

Exchange Report

Hi to all who are considering going to Keio for an exchange program.

I went to Keio University as an exchange student for a year.

I had a great time making friends from all over the world and the experience I had in Japan has broadened my worldview.

There are few things I want you to know before you go to Keio.

First of all if you are thinking about going to Keio I want you to make sure you understand the differences between the academic calendar of Keio and Otago. If you are starting your semester in September and planning to return in July the following year you might have to arrange to sit your examinations in Keio earlier so that you can return to Otago in time for the beginning of courses.

Secondly, you may experience great culture shock!

Even though I am originally from Korea (which is located right next to Japan) and studied Japanese culture for 3 years, it took a while for me to understand Japanese culture. You might be missing New Zealand fish 'n' chips and all you can eat sometimes is *combin*i food (once you've spent all your money on partying 😊)

Since my dorm was an international one I always had someone to talk with when I have problems, if I had gone flatting there I would have come back to NZ after a month. Being away from home is always hard. So make sure you have friends to talk with, especially when you are depressed and lonely.

Unfortunately being in an international dorm did not really help my Japanese as most people were speaking English there. At least I did not suffer from homesickness.

If you want to learn Japanese in a short period of time, I would recommend you to live with Japanese people. I had some international friends who did Japanese home-

stay. It not only helps your Japanese but also learning Japanese culture.

Most of my classes were conducted in English apart from Japanese language classes. Taking those classes you can learn international studies as well as Japanese culture.

Keio also has the conversation partner program which introduces Japanese friends to international students. After you filling out forms at Kosmic, they will let you know. Then, you meet up with your conversation partner once or twice a week and practice your Japanese and teach English.

At Keio there are plenty of clubs you can join such as Yoga, Kendo and camping, but since sports clubs are highly competitive, think twice. You might not want to spend your precious time in Japan just practicing sports.

The best thing about going to exchange in Japan is you can travel a lot of places. The bullet train to Osaka and Kyoto takes only about 3 and a half hours. I went to Kansai area with my friend during Japanese national holiday to see cherry blossoms. You can rent Kimono there at a cheap price (you will probably find it is hard to breathe though).

If you have any problems in Japan, talk to your R.A (if you are in a dorm) or go to international centre. They will help you as best as they can

It's been 3 months since I left Japan. I still miss Japan and want to go back sometimes.

I hope you have a great time in Japan and Keio. I'm sure going to Japan, and especially Keio will be one of the greatest times of your life.