



MUROTO EXCHANGE

INFORMATION SHEET

The PORT LINCOLN MUROTO FRIENDSHIP GROUP Inc.

All interested students and their families and all interested adults are required to read this important document before applying for the Muroto Exchange; please bring your copy (along with any notes and/or questions) to the upcoming Information Night; details of the Information Night will be emailed to all potential delegates and will also be available on our website. Website: www.portlincolnmuroto.org.au // Email: portlincolnmuroto@gmail.com

EXCHANGE PARTNERS

- The Port Lincoln Muroto Friendship Group Incorporated (*the Friendship Group*) is run by community volunteers
- The Friendship Group conducts the bi-annual exchange program in the spirit of the original Friendship Agreement that our Council signed with the City of Muroto in March, 1991
- The Friendship Group is a legacy of the original City of Port Lincoln Muroto Friendship Committee; the City of Port Lincoln provides a budget for incoming delegations, and allows the use of Council areas for meetings and events
- Japanese Language Teachers volunteer from the three local secondary schools, but do not represent the schools

MUROTO / JAPAN

- Muroto is a regional city with a similar population to Port Lincoln, with fishing as one of its main industries
- It also sits at the southern end of a triangular peninsula, but is set in a much more mountainous landscape
- Whilst in Muroto, delegates will “homestay” with Japanese families
- The homes (including bathrooms/toilets), food, language and traditions are all new experiences for delegates to encounter
- Shoes off inside all homes, schools and some public buildings is one example of a cultural difference that the delegates will encounter
- Japan is a very safe country, with a very respectful community; delegates will quickly notice both of these aspects
- Delegates will visit numerous Muroto schools; “lessons” may include Japanese cooking, flower arranging, large brush calligraphy and sports
- Other likely activities include excursions to various local industries, assisting with rice planting (at a field designated for the Port Lincoln crop each year), dressing in kimonos and attending a traditional tea ceremony – participation in these last two items is a real privilege and very ceremonial
- Muroto City’s Exchange Committee works hard to prepare the April schedule, selecting the host families and arranging welcome/farewell functions

RISK AWARENESS

- The Friendship Group has a duty of care to inform potential delegates and their families that all travel comes with some risks; this risk awareness section may influence your decision to proceed any further
- Risks may include (but not be limited to) earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, typhoons, fires, health epidemics, war, travel accidents etc.; personal risks also exist, including illness, injury, being lost or losing personal items or documents
- Should an incident occur, ALL recovery/medical costs will be borne by the delegate or their family; insurance policies do not cover all risks – we encourage all delegates and families to read their policies with care, and seriously consider purchasing increased insurance options
- Since the Fukushima earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Japan has significantly increased its preparedness for future natural disaster events; an event will occur in Muroto – possibly tomorrow, possibly fifty years from now
- We have added a “*Disaster Awareness*” presentation to our preparation schedule (focussing on earthquakes and tsunamis), and ask that all parents attend this session; we also complete a thorough “*Risk Management Plan*” prior to departure each year and ask our Muroto City counterparts to assist us by suitably preparing their citizens for our annual delegation
- Recent events such as Fukushima, White Island’s volcanic eruption (NZ) and Australia’s bushfires have further highlighted the devastating power, ruthlessness and unpredictability of natural disasters; the 2019 coronavirus outbreak reminds us that medical epidemics are also possible
- YOU need to give due consideration to these risks before spending any money on this trip; once you have signed our “*Commitment to Travel*” document, we cannot offer any refund guarantee

INSURANCES

- The Friendship Group will facilitate the booking of flights and accommodation through one of our local travel agents; travel insurance is also provided via this agent and is generally a very standard policy at a budget cost (sometimes a group policy, sometimes in individual names); sometimes, individual policies are extended by travellers to cover personal extras (as required); policies do not always cover every situation that our travellers may experience, and most policies have exclusions where events are simply not covered at all
- In terms of the level of cover, some (and certainly not all) situations that you need to be comfortable with include cancellation (and the terms of cancellation), illness (and that the illness is not pre-existing) and other reasons for coming home early or needing to stay longer (war, pandemics, natural disasters etc.)
- The Friendship Group insist that you, the traveller (or the family of the traveller) are ultimately responsible for the level of insurance you are covered by; if you do not contact the insurance company for extra cover, it is assumed that you are happy with the cover provided in the standard policy offered by the travel agent
- Should you elect to divert from the offered travel insurance policy, please inform both the Friendship Group (committee) and the travel agent
- All travel insurance MUST be in place when the first deposit is paid for the trip
- Final note: the cost of travel insurance is non-refundable upon cancellation of the trip

