

Interim Report

The Internship

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Preface

Since my first contact with my Japanese friends and their cultures in the USA, I was fascinated and did not know what kind of impact that would have on me in the future.

Thanks to Mr. Dudler, Chairman of the Scholarship Fund, I received another opportunity to improve my language skills and more importantly, to understand the fascinating and complex culture. Not only would I be able to experience life in Japan, but also comprehend how work is accomplished in Japan.

After my six months internship with a German Company in Shibuya, Tokyo, I returned to Switzerland to prepare myself for the second half of my stay in Japan that focused on language studies. Because of my ERASMUS Program, I began to miss the daily life I had in Japan once I came back to Switzerland and thought that I would get used to those emotions. Now that I am back for an extended stay in Japan – it has well proved me wrong.

This report will focus mainly on my visa trouble, my experience during the six-month internship and my preparation for the language school. As many reports, this should support future grantees who are planning to experience Japan.

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Introduction

What tipped the scales toward Japan started way back in 2003, when I studied English in Houston, Texas. It was the first time I became a sojourner and had to arrange my daily life all by myself in a foreign country. It did not take me long to form friendships. In Houston I had the chance to experience many different cultures and their customs, and the culture that stood out and fascinated me the most was the Japanese culture. This is where I met three individuals who influenced me. First, there was



Fig. 1: ELS School friends, Houston Texas

Masatoshi-san who had a clear goal of where he wanted to do his master studies. He was studying endlessly to pass the GMAT with the right score to enter one of the top 5 Universities in US. Then, Yusuke-san communicated mainly with body language. In particular, his facial expressions were terrific – I had never met anyone who could express “What, me again?” without words as much as Yusuke-san. Last but not least Miki-san; she had that incredible innocent and pure expression in her eyes. Reflecting on that particular period and comparing it with my Japanese knowledge from today, it was amazing how this three friends represented main characteristics of Japanese culture in different perspectives: The strive for perfection, the understanding without words, and the innocent and cute appearance.

After I came back from my sojourn six months later, I knew it would not be my last. I thought Swiss people suddenly changed during my time in Texas, but it was not the people that had changed, it was me – my eyes were the ones that had been opened.

Those six months in the USA helped me to decide which degree program I should pursue. I decided to study International Management at the University of Applied Sciences (UAS) in Olten, because all modules and examinations were in English, many foreign students as well as exchange students were represented in the lessons, and they offered a six-month ERASMUS Program in another partner University, with exception of Japan and China, where one year was expected due to language and cultural differences.

Since my first day at UAS, my main focus was on Japan and took Japanese elective courses for three semesters. Even before I started my degree, I took a Japanese elective course early on to increase my chances of getting into one of only two seats available for going to Japan. Then finally after passing the final exams in the first year, nothing could stop me from realizing my goal – to go and experience Japan.

At Kansai Gaidai University (KGU) I learned the language, about the culture and how to do business in Japan (theoretical procedure). Working on projects with people from all over the world gave me a global perspective that will help me in the future. I participated in the home stay program my first semester and decided to rent a house with two fellow KGU peers in the second semester that created a flat-sharing community and increased my knowledge of Japanese living customs.

The time spend in Japan was valuable, especially with communication skills. As with any culture, learning to listen carefully, thinking open-mindedly, and considering the other individual are vital to any positive cultural exchange and avoids misunderstandings between both, the speaker and the listener.

When I returned to Switzerland to graduate, I knew it would definitely not be the last time I would be in Japan. After graduating, I worked for an international company in Solothurn. One day I realized that I would like to experience another business unit as well as gain work experience outside of Switzerland. The company based in Solothurn offered me the opportunity to work in Shanghai or to do an internship in Tokyo. With my background in Japan, the decision was not too difficult. Fortunately I heard about the SJCC Scholarship funds and their expectations and did not wait too long to get in touch with Mr. Dudler and apply for the scholarship. What followed afterwards will be elucidated in the two reports: The Internship, which will be the title of my interim report, and the Language School that will cover all the aspects of my fluency in Japanese.

Different than most scholarships recipients, I started with my internship, since my employer in Japan was expecting my arrival as soon as possible. The interim report will mention the problems I faced during my visa procedure, information about my internship and employer as well as some impressions of my stay in Japan.

Prearrangement before Departure

I created a list of what I should do before leaving Japan, which saved me time and money. If I lived one year in Japan, I could apply for the national health insurance, which is affordable during your internship and costs even less if you change your visa status to student. However, you would have to give notice of departure at your commune.

The pension fund had to be transferred to an vested benefits account, since I would not be working for one year in Switzerland and already reached my 25-anniversary. Further clarifications were also needed for the military service and the retirement provision, community and tax authorities. Though it was countless sheets or paper work –I think of how much I could save, than I have to say the effort I put into it was totally worth it.

