

AJET

# CONNECT

10.2014





“Yozukuhade”  
by Josh Del Pino (Shimane)

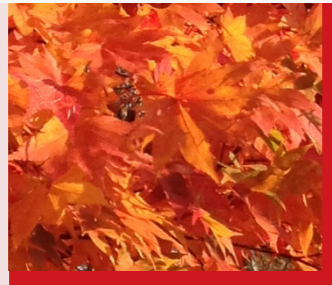
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If you haven't spent a weekend eating fruit fresh from the tree, you're not doing Japan right. See what's in season and find a farm!



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Japan has a long history of paper-making and bookbinding. If you're looking for a way to personalize gifts, read up!



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Colder weather and more layers means more choice when it comes to your style. This month, we look at men's fall fashion. Ladies, next month!



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David Hester, first-year Tokyo JET, takes us inside experimental music venue SuperDeluxe.



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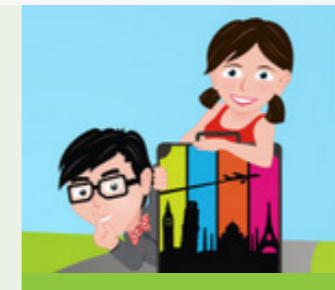


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Earning gold status with an airline can net you some serious perks. With these tips, you'll be there in no time!



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With major disasters come untold stories of heroism. Tomiko Shimotsukue put everything into helping abandoned animals in her area.



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This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online [here](http://www.ajet.net). Read Connect online and follow us on [ISSUU](https://www.facebook.com/ajetconnect).





### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Steven Thompson  
Head Editor  
4th-year Fukushima ALT



### LETTER FROM THE AJET CHAIR

Sandy Cheng  
National AJET Chair  
4th-year Kobe ALT

### CLICK AROUND!

Send us your thoughts on any article in Connect by clicking the comment bar on the page!

COMMENTS

**BEING A DIGITAL PUBLICATION** has its ups and downs, and Connect is always experimenting with new ways to make flipping through this PDF worthwhile and interesting. While we'd certainly love it if we could send each and every one of you a printed copy every month, there are some things we can only do in a digital platform.

Did you know that there's something clickable on pretty much every page in Connect? Aside from links for further reading and the ever-present Connect logo at the bottom (which leads you back to the Table of Contents), there's also a comment button on most pages that let's you respond to what you read and get in touch with us.

In this issue, we were also able to give you links to online fashion ("Autumn Essentials" page 25), some music to read by ("Step into the Soundroom" page 32), and maps to skate parks to visit ("Skateboarding in Hi No Kuni" page 50). Connect as a digital magazine is also accessible anywhere you go on your smartphone, thanks to issuu's easy-to-use and nice-looking mobile site and app.

So, until we're able to get a bunch of money and a distribution center, Connect will likely remain a digital-only publication, but that just gives us more chances to be interactive and interact with you. Got an idea for a nifty digital feature? Been waiting for your chance to Rickroll thousands of JETs and JET alumni? Send us your stories, comments, and videos.

**HI JETS!** Every month in this letter, you will find updates on the AJET National Council's activities. Our hope is that by making our actions completely transparent, you—the JET community—will get excited about being an AJET member, and know for a fact we're doing all we can to make your experience in Japan the best possible!

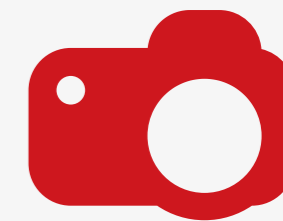
As many of you already know, Tokyo Orientation underwent some big changes this year, with hired professionals replacing the volunteer JET Tokyo Orientation Assistants, as well as the discontinuation of the Hospitality Centre, AJET Desk, and AJET Info Fair. AJET's Information Fair at the After JET Conference was also discontinued. Sad news!

However, there's still a silver lining! Since AJET no longer needs to raise funds for renting out room space for both the Tokyo Orientation and After JET Conference Info Fairs, we re-evaluated our system, and took the opportunity to change the way AJET's partnerships work!

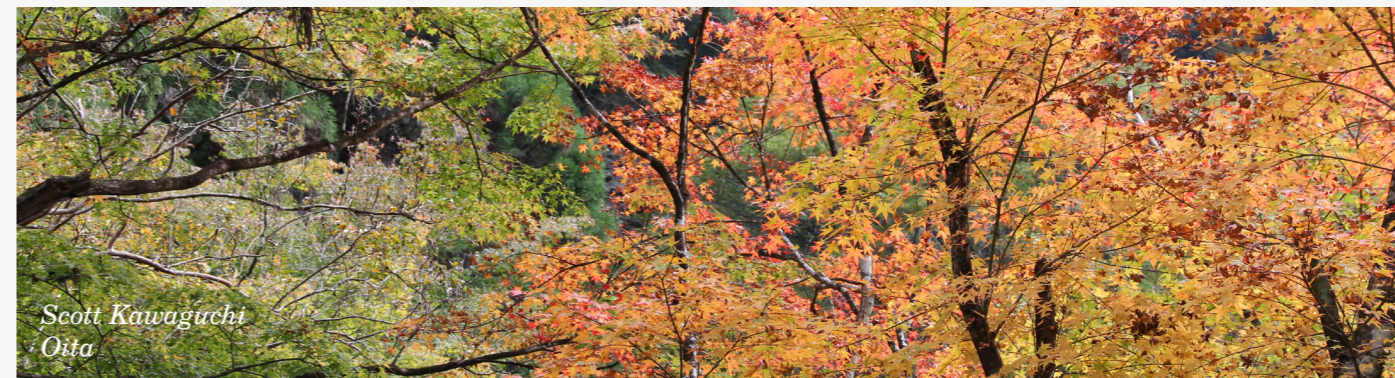
Where previously AJET had received monetary compensation for advertising, we now ask for products and discounts that we can distribute to the JET community via giveaways and contests. Our AJET National Council team has worked hard to negotiate agreements with many new companies, and if you're a current member of the AJET Block groups on Facebook, you may have already seen some of the early results of this change!

In other news, we've had our first Professional Development Conference Call for this AJET year, hosted numerous Block events across Japan, and our new website is nearing completion! I hope you've been enjoying everything we've been up to so far, because there's a lot more where that came from! Get hyped for even more AJET 2014!

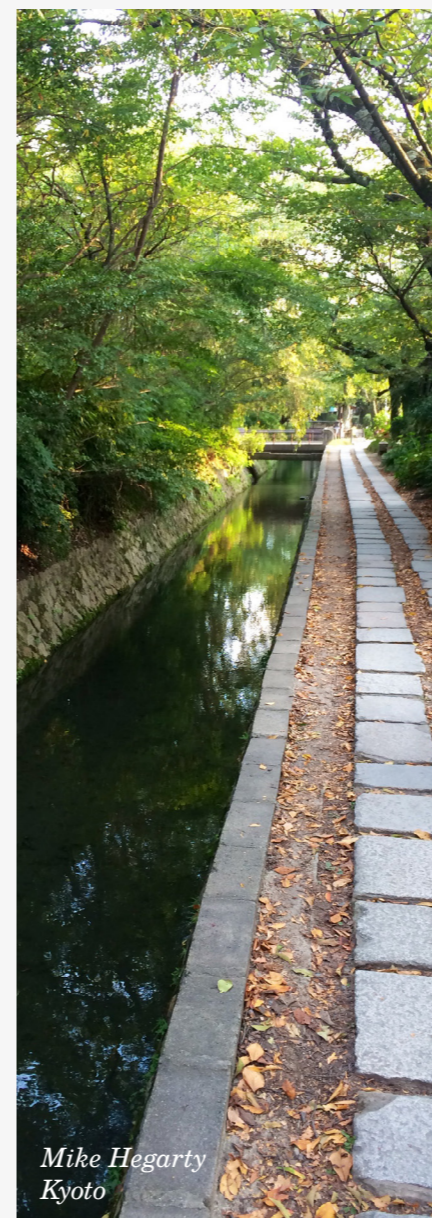
# COVER SUBMISSIONS



Send your photos for next month's cover to [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net). Photos must be submitted by the 25th of the month and include your name, prefecture, and title (if applicable). Photos must belong to you, and be of high resolution (1280x720, -300dpi, or higher).



Scott Kawaguchi  
Oita



Mike Hegarty  
Kyoto



Audrey Akcasu  
Nagasaki



Lorens van der Merwe  
Okayama



Audrey Akcasu  
Nagasaki



# NEWS & EVENTS



ERIKA KLEIN

[connect.news@ajet.net](mailto:connect.news@ajet.net)

The end of the summer saw several personal firsts, from spending my birthday at the US Consulate in Osaka to surviving my first paragliding lesson despite my questionable Japanese (it was fun, but hang gliding's still my thing). Check out our list of headlines for other exciting things that have occurred this past month in Japan, and enjoy the cool fall weather and abundance of kabocha!



LACEY LEE

[connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net)

Hello again everyone! We'll be stepping into fall season soon and I have to say, it's a particular favorite of mine. Something about seeing the leaves change and feeling the slight tickle of an autumn breeze is revitalizing, almost other-worldly after the unforgiving summer heat. Regardless of your exact location in Japan, the opportunity to witness true autumnal splendor is well on its way. I'm looking forward to it! Until then....



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Event Calendar

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In the News

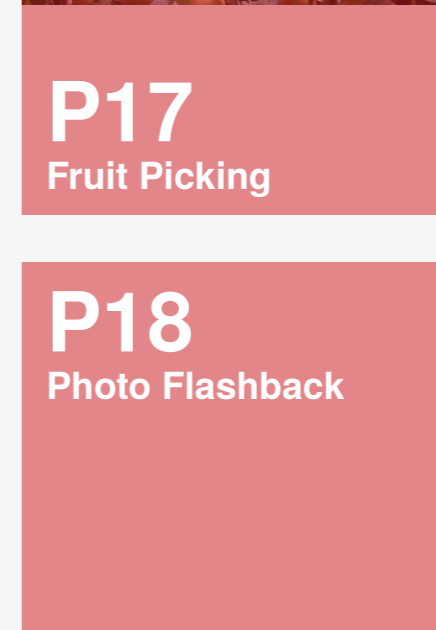
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In Good Times & Bad



**P16**  
Momijigari



**P17**  
Fruit Picking



**P18**  
Photo Flashback



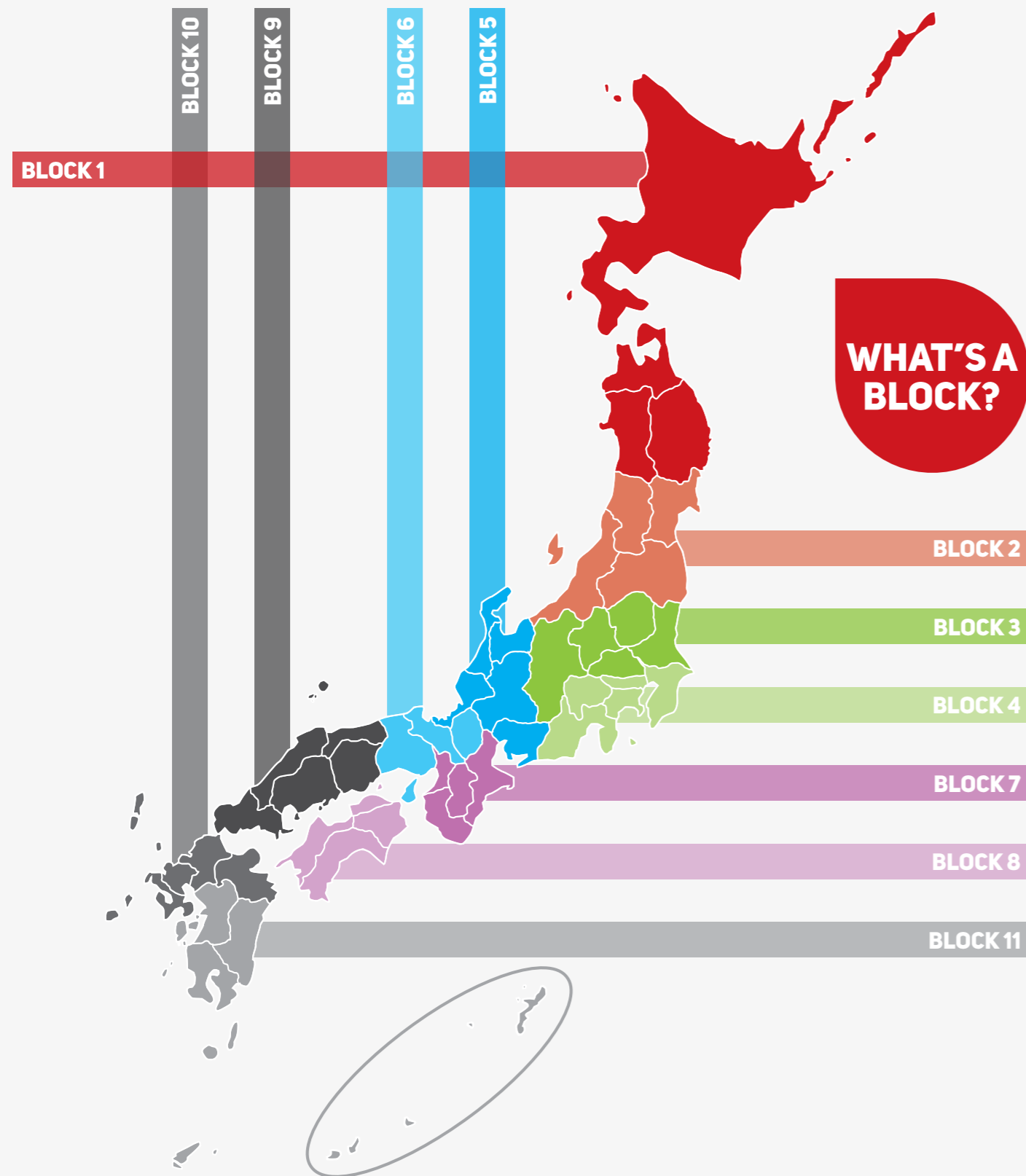


# EVENTS CALENDAR

## OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Autumn is approaching, so get up and get out there! There will be ample opportunity to experience the joys of fall at harvest festivals, chrysanthemum showings, and various activities, shows, and exhibitions in your area. Now's the time to put yourself in the middle of it! Then let us know about it once you're back at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).

Got an event of your own you'd like added to the calendar? Send us an email, or visit the [AJET website](http://AJET website).



