

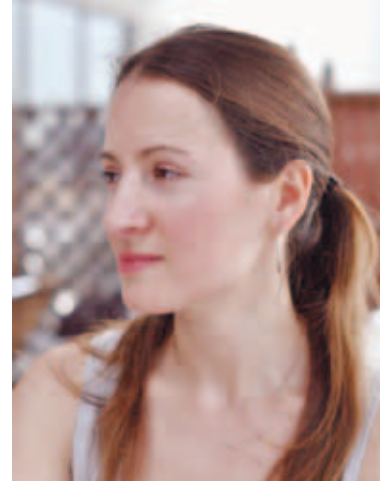
# Moving to Tokyo

Julia Friedman

Moving a family to a new country is never an easy thing. It is even more difficult when both spouses work and there is pressure to find good jobs for both. When my husband received an offer from IPMU in the winter of 2007–2008 we were very excited at the prospect of living in Tokyo, but there was still a question of what I would do during the three years we were to spend there. I have a Ph.D. in Art History, but since I do not speak Japanese the only appropriate positions could be found in the English-speaking programs that offer History of Art in their curriculum. Turned out, finding an excellent job was not at all impossible. Only a couple of months after my husband accepted the IPMU offer a colleague alerted me to an advert for a full-time Assistant Professor position at Waseda University's School of International Liberal Studies. Serendipitously, it was in my specialty (modern art), so I immediately applied. Still, because I could not be sure of a favorable outcome for my application I also left my CV at Temple University Japan Campus while we were visiting Tokyo in March of 2008. I knew that even when schools do not advertise for full-time positions, there is often a need for adjunct faculty. This worked: Temple's Tyler School of Art program needed someone to teach two courses in my specialty and I started teaching for Temple in September, less than a month after we moved

to Tokyo. In October, I received an interview invitation from Waseda University and following the interview was offered a full-time position. I have been working there since. I think I was quite lucky with landing these two jobs so quickly, but it could be that when there is a need for a specialist in a particular field, a specialist who can teach and research in English, the competition is not as fierce as in the English speaking countries simply because there are fewer suitable candidates. So, my impression is while jobs are not advertised often, when they do come up a qualified spouse would have a good chance at securing a position.

My experience as a parent has been positive for the most part as well. When we came to Tokyo our son was five and a half and ready to start his kindergarten year. We decided to place him into an international school, and after a long search settled on Tokyo International School in Minato-ku. While our son likes his school, if you choose to put your children in an international school you should be aware of several potential problems. First, the tuition is very high (typically around two million yen annually).<sup>\*</sup> Second, you might have to commute to school (in our case because we are not on the school's bus route our son has to go by train, with one change, and the trip is 45 minutes each way). Third, if the child does not speak Japanese, and you live in the area



Julia Friedman is Assistant Professor at Waseda University, School of International Liberal Studies. She is the wife of Dr. Damien Easson (IPMU Postdoctoral Fellow).

with few English speakers you might have a problem with play dates and after school activities. On the other hand, raising a child here is much less stressful than back in the US because Tokyo is very safe and people here are very nice. Also, our son is enriched by living in Japan and he is learning about different cultures represented by his very international classmates. I have no doubt that it will have long-term benefits for his education.

After spending two years in Tokyo I can certainly say that moving here was a good decision both personally and professionally. The logistics of our apartment search and all the initial appointments were not at all complicated or stressful because of the generous help extended by the IPMU office. My only regret is that I did not have a chance to learn Japanese. I was originally hoping to take a six-week crash course, but with all the teaching and research I do I never had the six leisurely weeks I needed. The inability to communicate with people who do not speak English is by far my biggest problem here, so if you have some time to study before you move, do so.

<sup>\*</sup> According to the guideline of the WPI Program, IPMU supports the entrance fee and part of the tuition for researcher's children to go to international schools.