Bilateral Exchange in Tokyo

2011–12
Important Names & Addresses

The Learning Abroad Center provides a full range of services from preliminary program advising to assistance with re-entry. Do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center with any questions.

In the United States

Learning Abroad Center
University of Minnesota
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430
Phone: 612.626.9000
Fax: 612.626.8009
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM
Email: UMabroad@umn.edu

Sarah Tschida, Associate Program Director
612.626.6712
tschi066@umn.edu

Kim Hindbjorgen, Program Director
612.626.0597
khindbjo@umn.edu

Prior to departure, contact Sarah for all questions relating to the program.
In case of emergency, contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000 at any time. If it is after business hours, there will be a recording giving you a number to call. The Learning Abroad Center has someone on call to deal with emergencies and can contact the on-site administrators if needed. Once overseas, participants should contact Sophia University in case of an emergency.

In Tokyo

University of Academic Affairs/Overseas Liaison Section,
Sophia University
7-1 kioi-cho, chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102-8554
JAPAN

81.33.238.3521 (from outside the US, dial 011+ number)

Staff
Mariko Onomura and Noriko Takano, Exchange Program Coordinators
Friends and family members should not contact Sophia University directly but rather direct all program questions to the Learning Abroad Center even once the participant is overseas.

Please make copies of this page to leave with friends and family.

Know Before You Go

Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, and the Learning Abroad Center's policies [http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policiesacademicstravel/policies.php](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policiesacademicstravel/policies.php). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Friends and Family Resources

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/parents](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/parents). Topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel are discussed.
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# Program Calendar

**Academic Year 2011–12**

Information on the academic calendar can be found at: www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/admissions/exchangeprograms.
Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a bilateral exchange student! Exchange programs provide you with the unique opportunity to integrate fully into the academic system and daily life of another country. As an international exchange student, you can expect to be challenged by complete immersion in a different academic system, a different culture, and a whole new way of life.

Although you may already be familiar with the culture, history, and language of Japan, you may still be surprised by some of the differences you will encounter. It is important for you to prepare for your upcoming experience by reading the following information carefully and by expecting the unexpected while studying abroad.

Exchange programs require independence, individual initiative, and flexibility. To encourage and guide you, the Learning Abroad Center provides a full range of services from preliminary program advising to assistance with re-entry. Contact the Learning Abroad Center at any point before, during, or after your exchange and staff will do their best to make your study abroad a rewarding and successful experience. While the international student support staff at Sophia University and the Learning Abroad Center will provide as much assistance as possible, the ultimate success of this unique opportunity depends on your commitment and effort to make the most of your exchange. Good luck and best wishes for a rewarding and successful study abroad experience.

Exchange Program at Sophia University

The Bilateral Exchange program at Sophia University provides you with the unique opportunity to experience Japanese life in the vibrant and dynamic city of Tokyo.

The following information is intended to help prepare you for your upcoming experience by acquainting you with certain aspects of your life in Tokyo. It also addresses academic issues including the academic program overseas and considerations at your home institution in the US. We recommend that you take this with you to Japan. This guide, however, offers only an overview on certain topics and is not comprehensive; you are encouraged to read other information in preparation for your stay.

You will find a resource list in the appendix. You may also want to check your local libraries for additional information. The better prepared you are, the more quickly you will adjust and function effectively in Japanese society.

Do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center or the staff at Sophia University’s international student office with any questions you may have.

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport

A valid passport and student visa are required to enter Japan and to re-enter the United States. You can find information on how to apply for a passport and visa by visiting the Learning Abroad Center or at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policiesacademics/travel/travel.php.

Ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your intended return date.

Visa

You will need a student visa. The visa process is lengthy, and you will need to begin working on it as soon as you are confirmed as a program participant. You need a Certificate of Eligibility to obtain the student visa. The Certificate of Eligibility is requested for you by Sophia University. See the Sophia University Application Materials booklet for detailed instructions on how to get the Certificate of Eligibility and to apply for your visa. Follow these instructions carefully and promptly. Sophia can only apply for your Certificate after it has received all of the required supporting documentation from you. It can take 6–8 weeks after they receive documentation receive the Certificate. Only then can you apply for a visa, which may take a few additional weeks.

You can review the visa application information ahead of time at www.chicago.us.emb-japan.go.jp/Consular/visa.html.

You cannot obtain a student visa after you arrive in Japan. If you enter without the proper visa, you will have to leave the country to obtain the student visa.

Your passport and visa are very valuable documents. Do not lose them. You cannot leave Japan without them.

Once in Japan, carry your passport with you until you receive your foreigner’s card (see below). If your passport is lost or stolen, you should notify the local police and the American Consulate in Tokyo.

Alien Registration

When you arrive in Japan initially, you must apply for your gaikokujin or Foreigners card/Alien Registration card. Go to your city ward office in Tokyo; the location of your ward office will depend on which ward you live in Tokyo. Bring your passport and 2 passport-sized photos with you. The City Office will tell you to come back on a certain date (usually 2–3 weeks later) and then you may pick up your card. Once you receive this card carry it with you at all times in place of your passport. It will be valid for one year from the date of your arrival in Japan. If you ever change your address or status in Japan you must report this to the City Office.
US Embassy Registration

The Learning Abroad Center requires you to register with the US Embassy in Japan. Doing so makes your presence in Japan known, and in the case of an emergency, the embassy can be a source of assistance and information.

