Spring School Programme

"Walking along the Path of Japan's Modern History, Culture & Heritage and Contemporary Society"

An Active Learning Exposure

13 – 23 March 2017
Japan
Spring School Programme: “Walking along the Path of Japan’s Modern History, Culture & Heritage, and Contemporary Society”

Background

Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), in partnership with Chiba University and ASEAN University Network (AUN), is organised the “Spring School Programme: “Walking along the Path of Japan’s Modern History, Culture & Heritage, and Contemporary Society”, from 13 – 23 March 2017 in Japan. The programme offers ASEAN students a unique opportunity to study and expose to Japan’s modernisation, its history, culture, heritage, as well as the development of the society specifically through a wide range of corporations and industries.
Japan’s National Diet
On the way to Tokyo Imperial Palace
“ASEAN & My Country’s Education System”
NHK Museum
Waseda University
Learning Objectives

1. To encourage participating students’ learning process and personal development through international exchanges

2. To expose participating students to cross-cultural experiences

3. To enhance the creativity and capacity in the participating students’ soft skills

4. To provide a venue for networking and building a friendship among the future leaders of the ASEAN region.

The programme is developed by employing a variety of learning components including lecture, field exposures, group seminar, self-reflection, group reflection and learning journal.
March 13 (Mon)
~12:00 Individual arrival at Narita Airport
Transport by bus to Chiba University
13:30 Briefing & administrative announcements (Chiba University Campus)
16:00 Arrival at Yoyogi National Olympics Memorial Youth Center. (YOC)
18:00 Dinner for socialising (YOC)

March 14 (Tue)
Tokyo Début Day
9:00: Leave for Tokyo Station for Station Tour & JP/Tokyo University Museum
11:00 Take HATO Bus Tokyo city excursion
14:30: Visit ASEAN-Japan Centre
17:00: Visit Tokyo Tower
19:00 Night Workshop on Japanese Language & Culture (YOC)

March 15 (Wed)
Yokohama Day
8:30: Leave for Yokohama for briefing at Yokohama JICA Office
13:30: Visiting Yokohama-based NPO for local community support activity
18:00 Welcome gathering with Yokohama local university students
March 16 (Thu)

**Tokyo Media Day**

9:00: Leave for Kamiyacho to visit NHK Museum
14:00: Visit Yomiuri Newspaper Headquarters
16:00: Visit Imperial Palace
19:00: Night Lecture on Japan’s modern history

March 17 (Fri)

**Education and Government Day**

8:00: Visit Waseda University
13:30: Workshop on “ASEAN & My Country’s Education System”
16:00: Visit Japan’s National Diet

March 18 (Sat)

**Tokyo Free Day**

All Day: Day for resting & self-study
March 19 (Sun)
8:00: Leave Yoyogi for Mt. Fuji area (Gotemba) by Bus via Odawara Castle and Hakone (Ohwakudani & Ashino Lake).
16:00: Arrival at Gotemba
Eve: Night Lecture on Mt. Fuji at

March 20 (Mon)
Excursion by bus to Hakone Fuji Goko (Kawaguchi Lake), Oshino-Hakkai & Narusawa-Hyouketsu.
Visit Tokinosumika Illumination site in the evening (Dinner)

March 21 (Tue)
Leave Gotemba back to Tokyo via Kamakura (Big Buddha) & Yokosuka (Navy Port Cruise)

March 22 (Wed)
Japan Business Day
8:00: Leave by train for Makuhari AEON Headquarters (courtesy visit & briefing)
12:00: Lunch (Inside AEON Mall Makuhari)
15:00: Visit Tokyu Corporation Headquarters in Shibuya by train (lecture, group work & presentations)

March 23 (Thu)
Departure Day
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Students’ Reflections

- Japan through Our Eyes
- Cultural Diversity and Exposure
- Inspirations and Goals
- Contributions to Our Countries
**Anime and reality**

Visiting Japan is like experience the anime we watched turned into reality. Many of us have an ideal image of Japanese culture long before visiting Japan. We get to know Japanese culture through constantly watching anime and J-pop. From anime, we watched pupil wearing the white shirt, short pant and same set of the backpack to school. From anime, we watched people stand behind the bar to wait for the train pass by. No doubt that anime is playing an important role in strengthening Japanese soft power, it spread around the world. Anime constructed most of our impression toward Japan. Every moment in Japan made us realise that the how anime producer strongly uphold their culture, as they portray Japanese way of life into the anime scene. However, our spring school experience in Japan made us realise that Japanese culture is far richer and complicated than we have thought.
Cultural shock made our trip memorable

We experienced a bit of cultural shock in the first few days at Yoyogi National Olympics Memorial Youth Center. We did not get used to the public bathroom, get up much earlier to be on time. We had to take a bath with other people naked. At the beginning, most of us felt very embarrassed to taking bath with a lot of people. It made some of us do not even want to bath but at the end, we thought that this was a new thing and we had to try. Finally, we could enjoy the public bathroom and took a bath together with our friends.

