

Midterm Report

Scholarship Fund

by the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce



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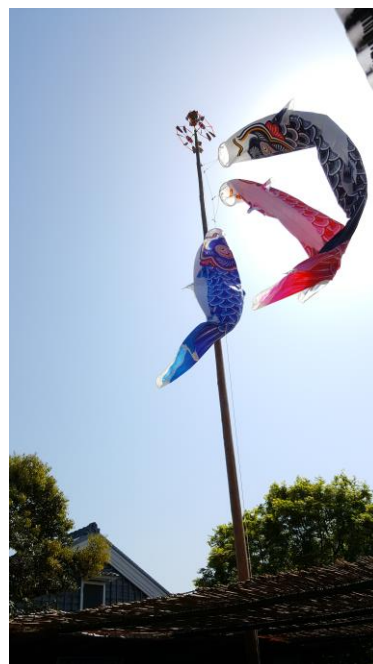
TIMELINE

2016

April	SJCC application
May	SJCC interview
June	SJCC scholarship granted
July	apply to Kichijoji Language School
September	apply for housing
October – December	Kichijoji Language School
October	application internship
November	accepted for internship
December	JLPT N2
9. December	application for Certificate of Eligibility
20. December	Certificate of Eligibility issued

2017

January	back to Switzerland for visa
February – July	internship
April/May	applications for next internship



INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

First of all, I would like to thank Martin Stricker and the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce for their trust and support, and for making it possible for me to now be writing this report from Japan!

Next, please note that I had to unexpectedly go back to Switzerland to change my visa status halfway into my stay in Japan. If you are planning to go to Japan on a short-stay visa (= tourist visa) and change your visa status within Japan, please read through the paragraph “Visa”!

It has now been seven months that I left Switzerland and started living in Japan. However, the way, which led up to this began long before. I have been interested in Japan since I was a teenager, triggered by the few anime and manga, which were then available on German TV and in German translation. I was always looking forward to the culture-section in the monthly manga-magazines *Banzai* and *Daisuki* and soon started reading about all kinds of aspects of Japanese culture and everyday life by myself. During high school (*Gymnasium*) I took beginners' Japanese classes for the first time at Migros Klubschule, which gave me some very basic understanding of the Japanese language and I also learnt to write *hiragana* and *katakana* there. After graduating high school, I could spend a year in Canada for work and studying, did, however, not continue my Japanese language studies there. When I came back from Canada, I entered the University of Zurich, majoring in Social and Cultural Anthropology and Studies of Religion. Luckily, both subjects allowed to take classes in other departments, and so I was able to also attend lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Japanese Studies on topics ranging from Buddhism and *shinto*, to foreign policy, the party system or consumer culture in Japan. Furthermore, I took Japanese language classes for two semesters at the language centre of the University of Zurich and one semester of classes at the Department of Japanese Studies. In that way, I could turn my interest in Japan from a hobby into a study subject.

Also, at some point I wanted to hear about Japan not only from books or websites and YouTube but directly from Japanese people. I found a [website](#) bringing together people interested in cultural or language exchange and was lucky to find three Japanese friends I am still in contact with now and meeting whenever possible – more than four years later. I found, that especially their messages, opinions and pictures gave a real impression of what life in Japan is like and what is on the minds of people there.

Through another [website](#), I found a Japanese tandem-partner in Zurich, whom I met once a week to talk for a few hours in Japanese and German. This was very helpful, not only to ask language-related questions but of course also simply to practice speaking and listening. Again, this person turned out to become a good friend and meeting was not just about learning a language but especially about spending a good time together while doing so, at a coffee shop, a museum, a festivals or each other's homes.

