

MEXT Scholarship Profiles - Angelica Lim



Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

I was interested in robotics after graduating from the Simon Fraser University, and felt that Japan had the best robots in the world. The MEXT Scholarship was a perfect way to continue my studies in a country that had even better technology and opportunities for my field than in North America.

What challenges did you anticipate (or find out) about living and studying in Japan?

I didn't know Japanese at all before I learned about the MEXT Scholarship program. So, when I decided to apply, I started taking courses right away – a summer class and an evening community course. When I arrived in Japan, the immersion classes offered by MEXT were extremely

invaluable, and I continue to use the Japanese I learned to this day.

What is your most memorable experience of your time studying in Japan?

Being a part of the launch of the world's first consumer humanoid robot, Pepper! As a robotics Ph.D. student, I landed a part-time job working on a secret robotics project for the Japanese telecom giant Softbank, and a French robotics company. Thanks to the Canadian system in which I learned French, and my Japanese robotics studies, I acted as a technical liaison between the French engineers in Paris and their Japanese colleagues in Tokyo. In June 2014, our robot, Pepper, was launched in a huge auditorium at Tokyo Disneyland. It was

Scholarship Type:
Research Student (Followed by Masters and PhD)

Program/Field:
Computer Science / Artificial Intelligence / Robotics

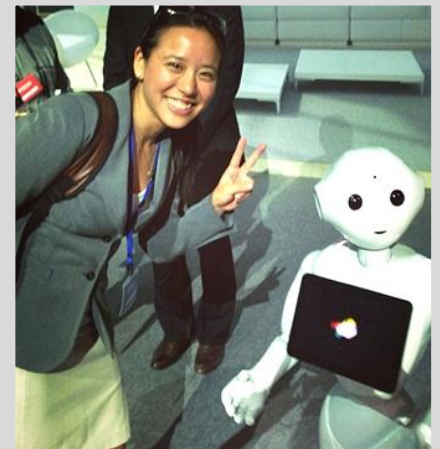
University in Japan:
Kyoto University (2009-2014)

University Alma Mater in Canada:
Simon Fraser University

Current Status:
Lead Software Engineer, Aldebaran Robotics, Paris

On Designing User-Friendly Robots: Angelica Lim at TEDxKyoto

tedxtalks.ted.com/video/On-Designing-User-Friendly-Robo



amazing to have played a role in it!

I had many memorable experiences, such as speaking at TEDxKyoto, and being served ramen by two knife-wielding robots!

Thanks to my research lab, I was also sent to attend conferences in Slovenia, Taiwan, Portugal, San Francisco, France, Germany and Italy.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

The onsens. I loved going to Japanese-style hotels (ryokan), eating fine food, and sitting in natural hot spring baths, surrounded by nature.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

My current role at robotics world leader, Aldebaran Robotics, is a perfect fit, thanks to MEXT. I can now speak Japanese at this Japanese-owned company in Paris, and lead a team in developing an emotional robot, which was the subject of my Masters and Ph.D. theses at Kyoto University. Plus, 5 years in Japan has allowed me to be able to comment on intercultural differences, to help my colleagues understand each other.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

If you don't know basic Japanese yet, I'd advise learning it before going, so that you can enter Beginner Level 2 or Intermediate Japanese immersion classes upon arrival.

Beginner Level 2 will get you far, whereas entry-level Japanese can be quite limiting.

Also, for researchers it's best to try and attend a top university for your CV later on, but choose your professor wisely to make sure you have fun

while doing it! I found a professor whose webpage had lots of pictures of student gatherings and events, and it turned out he was not only a top prof, but we also had a lot of great lab trips and activities!

Checking out Japanese culture with friends.



MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Terry Kuo



Keio Classmates

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

I liked the prestige of becoming a Japanese Government of Japan sponsored scholar. Economically, it also made sense - a full scholarship which included flights and living expenses.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

A few things: The vast

difference between the living space and pace in Tokyo versus Vancouver. The interaction between students and professors in a Canadian university and a Japanese university.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

Meeting friends from all over

Scholarship Type:
Japanese Studies

Program/Field:
Japanese Language Studies

University in Japan:
**Keio University
(2012 - 2013)**

University Alma Mater in Canada:
University of British Columbia

Current Status:
**International Student Program Assistant,
Langley School Board**

"Being able to study in a Japanese University has opened many doors for me in finding opportunities with Japanese based companies and organizations."

all over the world with similar interest in Japanese culture and language.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

The convenience of the convenience stores in Japan. From paying bills to accepting and shipping packages, as well as withdrawing money from overseas accounts, are all tasks that can be done at the 7-11 that's just around the corner.

The development of local tourism in Japan makes it so easy to travel to any prefecture and major tourist attractions. Limited research is required ahead of time and the issue of safety and tourist traps is almost non-existent.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

Being able to study in a well-

known and established Japanese University has opened many doors for me in finding opportunities with Japanese based companies and organizations. It certainly was taken into consideration when I later applied and was accepted to the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, and worked in Japan for two years as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR). The work experience in Japan also prepared me well for my current position in the international education field.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Look into the specifics such as living costs, food, culture, and weather when determining the study destination. Tokyo is a great city for tourists to visit but living costs are comparatively

high and the living space and pace is often challenging to those who are more accustomed to the Canadian lifestyle, particularly the laid-back pace of the west coast.

The Japanese culture is much more dynamic than the general stereotypical image of sushi, J-pop and anime. The unique differences between each prefecture and region of Japan make it a place that is ideal for exploration and learning about not only the language but the people, culture and much more.



Dinner in the Dorm



Made it!

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Yuji Matson



Scholarship Type:
Research Student

Program/Field:
**Master of Laws (LL.M.) –
International Economic
and Business Law**

University in Japan:
**Kyushu University,
Graduate School of Law
(2011-2012)**

University Alma Mater in
Canada:
University of Victoria

Current Status:
Lawyer (Immigration)

***“Fully immersing yourself
in a different culture can
be a rich and rewarding
experience.”***

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

Japan has been a large part of my life. I had studied the language and culture as an undergraduate, and lived there as an exchange student, as well as a participant in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. I enjoyed my time in Japan and was excited to live there again.

Every year, a graduate of the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law is selected to participate in Kyushu University's LL.M. Program in International Economic and Business Law (IEBL). I hoped to connect my knowledge of Japanese language and culture with my future career in law. Kyushu

University's IEBL Program was a perfect way for me to enhance my formal legal education before embarking on my professional career.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

From previous experience, I was already familiar with some of the challenges that I would encounter. One of the main challenges is navigating the cultural differences. Such differences can include something as simple and innocent as taking off your shoes before entering a home. More significant customs and etiquette include not being late for an appointment (it is best to be slightly early) and being

attuned to indirect and non-verbal forms of communication (Direct language is avoided, especially when expressing a negative response to a request).

An open mind and flexibility is important when faced with such challenges. One can discover new approaches to life and human relations, and the differing norms and values that they reflect. They can complement, rather than oppose, the practices and approaches we are more familiar with in our home country. In this way, fully immersing yourself in a different culture can be a rich and rewarding experience.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

My most memorable experience was getting to know people from around the world. Participating in an international academic program presents opportunities to not only encounter differing perspectives within the classroom, but to also learn about the diverse cultures and backgrounds of people you may not have a chance to meet in your life in Canada. The program I participated in attracts students from different regions in the world, including East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe. The faculty members and visiting professors also hail from different countries.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

Emphasis on the group in Japan is reflected in many aspects of its culture. One

example, which I enjoy, is the hot spring (onsen), which act as public baths in Japan; everyone is naked (save for a small towel). Out of courtesy to the other bathers, with whom you share the hot spring water, you only enter the hot spring after washing. There is a sense of equality in the hot spring, as everyone is stripped of any markers of status, which fosters a sense of camaraderie; everyone, literally, has nothing to hide and can feel more at ease to open up to strangers in the highly relaxed atmosphere.

These customs may seem strange or uncomfortable to someone who grew up in Canada, but once you shed your preconceptions and shyness (along with your clothes), onsen are both pleasurable and addictive.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

As an immigration lawyer, the skills and knowledge I gained allow me to better serve clients. Employers often refer to the

importance of soft skills, such as understanding different cultures or customs. Your experience studying in an international setting will foster the soft skills that are so valuable nowadays.

