

An Historical and Cultural Tour to England 2010

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1. General introduction

This paper will outline the processes undertaken in organizing and running a two week study abroad trip to England for students from the English Communication Department at Kagoshima Immaculate Heart (Junshin) University in Satsuma Sendai Kagoshima prefecture. It will explain the particular steps taken in the setting up of the tour, outline the reasons for the implementing the tour and summarize what happened day to day on the itinerary. The final part of the paper will focus on the positive aspects of the tour as noted by the participating students and suggest ways to improve the trip in future years.

2. Steps taken in setting up the tour

In the 2008-9 academic year it was decided to offer students in the English Communication Department at Junshin University a unique chance to improve their understanding of historical and cultural aspects of a foreign country. A programme was outlined whereby students would study under three members of staff during the second part of the academic year via a series of lectures on various places of interest. Following the course, the students would then have the chance to visit these places firsthand, giving

them the possibility to further investigate aspects of the course they enjoyed by visiting museums, cathedrals, libraries, colleges and world heritage sites on route.

The idea behind the course (named *Seikatsu Eigo 1 a* and *1 b*) was to allow students to pursue in-depth studies on aspects of culture and history in areas of their own specific interest and further develop their knowledge through on the spot research. Students could take the lectures for credit without travelling abroad or travel abroad without taking the lectures but it was suggested to students that by combining the course with the tour they would gain far more benefit from the experience. In the end the majority took both sections of *Seikatsu Eigo*.

Each year the course and tours are to be arranged to focus on different geographical areas in various countries. By changing destinations it will allow students to get involved more than once during their four years at university if they so wish. In the first year it was decided to focus on southern England and a tour route was developed taking into consideration places of interest that would minimize long days of travel and maximize time spent in the places of historical and cultural interest. It was also felt that students would benefit from a rounded view of English life and as such a decision was taken to include various types of accommodation in a number of distinct locations including small towns, rural areas, larger cities and the capital, London.

The series of lectures took place from September to January during which the students learned about London with a focus on areas around the Thames, Windsor, with its royal history, and Eton with relevance to its

connection with the British public school education system. Following that, the course looked briefly at areas in the south west of England including places such as Stonehenge, and the mystery surrounding it. Focus then turned to Salisbury and the Cotswolds, for its importance in Britain's early economic development. Roman influences in Bath were discussed as well as the rise of the city to prominence in Georgian times. Finally the course focused on Oxford and the importance of eight centuries of the college system within the town, before returning once again to look at London and how it has become a magnet for modern tourism. Although all of these places carry with them hundreds of years of history, they are still 'living' and being lived in and as such their history is constantly being reinterpreted by each new generation. On the one hand, buildings and landscapes have changed very slowly over many years while, on the other, frequent changes in usage and design take place from decade to decade. This concept is very difficult to fully grasp in the confines of the classroom. Therefore Seikatsu Eigo 1b takes students to those places they have studied and allows them to experience, firsthand, the way in which the past and present mix together in order to create modern day British culture.

In February a small group of students undertook the first tour, which is outlined in detail below. The plan for following years includes lecture courses and tours to northern England and Scotland, Wales and Ireland, the south coast of England and northern France as well as possible trips to the eastern coast of the USA and Canada and New Zealand.

Prior to the tour being run, the places selected to be visited were thoroughly researched by the lecturers involved with a view to maximizing potential for seeing as many places as possible without exhausting the

participants. Hotels were also visited and chosen based on their location, comfort and traditional aspects. It was felt that by stopping for two nights in each place, guaranteeing the students a full day in each location, the benefits of concentrated study time would be maximized. The goal was to avoid a hectic traditional bus tour and allow the students free time at each destination to pursue their individual interests.

3. Background reasons for implementing the tour

Language is primarily a means to an end in that it is used to carry out certain functions in order to achieve particular goals. However, studying a language in a situation where it is rarely used outside the classroom can give it a sense of artificiality and can lead to students having a lack of confidence in their own abilities. This can lead to a reluctance to actually try out the language they have studied which in the end defeats the purpose of studying a language as it ceases to be a tool of communication. Consequently, a second and very important goal of Seikatsu Eigo 1b was to give students the chance to use the language they have acquired in an English speaking country. It was hoped that by doing this the students would be able to see how good their understanding of English had become and to give them the chance to use English in real life situations. It was not expected that the students would be able to perform faultlessly in English but it was hoped that the experience of having to use English for real communication would help them to realize where their weaknesses lie and consequently encourage them to improve their overall language skills.

