

【 Bishop's University 】

Evelyne Gilbert (2009 年度交換留学生)

My experience in Japan

Where to start... The past five months have been the most rewarding experience I've had the chance to live. I have to admit that this exchange program was way above my expectations. I had the chance to meet with great people, develop friendship that I will cherish for many years, on top of increasing my knowledge about Japanese culture. It is true to say that Japanese culture is completely different from the North American culture but if you are ready to immerge yourself fully into it and experience various aspect of this one, you soon realise that we are not so different after all and that you can only beneficieate from the experience. One of the greatest fears I had when I came at fist was the language barrier issue but I have soon realized that everyone tries to accommodate you and we always found a way to make our self understood. Also living with other exchange students from different countries gave me a chance to learn not only about Japanese culture but also about Chinese and Korean culture. I think that receiving education in a country that does not follow North American standard gave me another perspective of the world (more particularly when we studied World War II from a Japanese perspective which was really interesting). I am now returning to Canada with my head full of good memories and the hope to soon return to Japan since I now believe that part of my heart belong in Yamaguchi. 皆さんありがとうございます！日本に来ったよかったです。(エビちゃん：Evelyne Gilbert、Bishop's University, Canada)



Dominique Daneau-Pelletier (2008 年度交換留学生)

Étudier à YPU pendant un an est une expérience marquante qui a ouvert mes horizons. Moi qui en arrivant me demandais jusqu'à quel point il me serait possible d'étudier l'art japonais, j'ai été servie. En plus des courts de calligraphie, poterie, cérémonie du thé et d'arrangement floral, j'ai également pu prendre plusieurs cours de mode et de design. À cela ajoutons un cours spécial sur les métiers d'art de Yamaguchi, on ne peut plus intéressant!

De plus, la vie à Yamaguchi était géniale. Certes, en termes de grosseur la ville de Yamaguchi n'a rien de comparable à Tokyo ou même Hiroshima, mais c'est justement ce que j'aimais. J'ai trouvé les gens de Yamaguchi décontractés et aimables. Autre avantage non-négligeable : comme il y a peu d'étrangers, l'on doit coûte que coûte utiliser son japonais pour communiquer. Ça rend l'immersion vraiment efficace, et dans mon cas mon niveau de japonais est monté en flèche!



食堂の前でバーベキュー
Barbecue devant la cafétéria!

留学生寮のすぐ隣の田んぼ
Champ de riz à deux pas des résidences étudiantes

Elliott Verreault (2008 年度交換留学生)

If I am to comment or write on my experience so far in Japan, I would have to say that it is the people who really made this experience so amazing. Meeting not only Japanese students but also international students from a lot of other countries (America, Spain, Finland, Korea, and China) has been amazingly positive. I made great friendships here in Japan, for which I am very thankful to the exchange program. Living in a foreign culture like Japan has also been a very rich and fruitful experience. My cross-cultural understanding has developed immensely during my time here. In short, the program is amazing, I would highly recommend it to anyone seeking that kind of experience.



Marc Andre McPherson (2008 年度交換留学生)



Coming to Japan has always been my dream. I had therefore, high expectations of Japan and I must say that I was not the least disappointed. Everything is a new experience. One of the things I enjoy most about Japan is the delicious food. Japan's cuisine is very varied and distinct from my home country. Of course, from a westerner's point of view, you have to be adventurous because certain kinds of food, for example squid, may be hard to eat. When I was planning to go to Japan I was of course thinking of going to a big city like Tokyo, but because of my Japanese friends from Yamaguchi, I chose the small city Yamaguchi. I don't regret coming to Yamaguchi at

all. The people are really nice and you have a bigger chance to experience Japan's traditional culture. The numerous festivals in Yamaguchi are really amusing and worth going to. The university I attend also plays a great part in my wonderful adventure in Japan. When first arriving I was really surprised by the immense aid I received from the school staff. They really helped me in every way possible. Japanese paperwork, host family matters and personal trips were all made easier thanks to them. Finally, out of all the things I experienced in Japan, meeting new people is the best of all. Making Japanese friends really helped me improve my Japanese and having fun in Yamaguchi. Furthermore, since Yamaguchi Prefectural University has a foreign exchange program, I was able to befriend people from different parts of the world making this cultural experience even more interesting.

