

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

**SEPTEMBER
2016**

Fukuroi Fireworks Festival

A Stylish Trio

Staying Healthy At Your Work Desk

Falling Into Place

The Olympic Games



**The Japanese Lifestyle & Culture
Magazine Written by the International
Community in Japan**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's our first regular issue for Connect this season! I hope everyone enjoyed the Tokyo Orientation issue and found it helpful. I also hope any of you new arrivals are getting settled into your new homes and work. You're basically hitting the ground running, but don't let that overwhelm you! You've got a wealth of people and resources to call on for help; including the many tips in this very magazine! Remember that if you get burnt out you've got some paid work leave to use — in this issue we'll take a look at how to get the most out of it! Don't forget to check out the Events Calendar to help you along.

To those of you who have already been in Japan a little while: did you take advantage of your summer? Hit the beach? Travel? I'd love to hear all about it if you hit up our social media! If you're anything like me, you're only now sluggishly accepting the reality of real work starting up again — it doesn't quite seem fair when the temperature is still surface-of-the-sun-esque. Did you catch the fever this season with Pokémon Go? If you're still riding that surf (HM03?), there's some great tips and tricks in this issue to help you in the Pokémon world that we all live in.

To help you get back into the working groove, we've got a great article about staying healthy at your desk inside, plus some quick and easy recipes for when you're too heat-dead to cook anything fancy. We also take a quick peek into Japanese trends and mental health in Japan, and a sobering glimpse at a recent tragedy. That's just the tip of the iceberg of fantastic content in the September issue of Connect. This new team is working hard to bring you the best content every month, and I couldn't be prouder of them! Many of them are just arriving in Japan and still getting settled in, so I appreciate all of their hard work at this busy time. They've really dug up some great stuff for you, and I can't wait to work with them all this year.

Timothy Saar
Head Editor
2nd Year Gifu ALT





NEWS AND EVENTS

NEWS EDITOR

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Kelsey Lechner

*"I'm not the next Usain Bolt
or Michael Phelps; I'm the
first Simone Biles."*

-Simone Biles

EVENTS EDITOR

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Lauren Hill

*"I delight in what I fear" -
Shirley Jackson*





In the News

July- August

Kelsey Lechner (Tochigi)

July 10

18 and 19-year-olds voted for the first time in the Upper House election, securing the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Komeito's influence. <http://bit.ly/2aVoUAu>.

July 18

Oxfam International released a report criticizing the world's six richest countries (Japan, the United States, China, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) for hosting only 8.8% of the world's refugees. In contrast, Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and South Africa, which account for less than 2% of the world's economy, host over 50% of all refugees and asylum seekers. <http://bit.ly/2a2Bmun>.

July 18

The "Out in Japan" LGBTQ+ awareness photo exhibition in Tokyo came to a close after opening in April of this year. The group is currently working on several other projects. See their website for more information. <http://outinjapan.com/>.

July 22

Pokémon Go was released in Japan. The government promptly issued a nine panel safety warning guide in manga form to players.

July 23

A knife attack at a care facility for people with disabilities left 19 dead and 27 injured. See *Ordeals of the disabled—murders in Sagami-hara, Kanagawa*.

July 31

LDP lawmaker Yuriko Koike won the Tokyo gubernatorial election to become Tokyo's first female governor. She promises to promote policies for daycare reform, and to stimulate the economy while reducing the economic burden of the 2020 Olympics on residents. She is also pushing for more transparency and restructuring in the capital's government, including decreasing her own salary. <http://bit.ly/2b5LLeh>
<http://bit.ly/2b8Fvh7>

August 9

Crown Prince Naruhito openly criticized the Japanese monarchy, and the militarism characteristic of the current political regime under Shinzo Abe. The monarchy has been kept separate from the political sphere for decades, and the Crown Prince will become emperor upon the death or resignation of his father, Emperor Akihito. <http://thebea.st/2aA1aMq>.

August 14

DNA testing results have identified the last victim of the massive earthquakes that struck Kumamoto in April. The death toll has been brought up to 50 with the identification of 22-year-old university student Hikaru Yamato. <http://bit.ly/2baNV5G>.

August 15

Japan won gold medals in wrestling, badminton, swimming, judo, and gymnastics in the 2016 Rio Olympics, with a total of seven gold and 41 medals overall.





Fukuroi Fireworks Festival

Alex Dark (Shizuoka)

I attended my first Japanese fireworks festival after less than two weeks here. I had left what was familiar to begin a new life in a very unfamiliar country. To my pleasant surprise, I discovered that Japanese summer firework displays reminded me of home. As I'm sure many know, in the United States we celebrate the 4th of July with fireworks. Sitting on a picnic blanket, staring up at the sky, enjoying what may have been the most spectacular firework display I had ever seen, was the first moment I'd felt at ease since stepping off that 14-hour flight. Around me were other JETs, many of whom I'd met at Tokyo Orientation. Surrounding us were Japanese locals clad in traditional clothing to celebrate the festivities. Above the entire crowd was the universal entertainment of fireworks. In that moment, we knew that not only are we going to survive in this new country – this festival marked the start of a fantastic year of adventures.

Alex Dark is a new prefectural ALT from Philadelphia, PA. She works in the international department at Hamamatsu Kita Koko in Shizuoka-ken. Her school is intensely academic, and international department students have English classes six times a week. In her free time, Alex likes to watch American TV, read, surf, and travel. She's also a coffee connoisseur of sorts. Alex is a certified secondary social studies teacher back in the United States, and plans to keep teaching for the rest of her life!

Staying Cool in the Heat

Getting the Most out of Summer *Matsuri*

Hilary Wilson (Hokkaido)

Some of the best things about Japanese summers are the *matsuri*, or festivals. There are hundreds of *matsuri* all across Japan during July, August, and the beginning of September. Some attract thousands of visitors, whilst local celebrations may be smaller and more traditional. But no matter the size, *matsuri* are a great way to get out of the house and meet some of your neighbours in an informal setting. Here are our top tips for enjoying *matsuri* to the fullest.

What to Wear

Generally, Japanese people wear *yukata*, summer *kimono*, to a *matsuri*. *Yukata* are unlined garments, typically made of cotton or rayon, making them a popular choice for the hot summer nights in Japan. Both women and men have the option of wearing *yukata*. Men's *yukata* are dark, usually navy blue or black, and tied with a sash, or *obi*.

Women's *yukata* are brightly coloured, and often feature fireworks or floral patterns. Usually, long hair is worn up in a loose bun. A decorative clip completes the *yukata* look. Perhaps the most difficult part of wearing *yukata* is tying the *obi* into a bow. There are plenty of online tutorials <http://bit.ly/2brFJP7> that can explain how to tie an *obi*, or you can pick up a *yukata* with a pre-tied bow from a local department store.

Both men and women can wear wooden sandals called *geta*, but the traditional *tabi* socks are not worn with *yukata*.

If you feel like diving headfirst into the *matsuri* experience, wearing a *yukata* is a really fun way to celebrate in true Japanese style!





What to Eat

Festival food is delicious and there are plenty of opportunities to sample a wide variety of Japanese cuisine, but be sure to bring your money in small bills or coins! Cashing in an inconveniently large note may cause an agitated queue to form behind you.

Some popular *matsuri* foods are *okonomiyaki*, a savoury pancake made from a variety of ingredients including cabbage; *takoyaki*, fried balls of octopus with mayonnaise; *yakisoba*, fried buckwheat noodles; *kakigoori*, shaved ice with flavoured syrup; and of course beer! Drinking in public is allowed in Japan, so long as you're above 20 years of age. Better bring your I.D. along, because there's beer to be had at both daytime and evening festivals.

In the seemingly endless summer months, it's almost impossible to avoid a *matsuri* in Japan. By celebrating the season with fireworks and friends, *matsuri* are a great way to enjoy traditional Japanese culture. So grab your fan, throw on your *yukata*, and enjoy a hot summer's night in your brand new surroundings!

Originally from Canada, Hilary Wilson lives in Obihiro, Hokkaido, and teaches English at an international preschool. She holds a degree in Japanese language and literature and enjoys reading and writing.

What to Bring

A handheld folding or fixed fan is every seasoned *matsuri*-goer's essential. Summer nights in Japan can be just as hot as the afternoons — though the darkness will certainly help you cool off a little. Fans are available in just about every style you can imagine, so you're sure to find something perfect for you. Even if you don't end up using yours, you'll look very festive with it tucked away in your *obi*.

Backpacks are difficult to wear with a *yukata*, so it's best to bring a *kinchaku*, which is a drawstring bag traditionally used with *yukata*, or small carry bag. *Kinchaku* are used by men and women, and they're a great place to store small personal items — cell phone, cash, etc.



Events Calendar

September - October

Lauren Hill (Tokyo)

