



Being a JSPS fellow in Japan



- Why I went to Japan?
- Life in a Japanese lab
- Tsukuba
- Life in Japan
- Tips for a fellowship
in Japan





Why I went to Japan?



- Particle physics is a fundamental science
=> for a post-doc outside Europe, the choice was North America or Japan.
- North America was the easy solution...
- There are a few famous Japanese in particle physics: Yukawa, Kobayashi, Maskawa,...
- KEK is one of the leading labs in the field.
=> I spent 2 years working at KEK as a JSPS fellow
- Before the start of my fellowship I was a bit worried of spending 2 years in an unknown country...





Life in a Japanese lab



- *Science is the same, computers are the same, publications are similar...*
- *But:*
 - *you must remove your shoes before entering some buildings,*
 - *most discussions take place in Japanese,*
 - *teamwork is very important,*
 - *everything is clean,*
 - *there is very little support staff...*
- *Many opportunities to get involved with interesting research!*





Support staff in a Japanese lab



- KEK has a budget similar to other international particle physics labs, but the workforce is 2/3 smaller than in its competitors.
=> You must maintain your computer yourself
- Japanese researcher work in close partnership with the industry very early
=> even prototypes and small components are ordered from the local industry
=> Technology transfer happens more easily and smoothly than elsewhere... (*we should learn from this!*)



Tsukuba Science City

- City located 1 hour away from Tokyo with many National Research lab...
- Japanese “silicon valley”
- Many foreign post-docs
(5% of the population is non-japanese)
- City built from scratch in the 1970s
=> wide roads, “big houses”, limited public transportations...
- Atypical for Japan but a very nice city...
- As in all Japanese cities, houses have no street number but an “area number”.





Life in Japan

- Are all the gaijins (foreigners) lost in translation?
- Are there any maps in english?
- Is there anything else than fish to eat?
- What to visit in Japan?





English in Japan



- Most Japanese are not “fluent” in english
=> Researchers do speak english,
support staff or contractors often do not.
- Rule in my group: if 2 foreign persons are present
the discussion takes place in english, else in
Japanese.
- Almost all road signs are bilingual
(but do not forget that you need to know where
you want to go!)
- Japanese are very kind, if you are lost they will
find a way to help you even if they do not
understand you
- SPAM emails, adverts are also in Japanese

=> quick to filter





The Japanese language



- Very different from Indo-European languages
- 4 writings: Kanji (chinese characters), Hiragana (phonetic alphabet for Japanese words), Katakana (phonetic alphabet for Foreign words) and “romanji” (for brand names,...).
- Structures and grammar are very different
=> learning Japanese is a good opportunity to think about your own language



Food in Japan



- Eating meat was uncommon in Japan before last century.
- Japan being an island, you can find sea food everywhere.
- Sushi is probably one of the most famous Japanese dish.
- Many chinese dishes have been imported and adapted.
- “Western food” is available in many places, but you may not recognize it as “western”.
- Vegetarian beware: different cultures have different understanding of being a vegetarian!
- You can find standard western food if needed but if you are curious, you will discover a lot of interesting dishes!



Food in Japan (2)

- Food can look/sound strange:
 - fermented soy beans (natto)
 - raw fish, dry fish
 - octopus, urchins, eel, ...
- Have ever drunk the water in which you had boiled noodles?
- But if you are ready to give it a try, you will enjoy it...





Travelling around Japan



- From Hokkaido to Kyushu Japan has a lot of interesting places!





Japanese culture





Would you expect to do science in this building?



Yes!



Japan is full of unexpected surprises!



Tips for a fellowship in Japan



- Learn Japanese.

You can survive without, but your experience will be much more rewarding if you speak/read a bit of Japanese.

- Buy shoes that you can remove easily!

- Be open-minded.

Japan is culturally very different and Japanese people are very kind and tolerant but things will not be like “at home”.



- Beware, after 2 years you may want to stay in Japan for longer...



Looking at my experience...



- Going to Japan was a good choice, and I would do it again
- I should have learned Japanese before
- Many opportunities both in my work and outside
- I did not face any big difficulties due to the cultural difference
- Went back to Japan 8 times in the past 2 years!
Still collaborating closely with my host researcher and I got a grant from the Daiwa foundation to further our collaboration.
- I took more than 10 000 pictures while in Japan:
<http://pictures.nicolas.delerue.org/japan/>