Finally, in 2014 I went to Japan for the first time for three weeks of travelling and meeting my chat-friends and penpals for real. Interestingly, many of the cityscapes looked quite familiar, I assume from manga and videos. Also, it was not that much of a culture shock, because I

already had fundamental knowledge about Japan. However, it was definitely impressive to see and experience, how many people actually live in Tokyo or Osaka! Unexpected for me, was how many people just started talking to me in random places and often in Japanese. Contrary to my image of the Japanese being very shy, I found that in many cases their curiosity gets the better of them. Since these people were of all kinds of ages and backgrounds, these experiences were always interesting and fun. After that first trip, I went back to Japan twice, again for travelling, mostly visiting the bigger cities, with a few day trips here and there.

So, over the years, my interest in Japan had never ceased, but on the contrary, become stronger and more diversified. Also, I had made a reality-check to some degree when I was travelling in Japan and when my time of graduation came closer, I finally decided to pursue Japan as a career. The Scholarship by the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce seemed perfect for me, because it allows both to work and study, and leaves a lot of freedom in composing the year, but also offers support (if needed). I therefore applied to Martin Stricker in April 2016. I was very happy to be invited for the next step in the application procedure – the interview – which took place at the end of May. To my great relief, Mr. Stricker turned out to be a very kind and patient person. I was asked about my motivation and interest, my Japanese skills and more. The interview was over in no time and then the waiting began, as Mr. Stricker discussed my eligibility for the scholarship with his two colleagues. To my great relief and happiness, I received a positive feedback in June and from that point started planning for real, because my plan was to study from October to March and then start working in April the next year.

Unfortunately, the start of my planning was already late, in some cases too late. For example did some language schools no longer accept applications for the autumn term and also the time needed to apply for a visa was basically already too short. But first things first.

SCHOOL & SELF-STUDY

LANGUAGE SCHOOL

I decided to look for a school first and consulted the reports of former scholarship recipients, as well as a list I received from Martin Stricker and “professor Google” for possible schools in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. I wanted a school, which is quite strict (in order to make progress quickly), with a positive and satisfied feedback from students, covering all four basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), ideally also offering business Japanese classes, being in an interesting location and having few Swiss students. My first choice, KAI Japanese Language School in Tokyo was already fully booked and also the Kyoto Institute of Culture and Language. However, [Kichijoji Language School \(KLS\)](#) still took applications and fit my above criteria. The application went through email in English and was very easy and fast. The school answered my many questions always in a very timely and informative manner. I finally booked the [general Japanese course](#) for two terms (October-December and January-March), with the option of taking private lessons for business Japanese as preparation for the internship once I had settled down in Tokyo.

The school scheduled a Skype-interview with me about one month before start of classes in order to assess my language level and assign me to a class. The interview consisted of about 25 minutes of general conversation, followed by an hour of written exam to be filled out at home and then sent back to the examiner right away. A few days later I was notified that I was

to start my studies in the top intermediary class (the school separates students into eight levels). I visited the school in the week before I started the actual classes to fill in last formalities, get some more information and purchase the text book.



I had classes from Monday to Friday, all morning from 9:10-12:35. My class consisted of 12 people, all of them Asian except for me and one Russian student. That made group discussions on all kinds of topics always very interesting, because I did not know a lot about Vietnam, Taiwan or Korea and also, Japanese was our only common language, which was of course beneficial for studies. The teacher was different for every weekday, which was actually a good thing, I thought, because it offered the chance to hear things explained by different people and to hear different voices. The classes as well as the textbook were completely in Japanese. The contents of the class covered, I found, all aspects of the language: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Every morning we had a short listening test to start the day. We also worked with the text book every day, either on the text of the lesson, grammar, discussion points, or vocabulary, etc. We studied new kanji every day and had them tested the following day (written, individual), as well as daily revisions (spoken, in class). Finally, every weekday was assigned a specific topic, like essay writing, dialogue, reading comprehension, long listening exercise, etc. Altogether, this made for a diverse and helpful learning experience and I found that my Japanese improved quite a bit. The end of the semester consisted of a semester test with a listening exercise and a written part (grammar, kanji, reading).

Because I found an internship starting earlier than I had originally thought, I had to consult with the school, because I was not going to be able to attend the spring semester classes I had already paid for. I asked, if it was possible to change the group lessons into private lessons or take the group classes after my internship instead. That was not possible, but the school offered to refund the tuition fee for the three months in return for a reasonable handling charge, so that was the solution I went with.

