

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

OCTOBER
2018

The Gunma Games – Local Pride Meets Sports and Cabbages

Getting Started With Korean Makeup – Advice for Newbies

Artistic Destinations – A Travel Guide

Spines: Best Served Chilled – Horror Media from Movies to Podcasts and Beyond

Giving Back – One Former ALT Documents a Changing Community



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Magazine Written by the International
Community in Japan**



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Happy Halloween! (Halloween is a month-long thing, right?)

It's that time of year again - time to get wrapped up in cosy scarves, drink gallons of tea, and celebrate all things spooky! This month, have no fear - we've got lots to keep you going while you stay out of the cold. How about some arty explorations of famous Japanese urban legends to get you started? Warning: not for the faint of heart!

Did you know the Japanese also have their own term for wanting to eat all of the amazing new seasonal foods appearing everywhere? Chestnut, pumpkin, sweet potato... It's called autumn appetite, and if you've got it bad, you might be interested in this month's review of the Kyoto Restaurant Bus, one JET's experience of doing Keto in Japan, and our handy guide to eating healthy on a budget.

Looking for a way to get outside and connected with the community? This month, we take a look at volunteering in Ehime, Saga's homegrown ALT tournament, and how to do Ultimate Frisbee (Japanese style, of course!).

Enjoy!

Lauren Hill
Head Editor
3rd Year Tokyo ALT



Photo: Gina Whitney



NEWS AND EVENTS

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*"I walk around like everything is fine, but deep down,
inside my shoe, my sock is sliding off." -Unknown*

Photo: Avalon De Gannes (Kobe)



Events Calendar:

October

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

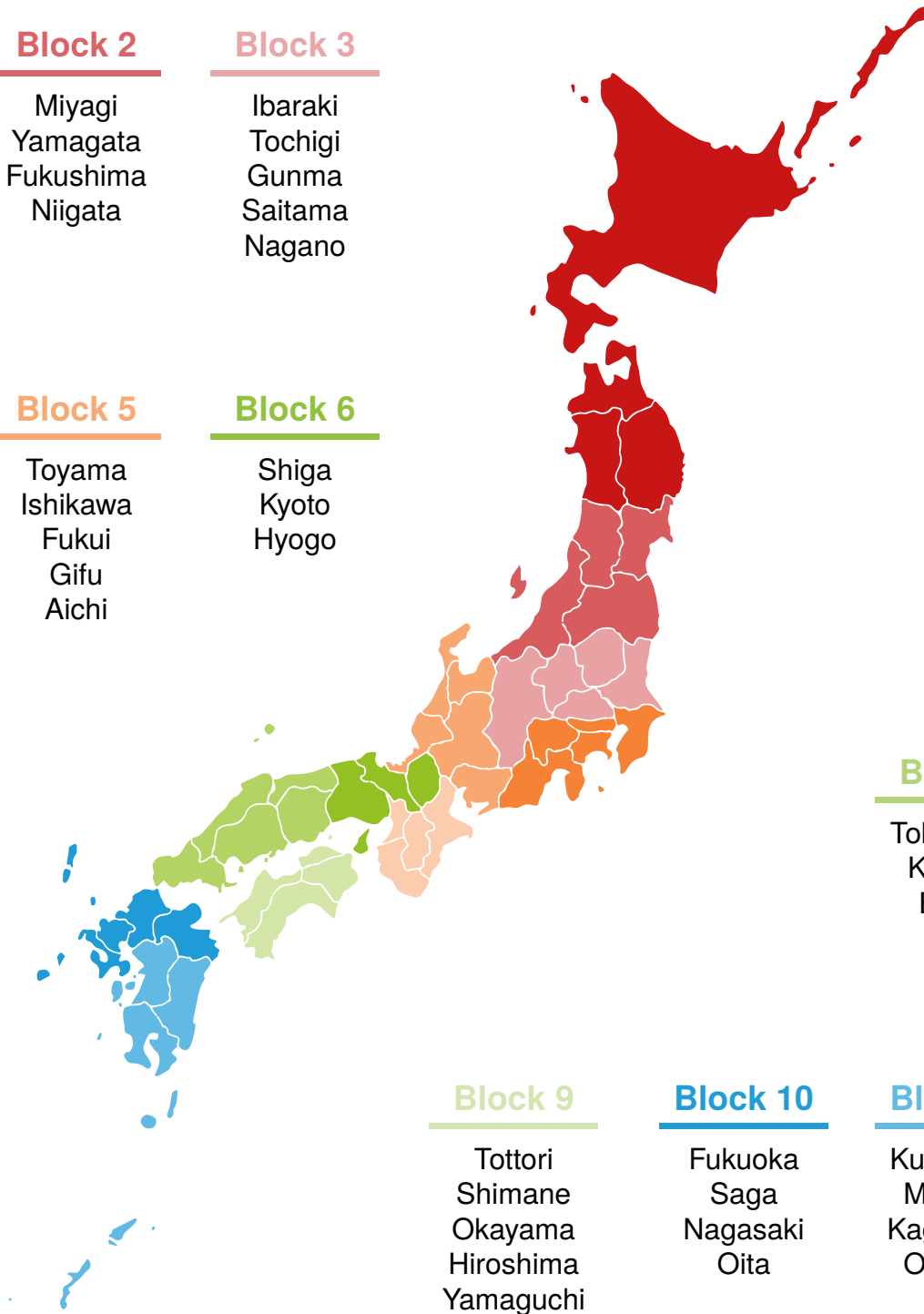
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa





Block 1

Iwate Town Fall Festival

05 October – 07 October
Iwate Town, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Traditional Performing Arts Festival

06 October – 07 October
Semboku City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 45th Autumn Wine Festival in Ikeda-cho

07 October
Ikeda Town, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

The 16th Hirosaki · Shirakami Apple Marathon

07 October
Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Fairy Tale Village Forest Light Up 2018

07 October
Hanamaki City, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sapporo Marathon

07 October
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc](#)

The Sapporo International Short Film Festival and Market

11 October – 14 October
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc](#)

The 26th Asamasagi Wine Festival

13 October
Yuri Honjo City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hiraizumi Balloon Festival 2018

19 October – 21 October
Ichinoseki City, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Kimi Machi no Sato Festival and Marathon

20 October – 21 October
Noshiro City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 2

Aizu Ramen Festival 2018

05 October – 09 October
Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

SAKE FESTIVAL NAGAOKA

06 October
Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Kesennuma Sanma Festival 2018

06 October – 07 October
Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Fukushima Burger Summit

07 October
Koori city, Fukushima Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Water and Land Art Festival

08 October
Niigata city, Niigata Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Mogami Daisangyo Matsuri Produce Festival

13 October – 14 October
Shinjo City, Yamagata Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)





Block 3

Sunflower Festival

05 October – 08 October
Midori City, Gunma Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sasamegawa Autumn Festa

06 October
Toda City, Saitama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Matsushiro Samurai Festival

06 October – 07 October
Nagano City, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc.](#)

Kanuma Buttsuke Autumn Festival

06 October – 07 October
Kanuma City, Tochigi Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc.](#)

Tsukuba Ramen Festival

06 October – 08 October
Tsukuba City, Ibaraki prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Soba Festival

06 October – 08 October
Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc.](#)

The 87th Tsuchiura All Japan Fireworks Tournament

08 October
Tsuchiura City, Ibaraki Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Myojin Pond Float Festival

08 October
Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc.](#)

The 17th Fireworks Festival

13 October
Konosu City, Saitama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Asama Hot Spring Fire Festival

13 October
Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc.](#)

Kasumigaura Enduro (Bike Race)

14 October
Kasumigaura City, Ibaraki Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Otori Festival

21 October
Konosu City, Saitama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Cosmos Festival

27 October – 28 October
Konosu City, Saitama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hitokotonushi Shrine Autumn Festival

13 September and 15 September
Joso city, Ibaraki Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Ikaho Festival

18 September – 20 September
Shibukawa city, Gunma Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Matsumoto Castle Moon Viewing Party

19 September – 24 September
Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Tenryu River Whitewater Festival

22 September – 23 September
Iida city, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)



Block 4

Yokohama Oktoberfest 2018

28 September – 14 October
Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Dai Tsukemen Haku 10th Anniversary

04 October – 31 October
Tokyo City, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Karuwa Grapes Festival

06 October
Koshu City, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Odawara Oden Festival 2018

06 October – 07 October
Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

McLock & Fuji Sonic 2018

06 October – 08 October
Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 3rd Lobster Festival

07 October
Isumi City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 20th Shizuoka Art Festival

12 October – 14 October
Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yatakata Peanut Festival

14 October
Yatimachi City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 7th Tsukimi Concert (Tsukigase Umebayashi)

14 October
Izu City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sagamiha-Ramen Grand Prix 2018

20 October – 21 October
Sagamihara City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

The 13th Kamakura Art Festival

20 October – 21 October
Kamakura City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yaizu Halloween Carnival

21 October
Yaizu City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Agriculture Festival 42nd “Autumn Harvest and Thanksgiving”

27 October – 28 October
Kamagaya City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Samba Show Brazil Carnival in Japan 2018

31 October – 04 November
Tokyo City, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)





Block 5

Gifu Nobunaga Festival

01 October – 02 October
Gifu City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Kanazawa Moon Viewing Light Party

05 October – 07 October
Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Takaoka Mayo Festival

06 October – 07 October
Takaoka City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Seki Cutlery Festival

06 October – 07 October
Seki City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

The 12th Hokuriku Ramen Expo 2018

06 October – 08 October
Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Atago Slope Light Festival

06 October – 08 October
Fukui City, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Takayama Autumn Festival

09 October – 10 October
Takayama City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Osu Street Performing Festival

12 October – 14 October
Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Tokoname-yaki Pottery Festival

13 October – 14 October
Tokoname City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

EAT WINE! TOYAMA 2018

14 October
Toyama City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Konan Citizens Fireworks

20 October
Konan City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

Nagoya Festival

20 October – 21 October
Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

Karakuri Puppet Dolls

27 October – 28 October
Inuyama City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)



Block 6

Otsu Hikiyama Festival

06 October – 07 October
Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Kansai Ramen Derby 2018

06 October – 14 October
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Ujicha Ceremony

07 October
Uji City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

16th Kyoto Intercollegiate Festa

07 October
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Hachimanbori Festival 2018

13 October – 14 October
Omihachiman City, Shiga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Saiin Kasuga Shrine Festival

13 October – 14 October
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Nada no Kenka Festival

14 October – 15 October
Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)



Block 7

Kanana Candy Festival

01 October – 31 October
Hainan City, Wakayama
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Ramen Girls Festival Osaka

04 October – 08 October
Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hanarart Festival

05 October – 07 October
Yoshino Town, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and
Japanese](#)

Crying Sumo Event

07 October
Hainan City, Wakayama
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Formula 1 Race (Car Racing)

07 October
Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Osaka Kitchenware Street Festival

08 October
Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Osaka Mecha Happy Festival

08 October
Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Miyako Hin Minato Festa

14 October
Gobo City, Wakayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Heijyo Tempyo Autumn Festival

20 October – 21 October
Nara City, Nara Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Cycle adventure Nanki RIDE ON SUSAMI 2018

20 October – 21 October
Susami Town, Wakayama
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 16th Festival of Inamura's Fire

28 October
Hirokawa Town, Wakayama
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 8

Kaiyo Ise Shrimp Festival

01 October – 31 October
Kaiyo City, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hiwasa Hachiman Shrine Fall Festival

06 October – 07 October
Hiwasa City, Tokushima
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 13th Iya Valley Powder Hikisaku Nippon tournament (Folk Songs)

06 October – 07 October
Miyoshi City, Tokushima
Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Imabari Festival (Local Goods)

13 October – 14 October
Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English,
Chinese, and Korean](#)

Doi Festival

13 October – 15 October
Shikoku City, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English,
Chinese, and Korean](#)

Kawanoe Fall Festival

13 October – 15 October
Shikoku City, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English,
Chinese, and Korean](#)



Block 9

Okayama International Music Festival

29 September – 14 October
Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yoshikawa Hachimangu Shrine Festival

01 October – 29 October
Kibichuo Town, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hagi Kimono Week

01 October – 31 October
Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Kanpai! Hiroshima! The Oyster Kingdom

03 October
Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Kimiwa Firework Display

06 October
Katsuo Town, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Ooura Shrine Fall Festival Great Festival (Horse racing)

06 October – 07 October
Asakuchi City, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Autumn Okayama Momotaro Festival

06 October – 08 October
Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Soba Flower Festival

07 October
Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yuda Onsen Sake Festival

07 October
Yamaguchi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Tottori Burger Festa 2018

07 October – 08 October
Seiyama Town, Tottori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Halloween Penguin Event

08 October
Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Onomichi Lantern Festival

13 October
Onomichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

The 27th Shime Film Festival

20 October
Yasugi City, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Matsue festival

21 October
Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Photos:
Sam Gordon
Cassidy Landers
Karina Zic
Sam Gordon



Block 10

Nigeria Festival & Culture Day

06 October

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Nagasaki Kunchi Festival

07 October- 09 October

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Eat Beef and Scream

08 October

Yufuin City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Kebesu Festival (Fire Festival)

14 October

Kunisaki City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Takengen (Fox Festival)

14 October- 15 October

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

11th Itoshima Craft Fes

19 October – 21 October

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Castle Town Kitsuki Mochizuki Festival

20 October – 21 October

Kitsuki City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Saga International Balloon Fiesta

31 October – 04 November

Saga City, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



Block 11

Hitoyoshi Okunchi Festival

03 October – 11 October

Hitoyoshi City, Kumamoto

Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

The 22th Nobeoka Tengaichi Takigi Noh 2018

06 October

Nobeoka City, Miyazaki

Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Nozoku Futory Festival

06 October – 08 October

Okinawa City, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Great Tug-of-War

07 October

Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Miyakonojō Yakiniku Carnival 2018

20 October

Miyakonojo City, Miyazaki

Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Yatsushiro National Fireworks Show

20 October

Yatsushiro City, Kumamoto

Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Takayama Yabusame Fireworks Festival 2018

20 October

Kimotsuki Town, Kagoshima

Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)



In The News

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)

Photo: Cassidy Landers (Kobe)

Japan Criticized for Dolphin Show at Sailing World Cup

Japan's Sailing Federation has apologized for using dolphins as a means of entertainment in the opening ceremony of the World Cup Sailing Competition, which was recently held at Enoshima Aquarium.

The event, which doubled as the first opportunity for sailors to test the venue for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, has drawn online criticism and led the World Sailing Federation to voice its disappointment.

In a statement, World Sailing, the sport's governing body, said it was "disappointed" with the use of dolphins as a form of display in the opening ceremony.



Dolphin show at the 2018 opening ceremony of the World Cup sailing competition draws criticism



“World Sailing does not condone displays of this nature and apologizes for the misjudgment and any offence caused,” the statement said.

They added, “As part of World Sailing’s Sustainability Agenda 2030, there are specific targets linked to marine life. One of these is to mitigate negative impacts sailing can have on marine cetaceans by 2020 by producing guidance, as necessary, which will be provided to our event partners to ensure this does not happen again.”

According to the governing body, all ceremony-related content of World Sailing events must be pre-approved by the federation, but “no such approval was given nor sought” by the Japanese organizer of the competition.

Others have also voiced their criticism of the dolphin show, including British yachtsman Luke Patience, who won a silver medal at the London 2012 games. “Couldn’t be more embarrassed with what I’m witnessing,” he tweeted with a photo of the display. “We are sailors, and apparently a ‘green’ sport.”

“I was shocked when World Sailing took us to a dolphin aquarium for an opening ceremony. As a sport, I hope we can show more morality than this,” he further added.

Hirobumi Kawano, who heads the Japan Sailing Federation, offered an apology and stated that they “lacked thought” despite worldwide efforts to protect dolphins and whales.

He then added: “How to treat dolphins differs among countries and individuals. We’d like to apologize if we made someone feel uncomfortable.”

Some dolphins that are currently housed in Japanese aquariums were caught in controversial (warning: graphic imagery) drive hunts such as the one in the whaling town of Taiji in western Japan. There hundreds of dolphins are often hunted and used as food.

Japan’s treatment and butchery of marine mammals has been a cause of ongoing conflict for many in the international community, as it is widely held to be cruel.

Source:
<https://bit.ly/2x9Lb4m>
<https://bit.ly/2iOL1ZD>

Image source:
<https://bit.ly/2x9Lb4m>

Japan Promotes ICT Use in Schools as Means of Improving English Skills

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is to be used as a means of improving English language skills in Japanese schools. According to sources, the Japanese Education Ministry plans to promote this new development by using English apps, in order to enhance the four language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing.

The ICT initiative will include the use of tablet computers and electronic blackboards that are designed to improve students' learning capabilities - for instance,

using apps developed by private companies to listen to native speakers' pronunciation.

The apps would be used in the classrooms of elementary, junior and senior high schools, in accordance with new curriculum guidelines.

For three years from the 2019 fiscal year 2019, a total of 10 selected schools in each of Japan's 47 prefectures will have the opportunity to take advantage of this new technological drive. As such, the ministry, in its fiscal 2019 budget

proposal, will seek 250 million yen to cover the expenditures.

English proficiency in Japan is considered one of the lowest in the developed world, and was ranked 37th out of a total of 80 countries in the 2017 English Proficiency Index.

Source:
<https://bit.ly/2CFQPRW>

Image source:
<https://bit.ly/2x5eUeK>





Man Indicted for Murdering and Dismembering Nine

On Monday, September 10th, public prosecutors indicted a 27-year-old man for the 2017 murders of nine people in his apartment in Zama, Kanagawa Prefecture, southwest of Tokyo.

Over the course of three months, Takahiro Shiraishi invited the nine people, aged 15 to 26, to his apartment where he choked them to death, dismembered their bodies, and stored them inside cooling boxes and other containers. Shiraishi later confessed to also taking money from the victims, eight women

and one man. All eight women were sexually assaulted.

He became acquainted with the victims via Twitter posts that expressed suicidal thoughts and eventually lured them to his apartment by allegedly saying he would help them to die.

After five months of psychiatric tests, Shiraishi was found to be competent and able to be held liable for the murders. He has been served with 10 arrest warrants in connection with the

killings. The indictment covers all of the cases.

According to the police, Shiraishi confessed that he killed the victims because he wanted to steal their money and “lead an easy life.”

The serial killings have prompted the government and social networking services to try and improve support for suicide prevention.

