

The Globe

Per adnum, ad adnum

Newsletter of Kochi University Global Education and Advancement Support Center

Summer 2025

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"Nobody can discover the world for somebody else. Only when we discover it for ourselves does it become common ground and a common bond and we cease to be alone."

— Wendell Berry

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Momo FUJIWARA reports on her time studying at the University of South Bohemia in the Czech Republic during 2024

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CALIFORNIA DREAMING

4th Year Humanities major Kota IRAMINA spent a year in the US, studying at California State University Fresno.

Read about his experiences on **Page 16**

RWANDA VOLUNTEER

Kokomi SONOBE travelled to Rwanda in southern Africa during the summer of 2024 as part of an overseas volunteer program. Read about it on

Page 13



In **July 2024** the university played host to a diverse group of 15 students from partner schools for the 8th Annual GEASC Summer Program. During their stay the guests—from the Czech Republic, Mexico, Thailand, the UK and US—studied Japanese language and aspects of Japanese culture alongside KU students, and together visited different locations in Kochi to learn more about sustainable tourism initiatives.

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Short-Term Study Abroad Program expands



The Short Term Study Abroad Program organised by GEASC

faculty has been expanded to include Korea (see following story), the Philippines and Taiwan as destinations.

The purpose for adding Korea and Taiwan to the range of options is to attract students who wish to study languages other than English and thereby encourage more to sign up for the program. STSA destinations now include Australia and New Zealand, Canada, the UK, US, Philippines, Malaysia and Korea.

In the spring of 2025 39 Kochi University students took part in the program. Reports from some of those who participated over the past year can be found elsewhere in this edition.

Study Korea

A new short-term study program was launched in 2023 for KU students who are interested in studying Korean as a Second Language. The program is part of the GEASC Short-Term Study Abroad Program and organised by



the centre in cooperation with Pusan University of Foreign Language Studies and the university Co-Op. The program at Pusan provides language studies, as well as cultural events.

Overseas volunteer programs offered from 2025

Beginning in the 2025 academic year KU students will be able to sign up for a new Short-Term Overseas Volunteer Program. The program, which is being organised by GEASC staff in cooperation with New Zealand based company International Volunteer HQ, provides opportunities to participate in voluntary programs in destinations on every continent and is offered as an alternative or supplement to traditional short-term study abroad. Volunteer activities are in areas such as environmental conservation, healthcare, and childcare, among other things. Students are also able to gain university credits for participating.

KU bids farewell

GEASC deputy director Prof. Cuifang Li has retired after a long career teaching Japanese to international students at KU. Prof. Li was also active in outreach

programs with local schools, as well as recruiting international students. Prof. Li taught at Kochi University for more than 20 years and will be enjoying her retirement in Osaka.

Events for new international students



Thirteen newly-arrived international students took part in *kendama* and *Yosakoi*-themed events hosted by KU faculty and students in the week prior to the start of the 1st semester 2025. Prof. Fukuzumi of the Faculty of Education provided expert guidance for the



kendama activities, which saw the students try their hand at various challenges involving the traditional Japanese ball game, testing their hand-eye coordination to the full!

In the afternoon SUIREN, one of several KU *Yosakoi* teams, put on a demonstration of their dancing in the auxiliary gymnasium, before inviting the



visiting students to join in and try it themselves.

After the event, several of the new international students expressed an interest in taking part in the *Yosakoi* festival itself, which is held in early August each year and the biggest event in the Kochi social calendar.

KU grad in Africa



KU alumnus Hinako Inoue is currently in Botswana on a two year Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteer program. She has been working in the Tonota district as a community development officer since the summer of 2024.

During the course of her studies at KU Hinako took leave of absence and spent a year traversing the globe, visiting 33 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. After graduating from KU in 2017 Hinako worked in Australia, before deciding to return to Africa with JICA. In preparation for the trip she took intensive English courses, and had to endure multiple vaccinations for health reasons!

KU student volunteers abroad

During the spring break 2025, two Kochi University students participated in volunteer programs overseas. After

teaching children in Rwanda during the summer of 2024 (read the full story on page 13, 2nd Year Humanities student Kokomi Sonobe travelled to Nepal in March 2025 where she also worked at a school. Also in the spring Oko campus-based nursing major Kohana Yamazaki spent a week in Bali helping to educate children about the importance of hygiene. After graduation Kohana is seeking to work for JICA.

KU Professor Ghana bound



Humanities Professor Kyoko Koga is taking a sabbatical to the University of Ghana beginning in September, to continue her research into the local languages and culture of the region. Prof. Koga has visited the country on a number of occasions before, but this is her first extended stay. During her stay she will be based in the capital Accra. Like many African countries, Ghana has a large number of native languages. Professor Koga's particular interest is Akan, which is used by the Ghanians as a *lingua franca*.

KU Summer Program 2024



Group visit to Chikunrinji Temple on Mt. Godai in Kochi

Students from KU partner schools in the Czech Republic, Mexico, Thailand, the UK and US spent the month of July in Kochi studying alongside KU students on the 2024 Summer Program. The program, which had to be suspended during the global Coronavirus pandemic, is now organised and run by GEASC faculty. During their stay the guests, some of whom had previously studied Japanese either as a minor or major subject at their home institutions, took part in a formal program of language studies. They also learned about various aspects of Japanese culture hands-on in

workshops on the traditional *shakuhachi* musical instrument, *ikebana*, *kendo*, *origami*, and *sado*, among other things.

According to a post program survey of participants an especially popular feature of the program were the guided weekend field trips to various locations in the local area, including the annual Ekin festival in Aki City, the rice terraces in Reihoku, Chikurinji Temple and Makino Botanical Gardens. In addition, the group travelled to Otsuki Town to learn about local sustainable tourism



Program participants learned hands-on about *ikebana* — the Japanese art of flower arranging



Kendo workshop led by master practitioner Prof. Hiromitsu Yano

initiatives, spending one night in a hostel that previously served as an elementary school.

Based on these experiences, in a final presentation mixed groups of Japanese and overseas students contributed their ideas and suggestions for a sustainable tourism model in Kochi. Although the visitors have returned home, some have already made plans to apply for the Japanese English Teacher program and return in the near future.

A video about the program can be seen on YouTube https://youtu.be/kkGXNHJ_N4k?SbzmBtCnrxb0ard5

大豊町立大豊学園生徒との英語交流会 I

By Prof. OTSUKA Kaoru

2024年7月11日（木）に、大豊町立大豊学園9年生(中学3年生)12人が実践的な英語教育の一環として高知大学を訪れ、本学の留学生5名と英語で交流しました。今回の活動は、本学の留学生との英語交流の経験により英語表現力を高める機会とするとともに、異文化に触れる経験を通して国際理解を深めるという目的で行われ、スウェーデンからオリヴァーさん、グスタヴさん、マレーシアからフダさん、ダヤンさん、インドネシアからヘルミナさんが交流会に参加し



ました。

今回は3回目の交流となりましたが、夏休みにオーストラリア研修に行く際に大豊町の紹介をそれぞれの生徒がするので、5名の留学生を囲んで小グループに分かれて8分間ずつ自己紹介や大豊町に関するプレゼンをし、それについてグループメンバーで英語で語り合いました。8分経過した後、次のグループに移動しプレゼンと話し合いをしい、5回のグループ活動が行われました。大豊学園の生徒からは「日本一の大杉さん」や「土佐のお殿様も泊まった立川番所」、「ラフティングができる吉野川」、「風と遊ぶゆとりすとパーク」など地元の大豊町の紹介があり、グループを移動するごとに皆表情が柔らかくなり、自信を持って英語で発表している様子がうかがえました。大豊学園の生徒からは「オーストラリア研修に向け



て自分が準備してきたものが紹介でき、自分のプレゼンの不十分なところが分かった」、「YouTubeに大豊町の英語での紹介動画を上げるので、指摘された箇所を改善したい」「プレゼンは緊張したけど楽しかった」という声が聞かれ、さらに練習していきたいという意欲が感じられました。

留学生からも「自分の出身地である大豊町についてよく調べてきており、質問にも丁寧に答えてくれ感心した」、「生徒さんが大豊町のことを紹介してくれ勉強になった。紹介されたものの中で興味がある部分は質問をし、生徒さん



