

# 2016 Re-Inventing Japan Project

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## 1. Reasons for participating in the study abroad program

Since I was a kid, I wanted to travel around the world to know new countries, cultures and languages. As I were growing up this passion for travel was growing as well. Nowadays I see the study abroad programs as a big opportunity not only to know different countries, cultures and languages, but also to acquire more knowledge about the world, the technologies used in each country. My motivation is to learn as much as I can; see different points of view from certain problem and better ways to solve it; apply new technologies that could be applied in my country.

Therefore, I saw this program as an opportunity to expand my knowledge and open my mind for different points of view by means of exchange of experiences with international students that can share their opinions and knowledge about their academic and life. I have much to learn from them and build a good relationship with another students and with another university is going to improve myself as a student and as a Pearson.

In addition, I always liked to watch Japanese “anime” and have the chance to insert myself in this such exotic and unique culture is indescribable. I always admire the Japanese discipline that made possible to the country to develop; the Japanese food was always a thing of interest for me because I wanted to see if is like the food we know in my country; and finally, I wanted to know about the respect that each person have with another, the relation between student and teacher, young and old people, friends and to strange people. The best thing about this is that some experiences cannot be learned in books or videos, but is a day-by-day life learning.

## 2. Activities during the program

### 2.1. Courses offered at Tokyo NODAI

I had a great experience in Tokyo NODAI and my stay was full of activities. I had classes such as remote sensing, in which I used a GIS based software during the classes to do some analysis; Ecology and Food Production, where I could learn more about the Japanese agricultural system and also from the countries of the others abroad students; microbiology, this particular class was good because I had a lot of previous knowledge of this subject from my university, so I had a very easy understanding of all the topics presented by the teachers; I also had Japanese classes. This last one were a little bit difficult to me because the language is completely different form the languages I already know (Portuguese and English) and my knowledge about the Japanese language was really poor. The Japanese classes were not regular classes because I arrived in Japan more than one month later then the time I should had arrived, so NODAI asked for a Brazilian friend of mine to teach me Japanese for 3 hours every Thursday, and it was great because the classes were dynamic and different every time. He thought me not only the language, how to read and speak, but a lot of the culture and costumes, foods, currency, music and lifestyle.

## 2.2. Interaction with students of Tokyo NODAI

Naturally, I made many friends from different countries during my time at NODAI. It was amazing because we could share our experiences in japan and in our countries. It was difficult to make Japanese friends because they were really shy, but I made some, and they became some of my best friends and took me to visit some touristic paces; though me more about the Japanese language and I though them a little about my own language, which they had interest in learning some things. They also assisted me in some classes and questions I had about the Japanese culture.

The other Brazilian students also helped me showing the university, the clubs and the laboratories. However, the biggest help they gave to me was outside the university, teaching me how to ask for information; taking me to buy clothes for the winter, to buy food and the best places to buy, among other things. They shared with me all the good and bad experiences they had in Japan to advise me about thing that I should or should not do related to the culture, places to go or not during my stay in this beautiful country.

## 2.3. Cultural Activities

One of my first trips in Japan was to Kamakura. I knew about this amazing place from some previous research and it was great to visit this place full of history and culture. Kamakura was the capital of Japan from the end of the 12-century and middle of the 14 century. Surrounded by mountains and ocean, the city was easily defended from the attacks from the enemies. In this period of cultural and economic flourishing was the time when the city expanded and build a lot of temples and shrines. Most of them can be seen today and are made in a wealth of detail and beauty, but it cannot be compared to the Great Buddha Daibutsu, a huge bronze statue of the Buddha that is 1.200 years old. It was my first real contact with the Japanese religiosity.

Following this feeling of knowing more about the Japanese culture and religiosity, my next visit was to Asakusa, an incredible city full with old building and temples. The most famous is the Senso-ji with big red paper lanterns and impotent ceremonial gates. There is a street between the gates, known as Nakamise-dori, which is full of little stores of foods and gifts or “omiages” for tourists.

