

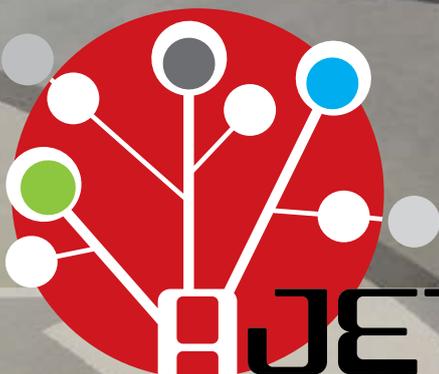
AJET

CONNECT

magazine

After JET Conference

2014



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF **CONNECT** MAGAZINE!

Here we are, halfway through the JET year, at the point of change. This is the time when all JETs make their decisions to stay or move on—and for those of you who are finishing your time in Japan, I want to say congratulations.

I greatly admire what you're doing. It's no easy decision to leave something comfortable for something new, but isn't that what brought us all here in the first place? I remember when I first came here, how what I wanted was a new challenge, a new place, and a new direction. I think JET has given us all these things and more, and these are the things I hope you find in your lives after leaving Japan. Wherever you're going, you'll be going there with that much more experience and knowledge. You never know what new skill, what new friendship, what new outlook you've gained here will propel you forward in the future. Nothing can ever take that away. Stay connected and keep moving forward, but don't forget your past here. You will become the guides for future JETs for years to come.

While I can't give you advice as good as Kay's, I can provide you with some resources to help you along your way. The Connect team and I have worked tirelessly for the past few weeks to put together this issue as a source of advice, comfort, and wisdom. From JETs only a few months into their alumni lives, to those 10 years down the road, we wanted to share their insight into what lies ahead (as well as something interesting to read as you sit at the conference). From minute details like shipping stuff home to deciding just where you're going to go next, there's bound to be something in these pages you can use (even if it's just the map of Yokohama).

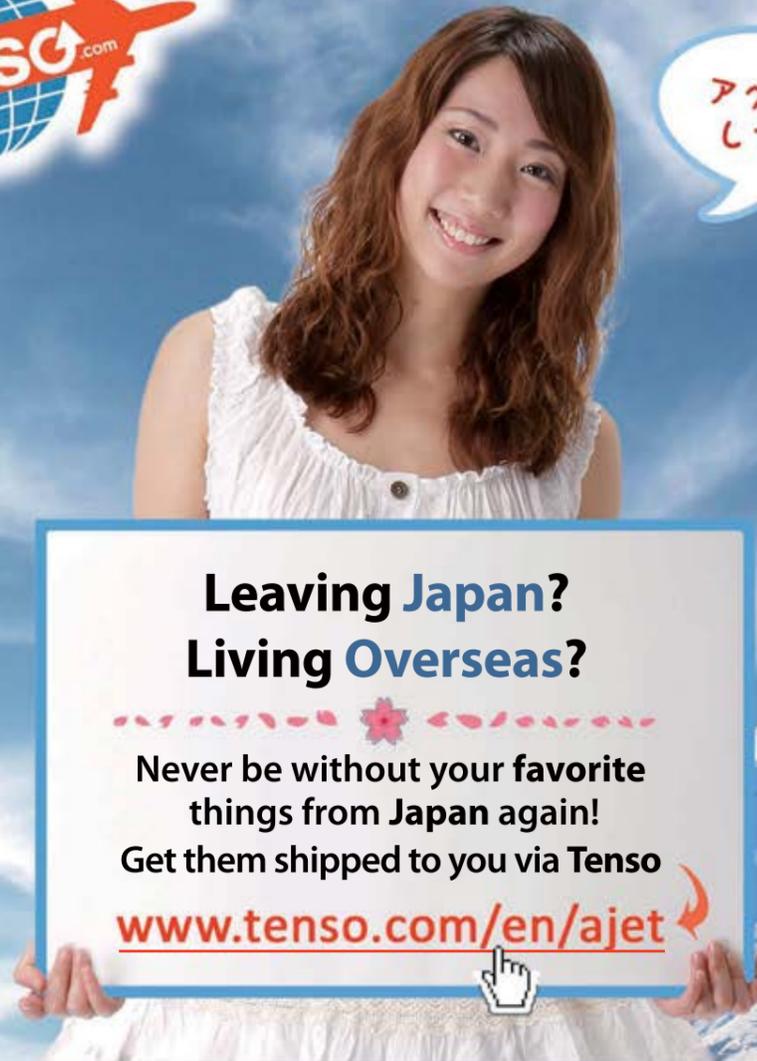
For those of you staying on JET another year, you also have my congratulations! We hope that you'll still enjoy reading about JET's best Japan memories, successful alumni in their careers, and

travel opportunities great for any time of your life. If someone close to you is leaving this year, do your best to enjoy your time together, and support them as they run around these next few months. Take a trip, help them pack, buy them dinner at their favorite place. Having friends all over the world is no small thing, so make this time count and keep in touch.

We hope you all enjoy reading this issue of Connect, and we hope that you'll keep reading throughout the year. We love hearing from you and reading about your lives and stories. I feel it keeps us all a little closer together as a community, connected by this great experience that is life in Japan. See you next month for the March issue! Same time, same place.

All my best,

Steven Thompson
3rd-year Fukushima ALT, Head Editor of Connect magazine



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FROM THE AJET CHAIR, KAY MAKISHI...



Dear Leaving JETs,

It's that time. When one chapter closes and another one begins. Actually, this letter applies to me, too, as I join the cohort of soon-to-be JET alumni.

I hope being a part of National AJET—your national JET community—has helped you during your time in Japan. Whether you attended block events, took advantage of TEFL discounts, called PSG, entered in photo/haiku contests, read or published in Connect, used the AJET smartphone app, participated in Professional Development Conference Calls or any of the other numerous free services National AJET offers JETs. The AJET National Council's purpose is to lead community building and we only hope we were able to serve and support you as best as possible.

Whether you spent one or five years on JET, and regardless how you feel about your time here, I just want to say that without a doubt, you have become a better version of yourself. Through experiences, you have become a little more enriched and a little less ignorant of the world. You and I are so lucky to have these opportunities that challenge us to grow as international citizens when so many in the world struggle to just find food and clean water. Experiences are investments in you as a person that no one can ever take away.

As you get ready to pack your bags and head for another adventure, I have three pieces of advice for you.

First, don't forget your feeling of being a foreigner. The good times AND the bad. Use your experiences of being on the outside to empathize with whomever you meet in the future.

Second, contact your JETAA chapter. Once you're in the JET family, you'll always be in the JET family. These networks will

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support you professionally and personally in your future, if you let them. If there isn't a JETAA chapter where you will be, start one!

Finally, remember the Japanese concept of ongaeshi, a repayment of kindness. Don't forget to pass on the kindness that people have showed you while in Japan. With knowledge and experience comes responsibility. It'll be our responsibility as alumni to contribute back someday, somehow.

Wherever you may go next, I only wish that you have the courage to follow your path and to embrace every experience. I'm so thankful to have been part of this JET adventure with you. Who knows? Maybe our paths will cross again someday! Until then, laugh, love, live and be happy.

Yours in JET community service,

Kay Makishi
Chair, AJET National Council
3rd-year Fukuoka CIR

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This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online at <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect>. Read Connect online and follow us at <http://issuu.com/lajetconnect>.



MEMORIES OF JET

DEPARTING JETS REFLECT ON THEIR BEST MEMORIES OF THEIR TIME ON JET

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Aside from all the resources you'll be receiving, workshops you'll be attending, and networking you'll be doing this weekend, we also wanted to present a more personal side of things. We asked you, the JET Graduating Class of 2014, about your time in Japan and what you remember best.

First off, please tell us who you are, where you're placed, and how long you've been there!

- ◆ Matthew Thomas, Matsuyama, Ehime, 4 years
- ◆ Max Holtz, Kawamata-machi, Fukushima-ken (2013-2014)
- ◆ Penelope Fox, Shiroishi, Saga (2012-2014). Before that I was placed in Taku, Saga (2009-2012)
I was lucky enough to be granted an in-prefecture transfer when my previous BOE ran out of money and cancelled my JET position in favour of a private ALT.
- ◆ Sophie Patterson, Izumigaoka High School and Junior High, Miyakonojo, I am only staying for a year in Japan!
- ◆ Allison Morris, Wakayama-ken, 3 Years
- ◆ I'm Sarah Stout. I'm a 5th-year ALT in Yamanashi.

What were your reasons for choosing to finish your time on the JET Program?

- ◆ It's been a fantastic four years and I've loved every minute of it. I want to have more control over classes instead of being an assistant. It's time to move on to something else!
- ◆ I was fresh out of college going into JET, so JET's structure was the perfect way to ease into the working world. Now, I feel ready to tackle a more challenging endeavor. I'm eager to begin a career back home. I love my town, but the mentality is that the ALT is a true assistant. I don't plan lessons, don't lead lessons, and don't grade assignments. It's a cushy lifestyle, but it can be boring at times. I want to sink my teeth into a job that will be more rewarding and productive.
- ◆ Well being a 5th year you might think I had little choice, but actually I declined a direct contract with my current BOE because I feel like I have come to the end of my journey, especially in terms of my work as an ALT. I still enjoy my job, but probably not quite as much as I did previously, and I wanted to go out on a high and still making a positive contribution, rather than waiting until I was not enjoying things; I think this would impact negatively on my work and ultimately the students, which is not fair. Oh, and I want to head home to find a partner and have some kids.
- ◆ I came to Japan with the intention of only staying a year (although I was often very tempted to stay longer). I have a long-term boyfriend working back in the UK and we just don't want to be apart for longer than a year. I always wanted to try teaching, to live in a foreign country and travel after graduation. But, as much as I love the job and the place, it's not something I ever planned to do in the longer term.
- ◆ As cliché as it sounds, it just felt like it was "time" to move on. Also, coming to the realization that I ultimately don't want to teach full-time when I return home, and that it was time for me to focus more on my career post-JET.
- ◆ I reached the maximum time on the JET Programme and I felt that after having gained the experience through being ALT, a member of the YETI (Yamanashi English Teachers International) council and a member of the National AJET Council that it was now time to move on to greener pastures.

What's next for you after JET? Do you have a job lined up or big travel plans?

- ◆ The job-hunting has already started, but I'm going to do a bit of traveling before!
- ◆ Nothing as of yet, but I'm in the process of figuring that out.
- ◆ I think I will head home... maybe to teach Japanese at school, or otherwise go back to my previous field of Human Resources.
- ◆ I will return home and search for a job in London. In the

future, though, I hope to work all over the world, and perhaps to study for a Master's in Europe. And I'll definitely be back to Japan over the course of my life.

- ◆ I will be preparing for graduate school.
- ◆ At first, I would like to travel around more in my home country, the US. I have never been to California or New York. I traveled to many different cities in Southeast and East Asia and yet I haven't been a tourist in my own country that often. Then, I would like to work in a company preferably using Japanese or having some relation to Japan. I am on always on the watch for new job opportunities and hope that I can land that perfect one. If you know of a great opportunity, please let me (and the rest of the community) know!

What's your favorite memory of your time on JET? Worst? Most embarrassing? Share a good JET story with us!

- ◆ My funniest memory on JET was going to a restaurant by myself in first year with zero Japanese! I ended up ordering the children's menu by mistake! I couldn't complain about it, after all it's what I had ordered, so I sat down to eat it. When I finished, I got up to pay and the waiter said to me 日本語上手ですね. To this day, I still don't know whether that was politeness or sarcasm.
- ◆ My favorite memory would be bungee-jumping in Gunma prefecture back in September. That was a wild experience, and something that I think I was able to do because of the adventurous mindset that JET puts you in. I didn't die, which was a plus.
- ◆ On the very first night I arrived in my town, I figured I better go and try to find something to eat close by... I wandered around and came upon a street with multiple venues with lit signs outside. Since I couldn't read any of the kanji, I settled for a place where I could see in the window slightly. It turned out to be a fantastic little izakaya, with a super-friendly master and mamasan, who made me feel immediately welcome (and this became my favourite place in town to eat and I went there many times in the subsequent years). There was another customer sitting next to me at the counter, who asks whether I eat sashimi, to which I replied that I did indeed like it. He says something to the master, has a little chuckle, and tells me that he will get me something as a welcome present. Within minutes this amazing-looking sashimi had arrived in front of me, with the fish head, backbone and tail displayed in a curved way to look a bit like a boat (a local specialty, I was to learn later). As I began to eat the sashimi, I noticed some movement out of the corner of my eye and realised that the fish was still moving! The master had caught the *aji* from the tank in his kitchen, scaled it, cleaned it and sliced it up within minutes and it was still not fully dead by the time it reached me on the plate. I did my best to feign ignorance and continued

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eating (it was delicious and fresh after all!), but I realised that he had specifically intended to shock me as the new foreigner in town. I will never forget this experience; it was an incredible way to begin my time on JET.

◆ I've had many mishaps thanks to my lack of Japanese-reading ability. At school, I mistook my Vice Principal's in-tray for my own and proceeded to throw out all his memos and papers for a whole semester! In my local mall, I left my belongings in what I thought was a locker but turned out to be a mini-fridge designed for shoppers' groceries... A lot of my best memories involved going out of my comfort zone: for example performing a skit in Japanese at my school's *bonenkai*, dancing to AKB48 in front of 900 students at a cultural festival, and walking around Miyazaki dressed as Santa and giving out candy! There are too many wonderful times to count—playing *taiko* every week in the middle of a forest shrine, drinking *shochu* at 1am on some rocks on the beach, swimming with tropical fish on an island, dancing to 70s disco with new Japanese friends on Halloween.