のプレゼンにも貢献できた」、「YouTubeに大豊町の紹介動画がアップされたら、ぜひ見てみたい」という感想が寄せられました。皆それぞれが異文化を知るきっかけになり交流が深められ、充実した時間を過ごすことができました。

大豊町立大豊学園生徒との英語交流会Ⅱ



By Prof. OTSUKA Kaoru

2024年11月18日（月）に、大豊町立大豊学園8年生(中学2年生)14人が実践的な英語教育の一環として高知大学に訪れ、本学の留学生4名と英語で交流しました。今回の活動は、本学の留学生との英語交流の経験により英語表現力を高める機会とするとともに、異文化に触れる経験を通して国際理解を深めるという目的で行われ、マレーシアからイザットさん、ネパールからスレスさん、ラツアナさん、インドネシアからアグラさんが交流会に参加しました。

まず、大豊学園生徒による英語での大豊町の観光地、特産品、大豊学園の概要や学校行

事、クラブ活動に関する紹介があり、留学生は日本の中学校や大豊町での生活について興味深く耳を傾けていました。

その後、イザットさんからマレーシアの多様性についての紹介がありました。冒頭マレーシアの旗やマレーシアの位置についてクイズが出されましたが、正解率はそれほど高くありませんでした。そして、マレーシアはマレー系と中華系、インド系の人々により社会が構成されており、言語や宗教、食べ物などの文化が異なりますが、英語が共通語なのでマレーシア人は英語が話せるとの説明があり、皆感心していま



した。

続いて、スレスさんとラツアナさんによる「ネパールはどこにあるのか」から始まるネパールの概要と自然についての紹介がありました。ネパールは世界で一番高い山「エベレスト」があり、仏陀が生まれた場所で、旗は世界でも珍しい特徴的な三角の形をしていることが紹介され、皆驚いていました。また、自然が豊かで美しく、珍しい動物を象に乗って見に行くツアーや滝下りをするラフティング、自然の中でのバンジージャンプなどが紹介され皆興味深い様子でした。最後に、アグラさんによるインドネシアの概要と文化についての紹介がありました。最初にインドネシアの旗や位置を中学



生に当ててもらいましたが、ヒントにより見事に正解し盛り上がりました。インドネシアは1,300の民族により構成され718言語が話されており地域により特徴的な気候や習慣、文化が発展しているとの説明に皆興味津々でした。また、インドネシアの人々は生活が苦しくても笑顔を絶やさず、周りの人々と助けあいながら生活しており、学校や仕事が終わってから皆で集まって食事やスポーツ観戦をするのが習慣になっているとの紹介に皆興味深く聞いていました。

それぞれの発表が終わった後、4名の留学

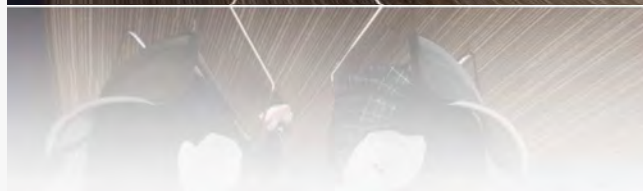


生を囲んで小グループに分かれて10分間ずつ自己紹介や発表に対する質疑応答、「将来の夢」についてグループメンバーで英語で語り合いました。10分経った後、次のグループに移動し質疑応答と話し合いをしあい、4回のグループ活動が行われました。グループを移動するごとに皆表情が柔らかくなり、自信を持って英語でコミュニケーションが取れる様子が見えられました。そして、交流会が終わりを迎える頃には皆すっかり打ち解けており、大豊学園の生徒からは「コミュニケーションが取れて楽しかった」、「もっと英語で交流したい」、「マレーシアやネパール、インドネシアに行ってみたい」という声が聞かれ笑顔が溢れていました。



留学生からも「皆最初は恥ずかしがっていたが、英語での交流を楽しんでいて短い時間だったが、とても楽しかった」、「次回はぜひ大豊町に訪れてみたい」という感想が寄せられました。皆それぞれが異文化を知るきっかけになり交流が深められ、充実した時間を過ごすことができました。

“皆それぞれが異文化を知るきっかけになり交流が深められ、充実した時間を過ごすことができました。”



大豊町立大豊学園生徒語交流会Ⅲ

By Prof. OTSUKA Kaoru

2025年3月7日（金）に、大豊町立大豊学園8年生(中学2年生)13人が実践的な英語教育の一環として高知大学を訪れ、本学の留学生5名と英語で交流しました。今回の活動は、本学の留学生との英語交流の経験により英語表現力を高める機会とするとともに、異文化に触れる経験を通して国際理解を深めるという目的で行われ、インドネシアからアグラさん、中国から李曉芸さん、ネパールからスレスさん、ラツァナさん、ムケッシュさんが交流会に参加しました。



まず、留学生から自分の国の世界遺産とおもしろいものについての発表が各国15分ぐらいずつありました。インドネシアからはアグラさんより様々な世界遺産が存在していることが語られ、中国起源の仏教やインド起源のヒンズー教、インドネシア独自の寺院についての紹介がありました。おもしろいものとしては、インドネシアの多様な民族文化の中から伝統的な影絵芝居の「ワヤン(Wayang)」やろうけつ染めで模様染められた布地である「バティック(Batik)」、竹製の伝統的な打楽器の「アングルン(Angklung)」、生きた恐竜とも呼ばれる世界最大のトカゲである「コモドドラゴン」などの説明があり、皆文化の違いに驚いていました。

Unique and Interesting Things in Indonesia



Wayang
Traditional shadow puppets storytelling.



Batik
Beautiful fabric with unique patterns.



Angklung
Bamboo musical instrument.



Komodo Dragon
The world's largest lizard.

さらに、インドネシアにはおよそ700の言語があること、イスラム教徒が87%を占めること、ジャコウネコがコーヒーの実を食べて消化されずに出てきた希少なコーヒー豆「コピ ルアク(Kopi Luwak)」などについて皆興味津々でした。

次に、李曉芸さんによる中国の世界遺産の「兵馬俑」と中国のお正月「春節」についての紹介がありました。中国の世界遺産はイタリアに次ぐ世界2位の登録件数で、現在59件がユネスコに登録されており、20世紀の考古学におけ



る最大の発見と言われる有名な「兵馬俑」について詳しく説明してくれました。秦の始皇帝が死後も自分を守るためにつくられた 8,000体も



インドネシアに関するプレゼンテーション

の「兵馬俑」はかつては彩色されており、どれも顔つきが異なるという説明に皆感心していました。また、中国の「春節」は、新しい年を祝う特別なお祭りであり、家族で集まり大晦日に特別なご馳走を食べたり、子どもは赤い袋に入ったお年玉をもらったり、花火や爆竹を鳴らしたりするなど日本のお正月との違いに皆興味深く聞いていました。

続いて、スレスさん、ラツアナさん、ムケッシュさんからネパールの世界遺産として世界で最も高い山であるエベレストや仏陀の生誕地である「ルンビニ」、首都カトマンズの渓谷にあるヒンズー教や仏教などの文化を取り入れた歴史的建造物が説明されました。また、ネパールのおもしろいものとしては、自然を活用したアクティビティである「トレッキング」や「バンジージャンプ」、「パラグライディング」が紹介され、皆興味を持っていました。

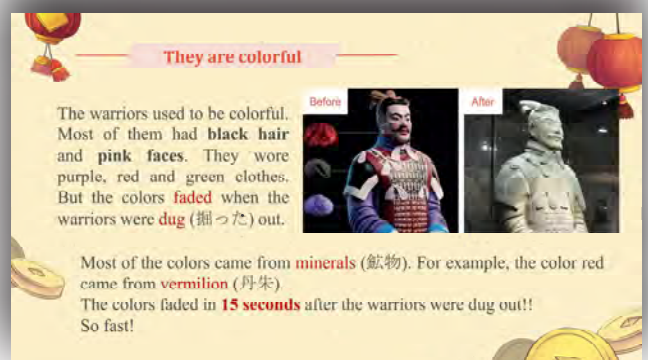
それぞれの発表が終わった後、5名の留学生を囲んで小グループに分かれて7分間ずつ自己紹介や発表に対する質疑応答、「自分が興味のある世界遺産」、「日本のおもしろいもの」についてグループメンバーで英語で語り合いました。7分経った後、次のグループに移動し質疑応答と話し合いをしい、5回のグループ活動が行われました。大豊学園の生徒からは「安芸の宮島」や「金閣寺・銀閣寺」、「屋久島と縄

