

AJET
CONNECT
magazine



April 2013



March

It's that time of year again: warmth has returned to the air and Japan's iconic cherry blossoms are in full bloom. In fact, this year they've been blooming earlier than ever before. Only a few weeks ago the trees here in Ehime were barren—now I've got friends telling me that if we don't rendezvous at the local park for *hanami* this week, we'll have missed our chance for another year! After a bitter winter, it seems a cruelly transient opportunity, but I guess there's a lesson in there.

Fittingly, now's also the moment to seize what little time you have left with your beloved Connect team! This is our *tenth* issue as a collective and it's also our penultimate—after next month, we'll be handing over to a new editorial team, so please do keep your emails coming if you think you'd be interested in joining! It's truly been a pleasure serving as your Editor and, fleeting as the seasons may be, I'm really proud that Connect's managed to be your own constant for the past twelve months.

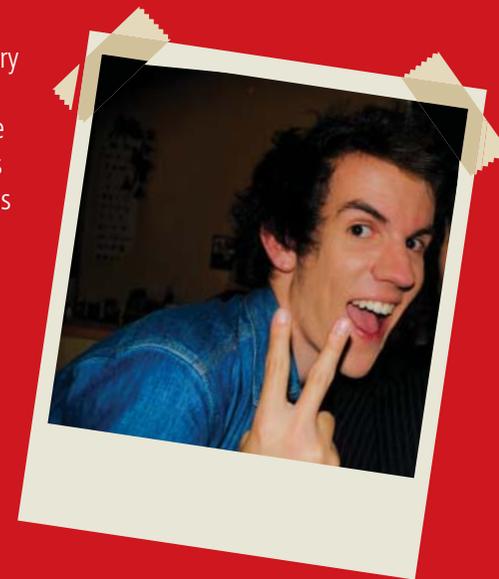
That being so, don't think we're ready to give up just yet! This month we've another bumper selection of articles for your delectation: celebrating spring, Ariane Bobiash has cooked up a treat with her tips for "Hanami Home Cooking" in Food, and Events Guru Steven Thompson's here once more providing an overview of the best happenings nationwide in this month's Events Calendar. But there's more to this month's issue than cherry blossoms! JETs from all over the world share their favourite national sports in "Country Pride...", globe-trotter Elysse Hurtado reports back from a recent trip to Stockholm, and Amelia Hagen sits down with Miki Dezaki (creator of "S**t Japanese Students Say") to talk about his latest controversial video project exploring racism in Japan. All that and more awaits you in the following pages.

As always, I'd like to thank my fantastic Connect team, my wonderful designer Melania and all of you for your continued support! If you haven't already, make sure you follow us all on Twitter (@NationalAJET)—and be sure to get involved in this month's Photography and Haiku Contests, too!

Enjoy the blossoms while they last! Here's to another month!

Jim

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In February, former JET Miki Dezaki, posted a controversial video titled, 'Racism in Japan' on YouTube. The video went viral overnight, with JETs across Facebook and Twitter praising Miki's courage in confronting an issue often brushed under the carpet in Japan. Alarming, however, Miki has also been the recipient of death threats from those opposing his views. AJET Connect sat down with Medama Sensei himself to get the scoop on his recent YouTube fame, and to explore his own reflections on the issue of discrimination in Japan.

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The time has come. You're next up in the karaoke queue. Expectant eyes await your choice, but the girl before you already sung Bonnie Tyler and you're not quite drunk enough for a solo Disney Medley yet. What do you do? Worry not, Caroline Bellinger's got the answers.

Entertainment: Yoko Ono, 80 Year On

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Earlier this year, one of Japan's biggest cultural icons, Yoko Ono, celebrated her 80th birthday. Whilst most newly appointed octogenarians are happy to spend their twilight years taking life easy, it's clear that Yoko Ono shows no signs of slowing down. Chris Barstow explores.

Culture: Finding Your Place in the Shuffle of Things

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Each April, JETs nationwide are subject to a uniquely Japanese working custom: the Annual Office Shuffle. For first-year and seasoned JETs alike, it can be a little disconcerting: just when you're starting to feel settled, colleagues you've spent months growing closer to suddenly disappear to a far-flung school. In times of flux, keeping a steady head can be a challenge. Luckily, Daniel Lowe's here with some top tips for making sure the shuffle doesn't get the best of you!

Culture: Bento: Lunch on the Go

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The ubiquitous bento: nothing quite says "Japanese lunchtime" more. But do you know your ekiben from your kyaraben? Your makunouchi bento from your koshibento? For all their enduring ubiquity, these box lunches are complex! Allow Culture Guru Sarah Blenkhorn to be your guide.

Events: The Show Must Go On

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Every year, a group of JETs, private ALTs, and local friends get together in Tokushima for the prefecture's annual musical: this year (the nineteenth!) it's "The Little Mermaid". The production is grown entirely from the grassroots, with participants responsible for the script, backdrops, costumes and advertising. It's a huge undertaking, and Mari Rueter's here to explain just how the prefecture manages to pull it off every year.

Events: Shootz, Brah, We Go!

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"Shootz, brah, we go!" is Hawaiian pidgin for "here we go!", which sums up perfectly the spirit of Fukuoka AJET's First Annual Hawaiian Luau and Skills Auction. Helping to raise money for English-speaking projects, the Auction took place last month, ultimately raising over 100,000 yen for the cause. Lauren Sakakibara, who was there at the forefront of the action, reports.

Travel: On Yamaguchi

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At the western end of Honshu, right between Hiroshima and Fukuoka, lies a jewel hidden amongst Japan's prefectures: Yamaguchi, a place where you can discover a myriad of wonders seldom found elsewhere. Having lived in Yamaguchi for two years, Jorge Galué's got the lowdown.

Travel: Stockholm—Truly a Northern Light

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While Yamaguchi is our pick for domestic travel this month, for those looking to venture a little further abroad, all eyes are on Stockholm! Elysse Hurtado has just returned from a jaunt to the Swedish capital and shares her experience.



Volunteering: Rock the Boat

Peace Boat is a Japan-based nongovernmental organization that promotes peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development, and respect for the environment. That's a lot of work! And it's carried out by using a cruise ship that travels around the world. In this feature piece, Neetha Mony catches up with Pania Lincoln, the International Coordinator, to learn a little more about the group. Afterwards, JET alumni Sadaf Taqvi and Aiden James Kosciesza share their insights on their own Peace Boat teaching experiences.

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Fashion: Style Strong: Cool Biz

Another month, another episode of Style Strong! This month, Connect's resident fashionista looks forward to summer with the return of "cool biz" culture. Hailing from Okinawa, where Cool Biz has been in style for years, Miss Kathryn's got you covered. After all, it's never too early to start planning a new wardrobe!

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Sports: Country Pride: Sporting Profiles from across the Globe!

Spring's here and it's time to get outside and make the most of the long days and mild evenings! Need a little inspiration for your next sports fix? Sports Guru Ruth Rowntree's been chatting to JETs from Scotland to Singapore, to the States, all about their own favourite sporting hobbies from home! So what are you waiting for? Let's get physical!

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Sports: PEPY Riders: Psyched Cyclists

Now entering its ninth year, PEPY Ride is a Cambodian cycling trip which takes participants quite literally off the beaten path to experience culture, history, language, and people in a much more up-close and personal way. Emily Lemmon reports on both her first-hand experience with PEPY, and how you can follow in her bike-tracks and get involved for yourself!

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Food: Hanami Homecooking

With spring approaching, one of Japan's favorite excuses to gather in parks to eat and drink with loved ones has arrived! *Hanami*, or cherry-blossom viewing, is a whole new opportunity for foodies nationwide to try their hand at some homemade picnic treats! This month, as well as offering tips for your own homemade onigiri, Ariane Bobiash offers up a delicious recipe she's going to be indulging this

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Food: The Spice of Life—Easy Mexican Home Cooking in Japan!

Cooking foreign cuisine in Japan can be a trial for even the most resourceful of chefs. Fortunately, legions of JETs before us have traversed the same culinary tightrope and come up trumps! Stephanie Reiter is one such JET, and this month she's bringing a little bit of Mexico to Japan with her recipes for carne adovada, tortillas, enchiladas and guacamole!

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Contest Results

MARK SAYS...

A message from the Chair of AJET



By the time you read this, graduation will have passed and the new school year will be starting. As I write this though, graduation has just occurred. I don't know how it is for you, but each year it gets a little harder and sadder to watch my kids go. Every graduating class is different and has its own unique personality. I am lucky in that I teach at both the elementary and junior high schools in my town, meaning I get to watch my students as they grow up. This year's graduates have been with me for four years, since they were in elementary school. I have been fortunate to watch them grow from kids into young adults and that has been an amazing experience.

Seeing my students smiling in the hallways and talking to them is truly the best part of my day. In doing so, I think about how blessed I am to have students that I love while being on such a great adventure in a foreign country. And as the days approach where I realize that I will no longer see their faces on a daily basis, it breaks my heart a little.

Yesterday, I sat there watching my students break down in tears as they bid their classmates, teachers and school farewell. It is always my favorite students starting to cry that affects me the most, when I realize that tomorrow they won't be around to light up my day with their enthusiasm and to engage in silly jokes in the hallway. I'm sure you can relate to it

when I say how full of life my students are. Nevertheless, despite the sadness, I am happy for them to move on to their next stage of life, even if I am going to miss them terribly.

Fortunately, the next group of students will also rise up to take an important place in my heart. In fact, between writing the last sentence and this one I just went and taught classes with my second year students. And yes, I can already tell how next year will be just as sad when they graduate. I'm really looking forward to watching them come into their own as the leaders of this school over the next year.

I love how, in Japan, winter brings the school year to a close and then a new one begins as spring dawns across the country. The seasons and school calendar coordinate perfectly. I especially enjoyed it as a first year JET because it meant that I didn't have to wait a full-year before getting a fresh start. I could begin a new school year, as someone who knew a bit more about what he was doing as an Assistant Language Teacher. A fresh start makes a big difference.

As you read this, it should now be the new term, a new school year for many of you. So here's wishing you a great one! Happy spring! I hope you are enjoying the cherry blossoms and sunshine out your way! Here's to a great new school year in Japan, especially for the students who have graduated. We are sad to see you leave the nest, but looking forward to watching you fly!

MEET YOUR EDITORS...



Sarah Jane Blenkhorn, Culture

In Canada, we say 'April showers bring May flowers' but in Japan, the flowers are already here! In this month's issue, check out Daniel Lowe's article on the changes April brings in schools, and how to make a good impression without working yourself to death. Read up as well on the humble Japanese bento box! Enjoy the spring weather!

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Amelia Hagen, Travel

Happy spring! Most of you reading this have already experienced or are experiencing the magic of hanami. I'll admit, it's sometimes difficult to travel abroad in spring because of the temptation to stick around for the cherry blossoms, but this month we have a few treats in store for you. Ely Hurtado explores a Swedish city of islands while Jorge Galue introduces you to lesser-known spots around Yamaguchi Prefecture.. Interested in contributing to Connect Travel? Give me a shout at *amelia.hagen@ajet.net*. See you in May!



Ruth Rowntree, Sports

It's here, folks! Let this month's Sports Section take you on an international JET journey as our 'Country Pride' segment looks at various traditional and national sports. Some countries may indeed lay claim to sports we thought were founded (or forged) elsewhere. Nonetheless, here's hoping you learn something new!

PEPY Ride Cambodia previously got a mention here but this month they feature for your cycling pleasure. May their tales encourage you to pump fresh air into your tires and lungs: for good times and a good cause. Why not explore local environs with your friends and colleagues by organizing a PEPY Ride event? It can take you from one prefecture to the next, to your favorite onsen retreat or the prefect hanami hangout... sans alcohol but substitute that with plenty of sakura cool!

If you have a sporting story or would actually like to step into these Sports Editor shoes this summer just send your thoughts this way: *ruth.rowntree@ajet.net* In the meantime, enjoy the blooms and the great outdoors.



Chris Barstow, Entertainment

And so this is Springtime. And what have you done? Well, here at AJET Connect this month, we are taking a look at the versatile artistic chameleon that is Yoko Ono as she turns 80. We also offer some tips about the choosing the perfect karaoke song that will have the audience screaming for an encore (rather than covering their ears in agony). Until next month...! *chris.*

barstow@ajet.net





Neetha Mony, Volunteering

With recontracting papers signed, many of us are now stuck wondering about what comes after JET. For those not yet ready to end their travels, consider checking out Peace Boat's voyages: Peace Boat travels the world on a charitable mission, offering language teacher and interpreter positions that, while unpaid, offer free room and board on the organisation's three month voyages. This month, Pania Lincoln, Peace Boat's own International Coordinator, gives us the inside scoop on getting one of these coveted positions. In addition, JET alumni Sadaf Taqvi and Aiden James Kosciesza tell us about the highlights of their own experiences working with Peace Boat. neetha.mony@ajet.net

Annabella Massey, Fashion

Welcome to the April's Connect! In this month's Fashion and Beauty section, you can check out another edition of Kathryn Strong's "Style Strong" column for advice on how to negotiate Cool Biz with ease, as the weather gradually takes us into spring. And if you need extra styling ideas for what to do with your wardrobe this season, try taking inspiration from the latest unveilings at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Tokyo 2013-2014 A/W. For definite visual treats, check out images from the ANREALAGE, Alice Auaa and Christian Dada shows at <http://tokyo-mbfashionweek.com/en/>. annabella.massey@ajet.net.