Bridget McKenzie (2008 年度交換留学生)

Doing an exchange to Japan was one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life! Choosing to come to YPU in Yamaguchi was another. My name is Bridget McKenzie and I'm now a third year Modern Languages major at Bishop's and currently studying at Yamaguchi Prefectural University in Yamaguchi, Japan. I came to here in April 2008 and soon I'll be heading back to BU after one of the shortest years of my life. The people here are so friendly, whether they are the International Office staff or just the regular teachers and students. During my stay I chose to



live with a host family and I couldn't imagine doing otherwise; I got to see how real Japanese people live, and be apart of their family for a year. I also joined the Japanese Archery Club, and hopefully will even get a ranking shortly before I leave. The friends I made there were so friendly, and willing to teach me all about Japanese Archery. It was a lot of work, but I learned so much about Japanese culture by joining the Archery Club, particularly the Japanese concept of ganbaru, or "trying your best". Not only is YPU great, but so is Yamaguchi itself! The people who live here will tell you it is very country side, but that is one of the great things about it. I've been to Tokyo and Kyoto, and while I had a great time, I defiantly think to live in a place like Yamaguchi City, one can get a lot more out of their stay. For example, my host family's house is surrounded by rice paddies! It's not all back-woods, there's plenty of shopping to do and places to go (for example Karaoke or All-you-can-eat or drink). I was told many times before I left that it was "going to be a life changing experience", and they couldn't have been more right...I'll be coming back a completely different person from who I was when I left.

Safe Travels!

【 Centre College 】

James Ransdell (2009 年度交換留学生)

Upon disembarking from the Boeing 777 which had seen me safely from Chicago O'Hare Airport to Narita Airport in Tokyo, I really had no idea what Japan had in store for me during my next four months. Sure, I had seen Japan depicted in various forms of media (American movies, Japanese animation, books, etc.), had become friends with the exchange students from YPU who had studied at Centre College the year before, and studied the Japanese language and culture for a year, but still, I had never before been to Japan and thus had a very limited understanding of what awaited me.

A night's stay at a youth hostel in Tokyo, several local trains, a shinkansen, and a bus ride later, I arrived at Yamaguchi Prefectural University with my fellow travelers. We moved in to our apartments, went through orientation, met our tutors, unpacked, tried to recover from jet lag as quickly as possible, and altogether hit the ground running, trying to figure out what Japan is all about. Because of the length of my stay and the degree to which I was able to interact with the students at YPU, I had anything but a normal tourist's experience. Granted, I was able to see Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, Okinawa, Hakata, Beppu, Tsuwano, and Mount Aso along with almost every nook and cranny of Yamaguchi city and Yamaguchi Prefecture, but this alone, while not unremarkable, is not what was most important to me.

What really made my experience in Japan come alive was the friendships forged with the students at YPU and other people around Yamaguchi. From the beginning, there were my tutor and the students who had studied at Centre College. Nevertheless, as time passed, and I became more comfortable with my surroundings, I was able to meet new people inside and outside of the classroom, was introduced to a host family, had interactions with the local people on the street, and even joined a club, LAB. These people not only gave me opportunities to learn and practice Japanese, but also helped me find my way around Yamaguchi and became great friends. One day, I may forget exactly what the kinkakuji looked like, but I doubt I will ever lose the times I shared laughing and learning with the students at YPU. It is that character of this program which I am both extraordinarily thankful for and which makes it extremely difficult to return home.



Jessica Brownfield (2009 年度交換留学生)



Coming to Japan was the first time I had ever traveled to a foreign country... and what an amazing way to start seeing the world! Japanese culture is so different from American culture, that nearly everyday brings a new adventure as I come to understand more and more about life here, with the help of our many Japanese friends. I hope to keep travelling for the rest of my life, but I feel that this experience has really been something special. Spending the New Year with a Japanese family, participating in kyudo club, or volunteering as a worker in local festivals, for example, aren't things that the average tourist seems likely to do in Japan. I have seen and actively participated in so many traditional and modern aspects of Japanese life that I don't even know where to begin to count them all. Not only that, but this has been a truly multinational experience for me as well, as I have gotten to know and become friends with not only Japanese students, but also Finnish, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean students, and learn about their cultures and languages as well. I will treasure this experience for the rest of my life and I hope I can return to Yamaguchi soon, because it has become a part of me forever.

