



2025 Japanese Exchange Program

Part 2: Charlotte Christian Students Travel to Japan
July 18-Aug. 2, 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

Charlotte Christian School is a Christ-centered, college preparatory school, equipping and developing students to effectively integrate Biblical truth and learning into their daily lives and to impact the culture for Christ.



CCS Students Travel to Japan

Japanese Exchange Program

The Japanese Exchange Program is an annual student cultural exchange between [Yamate Gakuin High School](#) and several North American schools. Charlotte Christian School has participated in the exchange four times since 2012. The program is broken into two parts:

- **April:** Each YGHS junior class homeroom is hosted by a participating school either in the United States or Canada for a two week homestay. The students live in pairs with host families provided by the participating school. YGHS students are fully immersed in North American culture while also sharing Japanese culture with the host families and schools.
- **July:** Students from each North American school who hosted in April are invited to travel to Yokohama, Japan for a two week homestay. The students live in pairs with host families provided by YGHS. North American students are fully immersed in Japanese culture in this unique experience.

Yamate Gakuin High School

Yamate Gakuin Junior and High School is a privately owned junior high and high school located in Yokohama, Japan, approximately an hour from Tokyo. The school was founded in 1966 by a brother and sister living through the devastating aftermath of World War II with a desire to teach the next generation of students the importance of being friends, rather than enemies, with other countries. The annual exchange with North America is a graduation requirement for the students of Yamate Gakuin.

Why Charlotte Christian participates in the exchange program

Less than 3% of the Japanese population claim Christ as their Savior. The major religions in Japan are Buddhism, Shintoism, and no religion. Charlotte Christian first learned about Yamate Gakuin's exchange program in 2011 and decided this is a way for us to "impact the culture for Christ" as our mission statement reads. We have the unique opportunity to host around 40 students and their teacher chaperones on our campus and in our homes. We have two short weeks in April to not only immerse them in the American way of life but also show them God's love and teach them about Jesus. As part of Japanese culture of honor and respect for others, they do justice, love kindness and walk humbly, but they are missing the knowledge and understanding of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Charlotte Christian School is the only participating Christian school, giving us the unique opportunity to share the Gospel. This year's exchange will happen during the Easter season, giving host families the opportunity to teach and celebrate our faith in a way that they probably would not experience in Japan. The upper school students who travel to Japan in July will gain a better understanding of Japanese culture, including their religions. The bond between the host families and the students can be a long-lasting, and sometimes life-changing relationship.



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ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

The trip is open to current students in grades 9-12. (Maximum students 20)

REGISTRATION

[Click here](#) to register for the trip by **January 31, 2025**.

COSTS

The cost of the trip is \$3,500. An initial deposit of \$500 is required at the time of registration. The remaining balance may be paid in monthly installments as follows:

\$1000 by March 31, 2025

\$1000 by April 30, 2025

\$1000 by May 31, 2025

The cost above does not include money for shopping or souvenirs. The suggested amount to bring for spending is \$300-\$500. Travel insurance is included in the cost of the trip.

SPRING/SUMMER MEETINGS

- The chaperones will meet with the students during the school day to discuss trip details and expectations, as well as cultural differences.
- The chaperones will meet with parents via Zoom to go over trip details.

ROOMING ASSIGNMENTS

The students will stay in pairs (same gender) with the host families. In the spring, students will make their roommate requests and the chaperones will make the final rooming decisions.

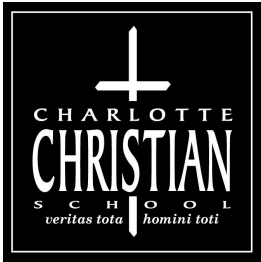
TRANSPORTATION

Depending on the flights, we should have one layover each way. We will fly into Tokyo and then connect with the host families.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

For international travel, a color copy of the student's passport must be submitted to the trip leader by **March 31, 2025**. Failure to submit this document by this date may result in the student losing their spot on the trip and any payments already made may not be refunded. For international trips, students and chaperones must have a valid passport that is set to expire at least six months after the final day of travel. (**approximately February 2, 2026**).

Additionally, students under the age of 18 will need to carry a notarized travel form while traveling through the airports. The form will be provided in the spring.



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GROUP ACTIVITIES

The students from the USA and Canada will have group field trips together. On field trip days, the host family will take the students to/from Yamate Gakuin where they will be met by the chaperones. The students and chaperones will be taking charter buses from the school to/from our destinations for the day.