Ariane Bobiash and Xan Wetherall, Food

Spring has officially sprung! The grass is kinda-getting-there-green! The cherry blossoms are... blooming the earliest they ever have?! Quick, break out the booze and grab bento boxes, it's time to flower festival it up! This month, Ariane rocks the picnic blanket with some prime hanami know-how, while Stephanie shows you how to bring Mexico to your kitchen in Japan! Make your own tortillas? You bet you can! Maybe you can even bring them to the hanami party in your area! As always, if you've got a piping-hot food story you'd like to share, hit us up at xan.wetherall@ajet.net and ariane.bobiash@ajet.net! See you next month!



Steven Thompson, Events

This month in Events we're shining the spotlight on super-impressive JET-created events! The flash-mob fan with a heart of gold Lauren Sakakibara reflects on the success of Fukuoka's first combination Hawaiian luau and skills auction for charity. Not sure what those words mean? Read on! Short answer: awesome. We also have the Tokushima superstar of the stage Mari Rueter talking about the 19th Annual AJET Musical, and she breaks down how to set up one of your very own! This month's Events Calendar spotlights the Hokuriku area. If you find yourself there this month, there's plenty to do! Got events you'd like to share? Use your hand-fingers to type me a word-message at steven.thompson@ajet.net!

MEDAMA SENSEI: A CLOSER LOOK AT MIKI DEZAKI

Amelia Hagen

In February, former JET Miki Dezaki, posted a controversial video titled, 'Racism in Japan,' which opened a giant 'can of worms' surrounding racism and discrimination in Japan. Across Facebook and Twitter, JETs praised his courage and voiced their support. AJET Connect recently sat down with Miki to get the 411 on his recent YouTube attention and his reflections on this hot topic.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me and share your thoughts with the greater JET community. When and where were you previously a JET?

From 2007 to 2012. I was a JET in Yamanashi for three years and then transferred to Itoman in Okinawa for two years.

What have you been up to since finishing your time on the JET Programme?

I am planning on becoming a Buddhist monk in a forest monastery.

Your Medama Sensei YouTube videos, 'Sh*t Japanese Students Say in Japan' and 'Sh*t Japanese Girls Say,' were very popular within the JET community. What inspired you to create these?

Two things inspired me. First, I bet my friend that I could make a video go viral. I love videos and editing in general and thought I could do a good job. I laugh so much at what my students say and do, and I knew it just wasn't just my school. Second, making the comedy video was the best way to get viewers. I made the YouTube channel so that I could later approach serious issues like discrimination in Japan.

Based on a discrimination-themed lesson you did last summer and posted in February, your 'Racism in Japan' video instantly drew controversy. Did you originally plan to post this on YouTube?

When I did the lesson, I had no idea. To create the video, I knew I had to be very sensitive on the subject. I didn't get the idea until I came back to America and thought about it for four to five months. The class and the video are two very different things. The video centers around the examples I gave of racism while I actually only talk about the examples for three minutes out of the 50 minute class. The class was more about how to recognize discrimination within yourself, society, and culture and how to get rid of it.



Can you discuss your process for creating this lesson in the first place?

I showed them the video, 'Eye of the Storm, in which a teacher does an experiment in an elementary school class to teach that discrimination is wrong. I then asked them to relate to this as Okinawans, explained how they're grandparents went through the same thing, and described how discriminatory thinking develops. I showed clips of T.V. shows and news of how these biases are formed. I talked about discrimination in general, and even went into bullying in Japan.

How did you go about planning/preparing with fellow Japanese Teachers of English?

I already had quite a bit of respect from my JTEs and they let me do anything I wanted. I proposed the idea and they said, 'Let's try it.' After a highly successful initial lesson, it spread and I taught this lesson to over 1,000 students.

How did you choose examples for the class and the video?

Many people said I should use Ainu examples but I didn't want to use examples people already knew. I wanted to bring the issue closer to my students. I used the Okinawa example to emphasize that they were discriminated against, too.

What did you hope to achieve in posting the 'Racism in Japan' video on YouTube?

I was hoping to get the same reaction that I got from my students. Their thinking was, 'Oh my God, this does exist in Japan and it's time to talk about it.' Not talking about it doesn't stop the problem. If we can recognize we have these discriminatory thoughts, that's the first step.

I have been getting some great responses from Japanese as well. They usually only respond in English because they don't want to be attacked by the right-wingers. One girl was only responding in English at first but after I encouraged her to write in Japanese, she posted a video in Japanese on the subject. I feel happy that some people are willing to put themselves out there.

I posted the Okinawa Times article [that followed the video] on the Facebook Page I made for my students and they have been super supportive. I remember my *kyoto-sensei* surprised me by coming into the class that day in July and said the class should be taught to every teacher and student. That's what gave me the confidence to put it on YouTube. Since posting the video, a different *kyoto-sensei* at my old school has been giving me a hard time. It's disappointing. He doesn't know what went on before and is trying to censor me.

What else have you experienced since posting the 'Racism in Japan' video?

Regarding the Japanese community, it's hard to say. A lot of what I get on the internet is coming from the right wing so I'm curious about to see what the Japanese community really thinks. I also want to know what Chinese, Koreans, and *burakumin* think. One friend of mine has a Japanese Chinese friend who said my video made her feel empowered. On the flip side, I was actually concerned about the expats here. They can be so critical of those who complain about Japan. Everyone wants to talk about this issue; it's I like opened up the valve and blew the top of this pressure cooker.

I saw that The Washington Post picked up your story surrounding the video's apparent controversy. How did the reporter hear about this issue?

He saw my post about it on Reddit and contacted me immediately. He even wrote the article that day and told me it's been his most successful article.

You later posted a second video titled, 'Racism in Japan Part 2,' detailing the censorship, threats, and comments you've received from right-wingers. What's been the primary reaction to this?

After I announced that I wasn't going to take down the first video, one critic messaged me and said, 'I respect you a lot. I think you're very brave. I understand your argument.' I think a lot of Japanese people who are arguing with me don't understand the things I'm saying. They're not criticizing. I've received death threats and they are still looking for information on me. They are now saying on Channel Sakura, their right-winger network, that Yoshi, a South Korean Japanese with whom I did a podcast on this topic, is actually a North Korean spy. Recently, another critic created a Twitter account with the sole purpose of harassing me.

Do you envision teaching or working in Japan again?

I don't know. If I did, it would be privately.

Did your JET experience contribute to creating the lesson on discrimination? If yes, how so?

Absolutely. I came to understand racism and discrimination much more through the JET experience. I felt inspired - like I had to do this.

Do you have any advice for JETs facing discrimination within their own classrooms? Do you think your lesson could be a model lesson for other ALTs in the future?

The best thing is to become friends with the people who are ignorant about you and try to educate them. I'd be very sensitive as to how to you do the lesson. Don't make it sound like you're criticizing Japan at all. Focus more on

discrimination, how it's created, and how to solve it, instead of how bad it is. Give the kids a reason to connect with the topic. Show them that it's not just in other parts of the world.

Once again, thank you very much for your time.

Amelia Hagen is a fifth-year ALT in the home of Ayumi Hamasaki, also known as Fukuoka Prefecture. She usually serves as your AJET Connect Travel Editor but felt inclined to highlight this JET alum's extraordinary work and passion. You can still follow her on Twitter via @jetset_amelia as she tweets her travels.





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YOU'VE GOT THE MUSIC IN YOU

Caroline Bellinger

The pressure is on. Stylus in hand, you stare blankly at the song-choosing-machine you are holding. You ask someone how to switch it into English then stare blankly again. A song, a song. You need to pick a song. But what song? "Come on," you think angrily to yourself, "you know songs". And yet now, at this crucial moment, you cannot think of a single one. You look up at the TV screen. There's 47 seconds left of the current tune with nothing racked up. Panicked eyes start looking in your direction. 39 seconds. You think back to every ballad you have ever belted, every chorus you've ever crooned...21 seconds. Nothing. People begin shuffling awkwardly. 15 seconds. It's crunch time. 10, 9, 8...you're out. You relinquish control, mumbling something about it "not having the song you were looking for". Song selection fail.

Hey, we've all been there. No matter how many mental notes you have made in preparation, or conversations you've had with your mates that you should "totally do that next time we're at karaoke"—sometimes the waves of musical inspiration simply do not flow—especially if there's been an abundance of lively libation throughout the evening. And, as we all know, you can't just pick *any* song. For while some tunes kill at karaoke, others—no matter how talented the singer is—just bomb. Knowing how to select the right one is the difference between having an epic ball and making a balls-up of epic proportions.

The science behind successful song choice is indeed complex and modern-day masters have marvelled at the mystery behind musical methodology (as well as the use of alliteration as a replacement for quality writing). In fact, some even believe they have cracked the code with a mathematical quotient for determining karaoke song quality. Although we've taken a less scientific approach, we've prepared for you this definitive guide to song selection success. Learn it, live it and we guarantee everything will be kara-OK.

1. Keep it short. Classics like Don McLean's 'American Pie' might be great for roadtrips, but selecting this 200-verse music obituary at karaoke will inevitably result in wall-to-wall stern looks. Other microphone-hogging hits include Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody', Michael Jackson's 'Thriller', Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Sweet Home Alabama', 'Hotel California' by the Eagles and 'Hey Jude' by the Beatles. As beautiful as it is, those 'naa naa na na-na-na-na's' at the end just won't quit. On the other hand, that cool cat who unleashes four minutes of solid gold then quietly slips back into the darkness = Legend.

2. Chose something well-known... You might be incredibly proud of the fact you know every word to 'BareNaked', Jennifer Love Hewitt's little-known song (and we use that term very loosely), but it would be ill-advised—indeed downright stupid—to share this fact with your karaoke crew, unless social ostracisation was your goal for the evening.

3. ...but not too well-known. Skip past the done to death ditties and pull out a classic hit that people have probably forgotten about but as soon as they hear the opening riff they'll be all like "Oh myyyyyyyy godddddddddd, I haven't heard this for aaaaaages. I looooooove this song". Depending on the age of your audience, hits from the early 90s tend to work well—think 'Plush' by the Stone Temple Pilots, 'Under the Bridge' by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and 'Today' by the Smashing Pumpkins. You will be loved and adored by the crowd for giving them back something they didn't even know they were missing.

4. Beware the dead air. You know the deal – it’s all fun and games until someone chooses a song with seven minutes of straight instrumental. Rookie mistake. Unless you’ve got moves like Jagger to fill the gaps, steer clear of anything that will leave you stranded with naught but an impassioned wish for the ground to swallow you whole.

5. Own it. The most successful karaoke performances are the ones where you can sit down after you’ve hit that final note and think “nailed it”. For that, you need your signature song. Know all the lyrics to REM’s ‘It’s the End of the World as We Know It’ or Third Eye Blind’s ‘Semi-Charmed Life’? There it is. You and a mate can work the room with a duet version of ‘Wannabe’ by the Spice Girls? Then, dear reader, grab that girl power anthem by they horns and ride it. The whole point, of course, is to sing it like nobody’s watching—or perhaps like you are a superstar at a sell out concert and everybody’s watching. In the wise words of the greatest lyricists of our time: “You better lose yourself in the music, the moment, you own it, you better never let it go”. Word.

6. Winning when you’re singing. Unless you can actually sing (and living in Japan has no doubt made you realise there are people who take karaoke very seriously—who knew?) don’t punch above your weight when it comes to notes and lyrics—your faltering falsetto or attempts to rap don’t sound anywhere near as good as you think they do, trust us. Bon Jovi’s ‘Livin’ on Prayer’ is notoriously hard for blokes to perform, for example, while Radiohead’s ‘Creep’, generally proves troublesome for anyone that’s not Thom Yorke. On the other hand, versions of Blind Melon’s ‘No Rain’ and ‘I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)’ by the Proclaimers can be passed off as comical attempts

at replications of the already humorous originals. Put simply, apply the same rules for karaoke that you would for drinking—know your limits and try not to vomit on your shoes.

7. Finish like the thunder. Fade outs are for the weak. ‘Nuf said.

8. Crowds are people too. It should go without saying, but do try to take into account the various sensitivities of your audience. ‘The Bad Touch’ by the Bloodhound Gang, ‘Closer’ by Nine Inch Nails or ‘Baby Got Back’ by Sir Mix-a-Lot are probably not wise choices for a night out with your co-workers. TISM’s ‘Defecate on My Face’ would also be one to avoid. Likewise, busting out ‘I Wanna Sex You Up’ by Color Me Badd or ‘I Touch Myself’ by the Divinyls while at karaoke with your students might see you arrested for lewd behaviour towards minors. Think of the ladies in the audience too—The Prodigy’s ‘Smack My Bitch Up’ rarely goes down well with the fairer sex, nor does Live’s ‘Lightning Crashes’—nothing kills the party vibe like singing about placentas falling to the floor. And then there are songs that are offensive to everyone. Aqua’s ‘Barbie Girl’, Len’s ‘Steal My Sunshine’ and ‘Macarena’ by those Spanish guys are enough to make anyone want to stab chopsticks into their ears. And anything by Creed or Nickelback. No...just, no. Oh, and don’t use karaoke as a forum to air your dirty laundry. That guy who recently broke your heart is sitting in the room? Now is definitely not the time subject everyone to a blubbing version of Adele’s ‘Someone Like You’.