“グループを移動するごとに皆表情が柔らかくなり、大きい声で自信を持って皆それぞれが異文化を知るきっかけになり交流が深められ、充実した時間を過ごすことができました”

文杉」などの世界遺産や「おみくじ」や「こたつ」、「お辞儀」などの紹介があり、グループを移動するごとに皆表情が柔らかくなり、大きい声で自信を持って英語でコミュニケーションが取れる様子がうかがえ、交流会が終わりを迎える頃には皆すっかり打ち解けていました。大豊学園の生徒からは「自分が準備してきたものを紹介でき、コミュニケーションが取れて楽しかった」、「もっと英語で交流した

い」、「次の交流を楽しみにしている」という声が聞かれ笑顔が溢れていました。

留学生からも「日本や他の国の話も聞けて楽しかった。グループワークでは私の質問に丁寧に答えてくれた生徒もいて感心した」、「今回久しぶりに英語で交流できて嬉しかった。生徒さんが日本や他の国のことを紹介してくれ勉強になった」、「紹介されたことに質問をし、生徒さんたちと楽しく議論できた」という感想が寄せられました。皆それぞれが異文化を知るきっかけになり交流が深められ、充実した時間を過ごすことができました。



中国に関するプレゼンテーション



By Prof. OTSUKA Kaoru

2025年5月10日（土）に、大豊町の地域の方や町役場等のご協力の下、34名の留学生及び日本人学生が参加し、地域の方との交流とともに、地域伝統文化の体験活動（茶摘み体験）を行い、地域とのかかわりを深めました。当日は晴天に恵まれ、皆で楽しみながら茶摘みの作業ができました。茶摘み作業終了後、立川刈谷多目的集会所に活動場所を移動し、集落活動センター「そばの里 立川」立川地区活性化推進委員会の吉川会長より、「日本におけるお茶の歴史」のテーマで、お茶の種類や作り方、お茶の産地等についてご紹介いただきました。その後、摘み立ての茶葉を釜で炒る作業、専用の機械で炒った茶葉を揉む作業、そして板の上に揉まれたお茶の葉を手で捻げて、乾燥しやすいように並べる作業をグループごとに体験しました。昼食は地元で採れたエゴマや銀不老豆等の食材をふんだんに使った地元住民手作りのお弁当を堪能しました。昼食後、6グループに分かれて地元の方へのインタビュー活動を行い、地域の方との相互理解、相互交流を深めました。また、インタビュー活動後、本学教育学部の福住先生のご指導の下、地元の方々とともにけん玉やお手玉を体験し、拍手や喝采で大変な盛り上がりを見せました。その後、旧立川番所書院を見学し、書院の歴史について学ぶ機会を得ました。

本活動に参加した留学生及び日本人学生からは、下記のような感想が寄せられました。

お茶摘み体験:・お茶摘み体験では、日本がお茶の文化を大切にしていることがよくわかり



ました。自分の手で茶葉をひとつひとついねいに摘むのは大変でしたが、友だちと一緒にやったので、とても楽しく、笑いながら過ごすことができました。きれいな自然の中での作業は気持ちよくて、時間がたつのを忘れるほどでした。この体験はとても不思議で楽しく、思い出に残る特別な体験になりました。

・お茶の作り方がこのように複雑で丁寧な過程が必要だなんて全然知らなかったです。もっとお茶を美味しく飲めそうです。

・茶摘みを通じて、たくさんの友達を作ることができましたし、茶文化に関する知識も知ることができて、とても面白かったです。

お茶作り体験:・お茶作りを体験できたのは、とても貴重でした。自分で作ったお茶の香りと味は特別で、忘れられない経験になりました。



・茶葉を摘んだ後、自分で炒ったり、手でもんだり、日なたに干したりしました。茶葉のにおいや色が少しずつ変わっていくのを見て、お茶ができていくことを実感できました。どの作業も丁寧にやるのが大事で、簡単ではありませんでしたが、とてもおもしろかったです。お



茶作りにはたくさんの手間と時間がかかることを知って、ふだんのお茶がもっと特別に感じました。

- ・茶葉を加熱したり揉んだりするだけで緑茶の香りがすごくして驚きました。煙などで作業がづらいのではないかと考えていましたが、いい香りがしていて楽しい作業であると感じました。

お茶についての講義:・お茶が中国から日本を経由してヨーロッパに広まったことを初めて知りました。また、中国から輸入されてきたものが今も栽培されていること、抹茶と緑茶などの違いなど、お茶に関して知らないことがたくさんあって、今までお茶に対して持っていた印象が変わりました。

- ・お茶の栽培には多くの手間と時間がかかることや、品質を保つための工夫など、普段何気なく飲んでいるお茶の裏側を知ることができました。

- ・お茶の起源と由来について勉強しました。特に、Chinaの発音はチャも含まれていることは初めて聞きました。そして、緑茶とウーロン茶と紅茶の区別についても勉強しました。

- ・吉川さんのお茶の話はとてもわかりやすく、お茶の由来から種類まで詳しく説明していただきました。

<インタビュー&地域の方との交流活動>

- ・地域の方々はとても親切で温かく、気軽に話しかけてくださって嬉しかったです。山の中の暮らしにも憧れを感じ、自然と共に生きることの豊かさを改めて思いました。

- ・移住されてきた方からのお話で、大豊町が山の水を利用していることを知り、何だか羨ましく感じました。久々に自然に触れたし、自然と暮らしている感覚をすごくかんじられました。

- ・地域の方々との交流を通じて、多くのことを学びました。この交流を通じて、地域の人々の生活や文化に対する理解が深まり、改めて日々の努力の大切さを実感しました。こうした貴重な経験は、今後の自分の人生にも大きな影響を与えたいと思います。

旧立川番所書院見学:・高知県の旧立川番所書院を見学して、江戸時代の治安や交通管理について学びました。旧立川番所は、旅人の身分を確認したり、荷物をチェックしたりしていた場所です。実際に使われていた道具や展示物を見て、当時の人々がどのように社会を守っていたのかを理解することができました。特に、番所書院の建物やその役割がとても興味深かったです。この見学を通じて、歴史を学ぶことの大切さを感じ、過去の人々がどのように社会を支えていたのかを実感しました。

- ・立川番所の見学では、歴史と伝統を感じることができました。普段の生活では味わえない学びがあり、非常に興味深かったです。

- ・立川番所は、歴史の流れとともに、役目を変えていきながらも、現在は地域の人々の支えのもと、存続しているのだということがわかりました。ただそこに在るだけでは、人々の関心は薄れてしまうため、イベントを開くなど建物に目的を持たせることで、人々に足を運んでもらえるよう取り組んでいることを学びました。



Rwanda volunteer



In the summer of 2024 1st Year Humanities student Kokomi SONOBE travelled to the southern African nation of Rwanda to participate in a volunteer program. This is her story.

I decided to join this volunteer program because I wanted to see the current situation in developing countries and experience different cultures with my own eyes. I have also been interested in international activities for a long time and wanted to be of some help to people in the world who need support, especially children.

The country I visited —Rwanda — experienced a genocide in 1994. Also, it is still governed by a one-party political system. The country relies on aid from other countries. I thought that through my work, it would be a good opportunity to learn how people live in a country that has a variety of intersecting problems.

During my stay in Rwanda, I worked at a day care center run by a volunteer group called KISEKI in

the capital, Kigali. I took care of children and supported English classes there. In addition to the daycare center, I also had the opportunity to visit slum areas to provide relief supplies support and interact with many people. What I learned through my activities was economic disparity and the hardships of children's daily lives.

In urban areas, infrastructure and public transportation were well maintained. I had the impression that people's lives were stable. However, a completely different scene unfolded when I went a little outside of the city. Most homes had no running water or electricity, and there were no hospitals.

Life in this environment is very difficult, and



many people leave for the city to work. As a result, children had to do household chores. For example, they go to fetch water twice a day, cook, and take care of their younger siblings. I was shocked that these tasks are just a normal part of their lives.

The challenge I faced was "improving the



support situation.” While I was there, I often saw people wearing clothes with Japanese characters on them and shops selling second-hand goods from overseas. I noticed that material and economic support was relatively thorough. However, I felt that there were many problems with the quality of the support.