Sarah Humphrey (2007 年度交換留学生)



When I was five-years-old, my younger brother suffered from complications during his premature birth. He became afflicted with cerebral palsy, and since that time, my life has involved the firsthand experience of coping with a person with disabilities in their daily lives and functions. Until I left America to come to Japan, I had always felt this presence in my life; and once I began to adjust to my life in Japan, I realized how deeply I missed my connection with my brother and his similarly disabled peers. Thus, to combat this form of homesickness, I began volunteering at the Wai Wai Club, an after-school program for children with mental and/or physical disabilities. Because my Japanese is still very much a work in progress, one of my two Japanese tutors accompanied me every Wednesday afternoon to spend an hour and a half playing with the children, and a half hour afterwards discussing the day's events with the other volunteers. I began volunteering there in November, and now as the end of January and my return home to America approaches, I look back on my past three months with the Wai Wai children and volunteers as a time filled with good feelings and positive encounters. I showed an interest in these children who rarely have an occasion to interact with foreigners to Japan; and in turn, they took me outside myself and diverted my attentions to something more important and lasting than my temporary heartache. The children, other volunteers, and I have thoroughly enjoyed our time together, and I look forward to seeing them again when I return to Japan. I hope that what started out as my selfish desire to seek out some semblance of my brother in Japan, instead will become an example for others to reach out to all sorts of people in the community. Differences—whether mental, physical, or cultural—might seem large and daunting at first, but in actuality they mean very little when compared to what we can gain by spending time together and learning about each other.

Andrew Kingsolver (2007 年度交換留学生)

When I left home I prepared to have four months of being alone and confused without my family and friends. It was a little scary I guess, but it was also very exciting. Now that I am leaving Japan I can see that though there were many confusing times I was never really alone. The other Centre College students and I have become very close as we worked together to figure things out. Also most importantly, I found that it was easy to become part of the Nomura family as they welcomed me into their home and life. My last week here is much less confusing and frightening than my first week because of the friends and family I have found here. Now I am excited to return to America, but it is also a little confusing and sad to leave my new Japanese relationships that I have come enjoy so much.



【 University of Lapland 】

Tytti Taipale (2009 年度交換留学生)



The hospitality and friendliness of Japanese people was overwhelming, and I felt really welcome right from the first day. School and all sorts of activities, like home family visits, festivals and field trips, kept me really busy. During the half of a year I got to know a great deal of new people, Japanese and international ones and experience new things nearly every day. We all had our own Japanese tutors that helped us with everything we possibly needed help for, in language learning and everyday things. I became also good friends with mine. Most of the courses I took were in English, so language barrier wasn't a problem. I had Japanese language and culture courses, but also few courses from the design and other departments. In Yamaguchi prefecture, there is quite a lot to see, but we also travelled around Japan to some extent. I don't have a chance to see the cherry blossoms before I go back to Finland since I'm leaving in March, but the plum trees with their pink and white flowers were amazingly beautiful! I'm writing this in the warm sunshine at our back yard, and feeling great. I'm really excited about our coming trip to Korea and Hong Kong before going back to Finland, but I'm also so sad to leave Yamaguchi in a week. I'm going to miss my friends, climate and Japanese food so much! This was an experience of my life, and I can't but to recommend the same for you.

Sofia Kari (2009 年度交換留学生)

I can sincerely say that my exchange period here in Yamaguchi has exceeded all my expectations.

First of all, there has been so much activities arranged by the school and by ourselves, that I feel this semester has just flown by. We got to see Japanese theatre, sumo wrestling, castles, shrines, museums, festivals and many other places and events. Although Yamaguchi is countryside in Japan, it is much different from the countryside in Finland. To me Yamaguchi has been a perfect combination of beautiful surroundings and urban life. I also feel that this way I got to see much more of this beautiful country that I would have, had I only stayed in one of the biggest cities like Tokyo.

