

A tale of two cities

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“Only in New Orleans” is a phrase often used to express the uniqueness of the Crescent City. But one Tulane University professor believes there is a place with similar quirks ? Kyoto, Japan.



On a two-week trip to Kyoto, Japan, Tulane architecture students found a machiya, an urban townhouse common in Kyoto, to be comparable to the shotgun homes of New Orleans. (Photos from Kentaro Tsubaki)

[Kentaro Tsubaki](#), assistant professor of architecture, found the resemblance striking enough to lead a group of 11 students on a [trip](#) this summer to study the architectural links between the two cities.

“Architectural decisions have a lot to do with climate,” says Tsubaki. “Kyoto and New Orleans have very humid, almost tropical environments, so their structures follow similar trends.”

Students on the two-week trip found a machiya, an urban townhouse common in Kyoto, to be comparable to the shotgun homes of New Orleans.

“The houses have narrow entrances and rooms that line up one behind the other. They're definitely similar to a shotgun,” says William Nemitoff, a rising fifth-year

architecture student.

Nemitoff also was reminded of New Orleans while observing the strong relationship Kyoto residents have to the Kamo River. “Like us, people in Kyoto orient themselves by the direction of the river.”

The expedition was largely funded by the Japan Foundation, which supports international travel programs that promote and enhance understanding of Japanese culture. Each student received \$2,500 to supplement costs of travel, room and board.

Graduate student Alison Rex always hoped for the opportunity to study in Japan. “Most architecture schools only have Western study-abroad options, but the movement toward efficiency and sustainability makes Japan very relevant,” says Rex.

The students will reconvene with Tsubaki in a course this fall to research and evaluate how contextual restraints of cities inform the design of structures.

“It's important for students to understand the relationship between a building and the city it's in,” says Tsubaki.

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