

Teach Abroad

Key:

ASE=Assistant Supervisor of English ALT=Assistant Language Teacher

The application process:

Q: What are the eligibility requirements for the program?

A: To apply for the ASE position, a four-year degree and a teaching certificate is required. To apply for an ALT position, a degree from a four-year institution is required but a teaching certificate is not. ASE's will receive a higher paid salary based upon their board certification. ESL certificates do not qualify for the ASE position.

Q: Can I apply for the program before I graduate from a university?

A: Yes, applicants in their senior year and final semester at university are eligible to apply. Applicants must be on track to graduate by the month of May prior to their respective year of program participation and be able to provide proof of graduation.

Q: Can I apply to the program even if I don't have a teaching background?

A: Yes, an interest in teaching and working with youth is a plus, but a teaching background is not required for the ALT position.

Q: What is the hiring process/timeline?

A: Applications are due in mid-February for the first round of review process, with finalist interviews and selection occurring in March. Those selected will be required to attend an orientation in April and pre-departure trainings in May, June, and August. Please visit the mandatory calendar for more timeline details.

Q: When is the application due?

A: Applications must be received on or before the deadline. Applications received after the deadline (including those postmarked on the deadline) will be considered late. Late applications are not considered.

Preparing for the trip:

Q: Are there any immunizations that need to be done in advance?

A: No immunizations are required by the program, although Japanese encephalitis vaccine is recommended for long-term (greater than 1 month) travelers to rural areas or travelers who may engage in extensive unprotected outdoor activities in rural areas, especially in the evening, during shorter trips. Two vaccines that are recommended for any traveler are MMR and Tetanusdiphtheria vaccinations. For a MMR vaccine, two doses are recommended (if not previously given) for all travelers born after 1956, unless blood tests show immunity. Tetanus-diphtheria vaccine is recommended for all travelers who have not received a tetanus-diphtheria immunization within the last 10 years. Please consult your physician for details.

Q: What kind of documentation will participants be required to take with them?

A: Participants must take their passports, visas, and an alternate form of photo ID. In addition, participants must also take their completed paperwork for taxes. It is also a good idea to make copies of each and carry them in your luggage.

Q: How do I go about obtaining a passport?

A: You must apply for a passport in person at the Clerk of the Superior Court, Passport Services at 601 W. Jackson St., Phoenix AZ 85003. To apply for a passport, you must present a certified copy of your original birth certificate. A certified copy of your birth certificate may be obtained from the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state where you were born. Hospital birth certificates are not acceptable. The certificate is required to be submitted with the application and will be returned with the passport. Expired passports may be substituted for a certified copy of the birth certificate. Naturalized Citizens must present their original naturalization papers instead of their birth certificates.

- All applicants will be required to provide their social security number.
- You must present two passport photos when applying for a passport. These photos must be made especially for your passport. Please consult your yellow pages under photographers or passports to obtain appropriate pictures. Family snapshots, portraits or school pictures are not acceptable as passport photos.
- You must present valid, government issued photo ID, such as a driver's license or military ID when you apply. Picture bank cards, school identification, temporary or expired forms of government issued identification are not acceptable forms of identification.
- The standard passport application form DS-11 and all other necessary forms are available at the Clerk's Office or can be downloaded from the Department of State website at www.travel.state.gov.
- Please allow ample time for this process, as the normal processing time for a passport is eight weeks.

Q: How do I go about obtaining a visa?

A: Phoenix Sister Cities will assist in facilitating the visa process. Participants will submit their passport, (2) passport size photos, a completed visa application, and release of liability to the Japanese Embassy in Los Angeles. Visa applications will be given to program participants at their first mandatory meeting and can be completed upon receipt of paperwork by the Himeji Board of Education, which includes flight details. PSC can also assist with obtaining visas for family members accompanying you to Himeji.

Q: Do I need to become a member of Phoenix Sister Cities?

A: Yes, program participants are required to become members of Phoenix Sister Cities. Personal membership fees vary in cost; there are student, single adult, senior and family rates available. You will receive monthly newsletters, discounted offers, invitations and additional announcements on various Phoenix Sister Cities events and programs with your membership.

