

Good morning or ohayo gozaimasu!

I'm sorry that you haven't heard from me for such a long time but during the last weeks after my internship at HCA in Florida I was quite busy. First, I went around in Florida (to the keys and the west coast) and to the Bahamas. After that exciting week, I fly to Philadelphia and from there I took the amtrak train to New York where I stayed with my friend Daniela who has her own business there. It was a very interesting week - New York was totally different to Florida but unfortunately I did not have the best weather during my stay there. I had the possibility to go to the Broadway shows Aida and the Phantom of the opera, I went to a concert in Carnegie Hall and, of course, I visited a lot of other famous sites in NY like: Empire State Building, Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, Guggenheim Museum, MoMa, Central Park,... - and a lot more!

With the tips and paperwork that Rey gave me, I was really able to find the sights quickly and to organise my day efficiently regarding opening times of the attractions (Thank you very much Rey!)

As you can see in the title of my email, I arrived very well in Narita (in the surroundings of Tokio). After my week in NY I only stayed 10 days in Germany - I was quite busy during this time. And after an over 11 hour flight last Wednesday I was very happy to arrive in Japan on Thursday noon. However already in the plane nearly everybody was Japanese. Then, at the airport, 2 of my colleagues came in order to pick me up there - I was very happy that I did not have to find my way to the company on my own. Hoerbiger Nippon K.K. is not very far from Tokio's airport but fortunately the noise of the plane is not too disturbing here.

First, we went to the company where I was introduced to my colleagues and I talked to the boss who is from Switzerland. There is only another colleague from Austria here, the other colleagues are all Japanese. And there are quite a lot of Japanese women working at Hoerbiger here (about one third of the employees) - that is a little bit unusual for Japanese companies – at least that is what I read. I'm sitting with 5 other Japanese women in an office - they're really very nice and try to help me with everything. Whenever I ask something, they are considering the question together and try to help me. And on my first working day, they also gave me a cell phone - so I can't get lost any more here! Besides, on my first day, a colleague went shopping with me which was really very useful because nearly all products only have Japanese signs so you really have to guess what is in there... sometimes, when you are very lucky, there is a small picture which indicates what kind of product it is!

After all that, one of my colleagues brought me to my apartment which was rented by the company. It is very close to Hoerbiger - about a 5 minutes walk. I have a small kitchen, a bathroom and nearly everything you need... there's only one thing I really have to get used to: the hard bed - they don't have a real mattress on the wooden plate so it's really very hard.

On Friday I relaxed a little bit and discovered the surroundings (but as last time when I returned to Germany, I did not really feel a jetlag). By the way the time difference to Germany is 7 hours, to the USA it is 13 hours. After one day of relaxing I was in the mood of doing a little adventure on Saturday: I was curious to go to Tokio so I took the bus at 7.30h to go there. After about 1 hour I arrived at the central station where I went to the tourist information centre to get some advice and maps of the city. After that I decided to visit the imperial palace first – of course you can't go in the palace, you can only visit the east garden of the imperial palace. It was nice to walk around there and to be honest, I was impressed how huge the garden is. (By the way concerning orientation in Tokio, you really have to rely on your sense of orientation as there are no names on the streets!)

From the gardens of the imperial palace, I saw the Tokio Tower (an imitation of the Eiffel Tower in Paris - but 11 metres (33feet) higher than the original) so I decided to go there. I went through the districts of Toranomon and Shiba. On my way I crossed another park in the typical Japanese style (Hibiypark). Then I reached the Tokio Tower but I did not go up this day because it was quite misty. I continued walking to the Atago Shrine and the Zojoji-Temple - For me it was impressing that in the hectic city you have small oases where time seems to stand still, where it is nearly absolutely quiet. After having been there for one day, this is a city of contrasts - interesting contrasts!

I walked to Roppongi, the district where the embassies of the foreign countries are and where foreigners ("gaijins") live. But I had the impression that even there, you really have to look for foreigners - there are not so many of them! And once more a lot of contrasts could be seen: on the one hand very modern shopping malls, e.g. the "Roppongi Hills", on the other hand parts of the city where loose cables were moving with the wind!