Source:
<https://bit.ly/2CJQ6iN>



THE SAGA TOURNAMENT:

ALT By Day, Competitor By Night

Robin Clark (Saga)

Rivalries, betrayals, Pop the Pirate, and fierce battles over which district is the best district in Saga prefecture. The Saga Tournament is an annual tournament with monthly events aimed at getting local JETs out and around Saga prefecture, while building a competitive community spirit. The idea for it began out of frustration that more and more JETs from Saga were looking outside of the prefecture for activities and events. Saga is a small place, sandwiched between Kyushu's far more popular Fukuoka and Nagasaki prefectures, so it is easy to overlook. Saga also has a comparatively small number of JETs, boasting only 45 people spread across the entirety of the prefecture, which in itself is divided into three districts. From this, the idea of the tournament began: pit each district against each other in monthly events that take place around Saga to get people out of the house and interacting with one another.

One of the initial challenges to address was what sort of events to host. The goal of the tournament is to try and include as many people as possible. Anything goes. As a result, the planning committee decided to

host a variety of activities. Events can be very short, such as September's video game tournament and March's calligraphy contest, which lasted a couple of hours. The calligraphy was actually judged by a local Japanese artist. There are also events that can last an entire month, like November's photography contest with the prompt being Saga. Participants submitted up to two photos, which were then voted on by everyone over the course of a week. Though most of the photos submitted were of festivals, such as the very popular Kunchi Festival, the winner was a photo of a gorgeous garden near Kunenan Mansion, close to Saga City (pictured above).

All of this aimed to bring people together, to interact with friends, and to win points for their district. The team at the end of the year with the most points wins an actual trophy. It's decorated in the colours of the winning district. Winners also get glorious bragging rights for the summer.

The first tournament started in August 2017, held on the same day as the traditional beachside BBQ



to welcome all new JETs. The first event was very small, only featuring three players, each representing their district. It lasted all of five minutes and got everyone crowded around a Pop the Pirate board game. Our version's rule was that the first player to pop the pirate won. Feeling the tension and hearing the cheers when a player won made it apparent that this idea was going to take off. This year's tournament began as the last one did, at the beach BBQ, with more participants and more events: a 100 m sprint on the beach, a contest to see who could pick up the most garbage off the beach in an hour, and Pop the Pirate made its glorious return.

Another big development of the tournament are storylines. One of the major points of drama that we have had has been a betrayal. The first year started off fairly one-sided with Tomatsu sweeping the first three events. However, one of Tomatsu's oldest ALTs moved to a different district and now is that district's most prolific participant and has won some events for them. He still says his heart is with Tomatsu, and wants a special team shirt to reflect that, but his betrayal won't be forgotten (or forgiven!)

After a year of events, the Saga Tournament has changed a fair bit. Originally it was an excuse to meet friends once a month and explore what Saga had to offer. Now there are team shirts, winning streaks, rivalries, betrayals, and storylines which can only develop and get more interesting in such a small prefecture. This year is only the second Saga



Tournament, but some big changes are in the works. Looking to the future, we have considered more long-term events; activities with traditional Japanese crafts; and involving the local non-JET community. This is all done in the hope that JETs get out there, enjoy what Saga has to offer, and have fun doing it.

More information and current standings can be found here: <https://sagajet.com/leisure/saga-tournament/>

Author Bio: Robin is a third year Canadian ALT based in Karatsu City, Saga prefecture. He was born in France to British and Jamaican parents and only received Canadian citizenship six months before leaving for JET. Robin now offers French lessons at his schools, and is a big fan of hiking and photography. Luckily Saga offers plenty of chances to further both of those hobbies.



Japan's workforce currently faces two interwoven problems: The elderly won't stop passing away and the youth won't start having children. In other words, Japan's population is growing *old*. So old, in fact, that it's currently considered to be "super-aging." (1)

From Japan's tremendously profitable adult diaper industry to the phenomenon of *herbivore men* (males uninterested in sex), one can hardly walk past a television or open a newspaper without being reminded that Japan's future labor market is in dire straits.

Waves of its citizens reach their sunset years and its nurseries remain empty. A very real question is emerging: who's going to pay the bills?

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 33.0% of the Japanese population is above the age of 60, 25.9% are 65 or older, and 12.5% are 75 or above. People aged 65 and older in Japan make up a whopping quarter of its overall population.

Not only is the population dying off at an alarming

rate, but it's failing to replenish itself. Essentially, Japan loses more residents each year than it creates. Research suggests Japan's record-setting low birthrate will continue to decline. By 2045 Japan will be losing 900,000 residents a year.

No Way, Jose

Despite these hurdles, the Japanese government has time and again made statements reassuring the island country that the Diet will not relax its notoriously rigid border policy. As recently as November 2017, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe himself expressed "no intention" of changing his position despite the looming labor crisis. (2)

The previous solution to this problem? Japan's Technical Intern Trainee Program.

Be Our Guest (But Not Our Citizen)

Introduced in 1993, Japan's Technical Intern Trainee Program, or TITP, officially claims that its purpose is to provide training, technical skills and technology experience to workers from developing countries. These are typically Southeast Asian countries, i.e. China, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

Japan Opening Its Borders to the Future

Out with the Old, In with the Who?

Ben Baer (Osaka)

Among the “technical” positions being snatched up by this program are warehouse attendants, day laborers, garment manufacturers and farm hands. The government-sponsored initiative has come under fire for being nothing more than a means to fill menial positions with unskilled foreign labor on the cheap. As the majority of these trainees are foreign students from developing countries with little to no recourse and minimal Japanese abilities, it is not uncommon to hear of participants being treated unfairly, having their wages withheld, or working in dangerous environments.

As Hosei University professor of Social Sciences, Chieko Kamibashi, explains, “(Foreign) bookers choose people with less education who often don’t

have a clear notion of what’s right and wrong so they don’t complain about mistreatment.” (3)

The Skills to Pay The Bills

Faced with these issues surrounding the TITP, Mister Abe did concede this July that in order to keep Japan’s economy and infrastructure stable, the country would strengthen efforts to allow foreign workers more opportunities for temporary work visas, but only when truly needed.

The newly created *designated-skills* visa aims to bring in half a million foreign workers by 2025. These skills will target areas currently lacking in native talent: agriculture, construction, hospitality, nursing and shipbuilding.

In contrast to the controversial TITP, this new visa aims to avoid the same issues plaguing its predecessor by having foreign workers enter the country under the scrutiny of an actual visa as opposed to a dubious training program.

The designation of an entirely new visa status for foreign residents comes as a welcome surprise to a country where less than two percent of its residents are non-native Japanese. As a developed nation, Japan is the least ethnically diverse in the world. On a global scale, it is the twenty seventh least diverse overall.

Importing an additional 500,000 skilled non-Japanese workers to the country will add roughly half a percent of foreign-born nationals to its 124 million person population over the next seven years.

Facing the Facts

“As the labor shortage becomes serious, we need to rush to build a system where foreign talents can be accepted as an immediate asset with a certain level of expertise and technique,” said Abe during a meeting of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy in June. (4)

Despite his well-known “Japan First” brand of politics emphasizing domestic policies and internal development, the prime minister’s revised stance on the issue of imported foreign talent has drawn surprisingly little criticism.

In fact, Abe’s proposed reforms have been criticized for being too conservative, even among members of his own Liberal Democratic Party.

“Some 500,000 is not enough at all,” said LDP chairman Yoshio Kimura in June.

“Some people who don’t know



about the reality (of the Japanese economy) must have just made up that figure.” (5)

Echoing his colleague’s sentiments, Yoshitaka Sakurada, also a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, admitted, “Until now, I’ve felt that short-term workers would take away Japanese jobs... but the economic situation now is different.” (6)

Naturally, members of Mister Abe’s own party can be expected to share (at least publicly) the policies of their leader. Surprisingly, however, opponents to the LDP have, albeit cautiously, expressed similar opinions.

“Basically, I think Japan is a unique

country, so allowing immigration will create various frictions,” right-wing Japan preservationist, Nariaki Nakayama said during an interview with the Financial Times.

“I’m negative on immigration, but on the other hand Japan has labor shortages. I recognize it will be hard to stop.” (6)

One of Us, One of Us

With both sides of the aisle slowly coming around to the idea of a foreign-friendly Japan, the country’s workplace portrait may soon be changing. Perhaps in the near future, the time-tested convenience store greeting of “irasshaimase,” may even be replaced with a “ni-hao,” or dare we imagine, “come on in!”

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Photo Sources:

BenBaer01.jpg – Foreign workers labor picking cabbages in the countryside.

Source:

<https://bit.ly/2oZH4UY>

BenBaer02.jpg – Filipino women in Tokyo train for the hospitality industry – an area Prime Minister Abe feels needs additional foreign talent in order to stay competitive.

Source:

<https://on.ft.com/2CJITA8>

BenBaer03.jpg – Vietnamese laborers work a construction site in Tokyo under Japan's controversial Technical Intern Trainee Program

Source:

<https://on.ft.com/2oWZZjo>

Ben is a fifth year ALT from the United States. He enjoys committing acts of hooliganism outside of 7-11, talking to little old ladies, watching Star Trek, and going through other people's garbage in the hope that they've thrown away a working LaserDisc player. He can be contacted at fukuiben89@gmail.com. He also has a Twitter page with nothing on it, and he has no idea how it works @BenBaerWasTaken

Additional Photo: Giovanni Perez



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"It was the way she felt when she looked at the stars." - Maggie Stiefvater, The Raven Boys

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This year I'm going to have an awesome Halloween costume that blows everyone's minds! If only I had money, or time or the creative ability....

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Tayla-Paige van Sittert

Fear is the reason for a lot of things; like the reason you may say "leave me alone" when really you want to be hugged quiet hard.

Photo: Ashley Hirasuna



In A Way, I Owe It to Inouye: *A Sign that Led*———— ————*Me Back to Japan*

Mimi Walker (Ibaraki)

Nearly three years ago, during my senior year as a journalism major at Emerson College in Boston, I was gifted an opportunity unlike any other: a chance to soak in both the glowing urban culture of Japan (through, namely, Tokyo and Kyoto City) and its hidden rural gems (through a visit to Shiga prefecture, which counterbalanced the thronging pulse of city life).

This opportunity came to me and all of my classmates in our Online Publishing Capstone via the TOMODACHI Scholars program. Figureheads of the program had been informed of our final project and extended gracious arms out for us to do a week-long, all-expenses-paid cultural exchange. That final project was an [Apple iBook](#) detailing the life and times of World War 2 hero and progressive Japanese-American Senator, Daniel K. Inouye (D, Hawaii).

We had learned so much about this fine man and all of the issues he championed, including food quality control, veterans' healthcare rights, ocean health, and minority rights, specifically those of Native Americans on reservations. We also had the somewhat daunting task of observing Japanese culture in various areas and then presenting our findings to officials in the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo in order to determine how Inouye's ancestry influenced his own political platforms in America.

I believe my own answers to this call came in their most fleshed-out form when all of us college seniors participated in a homestay on a farm in Minshuku Village in Takashima City, Shiga. Visiting the stunning shrines in Japan's major cities absolutely cemented the fact that Japanese culture reveres nature in its purest form and all of its evolution throughout time. Without nature's innate immutability (which, ironically, is the one predictable thing about it), humans would not have found the desire and drive to achieve intelligence that could mirror and complement the natural world.





There is something to be said about life in the *inaka*. Namely, that it emphasizes using the gift of nature to sustain the greatest unit of people: the family and beyond.

I have written about the importance and significance of water in Japan and in Inouye-supported bills in the afterword of my class's iBook, *Inouye*. On a personal note, the water in the deep spring at our Minshuku farm had to be the most incredible water I had ever seen or tasted. This inherently mineral-rich water produced the fluffiest of white rice and sustained our weathered skin after so many hours and days of traveling. To my mind, it was akin to magic.

This water found its way back to Lake Biwa, where a unique ecosystem awaited its powers. Suddenly, a theme clicked for me: *eco over ego. Group needs over individual needs*. It is a definite difference from the individualist mindset promoted in American media, yet this mindset is so desperately needed to fill the gaps between those who say "Us First" and those who are balking because it is difficult to believe in something at this point in the days of our lives.

"Ahhh," I thought, as I admired the exquisite headstones in the village's graveyard, where eras of ancestors remained after staying their whole lives in the village to sustain the greater good. "You can find purpose here. You do not need to be as consumed with yourself as society is encouraging you to be."

Water is a basic human right. Another basic human right flashed before me: the chance to extend a hand to another culture, recognizing in it a potential chance to influence new ways of quality self-enrichment. If I tried it, perhaps a ripple effect would occur, however it chose to manifest itself.

I owe my decision to come to Japan with JET in part to the spectacular teachers at Boston Higashi School, who worked tirelessly and fastidiously to bring out the hidden abilities in my autistic younger brother. And, in a way, I owe it to Inouye; the assignment of scouring his life and his beliefs in painstaking detail lifted me to a higher place of understanding, both of the world and of myself. Much like the ocean, I shall still ebb and flow through my tenure here as I work diligently as an ALT to engage students in learning English. And yet, the ebb and flow is the only predictable thing about it; what keeps me enthralled is keeping students intrigued, and that comes from placing the *interesting* over the *flawless*. Having this in mind makes me much more relaxed in the classroom and so much more excited for lesson planning.

One man's work for a country not of his origin has helped this young woman help herself through helping others in a country not of her origin, one slowly becoming her home. A home on the flip side is another basic human right, and I hope my students will be inspired to bring this right to life in their own journeys.



Mimi Walker is a JET Programme ALT placed in Ibaraki Prefecture since summer 2018. She is a graduate of the journalism program at Emerson College in Boston. She views Japan as a beacon. She adores trying new foods and cannot wait to carve out a life of adventures here!



Community and Tradition: Gion in Small Town Japan

Joshua Mangham (Oita)

In late July, Nakatsu celebrated its annual Gion Festival in a burst of colour and sound. And not without some revelry, too, although in typically Japanese style even this hedonism was bound by the twin Nippon virtues of discipline and responsibility.

Gion is celebrated across the country during the summer months of July and August. This period is designated as festival season in Japan, and during it you can't walk far without stumbling into a celebration of some sort.

Out of the host of summer festivals, Gion is undoubtedly the largest. Gion originated in Kyoto 500 years ago, and in Nakatsu it dates back to the 18th century. Gion is a festival you can only take part in if you grew up in the area or, perhaps, know someone who did. Luckily for my girlfriend and me, we knew a local: our Japanese conversation teacher, Yanai-sensei. Through his invitation to join the procession of his neighbourhood, Furuou-machi, we found our *gaijin* ticket into this year's Gion. During the three days of procession (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday), we joined the festivities for a few hours in the mornings and evenings but never before 10 a.m. We were thus allowed a taste of the inner madness of Gion without sacrificing sleep, although this kind of part-time basis is anathema to the Japanese spirit. It is certainly at odds with the usual commitment expected of a Gion participant.

One such participant was Ryunosuke-kun. Ryunosuke is a high school student I meet with every week to play cards. I practice English conversation with him in exchange for guidance through the alien world of Japanese pop music and free fizzy drinks. His involvement in preparing for Gion meant getting up at 4 a.m. on more than one Sunday in the month leading up to the festival; practising on weekdays after school; and then, when it came to the actual Gion long weekend, waking again at 4 a.m. and going all day until late in the night for three days straight. The intensity of his festival preparation and participation – probably totalling well over 100 hours of commitment – constituted the norm. Faced with this kind of commitment, I was happy to take a back seat.

Gion officially started on Friday. We arrived after work, just as the residents of Furuou-machi were gearing up for the evening parade. In keeping with our more relaxed role, we had neither the complete, colour coordinated uniform of full-timers nor the *happi*, consisting of *jika-tabi* – nimble, ninja-type black footwear wrapped in white rope, perfect for dashing silently across roofs in the black of night – and baggy trousers and shirts (white for men, black for women).





The men's forearms were adorned with long black sweatbands bearing Furuo-machi's kanji in gold and white stitching, and around their heads they sported *hachimaki* (literal translation: "helmet scarves"), the classic Japanese-style bandanas that symbolise perseverance and courage. Some of the women wore hair that defied gravity, a product of hours of preparation that sometimes included elaborate waves and braiding decorated with flowers. They carried their small children as immaculate adornments.

During Gion, each neighbourhood's residents pulled their float around the city for three days as part of a larger procession with other floats. Imagine the city streets as a grid of catwalks and the floats as peacocks. A sense of what Gion is like will emerge. Scores of Nakatsu residents came out and watched the floats as they passed, creating a carnival atmosphere. Leading each float were dozens of the neighbourhood's residents, who pulled on thick, long ropes attached to the carriage's front. Inside, boys played the drums. They were the invisible heart that dictated the rhythm of the procession. Ryunosuke was one of the drummers. Situated on the covered second floor compartment of the *guruma*, the drummers could see out through the gap between first and second floor. During breaks for dances, when the float grinded to a halt, I caught Ryunosuke and his friends stealing glances through the gap at people in the street, at the girls dancing below. They were huddled together, silent. Although high school students, they looked like children clustered on the stairs after bedtime, listening in on the adults' conversation.

During these breaks in the procession, the float

stopped at street corners. Shop owners came out with envelopes containing donations to the neighbourhood. The drums paused, and *enka*, Japan's answer to country music, erupted from heavy speakers. Teenage girls emerged, one at a time, from the curtained-off compartment of the *guruma* and began to dance wanly to songs that were sometimes sad but mostly gaudy. The faces of the girls were decorated with bright lipstick, heavy eye shadow, and pale foundation. Their expressions gave nothing away, and their movements were minimal. Dressed in perfect *yukata* (a summer cotton kimono) and *geta* (traditional Japanese platform sandals), they moved like dolls rising slowly from a wind-up box.

The pullers congregated in front of the cart. In sync with the music and in contrast to the dancers' deliberate coyness, they started manically jumping up and down. Most of the moshing crowd were teenagers, chanting the name of their neighbourhood while throwing each other about like they were at a punk metal gig. On the fringes younger children watched, eager to get involved but not trusting their chances in the throng, while the older adults stood, arms draped over the cart, smoking and looking on.

Behind the float, doing the toughest job, were the men that pushed and turned the *guruma*. This was a backbreaking endeavour. They had to provide the force to push the float from a standstill and gain momentum while also turning it 90 degrees when the *guruma* arrived at a street corner and required a change of direction. The lads that pushed from the back started at 4 a.m. and may still have been pushing at midnight. As usual in Japan, sleep was



incidental for them. Those performing it were usually the youngest and strongest men of the area. They were also the thirstiest.

The amount of alcohol put away by people involved in Gion was not insignificant. Throughout the three days, a small white van followed the float faithfully. The small man driving it was a happy sort, always wearing a beatific smile, for he knew that he was bringing relief to float pullers. The van contained water and *ocha* but also – importantly – big coolers full of beers and *chu-hai*. Comically large bottles of shochu passed along the float pullers during breaks between processions. In these moments ecstatic, sozzled voices invoked the Japanese equivalent of “Down it!” Given the Japanese aversion to water, it was a constant point of intrigue how, amidst all this crushing labour, sleep deprivation, and the baking sun, everyone just kept on going.