Lastly, for the most part, students study with the students they enter with throughout their four years at university. However, Seikatsu Eigo 1a and 1b give students a rare opportunity to study with students from other year

groups. This is important as it changes the atmosphere within the classroom and broadens the range of experiences students can have by giving them an insight into how people they do not know think and the opinions they have. Furthermore, working with people from different age groups helps to develop the students' interpersonal skills which are vital for being successful in their future careers. In connection with this point, it was felt that giving the students a chance to deal with the unfamiliar situation of being abroad would also help with their personal development. Living, even for a brief period, in a foreign country allows one to reflect on aspects of one's own culture and upbringing both by seeing and experiencing how other cultures do familiar things and through getting a feel for how that culture views one's own. In addition, living in a new country and cultural environment requires a certain amount of personal strength and it was hoped that by travelling to and then spending two weeks in England would go some way to helping the students realize their own strengths in this respect.

4. Day by day summary of the Seikatsu 1b trip to England 2010

The trip to England took place over a period of thirteen days, including the time necessary to travel to and from Kagoshima via Tokyo. Consequently, the actual period spent in England was approximately ten days. The following section provides a day by day summary of the whole trip.

Days 1 and 2

The tour group left Kagoshima airport in the afternoon and took a flight to Haneda, transferring by limousine bus to Narita. It was decided that an overnight stop adjacent to Narita airport would lessen the tiredness experienced by students during the long haul travel and allow them to

arrive ready to start the tour from the first evening. The direct flight from Narita the following day arrived in London at 4pm local time. The group used the ATG (tour group exit) at Heathrow which saved a good deal of time in the overcrowded immigration hall. A minibus was on hand to transfer the group to their first stop in Windsor. The first hotel, a small sized guesthouse, was chosen for its proximity to the town centre and also as it represented a typical 19th century building. Benefitting from free internet access, it was a useful place from where students could email families and reassure them they had arrived safely in England. The first evening was spent with a short walk around the town as a group after dark in order for the students to get their bearings. A meal was taken in a local restaurant in order for the group to discuss the next day's plans and for initial group bonding to take place.

Day 3

Windsor Castle was the focus of the full day in this town. It was estimated that students would need at least three hours to see around the castle. In hindsight even this amount of time only allows a superficial view. An early start was made with the group entering the castle as the gates opened at 9:45am. Saint George's Chapel and the State Rooms left a great impression on the students and the audio commentaries (free and in various languages) allowed the students to really gain a deep insight to the exhibits on show and to the history within each area of the castle. As with all the various places visited in England, by showing their student cards the students were able to get a reduction of between ten and twenty percent.

The afternoon was given over to a short visit to Eton village. February is a month when the college is unfortunately not open to the general public, but nevertheless, the students can still gain a good appreciation of the

place and its unique history through a walk down the High Street from the Thames to the college itself. Many of the old fashioned shops cater to the Eton students and display uniforms, books and other items of interest associated with the development of the college. Students on the trip were actively engaged in connecting the knowledge they had of the place from lectures in Japan with the concrete details they could see before them. Many took the opportunity to climb the famous Eton Wall and gain a vantage point over the Wall game field towards the college and Windsor Castle in the background. By having lunch in one of the old traditional restaurants on the High Street, the group was able to soak up the atmosphere of the place before returning to Windsor on foot.

From there the students were free to further explore the Thames towpath leading towards the famous Brocas meadows or return for more sightseeing around the old central station in Windsor town. An option for the evening included a visit to the Theatre Royal, a wonderfully maintained old playhouse where the students had a chance to see a performance of a musical. The show chosen was a story that many of them already knew, so linguistically they did not feel overawed.

In the evening the students were recommended to buy food from a local supermarket and eat back at the hotel if they wished, rather than going to another restaurant. This was more satisfactory for some in financial terms. This cheaper option of dining in the evening was offered in a number of the towns on the tour and was popular not only due to the cost, but it also meant students could fully appreciate the cultural differences in food and other items on sale in the English supermarkets as well as getting used to handling local currency and using their language skills in real situations.