In the afternoon I went to Ginza, where all the noble, first class shops are. Some comments concerning the prices in Japan: as you all know Japan is not a cheap country - today in the German Spiegel there was written that Tokio is the most expensive city in the world! And you

really have to pay attention here, some negative examples: 4 apples about \$4, one small melon \$5... whereas electronic equipment is quite cheap here.

For me it is quite comfortable that Saturday and Sunday are normal days Here - as you know I really enjoyed the opening times of shops and supermarkets in the US, we're not used to that in Germany - here all shops are open during the whole weekend and even buses run as frequently as during the week. Of course, that's a consequence of the Buddhismus and Shintoismus here. And during the weekend, I was very lucky concerning the weather. Normally, it is rainy season here but it hardly rained on the weekend - and even now when it rains, it only rains a little bit!

On Monday I started work here. At Hoerbiger Nippon K.K. working hours are very moderate in comparison what you hear from other Japanese companies. My working hours are from 9 to 17.30h (with 1 hour lunch break) - so that's not very long and in the evening not many people stay longer (I'm only with 2 colleagues in the office now!) Now, I'll finish to bother you with my stories... if you read all that, I would like to thank you for your interest.

Susanne

P.S.: By the way my address here is my private address s.klement@gmx.de. I had the choice to work with a Japanese notebook (so everything, MS Office etc. in Japanese) but I decided to use my notebook. My notebook has now access to the Hoerbiger network so that I did not have to change my outlook!

Hello everybody,

I've had another two exciting weekends and I would like to tell you a little bit about my impressions in Japan where I could really experience the Japanese openness concerning guests. Their hospitality is incredible: This weekend Sayaka, a colleague here at Hoerbiger Nippon K.K. took me to her parents' home in Ibaraki prefecture - about 1 hour north east from here. I told Sayaka before that I would like to experience the typical Japanese tea ceremony. As her mother knows how to do it - she has a licence so that she's authorized to do the tea ceremony - Sayaka invited me to come to their house.

On Saturday we went to Ibaraki Prefecture (north of Chiba-ken) . After about one hour we reached Sayaka's parents' home. First, we went for a walk in this region where a lot of rice is cultivated. And Sayaka wanted to try a new electronic tool that she has bought in the supermarket recently: it should translate dogs' barking into the Japanese language! When we came back from our walk, it really became exciting. Together with Sayaka and her mother, I went upstairs. There Mrs. Toshio showed me all her Kimonos - it was a variety of different kinds and colors of kimonos! Normally, a Kimono is made of silk but there are Yukatas, too. These are made of cotton and especially the younger Japanese people wear them e.g. on summer festivals. As it was quite hot on this day, Sayaka's mother proposed taking the Yukata. - And some minutes later, I was wearing one of these Yukata! (Of course you'll find a picture when you click on the link on the bottom of this mail).

For me it was impressing to see the variety of Kimonos and to experience some of the rules how to dress a Kimono. By the way, the Yukata I'm wearing is normally a lot too small for me - as nearly everything here - the sleeves should normally cover all your arms!

After having changed, we went downstairs where the tea ceremony began. Before I came to Sayaka's parents, her mother had already sent me a fax where the main rules and tools of the tea ceremony were described. I was impressed how many rules there are and how many details have to be considered. Normally it takes several years to learn how to do the tea ceremony! And even for the visitor there are a lot of rules what to say, how to take the cup, how to drink,.... - it was really a good experience!

After the tea ceremony, I enjoyed some nice Japanese food and it was a very nice evening I experienced in the whole family. Some words concerning Japanese meals: several times I had

the possibility to taste the traditional Japanese cuisine and I have to admit that I really like the food and that it tastes deliciously. And I haven't had any problems with the food so far. I really appreciate it how the meals are prepared and arranged. I've tasted sushi and sashimi of course, but also tempura (fried fish and shrimps), miso-soup, takko (that's octopus) or natto (a special meal typical for this region - it is not known in all parts of Japan - but that was really something that you must get used to: it is only beans that have been prepared in a special manner – but they get a little bit slimy and have a strange smell). My colleagues at Hoerbiger advised me to try natto because several non-Japanese persons really did not like it at all, so I got curious. However, it was not as bad as the descriptions were!