### **GORYOKAKU 150TH ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL**

Hakodate, Hokkaido  
4/26/2014-2/28/2015 - [Website](#)

### **MOMI-G FESTA**

Hakodate, Hokkaido  
10/18-11/9 - [Website](#)

### **2014 SAPPORO CHRYSANTHEMUM FESTIVAL**

Sapporo, Hokkaido  
10/31-11/3 - [Website](#)

### **YANASE TAKASHI EXHIBITION AT KUSHIRO ART MUSEUM**

Kushiro, Hokkaido  
10/31/14-01/21/15 - [Website](#)

### **2014 SAPPORO ART STAGE**

Sapporo, Hokkaido  
11/8-12/7 - [Website](#)

### **29TH NATIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL AKITA**

Akita, Akita  
10/4-11/3 - [Website](#)

### **NAKANOSHIMA INDUSTRIAL FESTIVAL**

Nagaoka, Niigata  
10/19 - [Website](#)

### **ECHIGO KENSHIN SAKE FESTIVAL**

Joetsu, Niigata  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

### **GRANNY'S 2014 8-HOUR ENDURANCE RACE**

Niigata, Niigata  
10/26 - [Website](#)

### **SEKIYU NO SATO AUTUMN FOLIAGE FESTIVAL**

Niigata, Niigata  
10/27-11/25 - [Website](#)

### **LANTIS FEST 2014**

Sendai, Miyagi  
11/15-16 - [Website](#)



### **KANUMA BUTTSUKE AUTUMN FESTIVAL 2014**

Kanuma, Tochigi  
10/11-12  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

### **RYUSEI ROCKET FESTIVAL**

Chichibu, Saitama  
10/12 - [Website](#)

### **KAIKOEN AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL**

Komoro, Nagano  
10/12-11/17 - [Website](#)

### **KAWAGOE FESTIVAL**

Kawagoe, Saitama  
10/18-19 - [Website](#)

### **TOCHIGI AUTUMN FESTIVAL 2014**

Tochigi, Tochigi  
11/14-16 - [Website](#)



**2014 HARVEST FESTIVAL  
COCO FARM AND WINERY**

Ashikaga, Tochigi  
11/15-16 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**ENOSHIMA AQUARIUM  
SPECIAL PROGRAM: NIGHT  
AQUARIUM**

Fujisawa, Kanagawa  
7/20-11/30 - [Website](#)

**DAITSUKEMEN HAKU 2014**

Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo  
10/2-29 - [Website](#)

**TOKYO INTERNATIONAL FILM  
FESTIVAL 2014**

Minato-ku, Tokyo  
10/23-31 - [Website](#)

**DAIDOGEI WORLD CUP IN  
SHIZUOKA 2014**

Shizuoka, Shizuoka  
10/31, 11/1-3  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**UNNOJUKU FUREAI FESTIVAL**

Tomi, Nagano  
11/23 - [Website](#)

**SURVIVAL GAME FEST 2014**

Inzai, Chiba  
11/1-2 - [Website](#)

**ESCAPE THE SLEEPING  
FOREST SHIZUOKA**

Shizuoka, Shizuoka  
11/1, 11/2  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**LAKE KAWAGUCHI AUTUMN  
LEAVES FESTIVAL**

Kawaguchi, Yamanashi  
11/1-24 - [Website](#)

**HAKONE DAIMYO GYORETSU**

Hakone, Kanagawa  
11/3 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**TSUMAGO FEUDAL  
PROCESSION**

Nagiso, Nagano  
11/23 - [Website](#)



**THE JOY OF SAKE 2014 TOKYO**

Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo  
11/6 - [Website](#)

**TORI NO ICHI**

Asakusa, Tokyo  
11/10, 11/22 - [Website](#)

**HIMEJI CONFECTIONARY  
FESTIVAL 2014**

Himeji, Hyogo  
10/31-11/4 - [Website](#)



**SIEGE OF OSAKA 400TH  
ANNIVERSARY**

Osaka, Osaka  
10/1-12/31  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**TOSA NO HOJOSAI HARVEST  
FESTIVAL**

9/20-11/3  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**SPECIAL EXHIBITION  
"CHOSOKABE AND UKITA"**

Nankoku, Kochi  
10/11-12/7  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**AUTUMN FESTIVAL(S)**

Saijo, Ehime  
10/14-17 - [Website](#)

**HIMEJI NINJA RYU SHURIKEN  
CHAMPIONSHIP**

Himeji, Hyogo  
11/2 - [Website](#)

**JAPANESE GREAT  
BATTLESHIP YAMATO**

Suminoe-ku, Osaka, Osaka  
10/4-11/30 - [Website](#)

**NATIONAL TREASURE  
SPECIAL OPEN AT KOHFUKUJI  
TEMPLE 2014**

Nara, Nara  
10/24-11/24  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**COLOR RUN OSAKA**

Maishima Sports Island,  
Osaka  
11/1 - [Website](#)

**DOGO ONSENART 2014**

Matsuyama, Ehime  
4/10-12/31 - [Website](#)

**KUROSHIO KOUBOU: BONITO  
BASHING EXPERIENCE**

Takaoka-gun, Kochi  
4/1-10/31  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)  
Reservations required.

**AUTUMN FESTIVAL OF  
YAMASHIRO SHRINE**

Niihama, Ehime  
11/3 - [Website](#)

**MASTERS KOSHIEEN 2014**

Nishinomiya, Hyogo  
11/15-16 - [Website](#)

**WONDER OF LIGHT  
EXHIBITION**

Minamiawaji, Hyogo  
3/15-11/30 - [Website](#)

**IKEDA RAMEN FESTA 2014**

Ikeda, Osaka  
11/1-2 - [Website](#)

**OSAKA PET EXPO 2014**

Suminoe-ku, Osaka, Osaka  
11/1-3 - [Website](#)

**THE 6TH IGARYU SHURIKEN  
CHAMPIONSHIP**

Iga, Mie  
11/9 - [Website](#)

**KISO ULTRA MARATHON 2014**

Kuwano, Mie  
11/22 - [Website](#)



**NAGOYA FESTIVAL**

Nagoya, Aichi  
10/17-19 - [Website](#)

**KUZURYU AUTUMN LEAVES  
FESTIVAL 2014**

Kuzuryu, Fukui  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

**SUZUKI YASUHIRO'S MITATE  
LABORATORY**

Kanazawa, Ishikawa  
9/13-11/24 - [Website](#)

**ILLUMINATION CRUISE -  
FUGAN SUIJO LINE**

Toyama, Toyama  
11/9-12/1 - [Website](#)

**MIKUNI HOT SPRING AND  
CRAB FESTIVAL**

Sakai, Fukui  
11/16-17 - [Website](#)

**WORLD HERITAGE -  
AINOKURA GASSHO-STYLE  
VILLAGE LIGHT-UP**

Nanto, Toyama  
11/21-24 - [Website](#)

**KYOTO: SPLENDORS OF THE  
ANCIENT CAPITAL**

Kigashiyama-ku, Kyoto,  
Kyoto  
9/13-10/16 - [Website](#)

**LOOKING EAST: WESTERN  
ARTISTS AND THE ALLURE OF  
JAPAN (KYOTO) EXHIBIT**

Sakyo-ku, Kyoto  
9/30-11/30 - [Website](#)

**KYOTO ART FESTA ARTDIVE  
2014**

Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, Kyoto  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

**2ND KYOTO LOCAL GOURMET  
RELAY MARATHON 2014**

Uji, Kyoto  
10/26 - [Website](#)  
(Deadline to sign up October  
10th.)



**TRAVELING AROUND THE  
WORLD IN SAND: RUSSIA**

Tottori, Tottori  
4/19/14-1/4/2015 - [Website](#)

**MATSUE SUITORO 2014**

Matsue, Shimane  
10/1-31 - [Website](#)

**10TH HIROSHIMA FOOD  
FESTIVAL 2014**

Hiroshima, Hiroshima  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

**WORLD CHAMPION CLASSIC  
2014**

Tottori, Tottori  
11/2-3 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**GOURMET FONDO IN MISATO  
2014**

Misato, Shimane  
11/3 - [Website](#)

**SHUKUBA MATSURI FESTIVAL**

Yakagechou, Okayama  
11/9 - [Website](#)



**THE 5TH FUKUOKA ASIAN ART TRIENNALE 2014**

Hakata-ku, Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
9/6-11/30 - [Website](#)

**OKTOBER FEST FUKUOKA 2014**

Hakata-ku, Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
10/17-26 - [Website](#)

**HAKATA OKUNICHI 2014**

Hakata-ku, Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
10/23-24 - [Website](#)

**IMARI TON-TEN-TON MATSURI 2014**

Imari, Saga  
10/24-26 - [Website](#)

**17TH YOSAKOI SASEBO FESTIVAL**

Sasebo, Nagasaki  
10/24-26 - [Website](#)

**2014 SAGA INTERNATIONAL BALLON FIESTA**

Saga, Saga  
10/30-11/3 - [Website](#)

**WORLD BEER AND WINE FESTIVAL 2014**

Sasebo, Nagasaki  
10/30-11/3 - [Website](#)

**HIKARI NO OKOKU**

Sasebo, Nagasaki  
10/31-3/31 - [Website](#)



**KARATSU KUNCHI FESTIVAL**

Karatsu, Saga  
11/2-4 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**COLOR ME RAD FUKUOKA**

Higashi-ku, Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
11/22 - [Website](#)



**MYOENJI MAIRI FESTIVAL 2014**

Hioki, Kagoshima  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

**TANIYAMA FURUSATO FESTIVAL**

Taniyama, Kagoshima  
10/25-26 - [Website](#)

**GOKANOSHO FALL FOLIAGE FESTIVAL**

Yatsushiro, Kumamoto  
10/25-11/20 - [Website](#)

**MIYAZAKI-JINGU TAISAI 2014 [AKA JINMU-SAMA]**

Miyazaki, Miyazaki  
11/1-2 - [Website](#)

**COLOR ME RAD OKINAWA**

Tomigusu-ku, Okinawa  
11/2 - [Website](#)

**ONE LOVE JAMAICA TOUR**

Okinawa, Okinawa  
11/22-23 - [Website](#)

**KUMAMOTO CASTLE AUTUMN FESTIVAL 2014**

Kumamoto Chuo-ku, Kumamoto  
9/1-10/31 - [Website](#)

**SHURIJO CASTLE FESTIVAL**

Naha, Okinawa  
10/31-11/3  
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**AMAKUSA MARATHON**

Amakusa, Kumamoto  
11/16 - [Website](#)

**AYA CRAFT FESTIVAL**

Aya, Miyazaki  
11/21-24 - [Website](#)

**YATSUSHIRO MYOKEN FESTIVAL**

Yatsushiro, Kumamoto  
11/22-23 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)



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**WHYNOT!?**  
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# IN THE NEWS

## AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

COMMENTARY

### AUGUST 15

Abe sends a ritual offering rather than visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine on the 69th anniversary of the end of WWII, attempting to avoid exacerbating tensions with China and South Korea ([source](#))

### AUGUST 23

Over 3,500 protestors in Okinawa stage the largest demonstration yet against the relocation of the controversial US Futenma base ([source](#))

### AUGUST 29

Japan's Defense Ministry submits a record budget request in line with PM Abe's reinterpretation of Article 9 to expand Japan's military ([source](#))

### SEPTEMBER 3

Indian PM Narendra Modi's 5-day trip to Japan suggests increased cooperation between the two countries in the face of China's rise ([source](#))

### SEPTEMBER 3

Upholding his pledge to promote the empowerment of women, Abe's cabinet reshuffle increases the number of female ministers from 2 to 5 ([source](#))

### SEPTEMBER 8

Chiba man is confirmed to have dengue fever, becoming the first infected person outside Tokyo during the recent outbreak ([source](#))

### SEPTEMBER 8

With its GDP reduced by 7.1% in the April-June quarter, Japan experiences its largest economic contraction since 3/11, adding to concerns about the recent sales tax increase and Abenomics policy ([source](#))

### SEPTEMBER 9

Newly released annals of the late Emperor Hirohito omit new information about WWII responsibility and Yasukuni Shrine ([source](#))

Photo - Joshua Del Pino

# IN GOOD TIMES & BAD

## THE HOPEFUL FRIENDSHIP OF ABE AND MODI

SEAN MULVIHILL (HYOGO)

**THIS PAST MAY,** India—the world's largest democracy—gave Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party an overwhelming victory in the general elections, providing Modi and the BJP the majority in India's lower house and ensuring that Modi became

that a close friendship has developed between the two prime ministers. Both were elected on platforms of economic revival, both often depict nationalist tendencies, and both hope to curb an increasingly aggressive China. Even less surprising is the prime ministers' goal of using their positive relationship to build closer ties between their respective nations. Modi's five-day visit to Japan in late August reflected that objective.

**"THEY NO DOUBT SEE A BIT OF THEMSELVES IN THE OTHER"**

Upon his highly anticipated arrival in Kyoto, Modi greeted Abe with a bear-hug, putting the budding friendship in the spotlight once again.

the next prime minister. Another fan of Modi's is Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who also happens to follow him—and only three other people—on Twitter. Modi tweeted in December 2012, "Sent my greetings to Mr. Shinzo Abe for leading the Liberal Democratic Party to a landslide victory in Japan's elections." A few days after India's parliamentary elections, it was Abe's turn: "Great talking to you, Mr. Modi. I look forward to welcoming you in Tokyo and further deepening our friendly ties."

Surprisingly, however, Modi's visit lost its promising momentum and ultimately proved unsatisfactory as both sides failed to make bold steps on a number of issues. Sure, declarations of continued Japanese foreign investment and commitments to joint maritime exercises were made, but the heads of state failed to make crucial progress in establishing "2+2" talks between foreign and defense ministers. Similarly, development of a civilian nuclear export agreement fell short as well. Reasons widely given for such a conservative outcome

are India's fears of angering China (its largest trading partner), and Japanese businesses' reluctance to invest, especially nuclear material, in a nation that is still perceived to be embedded in corruption.

Abe and Modi's budding prime ministerial relationship has been filled with flowery statements for one another and their respective nations—but in reality they, like most new couples, will be faced with difficult conversations which require actions in order to see any beneficial outcome. If Indian and Japanese lawmakers and businessmen fail to make the right compromises, both countries will miss an important opportunity to bolster their nations' economies as well as their regional and global standings.

*Sean Mulvihill is a 2nd year ALT in Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture. A contributor to this magazine and editor of a Hyogo Times, he tries to stay relevant by staying up-to-date on world affairs and pop culture. This is largely accomplished by listening to The Bret Easton Ellis Podcast, Freakonomics, and anything from NPR, all are highly recommended.*

COMMENTARY



# MOMIJIGARI (紅葉狩り)

LACEY LEE

## MOMIJIGARI VOCAB

- 紅葉狩り *momijigari*  
leaf peeping/looking
- 紅葉 *momiji, kōyō*  
autumn foliage, esp. red leaves
- 黄葉 *ōyō*  
yellow leaves
- 褐葉 *katsuyō*  
brown leaves

**LITERALLY TRANSLATED AS “LEAF HUNTING,”** but also known as “leaf peeping” or “leaf looking,” *momijigari* is a quintessential autumn event in Japan, just as it may have been in your hometown. Every year, many Japanese travelers flock to well-renowned locations to take in scenic autumnal foliage, known in Japanese as *momiji* or *kōyō*.

Momijigari season begins roughly around mid-September in the northernmost parts of the country, and proceeds southward along the country over the course of 50 days. Once the season begins in your area, you have an estimated 20 to 25 days to get out and see the best possible display of fall colors. Be sure to check out the October and November 2013 issues of Connect for our best recommendations for fall color spots.

COMMENTARY

# FRUIT PICKING

LACEY LEE

## ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS ABOUT JAPAN

is the special emphasis on homemade or fresh foods. You can experience this particular aspect of Japan by getting outdoors and picking some of this freshness yourself! Chances are there's a farm in your town or nearby that lets you pay money and start grabbing.

Fruit picking can go a few ways. Depending on the farm, pickers may be charged for a certain time frame and can eat as they pick. Alternatively, pickers may be allowed to pick at their own

pace and pay for acquisitions afterward based on weight. Before you pack up and head out though, do know that while most farms are open to walk-ins for most of the day, others may require advance reservations.

The price you'll pay varies depending on the season and the fruit you plan to pick. Prices are lower at the end of a fruit's season than at the beginning, as farms try to clear their inventory. Depending on your location and how the weather has been there the past few months, October will see the

latter end of the grape and pear seasons, and the relative beginnings of the apple and mikan seasons, so it's a great time to get out there and pick!

## THAT'S MY JAM

NICK POWERS

Got some fruit that's getting soft? Make some jam! Grab whatever fruit you have, get some sterilized jars, and throw it on the stove! Freeze some spoons to use for checking the jam's consistency as it cooks, and don't forget the lemon juice, sugar, and salt! When it's done, store it in the fridge and enjoy all week long.

COMMENTARY

## FRUIT SEASONS\*

Month	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
Apples									●	●	●	●
Cherries					●	●	●					
Grapes							●	●	●	●		
Melons						●	●	●				
Mikan	●									●	●	●
Peaches					●	●	●	●				
Pears									●	●		
Strawberries	●	●	●	●	●							●

\*Based off a diagram found at [japan-guide.com](http://japan-guide.com).

