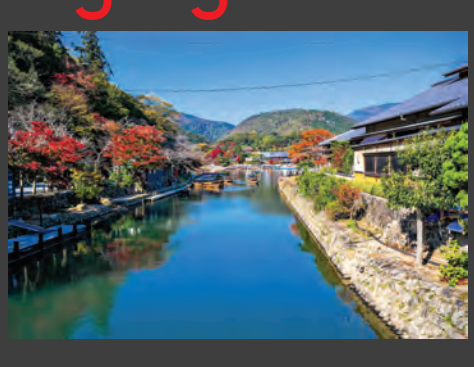
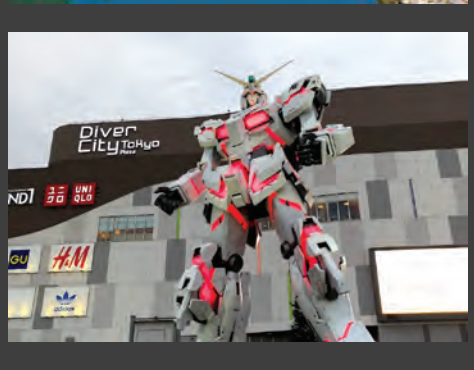
Welcome to Japan

Highlights



Where East Meets West

People may think of Japan as a culturally homogeneous nation, but this would be glossing over the incredible diversity of cultural influences in Japanese society. Embracing food, sports and music from all over the world (but especially America), and yet taking care to put a subtle East Asian twist on them - Japan is an amazing place where polar opposites of East and West meet, and seem to get along just fine.



Blend of the Traditional and the Modern

Japan has robot-run hotels and restaurants, but Japan also has thousands of Shinto shrines and sumo wrestling. In Tokyo, the electronics and anime haven of Akihabara is within walking distance from the cultural heritage centre of Asakusa. As the old are celebrated for their history, new frontiers are constantly being pushed. Watch as Japan redesigns tradition and rethinks modernity.

Mega-Cities and Mountain Ranges

Japanese cities have grown to astonishing proportions, and Tokyo is one of the most populous cities in the world: there is never a dull moment in the buzz of the big cities with bright lights. But while urbanisation is taken to the next level in Japan, the countryside remains a breathtaking preserve of scenic mountain trails and tranquil village life, not to mention an abundance of onsen spots for a relaxing weekend getaway.

Brief Overview

Why Study in Japan?

With many scholars heading to the US and Europe, it is a break from the usual to study in Asia. Within Asia, Japan has achieved incredible development while still preserving many of its traditions and cultures.

Japan is a country much like Singapore and yet so different in many ways. To be able to study and examine things from an Asian perspective provides a differentiating factor from Western-centric universities.

Unique Points

Japan is a melting pot of the old and the new, the East and the West, the urban and nature – there really isn't anywhere quite like Japan.

The culture and lifestyles here are arguably vastly different from anywhere else in the world.

The opportunity to study alongside interesting people from different parts of Asia such as Laos, Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan whom you would not usually have the opportunity to interact with.

Challenges

Limited Programmes in English

As an undergraduate, you have the option of attending a one-year preparatory course before enrolling in bachelor programmes conducted in Japanese.

Some of the prominent Undergradute Degrees conducted in English include:
- *University of Tokyo's* PEAK Program that offers two courses: the International Program on Japan in East Asia, and the International Program on Environmental Sciences
- *Tokyo Institute of Technology's* Global Scientists and Engineers Program that offers an interdisciplinary curriculum of Science and Engineering
- *Keio University and Waseda University's* undergraduate programmes that are typically humanities-related courses

For graduate programmes, the range of English courses is much wider with most major universities offering various English courses.

Language Barrier

Japanese is the only language that pervades day-to-day life, with public transport information, bank statements and administration typically being conveyed in Japanese and only Japanese. This can pose intimidating challenges for students entering a foreign environment, and is made worse by the bureaucracy behind Japan's processes. Not knowing Japanese can be debilitating and alienating.

