

# My Experience Living in Japan

Vi Retault  
Polytechnique Montréal  
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Nagoya University



Friday. June 2nd, 2023. 9 AM. As my Boeing 787 descended onto Chubu Centrair International Airport, the cargo ships departing from the Port of Nagoya seemed almost within reach. Little did I know that I would soon have the opportunity to see them up close, as they were being loaded of containers fetched from an endless, perfectly packed labyrinth of organized logistics. After leaving the airport, armed with my worn-out textbook and timid Japanese skills, I managed to purchase a train ticket that would take me to the buzzing city. It took me instead to the most extraordinary summer of my life.

The first question I was often asked, after how old are you, was why I came to Nagoya, often labeled as the “most boring” city of Japan. But this central hub, home of Japan’s most renowned industries such as Toyota, Mitsubishi, Fuji, Toshiba, Sony, and the list goes on, offered me an authentic view of what living in this country felt like. The city is designed to be as convenient as possible, from a punctual, pristine railway system with high speed trains every ten minutes that will take you anywhere, to konbini open 24/7 with bathrooms and ready made meals, coin lockers, and vending machines strategically located to overcome the summer heat. What struck me the most living there was the unbounded politeness, courtesy and hospitality of the Japanese people.

Throughout my stay, I had the opportunity to embark on numerous trips and meet kind and captivating individuals. Whether it was a simple exchange about the weather or the sharing of life stories, people eagerly engaged in conversation whenever they heard me speaking Japanese. I explored the breathtaking temples and the tranquil gardens of Kyoto, immersing myself in their serene beauty. Climbing Fushimi Inari at the break of dawn, I walked through a mesmerizing path lined with rows of Torii gates that stretched as far as the eye could see, delving into the spiritual realm of the sacred mountain. I got lost in Tokyo’s futuristic streets of Akihabara, while in the narrow streets of Ura-Tenma in Osaka, I discovered hidden izakaya gems. In Nara, I made friends with adorable deer, though I suspect they were fond of me only for the crackers I gave them, because when I ran out, they resorted to chewing on my handbag! My most surreal experience was venturing to Ise, taking the very last train of the day from Nagoya to participate in a Shinto ritual for the summer solstice. At 4 AM, we entered the sea to witness the sun rising above Meoto Iwa, the wedded rocks. Such a wonderful sight!

But my purpose in Japan was not to be merely sightseeing, but rather to immerse myself in the exciting world of quantum computing. I discovered this fascinating research topic and managed to make significant progress towards my PhD, motivated by these awe-inspiring experiences. It’s almost time for me to leave, but I’m already thinking of coming back.

## Findings through JUACEP

**Name:** Mohamed Maftah

**Affiliation at home country:** Department of Mathematics and Industrial Engineering, Polytechnique Montréal

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** Mathematical Optimization

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Tomohiro Sogabe

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ.:** Applied Physics | Mathematical Engineering Lab



Participating in the JUACEP program has been truly transformative for me, leaving a lasting impact on both my academic and personal journey. Joining Nagoya University's research community while immersing myself in Japanese culture has been a defining experience.

During my stay, I made significant progress in my PhD project. The research-friendly environment at Nagoya University, along with guidance from mentors and lab mates, fueled innovation, and intellectual growth. Attending presentations by fellow researchers in the mathematical engineering lab twice a week expanded my knowledge and created a sense of shared learning.

Weekends were dedicated to exploring Japan's diverse culture. The efficient subway and train network allowed me to visit cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Gifu, and Inuyama. Museums, temples, parks, and historical sites revealed Japan's rich heritage and traditions.

Engaging with lab mates and peers helped me understand Japanese work culture and collaboration values. This exposure enhanced my cultural sensitivity, global perspective, and interest in learning the Japanese language.

Reflecting on my JUACEP journey, it's clear the program is a milestone shaping my future. Gaining insights from research, academic interactions, and cultural exploration refined my critical thinking and adaptability, essential for my academic pursuits.

Moreover, experiencing different cultures and languages has enhanced my ability to collaborate worldwide, a valuable skill in our interconnected world. The program's impact on my growth and development will continue to influence my journey in academia and beyond.

In conclusion, my time in JUACEP has been all-encompassing, nurturing research, cultural understanding, and a passion for lifelong learning. I'm thankful for the opportunity and excited to contribute to JUACEP's legacy through my ongoing pursuits.



## Findings through JUACEP

**Name:** Catherine Denisowski

**Affiliation at home country:** Electrical and Computer Engineering,  
North Carolina State University

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** Development of an Interactive Real Time Android  
Communication System

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Ogawa Kohei

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ.:** Graduate School of Engineering, Information and  
Engineering



Ever since I was in middle school, I have always wanted to study abroad. I wanted to have the opportunity to live in another country and experience another culture, and Japan was one of my top choices due to its opportunities in engineering and rich and unique culture. When I was accepted into the JUACEP program, I was so excited and couldn't wait to go.

