

THE CALIFORNIAN

Japanese students bid farewell

■ Pupils from Murrieta, Nagasaki traded visits

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MURRIETA — For 16-year-old Yuri Hisamatsu, the most shocking thing on her first trip to the United States was the size.

"Everything was big," Hisamatsu said Thursday through a translator. "The houses were big and had many bathrooms."

Even going out for American food was cause for astonishment.

"We ordered a small size drink, but it was like that," she said, stretching her arms out.

Hisamatsu was one of 42 students from Japan who spent more than a week touring Southern California and attending classes at

Vista Murrieta High School.

On Thursday, their last day at the school, the students bid farewell to their U.S. counterparts with a talent show at the school.

The show featured traditional demonstrations, such as *kendo*, a Japanese martial art similar to fencing, and not-so-traditional talents, such as playing air guitar.

The trip was part of a sister cities program in which students from Murrieta traded visits with the students from Sasebo Minami High School in Nagasaki.

Last month, five Vista Murrieta students spent their first week of spring break in Japan, touring local attractions, living with Japanese families and visiting Sasebo Minami.

The Japanese students arrived last week and spent their time visiting Hollywood, demonstrating origami and calligraphy for local elementary and middle school students, and walking the halls of Vista Murrieta.

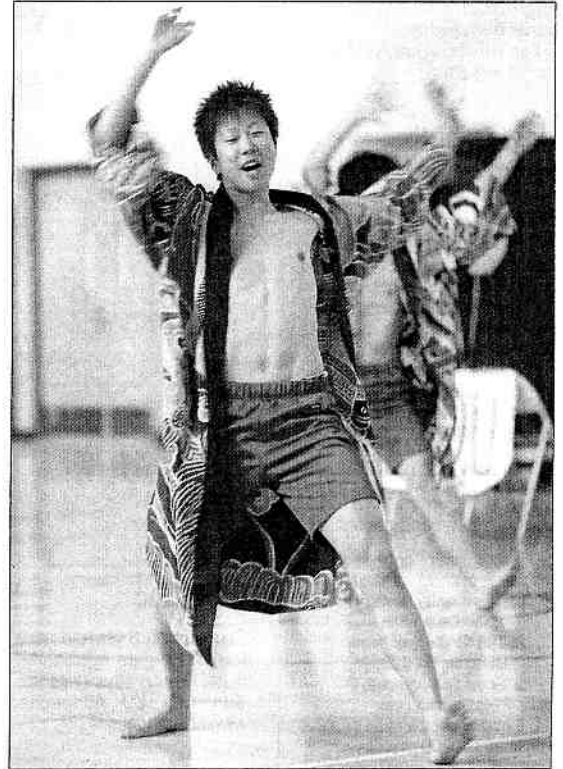
Attending class at a U.S. high school provided a startling contrast for the Sasebo students, who said they were surprised that American students can eat, stand and leave for the restroom during classes.

The Murrieta students who visited Japan were themselves shocked that the Japanese teenagers with whom they stayed spent 12-hour days in school and still had hours of homework.

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Japanese students visiting Vista Murrieta High School dance during a talent show Thursday at the school. This week, 42 students visited the Murrieta campus as part of a sister cities program.

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Visiting Japanese students photograph part of a talent show that they and their American counterparts put on Thursday at Vista Murrieta High School.

► JAPANESE

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"My guy stayed up studying till 3 a.m.," said senior Aaron Sabio. "That was just ridiculous."

While abroad, Sabio, 17, vowed to eat everything his host family served. His commitment was tested at least once.

"My host family wouldn't tell me what it was until I ate

it," Sabio said of a meal that tasted like a cross between beef and chicken. "It turned out to be raw horse."

Murrieta students said they were impressed by the lack of materialism and the social order they saw in Japan.

"We noticed as a group there was no trash on the ground," said junior Lauren Tackett, 16. "But when you want to throw something away, it's absolutely impossible to find a trash can."

Staying in Nagasaki, the students also were able to meet survivors of the atomic bomb blast that ended World War II.

Tackett said that put a face on a topic she had only read about in history class.

"It hits you more individually and makes you feel how terrible the event was," she said.

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