Japan, Tokyo – Sophia University
Exchange & Direct Enroll
ACADEMIC YEAR & SPRING SEMESTER PROGRAM HANDBOOK

The Sophia University Japan program is offered by International Academic Programs (IAP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in conjunction with Sophia University. This IAP Program Handbook supplements handbooks or materials you receive from Sophia University as well as the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and provides you with the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before your departure or while you are abroad.

Questions about your program abroad (housing options, facilities abroad, etc.) as well as questions relating to your relationship with your host university or academics (e.g. course credit and equivalents, registration deadlines, etc.) should be directed to IAP at UW-Madison.

This program handbook contains the following information:

Exchange & Direct Enroll ACADEMIC YEAR & SPRING SEMESTER PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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Contact Information

ON-SITE PROGRAM INFORMATION
There are two ways to participate on the study abroad program: through the Exchange program and through the Direct Enroll option. Both experiences at Sophia are very similar, and you will have access to the same courses and facilities. The biggest difference is the office that will support you during your time at Sophia.

Exchange students will receive on-site support from the Office of Global Education and Collaboration. Exchange students will apply for housing through Global Education and Collaboration.

Direct Enroll students will receive support through the Office of Admissions, Office of Academic Affairs, and other offices on the Sophia campus. Direct Enroll students are responsible for securing their own housing arrangements, whether that is through Sophia housing or a third party. Please see the housing section below for more information.

UW-Madison Information
International Academic Programs (IAP)
University of Wisconsin-Madison
106 Red Gym, 716 Langdon St.
Madison, WI 53706
Tel: 608-265-6329 Fax: 608-262-6998
Web: www.studyabroad.wisc.edu

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION
In case of an emergency, contact your on-site staff first using the emergency contact information provided on-site. For IAP emergency contact, call the main IAP number (608) 265-6329 between 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; after-hours or on weekends call the IAP staff member on call at (608) 516-9440. If you call the main IAP number after hours, the message will direct you to call the emergency number, so it’s a good place to start if you’re not sure about the time difference.

U.S. EMBASSY REGISTRATION
All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register at the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate.

Program Dates
Program Dates for the Sophia University programs will be listed in your MyStudyAbroad account.
Preparation Before Leaving

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Passport: A passport is needed to travel to Japan and to obtain your visa. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application materials can be found on the U.S. State Department website. If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

Visa: In addition to your valid passport, you must have a student visa to enter Japan. A Certificate of Eligibility for the status of resident College Student is required to obtain a student visa and must come directly from the Japanese host university. The Certificate will be mailed to you during the summer prior to the program. You will need to present the Certificate along with your passport and visa application to the nearest Japanese Consulate. More information about this is available in the Travel & Visa section of your MyStudyAbroad account.

HANDLING MONEY ABROAD

The official currency of Japan is the yen (JPY or ¥). When you arrive in Japan, be sure to have adequate funds to cover your initial needs (including housing), pay for transportation expenses, purchase furnishings and other necessities for your room, and any other expenses that may arise. You will want to have approximately $1000 available to you for the first several weeks. You may wish to bring a small amount in cash and the rest in traveler’s checks, which you may cash upon arrival. While you will likely not spend all your arrival funds, keeping your money in traveler’s checks will safeguard against emergencies, and cash flow will be especially important in the first weeks as you get accustomed to the higher costs of living.

Banks: Unlike the United States, personal checks are not used in Japan; it is very common to do all of your banking and money transactions using cash or inter-bank transfers. To facilitate your access to money, it is recommended that you open a bank account.

You should open an account soon after arriving because your monthly rent will be withdrawn from your bank account if you live in Sophia housing.

To fund your new account, consider a wire transfer, cash, traveler’s checks, or international postal money order. International postal money orders may be purchased at certain U.S. post offices for a small fee (approximately $5) and can be cashed at any post office in Japan (cashing at a bank can take up to one month). After you open account, note that your statements and all transactions will most likely be in Japanese (CitiBank offers statements in English and as well as bank employees that speak English).