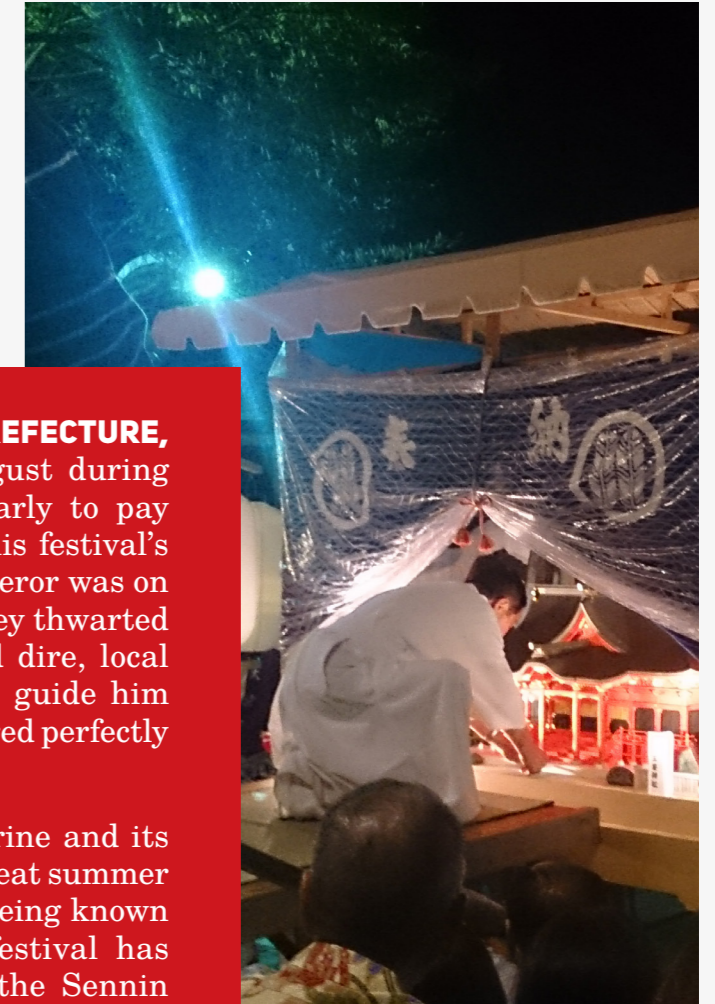
Photo - Joshua Del Pino



Photos - Erika Egner, Lacey Lee, & Roland Carlos

# PHOTO FLASHBACK: THE YAMAGA TORO MATSURI

LACEY LEE



**HELD IN YAMAGA CITY IN KUMAMOTO PREFECTURE,** Yamaga Toro Matsuri is held in mid-August during Obon, a holiday when families travel yearly to pay tribute to their ancestors. The legend of this festival's origin centers on an occasion when the Emperor was on his way to Kumamoto only to have his journey thwarted by thick fog. Though the situation seemed dire, local villagers appeared with torches of pine to guide him safely the rest of the way. It is a legend captured perfectly at dusk amid brilliant light and shade.

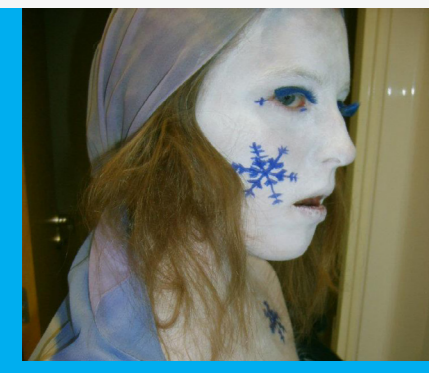
Spanning an entire weekend at Omiya Shrine and its outskirts, the Yamaga Toro is one of three great summer fire festivals in the prefecture, Kumamoto being known alternatively as the Land of Fire. The festival has many highlights, some of which include the Sennin Toro Odori, where 1,000 women dance to a slow-paced, traditional Yoheho-bushi melody with lanterns alight on their heads. Male performers reenact the Pine Torch Procession and welcoming of the Emperor in historical attire. Carefully crafted lanterns designed to represent shrines and castles are displayed throughout the streets in the entire area, and are offered to the shrine and blessed by a priest at the closing ceremony.



COMMENTARY



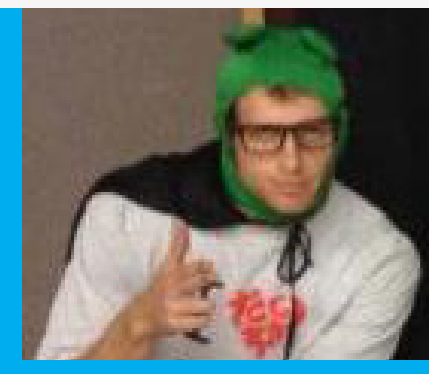
# THIS MONTH IN... ARTS & CULTURE



VERITY TOWNSEND

[connect.culture@ajet.net](mailto:connect.culture@ajet.net)

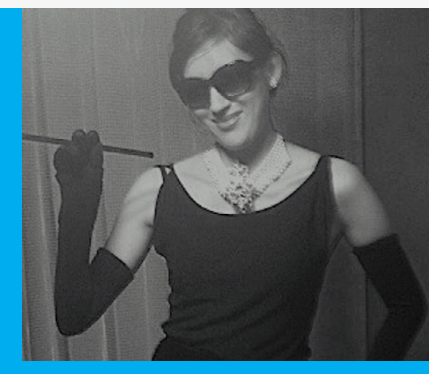
Although I need no excuse to get dressed up, Halloween is a good one! This month, I am looking forward to having Halloween parties for both the children and the eikaiwa I teach. Halloween is a great opportunity to exchange stories about Japanese yōkai and monsters from your own country!



COLIN O'NEILL

[connect.entertainment@ajet.net](mailto:connect.entertainment@ajet.net)

While many of you were enjoying the end of the Japanese summer and the beginnings of life in your new communities, I was grubbing on burritos, attending my brother's college football games, and performing best man duties at my buddy's wedding in America. Now that the fun is over, it's time to reprise my costume as the nearsighted flying frog for the fourth consecutive year. Happy October!



ERICA GRAINGER

[connect.fashion@ajet.net](mailto:connect.fashion@ajet.net)

As the months become cooler, I reorganized my wardrobe recently and dusted off some trans-seasonal wear. I also took a peek through Vogue to see all the latest in Autumn Fashion. Goodbye colourful summer frocks and hello warm earthy twinsets! Just remember to maintain your own sense of style and individuality. As Lauren Hutton quipped, "Fashion is what you're offered 4 times a year by designers and style is what you choose".



P22  
Stationery



P28  
Scarecrows

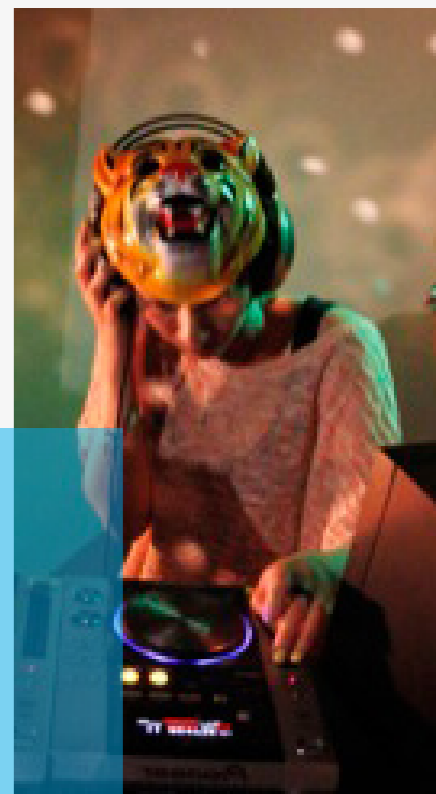


P30  
VS



P32  
The Soundroom

P25  
Autumn Essentials





# THE SUBTLE CHARMS OF A STATIONERY ADDICTION

MATTHEW ANSTIS (LONDON)

*Matt's Handmade Scroll*

## PINPOINTING THE EXACT MOMENT

when Japanese art, design, or even culture entered my life, is almost impossible. Without the internet, things may have been very different, but it set me on to a creative path which is only now beginning to blossom into a fun and rewarding craft: Japanese-style bookbinding. Otherwise known as stab binding, Japanese bookbinding involves stabbing holes into a text block, to be sewn together using a strong piece of string, silk, or thick thread. Stab binding is a fairly simple technique, but combining the right papers with the right covers and cords, coordinating themes or seasons and even just colour matching can all have drastic impacts on how each book turns out. Experimenting is always the most rewarding part of the production process for me, and could be for you too!

Books have been an important aspect of East Asian culture for a long time, and as early as the 5th century, Chinese and Japanese texts and images were being collected and read in the *kansubon* or hand scroll format. Often made of luxurious materials such as silk, or

highly decorated paper, my favourite is the mid-12th century *Heike nōkyō* [[1]]. Offered by Taira no Kiyomori to the Itsukushima Shrine, it comprises 33 scrolls featuring highly decorative scenes dusted with gold-leaf, silver and mica interspersed with Buddhist sutras copied in the most delicate calligraphy. During the Heian period, several different formats also appeared, although these were more in tune with what might look more like contemporary books, called accordion books, albums and butterfly books (*dechōsō*). Accordion books were usually made of one piece of paper, folded into a concertina and placed between two covers, but the butterfly book was slightly different. Separate pieces of paper were attached at the spine, opening out as if the pages were butterfly wings, giving the book a different sense of movement. The stab binding method originated from China during the 14th century but came to be known by the name *fukuro toji* (or pouch-bound bookbinding) in Japanese, where the pages are folded in half and stitched together with a front and back cover. It became synonymous with Japanese books but has spread even further afield, as

a beautiful and original way to bind diaries and notebooks.

We are now well into the 21st century and despite the invention of e-book technology, there has been a wave of independent publishers, book presses and binders who have seen a surge in popularity. In London, there are many niche publishing houses, such as Café Royal Books, who publish photo books and zines focusing on “aspects of change—social, historical, architectural or otherwise” (2), or even Hoxton Mini Press, who devote their books to the colourful characters you might spot in East London (3).

Publishing is a fantastic opportunity for your ideas, words and images to be

## STATIONERY HAIKU

千代紙よ、  
折って切ったら  
本作り。

*Chiyogami yo,  
otte kittara,  
honzukuri.*

The colored paper,  
fold and cut it,  
to make a book.

diffused to a wide group of people, but what if your ideas and images were the book itself? Having a background in Japanese studies and being halfway through an MA in East Asian Art History and Archaeology, I thought long and hard about a nice way that I could present my notes—or even carefully crafted gifts I could give to friends and relatives. To me technology is cold and plastic, so what if I were to

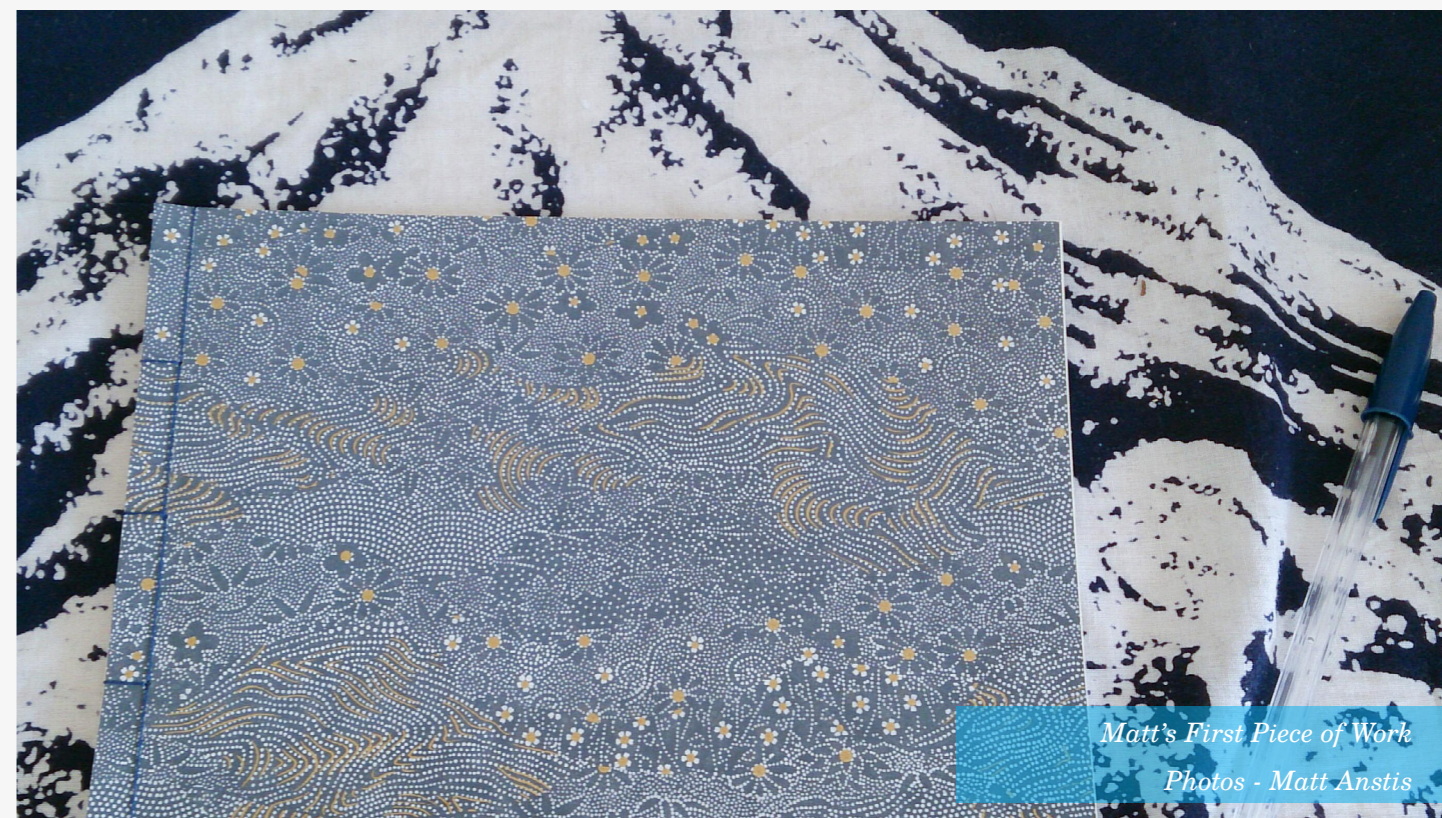
try my hand at binding my own notebook in a Japanese style? Design led brands such as Denmark's HAY have been producing plain, stab bound notebooks, which can be expensive, but I wanted to make ones which were beautiful, decorative, cheaper and with more pages. Not only that, but what could be more personal than something you have made from scratch? How much effort goes into any one handmade notebook is more

than words can describe.

Sourcing Japanese papers and high-quality recycled paper stock from shops such as Shepherds in Victoria, learning the necessary techniques using the appropriate tools, practice, and some late night hammering to the detriment of my poor neighbours, I have made hand scrolls and mini accordion books as presents, to great reception. While bookbinding might not be



*One of Matt's Notebooks*



*Matt's First Piece of Work  
Photos - Matt Anstis*





Calligraphy Practice

for everyone, it is important to find something creative or fun to participate in or start practicing, especially if you can join a group of people, or even if you prefer practicing on your own. You might even start an etsy shop account before I do!