For additional information, and to register, go to www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html.

Re-entry Permit

If you ever leave the country of Japan during your stay, you must apply for a re-entry permit to get back into the country. The office, like with the alien registration, will be located in your city ward district depending on what area of Tokyo you live. Bring your alien registration card and your passport. You have the option of a single re-entry permit or a multiple re-entry permit. The office will put the permit inside your passport to be shown at the airport when you travel.

Power of Attorney

We strongly encourage you to designate someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your Power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations. Review the information on the website at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies/financeCancellation/powerOfAttorney.html

Your Address

In order to ensure that all official communication and billing information is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, check your official contact information prior to departure. Visit onestop.umn.edu to verify that the information is correct. If your contact information changes, you must notify the Learning Abroad Center.

Health & Safety

Review the online Health and Safety orientation for details on your international health insurance coverage.

Japan is relatively safe; there are no major problems with street crime or pickpockets. However, take care of your valuables.

Keep copies of all of the following documents and phone numbers to report them if they are lost or stolen. Keep them in a safe place separate from the documents themselves.

- Passport and visa
- Airline ticket
- Insurance policy
- ATM card and credit card with emergency number
- Phone numbers at home in case of an emergency

Check the US State Department website for more detailed information at www.travel.state.gov/. Also check the Center for Disease Control for health information at www.cdc.gov.

Considerations During Planning

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Issues

Attitudes towards sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult your program guide or program sponsor for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues in your country of choice.

For additional resources, view the GLBT Students Abroad website at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/glbt.php.

Students of Color

You may wish to consult the resources available at the Learning Abroad Center on issues related to students of color and learning abroad. Also, program-specific material may include information more specific to the host culture. If you have questions about the country in which you will be studying, do not hesitate to contact a Learning Abroad Center staff member.

For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.academic.umn.edu/equity.

Students With Disabilities

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting. Participants with any kind of disability, whether hidden or visible, should contact the Learning Abroad Center in advance to discuss their particular needs.

Arrival Logistics

You will need to arrange your own transportation once you know your arrival date. Once you have your flight arrangements, give a copy of your itinerary to the Learning Abroad Center. We will need your travel details at least 30 days before your departure.

If your flight is delayed, contact the Learning Abroad Center if you are in the US, or Sophia University if you are in Asia.
Practical & Program Information

Accommodations
Housing information can be found on the Sophia University website at: www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/admissions/exchangeprograms/housingInfo_costs/housing_info.

Meals
Some dormitories provide breakfast and dinner at the dorm; others have shared kitchen facilities. For complete details, see the Sophia Foreign Student Housing info. Students who eat in the cafeteria can expect to pay about 500 yen per meal. The meals on the Yotsuya campus cafeterias tend to be cheaper than the Ichigaya cafeteria. There is a salad bar in one of the Yotsuya cafeterias. Western and Japanese style food are available.

Expect to pay considerably more and get less for groceries in Japan. A short walk or train ride in any direction will get you to a good-sized grocery store. Meat, fresh fruits and vegetables are very expensive. Expect to see a lot of rice, tofu, noodles, and seafood in a typical Japanese meal. If you are a vegetarian, finding adequate meals may be difficult. For alternatives to Japanese food, there is an international food store and a vegetarian restaurant very near campus.

Money Matters

Currency
The currency of Japan is the Yen. You can check the current exchange rate at www.oanda.com. Check often since the value does fluctuate.

Debit Cards
Many automatic teller machines (ATMs) in Japan do not accept credit, debit and ATM cards, issued outside of Japan. The big exception are the ATMs found at the over 20,000 post offices across the country. ATMs at post offices allow you to withdraw cash by foreign Visa, Plus, Mastercard, Eurocard, Maestro, Cirrus, American Express, Diners and JCB cards and provide an English user menu. Note that most post offices do not offer a 24 hour ATM service. In addition to the ATMs at post offices, a small number of international ATMs are located in 7-11 convenience stores, major department stores, airports and Citibank branches.

In order to use international ATMs, make sure that your credit or debit card can be used in Japan and that you know its PIN. Also, check what fees and daily and/or monthly limits are associated with international withdrawals.

Cash
It is advisable to enter Japan with some Yen in hand. It is recommended that you have 5,000–10,000 yen when you arrive in Japan. Check with your bank about where you can exchange money or do so at your departure airport.

Although credit cards are generally accepted at larger retail outlets, there are establishments that only take cash payments. It is not uncommon for people to carry large amounts of cash in Japan.

Lost or Stolen Credit Cards
Carry phone numbers of the credit card company and your bank with you to Japan (make sure you have numbers that can be accessed from abroad), and keep them separate from your cards. This way you can report any missing cards without delay.