These experiences gave them much more confidence as the tour progressed.

Day 4

This day was the longest in terms of distance from Windsor to Bath via Stonehenge and Salisbury. However, the journey time was only about three hours in total for the hundred or so miles, and total mileage for the whole journey in the bus was under 350 miles over eleven days, so the students at no time felt as if they were just being bussed from one site of interest to the next. This was intentionally done. It was hoped by keeping distances to a minimum students could really take full advantage of feeling at ease and be sure to be full of energy to better utilize all the time in the various places. Each day included plenty of short walks that far from tiring the students out, gave them further energy to explore.

The highlights of this day were two stops at the World heritage site of Stonehenge and the market city of Salisbury with its immense cathedral. A nine o'clock start from the hotel was imperative in order to reach Stonehenge before mid morning. The advantages of doing so were two-fold. By arriving around 10a.m it was possible to see the monument before the larger bus groups arrived late in the morning. Students benefitted from being able to tour the site at their leisure. Again, they were able to use audio commentaries in Japanese, but it was pleasant to see that some students were already opting for the English language versions, as they already knew much about the site from earlier lectures and personal research back at university. A further reason for an early arrival being more beneficial is that the light in the early morning (and evening) is much more atmospheric, leading to a more fulfilling visit. Photos tend to have better light quality about them at this time of day, and the students had the added bonus of not

having to avoid huge groups of other visitors when taking their photographs.



(Picture 1 : Early morning light on a fine February day at Stonehenge)

Saturday was a good day to visit Salisbury Cathedral (only twenty minutes drive from Stonehenge). The market which has taken place here since the 13th century is held every week on this day and the students enjoyed the chance to watch street performers of various types, try out the local produce on sale and haggle with traders for unusual souvenirs. A walk through the old medieval part of the town brought the group to the cathedral and its wonderful setting on an expansive green. Lunch was taken in the modern café where, under a huge glass roof, diners can enjoy a wonderful view of the spire while eating and drinking.



(Picture 2: Salisbury Cathedral spire from the glass-roofed cafeteria)

The tower tour starts in winter at 2.15pm, so a later departure at around 4pm is best. Bath is only an hour away and once installed at the hotel, a minute's walk from the Abbey there was plenty of time for an evening stroll which gave the students an opportunity to get used to the central area and its Georgian buildings. The one drawback to this location on a Saturday night is that it is located close to many of the central pubs which tend to be lively until late in the evening. Noise can be a problem, but rooms were for the most part secured on the quieter back part of the hotel, and overall the students rated this hotel as one of the best on the trip.

Day 5

This day started with a pre-breakfast walk. Many of the students found it easy to get up very early due to the time difference of nine hours between Japan and England. As a result, the suggestion of a morning walk to build up an appetite for a large English breakfast and the chance to see the town while it was still quiet on a Sunday morning was eagerly taken by all the students. It was a perfect chance for students to appreciate the layout of the Georgian streets and many were impressed by places like Poultney Bridge with its rows of shops over the river itself. Breakfast back at the hotel included traditional English fare such as kippers, smoked salmon, poached eggs and porridge. Students were encouraged to immerse themselves culturally as much as possible throughout the trip, and the teachers constantly reminded them that it was worth pushing the bounds of their experience especially in the culinary sphere. The students responded very well and many were pleasantly surprised by how good much of the traditional cuisine was. During the tour of the trip they tasted food such as goat's cheese, guinea fowl, pie and mash, lamb and black pudding. The fact that over the course of the trip, the food that was disparaged the most was a plate of 'sushi', bought in a local supermarket, shows how it is better to get students to be adventurous and not rely on what they think is comfortable. In the end, the sushi was of such poor quality that it was used as a forfeit for the loser in a game of cards, much to the amusement of the group.

Bath has so many places of interest within easy walking distance that it was decided students should plan their own itineraries and join with one of the teachers for a morning, before setting off to discover the parts of the town that were relevant for them personally. One group visited the Romans Baths first while another set off for the Royal Crescent and the Jane Austen

Museum. The whole group met up mid afternoon for a traditional afternoon tea at the famous Pump Room. The students enjoyed the experience of taking tea and cakes while listening to live classical music, a combination that was not something they had taken part in before.