Visa problems



Fig. 2: Me facing problems

In Japan the concept of doing an internship for already graduates is not part of the Japanese curriculum. Therefore I faced problems trying to obtain my visa. A Certificate of Eligibility was missing, and I could just apply for one if I would be enrolled at any University. After a little consultation with Mr. Dudler, we decided that he would get in touch with my employer in Japan at the same time I would ask my former University for a recommendation letter in which is explained how important it is for me to collect Marketing experience for my future career and what kind of role Japan had in my curriculum.

After two weeks my employer was about to give up on further arrangements for my visa. When my employer told me that they were planning to reject me after all, I asked for a one week extension to try to get a visa by myself. Three weeks has passed since I first applied for the position in Japan, and I started to worry because I was expected to start as soon as possible. I called the embassy in Bern a few times explaining the system in Switzerland that graduates also do internships. I also told them, that I asked for a recommendation letter for my former University. Time seemed to work against me.

Luckily one week later I received the recommendation letter, with an apology for the delay due to final exams at the University. On the same day, after announcing the embassy of my visit, I brought the recommendation letter in person to accelerate the procedure. Since the ambassador already knew about my situation, after calling him many times and sending him couple of mails, he asked me if I could actually wait for a moment. An hour later, I received my “special” visa. It took a load off my mind. I was very happy with the news but I had to clarify other things before my departure.

Back home I booked my flight and announced my employer and SJCC about the good news.

Internship at Bosch Japan

After an almost 6 weeks delay, I finally started my internship at Bosch Group. However due to my visa problems, my internship were shortened from six to five months. I did not challenge the situation, instead I tried to move on, to forget the problems I had to face and focused on making the best out of the time I had in front of me.

My first day at work was awkward. I was afraid of not being accepted by my Japanese co-workers. I heard that they often work very late into the night, and if I were to leave the company early, they would find it inappropriate and rude. Another issue was that some co-workers would try to evade new western members to avoid talking in English because they would feel embarrassed to make mistakes while having a conversation.



Fig. 3: In front of Bosch Headquarters in Shibuya

When I entered the Bosch Headquarters office on the fifth floor, I felt that I needed to prove myself to my co-workers. There were only two Germans in my department, and one of them was my boss. Both were expatriates from Germany and had given 5 years term assignment in Japan. They welcomed me and introduced me to the members of the power tools marketing department. In the air I could feel a certain skeptic by the Japanese co-workers. Since I was introduced in English I did not want to show my outstanding Japanese skills – to be honest I was embarrassed to say something in Japanese, because through the years of studying Japanese I was taught from female teachers, therefore my pronunciation and the word selections and sentence structure have a slightly feminine touch. Once we were done with the introduction my line manager gave me some brochures to study the Code of Business Conduct of the company, in other words the Bosch Bible, as they call it.

Once I was done with the brochure, my first meeting in a small group was already scheduled for the afternoon. We talked about my role in the power tools department, the different projects I will have, and how I was the first intern in seven years that the department has seen. I had to document everything I did and was involved in operational procedures for my successor. I was surprised how independent I could work and how much my line managers put their trust in me. After the meeting I was subordinated to two line managers, Brand Manager Lawn & Garden (BMLG) and Brand Manager Dremel (BMDR).

My main task was as assumed to support the brand managers in daily tasks in conjunction with Lawn & Garden and Dremel Rotary Tools, which were just launched in April 2008 in the Japanese Market. Besides being the Brand Manager's Assistant, I analyzed the sales, progress and profitability of those new products and sum all results in Key Performance Indexes (KPI's) for all managers in the department as well as for the USA and the UK. Last but not least, to create complete work-flow descriptions for all the tasks I was involved in.



Fig. 4: My last dinner with the Power Tools department

As time passed, I had less and less in common with my Western co-workers, but more and more with my Japanese co-workers and senior managers. They all made my stay interesting and pleasant, not only during work, but also outside of work. I was given the chance to see how a Key Manager visits the customer, negotiates about where and how to display our products. I could have a look at how negotiations are done with Marketing Agencies. I could participate on events, such as Home Center Exhibitions, Training Events for new Key Account Managers, customer and selling forces.

One thing I was not very keen on; the Monthly Business Unit Meetings. We usually had four to five topics we wanted to discuss in one hour so the next Business Unit meeting could start on time. But Japanese members would discuss one topic for about an hour, and nobody wanted to decide anything, just proposing, suggesting and postponing. With time, I started to enjoy it though.