Block 1

Hokkaido
Aomori
Iwate
Akita

Block 2

Miyagi
Yamagata
Fukushima
Niigata

Block 3

Ibaraki
Tochigi
Gunma
Saitama
Nagano

Block 4

Chiba
Tokyo
Kanagawa
Yamanashi
Shizuoka

Block 5

Toyama
Ishikawa
Fukui
Gifu
Aichi

Block 6

Shiga
Kyoto
Hyogo

Block 7

Mie
Osaka
Nara
Wakayama

Block 8

Tokushima
Kagawa
Ehime
Kochi

Block 9

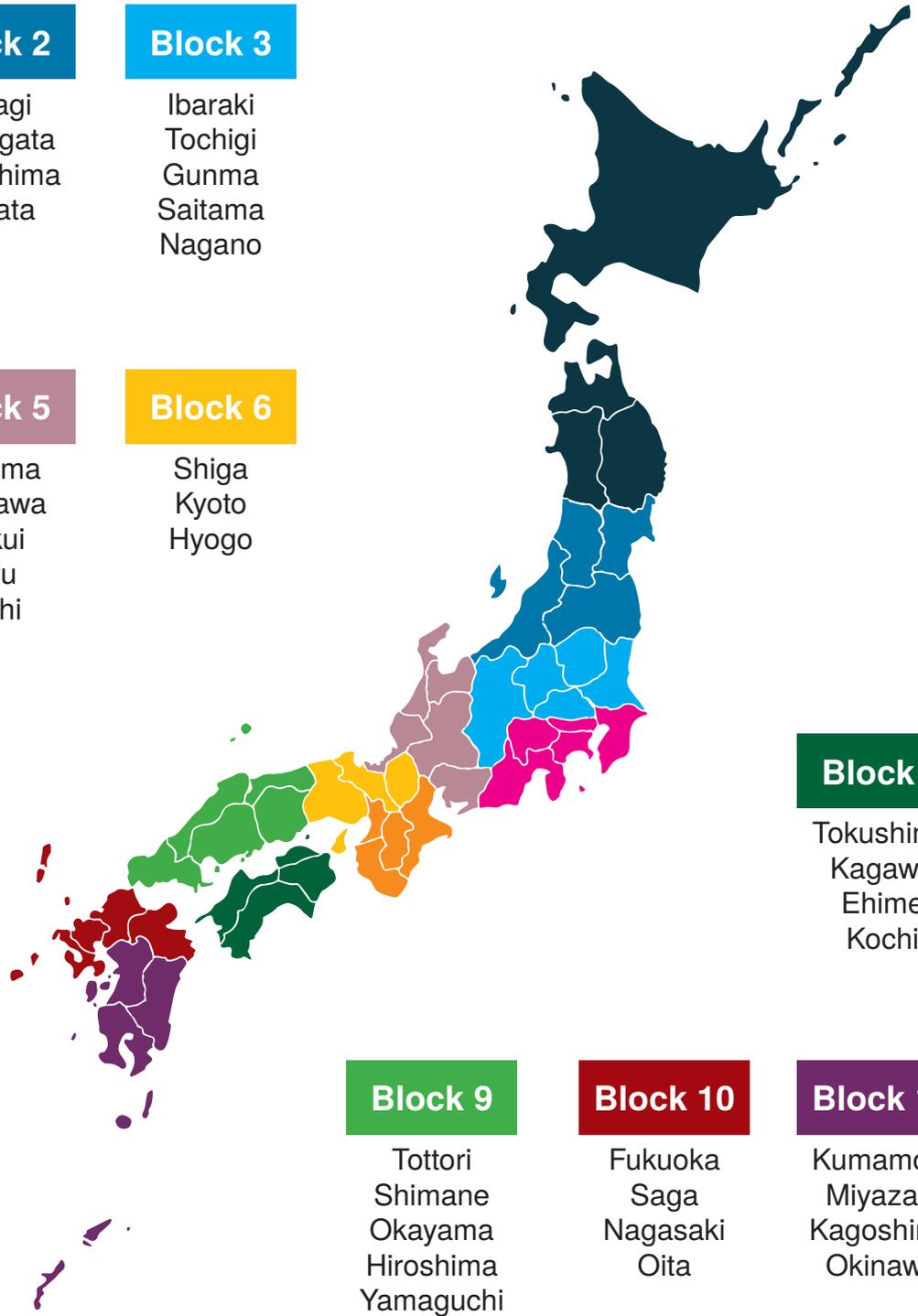
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa





Block 1

Tanbo Art Station Viewing

30 May - 10 Oct.
Inakadate Observatory,
Inakadate Village,
Aomori Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bsVOad>

Dai Don Den (Street Performance)

03 Sept. - 04 Sept.
Sapporo City,
Hokkaido Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aV96dX>

Sapporo Autumn Fest

09 Sept. - 01 Oct.
Odori Park, Sapporo City,
Hokkaido Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bwaLtl>

Odate Kyojinsha Reisai (Shrine Festival)

10 Sept. - 11 Sept.
Odate City,
Akita Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bsWc8l>

Oirase Shimoda Matsuri (Float and Costume Parade)

23 Sept. - 25 Sept
Oirase Town,
Aomori Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgHtyt>

Block 2

Aizu Matsuri (Dance and Parade)

22 Sept. - 24 Sept.
Aizu-Wakamastu City,
Fukushima Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brH34l>

Nihonmatsu Chochin Matsuri (Japanese Lantern Festival)

04 Oct. - 06 Oct.
Nihonmatsu City,
Fukushima Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2biq849>

Michinoku Yosakoi Matsuri

08 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Sendai City,
Miyagi Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aWGgsD>

Block 3

34th National New Fireworks Games

03 Sept.
Suwa City,
Nagano Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b82bOD>

Ishioka Festival

17 Sept. - 19 Sept.
Hitachinoguu Soutaisha Shrine,
Ishioka City,
Ibaraki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aVaDRl>

Ritual Shrine Display

23 Sept. - 24 Sept.
Hachiman Jinja Shrine, Ikeda Town,
Nagano Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/1v5hpp2>

Tsuchiura All-Japan Fireworks Competition

01 Oct.
Sakuragawa Riverside,
Tsuchiura City,
Ibaraki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aSU5Xq>

Asama Onsen Taimatsu Festival (Fire Festival)

08 Oct.
Asama Onsen, Matsumoto City,
Nagano Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aWGCzs>

Taisho Era Festival

09 Oct.
Yono Railway Station, Urawa District,
Saitama Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgJdl3>



Block 4

Yosakoi O-Edo Soran Matsuri (Dance Festival)

04 Sept
Kiba Park, Koto City,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUM2iq>

Arafes 2016 (Arabian Festival)

10 Sept. - 11 Sept.
Yoyogi Park, Harajuku District,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bwcj6O>

Dara- Dara Matsuri (Ginger Fair)

11 Sept. - 21 Sept.
Shiba Daijingu Shrine, Shiba District,
Minato City,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brlwb5>

Grand Sumo Tournament

11 Sept. - 25 Sept.
Ryogoku Kokugikan Sumo Arena,
Sumida City,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/1Cuib32>

Tokyo Game Show 2016

17 Sept. - 18 Sept.
Makuhari Messe,
Chiba Prefecture
Website: <http://nkbp.jp/2aUMs8n>

Fiesta Mexicana

17 Sept.-19 Sept.
Odaiba Area,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/1D3q4ks>

Shimada Mage (Topknot Hairstyle) Festival

18 Sept
Shimada City,
Shizuoka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aWH4xP>

Atami Kaijo Hanabi Taikai (Fireworks Display)

19 Sept.
Atami Beach, Atami City,
Shizuoka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/1VSBNe3>

Misakubo Matsuri

19 Sept. - 20 Sept.
Hanamatsu City,
Shizuoka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aMJT7p>

Nikkan Koryu (Japan-Korea Exchange) Festival

24 Sept. - 25 Sept.
Hibiya Park, Chiyoda City,
Tokyo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aMKWnM>

Yawatanmachi (Traditional Mikoshi Parade Festival)

17 Sept. - 18 Sept.
Tateyama City,
Chiba Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgEG7g>

Doll Memorial Service

08 Oct.
Negareyama City,
Chiba Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUNcuk>

Hagaromo Matsuri

08 Oct.
Shimizu District, Shizuoka City,
Shizuoka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aWHMLd>

Sakura Autumn Festival

14 Oct. - 15 Oct.
Sakura City,
Chiba Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b9NhoV>



Block 5

Tsuruga Matsuri (Mikoshi Parade)

02 Sept. - 04 Sept.
Tsuruga City,
Fukui Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aMKLbY>

Nagoya Antique Fair

02 Sept. - 04 Sept.
Fukiage Hall,
Nagoya City,
Aichi Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b9N84F>

Hono no Saiten (Fire Festival)

17 Sept.
Toyohashi Baseball Ground &
Toyohashi Kouen,
Toyohashi City,
Aichi Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bsXnVu>

Jike Kiriko Matsuri (Tower Float)

17 Sept. - 18 Sept.
Suzu City,
Ishikawa Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brJaW6>

Kanazawa Odori

22 Sept. - 25 Sept
Ishikawa Ongakudo, Kanazawa City,
Ishikawa Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUNNfJ>

Mino Washi Akari-Art (Creative Lantern) Contest and Exhibition

08 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Mino City,
Gifu Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aMKHco>

Takayama Matsuri

09 Oct. - 10 Oct.
Hachimangu Shrine, Takayama City,
Gifu Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brJBj9>

Owara Kaze No Bon (Matsuri)

01 Sept. - 03 Sept.
Yatsuomachi Kamishin-machi,
Toyama City,
Toyama Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bNsSJj>

Block 6

Seiryu-e Dragon Festival (Autumn)

14 Sept. - 15 Sept.
Kiyomizu Temple,
Higashiyama District, Kyoto City,
Kyoto Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgK4IH>

Kutani Zanzaka Odori (Dancing Parade)

15 Sept.
Kutani Hachiman Shrine,
Mikata District,
Hyogo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b4SnFL>

Autumn Moon Festival

15 Sept. - 16 Sept.
Ishiyama Temple, Otsu City,
Shiga Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b9O09L>

Kyoto International Manga and Anime Fair

17 Sept. - 18 Sept.
Miyako Messe, Kyoto City,
Kyoto Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aSW91F>

Mizukake Matsuri (Water Battle Festival)

18 Sept.
Kariya Kotoshiro Shrine, Awaji City,
Hyogo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aSVUn8>

Kushi Matsuri (Comb Festival)

26 Sept.
Higashiyama District,
Kyoto City,
Kyoto Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUNWzt>

Otsu Matsuri (Float Parade)

08 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Tenson Shrine,
Kyo-machi District,
Otsu City,
Shiga Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bsXxfT>

Nada no Kenka Matsuri (Battles Festival)

14 Oct. - 15 Oct.
Matsubara Hachiman Shrine,
Himeji City,
Hyogo Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aTnvUN>





Block 7

Danjiri Matsuri

19 Sept. - 20 Sept.
Kishiwada City,
Osaka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bwf1Jx>

Tsu Matsuri

08 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Tsu City,
Mie Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2biupVa>

Warai Matsuri (Smiles and Laughter Festival)

09 Oct.
Niu Shrine, Hidakawa Town,
Wakayama Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b9PosK>

Block 8

Annual Grand Festival

09 Oct. - 11 Oct.
Kotohiragu Shrine,
Kagawa Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUOoxJ>

Saijo Matsuri

14 Oct. - 17 Oct.
Saijo City,
Ehime Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brqKFW>

Niihama Taiko Drum Festival

16 Oct. - 18 Oct.
Yamane Park, Niihama Town,
Ehime Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bwfxac>

Block 9

Hiroshima Sundance (International Beach Party)

04 Sept.
Tsutsumi-Ga-Ura, Beach Park,
Hatsukaichi city
Hiroshima Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgKUF9>

Saijo Sake Matsuri

08 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Saijo, Higashi-Hiroshima,
Hiroshima Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b4UZn6>

Tottori Burger Festa

09 Oct. - 10 Oct.
Houki Town, Daisen,
Tottori Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUOwxo>



Block 10

Autumn Light Kingdom

01 Sept. - 28 Oct.
Huis Ten Bosch,
Sasebo City,
Nagasaki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2brK3hi>

Kyoryuchi (Foreign Settlement) Festival

17 Sept. - 18 Sept.
Glover Garden,
Minami-Yamaete Town,
Nagasaki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aUOHbU>

Yamanonogaku (Ritual Dance Festival)

23 Sept.
Yamano Wakahachiman Shrine,
Kama City,
Fukuoka Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aTosg4>

Hakamano Menburyu (Mask Dance)

23 Sept.
Takeo City,
Saga Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2bgGAEM>

Kyushu Ichi Fireworks Festival

24 Sept.
Huis Ten Bosch,
Sasebo City,
Nagasaki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aJ4hkT>

Nagasaki Kunchi Autumn Festival

07 Oct. - 09 Oct.
Suwa Jinja Shrine,
Nagasaki City,
Nagasaki Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aVegqG>

Block 11

Hassaku Matsuri

05 Sept. - 06 Sept.
Yamato Town,
Kumamoto Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2b85168>

Great Itoman Tug of War

15 Sept.
Itoman Elementary School,
Itoman City,
Okinawa Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aMNNqe>

Paantu (Mud Exorcism) Festival

Early Oct. (Date TBD)
Miyakojima,
Okinawa Prefecture
Website: <http://bit.ly/2aSYg5m>



Ordeals of the Disabled

Murders of Sagamihara, Kanagawa

Jocelyn Russell (Gunma)

Sagamihara, Kanagawa is a sleepy town, not famous for much. It sits on the edge of Tokyo, but does not carry the vibes of a big city. There is a small lake (Sagamiko) occasionally visited by tourists on summer vacation, but visibly seeming to suffer from an economic downturn over the past few years. The roads bend sharply around curvy mountains and have small “mom and pop stores” scattered along the stretches, some of them visibly abandoned. People seem to have left this town for the economic and social lures of Tokyo, and all that is left in Sagamihara are childhood homes and the elderly family members who care for them.

