

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

03.2015

KERO KERO BONITO TALKS WITH CONNECT



PLUS

WORLD TRAVEL IN 7 STEPS

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

CURLY HAIR CARE

OKINAWAN SOBA



The Japanese Lifestyle & Culture
Magazine Written by the International
Community in Japan

2015-2016 AJET NATIONAL COUNCIL

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR APPOINTED POSITIONS



UPDATE:

Appointed positions have increased. Starting in 2015, Block Representatives will serve only as elected representatives. Secondary duties previously performed by Block Representatives will now be open for applications based on skill and experience. See the next page for the full list of professional opportunities to serve National AJET. You can find additional details [here](#).

DEADLINE

MONDAY, MARCH 23RD

Applications for all positions are due by Monday, March 23rd. Results will be announced a week later.

PROJECT MANAGER

Helps the council achieve its goals by assigning tasks, managing schedules, and overseeing projects such as surveys and reports.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Writes, revises, and manages publicity for National AJET. Produces public content and manages promotional campaigns, as well as assembling monthly email updates for eConnect News.

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Maintains and updates AJET's social media presence across all channels, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

WEBSITE COORDINATOR

Updates and maintains AJET's online resources effectively to keep the JET community involved and aware of the National Council's activities through the AJET website.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING COORDINATOR

Heads a team of volunteer translators to facilitate communication between AJET and the Japanese government by making AJET materials, reports, and publications available in Japanese.

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Links past and current JETs by strengthening the relationship and providing communication between AJET and the worldwide JET Alumni Association (JETAA).

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI RESOURCES

Manages the networking resources for both current JETs and alumni. Arranges opportunities and provides employment prospects to JETs in coordination with the Director of Alumni Relations.

DIRECTOR OF AFFILIATE AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Supports groups within the JET community such as Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and affiliate groups like the Peer Support Group and Tatami Timeshare.

DIRECTOR OF ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

Oversees the publication of AJET Connect magazine and other AJET publications online. Works with a team of editors and artists to produce the magazine every month.

HEAD OF VISUAL MEDIA

Ensures all AJET content is visually consistent in print and digital forms. Designs the image of AJET and its publications.

DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING

Secures discounts and giveaways for JETs through partner companies and organizations. Manages advertising in AJET's publications.

DIRECTOR OF JAPANESE ADVERTISING

Works in tandem with the Director of Advertising, but exclusively with Japanese partners and businesses.

DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Assists JETs in becoming more skilled and accomplished educators and professionals by gathering articles, materials, courses, and resources for the community.

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL RESOURCES

Maintains and updates AJET's database of resources while creating new ones for the website. Manages online stories and news posts.

DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEERING

Manages volunteering resources while making new opportunities available for JETs wishing to volunteer domestically or abroad.

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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Steven Thompson
Head Editor
4th-year Fukushima ALT



LETTER FROM THE AJET CHAIR

Sandy Cheng
National AJET Chair
4th-year Kobe ALT

CLICK ME TO SEND YOUR THOUGHTS ON ANY ARTICLE IN CONNECT!

BEFORE IT WAS KNOWN JUST AS '3-MONTH' IN JAPAN, March used to be called 'yayoi' (弥生), which meant 'increasing life'. It is the time in Japan where everything and everyone is coming back to life after the cold, dark winter and things are gearing up for the new beginnings in April. It's the time of graduations and staff changes and spring break. In other words, there's a lot of stuff happening now that it's safe to venture outside after 4 PM.

I read every word in Connect magazine. Seeing as I'm head editor, I guess that shouldn't come as a shock, but I really do learn about some great stuff. This month I discovered a new artist (the playfully odd Kero Kero Bonito), a new style of ramen (Okinawa uses pork belly? Sign me up!), and lots of interesting tidbits (there's an exhibition about secret witches touring Japan).

There are so many stories and so many interesting things happening all over this country, and our community is connected by our mutual ex-pat status. It's just so cool to read about things like this, and to be a part of them on those rare occasions I'm not editing in front of my computer. Next weekend, I'll be heading to a *sake* festival in Niigata followed by a charity musical (*The Frog Prince*) put on by their local AJET chapter with cast members from all over the world. Where else can I do that but Japan? Maybe see you there!

PS - APPLICATIONS FOR HEAD EDITOR ARE OPEN TIL MARCH 23RD. EMAIL ME IF YOU'RE KEEN OR CURIOUS.

HAVE YOU VOTED YET? AJET elections are now well underway! If you haven't already, make sure to check out ajet.net by **MARCH 9TH**, and vote for your next Block Representative and executive team! We hope you're all as excited as we are to see who the 2015-2016 AJET National Council leaders will be!

This upcoming AJET year, appointed positions underwent a huge overhaul! We've separated the previously-mandatory secondary positions from the Block Representative roles, and created brand-new set of appointed positions that anyone in the JET Programme community can apply for. Block Representatives will no longer have to divide their attention, and can fully focus on creating and nurturing block events, interprefectural bonding, and updating Block groups. In addition, we hope this move will increase the number of JETs that can be directly involved with National AJET, and ensure that those taking on the appointed positions are solely interested and dedicated to their role.

As a council, we are optimistic that the changes made will allow the next AJET National Council to bring the community closer together, and to serve JETs better than ever before. With more than 10 different roles, there's definitely a little something for everyone. Interested in getting involved? There's no time like the present! Send your application in to the National Council today! Visit the [elections page](#) for more information.

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COMMENTS

COVER SUBMISSIONS



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

Penny Fox
Saga



Josh Del Pino
Shimane



Scott Kawaguchi
Oita



Penny Fox
Saga



Penny Fox
Saga



Penny Fox
Saga



NEWS & EVENTS

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P.15 In the News



ERIKA KLEIN

connect.news@ajet.net

The days occasionally feel slightly warmer, and Japan's school year is coming to a close; it's almost like summer! Until next term starts in a few weeks, at least. Enjoy this season of change, and don't forget to look further afield; lots has been going on in Japan's current affairs recently as well. As the staffroom composition changes with the new year, maybe you can strike up a conversation with your new coworkers on contemporary events.



LACEY LEE

connect.events@ajet.net

It's March already everyone! I'm reminded every year at about this time that at the beginning of the year, time seems to pass incredibly quickly. Pretty soon the sakura will be blooming in the crisp cool air that accompanies the season. It's a bright light at the end of the tunnel of a long school year, and I can't wait to drive along our well-known local Sakura Road to celebrate. Let Spring truly begin!