By the late afternoon, many of the students had obviously worked out the geography of the small city very well, and felt confident to go out jogging round the area near the hotel, including the banks of the Avon river. The extent to which they reverted to familiar patterns so quickly in new surroundings, suggested that they were feeling little strain in terms of being in a different cultural environment.

Day 6

This day represented a departure from the more common tour schedule of famous towns with equally well-known sightseeing spots. The idea was to show students, many of whom come from predominantly urban backgrounds, the rural side of life in England by focusing on village life in the Cotswolds. A key part to this section of the tour was the two night stop on a working farm. Initially it had been hard to convince tour agents in Japan of the worth of booking this kind of accommodation in the winter off season, but the lecturers involved were convinced that such a stay would allow students to experience many valuable insights into a side of English life they could not experience just from visiting larger places.

During the day a number of small Cotswold villages and hamlets were visited. The use of a minibus, able to negotiate the small country lanes with ease, was a real bonus at this point of the tour. The little hamlet of Bibury with its traditional limestone cottages and precious water meadows started

off the day. With snow on the ground and in the air, the atmosphere of the place was heightened and the students were able to experience firsthand a true winter's day in the countryside. In Bourton on the Water they even managed a snowball fight and took time to build a snowman, close to the old ford in which they took a great interest. Although this section of the tour is more weather dependent than any other, with imagination an ideal itinerary can be arranged to suit even the most inclement of days.



(Picture 3: Students in Bibury village, Cotswolds)

Traditional food for lunch at the King's Head Inn in Bledington allowed the students to taste country style food of extremely high quality. Locally sourced dishes were very good and by eating at a traditional country pub, the students were able to understand more easily the concept of the public house as social centre of the village, with its roaring fires, family lunches and local teams in traditional sports like darts.

Further stops in the bustling communities of Burford and Chipping Norton rounded off the day, and after good walks in the crisp cold weather the students enjoyed arriving at their comfortable farm stay accommodation. The chance to stay in a converted pigsty was a rare one, and by following the farm trails, well laid out by the owners, the students could enjoy feeding horses, goats, sheep and ducks, as they got their bearings on this typical rural Cotswolds farm.

Day 7

The morning was spent traveling to Stratford upon Avon via way of Moreton in Marsh. A short stop at Moreton allowed students to enjoy the local market (smaller than Salisbury) and have a chance to use the banking system as they changed money. This was a good experience for them, having to deal with very local accents in a situation that can be stressful for some students abroad as it involves passports and mathematical calculations. By late morning the group arrived in Stratford for a half day stop. Another long walk around the town allowed the students to see the River Avon, the stage at the Courtyard Theatre, several of the historic houses connected with Shakespeare, as well as time for an inside visit to his birthplace itself. Many of the students have studied a great deal throughout their school and university careers about the bard, and were able at last to put together the

pieces of their incomplete historical and cultural jigsaw about him and his time, and as such they seemed to get a great deal of satisfaction from the visit.

The evening back at the farm was a quiet one where the students were happy to relax in cosy surroundings in a quiet rural area that was very different to the other places for overnight accommodation on the tour. Many of them commented on how much they enjoyed the unusual experience.

Day 8

Another early morning walk gave the group a chance to chat about the previous day and outline plans for the upcoming one. The first place to be visited was Woodstock, close to Oxford and the site of Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Winston Churchill. It was decided that as there was insufficient time to see around the palace, a walk in the grounds on a public right of way would be more beneficial. The public right of way affords people the chance to appreciate the estate and vistas of the palace without having to pay overly high entrance fees. Many of the locals often use the paths, but most tour groups are shunted around the front of the palace and as such have no knowledge that there is a cheaper and more peaceful alternative. From this route our students were able to enjoy the parkland up to the famous obelisk, as well as seeing up close great sheep herds and pheasants. The fact that we entered the park through a “secret” entrance made the experience more unusual for the students.

After the walk, morning coffee was taken in the King’s Arms in Woodstock before the bus drove on to Oxford. The students settled into the B&B close to the centre. The Falcon was the fourth hotel that the group

stayed in and is situated on the Abingdon Road, about twenty minute's walk from the centre of Oxford. Abingdon Road is one of the main roads from the south leading into Oxford city centre so during working hours the road is fairly busy. Nevertheless, despite being almost directly on the road, very little traffic noise could be heard once inside the hotel itself.

