

Messages from Senior Camp Counselors

Sophia

The SCOA camp experience presented me with the distinct opportunity to learn about Japanese culture while contributing my efforts into leaving a positive lasting impression on SCOA campers. What I did not expect from the camp, however, was how much I would learn about myself. From day one, SCOA camp allowed me to grow as an individual through new challenges, new surroundings, and new circumstances. Counselors and campers alike undoubtedly benefit from SCOA's unrivaled cross-cultural experience. The chance to work at such a rewarding, unique sports camp is a once in a lifetime experience, and I will forever appreciate the time I spent at SCOA as well as the lasting friendships I have made.

Connor

I had an amazing experience last summer as a counselor at Sports Camp of America. My favorite part of camp was getting to know all of the campers and learning so much about Japanese culture. I had a wonderful time playing with the kids and enjoying various sports and activities. The camaraderie my fellow counselors and I developed was very unique. I will treasure their friendships for years to come. I am grateful for having the opportunity to travel to Japan and being a part of the Sports Camp of America family.

Nicole

SCOA was an amazing experience. If you love kids and you're a hard worker, you will enjoy working for this camp. If you just want to travel, find another way. Though the three days in Tokyo are incredible, the majority of your trip is spent working long hours with the kids. I had a great time at camp. I taught cheer dance. I was worried that it would be difficult to teach them because I couldn't speak their language, however communication was much easier than expected and turned out to be kind of fun. The people are so nice and the kids are so talented and quite amazing. Even though their culture and customs are very different the kids are no different than American kids, kids will be kids. One of my favorite parts was reading bedtime stories to the little ones. I don't know if they had any idea what I was saying or what the story was about but they listened with intensity and stars in their eyes. So go to have an experience with kids in a new culture, and be prepared for hot, humid weather, very different food (not my favorite part, I'm not huge on fast food, but I was super happy to see McDonald's while I was there!), and long, hard hours and you will have a once in a lifetime experience.

Natalie

The trip to Japan was difficult at times but also very rewarding. The children really do not know western culture and it is an indescribable feeling when they tell you they want to go to America or they want to learn English because of the experience they had at the camp with you. The hours are really long and the vacation time is short but if you are looking for something different and to be submersed in another culture then definitely work at this camp for the summer. The other counselors were great and you really bond during the camp. Saying goodbye to the kids is the hardest part. One last thing, bring snacks if you like to eat, because you will be eating Japanese proportions.

Alejandro

First off, as is true with every situation, there are pros and cons. To me, the pros outweighed the cons, even though the cons were considerable, at times. The cons were the long days; waking up at 7am everyday can get annoying, especially when you're up until about 11pm trying to reach back home. Also, the Internet situation isn't what it is in

America, you'll feel like you're sacrificing a lot sometimes. But after a while, we all worked out a way to make the Internet situation work. The biggest pet peeve of mine was when someone didn't like the food, openly. You will have fish for breakfast sometimes, rice is available 100% of the time – get used to it. Patience of people around will wear thin and it won't always be the best of times, but it's what you make it. Learn this now, the focus is not you, it's about the kids.

Honestly though, a trip to Japan to wake up every day and have very nice people cooking three meals a day for you just to hang out with some kids and interact with them all day is a very nice change to the rigors of living at home, working, paying bills, etc. As long as you understand that to you this is just temporary but for JR and Keiko this is their business and livelihood should put this in a better perspective. I don't want to give away all the dirt of SCOA because I wouldn't want to scare away or glamour up what is actually to come before you can experience it for yourself. It is a phenomenal experience and I would do it again if the opportunity came up if that helps in any which way. Cheers!

Eri

I was a bilingual junior counselor for SCOA's 2011 summer camp in Japan. It was truly an unforgettable experience. Although I had worked for SCOA's weekend day camps before, the summer camp was nothing like it. At first, I was a little nervous if I would get along with these kids that I'd be spending my next few nights with, but we all bonded instantly. Being a part of a child's life, knowing the impact I had on them, and bringing together the culture of Japan and America into their life was one of the most rewarding experiences as a bicultural counselor. By the end, it was hard to say our goodbyes to the kids and even the counselors. The counselors made my experience an even more fun and interesting one, and we were able to discover lifelong friendships. The weeks I spent with the kids and the American counselors were one of the most memorable and rewarding weeks of my life.

