

Name: Michelle Montgomery
Current institution: University of Bristol
Host institution: Kyoto University
Host researcher: Professor Fumiyuki Ozawa

I participated in the JSPS summer programme at the end of my first year of my PhD. At the University of Bristol I am working towards developing new synthetic routes into drug like molecules and although my project has industrial collaborations I had no existing academic collaborations. I contacted three potential host researchers in similar areas of chemistry explaining my work and asking if they would like to host me. Everyone I contacted responded immediately and they were all very eager to host an international student. In the end I decided to suspend my studies at Bristol and work with Professor Ozawa in Kyoto on a slightly different project. Suspending studies to participate in the JSPS summer programme meant I wasn't only motivated by results (although this was still a huge driving force!) and could take time to perform new reactions and master techniques I wouldn't necessarily require everyday in Bristol.

Professor Ozawa was extremely helpful at every stage in the application procedure and we designed my 10 week project together prior to my arrival in Kyoto. I would recommend having a well researched and realistic project plan before you start. Take into account the time you will spend at the beginning of your stay getting to know your surroundings and acquainting yourself with your new lab. Things can be very different in Japan from in the UK. The Japanese work extremely long hours and it was not unusual for me to find someone asleep in the office in the morning. Having said this the pace at which they work can be slow making progress, slower than you hoped for.

During my time in Japan I was continuously overwhelmed by how friendly the people were. The people in my lab were no exception to this and although not everyone spoke English every effort was made to make me feel welcome. They hosted two welcome parties when I arrived, a leaving party on my final evening and numerous activities in my honour during my stay including an overnight excursion where I was able to enjoy the delights of a traditional Japanese Inn (*Ryokan*) in splendid company.



My second welcoming party at a sake restaurant (left) and group excursion to Okayama (right).

As well as the research aspect I also seized the opportunity to explore Japan and was mesmerised by the beauty, tradition and rich culture coexisting with the bright lights and hustle and bustle of the big cities. I was fortunate enough to witness the Gion Matsuri festival, attend a sumo wrestling tournament and music festival, relax in an onsen, paraglide off a mountain and watch the sunrise

from the top of Mount Fuji. I am tremendously grateful for the experiences the JSPS programme afforded me and plan to return as soon as possible.



Gion Matsuri festival (left and centre) and Daimon-ji festival (right). Both in Kyoto.

If you are thinking of applying for the JSPS summer programme then do it! It is a fantastic opportunity which not only allows you to build international collaborations and extend your research portfolio but also introduces you to Japanese culture and language, provides you with the opportunity to stay with a Japanese family and meet likeminded researchers from all areas of science.

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Please feel free to contact me regarding any aspect of the programme.