Remember, when it comes to karaoke, it’s less about *what* you are singing, than it is about how you *feel* while you are singing. If seducing the crowd with a version of College’s ‘A Real Hero’ makes you feel, for that one dazzling moment,

like a perfect fusion of 80s synthesizer and Ryan Gosling’s scorpion jacket enclosed torso, then grab that mike and rock out with reckless abandon.

And finally...if all else fails, choose a Nicki Minaj song. If you’re drunk and can’t hold a tune, you’re already doing a better job than she did.

The top 10 No Fail Karaoke Songs

1. ‘Heavy Rotation’ – AKB48
2. ‘Don’t Stop Belivin’ – Journey.
3. I Want it That Way – Backstreet Boys
4. ‘Total Eclipse of the Heart’ – Bonnie Tyler
5. ‘Summer Nights’ – John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John
6. ‘Wannabe’ – Spice Girls
7. ‘The Sign’ – Ace of Base
8. Whatever bubblegum pop song is currently doing the rounds, such as Taylor Swift’s ‘We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together’, One Direction’s ‘What Makes You Beautiful’ and Carly Rae Jepsen’s ‘Call Me Maybe’ and ‘Good Time’
9. ‘You Get What You Give’ – New Radicals
10. ‘Torn’ – Natalie Imbruglia (Note: This song falls into a category of angsty girl power ballads, which also includes ‘What’s Up?’ by 4 Non Blondes, ‘Eternal Flame’ by the Bangles, ‘You Outta Know’ by Alanis Morissette, ‘I Will Survive’ by Gloria Gaynor and Beyoncé’s ‘Single Ladies’. Gentlemen, our advice would be to stand back and let the ladies rage)



YOKO ONO: 80 YEARS ON

Chris Barstow



orchestrated a series of quirky exhibits, including one which encouraged visitors to trample on a piece of canvas on the floor in order to create the art themselves. Another was a video focusing on the moving buttocks of people walking on a treadmill. Her most famous piece though, was arguably 'Cut', where she invited audience members to cut off her clothing until she was naked.

After a brief separation in the mid-70s, Ono moved to New York with Lennon and their son Sean, splitting her time between her art and music. After Lennon was killed by a fan in front of her in 1980, she began to shy away from the media spotlight. However, she gradually came back into the public fold with a series of initiatives around the world to honour her husband's memory.

In recent years, she has been busier than ever, continuing to create art installations and giving music performances around the world. She even managed to score a number one on the Billboard Hot Dance Club Charts at the grand age of 78. However, she is perhaps most active now pursuing her peace and advocacy work where she has promoted causes as diverse as same-sex marriage, anti-fracking and autism in recent years. And, with her continuing ability to provoke controversy and remain in the public eye, I certainly wouldn't bet on Yoko Ono trading in her signature top hat and sunglasses for a pipe and slippers any time soon...

Chris Barstow is a second year ALT in Yamagata. He wants to have a bed-in before he reaches 80.

Image source: Wikipedia

Earlier this year, one of Japan's biggest cultural icons celebrated her 80th birthday in indomitable style by performing an energetic concert in Berlin accompanied by an eclectic posse of performers including Michael Stipe, Peaches and Rufus Wainwright. Whilst most newly appointed octogenarians are happy to spend their twilight years taking life easy, it's clear that Yoko Ono shows no signs of slowing down.

Whilst she is perhaps most famously, and perhaps a little unfairly, known as the woman who broke up the Beatles, Ono has forged a long and successful career as both an artist and musician. Born in Tokyo, her privileged youth was interrupted by a period of hardship brought on her family during the War. After resuming her education at an exclusive school alongside the future Emperor Akihito, she moved to New York and became heavily involved with the bohemian arts scene. Throughout the 60s, she

After two tempestuous and short-lived marriages, she met musician John Lennon and began an intense relationship with him. The pair became increasingly known for their politics rather than their music, demonstrating against the Vietnam War and advocating other peaceful causes. After their marriage in 1969, they spent their honeymoon in Amsterdam where they they caused a media circus by highlighting their beliefs with a week-long 'bed-in' protest.

Shortly afterwards, the Beatles split and Lennon teamed up with Ono to produce successful hits such as 'Give Peace A Chance' as well as the seasonal classic 'Merry Xmas (War Is Over)'. Ono also recorded a wealth of solo avant-garde material to mixed critical and commercial acclaim. One of her most famous tracks, 'Open Your Box' was famously banned by the BBC for obscenity.



FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE SHUFFLE OF THINGS

Daniel Lowe

April is here, and with it comes the annual faculty shuffle, the point in the Japanese school year when teachers work hardest and latest. The new people coming in want to make a solid first impression, while the veterans will certainly try to give the workplace a professional image. If this is your first April on JET, then you'll be in for a bit of a surprise, partly because the yearly rotation is a relatively foreign custom and partly because Tokyo orientation places little focus on it.

I still remember how surreal my first spring on JET felt. That March I had to say farewell to the JTE who, for two semesters, had treated me like a younger brother by ensuring I was always where I needed to be, showing me around my crazy little beach town, and forcing me out of the door by 4 PM. We even used to drive around and yell at the kids who didn't wear their bicycle helmets.

Everything changed that April when, after spending two semesters as the second youngest faculty member in the building, I found myself introduced to several new teachers, six of whom were younger and less experienced than I was. As JETs, we work under a separate set of rules, both contractual and social, than our Japanese coworkers do, but when my coworkers asked me to teach a brand

new JTE about, well, everything, leaving at 4 PM stopped feeling so right. Why should I leave at four o'clock when everyone else my age worked later and for less money? I reacted by leaving late; by studying Japanese at my desk for a few hours after work. After all, it didn't make much sense to study at home when I could do the same at work and score some social points. What better way to experience life in Japan, right?

Wrong.

We hear the same four words over and over again at Tokyo orientation: "every situation is different." Few bother to mention that the same holds true with Japanese teachers as well.

Take another of my recently arrived JTEs for example: she had worked at a junior high school that required all ALTs to have teaching licenses and to teach on his or her own.

By my second lesson, I realized something wasn't right. Five minutes before the next period began, the JTE stormed into the faculty room in a mad panic and asked me to help her with class. I made it to the classroom as the bell rang, but my JTE was nowhere in sight. I told the class to bow and we did a warm-up activity. She finally walked in just as I finished and stood in the back of the room. I told her that the class was ready to go, but she responded with nothing but a blank look and a flat "good." I then asked her what she wanted to do, to which she replied "your lesson" like I was some crazy man from mars. Suffice it to say, this year wasn't going to be like the last. After fumbling through my poor excuse of a lesson, I informed her I would need far more notice in order to run my own classes. She agreed and we set up a weekly schedule.

Meanwhile, my coworkers were still locked in first impression mode, so I couldn't find it in my heart to complain. But as time progressed, teachers handed me assignments later and later until no one remembered that my job ended at four o'clock.

That's when I finally realized my mistake—by staying late, I signaled a desire to receive similar treatment to a Japanese person. After I decided not to recontract for another year, I saw my time in Japan as far more limited—I needed my evenings back to enjoy my last year here and to prepare for my future, but how to get it all back? I explained to my JTE about the concept of team teaching, something which she seemed utterly oblivious to at first, but eventually accepted. I had finally found my balance, but how?

Nothing is wrong with working late, but first we must ask ourselves why. Do we stay late with clubs or to chat, or to avoid guilt? It hit me like a shinkansen when I realized I took on so much responsibility not for my students, but for myself. I wanted to appear respectable and hard-working. After all, I had never taught before and I had no license. Were the students learning more from me than they would if my JTE and I worked together? I knew the answer.

When giving advice to other JETs, I often reference the days when my older brother of a JTE used to chase me out of work at 4 PM. I did my job and I did it well; I came to work well rested, I played an exciting role in class, and I loved my job. In comparison, when I taught on my own, I faced a lot of stress and it hurt my relationship with the students. After all, if I failed to teach a grammar point well, the students would fall behind. That teacher knew that an ALT who enjoys Japan enjoys his or her students and returns home with a positive impression of Japan.

So, this April, when your workplace floods with new faces, keep a few things in mind with your first impressions. None of us will ever have a job like JET again. Twenty years from now, do we want to look back and regret how much we sat at our desk to look good, or do we want to remember the time we spent with and for our students? At the same time, I doubt any of us would find happiness in the thought that we cheated our students out of an effective ALT. When in doubt, ask what kind of memories you want when you look back on our time here, and when facing overtime, work for your students, not your image.



BENTO: LUNCH ON THE GO

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

When the time comes to take a break and sit down to lunch at work or high school in Japan, chances are good that many people will be unwrapping a *bento*. This handy little box, neatly separated into compartments for dishes such as boiled or pickled vegetables, salmon or a small portion of pork cutlet, frankfurter or something deep-fried, and an essential serving of rice, often topped with a mouth-puckering pickled plum, is a common part of daily life in Japan. Bento can be found in convenience stores, department stores, supermarkets, stations and hand-made in kitchens all over Japan. They aren't just for lunch either — plenty a busy or tired worker after a long day will grab one with a beer to take home for dinner.

According to one story, the word *bento* (弁当) comes from China, and the original Chinese *kanji* mean 'convenience'. Another story claims that the word was coined in the time of Oda Nobunaga and meant 'organizing and distributing food to large numbers of people at outdoor meals'.

Travellers going a long way would at first take carefully wrapped rice balls, called *koshibento* ('waist bento') along with them. People going on a short excursion to view flowers or drink tea would take elegant lacquered boxes wrapped in colourful cloths called *furoshiki*, which did double duty as a carrying bag and table cloth.

With the advent of plastic and polystyrene, the use of attractive and eco-friendly reusable bento boxes has diminished. Some might say the loss of that charm is more than made up for by the convenience of machine-washable or disposable dishes. What do you think?

Here's a look at some of the popular varieties of bento:

Ekiben

Ekiben, or 'station bento', are boxed lunches you can purchase in train stations. They often feature tasty local specialty foods, and come in a variety of sizes and prices. Some come in ceramic or cedar dishes you can take home as a souvenir. The popularity of *ekiben* reached its height in the 1980's, before the high-speed train was introduced, reducing the need for a meal on the trains. Airports feature *soraben*, or 'sky bento'.

Kyaraben

Kyaraben or 'character bento', are *bentos* artistically arranged into the image of popular cartoon characters, such as Totoro or Mario Brothers. They were introduced as a way to make healthy food more appealing and induce young children to eat. Mothers often make *kyaraben* for their children. This attention to detail in homemaking can be attributed to the concept of 'good wife, wise mother', an ideal of femininity in Japan. A closely related trend is *oekakiben*, or 'picture bento' which can be decorated to look like people, animals, plants or buildings.

Makunouchi Bento

This, probably the most common type of *bento*, made its first appearance in military camps, and then moved into the *kabuki* and *noh* theatres, where it was typically eaten between the acts of the plays, or during dull scenes. The literal meaning of *makunouchi* is 'among the curtains.' As a side note, the phrase *o-bento*, a polite way of referring to *bento*, was once also used to refer to ad libbing and ham acting by performers. (Fun fact: ham actors are also referred to as *daikon*)



THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

Mari Rueter

Every year, a group of JETs, private ALTs, and local friends get together for one of Tokushima AJET's biggest and most-loved events. It's not a party (although some may argue otherwise), it's not a sport, nor is it a trip. Any guesses? Here are some hints: it involves singing, dancing, and acting... That's right, it's our annual musical!

This year marks the 19th production, and this year we're presenting our adaptation of *The Little Mermaid*! It is hard to believe that this has been going on for such a long time! The Tokushima JET community provides everything, from the script to backdrops, costumes to props, and choreography to advertisement posters. There may be those of you out there who are interested in starting up your own annual musical. Here is the process from start to finish!

1. The Story

Proposals for possible musicals are submitted in August and voted on by the AJET committee. They include: a basic scene-by-scene outline of the story, a list of characters, and ideas for Japanese twists that can be added. It is better to have a big number of characters so more people can be on stage. Adapting stories well-known by the Japanese audience is favored, such as pulling from Disney classics or Broadway shows. Also, they should be family-friendly since most audience members will be young children and older folks.

2. The Script

Once a proposal has been agreed upon, the writers get to work on the script. Taking on the script writing is probably the most difficult (and perhaps the most important) part of the whole production, so it is encouraged to have at least two writers. They can give each other feedback along the way and support each other through the 2-3 month process. The story is rewritten with easy-to-understand English dialogue, Japanese narration, and Japanese twists. Examples from this year's production include relocating the Merfolk Kingdom to the Naruto whirlpools and giving Ariel's sisters Japanese names like Aika, Akane, and Ayako.

3. Director and Assistant Director Selection

Next, we ask for volunteers to fill the director and assistant director positions. These are very important because they need to be people who can take charge with a vision of the show as well as lead everyone in their duties. I can say from personal experience, this job will keep you quite busy with organizing different committees and rehearsal schedules.

4. Editing the Script

After the first draft is completed (which should happen in early November for a March performance), the writers send it to the AJET committee, director, and assistant director to read. They then gather for what we like to call a "punch-up party." This is a meeting to make sure that the English is kept simple, the Japanese translated into a cohesive story, and that it is filled with plenty of Japanese cultural references and local jokes. With these new notes, the writers go back to transform the draft into the final script. This beautiful piece of work is then posted online for everyone to read.

5. Script Read-Through and Auditions

Held in late November/early December, people gather to read through most of the script, which also serves as auditions. Depending on how song-heavy the musical



is, singing auditions should also be considered. This is a fun, relaxed get together that even those not auditioning can enjoy. After hearing everyone read and sing, the director and assistant director cast the roles. It is then left to the cast to start memorizing lines.

