

JCCI Scholars

SHARING FROM 2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR 2024-2025 PROGRAMMES

1. Among all the courses you've taken at your university in Japan, which one(s) did you enjoy the most, and why?

My favourite course taken at Waseda University would be Learning Japanese through Travelling 2-3 (Japanese course for International Student) by Professor MORIMOTO, Keiko. This course broadened my view of travel destinations in Japan outside the Golden Triangle, which refers to the popular tourist destinations of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka.

Additionally, due to the interactive nature of the course, I was able to spend class time researching about interesting places to visit with my group mates from different backgrounds. One of our main projects involved creating a travel plan for Kyushu, a niche travel destination less frequented by tourists. I really enjoyed this aspect of the course as we could discover unique cultural, historical, and natural attractions of the region. I hope to visit Kyushu before I head back to Singapore.

Adrienne Yap

One-Year Waseda
Scholarship Recipient
Sep 2024 – Jul 2025

As someone who loves exploring new places and experiences, I found the course especially interesting because it allowed me to discover lesser-known destinations, learn about new aspects of Japanese culture and meet more people.



This picture was a commemorative picture of my group members from learning Japanese through travelling. It was taken on the last day of class celebrating the end of the spring semester and the completion of our group project.

2. How has this scholarship programme helped you gain a deeper understanding of Japan—its culture, people, and society?

This scholarship programme has deepened my understanding of Japan by providing me with the opportunity to engage with the local community, learn its culture and language. During the one-year long program, I was able to form new friendships with the locals, travel around the country and participate in various festivals which allowed me to fully experience what it means to live in Japan.

"This scholarship programme has deepened my understanding of Japan by providing me with the opportunity to engage with the local community, learn its culture and language."

For instance, two weeks after arriving in Japan, I was able to attend the Kawagoe festival that was held over two days. It was an incredibly educational and immersive experience that allowed me to witness traditional Japanese culture up close. On the second day, I had the rare opportunity to volunteer and participate in the parade rather than simply watching from the sidelines. Through this, I was able to interact with the locals and understand the history of the events and the meanings behind their float. Their passion and dedication to keeping the tradition alive were truly inspiring. This experience was especially meaningful to me, as I not only observed the parade but also had the unique opportunity to take part in it alongside the local community.



While participating in the Kawagoe Festival, I made friends with an international couple—one from Korea and the other from Japan.

Although they came from different backgrounds and cultures, they were able to overcome these differences and build a strong, supportive relationship, showing me how cultural understanding and mutual respect can bridge even the widest of gaps.



The people in charge of the float that I was volunteering for, Mr Hanaku and Mr Watanabe, took care of my friend and I. He also introduced us to the international couple and share with us the history of the event and the significance of the floats.



The highlight of the Kawagoe Festival is Hikkawase, a musical battle among floats where several festival floats compete in a hayashi performance. Volunteers holding paper lanterns gather and shout to liven the atmosphere.

3. With your experience in Japan, how would you like to serve as a bridge between Singapore and Japan in the future?

As my year-long exchange in Japan draws to a close, the memories, friendships, and experiences I've made will remain dear to me. Having participated in various festivals and travelled across 30 prefectures, I hope to share my experiences as a exchange student with fellow Singaporeans during the JCCI scholars dialogue. I would also like to promote lesser-known travel destinations beyond the commonly visited Golden Triangle in hopes of reducing the overtourism in these places.

Similarly, hope to stay in touch with the friends I made in Japan, many of whom have expressed interest in visiting Singapore, the Little Red Dot. I look forward to welcoming them and introducing them to our unique multi-racial culture, rich traditions, and diverse local cuisine.



My Japanese friend Nozomi, who is from Hiroshima, introduced me to one of Hiroshima's specialty dishes, okonomiyaki, for dinner.



During the summer break, the other scholars and I went to shikoku and stayed at a ninja inspired guesthouse. We had the opportunity to wear a hakama, a traditional Japanese garment, resembling skirt-like pants.

4. What will you miss most about Japan when you return to Singapore, and why?

After spending 10 months in Japan, what I will ultimately miss the most is the friendships I've forged here and the unique experience of dorm life. As I have never lived in a dorm before, this was truly eye opening as the simple daily greetings, the casual kitchen conversations while cooking gradually blossomed into meaningful friendships. I am extremely grateful to have made so many friends who would struggled with me through navigating Japanese administrative matters and exams but also during fun times like travelling and exploring new places and discovering delicious food to eat together. It's in those small, shared moments that I found unexpected friendships, and it's those moments I'll carry with me the longest.



