

JENESYS 2019 INDIA

Recently, I received the amazing opportunity to visit Japan as an exchange student under the JENESYS (The Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) Scholarship Program 2019, through the Embassy of Japan, AFS Intercultural Programs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan (MOFA, Japan).



The aim of the program is to promote mutual trust and understanding among the younger generations of Japan and the Asia-Pacific region, and to build a basis for future friendship and cooperation in the region, and to encourage understanding of Japan's economics, society, history, diverse culture, politics and diplomatic relations.

The participants were divided into 4 groups based on different themes and I was part of the Japanese Communication and Cultural Exchange Group A, in the Ishikawa prefecture of Japan.



After arrival, we had a post-arrival orientation and a 3 day stay at the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center in Shibuya city, Tokyo. During our stay there, we were taken to the Team Lab Planets which is an interactive space full of digital artworks and Odaiba, a popular shopping and entertainment district in Tokyo. The interaction with Indian students at Waseda University was really informative, encouraging students to apply to the University for further studies.

The visit to the Kaminari Mon (Thunder Gate), the iconic historical symbol of Asakusa and the Tokyo Sky Tree, which is a landmark of Tokyo was an unforgettable experience. We got to experience the lively nightlife of Tokyo and the bustling street markets of Asakusa.

Afterwards, each group was separated and moved to their respective regional prefectures, ours being the Ishikawa prefecture in the Honshu island. There, we were taken to various workshops and school visits and interacted with people from



different backgrounds and also got to experience rich cultural heritage and tradition of Japan through the exciting events arranged.



Upon arrival, we had a courtesy call with the Komatsu City Mayor Mr. Shinji Wada at the Komatsu City Hall and a visit to Komatsu University for an opinion exchange meet on 'Peace Education' to strengthen relations between India and Japan and to promote mutual trust and deepen friendship ties.

We got the chance to learn how to paint the Kutaniyaki (Japanese Porcelain Pottery) from authentic Kutaniyaki potters and also enjoy authentic Japanese cuisine at a traditional restaurant.

The Tea ceremony or Sadou experience was an educational and culturally enlightening experience which gave way for a deeper understanding of the historical significance of tea in Japanese society and its role in forming of social relations.



The Kabuki (Japanese Theater) is a classical art form of Japan, holding his with elaborate makeup and dynamic acting. We got to try on the 'Hime' or princess make-up and also learned to play a few instruments like the Shamisen, a three-stringed musical

instrument used in the Kabuki.



The art of Kabuki, the masks and the make-up used, resembled a lot with the Indian classical Kathakali of Kerala, just like how traditional Japanese roof structure matches the Kerala-style architecture, giving basis to the idea of a common origin of Asian cultures.



The homestay experience was truly one of the best, once in a lifetime experience. My homestay family, the Ishimoto Family, was a wonderful host family and they made this program an exchange worth remembering.

The homestay experience, though short, was key in understanding the daily life of average Japanese families and in understanding the cultural differences and be able to better comprehend and respect the beauty of human differences. Though the time we spent together was short, the homestay led to forming unbreakable bonds and a lasting friendship.



The Japanese style of praying involves clapping one's hands together and bowing one's head before the Gods, to pay respects and ward off evil spirits, which can be considered equivalent to the Hindu practice of ringing a bell on entering a temple.

The return back to Tokyo ensued a sad parting of the students with their respective host families, involving promises of maintaining contact and returning to visit someday. The closing ceremony of the program required each group to make a presentation of what they had learnt through this program.



I'd like to thank AFS Intercultural Programs, the Embassy of Japan and MOFA Japan for this wonderful learning opportunity that I will forever treasure in my heart. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Head Sir, Prof. P.C. Joshi and the entire faculty of the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, for helping me in becoming a part of the Jenesys 2019 Program. It has truly been an honor. Thank you.

どうもありがとうございました！

Aishwarya Ramkumar, B.Sc.(H) Anthropology, IIIrd year