- (1) *Komatsu, S. 2012. Kokuhō Heike nōkyō –zen sanjūsankan no bi to nazo –. Tokyo: Ebisu Kōshō Shuppan.*
- (2) *Café Royal Books, accessed 10/07/2014*
- (3) *Hoxton Mini Press, accessed 10/07/2014*

*Matthew Anstis is a part-time student at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies. Also a casual retail assistant at the Barbican Centre, he is a tough one to track down when not working or studying, as he enjoys a glut of London's artistic and Japanese-related pursuits. He writes ever so occasionally on Twitter as @nijuu\_rasen and is hoping to set up an etsy store under the same name.*

COMMUNITY



**WANT AN EASY WAY TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN JAPANESE STYLE NOTEBOOKS? MATT HAS FOUND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MASTER BOOKBINDER KOJIRO IKEGAMI'S BOOK INVALUABLE.**



Heiken Nokyo - Chapter 27 Cover  
Photo - Ovid's Exile @ flickr



Photos - Aurelien Violet

# AUTUMN ESSENTIALS FOR MEN

FELIPE GUSTAVO JORQUERA PICON (TOKYO)

*Autumn is finally here, and it's time to for a wardrobe change. As winter approaches, one can find more variety of textures, fabrics, layering and accessories becoming available. More chances to play with the way we look!*

## TWEEDS!

This coming season, tweeds are also popular. A classic, fitted tweed suit gives a nonchalance aura to the workplace, and wearing the jacket with slim jeans, pink shirt and brown shoes gives an absolutely different take on the look for the weekend.

## A MILITARY FIELD JACKET

Following the recent cargo trend, an absolute must item this autumn is the military field jacket. This looks chic both formally and casually.

TO SHOP ONLINE CLICK HERE







SHOP

**THE NECKTIE**

Important for any savvy man is to wear a necktie! There's a modern misconception that a necktie should be exclusively worn in the workplace. There are many types of informal neckties made from cashmere, plain wool, knitted silk, both rough and soft silk and various other combinations. Even if you are wearing a casual plaid red shirt and jeans, a woolen necktie will give it that little extra touch that will distinguish you from a grudge band member. With all that said, gentlemen, wearing clothes is one of the things that differentiate us from animals. Take it seriously, but be brave and have fun!



SHOP

**THE SUIT**

Rather than wearing your suit with disdain, why not change it into the shining armor of a modern knight? The first tip is to know your size. Even a cheap Zara suit looks stylish if it complements the body. Our attention should be put on the shoulders. The rest of the jacket can be easily altered, but little can be fixed on oversized shoulders. By the way, a skilled tailor should be a good friend of any gentleman. If the shoulders match evenly, you should take your suit to the tailor and have the sleeves cut and taken in. If there's some excess material, there's no need to panic, but try to avoid looking like Daniel Craig in *Skyfall*.



SHOP

**THE PERFECT COLLAR**

Choosing the perfect, flattering collar for your shirt or jacket is key. The Italian spread collar continues to be considered the most stylish choice, but rather than thinking about trends, we should focus on the shape of our face. Wide and round faced gents should avoid the spread collar, in favor of the classic straight point collar.

*Aurelien Violet is a French freelance photographer, who often contributes to the magazines, 'GQ' and 'Nylon'. He currently also manages his own fashion blog called, 'Chic is the New Punk' and you can contact him at [here](#).*

*Felipe is a dashing handsome Chilean, who lives in Tokyo, and works in the Fashion Industry. He's been in Japan for 6 years, on and off. He's multilingual (Spanish, Korean and English and some Japanese), his favorite designer is Tom Ford, and loves champagne, fine wines, and the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's!* His idea of a perfect moment is, drinking a scotch malt whisky on his balcony with his fiancé. Ooh la la!*



SHOP

**LITTLE THINGS MATTER**

The right length of the sleeves and a good drape gives an entirely different look to the same suit. If worn with a well-ironed crisp white shirt and properly knotted four-in-hand necktie, the result is amazing! Also, there's nothing sadder than an empty breast pocket. Never go for the necktie and pocket square sets, it's tacky. Necktie and pocket-square should be different colors, but complement the overall look. If choosing a patterned one is too difficult, you can never go wrong with a TV folded white pocket square à la *Mad Men*.



*The Dashing Felipe*

We should ask ourselves 'How do I really look?' It can't be over-emphasized how important the way we show ourselves is to other people, especially in the professional arena. Oversized polyester suits and poorly worn neckties are the rulers of our world nowadays. Even worse, when it comes to casual clothing, some think a pair of jeans and t-shirt will do the job. Nothing could be further from the truth! You don't need to look like a peacock, but simple details and a little bit of time can make a huge difference. Dressing well is not just a sign that you respect yourself, but also that you respect others and the environment you're in.



# THE SCARECROW FESTIVAL

CHI IENG IP (HYOGO)

## THE JAPANESE CALENDAR

is plastered with a variety of cultural celebrations based around the changing of one season to the next. As autumn settles in, many of us will be heading over to Kyoto for our yearly autumn leaves (momiji) pilgrimage. As the leaf viewing season roughly spans a month, why not save a weekend for an unusual festival in Hyogo? If you are after a taste of the odd side of Japan then this will certainly be an event to collect some unique snapshots for your photo album.

This November, make your way to Yano, a quiet town nestled within the city of Aioi. Once a year Yano plays host to a Momiji festival and *kakashi* (scarecrow) contest. Here you will find over a

thousand scarecrows erected on display. Many people from the local community work hard to design and construct interesting, creepy, bizarre or funny scarecrows. The creators gather inspirations from celebrities, pop culture, traditional folklore and current events.

Daikon (white radish) themed scarecrows are extremely popular because Aioi city had a minor claim to fame in late 2005. A stray daikon was found growing defiantly through a section of sidewalk pavement. Locals believed it to be a miracle and lovingly named it 'Dokonjo Daikon,' meaning the radish with a fighting spirit. Dokonjo Daikon quickly became a national celebrity and a mascot for courage and



Fuji-san Looks Painful

perseverance. Sadly, he was murdered by an unknown assailant but his legend lives on in the form of a popular children's story book. The locals lovingly refer to him as 'Dai-chan'.

Last year, many entries paid homage to Mt. Fuji's newly

appointed status as UNESCO world heritage. There are individual and group entries, many of the latter are absolutely adorable as they are mostly submitted by the local elementary school. Naturally, you can imagine that they would be extremely cute, bright and cheery.

Stepping aside from the class projects you will come across some amazing contenders who are in it to win it. Several entries are interactive by incorporating cut-outs for photo opportunities or small paths which allow you to take a closer inspection. If you are concerned about being intrusive just copy the locals!

Navigating your way around is quite simple, the route is well-marked and volunteers will usher you around. Eventually you will enter a small nature park called Rakan no Sato, where there are two stages set up for performances throughout the day. In the surrounding area you will find food and local produce stalls. Don't miss the local mochi-making society stall, they sell delicious hot mochi for 20 yen a serving. As you wait for your glutinous delight, you may notice a ridiculously long and enticing slide. But be warned, your bottom will be sullied by rust if you choose to ride it!

## HOW TO GET THERE

The main festivities this year will be held on the 9th of November, starting from 10:00 am till 4:00 pm. However, the scarecrows are displayed from the 8th through to the 16th. To access the festival, take a train to JR Aioi station and walk to the bus loop. Look for the Shinki bus line (神姫バス) leaving for SPring-8. After a 20 minute ride get off at the Uryu (瓜生) bus stop, it is no. 21 on the route. You will soon spot traffic wardens who will point you to the right direction. Bring an umbrella as bad weather seems to coincide with this festival!

*Chi Ieng Ip is a former ALT who caused havoc over a two-year period in a quaint town called Ikuno of Hyogo prefecture. She has since left the comfort of the mountains and returned to her home in Australia. Chi enjoys terrible Japanese puns, and has a large appetite for 'oyaji gags'. Feel free to contact her by e-mail if you have a good one! ip.chiieng@gmail.com*

**SUBMIT YOUR BEST OYAJI GAG FOR CHI AND THE COMMUNITY TO SEE IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE! CLICK HERE!**



Chanis Immortalized

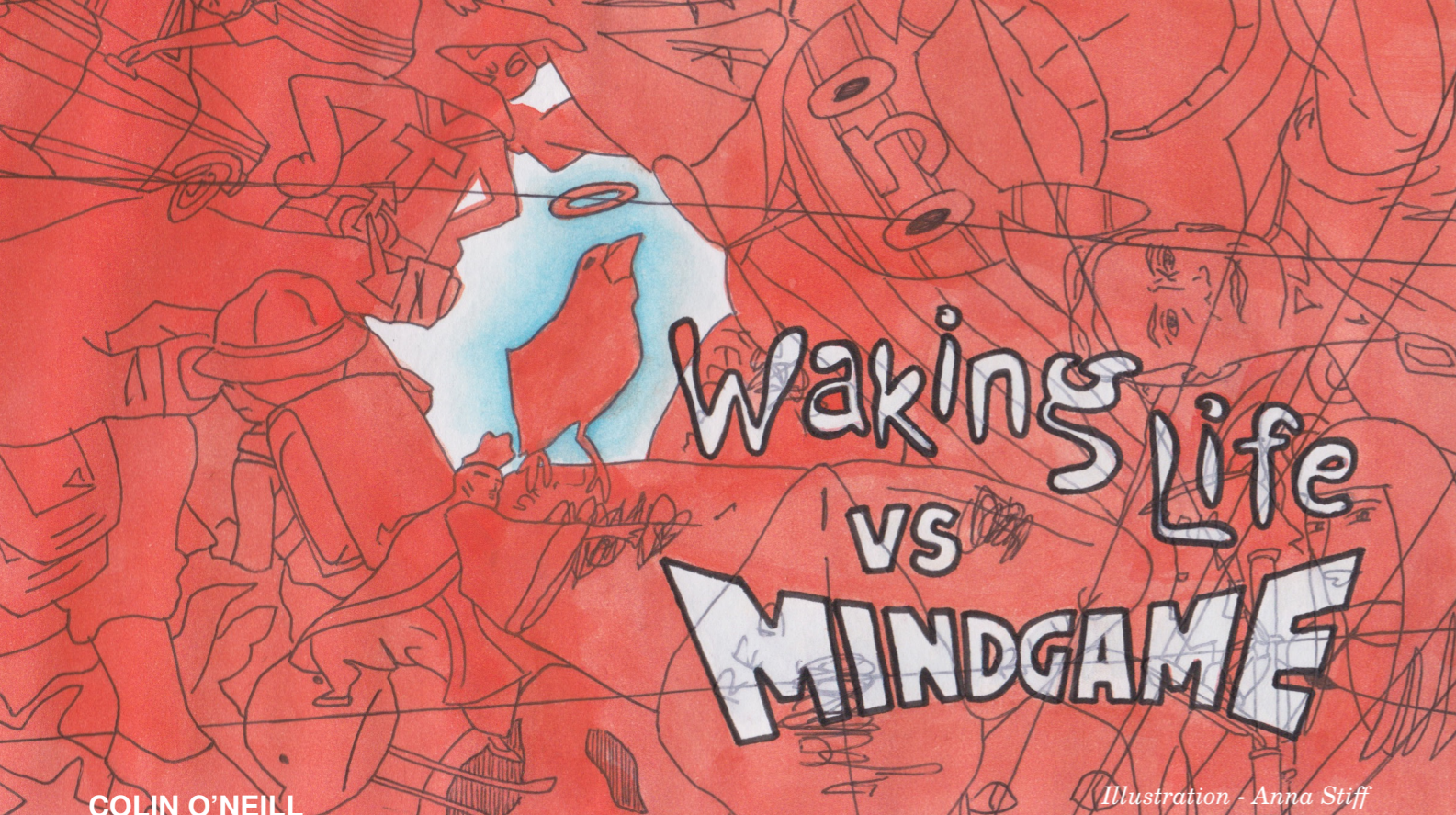


Totoro's Creepy Unnerving Smile



The Ring Fell Off?





COLIN O'NEILL

Illustration - Anna Stiff

## HOW CAN WE CONNECT

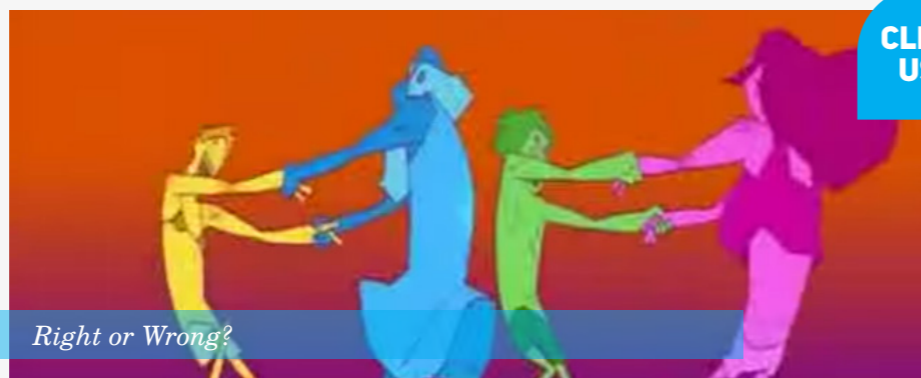
the loud, expletive expression of one Japanese anime film with the reserved, measured discourse of a Richard Linklater movie?

## BACKGROUND

With a résumé that includes pictures like *Dazed and Confused*, *Before Sunrise*, and most recently, *Boyhood*, Richard Linklater has championed a unique idea: development of films that stream together—without characters making monumental life changes as a direct result of one sensationalized event. If *Seinfeld* was indeed a “show about nothing,” Linklater has captured that genius to make **films about nothing**.

Avoiding production through the powerhouse Studio Ghibli that director Hayao Miyazaki has brought to international exposure, Masaaki Yuasa moved to pioneer the psychedelic anime with

「マインド・ゲーム」(*Mind Game*). Separate from foreign subcultures of psychedelia, which assume a certain level of drug use to accompany the art, Yuasa believed an audience could appreciate his film as an experience powerful enough to enjoy without the accompaniment of narcotics. You decide whether he is right or wrong.



Right or Wrong?

## SUMMARY

*Mind Game* follows Nishi, a young man who leads his life as a self-deprecating, passive observer of his own circumstances. Nishi comes

to the conclusion that he needs to change his approach to life after an unfortunate situation leads to his death. Posthumously realizing his own plight, Nishi finds he can go back in time to relive the moments before his death, changing his destiny.

*Waking Life* is a film that follows an unnamed main

character, floating from dream to dream. The character flows in and out of being a contributing member of philosophical conversations happening around him. While the main character willfully

**VS** or versus, is a new monthly editorial series that will draw comparisons and associations between Japan and countries worldwide. Each month, the VS series will analyze one Japanese entertainment form with one from abroad to find physical links, artistic similarities, and general impact, or success, of the highlighted works. The goal of the VS series is to show people within Japan and others outside the country how many parts of entertainment media are connected. While Japan is most often internationally associated with small cultural subsets of anime, kimono, sushi, and karaoke, the country is linked to the rest of the world in so many other **authentic and unique ways**. VS will analyze how Japan connects to other countries through movies, music, video games, or other types of entertainment media. If you have suggestions of Japanese media that you recommend bringing to a wider audience, email me at [connect.entertainment@ajet.net](mailto:connect.entertainment@ajet.net).

welcomes these discussions, he looks to leave his dream state in order to apply some of this knowledge to real life.

## MESSAGE

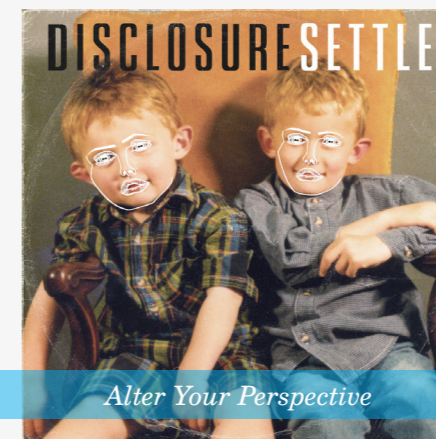
It is important to note that both *Waking Life* and *Mind Game* are difficult, and often frustrating, to follow. However, the message of the films is laid within the alterations in structure and animation: the external parts of your life are often out of your control.

