

UNT Graduate Student in Japan: A Brief Reflection of COVID Experiences

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My UNT student experience is very different than most other student experiences. I have lived in Japan since 2019 and experienced the brunt of "COVID times" during this period. Moving to Japan, I thought this would be an action-packed adventure...in some ways, it has been. For about 2 years, U.S. government personnel were restricted from visiting a lot of heavily populated prefectures across the country. Therefore, we really had to be creative and dig for new places to explore that we otherwise might have overlooked. For that, I am grateful.

Once personnel were gradually able to visit certain prefectures, many of us took off as soon as possible before we might lose the opportunity! So, when Tokyo Disneyland and the surrounding prefecture were authorized for travel, I crammed as much UNT homework/projects I could into the weekend before my trip! Interestingly, while we were authorized to visit the area, Tokyo Disneyland and DisneySea were still strictly adhering to visitation limits and social distancing requirements...even having closed a lot of their eating establishments, shops, and kiosks around the parks. Although I visited during Halloween 2021, their seasonal festivities were also extremely minimal.

I'd like to note that Japan takes matters like these very seriously. Most times, I've been grateful to be in a country that doesn't frown upon wearing masks and one that treats others with respect for personal space. Other times, I've felt that some measures have been a little excessive. The photo included in this reflection is one funny example. Here we are wearing masks as required in the outdoors, yet still having to socially distance for a photo with Disney characters...even though their entire bodies were covered! Sometimes, you can never be too safe. It must have worked, seeing as I have never tested positive for COVID this whole time! 😊

