



Keokuk - Kai-shi Exchange

Interested in Traveling to Japan?



- Visit Kai, Yamanashi, Japan, Keokuk's sister city since 2008. (And former sister city Ryuo since 1998).
- Represent the City of Keokuk.
- Learn how Japanese live day to day.
- Enjoy Japanese cuisine.
- Encourage broader understanding of the world beyond our borders. Ambassadors develop an appreciation of cultural differences.
- Travel with a group of students and chaperones from Keokuk. Stay for 10+ days with a host family in Japan.
- Host a Japanese guest in your home for 10 days.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AMBASSADOR EXCHANGE

Serving as a Middle School Ambassador to Kai is an exciting opportunity available to any student in the Keokuk area. The exchange program includes a 10+ day travel experience to Japan.

Keokuk's delegation consists of area middle school students and chaperones. Every effort is made to send students representing the public and private school districts in our area; however, the strength of the individual student is the most important factor in selecting an ambassador. Family commitment and ability to be involved in hosting experiences are also important.

Students and families interested in participating are encouraged to contact us for more information.

About the KSCA

The student ambassador exchange program is a volunteer exchange sponsored and organized by the Keokuk Sister Cities Association, Inc..

Keokuk Sister Cities Association connects the people of Keokuk to the people of the world to foster learning experiences and continuing relationships as friends.



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DECIDING TO APPLY

When does the exchange take place and how long does it last?

The exact dates vary each year, but typically includes the last week of July and the first week of August. Keokuk and Kai-shi alternate years hosting (odd years Keokuk hosts, even years Kai-shi hosts). Do consider that the exchange week often conflicts with band camp and sports camps so be sure to confirm your availability before applying.

How much does it cost to travel to Kai-shi?

It varies, but a general estimate would be \$2,000. This estimate includes required contributions towards airfare and the balance for other expenses described below. The KSCA covers the cost of the airfare with donations and fundraising activities, and required contributions from the ambassador's parents.

Other expenses to expect include a passport application fee, luggage or travel gear, pocket money for souvenirs and the two travel days, inexpensive gifts for the host family, as well as optional activity expenses in Japan. Individuals have control over many of these expenses. Kai-shi arranges for transportation to and from Narita airport (Tokyo) and various sightseeing trips.

How much does it cost to host?

Students stay with a host family and there are no lodging or food expenses in Japan; in return, families host a student and cover food expenses and basic expenses for their guest. The KSCA works hard to keep the program affordable.

Other expenses to expect include inexpensive gifts for the ambassador's family, as well as optional activity expenses.

Are there other, non-financial obligations?

Prior to leaving, students must attend orientation sessions that will prepare them to be good guests in a Japanese home and to represent our community in the best manner. While in Japan, students must participate in all exchange activities.

Families must participate in host activities when the delegation returns. KSCA volunteers create a hosting schedule.

As part of the preparation, the delegation works together to design a performance, usually a song or dance, that will be performed in Japan. The performance should represent our culture and be understood by non-English speaking audience.

Participation in KSCA fundraisers is required. Participation in fundraising efforts can result in substantial cost reductions.

Will my Japanese family speak English?

English may be spoken by some professionals, but, typically it is students in the home who are the translators for our students who are visiting. Kai-shi families decide whether they want to host a Keokuk ambassador with the knowledge that their guest will not speak Japanese. This means the student that will host you has some confidence in their language skills. Learning to communicate through barriers is part of the benefit of the program. Chaperones and

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students must be willing and able to handle this challenge in a flexible, gracious and pleasing manner. Most days, the delegation spends time together with representatives with Kai-shi. This includes Japanese staff fluent in English and native English speaker who speaks Japanese. Group activities always include an adult who speaks English fluently. A Keokuk chaperone is available to assist with communication needs, especially emergencies.

What will I eat in Japan?

The Japanese diet is very different from the American diet. Staying in a Japanese home will expose you to different foods and traditions. Miso soup, fish and seafood (cooked and raw) and rice are often daily staples. So are vegetables and fruits. Ambassadors often return home having tasted eel, octopus, and other seafood not common to Keokuk menus. Ambassadors are not expected to like everything, but must be open to new cuisine and able to accept and appreciate foods of another culture in a polite and gracious manner.

The visiting student is asked to prepare a meal for the host family.

What are the responsibilities of chaperones?

