

JENESYS 2017 REFLECTIONS

Last December, I had the opportunity to travel to the land of the rising sun for my very first time to engage in a series of exchanges under the *Japan East-Asia Network Exchange for Students and Youths* (JENESYS) program organized by JICE. Through this program, I had the opportunity to mingle with like-minded Japanese youths, understand more about the technological developments of Japan, engage in a homestay, visit historically significant fortresses, and was even selected to present to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We started off the trip with a majestic view of Mt. Fuji upon arrival at the Haneda Airport. There were gasps and cries of joy before we were struck with the 6 degrees wind and jolted back to reality. Over the next few days, we covered different tourist attractions in Tokyo. At *Asakusa*, we drew divination lots and prayed for the health of our family as well as for good grades. We went on to the *Imperial Palace* where our guide Okamoto-san introduced us to the Japanese Monarchy and the history behind the chrysanthemum throne before we headed to *Tsukiji Fish Market* and tried the freshest Sashimi I ever tasted.



Rising Sun, Nagoya



Divination Lot, Asakusa



NTU delegates, Nagoya Castle

For the next part of the trip, we took a *Shinkansen* shuttle to Nagoya. This was the part of the trip where I was highly anticipating since Nagoya is the birth place of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* and *Toyotomi Hideyoshi*, the historic characters I read about since I was a kid. It was an eye-opening experience at the *Tokugawa-en* where we caught the final moments of autumn. The reflection of the warm golden rays on the pond while busking in colours of red, green and yellow was truly a magical experience.

For two days, I had the opportunity to stay with Felix-san and Yoshie-san. Our gracious hosts introduced us to their family members and we cooked a Japanese meal together on the first night. The next morning, we had an opportunity to observe a traditional tea ceremony with a tea grandmaster whom Yoshie-san has been learning from for a couple of years. Donning a Kimono, *Sensei* embodies traditional culture and practice which the government is trying to preserve amidst rapid modernisation and integration of western practices. We spent the rest of the day with Ricky-san at the *Nagoya Zoo* where we all agreed he fits in with the *saru*.



Obasan, Nagoya



Sensei, Nagoya



Ricky, Nagoya

In Nagoya, we had discussions and shared about Singapore with our Japanese counterparts at Toyota Technological Institute. Upon reaching Tokyo, the Brunei team and Singapore team presented on how we can maintain relationship and encourage friendship after we return to our respective countries. I was honored to be selected as part of the Singapore entourage to present our ideas to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



NTU Delegates with GOH, Tokyo



MFA Delegate, Tokyo

There were so many aspects of the trip which I felt grateful for – the hospitality, the opportunity and most importantly, the kindness I felt. I would like to take this opportunity to thank SCBE for this wonderful opportunity and all the people we met on the trip who treated us with so much respect and kindness. Thank you so much Japan, I hope to visit you again soon!