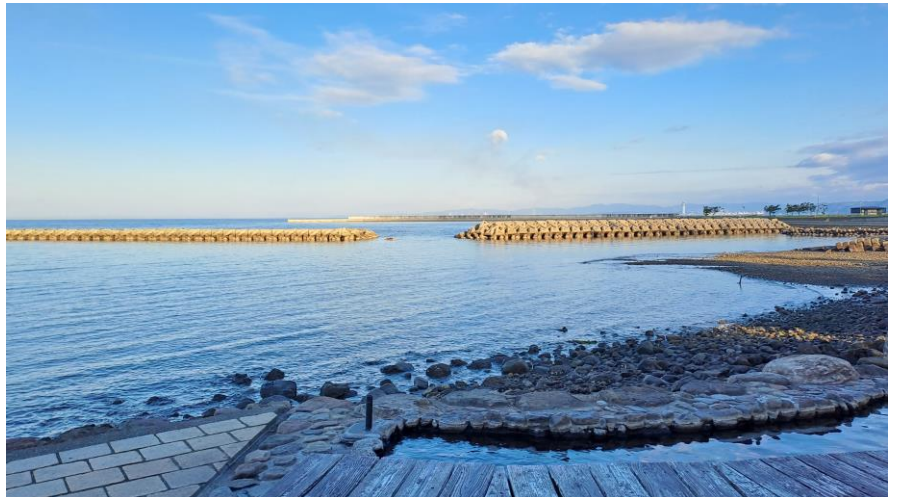
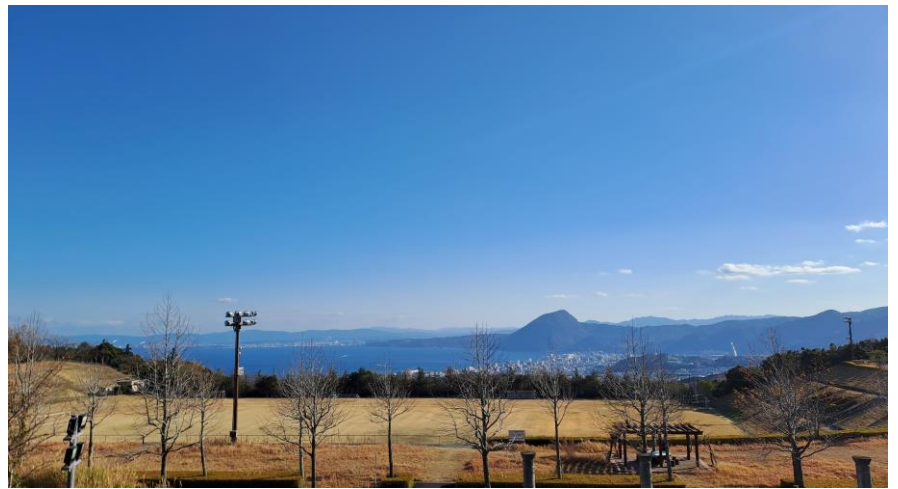


Shape your world



Ritsumeikan
Asia Pacific University



Fall Term 2022-23
Yan Hok Wan
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University
Japan

Part I - Monthly Activity Log

September

I arrived in Beppu in early September. For the first two weeks, I familiarized myself with Beppu and Oita area. I also went to Yufuin with my new friend. Orientation activities were held in mid-September. I met exchange students from all over the world. Before the start of the semester, I travelled to Tottori and Shimane. The Tottori Sand Dunes was beautiful and surely worth a visit.



Lake Kinrin in Yufuin



Tottori Sand Dunes

October

Classes started in October. Since it was just the beginning of the semester, the workload was manageable. In mid-October, I went to Osaka to watch some concerts. APU's campus festival (*Tenkusai*) was held in late October. Students set up food booths and perform on stage.



Concerts in Osaka-Jo Hall



Tenkusai

November

In early November, I went to other prefectures in Kyushu such as Fukuoka and Saga. Saga International Balloon Fiesta is held in Saga every year. I was impressed as it was my first time to see hot air balloon. During the quarter break, I went to Kansai region (Osaka, Kyoto and Shiga) with other exchange students. We had a great time in USJ. November is the best time to see maples leaves. Maple leaves light-up in Kyoto was so beautiful that I would never forget.



Saga International Balloon Fiesta



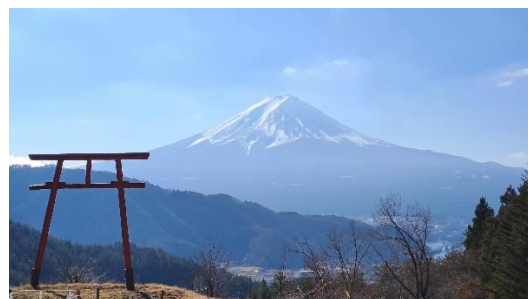
Kiyomizu Temple Autumn Illumination

December

Quarter 2 began in December. I spent more time exploring Beppu city. I went to Jigoku Onsen in Beppu with other exchange students. It is quite interesting to see onsen with different colours. Winter break started from Christmas. I travelled to Tokyo to meet my high school friend. I also travelled to nearby prefectures such as Yamanashi and Niigata. I was lucky that I could see the Mount Fuji quite clearly from Kawaguchiko.



Beppu Jigoku Onsen



Tenku-no Torii

January

I went to Asakusa for *Hatsumode* (shrine visit of the Japanese New Year). It is a Japanese tradition to visit a shrine to pray for good luck on the first few days of the new year. After the new year, I visited Aomori, Yamagata and Sendai in Tohoku region with another exchange student. Being apple lovers, we were very excited to travel to Aomori. Apples in Aomori are so delicious that you should never miss out. In Yamagata, Zao Snow Monster and the night view of Ginzan Onsen were impressive and we had a great time there. After winter break, I was busy with group projects and assignment. Sneaking a break from busy work, I went to Oita Fragrance Museum with my friends. We joined a DIY perfume workshop to make our own custom perfume.