During my studies, I developed a vast network of connections with the people I met from different parts of the world. Having an international outlook and contacts that span the globe is a tremendous asset.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Learn a bit of Japanese language before you leave. Making an effort to communicate in Japanese will be much appreciated. Many Japanese people are not comfortable or confident communicating in English.

Have an open mind and embrace challenges and cultural differences with a positive outlook. It will go a long way to making your experience rewarding and fulfilling.



At a Shinto Shrine



Graduation

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Aaron Froese



Lab Mates and Friends at Kumamoto Castle

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

I was interested in going overseas to continue my graduate studies. My thesis supervisor at the University of Saskatchewan had colleagues in Japan. As far as I was aware, the MEXT scholarship was the best support for foreign students being offered by any of the countries doing plasma physics research.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

I had only taken two introductory Japanese language courses during my undergraduate studies, so I anticipated the language barrier to be significant. However, I found the language to be an interesting puzzle which did not present many difficulties. During day-to-day

activities, the locals were willing to accommodate my poor communication skills and for more difficult things, I could always ask the people in my lab for help if I needed it. As with any language study, immersion is the most effective method for improvement; it involves a lot of making mistakes and sounding childish, but the payoff is worth the effort.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

A total solar eclipse happened in 2009 in the middle of tsuyu (梅雨), the rainy season. The best place to see the eclipse was Yakushima, but all the accommodations were full before I even started making plans. A friend of mine from Saskatoon was coming to see the eclipse, so I booked a

Scholarship Type:
Research Student

Program/Field:
**Department of Advanced Energy Engineering Sciences,
Interdisciplinary Graduate School of Engineering Sciences**

University in Japan:
**Kyushu University,
(2007-2010)**

University Alma Mater in Canada:
**University of Saskatchewan (2005-2007)
University of British Columbia (2002-2005)
University of the Fraser Valley (2000-2002)**

Current Status:
Computational Plasma Physicist at General Fusion Inc.

“There is frequent collaboration among physics researchers in the U.S, Japan and Europe...so it is very helpful to have some Japanese to introduce myself and begin what could be a fruitful research collaboration”

youth hostel in Ibusuki on the southern-most tip of Kagoshima Prefecture where the sun would be 97% covered. A single-track railway serviced Ibusuki only twice a day.

The trip there was beautiful and sunny, but as we walked into town, thick clouds rolled in. When we arrived at the hostel, everyone in the common room was glued to the weather report on TV, as everyone was there for the eclipse.

It turned out the only place on Kyushu that would have a break in the clouds was Fukuoka, where I lived. Even worse, the infrequent railway service left no way to get back before the eclipse would occur. If only I had checked the weather before leaving Kagoshima City, we could have avoided the clouds by going home! Back in Fukuoka, all my friends happily told me about how they had watched the eclipse, whereas I couldn't even perceive a change in the light level while it was happening. I'm still waiting for the next eclipse in North America in 2017.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

Not realizing the strength of Japanese traditions about bathing, I thought onsen (温泉), or hot springs, were used as novel settings in TV episodes because the writers had run out of ideas.

I realized my mistake when I was housed in old dormitories at other research institutions. The rooms were frequently Japanese-style with tatami mats and futons. The bathing facilities were also onsen-style, with many shower faucets in a single room around a huge hot tub. Modern hotels in Japan may have such facilities on a separate floor, but they tend to favour western-style rooms that include showers.