As with the other hotels the group had stayed in, a variety of rooms had been reserved. All the rooms were clean and fairly spacious. Each room had a television, central heating and tea and coffee making facilities. For the most part the students seemed satisfied with the hotel, though there was a small problem with getting sufficient hot water for showers particularly later at night.

After the students had had a chance to acclimatize they took a leisurely walk around some of the key areas of the city. By doing so, they found it much easier to get around the following day. A late lunch was taken in the famous covered market where the pie and mash café was a great hit. Its award winning meals, cheap and delicious were enjoyed by many of the students.

In the evening, it was decided to take the students to visit one of Oxford's many historic public houses. The place chosen was called The Eagle and Child situated in St. Giles and known locally as the 'Bird and Baby'. The main reason for visiting The Eagle and Child was to show the students the place where the writers of *The Narnia Chronicles* (C. S. Lewis) and *The Lord of the Rings* (J. R. R. Tolkien) met every Tuesday morning to discuss each other's current works. This group became known as the Inklings and met in The Rabbit room in The Eagle and Child. The Rabbit

room contains photographs of the writers and also a signed paper by C. S. Lewis, Tolkien and other 'Inklings'. Again it was hoped that the students would be able to feel the atmosphere of a traditional English public house where there was an open wood-burning fire, hand-pulled beer pumps and oak beam framework.

Day 9

As with the other hotels the students had stayed in, The Falcon offered a traditional English breakfast. After breakfast, the students visited Christ Church College. It took about fifteen minutes to walk from the hotel up Abingdon Road, over Folly Bridge (straddling the River Thames, known locally as the Isis) and then on to St. Aldates where the entrance to Christ Church College is situated. To enter the college itself, visitors go through the gate, past the war memorial garden, towards Christ Church meadows leading directly to the front of Christ Church Cathedral. Originally started by Cardinal Wolsey, Christ Church College was founded in 1546 by Henry VIII and completed as a royal foundation which it remains so today.

The point of interest for the students was the Dining Hall. The dining hall was completed in 1529 and contains many portraits of famous people associated with Christ Church College. At the head of the hall in the centre there is a large portrait of Henry VIII who appears to be watching over both students and teachers as they eat their meals. The dining hall also contains a number of stained glass windows. One contains paintings of Cardinal Wolsey whilst another contains characters from Lewis Carroll's (Charles Dodgson) book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



(Picture 4: Stained glass windows of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Christ Church College, Oxford)

Though the dining hall contains a wealth of history dating from the Tudor period, perhaps the main reason the students wanted to visit there was because it was used in the first two *Harry Potter* films. Certainly, as soon as you enter the hall, it does feel as if you have entered into a very different world.

In order to fully enjoy a visit to Christ Church College, students need at least two hours. Therefore, as the college is open to visitors from 9:30am a visit here will take most of the morning. It would also be good for students to take a walk through Christ Church meadows down to the River Thames

and, for the energetic, to go on around to the River Cherwell and finally come back through Merton Field taking them towards Oxford city centre. However, this would require at least a further thirty minutes to one hour.

On leaving Christ Church College, the students walked down Merton Street, passed Merton College and the Exam Schools building towards the High Street. The group then walked down Cattle Street passing by the Radcliffe Camera and on towards the Sheldonian on Broad Street. For a minimal cost of £ 2 (£1.50 for students) most of the group climbed up to the top of the Sheldonian tower to get a roof top view of Oxford's 'dreaming spires'. Although the sky was a little overcast, it was possible to see most of the city and the students enjoyed taking photographs of Oxford from above. Returning to the ground floor, the students also looked inside the auditorium of the Sheldonian. The auditorium is circular with tiered seating all around. The Sheldonian is used both for musical performances and also for Oxford University's graduation ceremony. Students were impressed by the building and enjoyed their brief visit there.

After lunch most the group visited the recently renovated Ashmolean museum. It was estimated that the students would need two hours to look around the museum, but in retrospect at least three hours would be better to take full benefit of the exhibits on display. The museum contains six floors in total and each floor contains exhibits based around a common theme rather than a particular location. Perhaps of most interest to the students were the exhibits of Japanese paintings and artifacts. One student was asked to complete a questionnaire about her impression of the Ashmolean and although she felt unable to express herself fully, she did feel pleased that she had been able to talk with one of the museum staff.

