

## **Fiona Dalton**

It was Fiona's friendship with a Japanese girl during her childhood which evoked her interest in Japan from a young age. At first, they couldn't speak each other's language so they played marbles together. It was this initial contact with a Japanese person that inspired Fiona to choose Japanese as a subject when she began secondary school. She studied Japanese for five years in high school, and thoroughly enjoyed it. The teacher she had in her first year at high school, Leeanne Everingham, established a love of Japanese in Fiona through her fun filled classes. In her last year of high school Fiona had the opportunity to go on a school exchange trip to Japan. The three week long trip was just a taste – she realised she definitely wanted to go back to Japan again.

After leaving school Fiona completed a Bachelor of Arts in Japanese and Psychology, with honours in Psychology. In the summer holiday before starting her 3rd year, she returned to Japan for three months. Two months of these she spent in a rural area of Gunma Prefecture, working at a mushroom factory and living with a host family. During this time of constant contact with Japanese people, her Japanese improved immensely. She spent the last month travelling around Japan, from Hokkaido to Kyuushuu on a Japan Rail Pass.

At the completion of her studies Fiona was accepted for the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) Programme, and spent two years teaching English at a senior high school in Hyogo Prefecture. While it is not a requirement that a JET participant has proficiency in Japanese, Fiona believes that being able to communicate with people in Japanese enriched her experience on the JET Programme.

Fiona returned to New Zealand with the intention of doing further study the following year. She found short-term employment as a receptionist for JTB (Japan Travel Bureau), and also worked as a translator/driver for the production crew of a Japanese movie. This was a unique opportunity as she had daily interactions with famous Japanese actors and actresses and gained an insight into film production.

Fiona is currently studying towards a Master of Development Studies at Victoria University. Upon graduation, she hopes to work for an NGO (Non-governmental Organisation) which supports projects in developing countries. She is considering working for an NGO based in Japan. Fiona believes her interest in Japan is a major reason for her decision to undertake a Master of Development Studies. Her experience of living and working in a foreign country has fostered a love of travel, and has given her a unique understanding of other cultures, which will assist her in her ability to relate to people from other countries.

Fiona's study of Japanese has given her many amazing experiences, and will certainly make a significant contribution to her future career.

*(profiled by Elizabeth Wood, 2006)*