

## **A chance of a lifetime: My study experience in Yamagata, Japan**

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From July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I had the opportunity to participate in The Yamagata-Andes Nations' Double Triangle Program. Since childhood, I established the goal of visiting and learning from distant, diametrically different countries about culture, way of thinking and technology. Japan was for sure the best candidate to set my mind on. As that dream already became true, I can say my study experience in Yamagata was as satisfactory as I expected.

My group of Latin American friends and I first visited Yamagata City. We were told before this city was in the countryside of Japan, so I expected to see only rural villages with small houses, huge agricultural areas and very few people. I could not be any more wrong. Modern cars, huge buildings, entertainment centres, and so on were most of what we could see around the city. I was astonished about the concept of "countryside" Japanese people have in mind, it was totally different from the one we can experience in Peru. In spite of all that, Yamagata city was a lovely, calm place where we could have some peace of mind looking at mesmerizing natural scenery and have having some leisure time after study activities. Here, at Kojirakawa Campus, we had lectures about Yamagata's Literature and Regional Development. We learnt how the interaction between Yamagata University and Local Companies contributed to people's quality of life.

Yonezawa city was the next place in the schedule. I felt that Yonezawa was a synonym of dynamism and progress, as its Industry had changed throughout the years managing not to become obsolete. Furthermore, tradition and culture could be experienced by visiting its ancient palaces from the time when Shoguns ruled all over Japan. I had also the chance to taste Yonezawa beef, and I could see why they feel really proud of it as it was absolutely delicious and of high quality. In this city, at Yamagata University's Faculty of Engineering, we learnt about Disaster Prevention and OLED Technology developed by this University, whose concept really surprised me; and also learned about the importance of nutrition in people's welfare at Yonezawa University of Nutrition.

After our stay in Yonezawa, we headed to Tsuruoka city. As an agriculture student, I was looking forward to this moment. I could say Tsuruoka was my favourite city of all that I visited, because of the rural scenery, wide and clean streets, and the special Imoni soup containing pork. At Yamagata University's Faculty of Agriculture we learnt about Japanese horticulture and agricultural technology to produce high quality food. We also visited the City's Residual Water Treatment Plant, in which I had the experience that impressed me

the most: Usage of treated residual water to irrigate rice fields for livestock feeding. I believe this is one of the examples that best shows the Japanese recycling culture.

Throughout my stay in Japan I learnt principally two things. First, Universities, Companies and local communities must be the axes of Regional Development. The Interaction of these three elements will make countryside cities its own technological and industrial cores, solving centralization problems. Second, rurality does not necessarily mean poverty or not developed. In Yamagata I could perfectly understand that nature and technology can co-exist increasing people's welfare and environmental protection.

All the knowledge acquired about these aspects will make me grow not only as a person, but also as a professional. Understanding the way how environmental protection culture and application of green technologies can improve quality of life in countryside cities is the best treasure I can take from Japan. I plan to finish my undergraduate studies in Peru so I can wholly understand my country's challenges and difficulties, and learn Japanese until I get fluent enough to possibly take postgraduate studies in Japan. I would like to go Japan again, as I feel there is still a lot to discover about the country where the sound of silence is the one of cicadas and leaves blown by the wind.



Visit to "Future House" in Yonezawa. Usage of tatami shows strong sense of identity towards ancient traditions in spite of globalization times.



View from hotel room In Yamagata. A peaceful city surrounded by green mountains: Japanese conception of countryside.