

Kyoto International Study Adventure

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I first heard of the opportunity to do the double degree program in Japan during my bachelor studies of Biomedical sciences in Maastricht University. At the first chance, I went to the open days where a student who followed the double degree program told about his experience abroad. The open day at Maastricht University pulled me over the edge to keep on studying and get into the double degree program for Japan. Initially, my enthusiasm in trying to join was a bit too much, as I applied a year too early. Bit saddened that I still had to wait a year, I started to deepen myself into my studies. Deepening myself gave me the opportunity to broaden my horizon and specialize myself during the master's program in Maastricht University. When the Double Degree Program finally started, I was one of the first to apply.

During my masters I specialized myself in Biomedical imaging, following multiple courses on the latest techniques in imaging both in the medical and biomedical research. On a wide variety of topics that is summed up as, from molecule to man. Combining with Maastricht University's approach of problem-based learning, small group sized teams that focus on specific problems to apply learned techniques and deepening the understanding by presenting your knowledge to your peers. With this method I learned to think and use different techniques together. Helping me solve different kinds of problems and give excellent presentations. The skills that I learned helped me to quickly adapt to new fields and share different information, that I got from experts.

With a more focus on student-student interaction then teacher-student interaction. While KPUM currently focusses on more teacher-student interaction to pass down information directly. The lectures I followed during my time in KPUM showed me the know-how of experts at the university are of incredible value. However I did miss some of the interaction between students. The program I followed at KPUM made me learn the expertise's of many departments the university has to offer.

Interaction I had between students of the KPUM international student association (KISA) was a great opportunity to learn more about the rich culture Japan has and their people. The city of Kyoto and Japanese citizens were much more than I could have imagined from Europe, while being my first-time coming Japan itself. As such I came with a biased foreign vision of the country. The truth which I was shown was something I will take and shape me for the rest of my life. I did research and learned about Japan from home since junior high school experiencing the country this way was something I could not have imagined then, and I am happy I did. From the travels across the city and the plethora of different foods. Towards visiting small shops and getting recommended local cult classics, which were amazing but incredible different to things I was used to. My fascination for Japan after living there for 7 months was not sated and I am hoping to return soon to get my fill again which was sadly shortened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 was the most unique experience to follow in Japan, as well as back in my home country of the Netherlands. As I was there in Japan during the first wave and in the Netherlands now middle of the second wave. The difference in approach and acceptance of rules could be attributed to culture, history and how the daily life is for the people. I remember the early panics in Kyoto, where it was impossible to find face masks or toilet paper. Being in the prefectural hospital and university we could follow the development from up close. This experience is something I can take with me even now as how things can be done. Sometimes being in a different location does broaden your horizon that you can see things in a new light.

For my Double Degree Program, I got a research project with the department of radiology. This was for me the first time working with medical professionals only compared to researchers and students. The doctors while managing their task as medical professionals do research as well. There, I found a deep respect to them and their work. I was able to research with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and different techniques used for brain tumor analysis, what gave me the experience in reading MRI and using different

imaging methods. I got the opportunity to go in my first weeks to a congress in Kumamoto which I am grateful for as the experience of going there, typhoon and meeting the team in an izakaya was an amazing experience.

The double degree program I finished gave me the opportunity to meet wonderful people at a distinguished university with a deep history located in one of the most culturally rich cities I have been to. Giving me a unique and everlasting experience that could have not been possible without the efforts from two professors in two different countries, getting a diploma from KPUM was honestly more exciting and fulfilling than I could have ever dreamt of. I sincerely thank all for giving this opportunity.