◆ After three years, there's just too many! I would say that recently, one of my favorite memories would have to be a Halloween party I organized for my smallest mountain school (10 students total). They range from first to fifth grade, and for the younger students this was their first real Halloween experience. While the kids had fun playing Halloween games and turning each other into toilet paper mummies, the favorite activity of the day was making homemade pudding cups. Most of the students turned their pudding into the most gruesome colors of brown, red and green, and I've never seen a child so gleefully separate out their favorite colors from sprinkles. The best part for me was watching their reactions when it came time to actually eat their creations. Priceless.

◆ My favorite memories have always been ones involving my students. I worked with my city's community relationship section to improve our sister's city relationship with a small town in Kentucky for the past two years. I give seminars for students who will go to that town for a short homestay and cultural exchange. Some of my own junior high students went. We spent hours together practicing basic English conversation at the seminars and also between classes. I was really worried about them because their English level was not very high at the time. When they got back from KY, they didn't tell me much about their experiences,

so I was thinking the worst had happened—they weren't able to communicate. However, later on in the year, KY dignitaries visited our city. At that time, the Japanese students as well as the ALTs attended a party. I was shocked (in the best way possible) to listen to my students having really fluent conversations with the dignitaries and other ALTs. I will never forget hearing them talk about their day totally in English and their rapid-fire responses to people's questions.

How do you plan to spend the rest of your time in Japan before going home?

◆ I want to make sure my students graduate properly! Then I'll get my affairs in order, say my goodbyes, prepare for my successor and explore Japan one more time!

◆ I have a lot of plans to see the rest of the country, and I am constantly trying to improve my Japanese. Really, I'll mostly be continuing my personal journey of self-discovery and self-improvement, which is made possible by an abundance of free time and solitude.

◆ I'm working hard to stay engaged and motivated at work; I don't want to be one of those ALTs who 'checks out' early after they have made the decision to leave. I also have a bucket list of things to see/do/achieve. Specifically, hike Yakushima one last time (spring break), finally get to Shikoku (Golden Week), hike Fuji (summer) and a host of other smaller items. And since I live in a really socially active prefecture (Saga) and block, no doubt there will be plenty of parties to take up any spare time. On a personal level, I want to make sure that I savour all those 'lasts'—be aware of the last time I will do/see various things, and be thankful for the opportunity and really make the most of it.

◆ I want to cement the friendships I've made here to last into the future. I want to leave my students with positive associations and motivations for learning English, and to challenge them to use it to think critically. There's a long list of places I still want to see, like Beppu, Nagasaki, and Yakushima. I also want to continue blogging and writing for AJET and local publications. My last challenge of Japan is the intimidating Fuji-san!

◆ Making as many memories as possible.

◆ I plan to go out with a bang, of course! I will be working tirelessly as the AJET National Council's Block 4 representative and Director of Professional and Education Development. I'll also be hosting my first visitors to Japan from the US—four friends from my hometown in March. Then, after my tenure the visit ends, I'll be busy packing and supporting my successor and other ALTs around me.

What do you think you'll miss the most once you leave?

◆ My students!!!

◆ I'll miss the charms of living in a small town in the mountains, the vast amount of adventure that is made possible by living in Japan, Japanese comfort food, and much more. It's definitely possible that I'll look back a year from now and miss all the freedom I have. Also, although it can be a pain, it's also fun to constantly be exercising your brain by communicating in Japanese.

◆ In no particular order: *kaiten* sushi, the JET community in Saga, my Japanese friends, my huge organic vegetable patch, having neighbours drop around with random (food) presents and seeing the smiles and surprise on their faces when you reciprocate later, the screams of adoring ES kids yelling 'Penny-senseeeeeei' wherever I go, and their squeals of delight when I give them a big wave, speaking Japanese.

◆ I actually have a running list of things I'm going to miss, which I look at if I'm starting to get homesick. It includes the unfailing politeness and generosity of the general public here in Miyazaki. It includes *conbini*, amazing 100 yen shops, onsen, the concept of *betsu betsu*, *kotatsu*, tomato ramen, solving everything with *jan-ken*, people's sense of fashion and style, and heated toilet seats. I'm going to miss the lack of cynicism and irony in interactions here, and the set phrases and greetings that oil the machinery of everyday kindness and respect.

◆ I will absolutely miss my community and my students. I would be lying if I said this job didn't have its challenges; there have been plenty of days over the past three years that have made me really think: "Oh my goodness, what am I doing here?" But

everyone has their "days," including my students; and the days when my students were excited and ready to learn far outweigh the "bad days," and that's what I want to remember most about my JET experience.

◆ I'll miss my students the most. I think that may be an obvious answer. I don't even know how I will manage to ruin all goodbyes by being a blubbery, crying mess. I have been so lucky to be able to teach mostly the same students from elementary school and junior high school. I watched them grow up, their personalities change and I've gotten to know their families over the years.



ALUMNI ADVICE

When we spoke to JETs departing Japan this year, one of their most requested features for this issue (aside from professional resources) was to hear from alumni who have gone through the process of finishing JET and returning home. We asked alumni all around the world about their experiences, and share some of them with you here. We received so many kind and wise words, we wish we could print them all!

Please tell us your name, where you were placed and when!

- Tesia Smith, Aomori City, Aomori Prefecture (2008-2013)
- Lauren Stockhausen - Fukui (2006-2009)
- Carsten Braun, Miyazaki-ken, Mimata-cho (1998-1999)
- Chelsea Kelley, Imari-shi, Saga-ken (2002-2005)
- Marianne Nieman, Saga-ken, (2004-2007)
- Thomas Lee, Nishiarita-cho, Saga-ken (2002-2005)
- Emma Bedlington, Ehime (2002-2005)
- Holger Mueller, Kumamoto (1995-1998)
- Björn-Ole Kamm, Ichinomiya, Aichi (2008-2009)

In your time since JET, how has your career path developed? Please briefly detail the direction you took post-JET and where you are now job-wise.

- While on JET, I started a distance learning masters program. As part of this I needed an internship. Upon arrival back in the states I completed my internship and still do some work off and on for them. I am focusing on my studies and plan to look for a full time job after graduation in May.
- 10 years in Japanese companies in the automotive industry were my biggest success (and pain in the back).
- My first job after JET was working for Pfizer in pharmaceutical sales for three years. Because of my time in Japan, I was selected to go to Paris as a translator during an international pharmaceutical convention.
- I am now a public school teacher in Hawaii. I pursued an advanced degree in education through the Teach for America program, and have completed two additional degrees since that time.
- 2005: returned to Ottawa, Canada. 2005-2007: 3 contract jobs with Government of Canada in chosen field (Geomatics, Geography), but unable to find full-time work. Also worked for JET Selection Committee. Decided I wanted to work in the field of corporate sustainability. 2008-2010: MBA at Simon Fraser University. 2010-2013: Sustainability Consultant at Stratos Inc. Presently, Senior Sustainability Consultant at Stratos Inc. If any JETs are interested in a career in sustainability, I'd be happy to speak with them. ebedlington@stratos-sts.com.
- With the experience in a foreign country, I was able to join an international operating company.
- I became a doctoral candidate in Japanese Studies and am now employed as an assistant professor in Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University, Germany.

What skills do you think you most developed on JET? Which would you (or did you) emphasize most on your CV?

- I am looking for jobs in tourism and I think my travels around Southeast Asia were very helpful. As JETs we learned to adapt to many different cultural situations, communication styles, and learn to be adaptable in any situation. These are very important in any work atmosphere. Also, as we know, many JETs have a lot of free time. If you were able to develop yourself or become creative during this time you can show that you are ambitious and strive for improvement.
- Reading, speaking and dreaming Japanese—so I finally managed to get out of the European culture's gravity zone at last!
- Independence, adaptability, coachability. The ability to work in diverse environments, ability to adopt culture different than my own. Before working for Pfizer, I had ZERO sales experience. When I sent a follow-up/thank you letter to the manager who interviewed me, I enclosed a Japan-English dictionary. I still remember it had the picture of a little girl in a kimono on the front of it. I thanked her for the interview and asked that she accept this dictionary as a reminder that "Just as I learned the language of Japan, I will learn the language of Pfizer."
- I was a Prefectural Advisor my last two years on JET. In that role I facilitated and planned workshops for JETS as well as Japanese teachers of English. I also highlight the fact that I worked in a high performing public school system which gives me the opportunity to compare and contrast with the US and local systems on which my work now focuses. I think I definitely developed management and leadership skills while on JET.
- Aside from the obvious teaching experience, I emphasized the programs and initiatives I was involved in during my time in Japan, including setting up cultural events (Halloween festivals and such). I talked about my experience adapting to new cultures and new settings as a strength, because it allowed me to figure out how to be effective in a new job and new environment.

■ As a German in Japan, I had a lot of practice in English speaking and international relations. Now I am working at an international company, where most meetings are held in English.

■ My presentational skills, including elaborate PowerPoint presentations (because I did up to three presentations a week during JET). I usually emphasize the following skills: event management, presentations, lectures, translation, and interpreting. I organized and taught two courses in higher education during my time on JET and so also point to these teaching experiences in job interviews.

Looking back to your own time on JET, did you experience any reverse culture shock upon returning home? How did it manifest itself?

- Work life in America is so different. People arrive whenever they want and leave whenever they want. On my first official day of my internship, I arrived and no one was in the office. Also, leaving for lunch and coffee breaks or going home early is acceptable and it was hard for me to just leave! Work relationships are much more open, friendly, and I've never got used to playing music in the office or joking around with the head boss!! Also, I was used to living alone, so coming home and living with my parents for a while was a change.
- My reverse culture shock was BAD... It lasted for about five months. I hated everything about the U.S. when I first returned, and felt that no one understood me. It really took a long time for me to be comfortable back at home.
- After returning, I spent three months with my parents, having moved back in again after five years. That was the biggest shock—to see that they believe I had not changed at all.
- There's no way around it. You'll never be the same. You'll find solace in helping other hopeful JETs survive their interviews and reach their dream, but you will never be the same. Traveling abroad once a year helps. Reuniting with former JET friends also helps, but I'll secretly always dream of being an ex-pat again!



■ I had a really hard time coming back. I got depressed and homesick for my life in Japan. My friends and family in the US didn't understand my experience, and though they were interested just didn't get it. I was isolated from other JETs for a bit until I moved to NYC for grad school, where I immediately started attending JETAANY events and still do. That really helped with the reverse culture shock.

■ No.

Considering the above, what would be your advice to current JETs for overcoming any impending culture shock?

■ Try to keep in touch with Japanese friends so Japan doesn't seem completely gone. LINE, Facebook and good ol' snail mail have been really great. Go through old pictures, listen to Japanese music, but then remember what parts about JET you were finished with and why you decided not to recontract. I miss Japan, but then I remember I don't miss my work in the end. Think about the good things you like about being home, too (friends close by, understanding everything, college basketball on TV, variety of international foods, cheese).

■ Make long and short term goals for what you want to accomplish when you move back. Before leaving Japan, have your resume done and start your job/school hunt early. Try to network the best you can while being abroad—the more you reach out, the more you'll catch! Also, be patient with yourself and with your family.

■ In my case, the reverse culture shock had a far stronger impact than the culture shock upon my arrival in Japan. So keep in mind that this might also be a problem. You need time and friends to get over it. It won't kill you!

■ Plan ahead. Start now. Have a lot of activities planned so you don't have too much time to live in the past when you return. Get on with the rest of your life.

■ Stay connected with JET friends and seek out ways to connect with other JET alumni in your area. Understand that not everyone will relate to your experience or want to hear about it all the time. It might feel like your whole time in Japan was a time warp and you're coming back to the same old thing. It takes awhile to start to feel normal again but it'll happen and having contact with others going through it definitely helps. Visit Japan if you can; I've been back twice and that was great, not only because I love it, but also it made me realize that my era there is over and new people have come in. That closure was helpful too.

■ If you're thinking about changing to a different career (i.e. not teaching, not JET related or not related to your undergraduate degree), seriously think about going back to school. This is a great way to re-brand yourself and an opportunity to make professional connections/networks in a new industry. My post-JET MBA was critical to my career switch. It is much easier to reach out for an informational interview as a student, rather than someone unemployed. (i.e. "Dear XX, I'm an MBA Candidate at XX University interested in Marketing.").

■ Be open-minded.

