

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

**OCTOBER
2017**

Have you heard of...Yosakoi? Explore the history of one of Japan's most celebrated traditional dances

Raising funds, raising hopes - Join JETs on an annual expedition to Baan Unrak Children's Home

Bathing Thai Elephants - An alternative approach to wildlife tourism

To leave, or not to leave? - Japan's rising divorce levels as seen through contemporary drama

Back to school bento recipes - Get inspired by our readers' top DIY lunchbox tips!



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

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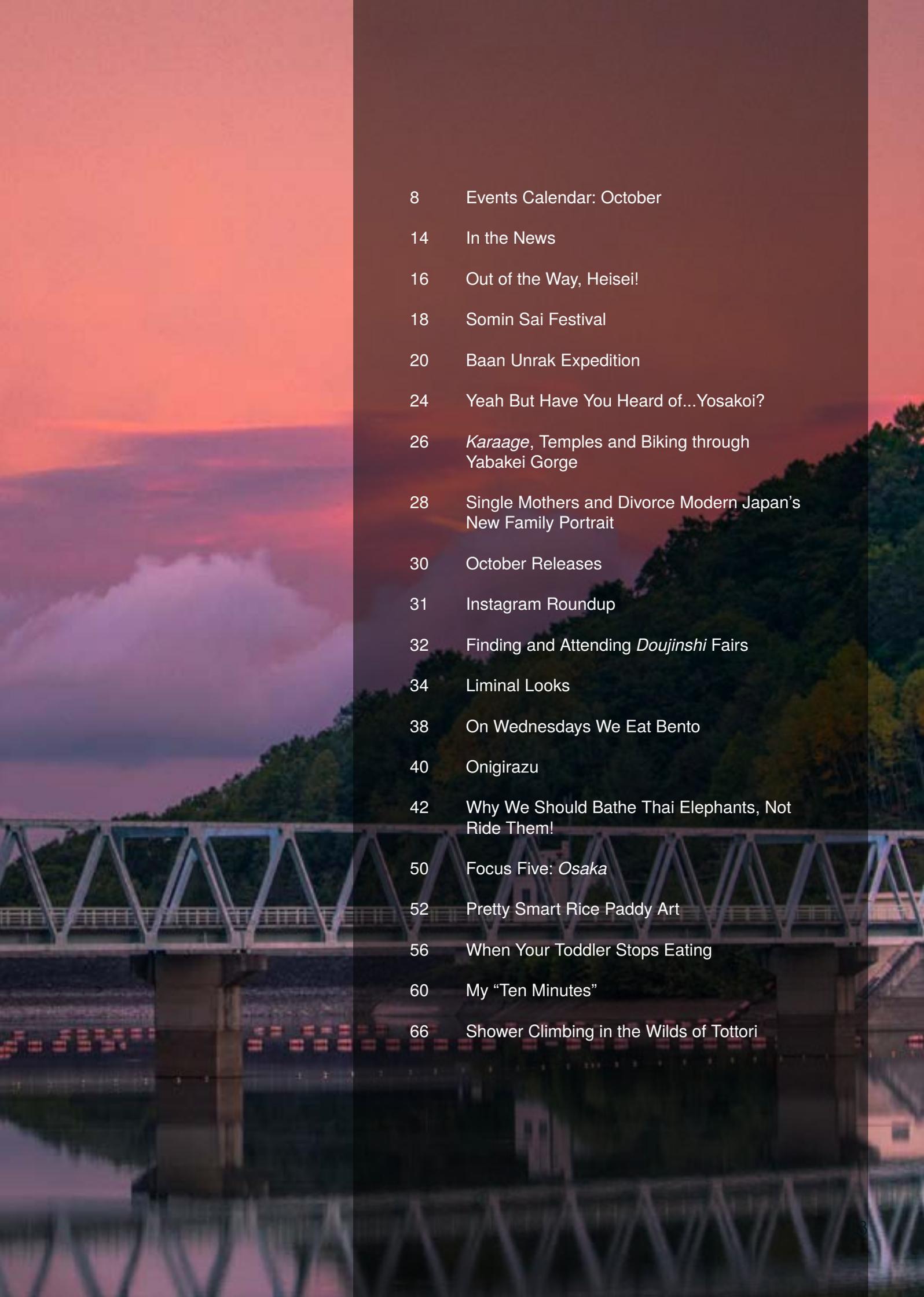
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's not a huge secret that Autumn is my favorite season of the year. I love the change in color, the hoodies and scarves, the warming food, and Halloween. Also, the probability of me being bitten while standing next to my bike for too long has been dramatically reduced.

Autumn doesn't last quite long enough in my opinion. I think that's also another reason why I think it's special.

Are you looking forward to what October has in store for you? 'Cause I sure am. Sure, October is full to the brim with obligations like the debate and recitation contests, speeches, and presentations. However, don't let your work life overpower your personal life—you need time for yourself as well, especially if it's hectic.

In Japan, the changing of the leaves is also an event for Japanese people. It's not as festive and celebrated as *hanami*, but it's still just as beautiful. If you get the opportunity, I definitely recommend spending an afternoon outing with some people to lay in the grass underneath some trees and just *relax*.

I for one am getting ready for my last year in Japan. I think this particular fall is hitting me just a little harder than normal because it's put the rest of the year in perspective for me, and also the past few years. It's time for some things to change. The question now is: what do you want to do next?

Lilian Diep
Head Editor
3rd Year Toyama ALT

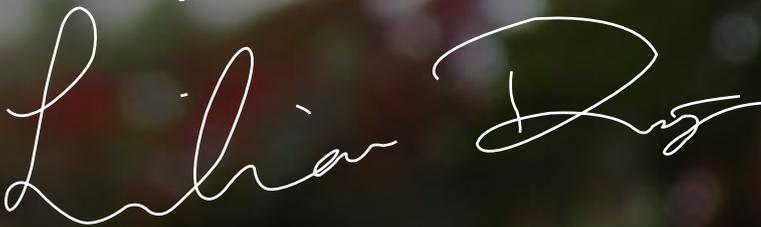


Photo: Hannah Martin



NEWS AND EVENTS

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Tresha Barrett

Goodbye sweltering heat!! You smothered & tormented with vengeance only a true nemesis could know...

EVENTS EDITOR

connect.events@ajet.net

Bailey Jo Josie

Photo: Shantel Dickerson



Events Calendar:

October

Bailey Jo Josie (Miyazaki)

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

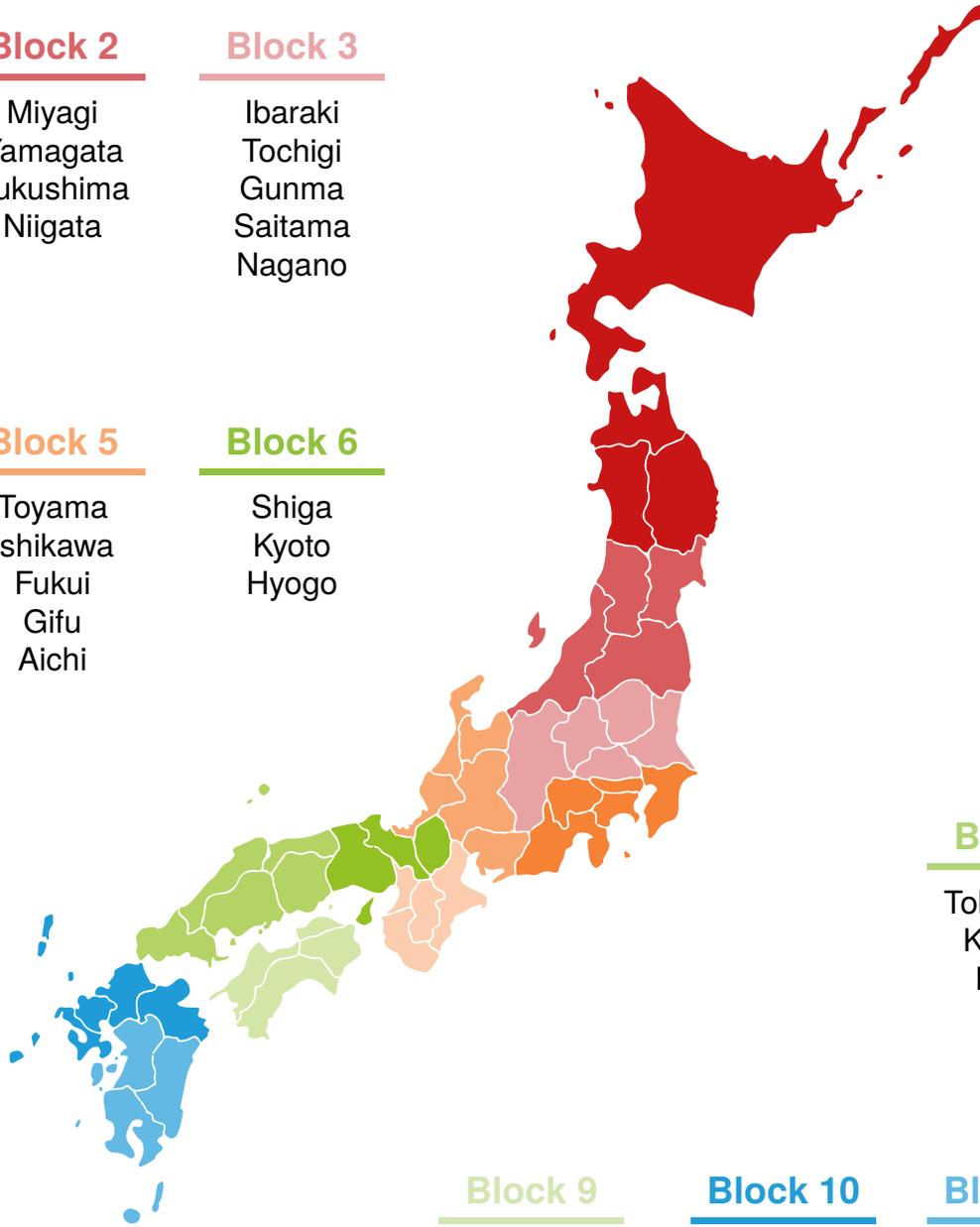
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

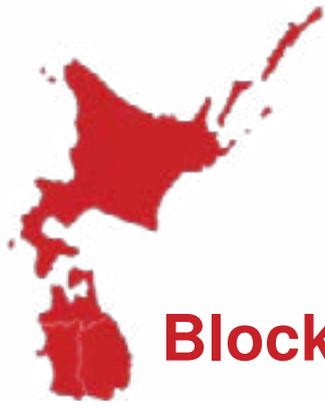
Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa





Block 1

Sapporo International Art Festival

6 August - 1 October
Moerenuma Park & Other Aresa,
Sapporo, Hokkaido Prefecture

[Website](#)

Iwate Kitakami Marathon Event

8 October
Kitakami, Iwate Prefecture

[Website](#)

Omagari Fireworks Autumn Chapter

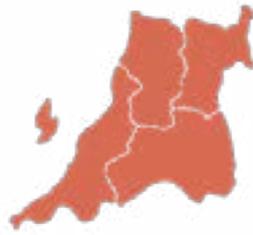
14 October
Omagari Akebonocho, Daisen-shi,
Akita Prefecture

[Website](#)

Kuoishi Craft Garden Premium

21 October – 22 October
Fukuro, Kuroishi, Aomori Prefecture

[Website](#)



Block 2

Michinoku YOSAKOI Festival

7 October – 8 October
Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Echigo Kenshin Sake Festival 2017

21 October – 22 October
Joetsu, Niigata Prefecture

[Website](#)

Nanyo Chrysanthemum Festival

13 October – 12 November

[Website](#)

Nihonmatsu Chochin Matsuri (Japanese Lantern)

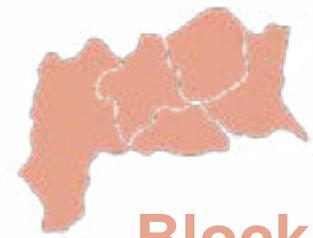
4 October - 6 October
Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture

[Website](#)

Autumn Festival

7 October - 8 October
Tanagura Town, Shirakawa,
Fukushima Prefecture

[Website](#)



Block 3

Tsuchiura All-Japan Fireworks Competition

7 October
Tsuchiura City, Ibaraki Prefecture

[Website](#)

Festival at Shimonita Suwa Shrine

7 October - 8 October
Shimonita Suwa Jinja Shrine, Gunma Prefecture

[Website](#)

Asama Hot Spring Fire Festival

14 October
Asama Onsen, Matsumoto City,
Nagano Prefecture

[Website](#)

Kanuma Buttsuke Autumn Festival

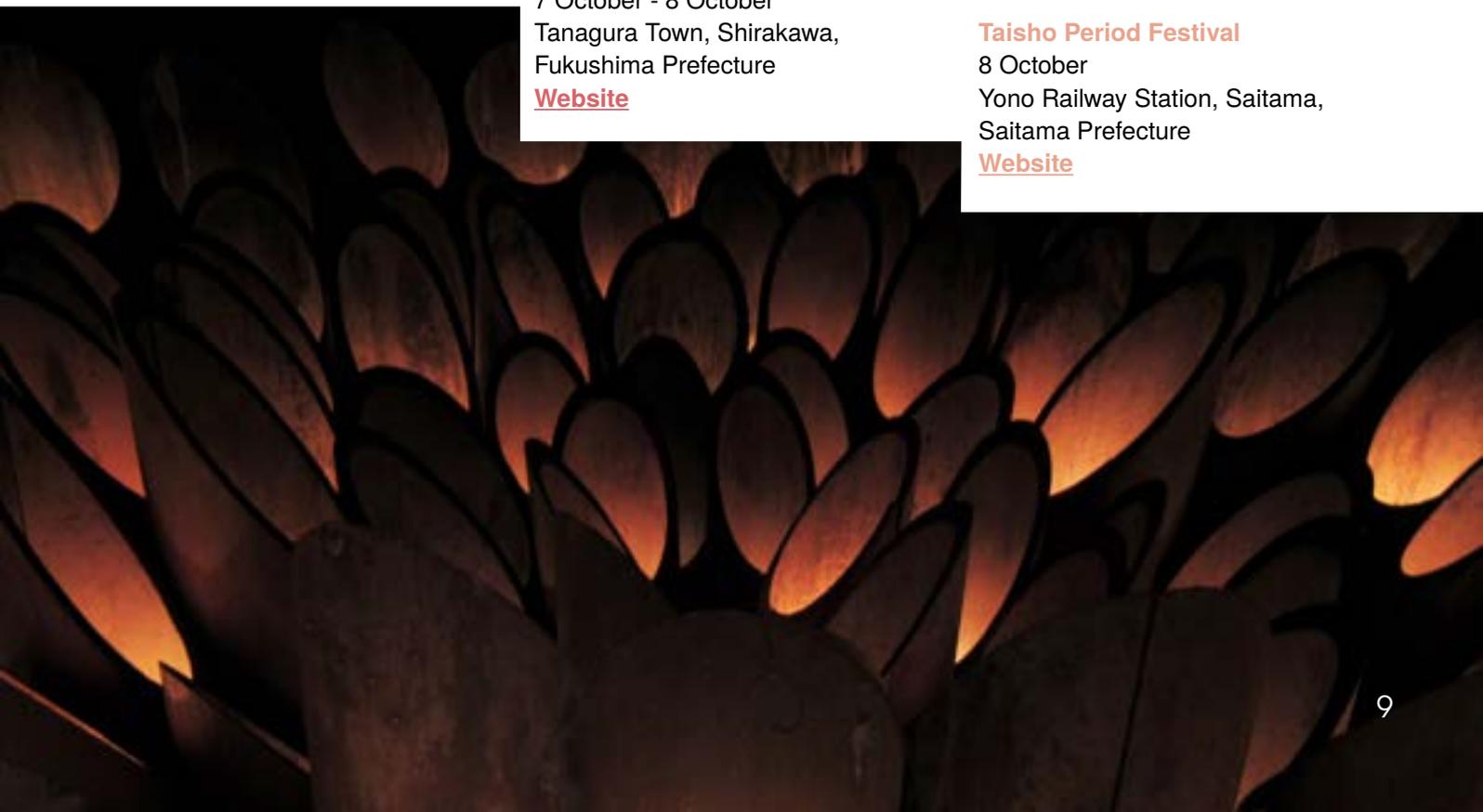
8 October – 9 October
Kanuma, Tochigi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Taisho Period Festival

