

# An Historical and Cultural Tour to England 2011

: Expansion of the Seikatsu Eigo Programme at Junshin University.

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## 1. General Introduction

This paper is an update concerning the ongoing Seikatsu Eigo Programme currently being run through the Department of Languages and Culture at Kagoshima Immaculate Heart (Junshin) University in Satsumasendai City, Kagoshima Prefecture in Southern Kyushu. It will focus on aspects of the 2011 Historical and Cultural tour to England, the second of its kind, which took place between February 20<sup>th</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup> 2011. The trip was open to members of the Language and Culture Department and was undertaken as part of a course designed to expand students' historical and cultural knowledge as well as creating a platform for use of English in natural settings. The itinerary was basically the same as in 2010 but with minor adjustments made to the schedule based on feedback from last year's participants and the findings of the accompanying teachers. Changing the tour itinerary every other year was seen as the best way of allowing for a more beneficial programme of taught lectures and creating a vibrant tour abroad through in depth planning over the two years.

In contrast to the first trip in 2010, this year's group was made up of not only University students, but also a group from the English Department

at Junshin College who were finishing their two year programme at that establishment.

As a result, the group was split between students who had studied a one semester course aimed specifically at giving them a deeper understanding of the places they were to visit on the tour, and a second group who had not participated in this course, but had taken part in a broader series of lectures on British studies prior to the trip.

By looking day by day at their reaction to the tour we hoped to find out if improvements made to the 2010 itinerary had been successful, as well as determining the extent to which the two groups differed in terms of the experiences they took from the trip given their differing pre-tour class work and their somewhat different academic backgrounds.

## **2. Review of steps taken in setting up the tour**

As has previously been stated, in the 2008-9 academic year it was decided to offer students 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, colleges and world heritage sites on route. The goals in this academic year remained constant, as the success of the 2010 February trip made it clear that the programme was appealing to students.

The idea behind the course 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 2010-11, all the students from the University who joined the tour took the taught course as well. By inviting students from Junshin College to participate in the tour, it meant that almost half the participants would be joining the trip abroad without having undertaken the series of lectures given specifically for that purpose. However, all these students had within the last year completed a month home stay programme in Australia, as well as following a general course at their college in British Studies.

Every other 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 second year it was decided to focus again on southern England and the first tour route was re-developed slightly taking into consideration information that had been gleaned during the first trip that would help to improve the tour even further. As in the previous year, it was also felt that students would benefit from a rounded view of English life and as such a decision was taken to stay in various types of accommodation in a number of distinct locations including small towns, rural areas, larger cities and the capital, London.

At the University, a 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 to the British public school education system. After the success of the visit to Windsor Castle in 2010, greater emphasis was placed on an understanding of the castle's history and role in everyday life in Windsor in modern times. 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 its cathedral where students were encouraged to take part in the tour of its impressive spire. 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. This section of the course seemed particularly attractive to this year's group of students, and further development of similar themes is intended for 2011-12. 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 the taught Seikatsu Eigo A course 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 order to help the students from the college who had had no chance to participate in this taught aspect of the course, a number of meetings took

place during the six months prior to the trip between one accompanying teacher and the group intending to travel. At these question and answer sessions, most of the key information on the tour schedule and itinerary was explained in greater detail. While not compensating entirely for them having missed the taught course, it did allow students at the college to get a basic understanding of the goals behind the trip and a rudimentary knowledge of the places to be visited on tour.

### 3. A day by day comparison between trips to England in 2010 and 2011

The following section provides a day by day comparison of the events and the students' responses observed on the trips made in 2010 and 2011.

#### Days 1 and 2 (Sunday and Monday)

Once again the tour group met at Kagoshima airport and this time the group was able to check-in for both the domestic and long haul flight at the ANA counter there. This both saved a lot of time and enabled the whole



(Picture 1: Leaving Narita)

group to have seats close to one another. The group spent the night at the Narita Rest House hotel which was the same as last year. Although it was good for the students to have a full night's rest before beginning the long haul flight to Heathrow, it was felt that the hotel itself was showing its age. In particular, the facilities seemed to be suffering from the wear and tear of the years and restaurant did not provide sufficient variety to warrant eating there. As a result, the whole group ate at the restaurants within Narita airport.

