

Ryunosuke Yusa

Second grade of Yamoto second junior high school

Over 6 months before I received the chance to go to Denmark, we experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake. I felt regret, pain, and concern for the future and there haven't been any good things at all since after the disaster. It was like a nightmare. But then I was offered the chance to go to Denmark. I was a little uneasy at first, but I really wanted to go to Denmark because I wanted to see and learn about things I had never seen before. This was a great opportunity and I couldn't pass it up.

The following month after I had made my decision to go to Denmark was a pretty busy one trying to get ready for the trip, but I managed to get ready in time. It took over 10 hours to get to Denmark by plane. When I got to Denmark, I was feeling a little jet lagged, but a welcome party helped lift our spirits. The Danish students who joined our tour seemed like they were on another level than us. I felt pretty immature. They all also seem to have unique personalities and think for themselves.

I really enjoyed this trip. However, I caused a lot of trouble and inconvenienced many people. On the first day I was late, then I lost my wallet and left my souvenir on the train. That's why I feel I'm a bit immature.

When we left Denmark, I felt regret rather than sadness. I should have spent my time better when I was there.

Almost two weeks have past now since getting back to Japan and I've thought of something. What I thought of was that the earthquake was not only a nightmare, but also a learning opportunity. An opportunity that was equally given to each student and if taken advantage of we could grow from it. From here on I will study harder and little by little improve.

Ryuuto Okada

Second grade of Yamoto first junior high school

I had several meaningful experiences while in Denmark. There were three things in particular.

First is cultural exchange. This was the first time I had done a homestay overseas. I felt nervous in the beginning, but as the days passed I became more at ease and eventually friends were like family. My host family took me to lots of places beside the formal events. I really appreciated them showing me a good time.

I found that there are ways of communicating besides just using words. Your facial expressions and gestures can express your thoughts as well. It doesn't matter what you do, but as long as you keep an open mind you can communicate with people. If I could speak English well, I could better describe the situation, but it is tough for me. I was able to make some Danish friends through many activities which makes me think of the saying, 「一期一会」. It means “once in a lifetime encounter”.

Second is I've been able to learn about the world. I learned the process of how to go through at the airport and about getting my luggage checked. And there are many things I would like to introduce to Japan from Denmark. For example, there are beautiful towns and nature, spacious houses and happy families. I not only learned about the idea of “lady first”, but also realized that there are parts of Japanese culture and ways of thinking that I would like to share. I think in every country there is a social infrastructure, with rules and manners, so that people can live happily.

Third is the importance of expressing your appreciation. I know this study tour took many people's efforts to make it happen. And I thought I should always appreciate all of the people who prepared this tour and supported us, the embassy staffs, municipal officers, translators, and people who invited us to Denmark and all of the people who helped while I staying in Denmark. Through these experiences, I really want to be become someone who can help others as well.

These experiences will make me stronger. By chance, because of I had no plans I was able to become a representative for my school. I will make the best use of my experiences in Denmark.

Hana Yasuda

Third grade of Yamoto first junior high school

I really appreciated being able to join this study tour. Before leaving for Denmark, I was a mix of emotions, both anticipation and concern. Every experience in Denmark was a first for me. My first trip abroad, first plane ride and first homestay. There are many differences between Japan and Denmark. I worried about whether or not we would be able to communicate with each other and if I could understand Danish people and culture. At the same time, I had no idea how to explain about Japanese culture. The more I thought about it the more worried I became. However, when I thought of the people from the embassy and Danish people who support the program, I reconsidered my stance. I was able to a great experience in Denmark because the school principal and many teachers had chosen me to go.

When we arrived in Denmark, we were greeted by the host families, translators, and Danish school teachers at the airport and city hall. There wasn't even a bit of anxiety left after that warm welcome.