These two films urge the characters to let go of a self-serving life to enjoy being small parts of the grand scheme of the universe. Even though your external environment is often out of your control, Linklater and Yuasa explore the concept that your internal compass that navigates the direction of your life is **completely** in your control. Instead of trying to change everything around you, embrace the complexity in life by altering your perspective.

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The main characters in *Mind Game* and *Waking Life* start off as passive individuals that move to be active contributors in their life.

At the beginning of *Waking Life*, the protagonist is willfully listening to people on philosophical monologues but not contributing himself. About halfway through the film, he has a conversation with someone about lucid dreaming. He learns about the concept of controlling the direction of your dream-life, and only then does he move to make a change in the



outcome of his dreams.

The character in *Mind Game*, Nishi, begins the film with bouts of self-doubt and frustration. However, these doubts are never more than apathetic complaints—when opportunity is thrust upon him, he declines to take part in the direction of his life. However, after being faced

with the idea of the end of life, he embodies the question posed by one of the characters later in the film: “Would you rather lay around and do nothing? Or would you rather do something and feel alive?”

## CONCLUSION

When you try to drink in the questions posed, animation shown, and problems presented together, *Mind Game* and *Waking Life* are overwhelming to any viewer. But isn't that more like the real world than what other movies portray? You have no choice when things come at you and you aren't afforded the opportunity to compartmentally deal with life.

Rather than a climax with an ending, both of the directors choose to leave their work up for interpretation as both of the characters are flying at the end of the two films. These endings reflect a life that isn't so carefully fit together and solved within a couple of hours. If two completely different directors on two sides of the world, with no seeming connection, are drawing the same unique conclusions, what else is Japan connected to when we slow down to consider it all?



# STEP INTO THE SOUNDROOM

DAVID HESTER (TOKYO)

## WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED

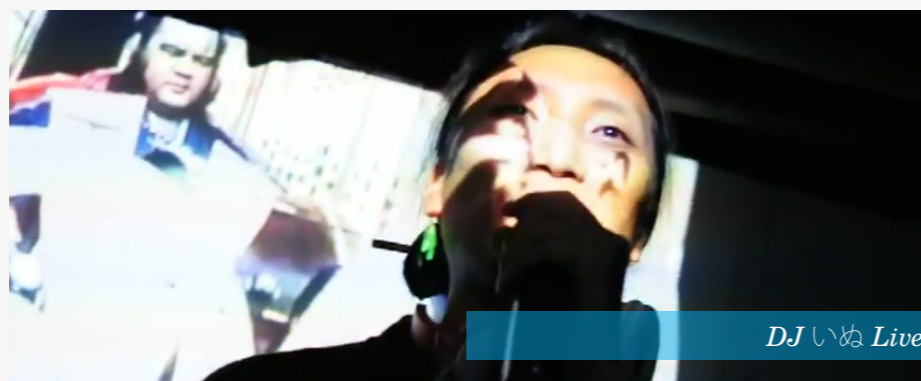
in Japan, I felt like a member of an audience passively watching a performance. From where I traveled to whom I met and what I learned, everything was scripted, clearly demarcated, and unambiguous. Etiquette was hard-and-fast, personal-professional behavior was never to be compromised, and I was expected to perform X, Y, and Z during periods 1, 2, and 3. Watching, bowing, and clapping in sync with my peers, I had come to expect a certain level of audience/performer separation.

I wasn't skeptical of this rigid structure until my second day in Japan when I went to my first live show, at the experimental performance venue [SuperDeluxe in Tokyo](#). I had been planning to explore Tokyo's avant-garde live music scene months before I arrived, but I wasn't expecting what would happen that night. On July 29th, the barrier lines I had embraced became blurred.

What immediately struck me about SuperDeluxe was the antithesis of what I had come to assume about Japan—it had a casual atmosphere and the setup was highlighted in its functional hybridity. Located on the basement

floor of an inconspicuous building off Roppongi-dori, SuperDeluxe is a combination bar, restaurant, exhibition gallery, and live performance space offering a variety of experimental acts.

[Before continuing, click here, then come back.](#)



DJ いぬ Live

The first DJ of the night, 'DJ いぬ', was already mid-set when I arrived, layering an eclectic mix of K- and J-pop, late-80s American synthpop, mid-90s American R&B, Tuvan throat-singing, and traditional Japanese drumming. This already seemed like I had entered into another sonic world separate from Japan.

The characters in attendance were just as wide-ranging as the music. Sipping on a whiskey neat, a haggard salaryman sat a few feet away from a short Japanese

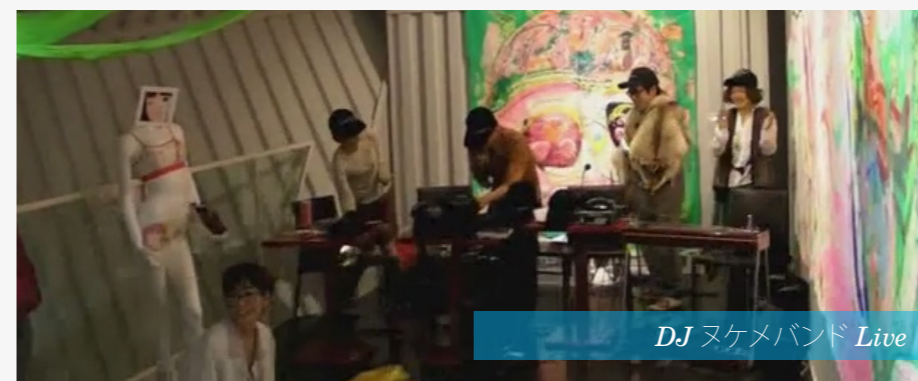
girl rocking a dyed hairdo and a gentleman in a big Super Mario Boo costume. While one young man danced exuberantly while checking his phone, a group of European tourists floated around and one exhausted patron napped through most of the sets.

As I was trying to soak it all in, 'DJ いぬ' wrapped up his set and the second act and a duo named Styser Aen began a glitchy, playful performance heavily invested in call-and-response improv. One member was creating oscillating buzzes on analog synths while the other was contributing on a sampler and a synth pad, generating melodic tones and off-kilter, polyrhythmic beats.

At points, their ideas melded hypnotically, but at many others they couldn't seem to keep in sync. But that was

okay. My favorite moment of their set was when both DJs realized that their ideas weren't connecting, stopped playing, looked at each, and laughed together before jumping back into the mix. The audience was fine with this informality, and I found it to be refreshing after days of formal training at the JET Program Tokyo Orientation.

In fact, the audience was fine with a lot of things that are usually taboo at concerts in the US. Throughout Styser Aen's set, patrons were eating, talking, and even walking up to the DJs, within inches of their equipment, to take pictures of their set-ups.



DJ ヌケメバンド Live

[Next, click here.](#)

This informal behavior happened throughout the rest of the performances, too. Most notably, after a set by 'DJ ヌケメバンド' with a crew clad in tiger masks, there was even a birthday party. The SuperDeluxe staff brought out a cake, everyone sang "Happy Birthday", and one of the celebrators even called me over to have a piece. It was a kind and inviting gesture that made me feel much more involved with everyone in the audience, and much less someone observing

experiences as a foreigner.

All of this happened as the trio of Ueno Takashi, Makoto Ooshiro, and, Yousuke Fuyama were setting up to give the final performance. My favorite performer of the trio was Yousuke Fuyama.

[Click here, please.](#)



Yousuke Fuyama Live

While producing glitchy beats and processing the sounds of the other two performers, Fuyama displayed his work on the wall behind him, showing every little detail of his sound-manipulation through a program called Euclid.

To an extent, his performance encapsulated my experiences that night: the eschewing of formality and the muddling or breakdown of performer-audience barrier. As I watched him fiddle with seemingly innumerable processes, I smiled and

thought to myself that this was the Japan I came to see. The professional formality, scripted interactions, and rigid scheduling would (and should) have their place. But I was most excited for the informal, the improvised, and the unpredictable unfolding of events in my new city—out on the town and at school.

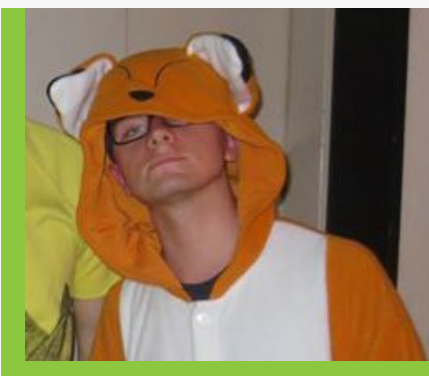
CHECK OUT THE PERFORMERS ON YOUTUBE!

Near the end of the set, I finally stood up and walked over to the musicians, intimately observing their equipment. As I watched them perform, I realized I had taken a crucial step in my transition. I was no longer simply a passive viewer in a performance—but rather an active participant assuming a novel role in a new environment.

*On any given day, you can find David rambling around Tokyo looking for the perfect beat—and the city's best curry. Follow David on Facebook [here](#).*



# THIS MONTH IN... LIFESTYLE



NICK POWERS-MAHER

[connect.food@ajet.net](mailto:connect.food@ajet.net)

Autumn is my favorite season. It's the perfect temperature for going out and staying in, for those of us cat-people who can't make up our minds. But it's also a season laden with food culture and culinary history. I ate more figs and persimmons than I care to count, so I could take some pretty photos. But I'm not complaining.



TOM LEGGE

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This month I have spent convincing myself of all the reasons why it is a good idea to save money and not go to Taiwan for a quick holiday. With a trip home at Christmas and lots of events planned between now and then, a quiet month is definitely in order. After much concerted effort and no shortage of strong will and determination, my flight leaves on Friday.



SIMON GRIFFIN

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Autumn is one of my favourite times in Japan, not least for the beauty of its changing colours, but also the drop from summer temperatures make exploring temples and nature very pleasant. For many JETs this term can be the busiest and longest, so be sure to take some time out from a hectic schedule and enjoy Japan at (arguably) its best. Let's momiji!



P36  
Seasonal Food



P37  
Blogroll



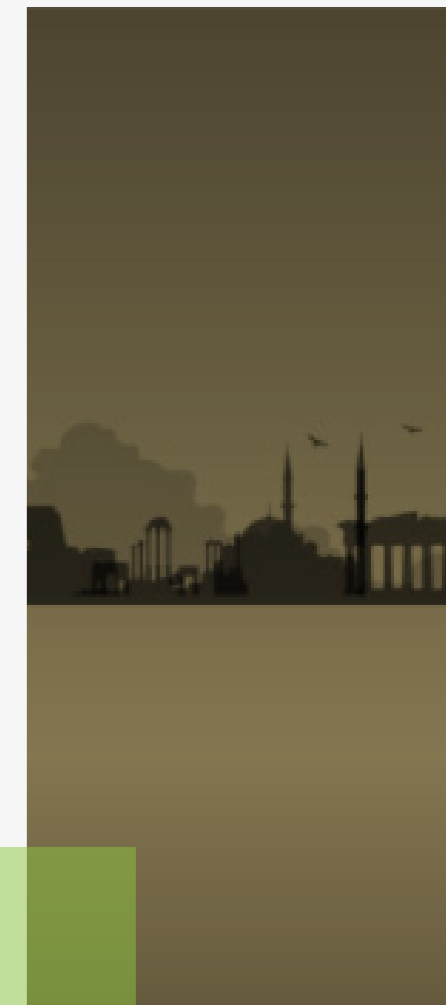
P38  
Let's Cook

P40  
Ask Sempai



P41  
Ise

P42  
Frequent Flyer





**THEY SAY THAT IN JAPAN** there are four seasons. Spring is cherry blossom season and late summer is typhoon season. *Shun no shokuzai*, meaning “seasonal produce,” refers specifically to autumn, a season for food, harvest, and preparing for winter. You’ll see an obvious change in restaurants and grocery stores, from the produce to the dishware. The changes reflect an appreciation of the season, *kisetsukan*. For example, restaurants bring out warmly colored ceramic dishes in the fall, and reserve their glassware for the hotter months. This meticulous attention to the mood of each season stems from both the nation’s agricultural heritage and its Shinto traditions.

**Fruits**

It’s a season of orange, which means persimmons (*kaki*), pumpkin (*kabocha*), mandarin oranges (*mikan*), and sweet potatoes (*satsumaimo*), as well as figs (*ichijiku*), pears (*nashi*), and apples (*ringo*). Look for sweet potato or pumpkin korokke, candied chestnuts (*kuri kinton*), grilled sweet potatoes (*yaki imo*), and a

pastry called “sweet potato,” with a purple filling.

**Not Fruits**

We’ll start seeing chestnuts (*kuri*), ginkgo nuts (*ginnan*), mushrooms (*matsutake*), salt-grilled mackerel (*shioyaki sanma*), and new rice (*shinmai*), which people say is sweeter and softer than rice harvested later. You can find new rice steamed with chestnuts, mushrooms, and ginkgo nuts, and a cold-weather soup made from the mushrooms called *dobin-mushi*, steamed in a clay pot.

In this issue, we’ve gathered some seasonal and filling recipes to help you prepare for the cold. If you crave more than what we have here, take a look at the Facebook pages for [JET-Food](#), [VegJET](#), and [Gluten-Free JET](#), as well as the list of recommended food blogs in this section!

Sources:

*All in Japan*, *Savory Japan*, and *Only In Japan*

COMMENTS

Photo - Nick Powers

FOOD BLOGROLL  
OCTOBER 2014

COMMENTS



**Is It Vegan?**

Angela Radich, Shizuoka, 5th year

Noticing a lack of resources on which common packaged foods in Japan are vegan, Angela set about translating food labels and creating a website to share this information with other vegans. She also happens to be the Social Media and Web Relations Officer for [VegJET](#).



Rose is a food lover exploring what it means to be compassionate. Follow her blog for mostly veggie recipes and food-in-human-rights news. To keep up with her Insta-food-porn, follow her on Instagram, [@roseeatsplants](#) too!

**RoseEatsPlants**

Rose Nelson, former Tokushima JET

When she started getting ill her first year on JET, Autumn noticed how much more she had to learn about gluten. Discovering a dearth of information on living gluten-free in Japan, she set out to explore what it means to be... Gluten-Free in Japan.

**Gluten-Free in Japan, Nihon de guruten-furii**

Autumn Widdoes, former Okinawa JET



Throughout the year, we’ll gather lists of recommended food/lifestyle blogs from the community. This month, noticing a lack of information on alternative diets, I found four blogs that touch on gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or compassionate living. Let’s food-gasming!



A co-administrator of [Gluten-Free JET](#), Donal created his Tumblr to document his experiences living gluten-free on JET, and to help spread information to others living gluten-free. It’s also a good source of beautiful photographs.

**Gluten-Free In Japan**

Donal Benson, Hyogo, 3rd year



Photo - Nick Powers



# LET'S COOK!

## FALLING FOR SWEETS

Photo - Nick Powers

### Vegan-friendly Pumpkin Spice Soft Cream

Rachael Ragalye, former Gunma JET

For some reason, Americans go nuts for anything pumpkin-spice flavored. Japan, unfortunately, does not. To ease your withdrawal, here's a pumpkin spice soft serve-style ice cream. This recipe uses Japanese pumpkin, kabocha, a powerhouse veggie that contains vitamins E, C, and B6. It's also a great source of dietary fiber. It's possible to make this recipe vegan by substituting milk for a non-dairy alternative, such as almond, soy, or coconut milk.

- 2 cups milk or non-dairy milk alternative
  - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
  - ½ teaspoons ground ginger
  - ¼ teaspoons nutmeg
  - 1.5-2 tablespoons maple syrup
  - 1 bag frozen pre-cut kabocha (pumpkin)
1. Blend all ingredients in an electric blender, except the kabocha.
  2. Add in the kabocha gradually. Start with a few pieces and blend until smooth.

Continue to add the kabocha 2-3 pieces at a time.