The following day, the direct flight from Narita arrived in London at approximately the same time as last year. However, there were two major differences this year, in that, firstly, the ATG (tour group exit) at Heathrow had been closed and so the whole group had to wait in line with everyone else to clear immigration. Whilst this did not require a particularly long time, the behaviour and attitude of the Heathrow staff did not provide the welcoming first impression that was desired. Instead, many of the staff came across as being unfriendly and impatient, especially with people who had a limited ability in English. Secondly, as the tickets to Windsor Castle had been prepaid, a representative from Kintetsu Travel (the sister company of Kinki Nippon Travel) was waiting for the group in the arrivals hall. It was thought that the representative would simply hand over the tickets and then leave the group, but in fact the representative attempted to take control of organising the whole departure from the airport despite being unable to contact the Ready Bus driver (which had already been done) . So it was felt that in future wherever possible the prepaid tickets should be sent to Japan well in advance to avoid complications after a long flight. After departing from Heathrow, the group went to their first hotel in Windsor, the Clarence Hotel, which was the same as last year. This year, because the group was

larger, the students were split between triple and twin rooms. The triple rooms were at the top of the building which meant carrying suitcases up the fairly narrow staircase. The twin rooms were on the first floor and comfortable though not spacious. As with last year, the first evening was spent with a short walk around the town, to allow the group to get a feel for the place, and a meal at a local restaurant.

### Day 3 (Tuesday)

Following breakfast, the group left the hotel at 9.30am in order to reach Windsor Castle as it opened at 9.45am. Pre-booking the entry tickets



(Picture 2: Windsor Castle with guard)

made for a very smooth entrance into the castle. The group this year was particularly lucky to be able to see firsthand the changing of the guard, an ancient British ritual, which takes place on Tuesdays. Based on last years' experience, plenty of time had been allocated for the visit to Windsor Castle and this was used to the full. However, one notable difference this year was the group as a whole was younger and so enjoyed looking around St George's Chapel and the Castle's State Apartments, but did not require so many background historical details. Bearing this in mind, a walk along the Long Walk might be an interesting alternative to spending time only within the Castle.

In the afternoon the group walked out to Eton village. Although it was not expected that the group would be able to see inside the college, this year the students were lucky to be able to see some of the college boys walking along the road in their school uniforms. In addition, when the group arrived at the wall by the playing fields, they were able to see the boys playing for the famous Eton wall game.

After returning to Windsor town centre, the students were given two hours to look around and explore. As was expected, the students split into three main groups and most spent their time looking around the shops. An important difference this year was that there was no plan to spend the evening at the theatre. This was for two reasons. Firstly, the show available at the theatre was not something that would appeal to the students and secondly, because, as most people were suffering from jet lag, it would be a waste of money to pay for the show and possibly sleep through it.

Taking note of the experiences of last year, the students were



recommended to buy food from a local supermarket and take it back to eat at the hotel rather than going to another restaurant. Most students seemed to be happy with this option, though one group did choose to eat at an Italian restaurant which had a special offer.

#### **Day 4 (Wednesday)**

Unfortunately, whereas last year the weather, despite being cold had remained dry, this year, it was both cold and wet. Consequently, the visit to Stonehenge was less picturesque than it was last year. Although Stonehenge itself is unquestionably an atmospheric place in beautiful surroundings, the group this year was unfortunate to arrive at the same time as a party of young French students and so was not able to have the monument to themselves. Perhaps it was due to the weather conditions, but the students did not really make use of the audio commentaries available to them as they walked around the monument. This is something the accompanying staff should encourage the students to do.

The tour group arrived in Salisbury by midday and walked through the North gate to the Cathedral. As the group was visiting on a Wednesday, it was not possible to see the market which is usually held every week on a Saturday and so the group went straight to Cathedral café. It would have been interesting for the students to take a walk around Salisbury to see the mixture of modern and historical buildings but the weather was such to make this a not very pleasant experience. However, a group of students was able to join the 1.15pm Cathedral tour (£6.50 as opposed to the full £8.50 price for adults) which included a climb up the Cathedral's spire. The remaining students were given time to walk around the city centre and again spent most of their time visiting the shops and looking at the buildings

and different kinds of architecture. In fact, it was felt that given the interest of Salisbury, in the future it would be worth considering a longer stay here especially on days when the weather makes a longer stay at Stonehenge impossible. The students who had climbed the spire seemed to have appreciated the opportunity and although one student had found the height of the spire worrying this had provided a valuable cultural opportunity for getting to know other people who had also taken the Cathedral tour.

The group left Salisbury just before 4pm and arrived in Bath about an hour later. In order to encourage greater unity within the group as whole, the students had drawn lots to change their room partners. This was a useful thing to do as it helped to let the students get to know each other. Again the rooms at the Bath Abbey Hotel for the students were triples and twins. The Bath Abbey Hotel is contained within an old Georgian building but is well maintained and well decorated in keeping with its surroundings in a Regency style. All the students seemed to be pleased both with the hotel and their rooms. As with Windsor, it was felt that an early evening walk would provide a good opportunity for the students to get a feel for both the city and surroundings and so the group walked through the Abbey Churchyard, down Westgate Street and into Kingsmead Square. Walking at this time also gave the students a chance to think about how the city must have been in the eighteenth century when it lacked street lighting and helped to bring home the importance of looking for landmarks to help them navigate themselves around the city. The group divided for the evening meal with one group visiting a local pub whilst the other experienced an English Chinese meal. Overall, the students enjoyed the Chinese food, though, the use of long-grain rice meant that it had a different taste and texture to the rice they are used to eating in Japan. In addition, despite

being able to see the kanji which described the dishes, the English version of the food they ordered allowed the students to experience English food preferences. Following the meal, the groups returned back to the hotel for an early night as it was stressed that the next day would be involve a lot of walking in order to be able to see as many of the things that Bath has to offer as possible.

