

2019 Re-inventing Japan Project (Long Term)

Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia

Department of Forest Engineering, 4th year

Leticia Maria Viana Negrão

Tokyo NODAI Department of Forest Science

My experience in Japan

When I started graduation, I always wanted to exchange abroad. I never imagined that one day I would come to Japan, because the selection process seemed to be very difficult. Therefore, I started to study hard to get good grades and a good resume. In addition, that's how I got selected in the Reinventing Japan program. Japan is recognized around the world for its technological and educational development without losing its cultural identity. In Brazil, there is much raw material, but little technological development for the correct use of resources.

In Re-inventing Japan program, I saw the opportunity to help my country develop with Japanese knowledge and techniques. Another reason to be interested in participating in the program was the opportunity to intern in a laboratory, so I chose the Erosion Control and Revegetation Engineering laboratory, because I would like to learn about the techniques used in Japan to be able to apply this knowledge in Brazil. The University of Agriculture – Tokyo NODAI is a very well known educational institution in Japan, with a large structure and good teachers.

NODAI CLASSES

I had the opportunity to participate in many activities during the program. The classes at Tokyo NODAI are very good, the teachers were always available to answer our questions and the university structure is very comfortable and pleasant. I did 5 subjects (Forest and Forestry, Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture, Japanese Brush-up, Comparative Nature Study from Cultural Perspective and Life History and Applications of Landscape Plants). I expected more subjects for Forest Engineering but the class From the Forest and Forestry discipline was very good, I was able to learn many things related to the world forest and Japan. The teachers were always comparing the Japanese forests with other types of forests that have in world.

I loved the Agroforestry classes, the teacher is very good and has a lot of knowledge related to agroforestry systems. He showed how agroforestry systems are important to the environment and how many people survive on this type of system.

The Planning Design of Landscape Architecture classes were very interesting; the teacher was always willing to teach us about the places of Japan, their cultural and tourist importance. We visited several calls, one of the places I liked the most, was the field trip to Mount Takao. The climb was difficult and the mount had several temples full of culture and tradition and a lush nature.

The Comparative Nature Study from Cultural Perspective subject was very interesting because we had conversations about our culture and I learned a lot about the culture of Japan. In this subject, I had the opportunity to talk about the culture of Northern Brazil; it was very interesting because I talked about the foods, dances and cultural manifestations. One of the coolest moments was when I dressed Yukata, thank you very much for this opportunity.

The subject of Life History and Applications of Landscape plants was very good, it was the first class I had in Japan at the time of the Sakuras. It was amazing to learn that there are various kinds of sakura species, the teacher is very good and was always willing to talk about the culture, economy and nature of Japan.

Brush-up classes were a lot of fun. The teacher showed us an easy way to learn Japanese. I was afraid I couldn't keep up with classes because the Japanese language seems to be very difficult. But lessons along with the good material we were given and a good teacher who was always willing to answer our questions made me learn a few things. Now I have more interest in the language, I would like to return to Brazil and take a Japanese course to learn more.



Image 1: Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture class, a visit to JAXA.



Image 2: Comparative Nature Study Class from Cultural Perspective, presentation on the Northern Region of Brazil.



Image 3: Comparative Nature Study from Cultural Perspective lesson, how to use Yukata with Kazuki Nakayama.

LABORATORY ACTIVITIES

The second week I arrived in Japan, we were introduced to the labs where we were going to do an internship during the months we stayed at NODAI, I was introduced to my lab (Erosion Control and Revegetation Engineering). My advisor is called FUKUNAGA Kenji, but I was under the supervision of Professor TACHIBANA Ryuichi, Specialist in Development of arid area by using revegetation technologies, Evaluation of soil environment in revegetation area and Water balance analysis in forest area. He was very considerate of me and showed me the lab. In the early days, I was already helping with lab activities with the other students.

In May, I went on a field trip to Oiso-machi, it was very tiring, because it was my first experience climbing a mountain, and in Brazil, we don't mountains. However, it was an experience that I was able to learn a lot about the plant species in Japan. We identified the species and could see the variety of species they have in the Japanese forests.

