

桜美林大学 | FAQ LIST

Arrival/Departure

Packing

Don't try to pack a year into a suitcase. Save space (and money) and have friends or family ship extra clothes later in your trip (such as winter coats and boots). To save space, bring only what you cannot buy in Japan, especially in regards to hygiene products and school supplies. Keep in mind that Japanese clothing stores tend to carry smaller sizes. It's better to pack more undergarments than other articles of clothing, to get the necessities out of the way. Summers are humid and winters might be cold and snowy, so pack accordingly! Don't hesitate to pack a few of your favorite snacks or ingredients from home if you know they aren't available in Japan. Transportation in Japan is largely walking/train based so pack durable shoes.

Flying to and from Japan

Most airlines offer free checked bags but if you are unable to bring everything at once, especially if you plan to stay for a full year, consider having your overflow items shipped to yourself after you arrive in Japan. Transportation is provided from Narita to J. F. Oberlin ('*Obirin*' in Japanese) but when you depart from Japan, you have to arrange your own transportation back to the airport. A bus between Machida and Narita, on average, will take around two hours.

Money:

- Students generally carry \$300-\$400 in cash with them to Japan. They exchange it into Japanese yen either at local banks (if their city is large enough) or at the airport in Japan. The exchange rate at US airports is usually not favorable. That takes care of about the first three weeks or so in Japan.
- Everybody spends money differently, so it was impossible to predict how much is the 'average' after arrival in Japan. After the first week or so, everyone spends less money, but 'settling in' takes extra funds.
- To get money, students all use their debit cards from their home banks. The convenience stores near school have ATM machines. BUT ONE WORD OF ADVICE: make sure your bank/bank card company knows you're going to Japan. If you don't tell your bank/bank card that you will be in Japan, your bank/bank card will refuse to release money to you from a Japanese ATM. So make sure your bank/bank card knows you will be overseas.
- It is also wise to have a Visa or MasterCard credit card. American Express and Discover are often not easily used in Japan.

Orientation

Obirin's orientation is a two-week series of events and info sessions that include a welcoming program, language placement testing, and class registration. Any questions you have about *Obirin* or life in Japan will be answered during this time. Private counseling for

academic and personal matters is also available. Tours of dorms, nearby cities, and local shopping areas are just a few of the optional sessions during orientation. There is also a welcome party before classes begin, so get excited!

Technology

Cell Phones/Data

There are various options available:

- If you want cell service in Japan, one option is talking to your current provider to see what international services they have BEFORE leaving for Japan. Often students find this option too expensive and change their minds after arrival in Japan. Since Sprint is now owned by a Japanese company, it may provide better international plans.
- Buying a Japanese cell phone with service in Japan requires an address and Japanese credit, which may not be reasonable for short-term international students.
- Pocket Wifi and Sim cards can be easily purchased in Japan or pre-ordered online. For more information on the two, see [here](http://www.sakuramobile.jp/japan-wifi/prepaid-sim-cards-or-pocket-wifi-in-japan-which-device-is-best/):
www.sakuramobile.jp/japan-wifi/prepaid-sim-cards-or-pocket-wifi-in-japan-which-device-is-best/.

Free Helpful Apps/Websites/General

We highly recommend you download LINE on your smartphone or computer, as it is more frequently used for communication between Japanese students than texting. LINE is free. Video calling is also available in-app, which is helpful for calling home! Safety Tips is an app created by the Japanese National Tourism Association for visitors to receive tsunami, earthquake, and other emergency alerts for free. Although *Obirin* is not in a high-risk area, it's a great resource to have on the go. Japan Travel by NAVITIME and Welcome Japan is a guide book and Google Maps combined into one. Plan your route using their schedule planner or search for ATMs, currency exchange booths, free wifi hotspots, and train stations anywhere in the country.

General

Depending on your home nation, you may need a power convertor for your electronics (in the case of the United States and UK, you will not need a voltage adjustor). Japan outlets take two-prong charging heads ONLY so if you have a three pronged laptop charger or hair dryer plug, you will need to get a three to two prong convertor. Bring back ups of all of your charging cables, especially those that are not commonly used (such as Android and older iPhones). Wifi is available for students on campus and in the dorms. You will receive a personal access code at orientation. *Obirin* also has several computer labs for student use on campus. Printers, fax, copy machines, and scanning machines are also available.

Academics

Japanese Language Program

Japanese language placement tests are held within the first week after arrival. They include written, speaking, and multiple choice portions. The results, in combination with the documents you submitted before arriving, will determine your class level. Despite what level you have achieved at your home institution or the number of semester you have studied Japanese, you may test into a level higher or lower than you expected.

Japanese language at *Obirin* is broken into six levels: six being the most advanced and one elementary. Academic counseling is also available to understand the level you were placed in or to discuss whether you should change levels.

General Classes

Obirin also offers special topic courses in Japanese culture and language. Special topic courses may be in English or Japanese and cover areas such as history, politics, literature, and pop culture. Class offerings vary by semester but a list of possible topics for the year should be available prior to your arrival in Japan. Be careful about choosing classes before arrival as the time schedule of classes is not available before orientation in Japan.

An introduction to *Obirin's* E-Campus, Moodle, and main website are given during orientation. This includes registration and add/drop information. Class timetables, syllabi, and general class information are available for each course on E-Campus after arrival but prior to registration. Registration takes place the second week of orientation via E-Campus.

Credits to Your Home Institution

Credit transfers to your home institution are up to you and your university. It varies by school.