Only on July 26th of 2016, Sagamihara experienced the worst mass killing in the country since World War II (1). Satoshi Uematsu, a former employee of Tsukui-Yamayuri-en, a residential home for people with a wide range of disabilities, broke into the facility with a hammer and used zip ties to restrain staff members who tried to intervene (1). He then proceeded to kill 19 residents, ten women and 9 men aged between 19 and 70, and injured 27 others with knives while they slept in their beds (2, 5). Some of them suffered from disabilities that prevented them from leaving their beds to escape (1). He then drove to the nearest police station and admitted to the police what he had just done. His car, still outside of the police station, is reported to have blood on the steering wheel (2).

Residents who lived close to Tsukui-Yamayuri-en reported that they could not understand why someone would commit such a hideous crime

against those with disabilities. Those who lived near Uematsu said they never thought of him as a threat, oftentimes seeing him helping his elderly neighbors and playing with local children. There are reports that he wanted to be an art teacher, like his father. Even the vice president of Tsukui-Yamayuri-en did not recall hearing negative reports of Uematsu from other employees (3).

However, some employees said that Uematsu was a threat to the entire center, which is why he was removed from his position. Later he was “involuntarily committed” to a hospital for treatment of mental illness on February 19 (1). He was released on March 2 after being deemed non-threatening to himself and others (1).

Friends later told reporters that his social media accounts were filled with threats to kill those with disabilities. He often sent messages to his friends inviting them to “kill the disabled” and “change Japan” (4). They claimed that this behavior began after he started smoking dangerous, hallucinogenic drugs during his university years. Shortly after the murders, Uematsu posted a photo of himself on Twitter with the message “wishing for a peaceful world. Beautiful Japan!” (1).



Furthermore, Uematsu wrote to the Lower House Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet, calling for the euthanasia of people with disabilities to improve the world economy and to prevent World War III. He then described his plan to kill “260 people in two facilities” and then turn himself in to police (6). He acknowledged that he would have to face imprisonment, but asked for only a two year sentence on an insanity plea and a compensation of 500 million *yen* following his release (6).

“... this silence is due to the embarrassment of having a relative with disabilities...”

Over a month after the murders, many victims' names have not been released. Friends of those living in Tsukui-Yamayuri-en have expressed concern with the secrecy of the victims, unsure if their friends are dead or alive. An official from Asahi Newspaper said that the media is respecting the privacy of the victims' families, as some parents with disabled children are discriminated against. However, some advocacy groups claim that this silence is

due to the embarrassment of having a relative with disabilities and that families wish for names to be kept secret. One activist wrote in the Tokyo Shimbun that what may be viewed as a respect for privacy by keeping those with disabilities hidden is a “double standard” in the media (7).

Sagamihara was suddenly bustling with reporters following the murders, and then all of a sudden it was disturbingly quiet, as if back to the town it once was. The future of Tsukui-Yamayuri-en and its residents is uncertain, but there is one certainty: what must Japan do to avoid such attacks in the future? With the media gone and the police packing up to leave, all that is left is a small community broken by tragedy and the fear of this tragedy returning.

Sources

1. <http://bit.ly/2abtrsa>
2. <http://bbc.in/2arAsY4>
3. <http://nyti.ms/2baXTCU>
4. <http://bit.ly/2boHdf3>
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7. <http://bit.ly/2bNwmw8>

Jocelyn is a 2nd year Gunma ALT hailing from Chicago. When she's not teaching and glued to reading the news online, she enjoys running and traveling Japan by motorcycle.

ARTS AND CULTURE

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Annamarie Carlson

"August is for something cute. You can learn something in November." - A lady in a bookstore in Seattle

Michael Sosnick

I have sweat in nooks and crannies of my body I didn't even know existed.

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Sabrina Zirakzadeh

After months of festivals, concerts, and "Elisabeth," going back to school will be the REAL vacation!

Travis Shaver

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"Everyday is a fashion show and the world is the Runway" - Coco Chanel

Roxanne Ghezzi

"Clothes are like a good meal, a good movie, great pieces of music." - Michael Kors



A Stylish TRIO

Meet **Tsukasa Mikami, Keiko Nishiyama, and Tokiko Murakami**

Miki Hatayama (Tokyo) & Erica Grainger (Fukushima)

Fashion in Japan is hard to define, and it's even harder to stay in the loop with many current trends and emerging designers. So, Connect has got you covered. Tsukasa Mikami, Keiko Nishiyama, and Tokiko Murakami are hitting the Tokyo fashion scene with a splash!

A/W = Autumn Winter, S/S = Spring Summer



Mikami's Debut Collection

The Pain of Others

Their first collection is Autumn/Winter 2016, entitled "The Pain of Others." It is inspired by Susan Sontag's book, "Regarding the Pain of Others" which was published in 2003. A crucial question from Sontag's book is 'how in your opinion are we to prevent war?' Mikami's debut collection has a political theme. They say that "it addresses the social problems currently happening in Japan." Mikami chose to use the Anemone flower in many of their designs as it symbolizes "truth" and purity. Mikami also exhibited their first collection Autumn/Winter at Mercedes-Benz Tokyo Fashion Week (MBTFW) in March 2016 to wide acclaim. We can't wait to see their next collection!

Please visit this website for more information: <http://bit.ly/2c0ZOQG>



Tsukasa Mikami
Born in Hiroshima, 1982.
2014 – began his design company, Xerographica LLC

Keiko Nishiyama and 'The Cabinet of Curiosities'

'The Cloakroom'

Autumn/Winter 2016 is currently Nishiyama's fourth collection entitled "The Cloakroom" and centers on the mushroom and its destructive force. "Mushrooms are organic and unique," they say. This collection transforms the mushroom into a dream-like spellbinding force. Rich, warm fabrics are combined, like velvet and wool in luscious colors, favoring printed dresses, coats, jackets, long-sleeved tops, and wide-legged trousers. These prints contain distorted images of mushrooms and capture the essence of Nishiyama's dream-like and hypnotic designs.

Nishiyama also has accessories, such as printed stockings and handkerchiefs, which are available in Tokyo at Tokyu Plaza Ginza. Why not have a look next time you're in Ginza?

To learn more, please go to: <http://bit.ly/2byU2Tm>



Keiko Nishiyama

Born in Tokyo, 1984.

2014 - An infusion of European and Japanese whimsical art and style with a strong focus on nature and animals. Keiko Nishiyama's brand is based in Tokyo and London, and features an ongoing concept: "The Cabinet of Curiosities." This epitomizes curiosity, mystery, and illusion. Her previous three collections were "Flowers" for Spring/Summer 2015, "Fish/Aquarium" for Autumn/Winter 2015, and "Butterfly" for Spring/Summer 2016.

Tokiko Murakami and the Beauty of Simplicity

Murakami's Latest Collection

Their fifth collection is Autumn/Winter 2016, and is inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*." They say they were "drawn to the color of the houses and wallpaper used in this film." The notion of split sides and opposing views featured in the film also appear in the latest collection. *Pina* (2011), the German dance documentary film, and *Magritte* (1992), the Belgium surrealist artist Rene Magritte's book, also influenced this collection. It contains strong bold colors with loose, simple draping that is feminine and playful.

It typically takes Murakami four months to design and create each collection, and there are two sizes available. Add some color to your wardrobe with their versatile and unique designs!
For more information, please go to: <http://bit.ly/2bvXEn1>

Miki Hanayama was born in Wakayama, but now lives in Tokyo. She works for a Japanese multinational conglomerate company in the finance department. She enjoys reading books, traveling, and seeing her friends. Her favorite designer is Junko Kemi, who designs the label "kay me."



Tokiko Murakami

Born in Tokyo

Their earlier collections were "Woman" for Autumn/Winter 2014, "Beginning of Beginning" for Spring/Summer 2015, "Consideration about Time" for Autumn/Winter 2015, and "Formless Form" for Spring/Summer 2016.

A How to Be the Very Best at



Travis Shaver (Niigata)



Welcome to the world of Pokémon Go. After a long wait, it's finally here in its homeland! Here are a few tips to get you started or to help you along the way, as recommended by seasoned Pokémon trainers from all over the world.

1 Catch all the Pokémon you see. It may be the 100th Rattata you've caught, but you'll gain much-needed stardust and experience. Not to mention limited bag space; if you hoard your Pokéballs you might find yourself spinning the disc at a Pokéstop and getting a notification "your bag is full."

2 When you've saved up candies to evolve your Pokémon, it's best to evolve the one with the highest CP. When a Pokémon is evolved, the placement of the CP gauge stays the same. If the Pokémon's gauge is 75% full, it will be 75% full when you evolve it. If the gauge is at the very bottom, of course the CP number will increase after evolution, but the gauge will still be at the bottom and you will have to use a lot of stardust to fill it.

3 Save up all your evolutions, use a Lucky Egg and evolve all of your Pokémon at once. It's a great way to rack up some experience points and also make use of excess Rattata and Pidgey candies.

4 When fighting in a gym, instead of repeatedly tapping until you knock out an opponent, keep an eye on the yellow circle the enemy produces every few seconds. Swipe left or right on the screen by the Pokémon and dodge their attack, then attack the opposing Pokémon immediately after. If you time it right, you can get into a good rhythm since this happens every 1-2 seconds.