6. Rehearsals

These are probably the best part of the whole thing! Every weekend in January and February is committed to practicing scenes, learning dances and songs, and making costumes, props and backdrops. Rehearsals provide theater-lovers with an outlet for their passion, and cast members who have never done musical theater before the chance to experience it! With so many hours spent crammed together at different venues across the prefecture, many long-lasting friendships are formed and developed. It's a great opportunity to hang out with people you may not have otherwise spent time with.

7. Advertisement

The producer of the show (usually one or both of the PAs) is responsible for getting the local community excited about the show through various forms of media. Advertising with posters, radio shows, magazine ads, and if we're lucky, TV spots. They are also in charge of seeking out sponsors, most of whom continue to support us every year.

8. Final Performances

What makes this production unique is the fact that we don't perform at one venue for multiple shows. We travel

to at least five different venues all over the prefecture to give people from different areas a chance to see it! This means we have to be more creative when creating sets because we must be able to take them apart and easily transport them by car to our different venues.

It's a lot of hard work, but, in the end, it's worth it. It has become an important part of the Tokushima community over the past twenty years, something that locals tell us they look forward to every year. Even if the show isn't done professionally, it gives people a chance to try theater and the audience has responded positively toward it with donations. If there is enough enthusiasm among your JETs, you too can make this a treasured tradition in your own area!

For more information about this annual event, including photos of past shows, visit www.ajetmusical.com. You can also see video of previous performances via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S420Uiz1ho4&list=PL5A17E187E7462819>

Mari is a 4th year Tokushima JET and self-proclaimed Hello Kitty fanatic. No, seriously... have you seen her apartment? And her wardrobe? And her giant pile of Hello Kitty cell phone straps?! When she's not busy collecting, she's busy at work planning events for her fellow JETs.

SHOOTZ, BRAH, WE GO!

Lauren Sakakibara



"Shootz, brah, we go!" is Hawaiian pidgin for "here we go," which was exactly the sentiment among the Fukuoka JETs as they came together to support their students' English studies. On March 2nd, Fukuoka AJET held its 1st Annual Hawaiian Luau and Skills Auction to raise money for an ALT-endorsed high school student to go on a two-week homestay in an English-speaking country during summer break. Just what is a skills auction, you may ask? Rather than tangible items, volunteer JETs and members of the community offer their skills, such as music or cooking lessons. The possibilities are endless!

The Ikoi no Sato grounds in Okagaki-machi were festooned with decorations and the air pulsed with music as curious community members filed in. The event kicked off with an icebreaker, with everyone laughing as they tried to untangle themselves from their Human Knots, followed by a rundown of the various skills being auctioned (including *shamisen* lessons, personalized artwork, a home-cooked American breakfast, and English tours around Kyushu). Suddenly, out of nowhere, came the thumping beats of "Gangnam Style!" A flash mob of JET volunteers emerged and proceeded to horse-dance, much to the delight of the crowd.

As guests munched on sandwiches, spam *musubi*, and pineapple coconut agar shots, the festivities continued with performances by the Wai Wai Taiko Group from Kitakyushu, Tahitian dancers, and a local hula group from Okagaki. Fueled by the audience's smiles and claps, the performers gave their all, despite the chill that day. Things got silly during the performance by African drumming group Djembe. Caught up in the musicians' rhythmic beats and chants, a few ALTs began to dance along...and within minutes, an impromptu dance circle had formed, including several Japanese visitors!

With everyone's help, we raised over 100,000 yen at the auction to put towards the Fukuoka AJET Scholarship Fund. We plan to award the first scholarship in the spring

of 2014. Any first or second-year high school student with a JET ALT in Fukuoka prefecture is eligible. The fund will be managed by a Scholarship Committee, who will create the materials, review applications, and manage the scholarship.

Thanks go out to Shimane AJET for their support, materials, and advice in helping plan the auction. We could not have planned this without your guidance, and we hope to continue this event and encourage other prefectures to try it as well. Thank you to the volunteers who gave their time and energy to help with all aspects of this event. Whether it was planning and logistics, leading games, making food, performing, or offering your skills, everyone contributed to the success of the auction. And a special thank you to JETs Amelia Hagen and Kay Makishi for your tireless efforts in making this event a reality, and to Fukui JET Anna Ho, who organized Fukui's skills auction and encouraged us to organize one of our own! *Otsukaresama deshita!*

Lastly, a poem:

*Had choke fun at da luau,
But da luau all pau...for now!
Aloha a hui hou!*

*Had a lot of fun at the luau,
But it's all done...for now!
Goodbye, until we meet again!*

-Credit to Stacy Koyama

Want to learn more the Hawaiian Luau and Skills Auction? Interested in organizing one of your own and need advice? Email fukauction@gmail.com. To contribute to the Fukuoka AJET Scholarship Fund or if you have questions, contact fukscholarship@gmail.com.

Lauren Sakakibara is a 2nd year ALT in Asakura City, Fukuoka. She loves staying up late baking, dancing to K-pop, and watching any movie starring Matt Damon. She's thrilled not to have to wear thermal underclothes any longer...but is deathly afraid of the imminent wave of insect intruders.

STOCKHOLM: TRULY A NORTHERN LIGHT

Elysse Hurtado

Stockholm itself is not simply a city alone, but rather a city spread over a collection of small islands connected by bridges, straight out of some kind of fantasy world. The main island, Norrmalm, is home to the transportation hub and major business areas, as well as the Swedish Parliament and an extensive shopping district. However, Sweden is not quite paradise for those on a budget. Though there are some good buys to be found, by and large the standard of living is so high that you will be hard-pressed to survive with a full wallet. And it's not just the attractively chic clothing or fascinating design items that will break your budget, the food is just as high-priced. It was impossible to find a restaurant serving dinner for anything less than 160SEK a plate, and by the end of my first day I was already in dire straits financially.

Fortunately, by raiding the local supermarket and cooking at the hostel we were able to stretch our Kroner quite a bit. I would like to add that I visited an average of two galleries or museums a day, each with an entrance fee rivaling the cost of a meal. Because, you see, Stockholm is truly a city for art lovers. From the fascinating Duchamps/Picasso exhibit at the Moderna Museet to the David LaChapelle Exclusive at Fotografiska, there are quite a variety of genres and periods to choose from, and I only just scratched the surface of the over 20 such attractions available.

For those who prefer a more historic side to their ramblings, both Stockholm City Hall and Skansen are great choices. City Hall is a beautiful red brick building, filled with historic relics such as 15th century tapestries and boasting a hall almost entirely tiled in gold. I felt like it must be a part of the Swedish character to see the lighter side of things as they went out of their way to point out little foibles in the building, such as the accidental beheading of King Eric at the top of the mosaic wall.

One of the world's only outdoor museums, Skansen is a collection of old folk homes from around the country that have been imported and reconstructed for visitors to learn

about the way Swedes used to live. Rustic farmhouses, intricately built bell towers, old-fashioned pastry shops, and gorgeous views of the surrounding city await those who visit this huge theme park. Staff members all wear period clothing and give friendly and informative explanations about everything, and you could probably spend all day wandering through the vast maze of attractions. It was clear that Swedes treasure their past in addition to leading the world in progressive social reforms.

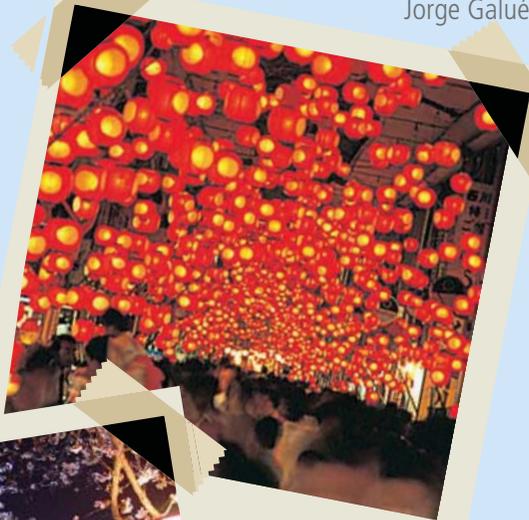
Finally, throughout my time in this stately and empathetic city I was impressed by the friendliness and politeness of the citizens. Smiles were ubiquitous, as was the phonetically familiar 'Tack!' ('thank you' in Swedish), and tourists were treated just like locals. In fact, I was mistaken for a local several times. I found this, and many other aspects, really brought out the true nature of the city: equality and harmony, with equal parts progress and nostalgia. Though I visited in the heart of winter I received a quite warm welcome, and I highly recommend taking a closer look at this northern beauty.

Elysse Hurtado is a second year CIR living in Ibaraki, where she fills all her free time with books, writing and cooking. Current projects include teaching herself Chinese, crocheting a random stuffed animal, a series of short stories on her blog, and travelling as much as possible. Elysse misses having a social life very, very much. You can visit her blog at <http://wanderingbluesky.wordpress.com/>.



YAMAGUCHI: WHERE A FASCINATING PAST MEETS AN EXCITING (AND DELICIOUS!) PRESENT

Jorge Galué



20

TRAVEL



If I were to tell you that there's a place here in Japan that: a) has a pagoda that is over five centuries old (and the tallest tower in west Japan past Osaka), b) boasts the biggest blowfish production in all of Japan and c) was the first place nationwide where Christmas was celebrated, you would probably come up with a list of prefectures before you get it right...

Because the answer is Yamaguchi Prefecture!

At the western end of Honshu, right between Hiroshima and Fukuoka Prefectures, lies an almost hidden jewel where you can find a myriad of wonders difficult to find anywhere else.

The patch of land, now known as Yamaguchi, has historically been the home of powerful families, such as the Ouchi Clan and the Choshu Fief, this being only part of what makes Yamaguchi one of the most important historic regions of Japan. The five-story pagoda at the Rurikouji Temple in Yamaguchi City is a certified national treasure, symbolizing how Yamaguchi thrived in the 15th century under the rule of the Ouchi clan to the point of being called, "The Kyoto of the West". Even Spanish missionary Francis Xavier, when arriving in Japan, looking for prosperous places to establish, was advised to head to Yamaguchi, since it was the best landing place in all of Japan at the time. The beautiful Xavier Memorial Church commemorates Xavier's sojourn to Yamaguchi, when the first Christmas in Japan was celebrated!

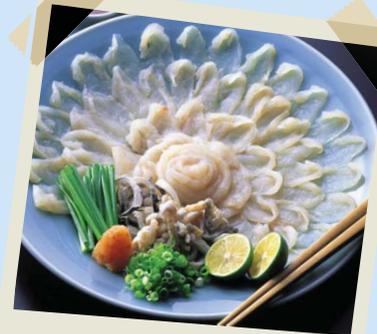
The cities and districts of Hagi, Iwakuni, and Chofu in Shimonoseki City are all places where the powerful Choshu Fief established important government and trade centers of government. There, one can find breathtaking vistas, including the famous Kintai Bridge in Iwakuni City, the old castle town of Hagi, and the Kousan Temple in Chofu—places where people can taste ancient Japan like nowhere else.

But not everything in Yamaguchi is about history! As a region surrounded by both the Sea of Japan and the Seto Inland Sea, it is a true paradise for food and, especially, seafood lovers. Blowfish, or *fugu* in Japanese, is the most sought after delicacy of the prefecture—fried, grilled, served as sashimi, or even made into *senbei* snacks. These are just some of the many ways this peculiar yet delicious fish can be enjoyed. Not to be outdone, *natsumikan* is a type of tangerine found only in northern Yamaguchi and it is used in various types of desserts and even *nabe* stews for a tangy, unexpected taste.

After all these sights and delicious food, nothing beats visiting the beautiful and renown Hot Springs of Yumoto Onsen in Nagato City and Yuda Onsen in Yamaguchi City. A plethora of exciting festivals like the Kanmon Straights Fireworks Festival or Yanai City's Goldfish Lantern Festival means there is always an interesting event to accompany the breathtaking sights and delicious dishes that are everywhere you turn in Yamaguchi

Does this pique your interest in Yamaguchi? This is only a sneak peak of all the wonderful surprises awaiting you. Can you afford to miss it? Come to Yamaguchi and find out!

Jorge Alberto Galué Piqueras is a second-year CIR in Yamaguchi City. An avid runner, before finishing on JET, Jorge will try to run in as many different prefectures as possible. You just might see him in a town near you! Check out what Jorge and his fellow Yamaguchi CIRs are up to on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cir.yamaguchi>





ROCK THE BOAT

Interview by Veetha Mory & Narrative by Sadaf Taqvi

Last month I caught up with Pania Lincoln, the International Coordinator for Peace Boat, a Japan-based nongovernmental organization that promotes peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment. Peace Boat seeks to create awareness and action based on effecting positive social and political change in the world; this work is carried out by using a cruise ship that travels around the world.

In this interview Pania gives advice for JETs interested in volunteer teaching onboard. Volunteer teachers and interpreters don't have to pay the participation fee. Peace Boat's 80th voyage will be July 18 – October 10, 2013, and their 81st voyage will be from November 22, 2013 – March 6, 2014. For those interested in being participants instead, you can receive up to a 30% subsidy on the 80th voyage in celebration of Peace Boat's 30th anniversary.

1. What is the time line for the application and interview process for volunteer teachers? What does the process entail?

Applications for voyages are open from approximately 6 or 7 months before the departure of the voyage. For example, if you were looking at departing in January, you would be able to apply between about June and August the previous year.