P.16 Working Women



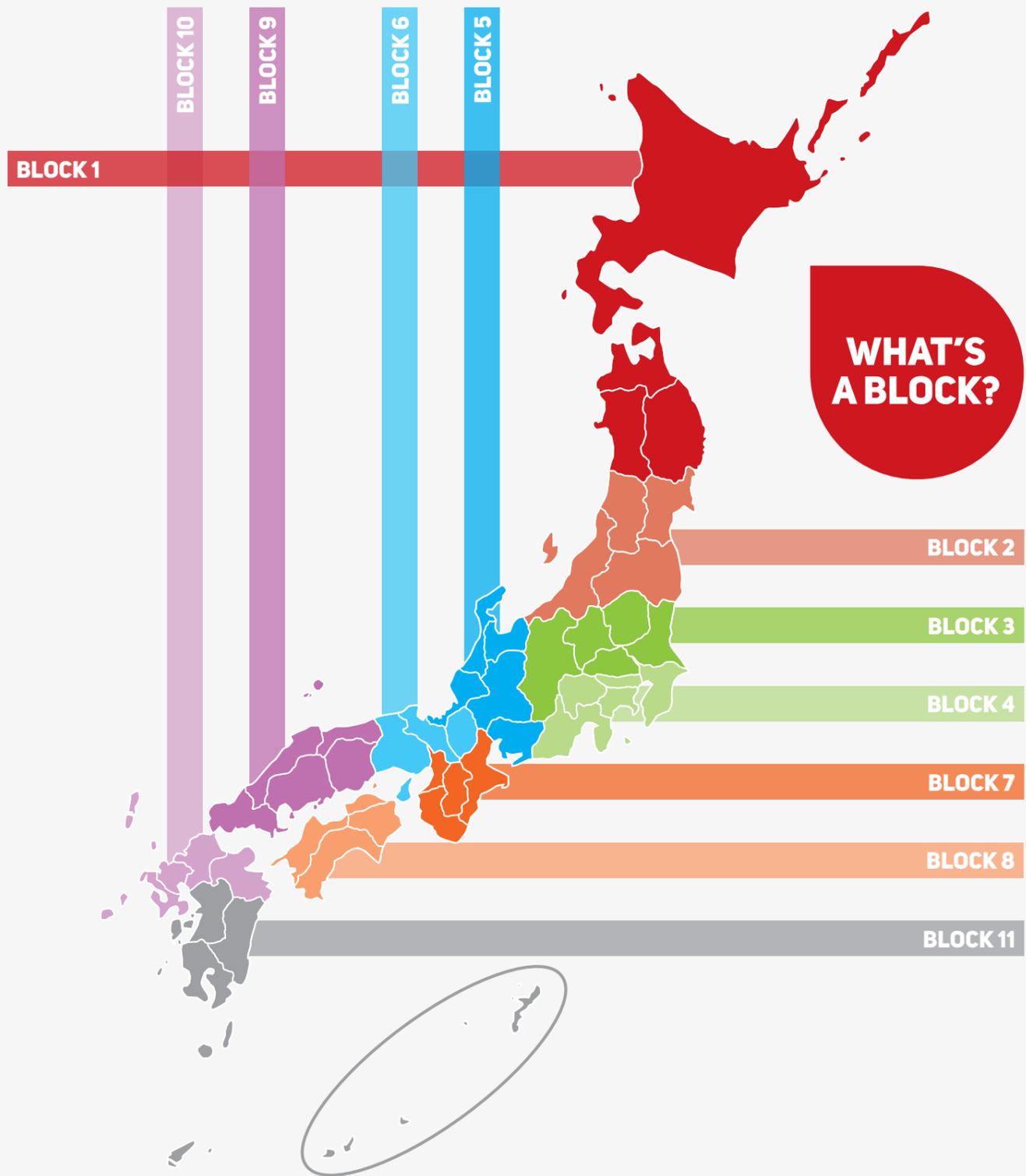


EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH - APRIL

The beginning of the year always seems to fly by, doesn't it? It's already March, so *hinamatsuri* will be in full-swing, and cherry blossom viewings will begin en masse. It's likely that no matter where you are, you'll be close to some great events this month and next, so set out to enjoy the best your area has to offer!

If you'd like to see your area's events included on this calendar, [contact us](#) or see the [AJET events calendar](#).



TSUGARU RAMEN WAY 10TH ANNIVERSARY "THE MEMORIAL FESTA"

Goshogawara, Aomori
9/6/14-3/29/15 - [Website](#)

FANTASY OF LIGHTS 2014-2015

Noboribetsu, Hokkaido
12/2/14-3/31/15 - [Website](#)

YUBARI INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL 2015

Yubari, Hokkaido
2/19-3/23 - [Website](#)

FIREWORKS COLLECTION 2015

Daisen, Akita
3/21 - [Website](#)

HOSHITSUJI SHRINE DARUMA FESTIVAL 2015

Akita, Akita
4/12-13 - [Website](#)

HISTORY OF NIIGATA, TOLD BY ARTEFACTS

Nagaoka, Niigata
12/20/14-3/22/15 - [Website](#)

MURAKAMI MACHIYA DOLL FESTIVAL

Murakami, Niigata
3/1-4/3 - [Website](#)

SUHARA SNOW CARNIVAL

Uonuma, Niigata
3/14-15 - [Website](#)

MURAMATSU PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Gosen, Niigata
4/1-30 - [Website](#)

NANOHANA SAKURA MARATHON & WALK

Niigata, Niigata
4/12 - [Website](#)
Entry deadline March 19.



119TH MITO PLUM FESTIVAL

Mito, Ibaraki
2/20-3/31 - [Website](#)

14TH ANNUAL VILLAGE OF CARP FESTIVAL 2015

Tatebayashi, Gunma
3/25-5/8 - [Website](#)

SPRING BREWERY-HOPPING KAMISUWA WAY 2015

Suwa, Nagano
3/28 - [Website](#)

OBATA SAKURA MATSURI, CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL & MUSHI GYORETSU 2015

Obata, Gunma
4/5 - [Website](#)

ZENKO-JI GOKAICHO 2015

Nagano, Nagano
4/5-5/31 - [Website](#)

**KOUZAKI SAKAGURA
MATSURI 2015**

Yokohama Naka-ku,
Kanagawa
3/15 - [Website](#)

UCHINA MUSIC FESTA 2015

Minato-ku, Tokyo
3/17 - [Website](#)

**RIKUGI-EN LIGHTING OF
WEEPING CHERRY TREE &
DAIMYO GARDEN 2015**

Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo
3/19-4/5 - [Website](#)

**4TH ST. PATRICK'S DAY
PARADE IN CHIBA 2015**

Chiba, Chiba
3/21 - [Website](#)

YAMANASHI WINE FESTA

Shibuya-ku, Tokyo
3/21-22 - [Website](#)



OYSTER GARDEN

Nagoya, Aichi
1/16-3/29 - [Website](#)

**SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF HINA
NINGYO DOLLS**

Ashiya, Hyogo
2/14-4/5 - [Website](#)

**BLACK JACK STORIES:
DOCTOR'S CHOICE
EXHIBITION**

Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto
2/28-5/10 - [Website](#)

HANA TORO

Higashiyama, Kyoto
3/10-21 - [Website](#)

**TOKYO OUTDOOR WEEKEND
2015**

Koto-ku, Tokyo
3/21-22 - [Website](#)

**42ND TOKYO MOTORCYCLE
SHOW 2015**

Koto-ku, Tokyo
3/27-29 - [Website](#)

**2015 OKTOBERFEST IN
AKIHABARA**

Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
3/27-4/5 - [Website](#)

**SEKIGAHARA EXHIBITION AT
EDO TOKYO MUSEUM**

Sumida-ku, Tokyo
3/28-5/17 - [Website](#)

SHINGEN-KO FESTIVAL 2015

Kofu, Yamanashi
4/3-5 - [Website](#)

ROYAL ACADEMY EXHIBITION

Nagoya, Aichi
2/3-4/5 - [Website](#)

**41ST NAGOYA CASTLE
CAMELLIA EXHIBITION**

Nagoya, Aichi
3/7-16 - [Website](#)

**TRAVEL FESTIVAL NAGOYA
2015**

Nagoya, Aichi
3/14-15 - [Website](#)

**9TH NIHONSHU FESTIVAL IN
FUSHIMI**

Fushimi-ku, Kyoto
3/21 - [Website](#)

**AWAJI FLOWER EXHIBITION
2015**

Awaji and Sumoto, Hyogo
3/21-5/31 - [Website](#)

KARA-1 GRAND PRIX 2015

Muko, Kyoto
3/28 - [Website](#)



**SAITAMA JAPANESE SAKE
PARTY**

Toshima-ku, Tokyo
4/11 - [Website](#)

**2015 JUNMAISHU FESTIVAL IN
TOKYO**

Shibuya, Tokyo
4/12 - [Website](#)

**2015 ODAIBA RAMEN PARK IN
FUKUI VOL. 5**

Fukui, Fukui
3/18-30 - [Website](#)

FUKUI SPRING FESTIVAL 2015

Fukui, Fukui
4/1-30 - [Website](#)

MINO FESTIVAL 2015

Mino, Gifu
4/11-12 - [Website](#)



**INAGAWA CHERRY BLOSSOMS
FESTIVAL 2015**

Inagawa-cho, Hyogo
4/4 - [Website](#)



SECRET WITCHES EXHIBITION

Minato-ku, Osaka
3/7-5/10 - [Website](#)

TOKUSHIMA MARATHON

Tokushima, Tokushima
3/22 - [Website](#)

OSHIRO MATSURI 2015

Matsuyama, Ehime
Mid-April - [Website](#)

**KOCHI CASTLE HANAKAIROU
2015**

Kochi, Kochi
4/3-5 - [Website](#)



**SWEETS WONDERLAND
-OSAMU WATANABE-
EXHIBITION**

Hofu, Yamaguchi
1/31-3/29 - [Website](#)

