

Graduate School of Law, Doshisha University (Japan)

1. Overall impression

Studying and living in Japan is very different from what we are used to from the University of Zurich or from living in Zurich.

Classes are very small at Doshisha and you are very likely to be one of very few foreign students in the Graduate School of Law. You are likely to get a lot of attention and be very well tended to. On the other hand Japan's culture is completely different to Europe's and sometimes difficult for us to understand. However, these are all reasons why a year in Japan is so extraordinary.

2. Making preparations

(e.g. administrative matters, finding information)

Japanese administrative matters tend to be very formalistic. However, a representative of Doshisha University (in my case Miki Ashida) will help you with everything administrative (Visa, Housing, Classes, etc.)

3. Contacts/Responsibilities

(e.g. important contact persons at the Partner University and Faculty)

People at Doshisha University are very helpful in general. This is true for Miki Ashida but also for the professors and students.

4. Housing / Finding accommodation

University Doshisha gave me some housing options to choose from (dormitories). The cheaper ones are rooms with shared bathrooms. The more expensive ones are rooms with bathrooms and sometimes breakfast and dinner included. I chose my dormitory because of its nice location near Kamogawa river. I had my own bathroom and got breakfast and dinner (Japanese Food - good quality but one has to get used to it).

5. Arrival

Personally, I went to Japan by train (Transsiberian railway) which was a very special and enriching experience. If you have time, I warmly recommend it. It was quite time consuming to prepare the journey, but I would do it again.

As soon as you are in Japan, you find your way best around with google maps or apple maps (both indicate public transport possibilities that are very accurate). Many public places have Wifi so you can look up your route. From Kansai International Airport it takes around 2 hours to Kyoto by public transport. There is an airport limousine (Bus) That goes to Osaka station and Osaka Namba (other big station in Osaka), taking one hour. From Osaka station and Namba there are many local trains to Kyoto which takes another hour.

From Kansai International Airport there is also a shuttle service that brings you to Kyoto for roughly 40 CHF and takes around two hours. You can book the shuttle before you arrive on this website:

<http://www.yasaka.jp/english/shuttle/index.html>

6. Telephone

(e.g. costs, carriers)

My telephone provider was Sakura. Not so expensive and easy to acquire (online). However, the internet connection was quite bad.

7. Bank account

Doshisha helps you open a Bank account. However, I never used it, because Japan is a cash society and I almost never payed with card.

8. Transport (e.g. from Switzerland, to the University)

If you go to Japan by plane, it is best to go from Milano (I hear it is the least expensive) and to fly to Kansai International Airport (Osaka).

You can get there by train and boat. It will take you around three weeks but you won't have much time to linger.

The public transport system in Japan is very good. There are many trains, buses and underground trains. Confusing is that all are from different companies and the ticket machines are not very easy to handle. Easiest is to buy an IC Card (at most ticket vending machines) with which you can use almost all public transport in Japan (except for some regions, e.g. in the mountains). For routes use google maps or apple maps.

Between Cities (e.g. Kyoto and Tokyo) the Shinkansen is the fastest. Unfortunately it is quite expensive. A cheaper alternative is to go take overnight buses. They are unexpectedly comfortable (with cushions and blankets). You can either call the companies and book a ticket, buy it online or there is an office at Doshisha that can help you.

In Kyoto the fastest and nicest way to get around is by bike. A used bike costs around 70-100 CHF.

9. General information about the Partner Faculty and student life

Student life is nice and calm in Kyoto. The campus is north of the imperial park, in a quiet area. The Graduate School of Law is a small faculty.

10. Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty

(e.g. program structure, methodology, exams, etc.)

Classes are small and you are expected to attend. They are mostly very interactive. In most cases you will have to submit a paper at the end of the semester.

11. City

(e.g. cultural activities, sports, discounts, nightlife, must-sees, short trips, etc.)

Kyoto is an interesting city with many of Japan's most important sights. It is also close to Osaka, Nara, Kobe, Koyasan and Lake Biwa. In each season there are special cultural activities and festivals.

Doshisha has a gym which costs around 50 CHF per month and is quite nice. Kamogawa River is ideal for running and walking. Kyoto is surrounded by hills that are nice to hike up to.