



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	MPW
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	01/04/2024 until 04/08/2024
Exchange destination: University	Kyoto University
Faculty	Graduate School of Agriculture
Country	Japan
City	Kyoto

2. Motivation for exchange

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

It was a bit in the heat of the moment. My girlfriend and I saw that there was space left on the exchange to Kyoto and we had wanted to go on an exchange to see new places and experience new things.

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

Japan is an incredibly interesting country, its culture goes back for thousands of years and is completely the opposite of the Dutch in your face way. I wanted to learn more about the culture, food and people.

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

Kyoto university is internationally and nationally renown. It is the second best university in Japan and has a strong science program. I had hoped to learn more about Agriculture from a very different perspective. Kyoto itself is also a beautiful city that is far less of a megapolis than Osaka, Tokyo, Senda etc.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

Take a plane, if you can afford it fly direct because its far nicer. Fly earlier to Tokyo if you can so that you can enjoy that city for a week or 2 and then take a bullet train or a cheaper train down. Alternatively you can fly directly into Osaka Kansai International Airport and then you are about 1 and a half hours away from Kyoto. If you have accommodation already available you can do this and then travel to wherever. Shinkansen tickets are EXPENSIVE, but very worthwhile doing at least once. If you are going from Tokyo to Kyoto make sure to do some research and pick the side facing mount Fuji, it's an amazing sight.

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	Agriculture and Environment in Japan	6	Specific environmental and agricultural background for Japan	4	Loved the 3 professors, they were all very kind and easy to talk to. They presented the material in an easy to follow fashion.
2	Field Automation	6	Field robotics and technological background of agriculture, mostly about Japan.	3	I learned a decent amount of new things, but the pace was incredibly slow. If you want to know more about automation technology and a relaxed environment, take this.
3	Forest and Resource Economics	6	Behavioral game theory. General issues from Experimental & Behavioral economics and their implication for Agriculture.	5	Yohei Mitani is an awesome professor. This guy was not at all like the stereotypical Japanese instructor, he was open, joking and created a great atmosphere. The material was relatively difficult, especially if you have no background in Economics and game theory, but it's all manageable.
4	Sustainable Agriculture: A Cross-Cultural Perspective	6	Sustainable agricultural from multiple perspectives	3	At first I did not like this course at all, I didn't agree with the professors views nor the way of explaining them. Near the end though I found I enjoyed and agreed much more with what the professor said and why he said it. Would give it higher if not for the rough start.
5					
6					

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes

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

Yes

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

No – The courses were incredibly easy, except for 1 class (resource economics). The rest of the courses were around high school level if not lower. They would go incredibly slow and did not give homework that would improve your understanding of the material.

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

Yes

f. What is it like to study there?

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

Incredibly laid back and easy. There's barely any pressure to get anything done and the level of the classes is honestly low. I think they do make it easier for international students. The workload is low, but it is really class dependent. Some classes could definitely be a challenge. Almost all examinations were done via assignments and presentations, barely any exams for the classes I chose.

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?

Lecturers are surprisingly approachable, they will answer questions and do like it that international students are more willing to ask questions and provide answers. Local students are much harder to get along with as the Japanese culture is a bit slower with making friends and opening up. There are definitely differences with the WU, you have to be a bit more formal with everyone and you should not question the professor.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

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

Sports area, swimming pool, multiple cafeterias, living area, studying, library.

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?

Campus but it's a lottery, private rooms are plenty and rent is very cheap in comparison to the Netherlands. In a relatively expensive private room from a new house renovated 2 years ago I pay 300 euros all inclusive...

b. What is the culture like?

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

Much different food, rice rice and more rice. You will also have a lot of noodles and more. If you can afford a bit more to spend though a whole world will open. There's a reason the Japanese are held in the same regard as the French in terms of their cuisine. The middle and higher end restaurants are absolutely amazing and I think there's not been a single restaurant I've been to that I have not enjoyed. Eating out is far cheaper here, if you want to do it cheaply you could easily spend only around 700-1000 yen (currently 4-6 euros). Even in a very nice restaurant you usually will not spend more than 3000-6000 yen. I am obsessed with the food here and it was the single greatest thing about Japan in my opinion.

Manners are much more important here than back home, but as a foreigner you get a lot of slack in terms of what you can get away with. If you try to adhere to the basic manners you will get far. If you speak even just a bit of Japanese and you really try you are already better than 99% of tourists. Kyoto especially is overrun with tourists so the locals are a bit sick of them, but if you go an hour or 2 out and speak a little bit of Japanese they will love you. Here's my secret trick to immediately impress the restaurants. Hit them with the "Thank you for the feast" or "gochisousamadeshita" and give a slight bow when you're walking out at the end of the meal. You'll see their eyes light up!

In general things are less heavy than stereotypes make them seem. As a foreigner you are not expected to follow each rule, but you will see the pressure that the Japanese students have to live with every day. The younger students and University adjacent people in general are more open and flexible than the rest of the people you meet. Always try to keep in mind that you are a guest and everything will be fine.

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

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

Get a suica on your phone wallet app and you're golden (Iphone only). Easy to load money to and its not expensive. Public transport in general is reasonably priced, especially buses (230 yen flat rate usually) and metros (230-460 yen, 460 yen Kyoto to Osaka 1 hour in the metro), trains are a bit more expensive but much cheaper than the NS. Only the Shinkansen is pricy, but you can travel an insane amount of distance in a very short convenient time. Just get on the station and you can usually take the next shinkansen and the come around every 15 minutes. Public transport is the best in the world, everything is on time and clean. The Netherlands is also excellent, but this is really a step above and beyond.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	400-1000 euros (depending on direct trip)
Visa - if applicable	0

Vaccinations - if applicable	0
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	100 Euro
Daytrips/sight-seeing	Budget a few hundred a month.
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	300 euro a month, room 5 minutes walking from Uni
Grocery costs per month	10,000-50,000 yen a month (I didn't really do any grocery shopping so these are estimates).
Public transport costs per month	1000 - 30,000 yen, really depends on how much you travel.
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	800-300 yen per meal, however much you want. Uni lunch is 400 -800 yen.

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

Lower by a lot.

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

The sky is the limit, if you have extra cash to splash there is so much to do here.

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

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

I loved Ishigaki, but that is a flight away. Hokkaido is gorgeous too. These are all with flights, but they are relatively cheap and can be booked a couple of weeks in advance no problem. Keep in mind that the rainy season is different due to the length of Japan.

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

Hakodate in Hokkaido. Generally anything outside of the main tourist areas (Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Hiroshima, Nagasaki) has itself a rich history and amazing sights to see. Most people get stuck just in these few places, don't, you can explore so much more with an exchange.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

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

Climbing Fuji, that was incredibly hard. Generally being away from home will mean that after a month or so you have a dip. That's perfectly normal and will go away in time, I contacted friends and family and had people come over to visit so for me it wasn't so bad.

b. Best memory?

Diving in Ishigaki and seeing a sea turtle.

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name & email address (if yes)	Bernard, Bernard.vanloon@wur.nl or Dutchmouseguy@gmail.com	