In the autumn semester, I studied at KLS, no events or excursions were offered, except for the end of year party at the school. Also, the people in my class did not really meet for after-school activities, even though the atmosphere within the group and in class was very good. Therefore, for people who are looking for a school which offers a lot of activities, KLS might not be the first choice. To conclude my experience, however: I was very happy with my choice of KLS! The classes benefitted my studies, I enjoyed going to classes, and the teachers were always

helpful with questions about Japanese or also everyday life questions. Furthermore, the location of the school is great: it is right beside Kichijoji station, which is accessible both via JR-lines and Keio-Inokashira-line. Kichijoji has lots of shops and restaurants, not to mention the beautiful Inokashira-park! Finally, Kichijoji's Seikei University invited the students of KLS to participate in a cultural exchange class which took place at the university campus, offering the opportunity to mingle with Japanese university students and enjoying various group activities and discussion with them, mostly in Japanese but also in English. I was at first hesitant to try it, because I was unsure if my language level would be good enough, but that was actually nothing to worry about, because the activities were possible to enjoy regardless of the language level and communication was always possible with enough effort and fantasy.

SELF-STUDY



Aside from classes I did a lot of self-studying in order to prepare for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N2 I took in December. Preparation classes are included in the classes of the advanced level students at KLS, not yet the intermediary level, so I did that myself. I used textbooks specifically for that purpose, one for grammar, listening and speaking each. Aside from that, I studied vocabulary and kanji with the app Memrise. It took up quite a lot of my free time and with the exam getting closer, this became somewhat of a stress factor, coming on top of homework, the preparation for the semester test at the school and looking for an internship. The exam itself took place at a university in Tokyo. I was grateful that the textbooks I had used had drilled me to keep an eye on time and that I was already familiar with the exam's question format. Nevertheless, I left the exam site pretty sure I had not passed, especially because of the listening part. I was then happy and surprised to learn, at the end of January, that in fact I could pass. With a low score, though, but pass. I believe, that especially for searching a job in Japan, it is an advantage to have a JLPT on the CV, so I hope this will help me

in the future. And of course, I aim to improve my score and one day to tackle the JLPT N1.

For now, I will start taking private lessons together with two colleagues, focusing on business Japanese, such as honorific and humble language, writing emails, etc.

STUDY RESOURCES

Aside from taught classes, so far I have found the following resources helpful for my Japanese studies:

- [WaniKani](#): kanji learning app and website; or a fee, but very much worth it, I find; the system makes kanji easy to remember, fun to study and revisions come up at regular intervals.

- [TextFugu](#): Japanese through self-study; easy to understand explanations, lots of examples, vocabulary lists, exercises, and study-tips.
- [Memrise](#): vocabulary learning app and website; make your own flash cards or look for pre-made ones; several of the textbooks I have used in classes already had the flash cards ready to use!
- [HelloTalk](#): language exchange app for chatting with native speakers, also wall like on Facebook.
- [NHK News Web Easy](#): news in Japanese written in simplified Japanese including vocabulary explanation (in Japanese), audio available, video too.
- [Lang-8](#): post your texts and have it corrected by native speakers.
- Find a tandem partner, watch movies, listen to music, read manga :-)

HOUSING

The next urgent thing on my list was to find a place to live. After doing some general research on housing options, I soon settled for a share house, because it was not only the cheapest option but it also seemed to be a good idea to live with others, especially Japanese people, to get started and have some company, especially in the beginning. After looking at the websites of various share house providers in Tokyo (just google share house Tokyo) and comparing points such as distance to school, distance to station, percentage of Japanese residents, number of rooms, infrastructure such as number of showers or washing machines, the neighbourhood, etc. I found my favourite in Hachimanyama. [Classiccompany](#) offers services in English and Japanese and so communication was very easy and smooth. They only accepted applications one month in advance but I got a room in my preferred house, so all worked out well there. The day I arrived in Japan, I was picked up by a staff member of the company at the closest station to the share house, brought there, got a tour of the house and then could start settling in right away.



