

## **Thomas Gumley: International Christian University (Semester 2, 2010)**

I went to Japan, speaking little Japanese, but eager to learn a foreign language, make new friends and experience a different society and culture. I have had a fantastic time and I would strongly recommend an exchange for anyone seeking to expand their horizons.



I chose to go to ICU (International Christian University) as it had a strong Japanese language program and an international environment. The religious side is not pushed strongly, there a plenty of students who are not religious who attend. With only around 2500 students, ICU has a community-

feel to it and the students know each other and their teachers well. This was very different to UQ which I happily accepted. The Japanese Language Program was great and though it was tough, I feel as though it improved my ability enormously. The campus is quiet and spacious and is a welcome relief from the enormous city surrounding it.

Tokyo was a great choice for a host city. While the rent and commuting can be expensive, I found that many of the horror stories surrounding prices in Japan where unfounded. In fact there are many cheap places to eat and most activities were comparable in price to Australia. I particularly enjoyed my time at all-night karaoke bars and *ezakaiya* or Japanese-bars, where everyone sits on the floor around a long table to eat Japanese food (raw horse meat being a local favourite) and drink beer. Tokyo also offered many great tourist sites from the tranquillity of the Imperial Palace Gardens to the excitement of amusement parks, Disney Land and nightclubs.

I would recommend an exchange to Japan and ICU without reservation and can all but guarantee a change in perspectives and a lot of fun.