Resources

Academic advising will be available throughout the semester via the Office for International Programs. Faculty also have posted office hours. Often it is a good idea to make an appointment by email ahead of time. The *Obirin* library is available for international student use and has a floor dedicated to English books and movies. Computers, audio/visual equipment, and private study space is available in the library and throughout campus. Books and materials specifically for learning the Japanese language can be found in JJFOU's Center for Japanese Language where students have open access to books, workbooks, CDs, movies, manga, magazines, and various other resources. The Writing Support Center is also open during the week for students studying Japanese to have their assignments and essays reviewed by a Japanese professor or tutor.

Health

Medications

Bring any medication you need from home, if possible. Japan does have over-the-counter common painkillers, allergy, and cold relief, but they may differ in strength and dosage from what you are used to. If bringing prescriptions or birth control, you need clearance before carrying medication into Japan. Contact *Obirin* (intl@obirin.ac.jp) or OGFA in the US (office@obirin-gakuen.org) if you have questions about the “Yakkan Shoumei” after checking out the website:

<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/policy/health-medical/pharmaceuticals/01.html> and downloading the Q&A from the website. Although there is a complicated explanation about mailing, the Ministry of Health and Welfare will now do the “Yakkan Shoumei” by email.

Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for all students and arranged by the city where you reside. You will register for it during orientation, together with city registration. Most students may pay around 8,000 yen the first month and 1,000 yen every month thereafter.

Toiletries, etc.

- If you use it regularly, bring deodorant from your home nation. Japan does not carry “western-style” antiperspirants and deodorants.
- Likewise, any hair dye or makeup products specific to your skin/hair type will have to be brought from home. Japanese is 99% ethnically Japanese, so you may have a hard time shopping for certain tones or colors as a foreigner. If you happen to forget something, many large brand stores such as Target offer international shipping for makeup and other products. You can also ship things from home, but keep in mind that some products are forbidden in the mail such as canned sprays!
- Ladies, Japan carries just enough, if not more options for both sanitary napkins and tampons than western countries. The size range is larger and prices range from 200 to 700 yen per package, depending on the size and use. Do be aware that many Japanese bath products are scented, so avoid packages with “scent types” on them if you have extremely sensitive skin.
- The pharmacy next to Fuchinobe Station is where most students go for bath supplies, as it is close and the staff is very foreigner-friendly.

Diet

Vegan/vegetarian options do exist thanks to the many types of fresh vegetables available in Japan. However, some soups and rice dishes use meat stock, so make sure to brush up on your vocabulary (and *kanji*) if you have specific dietary needs!

Housing

Whether you live in a dorm or a homestay, you will be required to register with the city to receive insurance, a valid ID, and information about living in Japan. Students cannot move from dorm to homestay or homestay to dorm after arrival.

Dorm Life

Obirin has two dorms international students can live in. Each dorm has their respective set of rules you must abide by and are roughly five minutes by foot to Fuchinobe Station/the *Obirin* bus stop. Dorm orientation will answer any questions you may have about community guidelines, amenities, trash disposal, kitchen use, and other topics. Resident Assistants are also available for both dorms. Guests, with the exception of parents, are not allowed to stay past 10pm or overnight. To enter either dorm, guests have to check in with you at the front desk. Bedding is provided: pillow, mattress/futon, quilt/futon, sheets –

towels are not provided, but are probably too bulky to pack. Smoking and alcohol are prohibited. Several grocery stores, a pharmacy, 100 yen store, bedding store, recycle/second hand shop, and various home and clothes stores are within ten minutes walking distance from the dorms. Likewise, at the beginning and end of every semester, a “free market” is set up for students to donate their old furniture, kitchenware, etc to incoming students.

Homestays

Homestays are a great way to kickstart your Japanese language skills but as space is limited, there is no guarantee you will be granted a homestay. Students interested in homestaying should have a minimum level of conversational Japanese in order to understand and communicate problems to members of your host family. Similar to living in a dorm, each homestay situation will have specific rules including a curfew and cleaning expectations. Smoking and alcohol are prohibited. Breakfast and dinner will be provided for you on weekdays. During the weekend, all three meals will be provided. Bedding is provided. Unlike living in dorms, you are not allowed to have guests visit your homestay UNLESS invited by the host family. Other rules may apply, depending on your assignment. Likewise, living in a homestay will require you commute to school using the bus or train system. To save money, consider buying a pre-paid commuter pass from SUICA or PASMO as soon as you figure out your daily commute. Information on how to do so can be found on the Japan Rail website (or you can ask your host family for help!)

Omiyage, or a souvenir from your home nation, is a great way to introduce yourself to the family and is highly encouraged. Country-specific foods and snacks are always a good idea!

Safety

Police boxes (“*Koban*”) are stationed outside of each dorm and train station and are open 24/7. With record low crime rates, you may never have the need to visit one but in case you lose something, you can fill out a lost item form inside (*Obirin* also has a lost and found inside each campus). As an island nation, Japan is at risk for earthquakes, tsunami, and heavy rain (especially during the summer). Although Machida is not a high-risk location, you will receive information on what to do during a natural disaster at orientation. In regards to earthquakes, you can expect to feel a few minor quakes during your stay. They may be exciting or scary at first but you’ll stop noticing them in no time!

General/Other

Disabilities

Obirin’s bus service and dorms have wheelchair access. However the university library is accessible by stairs only. For more specific information on accommodations and/or disability services, it is best to contact the university in advance.

Community Life

As an *Obirin* student, you can join circles, clubs, and some sport teams. Recruitment begins at the start of the semester and is open for anyone with conversational Japanese. Several clubs exist specifically for international and Japanese students to meet, as well! Like most universities, *Obirin* has baseball and other sport games students can attend. Concerts and other performances on campus are common and usually free for students. The Machida

campus has a cafeteria, convenience store (Family Mart), University Co-Op, and several restaurants students can purchase food at. At Planet Fuchinobe Campus (PFC), there is a school cafe and lunch box (bento) sale. Fuchinobe Station also has many restaurants, karaoke venues, and shopping.