

Hello, everyone. I know there are some new people in this office now and they might be wondering what this is when they find it on their desk. My name is Molly and I am an ALT at a high school, but I also visit the Education Center every Wednesday afternoon. Each week I write a short essay about some kind of experience from my time in Japan, and N-san translates it into Japanese for me so that everyone can read it—either in English or Japanese. I hope you'll enjoy reading this journal, and please don't hesitate to talk to me about it or to say hello to me when I am in the office next week.

Last week during spring vacation, I went on a one-week trip with three friends to Kyushu. Last year I did a camping trip in Shikoku during spring vacation so this year we decided to go just a little bit further and explore the island of Kyushu. Much to the surprise of my friends and co-workers, we decided to drive there from Mie instead of taking a train, plane or ferry, and it was a lot easier than a lot of people were making me think! To avoid traffic, we left around 1am on Friday night, and we arrived in Kagoshima, after taking many breaks, about 10 hours later around 3pm the next afternoon. It sounds like a long trip, but as my friends are from America and Australia, we are used to driving a long way in the car to get to other places. With three drivers, we took turns driving the whole way there and surprisingly weren't too tired when we arrived. We decided to go the whole way south to Kagoshima on the first day, so that we could slowly make our way back North and around the island for the rest of the week.

If you ever take a long car trip like this, my recommendation is to go to an onsen immediately afterwards to relax and stretch out after being stuck in the cramped car. We drove down to Ibusuki onsen, enjoying nice views of Sakurajima along the way, and we were buried in hot sand before we knew it. I had never been to a sand bath like that before, and I was surprised at how hot the sand actually was! It felt great to be buried under the heavy, wet sand, and I could have fallen asleep there if I hadn't been enjoying the seaside view and the new scenery.

That night we stayed in a hotel in Kagoshima for just one night before camping in a tent in various places around Kyushu for the rest of the trip. After the long car ride, I don't think I could have slept in a tent! Kagoshima was a nice city, but unfortunately it rained the whole time we were there and we couldn't enjoy it so much. Even Sakurajima was completely covered in clouds when we took the ferry there the next day. It was a rainy start to our trip but we still had lots of other adventures as we traveled around the island. I'll be sure to write more about it next week!