

AJET

# CONNECT

09.2014





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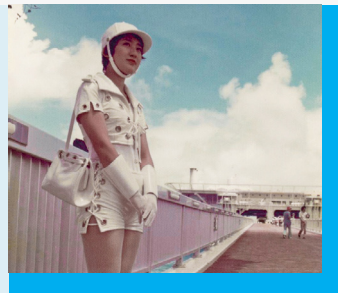


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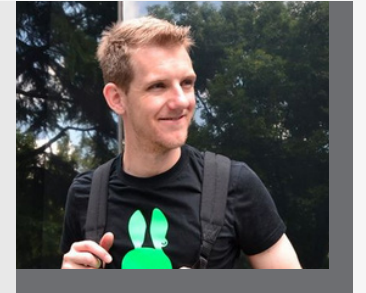
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With a huge international community, Japan is a great place for some unique sporting events. We've highlighted just a few put on by AJET groups around Japan.



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With a huge international community, Japan is a great place for some unique sporting events. We've highlighted just a few put on by AJET groups around Japan.



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*This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online [here](#). Read Connect online and follow us on [ISSUU](#).*





## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Steven Thompson  
4th-year Fukushima ALT  
Head Editor



## LETTER FROM THE AJET CHAIR

Sandy Cheng  
4th-year Kobe ALT

Summer's winding down and it's time to get back to work. That includes us at Connect magazine, who had a nice long summer break, and are back with a new team and streamlined layout that's easier to read on your phone, tablet, or computer. Because Connect is a digital publication, we wanted to make it as digital-friendly as possible. That includes tons of hyperlinks and multimedia embedded in the issue and easy 'click to read' navigation via the Table of Contents. For the best online reading experience, we recommend issuu!

One new feature we have is the **comment bar** (which you can see to the right). Clicking here will let you respond to any story in the magazine. Lend us your voice, and we'll lend you our ears. We might also respond in the magazine the following month. Whether 50 words or 500, questions or comments, good or bad, we're looking to hear back from you!

We've also broken the magazine into **4 main sections**, which lets us focus our efforts, trim down the fat, and bring you the best stories and features each month. All your favorite sections are still there, just blended together in a content smoothie. We hope you enjoy it!

See you next month!

Best regards,

Happy Autumn JETs! I hope everyone had a fantastic summer filled with plenty of air-conditioning, relaxing, adventures and fun.

Last month, your executive team at National AJET attended the Welcome Receptions at Tokyo Orientation to welcome over 1,600 new JETs to Japan. It's that fun time of year filled with lots of welcome parties and events as we welcome the newest members of our great and dynamic community.

First year JETs—congratulations on becoming official! I hope you have all settled in well to your new placements and are adjusting agreeably to your new homes. Your Block Reps have lots of great events lined up for you in the upcoming year. Japan is such a special country with something to see or do in every prefecture, so please get involved, start building your network, and make the most of the vibrant JET community around you.

The AJET National Council has been busy working on numerous projects. One of our major goals this year is the revamping of the AJET website. Our webmasters have been working tirelessly with the Council to give you improved accessibility to better resources, greater discounts and special offers, professional development opportunities, and much more. Offering the AJET publications, Planet Eigo and Foxy Phonics, to all JETs to download for free online is just one of our first steps to providing affordable and accessible resources for you. I hope you stay tuned with us for all the amazing things we have in store for you this year!

COMMENTS

# COVER SUBMISSIONS



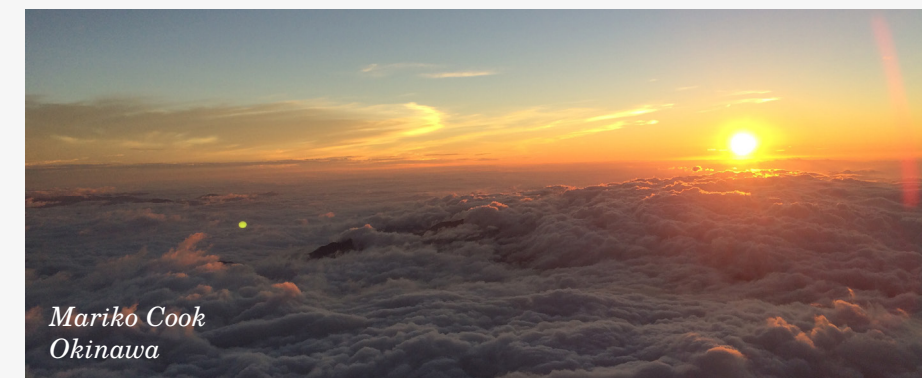
Larissa Milo-Dale  
Miyazaki



Jess Bertubin  
Okinawa



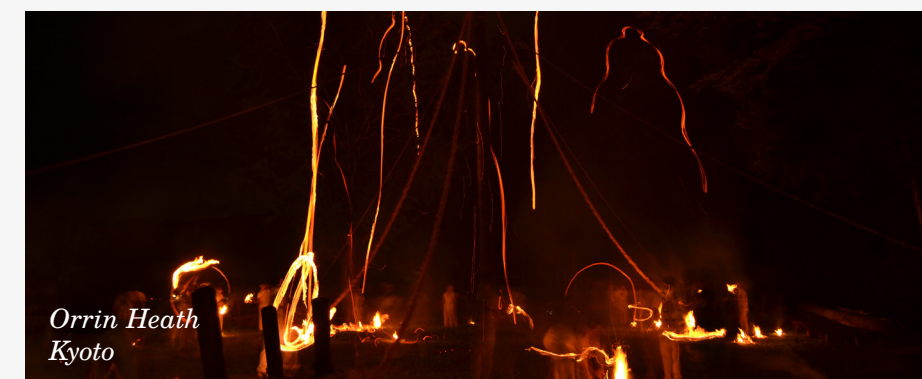
Mariko Cook  
Okinawa



Mariko Cook  
Okinawa



Larissa Milo-Dale  
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# NEWS & EVENTS



ERIKA KLEIN

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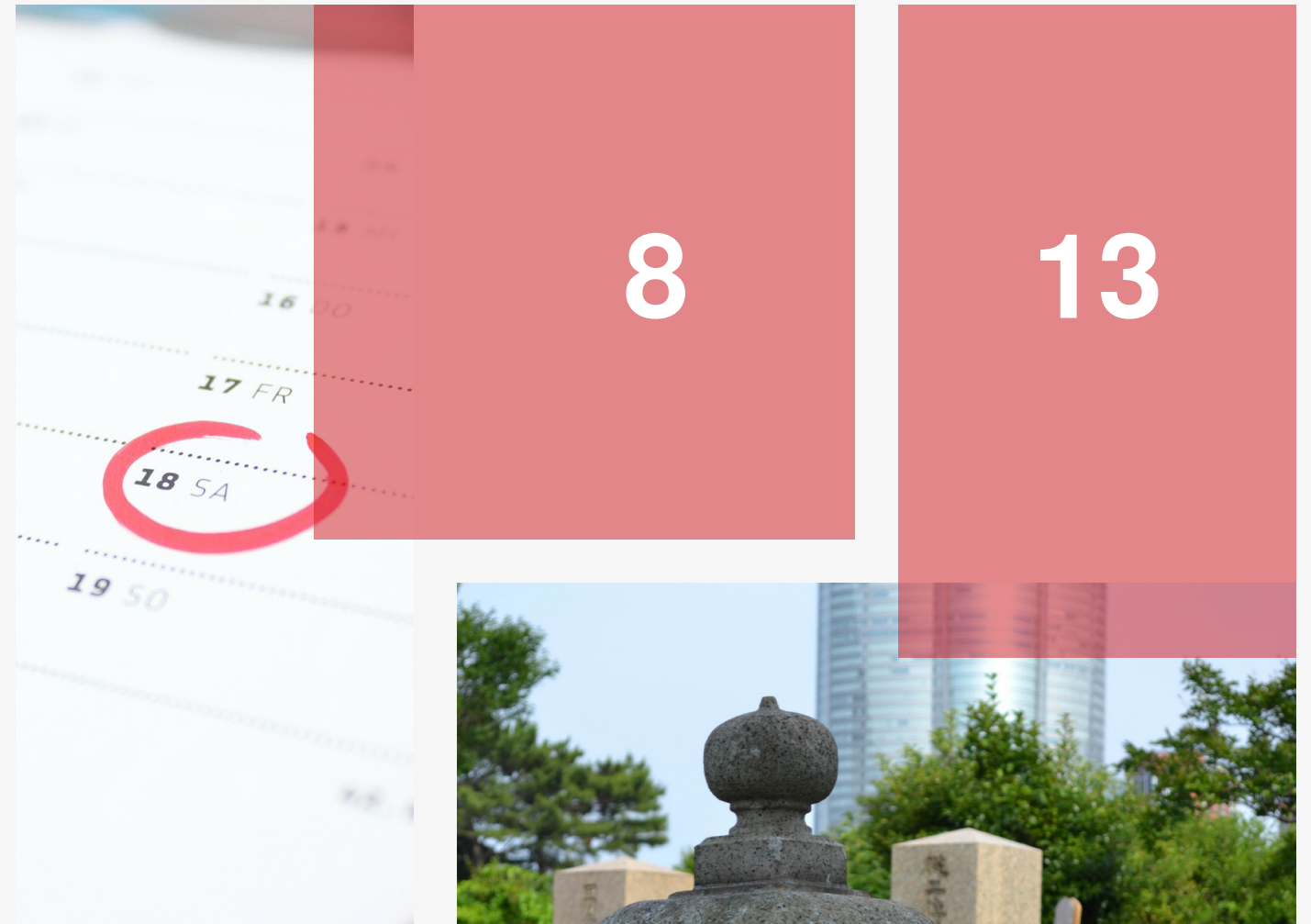
Lots of interesting things have been happening in Japan these last few months, from Prime Minister Abe announcing his reinterpretation of Article 9, to continuing island disputes, to some new approaches to immigration. If any news catches your eye and you feel like writing about it—or even just discussing it—feel free to shoot me an email!



LACEY LEE

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

Though it's the tail-end of summer, I hope that you've had a chance to participate in some great local or large-scale events in your area. If not, don't worry! There's plenty of time. Please feel free to help me by sending a quick note if you know of any spectacular local events that should be made known on the Events Calendar!



