

My experience as an exchange student in Japan

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From April to July, I studied at Ochanomizu University as an exchange student. I mainly took Japanese classes in preparation for my dissertation



on contemporary Japanese literature. At the time that I came to Japan, my Japanese skill were quite weak. I could read, but my listening comprehension was minimal, and I could not speak Japanese well. During my time at Ochadai I studied

a lot on my own, participated in many language exchange meetings, actively participated in my Japanese classes and so in this way I progressed little by little.

Because I focused a lot on my studies, I didn't do much of sightseeing throughout the semester, but when I did have time, I went to anime and manga events. For instance, in June I went to see a Mob Psycho 100 exhibition, which was a really nice experience. I also like knitting, so during my exchange I participated in many knitting events, through which I was able to make friends. In June, I organized a knitting event for my fellow exchange student and taught them how to knit. Plainly, I am grateful that I was able to study abroad.

When I return to the Netherlands, I will enter graduate school as a statistics student and during that time I plan to write my Japanese bachelor's thesis. I think it will be difficult to do, but thanks to my study

abroad experience, my confidence in my Japanese abilities has increased and so I want to continue studying hard.

I am very grateful to my Japanese abasans and ojiisans. Every Monday we talked and ate together at an NPO cafe. The first time I went to the cafe, I was kind of nervous, but once I entered, I was met with only smiles. Also, every time I would say that "I don't understand" and "Could you please repeat yourself" they would happily explain what they were trying to say. On the last day before the café closed, I cooked a Dutch dish called "boerenkool". Everyone took pictures and enjoyed their meal, which I am very grateful for. I am especially thankful for Hime-chan. Despite being 86 years old, she often walked me from the cafe back to the university and gave me sweets every time I dropped by at the cafe. I will never forget her warmth and kindness.

Thanks to the International Affairs Division, I was able to wear a yukata for the first time, as well as watch a kabuki performance. These are memories that I will continue to cherish. I am also very grateful for the Otowakan managers, who



always helped me out. Furthermore, I am grateful to Kato-sensei for giving me some of his best manga recommendations - I enjoyed reading Hunter x Hunter a lot! I am also very thankful for all the teachers that taught me Japanese. Thanks to Hagiwara sensei's guidance, I was able to have a good experience as an exchange student. I especially appreciate the time she helped me when I was in trouble. Furthermore, I would like to thank counselor Tanaka. When I couldn't do it myself, she always showed me a positive outlook on the future and comforted me. I would also like to thank Nishizaka sensei, Chou, Faiza and Ishida for their constant help in facilitating the exchange meetings we had this past semester. Finally, I would like to thank Ann and Tina for their friendship and support. When I

was lonely, they would somehow always contact me at the right time for some fun chats and loud laughter. I'm glad I can now call the two of you good friends. Let's meet again in England, Germany, or The Netherlands!