In June, I had the opportunity to participate in a field trip for NODAI third year students to Okutama Forest. There we made botanical identification and I was able to learn about various forest species and the economic, social and cultural importance in Japan. We also did soil collection, most of the collection techniques I already knew, because at UFRA I had several activities like these, but some the devices used to collect the soil here are different, more modern and easier to use, so I could use and understand how Japanese technology is advanced in the soil area. The last activity we had there was wildlife. We learned how to place cameras in the woods to identify animals that live there, such as deer and bears. There are many deer in that region, so it is very important to learn what these animals eat and how they survive as it affects the forest. There I also had the experience of eating homemade Japanese food; it is very different compared to breakfast,

lunch and dinner in Brazil. But it was very good, I really enjoyed this field trip, I learned a lot about the forests and the Japanese lifestyle.

In July, we went again to Okutama Forest. However, this time it was just the lab participants. We carry out various activities, including botanical identification and soil collection.



Image 4: Seedling Accounting.



Image 5: Soil collection in Okutama Forest.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

We had several meetings at the Latin American Café, it was the time when students from Latin America (Brazil, Mexico and Peru) interacted with some Japanese students. It was a lot of fun, they had many activities and we could practice a little bit of Japanese, English and Spanish.



Image 6: First Latin American Café.

At the beginning of June, there was the Ryugakusei Party and the international students showed the culture of their country to the other students through food and typical dance. It was great fun, I was very proud to show the Carimbó, a dance typical of the State of Pará of indigenous origin with influences of black and Portuguese culture. We also took some Brazilian foods such as brigadeiro, paçoca, candy coffee and cheese bread.



Image 7: International Students from Brazil in Ryugakusei Party.

Concerning interactions with Tokyo Nodai students, they were wonderful, although some were ashamed and afraid to speak English, and were always willing to help. In my Comparative Nature Study from Cultural Perspective class there was a student named Kazuki Nakayama, she spoke very good English and always participated in all discussions in class. In the last class she taught us how to wear Yukata, it was very interesting because I never thought I would have the opportunity to wear the traditional Japanese clothing that is worn in the summer and has many techniques. It was a pleasure to learn from her about many things about the culture of Japan, I also taught a little about my culture, it was a very good class. In Forest and Forestry classes there were many Japanese, they always interacted with the teachers and when we had any questions, they tried to help us.

EXPLORING JAPAN

The Golden Week, is a week from April 29th to the beginning of May with a series of Japanese holidays. I was able to meet more places, such as Yokohama, an incredible city full of interesting places like Minato Mirai, Chinatown and Yamashita Park where I was surprised to find a group that practiced Capoeira, a Brazilian cultural expression that mixes martial art, sport, popular culture, dance and music.

Saitama is a wonderful place, one of the places I most enjoyed visiting during Golden Week, I went to Hitsujiyama Park and there was a beautiful field with lots of heart-shaped pink and white flowers, behind we could admire Chichibu Hill. We also went to Arakawa River, it is a great place to relax and have fun. The waters are green and there were several people in boats enjoying the beautiful scenery.

During the August holidays, I had the opportunity to leave Tokyo and visit some places such as Hiroshima, Osaka, Nara and Kyoto. Hiroshima is known worldwide for the tragedy that happened during World War II, but during my visit, I was very happy to see that the city has been rebuilt and has a lot of technology and economic development. I stayed there for three days and have to know the Peace Memorial Park, the Peace Memorial Museum and the streets had the experience of tasting the Hiroshima okonomiyaki, which is very famous for the different way of being prepared. I also went to Miyajima Island, a magnificent and charming place. There we climb the mountain to admire the view of the island and enjoy the sunset behind the famous floating torii; I will never forget that moment.

I went to Osaka, a city full of technology; there were many foreigners. We visited some temples and castles. The city also offers entertainment, fun, shopping, food and many other things.

Nara is a beautiful place, I saw many deer in the park, I had never seen one before in my life. It was very funny. The last place I visited Kyoto, a place full of culture and beautiful nature, there I could visit several temples and the famous Golden Pavilion.



Image 8: Flower field in Chichibu, Saitama.



Image 9: Golden Pavilion, Kyoto.



Image 10: International students (Peru, Brazil and México) in Miyajima, Hiroshima.

CONCLUSION

This opportunity brought me a lot of knowledge, not only for my academic and professional career, but also for my personal life. The Re-inventing Japan program provided me with many experiences that I learned a lot about the nature of Japan and its culture. The exchange helped me practice the English language every day, and besides, I learned a little Japanese. I would like to learn more about the Japanese language in order to return to Tokyo NODAI in the future.