

Hyebin Park (Auckland University of Technology) on exchange at Sapporo University

My name is Hyebin Park. I am currently attending Sapporo University on a half year exchange programme. I arrived in Sapporo in March this year. The time has passed so fast – as I write there is only a month to go before I finish my University life in Japan.

When I arrived in Sapporo (24th March), there was snow everywhere and as I had never seen snow, it was very romantic for me. Therefore my first impression of Sapporo (in Hokkaido) was a world coated in snow. Due to global warming, Sapporo's snow lasted till the middle of March and the cost of gas was huge - around 10,000yen per month (about NZD160).

Therefore if you are planning to come to Sapporo you should be aware of the snow and that your living costs in winter would be more than twice as much as in other seasons.

Accommodation

I live in a regular apartment organised through Sapporo University for both international and national students. Electronics such as TV, washing machine, fridge are provided, as well as bed and blankets but no kitchen equipment. I had to spend quite a lot of money on these items unfortunately.

My room is sunny and is plenty big enough for one person. The best thing about it is that it is only 5minutes walk from university. The rent is 39,000yen which is around NZD630.00 (per month).

University Life

Most universities in Japan start their new semester in the first week of April. Sapporo University began 7 April. Before the semester started, other international students and I had orientation and we could choose our subjects.

However we also have some compulsory papers. For me these were Japanese language papers and I chose J-management (which is for only international students so the lesson was half in English and Japanese), Japanese society and cultures and interpreting.

My biggest regret is I did not choose any other optional papers. Though my Japanese level is not high, if I had taken the other subjects rather than using English I am sure I could be learning more professional Japanese language from the lessons and the tests. My favourite class was Japanese society and cultures, because half of my class mates were Japanese students in the Department of English so I have made many Japanese friends.

In addition to the classes, I joined the cooking circle with my Australian friends and we cooked once a week. As a group we also did other activities such as 'hanami', barbeque party, fireworks, fishing etc.

Living costs

As already mentioned, my rent is 39,000yen/month including water and I paid an electricity bill of approximately 1300~1700yen/month. The gas bill is the most expensive. You cannot live without heating in the winter season and I am sure everyone uses heaps of hot water when they shower. I paid more than NZD100.00

for the first month. It is less in summer but it is still expensive so you should be prepared for this!

Monthly, I spent around 60,000yen (NZD1,000) including rent, gas, electricity and food.

I didn't often go out for a drink and only went out shopping maybe once in 2months. Most of my money has been spent on food!!! There are so many different foods that I love and that are healthy; every time I meet my Japanese friends I look forward to new restaurants and new foods!

Big Tips!!!!

- Try to speak in Japanese all the time whether your Japanese is at elementary level or high! You come here to learn the language and culture, if you feel afraid to speak and just give up, I am sorry but this is ridiculous!!
- Don't wait until Japanese people come and speak to you. Be brave and say hello to them first. They want to be friends with you, they may be just too shy and afraid to speak to foreign students.
- Go for a part time job here! International students are allowed to work for a limited time. You can teach English or you can work in shops or restaurant.

I am not far away now from coming back to New Zealand and when I look back from the first day of my Sapporo life I have done so many memorable things that I can sincerely say that this one semester has been the best of my life and if I can have another opportunity to come back to Hokkaido, I will certainly take it!



In front of Sapporo University entry-



Sapporo University campus.



My place!!



Takopa-(takoyaki party) with my Japanese friends and Australian friends!



Last pictures of takopa!!



Hanami with cooking circle members



Yakiniku party ~