

**Madeline Prowse**

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In April of 2007 I went to study abroad in Japan for 2 semesters. I went to Seikei University in Tokyo and lived in an international dormitory next to the University. There were only 15 exchange students from countries including America, England, Thailand, Germany, and France. I studied Japanese language, taught by native Japanese speakers, in Japanese. My teachers were fantastic! They were very encouraging and really focused on each student's ability.

Seikei University, in my opinion was an outstanding University. Relatively small, being private, the environment at Seikei allowed many opportunities to make friends. I joined an international club (my friend and I, however, were the only international students!) and participated in various activities arranged by the club. I made some close friends through this club who I believe I will be friends with forever. Seikei really supported us, especially when we needed help settling-in in the first month. In our dormitory we had Japanese 'advisors' who helped us to set up bank accounts, get phones and insurance. There were 4-5 people in each kitchen (1 of which was a Japanese advisor). I felt the dormitory was like a family. I couldn't have imagined a better setup than what we had at Seikei.

I went to Uni 4 days a week, about 4 hours a day, which left lots of time for exploring my home town and surrounding Tokyo! The summer holidays was almost 2 months long, so I did lots of travelling with friends and saw some beautiful sights. Japan is an amazing country. Japan is so unique with friendly, polite, generous people and a fascinating culture.

My level of Japanese was not high when I first got to Japan. And, in fact, I felt incredibly stupid and felt that I had learnt nothing in my 7 years of study. However, my Japanese gradually 'came back' to me, and I started to remember everything I had been taught. My confidence was not at a high level at all when I first arrived, and for me, it took 3-4 months to become comfortable with speaking. I think going on exchange is the best thing anyone could do, in terms of experience, learning, and having a great time!! I would recommend it to anyone.

Maddy Prowse