8 October
Yono Railway Station, Saitama,
Saitama Prefecture

[Website](#)





Block 4

Glass Fair

7 October – 8 October
Sumida-ku, Tokyo

[Website](#)

Chushu Kangen-sai

4 October
Hie-jinja Shrine, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

[Website](#)

O-Edo Mikoshi Matsuri (Float Parade)

10 October
Kiba Park, Koto, Tokyo

[Website](#)

O-E-Shiki

11 October - 13 October
Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Ohta, Tokyo

[Website](#)

Funeral Ceremony for Dolls

14 October
Nagareyama City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website](#)

Yokosuka Mikoshi Parade

15 October
Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website](#)

Miho Hagoromo Matsu Festival

7 October
Shizuoka

[Website](#)

Fuji – Yamanakako Ediken for Peace

1 October
Yamanakako, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website](#)



Block 5

Shinminato Hikiyama Festival

1 October
Hojozu Hachiman Shrine, Imizu, Toyama Prefecture

[Website](#)

Nagoya City Festival

21 October – 22 October
Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Miya Matsuri

21 October – 22 October
Yatsurugi-jinja Shrine, Wakamiya-jinja Shrine, Gamagori, Aichi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Lighting Festival with Mino Japanese Papers

7 October - 8 October
Mino City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website](#)

Takayama Matsuri

9th - 10th October
Hachimangu Shrine in Takayama City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website](#)

Kuzuryu Autumn Leaves

28 October - 29 October
Ono, Fukui Prefecture

[Website](#)

The 11th Hokuriku Ramen Expo

28 October - 29 October
Ono, Fukui Prefecture

[Website](#)



Block 6

Autumn's Great Tea Ceremony

22 October
Keikoen, Shishonosai, Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture
[Website](#)

Kangetsu-no Yube

4 October - 6 October
Daikaku-ji Temple, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto
[Website](#)

Autumn Moon Festival

4 October - 6 October
Ishiyama Temple, Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture
[Website](#)

Otsu Matsuri (Float Parade)

7 October - 8 October
Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture
[Website](#)

Shigaraki Earthenware Sale Event

7 October - 8 October
Shigaraki Town, Kouga City, Shiga Prefecture
[Website](#)



Block 7

Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri (Speedy Float Parade)

7 October - 8 October
Kishiwada City, Osaka Prefecture
[Website](#)

Hiraoka Matsuri, Autumn Ritual

14 October - 15 October
Hiraoka Jinaja Shrine, Higashi-Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture
[Website](#)

Tsu Matsuri (Dance & Parade)

7 October - 8 October
Tsu City, Mie Prefecture
[Website](#)

Uneme Matsuri

3 October - 4 October
Uneme Jinja Shrine, Sarusawa, Nara Prefecture
[Website](#)

Warai Matsuri (Smiling & Laughing)

8 October
Hidakagawa Town, Wakayama Prefecture
[Website](#)



Block 8

Saijo Matsuri Festival

14 October - 17 October
Saijo-City, Ehime Prefecture
[Website](#)

Yabusame

1 October
Nonehachiman Shrine, Toyo-cho, Aki-gun, Kochi Prefecture
[Website](#)

Utazau Autumn Festival

27 October - 29 October
Ufukai Shrine, Utazu-cho, Ayauta-gun, Kagawa Prefecture
[Website](#)

Kawata Hachiman Shrine Festival

22 October
Yoshionogawa, Tokushima Prefecture
[Website](#)





Block 9

Matsue Suitoro

1 October – 31 October, weekends
Matsue Castle, Matsue, Shimane
Prefecture

[Website](#)

Hagi City Kimono Week

1 October – 22 October
Near Hagi Castle, Hagi, Yamaguchi
Prefecture

[Website](#)

[Website](#)

Tottori Burger Festa

8 October - 9 October
Houki Town, Daisen, Tottori
Prefecture

[Website](#)

MOMO de Beer Garden

Every Friday in October
Ekimoto-machi, Kita-ku, Okayama,
Okayama Prefecture

[Website](#)

Onomichi Lantern Festival

7 October
Onomichi, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website](#)

Hiroshima Food Festival

28 October – 29 October
Hiroshima Central Park, Hiroshima,
Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website](#)

Photos:
Shantel Dickerson
Hannah Martin
Duncan Cox
Shantel Dickerson
Shantel Dickerson





Block 10

Tonkotsu Ramen 80th Anniversary Festival

14 October – 15 October
Kurume, Fukuoka Prefecture
[Website](#)

The 59th Kitakyushu Kokura Castle Festival

21 October – 22 October
Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture
[Website](#)

6th Kyushu Hula Festival

30 September – 1 October
Ureshino, Saga Prefecture
[Website](#)

Nagasaki Kunchi, Autumn Festival

7 October - 9 October
Suwa Jinja Shrine, Nagasaki
[Website](#)

Kebesu Festival

14 October
Kunisaki, Oita Prefecture
[Website](#)

Oita International Wheelchair Marathon

29 October
Oita, Oita Prefecture
[Website](#)



Block 11

Ezuko Firework Festival

14 October
Kumamoto, Kumamoto Prefecture
[Website](#)

Yatsushiro National Fireworks

21 October
Yatsushiro, Kumamoto Prefecture
[Website](#)

Akune Spiny Lobster Festival

1 September – 31 October
Akune, Kagoshima Prefecture
[Website](#)

Myoenji Mairi

22 October
Hioki, Kagoshima Prefecture
[Website](#)
[Website](#)

Naha Tug of War Festival

7 October – 9 October
Naha, Okinawa Prefecture
[Website](#)

Miyakanojo Yakiniku Carnival

7 October
Miyakanojo, Miyazaki Prefecture
[Website](#)

21st Nobeoka Tengaichi Takigi Noh

7 October
Nobeoka, Miyazaki Prefecture
[Website](#)

Miyazaki-jingu Taisai (Jinmu-sama)

28 October – 29 October
Jingu, Miyazaki, Miyazaki Prefecture
[Website](#)



In The News

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)

29 August

A missile was launched from North Korea's western coast towards the northeastern Japanese region of Tohoku.

The missile is thought to have been launched at around 5:58 a.m. and it is suspected to have split into three pieces before landing close to Hokkaido in the Pacific Ocean at about 6:12 a.m.

Seen as a blatant threat to Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promises to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the Japanese people.

There was no attempt by the self-Defense Forces to shoot down the missile, but people in its vicinity received an alert from the government's J-Alert warning system to take precautions.

No damages were reported.

Source:

<http://bit.ly/2h4wVSw>

5 September

The next fiscal year will see changes in the database of teacher's licenses as the education ministry will have it updated to reflect the disciplinary records of those guilty of pedophilia and other perverted acts so as to have their information accessible on a national level.

This move is to counter cases where teachers whose licenses were previously revoked, due to sex offenses or other obscene acts against children, later found new teaching jobs at other schools.

Currently, to access files on these teachers, one would have to go through strenuous search tactics which make the information difficult to obtain.

Additionally, when access is gained to the database, not everything is recorded – as documentation of suspensions and other lenient disciplinary actions are not provided in the official logs.

Last month, a temporary teacher in Aichi Prefecture was arrested for abusing a female elementary school student.

Such an incident was able to occur because the contracting school had failed to complete a thorough background check. If full investigation had been carried out, the school would have known of his previous arrest and suspension for involvement in child pornography.

In order to finance the new database project, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has requested ¥480 million in the fiscal 2018 budget.

When completed, officials using the new system will be able to find an applicant's date of birth, type of license, expiration date and validity of certificate.

Source:
<http://bit.ly/2wtkXYv>

11 September

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to increase Japan's defenses in light of North Korea's recent antagonistic action.

Speaking to senior officers of the Self-Defense Forces, Abe stated that he had already asked his defense minister to create a blueprint for a medium-term defense strategy.

"No one else will protect you if you don't have the mindset of protecting yourself," he said. Adding, "We have to take all appropriate measures against [incidents such as] North Korea's missile launch over Japan."

Abe has been keeping close ties with the United States in a bid to strengthen the Japan-U.S. relations. This alliance is said to be "vital" for regional stability.

"We have to deter North Korea's repeated provocative acts," said Abe, highlighting recent joint drills with the U.S. and defense cooperation with like-minded countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Source:
<http://bit.ly/2xzTljP>

14 September

A 3-year old girl from Tokyo has died following an E. coli infection due to eating contaminated food bought from a deli.

She is said to have consumed fried shrimp and bamboo shoots from a delicatessen in Gunma that had an E. coli outbreak in August. After complaining about health issues and being hospitalized on August 11, the girl succumbed to her illness and passed away earlier this month.

According to the Maebashi Municipal in Gunma Prefecture, the girl is the first fatality of last month's E. coli outbreak where more than 20 people fell ill after eating potato salad, marinade and other products from delis run by Fresh Corp. They were eventually tested positive for the O157 strain of E. coli.

Ministry officials stated that the bacteria that was found in the girl was genetically identical to the type found in the other infected persons. A similar bacterial prototype was also identified in people in Shiga, Mie and Niigata prefectures.

The cause of last month's outbreak has yet to be determined.

Sources:
<http://bit.ly/2f6R6lY>
<http://bit.ly/2xzQtJq>

Photo:
Shantel Dickerson

Shōwa refers to a period from 1926 to 1989 when, under the rule of Emperor Hirohito, Japan transformed from a struggling post-war state into an imperial superpower, and later a technological juggernaut. Culminating with the conclusion of World War II, Japan began a period of rapid industrialization. Cars, consumer goods, and electronics produced within the country would become second to none by the mid 1980's. The aptly-named "Japanese economic miracle" was at its height when the emperor's death brought *Shōwa* to a close in 1989. *Shōwa*, roughly translating to "enlightened harmony," (1) gave way to the *Heisei* period, in which we find ourselves now.

Encyclopedia Britannica translates *Heisei* as "achieving peace." (2) However, the "achieving peace" era has seen the collapse of Japan's economic bubble, three record breaking earthquakes, and a revolving door of Prime ministers mired in scandal. This is in addition to increasing unemployment and a stagnating economy. It is conceivable, then, that the stress of living up to his predecessor's reign is what has caused the current monarch, Emperor Akihito, to announce his plans to abdicate.

A special, one-time bill passed through the Diet in June which will allow Emperor Akihito to officially abdicate at the end of 2018, bringing the *Heisei* era to a close. Although the emperor's desire to retire at the advanced age of 83 has been met with sympathy and understanding by the public, conservative members of the government remain wary.

For now, permanent changes to the laws of succession are off the table. Politicians and pundits, both Japanese and foreign, have noted that this could be problematic due to the fact that only males may currently ascend to the "Chrysanthemum Throne." (3)

Further complicating matters is the fact that there are only three viable males within the royal family at this moment; and one of them is a ten year old boy.

It has not been determined whether or not he possesses the maturity to bear the title of emperor.

"Considering the ages of the Imperial family members, this is an important problem that we cannot shelve," reported Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshide Suga, in June. However, Suga went on to state that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet "will firmly maintain" male-only succession. (4)

Adding to the difficulty of a dwindling royal line and intractable conservative policies, Emperor Akihito's eldest granddaughter, Princess Mako, announced her engagement to a non-royal (or *commoner*) on September 10th. Such a marriage will ultimately strip her of her royal status.



Out of the Way, Heisei!

An Era Comes to a Close, But What Comes Next?

Ben Baer (Osaka)

“There is no change in our view to proceed with consideration of steps to ensure stable imperial succession,” Suga reported after the announcement of her engagement. (5) This succinct statement by Suga is the only official comment on Princess Mako’s engagement from the Imperial Family.

Rumblings of concern regarding the future of the throne did not begin with Princess Mako’s wedding announcement in September, however. The previously mentioned third-in-line and potential child-king, Prince Hisahito, is the first male heir to be born into the Imperial House of Japan since 1965. Prior to his birth in 2007, the advanced age of Emperor Akihito’s two sons and their lack of viable offspring drew concern from politicians and pundits alike.

Prince Tomohito of Mikasa, Emperor Akihito’s younger cousin, has, in the past, suggested that royal males revert to a concubine system in order to increase the number of potential heirs to the throne.

He claimed to be joking. (6)

Other conservative politicians have suggested extending royal lineage to far-flung relatives of the Imperial house in order to add branches to its family tree. However, others have advised that this may be problematic as ancient family roots are far too murky to accurately trace. (4)

Japan’s first emperor, Emperor Jimmu, is purportedly the son of a sun goddess. This makes tracing his direct descendants difficult.

Conversely, left-leaning politicians and pundits have said that allowing women to hold the title of Empress is not unheard of. Before the *Meiji* era (1868-1912), eight women are recorded to have held this title.

All this begs the question, “what’s next?” Maybe Japan’s next era will see the reversal of Shōwa rules barring women from ascending to Empress. Perhaps it will subsequently be named as a period of understanding and progressivity. Or perhaps its new title will reflect the traditional values many in The Diet are quick to espouse.

Whatever values the upcoming era ultimately encourages, we needn’t place undue stress on ourselves. There is still time for decisions to be made and plenty of shopping days left to find a wedding gift for Princess Mako.

- (1) <http://bit.ly/2xkVnJ6>
- (2) <http://bit.ly/2eVGh2l>
- (3) <http://nyti.ms/2eYkE1v>
- (4) <http://bit.ly/2wZxAMC>
- (5) <http://reut.rs/2xxQkG7>
- (6) <http://nyti.ms/2jphSqV>

Ben is a fourth year public school English teacher in Osaka. When he’s not working, he can be found loitering outside of convenience stores or watching reruns of Star Trek and eating cereal.