**OSAKA MOTORCYCLE SHOW
2015**

Suminoe-ku, Osaka
3/20-22 - [Website](#)

**FLEA MARKET KINGDOM 2015
SPRING**

Suminoe-ku, Osaka
3/21-22 - [Website](#)

**MONJU-OESHIKI AT ABE
MONJU-IN TEMPLE 2015**

Sakurai, Nara
3/25-26 - [Website](#)

HANA HARU FESTA 2015

Tokushima, Tokushima
4/18-19 - [Website](#)

**SHIMANTO SWEETS FESTA
2015**

Shimanto, Kochi
4/19 - [Website](#)

**HAGI CAMELLIA FESTIVAL
2015**

Hagi, Yamaguchi
2/14-3/29 - [Website](#)

**IZUMOTOJI SHINSHU
MATSURI 2015**

Izumo, Shimane
3/20 - [Website](#)

KIYOMORI FESTIVAL 2015

Hatsukaichi, Hiroshima
3/22 - [Website](#)

**NAKATSUI HINA MATSURI
2015**

Maniwa, Okayama
3/28-29 - [Website](#)

**20TH NABARI SAKURA
MATSURI 2015**

Nabari, Mie
3/27-4/18 - [Website](#)

11TH MAGOICHI FESTIVAL

Wakayama, Wakayama
3/29 - [Website](#)

**KANSAI COLLECTION 2015
SPRING & SUMMER**

Nishi-ku, Osaka
4/12 - [Website](#)



**MATSUE WARRIOR MATRIX
2015**

Matsue, Shimane
4/4 - [Website](#)

**HATSUKAICHI SAKURA
MATSURI 2015**

Hatsukaichi, Hiroshima
4/5 - [Website](#)

TOKA-SAI 2015

Hatsukaichi, Hiroshima
4/15 - [Website](#)



IN THE NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY



USUKI DOLL TOUR 2015

Usuki, Oita
2/5-3/22 - [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

TENRYO HITA HINA FESTIVAL 2015

Hita, Oita
2/15-3/31
[Website](#) / [More Info](#)

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL "OVO" FUKUOKA

Higashi-ku, Fukuoka
2/20-4/5 - [Website](#)

HINAMATSURI SAGA 2015

Saga, Saga
2/21-3/22 - [Website](#)



1ST KOBAYASHI SWEETS & FRUITS TOUR 2015

Kobayashi, Miyazaki
12/1/14-3/31/15 - [Website](#)

KITAKYUSHU RAMEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2015

Kitakyushu, Fukuoka
3/21-22 - [Website](#)

FUKUOKA CASTLE SAKURA FESTIVAL 2015

Chuo-ku, Fukuoka
3/26-4/5 - [Website](#)

KASHIMA SAKAGURA TOURISM

Kashima, Saga
3/28-29 - [Website](#)

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL OF SHIMABARA CASTLE 2015

Shimabara, Nagasaki
3/28-29 - [Website](#)

OKINAWA FLOWER CARNIVAL 2015

Kunigami-gun, Okinawa
1/17-5/6 - [Website](#)

KUMAMOTO KIKUCHI CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL 2015

Kikuchi, Kumamoto
2/6-3/29 - [Website](#)

KODOMONOKUNI FLOWER FESTA 2015

Miyazaki, Miyazaki
3/14-5/17 - [Website](#)

USUKI CASTLE RUINS CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL 2015

Usuki, Oita
3/28-4/5 - [Website](#)

SAKE HOPPING HAKATA 2015

Chuo-ku, Fukuoka
4/12 - [Website](#)

7TH OKINAWA INTERNATIONAL MOVIE FESTIVAL 2015

Ginowan, Okinawa
3/25-29 - [Website](#)

HONMYOJI TEMPLE HANA TORO 2015

Nishi-ku, Kumamoto
3/28 - [Website](#)

28TH MIYAKONOJO ARCHERY FESTIVAL, NATIONAL KYUDO CUP 2015

Miyakonojo, Miyazaki
3/28-29 - [Website](#)



**SUBMIT
YOUR LOCAL
EVENT HERE**

JANUARY 1

Unable to obtain the required 20 recommendations from other Democratic Party of Japan members, former minister Renho halts her attempt to enter the DPJ's January 18 presidential election. Her surrender left a typical all-male ballot in a party allegedly attempting to increase the number of female Diet members. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

JANUARY 29

PM Abe expresses "shock" at depiction of comfort women in a California, U.S. high school textbook and calls for revision. Though the publishing company subsequently upheld its presentation of the issue, the Japanese government's request reveals its continuing attempts to alter its wartime image internationally, and risks further alienating South Korea and China. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

FEBRUARY 1

The murders of Japanese hostages Haruna Yukawa, and, a week later, Kenji Goto by the Islamic State (ISIS) bring the Japanese hostage crisis to an end, after the Japanese government's outspoken refusal to submit to the terrorists' demands. However, the executioner's words in the video of Goto's death—"let the nightmare for Japan begin"—and pacifist Japan's sense of a loss of neutrality, as well as new fears of terrorist attacks, have shaken the nation. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

FEBRUARY 9

McDonald's sales drop 12.6% in Asia in January, presumably due to "customer perception issues" caused by plastic pieces and a human tooth found in McDonald's food in Japan in the preceding months. ([Source](#))

FEBRUARY 10

Cabinet approves guidelines to allow Japan to fund foreign military forces for the first time. Though the aid should be limited to "nonmilitary purposes," critics claim that the Japanese government may not be able to prevent the assistance being used by militaries, thereby playing a role in widening Japan's international military reach. ([Source](#))

FEBRUARY 16

Abe confirms his intent to revise Japan's pacifist Constitution, particularly after the recent ISIS hostage crisis highlighted possible new threats to Japan's security. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

Photo - Josh Del Pino



JAPANESE WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

LAURE RUY (KOBE)

IN JAPAN, IT'S STILL RARE TO see young, married women working full-time jobs, much less working mothers. Married, career-minded women are often stigmatized, since marriage tends to halt any chance at career advancement in Japan, often due to old-fashioned thinking by lawmakers as well as outdated legislation.

circumstances" (1).

On the other hand, in June 2014 an Osaka city assembly member was accused of being a thief and of betraying the public when she had a child, as there was no maternity leave available (2). In fact, according to a June 2014 survey by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation

That being said, of all the women who exit the workforce, only 32% leave because of child care obligations. A survey from the Centre for Talent Innovation found that of college-educated Japanese women who voluntarily left their jobs, 63% quit because they found their careers unsatisfying while 49% left because they felt "stymied and stalled" (5).

With Japan's recent economic recession and decreased purchasing power, now more than ever, a second income is incredibly beneficial for families. Moreover, as a result of Japan's ageing workforce and declining population, working women are becoming increasingly valuable. This is especially the case considering Japanese women are some of the most educated in the world (6). Retaining sexist policies and attitudes that make it difficult for women to remain in the workforce is detrimental, not only to individuals but for Japan's economic well-being.

However, all is not lost! The Japanese government, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has a raft of policies known as 'Womenomics' designed to utilise the potential that is currently being wasted. These policies, which include

opening more childcare facilities and changing laws to promote the immigration of domestic workers, could help free women (both Japanese and foreigners living in Japan) from household duties as a way of encouraging them to remain in the workforce. Tax changes and training subsidies should also help entice young mothers back to work. Though recent scandals have led to the resignation of two women in Abe's cabinet, his initial appointment of five women (matching the record number) aimed to empower women, fitting with new regulations to encourage at least one female board member at every Japanese company.

Most importantly of all, Japan, a nation often considered behind the times in terms of female empowerment, is engaging in more open discussion regarding women's role in society. By spreading awareness and working together, people, companies, and the government are striving towards solutions that are beneficial not only for all women but for the economy and society as a whole. This is very important, as, in fact, some consider Japan to have some of the most progressive laws combating sexual discrimination in Asia (7). This means that if Japan were to successfully eliminate its widespread cultural stigmatization, it would become an excellent model for battling gender inequality around the world.