For teachers, national and international interviews are then done directly after the close of the application date, and volunteers notified directly after that. Then there is an approximate 3 month training period that can be completed online from anywhere in the world.

For domestic applicants (within Japan) - Interviews are conducted at the GET Offices in Takadanobaba, Tokyo, after an initial screening of candidates. Candidates invited to interview will be asked to give a short demonstration

lesson to a small class comprised of volunteer students. This lesson will be monitored by the interviewers and constitutes a major component of the interview process. This will be followed by a panel interview.

For international applicants—After the initial screening process and evaluations of both personal profile and demonstration class videos, successful international candidates will be invited to proceed with a series of interviews via Skype.

2. What is the daily schedule like for a teacher?

Busy! But in a good way. Teachers have two to three 80 minute classes each day with up to 6 students each class. Also we have 'open' classes teaching up to 200 or 300 participants for 40 minutes. We tailor make our curriculum so an ability to plan as well as implement lessons for adults is necessary. Outside of teaching duties, general staff duties, meetings and self organised events, there are around 100 lectures, workshops and events other participants organise every day.



3. Any advice for aspiring Peace Boat teachers on how to be more competitive applicants?

A volunteer spirit and genuine want to come onboard and participate is key. Volunteerism, a solid teaching history and certifications, and an obvious interest in Peace activities are helpful in adding flavor to any application. Additional languages and an ability to teach non-language based activities onboard is also helpful.

4. Some people have difficulty obtaining visas due to country regulations. How can they research if it's possible for them to get the visas?

We help all volunteers to research and procure visas including letters of reference for embassies. Travelling by boat is slightly different than by plane and many times there are not too many visas that actually need to be obtained. Part of the reason we have a three month 'training' period is to make sure that there is enough time to procure all visas. If they have any questions or would like to know more information they can mail us any time, even before the application deadline.

5. Have you ever traveled on Peace Boat yourself? If yes, what was your favorite port and why?

Yes, I am about to travel on my 9th voyage around the world. This is a common question and possibly the hardest to answer. My favourite port for food is different to my favourite port for culture, and again for people, for architecture, for experience, for nature...the list goes on! I can say that I loved Iceland in so many quirky ways, Guatemala will always have a place in my heart, Barcelona is so beautiful it makes me cry and the street art in France was so inspiring. One strange thing I hadn't realised before going on Peace Boat is that my favourite place to be is actually onboard learning and teaching and being part of the floating community.

6. Any advice for those considering applying?

Only one... do it! Follow your passions, and be ready to inspire and be inspired.

For more information about joining a Peace Boat voyage as a participant, teacher, or interpreter visit: <http://www.peaceboat.org/english/?menu=109>

Next, JET alum, Sadaf Taqvi, shares her insight on the Peace Boat teaching experience.

The idea of sailing around the world probably tickles your travel bug fancy as it does for me. There are so many places I want to travel to, so one look at Peace Boat's voyage itinerary and I couldn't help but 'eep' with joy at the possibility of what adventures lay ahead of me.

But, having joined a voyage complete with cool stamps on my passport and the must-have-jump-shot pictures in front of the iconic landmarks, I can confidently share with you that these travel moments were not actually the highlight of the journey.

It's the time spent on the boat that will impact your life in the most positive way. Imagine if you will a space where all your friends share with you their various skills and bits of knowledge and experiences and you do the same. Every day you wake up with the chance to learn something completely new! Or perhaps you'll be the one to share something that day – you know, like the "Thriller" dance before dinner. There are also lectures from guest speakers who open your mind and heart to both important issues and new ideas that you will then witness first hand with grassroots level organizations that you can visit in port. On the side, these guests might also teach you how to do something quite random, like play the grass flute. I really am a hit at dinner parties!

But what had the greatest effect on me (besides the waves rocking the boat) were those every day moments with the most incredible people that you will spend the next few months with. Everyone comes to the boat with a variety of different backstories to form the beautiful kaleidoscope that will be your Peace Boat family. They will help make your GET language class a success and aid in developing your teaching skills. You will cultivate relationships based on the mutual realization that you care for many people around the world and want to do something to help them. Together, you motivate each other to learn, share, grow, laugh, dance, try, love and give. Hey, it is called the "Peace" Boat for a reason.

I was asked to share a single favourite memory and I still can't do that. When I close my eyes, moments that have re-shaped my outlook on life and my interaction with my community glimmer across my mind's sky. Luckily, when I open my eyes, I have my photos and a lot of new Facebook friends to remind me of the epic journey that is Peace Boat.

Sadaf was a Saitama JET from 2007-2010 and now resides in the city that sometimes sleeps... Toronto. Her hobbies include: leaning and loitering around the city, perfecting her literal-dance moves during karaoke, and conquering her fear of heights by jumping off buildings, cliffs, bridges, planes and super tall friends.



THE WORLD IS PEOPLE

Aiden James Kosciesza

Traveling with Peace Boat was a whirlwind experience. In just over three months aboard the 74th Global Voyage, I visited twenty-two different countries. I passed through the Suez Canal, climbed Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, canoed to a native village in Panama, and posed for photos with the Sphinx. On the ship I taught English, of course, but I also wrote a play, studied Arabic, campaigned for LGBT rights, practiced kickboxing, and memorialized 9/11/2001, a tragic date in my country's history. Each day of my journey was like living a week on land.

In such a fast-paced environment, the intensity of each experience is cranked up a notch. Life onboard makes for close-knit relationships, especially among those who work together to make it all happen; in those three short months, my fellow language teachers became my family. When I flip through my memories of our journey, it isn't the monuments or the architecture or even the ocean that stands out. It's the people.

I remember Logan, the Texan, a foot taller than me and as skinny as a beanpole, eating piles of pancakes at breakfast and leading an Electric Avenue conga line across three decks at my fake bachelor party. Belinda, an Australian and former Mie JET like me, practiced Japanese slang with the passengers at every chance she got. Steven, the distinguished Montessori lecturer, shed his shirt to perform a wild-eyed Maori ceremony, and we all teased his fellow Kiwi Bekah for pronouncing "deck" with an "E" so short that it sounded like an "I". I fondly remember my boss, Jonathan, leaping out of his chair so that we could both rush to the windows and laugh like delighted children at the dolphins jumping in the ship's wake.

None of this was what I expected when I signed on with the 74th voyage. It was the travel that attracted me to Peace Boat, and before I made the journey, I thought that travel meant places. Our voyage changed my perspective entirely. I'm thrilled that I saw the Acropolis in Greece and the Aya Sofia in Turkey, but what I remember most is my Guatemalan host dad who took me running in the mountain fog and the Egyptian women who stopped me to ask, in eager English, what I thought of the Arab Spring.

When I first met Leon, the photojournalist aboard the 74th voyage, I didn't understand his work. I thought that travel photography meant wide vistas and cultural monuments, but Leon's favorite subjects were people: an elderly man looking over Asakusa with his hand on his hip, a squat woman crossing a Tokyo street in a muumuu, an employee posed on a street corner with a sign for a manga cafe. What I learned from him, from my GET teacher family, from the Peace Boat staff, the passengers, the guest educators, and from all the people whose paths I crossed in those twenty-two countries, is that the world isn't made of landscapes and architecture. The world is people, and I am a part of it.

Aiden James Kosciesza left his job as an ALT in Mie-ken in 2010 to become an underpaid adjunct professor and is still regretting it. He apologizes to his dearest GET family for being unable to include everyone's name in this article, and places the blame squarely on the word count.



STYLE STRONG:

BIZ COOL

Kathryn Strong

Today is graduation day at my junior high school. Although it's hot outside (I was traipsing around in a sundress yesterday), the students are still in their warm winter uniforms. I am, of course, in a suit.

Some days getting dressed for work is easy. Graduation: suit; opening ceremony: suit; term closing ceremony: suit. Other days, however, navigating Japanese business culture can be a bit complicated, especially in the summer when, in recent years, all of the old rules were thrown out the window and a new system, heralded as "Cool Biz", was introduced.

Cool Biz has the benefits of being relaxed and more comfortable. It hopefully saves energy from air conditioning and also has exactly zero clearly defined rules. Luckily for you, Okinawa has been doing Cool Biz year round forever, so I'm here to give you some ideas on how to dress appropriately at work for the summer.

Let's start at the bottom and work up. Work shoes don't change, so we'll skip those. Pants, however, do have a different set of rules. They no longer have to be full length slacks. Capri are perfectly acceptable in the summer; just make sure they're of a nice fabric and well fitted. Cotton will let them breath, which is crucial in the humidity and heat of the summer. Skirts are another option (and my personal favorite, as they're much cooler). Fuller, light-weight skirts are the most comfortable, with, once again, natural materials being the best option. Make sure that they fall at least to the top of your knees, and I'd also recommend wearing bike shorts underneath to prevent any unfortunate wind over-exposure. It's also important that

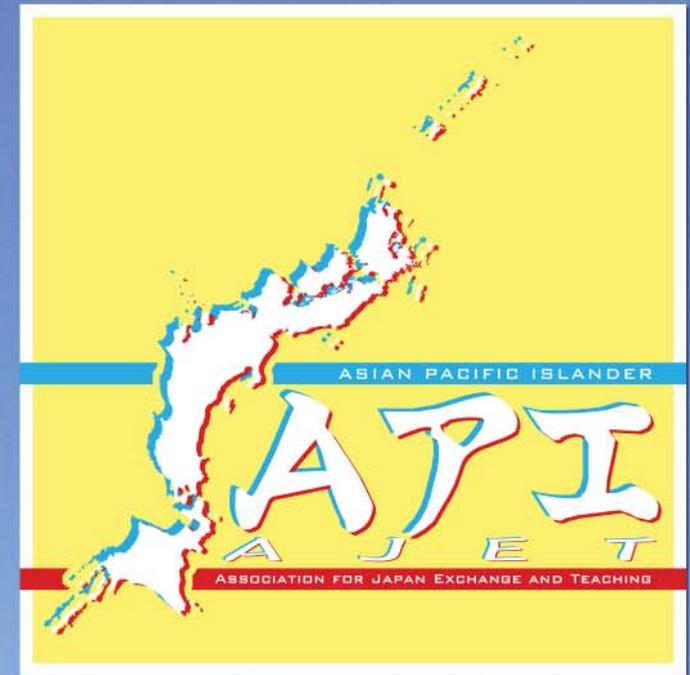
the rise is high enough so that your shirt isn't in danger of riding up and exposing your back or stomach. Remember, you'll be reaching up to write on the board in front of an entire class of students.

For shirts, comfortable modesty is the key to Cool Biz. The traditional Okinawan *kariyushi* is the most iconic example of Cool Biz attire, having been seen on everyone from my *kocho-sensei* to the prime minister. They look a bit like Hawaiian Aloha shirts, but are a bit more muted in colors. Good ones can cost close to 10,000 yen, so if you're going in for *kariyushi*, be prepared. Luckily, they are by no means the only option for summer attire. The only real rules seem to be 1) that your stomach and back are covered, 2) that your shoulders and upper arms are covered, and 3) that you refrain from unnecessary decolletage exposure. My biggest piece of advice here is to layer a thin undershirt beneath all of your clothing. It can serve to extend the life of your nicer pieces by protecting them from sweat (an unfortunate fact of life in summer) and also protect your modesty and your students' innocence by covering up any controversial skin. Stores across the nation will be rolling out their "Coolish Fact" style lines of summer undergarments shortly, so you can pick them up there if you don't have any now.

Dressing for work in the summer has an "anything goes" feel. As long as you follow these guidelines, you have the freedom to be creative, so have fun! Wear patterns and colors that you like, try out new pairings and shapes, and enjoy the innovation of Cool Biz.

Kathryn is a 2nd year ALT in beautiful Okinawa. Life on island has led to her developing an acute fear of winter and the opinion that the phrase "formal bikini" is not necessarily an oxymoron.

WHO ARE THESE INVISIBLE FOREIGNERS?



ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER

Asian Pacific Islander AJET (API AJET) was created during the summer of 2012 following many talks about the specific issues the API community faces.

This special interest group (SIG) aims to create a supportive environment for all APIs living in Japan. We also hope to increase awareness about API issues and encourage dialogue among curious JETs and non-JETs. Furthermore, API AJET hopes to act as a tangible resource for anyone interested in understanding an API's unique perspective (as a foreigner) in Japan.

The group is open to all. Join to share, discuss, and learn about the API experience. Membership is free!

For more information, email us at api@ajet.net, or find API AJET on Facebook and Google+.

ASSOCIATION FOR JAPAN EXCHANGE AND TEACHING

COUNTRY PRIDE: SPORTING PROFILES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE!

Ruth Rowntree



Hail to the Hurl! (Ireland)

Hurling is one of the two main indigenous Irish sports that occupies the hearts and minds of sport lovers in Ireland. It's played with 15 players a side, with H-shaped goalposts. Using a 'hurl' or 'hurley' (depending on what part of the country you're from, and how civilized you are as a human being), the idea is to work the 'sliotar' (roughly the size of a tennis ball) up the field to get a score. A score above the bar is a point. If, however, you're close enough and fancy your chances against the keeper, you can try for a goal, worth the equivalent of 3 points. It's the fastest field game in the world and a bit hard to describe in detail—think hockey on grass except the sliotar can be used in the air and lots of other bits and pieces that are different! Its history stretches as far back as the earliest myths and legends from Gaelic Ireland; the hero Cú Chulainn chokes an angry hound by hitting a sliotar into its mouth. Of course, this is probably not historically accurate, not least because the hero himself comes from the northern half of the country, who are useless at this great sport. Some areas in Ireland are exclusively hurling, others Gaelic Football (the other main Irish sport) and some places practice both. I highly recommend watching a few YouTube videos to get a feel for the sport, and you won't be disappointed. Enjoy. Corcaigh Abú!

