

Having decided on my year abroad in Japan, and more specifically in Nagoya University, added so much fun and great memories to my university life. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus outbreak this year, I was only able to enjoy the full of it during the first semester, so my report might not contain that much on travelling, but instead I will share some of my experience and thoughts.

The first week - Orientations

There were a LOT of things I needed to sort out to settle down in Japan in the first week (where there were no classes), such as going to local administrations for registration and pension exemptions. Luckily, we had got NUPACE office in Nagoya University.

NUPACE office was like a guardian angel who takes care of all the NUPACE international students. They took things very seriously and they held very informative orientations to help us to sort the things out. I was also amazed by how detail the instructions could be. We were given handouts with everything we needed to know. On top of that, they went through most of the important points in the orientation session. So don't worried about getting lost in what to do to settle down – NUPACE office has got your back. (A side note that it seems that not all universities have a department like NUPACE office that specifically designed to help the students on an exchange program. From what I know, NUS did not have such office, and it bothered my friend who was doing study abroad year there so much.)

Accommodation

When filling one of the forms around May, I was asked whether I wished to stay in one of the student dorms provided by Nagoya University or to find a new dorm by myself. I chose the former and got assigned to a very newly decorated accommodation named Daiko. It was the newest and most expensive option amongst the student accommodations, but I was very happy with it since it was so clean and... modern.

Each room (besides the normal bed and desk etc.) has its own bathroom with a small bathtub, refrigerator, closet, an AC and a small balcony. The shared kitchen (between around 10 people of the same gender on the same side of a floor) was big and clean, equipped with toasters, kettles, microwave ovens, stoves, and many cupboards. It was also considered the common room where people could study and chat in there (before covid 19 thing got serious). There were 2 laundry rooms per floor where we washed and dried our clothes using the paid machines. There are more common rooms on the ground floor, where some of us gathered and did movie nights. And all the rooms mentioned above were equipped with AC. Daiko is "modern" as I called due to how well equipped it is. But on the other hand, it is not so "modern" in some social aspects – there are many strict rules in Daiko that many of us considered inhuman. Such as there were "men only floors" and "women only floors". Also we could not invite anyone else to come inside our rooms. It was mildly the same for all the dorms, but Daiko seems stricter, just from my experience.

Living costs

The year in Japan might be very expensive especially if you are not receiving the JASSO scholarship. (JASSO was a scholarship designed for international students, sponsored by the Japan government, and it was 80000 yen per month, which was quite a lot.) The first month I paid a lot of one-off or later refundable fees. So make sure to prepare enough cash as suggested by the NUPACE office in the documents.

Fixed costs:

On average, every month the rent plus the bills for Daiko was around 34000 yen, nearly half of the JASSO scholarship. (However, if you stay in accommodations such as Higashiyama or Omekan, it would be so much cheaper! I think they were around 18000 yen per month.) Everyone needed to pay monthly for insurance, which was nearly 2000 yen. Also, one of the disadvantages of staying in Daiko was that we needed to commute by trains to campus, which induced a monthly cost of train ticket. For myself was like 6400 yen per month. But there were cheaper options for a coverage of less stations. The other dorms were nearby campus and hence was within walking distance.

Other costs:

Several other major costs include food, events, travelling, and other entertainment. You'll probably find eating out is so cheap comparing to in the UK that you would be doing so for most of your meals. There is also "obento", which is a flat box of food (usually had rice, some meat like fried chicken, and a little vegetable in each). The tickets to events like welcome parties on campus are free for the first month.

Support

There was definitely more support for international students than I thought. Besides NUPACE office, there were student organizations that helped us get used to life in Japan, and also to make Japanese friends. One of them is called Helpdesk, which many of my international friends joined at some point. The members were all very friendly and we had lunches together and chat in Japanese. It was like a language café every day. Another one was called ACE, which organized games and events on a regular basis.

Nagoya University had assigned each international student a student tutor (of the same gender) who practiced Japanese with us every week. My tutor was very kind and she was a great help to my Japanese homework. I had an extra 1.5 hours of Japanese language support every week, where I practiced Japanese speaking skills.

Academics

The courses were either Japanese language classes taught in Japanese or profession-related courses taught in English. The Japanese language courses would take up most of the study time since they took place every morning for 1.5 hours. They were quite assignment intensive

but the progress we gained from it was incredibly a lot. Unfortunately, there was no mathematics department in Nagoya University, but there were a range of courses from other departments that were available, such as social sciences and natural sciences ones. The lectures were interesting to learn from and the Japanese lecturers spoke English fluently and well enough to understand (surprisingly). The details of the courses please refer to other reports since they were as complete as I could imagine.