



**Summerschool Japan Niigata  
„Science and Technology in Japan“**

**31.08.2016 – 19.09.2016**

Review of the summer school in Japan from 16/08/31 to 16/09/19 from Hannes

The first time I heard of the summer school program in Niigata was, when I was browsing through the websites of the “Akademisches Auslandsamt” of the Otto-von-Guericke-University Magdeburg, while I was looking for a way to experience something totally different from my everyday life. The program sounded so interesting that I immediately applied for the summer school in Niigata and I was accepted not even one week later.

I couldn't wait for the journey to begin and finally the day came that we started our trip to Niigata. We were five people in the train to Frankfurt, where our plane was departing to Shanghai. From there it wasn't far from Japan and soon we arrived in the city of Niigata at the Japanese Sea. From the first day on, we had a perfectly planned schedule. We were taken directly from the airport to a local radio and TV station. After that it was time to meet our host families and students of the Niigata University at the welcome party. Luckily the assignment of the families gave me a wonderful host family, Midori and Yoichiro Dohmae, together with two other students of our group. The dinner was great, as were the conversations we had. When we left the party, our host family took a detour by the sea, so we could observe the wonderful sunset above Sado Island. I learned my first new word: 美しい (utsukushi), that was what my host dad said, when we were looking at the deep red sun. Beautiful. But after all I couldn't wait to get home, because we had a 30 hour travel from Magdeburg to here. Thankfully our host family was very experienced with hosting and felt our tiredness. The house wasn't far from the beach and after a short introduction to the conditions, we were free to unpack our stuff and had a shower. After that we had a nice talk with our host parents and went to bed finally.

The first day started with a nice western style breakfast including cereals and bread with jam. Midori-san, our host mother took us to the bus stop the first time, so we knew the way. The destination was the Niigata University, in fact the West Gate, where we met the other students, Prof. Sato and Dr. Genetzke. From there we were taken around the campus and arrived at the room where we had our Japanese lessons. The first lesson was extremely interesting, as we quickly learned the spelling through learning-by-doing. At the end of the lesson we could introduce our self in a very kind way. We used the new words during the lunch with the Japanese students, and they surely enjoyed our German accent. Some tours through the local faculties for engineering followed. We noticed that not every Japanese student was as confident in speaking English as our guides were and especially Koki-san was very delighting for us, as he could explain us a lot.

The first weekend was approaching and we made plans for the weekend together with our host family. On Saturday we were visiting a nearby city, called Sanjou that is known for its crafted products and traditional forging. We got the opportunity to observe a real blacksmith while forging a paper knife or letter opener with us. I was interested in all the products that were exhibited in the factory, especially the whetstones, of which I knew were good quality. My host dad bought me one of them and gave it to me as a present after we left the forgery. Then we were eating in a traditionally built restaurant, which had a very good natural air conditioning. The day ended after we did some o-sake tasting in the Niigata station.



Another special journey for us was the trip to the Niigata Institute of Technology, where we were visiting the laboratories and listened to a talk of a professor about the technology used for scanning the underground structure and early detection of earthquakes and tsunamis, which is inevitable for nuclear power plants in Japan. The day ended with a wild party in the dining hall together with local students and lots of “orange juice”. Finally a big bang announced our departure, the tail of the tsunami that was rolling over Japan at that time.

The weeks passed by, no day was like the other. We learned Japanese so we could communicate with local people on our own. It helped me a lot, and it fascinated our host family how quickly we learned new words and expressions. I think not everyone enjoyed the language courses as much as I did, but it was definitely worth it. We could use it almost always on our excursions such as the trip to Nippon Seiki, the o-sake brewery in Uchino of Higi Shuzo, our downtown tour with the Japanese students across the Bandai area and the Mediaship, as well as the Hakusan shrine, several public schools, the beach club, the department stores and not to forget the biggest and fanciest fireworks festival of the world in Katakai.

For me the trip to Niigata was one of the most interesting things I experienced so far. I was given the opportunity to learn Japanese culture from original Japanese people, who were treating us like their own kids and comrades. I didn't encounter any flinching or evasion at any time. The people always did their best to help us and kept being friendly all the time. All in all I have to say that the trip was absolutely amazing and I would definitely recommend anyone to do this who gets the chance.

