

S.A. in Japan – Technology and Culture: Communication and Games
Overview of site visits and expected benefits

“The rapid pace of the trip allowed for an extensive amount of learning to take place in a short time. The two week trip was precisely planned so that we were always maximizing our time in Japan. To put it plainly, there was never a dull moment. We were always on the move visiting amazing companies or wonderful cultural sites. Looking back on the trip, it is astounding to think of all the places we were able to visit in two weeks!” (Matt Ortlieb, Senior TISM, S.A. in Japan 2007)

Building from Matt’s comments, the program is indeed planned and executed in such a manner as to allow students to visit and learn from as many companies as possible regarding communication and game design in Japan, as well as travel to various cities and expose them to as much history and as many facets of culture that make Japan so unique and their culture so rich. The overall value of this program may be best described by the testimonials offered by last year’s group who offered a 100 percent recommendation rate to other students (see OSA program evaluation in 2007), so I’ve included them as appropriate throughout this document.

As an overview, Japan tends to be regarded as a homogeneous nation in terms of ethnicity and culture, because of its size and geography. This is true to a certain extent. However, by visiting/comparing both Tokyo (East) and Osaka (West), students will recognize how diverse Japan is in each region/local area in terms of culture (e.g. cuisine, language, etc.). *“I gained a great understanding for the diversity of Japanese culture through visiting many different cities and areas which all offered unique traditions, cuisines and histories.”* (Matt Ortlieb)

“Tokyo is a younger city as a capital. Formerly, rulers built capitals in their power bases, so there are several ex-capitals all over Japan. The most famous of these is Kyoto, but Osaka, Nara, Shiga, and Hiroshima/Miyajima also served as capitals throughout Japan’s history. Visiting these cities offers students a sense of the Japanese history that deeply affects its current industry structure. While Japan appears to be centralized around Tokyo, historically it adopted a decentralized government structure. Therefore, for the Culture component of the course, it is valuable to visit various cities other than Tokyo (Emiko Yoshikawa, Program Assistant).”

The remaining document includes a list of cultural and corporate site visits, along with bullets on: a) the main reason for visit; and b) expected take-away from visit. The program is based in Tokyo for 9 days and in Osaka for 5 days, the latter serving as our hub to the other cities visited.

Hiroshima (3/4 of a day) + Miyajima (1/4 of a day)

- Events:
 - Tour the “Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park” and “Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum”, commonly known as the Atomic Bomb Museum, UNESCO World Heritage Site
 - Tour Rijo (castle) that houses a Museum of Life during the Edo period.
 - Sample local cuisine (e.g. Okonomiyaki)
- Class activities: Discuss the role of communication and technology in the events leading up to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also how communication and technology contributed to Japan’s economic resurgence following the Second World War (Japan is exemplary in the use of Information and Communication Technologies post-WWII). In addition, this visit in particular contributes to promoting cultural diversity and acceptance.
- Feedback:
 - *“I learned so much more than the many years we covered the topic in middle and high school. I was amazed by how beautiful the city was when we visited as well as how nice they were to us.”* (Scot Hookham, S.A. in Japan class of 2007)
 - *“Hiroshima was one of the most powerful and overwhelming visits of my life. Certainly this cultural visit had a different tone than visiting the castles and temples. The museum was very informative, and gave me a new and fresh insight on the events leading up to, and following the drop of the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ... Not only was the museum itself powerful, but the Peace Memorial Park was the most moving part of the trip for me. Spending time near the Dome (last standing structure from the aftermath of the bomb), being able to touch the Peace Bell, and viewing all of the paper cranes for the child victims of radiation made a deep imprint on my and I definitely gained a new understanding of the tragedy in Hiroshima. The most amazing part of the visit to Hiroshima was how welcomed we were by all of the locals. To think that our country was responsible for all of this death and destruction, but yet there were no ill feelings towards served as one of many of the instances where we were able to experience the generosity and gracious nature of the Japanese people.”* (Matt Ortlieb)

Miyajima (1/4 of a day) + Hiroshima (3/4 of a day)

- Events:
 - Tour of the Itsukushima Shrine (a UNESCO World Heritage Site)
 - Sample local cuisine (e.g. Momiji manju)
- Class activities: Focus on Culture by discussing historic architecture and local cuisine

