



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Kyoto University, Japan
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester Two 2024 (Oct 2024-Mar 2025)
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>Major(s)</b>	Psychology

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>
Cultural Anthropology I-E2	English	Arts 100-level Unspecified
Education in Contemporary Japan	English	Arts 100-level Unspecified
Human Geography – E2	English	Arts 100-level Unspecified
Cultural Aspects of Healthcare – E2	English	Arts 100-level Unspecified
Kanji – Intermediate I	Japanese	Arts 100-level Unspecified
Japanese Intermediate IB (4H Course)	Japanese	Arts 100-level Unspecified

Total Otago credits gained:  54 points  72 points  108 points  \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

Just as a disclaimer for other Psychology students, not all the University's exchange partners offer Psychology papers that can be credited towards an Otago degree (as listed in <https://www.otago.ac.nz/psychology/study/studentexchange> ). None of the Japanese universities are included in this list. Because of this, I finished my necessary Psychology papers before I left and saved the "extra" papers I would've done for 100-level credits for exchange.

If you're in the same boat, or have space for random papers, I really recommend going to the pre-view/trial week for classes and "shopping" for your favourite ones before you make your final choices.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

Each paper (except for the Japanese 4H Course) were 90-minute lectures once a week, with no tutorials. Depending on the course the mixture of internal to external papers will differ. The language classes were like what we would take at Otago but taught in Japanese.

## Accommodation

*What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?*

I stayed in a share-house/flat with 5 other girls, both international students and local students.

I applied first for the dormitories but due to the lottery system I did not get in, so I contacted a residential company catered towards foreign nationals called "8NEST", with the premise of cultural exchange. They got me in contact with my current landlord and organised the deposit and contracts before I arrived in Japan.

Most apartments do not come furnished and have a mandatory "key payment" and 1 year lease. This option for a furnished and shorter-term accommodation was far more convenient. Since I lived in flats throughout my time in Otago, living in a flat here as well helped make things feel normal.

## Money matters

*Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance*

Rent and Utilities: JP¥58,000 per month

Flights: NZD\$780 departure // JP¥55,220 return

NZ Outbound Student Insurance: NZD \$417.75

National Health Insurance: JP¥2,000 per month

Food: JP¥5,000 per week (groceries and eating out)

*What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)*

I used a Wise account for most of my finances. I would transfer NZD to Wise from my NZ bank account, and from my accounts in Wise convert NZD to JPY. I could use my Wise card as a visa card or use it at ATMs to get cash out. I recommend always having about JP¥5,000 to JP¥10,000 cash on you, many places do not take card.

## Visas & Insurance

*Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?*

I have a Japanese passport, so I did not apply for a visa. If you are not a Japanese citizen, you'll need a student visa for entry and study, and they will give you a residence card upon arrival to the country.

In Japan regarding moving into a town/city, there's several processes to do regarding residency, National Health Insurance, and the National Pension Scheme. The university can help you with the process upon arrival.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes, they had insurance and co-op membership fee, which you could get refunded at the end of the semester. Insurance depended on your living situation. The refundable co-op membership fee was around JP¥4,000.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

*What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?*

The Kyoto University International Student Club (KUISC) organised multiple welcoming and social events for students. Some of the clubs and societies at the university were open for exchange students to participate in their activities. Because I was here during the fall semester, many clubs are not available to join as they do intake during the spring semester.

*What was the university/ city like?*

The university itself has a very studious and prestigious reputation, but the anti-establishment groups like the Yoshida Dormitory and protest culture was also very strong.

Kyoto is a cultural hub in Japan, with many temples and shrines and a deep history as the former capital of Japan for 1000 years. It's a much slower-paced city compared to Osaka and Tokyo, with less high-rises and green spaces.

*Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?*

Cultural/Sightseeing:

- Ginkakuji
- Otagi Nebutsuji
- Nijo-jo

Cafes:

- Jeté
- Café Bibliotic Hello!

Restaurants (only included ones near the university, too many to choose!):

- Monpan Shokudo (Mongolian and Japanese fusion)
- Caravan (Japanese shokudo style)
- Takumi (Ramen)

Outdoors/Hikes:

- Hike up Hieizan, to Enryaku-ji
- Daimonji
- Kifune-ji to Kuramadera hike
- Philosopher's Path

*Any tips for future students?*

Although the first week or so of admin is tough, the University there provides a full handbook and help with all the processes for registering for classes, city ward office procedures, co-op membership and insurances. I highly recommend taking the Japanese language courses here and involving yourself with the student life and activities at the university.

## Overall Experience

*Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!*

Being half-Japanese and coming here throughout my childhood, Japan and life here was not unfamiliar to me. Despite this, coming here by myself to study was a whole new journey unlike what I had experienced previously. Kyoto is a beautiful city with a rich history, and you could feel it and see it anywhere you went. I had a lot of freedom in choosing my courses and was able to take several interesting papers only available at Kyoto. The workload was also very reasonable, which allowed me time to go traveling and explore other parts of Japan. Most notably during the November Festival break, I went on a weeklong solo trip to the Tohoku region, where I hopped from prefecture to prefecture via train. Solo travel here was very easy and as a young woman I felt very safe being by myself in most places throughout the country. Experiencing life out of my comfort zone as well as challenging myself through solo travel and new experiences, helped me grow my confidence as an individual and knowledge of my own capabilities.

I made friends with people from a variety of countries, and we did a lot of exploring together as a group. Not often are you exposed to so many different cultures at a time, and I really valued what I learnt from the people I met here, and the life-long friendships I hope will endure from here on out. As someone who loves the outdoors but also the convenience and hustle of a city, Kyoto was perfect. Nightlife, shopping, temples, cafes, forests, rivers – it was a strange and lovely mixture of modern and ancient Japan. If you're considering studying in here, I cannot recommend Kyoto enough.

