

DISABLED YOUTH EXCHANGE

Firstly let me say what a privilege and honour to accompany Erin as her care giver on the Exchange Disabled Youth Trip to Kurashiki, Japan.

From the first meeting of Tania, Annette, Ryan, Erin and I it was great excitement as we planned. Air New Zealand were an excellent airline to travel with so very helpful.

On arriving at Kansai Airport we were met by James Benson.

The day at USJ was so much fun so much to take in and then on to Kurashiki.

James was invaluable in getting us to Kurashiki. It was a difficult journey with four trains to negotiate. It was pretty hair raising at times with a wheel chair. It would be much better if there was a bus that would travel all the way. It would most probably take longer but an easier journey depending of course on the disability.

The Hotel was very nice. We did have a hassle with the first room we were given as the bathroom was not wheelchair accessible. This should be noted for the future, The hotel was very accommodating and gave us their bigger room.

Our hotel was in a lovely part of the city so close to the Bikan a beautiful area. The programme was so well planned. It was wonderful sharing activities with the young people from the school for the disabled and at Fujien Centre.

Erin and I's home stay was fantastic sharing fellowship, playing games just being together and sharing a cultural exchange that stay is very much in my thoughts as I look back. Grateful thanks to the Okamotos they were great hosts.

The visit to Hiroshima was very moving. Visiting the Peace Park and then on to Miyajama, a very tiring day but very worthwhile.

Mizushima Automative Factory was very interesting really appealing to the young people.

Just 2 negative notes while the visit to the Asahi Kasei was interesting to hear that a company employs so many people with disabilities and the variety of work they do our young people found it quite boring as it was so very passive they like doing things. We bit older ones were feeling very sleepy as it was straight after lunch in a very small hot room.

The Shopping at the Aeon Centre was too long there is only so much shopping that can be done!

My grateful thanks to all the wonderful people we met. The interpreters that were so helpful and especially to James Benson and Tania McKenzie who were just fantastic and to the Christchurch Committee and wonderful sponsors.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, such truly wonderful memories.

Gina Bolton