- *“The temples and shrines were very different from anything I have ever seen. I was in awe at the detailed architecture and attention to detail in the ancient structures. During this trip, we also had the opportunity to try various local cuisines that I would have never given a chance in America such as cuttlefish on a stick!” (Matt Ortlieb)*

Osaka (One day and four one-quarter days)

- Events:
 - Tour of the Osaka-jo (castle)
 - Electronic guided tour of the Osaka History Museum
 - Guided tour of Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) Osaka Office
 - Tour of Den Den town (otaku culture: manga, anime, gemu – games - related)
 - Sample local cuisine (e.e. Takoyaki, Okonomiyaki)
- Class activities: Focus on both Technology and Culture by exploring local history, architecture, and the telecommunications industry. Students will also join the public during live broadcasting of NHK. At the broadcasting library, students enjoy old videos (around 250 pcs), attend a studio where they become newscasters, and observe the setting and recording of a currently running television show. Den Den will offer immersion in the world of Games.
- *“For me, this dualistic view was a great representation of how Japan is moving forward very fast, but remains directly connected with its history.” (Matt Ortlieb)*

Himeji (1/4 day) + Nara (1/4 day) + Kyoto (1/2 day)

- Events:
 - Tour of the Himeji-jo (castle, UNESCO World Heritage Site and Japanese National Cultural Treasure)
 - Participate in a traditional Tea Ceremony
 - *“Experiencing the tradition of the Tea Ceremony provided a glimpse into Japan's history. Being able to experience this first hand in its traditional style created a sense of the formalities and structure upon which Japan's culture has been built. The depth of understanding that this gave me about the Japanese people could never be matched through conventionally education methods or second-hand accounts.” (Clayton Boylan, Senior TISM, S.A. in Japan 2007)*
- Class activities: Focus on Culture by exploring historic architecture and rituals.

Nara (1/4 of a day) + Himeji (1/4 day) + Kyoto (1/2 day)

- Events:
 - Tour of the Todai-ji Temple and Nigatsu-do (a National Treasure)
 - Tour of the Horyuji Temple (the oldest wooden buildings existing in the world, UNESCO World Heritage Site as “Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area”)
 - Tour of the Heijo-Kyo (the ancient capital of Japan, built in A.D. 710) (celebrating its 1300th anniversary; World Heritage Site)
- Class activities: Focus on Culture by exploring local architecture and spirituality.
- The Todai-ji is the home of the “Great Buddha of Nara”, which is “reputedly the largest wooden building in the world, houses a colossal bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana, known in Japanese simply as the *Daibutsu* (大仏) The temple also serves as the Japanese headquarters of the Kegon school of Buddhism. The temple is a listed UNESCO World Heritage site as "Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara," together with seven other sites including temples, shrines and places in the city of Nara” (Source: Wikipedia)

Kyoto (1 and 1/2 days)

- Events:
 - Attend the Aoi Matsuri festival
 - Tour of the Kiyomizu-dera (temple) (World Heritage Site)
 - Tour of the Kinkaku-ji (temple) (Temple of Golden Pavillion) (World Heritage Site)
 - Tour of the Heian Jingu (a Shinto shrine)
 - Tour of the Ryoan-ji (temple) (Zen Temple of Peaceful Dragon) (World Heritage Site)
 - Kyoto Gosho (Imperial Palace)
 - Kyoto International Manga Museum
 - Potential events: corporate site visit of Nintendo (Game) and Kyocera (Communication)
- Class activities: Focus on Culture by exploring local architecture and cuisine; secondary emphasis on Games and the role of Manga in Game Design. Students will view exhibits at the Manga Museum and review any titles of interest among the available 200,000.
- “*Kyoto offered a very different feel than the other large cities.*” (Matt Ortlieb)

Tokyo (8 full days and 2 half-days)