Co-workers staying late, and no one leaves earlier until everyone is done is pretty well known. What I experienced during my internship, and after discussing with different interns outside Bosch, as well as some Japanese who breathed in the atmosphere of how work is done in foreign countries, is that Japanese spread work during the whole day. They pretend to be busy and stay till late to fulfill the expectations of the social environment. There is no written rule who tells you, that you cannot leave after your work is done after business hours are over, it is just rude to leave early. For me it looked kind of inefficient how work is done. But I guess in Japan, staying longer in the company is seen as commitment to the company, even though there is no need. What is also very interesting is that in most companies overtime work is not paid out, instead you will be able to take day off for the overtime collected. However, if you take them too often, your co-workers will not like it. Same with holidays; you might have 2 or 3 weeks holidays, but if you take holiday longer than 1 week, co-workers will frown upon an extended holiday.

One irritating problem I could see in Japan, not only at Bosch. New employees, the fresh work force who just started, do not receive the support comparable to those in Switzerland. In Switzerland a new worker will receive personal support for around one month to adapt to the new company culture and its tasks. Here in Japan, somebody who just graduated from University has to do everything by himself, without knowing how to do it the most efficient and effective way. I heard many stories of former students at KGU, who nearly lost touch to friends due to work. Most of them need between three to twelve months to get used to the company tasks, depending on the position and responsibility.

As for me, I enjoyed my work experience and would like to work a few more years in Japan, or at least work in Switzerland for a company who has business relations with Japan. We will see what the future will bring.



Fig. 5: Bosch Soccer Team, 3rd in Tournament



Fig. 6: Bosch Soccer Team, 2nd in Tournament

Bosch Group Japan

Bosch is located ten minute walking distance from of Shibuya station, the busiest and maybe most famous crossing in Japan is located. The trains were always very busy and crowded. Even though Japanese culture needs a bigger personal space and distance when talking to each other, in the train all passengers were squeezed together - the exception proves the rule.



Fig. 7: Hidden picture in a crowded train

Bosch Japan has its headquarters in Shibuya Tokyo, and Japan is the 6th most important market worldwide.¹ Bosch has three main business areas; Automotive Technology, Industrial Technology last but not least Consumer Goods & Building Technology, where Power Tools is subordinated, the department I worked for. Bosch Japan has 9 Plants and 15 offices spread all over. At the moment Bosch Japan has a Swiss President, Mr. Stefan Stocker.²

The Dormitory

Bosch owned around three dormitories between Yokohama and the headquarters in Shibuya. I was accommodated in Miyazakidai, around 20 minutes away from the Shibuya station. Shibuya should be well-known, not only from the movies Lost in Translation or from Tokyo Drift, but also for shopping malls like Shibuya 109 or Hachiko Crossing. On the top of Shibuya station, there is the Adidas futsal soccer field, where you can play on the 14th floor with nice view to Hachiko Crossing, the busiest crossing in Tokyo. By the way, if you wish to play futsal there, you should reserve at least three months in advance.

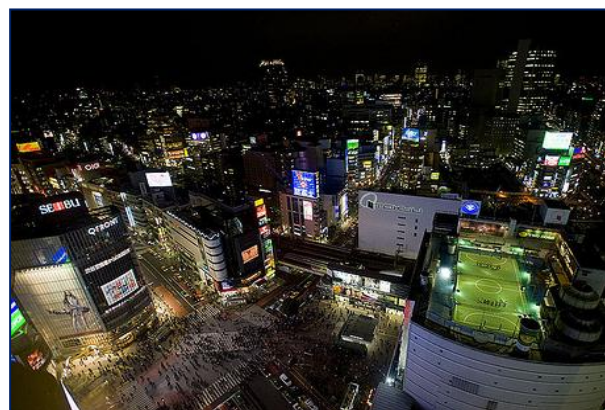


Fig. 8: Shibuya Station, Hachiko Crossing, Adidas Futsal

¹ Slide from RB Presentation; Annual Report 2007 (issued by Robert Bosch GmbH)

² Slide from RB Presentation; Bosch Group in Japan Basic Date, April 2008

During my internship the dormitory was offered by the employer, however visitors were only accepted if they were announced in advance. But even then you were not allowed to bring guest to your room, including family members or significant others. The house keeper sometimes checked the rooms, especially at the beginning of the stay, to see if everything is turned off and if candles were extinguished. The house keeper had to be strict due to a previous fire incident.

All rooms were western style with a surface of around eight tatami mats including a bed, wardrobe, table, and a chair. Every floor had a bathroom, laundry room, and wash basins. The showers, the dining room, and the living room were on first floor.

The other two dormitories were separated from each other and looked more like apartments than dormitories. In those places of housing, one could have guests visit anytime.



