APU Exchange Report
Olivia Wong

It has just been a few month since I left Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), in Japan, and I already miss it so much. The year I was there (September 2007 to August 2008) was full of valuable memories and exciting experiences. Living in a dormitory, meeting people from all around the world and traveling around Japan was just unforgettable.

About Me
I am now a 5th-year BBA Honor undergrad, with Fall 08 being my last semester. My areas of concentration are Accounting and Human Resources. I am lucky to be born in a family that loves to travel, taking me to many places around North America (such as Orlando, San Diego and New York), Europe (such as France and England) and Asia (such as Japan, Thailand and Taiwan). Traveling around with my parents made me a fan of traveling and photography which has enriched my experience of what the world is like. I go back to my hometown (Hong Kong) to visit my relatives every summer and usually stopover in Japan for a week or so before arriving back to Hong Kong. Slowly, Japan became my favourite place to travel to, providing me both the city experience (such as in Tokyo) and rural experience (such as the Tohoku prefectures, north-east of Tokyo). Another reason for me to decide on doing an exchange to Japan was to improve my Japanese skills.

General Information of APU
APU is located on top of a mountain in the city of Beppu, in the prefecture of Oita in the island of Kyushu. APU is approximately a 2 hour bus ride away from the Fukuoka International Airport. APU can be extremely windy, especially during the fall. The average temperature during the winter is 5°C and 25°C in the summer. To get to the Beppu Japan Railway (JR) station, it takes approximately 45 minutes.
Pre-departure
A number of things are important to be done before departure:
- Student visa:
  - students need to hand in documents such as Certificate of Eligibility (issued by APU) and passport to the Consulate General of Japan in Downtown Vancouver to obtain the student visa
- Fill-out all documents:
  - students need to hand in all documents (such as the dormitory questionnaire and health questionnaire) back to APU (SFU international helps you send it back to them), all documents to business department (such as acceptance letter for BBA exchange funding)
- Pay tuition:
  - Pay 12 credits of tuition fees to SFU
- Packing
  - Pack a variety of clothes for all seasons, medication (seeing a doctor can be a hassle and expensive) and a set of business casual clothing for class presentations
- Exchange yen
  - I recommend exchanging at least 100,000yen, because it takes a few weeks before APU finish helping students to set up a bank account at Oita Mirai Shinkin

Traveling to APU
The most common way of going to APU from Vancouver is taking a 9 hour flight from Vancouver to Narita Airport in Tokyo, a 1 hour bus ride from Narita Airport to Haneda Airport, a 2 hour flight to Fukuoka and then a 2 hour bus ride to Beppu Wan. During the new students arrival period (a 3-day period), on arrival at the Fukuoka airport, APU representatives would be there to take you to the bus stop where you will take the Highway Bus to Beppu Wan. APU representatives would be standing at the Beppu Wan station and take you to a van where you will take a 5 minute ride to arrive to the AP House (APU dormitory).

Arrival to AP House
On arrival to AP House, students will be asked to sign in at the security office, where they will provide you an envelope and a roll of tissue paper (if you stay in a single room). The
envelope consists of your room key, your room number, a mail card (to be used for receiving big parcels) and a code for your mailbox. Then, the RAs (Resident assistants) of your floor will take you to your room and introduce the floor and room facilities to you.

**Accommodation**

There are two kinds of rooms: single and shared. The one I lived in was a single room, with individual toilet and sink. The shared rooms have no individual toilet and sink, and have to share them in common areas on the floor. Shower rooms, kitchen, laundry and TV are shared in both types of rooms.

Each room (both kinds) consists of a single bed (with futon, bed-sheet, pillow and blanket), a refrigerator (with freezer), a desk, a chair, a desk lamp, cabinets and drawers and a shoe rack.

Both AP House 1 and 2 lobby have a tatami room (where wireless internet is available), a meeting area with sofas and tables, a pool table, a computer lab (24 hours), vending machines and ofuro (public bath). In addition, AP House 1 has a student office and a mini CO-OP (a mini convenient store). On top of the basic facilities in both of the AP Houses, AP House 2 lobby has two table tennis tables and a piano.

**First week at APU**

During the first week at APU, everyday was busy, with many events, activities and guidance. There were events such as Entrance Ceremony, APU Exchange welcome BBQ and downtown tour (provided by RAs to show you around Beppu city). There were mandatory guidance to attend: the Bank guidance, course registration guidance,
APU facility guidance and applying for Alien Registration Card (a ID card for foreigners) guidance. In addition to the above was the Japan Placement Test (to identify which Japanese course you should take) and the Health Checkup (which takes around half a day).

In the lobby of AP Houses, there will be counters for applying for a CO-OP membership card. The membership card costs 15,000 yen, but is refundable when you return your CO-OP card before departing back to home. This card provides you access to printing academic transcripts, using the travel agent service and may be used as a cash-card where you deposit money into it and can be used to conveniently buy food at the cafeteria.

During the first few days, single room residents do not have access to internet in their rooms, because their student number, id and password would not be given out until the arrival guidance.

APU (academic and facility)
Course registration starts around one week before start of classes. Registration is done through the school website and is advised to be done on campus, because the internet speed in the rooms will be slow due to high usage during this period. Courses are offered in English and Japanese. Many of the English business courses can be transferred back to SFU for credits, from 200-level courses up to 400-level courses. APU provides a variety of courses, ranging from business, to science, to culture, to tourism and to language courses. Examples of culture courses are the Japanese Tea Ceremony and Japanese culture.

The campus has a fitness centre (gym) free for students to use, a CO-OP (a store selling books, magazines, grocery, bus tickets, stationeries and electronics, plus a travel agent that helps you arrange travel trips and often provide discounts for students), a cafeteria (with an average meal of around 400 yen), a café (providing simple meals such as burgers and Panini), a library, a bus loop, a multi-function hall (where most big events are held), a media-centre (a computer lab with printers and scanners) and an incredible view of Beppu.
Life at APU

Other than the times I have to read the textbook, go to class and study for exams, I only need one word to describe by life at APU: FUN!! <Traveling, hanging out with friends, going on a home-stay>

Since a picture speaks a thousand words, here you go!!

- Star Gazing on campus
- Friends Birthday at Sports Bar
- Dinner with classmates
- Lastaroup dinner
- Masakazu’s Birthday at Spa Beach
- Road Trip around Cita
During this one year in APU, I traveled around Japan:

Fukuoka
Huis Ten Bosch

Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka

Hiroshima and Miyajima
Tohoku (consists of 5 prefectures north-east of Tokyo)

Okinawa
Lastly, I went to home-stay at a family with three kids in Oita City for the weekend.

**Conclusion**

This year of exchange in Japan was a life time experience. Not only was I able to travel, to meet people around the world, I was able to exchange many of my credits back to SFU and improve my Japanese. I would for sure recommend students to go on an exchange, even if it is not to APU. I am sure the experience in other countries will be as awesome as the one I had in Japan.