

The background of the entire page is a photograph of cherry blossoms in full bloom. The blossoms are light pink and white, with some in sharp focus in the foreground and others blurred in the background. In the background, a body of water and distant mountains are visible under a clear sky.

JENESYS 2019~2020

10th-18th Dec 2019

Fung Hok Ching Harold

JENESYS2019

Introduction

JENESYS—the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths Programme—is a youth exchange programme organized by the Japanese government. It aims to promote mutual understanding among students in the East Asia region through activities such as school visits, and cultural experiences like homestays and sight-seeing.



This year, the programme took place between 10th and the 18th of December. The Hong Kong Delegation comprised 50 members: 43 students, one school head, four teachers, and two EDB officials. During the exchange, we travelled across Tokyo, Osaka, Nara, and Ehime. The trip taught us about Japanese culture and history, and fostered our understanding of the Japanese lifestyle by immersing us deep into the locals' lives.

Itinerary

10/12 (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arrive at Narita International Airport- Briefing Session
11/12 (Wed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Made in Japan” seminar- Visit to National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo- Visit to Nijubashi Bridge of the Imperial Palace- Welcoming party
12/12 (Thu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Travelling to Osaka through Shinkansen- Visit to Suita City Resource Recycling Center- Visit to Panasonic museum
13/12 (Fri)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- School exchange
14/12 (Sat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arrive at Nara- Visit to the Todai-ji Temple- Visit to the Kashihara Shrine- Homestay
15/12 (Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Domestic flight to Matsuyama- Visit to Matsuyama Castle- Visit to Ehime University Museum- Arrive at hot spring hotel Okudogo Ichiyunomori- Traditional Japanese cuisine
16/12 (Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- School exchange
17/12 (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Domestic flight to Tokyo- Visit to Shinagawa Disaster Prevention Experience Center- Visit to Diver City Tokyo- Farewell party
18/12 (Wed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arrive at Haneda Airport

Sakurazuka High School

On day 4 of our trip, we visited Sakurazuka High School in Toyonaka, Osaka. We first attended a briefing session about the school's culture and activities. Then, we had a chance to take lessons together with Japanese students, learning more about Japanese literature. After a brief lunch session, some of the seniors walked us around the campus, introducing us to the school's facilities and extracurricular activities. We visited their Kendo Club, their school band, and even had a chance to try out the traditional teaism ceremony organized by the Teaism Club.

In Sakurazuka High School, all students must participate in at least one extracurricular activity, and cannot quit or switch clubs easily in their first three junior years. In addition to club-based ECAs, Sakurazuka High school also organizes sports day, swimming gala, cultural festival, and an art festival every year. The school aims to help students to find interests and help them develop a sense of responsibility through organizing different activities throughout the school year.





**Groupmates
presentation**



Literature lesson



School lunch







During the school visit, I was especially impressed by students' passion and dedication to their clubs and societies. When we were walking around their campus during their ECA sessions, all of them were practising seriously, even though there were not any supervising teachers.

I was also very impressed by their language skills. Before the exchange, I thought communication would be difficult because I did not expect students to be able to speak English that well. To my surprise, some of them could speak fluently, which helped us learn more about their school and their activities.

Students were very friendly and actively engaged with us during the whole visit. The members of the Dance and Kendo Clubs even invited us to practise with them and taught us some basics.