Makotz

Last summer, I was fortunate enough to be a junior camp counselor for the Sports Camp of America. It was a unique camp in terms of bringing in camp counselors from the United States, and without major support, shared a glimpse of the culture the Japanese kids. From a Japanese returnee's perspective, it was fascinating to see all the efforts the American counselors and the Japanese kids were putting in to communicate with each other. Through this camp, the American counselors are able to, unknowingly, influence the kids to think about the world outside of their country. I believe inspiring these kids to expand their horizon is a key in a child's stages of development. Also, the counselors were able to see traditional and downtown Japanese culture as well. As counselors last year, we became very good friends and we keep in touch and sometimes visit one another!

David

My time at SCOA was one of the best experiences that I have ever participated in. Being able to give your time to help impact and make a difference in the lives of children from another country is priceless. Not only did I have the opportunity to help teach Japanese children about Americans, but I also got to learn about the campers and their way of life. I also had the opportunity to create a number of friendships with other counselors and Japanese staff with whom I still keep in touch with today. Besides this, my experience at SCOA impressed many interviewers from medical school and ultimately had a significant impact on my acceptance. As much as I had the chance to impact the lives of the campers, my time at SCOA helped shape who I am today in more ways than I could have imagined.

Ali

SCOA in my opinion is a significant step into the wave of the future. It gives two completely different cultures the chance to interact, bond, and grow together in an unexplainable experience. It instills the knowledge that language is only one aspect of communicating and through athletics, much more can be shared. My SCOA experience involved singing at the top of lungs around a camp fire, playing endless games of sports, Frisbee throwing competitions, and putting on skits session after session. It was hard work, and I was exhausted after each day. But the rewards of the entire experience outweigh the tough times, and with the support of the other counselors the experience was extremely rewarding and fun. The children are amazing, they are eager to learn and socialize with the counselors, and for the

counselors, it gave us a chance to learn so much about ourselves and the Japanese culture. I would recommend this experience to anyone; it truly is one I will never forget.

Ashley

If you are interested in having one of the most *amazing* cultural experiences of your life you should strongly consider becoming a counselor at Sports Camp of America! Last summer I spent three weeks at camp in various areas of Japan working with some of the most incredible Japanese children, co-counselors, and staff. Teaching sports and games with a language barrier was one of the most challenging and rewarding endeavors I've ever experienced. Sports, games, outings, songs, campfires and s'mores in a beautiful and pristine country... what more could you ask for during your summer break??? Don't miss out on the opportunity of a lifetime - you won't regret it!

Eric

From the moment I stepped off the plane, I knew that this summer would be unlike any other. SCOA Camp had given me an opportunity to go to a country I'd always heard about and dreamed of visiting: Japan. Finally I was there and Japan did not disappoint. The crazy crush of people, the crazy mess of trains, the crazy neon orgy that is Japanese advertising--all gave evidence to the fact that Japan was vibrantly alive. The sensory overload would have been overwhelming if it wasn't all so magnificent. I knew little of what to expect from SCOA since this was my first time at a summer camp, in America or otherwise, but the first whirlwind moments of my trip did not belie the whirlwind that was to be camp.

As we stood in front of the Japanese campers for the first time--them gaping at us, us trying not to gape at them--we knew we weren't in the proverbial Kansas anymore. Immediately we were thrust into roles leading teams of energetic Japanese school children in games, sports, and--most of all--cheers. Remember, you need to have an awesome cheer. Every time. The campers were go-go-go all the time so we had to be as well. Even dinner was no respite. "Why do you hold your chopsticks like that?" Well, I never really learned-- "What's that on your arm?" There's something on my arm?! But the questions went both ways. English levels varied throughout camp so we engaged those kids who couldn't speak English very well through simple questions or even pantomime. Those kids must have thought I was slow because I asked them what the Japanese word for water was every time we had food. It's "mizu," by the way, but you'll want to forget that before your next meal. Food aside, my favorite part of SCOA Camp was the "Ask the Americans" time where the Japanese kids got to ask the counselors anything they wanted. Questions ranged from the innocuous like "do you have any hobbies" to something more racy like "which of your fellow counselors would you date?" Where's the safe way out of this one?! Answer: everyone is your favorite.

