

Title: My Very First Experience of Studying Abroad

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The four months I spent in Boston was one of the best times ever in my life. It started in August when leaves were still dark green and it ended in December when we saw beautiful snow fall. During the period, I studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which is one of the best universities in the world. Even now, I vividly remember the day when I arrived at the Boston Logan International Airport with a lot of ambition and a little bit of anxiety. I couldn't wait for the upcoming experiences at all and it turned out that my choice of studying at MIT was absolutely right. It was very tough and demanding, but that was exactly what I needed not only to learn something new but also to grow as a person.

First, I would like to talk about the classes I took; Intro to Sustainable Energy, Thermal-Fluids Engineering, Intro to Computer Science & Programming, and Moral Problems and Good Life. Each class was interesting in different ways and I learned so much every day.

What I found the most interesting about classes was the difference between MIT and UTokyo. In UTokyo, we take a lot of classes during a semester and we don't usually have homework assignments. Therefore, most students study hard only before finals and this style of teaching didn't help me learn deeply. But at MIT, we had homework assignments called problem sets every week. The concept is "learning by doing". Oftentimes, what we cover in class is abstract and the knowledge itself is not enough to solve real-life problems. Problem sets are, on the other hand, very practical in a sense that they deal with realistic issues that we will face in society. Spending a lot of time on tackling the assignments really deepened my understanding.

In addition, classes were composed of students from all over the

world with distinct backgrounds and value systems. They all are very eager to learn, so many questions were raised even when the professors were talking. Then the professors posed the questions to class and discussion started. Everyone was ready to discuss. The atmosphere enabled us to have animated conversations during and outside of class. For example, one day after class, I met one of my classmates from philosophy class at the dining hall and we had an exciting discussion on a philosophical issue over lunch. She was from Korea, so we took a look at the topic from Korean and Japanese points of view and compared it with Western culture. It was one of the best conversations that I had during my stay.

Outside the class was also a very important part of my life. Being an introvert, I had not been good at building new relationships and dealing with new surroundings. I knew I had to change something and this is partly why I decided to be there to struggle. It really was difficult to make new friends at first, but I am now very glad to have friends that I hope to keep in touch with even after the program. We went kayaking, camping, and hiking on weekends. The beautiful nature refreshed us a lot. All the memories with them were so precious and meaningful that I will remember forever.

That being said, I had some very difficult times too. I had lots of time alone during which I thought about myself so much. I asked myself: what do I want to do in the future? What is happiness to me? What can I do to those who always support me? I didn't have answers to these questions at the beginning, but eventually, I got to know my own answers. Considering that I would have never thought about that kind of profound questions in Japan, I swear that the experiences there mean a lot to my life.

Overall, it was a very meaningful and fruitful experience for me. I am sure that what I've gone through will have a big impact on my life path in some good way and I'm so grateful to have such an opportunity when I'm still an undergraduate student.