I spent the night at Sayaka's house. In the morning the family decided to do a trip with me! We went first to Mito - there is the Kairakuen park – one of the three most beautiful Japanese gardens. The park is from the 19th century and is famous for its plum trees. In the park there is the pavilion Kobuntei, a tasteful reproduction of a Mito clanlord's villa, that we visited. After enjoying the beautiful park, Sayaka and her family decided to take me to the coast (which is very close there). We ate Kaiten sushi - these are restaurants where you have little automatic band where the sushi comes directly to you and you can choose what you'd like to eat. After this delicious lunch we went for a little walk in the sand - as you all know: I love the sea. However the water there was very fresh! You could not go swimming there.

The weekend before, I went to Tokio - but this time I took my bike (that I've rented here for the 3 months!) in order to get to the airport. From there you can take the Keisei line to Ueno Station in Tokio which is much cheaper than the Express bus I took last time. In the morning I walked a little bit through Ueno-Park - you can have a look at some pictures in the internet, of course. I visited the well known Toshogu shrine (that has the same name than the other even better known and more important shrine in Nikko). On the other, I was shocked to see so many homeless people in this park - in the middle of Tokio - where they dressed their tents. You can see that in a picture, too.

At about 10 o'clock, I met with Sachiko, a Japanese woman who sat in the same row than me in the plane. During the flight, I did not have a lot of conversation with her as I did not sit directly next to her but we exchanged our business cards. Last week, I wrote her an email and we fixed a meeting for Saturday. She said, she's going to show me Tokio! After having discovered the huge Uenopark a little bit, we took the subway to go to Shibuya - the centre in the southwest of Tokio. In Shibuya there are many boutiques, theatres, cinemas and of course, the huge

department stores. And of course, there were a lot of people! I was happy that I'm a little bit taller than the average Japanese person so that I had a good overview. When you're standing on the big crossing in Shibuya all pedestrians (no matter where they are standing on the crossing) can walk at the same time (all lights for the pedestrians are green at the same time): the consequence? When the lights turn green the only thing you can see in the whole crossing is people - I have never seen that before!

Sachiko showed me some nice little shops and after that we continued walking towards Yoyogi-Park. In the middle of this park there is one of the most famous sights of the city: the Meiji shrine. It was built after the death of the important Meiji Tenno (around 1900 - a time where the modernisation of the country started). So in comparison to the other important shrines in this country, it is not old (especially because it was destroyed during the war so that a lot of parts had to be reconstructed) but like no other shrine, it is situated in the middle of 20000 trees that have been brought from different places all over the country. The park is 700.000 square metres (if I am not wrong this must be $9 \times 700.000 = 63.000.000$ square feet) large so when you go through the park you can't see the shrine - it suddenly appears in front of you! The dimensions are really huge!

In the afternoon, Sachiko showed me her home. There, her mother already waited for us with a delicious meal. I was really surprised what her mother prepared for only 3 people! It was a very nice evening. Sachiko's mother showed me some photos of different parts of the country, e.g. Kyoto and Hokkaido and a little bit later she told me that she plays the mandoline. I asked her to play something for me and of course, she did! I heard a mandoline solo "O sole mio"!

Unfortunately, time went by very quickly and I had to go back home. Sachiko brought me to the train and after 1 hour I reached the airport. In the meantime, it already got dark - as Japan does not change its time in the summer season, it gets dark between 6.30 and 7 p.m. I took my bike and tried to go home as fast as possible. (In the morning, when I went to the airport, I paid attention that there is a sidewalk everywhere so that I did not have to ride on the road at night). So I rode my bike and suddenly (I was in the middle of nowhere - there were no lights except a little bit from the airport - a about 6 feet high Buddha statue appeared in front of me (I did not see it when I went to the airport as it was a little bit hidden by a tree!)) I was really shocked but then I reached home without difficulties after a 30 minutes ride. By the way I would have never done such a thing in Florida - but here in Japan things are different: First of all Asian countries are said to be optimal for woman travellers because they are quite safe, secondly Japan is the

country with the lowest crime rate in the world and thirdly, I think the average Japanese person would be afraid of me as I am about one head taller than they and quite strong. (Sometimes I feel myself here as a big elephant!)

