

Technos International Week 2023 Report – Jamil Hasan

Being given the chance to travel to Japan for two weeks and experience the culture first hand from students in Japan was an amazing experience. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be something that I remember forever and will forever keep close to one of the most amazing few weeks that I have ever experienced. The rich culture, the diverse and delicious food, the breath-taking landscapes, and the unique way of life is definitely something that I would strongly recommend to anyone considering visiting Asia. I've been incredibly fortunate to have been able to participate in the Technos International Week at the end of my last term at Oxford, and I could not be evermore grateful to Pembroke, Technos College, Nancy, Matt, and the lifelong friends I made in this trip.

Filled with both excitement and apprehension, myself and the other Pembroke students embarked on a 15-hour journey from Europe to Japan. Upon our arrival at Narita airport, we were warmly greeted by a group of enthusiastic Technos students, whose eagerness to meet and engage with us was truly heartwarming. The following morning, we were treated to an impressive welcoming ceremony at Technos College. The description provided by our accompanying professor prior to our departure did not prepare us for the red carpets, rock music, and cheering crowds of students who eagerly embraced us with high-fives, hugs, and greetings. It was a surreal experience to be treated as honored guests, and it made us feel like celebrities.

The overarching theme of the two-week Technos International Week was "Values." Participants were encouraged to explore the roots of their own cultures and traditions, as well as the roots of the Technos International Week itself, which was inspired by Dr. Tanaka's experience of World War II and his strong desire to foster mutual understanding, friendships, and international exchange. With this theme in mind, all participants were encouraged to contribute fully and embrace the opportunities presented to us. The carefully scheduled activities included educational and fun experiences, fostering integration and interaction among the participating sister schools. Ample free time was also provided, allowing us to explore Tokyo's various districts and savour the delicious regional cuisine.

Many of the activities took place at Technos College, where we had the opportunity to tour the campus and participate in interactive sessions with students from various classes. Technos College, a technical institution offering vocational courses such as wedding planning, air crew training, hotel management, manga, voice dubbing, and animation, presented a stark contrast to our academic experiences in Europe. One memorable activity involved an Origami class where the students showed us how to make ninja stars. As someone who used to make this as a child, it was my shine to shine also. It was a fun and interactive event where we shared our different origami knowledge and could show our appreciation for the wonderful art that Origami is. We were also lucky to receive a gift bag filled with amazing Origami art that the Technos students spent a great deal of precision and time in making. It was the perfect memento.

In addition to on-campus activities, several off-campus events were organized. These included dinners with small groups of Technos students, a scavenger hunt around Tokyo in small teams, a two-day stay at Midori No Mura ("green village"), and a coach trip to

Matsumoto Castle. Exploring the castles picturesque scenery and capturing its beauty through countless photographs was a highlight of the trip.

The two-day trip to Midori No Mura stood out as one of the most memorable experiences. On the way to the village, we stopped by Mount Fuji, where we marvelled at the breath-taking views of the volcanic and enjoyed a regional specialty for lunch. Our stay at Midori No Mura was a true delight, as we were provided with exceptional facilities, including a gymnasium and tennis courts, and enjoyed a variety of activities and entertainment. From playing dodgeball and basketball to engaging in a water fight and a barbecue, we immersed ourselves in the spirit of camaraderie. Sleeping on traditional futon in communal rooms and indulging in Onsen baths (natural hot spring baths) added an authentic touch to our experience. En route back to Tokyo, we made a stop at a Miso production factory, where we received a unique walkthrough of how a 6th generation Miso producer makes his 3-year Miso.

During our free time, we ventured into various districts of Tokyo and savored a diverse array of delicacies. Shibuya impressed us with its colossal, brightly lit billboards and bustling streets, particularly the iconic Shibuya Crossing, Shinjuku offered a contrast with its quaint, authentic backstreet restaurants, and Asakusa enchanted us with its beautiful Senso-Ji shrine. The Marunouchi district's blend of the Imperial Palace and immaculately clean skyscrapers showcased remarkable architecture. One of my favourite visits was to the Mori Art Museum where I was able to explore the rich art which blended in an interesting way with Japan's history. Throughout our explorations, we indulged in a colourful variety of Japanese cuisine, including sushi, ramen, udon, A5 Wagu, and okonomiyaki.

The level of effort, thoughtfulness, and meticulous planning invested by both the students and faculty at Technos College left us overwhelmed with gratitude. Their constant hospitality, warmth, enthusiasm, generosity, and kindness were profoundly moving. The friendships we formed with both Technos students and participants from other sister schools in such a short span of time were truly unforgettable. Our immense gratitude extends to the Tanaka Foundation for funding this remarkable two-week experience, which granted us a unique insight into Japanese life and culture that few tourists can experience. The vision of Dr. Tanaka, to achieve international understanding and peace through programs like Technos International Week, inspired hope within us.

The Technos International Week provided an extraordinary platform for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. The opportunity to immerse myself in Japan's rich traditions and contemporary society will forever hold a special place in my heart. The experience fostered lifelong friendships and instilled a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of our global community. Through the generous efforts of Technos College and the Tanaka Foundation, the vision of international understanding and peace was brought to life, leaving an indelible impact on all participants.