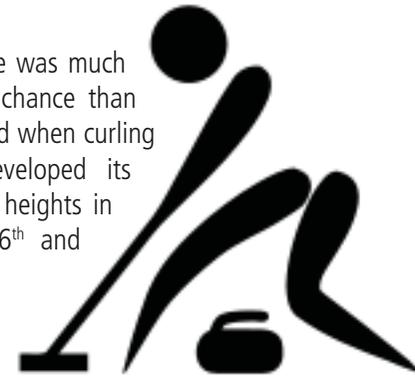
Neil Ó Briain is enjoying his 3rd year in Kagoshima City. When he's not sweeping Sakurajima's ash off the balcony he's strumming his heart and soul out down at the local.

Curling – A Very Scottish Sport

Curling is believed to have originated in medieval Scotland, with the first recorded contest being played at Paisley Abbey, Renfrewshire in 1541. There is other evidence to support this claim including the discovery of a curling stone with the date 1511 inscribed on it, which was found after a pond in Dunblane was drained.

In the early days curling stones were simply flat-bottomed

river stones and the game was much more down to luck and chance than skill. However this changed when curling gained popularity; it developed its strategic and competitive heights in Scotland between the 16th and 19th centuries.



The international governing body for curling, the 'World Curling Federation', was founded in Scotland and the first curling club (the 'Royal Caledonian Curling Club' still exists today. However these days curling is associated with North America and especially Canada after being introduced by Scottish immigrants in the 1800s. In fact the first ever world championship, the 'Scotch Cup', which was held in Falkirk and Edinburgh in 1959 was won by the Canadian team.

Today curling is an Olympic sport and has been since the 1998 Winter Olympics. In 2002 the International Olympic Committee retroactively decided that the curling outdoor competition from the 1924 Winter Olympics would be an official event and not a demonstration meaning the first gold medal was won by Great Britain and Ireland!

Christopher Murray is a 3rd year JET up in Toride City, Ibaraki-ken who's still exploring and learning in Japan.

Everybody's skateboarding, skating USA...

While not a national sport, skateboarding has become one of the most popular sports in the US.

One of the biggest challenges of skateboarding is balance, and keeping your feet on the board. The "Ollie" is a basic trick that pops the board into the air, allowing you to jump. I remember in high school it took me about a month to learn how to Ollie. Even then, I could only jump a pencil. Beyond just jumping, skaters flick their feet, spinning the board below them, and use ramps and rails.

While skating across Japan for the past five years, I have sessioned a miniramp at ground zero in Hiroshima and have traveled with 30 local skaters to watch Element pros in Nagasaki—I even met Nyjah Huston there. Through skateboarding, I've bridged language and cultural barriers, and made great friends.

The best way to learn about skateboarding in Japan is to visit your skate shop. My local shop is called "Olli". The owner, Jyuri, organizes trips, contests, skate video premiers, as well as parties. When I found my local skate spot in Kumamoto, the skaters were surprised, but excited, to see a foreigner on skateboard. Japan's skate scene is small, but the skaters are exceptionally friendly. Even as a less than "extreme" skater, I often get cheers for my abysmal tricks! And, as is Japan, even the punk rockers and skate kids have good manners and will give you a warm "otsukare desu" when you part ways.

Andrew Crooks, an artist and 5th year JET, has been skateboarding around-about for 16 years. Hit him up for ramps and rad times if you're down Kumamoto way, or check out his artwork here: www.andrewcrooks.com

Sepak Takraw... Tell me more! (Singapore)

Football and basketball are probably the two most popular sports in schools in Singapore, followed by badminton. Then there's a sport that combines elements not just from these three, but also volleyball.

Have you heard of sepak takraw? It's sometimes referred to as "kick volleyball". Players can use almost any body part except their hands

to keep a woven ball in play. It's considered a local sport, although not exclusively so (it comes from our northern neighbours). Anyway, "sepak" is Malay for "kick" and "takraw" is the Thai word for a woven ball. It's played by teams of two or three people who try to lob the ball over a net as the other team attempts to block. If you're imagining a pretty acrobatic sport by now, you would be right!

The sport may have evolved from an ancient military exercise in China where soldiers kicked a feathered shuttlecock back and forth. Later versions replaced the shuttlecock with a woven ball. That feathered shuttlecock never really went away though. "Chatek" is a popular children's game where a player tries to keep the shuttlecock aloft for as long as possible.

Although it doesn't enjoy the sort of global popularity football does, sepak takraw is played in a surprisingly long list of countries, including... Japan. So why not mention sepak takraw to your kids next time? Who knows? They might know what you mean!

Amanda came to Kumamoto last year. She enjoys breeding dragons on her phone and the occasional clattering about in the kitchen. And sometimes she writes about stuff she doesn't know much about (like sepak takraw).

Ka Mate! Kapa o Pango! (New Zealand)

Silence settles over the crowd as the All Blacks come together center field.

Suddenly they burst into loud chants, enchanting the crowd with their legendary dance.

The Haka is an ancient war dance the Maori people use for battle preparation, welcome or celebration. Most simply a dance, but the Haka is also a life force, carrying meaning

and history with every word, rhythm, action and beat. Thousands of Haka exist as different tribes, cultural groups and teams throughout New Zealand create their own.

A Haka performance uses all available instruments: hands, feet, eyes, tongue, legs, body, and voice to carry meaning to the audience.

A New Zealand Rugby team first performed a Haka before a match in 1888. *Ka Mate, Ka Mate*, created in the 19th century, was the original Haka the All Blacks used. In 2005, the All Blacks unveiled a new Haka *Kapa o Pango* written specifically for them, about the land, silver fern and the team.

Performing the Haka before games, the All Blacks create energy, focus and a united front, similar to its traditional purpose—preparing a war party for battle. The All Blacks team and management decide who will lead the Haka before each game depending on how the team is feeling and who the opposition is.

A Haka performance creates an unexplainable energy, demands silence, sets a challenge and is a reminder to all New Zealanders, wherever they are, of home.

Angela is a cake-baking, sports-mad, New Zealander teaching (and learning) English for a second year in peaceful Saga.

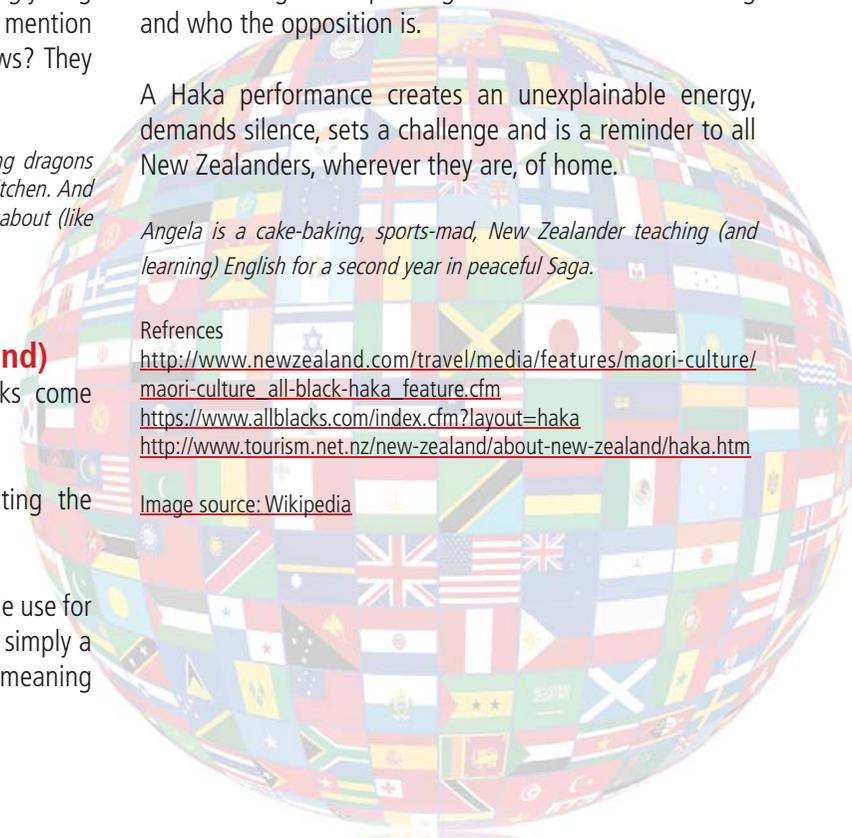
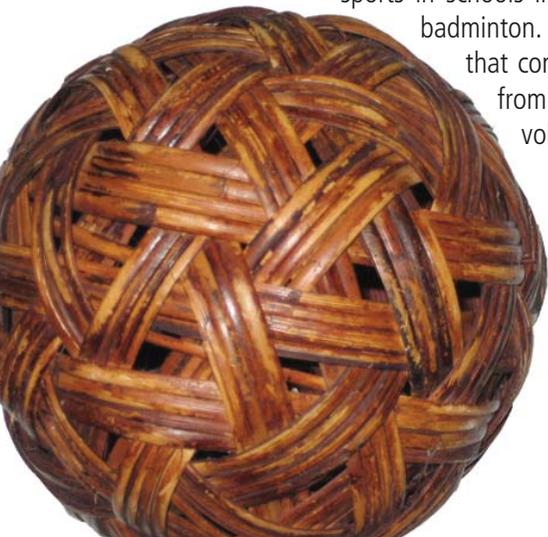
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Image source: Wikipedia



PEPY RIDERS: PSYCHED CYCLISTS

Emily Lemmon



If you type “pepyride.org” into your internet browser, it will automatically redirect you to pepycambodia.org instead. PEPY, which stands for Promoting Education, emPowering Youth (formerly “Protect the Earth, Protect Yourself”), has been shifting their focus and changing their methods as they have learned more about what it really takes to help a developing nation.

What is the PEPY Ride? Now entering its 9th year, this Cambodian cycling trip takes participants quite literally off the beaten path to experience culture, history, language, and people in a much more up-close and personal way. The next annual ride will span 19 days (or 14 if your schedule is tight), from December 22nd, 2013 to January 9th, 2014, traveling from Siem Reap to Kep. Participants need not be experienced cyclists, though a good fitness level is preferred, as some cycling days will reach toward 100km.

The folks at PEPY believe that every Cambodian kid deserves an education to equip them with tools like critical thinking and problem solving. Many JETs work in schools; we know the joys and difficulties of being part of education. Taking a ride with PEPY is a great way to support a wonderful cause while getting your cycling on.

What’s that? Don’t have two weeks or can’t afford a ticket to Siem Reap? There are definitely other ways to get involved with PEPY—just go on cycling trips within Japan! Many prefectures have their own version of a PEPY adventure, complete with bike riding, educational stops, and enjoyable afternoons spent with a bunch of new friends. Some are easy, others strenuous, but all operate with an aim to explore one’s own prefecture and gather a bit of funding for Cambodian kids’ education.

If there isn’t a ride in your prefecture it’s really easy to start one. Though I knew nothing about either PEPY or cycling in my first year on JET, I became captain of the Hyogo Prefectural Ride (Himeji Riiiide).

After getting to know PEPY, I just had to get to Cambodia, and after figuring things out, we finally put together a custom tour through PEPY Tours, the branch of PEPY that now manages the PEPY Ride. If you have six or more people, you can get a custom tour designed just for your group. We did a little bit of cycling near Siem Reap, but we also were able to do a rural village homestay, see Angkor Wat, tour markets, and check out other sites off the beaten track.

Believe me when I say that Cambodia was the most interesting and significant trip I took during JET (and perhaps during my life), and also that after speaking to a few others who visited Cambodia on their own just for the main tourist attractions, I’m glad we went with PEPY.

To find out more about bike rides in Japanese prefectures, get in touch with the PEPY AJET Special Interest Group at: pepyajetsig@gmail.com.

Happy cycling!

Emily was a JET in Shiso City, Hyogo-ken for 3 years. When she wasn’t shoveling learnin’ into Japanese kids, she spent her time traveling as much as possible, as near as Himeji and as far away as Cambodia.

Check out <http://www.pepytours.com/pepy-ride-viii-2/> for more information on the 19-day cycling adventure that is the cornerstone of PEPY; the PEPY Ride!

To learn more about what PEPY does in Cambodia and their educational programs, check out their NGO webpage <http://www.pepycambodia.org/>

The tourism and fundraising arm of the organization is <http://www.pepytours.com/>

HANAMI HOME COOKING

With spring approaching comes one of Japan's favorite excuses to gather in parks to eat and drink with friends, family, or coworkers: *hanami*, or cherry-blossom viewing!

There are several dining options when considering what to bring to a *hanami* party. Those who can afford it may prepare or purchase an *ohanamibento*. This lunch box will include many seasonal spring fish and vegetables, some of which may be cut to resemble cherry blossom petals! If time and money are limited, one can always pop in to the *conbini* to buy a few picnic foods to share. However, with proper planning, nothing beats a basket full of fresh goodies to share! Read on for an *onigiri* making 101 as well as a recipe for a delicious Middle Eastern dip!

If you have yet to try making homemade *onigiri*, now's your chance! This is a great way to use up extra rice from *kyushoku*, as well as any type of leftovers that you think would taste nice with rice! You can buy various packets of *onigiri* seasonings at your grocery store or use fresh ingredients such as shiitake mushrooms or finely chopped vegetables, like cooked spinach drizzled in sesame oil and sprinkled with sugar and sesame seeds.

