

My Study Abroad Experience So Far Chantelle Oliver-Nwachukwu

I have always admired Japan and Japanese culture for a long time, so I was very excited when it was finally my turn to study abroad for a whole year. However, there were also obvious nerves, as it had been a long time since I had been on an airplane, let alone traveled to a foreign country for such an extended period. Despite my initial worries, this experience has been life-changing so far. I have learned so much about Japan, improved my language skills, and made many friends from all over the world.

My first impressions of Ochanomizu University were very positive. It was a lot smaller than my home university, which I appreciated because it made it easier to navigate. Everything was accessible to me, including my dorm room, the cafeteria, and the halls where I attended classes.

When I first started attending classes, I was concerned that I wouldn't get along with my classmates, that I wouldn't be able to communicate with my teachers, or that I wouldn't understand the content being taught. However, I was relieved to find that this was not the case. Everyone in my class was kind and fun to talk to, and the teachers were approachable and enjoyable to have conversations with. I quickly realized that I had many people I could rely on when it came to getting my schoolwork done.

I have been amazed at how much I have already learned from my classes in just half a year. For example, in my kanji classes, I learned different types of kanji, which made reading signs and menus in Tokyo much easier. Another class provided an overview of Japanese culture, which sparked my interest in learning more about Japanese celebrations and traditions. I also took a class on Japanese onomatopoeia, and I now use some of these expressions in my daily life.

On my first weekend in Tokyo, one of the first things I did was visit Ikebukuro, as I am a fan of Japanese anime and manga. My first impression was that the sheer amount of anime, manga, and like-minded people roaming around was incredible. There were so many shops I had read about or heard of online that it was almost overwhelming. Even now, every time I visit Ikebukuro, I am always surprised by new cafés or shops opening and the variety of events I can participate in. I especially enjoy going to the cinemas in Ikebukuro as a way to relax and watch Japanese films that I wouldn't have had the chance to see back home. My day would be even better when I stopped by my favorite curry shop, CoCo Ichibanya, for a nice lunch or dinner.

Other places in Japan that I have visited and enjoyed include Akihabara, where I could see even more anime and manga that I love; Yokohama, which has a giant mall and air cabins that

provided stunning views of the rivers; and Shinjuku, where I explored Kabukicho and experienced a batting cage for the first time, which was a lot of fun.

One of the biggest highlights of my time in Japan so far was attending an idol convention at Makuhari Messe. It was an unforgettable experience where I met many people, including those who have worked in the gaming industry and my favorite seiyuus (voice actors). I also had the opportunity to admire artists' hard work and try all sorts of new things. This event also gave me a great chance to practice my Japanese conversation skills, as there were very few foreigners at the convention, so I had to rely on my Japanese.



Overall, my time in Japan has been incredibly enjoyable so far. I am looking forward to further improving my studies and interacting with the new students who will join us next term. I also want to continue exploring different parts of Japan. A place I would love to visit is Osaka, as I have heard great things about it. Additionally, I want to explore more areas of Tokyo, such as Ginza and Harajuku, which I have not had the chance to see yet.