2018 Re-inventing Japan Project (Long-Term)

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Introduction

My name is Fabiola, I am from Mexico and I studied in Japan as part of the 2018 Re-Inventing Japan Project (Long-Term) program. This was such a wonderful experience, all filled with unforgettable moments, beautiful places and a big incredible culture and history that enriches my knowledge. To have the opportunity to study in Japan is the best that happened to me, because I got not only new knowledge about different topics, also I learn about a new society system, and it was the best. I got many things not only in my educational training, but also cultural and personal.

I have admired Japan since many years ago, because of the language, beautiful culture, society, history, and good economy; it was my big dream to visit Japan, since I knew a bit about Japan by the anime and I watched some tv program, and another people that they also visited Japan. I studied in a small high school, very close with farmers because my family was a coffee producer, and I notice what important the good management means to the farmers, so I had the idea to get new knowledge and technology from a different opinion.

In general, I always being a big fan of Asian cultures, I always thought they had a lot to teach to other countries, but I focused on the most interesting on my opinion, so I started to study the Japanese language, and search for opportunities to saw about Japan in Mexico.

I am currently studying Engineering in Agricultural Economics in Chapingo. I really like the interactions between the farmers and the fields, also agribusiness and languages; I am also interested in many countries with respect to these topics, Japan means to me the opportunity to go out for the first time of my country, and learn about the agriculture in another context and economic situation, when I heard about this programs, it becomes my main goal on my studies.

The Re-Inventing Japan Project is good and comprehensive exchange program that gives the opportunity to grow academically as personally.

My experience

September

I arrived in Japan on almost the end of September, I think it was the most difficult, I had to adapted and discovered a new culture.

During those first days, I learn many basic things about Japan, even the shopping was a little difficult for me, but with some friends help that got better.

I learned all about attending classes, buying food and moving around the city.
I arrived on Japan I had my first good impressions, I was received with a lot of attention at the airport and I met my first classmate and roommate. The travel to get the university was such an interesting tour, I saw since fields to the big cities over the road. Then, our first place that we visit was Shibuya, in the famous Hashiko, and we took us photos with the statue and walked for the streets very good illuminated by big lights. A big city with high buildings, too many people, and loud.

After that, we bought some food and we went on our way to NODAI, we were well received for CIP assistant, afterwards they showed us our rooms. I was really surprised about everything; the city was very quiet and clean, perfect for student life.

During my exchange I share room with other three girls; from brasil and Peru; in addition, the classes I attend were in English, so I was able to practice my English, also improved my weaknesses on this language. My classes were taught by Japanese teacher and overseas teachers, most of the time our classmates were foreigners, and sometimes any Japanese students.

In the first week I met with my teachers and my laboratory. My laboratory belonged to the Agribusiness management department. I met some of my classmates from my laboratory and we got along well, some of them were foreigners, and the Japanese had also English practice.

That first week I found good friend, from my own country, and from different countries, with whom we got along very well, and become very good friends.

We had a welcome party, a week after arriving with all the foreign students and some Japanese students, who are interested in other countries, and a few who already visited Mexico and south America. I really enjoy this one of many activities organized by NODAI Exchange Program.

This first weeks I went with some friends to restaurants to enjoy traditional and famous food and they show me to use the subway, what is a wonderful experience, the punctuality and service they offer is incredible.

I was admiring even the children can used without any problem, it is not difficult to use it, and you can get any place through the subway, also the idiom is not a problem to understand the stations name.

I started with Japanese lessons on September too. It was a very good experience, in Mexico I studied Japanese language for one year, but that was not enough to catch up my classmates, anyway I learned many things on this class for my day living, or to communicate with the people.

**October**

On October with the other exchange students, we visit some places together and we god a really good time sharing the lunch time, visiting big and incredible places. It was very fun to agree on the places we would visit together. Besides that, as we had just arrived, we supported each other for all our first trip. At the end of the day we were tired with all the activities we did in each place. In this month we visited Odaiba, Asakusa, the Meiji Temple, besides exploring the surroundings of the city.
I visited a festival on Tokyo thanks of a friend who told me about it, and decided to know how they celebrate, it was such an incredible thing, all colorful and many people there.