Banks in Japan are open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Post offices also offer many banking services, including cashing of International Postal Money Orders, access to ATMs, and acceptance of payments for phone, insurance, and utility bills. Post-Banks do not require any initial deposit, and do not have any minimum amount that must remain in your account. There is also no required length of the time and the account can be closed very easily, thus they are a very convenient option.
Postal Savings www.yu-cho.japanpost.jp

UFJ www.bk.mufg.jp

Mizuho www.mizuhobank.co.jp

Sumitomo Mitsui www.smbc.co.jp

Traveler’s Checks: Traveler’s checks in U.S. dollars and other denominations can be exchanged for yen at most banks with exchange services and at major hotels and department stores throughout Japan (a passport is required). CitiBank and American Express traveler’s checks are the most widely accepted.

ATM/Debit cards: If you open a Japanese bank account, a cash card for automatic teller machines will be issued to you by mail free of charge. You may withdraw yen using your cash card at any ATM run by your bank. If you use another bank’s ATM or withdraw outside of peak hours, there is a service charge of approximately ¥105. Most ATMs are open until 9:00 p.m., except on Saturdays and Sundays when many of them are closed after 5:00 p.m. Convenience stores have ATMs which support most major bank cash cards, and many have begun offering 24 hour services. There is a ¥210 service charge for weekends and holidays.

To withdraw yen using your U.S. ATM/debit card, consider visiting a Japanese post office, as ATM machines in Japanese banks accept only cards issued by Japanese banks while post offices will accept foreign bankcards operating on the Cirrus (MasterCard) or PLUS (Visa) systems. Seven Eleven ATMs also accept foreign debit cards. Machines are available only during limited hours (depending on the bank, until 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. weekdays and up to 5:00 p.m. on weekends). Besides post offices, other places with ATMs that may accept foreign-issued cards include Citibank (which usually accepts both Visa and MasterCard and sometimes American Express as well), large department stores, and airports.

Credit cards: Japan is primarily a cash-based society, with most establishments not accepting credit cards for purchases. Credit cards may be used for obtaining cash and paying for accommodations, meals at expensive restaurants, train or air tickets, and major purchases. The most readily accepted cards are MasterCard (also called Eurocard), Visa, and the Japanese credit card JCB (Japan Credit Bank). Train passes can now be used as payment at many department stores and convenience stores. This is another way to carry money around without having to carry bills and coins.

PACKING

While most things are readily available in Japan, some items may be more expensive, difficult to be mailed internationally, or simply inconvenient to purchase there; hence, you may wish to bring particular items with you from home. Recommendations include:

Passport-size photos: 2 extra passport-size photos (for ID cards, forms, and applications)
Clothes: Temperatures in Tokyo can range from about 10 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to 100 and humid in the summer. Hence, a wide range of clothing sufficient for the entire year is necessary:

- Comfortable shoes – you will do a lot of walking.
- For men, semi-dress pants like cotton khakis.
- Women should make sure they have at least one dress or skirt.
- Collared long sleeve shirts are useful. You can wear them under sweaters in the winter and roll the sleeves up during autumn and spring.
- Jeans for casual wear.
- Shorts (comfortable to wear at home in the summer, but are seldom worn by Japanese students to school).
- Rain jacket/rain boots – Japan has a rainy season. Some past participants have found these helpful.
- Some club sports and extracurricular organizations may have events where you are required to wear a black suit.

Personal Items:

- Deodorant (it is difficult to purchase U.S.-style anti-perspirant in Japan)
- Toothpaste (finding U.S.-style toothpaste can be hit-or-miss)
- Sheets/pillow (if your dorm does not provide them)
- Any over-the-counter medicines you think you may need. While it is possible to get Japanese brands of over-the-counter medicines, if there is something you are accustomed to using often (pain relievers, cold medication, etc) you may wish to bring it with you.
- Contact lens solutions in Japan differ from American brands and American brands can be difficult to find, so you might want to bring your preferred brand.