Fig. 9: Interns of Bosch, last dinner at a Peruvian restaurant in Yotsuya

Insight Japan

Insight into Japan will tell stories and introduce various places I visited four years ago as well as during my six month internship last summer. I wanted to mention how I experienced Japan during my first trip, because throughout my internship I could not explore Japan as much as I wanted to due to external circumstances.

Back in August 2005, before leaving Switzerland for a new adventure, I informed myself about Japan's culture, values, and norms. I reviewed my notes from my person crash course on Japan. The movies *Lost in Translation*, *Seven Samurai (Shichinin no Samurai)* and *Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)* were part of my preparation which increased my curiosity about Japan even more. After being on a twenty-five hour flight, I finally arrived at the Kansai Airport. Staff from Kansai Gaidai University picked me and fellow peers at the airport, and we were chauffeured to the dormitory in Hirakata City. We didn't leave the airport until after 10P.M., and I remember not closing my eyes for even a second on the flight from excitement. Instead I enjoyed the whole ride observing the airport, which was on an island reclaimed from the sea, all the lights around the highway, the cars which differed from what I have seen thus far. When we exited the highway I was astonished by the parking lots spaces as well as the gas stations having their gas pumps on the roof.

The first hurdle I had to take when I arrived in Japan was the QQ, a 100 yen shop very close to the dormitory in Hirakata City, where I stayed for the first week before I was assigned to my home stay for six months. I remember another Swiss and I did not dare to enter a restaurant because we could not speak sufficient Japanese at that time, so we thought going to buy something would be more convenient. Once we entered the QQ, we felt utterly lost. Everything was in Japanese, most of it in Chinese characters. Fortunately we were familiar with cup noodles from back home, since Nissin products are available in many stores. I was introduced to the onigiri, the rice triangles with seaweed wrapped on the outside, during the flight on the plane. Knowing only these two products and not being able to read how to prepare other things, we ate onigiri and cup noodles for an entire week. After that week, I was very glad to move to my home stay family. My host mother was and still is an outstanding cook.



Fig. 10: Toudaiji Temple in Nara, Biggest indoor Buddha in Japan



Fig. 11: Shiori and me feeding a deer

My first trip exploring Japan was to Nara with my host family. On the way to Toudaiji Temple, where the largest indoor Buddha statue is located, we ran into a few deer along the way. My host mother, who could speak Spanish and English, did not tell me anything about the free-range deers. Because we went with her grandchild Shiori, I was not the only one who was really surprised by watching the deer coming too close and sniffing on my rucksack for food. After a little sightseeing we spent some time at Nara Park and had a Japanese picnic.

After four weeks in Japan, my friends invited me on a trip to Tokyo. We chose the cheapest and maybe the less comfortable way of traveling by taking the night bus which cost 4000 yen/person. It took us 7 hours to get to Tokyo, with the bus stopping every 2 hours for a toilet break. We also reserved a room in a love hotel north of Tokyo for 3000 yen per night/ person, the cheapest solution despite of the location.

We arrived in Tokyo around 6 AM. After we dropped off our luggage at the hotel and ate breakfast, we began our excursion to Harajuku. We walked through the famous Takeshitadouri, where the crazy fashion stores and their special customers meet. There you could see Sailor Moon or Dragon Ball characters or women wearing princess outfits as if it were their daily clothes. I knew the fashion in Japan showed more variations and is more eccentric than European fashion, but I did not anticipate the extent of eccentric fashion in Japan.



Fig. 12: My roomy Jorge in Takeshitadouri, Harajuku



Fig. 13: Hachiko crossing in Shibuya

The most exciting place for me was the Hachiko crossing in Shibuya. Walking on that pedestrian crossing for one minute with hundreds of people from all around the world made me feel so insignificant, but at the same time, I felt united and a member of our global community. At that moment I could not even imagine that in four years, I would be interning just around the corner, walking on this crossing every day for half a year.

On the second day, we went to visit the second biggest Buddha (biggest outdoor Buddha) in Japan located in Kamakura, around one hour outside of Tokyo. The bronze Buddha called Daibutsu, is around 14 meters tall and had a temple hall was until it was washed away by a tidal wave. Though the weather was rainy and overcast, the greenery of the forest appeared livelier. On the right hand side of Daibutsu was shelter, where Buddha's slippers are hanging on the wall.



Fig. 14: Bronze Daibutsu in Kamakura

During those three days we visited many places like the Tokyo National Museum, where art and archeological remains from Japan and Asia were displayed, Asakusa Route and Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple. On the way there we took some pictures of Beer-Glass alike Asahi Breweries building. We also went to Akihabara, the Electric City, at 4.30 AM to the Fish Market in Tsukiji, and we even had time to see Sumo Championship. This was my second trip through Japan. What I was not able to see about Tokyo that time, I caught up during my internship at Bosch. More about it later.