On Sunday, I relaxed a little bit and did a small tour with my bike (I'm sure you knew that!) But going around with the bike here is something else, too. First of all, it is quite hilly. Secondly, I only have a map with Japanese signs - and of course, nearly all signs on the road are in Japanese signs, too. So I try to get some orientation with the numbers of the roads (but you don't find signs with them very often). I went to Narita - about a 30 minutes ride - where I visited the well known Shinsho-ji temple. When I went back to my town, I tried to take another road. I was lucky that I can read now my town Sanrizuka in Kanji, otherwise it would have been very difficult to find my way back. The very little, narrow road went directly through the rice fields!

Some words concerning roads here in Japan. Especially compared to the US the roads here (not the highway) are very very small (for me, nearly everything in Japan is small: people, food packages, lorries, doors,...). That's why the average distance you can do here in one hour is about 30 to 40 kilometres (about 20 to 25 miles per hour). That's also why all my colleagues live very very close to the company.

So, I think, today you had enough to read about my experiences in Japan. Have a nice day,

Susanna

Hello everybody,

I'd like to tell you about my latest adventures here in Japan! On a Friday evening my female colleagues took me to a restaurant and invited me to a "Welcome to Japan" dinner. It was a special restaurant with big pots on the table with blaze/embers. You get the food in little bowls and put them on the mini-grill. That's "Japanese barbecue"! And it really got a nice evening where I tried sake for the first time. It was nice.

After the dinner we continued in our program of course. My colleagues wanted to show me something that is typical for the Japanese younger generation: who has not heard of karaoke yet? - First I was a little bit scared because I did not know what I'll expect there. I thought I have to sing in front of a lot of foreigners. But the building where we did karaoke had many little rooms - like living rooms with a sofa, TV and of course the microphones. And then we started: everybody tried one song - and I was surprised that there was even a German song that I tried first.

On Saturday my boss picked me up. I was invited at his home (as you can see the company here is like a big family). I met his Japanese wife and after a small conversation we went out for dinner to a very nice sushi restaurant. I tried ice cream with green tea taste for the first time. The ice cream is not so sweet but it is really delicious.

Last weekend - it was a long weekend because Monday was holiday ("ocean day"), I did a special adventure: 14 days before, I met Guna, an Malaysian and his pregnant wife at the Gion festival in Narita (I wrote about it in one of my last emails). He's employee at General Electric and asked me what I'll do on the weekend in 2 weeks. As I did not have any plans, he told me that a group of GE will go up Mt. Fuji - the highest mountain in Japan. He went there already last year. Of course, I liked this idea. However I was concerned about my equipment: I only had snickers and no pullover or other warm clothes. So I tried to inform myself carefully about the trip and the more information I got, the smaller got my concerns.

On Friday evening before our climbing, I had dinner with some members of the climbing group in Narita. They were very nice! So I could get to know some of them before climbing. On Saturday, Guna picked me up and his wife Jaya dropped us up at the station. First, we took the train to Tokio Shinjuku. There we met the other team members (who came from all parts of the country

and who nearly all of them worked for GE). It was a really international group of 20 people: USA, Great Britain, Malaysia, India, China, Australia and Singapore!

From Shinjuku, we took a bus to Kamagouchi to the 5th station of Mt. Fuji in 2300metres (7475 feet). Before climbing, we had dinner in the restaurant there. Then at about 9 p.m. we started climbing - yes, you go up there in the evening carrying an head light or a torch light with you! I went up with Guna (who is a fool if you believe in a Japanese proverb "A wise man climbs Mt. Fuji once, a fool climbs it twice") and Dave - an American who has climbed many mountains before.

It really got very cold in this night - minus one degree Celsius. I put one shirt over the other in order to protect me against the cold. Whenever we stopped for a little break - after about 5 minutes we got very very cold so we continued walking! However there was a small problem: as you can only climb Mt. Fuji safely during July and August, there are many Japanese people climbing Mt. Fuji during this period. Every Japanese person should climb Mt. Fuji once in their life. So about 2000 to 3000 people climb the mountain every day in this period. There is a real traffic jam going up the mountain and there are also a lot of people who have severe problems with their respiration above 3000m (about 9700 feet) lying on the way up. They try to continue walking with oxygen cans!

We continued walking and fortunately, none of us had real problems going up. At 4.15 a.m. (we did not sleep the whole night) we watched a great, unique sunrise - the sun colored the volcanic rocks even more red. It was like being in an air plane having a sea of clouds under you.

