

## My Journey

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I grew up in Jordan, a small middle eastern country. Since I was in high school, I wanted to visit Japan. Japanese culture, food, technology, anime has always fascinated me. Soon then, I entered dental school at the University of Jordan, and my life was completely shifted. All I cared about is my lectures, my clinics, patients, lab works, exams... I almost forgot my passion toward Japan. In my fourth year, I took a class which was given by a Jordanian professor who was a former PhD student in the division of bio-prosthetic at Niigata university 15 years ago. I remember saying to him "I want to do my PhD, and I want to do it in Japan, and I want you to help me" . I was lucky enough to have his guidance and presence in my life. Then, when I was in my senior year, he sent to me the application for Japanese Government Monbukagakusho: MEXT Scholarship Program. It was the start of a new chapter in my life.

I was blessed to be accepted by MEXT, and I was even more blessed to be accepted in the same division of Bio-prosthetic, here at Niigata university. In no time, I found myself on the plane heading to Japan. I only realized it, when I looked through the Shinkansen window, "ohhhhh, I'm really in Japan!!!!!" said to myself. I was terrified, it was my first time to be

alone without my family. Yet meeting my division professor, my supervisor, and some of the department staff over dinner on the same day of arrival, somehow reassured me again. They were nice, generous and made me feel welcomed.

After that, I had to take some Japanese language classes at Igarashi campus. I had the chance to meet a lot of exchange students whom I enjoyed my time with. Few months later, I joined the Bio-prosthetic division. By far, I can say this is the most important step I took in my life and I am thankful for it every day. Being around those great dentists/researchers, being able to learn from their experiences, work under their supervision, and being a part of their department, is a once-in-a life-chance. Their warm hearts and kindness are helping me to cope with my feeling of loneliness and home sickness.

For so many reasons, Japan is a unique and mysterious country and for the rest of the world we almost know nothing about it, so since I came, I have tried to explore the culture. I start taking a Japanese traditional flower arrangement (Ikebana) classes every month. I have learned that it's more than an arrangement. It is a disciplined art form in which the arrangement is a living thing where nature and humanity are brought together. It is steeped in the philosophy of developing a closeness with nature. Also, it demonstrates respect for



One of my arrangement using summer flowers

the natural world by following the normal seasons in using and joining the flowers together.

In my period of stay, I had the chance to visit many amazing places, museums, and cities. I have enjoyed snow and winter at Shirakawago in Gifu prefecture. It's a world heritage site where historic farmhouses shine during the winter light-up. It was magical! Enjoyed the cherry blossom at Hakusan park. The New green (Shinryoku)

at Fukushima prefecture. The fireworks at Nagaoka city during summer with my division. The red leaves in autumn at the Yahiko mountain. I shouldn't forget all the remarkable places inside Niigata city like the Northern Cultural museum, Minato Inari Shrine, The Old Saito Residence, Niigata rice cracker museum, and many others.

I also found an endless pleasure in soaking myself in onsen hot water. I always try to find the chance or excuse to go. Japanese food is another pleasure I discovered, especially Soba noodle. Their cuisine is so delicious, various and healthy. No wonder that Japanese have the longest life span in the world.

If we want to divide countries, there would be developed countries, developing countries, and there would be JAPAN! Here are the most surprising things I found in Japan: There is no garbage bin in the streets, yet the streets are so clean. You can find many and many of vending machines. The taxi door opens automatically. Due to health concern, wearing face make is completely normal. People don't eat while waking in public places. Every restaurant has a plastic menu for their food.



Shiragawago during winter



New green at Fukushima prefecture

People are so quit in public transportations. In valentine day, girls give present to their partners! Convenient stores are very convenient. There is an official holiday almost every month. Everything is punctual here, buses, trains, even humans. Stamp (Hanko) is still usable. To inter onsen water, you should be naked! Seasonal changes are a great deal, there is cherry blossom viewing (Hanami), red leaving viewing (Momijigari) and many others. Japanese people love festivals (matsuri), you can join many of them, especially during summer time. The food is delicious, nature is

gorgeous, temples (shrine) are majestic, cities are safe, people is polite. I just love being in Japan.

I still have a research to do, program to accomplish, work to master, cities to visit, people to meet and things to experience, and I should be thankful for the Japanese government, our department professor Dr. Uoshima katsumi, my supervisor Dr. Nagasawa Masako, my professor in Jordan Dr. Ameen Khraisat and to every member in my division for the opportunity, guidance and the chance. Thank you all.



Red leaves at Yahiko mountain