Technos Trip Report:

The Technos College trip to Tokyo was a fantastic and enlightening experience. We spent the majority of our time in the metropolis itself and three days and nights out in the countryside where we lived a much more traditional lifestyle. It was perhaps the contrast between these two aspects of the trip that made the whole thing so fascinating. We were exposed to both modern, urban life and the quieter life of the country. In Tokyo itself I experienced a vast and endlessly connected city that was larger and more varied than any other city I’ve visited in the world. The sheer vastness of the place is worth experiencing. Tokyo is also the most varied places I have ever visited. The districts range from the municipal centre (from which some great views can be experienced) to traditional, residential areas of small detached houses, and neon-beaming food and shopping districts. That said, you’re never too far from one of Tokyo’s countless and peaceful Shinto shrines should you want to temporarily escape the bustling streets.

Our three days in the country were spent in Midori no Mura (Green Village), a sort of country retreat for groups from the city. Midori was completely different to Tokyo for obvious reasons; we stayed in traditional bedroom quarters, slept on futons, washed in communal hot springs every day, played sports and games, and ate Japanese BBQ in the open air. However, it was what felt alike between the two places that was most interesting. In the same way Tokyo strikes you with its finely constructed streets, transport network, beautiful shrines and gardens, and cleanliness, I was struck in Midori by the importance of precision, etiquette, ritual, and intricacy to Japanese culture. We wore different slippers for different rooms, followed a strict bedroom, washing, and eating timetable. In fact, the Japanese concern for etiquette even extends to the process of tying your sleeping robe. It seemed to me that in Japan the ‘everyday’ was elevated in importance, raised perhaps even to the status of art and performance. This was something I saw reflected in the aesthetic of the city, the brilliantly intricate and compact gardens that adorn Tokyo’s residential streets, and, of course, the amazing and stunning food that we ate.

Even more rewarding than all of this though was getting to know the students of Technos College that were our guides (and fantastic guides at that). The students were with us the whole way, greeting us with unbridled enthusiasm at the airport (this seemed quite something at the time but turned out to be only the tip of the iceberg), taking us around every corner of their world during the day, and joining us in the evening as we explored Tokyo’s nightlife. We all made great friends, took part in their classes, and learnt all about the lives of our parallel peers from the other side of the globe. Spending our time with local people of our own age was quite simply the most immersive and effective way to learn about the country we were in. I learnt infinitely more about the real, modern Japan by talking candidly and late at night with a first-generation, Filipino Technos graduate who was starting his career in hospitality than I did from any information board or museum.

I will refrain from giving away any further details about the trip’s contents because part of its charm is the surprise of what awaits each morning and around every corner. It is, however, without doubt the best experience I’ve had on a trip abroad and I would recommend it to anyone and everyone who is eligible to apply.

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