

Tokyo University of the Arts - Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku

Exchange Semester SS2022

Introduction

I wanted to study in another country, so I applied for my master's degree in Liechtenstein. It was not too much of a difference to move from Germany to Liechtenstein. For this reason, I wanted to set myself a challenge to study and live in a faraway country for one semester. So, the semester abroad in Japan fitted perfectly into my stage of life.



Preperation / Accomodation

Unfortunately, the pandemic postponed my semester abroad by one semester. Until three weeks before departure, it was still unclear whether I would be able to start the coming semester or not, as the borders were still closed to students. Since I found out three weeks before the start of the semester, that I would be allowed to enter the country, my pre-planning was quite spontaneous and short. Due to the long waiting period, I had already received the CoE, which is required to apply for the visa. So, I had almost everything for the visa, after submitting all the documents I received the visa after a week. In the meantime, I looked for accommodation. The first thing I looked for was a "ShareHouses" near Ueno Park (location of the university). At one of the ShareHouses, the application process took about 1 week because they had to check your data. However, I was afraid of getting a rejection, so I looked for flats on Airbnb at the same time. And that's how I found my flat, where I lived for almost 5 months. Airbnb made it quick and easy. I had a flat for my stay without long confirmation time. The one room flat cost 80,000 yen a month. It's the equivalent of about CHF 570 a month. I had a small kitchenette and my own bathroom, and I was within a 20-minute walk in the university.

University / Student Life

The summer semester starts in April and ends in July. It's a short semester that ends very quickly. I arrived in Tokyo three days before April, so I had a few days off before the university started and before the induction ceremony. My first day was the induction ceremony, I arrived at the campus and saw all the new students starting the master's semester and the new bachelor's students.

Unfortunately, the whole ceremony was in Japanese, and I couldn't understand what it was

about. Afterwards, I received a map showing the subjects. Unfortunately, I understood this also not at the beginning because it was in Japanese.

(Fun fact: at the induction ceremony, everyone was in suits or dresses. You would have thought it was a graduation ceremony. That's why I felt a bit out of place because I was wearing my everyday clothes.)

Then the professor who had chosen me introduced herself. I was allowed to visit her laboratory for the whole semester.

A brief explanation of the structure of the master's program at Tokyo University of the Arts. You choose a laboratory in which you would like to specialize in the master's program. There you are supervised by a professor and their assistants for 2 years. As a master's student, each laboratory has a room where you can work with other students from the same laboratory. Within the laboratory, it was very familiar. Everyone helped each other.

My fellow students helped me with course registration and so did the secretariat. Unfortunately, there was only one person in the secretary's office who spoke good English, otherwise it was always quite difficult to ask for anything there.

Unfortunately, most of the courses are in Japanese. So, I didn't have much choice. I decided to take the Japanese course, which was an introduction to the Japanese language, and the Modern History of Western Architecture, which was held from my professor, and she had recommended it to me because I could submit a term paper to her in English at the end.

Due to the pandemic, it was unfortunately forbidden to hold events at the university. However, we did do things with the students outside the university from time to time. There were also a few other exchange students at the university, whom I got to know in the Japanese course. For this reason, I would recommend the



Japanese course not only for the language, but also to make friends.

My life in Tokyo

My life in Tokyo was always very exciting. There was so much to see and experience in Tokyo alone. In general, everything is very relaxed, and you can get everywhere easily by public transport. I recommend buying a SUICA card from the ticket machines on the first day of your arrival. You can top up this card every time and use it to travel with almost every train company (note: there are different train companies in Japan and the fares vary depending on the company). Google Maps will help you find the cheapest and best route.

Eating out in Japan is very cheap compared to Liechtenstein or Switzerland, you get a good portion for an average of 6 - 12 CHF.

One big problem was the language. Not only at university but especially in your everyday life in Japan. Very few people speak English, or many are too shy to speak English with you. That's why I recommend having some knowledge of Japanese. This will make things easier for you in many situations. Nevertheless, I was able to help myself very well with Google Translator, often people were very helpful when I showed them my mobile phone with the translation.

Conclusion

All in all, the semester abroad was a good decision. After almost 5 months living in a completely different country, the beginnings were not easy but after a while everything worked better and better and I understood more and more everything, even though I arrived in Japan without any previous knowledge of Japanese.

I learned a lot about Japanese culture, behavior and the architecture. Nowhere else can you find architectural works of art in such a small space.

Japan has something for everyone. The diversity makes the country indescribable. I would recommend it to anyone to do a semester abroad in Japan!

