

外国人客員所員を経験して

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My stay at ISSP

I stayed at ISSP for 3 months, from June to August 2014, thanks to a *visiting professor* position, to work in collaboration with Professor Kato Takeo. My collaboration with Prof. Kato started some years ago, and I had already made a few short trips to Japan to visit his group, but this was my first « long stay » in Japan. As I could chose the date of my stay so as to include the French summer holidays, my family (my wife and our 8 years old daughter) had the opportunity to join me in Japan in July and August.

Let me first discuss the material conditions of the stay, which were truly excellent and hassle-free. I can say that everything was taken care of for me ! Lodging was provided in a large and comfortable appartement, in the Kashiwanoha international lodge. I particularly liked that fact that this large building is the residence of many Japanese families; simply staying there was an excellent way to observe and experience true Japanese (modern) life ! The location of the lodge is also very convenient, because it is halfway between the Kashiwa campus, and the Kashiwanoha Tsukuba express station. Both are reached in five minutes by bike, which were also provided. We were really happy to have bikes for all the family members (even my daughter - with special thanks to Prof. Oshikawa for providing her a bike). Living in France in a location where we are heavily dependent on our cars for every displacement, it was extremely nice and relaxing to go everywhere either by bike or by train !

The goal of my stay was of course the scientific collaboration, and this aspect of my stay was also excellent. I enjoyed the regular seminar of the theory group. The ISSP being a very large laboratory, with a great diversity of research, I had the opportunity to discuss with other researchers, including experimentalists, about their work, which for a theoretician like me is very valuable. Being at ISSP as a visitor also meant that I was free of many time-consuming things which are common at my home laboratory, like meetings and administrative duties. I could thus concentrate on the research projects only, which is an effective way to make progress and learn new tools or techniques. During my stay, I learned and practiced, among other things, semi-classical techniques to compute transport properties in superconductors. The goal being to apply these well-established techniques to new, unconventional types of superconductors (P-wave superconductor), which are experimentally studied at the ISSP.

The environment of the Kashiwa campus as a whole was also very positive. I was particularly impressed by the quality of the Japanese courses which were provided for the foreign students and visitors. I could attend Japanese classes nearly every day of the week, with three different professors. In addition, thanks to the exchange program provided by the University, we had the opportunity to meet regularly a Japanese family, which was also an excellent way to learn « real Japanese langage », and to experience the authentic Japanese life.

I wish to thank the people which made this stay possible and enjoyable. First Prof. Kato, which took care of the invitation process, and with which I enjoyed work and discussions on a daily basis. Eguchi-san, from the secretary service of the theory group, which responded kindly and very efficiently to my numerous work-related requests. And Kameda-san and Seki-san of the International Liaison Office, which were in charge of the billions of things related to the practical aspects of my stay, and which were able to fulfill all my requests and answer all my questions.

To conclude on a lighter tone, let me tell this short story, which shows one example (among many) of how some things in Japan, which may look totally natural (and maybe even boring) for Japanese people, look so different and interesting for us. Each week, I was totally surprised by the song which is played on Friday at 3pm sharp (and so were my French colleagues who visited ISSP in July) ! It seems that suddenly, out of nowhere, this very peculiar song is played, in sharp contrast with the overall atmosphere of the place. After asking for explanations, I understood that it does in fact make sense, since it announces a coffee break with the famous song associated with the Nescafe brand, song which is immediately recognized by all the Japanese people. But for us foreigner, it just feels like we are suddenly in the middle of some fairytale !

It is the combination of these small surprising details, with the truly excellent scientific and material conditions, with made my stay both very enjoyable and professionally successful.