SOURCES

1. [Tokyo assemblyman leading gender equality panel apologizes for sexist remark](#)
2. [With no maternity leave, Osaka assemblywoman harassed for giving birth](#)
3. [Foreign women also face 'maternity harassment'](#)
4. [Holding back half the nation](#)
5. [What's Holding Japanese Women Back](#)
6. [Japan's Women to the Rescue](#)
7. [Human Rights Brief Volume 11, Issue 2, beginning at page 5 is: 11 No. 2 Hum. Rts. Brief 5 \(2004\).](#)

Laure Ruy is a second-year Australian JET who loves statistics but hates math, so she studied criminology. She wonders what makes people tick, so she also studied psychology. She loves Japan, traveling, eating and sports.

BY SPREADING AWARENESS AND WORKING TOGETHER, PEOPLE, COMPANIES, AND THE GOVERNMENT ARE STRIVING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS THAT ARE BENEFICIAL NOT ONLY FOR ALL WOMEN BUT FOR THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

A relatively recent high-profile example of Japan's institutional discrimination occurred in June 2014, when male members of the Liberal Democratic Party (headed by Prime Minister Abe) yelled sexist remarks at city assembly member Ayaka Shiomura during her speech about child care. A member who shouted "Why don't you get married soon?" eventually publicly apologized and left the LDP. However, the sexist attitude prevailed when another member, while addressing reporters about the incident months later, admitted that he "would also make that suggestion [of marriage] in private

(Rengo), one in four working women who were pregnant or had a child reported that they were victims of "maternity harassment," or *mata-hara* (3). Notably, such a widespread attitude has the potential to negatively affect not only Japanese women, but foreign women working in Japan as well.

These two examples highlight the prevalent attitude throughout Japanese society: If a woman gets married, she will become a housewife and have children, and so companies should start preparing for her departure from the outset. In fact, 70% of women do leave the workforce after having a child (4).

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GcbhvT

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THIS MONTH IN... ARTS & CULTURE



VERITY TOWNSEND

connect.culture@ajet.net

It's March and it's time to start getting excited about spring! Sadly it's also nearly graduation and may be the last time that some of us get to see our older students. I know I will especially miss this year's JHS 3rd grade as they were only 1st grade when I started my JET placement. At the same time, I'm looking forward to wishing them good luck for the future.



COLIN O'NEILL

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As my buddy says, "the St. Patrick's Day festival is always the weirdest thing we do every year." While it may seem strange that a traditional Irish holiday is celebrated in the middle of nowhere Japan, Ireland's connection to Shimane Prefecture is really quite strong. Read up on how impactful Lafcadio Hearn was in documenting Japan's Meiji Era to the outside world. While the Japanese community seems to have vastly misunderstood this holiday, they get 10 points for effort. *Sláinte!*



ERICA GRAINGER

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Ooh la la! March is here and I'm off to spend a full week in Tokyo to cover Mercedes-Benz Tokyo Fashion Week (Autumn/Winter collection) with Verity Townsend. We'll be reporting back on all the latest fads and trends hitting Japan's shores. During March, my adorable mother is also visiting Japan on business and we're catching up! Oh mamma mia! J.D. Salinger was right, "All mothers are insane", and who knows what we'll get up to! (Probably lots of harmless shopping and fine wine).

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Fashion in Film



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Kero Kero Bonito



JAPANESE FASHION IN FILM

THE 1940S & '50S: CHANGING TRADITIONS

SABRINA ZIRAKZADEH (OKAYAMA)

THE EFFECTS OF WORLD

War II and its aftermath permeated Japanese pop culture in the 1940s-1950s. By the 1940s, resources were heavily diverted to the war, and most films were wartime propaganda. The most famous and successful film of the time, *Hawai Mari Oki Kaisen*(1942,) was about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Special effects by newcomer Eiji Tsuburaya

were used to demonstrate the power of the Japanese military and justify its actions. Other movies, mostly historical films, followed suit. Even modern stories like *Sanshiro Sugata*(1943), Akira Kurosawa's debut, seemed patriotic. The film's story, about a young man's mastery of martial arts, glorified Japanese traditional practices and the idea of dying for what one perceives

is right.

RETURN TO TRADITIONAL JAPANESE STYLE

In addition, fashion shifted its focus to traditional Japan, with *kimono* and *jimbei* as day wear became fashionable again. Curls and simple hairdos were replaced by

straight hair, pinned back in traditional Japanese styles. Very few films or magazines promoted new or Western-inspired fashions; instead, they glamorized traditional Japan. Designers favored elements like flowing, open sleeves and traditional seasonal colors. For men, however, it was rare to be seen out of uniform, as even those unable to enlist in the military were encouraged to work towards the war effort in some way.

GOLDEN AGE OF JAPANESE CINEMA

The postwar U.S. occupation of Japan brought resources that led to the Golden Age of Japanese cinema. Themes shifted from nationalism to the aftermath of war, betrayal, and Japan's identity crisis.



Futaka Katsuji, 1942

Films set in modern times replaced period dramas, but Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and *Seven Samurai* (1954) used history to address the public's mistrust of both their leaders and themselves. Another period drama, *Ugetsu* (1953), uses the story of a man dreaming of glory, who loses his family to address the losses of war. *Godzilla* (1954) used Tsuburaya's special effects, but this time to show the dangers of nuclear war, and suggest how Japan could reclaim its identity. Then, there was Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953), about an aging couple, whose modern children are too selfish to care for them, except for their youngest daughter, who grapples with her love for both her parents and her siblings. This is a poignant metaphor for a country that was suffering the loss of its

MISS LAST ISSUE'S JAPANESE FASHION IN FILM: 1920S & 30S? CHECK IT OUT ON [ISSUU](#) OR [AJET.NET!](#)



Patriotic Flowers, 1940-1944



Kita No Sannin, 1945



Daywear in Ginza, 1941

VERY FEW FILMS OR MAGAZINES PROMOTED NEW OR WESTERN-INSPIRED FASHIONS; INSTEAD, THEY GLAMORIZED TRADITIONAL JAPAN. DESIGNERS FAVORED ELEMENTS LIKE FLOWING, OPEN SLEEVES AND TRADITIONAL SEASONAL COLORS.

traditional identity, while also wanting to distance itself from the past. The film is widely considered a masterpiece.

INFLUENCE ON FASHION FROM U.S. OCCUPATION

Postwar fashion was heavily influenced by the U.S. occupation of Japan, with female celebrities and models focusing on full or A-line skirts and blouses, instead of kimonos. Men favored three-piece suits and ties over military wear. As the



On the Set of *Ugetsu*, 1953



ABOVE:
TOKYO STORY, 1953

1950's progressed, Japanese elements began to appear. For example, women's trousers failed to become fashionable, and male styles were beginning to resemble Japan's pre-war fashions, in cut and pattern choices, and hairstyle. The popular feather cut, a framed bob with short-cut bangs, allowed for both curls and modern styles, as well as easily being pinned back to mimic traditional

Japanese styling. This sense of bringing Japanese elements into Western fashions is a trend that Japan is known for today. The rapid changes brought about by the war and postwar occupation of the 1940s-1950s reverberate not just in fashion and film, but throughout all Japanese culture to this very day.

