

Reflection Journal

Exchange Programme: Outbound trip to Sasebo NIT- 20 to 26 June 2016

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Without any doubt, the exchange trip to Sasebo NIT is truly enriching. I have broadened my knowledge and gained insight on various aspect of Japan such as cultural, heritage, history and engineering insights. From this trip, I picked up even more Japanese linguistic skills aside from attending the survival Japanese class conducted before the trip allowing me to better converse in the Japanese language which may be useful in the future.

I have observed that the Japanese passengers on the airplane tend to be really quiet and considerate as for making minimal movement so as not to affect other passengers on the airplane, they move in an orderly fashion when embarking and disembarking from the plane. At Sasebo, interacting with the Japanese was of a standard that is truly to be admired and respected. For example, gratitude was expressed by a sincere thank you and a bow which can be seen anywhere you go be it at the supermarket and even face to face interaction with the Japanese. In Sasebo NIT, students are highly respectful to their teachers and disciplined. For example when the teacher is conducting his or her lesson, the entire class listens to the teacher without any reminder from the teacher. Such act is truly something Singaporean should put into practise as it's truly a mark of a first world society which practise empathy and mutual respect.

Japan being a technological powerhouse boast innovation of all kind. At the airport, I can already see such innovations being used which is a Single ended soap dispenser. As opposed to typical soap dispenser, the Japanese soap dispenser that I used at the airport requires user to press the tip of the dispenser in order to dispense the soap out, this is a brilliant idea as it will save the amount of soap used as the soap dispensed will be directly on the user's hand. It does not require electricity due to the fact that it's fully manual.

While travelling on the road in Japan I noticed huge steel joints under the bridge, on further investigations I found out those are actually Ductile Reinforcing steel joint under highway for earthquake resistance due to added structure integrity. It can be explained by the fact that Japan sits in an earthquake prone area therefore there is a need for such measures.

I have also noticed that the train seats has front-back transition capability which are seats that can be configure to face the front or back depending on the preference of the commuter, this is useful as it gives the commuter the freedom to choose which side he or she wants to face and especially helpful if passengers want to sit in groups of 4.

One of the most admirable innovation to me is the bidet toilet which unlike typical toilet, the bidet toilet has additional plumping feature that squirts water to aid in cleansing of its user

On day two and four, we visited the Sasebo NIT, at the college, I learnt that students are required to write a report of their experiments after conducting them, this is helpful as it gives student a better understanding of their work as they are given the opportunity to reflect on their work done and explain the result of the experiments and improve upon it. At the college lab, students are entrusted with real life equipment and are expected to operate them (load simulator, solar panel...) similar to Singapore polytechnic, however one

distinct difference is the fact that dressed in attire appropriate for a certain lab session (For example, engineering uniform for students having practical lab session at the electronics lab). One distinct difference I noticed there is how the student does the engineering drawing, students there does it manually by drawing it with precision on a huge piece of paper, the students there was hospitable and took the effort to present to us about various aspect of Japan and Sasebo city and their projects on poster to us in English. As I was able to converse in the Japanese language sparsely, communication was rather smooth and we exchange our experience of school life and spoke about our common interest such as sports and Japanese culture.

We were then brought around the school and were shown places such as their laboratory and their hall. We were then brought to their dormitory, a huge portion of the student population in the college stays at the dormitories as they come from other cities in Japan which make it impractical to constantly return home. Male and female dorm are separated from each other. The canteen at the college serves a fixed daily menu which is served to the students who will queue up to get their food. Some food includes, champon noodles and croquette.

Mentioning about food, Japanese food depends on seasonal ingredient available. Aside from typical western fast food chain (KFC, Subway, McDonald's), there is a prefecture-wide food that is well known which is the Hakata Ramen. It consists of Cha-shu (Pork), scallion, black fungus and ramen. Sasebo is famous for Sasebo burger which is a burger consisting of bacon, beef patty, fried egg and tomato sauce. It was the Japanese take on traditional western style burger. Every morning, we were provided traditional Japanese breakfast by the hotel. It consists of Saba fish, Japanese rice, Miso soup, Seaweed and Japanese tea. This allows me to immerse in the Japanese culture. We have also tried out Japanese bento, which Japanese takeout is sold at Convenience store and Supermarket.

Sasebo is a well-built city with high level of green spaces, 2/3 of Japan land area is covered by mountain and therefore careful consideration is taken when building up new infrastructure. The facilities in Sasebo is highly centralized with major shops cluttered around an area and residential area in another, however it has a well-built infrastructure which consist of bus and taxi which hardly has any delay (We didn't experience any delay during our trip). One major transport infrastructure is the Sasebo station is located at the western end of the Sasebo line which links to various tourist attraction and Nagasaki city. It has a long history dating back to it's opening in 1898. I used the Sasebo station to commute to Huis Ten Bosch, thus I am able to experience the Japanese land rail system. The Japanese uses paper ticket and Suica card which is similar to the ez-link card in Singapore, one interesting aspect is that there will be a station master to collect our paper ticket at the end of the train ride. At the 99 Islands I have taken better appreciation of nature and have better respect of the environment by visiting the 99 Island aquarium and learning of endangered creatures.

Although photography is prohibited due to the sensitive nature of the material in it, I have broadened my knowledge of the Japanese navy and it relates to me as I am interested in the navy. I got to learn about the development and history of the Japanese navy and opening up of Japan from the Sakoku (Closing of Japan from foreigner) through the visit to the JMSDF museum. We also visited the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park which is dedicated to the

remembrance of the consequences of the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki during the near end of World War 2, it is one of the symbol of peace to remind humanity that war should be avoided as it causes devastation and destruction. It is surprising to know that some of the volunteers there are actually atomic bomb survivors.

Although I have studied about the Atomic bombing in social studies I have never been somewhere that I can emotionally connect with this tragedy. I am now much more aware about the consequences of not only Atomic bombing but any form of conflicts and usage of weapon of mass destruction. I pay my deepest condolence and respect for the victims of the atomic bomb and strongly feel that humanity must prevent such tragedy from happening ever again. The fact that Japan was able to rebuilt itself to become one of the most technological advanced nation in the world even when faced with such adversary goes to show how resilient the Japanese are. Lastly, we visited the Mitsubishi Heavy Industry Museum. The trip was both exciting and enriching as I am able to learn about things related to engineering such as the construction of the battleship Musashi with tools used being displayed and various engineering feats and failures by Mitsubishi over its 146 years of history being showcased at the museum.

Although the trip only lasted for a week, it was an extremely productive one given how much knowledge I have gained and how much I enjoyed it as much as how the schoolmate who I have no doubt enjoyed it too. I express gratitude from the bottom of my heart to the school and Sasebo NIT for making this trip possible for me and giving me the opportunity to visit Japan and if given any opportunity I will really want to come back to Japan and hope that this programme to be continued for future batches of students.