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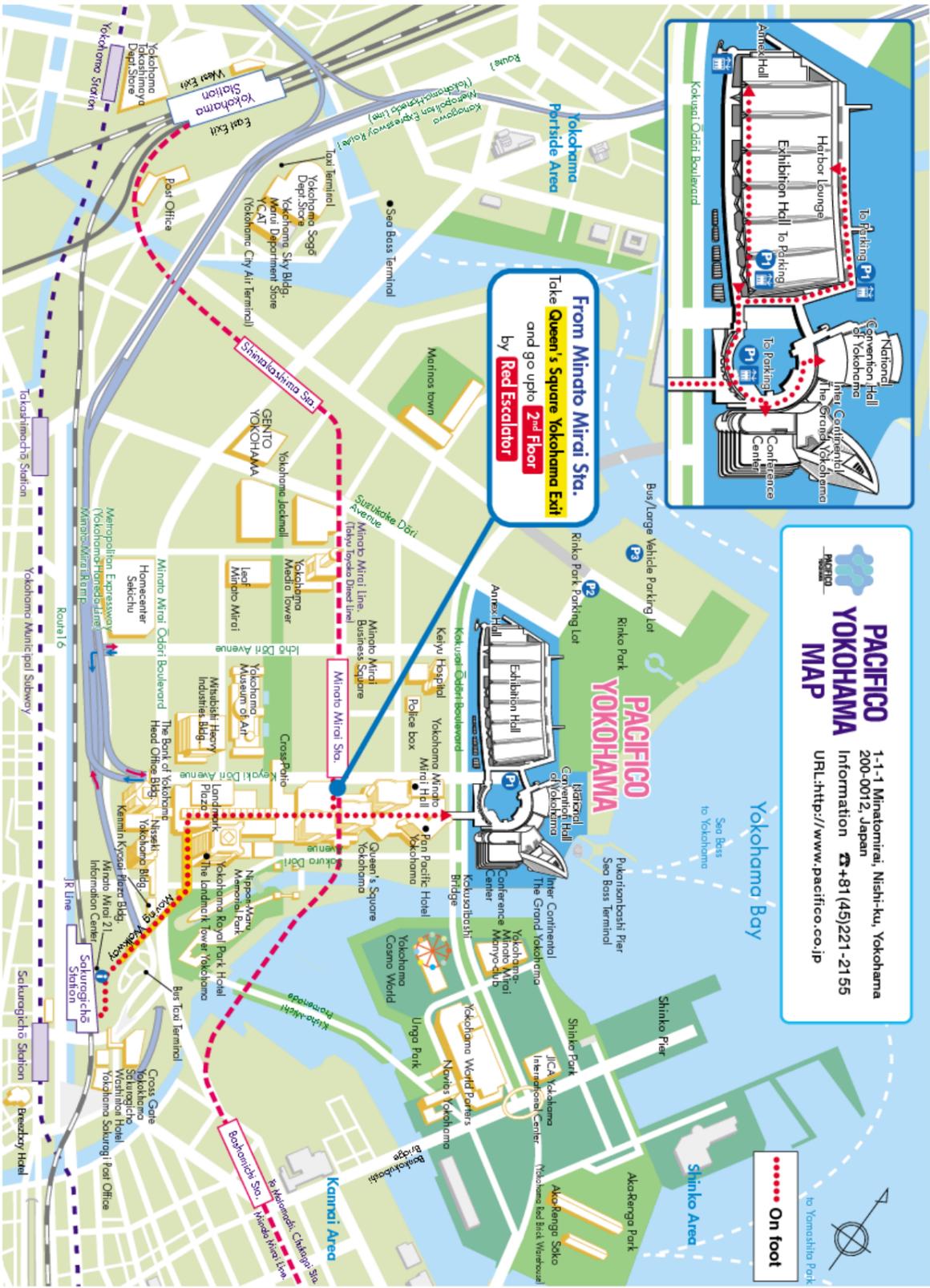
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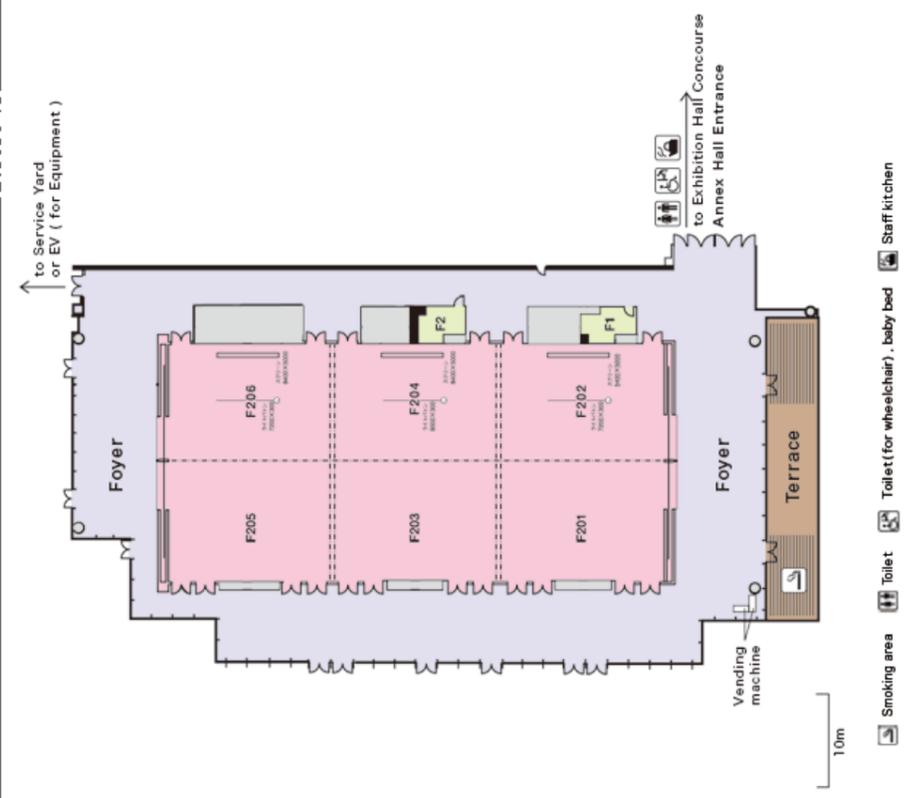
Yokohama Area Map

Pacifico Yokohama Convention Center

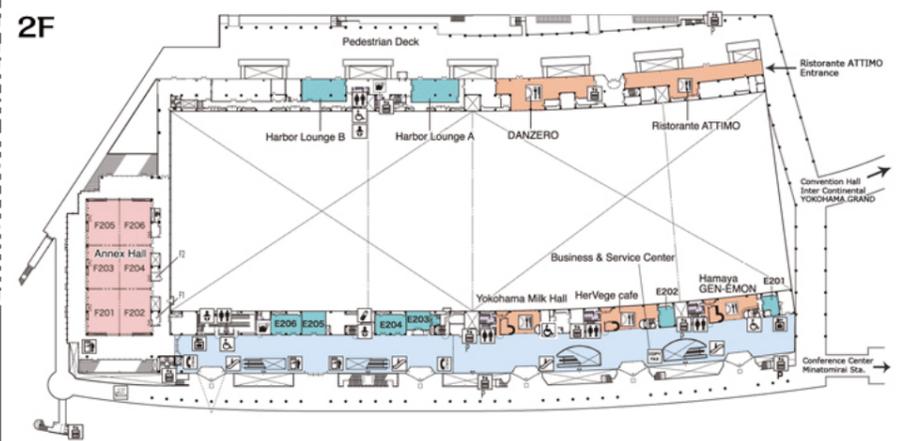
The 2014 After JET Conference will be held on the second floor of Pacifico Yokohama in the Annex Hall.

ANNEX

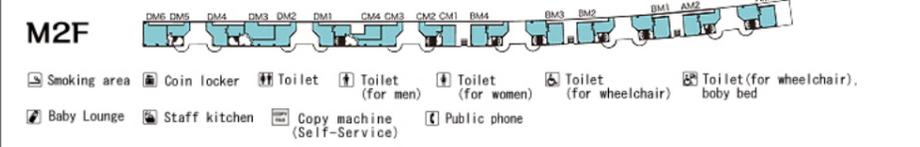
EXHIBITION HALL 2F



2F



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EXHIBITION HALL 1F



☑ Smoking area ☑ Coin locker ☑ Toilet ☑ Toilet (for men) ☑ Toilet (for women) ☑ Toilet (for wheelchair) ☑ Toilet (for wheelchair), baby bed
 ☑ Staff kitchen ☑ Elevator ☑ Baby bed ☑ First Aid room ☑ AED ☑ ATM ☑ Public phone

YOKOHAMA FOOD & FUN GUIDE

Lineng Tee, Yamanashi

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR
YOKOHAMA WEEKEND

Whether it's your first or fifth time visiting Yokohama, you'll find the city to be pleasant and charming. The skyscrapers certainly make for a nice change if you've been living in a rural part of Japan. Downtown Yokohama is full of life, without the tourist throng of Shinjuku and Ueno or the massive crowds of shoppers in Shibuya and Ikebukuro. To make the most of your weekend catching with friends or getting reacquainted with city life, we've put together a quick guide of places to see and things to do. Have fun, and all the best for your life after JET!



The Cup Noodle Museum



Chinatown

What's Nearby

The Pacifico Yokohama is just next to Minato Mirai 21, an outdoor urban space right by the sea, perfect for a lunch-time stroll or night-time gallivanting. Those looking for a bit of culture could pop into the **Yokohama Museum of Art**, an impressive building that focuses on contemporary art.

Grab a bite at **Yokohama World Porters**, a multi-use complex where you can pick up some fashion accessories or hit up the AEON cinema. Only 10 minutes away on foot, there are options galore on the first and fifth floors whether you are craving Mexican, Italian, Indonesian or McDonald's.

Keep walking for another 5 minutes and you'll arrive at **Aka Rengo Sogo (Red Brick Warehouse)**, a lovely place with shops selling artisanal handicrafts and a great view of the bay. Make sure you budget for enough time here, as the bright, airy restaurants and cafes often see a long wait.

Finally, cup noodle junkies should consider visiting the **Cup Noodles Museum**, a convenient ten minute walk from Minato Mirai and Sakuragicho stations. The interactive exhibits drive home the point that Momofuku Ando's brainchild is now so ubiquitous that it's slurped up by millions of busy folk around the world.

Further afield:

A ten minute walk from **Shin-Yokohama station**, the **Raumen Museum** offers a selection of pretty satisfying options. All four types of soup bases—miso, shio, shoyu and tonkotsu—are represented, but what's most charming is the 1950s décor, complete with a realistic and nostalgic rendering of an old-school shops, vintage streets and hand-painted movie posters.

Purists may gripe that the nosh on offer has been tweaked to suit Japanese tastes, but Yokohama Chukagai (**Yokohama Chinatown**) remains an interesting place to spend a couple of hours. You'll be spoiled for choice, with *manju* (steamed buns) to go and rows of restaurants serving *ramen* or course meals snaking round the block. Soak up the atmosphere along the busy, narrow streets, take pictures of the numerous colourful, elaborate Chinese-style gates and pick up a few kitschy souvenirs. I also recommend joining other visitors taking a break at **Yamashita Park**, a popular but serene area that connects Chinatown and Minato Mirai.

Getting to Chinatown from Pacifico Yokohama will be 35 minutes on foot, or from Minato Mirai Station, take the Minatomirai Line to Nihonodori Station or Motomachi Chukagai Station. The train ride will take 4-6 minutes and the stroll to Chinatown 8-10 minutes.



Red Brick Warehouse



WRITING A SUCCESSFUL POST-JET RESUME

Matthew Jones, Nagasaki

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Nothing strikes fear into the hearts of recent graduates like the prospective of writing a résumé. Yet they are often shoddy and boring, two things which are guaranteed to lose you that dream job just waiting for you. Get ready for some harsh truths about five major mistakes people make on a résumé which will consign them into the dreaded 'maybe' pile. Or worse, the trash...

1. Your résumé isn't a memoir.

This is supposed to point out your highlights, nothing more. It's not that the hiring personnel won't care about you, they just don't care about you right now. When they cut the stack of résumés from 100 to 10, they'll call you in to talk. You'll have plenty of time and to talk yourself up and impress them with how well-rounded you are once you're in the office. If you try to do it too soon, it will tell them one of two things: you have no clue what to say on your résumé, and you might be a self-centered jerk.

How to highlight JET: Easy. The JET Programme will stand out no matter how much you dumb it down. They will, without doubt, ask you to explain just what JET is, and what you did. Wait until they ask about it before telling the tale of how you ventured to a foreign land, learned the language and immersed yourself in the society.

Final word: It's not Facebook or Twitter. Don't dump your life on them until asked.

2. Objectives are Subjective!

Ask an interviewer if they care about objectives. Go on, I'll wait... Couldn't find one? That's because they don't. They have no place on a résumé, and if they appear in a cover letter, they had better be good. Look at these for (a bad) example:

"To gain experience and knowledge in a field I am interested in pursuing for a career."

"To obtain gainful employment that allows me to utilize and strengthen skills that are vital to the field."

They reveal nothing about you, your hopes, your fears, or your dreams. If you're applying for a professional job, you've just announced that you can't write or express yourself in a serious way.

How to highlight JET: You wanted to grow, you wanted to learn, you wanted to develop skills.

Past tense. In your cover letter, tell them how these last few years have benefited you. Your objectives are completed, you've grown, you've matured, you've learned. You're not expecting the company to help you out, you are ready to start helping them out.

Final word: A good objective won't open the company doors for you, but a bad one can close them in your face. So leave

the vague objectives and statements of purpose to the high-schoolers, you're a fully grown adult.

3. Your education doesn't come first

In any field, experience trumps education. Ask any interviewer which is more important: relevant applicable experience or a 4.0 GPA. Even if you have both, list your experience first. The best way I can explain this is that when you email your résumé to hiring personnel, it will clog their inboxes along with literally hundreds of other hopefuls. You're not the only person who found themselves on the Dean's List.

Don't believe me? Check out this page of 3rd-year Journalism student résumés from Berkeley University. Click one at random, check the other years, check other courses! Every one of them leads off with "Education: Berkeley." It's hard to dazzle anybody that way. They'll get to your education eventually, but your experience is far more important.

How to highlight JET: You lived in Japan, a (very) foreign country, for several years! You are already different, stand out even more by putting education after your relevant experience. Want to be a teacher? Excellent. Want to be a journalist? Write for Connect or a local magazine. Want to work in business? You have knowledge of Japanese language and culture! Highlight the experiences you earned during your time here as applicable to the position applied for. The possibilities are endless, and the reader will remember you as 'that guy/girl in Japan', which is a whole lot better than 'faceless college graduate no.1234'.

Final word: You're supposed to have an education. It's expected that if you are applying for a professional job, you will have gone to college. Nobody will be impressed by something that is expected of you.

4. Your references can impress without saying a word

Nothing sows suspicion quite like the words, "References available upon request." Here's a point to consider though: employers are going to wait before contacting references. They are busy people, and it's a waste of their time to ask someone else about you until they ask you about you.

