

## **Exchange at Ochanomizu University**

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My six-month exchange in Japan has come to an end. These past six months has been the most wonderful and life changing experience for me; full of adventures across Japan, new friends, challenges and opportunities. I've grown academically, professionally and personally, both inside and outside of the classroom, and I am so grateful that I was able to embark on this incredible journey.

I was originally intent on studying at Ochanomizu University for one year, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic that changed all of our lives I was only able to come for six months. Although I am forever grateful that I was able to come at all, I would have loved to extend my stay. To anyone wishing to complete an international exchange – do it! You have nothing to lose, and this once in a lifetime opportunity will change your life forever in so many ways.

All of my classes were in Japanese, apart from one class in English which I chose to take. This was related to my political science major at UTS. In choosing my classes, I knew I wasn't just here to learn the language, but to open my eyes to new and differing perspectives of the other students and teachers at Ochanomizu.

Regarding my Japanese language and culture classes, I believe I have most improved in my listening comprehension and my confidence speaking in front of a crowd. However, I believe I improved most noticeably outside of the classroom, such as having casual conversations with friends, attending exchange events and the conversation used in my ordinary daily life. If I could give one piece of advice to anyone going on exchange, it would be this: don't be afraid to make mistakes, take chances and put yourself out there. It's scary at first, but the only way to succeed is to learn from your mistakes.

I explored Tokyo and its outskirts with friends and by myself. Being on your own is scary at first, but something that every human should be comfortable doing. Some of the highlights of my Tokyo travels include Nakamise shopping street in Asakusa, climbing Mount Takao, visiting Mori Hills Sky Deck in Roppongi and seeing the Tokyo illuminations in Roppongi, Marunouchi, Omotesando and Shinjuku.

During November, there was a National Holiday, and I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to Osaka for the long weekend with some friends. This was my first time outside of Tokyo, and my first time on a bullet train! It was a much-needed escape from the bustling city life that I'd grown accustomed to.

Over the winter break, my boyfriend flew to Japan from Australia. Seeing a familiar face from home was something I can't describe. We travelled to Kyoto for Christmas, and spent Christmas Day eating Kyoto-style sushi (incredible!) and hopping from temple to temple. We visited Kinkakuji, Arashiyama bamboo forest, Fushimi Inari, Hakodateyama Ski Area and more. Upon returning to Tokyo for New Years, we embarked on more adventures

including the Tokyo Skytree observatory which was 450 metres above sea level (in my opinion, the most beautiful view in all of Tokyo).

To all my teachers at Ochanomizu University, to Ms. Ohno from the International Office, and to my academic advisor Mr Oyabu, and to our coordinator Ms. Hagiwara; I want to thank each and every one of you for your kind support, endless advice and for every procedure that made my exchange possible.

Photo 1: The top of Mt. Takao which we reached right at sunset, giving us the perfect view of Mt Fuji and surrounding mountains.

Photo 2: The view from Tokyo Skytree, the highest tower in the world.