You will not get an authentic onsen experience unless you go to a ryokan, which can be more expensive. I recommend visiting a ryokan at least once.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

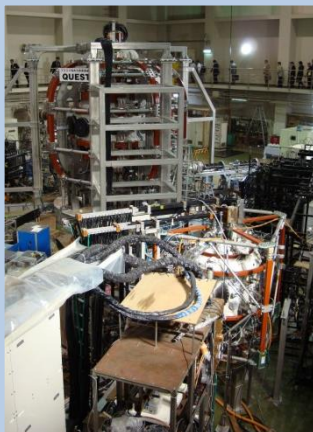
Many of my colleagues in

Japan continue to be good friends. In addition, there is frequent collaboration among physics researchers in the U.S., Japan, and Europe. The Japanese contingent tends to be somewhat self-segregating at international conferences, so it is very helpful to have some Japanese to introduce myself and begin what could be a fruitful research collaboration.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Foreign students came with varying levels of Japanese language ability. While everyone managed to settle into daily living, those who better understood their surroundings made the transition more smoothly and also had a greater appreciation for cultural activities. It was not a necessary prerequisite for research students. Anyone who preferred to concentrate on academic work was able to function despite putting minimal effort into learning the language. Both strategies proved to be feasible.

Spherical Tokamak
Chikushi Campus,
Kyushu University



Sefuri-san
the tallest
mountain near
Fukuoka

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Meghan O’Connell



Scholarship Type:
Research Student

Program/Field:
**Graduate School of Global
Environmental Studies,
Master's of Environmental
Management**

University in Japan:
**Kyoto University
(2011- 2013)**

University Alma Mater in
Canada:
McGill University

Current Status:
**Park Interpreter for Metro
Vancouver Regional Parks**

***"It has given me a unique
and more global
perspective on matters
regarding environmental
issues and education."***

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

I was previously living in Japan, working as an English teacher on the JET Programme, but I wanted to experience Japan in a new way. I thought that going to university there would provide me with that opportunity.

Looking into various graduate school programs both in Japan and in Canada, the program at Kyoto University really struck my fancy. It was largely internship based, which is what I wanted, and I would be able to live in

Kyoto, a beautiful city full of history and culture, while surrounded by nature.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

As I had lived in Japan for a number of years prior to receiving the MEXT scholarship, I was already familiar with many of the challenges of cultural misconceptions and language barriers, however there were some new challenges too. The way that courses are taught in Japanese universities is quite different than in the West.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

My most memorable experience was doing an internship with the Ministry of Environment in Shiretoko National Park, Hokkaido.

For five weeks in the spring of 2012, I worked in the remote Shiretoko Peninsula learning about wildlife management practices. At the Kushiro Wildlife Conservation Centre, which is a rehabilitation centre for Steller's Sea Eagles, White Tailed Eagles and Blakiston's Fish Owls, I worked side-by-side with wildlife veterinarians. I also worked with park rangers doing wildlife surveys.

The pristine environment and natural beauty of Shiretoko was like nowhere else in Japan. I saw orca whales, brown bears and foxes, learned how sea urchins are harvested, and

bathed in remote hot springs.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

From the remote wilderness of the north to the tropical seas of the south, Japan is a country that is so much more than the concrete jungle of Tokyo. By studying and living in Japan you can experience the country in a very intimate way.

The memories that remain closest to my heart are the fleeting moments that make you stop and truly appreciate the little things: the way the afternoon sun sparkles off of vibrant green rice paddy fields. The smell of roasted chestnuts at a roadside stand underneath red and orange, momiji maple leaves. Watching snow fall around the Imperial Palace grounds on a cold silent winter night. Strolling underneath the cherry trees as petals fall around you in magical beauty.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

Honestly, I can't say that getting a Master's degree in Japan helped me get my current job, but it has given me a unique and more global perspective on matters regarding environmental issues and education.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Do your research before applying. Talk to professors and former students to find out what your intended program will be like. Think about what you want to get out of your studies and decide if studying in Japan will fulfill your criteria.

Studying and living in Japan requires you to be open minded, adaptable, patient and ready to try A LOT of new things.



