

Darrione Jarrell (DJ) Soriano
B.A. in Japanese Studies, UC San Diego, Class of 2018
Into Japan Specialist Tours – Tour Consultant

Why I Chose Japanese Studies

Growing up, I was exposed to anime, manga, video games, and Japanese food, which gradually developed into a deeper interest in the Japanese language and culture. While studying at UC San Diego, the Japanese Studies Program helped me gain a deeper understanding of Japan's history and opened my eyes to career paths that have allowed me to live and work abroad in Japan.

What I Enjoyed Most

The Japanese language courses were foundational, showing me how essential language-learning is to truly understanding the richness, subtle nuances, and diversity of Japanese culture and history.

Japanese business classes also stood out, as they transformed our theoretical language skills into practical tools. Through a year-long group community service project, we were able to support the local Japanese community while simultaneously learning about Japanese business practices and professional culture.

Lastly, courses such as *Spirit of Anime* were unforgettable. They offered an engaging exploration of how Shinto and Buddhist beliefs are reflected in media such as *Spirited Away*, *Evangelion*, and *Ghost in the Shell*, whether through scenes, characters, or recurring motifs.

How Japanese Studies Helped Me After Graduation

After graduating, I immersed myself in Japan by moving to Tokyo, which significantly accelerated my language development. As a result, I currently hold the JLPT N2 and Kanji Kentei K5 certifications. These language skills led to opportunities as an English teacher, video game translator, video game convention interpreter, and eventually a tour consultant for a luxury Japan travel agency.

Teaching English for six years allowed me to act as a cultural ambassador while gaining firsthand exposure to real-world Japanese communication, from casual speech to keigo and slang.

Working as a video game translator and convention interpreter further strengthened my language skills, particularly in breaking down language barriers while ensuring nuance, intent, and comprehension were preserved across languages and cultures.

Today, I work in the luxury tourism industry, creating meaningful travel experiences while drawing on my knowledge of the Japanese language, culture, history, food, drink, anime, manga, and more. With this job, being able to fully apply my degree and skill set brings me a deep sense of joy, satisfaction, and accomplishment.

Message to Current Students

If you can, move to Japan as soon as possible after graduation. I accepted my first job in Japan in March 2018, graduated in June 2018, visited Japan for the first time in July 2018, and finally moved to Japan in November 2018. You are at a stage in life when exploring different paths is easier, and Japan offers countless opportunities. Be bold, take risks, and trust that you will find a path with your Japanese Studies degree that fits your skills and passions. ファイティング！