

What to expect as a student delegate to Ohara-Isumi City, Japan.

-The non-stop flight from Minneapolis to Tokyo Narita airport is around 11 hours and arrives in early evening. You will be met by sister city representatives.

-Ohara is a fishing port and agricultural area approximately 72 miles southeast of Tokyo on the Pacific Ocean and is part of a three city area known as Ohara-Isumi City. The bus ride from Narita to Ohara is around 1 ½ hours.

-The BUNCA is Ohara's cultural center and most pick-up and drop-off for daily activities start and end here. You will meet your host families at the BUNCA and depart with them to your host home.

- Host families are assigned by the Japanese. Usually, there is one student per family and most families have children. The families may live in Ohara proper or further out in the country. Host families may be teachers, rice farmers, fisherman or other professions in the area that feel they have room to host a student.

You might have a room and bathroom of your own or you may share a room with a younger family member. The room may be a traditional Japanese room (sleeping on a futon on the floor) where everything is put away in the morning or a room with western beds/toilets. You won't know until you arrive at their home.

Your family may or may not have someone who speaks enough English to be understood. Some families make up a basic chart of such phrases as "Are you hungry?", "Are you tired?" etc. in English and Japanese to help with communicating. Some Japanese have electronic language translators.

Your host may serve western style food in an effort to make you feel at home. Some may serve only Japanese food.

If school is in session (Japanese schools run year round except for the month of August and a break in December) the daily schedule will include visits to Elementary schools and the Ohara Junior High School. There will also be sightseeing to local area attractions. You will probably have a day in Tokyo as part of the official visit.

There will be family days where you will be with your host family all day and do what they have planned. Some go to Tokyo Disney World; some visit the young teen areas of interest in Tokyo, some go to the beach, etc. Every family will be

different. Sometimes, two or more host families will do something together. You will not be together as a group on these days and will probably not see your chaperones, who will be doing things with their host families.

If the delegates visit in August when school is not in session, than the schedule will contain more family days and fewer group scheduled days.

Your host families will be very concerned that you are having fun and enjoying Japan. You will always be able to get in contact with your chaperones—all the families have a listing of where everyone is staying with phone numbers. Ohara is a small town and most of the families know each other.

Take an international calling card if you need to call home (it is very expensive for your family if you use their account). You may or may not have access to internet/email, depending on the family. There is an international ATM at the Ohara post office if you need more yen.

Go with an open mind and prepared to enjoy the differences between home and Japan.