**Enjoying Uji Kintoki
(Red Bean & Green Tea Shaved Ice)**



**In the Field
Shiretoko National Park, Hokkaido**

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Lia Cosco



Lia with Classmates

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

Having lived in Japan for several years, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to apply my experiences to graduate education and further explore the issues and ideas I had cultivated.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

I was pleasantly surprised at the diversity of the student body, and the amount of English language content at Waseda University.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

As part of my seminar group at Waseda University, I came

back to Vancouver to present at a conference. It was great to be able to share the diverse research and studies occurring in Tokyo, and at the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies, with my colleagues in Vancouver.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

Japan, and Tokyo in particular, is a dynamic, sensual overload of experiences, which keep you constantly intrigued and engaged. It was a great place to live and study, and some of my closest friendships to this day were made during my time in Japan.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

My daily work as a Manager in

Scholarship Type:
Research Student

Program/Field:
Masters of International Relations - International Education, Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies

University in Japan:
Waseda University (2008- 2010)

University Alma Mater in Canada:
University of British Columbia

Current Status:
Manager, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

"The sense of exploration and curiosity you develop from living abroad, are great life skills that will truly benefit you in future endeavours."

The Faculty of Education, includes supporting the experiences of international graduate students and international programs at UBC – my personal experiences have been invaluable in this regard.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

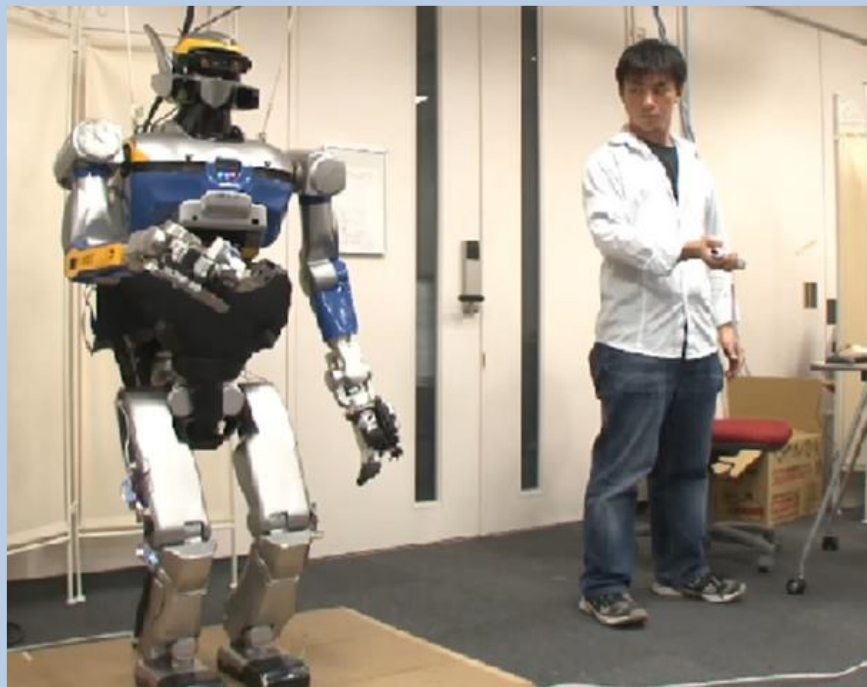
Keep an open mind, explore, and take opportunities that present themselves to you.

The ability to think critically and sensitively across cultures, as well as the sense of exploration and curiosity you develop from living abroad, are great life skills that will truly benefit you in future endeavours.



Graduation Day

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – Wesley Chan



Scholarship Type:
**Research Student
(for Ph.D. Course)**

Program/Field:
**Creative informatics
(Daily assistive robots,
human-robot interaction)**

University in Japan:
**University of Tokyo
(2013-Present)**

University Alma Mater in
Canada:
**University of British
Columbia**

Current Status:
Ph.D. student

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

While finishing my Masters Degree at UBC, my supervisor encouraged me to pursue my Ph.D. at a different location to gain experience from another university. My area of research is in assistive robotics, and Japan seemed a natural fit.

Around that time, a project at the JSK lab, at the University of Tokyo, caught my attention. Students programmed a PR2 robot to take the elevator and order a sandwich from a restaurant for a person. I found out more about the JSK lab, and decided to do my Ph.D. there.

I looked for scholarship opportunities, found the MEXT Scholarship, and decided to apply for it.

What challenges did you have for living and studying in Japan?

One of the first challenges I found was the language barrier. Even though I was enrolled in an English program, about half of the courses I had to take were in Japanese. Communication in my lab is almost exclusively in Japanese, and in daily life, English won't get you very far, either. This situation provided me with an excellent environment to learn Japanese. One of the reasons I chose to come to Japan was because I was interested in learning Japanese.