Jeremy Lim
One-Year Waseda
Scholarship Recipient
Sep 2024 – Jul 2025

1. Among all the courses you've taken at your university in Japan, which one(s) did you enjoy the most, and why?

One of my favourite courses that I took in Waseda University was Japanese Phonetics and Phonology. This course taught me about the different linguistic aspects of spoken Japanese, giving phonetic equivalents of different Japanese characters and providing details on their sounds and pronunciations. From this course, I practised my Japanese pronunciation, trained my verbal expressions of different Japanese hiragana and katakana, and learned various things about linguistics, Japanese, and speech patterns.

As an avid Japanese language learner, I have always been particular about my pronunciation and expression of the language to be able to communicate my ideas as unambiguously as possible. I am aware of various concepts in Japanese speech, such as the mora, accents, vowel devoicing, and the pronunciation of Japanese loanwords. Accents and morae in particular can change the meaning of words, so if you want to talk about your beloved husband, you should say しゅじん (husband) instead of しゅうじん (prisoner)!

I particularly enjoyed this course, because of how it allowed me to explore a different discipline in contrast to my own. Linguistics is a discipline I always had an interest in, although I did not have much of an opportunity to explore it due to it contrasting my original major in National University of Singapore. With this course, I am able to learn various concepts of Japanese speech, and better appreciate the hard work it takes to learn the language with proper pronunciation. It was a very meaningful and fun course, and I recommend it to anyone going to Waseda's SILS programme!



A picture of me visiting the Tea Museum, Shizuoka Prefecture

"This scholarship programme has placed me right in the middle of Japan's tea drinking culture, and I have taken the opportunity to explore different aspects of teas in Japan."

2. How has this scholarship programme helped you gain a deeper understanding of Japan—its culture, people, and society?

A huge part of my life here in Japan is intertwined with tea, as I have grown to have a keen interest in Japan's teas and its relation to daily life in Japan. This scholarship programme has placed me right in the middle of Japan's tea drinking culture, and I have taken the opportunity to explore different aspects of teas in Japan.

For one, I have signed up for Tea Ceremony classes in the Gakushuin Enshuryu Tea Ceremony Association (学習院遠州流茶道会), which teaches me the art of the Tea Ceremony, a ceremonialised practice of preparing and drinking matcha. the Tea Ceremony (茶道) is a cultural art in Japan that focuses on patience, purity and hospitality, and is rooted in Zen Buddhism. It has since emerged in Japan when tea was introduced to Japan from China, and is adopted in religious ceremonies in monasteries, etc. I am in the process of learning the obon (お盆), a temae (手前, ceremony) which is the simplest procedure of making matcha that all new learners go through (although I'm not good at it, I'm trying my best!). The senseis are all very kind and patient in teaching me, and I have thoroughly enjoyed myself in learning the Tea Ceremony!

I have also participated in official events organised by the school, such as helping out at the mizuya (水屋, tea preparation area) to serve tea to guests at a school festival in Gakushuin University!



A picture of the mizuya, and the mass picture of all of Gakushuin Enshuryu

I have also sought out various tea-related experiences in Japan. From visiting a Tea Museum in Shizuoka Prefecture to learn more about various teas around the world, to visiting a tea plantation in Sayama City, Saitama Prefecture, to harvest tea leaves to make my own Sayama green tea, I have grown a greater appreciation for tea and how tea is made.

The representative of the Sayama tea plantation had even given me some advice on tea harvest and processing, which I had found profoundly interesting. This scholarship programme has thus deepened my love for tea in Japan, and led me to have a greater appreciation for all the tea farmers in Japan who, with their extensive know-how and dedication, endeavour to produce delicious tea for all of Japan to enjoy.

