

Studying abroad in Hokkaido

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Three years have already passed since I first came to Hokkaido. Soon I will graduate and return home, but when I look back at my time here in Japan there were times of laughter and tears, hardship and joy, but all of them wonderful memories.

I first decided I wanted to study in Hokkaido not because of my interest in Hokkaido but more because of my interest in Japan. I think most students have been influenced in some way by Japan's cultural industry. While living in Canton Province I always watched Japanese animation and music programs, which – together with the historical relations between China and Japan – made me become curious about Japan. I think from when I was young I always wanted to spend some time in Japan if I had the chance. Added to that the beauty of the natural landscapes in Hokkaido and the fact that Hokkaido University is a magnificent national university, and thanks to various encounters, I ended up coming to Hokkaido.

As for the merits of studying in Hokkaido, from the perspective of students, consumption is relatively low. Of course, the cost of living is not all that different to that of the rest of the country, but rent is cheaper than in the Kanto and Kanai regions, and so for students who earn their living expenses from part-time jobs, the financial burdens is lighter. Furthermore, the population density in Hokkaido is not so high, and so even though Sapporo is a bustling metropolis it is not too noisy or crowded. For people who prefer a more relaxed, comfortable living environment, Hokkaido is a good place to choose. In addition, I like traveling and have been to many places, but in Hokkaido there is so much natural scenery, it's convenient to go sightseeing and experience different things in the different regions when you want to relax and take a break from everyday life here. In fact, there are many places in Hokkaido that are worth visiting. Even though I have been here for 3 years there are still places I haven't been and places I want to go again.

But there are also times I feel life in Hokkaido is inconvenient, especially for those of us who grew up in southern climes. When winter arrives in Hokkaido, there are heavy snowfalls and it's extremely cold when doing outdoor activities. When I first arrived, I wasn't used to walking on the snow, and often fell. What's more, I couldn't ride my bicycle and the distance between my room and school was far, meaning it took about an hour to get there.

Finally, a word to those who are about to come to Japan or those who are thinking about coming to Japan to study: an overseas student's life is always hard but many people realize that this is also one of the things aimed at making us stronger. There are many things to be learned from these

challenges that help us to develop and grow. If you think that studying abroad will be easy, think again. However, if you're seriously thinking about studying in Japan, I can really recommend Hokkaido. The air is clean and there's a calmness and comfort seldom found in the stressful societies of today. In particular, interpersonal relations are good and the tourism industry's recent dependence on overseas visitors means that there are more and more events aimed at overseas visitors, enabling you to experience Japan's traditional culture as well as overseas student life in a global city.