There were many exhibitions about food, plants as well as representations of both Japanese and foreign. As well I have the chance to see a Hanabi festival, the last one of that seasons, with a lot of people and the fireworks too amazing. We had laboratory practices where we also shared part of our culture, in addition to exhibitions by Japanese colleagues, who tried to show us part of their culinary habits and live style.

The month passed with many classes, getting to know our teachers and living with the classes, laboratory and dormitory companions.

November

In November we started the month with the harvest festival held at NODAI, where we could see the preparation of the whole event by the students, making great efforts so that everything went well in each of the prepared stands. Although I did not have the opportunity to participate actively with the preparations in the Latin American stand, I offered my help in what I could, a team made up of Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Mexico and Paraguay, with them I could communicate perfectly in Spanish, besides to learn things about these countries and share time. Within the prepared activities, we were able to participate in the different workshops that made us more affectionate; music, theater, drawing, photography, among others.

It was a great event from beginning to end there were many people. Another visit we made with the exchange partners was the Ueno natural history museum, an incredible and large museum, with many things to see, with three floors where you can find many interesting things. Studies they have done, fossils, minerals, history of ancestor lifestyle in the archipelago, in addition to many other things. It was an incredible visit to this place, after the museum, we decided to eat something traditional. Sharing time also with some Japanese friends we visited Shibuya and Shinjuku, that for those dates already had illuminations on all sides, and they look incredibly great. After dinner, we walk around these cities, we take pictures and we buy some souvenirs.

As part of a practice, we made a visit to Samegawa Village, where we could share time with organic producers, making a first stop with a group of organic producers, where we lived and tasted some typical dishes of the region. In addition to sharing with some people of the village who were interested in knowing what country we are, and some of our traditions. We made this visit with Japanese partners as part of their academic training as well. We also help with the collection of forest material that they occupy in winter to keep cattle in good conditions, since due to the low temperatures they could suffer some damage. At the end of the day we shared an incredible traditional dinner. We participated in some school games organized by the village schools, we enjoyed this event with the people of the village.
On the last day of this trip, we visited an organic apple producer who told us a little about his way of production and the methods he uses in the nutrition of his products. This is a small producer that supplies local markets, which obtains good prices of its production due to the high prices for this type of goods.

December

December was a very emotional month for everyone, due to the festivities of this. although in Japan the significance is different than for other countries. At the beginning of the month we had an exit to the Kikkoman company from the subject of Comparative Developing Agriculture, an international Japanese company, important in the production of soy sauce founded in 1917, and basically composed of united family businesses.

In this we could see the production process of soy sauce, from the grain to the bottling, and the different presentations that the company has. This company is present around the world and its products are used in various dishes everywhere, we also receive a present from the company. also, we had the opportunity to visit an organic market supplied by local producers and other parties, and which offers a wide variety of products, which are produced in a healthy way for consumers. In this market producers can refill once their merchandise is exhausted and thus obtain mutual benefits. This market also has a vegetarian restaurant in which we had the opportunity to share lunch with our colleagues and enjoy dishes based on the same market.

In this month we also celebrate the holiday season with the exchange partners, where we share the Christmas dinner, we also visit the different illuminations of the cities.

This time we also visited the Pokemon Mega Center Tokyo located in the area of Ikebukuro, which is quite famous and an excellent place to visit, since the place has many things and in the area there are many and varied shops.

During the last days of December, an orchestra concert was held by the students of NODAI, which I was able to attend in the company of my advising teacher, where I also congratulate the students who finished their studies in this last period.

Regarding Christmas, we share it with good friends, we make a small dinner where, we give ourselves something as a souvenir. also spend time with the companeros of brazil, with whom we organize meetings to live and so this also helped us not to feel nostalgia for our homes on those dates.