However, most Japanese universities are intensifying their efforts to integrate international students into the university, and offer support for international students who may not know Japanese. This includes assigning a local "buddy" who will be able to assist in translating documents for students who have yet to master Japanese. They are also willing to converse with you in Japanese if you are looking to gain fluency in their language!

Moving In

Apart from university dormitories, it may be difficult to find affordable apartments. However, do take note that university dormitories are limited in availability and one has to go through competitive balloting processes to get them. Private apartments tend to be unfurnished and come with various one-time fees and contractual terms.

However, sharehouses provide affordable solutions - as long as you are not too particular about privacy! And with a tightly-knit Singaporean community in Japan, all you have to do is to reach out, and someone would share their own personal experiences and offer helpful advice. The Singapore Students' Association Japan (SSAJ) offers a useful guide to surviving in Japan at *ssaj.net*

Practical Tips

Undergraduate

Admission for undergraduate programmes are mostly in April, with some in September

Basic Admission Requirements:
- High school results, standardised test results, personal statement / letters of recommendation, etc.
- At least N1 to N2 proficiency in Japanese might be required for some programmes
- Universities may have varying requirements for programmes taught in English, especially at the graduate level

For More Information:
- The Japan Student Services Organisation (JASSO) offers one-year pre-university Japanese language courses
- Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) offers information to help international students understand Japan

Graduate

Admission for graduate programmes are mostly around December/January, with some admissions in September.

Masters in Public Policy at the Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Tokyo
- Application Deadline: December 2019
- Interview: February 2020
- Announcement of Admission Results: March 2020

Graduate Program on Global Society, University of Tokyo
- Application Deadline: Mid-January 2020
- Announcement of Admission Results: March 2020
- Requires GRE results for admission

Testimonials

Brendan

2014 Overseas Merit Scholarship (Open): University of Tokyo: Master of Public Policy/ International Program

Studying in Japan was a highly enriching experience. Having studied in both the UK and the US, I was eager to find out what it was like to pursue higher education in an Asian country. The Graduate School of Public Policy allowed me to take courses which explored Japan's take on public policy, from foreign policy to monetary policy, which I found very informative. I was also provided with various opportunities to take my learning outside of the classroom, through conferences and events. Of course, the world-class faculty and my talented classmates helped to complete my experience. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed studying in a country that had so much to offer in terms of policy innovation despite its emphasis on culture and tradition.

Xinyi

2015 Public Service Commission Scholarship: University of Tokyo: Master of Public Policy/ International Program

It has been a wonderful experience studying and living here in Tokyo. The Graduate School of Public Policy offers an interesting variety of courses to suit students' differing interests. There are also several opportunities to go abroad during the programme through intensive courses or student conferences. Most importantly, I have found it deeply rewarding to truly get to know my friends from all around the world at GraSPP. Outside of school, there are many things to do in Tokyo - be it attending talks given by world renowned speakers or savouring the many delicious food options on offer.