My research internship was an incredibly interesting and rewarding project. I worked on developing a system for human-android communication, which allowed a human user to talk to and have a conversation with an android. My work involved using speech recognition, voice activity detection, and response generation with an AI language model to interpret human speech and produce an appropriate response. Throughout my project I was able to not only collaborate and learn from other members in my lab but also get one-on-one support and guidance from my advisor, and this was invaluable for my project's success. Once the base system was completed, it was tested by my lab members and also high school students through the WWL summer lecture and Open Campus events, and it was incredibly rewarding to see the results of my hard work.

When I was not working, I was able to get a glimpse into what life is like in Japan. While there were certain differences in day-to-day life that I was already aware of (such as sorting trash and no tipping), there were smaller differences that I only noticed when I got here. For example, I did not initially realize that people tended to walk on the left side of sidewalks, and I also was surprised that I had to pay my bills at the convenience store. However, I quickly adjusted and did my best to continue exploring. I really enjoyed going to many of the summer festivals, attended a Dragons baseball game at Nagoya Dome, and watched Sumo at the tournament in Nagoya. One activity I particularly enjoyed was karaoke, and I would go many times after work to have a fun and relaxing evening. On the weekends, I explored not only sights in Nagoya such as Nagoya Castle, the aquarium, and the many museums in the city but I also took weekend trips around Japan. These trips included places such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Kamakura, and Nara. These trips were really fun and I was able to see many interesting sights, such as a variety of temples, museums, and even some unique attractions like a monkey park and even the Sanrio theme park!

The events through the JUACEP program itself were incredibly interesting, especially the engine assembly/disassembly workshop and the full day excursion. The port tour, Toyota museum, and Kirin brewery tours were really informative, and it was nice to have another full day to explore Nagoya. I also really enjoyed the Japanese course, and the small class size allowed me to really practice my Japanese directly with our instructor.

This program was an excellent experience, and I can't think of a better way I could have spent my summer. I had a great experience in my lab, as I was able to work on fascinating research and get to know the students in my lab. They were so welcoming and kind to me, and I really enjoyed getting to know them. I was able to experience not only day-to-day life in Japan, but also see the major sights and some more niche ones as well. Additionally, my technical and cultural experiences in this program will be invaluable for my future, especially when it comes to searching for jobs. I am very grateful to have been a part of this program, thank you so much to everyone who made it possible!



## Findings through JUACEP

**Name:** Arthur Bawin

**Affiliation:** Dept. Mechanical Engineering at Polytechnique Montreal (Canada) and Institute of Mechanics, Materials and Civil Engineering at UCLouvain (Belgium)

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** High-order meshing in two dimensions and applications to fluid flows.

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Toshiro Matsumoto

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ. (Dept.):** Department of Mechanical Science and Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering



I am grateful for the opportunity to work at Nagoya University. It has been a privilege to immerse myself in the world of research in Japan, and I am leaving with a wealth of unforgettable memories.

While I was already familiar with research, working in a different environment was a refreshing change. The collaboration and exchange of ideas with my Japanese counterparts broadened my horizons and gave me a new perspective on my field of study. One of the highlights of my time here was the warm welcome I received from my colleagues at the laboratory. I felt like a part of the team from day one until the nomikai on the last day of the internship. It was an enriching experience that I will carry with me throughout my academic and professional journey.

During my stay, I had the chance to explore some of Japan's most iconic cities with the other JUACEP interns, including Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Hiroshima. Each city offered a unique blend of tradition and modernity, and I was able to deepen my appreciation for Japanese culture and history.

Of course, I can't talk about my time in Nagoya without mentioning the food. The culinary delights of Japan are renowned worldwide, and I had the pleasure of savoring some of the most delicious dishes during my stay, including Nagoya's famous hitsumabushi.

Many thanks to the JUACEP program and organizers who made this internship possible and to my colleagues and friends in Nagoya for making me feel at home!

## Findings through JUACEP

**Name:** Enzo

**Affiliation at home country:** Department of Aerospace Engineering, Polytechnique Montréal

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** Educational purpose of designing and building a glider model

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Susumu Hara

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ.:** Department of Aerospace Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering, Nagoya University



The JUACEP program was truly a wonderful and life-changing opportunity. Since I began learning Japanese I have been fascinated by this country. I am thankful for having the chance to come here and experience life in Japan, in a great University. The international office staff made a wonderful work to ensure that our arrival went smoothly. The members of my lab were all welcoming and helped me integrate a bit in the Japanese society. I liked working on my project. It was an exciting challenge. I put in practice a lot of my theoretical knowledge in a more practical project. I was really help by one laboratory college that gave me all his practical know-how. That experience was full of lessons.



