



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Invitation Program for the Princess Delegates Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

Four FY2024 Princess Delegates^(Note) were invited to Japan from January 22 to January 28. The participants visited Tokyo and Shizuoka to deepen their understanding of Japanese culture and society through courtesy calls, exchanges with related organizations, homestays and cultural experiences. The participants also shared their learning and findings on social media.

(Note) Princess Delegates are participants of an exchange program called “Cherry Blossom Program.” This program takes place during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, a celebration of Japan-U.S. friendship, held annually in Washington D.C. from March to April. Princess Delegates were selected from each state to participate in various cultural programs.

【Participants】 Total: 4 Cherry Blossom Program participants (working youths) from the United States

【Locations】 Tokyo, Shizuoka

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Jan. 16 (Thu) **【Pre-departure Orientation】** Project objective and mission, rundown of the schedule, overseas travel warnings, precautions of infectious disease, etc.

Set Period Prior to Arrival **【Video Viewing】** “Lecture on Japan” (Choose on Web Japan)

■ Invitation Program:

Jan. 22 (Wed) Arrival at Haneda Airport

【Post-arrival Orientation】

Jan. 23 (Thu) **【Courtesy Call】** Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko, the Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan

【Observation】 The State Guest House, Akasaka Palace

【Courtesy Call】 Ms. ERI Arfiya, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs

【Observation】 Meiji Jingu Shrine, Harajuku (Japanese pop-culture)

Jan. 24 (Fri) **【Observation】** THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF EMERGING SCIENCE AND INNOVATION "Miraikan"

Travel from Tokyo to Shizuoka

【Meeting with the Host Families, Homestay】 Oyama Town, Gotemba City

Jan. 25 (Sat) **【Homestay】** Oyama Town, Gotemba City

【Opinion Exchange】 Gotemba City Fire Brigade Women's Division

【Cultural Experience】 Tea picking experience (Katsumata Tea Co., Ltd.)

Jan. 26 (Sun) **【Farewell Party with the Host Families】** Gotemba City

【Observation】 Atami Sakura Itokawa Cherry Blossom Festival

Travel from Shizuoka to Tokyo

Jan. 27 (Mon) **【Observation】** Hie-jinja Shrine
【Courtesy Call】 Mr. NUKAGA Fukushima, Head of the Japan Cherry Blossom Association and Speaker of the House of Representatives
【Exchange】 Japan Cherry Blossom Association
【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)
【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans

Jan. 28 (Tue) **【Observation】** Asakusa
Departure from Haneda Airport

2. Program Photos

Invitation Program

	
January 23, 2025 【Courtesy Call】 Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko, the Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan	January 23, 2025 【Observation】 The State Guest House, Akasaka Palace
	
January 23, 2025 【Courtesy Call】 Ms. ERI Arfiya, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign	January 23, 2025 【Observation】 Meiji Jingu Shrine
	
January 24, 2025 【Homestay】	January 25, 2025 【Opinion Exchange】 Gotemba City Fire Brigade Women's Division

	
January 25, 2025 【Cultural Experience】 Tea picking experience	January 26, 2025 【Observation】 Atami Sakura Itokawa Cherry Blossom Festival
	
January 27, 2025 【Exchange】 Japan Cherry Blossom Association	January 27, 2025 【Reporting Session】 Group photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ Working Youth

My favorite formal event was our courtesy call with Ms. ERI Arfiya. She was eager to receive us and has beautiful, inspirational answers to our questions. My favorite cultural event was the Tea picking opportunity in Gotemba. It was impressive to see how 18 generations have endured the test of time to keep traditional tea harvesting and drying practices alive.

◆ Working Youth

The most impressive parts of my experience throughout the Kakehashi Program were the visit to an all-female fire brigade in Gotemba City, the homestay, and collecting stamps from Meiji, Hie, and Senso-Ji shrines. I networked with the captain of Gotemba's female fire brigade and even provided a resume.

◆ Working Youth

The homestay also left a lasting impression, as it showed me firsthand how Japanese people live, as well as their unique traditions and customs. It was interesting to see the unique fusion of Japanese and Vietnamese culture in my homestay. It was priceless aspect of the program, because it could not be replicated if we had just stayed in the hotel.

◆ Working Youth

I truly enjoyed getting to pick tea leaves and make my own hand-rolled tea. The homestay was also an amazing experience, allowing me to learn how life in Japan truly is.

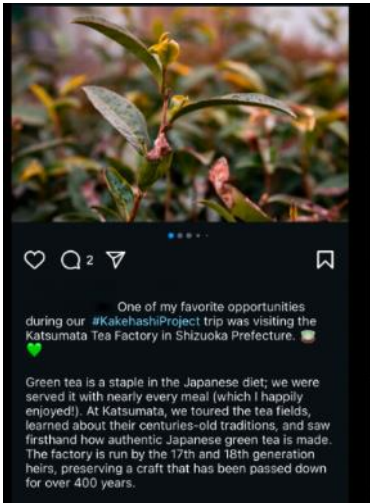
4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ Cooperating Organization

What overjoyed us the most was that the host families were so happy to have hosted the delegation. They were quite worried before accepting the delegation, but in the end, they enjoyed hosting them very much. The Atami cherry blossoms seemed to be about two weeks late in blooming this year, so they were not in full bloom, but it seemed like the delegation still enjoyed the scenery of Atami.

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc.