### **Day 5 (Thursday)**

By now the students were beginning their third full day in England. For most of them jet lag was beginning to wear off, so about half of the group came down for breakfast later than on previous days. Nevertheless, some students were still waking early in the morning, though this did not seem to be causing too many problems. It was noted that many of the students were choosing to eat a full English breakfast and were clearly enjoying this part of the traditional English diet. Some students even tried to eat 'black pudding' (dried pigs' blood) though this was not to everyone's taste.

Unlike last year, the day did not start with a pre-breakfast walk, instead the whole group left to look at some of Bath's famous sights together. It was hoped that the students would really take the opportunity to see one of England's most beautiful cities fully and appreciate the difference between a carefully planned city and one that had grown up naturally over time, such as Windsor. To show this, the group walked up High Street, along Upper Borough Walls and Milsom Street to George Street before turning right into Gay Street and so to The Circus. This route took the students along some of the most famous parts of Bath, many of which are associated with not only the most famous architects who worked in Bath but also with Jane Austen and her novels. It was pointed out to the students that whilst many of the

building facades followed a strict classical form the rears of the buildings followed no particular pattern allowing each builder to show off his own personality. The reason for this approach was that John Wood, the first main architect to work in Bath, had a vision of recreating a city along the lines of classical Roman architecture. Ultimately this style became the main style of the Georgian period. From The Circus, the students went on to see the Royal Crescent and enjoyed the sunshine whilst walking through the Royal Victorian Park.



(Picture 3: The Royal Crescent, Bath)

After leaving the Royal Crescent, the whole group moved onto Bartlett Street to visit the Assembly Rooms and the Fashion Museum (£7.25 full price admission) . Many of the students had expressed an interest in fashion and so they were looking forward to seeing the displays housed in the museum. Last year, students who visited the museum had enjoyed looking

around and had spent time trying on eighteenth and nineteenth century style clothes. However, this year despite all the students going inside, only a few students tried on the clothes. Whilst the displays showed clothes from different eras, with some particularly good exhibits of twentieth century styles, there did not seem to be as much opportunity for interaction as last year and there was both an absence of staff and explanation of the exhibits. As such, it would be important to carefully check before suggesting a repeat visit.

After leaving the Assembly Rooms, the students were given time to look around Bath by themselves. They were encouraged to not go to places alone but to walk around with a partner or in small groups. Although it was close to midday, as this was their first real opportunity to spend a period of hours away from a teacher it was felt to be wise to err on the side of caution. For the most part the students spent their free time looking around the shopping areas around the Abbey Churchyard, however, two students, at different times did visit the Jane Austen Centre on Gay Street. The centre is contained within the building Austen lived in with her mother after her father had died. Entry to the museum cost £7.45 (full admission) . The visit began with a short introduction to Austen's life and her time in Bath (this was supplemented by a short video on displays in the main rooms) given by one of the centre's staff. Afterwards, people were free to walk through the rooms of the house which showed how Austen may have lived and examples of some of the clothes she and her contemporaries would have worn. Unfortunately, unlike last year, there was no member of staff on hand dressed as Mr Darcy!

Similarly to last year, the whole group met up again in the afternoon

for a traditional afternoon tea at the Pump Room. This year the Pump Room seemed particularly full due, in all likelihood, to the local schools being on holiday. Nevertheless, the whole group was able to sit around one table and the students enjoyed the experience of taking tea and cakes (£9.25 for a cream tea and £17.50 for a full afternoon tea) while listening to a solo pianist, a combination that was not something they had taken part in before.

Overall, the full day in Bath seemed to have been popular with the students and they all enjoyed their free time walking around the city, watching street performers, looking at the buildings and parks and, of course, shopping. The day closed with all the students opting to buy food in a local supermarket and eating together in their hotel rooms.

### **Day 6 (Friday)**

As with last year, the next two days' events centred on getting a taste of life in rural England. Unfortunately, again the weather had turned from the cold but clear skies of the previous day back to being cold, grey and, by midday, drizzling rain. The drive gave everyone the chance to see some beautiful rolling countryside with lots of small villages nestling on the hillsides. Although each village had the common theme of the limestone buildings, each had its own character as well.

