

TO: Nakatani Foundation

Nakatani RIES GE 2019 Report

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Your University: Karlsruher Institute für Technologie KIT

Host Lab in Japan: Kurihara Lab/Molecular Microbial Science Laboratory

Meaning of Nakatani RIES Fellowship: How would you describe the meaning/impact of the Nakatani RIES Fellowship

More open for international opportunities as I now know I can handle myself and research outside of what I am used to. The Nakatani RIES program was a unique opportunity to challenge myself and grow as a researcher and human.

Complete the following sentences with the intended audience for these responses being potential applicants to the Nakatani RIES Fellowship.

- My favorite experience in Japan was...
 - The view down on Kyoto at night from the Fushimi Inari shrine. Going at night to avoid crowds after a long lab day it was an amazing way to end the day.
- Before I left for Japan, I wish I had...
 - Known the times for supermarkets to reduce fresh veggies and fruit. And just how many useful things 100Yen-shops offer that I could have just gotten on location instead of bringing.
- While I was in Japan, I wish I had...
 - had more time to explore the country and dive deeper into its culture.

Research Internship Overview: Provide a description of your research project and experience during your research internship. How did your project relate to your current or future academic interests? What was the experience of working in an international research setting like? What will you take away from your research experience this summer and what impact do you think this has had or will have on your future academic career or research interests?

My research project was a fair bit outside of my current and future work but very similar in techniques used so it was still helpful to review those and learn something new about different approaches with the change in organism. I usually work with toxin production and other secondary metabolites in fungi. During my internship I worked on the identification of a transposon mutation in a cold-adapted bacterium. Lab work was so much alike that it was surprising me how much. There are different customs as to preferred buffer preparation, cleaning schedules and the like but overall lab work is very similar. It's a good thing to know and be more self-assured about how ones skill translate into a different lab.

Lab Environment Overview: Provide an overview of what the personal environment of the lab was like. Describe the personality and working style of your research group? What was it like working with your research mentor/s and the overall group dynamic in the lab?

I was fortunate to be set up with a group that regularly engages with foreign students and that was happy to communicate with me and integrate me in their group. My mentor was always reachable for questions but gave me the freedom to work mostly on my own as discussed and the opportunity to teach another student.

Daily Life in Japan: Provide an overview of what your daily life was like in Japan. This could include the people you interacted with outside the lab on a day-to-day basis, food, your housing/living experience, your travels around Japan and the challenges you faced and the rewarding experiences you encountered over the course of the summer.

You do not need an alarm clock as a light sleeper as the screaming trees/cicada will wake you at sun rise. All week I went to Uji Campus by bus, did my experiments and discussed those and many other things like where to travel around Kyoto, other research projects, culture differences etc. at lunch with my host professor and most of the lab group. Once I'd get home, I'd either cook for myself or go out with other program participants, do further reading/research for the lab or weekend trip plans.

Traveling Japan is easy once you figure out how to find out which of the four bus stop locations of the same name is the one for the particular bus you're looking for. The Icosa Card is brilliant, and people are very helpful. It is safe to travel at any time of day. Biwa lake, Nara, Osaka, Kobe, so many hiking spots and temples and gardens- it is beautiful.

Experiences with Japanese Culture: Provide an overview of your most meaningful experiences with Japanese culture. This could be program activities or interactions you had with your lab or within your daily life in Japan that you think best exemplify aspects of Japanese culture or values. What did the experience/s teach you about Japan? What did they teach you about yourself?

I really appreciated the traveling habits in Japan. Quiet on the bus, helpful short answers if you ask for directions or where a certain bus is going. No matter where you went to, no matter if English was understood or not if you needed help there was a way to figure it out between bits of Japanese, English and miming if necessary. That and if you saw something nice you could share it as well as a hello on the road. When I went up Mount Kurama I exchanged hellos and small talk as well as some excitement about a blue-tailed skink with many other hikers it was very nice.