Matsuyama Higashi High School

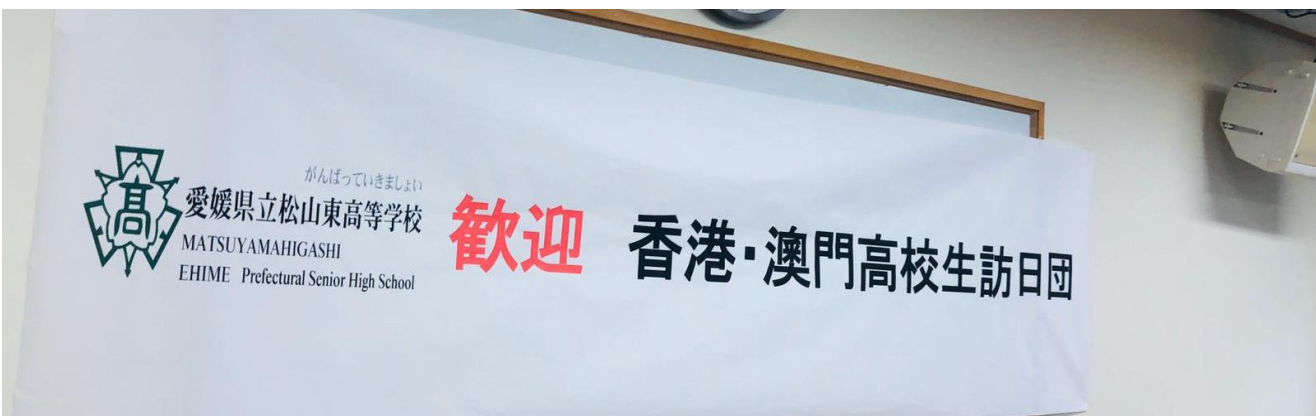
On Day 7, we had our second school exchange at Matsuyama Higashi High School in Ehime. The Principal and students welcomed us during their assembly and gave a PowerPoint presentation about their school activities. The Calligraphy Club also put on a live performance on stage to welcome us. Then, we took English and Music lessons with the Japanese students.

After lunch, we took part in their daily cleaning activity, in which students go outside their classrooms and clean the campus together. I was very impressed by their collective effort in keeping their school a clean environment.

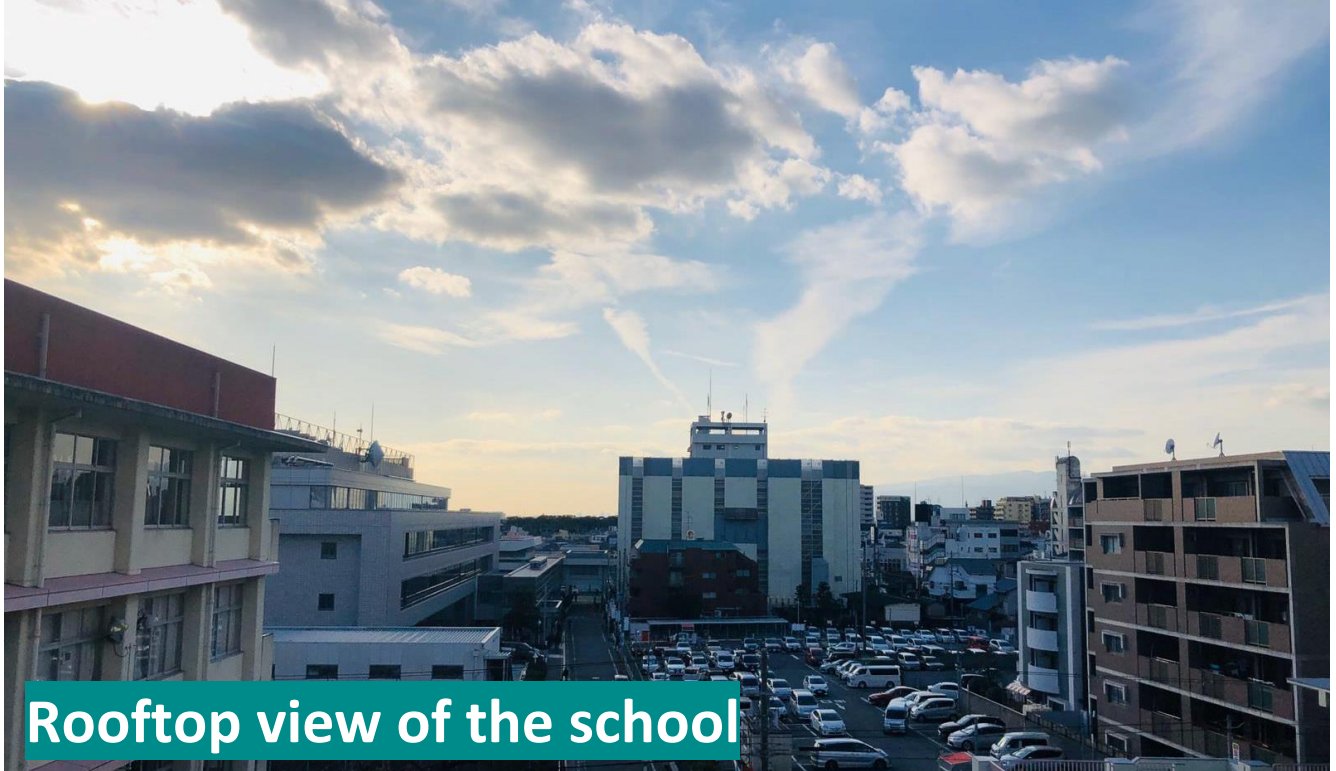
I then returned to the conference room to give a presentation about Hong Kong culture, such as our snacks and local tourists spots. Their students also introduced some local Japanese games and traditional cultural activities to us, such as teaching us how to do origami and kendama.