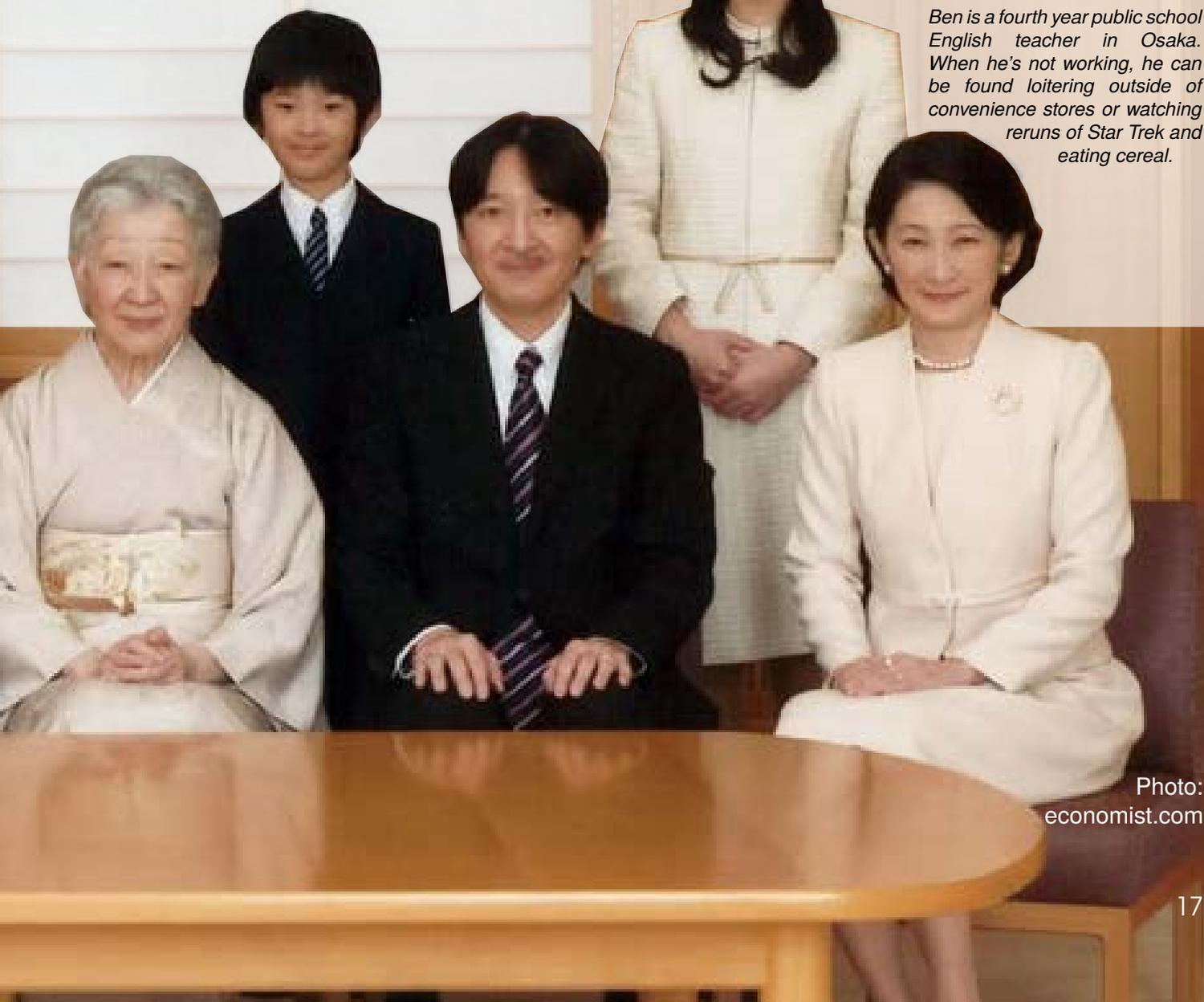


Photo:
economist.com



Somin Sai Festival

The Experience of a Lifetime

Manabu Ohara

I'm ready at 10 p.m. I put on my shoes and go out into the cold wearing only my loincloth. I have never worn a loincloth before, so figuring out how to put it on was confusing. I go around the precinct three times, and at each round, I get showered with a bucket of water. The first bucket feels good, but the second and third aren't as pleasant. I scream "*Jusso!*" to prepare my body for the freezing cold impact.

The fire begins at 11:30 p.m. I rush up to the bonfire and lift my hands to show my strength. This process is painful. It's not the heat, but rather that the smoke from the fire stings my eyes, and when the wind blows smoke in my direction, I can't open them.

After the fire battle, more than half of the people participating decide to go home. But this is when the real festival begins.

It is barely 5 a.m. As I warm up inside the hut, I can hear the voices of men outside gradually getting louder.

"*Jasai! Josei! Jasai!*"

Yes! This is the sign of the beginning of the last event; the battle for the *somin* sack has begun. I rub my sleepy eyes, take off my down jacket, and re-tighten my loincloth. I mentally encourage myself. Outside, the snow has clustered on the ground. Iwate is cold in February.

The festival has been going for seven hours. We have come this far together; our personal emotions are lost, and strangely it seems like we now share one emotion and one mind. The shouts continue, and as our excitement reaches a climax, our screams of "Turn off the light!" rises. Suddenly, the main shrine's electricity is turned off, and the *somin* sack is thrown.

Striving to be the first, we all stretch our hands out to the bag. This moment is intense, and I'll never forget it.



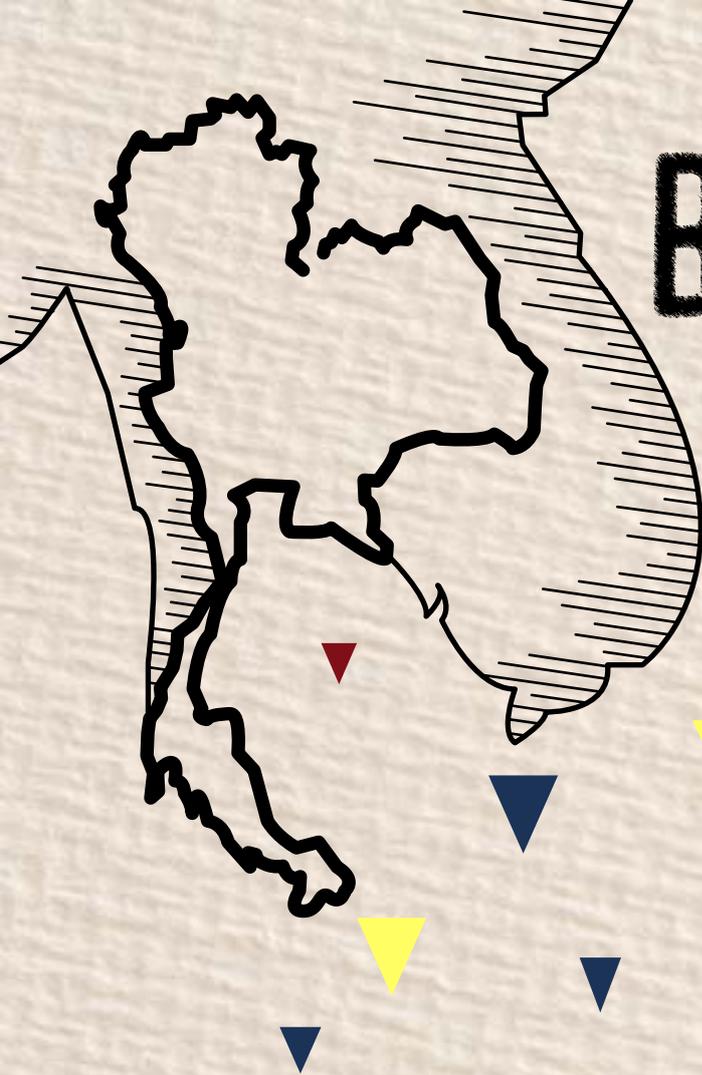
Photos:
Manabu Ohara

The Somin Sai Festival

The Kokusekiji Somin Sai Festival has gone on for more than 1,200 years and has become an intangible piece of Japanese folk culture. It is one of the “three biggest festivals in Japan.”

In February, men run through the precinct all night, undergoing water and fire rituals and then competing for the somin sack. The purpose of getting the somin sack is to avoid bad luck and trouble for the rest of the year.

This is a short excerpt from the blog post on Manabu's experience at Somin Sai festival who participated in the Somin Sai festival through Maturism. For more information on how to participate in the next Somin Sai festival or other Maturism supported festivals, please visit www.maturism.com or email at info@maturism.com.



BAAN UNRAK EXPEDITION

Jonathan Longden, (Oaska)

On New Year's Eve of 2016, 11 volunteers landed in Thailand for a week long volunteer visit at Baan Unrak Children's home in the rural region of Sangkhlaburi. The group was led by Jonathan Longden, then a first-year ALT living in Shiga Prefecture, and made up of volunteers from the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Japan, and Jamaica. For weeks leading up to the trip, the volunteers had worked hard at fundraising. For most of them, this was their first visit to Thailand, and also their first volunteering experience.



Soon after the group's arrival in Thailand, the children at the home made a great first impression on them. A Welcome and New Year celebration party was held the first evening, where the group got to know the children over pizza and fun around a campfire.

The children had been taken under the wing of the home's founder, Donata Dolci. Many were orphaned refugees who had escaped genocide and persecution in neighbouring Myanmar, or belonged to small families with single mothers who had lived through tragic experiences.

Italian-born Donata Dolci, or *Didi* (big sister) to the children, founded the home in 1990, and opened the doors to give care to anyone who needed it. The home has since grown into a huge success story, caring for over 150 children, providing them with a fulfilled childhood and a proper education.

Very quickly, the group of volunteers saw for themselves how much of a success the mission had really been. Despite the heart-breaking experiences some of the children had endured, all of them seemed incredibly innocent, happy, playful and sociable kids, living amongst a huge group of their friends. Even at a young age, all the children spoke excellent English. and many continued to impress the group with their brightness and willingness to learn.

As the week went by, the volunteers became attached to the children. They accompanied them on swimming trips to local rivers, played soccer, painted and drew pictures, attended dancing and karate classes and taught at their school when the term recommenced in the new year. And as part of the home's rules, the volunteers also chose to join children in daily meditation sessions. From the moment the volunteers came down from their dorms in the morning, to the moment they returned at night, the children were with them.

Aside from helping out with an endless list of jobs at the Baan Unrak home, volunteers also had the opportunity to help sell goods from the Baan Unrak bakery and weavery at the local market. Having a foreigner manning a stall in the already bustling and vibrant markets certainly attracted attention, and it was great for business too!

Volunteers always ate their meals at Baan Unrak, and were told in advance that they'd always be served vegetarian food. What they didn't realise was how delicious and healthy the food would be! From fresh local fruit, to baked goods made at the nearby Baan Unrak bakery, the volunteers were so impressed and grateful for the delicious Thai dishes they were served.

There were so many upsides of life at Baan Unrak, but

there were certainly sad aspects that kept the volunteer team motivated to continue making a difference for the good of the residents.

One older resident had been taken into Baan Unrak with physical and learning difficulties at a young age. After graduating from the Baan Unrak School, she had few options but to stay at the school. Unfortunately, the electric wheelchair she relied on for mobility had been badly damaged by the harsh Thai weather, and she relied on others to move her with a regular wheelchair. Fortunately — as part of the ¥500,000 donation this volunteer team contributed — replacement parts were ordered to completely repair her wheelchair.

Another somber moment came when Didi announced to everyone at Baan Unrak that there wouldn't be enough water to shower or do laundry for the foreseeable future. Although this shocked the volunteer team, the children barely seemed phased. They packed into a truck to make a journey to a local river, to do laundry and bathe, like they'd done it a million times before. Baan Unrak continues to rely solely on generous donations from others, but there still isn't enough money available to buy a much-needed water tank for the home.

Of course, leaving was a very traumatic experience for the volunteers and children alike. Although the children are used to seeing volunteers come and go, they were particularly attached to this big, hands-on group that had gotten to know them so well. After a farewell performance by the group's yoga team, the children approached the group on their final night, to tearfully hand over their favourite toys, special gifts, photos and drawings to the volunteers. Despite their attempts to give them back, the volunteers took the gifts home, which continued to remind them of their life-changing week at Baan Unrak.

This trip is an annual event, organised exclusively by a single JET programme participant. Didi continues to actively seek out our help, and our work and fundraising continues to make a real difference to so many people.



If you are interested in taking part in this year's trip, from the 30th of December to the 7th of January, please take a look at the official Facebook event page by scanning the QR code. Alternatively, you can email Jonathan Longden, who is organising the trip for a second year, at gomad.thailand@gmail.com



Any readers who'd like to make a one-off donation or commit to a regular child sponsorship plan, are of course welcome to. Please email for more information. Thank you!

ARTS AND CULTURE

CULTURE EDITOR

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Jack Richardson

Supermarket staff are like horses: they can smell fear.

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Between rehearsals, start of term, autumn musicals, and USJ Halloween, I'll be vanishing til next year!

FASHION EDITOR

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Abby Ryder-Huth

Find me decked in scarves in the supermarket fruit section, holding court by the nashi and grapes.

Photo: Ashley Hirasuna



Yeah But Have You Heard Of...Yosakoi?

Jasmin Hayward (Ishikawa)

Yosakoi is not like other festival dances. At first sight, the bright traditional clothes might give that impression, but when the music starts and prerecorded singing and electric guitars blare through the street, you know it's something special — a modern and energetic dance generally performed by large teams. The first yosakoi festival was held in Kochi City in 1954, but its history goes back much further than that.

Yosakoi History

Perhaps the oldest, and certainly most spiritual influence on yosakoi is *Bon Odori*. *Bon Odori*, literally the dance of *Obon*, is a centuries old folk dance that ancient Buddhist citizens of Japan performed to welcome the spirits of the dead. The dance is still performed today during *Obon*, a Japanese festival that celebrates family members both alive and beyond the grave. The dance as it is today is believed to have started in the Muromachi period (1336 -1573) but the concept of *Obon* itself, as well as dancing as a means to celebrate it, stretches way back to before the first millennia.

While yosakoi may have inherited its spiritual facet from *Bon Odori*, its lively attributes come from another source. The *Awa Odori* festival in Tokushima Prefecture remains the largest festival in Japan, attracting 1.3 million

tourists every year. Like yosakoi, *Awa Odori* is a dance style consisting of choreographed dancers wearing traditional Japanese costume. Unlike yosakoi, however, the accompanying music is usually live and the dancers are typically escorted by taiko drums, *shinobue* flutes, and the like.

Awa Odori began in the Sixteenth Century, but had declined during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Its revitalisation in the Showa Period (1926-1989) gave *Awa Odori* its current name. It became associated with a song known as *Awa Yoshikono*, a modernised version of an Edo period folk song. Part of the *Awa Yoshikono* charmingly declares "*Odoru ahou ni, miru ahou, onaji ahou nara, odorana son, son*" — "the dancers are fools, the watchers are fools, both are fools alike, so, why not dance?"

There are far more rules and expectations to the historical *Awa Odori* than its yosakoi descendent. Men and women dance different dance moves and there is a distinction between the restrained daytime *nagashi* style and the frenzied night-time *zomeki*. The latter is the main foreshadower to the carefree method of yosakoi.

All of this culminated in the final evolution, the wondrous yosakoi. Like *Awa Odori* it originated on the

southern island of Shikoku but its birth was actually in neighbouring Kochi Prefecture. It is thoroughly steeped in Shikoku tradition: its name means "come at night" in the island's Tosa dialect. The first festival was held in Kochi city in 1954 as an effort to revitalise the local economy, and there has been a festival in the city every year ever since. Its following has only grown bigger.

Yosakoi Today

Unlike its predecessors it is a thoroughly modern dance with few rules but its ancestry keeps it rooted in tradition. It too is performed in teams and the choreography and choice of song is left up to the individual teams. There is no live music but the teams both compose and perform the songs for recording themselves — a tougher feat, if anything.