In the evening, most of the students returned to the Sheldonian to hear a performance of various pieces of classical music (Brahms, Wagner and Saint Saens) given by students from different Oxford Colleges. The tickets cost a mere £ 5 (about ¥800) for a two hour concert. This was a wonderful opportunity for the students to see firsthand how other undergraduates were spending time during their university days. They were very impressed by the skill levels of many of the performers and the evening left an indelible impression on them.

Day 10

The group got up early in order to take the opportunity to see the college rowing teams practising on the Thames just below Folly Bridge. Unfortunately, the morning was a little overcast with light drizzle falling. Nevertheless, the students were impressed to see the college rowing teams receiving instruction from their coaches who rode on bicycles to keep up with boats as they moved down the river. Certainly, this was a sight that few students had seen before and one that they would be unlikely to see almost anywhere else with the possible exception of a visit to Cambridge in East Anglia.

Breakfast was taken early and the group left The Falcon promptly at 8.30am. The Ready Bus coach took the group into London calling firstly at Hampton Court Palace. The drive from Oxford to Hampton Court Palace took close to an hour and ten minutes. On arriving at Hampton Court Palace most of the students chose to look around inside the palace while the rest decided to spend time walking in the palace gardens. Partly this was for economic reasons as it cost the students £11.50 (full price £14) to enter the palace whereas entry to the gardens cost £ 4 (£4.60). Inside, the students

first went to the information desk located off Clock Court to pick up the tour guide players. Whilst these were useful, providing commentary in various languages, it was felt that the information provided was nowhere near as thorough as that for Windsor Castle and for the most part the group simply followed the tour route and read the information supplied beside the exhibits. This was a slight disappointment as the guides provided at Windsor Castle had given both useful and interesting commentary. Nevertheless, the interior of Hampton Court was very impressive as befitted the hopes of the original owners, Cardinal Wolsey, and subsequently in 1529, Henry VIII. The students were able to take photographs of most of the rooms and the portraits and furnishings they contained. The only exception to this was the Royal Chapel where photography was not allowed. Perhaps the highlight of the visit to Hampton Court Palace was the appearance of 'Henry VIII' giving the chance to have photographs taken standing beside him.



(Picture 5: Student posing with Henry VIII, Hampton Court Palace)

The students spent just over an hour looking around the palace. This was because the group needed to check-in to the next hotel in Kensington by early afternoon. However, to really see both inside the Palace and to walk around the gardens, at least two and a half to three hours are needed. Nevertheless, the students thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the Palace.

Although the distance from Hampton Court Palace to the Copthorne Tara Hotel was not very far, the drive, due to traffic congestion took almost an hour. Despite this the check-in proceeded smoothly and the students were able to put their bags in their rooms by early afternoon. Unlike previously where the students had shared rooms with each other, some single room accommodation was available. Once the students had put their bags in their rooms, the group set off for central London. The Copthorne Tara Hotel was within a very short distance of Kensington High Street providing the option of taking the underground, buses or walking into London. As the weather was fine, it was decided to walk down Kensington High Street and into Hyde Park. This allowed students to become acquainted with the area in which they would be staying and gave them a chance to take photographs of the various famous buildings and monuments in Hyde Park such as the Albert Memorial. The group left Hyde Park at Prince of Wales Gate and then took the number 9 bus up to Piccadilly Circus. The number 9 route retains the historic 'routemaster' bus, so beloved by many Londoners. It was felt that as this was the students first visit to central London, it would be better if they remained together as group, so a late lunch was eaten at Wong Kei's in China Town in Soho. This also gave the students a chance to taste the English interpretation of Chinese cuisine.

The day drew to a close with some students remaining in central London

in order to watch a performance of Stomp at the Ambassadors Theatre on West Street just off the famous Shaftesbury Avenue in London's West End. A performance of dance containing only one act, this proved to be very popular. The remaining students decided to return with one of the teachers to the hotel for a quiet evening after a busy day's sightseeing.