They did, though, and through the three days, the refrain of life here – “*Otsukaresama desu*” – was a constant. Our float – Furuou-machi’s *guruma* – was the first of this year’s procession to come racing into Nakatsu Castle. A large crowd cheered as we ran up the hill and through the entrance into the castle park. As we arrived, we were doused with water thrown from large buckets by a mirthful posse of older men and women. Inside the grounds, the crowd had spread out to the perimeter, and we made ten laps of the castle before coming to a halt and retiring the float for the night.

In ten-minute intervals afterwards, the other neighbourhood floats did the same, each time

presenting a different flurry of colours and neighbourhood-centric chants. After Furuou-machi’s drummers stopped and the float was put to bed, everyone walked to the Shinto shrine less than fifty metres away. There, Furuou-machi’s priest led thanks for that day’s efforts and prayers for the next day. The night ended with fireworks over the Yamakuni River, and we sat on the grass in our damp clothes, drinking beer and watching the light show.

Participating in Gion provided a vivid insight into the bonds of community and tradition that remain so strong in this small Oita city. I’m already looking forward to next year and, this time, I might even graduate from the *gaijin* ticket.

Josh is a 2nd year JET living in Nakatsu-shi, Oita-ken. Apart from occasional cravings for fish and chips and Brexit, Josh thinks leaving the UK to head to Japan is at least one of the top ten things he did in 2017. Mountains, kaiten-zushi and nomihoudai are some of his favourite Japan activities. A longer-form version of this article originally appeared on the author’s [Medium blog](#).



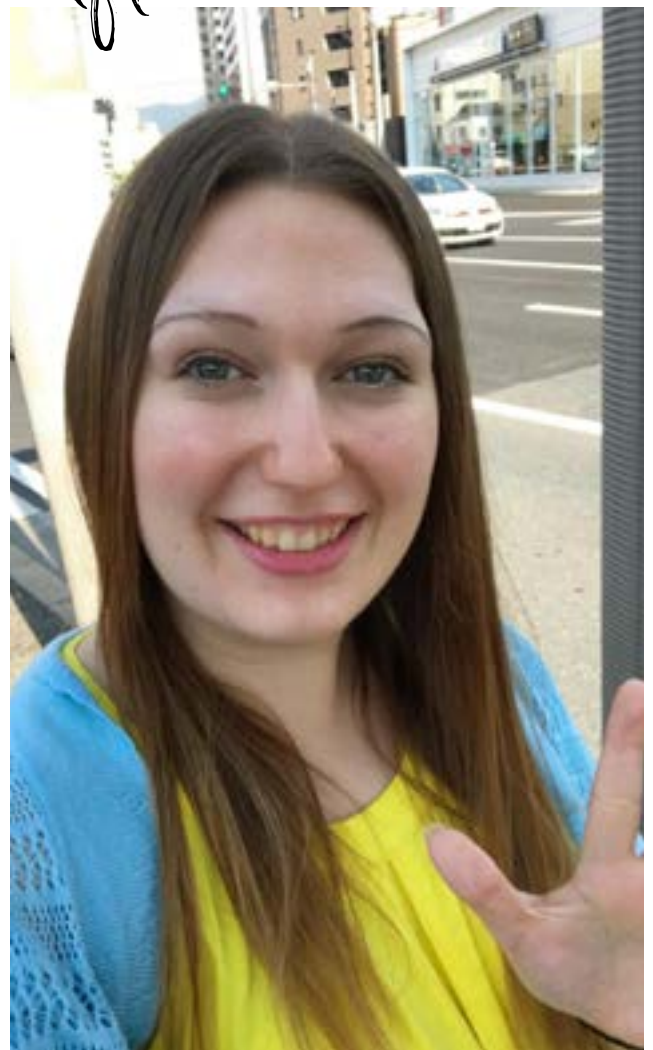
The Straight Perm: A Solution to Summer Frizz?

Ericka Selenski

Before



After



Many of us here in Japan know the struggles of frizzy hair in the humid Japanese summer. This can be especially difficult for those of us with curls. I have dealt with my own curly hair since I was quite young, but I found an easy way to reduce the amount of time and effort I have to put into my hair every day: the Japanese straight perm.

I grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s, a time defined by the pin straight hair of celebrities. My favorite Spice Girl was Posh Spice (Victoria Beckham), and I thought Avril Lavigne was a fashion icon. To me, straight hair was “cool.” I had the impression that straight hair was “sleek” and “fashionable.” Even though I am aware that many different types of hair are beautiful, that philosophy has always stuck with me.

In high school, if not sooner, I began flat ironing my hair. People always told me they loved my curls; however, they never saw me first thing in the morning or after I let my hair air dry. I had huge, poofy hair, not well defined curls. Every morning I would wash my hair, blow dry it, and straighten it – a process that took me about an hour. Right before coming to Japan from Canada, I decided to get bangs. I assumed if I just straightened them every morning, my hair would look alright. However, Japan’s summer proved to be a new challenge to me.

Straightening my hair was futile as I’d sweat profusely after being outside for five minutes, and my hair would shrink and poof out. The heat forced me to deal with my hair’s natural texture, and I usually tied it up into a big ponytail.

Come the following June, I was dreading dealing with the summer sweat and humidity. I had heard of Japanese straight perms before and had even seen some of my favorite YouTubers get them done. However, I was afraid of committing to straight hair and of saying goodbye to my curls, which I had somewhat learned to manage. Eventually, the inescapable humidity of the Japanese summer pushed me to go to the hairdresser.

Just some information on my hair: the texture is very fine, but I have a lot of it. It’s quite long, falling just below my bra strap. I have had it coloured since I was about 16 years old, but before coming to Japan I decided I wanted to keep my natural colour. I was root matched and came to Japan with my natural brown hair. By the time I got to the hairdresser here, the dyed portion of my hair started at around chin level. It is possible to perm hair that has been dyed.

The straight perm took about three hours from start to finish. The time it takes to get a straight perm very much depends on the length and texture of your hair. It is a three part process that works to change the structure of the bonds in your hair from being curly to straight. My Japanese hair dresser could speak English, has worked in Canada, and also has a straight perm so I trusted she knew what she was doing. You should research yourself and talk to your hairdresser about what types of chemicals you are happy to use in your hair since some chemicals can be stronger than others, and you should be aware of how they will effect your own hair type. When the process was finished, I was in love with my hair. It was straight, shiny, and frizz free, reminiscent of those 90s celebrities like I had always wanted.

After the perm, I couldn’t wash my hair or wear it in a ponytail for three days. I was so nervous to wash it, fearing it would dry poofy like usual, but it didn’t! It dried straight! Three months later, it is still drying straight. I no longer have to worry about spending an hour blow drying and flat ironing it; I am able to just wash and go. Additionally, I am still able to curl it with a curling iron if I want.

As far as negatives go for my experience with the straight perm, I can only think of two. First, the ends of my hair became very dry – especially paired with Japan’s hard water, but I am able to combat that with hydrating hair products. Secondly, getting a straight perm is a huge commitment. I am planning on getting a retouch done on my regrowth in December and every 6 months after that. Unless I am willing to deal with the awkward style of half poof, half straight hair or opt for a pixie cut, I won’t have my natural hair texture again.

I do not regret getting the straight perm at all. I would recommend it to anyone fed up with their frizzy hair and looking for a change. It is, however, a long term commitment. If one is not ready to spend around ¥10,000 or more every 6 months, then perhaps the straightening iron is best.

Erica is a 26 year old from Canada. She is currently in her second year on JET. In her free time she would like to play badminton, but usually she spends her time watching Netflix or YouTube.



Up your Makeup Game with

Korean Beauty

Megan Alice Jones

Since moving to Japan a year ago, I have replaced almost every product in my makeup bag, and you may be surprised to find that very few of my new products are Japanese. Instead, like many young Japanese women, I have been caught up in the phenomenon of K-beauty.

In recent years, Korean beauty has come to be held in high regard, not only in the Asian market, but in the Western one as well. The popularity of Korean products stems from their affordability and state-of-the-art ingredients. While Western products offer thicker coverage foundation to achieve that flawless look, Korean products

opt for a more natural, dewy look that can be achieved with a skincare routine that prevents problems before they arise - think SPF for sun protection and highly moisturising formulas.

Here are some of my own recommendations for you to try out so you can get started with your Korean skin care routine. **DISCLAIMER:** Some Korean beauty products do not do a great job of catering to POC due to a limited colour palette.

Here are five must-have products to help achieve the perfect base for your makeup:



Megan is a second year Saitama JET from the UK. She's currently spending her time playing Witcher 3 until it's time to go out and party.



Sleep Packs

When it comes to keeping your skin moisturised, everything starts at night. Sleep packs are a kind of night cream crossed with a face mask, and they come in many different formulas. You apply them to a clean face before sleeping just like you would a regular night cream, and you wash them off in the morning to reveal glowing, hydrated skin. Most formulas are light and dry into the skin, so don't worry about waking up with cream all over your pillow! I use Moistfull Collagen Sleeping Pack.



Face Masks

If you feel like treating yourself to a home spa day or need to minimise those pores just before a big night out, there are literally hundreds of face masks out there to help you. My favourite kinds are sheet masks, which are fabric masks covered in the serum of your choice, and cream masks, which you allow to dry into your skin before washing them off. Use these masks once or twice a week to combat specific problem areas and keep your skin nourished. I've found I like the Skinfood Egg White Pore Mask.



Foundation

Korean BB creams are some of the best on the market, thanks to their SPF and moisturising properties. They unfortunately don't cater to every skin tone, but there are various brands with a range of yellow or pink undertones that will fit many people, whereas their previous foundations didn't. If you are looking for something thicker, some brands

Chemical Exfoliator



This is a kind of exfoliator that literally melts the dead skin off of your face. It may sound scary, but don't worry - these exfoliators are much less abrasive than traditionally coarse products, which not only often contain microbeads and are unfriendly to the environment, but can also damage and dry skin if used too often or too vigorously. I use Secret Key's Lemon Sparkling Peeling Gel.

Primer



When you have your skincare routine down to a T, it's time to think about applying makeup. Although we are at the end of summer, thank god, there are still the odd sweaty days that will destroy your makeup, and you can bear this in mind for future purchases. Primer is a great way to keep your base glued to your face for the whole day, even during those humid summer months. This primer from Innisfree is great.

This isn't a fully comprehensive guide to every Korean product ever, but for those who are unfamiliar with the selection, it's a good place to get started. Always remember to keep your skin type in mind when you're shopping, and use the internet to your advantage when looking for the best products! If you are lucky enough to live in Tokyo, you'll find Korean stores around Shinjuku and Harajuku (Etude House, Innisfree). Stores can be found in other parts of Japan, but if you want as much choice as possible, I recommend the website Yesstyle.

Embrace the Korean beauty market, and maybe you'll find some new staples you can't live without!



How Sonic I

Courtney Ga

Last month, I was privileged enough to attend *Sonic Mania*, the all-night opener to *Summer Sonic*. Summer Sonic is a huge two-day music festival in Chiba, and though I only went to day two, I wanted to share my experience with you.

Sonic Mania first. It's a bit of a rocky beginning. I arrive in Tokyo only to encounter delays. The Sobu line into Chiba has stopped. Because of this, I don't end up getting to the venue, Makuhari Messe, until around 9 p.m. This gives me one hour to wade through the endless merch line before Cornelius' set begins.

Spoiler alert: I do not make this deadline. Nor, in fact, am I able to catch ANY of his set. He's Cornelius. I'm sure it was amazing. I will never know.

I don't let this get me down though because next up is Nine Inch Nails, a band that I am a longtime fan of. Luckily, I'm able to find my friend in the crowd. We get a pretty good spot, a little left of middle. The crowd is incredibly excited, and the moment the band comes out, I get the only significant crowd

surge I will experience through the festival. Nine Inch Nails are too big, too exciting, and you have to budge right up close to the person in front of you just to be that one centimeter closer to them.

Seeing Nine Inch Nails this time around is particularly poignant as it is my first time after the passing of David Bowie. NIN front man, Trent Reznor, greatly admired him and had worked with him before. Their latest album could almost be considered a tribute to him. So the band plays "God Break Down the Door" and "I'm Afraid of Americans," one song written in Bowie's style and the other featuring him. For their fans, they present a fantastic spread of their catalogue, including old favorites like "Wish," "Head Like a Hole," and, of course, "Closer." They finish up with their classic finisher, "Hurt."

Throughout their set, Reznor talks about how absolutely floored he is to be opening for the quintessential shoegaze band, My Bloody Valentine. It seems he is a big fan. Apparently, so is much of Japan, if the amount of people packed into

the hall is any indication.

My Bloody Valentine is a band that, if you have even a passing familiarity with shoegaze as a whole, you have heard. They have been around for longer than I've been alive and have never wavered from the sound they helped pioneer. This sound is noise — sheer noise that is beautiful and haunting all at once. It's a wall that blasts you into nirvana. They give out earplugs prior to their set. It's beautiful, but with that much reverb and distortion, you need a little cushion.

Their set is everything you would expect. They start straight away into "I Only Said" off their classic *Loveless* album, which they actually play quite a bit of. Throughout their set, they say nothing until just before the last song. And that, of course, is to inform us that it is their last song. The whole time, behind them, the screen displays psychedelically morphing images—a crossbreed of twisting, lava lamp-like blobs of color and off-air television fuzz. They know their art. They know their fans, and we love it.



Summer?

allegos (Mie)

One of the best things about going to festivals like this is that people are often so full of happiness at seeing their favorite artists that it just overflows out of them, and despite typical Japanese reticence, strangers just open right up to you—even in the long line to the bathroom. Waiting to take my turn for the toilet, I make a new friend. We bond during that 20 minute wait over other festivals we have each gone to and other artists we share an appreciation for. I don't catch her name and will likely never see her again, but for that moment, we are besties.

After this, it's about 3 a.m., and I'm getting a little loopy. Denki Groove are next, and I've already seen them at another festival this season, so I decide to wander through some of the other artists. I had been given some 3D glasses for Flying Lotus' set, so I figure I'll head over there. Sadly, I only catch the last song. I can't say the music is for me, but whoa, that animation is insane.

The very last act of the night is the classic trip hop group, Unkle. I

find a nice place at the back of the hall, sit, and just groove to sounds that made me feel like I'm in a Guy Ritchie movie. Good times. Sonic Mania comes to a close, and I make my sleepy way to bed somewhere around 6 a.m.

Day one seems a little short on artists I am interested in, so I give it a pass. Day two starts.

I take my time showing up. I meet up with a friend who feels as ambivalent as I do, and we wander through some of the halls. We pass a mini casino set up, a silent disco, dozens of food stalls with offerings from all over the world such as Hong Kong cuisine and Cuban sandwiches. We pop in to Endrecheri. Turns out this is Tsuyoshi Domoto of Johnny's KinKi Kids fame. Very much not my thing, but he has a fantastic backup band.

We don't stick around here long and instead head over to Daoko's stage. Her music is what you get when you mix idols in floofy dresses with rap. Sometimes her songs are saccharine pop, and sometimes they are....well, as hip

hop as you can get with a sweet-sounding, high-pitched voice. Her set finishes with what is easily her most popular, or at least most well-known song, "Uchiage Hanabi."

I've still got some time to kill before the act that I really want to see, so we do some more wandering and catch Walk the Moon. I have never heard of this band before in my life, but, wow, they are so happy to be playing at Summer Sonic. The guitarist even brings out a Japanese flag with their band symbol superimposed over the red in the center. It's a cute tribute. They play a very impressive set and seem very reluctant to leave the stage, but when they do, I feel excitement bubble up inside me.

Now is the time. My band is next, so it's time to swim like a salmon upstream to get as close as possible. I get to about three rows back from the very front, a little to the left of center. I'm so excited. This is the closest I have ever been. The artist I am there to see? Takafumi Ikeda, of Super Butter Dog fame, also known as Rekishi. His shtick is light hip hop/funk mixed with Japanese history



comedy. I'm a huge fan.

He comes out to his typical conch shell trumpeting, dressed as a blinged out feudal lord with 70's bug eye sunglasses and a rockin' fro. Typical Rekishi. The set mostly sticks to his bigger singles, which are all good. For Shikibu, he dons a Murasaki Shikibu-like fake *juunihitoe* over his other clothes. One of my favorite parts of Rekishi sets at festivals is that he likes to do quick little covers of songs by other artists that are at that festival, replacing the lyrics with things more relevant to his music (usually inaho or cats...because why not cats!?). So, because Parliament Funkadelic are playing later, we get treated to the tune of "P. Funk (Wants to Get Funked Up)" with the lyrics all replaced with "ina-ina-inaho." He also randomly throws in a quick inaho version of "Immigrant Song" by Led Zeppelin, and another meowing "Don't Look Back in Anger" by Oasis. The set finishes, and I'm a mess from jumping around and shouting out songs with the audience around me. My friend and I hole up at the back of the hall as we catch Jorja Jones' set and refuel.

Next up is Portugal the Man, who I have heard of vaguely. I'm

interested, but I am also pretty unfamiliar with them. The moment they start, I know I don't have to worry. It's going to be great. I start out towards the back in my speculative appreciation, but by the end of the song, I make it maybe fifteen rows from the front. These guys are fantastic. As they play, the screen behind them shows some of the most bizarre animations I have seen in a while. Some are of overly tattooed people falling in love. One is of a fishnet-stockinged pug dog demanding they play "Freebird." They do not. But! They do cover Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall," and a quick bit of T-Rex's "Children of the Revolution." Every once in a while, they display messages in Japanese to the audience. They're amusing little things like "Don't worry, that song is coming next." I don't know them that well, so I don't know what song *that song* is, but....the next song plays and the message during it is "none of these instruments are computer generated; they're all real!" Interesting...the next screen that comes up is "*cho yabai.*" Hilarious. They definitely gain a new fan, and I pick up their CD afterwards.

St. Vincent is set to play next, and I'm a bit torn between seeing

her and catching the bus down to the outside stages to watch Thundercat. I decide while looking in on Spyair (who don't really win me over) that I'll stick around for exactly two St. Vincent songs and then catch the bus across. I can definitely see what all the excitement is about. St. Vincent brings it! Even though I'm only there for two songs, I want to hear more. She absolutely rocks the house, but I pull myself away.

I get over to the beach stage in time to catch my least favorite Thundercat song. It's "Tokyo." If you haven't heard the song, let's just say certain verses are pretty uncomfortable. Catching "Them Changes" after that doesn't quite hype me back up despite how much I love that song. But Thundercat isn't who I am really here for.

