



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Animal Sciences
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	03-08-2022 until 07-02-2023
Country (exchange)	Japan
City (exchange)	Kyoto
University (exchange)	Kyoto University
Faculty (exchange)	Faculty/Graduate School of Agriculture

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

Ever since I learned that going abroad during your study is possible, I have wanted to study in another country during my bachelor. I love traveling to other countries to experience the culture and environment there, which is why being able to study for a certain amount of time in another country at another university is appealing to me. It is a great way to make new friends, broaden your horizon and learn more about another country. Moreover, you can follow courses at another university which might not be offered at your own university.

What is the reason you chose for this country/university?

Before I started with the Bachelor Animal Sciences, I completed the Bachelor Japanese Studies at Leiden University. I have been interested in Japan and its culture for years, which is why I followed and completed this bachelor. It was my dream to go to Japan and study/live there for a while. Unfortunately, Leiden University did not let me go to Japan for an exchange period and thus even though I have been to Japan as a tourist before, I did not have the opportunity to go there to study at a Japanese university. Luckily, Wageningen University offered exchange to Japan.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)

It is the easiest (and probably also the only option) to fly with a plane to Japan from either an airport in the Netherlands or in Germany. I flew to Kansai Airport (beneath Osaka) and took a train from there to Kyoto station.

4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Zoo Biology	6	A short and intensive course about zoos and their role in society	5	Includes a visit to Kyoto Zoo and has a great lecturer.
2	Food Science	6	Course about all aspects of food science and a bit of chemistry	4	
3	Japanese Popular Culture II	6	Course about the popular culture of Japan after World War II	4	Discusses all kinds of aspects within Japanese popular culture, which is nice if you are interested in some topics but not in others. The same goes for the examination, as you can choose which topic you want to write a paper about.
4	Comparative Cognition	6	Course about the cognition of animals, how to measure this and how to compare them	5	Extremely interesting course and has the same lecturer as the Zoo Biology course.
5	Introduction to Primate Behavior and Cognition	6	This is an introductory course about primates which focuses mostly but not only on their behaviour and cognition	5	Fun course about primates where the focus is more on acquiring knowledge than on being able to memorize every little detail and reproduce this on the exam.
6	Seminar Introduction to Bird Study - Ornithology	6	This is an introductory course about birds and will discuss all kinds of aspects of them	5	Fun course about birds where the focus is more on acquiring knowledge than on being able to memorize every little detail and reproduce this on the exam. Includes voluntary bird watching with the lecturer.
7	Biological Sciences through Scientific Articles II	6	This course learns you to work with biological articles, meaning how to find them, read them efficiently, find what you need within an article, extract relevant information etc.	3	

How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)

Kyoto University works with something like Brightspace, but it is called Panda there. On Panda lesson materials are made available to the students if necessary for the course. Examination is done through multiple ways. Some courses have end exams, some have end presentations, some have assignments throughout the study period and some have quizzes (or a combination of the abovementioned methods). The academic level differed per teacher/course, but I felt like I had a bit less work to do then at Wageningen University which enabled me to explore more, which was nice.

What is the culture of the university? (E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with the WUR?)

The approachability of the lecturers differs per lecturer, but I found that they are generally extremely easy to approach and talk to about either course material or personal issues. However, I do have to mention that all but one of my lecturers were not Japanese. The engagement with local students was extremely low, as Japanese students are usually very reserved (also do not speak up during class) and are either shy, not interested in you or are not fluent enough in English to strike up a conversation. I felt like this was the opposite with the WUR, where the students are usually more likely to engage with exchange students, but lecturers can be less approachable when it comes to personal issues. Once again, though, it depends on the lecturer.

What does the university offer the student additionally? (E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?)

There are multiple cafeterias where lunch and dinner can be eaten for a relatively cheap price. Every cafeteria offers a different menu and there are some vegetarian options. There are many clubs at the university (usual for Japanese universities) but they can be a bit difficult to join when you are non-Japanese. It depends on what activity you want to do, if you speak (some) Japanese and what time of the year you want to join. There are some libraries for which you can get a library card for free so you can borrow books or study in the library, which is nice.

5.Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing? (E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?)

Kyoto University has multiple international houses for students and/or researchers for which you can sign up. If there are too many sign ups, they will have a lottery for who gets a room. It is also possible to rent a private room or a room in a private house for students, but it can be a bit pricier. It is also important to start looking early, because the people I spoke to who had trouble with finding an accommodation, started very late with searching. The rent I had to pay was pretty similar to the rent I pay in the Netherlands.

What is the culture of the country like? (E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?)

Japan has a completely different culture, which is important to prepare for if you have never been to Japan before. They are very polite, indirect and quiet, which is quite different from Dutch culture. There is a very famous saying in Japan stating that 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down', and they expect you to conform to this too. Many Japanese people do not speak English and some that are able to will still refuse to talk to you in English. It is thus wise to learn a bit of Japanese before arriving. The cuisine is also quite different and can take a little time to get used to. Vegans/vegetarians I knew had some trouble with getting food sometimes.

Could you give a general price indication of the place of residence compared to living in Wageningen?

The general price for the room in Japan was a little less than what I pay here in total (if I include the rent allowance I get), but I also had to pay for electricity and water in Japan (price is calculated on how much you use). Thus, it was a bit more expensive than here but there was not a big difference.

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure? (E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

I already had a Japanese public transport card, so I am not sure how expensive those are. However, if you take the bus within Kyoto city you pay 230 yen per ride (does not matter how many stops you are in the bus, it is a fixed price). Outside of the city, you do pay depending on how far you go. However, many people use bicycles in Kyoto so many residents and exchange students bought second hand bikes or cheap new bikes in order to travel to the university or other places in the city.

6. Free time

What are must-sees in the area? (E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?)

There are beautiful temples in Kyoto that are must-sees like the golden and silver temple. Also Gion, the older area in Kyoto, and the bamboo forest Arashiyama is beautiful to walk through. You can bike to these destinations, but be aware that putting your bike in a random place in Japan is illegal and will get you fined. Either you pay for a bike parking (which are sometimes hard to find) or you take the bus/walk.

What does not appear in the travel guide, but is worth a visit?

I have never looked in the travel guide, so I do not know.

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)

Karaoke is incredibly fun and common in Japan, so I definitely recommend doing that with a group of friends. I also recommend going out to visit shrines and temples.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

It was hard at first to do grocery shopping as everything is in Japanese which can be hard (or impossible) to read. On top of this, food items might be unfamiliar so it was a struggle at first to know what to buy for dinner etc.

What was your best memory abroad?

I made a road trip with a group of friends where we rented 2 cars and drove from Kyoto to Nagasaki and back (with multiple stops on the way for sightseeing, of course). This was extremely fun as we got to see a lot of the country.

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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