Thammasat University



Study Exchange essay

Essay about study exchange at Tokyo International University, Tokyo Japan

August 2023 to December 2023

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This study exchange period was one of the most beneficial experiences of my life. It was the best opportunity for me to study new things, live abroad away from my family for the first time, meet new people from all over the world, gain experience in other countries, and learn more about their educational system. Throughout this exchange period, I experienced both positive and unpleasant experiences in a range of areas, including study, friendship, dorm life, travel, food, and so on. These remarkable events will be detailed in this article to explain what I learned throughout my study exchange period and to inspire others to go abroad at least once in their lives.

Welcoming Process and Dormitory

The welcoming period was all about helping students. As almost all of the students, both exchange and full-time students, at Tokyo International University are from different countries, most of them were struggling with searching for a place to live by themselves. Because they have no experience living abroad and not all of the students are fluent in Japanese. So the university plays the most important role in managing all the living factors that the student must go through to live in Japan and start their study. From my own experience, the university helped me a lot by providing a dormitory for me, helping me apply for a student visa, helping me apply for necessary residential documents, providing move-in and move-out procedures, and many more. Their help made my life in Japan a lot easier and made me feel comfortable that I didn't have to face any issues alone. The university has much experience dealing with and helping students with residential and other necessary legal documents. They brought us, the exchange and full-time students, to the city hall in our districts, to fill out all the legal forms, and communicated to the city hall's staff to reduce the risk of miscommunication or any issue with the procedures. This helps all students to study at the university without any issues. The university also arranges all dormitory matters for each student through a third-party company, such as the place where the majority of students live, manages all problems that occur in the students' residences by finding the best solution to solve the problem, and giving advice for every student about how to live in Japan and others. However, all issues

that occur in the student's residence must go through the university first before letting the third-party company manage those issues, this made students feel safer and be sure that their problems will be well solved. The dormitory that I lived in was an apartment residence in the Saitama area where any people could live, not only the university's students. It is located near the train station that has a direct line to the university, both Kawagoe and Ikebukuro campus, and close to the supermarket, shopping malls, restaurants, city hall, tourist attractions, and other places that help support students during their study period. This train was the main transportation method that I used to go to the university or travel to the place that I wanted to go. As it's located in the Saitama area near the police station, The environment around my dormitory is peaceful and safe to live in. In my dormitory, 4 TIU students lived together, which were me, my Thai friend from Thammasat University, and another 2 American students. We weren't allowed to choose who we wanted to live together, which positively helped new students to make friends with students they never met before and people who came from different cultures. In my apartment, there are 4 private rooms a shared living room, a toilet, a shower room, and a kitchen. The university also provided all necessary and basic appliances for us, so we could live without buying any other appliances that were not needed. This place was convenient and comfortable making me feel pleasant and happy while living there.



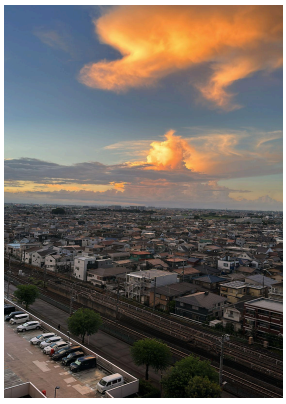
The Greeting-Orientation



The room hallway



My bedroom



The view from my apartment

Education and Friends

The program that I studied during my exchange period is called, the E-track program. This program teaches all in English and is divided into 3 majors, which are Business economics, Digital business and innovation, and international relations. The aspect of Tokyo International University's education system that is different from Thammasat University is how they allow every student to choose any subject they want to learn by themselves. There were only some mandatory courses that the students must register for during their first 2 semesters, however, other courses are up to the student to choose based on their interest in when they want to study those courses. For example, the student can take basic marketing whenever they want, they don't always have to take it during their first 2 studies semester. From my experience, This system is beneficial as the students have the freedom to choose to study their preferred subject each semester, allowing them to be self-sufficient, able to manage their own lives, and pursue their dream career path. Apart from this aspect of the registration method, almost every other aspect, that I knew about, is similar to the Thammasat University system. Another new system that I never experienced before is the fact that TIU arranges each class to be studied for only 1 hour and a half per class and 1 subject will be taught twice per week. All classes will be held on every weekday except Wednesday because on Wednesday the university opens opportunities for students to explore nearby areas or have time to themselves as there are no classes held on every Wednesday. The classes are arranged twice per week using the system where classes that study on Monday will be the same as on Thursday and classes that study on Tuesday will be the same on Friday. For example, in my case, I had leadership and corporate classes on Monday and Thursday and I had marketing and international business classes on Tuesday and Friday. I studied 4 classes during my exchange program. My courses were entrepreneurial practicum, corporate strategy, global marketing, and international business. The teaching method was similar to what I learned in Thammasat, where professors will mostly focus on lecturing and give some projects to do for final projects. I got a lot of new knowledge in business and strategy aspects from joining these classes, this knowledge will be useful in the future

