

4 EXCHANGE STUDENT PERIODICAL  
REPORTS

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# I. Trip in Japan

Japan is undoubtedly one of the most famous tourist destinations. I believe many people would love to visit Japan at least once and I am one of those. When I first knew I was given a chance to visit Japan, despite the thought that I have to concentrate on study, I also intended to visit as many places and try as many things as I can. Come on, this is Japan and you wouldn't want to miss a chance to experiences those amazing things!

**A**bundant choices of transportation and accommodation made my japan trip as solo traveler very easy. There are many options; *Shinkansen* (bullet train), train and bus. The bus and train station mostly located in the same or nearby area, which made it convenient to transit from one to another. The ticket price are varied from the speed you arrived at your destination, traveling by Shinkansen is absolutely much faster but the ticket price is also doubled or tripled. On the other hand, the bus might take longer but it is the cheapest way to get you around Japan. Moreover, sleeping on the night bus will help you save some hotel cost. The normal room rate of business hotel is comparatively high if you don't have friends to share the room with; thus, if you have limited budget, small hostels, capsules or internet cafes might be your good options.

**F**or me, I usually choose to stay in small hostels which the price is more acceptable and reasonable and plus I had a chance to make new friends. For transportation, my choice is either bus or local train. During my stay, I visited many interesting places like Hakone, Odawara Castle, Osaka, Himeji, Nagoya, Kurobe, Fuji-Q Highland (Amusement Park) and Kawaguchiko. Among all I visited, my 3 favorite cities are Kyoto, Nikko and Hida-Takayama. And for those who are wondering where is Hida-Takayama? Hida-Takayama, known as little Kyoto, is a city near northern Japan Alps of Gifu Prefecture (Western of Tokyo). This charming small city is well-known for its beautiful preserved old town. This is a city I recommend you to visit once.

**A**bove all cities I mentioned, my dream-to-visit city is Hiroshima. Hiroshima's reputation of its unforgettable history attracted me to arrange crazy short trip before leaving Japan in August. As a result of time limit, I decided to arrange a trip to visit Hiroshima 2 days before going back to Thailand. This trip started on the last day I stayed in Tokyo as I have to go to Osaka to catch a plane to Bangkok. That morning, I carried my 2 big suitcases to visit Disneyland for the first time of my life. I left my suitcases in the locker before spending a whole wonderful day with my friend at Tokyo Disney. At night, I took a night bus from Tokyo Disney to Osaka. As soon as I arrived in Osaka in the next morning, I had my luggages stored in the locker again and quickly catch my first Shinkansen ride to Hiroshima. Not waste any time after arrived in Hiroshima, I went to the famous A-Dome and the Museum, and later hop on a tram and ferry to Miyajima Island as my last visit that day before heading back to Hiroshima city to catch a night bus back to Osaka again. It was 2 exhausting days without shower and most expensive trip because of Shinkansen but the beauty of Hiroshima made this short crazy trip my most memorable trip ever in Spring 2012.

**I**n short, traveling in Japan might be costly yet very easy and despite the fact that all cities attract me with its charm, what I was attracted to most was the Japanese hospitality. From my experience, they made sure that visitors will have as smooth trip as possible. This is one of the reasons why many people and I want to visit Japan again and again.

## II. Food in Japan

**S**oba, Ramen, Sushi, Sashimi, Tempura, you name it; Japanese food is as famous as its beautiful landscapes. A variety of food is one of the factors that made my stay even more enjoyable. In every city, there are must-try recipes. Moreover, Japanese pay attention to the taste and look, they carefully cook and decorate every dish before serving to customers. No matter how much budget you have, you can find a delicious Japanese food from coin machine to sit down dinner restaurant. Visitors will not be starving because food can be found 24hrs, both in convenient stores and in coin-machine restaurants.