Chaperones have the responsibility for the group on travel days. Once in Kai-shi, the chaperone's primary responsibility is to assist Kai-shi staff with communication issues and emergencies. Chaperones are responsible for helping students with homesickness and problem solving. Chaperones are also responsible for addressing any behavioral issues that may occur. The KSCA carefully selects students. We seek students with a cooperative nature, who are recommended to be good travel companions. As with all children, the delegation may need occasional reminders about minding their manners. Chaperones are expected to set an example by keeping an appreciative mind and open heart while in a foreign situation.

What is the selection process?

1. Send a complete application along with three recommendations by the deadline.
2. Applications are reviewed. Selected students are invited to interview with KSCA volunteers.
3. Following interviews, a delegation is composed and students are notified.
4. Orientation meetings are schedule with families.

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JUST FOR PARENTS

Keokuk Sister Cities Association is extremely excited about our next exchange to our sister city of Kai-shi. Each year we meet many excited middle school students and their supportive, but sometimes bewildered, parents.

We hope we have answered some common questions in this application. The Keokuk – Kai-shi Ambassador Exchange Program requires family involvement and parental commitment.

After talking with parents from past delegations, here are a few things those parents want you to know:

__ Plan for an adult family member to take time off work during the hosting period. Hosting is fun and exciting. It is an obligation. It doesn't fit in after work or on the weekends. If you have to work a day or two, that may be okay. If your work requires more than that and there isn't another adult family member who can commit full-time to the hosting responsibility, reconsider applying.

__ Plan to spend time at the orientation sessions. You'll be expected to attend a few planning meetings and to learn about Japanese culture and prepare you for your guest. We try to keep these fun and convenient.

__ Plan to coordinate activities with the other host families. Other adults can help car pool, host barbecues, and give you a break. We'll work with you as a group to customize the hosting plans. You'll be busiest the days just before your child leaves for Japan and again during the hosting period.

__ Hosting and gift costs should be budgeted. We work hard to keep expenses discretionary and low. However time and again we heard parents say they wanted to do more with their guests than they planned. Sorry we can't tell you how much you'll spend, but if you are concerned about your ability to cover costs, talk to us early and often, and we can help you plan.

__ Don't plan vacation or send your child to camp immediately before or after the exchange. The exchange is constant activity for about two weeks and can be demanding physically and emotionally. Plan time for your student and family to rest.

__ Plan to see your child grow and mature. Parents often remark at how much maturity and confidence they see in their child after participating in the Keokuk – Kai-shi Ambassador Exchange Program. They may also talk about wanting to go again to Japan or other parts of the world. This is natural. There are many programs in high school and college that allow for study or travel abroad experiences.

You don't have to decide now, but if you have questions or concerns about your family's ability to participate, ask us lots of questions early on in the process.

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STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

Any middle school student who lives in or has at least one parent working in Keokuk may apply. Students entering the ninth grade in the fall are also encouraged to apply.

Name: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

On a separate piece of paper, briefly answer the following questions:

1. Write a description of yourself including such information as talents, interests, work experience, general health, and any previous travel experience.
2. Please list all of your extracurricular activities.
3. What sparked your interest to apply for this exchange?
4. What would you like to learn from your homestay in Kai, Japan?
5. Describe a situation in which you were frustrated by a friend, teammate, or classmate who you could not avoid spending time with and how you handled yourself.
6. If your parents are separated or divorced, please include the names and phone numbers of ALL adults who will be actively involved in hosting.
7. Describe briefly the members of your immediate family, such as their occupations, interests, etc.

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Mother's Name: _____ Father's Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Mobile Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Email: _____ Email: _____

Three personal recommendations are required from adults who know you. At least **two** recommendations must be from a current teacher, guidance counselor, or school administrator. None may be from a relative. These recommendations should be sealed in a separate envelope and returned along with your application.

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Are you under a doctor's care? _____ If yes, explain: _____

Are you taking any medication? _____ If yes, do you require an adult's assistance? _____

Are you a U.S. Citizen? _____ If No, Alien Registration Number _____

If not a U.S. Citizen, country of citizenship? _____

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED

COSTS

1. Applications must be accompanied with \$30 payment for two year KSCA family membership. More than one family member may apply under the family membership.
2. Applications must be accompanied with a payment of **\$40/person**. The deposit is non-refundable and used for administrative costs.
3. The estimated cost of the trip to Japan will be \$2,000 per person. Your cost will also depend on the success of KSCA fundraisers and donations received. Deadlines for the payments will be established in conjunction with travel agency policies.

