

Joe's Blog:

Hi everyone, apologies in advance for this poorly worded and formatted blog. Having just made it through the festive period in the UK, my mind is yet to resume full function, saturated as it is with cheese and wine.

As everyone seems to be focusing on specific aspects of life in Japan, I'll do the exact opposite, as I don't have enough content on any one topic to fill an entire blog.

I'll begin with what is taking up most of my time in Japan. No, not Japanese, as it should be, I was stupid enough to join a circle (society) at Waseda at the beginning of term.

After sending off 1000 emails to every circle in the university that looked vaguely interesting, the amazing people at the Waseda University Judo Club were foolish enough to reply, and then allow me to attempt to train with them.



Me and the gang...

University societies in Japan are pretty intense, and because you meet almost every day, it leaves you with a lot less time to do other things (such as see Tokyo or fill a whole blog with photo's of you having fun or appearing to...). Doing a martial art also brings its own set of difficulties. With everyone being incredibly good and me being incredibly bad, you spend a lot of time getting thrown around or shouted at in inaudibly deep and gruff Japanese (having checked with fellow Judoka's, the teachers voice is inaudible to both native speakers and myself).

There are however many benefits, and I would definitely recommend joining a circle if you can stomach the time-commitments! You make some great friendships with actual Japanese people and get invited to fun cultural events (such as this big party after the Waseda Keio Judo Match).



Man drinking beer from trophy...

It's also been great practice for Japanese, and in particular more colloquial Japanese, which often isn't taught in the main classes. I often go into each training session and try to use whatever grammar point we learnt that day, irrespective of how appropriate it is in the conversation, and often receiving bewildered looks for using it wrongly.

The next thing that takes up the majority my time is Japanese! I'll make this part brief, as I'm sure anyone who has learnt Japanese, or wants to, is already fully aware of its incredible complexities. To sum it up, Japanese is really interesting, but really hard. It's all about the little victories, such as someone understanding you for the first time, or comprehending a little bit of terraced house (Japanese reality TV show on Netflix every aspiring Japanese speaker seems to watch) or recognizing some Kanji on the subway system.

Here are some of the other things I've been doing...



Just another day at the office... (Meeting the Daiwa CEO, everyone looking their best).



Hakone!



THUNDER GATE.



Smith's rendition with Vikram.

For anyone who has just applied to the Daiwa Scholarship, best of luck!! Japan is a truly remarkable place, and you will no doubt have an amazing time if you're successful.