The share house was a three-story building with nine rooms, plus a large kitchen, living area and rooftop space to hang the laundry. Aside from one French and one half-British resident,

all were Japanese, most of them already working, others still at university. The socialising took place in the kitchen and living room. We did not really make meals together, but ate together or watch TV when someone was around. I liked the house and it offered all I needed. Cleaning was done once a week by a cleaning lady. The neighbourhood was very quiet and there were supermarkets close by. Also, I enjoyed taking walks and discovered parks and even vegetable patches on the way. The station is along the Keio-line, which offers direct access to Shinjuku within 20 minutes, or to Shibuya with changing trains once. That was obviously convenient.

As a drawback, however, the Keio-line is quite easily affected by the weather and was therefore usually somewhat delayed. As I will explain below, I had to unexpectedly go back to Switzerland in January, but since I had decided to only rent the room at the share house for three months to start, this worked out perfectly. It was possible to prolong the rent any time, but I wanted to keep the possibility to move open, therefore the only three-month initial contract.

And that is what I did. The internship I had found was located closer to the centre of town and also, I was longing for a bit more privacy and especially some more peace and quiet: my neighbour at the share house was unfortunately quite a loud person, at any time of day and night, and not always was consideration for others acted out enough to make a share house comfortable for everyone. Also, the possibilities to invite friends to the share house were very limited. In any case, I looked for alternatives online and luckily found a small furnished apartment for a comparably reasonable monthly rent and within walking distance from my future work place. [Residence Tokyo](#) turned out to be related to the company I had rented the share house room from, and also with the apartment, the process was smooth. The apartment was available only from the beginning of February, so the two weeks between coming back from Switzerland until then, I stayed in a room I found via [Air B'n'B](#). Luckily, I could leave my luggage with friends here in Japan, during the time I went back to Switzerland. That obviously made things much easier! Nevertheless, packing and moving everything three times within a short period of time was quite a lot of work.

This apartment I have been staying in since February is located at Ebisu, offering very convenient access in terms of public transport and I enjoy living here very much. The apartment is small but it was definitely worth moving! It's a quiet neighbourhood and it is fun to have one's own place to live, including the possibility to invite friends over. Conveniently, the apartment already included bed, table and chair, chest of drawers, cupboard, TV, washing machine, kettle, microwave, air conditioning, a small kitchen and a bathroom. The rent furthermore includes water, electricity and Wi-Fi, so that I do not have to take care of any of these myself. The apartment can be rented monthly and is therefore a very flexible choice.

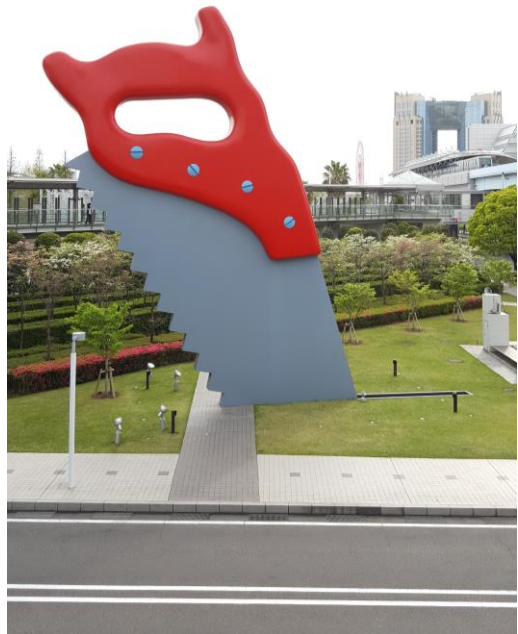
VISA

Unfortunately, the school was not willing to apply for a student visa, unless one studies with them for at least one year. I was very puzzled, since I had read in other scholarship reports, that people had been provided a student visa also for only a six-month period. However, no matter what I tried, the school stayed firm on their policy and so I decided to go with a tourist (= short-term) visa for my time at school. As a Swiss citizen, it is possible to extend the three-month period of a normal tourist visa for another three months, which would therefore have neatly covered my time at school. I had read in some report, that people were able to nevertheless change their visa status to an internship visa. That is to say, with a lot of patience

and effort, but at least it seemed possible. I felt uneasy about this visa solution, but since I did not want to change the entire timing of my stay in Japan I went with it.