How to highlight JET: Japanese people are usually quite effusive in their praise, which is good for you, so speak to your principal, supervisor, JTEs or CIRs. Listing a reference from Japan is another way of saying that you have been out in the world, that you weren't just a fly on the wall, that you made an impact.

Final word: If you've ever impressed some professionals, listing

them as a reference is a not-to-obvious way to say you're worthy of an interview.

5. Little errors add up

None of these will cost you a job, but a few of them might, so don't:

✘ Brag about university. University was a long time ago for these people, they don't care about it.

✘ Use a lame font. No font says 'I don't care' more than Times New Roman. Don't get me wrong, it's a nice font, but it's the default, the vanilla, the bland. Consider a nice alternative like Calabri or Garamond.

✘ Go into detail about retail. So, your résumé is lacking under 'experience'. Time to add all those retail jobs, right?... half-right. Retail work is just fine, but list only as many retail jobs as are relevant. If you have worked in two relevant positions, only mention two retail jobs, even if you've had more. Also, choose the longest ones over the most recent, they show that you can stick with something.

✘ Lie about retail. An employer is going to read 'managed public relations and consumer satisfaction at a mobile Mexican restaurant' as 'worked in a taco truck'. Don't insult them by trying to dress something up, you won't fool them, you just make yourself look bad.

✘ Go long. Your résumé should be one page, full stop. You haven't lived long enough to be that interesting.

✘ Use clichés: 'hard working, results driven, loyal, dependable'... These words are so overused, they've become meaningless and eyes will just pass over them. You want your résumé to be short, sharp, and above all, unique. Also off the table are 'expert' or 'quick learner'. You're not an expert, otherwise you wouldn't be applying for a job, you would already have one. And quick learner? That just screams 'I don't know what I'm doing, but after I make a few mistakes at your company, I'll figure it out.'

Final word: Don't listen to me, either. Act like the professional you want to be, and talk to people in your chosen field. There's only so much generic advice that will apply to you, but these tips should at least keep your carefully typed CV out of the dust bin. Above all, do your research, study successful résumés, learn from the best.



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MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR NETWORK

Lana Kitcher, Yamanashi (2010-2012)

This article was originally posted on JETwit.com as part 3 of an ongoing series of alumni advice articles by Ms. Kitcher called "Kitcher's Cafe." This series, and other great articles, can be found on the JETwit website.

I was recently given the opportunity to speak at the JETAANY Career Forum in New York City about how to successfully land a job in today's economy. We learned that it is important to keep strategies current as technology continues to change and as the methods of yesterday are not necessarily effective for our search today.

I would like to share with you some of the points from my presentation called "Making the Most of Your Network," since some of you are also going through this transition now. When I first returned home from the JET Program, I had a really difficult time figuring out how to start the job search. At that point my only full-time job had been teaching English in Japan, and I didn't know how to start looking for a new job from scratch. It took me until mid-February to get a job, and I really wish someone had told me what I needed to hear earlier.

I thought I was supposed to be applying to job posts and boards online, giving out my resume, and collecting business cards and LinkedIn contacts. After several weeks of searching and no hits (nope, not one interview), I was starting to feel desperate and under-qualified. I kept hearing from people that they had found their jobs on craigslist, or had applied online and gotten an interview. But this method clearly wasn't working for me, and I needed to change my strategy.

From that point I started doing extensive research, reading books and talking with people. Someone once told me that if I wanted to meet someone, I should invite them to lunch and offer to pay for the meal. (Ever seen an episode of MadMen?) I tried this advice, and started talking to people that I could learn from. It was through these connections that I was actually able to start building a real network, finally turning my hopeless job search into a successful one.

When it comes down to it, people are doing the hiring. Having a good resume is important, but submitting it blindly to hundreds of job postings doesn't mean that anyone will ever actually read it. Why not meet people who can get to know you? Maybe they will know someone who is hiring and they can recommend you. Maybe they are actually hiring themselves and decide through your pleasant interaction that you would be a good fit for their company. Companies want to hire people they know and trust. Maybe your meeting will lead nowhere (now), but if nothing else it could be a great conversation, or practice for when it will count.

At the presentation, I passed around these resources for participants to use. Please feel free to view or download them online if you feel they can be helpful to you. [Editors note: This issue of Connect will be available online as well, if you would like to access these documents]

1) Networking Tips Sheet – This has several bullet points of general tips that I wanted to highlight, or items I didn't have enough time to cover during the presentation.

2) Networking Resources Reading List – This list includes books that I have read or have had recommended to me regarding networking. It may seem strange to read about job hunting and networking, but in the long run it may be worth the time investment. Most of the resources should be available at your local library if you do not want to purchase a copy.

3) Networking Practice – When meeting new people or attending networking events, it is important to remember information about the people you meet. It is also important to follow up with them afterward. If you note commonalities, it will give you more to connect on later. Consider using a worksheet like this to help keep track of new connections. For some, it may also be helpful to have a "goal" when attending events. I often tell myself that I need to meet at least three people by the end of the event. Since I am shy, this pushes me out of my comfort zone and allows me to strike up new conversations.

4) Making the Most of Your Network PowerPoint – It may not make a lot of sense alone, but I thought I would include it just in case you wanted to take a look.

If you are currently unemployed, I would recommend starting by meeting 2 to 3 people and attending one networking event each week. If you are pressed for money, schedule a few phone calls instead. Using technologies such as e-mail, LinkedIn, and internet searching are a great way to start your research process. The next step is to make those human connections. Find things that you have in common with that person. Do you share interests? How about alumni associations, previous jobs or locations? Do they do what you want to do? Ask them how they got there and what they might do differently if they could do it again. Learn from them and teach them about who you are without having to "sell yourself." They will learn about your experience and personality throughout the duration of the conversation and the relationship. Networking isn't about meeting as many people as you can as quickly as you can, but about creating human connections, and being able to sustain the relationships over time. How can you help them? How can you mutually benefit?

Words to redefine:

Informational interview – Talking with people about what they do and how they got there. You're there to learn about them or their company.

Elevator pitch – Knowing who you are and what direction you're thinking about going in. Don't try to fit your life story and qualifications into 30 seconds, but when the point comes and they ask you, "so what are you looking for?" you'll know the answer. There's nothing harder than trying to help someone who doesn't know what they want. Try some of the exercises from the book What Color Is Your Parachute to help you get there.

Networking – Meeting new people and sustaining relationships and connections over time. Teaching and learning, listening, helping, bridging.

So there you have it! If what you're doing isn't working, trying something new. Ask your friends and family what worked for them. I'll leave you with some advice that my friends told me:

"I met my boss at a meetup.com social event!"

"I attribute my success to LinkedIn, but not the job boards—just speaking with and reaching out to different people."

"I started learning how to network when I stopped calling it "networking" and started calling it "meeting new people."

"I found my current position by following the jobs posted on JETwit."

"It's very unlikely that someone will say no to a free meal, and if they say no—well, that's the worst that could happen."

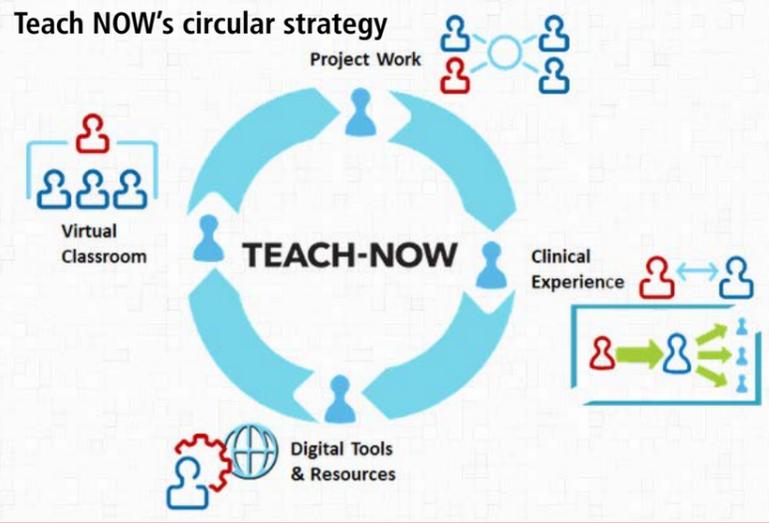
By the way, definitely utilize your JETAA and JETwit networks for your job search! There are new jobs posted weekly either by JETs, or by companies who love to hire JETs. Good luck!

Lana Kitcher was an ALT in Yamanashi prefecture now working for Japan Society in New York (www.japansociety.org), and previously at Bridges to Japan with Jennifer Jakubowski (www.bridgestojapan.com), also a former JET. Her blog and website, although not updated recently, should still be useful www.blogspot.lanakitcher.com and www.lanakitcher.com. If any AJC attendees are interested in reaching her they should feel free to find her on LinkedIn and send a message through there. (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/lanakitcher/>)



EARNING A TEACHING CERTIFICATION WITH TEACH NOW

Adam Carter, Kagoshima



As much as we have cherished our lives here in Japan, the time has come for us to move on. Many ALTs may want to pursue teaching as a career, or as a means to live and work around the world for a while. The problem is that, in order to teach at schools in the States, teachers need to be certified in the US. The same goes for "International Schools," a rapidly-growing network of 6,500 schools where all instruction is in English. Due to the huge growth of these schools, this is a great industry to be involved in, as demand for teachers (and as a result, wages) are growing annually!

But first, teachers need official US teaching certification. As I learned from extensive research, becoming certified can be a very bureaucratically-cumbersome, time-consuming (18+ months) and expensive (\$13,000+) process.

But then I heard about an innovative new program called Teach-Now [<http://www.teach-now.com/>], which is a fully-accredited 9-month long online teacher preparation program based in Washington, DC. Students complete the 6 months of coursework on the customized web platform from anywhere in the world; the interface is very intuitive and it's very easy to access the assignments and resources. There is also a Virtual Classroom (audio and video) element, in which each group of "cohorts" (maximum of 12) meet together one hour a week with an instructor to discuss the material and their assignments. The final component of Teach-Now (and of ANY teaching certification program) is the 3-month student teaching portion. Current ALTs can complete this in their school in Japan (as I and other ALTs are doing) or they can complete this in schools basically anywhere. Teach-Now helps their cohorts arrange these if they need assistance, but it basically entails finding a school looking for some free part-time assistance from an eager young teacher (hard for schools to turn down!).

I have already completed the 6 months of coursework and have really loved the program. It is well-designed and draws upon current trends in education, such as brain-based learning, flipped classroom, and project-based learning. I have learned all of the essential principles of teaching and tools to be an effective educator. One of the best parts of Teach-Now is the fact that most of the assignments require the use of digital tools that are an essential part of the 21st century classroom, such as brain-maps, presentations, voice-threads, video production,

infographics, and online discussion forums. By learning how to use these tools in a hands-on manner, candidates become comfortable enough to then utilize them in the classroom. The fact that Teach-Now is such a forward-thinking program is due to its founder Emily Feistritzer. [<http://www.ncei.com/bio.htm>] the foremost authority on teaching certification for the last thirty years. Emily (who is an amazing person!) noticed that current teaching training programs were not equipping teachers with the innovative skills and digital expertise needed to become effective 21st century teachers, so she set out to design the ideal program, created for candidates just like us.

As opposed to other programs that run upwards of \$13,000, Teach-Now costs only \$6,000. In addition, they have agreed to offer JET participants a discount. There is a 10% discount available for those who pay it all up front and an additional \$100 discount for any JETs, so \$5,300 total. This is not a diploma-earning degree, which is fine for ALTs, as we all already have the Bachelors needed to teach in US or abroad. But it does lead directly to teaching certification in Washington, DC. Once they finish Teach-Now, applicants need to get an FBI background check (same as we did for JET) and pass the two or three PRAXIS exams (the standardized board exams which are offered all over the world, including Tokyo where I took mine). Teach-Now takes care of the paperwork, which is a huge relief.

For those that may not know about the reality of teaching ESL around the world, JET does not offer us any ESL certificate, which means we are not eligible to take on most of the more high-paying ESL jobs out there. But being a certified teacher in the US, we are very qualified to teach for English academies and upper-echelon International Schools around the world. I am becoming certified in Social Studies, but many JETs may want to teach ESL in the future, in which case they will take the PRAXIS ESL/ELL test; there are tons of study materials online.

In addition, for those looking for a Master's Degree, Teach-Now has partnered with University of the Pacific (one of the 100 top universities in America) to offer a Master's option. Candidates complete the same exact coursework but pay an additional \$12,000 for the degree. There is financial aid available for candidates, so speak to Teach-Now if you are interested and don't let the price tag scare you away.

There are cohort groups starting nearly every month, so if you wanted to start in March, you would finish your coursework in August. After 3 months of student teaching, you could be completely finished by the end of November with your fully-accredited teaching license in hand by January 1, 2015. Even before you have received your teaching license, you can begin applying to schools through some of the international recruiting agencies like SearchAssociates or ISS, looking for full-time positions beginning the following school year (August 2015). These jobs typically pay more than \$40K with amazing benefits like housing, insurance, airfare, etc.

This offers the opportunity for a seamless transition

from JET into a secure, high-paying and rewarding teaching career. Even without the certification finalized, I was able to land a job teaching social studies at an International School in Egypt and will be able to SAVE about \$30,000 next year!

For those that would like to teach in the States, this program offers certification in Washington, DC which has reciprocity with all states except for California and Montana. (For Californians, the Master's program with Pacific can lead to Cali certification.)

Non-Americans are also eligible to do the program. Even if they have no intention of teaching in the States, they can use their certification to teach in any country they choose. Three of the current cohorts in my Teach-Now group fall into this category.