After this little break, we continued and reached the peak at about 6 a.m. - it is 3775,63 meters (about 12270 feet) high. However it was not really comfortable up there as a strong wind nearly blew us away! After we visited Japanese highest post office on the summit, we started going back at about 10 a.m. However we did not take the same trail we went up. We went down on the other side using Gotemba trail. After having met 3 other team members on the top, all 6 of us went down together. First, it was a normal path but after 1 hour we only saw black ash everywhere. We entered a no man's land.... nobody wherever you looked and it got misty, too. The only way to find the other 5th station was to stay close to the ropes showing the way down. But it was really nice to go down the ash...you could not walk but you had to jump into the ash (which was about 1 feet deep)! It was a little bit like skiing in deep snow!

It was really a long way down - the 5th station in Gotemba is only at 1400 metres (4550 feet). And as it was so foggy we could not see an end! Finally, we reached the 5th station and took a taxi to the train station. At 11 p.m. in the evening, about 36 hours after Guna picked me up - I reached my apartment.

On Monday - I did not have any problems - I relaxed and then Guna and Jaya picked me up. They've invited some other team members and me for tea at their house. So we could share the events and photos of the last 2 days. After that we went to Narita for shopping before having Thai food for dinner!

As you can see from my report, I really had an exceptional weekend. I would go up Mt. Fuji again any time! Hope to hearing from you! Greetings from Japan,

Susanne

Hello everybody,

I'd like to tell you about my last adventures here in Japan – especially because last week was a extremely exciting week for me! As my boss has given me the project to analyse the work flow of the company here, I've interviewed everybody in order to draw the processes and to find bottlenecks and ideas of improvement. As Hoerbiger as a second office in Kobe, my boss sent me to the Kansai region in order to talk to the employees over there. And, besides of that, he offered me to travel around Kansai region. I took this offer, of course!

On Thursday evening one of my colleagues took me to the airport and at 5.55 p.m. the All Nippon Airlines plane took off. After about half an hour, I could, see the volcanic mountain of Mt. Fuji. (You can have a look at the picture by clicking the link below.) After about one hour, I reached Itami airport in Osaka where I took the bus to Kobe. However, I reached Kobe quite late (8.30 p.m.).... it rained, was dark and I really had some problems to find my accommodation. I stayed in the youth hostel which was situated on the hills. So there were only very small streets going up - but fortunately, after having run around some time, I found somebody who explained me the way!

From the living room in the youth hostel, I really had a wonderful view over Kobe and the whole bay! I enjoyed it every morning and evening during my stay.

The first day, I went to the office, of course which is situated in the centre of Kobe on the 12th floor of a business building. (As there was a taifun running over Kansai area this day, you could not do much anyway!) From the office, you had really a great view! Perhaps you think that the 12th floor is not very high - however, there are not so many skyscrapers in Japanese cities - because of the earthquakes, especially Kobe had a bad quake in 1995 – and that is why the view from up there is really beautiful.

In the evening, my colleagues invited me for dinner: we went to a restaurant where you could make tempura yourself, i.e. there was a buffet where you had all kinds of spits with seafood, meat, vegetables etc. On the table you could coat with breadcrumb these spits yourself and fry it after that. I really like tempura very much, it was delicious!

On Saturday, I really started exploring the city. Kobe is really unique: the city which is very international has both: the sea and the mountains! I was really enthusiastic! Of course, I went to

the museum about the earthquakes where the disaster of 1995 was documented. But I also walked around in the city a lot, all along the port and enjoyed the incredible flair there. From the top of the city hall I had a wonderful view over the whole bay.

But life in Kobe does not stop at night - it is a very international city where you won't get bored in the evening. After having met two French interns in the youth hostel, I explored Kobe's night life together with them. On Sunday morning, I met Akirasan, one of my colleagues. Those who know me can certainly predict that I wanted to enjoy the nice view over Kobe from the mountains. Therefore Akirasan and me walked up Mt. Rokko (of course without using the "rope-way"). While walking up we passed by numerous water falls and up there we had a wonderful view over Kobe and the whole Osaka bay. Back in Kobe, Akirasan took me to a little restaurant where I tried okonomi yaki – a specialty of the Kansai region (made of eggs, flower, vegetables, seafood etc.)