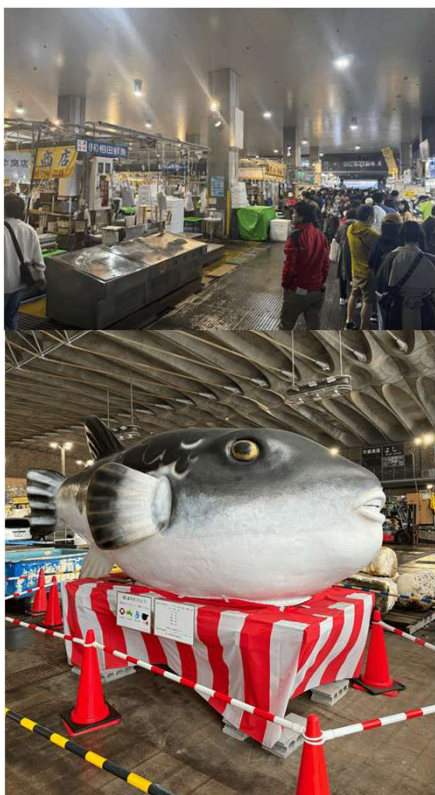


A picture of me in the tea fields

3. With your experience in Japan, how would you like to serve as a bridge between Singapore and Japan in the future?

I would like to learn more about the food of Japan and Singapore, and dive into a career that allows me to promote the merits and cultures of both countries' cuisines. I have sought, tasted and experienced much of what Japan has to offer, and found out more about how each food item came to be. Fascinating stories, historical accounts, and interesting characteristics which make each prefecture's cuisine special, Japan is a treasure trove of food for us to enjoy.

For example, Yamaguchi Prefecture's Shimonoseki is known as the Fugu capital, handling the world's largest volume of pufferfish, and being at the tip of Honshu and being so near the sea, it is THE seaside town for fresh seafood. On a day trip to Shimonoseki, I visited its Karato Fish Market and enjoyed lots of fresh seafood sushi! This is something I would like to bring back to Singapore for me to serve as a bridge between Singapore and Japan.



A picture of Shimonoseki's Karato Market, and the giant puffer fish statue

Furthermore, with my passion for tea and the tea ceremony, I would like to continue the practice of the tea ceremony even as I go back to Singapore. I would learn the basics here in Japan, and bring that knowledge with me back to Singapore to teach others in turn.

4. What will you miss most about Japan when you return to Singapore, and why?

I would miss the maguro (tuna) the most. Admittedly, that is the fish I have consumed the most in Japan. I absolutely love the texture and flavour of the fish, and I have been eating it very frequently, on a weekly basis. In fact, there is a tuna place near my dormitory which I go to very often for a good, hearty bowl of maguro don (tuna rice bowl) every Thursday! It's cheap and delicious, and I can't stand not being able to eat the shop's maguro yukke don every Thursday when I go back...

What I like about the maguro here as compared to Singapore, is its freshness, affordability, and integration into Japan's society as a staple of everyday life. Through my time in Japan, I have seen maguro in many forms, in restaurants and food places in cities all over, such as sushi, rice bowls, and even steak! While the enjoyment of maguro in Singapore is as part of the occasional celebratory/indulgent Japanese meal, I could literally eat it in Japan every single day and not have it break the bank (i.e. less than ¥1000 or ~S\$9/meal). Many fond memories have been made over a bowl of maguro don, and I would miss them very much when I go back to Singapore.



Benjamin Chee

One-Year
International Christian
University (ICU)
Scholarship Recipient
Aug 2024– Jun 2025

1. Among all the courses you've taken at your university in Japan, which one(s) did you enjoy the most, and why?

The one course at ICU that I will never forget is Untold Histories, taught by Professor Janet Borland. Untold Histories explored histories in Japan that have been overlooked, ignored, hidden or simply untold and it provided me with so much insight into intriguing environmental events that unfolded throughout post-Meiji Japan.

The class covered topics such as Japan's first environmental disaster at the Ashio copper mine, the country's whaling industry and the extinction of the Hokkaido Wolf. These stories, deeply connected to Japan's rapid modernization after the Meiji Restoration, sparked thoughtful discussions around ethics and environmental responsibility. Listening to my classmates contribute their own unique perspectives, shaped by their diverse backgrounds from Japan, the U.S and other countries, made these discussions especially engaging and enjoyable.

What I appreciated most about the class however was that it encouraged us to not only passively learn these histories but actively reflect on how these untold narratives continue to shape contemporary Japanese society.



Me and my friend exploring the area around ICU on our bicycles

I always knew Japan had a rich and fascinating history, but Untold Histories made me see it in a completely new light. Instead of learning about commonly taught Japanese histories, this class encouraged me to engage with lesser-told stories about Japan, revealing just how complex and layered Japan's past really is. It made history feel a lot more alive and I will never ever forget it.

"I was lucky enough to be accepted into ICU's Global House and it has been an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life."

2. How has this scholarship programme helped you gain a deeper understanding of Japan—its culture, people, and society?

This year has given me the kind of deep, personal insight into Japan that a short-term visit cannot provide. I was lucky enough to be accepted into ICU's Global House and it has been an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. I've met Japanese people from a diversity of backgrounds, each of whom has taught me something unique about Japanese culture and their way of life. My roommates patiently introduced me to everyday aspects of Japanese living such as the importance of gomisabetsu and the relaxing nature of the ofuro. These small but meaningful lessons helped me integrate into the rhythm of daily life in Japan. The many events that Global House hosts throughout the year like the Global Ball and the Kichijōji Tour also made me feel welcomed and cared for. Staying here, there is always something to look forward to and it has truly felt like I've been part of a big, supportive family.