The days after that were really great and spent to fullest. There are lots of things that I should learn and I had a very nice time. Especially, I was really pleased when my host family said to me make myself at home. The time just flew by, and before I knew it, it was about time to leave. It was a tough thing for me to say goodbye. But I will cherish our time together and believe we will meet again someday. This tour has been a great experience for me. I have been surprised and impressed with every moment while in Denmark. Every thing was new to me and changed my outlook on the world.

I've never such a meaningful experience like that before. I'll make the best use of these experiences, and I tell those experiences to my Japanese friends.

I really appreciate from the bottom of my heart everyone who was a part of this tour.

Natsuki Mizutani

Second grade of Yamoto First junior high school

I've learned lots of things in Denmark. Seeing another country's culture and lifestyle changed my way of thinking and viewpoints. For instance, even if there is a language barrier it's still important to try and communicate. Also don't hesitate to be more outgoing to communicate with other people. In fact, at first I couldn't catch what people were saying and even on the last day as well, but I communicated with gestures or by using a dictionary and when they understood my thinking, I was really happy. Therefore from now on, I should try hard not to worry about failing or making mistakes, but just try my best and proactively take on challenges.

There are many nice manners in Denmark. What I was impressed with was the "lady first" mentality and dining etiquette. I felt that "lady first" means not necessarily be considerate to just women, but to people in general. Originally I think Japan was also a country like that, but recently I think it's becoming a bit outmoded. I think about how to make common sense remain as common sense. When it came dining etiquette, at first I was at a loss when I had a meal without chopsticks, but eventually I got used to using a fork, spoon and knife.

I've learned many things and feel I have grown from this trip. This kind of experience doesn't happen often. I've seen many different kinds of jobs and when I try to decide on my own job, I will refer to these experiences.

Actually, I don't like English very much, but after this trip my interest in English really changed. I want to know more and speak more. I want to learn and speak English more and more. I think I should study more so that whenever I meet Danish people or people from other countries, I'll be able to speak fluently and enjoy the conversation.

Issei Naganuma

Third grade of Yamoto First junior high school

I learned a lot from all the people, places, surprises, and experiences I had and had a great time in Denmark. I think Danish people and their culture are very nice and this is probably the same throughout all of Denmark. The biggest thing I want to say is “Thank you” to Danish people who took care of me.

There were lots of situations that I want to express my appreciation for. First, my host family treated me very well. They made me delicious meals and they told me everything politely. A translator helped translate English to Japanese for us. I also want to thank the students of Endrup high school and everyone involved.

There was one thing I found from encountering so many people on this trip. That everyone works so hard and diligently. I thought this was really cool.

I met a woman who is Japanese-Danish. That woman was born and grew up in Japan and last year she came to Denmark. I was really impressed that she works so hard in spite of being a stranger there. When I was leaving Denmark, I made eye contact with her. Her eyes seemed to have a spark in them. I decided to focus and study harder at that moment.

When I got back to Japan and I went to school and my teacher and friends said to me “Welcome back”, I felt really happy. Looking back, there are many things to be appreciative for. Thank you to everyone involved with this study tour.

Yuuya Ootuki

First grade of Naruse Second junior high school

I joined this tour as a representative of my junior high school. I was really happy to join this tour, and I've had many valuable experiences.

After this tour, I again realized how irreplaceable family and friends are.

At first I was really worried about whether or not I would be able to make friends with Danish people and get along with my host family. But the Danish students talked to me and we had become friends with each other before I even knew it. I can't speak English at all because I just started studying it and ended up bothering my host family with my English. But slowly as the days went by, I seemed to be able to catch some words here and there. And finally on the last day I was able to have a conversation with my host family. While in Denmark, I missed my friends back in Japan, but I felt like living in Denmark would also be good.

My host family really treated me like family. They washed my clothing and cooked meals for me. I always thought house chores are ordinary things that my mother and father do for me, but I realized I should thank them for doing these things.

I'll never forget the experiences I had on this trip and I try to pass along what I've learned.

