

My experience in Tsukuba Trans-Pacific Program

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Exchange Period: October 2022 - February 2023

Although my first time coming to Japan was in 2019, I only stayed for a few weeks, so I didn't have the opportunity to get to know places, people and its culture as much as this time. I was supposed to come in 2020, but due to the sanitary conditions this plan was postponed many times. Finally, I was able to come to Japan for the 2023's fall semester. I am truly convinced that things happen for a reason, and I am glad I went to Japan during the mentioned period, met incredible people and enjoyed a calm Japan without a lot of tourists.

About the academic field, I had Japanese in the mornings, from Tuesdays to Fridays. And some art and design subjects during the afternoons, such as: Kanei Information and Media Interaction, Workshops on Woodworking, Ceramic Workshops and Wood Carving Workshop. The schedule was a little different from my home University, there are only 6 periods during the day, each one lasts 75 minutes and the earliest starts at 8:40, while the last one at 16:45. Most of my classes were in Japanese, but as they were more practical than theoretical I was able to follow without problems.



Also, in some classes, there were other exchange students, so we supported each other whenever we had any inconvenience with the language or class.



In addition, I must say the first weeks were slightly confusing, because in the University there are a lot of buildings and I had some trouble finding the classrooms. Luckily, my tutor and some friends helped me with this. So, I would suggest to the new exchange students to search with time and verify the locations. I will also recommend looking for a bike as soon as you arrive to

the University, since the campus is quite big and sometimes the classrooms are far from each other. In my experience, having a bicycle in Tsukuba was convenient not only to arrive on time to my classes, but also to save money in transport and meals (usually, I had enough time to go back to my dorm and cook lunch before my next class) and then use it to travel and eat nice, but no so cheap food haha.

On the other hand, there are plenty of extracurricular activities. During the first month in the University there was an event where some student clubs, mostly sports related, were giving information about their circles. Also, I found more information in the following website: <https://www.stb.tsukuba.ac.jp/~shinkan-web/>, and after I contacted through social media to some circles I was able to join the pottery club, tokimeki taiko, folklore club and swimming practice.



Thanks to these experiences I was able to relate with Japanese students that shared interest with me, therefore it was easy to communicate with. Besides, through these activities I learned Japanese and other country's cultures. For example: compromise, punctuality, consideration to others, solidarity and teamwork.

Finally, I would like to talk about one of the best things in Japan: food. In the University there are combinis (perfect for a drink and snacks), supermarkets (even there is one inside the campus), restaurants nearby. Therefore, if you are the type of person that prefers to eat outside home, or like me that enjoys cooking but also to have dinner or lunch with friends from time to time, being in Tsukuba is not going to be a problem at all.



However, I realized that the situation is a bit complicated for vegans and even vegetarians. One friend of mine is vegan, and she had to be careful with the ingredients and dishes she bought, because most of the Japanese food is based on

fish and pork. For example, some basic ingredients for this cuisine, such as miso, even though the main component is not animal, can include some non-vegan elements.