I squeeze up for the very last act I'll witness at Summer Sonic, George Clinton and the Parliament Funkadelic. I make it to about three rows from the front. The members of this collective are gods of the bizarre and fabulous. I first heard them when I was in my early teens from a cheesy college movie called *PCU* in which they make a cameo. The movie is....pretty garbage, but their cameo was the absolute highlight of it. George Clinton is decked out in this hooded robe, like the true King of Interplanetary Funk. And now, decades later, I get to party down to that funk. LIVE!

And, wow, do the P-Funk know how to put on a show. There are horn solos, guitar solos, acrobatics, and fireworks! They play a massive showcase of old classics and new stuff, never once dropping the beat. There are no breaks. Songs don't have endings, they just morph into one another. Band members are wandering all around the stage, sometimes sitting out for a while,

only to appear somewhere else, wearing different clothes. It's chaos, it's messy, and it's one of the best parties I've been to in ages.

One of the best parts about Summer Sonic is that it blends Western and Japanese acts, and, consequently, it has a huge Western music festival feel to it. Which means there's also no overbearing restriction on cell phone recording. At any act, you'll have a bunch of people whipping out their cell phones and grabbing a video or two. This is the case at P-Funk, but they are recording us probably as much as we are recording them! They are just so floored to get such a reaction from this foreign crowd! It's a beautiful moment on both sides and a perfect way to end the event. There are thank yous to the audience, dozens of pictures, stage hijinks.... and then it's all over, and we all make our sandy shuffle off the beach and back to reality.



Summer Sonic is such a jam, from start to finish. If you've never checked it out, I highly recommend that you do. It's the perfect summer music extravaganza. I never wanted it to end.

Courtney Gallegos is a fifth year JET in Kuwana, Mie. She can most often be found in livehouses throughout the Kansai region and, from time to time, at various music festivals throughout the country. When she remembers it exists, she sometimes posts on her [blog](#) about her experiences, music in general, and lyric translations.





SPINES:
BEST SERVED
CHILLED

Stephen Hill (Kagoshima)

A solitary tree branch blows softly in the night air. It's a slow exhale of breath in the dark of night. Somewhere, in the recesses of the foliage, there is a shape of indiscriminate size sitting motionless. Watching. A girl in the house opposite is talking, laughing on the phone. Oblivious. It is watching... watching...always watching...

Looking for that spooky adrenaline rush this October? Whether you are watching with friends or by yourself on a dark, stormy night, horror movies are always great. These are just some recommendations from the past year to spice up your Halloween:

Ghost Stories managed to capture a real sense of dread this year. An anthology film that sees the main character trying to solve three paranormal mysteries; it's all tied together in a way that, if nothing else, sends chills down the spine. Anthology horror films are among the best in the genre (*VHS* is another particularly good one) because they can throw different types of scares at you to see what sticks. *Ghost Stories* has elements of many classic scary movies and will have you checking your closet before going asleep.

If ghosts in the night aren't your thing, you might look into Steven Soderbergh's *Unsane*. Unfurling in an insane asylum, our main character is accidentally committed when she starts seeing her stalker at every corner. This is one of the smartest horror films to be released in recent years, taking on elements of gas lighting, mental health, and the #MeToo movement in one horrifying swoop. It would be difficult to watch if it weren't for Claire Foy, an actress who makes the main character, Sawyer, relatable, sympathetic, and entertainingly catty in equal measure.

These are both good movies for those looking for a horror 'fix,' but what about trashy scares? One to watch with a few mates? A Ben & Jerry's horror experience? *Happy Death Day* was one of the most surprisingly enjoyable movies to come out last year. It sees a college student, Tree, constantly reliving the day of her demise. Stuck in the cycle, she can only break free if she can figure out who the killer is and stop them before they stab her in the heart. It's a hugely enjoyable whodunnit that keeps you guessing, laughing, and occasionally jumping the whole way through. It's probably the only film on this list that can be described as a feel-good horror movie.

Anyone walking into a horror movie knows what to expect. Limbs get casually ripped off. Death is

around every corner. Everyone is expendable. *Hereditary* is a film that breaks that concept. It presents us with a much more restrained horror, one that is less about the OTT flourish and more about a painful reality. A throwaway comment from a mother to her son makes your stomach writhe. The treatment of a recently deceased pigeon is nail-bitingly awful. And then, just when you're settling into what you think is a typical horror story... something happens. To say more would spoil the film, but you can be sure that you will be absolutely floored by its gut-punch of an ending.

Chelsea freezes as the lights go out and the phone goes dead. The wind shakes a windowpane in some dark corner of the house. A dial tone hums weakly in her ear, her only tie with civilisation cut. The darkness that began in the corners of the room starts to flow across her vision. As she hangs up, she realises how quiet it is out here. The silence is almost aggressive - her attempts to break it are like throwing rice in the ocean. And yet, as she strains to listen, she is sure...somewhere in the house... she can hear something... hear something... scratching...

Slightly more insidious than a horror movie is the all-too-spooky radio drama. The only special effects they have are fuelled by your own mind. When they say there's something behind you, you don't wait for them to tell you what it looks like. It's already the very worst thing you can imagine! This Halloween, let me suggest an alternative evening plan: close the curtains, switch off the lights, and light a single, solitary candle. Sit back with a friend and enjoy one of these creepy shows from a forgotten past.

My introduction to this format was a little radio show called *Night Beat*, which conveniently ties all of its episodes together through a journalist investigation arc. Randy Stone searches for strange stories on the air, listening to the unusual tales his callers regale him with. It aired in the 1950s, so it's more creepy than properly scary. However, it has buckets of charm to compensate for that. One of the best episodes is *The Black Cat*, which neatly mixes the supernatural and murder with great skill.

For a more modern take, *The Black Tapes* is a particularly good podcast. Again focusing on the paranormal, the titular black tapes are the unsolved mysteries of paranormal investigator Dr.

Richard Strand. Each episode varies in length but is never longer than an hour. It's worth starting at the beginning as they offer more of a serial format rather than singular, contained episodes. The podcast ended its run in 2017, but a mysterious teaser on the podcast's official Twitter account indicates there might be more on the way.

Suspense is a favourite of mine, masterful in its ability to make you forget you're listening to fiction. The original run began in the 1940s, so the *Twilight Zone* and Hitchcock influences are obvious. A good place to start is the episode *Sorry, Wrong Number*. Often ranked as one of the best audio plays of all time, it follows the frantic phone calls of a paranoid old biddy named Agnes. She believes she has overheard someone plotting a crime and dials frantically in an effort to get more information, and to convince someone, anyone, that she isn't simply hysterical.

The final suggestion, and the most likely to get you hooked on radio plays, is the delightfully quirky yet unsettling *Welcome to the Night Vale*. Sharing a lot of DNA with *Twin Peaks*, it's about a fictional radio station in the town of Night Vale, where all conspiracy theories are true. While it is a surrealist, absurdist take on small-town America, the charm comes from how mundane the radio presenter makes everything seem. Not strictly light, but certainly lighter in tone than others on this list. Enjoy in the grim dark of night...unless you live in a desert town. Then it may get too real!

The scratching beneath the table continues as Chelsea walks slowly towards it. The tablecloth rustles though there is no breeze. She steadies her breath, steeling her nerves. She grips a carving knife in both hands, gritting her teeth. With a lunge, she rips the table cloth up to reveal...nothing.

Unbeknownst to her, a pair of eyes are watching from behind the curtains. It's playing games with her...

Speaking of playing games, there has been a renaissance of survival horror video games in the past few years. We are now spoiled for choice in terms of dark hallways, stunning lighting effects, and monster babies hiding in the kitchen sink. *Silent Hill* was always my go-to for that kind of experience - unsettling imagery, creeping dread, and a big focus on compelling stories. While that series has petered out like the last drops in an IV

drip, here are a few others that might be worth your time:

A faceless man in funeral garb, tendrils of darkness creeping over his shoulders... I am referring, of course, to ~~Paul Blart: Mall Cop~~ the Slender Man. *Slender: The Eight Pages* is a game that can be enjoyed for free online by visiting this [website](#). A remake/sequel called *Slender: The Arrival* is also available. Ideal for a night in, the entire premise of the online game is to find eight pages scattered around a forest before the Slender Man finds you. For every page you collect, the Slender Man gets faster and more aggressive, upping the tension in a completely organic way. The sequel/remake is more story-focused and has a little more structure, but I find the original more enjoyable despite the graphics.

If you really want to sink into the pits of despair, however, there's *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*. Armed only with a lantern and a bag of nerves, you explore a derelict castle while trying to avoid the hideous monstrosities that lumber through the hallways. In a clever twist, the more often you see the monsters, the lower your sanity falls. This gives you an additional reason to be afraid when they do appear and a genuine incentive to run and hide. This game is one of the catalysts of the new survival horror renaissance and still one of the best examples of the genre.

But now, let's say that's not your thing. Let's say you just want to feel awesome and blow up monsters with a hugely gratifying gun. No judgement here. The closest you're going to get to *Samuel L. Jackson: The Game* is the sensational *House of the Dead: Overkill*.

Dropping the F-word like most people drop commas, this game is undiluted grindhouse and gore-soaked action. A typical zombie rail shooter, it revels in its cheesy aesthetic and tone, with levels like PAPA CAESAR'S' HOUSE OF PAIN! in plentiful supply. An excellent game to play with friends and popcorn, it fits the late night, z-movie vibe perfectly.

And finally, acknowledgement has to be made to one of the progenitors of survival horror: *Resident Evil*. An exciting announcement made this year was the confirmation of the *Resident Evil 2 Remake*, to be released on PS4 in January 2019. A trailer released in June showed the Raccoon City Police Department in stunning HD, a stronger focus on pitch black hallways, and impressive

combat in gameplay. It boasts the same game engine as the critically acclaimed *Resident Evil 7*, which is also available for PS4 in case you can't wait until January.

Her heart jumps into her throat as a loud thump reverberates from the ceiling. She gazes up, listening carefully for footsteps. The shadows in the corners of the room ooze slowly outwards. A gust of wind rattles the window panes. Swallowing, Chelsea grips the knife handle and steps into the hallway. Resting a hand on the bannister, she peers fearfully up into the darkness. After a beat, the silence is broken with a single, drawn-out creak of old floorboards. Chelsea thinks to herself, "this is not real—" just before a hand in the dark reaches from behind and covers her mouth.

It's all too easy to tell yourself the horror isn't real when watching a film, reading a book, or playing a game. It's a bit trickier when you are being chased by a man with a chainsaw or when a white-faced ghost is shrieking in your face. But don't worry; this still isn't real....technically!

The past two Halloweens that I spent in Ireland, I visited the *Haunted Spooktacular* in Kells. This type of experience isn't for the light-hearted. You will be chased, screamed at, and even grabbed. (You must agree to this prior to ticket purchase. It's their job to scare you, after all!) I've discovered a few of these experiences taking place in Tokyo and listed some of those that sound most promising:

ASAKUSA HANAYASHIKI OBAKEYASHIKI

This is one of the oldest amusement parks in Japan, in which there is a haunted house (suitable for all ages) and a ghost mansion in which you listen to a ghost story through a pair of headphones. It seems reminiscent of the audio play, which should give it an authentically creepy vibe. The park is a five minutes walk from Asakusa Station and costs 1,000 yen for entry.

MYSTIC MANSION TALE OF PANDEMONIUM

A 3D theatre that centers around the world of Japanese yokai (supernatural creatures), the setting for this experience is an old haunted home. It leans more towards an interactive scary movie, so it may induce frequent jumpscare. Slightly more intense and suited to people aged 13 and up, this attraction is situated a two minutes' walk away from Odaiba Kaihin Kouen Station. Admission is

600 yen.

ODAIBA KAIKI GAKKOU

This is where things start to get a little more intense. Set inside an abandoned school (i.e. Nightmare Factory sub-category B), there is a lot more interaction at this attraction, with many attendees screaming in terror apparently. A disclaimer advises against participation if you suffer from heart problems or are pregnant...so you know it's good! Also a two minutes' walk away from Odaiba Kaihin Kouen Station, the attraction's admission fee is 800 yen.

HONANCHO OBAKEYASHIKI OBAKEN

Easily the most extreme experience on this list, its premise is simple - a haunted house built within a real house. You are required to book this experience in advance and are also required to sign a waiver to say they are not responsible for any health issues experienced inside. There is a running storyline within this horror experience, and to go into any detail is to spoil it, apparently. What is clear, from the many reviews the place has, is that it is a pure adrenaline rush and an absolute must for any horror junkie. Located by Honancho Station, it costs 2,500 yen to book in advance and 2,900 on the day. Just be careful nothing follows you home afterwards!

Several miles away, at a secluded farmhouse, Laurie puts down the phone. She had been cut off from Chelsea hours ago and is sick of calling. There must have been a power outage, she decides. She normally wouldn't bother calling so many times, but this house is so....spooky. "This is the last time I take a babysitting job from a newspaper ad," Laurie thinks viciously.

With that, she puts her headphones back on and lays back on the couch. If she hadn't, she might have seen the shape outside her window, watching...

*Stephen Hill is an Irish movie fanatic and has been fascinated by horror since he was five years old, when he was traumatised by the 1931 version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He indulged himself by reading Goosebumps books and the back covers of horror VHS tapes in his local video rental store. In college, he started a Gothic and Horror Society, which won an award at the end of its first year. He is now teaching as an ALT in Kagoshima City, getting his horror fix by playing survival horror video games and changing other people's screensavers so that they feature the video from **The Ring**.*

STEP OFF THE BEATEN TRACK



A new, colourful, English-language travel guidebook to the better-kept secrets of rural Japan, titled *Japan - 100 Hidden Towns*, will go on sale worldwide from October 1st, 2018.

Steering away from from the bustling cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, *Japan - 100 Hidden Towns* is a guide to another, off-the-beaten-track, Japan.

100 towns from all of the country's 47 prefectures - including places which may be unfamiliar even to some natives of Japan - were carefully selected and reviewed by a team of researchers who visited over 150 candidate destinations, with a focus on nature, culture, food, access, and key dates to visit.

Interesting tidbits of local history are included in each review's *Did you know?* section, while a taste of subjectivity and a few anecdotes are provided in the *We say* segments.

Japan - 100 Hidden Towns is colourfully illustrated with photos from each of the locations (over 900 photos in total), and also has sections which provide some broad travel information on Japan's eight regions and their major tourist attractions, general advice for visitors, and listings of useful travel phrases.

The book is supported by a [website](#) that includes detailed maps to the attractions, and updates to help readers while on their travels.

Japan - 100 Hidden Towns is a perfect travel guidebook for residents and repeat visitors to Japan, especially those who wish to avoid the hubbub of the country's major cities.

As well as providing a wealth of travel information in one attractive, easily navigable volume, the book is ideal for casual reading - deepening an understanding of Japan while leafing through its contents.

OCTOBER RELEASES

Sarah White (Fukui)

MOVIES

5 Oct.

- The Equalizer 2 (2018)
- Fifty Shades Freed (2018)

6 Oct.

- Tulip Fever (2017)
- Solace (2015)

12 Oct.

- The House with a Clock in Its Walls (2018)
- Smallfoot (2018)
- I Kill Giants (2017)

13 Oct.

- Under the Silver Lake (2018)
- Beyond Skyline (2017)

19 Oct.

- Pitch Perfect 3 (2017)
- Death Wish (2018)
- Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation (2018)

20 Oct.

- Den of Thieves (2018)
- Thelma (2017)

26 Oct.

- Searching (2018)

GAMES

2 Oct.

- Mega Man 11 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Forza Horizon 4 (PC, Xbox One)

5 Oct.

- Super Mario Party (Switch)
- Assassin's Creed: Odyssey (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- WWE 2K19 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)

11 Oct.

- Child of Light (Switch)

12 Oct.

- Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Luigi's Mansion (3DS)
- The World Ends with You -Final Remix- (Switch)

16 Oct.

- Lego DC Super-Villains (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Starlink: Battle for Atlas (PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- The Hunter: Call of the Wild 2019 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- Warriors Orochi 4 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Valkyria Chronicles (Switch)

19 Oct.

- Dark Souls Remastered (Switch)
- Dark Souls Trilogy (PS4, Xbox One)
- Soulcalibur 6 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)

23 Oct.

- Marvel's Spider-Man DLC 1: The Heist (PS4)
- Just Dance 2019 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Xbox 360, Switch, Wii, Wii U)

26 Oct.

- Red Dead Redemption 2 (PS4, Xbox One)
- N.E.R.O. (Switch)
- My Hero One's Justice (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

October 30

- Call of Cthulhu (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- Lego Harry Potter Collection (Xbox One, Switch)

Sources:

<https://imdb.to/2PiCSee>

<https://bit.ly/2LlzneF>

Photo: Sean Do on Unsplash



Scared? In Japan?

Tayla-Paige van Sittert (Kumamoto)

The witching hour is upon us, and people around the globe are hustling to pay for a good scare. It is the time of year when our fascination for horror is devoured like a delicious plate of vomit. I know, what the fungus right?

Typically, fear is a thing that allows us to survive various dangers, but on Halloween we don't want to just survive; we want to pretend that we are dead or dying... safely...and celebrate it for all it is worth.

Strangely, Halloween has only just become big in Japan and it's mostly stripped of all things terrifying, laced with all things cutesy instead.

Nonetheless, Japan does have a crazy history of horror stories and urban legends to make us feel something other than sentimental. As a culture of religious fusion, with Shinto and Buddhism mingling in numerous ways, there are many open gaps for ghosts and spirits to take over the imagination.

In this month's issue, two artists have illustrated two gruesome Japanese tales for our yearly scare-fill: one featuring a female specter and the other a dark Internet tale.

Happy shivering, and don't bite your nails!

