

Student Voice



Chandana Nawarathna, Saitama University

I am Chandana Nawarathna, one of the international students currently studying Civil and Environmental Engineering at Saitama University under the international graduate program. It is my great pleasure to share with you my experiences of living and studying in Japan. I am sincerely grateful to associate professor Shingo Asamoto, editor of the JSCE Concrete Committee newsletter, for providing this opportunity to express myself.

I am Sri Lankan. I came to Japan as a student in 2012 to take my master's degree in Civil Engineering. I'm now about to graduate.

Ever since my childhood, I have been hearing about Japan, its beauty and high level of technology. I'd always hoped to see and experience the country. Then, when I became interested in engineering, my impression of Japan was reinforced when I realized that it is the world's leading country in engineering. This is why I decided, once I completed my bachelor's degree in Sri Lanka, to do further studies in Japan. I was extremely pleased to get the opportunity to continue my studies in Japan.

Upon arriving at Saitama University, I had the opportunity to be part of an international study environment. I was worried about the language barrier, but the language teaching program for day-to-day needs really helped me to interact with people. Once I made Japanese friends in the laboratory, the language barrier disappeared. In addition, there are students from more than 15 countries currently studying in the Civil Engineering department alone. This was a great opportunity to experience the hospitality and traditions of many countries at various events, like the annual food festival for one. This truly makes the educational environment international and has changed my lifestyle too. This was a bonus for me and it will endure into the future too.

Besides the international environment, the well-structured research topics available in the many laboratories helped me specialize as I wished. The latest research into crucial issues has helped me keep my expertise up to date. My own research relates to investigating tsunami-damaged bridges. The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami caused damage to many bridges, while others survived. Timely investigation of this is essential to protect and improve the safety of existing bridges in coastal regions around Japan. I was given every freedom to implement my ideas and suggestions for this research, while all was ultimately discussed with my supervisor, Professor Hiroshi

Mutsuyoshi. With his guidance, I have developed my skills enormously and I feel greatly privileged to be one of the students under his supervision. During laboratory experiments, we all helped each other regardless of whether a bachelor, master or doctoral student. So, throughout my time here, I have felt that I am part of a family.

During my studies, I have been very fortunate to take part in a number of international symposiums organized by JSCE and various universities, which has improved my professionalism. I have also been able to travel all around Japan and explore the beautiful scenery, culture and traditions. I found the well-planned and efficient transportation system relaxing, even when travelling hundreds of kilometres. It is very easy to access the whole country in just a few hours. The natural scenery, especially the spring flower season and the changing colours of autumn, brought me new experiences throughout the year. There was organized entertainment, too. Often we had parties among international students and also with our lab mates. I even had the opportunity, through the Japanese home stay program, to stay a night with Japanese families. I've really had a wonderful time in Japan.

To finish, I should say something about the kindness of the Japanese people; everyone is so friendly, despite their busy schedules. I would recommend students from around the world to experience Japan, especially its hospitality. This period in Japan had been a wonderful and remarkable experience for me. I would not hesitate to say it has been the best time of my life so far.



At top of Mt. Fuji



Bowling Tournament



Educational Filed Visit



Language Group



Canoe Tournament 2012



At Nagoya castle