The colourful costumes of its ancestors live on, also. Yosakoi performers wear brightly coloured *yukata* and *happi* coats, though often with a modern twist, and it is not unusual to see an outfit change to something a little more risqué mid-song.

One of the only stipulated conditions of yosakoi is that the dancers must use *naruko*, wooden percussion clappers, at some point in the performance. Traditionally these clappers came with blue and white



beaters, and a plain body, but more modern groups are changing these to fit their style. Naruko were originally used by farmers to scare birds away from their crops and were chosen due to their close association with Kochi.

Yosakoi is more than just a choreographed dance, too. It is an activity for all the family. It is not uncommon to see teams with young children and elderly members, and all genders are welcome to participate. For those not interested in the rigorous training schedule that the dancers must go through, the performances are also flanked by flag bearers waving huge detailed flags. There are also *jikatasha* trucks that lead the teams in festival procession, which are often decorated with the team's theme, and act as a stage for the sound system.

Though there are few rules to yosakoi as a whole, particular festivals and competitions often have their own stipulations. Yosakoi Matsuri, for example, the main festival in Kochi, specifies that each team must use at least a single element from the original yosakoi song, *Yosakoi Naruko Odori* ('Yosakoi Naruko Dancing') by Takemasu Eisaku. The song is heavily influenced by its Kochi heritage and is formed of a yosakoi melody, a children's song, and a folk song native to the prefecture.

One of the biggest festivals outside of

Kochi is the Yosakoi Soran Festival in Sapporo. In this festival, teams must incorporate *Soran Bushi*, a traditional Hokkaido fisherman's chant, into their performance. Teams often get creative when composing their versions of the song, and the finished products can sound vastly different from the original.

Though it requires rigorous training and months of preparation, ask any yosakoi dancer what the sport means to them and they will tell you how much it has affected their lives for the better. It's not just for *nihon-jin* either: plenty of JETs are joining some of the hundreds of yosakoi teams in Japan. Jenny, a third year ALT in Kanazawa, says she loves yosakoi because of its energetic nature and because she gets to be part of a team.

"Going to practice and talking in Japanese is all really amazing," she told me. "In January we all start learning a dance together and everyone's very disjointed, but practising hard for months, then getting costumes and seeing everything come together in performance is just great. It really makes me feel integrated with the community, and the emotions you feel: frustration when you go up, to nerves before a big competition, to utter elation when we win. I wouldn't change them for the world."

Jenny is not the only one who has

caught the yosakoi bug. Joining a yosakoi team has been the perfect way for me to experience authentic Japanese culture, learn the language, and keep fit all at the same time. Putting on those beautiful yukata makes you feel part of something ancient but those eccentric dance moves place you very much in the modern day.

Over the past few years yosakoi's reputation has soared. There are over 200 yosakoi festivals and competitions in Japan alone, and teams can also be found all over the world, from Malaysia and Vietnam to France and Sweden. There is even a manga and anime series called *Hanayamata*, about a group of junior high school students that take up the sport, and several films, such as 2009's *The Harimaya Bridge*, feature the dance style. And, who can be surprised. Yosakoi is an exciting and alluring spectacle, fun for watchers and dancers alike. So, as the Awa Yoshikono suggests: the dancers are fools, the watchers are fools, both are fools alike, so, why not dance?

Photos:
<http://bit.ly/2xiM1f0>

Karaage, Temples and Biking through Yabakei Gorge

Josh Mangham (Oita)

Josh is a first year Junior High School ALT in Nakatsu-shi, Oita Prefecture. Two months into life in Japan he is still amazed by everything about 7-11 conbini's, and outside of school he enjoys watching late night Premier League soccer and searching for the perfect ramen joint. He has yet to come around to natto.

My eyelids slowly parted. Glaring light streamed through the gap in the curtains. The fan beside the futon was whirring away, each revolution reverberating in pounding echoes. It was 8 am on a Sunday and, in so many words, I was hung over.

The effects of last night's *nomihodai* at the local *izakaya* were in full swing. It wasn't my first dance with *nomihodai*: I had felt similarly soul-sick the morning after the night before two weeks earlier, at my prefectural orientation. Something tells me though that thanks to the dazzling bang-for-your-buck value of *nomihodai*, this won't be my last brush with all-you-can-drink bar culture in Japan.

As I was contemplating the lingering taste of whiskey sours my alarm went off like a clarion call. In the midst of this morning struggle there was a beacon of salvation: today I was taking a bike trip through Yabakei Gorge. Here was the chance to balance out the yin hedonism of *nomihodai* with the yang purity of cycling through verdant valleys and fresh mountain air.

My neighbour and fellow ALT had organized a cycling trip through Yabakei Gorge, a 30-minute drive from my new Nakatsu City home in Oita Prefecture. Knowing next to nothing about Kyushu before discovering the location of my placement, the southern island of Japan has been a repeated source of awe since I arrived at the start of August. Tropical and lush, mountains spring out of the ground wherever I look. Greener than a genetically modified cucumber and abundantly populated with dense vegetation, I can't imagine tiring of the peaks that swell around the city.

With the aid of coffee and a cold shower I clambered into my car. I drove half hour to Yabakei Cycling Terminal, one of three bike rental stops along the famous Maple Yaba Cycling Road. There I met the six other ALTs. A former railway route that handily starts from Nakatsu train station (where visitors can also rent bikes and tour the city for free), the Maple Yaba Cycling Road passes out of the city and continues, through tunnels and over bridges, along the Yamakuni River and into Yabakei Gorge. Much like *nomihodai*, Cycling Terminal bikes represent good value for money, costing users a measly 500 yen a head for a day's rental.

Once sorted we left the Terminal and almost immediately we were in the centre of Yabakei's stunning valley. Formed over a couple of million years by the Yamakuni River scything through volcanic lava, the Yabakei Gorge is a jaw-dropping collection of caves, cliffs and mountain formations. Taking the route by the river, we occasionally had to divert off the cycle path and onto the main road due to repairs being carried out after the region's severe flooding earlier in the summer. On the road we passed vending machines nestled between centuries-old temples, glowing shrines to consumerism living cheek by jowl with sombre Buddhist paeans. This mixture of the profane and the sacred is one of the many examples of the balancing act that Japan seems to maintain without – or perhaps only just – verging into contradiction.

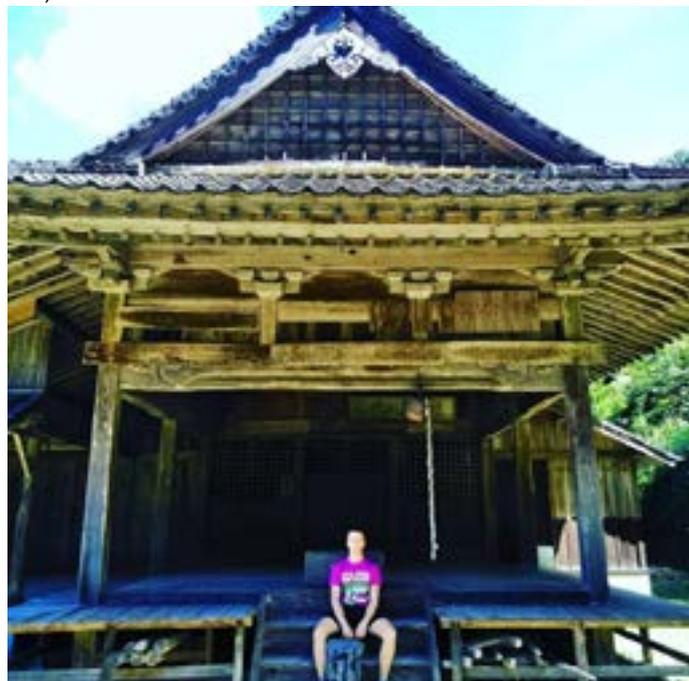
A prime example of this balancing act is Japan's relationship to cycling. Renowned as one of the world's great cycling nations, Japan is a nation of over 75 million bicycles, with 10 million more being sold each year. The ubiquitous *mama-chari* "granny bikes", single speed bicycles manned by everyone from seven-year-olds to salarymen to septuagenarians,

Photos:
Illaura Rossiter
Josh Mangham

are famous around the world. There are 45 velodromes across Japan, and cycling fever promises to hit the nation as the 2020 Olympics draw closer. Despite this, Japan has little to no cycling infrastructure, and there is a yawning gap between what is legally required of cyclists (no cycling on sidewalks, no use of phones or iPods while cycling) and what is actually enforced (most cyclists use sidewalks, phones *and* iPods regularly). Whatever the contradictions, cycling is woven into the fabric of Japan, and northern Kyushu in particular is a cyclist's paradise.

As we followed our route along the Yamakuni River, we passed through a host of paddy fields. Farmers would stop and wave at us, squinting smiles under their broad hats as we ambled by. Strange, grand rocks of all shapes and sizes dotted the densely forested hills and valley either side of us, glinting in the sun. We stopped at a restaurant for lunch and shade, sitting sweatily at the bar, slurping soba, before moving on. After lunch we cycled until we reached Yamakuni town, where we paused at a place that served *o-cha* (green tea) flavoured ice cream. As we sat down to eat one of

you have to climb close to 250 stairs in the dark before reaching a glass cube suspended in the air. The view was excellent, but not one for those afraid of heights. At this point it was late afternoon, and we decided to make our way back along the route to the Yabakei bike shop. En route we made a final stop at one of Yabakei's oldest temples, which although also placed modestly by the side of the road, was far larger than the temple we had



the farmers from the region walked over and struck up conversation, proffering a large basket of special Oita karaage. Not one to balk at the combination of fried chicken and ice cream, I picked some up and, after waiting for it to cool down, enjoyed something that was beyond delicious. The Yamakuni farmer informed us that he was keen to practise his English, which he'd been learning by listening to English-language radio. He couldn't hide his delight at a group of *gaijin* enjoying the fruits of his local area. He told us about himself – he had been a farmer and engineer in the region for over 40 years – and how we must visit *onsen* (hot spring baths), which, he said as his face cracked open into a toothy smile, had kept him beautiful into his golden years.

Feeling heavier now, we headed a short distance to Core Yamakuni, a large, abandoned looking municipal building that represented an homage to avant-garde 1980s Communist architecture. Core Yamakuni has an ice rink that opens in winter and features a slender, monolithic viewing platform 70 metres high. To get to this,

visited earlier in the day. Within the temple grounds stood a couple of imperious trees with a prehistoric, immaculate bark. Around one of the trees' thick rope was tied in knots, marking the fact that this tree was over 1000 years old. Gawking up I tried to comprehend the size of it until my neck started to hurt. On our way out of the temple we encountered a snake sauntering along the ground. He registered us, froze, and then slithered off in comic fashion underneath the tree. He appeared to have been more scared of us humans than anything else, although that wouldn't have been obvious listening to the terrified scream emitted by one of our group. Not wanting to disturb any more residents in the holy grounds, living or dead, we departed for the last stretch back to the the cycling terminal.

After depositing our bikes we drove the half hour back to Nakatsu and headed straight to Sakura onsen. There, tired and pungent, we expunged ourselves of unwanted odours in the hot baths and sauna. Oita is onsen country and I was only too keen to follow the friendly farmer's advice: at just 450 yen Sakura is one of the many examples of why hot spring baths are God's gifts to man. We sat in the baths – located outdoors as well as indoors – until our skin was as wrinkled as prunes, before venturing into the sauna. There we sat in 96 °C heat, laughing along with the nimble old men sitting cross-legged, watching a game show that was as alien as ancient Egyptian but captivating all the same. There was no better way to end 24 hours of variety and heightened experience that only Japan could offer up.

Single Mothers and Divorce

Modern Japan's New Family Portrait

Farrah Hasnain (Shizuoka)

No Japanese drama is complete without adversity. Almost every series consists of conflicts arising from the protagonist's environment. In the past few years, more of these sources of conflict have been taking place inside the home, emphasizing the characters' relationships with their family members instead of outside causes.

Family dynamics in Japan have transformed since World War II. Traditional family units were known as *ie*, where the eldest male family members made most of the decisions in the familial hierarchy. If the family did not have any sons, the daughter's husband would become head of the household. Yet one of the most surprising trends about traditional family dynamics is the commonality of divorce (1); in the *ie* system, rates were fairly high. Brides, and sometimes grooms, would be sent back to their family if their partner felt that they weren't contributing to the household or had irreconcilable differences. As more Japanese families transitioned into nuclear family units and married voluntarily instead of through arranged marriages, the divorce rate actually decreased after World War II (2). However, in the past decade, the divorce rate in Japan has been increasing, and dialogues about issues that lead to divorce, including affairs and the lack of communication between husbands and wives, have started to open up from the television screens in millions of households in Japan.

So, how has Japanese media reflected this dynamic phenomenon in the past 10 years? In the beginning of the early 2000s, many popular dramas consisted of female protagonists who were raised in contemporary environments that gave them more agency over their roles in the household. In these dramas, contemporary family units would already be present in the beginning of the series. In *Gokusen* (2002), Kumiko Yamaguchi, a granddaughter of a Yakuza leader, is appointed the next head of her family business after her parents pass away. Although the plot of the drama mostly revolves around her career as a teacher and hiding her

affiliation with the Yakuza, Yamaguchi's inherited role as the head of the household shifts away from traditional gender roles.

Over the next few years, this transition to non-traditional households functioned as the center of the plot instead of the setting. Fast-forward to 12 years later, in 2014. *Hirugao* (*Love Affairs in the Afternoon*) focuses on the harsh truth of how collective family units can fall apart if they avoid expressing their conflicts. The protagonist, Sawa Sasamoto (played by Aya Ueto), is a housewife who is a part-time supermarket cashier. One day, she impulsively shoplifts lipstick from her own store and witnesses a neighbor in the midst of her extramarital affair. They agree to keep each other's secrets, and Sawa also begins to have an affair with a married high school teacher who she met that same day. Throughout the drama, viewers witness how these affairs begin, intensify, and eventually affect their roles at home. The chaotic





nature of infidelity eventually compels the family members of these two characters to confront their issues within the marriage. The central theme of the drama is not necessarily the affairs themselves, but rather the choices that people make in a marriage.

The suspenseful yet realistic plot exposes all of the wrong reasons why someone decides to get married: financial stability, social expectation, etc., resulting in settling down before everyone is satisfied. Once these jilted characters find someone to replace the affection and attention they were missing in their marriage, they enter a cycle of secrecy and become victims of their own circumstances, inevitably confronting the idea of divorce and changing into a single-parent household. The results of these affairs will not be mentioned to avoid spoiling the plot, but I can say that the idea of divorce and separating parents is tensely embraced by some of the families in the series.

This year, a new drama also tackles the issue of divorce and single parenting. *Kanna-San!* (2017) is a story about Kanna (played by Naomi Watanabe), a married woman who works full-time as a fashion designer, has a son, and finds out that her husband has been having an affair. In the first episode, she immediately divorces him and tries her best to continue her role as a mother for her son, Reon. Instead of attempting to completely replace her husband's role as a father, Kanna aims to retain his role in their son's life and acknowledge their separation. Meanwhile, her in-laws and other parents at the daycare her son attends try to pressure Kanna to avoid divorce due to the stigma attached, and the belief that a stable household is incomplete without a father.