TW: Gore

Altinay Dinc on Unsplash



KUCHISAKE ONNA

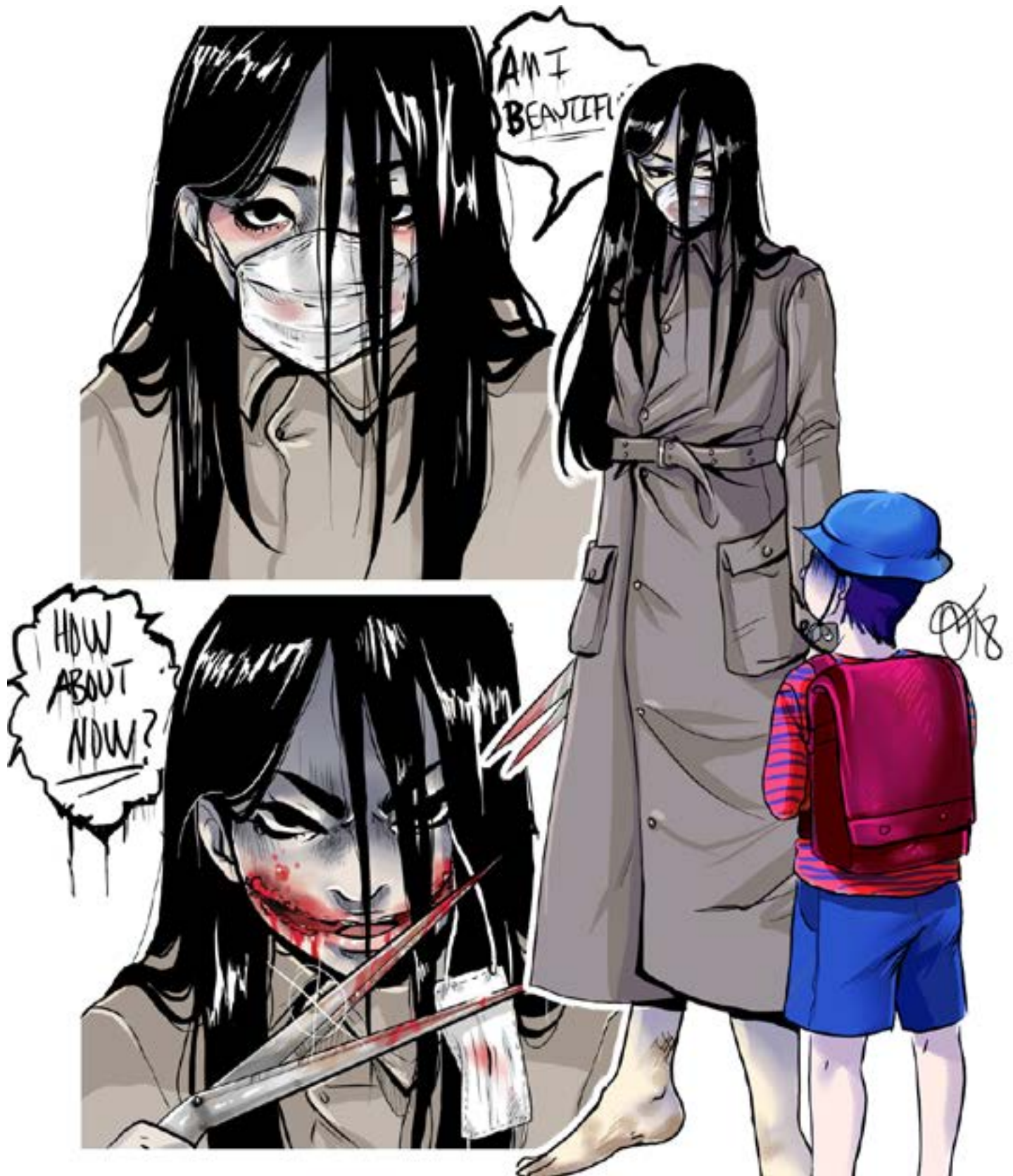
Chantel Fugere (Yamagata Prefecture)

For this month's theme, "Japanese Urban Legends," I illustrated the legend of the *Kuchisake Onna*, or 口裂け女. This legend was originally meant to keep children from walking home alone at night. It is said that if a child is walking alone in the evening, a beautiful woman wearing a surgical mask will appear to the child and suddenly ask, "Am I beautiful?"

If the child says yes, the woman will remove her mask, revealing her mouth, which has been cut all the way to her ears. She will then ask, "How about now?" Before the child can answer, she will cut the child's face to resemble her own. If the child responds no to her original question, she will cut the child in half. It is said that if a child answers with "I don't know" or "You're so-so," it will confuse the Kuchisake Onna, and they will have time to escape.

I'm originally from North Dakota in the US, and I studied Fine Art and Illustration in university. I love living in Japan, and I hope to improve my Japanese language skills and make many new friends while living here!

*For more art, please visit my Instagram
<http://www.instagram.com/chantelligence>*



THE RED ROOM

Whitney Wu (Aomori-ken)

The Red Room is a Japanese urban legend about haunted online pop-ups. It details the story of a boy who was addicted to the Internet. He heard a rumor about the Red Room from a friend at school. While he was researching about the Red Room on the Internet, a pop-up appeared. It said, 「あなたは好きですか? 」, meaning “do you like?” He closed the window, but it appeared again, this time revealing more text. As he closed the window again and again, it began to read, 「あなたは赤部屋が好きですか?」, or “do you like the Red Room?” The boy also heard a child’s voice ask the question. Just then, the screen went blank, and a list of names appeared. At the bottom of the list was his friend’s name, the same friend who told him about the Red Room. All of a sudden, the boy felt a presence behind him and blacked out. The next day, the boy did not return to school. He had killed himself by painting his room red with his own blood.

I chose to paint this story because I really wanted to challenge myself by drawing a room with dramatic perspective and lighting. I had a lot of fun painting the details of the room and layering reds to get the impression of blood all over the walls. Personally, I spend a lot of time on the Internet, and this story gave me goosebumps! Be careful of mysterious pop-ups!

I'm a second year high school ALT in Tsugaru City, Aomori-ken! I'm originally from Vienna, VA, near Washington D.C. Please follow me on Instagram @mochiwei



LIFESTYLE



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Amanda Muller

"I think I've got Fear down, but how do I take it all the way up to Terror?" -Neil Gaiman, The Graveyard Book

TRAVEL EDITOR

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Laela Zaidi

Photo: Ashley Hirasuna

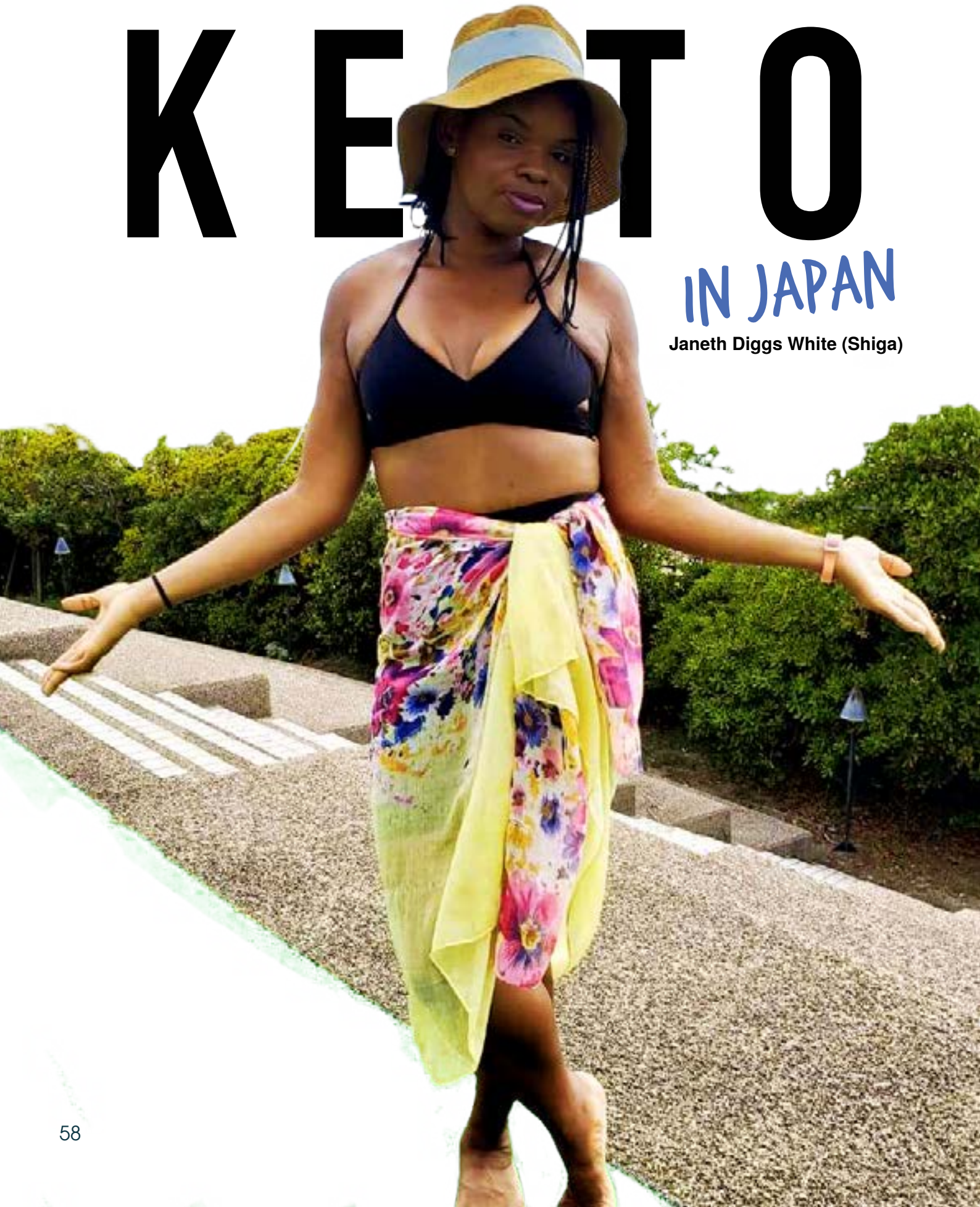


LIFESTYLE SPOTLIGHT

KEETO

IN JAPAN

Janeth Diggs White (Shiga)



WHAT IS KETOSIS?

Ketosis is a metabolic state within which our bodies burn ketones in the liver as its primary source of energy. Maintaining a ketogenic diet leads to successful weight loss because, for many of us, our bodies burn glucose as its main source of energy. Our daily intake of calories often involves a lot of rice, flour, bread, and pasta -- all carbohydrates, and glucose is derived from the consumption of carbohydrates. When we consume too many carbohydrates, our bodies convert the excess into fat and that fat is stored within the body. In a nutshell, that's pretty much how we get fat. That and a lack of exercise, of course. However, on a ketogenic diet, our bodies utilize the stored fat as its main source of energy. When our bodies lose fat, we lose weight. That's the magic of keto. Ketosis is achieved by depriving the body of carbohydrates and adapting to a high-fat diet. Generally speaking, a keto diet has the following ratio: mostly fat (about 70%), some protein (about 25%) and very few carbohydrates (about 5%).

MY PERSONAL WEIGHT LOSS JOURNEY AND MOTIVATION

I grew up a chubby child and packed on the pounds as the years rolled by, despite being somewhat athletic. This means I have tried almost every fad diet, legitimate diet, weight loss pill, drink, shake, wrap, and workout DVD. Everything that you can think of, I've tried it at least once. However, nothing worked for me. Some had temporary success but nothing lasting.

I eventually learned to love my fluffiness, as my weight didn't stop me from scoring any points on the *'Attract-o-Meter.'* Most men seem to have found my former curves, thick thighs and DD breasts attractive, so my motivation for weight loss is not rooted in attracting any potential mates. I want to be healthier so as to ameliorate symptoms of a medical condition I face. I'm doing it for my health; I'm doing it for me. I think it's important for long term success, not to be motivated by shallow things, because your motivation may only be momentary and soon you'll be back to square one. So, ensure the bottom line is you do it for you.

My journey towards weight loss was slow and steady, and I didn't go straight into adopting a ketogenic diet. I underwent a process of eliminating undesirable

things from my diet and a process of incorporating more exercise into my daily routine. For example--my first healthy decision was to do power walks, and I'd track my steps and calories burnt using an app. Then every two weeks or so I would rid myself of a vice. I eliminated soda, sweets, breads, pastas, until my daily intake of calories consisted mostly of meat, vegetables and liquids. Eventually I signed up for a milieu of different physical activities. I tried Judo, salsa, swimming -- whatever was readily available in my area.

My decision to be keto was born out of self-motivation. I was losing weight, but I arrived at a plateau. I read somewhere that diet is far more important than exercise, because diet entails what sort of food you eat and the quantity thereof, whereas exercise only involves burning the calories of the food already



consumed. I thought, *"So, if diet is more important than exercise...how can I further improve my diet? What more can I possibly do?"* I consulted the *Great Google*, master of all things knowledge. In my lunchtime and breaks from work, I would just read and read and read about all things diet and all things weight loss related. I read several articles about people who lost a hundred pounds or more. I noticed many of them had one thing in common -- the commonality was keto. So, naturally, I was compelled to google 'ketosis'. I'd say it took about a good two weeks of thorough reading and note-taking before I started my keto journey.

When I began ketosis, I experienced the *keto flu* as many people undertaking keto often do -- dizziness, headaches, fatigue, irritability and even stomach

pangs. For a few weeks, every day was miserable. However, one day I had a sudden burst of energy, mental clarity and general feeling of *genki*.

At first, my daily life on Keto was rather creative, I was in discovery mode. I would make almond flour buns, *konyaku* burger buns, *yakitori kawa*, cauliflower rice, *konyaku* rice, sugar free sweet potato pudding, sugar free cheesecake, sugar free fruit jams, banana ice cream and top everything with bacon. I realized keto is not a fad diet, it's a doable lifestyle which affords me the luxury of eating all the fatty foods I crave, and I'm never hungry.

DAILY LIFE ON KETO

However, after my honeymoon stage, I developed my own pattern and habits. Now, I eat twice per day, my main meal being breakfast. I do this because I want my body to burn as much of the calories consumed before bed as possible. I also drink a lot of liquids (zero calorie tea or water with a splash of lemon). Ketones are passed in urine, and I find I urinate a lot and I aim to replace my salts and electrolytes. I also eat the same meals every day for long periods of time (a week or two). Meal prepping and budgeting is easier this way for me. Adopting to this kind of style helps me to combat the difficulty in accessing

different sources of fat from my local supermarket in Japan. For example -- Japanese bacon is a little different from western bacon, less fatty and less salty, and many cuts of meat available in the supermarket already have the fat rendered off. Some keto basics are rather expensive here, like cheese and butter, and other keto staples are sold in unreasonably small packets, like almond flour.

For my daily life in ketosis, I decide how many calories I want to consume, the food I want to eat, the nutritional value (as it relates to carbs, protein and fat) of each food item, and the portion size that best suits my calorie intake goal of said items. I have a food scale and I make rough calculations in my diary, but you can use an app for ease and convenience. I learned how to convert the nutrition labels on food items (for example, protein to calories) and the kanji for fat, sugar, carbohydrates, etc. I also do *bulletproof coffees*, *fat bombs* and most recently *MTC powder shakes*, which are basically different ways of getting more fat in your diet, as most people on keto do.

Ketosis has been pivotal to my weightloss because I realized I was losing weight whether I exercised or not. Every time I got on the scale I was blown away. The pounds would just shed.

FAT: 700 CALORIES // PROTEIN: 250 CALORIES // CARBOHYDRATES: 50 CALORIES

GOAL: 1000 CALORIES	FOOD ITEM	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	FAT
	BREAKFAST			
Coconut oil & butter fried scrambled eggs and bacon				
	Coconut oil - 1tbsp - 100 cal	-	-	100
	Butter - 1tbsp - 100 cal	-	-	100
	Egg - 1 - 74.5 cal	54 (6gx9)	2 (.5gx4)	20 (.5gx4)
	Bacon - 100g - 168 cal	143 (15.9gx9)	12 (3gx4)	40.4 (10.1gx4)
<hr/>				
SNACK				
Spicy cabbage mayo salad				
	Mayo- 2tbsp - 187 cal	-	-	187
	Cabbage - 100g - 21 cal	-	21	-
	Crushed red peper - 1/2 tsp - 2 cal	-	2	-
<hr/>				
FAT BOOSTER				
Bulletproof butter coffee				
	Coffee - 1tbsp - 2 cal	-	2	-
	Butter - 1 1/2 tbsp - 123 cal	-	-	150
<hr/>				
LUNCH				
Butter sautéed grilled chicken thigh in mushroom soup				
	Butter - 1tbsp - 100 cal	-	-	100
	Chicken thigh - 25g - 61.25 cal	-	-	15.36 (3.84gx4)
	Mushroom - 100g - 13 cal	-	13	-
<hr/>				
	TOTAL 1017.76 CAL	252.91 cal	52 cal	712.76 cal



There are some other challenges but they are closely linked to the nuisances of maintaining a ketogenic diet whilst living in Japan. Most people do not grasp the meaning of ketosis and so the idea of consuming fat, fat, fat, fat, fat whilst you *claim* to be on a diet is rather mind-boggling. In Japan people are no different in this regard, for the most part.

Japan has a group culture -- that is, it's good to engage in the same activities together, and eat and drink the same kind of food together. At meal times, when the rice is brought out, I politely refuse. However, I never want to risk unintentionally offending anyone, so I often find myself explaining, incessantly, the concept of ketosis, and even having to justify my food choices. It can be taxing, mentally. However, after a while it registers with my Japanese co-workers, foreign colleagues and my mixed bag of friends that this is not a transient *thing*, this is my diet- no, scratch that, my *lifestyle choice*- and they eventually adjust as necessary.

FUTURE GOALS

I won't say my starting weight, but I was a *fat potato*. You can look at my pictures. I've been on a ketogenic diet for about a year, give or take, and so far I've lost over eighty pounds. Let's put that into perspective -- when I first arrived in Japan I could barely shop in the Shimamura Fashion Store plus size section, squeezing into size 4X, but now I can peruse the entire store for a size L or M depending on the style. I've never been a size M my entire life, unless I can count my toddler years. I've even dropped a shoe size. I didn't even know that was physically possible.

I'd like to lose at least fifteen to twenty more pounds or so. I'd like to tone my body and build some muscle, too. That's going to require more work and dedication, so I'm going to keep on keeping on.

I created a small Line group with likeminded people. We talk about all things keto, motivate each other, and check each other's progress. If you're interested in a ketogenic lifestyle, please send me an e-mail. We'd love to have you. My e-mail address is jdiggswhite@hotmail.com.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

The biggest one is that sometimes I fall off the wagon. I've had weak moments of binge eating, over self-indulging on nights out, and other nights of simply getting wasted. Temptation is everywhere too. I try not to beat myself up, it doesn't fix the mistakes I've made -- it doesn't take away the calories from all the alcohol I drank or all the sweets I ate. I do examine the *why and because* behind my negative actions so the next time I can avoid the same pitfalls. For example -- did I binge eat because my caloric intake was too low? Was I feeling hungry? Or was I simply lacking discipline? I also do a system reboot, both physically and mentally. I remind myself about my motivation for maintaining a keto diet and try to have more discipline going forward.





Mottainai

How to eat healthy on a budget without wasting food.