Fig. 15: Fish Market in Tsukiji



Fig. 16: Asakusa

Such culturally enriching, highly visited places with people from all around the world have raised the bar of my expectations. The next excursion should be at least as interesting and colorful as the one before.

During the school year at Kansai Gaidai Daigaku, there was a Ise-wave going on. Many students were talking about the famous and unique Meoto Iwa (Married Rocks or Wedded Rocks) and Japan's most sacred shrines – a must see attraction in Ise. We went on a weekend getaway to Ise, located in Mie Prefecture. We stayed over in a ryokan, a Japanese-style hotel, a little bit outside the city. Once we dropped off our luggage, we decided to explore the village in search for a restaurant. Since we arrived around 9pm to our hotel, the hotel restaurant was already closed. On our way to the city, we were hoping to find a restaurant but had no luck. We realized that we are not in Tokyo anymore where shops are open 24/7. After walking through the whole city, we found a curry shop close to the highway.

Though our trip had not gone as planned, I was excited about the next day. After taking a nice hot bath and enjoying a nice sleep on tatami floors, a Japanese-style breakfast was waiting for us. Rice, miso soup, nattou, fish, raw egg, and some colorful pickles were served, accompanied with some hot green tea. I usually do not have such a large breakfast but I thoroughly enjoyed my 8A.M. breakfast.

Nattou, the sticky fermented soybeans, is known to be unpopular with foreigners due to its appearance and smell. When I saw it for the first time, I could only think of something very unappetizing, but once I became aware that nattou actually does not have any smell, I decided to give nattou a second chance. Today I have to say, I have become a fan of nattou. The best is when you mixed it with vinegar, mustard, and rice.

Then I came up with a good theory about nattou and Mexicans. A Mexican stereotype is that they eat a lot of beans. Therefore I started my mission to convert Mexicans into Nattou lovers, in which I failed...whereas the main difference between both products consists in the sticky appearance and the packaging only.

Going back to Ise, we left the hotel around 9AM to first visit the sacred shrines, before going to see the main attraction, the Married Rocks. I was astonished when people suddenly began appearing from every direction, after experiencing a quiet and uncrowded city the night before. After lunch we finally arrived at the shore, from where we could see two rocks, a small and a bigger rock connected by a rope, whereas the latter had a tiny shrine on the peak. They said, if you go really early, you can see the sun rising between the two rocks, and if you are lucky, you will be able to see Mt. Fuji in the background.



Fig. 17: Ise Meoto Iwa (Married Rocks)



Fig. 18: Married Rocks in Okinawa

Even though I missed both, seeing the Married Rocks was an unique experience I will soon not forget, - I thought. Later when I went to Okinawa, on Honto Island, somewhere on the Westside shore close to Nago, I thought I saw an illusion of the unique Ise Meoto Iwa rising from the sea. But it was not an illusion, in fact it was another pair of Married Rocks, and they looked very similar to the ones in Ise. I felt so cheated.

After the last trip I was a little more careful in choosing my destinations. I decided to visit the sights near where I was living. So I decided to visit some places around Osaka and Kyoto. Osaka was spent mainly shopping and for trying international cuisine while Kyoto was spent experiencing temples, shrines, and learning about the culture and history in Japan.

Osaka's Umeda is not comparable with Tokyo's Shibuya in terms of people, but as they say, sometimes less is more. Indeed, when I wanted to try some clothes, I did not have to stand in line for thirty minutes, like I had to in a fashion shop in Tokyo.

In Shinsaibashi Osaka, I entered at the "Hello Kitty" store. The cult kitty of around 2.30 meter was standing in front of the shop, welcoming her international customers. The store offered everything imaginable from toys to clothes and school material to a \$ 15'000-Hello Kitty robot.



Fig. 19: Hello Kitty store, Shinsaibashi

As we know Japan is famous for advanced consumer electronics, I had to visit Umeda's Yodobashi Kamera, one of the most well known consumer electronics giants. I was completely amazed how advanced mobile phones were, and then the gadgets you could have with it- unbelievable.

I remember the mobile phone I bought in Japan, even after returning to Switzerland, it was still trendy two years later. In 2004, the phones in Japan already had at least a 3.2 megapixel camera included with video function. Mobile televisions were offered for free with some contract packages. Checking your e-mail, going online with your mobile and paying your train ticket or just buying something at the convenient store by using your mobile phone, were very common. With some mobile phones you could even talk under the shower or read mangas.