I am really lucky to have found this program as it will allow me to take a huge career leap. Combining my ALT classroom experience with a teaching certificate will allow me to make great money while teaching around the world. Hard to ask for more. Jay Johnston, a 3rd-year ALT in Kokubu who has also enrolled, says, "Teach-Now is a unique program that allows any ALT the opportunity to further their teaching credentials. I would say it is mandatory for anyone considering a serious career in education. Furthermore, I highly recommend it to anyone looking to make the most of their time on the JET program."

If you have any more questions, visit www.teach-now.com or e-mail me at adrockisland@gmail.com. If you do contact Teach-Now, be sure to mention your \$100 JET discount, as well as the 10% discount for paying up front. I will be holding a one-hour webinar with details and answers to your questions on Tuesday, February 25th at 7:30pm Japan time. To register, visit: <http://www.joinwebinar.com> and enter Webinar ID 114-880-251.

The screenshot shows the Teach NOW dashboard for Adam Carter. It includes a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Learn', 'Clinical', 'e-Portfolio', 'Resources', 'Discussion Forum', and 'My Notes'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Candidate Info' (Name: Adam Carter, Progress: 6 of 7), 'Teach-Now Progress Chart' (Module: Teacher Practice and Proficiency, Total No. of Activities: 37, pie chart showing status distribution), 'Teach-Now Performance Chart' (Module: Teacher Practice and Proficiency, Total No. of Gradable Activities: 9, bar chart showing proficiency levels), 'Teach-Now Syllabus' (About), 'Teach-Now Program Schedule' (Calendar for December 2013, showing a mentor meeting on Dec 5th), 'Teach-Now Social Updates' (Recent Updates for #tncohort), and 'Announcements' (No Announcement available). A 'Messaging' section shows Adam is online.

The main page for Teach NOW

FINISHING UP YOUR TIME ON JET

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS!

Now that you've signed the papers and made it all official, the countdown begins until you board that plane to leave JET and start something fresh and exciting. Before that, you'll probably want to squeeze in every last ounce of Japan as you can. The Connect staff and AJET council took some time to recommend their favorite places or personal bucket lists for your final six months! How about you? What's your Japan bucket list? Send your recommendations to us at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:editor@ajet.net) and you could be published in an upcoming issue of Connect magazine!

Miyajima Xan Wetherall

Before leaving, you can't miss the wonder that is Miyajima! A 30-minute train ride outside of Hiroshima city to the JR station Miyajimaguchi, then a 30-minute ferry ride will place you at the beautiful UNESCO World Heritage Site, Itsukushima, popularly referred to as Miyajima, meaning "Shrine Island". Rated one of the most scenic places in Japan (and for good reason), it's an important spiritual site for both Buddhism and Shintoism. It features both the legendary Miyajima *torii* gate—floating serenely in the water—and Mount Misen, where Kobo Daishi's eternal flame continues to burn even today. The flame, used as part of his training more than 1200 years ago, is a wonder to see.

Unmissable attractions include visiting the aptly named Itsukushima Shrine (said to be founded in the 5th century), ascending Mount Misen in a gondola, eating the local specialties (fresh oysters, sea eel rice, and maple leaf-shaped bean buns, for the uninitiated), and patting one of the tame local deer (said to be messengers of the Shinto gods) on their much-beleaguered little heads. I go back about once a year, and I'm continuously blown away by the perfect fusion of nature, religion, culture, food, and people. You'll understand what I mean as soon as you're on the ferry. Unmissable!

Mount Koya Ariane Bobiash

I thought I had witnessed the best scenery that Japan had to offer, but I began to second guess myself when riding the train up to the base of the mountain range collectively referred to as Koya-san, famed final resting spot of Shingon Buddhism founder Kobo Daishi. Located in Wakayama prefecture, Koya-san is a hidden gem of nature and history. Here, my travel companions and I stayed at the Eko-In temple, where one night in a spacious tatami room with intricately decorated screen doors set us back 10,000yen per person, including an elaborate *shojin ryori* (vegan Japanese temple food) dinner and breakfast. This package seemed to be standard for temple stays in the area, but hostels

are also available in town for those travelling on tighter budgets.

After a day of exploring the shrines, gates, and other monastic structures that rival Kyoto's best, be sure to take a tour of the Okunoin graveyard, the largest in Japan and home of Kobo Daishi's mausoleum. It's a truly haunting experience walking amongst the tall ancient cedars in the twilight. If you're lucky, you may even get to see flying squirrels gliding amongst them!

Off the Beaten Path Matthew Jones

Do you have a beaten path? You know what I mean; you have a path that you walk every day. You make your way to work, you go home, you go to the shop, you go to the restaurant, and you go home again.

My 'thing to do before you leave' is simple, get off the beaten path. Some of the best and most memorable experiences you can have will happen down some dark alleys... you know, restaurants, shrines or peaceful little spots. I found my favorite running path by seeing a staircase up a hill next to my house. Little did I know, that it would lead to an amazing path overlooking Nagasaki Bay. I found an amazing French restaurant, complete with a chef who studied in France, by seeing if I could find a shortcut to the train station.

The point is, if you've ever seen a mysterious little staircase, an interesting looking alleyway, or a weathered shrine, get off the path and explore it, you won't be able to do it forever!

The Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk Julia Mace

I heard about a place at the top of Hokkaido where the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk meet. There's a mountain there that you can climb and watch the two bodies of water mix and merge together. I want to go there and watch the waters under the northern sun and listen to the wind and talk to the other travelers who might also be brave enough to go there only to sit and look until we're done sitting and looking.

I heard it's a cold hike up to this spot, but I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to walking up there, and I'm looking forward to walking back down again. I love the feeling you get when you've accomplished your goal and you feel like you're all filled up inside. And I love the feeling of walking away from an old goal and forwards towards the next one. I know that I'll be able to achieve this. It's just a train, a bus, a plane, another train, another bus and a few steps away.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North Steven Thompson

If you know anything about haiku, you know the name Basho. Composer of hundreds of timeless, beautiful, tightly-metered verse, his best-known work is a travelogue of sorts. Called *Oku no Hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Deep North), Basho

wrote many of his most famous haiku while traveling in the wild, unknown North of Edo-period Japan. His companion poet sidekick, Sora, chronicled in detail the route they took (one which neither of them expected to return alive from). Nowadays, the land they traveled (now called Tohoku), is less full of barbarians and death from exposure, and more with gorgeous landscapes, wonderful people, and pristine nature. It's not uncommon for people to walk part or the whole of Basho's journey, stopping at sites he wrote about and searching for something within.

Basho's trip, starting in Tokyo and going all the way north to Yamagata before coming down the coast through Niigata and Gifu, encompasses a variety of natural wonders and ancient temples. While the entire 1,200-mile route may be a bit daunting, you can certainly hit the highlights (either on foot or by train), including the pine-covered islands of Matsushima Bay, the mountain-carved temple at Yamadera, and the holy sites at Dewa Sanzan. If I had to recommend one spot in particular to connect with the soul of the legendary poet, it'd be Yamadera, which presents a wild spirituality and also houses a museum of his original works. Wherever you do go before or after JET, remember what Basho wrote at the beginning of his work, "Each day is a journey, and the journey itself home."

Rafting Hugo Dragonetti

We all know that talk of returning home often leads to talk of climbing Mount Fuji, but there's another outdoor challenge at slightly lower altitude that you should also try before you go. I'm talking about rafting. It just so happens that the months leading up to your departure are the perfect time to experience it on one of Japan's gorgeous rivers. Provided you're not adverse to a bit of water, paddling and manoeuvring your way down a river, as part of a group, in an inflatable boat is a fantastic experience. Rafting's also one of the more accessible outdoor activities in Japan, with plenty of information available in English online for all of the major locations.

A popular location with beginners is Minakami, Gunma Prefecture. The rafting there takes place near the source of the Tone River, Japan's second longest river, and has some great views of the local canyons. The only downside is that the rafting season there ends in late June. The Tama River, on the outskirts of Tokyo, is another good destination. But probably the best place for rafting in Japan, and a great reason to visit Shikoku, is the beautiful Yoshino River.

Okinawa: The Land of Star Sand and Sunshine Sterling Diesel

Picking a few locations to travel to in Japan is really tricky, but there's one gem I find is too often over-looked: Okinawa prefecture. Each of the Ryukyu Islands has its own personality, and I guarantee there is one you will find yourself falling in love with from your first sight of it. The crystal clear beaches and dense tropical wildlife will influence your dreams for years to



come, and the cuisine may motivate you to throw some new produce into your shopping cart when you return home.

The soil in Okinawa is like a miracle drug for all the plants that grow in it. Have your taste buds prepared for succulent fruits like mangoes, papayas, and pineapples as well as vegetables like bitter melons, umi-budou ('sea grapes'), and incredibly purple sweet potatoes. These are without a doubt some of the secrets to a long, healthy life.

There is enough culture and language that has developed apart from mainland Japan to make you feel like you're experiencing the country again for the first time. Don't forget to pick up some of the phenomenal laquerware, pottery, glassware, or fabric before you leave. You may never get another chance to own these exquisite souvenirs.

**The Shikoku Pilgrimage:
I got 88 temples but a Kiyomizu-dera ain't one**
Kay Makishi

The most famous pilgrimage route in Japan spanning about 1,200 kilometers, and I want to conquer it by *mamachari*. Of course there are the must-see temples like Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto, Kamakura in Kanagawa, and Todai-ji in Nara, but a lot of people often overlook the Shikoku Pilgrimage—for good reason, too. It takes time and it's not the most conveniently located tourist destination.

People set off on pilgrimages for various reasons. For me, I think this will be a nice way to wrap up my JET experience by taking time to reflect on the past three years of my life in solitude and in nature. Also, I want that feeling of being able to complete something in its entirety. I know when I reach my final destination, there will be no fireworks, people clapping for me nor personalized banner saying 'congratulations' but inside, I will feel accomplished. It'll be perfect.

However you choose to spend the rest of your time in Japan, remember to look around and appreciate how wonderful this is. Make some memories, and consider sharing them with us here at Connect magazine!



Tom Morin-Robinson, Tochigi

Unless your stay in Japan has turned you on to asceticism, the odds are you've accumulated a boatload of junk and treasures you simply cannot bear to part with. This guide will provide you with a few useful tips to get the things that really matter home with you.

Japan Post

Unless you're attempting to ship a complete *tatami* flooring set home to ease your reverse culture shock, your cheapest and most convenient option will be the good old post office. Japan Post offers three options for shipping packages internationally. For all three services, the weight limit for one package is set at 30kg. The size limit comes in two flavors. For China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and England, the length of the package must be within 1.5 meters and its total length, height, and width must not exceed 3 meters. For the USA, Australia, Brazil, and Mexico, package length must be within 1.05 meters and total dimensions must not exceed 2 meters. Limitations on package size and weight can vary from country to country, so be sure to double check on the Japan Post website.

There is no limit to the amount of packages you can send at one time. In fact, shipments of over 10 items are 10% off, and shipments over 50 are 20% off. This is regardless of whether or not they are going to the same destination, so it may pay to buddy up.

Here is more detailed information about each service:

Express Mail Service (EMS):

Delivery Time:	2–4 days
Cost for 10kg:	
Asia:	10,200 yen
North and Middle America, Oceania, Middle East:	14,000 yen
Europe:	16,200 yen
South America and Africa:	27,400 yen

Features: Tracking number, package pick up, 20,000 yen of free insurance.

Economy Air Mail (SAL):

Delivery Time:	6–13 days
Cost for 10kg:	
East Asia:	6,700 yen
Southeast /Southwest Asia:	8,000 yen
Oceania, Middle East, North & Central America, West Indies, and Europe:	12,550 yen
South America and Africa:	17,050 yen

Surface Mail:

Delivery Time:	1–3 months
Cost for 10kg:	
East Asia:	3,750 yen
Southeast /Southwest Asia:	5,300 yen
Oceania, Middle East, North & Central America, West Indies, and Europe:	6,750 yen
South America and Africa:	6,250 yen

For a complete and up to date schedule of costs by country please check the Japan Post website:
http://www.post.japanpost.jp/int/index_en.html

Other Methods & Things to Remember
You will most likely require double-walled cardboard boxes. You can get these at big box stores like Joyful Honda, on Amazon.co.jp, or directly from shipping companies.

Grab shipping labels at the post office and fill them out at home. You don't want to be painstakingly doing an inventory of everything in your boxes at the post office.

Conversely, do not seal your boxes at home; the post office employees may need to double check your package's contents.