We then separated into different groups to try out different ECAs, including kendo, archery, and ikebana. Unlike in Sakurazuka High School, this time, I had a chance to change into formal kendo clothing and learn the basics in a match. The club chairman even gave us a demonstration match.









Rooftop view of the school



Centre of the school

Homestay

The Japanese homestay was a very memorable experience. After visiting the Kashihara Shrine on the 5th day of our trip, we headed to Asuka village in Takaichi District, Nara Prefecture. The organizer delivered a speech in the welcoming ceremony, after which the 43 of us were separated into groups of 3-4 for the homestay.

After the ceremony, my groupmates and I met Ms Era, who works as a housewife in the host family. She drove us to a local supermarket to pick up groceries for that night's dinner and bought us some snacks on the way. Although language barriers did exist during our stay, we had a groupmate who knew how to speak Japanese, which made communication easier.

During our stay, we learned a lot more about Japanese culture. We showed them photos of Hong Kong, and they told us a lot about living in Japan. We even played games with the youngest son during our stay and helped Ms Era to prepare the dinner. After dinner, we watched football together, a match between Hong Kong and Japan. Overall, we had a great time and felt welcomed by the host family.

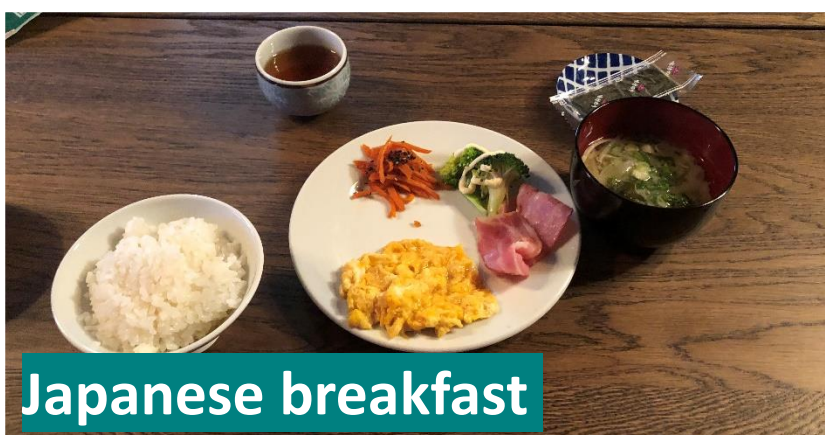




Welcoming ceremony at village centre



Selfie with the Era family



During our short stay with the Era family, I was greatly impressed by their genuine hospitality. Although we were foreigners who could barely speak Japanese, they treated us like we were part of their family, and actively engaged with us throughout the whole stay. They took care of us with great effort and made our stay as comfortable as possible.

After a good night's sleep on tatami mats, we gave the host family our presents and headed off to the airport for our domestic flight to Matsuyama.

