Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

artist:

title:

2015.3

Tsukihyakushi setsugo-no-akatsuki Kobayashi Heihachiro

artist:

title:
SAITAMA: JAPAN AT YOUR DOORSTEP

For many people, the thought of Japan conjures up images of rich cultural traditions, cutting-edge technology, and courteous hospitality. These images may be accurate, but they only provide a small glimpse of all Japan has to offer.

A university exchange is a perfect way to learn more about this fascinating country. See the sights, master the language, experience the culture, and build friendships that will last a lifetime. Welcome to Japan... welcome to Saitama!

Unparalleled Livability

Saitama then and now

In feudal times, Saitama was the ‘gateway to Tokyo’, a place enjoyed by everyone from emperors to peasants, and a refuge at times of crisis in the capital. Local samurais promoted a philosophy of peace and tolerance, nurturing the land and planting trees rather than crossing swords. This historical legacy has grown into a distinct local identity that blends urban amenity with all the charms of nature. More than 170,000 non-Japanese nationals now call Saitama home—a testament to the region’s livability and friendly cosmopolitanism.

A metropolis at your fingertips

Located just north of Tokyo, Saitama is one of East Japan’s most popular residential areas. The regional rail hub, Omiya station, is only 30 minutes from Ikebukuro and just a few minutes from Tokyo’s cosmopolitan haunts Shinjuku and Shibuya. Saitama residents boast that the attractions and conveniences of big city life are at their fingertips, but never in their faces.

Easy access to Japan’s top destinations

All of Japan’s major attractions are within easy reach of Saitama. Popular day trip options include Mt. Fuji, the Nikko World Heritage Area, and the ski slopes of Sayama. Saitama is on the Shinansen high-speed train network that can take you to northern attractions such as Aomori, or southwest to Kyoto, Osaka and beyond, in just a few hours.

Making the most of the experience

Every day in Saitama has been slightly different than the last, and it has made me realize how much I take for granted. I have had the opportunity to see some of the most beautiful landscapes and experience new things, but the most memorable moments have been the unexpected. I have learned to enjoy the little things and be grateful for what I have. It has been an amazing experience so far and I am excited to see what the future holds.

So far, my experience in Saitama has been amazing. The people are friendly and welcoming. I have been able to make new friends and explore new places. It has been a great opportunity for me to learn more about Japanese culture and customs. I have also been able to try new foods and participate in cultural activities. I have found the people to be very hospitable and helpful. It has been a truly unforgettable experience. 

I would encourage anyone coming to Saitama to try and keep an open mind in order to make the most of every opportunity. Our own cowardice is often our worst enemy. Take the subway, talk to the cashier, join a club, and even when you struggle you can know that you are living life to the fullest and enjoying every moment. You won’t feel alone. Ganbatte!

Don’t forget to try and keep an open mind in order to make the most of every opportunity. Our own cowardice is often our worst enemy. Take the subway, talk to the cashier, join a club, and even when you struggle you can know that you are living life to the fullest and enjoying every moment. You won’t feel alone. Ganbatte!

Did you know?

Day 1

Saitama is the backdrop to the phenomenally successful animated feature My Neighbor Totoro, directed by the world-renowned Miyazaki Hayao. The film depicts the charming rural atmosphere of Saitama in the 1960s.

Day 2

Saitama is widely known as a magnet for major events. It boasts the Saitama Stadium, one of the largest purpose-built soccer venues in Asia and a host venue for the 2002 World Cup. Many of the world’s top musical artists have performed at Saitama Super Arena. Smaller venues host an array of other performing arts events and exhibitions to suit all tastes. Several of Japan’s top professional sporting teams also call Saitama home, including the Seibu Lions (baseball) and Urawa Reds (soccer).

Day 3

Saitama is known for its vibrancy of a large city growing up, but it also retains a similar charm. Many places like Kawagoe, are wonderful examples of blending the old and new sides of Japanese culture. My advice is not to overload (big tourist spots are often overcrowded) and to see the world around you with open eyes. It is when you discover things you never expected.

Day 4

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Day 5

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Day 6

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SAITAMA UNIVERSITY

The world’s gateway to Japan, Japan’s gateway to the world

One of Japan’s elite national universities, Saitama University was founded after the amalgamation of three renowned national education universities in 1949. The university’s 8,000 domestic students come from all over Japan, with more enrolling from outside the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area than within it. Saitama University strives to be an international academic gateway, welcoming students and researchers from around the world not just as guests, but as valued colleagues and collaborators. Saitama University researchers stand at the pinnacle of their field in many disciplines, and the university has an active program of international partnerships in both research and learning cosmopolitanism.

