

Pets

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Pets have always been a big part of my life, growing up my family has always had cats. Currently, my family has four cats including my cat, Mugicha, who my parents are taking care of while I live in Japan. Most people I knew had pets, it's actually more common in the U.S. to own a pet than to not own a pet so pet ownership is an important part of American culture. Pet ownership in the U.S. and Japan has some pretty big differences.

One of the biggest differences is that many people adopt their cats or dogs in the U.S. Almost every town has an animal shelter that takes in local stray and abandoned animals and tries to get them adopted. I adopted my cat Mugicha from a shelter and paid 10,000 yen for her, this covered her vet fees and food. Adopting cats usually cost around 10,000 yen while dogs are usually 20,000 yen. Cat cafes have started to become popular in the U.S. but cat cafes in the U.S. work with animal shelters and all the cats at the café are able to be adopted. Many people also take in stray cats, two of my family's cats were strays and so they were free. I was surprised to learn that Japan has very few animal shelters and that most people buy their pets. The price of cats and dogs in Japan really shocked me, even buying a pet from a breeder would rarely be as expensive as a normal pet in Japan.

Another difference is that I've seen less breed diversity, especially with dogs. During university, I worked part-time at pet hotels and daycares, there I saw almost every breed of dog that exists and every mix of breeds. In Japan, mixed-breed animals seem to be rare but in the U.S. many people have mixed-breed dogs, some are so mixed that you cannot even tell what kind of dogs the parents are. At my work, we would often try to guess what mix of breeds dogs were. Dogs in the U.S. are also more diverse in size, I have taken care of dogs as small as toy poodles to great danes that were almost as big as I am. In Japan, it seems that people prefer small dogs and there are fewer options when it comes to buying dogs.

Also, since pets are so common in the U.S. most apartments and homes allow pets, but you may have to pay a pet fee. In Japan, it seems that pet-friendly apartments are less common.