



Titus Koh

Nagoya University

My friend and I were doing a hike (that took 5 hours) along the Jogasaki Coast in Izu Peninsula, Shizuoka Prefecture, known for its beautiful views of the cliffs and the sea

Why did you choose to apply for the student exchange program? Where did you do your exchange?

Going on a student exchange has been on my radar even before entering university. I'd heard so many stories from seniors and even from people who have already graduated about how it was the absolute highlight of their university life, so when the time came to apply, I didn't hesitate.

I set my sights on Japan—partly because I've been taking Japanese classes at NUS, but also because I have a huge soft spot for the country (this is actually my 10th time here!).

Even though many people, including my parents, suggested I try somewhere new, I chose Japan because it's a place where I feel truly comfortable. Plus, it's the perfect environment for me to continue practicing and refining my Japanese.

I eventually chose Nagoya University as not only is it one of Japan's prestigious "Seven National Universities" and highly regarded by the locals, but it also offers a much more affordable cost of living compared to the bigger cities Tokyo or Osaka. It also sits right in the middle of Japan making it very convenient to travel to other prefectures!

What did you find interesting about the university you visited?

The campus life at Nagoya University is incredibly vibrant! It's not uncommon to stumble upon live band performances right in the middle of a lunch break. The crown jewel of the student experience, however, has to be the Meidai Festival (Meidaisai) held every year in June.

It is one of the largest university festivals in the surrounding region, drawing in a staggering 80,000 visitors annually. Classes are actually cancelled just so students can put together this massive event! With over 100 activities ranging from club performances to tours, it's essentially a huge Japanese summer festival like those you see online!

How does Japan compare to Singapore? Is it a place worth visiting?

One thing I've truly come to appreciate is the incredible sense of order in Japan. Everything has its time and place, from the pinpoint punctuality of the public transport system to the meticulous way people handle their trash. Coming from Singapore, where we're used to a more "all-in-one" disposal system, the recycling culture here was a bit of a culture shock! You have to be very intentional about sorting everything—plastics, cans, burnables—but I actually find that level of discipline quite refreshing, even if some of my peers found it a bit strict.

Japan is also 100% worth visiting right now, especially with the weakened yen. While public transport can be a little pricier than back home, the cost of living here is surprisingly manageable. Many of my friends on exchange in Europe or the US are stuck cooking every single day to save money, but here in Japan, I can comfortably enjoy a high-quality restaurant meal every day without breaking the bank.

Can you share a funny story from your time abroad?

One memory that still makes me laugh (and sweat a little) was a road trip I took with two friends. It was our final day, and we had a strict 7 PM deadline to return our rental car in Nagoya. We'd left our previous spot with plenty of time to spare, but Japanese highway traffic had other plans. Our ETA quickly slipped from a comfortable 6:20 PM to exactly 7:00 PM. I took the wheel and, admittedly in a bit of a panic, drove as fast as the speed limits would legally allow. To "help" me focus, my friends started blasting high-intensity racing music and cheering me on like I was in a grand prix for the entire two-hour haul. Miraculously, we made it and handed back the keys right on the dot! It's a hilarious memory now, but I definitely wouldn't want to repeat that experience again.

Overall, would you say that being on exchange has been a positive experience?

It is a 100% yes from me! I haven't had a single dull day in Japan, and I finally understand why so many people call exchange the absolute highlight of their university life. For me, this was more than just a trip; it was likely my only chance to truly live overseas, and I couldn't have picked a more welcoming and exciting country to call home for a while.

Beyond the classroom, it's the people who made this journey so special. I've made incredible connections with both locals and fellow international students, and the memories we've shared—from late-night drinking sessions to spontaneous travels—are ones I'll cherish forever. Stepping out of my comfort zone to study in such a different environment gave me a perspective on life that I simply couldn't have found back home. If you're ever on the fence about applying for an exchange, my advice is to simply go for it!