



Student Life in Japan

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I was intoxicated and at the same time terrified days before my flight to Japan - a country almost alien to me and barely have knowledge about. I arrived here in 2016 September with only my will power, and my 46kg luggage. The exact reason why I came was yet unclear to me. My first half-a-year stay experienced a turbulent ride, as I was trying to adjust culturally and sorting out what it is exactly that I want to do and achieve here. Now, I am a proud member of the Sustainable Social Infrastructure Group (Michael Gumi), in Hokkaido University. I guess one might remark that I have vanquished my state of irresoluteness.

The current perspective of research that I am working on is to understand the complicated nature of concrete sustainability. A rather timely and internationally relevant area, as the world struggles with its depleting resources, while at the same time feeding its boundless appetite for consumption. The research question, maybe, complex enough to keep me busy even beyond the limits of my student life. However, I am not alone in this battle; thanks to my supervisor who never failed to critique my work, put me back on track when I deviate from it, and whose work encourages me to exceed my worst.

Furthering my knowledge in civil engineering here in Japan is an opportunity I have always looked forward to in the past. I recognize the stack of opportunities that this can offer, not only for me, but also for my future students when I join back the university life in the Philippines. I am already optimistic of the future collaborations as a result, and contribute to strengthening the connections of academic institutions between Japan and Philippines.

However, that is only barely half of the story, because part of studying here, I get to experience a different but amazing culture and wonderful people. I love how my perspective and attitude towards work and perfection continually been reshaped, which I hope to radiate also to my peers and friends. The immediate worry I had when I landed the first time was the language, but up until now, I never really invested serious effort at learning the Japanese language. Nevertheless, that did not hinder me from having a happy and contented student life, assimilating the uniqueness of Japanese way of life into my conventional Filipino lifestyle.

Every day I always play the observer role that is enjoying myself with the astonishing behaviors of the Japanese people. They are always consistent and law-abiding, particularly with the traffic rules, making my daily commute stress-free. People are so polite, and in most instances, they are always super willing to offer help with my troubles, even though I struggle to explain things to them.

The weather also has another part to tell. In Hokkaido, for example, four seasons exist. Here, I managed to survive two winter seasons, and my first snow experience was magical. The autumn is my favorite time of the year.

Coming here, I have become a different person than I was. I want to emphasize that it is because of my new family in Japan and the friendship that I built with both international and Japanese

students that my graduate school life here is worthwhile - an experience that I will happily carry forever.

Here is a glimpse of my journey:



Michael Gumi members



Serious research stuff:
We hosted an international symposium



A very Japanese experience:
Michael Gumi Onsen Trip



Relishing the grandiose beauty of Hokkaido
autumn