

My decision to go to Japan was primarily based on the available courses at Waseda University. I aimed to extend my knowledge in the field of monetary economics and finance. The preparation in cooperation with the international office in Göttingen was simple and the requirements from the Waseda University clear such that no problems evolved with my application. Other organizational matters concerning flights and insurance were also manageable. I booked through statravel in Göttingen and got a flexible return ticket which proved very convenient. For insurance, I picked HanseMerkur. It is noteworthy that there exists a mandatory national insurance in Japan such that I had almost double coverage throughout my stay in Japan. Last in the preparation procedure was the Visa which proved, again, very easy and convenient and it allowed me a full year stay after my first entry in Japan.

Arriving in Tokyo was an amazing experience and my arrival at Waseda Hoshien Dormitory well organized. I used a free shuttle service provided by the dorm. The dormitory was nice: Clean, tidy, conveniently located (University in walking distance of 3 minutes). However, obeying to the many rules was not a particular common experience to me, especially as a graduate student. But no incidents occurred and I can certainly recommend this dormitory. Waseda University is a private university and one of the more popular ones in Japan. It has many new buildings and the campus provides some nice alleys and a beautiful Okuma Garden. My faculty building was one of the newest (bldg. 3) and walking insight felt more like entering an office building than a university. My course selection process was also straight forward since I fixed my classes before my arrival in accordance with the international office and my learning agreement. The course selection was also somewhat limited since many courses are only offered in Japanese. Besides my mandatory classes I decided to get some insights into the Japanese language by entering the Zero Beginner course which proved helpful and interesting. However, my Japanese language skills are still basic. The courses themselves varied a lot. Some classes provided me with completely new insights, some with completely new challenges but some were also disappointing since the level was somewhat low. Since my classes allowed me to spend a lot of time outside of university I joined the rowing team after a while. It was not easy to get in touch with them since it is an individual dormitory by itself a little outside of Tokyo and their homepage is in Japanese only. I did competitive rowing in the past so that I was allowed to go in a single. Unless former experiences I doubt that they allow beginners to join since they all live at the boat house and practice twice every day. Given that I wanted to travel and explore Tokyo I found a convenient agreement with them to row only 3 times a week. Joining a club provided me with beautiful insights and allowed me to meet friendly and generous Japanese friends. Despite the language barrier most people are really open and interested in foreigners and their opinion about Japan.

Everyday life in Tokyo is expensive. Rent was about 77.000 JPY and food isn't cheap either. Especially fruits and other imported goods can cost a lot more compared to Germany. Thus, eating out is a convenient and ideal option given that Tokyo is one of the best cities in the world to experience food. Luckily, I was granted a scholarship with the DAAD such that affording my semester abroad became more feasible.

In summary, I can highly recommend an exchange semester in Japan. Despite some academic shortcomings the Japanese culture is truly amazing: Friendly, polite and generous people, good food, absurd subcultures, crazy nightlife and all of that in a safe and very orderly environment. I am grateful for that experience.