

My time at Hyogo Medical University 2024

By Charlotte Fruböse

My journey to Japan began with one of the happiest moments of my life: receiving the news of my acceptance to Hyogo Medical University. I had dreamed of this exchange for over 2 years. As I prepared for my departure, I was filled with a mixture of excitement and nervousness, eager to immerse myself in a new culture while advancing my medical studies.

When I finally arrived at the airport in Osaka, the sheer number of people, the organization of transportation, and the bustling atmosphere left me speechless. Despite my initial overwhelm, I was warmly welcomed by the staff of the medical faculty, the doctors, nurses, and technicians of the hospital. I felt right from the start, that my time in Japan was going to be transformative.

During my clinical practice, I was fortunate to experience many fascinating and moving procedures in daily clinical practice. One of the most memorable experiences I had was my first robotic surgery. I still vividly remember the thrill I felt watching the Hinotori robot in action. The precision of the robot, combined with the skill of the surgeon, and the whole team was breathtaking. It was a defining moment in my medical education, as I realized the potential of technology to revolutionize patient care.

Another unforgettable moment was my first experience assisting with a cesarean section. The joy on the mother's face when she first saw her baby, the teamwork of the doctors and nurses of different specialties the overall sense of accomplishment filled the room with an indescribable energy. It was moments like these that reminded me why I chose to pursue a career in medicine – to witness and be a part of life-changing moments for patients and their families.

Outside of my medical education, I had the privilege of exploring the cultural and historical wonders of Japan. One of my favorite experiences was visiting the bustling city of Osaka, where I quickly fell in love with Takoyaki, Onigiri, Gyoza and various foods topped with Macha. Japanese cuisine, in general, was a highlight of my trip. Each meal felt like a new adventure, from Sushi and Ramen to more traditional dishes that I had never tried before. After some time, I finally learned how to eat with chopsticks, which was a small but proud achievement for me!

In addition to Osaka, I took advantage of my free time to explore other beautiful cities and regions. The Kobe gardens left a lasting impression on me with their tranquility and beauty. Walking through the serene pathways surrounded by plants and trees was beautiful. I also had the chance to visit Nara, where the famous deer roam freely. Feeding and interacting with the deer was such a unique and enjoyable experience.

Himeji Castle was another stunning site I had the pleasure of visiting. Its grandeur and historical significance were awe-inspiring, and standing before it made me feel connected to Japan's rich past. Kyoto, with its blend of ancient temples and modern city life, was equally enchanting. Walking through the Fushimi Inari Shrine, with its thousands of red torii gates,

felt like stepping into another world. The spirituality and history infused in every part of Kyoto left a deep impression on me.

While the sightseeing and food were amazing, the friendships I made with other medical students at Hyogo Medical University were perhaps the most rewarding aspect of my time in Japan. We bonded over shared experiences in the hospital, and we explored the city together, went to karaoke, Universal Studios Japan, and shared many meals. Karaoke quickly became one of our favorite activities. It was a fun and lively way to connect and share the love for international music. No matter how well (or poorly) we sang, the laughter and camaraderie made every session unforgettable.

As I reflect on my time in Japan, I realize that it was not only a period of significant academic and professional growth but also a time of personal development. Living in a foreign country, particularly one as different from my own as Japan, challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone. I had to adapt to new ways of living. But in doing so, I became more resilient, open-minded, and adaptable. Japan taught me the value of patience, precision, and respect – qualities that are central not only to Japanese culture but also to the practice of medicine.

Leaving Japan was bittersweet. I was sad to say goodbye to the friends I had made, the beautiful places I had visited, and the experiences that had shaped me. However, I left with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude. My time at Hyogo Medical University surpassed every expectation I had, and the memories will stay with me forever. Arigatou gozaimashita, Japan—you've left a mark on my heart, and I couldn't be more thankful for this amazing journey!