Prescription Medications: A one-month supply of prescription medication is allowed. Medications must be in their original container with the prescription label. Most prescription drugs are permitted, including drugs that may not be available in Japan, such as birth control pills. Drugs that are hallucinogenic, narcotic, and/or psychotropic in nature will be confiscated, except in extenuating circumstances where prior approval has been obtained from the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. If more than one month's supply is required, prior permission from the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare in Japan is required:

Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare
www.mhlw.go.jp/english/
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/policy/health-medical/pharmaceuticals/01.html

Be sure to have a copy of the prescription and/or letter from your prescribing physician explaining the nature of the medication, the purpose of taking it, recommended dosage, and frequency of ingestion.

Past participants have also had prescription medications sent to them via air mail. Check with your local post office and pharmacy for information about regulations.
Travel and Arrival

You are responsible for arranging your own transportation to Tokyo. The major airport near Tokyo is Narita International Airport (NRT) www.narita-airport.jp.

Transportation from Narita into Tokyo:

Narita airport is located about 35 miles outside of Tokyo and there are several options for transportation with ranging costs and times:

By Taxi: Taxi rides are quite expensive in Japan. While taxis can be convenient, the ride from Narita airport into Tokyo has costs as high as 20,000 yen and the drive takes between an hour and a half to two hours or longer depending on the traffic situation.

By Bus: Buses run regularly from the airport to various stations and hotels in the Tokyo area. The Airport Limousine Bus Service is a popular choice and tickets can be bought at the airport terminals after your arrival. The buses run from every hour to up to 3 or 4 times an hour and the costs is about 3,000 yen. The buses pick passengers and their baggage up outside of terminal one and terminal two and the rides varies from an hour and a half to two hours depending on the destination and on traffic.

By Train: There are varying degrees of local and express trains from Narita into Tokyo. Via local train, the ride starts at around 90 minutes and the costs vary depending on the type of train. However, there is no luggage rack on the train and no seat reservations so you may end up standing in a crowded train. To avoid this there are two specialty trains running from Narita into Tokyo;

  Narita Express (East Japan Railways): The Narita express train runs from Terminal one and Terminal two of Narita airport and stops in various stations within Tokyo including Tokyo station and Shinjuku station. The cost is about 3,000 yen and the ride takes about an hour. There are luggage racks in each train car and train tickets can be purchased in advance.

  Narita Express: https://www.jreast.co.jp/e/nex/index.html

  Keisei Skyliner (Keisei Railways): The Skyliner departs from Terminal one and Terminal two of Narita airport and reaches Ueno Station a short 40 minutes later with one stop at Nippori station. The cost is about 2,000 yen. There is an area on each train car to place luggage bags and tickets can be purchased in advance or after you arrive at the airport.


Baggage Delivery Service (takkyubin): If you are traveling with multiple large suitcases or simply don’t want to have to worry about your luggage; there are many baggage delivery services
available. You can bring your bag(s) to one of the baggage service counters in the airport and they will deliver your bag to your destination. The cost per piece of luggage depends on the size and the destination, with costs from 2,000 to 4,000 yen. It is usually next day delivery so you might want to keep some necessities and a change of clothes with you. These same services also do baggage pick-up for when the time come to return to the airport. Baggage can also be dropped off at many convenience stores across Japan and be picked up from a counter in Narita Airport.

The Academic Program

SOPHIA UNIVERSITY
Established in 1913, Sophia University is a private Jesuit university located in the heart of Tokyo. Since its founding, Sophia University and has grown to be one of Japan's foremost private universities.

Sophia University: www.sophia.ac.jp

FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS
Program participants will attend the Faculty of Liberal Arts (formerly the Faculty of Comparative Culture) on the Yotsuya campus. The Faculty of Liberal Arts was founded in 1949 as the International Division, which in 1974 became the Department of Comparative Culture, Japan’s first university-level program taught entirely in English and accredited by the Ministry of Education. In 1987 the department was expanded into the independent Faculty of Comparative Culture. Widely known for its broad and rigorous curriculum, in 2003 the Faculty of Comparative Culture received a prestigious “Good Practice” award from the Ministry of Education and Science for pioneering modes of education suited to an increasingly global society. In 2006 the Faculty of Comparative Culture became the Faculty of Liberal Arts (Kokusai Kyoyo Gaku bu). Simultaneously it moved from its location in Ichigaya to new quarters on the main Yotsuya campus.

