



Arrival

I arrived to Chubu Centrair International Airport in Nagoya. Since I arrived with a student visa allowing me a stay for up to a year in Japan, I was about to receive a resident card.



This card is your ID while you are in Japan. You can open a bank account, take mortgage and even buy property – almost anything that a Japanese citizen can do, including getting a health insurance that covers anything with a participation fee of 30% (this includes dental which is usually not covered in Israel).

This is great, but you need to prepare

yourself for endless bureaucracy in Japan. Starting with the airport, when you will be asked to fill in forms and sign them for at least 3 times before you get out of the airport.

Once you are out, you will go to school to meet the administration representative that will help you to get to your dorms. If you are told to be there in time, say before 16:00, than it means that if you arrive there at 16:01 you will be left alone and it will be your fault – Japanese are very strict about the rules even those that seems to be ridiculous. They demand you to follow the rules, but they also inform you about everything, leaving no place for an error – you will be provided with all the necessary



information to get from where you are now to the point of receiving further information upon your arrival. This includes information about visa procedures, airport schematics, transportation options to get to school upon arrival, etc.



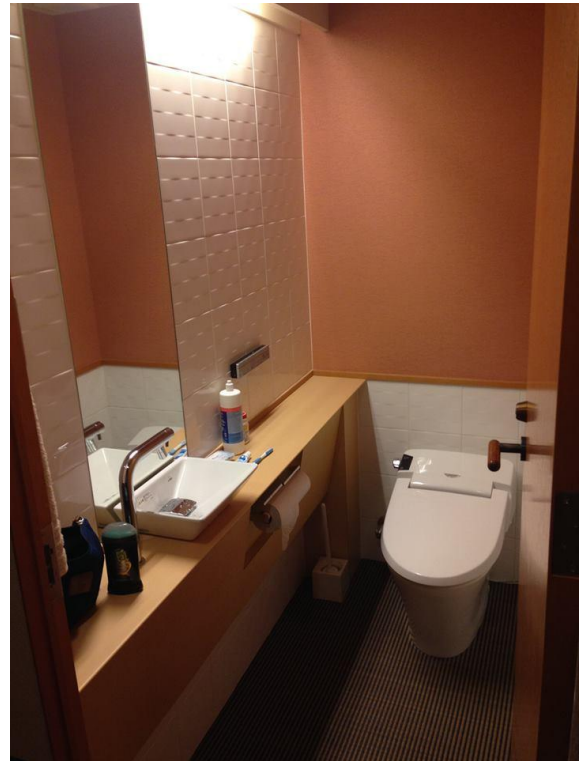
Dorms

You don't get to choose which dorms you get, but there are only 2 options:

1. Chiyoda dorms – cheaper and in the center of Nagoya. Everything is there and get to see the city and its night life without worrying too much about transportation to get home after midnight. The rooms are simple, but they include a private toilet, shower, a bed, AC, mini kitchen, refrigerator and even a balcony. Wireless internet is available in the building. The price is about 60,000 yens (it can change after all the yen is getting weaker now). The only problem with these dorms that there is no common area or a club where you could meet with the other exchange students and have good times. The rooms are too small to host a party for more than 5-6 people.
2. Higashiyama dorms – I got these dorms. If Chiyoda dorms are a regular student dorms building with small and cozy rooms, Higashiyama is nothing like that. It looks and feels like a 5 star hotel. The rooms are a fusion between Japan and the west – normal western furniture with some bamboo décor on the walls.



The rooms are equipped with a big table to study/work, you have a LAN connection for the internet, a fridge, a smart toilet with many buttons and heated seat, a tub in the shower.



The facilities in the building include a gym (24 hours), laundry room, Wifi, theater room (you can project movies there), common area,



big kitchen fully equipped,



seminar room, and a big balcony with a view to the Zen garden outside:



You get a cleaning service once a week and breakfast buffet every morning on week days.



You can also enjoy an electric bicycle which is shared between you and your neighbor. Sounds great right? Well, not so fast! These dorms are far from the city center (about 10km) which makes it difficult to be in the city whenever you like it or getting from a club after midnight (taxi is very expensive even when shared). You could use the bicycle but it gets cold and wet in the fall (if that is your semester).

The price is also not so cheap and was 85,000 yens when I was there.

As I already said, you don't get to choose the dorms, but I know that you can be in Higashiyama only if you have good grades in Israel and you receive a scholarship starting day 1.

There is always the option to rent in the city – many times it will be a cheaper option, especially when comparing to the Higashiyama dorms.

Scholarships

This is something which is not obvious – you can get a scholarship without even asking, just don't forget to send them your grades when submitting the exchange request. If you have better than average grades you will get one of the scholarships (the better the GPA the better the scholarship). You can get up to 40,000 yens in month that will decrease your monthly payments (dorms) significantly. The scholarship is given for 1 term (2 months). After your first term, your GPA is calculated and it is decided if you continue to receive your scholarship for the second term as well. You need to take at least 3 classes in term 1 to deserve a scholarship in term 2.

Studies

Typical semester is comprised of 2-3 terms. Each term lasts 2 months. This makes the studying intense with a short examination period between the terms. You get only one trial in the exams. If you get sick in the exam day, you can get an alternative date for an exam (need to have a proof from a doctor), but you still have a penalty and your grade is capped by a maximum of 80%.

The grades are relative, which means that even if you are very good, you can still fail if the others students were a little better than you were. The distribution is tough, so if you aim for the scholarship, you need to be to 30%. This is not an easy task, since many classes are done in groups where you cannot really know the level of your team members.

Follow the deadlines – rules are sacred in Japan. If you miss a deadline by 1 minute, you can fail a class. No flexibility. The fact that you are new to this school or this country will not really help. If you failed to follow the rules and get really screwed then if they like you they can try to help you, but because it is all about hierarchy, your request will be discussed by everyone in the school including the president.