In New Year, as in Christmas, we received the new year in a meeting watching movies and sharing snacks. We had a good time, also talking about our countries and learning a new language.

January
For January, with the help of the boys from Brazil who every year organize a visit to the ryuoo skipark, in Nagano to practice snowboarding. I had the opportunity to visit this great place. We did the transfer at night but because of the nerves we could hardly sleep, since this would be the first time, I had the opportunity to see snow. Upon arriving in Nagano, this was already covered with a high snow floor and tall trees covered by snow, which made the place look beautiful. There were already a lot of people, from small children learning, as boys who achieved a great descent. The first day we focused on learning how to stand on the board, since this was the first time using a board, I found it difficult. But I improve with practice. On this trip I met other friends from Mexico, who are in Japan for studies and other work that joined us, it was good enough to share this experience with them, this was no exception, and we tried new dishes in some restaurants.

During this month I visited several places as well, as part of my laboratory, we made a visit to a Miso soup producing company, where they taught us how to prepare pasta for this delicious and traditional accompaniment to meals. Also visit the Gotokuji temple, which is very close to the university and is very beautiful, this temple is a Buddhist temple, it is famous for being considered the place where the Maneki-Neko amulet originated, which has a raised leg, as if waving. At the beginning of the year this had enough people who were going to leave their prayers. That was something that I found very curious, since people traditionally in Japan visit the temples to leave their prayers and requests, so at the beginning of the new year they are super full of visitors. In this month, being almost the last one, the last presentation for the CIP took place, about our experiences in NODAI, where also Senpai’s classmates and other interested boys in our country.

We also visit the Kawasaki temple, which is more than an hour and a half from Tokyo, is a beautiful temple, very large and with many things. Within the Temple area there were many stands which sold food, amulets, and souvenirs of the temple. It is a very colorful temple in and around this, with many traditional and typical things, we stopped to compare some things like amulets and some souvenirs and also food that abounded throughout the Temple. In a trip organized by CIP managers, we visited JAXA, the space station in Japan, in which we participated in interactive activities, this was a trip prepared for foreign students who are for a short time in Japan and also for those interested in join. We visited the Museum of Natural History in Kanagawa Prefecture, another very interesting museum, with many things about history about the whole world as a collection. At the end, we stopped at Suzuhiro Kamaboko Museum, where they tough to make Kamaboko by ourselves, we made two kinds of Kamaboko.
We made one of the last group outings to Yokohama, where we visited all the most representative places in this city. The road to get to Yokohama is a little long so we had to leave with a good schedule to have enough sunlight to take advantage of all the places. We made our first stop at the pier, to appreciate some boats lined up. After we toured a bit of the streets, we visited a videogame center, then we visited the Chinatown located in Yokohama, which is very large and with many things like stores with souvenirs, and some dedicated entirely to their Chinese culture.

There were many representations of the gods and mythology proper to Chinese culture, also great temples on the road visited by many people; At lunch time we chose a traditional restaurant, which was quite quiet and with its own representations. Because this part is only port and for the season, we should move so that the cold will not affect us. We also visit the museum of cupnoodles which is very large and very interesting, we also buy some souvenirs. At the end we hope to see the lights that illuminate Minatomirai in the amusement park, which in the afternoon is quite beautiful. We had the opportunity to enjoy these attractions.

With a partner we visited the Tokyo Tower at the end of January, where we appreciated the view of the entire city from the top of the tower. In addition to visiting the ONE-PIECE manga commemorative museum, which is quite large and took almost an entire afternoon to do the whole tour and also the interactive activities of the museum.

February

This last month, was full of a lot of things to do, because of our leaving.

Before ending our exchange, this last month was full of many things. In the company of Dolyne and my Host-Professor, we visited the Nikko, where the famous Shinto Toshogu Shrine is located, established as a luxurious memorial for Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder and leader of the Tokugawa Shogunate, or the Edo period. This shrine includes the Yomeimon door bathed in gold. This mausoleum of shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa, one of the most important characters of Japan, was inaugurated in 1636 by his grandson Lemitsu Tokugawa, being the main tourist attraction in the area.