Jeremy

2013 Singapore Government Scholarship (Open): University of Tokyo: Master of Public Policy/ International Program

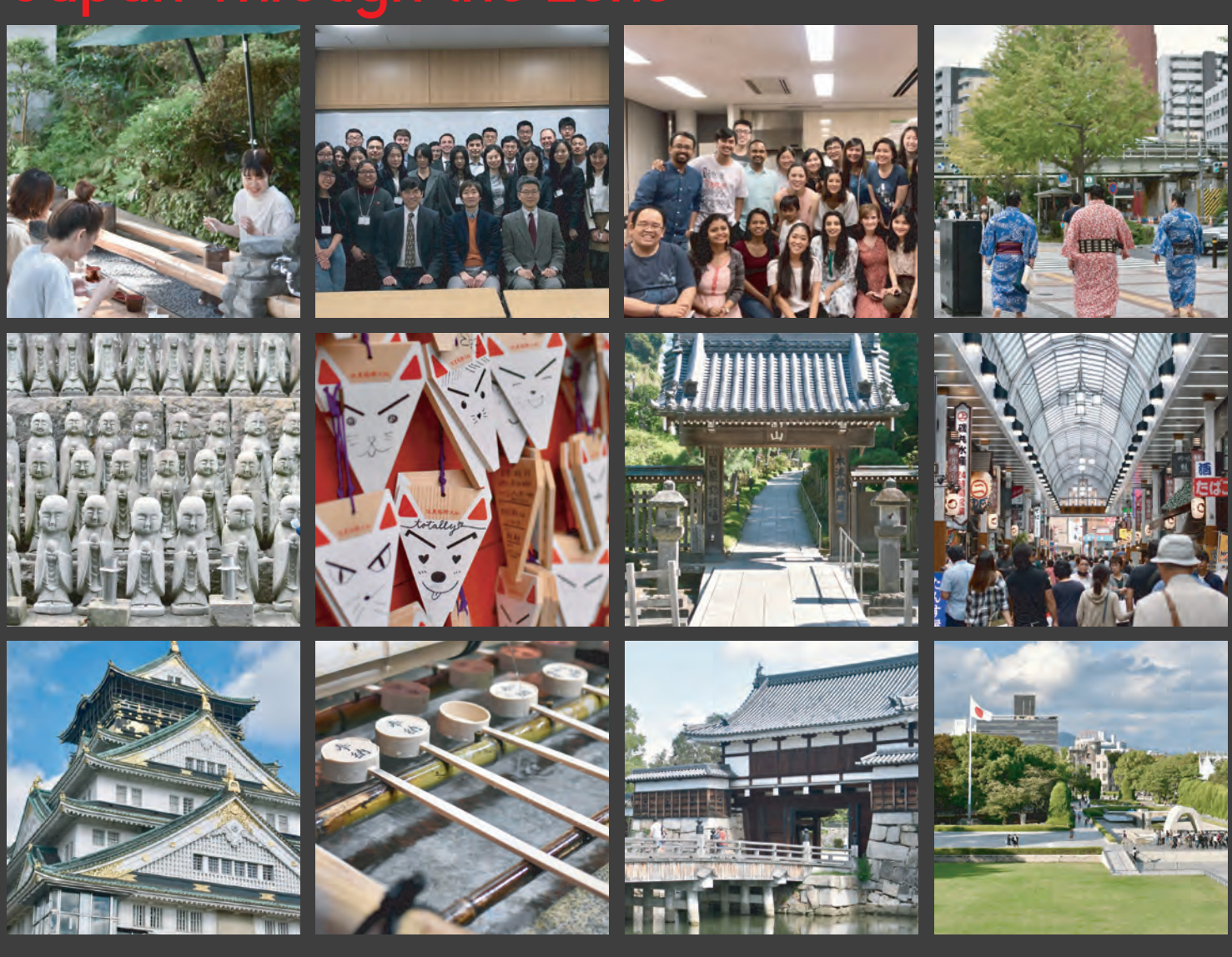
I had completed my undergraduate degree in Computer Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS). During my time at NUS, I attended a Summer School in UC Berkeley, USA, an exchange at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan and a Winter School at Yonsei University, South Korea. I saw Japan as a place of opportunities to really get to interact and engage academically. It is a city that shares many similarities to Singapore and yet different. Both Japan and Singapore have the same influences from both the East and the West, and have a strong focus on infrastructural development. However, they differ greatly when it comes to things like tradition preservation, customs and citizen interaction. While I struggled to choose between LKYSPP and UTokyo, I'm glad I chose UTokyo as it provides me more opportunities to achieve personal growth.

Danyon

2016 Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship: University of Tokyo: Graduate Program on Global Society

For me, pursuing studies in Japan has been a plunge into a cultural environment that starkly contrasts my undergraduate experience in the UK. Living here has provided me with an invaluable opportunity to sneak a glimpse into the underbelly of Japanese society - to see past the hospitable image that Japan projects to tourists visiting for a short period of time, and gain a fuller understanding of how Japan has fascinatingly evolved into where it is today.

Japan Through the Lens



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