In Kyoto the next cultural experience was Kurama Hi Matsuri (Kurama Fire Festival) on October 22 in Kyoto. Men clad in loincloths, almost wearing nothing, were carrying burning torches from Kurama Dera up to Yuki-Jinja Shrine. On the way to Yuki-Jinja Shrine, the men carrying those pine torches were loudly giving tongue. Those torches were around three meters and appeared very heavy. I did not remember exactly, but at the final destination, there must have been hundreds of those torches long torches and even children were wearing some smaller ones, also wearing those loincloths. Around 10pm we decided to go home, since it was a very cold evening. At Kurama station, famous for Tengu, was a long nosed goblin with magical power and having the capability to fly, we were standing in line for the train to go down the mountain. The train was so crowded, people did not have to hold themselves when the train started to descend the mountain. On the next day I heard, that this festival starts from 6pm until sometime after midnight, all year on October 22.



Fig. 20: Kurama Tengu



Fig. 21: Kurama Hi Matsuri (Kurama Fire Festival)



Fig. 22: Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion)

One of the most famous places to visit in Kyoto is the Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion). When foreign leaders come to visit Japan's Prime Minister, they usually go there to show Japan's cultural beauty. As the name already says, the Pavilion is gilded. Especially when it is sunny, the Pavilion reflects in the little pond, and when the light reflects back, it illuminates the first floor which is not gilded. Unfortunately, till now I missed that occasion, as you can see on the picture.

Not very far from Kinkakuji, is the Ginkakuji (Silver Pavilion), which I did not visit yet. At the moment the Silver Pavilion is being renovated, estimated to be done at the beginning of 2010. Let's hope I will be able to visit it before I go back to Switzerland after my Japanese studies in the Kyoto area are over.



Fig. 23: Hakuba, Nagano

I still remember Rafael's face when we arrived on the night bus in Nagano. He had a smile from ear to ear and even though he did not sleep more than 3 hours, he looks as if he had had a good rest. Barely arrived, he was already at the winter clothing rental shop choosing all equipment for the next couple of days. We planned for one day of skiing and one day for snowboarding. On the last day everyone could choose what they liked the most. The first day, we made two

groups, because only two people knew how to ski. I was responsible for Mon (Thai) and Esteban (Ecuador), and Charlie (US) was in charge of Jackson (Taiwan) and Rafael (Philippines).

I showed my group how to make small curves pointing the skies together and standing on the edge. After teaching them for about thirty minutes, we decided to go to a little hill to practice what they just learned on a steeper slope, so that they would get used to the feeling, and maybe for going a little bit higher up the mountain.

I had not seen Charlie's group for an hour and began to wonder where they had disappeared when all of a sudden, I heard someone shouting "Help, Help..." up on the hill. I stopped my group to see what was going on and couldn't believe what we saw. Rafael was in a perfect downhill posture coming pretty fast down the mountain, shouting for help but looking so happy at the same time. Right behind him we saw Charlie attempting to explain to Rafael how to brake, but no such luck. Rafael fell down a few seconds later, and Charlie had to collect Rafael's equipment that had spread all over the ski run. Rafael was fine, but then we couldn't find Jackson. At the top of the hill, we all watched Jackson cautiously sliding down the mountain and not on the skies.

We all had a great ski weekend even with a lot of muscle pain and bruises all over our bodies. We decided to snowboard the day before we left Nagano and could not sit properly for the next two days, but the pain was worth it.



Fig. 24: Holiday house, Hakuba, Nagano

I have been back to Nagano a few more times on holiday during summer and winter. I had a slight incident while canoeing at the Aoki Lake. My canoe turned on its side and another boat had to fish my canoe out of the water.

Hokkaido, the northern island in Japan is always compared with similarities of Switzerland, in terms of season, temperature, landscape. However, if you start missing Switzerland while living in Japan, I also recommend Nagano, the more inexpensive alternative to Hokkaido.

After an enjoyable weekend with five friends from different parts of the world, it was time to focus on a more historical and cultural aspect of Japan. As we all know what happened on August 6, 1945, I was very interested how Hiroshima looked sixty years after the atomic bomb was dropped. I went to Hiroshima by night bus and started at the A-Bomb Dome, one of the remaining buildings. If the remaining building would have been renovated, it would not be obvious that sixty years ago a bomb had been dropped in Hiroshima. The city was intact as any other with flowers and trees blooming, even the water was drinkable. But in the air you could still hear a certain silence all over the city. We visited the Peace Memorial Park and entered the museum. After reading all the stories in the museum it was remarkable to see how neutral the message was