The University of Tokyo provides a wide range of free Japanese classes, as well as opportunities for cultural exchange between Japanese and international students, both in Japanese and English. Through them, I

"Japan has given me the great experience of working in different worlds."



became proficient enough to enjoy simple conversations in Japanese with lab mates and friends.

What is your most memorable experience of studying in Japan?

There are too many experiences to pick just one. Getting to work with many different robots at my lab. Visiting and conducting collaborative research with large companies within the industry. Climbing Mt. Fuji. Joining cultural exchange programs for homestays. Interacting with students at public schools. Helping to raise global awareness and multicultural understanding. Seeing different matsuri (festivals) and hanabi daikai (fireworks). Making friends with people from all around the world. These are all memorable experiences I have of studying in Japan.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

One thing I find intriguing is Japan's heavy promotion of tourism within the country. Almost every prefecture and many cities have unique food, products and attractions for which they are famous. There's always something interesting, and I enjoy travelling around Japan to see different places.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

Japan has given me the great experience of working in different worlds. I see different approaches for research, different work culture and work ethics, and learn different methodologies and ways of thinking. It allows me to make comparisons, think deeply, and choose.

While I still haven't decided

exactly on my future, it has allowed me to see a bit more clearly the type of person I would like to become, so that I can help make this world a better place for everyone.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Try to learn Japanese beforehand. It will be crucial for getting the most out of your studies. Having said that, you can still enjoy Japan a lot without knowing any Japanese.

Although I never thought about studying or living away from home, I'm really glad I did it. It has given me many great experiences in research and in life. Occasionally, there are hard times, but the majority are positive. I have met many friendly people and received much support.



Niigata Cultural Exchange and Homestay

MEXT Scholarship Profiles – K. Lee



Scholarship Type:
Research Student

Program/Field:
**International Relations,
China's Foreign Policy**

University in Japan:
**Graduate School of Asia
and Pacific Studies,
Waseda University
(2009-2011)**

University Alma Mater in
Canada:
**University of British
Columbia**

Current Status:
Recruiting Consultant

Why did you apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

I found the perfect graduate program that I wanted to enrol in, China's foreign policy, at Waseda University.

What challenges did you anticipate (or find out) about living and studying in Japan?

At first, living in Japan might be challenging because it is culturally and linguistically very different.

The graduate school had an English-track, but I also did some coursework in Japanese. Completing and presenting class materials in Japanese was challenging, but it greatly improved my Japanese.

I found my two-years studying in Japan was a very worthwhile investment. It provided me with an opportunity for personal

growth and lifelong friendships, while opening doors to a wider variety of careers paths in the future.

Finding a place to live through Japanese agents was too costly, but eventually I found an affordable place to share with friends.

What is your most memorable experience of your time studying in Japan?

I had already been to many places in Japan in the past, mostly in the Kansai area. Living a metropolitan life in Tokyo was a memorable experience for me.

What else was enjoyable about Japan?

I found the Japanese food most intriguing and attractive. I also enjoyed the well-established transportation

"It provided me with an opportunity for personal growth and lifelong friendships, while opening doors to a wider variety of careers paths in the future."



system.

How did studying in Japan benefit you in your current role?

Through studying in Japan, I was able to establish a personal network with people related to Japan and Japanese affairs, more easily.

I currently work as a recruiting consultant. However, in the long-term, I plan to pursue a career in the non-profit and government sector at organizations potentially related to Japan.

What comments or advice do you have for people considering studying in Japan?

Japan really has an excellent scholarship program for foreign students. You will be able to enjoy a quiet life of studying if you find a good university and program that fits your academic interest.

Make sure to make the most out of Japanese language programs available for foreign students.

Try to reach out to Japanese people if you want to culturally mingle with them by joining school clubs, events, etc.

Also, try to find career opportunities while studying. Japan has many foreign companies and organizations, where you can apply for internships or jobs.



**K. Lee in
Shibuya, Tokyo**



Sakura (Cherry Blossoms) near Waseda University