One of the Faculty’s major strengths is the broad range of courses on Japan and Asia taught by a faculty widely recognized for expertise in this area. The teaching staff of professors and adjunct instructors represents over a dozen nationalities with graduate degrees from leading institutions around the world. Drawn from over 30 countries, the student body includes graduates of Japanese high schools and international schools, Japanese nationals educated abroad, and foreign degree and exchange students.

ORIENTATION
Participants will attend an orientation before the start of the semester, which will go over helpful information such as obtaining train passes, available courses, and life in Japan.

COURSE INFORMATION
Courses: The Faculty of Liberal Arts offers courses taught in English in the following areas: Comparative Culture, International Business and Economics, Social Studies, and Japanese
Language and Studies. Faculty of Liberal Arts “core programs” courses and the modern language courses (except, of course, Japanese language) are not open to exchange students.

For course descriptions, use the following link:
http://www.fla.sophia.ac.jp/academics

**Japanese Language Courses:** Participants are required to take Japanese language each semester. Upon arrival in Japan, students will take a Japanese placement test to determine their proficiency level. Depending on the test results, participants take one course each semester out of the following Japanese language tracks:

1) **Regular** - There are 4 different levels within this track. Students are in class five times a week for 90 minutes each. The course is worth a total of 4 credits.

2) **Intensive** - There are 3 different levels within this track. Classes meet for three hours a day, Monday through Friday mornings. The course is worth a total of 8 credits.

   The intensive track course teaches the Japanese language in the context of Japanese culture. This course is designed to meet the needs of students who are interested in acquiring a solid grounding in spoken and written Japanese.

**Other Courses:** In addition to Japanese Language, students take courses available to non-degree students within the Faculty of Liberal Arts. (Note: some courses in these departments are restricted to degree-seeking students only.) All courses besides Japanese language classes are taught in English and the class format is very similar to that of UW-Madison courses. The majority of these courses are worth 4 credits each.

**Registration:** Students will finalize their course schedule with Sophia University upon arrival in Japan.

**Equivalents and Course Equivalent Request Form (CER):** Each course you take abroad must be assigned a UW-Madison “equivalent” course in order for your grades and credits to be recorded on your UW-Madison transcript. In order to establish UW-Madison course equivalents for your study abroad courses, you will submit a Course Equivalent Request Form (CER). Detailed information on the UW-Madison course equivalent process is available in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and in your MyStudyAbroad account.

Please note that every course you take abroad must be awarded an equivalent UW course. There are no exceptions. It is important to start the equivalent process as soon as possible to avoid any delay in posting your study abroad courses to your UW Madison transcript.

For Japanese language courses, you will receive credits for the next course(s) in the UW-Madison Japanese language sequence. Japanese literature classes may be grouped together to form one UW-Madison course equivalent. These course equivalent determinations are made by the Department of East Asian Languages & Literature in consultation with IAP. Courses that are not Japanese language or literature will be reviewed by the appropriate UW-Madison academic department to approve the course equivalent.
CREDITS

Conversions: The number of credits you receive for a given course at Sophia University will convert to the same number of credits at UW-Madison. For example, 8 credits of Intensive Japanese Language will convert to 8 credits at UW-Madison.

Limits and Load: Upon arrival in Japan, Sophia University will advise students on the number of courses they are required to take each semester. UW-Madison students are required to follow Sophia University policies and enroll in a minimum equivalent of UW-Madison 12 credits each semester.

PASS/FAIL/DROP/AUDIT

Please refer to the IAP Study Abroad Handbook for academic policies.