Fig. 25: Itsukushima Shrine, Torii Gate, Miyajima, Hiroshima

about the United States. I think the most touching was the stories of some individuals before the bomb was dropped and also to see the impact of the bomb itself. Even though the bomb exploded around 1km above the A-Bomb Dome, it wiped off almost everything which was within a 2km radius. I left the museum slightly upset, but more sad and sorry feeling about what happened on August 6, 1945 – how could the United States use Japan as its guinea pig, but also how human kind could do this to one another. We later went by ferry to the Miyajima Island, a small island around forty minutes outside of Hiroshima city, famous for the Itsukushima Shrine's Torii Gate. When it was high tide, the Torii gate appears to float on the top of the water. Before we returned to Osaka by shinkansen, we decided to eat Hiroshima's specialty, Hiroshimayaki, a pancake-like dish with different vegetables, sea food, and soba or udon. I was very impressed with the atmosphere in Hiroshima, so that I decided to go a second time. I wanted to see Itsukushima Shrine's Torii Gate during high and low tide, as well as Hiroshima during fall and spring.

Every year, hanami occurs during the spring time when the sakura (cherry blossom) trees start to bloom. Cherry blossom viewing is a huge attraction in Japan. For example, many companies celebrate under a sakura tree, drinking and eating until the wee hours of the evening. As for me, my favorite sakura places between Osaka and Kyoto were Osakajo (Osaka Castle), Maruyama Koen (Maruyama Park) and Kiyomizudera (Pure Water Temple). Kiyomizudera has been recently added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Sakura make the trees look like they are covered by snow during spring time. They only last for a few weeks at most. For me however, I preferred Yozakura (Night Viewing of Sakura) in Osakajo. The trees with the light effect makes the scenery appear as a romantic dream or fantasy land. I wish for everyone to experience that feeling. Besides that, the places are not as crowded, and the temperature is just perfect.

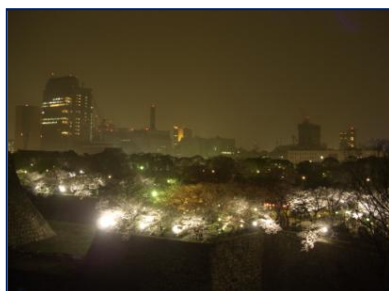


Fig. 26: Osakajo, Yozakura



Fig. 27: Kiyomizudera, Sakura



Fig. 28: Ski Friends in Maruyama Koen, Hanami

I saved the best for last, before I went back to Switzerland in 2005. The most exciting place I have been within Japan was Okinawa, on the main Island Honto. I went with a friend and we stayed six nights at the Renaissance Hotel, close to Okinawa City. Renaissance is one of three hotels that belong to a chain in Okinawa city, and it was situated on a little hill, fifteen minutes away from the sea by car. Royal Palace was the fanciest of them and was located at the shore. The third hotel, Coco Island was in between and all three hotels were easily accessible by the hotel's own shuttle bus.



Fig. 29: Royal Palace Hotel's private owned Beach

Our daily schedule consisted of sleeping at Renaissance, eating brunch at Coco Island and swimming at Royal Palace Hotel's private beach. We were lucky with the weather and booking our package. We

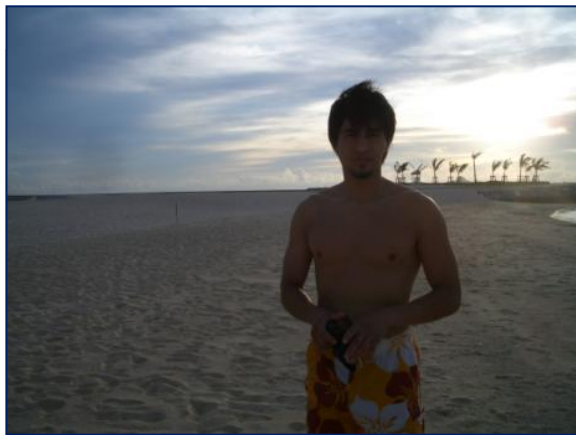


Fig. 30: Beach North of Ocean Expo Park, Okinawa

booked our ticket during the last weeks of the raining season. Since most of the beaches were privately owned, we were not surprised at how remarkably clean, well organized, and clear the beaches were. We spent our time eating Okinawa food, soaking up the sun on the beach, and even went snorkeling. The second to last day we rented a car, the new Nissan Cube which will be available in Switzerland in 2009 and went from Okinawa City all the way to the west coast along to Ocean Expo Park. We stopped by a small market, where we

saw another pair of Married Rocks in the sea. I recalled how friends kept trying to convince me to go to Ise to see the unique Married Rocks. Later on, we also passed by the Nago Pineapple Park, but decided to visit it at the end of our little excursion through the north of the island.