The first place that we stopped at was Cirencester. Cirencester was chosen in part because of its long history (dating back to the Roman era in Britain) and also because it has daily markets. Last year, the students saw two markets and it was hoped that Cirencester would be able to provide an interesting out-door market for them to see this year, but in reality it proved to be a disappointment with only a few stalls selling very mundane hardware

items. Nevertheless, the students did discover an indoor market selling an array of antiques and memorabilia. After milling around the market, the group took morning tea in a local café which also specialized in local cheeses. Hot chocolate and tea proved a welcome break from the cold temperatures outside. So feeling refreshed, the group headed to its next stop.

After a twenty-minute drive, the bus arrived in Bibury. Once off the bus the group followed the public footpaths beside the water meadows to Arlington Row. This is perhaps one of the most iconic views of the Cotswolds and the students enjoyed taking pictures of themselves in front of the cottages. It is surprising that when these buildings were first built they were associated with rural poverty and hardship but now constitute some of the most sought after properties in Britain.

After leaving Bibury, the group went on to Burford to have lunch in the garden centre. Last year the students had eaten lunch in a country pub, but partly because this years' group were younger and also due to the cost it was felt that the garden centre café was a more appropriate choice. The food at the café was basic but good and reasonably priced (meals ranged from £4.50 to £8) . The garden centre itself also gave the students a chance to appreciate the British traditional past-time of gardening. The centre sells everything from out-door furniture and seeds to various kinds of local produce. It was a shame that the students were unable to sample any of these local products.

The final scheduled stop before reaching the next two nights' accommodation was in Bourton-on-the-Water. This is another frequently visited village in the Cotswolds and again because the schools were on

holiday it was quite busy. Nevertheless, the students were able to walk around the town crossing over the small stream that runs through the village. Although the weather was far from pleasant, it was hoped that the students would take this opportunity to walk around and look at the buildings and play with the wildlife beside the stream.

The group reached Banbury Hill Farm at about 4pm and as it was still light the students were able to see all the farm buildings before settling for the night. A major difference from last year was that the group had been given the use of four self-contained cottages. Each cottage had a living room / dining room area, a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom (s) and wireless internet connection was also available. The size of the cottages gave the students a chance for some privacy and a real opportunity to relax and one cottage had a dining table which was big enough to seat the whole group. Therefore it was decided to go to the local supermarket to buy food which could be shared and eaten at the cottage. This proved to be an extremely enjoyable and valuable occasion where all the members of the group could talk, relax and really find out about each other.

### **Day 7 (Saturday)**

Before coming into the farmhouse for breakfast, a few of the students walked around the farm to look at the animals. For many of the students it was their first experience of seeing and being able to feed the horses and sheep. Consequently, it was felt that choosing to stay on the farm was the right choice as it broke the routine of moving from one town or city to the next. After breakfast the group took the short bus ride from Charlbury and arrived at 10.30am in Stratford upon Avon.



The day in Stratford followed a very similar pattern to the previous year. The group walked from the coach station, which is near to the River Avon, into the centre of Stratford and from there to Shakespeare's birthplace and other landmarks. As Stratford is a fairly small and compact town, it was felt that the students could be given time to do things by themselves. For the students, one of the highlights was enjoying a meal in a famous fish and chip restaurant.

Again it was decided to eat together in the evening at the cottage and so a brief stop was made in Chipping Norton to buy food for the evening. This time fewer people bought microwavable food as it had proved not very appetizing the night before.

### **Day 8 (Sunday)**

Following another hearty breakfast, the group left Banbury Hill Farm for Oxford via a brief stop in Woodstock in order to walk in the grounds of Blenheim Palace. Unfortunately, the weather was changing again with an extremely cold wind bringing yet more rain. Luckily the group was able to take a cold but dry walk through the parkland close to the obelisk. Along the way the students were able to see more sheep, ducks and geese and in the distance both a woodpecker and cuckoo were heard. After leaving Blenheim, the group walked into Woodstock to the King's Arms for morning tea and coffee. Along the way, the group were able to sit in the 'stocks' and have their pictures taken. Many were surprised to hear that the stocks had originally been used as a form of punishment for petty crimes and that passers-by had been allowed to throw things at those sitting there. Being a Sunday, the students were also treated to an example of church bells ringing as they walked by the church in Woodstock. Unfortunately, while having

refreshments in the King's Arms it had come on to rain quite heavily, so everyone was glad to get on the bus and head into Oxford.