3. Either serve immediately or place in the freezer for 5~10 minutes if you'd like a firmer ice cream. Experiment with different garnishes!
4. The ice cream will keep in the freezer, but will turn rock-solid. Should this happen, place the ice cream in the refrigerator for at least an hour before serving.



**NOT JUST PUMPKIN FLAVORED, BUT A GOOD SOURCE OF VITAMINS & FIBER!**

Photo - Rachel Ragalye

### Gluten-Free Pumpkin Pie

Adriana Reinecke, Kobe

Makes 8  
2-inch-thick servings.

- ¾ cup sugar
  - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
  - ½ teaspoon salt
  - ½ teaspoon ground ginger
  - ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
  - 2 eggs, beaten
  - 1 15-ounce can of pure pumpkin
  - ⅛ cup of heavy cream (or milk for fewer calories)
1. Preheat oven to 425° F (~220° C).

2. Combine dry ingredients in a bowl.
3. Beat eggs, stir in pumpkin and sugar mixture. Gradually stir in milk, and pour into unbaked pie shell or crust. See below for piecrust recipe.
4. Bake for 15 minutes at 425° F, reduce temperature to 350° F (~175° C) and bake for an additional 40 to 50 minutes or until knife comes out clean.

### No-Roll Flaky Pie Crust

Adriana Reinecke, Kobe

- 1 cup gluten-free flour mixture
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ¼ cup butter (may be substituted with lower calorie/fat options)
- 1 egg yolk, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons ice-cold water

1. Preheat oven to 450°F (~220° C).
2. Sift together the flour mixture and sugar.
3. Cut in the butter with a fork or two knives.
4. Add the egg yolk and water and mix thoroughly.
5. Press the dough onto the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie plate (grease it first).
6. Pour in the pie filling and bake 10 minutes.
7. Reduce heat to 350° F (~175° C), and continue baking for 40 minutes or until the filling is cooked.

### Kaki Keiki, Persimmon Cake

Simon Griffin, Kyoto

A simple and versatile cake recipe flavoured and decorated with persimmon for a great autumn twist.

- 175 grams self-rising flour
- 175 grams unsalted butter
- 175 grams caster sugar
- 3 beaten eggs
- 3 large diced persimmons
- Persimmon juice

- Icing/powdered sugar
  - Butter
1. Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl.
  2. Add the persimmon juice to the beaten eggs, and gradually add this to the mixture, beating thoroughly after each addition.
  3. Fold in the flour, and then mix in the diced persimmon.
  4. Spoon a large teaspoonful of the mixture into cake cases and bake at 180 C for around 8 minutes, or until golden brown and a knife shows the center to be dry.
  5. Prepare simple butter icing by creaming butter with icing sugar and a little persimmon juice.
  6. Once cool, pipe a helping of icing onto each cake and top with a freshly cut slice of persimmon. Sprinkle with icing sugar to finish.

### Gluten-Free Chocolate Chip Pancakes

Autumn Widdoes, former Okinawa JET

- 2 cups white sorghum baking mix
- chocolate chips\*
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil or butter
- 1 ½ cups water/milk, as needed

\*If you have an allergy, make certain the chocolate chips are safe to eat. If you can't read the Japanese it's safer to order it online. Enjoy Life has chocolate chips that are certified gluten-free. You can order at [iherb](#).

Note: If you want thicker pancakes, add some other gluten-free flours, like rice flour. If you want thinner pancakes, add more milk/water.

1. Heat cooking oil in a pan.
2. Combine dry ingredients. Stir in wet ingredients. Mix well, and add chocolate chips.
3. Drop by spoonfuls into the pan, and cook until golden brown, turning once.

**MAKE A CAKE TO EAT AT HOME, OR CUPCAKES TO SHARE!**



Photo - Simon Griffin



# ASK SEMPAI: WHAT IS YOUR SECRET KITCHEN WEAPON?



COMMENTS?

“Excalibur the Mighty Metal Spatula of course! I’m not yet dexterous enough to cook everything with chopsticks.”

*Renata Janney, Fukushima, 2nd year*

“My slow cooker. Cheap to run in winter and cool to run in summer.”

*Lynne Lucy, Akita, 2nd year*

“My small fry pan from the local Maruto! That and my spatula, and I can make pretty much anything!”

*Melanie Smith, Fukushima, 1st year*



“A well-sharpened knife. It makes preparation so much easier.”

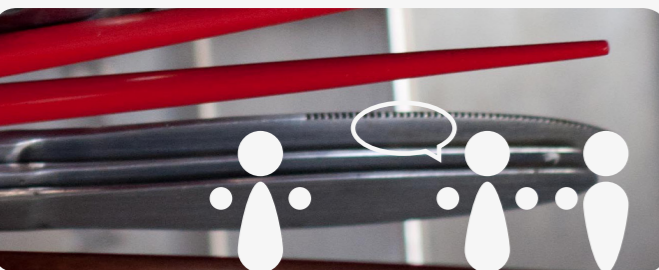
*Rachel A., Ibaraki, 1st year*

“An assortment of bento gadgets to out-bento the other mommies at school. You can get a year’s worth of cuteness for under 1,000 yen at DAISO.”

*Audrey Jones, Nagasaki, 5th year*

“Non-stick frying pan and wok. Both are great for cooking, and cleaning them is fairly easy.”

*Matthew Drew, Gifu, 4th year*



“An immersion blender. Very versatile!”

*Sarah Blenkhorn, Shimane, 5th year*



*Photos - Hannah Killoh*

*Wedded Rocks*

*Photos - Keiko Sano*

# EXPLORING ISE THE EARLY BIRD SEES THE ROCKS!

KEIKO SANO (KYOTO)

COMMENTS?

## IF YOU AREN'T

an early bird, you’ll be missing out in Ise City, Mie. Our trip included Ise-style udon at Yamaguchi-ya, pearl exhibits at Mikimoto Pearl Island, and delicious donburi for dinner. The highlight of our trip, however, was going to see *Meoto Iwa* (the wedded rocks) at sunrise, but it wasn’t without its difficulties and a very early morning!

The whole goal of our trip was to see Meoto Iwa at sunrise, and we had planned to take a taxi early in the morning; but unfortunately taxis were unavailable at such an early hour. It seemed all hope of seeing the rocks at sunrise was lost—until, to our rescue, the hostel suggested we rent bikes and ride there. All was saved!

Our alarms buzzed at 3:30 AM. Groggily, and in hazy

## GETTING TO ISE

Ise is easily reachable by Kintetsu Railway from Osaka’s Tsuruhashi Station (1hr 40m 3030 yen), Kyoto Station (2hrs 3620 yen) and Nagoya’s Kintetsu Nagoya Station (1hr 20m 2770 yen). Bus and night-bus options (for those travelling a little further, i.e. from Tokyo) are also possible, and offer a slightly cheaper way of reaching the city. Keiko stayed at Ise Kazami, a reasonably-priced hostel with helpful, English-speaking staff.

disarray, we pulled ourselves out of bed, got on our bikes, and headed for Meoto Iwa. As we arrived, there was already another group awaiting the sunrise, and we patiently (perhaps somewhat impatiently) joined them. Finally, at 4:56, the sun cracked through the horizon and glistened over the ocean, “*kirei*” and “*sugoi*” could be heard under viewers’ breath. I hadn’t anticipated that moment to be so breathtaking and memorable. The trip continued, but nothing could top that sight!

*Keiko is a 3rd year American JET living in Southern Kyoto. She enjoys traveling, playing ultimate frisbee, cooking, and running. Her goal this year is to explore more of Japan and southern Asia.*



*Delectable Donburi*



*Harvesting Oysters for Pearls*



# THE GREAT FREQUENT FLYER HACK

TOM LEGGE  
with thanks to MILLION MILE SECRETS

## NOTICE

Unfortunately, right before going to press, Aegean decided to change their programme rules for the first time in years. This means that after November 24th, it will be much more difficult to obtain Gold Status. However, a lot of the principles in the article will hold true for other programmes so shop around and check out sites like [FlyerTalk](#) for more information. Remember, with some research and careful planning, frequent flyer perks do not have to be for only frequent flyers! It is quite possible to turn a long haul flight or two into free flights and some serious, tangible benefits.

With Japan so well-served by Star Alliance airlines for both regional holidays and trips back home, obtaining Gold status can make life a little bit easier for JETs spending time outside of Japan, not to mention saving money in baggage costs and expensive airport food and drink.

For the savvy traveler, Gold status does not have to be solely the preserve of the frequent flyer. Our very own editor, Tom, managed to secure his Gold card earlier this month using the programme below *with just one return long-haul economy class flight*.

Originally published on the blog [Million Mile Secrets](#), by Daraius Dubash and Emily Jablon, this article illustrates the finer points of

how to secure Gold status for oneself.

Imagine skipping ahead of the crowd with priority check-in, taking extra baggage on your trip for no charge, and relaxing with champagne in the airport lounge.

Here's a little known way to make this dream come true! You can use Aegean Airlines' frequent flyer program to get Gold status on Star Alliance airlines such as Air China, Thai Airways, ANA, EVA Air,

Asiana, United, Air Canada, SAA, Air New Zealand and many more.

Most Star Alliance airlines require at least 25,000 status-qualifying miles to earn Silver status, and at least 50,000 to earn Gold status. But if you credit miles flown on any Star Alliance airline to the Aegean frequent flyer program, you can reach Star Alliance elite status with many fewer miles.

You only need 4,000 miles to earn Aegean Blue (Star Alliance Silver) status, and 20,000 miles to earn Aegean Gold (Star Alliance Gold) status. But you'll also get 1,000 miles just for signing-up for Aegean's frequent flyer program, which count towards the miles requirement for elite status. And because you can credit your flights on any other Star Alliance airline to Aegean Airlines, you can get status without ever taking a single Aegean flight!



## Why Would You Want Star Alliance Elite Status?

Once you become a Star Alliance elite, you'll get perks whenever you travel on any Star Alliance airline.

Star Alliance Silver elite status gets you a few benefits but you get many more benefits with Star Alliance Gold:

- Entry to airport lounges when flying on any Star Alliance airline (even if you're flying coach class)
- Extra baggage allowance (extra weight or 1 extra piece)
- Priority check-in (shorter lines!)
- Early boarding with the First and Business class passengers
- Priority baggage handling (your bags will be unloaded 1st)
- Priority on the waiting list if a flight is full and you want to buy a ticket
- Priority on the waiting list if a flight is full and you're on standby at the airport

## Crediting Star Alliance Flights to Aegean

When you fly on a paid ticket with any Star Alliance airline, you can choose to credit the

miles to Aegean Airlines.

For example, if you book a ticket on Air China, you can select Aegean Miles & Bonus while you're making the booking. You could also do this over the phone or even at the airport.

## Earning Aegean Gold (Star Alliance Gold) Status

Once you've achieved Blue status (4,000 miles), you only need to credit another 16,000 miles to earn Aegean Gold (Star Alliance Gold) status. You must credit the miles within the 12-month period after earning Blue status.

Once you have Aegean Gold Status, you can keep it forever, as long as you credit at least 1 flight to Aegean every 36 months. I don't know of any other frequent flyer program that allows you to earn and keep lifetime elite status so easily!

## Spending Aegean Miles on Award Tickets

You can use the miles you collect in your Aegean frequent flyer account to book flights on Aegean and Star Alliance airlines.

Their award chart is about average, but there's one

redemption that might be interesting to JETs. Aegean has a fairly broad definition of Far East, encompassing China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam. A return flight from Japan to anywhere in this list is just 25,000 miles return in Economy class.

## Drawbacks and Limitations

When crediting Star Alliance flights to Aegean Airlines, you will NOT necessarily get full credit for the miles flown although the credit percentage is very competitive. Aegean will credit based on the fare class of your ticket so check before booking.

For example, United Airlines earns 150% miles for full-fare economy tickets, 100% miles for discounted economy tickets, but only 50% miles for deep-discount economy tickets.

Each Star Alliance airline gets credit for fares differently. So you should look at Aegean's Star Alliance miles earning charts before deciding which flight to book.

*Million Mile Secrets is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in ensuring that they are getting the best value for money out of travel. I urge all our readers to take a look at some of the articles [here](#).*



# THIS MONTH IN... COMMUNITY



**HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA**      [connect.sports@ajet.net](mailto:connect.sports@ajet.net)

With summer over and autumn making its way with cooler breezes and earlier sunsets and into the first month of second semester at school, it's time to get active again. Whether it be losing those few kilos gained over the summer holidays by riding your bike to work or starting some serious training for a marathon, it's your chance to get involved in your community. I spent the September playing in a teacher's volleyball tournament, practicing for upcoming local *ekidens* and playing soccer with expats and locals. Hope you have an active October! Let me know if you would like to share your recent endeavors.



**NATHAN BERNE**      [connect.volunteer@ajet.net](mailto:connect.volunteer@ajet.net)

The best Halloween costumes give a clue to what's deep down inside the wearer, so whether or not you're excited about this holiday, remember that you're always showing the world... something!! – so make sure it's something good!! Whether you're about in the community incognito or simply loud and proud all over town, you're always a contributor, and able to volunteer your time. For me, autumn breeds introspection, so let's get the most out of this beautiful season in Japan, and plan that year ahead!! Be sure to share what you find!!



**P46**  
Tohoku Hero



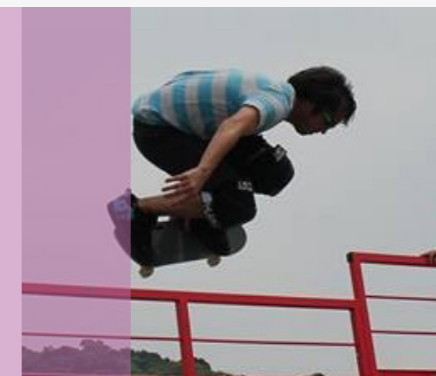
**P48**  
Take a Hike



**P50**  
Touch Rugby



**P52**  
Skateboarding



**P55**  
Comics



**P58**  
Spotlight





# THE OTHER TOHOKU HERO PETS' PERSPECTIVE

CHRISTINE MARTIN-BUCK (IWATE)



Inochinokai Dog

## LONG BEFORE ITS RISE

to national prominence, Inochinokai found its initial spark when Mrs. Tomiko Shimotsukue, a well-meaning community member, found a lonely cat and her litter of kittens at Takamatsu Pond, and began feeding them each day. After over a year of daily feedings, Mrs. Shimotsukue was hospitalized for cancer treatment, but took to covertly sneaking out every day to feed them. Upon her release, in 2000 she joined up with five fellow good Samaritans, rented a house in Yahaba town, and helped pool everyone's efforts to care for a whole host of local stray cats, thus informally founding Inochinokai.

Within two years, the group received its first official call to action, when an indebted local

dairy farmer abandoned his 30+ cows and 100+ cats. When Inochinokai adopted 83 cats at the request of Shizukuishi town officials, the incident made national news, and ignited an unprecedented month-long flow of donated food, cages, and funds, and forced the group to relocate to Shizukuishi to handle their growing pool of homeless pets.

Currently, the association receives calls to accept animals ranging from dogs and cats to peacocks and other exotic pets, and works directly with local fire and rescue professionals to retrieve the more wayward stray animals from crawlspaces and treetops. Apart from pets, the center even takes responsibility for some local homeless individuals, and

*Respected as a rescue center for animals, the Inochinokai pet shelter grew from a single volunteer and a family of stray kittens into one of the largest pet initiatives in Japan.*

has directed many towards local health and support resources to escape their own dependence on welfare.

## The Unadoptables

Despite preemptive planning, community support, and increasing awareness, Mrs. Shimotsukue and

## PREEMPTIVE DISASTER RELIEF

Encouraged by successful rescue efforts after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster, Inochinokai continues to work with the prefectural government to establish rapid response procedures for local disaster hotspots. Next Step: preparing for a possible eruption of Mt. Iwate (as predicted in the near future).

the Inochinokai staff have identified a massive subsidiary challenge in their population of "unadoptable" or otherwise difficult animals. This group, including terminally ill pets, cases of feline AIDS, and abused dogs and cats with a tendency to bite, often remain under Inochinokai's supervision until the end of their natural life spans, and come to constitute a major financial burden of their own. That said, the association still refuses to euthanize pets, and even plans to construct an additional animal hospital and seek the help of volunteer

veterinarians.