5 As the app warns, "remember to be alert at all times. Stay aware of your surroundings." This is common sense to most, but it hasn't stopped people from doing things they shouldn't and getting hurt in the process. Also, be respectful and don't go onto private property or school grounds even if they happen to be PokéStops; please don't go running into a temple or shrine to catch your favorite Pokémon until you know it is OK.

6 Many castles in Japan are home to PokéStops, and so are many game-friendly locations such as the Philosopher's Path in Kyoto, Odori Park, the Shiroi Koibito factory in Sapporo, and many famous gardens. Churches, post offices, and other public areas are also home to PokéStops. Use your quest as an excuse to find useful and interesting things in your neighborhood!

7 The best time to gain experience with a Lucky Egg is when you have around 60 Pidgey, Caterpie, or Weedle ready to evolve. It's even better when you have eggs ready to hatch. Visit [pidgeycalc http://bit.ly/2baHv6e](http://bit.ly/2baHv6e) to help calculate how many candies and Pokémon you need to max out experience.

8 Certain spots are famous for rare Pokémon, but recently the game has changed so that those Pokémon aren't there forever. If you want to catch that rare creature in Ueno Park, better book your trip sooner rather than later!

9 Want to speed up your journey to learn Japanese, or learn the original names of Pokémon? Use the Japanese version of the app instead of the English one!

That's it for tips! The more you play, the more you'll discover, and you probably have a whole list of other tips too. Make sure to help your fellow trainers when you find out something new by sharing it with them! Just remember to have fun, be safe, and catch 'em all! Good luck, trainers!

LARP Comes To Japan

Tim Saar (Gifu)

Despite being the birthplace of *kendo*, *karate*, and many other wonderful ways to fight each other, there's one thing that Japan has lacked in the "hit things hard and make sure they don't hit you back" department: diabolic magic, dark creatures wishing ruin on the countryside, and a bit of amateur acting.

Live Action Roleplay (LARP) is not popular in Japan. Being a mecca for roleplaying games and cosplay, this is surprising. If you are unfamiliar with the practice, LARP is the umbrella term for games where the players act out their characters' actions in real life, often (but not always) involving fighting and often (but not always) in a fantasy setting. It has many parallels to tabletop games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, except that the players are actually fighting and performing the actions instead of rolling dice. Picture a bunch of guys and gals running around the forest in homemade armor and with safety swords, acting like heroes and villains straight from a Tolkien book.

Night falls, and the adventurers gather around for dinner in the tavern. With some imagination, the picnic tables and slow-cookers become oaken banquet tables and boiling pots of food. After dinner, the group retires to their tents for sleep — though with a sword always close at hand, as they are never quite sure who is lurking outside.

You'll find similar scenes at most LARP events around the world; but this one in particular is from the Underworld LARP: Havenhollow, which takes place once a month in Aichi Prefecture near Nagoya. Havenhollow is the first internationally-recognized LARP group in Japan, the only outdoor LARP in Japan, and the only one conducted in English.

Havenhollow was started in October 2015 by Steven Smith, who lives in Japan with his wife and two children. He plays the Duke in the monthly games, and his family makes frequent appearances as royal

family or villagefolk. Over the months membership has grown from three at the start to 12 at the most recent event.

"I thought it was something Japan doesn't have — especially the expat community," explained Steven. "I thought it was fun and cool, and cool looking. But I wasn't 100% sure myself until I participated in a LARP in Canada."

He's referring to what might be called the headquarters of Underworld LARP, which officially started about 20 years ago in Toronto, Canada. It eventually expanded to London, Ont., and Edmonton, with Japan being the fourth group. With six others in North America, there is the possibility of North Americans coming to visit Havenhollow — both the in-game and real-life locals — to play their characters.

"They just want people to enjoy the game," said Steven. "Anyone can join. There's no restriction on age, nationality, or language." He does caution that events are in English.

Most of the players in Havenhollow were beginners to LARP before joining, and the group is friendly toward novices.

"I've always wanted to try out LARP even before I arrived in Japan," wrote Martha Osborne, a former Gifu JET. Despite finding it difficult to "become" her character, Martha enjoyed Havenhollow so much that she is looking into opening a chapter in her home town now that she's left Japan.

"This is perfect for people who enjoy the fantasy-style games, but don't want to just sit indoors all day," Steven continued. **"Getting outside, getting in the fresh air, and actually being physically active, and also being part of a social group is one of the most appealing things to most players."**

While Havenhollow LARP previously took place in a public campground outside of Nagoya, it has recently moved to its own dedicated land.

"We bought a mountain in Toyota City," laughed Steven. This move was of course incorporated into the story of the game by mysterious and deadly circumstances causing the abandonment of the town. As it's been nearly a year since the start of Havenhollow LARP, you could say this move marks the beginning of Chapter 2 for them.



Learning to Teach by Playing

“Live Action Roleplay is massive in Nordic countries,” said Steven, **“and schools actually use LARP** for teaching. It’s about hands-on learning. Teachers are using it to teach about something. Instead of lecturing they actually go out and do it.”

Most notably, Østerskov Efterskole, a boarding school in Hobro, Denmark, uses LARP to teach kids on subjects ranging from how to use the public transit system to the Roman Republic (1).

Steven holds that LARP can be a great tool for language teachers as well.

“English teaching is 10% knowledge and 90% improv,” he said. **“And what are we doing? We’re improv-ing the whole weekend. You’re living a character and you’re making things up as you go. As an English teacher you have to think on your feet, and that’s what we do with LARPing.”**

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of LARP is its freedom in execution and storytelling.

“I don’t know how many times,” said Steven, **“where I’ve written what I wanted to do and I’ve had to change it and react and bring in new characters and scenarios because [the players] didn’t follow what I thought [they] would follow. That’s part of the cool thing, is that [they] are the ones that are really in control.”**

You can find out more about Havenhollow LARP from their Facebook group <http://bit.ly/2aU7NsW>, and more about the Underworld organization from their website <http://bit.ly/2bhA8i1>.

Sources:

<http://bit.ly/1N2rFs1>

Who What When Wear

Roxanne Ghezzi (Gifu)



Who

This month we'll be featuring Rebecca Simpson, a second year JET living in Gero City, Gifu Prefecture. This city is famous for its natural hot springs known as *onsen*. Rebecca made the move to Japan from her hometown of Kenosha, Wis. Currently she is an ALT at Mashita-seifu High School.

What

Rebecca is wearing a casual *kimono*-like garment called a *yukata*, which is choice wear for summer in Japan. *Yukata* are usually made from cotton and are unlined, making them a cooler option whilst maintaining the beautiful traditional look. This *yukata* was purchased at a specialty shop in Malera Mall in Gifu City.

Yukata come with many pieces and can be quite difficult to put on correctly the first time. If you're not familiar with Japanese tradition, make sure you wrap the *yukata* left over right. The reverse is used for dressing a body for a funeral. Typically, *yukata* come as sets with everything included. Besides the *yukata* itself, there will be an *obi* which is a sash that wraps around the waist, and a large bow which is placed at the back. Some *obi* can also be tied to form the bow instead. Rebecca is also wearing traditional wooden sandals called *geta* which came with her *yukata*. Rebecca said, "I really didn't like the *obi* that originally came with this set. So, I convinced the shop owner to swap the *obi* that I liked from another set. The *obi* is actually my favorite part of the whole ensemble."

When

This is Rebecca's first *yukata*, and also her first time wearing it. Being a special, seasonal garment, she only wears her *yukata* in the summer and during festivals. It's not an everyday outfit, and not one you want to get messy either, so choose your *yukata* days wisely. According to Rebecca, while the *yukata* is comfortable to wear, the *geta* are not so much.

Wear

As mentioned before, *yukata* are typically only worn during summer festivals and firework viewings. Rebecca chose to debut her *yukata* at the Gero City summer festival, and will wear it for more festivals to come.

SEPTEMBER RELEASES

Sabrina Zirakzadeh (Osaka)

In need of entertainment? Each month, Connect brings you the latest information on upcoming releases and events in Japan. Here is the most anticipated entertainment for September!

Movies

- 10 Sept** *Suicide Squad*
- 24 Sept** *Digimon Adventure Tri 3: Confession*
- 30 Sept** *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

Concerts, Shows, & Events

- 3 - 4 Sept** Akita Caravan Music Fest, Akita City, Akita
- 17-18 Sept** Tokyo Game Show 2016, Tokyo
- 26 Aug. - 3 Oct** *One Samurai from Kagoshima: SAMURAI the FINAL and Romance!!* Revue, Takarazuka City, Hyogo

Games

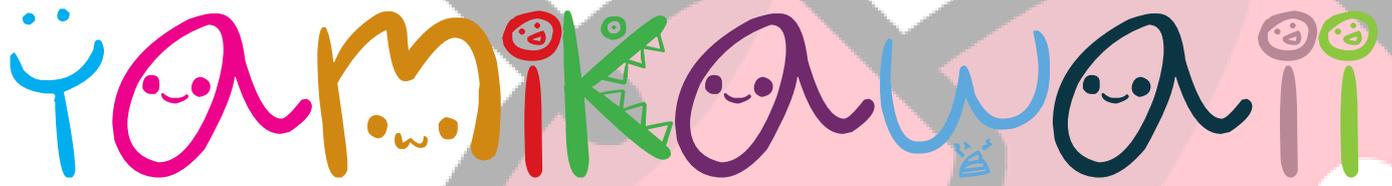
- 15 Sept** *Persona V* on Playstation 3, Playstation 4
- 21 Sept** *Utawarerumono: The Two Hakuoro* on multiple systems

Sources

<http://imdb.to/1DZWXgA>

<http://bit.ly/MxVjLD>

<http://bit.ly/2aVRGOE>



YAMIKAWAII

So Cute It's Sad

Omri Wallach (Ibaraki)

It was the second week of summer vacation, and I was trying to stay awake while editing a student's presentation, my chair as close to the air conditioning as I could manage. My brain was on autopilot, scanning for incorrect spellings and misused English, when I came across a word that broke the doldrum of August. I read it, reread it, and finally looked up at the student waiting patiently for me to finish reading her script. "What is *yamikawaii*?" I asked. I was met with a wide smile, followed almost immediately by a puzzled expression; clearly, this was something awesome, but too hard to explain. "Cute, but mental health," she managed to surmise, which, frankly, wasn't going to cut it. She struggled with words a bit longer, then finally asked if she could just show me on her phone.