For example, there was a house provided by the government for people in poverty, but it only had electricity—water and sewage were insufficient. In another case, there were three wells established by support groups, but two of them were broken and abandoned, and only one well was still usable.

From this, I learned that there was a problem in that temporary support would not lead to a fundamental solution and things would eventually return to how they had been before the support had been provided. I realized that we need to change the way we provide aid.

Overall, volunteering in Rwanda was a great opportunity to broaden my perspective on international problems. Rather than just thinking one-sidedly, I realized that we need to look at the current state of life and make improvements based on their reality.

Through these experiences, I gained valuable awareness of my future activities. I also realized the importance of focusing on "support with an eye to the future," rather than "support for the present moment.”

“Volunteering in Rwanda was a great opportunity to broaden my perspective on international problems”

—Kokomi SONOBE—





Many Rwandans have to walk long distances every day to collect water

Interested in volunteer work? The Global Education and Advancement Support Centre is now offering a new course called the **Short Term Volunteer Abroad Program** that enables KU students to participate in volunteer activities in countries all around the world!



Kigali, the Rwandan capital, seen from the air



Scooter taxi ride in downtown Kigali

California dreaming



**4th Year Maths major Kota
IRAMINA spent a year at Fresno
State University from 2023 to 2024**

My journey in Fresno, United States started with a “I DON’T HAVE ANYWHERE TO STAY” situation. I was about to be a homeless right at the beginning of my wonderful US life. At the end of the day, thankfully, one of my best friends, Richard, bailed me out. If anyone who is planning to study abroad reads this, please please, please, be aware that deciding where to stay should be the very first step. Anyway, overall, my study abroad was unbelievably enjoyable.

During two semesters in Fresno States, I am confident to say I studied a lot and tried many new things. My first semester in Fresno State was an uphill battle. Of course, the educational system between Japan and the States is very different. I,

therefore, faced quite a few academic challenges, especially with presentations and discussions, mainly due to a lack of public English-speaking skills. As you may know, university classes in the States are more active rather than just lecture-based, so you really need to voice your thoughts and ideas. It took me some time to get used to that environment. But people around me always supported me, and I really appreciate everything they did for me. Thanks to their help and my efforts, I received the highest grade for all the classes I took. It strikes me that once you get over the hurdle of English public speaking skills, everything else seems much easier. I also took a field trip class. That was 4-day trip going to northern California. We hiked, and observed San Andreas Fault, camped, and talked all night. And of course, no internet connection, so that we did digital detox and spent time like people in ‘90s did. That was such an amazing experience. In my second semester, I participated in an environmental science symposium as one of the presenters. It was a poster style presentation. Although I had tons of butterflies in my stomach, I managed to pull it off. On the top of that, I also participated in some volunteer events to help improve local communities. These activities were challenging to me, but they definitely helped me step up to the next level. For additional information, when it comes to facilities for studying, Fresno State is a great school. If you are into Starbucks, Fresno State library is the place to go. There is a Starbucks on campus! Eating food and drink are also allowed. Aside from that, the library is open 24 hours during exam week. Isn’t it great environment? If you are a





study-holic and a Starbucks lover, this is the best place. You can really focus on your studies.

In addition to study, I had so much fun outside of school. The best experience was going to Yosemite National Park. I had really wanted to go there, so I was over the moon when I finally did. We do not really go hiking in Japan, so I fully enjoyed feeling the beauty of nature. I became a nature lover, and now that I am in Kochi, I really want to explore its nature. Luckily, I had many chances to go traveling around California. I went to Santa Cruz, which had a very “Cali Vibe”, also to Berkeley to see UC Berkeley's freshmen frat parties, which were absolutely crazy. But the most memorable trip was when I went to San Diego for my cousin's wedding. The wedding was held at a beautiful location with a stunning view of the ocean and sunset. The food was delicious. The soup was the best ever. The wedding itself was breathtakingly beautiful and I wish I could have a wedding like that one day. By staying in San Diego for couple of weeks, I got really into the lifestyle in San Diego, though living expenses are ultra-high.

“I had bunch of precious experiences in the States. I made many friends, visited many great places, did what typical US university students would do. I can honestly say my study abroad could not have been better. It was just awesome.”

—Kota IRIMINA—

Last but not least, food I had in the States was great. I had thought America is all about junk food like burgers and pizzas, which was only partially correct. Surprisingly, there are also a lot of ethnic restaurants including Vietnamese, Thai, Mexican, and Hawaiian food. I became obsessed with Mexican food. When it comes to burger franchised



California State University, Fresno

chains, FIVE GUYS is second to none. People often say IN-N-OUT is the best, but to be honest, I thought it was just mid. It was not really my cup of tea.

To wrap it up, I had bunch of precious experiences in the States. I made many friends, visited many great places, did what typical US university students would do. I can honestly say my study abroad could not have been better. It was just awesome. I am so glad that I chose this exchange program over any other way to go study abroad. It was tough, but it was totally worth it. Lastly, if anyone reading this and thinking about studying abroad at least a little bit but has not gotten the ball rolling yet, just go for it. Put up or shut up! It is going to be so much fun, anyway!

For more information about studying abroad at Kochi University, see the Global Education and Advancement Centre website

“If anyone reading this and thinking about studying abroad at least a little bit but has not gotten the ball rolling yet, just go for it”.

—Kota IRIMINA—



Czech mates!

Momo FUJIWARA
recounts her
experiences of
studying in the
Czech Republic in
2024

I studied abroad at the University of South Bohemia in Czech Republic from February to June 2024. It was my first time living abroad, and at first, I felt quite nervous. However, I can now confidently say, “It was truly an incredible experience!” Although I faced challenges such as cultural differences and language barriers, I was fortunate to have the support of friends from 18 different countries whom I met during my time there.

One of the most memorable experiences was the “Culture Evening”. It wasn’t just about sharing food from our countries; we also discussed our cultural backgrounds, often laughing at surprising differences. For example, my Italian friend was shocked to learn that Japanese students clean their schools, while I was amazed that Italian



Momo (far right) with fellow students

school days are much shorter. These talks showed me how daily routines reflect deeper cultural values.

Studying abroad was challenging but helped me grow. I took classes in poetry analysis, business English and Czech language. Learning Czech through English was tough since the pronunciation was difficult. So I struggled with it every day. The business English course was demanding and required six hours of preparation and review for each class, but what I learned was very useful.

Czech Republic impressed me with its

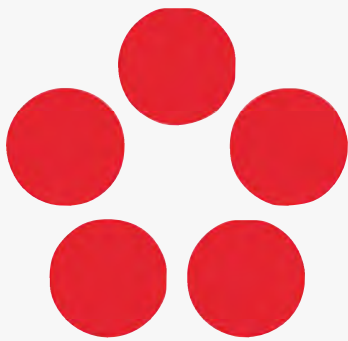
safety and cleanliness, far beyond what I had expected. I rarely encountered culture shock, but everyday tasks such as shopping required me to use simple Czech phrases since many store employees didn’t know English. This became a fun and rewarding experience, as I learned to communicate bit by bit. Although I used English with international students, these small exchanges in Czech gave me a strong sense of accomplishment.

Also, I became curious about why Czech people generally speak English better

than Japanese people, even though both face similar challenges learning it as a second language. To find answers, I conducted interviews and discovered that Czech schools focus on English discussions and presentations from elementary school. In addition, free tuition through university gives students opportunities that many Japanese students lack. These findings made me reflect on Japan’s education system and inspired me to explore this topic further in my academic research.

Studying abroad taught me much more

than just improving my language skills. It helped me develop problem-solving abilities, cultural awareness, which are important for personal growth. A key moment was starting a conversation with a stranger during a long airport layover. That simple exchange showed me I no longer feared making mistakes—a big step in my growth. For anyone thinking about studying abroad, I strongly encourage you to try it. It is not only a chance to learn but also an opportunity to change your perspectives and create lasting memories.



Enjoying a picnic of local food with university students and staff



View over the rooftops of a picturesque Czech town.

“For anyone thinking about studying abroad, I strongly encourage you to try it. It is not only a chance to learn but also an opportunity to change your perspectives and create lasting memories.”

