

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.

[LAB in Kyoto]

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(a) Having the opportunity to participate in this LAB has allowed me to form a clearer idea of what I intend to major in and my future research interests. Observations of the different presentations of temples and shrines to visitors got me thinking about possibly looking closer into how traditional spaces are preserved and presented to different audiences and the various implications that such different presentations may lead to. I was intrigued by how some temples had visitors follow a designated route whereas other temples such as Kenninji allowed other visitors to explore the place as they wished, as well as the presence of merchandise within some temple compounds. Being able to listen to, read and ask questions in Japanese about things I was curious about also further encouraged me to further raise my level of proficiency so that I might be able to ask better questions, as well as comprehend explanations better. This has led to my decision to seek a private Japanese teacher to guide me in improving my Japanese over the summer. I am also actively considering options for Japanese Language Summer Schools next summer.

The large number of shrines and temples in Kyoto also got me wondering about the influence of architecture and spaces on an individual's understanding of the Zen tradition. It would be an interesting area of study if I could further look into comparisons between individuals who had grown up in Kyoto and residents who had grown up in city areas such as Tokyo, and observe if the interpretations of Zen would differ based on the spaces they had access to.

Reading material such as 恋都の狐さん and 境界の彼方 also provided interesting examples of place marketing. Reading 恋都の狐さん in Nara was a new experience for I could actually visualise the places and scenes described in the novel since it referred to various locations in Nara. The placement of a library with books in the hotel lounge that contained descriptions of religious statues, temples and other famous locations in Nara was a novel one to me. Instead of merely using brochures to advertise areas of interest, the utilisation of this new medium is possibly a more effective one in conveying the attractiveness of a place. Unlike brochures that are engineered specifically for tourists, novels and light novels hook the reader with their plots and can possibly help to make the attraction of a place greater when one comes to associate it with a particularly memorable scene in the book. This has prompted me to read the texts in detail so that I can map out the various places mentioned in the book, and compare them with the actual locations and events to see how they differ.

(b) The thing that struck me most about Kyoto University was the number of creative posters I saw along the street recruiting for new co-curricular members. I was also extremely touched and very grateful to the hospitality

of the students at Kyoto University, who were very patient in fielding the questions posed. Lynn, Jin, Ryosuke and Itsuki also held very informative orientation sessions prior to our departure on Singapore, which helped greatly in my navigations around Kyoto.

(c) The seminars on Zen Buddhism conducted by Professor Garfield and Professor Liu before the trip were immensely helpful to my understanding of the different history of each temple that we visited. The programme's focus on Zen Buddhism thus definitely added a new dimension to my understanding of Japan and its culture. I thoroughly enjoyed our trips to the temples and the Imperial Villa, which allowed me to better appreciate the real-life manifestations of Zen Buddhism in architecture. The incorporation of nature as part of the architectural designs at the Imperial Villa were also particularly memorable. The flexibility of the programme in affording us time for self-exploration also enabled me to serendipitously learn new things about Zen, such as the importance of the motif of dragons in temples.

(d) While I cannot say definitely how this would impact my career plans, I can say that this trip has had a big impact on my choice of major in the future. If I were to pursue a career as an academic, I would look forward to returning to Kyoto and studying an aspect of urban life in the area as part of my graduate studies. In the short term, I would be most willing to help out in any capacity for future collaborations with Kyoto University and Yale-NUS college.

*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.