The CISI insurance plan provided to all participants includes the Team Assist Plan (TAP), which offers travel emergency services such as assistance in replacing traveler’s checks. Please refer to your CISI info packet for more details. Lost or stolen cash cannot be replaced.

Communications

Email
You will have access to email while you are studying at Sophia University. You will be issued an email account 2–3 business days after you register. More computers are available on the Yotsuya campus and you will be able to access your University of Minnesota email account over the web.

Mail
Air mail takes 5–7 days and is about double the cost we pay in the US. There is a post office right next to Ichigaya campus to serve you during business hours (9 a.m.–3 p.m.), and there are stamp vending machines outside the post offices. For large packages, you may want to send them by surface mail. This takes about 2 months but is half the cost of air mail.

Telephones
The public phones (green or gray) are extremely convenient for making domestic and international calls. Phone cards need to be purchased to use these phones and can be bought at convenient stores or in vending machines that are scattered around. It is a good idea to bring a calling card (such as Sam's Club, MCI, AT&T) because international calls from your Japanese phone will be expensive. Keep in mind, Japan is 14–15 hours (depending on day light savings time) ahead of Minnesota time.

Access to your own phone and payment for use of this phone will depend on your housing arrangements. Students housed in the dormitories tend to pay 2,500 yen a month for basic telephone charges, not including their personal calls. Even local calls are charged in Japan, 10 yen a minute. New broadband services (such as Yahoo) often offer phone service, through the internet, for a reduced fee.
Cell phones
Softbank, AU, & Docomo are the three big cell phone providers. Softbank tends to provide the best deals for international students. If you look around, you should be able to find phones for free or deals for 1 yen. Look at contracts closely and have someone help you since most places will require credit card information so that if you leave Japan half way through a one year deal they can charge you for the difference. Too many foreigners have left behind unpaid bills. The charges for placing international calls is quite high, so you should only plan to receive calls. Text messaging is standard as well as e-moji, which are cartoon characters you can put into a message.

Work Abroad & Work Permits
Students on study abroad programs should give careful consideration to the practicality of working while participating in the program. In most countries it is not possible to work when entering with a student visa.

FERPA
It is important to be aware that the Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can arrange Power of Attorney through the Student Legal Services Office. More information is available at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policiesacademicstravel/policies/finances/powerofattorney.php

Academics

Program Structure
There are seven faculties at Sophia but you will probably be a member of the Faculty of Liberal Arts/Comparative Culture. If you have fluency in the Japanese language and are able to pass a test upon arrival at Sophia, then you may be admitted to other colleges with courses taught in Japanese with Japanese students.

The language of Instruction will usually be English and students will study Japanese and/or take Intensive Japanese language courses.

Japanese Educational Context
Competition is fierce for spots at the top universities, as career opportunities with top-ranked companies are closely tied to degrees from prestigious universities. High school is extremely rigorous in Japan. So is the working world. As a result, once admitted to the university the context is often viewed by students as a rest period between high school and the career world. Attitudes will vary depending on the university, but you should be prepared that you may find student attitudes more relaxed. As a result, it will be up to you to maintain good study habits while overseas. You may have more free time than you do here, but you will need to judge carefully for yourself what level of dedication is required to maintain good academic performance. Some students have been surprised by their grades at the end of the year, because they did not maintain good study habits while in Japan.

Orientation
Orientation is usually a week after your designated arrival, as listed on the academic calendar. You will meet with your advisers on this day, tour campus, and join in on a Welcome Party. Past participants have indicated that there is a lot of unstructured time after your arrival until orientation takes place, so you should plan to be independent and self-motivated during this time.

Registration

Registration at Sophia University
You will receive registration instructions during your on-site orientation.

Registration in Minnesota
All University of Minnesota Twin Cities students are responsible for registering themselves for the exchange program. You will be given the necessary information for registration by the Learning Abroad Center. Do not look for your course number to appear on the online class list. The numbers you need for registration can only be obtained from the Learning Abroad Center. If you register for a course that is listed online, you have registered for the wrong course and may be subject to tuition charges.

Register yourself after your designated registration queue time. Failure to complete registration may result in late registration fees and may delay or prevent financial aid disbursement.

Contact helpingu@umn.edu or www.onestop.umn.edu with questions about financial aid. If you do not register for study abroad, your grades cannot be processed. Failure to register before departing for study abroad may result in no credit for your study abroad program.
Before Registration:

• Meet with your academic adviser(s) and complete the Academic Planning for Study Abroad Form.

• Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration date. Learning Abroad Center cannot remove holds on student accounts. To check for holds, go to http://onestop.umn.edu/registration/guidelines/holds.

Courseload

You are required to enroll in a full-time course of study while overseas. Learn about the full-time load at Sophia prior to your departure. If you do not receive information from the overseas institution with your acceptance materials, contact the overseas coordinator before you depart and consult with the Learning Abroad Center to discuss any questions you may have.

All semester and year students have the option of taking Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience with Your Future. This 1-credit course provides opportunities for you to make meaning of your learning abroad experience and prepares you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a new multicultural setting and to succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course teaches you to apply these skills to your post-graduation plans.

