

The Ise and Japan Study Program / 「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラム

Arina Boelanders / アリナ・ブーランダース

België / ベルギー

皇學館大学

21/2 - 12/3 2016

13 march 2016

The first time I heard about the Ise Japan Study Program was on our Japanese studies blog, and I was immediately interested. The purpose of the program is for master or doctoral students to deepen their understanding about Japan, Ise, and Shinto. To my joy I was accepted, and so I and 13 other students quickly found ourselves on the plane to Ise, Mie.

I did Japanese studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and had already taken a class on Japanese religion. This study program was the perfect opportunity to expand my knowledge on this subject, to learn about it from people who are directly involved in Shinto, and to get first-hand experience. Two years ago I have also been in Japan, and I stayed mainly in Tokyo. I like big cities, but I also wanted to visit the countryside and learn about its culture, so this study program was the perfect choice for me.

Ise, in the prefecture Mie, is a city that is well known for its shrine, the Ise Jingu, which is composed of many smaller shrines centered in Naiku (Inner Shrine) and Geku (Outer Shrine). It is also home to many museums and important landmarks such as the Wedded Rocks and many interesting neighborhoods.

Our schedule was composed of three types of classes: regular class in the university itself, 'experience classes' in which we try out various activities, and field trips. The classes are on various topics related to Ise and Shinto religion, for example pilgrimage, regional dialects, literature, information about the area and of course the shrines and Shinto itself. During the experience classes we went to visit (among other places) a factory where we made fish cakes, and we had the chance to try on Shinto priest robes from the Heian period. The field trips took us all around Ise, big and small places, many shrines and temples, and also to Nara and Kyoto.

Many of the lecturers of the study program are professors of Kogakkan University. Every single one of them was very knowledgeable and really enthusiastic about their own field, and they were always happy to answer any questions that we had. They had also prepared many useful books and

other materials related to the subjects of this program, for us to read and take home. The person responsible for the group, Mr. Tamada, was very caring and helpful.

Not only the study program itself is fantastic, so is the city itself, and its people. When I walked around town, a few times people were curious about me and we started talking (and taking group pictures, of course). The people from Ise are very warm and helpful. The mountains and nature in the area are also breathtaking.

The program lasts three weeks, in which we learned and experienced so much. I met many great people, and made many friends, not only from our student group but among the Japanese volunteer students as well, and I will definitely stay in touch with the professors. I am deeply grateful to be given this chance for a once in a lifetime trip, and I advise anyone who is reading this to take the plunge.

私の大学の日本学のブログで初めてこのスタディプログラムについて読んで、すぐ興味がありました。修士や博士が日本、伊勢と神道についての理解を深めるのはこのスタディプログラムの目的です。参加させていただいて、複数回後私と他の学生が伊勢に向けて出発しました。

ルーヴァン・カトリック大学で日本学を勉強したので、もう日本の宗教について勉強しました。この話題の知識を広げるのに、このスタディプログラムは絶好なチャンスでした。そのように神道の当事者に授業をいただいて、神道を自分で体験することができます。東京のような大都市が好きですが、田舎を訪れたくて、田舎とその文化を学びたかったなのでこのスタディプログラムは素敵なチャンスでした。

スケジュールが3つの部分に分かれていました。その部分は大学での講義、体験型授業とフィールド・スタディです。スタッフが皇學館大学の先生から成り立って、各先生が有識者で、教えていただいたことに意気込みました。学生の質問をいつも快く答えていただきました。講義など関係がある面白い書籍をたくさんいただきました。学生グループの担当者の玉田さんは面倒見のいい人情家です。

スタディプログラムだけだわなくて、伊勢市とその住民も素敵です。街で歩いた時、時々人が興味があって話し合いました。伊勢の住民が人情家。それに山と自然に圧倒されました。

このプログラムが三週間かかって、たくさん習って経験しました。素敵な人に大勢会って、友達を作って(学生だけでわなくて、日本人のボランティアも)ぜひすぐ先生に連絡します。このスタディプログラムに参加させていただいて本当に感謝しています。読んでいる人に参加してみたと勧めます。