Photos from activities and sightseeing



“Made in Japan” talk



Heading to Tokyo National Museum



Welcoming party performance



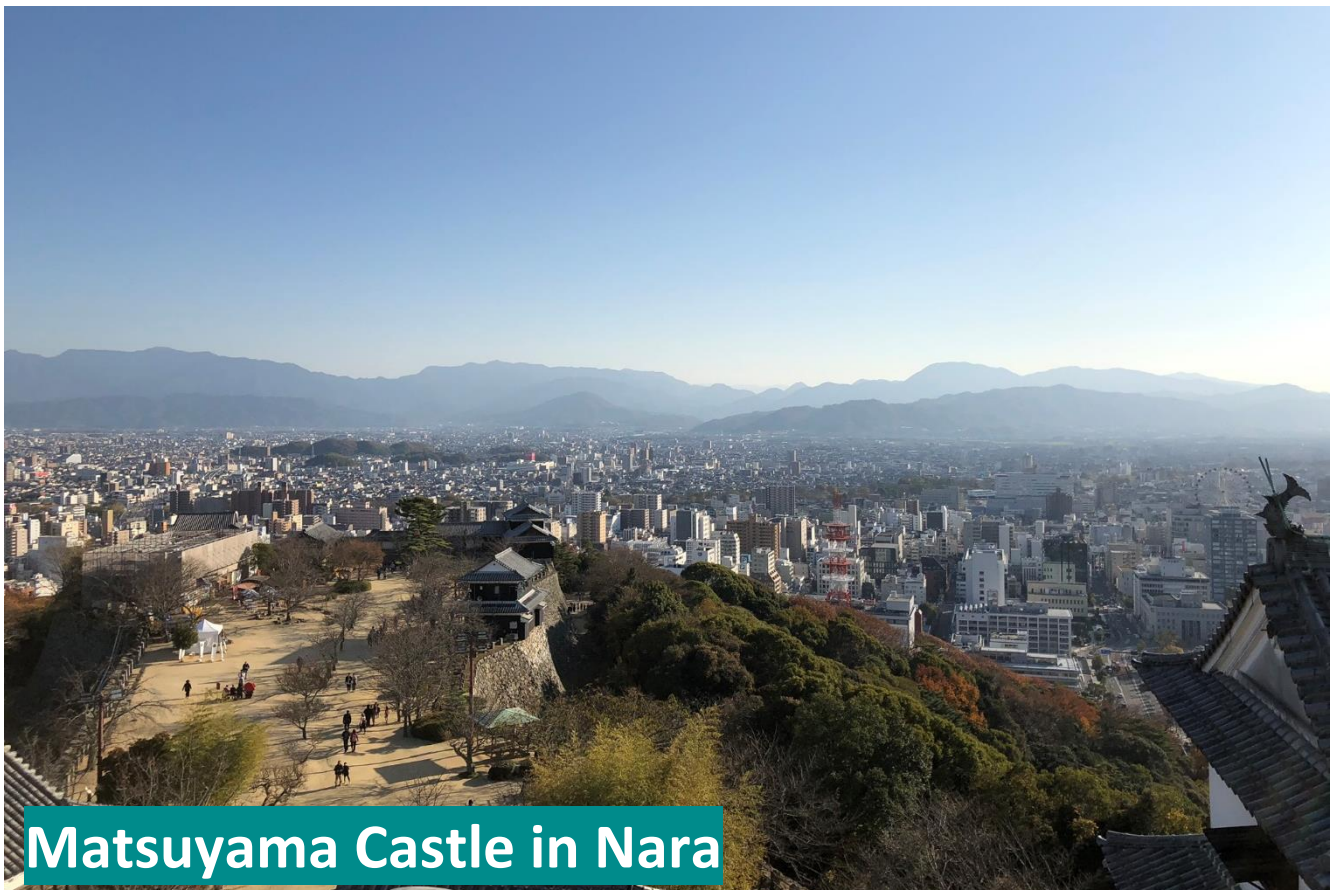
Panasonic Museum



Todai-ji Temple



Lake near Todai-ji Temple





Diver City Gundam

Self-reflection

To me, The JENESYS programme was more than just travelling abroad for nine days. It was an eye-opening experience because we had a chance to learn about Japanese culture from a local perspective. From school exchanges to homestays, the programme let us immerse ourselves deeply into the Japanese community and learn what it is like to be a local Japanese student, something that I have never experienced before.

I was also very impressed by their hospitality. No matter where we went, the Japanese tried to make us feel welcome. During my visits at both high schools, for example, the students and teachers welcomed us warmly, and patiently answered our questions about their education system, even though there were significant language barriers. At our homestay, Ms Era also offered us lots of snacks and drinks and prepared a scrumptious dinner for us. This great hospitality from the Japanese culture is something that I think we can admire and learn from.

Their dedication to environmental protection was also very impressive. When we visited the Suita City Resource Recycling Center, the manager showed us the types of garbage in Japan, and the complicated procedure of recycling it. There is even a dedicated department in the center that specializes in recycling bicycle parts and turning them into functional bicycles.

Overall, I was deeply impressed by Japanese culture. Their attention to detail and focus is amazing, and I can learn from them.

Conclusion

The JENESYS programme was an unforgettable experience. I want to thank our principal, Mr Yuen, for nominating me for this trip. I also want to thank Ms Wong for giving me this great opportunity to travel to Japan and providing me support.



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