If you receive financial aid you should be aware of the number of credits you must take each semester in order to retain your aid while overseas.

The Sophia University grading scale is different than at the University of Minnesota and there are cultural differences in how Japanese and American professors grade. Be prepared for potentially lower grades than what you typically receive at the University of Minnesota.

Academic Planning

As a part of the Learning Abroad Center preparation, all students are required to complete the Academic Planning for Study Abroad (APSA) form. This is the green form you received at your First Step Meeting. The APSA form will assist you in receiving academic credit for your overseas studies, and deciding how to fit these credits into your academic goals at the University of Minnesota. Save all of your study abroad coursework to go over with your academic adviser when you return to campus.

In order to complete the APSA form, you will need to meet with your academic adviser and any other required faculty. After this, you must submit the completed academic planning form to the Learning Abroad Center.

Transcripts

After you return from your exchange the Learning Abroad Center receives an official transcript from the overseas institution. Once your credit has transferred onto your University of Minnesota transcript, you will want to meet with your advisers to ensure the decisions made on the APSAS report. You will receive resident credit for this program, which means that all courses will be posted to your University of Minnesota transcript, and all grades will be counted towards your overall GPA.

Please Note

• It can take three to six months after you complete your program for the University of Minnesota to receive your official transcript from Sophia University. As a result, it is not possible to graduate immediately upon return from your program.

• If you receive a transcript directly from Sophia University, do not bring it to the Admissions Office at the University of Minnesota. This will cause significant problems with receiving credit for your work. You must bring it to the Learning Abroad Center.

Student Grievances

Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota sponsored or cosponsored learning abroad programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.
Life in Tokyo

(Adapted from Lonely Planet)

Climate
In Autumn (September to November) the temperatures are pleasant, and the autumn colors in the countryside are fantastic. Mid-winter (December to February) can be bitterly cold, while the sticky summer months (June to August) will cause you to dab your sweat with a cloth as the locals do.

Transportation
The modes of everyday transportation in Japan vary greatly from bicycle to bullet train. Japan has an efficient public transportation network, especially within metropolitan areas and between the large cities. Japanese public transportation is characterized by its punctuality, its superb service, and the large crowds of people using it.

Getting around on campus and to the nearest train stations is feasible by foot. For anything beyond campus you will have to depend on one of the forms listed below. For more detailed travel information visit www.japan-guide.com/e/e627.html

Bikes
If you do choose to purchase a bike, it will mostly be used to get you to your nearest train station. Sometimes dormitories, apartments and homestays can be up to 20 minutes by bike to the nearest station.

Bus
Using buses in Japan can be intimidating to foreigners but don't be afraid to ask your fellow passengers for help or watch what they do. Within the city of Tokyo buses can be quite convenient and the cost is low. Longer distances can also be traveled by bus and night buses are available at a reasonable rate.

JR Trains/Subways
Public transportation is the rule in Japan rather than the exception. Plan on learning the routes before or as soon as you arrive in Japan. Any major train or subway station or department stores (stationary section) will have bilingual maps of the Tokyo system. It is recommended that you purchase this map as soon as possible. The trains and subways are well marked and easy to understand with Roman characters used also. The system is safe, efficient, and extremely punctual. Japan Railways (JR) provides an excellent transportation system as do the variety of private railways in Tokyo. Subways are a bit more expensive but are just as easy to use. Most lines stop running at 11–11:30 p.m. and start up again around 5–5:30 a.m..

Taxis
This is a very expensive alternative to get where you want to go after the trains stop running. Taxis can be hailed from most major streets but especially in front of all train stations, or you can call ahead if you need direct pick-up. Fares go up on nights, weekends and holidays. There is no need to tip the driver and don't touch the doors; the driver controls them.

Shinkansen/Airplanes
For further distances you may want to rely on the shinkansen or bullet train. It is a more expensive way to travel but it is usually cheaper than flying. Shinkansen lines now reach to the larger cities almost all over Japan. But in some cases, for long distant traveling throughout Japan, an airplane could be cheaper than the shinkansen so be sure to check out prices before you travel. The Japanese airlines are JAL (Japan Airlines), JAS (Japan Air Systems) and ANA (All Nippon Air). There are domestic airports in almost every prefecture in Japan.

Travel
Make use of the office on the Ichigaya campus that offers student travel discounts. Show your student ID and receive discount airfare and shinkansen tickets. You may prefer to travel long distances by slow train. JR offers a special discounted ticket for students during the breaks. It is called the juu-hachi kippu and it allows you to ride the slow trains an unlimited number of times in 5 different days. It can be purchased at any train station.

There are many travel agencies that offer services for travel around Japan and the world. No 1 Travel in Tokyo offers affordable travel and services in English. (www.no1-travel.com or 03.3205.6073). The Japan Times newspaper, received in the library everyday, often advertises travel sales with English speaking representatives. Commuter train and shinkansen time tables are available at every train, subway or shinkansen station. Local bus schedules are posted at every bus stop, and overnight bus information can be picked up at any train, subway station. Travel information for all modes of transportation is also available online.