Have a bowl of cooked rice ready and a bowl of warm water to wet your hands before shaping the *onigiri*. You can keep things very basic and sprinkle your chopped leftovers or *furikake* (rice seasoning such as various types of fried fish flakes, seaweeds, vegetables, or a combination) onto the rice, mix, and simply form into balls with your hands. You can also purchase various types of molds from the 100 yen shop if you're fancy.

If you're hankering for something a little more exotic than your typical Japanese rice ball, baba ghanoush is an excellent option. This smoky Middle Eastern roasted eggplant dish can be used as a dip for veggies or as a spread, and the ingredients can easily be found at your local supermarket!

Image sources:
www.mylifeasmrs.com; www.brownjca.org; www.twitter.com/masakosydney;
dustinandlaura.blogspot.com



Baba Ghanoush

Ingredients

- 4 small eggplants, sliced lengthwise
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2-3 tbsp tahini, roasted sesame paste (the Japanese kind comes in a white tube)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Juice of one lemon
- Salt and cayenne pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley (or use *mitsuba*, the Japanese version!)

Preheat oven to 180c. Poke the eggplant in several places with a fork. Brush the cut sides lightly with olive oil and place cut side down on baking tray lined with foil. Roast until very tender, or 30-45mins (less if using a toaster oven). Allow to cool for 15mins.

Scoop the eggplant flesh into a large bowl and mash well with a fork. Combine the eggplant, garlic, remaining olive oil, tahini, cumin, 2 Tbsp of the lemon juice, salt, and a pinch of cayenne. Mash well then leave to cool to room temperature.

Season to taste with additional lemon juice, salt, and cayenne. If you want, swirl a little olive oil on the top. Sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley and serve with any type of bread or veggie crudité's!

http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/eggplant_dip_baba_ghanouj/

THE SPICE OF LIFE:

EASY MEXICAN HOME COOKING IN JAPAN!

Stephanie Alice Reiter

One thing you notice pretty quickly about living in Japan, especially in the more rural parts, is that there is plenty of Japanese food, but never enough Mexican. Sure, there are Italian and French restaurants in the bigger cities, Chinese food joints, and plenty of Indian hot spots with spicy curry, but not a whole lot of places with tacos or enchiladas on the menu. To make matters worse, if you're from the American Southwest like myself, you miss home just that little bit more. Even before I got here, I'd been hearing from JETs about how much they yearn for the day when they can have a chili-smothered burrito again, or some enchiladas dripping with cheese. Me, I just dream of the day when I can have a steaming bowl of *pasole* again. But while I've been here, I haven't wasted any time cooking myself other beloved Mexican dishes. Although Japan might not have many Mexican food restaurants, their grocery stores still carry most of the ingredients you would need to make your own dishes at home. In the winter, some of my favorite recipes have kept me just as warm as my *kotatsu*, and I found everything I needed at my own local store. Here's a good recipe to start with!

Carne Adovada

This is a really simple but delicious meat recipe that is really popular where I'm from. Some people like it with pulled pork, but I enjoy making it with cubes.

Ingredients:

- 2 potatoes
- About 250 grams of pork, cut into cubes
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder (Can be substituted with fresh minced garlic.)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons red chili powder (You can generally find this in the seasonings aisle. I've even found packets at the local drugstore and 100 yen shop! If you don't have powder, or really can't find it, you can use dried red chilies, and blend them in a blender with a little water to make chili paste, which you can use instead!)

How to cook:

1. Peel and cut the potatoes into medium cubes. Place potatoes in a saucepan, and fill with water until potatoes are covered. Boil at medium heat.
2. When the consistency of the potatoes becomes somewhat mushy, make sure the water has boiled down below the potatoes. This isn't a stew, so you don't want it too watery, but you want it watery enough to keep the potatoes moist and to cook the pork in.
3. In a separate bowl, season pork cubes with the garlic, salt, and red chili powder. Add to the potatoes when completely blended.
4. Continue to cook at low to medium heat until pork cubes are fully cooked and potatoes are good and mushy. If you like things a bit spicier, you can always add extra chili powder to taste!

Carne Adovada is my favorite when I don't feel like spending a great deal of time preparing. Because it's so simple to make, it's also great for cooking for a group of people!

Another recipe I like to bring out when I start thinking of home is, of course, enchiladas. However, like most JETs in Japan, I don't have a big oven, so I make do with a simple toaster oven, which works just as well. Due to the toaster oven's smaller size, this recipe is designed for only two to three servings at a time. Furthermore, unless you order them online, finding corn tortillas in Japan has proven nearly impossible. Occasionally, I have been able to find regular flour tortillas in stores, but when even they run out, you can make them yourself! Here are a couple recipes that will help you not only make enchiladas, but the tortillas you need to make them.

Simple Flour Tortillas

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of flour
- 3/4 cup of water
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 3 1/2 tablespoons of olive oil

How to cook:

1. Mix all ingredients together in a bowl with a large spoon until they form a large, doughy ball, then switch to kneading with your hands. Add a little bit of water if the mixture is still dry.
2. When the dough is smooth, roll on to a floured surface and divide into equal portions—maybe 6 or 7 pieces at the most. Flatten each piece with a rolling pin until they are thin and round.
3. Cook in a skillet with a thin layer of oil or butter on low heat until they start to turn golden- flip to make sure both sides are cooked. When done, put on a plate with a paper towel and let cool.

Enchiladas

Ingredients:

- 250 grams of ground beef or pork
- Shredded cheese
- 1 1/2-2 tablespoons of chili powder
- 1 teaspoon of ground cumin
- 2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoon of garlic powder
- 400 grams of tomato puree (The bottles often look like ketchup!)
- 1-2 tablespoons of water
- Tortillas

How to cook:

1. To make the enchilada sauce, mix the tomato puree, chili powder, cumin, salt, garlic powder, and water together in a medium saucepan and heat on low. If you like your sauce spicier, add chili powder to taste.

2. Brown the meat in a skillet on medium heat.
3. In a casserole dish that fits your toaster oven—glass or metal is fine—spread a thin layer of sauce on the bottom. Arrange one layer of tortillas. Next, layer the browned meat, shredded cheese, and enchilada sauce. Cover with another layer of tortillas. Spread one final layer of sauce, and top with more cheese.
4. Bake in your toaster oven for 15-17 minutes at 240 degrees Celsius. Let cool, cut, and serve!

Finally, if you don't even a toaster oven, but still want to entertain, you can buy some chips and make this easy guacamole recipe!

Guacamole

Ingredients:

- 2 Avocados, relatively soft to the touch
- 1 medium-large tomato
- Ground cumin
- Garlic powder
- Salt

How to cook:

1. Cut the avocados in half and scoop the flesh out into a bowl. Keep at least one seed and set it aside. Mash the avocados until creamy.
2. Dice the tomato and mix in. Add cumin, garlic powder, and salt to taste. Serve with your favorite chips!

By putting an avocado seed in the guacamole, you can keep it fresh for a longer period. Additionally, if it's going to sit out for a while, you can cover it with a layer of lettuce to keep it fresh!

If you're lucky enough to have someone sending you care packages and you miss Mexican food, I suggest asking them to visit the seasoning aisle at their local grocery store for you, and getting them to throw a packet or two of spices into their next package. I've been fortunate enough

to have great parents and friends who send me a special delivery every once in a while with the things they know I love: chilies, taco seasonings, salsa, dried *pasole*, and hot sauce. I've even known a JET who, during Thanksgiving, received corn husks and masa from their family, so they could make tamales! But even without help from overseas, it's not impossible to make your favorite Mexican dishes right here in Japan—and relive that taste of home!

Stephanie is a 1st-year JET on Sado Island, Niigata. Originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, her hobbies include making fiery food dishes, hot air ballooning, writing, painting and running. As there are several Stephanies in Niigata, she is better known as Steph ARRRRR, due to her penchant for talking like a pirate on the long ferry rides back and forth from Sado.



JAPAN EVENTS

April 13th 2013 – May 13th 2013

This month we're changing things up a bit by putting the spotlight on a specific area of Japan. If you're traveling in the Hokuriku area, why not drop in on one of these great events? Special thanks and internet hugs go to Meredith Smith, an ALT in Fukui who assembled all these events into a grandmaster list! Thanks, Meredith!

Don't see your favorite festival here? Have an upcoming event you're super excited for? Let's put them on the calendar and spread the love! Contact Events at steven.thompson@ajet.net with the details! If you're not sure what's going on in your area, you can always get in touch with your Block Representative or local AJET chapter!

Event name	Location	Date
Maruoka Castle Sakura Festival	Maruoka, Fukui	April 2nd – April 20th
<p>Aside from being one of the oldest and greatest castles in Japan, Maruoka Castle (also known as the Castle of Mist, since legend says a mist hides the castle when under attack) is a great place to take in some cherry blossom viewing! http://fjet.org/event/maruoka-castle-sakura-festival</p>		
All-Japan Chindon Contest	Toyama, Toyama	April 5th – 7th
<p>'Chindon' is the Japanese word for traditional street advertisers, who wear bright costumes and are accompanied by a merry band. The street fills with sound and color and laughter as nearly 100 chindon bands compete. http://visit-toyama.com/en/entry.php?nid=317</p>		
Taishoji Sakura Festival	Kaga, Ishikawa	April 13th – 14th
<p>This sakura-viewing event also features relaxing boat trips down the river, lion dances, and shrine processions. The whole thing gets the lantern-lit treatment at night for supercharged beauty. http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/topics/kpeilp000002xx9m-att/kpeilp000002xxhm.pdf</p>		

Echizen Era Parade	Fukui, Fukui	April 13th
<p>Watch history come to life and pass you by along the streets of central Fukui city. These historical parades are always really impressive, as everyone turns out in full costume and you can imagine for a bit you're living in feudal Japan as some kind of Time Lord. http://www.city.fukui.lg.jp/lang/english/cityguide/fes.html</p>		
AJET Volunteering Week	Throughout Japan	April 13th – 21st
<p>Neetha Mony created this idea, which will become an annual event, in order to coordinate the volunteering efforts for all of us living here in Japan. For one week, JETs across the country will host and participate in volunteer events to give back to their communities. Check out the site to find an event in your area, or to register an event of your own and encourage people to come help! http://ajet.net/2013-national-jet-volunteer-week/</p>		
Takayama Festival	Takayama, Gifu	April 14th -15th
<p>Ranked as one of Japan's Top 3 Most Beautiful Festivals (Japan does Top 3 for many things), the biannual Takayama festival really is deserving of the title. Ornately decorated yatai carts are paraded through the streets of the Old Town around Hie Shrine. Mechanical kabuki doll performances can be seen atop the beautiful carts. http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e5909.html</p>		
Marumage Hair Festival	Himi, Toyama	April 17th
<p>Come watch parades of women getting their hair styled in the traditional marumage geisha fashion. This hairstyle is historically reserved for married women, but on this day, those who wish to be married someday soon "borrow" the hairstyle for a day in hopes that they can wear it permanently! http://www.city.himi.toyama.jp/~10000/english/Festivals.htm</p>		

Gon Gon Festival	Himi, Toyama	April 17th – 18th
<p>Held at the same time as the marumage festival, this festival originated as one to pray for rain, or to thank the gods for rain, depending on the current status of the rain and what people wanted the rain to be doing. The big draw of this festival is a bell-ringing competition, and we're not talking about dainty little handbells, this is a huge metal bell at the temple, which is rung with a 60 kg log as a feat of strength. http://www.city.himi.toyama.jp/~10000/english/Festivals.htm</p>		
Sumida Park Yabusame	Taito, Tokyo	April 20th
<p>Yabusame is the ancient Japanese sport of horseback archery, which was a venerated samurai skill in feudal Japan and a staple of the Japanese festival circuit. Elaborately-clad warriors gallop down the track and hit a tiny target with traditional wooden bows. Yabusame can be seen all throughout Japan! http://events.frommers.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event_id=159031</p>		
Taishi Candle Ritual	Taishi, Osaka	April 20th – 21st
<p>Over 7,000 gently-burning candles are placed throughout the Eifukuji temple complex and the surrounding cherry blossom trees are lit up during this nighttime event. An open-air market is also open in the area from 6 PM on. http://www.town.taishi.osaka.jp/news.php?eid=00855</p>		
Hikiyama Festival	Noto, Ishikawa	April 20th – 21st
<p>Hokoriku is well-known for the hikiyama festivals, which feature large, elaborate festival carts. What's interesting about these festivals in particular is that they're organized and performed by men who are unlucky ages (25, 42, and 60, called otogumi). Check out one of these festivals and give some luck to these guys! http://bunkashisan.ne.jp/search/ViewContent_e.php?from=10&ContentID=235</p>		
Tokyo International Bar Show	Shibuya, Tokyo	April 20th – 21st
<p>Featuring the international whisky-appreciation event Whisky Live, as well as master bartenders and brewers of all kinds, this 2-day event wants to fill your head with interesting seminars and your belly with warm liquor. http://tokyobarshow.com/2013/indexE.html</p>		