Group events are subject to change, but may include:

- Tour of Tokyo - including Askuska shrine and a tempura restaurant
- Tour of Yokohama or other nearby city
- Tokyo Disneyland or Disney Sea
- Japanese Culture Day at Yamate Gakuin School

DAYS SPENT WITH HOST FAMILIES

On days that do not have a planned group activity, the students will spend time with their host families exploring the area and enjoying the Japanese food and culture. During our two-week stay, Yamate Gakuin students are on a school break, so although there will be no classroom instruction time, there will be more time to bond with the families. By living in a Japanese home with the host family, the student pairs will be immersed in the culture and will have deeper, personal experiences in the culture in addition to the group activities.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- High temperatures - summer in Yokohama is similar to summer in Charlotte.
- Walking - Most likely, your host sibling will be taking you places, including to school for group outings. The driving age in Japan begins at 18 years old, so be prepared to travel by bus, train, bike or walking.
- Hospitality
- Cleanliness
- During the spring semester, there will be meetings for the students traveling to Japan to prepare them for cultural differences that they will encounter on a daily basis.

SAFETY

- The safety of students is the top priority of the chaperones.
- Our trip will be registered with the US State Department. In the event of a national emergency, we will receive instruction and assistance from the US embassy.
- We will follow health guidelines for the US and Japan during the trip.
- Chaperones will be available 24 hours a day for students, parents, and host families.
- We will have a network of Yamate Gakuin teachers, staff, and parents (including their PTF committee) to assist us as needed.

If you have any questions, please contact the Japanese Exchange Program coordinator:

Margaret Jackson

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(704) 366-5657 ext. 6502

Maya Szymborski ('21) shared about her experience visiting Japan in 2018.

Visiting Japan was very exciting because the culture, society, and environment is completely unlike America. Everything was new and novel. I enjoyed living with my host family and meeting new friends, as well as just experiencing Japanese life. While it can be intimidating to have the cultural and language barriers, they were never too much of a hindrance that I couldn't enjoy the experience. In fact, that made the experience all the more enjoyable because I was able to get out of my comfort zone and experience something new, but in a safe environment with people I still knew.

My host family were incredibly nice and eager for me to experience everything Japan has to offer. When I didn't go on trips with the CCS group, my host family were taking me amazing places and buying me Japanese foods to try. I have stayed in contact with them throughout the years, and this summer when I studied abroad in Japan, I was able to visit them. They were very excited to see me again and even wished I could have stayed longer with them. They gave me a lot of gifts to return with. Since I have been taking Japanese classes, I was able to communicate with the family much better than I had back in 2018. They were very amazed by my progress and still tried to make me comfortable by speaking the limited English they could.

The 2018 trip to Japan completely changed my life. Even though that sounds cliché, before then I didn't have much of an idea of what I wanted to major in college, what career I wanted, or what I was passionate about. But during the Japan trip, I realized that I have a love for learning about other cultures and an eagerness to experience lifestyles completely different than my own. I realized that I enjoy learning languages and being able to talk to people in their native tongue and learn about their life. I found a passion for learning about culture, language, and other people that I didn't know I had before. After the 2018 trip to Japan, I was able to declare my major in East Asian Studies with confidence. Since then, I have been studying Japanese for 3 years now and have had the opportunity to study abroad there for an entire summer. I made a lot of Japanese friends and still stay in contact with them. I have learned a lot about Asian culture, society, and history, much of what is not taught in high school. I have met friends who are interested in the same things through my classes, but also through clubs and organizations. I have found that I have a knack for learning languages, which is something that really excites me.

To CCS students who are thinking about going to Japan, I'd say do it! Don't think twice about it. Being in Japan is such a unique experience that you may or may not ever get experience again. While it may seem daunting to travel there and be somewhere completely foreign to you (because Japan is VERY different than America or Europe), I promise that you will enjoy your time there and wish you could've spent longer.

Some notes I have from spending this past summer in Japan: Try to experience the nature and environment! While major cities are busy and there are tons of fascinating things to do in them, there are also gardens and temples around that give an unreal sense of peace and tranquility. I definitely recommend visiting them. Also, try new foods! Japan's cuisine is very different than America's, and while it may seem comforting to stick to what you're used to or what sounds familiar, definitely try new things! You'll never know what kinds of foreign foods you'll like. Plus, the experience is always worth it! Additionally, people in Japan are very nice and accommodating. While there is always the language barrier, they will try their best to understand you and help you out, especially if you try as well. Speaking of Japanese people, try to make friends and connections with the students and host families you meet. I have stayed in contact with them over the years and were able to meet up with them when they visited America again, and when I was in Japan. It's a very joyful thing to be able to continue talking and meeting with people from



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around the world.