An ideal choice — whatever your goal may be

I chose Saitama University because it offers an excellent Japanese language program and great freedom for exchange students to plan their own studies, in both English and Japanese language mediums. A Japanese friend studying at Saitama University had also told me the good things about the friendly, attentive teachers and the laid-back environment. Here on campus I have the best of both worlds: a quiet and peaceful environment conducive to study, and proximity to the big city when I need it. University staff members are supportive and genuinely interested in exchange students’ welfare. I really hope to maintain a connection with Saitama University after my exchange has finished.

What makes us special?

1. Low student-teacher ratio
   The Saitama educational experience is characterized by small class sizes and attentive, dedicated instructors. Students are encouraged to collaborate with their classmates and make the most of their instructors’ knowledge and guidance.

2. Comprehensive campus
   All academic departments are based on the university’s main campus on the outskirts of Saitama City. This concentration of academic activity creates an intellectually stimulating atmosphere and provides many opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

3. Generous scholarships
   The university administers an extensive range of scholarship and financial aid programs, supported by government and private-sector donors. Many exchange students, both outbound and inbound, receive generous subsidies and allowances.

Academic Programs

Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Global Governance Studies
- Sociology and Field Studies
- Philosophy and History
- European Culture and American Studies
- Japanese and Asian Culture

Faculty of Education
- Comprehensive Education
- Modern Symbiosis Education
- Subject Education
- School Health Nursing

Faculty of Economics
- Economics
- Business Management
- Social Environmental Design

Faculty of Science
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Regulatory Biology

Faculty of Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical and Electronic Systems
- Information and Computer Sciences
- Applied Chemistry
- Functional Materials Science
- Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Environmental Science

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Graduate School of Education
Graduate School of Science and Engineering

*as of April 2015

SAITAMA UNIVERSITY

Chulalongkorn University
Nick Natapol
Faculty of Liberal Arts
Global Governance Studies
Sociology and Field Studies

Faculty of Education
Comprehensive Education
Modern Symbiosis Education
Subject Education
School Health Nursing

Faculty of Economics
Economics
Business Management
Social Environmental Design

Faculty of Science
Mathematics
Physics
Chemistry
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Faculty of Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Electrical and Electronic Systems
Information and Computer Sciences
Applied Chemistry
Functional Materials Science
Civil and Environmental Engineering
Environmental Science

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Graduate School of Education
Graduate School of Science and Engineering

Saitama University researchers stand at the pinnacle of their field in many disciplines, and the university has an active program of international partnerships in both research and learning cosmopolitanism.
STUDYING AT SAITAMA UNIVERSITY

Take control of your exchange

Exchange students at Saitama University have the opportunity to tailor their academic programs to their own individual needs and interests. They choose from a wide array of academically rigorous courses, complemented by a Japanese language program that delivers proven results.

Regular Courses

Saitama University is a comprehensive university, offering a wide variety of courses across all disciplinary areas. Exchange students are welcome to enroll in these courses, subject to their Japanese proficiency and other previous study experience. Over 50 courses are also offered in an English language medium, allowing students with little or no Japanese ability to study alongside local students majoring in the same field.

Popular Courses Taught in English

The following English-medium courses have proved popular among exchange students in the past:
- • Japanese Politics and Foreign Policy
- • International Communication
- • Japan in the Foreign Imagination
- • Anthropology of Japan
- • Japanese Pop Culture
- • Pre-Modern Japanese Literature
- • Justice and Vendetta Culture in Pre-Modern Japan
- • Contemporary International Affairs


Japanese Language Program

Exchange students also have the option of enrolling in the intensive Japanese language course operated by the Japanese Education Center. This highly regarded program features full-class instructors and the latest teaching methodologies. Exchange students are placed in classes best suited to their proficiency level. The full range of skill areas is covered, from reading/writing to everyday spoken Japanese. Many students go on to achieve excellent results in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT).

A journey toward “Japan-literacy”

I’m majoring in Japanese back in China, but there is a limit to how much you can learn in the classroom and from textbooks. I always knew that I wanted to become a true Japan expert. I would need to spend time here “on the ground” in Japan. I thought that an exchange to Saitama University would be the ideal way to master real-life Japanese language and to experience Japanese culture at the same time. And I was right!

My classes are always challenging, but I can see my skills improving from day to day. Everything I learn in class connects directly to what I hear and outside of class. I have a much broader view of Japanese society and culture now, and really hope to continue my contact with Japan throughout my studies and working life.