In addition, I had an amazing experience doing snowboarding for the first time of my life. I went along with some international students that like to have some adventure in radical sports. It was a 6 hours trip by bus until Nagano prefecture, the place where we stayed in a hotel for three days. In the morning of the first day, it was incredibly difficult to stand up with the board without falling, but I had some help from my friends that already knew how to do it. At the end of this first day, I was able to stand on my board without falling for a few meters; in the second day, I tried to go down the mountain without going to the ground and after learning some techniques, I actually did it, but still falling sometimes. At the end of this day I went to an “onsen” for the first time. I felt a little strange because I am not use to this kind of bath but it was relaxing; the third and final day I was feeling like professional and my whole body was aching, but it was worth it. Was an experience that I will never forget.

#### 2.4.Agricultural Internships

Every kind of internship is important during the graduation for the academic formation of each professional because ins in this period of life the we learn how the world works, and we always have someone like a teacher to teach how thing should be done, and if a mistake is made this person can show where was the mistake I how to

correct it. Once you graduate and get in the job market the life is not so simple because people will assume that you are capable of do your job and mistakes will not be tolerated and will have consequences.



At Tokyo NODAI I had the opportunity to do some internships. The first one was at Mercado, which is a company from the university, created by students and teachers to promote the name of NODAI. We had a meeting with president of this company, and he explained to us that the company makes some products in partnership with farmers from other countries like the coffee from Brazil and the Camu-camu that comes directly from Peru to produce a delicious drink; there were also other products like honey and tea that tasted really good. In this internship, me, the other RJP students, some Japanese students from NODAI and the teacher responsible for the Mercado went to Yokohama in a fair in an open space with several stands from other universities, companies and farmers, and our goal was to sell as many products as we could to NODAI. Despite the difficulties of communication due to the different language it was an amazing day, we had a lot of fun trying to speak Japanese and I could interact more with the other students sharing this

amazing experience. It was funny because at the end of the day I was the only one that had no voice as a result of calling clients all day.

The other internship that I had was with ERECON. This was a five-day internship along with some abroad students from Nepal. In this occasion, we visit NIED to see the biggest rain simulator that can simulate 300mm of rain. This simulator is used to do research simulating landslide or floods situations, in order to know what actions should be taken in case of the occurrence of any of these events. We also could see the second biggest shaking table in the world (15mx18m), which is used to simulate earthquakes. It works with hydraulic pumps that shake the table in every direction (up, down, right, left, forward and backward).in this table they make tests check the resistance and durability of a house, a building or certain materials.

## 2.5.Visit to agricultural facilities

Additionally NODAI provide us with amazing visits to some agricultural facilities, for instance the Japan Plant Factory Association. One of its goals is to develop sustainable systems that save energy resulting in high quality products. In this factory, we could see their systems of production such as the LED lighting production in greenhouse, which is call Urban Agriculture. This system has the advantage of using less energy, producing food in much less time than the conventional way of food production. This is possible because of the LED lights used to stimulate the natural light and the nutrient solution in which the roots of the plants are submerged.



The other visit that we made was to the Atsugi campus of NODAI. This visit was amazing because we could have a wider vision of NODAI's facilities and activities. The most astonishing things about this campus are the programs that seeks the well-being of people who need attention or with depression by providing an interaction between these people and animals like cats, dogs and horses or with therapy gardens. These programs have an enormous importance in a society, like the Japanese society, that suffers with many cases of people with depression that can be helped by these programs. This campus also has a really big laboratory of entomology with a big collection of insects of all kinds and from many places.



### 3. Explain what did you accomplished and learned through this program

With this program, I learned about a completely different and unique culture, and the most important thing with it: the discipline. I am amazed with the discipline of the Japanese people and is a learning that I am going to take for the rest of my life, because I can see the importance of a well-disciplined person and what it can accomplish. This discipline helped me to present a work in a symposium along with a friend of mine, and was a great feeling. I also had contact with a GIS software that I had never used before and I think it can be used in the reality of my country.