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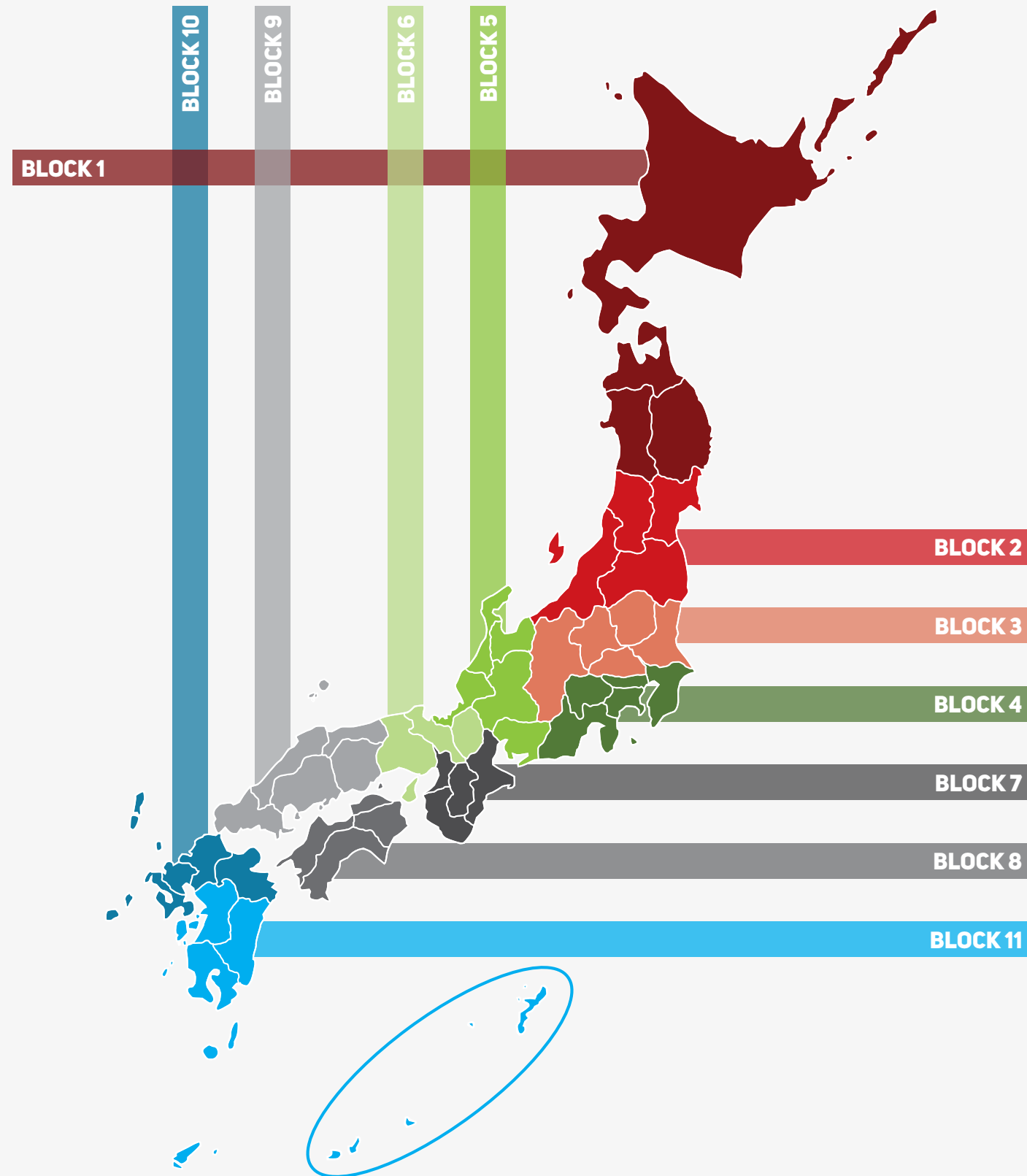
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# EVENTS CALENDAR

## SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER



Get out of the house! Get out of town! Every weekend in Japan, there's something going on, so take the chance to see a new place, meet some new people, and add a little more to your Japan story. You can always tell us about it when you get home 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](#).

Looking for a place to stay while traveling? Why not join [Tatami Timeshare](#) and meet up with some locals?

### 39TH SAPPORO MARATHON

Sapporo, Hokkaido  
10/5 - [Website](#)

### 9TH SAPPORO INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

Sapporo, Hokkaido  
10/8-13 - [Website](#)

### HOTEI FESTIVAL

Murata, Miyagi  
10/12 - [Website](#)

This festival's central draw is a very tall, decorated wooden float, upon which the god Hotei dances. The float is pulled through the city, escorted by encouraging calls and ancient flute melody.

### NIGHT FESTIVAL OF THE FOX

Kashiwazaki, Niigata  
10/13 - [Website](#)

### ECHIGO KENSHIN SAKE FESTIVAL

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

### MINOWA NO SATO NO KITSUNE NO YOMEIRI

Takasaki, Gunma  
10/6 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

This particular event focuses on a procession known as the "Fox's Wedding," where performers dress in the guise of a fox. It is a traditional event that has been handed down for generations in castle town Minowa.

### MARIMO MATSURI

Kushiro, Hokkaido  
10/8-10 - [Website](#)

The Marimo Festival introduced as a means to promote the protection of marimo, or algae balls, a cherished species to the Ainu people. Ancient Ainu rituals, traditional dances, and parades are demonstrated at this festival.

### IWAFUNE FESTIVAL

Murakami, Niigata  
10/18-19 - [Website](#)

### HAKKAISAN FIREWALKING FESTIVAL

Minamiuonoma, Niigata  
10/20 - [Website](#)

This festival is held at a sacred shrine for mountain gods. Upon burning down timber, participants are able to walk barefoot through hot embers to pray for their family's health and prosperity.



**TSUCHIURA ALL JAPAN FIREWORKS COMPETITION**

Tsuchiura, Ibaraki  
10/4 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**KAIKOEN AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL**

Komoro, Nagano  
10/20-11/7 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**TOKYO GRAND TEA CEREMONY 2014**

Tokyo, Tokyo  
9/27-28, 10/11-12 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**ASAGIRI JAM 2014**

Asagiri Heights, Shizuoka  
10/11-12 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**NARITA STRINGED INSTRUMENT FESTIVAL**

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

**YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE ART FESTIVAL**

Yokohama, Kanagawa  
8/1-11/3 - [Website](#)

If you like art, make sure to stop by this exhibition, in its fifth incarnation. This year the festival welcomes Yasumasa Morimura as artistic director and contemplates the theme: "ART Fahrenheit 451: Sailing into the sea of oblivion."

**TAKEFU CHRYSANTHEMUM DOLL FESTIVAL**

Echizen, Fukui  
10/3-11/9 - [Website](#)

**GIFU NOBUNAGA FESTIVAL**

Gifu, Gifu  
10/5-6 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

**TAKAYAMA AUTUMN FESTIVAL/HACHIMAN MATSURI**

Takayama, Gifu  
10/9-10 - [Website](#)

**KUZURYU AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL**

Kuzuryu, Fukui  
10/26-27 - [Website](#)

**SHUKI TAISAI GRAND AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

Nikko, Tochigi  
10/17 - [Website](#)

This autumn festival celebrates World Heritage Site Nikko Toshogu, and involves a long parade of men decked out in samurai attire, also known as the Parade of 1,000 Samurai Warriors.

**IKEGAMI HONMONJI O-ESHIKI**

10/11-12 - [Website](#)

**FESTIVAL OF THE AGES/JIDAI MATSURI**

Kyoto, Kyoto  
10/22 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

One of the three largest of Kyoto's festivals, Festival of the Ages, held at Heian Jingu Shrine, hosts a parade with portable shrines and representative Kyoto attire throughout all stages of this famous historical city's growth.

**MIFUNE FESTIVAL**

Kumano, Wakayama  
10/15-16 - [Website](#)

**11TH ANNUAL YOSAKOI-EEJYANAIIKA FESTIVAL**

Rinku, Osaka  
10/18-19 - [Website](#)

**TAISHI LANTERN FESTIVAL**

Taishi, Osaka  
10/18-19 - [Website](#)

**MATSUYAMA AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

Matsuyama, Ehime  
10/5-7 - [Website](#)

This celebration of the harvest in Matsuyama features a type of duel between hand-carried portable shrines. Bearers slam these shrines against each other as they yell "Mottekoi!" or "Bring it on!"

**NIHAMA TAIKO (DRUM) FESTIVAL**

Niihama, Ehime  
10/16-18 - [Website](#)

**OLIVE HARVEST FESTIVAL**

Setouchi, Kagawa  
10/25 - [Website](#)

**THE ANNUAL GRAND FESTIVAL OF KOTOHIRAGU SHRINE**

Kotohira, Kagawa  
10/9-11 - [Website](#)

**MATSUE DO-GYORETSU DRUM PARADE FESTIVAL**

Matsue, Shimane  
10/14-15 - [Website](#)

**KAMO TAISAI (GRAND FESTIVAL)**

Kamo, Okayama  
10/19 - [Website](#)

**KURAMA FIRE FESTIVAL**

Kyoto, Kyoto  
10/22-23 - [Website](#)

**TSU CITY FESTIVAL**

Tsu, Mie  
10/11-12 - [Website](#)

**SAIJO FESTIVAL**

Saijo, Ehime  
10/8, 9, 14-17 - [Website](#)

This is Saijo City's Autumn Festival at Isono Jinja Shrine. Lanterns are lit and people wander the town amid portable shrines, a myriad of floats, and taiko music, with the highlight of a river crossing on the 16th.



**AICHI-JINJYA SHRINE AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

Kurashiki, Okayama  
10/18-19 - [Website](#)

**NAGASAKI KUNCHI MATSURI**

Nagasaki, Nagasaki  
10/7-9 - [Website](#)

**TAKEHARA SHOKEI NO MICHI CANDLE FESTIVAL**

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

**NAKASU FESTIVAL**

Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
10/4-5 - [Website](#)

**BAMBOO AND MOONLIGHT MELODY**

Beppu, Oita  
10/11 - [Website](#)

**HIToyoshi OKUNCHI FESTIVAL**

Hitoyoshi, Kumamoto  
10/3-11 - [Website](#)

**HAKATA OKUNICHI**

Fukuoka, Fukuoka  
10/23-4 - [Website](#)

**KAWASHIRI-JINGU GREAT AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

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

**NAHA TUG-OF-WAR & FESTIVAL**

Naha, Okinawa  
10/11-13 - [Website](#)

This festival kicks off with a parade, leading into evening entertainment and activities as well as a bazaar and fireworks in the evening. The next day also begins with a parade, then it's the main event: a tug-'o-war competition of epic proportions, the largest in the world, using the largest rope. Events continue into the evening of the second day as well.

**YATSUSHIRO NATIONAL FIREWORKS FESTIVAL**

Yatsushiro, Kumamoto  
10/18 - [Website](#)

This large fireworks festival showcases creations from famed pyrotechnicians across Japan. Prior to each display, makers are announced in Japanese and the body of work is explained. Though crowded, it is worth the commute. Bring something to sit on and get ready for a good show!

**COUNTRY GOLD**

Yatsushiro, Kumamoto  
10/19 - [Website](#)

In the Aso area, the largest country music festival is held annually at outdoor stage Aspecta. Participants dress in true country style and perform country dances near the stage.

**AMAKUSA CERAMICS AND PORCELAIN FESTIVAL**

Amakusa, Kumamoto  
10/31-11/5 - [Website](#)

This festival is an exhibition and sale of ceramic and porcelain products made in Amakusa. Visitors can also give the pottery wheel a spin and experience pottery-making firsthand.

# IN THE NEWS

JULY-AUGUST

- July 1**

Abe announces reinterpretation of post-WWII constitution to allow for “collective self-defense,” widening Japan’s primarily defensive military. However, the public’s pacifist ideals and neighboring countries’ concerns persist ([source](#))
- July 4**

Japan decides to ease sanctions on North Korea in return for Pyongyang’s increased efforts to resolve issues surrounding its 1970s abductions of Japanese citizens ([source](#))
- July 13**

As part of his “Abenomics” plan to strengthen the economy, Abe reasserts his intention to increase the number of women staying in the workforce and ascending to management positions, despite the challenge of women’s traditional role as homemakers ([source](#))
- July 16**

Sendai nuclear power plant receives initial safety approval, as Abe, seeking a return to cheap nuclear energy, urges the restarting of nuclear plants post-Fukushima despite public unease ([source](#))
- July 17**

Prime Minister Abe announces rules regarding December’s controversial secrecy law; public remains wary of insufficient independent oversight ([source](#))
- Aug 1**

Japan announces individual names for the disputed Senkaku Islands to reinforce its territorial claims against China; China declares the move “illegal” ([source](#))
- Aug 5**

Japan places new sanctions on Russia due to Russia’s involvement in Ukraine ([source](#))



Photo - Nick Powers



# H(A)IYA! HOW LOCAL EVENTS WELCOMED ME TO MY COMMUNITY

LACEY LEE (KUMAMOTO)



Large events are great but not all placements have the luxury of all-out events being carried out down the street. The alternative is to attend as many local events as possible! This is how life began for me in an area known as Amakusa, otherwise known as ‘Takarajima,’ the so-called “Treasure Island” of southern Japan.