## Summer school „Technology, Science and Culture in Japan“

In this evaluation I will assess our program we had during our time in Niigata.

First of all, I specially liked that we were able to stay in host families. This enabled us to experience Japanese everyday life and we got to know the Japanese Culture. It was fun to do trips like visiting an Onsen or a Shinto Shrine.

Furthermore, visiting Niigata university was really interesting, however, due to our language barrier we did not understand all the information provided by Japanese students.

Another event I really liked was going to Ikarashi Elementary and High School. Like this, we were able to see how the Japanese school system works, which is interesting since it is different to the German one. Playing soccer with the pupils was great, too.

Besides having academic activities, it was also great to see cultural events such as the Katagi Fire Works Festival and visiting the Sake brewery in Uchino. In the brewery we were able to taste different variations of Sake and got to know the process of the Sake production.

Moreover, getting to know the Niigata City Area through a sightseeing tour organized by the Japanese students was nice, too.

In order to get a better understanding in Japanese language it was also helpful to have Japanese lessons where we learnt important Japanese phrases and also the Japanese alphabet.

Besides all of the above, it was really nice to have a farewell party at the end of the summer school and to spend the last night at a Karaoke bar with the Japanese students.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for the good organization of the program. I feel like we were able to experience things a normal tourist is not able to see.

Lastly, I would like to add that I recommend this summer school exchange program to everyone.

## **Luca Pellarin: Summer School Niigata University 2016 Experience Report**

One statement before my report: Japan was awesome and I'm looking forward to coming back some day for at least a visit!

### ***Organizational Matters & Costs***

Our trip started with arriving safely at the airport in Niigata on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August with China Eastern Airlines. We flew from Frankfurt over Shanghai to Niigata. The journey was pleasant and we had no problems so far. The flight cost around 1,200€ and we paid additional 300€ for the summer school program. The price was definitely justified for the program because we experienced so much interesting and new things. In Niigata and Tokyo we paid additional ~500€ for food & beverages, clothing, the apartment in Tokyo, and entrance fees for different events. So in sum we had costs around 2,000€ (~230,000 Yen) per person (more or less). We stayed two and a half weeks in Niigata and four days in Tokyo. The temperatures in Niigata and Tokyo vary between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius but I recommend an umbrella due to the typhoons. The humidity is also very high. Our trip ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September by departure from Tokyo over Shanghai to Frankfurt.

### ***University Life***

The university life is great in Niigata! All of the students were really helpful if we had problems or questions to ask. We had a Japanese class to improve our Japanese skills at least a little bit. I've already learned Japanese for one year so it was a good revision for me. Our teacher was also very kind. We had a welcome party and a farewell party and both were formal but worth it! We had a lot of different food and great choices. The speeches were very amusing and informative.

The campus is beautiful! Niigata University has three cafeterias, a university shop, where we bought shirts and cups, and many engineering departments with lots of interesting laboratories. The food in the cafeteria was very tasty and not that expensive!

### ***Niigata City***

When we had the day off or were traveling through Niigata City with our Summer School group we experienced so many things. For example the Sake brewery (great sake!), the Niigata Institute of Technology, the Ikarashi Elementary School, or the Ikarashi Junior High School. We had so much fun playing soccer with the elementary kids and visiting the training for a sports festival at Junior High. One day we enjoyed the beach with barbecue and another day we watched great fireworks with the world's biggest firework.



### *Host Family*

Two other students and I stayed at Naoko-sans house. Our host family has five kids and all were living at home. Therefore we were 10 people and we had so much fun! The youngest child was around 3 years old and the oldest 17. We played games together, ate together, and drove to interesting places in Niigata. Looking forward to seeing them again someday!



### *Tokyo*

The last four days we stayed in Tokyo. I've never visited a city which is so huge! We (eight students including me) booked our apartment by using [www.airbnb.de](http://www.airbnb.de), therefore we only paid around 65€ for three nights. Our apartment was near the heart of Tokyo. So it was really easy to go out in the evening. We went to the imperial palace, to the observation platform of the government building, to Ginza, to the "electric city" Akihabara, to Ueno and many other beautiful places.



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**Both Niigata and Tokyo are worth to visit and I can just recommend going there!**