Living in Sweden



While on exchange at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden Mako MIMOTO visited an amazing 18 different countries in Europe. Here she offers some practical advice about life in Sweden

Starting with clothes, you can get everything you need by going to a shopping mall and many students prefer to use H&M. When it starts to get cold, sports and outdoor shops will start to sell goods to help you get through the cold winter, such as down jackets and gloves. Students often shop at second-hand stores, where you can get things cheaply. On the other hand, if you want to sell your clothes, you can give them all away as a donation to a church.

As everything sold in supermarkets is labelled in Swedish, you will have to make

good use of a translation device when shopping, and I think you will struggle at first. There is an Asian supermarket in the shopping mall in Gothenburg, and you can get most of the seasonings you use in Japan there. There are 4-5 different supermarkets in Sweden, and there is a ranking in terms of the prices. Basically, the bigger the supermarket, the cheaper the prices. Eating out is quite expensive, so people often get creative by cooking or bringing food together.

While it is cold outside, it is often quite warm inside and sometimes it can be difficult to adjust your clothes to suit. Most of the student dormitories are concentrated in Olof, next to the Humanities Building, and most students live in Olof. There are also several other student dormitories provided by the university, but you need to choose carefully, considering factors such as distance, location and rent.



I only had a fever and had to stay in bed twice in about six months, but it took a long time to recover. I had a chill and couldn't move around easily, so I had to miss some classes, but since many people catch colds at a certain time of year, there was hardly any problem with missing classes. When my throat started hurting, I had a fever the next day, so I thought it was probably because of the dryness, so I tried to counteract it by hanging my laundry inside to moisten it, and buying throat lozenges from the pharmacy.

The dormitory where I was living was quite far away from most of the other international students' dormitories, but I wanted to make time to actively make friends and communicate, so I made sure to go to the cafes where the students gathered. At first I was worried about whether I would be able to make friends, but I was able to get to know them better through meeting up with them



again and again and playing games together. At first you might struggle with communicating in English, but if you meet students who are willing to listen carefully, and if you go to places where you can speak English and consciously make an effort to spend more time speaking, it won't be so difficult.



“I wanted to make time to actively make friends and communicate, so I made sure to go to the cafes where the students gathered.”
—Mako MIMOTO—

‘Oz’

Marin KONISHI spent a month in Brisbane, Australia studying English. Here she describes some of her more interesting experiences, including being caught in a tropical cyclone!



During my study abroad experience in Brisbane, Australia, I feel that I grew a lot as well as being able to come into contact with many things that I would not have been aware of or known if I had stayed in Japan. In the following, I will discuss the characteristics of the local culture and society and how they compare with Japan's, what is important when communicating with people of different backgrounds, and how I will make use of the skills and experiences I gained through my study

abroad experience in the future.

First how does the local culture and society compare with Japan? The thing that I liked the most about Australian culture was the custom of friendly greetings. In particular, I thought it was wonderful that the phrase ‘How are you today?’ was heard all over the city. In Japan, we are used to people greeting their neighbours in this way, but in Australia, unlike in Japan, people greet each other in this way even though they don't know each other at all. I felt that this culture

must be deeply rooted in the friendliness of the Australian people, because they ask you wherever you go, in shops, restaurants and reception areas. I also learnt that Australia is a free society with a relaxed culture. There are many Japanese people in Brisbane, but there are also many people from other countries, so I felt that there is a high degree of freedom. In Japan, there is an atmosphere where people are concerned about the eyes of others and have to conform because of the importance of

cooperation, but in Brisbane, in a good sense, no one is concerned about the eyes of others and they seem to value individuality because they are themselves. I also saw many times that even on weekdays, when I went to beaches and parks, children and adults were playing and enjoying the space there, and I felt that they seemed to value relaxation more than in Japan. And as a society that goes to bed early and gets up early, many cafés open at around 7am and close at around 3pm, which was surprisingly different



from Japan. One thing in common with Japan is that people are kind. Whenever I asked someone for help when I didn't know the way or how to use something, they always made an effort to solve the problem.

The second point is the importance of communicating with people of different backgrounds. The important things are to try and understand what they are saying, to be interested in what they are saying and to be able to talk about yourself. This is what I felt when I came to Brisbane and came into contact with people from different countries. Being interested means that, as far as possible, the listener asks questions and elicits information. If the speaker does not receive any questions, he or she may feel insecure, and then the desire to communicate wanes, as if they are not interested in him or her. In order to prevent this, listeners should ask questions about anything they are interested in, so that mutual understanding can be deepened and communication can continue. Furthermore, I felt that when talking to people you have never met before, you need to be able to give a certain amount of information about yourself in order to shorten the distance between you. In order to expand the topic of conversation and gain understanding from the other person, you have to be able to tell them more about yourself, and without mutual understanding, communication will not work, so I realised that two things are particularly important: an attitude of understanding and transmission from yourself.

How I will connect my experiences and the skills I gained this time to the future? This was my first solo experience abroad, so it was a big thing for me. I feel that I acquired a spirit of challenge

and better speaking skills in particular. I would like to use these things to challenge myself even if classes seem difficult, if I think I will never succeed in finding a job, and if I otherwise think negatively. I would also like to make use of the improved speaking skills I have acquired, not only in my domestic activities, but also in my overseas activities and in making friends abroad. Although my skills are still lacking, I want to remember the growth I felt here and use my experience as a confidence boost for my future.

“This was my first experience abroad on my own, which was a big experience for me, and I feel that I acquired a spirit of challenge and speaking skills in particular.”

—Marin KONISHI—



Malaysian memories

By Yuri UTSUMI

In 2024, I went to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia for about 7 weeks, where I took English classes with people from various countries at ELC language school. I learned through studying abroad that a major difference between Japan and Malaysia is that multiculturalism is deeply rooted. While Japan is dominated by the national culture, Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, so various languages, religions, foods are encountered. For example, many Malaysians are Muslim and don't eat pork, so the meat dishes are usually beef or chicken. This seemed to be the case in all types of restaurants. Also, although there are many differences in multicultural societies, they are able to coexist because they understand

and respect each other.

As for the commonalities, I didn't feel that Japan and Malaysia had much in common, but I felt that public transportation and public places were well maintained. In fact, there are signs on the monorail and subway warning that littering is punishable by a fine, and cleaning staff often patrolled those areas. However, in crowded tourist spots far from the city, garbage is usually scattered on the roadside, so not all places are clean.

So, what is important when communicating with people with different cultures? During my time abroad, Ramadan, a major events for Muslims, was held. The purpose of Ramadan is to deepen the faith, and it lasts 30 days. In addition to abstaining from eating and drinking, smoking and sexual activity are also prohibited. The



temperature in Malaysia is often above 30C, and it feels like you can't live without water. However, since Muslims couldn't drink water during the daylight hours, we tried to accommodate them, for example, by not putting water bottles on the table. However, there were times when I thought I understood, and that concern backfired. When I told a student that not being able to drink water seemed difficult, he replied, "It's not because it's my dedication to God, so don't say that." And when I warned him about a puddle that looked dangerous, he replied that water belongs to God and is not dangerous. I learned that words of concern in Japan can be misunderstood if you do not understand

religious differences, and in intercultural communications it is necessary to research basic information about the culture of the other country, and think before

"I could make a lot of wonderful memories"

speaking.

So how will I make use of the experience and skills I gained on this course? In the future, I will make sure to make time to practice English in order to further improve my English skills, and continue to interact with the friends I made. In addition to learning basic English, I would like to learn medical English as I would like to participate in international volunteer activities, and provide nursing care to both Japanese and people from overseas as a nurse who can speak and act from the perspective of others.

Feature: Sun Pacific College

Since 2022 Kochi University students have been able to study at **Sun Pacific College**, a Japanese-run language school in northern coastal city of Cairns. In this promotional feature we look at the school and staff.

SPC offers a variety of English language courses.

- **General English:** A comprehensive course covering all language skills.
- **Intensive English:** A fast-paced program for rapid language development.
- **IELTS and Cambridge Exam Preparation:** Specialized courses for specific exams.
- **Vocational Training:** Certificate and diploma programs combining language learning with business skills.

Student Support

The college provides various support services, including:

- **Accommodation Assistance:** Helping students find suitable housing.
- **Academic Counseling:** Offering guidance and support to students.



- **Social Activities:** Organizing cultural and social events.