THE POPULAR FEATHER CUT, A FRAMED BOB WITH SHORT-CUT BANGS, ALLOWED FOR BOTH CURLS AND MODERN STYLES, AS WELL AS EASILY BEING PINNED BACK TO MIMIC TRADITIONAL JAPANESE STYLING. THIS SENSE OF BRINGING JAPANESE ELEMENTS INTO WESTERN FASHIONS IS A TREND THAT JAPAN IS KNOWN FOR TODAY



Tokyo Daywear, 1958

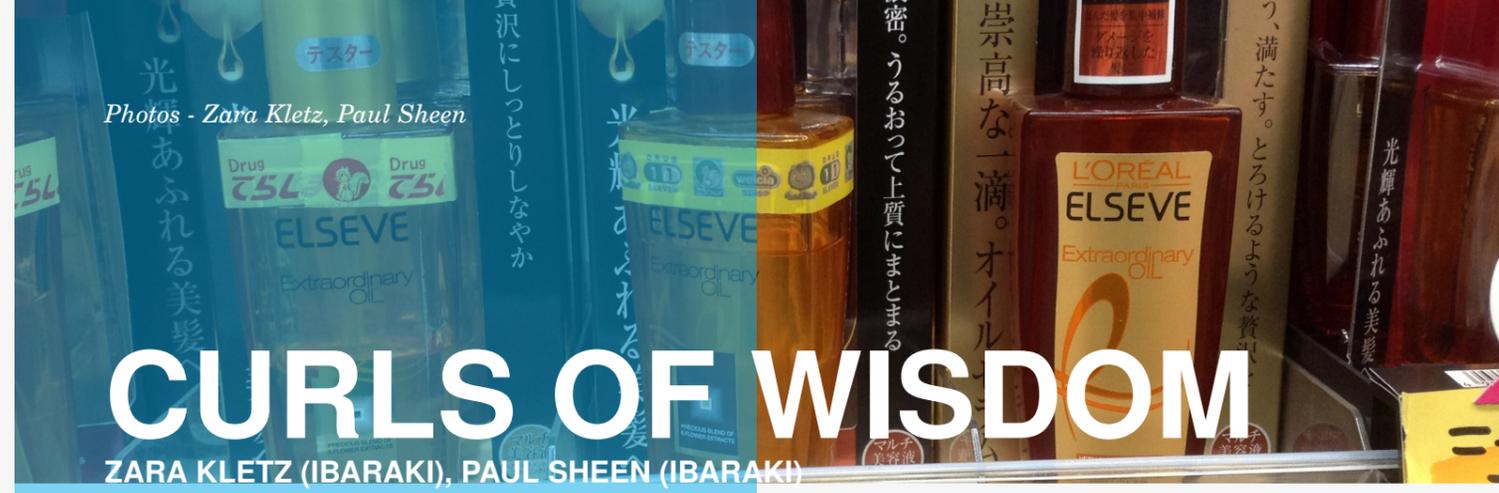


Takamine Hideko Circa 1950

THE POSTWAR U.S. OCCUPATION OF JAPAN BROUGHT RESOURCES THAT LED TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF JAPANESE CINEMA. THEMES SHIFTED FROM NATIONALISM TO THE AFTERMATH OF WAR, BETRAYAL, AND JAPAN'S IDENTITY CRISIS.

Sabrina Zirakzadeh is a third-year ALT living in Okayama prefecture. She loves history, movies, and shopping, and spends way too much time geeking out over classic movies. Check her out at Jupiter-Star.com or follow @jupiter star on Twitter for more!

COMMENTS



CURLS OF WISDOM

ZARA KLETZ (IBARAKI), PAUL SHEEN (IBARAKI)

Zara:

I have spent many years figuring out how to tame my Jew-fro. Making the transition from frizzy to curly has been a long learning process that involved many kinks along the way. After endless trials, watching YouTube tutorials, speaking to fellow curly-haired friends and consulting an actual curly-hair specialist hairdresser, I can finally say I've got these locks down.

Paul:

Since coming to Japan, my hair has gotten progressively longer and curlier. Fortunately I found a great hair stylist based in Shibuya, who has enlightened me on the secrets of caring for

curly hair. If, like Jon Snow, you know nothing, (about men's curly hair care) then hopefully these few tips and tricks will have you looking like one of the Night's Watch's finest crows.

STEP 1: SHAMPOO

Zara:

Shampoo is a controversial product within the curly hair community. There's a contemporary movement, called the, 'No-poo' approach whereby people are replacing shampoo with natural homemade remedies or stop using shampoo completely. I tried this hardcore method in 2012 for a few weeks, but I became a grease ball! So, I don't personally recommend it.



Meet my bad hair days...!

Shampoo can dry out curly hair, so the trick is to wash the base of your scalp with minimal shampoo usage. Ideally, a quick scalp massage followed by a quick rinse out. Imagine your shampoo is a ninja, in and out as quickly as possible with minimal disturbance. I also shampoo with my head flipped down, so the main bulk of hair is gone.

Paul's Tip:

Don't wash it daily!

Zara:

Firstly, do not wash your hair too regularly. Once a week is recommended for curly hair. However, working at a high school, exercising and going to smoky izakaya means I wash my hair three times a week.

My hair became dry, frizzy and unmanageable, now I wash my hair twice a week.

This prevents washing away natural oils that our hair produces. People with



A Typical Curly Day

naturally dryer hair types can wash less frequently. Experiment and see what works best for you.

STEP 2: CONDITIONER

Zara:

Conditioner is curly hairs' best friend. Moisturizing is a crucial step for sleekness and control. Work conditioner through your hair at a leisurely pace. Aim to leave conditioner on for a few minutes before brushing through it with a wide-tooth comb and then rinsing it out. Every 2-3 weeks, I also recommend a deep-conditioning treatment, a conditioning mask, or a leave-in conditioner.

Paul's Tip:

A bit of conditioner left in helps prevent frizz!

completely dry your hair off! Leave it nicely damp for Step 4.

Paul's Tip:

Don't vigorously rub your hair with the towel as you will just cause the hair to frizz. A hair dryer with a diffuser attachment is ideal.



Tame curls with this!

and some Moroccan oil. The longer and bigger your hair, the more product you'll need. Mix this combination of products through your hair slowly and thoroughly using your fingertips, avoiding the roots. I recommend Argan Rich Oil.

PAUL RECOMMENDS:

Roberto Perozzi
Hairstylist
Shibuya, Tokyo
perozzirob@gmail.com

STEP 3: DRYING (PARTIALLY)

Zara: Do not towel dry your hair! Use a cotton T-shirt. Towels rob your hair of all the sweet sweet moisture your curls so desperately need. T-shirts will absorb excess water, but not moisture. Don't

STEP 4: PRODUCTS, PRODUCTS AND MORE PRODUCTS!

Zara:

I have often gotten into arguments with my curly-haired family, over which products are the best, but I've come to the conclusion there's no one-size that fits all. Everyone has different products they like, depending on how curly their hair is, the price, prior experience, and the design and smell of the product.

Start by squeezing a small amount of product into your palm, and rub your palms together. I like to mix up a conditioning treatment with a curl defining cream

Paul's Tip:

Don't use anything alcohol based, it'll dry your hair out.

I recommend using a coconut oil based cream.

STEP 5: DRYING (COMPLETELY)

Zara:

Drying natural is best. A technique that I learnt and love from a specialist hairdresser, is to pin curl clips in your hair at the root. Clip these bad boys near your scalp, ideally so the hair at the top of your head has volume. This prevents your hair being weighed down and drying flat.



Scrunching with Moroccan Oil



If you have a diffuser, drying's easy. If not, then try to dry your hair carefully, using one hand to gently scrunch your curls, while your other hand holds a dryer against it.

Paul's Tip:

My scrunching technique is to grab a small section of your hair and crumple it up towards your scalp.

STEP 6: HAIRSPRAY

Zara:

Time for hairspray! When you wake up the next day with bed hair, just spray your hair with water, add a little more product and go on your way.



ZARA'S JAPANESE PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 'Diane' products, which has a Moroccan oil range (¥700-1,000)
- 'L'Oreal' range, especially its 'Balm-hair Mask' (¥2,200) and 'Extraordinary Oil' (¥2,200)

Zara is a 2nd-year JET from the UK. She likes late nights out in Tokyo, playing her ukulele on the beach in Hitachinaka and spending as much time as humanly possible soaking in onsens. Contact her at: zarakletz@yahoo.co.uk

Paul is a 3rd year ALT based in Ibaraki Prefecture. His hobbies include gaming, TV dramas and protecting the realm from the darkness beyond the wall. Email him at pjskafka@gmail.com



Repurposing a Wet T-shirt

SINGING, DANCING, & CROSS-DRESSING: JAPAN'S KABUKI THEATRE

LAURA DUVALL (GIFU)

Okuni Entertains the Crowd
Photo - Scholten Japanese Art

PERHAPS THE MOST WIDELY known style of traditional Japanese performance is *kabuki*. Kabuki, which translates to “the art of song and dance”, has everything—elaborate makeup, over-the-top movements, and even cross-dressing! Let’s take a closer look at this iconic art form.

