

Graduate School of Law, Doshisha University (Japan)

1. Overall impression

The opportunity to go to Japan, especially Kyoto - a city as such rich in authentic culture - is a unique one. Since I already studied in Japan before my arrival in Kyoto, I yet have to say, it definitely added to my deeper understanding of Japanese society. This not only includes legal studies, but also their approach to various matters from a historically heavily influenced tradition.

Someone seeking to have a once in a lifetime experience to dive into a unique Asian society, should not miss it. Despite my generally established attraction to Asian countries, I would say Japan shall not be mixed up with other Asian countries and therefor is much more worth to visit as a student than merely as a tourist.

My academic experience was outstanding, I received strong support from all Professors I attended lectures of. Not only have I been able to discuss about various topics on a personal level - exchanging perspectives from both a Japanese and a Swiss/European point of view - but also get invited to various events which offered me to connect to other legal professionals.

The fear of being "Lost in Translation" does not really hold up since all professors and staff are fluent in English in most instances. Outside of University, despite the yet to encountered language barrier, Japanese people are very friendly and readily offer help in need. I never faced a situation where I felt uncomfortable.

The only note to be made is to have a friend close by who is able to support with administrative mails which will be encountered in the context of rent or bills.

To conclude with, I wish for more curious students to take this opportunity to discover Japan and gain expertise from their legal approach since it is also a Civil Law jurisdiction and highly inspired by German and French Codes.

2. Making preparations

(e.g. administrative matters, finding information)

In general, I have to say once everything is filled out in the proper way - the procedure to apply for visa, pick accommodation and further administrative matters - everything subsequently is prepared and done in a speedy manner. Japanese offices pay careful due diligence to the paper work and therefore it might be necessary to spare some additional time for corrections. Despite that, you are usually provided with most information by office and don't have to worry too much about losing track.

I would like to point out, to always double-check everything concerning administrative matters concerning e.g. your registered subjects and cancellation of it, because there are systems which require you to do the inputs by yourself. Better to ask twice before running into making a mistake.

3. Contacts/Responsibilities

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

I am very delighted by the support all Professors you attend lectures of since they are always very kind and support you with your study. The office staff usually keeps you updated on important deadlines, but I would again advise to be on the safe side and keep a record on important matters.

4. Housing / Finding accommodation

Finding housing was an easy task since the University offers various options to choose from. In fact you can search for renting flat by yourself, however this will require you to get in touch with various electrical and building staff to form contracts and this might be a difficult task since the involved people usually do not speak English. I would advise to stay in one of the offered accommodations. I personally stayed in the Nishijin Dormy,

which was one of the options closest to the University. I was happy because I was in an almost exclusively Japanese Dorm, which boosted my opportunities to be exposed to Japanese and the food, namely breakfast and dinner was very good.

5. Arrival

Arrival in Japan should be very easy once you get used to the signs. Trains, Metros and buses are very frequent and efficient. The convenience in general is outstanding. If you ever get lost ask the train staff, there are many on site to guide you. There are also so-called Limousine buses, which are a convenient way, since you don't have to worry about your suitcases and have a nap upon arrival, depending where you will land.

6. Telephone

(e.g. costs, carriers)

It is easy to make a contract for your mobile phone, however I would advise to ask a Japanese friend to come along to help in case of detailed questions. Upon arrival, I would advise to at least buy a prepaid card to cover data to stay connected in order to navigate, but once settled you can take care of the matter. It should cost around CHF 30 depending on the package you chose. Wifi was provided in my dormitory for which I had to buy a router, which you can order online or buy in an electronic store (most popular: BIC Camera).

7. Bank account

I would advise to bring a Japanese friend along, which is usually offered by the University advising students to support you in the beginning, in order to avoid difficulty with language or bringing the correct documents along. Once done, if you make an account with the JP Post Bank, you receive a so-called cash card. You cannot directly pay with this card in stores, but its functionality is limited to be able to withdraw money from ATMs. I managed it this way without issues.

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

As indicated above under section "Arrival", it is very easy to navigate in public transport. There are different Metro systems, so be aware to connect correctly, also it is the most convenient to buy a MTR card which you simply tap along when you enter and exit various public transport stations. I would advise to at least once during your stay to ride with the "Nozomi Shinkansen", which is the fastest magnet bullet train. It is very quiet and convenient and you can see a lot on its way, depending on the connection.

9. General information about the Partner Faculty and student life

Doshisha University in Kyoto is a very welcoming University where you are able to make international friends easily, if you attend international gatherings or participate in Japanese language lectures.

10. Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty

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

The teaching I experienced was luckily in a lot of instances a one-on-one teaching, since not a lot of Japanese students sign up for exclusively English taught lectures and in my year only 2 additional international students on a Masters level visited the same University. The exams are in most cases written reports which have to either be handed in consecutively during the semester or by the end of a semester. I would highly recommend to visit the lectures which focus on Japanese law or International Law.

11. City

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

Kyoto is a beautiful traditional city, as I already outlined, with a richness of culture. This is because of the probably hundreds of temples in the city and surrounding area. The mountains and the Kamo River really give it the serene scenery. Geographically it sits perfectly, enclosing the triangle of Kobe and Osaka. You can do various day trips to e.g. Nara, Uji, and if time allows to the museum islands like Naoshima.

I personally started practicing Aikido there, which I can highly recommend due to its origin stemming from Japan!

Osaka will serve you a better deal with nightlife, Kyoto will keep your mind at peace due to its slow lifestyle. Yet Kyoto offers everything you need and does not overwhelm you with a mass of people like Tokyo. Tokyo is of course a must see in case you do not plan to arrive there. It has its own character just like Kyoto, but much more modern and expressive than traditional Kyoto.