

From and about Japan

I had as part of my apprenticeship an opportunity to do an internship in Japan. I was prompted to write these lines about why I chose Japan as the location of the action. Unfortunately the causality is easily and fast to deduce and is therefore rather uninformative regarding Japan nor regarding my expectancies there (maybe not useful): For couple of years I am an employee of a company which offered me the opportunity to travel to a foreign location to learn more about their products and to gather impressions which will be useful for my professional and personal development. Because of certain restrictions of my university (I should be working in a section where computer science is present) I was able to choose between the USA and Japan. From the beginning I was sure, that Japan has been my favor – because the culture is very different and therefore interesting. At this time I didn't really think about the far Asia and my preparations left a lot to be desired. The reason was mostly the stressful end phase of the last semester.

So let me talk about some other subjects instead:

In Japan the population accumulates in a dense area. This is the reason, why always a lot of people are around. The individual human being will drown in the crowd. However there are no collisions between people what is remarkable and gives you a first glance of Japanese mentality. There are rules, not written, but made to protect the "flow". To stand on the left side of the escalator is one of them. After getting off of the airplane I was heading towards an instance of such an escalator and was amazed about the discipline of the 200 passengers (except of a few, who surely had a tight schedule) who are standing left. The discipline of these 200 has already been shown, because for the first time of all my flights, all the passengers patently remained seated and waited for the plane to arrive at the gate and to turn off the "fasten seatbelt" symbols.

If you want to drive in Japan, you should know a little bit beforehand. The most obvious you will notice is that there is left traffic. Furthermore, there are a lot of traffic lightings. But behind a corner and not before it, which is the usual case in Germany. This fact makes it dangerous to drive at the early morning without a coffee. This was still the case after several weeks.

“Ah, doitsu!“ (and a smile): this is the classical reaction to the response of the question where you come from as a German citizen. In my opinion, Germany and German people have a very good image. A reason could be the similar base values (like punctuality and reliability; If somebody wants to mention the Deutsche Bahn as an counterexample, let me tell you, that the DB chose to be reliable for being late...). The fact that Japan and Germany fought on the same side in world war II maybe an important one for older people. I met an older man (80 to 90 years old) who happily spoke about this which was honestly a little bit uncomfortable for me. A co-worker of mine mentioned the support from Germany in subjects like education systems, and legal systems. Anyhow, it is very nice to be welcome.

I gathered a lot of impressions and will tell a few of them. Some stories are for friends and family but a large part is special and only part of my memory.