GRADES AND GRADE CONVERSIONS

Grades will be converted according to the following scale:

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<th>Sophia University Grade</th>
<th>UW-Madison Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A (90-100 pts)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (80-89 pts)</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (70-79 pts)</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (60-69 pts)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (59 or below)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (failure)</td>
<td>F</td>
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Living Abroad

JAPAN

Japan is an archipelago comprised of four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, although thousands of smaller islands occupy the surrounding water. Its climate is temperate, with four seasons, resembling the East Coast. Unlike the East Coast, however, it rains between 40 and 120 inches a year, contributing to Japan's long growing season from early spring to early autumn. Steep hills and mountains cover over 70% of the land which divide the habitable parts of the country. Due to this, Japan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a population of over 125 million people.

Japan has few natural resources, apart from some wood, fish and rivers for hydroelectric power. Unlike most industrialized nations, Japan is almost completely dependent on imports for its raw materials and is one of the world's major importers of oil, coal, iron ore, lumber, cotton, wool and even silk. And even though its farms are among the most productive in the world, Japan still imports much of its wheat and other foods. Nevertheless, no other country in the world
with so few natural resources has achieved the level of economic success that Japan has. After World War II, the Japanese people built their country from virtual devastation to a leading economic power. Textile manufacturing was its first success, then shipbuilding. Today, the automobile industry is key, as well as its advancements in a variety of technological industries.

The government in Japan is democratic with a constitution that guarantees representation and individual rights. Japan has one of the world's oldest unbroken monarchies with an emperor that, while possessing no governmental power, continues to perform many state functions.

While most Japanese people do not practice religion on a regular basis, Japan has been influenced by two major religions: Shinto and Buddhism. The basic Shinto belief is that people should live in harmony with all living things. Shinto established a set of ethics that guide the relationships between human beings and nature, and between the individual and society. Buddhism taught that salvation was possible by purging oneself of personal desires and attachment to worldly things. In practice, millions of Japanese are both Shinto and Buddhist, for example, using Shinto rites when they marry and Buddhist funeral rites when they die. The two beliefs are not incompatible. In everyday life, also, the Japanese perspective on morality and ethics has been influenced by Confucianism, which is not a religion but a philosophy of personal behavior. Most Japanese do not consider themselves to be Confucianists, but its concepts of a rational approach to life and society strongly influence the culture.

**TOKYO**

About 10% of Japanese people live in Japan's three major cities: Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka. Located on the largest island of Honshu, Tokyo has over 35 million people living in and around the metropolitan area. Tokyo is densely packed and is broken down into 23 administrative wards, known as *ku*. You should prepare yourself for life in a large city, with long commutes, extremely crowded conditions, high costs, and plenty of concrete. Given that land and apartments in the center of Tokyo are so expensive, it is not unusual for commuters to spend 2 to 3 hours a day traveling to and from work on the city’s trains and subways. Tokyo enjoys a relatively mild winter with low humidity and occasional snow, in contrast to high temperatures and humidity in the summer months.


**HOUSING**

Since Sophia University campus is located in the heart of Tokyo, the cost of living near campus is very high and there is no on-campus dormitory. Instead most housing is located in suburbs and students should expect a 45-90 minute commuting time to campus.

Students note housing preferences on their Sophia University exchange application, but final arrangements will be subject to availability of accommodations. Students should consult carefully the housing information on the Sophia University website and in their program materials for more information before selecting their dormitory preferences.
For all housing options, students are required to submit a housing payment at least one month prior to their arrival. Sophia University has advised that the best way to submit payments is via wire transfer.

Sophia University Housing Information for Exchange Students
http://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/admissions/exchangeprograms/housinginfo_costs

Sophia University assists exchange students with securing furnished single rooms in privately-run off-campus dormitories, most of which are located within a 30-60 commute from campus. Exchange students will receive a housing preference form as part of their application materials. Most dormitories house Japanese and international students from other universities in addition to Sophia University.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Direct enroll students must make their own housing arrangements and cannot rely on the international office to prompt them to plan ahead. That said, direct enroll students are eligible to live in Sophia-affiliated dormitories, but must contact them directly in order to apply.

Meals: Lunch is not included in any of the housing plans. The campus has three cafeterias offering food ranging from ¥300 to ¥700. You can also purchase lunch at convenience stores near campus for approximately ¥300 to ¥700.

