

# Exchange Year in Japan

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Hello, my name is Kora and I'm an exchange student from Switzerland. I did an exchange year in Japan 2019/2020.



Before coming to Japan, I didn't really know what to expect. Of course, I had heard many things about Japan, one of those things was that Japanese people only eat fish and rice, but I wasn't sure if what I heard was even true.

So, when I first arrived in Japan, it was very different and new to me. Especially bowing and the extreme politeness people treat each other with. In the first two weeks of staying with my host family, I already learned many things about Japanese culture and language. For example, *hiragana* and some *katakana* and culture-wise, my host mom had taken me to a temple, shrine and Japanese festival, which was a great experience.

I would like to say I hadn't been nervous for my first day of school in Japan, but that would be a lie. And looking back, I don't know why I was scared, maybe it was the about 800 people watching me introduce myself, partly in a language I didn't understand even a little bit. Gladly the first week of school was quite good. The students of my school were, kind of shy in the beginning, but after a while very open and friendly. School wasn't always that interesting, because I didn't understand most of the things my teachers were saying, therefore my friends always made it more enjoyable. In the beginning, I did self-study in most of my classes, later on, after winter break, I got seated between two of my friends so concentrating got a lot harder. And maybe, just maybe, I also got a little bit lazier.

Compared to Switzerland, Japanese schools are extremely different. They are much larger and the number of students is also a lot more. The school I went to in Switzerland before my exchange had about 150 students, every class 15 – 20 people. The way of teaching was also not the same, in Japan the style of teaching seems more "traditional" on the other hand in Switzerland we work more with electronic devices like computers and visualizers. All in all, I got the impression that quite everything in Japan is bigger than in Switzerland, well except the houses.

I am glad I got to do so many things in Japan, which I couldn't have done in Switzerland. Visiting many fun and interesting places with my friends, family and Rotary was a great experience for me. If I had the chance, I would do it again for sure. Thanks to everyone I met I was able to learn much about Japan. As for the language, before I came here I barely knew any Japanese. I had learned my basics like “おはようございます” and introducing myself. Therefore, my Japanese definitely has improved since I first arrived in Japan. I would have loved to stay longer, but because it has been decided I should take a flight home as soon as possible, I am very sad to say goodbye to my friends and family here in Japan.

These 8 months in Japan were truly an amazing experience. I will definitely visit again sometime. Thank you for this wonderful time.