**S**peaking about the selection of food, I tried to have a specialty in each city I visited. For example, in Nagoya, I walked around and asked around for almost an hour to finally find the famous fried chicken restaurant that is recommended in Thai guidebook, and I was not disappointed. It was mouth-watering and very tasty; it was also so famous that they made a snack out of it. In Osaka, my friend introduced me to *Takoyaki* and *Kushikatsu* (deep fried slices of meat or vegetable dipped in special sauce). And if you have tried Kansai style *Okonomiyaki*, do not forget to try Kanto's *Monjayaki* as well. *Yuba* (thin bean curd sheet), one of Nikko's specialty is another dish you shouldn't miss. I had *Yuba* in *Nabe* (hot pot) for lunch when I first arrived in Nikko and the tastes was unforgettable. You probably have heard about famous Kobe Beef, how about Hida Beef from Hida Takayama. The beef here really melt in your mouth!

**A**fter meals, you can pamper yourself with something sweet like the famous Shibuya Honey Toast or Royce Chocolate. Still have some space for more? Try the famous Matcha ice-cream with red bean or Matcha Parfait, especially at Gion, Kyoto. In Japan Matcha are served as many forms of dessert; cake, jelly, cookies and all are very good. What normally sell in the summer, and one of my preferred dessert, is what Japanese called *Sofuto Kuriimo* (soft cream). It comes with plenty of flavors; green tea latte, strawberry, banana, melon and more. And if you crave for more snacks to sweeten your teeth, please try the famous Tokyo Banana, also a good choice as souvenirs.

**A**mong all, there are 2 good restaurants I would recommend. Ichiran Ramen is the first one, a franchise coined ramen shop; you can find at Ginza or Shinjuku. At Ichiran, customers can choose the richness level of soup and size of noodles. Language is not barrier when they have English order sheet available for foreigners like mine. The other is the Soba restaurant in Kyoto, my Japanese friend took me there after visited Kinkakuji (The Golden Temple). This unique restaurant is a part of beautiful Japanese-style house and their famous soba and tempura goes well together, this is one of the best I ever tried.

**I**n addition, the authentic Japanese cuisine is different from those I had in other country like Thailand or Taiwan. The Japanese food I had in Japan is even better and it is still my all-time favorite. The weight I gained while staying in Japan might be a good proof how much I enjoyed the food there and how delicious Japanese food is. Personally, I think it is quite risky for me to stay there longer.

### III. Fashion in Japan

The other thing Japanese continues to amaze me is the Japanese Fashion. Not many countries in the world that you can see its people wearing their traditional clothes in everyday life like Japan. The advantage of people living in the country with 4 different seasons is they can enjoy changing different clothes each season. Some might think there is nothing special but for a person who come from a country, which only have hot, hotter, hottest season, like me, this is very special.

As soon as spring comes, *Sakura* (Cherry blossoms) start blooming from South to North. *Hanami* (flower viewing) is one of the most famous festivals among Japanese; the Japanese girls will put on their lively casual summer traditional outfits, *Yukata*, going to the park for drinking and enjoy viewing *Sakura* with friends. After *Hanami* in April, there is *Hanabi* (fireworks) starting from end of July. The girls and boys will put their nicest *Yukata* on to view the fireworks at these summer festivals. I also bought a *Yukata* and went to see beautiful fireworks along Sumida River with my friends.

Not only in the popular festivals, Japanese also wear their traditional outfits to attend many events such as funeral, party, graduation ceremony, going to temple or even to have dinner in high-end restaurant. Every day you will always see at least one Japanese girl wearing their *Yukata* or *Kimono*. I tried on real *Kimono* (Japanese formal traditional garment) once at the *Kimono* rental shop where my friend works. I found out that wearing *Kimono* is complicated yet interesting. You need to practice in order to wear it beautifully and properly. The way Japanese pair the color of *Obi* (belt) and *Kimono* and put on garment after garments and tie this and that until eventually made it an elegant *Kimono* really astonishing.