Once again the group was staying in the Falcon Hotel on Abingdon Road in Oxford. It was noted that the upstairs rooms had been redecorated and refurbished, including new showers. This meant that the problem that some students experienced last year of not having hot water did not happen this time. After leaving their bags at the hotel the group walked up to Christ Church College. It was felt that it would be best to visit Christ Church immediately rather than to wait for the following day. Accordingly, after a very quick lunch, the group looked around the dining hall and cathedral. One notable difference from last year was that there were a significant number of other visitors and so whereas last year the students had been able to walk freely around the dining hall, this time visitors were only able to file through once. This lessened the enjoyment of the visit as it meant people could not move at their own pace and look at all the pictures and stained glass windows that are in the room. Nevertheless, the students seemed happy to have seen the dining hall and they were equally impressed by the small but historic cathedral.

In the evening, because last year's group had enjoyed themselves there, it was decided to go to The Eagle and Child pub. This proved to be a great success both in terms of the atmosphere of the place and in the quality of the food. In fact, the students felt so comfortable there that they asked to come back the following evening for dinner.

**Day 9 (Monday)**

It was decided that the students should be given some free time to do what they wanted in Oxford. This was because Oxford is compact and fairly easy to navigate around and there is a wide range of things to do. Consequently, the morning was spent in Oxford's Natural History Museum which proved to be surprisingly interesting with displays of dinosaur skeletons and stuffed rare and extinct birds. Following this the students divided into small groups and walked around Oxford. Most students took this as an opportunity to do some shopping. This was unavoidable as many of Oxford's museums are closed on Monday.

The group met up again at 5pm and those who wanted to return to the Eagle and Child for dinner did so. However, half the group decided to buy some food to eat back in their hotel room.

**Day 10**

Tuesday started grey but thankfully it had stopped raining. Unlike last year, there was no walk up to see the college rowing teams practising on the Thames just below Folly Bridge. This was because the group had had a quick glimpse of the teams practising when they arrived in Oxford and it was felt there was not enough interest to warrant a second visit.

Once again, the group left the Falcon promptly at 9.30am and went directly to Hampton Court Palace. Rather than spend another £10 to £15 on the entrance fee into the Palace itself, the group simply walked around the gardens which at this time of year are free to enter. This proved to be the right choice as the students thoroughly enjoyed looking around the ornamental gardens and at the world's largest grape vine. The group spent

almost an hour in the palace gardens before heading across the Thames to one of the local cafes for a well deserved warm drink and mid-morning snack.

The group arrived at the Copthorne Tara Hotel by 1pm. In this hotel, all the students were to share twin rooms but unfortunately the group was spread out on different floors. This was probably because, although it was mid week, the hotel seemed to be very busy. As with last year, it was decided to walk along Kensington High Street and into Hyde Park through Kensington Gardens. 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 'routemaster' bus, into central London. This was a very special experience and the students took the opportunity to ride on the bumpy upper deck. Again it was felt that as this was the students' first visit to central London, it would be better if they remained together as group, and after buying tickets for them to see *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre on Haymarket, the group ate a late buffet-lunch at a Chinese restaurant in Soho's China town. They appreciated the chance to eat 'familiar' food at a very reasonable price. Indeed many students went back more than once to refill their plates.

Then the whole group walked down to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. As it was still light, the students were able to see Big Ben and the Palace of Westminster in the distance as well as taking pictures beside the lions under Nelson's Column. Unfortunately, there was only time for a quick walk around the gallery itself, but it was pointed out that if anyone wanted

to spend more time there, they would be able to do so the following day. At 7pm the group was taken to their theatre to watch the show they had chosen. All of the students said they thoroughly enjoyed the performance. After the performance finished, one of the teachers met the students to bring them safely back to their hotel.



(Picture 4: Big Ben)

### Day 11 (Wednesday)

A major difference between this year and last year was that the breakfast rooms seemed very crowded. This meant that people had to queue for a short period before being able to sit down. In addition, it was felt that the quality of the breakfast and the attitude of the senior staff meant that

the whole experience was not as satisfying as it had been last year.

The group met in the lobby of the Copthorne Tara Hotel at 9.15am and then went to High Street Kensington underground station to take the tube from there to Tower Hill. Once again the students purchased one day travel-cards (£6.60) as it was felt that this offered the most economic way of travelling around London. After getting off the tube at Tower Hill, the group made its way towards Tower Bridge from where the students could get good views of both the bridge itself and the Tower of London. Luckily, this year the weather was fine and so the students were able to spend time walking up and down the bridge taking pictures. Then the group went straight back to Westminster in order to see the London Eye, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Fortunately the group arrived just as Big Ben was striking the hour at 11am and so this year's group was also able to hear as well as see Big Ben. The group then walked up Whitehall passed Horse Guards' Parade where the guards were just beginning the changing of the guard. This gave the students the added bonus of seeing a second changing of the guard. However, it did mean that time was pressing so it was decided to go straight from Leicester Square on the underground to The British Museum via a short stop at King's Cross for pictures to be taken at Platform 9 and 3/4 (however, due to building work being done at King's Cross the Harry Potter exhibit seems to have been hidden away, much to the amusement and some disappointment of the students) .