Students wishing to make other living arrangements are free to do so, and as stated above, direct enroll students must make their own arrangements. Past students have developed their own homestay in the Tokyo area, lived in a private apartment, or shared space in an apartment through an organization like Sakura House http://www.sakura-house.com/en/. When finding these housing opportunities students should take care to ensure they understand the financial obligations, how utilities and rent are paid, and the duration of the lease. Sophia University does not have any resources available to students interested in homestay options.

Some IAP students have stayed in the past at DK House: http://www.e-guesthouse.com/eng/tokyo/ This is a viable option for all students studying in Tokyo.

STUDENT LIFE

Club Activities: Former students have stated that the best way to meet Japanese students is to join a club. There are bulletin boards in the main thoroughfare for club postings that are almost always filled with flyers. This is a great place to check meeting times for a variety of clubs and circles. There is also a sports information event for the university teams held in the Fall.

Students have joined choirs, the swim team and various other clubs. Past participants have recommended joining the following clubs:

- An international club (like Amity) that has weekly meetings. It’s comprised of both Japanese and other exchange students and can be a good way to meet other people. It arranges parties and other activities, as well as trips to places such as the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Kyoto, and Disneyland.
- CPP (Conversation Partners Program).
- The Aikido Club, which teaches the Japanese martial arts. A past participant said the club was very friendly to foreigners. Clubs will vary on how interested they are in accommodating exchange students.
- The “Foreign Student Partner Program” aims to support foreign students in their study of the Japanese Language. Japanese students will be willing to help you with your study in the Japanese Language.

**Social Life:** Coffee shops, family restaurants, and bars are nice places to meet with friends. The biggest drawback, however, is that they are quite expensive by U.S. standards. When frequenting bars, be aware that if you order only drinks many bars will require you to eat something along with your drink order, and some may ask for a “table charge”. Nightclubs are more expensive than regular bars, so they are seldom frequented by college students except for special occasions and dates. Cover charges are around ¥1000 per person, and you are often expected to order a steady stream of drinks and food for as long as you remain there. At other clubs, you may pay ¥5000 to ¥10,000 to get in the door, but are treated to a gourmet dinner and open bar while a band performs.

It is frequently the custom that the bill is divided equally among everyone, regardless of who ordered what. Thus, a person who ordered only an iced tea winds up being socially pressured into paying his or her share of a bill when others were drinking beer. Many people do not like this custom, but it is considered impolite to not pay an equal share of the bill.

**SHOPPING**
Most stores are open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with most convenience stores open 24 hours. Past participants recommend ¥100 Shops for buying things you may need for your dorm, including cheap snacks and drinks. It is common to find it difficult to fit into Japanese clothing sizes. In this case, the best bet for clothing is to shop at “American” department stores (like Forever 21, GAP, etc) because the smaller boutiques do not often carry large sizes. A good location for these stores in in Harajuku. Past participants have also recommended UNIQLO.

**TRANSPORTATION**
The Faculty of Liberal Arts is located in the heart of Tokyo only minutes by rail from Shibuya, Shinjuku and Tokyo stations. The campus is served by the Yotsuya station and by the JR Chuo-Sobu line and the Marunouchi, Namboku, Toei Shinjuku, and Yurakucho subway lines.

**SAFETY**
Crimes are uncommon, and those that do occur usually involve petty theft or vandalism. However, as in any new situation, it is better to be somewhat conservative until you are more familiar with the city. Common sense is the best way to avoid bad situations. Women should be aware of safety issues, especially on trains, and might want to utilize options such as the women’s-only train car. Report any crimes immediately to the local police box (koban). Students should be sure to carry their residency card on them at all times.
HEALTH
The health clinic at Sophia University mainly provides suggestions for students to go to an off-campus clinic or hospital. Past participants have received recommendations for doctors who have a degree of English ability.

Insurance: You are required to join the Japanese National Health Insurance. The rate varies by residential ward, but is relatively low (¥1,300-3,000/month). Most ordinary medical treatments (including dental) are covered by the National Health Insurance.

