

Sky Rising in Yusuhara: #1 A Quest Unveiled

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Until recently, I had lived in California for my entire life. My home had always been associated with busy highways, sandy beaches, and sunny skies. Moving to Japan is my latest quest in life, and living in Yusuhara will forever be part of my life journey. My initial thoughts were filled with intrigue when I discovered that I was going to be placed in Yusuhara. I had known about the island of Shikoku and Kochi Prefecture, but the town above the clouds was brand new to me. I enjoyed researching what would become my new home. The idea of living in a town far away from the bigger cities and surrounded by a dense forest seemed ideal. My one Japanese friend even prepared me by telling me about the great samurai, *Ryōma Sakamoto*. I dreamed about being able to experience the Japanese countryside because I wanted to see a side of Japan that most foreigners never get to experience.

After leaving America and spending several days in Tokyo for the JET Program Orientation, I finally arrived in Kochi. On the drive from the airport to Yusuhara, I felt a sense of peace and tranquility flow through me. As much as I admired Tokyo's beautiful cityscapes and buzzing nightlife, I found Kochi's natural landscapes to be food for the soul. Nature has a way of easing one's mind and body when feeling stressed, and thus the scenic forest-views filled my heart with peace. Then as I arrived to Yusuhara, I could not have been more amazed. The town seems to fit perfectly with the natural landscape; it is as if Yusuhara has grown in unison with its natural environment. The town and nature seem to move as one cohesive unit. Many towns in America fail to reach this level of unity, and many never even try. Yusuhara is also beaming with life. Even in the early mornings, I can feel the palpitations of the town's heart. The hybridity of tradition and modernity is quite beautiful; this appears to be both a reflection of Japanese culture and of the town of Yusuhara. I hope that America will take more inspiration from Japan because Americans too often choose to forget the past and focus solely on the future.

At the time of writing this article, I will be at the end of my first two weeks in Japan and at the end of my first full week in Yusuhara. I am honored to be living in such a special country and in such a beautiful town. The people have been more welcoming than I ever could have imagined! During my time in Yusuhara, I hope that I will be able to contribute positively to this community of wonderful people. As a message to my neighbors and the local community, I am always willing to help out in anyway possible. Once again, I am fortunate that my life's next quest has led me to Yusuhara; there is no other path I would have rather taken!



The Yusuhara River flowing under Miyuki Bridge.
My latest quest starts here!