

I have spent 6 months in Kyoto University for a Graduate Specialist program in the Graduate School of management. My masters program in Marketing and Channel Management here in Göttingen University could be aligned with their Master of Business program in international project management course. I can already say the 6 months experience in Japan was an invaluable experience for me and that it was definitely worth it having studied in Kyoto. I would like to explain along my summary of life in Kyoto with the following points: preparation, Life in Japan (Studying, living and traveling), final remark.

1. Preparing for Japan?

Preparing for Japan and the first few days in Japan might be quite challenging for you. They send you a lot of information materials, documents for visa and orientation materials as soon as you receive admission from the university. Some information might be also overlapped as the international office and faculty both are in charge for your exchange semester. Some patience and just following the steps required would though solve this issue. Another big challenge for me was the language problem. As soon as you arrive in Japan, you would recognize that very few people you meet speak English. However, university students and staffs speak good English and practicing basic daily Japanese speak would help you to overcome this challenge.

Conclusion: Learn Japanese at least basic level, this would only help you to meet locals and overcome small challenges.

2. Life in Japan

After the long procedures (student dorm, visa, insurance, orientation course selections etc.), Kyoto simply becomes your second home. In 24 hours opened convenient stores and supermarkets you would find everything you need. University supports you very actively so that you can adjust well in Kyoto University.

2.1 Studying in Kyoto University

The most amazing part is that before you fly to Japan, you already have your tutor. Use this system well, contact your tutor before and get to know each other! My tutor was a local Japanese master student and he helped me in situations where high Japanese level was in need. Additionally, he became one of my close friends along my exchange university life.

Kyoto University master program is great in the sense that it supports highly actively foreign students. It is generally an international program and all of the classes are in English. You meet here various people from all over the world and get to know different fields and expertise, students have in average 3~5 years of working experience.

The courses therefore are highly practical and always with lots of discussion, debates and presentations. Although you have to do a lot of assignments during the semester, you need no memorizing activities in the final exam.

The tandem language program (German-Japanese; English-Japanese) is also a good program to meet local Japanese people. I was lucky to meet Japanese locals who were interested in German culture and even decided to come to Göttingen for an exchange!

Conclusion: very diverse small groups in each course, fruitful discussion, and great teaching staffs, who you can visit anytime to ask for advice. Use the programs supported by the faculty and University! Don't hesitate to speak to local students!

2.2 Life in Kyoto

Kyoto is just amazing. The city gives you so much comfort with the tradition of the Japanese culture. The University campus is in 10 mins from city center which gives you fast access to many bars, local restaurants, shopping opportunities and famous touristic areas (shrines and temples). The river kamogawa is also 5mins away where you can gather with friends for a can of beer.

Kyoto has around 1.5 mil population and has been the capital of Japan over 1000 years. Thanks to its abundant cultural heritages, the city is filled with tradition and what they call 'the real beauty of Japan'. Just taking a bike to the city center gives you an unique feeling of traditional Japanese city. There are also diverse hiking opportunities and the lake biwa, Arashiyama bamboo forest, fushimi and the green tea field of wakayama offer you a path to discover nature and tradition of Japan. Near my student dorm was a local Japanese Izakaya (called Aho-bar) where you can not only hang out your own friends with traditional Japanese cuisine and drinks but also an opportunity to meet locals.

Conclusion: Kyoto would never be boring. Very easy to make contacts with people (international and locals) and amazing traditional city (I personally became to prefer Kyoto to Tokyo).

2.3 Traveling Japan

I was indeed very lucky to be granted Jasso (600 euro monthly) scholarship. From my experience, you would have fairly high possibility to receive Jasso in Kyoto University as a Göttingen applicant. This gave me opportunities to travel around Japan and also to support my living expense. I will replace the traveling part with some pictures attached below.

Conclusion: Japan has so many colors and attractive places to discover. What you already know about Japan is only a tip of an iceberg.

3. Still considering whether to go or not to go?

Do not hesitate, apply now!

Conclusion: Expenses are similar to Germany. Even with basic Japanese language level, you will feel like home. Amazing courses and support from Kyoto University. Mostly unforgettable people.

Some photos of Japan



Photo 1 Yakushima Island



Photo 2 Yakushima Island



Photo 3 Bowl of Shashimi in Tokyo
700 Yen (5 Euro)



Photo 4 Nightlife Tokyo



Photo 5 Tradition of Kyoto



Photo 6 The Japanese Alps