



# Tips on Studying Abroad at Waseda University (Undergraduate Exchange) in Japan

Want to know what it's like to study abroad? Want to know what your peers think? Your fellow Georgia Tech students who have previously gone on this exchange program gave their opinions so that future participants have the inside scoop on their host institution and host country.

## Preparation & Getting Started

- I chose this program because I was born in Japan but I had no experience in Japanese school life (except elementary school). Also, I was considering going to graduate school in Japan, but before making a decision, I wanted to experience life in Japan and their education system.
- After applying to the program, I realized that the host university does not have an “electrical engineering” major like GT. Instead, the major I enrolled in was “electrical and bioscience engineering”. At Japanese universities, students apply to specific majors (and rarely switch), the curriculum was rigid and inflexible. As a result, I had difficulty finding courses that were transferable to GT. Fortunately, the undergraduate advisor in electrical engineering was very helpful with the credit transfer process.



## Food

- There was a kitchen in the dorm, so I cooked for myself.



## Classes

- The orientation was held on a different campus from the engineering campus, so be sure to find out who to talk to in order to find your way around.
- Courses are all taught in Japanese.
- Professors do not assign homework as much as Georgia Tech professors do. The only criteria for the final grade was the final exam.
- I was hoping to take many major courses, but in my second semester, I had difficulty finding courses to take from major school. As a result, I took history electives.
- Professors do not hold office hours.
- Classes were rather homogeneous (mostly Japanese students).

## Lifestyle

- There were three other international students in the engineering department. Of about 100 international students on campus, I was the only American.
- I joined a volunteer group which taught Japanese to foreign residents. There, people were very friendly and positive. I realized that I'm Japanese but I'm also too Americanized to call myself totally “Japanese”. I learned a lot from just joining that group. Since then, I've become interested in volunteer work.
- They had over 1,500 clubs that you could participate in. They did a good job providing chances to meet other students, integrating the international students into the Japanese student body. Social life was good.

## Cultural Differences

- All the girls on campus were wearing skirts! Since the majority of students at GT wear jeans and T-shirts, I was surprised to see that.
- The Japanese students tended to stay in their groups of friends.
- Although school life was not like I expected, I learned a lot from the program and I'm interested in applying for another study abroad program in future.
- I think at first I was too self-conscious, being ultra sensitive about what I say and do. Once I stopped doing that it was quite easy to meet people.



### Transportation & Travel

- You can walk to school in 30 minutes.
- Travel is very expensive within Japan, however if you have the money it is very efficient to travel. If you get a cell phone you can just plug in what station you're at and where you want to go and it tells you how much and where to change trains, etc. Plane travel is also inexpensive through sites that serve foreigners in Japan like [www.no-1travel.com](http://www.no-1travel.com) and [www.acrosstravel.com](http://www.acrosstravel.com).



### Finances

- I mainly used an ATM card. Japan is a cash based society so that's basically what you have to use.

### Communication

- The dorm had IP phone service, which uses internet access to make phone calls. This made international phone calls (especially to the US) much cheaper.
- I brought my laptop and the dorm had fast internet access, so I did not have any trouble getting internet access. However, I did not know how to get wireless internet access on campus.
- I mainly emailed to my friends and family, and my family even visited me while I studied abroad.

### Housing

- I found the housing on my own, (girls-only student housing). The building was a little older, so there were some minor inconveniences. However, the couple who maintained the dorm was very friendly and supportive, which made my life in Japan much easier.

### Participant Profiles

Please see information of contributing students below. If a blog or website is listed, feel free to take a look! Also, if an e-mail address is listed, you may contact that student if you have any questions about their study abroad experience.

ECE, Spring & Fall 2006

\*These comments do not reflect the views of GT's Office of International Education. They are based on students' individual opinions and are, therefore, not necessarily representative of all student experiences.