**“THINKING BACK NOW...I AM MORE THAN HAPPY THAT I STEPPED OUT IN A YUKATA INTO THE HUMID HEAT OF HONDO’S STREETS THAT NIGHT.”**

Located in Kumamoto prefecture, Amakusa has a unique and varied history. Throughout time it has encountered foreign influence and evolution incomparable to other areas of Japan, but these weren’t things that I was initially keyed in to during the first weeks after my arrival. Though tired, I itched to do something particularly Amakusan, and

according to elder ALT’s, *haiya* festivals were my best bet. Amakusa has two much-celebrated events known as the Hondo Haiya and Ushibuka Haiya Festivals that celebrate the *haiya-bushi*, a song of welcome for boats coming into the harbor, sung by female inhabitants of port-town Ushibuka, said to be the birthplace of these melodies. Still new in town and still out of the loop, it was lucky for me that I heard from the local mechanic, whose family has ties not just to *haiya*, but to traditional Japanese dance in general, that the second of the two festivals, the Hondo Haiya, was that weekend, and they would be happy to dress me in yukata and show me along one night.

After being fitted into yukata (featured as my editor’s picture this month), and walking a couple of blocks to the main street, we had arrived at the scene of generations’ worth of culture unfolding before us. It is said that the *haiya* song originated in Ushibuka many years ago and subsequently inspired all of the other area *haiya* songs

that sprung up in Japan in the Edo period. Once a song of welcome, the *haiya* has now transformed into a song that more broadly heralds celebration. And celebrate we did.

Though the smaller of Amakusa’s two *haiya* festivals, the Hondo Haiya is as involving as its Ushibuka counterpart, which I attended later in my first year. A parade of considerable length is the focal point of festivities, where participants dance the blocks surrounding Hondo’s main thoroughfare for around two hours. Groups from local businesses, schools, sporting groups, and more gather for months ahead of time, practicing a singular dance to perform in a loop down the crowded streets. Walking along stalls filled with food and children’s toys, there is a distinct pride the pervades the air regardless of the fact that we’re all gathered in a comparatively small place, doing what those before us did years and years ago. In this atmosphere there is a distinct sense of timelessness, but also responsibility to pass this tradition on.

As the parade moves on, shamisen players continue tirelessly, strumming along, moving the dancers down the course. Basic as the dances seemed to me, they were strength tempered with delicacy, just as you might witness in Japanese archery or aikido. In the middle of dance groups floats are carried by men in traditional *happi* coats and headbands. Despite the humidity, similarly outfitted dancers shout in time to the music and display their best as they near the main podium, hoping to be awarded the sash proclaiming admirable

dancing abilities. Thinking back now, a year later, I am more than happy that I stepped out in yukata into the humid heat of Hondo’s streets that night. In April of this year, I chose to step out again, actually dancing in the Ushibuka Haiya Festival as a part of the Amakusa Board of Education. Having participated in both events, as both spectator and performer, it’s given me understanding of an important cultural aspect of the area I’ve been placed in, but even above understanding, I feel pride for Amakusa as a native of

the city would. I feel a certain respect for Amakusa’s people; depopulating as the area might be, the people seem determined to stay here and wring forth the best of what history has bequeathed to them. It’s a determination that goes beyond the word itself, and becomes a state of being.

What does your locale have to offer you? I encourage you to seek it out.

*Interested in Amakusa? Read up on the area at their [English tourism site](#).*



Photos - Lacey Lee



# JAPANESE NEWS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

ERIKA KLEIN (HYOGO), VERITY TOWNSEND (HYOGO)

## REINTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE 9: DECLINING PACIFISM

Article 9 of Japan's Constitution has long been a contentious issue. Sometimes referred to as the Peace Clause, it was put into place by the US Occupation Government after World War II. It prevents Japan from engaging in conflicts (except in UN peacekeeping roles as outlined by 1992's PKO law (1)) and limits the size of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Although the minimal military budget aided Japan's post-WWII economic rise, current issues, including China's increasing power and North Korea's nuclear weapons program, have encouraged Japan to reconsider its own military abilities. Abe's reinterpretation of Article 9, announced July 1st, will allow the SDF to take part in collective self-defense—for example, allowing the potential for Japanese troops to provide combatant support to American forces in the Middle East. This more proactive approach to defense has worsened tensions with Japan's neighbors, as well as sparked protests at home. As Article 9 is the core symbol of Japan's pacifistic stance, Abe's reinterpretation has raised fears about Japan becoming an instigator of war.

## REGIONAL DISPUTES

Disputed islands have also been sources of strain between Japan and its neighbors. The Takeshima/Dokdo island is claimed by both South Korea and Japan (2), with a series of small islands near Sakhalin in the north also contested by Russia and

Japan. The Senkaku (or Diaoyu) Islands and their natural gas reserves, which both Japan and China lay claim to, have hit the news many times recently. In 2012, the Japanese Government purchased the islands from the Japanese family that owned the deeds, thereby nationalizing the islands and implying a strong message regarding ownership to the international community. The action resulted in renewed accusations from China that Japan 'stole' the islands, as well as sparked protests against Japanese businesses in China and multiple incidents of Chinese ships entering the waters near the islands (3). In April 2014, Obama stated that the US would support Japan's claim to the islands—the first time the US has expressed an opinion regarding the sovereignty of the islands (4). Recently, Russia has also been conducting military exercises on the disputed Etorofu and Kunashiri islands, which have been condemned by Abe (5). The mounting disputes and incidents have caused a rise in overall regional tensions, which may soon require an outlet.

## TWO "LOST DECADES" OF ECONOMIC STAGNATION VERSUS ABENOMICS

Despite being the world's third-largest economy (recently bumped from second place by China), Japan has long experienced economic stagnation. Following World War II, Japan achieved significant economic growth, culminating in an "economic miracle" during the 1970s and 1980s which catapulted it to its position as a top world economy. However, the asset market bubble burst in 1990, leading to recession.

Unsuccessful attempts to revive the economy—which were further hindered by the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global crisis—resulted in Japan recently concluding its second "lost decade" of economic stagnation. Ongoing issues, such as Japan's aging population, low birth rates, and (until recently) the deflated yen also thwarted economic recovery attempts. Prime Minister Abe is now implementing his own ideas in a bid for economic revival. Popularly referred to as "Abenomics," his plan includes increasing government spending on infrastructure, raising inflation, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and diversifying the workforce (including retaining female workers and elevating their career opportunities) (6). The increase in the consumption tax from 5% to 8% in April 2014, scheduled to rise again to 10% in October 2015, is also part of Abenomics. It is yet to be seen whether or not Abenomics will finally lead Japan out of its long economic torpor.

## WILL ECONOMIC WOES FINALLY BOOST IMMIGRATION?

Japan has traditionally embraced its roots as a closed society, but PM Abe has recently emphasized foreign labor as an economic stimulus as part of his Abenomics initiative. Historically regarded as secluded, Japan actually engaged in trade with Europeans since the 1500s, only instituting a "closed country" (*sakoku*) policy in 1639. The policy banished nearly all foreigners until 1853, when American Commodore Matthew Perry forced Japan open for international trade (7). Despite attaining tremendous success in the global economy, Japan still retains facets of its old isolation, remaining relatively homogenous and espousing a strict immigration policy. In fact, even as its economy now stagnates and its working-age population continues to decline, politicians hesitate to promote mass immigration due to the Japanese public's "strong insular mentality" (8). Still, "backdoor" immigration arrangements have allowed unskilled workers to enter the country, addressing the labor shortage. Furthermore, on June 10th, Japan revised

its immigration law to allow foreigners with special skills, such as researchers and engineers, to remain in Japan "indefinitely" (9). Should Abenomics succeed, Japan may attain both a stronger economy and a more open and diverse society.

## Further reading

- (1) PKO law Fukushima, A, 2011. The Merits of Alliance In: Ikenberry, G. J., Sato, Y. and Inoguchi, T., eds. 2011. *The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Ch.4., p.61.
- (2) [Dokodo-Takeshima Island](#)
- (3) [China Accuses Japan of Stealing After Purchase of Group of Disputed Islands](#)
- (4) [Obama says US will defend Japan in island dispute with China](#)
- (5) [Japan protests Russian military drills on disputed islands](#)
- (6) [Abenomics and the Japanese Economy](#)
- (7) [Black Ships & Samurai](#)
- (8) [Japan stands by immigration controls despite shrinking population](#)
- (9) [Law to enable foreigners with advanced skills to stay indefinitely](#)



# THIS MONTH IN... ARTS & CULTURE



VERITY TOWNSEND

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

I spent my summer going back to the cooler climate of England to savour some home cooking. I also got up early to queue for tickets for an excellent production of *Elisabeth* by Hyogo's all female Takarazuka Revue. Whether you are a new JET or a seasoned veteran, let me know if you've taken up a new hobby or had an interesting experience this summer.



COLIN O'NEILL

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If you're lucky enough, maybe one day you'll also work with a badass Vice Principal who makes newsletters using magical clip art. This summer, the rain gave me ample opportunity to listen to new music, enjoy a few flicks, and get lost in the weird part of YouTube. Shoot me a note if you have recommendations of tunes, movies, video game reviews, and any other Japanese or foreign entertainment media.



ERICA GRAINGER

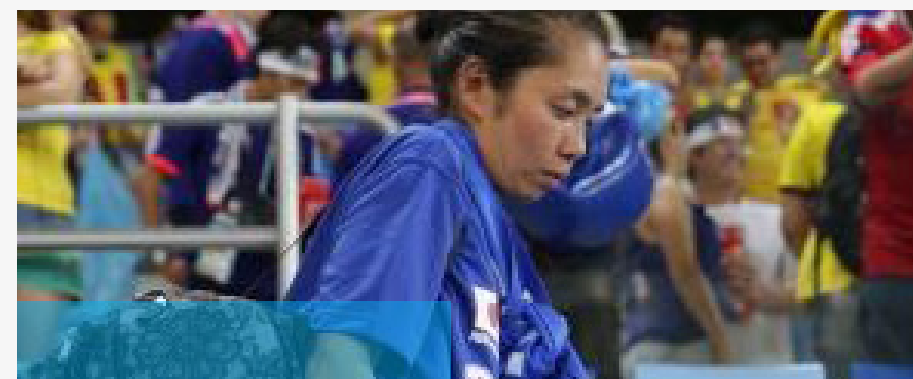
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For September, we take a step back in time to reflect on how fashion has changed from post-war Japan to current day. In the words of Coco Chanel, "Fashion is always of the time in which you live". I sometimes wonder, what would I be wearing if I was born 100 years ago? Maybe an air-tight suffocating corset? Thank goodness fashion has changed since then!



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# JAPANESE FASHION THROUGH THE AGES

ERICA GRAINGER (FUKUSHIMA), VERITY TOWNSEND (HYOGO)



Typical Japanese Fashion - 1975

Japanese fashion has changed dramatically from feudal times to the modern day. This is poignantly demonstrated from the perspectives of two very different Japanese women. One is Kazuyo Osugi, now in her mid-60s, who grew up in post-war Japan in the 1950s. The other is Michi Kitago, a young woman in her mid-20s living in Saitama. We conducted an interview with both women to understand their fashion style and their views on Japanese fashion.

## KAZUYO OSUGI MID-60s (HYOGO)

### How would you describe your style when you were young?

I liked military style coats, dresses and mini skirts.

### Who were your style icons growing up?

I loved Ingrid Bergman's style, so simple and elegant. Especially her wonderful hats! My other style icons were Twiggy, who was so tall, and Yoshinaga Sayuri. She was a Japanese actress, who always looked very fashionable in both kimono and western clothes. I liked the Beatles too!



Monpe March

### What were your favourite items of clothing in your mid-late 20s?

I had a military style coat with a stand collar, big buttons, folded cuffs and large stitches, which I loved.

### What fashion styles or trends did you detest?

I don't like overly pretty or *kawaii* outfits with lots of frills. I preferred sharp silhouettes and fitted clothes.

