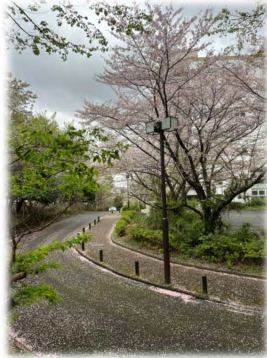


JOY Program at YNU: A Semester in Yokohama

Exchange Semester Experience Spring2026

VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic



When I arrived in Yokohama to begin my exchange semester at YNU, I had a rough plan in my head: attend classes, improve my Japanese, and see a bit of the country. What I did not expect was how much the everyday, unplanned parts of exchange life would end up mattering the most.

The first few weeks were, honestly, an exercise in patience. Setting up daily life here, registering my address and sorting out a phone plan, figuring out which train line got me where I needed to go, took far longer than I expected. If there is one thing I would tell a future JOY student, it is this: budget more time than you think you need for the administrative side of settling in, and do not be afraid to ask the Student Center or your Student Assistant for help early. Everyone I approached was patient and eager to help.

Academically, the mix of courses I took from Intensive Japanese and Kanji to Data oriented classes gave me both a language foundation and a chance to keep working in my own field, Computer Science, in a completely different academic environment from my home university. Classes at YNU brought together students from all over the world, which meant that even a normal lecture became a small window into how people from different backgrounds think about the same problem.

But if I had to pick the single best part of the exchange, it would be life at the dorm. Living alongside other international students meant that a normal Tuesday evening could turn into a group dinner, and a free weekend could turn into a spontaneous trip with friends. Some of my favorite memories are the short trips we took together, wandering around Minato Mirai's waterfront in Yokohama with its skyline, the Ferris wheel, and Cup Noodles Museum, or just exploring a new part of the city as a group. The area around Yokohama Station is also a place for many trips, there were always new stores we didn't see before. Those trips and friends I made, more than any single sightseeing highlight, are what made this exchange feel like a shared experience rather than a solitary one.

I will also strongly recommend joining the YNU clubs/circles, there are many to choose from and are a great way to improve your Japanese, but also to make more friends.