

Dr. KAGAWA Kotaro

My research

In recent years, it's been found that interspecific hybridization can trigger the rapid evolution of various species. That is, hybridization via mixing and combining genes from different species can create many novel species that colonize new environments. Although being a powerful driver of evolution, hybridization seems unlikely to affect evolution outside the location where hybridization occurred. The lab where I am working has, however, found a case where a single hybridization event has promoted species diversification in multiple geographically distant areas. My study aims to clarify how hybridization-induced genetic variation can spread over wide areas and promote repeated species diversification in distant areas.

Advice on preparing to go abroad

As acquiring a visa will probably require mediation by your host research institution, it's a good idea to consult with them early on. My host institution is located in the Swiss state of Luzern, where the annual stipend of the Overseas Research Fellowship is several ten-thousands of yen insufficient for meeting the requirements to obtain a visitor's visa. In my case, the host institution covered the remaining salary, allowing me to obtain the visa. If your stipend should be insufficient by a small amount to obtain a visa, there may be a good chance that your host institution will supplement the remaining amount. So, you should consult with them right away. Also, persons residing in Switzerland must purchase health insurance. To do so, you will need to obtain a local telephone number and bank account number. You should get them as soon as you arrive in the country.

Advice on problems that may arise when living abroad

Switzerland is a country of good public safety. While residing here I have not experienced any serious problems regarding my research or my daily life. You may think that, upon your arrival in country, your host institution will provide you temporary lodging while you look for a place to rent. When searching for housing I found things that took a lot of time and effort. With the system I encountered, it takes 2-3 months to secure housing. I first searched for a room from a website advertising for renters. Then, I visited the site and talked to the current tenants, after which I consulted with the landlord about renting a room. Among the people seeking to rent the room, one was chosen to sign the contract. If other Japanese

researchers are residing in your destination country, it would be a good idea to contact them for information. Speaking from my own experience, I met a Japanese researcher who had been living in Switzerland for many years. He gave me a wealth of information that was beneficial to my daily living.

What is it like living abroad?

Depending on the area of Switzerland, people may speak Swiss-German, French and Italian. As, however, the majority of people can speak English to one degree or another, one can get by in Switzerland speaking English. Regarding housing, from a Japanese sense of rental fees, the cost of housing is quite high. In the area where I live, it was very difficult to find a room rental fee of less than ¥100,000. However, the room quality is high proportionate to the fee. The cost of living here is 2 to 3 times higher than in Japan.

What is good about your receiving a Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad?

One advantage to living abroad has for me been engaging in many discussions on new research in a location central to pursuing research in my field. From this experience, I have gained many ideas connected to the next stage of my research. For example, I had read in advance research papers issued from my host institution. Staying there has given me the opportunity to learn about unresolved issues not yet published in research papers. Talking about these issues has helped me to find new research themes. I am very thankful for the opportunity this Fellowship gives me to freely pursue research on my chosen themes.