

## **MIRAI 2016**

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From September 8th until 15th I participated in program MIRAI that took place in Japan. I found out about this program for the first time on the website of Charles University. It was always my dream to visit Japan so I haven't hesitated for a single moment and submitted my application. After that I was invited for an interview that took a place in Japanese information and Cultural Center of Japanese Embassy. One day after the interview I received an e-mail that I have been selected. My dream has slowly started to come true.

I left Prague on September 7<sup>th</sup> together with one more participant from Czech Republic, Tereza. We flew through Munich where we transferred to our flight to Tokyo. In Munich we met with other participants of MIRAI from other countries. Right after I met them I already knew it is going to be a great experience because we shared one similar interest-Japan-so we had a lot to talk about. During our 11 hours long flight I was able to create friendship bonds that continued throughout the program.

After the arrival the organizers were already waiting for us and we were transported by bus to our hotel in Shinagawa. After check-in we went for a lunch. The restaurant was only ten minutes away from the hotel, but in these ten minutes we realized we are in completely different world.

I should mention that the population of Tokyo is bigger than the population of the whole Czech Republic. Everywhere was crowded with people hurrying in all directions. You can also tell from the infrastructure that Tokyo is a mega polis. All the architecture seemed a little bit chaotic, but on the other hand very functional. I know this doesn't sound like a compliment, but I was absolutely charmed by Tokyo. I was mainly fascinated by this city because it was busy all the time and I had a feeling that there are so many interesting things going on around me. I cannot imagine living in Tokyo, but I would love to come back and experience it more.

First day of MIRAI program was about introducing ourselves to other participants and also getting to know Japan. Following day we visited Edo-Tokyo Museum and Roppongi Hills. In the evening we flew to Hiroshima. We spent whole morning on Miyajima island and in the afternoon we went to Peace Memorial Park that commemorated atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Next day we went to Kyoto where we visited former palace of the Emperor, town of Uji where we visited Buddhist temple Byodoin and we could also try preparation of matcha tea. Following day we also spent in Kyoto and we also visited Kyocera company that was followed by a visit to Fushimi Inari shrine. After that we moved to back to Tokyo where we spent rest of our stay. We visited Waseda university and we also attended a lecture about nuclear weapons disarmament. Last day we had a free afternoon and we could go anywhere we wanted. Most of us visited Akihabara or some other parts of Tokyo. In the end we just had to say goodbye to our new

friends and go back home.

I know I have been little bit abrupt when I was talking about places we visited in Japan, but I would like to take this opportunity and talk more in depth about MIRAI program. First, the organization was without any problems. We were traveling a lot around Japan, so it was important everything to be planned up to smallest details and there was no space for errors. We were a group of seventy people and we haven't encountered any problems or delays thanks to the organizers and their great preparation. All organizers were very kind and always happy to give us an advice, explain things and show us around. We visited many places and I am so glad that the spots we went were selected to this program. Another thing I would like to mention is that we always stayed in very nice hotels. I have always shared a room with my new Czech friend Tereza and we got very well along, so it was great. Another thing that I would like to point out is food. We were either eating in hotel or in restaurants and it was always delicious and there was more than enough. Although I have to admit I got little bit tired of Japanese food after four days, I like rice and sea food, but for me it became a little bit too boring. Luckily, the organizers thought this might have happen to foreign students so on the fifth day there was a surprise dinner at TGI Fridays. In the end I would like to say that the whole program was wonderfully organized and we could fully enjoy the atmosphere of Japan that was so beautiful. In the end I would like to share some of my insights about interesting facts that I have noticed in Japan. I was amazed to see how Japanese are so polite. And I mean very very polite. This level of politeness you are unable to witness in Czech Republic. Also the constant bowing was a very new experience that I couldn't get at the beginning but by the end of the program I was also bowing to everyone and I couldn't get rid of this new habit for couple of days after my arrival back home. It is something very unusual for a European, but I have to say it is a very nice habit. On the other hand, I have to say that Japanese and their knowledge of English is not very great. In the hotel we didn't have any problem using English, but when we entered shops or restaurants the communication got bit complicated. Luckily there was always someone in our group speaking a little bit of Japanese so we managed. If I would be planning to visit Japan for longer period of time, I would try to learn as much Japanese as possible.

Program MIRAI gave me chance to visit Japan and get to know how wonderful is its culture, history and I could peek into local people's life. I also gained many new friends and experiences that I will never forget. I would like to thank to all the people that are organizing program MIRAI for their wonderful work.