This photo was taken in the city of Uji in the Kyoto prefecture of Japan. The area is not only famous for its abundance of matcha flavored goods, but also for its intimate ties to the *Tale of Genji*, the world’s first novel.

During my junior year in the fall semester, I studied abroad in Kyoto, Japan. I had taken the language courses and felt that my language skill was proficient enough to get around. I handled all of the paperwork and in August of 2014 I went to the airport and took the 14 hour flight across the world. Japan was different from everything I had imagined. Though things looked similar, the communities were vastly different. I had to learn about who I was in order to navigate the sphere. I had to understand that I was not initially as skilled as I thought I was and that reality can change how you view yourself. I spotted the differences in cultures, and compared my own with that of my host family’s culture. The differences rarely caused conflict, and they allowed me to open my eyes by viewing firsthand what another culture was like. I thought about my place in the world knew that because I am only one person, with limited life experiences, I want to travel and meet as many people as possible in the future and learn about as many other experiences as possible.

**The Best Part About Kyoto:**
The unique feel provided by the myriad of shrines and temples mixed in with the city atmosphere.

**Tip:**
Don’t be afraid to get lost in the city! You never know what wonderful things you will find that were unplanned.