Courses taken at Saitama University (Semester 1, 2014)
- Japanese language program courses
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Listening
  - Conversation, Presentation
  - Advanced Writing
- Courses taught in Japanese
  - Introduction to Educational Methodology
  - Japanese Language and Education
  - Japanese Pop Culture
  - English Grammar
  - Writing
- Courses taught in English
  - Foundations of Modern Japanese Political Thought

Academic System

Course Credits

One semester is 15 weeks and most semester-length courses involve one class per week.
- 15 X 50-minute class = 2 credits
- 15 X 90-minute class = 3 credits
- 1 credit for a language course

Grades

Exchange students will be evaluated and awarded grades in accordance with Saitama University’s policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Year

This is the standard academic schedule at Saitama University. Exact dates vary from year to year. Exchange students may study for one or two semesters, depending on their own plans and the requirements of their home universities.

Experience within and beyond the classroom

When I first came to class at Saitama University, I was pleasantly surprised by the small class sizes. Instructors give us individual attention and ensure that everyone stays engaged. It also like the international atmosphere. Having classmates from places diverse as Brazil, Russia, Spain, Thailand and the UK not only provides a great multi-cultural experience, but also ensures that class discussions are full of different ideas and perspectives. I feel that Saitama University’s curriculum is extending my language skills and knowledge of Japan, but more importantly, it’s helping me make the most of the experience of immersion in the Japanese culture. I encourage students to take the whole campus and community as a classroom. Even a simple walk around campus is sure to teach you something new!

Courses taken at Saitama University (Semester 1, 2014)
- Courses taught in English
  - Japanese Pop Culture
  - Contemporary International Affairs
  - Japanese language program courses
  - Reading & Grammar
  - Oral Expressions
  - Listening
  - Vocabulary, Kana and Writing
  - Conversation

Anqi Li
Renmin University of China

Desiree Benini
University of Turin
Enhancing the exchange experience

We believe that housing is a focal point for student life and a crucial feature of the educational experience. I-House offers a ready-made social world that students can use to meet new friends and adjust to life in Japan in a supportive, convenient environment. An added benefit of life at I-House is the opportunity to interact with students from across the globe. This cosmopolitan environment is an unexpected benefit of the exchange experience for many students at Saitama University.

The ideal place to start life in Japan

Looking back at my first two months on exchange, I realize that International House, or “I-House” as we all know it, played a really important role in my adjustment to life in Saitama. At I-House I immediately felt part of a community of students that was keen to welcome and help out new arrivals. I also enjoyed exploring the campus and local area with my fellow residents, and appreciated how easy it was to get to class. I also enjoy I-House’s cosmopolitan atmosphere. My immediate neighbors are from the U.S. and China, and Japanese is the only language that all three of us have in common. Even though I am a student of Japanese studies, this might be the first time I have actually used Japanese as a language of international communication.

One of my major concerns before coming to Japan was the cost of living. But here in I-House, I am finding life very affordable. I have also been fortunate to receive a JASSO scholarship with 80,000 yen per month, which is enough to cover my living costs here. I think the balance between affordability and quality makes Saitama University a great place to study.

Support Services

One-on-one attention to all students’ needs

The Office of International Affairs is your first point of call for concerns and questions about life as an exchange student. General advice on studies and daily living is readily available, and the office can also provide introductions to specialized services such as medical care. Our staff members take pride in treating each student as an individual, and will take the time to get to know you and your needs.

Student Clubs

Beyond the classroom, beyond your horizons

Exchange students at Saitama University are strongly encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities. Joining one of the university’s 172 registered student clubs is the ideal way to indulge your interests at the same time as making friends with local students beyond your regular classes. Popular student clubs for exchange students include Aikido, Judo, and Basketball.

My Day | A typical day in the life of Charleen Lay

### Time and date

*My day starts just in time for a quick breakfast in my room at International House.*

#### 7:30

** Rise and shine**

*To start the day, I wake up early and head to the gym attached to my housing.*

** Japanese**

*My first class today is Japanese Grammar. There is a mini-quiz at the start of each class to keep us on our toes!*

** Lunch and a chat**

*The cafeteria is my favorite spot for lunch. Today I catch up with some other Australian exchange students over a bowl of curry.*

** A change of pace**

*Alongside the Japanese program, I’m taking two regular courses taught in English. Today I attend a Theatre Performance Arts class.***

** Indulge my passion**

*I am a member of this university’s Tea Ceremony club. I’ve always been fascinated by the art of tea, so it’s great to have an opportunity to learn it alongside local Japanese students. The club members love meeting exchange students, and I’ve been able to talk about other the tea!*

** Drink**

*After club, I meet up with some other exchange students back at I-House, and we decide to go out for dinner in Saidai-dori, a dining precinct that is famous for its Ramen noodle shops. As usual, I’m happy to know which dish to choose!*

** More Japanese**

*Back to my room in I-House, and we decide to go out for dinner in Saidai-dori, a dining precinct that is famous for its Ramen noodle shops. As usual, I’m happy to know which dish to choose!*

** Time to head home to my room in I-House. With Japanese text everywhere, there is still plenty to do before I fall the pillow. Watch me go!***