Travel affords excellent opportunities to see Japan. In addition, shorter trips on weekends can give you a valuable insight into the countryside around Tokyo. Traveling by train or bus in Japan is easy, and generally efficient. As this is an academic program, you should be careful about the amount you travel during the weekends.
Life in Japan

History and Culture
(Adapted from Lonely Planet and the US State Departments Background Notes)

Geography
Japan, a country of islands, extends along the eastern or Pacific coast of Asia. The four main islands, running from north to south, are Hokkaido, Honshu (or the mainland), Shikoku, and Kyushu. Okinawa Island is about 380 miles southwest of Kyushu. About 3,000 smaller islands are included in the archipelago. In total land area, Japan is slightly smaller than California. About 73% of the country is mountainous, with a chain running through each of the main islands. Japan's highest mountain is the world famous Mt. Fuji (12,385 feet). Since so little flat area exists, many hills and mountain sides are cultivated all the way to the summits. As Japan is situated in a volcanic zone along the Pacific depth, frequent low intensity earth tremors and occasional volcanic activity are felt throughout the islands. Destructive earthquakes occur several times a century. Hot springs are numerous and have been developed as resorts.

Temperature extremes are less pronounced than in the United States since no part of the interior is more than 100 miles from the coast. At the same time, because the islands run almost directly north-south, the climate varies considerably. Sapporo, on the northernmost main island, has warm summers and long, cold winters with heavy snowfall. Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe, in central and western parts of the largest island of Honshu, experience relatively mild winters with little or no snowfall and hot, humid summers. Fukuoka, on the island of Kyushu, has a climate similar to that of Washington, DC, with mild winters and short summers. Okinawa is subtropical.

People
Japan's population, currently some 128 million, has experienced a phenomenal growth rate during the past 100 years as a result of scientific, industrial, and sociological changes, but this has recently slowed because of falling birth rates. High sanitary and health standards produce a life expectancy exceeding that of the United States.

Japan is an urban society with only about 6% of the labor force engaged in agriculture. Many farmers supplement their income with part-time jobs in nearby towns and cities. About 80 million of the urban population is heavily concentrated on the Pacific shore of Honshu and in northern Kyushu. Major population centers include: Metropolitan Tokyo with approximately 14 million; Yokohama with 3.3 million; Osaka with 2.6 million; Nagoya with 2.1 million; Kyoto with 1.5 million; Sapporo with 1.6 million; Kobe with 1.4 million; and Kitakyushu, Kawasaki, and Fukuoka with 1.2 million each. Japan faces the same problems that confront urban industrialized societies throughout the world: overcrowded cities, congested highways, air pollution, and rising juvenile delinquency.

Shintoism and Buddhism are Japan's two principal religions. Shintoism is founded on myths and legends emanating from the early animistic worship of natural phenomena. Since it was unconcerned with problems of afterlife which dominate Buddhist thought, and since Buddhism easily accommodated itself to local faiths, the two religions comfortably coexisted, and Shinto shrines and Buddhist monasteries often became administratively linked. Today many Japanese are adherents of both faiths. From the 16th to the 19th century Shintoism flourished.

Adopted by the leaders of the Meiji restoration, it received state support and was cultivated as a spur to patriotic and nationalistic feelings. Following World War II, state support was discontinued, and the emperor disavowed divinity. Today Shintoism plays a more peripheral role in the life of the Japanese people. The numerous shrines are visited regularly by a few believers and, if they are historically famous or known for natural beauty, by many sightseers. Many marriages are held in the shrines, and children are brought there after birth and on certain anniversary dates: special shrine days are celebrated for certain occasions, and numerous festivals are held throughout the year. Many homes have "god shelves" where offerings can be made to Shinto deities.

Buddhism first came to Japan in the 6th century and for the next 10 centuries exerted profound influence on its intellectual, artistic, social, and political life. Most funerals are conducted by Buddhist priests, and burial grounds attached to temples are used by both Buddhist and Shinto faiths.

Confucianism arrived with the first great wave of Chinese influence into Japan between the 6th and 9th centuries. Overshadowed by Buddhism, it survived as an organized philosophy into the late 19th century and remains today as an important influence on Japanese thought and values.

Christianity, first introduced into Japan in 1549, was virtually stamped out by the government a century later; it was reintroduced in the late 1800s and has spread slowly. Today it has 1.4 million adherents, including a relatively high percentage of important figures in education and public affairs.
Beyond the three traditional religions, many Japanese today are turning to a great variety of popular religious movements normally lumped together under the name “new religions.” These religions draw on the concept of Shinto, Buddhism, and folk superstition and have developed in part to meet the social needs of elements of the population. The officially recognized new religions number in the hundreds, and total membership is reportedly in the tens of millions.

