



Spending a semester abroad in Japan was one of the most beautiful and at the same time one of the most difficult experiences in my life. I chose Japan for a semester abroad, because I really wanted to go to a non-European country and Asia was what interested me the most. TH Köln and Kanagawa University (KU) had just signed the partnership agreement and when I got the offer to go there, I was hooked instantly. For me, Japan was like a little adventure. Being at the other end of the world, plunging into a completely different culture with a language that is not at all comparable with zero prior knowledge. Sounds a little crazy and it is.

When I finally arrived in Japan, the KU welcomed me warmly and was always helping me when issues arose.

I lived in Hiratsuka in a student dormitory in a central location. The dorm room had its own bathroom and kitchenette. Not very big, but definitely enough. Hiratsuka is about 45 minutes by train from Yokohama and 1 hour 15 minutes from Tokyo. During my stay, I took part in various activities of KU, such as barbecuing, planting rice, day trips to an animal and nature park, disaster training (earthquake, tsunami, fire) and "pizza parties".

In my everyday life, I took the bus to the campus 40 minutes away. Participation in the courses I took was compulsory and was always registered at the beginning of the lecture by scanning my student ID on a device at the entrance of the classroom. That was already a bit different from a lecture at the TH. The courses were all held in English. I got along very well with that. There were also Japanese students in my courses who wanted to improve their English. You have to know that not many people in Japan have a good command of English - I've had to experience that often.

At lunchtime, I often ate in the cafeteria or bought something in the supermarket on the campus. These supermarkets are amazing. They have almost everything you need, including hot canned coffee. I used to buy it in the summer months and people looked at me strange, as the Japanese tend to grab a cold coffee with ice cubes in the summer. So much for cultural differences. Some shops in town are open 24/7 - great for grabbing a snack at night.

In my free time I met other students, went to real Japanese karaoke, went on trips to the big cities of Yokohama, Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and more. Japan is a very beautiful country with many traditional elements like festivals, temples, shrines, rituals, etc. At the same time, Japan is often crazy. Especially when it comes to anime / manga. In Yokohama, there is a Pikachu parade with hundreds of Pikachus. In Tokyo and Yokohama, there are huge [Gundam Wings](#) statues that can move. The Japanese also love fireworks, order / cleanliness and punctuality, to name a few points.

I can look back on a very good time, on great challenges and on new friendships. The adventure in Japan was definitely one of the best decisions of my life.