Pink hearts, pink backgrounds, pretty fonts ... all beautifully juxtaposed with knives, guns, dead people, and depressing messages. A sudden gust of Myspace nostalgia hit me, but this seemed legitimately dark. Back in my day, we kept it contained to sullen gifs of Tom Felton, with some Linkin Park lyrics thrown on for good measure. Our Myspace pages were edgy and vomit-inducing because we were fourteen and trying to be deep, but the topics were relatively tame. Yet this was different. This was bright, vivid, and aesthetically pleasing, but filled with gore, suicide imagery, and disturbing commentary. My student

pointed to one particular image of a girl impaled on a merry-go-round and exclaimed "*Kawaii!*" Hang on. This isn't Pikachu dressed as a detective. How in the world was this *kawaii*? We scrolled through many examples, and no matter which picture I selected, the student would respond as if it was a baby wearing an overstuffed winter coat. Girl pointing a gun to her neck? *Kawaii*. A bunny with dead eyes holding a noose? *Kawaii*. I called over another student and pointed at an image of a girl hiding a knife behind her back while her 'fake' friends chatted in front of her. "Oh, *kawaii!*" We were clearly at a disconnect. The students showed me more examples, but I could see that this was going to require a bit more research to understand.

Yamikawaii is written with the *kanji* 病, meaning illness or sickness, which is most commonly found in the word for hospital, *byōin* (病院). Another way to interpret the *kanji* is mental illness, or *menhera*, and this is where our strange subculture finds its name. As you might have guessed, *yamikawaii* is a Japanese subculture coming out of Harajuku (the presentation skit was about subcultures). It is a sort of anti-*kawaii* — revolving around the traditional pastels and cutesiness of traditional *kawaii* culture, contrasted with messages and imagery surrounding depression, social anxiety, and suicide, amongst other

"Cute, but mental health"



colorful issues. The movement has tons of followers and fan-art, an unofficial mascot, idol groups cashing in, and even a couple of Harajuku stores (where else?) dedicated to the trend.

The thing is, *yamikawaii* should not have surprised me as much as it did. It instantly made me think of the emo trend from when I was a teenager, but with a different, cutesy take. Not to mention, I have stumbled upon many a DeviantArt page dedicated to strange and terrifying fan art, so none of the images were too shocking. This is also not the strangest *kawaii* subculture out of Harajuku that I've seen.

Kowakawaii ("scary *kawaii*") is all about blood, eyes out of sockets, and other grotesque imagery. *Yumekawaii* ("dream *kawaii*") is a mix of fairy-tale unicorns, bright pastels, and a splash of *yami* (this time, meaning "darkness") represented by bandages and needles. These trends all have anti-establishment — or anti-cuteness — in common, and it's no surprise they have dedicated fanbases.

Still, I found myself bothered. My students had reacted to examples of *yamikawaii* the same way they would react to anything *kawaii*. I tested this thoroughly, trying

to spot a difference. Picture of me as a baby? *かわいいいい!* Picture of a kid and his dad cosplaying as Master Chief? *かわいいいい!* Picture of a schoolgirl with pink hair, bandaged wrists, holding a knife? *かわいいいい!* What if I covered the knife? "Still *かわいい*." It seemed that no matter what I did or how insane this seemed to me, the students thought that cute was cute, regardless of subject matter.

That's where the disconnect lies. For me, *かわいい* appears to mean cute, and cute things are easily definable. Adorable, small, huggable, pretty — any stuffed animal or baby cousin is cute. When you add in an element of

It instantly made me think of the emo trend from when I was a teenager, but with a different, cutesy take.

shock, such as with *yamikawaii*, the picture changes. The cuteness becomes ironic, and the focus becomes the message the artist is trying to convey. A cry for help, repressed negative desires, a reflection on popular culture. This is what I see. Either that or the start of a good zombie game. Take the creepy cuteness, add a slow music-box loop and some distorted laughter, and you have a summer top-seller waiting to happen. I can't help but wonder if there is a real issue buried beneath the pink frilly facade and dead unicorns. When you live in any country long enough, you begin to notice the cracks, even in an otherwise streamlined society like Japan.

In the aforementioned country's case, the cracks seem to be the collective acknowledgment (or lackthereof) of mental health. While no country has been able to perfectly address the issue of mental health in society, discussion in Japan seems to be relatively non-existent. Maybe it is this lack of social recognition that drives my students' reaction to *yamikawaii*; they simply don't recognize the seriousness of the underlying message. Or maybe there is no underlying message, and these works of art are just cashing in on a trend. Regardless, the issue of why *yamikawaii* exists, and its connection to Japan's social perception of mental health, deserves far more than a thousand words from a jaded undergrad. In the end, it all comes back to the reactions of my students, and of children around Japan that are influenced by the subcultures of Harajuku. Maybe they think it's cute and connect with it because the trend is highlighting their true feelings. Maybe I'm making a big deal out of a passing interest. Maybe my students see the same things as me, but can't express it. What they can, and do, express, is that unrelenting joy of seeing something that appeals directly to your heart. *かわいいいい!*

LIFESTYLE

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and scattered clouds. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a thatched roof structure is visible, with a tassel-like object hanging from it. The overall mood is serene and evocative.

HEALTH & NUTRITION EDITORS

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Pameline Kang

"Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it." - Russell Baker

Jessica Williams

"Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back, a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country." — Anaïs Nin

TRAVEL EDITORS

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Dylan Brian

"Oh my god, is your surname really BRAIN?!, Yes, yes it is..."

Lara Bigotti



Health Spotlight

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Lorraine Hayman (Yamaguchi)

Did you know?

In Japan, approximately 140,000 patients suffer from ulcerative colitis (UC) and 40,000 with Crohn's disease (CD) (2) !

The Invisible Illness

There are many chronic illnesses that have an impact on people's lives, both in Japan and around the world. These are often called "invisible illnesses" as the patient may go about daily life as normal, until a flare up of the illness strikes again. It can be easy to judge people for their behaviour, but bear in mind if you have a friend or colleague who always goes home early or has some strange habits, they might be one of the five million people around the world ([1 http://bit.ly/262QQE1](http://bit.ly/262QQE1)) suffering from the often invisible inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and coping with it in their own way.

Like IBD, ulcerative colitis (UC) is also another painful disease caused by the ulceration of the large intestine. This means food, water, and nutrients cannot be well absorbed into the bloodstream, often leaving the patient with fatigue, sickness, and discomfort. Both forms of IBD are autoimmune diseases, meaning that the immune system attacks itself, causing ulceration and deterioration of the intestine (3).

Do I have IBD?

The diagnosis of IBD is still low and, consequently, many in Japan suffer from mysterious symptoms without accessing treatment. Often, these symptoms are dismissed as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). While IBS is difficult to live with, it can often be managed without medication and does not result in the range of health complications IBD sufferers experience.

The research into IBD, its causes and consequences, is relatively recent. This is especially so in Asian countries like Japan. It is believed that IBD is an inherited condition which can be linked to environmental factors, such as urbanisation and the Western diet. However, there is no proven link between diet and IBD. This is a common mistake made by both those suffering with IBD and those with family members or friends suffering. Certain foods can exacerbate the condition and symptoms, but food is not a cause.

Treatment Options

Both UC and CD are lifelong conditions without a cure. The impact of this on the mental health of those diagnosed with IBD can often prove more detrimental to health and happiness than the actual disease itself. Knowing that you have a potentially life-limiting condition, which can flare up and cause you distress at any time and any age, is a difficult truth to accept, given the amount of medication one might need to take daily.

To treat IBD, immunosuppressive drugs are usually required, which, as the name suggests, suppresses the immune system (4). This can often lead to other illnesses that are easy to catch, such as the flu or common cold.

However, often IBD can be successfully managed through medication and surgery, and there are many global support groups IBD patients can access. Simple changes to lifestyle can also make a big difference, such as introducing gentle exercise to your weekly routine (4).

IBD in the News

The profile of IBD and what it means for those suffering has recently been raised. Both diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Olympic swimmers Siobhan-Marie O'Connor and Kathleen Baker have won silver medals in Rio 2016, raising invaluable awareness of Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's Disease.

20-year-old Siobhan-Marie O'Connor became the first British woman to win an Olympic medal in the 200m individual medley, missing out on a gold medal by just 0.3 seconds. Siobhan-Marie isn't the only swimmer overcoming the challenges of Inflammatory Bowel Disease at the Rio Olympics this year. US athlete Kathleen Baker also won a silver medal, completing the 100m backstroke in 58.75 seconds.

From The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease. See more at this link <http://bit.ly/2aAXnTA>.

They have raised important awareness about the diseases, as well as demonstrating what you can still achieve even if you suffer. (5)

Source:

1. <http://bit.ly/262QQE1>
2. <http://bit.ly/2bTFgZm>
3. <http://mayocl.in/1PKnUsC>
4. <http://mayocl.in/2bEtjGp>
<http://bit.ly/2aAXnTA>



Staying *Healthy* at your Work Desk

Pameline Kang (Ishikawa)

Sometimes, we get those long breaks between classes being confined to our desks. Staying glued to our seats can be detrimental to our health. Learn how to take care of your body as you “desk-warm” with these useful tips and tricks.

RESTRICTIVE OFFICE WEAR

Your office wear might be detrimental to your health! Tight clothing can cause joint and circulation problems. When performing certain movements, such as bending over to pick something up off the floor, people wearing restrictive clothing tend to move their back and hips unnaturally to compensate, which can lead to injury.

Our Tip: Try to wear comfortable clothes that are made of breathable and flexible material. Check if your office is participating in Cool Biz (which lasts until Sept. 30). Do dress down, and consider ditching your suits and ties for open-necked, short-sleeved shirts instead.

BAD SITTING POSTURE

This is probably the most common complaint of all desk-bound workers. Back pain can occur for many different reasons, and your office environment can contribute to or even worsen it. The most common cause of back pain is slouching in your chair. Staying like this for long periods of time increases pressure on the muscles in your back making the pain even worse.

Our Tip: Make sure you move frequently throughout the day. Get out of the office for lunch or take a few flights of stairs up and down between floors. Walking from desk to desk is a great way to get to know your co-workers better, too!

EATING AT YOUR DESK

Are you sure you want to eat that bento you made at your desk? According to WebMD.com, your work desk may have up to 400 times more bacteria than a toilet seat. Now that's gross!

Our Tip: If you're a desk diner, be sure to wipe down your workspace with disinfectant and paper towels frequently and especially after every meal.

USING YOUR MOUSE/KEYBOARD

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) is a result of overusing the hands to perform a repetitive task, such as typing on a keyboard, clicking a mouse, or writing.

Our Tip: Try to avoid typing for long periods of time — take a break for a few minutes every half hour or so to give your hands, fingers, and wrists a rest.

EYE STRAIN

Several of us spend our working days sitting at a computer in an office. According to the Mayo Clinic, doing this for 40 hours every week can cause eye strain and other physical symptoms. Staring at a screen all day is not only tough on your eyes, it can drain you physically and mentally as well.

