

1. Report

Please write a report on your study experience, addressing the matters listed below. Your report should be more than 500 words in English. Matters to include in your report: (a) Academic outcomes (how participation in this program affected your motivation, university study and international understanding, and what interests and plans you developed for further study in the future); (b) Your experiences in Kyoto University; (c) The content of the program; (d) The impact of the program on your career plans.

*The information you provide may be included in Re-discovering Japan Project reports, or published in printed materials or on our website in pages dealing with the outcomes of programs offered by the Asian Studies Unit and/or Kyoto University. Please ensure that your report only includes content which is publishable in light of privacy considerations and the need to safeguard personal information. Also note that depending on the publication format, we may need to edit parts of your report.

Jolanda Nava
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The program proved to be an incredible experience that opened new perspectives on both a personal level and an academic level.

First of all, I have been studying Japanese for two months prior to this program and learning such a different language (I am Italian) has not been easy. However, as this was also my first time in Japan, I was incredibly fascinated and hence motivated to pursue my studies. Getting to know the Japanese culture, as well as engaging in everyday small talks with people, really fostered my will to improve my Japanese. Previous to this program I was in doubt whether to continue my studies due to the very heavy time commitment, but now I feel more resolute to pursue them.

The University of Kyoto was extremely welcoming. My experience would not have been as impactful, had it not been for the very careful planning and the very smooth running of the program. The students were also extremely engaging and easy to approach. I gain a lot from the interaction with them as they offered insights on the city and on the sites we visited.

The program itself approached to Buddhism and Buddhism philosophy through the lenses of experiential learning. The more theoretical side served us as an introduction and preparation for when we visited the temples themselves. I never really approached Zen Buddhism before but I found the program easy enough for a beginner while still being extremely interesting. The collection of temples was diverse and comprehensive. I think exploring the practical side of Buddhism gave much more depth to the theoretical aspect as well as making it more interesting. I was fascinated by the rituals as well as by the symbolism of the temples. The professors really help us trying to capture as much as possible from what we saw. We engaged personally with some of the questions used in Buddhist meditation and that opened even more opportunities and ideas on how to approach the material we were confronted with.

The program also triggered a few ideas and new perspectives on a personal level, an academic level and from the career point of view. One aspect is the linguistic one, as I have already mentioned. Beyond that, I think this experience really triggered my interest in Japanese Buddhism, which I hope I will be able to cultivate even outside the program, in my own time. From the academic side, I would say that I have now more incentive to take up some modules related to Japan's history, both culturally and politically. On a career level, I think there is a lot for me to explore as I intend to major in Global Affairs. Japan is a key player in the region and understanding the philosophies that deeply influence it is a key step in gaining a better comprehension of the country itself.

In this light I would say that the program has been extremely successful in both, presenting people with new and engaging material and foster reflections and interests beyond the mere topic of the program.