Jessica Ing (Nagaoka)

Living on your own certainly increases your skill set. During your time here doing JET, you can familiarize yourself with food preparation, cooking, and restocking your fridge. The bonus of living in a town surrounded by bountiful farmland is the amount of seasonal produce available to purchase--my local supermarket, *Harashin*, is a 5 minute walk or 2 minute bike ride away. However, some weeks I create more organic food waste than I consume. If you've heard of the concept of *mottainai*, you'll know how I feel when I have not been diligent in buying only what I need. The word *mottainai* is an expression that conveys a sense of regret for wasting things.

I wanted to stop the trend of money ending up in the *gomi*. This technique may not work for you, but I tend to buy groceries every three days in the evening. When I go food shopping, the produce in season is generally put on shelves near the entrance. These are the items that I tend to buy and create a recipe around.

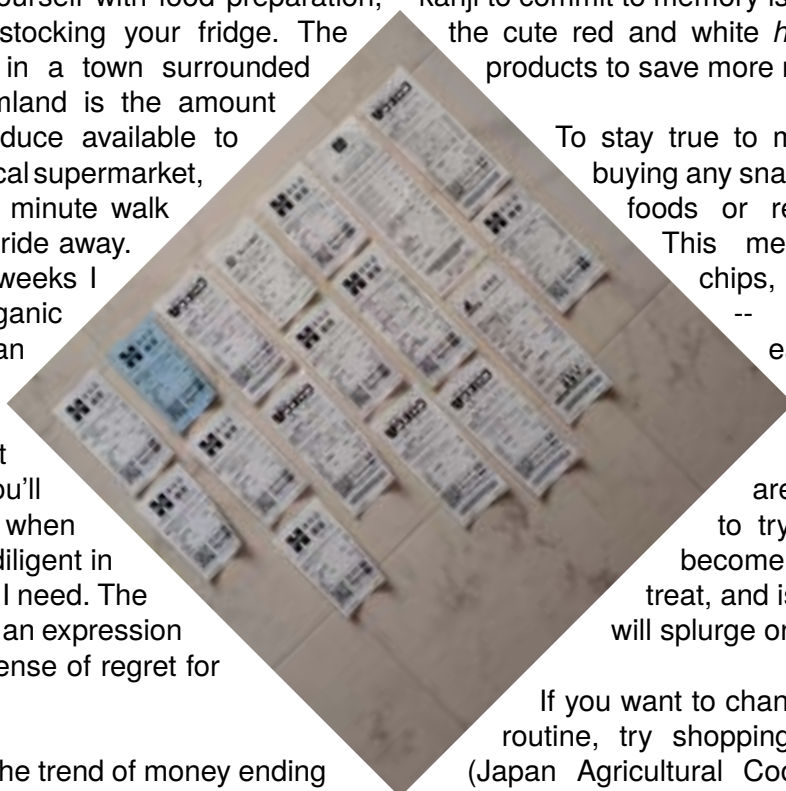
Many foods are discounted around 18:00 and again one hour before the store closes. A useful kanji to commit to memory is *hangaku*. Look for the cute red and white *hangaku* sticker on products to save more money.

To stay true to my budget, I avoid buying any snack food, processed foods or ready-made foods.

This means no cookies, chips, popcorn, candy -- anything that is easy to munch on.

Though I do have a sweet tooth for ice cream. There are so many flavours to try in Japan! It has become a regular weekly treat, and is one of the items I will splurge on.

If you want to change up your regular routine, try shopping at the local JA (Japan Agricultural Cooperative) in your area. They have nice selections of local, farm-grown vegetables and meats. It is worthwhile to check these places out because foods often come in larger packages that are cheaper than you'll find at the supermarket. Also, sometimes there is no tax on the food.



I looked through all my receipts to put together my shopping cost for August. Frequent food purchases have prevented a lot of fruits and vegetables from spoiling, so I save more and eat healthy. Generally I set aside a ¥10,000 budget a month for grocery shopping. This works out to approximately ¥2000 a week -- keep in mind that I am only feeding myself and occasional guests. The ¥10,000 budget may not work out for more than one person, but it would prove to be an interesting experiment!

You'll notice I spend more money on some weekends -- on those weeks I purchased more foods that were on sale, then I prepared them at home and froze them for future recipes. Please plan accordingly for your dietary needs.

Week 1: Wednesday August 1 - Saturday August 4	
Harashin	¥ 654
Week Total ¥ 654	
Week 2: Sunday August 5 - Saturday August 11	
Harashin	¥ 627
Marine Dream Nou	¥ 972
Sendai	¥ 933
Apita	¥ 467
Week Total ¥ 2999	
Week 3: Sunday August 12 - Saturday August 18	
Ureko	¥ 131
Harashin	¥ 183
Harashin	¥ 213
Harashin	¥ 380
Harashin	¥ 654
Ureko	¥ 95
Week Total ¥ 1656	
Week 4: Sunday August 19 - Saturday August 25	
Ureko	¥ 997
Harashin	¥ 95
Ureko	¥ 425
Harashin	¥ 1605
Harashin	¥ 105
Ureko	¥ 211
Week Total ¥ 2538	
Week 5: Sunday August 26 - Friday August 31	
Harashin	¥ 639
Week Total ¥ 639	
Grand Total ¥ 8486	



Some fundamental foods in my apartment include eggs, milk, bananas, chicken breast, and seasonal vegetables. In my pantry I have soy sauce, mirin, vinegar, dashi stock, salt, sugar, black pepper, basil, S&B spice, mayonnaise, black bean spice, tomato sauce, maple syrup, dry yeast, 1 kg flour, 5 kg rice, and noodles. Restocking usually occurs every 3-6 months.

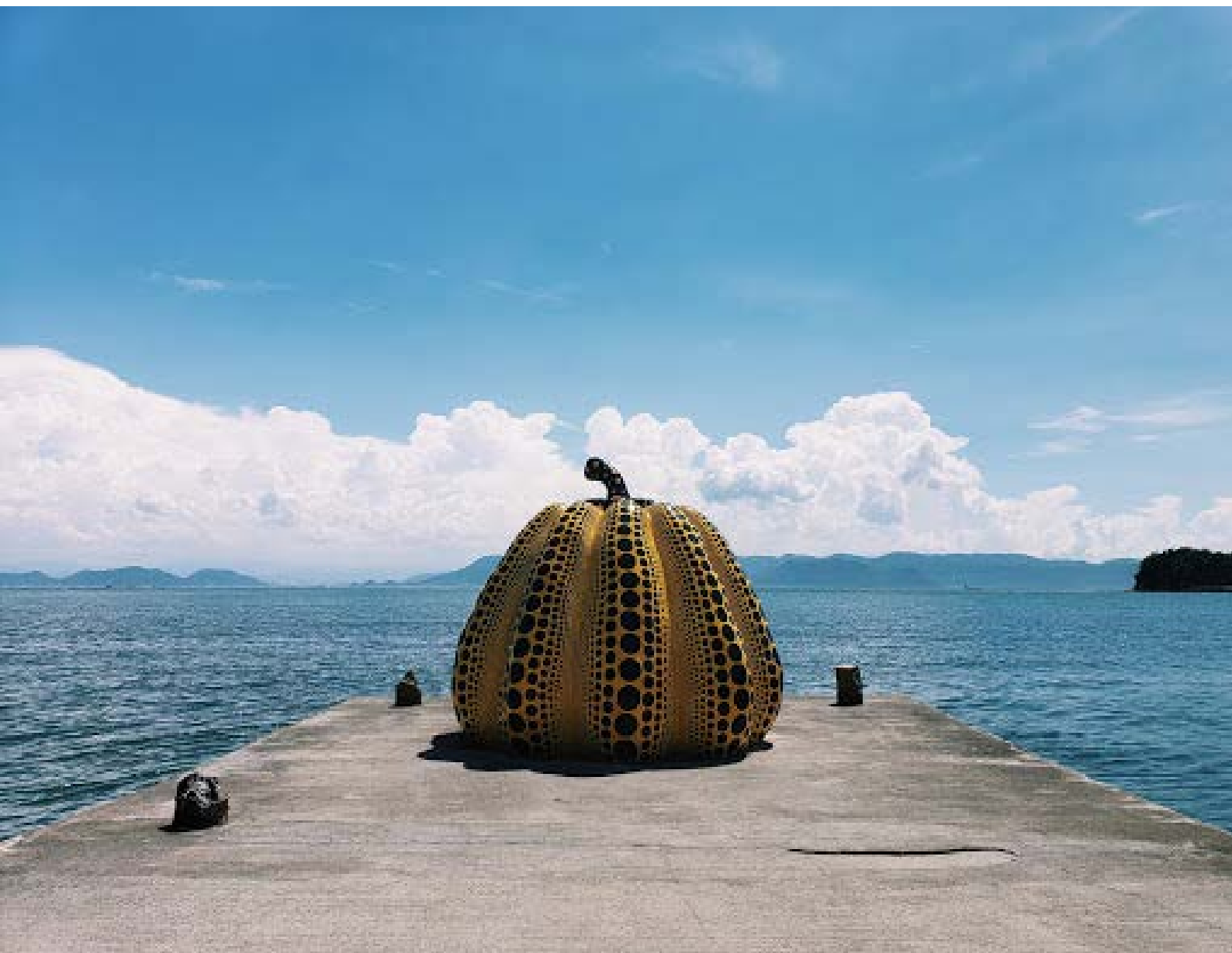
When you prepare meals you are in control of what you eat, and eating healthy becomes a game. One rule of the game is to eat till you are *hara hachi bu* (80 percent full). Finding meals that satisfy you for breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner can be an enjoyable challenge, and a learning experience too! Have fun and enjoy all the food that Japan has to offer!



TRAVELING WITH ART

Naoshima, Ogijima & Takamatsu





Yayoi Kusama's "Pumpkin" (1994) - an iconic symbol of Naoshima

NAOSHIMA

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Naoshima is a remote island in the Japan Seto Inland Sea, accessible by regular ferry from Uno Port in Okayama or Takamatsu Port in Kagawa, and sporadically from other islands in the region. The island is part of the Setouchi Triennale International Art Festival, a tri-annual contemporary art festival. Tadao Ando and Yayoi Kusama are the biggest names whose works are showcased here. Naoshima also houses thoughtfully designed museums with clean lines emphasising minimalism, abandoned houses turned into permanent art exhibitions, and quirky sculptures with eye-popping colours. There's something here for anyone interested in contemporary art and architecture. Grab a map, hop on a rental bicycle, and take your time exploring the island.



“

I like ruins because what remains is not the total design, but the clarity of thought, the naked structure, the spirit of the thing.

- Tadao Ando

”



Chichu Art Museum

Built primarily subterranean so as not to affect the natural landscape of the island, the museum stuns with its masterful juxtaposition of light and shadow, clean lines and intersections.

It is not immediately apparent to visitors from within, but the museum is made up of several basic shapes that can only be viewed from an aerial perspective.

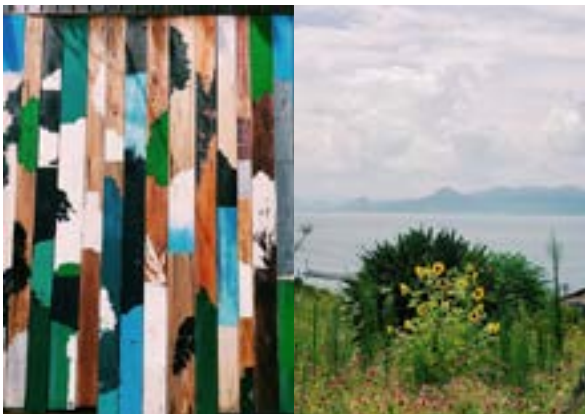
Permanent exhibits include work by Claude Monet, Walter de Maria, and James Turrell.



Top: Sou Fujimoto's "Naoshima Pavilion," constructed for the 2016 Setouchi Triennale - photographed at sunset
Bottom left to right: House exterior part of the Art House Project, Naoshima Bath "I ♥ 湯" (2009), Kazuo Katase's "Drink a Cup of Tea" (1987-1994),



Ogiijima Port, featuring Jaume Plensa's "Ogiijima's Soul"



OGIJIMA

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Another participant in the Setouchi Triennale, Ogiijima is accessible by ferry from Takamatsu Port and its sister island, Megijima. It is decidedly smaller than Naoshima, and can be explored quite easily within 2 hours. Aside from the art installations in the village set into the side of the hills, there is also a lighthouse and its accompanying museum on the northern side of the island. If you're planning to go to the lighthouse in the warmer seasons, it is recommended that you apply a healthy dose of insect repellent before starting.



Azaleas of Nanko (South Pond) in Ritsurin Garden

RITSURIN GARDEN

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With Takamatsu as a base, it's easy to get to all the art islands on day trips and then come back at the end of the day to slurp up bowls of Sanuki udon for dinner (the thick wheat flour noodles that Kagawa prefecture is famous for). However, not all of the area's charms lay a ferry ride away.

A few stops from Takamatsu Port is Ritsurin Garden, an immaculate landscape garden with a rich history, built by the local feudal lords from 1625 to 1745 during the early Edo Period. In 1953, the garden was designated a Special Place of Scenic Beauty.

Sarah Leck plays bass guitar for Panic! At the Daiso, writes for Oddmag.co, and volunteers with Kobe City as a PR Ambassador. You can check out more of her photography & creative work on her Instagram (@srhleck).



*Top: Lotus bloom in Fuyo-sho, the lotus garden; in summer, about 1000 lotuses can be seen
Bottom: Ritsurin Garden as photographed from Hiraiho, featuring Fukiage Tei (a rest stop) on the left, Engetsukyo (Crescent Moon Bridge), and a Japanese-style wasen boat on the right*

A Restaurant And A BUS

Experiencing Willer's Kyoto 2018 Run

Grace Chew (Shiga)

The bane of many tourists visiting Kyoto in summer is, most likely, the incessant walking between scenic spots in the blistering heat. Wouldn't it be great to sit back in air-conditioned comfort and take in the scenery of Kyoto and some iconic landmarks all while enjoying a traditional Japanese lunch? This summer, I got to do just that on the Willer Kyoto Restaurant Bus.

Willer is a well-known bus company among budget travellers for their highway buses. Since 2016, they have been offering well-heeled, unique, and easy experiences touring various areas of Japan, including their "restaurant bus." Although restaurant buses appear ordinary from the outside, the inside has been modified to include permanent tables and chairs. In previous seasons, the bus has plied Tokyo, Niigata, Hokkaido, and Okinawa. And with each season, they team up with a different restaurant to provide gourmet food on board. For the Kyoto Summer 2018 season, prices ranged from ¥6,800 - ¥8,200 for the lunch course and ¥8,600 - ¥10,500 for the dinner course. The cost depends on which seat you choose on the bus. The bus runs every weekend and also on a few select weekdays. As I subscribe to Willer's mailing list and receive promotional emails from them time to time, I received an invitation to ride their first round of the lunch course at only ¥2000! At such a great deal and being a fan of novel transportation, I grabbed a friend and signed up for it immediately.

We arrived early at Kyoto Station, the pick-up point, way ahead of time as we did not want to miss the bus. At noon, there was still no sign of the bus, which was atypical of Japanese punctuality. We were reassured by a Willer Bus representative that the bus was slightly delayed and on the way. Shortly after 12, the bus pulled in amidst frantic clicking of cameras

and phones by the hungry guests waiting in line.

The bus was yellow and double-decker with the words "WILLER KYOTO Restaurant Bus" splashed across its side along with a picture of a Japanese woman in traditional dress enjoying a meal. As we were listening to the introductory promotion of this season's menu, a reporter and videographer from a local TV station were also present. After a quick name check on the guest list, we escaped the sweltering heat and headed into the bus. Upon entering, we were directed upstairs to the second deck, where the interior had been redesigned with restaurant-style furnishings to accommodate 25 diners. Our guide gave a warm welcome and introduction of the staff in impeccable English before continuing the rest of his explanation in Japanese for the duration of the ride.

As the bus moved off, we were offered a selection of free-flow wine, beer, Japanese alcohol, or ginger ale. Surprisingly, water and tea were not available. We decided to try the ginger ale, which had a unique tangy flavor unlike store-bought versions.

The first part of our route remained in the city center, and our view was filled mostly with buildings, roads, traffic, and people gawking up at us from the streets. I enjoy architecture and people-watching in a foreign country even if it's just regular people going about their everyday lives. The most beautiful part of the journey was when we passed Hiroasawa Pond, as the city scene gave way to views of mountains, water, and greenery. Other places of interest along the route include Kyoto Gyoen, Kitano Tenmangu, and Higashi Honganji. Besides these tourist sites, our

guide would also point out places we passed, such as universities and train stations, and give interesting background information. It was a little confusing initially when he told us to look ‘right’ or ‘left’ as I was seated in a back-facing seat. Additionally, the ride was slightly nauseating after awhile, but as we had a 30-minute break at Arashiyama, it wasn’t too bad. This is the only stop on the trip, and everybody had to get off the bus. As my travel buddy and I had both been to Arashiyama before, we decided against walking about in the blazing sun. Instead, we took respite at the visitor’s center and marveled at the crowd braving the midday heat to take pictures with the near-vanishing river.

The food looks exactly as in the picture shown on their website, except each course is served individually. While the English website merely lists a “seasonal dish,” the Japanese website details the courses: appetizer of spinach in sesame seasoning; main dish of dashi egg roll, grilled salmon, wakasagi fish (*Hypomesus nipponesis*), salmon marinade, maple leaf, and aoba green leaf; side dish of cucumber, shrimp prawn, ginger, and vinegar; rice with pickled eggplant; soup; and a warabi mochi dessert. With the exception of the rice and miso soup, every dish is served cold. This was great for a summertime lunch but left me wondering if they really needed the whole of the first floor for a kitchen and a tiny toilet. I was also puzzled by the choice to serve a whole unshelled prawn, which was inconvenient to eat on a moving bus. Overall, the portion size was reasonable even though taste was slightly lacking. For the same price, there are certainly a number of kaiseki lunches in Kyoto that would be more satisfying to a Foodie.

On the way back, we decided to refresh ourselves with a cold beer. As it had been hovering at 35 degrees Celsius, the bus had kept its clear roof shut for the whole afternoon to keep out the heat. However, as we drove closer to Kyoto Tower, the guide polled the passengers and everybody agreed to open the clear roof of the bus to feel the wind and have a better view of the scene. There were happy sighs all around as we turned the corner and ended our journey back at Kyoto Station.