Q: Will the Sister Cities Commission provide an opportunity for participants to become more familiar with the culture and daily life in Himeji before the program begins?

A: Yes, all participants will attend an orientation before the program begins. Also, by participating as a member of the Phoenix Sister Cities program, the participants will receive newsletters including information about Himeji and attend the PSC Himeji committee meetings. In order to familiarize themselves with the city, participants MUST attend at least three of the (monthly) committee meetings prior to leaving for Himeji.

Q: Are there other opportunities to learn more about the program and life in Himeji?

A: Program participants are encouraged to research and learn as much about the program and life in Himeji as possible. Program participants will have the opportunity to hear from several program alumni and online resources for more information on the residence, schools and daily life. A welcome committee of second year ALTs will assist in integrating you into life in Japan upon your arrival.

Q: How will participants be picked up from the airport? Will there be enough room when they are picked up for their families to be transported as well?

A: At least two people from the Himeji city office go to the Kansai airport to pick up both the participants and their families.

Questions about the Program:

Q: What is expected of the ASEs and ALTs in the classroom?

A: ASEs are responsible for planning their own curriculum and classroom activities with the advice of the program coordinator and the principal of their respective school. ALTs will be collaborating with the

teacher with whom they are assigned. Their involvement will be more flexible, and more as a support to their teacher. Both ASEs and ALTs will need to be comfortable and eager to speak English before a large group(s). ALTs and ASEs are also encouraged to be creative and innovative to create learning activities to teach both English and American culture.

Q: What age group do you teach?

A: ALTs co-teach English at the junior high and elementary school level. ASEs teach at the high school level. Community involvement is also important as the participant will be expected to give seasonal community lessons to local adults.

Q: When will the teachers receive their first paycheck?

A: It will be on the second Friday of September. It is highly advised to bring enough to cover initial start-up expenses. \$1500 is the recommended minimum.

Q: How is the school administration structured? How will ALT and ASE supervision be structured?

A: The administration is structured similar to American public schools, with a Principal, Dean or Assistant and so on. The ALTs will work under their assigned teacher(s), whereas the ASEs will work independently under the direction of the school principal. The supervisor for both programs will be a staff person of the Himeji City Board of Education.

Q: Will there be an opportunity for participants to learn Japanese in a class or community setting?

A: Yes, program participants will have many opportunities to learn Japanese while in Japan. Hymenia YMCA offer Japanese language courses that last for several months. Private lessons are also available. The YMCA can be contacted at 98-5567 in Himeji. Additionally, program participants will have the opportunity to visit with the families of their students outside of the classroom, as some of them are very open to tutoring the teachers.

Q: Are there opportunities to travel to other areas of Japan?

A: You may travel wherever you wish on your holidays. You will have ample time off for 'Japanese Experience Days' although no travel will be coordinated through the program. Travel and excursions may be planned on your own. Expenses for additional travel are not covered by the program.

Q: What is the dress code for work?

A: The dress code for working in the schools is business casual, no jeans, no bare shoulders or knees. Shoes should be closed toe and comfortable. Attire is covered in detail during pre-departure meetings.

Q: Is the position strictly teaching English, or do ALTs have other duties outside of the classroom?

A: Participants will also be asked to tutor English outside the classroom during winter, spring and summer breaks. During the school year you may participate in whatever extra-curricular programs you choose at your school, clubs, sports etc., although you should not overextend yourself, as teaching English is the main objective of the program.

Q: How many paid holidays will participants receive in Japan?

A: American ASEs and ALTs receive the same amount of vacation time as all other Japanese teachers. Japanese teachers receive approximately the same number of school holidays as teachers do in the U.S. Although participants will be required to work over the school winter and spring breaks, you will additionally receive 20 days of paid vacation or 'nenkyus' to take as you wish.

Q: Can I stay for longer than a year?