A defining feature of kabuki is the *onnagata*, or female

character, who is played by a male actor. However, at the inception of kabuki, it was quite the opposite. Kabuki is believed to have been started by a female priestess named Okuni who famously parodied Buddhist prayers. She began touring Japan with an all-female company in the early 17th century. Soon her performances were outlawed by the Tokugawa government for being too

still uses classical Japanese from early scripts. Many native Japanese speakers cannot even understand it! However this language barrier will not prevent you from understanding the story. Key kabuki characters are designated with specific makeup designs. The use of red, black, white and the arrangement of stripes on the face, indicates to the audience who might be the protagonist and who might cause trouble later in the story. Apart from the makeup, the actors themselves also make their character’s intentions apparent through their highly stylized, dance-like movements. Male characters are known to strike dramatic poses known as *mie*, while females adopt a more fluid style.

Okuni’s tradition of parody also lives on in kabuki. The subject matter of a kabuki show usually falls into one of two categories: *jidaimono* (historical plays) and *sewamono* (domestic plays). Both of these categories mock their subjects and make an over dramatic display of events. However, some of these dramatizations leave out important background information, so it’s important to do your homework before



Renzaburo Posing, 1959

racy. This is when the men took over and created the *onnagata* that is still a staple of kabuki theatre today.

So, what should you expect when you see a kabuki play? The most important thing is the language. Kabuki



Doing the Sagimusume Dance
Photo - Fujisaki Tomoya

BEFORE YOU GO!

We hope you enjoyed reading Connect magazine’s trilogy of articles on traditional Japanese theatre. Just in case you missed them, you can check out Kyle Cardine’s fascinating piece on the puppetry of Bunraku [here](#) and also Laurel Williams’s in-depth articles on traditional and modern Noh theatre [here](#).

seeing a kabuki performance.

The environment of a kabuki show is also vastly different from that of Western theatre. The most noticeable difference is part of the stage itself. In kabuki, a long, narrow pathway known as the *hanamichi* (flower road) extends from the stage all the way to the back of the audience. Characters are known to make dramatic entrances and exits on this part of the stage. When actors enter this area, it is very common for audience members to shout their names. It’s quite a shock for a foreigner who is used to a silent audience during performances!

Apart from the actors’ voices and the audience’s shouts, a



Torii Kiyotada VII Flyer, 1896

small ensemble of musicians known as the *hayashi* also contributes to the audio. This ensemble typically consists of an equal number of *shamisen* players and vocalists. Sometimes it may also comprise percussionists and flutists, depending on the performance.

Kabuki is an experience that is uniquely Japanese. If you are near one of the famous theatres in Japan, be sure to check it out! If you are not close to an established theatre, don’t fret—many of the most famous kabuki companies take their shows on the road. Don’t miss it!

Laura Duvall is a first-year ALT and considers herself to be Queen Under the Mountain in the town of Nakatsugawa in Gifu Prefecture. When she is not too busy fighting off angry elves, greedy dwarves, or fearsome dragons to keep her title, she can be found singing her heart out with local rock bands or making her way through the vibrant Nagoya theatre scene. You can see her on stage this summer in KAN劇 Theatre Company’s production of “Nagasaki Dust.” For more info, check out the Kangeki Theatre [website](#).

WHERE TO SEE KABUKI:

- [Kabukiza Theatre, Tokyo](#)
- [The National Theatre, Tokyo](#)
- [Minamiza Theatre, Kyoto](#)
- [Shochikuza Theatre, Osaka](#)



The Famous Kabukiza Theatre

Photos - Kero Kero Bonito



KERO KERO BONITO

THE BILINGUAL BEATS YOU NEED TO HEAR

LARISSA MILO-DALE (MIYAZAKI)

GUS, JAMIE, AND SARAH, THE trio that make up Kero Kero Bonito, are a group of young people in London whose music has been taking off at laser speeds. They recorded their first album independently in

Their music is *fresh*—it's really the only word that comes to mind. Light and poppy, nostalgic but new, and above all, unique. Fittingly, no one has seemed able to nail just how to describe it, with tags

it up into a genre label that commands listening to: *bilingual schoolyard dancehall*.

So what is it that sets KKB apart from other artists playing with dancehall samples, Casio beats, and video game melodies? What is the connection between these three Londoners and Japan that distinguishes them from other entertainment seeking merely to exploit the distinct oddities of Japanese pop iconography?

Consider that by the 80s and 90s, Japan had created, unwittingly or not, a united culture. No matter where we come from, life 15 to 20 years ago featured no shortage of Japanese influence: videogames and anime, sure, but don't forget the family car and home gadgets. Across class and cultural divides, friendships started at the mention of Nintendo or PlayStation. They came from Japan, but it resonated with, and was adopted by, everyone. Kero Kero Bonito achieves something similar: the music is made in the U.K., but it works for anyone who connects with Japan's international culture, past or present.

Gus and Jamie, friends and independent musical collaborators for years, have always celebrated this nostalgia in their music. They weren't alone either, with movements like chiptune and labels like PC Music making waves. The boys became inspired to do a project where they would produce a vocalist. They posted an ad to a Japanese expat board for people in the London area, looking for a rapper. While enthusiastic responses from Japanese salary men wanting to relive their glory days as 80s rock frontmen were tempting, it was Sarah who caught their eyes and ears. A mixed British and Japanese girl, Sarah's vibrant attitude, artistic presence, and lyrics that challenged global issues and social expectations for women, sealed the deal for what was to become Kero Kero Bonito.

"Sarah is always willing to experiment with music", Gus says about the mad-styling KKB front lady. While listening to music together and searching for their sound, Gus was impressed that, from the beginning, "she tried everything we threw at

her". This included a range of Japanese rap, hip hop, and pop, including East End x Yuri. Sarah digested this auditory homework and took a shot at writing—nailing it on the first try.

"I was really excited," she says about creating the first lyrics

something where I could use them together. When I was writing the first rap, I don't know, I was really excited and it...just happened. It felt really right." Growing up, Sarah's dad spoke a limited amount of Japanese and her mum, a limited amount of English, so a new idiom was



LISTEN HERE

KKB RECOMMENDS

"I WROTE 'I'D RATHER SLEEP' AT AN IN-BETWEEN: FINISHING UNI AND STARTING AN 'ADULT' LIFE. I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE THAT FUN, 'MIND IS FREE' LIBERTY - SARAH"

the summer of 2013 and re-released it through Double Denim Records last August. It brought nods of approval from producers like Blackbird Blackbird, features by The Guardian, DIY Mag, and Pitchfork, plus special edition album art commissioned by Tower Records. It's clear that the beats are resounding across the globe and that the message, in all its bilingual glory, is coming through.

ranging from "contemporary J-pop" to "turn-based RPG soundtracks". Kero Kero Bonito, though, have wrapped



LISTEN HERE

KKB RECOMMENDS

"'HOMEWORK' IS THE VERY FIRST SONG WE MADE AND I LIKE THE CONCEPT: BEAT THE SYSTEM RATHER THAN BE FLATTENED BY IT - JAMIE"

created in her home. "It's love!" declares Gus. "To me, it's one language. But I have no idea how they do their tax returns..."

for KKB. "I spent half of my life in Japan and because I have this ability to speak both languages, I wanted to do

Gus elaborates on some bigger issues that KKB explores in their music. "In places like London, being mixed-race is so commonplace and doesn't get much of a second thought anymore. But, in Japan, it's almost like people question whether a person can really be two things." Sarah had the experience of asking herself that very question while attending junior high school in Hokkaido. "Sometimes it felt like being in a zoo, with schoolmates coming to my classroom just to look at me and run away." Moving to the U.K. provided an environment to fully embrace