CERTIFICATION

Successful applicants and their parents must comply with obligations as follows:

- Join the Keokuk Sister City Association
- Commit to a minimum 2-year period
- Participate in KSCA fundraising activities
- Attend orientation meetings and other planning meetings in preparation for the exchanges
- Host a sister city student in your home
- Promote the sister city program
- Obtain and submit a passport and 2 copies by the deadline date established by KSCA
- Submit all funds required for airline ticket purchase by the required deadlines

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By signing this application:

I/we certify that the information provided is complete and accurate to the best of our knowledge. We also understand the obligations outlined in this application above and will comply with the best of our ability.

I give permission for my child listed above to participate in the Keokuk – Kai-shi Ambassador Exchange Program. I understand my child will travel from Keokuk, Iowa to Kai-shi, Japan.

I agree to release the Keokuk Sister Cities Association, Kai-shi International Friendship Association, and the associations' volunteers from any liability, responsibility, damages, expenses, lawsuits or injuries which may occur or be given rise to during his/her participation in the youth exchange.

I/We hereby release the Keokuk Sister Cities Association from any responsibility for the actions of my son/daughter during youth exchange both in the U.S. and overseas. I further understand that KSCA will not be held responsible for the student's negligence, including, but not limited to, horseplay, gross misconduct, and rule noncompliance.

I/We have adequate medical, accident, dismemberment, and repatriation insurance coverage for our son/daughter. We have verified this coverage with our agent and it is valid overseas. I am able to provide documentation if requested.

I/We understand that the Keokuk Sister Cities Association provide no medical, accident, dismemberment or repatriation insurance.

Print name – student applicant

Signature – student applicant

Date

Print name – applicant parent

Signature of parent

Date

IN THE EVENT OF INJURY OR ILLNESS TO OUR DAUGHTER/SON/WARD:

By signing this application, I hereby authorize the representative abroad of KSCA and KIFA Keokuk – Kai-shi Ambassador Exchange Program for two years from date below, their officers and/or agents, to transport to medical facility, secure medical treatment and care deemed necessary, including the administration of an anesthetic and surgery.

Print name – applicant parent

Signature of parent

Date

Insurance Company: _____

Policy Number: _____

Phone: _____

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DELEGATION PROFILE

This information will be used to match you with your host family. This form will then be given to your host family.

Name: _____ Gender: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Address: _____ Age: _____ DOB: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Pets? _____

Family Members (Name, Age, Shirt Size):

_____	_____
_____	_____

Hobbies: _____

Interests: _____

Likes: _____

Dislikes: _____

Extracurricular Activities: _____

Allergies: _____

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RECOMMENDATION FORM

To whom it may concern: This evaluation form for _____, who is applying for the Keokuk – Kai-shi Ambassador Exchange Program sponsored by the Keokuk Sister Cities Association, Inc. The exchange involves a 10+ day homestay in Japan followed by the next year by a 10 day hosting of a Japanese student. When completing this form, please remember the young person you are evaluating is asking to represent our city in Japan. The ability to be a good representative often relies on a student’s ability to compromise, to accept the decisions of a group, and to be respectful in situations that contradict American culture. Please keep in mind that the committee is interested in more than whether the student demonstrates leadership or assertiveness. We also ask you to speak to the student’s ability to be part of a team and accept group decisions or adult authority, even if they disagree. It would also be helpful to know how the student responds to stress and how accepting they are of other young people who may have different likes and dislikes.

The selection committee is very dependent of your willingness to be straightforward with your opinions. The strength of the student’s application and interview will also be important. Thank you for your time.

Name: _____ Relationship to student: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please circle the work that best represents your opinion.

The student is flexible and tries to adjust his/her expectations and behavior as the situation warrants.

Never Sometimes Often Almost Always Always Not Sure

The student is considerate of others, is respectful of adults and peers, and displays general good manners.

Never Sometimes Often Almost Always Always Not Sure

The student seems to have intellectual curiosity, exhibiting an eagerness to learn about new people and places.

Never Sometimes Often Almost Always Always Not Sure

The student is concerned about others and sensitive to different communication styles.

Never Sometimes Often Almost Always Always Not Sure

The student is able to reach out to peers who may have different interests, likes or dislikes.

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Describe the student's personality and character as they appear to you.

Would you consider taking this student with you on a family vacation? Why or why not?

Why do you feel this student would be a good ambassador? What, if any, are your reservations?

Please add any further information about this student that you think will be helpful to the committee.

Signature

Date

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