While topics such as divorce and single parenting were less represented or addressed in the media a decade ago, these family dynamics are gradually becoming more acknowledged in Japanese media and life alike. Rather than saving the idea of divorce for the final episode, Japanese dramas are starting to celebrate more individualistic characters who capably navigate their transition into single-parent households and alternative parenting styles. On top of this, they also address the criticism they receive from the other characters in the series, including elderly in-laws and peers who are also parents. Reflecting on the cultural dynamics of divorce today with characters from previous generations not only allows the protagonists to detach the social pressure and stigma of divorce, but also the viewers who have experienced a similar journey in their childhood or adulthood.



Photos:
Amazon01
Wikicommons03
Wikicommons04

Sources:
1. http://acad.depauw.edu/~mkfinney/teaching/Com227/cultural_portfolios/japan/familycontexts.htm
2. <http://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1742&context=etd>

Farrah Hasnain is a 4th-year ALT based in Shizuoka prefecture. She has watched Japanese dramas for 13 years, with the first being 1 Liter of Tears.

OCTOBER 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 October!

MOVIES

13 Oct. *Annabelle: Creation* (Horror):
Directed by David F. Sanberg, starring
Anthony LaPaglia, Mirando Otto

14 Oct. *Gekijouban Fate/Stay Night:
Heaven's Feel* (Animation): Starring Ayako
Kawasumi, Noriaki Sugiyama, Jouji Nakata

20 Oct. *Atomic Blonde* (Action, Thriller):
Starring Charlize Theron, James McAvoy,
John Goodman

21 Oct. *The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.*
(Comedy): Directed by Yuuichi Fukuda,
starring Hirofumi Arai, Kanna Hashimoto

27 Oct. *Blade Runner 2049* (Science-Fiction):
Directed by Dannis Villeneuve, starring
Harrison Ford, Ryan Gosling

27 Oct. *Get Out* (Horror): Directed/Written
by Jordan Peele, starring Daniel Kaluuya,
Allison Williams

GAMES

12 Oct. *Lost Sphear* on Playstation 4,
Nintendo Switch (Fantasy RPG)

27 Oct. *Super Mario Odyssey* on Nintendo
Switch (Adventure Platformer)

MUSIC

14-15 Oct. LOUD PARK 17 — Saitama City,
Saitama (Metal)

18 Oct. *Untitled*, Arashi (Idol J-Pop)

27-29 Oct. VAMPS Halloween Party 2017—
Tokyo (J-Rock)

STAGE

1-29 Oct. *Orlando*—Kanagawa, Nagano,
Hyogo, and Tokyo (Romance theater)

2-31 Oct. Osaka Culture and Arts Festival—
Multiple locations, Osaka (Traditional Osaka
culture performances)

6-30 Oct. *Super Kabuki One Piece*—Tokyo
(Anime Kabuki)

7 Oct. *Carnival on Ice* feat. Nobunaga Oda,
Daisuke Takahashi, Jeremy Abbott, Javier
Fernandez—Saitama City, Saitama (Figure
skating expo)

11-22 Oct. Handsome Rakugo—Tokyo
(Traditional Japanese storytelling with a
handsome comedy twist)

Instagram Roundup

Illustrations by Luke Paisley

Instagram is in some ways like a fashion magazine blown open-- there, skating across the neural webs of cyberspace are more looks, inspirations, and moments of personality than anyone could ever dare print. It showcases the diversity of the world's fashion output, and shows how each individual builds and fosters their own unique relationship to style. Some Instagrammers, however, stand out. We'd like to toast to these rad gender-benders, and the vibrancy they bring to our large communal table.



@aaaaoe__ is the digital platform of teenaged model Yutaro Goto, a fashion whiz-kid who thrives in the blank space between masculine and feminine. He curates his wardrobe from second hand stores, finding pieces that speak to a down-to-earth, freewheeling interest in the many selves which fashion can help a person explore. Seek him out for overalls inspiration, big-glasses envy, and serious pretty-boy cuteness.



A glance into the vibrant technicolor world of @peey_is sure to put pep in your step. A fashion shop clerk in Harajuku and immediate mainstay in the Genderless Kei world, Pey's take on style is irreverent, bright, and unapologetically fun. His trademark pink hair and variety of candy-hued wigs may be eye-catching, but his clothes are a confetti of retro influences from everywhere from 80s neon to 50s diner swing. His is a psychedelic rabbit hole decidedly worth losing oneself down.



@yooshiakii is another teen whose self-assured fashion expertise leaves many adults in the dust. His look may be more at home in amongst traditional trappings of masculinity, but his refined take on aesthetics is both youthful and delicate. Often posing with his cool older sister (and fellow model) Michi, the pair often hit an aloof sweetspot in fashion that is just slightly left-of-femme.



The global craze of hipsteria might make us yawn, but there is no denying that coolness never dies. Enter @muyua23, a shoo in for the high court of Genderless Kei with an unrivaled eye for style. An iconic part of Harajuku retail shop Santonibunnoichi and fashion photographer in his own right, Muyua's looks blend seamlessly into high fashion. Imagine the sun-bleached love child of Comme de Garcons and a hometown yard sale, dropped out of finishing school to become the teacher. Sign me up for lessons.



It is no surprise that P, the sole boy in energetic, J-pop dance group Tempura Kidz, has become the bright and shining social media fixture that he is. Anyone whose early career saw them dancing backup for Kyari Pamyu Pamyu was bound to pick something up along the way, and @p_tempurakidz is a bold, young face whose style is as sunny as it is carefree. P's gleeful grin and bright pastel hair help him skate easily across fashion trends that are girlish and boyish at once. Sprinkle some glitter on that kawaii and dip it into grunge and you'll find P, doing his own cool lil thing.

FINDING AND ATTENDING DOUJINSHI FAIRS

J. Colón (Osaka)

If you've ever wanted to see Captain America propose to the Winter Soldier or wondered if Gundams can do yoga poses then the world of Japanese *doujinshi* (self-published fan comics) is right up your alley. While Western fandom focuses on fanart and fanfiction, Japanese fandom is centered around fan-made comics.

In Japan, there is a stark divide between officially sponsored conventions and fan-organized events. A doujinshi fair is similar to the Artists' Alley section of an anime convention, though with the major focus on fan comics and less on crafts or prints. While these fairs can be a lot of fun, they are more difficult to navigate if you don't have a Japanese friend who shares the hobby. Here's how to find and enjoy these events without the need for a native guide!

J. Colón is an American ALT in Osaka public schools. Outside of teaching she can usually be found exploring Kansai's numerous tea shops, art museums, and cultural events. She's three quarters of the way to her goal of visiting every prefecture in Japan and has yet to discover an afternoon tea set she doesn't like.



Photo Captions: ColonJ01 – Osaka Comic City

Finding Events

The best way to get started is to head over to the [Akaboo Communications Company website](#). Akaboo handles the coordination for the Comic City events. The three major venues used are Big Sight in Tokyo, Intex in Osaka, and Yahoo! Dome in Fukuoka. The fairs vary in size, but there's usually a doujinshi event at each venue every few months. Akaboo's site is full of information, but for newbies it may be easier to pull up the official website of the closest venues to you to check the schedule. In addition to Comic City, smaller events can also be found listed at [Ketto.com](#). Finally, Comiket, the largest of these events, has its own site as well. You can also find event information by following your favorite fan artists on pixiv.

Doujinshi fairs are almost always held on Sundays, though Saturdays are not unheard of and the famous Tokyo Comikets last Friday through Sunday. The hours vary, but are typically 10am-3:30pm. Sometimes cosplay is permitted, but you'll need to check the event or venue website for the rules concerning costumes and props.

Preparations

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the venue and be prepared to wait in line. Unlike Western conventions, the vendors won't be able to process credit cards so bring plenty of cash with you. Not every venue has an on-site ATM, so bring a little extra just in case. Don't forget a tote bag for all of your goodies, as these are fan vendors and most will not be providing shopping bags! Large venues do have small restaurants and convenience stores, but you may want to bring your own snacks and drinks rather than waiting in long lines. Make sure to only eat or drink in designated areas - no one wants canned coffee spilled on the fruits of their labor!

General entry tickets are sold at the door. The only way to get a ticket in advance is to buy the [パンフレット \(panfuretto\)](#) or guidebook at a participating retailer like Animate. If you choose to do so you must bring the guidebook with you to the venue, as it doubles as your ticket!

At The Fair

You may want to arrive before the larger events begins to avoid missing out on your favorite artists and to give yourself time to see everything. Follow the signs for 一般 (*ippan*), which is general admission. Small events may have free admission, but charge for the guidebook (about 500-800 yen). Larger events bundle the admission with the cost of the guidebook (1000-1500 yen). The guidebooks are a wonderful resource to maximize your fun at the fair even if you're not fluent in Japanese.

The first few pages of the guidebook are usually maps of the venue with the rows of tables being labeled with a kana/letter and number. After that there is usually a written index of participating artists (known as the "circle" as usually multiple people work on a doujinshi). The main feature is the pictorial index! Each circle is allowed a postage stamp-sized space to advertise their wares. They're organized by genre of the original source work; for example all the doujinshi being sold based on shounen comics will be in one area while those based on Hollywood movies or Western TV will be in another. For big events you may not get to see every area so time management is crucial if you have must-see circles on your list.

Beyond Doujinshi

While these fairs are geared toward doujinshi based on preexisting intellectual properties, there are both amateur and professional artists who use self-published comics to promote original works as well. Many professionals in the anime/manga industry got their start in doujinshi (CLAMP being a famous example) or continue make doujinshi to explore an idea (Yoshitoshi Abe of *Serial Experiments Lain* fame wrote the *Haibane Renmei* concept as a doujinshi before later producing it into an anime). Comiket is especially famous for industry professionals selling unofficial artbooks of their works or debuting new concepts. There are also artists who are interested in selling small artbooks, prints, and postcards of their original art to gain exposure to a wider audience. Last, but not least, are the crafters who make both fandom-inspired items (themed jewelry, felt mascots, etc.) and handicrafts without any connection to fandom. If you end up buying too much to lug home, fear not, as low-cost shipping companies are often on site to help you box up and ship your haul domestically.

After the Fair

Many Japanese fans and circle participants use the rest of the day to visit the anime shops or anime cafes nearby, as it's a chance to bond with fellow fans, especially those from out of town. Major cities also boast used doujinshi shops you can check out to see the older works of a circle (or to hope against hope that a sold-out doujinshi from the fair might have been resold there!). If you purchased from a circle or artisan, it's considered a nice gesture to drop them a line on their website. Creators thrive on feedback and you'll be doing your part to futher the wild ecosystem of fandom!

For more information please visit:

<http://www.akaboo.jp/>

<http://ketto.com/>

<http://www.comiket.co.jp/>

<http://www.bigsight.jp/>

<http://www.intex-osaka.com/>

<http://www.softbankhawks.co.jp/stadi>



Devyn Couch, Gunma

LIMINAL LOOKS

fashions in the margins of gender

It's often said that clothes make the (wo)man. To an extent, this is true: people like to wear clothes that make them feel good—that speak to their sense of self. Style is a personal choice, so why bother spending money on things that fail to make you comfortable, or misrepresent who you are? For some, myself included, this can mean needing to step outside the confines of what is typically marketed to one's gender, as mainstream fashion in many places is still often starkly divided into two rather limited categories: “Men's” and “Women's”.

When making the decision to move to Japan, this was one of the things that admittedly gave me pause. Despite a long history of actors and actresses in various types of theater (e.g. Noh, Kabuki, and Tarakazuka) cross-dressing to play members of the opposite sex, the country isn't exactly known for its progressive attitude towards individuals who don't conform to traditional gender identities. However, when venturing out, I started to take note of what people were wearing in their everyday lives, and often found myself pleasantly surprised by the offerings available at stores catering to “fast fashion.”

While it's true that most clothing stores here still adhere to the so-called gender binary, with specific sections dedicated to men or women, many of the clothes themselves seem to fall into a liminal space in terms of cut, color pallet, and occasionally print, as well. Having grown up in America, where clothing for girls and women is often brightly colored, more embellished (with glitter, sequins, rhinestones, etc.), shorter, lower-cut, and more fitted than what can be found being marketed to boys and men, this difference was comforting. In Japan, women's wardrobe basics are easy to find in cuts that are looser, and colors that are more muted. That is not to say that all clothing here is like this; embellishments still exist and follow the latest trends, pastels inevitably appear during the spring season, and kawaii culture continues to thrive. However, this does not negate the fact that it's quite easy to find shirts, pants, cardigans, and other wardrobe staples without having to dig very deeply, or actively head into the men's section in order to find clothes that make me feel comfortable, as I was wont to do back home. Part of this may be due to the fact that

the country embraces more traditional and conservative values; as such, women's clothing tends to be less form-fitting and revealing, with higher necklines and lower hemlines. The same could be said of the comparably neutral color pallet—oftentimes, many of the same colors can be found in either section of a store, and the demarcation between the two spaces is sometimes not particularly distinct. Another contributing factor to this might be the trend of couples and close friends wearing similar or even matching outfits while out and about. With this being a fairly common practice, even outside of the major cities, one could see how creating stylish, gender-neutral clothes might be in the best interest of companies who want to make a profit via this current trend.

Although Japan does currently offer some options in clothing that straddle the line in terms of being appealing to both men and women, they usually fall into the category of fast fashion rather than fashion-forward, what with their looser/boxy silhouettes, neutral colors, and simple prints. In fact, there is a rather new movement, based in Tokyo's center for youth fashion, Harajuku, which takes the idea of gender-neutral one step further by entirely rejecting the concept that clothes should have a gender. Thinking about it, it makes sense; why should they? After all, when it comes down to it, all clothing is simply pieces of fabric made to keep people adequately warm and “decent” in terms of social norms concerning nudity.

Enter one of the country's newer fashion trends: Genderless Kei. Tracing its origin to the 2015 Autumn/Winter line put out by Tokyo Girls Collection, the trend has continued to gain traction via social media ever since. As the name implies, this fashion movement is based on the concept of androgyny—a blending of the masculine and feminine into something that is both, or neither. Right now, the most prominent icons of this trend are male, which is admittedly somewhat refreshing, as many of Japan's stylistic subcultures tend to lean female-centric (e.g. gyaryu, lolita, mori girl, etc.).

So what exactly defines the Genderless Kei? While style choices seem to vary greatly between the individuals that have become the

unofficial spokespeople for this movement—Genking, Yohji Kondo, and Toman — many of the men involved seem to adhere to a certain aesthetic: colored contacts; styled hair in a rainbow of colors; faces made-up and nails painted; cute accessories; and clothing that lies outside traditional perceptions of masculinity in cut, color, or both. And, they admittedly look absolutely fantastic while bucking a system that espouses the harmony of the group over the indulgence of individual expression.

However, it is important to note that this style choice is about being comfortable with yourself and looking good in the clothes of your choosing. People who follow the Genderless Kei or androgynous fashion trends— be they biologically male or female—are not necessarily out to “pass” as another gender, or make a statement about their gender identity and/or sexuality, as some may think. Simply put, clothes are clothes, people are people, and everyone should be able to wear whatever, he, she, they, etc. feels suits them best at the moment. The majority's perception of what is “appropriate” for any ascribed gender need not be so important.