Our Tip: Do take a few breaks to rest your eyes during your shift. Do consider doing some eye exercises <http://exercises4eyes.com/> at your desk! For those wearing contact lenses, perhaps it is better to switch to glasses instead.

LONG PERIODS OF SITTING

Sitting requires the muscles to hold the trunk, neck, and shoulders in a fixed position, causing fatigue and loss of blood circulation. In addition, medical research has shown that sedentary time has been found to be associated with health effects such as metabolic syndrome (including diabetes), heart disease, and poor mental health.

Our Tip: Get up, and move! When you do it doesn't matter. Just try to remember to take a break every 20-30 minutes and move around.

Source

<http://huff.to/2bNJJKN>
<http://mayocl.in/1KvNr3l>
<http://wb.md/2bCYfFv>
<http://bit.ly/2bjNSZe>
<http://mayocl.in/2bEviug>
<http://mayocl.in/1HRBRlM>

QUICK & DIRTY RECIPES

Jess Williams (Yamaguchi)

Congratulations on surviving your first month in Japan! Unlike some lucky few who have received their paycheck last month, some of you might be scrimping on your last few thousand *yen* till payday and perhaps going to bed hungry.

Then your stomach omits such a large growl that the walls shake, and your new neighbour quietly utters “*Godzilla ga iru ka na?*” Can’t sleep on an empty stomach? Worry not! Connect is here with three quick and dirty recipes so simple and affordable that you can prepare them in your sleep. All these recipes can be made with items from your local combini/grocery store and take less than 15 minutes’ prep time.

Ramen+

Add a twist to your favourite ramen snack, by just adding a few extras to make a filling meal.

INGREDIENTS

- Your favourite flavour of instant *ramen*
- Bacon
- Egg
- Hot water

METHOD

Follow the instructions on the packet of *ramen*. Whilst it is cooking, cut your bacon into bite-sized chunks, and fry to your taste. Add the bacon pieces to the *ramen*, and then fry your egg in the bacon fat. Top your *ramen* with the egg. and enjoy!

Note: Japanese bacon is not like bacon in the US/UK. It is has more of a Spam/ham taste.

Speedy Chicken Teriyaki

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chicken breast
- 1 tablespoon of cooking oil

Marinade

- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon of honey/sugar
- 1 teaspoon of water
- 1 teaspoon of mirin

Teriyaki sauce

- Pinch of ginger powder
- Pinch of garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon of cornstarch
- 3-4 tablespoons of water
- 3 tablespoons of sugar or honey
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce

METHOD

Cut the chicken into bite-size pieces. Mix the marinade ingredients together. Pour the mix and the chicken in a bag, and completely cover the chicken in the mix. Set aside. In a small cup or bowl, mix the cornstarch with a tablespoon of water. Mix until smooth, then set aside. Fry your chicken until cooked (approx. 5-7 minutes) set aside. Mix your *teriyaki* sauce ingredients together in a small pan, bring to the boil, then add the cornstarch mix and stir until thickened. Either add your chicken to the sauce or pour over your meat. Serve with rice and sesame seeds.

Tip: Add furikake to your rice for a pop of flavour!

Egg Stir-fry (Vegetarian Friendly)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon of cooking oil
- 1 cube of ginger (unpeeled)
- Handful of beansprouts
- 2 chopped spring onions
- 2 eggs beaten
- ½ tablespoon of soy sauce (add more to taste)
- Other veggies to taste (Pak choi or broccoli are good ideas)

METHOD

In a frying pan, add your oil and your toughest veggie (i.e. broccoli) Fry for five minutes to soften. Then add your beansprouts, ginger, and half of your spring onions. Fry for 30 seconds, then turn down the heat, and pour in your egg. Let it set for a few seconds, and then slowly stir the egg mix into the veggies. When the egg has set, add the soy sauce, and let it sizzle for a few seconds. Serve with the other spring onions. Add more soy sauce to taste. Enjoy!

Tip: Swap out the veggies with your favourites, or omit the egg for a vegan-friendly option.

Source:

<http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/2098/scrambled-egg-stirfry>

<http://www.food.com/recipe/chicken-and-teriyaki-sauce-175011>

A photograph of Tanabata festival decorations. The scene shows bamboo branches with colorful paper streamers (yellow, pink, blue, green) and small paper tags (tanzaku) hanging from them. A large, ornate golden tassel (tanzaku) is visible in the lower center. The background shows a building with a dark roof and a window. The overall atmosphere is festive and traditional.

INAKA TANABATA

Olivia Obrecht (*Shimane*)

Sai! Sai! sai-sai!
Ten teko tenno, tanabata san!
Ten teko tenno, tanabata san!

The festival's chant echoed in the streets as the parade wound its way through the town of Daito in Shimane Prefecture. The August *Tanabata* festival, more than 400 years old, was in full swing. Food stands lined the roads, *kagura* dance stages were lit, and crowds of people pressed together along the edges of the main streets, gathered to watch the parade go by — a parade that new Unnan City JETs, including myself, were walking in. We were part of a group carrying tall bamboo branches covered in wishes written by children, shyly smiling and waving to all those people. Having been in Unnan City for barely two weeks, I couldn't believe we'd been invited to participate in this very festival.

We crowded into a garage with many other festival participants, all exchanging introductions in Japanese, donning the *matsuri* jackets our lovely hosts provided us with, and practicing the chant we were to call out as we walked. We then began our trek to the festival, stopping at the community center to pick up our bamboo stalks and partake in some celebratory pre-parade *sake*, *ume*, and fish cakes.

Upon making it to the festival starting place, the decorations were quite the sight to behold. Handmade floats were lined up and down the row, covered in paintings of Pokémon, *Shimaneko*, and various other Japanese characters and mascots. People lit stacks of lanterns, and small shrines were lifted onto shoulders, ready for the march. Drummers practiced their beats, children pulled at their *matsuri* jackets and headbands, and my fellow JETs and I chatted with other festival walkers. Or we tried to, with lots of hand gestures, laughs, and apologetic giggles on both sides as we made attempts at each other's languages.

Soon enough, it was time for the parade to begin! It was then that we found out, to our horror, that the watermelon-painted lanterns attached to our bamboo shoots were to be lit with actual fire! We were now faced with the responsibility of not accidentally setting the bamboo, ourselves, or the town into raging flames.

Sai! Sai! sai-sai!
Ten teko tenno, tanabata san!
Ten teko tenno, tanabata san!

Carefully eyeballing our burning lanterns, we chanted along with the other parade members, but we were soon drowned out by a small elementary school boy behind us, who proudly screamed out the lyrics as he beat his small *taiko* drum. Our bamboo branches waved in the hot, humid air as we made our way through the streets. The scribbled paper that were hung upon the branches crinkled in the breeze, falling and leaving a trail of wishes behind us.

The lanterns created a soft pink glow in the night, as the sun disappeared and the procession pushed onward. We passed food stand after food stand, the air filled with the sweet smell of baked goods and candied apples, and the sizzle of grilled *yakitori* and *yakisoba*.

To be given the honor of sharing in Daito's ancient *Tanabata* festival, walking and sweating and chanting where others had for several centuries before — it was a moment beyond words. One of the most beautiful aspects of living in rural Japan is the capacity of these small communities, like Daito and Unnan, to adopt foreigners as if they are part of a large family. It brought my fellow JETs and I closer to our community, made us new friends, and gave us a beautiful introduction to our new home. We will always treasure this experience of a summer *matsuri* in the *inaka*.



Make the Most of Your Annual Paid Leave

Chey Parlato (Akita)

We all look forward to having time off from work to relax and enjoy ourselves, but we are limited to weekends, national holidays, and the days we receive for *nenkyu* (annual paid leave). So, how can we combine these three circumstances to make them work for us? Every situation is different when it comes to the amount of *nenkyu* that you can take, and when you are allowed to use it. Over the two years that I have been on the JET Program, I have been exploring how to best utilize my *nenkyu* days so that I can get the most out of them. Here are some of the tips that I have learnt so far during my time on JET.

1 Ask your school for the yearly calendar.

This will be your best friend in terms of planning ahead, so you can get the most out of your *nenkyu*. When it comes to planning my vacations, I always refer to this calendar because it contains school holidays, public holidays, school events, and everything in between.

2 Ask your supervisor or vice-principal if you can have the time off.

Not all contracting organizations, BOEs, or schools will allow JETs to use their *nenkyu* during the school term. So, it is best to ask before making plans, because you don't want to be out of pocket if you have to change bookings and reservations. This will also help in planning future vacations, as you will be more aware of when you can and can't use your *nenkyu*.

3 Look for the short weeks.

These are the weeks where you only have work for three days with a four-day weekend. This is an optimal time to use three days of *nenkyu* and get seven (sometimes even 9!) total days off for a quick vacation. Because these are not usually during school holidays, travel will be cheaper and destinations a lot less crowded, so it is the perfect time to travel Japan or pop overseas, but if you have more than that number of days remaining and choose not to use them, you will lose them. For example, I am a second-year JET and I arrived in August. I currently have 22 days of *nenkyu*, and I can roll over 12 days of *nenkyu*. My rollover date is in one month. If I choose not to use any days between now and the rollover, I will lose ten days of *nenkyu*.

Those twenty days of paid leave can give way to some incredible adventures. Use these tips and find your own to best utilize your *nenkyu* so that you can venture around Japan or even overseas and see what the world has to offer.

4 Record your *nenkyu*.

This can vary by contract, but many times you are allowed to roll over a set number of days from the current year to the next year, so ask your supervisor about it. This will come in handy if you are planning a big trip or if you are not re-contracting, as you can potentially use your leftover *nenkyu* to leave JET early. Of course, you would need permission to use your *nenkyu* to leave your contract ahead of schedule. By keeping a personal record of how many *nenkyu* days you have leftover, you won't be caught out asking for time off and not having any left to take. This does happen, especially if you have friends or relatives that make last-minute decisions to visit you.

5 Summer leave is brilliant.

It is an extra few days off, and it doesn't get taken from your *nenkyu*. You usually only receive this special leave if you are re-contracting after your first year on JET. The number of days a person gets for summer leave is dependent on their contracting organization, but it can range from zero to five days off. Yes, some JETs do not receive any summer leave, but occasionally this is made up for by working half-days during summer vacation. Using these bonus days along with *nenkyu* can give you a one- to two-week break from sitting in the office all summer.