Unfortunately, the worries turned out to become a reality. I was accepted as an intern at the Embassy of Switzerland in Japan, [Science & Technology Office Tokyo](#) (more on that below) in November, and at first it looked like I could go to the closest Japanese embassy abroad (Korea) and apply for the necessary visa (or change of visa) there. I was told, that had been possible in the past. However, in my case the authorities were very strict and firm on that a visa has to be applied for in the home country of the applicant. The problem seemed, that I was only in possession of a short-term visa, and that with a student visa, it should not have been a problem. So, I could choose between declining the internship I had always wanted or go to Switzerland to apply for a visa. I decided to do the latter, which meant that I had

to do a lot of organising in a short period of time. Because that notice came at the end of November, but my three-month short-term visa was going to run out on January 2nd, and I could not apply for a prolongation because the application process for the visa necessary to work at the Embassy was running at the same time. They helped me a lot and applied for the [Certificate of Eligibility \(COE\)](#) right away, which I received mid-December. Only with that COE it is possible to apply for a visa at a Japanese embassy and it has to be applied for by a guarantor in Japan (employer, school, etc.). The visa is normally issued within a week, but to be sure, I decided to go back to Switzerland for two weeks, so I would have some backup time. Luckily, the process from there on posed no problems at all: I went to the Japanese embassy in Bern, handed in the application and the COE and one week later, I could pick up my visa. Also, immigration at Narita airport was very short and smooth.



PHONE & BANK ACCOUNT

Closely related to my visa status was the matter of getting a Japanese SIM-card and opening a bank account. For both, a resident card is necessary, showing the usual ID information but also the address. Short-term visa holders are not eligible to receive such a resident card, however.

As for the bank account, even though I tried at several banks with proof of my school and housing contract, scholarship documents, proof of financial means, etc. it turned out to be impossible to open an account without the card. In the end, I gave up and decided to try again, once I started my internship and obtained a respective visa (plus residence card). That way, I could however not yet receive any scholarship money, because a Japanese bank account is the condition for that.



Unfortunately, the visa for the internship at the Embassy is a special case. The so-called official visa, unlike other work visa, does not make one eligible for a resident card either, and so I found myself in the same situation as before. However, the Embassy kindly provided a “Certificate of Employment and Residence”, with which I could in the end open a bank account at the nearby [Mitsubishi UFJ](#), despite not having a residence card. The process took a lot of time and the staff spoke only Japanese, but were very helpful and patient, so that everything went well and I could finally receive the first half of the scholarship money as well as handle my internship salary directly through the Japanese bank account.

Concerning the phone, it would have been possible to get a SIM-card with only online data but no phone number without holding a residence card. Since I was going to apply for internship positions, however, I really wanted a phone

number, assuming I would need one. Luckily, my Japanese friend kindly offered to step in and sign the contract with the [mobile provider](#) for me, using her credit card and that is how I finally got a Japanese phone number and data plan. It was not even possible to have the contract under her name and use my own credit card. Consequently, I had to give her the plan fee every month.