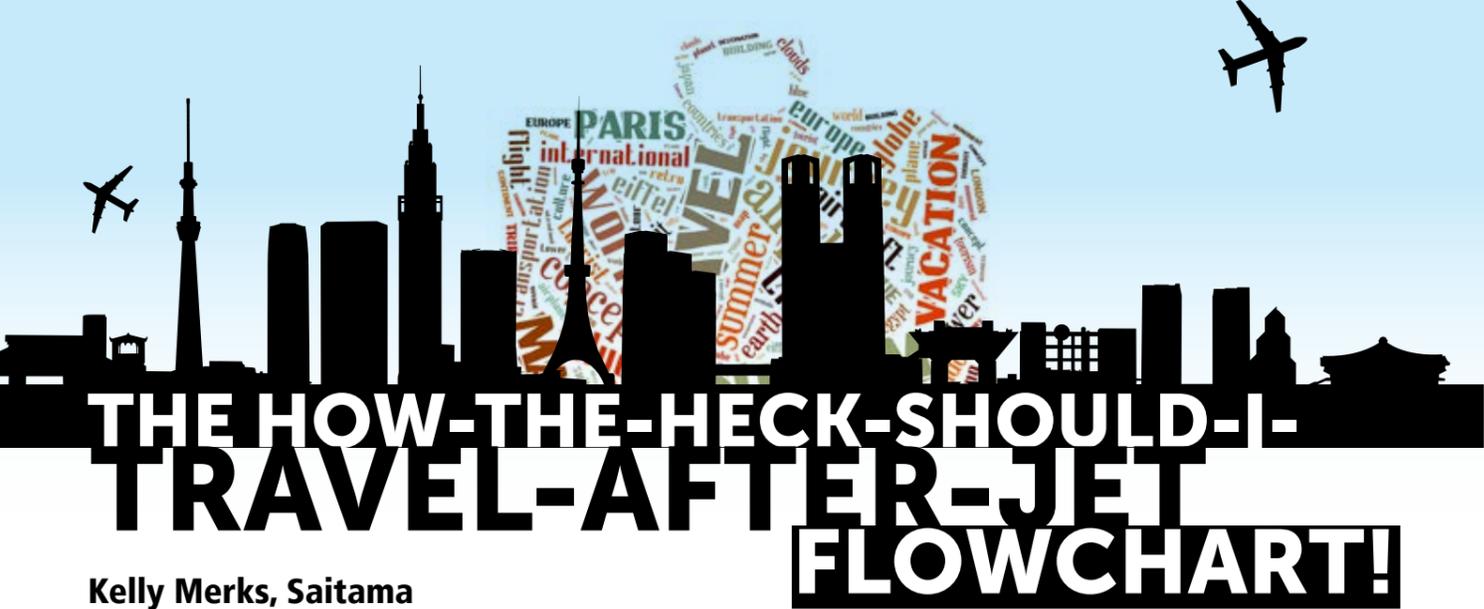
Don't be afraid of your airline's baggage surcharges. Look into fees for extra and overweight bags; they may just be cheaper than paying to ship another box.

Too many bags to carry to the airport? Major airports around Japan have contractors that can pick up your stuff and deliver it straight to the airport. You can also arrange this directly through Yamato Transport's TA-Q-BIN service. Rates vary depending on distance, size and weight. <http://www.kuronekoyamato.co.jp/en/personal/airport/>

Are you shipping large, unwieldy objects, or just a ton of stuff? It may be best to get a quote from a private shipping company. There are plenty to choose from in Japan, so start planning early and shop around for the best price. Here are a few to choose from.

- <http://www.jluggage.com/>
- <http://www.nipponexpress.com/index.html>
- <http://econoship.net/>





Kelly Merks, Saitama

If you're having a tough time deciding what to do or where to go after your contract has ended, these next few pages are just for you. The flowchart's results are not mutually exclusive, and this is by no means an exhaustive list of opportunities. Chances are you know of most of these organizations, and you may have considered a few of them already. Our hope is that you learn about a new or challenging opportunity. And, of course, thoroughly research anything before jumping in. A few JETs, current and former, have also written about their experiences traveling during and after JET, and those passages are included as clarification and inspiration.

Enjoy!

What's your travel modus operandus?

To see new stuff!
Right on! How do you feel about volunteering?

To get a new job!
More power to you. How do you feel about teaching ESL (again)?

Sure! I enjoy it, and it's an easy way to pay my way.

OK then, that was easy: teach abroad for a stint or two (or five)! This is what we recommend:

→ If you have a specific place in mind, start preparing ASAP (see page 30 for more). If you aren't certain where you want to go yet, try one of these teaching organizations:

- ◆ Institute of International Education: <http://www.iie.org/>
- ◆ Council on International Educational Exchange: <http://www.ciee.org/teach/>
- ◆ European Council of International Schools: <http://www.ecis.org/>

I'd rather not...

→ It's a good thing you're at the AJC! In addition to what you learn here:

- ◆ Consider taking your home country's foreign service exam
- ◆ Get to know your foreign consular
- ◆ Attend job fairs in Japan (like the one here at the AJC)
- ◆ Think about getting a degree in a foreign country (see page ## for more)
- ◆ Check out <http://www.idealists.org/> if you're into non-profits.

It's not a priority.

→ Go on a backpacking or guided tour

- ◆ Kiwi Experience: <http://www.kiwiexperience.com/>
- ◆ Stray Travel Asia: <http://www.straytravel.asia/>
- ◆ Geckos Adventures: <http://www.geckosadventures.com/>
- ◆ Bamba Experience: <http://www.bambaexperience.com/index.php>
- ◆ Young Pioneer Tours, for the very brave: <http://www.youngpioneertours.com/>

→ Travel within Japan

- ◆ Register with CouchSurfing
- ◆ Check out airbnb.com
- ◆ WWOOF (see page 34 for more)

I'm going to check out other parts of Japan.

→ Volunteering within Japan

Volunteering section editor Michelle recommends these organizations:

- ◆ Eyes for Fukushima: <http://e4f.fujet.org/about-us/>
- ◆ Japan Cat Network: <http://japancatnet.com/about-jcn/what-we-do/>
- ◆ It's not just mud (Playgrounds of Hope): <http://itsnotjustmud.com/projects/other/playground-of-hope/>
- ◆ Be one Tohoku Aid: <http://www.b-1.jp/tohoku/en/volunteer-en/info-en/>

Yes, please!

Great! Are you traveling Japan, or going abroad?

I need a change of longitude.

→ Voluntourism, combining charity work and cultural immersion. Here are some reputable organizations:

- ◆ Azafady: <http://www.madagascar.co.uk/index.htm>
- ◆ International Volunteer HQ: <http://www.volunteerhq.org/>
- ◆ The International Ecotourism Society: <https://www.ecotourism.org/>
- ◆ InterExchange: <http://www.interexchange.org/>

→ Other service organizations

Voluntourism is not without controversy. If you still want to volunteer abroad and have more than a couple weeks to spare, consider the UK's International Citizen Service (<http://www.volunteercs.org/>), the US Peace Corps (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>) or JustWorld International (<http://www.justworldinternational.org/en/about/>).

Oh, you don't want something that permanent? Consider one of these:

→ Travel somewhere to be certified to teach ESL

- ◆ Greenheart Travel: <http://greenhearttravel.org/programs/adult/teach>
- ◆ International TEFL/TESOL training: <http://www.tesolcourse.com/>
- ◆ Entrust TEFL: <http://entrusttefl.com/>

→ Ride the Peace Boat (see page 31 for more)



GRAD SCHOOL AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR TRAVELING

Amelia Hagen, Fukuoka (2008-2013)

As my fifth year on JET began, I knew I wanted to have a plan for after JET before I departed Japan. But the premier university for my desired Masters in the US was priced at a whopping \$90,000 over two years. With that in mind, I took a former JET friend's advice and applied to universities in the UK and Australia. Though classified as an international student in both countries, tuition was a fraction of that in the US, most courses are only a year long, and each location came with travel options.

In the end, a university in the UK seemed like the best fit, and because of my omnipresent travel bug, the UK's proximity to Europe was simply too tempting. I moved to the Southeast England last September. While the cost of living in England is certainly higher, there are plenty of ways to still travel around as a postgraduate student. The UK's National Rail Card saves student cardholders 30% on all fares and the NUS International Student ID Card has gotten me big discounts on attractions and transport across Europe. Living an hour from London's Gatwick Airport has also resulted in a plethora of cheap EasyJet flights throughout Europe literally at my fingertips. Whether you're from North America or the UK/Europe looking to go to postgraduate school across the pond, check out IcelandAir for the cheapest transoceanic flights and a free layover in Iceland for up to 7 days on your way over.

Choosing postgraduate school abroad has resulted in new friends from easily two dozen countries. Some of my classmates even spent New Year's with Norwegian friends in Norway. Additionally, these classmates probably cover the globe with their range of travel experiences and knowledge they're eager

to share. Even better, I have personally enjoyed meeting up with many friends from my time on JET in both England and Ireland. These reunions have not only allowed me to see old friends and explore their towns, but also served to alleviate some reverse culture shock.

Since leaving the US, thanks to school breaks and classes only a few days a week, I have managed to get to Iceland, Ireland, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Russia without blowing away my budget. As I just started a new part-time job in England, I have some 'city break' trips to a handful of European cities this spring as well as some jaunts to other parts of the UK to visit JET friends. Many people think you have to choose 'one path' as the next step. Why not choose two or three, blending them together? After such an active lifestyle, being involved so much on JET, it would have been difficult to concentrate on one thing. Doing my Masters outside of the US has enabled me to continue traveling frequently while making myself more competitive in my chosen field. Can't shake the wanderlust? Know you need another degree? Explore this.

Amelia Hagen is a former 5th-year Kitakyushu, Fukuoka, JET and is currently pursuing a Masters of Science in International Event Management. When she isn't planning her next trip, she works as a sustainability project coordinator and volunteers for TEDx events anywhere and everywhere. You can contact her at ameliahagen@gmail.com.



TEACHING ENGLISH AFTER JET

Fernando Ramos, Saitama (2008-2013)

Right after finishing five years on the JET Program, I decided to move to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in order to expand my teaching skills and because I wanted to try a different part of Asia. Through various strokes of good luck, I found myself a job as a full-time teacher at Broward College in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where I am teaching English for Academic Purposes and run an after-class film lab. Unlike JET, I am fully in charge of all planning and implementation of lessons, guided by a wonderful supervisor and supporting staff, Vietnamese and expat alike.

My advice to all those who are interested in continuing down the English teaching track is, first, take a TEFL/TESOL course from a reputable institution (I took mine online with iTTT via Saitama AJET). Even an online course can help you take the time to solidify an understanding of our language and the challenges that it can pose for a foreign speaker. You will also be in a unique position in that you can immediately apply what you learn in your course to the Japanese classroom and see what works best for you.

Another thing to anyone thinking of moving to another foreign country is to reach out to make connections related to that place. Take a course in the language of that country and bring up your plans in casual conversation at gatherings. I received two very strong referrals for two jobs from just this. In fact, I became informed of my current job because my supervisor and I had the same Vietnamese teacher! Not everyone can have the same luck, but, if I hadn't committed to my destination and made the connection, I would never have even known about the opportunity in the first place.

Ultimately, even though other countries may differ greatly from Japan, your JET experience is invaluable. Observing and working with JTEs has made you witness and participant to many styles of teaching in a way that many professionals can only envy. Where your peers may become bewildered, you probably will just shrug it off and adapt, or, better yet, find a solution hitherto unseen. You're already ahead of the game and don't know it!

Fernando Ramos is an instructor at Broward College, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He is a former JET, and spent 5 years as an ALT in Hasuda City, Saitama.



WWOOF AROUND THE WORLD

Ola Weber, Gifu

If you're anything like me, and long to learn about culture in an intimate and authentic way, you may very well want to include WWOOFing in your post-JET plans. Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) is a network of national organizations that facilitate the exchange of labour for room and board. Not only do volunteers learn about farming in a cultural context, but they may also learn a new language, forge friendships, and discover local gems. Best of all, WWOOFing is free. Scoring a place to crash shouldn't be your main motivation—but in all fairness, travel is expensive. At the cost of a plane ticket, a little sweat and maybe some sore muscles, WWOOF opens the door to an enriching way of travelling the world.

As a tourist, it is often difficult to scrape the superficial layer of a culture, especially if you're not spending much time in a given place. By being thrust into somebody's home and being required to contribute, you are immediately engaged in an authentic experience. Granted, this comes with its caveats, but if you approach WWOOFing with an open mind, you are certain to gain insight into a foreign culture, learn a thing or two about farming, and likely make a few friends along the way.

So what kind of work can you expect? You may find yourself chestnut harvesting, vineyard tending, mixing concrete, building stone walls, clearing gutters, herding sheep, brush-cutting or even goat cheese making. With over 99 member countries and thousands of host farms to choose from, you can certainly find a host farm that appeals to you. Host profiles are very detailed, covering work hour expectations, living arrangements, free time, languages spoken, and provision of meals. Do your research, as one person's dream host can easily be another's nightmare. Avoid any surprises by carefully considering your options and making a well-informed decision.

I heard about WWOOF from a friend, and even though I initially scoffed at the idea of unpaid labour, I decided to give it a shot. I wanted to experience the Japanese New Year authentically, and figured that volunteering would allow me to do so. After perusing <http://www.wwoofofjapan.com>, I settled on a small rice farm at the base of Togari ski resort in Nagano prefecture. Because of the season, my tasks focused around housekeeping, food processing, and a little babysitting. Not really in line with organic farming, but I was primarily seeking cultural exposure. Nonetheless, I was surprised with how much enjoyment I derived from the work even when I was stacking firewood or vacuuming. I felt a sense of inclusion from working alongside my hosts and from performing the same menial tasks they did.

I got to do some wicked cool stuff too, like learning how to make *mochi*, persimmon preserves, and *tsukemono*. I learned how to

gut and prepare *fugu* (poisonous if prepared incorrectly). I ate like a queen every day. One of the guests was an award-winning chef who owns a restaurant in Ginza, and he prepared all of our meals with the utmost care and precision. Everyone dined together, and often we sat around the dinner table for hours exchanging stories and filling our cups with sake.

Although I didn't learn much about farming practices, I was fortunate to experience the spirit of WWOOF. This goes beyond the basic transaction of labour for room and board: it encompasses the exchange of culture, skills, camaraderie, and most importantly the willingness to open your heart and forge a connection with strangers—even if it's just for a short time. To be honest, I was nervous before going, and the thought of cancelling even crossed my mind. But not only was I immensely fulfilled by the experience; my confidence also grew from having challenged myself in a new way.

Upon my return to Gifu, I immediately started researching my next WWOOF adventure. My time in Togari served as an easy introduction to farm volunteering, and provided enough insight and confidence to step a little further out of my comfort zone. I don't think I have the resilience to WWOOF my way around the globe, but I would like to incorporate a few volunteer stints throughout my post-JET travels. After tons of research and reflection on what I wanted to gain from each experience, I came up with the following list of countries I personally would love to WWOOF.