Campus Life and Location

SPC has two campuses, in Cairns and Brisbane. Situated in the picturesque suburb of Kewarra Beach in northern Cairns, the Cairns campus college provides a peaceful learning environment for international students with both on- and off-campus accommodation options. The sister campus is located in the heart of Brisbane a multicultural city, offers opportunities for students to explore Australian culture.

Accreditation and Quality

Sun Pacific College is accredited by the peak national body for English language education in Australia, ensuring high standards of quality and student care. For more information about studying at SPC, contact GEASC.

Manila thriller!

During the 2025 spring break Mai TAKEDOMI travelled to the Philippines to study at Ateneo de Manila

Through studying in the Philippines, I was able to discover many differences between Japanese and Filipino society and culture, and broaden my own horizons. First of all, I found that many Filipinos are cheerful and friendly, and can easily open up to new people. Japanese people tend to keep new people at a distance, so I felt an atmosphere of openness and friendliness in the Philippines. The food culture in the Philippines was also similar to that of Japan in some respects and different in others. Filipino food is characterised by a sour, sweet and spicy taste, with traditional dishes such as *adobo* and *sinigang* being particularly popular. Japanese cuisine, on the other hand, is characterised by lighter

flavours, for example, sushi and tempura. However, both countries have a culture of valuing food and enjoying meals with family and friends. Furthermore, there were also differences in education. In the Philippines, education was mainly conducted in English and the environment was conducive to improving English language skills. In Japan, education is conducted mainly in Japanese, but in recent years there has been an increased focus on English language education. I felt that both countries share the same emphasis on

education and enthusiastic support for students' learning.

Religion is deeply rooted in daily life in the Philippines, and many people are Catholic. Attending church is common and religious events are held. In Japan, however, religion is a matter of personal freedom and one does not see many devotees, and religious events do not have much impact on daily life. So while there are many differences between the Philippines and Japan in terms of religion, similarities can also be found. In both countries, people are

kind and there is a deep-rooted culture of valuing education and food. It was a very valuable experience for me to be able to understand different cultures and find commonalities through this study abroad experience.

I felt during my overseas training that the most important thing when communicating with people from different societies and cultures is to respect the other person's culture. When conversing with people from different cultures, you need to respect and try to understand their culture and



Mai catching a taxi with fellow students

values, and it is important to think from their point of view rather than imposing your own values on them. Secondly, it is necessary to be 'open-minded'. When communicating, we need to be flexible in our thinking, without preconceptions or prejudices. By being open to new information and perspectives, a deeper understanding can be gained. In addition, 'communication skills' are important. Even when there is a language barrier, gestures, facial expressions and body language can be used to communicate. In addition, listening carefully and asking questions to understand

what the other person is saying is also effective in stimulating conversation and deepening rapport. Finally, patience is also necessary. Communication with people from different cultures and backgrounds can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and friction. However, patiently continuing dialogue can deepen mutual understanding and help us to learn more about what the other person wants to say to us. By valuing these things, communication with people from different cultures and backgrounds can be facilitated and enriched. Therefore, I learned that intercultural



Seeing some of the many sights in Manila

understanding is essential for personal growth

Through studying in the Philippines, I not only developed my English language skills, but also experienced the unique culture of the Philippines. While this had positive aspects, there were also many negative aspects. For example, compared to Japan, there are many street children and the transport system is not well developed. This is also the norm for the local people, but it was very shocking when I first saw it.

Although I have not thought of a clear solution to this problem, I felt that I would like to help give these children a place where they can have food, clothing and shelter and where they can study. For this reason, I will consider taking part in volunteer activities in the future.

“Through this study experience in the Philippines, I not only developed my English language skills, but also experienced the unique culture of the Philippines.”

—Mai TAKEDOMI—



Classroom at Ateneo de Manila

Brighton rock!



1st Year student Shuma SAJI describes his time studying in the seaside town of Brighton

From February 19th to March 18th, 2024, I studied abroad at Oxford International Language School in Brighton, England. During my study abroad, I learned English with people from various countries, mainly in the Middle East and South America, and had the experience of interacting and hanging out with them outside of class.

During my days there, I made many discoveries, experienced Britain firsthand and noticed many differences between the daily environment in Japan and that in Brighton. There were also many differences between the image of Britain I had in my mind before arriving there to study abroad.

What I discovered at school was that at first I thought there would be a lot of people from other European countries and Asian countries, but in fact there were a lot of people from the Middle East, such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, etc.

The majority of students were from Turkey, and there were also many students from South America, such as Mexico and Colombia. There were no students from the countries I had expected to be from, and I was surprised to see that there were many students from other countries.

I have had contact with people from many different countries in my life. However, this was my first time interacting with Middle Eastern people, so it was a very

**“There were many differences between the image of Britain I had in my mind before arriving there to study abroad.”
—Shuma SAJI—**

refreshing experience. They are very expressive and, in terms of personality, they are free-spirited in a good way, but are very punctual in a bad way. I had the impression that it was a bit of a hassle-free experience.

During class, they would talk to me in a friendly manner, using gestures and movements, and I would exchange opinions with fellow Middle Eastern and non-Middle Eastern students. Sometimes they would get heated up and yell at each other, and I would be scolded by the teacher, or I would be called in and scolded for being late to class every time.

Outside of class, we would get together and smoke, and on special days, we would have them introduce us to their cultures and cuisines, and I, as

a Japanese person, was asked to comment on how I felt about them. Specifically, on the National Day of Kuwait, I was shown their traditional costumes, and my Saudi Arabian friends introduced me to Saudi Arabian cuisine at a restaurant serving Middle Eastern cuisine. The dishes were rice dishes, such as saffron rice topped with chicken, which was almost twice as long as Japanese rice, but was very delicious.

The thing that was the most different from the image I had during my interactions with them was that I had a preconceived notion that Turkish people are very pro-Japanese because of the Etoile disaster that I learned about in my ethics class in elementary school. However, in reality, that was not the case at all. I was very shocked.



Nursing major Kohana YAMAZAKI spent 4 weeks in Brisbane, Australia on a study program. This is her story.

What did I learn through studying abroad? There three main differences and commonalities in society and culture that I felt overseas.

The first is the individuality of people in different countries. Brazilians and Colombians can express their opinions clearly and are confident in themselves. I saw Brazilians and Colombians arguing their opinions. Seeing this, I gained respect for people who could clearly communicate their opinions to others, even if they differed in their views. If my opinion is different from another person's, I may end up

conforming to the other person and keep my feelings hidden. I was able to learn the importance of communicating with and understanding each other, even if my opinions are different.

A second difference is the Australian working environment. I found a lot of differences when I went to shops, restaurants and markets. I felt that Japanese people were more stressed by working than Australians. In Australia, many employees were talking to each other, and to customers, while looking at their smartphones. I thought

it was wonderful that people working seemed to be having fun.

The third is that everyone has things to worry about and to struggle with. I have Brazilian friends that I look up to. However, these friends told me that in the past, they had had mental issues and sickness. I also learned that my Colombian friends have some unsettling experiences.

Next, regarding what is important in intercultural communication, I felt that it was vital not to use my way of thinking, values, or way of perceiving things as a standard. People have their own values, beliefs and perceptions depending on the environment in which they were raised. Things that I take for

granted are not always normal for others.

Therefore, I think it is important to try to understand other people's opinions without using yourself as a standard. In addition, your actions and statements may make the other person feel uncomfortable. I said "you look like a monkey" to my Brazilian friend because his behavior reminded me of a monkey. I didn't mean anything bad. However, I later found out the word 'monkey' is a discriminatory term in Brazil. From this experience, I learned it is important to be careful what you say.

As to how I will make use of the experience and skills I have gained in the future, I had a lot of worries in Japan, so I decided to try learning



in a different environment. I learned from Brazilians and Colombians the importance of having confidence in oneself and expressing one's opinions. In addition, by interacting with people from different cultures and values, I was able to learn to understand others even if their opinions differed from my own, and not to perceive things based on my own ideas. I believe that these are very important things when interacting with people. I often struggled with relationships, but I thought

that I could build a better relationship by making the most of them. In addition, seeing the people around me speaking English better and striving for their dreams gave me motivation to pursue my dreams. Therefore, I decided to work harder on nursing, studying English, and working part-time. For me, this study abroad experience has become a very important part of my life. I want to act in a way that I can make use of in my future life.





