

Dr Marie Goua
Lecturer in Biomedical Sciences
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

JSPS Long-Term Invited Fellow in Prof Iwai's laboratory, Division of Chemistry at the Graduate School of Engineering Science, University of Osaka.

For this fellowship, I spent 3 months (16 June to 16 September 2013) in Japan and this was my 2nd stay in Japan after having spent 10 last in 2012 in Prof Iwai's lab under a Daiwa Foundation collaborative grant.

During my 3 month stay, I studied DNA damage in breast cancer cells in relation to rapeseed pomace and to a newly synthesised anti-cancer compounds. I learnt techniques which I was not familiar with (such as rapeseed pomace extraction). This fellowship allowed me to be back at the bench, away from any other academic commitments. The work performed in the lab was quite successful and we are planning on extending the collaboration further. Moreover, I use the domestic travel allowance to attend a conference on Medical Oncology in Sendai and I went to Meijo University in Nagoya to give a seminar on cardiovascular disease and cancer. These events were very beneficial to forge new contacts in Japan to investigate further collaboration.

The University of Osaka is very well set up for welcoming international researchers and my accommodation, a very spacious studio flat, was fantastic and 2min walk from the lab. Everything had been taken care of prior my arrival and it made the whole adventure so much easier! The lab was very welcoming and had planned a social calendar for me which meant that we interacted outside the lab as well. During my stay, we also had the pleasure to see the Emperor and his wife on a visit to the University of Osaka (see picture).

I have also tried to make the most of my time in Japan and with Osaka being centrally located it was really easy to travel: the Shinkansen is so convenient that I would just hop on a train to get to Hiroshima, Kyoto or Tokyo.

Japan is a cultural shock but everything is easy if you take the time to look at signs... although the famous Shinjuku station in Tokyo can be a labyrinth.

Do try as much as you can and make the most of your free time, the Hakone region would be my top tip. My one regret was not to engage more with the language but I still managed to grasp the basics.

I am ever so grateful to JSPS and Prof Iwai and Dr Kuraoka for the opportunity, I have learnt so much scientifically and culturally and I hope I can renew the experience in a few years.



The Emperor and his wife



Breakfast at Tsukiji, Tokyo fishmarket



Having Unagi with Dr Manako Hanya, Meijo University, Nagoya



Prof Iwai's lab and me, after a lab day out in Kobe