### What is your favourite decade in Japanese fashion?

The 1950s! Japan didn't have much after the war. So, many people wore *monpe*, loose fitting work pants because they were practical. Clothes made from *momen*, which is cotton woven into a striped pattern, as well as the arrowed pattern became very popular as well. Although Japan was very poor, I love the simple style of the clothes

from the post-war era, as they make me feel nostalgic for my childhood. *Meisen* kimono also makes me feel wistful.

### How do you think fashion today compares to fashion when you were young?

I think that the biggest change is that nowadays fewer people wear kimono. I worry that Japanese people won't maintain this tradition. I am going to miss it, but

I am always happy on the occasions when I see young people taking an interest in kimono. I am very thankful that some foreigners are also wearing kimono and helping keep the tradition alive.

**"CLOTHES MEAN NOTHING, UNTIL SOMEONE LIVES IN THEM."**

**MARC JACOBS**





**MICHI KITAGO**  
20s (SAITAMA)

**How would you describe your style?**

Casual but sophisticated, usually.

**Who are your style icons?**

I don't really have any style icons, but I enjoy street snaps of different people's style in London.

**What are your favourite items of clothing?**

I like hats, bags, shoes and jackets

**What fashion styles or trends do you detest?**

I don't like the kind of fashion that's trying too hard to look cool or cute. Or when the design or cut of the style misrepresents a person. I don't like the popular trend that everyone follows either.

**What is your favourite decade in Japanese fashion?**

The 1950s was my favourite decade.

**How do you think fashion today compares to fashion from the past—40 or 50 years ago?**

In recent years, since the huge shopping malls started taking over the fashion industry, it's very easy to find the same things everywhere. On the other hand, it's hard to find unique clothes in independent boutiques and it's also difficult to order tailor-made clothing from designers.



*Ready for Work*



*Smart Business Casual*



*Shopping with Friends*



*Elegant Dinner Party*



*Little Black Dress*



# TALKING HEADS VS PLASTICS



COLIN O'NEILL (SHIMANE)

Illustrations - Anna Stiff

How can we connect an obscure Japanese new-wave group with one of the most successfully innovative bands of all time?

glorified experimentation in sound. Lyrics to songs like "Life During Wartime" were criticisms of the era and slogans for the upcoming

slow to gain footing.

Members of Plastics and Talking Heads both felt that music was not simply a sonic experience. Visual and mental contexts were needed for an audience to truly appreciate songs. Each Plastics band member had previous interest in art, design, and fashion. Their goal was to create a music style that could be enjoyed on all artistic platforms. Similarly, Talking Heads pioneered the MTV music video era. Producing songs along with a visual experience became a regular process for musicians, a trend that continues today.

More specifically, with ambiguity in the genre called new-wave, it's often difficult to compare the sound of different



Looking more generally, Talking Heads and Plastics were on the frontlines of pushing the new-wave genre in the 1970's and 1980's. Talking Heads found success in New York City's post-Vietnam War music scene that

generation. Yet, in Japan, Plastics struggled to find interest in a new-wave following. While Japan was significantly westernized in the post-WWII years, bands that fell too far outside the norm of popular music were

**VS**, or versus, is a new monthly editorial series that will draw comparisons and associations between Japan and many of the 195 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).



WHAT IS VS?

bands. However, songs like Plastic's "Diamond Head" are very similar to the sound of Talking Heads' most revered album, *Remain In Light*. In an even deeper sense, ideas for songs like Plastic's "Copy" and Talking Heads' "Once In A Lifetime" are rooted in the same message. Imitating a mechanized computer in "Copy" or David Byrne mimicking an evangelical preacher in "Once In A Lifetime", the songs symbolize deeper messages of a detached society, readily willing to buy into ideas.

guitarist David Byrne. On a whim, Toshio included a demo tape with the designs. David Byrne actually listened to it and sent it to an American music manager who eventually marketed Plastics for U.S. exposure. Wow.

If a firsthand link between a world-renowned artistic group and a little known Japanese band can be excavated, what other deeper connections can we find?



CHECK OUT THE SONGS ON YOUTUBE!





Photo - Faizon Lakhani via Twitter

# INTERNATIONAL IDOLS! OR INDISCERNIBLE INDIVIDUALS?

COLIN O'NEILL (SHIMANE)

An unlikely symbol emerged during the 2014 FIFA World Cup from Group C: a trash bag. In June, photos of Japanese fans went viral after being posted to social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. After each match, fans of Japan's national team were seen with bags, cleaning up trash in the stadium's stands. Internationally, people were taken by this gesture that implied selflessness, kindness, and generosity. But as *Samurai Blue* were eliminated, the fan base exited the stadiums and coverage of this story faded away quietly. For most media, that was the end of the story, but let's delve in a little deeper.

From *any* cultural viewpoint, leaving a place cleaner than how it was found is deserving of recognition. After all, the story wouldn't be newsworthy or admirable if it was a common occurrence. In fact, fans gathering trash at a sporting event is so out of the ordinary that, undoubtedly, Brazil employed thousands of employees for the sole purpose of cleaning stands between matches at the World Cup. However, is an unquestioned and reverential respect for Japan's fans misguided?

Could we be astounded by their cleaning because we are looking at an isolated event through the lens of our individual culture, rather than through a foreign one?

We learn or develop most understandings of personal character and social interaction from our environment, particularly our homes and schools. In American schools, there are teachers, administrators, counselors, and—most relevant to this analysis—an entire janitorial staff. Students spend a great deal of time in an environment where they are not completely responsible for their own waste. This fosters a public lifestyle that separates what we do in public and what we are held accountable for (for

trash, at least).

Now, let's contrast this with schools in Japan. Not only are there no janitors in Japan, but *students* are responsible for cleaning the school. Every day, students have a cleaning period to supplement their classes. The teaching staff organizes and divides up cleaning jobs amongst groups of students. They clean everything from bathrooms, to hallways, and even windows. Everyone does their part to maintain the environments that provide for them. Relative to some foreign perceptions of roles and responsibilities, this is shockingly refreshing. But the question we want to answer is this: are these actions impressive and admirable on their own? Or, do the

actions only hold significant merit through the lens of our individual culture?

Looking outside of school systems, some of today's biggest global problems are waste, recycling of materials, and reuse of products. While most countries are trying to restructure their societies based on environmental protection in these areas, Japan is seemingly ahead of the curve. Whether walking through busy downtown areas, sitting on trains with hundreds of commuters, or driving on public highways, everything is impeccably clean. As a foreigner in Japan, this cleanliness seems counter-intuitive because there are virtually *no* trashcans in towns or cities. When you do finally see them, the bins are divided up between burnable papers, plastics, glass, and cans. These rules are followed without question. In Japan, cleanliness and recycling are maintained as parts of daily life and not as choices to obey or ignore.

By the end of the Group C matchups, Japan became so

distinctively recognized for their post-game cleaning that they would hold up trash bags in the stands as representative

lenses, rather than just one, we can avoid aggrandizing or sensationalizing an occurrence just because it is

**IN JAPAN, CLEANLINESS AND RECYCLING ARE MAINTAINED AS PARTS OF DAILY LIFE AND NOT AS CHOICES TO OBEY OR IGNORE.**

symbols. However, this was often misinterpreted as an acknowledgment of thanks for the praise given to their cleaning at the World Cup. Rather, Japanese fans were simply shocked and humored by the fact that *we* were so astounded.

We *must* applaud moments of kindness and respect, but it's important to look at those moments with perspective to understand the root of the actions. By looking at things through a number of cultural

different from what we know. When countries are labeled as first-world, or cultures are coined as westernized, we tend to put them in a box that denotes a particular way of life similar to what we know. Remember that while the world is now linked together more than ever, different countries and cultures are connected, but not identical.



Photo - Colin O'Neill

Japanese Students Cleaning Their School



Photo - Colin O'Neill

Standard Bins for Separating Trash Outside a Convenience Store



# JAPANESE BRAND VIVE VAGINA'S "BLUE WILLOW" DEBUT COLLECTION

TOKYOFASHION.COM

*This article was originally published by TokyoFashion on May 15, 2014 and is reprinted with their permission. You can find this article and more [here](#).*

Photos - Vive Vagina  
Blue Willow Dress 1



Japanese fashion brand Vive Vagina is best known for their trademark vagina-print tights, which are popular with many young women in Tokyo's street fashion scene. The brand was launched in 2011 by well-known Japanese model si oux. The first

collection of tights became an immediate sensation with Japanese fashion bloggers and others in social media. Harajuku fashion icon Hirari Ikeda is a longtime fan of the brand, and was the featured model for the 2012 Vive Vagina accessories collection.

Taking a step beyond tights and accessories, Vive Vagina is launching their debut fashion collection in Autumn/Winter 2014.

The theme of the Vive Vagina 2014 A/W collection is "Blue Willow" and inspiration is drawn from patterns found in traditional Chinese ceramics. The graphics used in the collection are by the Japanese artist Phazee, best known for creating album art for Japanese musicians including m-flo and OKAMOTO'S.

The collection features mostly dresses and tops, with a number of the dresses showing traditional Chinese influences going beyond the "Blue Willow" graphics. The designer's background as a Japanese street fashion icon are also evident in many pieces in the collection. Check out the Vive Vagina pieces below and watch for the collection to appear in stores—and on the street—in Japan later this year.



Blue Willow Dress 2



Blue Willow Dress 3





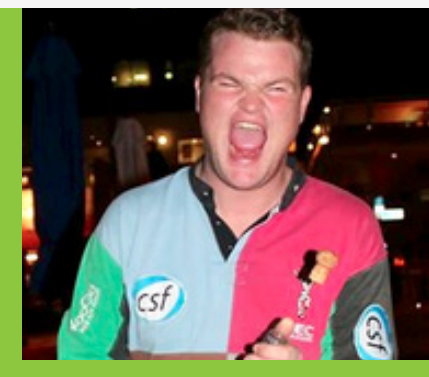
# THIS MONTH IN... LIFESTYLE



NICK POWERS-MAHER

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I eat frantically, as if I'll die before dinner, and recklessly, as if there's no such thing as a poisonous food. I once put sour cream on my face trying to get rid of acne. I love all food things and my favorite thing is to learn, so let's teaching! Tell me your food stories and secrets!



TOM LEGGE

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This month, I'm recovering from a whirlwind mileage run to South Africa having got up close and personal with a giraffe and within one fluffed gear change of being gored to death by a rhino. I've also been playing around with the Matrix ITA Server flight search engine which I'm covering for Connect soon!



SIMON GRIFFIN

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

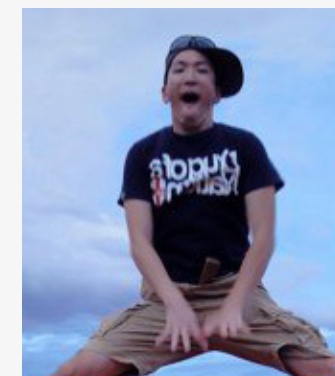
Summer is a great time for travelling both inside and out of Japan. The hot weather can make hiking and temple-viewing a little sweaty, but dips in the ocean or an air conditioned museum are great this time of year. I spent my Obon Holiday in Singapore and Malaysia, getting my fill of city sight-seeing, shopping and even a botanical garden thrown in for good measure.