Some of us were also a bit uneasy at first because the bathroom only opened at night but we usually took a bath twice a day, morning and night. After a few days, we adapted. Looking back at those experiences, we realised that these things made our trip memorable and unique.
Weather, from tropical to 15 °C below

One thing that was quite hard for us to overcome was the weather. Almost all of us came from tropical countries that only have two seasons, which is rainy and dry. We do not have to wear a coat or jacket. In Japan, we needed to wear three layers of clothes, plus scarf and gloves to resist the cold weather. Although the temperatures could hit 15°C below, all of us were still so excited to do many activities.

We were impressed by the fresh air in Japan. The air in Japan was very clean and fresh. Most of us came from developing countries that fresh air can only be felt in the early morning.
The city of Speed. Transportation and Walking

The transportation system of Japan is amazing and very convenient. The railway connects many areas. Train arrive and departure time is accurate.

Although the train system might be confusing at first because of the number of different lines and destinations, we can see they are well connected from one place to other places. So once you know how to read the map, you are able to travel most of the places in Tokyo.

There is also some phone application that made it even easier to go to your destination. All you need to do is just type your current location and where you want to go, and then the app will show you which train you to take. We also found that the Suica card is so useful for our daily lives in Japan. Not only we can use the card to take the trains but we can also use it to pay in the mini mart and some restaurants. You can also use it to buy things from the vending machine. There are a lot of vending machines in Japan that sells varieties of products.

We were also impressed by the way Japanese walk, they very fast but does not look tired at all. This is very different from some of our own countries where the people do not walk that much, instead, we usually drive cars or motorcycles.
**Impression to Japanese people: polite, kind and on time**

Japanese people are considerate. We noticed this from some unspoken rules and etiquette, for example, standing on the left side on the escalator, if you are not in a hurry. Rules like these may create a good relationship and avoid conflict between people.

Japanese people are very punctual. They always come 5 minutes earlier before appointment time, they always line up when they are waiting and no one cut the line.

**History and museum**

Japan is rich in culture. We had visited many historical places and museums like Tokyo Station, JICA’s in-house Oversea Migration Museum, Imperial Palace, Mt. Fuji and Odawara Castle. At the Tokyo station, we learned that Tokyo station is the oldest western style train station in Japan. Tokyo station was not affected by the earthquake but destroyed by war. It originally had 3 stories but then become 2 stories because of the B-29 firebombing on May 25, 1945. In 2013, they reconstructed the building to the original 3 stories design. At JICA’s in-house Overseas Migration Museum, we learned the reasons why Japanese migrated, and which part they migrated, like US and Brazil.
Japanese people are honest. They have trust to each other. One of our friends lost his wallet and usually you would not be able to get it back. However, he got the wallet back because someone picked it and gave to the staff. We were very impressed about this.

When we went to the restaurant to have the meal in Japan, most of us had difficulty in communicating with the waiter. We did not understand Japanese and waiter did not understand English well. However, they still tried their best to use body language to serve us, and with a good smile. These friendly attitudes made us really happy because they are very nice to the customer no matter where they come from.

**ASEAN youngster work in Japan in future?**

As Japanese confronting aging society, they seem willing to accept young workers from ASEAN. Japan will be a fully English-speaking country within the first half of the century. Therefore, those who do not speak Japanese and want to work with world-class cooperation may find more opportunities in Japan in the future.
**Cultural Diversity and Exposure**

**One Asia, different cultures**

Although Japan is located in Asia, the culture is so different from ASEAN countries.

Japan people say Itadakimasu and Gochisosama before and after the meal. Japan is more diverse than we expected. Seeing many foreigners at the street reflects that Japan is so popular within and outside of ASEAN. From visiting some big corporation, we learned that Japan is the hub of international cooperation in businesses and tourism.

**Well-developed while preserving culture**

Japan is a unique country. It successfully preserves the traditional values while developing technology well. Development and new social value are not a threat to traditional customs. Japanese people are so proud of their ritual and festivals and sometimes they even closed major roads for conducting the festivals ceremony.