→ Estonia

Nestled between Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea, and Russia, Estonia boasts beautiful forests, lakes, mountains as well as an extensive coastline. The country is serious about environmental protection and nature conservation, and despite a long history of foreign occupation, Estonian cultural identity is strong and distinct. Set your sights on livestock tending, sheep shearing, medicinal herb growing, as well as berry and mushroom farming. Membership is only 8 euros for two years, so visit <http://www.wwoofof.ee/> and get started.

→ Italy

I haven't yet made my way to the "boot", even though I've loved and longed for Italian culture since I was a child. Granted, I probably won't get to see a performance of Tosca on an organic farm, but Italian culture is certainly one I wish to experience in the most authentic way possible. Whether it's harvesting olives, making ricotta, or preparing antipasto, I'd love to learn how to make the foods Italy is famous for. WWOOF Italy has over 30 host

farms to choose from, and an annual membership is 35 euros. Visit <http://www.wwoofof.it/en/>, and start planning your working Roman holiday!

→ Mendoza, Argentina

This one's easy. The Mendoza region of Argentina is malbec wine country. Delicious food, fine wine, rich culture, beautiful language, and an arid climate make Mendoza a desirable choice for an extended volunteering opportunity. After paying the annual membership fee of \$38, you'll have access to 78 host farms offering experiences in adobe construction, cold-cut production, cheese making, and orchard tending among many others. Visit WWOOF Argentina <http://www.wwoofofargentina.com/> to view the full offering.

As you've likely gathered, as a WWOOFer you can expect the unexpected. However, here are some ways to ensure that you aren't driven too far out of your comfort zone, and that your experience with WWOOF is an enjoyable one.

→ **Do your research!** I can't stress this enough. Ask yourself why you want to WWOOF, and try to find a placement that will help you achieve that goal. Do you want to learn about running a sustainable homestead, or traditional food production? Do you want to freshen up the Spanish you learned in high school? Find a host that suits you best.

→ **Set expectations beforehand.** Whether it's via email or over the phone, discuss your work conditions, work hours, dietary concerns, length of stay, transportation to/from the farm, accommodation, access to communication, and any other important details.

→ **Expect to work hard.** At times the work may be monotonous or even downright dirty. Embrace the challenge and you'll have a good story to tell, or at least you'll enjoy that evening's home-cooked meal even more.

→ **Stand your ground!** If you feel you're being mistreated, speak up. Voice your concerns in a respectful manner and try to offer a fair solution. If this doesn't work, file a complaint with WWOOF and save future volunteers from a similar ordeal. WWOOFers are free to leave at any point, but as common courtesy dictates give a day or two's notice.

So, there you have it: a little introduction to the wonderful world of WWOOF. WWOOF functions as an umbrella organization for a network of national chapters that share common principles, but function independently. By visiting <http://www.wwoofof.net/> you can find your chosen country's WWOOF site, pay a nominal registration fee, and set up a profile. You will then be sent a listing of hosts, and you can get started on playing matchmaker!

Ola is a 1st-year in JET from Gifu-ken who's always usually wandering around lost and confused, hoping to stumble upon Japan's hidden gems by accident.

STAY CONNECTED: FIND YOUR LOCAL JETAA CHAPTER

The JET Programme Alumni Association (JETAA) is an Alumni Association created in 1989 to strengthen and maintain the bonds of friendship developed between JET Programme participants. The purpose of JETAA is to promote a broader and deeper understanding between Japan and the countries participating on the JET Programme through the hosting of national activities. The JET Alumni Association has 53,000 alumni from the 20 years for the Programme. Nearly 23,000 alumni are now registered to the some 52 regional Chapters located across 17 countries, making JETAA one of the largest growing alumni associations in the world.

JETAA Chapters play an important role in the promotion of Japan in their region in the form of social events related to Japan, orientations for new participants of the JET Programme, support for newly returning JETs and promotion of Japan and the JET Programme in their local communities.

To give you a helping hand, we've compiled a list of the current JETAA chapters and (where available) given you each chapter's website address so you can make sure you stay connected!

JETAA INTERNATIONAL

<http://www.jetalumni.org/>

JETAA USA

<http://www.jetaausa.com/>

JETAA Washington DC

<http://jetaadc.org/>
president@jetaadc.org

JETAA New York

<http://jetaany.org/>
president@jetaany.org

JETAA New England

<http://www.nejetaa.com/>
membership@nejetaa.com

JETAA Southeast

<http://www.jetaase.org/>
jetaase@yahoo.com

JETAA Mid-South (NOLA)

<http://www.jetaanola.com/>

JETAA Florida

<http://www.floridajetaa.org/>
president@floridajetaa.org

JETAA Chicago

<http://jetaachicago.com/>
info@jetaachicago.com

JETAA Heartland

<http://www.heartlandjetaa.org/>
membership@heartlandjetaa.org

JETAA Texoma

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/268432196393/>
info@texomajetaa.org

JETAA Rocky Mountain

<http://rmjetalumni.org/>
president@rmjetalumni.org

JETAA Pacific Northwest

<http://www.pnwjetaa.org/>
membership@pnwjetaa.org

JETAA Portland

<http://www.jetaaportland.com/>
president@jetaaportland.com

JETAA Northern California

<http://www.jetaanc.org/>
president@jetaanc.org

JETAA Southern California

<http://www.jetaasc.org/>
officers@jetaasc.org

JETAA Hawaii

<http://jetaahawaii.org/>
jetaahawaii@gmail.com

JETAA Alaska

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/168479171220/>

JETAA Great Lakes

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/70545369272/>

JETAA Minnesota

<http://www.jetaamn.org/>
president@jetaamn.org

JETAA Music City

<http://www.jetaamc.org/>
president@jetaamc.org

JETAA CANADA

<http://www.jetaacanada.ca/>

JETAA Quebec/Atlantic

<http://jetaaqa.ca/>
info@jetaaqa.ca

JETAA Ottawa

<http://www.jetaaottawa.ca/>
exec@jetaaottawa.ca

JETAA Toronto

<http://www.jetaatoronto.ca/>
membership@jetaatoronto.ca

JETAA Manitoba/ Saskatchewan

<http://jetaambsk.ca/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3531660300>

JETAA Northern Alberta

<http://www.jetaana.ca/>

JETAA Southern Alberta

<http://www.jetaasa.ca/>
info@jetaasa.ca

JETAA British Columbia/ Yukon

<http://www.jetaabc.ca/>
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(Special thanks to Xan Wetherall, who compiled and updated this list for the issue.)





Eden Law is a committee member of JETAA NSW, based in Sydney, Australia. As a day job, he's a front-end developer (i.e. IT guy), and holds the position of webmaster and social media rep for JETAA NSW (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @jetaansw). He also writes for JETwit and JQ Magazine, the alumni magazine, career centre and communication channel for the JET alumni community worldwide.

To say JET influenced my life after I left would be an accurate, if rather inadequate statement. As a way of continue my association with JET, I've become involved with my local JETAA chapter, organising and participating in events, meeting the local Japanese community, and meeting like-minded peers who won't get tired of all the Japan stories and who gets all the JET in-jokes. But first, a bit of background for perspective.

I had the best placement anyone could have. My town had a large JET population, I had great co-workers and the local community were friendly and inclusive. Though rural, I was not far from Tokyo and I traveled more widely in Japan than I did in my own country. Believe the hype: when they said it would be an "experience of a lifetime", it was all that and more. For me though, there was something a little extra: I was a Fukushima JET in 2011, and my city of Iwaki was near the coast, 50km south of the nuclear plants.

People united and helped, without demand or expectation, like an inevitable and natural certainty. Those of us who witnessed this—well, we weren't quite the same after. If we had evacuated, we returned. We self-mobilised and self-organised. We were like a UN relief force, fueled by chuuhais and local ramen—volunteering and raising awareness of what was happening on the ground. Having participated in local relief projects, it left me with the motivation to continue when I got back home, hence my involvement in JETAA.

When I finished up in 2011, the biggest thing back home was the Tohoku disaster. Wanting to do whatever I could, I reached out to JETAA, doing things like exhibiting letters my chuugakusei wrote about their experiences during and after the disaster. It started the ball rolling from there, seeing opportunities like this with JETAA, and I formally joined the committee the following year.

With JETAA, I've organized fundraisers, participated in "Careers Night" for newly-returned JETs, wrote articles for JETwit, watched movies at the Japanese film festival for free as a reviewer and much more. I continue to dream up projects, events, competitions, and social media publicity as a member of JETAA, making connections with local cultural and government organisations, building up useful networks.

While being a JET didn't lead me to a career like it did for others, it was more a personal and emotional influence. Having seen how people picked themselves up to face an uncertain future with a stoic determination to forge ahead no matter how old or young they were, is a humbling experience that made everything else pale into "first world problems". Being with JETAA means my JET experience, in a way, has never ended, I encourage those of you who are finishing up, to join your local chapters and continue your connections like I have. Good luck!

WHAT IS JETwit?

Steven Horowitz, Aichi (1992-1994)

JETwit is, in short, the one-stop site for all things JET alumni. Just as Connect seeks to bring you interesting, useful, and engaging content for your time in Japan, JETwit aspires to do its best for your time at home after your JET adventure has finished. You can see two examples of JETwit content in this very issue you're reading now! We're here for all JET alumni, all 55,000-plus of you. Don't take our word for it, here's some kind words Yasuhisa Kawamura, Director of the Japan Information Center at the Consulate General of Japan In New York, had to say in his official Letter of Support to JETwit (which you can read in full from our homepage):

JETwit.com nurtures this vibrant community by connecting former JETs and providing them with news on the latest Japan-related events, JET activities, the work of notable alumni and job opportunities. With its helpful information and frequent updates, JETwit has emerged as the de facto central website for JET alumni. We look forward to JETwit's continued success as a key online resource for former JETs and all those wishing to cooperate with them.

JETwit was created to be (among other things):

- ✎ A library of things written or created by JET alums and/or links to things created by JET alums. If it was created by a JET alum, hopefully you can find it here.
- ✎ A place to publish, promote, or bring attention to things created by or accomplished by JET alums.
- ✎ A source of job listings, especially related to writing, interpreting and translating.
- ✎ A directory of JET alums who are doing (or have done) interesting things or are established in various fields.
- ✎ A way to raise the profile of JETAA in general by showing all the interesting things that JET alums have done and accomplished.
- ✎ A place for current JETs to look for jobs and helpful info and helpful alumni as they prepare to return home.
- ✎ A place for potential JETs to look to for writing and information about the JET Programme as well as a sense of what people do after JET.

There's a wealth of alumni-related links to be found on JETwit as well on our Alum Groups page at <http://jetwit.com/wordpress/jet-alum-groups/>. There you can find groups for aspiring writers, travelers, academics, volunteers, and more. Check out our LinkedIn and Google Group pages for job postings and networking opportunities.

If you would like to contribute content, add a link or share any information or comments that you think would be relevant to the website and helpful to the JET alumni community, please read the Get Involved![[<http://jetwit.com/wordpress/get-involved/>]] page and/or contact Steven Horowitz at stevenwaseda@jetwit.com.

JETwit is an independent publication created by Steven Horowitz (Aichi-ken, 1992-94), who had served previously as the JETAA New York Newsletter Editor for six years, in an effort to share information, connect dots, and fully utilize the resource that is the JET alumni community. Steven currently serves as a member of the JETAA USA Board of Advisors and the JETAA New York Board of Directors.

JETwit: JQ&A WITH MANGA TRANSLATOR, JACK DAVISSON

Julio Perez Jr., Kyoto (2011-2013)

This interview is printed in part, and was originally published in JQ Magazine, by JETAA NY and hosted on JETwit. You can read the full text of the interview [HERE](#).

A scholar, author and translator of Japanese folklore and ghost stories, Zack Davisson (Nara-ken, 2001-04; Osaka-shi, 2004-06) joined the JET Program in 2001 with some basic Japanese knowledge and a strong desire to learn much more. After spending five years on the program, he remained in Japan to acquire a master's degree in Japanese studies while writing freelance and translating for Osaka University.

The theme of Japanese ghosts running through Davisson's writing and translation dovetails the interests of manga legend Shigeru Mizuki, who is famous for the classic series *GeGeGe no Kitaro*. Mizuki is equally well known in Japan for his autobiographical works about his experiences as a soldier during World War II. A great fan of Mizuki, Davisson now contributes to publisher Drawn and Quarterly's English adaptations of Kitaro and is the translator of the first volume of Mizuki's historical manga *Showa 1926-1939: A History of Japan*, released last month in North America.

How did you first become interested in learning the Japanese language, and how long have you been studying it? For aspiring translators who are still studying, do you have any advice about textbooks, programs, or techniques?

I actually became interested when I was about 10 years old and my mother took me to see *Seven Samurai* at a local art theater. I was hooked pretty early—if I look at my class pictures from that time I am wearing ridiculous Japan t-shirts. I took Japanese in high school when it was offered as a foreign language, but there were only four of us in the class, so it was cancelled—no one was interested in learning Japanese back then. This was the '80s, so there was no "Cool Japan." That pretty much ended my language studies for a while.

Decades later when I went on JET, I was useless language-wise. I thought I knew more Japanese than I did, but really just the set phrases and greetings. I was determined to leave JET functionally bilingual, so I just studied as hard as I could from day one, eventually getting my master's degree in Japan.

My only real advice for people is to go to Japan, and talk and

read and practice as much as humanly possible. There is no substitute for immersion and experience. I always say I learned more Japanese at my local bar, the 100 Club, than I did doing my MA. Talk, talk, talk. Read, read, read. Use Japanese as a living language, don't just study it as an abstract. And, of course, marry a Japanese person. That's a huge advantage!