After a ninety minute drive, we finally arrived at Ocean Expo Park, located on the Motobu Peninsula. For anyone visiting to Okinawa, I recommend going and exploring Japan's largest and most beautiful aquarium. We entered in the Oceanic Culture Museum and the greatest attraction, the Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium. They had dolphin and other live shows and attractions, but we unfortunately spend too much time in the Museum and Aquarium that we missed the performances. The hotel reception recommended us to go there, but they did not mention the beautiful beach just behind the Ocean Expo Park.

As we went during the last weeks of the rainy season, there were not many people at the Park and almost nobody at the beach. We had at least 500 meters of white sand beach just for us and could enjoy the color changing clouds while the sun was setting.

Due to the numerous attractions and the beauty of nature, we completely forgot about Nakijin Castle and the Nago Pineapple Park. By the way we made it back, Pineapple Park was closed but we still stopped to take a few photos. We heard from the hotel receptionist that Okinawa has been cultivating pineapples for a century, but because the industry has suffered due to imported lower priced pineapples, the fruit has been promoted as a tourist attraction – Nago Pineapple Park is the result. In the park, a pineapple-like vehicle drives you through the pineapple fields and you can eat different kind of pineapple products. Unfortunately we missed out, but hopefully I will be have another opportunity to ride on the pineapple in the future.



Fig. 31: In front of Nago Pineapple Park

Preview

The next chapter of my life in Japan will not be as easy as the first. I received a lot of support from my current employer to find a place to do my internship in Japan and to overwhelm all administration work as for example opening a bank account. This time I will have to face the dilemma of where to study Japanese and in which region. Will it be Tokyo because I have already settled down there through my internship at Bosch, or will it be in the Kansai area, where I studied abroad three years ago? Will it be a Japanese language school or at a university? How I solved the problem of searching for accommodations and how I proceeded will be explained in the next chapter. I will discuss the months left in Japan concerning my future, be it a in professional and in a private perspective. I will also mention other places I visited during the last couple of days before leaving Japan after my internship, and if time and budget allow, the places I will visit during my studies.

I am ready to return to Japan, the land of the rising sun, but even more excited to see how I will solve the arriving tasks. One thing is for sure, I am looking forward to meeting new people from all around the world, creating new friendships, and learning from each other.

Closing Words

Looking back, all of my experiences were not always enjoyable, especially when I think about the visa problems and all the paper work for saving costs, - but it was necessary and completely worth it.

It is interesting to see how much the past can influence the future, in my case the experience I had in Texas, my first come together with the Japanese Culture and its characteristics.

During my Part 1 of my stay in Japan, thanks to SJCC's support, I could not think of anything more enjoyable than going to work and interacting with my workmates. Five months interning at Bosch Tokyo passed really quickly. All my concerns and worries about not being accepted well by my co-workers seemed ridiculous. I could compare how work is done in Japan, and how hard it must be for someone starting to work just after graduating from college or university, not receiving much support and swimming in stress until the person gets used to the pressure and how to work more effective and efficient at any given time. I also will not forget the long discussions during the product meetings once a month, and the facial expressions of my westerner co-workers hoping to get to a

solution soon. My Japanese workmates who I am thankful for all the support during my internship and who always tried to involve me in any decision, whether in sales or in marketing solutions. The responsibility I was given by my direct brand manager allowed me to see the whole work flow of the marketing procedure starting from headquarters in Germany, moving to regional brand manager in UK, working close with Bosch production outside Japan, and staying in contact, as well interacting with other companies in different countries, trying to keep up the milestones to reach the deadline in time, and to launch the product as the market demands.

It was so easy to make friends in the Bosch dormitory or with other Bosch Interns due to similarities of interests, no matter what your ethnicity or sex was. Coming from all parts of the globe, we were seeking globalization, striving for something new, for change, being open-minded and tolerant about others values and norms. I think that is what connected us so well.

Then I had the chance to see many beautiful places, some for historical value, some for cultural value, and some for recreational value, like skiing in Nagano. The different varieties of food and the healthy way meals are served and how people treat each other, all of this is unique, and I have been privileged to gain such insight into Japanese culture.

Five months have passed, my first half of my stay in Japan, and what I have accomplished is now history. It is like watching the perfect sunset on a pleasant summer night. While the sun disappears slowly on the horizon, you feel the sun's warmth, see the light, and it gives you that cozy feeling. Once the sun is gone, you start to feel alone and cold, wishing you could see the sunset once again, but you know, there will never be the same sunset again, not in the same constellation. It is a unique event. Nevertheless, what remains with me are my experiences during my internship, unforgettable memories outside work, and everlasting friendships. As the next sunset falls, I won't be longing for the past, because I will be carrying the memories with me. Instead, I will be looking forward for the next sunrise (Japan Part 2).



Fig. 32: Friends and Bosch Interns workmates at Hachiko, Shibuya, Tokyo