SUPERVISION / CHAPERONING

- Students are normally accompanied by at least three adults (*adult chaperones*)
- Ideally, these may include a Friendship Group member and a teacher (but not always), plus others (e.g. parents, interested community members)
- Parents of the selected students must be comfortable with the composition of the adult chaperones
- Chaperoning includes long plane flights and travel within a foreign country
- Adult chaperones are volunteers who are also there for the cultural experience; please do not rely on them for close supervision and discipline of your child

TRAVEL PLANS

- The Muroto Exchange from Port Lincoln to Japan is planned for the April school holidays each year; exact dates will be advised, but an indication can be found on the following website: <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/teaching/south-australian-state-schools-term-dates>
- Direct flights to/from Japan are normally the most convenient option; however, many trips have successfully included a stopover in Asia; flights or rail trips to/from Muroto are then arranged to suit the itinerary
- Previous trips to Muroto have included 3-4 days of extended touring in Japan, featuring visits to places such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, Hiroshima and Himeji; this is an amazing and relatively cost-effective experience; any extended tour details will develop soon after the delegates are selected
- Extended touring can only be arranged if families are willing to pay for the services of Japanese tour guides, extra travel fees and extra accommodation
- Once the adult chaperones have been chosen, travel arrangements can be discussed and finalised
- We may plan to arrive/depart Japan via a choice of cities, and we may decide not to visit some regions or cities; serious consideration is given to risks and safety (e.g. government advice is checked regarding the safety of Tokyo since the Fukushima disaster)
- These independent travel components offer an incredible opportunity for the delegation to experience a variety of other aspects of the amazing nation of Japan; all adults, students and parents involved however, must acknowledge and accept the added responsibility of such a venture

OUTGOING DELEGATION

- Student numbers need to be capped at a maximum figure of ten (due to homestays, logistics etc.); adult numbers will be capped at five (note: these are maximum figures, not targets)
- Due to the limited number of delegation positions available, our selection process will be rigorous
- It would be ideal to send all students with a genuine desire to be part of the Muroto Cultural Exchange; however, due to the high level of interest, unfortunately, this is not possible
- The Friendship Group goes to a great deal of effort (and heartache) to ensure that the right students are given the opportunity to go
- Sometimes, students miss out through no real fault of their own; sorry!

EXPECTATIONS

- It is vital to understand that this is not a holiday, nor is it a school excursion
- Students must take responsibility for themselves (from this moment onwards)
- Some of the characteristics that the Friendship Group are looking for in potential delegates include a commitment to:
 - embrace the Japanese culture in every way
 - contribute to a group/team environment
 - represent themselves, their school and their city in a culturally sensitive manner
- Delegates are also expected to:
 - display utmost respect towards the Japanese and their customs at all times
 - attend all preparation sessions which include: traditional Japanese customs & cultural differences, language skills, food/cooking, earthquake/tsunami awareness, international plane travel & border security, packing/luggage, gifts, phones/devices, currency/money, travel itineraries (including any extended travel)
 - arrange and participate in 3-4 of their own team-bonding/preparation activities (e.g. barbecue, movie night, hike, Tunarama, grape-picking etc.)
 - introduce themselves (in Japanese) and perform a musical item at selected events in Muroto
 - look forward to enjoying a traditional Japanese diet for every meal
 - manage their own behaviour, language, money, safety, belongings etc.
 - follow the directions of the adult chaperones
 - not engage in any sexual activity, public displays of affection, consumption of alcohol or drugs (including smoking) or driving
- Once selected, delegates are still assessed on their eagerness to learn, their ability to interact, communicate and follow instructions, and their willingness to be a thoroughly suitable ambassador for the City of Port Lincoln
- As stated in the "Applicant Contract" (part of the Application Pack):
"I understand that if I do not comply with these conditions, I will be unable to travel as part of the exchange and may forfeit any financial deposit that has been made on my behalf."
- Media: in order to celebrate and promote each exchange, all delegates are required to participate in various forms of media coverage, both in Australia and Japan; the resulting content becomes free for distribution in both countries as described in the Applicant Contract
- Parents of the student delegates are expected to:
 - be fully engaged with their student throughout this entire process
 - attend (approximately) three important preparation meetings
 - attend, if possible, the last fifteen minutes of the two-hour preparation meetings; there are approximately eight in total
 - if you haven't already spoken to any parents of past student delegates, please do so before the Information Night; the names of all past delegates are listed on our website (simply click on the photos in the "Delegations" tab, or speak to a member of the Friendship Group)

This document was last revised in March 2020; it is to be read in conjunction with other documents provided by The Port Lincoln Muroto Friendship Group Inc.