Camp shouldn't be the only draw for a would-be SCOAer because after camp ends counselors are given the opportunity to explore Japan. On my trip I went from Hiroshima to Tokyo, seeing everything from hundred year-old temples to state of the art electronics. In Kyoto I was even lucky enough to see one of the legendary Geishas on her way to work. Be warned, though, they're hard to spot as there are only about a thousand left in Japan. One thing that isn't a rarity in Japan is the country's natural beauty. On my last night in Japan I went on a night hike up the most famous of Japanese natural landmarks: Mt. Fuji, which the Japanese call Fuji-san or Mr. Fuji. The politeness that is a hallmark of Japanese culture was driven home most by this trek; only in Japan would people form a queue to climb a mountain at 1AM. Fortunately, the wait did not diminish the reward at the top of Mr. Fuji. When the clouds parted at sunrise to reveal all of Japan below, I felt like I was in a Renaissance painting. The stunning beauty of the strange and wondrous land below was a fitting end to my summer in the land Geisha and gadgets.

Even though the view from Mt. Fuji was ethereal and the temples were striking, these are not the things I remember most. As with any worthwhile experience, I most remember the people I encountered; my fellow American counselors and our Japanese campers. The stresses and frustrations of camp and traveling fade away and all I'm left with are the people I shared camp with. SCOA Camp brought us together as companions on this amazing journey and in sharing this experience we all grew, learned, and changed together. And that is what SCOA Camp is really all about.

Julian

SCOA was unlike anything I had experienced before. It appealed to me because I always had an interest in athletics, kids, and travel. I joined the staff knowing I would be teaching children about American sports and life, but had no idea I would learn so much about others and myself.

Over the years I had worked and participated in several sports camps in the US, but SCOA is very unique. All parts of the day are filled with something new. Everything from how you get ready for the day to how you go to bed are different for both the campers and staff. Throw in the fact that you speak different languages and it all becomes very interesting. You quickly learn to face any and all obstacles, developing tight knit relationships with your co-workers. By the end of camp you have learned so much and developed so many new skills that you know it was an invaluable experience.

Traveling throughout Japan after camp ended was an added bonus to the trip. I had met great people at camp and was lucky enough to experience a lot of what Japan has to offer. Everything from the environment, to the people, to the culture is unforgettable. I would highly recommend this camp to dedicated individuals that have an interest in sports, children, and a desire to learn and embrace new things.

Mimi

I was a senior counselor for the 2009 SCOA summer camps in Japan. I had an unforgettable time. The staff and I bonded instantly and it made the summer pass by faster than I would have liked. The kids in the program were great! As hard as things are teaching new things to children who cannot understand you I had to keep in mind kids are kids no matter where they are from. They came through for me just like any of the kids I work with in the states do... with love. They looked up to us counselors and just made camp so much fun. I really enjoyed the "ask the Americans" section of each camp. Watching Keiko translate was such a trip I wish I could do that. Being a counselor for SCOA is an amazing opportunity I will always treasure. It took a lot of work though keep in mind the hours JR gives you are for real!!! :) Sometimes it seems like it will be easy to get through no problem, but back to back sessions takes its toll and with new faces each camp you have to be on your game, so everyone has a great time each session!

Kaitlin

Sports Camp of America is a great internship opportunity for college athletes who are passionate about coaching and playing with young children. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a camp counselor for SCOA. I was able to form long lasting friendships with my fellow counselors and travel around a foreign country with a truly unique and wonderful culture. The kids were a joy to work with, and learning to overcome the obvious language barrier in order to connect with them proved to be one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. I would definitely recommend this camp!

Ryan

My time at SCOA camp was definitely a memorable one. I served as camp counselor and the head medical personnel during the camp. I can honestly say I learned so much from these kids and I hope they learned a lot from me. These kids definitely reach in and grab you by the heart and will make you fall in love with them. One of the most memorable times I had was teaching the kids about soccer. They were very quick learners and had a blast playing the sport. As for Japan, this has to be one of the most beautiful countries. The mountains were so green and the people all so nice. If I had the opportunity to return, I would not hesitate! This experience will forever change your life! I encourage you, take the plunge! You will not be disappointed!

Miranda

Having the opportunity to work as a camp counselor for Sports Camp of America was one of the most rewarding and unforgettable experiences anyone could ask for. Traveling to Japan to work with kids of another culture was fascinating and I learned a great amount about the Japanese culture and language. The campers were bundles of joy and always

eager to learn about the American culture and teach us about their culture. I can't express in words the difference you can make in a child's life while doing this experience. I know I made a difference in many campers' lives at SCOA and the smile you get in return is the most rewarding gift. I highly recommend anyone who is interested in other cultures and sharing our America culture with others through sports, games and activities should consider this position. Working as a camp counselor for SCOA will give you the opportunity to explore the Japanese culture while working with kids and the gift to make a difference in a life.