The Land Down Under

By Maho WATANABE

In spring 2025 I stayed in Cairns, Australia, for about a month and experienced first-hand the social and cultural differences between Japan and Australia. One of the most striking differences was the difference in the sense of time and fare for public transport. In Japan, it is commonplace for trains and buses to run on time. In Cairns, however, buses are often late and sometimes do not arrive on time. In terms of fares, it was possible to travel to the city, which is more than 20km away, for a fare of about 50 yen. Furthermore, for unknown reasons, fares were often waived when there were delays, in contrast to the strict fare system in Japan. Some societies, such as Japan, require strict management, while others, such as Cairns, are more flexible. I learnt the importance of understanding the differences between each culture and the ability to adapt. In addition, being exposed to a culture and society different from Japan's allowed me to have a sense of values that I did not have before, and broadened my horizons.

Secondly, the most important thing I learnt when communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds through my short-term

study abroad experience was to respect others. Respect is important even when communicating with people from the same culture, but you need to be even more aware of it when talking to people from a different culture. Trying to understand the other person's values leads to smooth communication. It was also important to avoid misunderstandings caused by language differences. For example, in situations where you do not fully understand, pretending to understand they are not clear can lead to major misunderstandings later on. Therefore, I felt that I needed to make it clear if I did not understand. Furthermore, it was a great help to use not only words but also gestures and facial expressions. Even if their English was not perfect, it was easier to convey my intentions to the other person by using gestures. The ability to rephrase is also necessary, and flexibility is required to be able to explain in another language if one





expression is not understood. I felt that these efforts to communicate with and understand others are extremely important in cross-cultural communication.

Finally, when I think about how I can use the experiences and skills I gained from this experience in my future life and career, the first thing that comes to mind is improving my language skills. Through spending time abroad, I have had more opportunities to actually use English and have gradually acquired the ability to overcome language



barriers. I would like to continue to study English, especially to improve my practical conversational skills. I would also like to try to acquire English qualifications and make use of them in my future work. Furthermore, I would like to make use of my experience of cross-cultural exchange and actively engage with international students in Japan. I want to actively deepen exchanges while understanding their culture, so that I can offer the same warm support I received in my home country to international students coming to Japan. I am convinced that by broadening my understanding of different cultures, I will be able to further broaden my own horizons. I would also like to take on new challenges. During my study



abroad, there were many unpredictable events that required the ability to respond flexibly each time. Through the experience of things not always going according to plan, I learnt the importance of flexible thinking. I would like to make use of this experience, actively challenge new things in the future and develop the ability to cope in any environment.

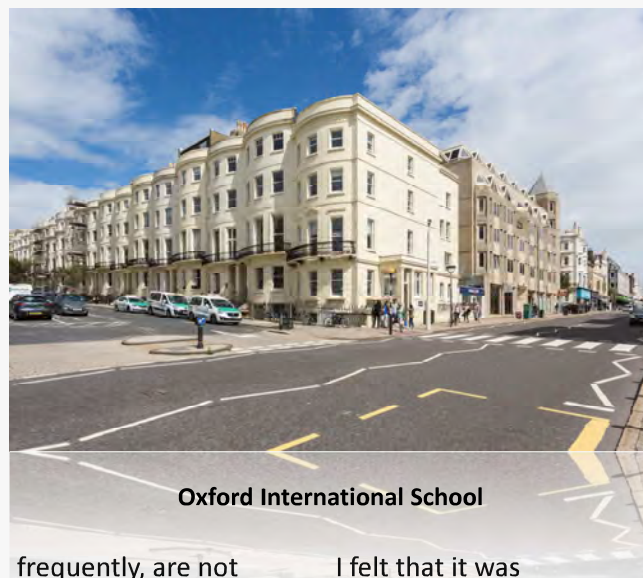
Through my short-term study abroad in Cairns, Australia, I was able to experience a different society and culture, and learn a lot. This short-term study abroad experience was definitely a big growth step in my life.

Crossing cultures

By Kurara TANI

While studying in the U.K, I felt that there were many differences between Japanese and British culture. There were people from many different countries and they always greeted each other when they came to school in the morning, which is different from Japan. In Japan, people sometimes do not greet other students when they arrive at school. However, people in the UK always greeted each other and talked about how their day was going. The game of rock-paper-scissors is also different from that in Japan. They played rock-paper-scissors with their hands under the usual 'par' and 'choki'. I was also

impressed by the way they often hugged each other and talked a lot. I also thought it was different from Japan in that many people smoked cigarettes while walking on the street or used the phone loudly without paying attention to their surroundings. In Japan, you don't see many people smoking on the street or talking on the phone while walking. My host mother was Chinese and she served me a wide range of food such as rice and noodles. I also understood once again that eating with a plate at meals is a part of Japanese culture. In China, she said, it is customary to eat with the plate on the table. They also understood that things that are commonplace in Japan, such as washing clothes and showering



Oxford International School

frequently, are not commonplace in the UK. In contrast to the differences, the similarities between the Japanese and British cultures are that in the UK there are many situations where sorry and thank you are often used. In Japan, too, 'thank you' and 'excuse me' are often used in everyday life.

Because my English pronunciation is not good, it was not easy to get across when I actually went to an English-speaking country. In particular, I had a hard time communicating with my host mother because she could not easily understand my English. However, I was able to improve my English by asking questions in English about things I didn't understand. Therefore,

I felt that it was important to be willing to communicate with them. I think it is important not to give up speaking because your English is not understood, but to

"I also acquired the ability to try various things without fearing failure."

—Kurara Tani—

speaking your own English more and more. This is because if you avoid communicating, it will be difficult for others to communicate with you. Therefore, it is necessary not to end a conversation abruptly, but to connect to various topics and communicate actively. The language school students actively expressed their opinions



Brighton's 1360 is a giant elevator on the seafront that provides people with views over Brighton and the surrounding area

in class and spoke English voluntarily, which led to an improvement in their English language skills. It is also important to learn about the culture and customs of people from other countries.

I believe that I was able to acquire the independence to actively participate in activities and to speak to others on my own initiative. In order to make friends in the short period of three weeks, I actively tried to talk to my classmates. At first, I was nervous and could not communicate well in English, but as I spoke, I gradually became able to communicate better. Also, at first it was difficult to communicate well and speaking English was painful, but after one week I wanted to speak English more. Furthermore, I think my speaking and listening skills have improved the most by putting myself in an environment

where I never hear Japanese and speaking English every day, and I want to make use of this in my future English studies. I also acquired the ability to try various things without fearing failure. I was able to try various things, such as gesturing and speaking to convey what I wanted to say in English as hard as I could, and riding the bus to different places. At first I didn't really want to go out anywhere because I couldn't use my phone outside, so I couldn't use maps and so on. However, the people at the language school introduced me to different places in Brighton and I wanted to go to more places. And I visited a lot of places, making sure I learnt the roads and only knew the way back. In this way, I would like to continue to challenge various things with curiosity



The Brighton Lanes are a popular shopping and street cafe area



The Royal Pavilion is one of Brighton's most famous attractions

and without fear of failure.

When I first came to Brighton in the UK, I noticed many things. Brighton was a beautiful city with

the floor and dirt left after eating something. I was surprised because in Japan it is commonplace for schools to be clean because there are people who clean up after

“At first, I was nervous and could not communicate well in English, but as I spoke, I gradually became able to communicate better.”

—Kurara TANI—

many people, full of vitality and lined with historical buildings from long ago. However, I had the image that cars were faster and people walked faster than in Japan. Also, walking around the streets of Brighton, one can understand how clean Japan is. In Brighton, there is a lot of rubbish and streets that are not clean and paved. And inside the school, there was rubbish on

themselves. I was also surprised to find that cars are parked along the road and there are no parking lots. Living in such a completely different environment from Japan made me realise once again not only how wonderful Brighton is, but also how wonderful Japan is.

Brisbane memories

Nursing major Aika NAKAHARA spent 4 weeks in Brisbane, Australia on a study program. This is her story.

During my study abroad in Australia, I experienced many cultural differences. First of all, I felt that there are many vegetarians and vegans in Australia, including my own host family. Every restaurant in Australia has at least one dish for vegetarians and vegans, and one restaurant has a menu called "vegetarian, vegan, and other" on the menu, and the menu for vegetarians is listed on the first page. In Japan, there were no vegetarians or vegans around me, and I hadn't seen many menus for them in restaurants, so I felt that the culture was not so familiar in Japan. In fact, when my host family, who are vegetarians, visited Japan, they told me that it was very difficult to find a meal that they could eat because there were no vegetarian menus in the restaurants and many of the dishes included meat.