The offered classes are rather general and they do not offer many specialized classes. If you are majoring in something don't count on choosing from various specialty classes. The school offers unique classes about "Doing business in Japan", Asia and "Global policies". There are some international classes offering an insight into Asia and Japan, discussing local trends and some cultural issues.

You will also be offered classes in Tokyo branch. This can be a good way to mix business and pleasure. Tokyo is 30 million people megalopolis – recommended. The school has fancy classes there (Harvard used to rent there, but it was too costly for them, so now NUCB rents there)

I took as many as I could, and while some are intense some are very easy and interesting. I also recommend taking the Japanese class – the teacher is not so good, but it will help you understand some of the cultural aspects of this country. You will also be able to use some sentences in your everyday life.

Sometimes the school invites big companies for internship programs, where students can take place both for the professional experience and the "working in a Japanese company" experience. I worked in MHI (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries) as a team leader doing a strategic consulting project for the aerospace division. It was very intense and time consuming. Unless you came to Japan to work all the time, I would recommend reconsidering this wonderful experience ☺

Traveling

Nagoya is in the best location for traveling in Japan. It is in the middle between Tokyo and Osaka, close to Kyoto, Kobe, Nara and Mount Fuji.

Japan is blessed with a beautiful nature, having lots of parks, mountains (some of which are active volcanos), Islands, rivers. Japan is also rich with temples and historical monuments.

In you come for the fall semester, you will see the beautiful leaves on the trees. Recommended places are Nara and Kyoto:



As the winter approaches, all the streets are decorated for Christmas – the trees are covered with led lights, Christmas music is played in the stores and Japanese girls start dressing red miniskirts starting November. In December, you will see some snow.

If you come in the spring, than April is the best time for the Sakura blossom (so I was told).

Transportation

Japan has a well-developed transportations network. It offers the fast Shinkansen trains, buses with AC plugs and Wi-Fi, domestic flights (this includes cheap flights to S. Korea (~120\$), China, Phillipines, etc.), taxi (crazy expensive), regular trains and subway.

All means of transportation are expensive – very expensive. I would recommend taking buses when you go to other cities. This is the cheapest option second to the regular trains. Shinkansen is crazy expensive. The school can give you a 20% discount coupons for the JR transportation which includes JR trains (regular ones), JR Shinkansen and JR buses. There are also private bus providers (google “WillerExpress”) that are cheaper sometimes and also give a student discount (3,000-4,000 yens to Tokyo for example).



As for the transport in the city itself, you can buy a pass for the subway, but it is also expensive and if you live in thoe center (Chiyoda) than you better buy a second hand bicycle. From Higashiyama a monthly pass costs about 6,000 yens and it can take you only to school (ask to include extra 2 stations to Chiyoda dorms – same price and you can visit the students there).

Food

Japan is not only about Sushi, but you will see a lot of it in any store out there. They sell a lot of prepared foods in big stores and in small convenient stores. The prices are reasonable and you can buy lunch for 10-15 ILS or you can go to a restaurant and buy lunch for as low as 20-30 ILS. You could of course pay much more, depending on what you want.

In the grocery stores, some foods are very cheap – fish, rice, bread (3-10 ILS), some vegetables, noodles/spagetti (3-6 ILS), some alcohol.



On the other hand, if you want fruits or certain vegetables that you are used to buy in Israel, you might be surprised by the prices – one apple can cost 3-10 ILS, a melon goes sells as low as at 35 ILS, tomatoes are also sold per piece and the price varies 3-10 ILS per tomato, good price for Avocado is 3.5 ILS per one.



Many foods can be bought for a half price in the evening, so look for stickers on the prepared foods – you can buy a sushi set for 3-5 ILS.

Shopping

Shopping district is in Osu – you will find many shops there for almost everything. There are second hand shops there that sell ROLEX watches and diamonds.

There are 3 recommended networks in Japan:

Donkihote/Don Quijote (souvenirs, foods, sex shops, holiday costumes, other weird stuff...),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNvdJfijWcs>

Daiso (100 yen shop, unlike our 1 dollar shops in Israel, this one actually sells high quality products that you might want to buy – good for souvenirs, foods and various accessories),



Lawson (foods).



Good to know

- If you see a Japanese person reading a book in English, it does not mean he can speak it – if you try speaking to him/her you might offend or scare them.
- Japanese people are shy and do not express themselves directly – try not to be too direct and keep the harmony undisrupted – this and not complaining is very important.
- Be prepared to deal with endless bureaucracy. The results are less important to Japanese – it is the process that matters and the process might be long and unnecessary complicated.
- If you bring cash to Japan than you should know that exchanging in banks can be time consuming (half an hour) and expensive. Look for small exchange kiosks.
- Although Japan has a reputation of a technologically advances country, its people are very conservative. In some stores they don't even accept credit cards and you will need cash in those places.
- If you get to stay till the winter, than you should know that Hokaido, second biggest island of Japan is also one of the best ski resorts in the world.
- Jewish community in Kobe is very friendly (there is also in Tokyo) and can host you for Shabat. They even pay back the traveling expanses (if you take the bus + keep the receipts) for students.
- There are Japanese Christians that support Israel and they offer 3 free nights (B&B) in Tokyo, Nara, Hiroshima and Kyoto – the organization is called “Beit Shalom”.
- Hiking to the top of Mount Fuji is not recommended after September. Having said that, you can go there (I did) but be prepared for cold and wet weather. If you are lucky, you can meet the sunrise on the top of the mountain. There are huts along the way for rest and sleep if you want, but it is expensive (80,000-100,000 yens).