Before going to the British Museum, the group had a quick lunch in the park café in Russell Square. This provided a welcome break from walking around and gave the students a chance to look at one of the squares which help to give central London its character. It was also good to note that the

sun had finally broken through the clouds, so despite being chilly, the day was very pleasant. It was only a short walk from Russell Square to the British Museum and it was there the group divided in half. One half went with one teacher to see inside the museum, then went on to see Abbey Road (for its Beatles connection) , before heading to Bond Street by way of the Sherlock Holmes Museum on Baker Street. The other half went straight to Oxford Street where most of the students spent their time buying presents for themselves and for their relatives. Both halves of the group met up again at 5.30pm at Piccadilly Circus to catch the bus back to the hotel.

Once again to celebrate the successful completion of the trip, the whole group went for a final evening meal together at the same Italian restaurant on Kensington High Street as last year. This year, because it was mid week, there was no difficulty about booking enough tables for everyone to be able to sit together and the waiter worked hard to entertain the group. It was felt that this was a very good way to bring the final full day in England of the trip to a close.

### **Day 12 and 13 (Thursday and Friday)**

Originally, it was planned that the students would spend the morning visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum before doing some final shopping in Harrods, but as it turned out, the students enjoyed the pleasant walk from the hotel to Knightsbridge and then spent the remaining time shopping. This was perhaps understandable because Harrods, though expensive, is unquestionably one of London's landmarks. Nevertheless, the students were cautioned to curb their urge to spend due to baggage weight limits. The group returned by bus to the hotel and then had lunch on Kensington High Street. After a final session of repacking bags, the group departed for

Heathrow airport. At Heathrow, they were able to look around the duty free shops before boarding the plane back to Japan. Although the flight was long, it passed smoothly and late on Friday evening the students arrived back at Kagoshima airport.

#### **4. Feedback from the students**

A short questionnaire was handed out to all participants on the return journey from Heathrow airport in London. The idea was to gain an understanding of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the tour as perceived by the students, so that the planning stage for the 2012-13 trips could be completed with a greater appreciation of what the students found most beneficial from their time abroad.

##### **Questionnaire**

1. Which hotel did you enjoy staying in the most? Why?
2. Of the places visited on the tour, which was the most enjoyable? Why?
3. What was your biggest problem on the trip?
4. If you had the chance, would you come on a trip again? Why/why not?
5. Is there any information you would have liked before the trip? Explain
6. Would you recommend the trip to other students? Why/why not?

##### **Questionnaire results**

1. The two most popular places in terms of accommodation were the hotel in Bath, and the farm-stay in the Cotswolds. Both places were first choice with about 40 % of the respondents. This result is rewarding in the sense that the initial idea when booking accommodation was to give the students a chance over the ten nights in England to experience as wide a range of places as possible.





(Picture 5: Hotel room, Bath Abbey Hotel)

The hotel in Bath, popular for its fine views over parts of the central city, its large triple rooms and fine dining room decorated in the Regency style was in many ways the complete opposite of the farm-stay. In the Cotswolds, the accommodation was in self catering holiday cottages, where students enjoyed the "at home" feeling to be had in accommodation that contained a small kitchen, a comfortable living room and even a dining area where many of the group could gather, prepare a meal and eat together in a relaxed manner. The fact that both these types of places were clearly enjoyed seems to point to the fact that on such a trip, the positive cultural experiences gained by students staying in varied accommodation is more important than might be thought at first. Rather than using only generic

types of large-scale hotels where services and design differ little from what students already know in their own country, allowing students the chance to experience unusual kinds of overnight accommodation can help expand their cultural understanding of British life dramatically. In Bath, students were greatly impressed by the historical feel to the city, and the elegant stone buildings, spires and streets seen directly from their own hotel room greatly enhanced this experience. In the Cotswolds, relaxing in a warm cottage, looking out over fields containing sheep, horses and other livestock, gave them the chance to appreciate rural England and for some to contrast the experience with their own urban backgrounds in Japan.



(Picture 6: Cotswolds Sunset)

2. There were a number of varied responses to question 2 in the survey, but the capital city London came out top with 65% of the students choosing it as the most enjoyable place. This was perhaps not surprising given its extremely wide range of attractions. Following last years' trip, students had

indicated that they would have liked an extra day in London. However, due to cost constraints it was not possible to do so this year. Nevertheless, the idea of spending a longer time in capital cities is something that needs to be considered in future years. Windsor, with 25% , was also very popular and was enjoyed in particular by some students as they felt they were on the set of a movie, the ancient stone architecture around the castle in particular, being something they were unfamiliar with in their daily lives in Japan.

