

Visit to Japan 23-28 October 2006

By prof. Richard T. Griffiths

My visit to Japan was to advance our discussions for a student exchange between Leiden and Japanese centres of European Union Studies. As part of the trip, I lectured a group of students on the coal and steel origins of the present-day European Union and I also addressed a staff seminar on Euroscepticism in Europe, and especially the negative French and Dutch referenda outcomes on the Constitutional Treaty. With our friend there, we discussed the outline of an agreement, and the possibilities for research collaboration in the future.



My previous visit had been over a decade ago and I was eager to see what changes had taken place – especially to prices. Last time, we simply doubled all European prices, and only then decided if anything was expensive; the alternative would have been never to venture from ones room. A decade of deflation and a weak currency made at least this visit affordable, with prices not much higher than London, and many even lower!

Japan has always captivated me by the simple elegance of its style, and a side-trip to Kyoto reaffirmed this, whether it be the Golden temple or the neighbouring Zen gardens.



I also managed to squeeze in a first-time visit Himeji castle, a restored colossus from the late 16th century, a mixture of visual pleasure and murderous efficiency.



If everything goes to plan, from next year students will have the opportunity of spending a short study visit in Japan in connection with their thesis topics, and we may be receiving Japanese researchers and students here in Leiden.