Chinese Language and Culture Camp: July 12-16
Japanese Language and Culture Camp: July 19-23

Comments from the campers:
“I have always wanted to learn Calligraphy and am glad that I learned it at the camp.”
“I loved the Bonsai presentation!”
“I enjoyed learning the culture and history of Japan and China!”
“I loved how the lessons are presented to us and have learned a lot!”
“I would recommend the camp to my friends.”
“I liked everything about the camp!”
“Please also consider offering camps for kids ages 13 and above!”

UTSA’s East Asia Institute hosted its inaugural summer camp for kids ages nine to twelve in July, 2010. Eleven campers enrolled in the Chinese Language and Culture Camp, which was held from July 12th-16th, while the Japanese Language and Culture Camp, held from July 19th-23rd, was attended by thirteen campers.

Chinese Language and Culture Camp

In addition to learning to speak Chinese through various interactive language activities and games, China campers also learned to recognize and write Chinese characters. There were several presentations on Chinese culture, holidays, history and geography as well. The campers enjoyed a wide selection of hands-on art projects, such as making paper lanterns, panda masks, and Pandas

- A wild panda’s diet is almost exclusively (99%) bamboo.
- A zoo panda can live for as long as thirty-five years.
“Chinese is spoken by one-fifth of the total world population, and therefore, it is all the more important for American youth to learn about the Chinese language and culture in order to compete with their Chinese counterparts on the global stage.”

– Mimi Yu, Associate Director of the East Asia Institute

Chinese origami. China campers partook in calligraphy and Chinese ink-wash painting sessions. “It’s hard to write with a brush pen because I can’t control the pen as well as I can a ballpoint pen or a pencil,” said one of the campers regarding these activities.

Aside from structured language and culture lessons, China campers also enjoyed daily sacked lunches together while watching China-themed movies, which were followed by discussions about Chinese culture, religion and society.

Additionally, physical activities were offered every day to keep the campers entertained, including jump rope, Chinese rubber-band jumping, balloon games and chopsticks competitions.

On the last day of camp, a party was held. The campers all learned to make dumplings (jiao zi) and enjoyed fried rice, Chinese green onion pancakes, egg rolls and assorted Chinese desserts prepared by the East Asia Institute faculty and staff.

“I would recommend this camp to anyone that is interested in learning Chinese language and culture,” said another camper. “All in all, it has been a very enjoyable experience this summer!”
Several students that participated in the Chinese Language and Culture Camp also attended the Japanese Language and Culture Camp.

The class typically started with a greeting song in Japanese that helped the campers learn basic Japanese greetings, from Ohayoo (Good morning!) to Mata ashita (See you tomorrow!).

As in the China camp, the Japan camp also offered language instruction. Japan campers learned about the three different writing systems used in Japanese. They also learned how to decode and write simple Japanese words or phrases using the Japanese syllabaries (Hiragana and Katakana).

Upon successful completion of the camp, the Japan campers were able to make a short self-introduction using their name, nationality, likes/dislikes in food and drink, and a “Nice to meet you!” to top it off. They also learned how to ask some basic questions in Japanese.

In addition, the Japanese Language and Culture Camp offered great insight into the society and culture of Japan. The topics covered included Japanese geography, history, and Japan’s innovative ideas, such as the ski dome, ocean dome, capsule hotels, robotics and bullet trains – to name a few.

Japan Camp also touched on several important holidays in Japan and the Japanese educational system. In addition, calligraphy and ink-wash painting lessons were demonstrated along with an origami session and a bonsai presentation.

Some of the hands-on activities included making a Japanese calendar, Japanese fan (uchiwa) and playing with a kendama (a wooden Japanese toy) and atedama (Japanese hacky-sacks). Male campers learned how to make koinobori (flying carp streamers) and female campers learned how to make ningyou (Japanese dolls) for Boy’s Day and Girl’s Day celebrations respectively. Physical activities included a daily walk around campus and jump roping.

Japan campers enjoyed their daily sacked lunches with Japanese movies during lunch hour, followed by discussions about Japanese culture, society and traditions.

On the last day of camp the campers learned how to make Japanese sushi rolls (maki-zushi) and hand rolls (temaki). There was also a bento (lunchbox) decoration competition. Each Japanese camper was given a box with cooked white rice along with assorted veggie items to decorate their boxed lunch with. Each camper gave their bento a title/theme and entered it into a competition. The first three places won a prize.

Break-time means playing games while making new friends!
Japan is not only the “Land of the Rising Sun” but also a land where many fresh, new ideas are born and where yin and yang coexist, as shown by how the Japanese have kept up with old traditions while simultaneously leading the world’s automobile and robotics industries. We can also see this paradox within the samurai, fierce Japanese warriors who also practiced zen meditation, formal tea ceremonies and ikebana (flower arrangement).

Summer is a great time for rejuvenation, but our China and Japan campers relaxed with a twist and submerged themselves in Asian societies, cultures and languages. These campers are ready to compete as global citizens! As an old Chinese saying goes, “If you know those that you are competing with well, you are sure to win every single time!” These campers are halfway there already!

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