A: Yes, if you wish to stay for an extended time with the program, you can sign an extension contract for up to one additional year. Your supervisor will review your contract with you during the first year and at that time you will be able to request one more additional contract year. Because of the limited number of positions in the program and the large number of those who wish to participate, two years is the maximum time allowed for one person to stay with the program.

Q: Can I work part time at school in Himeji?

A: No, participants are required to work full time at their schools in Himeji.

Q: Can I get a second job while I'm in Himeji?

A: No, the status of your visa does not allow for secondary work.

Questions about Himeji:

Q: What is the weather like in Himeji?

A: The weather in Himeji is generally mild, as it is surrounded by the sea. The summer (June through August) is warm 78-86F, and humid with a rainy season in early June. The winter is generally mild with occasional snow.

Q: What is the national currency?

A: The official currency of Japan is called the yen. Coins come in denominations of ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100, and ¥500, while paper notes come in denominations of ¥1,000, ¥2,000, ¥5,000, and ¥10,000. For a quick and convenient reference on exchange rates, please go to www.xe.com. U.S. dollars may be exchanged for Japanese yen at any bank with the "Authorized Money Changer" sign in the window. For more information regarding other currencies, contact your local bank prior to departure.

Q: What kind of electrical outlets do they use in Japan?

A: Voltage in Japan is 100 volts. A typical electrical plug in Japan is round with two flat, parallel, vertical blades. If a voltage adapter is needed, they can be found at Fry's Electronics or Radio Shack.

Q: When are the Banks and the Post Office open?

A: In Japan, bank and post office accounts may be used for savings; funds transfers; paying utility bills (electricity, gas, etc.), phone bills, and NHK television reception bills by automatic withdrawal from one's account; paying credit card bills; etc. This is equivalent to what Americans refer to as automatic withdrawal. Banks are open from 9AM until 3PM Monday through Friday and Post Offices are open from 9AM until 4PM.

Q: What is the food like in Japan?

A: In the city of Himeji, you can generally find any type of food. Some popular Japanese dishes include Sushi, Sashimi, Bento, Soba, Gyudon and Tempura.

Q: Can my family/friends send me mail and care packages?

A: Yes, your family/friends can send you mail and packages, but it is fairly expensive to mail packages overseas. The price is dependent on the weight of the package and the speed at which the package is sent. Some other items to be aware of are the international regulations on the types of things that can be sent. No food, alcohol, plants or medicine may be shipped overseas. For more information or to get price quotes you can visit www.fedex.com or ups.com.

Q: Does Himeji have an international or English-speaking school for kids traveling with me?

A: No, Himeji does not. Kobe, a capital city of Hyogo Prefecture, has international schools. It takes about one hour from Himeji to Kobe by train.

Questions about the housing/living arrangements:

Q: Do all participants have their own apartment?

A: Yes, all ALTs and ASEs will have their own single apartments with the option of acquiring a family style apartment if they choose to have family members accompany them to Himeji. The cost for a family style apartment is higher than that of a single apartment.

Q: How much is the rent for the apartments per month?

A: The apartment costs are subsidized by the Himeji Board of Education. The subsidized rent for a single style apartment (30 square meters, approximately 323 square feet) is 11,700 yen plus utilities. A family style apartment (60 square meters, approximately 654 square feet) is 24,400 yen.

Q: Who pays the first month's rent?

A: The first month's rent will not be requested until after their first pay day (the second Friday of September).

Q: Do all participants live within the same building?

A: Yes, all program participants live in the Shirasagi Residence Complex along with the program JTE participants from Australia, Britain, and Canada. The SRC is centrally located to most schools the program works with and near public transit.

Q: How much are the utilities for the apartment? How often do you pay them and how?

A: According to a previous participant, the cost of utilities is about 10,000-26,000 yen per month.

Q: Will I have internet access in my apartment?

A: Internet access is not included in your apartment rent, although it is available for purchase.

Q: Can I take my pet(s) with me? Purchase them while in Himeji?

A: No, pets are not permitted in the apartment complex.

Q: What is the city transportation system like? Will it be necessary to acquire any other means of transportation?