Kawaii Matsuri	Shibuya, Tokyo	April 20th – 21st
<p>Presented by the current reigning champion of all things suffocatingly-cute, Kyary Pamyu Pamyu (with support from TM Revolution), this festival at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium seeks to celebrate kawaii-ness in all its forms. Observe the current cutesy trends emanating from Harajuku, Shibuya, and Akihabara with music performances, fashion shows, and lots and lots of goods for sale. http://kawaii-matsuri.jp/eng/</p>		
Yamathon 2013	Tokyo	April 20th
<p>Part urban challenge, part charity fundraiser, the Yamathon is an annual event where participants explore Tokyo and visit all 29 of the stations along the famous JR Yamanote line. Walkers are encouraged to take shortcuts and dig into the heart of Tokyo in an attempt to see all the stations fastest! http://www.tokyo-yamathon.com/</p>		
Fuchu Stream Nobles' Feast	Toyama, Toyama	April 21st
<p>Tired of the feasts of the peasants with their choco-bananas and goldfish scooping? Looking for something a little more refined? This event features Heian-era nobility (or maybe people dressed as such) creating and reciting poetry down by the stream at Kakugan temple. http://www8.city.toyama.toyama.jp/kanko/english/e_event/e_01.html</p>		
Setouchi Art Triennale	Naoshima, Kagawa	Until April 21st
<p>This month-long art festival is held every three years across a dozen islands in the Seto inland sea between Honshu and Shikoku. It's similar in form and purpose to Niigata's Echigo-Tsumari Art Festival, so if you had been interested in that but couldn't make the trek up north, take a ferry out to the islands and get your fill of contemporary art installations and exhibits. http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e5410.html</p>		
Kamakura Medieval Festival	Kamakura, Kanagawa	April 21st – 28th
<p>This week long festival celebrates the storied history of the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine. There are parades, performances, and rituals held throughout the city's culturally significant sites all week, but activity peaks on the two Sundays. http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/kamakura.html</p>		

Remembrance Ceremony	Osaka, Osaka	April 22nd
<p>To commemorate the passing of Shitenno shrine's founder, Prince Shotoku, this spring festival features court music and dance and is a designated Important Intangible Folk Cultural Asset of Japan, performed continuously for 1,000 years. http://www.shitennoji.or.jp/event/4/#event1046</p>		
Tulip Fair	Tonami, Toyama	April 23rd – May 6th
<p>The city of Tonami is primarily famous for its tulips. Various events are held throughout the weeks as visitors take in the million tulips coming into full, colorful bloom in the park. http://www.info-toyama.com/english/guide/tonami.html</p>		
Koenji Surprise Street Fair	Suginami, Tokyo	April 27th – 28th
<p>Not as surprising now that it's in its third year, but still crazy fun to watch! For two days, the area around Koenji station explodes with street performances of all kinds! Magicians and musicians and random people doing things that are really loose definitions of 'talent.' Totally free and sure to put a smile on your face. http://www.timeout.jp/en/tokyo/event/7856/Koenji-Bikkuri-Daidogei-2013</p>		
Matsuyamachi Spring Battle	Osaka, Osaka	April 28th
<p>Famous for its wholesale shops specializing in dolls, fireworks, and toys provided by friendly, open shopkeepers in the traditional way, Matsuyamachi also hosts an accessible samurai period parade. Not quite so serious as others, visitors are welcome to try on armor and helmets and take lots of pictures here! http://www.matuyamati.com/</p>		
Tokyo Pride Parade	Shibuya, Tokyo	April 28th
<p>An annual event, and one of the biggest of its kind in Japan, the Tokyo Pride Parade welcomes anyone who wants to celebrate and show support for the LGBT community. People dress in all kinds of different costumes and display rainbow flags and symbols as the parade makes its way from Yoyogi Park through Harajuku and Shibuya. http://tokyorainbowpride.jp/en</p>		
Yokata Children's Hikiyama	Toyama, Toyama	April 29th
Izurugi Hikiyama Festival	Oyabe, Toyama	April 29th

Awara Onsen Spring Festival	Awara, Fukui	April 29th
<p>I don't know how much convincing you need to go to an onsen town, as they're wonderful and relaxing and full of onsen (surprising, I know). Enjoy the festive atmosphere of the Spring Festival, or purchase tours of the various onsen hotels in the area and get a taste of everything! http://awara.info/page.php/83</p>		
Crying Sumo Festival	Taito, Tokyo	April 29th
<p>No, unfortunately this isn't your chance to see the big guys weep giant tears. This festival is a little stranger even than that, in that sumo wrestlers holding babies try to make them cry and see which cries the loudest. Why? It's said that a baby who can cry with a good, strong voice will live a good, strong life. The event has recently opened up to international participants as well. If you have a baby, why not let a sumo wrestler make it cry? http://www.matsuritimes.com/asakusa-nakizumo-crying-sumo/</p>		
Kintaikyo Bridge Festival	Iwakuni, Yamaguchi	April 29th
<p>A very famous bridge (among bridges) the plays host to many festivals. On this day, the town recreates the departure of a local daimyo (Japanese lords) for the capital. A procession crosses the bridge in colorful period costume, after which a firing demonstration of antique matchlock rifles is shown. http://www.gethiroshima.com/event/kintaikyo-bridge-festival/</p>		
Demachi Children's Kabuki Hikiyama Festival	Tonami, Toyama	April 29th – 30th
<p>The spring festival at Demachi Shinmeigu Shrine plays host to both hikiyama carts and children's kabuki. Hikiyama carts from the east, west, and middle parts of the city represent themselves with their elaborate setups.</p>		
Manbu Oneri Ritual	Hirano, Osaka	May 1st – 5th
<p>This ritual seeks to recreate the world of paradise as envisioned in Buddhism. Monks dressed as 25 bodhisattvas in glittering gold cross the Raigo bridge and recite the Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra 10,000 times. An Important Intangible Folk Cultural Asset. (Can I just call these IIFCAs? Or maybe Folkies?) http://dainenbutsuji.com/oneri/index.html</p>		

Tomobata Festival	Noto, Ishikawa	May 2nd – 3rd
<p>A relaxed, colorful festival where catamarans take to the river decorated in hundreds of colorful streamers to celebrated the local Mifune Shrine. http://www.hot-ishikawa.jp/kanko/english/20028.html</p>		
Yokohama International Costume Parade	Yokohama, Kanagawa	May 3rd
<p>This festival and parade celebrate the opening of Yokohama port, now 61 years old. Thousands of participants parade around the waterside starting in Yamashita park. You can also enjoy unique Yokohama events and browse open air markets during the festival. http://www.welcome.city.yokohama.jp/eng/travel/events/annual_events/05.html</p>		
Ajima no Manyo Poetry Festival	Echizen, Fukui	May 3rd – 4th
<p>Not just about poetry, there's also fire! Also, if you miss the bigger period parade in Fukui city, this festival also features famous Fukui figures dressed in historical costumes parading amidst beautiful flowers. http://www.fjet.org/event/echizen-city-shikibutofuji-festival</p>		
Hokata Dontaku Festival	Fukuoka, Fukuoka	May 3rd – 4th
<p>This spring festival boasts the most spectators of any festival in Japan, with over 2 million visitors coming last year. Parades full of interesting in unique costumes can be seen admist a town given to citywide dancing. Joining in on the dancing is highly encouraged. http://www.crossroadfukuoka.jp/en/event/?mode=detail&id=400000002448</p>		
La Folle Journee	Chiyoda, Tokyo	May 3rd – 5th
<p>For two days at the Tokyo International Forum, central Tokyo will fill with over 300 classical performances by orchestras and soloists from around the world. This event is unique in the classical music world in that it centers around an annual theme, which is "The Exquisite Hour" this year and will focus on French and Spanish composers. http://www.lfj.jp/lfj_2013e/index.html?id=hedder</p>		

Gods and Paper Festival	Echizen, Fukui	May 3rd – 5th
<p>In Japanese, the words for god and paper are homophones (kami) and this festival celebrates Echizen's rich history in both. The goddess of paper is carried throughout town in a portable shrine on the first day, special events are held throughout the festival at the shrine, and on the last night, she's carried back up the mountain accompanied by lanterns and torches. Don't forget to buy some traditional Japanese paper (washi)! http://www.echizenwashi.jp/english/aboutus/festival.html</p>		
Seihaku Dekayama Festival	Nanao, Ishikawa	May 3rd – 5th
<p>If you thought you'd seen large festival floats in Japan before, you ain't seen nothin' yet. These ones weigh in at 2 tons and stand over 12 meters tall. Visitors to the festival can join in on tugging the ropes to change the direction of these bright behemoths. http://www.nanao-cci.or.jp/dekayama/index.html</p>		
Hamamatsu Kite Festival	Hamamatsu, Shizuoka	May 3rd – 5th
<p>The skies over the Nakatajima Sand Dunes fill with flying and fighting kites during the Golden Week holidays. Beginning with peaceful, friendly flying, the kites begin battling one another after a time. These three days also encompass a variety of festival events in Hamamatsu city. http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/hamamatsufes.html</p>		
NHK Mile Cup	Fuchu, Tokyo	May 5th
<p>A famous horse race in Japan, the Mile Cup is open to anyone who wishes to place their bets. The track itself is located about 30 minutes outside Tokyo, at the Tokyo Racecourse in Fuchu. http://japanracing.jp/_races/2013races/0505nhk-mile.html</p>		
Kamigamo Horse Race	Kyoto, Kyoto	May 5th
<p>Not the sort of horse race you can bet on, but more the kind steeped in 1,000 years of tradition. Kyoto's oldest shrine holds this event annually, where riders compete in speed and technique on the temple grounds. http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/07/</p>		
Equestrian Rites Festival	Kyoto, Kyoto	May 5th
<p>More horses, but no racing. This other festival featuring our equine friends focuses on acrobatic stunts and graceful maneuvers. The area of the Fujinomori shrine also plays host to a parade of armored warriors carrying portable shrines. http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/08/</p>		

Children's Day Kabuki Festival	Komatsu, Ishikawa	May 5th – 6th
<p><i>During the Otabi festival period in Komatsu, select groups of children kabuki performers come to the Komatsu Civic Auditorium to perform some of the ancient art's most famous plays.</i> http://www.komatsuguide.jp/index.php/article/detail/kabuki/en/</p>		
Ozzfest	Chiba, Tokyo	May 11th – 12th
<p><i>I did not know this was a thing. Did you know this was a thing? Japan's very own Ozzfest will feature Slipnot, Tool, Slash, and (shockingly) Black Sabbath. Held at the de facto Tokyo concert venue, Makuhari Messe.</i> http://ozzfestjapan.com/en/index.html</p>		
Tokyo Rocks 2013	Chofu, Tokyo	May 11th – 12th
<p><i>As great as it would be to see Ozzy Osbourne sharing the stage with the likes of Blur, The Libertines, and My Bloody Valentine; you'll have to make a choice. This concert series will be held at Tokyo Stadium and feature a wide variety of Japanese rock bands in addition to those mentioned.</i> http://tokyorocks.jp/home.html</p>		
May Sumo Tournament	Sumida, Tokyo	May 12th – 26th
<p><i>The May basho, number three of the years six grand tournaments in Japan, returns to the Tokyo Ryogoku Kokugikan Sumo Arena. Study the matches carefully, and see if you can identify all 70-plus moves required to be learned by any sumo wrestler. More than just sheer bulk and power, enjoy the techniques and tricks employed in this ancient sport.</i> http://www.sumo.or.jp/eng/</p>		
Otabi Festival	Komatsu, Ishikawa	May 13th – 16th
<p><i>One of the biggest festivals in Ishikawa, this 340-year-old festival features children performing kabuki theater atop large shrines. Nationally renowned as some of the best children's kabuki in Japan in a vibrant festival atmosphere.</i> http://experience-kanazawa.com/event/otabimatsuri.html</p>		



Welcome to AJET Connect's monthly Photography Contest! Send us your photos and battle it out with other works of art from all over Japan in the hopes of becoming the highly coveted Photo of the Month. The photo with the highest number of votes will have the honour of being featured on the cover of the next issue, as well as being entered in the annual AJET Photography Contest. Submissions are welcomed from all current JET Programme participants.

In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.

Please submit your photos by April 14h. A shortlist will be created and you will have one week to vote for your favourite photo via online poll at www.ajet.net/photos. Voting will be open from April 15h until midnight on April 22nd.

As the spring buds bloom all over Japan, the theme for this month's photography contest is "Sakura Season". Of course, you're free to interpret the theme however you will—think *outside the box* and your photo may end up *on top* of May's issue!

Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. The theme for this month's competition is "Sakura Season". Send your entries to contest@ajet.net.



Ownership/ Use Rights

Photographers retain the rights to their photograph. By entering the contest, photographers agree to have their submitted photograph published on the cover of AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Photos will be credited to the author named in the entry form.

MONTHLY PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

PHOTOGRAPHY WINNERS

This month was another great month for photos at Connect! You've already seen Josh Del Pino's spectacular winning photograph on the cover of this month's issue, now take a look at the runners-up from the April Photography Competition!

If you're interested in entering May's Photography Competition, flip over to the next page for more details!

#3

Almas Rehman, Nagasaki



#4

Zhiying Lu, Miyazaki



#2

Meagan Connor, Toyama



CONTEST



look up at the moon
caught in strands of silver thread
moored in memory

月見あげ
雲の織り糸
時空つむぐ

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn
Shimane



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CONTEST

Got a haiku of your own you want the JET community to hear? Submit it for April's Haiku Competition! Contestants may submit one original haiku to contest@ajet.net.

Haikus should be received by April 18th. The competition is open to current JET participants only. The winner will be decided by means of an online poll, with the winning haiku being published in next month's issue! Happy haiku-ing!