

A lot of my family and friends at home are surprised that I am happy to live in Japan for three years. For some people who haven't traveled outside of America, I might as well be living on Mars. I usually dismiss these people pretty easily. Even though Japan and America are very different, people are really the same everywhere, I tell them. Japan really isn't so far away! Just because our foods, customs and holidays are different, it doesn't mean that we can't make friends and have meaningful experiences all over the world. People are people.

But recently, I realized what really makes it easy to live on the other side of the world. It's the internet. With the internet at home, I can talk with family and friends for free whenever I feel like it. I can listen to the news and even see some American TV shows. Of course I watch TV in Japan for news, weather and entertainment, too, but sometimes it's just nice to see or hear something familiar (and easy to understand!). A few weeks ago, my computer broke, so I was forced to see what living in Japan without all of those conveniences is really like. I don't even use my computer that much, but I guess just knowing that it's there is reassuring. I can still read emails at work, but all the information that I had gotten used to having at my fingertips was gone. I had to learn how to check the weather, train times and keep in touch with people in a different way. Realizing how much I relied on the internet made me feel a little bit guilty—I wonder what life was like for ALTs 15 years ago when the internet was not so widespread.

My feeling that I am far, far away from home was most exaggerated when a friend on Sunday reminded me that it was Easter. Easter is a big holiday in America—it's originally religious but has become a holiday that everyone celebrates, kind of like Christmas. Instead of Santa Claus, there is a character called the Easter Bunny, who brings chocolate eggs to put in children's Easter baskets on Easter morning. My family dyes hard boiled eggs a variety of bright colors and eats egg salad for a week. It's special because there are lots of special Easter foods and traditions that come from many different European countries. It is America's spring holiday. Where sakura marks the coming of spring in Japan, Easter marks spring in America. I couldn't believe that I had completely forgotten about it.

Since so many people that I know are shocked that I live in Japan, I guess I started to think that I am pretty adventurous for living here. But I was put in my place this month when I realized that without my computer and being able to stay in close touch with the people and news at home, I can get just as homesick as anyone else! In some ways, it's a good thing that my computer broke. It showed me that I should put less importance on that, and more on the people around me and the unique experiences that I can have in Japan. I didn't eat any chocolate Easter eggs this year, but I did get to try sakura yatsubashi! (Still, I'm happy that computer will be fixed soon).