

# A Month in Fast-Forward

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## First Steps

This past month in Japan has felt like someone pressed the fast-forward button on my life. I arrived on the 4th, and instead of the usual “where am I?” panic, I felt surprisingly at home — like I already had the cheat codes to this game. The airport was a breeze, and even Tokyo’s famously complex train system seemed almost easy... until I accidentally took a very scenic detour that added an extra twenty minutes but offered a great view of the suburbs.

The first real hurdles appeared in the form of paperwork: getting my residence card, registering at the city office, opening a bank account. Each step felt like defeating a new mini-boss, complete with forms, stamps, and polite but firm instructions in Japanese. It was nerve-wracking, yet also a great way to stress-test my language skills. By the end, I had not only conquered bureaucracy but also collected a bunch of new words — hopefully not just an accidental mix of dialects and banking slang.

## Lovely community

For the first few days, I wasn’t alone: my parents came along, and together we turned the city into our playground. I showed them my favourite corners of Tokyo, from peaceful shrines tucked between skyscrapers to tiny cafés serving desserts that looked too pretty to eat. We also ventured beyond the capital, and **Kamakura** completely stole my heart with its sea breeze, serene temples, and streets lined with little shops selling handcrafted treasures.



When my parents headed back home, I worried that my life would feel too quiet. But Orientation Day arrived just in time, bringing with it a wave of friendly faces from every corner of the globe. We bonded almost instantly — over food hunts, late-night chats, and shared confusion about which train line actually goes where. One of the highlights so far was heading out as a group to watch **hanabi** — a fireworks festival that lit up the night sky in a way photos can’t capture. Sitting by the river, laughing and cheering with everyone as the colours exploded overhead, made me realise how lucky I am to have found such an amazing crew so quickly.

## Studies, Challenges & Growth

Soon after, classes at HOSEI University began. The internship here feels like an academic buffet: I can focus on courses that align with my university program back home while also sampling classes I’ve always been curious about. One day I’m diving into familiar material, the next I’m exploring something completely new — and that mix keeps me motivated.

Of course, not everything has been smooth sailing. There have been mountains of paperwork, rush-hour trains packed tighter than sushi rolls, and kanji characters that seem determined to play hide-and-seek. Yet every small victory — successfully navigating a new station, understanding a tricky lecture, or ordering lunch without fumbling for words — feels like levelling up.

Japan, I’ve realised, isn’t just a place on a map. It’s a quirky, beautiful, slightly chaotic universe that challenges you to grow, to laugh at your own mistakes, and to discover sides of yourself you didn’t know existed. One month in, and I can’t wait to see what the next chapter holds.