**Learning from peers**

This exchange programme deepens the understanding between individuals from different background. Through interact with our peers, we have better interest in global issues. Every day we discover new things about our peers and learned that we are not that different at the end. This programme enables us to interact with students from 9 different countries that definitely have a variety of way of lives.
In this programme, we were not only traveling to Japan but we feel other ASEAN countries as well. We get to know more about other ASEAN countries through pillow talks and train chit-chats. Because of this, we learned a lot the cultures of other ASEAN countries like Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and of course Japan.

For example, Malaysian and Indonesian use ‘batik’ pattern in their clothes. Cambodia and Laos have similarity in the way of two pieces clothing; the upper dress and the skirt. It was fun to explore the things we share in common and the things we do differently in our country. Some of us were able to try the traditional costumes of other countries. It felt like a fashion show. We changed costumes of different countries in just one night.
Better language skill and confidence

International student mobility programmes help improve our language skills as well. At first, speaking English can be a challenge for some of us who rarely speak English in daily lives. As time passed by, we get used to speaking English confidently with the other participants.

Furthermore, spending time in Japan has enhanced our awareness about the importance of the ability of speak more languages apart from our national language and English. It would help us to better communicate with the foreigner. Besides, we did strengthen our self-confidence, maturity, and became more independent.

Being minorities, embrace different culture

Through this programme, we learned that nationalities, religions, and even cultures do not determine our friendships, our hearts do. There are 33 ASEAN and Japanese students who hold different cultures and traditions, spending 2 weeks together. We feel like we are siblings. We explored, learned, experienced, cheered, smiled and got along with each other well although our nationalities and religions are different. Moreover, the experience of being a minority in such a big country inspired us to be more tolerant to other people. We learned to respect and value different way of lives, religions, food culture. Our experience in Japan made us understand that it's okay to be different, as long as it is peaceful.

Group discussion between ASEAN and Japanese students
Welcome gathering with Yokohama local university students
To study or work in Japan

After visiting Japan for two weeks, we are inspired to study in Japan in the future, as the country’s education system is well constructed; some of us also wish to pursue a higher degree after completing our undergraduate studies, for instance, a master’s degree in political science. Japanese Universities, institutes and research centres offer various scholarships for young students in ASEAN countries, thus we imagine that the country is a great destination for international students, especially those professing in the field of computer science and information technology.

Furthermore, we hope that more pupils from our countries can be sent to Japan to study, so that more about the Japanese cultural habits and spirits can be learnt, which may be valuable to our own countries’ development in the future.

To learn Japanese

We are motivated to learn Japanese, which is the key to learning more about the culture, traditions, and lifestyles of Japan. When hearing local people communicating in
their native tongue, we have attempted to interact with them, but they refused to as they did not speak English; most of texts we saw in Japan were also solely written in Japanese. This encourages us to learn Japanese, so that we can both have a method of communication with Japanese people, and study more about the country and its specialties.

**To Learn from Japanese spirits**

This trip to Japan influenced us to be a better person: the Japanese people’s respectful behaviours, such as the way they bow and how they respond to questions, were the most impressive for us. With Japan’s values so deeply ingrained in their lifestyle, even the simplest ways of life inspired us during our 10-day stay, and the culture shock that we experienced during our stay there specifically reflected how much the Japanese values time and promises; when we first arrived, most of us were overwhelmed by how punctual they were, and we were deeply moved by the punctuality they exhibited. It ought to be noted that in most ASEAN countries, punctuality is a discipline that is very rarely practised despite the fact that it is always emphasized, especially for events and ceremonies; but old habits die hard. Therefore, it was our goal during the program to learn from the Japanese people by appreciating the value of time. By doing this, we believe we were not only taking care of our own precious time, but of others as well.
Hand and mouth rinsing in front Meiji Shrine to express respect

Waseda University introduction by Dr. Kazuo KURODA, Dean of International Affairs

NHK Museum
Japanese people also share the great quality that is honesty. At one point, one of our friends left her pair of shoes on the common bath’s shoe rack, and since the design was quite popular, someone mistook it as their own and took it by mistake. Our friend left a note, and the next day her shoes were returned. With this, we came to the conclusion that many among the Japanese are honest people.

Furthermore, from our point of view, Japanese people’s appreciation for rules was not limited to being on-time: they obeyed the rules to protect the common interest. For example, they always queued up wherever they were: at the store, train station, or restaurant; queuing etiquette is still not given a strict concern in our countries, thus we were attempting to get used to it. After spending ten days in Japan, we gained insight into the importance of obeying rules for the benefit of our people. The Japanese are also known for their steadfast discipline, attention to detail, boundless creativity, knack for innovation, and humility. For these reasons, we find that they are a nation worth emulating.

