

## My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

### Dear me, breathe and love

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Destination: Yokohama City University, Japan

Rachele Parodi concludes her sophisticated impressionistic account of her Japanese experience by thanking herself for having the courage to embark upon it in the first place.

I never thought I'd be a sneaker-type of girl.

I never thought I'd be a globetrotter-type of girl.

I never thought I'd be an unflagging adventurer-type of girl.

I never thought I'd be many things, in my life. I dreamt about it, reading books in my bed at home. Loads of stories about heroines who embark upon journeys in faraway lands, looking for some kind of treasures, something that should give their life meaning, eventually discovering that looking themselves in a mirror was just enough to find what they were longing for.

I read, dreamt, travelled, believed, lived adventures with them, but I never thought I'd be successful in such a challenge.

And instead.

As I left for Japan, I fulfilled my biggest dream as a little child, a teenager, a young woman, making me proud of myself as I ever was.

The moment in which I realized I was growing, was probably when I had the chance to travel around Japan for almost two weeks, during the famous Golden Week. I went to Shikoku, southern Japan, with some friends, and we went on a journey on the road, hitch-hiking and trying to discover the island.

I'll never forget those days, those people, those mountains. I'm never going to forget those skies, one blue and one grey. I'll never forget my rusty orange bike, neither my former white sneakers - now blackish. I'll never forget the adrenaline rush that surprises you while you go biking on a hill, without really knowing where you will get at the end. And the joy you feel, understanding it was all worth it.

Beers, rice, *onigiri*, *bento*. Smiling faces, anxieties, thoughts, the joyful moments, the stars.

How they can shine so bright... it's breathtaking.

The temples of which you catch glimpses beneath the trees, the graveyards. The dazzling green of the trees, of the forest, of everything that sur-

rounds you, remembering you that even though there are many problems in the world, there is still a deep-rooted hope in nature and in mankind.

When I was there, I was living a changing moment in my life, as I was trying to imagine my future self: my studies, my job, my home, my family. I got confused and I was somehow panicking, because I realized that my future was coming towards me at light speed but I didn't know what to do. So, I tried to focus on how I was able to go to Japan, and on the beautiful places I was visiting.

I started breathing again. And I realized: If everything is fast, too fast for you, take some time for yourself. Go away, get some distance, go home. Take a break. And then, breathe. Breathe at the top of your lungs, with your arms wide open so that the world could wrap you up.

Shikoku became one of the places where my heart will always be. Wherever my life will lead me in the future, I know this place will never leave me.

I don't know anything about my future: with all its uncertainties, I don't know what I will do, or where I will live. But I will always go back there, to Shikoku.

At the end of it, of my experience, I can just say one thing: I fell in love. Deeply, completely in love. Not just for the beautiful things, but also for the worst, and this is the best part: I've seen the good and the bad. I've seen the racism, the trains delayed because of suicides, the absurd plastic waste, the total unawareness of the youngsters towards politics, their culture, the problems with and related to the infertility rate, and so on. But still... I fell in love.

I couldn't help it, but everything drove me to this feeling, and the ambiguity, represented by Tokyo at its finest, was one of them. You could be wandering in the city, surrounded by skyscrapers, and yet you suddenly find yourself in a very well hidden oasis, with trees, maybe a temple, and you only hear the noises of the city as if they are coming from outside a glass dome. There are cities like Tokyo, where everything is modern, fast, punctual, perfectly working; and then there are places where you are simply surrounded by rice fields and mountains, no trains and almost no cars, no supermarkets and just a *conbini* on the main street.

So, thank you, young Rachele, because you discovered you had the courage to start this journey, the best thing that could happen to you. You don't know it yet, but during these four months and a half you're going to travel a lot, study, laugh, learn, you're going to grow up. But above all, you're going to find a purpose in your life.