Will Genderless Kei help swing fashion choices in Japan (and other countries) further away from the gender binary that still dominates much of society, and create a more defined space for those who operate outside that “norm?” One can hope, but it remains to be seen. For now, I know that I'll continue to draw inspiration in my wardrobe from the Instagram pages of various genderless fashion icons, and wear what makes me feel good about myself. Life is too short to do anything but.

Want a closer look? Check out the individuals helping drive Tokyo fashion beyond gender in this short [video](#) made by i-D.

Photo by Kris Atomic on Unsplash

Devyn Couch is a punk rocker and (fan-cy) hat enthusiast living that #inakalife in Japan. Future inspirations include: building a tiny home and traveling as much as possible with a pet pig in tow.

LIFESTYLE

A photograph of a traditional Japanese village with tiled roofs and a green field in the foreground. The image is used as a background for the text.

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*The dancers are fools,
The watchers are fools,
Both are fools are alike,
So why not dance?*

Photo: Duncan Cox



On Wednesdays We

Karalee Ripley (Miyazaki)

I used to pack my lunch in just regular Tupperware, but I loved the brightly colored *bento* boxes and bags that all my students and teachers brought, so I bought a bento box. I enjoy thinking about the logistics of what I can make that is bento-friendly, and what sides I can make that complement the main. It really depends on what I'm making, but I think the structure I usually end up with is 1/4 carbs, 1/4 protein, and 1/2 veggies, and it usually takes about an hour to make it. I think the only constant ingredient in my bento make-up is rice. I only have to bring my own lunch to school every once in a while, so when I do have to bring a bento, I try to make something different each time. What I like thinking about the most, though, is how I'm going to arrange my bento in a way that'll both maximize on space and make it look nice. The bento looking good is actually really important. It's supposed to be fun and colorful, which is why everything made for bento is so cute. But, I'd say the most important thing to keep in mind when making a bento is not to go too fancy. It doesn't need to be something with five different kinds of *furikake* and everything shaped into a heart or star. Just make it something simple, colorful, and easy to pick up with chopsticks! The advantage of bringing your own bento, besides knowing you'll like everything that's for lunch, is the bragging rights. If you eat with your students or coworkers, they're all going to be curious about what you brought. It's a good conversation starter, especially if you make and pack a dish from your home country.

June Ang (Kumamoto)

I'm a Senior High School ALT so I've got to make my own bento daily. What I found most helpful is freezing portions of rice. I have a small digital scale that helps control the amount of rice I pack. The freezer is my best friend in regards to bento preparation. I marinate my meats in various sauces and wrap them up into individual portions with press and seal Glad wrap. I also wrap my seafood, most commonly squid or prawn, into individual portions. The press and seal wrap is rather expensive but worth the money in terms of individual packaging. It saves me a lot of space in my tiny freezer. I pop whatever packets I need into the fridge to defrost in time for packaging in the morning. Or I defrost everything the previous day if I prepare a bento the night before work. Frozen vegetables are a lifesaver! Frozen broccoli, pumpkin, eggplant, and corn are so easy to include in a bento as fillers. They defrost by lunch time. My lazy go-to bento is spaghetti and a pack of instant curry sauce to pour over the pasta. I heat it all up in the microwave at school. Another lazy bento meal that I make often is a tortilla wrap. I usually put a piece of *kimchi*, a slice of meat, lettuce, and cucumber in my wraps. Sometimes when I do a stir-fry for breakfast, I make double the amount to pack for my bento. This is not for everyone as not everyone can stomach a full meal for breakfast but I'm used to it. The main advantage of making my own bento would be the reduced amounts of salt and oil. I have underlying health issues that require me to control my salt and oil intake. Making my own bento allows me that control. The second advantage would be the calorie control. I've reached an age where my metabolism is getting slower every year! Hence the need to cut down the amount of calories I take in. Japan's school lunches normally have about 1000 calories per lunch and the bento that high schools order in everyday are about 800-1000 as well. My doctor's advice was to eat about 500 calories per meal, so my own bento make things a lot easier for me.

Elaine Yuan (Toyama)

I make and bring a bento to school almost everyday. I try to meal prep and prepare a large batch of something to heat up for lunch or dinner. This may be a package of soba noodles for cold soba noodle salad, a large bowl of potato salad, or several servings of fried rice. If I don't have time to meal prep, I double the serving size when I make dinner so I can take the leftovers to school the next day. I like to have frozen vegetables, canned corn, *kimchi*, carrot ribbons, and firm tofu on hand to easily incorporate into my meals or to add as side dishes.

Carina Bublies (Miyazaki)

There are many advantages to preparing your own bento food for you, and it can be cheaper than buying lunch especially Japanese foods when the homesickness sets in. I try to do as many days as possible.

I often prepare miso flavored eggplants and red pepper from dinner are perfect for variety without spending too much. It can be done in almost no time at all.

I don't tend to worry about how healthy my bento is. Food is for myself. Colors and shapes are important to create a great idea. When cut in slices, the star-shaped vegetables give them a special touch or use them as the main ingredient. I'll cut them in half and roll 1 or 2 of them together with *kimchi* in a wrap or fry them. If you cut them in half, they look really good. By regularly preparing eye-catching dishes in bulk, making bento is a lot easier.

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Fat Bento

Five Bento gurus Share Their Secrets

Japanese have bento, or 'lunchbox', preparation down to a science. The cute and colourful bento students or their parents' make for hours over can put some western lunchboxes to shame. Most bento cookbooks will emphasise the importance of a mathematically structured, well planned, and tightly packed bento. The magic ratio always comes back to around 4:2:1 (1), 4 parts carbohydrates, 2 parts protein, and 1 part fruit/vegetables. Anyone who's ever tried sticking to this rule when making a bento will know that it's not an easy task. But it is possible to make a great bento without all the hassle. We talked to five JETs about their bento adventures to see just how easy and advantageous it can be.

Hayley Closter (Miyazaki)



It will only consist of dishes you like to eat, it'll be the right amount of food for every day. You can also prepare dishes from your home county instead of preparing various dishes in bulk on Sundays and use them for my bento for

Leftovers, sweet potatoes cooked with lemon, and bacon-wrapped dates. Leftovers mean bento preparation is so much time cooking. Bulk preparation and leftovers mean bento preparation

Rather, considering how to arrange bento is an exciting daily challenge I set myself. I want to make a delicious-looking bento, which is why using okra in your bento is always a good idea. Vegetable tends to be an effective eye-catcher. You can put okra in meatballs to make it a main ingredient of a particular dish. I really like okra-kimchi rolls. I cut the okra in half lengthwise, slice of bacon. Then I dip the rolls into flour, egg, and bread crumbs before frying. They are so good and taste even better.

Like okra-kimchi rolls, you can easily make a truly delicious and satisfying

Jenny Vosper (Kumamoto)

I make myself a bento every day because I am a pescatarian. In England I am a full vegetarian, and when I cook at home in Japan I normally don't use any fish (that I know of). I don't mind making bento. In fact, I quite enjoy it! I get to know what goes into my body every single day, and I get to eat what I feel like. I have a cute Totoro bento box with matching chopsticks, a bag, and a flask. I got this bento box because it's got two levels, and a partition. It's quite tall and you can pack in an awful lot of food. I have several other smaller bento boxes and some little silicone cups that you can sit smaller portions in to stop things spilling and touching the food next to them. I normally put my main meal on the bottom because it's the biggest compartment and it means nothing spills. My main meal is normally a combination of carbohydrates and protein. I find eggs to be the best protein source for me, so I normally have something like *omurice*, or boiled eggs with something like a pasta salad. Eggs are so versatile and are delicious when cold too. I always end up making my bento with the leftovers of what I had for dinner the night before, so it helps to meal plan. That way you don't end up eating rice with every week-day meal. The top section of my bento is for "fun stuff". This can be anything from vegetables - I love Japanese cucumbers and tomatoes - or even little snack biscuits. I normally tuck some fruit in somewhere, but sometimes it's just easier to lob in a banana. The advantage of having a big bento bag is that you can stuff any remaining gaps with fruit and water to keep you energised after you've chased a group of elementary students around. My favourite thing to do with my bento is to make it exciting. I like to open it and watch staff members or students get excited. With the elementary students, sometimes I make them guess what I'm eating in English. I highly recommend 100yen shops for their colourful bento accessories, particularly their *onigiri* makers. If you take in a teddy bear *onigiri* under an omelet blanket, I guarantee they will think you're a culinary marvel!

Onigirazu

The
Be

Hayley

Nutritional. Filling. Easily prepared. *CONNECT* believe *onigirazu* and *onigiri* are like “hybrid Japanese rice balls”. *Onigiri* not only by their shape but also by their ingredients. *Onigirazu* consist of unconventional onigiri fillings. Instead of moulding the rice ball, you spread the filling before compressing it with the seaweed. Then you cut in half before packing into your container. It's what you want. Taken from the top selling recipes, it's bright, delicious, and memorable.

Taco Rice Onigirazu

ingredients

- o 100g minced pork
- o ½ clove garlic
- o 1 tsp vegetable oil
- o 1 tbsp ketchup
- o ½ tsp semi-sweet *chuno* sauce
- o few drops of Tabasco sauce
- o 1 sheet dried seaweed
- o 150g cooked rice
- o 1 lettuce leaf
- o 2 cherry tomatoes
- o 1 tbsp shredded cheese

method

1. Finely chop the garlic
 2. Heat vegetable oil in a fry
 3. Add the minced pork and
 4. Once the meat has cooked, add ketchup and Tabasco
 5. Simmer for one minute then turn off the heat completely
 6. Shred the lettuce and cut into strips
 7. Lay the sheet of seaweed flat
 8. In the centre of the seaweed, arrange half of the rice in a square. Pat it flat until it's the size of your palm
 9. In order, stack lettuce, cheese, the rest of the rice on top
 10. Fold the seaweed over the top to close and cut in half
- Wrap in cling foil so the onigirazu holds its shape

Tuna, Cabbage and Mayo Onigirazu

ingredients

- o 1 sheet dried seaweed
- o 150g cooked rice
- o ½ a can (32g) of tuna
- o 1 tsp mayonnaise
- o 1/3 a leaf (20g) cabbage
- o Salt and sugar to taste

method

1. Drain the liquid from the can of tuna, and then mix the tuna flakes with the mayonnaise
2. Cut the cabbage into thin strips and sprinkle with salt and sugar.
3. Pat the cabbage dry
4. Lay the sheet of seaweed flat
5. In the centre of the seaweed, arrange half of the rice in a square. Pat it flat until it's the size of your palm
6. In order, stack the tuna mixture, cabbage and the rest of the rice on top
7. Fold the seaweed over the top to close and cut in half
8. Wrap with cling foil so the onigirazu holds its shape

The Surefire Way to Bento Success

Closter (Miyazaki) Youichi Honda



pared. Visually exciting. If you want to tick all of these *bento* requirements, the foodies at is the best way to go. First appearing in the 1990s, these rectangular shaped cousins of "these-style rice ball sandwiches" (1). According to food blogger Judy Ung, onigirazu differ to but by their ingredients (1). On her website The Spruce, Ung explains that onigirazu usually *igiri* ingredients such as pork *katsu* or a B.L.T wrapped in rice and a layer of seaweed. ball with your hands, you shape the ball of rice by carefully laying fillings in a neat square seaweed. To keep the onigirazu fresh and firm all day, be sure to wrap it in cling foil and cut bento box. The best thing about onigirazu is you can make them as big or as small as you cookbook by Youichi Honda, ず (onigirazu), these recipes will be sure to make your bento a one.

zu

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ring pan and fry the garlic
cook for 2-3 minutes
ed through, add ketchup, chuno sauce,

en remove from the heat to cool

cherry tomatoes into thirds
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eed, arrange half of the rice and pat it
your palm.
eese, tomatoes, 2 tbsp of taco meat, and
e top to close and cut in half
u holds its shape.

Avocado Lettuce and Tomato (ALT) Onigirazu

ingredients

- o 1 sheet dried seaweed
- o 150g cooked rice
- o ¼ avocado, sliced
- o 1 leaf of lettuce
- o 1 slice of tomato
- o *optional slice of cheese

method

1. Cut the avocado and tomato
2. Lay the sheet of seaweed flat
3. In the centre of the seaweed, arrange half the rice in a square. Pat it flat until it's the size of your palm
4. In order, stack lettuce, avocado, tomato, cheese and the rest of the rice on top.
5. Fold the seaweed over the top to close and cut in half
6. Wrap in cling foil so that the onigirazu holds its shape

sources

1. <http://bit.ly/2xo36H3>
2. Honda, Y. (2015). Onigirazu. Japan: Shinsei Publishers.

WHY WE SHOULD BATHE THAI ELEPHANTS, NOT RIDE THEM!

A photo essay capturing an ethical approach to elephant tourism in Thailand

Shantel Dickerson (Oita)

“Are you going to ride an elephant?” This is perhaps the most common question to travellers setting out on trips to Thailand. There are some 3,000 captive elephants in riding centers and sanctuaries across Thailand, which comprising roughly 95% of the total Thai elephant population. “Yeah, of course!” I exclaimed, in total ignorance of the cruel and harsh treatment elephants receive daily at most Thai elephant riding centers. Only later would I discover that instead of riding elephants, I was actually going to bathe with them.





Upon arriving at the [Elephant Jungle Sanctuary](#) tucked away in the forests of Northern Chaing Mai, I promptly met one of the many '*Mahouts*', or elephant caretakers/trainers, who is pictured here making medicine for the elephants. A local of the Karen Hill tribe, he was anxious to explain the sanctuary's philosophy of promoting ethical and sustainable eco-tourism.



He outlined the Sanctuary's "no riding" policy was two-fold. Pointing to a giant banner with a diagram of an elephant's skeleton, he noted that elephant spines are simply not designed to carry hundreds of tourists a day. "Would it be fun for any animal to carry hundreds of tourists on their back every single day of their lives?" I agreed with him. That did sound terrible.

Secondly, riding centers are often in quite poor condition and do not prioritize the health and safety of their elephants. They neglect the wounds caused by the 'howdah', the chair placed on the elephant's back, as well as the scars from lacerations caused by the chains that anchor the elephants to their respective posts. Mahouts control elephants by hitting them over the head with clubs and sticks, often drawing blood and causing the incredibly emotional animals to whimper and scream in pain. Unfortunately, by this point, elephants have usually already experienced much worse pains through the isolating, spirit-breaking, and soul-crushing process of "*Phajaan*".



Brooke Petersen
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hants laid down
und the mud pit,
v pigs and dogs
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iced sunscreen.



After a nice roll around in the mud, the tourists headed over to the river with the elephants to rinse off. Elephants are no strangers to bathing in rivers. In fact, they are excellent swimmers and enjoy splashing one another. A few of the elephants would fully submerge themselves by lying on their sides, with just their trunk visible above the water to keep a steady airflow. As seen in this photo, Mahouts offer small bowls to fill, so we can splash one another with river water.

The Elephant Jungle Sanctuary is one of the many Thai elephant sanctuaries seeking to partner with elephants and tourists in hope of offering elephants better and brighter lives than the ones they had experienced in the riding centers. It is our turn, as tourists, to take responsibility to find these sanctuaries that support and sustain a healthy lifestyle for the elephants, too. Plus, who wants to ride an elephant anyways, when you could have a much more intimate experience taking a mud bath with one?