It is really amazing to even think how hectic their routine is, and how hardworking they are. Throughout our duration of stay in Japan, we observed and experienced first-hand their daily activities; we observed that Japanese worked diligently in order to meet their expectations, and they thirsted to perfect everything regardless of its significance. They put in tremendous effort to achieve what they were aiming for. As a visitor, we realized that Japanese people were genuinely helpful and reliable, as observed from their effort to help us when we asked them for directions. Even though some of them didn’t speak English well, they still tried their best to assist us. As a result, the Japanese people have been respected and considered to be a role model for other nationalities.
Japanese lifestyles inspired us to implement some of the Japanese cultures in life like kindness, behavior, punctuality, discipline, and the determination in accomplishing goals. We would love to implement this habit and culture in our country; by simply starting with ourselves, it would inspire other people to do the same things just like how Japanese people impacted us.

**To help the community**

Seeing Japan in reality was highly insightful. One of the things that we are awed about Japan is the level of gumption and dedication displayed by the Japanese people when caring for their society and achieving magnificent things. The local people help each other to build their own community and improve their quality of life, while founders of huge corporation work together to improve the prevailing economic systems; the Japanese government is rather laissez faire and allows the corporations to be greatly influential to the economy. That kind of savviness is still exhibited by the Japanese people even in the face of globalization, and cherishing their own unique culture is what made them a formidable force in the economic sector. How they solve their problems in solidarity is also very impressive: both the people and the government can work together to form a resolution, regardless of how severe the problem is. While in most of the ASEAN countries, the people usually wait for the government to tackle the new problems, even though sometimes they are caused by the people themselves.

Through this trip, we realized that our country had many things that could be improved. We believe that the greatness of this country is built on their culture, which always teaches their people about discipline, hard work, and punctuality. Not only do they understand the benefits of these values, but they have also already applied them to their everyday life. If we want our country to be as successful as Japan, our society has to both learn and adopt these values.
To start with ourselves

Before we went to Japan, we know about our goals; and the trip, which taught us to shape our future goals, helped us to realize what we are going to do to achieve them. For instance, some of us decided to learn Japanese to accomplish their goals and to absorb some new creative concepts, and to apply jobs. We have many different goals after joining this program: some of us want to work in Japan because they think that everybody works hard, knows their responsibilities, and dedicates in whatever they are doing; some want to work in international offices as a middleman for multinational business and cultural exchanges; some want to travel to other new places to learn new things; some want to be a diplomat, and the interest in the ASEAN-Japan relationship has grown substantially due to the program, thus we are attempting to master the discourse between Japan and other ASEAN countries. The same thing that we all feel is that this program has inspired us to study and work harder and advance in our own fields, as we believe each of us have our own specialties and interest in different fields that we can use to help other people, and even our own country if we devote a lot of effort into it. Even just by studying our best, we think that we are already helping our country just a little bit.
The word we often heard in Japan was Kaizen, a goal for every company or restaurant. It refers to continuous improvement; this is why Anthony Bourdain, one of the best food writers, praised Tokyo as the home of good foods. For example, Japan is the home of many thriving local private companies that build many infrastructures in Japan and various foreign countries, as their products are usually of excellent quality. We ought to keep this quality in mind and to make an improvement and be a better person every day.

In addition, we are definitely amused by how Japanese actually take advantages of the technology that they have to make their life more comfortable. From the heated chair on the train and toilet to the hot and cold vending machine, we are inspired to actively innovate for our countries. Unfortunately, it is difficult to change our society, and as students, our societal influence is very limited. What we could do now is to apply the principles in our daily lives, so in the future we could teach them to the people around us. Even though it will require a lot of effort, I believe, as a student, we have to at least make the first step for the progress of our society.
CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR COUNTRIES

It is true that travelling opens our eyes and mind. Before visiting Japan, we only focused on studying, chores, and family. However, now we realize that students are supposed to be active, innovative, and looking forward to the future. From this trip, we were encouraged to think about all of the above aspects.

To preserve our culture while also adapt to the world

In most of our countries, the traditional culture and values are gradually vanishing, and the situation worsens due to the rapid influences of modernization and urbanization. It is desirable if we can preserve the older values while also adapt to new changes: Japan has accomplished this. We wish to take better care of our own heritages so that more people will be attracted to visit, and learn about our culture and history.

