

Study Abroad Experience

University of Manchester

Erin Lamb

Due to COVID-19, my study abroad experience has not been a normal one. I was supposed to come to Japan in the September of 2021 and begin my classes at Ochanomizu University in October, but due to the borders still being shut I was not able to enter the country. As a result, I participated in all of my first semester classes online whilst struggling through the cruel time difference. At first, this online schedule was very hard to get used to. I found it particularly difficult to balance my studies with my daily life in the UK. Despite this, all of my teachers were very kind, and the class content was interesting, so I still had a good experience. Because of that, I wouldn't have minded continuing online if I was still unable to enter Japan in semester two.

However, at the end of February this year, news suddenly came out that exchange students would be able to start entering the country. I gathered all the necessary documents in the span of a month and managed to enter Japan without any issues on the 1st of April. Since my preparations to enter Japan were very rushed, it was quite hard to get used to Japanese life at first. It was also my first time living in a foreign country, so of course there were times where things such as culture shock and the language barrier were difficult. But thanks to my classes starting and finally getting to meet my classmates in person, I slowly got more and more used to life here.



I am very grateful that I was able to take part in classes in-person this semester. Like first semester, the class content was incredibly useful, but I feel that in person classes are definitely better. Getting to freely talk to my teachers and classmates during class, and then also hang out with friends afterwards, was incredibly beneficial for my Japanese. It is thanks to meeting classmates from all over the world that I was able to learn a lot not just about Japanese culture, but other cultures as well. I am especially grateful that I was able to make friends with foreigners whom I did not share English with as a common language. It was very fun being able to hang out and speak Japanese the whole time. Additionally, I enjoyed taking challenging classes such as a presentation practice class, and a class in which I had to create a website entirely in Japanese. Since classes like these aren't available at the University of Manchester, I am very glad I had the opportunity to take them at Ochanomizu

I have only been in Japan for half a year, so I have not had much time to travel. Out of the places I have travelled to, I have only really been to places in and around Tokyo, but I have still managed to have many fun experiences. One of the best experiences was going to the Studio Ghibli Museum. It is thanks to watching Studio Ghibli films often as a child that I first became interested in Japan, so getting to visit the museum was incredibly meaningful. I had



also never lived in a city like Tokyo before coming to Japan, so I am glad that I had the opportunity to live in a place as fun and exciting as this. Hopefully, I will be able to explore more of Japan in the future, but for now I am satisfied with the experiences I have had in such a short time.

There are many people who have taken care of me during my time studying abroad, so I would like to express my thanks to them. Firstly, I would like to thank all my teachers for teaching me lots of incredibly useful things both in-person and online. I would especially like to thank Hagiwara sensei and Matsuda sensei for always remaining positive during the tough times and for all the help they have given us across both semesters. Next, I would like to thank my supervisor, Moriyama sensei. I always enjoyed our conversations over email, and I am grateful for all the kind words and advice you gave me. I would also like to thank my tutor, Nakao. Thank you for all your help and guidance since I arrived in Japan. I am also very grateful that you have been not just a tutor but a good friend to me! Finally, I would like to thank the international division, particularly Ohno. If it were not for Ohno's hard work, I do not think I would have been able to enter Japan smoothly. Thank you for always quickly communicating any and all news related to the Japanese borders, for all your advice whilst I was entering Japan, and for your continued hard work whilst I have been in Japan.