Looking further forward, the group also plans to reduce the number of abandoned pets by encouraging owners to seek adoptive families for pets on their own, and by coordinating with local health centers to establish stricter qualifications for pet abandonment. In addition, and with thought towards inter-community pet management, Mrs. Shimotsukue also cautions against misinterpreting pet statistics, and warns that when cities do in fact boast a rate of zero euthanization, some are in fact guilty of allowing owners to release their pets into neighboring cities, where the animals are often summarily euthanized therein. Thus, as Mrs. Shimotsukue advises, the end goal of 100% pet adoption and 0% euthanization requires cooperation across cities, communities, and prefectures.

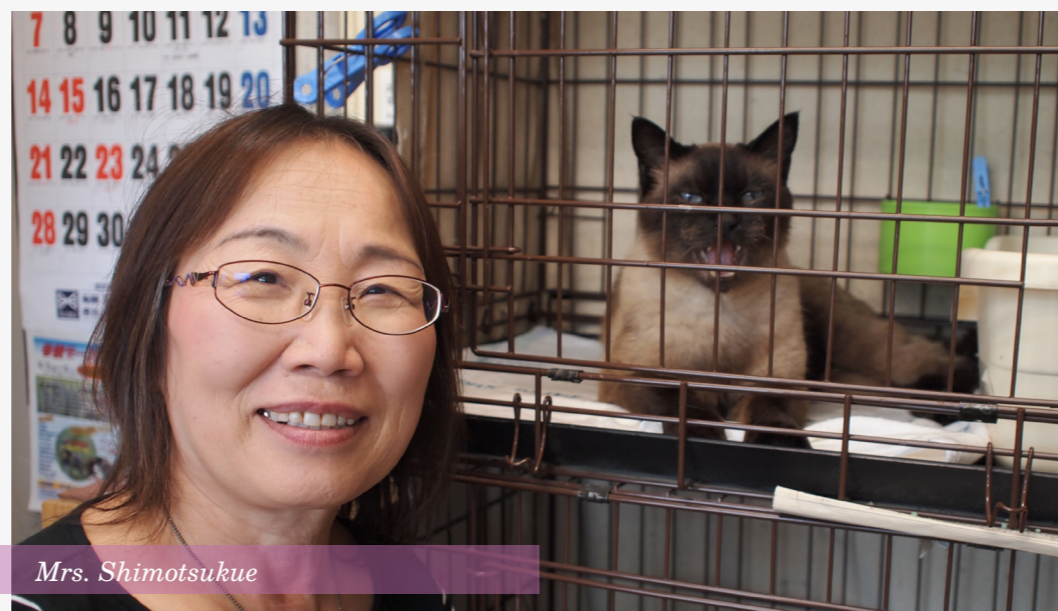
With such progressive and admirable goals in mind, Inochinokai represents a bright beacon of hope in the international animal lover

community, representing the true strength and scope of coordinated local activism.

*Christine Martin-Buck is a long time animal lover, moved to Japan in 2010, teaches English at Caffe Bar PICO in Morioka, and has a pet rabbit of her own. She writes a blog on her Japan adventures [here](#), and looks fantastic in a purple yukata.*

## HELP SUPPORT

You can contribute!! To help the Dobutsu Inochinokai Iwate, beyond just promoting their principles at home, volunteers are welcome to donate or to assist with daily pet care and adoption events held by Inochinokai. Please email beforehand at [inochinokai@gmail.com](mailto:inochinokai@gmail.com) and make an appointment.



Mrs. Shimotsukue



Cat Enclosure  
Photos - Christine Martin-Buck



# TAKE A HIKE: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STRAW-HAT BACKPACKER RYAN NEWMAN

ALEX MACNEIL (OKAYAMA)

*On an inspiring journey to raise awareness, walk the world, and achieve a personal goal, one activist hikes across Japan as part of a five-year personal mission*

If you're reading this as a JET, chances are it's because you're following your dream; a course that takes courage, and a thirst for adventure. Though difficult and downright dangerous at times, the reward is greater than any obstacle, and if you're anything like Ryan Newburn, who has taken to adventuring in the most wonderful of ways, then your experience is something for all of us to admire.

Mr. Newburn, or "The Straw Hat Backpacker," as he is known these days, has come a long way, and intends to go a great deal farther. In March of this year, Mr. Newburn left his job, his home, and his family to follow his own dream of walking across the world, while simultaneously raising funds and awareness for the battle against obesity. After spending six months walking from one end of Japan to the other, this backpacker will be leaving for New Zealand this autumn to continue on his journey. I had the chance to ask Ryan a few questions about his experiences so far:

**What made you decide to embark on this journey? What's your main motivation(s)?**

"It has always been my dream to travel the world; I was just never sure how to tackle such a great task. I joined the US Navy in 2012, but was medically separated during basic training due to a snapped screw in my ankle from a football accident 4 years before. Upon returning home and healing up from the surgery, I really started contemplating what my next step in life would be. Then one day, a good friend of mine called me wanting to move to Japan with him. The idea sounded exhilarating to me, so I started researching how to do so.

Afterwards, I found out that I had to have a work visa in order to live in the country, [but] then I found out that the tourist visas last for 90 days in Japan, so I could prolong my visit for quite a while ... After all, I wanted to see the backbone of the country, and not just go about it like a regular tourist with the expenses that come with that. After viewing some travel blogs on Japan, it came to me: Why not walk across Japan? I could see the whole country, and while doing so,

spend a minimal amount of money.

**From there, the idea grew exponentially. Why stop there? Why not continue this journey after Japan, and see the whole world this way? Why not walk across the world? I became enveloped in this grand idea and began dedicating the next seven months towards preparing.**

My main motivation throughout my journey is the pursuit of my own crazy dreams of travel, and in doing so, to inspire others to

Straw Hat Trail and Vending  
Photo - Photographer



Straw Hat Before

go after their dreams as well. Many people have this false concept of reality integrated into them that convinces them that certain things just aren't possible, but I'm making it my mission to show as many people as I can that you can achieve anything you want in life with hard work

of happiness throughout my walk keeps me going strong."

**Do you have any advice for others out there trying to realize their goals and aspirations?**

"Absolutely! Figure out whatever makes you happiest, and harness all of your energies into whatever that may be. I went from being a 320 pound slob with no real goals in life all the way to a 200 pound, dream-driven individual that walked across a country! If I can do that, then there is no excuse for any of you.

If you're not sure of what your goal are yet, don't worry because you will eventually discover what makes you happiest. I find that going for a walk helps to open your mind to possibilities!"

**You've conquered your goals in Japan, what comes next?**

"One of the greatest pieces of advice that I received before departing on my journey was from a fellow traveler and inspiration of mine. He said that I should never hold myself down to a path that is set in stone. If you are venturing down a road and feel like going left instead of the planned right, then you should take it, because it is your journey and no one else's.

You have to follow your heart, and let it guide you down the correct path. Only then will you discover your own personal destiny. I'm going wherever the wind decides to take me ... although I do feel a strong south wind sweeping

towards the exotic islands of New Zealand!!"

**If you could do it all again, would you do anything differently?**

"One thing that I really regretted when arriving in Japan was my lack of knowledge of the language itself. I had only studied Japanese for 2 semesters in college before leaving, and wasn't even close to being prepared for what was to come. After arriving in Japan, I was completely lost in terms of communication, and struggled for quite a bit because of it. Gradually though, I started learning phrases to get me by each day, and eventually knew the language well enough for very basic communication.

If I could do it all over again though, I would have definitely learned the language a lot better before leaving. In doing so, I probably would've developed friendships and bonds with even more Japanese people though out my journey."

*Alex MacNeil is a 2nd-year JET in Okayama prefecture, works at the largest elementary school in town, and has successfully made udon by hand, and smelted pig iron. His own travel plans know no limits!!*

You can keep track of Ryan's amazing journey, get in touch with him, and donate to his cause through his blog [here](#).

## THE TALE OF THE TREK:

- Code Name: The Straw Hat Backpacker
- Goal: Raise awareness against obesity, and see the world!!
- Miles Traveled: Approx. 2,000
- Weight Lost: 120 lbs.
- Next Stop: New Zealand

and dedication. Travel the world? Why not!? Knowing that there's a chance to see other people get inspired to go after their own pursuit



Straw Hat After - Luffy Edition



# TO TOUCH & BE TOUCHED

MING TAN (NARA 2011-2014)



At the Tokushima Tournament

- TEAMS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE LAST TOKUSHIMA TOURNAMENT:**
- The Hiroshima Kure Ship-Heads
  - The Hiroshima Wide Island Warriors
  - The Hyogo Touch Wood
  - The Ehime No Name Team
  - The Nara Knights
  - The Ruamoko Fukuoka

## “TAKE THE TOUCH, DUMP AND SCOOP!”

With a touch rugby ball, that is. For a number of years now, touch rugby has been the team sport of choice for JETs from across the country.

Whether you're from a Commonwealth nation and have some familiarity with rugby in one or more of its myriad forms, or you find a sport in which players

can only pass the ball backwards decidedly more mysterious, JETs of all ages and athletic abilities can make a contribution to their team's success, and more importantly, have fun doing it. As a bonus, touch rugby distinguishes itself from rugby in that you don't get pulverized playing it.

Requiring only a ball and 12 willing friends, the first step to becoming involved in this tremendously enjoyable sport is to ascertain whether one's prefecture has a team, and if so, when and where practice sessions are held. Typically, teams have a Facebook group from which practice events are created. If they don't, make one!

There's a good chance that some of your most memorable JET memories will take place there.

Over the three years that I played touch rugby as a member of the Nara Knights, the team steadily improved to the point where we brought home second place in the second division of the 2014 Tokushima tournament—a perfect note for myself and

the team's other departing JETs to bow out on.

So what are you waiting for? Let's touching... on the touch rugby field!

*Ming Tan was an ALT in Japan for three years in Nara Prefecture. He is a doctor.... well not one you see to get a health check but one in philosophy. In his spare time he likes to take scenic photographs and travel where his interests take him.*

### LINKS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- <http://www.funwithtouch.com/>
- <http://alljapantouch.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.japantouch.jp/>

The second step is to attend practices. For newcomers to touch rugby, the first few sessions are especially useful to familiarize yourself with the basic rules, which become second nature in a surprisingly short amount of time.

The third and final step is to play competitive matches against opposition teams. The major tournament is held in Tokushima in May. Once or twice a year, smaller scale tournaments are also held in Kobe. Shake off those initial nerves, and savour every moment on the field of battle.

**THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT SOME OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE JET MEMORIES WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE FIELD.**



Nara Knights Enjoying a Day Playing Touch Football



Team Nara Knights  
Photos - Ming Tan



# SKATEBOARDING IN HI NO KUNI KUMAMOTO'S FIRE COUNTRY PARKS

SAM VAN GINHOVEN (KUMAMOTO)

*This piece is brought to us by Kumamoto's prefectural magazine, The Yoka. This story (and a great piece on swimming, featured on AJET.net) came from the Summer 2014 issue. Got a local rag you love to read? Share it with us and we may publish it for everyone next month!*

## IF YOU ARE ACCUSTOMED

to roaming downtown Kumamoto on the Shimotori at night, you may have noticed that there are some skateboarders in Kumamoto. Kumamoto has a rad skateboarding community, which is surprisingly big for a 'small' city and 'average' prefecture. It personally took me a while to find skaters and their whereabouts. For my first few months in Kumamoto, I wasn't aware that skateboarding was very popular here in a prefecture that I never knew about until I received my JET placement.

There are many skaters in Kumamoto; most are superb street skaters. Karashima Park in Kumamoto City is usually the biggest

street scene. It is more popular at night than during the day because of day events and the possibility of police officers on patrol; however, that never stops skaters. There are not only skateboarders but BMX and inline skaters. The street scene promises a variety of skating for anyone's interest. Now it's time to discuss some of the sweet areas for skating in Kumamoto and my experiences at them. I'll also mention some dope skate shops. All are accessible by train, bicycle, tram or bus, but the best option to get to these places is by car or train. As a city JET, I have no car, yet I've managed to skate at all these locations by riding with my friends or taking the train. With the exception of Hinagu Skate Park, every park is accessible for under a thousand yen by train from Kumamoto City.

### KARASHIMA PARK

Karashima Park is located in downtown Kumamoto near the Karashimacho tram stop. It is a skate 'park,' and usually has most of the local Kumamoto skaters on Friday and Saturday nights. There are ledges to grind, flat spots for tricks, and stairs to ollie off of. Sometimes, a skater will bring a flat bar for grinding and board sliding. I don't know the history of Karashima Park; however, I know it has been skated for quite a long time. It's a great place to meet skateboarders, inline-skaters, and BMX people. Skaters usually hang around till 1 am.

- Layout: Many stair sets between 4-8 steps, ledges, flat ground, some rails
- Location: It's near Karashima-cho tram stop.
- Price: Free
- Address: 辛島公園 熊本県熊本市中央区 辛島町 1

[Map](#)



### SHIRAKAWA SKATE PARK

Shirakawa Skate Park is a free skate park. The skate park is not very old and was originally somewhere else in Kumamoto under another bypass. It's a pretty sick park maintained by skaters. It has no rules and is out of the way so people don't complain of noise. The farmers who work in the surrounding rice paddies don't mind, either. The park is a little far from the Hikari no Mori, about 1.5km or about 10-15 minutes on a skateboard. It has lots of rails and a sweet mini half pipe; however, the ramps are old, so some suffer from rain damage and normal wear and tear. The park is without a doubt, old school. Please keep it clean if you go. There is no supermarkets or conbinis located near it, just a soda machine and water fountain in the park next to it.

- Layout: Boxes, rails, spine, grind rails, mini half pipe, quarter pipes, kickers,
- Location: It is next to a farm business near Hikari no Mori station, about 1.5-2km away. It has no formal address.
- Price: Free
- Address: Kumamoto-ken, Kumamoto-shi, Higashi-ku, Kakizemachi, 22-4 瀬ノ上自動車

[Map](#)



### X-LAND SKATE PARK

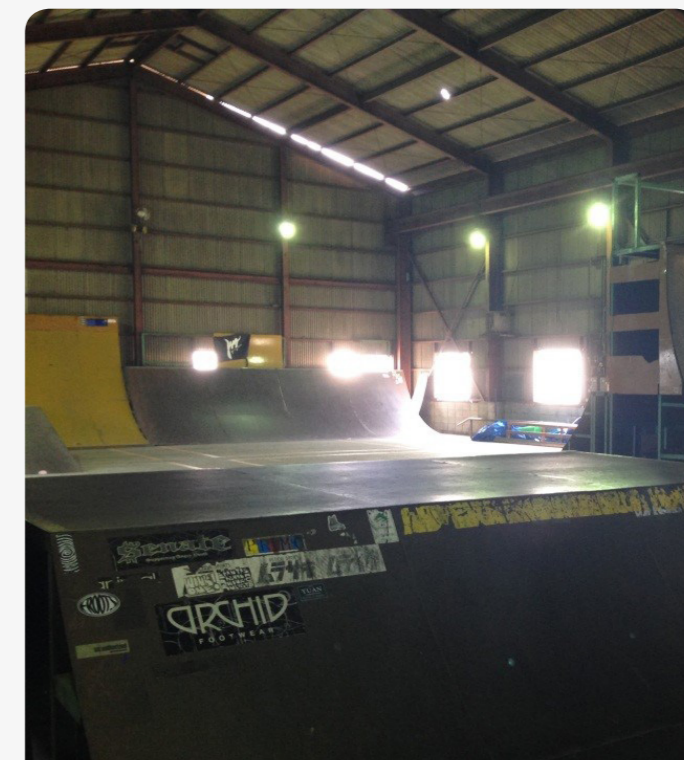
This is X-land Skate Park near Matsubase station. It's about ten or twelve years old. The skate park is surrounded by metal shops and rice fields. It's in a somewhat odd location, but it's pretty sweet for a nearby skate park that is accessible by train. One thousand yen is the price to skate all day. It's in a giant warehouse which makes it perfect for any season: no rain and no snow. The half pipe is old and needs new wood or skatelite (crazy expensive). This skate park is somewhat maintained, although almost everything is metal, so constant maintenance isn't needed. I really like this park; however, it is not beginner friendly due to the height of ramps and the odd placement of the smaller quarter pipes.