6 Use it or lose it.

If you do not use your *nenkyu*, then you will lose it. You can roll over a certain number of days to the next year (ask your CO or supervisor for this number in your situation),

YASSA MATSURI

Philip Kempthorne (Hiroshima)



Yassa Matsuri is one of the biggest festivals in Mihara, a small city in Hiroshima Prefecture. Almost everyone in the city, as well as many people from neighbouring towns, don their *yukata* and turn out to dance, eat, and drink their fill. The opportunity to see some of Mihara's traditional specialities, the summer festival atmosphere, and the wide range of street food make this event worth a visit. The main event is a parade that loops around the area in front of the station, in which participants perform a traditional dance late into the evening. Any Mihara-based organisation can apply to take part, including government departments, schools, companies, and community groups; the result is a diverse group of performers of different ages and backgrounds, which makes for interesting viewing. Although the steps of the dance and the music do not change, the different costumes and hairstyles, and the varying skill and enthusiasm of the dancers, allow for each individual to shine. The festival itself is a re-enactment of the drunken revelry following the construction of Mihara Castle in 1567, which is reflected in the weaving path of the dance (and occasionally in the drunkenness of the participants). The celebrations last three days, with the parade occupying the first and second days, and the festival culminating in a fireworks display on the evening of the third. *Yassa Matsuri* provides the true atmosphere for any traveller wanting a taste of Japanese summer.

Phil Kempthorne is a Kiwi and English teacher living in Onomichi. He can most likely be found at a café, bakery, restaurant, bar, or generally anywhere that serves food, drink, and atmosphere!



COMMUNITY

A photograph of a Japanese festival, likely a Matsuri. In the foreground, a man is wearing a dark, tall, conical hat (eboshi) and a dark kimono with a colorful patterned sash. He is looking slightly to the left. In the background, other people are visible, some wearing blue festival attire. Large, decorative flags (nobori) are flying, one of which features a butterfly design. The scene is outdoors with greenery in the background.

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Joshua Francis

*"All sashimi and no Marmite
make Josh a sad boy"*

Amir Bagheri

*"It always seems impossible until
it's done." - Nelson Mandela*

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Subane Abdi

*You can only appreciate the
power of air conditioning during
the incessantly hot Japanese
summer days (and nights -
they're the worst).*

Emma Riley

*"Tokyo is pretty much how the
90's imagined the future" -Sam
Riley*





Falling Into Place

The Takachi Fireworks Festival

Hilary Ann Wilson (Hokkaido)



Obihiro is a small city in Hokkaido, it serves as the capital city of the Tokachi subprefecture. Obihiro is home to about 170,000 people, including a few hundred foreign households. Most of these are English teachers who work with JET or are privately employed. Generally speaking, the foreign households all know each other, or know someone who knows someone. A few “lifers” reside here; Americans with Japanese families, and young people starting out their careers as English teachers in Japan.

Obihiro is home to a brand new bookshop, Okasho, and its partner café, Doutor. It mirrors the popular American combination of Starbucks and Barnes & Noble. The new bookstore is already a popular stop for people who want to enjoy a comic and a coffee.

On Friday morning, I approached the café, eyes narrowed and curious. In the throng of Japanese people stood a large man with sandy blonde hair waiting in line to order.

I met Dan and his wife Kim during my first stint in Japan. I was an ALT in a small farming town, just outside of Obihiro from 2009 - 2013. After this I moved away from Japan, and although we kept in-touch on Facebook, I haven't seen any of my friends from my ALT life since I left Japan. But I moved back to Obihiro for a new job in July 2016.

Leaving home to come back to Japan was difficult, but there was no doubt it was the right decision to make. I started studying Japanese in high school at the age of 16 and dedicated my whole university life to getting my degree so I could get to Japan. That was always my goal.

After my ALT career ended and I left Japan, it felt as if my life had ended. That sounds a tad dramatic, but

my whole life from the age of 16 was dedicated to getting to Japan. When I had to leave the country, it felt as though all that work I did was for nothing, and a piece of me died.

The decision to come back to Japan was made after some reservation and endless discussion with my best friend, but the decision was made and things just seemed to fall into place.

“Hey,” I said as I approached.

Dan looked up from his phone and stared at me, wide-eyed. “Hey!” he said, looking like he had seen a ghost.

“How’s it going?” I asked tentatively, grinning from ear to ear.

“Good. Oh my god, it’s good to see you!”

We chatted for a bit and I explained what I was doing back in Obihiro. Suddenly a short Japanese woman, who was standing in front of us, turned around.

“Oh, this is Naomi. She’s our Japanese mama (1).” Dan explained.

Naomi nodded, and she and I exchanged pleasantries.

“What are you doing tomorrow?” Naomi asked me suddenly in Japanese.

“Oh, right!” Dan said. “Would you like to come to the fireworks festival with us tomorrow?”

Surprised, I looked at both of them. “Sure!” I said. “If it is not an imposition.”

“No,” Dan said. “We have an extra ticket we’ve been trying to give away.”

We floated between speaking in English and in Japanese.

“Yeah! I would love to go. I have never been to Tokachi’s Fireworks Festival before.”

“Well, then you have to come. Meet us at Obihiro Station tomorrow at 4:40 p.m. and we will all go together! I will bring lunch; make sure you bring a drink.”

“See you tomorrow!”

The two jetted off to their next destination, and I ordered my drink from the café.

There was more food than the five of us could eat. Naomi had made five pieces of inari for all five of us, plus salads, karaage, yakitori, and a fruit plate for dessert. Dan and I stared at each other in disbelief as we dug into the feast.

“I feel compelled to eat,” he said, helping himself to a serving of karaage.

I dove into the yakitori. “Well, we have two hours before the show begins. We have time.”

About 200,000 people visit the Tokachi Fireworks Festival. For a city of less than 250,000 people, this festival is a huge deal.

“It’s the third largest in Japan, too!” Dan said, pouring salad dressing on his tomato-less salad. Naomi made it especially for him.

With sponsors like Toyota and Coca-Cola, the event was huge, lasting for more than two hours, and boasting about 20,000 fireworks.

Chatting and laughing for two hours, catching up felt nice. It was also nice to get to know Naomi, who was kind enough to invite a perfect stranger along for the show.

We all watched Tokachigawa Park fill with people. Many young people were dressed in *yukata*; I

wore a pair of black shorts with a black top. I did not have my own *yukata*. We all had a cell phone or camera ready to record the night’s event.

All of the struggles with the decision to move again from my home country to my adopted country seemed to melt away.

The show started and fireworks of all colours and shapes filled the night sky. Accompanied by different musical pieces, each fireworks set had a particular theme. One was made for engaged couples and newlyweds. Flowers burst into sight, littering the black sky with reds, purples, and yellows. But the best part was the grand finale.

A spectacular array of gold fireworks (which might have had something to do with Japan’s performance at the Rio Olympics this year) shot off one after another into the black. Recorded by nearly everyone in attendance, the grand finale was a ten-minute display of pride, performance, and perfection. There was no break nor pause during the show: just golden streaks that took over the hearts and minds of those in attendance.

Sitting beneath the spectacular gold fireworks that lit up the night sky, beside old friends, Dan and Kim, and in front of new friends, Naomi and her husband, it felt just like being home. All of the struggles with the decision to move again from my home country to my adopted country seemed to melt away. A girl with a dream, and the courage to make it happen, ended up in the right place just as she planned.

(1) A Japanese mama is another term for a host mother.

Painting My Way, *Days Of* 30 Water colour

Kelly Pieterse (Hiroshima)

Throughout August, I challenged myself to paint one watercolour a day. So far, I've painted some pretty interesting and strange things which reflect the project's topic, "My Japanese Summer." Among some of the paintings, there are: an octopus tentacle from my local supermarket, a cicada, and even my favorite artwork by Yayoi Kusama! On my art page, I post one painting a day or a photo of a painting in progress. Depending on the complexity of a painting or if I have time constraints, it may take two days to complete. If this happens, I post a photo of the work in progress.

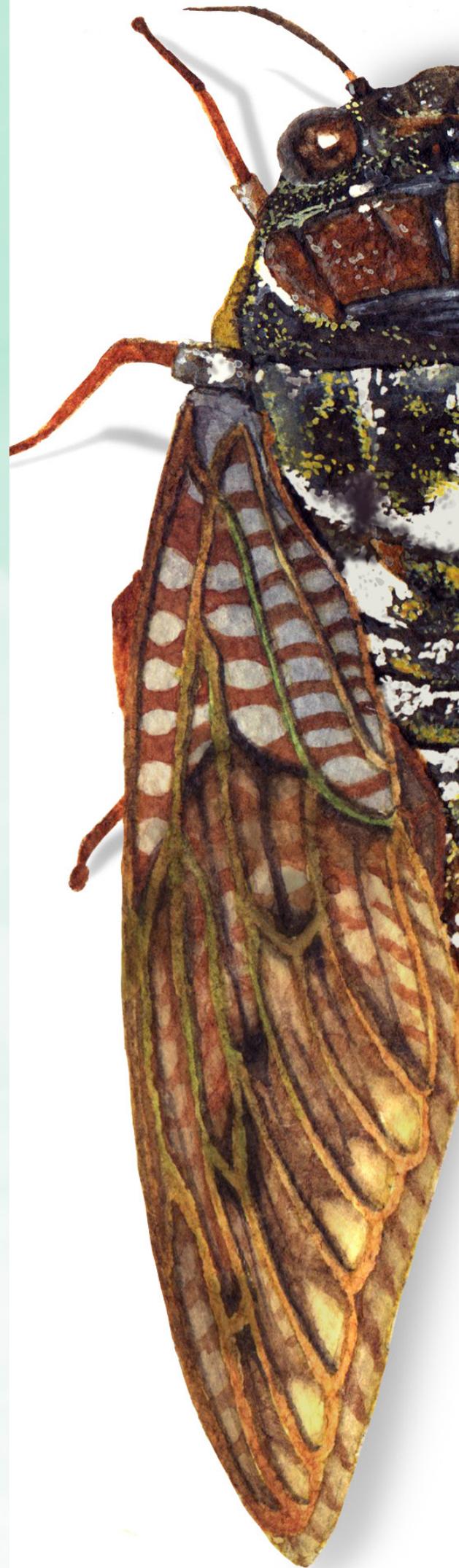
I'm always looking to learn and try new things, so my art always has room to further develop. I believe my art has a bright and light hearted tone to it, perhaps even a slice-of-life kind of feel. After all, what I like to paint are taken directly from my life, and put onto paper. If you want to know what kind of person I am, all you have to do is look at my art.

My art career, like many other artist's journeys, started out rocky. Creating art was an intimidating thing; there are so many mediums to choose from, and naturally you gravitate towards one medium

over another. For me, my default was digital art, as I'm a trained 2D animator. Earlier in my art career, regardless of how hard I worked, I always had a negative internal dialogue on loop in the back of my head, "Will people like it?" and "Is it good enough?" Art became a chore and I just wasn't happy.

