

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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ENGLISH TEACHER IN JAPAN



Hello UAB students!

My name is Zach and I just graduated from UAB this April with a degree in marketing and a minor in Japanese. Right now, I live in a small town in rural Kagoshima, Japan teaching English through the Japan Exchange Teaching Program (JET). Kagoshima is the southernmost prefecture of mainland Japan and has humid, hot summers just like we get in Alabama. What we don't have in Alabama, however, is a massive and very active volcano named Sakurajima.

Sakurajima is a cherished symbol of Kagoshima and the source of pride for many locals. It can be seen from many parts of the prefecture, but it is most famously viewed from Kagoshima City, Kagoshima's largest city, where it sits a mere 3 or so miles off the coast of the city. And yes, I did indeed say it is active. In fact, it erupts all the time. Although I can't see Sakurajima from my city, I'm constantly reminded of its existence through the news. Despite Sakurajima's frequent eruptions, Kagoshima locals persevere and just consider it a part of their daily life. It is very common to see ash covered cars driving around, people walking around with umbrellas to shield themselves from the ash, and to suffer from perpetual red eyes due to the highly irritating ash flying into your eyes from the wind.



While I could talk about my love-hate relationship with Sakurajima endlessly, Kagoshima is famous for many other things as well. For example, natural hot springs, pork based dishes, and some of the best ramen in all of Japan. My little town, Isa, isn't widely known for much, other than rice production and Shochu, a Japanese liquor commonly made from sweet potatoes, barely, rice, and sugar. There are only a handful of non-Japanese people living here in Isa, which makes interactions with the locals fun and interesting. Luckily, Kagoshima people are known for being warm and welcoming.



I work at a highschool with just 100 students total, so this makes it really easy to get to know my students. When I am not teaching class, creating lessons, or grading papers, I often study Japanese during my downtime at work. I am studying to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) this December in order to boost my credentials to achieve my goal of working in the field of international marketing in Japan after completing my time here on the JET Program. Outside of work, I enjoy traveling and exploring all over Japan, discovering new restaurants, and going for long drives through the winding mountain roads of Japan.



日本語の学習者、頑張りましょう！