Overall, the Willer Restaurant Bus was a fun and novel way to catch up with a friend, even though both of us have visited Kyoto many times before. Perhaps if there were an English flyer detailing interesting points along the route I might have been more intrigued by the passing scenery since my Japanese

ability is limited. This activity is best enjoyed in a small group and is probably not so suitable for people with mobility impairments. It feels not unlike flying on an airplane but with fancier food and more varied scenery. We were also interviewed by the local news station and some web sites in Japanese in order to offer a foreigner’s perspective. Although the dinner course and other seasons will offer a slightly different experience, I am glad I got to try this Aug-Oct 2018 season of Kyoto Restaurant Bus.

And for our friends in Tokyo, rejoice! The October-December season of the Restaurant Bus will be in Tokyo. However, there will be a low-calorie French menu instead of traditional Japanese food. Also, there will not be a tour guide. Instead, there will be an auto-guide in English, Chinese, and Korean, so no worries for those with limited Japanese ability. The meeting point for the Tokyo Restaurant Bus is at Tokyo Midtown Hibiya, with a 30-minute break at Aquacity Odaiba. Check out the Willer web page for the latest information and booking details!

For

People who like comfort and convenience
People who like novel transportation experiences

Not For

People who want to explore Kyoto in detail
People who get motion sickness easily (especially back-facing seats)
Foodies

TIPS

While there are blinds across the sun roof, it can still get sunny especially along the aisle seats, so bring a hat. There is a charging point under the table. The toilet is smaller than an average airline toilet. Seatbelts are provided. Sign up as a member of Willer Bus, and you may be invited to participate in the next season’s introductory promotion run. Details and booking information can be found [here](#).

Grace was an Assistant Language Teacher based in Shiga Prefecture. She has no affiliation with Willer Bus, and this is not a sponsored article.

COMMUNITY



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Lena Pham

*"Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward
in whatever way they like." -Lao Tzu*

SPORTS EDITOR

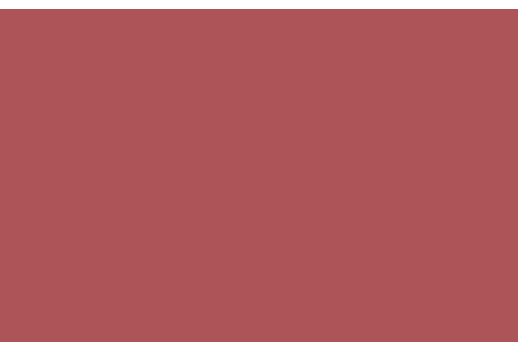
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Photo: Giovanni Perez



NIIGATA IN THE INAKA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Adam Barnett (Niigata)





Have you heard about the Niigata in the Inaka International Basketball Tournament (NIIB)? It's an event for the JET community that takes place biannually in rural Niigata. They're looking for new JETs and teams for future tournaments, so if you love basketball, or are interested in getting together with JETs from other prefectures, then why not check it out!

NIIB isn't a serious tournament; teams are made up of both guys and girls, and the refereeing and scorekeeping is handled amongst the participants. While it's great to win – and the winning team will be presented with the coveted Champions Belt (a plastic WWE replica) – the main purpose of the event is for people to make new friends, and have a good time in the beautiful Japanese countryside. It doesn't matter whether you're a basketball pro or if you can't bounce the ball to save your life, everyone is welcome!

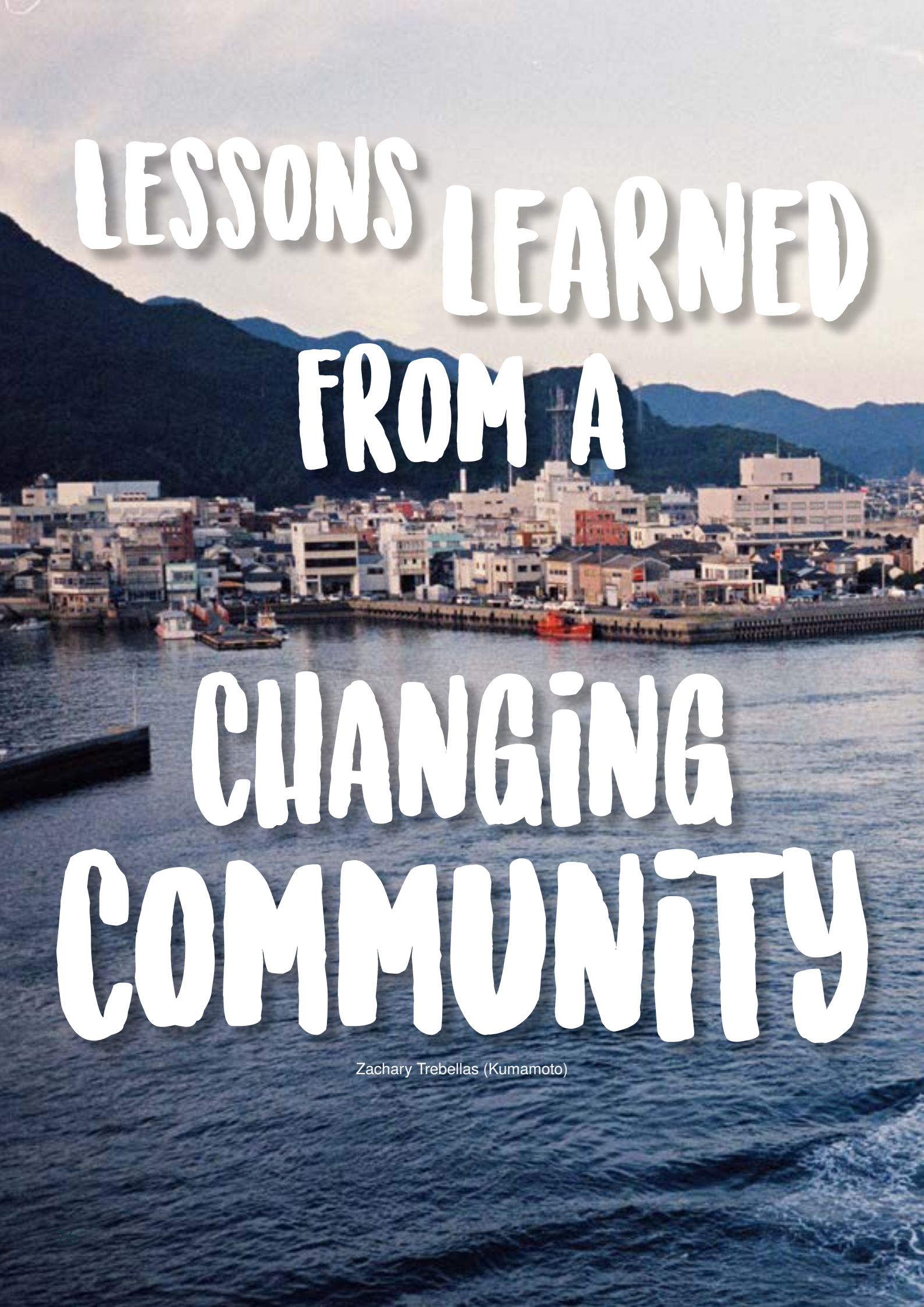
The tournament also raises money for charity, donating 500 yen for every player. In the past, NIIB has donated to charities involved with relief efforts for areas struck by natural disasters, such as the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and heavy rain disasters in western Japan. The money raised at the next tournament will be donated to the Japanese Red Cross.

So, what exactly happens at a NIIB tournament? Well the event starts on Friday night, as teams travelling from far away arrive at the tournament ryokan. Then on Saturday, there is a round robin and championship tournament before an all you can eat/drink dinner party in the evening. During the dinner party, the winning teams and other players elected for special awards are presented with a selection of Niigata's finest sake.

The next tournament will be held on Saturday, October 27, and the deadline to register is October 5. JETs can register as a team (5 to 12 players), or individually (1 to 4 players). Individual applications are welcomed, and the organizers will introduce you to a suitable team on the day. Check NIIB's Facebook pages for full information on how to sign up, and for future updates!

Fall 2018 Tournament Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/245269189529673/>
[NIIB Page.](#)





LESSONS LEARNED FROM A CHANGING COMMUNITY

Zachary Trebellas (Kumamoto)



When I moved to Japan in the summer of 2012, I'd only experienced two kinds of towns. First was Batavia, the city of twenty-five thousand in which I grew up. Forty-three miles outside of Chicago, it's one of the city's westernmost suburbs. Five minutes west of town, rural Illinois' cornfields began in earnest. Second was Chicago, the landing place for many suburban college graduates and the nation's third largest city at 2.7 million people. Where in Batavia I'd felt a strong sense of community, a shared history and destiny with others, in Chicago I never had such feelings. Running errands and commuting in the second city, I was forever anonymous, surrounded by strangers. In contrast to Batavia where my neighborhood had its own phone directory and annual block party, in Chicago it took me six months to even learn my downstairs neighbor's name. When I said good morning to people on my block, they'd mutter back to me awkwardly before shuffling away. Compared to Batavia, it was isolating and lonely, even with friends nearby. When I got into the JET Program, I told myself I'd never again live in Chicago. And I haven't since.

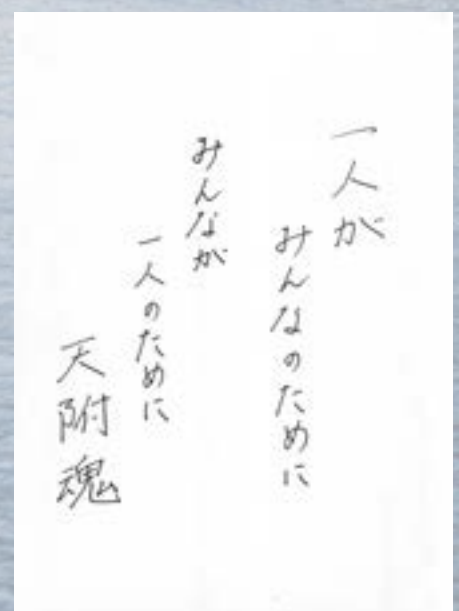
Like many JET participants, I was sent to a third kind of town, a rural one. I'd long driven through the countryside of Illinois, wondering what life was like in those small

corn towns. In Japan I got my answer. In a way, the sense of community in my placement felt similar to Batavia, only intensified. My town was Kawaura, a seaside village of five thousand tucked into the corner of the lower island of Amakusa in Kumamoto prefecture. There, your business was everyone's business. If I chatted with a woman about calligraphy lessons on a Saturday, on Monday I'd be asked by a student about the encounter at school. When my twin brother came to visit, a grocery store employee asked me if I had a guest over, as there had been more clothes than usual drying on my balcony. My brother found the surveillance to be unnerving, but I loved it. To me it proved just how close the community was.

Amakusa was changing, and for two years I experienced those changes alongside my students and their parents. The population of Amakusa had been declining for decades and Kawaura was no exception. My predecessor saw two of his elementary schools close. Just a year later, I saw two more close and merge until there was only one left. I keenly recall how often I'd hear the words *heikou shiki*, "school closing ceremony", leading up to the inevitable. I still remember the emotion in the principal's voice at one such ceremony when he described Miyanakawachi Elementary as *daisuki na*, "beloved".

Amakusa has been named the fastest depopulating municipality in Japan. The issue embarrassed my coworkers, but I couldn't get it off my mind. I knew there was something there, something that art could speak to. Three years after my return to the States, I received the opportunity through the JET Program's Furusato Vision Project to propose a project for Amakusa. I'd never gotten its depopulation off of my mind. I wondered how the issue made those communities feel. Shame? Failure? Sadness? Whatever the case, I wanted to locate and tease out the positive in the situation. With that goal, I returned to Amakusa in November of 2017 and set my sights on Ushibuka, the fishing village just south of Kawaura where one of my elementary schools had been located. Its population had shrunk the most of any city in Amakusa, from a height of thirty-eight thousand in 1955 to around twelve thousand today.

The village was more or less the same as when I'd left. Soon though, my knowledge of its past and perspective on its present would shift greatly. Titled my project *Hidden Histories*, I'd scheduled meetings with twelve Ushibuka residents and requested that they



share with me a cherished memory attached to a bygone place. Through this, I hoped to reposition the town's shuttered storefronts from symbols of decline to vessels of positive memory. Residents shared all kinds of stories. Often talking for nearly an hour, they illuminated how Ushibuka had become emptier and more elderly, all the while excitedly telling stories of family gatherings, playing with friends, cooperating with classmates, etc. Masaya Kajiwara, the youngest participant at nineteen, spoke sincerely about how going to an elementary school of just thirty students had taught the children to take on more leadership and responsibility. After all, they had a large school to take care of. Years later in bigger junior and high schools, it was those students who continued to be strong leaders. People wouldn't expect these kinds of values to arise out of a small elementary school, he told me. They likely wouldn't think much of a small school at all.

Residents' pride reminded me of people I'd met at a dance performance in Gary, Indiana, nearly ten years prior: people there beamed about the quality of character found in their city. From the outside, rust belt towns like Gary and depopulating islands like Amakusa can look hopeless, but in each, people held such pride of place. In the dozen stories I collected in Ushibuka, it was the relationships that stood out as a common denominator. It was people's humanity and their care for each other that made the various locations special.

As communities change, I believe it's those kinds of values that are important for people to uphold. And I believe that those values occur more deeply and readily in a small, interconnected communities

like the rural towns of Japan. Back in the United States, I know this to be true in my own life. Artists often exist in a kind of sub-community within a larger town. In my case this is Grand Rapids, Michigan, a city of two-hundred thousand. As artists, we have our own events, district, gatherings, organizations, and more. Within this community, I experience many of the same things I treasured about the towns of Amakusa. We care for each other, support one another, and work together the best we can with limited resources. It makes me feel like I have a first-hand glimpse at what it's been like for the long-term residents of Kawaura and Ushibuka. Living now in a booming city, the strongest economy in Michigan, my mind wanders to those in places where the economic fate is much less promising. I believe that if people in those changing communities hold onto their kindness, concern for each other, and continue to take joy in one another, then life will be brighter for future generations. This is the belief that Ushibuka gave me. I hope it turns out to be true.



Zachary Trebellas is a conceptual artist who takes inspiration from the culture and history around him. He is inspired by older forms of creativity like folk art or depression-era public art, both of which insert art into people's everyday lives and reflect the culture in which it is made. In his hometown he's created a street art series asking locals to share their thoughts on the shutdown of the town's particle accelerator. In Japan he has recorded stories of the past told by residents of a depopulating fishing village, and currently he is working to create a contemporary version of Michigan's Native burial mounds.





Ehime, a gift in experiences



In 2016, I was in Ehime and fell in love with the area. After watching the recent disaster footage on the news, I wondered if I, a middle-aged foreigner, could help. Nobody I asked said “no”.

I chose Unomachi as my destination after I found a *minshuku* (Japanese-style bed and breakfast) there that spoke English. The travel went smoothly. I took a train to Hiroshima, a ferry to the port in Matsuyama, Ehime, then a train to Yawatahama. The track from Yawatahama to Uwajima was still damaged, so I took a bus the rest of the way. During the trip I occasionally caught sight of water-damaged cars or areas where water had crested the banks. Otherwise life seemed to be running as usual.

Over the next three days I learned the disaster was not in one large area. Instead, it was in pockets. It was in small valleys where landslides had brought cedar tree groves crashing down the mountain and in areas where debris had dammed the streams and culverts, making the repeated bands of heavy rain overflow the banks and rush into the streets and buildings. The rushing water had flowed down to the river and quickly turned it into a powerful force carrying large trees, homes, and debris which stacked up against bridges. The river had then overflowed and rushed into the surrounding area of paddies, fields, homes and businesses.

Unomachi is located on both sides

of the Hijikawa river. The water had backed up from the debris and flooded the community. Hundreds were evacuated, and many remained in the elementary school evacuation center when I arrived a week later. The volunteers who showed up right after the disaster found 15 cm of mud covering main roads and homes with ground floor rooms completely flooded. The work they did was truly monumental. By the time I arrived, the water had been drained but the huge amount of damage was evident.

Volunteering, even without speaking the language, went smoothly. Each day I checked in to the "Volunteer Spot." This was an area located below a community office building. The river was 200 meters away and yet this parking area had a water line 2 1/2 meters up the wall. After filling in the registration form, I received a name tag which listed the town, my name and my blood type. Groups of five or more volunteers received a safety brief by a volunteer staffer. He must have done it dozens of times each morning yet he was always smiling and enthusiastic. After the brief, the group was assigned jobs. Due to the heat (35°+), breaks were important and were announced by a member of the group who was designated as the team leader. Lunch was between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. during which we returned to the center to eat. The work day ended at 3 p.m.

After washing up, the volunteer staff greeted us with onigiri and cool water. Their enthusiasm was contagious and a wonderful way to end the work day.

There were 138 volunteers the first day. On the last day the total was around 238. Middle and high schoolers on summer break made up a large part of the volunteers.

I volunteered for three days and was involved in tearing out floors, removing dry wall, cleaning mud from inside foundation areas, and tackling the mold issue in homes and community buildings. Among the people I worked with were nurses from Tokyo, an educator from Fukuoka, a masseuse from Tokoyama, a farmer, a firefighter, and a physical education teacher and her cross country team from Matsuyama.

I will particularly remember day one when we cleaned out the sports center's storage area which was covered in 10 cm of mud. All the equipment, including the basketball hoops, mats, scoreboards, uniforms, chairs, weights and cupboards, were soaked. All of it went straight into the pile of debris. The work was arduous, the temperatures were soaring and yet the energy of the volunteers was amazing.

I will never forget the elderly lady from the last day. Her deceased husband's picture was still up on the wall in the entryway, a room with no floor. At the end of the day she brought us *senbei* (Japanese rice crackers) and cakes to thank us, while profusely apologizing that the snacks were all she could offer. She had lost everything and was still grateful for the little we did to help. I will never forget her or the other people who made this experience incredible for me. It was an honor to be there.

Jen is in Japan with her husband who is a civilian engineer with the US army. They are finishing up their five years in Japan the spring of 2020. She has loved exploring the country and highlights include walking the 88 Temple Pilgrimage in 2016, riding motorcycles to Hokkaido in 2017, and working on a farm in 2018. Jen describes helping out in Ehime as such an honor. The people she has met everywhere are amazing.



As I shuffled, centimeter by centimeter, across the sheer cliff face of Mt. Tsurugi, my sweaty palms desperately gripping slippery rocks and my knees beginning to shake, I heard a voice from below. A climber on his way up saw my struggle and lent his support by bellowing at an impassioned, “gamba!”. After I had crossed the infamous “crab walk,” he greeted me with a smile and said he hadn’t realized how daunting this mountain would be. I lied and said it hadn’t been too bad. Before continuing down, I winked and told him to be careful. It’s difficult to fit a mountain into a single newspaper article, and it is impossible to adequately explain hiking’s impact on my life, but I’ll do my best.

