

Going into this internship, I did not know what to expect. I was bracing myself for the well-known strict Japanese corporate life, but little did I know, that image stayed only in my imagination. On the first week, I was given the chance to go on a tour of Kanazawa with three other workers at the hotel, two of whom were this year's new staff and one of whom was last year's new staff; this meant they were about the same age as me, which made the atmosphere very casual and welcoming. We toured around Kanazawa and had a very good time, and I definitely felt very warmly welcomed and included.

For most of the four weeks, I worked in the guest relations department, which is a department that works alongside the people at the front desk. This is the department where most of the customer interaction takes place. Most of the work consists of guiding guests to their rooms, bringing luggage and bags up to guest rooms and following up on inquiries at the front. There were many instances of spontaneous conversation with Japanese customers, of which most went smoothly, but some were a little awkward. These spontaneous conversations with guests were definitely the most challenging as, not only did they really push me to use my Japanese skills, but also forced me to put on a confident smile and speak in front of people I did not know.

Throughout the time of my internship, I was also given the opportunity to rotate around other departments at the hotel as well, such as Marketing, Logistics, Accounting, Human Resources, Food & Beverage and Banquet Services. I got to learn about what each of these departments do in a general sense, and got to do hands-on work where ever I was able to. I got to write my own advertising article in Japanese in Marketing, take orders from customers in Food & Beverage, and I also got to learn about the Shinto Japanese style and Christian style weddings. I was even given the opportunity to attend a real Japanese wedding. Everything was definitely a very fruitful learning experience.

I really enjoyed my time at each of the Departments. As an introverted person and one who does not excel at impromptu social interaction, I was worried at first about my ability to do this guest-oriented job, but after a few weeks, I actually began to enjoy interacting with customers. Being able to be a part of the making and organising of someone's wedding, bringing someone to their comfortable room after a long day of travel, or being able to quickly answer a question that was bothering a customer; the smiles that I get from our guests definitely made my day all the time, and I began to look forward to the times where I could talk to guests.

What left the most impression on me during my internship, however, were definitely the people that I worked with. Everyone was very understanding and patient with me, but not only so, they treated me like a colleague and an equal, for which I was very grateful for. They would ask me to translate some Japanese in English and Chinese, and I would ask them to teach me Japanese. *Keigo* was definitely one of my weaknesses, because although I had learned *Keigo* previously in my classes, I was never given the chance to use it in a real life situation. My colleagues were all very approachable, which made it very easy for me to ask them questions on how to properly use *Keigo* with customers. Through our numerous conversations at work, I was able to bond very well with them and make some new close friends—friends that I am still in contact with now.

Through this internship, I was given a glimpse of the Japanese corporate world and the Japanese service industry. Although I was able to learn a lot and improve on my

Japanese skills, I realised that there is still a lot more for me to learn. My hope is to continue learning Japanese, improving my language skills, and to become more familiar with the Japanese corporate world. After this internship, I have realised that I wish to deepen my connection with Japan and hopefully be able to return in the future.



The four of us at a café in *Higashichaya-gai* during the orientation tour



Making *Kaga Kebari* with a colleague in the Banquet Services Department



Me trying on the Miko uniform (A Miko is a maiden that helps at a Shinto Shrine). The hotel staff wear the Miko uniform to be a helper during a Shinto Japanese style wedding.



My colleague and manager at the Guest Relations department at a local Sushi restaurant on the night of my last day.