Natsuki Takahashi

Third grade of Naruse First junior high school

The main thing I got from this study tour when it was over was to appreciate all of the people involved. I learned many things and so I thank everyone who got me this opportunity. Above all, I'm really thankful to my host family who took care of me for those 10 days. I was at a loss by the language difference some times, but they treated me kindly, and I enjoyed my time in Denmark.

The best thing in Denmark was being able to make friends with Danish students and have experiences I will definitely remember. I'll remember how we went to school together, hung out and had lunch. Even the little things will be good memories.

I've been so depressed because I had lost my house in the tsunami. But I've felt better after I going on this study tour, and spend meaningful days in Denmark. All the different kind of events in Denmark helped cheer me up. Now, I'm in 9th grade and I'll have to prepare for exams to enter high school next year. Looking over Japan, people are trying to get over this disaster and get back on their feet. This study tour has really helped me decide to do my best in whatever I try. Now, all I can do is study hard. I need to study hard for myself and to help revive my city. I'm not very good at speaking English, so I wasn't able to communicate with my Danish friends enough. I feel I need to be able to speak English in the time to come. At the same time, I want to do some kind of international work.

I make the best use of this experience and as we move forward, I'll never forget the many countries that supported us.

Haruhisa Tanaka

Second grade of Yamoto Second junior high school

I've learned many things through this tour and had a lot of great experiences. The 10 days I spent in Denmark were really fulfilling and I'll cherish it forever. More than anything else, there were 4 things that I was really impressed with that you can't experience in Japan.

First is cultural exchange. I told my host family about Shuuji(Japanese Calligraphy). I showed them how to write and they enjoyed trying to write their own name in Japanese. Also, I thought showing Kendo was also a nice cultural exchange. I watched Kendo's Kata for the first time myself. I think that was really great even from a Japanese perspective.

Second is I showed them, “心あったかイトころ運動”(Kokoro attaka itokoro movements. The city started these movements so that every person makes happy and warm heart). And our school carries out “Second Day movement” (this is for making the people in the surrounding area more comfortable; pick the trash up, be civil, etc.). And I make the best use of this experience in everyday life.

Third is that I'm really grateful for being able to go through this experience. If Denmark didn't support us, we wouldn't have this opportunity and so I really appreciate Denmark. Sometimes I wasn't able to communicate with my host family in English, but in spite of this causing trouble, they always greeted me with a smile. They have a kind character and treated me very well. On the first day, I was really nervous and I hesitated to do anything. But they tried to relieve my stress and I learned the importance of kindness while in Denmark.

The fourth is cultural exchange from now on. I stay in touch with Danish friends on Facebook or through e-mail. I'm really happy to get e-mails from friends. I'll connect with those friends later on. I'm so glad from the bottom of my heart to be able to join this tour. I'll make the best use of this experience at school, club activity and student council.

Kaisei Suzuki

Second grade of Naruse Second junior high school

I had a really good time in Denmark. Before I went to Denmark, I had been anxious to go abroad and communicate with people from other countries.

I think we differ from Danish students. Because they bring fruits to school and they don't have school uniforms. I learned about the good aspects of both Danish and Japanese culture. I told my host family about, “いただきます”(Itadakimasu. This is said before eating a meal. It means something like, “thank you for serving”.) and “ごちそうさまでした”(Gochisousamadeshita. This is said after eating a meal. It means kind of “I'm done”). And I was taught the some Danish words as well.

This was a good experience for me. For example, I learned how Japan differs in land area, houses made by brick, food culture and more.

We couldn't understand each other completely, but we could empathize and laugh at the same things. It was really hard for me to say goodbye when I had to leave Denmark. They treated me kindly. They took me shopping, told me the specialties of Denmark and always took care of me. I really appreciate everything they did.

I'll make the best use of these experiences in my life someday and I hope I go to Denmark again.