DEBUT ALBUM, INTRO BONITO

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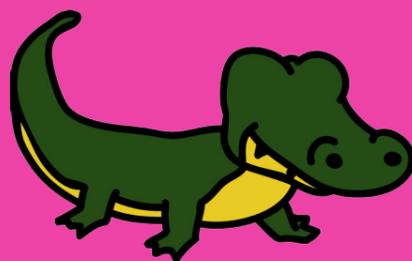
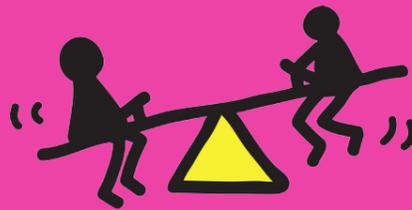
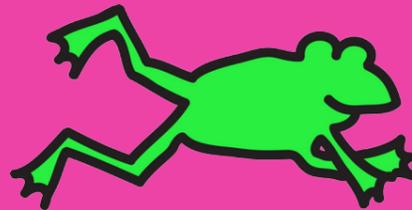
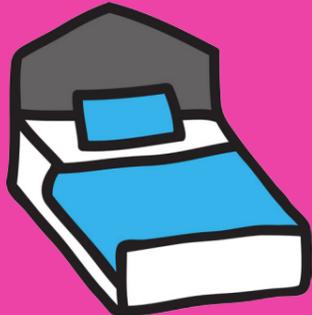


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CLICK US TO HEAR KERO KERO BONITO'S MUSIC ON SOUNDCLOUD!



both cultures and the inner-conflict subsided. "I don't think of it negatively on the whole, though. *Because* I had that experience, I'm used to not worrying about what other people think when I do things." While this makes her the perfect front woman, it's Sarah's moral outlook that makes her a leader: "The more intercultural mixing, understanding, and diversity, the better!"

up on 70s punk rock, thanks to her British father. It's safe to say that she was the only kid at her *chuugakkou* in Otaru who knew T-Rex. With an eye into the new world of Japanese pop as "an antidote" to its British counterpart, the Kero Kero Bonito creature has come alive!

The name itself reflects the band's heart and soul of international

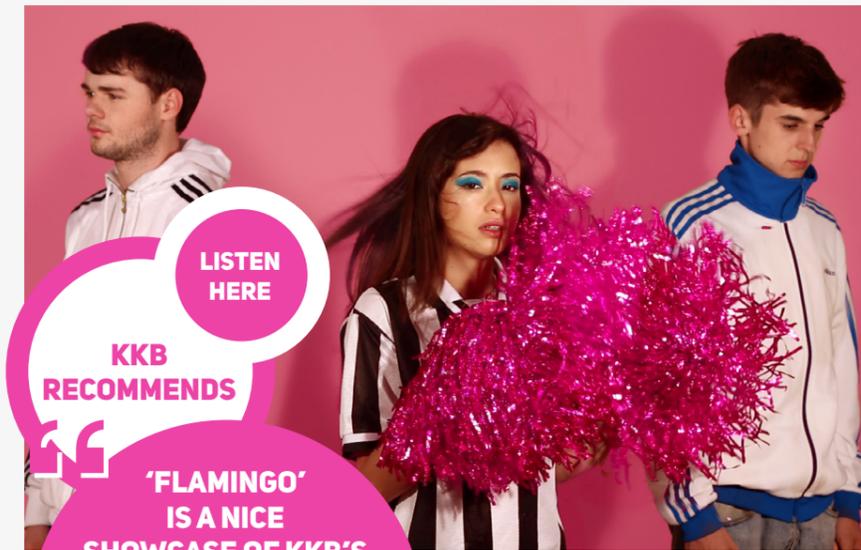
banger hits. They're currently polishing off their new album and are hoping to release it before their March tour in the U.S. The band has received invitations to come to Japan and is looking to play in as many places as they can when they come.

While things are definitely taking off, and quick, KKB is full of gratitude. They gave big shoutouts to PC Music, Hannah Diamond, Jamie Milton at DIY Mag, whose exposure helped them find a home at Double Denim, and to Patrick St Michel, a music journalist in Japan who is one of the big forces in disseminating Japanese music worldwide.

They also showed love to the JET Programme: Sarah remembers the ALTs from her junior high school way back when and encourages current JETs to keep inspiring kids with English. Then, at the very least, students can learn the other half of KKB's lyrics!

You can buy Kero Kero Bonito's debut, *Intro Bonito*, anywhere digitally; except for Japan, where it is **both** digital *and* on CD. Keep an eye out for Tower Records' specially commissioned edition of the cover, where KKB's iconic pink-black-and-white has been swapped out for yellow-red-and-white to match the Tower colours.

Larissa is a 2nd year ALT in Miyazaki, which is Japan's taste of the Caribbean: the capital of surf, reggae, and mangoes. You can check out her tweets about sustainability, music, and the good life in Kyushu on her Twitter @larashka.



LISTEN
HERE

KKB
RECOMMENDS

'FLAMINGO'
IS A NICE
SHOWCASE OF KKB'S
BILINGUALISM AND
THE MESSAGE IS KEY.
IT'S ALSO THE BIGGEST
SIGNPOST AS TO WHAT
WE'RE DOING
NEXT - GUS



In that very spirit, each member brings something distinct to the KKB mix. While Jamie beat boxes, Gus explains his love for videogames and describes his father's massive collection of dancehall records, believed to be the largest selection of Jamaican music in south London. Jamie's musical bedrock is U.K. garage and funky house, the anthems of anti-culture kids in 90s London. Sarah was brought

communication. For those more familiar with the big, wide world of Japanese onomatopoeia, 'kero kero' is the sound of a frog's 'ribbit'. The expression had a certain ring and stuck with Gus when he first discovered it. Together with an article he'd read on bonito, the English term for the *katsuobushi* fish, it provided the cute image of a ribbiting fish, but also brought the two languages together.

Crossovers aren't limited to KKB's name: their second release was a remix album and they've done collaborations with artists like Spazzkid and Anamanaguchi to create

THIS MONTH IN... LIFESTYLE



NICK POWERS-MAHER

connect.food@ajet.net

It's Ireland month. Being semi-Irish, and fond of spring in its forgiving warmth, I love March. I bought individual muffin cups so I can finally make muffins again without a pan, and I taught myself to make burgers from scratch. As a result, I continue to gain weight (where on earth is my metabo?) This month, I will be drowning myself in yakitori when my favorite students graduate, and then again in beer when we say hello to the new staff. *Slainte* and *go n-eiri an bothar leat!*



TOM LEGGE

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This month is St. Patrick's Day and what a time to be in Ireland! Alas, I'm not there, but my girlfriend is and I'm looking forward to being bombarded with pictures of people drinking Guinness and having a good time. I spent some of this month in Tokyo, enjoying the sights and sounds of its various bars and eateries. In fact, my friend and I enjoyed it so much that I'll be spending the rest of this month indoors with the heating off drastically searching for stray coins down the back of my sofa.



SIMON GRIFFIN

connect.travel@ajet.net

For those of us who made it, Old Man Winter is just starting to retreat to his cave, and we're just about to enter one of the most beautiful times in Japan. This month we have plum blossoms to look forward to and cherry blossoms for most people just start budding onto the horizon. Most of the country is still fairly cold but it's time to get out from under that kotatsu and enjoy the season!

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Brioche Buns



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Etiquette



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Okinawa Soba



EXPLORING AMANOHASHIDATE

KYOTO'S BRIDGE TO HEAVEN

SIMON GRIFFIN (KYOTO)

Matsushima!
Photos - Lauren Jeffers, Simon Griffin

THE NAME MAY NOT EXACTLY roll off your tongue, but make no mistake, the Amanohashidate (often translated as 'The Bridge to Heaven'), located in northern Kyoto Prefecture is one of Japan's true treasures. The Amanohashidate is a 3.3km long natural sand bar, which stretches across northern Kyoto's Miyazu bay. The sandbar is covered in over 7,000 pine trees, flanked with sandy beaches and dotted with shrines and temples. It is one of the largest tourist attractions in Northern Kyoto and is known throughout the country as one of Japan's Three Most Beautiful Views.

CONGRATULATIONS, IT'S AN ARCHIPELAGO!

Gradual deposition of sediment due to coastal tides may not be the most exciting origin story for such

a beautiful area, so it's no surprise that a few other ideas exist of how the bridge may have come to be. As the kanji suggest—天 (sky), 橋 (bridge), and 立 (rise)—Amanohashidate was once the bridge that connected earth to heaven, and from which the two creators of Japan, Izanagi-no-Mikoto and Izanagi-no-Okami descended. Subsequently, the pair attempted mating, but due to the female speaking first during the ritual (tut tut) the children/islands she bore were deformed. One of these children is Ebisu, the laughing guy with the fishing rod, hat and huge ears, you no doubt seen around Japan. After a second (and, this time, successful) mating ritual, the lady birthed the great eight islands of Japan.

