

JOY Program at YNU: New Chapter Of My Life

Exchange Semester Experience Fall 2025 ~ February 2026

University of Malaya, Malaysia



Coming to Japan through the JOY program at Yokohama National University was more than just studying abroad for me. It marked a completely new chapter of my life, and the best one so far.

I had taken courses in both English and Japanese, and the smaller class sizes made learning feel personal and interactive. The professors were supportive, and classes were engaging rather than intimidating. However, what truly made this experience special were the moments outside the classroom. Growing up in a tropical country, I had never experienced cold seasons before. Seeing the leaves turn red and gold felt beautiful beyond words. I was especially excited during my anime pilgrimage moments, when scenes that once felt fictional suddenly became real in front of me. Some trips were with new friends I met during the program, while others were solo journeys where I learned to navigate a new country on my own. I even tried skiing for the first time, and although I fell more times than I can count, it became one of the happiest and funniest memories of my exchange life.

Campus life at YNU was calm and comforting. People often call it “the university on the hill,” and it truly was a peaceful place to study and reflect. Eating at the cafeteria, studying at the library, and walking through campus, slowly became part of a routine that I know I will deeply miss. The support from program coordinators and staff also made a big difference. Whether it was academic concerns or adjusting to life in Japan, I always felt supported and welcomed.

And yes, Yokohama was such a comfortable city to live in. Life here felt calm, safe, and easy to get used to, which made everything less overwhelming as an international student. I loved how the city could be peaceful and relaxing, but at the same time still full of life. I could spend an entire day wandering around Cosmo Clock or sitting in Yamashita Park, simply enjoying the sea view on a random free day. Getting around was also very convenient, and it was easy to travel to Tokyo and other nearby places, which made exploring Japan even more exciting. Over time, Yokohama didn’t just feel like the place where I studied but like a second home filled with memories I will always cherish.

Through this exchange, I didn’t just learn about Japan but I truly experienced it. I improved my Japanese through everyday conversations, discovered cultural differences, met people from around the world, and created memories that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. For those who are still hesitant about joining an exchange program, I would simply say: you may never have another chance to experience so many “firsts.” Step out of your comfort zone, explore the world, and discover a stronger version of yourself.