

Report on completion of the short-stay study abroad program

School and Dept.: Multidisciplinary Sciences, Department of Informatics

Present Year: Doctoral course 3rd year of 3-year PhD course.

Name: Zhao Lihua

Destination country: France

Receiving univ./institute: French National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control

INRIA Grenoble Rhone-Alpes

Period of study: 17/08/2013 – 22/09/2013 (5 weeks)

1. Information regarding (or) A general description of the receiving university/institute

INRIA is a public science and technology institution established in 1967, which is the only public research body fully dedicated to computational sciences. Combining computer sciences with mathematics, INRIA's 3,400 researchers strive to invent the digital technologies of the future. The Inria Grenoble – Rhône-Alpes centre was established in 1992. The centre currently has 34 research teams, 200 researchers and lecturers, 250 PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, and 80 engineers, technicians, and administrative staff.

2. Preparation before leaving Japan

I heard of this program from other students who are accepted for this short-stay study abroad program last year. Hence, when SOKENDAI sent notification email, I applied immediately. The first thing I have to do was looking for a research centre that is related to my research. With the recommendation of my supervisor, I got acceptance from prof. Jerome Euzenat in INRIA, who is a famous professor in the ontology matching field.

The topic of my research and in the visiting lab of INRIA is similar and we could help each other by collaborating our ideas. I met the professor in an international conference last May and discussed possible collaborative work with him. Since my PhD defense was before the visiting INRIA, I completed my doctoral thesis before leaving Japan.

In order to visit France, I needed an invitation letter from INRIA to apply for visa. They also asked me to fill out some documents to pass the security check in INRIA. Before leaving, I had to schedule my trip such as booking hotels, air tickets, and train tickets.

3. Study and/or research during the stay

I didn't register any course in INRIA.

I discussed possible collaborative work with professor and post-doctoral researchers in the lab and tried some tools implemented by the lab for further improvement of my research. I also did presentation of my PhD research work for some professors and researchers from INRIA, University of Grenoble, and University of Lyon.

The daily research life in INRIA is similar to Japan. We can visit professor's office to discuss problems and also discuss with other lab members. Other than doing research on their tools, I also continued to work for my own work.

4. Activities other than study or research during the stay

Grenoble is almost surrounded by mountains of Alpes, hence on weekends I did hiking and also visited city centre and nearby cities - Lyon and Annecy.

5. Expenses

The living expenses are similar to Japan. However, if you want to save money for travel expenses, it's better to reserve tickets 1-2 months in advance. The fare train tickets can be found on the website (<http://www.voyages-sncf.com/>), and it's cheaper if you buy it earlier than your departure. If travel many days by TGV train (similar to Shinkansen), it's better to buy the rail pass ticket inside Japan (<http://www.raileurope-japan.com>).

6. Language at the receiving university/institute

The languages used in INRIA are English and French. Since most of the people in the research centre can speak English, you don't have to speak French for discussion.

7. Things you found difficult (if any)

Outside of INRIA, you need French for ordering food or reading information. Also the regulations of tram and bus tickets are complicated, and not many people in the city can speak English. Furthermore, most of the shops and supermarkets are closed on sundays and after 7pm on weekdays, which is inconvenient for shopping. I think the most difficult thing living in Grenoble was food. I recommend to bring some instance rice and miso soup when you travel in Europe.

8. Advice for future applicants

This short stay abroad program can bring you a good opportunity to meet many researchers from abroad and from different research field. You will gain a good research experience and broaden your research networks with professors and researchers. I highly recommend SOKENDAI students to apply this program to challenge yourself working abroad and communicate with researchers in other institutes.