



Hello everyone.

I'm Arno, the new Belgian CIR in Kanazawa!

I say new, but I just finished my fifth month here. It has still only been a fairly short time, and it sure flew by. I want to share my experiences for anyone who might one day be thinking of becoming a CIR in the future!

It is worth mentioning that for pretty much the first time ever, more than one Belgian was chosen to become a CIR in Japan starting August 2024. So I left with 3 lovely colleagues for Tokyo. They would be going to different cities in Japan. I sincerely hope that the Belgians leave a deep impression where they are stationed, so that it becomes tradition for a Belgian to work there, and more Japanologists get the opportunity to live and work in Japan as a JET. Here's a picture of 'the gang' at the hotel in Tokyo where we spent the first few days at orientation. The more the merrier, I suppose, as a fifth Belgian arrived in Japan in November to start as a CIR. It is truly unheard of that more than one Belgian is a CIR at the same time so the fact that there are now 5, is very exciting news.

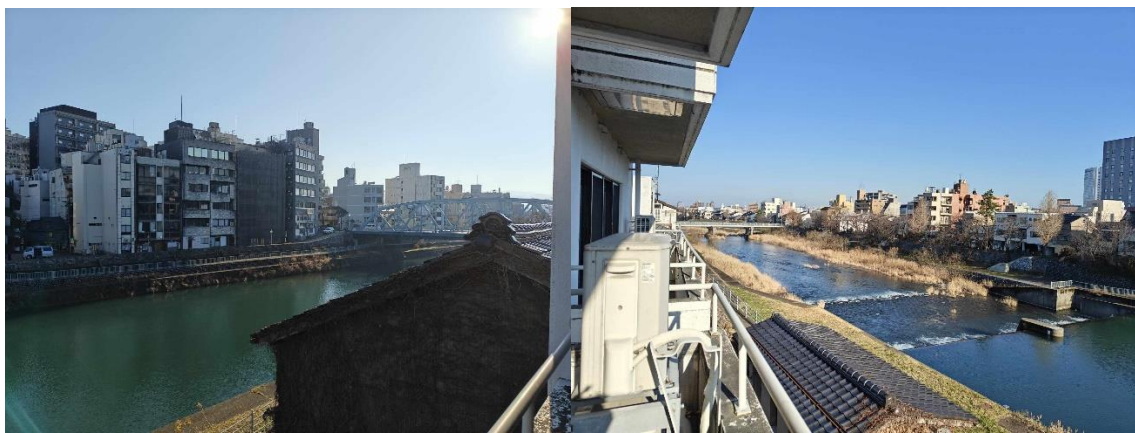


I'll mainly talk about my experiences during the first (hectic) days after becoming a CIR.

The JET-program had arranged everything for us prior to departing for Japan. The tickets for the plane were booked so that us 4 CIR-to-be's were seated next to each other. It was fun getting to know the other Belgians and not being alone on the long flight. It also made it all less daunting, knowing I was not alone and other people were going through exactly the same experience as me. When we arrived in Tokyo, a bus was waiting for us to take us to a hotel and we had to send one of our pieces of luggage ahead to the contracting organization (in my case, the Kanazawa city hall). The orientation itself was a bit rough because of the jetlag. We arrived at the hotel at 10pm and the following morning, we had orientation so no time to rest. You share the hotel room with one or two other new CIR's (in my case a Finnish and a Danish guy). Everything was super well organized by both the JET program and by the Kanazawa city hall. After the three days of orientation, we were sent to our respective cities, and I flew to Komatsu airport. Upon arriving, my superior was waiting for me holding a sign welcoming me.



First stop: the city hall where I would start working. The first day was pretty hectic (but memorable!), being taken to the city hall straight from the airport, still recovering from jetlag, 35 degrees heat, sitting through the longwinded explanation of various contracts (electricity, my apartment contract, getting a phone number, registering as a resident of Kanazawa and so forth), meeting my new colleagues, ... . As a CIR in Kanazawa, you can take over the apartment of the previous CIR. This was by far the most convenient choice and I don't regret it one bit. It didn't take long to furnish it and it truly feels like home now! I am especially happy with the view of the Saigawa river!



The CIR job content varies from place to place, and I might give a more detailed overview of my experiences in a later report. But to sum it all up very briefly, I help bridge the (cultural) gap between Kanazawa and its sister city Ghent, I provide language support (interpreting, translating Japanese/Dutch/English where needed, I spread Belgian culture here in Japan through school visits and the like, and lastly, I promote Kanazawa and its culture abroad. I could write so much more, but maybe for a future post! I put some pictures of some highlights of my time here below.

Arno out.



＜Me interpreting for the mayor during a French delegation visit.



＜Me receiving first aid and getting carried in the back of an ambulance during a first aid training session.



< “Boomstammetjes met bloemkool in de kaassaus en patatten”, which I taught the locals to make! 😊 The Japanese all ate it with chopsticks...