INTERNSHIP

The internship search was quite heavy on my mind for a long time. I had looked for webpages with post offerings online while still in Switzerland but not yet sent out applications yet. Since I had worked in different fields and jobs, but did not have a specific kind of internship in mind for the time in Japan, I first thought about what kind of work and work environment I liked and what might fit my background. It was helpful to check various websites with internship postings (former scholarship reports offer informative lists of such) and get an idea of what kind of internships are generally offered in Japan. Very early on, I knew that an internship at the [Embassy of Switzerland in Japan](#) would be the epitome of my ideal workplace and so I checked the Embassy’s [webpage](#) regularly for job openings. Lucky for me, two internship positions were posted in October and I applied for both. To my great pleasure, I was invited for a Skype-interview for the internship position at the Science & Technology Office Tokyo in November. The job description caught my interest immediately, so I was very nervous for the interview, which was mostly conducted in Swiss German and English, with one part in Japanese. Despite not doing particularly well during the Japanese part, I was notified the week after, that I was accepted as trainee. I could hardly believe my luck and was greatly looking forward to start, despite the visa trouble and the monetary and time effort to go back to Switzerland before. Martin Stricker knows the then-head of the Science & Technology Office Tokyo, Matthias Frey, and later I learnt, that he kindly recommended me to Mr. Frey. I am sure this made a big difference and I am very grateful for this wonderful support!

I started my six-month internship in February and now, three months into the internship, I can say it was definitely worth the visa trouble! The Science & Technology Office Tokyo is run by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation and integral part of the Swissnex network, promoting Swiss science, technology, innovation and higher education abroad. My tasks as intern include

- checking Japanese newspapers (in English) for news in the above-mentioned areas such as research, higher education, start-ups, etc. and collect them for the office's monthly newsletter
- writing blog entries on the office's website on Swiss or Japanese news in these areas
- drafting Facebook posts, including draft translations into Japanese
- organising and implementing a spring event for alumni of Swiss universities living in Japan, including flyer design, location-booking and online-registration
- preparation and participation at study abroad fairs at Japanese universities, representing Swiss universities and counselling students interested in studying in Switzerland
- the Swiss Medtech Pavilion at MEDTEC Japan 2017: Asia's largest medtech-related trade fair, which took place in Tokyo in April. I was responsible for communication with the Swiss companies, institutions and university spinoffs co-exhibiting at the Swiss pavilion, the contractor who built the pavilion and the Japanese organiser of the expo. I designed a bilingual pamphlet introducing the co-exhibitor companies and handled the online registration for all the participants of the pavilion. During the expo itself, my task was to greet our co-exhibitor companies, guide visitors to the pavilion, support visitors and co-exhibitors when they had questions or needs, etc. Since practically all visitors at the expo were Japanese, this was also a great opportunity to use polite speech.
- visiting very interesting facilities! My boss generously let me go to various events, among them guided tours organised for Embassy science and technology departments, which gave me the great opportunity to visit for example JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), NIED (National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Prevention), the IIS (International Institute for Integrative Sleep Medicine) at Tsukuba University and others.



In conclusion, the first three months have been very busy and very interesting, full of variation and challenges. I enjoyed my internship very much so far, not only because of the work but especially also because of my small but great team, which makes for a comfortable and fun work environment. Unfortunately, the Swiss head of section left Japan at the end of March, so

that we are now only three people in the office: me and my two Japanese colleagues – the deputy head and the secretary. Both are wonderful people and always open for questions and also suggestions, and such a work environment is very motivating. Furthermore, eating lunch or meeting for activities on the weekend or evenings with the other trainees and some of the Embassy staff has become regular and also contributes to my very positive internship experience at the Embassy! I am looking forward to the remaining time until the end of July.

However, after that I still have three months to fill, in line with the conditions of the scholarship to stay in Japan for one year. Since all the semester-courses at the language schools start around October, however, and to find a school where it is possible to study for only three months might be difficult, I am aiming for another internship. I am now again checking the same websites as before, and also using LinkedIn and in some cases the contacts made through my internship so far to look for openings. My friend at the [Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan](#) kindly notified me that Adecco Ltd. had posted a call for applications on their website and introduced me to them. I was invited for a first interview two weeks ago, which was a very happy but at the same time somewhat scary event, because the preceding mail contact as well as the interview were conducted fully in Japanese. That was a first for me and I invested a lot of time to prepare possible answers for all kinds of interview questions and memorising as much as I could. There is helpful content online, on the respective manners to be observed and questions likely to come up during a job interview in Japan. Luckily, I also had support from Japanese friends, who helped me revise the contents and practice, and so the interview turned out not so bad. I am currently preparing for the second interview round, which will take place soon.

