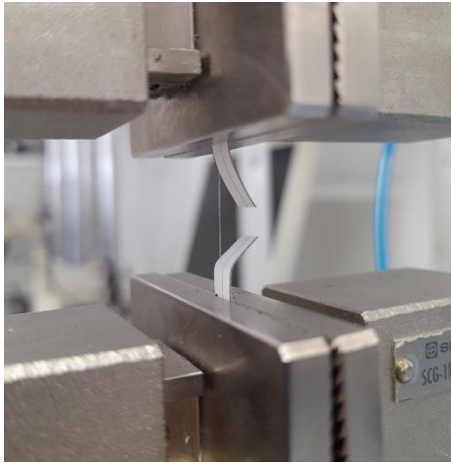


1. Do you think the program and the educational environment helped promote your research?



Tensile testing of a fiber

I think that the Double Degree program is a great opportunity to delve into the world of research. In fact, during the Double Degree Master a lot of time is dedicated to a chosen research project with little classes taken in parallel. In my department, the Graduate School of Environmental Studies, only a small number of 10 classes (equivalent to 20 credits) must be validated throughout the two years of Master. Therefore, it leaves a lot of time to personal research. Additionally, my Laboratory let me have a lot of freedom to choose a research direction and to develop my own ideas. The research was punctuated by progress report meetings, and the overall experience required independence and autonomy. Also, I was agreeably surprised to be met with great access to machines and experimental setups.

On a side note, it was very useful to have some knowledge of Japanese. Presentations in Japanese are well appreciated and allows for a proper understanding from the audience.

Each Laboratory specializes on certain research topics. Hence, I think it is important to apply to a Laboratory which focuses on our research interest. I personally found my Laboratory by typing my interests through the following website:

<https://www.rpip.tohoku.ac.jp/seeds/lang:en/>

Besides, I found that administrative support for foreigners is well developed at Tohoku University. The Student Exchange Division was of great help, in particular throughout the procedures such as opening a bank account or taking appointment at the city hall. There is also a [Student Help Desk](#) where you can ask questions of any kind to other students, and they speak English! In this regard, I think Japan is a very well accommodated country for foreigners.

2. Living in Sendai: Experience and Advice

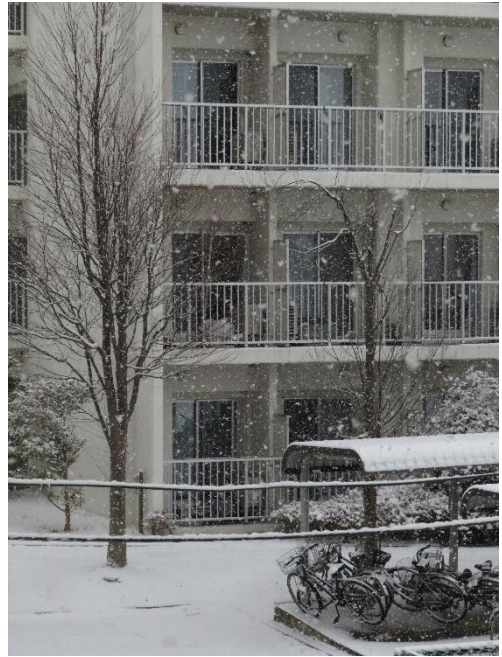
Housing

At Tohoku University, different dormitories are available for foreigners. I personally resided at International House 1 in Sanjomachi. This dormitory offers spacious individual rooms at a cheap price of 20 000¥, with their own kitchen! However, the building is quite old and far from the subway stations, as well as from Kawauchi and Aobayama campuses. In this case, transportation can be realized by bus (line 70 to Kawauchi), by foot (30 min to Kawauchi, 50 min to Aobayama), or using the free [Campus Bus](#) departing from the neighboring Seiryō campus. Otherwise, it can be very convenient to own a bicycle.

Food

I think it is possible to eat for quite cheap in Japan. Convenience stores, that are accessible everywhere, offer prepared meals for around 600¥. However, prices are a little bit cheaper at supermarkets such as *Seiyu*, *Coop*, or *Aeon* where you will find larger quantities, cooking ingredients, and vegetables. In particular, the *Gyomu Super* 業務スーパー is said to offer cheaper prices (and is approved by the Chinese students).

Concerning restaurants, a large range of prices can be encountered depending on the food and its quality. Ramen are popular as they are cheap (around 1500¥), nourishing, and very tasty of course! However, some Japanese specialties can be more expensive such as unagi, sushi, etc. Besides, the Laboratory conventionally holds around two events per year when everybody gets together to eat and drink. In these *nomikai* (飲み会), the group pays for an all-can-drink associated with an eating course, which usually costs around 5000¥ per person. It is the occasion to discover more about the other students while they are a bit tipsy.



Dormitory in Sanjomachi

To sum up, excluding shopping and travel expenses, I spent around 70 000¥ per month. This price includes the monthly housing pay of 20 000¥, a gas bill of 5000¥, the premium health insurance of 2000¥, a food consumption of around 40 000¥ and 2000¥ used for the washing machine.

