

## Sanduni Fernando (Sri Lanka)

The homestay program that I participated, provided me with a valuable opportunity to experience Japanese culture, daily life, and family relationships in a warm and welcoming environment. Throughout the program, the host family was very kind and supportive, which made the experience meaningful and memorable.

On the first day, I arrived at the host family's home and shared dinner with them. We ate chicken karaage with salad and rice, which was very delicious and introduced me to a popular Japanese home-style dish. After dinner, we played card games together. This activity helped us communicate easily and break the ice, allowing me to feel comfortable and relaxed from the very beginning of the homestay.

On the second day, we visited a tea museum near Shimada. There, I learned about the history and cultural importance of Japanese tea. I was also fortunate to see Mount Fuji, which was a very impressive and unforgettable sight. Additionally, I participated in a traditional Japanese ocha (tea) making experience, where I learned about the careful process and spirit behind tea preparation. For lunch, we went to a fish restaurant and enjoyed fresh seafood, which was another highlight of the day.



Later, we joined the Hippo Family Club, where we received a very warm welcome from the members. We played several games together, and I had the opportunity to teach them some Sinhala words. They showed great interest, and it was enjoyable to share my language and culture with them. This interaction made me realize the importance of cultural and language exchange. For dinner, we had chicken soup, and afterward, I spent time playing many games with the daughter of the host family. This helped us become closer and strengthened our friendship.

On the last day, we started with a calligraphy activity. It was a great experience that required concentration and patience, and it helped me appreciate Japanese traditional arts. We then decorated a Christmas tree, which created a cheerful atmosphere. Later, I tried wearing a yukata for the first time. It was a wonderful experience and made me feel more connected to Japanese culture. While waiting for dinner, I helped the daughter of the family prepare gyoza. The gyoza was very delicious, and cooking together made the experience even more enjoyable.

In conclusion, the homestay program was an amazing experience for which I am deeply grateful. Through this program, I learned about Japanese culture, family values, and the importance of communication and mutual understanding. This homestay will remain a precious memory for me.