

Moving to a New Country

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When I moved to Berkeley, California, I had to find a place to live, obtain the social security number, open bank accounts, learn where to shop groceries, buy furniture including a crib for our new-born second child, and learn how to file tax returns. To buy a car, I went through classified ads on a local newspaper, ended up with a family of Afghan refugees who didn't trust my travelers' cheques. Even though I did speak English fine, I was struck by the differences in systems, customs, lifestyles, and had difficulty getting engaged in rapid-fire lunchtime conversations on movies and politics at workplace.

After arriving in IPMU, I had difficulties settling in Japan. My credit card application was denied because I hadn't had any income in Japan the previous year. I couldn't buy a cell phone because I didn't have a local address or landline. People laugh at the way I speak because apparently I sounded like a cheap translation of an English novel. And most importantly, I didn't know how to do business in Japan and hit numerous roadblocks. On the other hand, I was amazed how safe and clean Japan was and how reliably public transportation worked.

At IPMU, we do everything we can to make the relocation easy. We built an extensive website to provide information about logistics. Our staffs in International Relations, Secretariat, and others go over incredible lengths to help newcomers feel at home and start working as soon after they arrive. When

one of my Berkeley students was severely injured in an accident, they put enormous effort to help him recover (and he is now completely fine and assumed a postdoc position in the US). In this volume, you can read about how the Japanese classes taught by Masami Nishikawa are fun and useful. It is especially stressful for spouses who look for jobs, as you see by reading experience of Julia Freedman, and I'm happy I could help her to some extent. And there are so much effort going on behind the scenes you don't read about. I'm very proud of our staffs!