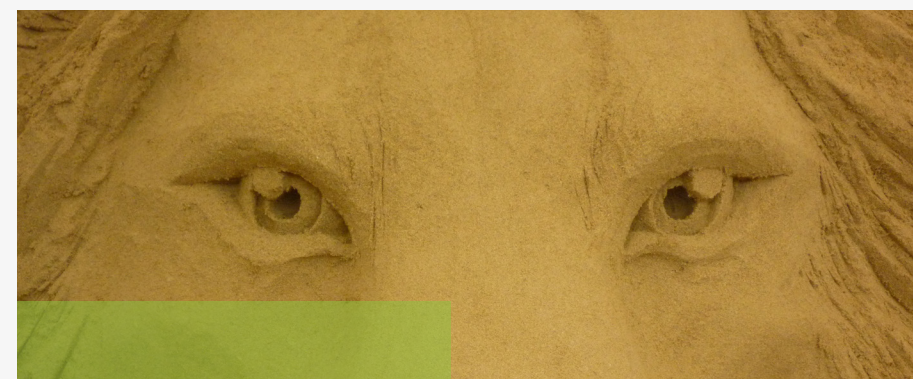
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# LET'S START COOKING

## Sake Shoyu Potatoes (sake soy sauce potatoes)

Nick Powers, Kagawa

A fast fry-pan recipe for a delicious, starchy, and *umami*-ful side dish.

### Ingredients (makes 2-3 servings)

- 3-4 potatoes
- cooking oil (olive oil, canola oil, etc.)
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons of *mirin* (cooking sake)

### Process

1. Heat a little cooking oil over high heat in a skillet.
2. Slice and chop potatoes a little larger than bite-sized. Fry in skillet until browned, then flip and fry again.
3. Mix soy sauce and sake and drizzle over potatoes. Turn down heat, flip potatoes, and cook for a few minutes.
4. Scoop out and enjoy!

**"APPLIANCES CAN DO SO MUCH MORE THAN THEIR ADVERTISED PURPOSE / FUNCTION!"**  
BRANDY TACKETT (HIROSHIMA) 4TH YEAR

## Oven-Baked Fries

Nick Powers

A home-baked alternative for those of us addicted to the deep-fried stand-by. You can season and salt to your liking!

### Ingredients (makes 2-3 servings)

- 2-3 potatoes (white potatoes, not purple/sweet potatoes)
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil (olive oil)
- 1 tablespoon salt
- Desired flavorings (garlic salt, herbs, black pepper)

### Process

1. Slice or chop the potatoes. Smaller pieces with more surface area cook faster and more evenly.
2. Dry between two paper towels.
3. Dump into a bowl and add salt liberally. Add oil, conservatively. Add desired flavorings, liberally, and mix everything by hand thoroughly, until the potatoes are coated.
4. Cover a baking pan with parchment paper. Scoop out potato pieces and spread in one layer on the pan.

5. Toaster oven: Toast at high heat (700 – 1000 W) until they start to brown, 30 – 45 minutes.
6. Conventional oven: Bake at 350 F (180 – 200 C) until browned.



**"FIND LOCAL FAMILY-OWNED SHOPS AND BECOME A REGULAR. YOU MAY GET FRESH PRODUCE AND ADVICE ON PREPARING IT!"**  
SARAH JANE BLENKHORN (SHIMANE) 5TH YEAR



**"EVEN IF ONLY ONCE A WEEK, TRY MAKING SOME JAPANESE FOOD! IT'S PART OF THE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE."**  
RENATA JANNEY (FUKUSHIMA) 2ND YEAR

## Yasai-Itame (Vegetable Stir-Fry)

Sterling Diesel, Nagasaki

Another pocket recipe for getting your greens. Learn to stir-fry and you can make just about anything.

### Ingredients (serves 2+)

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce (or other desired sauce)
- 1 tablespoon cooking sake
- 4 cloves garlic, minced (chopped very finely)
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 10 basil leaves
- 100g package of fried tofu triangles cut into bite-sized pieces
- Desired vegetables (cabbage, carrots, etc.)

### Process

1. Cut up vegetables so they're ready to throw into the pan. Cabbage slices should be about 5x5 cm squares. Slice the other vegetables into strips about 1cm thick. Basil leaves can be left as they are. Rinse beansprouts, if using, carefully so as to not break them. Set vegetables aside.
2. Turn your stove to medium heat. Put the oil, garlic, and ginger into your wok. When the

garlic is fragrant, add the tofu (or meat if using). Stir until it's almost fully cooked.

3. Add all of your vegetables and cooking sake at once. Stir constantly until they begin to wilt.
4. Add soy sauce and any spices you'd like, then remove from heat.

## Chicken, Cashew, and Soba Stir-fry

Alexandra Brueckner, Aomori

A no-fail fry-pan recipe for meat, veggies, and carbs, all in one. Start with boiling the water, then go from there.

### Ingredients (serves 4)

- 1 head of broccoli, chopped into florets
- 2-3 carrots, diced
- 200 g of soba noodles
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger

- 2 skinless chicken breasts, diced
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- 1 cup toasted cashews

### Process

1. Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add in vegetables and noodles. Boil 3-5 minutes, until the vegetables are crisp. Drain and set aside.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add in olive oil, ginger, and garlic. Stir for 1-2 minutes, until the garlic is starting to turn golden.
3. Add in chicken, sesame oil, and soy sauce. Stir-fry until cooked through, about five minutes.
4. Stir in vegetables, noodles, broth and cashews. Heat through and enjoy!

**"GO LOCAL AND GO NUTS!!"**  
BENOIT FORGUES (SAGA) EX-JET





# ASK SEMPAI

NICK POWERS (KAGAWA)



Now that you're here, you're learning to adjust, but you may discover new issues you never thought of before. We've started to gather some food-related questions from the JET community and answers contributed by your sempai!

## A NICE NEIGHBOR JUST GAVE US THIS BAG OF DRIED FISH—UMM.... WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

• KENDRA PETERSON, OKAYAMA, 2ND YEAR

Make *dashi*!

• Karla Walker

Eat it!

• Kathe Schmaing

*Hoshizakana* (dried fishies) are another great way to make *dashi* soup stock! Otherwise, feed them to the neighborhood cats and dogs.... They're crazy popular as a pet snack, because of the abundant calcium!

• Xan Wetherall

## DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND CORNMEAL? I WANT TO MAKE CORNBREAD!

• KARLA WALKER, NAGANO, 1ST YEAR

If you want rough cornmeal for baking and such, look for corn grits—it might be a bit rough for cornbread, but its good enough for the bottoms of rolls, etc. I got mine at a Jupiter, but I've seen some at a couple of Kaldi locations too.

• Anonymous

Try [Amazon](#) or [Rakuten](#).

• Aya Rothwell

## ANYONE HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR WHAT VITAMIN B12 FORTIFIED FOODS ARE IN JAPAN? DOES ANYONE KNOW OF ANY B12 FORTIFIED FOODS I CAN JUST GET AT THE SUPERMARKET HERE THAT ARE VEGAN?

• JESSICA RENAE, HOKKAIDO

Check [iHerb](#).

• Anonymous



## I WAS WONDERING IF ANYONE KNEW OF ANY GOOD GLUTEN-FREE NOODLES IN THE NIIGATA AREA? I LOVE JAPANESE FOOD AS I'VE BEEN TO JAPAN SEVERAL TIMES, BUT I WOULD LOVE TIPS ON HOW TO AVOID GLUTEN!

• BECKI ROLSTON

There are some alternatives that you can locate either online (iherb, Foreign Buyers' Club) or sometimes in grocery stores (most stores do not have allergy sections, but on occasion you may be able to find a larger store that does). If you're in a rural area, this may be more difficult. Still, if you can locate an organic or macrobiotic store in the area, you may be able to find flours that you can use as an alternative. As for eating Japanese food, learn how to cook if you want to eat foods that you usually eat. Most Japanese food has a form of gluten in it (either flour or soy sauce, or another liquid that uses flavoring, or dressings, etc.). Adjusting to this reality can be a difficult process, as you will need to schedule cooking as a priority for your health. Also, socializing with others may seem more difficult, since the majority of your friends will be able to eat anywhere they want and you may find yourself with a limited number of options. If you can make friends with local cafe or restaurant owners, they may be sympathetic and create meals that you can enjoy while eating out with your friends. Get a card in both Japanese/English that lists the things you can and cannot eat. Research and learn the kanji, so you can read the labels of food in the stores. Be aware that when you shop for groceries, the majority of foods in the stores are already off-limits. No instant foods, no prepared foods, etc. The safest foods are whole foods (veggies, fruits, rice, meat, fish, tofu, etc.). Start connecting with others in the GF community in Japan\*.

• Autumn Aki

Join the Facebook group [Gluten-Free JET](#) for more advice and to connect with the gluten-free community!

The folks at Celiac Travel have created a useful card denoting dietary restrictions which can be downloaded [here](#).



Online shopping will be your friend and don't be afraid to ask if there is gluten in anything you buy/eat. Most people don't know that most sauces contain gluten of some kind, so be aware. A bread maker is a good purchase and you can buy gluten free bread flour on Rakuten with which you can bake great bread!

• Sarah Griffioen

If you have an AEON around you they might have wheat-free pasta, close to the rice noodles or foreign food items.

• Vicky Brown





# JOURNEY TO GAIKOKU

## AN INTERVIEW WITH WATARU OHIRA

SIMON GRIFFIN (KYOTO)

*As a foreigner living in Japan, I often find Japanese people taking an interest in my life, my home country and how I have found the experience of living in a strange and foreign land. For this article I decided I would turn the tables on a Japanese friend of mine, Wataru, and ask him about some of his experiences living outside of Japan. As Wataru speaks English fluently with a very strong (almost Scouse-like) British accent, the interview was conducted entirely in English via Skype.*

**Tell the readers a little about yourself, and your history of living overseas.**

I'm Wataru Ohira, 29 years old and originally from Tokyo.

My first trip from Japan was in 2007, when I went to Australia to study sociology for four years. After that, I moved to the UK on a working holiday, and that is where I have been based since.

**Why did you initially choose to live in Australia?**

Following graduation from high school, I worked as a receptionist with the English teaching company Nova in Tokyo. Nearly all of the friends I made there were Australian and had gone to the same University; Monash in Melbourne. At that time it was the only university I knew of in Australia, and having made lots of great friends from there I decided that was the place I wanted to go.

**How was your English ability at that time? Did you have any problems communicating?**

My English was okay before I went. I was able to communicate socially without any real problems. Academic English was harder and before I left Japan I took a 'Bridging Course' to bring my academic English up to a suitable level. So overall, there were no major problems communicating with people in everyday life, and I don't remember having any real issues due to language.

**What things surprised you when you first arrived?**

Public transport was one thing. It was so inefficient in Australia, and they don't run nearly as often as in Japan. Trains would be late without explanation or apology, and buses could be cancelled without notification, something that would never happen in Japan. I guess a second point would be customer service, and how different that is compared with Japan too. In Australia, people working in shops and such were a lot more relaxed than in Japan. It was okay for the staff to be chewing gum or talking to their colleagues as they served you, again

something that I would never see in Japan. I experienced a bit of culture shock seeing things that were so different from what I was used to.

**What did you enjoy about living overseas?**

I guess I loved the whole experience of living away from Japan and everything being so different—experiencing new things, seeing new places and constantly challenging myself. I really enjoyed taking a step out of my comfort zone and seeing things from a new perspective.

**Did you miss anything about Japan?**

Well I obviously missed my family and friends; I think anyone living away from home feels this way. Otherwise, I guess I did miss Japanese food, too. In Japan you can get good quality, delicious food for a really cheap price, maybe for example a beef bowl for 500 yen, and with good quality meat. I don't think you can easily find similar standards of food in Australia or the UK, especially such good quality food at such a cheap price.

**Has living overseas changed you?**



**“WHEN YOU LIVE AWAY FROM HOME AND EVERYTHING IS CHALLENGING AND YOU ARE CONSTANTLY OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE, I FEEL YOU HAVE TO GROW IN CONFIDENCE TO SURVIVE.”**

Yes! I've grown up a lot. My parents say they see it too. Living away from home and doing everything by myself has made me really independent. I'm able to do a lot more than I used to be able to. I would also say I'm more confident than I used to be. When you live away from home and everything is challenging and you are constantly out of your comfort zone, I feel you have to grow in confidence to survive. And then obviously my English has improved a lot too!