**History**

Japanese legend maintains that Japan was founded in 600 BC by the Emperor Jimmu, a direct descendant of the sun goddess and ancestor of the present ruling imperial family. About AD 405, the Japanese court officially adopted the Chinese writing system. Together with the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, these two events revolutionized Japanese culture and marked the beginning of a long period of Chinese cultural influence. From the establishment of the first fixed capital at Nara in 710 until 1867, the emperors of the Yamato dynasty were the nominal rulers, but actual power was usually held by powerful court nobles, regents, or “shoguns” (military governors).

**Contact With the West**

The first recorded contact with the West occurred about 1542, when a Portuguese ship, blown off its course to China, landed in Japan. During the next century, traders from Portugal, the Netherlands, England, and Spain arrived, as did Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan missionaries. During the early part of the 17th century, Japan's shogunate suspected that the traders and missionaries were actually forerunners of a military conquest by European powers. This caused the shogunate to place foreigners under progressively tighter restrictions. Ultimately, Japan forced all foreigners to leave and barred all relations with the outside world except for severely restricted commercial contacts with Dutch and Chinese merchants at Nagasaki. This isolation lasted for 200 years, until Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy achieved the opening of Japan to the West with the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854.

Within several years, renewed contact with the West profoundly altered Japanese society. The shogunate resigned, and the emperor was restored to power. The “Meiji restoration” of 1868 initiated many reforms. The feudal system was abolished, and numerous Western institutions were adopted, including a Western legal system and constitutional government along quasi-parliamentary lines.

In 1898, the last of the “unequal treaties” with Western powers was removed, signaling Japan’s new status among the nations of the world. In a few decades, by creating modern social, educational, economic, military, and industrial systems, the Emperor Meiji’s “controlled revolution” had transformed a feudal and isolated state into a world power.

**Wars With China and Russia**

Japanese leaders of the late 19th century regarded the Korean Peninsula as a “dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.” It was over Korea that Japan became involved in war with the Chinese Empire in 1894–95 and with Russia in 1904–05. The war with China established Japan’s domination of Korea, while also giving it the Pescadores Islands and Formosa (now Taiwan). After Japan defeated Russia in 1905, the resulting Treaty of Portsmouth awarded Japan certain rights in Manchuria and in southern Sakhalin, which Russia had received in 1875 in exchange for the Kurile Islands. Both wars gave Japan a free hand in Korea, which it formally annexed in 1910.

**World War I to 1952**

World War I permitted Japan, which fought on the side of the victorious Allies, to expand its influence in Asia and its territorial holdings in the Pacific. The postwar era brought Japan unprecedented prosperity. Japan went to the peace conference at Versailles in 1919 as one of the great military and industrial powers of the world and received official recognition as one of the “Big Five” of the new international order. It joined the League of Nations and received a mandate over Pacific islands north of the Equator formerly held by Germany.

During the 1920s, Japan progressed toward a democratic system of government. However, parliamentary government was not rooted deeply enough to withstand the economic and political pressures of the 1930s, during which military leaders became increasingly influential.

Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1933, Japan resigned from the League of Nations. The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 followed Japan's signing of the “anti-Comintern pact” with Nazi Germany the previous year and was part of a chain of developments culminating in the Japanese attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941.

After almost 4 years of war, resulting in the loss of 3 million Japanese lives and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan signed an instrument of surrender on the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Harbor on September 2, 1945. As a result of World War II, Japan lost all of its overseas possessions and retained only the home islands. Manchukuo was dissolved, and Manchuria returned to China; Japan renounced all claims to Formosa; Korea was occupied and divided by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.; southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles were occupied by the U.S.S.R.; and the U.S. became the sole administering authority of the Ryukyu, Bonin, and Volcano Islands. The 1972 reversion of Okinawa completed the U.S. return of control of these islands to Japan.

After the war, Japan was placed under international control of the Allies through the Supreme Commander, Gen. Douglas MacArthur. U.S. objectives were to ensure that Japan would become a peaceful nation and to establish democratic self-government supported by the freely expressed will of the people. Political, economic, and social reforms were introduced, such as a freely elected Japanese Diet (legislature) and universal adult suffrage. The country's constitution took effect on May 3, 1947. The United States and 45 other Allied nations signed the Treaty
of Peace with Japan in September 1951. The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty in March 1952, and under the terms of the treaty, Japan regained full sovereignty on April 28, 1952.

**Government and Political Conditions**

Japan is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. There is universal adult suffrage with a secret ballot for all elective offices. The executive branch is responsible to the Diet, and the judicial branch is independent. Sovereignty, previously embodied in the emperor, is vested in the Japanese people, and the Emperor is defined as the symbol of the state.

Japan's Government is a parliamentary democracy, with a House of Representatives and a House of Councillors. Executive power is vested in a cabinet composed of a prime minister and ministers of state, all of whom must be civilians. The prime minister must be a member of the Diet and is designated by his colleagues. The prime minister has the power to appoint and remove ministers, a majority of whom must be Diet members.

The six major political parties represented in the National Diet are the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the New Clean Government Party (Komeito), the Japan Communist Party (JCP), the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), and the Conservative New Party (CNP).

