

Exchange Student experience in Japan

Ochanomizu University

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Since last year, across the world there have been a lot of changes and uncertainty taking place. In this kind of condition, things such as going abroad as an exchange student have become much more complicated and difficult. Before coming to Japan, my classmates and friends were facing many obstacles and issues that meant a lot of them were unable to go abroad, or had their exchange placement indefinitely delayed. For that reason, I am incredibly grateful that I was able to come to Japan after taking classes online in the UK for the first few weeks of my time at Ochanomizu University.

The process of moving to Japan during the pandemic was incredibly difficult and complicated, especially the quarantine period upon arrival. However, as soon as that was completed, thanks to the help of other students and the teachers at Ochanomizu, it was easy to settle in and feel more comfortable. During my first semester here, I was able to attend some in person classes for the first time since the pandemic started, and have lots of fun experiences during my day to day life. Especially important to me was the time I spent with the other exchange students, and I was able to make a lot of memories together by exploring Japan and experiencing new things.



During the spring break I had a lot of unforgettable experiences, especially getting the opportunity to travel to Osaka, Kyoto and Nara. Personally I have always been interested in Japanese pop culture and modernity so had always seen Tokyo as the ideal place, tending to overlook other parts of Japan known

for their more traditional aspects. However, through visiting Japan more widely and seeing more traditional landmarks, I found myself falling in love with many different aspects of Japanese culture that I hadn't paid much attention to before coming here. One place that especially stood out to me was Kiyomizudera in Kyoto, where the importance of nature, the seasons and aesthetic in Japanese culture becomes obvious. Visiting was an incredibly moving experience.

Aside from Japanese culture, I also feel that I have learnt a lot about various countries around the world through talking to other exchange students from other parts of the world. I feel I can recognize the importance of the world's diversity, and feel almost as if the world has become wider through this experience.

This semester, due to the state of emergency declarations and such, daily life became a little more restricted. Although this is hard to deal with when trying to enjoy my year in Japan, I feel that it's better to not dwell on what I couldn't do and instead be grateful of the experience in Japan overall. Through social distancing and spending time alone studying and going about

life, while across the world from my family and friends, I feel that I began to understand myself better and become much more independent.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to various people who have helped make this year possible. First, The international department who were vital to me being able to get to Japan. Secondly the dorm mothers who always made me feel welcome and made me feel at ease during day to day life. Also my Academic advisor, who although I haven't met in person, has always made me smile when emailing me. Of course the teachers here at Ochanomizu have also been very important, especially Matsuda Sensei and Hagiwara sensei who always made me look forward to their lessons, even if they were online.

Finally I hope that the exchange students who have not yet been able to come to Japan are able to enter the country soon.

