

2018 JENESYS

A TOUR
REPORT BY:

JAMIE LEUNG



INTRODUCTION

JENESYS, or the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths, is a youth exchange initiative from the Japanese government. It aims to provide a foundation for strong solidarity and mutual understanding within East Asia, and to provide opportunities for foreign students to better understand Japan through activities including field visits, youth interactions and cultural experiences.



BACKGROUND

This year, the Hong Kong Delegation comprises forty-nine members, including one school head, four teachers, two EDB officials and forty-two secondary five students. The delegation visited Japan between 9 and 17 December, travelling across Tokyo, Kyoto, Ibaraki, Shiga and Chiba. Through school attachments, home stays and visiting historical and cultural sites, student-delegates learnt about Japanese life and culture in depth.

ITNERARY

9 DECEMBER TO 17 DECEMBER

DAY 1 (9 DEC)

**Arrived at Narita
Airport in Tokyo**

Briefing Session

DAY 2 (10 DEC)

Visited the Miraikan

**Welcoming
Ceremony**

**Visited the
Nijubashi Bridge**

DAY 3 (11 DEC)

School Visit

DAY 4 (12 DEC)

**Moved to
Shiga Prefecture**

**Met host families
of homestay**

DAY 5 (13 DEC)

**Homestay
Farewell Ceremony**

**Visited the
Koga-ryu
Ninja House**

DAY 6 (14 DEC)

School Visit

DAY 7 (15 DEC)

**Visited the
Fushimi Inari Shrine**

**Visited the Kinkakuji
(Golden Pavilion)**

Back to Tokyo

DAY 8 (16 DEC)

**Visited the
Edo-Tokyo Museum**

**Visited the Ikebukuro
Life Safety
Learning Center**

**Visited
Commercial Facilities**

Farewell Party

DAY 9 (17 DEC)

Back to Hong Kong

SCHOOL ATTACHMENT



Within the 9-day visit, we visited 2 high schools and have learnt much about Japanese high school life.

One thing that stood out with the Japanese students was their passion for various extracurricular activities. All of them have joined at least one of the school's clubs or sports teams – no exceptions. They were all really serious about holding events. In the corridors were countless colourful posters promoting different events. By encouraging students to discover and develop their potential, the school emphasises that education is much more than academic success.



Promotional Posters



Handcraft Workshop

Also, the relationship between students and teachers was beyond my belief. In lessons, the students were attentive and thirsty for knowledge. Any questions were immediately raised during teaching. In Hong Kong, teachers often take up the active role, whereas here in Japan both teachers and students are equal participants.

After lessons, students and teachers talked and made jokes. The teachers even had lunch with the students in the canteen, offering them great opportunities to build a strong bond, thus creating a more harmonious atmosphere.

This solid relationship is built on mutual respect. Sometimes, the students may be making fun of the teachers, but in every serious occasion, they show appreciation and respect. It is unquestionable that the Japanese place great emphasis on courtesy and etiquette. These characteristics have contributed to the schools' active yet cozy ambiance.



Dancing Performance



During Lessons

TOYO Ushiku High School



TOYO Ushiku High School



TOYO Ushiku High School



Hokuryo High School



Hokuryo High School



Hokuryo High School



Hokuryo High School



HOMESTAY



It was a chilly and frosty evening. Here, we met our host family, the Torima. It was my first time in a stranger's home, where the hosts kept babbling words I could not understand! They used a translation app and we gestured with our bodies to try our very best to communicate. When none of us understood each other, we all simply smiled and laughed.



Hearty Homestay



Exotic Railway

It was true that language barriers existed, but it did not hold us back. We shared our travelling experiences and our lifestyles. Mr. Torima told me that in Japan, people do classify one another based on where they live. Tokyo is similar to Hong Kong, where the people are highly efficient and trends evolve rapidly. Tokyo teenagers enjoy all sorts of late night activities such as karaoke, fishing, and of course arcades. In contrast, Osakans have a slower pace and are more friendly to tourists, often offering their helping hands.

In return, we introduced Hong Kong to the host family. We showed them photographs of its cityscape at night and some famous scenic spots. Interestingly, they were intrigued by the political system in Hong Kong. We talked about how Hong Kong differed from the Mainland and, of course, some of our colonial history.

I remember vividly that night, when our hosts drove us to one of the woods nearby. In these forests they had built some temples for nature worship, such as their respect and their belief in the interdependence between humankind and nature. During the drive, we saw plenty of green lights around us. Our hosts explained that these were the eyes of Japanese sika deers. They were foraging and play a great role in the forest's ecology.

