

Name	AVNEETA KAUR GULATI
Type of position	ALT
Period and duration of assignment	Aug 2006- Aug 2007 (One year)
Name of Prefecture you were dispatched to	FUKUOKA
Name of School/Municipal Government you worked for	TAGAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION

My experience as an ALT in Japan was absolutely beautiful and enriching. Located in a typical country side, small town of Fukuoka Prefecture, I met the most amazing people, with whom I worked and made friends with, who made my time in Japan totally unforgettable. They have given me some beautiful memories which only make me want to go back to that time.

I started as a young 19 year old, super apprehensive yet confident girl ready to take on this new challenge at a new place amongst new people. It all felt easy and adventurous but it wasn't really this simple. It was a huge responsibility, a lot was expected out from somebody in my position. The challenges were different and greater than I expected.

My fellow colleagues knew English only as much as I knew Japanese. Suddenly I realized I am not able to convey something as simple as "I want to call my family in India". Being a country side, there were hardly any foreigners with whom I could interact. Amongst all this, I was invited for several introductory dinners that started giving me jitters as somebody casually translated and told me I just had cow tongue and intestines!!

But it was just about time I started settling in. Learnt the language, loved the food only because I met such wonderful people who hand-held me throughout. I made friends with my colleagues, my students, the local-grocery lady, my neighbours. I couldn't have been in a better world.

I loved everything about my job. I adored all my students and it gave me immense pleasure to un-learn with them everything that I had learnt so far in life. I hoped they became responsible and aware citizens of their country and kind and compassionate individuals.

After more than a decade I can still say that time as an ALT in Japan was possibly the best time of my life. It gave me strength, made me mature and humble. It taught me to value things and people we otherwise take for granted in our daily lives.

Today I try and inculcate the same values in my daughter. I hope I made a positive difference in my friends' and students' life because they definitely made a difference in mine 😊