and help me pursue my dreams successfully. Corporate strategy was the only subject that had a different teaching method that I never experienced before. It was the only subject that required all students to read the case studies and concept strategies, analyze the case, and answer the question individually. The work must be submitted before class starts. The work in this class was useful and interesting, however, it was quite stressful because the professor gave work every day or twice a week and the deadline was 24 hours before the next class started, which meant that the students only had around 1 day to finish their analysis. I was struggling with this subject because I needed to spend my free time working on that homework during other classes' time, which created a distraction and limited my ability to understand the contents in other classes. Apart from this corporate strategy class, other classes were fine for me, there were no problems that occurred. The university's environment was friendly, quiet, convenient, and peaceful for me. The campus that I studied in is located 15 minutes from the Ikebukuro train station and another train station nearby. To go to this campus I needed to use the train station that was close to my apartment and travel direct line to Ikebukuro station. It took around 1 hour and 30 minutes to arrive at Ikebukuro station from the station in my neighborhood called Kamifukuoka station. The campus was not only close to the train station but also close to the shopping mall, shopping districts, tons of restaurants, drug stores, and other shops that were located in that area and accessible. Moreover, the campus also has free wifi, a kitchen, a convenience store, cafeterias, and a vending machine inside the campus building as well. There is a high-quality security system on the campus, all students, professors, and staff are required to use their university's ID card to identify themselves before entering the campus. For example, when students want to enter the campus building they need to tab their student ID to the provided automatic gate first, if they don't have their student ID card with them they are required to inform security and security will allow them to go inside the building. This security system makes all students, staff, and professors feel safe on campus as outsiders can't easily access the building.

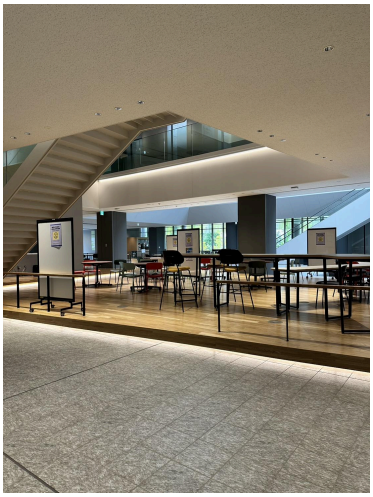
Pictures around the TIU Ikebukuro Campus



The campus



The campus



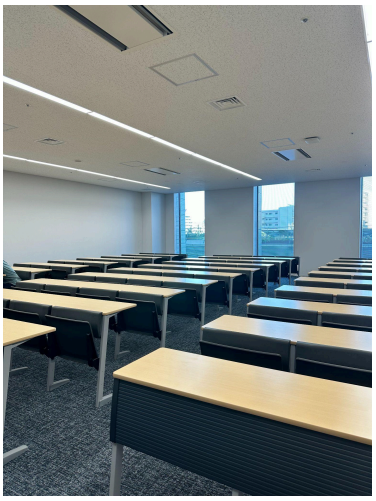
The campus



The campus



Campus’s Library



The lecture room

In terms of friends, I met a lot of new friends from all over the world. As I mentioned before it's an international university where anyone from any country can enter to learn here making the university full of diversity. All people in this university support each other through their hard work and collaboration. Even though people were less connected, in my point of view, when it comes to group work all collaborated resulting in efficient group work. And if they find anyone without a group they will help that person to solve their problem. Furthermore, all students at this university are very confident in themselves. They constantly talked to professors about questions related to the class or their study life and answered questions or expressed their opinions in class too. Eventhough I didn't know many people during this exchange period because I stayed there for only a short time, however, I still know from my observation that people in this community are friendly, enjoy their lives, are willing to help others, and are open-minded by rarely judging others based on their perspectives.

Travel and Food

During these 4 months, I traveled around Tokyo and Saitama areas the most as those areas are the closest to my university. I have been to all the famous tourist areas, for example, Shinjuku, Shibuya, Harajuku, Ikebukuro, Omote-Sando, Sen-Joji temple, Tokyo Skytree, Tokyo Tower, Kawagoe, and many more. When the semester ended, I also went to Osaka for a short period before I flew back to Thailand. During this vacation, I also visited famous places in Osaka. While traveling and studying, I had a lot of fun and experienced many traditions, cultures, food, and so many other things that made me gain more experiences that will be helpful to my living in the future. Examples of pictures of food and places that I experienced during the exchange period are attached below.