Lauren

Upon hearing about Sports Camp of America (SCOA), I knew instantly I was interested in the opportunity. Being able to combine both of my passions, dance and travel, appeared to me as an experience of a lifetime. Fortunately, being selected as a SCOA camp counselor lived up to all of my expectations and more. However, it was not the dance teaching nor the traveling I enjoyed most (though I did thoroughly enjoy those aspects), but the campers that made SCOA an amazing experience. Bonding with each and every camper through friendly competitions, creating team names, chants and banners, and reading bedtime stories to the younger campers became my favorite activities at SCOA.

I would recommend this opportunity to anyone genuinely interested. It is definitely a challenge that generates lasting memories and lifelong friendships. The cultural exchange between camp counselors and the campers through sports and simply spending time together exhibits an opportunity that develops moral character, international perspective, and sincere tolerance; traits that remain valuable and irreplaceable in one's lifetime.

Catie

Japan. I never thought that it would be my first trip overseas; however it proved to be more than I could have ever expected. Receiving an opportunity such as this is a once in a life time deal that I am ecstatic that I didn't pass up. For all the fun that was had, there was a large amount of hard work that went into making the camp experience all that it was.

The best part of camp for me was the relationships that were formed. The group of counselors that I worked with at SCOA were more than qualified, as well as fantastic people that definitely made my experience at camp outstanding. The experience of working with the children at the camp was also extremely rewarding; some with fluent English and others who spoke nothing other than "Hello" allowed the counselors to see sports in a completely new perspective.

Other than building friendships, my highlight of my trip is having the opportunity to travel all across Japan and spending three days in Tokyo with the other counselors. Being able to see so many things such as the many neighborhoods throughout Tokyo, to the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, to the ancient temples in Kyoto, to my night hike up Mt Fuji to watch the sunrise at the summit, were all unique experiences that made my trip to Japan amazing.

Stephen

Last summer, I was once again granted the opportunity to be a SCOA senior camp counselor. While a sometimes tough, sometimes grueling task, being a SCOA counselor is ultimately one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences someone could ever have. As a SCOA camp counselor, you can expect to be working with children who speak little to no English but are filled with unbridled enthusiasm for whatever task you are to do with them. The other staff members, both English-speaking and otherwise, are just as awesome.

The camp schedule can seem at times to be hectic and at times, you may find yourself wondering what you've gotten yourself into. You'll only have three days (or sometimes two) to meet and bond with the campers but you'll find that the experience with the children can be quite endearing and unforgettable. If you come into camp with an open mind

and cheerful disposition, I guarantee you'll have the time of your life. I know I did.

Laura

My summer in Japan was life changing. SCOA Camp introduced me to an entirely new and beautiful culture. I am truly blessed to have been given the opportunity to travel to another country and learn firsthand through children what the other side of the world is truly like. After my month working with the children in Japan, I find myself missing each and every one of them today. If there is one thing about SCOA Camp and my summer in Japan it is that the joy the American counselors gave to the campers was incredible. My experience as a camp counselor in Japan this past summer was unforgettable and if I had the chance to repeat every day I was there, I would.

Japan, the children, and my fellow counselors have all taken a small piece of me. The excitement and joy I feel for the people I made lifelong friendships with will never go away. My advice to anyone who has such a wonderful opportunity to work around the world and step into a country with arms wide open...is do it and don't look back. I will cherish the summer I spent in Japan forever and the friends I made out of it.

SCOA Camp led me into a new country and left me with a new perspective on life. The children I had the pleasure to work with will always be on my mind. My fellow counselors and I have an entire month in Japan to one-day look back on. The nights around the bonfire, holding a child's hand that doesn't speak any English and embracing a brand new way of life was worth every minute of it.

Madison

Teaching the children was one of the most challenging yet, enlightening and unforgettable experiences I have ever encountered. I was challenged to try new things and learned things I will cherish for the rest of my life. I gained understanding on the Japanese culture while the kids gained understanding on our American culture. It was so unbelievably rewarding to see the kids on the last day of camp using their newly learned skills and to have them thank us for it. The other counselors were also amazing. Going into a foreign country with 11 strangers is scary, but being thrown into this situation made us all that much closer. I will forever cherish memories I shared with them and I plan on keeping in touch with them for many years. The children are incredibly lucky to have such a strong, sincere, enthusiastic and talented group of athletes in one place. The people I met and the places I traveled have changed my life.