At what point did you decide to make your Japanese skills a part of your career? Had you been interested in translation early on?

I decided to be a translator when I was in Japan working on my MA—and specifically Shigeru Mizuki's translator. That was a goal I set for myself way back then. I thought there was all of this wonderful stuff with no English translation, and I wanted to be the one to bring it over. I used to talk about it in Japan all the time, so much that my friends got sick of it. They're pretty excited to see my first translated volumes released. I think they are sticking a copy up on display at the 100 Club to show dreams can come true, from time to time.

What did you do immediately after JET? At the time, did you see yourself where you are today?

Immediately after JET I stayed in Japan working as an elementary school English teacher, and doing some freelance magazine work and translation and writing for Osaka University. By that time I had met my now-wife, Miyuki, and we were going through the long process of getting her fiancée visa so we could head back to the States together.

I stayed in Japan until my contracts finished and her visa was secured, then we came back to the US. The economy was bad, so I took what jobs I could—there were some lean and miserable years. But I tried to push forward, to build my writing/translation resume, and work on finishing *Yurei: The Japanese Ghost*.

What kind of translations have you completed in the past? Are they all literary translations? Which ones have been or will be published?

Up until now, most of my published translations have been academic, done for Osaka University where I had a contract. I worked on a textbook called *Keywords in Use* and some of their language-learning software.

Other than that, it has been for my own purposes on my website



Zack Davisson, Mizuki Shigeru Translator

Hyakumonogatari.com, or at various private requests. I love American comics, and I do translation and research for a couple of different comic writer/artists when they want to stick Japanese flavor into their comics. For example, I work with Tony Harris on Roundeye and Brandon Seifert on *Supernatural Geographic*. Also, I did the TV special for National Geographic, *Okinawa: The Lost Souls of Japan*, which involved some translation work and research as well as my on-camera appearances.

I have done a few unpublished manga translations too, for practice and to pitch to publishing companies. We'll see if any of those see the light of day. I always hope. And I have a few secret, unannounced projects that are definitely coming, but I can't talk about.

How did you come to write a translation of Showa: 1926-1939? Was it of your own initiative or Drawn and Quarterly's? If it was your decision, how did you go about having it published?

I basically just sent them a cold letter saying how thrilled I was that they were putting out his work, and that I would love to be a part of it if possible. It was lucky timing—they already had *Onwards Towards Our Noble Deaths*, *NonNonBa*, and *Kitaro* translated, but were in the market for a new translator. I did a 100-page test translation that they compared against their current translation, and they liked it and gave me the job. I think they were impressed with the passion I brought to the project as well as my abilities as a translator.

I was surprised when they told me the next book would be *Showa 1926-1939: A History of Japan*. Because I identify Shigeru Mizuki so strongly with yokai, I would have never thought of doing his war comics. But *Showa* is an amazing and important comic—possibly his magnum opus—and I was thrilled to take it on. Thrilled and daunted. It's a heavy work.

What advice do you have for aspiring manga translators? Do you foresee any growth in the industry?

For advice, I would say practice, practice, practice. Translate something at least every day. Get a hold of some comics that have English translations, then translate the Japanese and compare it to the official English translation. But whatever you do, don't post them online. Posted fan translations (a.k.a. scanlations) are poison and will get you blacklisted.

Also, look for paid work. I've seen a few editors laugh at resumes that are full of "volunteer" translations, but no paid work. Even if it isn't manga, you need a resume, you need work experience.

Oh, and go to conventions and make contacts. Like much of the modern world, networking counts. It's much easier to get jobs if people already know who you are.

(You can read the rest of JQ's extensive, exclusive interview with Mr. Davisson on their website, or on JETwit.com.)

Julio Perez Jr. is a bibliophile, writer, translator, and graduate from Columbia University. Julio is currently seeking opportunities with publications in New York. Follow his enthusiasm for Japan, literature, and board gaming on his blog <http://brittlejules.wordpress.com> and Twitter @brittlejules.

REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

THE JOURNEY TO RE-ADAPTATION

6 MONTHS HOME

Sterling Diesel, Nagasaki

By now you are well-versed in handling culture shock and you're reading a lot about reverse culture shock. Reverse culture shock is roughly the same experience, except it involves your return to a previous environment you were well-connected to. After the initial celebratory honeymoon phase, travelers can feel even more out of place than they did while they were on the road. Before you begin to flourish after JET, you will have to transition back to your old environment. Here are some potential problems you may face and ways to deal with them.

The social norms you're returning to may not be anything like they are in Japan. It may be frustrating to get used to how people treat you as early as the airport security checkpoint. Even if you didn't mesh well with your culture to begin with, you can utilize your old coping methods again. Make a list of reasons you enjoy the people in your home town. Surely there are things you can do in your old home that you couldn't fathom doing in Japan! Find cafes, bookstores, clubs, art collectives, or hostels to hang out in that have cultivated groups of people whom you feel comfortable around.

Don't expect to get along with all of your old friends again. Initially people will be excited to see you. As the months go by, you may find fewer people try to contact you. Expecting to have the same relationships with people is a dangerous kind of attachment that could leave you feeling isolated. This is why it's important to seek out new friendships. You may be going back to old friends who have gotten married with children, or your interests may have changed. There are many reasons why people grow apart, so try not to take it personally. Think of all the amazing people you met on your travels by chance—there are more amazing people all over the world you can get to know!

The romance of travel may leave you pining for more international experiences. No matter how long you previously spent in the place you're returning to, there are always adventures to be had within 50 kilometres of your doorstep. You just have to be willing to seek it out! Go for a hike, walk down new streets, or go for a drive until you reach a place that looks like it's worth exploring. Don't forget that there are other countries that you can visit, too.

There are many other issues you may have to overcome on your return that are worth keeping in mind before you leave. Ask your friends or family about places that sell Japanese groceries, figure out what kind of adapters you need if you're importing electronics, and get professional references from your office. Also, do yourself a favor and take photos of your current everyday sights in Japan. No matter where you are, try not to take your experiences for granted. A world of possibility exists within you. Your perspective is the key to unlocking it.

If you'd like to read a bit more, I'd recommend these for a hard look at the subject:

<http://jetwit.com/wordpress/2013/07/09/10-ways-to-cope-with-reverse-culture-shock-and-leaving-japan/>

<http://www.vagabondish.com/how-to-survive-reverse-culture-shock/>

Brent Barron, Fukushima (2008-2013)

After saying my thousandth goodbye and feeling utterly sucked dry by the vampires of emotion, I left Fukushima—the place I had called home for four years—to embark on my next big adventure. I went immediately to Europe for over a month, where new experiences stacked up in my arms so fast I had no time to hang onto the old. Still, soon enough I found myself touching down back in the deep-fried southern state of Georgia and into a new reality. And, for a time, the reunion with family and old friends was great, as was stuffing my face full with four years of missed slices of *real* pizza (hold the corn and mayo). It felt like another extended vacation... until it didn't. Then one day all the deferred worries I'd crammed into a little bubble over my head burst and drenched me. Welcome back to the Real World, Brent.

In the nearly six months since leaving Japan, I spent days that turned into months applying and interviewing for jobs like *that* was a full-time job—with a relaxed dress-code that didn't require showering, shaving, or pants. Out of the several million applications I put in, I heard back from only a fraction, and found myself in a lovely limbo-land of being not qualified enough for some jobs and overqualified for others. I had a lot of time to sit around at home and think. Outside of the immediately urgent prospect of finding a job to bring in some income, I had to think about the long-term. I knew I wanted to write, and began dipping my toes in the massive virtual waters of internet freelance journalism. But what was my goal? If I could do absolutely anything, what would it be?

I really thought about it long and hard, and I realized I had the same career ambitions now at 28 as I did way back at 20. I wanted to be a TV screenwriter. The only difference was that taking a big career risk approaching 30 is way scarier than it would have been a decade before. But, taking fear out of the equation, I still wanted it just as bad. I fell into the mindset of living as if failure was not an option, and suddenly the world opened back up for me.

My months of floating around like an untethered astronaut often felt like a scary eternity, but in reality it wasn't. In that time, I found a job, started writing again, and solidified plans for my future. Looking back, I did a lot! If your immediate post-Japan life isn't what you'd hoped, give it time. And while you move toward your future, stay connected to your past. It's helped immensely to stay in touch with many of my close friends from Japan, especially on those blah days. While there are times I crave a bowl of sauce *katsu* or wish I was on a ski lift heading to the top of Mount Bandai, it's the people that I truly miss, and keeping those connections alive—whether through Facebook messages, Skype calls or figuring out time zones for group video gaming—has been one of my lifelines during these transitional days.



It's raining outside and you are surrounded by unpacked boxes. You miss Japan. You miss your friends, but what can you do? Now that you are leaving, you will have to put more effort into maintaining your friendships. You will be transitioning to your new life after the JET Programme and the Connect team has come up with some tips on how to maintain your bonds.

Skype: First you will need to at least make a mental note of time zones of where your friends will be when you what is a good time to contact them. It is not always convenient to have a Skype session when your best friend is in another country and falling asleep as you are cooking your morning oatmeal and wanting to chat. Plan ahead and make it special. Arrange a group chat to catch up with more than one friend at a time.

Facebook: The messenger feature is the main thing I use to catch up with friends who live outside of Japan. What is great about you becoming a *sempai* now is that you can give advice to current JETs who are a part of your prefectural AJET page or Special Interest Group pages. I know I am not alone in saying I appreciate my friends' photo albums and video uploads, so that I can get a glimpse of where they are living and working.

Line: Get a smart phone once you leave and import your contacts. With the Line app, you can have group chats, record video, and leave voice messages. It's convenient and has cute emoticons.

Email and snail mail: Do you miss your favorite Japanese chewing gum? Or have you ever tasted fig cookies from Dubai? Get the addresses of co-workers and friends. Sending and receiving care packages to friends abroad really helps them get readjusted to their non-JET life and lets you sample goodies from where your friends will be living. You will also have to start filling out paper work to get your pension refund. This process will go a lot smoother if you have several ways of contacting your old supervisor (If they are the one helping you with the paperwork). What about your students? Some of your student might not have Skype or Facebook accounts, but would value an update about your life after leaving your current position in the JET Programme. If you have an *eikaiwa* class or want to start a pen pal program with your old students don't discount the art of handwriting a letter or sending a postcard.

Alumni groups: Remember your good ole consulate? Meet up with other JET alumni who are in your area transitioning to life after the JET Programme and enjoy activities that celebrate Japanese culture via a JETAA chapter. These groups support the consulate's JET-related activities. You could even be the one to help with recruitment, candidate selection, and helping with orientation before new JETs fly off to Tokyo.

Don't forget about your prefecture! In Shimane prefecture, our AJET chapter asks leavers from the past couple of years to send in a quick update and advice videos for current leavers. The videos are then edited and played at our end of the year AJET leaver's party.



TAIKO TIES

Sara Martinez, Tochigi (2010-2013)

In May of 2013, when I moved back to Texas from Japan, there were a lot of things I was in dire need of: a job, a home, a job, a car, a *job*... Of course I was already looking for these things, but before I'd been out of Japan for even a week, I had something new to add to my list--I seriously needed some Japan. I needed someone I could talk to about it who would actually get it, whose only questions wouldn't be, "Did you like it?" (I was there for three years. What do you think?) and "Was the sushi good?" (How would I know? I hate the stuff!).

I started looking around, and found a Japanese language club. It turned out to consist of twenty eager Texans and two or three "Let's practice English!" Japanese nationals. I visited a "Wind Festival" featuring some professional kite makers from Sendai. Next, I tried an "Asian Culture" festival downtown, and that's where I saw Dallas Kiyari Daiko perform for the first time. Somewhere between the first *fue* notes and the last beat of the drums, I decided that they were the group for me.

I'd studied *o-hayashi* during my time in Japan (you know, those awesome drummers you see on carts in the middle of festivals sometimes), so I figured I wouldn't exactly be a noob. I e-mailed the group leader and got an enthusiastic response, including the phrase, "Your sister already e-mailed us about you!" Clearly I wasn't the only one who'd noticed how badly I needed a Japan fix. My first Sunday practice, I received a rude awakening and a pleasant surprise. To make a long story short, it turns out that *kumi-daiko* is a lot more physically taxing than *o-hayashi*. On the plus side, I had stumbled upon not just a chance to tighten up my core, but an actual little slice of Japan in north Dallas.

My group mates, most of them Japanese nationals, converse mostly in Japanese. During break time, we sit on the floor of the



studio and drink *mugi-cha*. And when I tell them how much I love *onsen*, and how I long for a hearty bowl of miso ramen, they do more than just smile and nod.

Joining Kiyari Daiko was one of the best decisions I've made since moving to Dallas. In the months that followed, I did eventually find a job, and an apartment, and a car. And every time I accomplished one of these goals, I had a group of friends telling me "*Otsukare sama deshita!*" Every week we have home-made *mugi-cha* and various *o-yatsu*. Our *bounenkai* included home-made *mochi*, *karaage*, *takoyaki*, and *o-den*. And lest you think that I'm only in it for the food, they've actually started letting me perform too. Last summer, I even got to play at a Rangers game, though unfortunately I didn't manage to get Yu Darvish's autograph (this time). Every Sunday after practice, I go home sweaty and sore, but I know it's all worth it every time I get up on stage, raise my *bachi* and cry, "*So-re!*"

Sara was an ALT in northern Tochigi from 2010 to 2013. She now makes her home in Dallas, Texas, USA where she works as a college planning coach and devotes her free time to writing the next great fantasy novel and planning her next stint abroad.

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