**Has living overseas changed your views on Japan?**

I guess sometimes I now see that Japan can be a little too strict on certain things and everybody follows rules and customs maybe without

thinking about why or if there is perhaps a different or better way. I did work in Japan last summer for a couple of months while I was home visiting family. Every day, I would catch the last train home, just because that was what everybody else was doing, and that was what I had to do too. This meant everyone in the office was always a little tired, and so everyone was less productive than they would have been if they just worked “normal” hours like in Australia or the UK. I found following that kind of lifestyle very tiring and difficult to maintain.

*Wataru is currently living in the UK, and will begin a new job in London with an accounting firm this September.*





# TOTTORI'S... SAND MUSEUM?

## A LOT MORE FUN THAN IT SOUNDS!

SIMON GRIFFIN (KYOTO)

Photos - Simon Griffin  
Queen of the Sands

The first time I ever saw a sign advertising the “Tottori Sand Museum” I can remember turning to my friend and laughing, both of us imagining corridors filled with cases of sand samples from all over the world, and tourists clicking away with cameras as they “oooo” and “ahhh” at all the various types.

How very wrong we were! This year, in fact, marked my third visit to the Sand Museum in as many years, and I shall, without fail, be planning a fourth trip next year. Open April through January, the museum showcases truly breathtaking sand sculptures, designed and created by sand sculptors from across the world.

Soon after entry to the museum, you can watch a video on how the sculptures are made, making them seem even more amazing when you stand dwarfed by palaces and battle scenes all made of nothing but sand. The attention to detail on every piece is truly incredible, right down to the light reflections on each eye, or every knot in a wooden barrel.

This year’s annual theme was “Russia” and sculptures depicted various important

Russian historical events, as well as scenes of Russian culture and lifestyle, ranging from a stage with ballet dancers to a Russian space shuttle.

The most memorable sculpture this year was a large centerpiece depicting the Russian tundra that could be viewed at any angle. One side showed men mid-battle with a mammoth, whilst the other showed ice wolves stalking an ox and cart.

The Sand Museum first opened in 2006, and previous themes have included the Italian Renaissance, the UK, and East Asia. However, 2010’s African theme, complete with a ceiling high stampede of animals is a personal favourite.

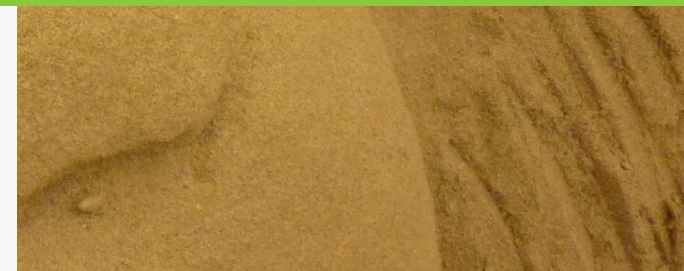
The museum is situated just a short walk from the Tottori Sand Dunes, which claim the title of Japan’s largest dunes. The dunes are open year-round, but be warned: the sand (unsurprisingly) becomes very, very, very hot during the summer months—flip-flops are not advised!

Equipped with proper footwear, you can climb the sandy mountains for yourself, ride a camel and finish off the experience by sampling Tottori’s famous produce: the humble Tottori pear. Be it in the form of the actual fruit (available in autumn) or my personal recommendation—pear flavoured ice cream.

Mufasa!



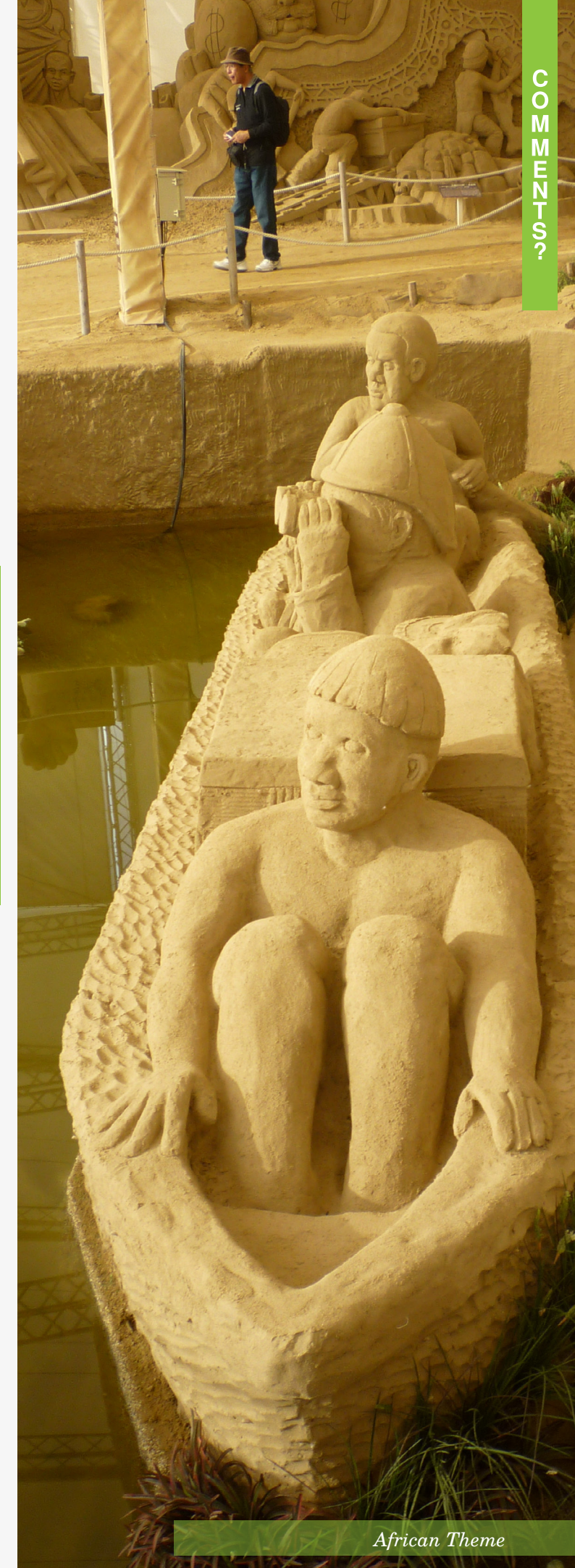
**“I CAN REMEMBER TURNING TO MY FRIEND AND LAUGHING, BOTH OF US IMAGINING CORRIDORS FILLED WITH CASES OF SAND SAMPLES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD...HOW VERY WRONG WE WERE!”**



The Russian Ballet



To Be or Not To Be?



African Theme

COMMENTS



Photos - Jesse Whitehead

# TRAVEL IN PICTURES: THE NAHA GRAND TUG-OF-WAR



## NAHA TUG 'O' WAR AND FESTIVAL

Friday, October 10 - Sunday, October 12

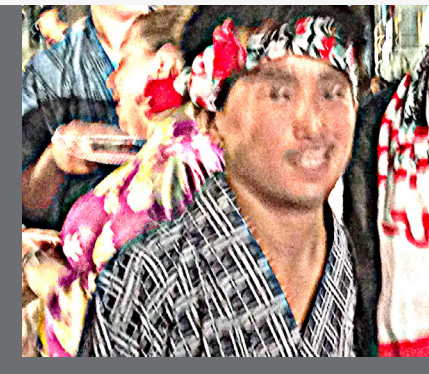
If you've been looking for an excuse to head to Okinawa, this is it! Take a break and head to Japan's own tropical paradise for a bit of fun and cultural festivities like parades, beer gardens, performances and a tug 'o' war of epic proportions. In fact, Guinness world record proportions! See details at the event's [Facebook page](#).



COMMENTS



# THIS MONTH IN... COMMUNITY



HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA

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

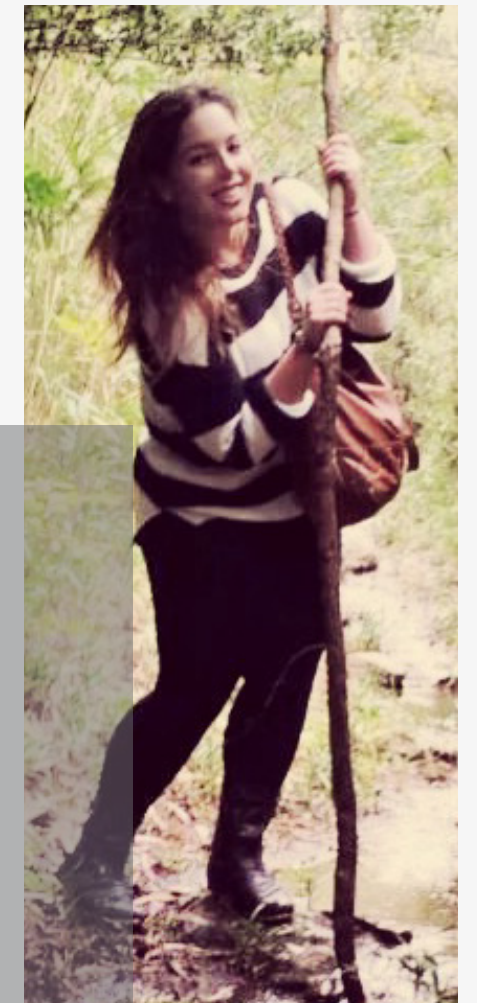
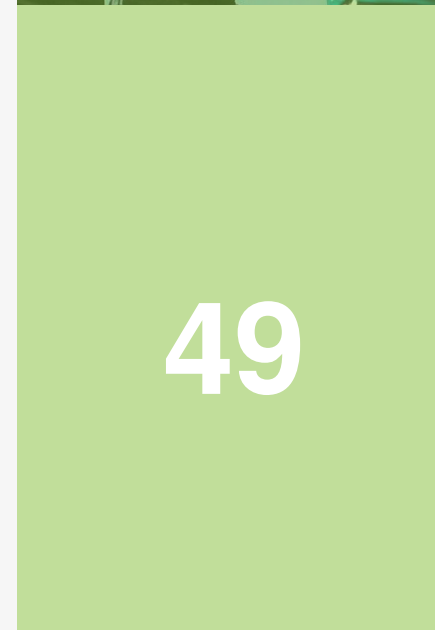
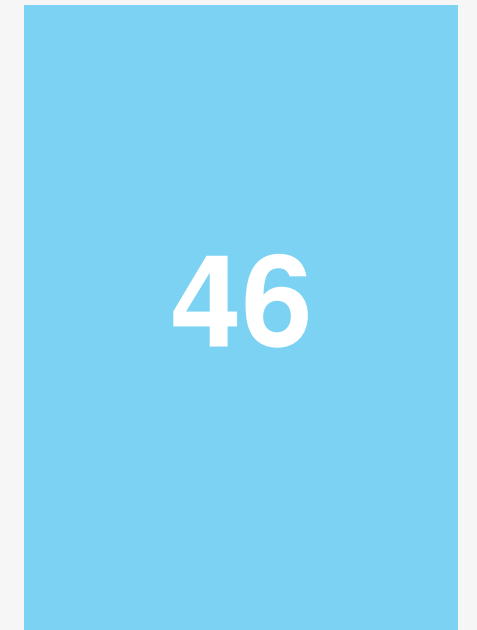
This summer, I was fortunate enough to climb Mount Fuji, beating Typhoon Halong and seeing the sunrise. I also gave surfing a go at the tranquil beaches of Miyazaki with the good-natured people from Aoshima Guesthouse. If you have any recent endeavors you would like to share or you have any sports questions, contact me.



NATHAN BERNE

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

Summer has erupted this year with some amazing inclement weather, so there's work to be done!! Get OUT! Get ACTIVE!! Get OVER your excuses!! This month alone, I've helped with road-clearing, taken punches at a karate academy, and even Eco-Toured in Australia, so yeah, I've been lazy. No matter how you do it, please volunteer your time, connect with your community, be sure to give as much as you get, and have fun!!