4. How did this program shape your career and how will you apply what you learned in the future

During my course, one of the areas that attracted me the most was geoprocessing and the other was remote sensing and it awakened in me a passion and a desire to specialize and work in these areas. In Brazil, the use of these tools is more common related to the control of deforested areas and control of agricultural production. However, in Japan, I came across a new reality associated to the applications of these technologies, especially to natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, which, due the absence of these phenomena in Brazil, I could not see how powerful and fundamental these techniques can be in daily life of people. The expansion of this horizon was fundamental for ratifying my passion for this area of activities and raised my attention to the enormous potential that these technologies can have in diversified branches in Brazil and can contribute directly to the improvement of the quality of life of the population and the sustainable exploration of the natural resources of the environment in order to preserve it for the next generations. It is my wish that in the future these technologies can be better utilized and expanded, that new researches can be done and that as a forest engineer, my colleges and me can contribute even more to society.

5. Any advice for future RJP students

With regard to advice the future students who will be contemplated with this wonderful opportunity to know Japan and immerse themselves in the beautiful oriental culture, I believe that it is one of the most importance that they need to have an open mind and great curiosity about learning new habits and costumes different from their own, in order to have a cosmopolitan vision, which will facilitate their stay in this country with a distinct culture.

It is essential that these students do a lot of research on Japanese before boarding on this journey. Knowing the main costumes so as not to go through an embarrassing situation for example. Another factor that contributes to a better adaption is the domain of at least the basic of the Japanese language. The simple fact of knowing basic words or sentences, knowing how to ask and thank for something or starting a conversation with a Japanese greeting collaborates for a more pleasant interaction besides a greater use of the trip and helps the learning of a new language. When I arrived to Japan my knowledge of the Japanese language was very limited, but being there experiencing daily life and feeling the need to communicate, I was driven to learn everything I could, to study every day and practice the conversation with the natives was essential. A greater absorption of

this new language came by this interaction, and I believe that was faster than if I only had stayed only in a classroom.

In addition to knowledge about customs and language, the notion about the country's currency is vital. Understanding the Japanese economy minimally assists in controlling spending and pricing. Understanding that the comparison of prices and values between Brazil and Japan is unfeasible because of the substantial difference in the minimum wage and the standard of living of the population can minimize the frustration of the high prices of some products in Japan. In the first months of dealing with the "yen" on a daily bases I ended up losing a little and spending a lot because of the unfamiliarity with the currency. It is important for the next RJP students to have a sense of spending control and to manage the amount they will receive.

Furthermore, it is necessary that the students learn about health issues. Pre-trip check-ups can save you the inconvenience of needing a medical care, but if that happens, there are those that will be ready to help. It recommend when taking medicines, taking the necessary amount of the treatment and the prescription. Making a medical kit for every day eventualities may be a good option because all the labels on the medicine shelves are in Japanese and there are substances used in Brazil that are used in Japan.

#### 6. Any suggestion to improve the program

When I applied for the Re-Inventing Japan Program I was extremely enthusiastic about this opportunity and I imagined that it would fit perfectly with my university's schedule because the semester would end shortly before the beginning of the classes in Japan, which would be in the beginning of September. But the answer came at the end of October and the trip was scheduled for November. Therefore, when I arrived in Japan the activities at NODAI had already started and I was prejudicated because I could not take credit for the subjects or participate actively in the projects that I was interested on. The teacher responsible for me in the university was really helpful in this case because he did his best to insert me in some activities at the laboratory, but I believe that the experience would be much greater if I were present at the beginning of the NODAI's semester. So a 'possible point to be improved in this program is the agility in electing the candidates and in given back an answer so that all available knowledge offered in NODAI is absorbed.

In addition, it would be beneficial for the future students to be previously informed about the initial costs and taxes to settle in the dormitory so as the students be prepared and to avoid surprises.