Day 11

The Copthorne Tara Hotel provided a buffet style breakfast but offered much the same choices as had been available at the other hotels. After an early breakfast, the whole group set off again for central London to see, firstly, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge. As on the previous day the students had used London's red double-decker buses, it was felt that the students should try to use London's 'tube'. The journey was very straightforward despite requiring a change of platforms at Earl's Court station. The journey across from Kensington to the Tower took about thirty minutes in total. Unfortunately, whereas the previous day the weather had remained dry, this morning there was light rain and a fairly strong breeze. Nevertheless, the group enjoyed a walk around the outside of the Tower and onto London Bridge. It was felt unnecessary to go inside the Tower as students had already visited both Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace so the entrance fee of £17 could not be justified and neither did the students want to spare the time to look around inside, as each had many other plans for the day.

Consequently, the group again took the tube from Tower Bridge to Westminster. Here the students were able to see both the Houses of Parliament and the clock tower containing Big Ben and the outside of Westminster Abbey. The group arrived just before 11am and, due to the

weather, after hurriedly taking some photographs on Westminster Bridge, looking towards the Houses of Parliament, they were lucky to hear Big Ben striking 11 o'clock. The group then walked up Whitehall passed Horse Guards' Parade, where they were able to have their photograph taken standing next to sentries sitting upon their horses. This again provided the students with another memorable experience. Whitehall, as the centre of administration for the British government, allowed the students to see such famous places as Downing Street (now unfortunately giving only access to invited guests of the Prime Minister) and buildings connected with the Admiralty.

Finally the students arrived at Trafalgar Square and were able to see Nelson's Column with the Lions at its base. From there the students had a short lunch break at the cafeteria inside the National Gallery. It was felt that by this time the students were sufficiently confident to be able to divide into smaller groups and chose the places that they wanted to see. Most students took this opportunity to visit the National Portrait Gallery (which is situated just behind the National Gallery on Charing Cross Road), the British Museum and Covent Garden. The students found this a very fulfilling experience both in terms of the exhibits they were able to see in the various museums (most of which were free to enter) and in that they succeeded in moving safely around London by themselves.

The group met back at the hotel in the evening before going together for a final evening meal together at a restaurant on Kensington High Street. Both the food provided and the atmosphere in the restaurant enabled the whole group to celebrate its final night in London.



(Picture 6: Trafalgar Square, London looking towards Westminster)

Day 12

The students had been told that they were free to spend the morning doing whatever they liked and as such, despite the weather which again

was wet, most students went back into central London. In addition, whereas before most had visited places with a partner, this time most students decided to visit places alone. The places the students went to included Harrods, which was described as being 'expensive', the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum and the National History Museum. Again the students felt that they had been able to see things they had not had the chance to see before in Japan.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the group met together in the hotel lobby to collect luggage and await the arrival of the Ready Bus coach. The coach arrived punctually at 3 pm and by 3.45pm the group had arrived at Terminal 3 to check-in for the long-haul flight back to Japan.

Day 13

The flight from Heathrow left about twenty minutes late but as with the outward flight everything went smoothly and the aeroplane arrived just after 3 pm local time in Japan, about forty-five minutes ahead of schedule. There were no problems at immigration and all the students' belongings arrived safely at the baggage claim area. Consequently, the students were able to arrive at Haneda just before 6 pm, giving them about forty minutes to do some final shopping before returning to Kagoshima.

Finally the group arrived safely back at Kagoshima airport at 9 pm where they were met by the students' parents and the representative from Kinki Nihon Tourist company, formally bringing the trip to an end. The group then separated to return by themselves to their homes.

5. Students' comments from their diaries.

"Thanks to you, I could have a great experience on this trip. I'll never forget it. Thank you so much."

"Thank you for a wonderful trip. It was the first time for me to go abroad. I could experience a lot of culture, foods, and living style in the U.K."

"The Abbey Hotel was the favourite hotel because of its location and large comfortable rooms."

"The most popular sites included Stonehenge, St. George's Chapel, the Roman Baths, the Ashmolean Museum and the British Museum."

"By going off alone some days you can get confidence in your English by speaking with local people."

"When I walked around Eton and saw all the traditional buildings, I wished I were an English boy and a student of the college."

"Stonehenge was attractive because of the mystery surrounding it which is not completely solved."

"At Blenheim Palace gardens there were many pheasants and sheep and it was very silent. I felt time went slowly which was good and I realized lots of people are in a rush in Japan, but we need time to relax and see nature and animals."

"At Christ Church I felt I was in a Harry Potter movie."