I have to admit that when I came here, I was a bit concerned about surviving here, since I had not studied a single word of Japanese before. But even if I did not get to master the language during my stay here, I have enjoyed so much meeting and communicating with Japanese people. It might have been better for everyday life, had I spoken Japanese just a bit more fluently, but Japanese people are so helpful and friendly, that I have felt welcomed all the same. Actually everyone in the YPU, the staff, the tutors and other students have been really wonderful and done so much to make our stay as great as possible. I can only be grateful for that. I have also had the pleasure to have a local host family, with whom I have had so many fun experiences. Thank's to their hospitality and friendliness I have also been able to see a side of the Japanese culture that I would not otherwise have been able to see.

These are only a few of all the exiting things I have experienced during my exchange. So now, after five months in Yamaguchi, I feel that the semester has gone too fast, and I am not ready to go home at all. I can only hope to come back some day and meet again all the wonderful people I have gotten to know during my stay.



Tanja Severikangas (2008 年度交換留学生)



When I first arrived in Yamaguchi, I was happy to experience the warmth, to me it seemed like summer. The weather was mainly warm and nice, and I got to know a lot of the town. Compared to Finnish towns, Yamaguchi is way bigger, but it has a supersafe and cosy feel to it. The studies here have been very interesting, I've taken a lot of classes on traditional arts and culture, for example Japanese calligraphy and tea ceremony. I found tea ceremony classes to be like a haven of peace sometimes, because it does get busy with schoolwork here at some point. I believe that the core of Japanese culture can be found inside the tea ceremony. In the design department, I've had the chance to take fashion design class and make my own product, and take part in a fashion competition with it. In my school, as an industrial design, not a fashion design student, it would be very difficult to get to a class outside your curriculum of choice. I would like to stay here for another semester, but unfortunately I have to go back and graduate as Bachelor. But, I am already planning on coming back for Master studies in Japan.

Hiltula Petri Tapani (2008 年度交換留学生)

My Thoughts

What an experience! A dive into a strong and interesting culture with other exchange students. From the day I arrived Yamaguchi everyone have been really helpful and friendly. We have had really interesting lectures on Japanese history and culture with field trips. One day we went to try japanese paper making and another interesting trip was to Hagi where we went to learn the history of hagi-yaki-pottery. When school started I was assigned a tutor who teaches me Japanese and helps me in everyday things when needed. Design classes I've taken have been interesting and oriented more towards down to earth. Some people say Yamaguchi is small place but I think it's just the right size. You can easily go around by bike and it is hard to get lost.



【 Public University of Navarre 】

Eduardo Moreno Moreno (2009 年度交換留学生)



These months in YPU have been the best experience of my life. First of all I have learnt many things about a very different culture but very interesting. Besides I have shared my customs in Spain with Japanese, American, Chinese, Korean and Finish people but I have learnt more things about these countries as well. In the classes I have enjoyed a lot and I have learnt many things due to this kind of classes are different from the classes in my university.

The activities of the university have been very special for me due to I have been able to experiene Japanese traditions like tea ceremony, Buddhism ceremony, wear kimonos...

Besides I could go to different places in Japan like Osaka, Kyoto or Hiroshima where I have visited many interesting places.

In these months I have met many Japanese people and of course the rest of exchange students with whom I have shared many unforgettable moments.

I can say that with this experience I have learnt a lot, besides I would like to say thank you for give me this chance.

Roman Ljubimov (2008 年度交換留学生)

Since I came to Japan I've had so many experiences that I don't know where to start. At YPU they organize so many activities, and most of them for free. Through these I could visit places like Miyajima with it's shrine door in the water, a famous pottery making family in Hagi, I could learn how is soy sauce made in Yanai, among others. Not only YPU helped me to know Japan more, but also the Japanese people have allowed me to join them in their traditional or not so traditional activities. For example, I've done "mochi tsuki" (beating rice for making rice cakes) twice in a week. I've spent the night in a traditional old



house in the mountains, eating boar and other delicious food. There has been a fertility festival in which I have actively participated, carrying a totem disguised in a funny way (Photo). I've made my own Hagi yaki plate and mug. And if you like trying new foods, Japan is the perfect place. I have had so many opportunities to eat delicious typical foods, and also joined the Japanese in some barbecue meals in which enormous quantities of meat, fish, seafood, and vegetables are roasted in company of friends or family and which I terribly enjoyed.