

2025 UPDATE

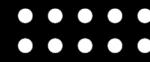
# IMMERSIVE TRAVEL FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

## MY HOMETOWN PROJECT



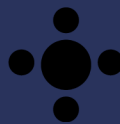
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LEARNING FUTURIST

# Project Summary



The My Hometown Project is an immersive learning initiative that connects students and educators worldwide through virtual cultural exchange. By creating and sharing VR tours of their own hometowns, participants invite others into their personal worlds—telling stories, showcasing local culture, and fostering empathy across borders. The project blends technology and storytelling, using tools like smartphones, VR headsets, and a custom-built online platform to transform local experiences into global learning opportunities. At its core, it encourages students to become subject-matter experts of their own lives, building confidence, communication skills, and a deeper sense of identity while simultaneously learning about immersive media design and the future of digital tourism.

Since its launch in 2016, the project has grown from classroom-based experiments into a global network of participants spanning Asia, Europe, and beyond. The pandemic accelerated its role as a meaningful alternative to study abroad, offering sustainable ways to connect across cultures when physical travel was limited. Today, the My Hometown Project stands as both a course and a platform—part virtual travel showcase, part training ground for next-generation skills in AR/VR and storytelling. Whether joining individually or as part of a class, students not only learn how to design immersive experiences but also step into a shared digital space where they can meet, exchange, and reimagine what it means to learn about the world together.



# Immersive Workshops

The Future Hub's Immersive Learning Lab in Kyoto is a purpose-built space for hands-on workshops that explore the frontiers of education and technology. Designed around the principles of Immersive Learning Design, the lab integrates advanced tools such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) to create highly interactive and engaging learning experiences. Its open, flexible layout supports both individual exploration and collaborative projects, providing students, educators, and professionals with an environment to test ideas, develop skills, and reimagine how knowledge is shared.

At the heart of the lab is the U Theatre, a state-of-the-art 180-degree immersive theatre where storytelling meets innovation. This unique environment enables participants to step inside simulations, cultural experiences, and interactive narratives that enhance creativity, problem-solving, and empathy. Workshops hosted in the Immersive Learning Lab are adaptable in format—from one-day or two-day intensives to blended training experiences—and can be tailored to areas such as tourism, language learning, digital literacy, or game design.

**Upon completion, participants are awarded a certificate of completion, which can carry academic or professional recognition depending on the context in which it is delivered.**



# Certificate Course

The Certificate Course Pathway offers a structured yet flexible way to participate in the My Hometown Project, designed for both academic integration and professional development. This pathway combines the advantages of self-paced online coursework with the accountability and support of scheduled live online sessions, creating a balanced learning environment that adapts to different schedules and learning preferences. Students and professionals alike can progress through the program's 10 stages at their own pace, developing skills in immersive media, storytelling, and digital tourism, while also benefiting from periodic live check-ins for feedback, collaboration, and guided instruction.

For universities, this format can be integrated as a credit-bearing elective or a co-curricular experience, complementing programs in tourism, media, education, or global studies. For professionals, the certificate serves as evidence of newly acquired competencies in AR/VR and digital storytelling, providing career-enhancing credentials.

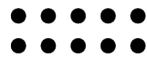


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# Integration Options

THE MY HOMETOWN PROJECT CAN BE INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING PROGRAMS OR COURSEWORK IN FLEXIBLE FORMATS THAT BALANCE LIVE INTERACTION WITH SELF-PACED IMMERSIVE LEARNING.



## Bookend Workshop Model

- Start and finish with live, face-to-face or online workshops.
- Use the time in-between for self-paced online coursework.
- Works well for semester-long classes or themed modules.



## Immersive Lab Experience

- Host a one- or two-day visit to the lab for hands-on training.
- Students practice VR/AR tools and storytelling in an intensive format.
- Can serve as a special event, capstone, or study-abroad alternative.



# PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

**SOME OF THE PARTICIPATING  
PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD**

**KYOTO UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES**  
Kyoto, Japan

**GADJAH MADA UNIVERSITY**  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO**  
Bergamo, Italy

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**  
Penang, Malaysia

**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
Manilla, Philippines

# TESTIMONIALS

## WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING ASPECTS OF THIS PROJECT IS  
THE WAY STUDENTS ARE REPORTING A SENSE OF  
TOGETHERNESS AND EMPATHY FOR FELLOW PARTICIPANTS  
ALL OVER THE WORLD



**AKARI SONE**  
KAGAWA, JAPAN

"マイホームタウンプロジェクトの  
中で改めて地元の魅力を感じられて  
ICTの進化に驚きながらも一生懸命  
勉強できたかなと思います"



**SHAFIRA AZZAHRA**  
PALEMBANG, SOUTH SUMATRA

"I feel like I have learned a myriad of  
skills that will help me navigate the  
tourism and hospitality industry in  
my country"



# FEATURED ON TEDx

Faced with the challenge of empty classrooms, borders closed to tourists, and online learning; learning futurist Eric Hawkinson conceived the my hometown project that enables students anywhere in the world to create online virtual tours to their hometowns, giving them valuable skills, and enabling new human connections. This talk was presented to a local audience at TEDxChiangMaiLive, an independent event.



## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

TED Conferences, LLC (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is an American media organization that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". TED was conceived by Richard Saul Wurman, who co-founded it with Harry Marks in February 1984 as a conference; it has been held annually since 1990. TED's early emphasis was on technology and design, consistent with its Silicon Valley origins. It has since broadened its perspective to include talks on many scientific, cultural, political, humanitarian and academic topics. It has been curated by Chris Anderson, a British-American businessman, through the non-profit TED Foundation since July 2019



ERIC HAWKINSON



# AWARD WINNING



**TIS** TOURISM  
INNOVATION  
SUMMIT

THE TOURISM INNOVATION AWARDS, HELD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF TIS – TOURISM INNOVATION SUMMIT, REWARD OUTSTANDING INNOVATION PROJECTS CREATED TO BOOST USER EXPERIENCE WHILE INTEGRATING NEW BUSINESS MODELS OR USING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN BRING A CHANGE IN THE CURRENT TOURISM LANDSCAPE. THE AWARDS RECOGNISE THE INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS THAT ARE COMMITTED TO INNOVATION, DIGITALISATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE TOURISM SECTOR.



**UNWTO**

World Tourism Organization

HEALING SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM CHALLENGE  
UNWTO RECEIVED OVER 1,000 APPLICATIONS FROM OVER 100 COUNTRIES FOR THE HEALING SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM CHALLENGE, LAUNCHED TO IDENTIFY THE MOST DISRUPTIVE STARTUPS, ENTREPRENEURS AND DRIVE SOLUTIONS TO MITIGATE COVID-19'S IMPACT ON TOURISM.



# ABOUT THE HOST

**ERIC HAWKINSON - LEARNING FUTURIST**

**ERICHAWKINSON.COM**

**PROFESSOR - KYOTO UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES**

**FOUNDER - TOGETHER LEARNING**

**RESEARCH COORDINATOR - MAVR IMMERSIVE LEARNING SIG**

EDUCATOR, AUTHOR, SPEAKER, RESEARCHER, DEVELOPER, TECHNOLOGIST, FATHER, HUSBAND, TEACHER, SCI-FI NERD



Eric is a learning futurist, tinkering with and designing technologies that may better inform the future of teaching and learning. Eric is president and research coordinator of MAVR, a research group working in immersive technologies for teaching and learning, and more specifically, augmented and virtual realities in language learning. Eric's day job is at the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies where he teaches courses and conducts research on issues related to technology in tourism and education. Eric also leads a team of interactive media designers for TEDxKyoto. His passion project, ARientation is an award winning, free-to-use, privacy-by-design augmented learning platform to rapid prototype augmented learning environments, also aiming to spread awareness of increasing aggressive data collection models using immersive technology. Eric's other projects have included augmented tourism rallies, AR community art exhibitions, mixed reality escape rooms, and other experiments in immersive technology.