道頓堀

Dotonbori

1

This area of town is filled to the brim with things to experience, see, and eat (mostly eat), making it a top choice if you only have a little while in wonderful Osaka. The most memorable part of Dotonbori, the street vendors, give the area its distinct flair, particularly the *Takoyaki* stands. *Takoyaki* is an Osaka specialty, made with a wheat-based flour, an octopus center and drenched in *Takoyaki* sauce and scattered with bonito flakes. Additionally, *okonomiyaki*, a Japanese cabbage-based pancake, is also a popular choice for lunch or dinner here. As for dessert, melon bread with ice cream hits the spot on a hot summer's day! You can add chocolate sauce for an extra charge or better yet go to the local *konbini* to do it yourself for cheaper. There are so many restaurants on the streets that everyone can find a place to settle their food cravings!

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2

Universal Studios Japan

As for attractions in Osaka, Universal Studios Japan is a unique stop with plenty of charm to last you the whole day. My personal favorite attraction is The Flying Dinosaur rollercoaster, which flips your body parallel to the ground to simulate a pterodactyl in flight. For at least a whole 30 seconds, you are slowly taken up to the top of the rollercoaster, which gives you a great view of the park. Once the drop hits, it's an danger-filled adventure with loops and corkscrews that will fuel your inner adrenaline junky. To avoid the lines, go on this ride or the Minions ride as early as you can. (Japanese people love the Minions, so it turns out). Additional attractions are the Harry Potter world, which has great outdoor skits to watch. There is also a dinosaur show in Jurassic Park where extremely realistic dinosaurs come out and scare little children and adults alike.

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Osaka Aquarium

3

With a wide variety of all over the world, the should not be missed aquarium is one of the in the world and hosts the Pacific, from Mont to parts of Antarctica. attractions inside the a shark, or *jinbeizame*, k largest fish species in to be wary of is the am it becomes very crowd so try to dedicate at le aquarium.

As all *gaikokujin* known worldw debut in the G Naturally, for f had never set foot in O sure what to expect. Is to be? When will this G so much about appear city? The fear of the ne left me shook. It might for *meccha-kawaii* Hell during my 11 pm interl awfully filmed Japanes was pleasantly surpris lively city filled with gre entertainment. Allow m personal favorite place the surrounding areas.

FOCUS FIVE:

Reece Mathiesen (Ishikawa)

Photo: Shantel Dickerson

different sea-life from Osaka Aquarium during your visit. This is one of the largest aquariums in the world. One thing you should know is that the amount of visitors, as measured at certain points, can last 2-3 hours for the

As you know, Osaka is famous for its famous Godzilla series. For foreigners like me who visit Osaka, I was not really sure if Osaka is a safe place to visit. I read next to demolish the next Godzilla attack occur while shopping on Kitty hashi, or the idea of binge watching the news. However, I decided to see a vibrant, colorful city that smells, sights, and sounds are so good to share five of my top spots to visit in Osaka and

奈良公園

Nara Deer Park

4

Todaiji

東大寺

Have you ever heard of a deer that bows for its food? Well, only one hour away from Osaka by train is a prefecture called Nara, famous for its deer park. You can buy *senbei* (crackers) to feed the deer for only 150 yen, but beware because the deer will follow you without hesitation. However, do not be scared! Simply raise a piece of the *senbei* above your head, and the deer will bow three times. After their third bow, return the bow and give them the snack. I cannot begin to tell you how many foreigners buy *senbei*, run away from the deer screaming, and then throw the deer a whole *senbei* to eat. Please try to avoid this behavior because it looks really bad and teaches the deer poor habits!

After you finish hanging out with the adorable deer, *Todaiji* is a great temple to sightsee and relax at. One of the main attractions is the *daibutsu*, or Great Buddha. Another activity is *hashira kuguri* where you try to pass through a hole in a wooden pillar that is said to be as wide as the nostrils on the *daibutsu*. If you pass through folklore has it that you will receive good luck and health! Be warned, however, because I almost got stuck trying to get through and decided it was not wise to attempt it. No luck or health for me, I guess.

難波ウォーク

Namba Trail

5

If you are waiting for a train or bus and need something to do in Namba station, the Namba Walk is a great time-filler. In one area, paintings from the Art Institute of Chicago line the walls of the walkway. The middle of Namba Walk is filled with plenty of restaurants and fresh bread shops in case you get hungry, as well. On special days you can even find musical performances outside in the courtyard area.

Osaka is a lively area filled with all these activities and so much more. I would highly suggest booking a trip to Osaka due to its accessibility and versatility. I would also encourage you to do some personal research on seasonal events as well, because I caught the *Tanabata* festival while I was there and it was a fantastic experience. I hope you consider the wonderful Osaka for your next trip. I know I will be back soon.

Reece Mathiesen is from California, USA and graduated from UC Davis in 2016. He is currently living in Kanazawa-shi, Ishikawa-ken and teaches high school students as an ALT. In his free time, he enjoys singing, studying Korean (usually while singing), and playing video games.

If you are a fan of Japanese art, then the *Tanbo*-art, or rice paddy art, in Tohoku is a must see place for you. Now growing popular all over Japan, the original Tanbo-art can be found in the small village of Inakadate, Aomori prefecture, the northern most prefecture of Honshu. Only 20 minutes north of Hirosaki city, a city famous for its castle and cherry blossoms, Inakadate is just a step away, and well worth a visit if you are in Tohoku during the summer months.

So what is Tanbo-art, and why did this new fad start in this small northern town? It started in 1993, when the town was looking to revitalize its economy. Boasting thousands of years of rice cultivation, the citizens of Inakadate village decided to celebrate their heritage by planting different varieties of rice to create colorful murals in the paddies.

They started with simple designs, each year depicting a different scene or character from Japanese history, art, or popular culture. The first Tanbo-art featured Mt. Iwaki, a prominent mountain and a symbol of the region. Other past scenes have included Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler from "Gone with the Wind," the Mona Lisa, and Marilyn Monroe. Often characters are from Japanese popular culture, such as Godzilla, Anpanman, or from Japanese mythology and history, such as Momotaro, and of course Japanese symbolic images, such as Mt. Fuji, "The Great Wave," and the goddess Kannon.

Themes chosen each year often reflect popular culture, or commemorate some event. For example, 2014 featured Mt. Fuji in celebration of it becoming a UNESCO world heritage site. 2015 starred C3PO, R2D2, and BB-8. coinciding with the release of the new Star Wars movie "The Force Awakens." Each year the images grow more ambitious, even adding a second site nearby in 2012. This year's depiction from Japanese mythology, features an eight-headed dragon which seems to be slithering through the grass as the wind sweeps through the rice paddy, and the face of the warrior fighting the monster is so full of detail that one feels really feels drawn into the image.

Now, with the help of technology, the art has become more and more detailed. First the design is drawn on a computer. Then volunteers from the village laboriously plot out the land, marking where each variety of rice must be planted. Looking at the final result from above, the images look almost 3D.

The town has invested such a great deal into their rice art that they even built a castle-like observatory from the city hall. From here one can view the art from the perfect perspective, and also enjoy a panorama of the whole city, surrounded by fields of green rice and Mt. Iwaki in the distance

Looking at the Tanbo-art, one is not only impressed by the magnitude and detail of

the art, but the towns does not work and of their website of *no mura*"

Consider colorful liv and an im people of to nature communit young pe has to lau ingenuity,

As a touri of the citie Here in th of Japan, their herit springing worth a tr scale Tan

Pretty Smart Tanbo Art in Inakadate

2016's second site features the popular Momotaro or "peach boy," the boy born from a peach, a dog, a bird, and a monkey, bravely rescuing his

ut can also feel the deep connection and love people must have towards this place. This art rely on one person's genius, but on the hard effort of a whole village. The town is so proud eation, and even the official government of Inakadate village label the town "Tanbo-art or town of Tanbo-art.

ng this while gazing across the stretch of ving art, can be a deeply moving experience teresting insight into Japanese culture. The Inakadate seem to have such a connection and sense of community. While many rural ties have been suffering in recent years, as people flock to the major cities to find work, one and the town of Inakadate for their effort and in keeping their community alive.

st in Japan, it is eye opening to venture out es and away from the main tourist attractions. e small rural towns, one can feel the spirit this deep sense of community, and pride in age. While rice paddy art can now be seen up in different prefectures, it is definitely ip to Tohoku to view the original and largest bo-art in Japan.

Visit *Tanbo-Art*

How to get there: From Hirosaki City on the Konan line about 30 minutes.

Site 1: Inakadate Village Office
Nakatsuji 123-1 Inakadate-mura, Minamitsugaru-gun,
Aomori-Ken 038-1113
(From Inakadate Station: walk 25 minutes)

Site 2: Michi no Eki Inakadate
Yahata 10, Takahi, Inakadate-mura, Minamitsugaru-gun,
Aomori-ken 038-1113
(From Tanboato Station: walk 5 minute)

From 9:20am to 4:50pm, a free shuttle wagon runs between the two sites every 30 minutes to 1 hour.

When to go: Open from June to October. (Best viewing from mid-July to mid-August.)

Price: 300 yen.

For more information check the official website:

<http://www.inakadate-tanboart.net>

Or learn more about the city that started it all:

<http://www.vill.inakadate.lg.jp/>

(Websites are in Japanese)

Rice Paddy Art

date Rachel Ristine (Gunma)



er hero from the Japanese fairytale n from a peach who, with the help of a cues his town from raiding monsters.

COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY EDITOR

connect.community@ajet.net

Shantel Dickerson

Show me fury, and I'll show you friendship.

SPORTS EDITOR

connect.sports@ajet.net

Kirsty Broderick

The grape obsession continues...

Photo: Illaura Rossiter





FAMILY SPOTLIGHT:
**When Your
Toddler Stops
Eating**

“YOUR CHILDREN
PROBABLY DON’T
HAVE THE SAME
SENSE OF CULINARY
ADVENTURE THAT
YOU DO”

Kendra Spring Klasek (Oita)



Like many of us, starting off on this incredible adventure with my family, my expectations were tuned to all the good things and none of the bad. The thing is, anything new is hard; if we close our minds off from the harsher realities of life, in any major transition, we close ourselves off from the joy, as well.

This is my family's story.

It started innocently enough before we left for Japan, though I knew in my gut something was wrong. Our 2-year-old son, Anton, had been increasingly fussy and starting to skimp on his meals, and in spite of a doctor's appointment where he was given a clean bill of health, I thought for sure he was sick.

So, we left our home of Lincoln, Nebraska for my husband Jordan's departure city of Denver, Colorado. Anton slept straight through the night on the train ride there, but then the trouble started in earnest the following morning. He was in high spirits, but he wasn't eating, despite my best efforts. The pre-departure reception was that night and Anton stayed with the family of a fellow JET for the evening, until Jordan was sidelined by a crippling migraine.

Upon arriving back at the hotel after departing early from the reception, I found an increasingly angry and ravenous child. At least, I thought, if he's that hungry, he'll eat. Nothing I tried would fly so in desperation, I called down to the front desk to see if there was anything they could scrounge up from the breakfast bar that he might actually eat. I ended up with an armload of goldfish crackers, a couple of questionable bananas, a half-pint of milk and two cups of strawberry yogurt. The girl at the front desk (who had heard Anton wailing in the background on the phone) took pity on me and didn't charge me anything for my huge haul. I thanked her profusely, blinking back tears at her blind understanding. She wasn't a mom — she couldn't really know what I was going through — with a bellowing child, escalating amounts of concern, and a migraine-disabled husband whose head was buried under four pillows.

Thankfully, Anton ate nearly all of the food.

The following morning, armed with my "at least he'll eat goldfish" knowledge, I cleaned out the hotel's goldfish supply and tucked them into my carry-ons. Though Anton did drink milk and eat two containers of yogurt for breakfast before we left for the airport, it was his last voluntary meal.

Photos:
Kendra Spring Klasek
Shantel Dickerson

Over the course of the next three days in Tokyo, while Jordan was in orientation, Anton and I explored the mile or so surrounding our hotel, including a beautiful park with a playground directly across the street from us. Foremost on my mind each day, however, was finding familiar foods for Anton. I'd struck out at the hotel's continental breakfast and nothing else that day remotely interested him. On the second morning, determined to find eggs, we went to Denny's. To my chagrin, they didn't have a breakfast menu. They did have fried eggs on the menu and I decided, in my desperation, to beg the indulgence of the cook.

"Please," I said to the waitress who thankfully spoke some amount of English, "my son hasn't eaten in days. If I could just get some scrambled eggs, I think he'll eat them." Then quickly added, for fear of being thought a horrible mother, "Everything I've tried to feed him, he's rejected." Over the course of those few days I found myself growing increasingly defensive, as if it were possible for people to think I was actively starving my child.

A ripple of understanding washed over her face. She may not have been familiar with scrambled eggs, but she knew a concerned mom when she saw one, and my shell of measured excitement was starting to crack. She vanished into the kitchen for 5 minutes and returned with a simple "Okay!", a bright smile, and a quick bow.

I sipped on a cup of coffee and waited for Anton's plate of fluffy yellow salvation to arrive. When it came, he took one bite and pushed the plate away.

Back to the drawing board.

Eventually, we arrived in our placement city of Hita and it was at this point that things came to a head. He'd stopped eating completely. He'd stopped drinking. And so, my first act as a JET spouse was rushing my child to the hospital. The diagnosis was simple, his throat was so sore that he could no longer swallow, as was the treatment, I.V. fluids and pain meds for the sore throat. Anton's care was actually free, as are all children under the Japanese health care system, and as difficult as the transition was, there's no better barometer for what kind of community you've just joined than seeing how they react in a crisis. Hita did not disappoint.

My advice to parents making the same journey... bring as much children's Tylenol as you can and use it at the first sign of trouble. Pack as many snacks as you can, stuff you know your children will eat. Do not count on finding anything of appropriate familiarity. Your children probably don't have the same sense of culinary adventure that you do.

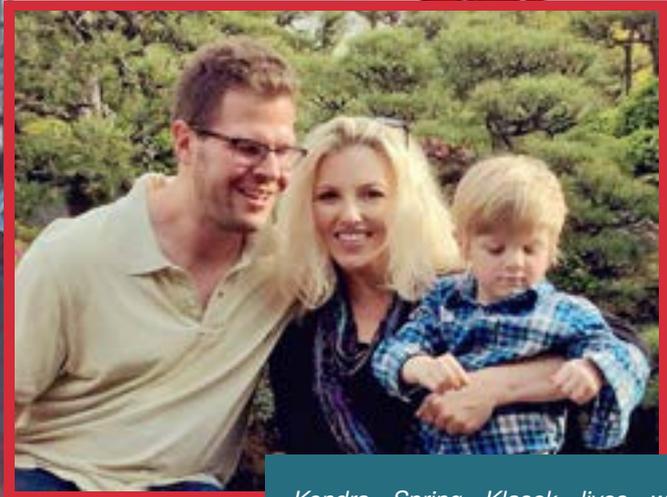
Most importantly, relax and take in every moment, even the bad ones. After a rough transition, Anton is thriving, learning Japanese, attending *yochien* and has made many friends. Change can be terrifying, but that doesn't mean you chose the wrong path.