Full-time international students can also apply for Student Medical Care Assistance (provided by the Japan Student Service Organization). You only need to apply for this after receiving medical care. Forms are available in the International Center. Utilizing these two types of assistance, you can cover a majority of medical fees.

Japanese health facilities will generally not accept foreign insurance policies in lieu of payment. Be prepared to pay all fees for treatment and hospitalization in cash immediately after services are rendered. You will then have to submit the required documents for reimbursement to CISI.

Student Testimonials

The quotes below are comments from past participants; they reflect various students' experiences and are included to provide different perspectives. IAP does not endorse any specific view expressed in this section.

HANDLING MONEY ABROAD
Japan has a lack of foreign ATMs, so I’d really recommend opening a bank account in Japan. The Post Office ATMs are virtually the only machines that accept foreign cards. On top of that, their hours are very limited on weekends and the ATMs are CLOSED on holidays, the very times you’ll need money the most. Also, be sure to keep a good chunk of cash on you at all times. Most places do not accept credit cards, and you don’t want to find yourself stuck. It’s relatively safe to carry a lot of money on you.

PACKING
If you’re intending on leaving during the summer, take those summer clothes you feel you will need, and send your winter clothes later on. Take a fall jacket and some long sleeve shirts just in case, but leave your sweaters and winter coat for a later package. At the same time...for guys at least...you don't need to take as many clothes as you might otherwise think.

Bring DVDs and English novels. You may not think you need them, but one night when you are bored and missing home you will be thankful you brought them! I ended up lending out DVDs and books to a lot of my friends. Everyone appreciates the familiar TV shows and movies.
Bring enough shoes and clothes for the whole year, especially if you are not petite. Japanese women’s shoes only go up to size 25 (US 8) so you may not be able to find any. UNIQLO and GAP are the cheapest places to shop and offer a wider range of sizes than some other stores, but do be aware that they run smaller than in the US.

If you don’t have a suit, you might want to think about getting one. I ended up needing one for several dorm and club events, for job interviews, and at my part time job as an English teacher.

It’s good to have a few small gifts for teachers who help you out a lot, but don’t overload yourself with little trinkets and gifts or you will end up scrambling to find people to give them to before you go home. WI T-shirts make great gifts because they are cheap, light, and American university apparel is popular in Japan.

COURSES

The first week of courses is something like a “tryout” week where students can go to any and all courses that they are interested in before official registration. This is a great way to get an idea of course load. Plus, if there are two classes that run at the same time, you can go to each class once that week to help you decided which to take.

Japanese classes are comparable to the rigorous courses at Madison, so you won’t get behind. The placement test can be a bit tricky and many students were placed below their level. It’s hard to switch, so I’d recommend studying! Take the intensive classes, it may seem mundane at first but you will learn a lot of Kanji!

Classes outside of Japanese are taught in English. They are hit or miss, however, and you may find yourself bored at times. Attendance is taken in many of them, so pick classes that interest you. The work is not very rigorous, but some professors are tough graders.

HOUSING

Live with a host family! I lived in 5-ships, and there is an 11:00 curfew and it is 90 minutes from campus. The staff is wonderful, however, and your roommates are Japanese so it’s a good way to meet Japanese students. Azalea House is a good option for living with International Students, but it is a little expensive. The best option is really host families, though! My friends who lived in host families had the best experiences; they ate home-cooked food, most had last train as a curfew, and it is the only way to improve your Japanese. They will also be good support for you while you are adjusting.

STUDENT LIFE

Joining a student club is a great way to meet Japanese students who share your interests. It’s also an excellent opportunity to practice your Japanese. While not all clubs place an emphasis on drinking, many do. Just ask around about clubs’ reputations before expressing too strong an interest in joining a particular one. Go to your first club activity saying your study schedule is
very hectic and you’re worried about being able to participate fully in all social activities. It’s always better to be suddenly able to take part in more activities than you thought you could, than to lose face by having to back out of something after you’ve already committed yourself.

