

A Memorable First Encounter: Reflections on a Unique Cross-Cultural Meeting in Tokyo of the Japan Oman Club

This year marked a remarkable milestone as 19 Omani students and 16 Japan Oman Club members gathered for the first time at Joganji Temple in Tokyo. Carefully planned and rich with cultural experiences, the program offered a rare opportunity to explore cross-cultural understanding through learning, mindfulness, and hospitality.

This annual gathering has taken place since 2013, but for me personally and most of the other participants, joining it for the first time transformed it into a unique and unforgettable experience, one that I will always carry with me.

The serene environment of Joganji Temple, just minutes from Nakano-Sakaue Station, provided the perfect atmosphere for meaningful engagement. From the moment participants arrived on November 22nd, it was clear that this gathering would go beyond academic exchange. The opening discussions created space for diverse perspectives, personal stories, and newfound connections—highlighting the importance of mutual respect and shared openness.



Figure 1: Joganji Temple in Tokyo

Participants received a guide on Zen temple etiquette, setting the tone for mindfulness and cultural sensitivity. For many, it was their first time learning about such traditions, and their enthusiasm underscored the collective commitment to making the experience meaningful.

A major highlight was the Tea Ceremony at 3:45 PM. This traditional Japanese ritual introduced attendees to an art form that represents harmony and tranquility. The measured movements and quiet ambiance offered a grounding moment amid the day's activities.



Figure 2: Tea Ceremony

The evening continued with a group walk to Caravan Sarai Pao for dinner, where laughter, warm hospitality, and engaging conversations strengthened the bonds formed throughout the day.



Figure 3: Caravan Sarai Pao dinner

The second day began with Zazen at 7:00 AM—an introduction to Zen meditation. Although challenging for some, it offered a unique opportunity to begin the morning with reflection and stillness. After breakfast, packing, and cleaning—a Zen practice symbolizing respect for shared spaces—the group met the Temple Priest to express gratitude before heading to the Akasaka Detached Palace and Garden.

The visit to the National Guest House, known for its majestic architecture and diplomatic significance, added a powerful cultural dimension to the program. Surrounded by



Figure 4: The National Guest House

beautifully maintained gardens, participants experienced yet another facet of Japanese heritage.

The event concluded with lunch at noon, giving participants a final chance to reflect on the meaningful moments they had shared. This program has been held every year since 2013, but attending it for the first time made it a very special and unforgettable experience for me.



Figure 5: Lunch (Halal Ramen)

MY PERSONAL REFLECTION

This was truly my first experience, and I loved every moment of it. I learned about Japanese culture up close, discovering similarities and differences between Oman and Japan, especially in social customs and the way people interact with respect and warmth.

I made many friends—both Omani and Japanese—and every activity opened my eyes to something new. It was a unique and unforgettable experience for me.

The food was also delicious and added to the joy of this cultural journey.

I want to thank the organizers, especially Kyoko-san, for their amazing efforts.

Meeting Details and Program Schedule

Location: Joganji Temple (2-26-6 Honcho, Nakano-ku, Tokyo)

Closest Station: Nakano-Sakaue Station (Tokyo Metro Marunouchi Line)

Use Exit 1 (not A1). Walk downhill along the highway for about 5 minutes. Enter the Temple Gate on the right.

Program Schedule

November 22

1:00 PM – Check-in, introductions, discussions, coffee break

3:15 PM – Summary of discussions and check-out

3:45 PM – Tea Ceremony

5:45 PM – Take luggage to accommodations

6:10 PM – Walk to Caravan Sarai Pao

6:30 PM – Dinner

November 23

7:00 AM – Zazen, breakfast, packing, cleaning

9:00 AM – Meet Temple Priest and return keys

Visit Akasaka Detached Palace & Garden

12:00 PM – Lunch and program conclusion

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