

PII Internship report by James Tawney
ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kanazawa

I had an amazing experience working at the ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kanazawa for two months the summer after my sophomore year. Despite my initial nervousness about working at a Japanese company for an entire summer, I was warmly welcomed and generously supported from Day 1. My internship began with a two-week orientation process, in which the Human Resources Department introduced me to the hotel industry in general and ANA Crowne Plaza specifically. I visited each of the different divisions of the hotel, practiced *keigo*, and learned hotel etiquette (bowing, greetings, etc). My goals for working in a Japanese business were to improve my *keigo*, interact smoothly with customers and co-workers in Japanese, learn formal corporate etiquette, and learn a little Kanazawa-ben on the side.

While I was allowed to give input as to which divisions interested me, I spent most of my time in the 宿泊部 or Rooms Division as it is the main department of the hotel and fit my goals most closely. The Rooms Division oversees the lobby and guest rooms, and is responsible for customer service, check-in/check-out, sightseeing advice, etc. Thus, the rooms division has the most opportunities for interacting with guests and practicing Japanese. I really noticed an improvement in my language skills and general ability to think on my feet through the course of my time in the lobby. My first day, all I could do was to smile and greet guests entering the building, but by the end of my internship, I was leading guest to their rooms, while carrying their luggage, explaining the hotel, and answering their questions.

It gave me a sense of accomplishment to go from redirecting all questions to the permanent staff, to answering any question asked of me and proactively dealing with any problems that a guest might have. I also felt like I was a full contributing member of the staff. Rather than working a desk job, waiting for a supervisor to find something for me to do, I was able to lighten the workloads of my co-workers and help with translating and interpreting for foreign guests. In addition to the Rooms Division, I spent time in Marketing, Human Resources, and Guest Room Maintenance. I also sat in on employee English lessons, even teaching a little English to my co-workers in the Restaurant Division by translating menus and teaching conversation.

The best part of working at ANA Crowne Plaza was developing relationships with my co-workers. Everyone was friendly, helpful, protective, and inquisitive. I always had someone to eat with in the employee dining hall, had great conversations about everything from college life in America to Japanese history, and always had a fallback if I couldn't understand a guest or had to deal with a difficult situation. My co-workers had so much to teach me about the hotel, about Kanazawa, Japan, and life working in the "real world." To make me feel a part of the team and let me experience another unique aspect of Japanese corporate culture, they took me out after work to *izakaya* and karaoke. I had so much fun spending time with and getting to know my co-workers that I could not believe how much I missed them after the end of the summer.

In addition to my regular nine to five workday, I also had the opportunity to see Kanazawa and take part in special events. For instance, I was invited to participate in the hotel's wine tastings, traditional sweets-making workshops, birthday parties, lunch at the hotel restaurants, and employee appreciation party. While I initially had misgivings about spending a second summer in Kanazawa, I quickly discovered that although I had spent so much time experiencing the city and the region during PII, there was still so much to see and experience. My co-workers organized sightseeing trips of Kanazawa to help me give better tourism advice to

guests, tailoring our itineraries to include new sites and experiences. As an important business in Kanazawa, the hotel has close ties with other organizations throughout the city; opening up new opportunities like a special tour of the 21 Century Museum led by the museum's director.

I had an unforgettable experience at ANA Crowne Plaza thanks to my co-workers, the Prefecture, and PII. The internship offers an enriching experience, even if you aren't interested in the service industry as a post-graduation career. While my professional goals don't relate to the hotel industry, I gained valuable working experience and improved my Japanese. I still remain in contact with a number of my co-workers through Facebook and received so much support for my future endeavors when we said goodbye.