	
January 24, 2025 (Instagram) Our first two full days in Japan with the Kakehashi Project have been a whirlwind and so rewarding! We started in Tokyo with our first order of business, being a courtesy call visit with the First Lady. She was excited to receive us at the Prime Minister's office where we did a Q&A discussing the friendship between our countries and the importance of fostering traditional and new forms of communication simultaneously. ...	January 28, 2025 (Instagram) I am thankful for the Kakehashi Project which afforded me with the opportunity of a lifetime. Through my cultural exchange experience I was able to gain a greater understanding of Japan, its people, rich history, and core principles. I am honored to serve as a bridge between the US and Japan as we continue to strengthen our friendship. I explored the heart of Japan from Tokyo's vibrant streets to Shizuoka's serene tea fields Highlights: A powerful meeting with Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko followed by a meeting with Ms. ERI Arfiya, tea picking in Shizuoka, and the breathtaking winter blooms in Atami. Every stop reminded me of Japan's perfect blend of tradition and innovation-

	from ancient shrines to cutting-edge tech. Grateful for the warmth, hospitality, and rich culture that make this country so unique. I've learned how Japan beautifully balances tradition with innovation, values community and hospitality, and sees nature as a guide for living fully in the moment. I'm bringing this sense of mindfulness, respect for nature, and appreciation for both history and progress back to the US.
 One of my favorite opportunities during our #KakehashiProject trip was visiting the Katsumata Tea Factory in Shizuoka Prefecture. 🍵 Green tea is a staple in the Japanese diet; we were served it with nearly every meal (which I happily enjoyed!). At Katsumata, we toured the tea fields, learned about their centuries-old traditions, and saw firsthand how authentic Japanese green tea is made. The factory is run by the 17th and 18th generation heirs, preserving a craft that has been passed down for over 400 years.	 文化財防火デーに伴う消防演習を実施 文化財を火災から守ろう 消防演習の様子
January 30, 2025 (Instagram) One of my favorite opportunities during our Kakehashi Project trip was visiting the Katsumata Tea Factory in Shizuoka Prefecture. Green tea is a staple in the Japanese diet; we were served it with nearly every meal. At Katsumata, we toured the tea fields, learned about their centuries-old traditions, and saw firsthand how authentic Japanese green tea is made. The factory is run by the 17th and 18th generation heirs, preserving a craft that has been passed down for over 400 years. They showed us the step by step process to take tea from field to cup. ...	January 30, 2025 (Website of the Kojimachi Fire Station, Tokyo Fire Department) “Firefighting Exercise Held in Conjunction with Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties” On Monday, January 27, 2025, a firefighting exercise was held at Hie Shrine as part of the 71st Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties. ... Princess Delegates from the United States, who came to Japan as part of the “KAKEHASHI Project,” a Japan's Friendship Ties Program promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also observed the firefighting exercise.

	
February 3, 2025 (Website of Mr. NUKAGA Fukushima, Head of the Japan Cherry Blossom Association) “Princess Delegates and Queen’s Courtesy Call”	February 3, 2025 (Instagram page of the Local Network Service Shizuoka Japan) “Four Cherry Blossom Princesses from the KAKEHASHI Project came to visit Shizuoka!”

6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session

Locations: Tokyo, Shizuoka (Presentations by a total of 2 groups)

Group 1 (2 participants)	
	
【Results of the Program】 Learning and Findings: - We learned about the state of Japan’s communal society (consideration for others, clean city and trains, safe environment where kids can go home alone), preservation of tradition, and balanced lifestyle. At shrines, even cars and babies receive blessings, showing the importance of culture and tradition to the Japanese people. The cherry blossom symbol on emergency services is deeply connected to the Japanese heart. - We had the opportunity to think about consideration for others, simplicity, commitment to quality, social responsibility, and cultural preservation. Personal Outlooks: - I want to make an effort to preserve my own cultural heritage. - I want to make time to make traditions that bring meaning to my life. 【Action Plan】 - Publish a digital magazine or newsletter featuring photos, reflections, and insights from Japan. I will complete this by mid-March and distribute them by the first week of April. This will raise awareness of Japanese culture and encourage people to participate in cultural exchange	

programs like the KAKEHASHI Project.

Also, I will give presentations about the KAKEHASHI Project at local events such as the Rhode Island Japan-America Society's events and the 2025 Cherry Blossom Princess Program.

2. I will dedicate a day to lessons about Japan in the world geography class at the school where I work. I will also host a Japan Culture Day to introduce students to Japanese culture through arts, cuisine, language, and history, promoting cultural exchange and understanding between Japan and the U.S.

Group 2 (2 participants)



【Results of the Program】

Learning and Findings:

1. We noticed a cultural fusion with a Vietnamese mother in the host family. The father also participated in household chores and childcare.
2. At the Miraikan (National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation), we learned more about JAXA. The exhibits provided valuable information on how Japan views international cooperation for launching spacecrafts from Florida to the International Space Station.

Personal Outlooks:

1. I want to work on expanding OCIO services for the Japanese market as a nexus between finance and cross-cultural exchange.
2. One of my career avenues involves emergency and disaster management. I expressed my interest in collaborating with the female chief of the Gotemba City Fire Brigade soon. I plan to reference Japan's emergency management procedures to improve existing ones in Florida.

【Action Plan】

1. As a Fulbright scholar going to Zambia for research, I will hold a workshop for my peers to present my learnings and experiences from this visit to Japan (around August). I will also share this on the Fulbright blog (by March 31, pending approval). I will present about the KAKEHASHI Project at the NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies) and volunteer with the Cherry Blossom Princess program to connect with the next princess delegates (by April 20).
2. To cooperate with Japan's emergency management, I will contact the female chief of the Gotemba City Fire Brigade. I will start a blog detailing my experiences through this program. I will include the KAKEHASHI Project in Florida's 2025 Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan. I will prepare this immediately upon returning and complete it by February.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)