The street fashion is also very interesting and considered to be a part of Japanese pop culture. Not only seen at renowned Shinjuku or Harajuku, but everywhere I went I also saw Japanese put on the clothes in different ways; cute and girly sweet, dolly, gothic, rock, Cosplay, colorful and bright, neon, or vintage ,every fashion style exist here in Japan. For some people, the way Japanese dresses are weird or crazy but for me, the only word I would describe is "unique". To me, the Japanese teenagers just expressed their interest and preferences through their clothing when they still can. I never get bored by Japanese dressing style.

Additionally, even buying new clothes in Japan might cost a fortune, but many students can still enjoy shopping from second-handed shop that's available everywhere. A popular area recommended by my friends for shopping seconded-hand clothes is Shimo-Kitazawa and for student at IUJ is Hard-off, the shop where you can find everything second-handed from designer bag to the washing machine. However, if seconded-handed is not your taste and you want something more fashionable, pay a visit to Shibuya109 and the surroundings tons of chic clothing stores. Mix and match, color your hair and nails, dress whatever you want, you can do it here without having people looking at you strangely.

Finally, I really do appreciate the confidence and Japanese sense of fashion. There is nowhere else that the contradiction of trendy and traditional divisibly mixing and exist together. This is one particular Japanese charm I witnessed every day during my stay in Japan.

## IV. Manners in Japan

It is normal for exchange student to experience some cultural shock sooner or later during our stay in foreign country. Something we did in one country might not be acceptable in other country. Japan is the country where its people are well known for being polite and peaceful. There are some issues that Japanese strictly perceive as good and bad manners; therefore, it is useful for anyone who visit Japan to understand some basic manners in order to stay in Japan more peacefully and happily. Below are something I have learnt during my stay and I gave some comparisons so you can have a better pictures.

### Eating manner :

- The first obvious difference for Thai people like me is the way Japanese eating noodles. For Thai, it is extremely impolite to make a noise while eating, unlike Thai, Japanese tends to make a loud noise while eating noodles in order to shows the appreciation of noodles flavors. It surprised me at first but after a while, I get used to it and learnt to do the same thing.
- The second thing that I found hard to follow is Japanese try to finish their food. I was told that it is very impolite to have food left over in Japan. On the other hand, for Thai, it is acceptable to left some rice on your plate, this is to show that you are really full and do not want more. However, this thought is gradually change because we don't want to waste our food.

### Drinking manner :

- It is unlikely for Thai to go out for drinks with their supervisors and colleagues on weekday. This might due to the fact that Thailand has bad traffic jam and inconvenient public transportation, as a result, most of Thai tends to go out for drinks on Friday and Saturday. According to my experience, Japanese are likely to go out for drinks with the boss and colleagues after work on weekdays. This is part of their culture that helps to strengthen relationships in the office. Furthermore, it is inappropriate for Thai to get drunk at the presence of their supervisor because the superior might think that we are irresponsible. It is very important for Thai to keep a good image at work. On the contrary in Japan, I saw many Japanese get drunk with their bosses or even their professors.

### Living manner :

- Firstly, it is strictly prohibited to talk on mobile phone in the public transportation in Japan. I have asked many people why it is restricted but I haven't found out the answer yet.
- Secondly, it is the way Japan treat their garbage. Like Taiwan, Japan separate different kind of rubbish for better trash management. This is a good way to keep the country clean and I think this is the good example that Thai government should implement.
- Thirdly, what I found frustrating is smoking inside restaurant and nightclub is allowed in Japan. If you are in Japan, be prepared to have cigarette smell on clothes when you go out for lunch or dinner. Believe it or not, this is something legally banned in Thailand many years ago.
- Lastly, what I have learnt from class is that Japanese value the attempt to do things more than the success of doing thing. Some people are afraid to do things that seem out of their capability. However, if you are in Japan, just try your best, succeed or not, Japanese will surely appreciate your effort.

In short, knowing some Japanese manners is very helpful for those who are going to Japan. At least they know what to expect and will not badly struggle to adjust themselves during their stay.





*With love, Leo ♥*