

Excursions

Cherry Blossom Viewing Party and Pottery

Ohnmar Khaing, second year master's student, Architecture and Civil Engineering

I have been fascinated with Japan since my undergraduate days. I dreamt about going to Japan for a first-hand look at Japanese culture, and its people. Then, I realized my dreams when I was given the opportunity to study at Toyohashi Tech. Since arriving here, I feel that everything looks cute, happy and exciting, especially in the spring, during the cherry blossom (sakura) season.

On Sunday 31st March the Shinshiro Youth Association organized the 'Experience Cherry Blossom Viewing and Pottery' event for international students at Toyohashi Tech at Sakurabuchi Park in Shinshiro City. A total of nine international students participated in this event.

Two members of the Youth Association picked us up at 10:00 in the morning. We thoroughly enjoyed the activities of the days in spite of the chilly and damp weather with gloomy skies on Sunday morning.

Our group arrived at Sakurabuchi Park at 11:15 and I remember seeing the amazing sea of pink and beautiful flowers all around me. I couldn't believe my eyes because it seemed so unreal. I was amazed at beauty of the Sakura flowers. It was the first time I had ever seen so many sakura trees in full bloom. At around 11:30 we started to explore the park. It was raining but the park was full of people enjoying the day. Everybody looked so happy and fresh.

First we went to Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival vendors who were selling many different kinds of food and souvenirs, including regional delicacies. Many stalls and shops were lined up along the main pathways, which were filled with customers. For lunch, I bought fried chicken, stream fish, and local food of Shinshiro. We had a picnic under a sakura tree, which gave a good opportunity to chat about the morning's activities. Also, young members of the Shinshiro groups had brought us special home cooked meals. All the foods were so delicious and the Taranome tempura was my favorite.

After lunch we visited other areas in park. Crystal clear water flowed in a stream and some people were walking across a beautiful suspension bridge that spanned the stream. Some people were enjoying riding boats and fishing in the stream. The entire park was covered in pink sakura with a delicate fragrance. The petals were falling on the sidewalks and onto the hair of the Japanese ladies dressed in sakura patterned kimonos who were taking photographs with this dreamy beautiful background. I had never seen scenery like this before and took many beautiful photographs.

Around 14:00 we left Sakurabuchi Park and moved to a workshop for the pottery. After walking for 10 minutes, we found some small, delicate, and beautiful pottery along the bank of the stream. The Japanese pottery master explained and demonstrated in detail how to make a cup. We created our own clay cups with unique designs and colors to glaze the cups. Now, we all possess our handmade and lovely pottery.

At 16:00 we move back to Toyohashi Tech and I thought to myself how sakura makes people and happy. I do wish to come back here every year during this season. But, I know my wish is impossible for me because I will go back to my country after my graduation. I whispered to myself, "Sayonara Sakura."

I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers, the Shinshiro Youth Association and other participants in this event for giving me the most amazing experience of my life.



Group photograph at the Sakuraguchi park. Ms. Ohnmar Khaing is on the front row, third from the left.



Making cups at the pottery experience

Study Tour in Kyoto

Nihad Karim Chowdhury, first year doctoral student, Computer Science and Engineering

It was March 11th Monday, a sunny bright morning. A two study trip for International Students of Toyohashi Tech to Kyoto was scheduled by the International Affairs Division. The tour was meticulously planned for the 51 participants including Toyohashi Tech staff and students. The International Affairs Division produced a pamphlet with detailed information about the tour.

Some of the students met at 7 AM at the entrance hall of the International House to complete registration for the Kyoto tour before departing for Toyohashi Station, to join another group there. The participants were divided into groups of seven to eight students including a group leader.

I was little bit crazy, and was feeling excited because this would be my first time to ride on the Shinkansen. Really, the train was awesome, as the luxurious Shinkansen accelerated to maximum speed and headed towards Kyoto.

We reached Kyoto station around 10 AM, where two tour buses were waiting for us for sightseeing. From Kyoto station we first went to Nijo Castle. The Castle was originally built in 1603 as the official Kyoto residence of the first Tokugawa Shogun Ieyasu, and it was completed in 1626 by the third shogun Iemitsu, who transferred some of the structures from Fushimi castle. It's internal architecture was amazing.

After our delicious lunch, we went to the Kyoto City Disaster Prevention Center. This was also an amazing experience. We frequently hear about earthquakes in Japan, but at this center we experienced an artificial earthquake. In addition to this we enjoyed a short 3D movie and experienced "firefighting training". This program was designed to help us to prepare ourselves to save lives and limit damage during an earthquake.

Next, we went to a place where we experienced "Yuzen-Zome" dyeing. All the international students experienced one type of dying: drawing freehand with a brush or "tegaki yuzen". Later we looked around a museum of Japanese arts and crafts, and at about 5 PM, we reached our hotel—the Gion Fukuzumi—where we had a delicious and 'artistic' dinner. The most interesting part in the dinner was meeting with "Maiko San". From this experience, I say that if you want to comprehend Japanese culture then meet a Maiko san. Her colorful dress and activities were very impressive.

The following day, we went to the outstanding Kinkaku-ji temple. The original purpose of the building was as a residence for the retiring Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1409). The temple was rebuilt in 1955 and continues to function as a storehouse of sacred relics. After that, we visited another place to get experience about how to make "Nama-Yatsushashi", where we got some delicious Kyoto sweets. Finally, we visited Kiyomizu-dera temple, which is one of the most famous temples in Japan. It is made entirely of wood and is situated on a hillside. We enjoyed views of Kyoto city from grounds of the temple.

Then, the tour was over and we reached Toyohashi Station at 7:30 PM. I would like to thank to Toyohashi Tech for arranging this amazing tour.



Participants in the front of Nijo Castle



Participants in front of Kinkaku-ji Temple. Mr Nihad Karim Chowdhury is in the back row, fifth from the left.



International students making "Nama-Yatsushashi"