

### Yusuhara Sunshine Times #3 My Best Experiences in Japan!

Ever since I came to Yusuhara in August, I've had the privilege of seeing so many amazing things that I wouldn't see in America. As a teacher at Yusuhara Gakuen, I've been able to be part of some of the most amazing school events that I've ever seen, like Sports Day and the school's "Welcome Concert". As I've gotten to know the locals better, I've also been invited to see many wonderful places in Kochi and Ehime, like Mount Kuishi! With the end of the year, I wanted to look back on my four best experiences I've had since coming to Japan.

My first best experience in Japan was being part of Sports Day at Yusuhara Gakuen. While many American schools have "Field Day", which is similar to Sports Day, I found the latter much more fun. I enjoyed watching the students compete against one another in many different, unique events. My favorite event to watch on Sports Day was "kibasen", where the students carried each other and tried to steal their opponents' headbands. I've never seen anything like it in America. During the event, I had to run behind one group to make sure no one fell! I also enjoyed watching each team give their own group dance performances. The performances were a spectacle, and I can't imagine how much the students practiced for them! It was great to help with the event and cheer everybody on.

My second best experience was hiking Mount Kuishi! In September, I was invited by a group of other teachers to hike the mountain. It was my first time hiking in Japan ever. It was a tough and steep climb to the top, which is about 1000 meters tall. Because of the weather, it was slippery too! When we reached the top, we enjoyed the view of Kochi and ate ramen. It was a lot of fun venturing through nature with good friends. Afterwards, we went to an onsen, which was also a first for me! The experience really gave me a new appreciation for hiking. In the future, I want to hike Mount Ishizuchi!

My third best experience was attending the "Uwajima Bullfighting Festival" in mid-October. My friend and I went to Uwajima to watch bullfighting, which I've never seen before! Before we went, my friend explained to me the rules of bullfighting and the techniques that bulls use, like "oshi" (hitting the opponent head-on) and "haratori" (attacking the side of an opponent while their guard is down). The fights were very exciting and I found myself cheering with the audience! Afterwards, I ate takoyaki for the first time, which was delicious.

My fourth best experience was being part of Yusuhara Gakuen's "Welcome Concert" in November. I've never seen anything like it in America. It was a lot of fun watching the students perform in so many different ways, like singing, dancing, playing traditional instruments, "chanoyu", and even giving presentations in English! My favorite moments were listening to each class sing together in unison, the performance by the school's music club, and watching the teachers dance on stage! The students and teachers of Yusuhara Gakuen are certainly very talented. It was an honor to help with the event and take pictures!

Looking back upon my favorite experiences, I can't help but feel immense gratitude. I'm very grateful to the wonderful teachers and staff members of Yusuhara Gakuen, who've always helped me when I needed it. I'm grateful to the students of Yusuhara Gakuen, who inspire me with their passion and energy. And I'm grateful to the people of Yusuhara Town, who've made me feel more than welcomed. I really am lucky to have experienced so many great things in Japan, and I'm excited to experience more in 2026. Happy new year!

- Carter Frost, Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at Yusuhara Gakuen

