



## IT University Travel Report

*Dear Student, this is a template – the aim is to inspire other students who may wish to follow in your footsteps. You are free to give your report the shape you want and to go beyond the questions. You are also very welcome to include pictures and contact information – but you need not.*

*Note that by filling in and sending the report you automatically consent to publishing it on ITU student.*

**Host university:** Kyoto University

**Study Programme at IT University:** MSc in Digital Design and Interactive Technologies

**Exchange agreement or Free mover:** Exchange agreement

**Courses studied abroad:** Perspectives in Informatics 5, Multiagent Systems, Biosphere Informatics, Seminar on Cognitive Science

**Period studying abroad: semester (autumn/spring)** autumn **year** 2023/2024

**If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:** Emma Marie, ITU-mail: [emmla@itu.dk](mailto:emmla@itu.dk), phone number: 22419032

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## Your stay abroad

**What was it like to study at the university (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?**

Firstly, classes were conducted primarily through classroom-based teaching, fostering interaction among students and instructors.

Regarding the selection of courses, I didn't have a wide array of options but rather chose subjects that aligned best with my academic path at ITU. I selected courses that complemented each other, enabling me to apply knowledge gained from one subject to another. For instance, Multiagent Systems overlapped with Perspectives in Informatics, while Biosphere Informatics intersected with Seminar on Cognitive Science.

Assessing the academic level is somewhat challenging. While we encountered challenging and intricate topics, the assignments didn't always reflect the depth of the subjects. In other words, although we tackled difficult subjects, the assignments often seemed quite manageable. I believe that some assignments were obligatory, serving to keep us engaged.

The academic level, I would evaluate, is below that of ITU standards, yet it exposed me to unfamiliar concepts and topics that complicated matters.

Regarding the social aspect, my campus social life was somewhat limited. I had exchange friends with whom I shared classes, but beyond that, I didn't engage much in campus social activities. I was assigned a desk in an Informatics building where I could study. This space was shared with many Informatics students working on projects, and although I was invited to some events, unfortunately, I couldn't attend. Nonetheless, opportunities for a vibrant social life on campus do exist. It's advisable to ask your professor for contact information for your personal tutor; they can provide you with invitations to various events and assist you in navigating university life effectively.

**What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?**

Initially, my desire to study abroad was primarily centered around Kyoto. The prospect of going on an exchange to Japan had always captivated me, and I harbored a long-standing dream of experiencing life in Japan firsthand. Despite this strong inclination towards Kyoto, I decided to explore other options for exchange programs. However, the core of my exchange aspirations stemmed from the dream of immersing myself in Kyoto's culture, and fortunately, that dream became a reality.

While my experience in Kyoto has largely met my expectations, there have been some notable differences, particularly in the structure of the school system. I found the educational system here to be somewhat less rigid than their structure in the country in general, which has been occasionally frustrating. Nonetheless, the willingness of the staff to offer support and assistance has been reassuring; all it takes is reaching out.

**Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?**

My stay in Kyoto has contributed significantly to my personal growth. Simply stepping out of familiar surroundings, pushing beyond my comfort zone, and having to manage nearly everything on my own has propelled my development immensely in just six months!

Academically, I have also made considerable progress. I've learned great things that I wouldn't have encountered back home, as I was taught concepts that fall outside the curriculum of my studies at ITU. This has allowed me to shed new light on existing knowledge from ITU through different

perspectives. Additionally, I've been able to draw parallels between the courses at Kyoto University and my past courses at ITU, as well as subjects from my bachelor's degree, which has been a rewarding experience, almost like tying everything together.

However, I must emphasize that my personal growth has outweighed my academic development. Unfortunately, not all the learning experiences feel directly applicable to my future studies.

## **Arranging your stay**

**Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:**

The process was lengthy, yet overall quite satisfactory. Initially, Anna Thomsen handled communication with Kyoto University, which proceeded smoothly.

However, I encountered difficulties in getting my courses approved. In my opinion, ITU should be more flexible in this regard, especially if they continue sending DDIT students to Kyoto's Graduate School of Informatics, as there are limited design courses available, particularly in the autumn semester. Despite these challenges, everything eventually fell into place. As mentioned earlier, the courses still hold value and contribute to my ongoing studies in various ways.

**What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?**

I used my brother a lot, because he also went on exchange to Kyoto University, which was a big help. So, feel free to contact me for information and advice!

On a side note, I have used TikTok a lot when I first settled in Japan, because it shows you everything to do in this country!

**How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?**

I applied for a spot in the dormitories on campus, but unfortunately, I wasn't selected.

Consequently, my professor provided me with a link to explore other housing options. I applied to almost every option that caught my interest, and eventually secured an apartment located 10 minutes away from campus by bike. While I would have preferred to reside in the dorms with fellow students, the apartment turned out to be a suitable alternative. One of the advantages is the ample space it offers, along with lower electricity and gas bills.

When it came to medical needs, I initially contacted a designated number for guidance on where to seek medical assistance. However, later on, I simply visited doctors who had English websites, which proved to be a smooth process.

Whenever any issues arose, I would promptly reach out to my tutor via text for guidance. This was

especially helpful when I needed assistance with Japanese translations and understanding. In the beginning, registering as a resident at the ward office was a confusing procedure but just ask for help, then they will guide you through the process.

## **Expenses and Financing**

### **Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad**

- I paid 2500 DKK in rent each month (I was not living on the campus, it is even cheaper on campus)
- Bought a used bike for around 650 DKK, and then you can sell it again in the same store.
- In average I paid 100 DKK for electricity and gas each month.
- I used a lot of money on public transportation to get around in Kyoto, but also in the whole of Japan.

### **Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?**

I applied for some scholarship. I would recommend to apply for more ;)

I got the following four: William Demant Fonden, Knud Højgaard's Fond, Rudolph Als Fondet, and Frants Richerts Fond.

### **Recommendations for other students:**

- Don't hesitate to ask for help whenever you need it! Japanese people are known for their willingness to assist.
- Use Airalo to buy an e-sim, do not buy it in the airport!
- Get a Revolut bank account and card. In week days there are no fee on using the card, and it's easy to transfer money to your exchange friends.