

Winner of Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025: Chika Kajiyama



Our international student Chika Kajiyama has been selected as one of the winners of the Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025. She has won \$1,000 from the Dunedin City Council to be spent during her year here in Dunedin. We are so proud of Chika for receiving this special award! Here are some excerpts from her insightful application.

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Chika Kajiyama. I live in Fujikawaguchiko town in Japan which is very close to Mt. Fuji. This town has a lot of variation in temperature throughout the year. I think, in some ways, my town and Dunedin might be similar. In other ways, the animals and plants are very different, so I am looking forward to seeing these differences in person.

I joined the Japanese tea ceremony club at my high school and learned how to make Matcha, Japanese green tea. Matcha is a historical and cultural drink, and there are many rules to make it properly. I

would love to serve it to people in Dunedin.

My favourite subjects are English communication and PE. Also, I'm interested in art and design. I want to actively try subjects in Dunedin, and I want to try some others which might be different to Japan.

When I chose Dunedin, I was the most interested in the architecture of the city. For example, Dunedin railway station. I feel it looks like a palace. In Japan, I haven't seen a station shaped like this. One more is Otago Museum. I felt the colours and appearance blended in naturally. Also, I'm looking forward to learning there about Dunedin and New Zealand history, culture, and more.

When I studied the different regions of Japan in elementary school, my teacher told us to pay attention to the structure of the buildings in each area. Japan is as long as New Zealand from north to south, and because it is in a volcanic region, it has a lot of rugged terrain, and each region has a completely different climate. Areas with frequent typhoons have roofs that are resistant to rain and wind, while areas with heavy snowfall have the roofs that are built to withstand the weight of snow. One example, in Japan, Gassho-style Houses (steep thatched roof houses). This roof is used at in heavy snow areas. Also, this roof can catch snow and prevent collapse. The area near Mt. Fuji, where I live, is 1,000 meters above sea level, and winters are very cold. Old buildings are made of wood, but they are built to cope with the cold. In Kyoto, which is one of the most historical cities in Japan, the town was built in an orderly grid pattern more than 1,000 years ago. The Imperial Court was placed in the center of the grid, and people lived in townhouses built in the divided long, narrow spaces. What I have noticed in focusing on buildings and architecture is that climate and history determine buildings, townscapes, people's lives, and ways of thinking.

When I researched Dunedin, I was most interested in the architecture. For example, Dunedin railway station because the architecture was completely different from anything I had seen before. And I thought they were cool. Also, I'm interested in Winter Garden. The greenhouses are located in a more natural setting than in Japan, slightly separated by glass but integrated with nature, and the roofs look like umbrellas, which I thought were unique features not found in Japanese botanical gardens. The fact that there are buildings that I have never seen before means that Dunedin has a different culture, history, and way of thinking from



Japan. I would like to see the buildings and streets of Dunedin in person, live there for a year, have conversations with the people of Dunedin who live there, and gain new ideas and perspectives.

Ever since elementary school, I have wanted to realise a world where everyone lives with a smile. However, I have not yet determined what I should do to achieve this. I believe that Dunedin has a culture and history that I have never experienced before. By getting to know this town and conversing with its people, I would like to gain new values and perspectives to help me better decide what I should do in the future.

At the moment all of my understanding is based on Japanese culture alone and I would like to combine the best of Japanese culture with the best of New Zealand's culture so that I can make decisions which are informed by two very differing cultures instead of just the one I'm familiar with now.

Firstly, I want to learn and understand the history, culture and thinking by immersing myself in everyday life, the building and streets of Dunedin which are of course completely different to what I am familiar with in Japan. Secondly, I would like the people of Dunedin to experience aspects of Japanese culture through myself and observe their reactions to better understand my own culture from someone else's perspective and re-evaluate all of the things I am too familiar with or take for granted in Japan. For this purpose, I would like to perform the Japanese tea-ceremony and make Matcha (Japanese green tea) and make sweets which go well with it for local people and engage in conversation with them.

Now that I have discovered the Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025, I feel that this is a very attractive path to take in my personal development. Through experiencing first-hand New Zealand life and network expansions, this programme feels like a good fit for me. If I am lucky enough to be accepted, I intend to actively participate in the programme through cultural exchange with the intention of both cultures benefitting from this interaction and helping to spread knowledge and understanding of NZ culture in my own country.



International Maths Competition Success



Moana Li has been crowned an International Maths Challenge Champion! This incredible achievement places her among a select few from New Zealand who scored above the 95th percentile.

This has earned Moana the exciting opportunity to compete in the final round of the two-round Open Challenge. Well done Moana on her remarkable achievement!