Photos - Yolanda Espiritu

# ALL HANDS TO BOHOL

YOLANDA ESPIRITU (AOMORI)

Clean-up with the Kids

*An Education in Deconstruction: Beyond the reconstruction in Tohoku, a journey to the Philippines for overseas disaster relief provides a well-rounded lesson in the particulars of community recovery.*

My name is Yolanda, and in a nutshell, my passion is to help others. It makes me feel like I'm doing something meaningful and productive when I get involved in projects and volunteer. That being said, I recently returned from working in relief efforts in the Philippines, and was able to continue my work with the organization All Hands in support of an important cause.

Upon first arriving in Japan, I had previously been involved in a charitable organization back home in the US, and so I set out looking for a similar program in Japan. In no time at all, my search led me to a relief project in Tohoku where I found opportunities to help with reconstruction of the devastated area. I was also pointed toward the far-reaching charitable relief and rebuilding efforts of the organization All Hands, which actually got me started on further international relief work outside of Japan. Through their work, I was able to volunteer and be a part of the deconstruction

and reconstruction in Bohol, Philippines; Japan's neighbor across the sea.

## Deconstruction via Jeepney

On October 15th 2013, a substantial portion of the Philippines was hit by an earthquake and typhoon, leading to an overwhelming loss of life, homes, and buildings. Since I was already looking for an opportunity to help—and as I immediately felt a strong interest in activism within the JET community—I turned to All Hands as it is

a program in which JETs can get involved not only within Japan, but throughout our unique corner of the world. With this in mind, I chose to work through All Hands as the organization focuses on rebuilding communities that have been hit by natural disasters, and I set off to contribute.

Once in Bohol, we set off as a team to rebuild and bring aid to people in the affected areas. We transported tools and materials, shoveled rubble, and rode to work every day on *jeepney* jeeps. I was surprised to find that one of my favorite parts of the day was actually riding to work on the jeepney roof! Beyond that, I was also able to learn about the additional deconstruction that takes

place after a natural disaster. As the earthquake left many buildings damaged but not completely destroyed, a large part of our mission was actually dealing with these half-erect buildings, since many of the structures were so shaken up that they were no longer safe enough to use. As a result, much of our work involved tearing down the pillars and cement walls that were still standing, separating the rebar from the cement, and clearing the rubble. Therefore, a primary element of our task became “safe-ing”: the process of bringing down a home safely through deconstruction, so that reconstruction could commence.

## Kids and Coconuts

As the rebuilding continued, we also cleaned up community spaces and broke cement at a rubble-strewn school, and we even had a chance to visit with the kids and snap a few pictures. Workdays were broken up with frequent *coconut breaks*, and lunchtime always came with additional coconuts for everyone. On top of all of this,

*A US-based non-profit disaster relief volunteer organization, All Hands was initially developed in response to Hurricane Katrina, but has since expanded to launch 42 separate relief projects worldwide since 2005, and has grown to include over 17,500 volunteers, who have collectively worked over 1,000,000 hours. Geared toward fundraising, response to natural disasters, and provision of sustainable support to communities, All Hands' international board of directors recently wrapped Project Bohol, but remains active throughout the global community. Learn more [here](#).*

while serving this excellent cause, we banded together as a great group of energetic and out-going people ready to help, and were honored to watch the community rebuild around us. When the time came to return to Japan, I realized that I had not only had an opportunity to help, but I had also shared in the rare experience of being able to see another *inaka* area with beautiful coconut trees, rice fields, poultry farms, and a tropical landscape; all of which I found to be unique, and all the more inspiring.

By the end, in addition to having helped and served a community, I was grateful to have learned so much about the deconstruction and rubble cleanup process that must always take place before the rebuilding of houses and schools can happen. Combined with my experience working in Tohoku, where reconstruction was already well underway, my work in Bohol actually helped me to gain a more well-rounded perspective on the stages that follow a natural disaster, and a stronger sense for how the complete rebuilding process actually functions.

For anyone with a will to volunteer, please know that it's never been so easy to find a

volunteer project for wherever you want to go!!! Volunteering is the best way to travel, experience, and learn about a new place, new culture, and a new community, and you'll definitely be surprised by the new knowledge you'll gain.

*Yolanda (Yoyo) Espiritu served as the 2013-2014 AJET Director of Resources & Block 1 Representative. She lives and teaches in Aomori Prefecture, volunteers internationally, and can swing a shovel like a pro.*



Rubble at Yolanda's First Site



Yolanda with Coconut



# THE SQUARED CIRCLE OF DIPLOMACY

ALEXANDER PEGRAM (OKAYAMA)

*One amateur boxing-nut from Tennessee turned a stress-relief hobby into a cross-cultural blender, and involved other JETs as volunteer sparring partners, in-ring announcers, and match-card display models. Gloves on or off, boxing brings people together.*

## The First Punch

Leading up to the start of my first year on JET, I developed a nasty little habit of exchanging punches with people. As a former regular at a local boxing gym in my city, when I finally settled into my quiet, new home in Japan, I realized that I had really come to enjoy the benefits of the physical conditioning and stress relief that accompanies banging a heavy bag. Right away, my addiction started nagging at me.

I wanted to punch. So here's

what I did. (Just so we're clear; I did not just go outside and start punching things.)

## Finding a Ring

My first step was finding a place to practice. I knew that Japan is home to numerous martial arts disciplines, and my base school itself invited me to join in on the Judo classes...but, I wanted to BOX!!! I spent some time googling combinations of my city's name and the word "boxing" with mixed results, but what ultimately worked for me, and what I'd suggest

to others, was checking Google Maps and searching (in Japanese) for the specific discipline I was inclined to practice.

Living in one of my prefecture's larger cities, I found several options for boxing gyms within a 30 minute biking radius, so on the next holiday, I set off to see what was there. After a long search, I arrived at what would later become my boxing gym and I creepily peeked in the window and noticed a menacing figure shadow-boxing in the ring. His trainer noticed me, and the two of them came outside to have a chat.

This is when my admittedly small knowledge of Japanese was extremely useful. The trainer happened to own the gym, and after punching the mitts with him, I was able to ask vaguely about how to join the gym. In my case, the many options were difficult to distinguish due to my low Japanese ability, but we managed to work out a deal where I would pay around 10,000 yen a month for free access to the gym during open hours. This included

personal training and the use of any necessary equipment (headgear, gloves, etc.). It was a steep price, but the hidden benefit was a great new source of friendships to make me feel comfortable in my new home away from home.

## Gloves ON!

While I had finally found a place to train, I quickly learned that I had done more than simply join a gym. I had joined another community! At my gym, I trained alongside people of all ages, and I was quickly integrated. The children in the gym were always excited to practice their English with me, and the adults were always curious about my home and about my life in Japan. I was even given the opportunity to work as a sparring partner to prepare my gym-mates for their professional debuts.

While almost all conversations took place in Japanese, it was a wonderful experience that bolstered my confidence in navigating this new culture, and as I settled in, I was also given ample opportunity to share my own culture,

**"I QUICKLY LEARNED THAT I HAD DONE MORE THAN SIMPLY JOIN A GYM. I HAD JOINED ANOTHER COMMUNITY"**

and to invite others to come and contribute as well. My gym would often have its own festivals and parties complete with food stalls and boxing tournaments for adults and kids alike, and I was always encouraged to bring friends and other ALTs. In particular, we held yearly sparring festivals, and fellow ALTs came to assume the roles of ring announcer and round-card girl, with much hilarity and aplomb ensuing.

This added an international flavor to a local festival, and

everyone from the kids to the boxers to the trainers had a great time. We sparred, we laughed, we helped kids cheer for their boxing dads (and vice versa), and we saw some astounding theatrical ring entrances and half-time shows. Through it all, we grew closer with our community in a way that no one had expected.

In the end, that's one of the primary goals of JET, isn't it? Bringing the international community to all corners of Japan. For me, what started



Through the Wire



Celebrating

Taking a Jab  
Photos - Alexander Pegram



out as a boxing itch grew into one of the most important components of my time on JET. In joining a gym, I made local friends outside the workplace, and engaged in mutually beneficial friendships with people of all ages—punches included! I was able to influence a

new community even as they so richly impacted my experience, and in the end, it was a true K.O. for international relations.

Even when sweating in a boxing ring, you're still a winner for JET.

*Alexander Pegram taught for two years in Okayama with JET, and continues to function as both a puncher and a punching bag back home in Tennessee, USA. He ran twice in the Okayama Naked Man Festival, proposed to his girlfriend (a fellow JET), and is now pursuing a degree in Medical Physics.*

COMMUNITY



# LET THE AJET GAMES BEGIN

**"WHILE ALMOST ALL CONVERSATIONS TOOK PLACE IN JAPANESE, IT WAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE THAT BOLSTERED MY CONFIDENCE IN NAVIGATING THIS NEW CULTURE"**

*So you've made it through your first month in Japan and you're looking to get involved. Whether you've never kicked a ball or you're well co-ordinated and sporty, there are numerous ways to get involved and keep fit. Here are a few friendly competitions organised by JETs or the Japanese community. This is by no means an exhaustive list, so if you've got an upcoming event you'd like to share, get in touch at [connect.sports@ajet.net](mailto:connect.sports@ajet.net) or reach out to your local **AJET Block Representative**.*



*Flying Superman Punch!*

## ALT SOCCER TOURNAMENT

This annual soccer tournament is for foreigners living and working in Japan, however Japanese players are also very welcome! Generally teams are made up largely of JET participants, so it's a great way to get to know ALTs from different prefectures.

West tournament

- Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture

East tournament

- Sugadaira Kogen, Nagano Prefecture

West tournament

- September 20-21 2014

East tournament

- October 4-5 2014
- Cost for Players
  - Fri & Sat night: 17,000 yen
  - Saturday night only: 12,000 yen
- Cost for Supporters
  - Fri & Sat night: 15,000 yen
  - Saturday night only: 10,000 yen

## NAGANO SKI EXTRAVAGANZA

Take some time out and enjoy a weekend of winter sports and merry cheer! This is a great chance to get together with people you might not usually ski or board with, tick off a visit to a new prefecture, and forget about work for 48 hours. Whether you're a pro, or just finding your snow legs, we want you there! Come along with us and enjoy the powder kingdom of Myoko Kogen just over the border, in Niigata Prefecture.

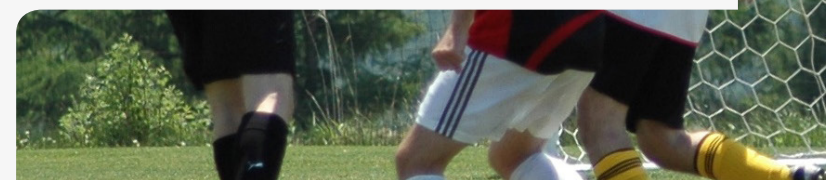
Myoko Kogen, Niigata Prefecture

- Date TBD January 2015
- Cost TBD

[Website](#)



*Photo - Chris Moore  
AJET Tournament - Close Call*





### OITA INTERNATIONAL CHARITY BIKE TRIP

The Annual Oita International Charity Bike Trip is a three-day cycling trip around the beautiful countryside of Oita Prefecture. During the event, both bike riders and volunteers in support vehicles will cycle roughly 300 km in order to raise money for Room to Read, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational opportunities to under-privileged children in third-world countries.

Oita Prefecture

- Date 3 day weekend in March
- Cost 15,000 yen

[Website](#)

Contact: oita@ajet.net



ALT Soccer Tournament

### NIIGATA INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

This basketball tournament is held twice each year, and it welcomes ALTs, expats, locals and friends from over five prefectures to the pristine countryside of Matsunoyama, Niigata. What started as a small local tournament in a great little town has grown into an international event with hundreds of participants, many of which are repeat participants!