- Events:
 - Sophia University
 - Dr. Parissa Haghirian lectures on The Role of Japanese Culture on Consumer Behavior
 - Hitotsubashi University
 - Dr. Jeff Funk lectures on Mobile Commerce research findings and future directions
 - Keio University
 - Dr. Minoru Sugaya will lecture on Regulatory Environment for Telecommunications
 - Discussions with Japanese students who are majoring in media policy
 - NTT DoCoMo - R&D
 - Presentations and hands-on use of various prototypical mobile devices and services, including 3D holographic recommender systems in the apparel retailing industry, an interactive participation in band that is geographically dispersed, and computers that produce aromas when needed (e.g. sample of perfumes, immerse in environment).
 - Yahoo! Japan
 - Presentations by various product areas (e.g. Auctions, Answers, Classifieds) of Yahoo! Japan, demonstration of their various services, presentations by the corresponding developers/engineers, an overview of the strategy and market forecast for communication services, walkthrough of facility and interviews with employees.
 - Future Scope
 - Presentations by all four of Future Scope's Partners, walkthrough of the development area, demonstration of currently available mobile services, and an overview of strategy and market forecast.
 - Japan Rail East Company – R&D
 - Presentations by six mid-senior level managers on their human-computer interaction and usability evaluations of communication interfaces at both train stations and on-board; a presentation of its corporate strategy and market is also given.
 - Q Entertainment
 - Presentations on the company's corporate strategy and market forecast of mobile games, demonstrations of their games, presentations by developers/engineers, walkthrough of corporate facility and interviews with several employees.
 - Square-Enix
 - Presentations by senior managers on the company's corporate strategy and market forecast of games, demonstrations of games to be released, walkthrough of corporate facility and interviews with several employees.

- iNiS Corp.
 - Presentations by senior managers and game developers on the company's corporate strategy and market forecast of games, demonstrations of a game recently released and of an upcoming release, walkthrough of corporate facility and interviews with employees.
- Tokyo Tower
 - Explore the Tower's radio and television broadcasting services, and discuss related, enabling telecommunications technology.
 - *"It's cool that such a site visit holds a few museums, an aquarium, and educational events"* (Scot Hookham)
- NHK Museum of Broadcast
 - Explore "the birthplace of Japanese broadcasting" - The museum showcases exhibits on broadcasting history, original programming items, and an on-demand video library and a reference library.
- Akihabara Electronics District
 - Guided tour of the retaining aspect of telecommunication and game products.
 - *"It only took one store (okay we were still on the first floor!!) for me to say I would never walk into a Best Buy again and "enjoy it."*" (Scot Hookham)
- Maid Café
 - Guided tour of "Maid Café" (staple of otaku culture – manga, anime, gemu)
 - Explore its influence from Manga on Anime and Game Design
- Kanda Matsuri Festival Parade
 - Attend the parade that is a Shinto celebration - Shinto has been the source of a code of honor and action for the Japanese.
 - *"The parade gave us a glimpse of their lifestyle, and their past, present, and future. It was one of the wonderful cultural aspects that Japan amazed me with."* (Scot Hookham)
- Harajuku
 - Explore the fashion district in Tokyo offering a different cultural insight
 - *"The Japanese really do love their fashion and you can see as you go from city to city, how different everyone dresses."* (Scot Hookham)
 - *"Personally, this was my favorite part of Tokyo. I was very happy when everyone that we asked was very helpful, open, and even excited that we were exploring this side of the Japanese culture. Again, this experience offered a great understanding of the duality of Japanese culture."* (Matt Ortlieb)

- Class activities: Focus on Technology by visiting companies in the Communication and/or Gaming industries; secondary emphasis on Culture by exploring local culture (e.g. history, culinary).

In summary, I'm including testimonials by two former students regarding the course as a whole:

"Overall, the experience of studying in Japan was different than anything I have ever participated in. Not only were we able to visit cultural sites and tour the cities as tourists, but we were given the unique opportunity to visit with some amazing companies. This trip is truly an immersion into a different culture and offers incredible learning opportunities. To be invited to sit down with companies as large as Square-Enix and Yahoo! Japan is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Visiting with the companies, (large and small,) I was able to gain an understanding of how the Japanese culture directly influences and affects the work ethic, work practices, and workplace of Japanese companies. I gained many insights that I simply would not have been able to grasp or understand to such an extent if I were studying in the classroom." (Matt Ortlieb)

"Books and lectures can give you a deep knowledge of a people's history and language but to truly understand a culture you have to live it. This two week tour through Japan was nothing short of a culture shock. The Japanese are a polite and formal people. Touring the preserved temples and growing companies within the various cities provided a dichotic view of a country technologically advancing yet remaining deeply rooted in its historic cultural values. This trip was an eye opening and life changing experience. I would recommend it to anyone with even the slightest interest in learning about Japan." (Clayton Boylan)

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