Kanae Chiba

Third grade of Naruse First junior high school

It was such a nice experience being able to participate in this study tour. When I first heard I could go, I got so excited, because this tour was the first time I had ever gone abroad. But when I attended the meeting about going to Denmark, the superintendent of education of my city, Mr. Kimura, said to us that you need to be prepared for the trip. Then I thought about what I should do in Denmark or how I could I tell about Japanese culture to Danish people? I was so nervous and worried about going to Denmark. Of course I looked forward to going to Denmark, but I was really anxious at the same time. The biggest anxiety was about host family and whether or not I would be able to get along with them in 10 days? I felt so uneasy up until we arrived in Denmark. But when I met my host family and they greeted us with a warm smile, my uneasiness disappeared.

This trip really broadened my views and I had many experiences with the Endrup high school students. We went to go see castles and look around in Copenhagen. When I saw all the history and culture of Denmark, I realized I didn't know much about the world at all.

My host family was really great. They took care of me so much that I felt kind of sorry. There were lots of things I wanted to talk to them about, but I didn't know how to communicate my ideas. As a result there many things I wasn't able to tell them about. I really thought I have to study English harder from that moment. I'll go to Denmark again when I have mastered English and I want to talk to them about all the things we couldn't talk about before.

Nagomi Nasukawa

Third grade of Yamoto First junior high school

I wasn't able to adjust right away back when I got back to Japan. I think Japan and Denmark are the same in some ways. It takes a little bit of time to get used to your original life and also new circumstances.

Through this tour, I've found out something about myself. I don't care about race. No doubt Japanese character differs from Danish. But I don't feel very much that this tour has exchanged Japan and Denmark for me. I just made friends with junior high school students who live in a different country. Thanks to Mr. Tsutiya and many other people who did everything for us to stay comfortable.

Nationality is a marvel. EU countries gathering into one organization is amazing. I thought EU system is really innovative. I felt a little frustrated when I couldn't explain what I thought. I had to translate Japanese words to English one by one. Sometimes I used electronic dictionary or gestures. That's why, I want to become multilingual, or a woman who can speak something that is understood world wide or use sign language or something.

When I came back to Japan, I felt the long distance between Japan and Denmark. My memories of Denmark are gradually fading away. Because I have to study and do club activity. Of course I'll never forget Danish friends and experience in Denmark. But I still haven't email my friends or gotten in touch with them. I want to connect with them as soon as possible. I realize again the long distance between us when I can't meet them when I want to.

I think it's important for Japan and Denmark to have closer relations from now on. I hope to go to Denmark someday, and talk to my host family and friends a lot. This experience was a good chance to take some action for us.

Kenrou Kuronuma

Third grade of Yamoto first junior high school

I learned about many different things after participating in the home stay and lots of events. I had a good time with Danish people. But I was bewildered about Danish culture at the start. I decided one objective before I went to Denmark and that was to never forget the appreciation I felt for all the people I met.

While I on this study tour, I practiced this objective. Specially, I was able to say thank you from the bottom of my heart to my host family when I had to leave Denmark. I relearned how important language and communication really is. I experienced various things about culture that Japan doesn't have. "Lady first" particularly surprised me, because you hardly see this in Japan. I know the staple food in Denmark is bred, but I didn't know how to eat it with a fork and knife. I was really surprised about that and I wasn't used to eating it with these. So I was a bit awkward at first, but I gradually got use to using them. Meanwhile they said to me "Our culture differs from yours, but there are lots of nice aspects about each country." I thought exactly the same. I found our culture to be different from Danish culture, but this can be a good thing.

I think this study tour was big success. I got along with my host family and saw many castles. I'm really glad to be able to join in this cultural exchange. I want to cultivate this friendship more and more.

Finally, I'll make the best use of these experiences in regular life. And I thank my parents and all the people involved with this tour.

Yuuki Utsumi

Third grade of Naruse First junior high school

It has been already two weeks since getting back from Denmark, but I can still remember clearly the town, the sky and the people of Denmark. There are two things I was really impressed with.

