

## Exchange Student in Japan

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Due to the coronavirus, my experience as an exchange student was a little difficult at first. I was supposed to start studying at Ochanomizu University in October 2020. However, I was unable to come to Japan until this year due to immigration restrictions. This was my 3rd year applying. Because Japan only started allowing foreign exchange students to enter the country at the beginning of the year, my preparations to enter Japan felt very rushed. Because of this, speaking the language was quite difficult at first as I had no time to study or revise in the run up to my flight. On top of this, I also took a gap year during the pandemic. However, living in Tokyo, it is necessary to speak Japanese all the time in day to day life, so I got used to it pretty quickly with the help of my classes.

This term, I took a mixture of classes that I thought were my level and ones that were more challenging. I felt that this was a good balance as I did not feel constantly stressed and out of my depth thanks to more relaxed classes, but I also felt like I was challenging myself and working hard with the more difficult classes. It is very nerve-wracking for me to give presentations in Japanese in front of my classmates but because of these presentations I think I have become more confident in speaking Japanese. I feel very motivated to learn more next term.

From October up until now I have been able to visit many places. The first week I arrived in Japan I stayed with a host family in Fukuoka, which I really appreciated as it helped me get used to the Japanese lifestyle and language without having to worry about classes straight away. My host family also helped me with many complicated immigration documents so I feel very grateful to have met them.





After I moved into my Tokyo Dorm, I mainly focused on my studies but I did a lot of traveling during the winter holiday. My partner came to visit at Christmas and we did a lot of sightseeing as it was his first time in Japan. We went on the Ferris wheel at the Tokyo Dome, saw a lot of pretty Christmas lights and also went ice skating on the rooftop of the

GINZA SIX building. However, I think the best experience was going to the Studio Ghibli museum in Mikata. Because I study film alongside Japanese at Birkbeck, I am very interested in Studio Ghibli and love their work a lot. The museum is very amazing and inspiring so I recommend it. We also climbed Mount Takao during the winter break. The view from the mountain top is amazing but I do not exercise a lot so the climb was very tiring for me

There were many people who helped me during my study abroad who I would like to thank. First of all I want to thank the teachers. Thanks to them I was able to learn a lot of useful things, not only about the language but also the culture and lifestyle so I am very grateful. Next, I would like to thank the International Affairs Division. Without them I might not have been able to come to Japan as smoothly. Thank you so much for sharing the news about the COVID-19 situation in Japan, always giving me advice quickly when I needed it. Finally, I am most grateful to my tutor, Moeka. Thank you for meeting and talking to me every Friday. I really enjoyed learning about your hobbies and interests. Talking with her every week has given me the opportunity to have more natural Japanese conversations instead of learning from a textbook. Because of her I don't feel lonely in Japan, and it has been really cool to have the opportunity to talk with a Japanese student like. Thank you for all your guidance and help since I came to Japan.