Ginzan Onsen



Zao Snow Monster

February

Final exams took place from late January to early February. After final exam, I went to Fukuoka to enjoy a live show of a Japanese band. After that, I returned to Beppu and was busy packing things back to Hong Kong. After handling all moving-out procedures such as cancelling national insurance, I enjoyed the last moment with other local and exchange students and finally returned Hong Kong.

Part II - General Study Abroad Information

Visa Procedures

APU will send you the Certificate of Eligibility (CoE) in August. After you receive it, you need to bring it together with other documents such as passport, a passport-size photo and visa application form to apply student visa in the visa application centre. It will take around a week to have your visa ready.

Orientation Activities

There are both mandatory and non-mandatory orientation activities. Mandatory activities include registering address on residence card and guidance sessions related to the life in Japan. Non-mandatory orientation activities include guidance on opening a bank account, campus tour and chit-chat sessions.

International Services & Activities

You can contact Academic Office (Student Exchange Team) if you have any problems during your stay. APU provides arrival assistance service at the Fukuoka airport. There will be a shuttle bus bringing students to AP House. There are two timeslots, 11am and 3pm, which operates every day in early September. Remember to use this service to go to AP House.

Accommodations

At first, exchange students were offered AP House 4. However, APU changed the policy in July and rearranged us to AP House 3. The monthly rent of AP House 3 is inexpensive which only costs 28000 yen (around 1700 HKD). The electricity fee is not included in your monthly rent and the amount varies according to how much electricity you use. I spend 5000-6000 yen on electricity monthly. There are bathroom, toilet, IH cooking stove and other basic furniture inside your room. There is also a shared onsen on the ground floor. The nearest supermarket will take 7-minute walk from AP House 3.

Courses Registration

Course registration is not complicated. You can easily follow the instructions provided by APU. APU offers courses in semester-based and quarter-based which may have different drop-add period. The add-drop period is also very short, so please observe the deadline. You need to make sure you have courses throughout the semester. In other words, you cannot take courses solely in quarter 1 or quarter 2. You need to take at least 14 credits in one semester.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

There are both on-campus courses and online courses. Assessment methods mainly include assignment, quizzes, group projects and final exams which are very similar to UST. The overall workload is lighter than that in UST. If you are interested in taking Japanese-taught classes, you need to provide your JLPT result to verify your Japanese proficiency.

Finance & Banking

It may not be necessary to set up a bank account unless you are receiving JASSO scholarship. APU will guide you through the application process. During my stay in Japan, I mainly use cash and debit card. It is recommended to bring more cash since a plenty of shops in Japan do not accept cashless payment.

Climate

It is quite warm in September. There are a few typhoons as well. Then the temperature starts to drop in late October. In November, the average temperature is around 14°C. It is a bit cold in December and January. It snows a few times in winter.

Health & Safety

It is compulsory to pay for national health insurance fee every month. It costs approximately 2000 yen per month. With national health insurance, you only need to pay 30% of the medical expense when you go to hospitals and clinic. Besides, APU requires you to attend a health check-up in late September.

Food

APU's cafeteria offers a wide range of food such as Japanese food, ethnic food, and vegetarian meals. They are cheap and delicious. Besides, there are many restaurants in Beppu city for you to explore. I personally recommend a sushi restaurant in Beppu called *Kamesho Kurukuru Sushi* which offers very delicious sushi with affordable prices.

Transportation

The nearest station is JR station is Kamegawa which requires 15-minute walk from AP House 3. Transportation fee is expensive in Japan. To commute to APU, it takes 280 yen (around 17 HKD) one way. To commute from AP house 3 to Beppu city, it costs 380 yen by bus or 210 yen by JR. You can also buy Oita Kotsu triple tickets which costs 1000 yen in total. Besides, you can take domestic flights, limited express trains, highway buses or ferries to travel between different prefectures.

Communication

I use LINEMO sim card service. I choose “smartphone plan” which includes 20GB data and 5-minute telephone call. It costs approximately 2700 yen per month. The application process takes place online which is very simple and convenient.

In APU, most students could speak Japanese and English as well as other languages such as Putonghua and Korean. However, to communicate with local Japanese people outside APU, it would be better if you could speak some Japanese.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a GYM room in APU. Outdoor facilities include tennis courts, multipurpose sports fields and a basketball court.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

You can sign up for APU Buddy program. It allows exchange students to connect with APU students. APU buddies will hold activities such as Halloween party and Christmas lucky draw. There are also many clubs for you to join.

Cautionary measures

Japan is prone to earthquakes. Be psychologically prepared for it. It is advised to have an emergency evacuation bag with you. You should also remember the evacuation route.

Other notes (if any)

From my observation, students who do not know Japanese may find it difficult or troublesome to deal with some daily life situations. Having some knowledge on Japanese would surely improve your exchange experience. Therefore, for those who are interested in going to Japan but have not learnt Japanese, I encourage you to learn some Japanese before you start your exchange :)

Part III - Items to Bring

- Passport
- Notebook
- Adaptors
- Clothes (especially winter clothes)
- Cash
- Medicine
- Chargers
- Copy of important documents (such as passport, visa, insurance proof)

Part IV - Useful links and Contacts

<https://www.apu.ac.jp/home/> (APU website)

<https://visa.vfsglobal.com/hkg/en/jpn/> (info on applying visa)

<https://en.apu.ac.jp/abroad/prospective/incoming/?&version=English> (application procedures)

<https://portal2.apu.ac.jp/campus/slbsskgr.do> (courses search)