Shopping

In my opinion, clothes tend to be a bit more expensive in Japan compared to France. Nonetheless, better prices can apparently be found at the right places. I personally found that fair prices are encountered in bigger stores such as *Super Sports Xebio* that sells sportswear, shoes, and general clothing. The store is located at Izumi-Chuo, the last stop of the Namboku subway line. Also, *ABC Mart - Grand Stage* located downtown offers attractive discounts on their last floor, that is if you find your size.

Phone

In Japan, mobile plans often offer a lot of internet services and very few call time. I personally did not have a Japanese phone number, but this situation can be limiting. For example, it was not possible to register to Japanese websites such as *Mercari* (equivalent to *Le Bon Coin* in France), or harder to make reservations via phone calls. Nevertheless, a lot of fixed phone booths are available in Japan.

Furthermore, *Line* is the main communication network in Japan. It is used by students, clubs, to organize events, exchange photos, and so on. However, without a Japanese number I was not able to register to the application while residing in the country. Thus, I strongly recommend acquiring a *Line* account before coming to Japan!



Japanese phone booth

Travelling

Around Sendai, one of the most famous locations is Yamadera, accessible through the JR Senzan Line. Yamadera is a temple you must reach after a 1000 steps climb. The top offers a great view on nature and the surrounding mountains (It is worth it I swear). It is especially beautiful in autumn for its colorful foliage. If you are fond of hiking, there is a nice walk through the gorges from Omoshiroyama to Yamadera. If you are lucky, you might even see monkeys!



Views of Yamadera

Another renowned location around Sendai is Matsushima. Matsushima constitutes a beautiful archipelago of islands. It is recommended to enjoy the magnificent views and try the seafood. There is also a nice temple to visit, get close to the seaside and you might see colorful starfishes.



Hokkaido's Blue pond (青い池)



Starfish in Matsushima

I had the chance to travel to Hokkaido in summer. Hokkaido is renowned for its beautiful nature and its numerous natural parks (as well as its intimidating bears). I especially recommend this destination for hiking enthusiasts! Because Japan was formed by volcanic activity, the height of the mountains is limited compared to those in Europe and beautiful volcanic views can be witnessed. Also, several campgrounds allow cheap housing. However, transports are limited on the island and in order to reach the hiking paths, it is essential to rent a car. For this purpose, it is possible to translate a foreign driver license to the Japanese system as far as one year after the date of arrival in Japan.



Daisetsuzan park in Hokkaido



Daisetsuzan park in Hokkaido

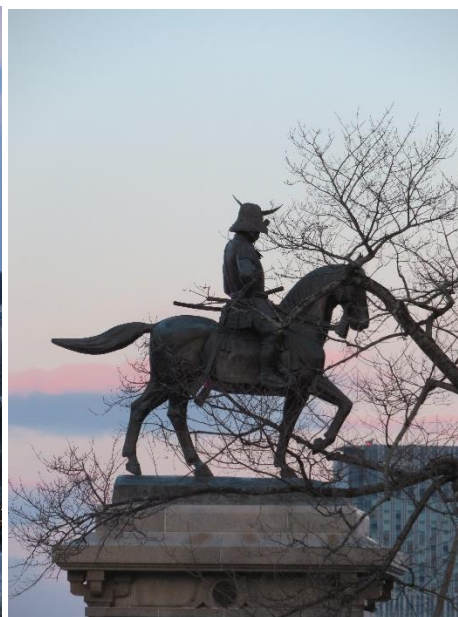
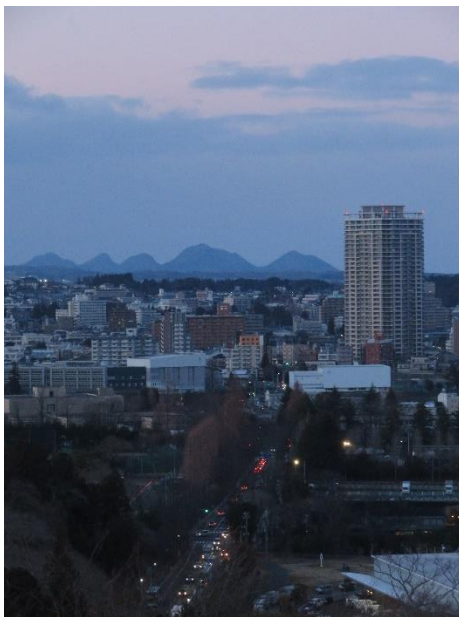


Volcanic activity in Hokkaido

Japanese people are very nice. However, they might be scared by foreigners and especially by the English language! In consequence, it is very useful to learn basics of Japanese to communicate. In particular, smoothly engaging the conversation can quickly help them warm up to the situation 😊.

3. Career paths

I think the Double Degree provides a great experience in research, which is very valuable to start a career in the field. If possible, I would like to pursue a career in research. I plan on looking for a PhD position in my home country.



Views of Sendai