

**EBERSTEIN Camille-Alice**

Exchange student (France, Université de Paris) during six months

# Life at NWU

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## My life at NWU

Ever since I was offered a university exchange to Japan, I knew where I wanted to study. I needed a place steeped in history and steeped in traditional Japanese culture that would allow me to study what I love most: ancient history and beliefs/religions. Having already studied a lot of Japanese history in France, I knew that Kansai was the ideal region. Nara seemed to be the perfect city for my studies, as it is human-sized (I thought it was important to do my very first exchange abroad in a city that was not too big) and, just as I dreamed, full of history.



The Nara Women's University seemed to me to be a peaceful place where there would not be too many people, and where I could more easily create a small social circle and ask questions to the teachers if needed. It was also a university that interested me because of the range of subjects it offered. I was delighted to be able to study history and culture, literature, a new language (Korean) and even anthropology (something I had long dreamed of learning).

As I thought, it is a very livable university. The campus is very nice, peaceful, I was happy to just sit on a bench and enjoy the sunshine, sit in the cafeteria to work or stay at the Dear Deer café to eat a delicious parfait. The fact that the university is not too big made me feel good, like a second home.

I was immediately very well received and followed, whether by the administration, the teachers or my tutor, Alisa. This helped me to feel good, I really had the impression that I was cared for and concerned about (something that is not possible in Paris because of the number of students). It was the first time I had left France for so long and had to live on my own, I was afraid it would be difficult, but thanks to everyone, it went incredibly well. I never felt homesick.

I was also able to take advantage of the clubs at the university. Thanks to this, I was able to fulfill a dream and practice koto.

The classes themselves were very enjoyable to attend. Since there were often not many students in the classes, it was easier to talk with the teacher and participate. I was obviously a bit impressed at first to be taking classes completely in Japanese on quite specific subjects (奈良学, 文化人類学概論, 韓国語), but my teachers did everything to make sure I understood, which was very reassuring. I could also count on Alisa if I missed something.

And in addition to the courses, I was able to take part in activities within the university, such as the trip to Ise jingu or the theatre event which I was very happy to organise!

This semester was very enriching for me, both on an educational and human level. I learned a lot about Japan through the course content, but also by being immersed in a university like any other student.

## My life in Nara

I first discovered the city thanks to my tutor and friend, Alisa. Thanks to her, I was able to discover the university, but also Nara and its surroundings. We saw together the cherry blossoms of the Saho river, the Todaiji, the Nigatsudo, a small animal café, Osaka Namba, the Hannya-ji, a kabuki show, the Gion matsuri, the lantern festival,... I thus discovered various aspects of life in Nara.



I also discovered the city by myself by going out very often and walking without defining a destination. That's how I discovered the botanical garden, the Kasuga-taisha (my favourite sanctuary), the Nara park,... It's a city just like the university; very pleasant to live in, peaceful, and where people are adorable. I was afraid that being a foreigner, I would be treated differently. But in Nara, people spoke to me directly in Japanese instead of English, they didn't look at me in a bad way. It was even better for me, I felt like I was part of the city.

I sincerely hope to be able to come back one day and continue exploring Nara. Six months is not enough!



## My life in Japan

My life in Japan was obviously strongly linked to my life at NWU and Nara. I felt at home there. I was delighted to discover such an amazing country, and that everything went so well. Studying didn't stop me from travelling; I was able to go and discover Japan with my friends or by myself. It was a real dream for me. I discovered Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima, Tokyo and Mount Fuji. Besides allowing me to see other aspects of Japan, these trips allowed me to learn more about the different local and regional cultures.

I am sad that I could not stay longer, as I would have gladly studied for a full year at NWU and discovered more of this incredible country and its equally extraordinary people. But I will return to France with many memories and no regrets about my time here.

Thank you all for allowing me to make my dream come true and for accompanying me during these six months. I hope to see you again to live even more adventures with you!

