

Spring '25 Academic Exchange @ Waseda University

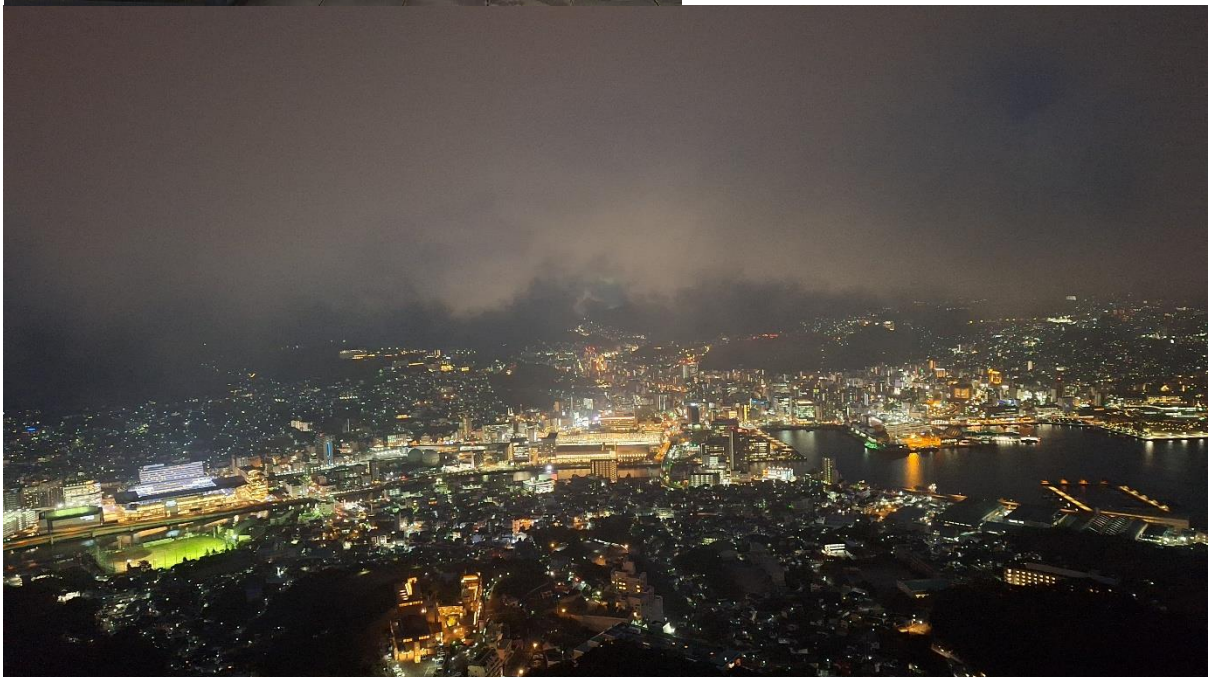
Campus Asia Program

Home University: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



Late March

Having arrived in Japan in mid-March, I began my exchange semester with a trip to Nagasaki. As a political science undergraduate, this was almost a rite of passage in itself in understanding the horrors of nuclear war and how important global peace is in an era marked by increasing conflict.





Early April

As Japan transitioned fully into springtime, I took the opportunity to visit the various sprawling parks around Tokyo, such as Ueno Park and Shinjuku Gyoen. I also got the opportunity to do some cherry blossoms watching, known also as 花見 (*hanami*) in Japanese.



Late April



With the help of friends, I was able to secure a ticket to the annual Waseda-Keio rugby match, part of the wider sporting rivalry between Waseda and Keio University, known as the 早慶戦 (*sōkeisen*).

Early May



I visited the area surrounding the Imperial Palace with some classmates on a self-directed field trip for our Japanese cultural politics class. Through associating the information in our readings to the real-life locations, I was able to better understand Japan's process of nation-building since the Meiji Restoration, and I was able to appreciate the scale of the well-preserved environs (especially the castle/moat area and the gardens within) compared to parks and historical monuments back in Singapore.

Late May



In Waseda, I attended a class on Japanese political thought and history. I wanted to see for myself the physical remnants of Japan's initial contact with the world at the end of the Edo period, ending the 鎖国 (*sakoku*) policy. To this end, I decided to visit the lesser-known treaty port of Niigata, famous for its rice and *sake*. Having grown up in a densely-populated city-state like Singapore, Niigata was a breath of fresh air, with amazing seafood, beautiful beaches and well-preserved historical monuments such as the customs port and foreign bank.

Early June



I also took the opportunity to attend the Campus Asia Alumni Workshop, which was hosted this year in Beijing. During the conference, I met many new (and some old) friends from different partner universities spanning Japan, Korea and China, and we discussed how we could further strengthen such alumni networks to enhance trilateral cooperation.

Beyond the discussions and deliberations, I also took the opportunity to visit some of the famous landmarks in Beijing, as it was my first time there. Places I visited included the Summer Palace and the Forbidden Palace, amongst others.



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Late June



Back in Tokyo, I also made new friends in Waseda University through the Campus Asia Café, a fortnightly meeting of students interested in or already participating in the Campus Asia program.

July





During my stay in Japan, I also took the opportunity to visit the numerous museums and galleries scattered throughout Tokyo and the country. The two pictured here belong to the Metro Museum in Kasai and the National Film Archive of Japan in Nihonbashi respectively. These two museums were particularly significant to me as I felt they symbolised the quintessential impression of Japan: through various mediums of film and the world-renown rail network that carries millions around the country every day.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout my exchange program, I was able to broaden my academic horizons by taking modules on peacebuilding and Japanese political thought, which are not available in my home university. Through these modules, I was able to better understand the history of political developments in Japan and Japanese efforts in fostering peace in Asia and the world. I was also able to travel to different parts of Japan to experience varieties in climate, terrain and gain a newfound appreciation for local cultures and customs. Most importantly, I was able to experience the hospitality and warmth extended to me by fellow exchange students, Waseda University students and people that I met in my everyday interactions.