I felt that there are many Japanese people who do not try to convey things to the other person directly, whereas many foreigners clearly express their opinions and say yes and no. I have a typically Japanese personality, and I used to go along with the other opinions of others without expressing my feelings clearly, I didn't show my feelings, I didn't show my feelings clearly, and I didn't clearly say yes or no. However, this caused confusion and irritation for my Brazilian friends, and she said,



"You decide, what do you want to do? Say your will." The other Japanese person I was with was asked by a Brazilian friend to go, but I felt a little awkward because it was my first meeting, and I was wondering if I could join her, so I declined, and I couldn't get this feeling to her, and she said, "Why? Why? Why we cannot stay together?" I was being asked, and I was confused by each other. Also, my host family was very vocal about their opinions and thoughts, so I succumbed to the pressure and didn't say much about my thoughts, and there were days when I wanted to change

"Through study abroad, I seem to have achieved my goal of having English conversation skills at the level of a university student. This experience made me more interested in learning English and speaking."

—Aika NAKAHARA—

homestay because of the strict curfew and house rules. However, when I consulted with the SPC, they told me that it is natural for people to have disagreements with their host families because a homestay is a person-to-person relationship, and that many Australians are very clear about things, so you can also express your intentions and thoughts.



Aika with her classmates and teacher

From this experience, I learned that regardless of language, it is important not only to listen to the other person's opinion, but also to convey your own thoughts clearly, and to clearly indicate that if you say yes, you will say yes, and if you say no, you will say no. I also felt that it was important to accept the culture and sociality of others and to try to reach out to them. There was a language barrier, and it was sometimes difficult to convey small nuances or misunderstandings, but I also learned that it was necessary not to give up and to try to convey something using gestures and other phrases. Through this study abroad experience, I seem to have achieved my goal of having English conversation skill at the level of a university student. It also made me more interested in learning English and speaking English, and I wanted to learn more practical English expressions, learn difficult English words, and have deep interactions with native speakers. In the future, I would like to make use of this experience by working as a nurse overseas or using a working holiday to get a job overseas. In addition, even if I work in Japan in the future, I hopes to be able to use my English conversation skills to give foreign patients a sense of security.



The city beach in central Brisbane

Feature

The Land of the Long White Cloud

Humanities Faculty student Akari OKABE spent the spring break in Auckland New Zealand on the Global Education Centre Short Term Study Abroad Program. Here she recalls the experience.

The purpose of my study abroad in New Zealand was to improve my English skills, especially practical skills such as listening and speaking and doing *kendo*, which I have been doing since I was a child, overseas. I also wanted to learn about the differences in culture, values, and personalities between Japan and other countries. This was my first time abroad, and it was difficult to prepare myself from scratch. I was very worried about going and speaking alone, and about being able to do it in a place where the language was different. However, it turned out to be the best thing of my life, even though it was only three weeks.



When I went to New Zealand, I felt a lot of social and cultural differences. I went during summer and as a result, the daylight hours were long and it was bright outside even at 8:00 at night. Perhaps because it was a sunny city, the people living in Gayland were all cheerful and very friendly. As I walked down the street, everyone who passed by greeted me with a smile and HELLO. The same situation sometimes occurs in Japan, but if you greet anyone in Japan, you may be considered strange. Also, New Zealand is a multinational culture, and the people I met were not only New Zealanders, but also from other countries. Therefore, I felt that there was little discrimination

and many people were kind. Another thing that I felt was different from Japan was the personality. Japan people tend to act in groups, and when they speak, they are considerate of their surroundings. In addition, there are many people who wear clothes that are trendy, and I feel that they wear similar clothes in the city. I also felt that I could express my individuality by wearing the clothes I wanted to wear. I also did *kendo* in New Zealand. I had the opportunity to have dinner with a person named

“I felt that the most important thing in living in a place with a completely different language was the desire to convey the story rather than English ability.”

—Akari OKABE—



Picknicking with friends

Lina, who has been a member of a *kendo* club in New Zealand for a long time. Lina has lived in New Zealand since she was in high school and now works for an insurance company. We talked a lot over the meal. At that time, Lina said, "One of the things I



struggled with the most when I was a university student was that if I didn't say anything when I was asked about something, it would be thought that I wasn't thinking about anything. I did *kendo* with Lina, and she was the first to speak up when the *kendo* teacher asked the whole group questions. I'm not the type of person who usually takes the initiative to speak, so I felt that such things change in different countries.

I went to a language school for three weeks. I wanted to make a lot of friends, but at first I was nervous and couldn't talk to them much. But as I gradually got used to speaking English, I didn't have any trouble talking to them, and in fact, I wanted to know more about them, which was a lot of fun. My English is still not at a level where I can accurately convey everything to others, but if I have a desire to communicate even if the grammar is inconsistent, my desperation will be conveyed and he will listen to me until the end. I felt that the most important thing in living in a place with a completely different language was the desire to convey the story rather than English ability.

Through the new discoveries and learning I made during this study abroad, I felt that my world had expanded greatly. Until now, I had not been able to use my English study method in practice at all, but

now I have a clear idea of how I should study from now on. I am currently working at a Korean restaurant in the city, but for some reason the number of customers from overseas has increased since I returned to Japan. Thanks to studying abroad, I am no longer afraid to serve customers in English, and I think it was a very good experience for me. It is very good to still have opportunities to come into practical contact with English.

Feature

‘Frisco



Education faculty major Koki HARA spent a month in the colourful city of San Francisco studying English. Here he describes some of his interesting experiences!

From February 10 to February 24 2024, I went to San Francisco in California, USA, for a short-term study abroad program. I did a homestay and was able to spend a very fulfilling two weeks going to a language school in the center of San Francisco on weekdays and having my host family take me

sightseeing on holidays. Although it was only two weeks, I realized some differences between Japan and the United States, so I would like to explain them next.

I experienced several differences between the United States and Japan while studying abroad. As I

**“In order to communicate. I felt that it was important to first find common topics”
—Koki HARA—**

mentioned earlier, I attended a language school on weekdays. I was staying in a place where it took about two hours by car from my homestay to the language school, so I had to commute to school by bus. In Japan, it is common for buses to arrive at the bus

stop according to the timetable, and it is natural to apologize if you are even a little late. However, in the United States, it is normal to be 15 minutes late, and in the worst cases, it can be significantly delayed. I was shocked because I thought it was normal



“Although it was only two weeks, I was able to learn a lot and gain awareness”

for public transportation to come according to the timetable like in Japan.

Other than that, security varies greatly between day and night. The school I attended was crowded with many people during the day, and it was relatively stable and safe. However, at night, many gangs and homeless people gathered, and I saw many thefts and street fights. In Japan, it is safe all year round, and even if you drop your wallet, it is common for it to come back to you. I was afraid because I never witnessed a fight

on the street. There are many other things that are completely different between Japan and the United States, and I feel that I was able to have a very good experience.

At the school, I often spoke with people who spoke different native languages, and my host family was also local, so I had to converse in English 24 hours a day. In order to communicate, I felt that it was important to first find common topics. For example, on February 11 the "Super Bowl" was held. This is the final game of the biggest tournament of American football—one

of the sports of great public interest in the United States.

Therefore, I decided to eat with my host family at a nearby restaurant. When I had a conversation with a complete stranger at the restaurant, we discussed many topics and watched the Super Bowl game on TV. Not only that, but I was able to talk with my classmates at the language school about sports and other things, and get to know them. From these experiences, I realised that it is most important to expand the conversation starting with a common interest.

Although it was only two weeks, I was able to learn a lot and gain

awareness. Some of these things I learned and became aware of are difficult to verbalize. However, I believe that I was able to have this experience because I went there alone, and interacted with the local people through conversation. I am thinking of obtaining an English teaching license in the future. Studying at a language school was a good opportunity for me to realize what I am lacking in order to achieve that goal. I will never forget this experience, and if I have the opportunity, I hope to study abroad again. For that reason, I would like to improve my English through my own efforts in the future.



Short-Term Volunteer Abroad Program

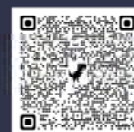


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