Even if the work at my lab was interesting, I also took some time to explore Japan. I visited the big cities, Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and obviously Nagoya. I enjoyed taking pictures there, even if not very good at it. Know, I'm preparing for a two week long trip in Kyushu. I am looking forward to it. On top of that, even if the summer is hot in Japan, this also the time of festivals and fireworks. Without the JUACEP program, I might not have had such an opportunity to visit this country.



## Findings through JUACEP

**Name :** Herman Musumari Siaben

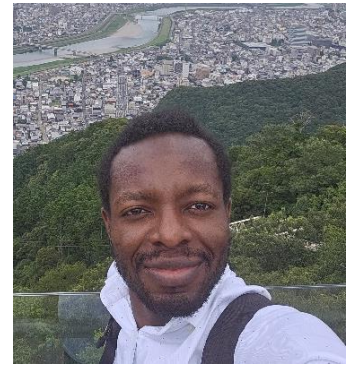
**Affiliation at home country (Dept & Univ):** Department of Civil, Geological and Mining Engineering, Polytechnique Montréal, Montréal, Canada

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** Flow visualization of non-Newtonian fluids – The Experimental approach

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Ryota Tsubaki

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ. (Dept.):** Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering



“Joining the JUACEP Summer School program has proven to be one of the best decisions I have ever made!”

This program provided me with the opportunity to revisit Japan for the second time and collaborate closely with a remarkably knowledgeable research team led by Professor Ryota Tsubaki. It was a truly unique experience that allowed me to rediscover the beauty of Japan, its rich culture, and its warm-hearted people.

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the exceptional support I received from my advisor. He consistently devoted his time to listening to my ideas and guided me with his profound knowledge and extensive experience. In just a few weeks, I acquired technical skills related to experiments involving PIV (laser) and image analysis and processing using synchronous high-speed cameras. This rapid skill development was both demanding and gratifying, undoubtedly preparing me for my future academic and professional pursuits.

While I had theoretical knowledge on combustion and jet engines, I had never had the chance to gain practical experience that allowed me to comprehend the role of each component within the engine as part of a whole. The hands-on workshop provided an invaluable opportunity to consolidate my previous knowledge, and I only wish we could have more similar opportunities.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Tomoko San and Professor Dina Grib for their exceptional organizational skills and support. They made me feel at home right from our initial contact. I recall the challenges I faced in obtaining a train ticket discount, and it was Tomoko San's dedication that made it possible. Thank you for your unwavering support.

Beyond the cherished memories of my travels to various cities, the experiences I gained in Japan will undoubtedly serve as an asset in my future career in Canada.

Lastly, I want to express my sincere thanks to Professor Tsubaki and his wife for welcoming me into their home and for introducing me to the concept of "Ichi-go Ichi-e," which emphasizes the uniqueness of each encounter. This experience has left a lasting impression on me."

# Unveiling Harmony: My Journey of Academic and Cultural Discovery in Japan

**Name:** Hanane TISSIR

**Affiliation at home country:** Biomedical engineering department,  
Polytechnique Montreal

**Participated program:** Summer Course 2023

**Research theme:** Biomedical engineering

**Advisor at Nagoya Univ:** Prof. Ryuji Kato

**Affiliation at Nagoya Univ.:** Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences



My experience with the JUACEP program at Nagoya University has been nothing short of transformative, both academically and personally. Academically, the opportunity to work in the highly developed Laboratory of Cell and Molecular Bioengineering alongside skilled researchers was incredibly enriching. The lab's state-of-the-art facilities and the intellectual rigor have had a profound impact on my professional development.

However, what made the JUACEP experience truly unforgettable was the cultural enrichment that came along with it. The program included organized outings that allowed me to immerse myself in Japanese culture fully. I had the privilege of visiting various museums and cities, each offering a different facet of Japan's rich heritage and technological advancements. These excursions were not just informative but added depth to my understanding of the context in which I was studying and living.

Moreover, my lab mates and other members of the laboratory greatly influenced my perception of Japanese culture. Their professionalism, work ethic, and genuine kindness have left me with an overwhelmingly positive image of the Japanese people. Their willingness to collaborate and share ideas created an atmosphere of mutual respect and enrichment. In summary, the JUACEP program is a perfect blend of rigorous academic pursuit and cultural exploration. I am incredibly grateful for the research skills I have acquired and the cultural insights I have gained. The friendships and connections I've made here are invaluable and have left me excited for the journey ahead in both my career and personal life.

