

## My exchange to Ritsumeikan University – spring 16

When applying for a semester abroad I knew that I wanted to experience something interesting, different and far away. I've always been interested in other cultures and different ways of living. Japan has been mentioned in my textbooks at Stockholm Business school of Economics developing theories and methods, improving systems and organizations. A family member visited Japan some years ago and she absolutely loved it. So I applied for a semester - Study abroad program - in Kyoto, Japan, and got approved to a semester at Ritsumeikan University in Osaka, a city 40 min away from Kyoto, instead.

When first arriving to Ritsumeikan University different choices of classes were given to us. We should take 7 classes per week where every class was held in English at the same time and day of week for the entire semester. I decided that I wanted to study Japanese. I didn't know any Japanese before moving to Japan and I was surprised that the Japanese people in Osaka were not better in English than they were. For that reason, I would recommend everyone to take a course in basic Japanese on beforehand prior going to study in Japan. Not being able to speak Japanese made my life really difficult in the beginning. I had to bring a Japanese student everywhere I went so someone could translate when I had to pay bills and other important stuff. Japanese people are very friendly so it was always easy to find help.

Ritsumeikan University was very new. All the buildings were nice and spacy. To choose seven classes was a bit complicated since I had already at my University in Sweden taken many of the offered classes. There was a broader choice of classes that had to do with cultural differences which I found interesting. The courses held in English were basic and I didn't feel like I learned very much during the semester. The main reason I think is that most of my classes were taken with other Japanese students and since their English level was low, the teacher had to adjust the level thereafter. It was difficult to work with the Japanese students, not because of lack of will, more due to the fact that their ability to understand, talk and write English was too low.

Before moving to Japan I was in contact with Haruko Negai, a woman in charge of all the exchange students. She helped me a lot and made my life in Japan a lot easier. We got offered 4 different housings in Osaka. The information given was really basic and I decided to stay in a small apartment in Aya Mikuni. The location was great since it was pretty close to everything. Most of the exchange students stayed in Chateau Hights which was pretty far from me, on the other hand the apartments there were really dirty and had both mould and cockroaches. All the apartments were around 4000 Swedish krona/month.

The cost of living in Japan is a little bit cheaper than Sweden. There are a lot of great restaurants in Japan that aren't too expensive. Almost everything in Japan is paid in cash which is something you have to keep in mind before moving. Osaka is a great city to live in. It's close to many other nice cities that you would want to visit. I went to Kyoto, Kobe, Nara and Tokyo during my exchange. I also went to Korea, Busan for a couple of days. Amazing food!

Over all I am happy with my exchange. I wouldn't say that going to Japan for exchange would give you the typical exchange. There are not really any welcoming activities and there are very few exchange students going there. That was one of the most challenging things for me. I did learn a lot about other cultures and about myself as well. I had so many great memories to bring back to Sweden. Going to Japan for an exchange is probably something you only should do if you really love the country. I did enjoy it and I will always be grateful for my experience.