

## Introduction

Hello! My name is Caroline Dunphy. I'm a sixteen-year-old student from Colorado. I'll be staying in Okinawa for six weeks through a homestay program. Colorado is a mountainous state located in the center of America. I live in northern Colorado, in a town called Fort Collins. It is named after a United States Army fort, the original Fort Collins, that was built there in the 1860s. The fort protected a mail route, and any travelers that passed through the area. By 1867 a town had grown around the fort, and it soon took the fort's name. Now, Fort Collins is a large town, with more than 160,000 residents. It is home to Colorado State University (CSU; the picture to the right is of the entrance to campus). CSU is famous for its veterinary medicine program, as well as its agricultural science programs. CSU is located in Old Town, the historic district of Fort Collins. Many of the buildings in Old Town are original, the ones first built by the founders of Fort Collins. During the summer many music, art, and food festivals are held in Old Town. Fort Collins is also famous for its beer. There are many small breweries around town, called microbreweries, that only make a few special types of beer. There are other large breweries as well. The most well-known is probably Budweiser. They have a large factory just outside of town.



The areas in and around Fort Collins are very beautiful. The mountains in Colorado are called the Rocky Mountains (pictured below). They are the tallest mountains in America. The mountain range starts in southern Canada, and runs south through other American states, but the tallest and most popular mountains are in Colorado. During the winter, it is very easy to drive to mountain ski resorts and ski or snowboard. Many rivers flow from the tops of the Rocky Mountains and into Fort Collins. The Cache la Poudre River is the most famous. "Cache la poudre" means "hide the powder" in French. The river is called this because in the 1820s, there was a bad blizzard and nearby French fur trappers buried their gunpowder along the river bank so they could come back after the storm and find it. Many farms surround Fort Collins, growing mostly corn and sugar beets. There are also many ranches around Fort Collins, so it is very common to see horses, cattle, and other farm animals. In fact, just outside my elementary school there was a small farm with two horses! Overall, Fort Collins is a very nice town to live in. There is always something to do in town, the people are very friendly and lively, and the surrounding countryside is beautiful.



## Okinawa Impression

I like Okinawa. It is very lush, and there is a lot to see and do. I'm amazed at how old many of the famous places are. I like history, so this is very exciting for me. The people are friendly and not as formal as I thought they would be, which makes me feel more comfortable.

Everyone asks about the heat, and if it's hotter here than in Colorado. Colorado is only a little bit cooler than Okinawa, but it isn't humid at all, so the heat isn't too bad. Okinawa is very humid, so the heat tires everyone out quickly, and feels extra hot. I don't mind the weather too much. It is hot here but if I drink water and wear sunscreen I'm ok.

Overall, I feel fairly relaxed in Okinawa. Life has a slower pace here, and everyone one is friendly.

# Food

I like the food here. It's different from American food. It's less sweet and ingredients from the sea are commonly used. Even though the food isn't as sweet as American food, it still tastes good. My favorite Japanese food is noodles. Udon, ramen, soumen, I like anything with noodles. I also like tempura. Okinawan tempura is different from the tempura I've eaten before, but I like the flavor a lot. The only foods I've had trouble with so far are sashimi and goya. I rarely eat seafood in Colorado, so I'm still getting used to it. I like cooked fish, but sashimi is still a bit difficult. Goya is really bitter. Other than these two, I've eaten everything so far and it's all been delicious!

## School in Japan and America: Similarities and Differences

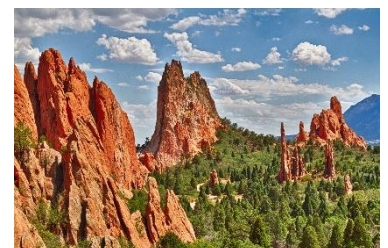
School in America is very different from Japanese school. American high school is four years long, 9<sup>th</sup> grade in America is the third year of middle school in Japan. During the school day, each class held in a different classroom. The teachers always stay in the same classroom, and the students move around. Few schools in America use uniforms. At my school there is no uniform, instead there are rules about what students can wear. However, at least at my school, there are very few rules. Students can wear any type of piercing, have colored hair, or even wear pajamas to school. Short pants, low-cut shirts and tank tops are also allowed. Finally, the way classes are taught is different. In America, participation is very important. Most teachers want the class to talk and ask questions, and assignments given to a group of three or four students to complete are common. American classes rooms are very lively. However, in Japan, the teacher talks and the class is almost always completely silent. Japanese students are very diligent, and most study even during self-study periods when there is no teacher. I'm really impressed by how hard working the students are here.



In America, schools don't have festivals. Instead, there are dances and "spirit days". Dances are themed, and each school holds the same three or four dances every year. Common dances held are Homecoming and Prom. Homecoming is held at the beginning of the year, and is held to celebrate the first football game of the year. All students can attend, and the dress code is more casual. Prom (pictured above) is held toward the end of the school year, and only 11<sup>th</sup> grade (second year) and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (third year) students can attend. Prom is very formal, and everyone wears long dresses or tuxedos. Usually, boys ask girls they like to go attend these dances with them. Spirit days happen in the days leading up to a dance, or around holidays like Halloween. Each spirit day has a theme, and students dress to that theme (pictured above; two teachers dress for pajama day).. These days are meant to increase school spirit and get people excited for the upcoming event.

## What to see and do in America

Big cities in America, such as San Francisco and New York city, are unique because of how diverse they are. There are many different cultures mixed together, which is fun to experience. Natural phenomena found only in America is located primarily in the central and southwestern states. These states have many mountains, deserts, and dramatic landscapes. There are many national parks worth visiting in these areas. I



I live near these areas, but every time I see them I'm still amazed. The photo on the right shows one of these parks. It is located in Colorado, and is called the Garden of the Gods. The park has many rock formations unique to this area of America. If you have the chance, I suggest visiting a park such as this and hiking around or taking a guided tour. These locations are truly breathtaking!