

# Italian vs. Japanese Lifestyle



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■ Career  
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University of Bergamo Scholarship at

■ Research Field  
• PSS Simulation  
• Service Engineering

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## 1 Introduction

My name is Alice Rondini, I'm 25 years old and I graduated in Management Engineering in December 2013 at the University of Bergamo, in the north of Italy. During the work of my master thesis I worked on the simulation of PSS (Product-Service System) in the CELS (Research Group on Industrial Engineering, Logistic and Service operation) Lab. I will not go through any boring detail of my work but it was the beginning of my story. I knew that CELS research group was collaborating with TMU (Tokyo Metropolitan University) but I was very far from thinking that I could come here in Tokyo. Anyway, after my graduation, thanks to a scholarship, I got the opportunity to stay in CELS lab to explore in depth PSS simulation. It was at that point that my professor asked me to spend a month here in Tokyo.

Of course I didn't hesitate to say yes! I was very excited. It was a great chance for me and for my research but it also meant spend a period abroad, in a new university with new people. I started to dream about my month in Japan, my accommodation, my colleagues, the university, Tokyo, Shinkansen trains and all the things that I could have done.

However, I was also a little bit upset considering that I would have spend a month at the opposite side of the world, in a completely different country, with different culture, different language and different religion.

## 2 Welcome to Japan!

I depart from Italy on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, with my big baggage trying to contain everything needed for one month abroad. After 13 hours, I



Fig.1 My Welcome party!

finally landed in Tokyo Narita airport. My experience has just started. I looked around for a while and my first thought was : "Oh my god! I'll never be able to understand one single word of Japanese. How will I deal with bus, trains and so on?"

Well, after almost two weeks in 八王子 (You can see my progress), I'm quite confident with buses, JR trains and Tokyo. I'm definitely managing my Japanese stay and it is not so difficult (Fig. 1).

According to my point of view, Japan is more similar to Italy than I thought. There are differences in organization, in everyday life, in traditions but the two countries are not so far. However, there are some elements that are still surprising me a lot. I'll devote the rest of this brief article describing them.

## 3 Differences

First of all I want to point out one big difference about student's life. I was quite surprised to know that at certain point in their carrier Japanese students starts to actively participate in laboratories. I think it is a great opportunity to favorite team working. In Shimomura Laboratory I had the chance to see bachelor, master and Ph. D. students all working together, giving advice



(a)



(b)

Fig.2 Paper Bridge competitions

one to the other and collaborating. They also had weekly meeting to share information with each other and to organize work. In Italy students do not have this kind of activities. During both bachelor and master degree they do not have the chance to actively participate to laboratories. They just follow lessons, prepare and perform exams by themselves. In very few cases during thesis preparation they work on some projects and work in labs. But usually, when working in a lab they do not have the possibility to share work and ideas. Usually they perform their own work and then give it to the professor for reviews.

During my stay I also knew that at the beginning of the academic year, at TMU there is a bridge competition where teams of students have to collaborate in building bridge made of paper (Fig. 2). This activity, aimed at helping new students to make friends at the beginning of the year, can last many hours. I think this is a very useful and happy way to begin five years study. I don't think that Italian universities organize any kind of similar events.

And what about sleeping students? When I went to a lesson and I saw many students sleeping, some without shoes, I was very amazed! I cannot explain the surprise in seeing students sleeping on the desk while professor talking. In Italy it is not usual, if a student wants to sleep or is tired he/she can just skip the lesson or go back home. Professor would be very



Fig.3 Sleeping boy on the train. At the last station he remained on the train because he was sleeping at his stop!

disappointed in seeing students sleeping. I had the same surprise to see people sleeping while standing up on the train (Fig. 3). How can you do it? I would like to learn it!

I want to describe few other interesting differences that I noticed between Italian and Japanese lifestyles. I think that the most interesting are the following :

- (1) People with allergy do not stay the entire day with a Kleenex in their hand such as in Italy. They prevent the problem using sanitary masks. Even if for me is quite strange meet people with this "white towel" on their face, I think it is very useful and sustainable. People do not use drugs and also feel better!!
- (2) Parking facilities. I very appreciate the way in which Japanese people are managing parking facilities with multi-level floors. Wow!! I think this is one of the main reason why road are not completely a mess like in Italy (Fig. 4).

Transport organization. I think that Japan has very well organized transport network. In particular I think that the payment systems on the bus are very efficient. In Italy we still have paper cards with written : "Please remember to validate me in order to avoid penalty" (Fig. 5). Of course, lots of people do not pay the ticket.

## 4 My Studies

Apart from the differences that I



(a) Parking in Italy



(b) Parking in Japan

Fig.4 Parking differences



Fig.5 Italian bus ticket. It says : Please remember to validate me in order to avoid penalty

noticed, I have to admit that I enjoy stay in Japan. In staying in Shimomura lab I have the chance to share my research topic about PSS and simulation. I also started to work on a project aimed at the analysis of the services offered by small and medium enterprises in Bergamo area. During the period in the lab I share information with students I get precious feedbacks to continue my work. Moreover every day I have coffee break with students and we have the possibility to talk about Italians and Japanese culture and traditions.

## 5 Conclusions

I hope you enjoyed the reading. I'll wait for someone of you in Italy so that you will confirm or deny my observations. Bye Bye.