

Andrew Niven  
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*Hosting a trivia event with the Global Innovation Program at Kansai Gaidai University, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

(KGU News Link: <https://www.kansai-gaidai.ac.jp/news/detail/?id=2132&cat=2>)

(Instagram Post: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C33FEOrPy9k/>)

## How Are You Living: Study Abroad in Japan

Before I came to Japan, I knew that I would be faced with innumerable challenges. A once in a lifetime opportunity to experience the culture I had been studying since high school, how could I possibly get it right? Is there even a “correct” way to live in a new culture? The answer is no, you just have to take what you’re given and follow your instincts to make the most of it.

So what’s it like to live in Japan? I chose to study at Kansai Gaidai University, located in Hirakata, a city in the wider metropolitan area of Osaka and Kyoto, in the prefecture of Kansai. The people of Kansai speak a specific dialect, *kansai-ben*, and although everyone here also understands the typical Japanese taught in classes across the country, learning *kansai-ben* is an essential step to becoming fluent. Among the many prefectures of Japan, Kansai is renowned for

its delicious food, fun culture and friendly people. If I decide to work in Japan, I hope to return to this amazing region, and reunite with the many friends I've made here.

My favorite class since I've come here is Japanese Small Talk, *zatsudan*. This is by far the most fun class: the teacher spends half the time introducing several conversational phrases and grammar points, and the other half we divide into pairs to create and perform a freestyle skit using these phrases. Even the shyest of classmates often break out in laughter in the process. Zatsudan is the most charming class I have taken here, with a pedagogy that is truly unique in my long study of the language. It's not only fun to learn phrases you don't learn from textbooks, but the structure of the class so fundamentally breaks the ice between students.

This style of class is perfect for encouraging students to take the most important step towards learning a language: making local friends! I chose to go to a foreign studies college because I knew that the local students would be interested in meeting foreign students like myself. But even with that in mind, I was surprised at how friendly and eager the students here were to become friends. And because students from all over the world come here, you can make many friends from countries outside of Japan as well.

To anyone who wishes to study abroad, the key is this: speak, and listen. Even if you are only a beginner in the language of your chosen home away from home, you will be able to find people who wish to speak to you. In my experience, the people of the world, on the whole, want to know each other, and are curious especially of those from other countries. Imagine the joy and exhilaration of meeting these people, and realize that they, too, want to meet you.

*I was granted an incredible opportunity to live in this unforgettable country due to the generosity of two organizations dedicated to the promotion of international studies through experiences like this. Those two organizations, are the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the Freeman-ASIA Scholarship, and I am deeply grateful for the financial support they have given me.*