I was also able to reconnect with the host family I had stayed with during a previous exchange in Aomori. Visiting them during the winter gave me an intimate window into family life in Japan and I learned so much from observing their day-to-day routines.

It was heartening to see how the parents balanced work at the shiyakusho while caring for their children, and how naturally the children connected with the community around them. The way the family found joy in the simplest things, like shared meals or short outings, really stood out to me. It was a refreshing change of pace from life in Tokyo and the quiet warmth I felt when I was with them is something I'll always cherish.

One of my favourite memories with them was visiting Cape Ōma, the northernmost tip of Honshū, just an hour from their home. We admired the pristine coastline and took turns throwing rocks into the ocean to see who could toss them the furthest. Just thinking about it makes me smile all over again. The mother, who was born in Ōma, even brought me to her jikka and introduced me to her mother, who welcomed me so warmly with hot tea and kind curiosity about life in Singapore.

My stay in Global House and the time I've spent with my host family have revealed the incredible warmth and hospitality of the Japanese people. These quiet, everyday moments have given me the chance to truly understand and form a meaningful connection with Japanese society.



The Global House Ball (The theme was Wild West!!)

3. With your experience in Japan, how would you like to serve as a bridge between Singapore and Japan in the future?

After this one year, I can truly see myself serving as a bridge not just between Singapore and Japan, but also between Japan and the wider Southeast Asian region. During my time here, I've had the chance to engage with diverse communities and witness the growing interest in Southeast Asia, especially through my participation in the Southeast Asian Cultural Club. It's clear that the relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia, particularly with countries like Singapore, is becoming increasingly important in today's globalised world.

Having spent meaningful time immersed in both cultures, I hope to play a role in connecting people, ideas and opportunities across these regions. Whether it's through business collaboration, cultural exchange or even social impact initiatives, I want to be involved in connecting Singapore and Southeast Asia with Japan and help foster a meaningful and lasting relationship.

On a more intimate note, I'd also love to introduce Singapore to my Japanese friends, bringing them around to try local cuisines, explore historical sites, and experience the richness of our culture firsthand.



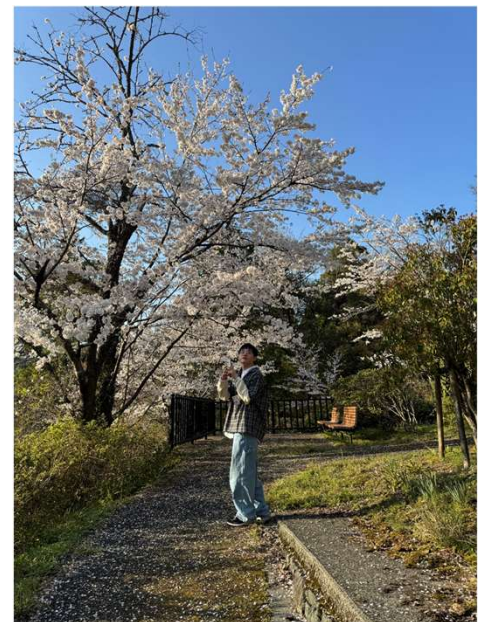
Learning to make local Senbei with my host family

4. What will you miss most about Japan when you return to Singapore, and why?

One of the things I'll miss most about Japan is the simple pleasure of cycling everywhere. The neighbourhood around ICU is not only scenic, but incredibly bike-friendly. The bike paths are seamlessly integrated into the sidewalks, and bike parking is readily available throughout the area. Cycling has given me the chance to notice the little things I might have missed otherwise, like quiet riverbanks, hidden shrines, and charming neighbourhood parks tucked between the rows of houses. Living in ICU has offered me this freedom, and I'll forever cherish those peaceful rides to nearby cafes, parks and even the local batting cage.

I'll also miss the abundant greenery and natural beauty of the ICU campus. Walking through it brings a sense of calm that melts away any stress I have. My Global House friends who stay up late playing games with me and are always there for me will be the people I miss the most too.

Lastly, my travels to the many little charming towns and peaceful parks across Japan will hold a special place in my heart. No matter how tucked away it was, I was always met with warmth and kindness from the people living there. But what I'll miss most of all is the four seasons. From snow-covered landscapes in winter to cherry blossoms in spring, every time Japan changes, it reveals a new side of itself that's just as beautiful as before.



The beautiful sakura at a park in Kōchi

