Technos Report

As by far the most exciting, interesting and varied experience I have ever had, it's difficult to know where to begin. From the everlasting enthusiasm and hospitality of the Technos students and staff to the amazing places we visited, food we tried and memories we made, it's challenging to satisfactorily describe some of the unforgettable experiences I had on the other side of the world.

Arriving at Tokyo Narita many hours before the rest of the international students, I was unsure what to expect from my jet lagged first taste of Japan. Helped by some very friendly and patient Technos students and helpers, a coach and train ride across Tokyo gave a glimpse of the exotic culture to come. Spotting the ubiquitous vending machines, witnessing the customary bowing and saying my first Japanese words (Arigatou to the bus driver!), things that would become commonplace over the following 2 weeks. Impetuous to explore, but overwhelmingly tired from the flight, it was suggested that we could go to a matsuri happening near our hotel. Something I had seen many times in Japanese TV shows and always wished to experience, this traditional festival gave us the opportunity to see exciting horse archery and explore a colourful market. We also got to try our first authentic Japanese food that was cooked right in front of us.

Some of my favourite cultural experiences from the trip were visiting the numerous Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. Often in a tranquil wooded place just off a bustling street, I was equal parts enthralled by their history and serenity, as fascinated by their continuing relevance in the modern Japanese lifestyle. We visited some very pretty ones in Kamakura, during a very atmospheric storm no less. We also saw the impressive Great Buddha of Kamakura.
The trip to midori no mura, to the heart of rural Japan, was another big highlight. Just the night before leaving our hotel, we had been exploring the bustling neon-lit back-streets of Shinjuku and navigating the impressively efficient and busy railway system. To then spend the next day meandering in the coach through quaint villages and paddy fields in the mountains and later relaxing in an onsen, overlooking a spectacular sunset, showed just how varied Japan is. We stayed at a traditional Ryoken, where we made proper sushi, did lots of karaoke and had a fantastic barbecue.

While the opening ceremony was a spectacularly welcoming and exciting event, instead I'll conclude with the equally well choreographed, but far more emotional closing ceremony. A final chance to talk with, thank for their amazing hospitality and exchange gifts with those we'd got to know over the previous 2 weeks (and eat some more Japanese snacks!). Speeches by Rina, the international week leader and Chappy, one of the American students left many in tears; we'd all made fantastic memories and learnt so much about each others cultures.