A: Means of transportation in Himeji include Japan Railways (JR), Sanyo Electric Railway, City Buses, the Shinki Bus Company, and taxis. JR, the largest railway network in Japan, goes almost everywhere in the entire country. The shinkansen bullet train will take you to all the major cities in Japan in a very short time, though an extra charge for express train service must be paid. The Sanyo Electric Railway is a private rail service linking southern Himeji to Kobe and Sannomiya. Bus services provided by the city and Shinki Bus Company provide service to virtually every nook and cranny in Himeji. Buses and trains in Japan do a superb job of staying on schedule, so it is highly recommended that you take advantage of these efficient means of transportation. A Commuter Pass allows users unlimited use of transportation services within a certain area during a specific period of time (one-month, three-month or six-month periods). Participants will be given a transportation stipend to assist in commuting to and from. The transportation stipend is to be used at the discretion of each participant. Program participants may purchase a commuter pass, a bicycle, both or nothing at all.

Q: Will the Himeji City Board of Education be coordinating our flights for us?

A: Yes, the Himeji City Board of Education will coordinate and purchase tickets to and from Himeji. Although, if any participant wishes to travel elsewhere or home on vacation during the program, they would be responsible for their own airfare.

Q: Will the Himeji City Board of Education pay family member's airfare?

A: No, family members must pay their own airfare. Flight information will be given to the program participants in the early summer months.

Questions about Insurance and Healthcare:

Q: What kind of insurance will be covered in the insurance package?

A: The Himeji City Board of Education will prepare for all Health Insurance cards upon participants arrival in Himeji. All program participants are covered under four types of insurance:

- National Health Insurance
- Pension Insurance
- Accident Insurance
- Employment Insurance

Q: When does the Health Insurance begin?

A: The Health Insurance begins on the start date of the participant's signed contract. It covers 70% of your medical expenses for illness and injuries and includes:

- Medical examination
- Provision of medical supplies/medications

- Please note, some medications common in the United States are not permitted or accessible in Japan
- Emergency treatment, surgery, and other treatments, including dental
- In-home hospital care
- Hospitalization and nursing

The insurance does NOT include:

- Preventative medicines
- Physical check-ups
- Cosmetic surgery
- Dental checkups or cleaning
- Eye exams or eyewear
- Pregnancy exams

Q: How will I be taxed while I am in Japan? What is the process and or what are the forms that I will need to complete?

A: All participants will be exempt from Japanese taxes, but will continue to file taxes in the US. All participants should complete tax form 8802, an application for residency certification, to the US IRS in order to receive a 6166, the actual certificate of US residency form for tax exemption in Japan. These forms can be acquired on the IRS website at www.irs.gov. Individual tax questions can be answered by phone at 1-800-829-1040. Please allow ample time to receive these forms, as the application process may take up to a month. Once you have received the form you must take it with you to Himeji. You can turn it over to the Himeji Board of Education.

Q: In order to have the Certificate of Eligibility issued by Immigration office, what do participants need to submit?

A: Phoenix Sister Cities will submit the following information to the Himeji Board of Education to process the Certificate of Eligibility. The Certificate of Eligibility is required prior to processing the visa paperwork.

Participants will need to present four items due at the April meeting

- 1) Two pictures per person (passport size)
- 2) A copy of original diploma
- 3) Copy of passport
- 4) Signed contract
- 5) Information sheet

Other Questions:

Q: How do you order in a Japanese restaurant?

A: To order in a Japanese restaurant you usually either push a button that is on the table to signal to the wait staff or you say "sumimasen" which means "excuse me." You do not ever leave tips. Everything else is about the same as in the United States.

Q: What if I break my contract?

A: You will be required to refund the Himeji Board of Education for the airline ticket expenses to Himeji, Japan. You will also be required to purchase your own airfare home. Program participants need to fully understand the terms of their contract and that life will continue back in the United States without them. Scheduled visits back to the U.S. are acceptable during allocated vacation time only.

Q: What if I don't fulfill my training requirements?

A: Failure to comply with training requirements forfeits your position with the Teach Abroad Program.