Senjo-ji temple



Kawagoe Old town



Tokyo Skytree



Famous Fluffy Pancake in Shibuya



Chicken Teriyaki U-don



Okonomiyaki



Kawagoe Festival



Tempura don



Omote-sando pedestrian area



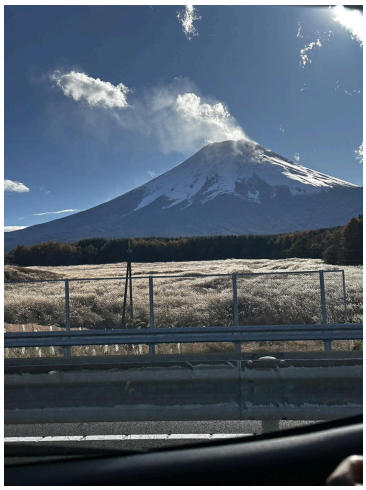
Shibuya area



Tokyo Disneyland



Tokyo Disneyland



Fuji-san Mountain



Fuji-san Mountain



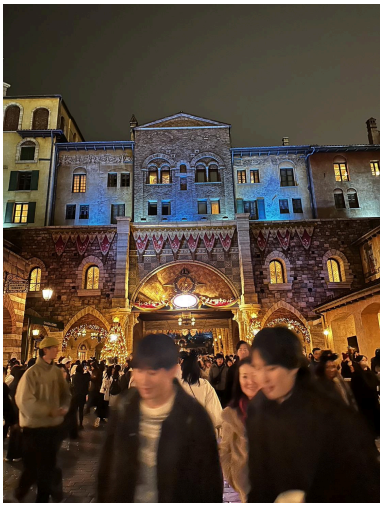
University of Tokyo



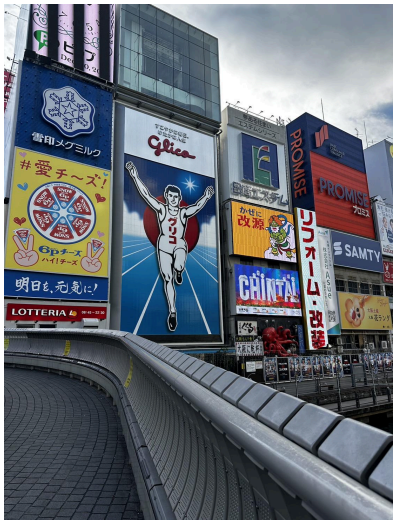
Roppongi area



Tokyo Tower



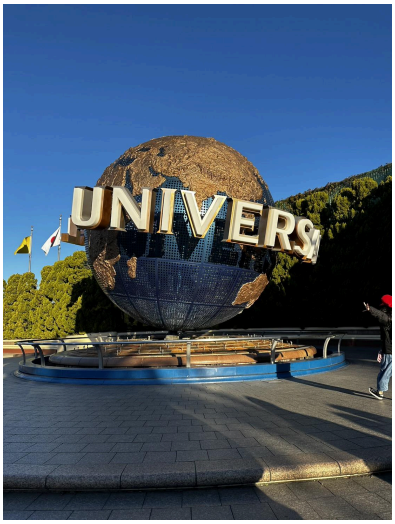
Tokyo DisneySea



Numba street, Osaka



Numba Yasaka shire, Osaka



Universal Studio Japan

Overall Environment

As a Thai exchange student who experienced exploring Tokyo during the exchange period, Tokyo was a place filled with kind citizens who welcomed all foreigners will a positive attitude. Not only the people that make foreigners feel welcome but the city's safety is based on low crime rates, a strong feeling of community, and effective law enforcement. Respect, civility, and harmony are highly valued in Japanese society, which contributes to a strong sense of security. The vast and well-maintained public transit infrastructure allows students to easily navigate the city, especially if they are unfamiliar with the language. Furthermore, Tokyo's cleanliness and orderliness provide a welcoming environment in which everyone, especially exchange students, can explore the city alone. Based on my experience, even if Tokyo is one of the busiest and most crowded capital cities, it is still safe for students and normal people, especially females, to walk alone because when something happens people around the incident are willing to help each other and the police also take action fast when something bad happened too. In my opinion, Tokyo unfolds as a fascinating tapestry of contrasts and novelty. The busy metropolis, pulsing with unstoppable energy, perfectly combines modern marvels with venerable cultural traditions. The gastronomic adventure provides a diverse range of cuisines, from fine sushi to substantial ramen, providing a welcome

break from Thailand's traditional tastes. Tokyo's cultural diversity, as represented in art, fashion, and historical buildings, is an exciting challenge for the exchange student to absorb and appreciate, giving depth to their cross-cultural experience. Living in Japan for 4 months changed my personality and daily life in positive ways, for instance, I became more self-responded, always aware of others, and followed unfamiliar rules like separating trash and disposed it on the right day of the week, always observing social norms and follow them, how to use public transportation in Japan, and learned more about their culture.

In conclusion, experiencing study exchange once in your life opens your opportunity to learn new things that you can’t find when you stay in Thailand. It teaches you to be independent and learn to rely more on yourself. Studying abroad also expands your social circle internationally as you will have a lot of opportunities to meet new people. My decision to get out of my comfort zone and study abroad was the best in my entire life as the experience that I got was worth it and it all improved me to become a better person.