During the Meiji Era it was declared a Shinto shrine, but it still retains elements of its Buddhist past, such as the Gojunoti pagoda and the Niomon gate.

This visit was really enriching for me, since it is one of the most representative places in Japan, I really wanted to visit it.

Because it is in an area of mountains, the last part of this temple is on the top of a small mountain, which you must climb to see the last part of the route.

In this month we also had a service practice with ERECON, which is an institution dedicated to the environment, its goal is to harmonize agricultural and urban development with the natural environment, restore and preserve the environment degraded by development, and contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources.
through education and environmental awareness activities, we learned about some projects that you have implemented in some countries, and that have given good results. They have focused on some poorly developed countries that use conventional farming methods and do not help the conservation of the land. We learned some conservation methods and some fertilizer options as well as how to work with them. We had the opportunity to propose our own conservation project, to expose it to our colleagues and professor. This should be about any of the problems present in our country and that we would like to help resolve.

At the end we received a certificate of participation from the teacher in charge.

At the end of our service, on the part of my host-professor we visited Kamakura, a place with great history and a beautiful place, I was able to visit the big Buddha statue, and buy some souvenirs, we also visited Enoshima Aquarium, we saw the species of animals that conserve which are many, and the show they do with the dolphins. We had planned to visit some places with my classmates which were Kyoto, Nara and Osaka.

The first place we arrived at was Kyoto, which concentrates many temples and sanctuaries throughout the area.

We visited the Higashi Honganji temple in Kyoto, in addition to the Nishiki Market, which is full of many curious things, and unique dishes. I visited the area of Kawaramashi, Kiyamachi Dori St., Kenninji Temple, Yasaka Shrine, Kodaiji Temple, Heian Jingu Shrine, among many others, it is a lot of places that we could visit in Kyoto and they were all places that we knew by images that we could see by ourselves. One of the ones I liked the most was the Kinkakuji Temple (the golden Pavilion), which is a historic monument and has that golden color characteristics, which makes the place look very beautiful. also the Senbon Torii, a path of Torii gates along a mountain and which is quite long, but it is a highly recommended place since it is incredible.

We really enjoy walking the streets as they are full of many things everywhere, where Torii Gates can be found among the huge buildings throughout the city. Finally, we visited Nara, Todaiji Area. In this place we wanted to see the deer that live with the people that visit the area, and walk free making the visit very special. The first place was, Nara Park and Nara National Museum, Todaiji Temple in which is another of the largest Buddhas, surrounded by other deities. The temple is very large and spacious.
After the trip I started with all the last preparations for my return to Mexico, which is not difficult since CIP provides you with help to do everything.

SHAPING MY CAREER

As a student of Engineering in Agricultural Economics, it was for me a great opportunity to know other forms of social organization that allows the development of society and a good organization. Besides that, I had the opportunity to see closely the form of agriculture that is practiced in Japan and that has adapted to the needs and availability of the country. I realized that resources are used in the best way. They also have sustainable projects not only for their country, but also to apply them to other countries to improve their use.

I met some institutions that can help implement some projects to improve our way of production, society and the environment.

ADVISE FOR STUDENTS

What could advise new students interested in visiting this great country, is to study about the language since it is of great help when you arrive, besides that it facilitates a bit the coexistence with the society, in addition to reading about the history of Japan, because it is a country with which it offers you a great and magnificent history. Many times if you do not know people are willing to help you, so you should not be sorry to collide with someone when you do not understand.

SUGGESTIONS

For my part I am very happy and satisfied with this program; Re-inventing Japan Project, as it allowed me to further develop my skills and knowledge, in addition to meeting many friends from other countries with whom we made a good friendship and stayed in communication. I would like to thank this program for allowing me the opportunity to make one of my goals come true. Maybe something that I would like to be included for other participants, would be something more than cultural activities, in which you can coexist even more with Japanese partners.

So, if you are interested in visiting Japan, do not hesitate and try it.