Heading back home, they prepared heated mattresses for us to sleep on. We packed together in the bedrooms while gazing at the stars. It was truly an unforgettable experience to sleep on tatami mats, admiring the surroundings, and listening to one of our tour-mates wittily explain the origins of traditional Japanese ceiling lights.



Goodbye and Farewell



Family Picture

To me, they were like my family, taking care of me in a foreign place with heart and soul. We were all moved by their immense and selfless efforts. When we bade each other farewell, everyone was crying so hard, even the host family and our teachers. It was an upsetting scene. With our eyes red and noses running, we said our farewells in a way as is tradition in Japan – to long wave goodbye.





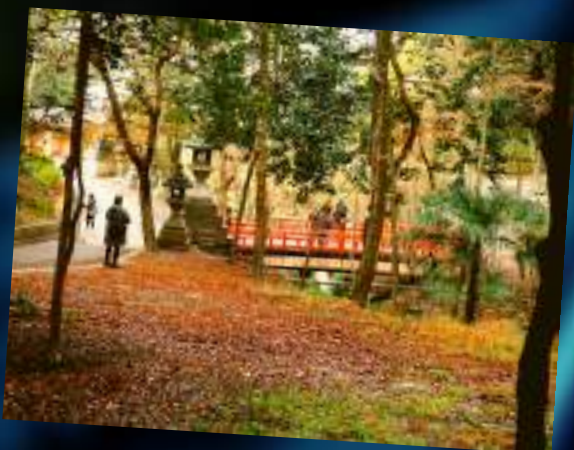
JAPANESE CUISINE







SIGHTSEEING









TO ME...

First and foremost, I have learnt the importance of integrity and humility within Japanese culture. From high schools, host families, to even a simple interaction, the courtesy and manners of the Japanese always left us with great impressions. Since nursery and kindergarten, they have been raised with a sense of belonging and awareness to their nation. They often focus on the minutiae of everyday life and treat relationships with seriousness. This explains their unity and solidarity, displayed during times of disaster. Their respect for people from all walks of life and high regard for nature shows how they are humble by culture and humbled by nature. All these characteristics of the Japanese have contributed to their international prestige.

Apart from appreciating their civility and benevolence, I was also impressed by their organisation: from how they rebuilt their community and economy shortly after disaster, to how they preserve cultural and historical sites. Perhaps this is what makes Japan, a small island country, one of the most well-developed countries in the world. Their high-tech, research-based industries led the world in the 2000s, and their remarkable rebound after the Second World War shows incredible discipline and efficiency. This work ethic and attention to detail, and their well-regulated socio-economic policies, have let them emerge as the third-largest economy in the world.

However, the achievements of a country alone does not help its international relations. Developing values such as acceptance and egalitarianism fosters international harmony. We live in troubled times. Protectionism, terrorism, and anti-globalisation movements are starting to spread, anti-refugee policies are being carried out, and ethnic and religious tensions are at their boiling points. Racism and terrorist attacks are becoming so common, and it is up to us to resolve such issues. It is absurd that, despite two world wars, some conflicts (e.g. Crimea or Kashmir) are still solved through military means, when they should only be resolved through civilised means. Civilians should not be sacrificed for these tug-of-wars between authoritarian regimes.

To conclude, the JENESYS programme sets up a good foundation for strong international bonding. It is hoped that these youth exchange programmes can reduce conflicts and facilitate regional cooperation. Younger generations should continue to be given opportunities to cultivate an appreciation for diversity. Ultimately, having an open-minded worldview encourages youngsters to shape a world free of hate.

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IN THE FUTURE

Admittedly, I had always been indulging myself in materialistic life and seldom was I grateful. In a city where wealth seems to determine success, I believe too that the more I have, the happier I will be. JENESYS has made me rethink what means the most to me.

On the day we said our farewells to our host family, many tears were shed. Both the hosts and we student-delegates were touched from the bottom of our hearts. We could feel their attentiveness, as they enthusiastically showed us their daily routine and their culture. We made local dishes such as tempura and shabu-shabu with them. We harvested vegetables with them in their farm, not to mention that drive to the woods. It was unbelievable how two days of companionship could be so emotional, and we were all grateful for their care and love.

After the homestay, I reflected on how I treat those close to me. Before this programme, I was always more of a taker than a giver. I often took my family and friends' support for granted. I should learn how to appreciate their love to me and complain less. At the same time, I found out what means most to me. It's not money but the bonding I share with everyone who I encounter in my life.

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AT LAST...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Principal, Mr. Yuen, for letting me take part in this exchange; and Miss Wong, my history teacher, who has given me so much support and so many opportunities.



“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” —John F. Kennedy



THE END

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