It was telling that 70% of students also mentioned that they really had more than one choice as an answer to this question, and among their responses in second place Bath, Oxford and the Cotswolds were all mentioned more than once. Therefore it seems the variety of places offered on the trip in terms of rural locations, smaller cities and the multi-cultural capital worked well in offering the students a glimpse of a number of places that make up modern English life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The emphasis when outlining and organizing the tour was to give students the chance to experience as wide a spectrum as possible of the kinds of places English people call home. The mixture of overnight stays in villages, historical larger towns and cities is a key factor for the trip. This approach, which gives such a unique flavour to the tour, is one that will be used in coming years too, although in different areas of Britain as well as other countries.

3. There were few major problems encountered by the students according to their replies in the survey. This was partly perhaps due to the planning over the previous two years which has led to an emphasis on allowing the students as much freedom to explore all places as possible, while realizing

the necessity of closely structured support from accompanying teachers to ensure the students do not feel uneasy about any part of the trip, and do not feel worried that they cannot cope adequately in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

Most problems outlined were only mentioned once in the survey which tends to suggest they were not recurring issues which clearly need addressing before next year's tour. Only the problem of lost items was recorded twice (an umbrella and a wallet) . The wallet was returned within a few minutes by a kind local, and this event, according to the journal of the student concerned, made her appreciative of local help. Also, it made her more aware of her own responsibility for personal articles while on the trip, an issue which had been brought up in pre-tour meetings with the students.

One or two other noted responses concerned cultural differences, such as the lack of, or poorer state of toilet facilities, especially in the larger places like London. Another concerned a feeling of homesickness, especially at the beginning of the tour, when students were still coming to grips with the new cultural environment as well as battling jetlag due to the nine hour time difference. This feeling seemed to be less of a problem towards the middle and end of the tour, but is something that is perhaps important to explain in more detail at future pre-tour meetings. It is also perhaps not surprising as 25% of the students were abroad for the first time in their lives, and for all students in the group this was the first time to visit a European country.

One problem noted was the trouble picking up the speed of conversation with shop assistants and this point suggests that more work could be done with students in the course before going abroad to improve their ability in

these kinds of conversational situations.

4. 100% of respondents answered that they would, given the chance, love to go on a similar trip again. Some stated that they wanted to go for longer to help improve their English ability. Many were beginning to feel towards the end of the trip that their ability in their second language was gradually improving, so they were aware of the concrete benefits of such a tour on their area of study at University. Over 30% mentioned that the experience was very positive in terms of having encouraged them to learn more about cultural and historical aspects of England. It was also encouraging to see many of the students buying English language books along the way to help them in this pursuit. Other reasons for the positive responses included the fact that it was a good chance to make new friends through travelling together. Naturally this kind of response suggests the idea of taking a mixed group of college and university students to have been a successful one. Students who had only met once briefly before the trip, were able, after 12 days together to find new friends through this shared cultural experience. In future years the plan is to open the tour to other departments and this varied mixture of students may well increase in coming years, so with this in mind, this year's trial can be seen to have had very positive results.

A final response stated that as it was not the kind of trip they could have undertaken on their own, they felt lucky to have been able to see so many varied places and experience so many varied things in such a short space of time in many diverse locations.

5. Over 20% of respondents stated they had received adequate information beforehand and had no need of further information to help them. A similar

figure stated that they had experienced a little trouble with local coins and would have liked more pre-tour knowledge on what to expect from using the pound monetary system. This is something that the accompanying teachers were aware of as the tour developed, and as such a short seminar on this topic will be instituted in future years. This was not a problem that was so apparent on the previous tour, and may have stemmed from the fact that many of this year's participants were younger than last year's and had significantly less experience of traveling abroad. This point highlighted the fact that it is important for accompanying teachers to be flexible, as the same results from previous years cannot always be expected when different sized groups with varying age ranges are brought into the equation.

6. The final question in the survey received an overwhelmingly positive response. All students stressed the fact that they would wholeheartedly recommend this kind of tour to other students at their college or university. Reasons for their positivity ranged from those who felt the trip had really helped them to understand why they were studying English as a foreign language and how it could be of use to them in their lives, to those who were taken with the historical aspects of the tour. They felt they had learned a great deal about the history of England through some very enjoyable visits. Other comments stated that they had enjoyed experiencing the 'real England' and urged others to do likewise. More than one mentioned the fact that they had seen so much in such a short space of time, and that they had felt very safe despite being in a cultural environment that was new to them. They also stated that it was logistically not the kind of tour they could have conceived of themselves. Perhaps the most telling comment, in stressing the overall feeling of positivity towards the tour was also the simplest. One student stated that she wanted to tell other students "This trip is amazing.