Welc



SEASIDE TO



Kendra Spring Klasek lives with her husband Jordan Joseph Klasek and their son, Anton, in the city of Hita in Oita Prefecture and works as an English teacher at Pacific English School. Kendra is also a writer, actress and former Marilyn Monroe tribute artist. She is a senior staff writer for the Outlander Cast Blog and writes about entertainment and her family's experiences in Japan at **Beyond the Stones**. Check out some of her work [here](#) and [here](#).

come to Japan!



MY "10 MINUTES"

**JET ALT recounts initial moments as
North Korean missile flies overhead**

Submitted by Anonymous

“You will only have 10 minutes to get to safety from the time a warning is issued before the impact of a nuclear missile”

I remember hearing this during evacuation drills held by my school, and not thinking much of it. We live in the countryside. Why would North Korea bother with us?

Irony can be a jerk.

On August 29, 2017, the once unbelievable scenario became a reality.

**THESE
WERE
MY “TEN
MINUTES”**

(06:02 a.m.)

I was sleep deprived. Apparently, my town changed up the annoyingly chipper morning wake-up call to an alarm that sounded like pure death. I thought to myself, “Did I oversleep?” I rolled over to check the time and noticed it was too early. Eventually, I realized the sound was actually coming from my phone. Blindly feeling my way to my phone, I squinted at the Japanese message displayed on the screen.

政府からの発表

2017/08/29 06:02

「ミサイル発射。ミサイル発射。北朝鮮からミサイルが発射された模様です。頑丈な建物や地下に避難して下さい。」
(総務省消防庁)

My eyes flew open at the words “missile” and “underground.” I found my glasses, slapped them on my face, and immediately re-read the message — hoping I just misread it.

Message from the Government

2017/08/27 06:02

“Missile fired. Missile fired. A missile has been fired from North Korea. Please evacuate to a sturdy building or underground.”

(Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, Fire and Disaster Management Agency)

Then, the town’s speakers started to ring out: announcing that all citizens should seek shelter because a missile was approaching.

A rush of adrenaline kicked in, and I was in survival mode to find shelter. A few steps in, I realized I didn’t know where to go.

(06:04 a.m.)

Exiting my bedroom, I made a call to my supervisor, who was a block away, to ask about the closest place to evacuate. Turns out — there wasn't one. She had me stay inside and turn on the TV. I'd hoped to discover the status of the missile on my flat screen, but instead saw a still message similar to the one written on my phone.

(06:05 a.m.)

Oddly enough, I grew to accept the situation I was in. I started to prepare an emergency bag — in case I did make it out. As I prepared, three things came to mind. First, I wished I had saved time by making a bag beforehand. During Orientation, the PA made a checklist for making one, but I never thought I would have to use it. Second, I hoped that everyone in my region was OK. We had new ALTs with no Japanese ability who recently arrived. I could only imagine how confused and scared they must have been. Third, I wished I had made a living-will for my loved ones back home. I wondered if they knew what was going on.

(06:07 a.m.)

I opened LINE to check on my region. Representatives had messaged out translated updates from the prefectural office. With the immediate area informed, I switched over to Facebook. Friends in Tokyo didn't mention any missile at all. Only ALTs residing in the greater Hokkaido and Tohoku area were in panic. Glancing at the time, I decided to make one last call.



(06:10 a.m.)

I called my mother to let her know from me what was going on from me, rather than the news. When she picked up, I instantly regretted it. How can you tell a mother that her child is in danger of a missile attack? She broke down. I promised her that if the missile landed near me, I would do my best to survive and return to her.

As soon as I knew it, those initial 10 minutes were coming to a close. I stayed low to the ground and I waited.

(06:14 a.m.)

I received the following message.

政府からの発表

2017/08/29 06:14

「ミサイル通過。ミサイル通過。先程、この地域の上空をミサイルが通過した模様です。不審な物を発見した場合には、決して近寄らず、直ちに警察や消防などに連絡して下さい。」
(総務省消防庁)

Message from the Government

2017/08/29 06:14

“The missile has passed. The missile has passed. The missile from earlier has passed through your region. If you encounter suspicious looking objects, do not approach and immediately contact the police, fire department, or other agencies.”

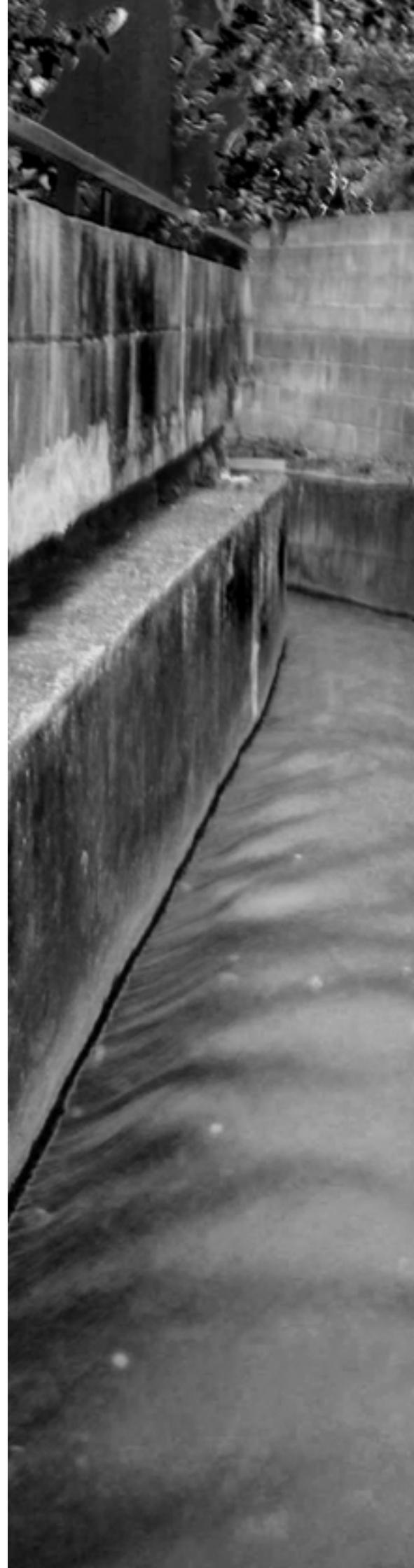
(Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, Fire and Disaster Management Agency)

THE AFTERMATH

After being in the dark, the default message on the TV changed to national news. Seeing the missile pass so near to my area was surreal. Neighboring schools were delayed and my visit school was cancelled. However, my base school decided to proceed as normal.

Walking into the office was like any other day except for the TV playing government announcements. Many people from out of town had no idea what was going on until much later. Some didn't take the warning seriously. Students were upset they had to come to school. For the most part, we all avoided talking about the incident for too long to avoid panic. During breaks, I checked online news and I felt the events of that morning were underrepresented in comparison to the emotional roller-coaster that it was for me and fellow community members.

From telling myself to accept death, then transitioning back to being OK — I was extremely overwhelmed. Deep down, my sense of safety had been violated. I needed to talk to somebody without the fear of judgement. Thus, I made a call to [TELL Japan](#), a phone listening service for expats. Through that call, I was able to talk honestly about my feelings and make peace with what had transpired.





MESSAGE TO JETS

It is my hope that no one will ever have to face the same 10-minute experience that I did. However, I encourage everyone to be aware and prepared.

- Have a 3-day emergency bag you can easily access. They sell them on Amazon Japan. Alternatively, be creative and make your own — using supplies that can be found at a local 100 *yen* shop.
- Ask your supervisor or BOE about emergency disaster procedures and where to find your closest evacuation shelter.
- Register with your home country's Embassy/ Consulate/ Prefecture
- Download emergency alert cellphone apps like *Yurekuru Call* and *Safety Tips* if you need information in English.
- If you ever need to talk anonymously with someone about anything while living in Japan, the TELL Japan hotline or [AJET's PSG](#) volunteers are there to listen to you.

Photos:
Hannah Martin
Hannah Martin
Shantel Dickerson

SHOWER CLIMBING

in the Wilds of Tottori

Sarah Lavery (Shimane)

“You want to do *what?*”

“Shower climbing,” I repeated to my friend.

“OK, that’s what I thought you said, but I still have no idea what that means. I’m picturing rock climbing, sort of. But in the shower.”

I can’t blame her for misunderstanding. Shower climbing, a term allegedly first proposed in Gifu and eventually established by a white water rafting company in Shikoku, is a relatively new activity in Japan. My friend was half right; shower climbing does involve scaling something, but not bathroom walls!

A couple of weeks later, five ALTs from Shimane prefecture, myself, and my Japanese coworker who was our guide for the day, made the drive out to Tottori for our first shower-climbing experience. As we started to get changed, it

suddenly dawned on me that not everyone in the group has experience with wetsuits. This seems obvious in hindsight, but I’m Australian and lived the first eighteen years of my life within a two minute walk of the ocean, where wetsuits were the main thing that keep us going to the beach all year round. The boa-constrictor like feel of the suits was a shock to the group and despite my reassurances that once you’re in the water the foam fabric will loosen up, there were a lot of dubious looks passed around. Once we cleared the hurdle of getting dressed, we piled into a van and started the long drive up to the river.

The mildly concerned looks increased as we made our way further and further up into the mountains, the road winding and giving occasional peeks between the deep greenery to the sharp drop into the valley below. Despite the August heat, there was a cool breeze blowing through the open windows of the car and the fierce sun was filtered by the forest canopy. The town below us grew smaller and smaller. The sense of isolation suddenly broke when we glimpsed a beautiful building constructed entirely out of wood and glass, so that it seemed to blend into the surrounding forest. People were strolling around what appeared to be various shelves and displays at a small market before heading inside. Counters lined the windows and small lights peeked out from between shade of the trees. My coworker Harada-san, a former Tottori local, explained the establishment is a café, well-hidden but loved by locals.

The second surprise came when we arrived at the carpark close to the top of the mountain. Like the forest café, at first glance the area had seemed empty but upon rounding a corner, we saw people had come out in spades to enjoy the beautiful weather and escape the heat, taking advantage of the cool forest and bubbling streams and rivers. Parents had rolled their pant hems and sleeves up to wade into the water while children chased and splashed around them. More children were enjoying a quiet and inquisitive moment inspecting the creatures caught in their insect nets and carefully lowered into clear plastic bug boxes, pre-lined with leaves and sticks to make a comfy temporary home.

We looked an odd group, a mix of Americans, an Aussie, a Brit, and a Trinidad-Tobagoian led by our Japanese guide, all dressed in half-worn wetsuits with life jackets and helmets slung over our shoulders. It was a short ten minute trek through a secluded mountain path to the river below. On the



way, we spotted a powerful waterfall, the narrowness of the river at that point creating a concentrated flow of water that churned the otherwise clear water into a frothy white mess. “We’ll start by climbing that one,” Harada-san said with a grin. My friends laughed, thinking he was joking.

By the time we got to the riverside, the waterfall looked a lot steeper and taller than it did from above. We strapped ourselves into life jackets and helmets, doing a final check on our equipment as the guide and I ran everyone through some safety points.

Finally, we lined up on the river shore, ready to start our climb. Everyone was pleasantly surprised to find the wetsuits not only do a wonderful job of cutting down on the icy chill of the fresh mountain water, but add a level of buoyancy in addition to the life jackets that helps keep us on the surface of the water with minimal exertion. This was very useful as the relatively tame looking river surface was undercut by a lot of water pressure that made just swimming forward seem a bit like trying to run up a downward-moving escalator. Then we hit the first climb.

Later, Harada-san told me that he’d intentionally chosen our starting point so that the first waterfall we climbed would be the largest of the day. I initially laughed and told him he was terrible for throwing us into the deep end like that, but then he explained his decision. When people try shower-climbing for the first time, they’re normally nervous because it’s an activity that compares to very few others. It uses muscles that you don’t usually use, unless you’re an avid rock-climbing or bouldering fan, and even then most people don’t rock-climb up a slippery surface with so much water churning down it that half the time you can’t even see what you’re climbing. The

initial shock of the cold mountain water, the height of the climbs, and the unusual sensation of dealing with constant water pressure of varying strengths and in varying depths all throw most beginners off at the start.

However, while shower-climbing might seem intimidating at first, it’s amazing how quickly you get used to the sensation and your body falls into a rhythm. Sure enough, we cleared the first hurdle with no problem and even the more reluctant members got into the swing of things, eventually moving closer to the front of the group and handling climbs with

little to no assistance. Harada-san’s plan had worked; overcoming the largest waterfall first had shown everyone that they were more than capable of handling the rest of the climbs, and had sparked both a sense of accomplishment and a rush of adrenaline and enthusiasm for more.

A little over an hour later and we reached our goal: a weir (or overflow dam) that created a huge rush of water down a concrete wall into a deep stream at the base. A massive rock in the pool provided the perfect spot for us to launch ourselves into the frothy pool, and we took turns taking a shockingly cold and powerful shower by leaning into the wall of water pouring over the face of the weir.

During our climb we’d swam, climbed, occasionally slipped and frequently laughed our way through a pristine and untouched stretch of river under the shade of a canopy of summer green, with glimpses of sunlight warming our faces and the singing of cicadas and the rush and bubble of the stream in our ears.

Last year, when I first arrived in Japan, I spent my first summer dealing with *natsubate* (summer heat fatigue) and stayed inside with my laptop almost all summer. Feeling the effects of a lack of appetite, lack of sleep, general listlessness and copious amounts of sweat in places I wasn’t even aware could produce sweat, the concept of getting outside and marvelling at the beautiful nature of the



“That’s where shower-climbing really turned my whole perspective on summer around.”

season seemed sadly out of the question. And the concept of exercise under such conditions? Haha, let me get back to my air-con and Netflix, thanks. That's where shower-climbing really turned my whole perspective on summer around. The idea of repeating last year's summer activities seemed too tragic to consider.

Floating on my back in a cool river, looking up at the sunlight filtering through the fan of maple leaves above my head and appreciating the good post-workout soreness in my muscles, it occurred to me. There really are ways to get past the challenges of the season and make the most of summer, even if you don't have a beach within driving distance of your place, and your placement is a remote town up in the mountains.

The beauty of shower-climbing is, there are as many options as there are rivers with waterfalls. Searching for them is half the fun. Getting a team together and

tackling your newfound location is the second half, and once you've gotten a taste for it you'll definitely be back for more.

Go chasing waterfalls! An entirely new and exciting type of sport is waiting for you.

If you're interested in shower-climbing try contacting your local Tourism Association or doing a Google search for options in your area. I highly recommend the tour for beginners to intermediates available in Chizu, Tottori featured in this article, or come join me for a climb in Iinan, Shimane!

Sarah is a second-year CIR based in Iinan, Shimane. Since coming to Japan she's made the most of her rural placement in the Sanin mountain region and dabbled in snowboarding, cycling, hiking, kayaking, kyudo and is currently working with the local Tourism Association to establish a series of shower-climbing courses in the area.



Photos:
Sarah Laverty

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Contact the Head Editor of *CONNECT*, Lilian Diep, at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

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Let us know what you think. Interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and issuu.com.

PHOTOS

Members of the JET community contributed to the photos you see in this issue. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Ashley Hirasuna, at ashley.hirasuna@ajet.net.

HAIKU

Each month *CONNECT* will feature *haiku* from our readers. A *haiku* is simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your *haiku* along with your name and prefecture to connect.editor@ajet.net.

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You asked for it, and now *CONNECT* features comics. Whether you're a desk doodler or a published artist, we want to see your panels and strips about life in Japan.



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