It’s easy to spend a lot of money in Tokyo, but there are ways to spend it wisely. Don’t eat out too much! The conbinis have cheaper pre-made food, but cooking for yourself is the best option. Host families will supply you breakfast and dinner, and the cafeterias at Sophia are reasonably priced.

Clubs are really expensive, and some require you to have a drink in your hand at all times. Izakayas are fun to eat and drink at, and you can find all you can drink, nomihoudai, or all you can eat, tabehoudai, specials at lots of places. Utilize this, it will save you money. Karaoke is really fun, even if you are not a professional singer. They have a wide selection of Western songs, including some of the newest hits, and it’s fun to sing Japanese songs too.

While club activities at Japanese universities can be very exciting and fun and a great way to make friends and meet new people, they take their club activities very, very seriously, and at times this can get in the way of studies. The key is balance!

Speak Japanese every day if you can. This is the only way you will improve. I had Japanese friends whom I met with occasionally, and once a week I did a language exchange. My international friends and I also spoke Japanese together, and this is really good practice as well. I did not notice my improvement until I came back, but I reached my goals!

Don’t shrug off friendships with other international students. They are valuable friends and understand your frustrations. Welcome the new international students second semester – remember how lost you felt.

My roommates were Japanese, so we spent time together often. At Sophia, however, you take classes with mostly foreign students and there is a divide between the Japanese and the foreigners. Clubs like AMITY or the Walking Club will make it easier to integrate. Also, if you live with a host family they may introduce you to people.

If you go out with large groups of Japanese people, be aware they often split the bill evenly no matter who got what. Sometimes they will take notice of someone who didn’t really eat or drink much and offer to pay that person’s share. This happened to me a lot because I do not drink and can’t eat seafood.

When you go out to eat, it is easy to get separate checks and you don’t have to tip. Don’t be surprised, however, if there is a ¥300 table/service charge.

Family restaurants (Skylark, Saizeriya, Jonathan’s) are the best places to hang out for very little money. The food may not be great, but you can stay as long as you like and enjoy the cheap (¥200) drink bar.
SHOPPING
Harajuku has really cheap clothes, and cute too. There is also a shop near Sophia that has lots of clothes for under 2500 yen. The more expensive shops are in Shinjuku and Shibuya. Go to Ginza to see designer brands!

TRANSPORTATION
The best way to get around the city is on JR, and make sure to get a PASMO or SUICA card. These cards will work for all lines, including private ones, and they will deduct from your account every time you ride the train. They are a great convenience, especially if you are running late for a curfew.

SAFETY
Personally, I did not have many issues. Occasionally, I was stared at on the train but it was not overt. Beware of sexual offenders, or “chikkan,” on the crowded trains. They have no shame and will get uncomfortably close to you. Position yourself against a wall near the doors and keep a bag in front of you. This will create a buffer between you and any shady characters.

TRAVEL
Utilize your two month Spring break for travel! The shinkansen is pretty expensive, but worth riding at least once. For a cheaper option try the night bus. While the seats are not made for foreign people, it will cost you $100 round trip to Kyoto. Tokyo also has a lot of tourist places, under an hour away. Try to see Kamakura, Hakone, and Nikko. Also, Tokyo is a great location to be if you want to travel around Asia. Airline tickets will be a couple hundred dollars and Tokyo has an STA office. My recommendation is Thailand!

It’s a lot of fun to just get on the trains and see where you end up. Ride to the end of a line you use every day and see what there is to do there.

Climbing Mount Fuji was amazing. There is a limited time frame in which this can be done beginning in late June, so plan ahead. Also, it is very cold at the top, so dress appropriately!

www.hyperdia.com. Get travel itineraries to and from anywhere in Japan, great when you want to go somewhere new!

EMPLOYMENT
The best part-time job for exchange students is private English teacher. Making connections will also help you find a job. Personally, I used Japanese a lot when I taught English and afterwards we would converse in Japanese. This is not the case for most students, so don’t expect it.

A student visa includes 20 hours of work. Students are not allowed to work in bars. Working is a great way to make money, and was a positive aspect for me.