Go to England!"

5. Students' comments from their diaries.

Part of the strategy around promoting the trip in future years is to allow students who have had the experience abroad to speak directly to others back on campus at the university. It has been seen already in the first two years of the programme that while teacher orientated explanations are useful, direct feedback from participants to their peers is of greater value in promoting the course and tour.

This year, by means of power point presentations and short talks using video footage taken on tour, it is hoped that many of the present 1<sup>st</sup> year participants will be able as new second year students to outline just why the trip and the course preceding it are of value to other students who have yet to sign up.

The written diaries the students produced while on tour (in English and Japanese) are useful as gauges for the accompanying teachers to understand exactly how the participants felt during the tour. In addition, they are very useful as written tags attached to photos in the power point presentations, which give concise snappy explanations to the visual content designed for future participants.

Below are some of the comments that will be used to enhance the persuasive promotional aspects of presentations given jointly at the University and College campuses later in 2011.

"I wanted to improve my pronunciation on this trip and listening to many

local people helped me do this."

"After Stonehenge, we went to Bath. I was surprised at the view of the city. It's very beautiful and full of history, but there are no lack of modern shops and facilities either."

"I saw Shakespeare's ghost! It looked at Yuko and she became very scared! It was really funny!."



(Picture 7 : Shakespeare's Ghost, Stratford Upon Avon)

"The farm-stay reminded me of my island because there were a lot of paddocks with animals in them. I love horses, so I really wanted to ride one."

"We saw the musical 'The Phantom of the Opera'. It was more impressive



than I expected. Christina, the lead, was very beautiful and had a nice voice."

"It was a nice memory taking a picture with a horse guard on Whitehall in London."

"At Windsor Castle, I saw Queen Mary's Doll's House. It was an amazing, fantastic miniature one."

"In Stratford upon Avon I saw the blue sky for the first time. The clouds were low in the sky and the rays like the ladder for angels."

"At the farm, I couldn't ride on a horse, but I took a photo with him and we watched each other for a time while I fed grass to him."

"I had a scary experience at the traffic lights which change very quickly. I realized we have to be very careful crossing the road. Traffic lights in England are as changeable as the weather!"

"Finally, London! I'm happy to come here because for me it is a kind of dream city, but sad too, because the day to return home is coming closer."

"Windsor. I really feel like I am in the middle of a movie set"

"At Stonehenge, the weather was typically English, but I was able to take a nice picture. Stonehenge is very famous, I and learned a lot about it in a class at University. To see it up close was amazing."

"When our bus reached Bath, my mind was shocked with deep emotion. I

thought the view was like my idea of Paris"

"I was very happy to talk with local people in Oxford. It was a great experience for me."

"Windsor's streets are so beautiful. The scene looks like it is from a picture book."

"At the farm after dinner we watched an English TV programme. We were really relaxed. The atmosphere in the cottage was so nice."

"We went to Oxford University's Natural History Museum. It was great. I really enjoyed the visit. There were a lot of bones!"



(Picture 8 : Dinosaur skeleton.Oxford Natural History Museum)

"I really enjoyed this trip. I became a UK lover. I had a really good time."

"When I talked with our teacher's nephew, I thought that I should keep studying English, and have a dream."

"I really enjoyed walking in the morning and the evening at the farm."

"I understood the lifestyle in England through afternoon tea, full English breakfast and visits to Royal castles and parks."

"I ran for about 20 minutes in the morning. It was very refreshing because it was quiet and the mist off the river was fantastic."

"In Windsor Castle, we could go inside. It was so gorgeous. I saw a lot of rooms with furniture and portraits. We listened to each explanation and got a lot of information."

6. Observations of the tour to southern England by the accompanying teachers.

A positive point was that although the college students had not taken the Seikatsu Eigo taught module, they had done some research prior to the trip and had decided on the places they wanted to visit.

A noticeable difference between the university group this year and last was that there was less interest in the historical background of England. At this point, it is not clear whether the seeming lack of student response was due to the over-expectations of the accompanying staff or the fact that many

of the students were younger, had less background knowledge through detailed personal research and less confidence in their English ability. Nevertheless, in the future it will be necessary to find some way to stimulate interest for students in this age group.

It was apparent was that some of the students occasionally suffered from car-sickness as a result of driving along the twisty country roads. This is something which needs to be born in mind for future trips, particularly on days where the bus is required for longer journey.

It was rewarding to see the college and university students mixing well together. Prior to the trip, the introductory meetings had obviously been beneficial. Students were happy to interact both during the day-trips out and at hotels in terms of their rooming allocations. Also, from post trip meetings it has been seen that new friendships have been cemented.