

## 2023/2024 Japanese Language Program for Specialists in a Cultural and Academic Field – Short Term



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Nestling against the Izumi Mountains, and overlooking the Osaka Bay, the Kansai Center bestowed upon me two months of unforgettable experiences. From my dorm room, nature painted breathtaking scenes: vibrant sunsets melting into the sea on clear days, and clouds crowning the blue peaks on overcast mornings. Yet, beyond the scenic splendor, it was the bonds of kindness forged with the teachers and peers that left an indelible mark on my heart.

The program unfolded at a fast pace, balancing structured coursework with enriching extracurricular activities. Upon our arrival, the cohort of nine participants took placement tests. Based on the test results, we were divided into two classes to receive grammar tutorials that catered to our individual proficiency levels. Alongside the required grammar courses, we could also choose from a range of elective subjects, including Kanji Vocabulary, Conversation, ICT (email etiquette training), Nihongo Café (Japanese cultural tutorials), and Specialized Reading/Report Writing Support. These classes, led by experienced teachers in small classroom settings, guaranteed personalized attention from Mondays to Thursdays.

Fridays offered a kaleidoscope of cultural exploration. For example, one week, we journeyed to downtown Osaka to appreciate the Bunraku play. On another Friday, we visited Kobe University where we not only toured the campus, but also had stimulating discussions with the graduate students there. Moreover, we tried our hands at flower arrangement and



calligraphy under the instructions of masters. Midway through the program, we also

conducted self-study trips to Tokyo where we visited libraries and conducted interviews for our individual research projects.



The two-month program culminated in the final presentation ceremony, where each of the nine participants showcased our research projects in Japanese to a diverse audience comprising both the staff members at the Center and guests from the local community. In preparation for the final presentation, teachers offered a series of one-on-one or small-group

tutorials that were instrumental in refining our presentation. As a result of this rigorous preparation, I not only improved my presentation abilities in Japanese but also acquired the essential skills necessary to conduct research in Japan.

The smooth execution of all coursework and extracurricular activities was made possible by the firm support of our dedicated teachers and staff members. Through weekly meetings, they ensured transparency and clarity in the program's schedule. Every other week, teachers held one-on-one meetings with every participant to make sure our stay at the



Center was comfortable and conducive to learning. These sessions allowed us to discuss our study progress and address any concerns. In addition, I benefited tremendously from the librarians who offered me important guidance on navigating and locating relevant sources in the Japanese databases. The unwavering professionalism demonstrated by the teachers and staff members served as the cornerstone that tied the entire program together.

While words may fall short in expressing my gratitude to the teachers and staff members, I enjoyed the company of my peers and gleaned invaluable insights from them. Our diverse cohort, hailing from various cultural backgrounds and career stages, sparked lively discussions both within and beyond classroom. From learning about the process of compiling Japanese textbooks in Sri Lanka to exploring the fusion of Japanese linguistics and neuroscientific



studies in Brazil, each interaction broadened my horizons. Our cohort created numerous sweet memories in the Karaoke room on the third floor of the Center, at the marble beach by Rinku Town, and during casual talks every day. Towards the end of the program, I surprised myself by starting to blurt out some idiomatic Japanese expressions. At

those moments, I realized that my peers had played a pivotal role in my linguistic growth, by generously sharing their knowledge and fostering a safe language environment.

As we bid farewell on the last day, we jested that the program would have been perfect if only it had been a bit longer. Jokes aside, in bringing together such a remarkable cohort at the Center, the program had woven connections among us that would endure far beyond its two-month duration. Amidst the bittersweet farewells, I departed with a heart brimming with gratitude and a spirit nourished by the warmth shared at the Kansai Center.