"While I was looking around the Ashmolean Museum a man who worked there asked me to answer a questionnaire. I was surprised and it was a good chance for me to use English."

"I hadn't intended to go inside Hampton Court but it looked attractive so I went round. It was very different to looking at a text book or a brochure and I could feel a real sense of history."

"At St. George's Chapel, we saw a lot of stained glass which was amazing. Although we're not Christians, it was so peaceful. In Japan we don't walk

on someone's grave but most people walked over the stones covering the graves in the chapel. It was very weird. I'm very interested in the Tudor period so when I saw Henry VIII's portraits I was so impressed."

"On Sunday many shops don't open until noon which is very different to Japan.

Hampton Court Palace was amazing. I met Henry VIII and had my picture taken with him. I was so lucky."

"Some of my friends said that English food does not suit the Japanese but I didn't think so. It was delicious. I even tried goat's cheese which was great."

"At the Fashion Museum we tried on corsets and hats. The corsets were really tight but we really enjoyed the visit."

"We went to the bank to change Japanese yen into pounds. It wasn't so difficult.

Walking around in England is so much fun. You can always find beautiful views, historic buildings and lots of dogs."

"In each hotel room there's a nice radiator so it's warm and a good place to dry clothes. I watched a movie in the Odeon cinema. The movie theatre was different to Japanese ones but the cost was cheaper."

"I didn't know musicals and plays were so famous in London. I wasn't so interested in them so I didn't go to a theatre. However, my friends told me it was really great so I'd like to see something when I go next time."

"At first I didn't know how to use the tube in London, but within a day I felt confident using it."

"Stonehenge was great. It was bigger than I thought. The ancient people who made it had constructed it very well."

"Having afternoon tea in the pump room was very relaxing. We had tea and cakes while listening to nice music. It put us in a good mood."

“The Cotswolds was a very quiet place. I live in the countryside too so I could remember my home town and feel relaxed.”

“On the farm there were lots of animals to see and we could feed them. Our accommodation was in an old converted pig sty with lots of pictures of pigs on the walls.”

6. Proposals for the future

Overall, as can be seen from the students' comments in the previous section, the trip can be considered to have been a success. Nevertheless, a number of points need to be considered in order to ensure the success of future trips:

- All students should buy a reputable guide book on the areas to be visited.
- All students should pack a waterproof jacket and small travel umbrella.
Try to arrange the visit to London on a weekday to avoid the larger crowds.
- Students who do not take Seikatsu Eigo 1a need to carefully research into what they would like to do in each place they will visit before leaving Japan.
- Students should be given a very rough estimate of the amount of money they will need for the whole trip. As an example, for 2010 with an exchange rate of ¥140 to the pound, 20 pounds covered lunch and dinner costs each day. Entrance fees to the various places visited ranged from 5 to 15 pounds. In addition, students should be encouraged to bring traveller's Cheques with them rather than taking significant amounts of Japanese bank notes.
- Entrance fees for at least Windsor Castle and possibly Hampton Court

Palace should be included in the total tour cost. Also, money to cover one or two evening meals should be included in the tour cost so that all students can partake fully in a final evening meal in London without having to worry about the cost.

- After checking in to the hotel in Narita airport, it would be good for group morale to have a meal together. This will also allow for an opportunity to make arrangements for leaving the hotel on the following day in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.
- It is important to ensure that the tour company representative makes a prior seat reservation so that the whole group can sit together on the flights to and from Japan.
- Overall the hotel locations were suitable. However, in the case of Oxford it may be useful to try to find an hotel slightly nearer to the city centre.
- As far as possible, rooms on either the ground floor or first floor should be reserved at the Falcon Hotel to ensure a regular supply of hot water.
- Sufficient time should be allowed for looking around the Ashmolean museum. To help with this, class time in Seikatsu Eigo 1a could be used to introduce the students to the extent of the collections in the museum.
- A trip to Hampton Court Palace, with the option of either going inside or only visiting the gardens, should be taken on-route from Oxford to Kensington. This will allow for both a fulfilling visit to the Palace and enough time for an afternoon in central London.
- Students should be encouraged to visit more of the museums near to the hotel in Kensington.
- If possible, it might be useful to extend the trip by one day to give students more time in London or to shorten the stay in one of the other places in order to extend the time spent looking around London.