One is about the casual conversation between Japanese and Danish people. I felt at ease about going to Denmark at first, because I heard a translator would be coming with us. But actually he wasn't with us very much. So I couldn't understand what they were saying very well, but I gradually got use to listening and understanding what they want to say. Then I thought I want to learn English more.

Second is the kindness of Danish people. My host family, Anders mother Hanne was such a kind woman. I thought young Japanese people could learn from her. I want to tell these experiences not let them just remain my memories alone. Finally I have a favor to ask. I not only want this project to occur once, but I want to continue the ties of friendship with Denmark.

Asahi Sugawara

Third grade of Naruse Second junior high school

I've learned many things after participating in this study tour. At first I was concerned about the difference of language, culture and communication. But while I staying in Denmark I was able to make friends with Danish students.

There are 2 things I found while in Denmark. One is I managed to communicate with Danish people even though I couldn't speak English well. I couldn't speak to them or I was helped by a translator during the second day of the trip. But I got use to listening, and using gestures to communicate with them little by little. I was happy when we chatted about ordinary things at their home.

Second, I thought Danish people's personality is very kind and gentle. Not only my host family but I think many Danish people are like that. They gave up their seats for me or told me carefully about things I didn't know.

The day we had to leave Denmark, Danish people wrote 「一期一会」 to us in Japanese Kanji. It was really impressed and it surprised me. I really thought about the meaning of this phrase. Honestly, I think it would be really nice to stay in Denmark for a while. I'll make the best use of the things I've learned in everyday life and I hope to go to Denmark again someday.

Chiharu Takahashi

Third grade of Yamoto Second junior high school

This tour has been one of my best memories ever and I really enjoyed staying in Denmark. But I felt so nervous and anxious to go Denmark at first. After spending time with Danish friends, I really started to enjoy being there. I don't know how many times I would hastily use words I didn't know or just say "no", because I couldn't understand what they were saying. I've also been surprised by difference in culture. I still have no idea when to leave my shoes on and take them off. And how to eat a boiled egg, I've never even thought of eating it with a spoon. I was really confused by these culture differences.

The friends I made will be my life time friends. I should have studied more before I went. If I spoke better English, I would have been able to get along with them better. I think I made friends with them on purpose rather than naturally. I thought it would be too long to stay in Denmark for 10 days at first. But the day I had to leave Denmark, I thought it was so short and I wanted to stay longer. We made pancakes together. The wine was too bitter for me. Black gummies I've never seen or tasted before. These are the precious memories I had.

One day, if I study English hard, I'll certainly go to Denmark again. I want to meet Matilda who is the host family, and I'll also go there with some Japanese friends. I also want to invite them to Japan and tell them about Japanese culture and tradition.

My time spent in Denmark was really wonderful. Finally, I really want to thank everyone who helped give me this opportunity, the people that translated my conversation, my host family and Danish friends. Not only just writing or saying these things, but I should take some action so that I can be proud of my city and country.

Kaho Maeda

Third grade of Yamoto Second junior high school

After going on this tour, the first thing I think of is how fun it was and how I'll go Denmark again one day. To keep in touch with Danish friends, I signed up on Facebook. Occasionally, I type some English on there. Writing in English is difficult for me and so I just type simple sentences. I really need to study English even more.

I talked about Japanese culture, language, and food among other things to Danish friends as well as them telling me about many Danish things. Danish life style differs from Japanese and I found many things in Denmark that Japan doesn't have. I think Danish junior high school students have more freedom than we do. I was surprised their appearances seemed almost adult-like. But once I talked or hung out with them, I go along with them quickly.

I've thought about what I have to do since getting back to Japan. About how I should tell about these experiences to Japanese people as much as possible. I'll try to tell about these experiences and common things in Denmark using photos and maps. My friends have laughed or been surprised by my stories. I bought Danish gummies for my friends. Actually, my friends didn't think they were very good because it was an unfamiliar taste in Japan.

Finally, I'm really glad to be able to take part in this tour. I'll do my best to make use of these experiences so that everything I learned won't go to waste.