Japan's judicial system, drawn from customary law, civil law, and Anglo-American common law, consists of several levels of courts, with the Supreme Court as the final judicial authority. The Japanese constitution includes a bill of rights similar to the U.S. Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court has the right of judicial review. Japanese courts do not use a jury system, and there are no administrative courts or claims courts. Because of the judicial system's basis, court decisions are made in accordance with legal statutes. Only Supreme Court decisions have any direct effect on later interpretation of the law.

Japan does not have a federal system, and its 47 prefectures are not sovereign entities in the sense that U.S. states are. Most depend on the central government for subsidies. Governors of prefectures, mayors of municipalities, and prefectoral and municipal assembly members are popularly elected to 4-year terms.

**Recent Political Developments**

The post-World War II years saw tremendous economic growth in Japan, with the political system dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). That total domination lasted until the Diet Lower House elections on July 18, 1993, in which the LDP failed for the first time to win a majority. A coalition of new parties and existing opposition parties formed a governing majority and elected a new prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, in August 1993. His government's major legislative objective was political reform, consisting of a package of new political financing restrictions and major changes in the electoral system. The coalition succeeded in passing landmark political reform legislation in January 1994.

In April 1994, Prime Minister Hosokawa resigned. Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata formed the successor coalition government, Japan's first minority government in almost 40 years. Prime Minister Hata resigned less than 2 months later. Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama formed the next government in June 1994, a coalition of his Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the LDP, and the small Sakigake Party. The advent of a coalition containing the JSP and LDP surprised many observers because of their previously fierce rivalry. Prime Minister Murayama served until January 1996, when he was succeeded by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. Hashimoto headed a loose coalition of three parties until July 1998, when he resigned due to a poor electoral showing by the LDP in Upper House elections. Hashimoto was succeeded as LDP President and Prime Minister by Keizo Obuchi, who took office on July 30, 1998.

The LDP formed a governing coalition with the Liberal Party in January 1999, and Keizo Obuchi remained prime minister. The LDP-Liberal coalition expanded to include the Komeito Party in October 1999. Prime Minister Obuchi suffered a stroke in April 2000 and was replaced by Yoshiro Mori. After the Liberal Party left the coalition in April 2000, Prime Minister Mori welcomed a Liberal Party splinter group, the New Conservative Party, into the ruling coalition. The three-party coalition made up of the LDP, Komeito, and the New Conservative Party maintained its majority in the Diet following the June 2000 Lower House elections.

After a turbulent year in office, Prime Minister Mori agreed to hold early elections for the LDP presidency to improve his party's chances in crucial July 2001 Upper House elections. Riding a wave of grassroots desire for change, political maverick Junichiro Koizumi won an upset victory on April 24, 2001, over former Prime Minister Hashimoto and other party stalwarts on a platform of economic and political reform.

Koizumi was elected as Japan's 87th Prime Minister on April 26, 2001. The New Conservative Party dissolved in December 2002, and elements of it and defectors from the opposition DPJ formed the Conservative New Party (CNP). The CNP joined the coalition with the LDP and Komeito at its inception. Prime Minister Koizumi was re-elected as LDP President on September 20, 2003, securing a second 3-year term as Prime Minister. In the fall of 2003, the Liberal Party merged with the Democratic Party of Japan, combining party identification under the DPJ name. In congressional elections held in November of 2003, the DPJ won 40 seats, bringing to 177 the total number held by the party. This result brought Japan as close as it has ever been to a two-party political system.

On September 27, 2004, Koizumi carried out a major cabinet reorganization, dubbing his new ministerial lineup “Reform Implementation Cabinet.” Key appointments included Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, who called the U.S.-Japan alliance the “linchpin” of Japan's foreign policy while also pledging to improve ties with key Asian neighbors, including the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) and the Republic of Korea.
Economy

Japan’s industrialized, free market economy is the second-largest in the world. Its economy is highly efficient and competitive in areas linked to international trade, but productivity is far lower in areas such as agriculture, distribution, and services. After achieving one of the highest economic growth rates in the world from the 1960s through the 1980s, the Japanese economy slowed dramatically in the early 1990s, when the “bubble economy” collapsed.

Japan’s reservoir of industrial leadership and technicians, well-educated and industrious work force, high savings and investment rates, and intensive promotion of industrial development and foreign trade have produced a mature industrial economy. Japan has few natural resources, and trade helps it earn the foreign exchange needed to purchase raw materials for its economy.

While Japan’s long-term economic prospects are considered good, Japan is currently in its worst period of economic growth since World War II. Plummeting stock and real estate prices in the early 1990s marked the end of the “bubble economy.” The impact of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 also was substantial. Real GDP in Japan grew at an average of roughly 1% yearly in the 1990s, compared to growth in the 1980s of about 4% per year. Real growth in 2003 was 2.7%.