One of the advantages of participating in this program was to be exposed to foreign cultures, which influenced us to be more open-minded and understand that it is possible to live together in harmony despite of cultural differences, as long as we understand and accept one another. We believe that this type of program also helps us to understand the importance of international relationship between countries, change our mindset regarding the need for a higher level of cooperation between countries, and eventually helps us to build a stronger and closer community that will strive for a peaceful future.
To better our own people

There are different ways that we can contribute to each of our countries. It is common for the people in Japan to be highly engaged in developing public spaces and community services, while they also contribute a lot of their time for other people and their own country. Most people from our own countries still lack of this quality, and are occasionally unwilling to cooperate with others for the greater good; in comparison, Japanese people all have the will and commitment to achieve that.

For example, during our visit to Tokyu Corporation, not only did we learn about their business and how their company operated, but also how they maintained a close relationship with the government and their competitors; they elaborated further on how they resolved issues with other companies, and they mentioned that they all simply need to talk with each other. This amount and level of coordination between companies and also with the government is something that is rarely seen and should be attempted in some ASEAN countries, including Indonesia.

Additionally, ASEAN countries have to be developed more rapidly; for example, in the field of technology, we are much less advanced than Japan, possibly because of economic and social issues. We should be more organized in term of society, and people should be honest, obey to the rules, avoid being selfish, lazy and late, and start to think about the whole instead of only focusing on themselves, in order to push our country to be in a better state. In contrast, Japan thought that the citizens are important to the nation, and that they are the source of problems, so the government tries to encourage them first. There are a lot that we, as a whole, can take a page from Japan.
To focus on education

After visiting the Science Museum in Tokyo, we observed that Japanese people educated the younger generations on natural science, future career, and problems that humanity has to deal with since they were children. A lot of Japanese people are trained to love, to learn and to find their future goals. Youngsters are, undoubtedly, a vital part for our countries’ future development, so we hope that we could contribute our time to educate them.

Of course, we have to start with ourselves: to contribute our time, knowledge and abilities to our countries to become better and be significant for the world. Thus, we promised ourselves to study hardly and obtain excellent results so that we would become a well-rounded, respectable, and knowledgeable graduate. From that, we will have a better chance to strive for our dream and goals.

We can encourage all of our friends and colleagues to broaden their minds, as they ought to know there are a lot of things to learn outside of the classroom, and there are numerable valuable lessons that we
can take from other countries. For instance, it is good for our ASEAN community to learn about cultural management from Japan, since our cultures have not been emphasized enough in our own countries. We would like to share our memorable experiences in Japan with teachers and students at the university, and to illustrate how amazing it was to live in Japan with other 30 ASEAN delegates whom we have never met each other before. We hope that we can apply everything that we learnt from Japan in various fields, and by starting from ourselves with simple actions, we will implement many things that we learnt to our society, such as their attitude, and discipline. Hopefully, our action can influence others and bring many benefits for our country. We may start by respecting the rules, lining up in a proper way, being punctual and keeping the environment clean.

To build international connections

One of the things we can do for our home countries is to contribute in building interpersonal connections between ASEAN and Japan, as this may help the governments to come to a greater understanding of other ASEAN countries. We now strongly desire to connect with other ASEAN students, and to help the government to raise awareness and positivity. Such a program certainly shed some doubts as well as paranoia on integrating our identity into one ASEAN community. Also, now that we have many new connections in other ASEAN countries after participating in the program, our future careers as well as our countries will benefit from them, as strengthened international relationships are usually advantageous for future developments. Therefore, we ought to start building connections among ASEAN people for our society.
CONCLUSION

As students from ASEAN, we believe what we learned in Japan had become of great importance for our lives and how we would contribute for our own nations. The living condition of Japan, one of the most developed countries in the world, is a stark contrast to that of most ASEAN countries. Our part as students became crucial for the future of ASEAN as there will still be a long way to go. In our opinion, by learning from a country, like Japan, that has already achieved prosperity and peace, we can come to the conclusion of what kind of change we want to make in our own countries. This crucial step is already completed, and the next step we will take will vary, and highly depends on ourselves.

Nevertheless, this programme gifted us with a new vision and precious partnerships. Although how we will proceed to create change and achieve we want is of our own choice, we are already equipped with new knowledge about Japan, which represents the standard we want our countries to achieve, while we are also enlightened of the advantage of cooperating with other ASEAN countries to achieve the progress that we want.

Lastly, we cannot express in words how thankful we all are for the opportunity to meet such great friends and mentors from all over Asia through ASEAN University Network and Chiba University’s 2017 Spring School Programme. We have learned so much from this trip, and the friendships we formed are precious and invaluable to us. To this day, we still keep in touch and look forward to chat with one another, and the memories we have of Japan are beautiful and cherished. Looking through all the pictures we’ve taken during our trip makes us a bit sentimental, but we know we will see each other again soon!