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Rise and shine, Japanese Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00~</td>
<td>My first class today is Japanese Grammar, there is a mini-quiz at the start of each class to keep us on our toes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Time for a coffee, drinks from International House to the main campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40</td>
<td>Meet up is a Japanese conversation class, with countless opportunities to speak Japanese outside the classroom, I really feel that my skills have improved since I came to Saitama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10~</td>
<td>Lunch and a chat, The cafeteria is my favorite spot for lunch. Today I catch up with some other Australian exchange students over a bowl of curry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:40~</td>
<td>A change of pace, a Theatre Performance Arts class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:10~</td>
<td>Indulge my passion, I am a member of the university’s Tea Ceremony club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00~</td>
<td>Drink, After club, I meet up with some other exchange students back at I-House, and we decide to go out for dinner in Saidai-dori, a dining precinct that is famous for its Ramen noodle shops. As usual, I’m happy to know which dish to choose!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00~</td>
<td>Time to head home to my room in I-House. With Japanese text everywhere, there is still plenty to do before I fall the pillow. Watch me go!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequently Asked Questions

MONEY MATTERS

Living Expenses

More affordable than you think
Life in Saitama is an ideal combination of convenience and affordability. Students are pleasantly surprised to find that living costs are significantly lower than in many parts of Europe, North America and Oceania. We recommend that you budget around US$5,000 for a six-month exchange and US$10,000 for a year-long exchange. See the chart below for a breakdown of average costs.

Insurance

All exchange students are enrolled in Japan’s National Health Insurance scheme. 70% of all regular health care costs, including medical prescriptions and dental care, are covered by this insurance for a small monthly premium. Additionally, many expenses are covered by insurance. University CO-OP Student Insurance provides medical coverage that includes low-cost insurance coverage for both accidents and personal liability.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

In addition to any support provided by their home institutions, high-achieving exchange students at Saitama University may be eligible for scholarships offered by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO). In the past, these scholarships have been awarded on the basis of academic merit and provided stipends of around US$800 per month. Saitama University itself also offers Honors Scholarships valued at US$800 per month to students who actively participate in university and community life. The Office of International Affairs informs all new exchange students of the scholarships available and assists with application processes.

From Application to Arrival

If you are interested in going on exchange to Saitama University, the first step is to apply to consult with a study abroad advisor at your home institution and gain approval to complete the Saitama University exchange program for credit. Once you have been approved by your home institution, the process is as follows:

1. Submit application and gain approval from Saitama University.
2. Obtain a student visa. Saitama University will help to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility which you take to your nearest Japanese embassy or consulate to apply for a College Student visa to study in Japan.
3. Reserve air tickets, confirm housing and other details. The university will advise you of the arrival schedule and consult with you regarding housing options.
4. Come to Saitama! Saitama University’s Office of International Affairs will provide full transport instructions to ensure that your arrival in Japan and on campus is smooth and enjoyable. The Office’s friendly staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have as you adjust to life in Saitama.

Update: March, 2015

Living Costs Snapshot

Expenses are subject to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Description</th>
<th>JPY (¥)</th>
<th>USD ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room &amp; Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Residence Hall</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>11,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(on-campus)</td>
<td></td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (electricity, water, gas etc.)</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>7,000-10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deposit</td>
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<td>60-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saitama City area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Bus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tokyo area</td>
<td>220</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saitama City area</td>
<td>140-220</td>
<td>1.2-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Train</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saitama City area</td>
<td>140-220</td>
<td>1.2-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saitama Pref. area</td>
<td>140-1,000</td>
<td>1.2-1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saitama City to Central Tokyo</td>
<td>260-450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>University CO-OP Student Insurance</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>Per semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smart phone</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Regular contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>Club activities</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>4,500-10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>2,000-3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment &amp; Hobby</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>5,000-10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When should I start planning my exchange?
A. As soon as possible! Many students begin to plan 18 months or 2 years before they depart. Your university will usually require you to begin the application process at least 3-12 months before the exchange. Please ask a study abroad advisor for details.

Q. Do I need to find my own place to live?
A. No. Saitama University will arrange housing for you, usually in the on-campus dormitory, International House.

Q. Will I be placed in the right level of Japanese language classes?
A. Yes, all Japanese language program students take a placement test at the start of semester and are assigned to classes suitable to their proficiency level.

Q. Will I have time to travel around Japan while on exchange?
A. Saitama is an ideal base from which to launch short trips around Japan, and even to nearby countries such as South Korea. During semester, you will have time to travel at weekends and on non-class days. If you are staying for two semesters, you can use the vacation periods in August/September and February. You will be permitted to stay in your accommodation at Saitama University for several weeks after the end of semester (depending on home university requirements), giving you plenty of time to explore the rest of Japan.

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