



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	Master Nutrition and Health
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	1/4/24 until 4/8/24
Exchange destination: University	Kyoto University
Faculty	Faculty of agriculture
Country	Japan
City	Kyoto

2. Motivation for exchange

a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to extend my studies, but I still wanted to do something useful. So therefore, I thought studying abroad was a nice opportunity, to gain new experiences.

b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

In my bachelor I went on exchange to Sweden. As I wanted to go on another exchange, I wanted something completely different so I could not compare the two with each other. After searching some possible exchange countries outside of Europe, Japan suited best in my schedule as they start in April instead of February.

c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

In Japan, the only possible cities were Tokyo and Kyoto. Tokyo is the biggest city in the world and I am not the biggest fan of living in really big cities, so therefore Kyoto was a better option for me. Additionally, Kyoto is the cultural capital of Japan and therefore, this looked more interesting to me.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

As Japan is an island, the most convenient way to reach your exchange destination is by plane. Kansai Airport in Osaka is the closest airport near Kyoto and from there you can easily take a train to Kyoto Station.

4. University and studying

a. 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	Elementary Japanese 1 (conversation)	4	You learn the basic sentences that you can use during your stay in Japan.	2	Even though it was the lowest level, for me the classes went really fast. Especially because my fellow students already had prior knowledge which I did not had.
2	Food systems in Asia	4	You learn about what was eaten in different Asian countries and especially why that is eaten. So it also explains some history and rituals of Asian cuisines.	4	You go on a really nice field trip to a rice farm.
3	Psychology of Addiction	4	You learn about different types of addiction, treatments, and how it works in the brain.	5	This was a really interesting course and also the teacher was really nice.
4	Sustainable Agriculture	6	Even after following all lectures, I still do not really know what the intention was of this course.	2	
5	Agriculture and Environment in Japan	6	You learn about the agriculture in Japan. It for example explains about growing fruits, the soils, and growing cattle.	2	The teacher had some difficulties speaking English
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b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

No, in Japan a lot of people (including professors) have difficulties speaking English. Therefore, most courses (even in the graduate faculties) are given in Japanese. This made it difficult to select suitable courses.

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):

No. As a master nutrition and health student they selected me for the agriculture faculty. Additionally, most courses at Kyoto University were taught in Japanese. So, therefore, there were only a few courses that I could follow and most of them were related to Agriculture. However, as a student with no interest and prior knowledge in Agriculture, they were not really suitable for me.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):

As most master courses were not really in my field of study I also took 2 bachelor courses. These were already way more interesting, however as they were bachelor courses I did not really find them that challenging. Also the graduate courses were not really that challenging to me as you did not really need to pay a lot of attention to them to pass the course.

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes. Not all courses were really that interesting to me, however, most courses were also not that difficult so it was still easy to pass. Additionally, we did not really get much homework which made it better as well.

f. What is it like to study there?

E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?

Most lectures were just listening to the teacher who tells his or her story. Most courses were graded based on attendance and giving an end presentation or report.

g. What is the culture of the university?

E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with WU?

It was really difficult to engage with local students as most of them had difficulties speaking English and they already had their own friends that they hung out with. As I also had some American teachers they were really easy to approach and they also were down to have some nice talks. However, even though the Japanese teachers were really nice and polite, it was more a professor student relationship.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

There is a cafeteria where you can easily eat cheap lunch or dinner. You can also make free use of the gym, however it does not look as nice as the Bongerd. Additionally, there are a lot of clubs that you can join, which are sport related but for example also art or science related.

5. Housing-traveling-living

a. What are the possibilities for housing?

E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?

There are multiple university dorms for which you can sign up. However, if there are more people applying than that there are places, not everyone can get a room.

Therefore, the university website also has some other options of companies that you can contact. I for example used 8NEST which also offers student houses, and is easy to contact and get a room from.

b. What is the culture like?

E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?

Japan is completely different from the Netherlands. They in general eat rice three times a day. Things like cheese, yogurt/muesli or bread are not really common and therefore you also pay a lot for it even though it does not taste as good.

The Japanese people are really polite and strict in following rules. They for example all wait in line at the bus stop instead of trying to cut people. However, this also leads to the fact that they are really good in pleasing other and will not really tell you what they really think.

c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?

There is a big station (Kyoto Station) from which you can easily take trains to for example Osaka or Tokyo. From here you can take the shinkansen, which is the really fast and therefore also expensive train, however local trains are also used a lot. In Kyoto itself mainly busses are used. Every time you use the bus you pay 230 Yen, not depending on how long you are in that bus.

I lived really close by the university so I could easily walk to my classes. However, there were also people who took the bike or sometimes even bus if it was raining really hard.

6. Expenses

a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

I cannot really say exact amounts as I did not really calculate it or wrote it down.

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	1000-1500 Euros
Visa - if applicable	-
Vaccinations - if applicable	-
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	I am still on the insurance of my parents so I did not really pay that much extra
Daytrips/sight-seeing	This really depended on how much you want to see, but I think this was one of the highest expenses for me
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	I paid around 360 euros per month
Grocery costs per month	I did not do that much groceries as I mainly ate outside with friends for lunch/dinner.

Public transport costs per month	This also really depended on what I did that month
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	I think around 10-15 Euros per day

b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands:

I think some prices were way cheaper and some were a bit higher compared to the Netherlands. We were lucky that the Yen was really low so that made it a bit cheaper for us already in general. Housing accommodation (especially if you have a university dorm) is way cheaper than in most student houses in Wageningen. Going out for dinner is also cheaper as you can easily get a full meal for 5-10 Euros. However, this also makes it tempting to go out for dinner and lunch a lot which also adds up in costs.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

E.g. Nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?

There are a lot of pretty temples and other places in Kyoto. However, they are often very crowded with tourists, especially during cherry blossom season and in summer. Therefore, I would recommend to search on google maps for pretty temples and just go there. Or go early in the morning, as most people will arrive around 10 at the tourist spots.

b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

Having drinks at the Delta/river. As the weather is really warm in Japan, you can easily stay outside until late and because many restaurants/houses do not have place for a lot of people, it was easy to go to the river to have drinks there all together.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

The language barrier could sometimes be a bit of a struggle, however using Duolingo, google Translate and your hands/feet also helps already. Additionally, I sometimes found it difficult that Japanese people were really shy and scared to give their opinion, this made group work really difficult. And I still don't have tips for how to deal with those situations as I don't think it is easy to change.

b. Best memory?

The combination of everything together. I made really good friends which I will still visit when I am back home, and we could see and experience things that we all have never seen before.

9. Contact details

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