In any case, it is my goal to stay in Japan for more than that one scholarship year. So hopefully, I will be successful at finding a next internship and after that a longer-term employment in Japan. For sure, there is still a lot of studying to be done. Currently, I am speaking English much more often than Japanese at the Embassy, even though within our team we have set the rule to speak only Japanese in the morning and English in the afternoon. But to become able to fully and efficiently work in Japanese, there is still a long way to go, so that is my main goal at the moment. Therefore, I would like to work in a Japanese environment for the next internship and also, therefore I will start taking private lessons for business Japanese starting next week. 頑張ります :-)

DAILY LIFE & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

But of course, the time here has not just been about studying and working! Extracurricular activities and time with friends have been what has made the time here especially worthwhile. So far, I have spent my time mostly in and around Tokyo, but it is Tokyo, so there is always something new and something more to see and do. And especially also with the changing seasons. I enjoy that aspect very much, because every time I had been travelling here was in winter, so it was wonderful to see the autumn leaves or the cherry blossoms for the first time, including related activities such as hiking or picnicking under the cherry trees. Obviously, Tokyo is also great for shopping and eating out, with all the varieties of products, cuisines and dishes, everything looking great and delicious! Then, for example, before, during and after Christmas there were lovely illuminations all over town. For New Year's, I got to try the traditional

associated food, every dish coming with its own symbolism. Exhibitions, cinemas, parks, events, karaoke – there is always something to do in Tokyo! As for day trips, Kamakura and the seaside are close, hiking at Mt. Takao and the view of Mt. Fuji were great, and Yokohama definitely worth the visit. One week, I spent in Kyoto, wandering about town, and going to Ise and Osaka one day each.

It is easy to find lists of activities to do and places to go online, or in a guide book. However, I found that the most interesting and fun discoveries I made were with recommendations from Japanese friends or places I discovered while I was just taking a walk, without having a particular goal or at least with only a general direction to go. I find, that in that aspect Japan is very rewarding. Much more than in Switzerland, for example, is there architectural diversity (chaos?). So, it often happens, that one finds buildings which do not really seem to fit in with their surroundings. Or, one finds a tiny shop in a residential area. Or a vegetable patch with produce sold on site. Or maybe a small temple or shrine. And for those who do not like to take walks – going by bicycle is equally fun :-)



In all of that, the company has been the most fun of all! I already had some friends in Japan before I came here, and that was great in the beginning, so I did not feel lonely. Also, I found new people through a [language exchange app](#), bringing one in contact with native speakers. Naturally, one should be careful when meeting strangers for the first time, but having coffee together in a public place should be fine, I think. And I found really nice and interesting people there, first chatting with them through the app and at some point, meeting for a coffee in town. Also, school and work are a good places to meet new people, and that is also where I met some of the people I now spend most of my time with. Finally, activities such as participation at the class by Keisei University are a great opportunity to meet people.

CLOSING WORDS

I have now been in Japan for seven months and I can only say it has been a wonderful experience! Learning a language is nowhere as “easy”, motivating and rewarding as in the very country itself. Working abroad and in a new working environment is very challenging but also very interesting and I find that already now I could learn a lot. Sometimes, also “simple” everyday life can be challenging, and there have been times when everything seemed too much. However, in these moments, I reminded myself why I came here: to become proficient in Japanese, to become able to work and live here, to experience and enjoy life in Japan to the fullest, to make friends, to discover new things, to overcome challenges and to live an interesting life. Certainly, it is not always easy to live here, but I enjoy living here and many people who are dear to me are in Japan. For these reasons and with the support of these

people I am greatly looking forward to a hopefully yet long time here in Japan. And I am curious what I will be able to tell you in my final scholarship report :-)

Tokyo, May 2017

