

Mohammad Sabri bin Hj Mohd Yusof

Teacher Training Program 2008-2010



REMINISCING THE OLD TIMES IN JAPAN

I love Japan. I have never thought in my wildest dream that I could ever experience living in this awesome land. The one and a half year stay had taught me so much of what hard work, sincerity and friendship meant.

How I ended up in Japan was pretty much of luck I guessed. Initially I applied for the Young Leadership programme which was under the Monbukagakushou Scholarship which unfortunately I didn't get. I was very disappointed at that time because of all the trouble taking the exams, processing the scholarship forms and the interview. Fortunately a few months later, the Japan embassy called me and told me that I would be going to Japan through the Teacher Training Program. I was still not convinced with the news even though I had received all the itineraries of studying in Japan until I entered the Brunei International Airport which confirmed to myself that I was definitely going to set my foot on the island of the rising sun.

Upon arriving in Japan the first thing I found difficult was communication. It's pretty much a burden at first when you have little knowledge of Japanese language except for ohayo, konnichiwa and sayonara. Therefore it is advisable for those who plan to go to Japan for the first time to bring along a bilingual dictionary with them which will definitely come in handy. Since the scholarship that I took prepared an intensive Japanese language course, somehow I felt at ease. Do expect to have a lot of tests and homework every day except for weekends.

Travelling was probably by far my form of guilty pleasure in spending my free time. For me it was a release from the tension of over studying which motivated me to do as much travelling as possible and the most exciting thing about travelling in Japan was every place offers different kinds of experiences. I managed to go to the "desert" as I usually referred to a sand dune which is located in Tottori, ninja village in Nikko, the memorial park in Hiroshima, Himeji castle, Tokyo tower and other interesting places. The only place that I regretted not going was Hokkaido. Although I hated the cold but I still wanted to experience the snow festival which happens once a year. So take the time to travel and observe the beautiful scenery while you are there.

Talking about habits, I am sure Bruneians who came back from Japan will definitely still nod their head unconsciously. That kind of habit is really hard to break. In Brunei, I nod my head and bow at counters especially at banks, meetings, and other activities which involved shaking hands or goodbyes. Back then in Japan, these gestures I found it as a form of deep respect and appreciation. Not forgetting the word "Kawaii" which will eventually become the most basic appreciation of cuteness of tiny things and of course every picture with the peace sign. It would be bizarre if these kinds of habits did not catch on newcomers.

In campus I had a couple of friends whom I felt really connected to. Jane, Bounmee and Changhun had been really the best buddies whom I shared a really closed friendship. Many times they would stay in my apartment having dinner together sharing hot noodles and kimchi, drinking tea when the night got cold, share stories and experiences and even gossip. But much of the time we really had great time because we took the time to understand and accept each other. So make friends and try to do many things together so that when you come back to Brunei you can always talk about your life back in Japan and the people you cherished most when you were there.

Other things besides the above I would like to share one of the funny experiences which I think which I will never forget. It was the first and probably the last time I would ever climb Fuji Mountain. I am not saying it in a negative way. To think back about it, my friends and I had not prepared well for the climb. Despite the bad experience, I am still amazed on how things turned out. We managed to experience the sun rise on top of the mountain. And the most shocking discovery was the availability of convenience store on top of the mountain which was awesome. Initially I thought it was quite funny to find such store on a mountain but it was really a blessing in disguise. We bought souvenirs and definitely food and drinks. So no complaints on that and I ate crab on the mountain instead of near the sea. This kind of experience always makes me wonder at how creative Japan is to make the impossible possible.

What would I advise for those who wish to study in Japan?

- Study should be your top priority.
- Get involved in carnivals or cultural events so that you could showcase your country.
- Celebrate the four seasons because each season offers unique experience.

Finally my last advice, be hardworking, respectful and honest to others. These kinds of behaviours will give you more opportunity to bond better understanding and friendship. So enjoy your life if you happen to be the next scholarship holder and take the opportunity to know the people, language, culture, places of interest or festivals because the experience could help you to be more appreciative of what you have in your own country.