



A delegation of North Carolina lawyers that visited Tokyo and Kyoto last fall squeezed in as much sightseeing as it could between meetings with executives and legal professionals.

# Kon'nichiwa, NCBA

## Attorney Exchange Program Immerses Travelers In Japanese Business, Culture

*By David Robinson*

Nine N.C. lawyers and a few family members traveled to Japan this past October for a 10-day exchange trip as delegates of the North Carolina Bar Association's Attorney Exchange Program.

This diverse group of lawyers (big firm, small firm; different practices; from five different N.C. cities) traveled at the invitation of the Dai-ni Tokyo Bar Association, the fastest growing and now the largest bar association in Japan. The delegation met with both the Dai-ni Tokyo leadership, and also with the leadership of the Kyoto Bar Association during its stay in Japan. An official invitation letter was hand delivered to the Dai-ni Bar Association, inviting them to send a reciprocal delegation to North Carolina in 2018. It was a busy 10 days!

Thankfully, the first day in Tokyo for many of the delegates was a holiday in Japan — sports day, which is taking on increased importance with the Tokyo Summer Olympics just around the corner in 2020. Following this first day of acclimation and orientation, during the first three business days in Tokyo, the delegation met with Sumio Shibata, director of North Carolina's Trade Office in Japan; Shiro Akiyama from JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization); Youquing Ma and Tamami Honda from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo; Andy Conrad, general counsel for AFLAC in Japan; the leadership of the Dai-ni Bar Association; three representatives of the Development Bank of Japan; and

seven partners with Nishimura & Asahi, the largest law firm in Japan. Day 4 was a free day for sightseeing or individual business meetings.

On Day 5, the delegates traveled to Kyoto to attend a law school class at Doshisha University Law School on the legal structures of Japan, and to meet with the Kyoto Bar Association leadership, followed by informal conversations into the night with several Kyoto lawyers. After a weekend as tourists (temples, nature and monkeys) in Kyoto, the delegates returned to Tokyo for a final trade briefing with Atsuyuki Oike, Japan's Cabinet Secretariat and Deputy Chief Negotiator for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Along the way, the delegates were exposed to a number of 'things Japanese,' including making Japanese lunches for Tokyo homeless, attending a briefing on the foreign prison population in Japan, experiencing the Robot Restaurant, watching sumo wrestlers practice, experiencing one of the most chaotic shopping streets in the world, and eating a LOT of Japanese food.

The section is looking forward to hosting the Dai-ni Bar Association lawyers in 2018 to continue the dialogue initiated during this trip. As always, the section is indebted to the NCBA for its outstanding support of the Attorney Exchange Program, and specifically to Julianne Dambro, our International Law & Practice Section liaison, for her logistical support along the way. *JCL*

