

A Day in the Life of an Uchideshi at Aikido in Fredericksburg (a program modeled in the Japanese Tradition)

If you want to immerse yourself in Aikido meaning wake, sleep, eat, drink, breathe Aikido then being an Uchideshi could be for you. By living in the dojo you will have the opportunity to participate in up to 25 classes each week, to spend off the mat time talking with Sensei and fellow deshi, to enjoy a library stacked with books and videos, and to commit yourself to the path of Aiki. If your application is accepted, Uchideshi stays can be booked from one week to one year in duration.



You can take pride that training, dojo life, and the needs of the dojo and Sensei will come before your wants. Apart from training in as many classes as your body permits, Uchideshi work at least one hour each day for the dojo. That includes daily chores, assisting with repairs, and special projects. In addition, in the warmer months outdoor landscaping/gardening assistance is required. When there are events, seminars or parties at the dojo, Uchideshi help prepare for, take care of tasks during, and clean up after the event.



By now I hope that you are getting the feeling that being an Uchideshi entails more than just training a lot. It means learning to be of service, it means learning how to connect with people on and off the mat (blending), it means finding out about your shortcomings and how to grow and overcome them. It means learning how to be observant, not just on the mat (which is called martial awareness), but off the mat as well (being present). Being an Uchideshi is a communal lifestyle that may take a bit of getting used to. The latter being said, Aikido in Fredericksburg has superior dorm-style rooms and a beautiful building and grounds in our "green" dojo.

Now that your eyes are open – being an Uchideshi is awesome! You get to do what you love, and you will improve quickly, which is very satisfying. Kyu and even dan tests can come quickly. You get to train a lot! I mean, A LOT. There are morning classes on six days, so getting up, opening the dojo and being on the mat early before class makes for an early morning. Noon classes twice a week, and evening classes on five days. Be

prepared for your body to initially respond with aches and pains. Be careful that these don't turn into or result in injuries. You will learn to take care of yourself.

After each class the mats are swept. The long pauses on the training schedule between morning and noon classes and noon and afternoon/evening classes can be deceptive. You will have to buy and prepare your own food, do your dojo chores, take care of your laundry, write/journal into your Uchideshi notebook, rest and recover, and maybe go to work or college. All of that can leave little free time for activities outside the dojo. Little, but still some. Uchideshi are encouraged to engage in the larger community.

As Uchideshi you are expected to strive harder to develop your technique and be a model student on the mat, Aviv Sensei pays extra attention to you. You may or may not like this.





You do not need to do every class but you may want to. What does the schedule look like on an average day? Getting up at 6 - 6:30AM, then morning training with weapons and taijutsu. Breakfast fits in before class or after depending on how early you get up. The morning is free for chores, landscaping, free training, or test preparation, rest, or personal errands. The morning goes by fast on days with a noon class – remember that you are on the mat half an hour before class starts. After lunch there is another opportunity to do everything you might have done in the morning. The dojo has an extensive Aikido library with books and dvds. The afternoon is a good opportunity to read or watch some of that preserved knowledge. Youth and children's classes are in the late afternoon and Uchideshi are expected to assist with those. Then one or two more adult classes with only short breaks in between, and it is 9PM or later. Time for some dinner and bed, so that the next morning, and the morning after, and the morning after are doable with energy and joy.

You have access to guest instructors and special events that occur every month. You may want to travel with Sensei to a seminar that he is teaching at or attending. Uchideshi gather as a group with Sensei and Donna at least once a week for a meal to celebrate our successes and identify areas for personal improvement. When your uchideshi stay is over you will have grown as a person, developed new friendships and memories, and your Aikido will be markedly improved.



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