



Student life in Japan

Teeranai Srimahachota

Doctoral course 3rd year student

Division of Engineering and Policy for Sustainable Environment

Graduate School of Engineering, Hokkaido University

Country of origin: Thailand

Have you ever wondered what life in Japan is like? Studying abroad is like getting out of your comfort zone, and it is even more challenging when you have to pursue your degree also. I started my journey in Japan as a student in the International Engineering course (e3) at Hokkaido University. I had scholarship support from the Japanese government for my master's degree and from Mitsubishi UFJ Trust Bank for my PhD. Studying in Japan has not only enhanced my knowledge in the field of civil engineering but also developed my confidence and ability.

When I first came to Japan, like most students, I faced many challenges, especially the language and culture barriers. Even though my course was provided in English, speaking Japanese is still important in daily life. The university supported me by providing a Japanese language course for all international students; this facilitated daily life in Japan a lot. Apart from that, there were supervisors, university staff and Japanese lab members who were open-minded and always willing to help me to overcome problems during my studies. Studying in Hokkaido University gave me a great opportunity to conduct research on contemporary global issues under the supervision of professors who are well-known specialists in their field. The advanced technology and equipment available in Japan have allowed me to carry out my research more efficiently.

Currently, my research interest is tackling the environmental issue of marine debris; I am studying the utilization of discarded fishing nets as reinforcement fibers in concrete structures. This work focuses on the application of a polymer cement mortar reinforced with recycled fibers for the repair of corroded RC beams. The project involves collaboration among many teams, including the partner university responsible for the project, the cement company that supplies the repair materials and the local contractor that supports the work on-site. Through this work, I have learned about the importance of long-term planning, communications and teamwork. The research has opened up the future prospect for utilizing a recycled material in concrete structures, which will improve engineering technology toward the sustainability.

As a student at Hokkaido University, I was encouraged to learn how to approach research problems, make plans for experiments, set up experimental work and analyze experimental results. At the same time, the international environment in my laboratory helped me to broaden my perspective in current affairs. The favorite aspect of my studies is attending conferences, where I have the opportunity to introduce my research to the world. I have taken part in several international conferences, including symposiums held by JSCE. Going to conferences gave me a chance to meet many people who offered ideas and pointed out gaps in my research; furthermore, I also had a chance to meet many friends and teachers from my home country. In my opinion, attendance at conferences allows me to build an international network, which is very important for my future work.

I live in Hokkaido, the northernmost prefecture of Japan, where I can enjoy four seasons of a beautiful natural environment and fresh delicious food. Here, I can experience cherry blossoms in spring, lavender fields in summer, autumn colors in fall, and snow activities in winter, all of which help me balance a life of study and enjoyment. During the summer, the university had a festival called "Hokudai-sai", where students ran food stalls and we international students introduced food from our home countries. Studying in Japan may seem like a challenge to some people; however, it can also be considered an opportunity to improve yourself and explore new aspects of life. My valuable experience of Hokkaido and my memories of time here will give me the ambition for future achievement.

The journey so far...



Summer trip with lab members



Field experiment in Kurihama



Annual meeting with MUFJ Trust scholarship



University festival "Hokudai-sai"



Lavender field in summer



Autumn colors at Hokkaido University