Matsunoyama, Niigata Prefecture

- Date TBD June 2015
- Cost 12,000 yen

[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

### TOKYO YAMATHON

The Yamathon is organised by members of the International Volunteer Group (IVG) who volunteer their time and efforts to put on fundraising events around Tokyo. The majority of your registration fee and all of the money you raise in sponsorship will go straight to Oxfam Japan to help those living in poverty worldwide.

JR Harajuku Station Tokyo City, Tokyo Prefecture

- Date TBD June 2015
- Team Registration Fee: 10,000 yen

[Website](#)



Photo - Chris Moore  
AJET Tournament - Face Off

### AKITA INTERNATIONAL SUMO BASHO

This charity sumo tournament is held in June by the Akita Association of JETs. Every year JETs and friends gather from all across Tohoku (and some farther still) to decide who is worthy of the title of Akita's Yokozuna.

Akita Budokan, Akita City

- Date TBD June 2015
- Cost for Players
  - 500 yen
- Cost for Supporters
  - Adults 1,000 yen
  - Kids 500 yen

[Website](#)

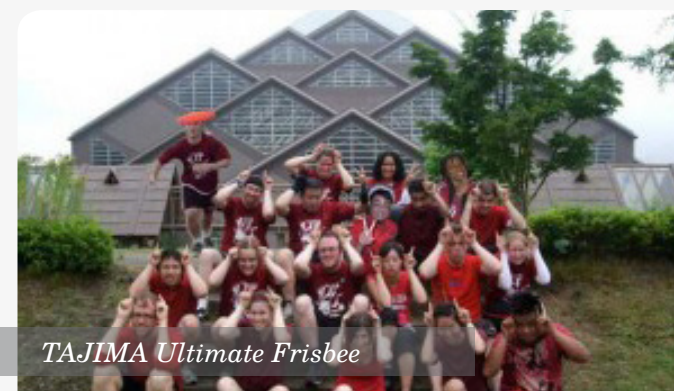
### BLOCK 9 SHIMANAMI KAIIDO CHARITY BIKE RIDE

Anyone is welcome to join this 77km cycling route that covers the six islands and seven bridges between Onomachi on Honshu and Shikoku. It's an awesome chance to soak up the Spring sunshine, get a workout, and best of all help raise money for a well deserving charity, the Tohoku Artist Caravan. Bring your own bike or rent, and choose between the one-day or two-day options. Whatever your choice, this will be an epic weekend not to be missed!

Onomachi Station, Onomachi, Hiroshima Prefecture

- Date TBD
- Cost TBD

okayama.ajet@gmail.com



TAJIMA Ultimate Frisbee

### TAJ ULTIMATE

Taj Ultimate is a two-day ultimate frisbee tournament where teams and players gather from all over Japan and even from all over the globe. Taj Ultimate is also famous for its BBQ dance party.

Tajima Dome, Tajima, Hyogo Prefecture

- Date TBD
- Cost TBD

[Website](#)



Photo - Chris Moore  
AJET Tournament - Victory!

### TOUCH FOOTBALL

Teams of JETs, friends and Japanese alike will come together in Tokushima-ken to enjoy competitive sport and good company. The main venue for the tournament will be the same as for the past two years, Shikoku Saburo no Sato, a picturesque campground located by the Yoshino River in Mima-shi.

Shikoku Saburo no Sato, Mima-Shi, Tokushima Prefecture

- Date TBD May 2015
- Cost for Players
  - 4000 + accommodation and transport (varies for each team)

[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

### START YOUR OWN EVENT

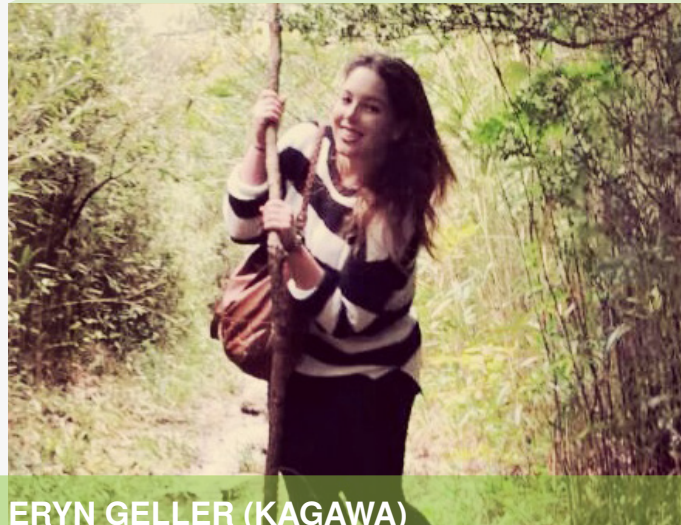
If you're keen to start a new event, AJET has created a guidebook to help you get started. Check out this [link](#).

#### Didn't find your niche?

Check out Sports Entry, a site that gathers information about sports events for amateurs. The website is viewed better in [Japanese](#).



# SPOTLIGHTS



ERYN GELLER (KAGAWA)

Before starting her tenure on Shodoshima, Kagawa's "Olive Island," in the Seto Inland Sea, Eryn was an English major in New York City. She now publishes her own column in the *Urarah Shimbun*, a local quarterly art newsletter combining creativity and journalism.

Eryn's column, which she inherited from her predecessor, is called "Eryn Tries Everything!" (*Eryn no Zenbu Yattemiyou*) For her column, Eryn explores various aspects of island life, writes about them in English, and they're then published with a Japanese translation. She took up the role because, in her words, "every interaction is an opportunity for internationalization—especially on Shodoshima, where foreigners are few and far between."



FLAVIA ANTONELLA (FUKUSHIMA)

Meet Flavia! She's a fiery Chilean, who teaches Spanish and private classes at the Bunka Centre in Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima. She was born in Santiago and from a young age, she had a deep love for Japan. In high school, her dream was to come to Japan and live there. Her fascination with Japan lies in all the differences between Chile and Japan. For instance, the food, the fashion, the people, the language, the culture, even the hair styles! She is also interested in Japanese history and especially the Samurai tradition.

Flavia arrived in Aizu-Wakamatsu five years ago, and has not returned to Chile since then. She misses many things about Chile, especially her family and friends, and occasionally gets homesick. However she is determined to stay strong and keep on smiling!

Her future dream is to open her own little coffee shop in Japan. A place that feels familiar and comfortable to foreigners, offering foreign foods and beverages from around the world. A home away from home, for all those foreigners that get home-sick like her!



GAVIN BINGË (HIROSHIMA)

Gavin Bingë, a 2nd-year South African JET in Hiroshima Prefecture has written and recently published a book detailing his extraordinarily unfortunate life to date, entitled *Sod's Law and Silver Linings: My Path to the JET Programme* (available for Kindle on [Amazon](#)).

The book focuses on how Gavin ended up on the JET Programme despite having to survive a string of robberies, two near-fatal car crashes, two further exploding cars and a hellish cocktail of depression and anxiety. Informative, funny and engaging, this is a unique insight into one man's experience of getting onto JET, told with Gavin's usual enviable humility and self-deprecating candour.

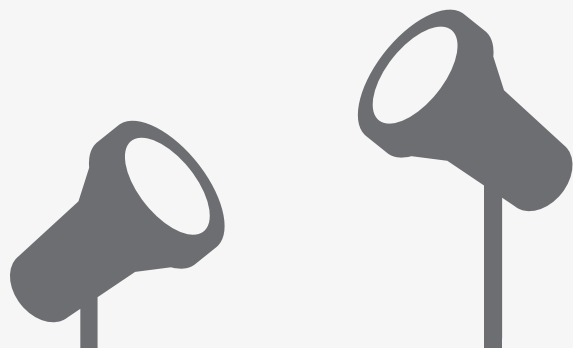
To write a book and successfully publish it is admirable. To do so on your first year living in a foreign country in a completely new job and environment is more than worthy of acclaim. Well done, Gavin!



KANE BYRANT (KUMAMOTO)

Kane Byrant, a 4th year American JET from the state of Kentucky, came to Japan with no language skills, and learnt Japanese from the basics. While being an ALT he has taken on the role as Project Manager for the English Committee in the Kumamoto City Board of Education, which organises activities that benefit the students' communication skills. With assistance from ALTs, BOE staff and JTEs from Kumamoto City, he successfully organised and ran Kumamoto City's first English Camp for junior high school students. The camp primarily focused on encouraging the students to enjoy their experience with English, and realise it as a communication tool rather than see it as just a subject for high school entrance exams.

The activities at the camp ranged from gold rush, water war, English Olympics and other engaging communicative activities. Every participant at the camp was recognised for their participation which will help their applications for high school in the future. To successfully organise a camp for the first time with local media attention is a remarkable achievement. In his spare time, Kane plays badminton with Kumamoto locals and teaches to his *kohais*.







**KELSEY HOSKINS (KAGAWA)**

Kelsey, originally from Hayden Lake, Idaho, in the United States, now teaches in Sanuki City. When the Sanuki ALTs first arrived, Hirohide Motozawa, the head priest of the local Shinto shrine, immediately took them in, as if they were his own children.

Kelsey helps Hirohide at the Tsuda Iwashimizu Shrine on a regular basis. This past winter, she helped at the New Year's celebration (*Oshougatsu*), cleaning the shrine, preparing charms for sale, decorating and setting up for the celebration, cooking, and even dressing up as a *miko* to help sell *omamori* (protective charms), *omikuji* (fortunes), and other items.

Through her time with Hirohide, Kelsey has gained a deep insight into the inner working of Shinto shrines and spirituality, information she couldn't otherwise find in books or online. It's one thing to bow politely at the people working in a shrine on your travels, but it's an entirely different world when you are one of those people.



**KENDRA MCDUFFIE (KYOTO)**

Kendra McDuffie is a third-year American ALT living in Northern Kyoto Prefecture right next to the home of Japan's silk industry; the *Chirimen Kaido*, a placement that matches her interest in kimono perfectly.

After attending a free kimono and tea ceremony class in Nara during her study-abroad year in 2010, she fell in love with the traditional Japanese dress, and returned to America with a new passion (and a suitcase-full of yukata). At college she arranged a successful Japanese Fashion Event showcasing traditional kimono and the influence of Western culture on modern dress. The show ended around the time of the 2011 Tohoko Disaster and proceeds from the event-turned-fundraiser went towards victims of the tragedy.

Since coming to Japan, she has found a kimono teacher in her local area and has been studying furiously for about a year, which means she is half-way to earning her full license as a kimono teacher. When she returns to America (along with her 50-strong collection of kimono) she hopes to spread the dying art of kimono to both a Western audience and those living overseas with Japanese family as a way to reconnect with their heritage.



**NATALIE DONOHUE (FUKUSHIMA)**

This month, meet Natalie Donohue, a second-year ALT living in Fukushima. Shy and quiet, Natalie likes to express her personality through her clothes and accessories. She especially loves making clothes out of fabric reflecting the shapes and colours found in nature!

**My style is best described as...**comfortable with lots of interesting and unusual prints!

**My style icon is...**Helena Bonham Carter for her unique sense of style and bold quirky clothes!

**My essential items/tools...**my sewing machine, pins, fabric scissors, a seam ripper, measuring tape, a ruler, and plenty of Disney movies!



**Natalie's Tips**

Buying clothes in Japan can be difficult when one doesn't fit the typical Japanese proportions. By creating my own clothes I have more freedom and a huge sense of accomplishment! The process of starting with gorgeous fabric and creating a finished garment seems daunting, but there's no better feeling than wearing something you made yourself. If you're interested in making your own clothes, don't be afraid—go for it! I was a near-beginner last year, but there are tons of tutorials online and on Pinterest. Sewing is a great skill to have, especially during those cold winter nights. Have fun with it, and good luck!

**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)!





# 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](#).