

# OPU Students 海外留学レポート

Study Abroad Report from the OPU students



## プロフィール (Profile)

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## 留学レポート Study Abroad Report

Why do you need to study abroad no matter who you are or what you want to do or be in the future? The ultimate answer is because studying abroad broadens our horizons. In other words, you can see the world in a bigger picture by experiencing life in different countries and having conversations with people from different backgrounds. Truth be told, this answer is gained after I came back to Japan. Then, why I applied to this program? In this essay, I will explain the reason and what I learned, experienced and gained from this program.

To begin with, let me introduce myself here. I was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture and moved to Iwate Prefecture, Fukuoka Prefecture, and finally to here, Osaka. As you know, I live in and grow up in Japan, where 98% of the population is people who called "Japanese" and most of them have similar opinions, or they are implicitly forced to have the same opinions in pursuit of social conformity. This kind of social agreement has contributed to our culture positively, and this is what makes our culture distinct from others. However, this is not always good, since the whole world is changing at a rapid speed and we have to face different situations and different opinions or methods from people with different backgrounds. Regarding all of the aspects of Japan: inefficient education, decreasing population, conservative government, it is clear that Japan cannot stay competitive anymore. Meanwhile, China, Korea, and other Asian countries have steadily increased their power, especially in the engineering field. In my opinion, those countries are trying to incorporate new perspectives from abroad and encourage students to study abroad. All things considered, if I want to stay competitive, it is important to expose myself to places where various people gather such as the US. This is why I applied to this program. (Technically, this program is too short that I cannot call it "studying abroad", but it was important in that I could rethink about why study abroad matters.)

Next, I will tell you about redneck culture and one of the lessons that I gained from this culture. Redneck, this term is not necessarily politically correct but Erik, my friend, likes to use the term and he told me a lot about this redneck culture. Historically, they were cowboys/girls and engaged in farming. Their necks are red because of the Western United State's intense sunlight. They have pickup trucks. They have distinct western accents. I liked the way how those people talk and behave. They don't care about small things and they have big hearts, and they are generous. Hulk Hogan (if you don't know, please Google it) is the epitome of redneck, according to Erik. Also, they like guns. They regard guns as their symbol of the frontier mind. Erik has many guns and I saw some of his guns. Usually, according to him, he goes to deserts and brings some old computers or garbage. Then, he shoots them. As far as I know, shooting is one of the most popular sports in western America, like baseball; guns are so important in terms of identity as Americans. Before I go to the US, I was opposite for the right to have guns because I thought guns can easily kill people. However, now I realized that guns are a part of American culture and denying it without good reasons is nonsense. It is like a Japanese whale hunting. Western people might think this is cruel or inhumane, but we Japanese historically have had whales, and we know that this is a part of Japanese culture. I know things like these are not easy because people have different backgrounds and opinions, but before denying them or look down them, please accept and respect these cultures, and if you talk with people who are familiar with those cultures, you can understand different cultures more deeply - this is one of the most important lessons that I learned throughout the program.

Also, this program made me interested in Native Americans, people who originally lived in American Continental but now live in the reservation and suffered from the exploitation of the colonization in the US and

Mexico. They are often called "Indians" but this term is politically incorrect and some Native Americans hate it while others do not really. I knew Native Americans before I went to the US by this program. When I was a child, I read a book about them: "The Education of Little Tree" but my knowledge was not enough at that time. As a part of this program, we went to Grand Canyon, and before we went there, we watched an IMAX about the history and the beauty of Grand Canyon. We learned that Native Americans lived there from time immemorial, and European colonization of America from the early 16th century changed almost everything and they lost their motherland. Also, we visited The Heard Museum, located in Phenix, AZ. This museum is about Native Americans' cultures: It showed us Native Americans' artworks, crafts, and photographs. Through these media, the museum explained to us why Native Americans' life has been so severe, where they are and what they are doing right now. Many Native Americans were killed due to viruses that Western Caucasians brought to America because Native Americans were geographically isolated from other areas and not exposed to these viruses before the outbreaks happened. However, what was most painful about Native Americans' history is that they have been forced to discard their identities. The US government in the past created special programs to make Native American children behave like Caucasian and Christian Americans - this is often called "assimilation of Native Americans". Native Americans were forced to give up their languages, religions, even their names. They were given different names by their schools that sounded like ordinary Americans and were constantly under surveillance by teachers. They were young but were often subject to violence. Nowadays, the population of Native Americans has been greatly decreased. Some of them are making their living by running casinos in their special district, reservation. I could see some of the real examples of that during the program. We stayed in Prescott, and we saw casinos in Yavapai. The first time I saw them out of the window of our car from the hotel to ERAU, I did not know why there were casinos because usually they are prohibited by the US law, but now I understand: Those casinos are inside Native Americans' reservations where they enjoy autonomy to some extent, and they have no other industry that can feed their family because of the harsh environment of Western America and because of Native Americans' painful history. There is no superior or inferior cultures or religions, and if you - this is also one of the most significant lessons that I gained from this program.

Last but not least, American foods are quite diverse. They have almost all kinds of food though they are often Americanized. We had Chinese food at Panda Express, Thai foods in Flagstaff, Italian in Red Lobster, Mexican food at the party when we first arrived at ERAU, cowboys/girls meals at Blazin' M Ranch, where we could experience the life of cowboys/girls. This is one of the good things about the US.

Overall, I could learn about the history, cultures, and issues of Western Americans and how we should think about diversity through ERAU Winter School. Throughout the program, Mr. Matsui, Mr. Tsutsui, Trevis, other OPU staff members, ERAU staff members and buddies, teachers and other students, and local people made great efforts to make sure that we could learn and experience a lot. Now I can say with confidence that I could improve myself a great deal through this program in terms of personality, knowledge about international affairs and English. I am deeply grateful for the kindness of those who have been involved with this program. Thank you, again.



You can watch the 360 video that I created as a part of this program:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-19NBaEF7M>