If there is one phrase that every mountaineer in Japan needs to know, it’s “Gamba!”. Even though I’ve heard it on many treacherous traverses, and said it to countless climbers, it still eludes a succinct definition. It

means so much more than “do your best.” Whether I’m slumped near the peak too knackered to summit, or clinging with all of my being to a pebble only a meter from topping-out a boulder, hearing that from a friend is enough to see me through. It conveys a sense of community and encourages you to fight through pain and hardship knowing that others are with you in spirit. Even when a total stranger yells it at me from below, by the time I come back down we will be close comrades of the cliffs.

The climbing and hiking community in Japan is one of the friendliest and accepting that I have ever experienced. It’s a hodgepodge of every kind of climber: from office-working weekend hikers to true mountaineers filthy from weeks in the wilderness. No matter where you fit in the spectrum of climbers, you will be

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welcomed at any gym, campground, or mountain hut as if you were family. Everyone knows what it's like to gasp for breath atop a Japanese Alp or to feel the pain of raw fingertips on the boulders of Mie. And everyone knows that a small word of encouragement and comradery can go a long way.

People often ask me what it is about Japan that makes me stay and visiting friends always ask how to see the best sights of the country, but I always fail to adequately explain how difficult those questions are. How can I possibly explain the sense of connection, community, and belonging that is every bit as deep as Mt. Fuji is tall? How can I take you to the heart of the Northern Alps to show you the truly unforgettable sights of Japan when you fly out of Narita in a day or two? Of all the reasons and tales I could give

to those who ask why I stay in Japan, I usually just go with one, "Mountains."

The JET Programme Voices column highlights the charm and appeal of local communities and life in Japan as seen through the eyes of JET participants. Articles are published online and in print by Yomiuri Shimbun in their English-language publication, The Japan News. All current and former JET Programme Participants are eligible to submit articles.

Articles are accepted on a continuing basis. They should be approximately 450 words in English/Japanese. You must also include a short self-introduction that is about 200 words and includes your name, CO, prefecture, home country, and job type. Finally, submissions are printed with pictures, so you are encouraged to include several high-definition shots. There is no limit to the number of articles JETs can submit.

Submissions should be sent to gyomu@calir.or.jp.

More information can be found [here](#).

Nick is a fifth-year ALT living in Shiga Prefecture. In his free time, some sick compulsion urges him to do anything and everything—except relax. You may find him playing guitar in a Kyoto bar, clinging to a rock in a bouldering field, or atop any mountain in Kansai. If you don't run into him in the Japanese wilderness, you can follow him on [Instagram](#) and read his creative writing blog, [Rafiki's 日記](#).

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Creating Your Community

Ivy Pan (Ehime)



The term "health" has different meanings for different cultures. Generally, health is an embodiment of fitness, diet and mental state. Personally, I believe health means having a high level of activity, a consistent diet, occasionally meditating, and having a strong community. In North America, there are systems in place to promote high levels of activities crammed into short amounts of time. There is the prominence of high intensity interval training (hiit), fast cardio classes (Zumba, bootcamps, CrossFit) and yoga classes. Before arriving in Japan, I did everything ranging from dragon boat, Zumba, weight training, Bikram yoga, Moksha yoga and CrossFit. Being involved with a variety of fitness communities led me to believe and feel that I was living my best life. I felt I had complete control over my body with my abilities to run, lift and stretch.

Through the help of the prominent fitness community in Toronto, I found solace in becoming better physically and mentally with other people. Being constantly surrounded by people who were striving every day to better themselves causes you to act in the same way. *You are a product of your environment.* Fitness also gives you the feeling that you are regularly in motion in life; you are constantly trying to run a little faster, lift a little heavier, and stretch a little further. These mentalities spill onto other aspects of your life such as in relationships and your career. I believe that fitness has made me into a more empathetic, aspirational person.

This began to change when I arrived in Japan.

I initially tried joining gyms and yoga studios. However, the language barrier was frustrating; I didn't understand what the

instructors were trying to tell me. Fitness culture in Japan seems so different as it takes a more laid-back approach than what I was familiar with. The gyms and studios just didn't feel right and so I settled on working out by myself. I probably have done half of all the fitness videos on YouTube, and my neighbours probably hate me for doing CrossFit while listening to EDM in my tiny apartment.

I gave my best effort to work out every day, but what I didn't realize was how much I depended on my community for motivation. In Toronto, people expected me to show up at the gym or studio at a certain time of the day, and I did. Seeing other people working hard made me work hard too. With no one to watch or to keep me in check, my fitness took a hit and I quickly grew frustrated at how weak I was getting and how all the progress I made up to this point had begun depreciating.

I had to do something!

I needed to be proactive. If I couldn't find a community where I fit in, then I would have to create one around me. Thus "Morning Yoga with Ivy" was conceived. Although I'm not a certified yoga instructor, at that point I had practiced yoga for more than four years and could remember all the sequences and poses. In May, I started doing yoga in the park by myself. After a while, I would be joined by one other friend. It became a weekly ritual. I later decided to make a Facebook group in hopes that more people might join. And it worked! More people began to show up. Eventually, Japanese people who were curious about what we were doing started to join as well (even though they might not understand my instructions in English)!

With the beautiful Matsuyama

Castle Park as a backdrop, I now lead a sizable yoga class every Saturday morning. Most weeks, I can expect to see at least ten members. After our morning exercise, we eat lunch together. Looking around the lunch table and seeing all their smiling faces, I'm drawn to the realization that I have created the social group I was searching for! From "Morning Yoga with Ivy", I've been branded as the fitness girl and now people – whom I've never met before yoga – have asked me to workout with them or even teach a class.

Back in Toronto, I worked hard to build up my body and mind. I was the happiest I ever was. Each and every one of my fitness communities called me by my name when I walked through the door. I felt heard, seen and loved. In Japan, I tried working out alone, but I missed the sense of community that I experienced in Toronto. Now with "Morning Yoga with Ivy," I have a new fitness community around me; one that was not originally there, one that I helped create.

So the moral of the story is: if you can't find a community, create one around you and other things will follow! It might start slow, but remember that even two people are a community. If you would like to start something, just do it: have consistent meetings, and keep doing the things you love no matter what. If you can't find a way, make a way!

Ivy Pan is a second year JET from Toronto. She is currently the regional advisor for Chuyo, Ehime. In her spare time, she loves playing the violin, painting, and being active. You can find her yoga Facebook community [here](#).



ENTER THE GUNMA GAMES

Maja Thoenes (Gunma)

It's practically a billion degrees, and there is a storm on the horizon. Dragonflies dive in the wind. Dozens of empty two-liter bottles and bags of potato chips fill the pavilion. Plastic cones glow bright orange in the grass. Ten crisp, green cabbages await their fate. A few had come by bike, while others had driven over seventy kilometers for this day. It could be called an "ALT *undoukai*," or sports festival. It could also be called plain madness. We call it the *Gunma Games*.

An annual event held at the end of the summer, the Gunma Games aim to unite new and current JETs from around the prefecture in a full-out battle over the prized golden cabbage. A representation of Gunma's popular export, this respected and sought-after papier-mâché trophy is thought to capture the essence and power of Gunma, and is awarded to the team that collectively wins the most points throughout the day. The result is a day chock-full of team spirit, hilarious yet challenging mini games, sweating, and ALT bonding unlike any other. These bright-eyed civic servants are split up into their regional teams: Agatsuma/Tone, Chubu, Seibu, and Tobu. In the event that one team's numbers far outweigh another, players are occasionally recruited by other teams to even out the playing field. Boasting their previously decided team color through t-shirts, handkerchiefs, face paint, or giant banana costumes, team members and their regional representative huddle together to form chants, consider possible alliances, and decide on participants for each activity.

True to Japanese customs, the games open with *rajio taisou*, where the JETs all stand together and stretch to music. This event is particularly helpful to the first year JETs, who will soon participate in their own school's sports festivals, where they will find themselves

stretching alongside their coworkers and students. After, the players prepare themselves for the upcoming "Champion" events—games operating simultaneously around the field involving several players from each team.

These events challenge a wide range of physical and mental abilities, calling on the strong and long-armed contestants for the Cabbage Toss. The resident smarties duel one another in trivia, where knowledge of Gunma's mountains, history, sports, and mascots score points for their individual teams. On one side of the blacktop, players compete by jumping rope for as long as they can, while on the other side, JET newbies make giant paper cranes, "flying" them across the parking lot with plastic *sensu*, screaming and fanning for their lives. The ever-popular Cabbage Bowling always results in laughter as the uneven cabbage never quite rolls in the intended direction. Another refreshing favorite is the Sponge Game, where teams dip sponges into a water source and carry it back to their team bucket, trying to transfer and accumulate more water than the other regions. The Balloon Stomp requires players to tie a balloon to their ankle with a string, attacking by stomping their opponents' balloons while trying to preserve their own.

Perhaps the most anticipated and revered portion of the games is the last event in the lineup, Ultimate Cabbage. A mixture of basketball and Frisbee, this bracketed event uses a fresh cabbage instead of a ball or disk, and challenges the players' coordination, stratagem, stamina, and most importantly, team work. The participants do their best to advance the cabbage closer to their own goal while blocking their opponents' passes, hurling the cabbage through the air, and fighting to see through the arms of other tall players. Most players do not leave the field without an elbow to the gut or a cabbage to the face, but winning this event will put the team a large step in front of the others in score total.

After Ultimate Cabbage, all the points are added up and the winning team is announced. The team is bestowed with the golden cabbage and bragging rights until the following year's Gunma Games.

In addition, "Presidential Awards" are announced, acknowledging the most friendly/gracious team, the team that demonstrated the most team spirit, the most organized team, and the MVP of



the day. These recognitions encourage the teams to not only fight hard for their victory in the games, but reward the teams that remember the true reason for Gunma Games—uniting JETs throughout Gunma and fostering new friendships through good ole cabbage-y team work and competitiveness. Gunma Games is one of the first large-scale events that many of our new JETs experience, and as such, it is important in forming their impression of the Gunma JET community.

And it works. Open arms and smiles of the continuing JETs welcome the new members of the Gunma family, gifting them a team colored bandana and pulling them in to their team huddle. The Gunma ALTs' cheering is something else entirely. Every year, there are moving scenes in which players work desperately to win an event, the witnessing members jumping up and down and screaming on the sidelines so loudly you'd think there was much more than a spray-painted cabbage at stake. Furthermore, there is no shortage of good sportsmanship. During the Cabbage Bowling event, the audiences surrounded the arena in a crescent, clapping and rooting for each bowl, regardless of team affiliation. The same atmosphere followed the Balloon Stomp, where the collective "aww"s of the spectators at the disqualification of a player showed no favoritism. It didn't prevent the occasional victorious laugh of success, but it was shared by every team.

Regions don't stay separate, either—in the downtime between games and during snack breaks, JETs of all experiences lounge in the grass or under the gazebo, swapping stories and answering the questions of newcomers. Those conversations range from how to avoid depression in the winter to how to best deal with pesky summer insects and students. Continuing JETs jump on the

opportunity to promote their cities, sharing about the incredible nature and opportunities their region has to offer, and encouraging new JETs to visit. Friendships are cemented as LINE info is exchanged, and hiking trips, ski vacations, and "Smash Bros." tourneys are scheduled.

The field is cleaned up and the mutilated cabbages and giant bags of plastic bottles are hauled off. The once threatening rain clouds had turned to wispy blue skies somewhere along the day. JETs head to downtown Takasaki for a celebratory beer garden and perhaps a few rounds of karaoke later into the night. They scramble to catch the last train home, or pile into cars for the long drive back to their cities. They'll all be back next year, and they'll look forward to building new memories at the Gunma Games.



Maja Thoenes is a second year JET from Alabama. She is a published author, and enjoys hiking and bingeing Netflix. You can find her work on [Amazon](#).





The Ultimate Japan Experience

Sarah Campeau (Nara)



Tell a Japanese person you play Frisbee and they immediately get this confused look on their face. They worry they misunderstood you, or that they missed a joke. Because in Japan, Frisbee is mainly a toy used to entertain dogs when they lose interest in playing fetch with a ball.

Though Ultimate Frisbee is an American sport – first played by high school students in New Jersey in 1968 – it was introduced in Japan just one year later, and was then legitimized by the establishment of the Japan Flying Disk Athletic (JFA) in 1975. As with all hobbies in Japan, it quickly garnered a very strong, highly committed following. The slogan “no disc, no life” is proudly sported by many an Ultimate player in Japan, and I get the feeling they really mean it.

Nara prefecture has had a JET-led Ultimate Frisbee team since at least 2009. We have cycled through a few names and logos, but currently we are the Nara Buck Wild team, in honor of the infamous Nara deer. I've been a part of this legacy for the past two years now, since my first year as a JET. At that time, the team welcomed me with open arms, despite my lack of coordination and limited disk sports experience. Now, thanks to the guidance, and seemingly limitless patience of my teammates, I'd like to think I'm a valuable member of the team!

As it happens, Ultimate is quite an easy sport to pick up, but a tricky one to master. Once you learn the basic throws, forehand and backhand, and wrap your head around the game, you're good to go. Of course, the more you practice with your team, the better you get. From my experience, there are two types of teams in most Ultimate tournaments: serious teams and fun teams. Buck Wild is a fun team. But, given that Ultimate is still a budding sport in Japan, tournaments will often have both amateur and intermediate teams playing together.

Being a fun team means we are not in it to win it. We prefer to present ourselves as friendly, even slightly goofy. We actually have a highly original cheer we perform to celebrate the opposite team's MVP at

the end of each game! With a constantly rotating roster of diverse individuals who practice roughly once a week, we don't measure up to the university teams who practice daily and are all in peak physical condition. But that doesn't matter. Ultimate Frisbee is a pretty laid back sport; it's less about winning, and more about enjoying the sport.

Naturally, over the course of two years, I have grown close to my teammates. We see each other regularly at practice, grab dinner, drinks, or sometimes both afterwards, and of course bond during weekend tournaments. Despite the fact that our members have varying degrees of English and Japanese language ability, we all manage to communicate just fine. Our combination of current and past JETs, non-JET expats, and Japanese locals sometimes compels a player with proficiency in both languages to act as an unofficial translator, but even without a translator we do alright. I am always impressed by how little the language barrier actually inhibits understanding.

I expected to become friends with my teammates. What I didn't expect was to become friends with all the other Ultimate players we matched against at tournaments. From banter on the field to pick up games after the official ones end, camaraderie doesn't stop with your teammates, but extends to all players present! And then after the tournament ends it takes the form of joint practices, or teaming up for tournaments. It means going to an event anywhere in Japan and looking forward to seeing familiar and friendly faces, in addition to playing Frisbee.

Tournaments are absolutely the highlight of playing Ultimate in Japan. It's just an awesome experience every time! A typical tournament will start with a road trip to the location – often unique places you might not otherwise travel to like Ehime and Tottori. When you get to the venue you stake your claim on your team's lot of land for the day and dump all your stuff. Warm-up begins immediately; disks are flying all over the place. After a captains meeting the games begin. In tournaments, Buck Wild always goes in with one goal – don't be last place. Usually we achieve

that goal, sometimes we don't, and that's when we invoke our emergency secondary goal – get at least one point per game! After a full day of Ultimate everyone is exhausted, but satisfied. We usually make our way to an *onsen* and soak our aching bodies. The hot water revives us; it replenishes our energy for the evening's festivities. It is customary at tournaments to have a barbeque. Food and drink is consumed in copious amounts until the late hours of the evening. Sometimes there is music, sometimes there is bingo - it's a party! Not much sleep is had. But the next morning, everyone is up and ready to go for round 2 – the bracketed games. Some people are definitely more sluggish than the previous day, but every team turns up and commits to doing the best they can. After a second day of matches, it all comes down to two teams. The final game is a beauty to behold. Everyone watches. This game is of course followed by a closing ceremony for the top teams, and then it's time to pack up and return to the real world. But we don't go back empty-handed; we return with fond memories, new friendships, and an intense eagerness for the next tournament.

Wikipedia claims there are over 3,000 people who play Ultimate in Japan. Having been to a number of tournaments over the past few years, I think I can confidently say that I have interacted with roughly 10% of those players, and I have yet to meet an unpleasant one. I've heard from people who have played Ultimate in various countries that this sport attracts a certain kind of person – fun, energetic, kind-hearted. Considering the general goodwill of Japanese people, I should have known the Ultimate community in Japan would be next level.

So if you hear about any Ultimate events or know of a team near you, I urge you to check it out. One part exercise, one part socialization, one part language exchange, Ultimate in Japan is all that and more. It's as they say: “no disk, no life,” and ultimately, you need to ask yourself: “Are you ready for your life to start?”

Sarah Campeau is a third year ALT/PA from Toronto. She likes being active, loves playing board games, and never passes up a chance to travel someplace new. You can follow her adventures and travels in Japan on Instagram @five6eightthree.





Seeking volunteer translators and Japanese proofreaders!

翻訳・ネイティブチェックボランティア募集中!

The AJET translation team is currently looking for volunteers with advanced Japanese proficiency (N2 equivalent or better) to assist with EN to JP translation of AJET reports throughout the year. It's a great opportunity to get real experience translating professional-level documents for a reputable organization while helping out the greater JET community, and all translators will be credited in each report.

We are also seeking native Japanese speakers to revise Japanese-translated reports. English proficiency is not required, but volunteers may receive native English checks in exchange for their work if desired.

J E T 参加者の力になりたい方、ボランティアしてみませんか？日本語に訳された A J E T 報告書を修正できるボランティアのご協力をお願い申し上げます。日本語のネイティブチェックの代わりに英語チェックを貰うのも可能です！興味のある方、是非下記のメールアドレスにご連絡下さい。

For questions or to volunteer, please contact the AJET Translation and Interpreting Coordinator at: xy.teng@ajet.net

CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

CONNECT is a magazine for the community in Japan, by the community in Japan. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! If you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors. We'll work with you to make it the best it can be and share it with our audience of thousands. Not every article needs to be an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, travelogues, and more.

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

ARTICLES

Write about something you're doing. Write about something you love. Tell us a story.

SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about someone in your community who's doing something neat and noteworthy. Cooks, collectors, calligraphers — we want to hear about the inspiring people around you.

COMMENTS

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.

COMICS

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.



CONNECT WITH US

Interested in contributing to *CONNECT*? Want to stay up-to-date on interview opportunities, photo requests, and *CONNECT* announcements? Get involved with *CONNECT* by contacting our current *CONNECT* staff and reading about the possible positions [here](#).

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