Later in the afternoon, I took the train to my next destination: Kyoto – the cultural centre of Japan - north east of Kobe. In Kyoto, there are more than 1600 temples and 270 shrines - so you can only choose the real highlights! For more than thousand years, Kyoto (literally translated "capital-city") was the capital of Japan. Since the Meiji Tenno went to Edo in 1868, the emperor did not live in Kyoto any more. Edo - his new residence - was renamed Tokio ("eastern capital"). However as tourist you can still visit his imperial palace in Kyoto. But you have to go through some bureaucracy first by fill out forms and showing your passport.

After having visited the imperial palace I went around with a German student and an Austrian who was on his journey through to the Mongolia in the eastern parts of Kyoto. We walked all along the "way of the philosophs" and visited some famous temples. I was impressed by the number and the size of the temples and especially enjoyed the nice Japanese garden around the temples.

On Tuesday morning I went to the most famous temple in Kyoto: the golden temple or Kinkakuji. From there I went to Ryoanji - a Zen-temple which is famous for its stone garden. In the garden there are 15 rocks but you can only see 14 at one time.

After so many temples, I wanted to see something else on Wednesday: in my guide I have read that you have a wonderful view from Mt. Hiei. Therefore I went to the tourist information centre in order to get a map. After that I started climbing. However I realized that the map was not very detailed and all signs were only in Japanese characters - most of them in kanji. Besides, there

was nobody walking up there. I was walking more than 1 1/2 hours without seeing anybody before I reached the top (only about 1000 metres). There I was surprised to see so many people - I suppose they all came up there by car or by rope-way. From the top I had a nice view over Kyoto and Lake Biwa - a very big lake. For the first time, I have heard about it when one of my colleagues told me that he watched a programme on TV where they said that if you brought the whole population of the world to one place it would only cover the surface of lake Biwa!

Then, on Thursday, I was unlucky as it kept on raining the whole day. However, I walked around and continued exploring Nara together with a Swedish traveller I met in the accommodation. Nara is - compared to Kyoto - a very quiet, small city. There are not so many tourists although this city is also very famous for its old wooden buildings. Of course, we visited Todaiji temple with the biggest wooden hall in the world. Inside the temple there is a statue of Buddha which is 16 metres high. In one of the pillars of this big hall there is a little hole. If you can go through it, you will be lucky in the future. However, this little hole was only made for the Japanese size - I did not try it, I think I would have stuck in the stem.

In the evening, there was a festival in Nara. The over 3000 lanterns - mostly made of stone - were filled with candles. It was very nice to walk around at night. Besides, Japanese folk songs were performed - it was an interesting spectacle!

The next day, I explored Kyoto once more in the morning. At the Kiyomizu temple, I found what I have been looking for a long time: nearly every evening I spent in Kyoto I went to Gion in the early evening hours because I was told that there you have the best possibility to see Geishas. But I did not see any! So I was really happy that on my last day in Kyoto 3 Geishas were finally standing in front of me!

In the afternoon, I went to Osaka by train. There I walked around a little bit in the modern city (second largest city of Japan), went to Osaka castle and to the shopping streets. On Saturday morning I took the plane back to Narita. It was really a great trip!

By the way, I have never had serious problems to get around during my journey. Travelling in Japan is much easier than I expected. And Japanese people showed me their hospitality several times - it was really incredible! I only would like to tell you one example: I was at the bus terminal in Kyoto and asked a business man if that is the right bus stop for the bus I wanted to

take. He answered me and we had a little conversation as we were waiting for the bus. We got on the bus and continued talking. Before he got off he took some Japan Rail Tickets out of his pocket and gave it to me. He told me I should use them for travelling around. So, I did not pay anything for the trains I took in Kansai region as the tickets had a value of about 25 Dollar! That is really incredible, isn't it?

However, in spite of all these new impressions the sightseeing program continued on the weekend! On Sunday, I went to the biggest Buddha in the world in Ibaraki prefecture together with some friends from GE. This Buddha is 120 metres tall and can be seen from very far when travelling there. Finally, we had a nice dinner together where I learned a lot about Malaysia by asking many questions to two Malaysian guests visiting Japan.

As you can see I really enjoyed my trip to Kansai area - it was a great possibility to getting to know other parts of Japan. Greetings from Japan to the rest of the world!

Susanne