Cultural Adjustment

Living in another country where the native language is not that of your own may be intimidating, but it is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered, by the program and by being in another country, to interact with the host people and culture. Here is a list of some ways that you could take advantage of these opportunities:

- Join one or more of the various circles and clubs at Sophia, this is a great way to make friends at Sophia who share your interests
- Frequent places like markets, local restaurants, or a bakery
- Do what the locals do, don’t spend a lot of time in touristic hangouts
- Participate in activities your program may offer that includes host country nationals
- Spark up conversations when possible with host-country nationals
- Venturing out in smaller groups can make it easier to meet people than going out with a large group of Americans
- Make an effort to speak the language

You can minimize the stress involved in adjusting to life in the Japanese community and get maximum benefit from your experience abroad by preparing adequately. The cultural differences you encounter can enrich your life by presenting you with a different worldview and new approaches to solving problems.

Read as much as possible about Japan to gain some insight prior to your departure. Talk to international students and veteran travelers who have been where you want to go. The Learning Abroad Center has travel tips from return travelers, many of whom are willing to be contacted and give advice in person. The Learning Abroad Center may also have some past participants who also are willing to share their experiences with new travelers.

You will do best to go to Japan with an open mind and be prepared to be surprised. Somewhere between the elegant formality of Japanese manners and the candid, sometimes boisterous exchanges that take place informally, between the sanitized shopping malls and the unexpected rural festivals, everyone finds their own vision of Japan.

The nation’s list of attributes reads like a handbook of paradox, but at its heart, Japan is a warm and friendly destination.

Solutions for Common Communication Difficulties

You can hear and decipher language better in context. If you know the subject matter, you will better anticipate what you are going to hear: If you ask how much something costs, you are going to hear numbers. If you ask where the supermarket is, you are going to hear directions and distances. You do this anticipation unconsciously in your own language, but need to focus special attention on it in a foreign language. Carry a small Japanese-English dictionary or phrase book with you all the time.

When you learn a new phrase or expression, use it as frequently as possible, to reinforce it in your memory. Carry a small notepad and pen with you. If you are having trouble hearing names, prices, addresses, etc., ask the person to write them down for you.

Coming Home

By the time you return home from Japan, you will have grown and changed significantly. You will probably find yourself experiencing reverse culture shock. Many students find that returning home is harder than leaving was. It is very normal to experience these feelings and you aren’t alone. You are encouraged to tap into the resources available in order to make the transition home easier.
To stay connected to your study abroad experience, you may want to:

- Become a Global Ambassador Intern: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/about/opportunities.php
- Become a classroom visit intern
- Serve as a past participant at pre-departure orientations
- Stay in contact with friends from your program
- Take an internationally-focused course or join a global club.
- Check out possible job opportunities in the Learning Abroad Center or International Student and Scholar Services.

These are just a few ways to stay connected. More information can be found at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry.php.

Stop by the Learning Abroad Center office any time. Staff enjoy talking to students who have returned from study abroad, and would love to see your pictures and hear your stories.
Cultural Adjustment

The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home that may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment, however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your programs onsite support staff.
Appendix

Suggested Packing List

It is extremely important that you pack light, because you will be carrying your luggage yourself during the trip, often for long stretches in airports, bus, and train stations. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is “easily carried” is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up and walk around the block.

If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you’ve packed. However, remember that sizes are limited in Japan and “foreigner sizes” are not easy to find.

Necessary Items

- Comfortable, seasonable clothing that you can wash and wear, plus one or two formal outfits
- Comfortable walking shoes.
- Supply of any prescription medication you require (bring enough for your full stay and make sure it is in its original bottle for customs)
- Voltage converter and outlet adapter if you bring any electrical appliances
- Earplugs to eliminate background noise for study/sleep
- Toiletries such as your favorite deodorant brands, feminine hygiene products (for women), shampoos, face wash, etc.

Resources

Consular information
www.travel.state.gov/travel

Health information for travelers to Asia
www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm#region

General info about Japan and travel in the country
www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/japan

Japan National Tourist Organization
www.jnto.go.jp/eng/index.html

Japan Travel and Living Guide
www.japan-guide.com/

Maximizing study abroad: A students’ guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use, by Paige, R. M., Cohen, A. D., & Kappler, B. Chi, J. C., & Lassegard, J. This guide will prepare you to study abroad, help you have an enriching experience and help you readjust after you get back.

Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide, by R. K. Brislin, C. Cherrie, and M. Yong. A series of “critical incidents” designed to help you recognize cultural clues in a variety of situations, and to generate several possible explanations for a particular situation.

The Silent Language, by Edward T. Hall. Known as “the father of intercultural communication,” Hall writes about many of the more subtle cultural differences such as nonverbal communication in an engaging and anecdotal way.

Survival Kit for Overseas Living, by L. Robert Kohls. A rather simple but useful general guide for persons preparing to live abroad. A good, basic introduction, short and easy to read.


The Art of Crossing Cultures, by Craig Storti. Storti focuses on learning how to anticipate differences and to employ different reactions according to the cultural situation.

Many of these books are available in the University of Minnesota libraries. Some are also available in the Learning Abroad Center. Nearly all of them, and many others, are available through Intercultural Press, P.O. Box 700, Yarmouth, ME 04096. Call 207.846.5168 or write to get their catalog. They may also be ordered online.