

I had the privilege of doing my exchange semester at Yamaguchi Prefectural University, which I could not be more pleased with. The small university in the rural prefecture of Yamaguchi showed me what Japanese friendliness and hospitality can be at its best, as I could make friends with a lot of the local students and I would be able to run into them anywhere on campus, circle or in the grocery store. I felt truly so welcome during my stay here and could not recommend YPU more to all future exchange students.

The student tutors were so helpful, and I made a great friend of my student tutor! We spent a lot of time with the other exchange student from Lapland and her tutor, which was so much fun, as we could make trips, go to festivals and do different kind of activities, like watching Japanese films or making magnets, together!

Majority of classes offer English support, even hagi-yaki pottery and tea ceremony. Don't hesitate to ask the students to translate – they are all so helpful and kind that they will try their best even if they aren't confident in their English abilities! So many people at YPU want to learn about different cultures, and people will approach you wanting to know more about yours, which makes it easy to create new connections. Downloading the LINE app was definitely the key to maintaining these connections, and it gives a good way of staying in touch in the long run.

The teachers were all very welcoming and helpful, even if they had limited English skills, they would surprise me with their Finnish skills! Out of all the courses, I do find tea ceremony, pottery, and Ikebana the most memorable and my favorites during my stay – as I could learn traditional Japanese culture through participating in it myself. Other highlights were Amy Wilson's Debate and Mark Swanson's Japanese Modern Society, where I got to hear more about the YPU students' opinions and thoughts on current topics such as discrimination, overwork, and gender equality.

The university also offered a chance to do a home stay with a local family, and I couldn't be happier with the host family I got to spend a weekend with. They were so kind and welcoming, and we had so many great laughs together. They let me into their home and treated me like family, and I got to take a glimpse into the lives of Japanese families with their hobbies and chores. Luckily, we managed to stay in touch and in May we went on a day trip to Tsunoshima and had a delicious BBQ after at their house. The kids even showed me

their school's sports day cheers. I'm happy to say I will be seeing them again before I return to Finland.

Beyond university life, I got to experience Japan by traveling a lot. I discovered new places in Yamaguchi: Hagi, Iwakuni, Akiyoshido, Ube and Shimonoseki, as well as places in near and far prefectures: Tokyo, Hiroshima, Tsuwano, Fukuoka and Miyajima. Additionally, I had the opportunity to take the ferry from Fukuoka to Busan and visit there and Seoul in South Korea. Whilst visiting these places I got to experience the local culture via foods, shrines, events (such as Yabusame) and museums.

All in all, I recommend Yamaguchi Prefectural University to everyone considering coming to Japan. The nature, culture and people are one of a kind and will welcome you with open arms. With that you can also advance your Japanese language skills exponentially, as conversations can strike in thrift stores or train stations!

Pictures on the next page:

1. Akiyoshido cave
2. Tsuwano, Yabusame
3. Yamaguchi, picnic with tutors
4. Shimonoseki, Chofu day trip with host family
5. YPU, Tea ceremony, I got my license!
6. YPU, Hagi-yaki carving process.
7. Seoul, Imperial palace
8. YPU, Ikebana
9. Iwakuni, Kintaikyo Bridge
10. Iwakuni, Iwakuni Castle
11. Hiroshima, A-Bomb Peacepark
12. Toyko, Shibuya crossing

2025 Academic Year – University of Lapland Student



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



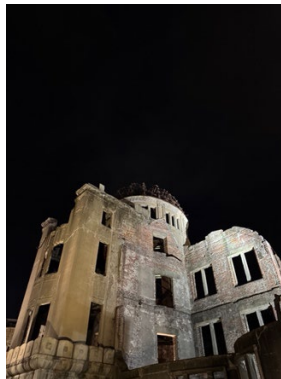
8



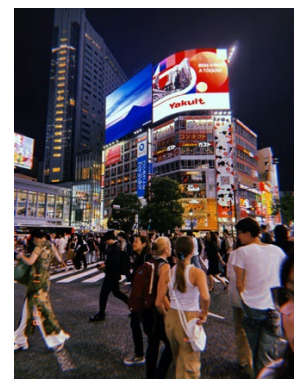
6



10



11



12