The skate park is not as big as it once was. Probably to make more business, a dance studio and cooking room were built after skateboarding began to decline around 2007. I assume the people who own it could not afford to get rid of the enormous ramps and other materials. It's an awesome spot and definitely recommended for a nice skate weekend.

It's friendly to all extreme sports: skateboarding, inline skating, BMX, etc.

- Layout: Half pipe, quarter pipes, launcher, kicker, roll-in, rails, flat bars, vert wall
- Location: Use the recommended street in the Google link to walk there. Price: ¥1000
- Address: 3-2 Shiranuhimachi Kashiwabara, Uki-shi, Kumamoto-ken

[Map](#)





## HINAGU SKATE PARK

Hinagu Skate Park is the furthest away from Kumamoto City. It takes around an hour and a half to get to by car. It is somewhat accessible by train; however, I have only gone by car. The skate park is super cheap, around ¥200 for a few hours. It is by the water and very spacious. There is no shade, so prepare to burn from the hot sun. The sea does provide a cool breeze, though, and Hinagu is also famous for onsens. The skate park is all concrete with professional Skatelite ramps. This provides an incredible surface to skate and practice tricks on. The greatest part, in my opinion, is the 5.0 foot high half pipe with two tiny extensions. The ramps are professional grade, so they offer the cleanest ride in Kumamoto.

- Layout: Concrete octagon pyramid, hump, midsize half pipe, boxes, pyramid, Skatelite
  - Location: It's under Yatsushio in Hinagu. It is accessible by car or train.
  - Price: ¥200-¥300 for all day
  - Address: 日奈久ドリームランドシー・湯・遊 〒869-5138 熊本県八代市日奈久平成町
- [Map](#)



## OLLI

Olli has served me well thus far. It's right in Kumamoto City. The prices are good, and they offer a variety of skateboard shoes, decks, completes, hardware, and clothes. For example, I broke a piece of plastic on my trucks that I thought would be expensive to replace. It was my first time ever needing this specific part. The shop carried the exact part that I needed to fix my board, just ¥200 for a tiny plastic filling. The shop is a life saver for any skater who needs special skateboarding hardware for repair or replacement.

- Location: Down the Shower dori, pass Starbucks
  - Address: 12-12 Shinshigai Chūō-ku, Kumamoto-shi, Kumamoto-ken
- [Map](#)

## Doing the 360: Looking back

For now, this is everything I know about skating in Kumamoto. It is a great place to skate with an awesome community of skaters. Every place offers something for beginners and experts. The locations are near and far, yet are accessible to almost everyone. For shopping, there are enough skate shops to choose from a huge selection of skateboards, even Murasaki Sports in Parco. I highly recommend checking out the skateboard community if you are interested in starting out or have been contemplating where to skate.

*Sam Van Ginhoven. is a second year JET teaching in Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture from Florida, and he has been skateboarding since high school. He studied abroad in Japan for two semesters at Kansai Gaidai, and I've worked in Osaka before. He love traveling around Japan and exploring new places.*



Photos - Sam Van Ginhoven



# COMICS



## MARIKA'S COMICS

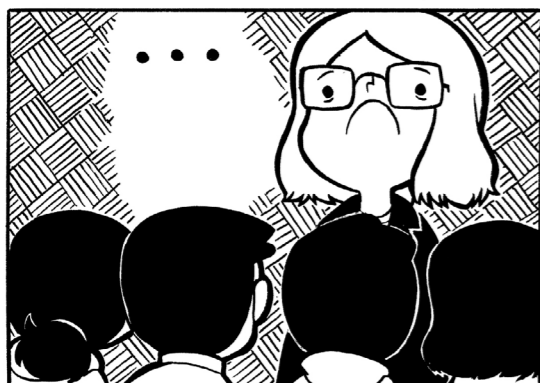
Marika participated in JET from August 2013 - 2014 in Akita Prefecture. Her comic hobby started there and now she is back in New Zealand, working at an International English school in Japanese student services. She enjoys drawing comics in her free time.

[Website](#)

Twitter: [@Marikascomics](#)



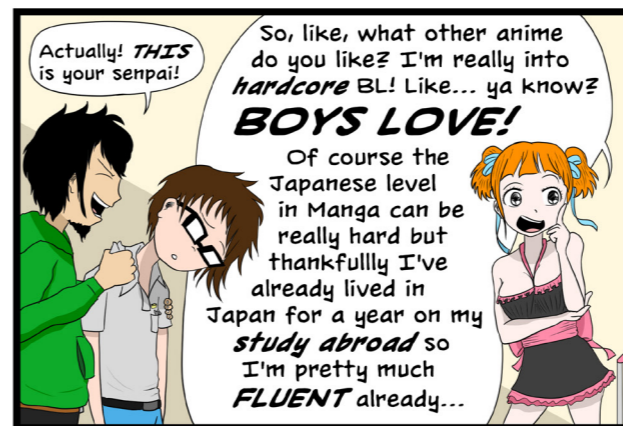
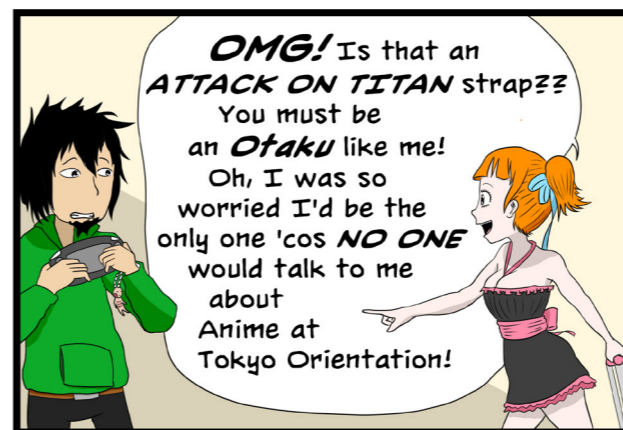
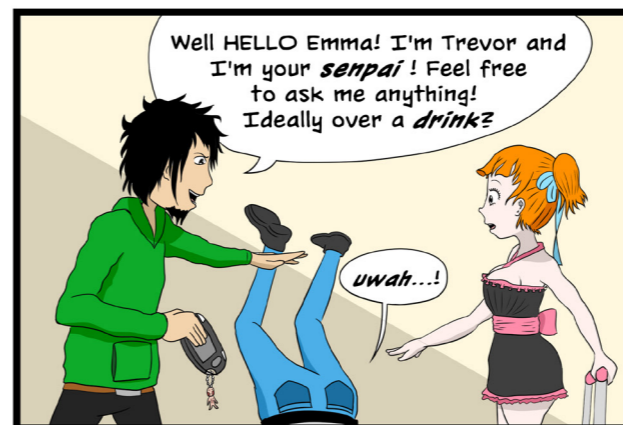
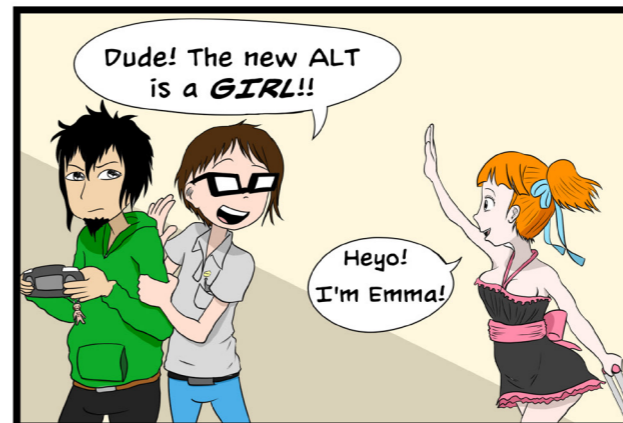
ENGLISH SHIRITORI



OBAASAN



Are you an Anime fan?



LET'S SPEAK ENGLISH

Mary Cagle is an ALT in Miyagi prefecture. When she's not teaching elementary school kids, she's probably drawing comics! Besides Let's Speak English, she also draws a weekly action adventure comic called Kiwi Blitz. You can read both for free at [marycagle.com](http://marycagle.com) and [kiwiblitz.com](http://kiwiblitz.com)!

JET PEEVES

Chris Chong is a 4th year ALT from the UK and teaches in Chiba Prefecture. He drew 'Chloe', an exclusive manga for London Comic Con's news site MCMBuzz in 2011. His English manga 'Courage' about bullying came in the top-ten short list for the UK National 'Manga Jiman' contest 2013 and was displayed in the Japanese Embassy. He wrote his undergraduate thesis on 'The Narrative Role of Music in Role-playing Games: Final Fantasy VII' and went on to study composition at the Royal College of Music, London. His music appears as 'MajorC.co.uk' on the exploding ninja robot PC game 'Plain Sight' and also soon to appear on games for iOS. He now runs Nihongo Gamer, a website and YouTube channel dedicated to using video games to learn Japanese. His hobbies are programming, yo-yo'ing and scratch dj'ing.

Being a JET is easy, but making other people care about our experience is a challenge like no other. I once read a greetings card online that said, 'We hope our Christmas card alerted you to how much better our family is doing than yours.' It summed up all the things that we do wrong on Facebook, Instagram and other social networks. Jet Peeves is an attempt to share my experiences as an ALT by highlighting every facepalm moment in my daily life. Moments that you may recognise from your own, facepalm inaka life."

Comics

Website [deviantART](http://deviantART)  
Twitter: [@ChongComics](https://twitter.com/ChongComics)

Music

Website  
Twitter: [@MajorC](https://twitter.com/MajorC)

Games

Website  
YouTube  
Twitter: [@NihongoGamer](https://twitter.com/NihongoGamer)



# SPOTLIGHTS

## SPOTLIGHT NOMINATION?

Know someone in the community doing something neat or noteworthy? Nominate them for next month's Spotlight at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net)!



BELEM FLORES (KYOTO)

'A perfectionist's worst nightmare!' That's how Belem Flores, a third year JET in Kyoto Prefecture, would describe *kyuudou* (Japanese Archery). After finding *koto* (a traditional stringed instrument) a little too dull for her tastes, she decided to take up the bow and arrow and try her hand at the ancient martial art. That was a year and a half ago, and during that time she has become a regular at the local *dojo*, practicing at least five times a week. She has already attained the rank of *shodan* and is (pardon the pun) shooting for *nidan* early next year.

She describes the sport as extremely challenging, where perseverance is the key to success, especially for those just starting. Already she has seen marked improvements in her skills and routinely hits well above her rank at the monthly competitions.

She further describes the experience as something akin to a rollercoaster, where after flying high for a week or two, all skill can seem to vanish and it is easy to feel disheartened. But stick with it and you will soon climb again, with the challenge of the rise and the views from the top being well worth the effort.



KARYN STECYK (KOBE)

Currently a second-year JET in Kobe, Karyn started her YouTube Channel, [myfatsushi](#), this past June. She started the channel with the hopes of reaching out to a broader audience than she had with her blog, and helping to spread information about living in Japan. Diet and nutrition are her passions, and she has devoted a number of videos to food and health, including a video about the nutritional content of *soba*. Japan is certainly a healthy nation on the whole, but any information on possible health problems and maintaining your lifestyle is valuable, regardless.

She has many dedicated followers, and enjoys engaging with everyone in the comments of her videos and learning whatever she can from the feedback. She posts a new video on average once a week, so if you're interested in learning a little something about healthy living in a foreign country, take a look!

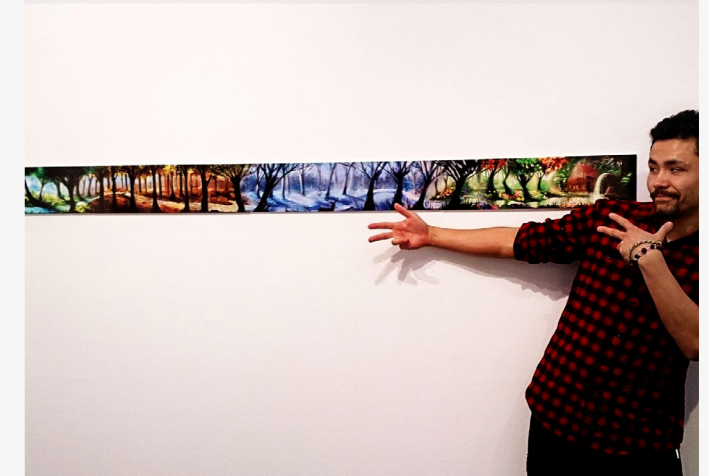


MATTHEW STRASSER (SHIMANE)

Meet Matt – a 27 year old Chicagoan, teaching in Shimane Prefecture as a 2nd year ALT.

After growing up in Algonquin, Illinois, Matt moved to Los Angeles, California to study film and TV production. Matt spent his free time slapping the bass in experimental bands and working as a local DJ at the college radio station. While his interests were firmly grounded in the arts, Matt began to see a business opportunity working at the radio station. Rather than simply supporting bands in the LA area by attending shows or purchasing music, Matt and his co-worker decided to start their own company. With music from lo-fi punk, psychedelic/electronic, and noise bands, Matt promoted and released CDs and 7-inch records by co-founding the record label "How To Fight Records".

In Japan, Matt continues to organize shows and help bands tour under "How To Fight Records". Whether he is playing at local *matsuri*, travelling to Nagoya to see bands like 'Jailbird Y' and 'Melt Banana', or writing music reviews, Matt continues pursuing his passions while teaching in Shimane.



TIM NGUYEN (HYOGO)

Tim Nguyen, a 2nd-year Kobe ALT, is a visual artist who joined JET with an interest in eventually pursuing a creative career in gaming and animation in Japan. Besides spending much of his free time painting and creating digital art, he has incorporated his skills into the classroom by making visually appealing worksheets and lessons for his students. He has also found ways to use his hobby to benefit fellow ALTs, creating logos and posters for JET events, as well as giving seminars at Kobe JET conferences on using digital programs like Adobe Photoshop.

Tim has also used his art to engage with the wider community by participating in the annual Kobe art show. The show, run by JETs but open to the public, allows JETs to show off their artistic talents in a public gallery as well as to network and express themselves to a greater audience. Tim hopes to continue to hone his craft during JET while building a network that will enable him to reach his dream of working in the digital entertainment industry in Japan. His artistic endeavors provide a good example for JETs desiring to pursue a unique passion in their work and community in Japan. You can view some of Tim's work [here](#).





# CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

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

Contact Head Editor Steven Thompson at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net) with your submissions, comments, and questions.

## ARTICLES

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

## SPOTLIGHT

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

## COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Click the comment button at the end of any article, or interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and [issuu.com](http://issuu.com).

## PHOTOS

All of Connect's photos are provided by the community, from the cover to the articles and everything in between. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, send it to us at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net).

## HAIKU

Each month Connect will feature haiku from our readers. Haiku are simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your haiku along with your name and prefecture to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net).

## COMICS

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



## CONNECT WITH US

Interested in contributing to Connect? Want to stay up-to-date on interview opportunities, photo requests, and Connect announcements? Sign up to be a contributor at the [Connect Contributors Circle](#) online to receive updates from us, pitch your ideas, and discuss with the Connect staff and community.

You can also Like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), and interact with the magazine via CLIP at [ISSUU](#).