



America – Michael Henderson

Often when I talk to non-Americans about America, one of their reactions is that “America is dangerous”. Because of the news, especially about guns, I understand why they have these thoughts. However, I don’t think America is as dangerous as people think. If you go to visit or even live, I’m sure you will be okay as long as you’re a little careful. So, let me tell you the reasons why you SHOULD travel to America! The reasons will center on “diversity”. (多様性)

First, the diversity of people! In Japan, as a foreigner, people will always see and treat (取り扱う) me as a foreigner. But in America, even if you are foreign, most people will automatically think you’re also American. Even when they realize you are foreign, they will (usually) not treat you differently. Americans have a very positive view of Japan, and are often very curious (気になる) about Japanese culture. So, don’t be afraid to being different; there are many types of people, and you will blend right in! (目立たない!)

Second, the diversity of culture! I will give you an example. When I went home to America, my friends and I wanted to eat at a Moroccan restaurant. Unfortunately, it was closed, so we ate at a Thai restaurant across the street. And along the way, we passed (通り過ぎた) a fancy Japanese restaurant. Even though it was only a few streets downtown, there were many different cuisines to choose from. It’s very easy to eat, see, and experience different cultures in America.

Third, diversity of each area. America is very big, so there are many different climates (気候), ways of life, and local cultures. I’m from Washington, but I used to live in Florida. The way people acted, their beliefs (価値観), and the environment were all so different. It was so different that I wouldn’t want to live in Florida again (though some people love it!). I hope that one day, you’ll be able to experience America’s greatest asset (強み); its diversity!

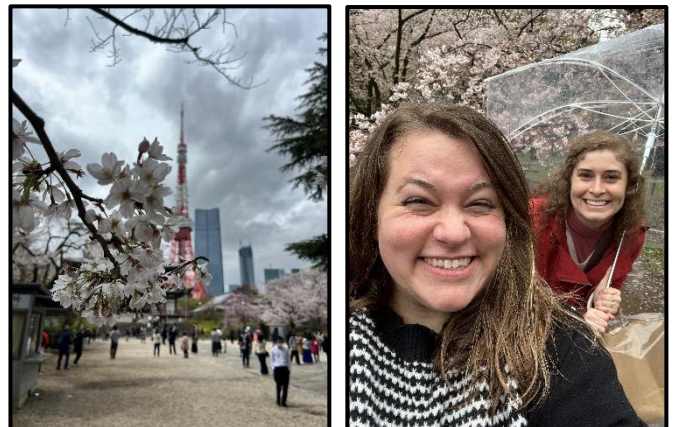
Blossoms and New Beginnings – Katelyn Sondereker

Cherry blossoms (桜) in Japan are so beautiful, but they do not last for very long. In fact, the cherry blossoms have already left Kumamoto. It is always sad when they start to fall, but I think this is also why people love them so much. If cherry blossoms were always around, they wouldn’t be special. Because we can only enjoy them for a short time, they are precious (大切な) to us.

I think life is the same way. Earth has existed for a long time, but our lives as humans are fleeting (儚い). Our time with the people we love is so short. This can be heartbreaking (切ない) and painful, but it is also what gives life meaning. If life went on forever, would it still feel precious? In my opinion, endings teach us to value (大切にする) the present (現在), to hold it softly in both hands.

Another thing that cherry blossoms teach us is that when things end, there is always a new beginning waiting for us. It might take a long time for the cherry blossoms to bloom (咲く) again, but we can trust (信頼する) that they will always come. So even when something you love ends, remember that there are good things just around the corner waiting for you.

As you begin this school year, I hope you keep these lessons from cherry blossoms in mind. You will make new friends, learn many difficult things, and build lots of good memories. Enjoy these new beginnings, because eventually they too will end. But isn’t that what makes them beautiful?



This year, Kate saw the cherry blossoms with her sister in Tokyo.

Fun Facts about your ALTs!

Katelyn Sondereker



How old are you? I am 29!

What is your favorite English word? **Cozy**

What is your favorite Japanese food? **Mochi!!**

If you had to choose, would you choose
movies or books?

**Definitely books! I love reading, especially
on rainy days.**

What places have you visited in Japan?

**So far, I have been to Fukuoka, Miyazaki,
Kyoto, and Tokyo.**

What is your favorite memory at Daini High School?

**Cultural festival (文化祭), playing the koto with 箏楽部,
and talking with students 😊**

What is your middle name? **Stephen**

What is your favorite English word? **Pensive**

What is your favorite karaoke song?

旅路 by 藤井風

Coffee or tea?

**Even though I used to work at Starbucks, I actually
like tea more! Especially Houjicha flavored things.**

What is something you like about Japan?

**I love how so many areas of Japan have unique
dialects.**

What is your favorite memory in college?

**One time my friends and I made a Korean drama for
our club in college, you can find it on Youtube!**

Michael Henderson

