



Janine Mayer spent the fourth semester of the Human Centered Computing (HCC) program in form of a semester abroad in the Japanese community of Takizawa. There she courses at the **Iwate Prefectural University (IPU)** in the north of Japan's main island Honshu.

The image left shows her daily view over Mount Iwate during the cherry blossom period in April.

Takizawa

Takizawa and the IPU can be very well compared to Hagenberg and the University of Applied Sciences ("japanisches Hagenberg"). Takizawa is a small community just outside of the 300.000 inhabitant's city Morioka which is easily reachable by train. There are many woods and sports areas (baseball, football, soccer, tennis) available which invite you to spend time outside. The cherry blossom trees on the university grounds makes a beautiful area to visit in spring. While Takizawa has all the nature, Morioka is a magnet when it is about social interaction and shopping. The Odori (main street) is a short walk from the main station and offers many delicious restaurants and shops to browse through. In summer there are local festivals such as the Chagu Chagu Umakko (left image) and the Sansa Odori (right image) which are a must see!



University and Courses

The university has a variety of different departments besides Software and Information Science, such as Policy Studies, Nursing, and Social Welfare. I attended the courses "Machine Learning" and "Brain Information Processing", both of which were taught in classes of up to 20 students. After and before courses you could spend time in a laboratory. Each student has a workspace in a lab and a supervising professor which supports the students for their work. Apart from the usual courses, they offer additional activities. For example, I participated in a flower arrangement course which was taught by an Ikebana master!

Communication

As most can guess, Japanese is completely different from German. Studying Japanese is fun though it can also be very challenging. Still, it is necessary to live in Japan. Most Japanese speak little to no English. Even in the university it was hard to talk to people because they are often shy or cannot speak a lot of English. There were free Japanese courses, and I met a lot of Japanese who were interested in trying to talk English with me. It was a great experience to communicate in Japanese, even though it was often challenging, and the usage of hands and feet for gesticulation was no rarity.