



Ritsumeikan University 立命館大学 | Kyoto, Japan

03/2018 - 02/2019

FK15 - Angewandte Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften



- Established in 1869, Ritsumeikan is one of Japan's top private universities with three main campuses in Japan's Kansai region

- Renowned for its 'international' outlook and dedication for "creating a future beyond borders"
 - extensive range of courses taught in English
 - famous International Relations/Global Studies Program
- 12 months student exchange via ISEP at Ritsumeikan's Study in Kyoto Program - Intensive Japanese Track
 - primarily held at Kinugasa Campus in the North of Kyoto City
 - international dormitories (included in this ISEP Program) are located in walkable distance of the campus

Kyoto 京都 | Japan 日本

- Major city with a population of 1.5 million in the west of Japan's main island
- Arguably Japan's number 1 tourist (and retirement) destination (especially among Japanese themselves) the city of Kyoto used to be the imperial capital for over 1000 years
- UNESCO World Heritage and important cultural and religious landmarks everywhere one turns
- The centre of 'traditional' Japanese arts and crafts
- Retains quite a small town vibe despite its size and buzzing city centre due to restrictions of city construction (world heritage)
- Surprising accumulation of universities and thus students



Organisational Matters

- Exchange programs through ISEP offer multiple points of information and contact to ensure support through any 'problem' that might arise
- Arrival (and departure) guidances run by Ritsumeikan's International Office are extensive and highly detailed

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- The International Office is responsible for anything concerning international students, can at times be administratively rigid, but is also able to compromise
- International dorms are convenient but their rules are more fit for high school students
- Exchange students are 'accompanied' to official, medical et al. appointments by various groups of volunteer students

Academics



- Ritsumeikan's Intensive Japanese Track offers Japanese language classes for any level of proficiency and is truly intensive: classes take place five times a week for several hours and results show themselves quickly in daily use
- Classes taught in English can be added and cover areas like Sociology, Business, International Relations or Literature. A lot of courses have a focus on Japanese issues or Asian Area Studies
- A lot of classes electable by exchange students are designed as guided exchanges between international and Japanese students under the umbrella of 'intercultural communication'. These are at times academically not quite challenging but are rather meant as an open room for networking and transfer



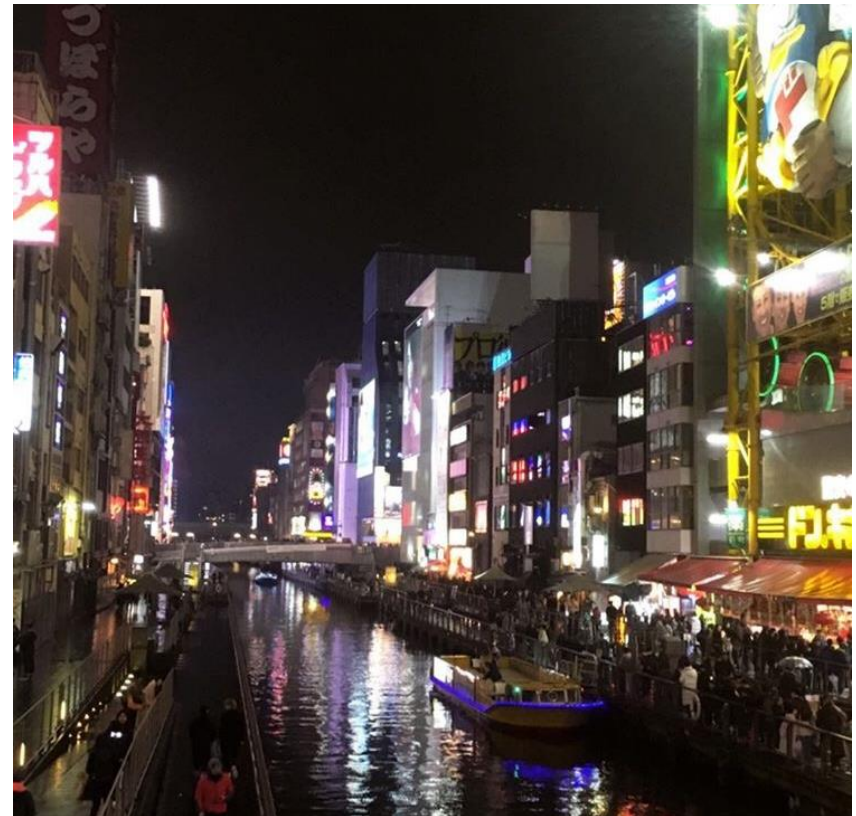
Social Integration

- University life in Japan is not complete without its student clubs and circles, so try and enter one of your interest
- Ritsumeikan has various groups and associations that cater to international students and organise things like study trips, parties, language study circles or academic presentations (SKP Buddies, Beyond Border Plaza BBP,...)
- First and easiest community building obviously happens with other international students, but contact to 'Japanese' students is very much possible and recommended
- 'Entertainment' can be found at every corner and makes socialising just a matter of taking the first courageous step
- Socialising often happens through food and drinks (飲み会)...very tempting and very fun
- My personal recommendations: Go to a local concert in one of the numerous little Live Houses and don't miss out on the 'Matsuri' (Summer festival) experience

Culture

- Convenience Culture: Service in Japan is on a whole other level, in some situations however you might feel deprived of your 'independence'
- Japan is extremely 'clean', the use and waste of plastic however is mind-blowing, so don't forget to refuse to take an extra plastic bag at the convenience store
- Despite the idea of a mono-culture, Japan is regionally highly diverse and the people celebrate regional traditions and delicacies enthusiastically - everywhere you go there is something special to try and see
- Japan, its (self-)image and overall 'construction' of (national) culture is highly fascinating and you have the chance to learn about its dynamic recent history and contemporary society academically and personally, so take off those 'anime-tinted' glasses from time to time

- 'Culture' is one of Japan's biggest exports so you might be familiar with a lot of aspects already, at least the one's that have probably sparked your interest for this country in the first place





Words of Advice...And now?

- Even though going abroad through ISEP can be a lengthy process and taking the far step east might be intimidating, the change of perspective and escape from the 'western bubble' is something I would recommend to anyone!
- TRAVEL - I needn't say more!
- Be open and (self-)critical at the same time!

- As I did have no wish to leave Japan when my time had come, it is only a matter of time until I will be back (for good)
- I will be utilising the knowledge and resources I acquired (about Japan) during my time abroad for my Bachelor thesis - something I foolishly did not intend to do before going abroad
- I do also intend to incorporate aspects into my graduate school studies and try to go abroad again.

