

# Exchange Hitotsubashi University Tokyo

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## **General information**

At first I wasn't planning on going to Japan for my exchange. However, I got rejected for my first three choices and had to pick other universities for my second round. As soon as I saw Hitotsubashi was still available as an option I chose it, hoping to get selected, as I always wanted to go to Tokyo anyway. And I got selected! Even though Japan wasn't my first choice I'm now glad I didn't go anywhere else.

When I applied the semesters of Erasmus and Hitotsubashi weren't running parallel making me miss most of my 3<sup>rd</sup> block. However, Hitotsubashi has changed the timing of their semesters for next year making it perfectly possible to follow your 3<sup>rd</sup> block at Erasmus.

## **Preparation**

Hitotsubashi might be the university with the most paperwork to be done. This is a common thing in Japan as, despite their technology, most things are still done by paper. You have to submit mostly general information regarding your grades and background to the university. Furthermore, a health check is needed which you should do well in advance as it requires a x-ray of your chest. Most of this should be sent to Hitotsubashi by mail.

After you got your message of acceptance, which comes around the end of June, you can arrange your visa at the Japanese embassy. This should at most take a couple of days. With regards to housing, Hitotsubashi gives you the option to stay at their dorms, which I highly recommend you to take. Signing up is very easy and it's ridiculously cheap (max 200 euro a month).

Although this may seem like a lot of preparation, once it's done Hitotsubashi will do nearly everything for you both before and during your stay giving you plenty of time to prepare yourself and enjoy your exchange properly.

## **Arrival**

After you arrive at the airport in Japan, the Japanese students will pick you up. This is only the case if you arrive at the date Hitotsubashi gives you, do you arrive earlier or later, you'll have to find your own way to the dorms. However do not worry, as Hitotsubashi will send you a detailed explanation on how to get there. (It's only one bus and one train).

The first week consists of getting to know everybody and picking your courses. In the first week you're free to visit any course you want giving you a good view on what to choose for your semester. You will also need to go to the city hall and arrange a bank account. However as already mentioned before, Hitotsubashi takes care of everything meaning you'll only have to be there and sign.

## **Courses**

The HGP-program for exchange students at Hitotsubashi requires you to take at least 12 Japanese credits which conveniently is a little over the 24 ECTS you'll need for your exchange. You can take any course Hitotsubashi offers you however keep in mind that half of your credits need to be coming from subjects related to your Erasmus faculty. Most classes at Hitotsubashi are really small scale and the professors try to get involved with everybody. They often have a chat and it is not weird for a class to go out with the professor for some dinner and drinks during the semester.

Hitotsubashi is known as a top 2 university in Japan, despite that, the classes given in English were relatively easy compared to the classes given at Erasmus. However this is definitely not the case for classes given in Japanese. I mainly chose classes without exams and attendance requirements, as I wanted to be free to travel when I felt like it. Most of my classes did require me to write several papers.

**Labor Economics (8ECTS):** This course was my only course having an exam. It mainly covered the basics of labour economics together with really basic econometrics. The professor really enjoys the subject and speaks decent English making the course easy to follow. Attendance was not required.

**Special Seminar (4ECTS):** This course was given by the same professor as for Labour Economics. It covered regressions and their use in everyday researches. At the end of the course you're required to cover a paper in a presentation. If you've done econometrics before this course shouldn't be a problem at all.

**Japanese 4-skills 1 and 2 (4ECTS total):** This was the most basic Japanese course. Don't expect to speak fluent Japanese after this, it at most will enable you to get around Tokyo in Japanese and have really basic conversations. If you're more interested in Japanese language I advise you to take the intensive course. This takes place 5 days a week though compared to the 2 days a week of 4-skills.

**Japanese corporate business management (4ECTS):** Probably my favourite course. It's given by two former employees of major Japanese companies, who both were really high up the management chain). They lived abroad for several years given them a good grasp of the English language. The course covers differences between Japanese business management and Western business management, which are both bizarre and interesting to see. This course only requires you to attend and write papers. The professors are particularly interested in their students and they therefore took us out for dinner and drinks to get to know us better.

**Negotiations (4ECTS):** This course teaches you how to negotiate. Given by a lawyer each lesson is focussed on real life cases. The course only requires you to attend and do a presentation at the end of the semester.

## **Finances**

Tokyo is expensive, however it doesn't have to be. It mostly depends on your lifestyle. Most students received a Jasso scholarship of around 700 euros a month, which should cover most of if not all of your main costs. The things I found most expensive were public transport and clubbing. A both way trip to Tokyo would be a quick 12 euros and entrance to clubs is 20 euros for women and 35 euros for guys, usually.

Number one tip to cut down costs is to buy a bike, I bought mine for 4000 yen which is about 35 euros. Cycling to university takes around twenty minutes while a round trip to university costs you about 5 euros. This means you'll have your money back within two weeks.

### Costs

Rent: €200

Cost of living: €400

Transportation: €150

Social life: €150

I didn't put in my travel expenses as you can go as crazy as you'll like. I did several trips in Japan and visited Seoul and Hong Kong. Flight tickets and hostels are relatively cheap in Asia.

## **Daily life**

Nearly all of the exchange students live in the dorms provided by Hitotsubashi. These are located about 20 minutes out from university by bike and about 40 minutes out of Tokyo by train. Since everybody lives together often parties are thrown at the dorm making sure you'll enjoy your stay.

Regarding food, most people ate outside. It costs about the same as cooking your own meal. Japanese food is definitely the best food I've ever had. For 4 euros you can get the most delicious meals leaving you full for the rest of the day.

The dorm contains a gym and several sports clubs you can join. Be advised, the clubs "require" you to speak Japanese and you'll have to be there 5 times a week.

Japanese people don't speak English, this was mostly difficult the first few weeks. After a while you get used to it and will know how to work your way around this. I didn't speak any Japanese beforehand, it's not required but it wouldn't hurt to know how to read Japanese and know a few phrases.

I've never felt as safe as I did here in Japan. People are insanely polite and crime basically doesn't exist. If you forget something on the train like a laptop or a bag there's a 99% chance you can pick it up the next day at the station.

Tokyo itself is amazing, you'll never get bored and there'll always be something to do. I've been here for 5 months and I still feel like I didn't have enough time to fully explore the city.

Going on exchange was the best decision in my life and I wished I had put Tokyo as my first choice. I had lots of crazy experiences; made lots of new friends from all over the world and travelled to see different cultures. Going on exchange definitely opened my eyes and I couldn't wish for a better experience.

If you have any questions feel free to mail me at: [Koenvanwissen@outlook.com](mailto:Koenvanwissen@outlook.com)