I was once strongly urged to get a set of watercolour paints for a local community art class. I absolutely hated it; it all felt forced. I was always of a strong opinion that traditional mediums that require painting supplies seemed a waste of money, especially when I didn't have the money to spend. A further great cause of anxiety for me is the lack of an "undo" button to erase any mistakes! However, beginning last May, my perspective began to change drastically. I dug out the forgotten paint set and this time took things at my own pace. I think my recent breakthrough happened because I finally painted for myself. I wanted to have fun and I didn't want to please someone. Since that day, there has rarely been a day that goes by where I'm not painting! I don't have that negative dialogue on loop anymore, and I'm having the time of my life.

"Don't think about making art, just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it's good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding, make even more art." — Andy Warhol





I've only recently started painting and every artist needs a portfolio, so I wanted to build one with a more personal, connected tone in an engaging way. I also wanted to share this process with others. I was inspired when I saw the class *"How To Start (And Finish!) Your Very Own 365 Day Project."* (1) taught by Cynthia Kool. I saw this as a chance for me to grow artistically, whilst also building a fun and personal portfolio.

Finding the time to paint every single day is a big undertaking, but I'm pretty lucky to have a supportive husband that can cook well and understanding friends. I find that I have plenty of time to sketch and paint at my schools' art clubs. I've also traveled to Naoshima island, also known as "art island," for my 1st wedding anniversary. There, I got the chance to paint on the go.

Motivation is a big part of this project, and the support and kind words from people on social media helps keep me going. This project is a priority for me; I'm dedicated to seeing it through, and I have a few fun ways to keep track of my project's progress which keeps me engaged and posting to my blog and social media everyday makes me feel pretty accountable.

Documenting my progress and sharing the process of becoming an artist is extremely exposing, but it is important to me. I've only been painting with watercolours for a few months, so I hope to improve my painting skills and build a body of work that has a personal touch. This is a great challenge for me and I hope to meet like-minded people throughout the

journey.

So, what's next? Now that my "30 Days of Watercolour" project ended with August, I'll be starting an ongoing project called "Paint My Treasure!" This is where anyone can send me an image of something that they hold dear and there is a chance I will paint it while sharing the steps and process as I do.

"Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." — Dr. Seuss

I feel that we are told at every phase of our education that everything we do has to be done for or designed with a consumer in mind. Someone must like it and buy it for it to be considered a success. I find that this mindset is outdated; there is no real connection between your art and the person looking at your art. I don't want to trick people into liking my art, which I paint in my own way for the joy of painting, and hope that my watercolours are enjoyed by others.

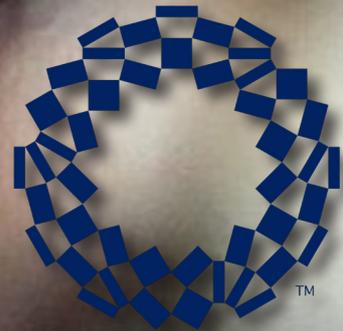
Kelly Pieterse is a creative twenty-something originally from South Africa. She graduated from film school with a Bachelor's Degree in animation and script. She and her husband feel lucky to have found themselves in Hiroshima where she now spends her days teaching English at several schools, and her free time exploring, eating, and painting everything that catches her eye. Follow her 30 Days of Watercolour project on: her blog over at itsakelly.blogspot.com [\[\[http://bit.ly/2c5qBLW\]\]](http://bit.ly/2c5qBLW), @Itsa_Kelly on Twitter, and Instagram and Facebook @itsakelly

"How To Start (And Finish!) Your Very Own 365 Day Project."
<http://skl.sh/2brwSwY>

THE OLYMPIC GAMES



Rio 2016



Tokyo 2020



This month, the sports section is bringing you two Olympic articles to celebrate the Rio 2016 Olympics and to begin looking ahead at what Tokyo 2020 could bring us. This month's featured articles look at how Rio 2016 has been an Olympics that has brought countries and people together despite their differences as well as looking at a particular sport that could be making headlines come Tokyo 2020 for quite divisive reasons.

The 2016 Rio Olympics, in particular, has brought sports and international competition to the forefront of conversation this month in Japan. The first article shares the experience of one JET living in Tokyo, as he watches the Olympics unfold. The Rio Olympics has not been without its controversies, but his story maintains the positive spirit of this global tradition.

Japan and the 2016 Olympics

“Globalization in the Games and Gearing Up for Tokyo 2020”

by Josh Fries (Tokyo)

“I think Japan’s rugby team is quite strong,” I say while leaned over a big, wooden table in the main office of my school’s mechanical engineering section. My co-worker and I sit and drink coffee while discussing the country’s recent athletic performances, a thing that has become somewhat of a ritual as of late. On the television in front of us we watch the Japanese women’s archery team take on Ukraine.

“America is strong in many sports,” he says, leaning back into his chair. “How about America’s rugby team? Is rugby so popular in the US?”

I smile and say, “Rugby is becoming more popular in the US, but we’re not quite there yet. Year after year, we get stronger though.” We pause in our conversation for a moment to watch the Japanese archers take their shots for the round. Some of the other teachers in the room come over to watch as well. An arrow lands in the 10-ring, and the room lets out a content sound of satisfaction. It’s a warm and fun environment. There are few things that put me at ease more than sitting around watching sports with other people and chatting like we’re professional commentators, exchanging our infinite knowledge

of sports while not necessarily being sports-inclined.

The Rio Olympics have, like most other major international sporting events, provided endless amounts of topics for watercooler conversations at my school. Much like music, sports tend to be a universal language of sorts. No matter one’s background or origin, it can be surprisingly easy to strike up a conversation with almost anyone in any language if the topic comes to sports.

“Did you see Nishikori edge out Nadal?”

“Why is Fu Yuanhui so darn adorable?”

Oddly enough, quite often we tend to talk about Olympic athletes as if we were talking about our family or friends. These people who represent our respective countries, I suppose, are in some ways like family. Our compatriots represent our nation on an international stage. The Olympics are supposed to be a grand stage where countries from around the world can demonstrate their prowess with respect to others, as if the honors they gain illustrate national quality. If our compatriots perform well, it somehow reflects well on us though we may personally have

never even so much as leapt a hurdle or picked up a javelin. Such is the value of the Olympics.

When it comes to the Olympics, there are incredibly few moments of disparaging the athletes we see perform, at least when talking about them with my co-workers. We often speak of the athletes in a knowing tone that they are there performing feats that we ourselves couldn’t think of achieving. A diver may mistime their rotation and land on their back into the green diving pool in front of a large crowd, but we’d still admire and praise their ability for even being able to attempt what for most people would be impossible. The Olympics are intended to be full of positivity in a world that often emphasizes how absolutely terrible everything is, from wars to famine to social inequality. For the brief few weeks that the Games occur, the world is allowed to focus on the beauty of sport and the athletic talent of its sons and daughters. I don’t personally know Katie Ledecky, but I’ll happily talk about her as though we were friends from back in the day and how she’s been amazing ever since she was 15. By the time you read this, the 2016 Rio Olympics will have finished. The final medal count will be tallied, athletes will return to their

home countries, and we'll go back to our normal, pre-Games media routines. Once the Olympic flame goes out in Rio, the countdown to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics really begins. Japan will be hosting the Summer Olympics for the first time since 1964. Hopefully the Games will bring many benefits for Japan and the international community, and not just in terms of infrastructure and prestige.

The Games allow for the world to see the best of the host country, but they also provide the hosts a chance to experience the best the visitors have to offer in terms of sportsmanship and skill. The Olympics, both the Summer and Winter Games, allow the world to come together in the name of sport. Those brief few weeks of unity and camaraderie alone are valuable in a world where both are seemingly becoming harder and harder to find on both a national and international scale. The Games give us a chance to learn about one another, to see that the world is filled with bright and talented people.

Sometimes, it is this observation that makes the Olympics special, where those countries that might be politically at odds with each other are, for the brief time of the Olympics, brought together to compete through their respective athletes, who just want to do what they love without the burden of international politics.

Josh Fries lives in Akishima, Tokyo and works in Fussa as a second year ALT.



#TeamRefugees



Looking Ahead Tokyo 2020

“*Karate at Tokyo 2020: New Olympic Sport or Simply a Gimmick?*” A *Karateka’s* Perspective”

Joni Longden (Shiga)



On Aug. 3, 2016, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved karate, along with four other new sports, for inclusion in the 2020 Olympic Games, which will take place in Tokyo. This approval is the culmination of years of petitioning for karate’s approval, from enthusiasts all over the world. Perhaps it’s fitting that the first Olympic karate events will now take place in the birthplace and spiritual home of karate, and karate fans should rightly rejoice over this Olympic inclusion for 2020 — but is it the right decision?

Judo, for example, is a traditional Japanese martial art, and it's been an Olympic sport for years. Both taekwondo and wrestling are comparable to karate, so it raises the obvious question: what took so long?

The answer isn't so simple. The main problem is that karate has never had a recognised governing body. There are several styles of karate that are practiced all over the world, and several governing bodies have their own approaches to organising competitions. The World Karate Federation (WKF) has always been the long-established leader amongst these. The WKF has held biennial World Karate Championships. The 23rd games will take place this year in Austria and will attract the very best competitors from several styles, from all over the world. With direct links to traditional Japanese karate, the WKF has always been the front-runner to organise the logistical challenge that will be the Olympic karate events.

Karate traditionally consists of "the three Ks." Each style will practice its own variation of kihon (repetitive basic techniques practiced alone), kata (pre-determined sequences of moves practiced alone) and kumite (pre-determined or freestyle sparring practiced with a partner). Exponents from any style can compete against one-another in Kumite events fairly simply, and the WKF approach is predictably ruthlessly well organised. Kata events involve two competitors performing a kata from their style, and a panel of judges deciding which is best. Because kata vary so much, directly comparing two katas from different styles is somewhat more

complicated. But after years of bidding for Olympic inclusion, the WKF has developed a very precise method for ensuring the contests run fairly. The timeliness and organisation of these events have been showcased at the WKF Karate World Championships, and it seems it's been enough to finally convince the IOC that karate is a viable Olympic sport.

But is all this effort worth it? Will karate's inclusion into the Olympic Games benefit karate in general? Some consider karate to be an art form, and argue that sport karate in general has the potential to taint this so-called budō karate. It's true that the founder of modern karate strongly opposed competitive karate. But no one can deny that the karateka (exponents) who emerge as champions of international competitions are incredible athletes. Their performances are stunning, and in my view, if this inspires just one extra person to take up karate, then this decision is the correct one.

I've practiced karate for over a decade, and in that time, I've taught and competed with and alongside some incredible karateka. Hopefully, if I'm still in Japan in 2020, I'll get my hands on a ticket to witness some of the events for myself. If you have the opportunity to do the same, I'd recommend it wholeheartedly — you won't be disappointed!

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