While the two lived happily on

the earth, it is said the ladder to heaven fell and landed in the water where the gods had settled, forever stranding them here. This fallen ladder became the Amanohashidate. Of course, as with any legend, various versions exist. One states that a battle in heaven caused the ladder to fall, while another says that a particular amorous coital embrace between the gods may have been to blame.

PUT YOUR HEAD BETWEEN YOUR LEGS...

Nowadays, gods may be scarce, but the area is still a huge tourist attraction. In the summer the bar has sandy beaches and warm water, perfect for swimming. In the autumn, the area houses a large kimono parade. Heavy snowfall is experienced a few times throughout winter and makes for beautiful scenery.



Correct Viewing Etiquette

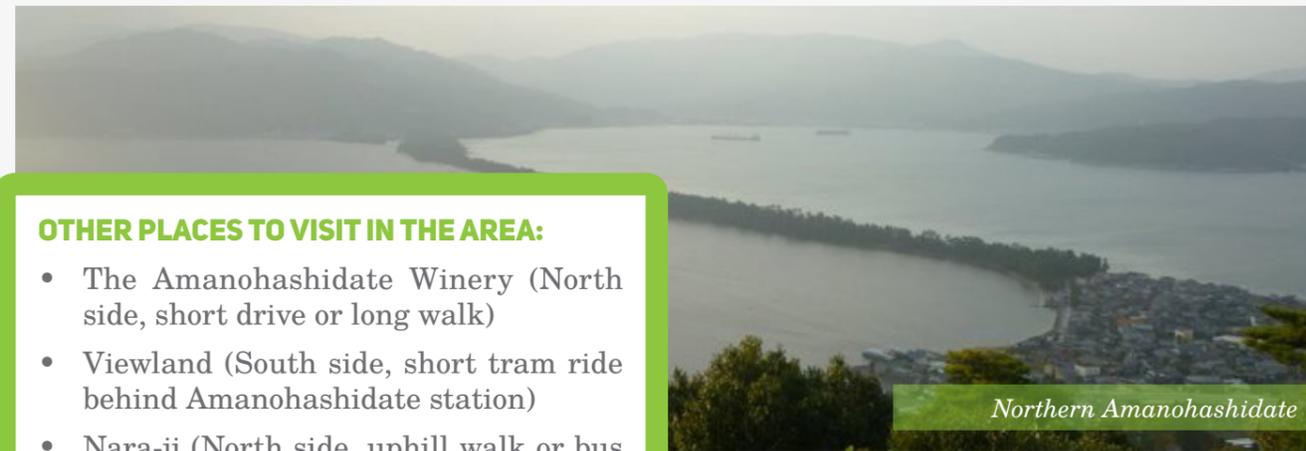


Putting It to Practice

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT IN THE AREA:

- The Amanohashidate Winery (North side, short drive or long walk)
- Viewland (South side, short tram ride behind Amanohashidate station)
- Nara-ji (North side, uphill walk or bus ride beyond lower rest area and café)
- Chirimem Kaido – featured in the [December 2014 issue](#) (In the neighbouring town Yosano, 20 minutes' drive)

***Refer to the article for more details about these places!*



Northern Amanohashidate



Busy Beaches in the Summer



Famous Autumn Leaf Viewing



Nara-ji, Midst Winter Storm



A Single Tree on a Matsushima

The classic way to view the bay is to climb either of the mountains at each end, to turn your back to it, and then look upside down between your legs. Supposedly, in doing so, it will look again like the true bridge to heaven that it once was. Personally, I think it looks mostly the same except upside-down, but you'd miss out to come all this way and not try it even once. Look out for the specialized viewing platforms that litter the mountains.

For those not opposed to a little uphill walking, (or an expensive bus) you can climb to a five-storied pagoda—Nara-ji—at the northern side, by following the trail beyond the café. From here, not only do you get significantly higher views of the whole bay and surrounding mountains, you can also enjoy the shrines hidden in the mountains away from the crowds in the lower areas.

The south side (where Amanohashidate Station is located) is home to some traditional-style Japanese stores, a temple, and boats offering rides around the bay. By riding the tram up the mountain, beyond the

HISTORICALLY, BOTH WOMEN AND THE DYING WERE BANNED FROM THE ISLAND IN ORDER TO KEEP IT PURE. IT IS NOW FAMOUS FOR BEING HOME TO HORDES OF TAME DEER, WHICH ARE A LOT FRIENDLIER THAN THE SAVAGE BEASTS OF NARA.

train station, one can reach the aptly named Viewland, a small theme park complete with a mini rollercoaster, café, and viewing areas.

The Amanohashidate area can be reached by train from Kyoto Station in around two hours for around 4,000 yen. Travelling from Osaka is also possible for around 4,500 yen. For those wishing to drive, parking is ample.

TWO TO GO!

The Amanohashidate is considered one of Japan's Three Views (日本三景), first described in 1643. For those readers looking to score the hat trick, here's a quick guide to the other two.

ITSUKUSHIMA SHRINE ON MIYAJI, HIROSHIMA

This is perhaps the most famous for non-Japanese, and is the location of the iconic floating tori gate. Historically, both women and the dying were banned from the island in order to keep it pure. It is now famous for being home to hordes of tame deer, which are a lot friendlier than the savage beasts of Nara. Women are now permitted, and you can ask local tourist information for a guide on dying. The island is easily reachable from the ferry terminal at Miyajima-Guchi.

THE PINE-COVERED ISLANDS OF MATSHUSHIMA, MIYAGI

Matsushima is a collection of around 260 small pine-clad islands in Miyagi Prefecture, Northern Honshu. A supposedly famous haiku by Basho summarizes the area's beauty as follows: 'Matsushima ah/Ah-ah, Matsushima, ah/Matsushima ah'. The area can be easily reached by train from Sendai City, and is best viewed from tourist cruise boats that offer trips throughout the islands.

COMMENTS?

HOW TO TRAVEL THE WORLD IN SEVEN EASY STEPS

KRISTIN OSANI (YAMAGATA 2011-2014)

IN NOVEMBER 2014, my partner and I embarked on our round-the-world trip. The first thing out of anyone's mouth when they learn of our travels is normally some kind of expression of jealousy, followed by an incredulous: "How do you even do all that?"

Everyone's travel style is different—some people like to have everything planned out to the very teensy details, others like to let the wind take them where it will. I fall somewhere in between: I like to cover all my bases, though I **expect** that my plans will go awry at some point and try to factor that in. My planning process happens in seven steps:

STEP 1: THE DECISION

As obvious as it might sound, **deciding to actually go** on a trip is the most important step in the planning process. It's not enough to think, "I'd like to go to _____ someday," and then let it float to some distant corner of your mind like any other whimsy. The motivation you need to start pinching pennies to fund your trip simply won't manifest itself without a firm decision.

STEP 2: THE REASON

There's a ton to do/see/visit/eat no matter where you're going; you will need your core reason to help you focus so you **don't get overwhelmed or try to cram too much** into one visit.

Answering the "why" question specifically enough to avoid the big-eyes-small-stomach conundrum can be deceptively difficult, but it's also fun to whittle down what it is about a destination that attracts you. As an example, the core reasons I wanted to go to Taiwan were to drink boba tea where it was invented and to visit the town that inspired Yubaba's bathhouse in *Spirited Away*.

STEP 3: THE ITINERARY

I love sitting down with my calendar and all my notes from my research on our destination and imagining where we'll be and what we'll be doing/seeing/eating on a given day. It fuels my excitement for an upcoming trip and helps motivate me to get me through those not-so-great days by knowing what's just around the corner.

Jigoku Meguri
Photos - Kirstin Osani



It's not only an exercise in daydreaming though: having an itinerary roughed out—even if you end up not sticking to it—will help when it comes to figuring out what your budget will look like and what sort of clothes/gear you'll need to bring.

STEP 4: THE BUDGET

Once I have my initial itinerary sketched out, I research each entry and see how much it might cost. I generally break it down into five categories: transportation, accommodation, food, adventure/sightseeing, and miscellaneous. Then I round up and add an extra hundred bucks or so for emergencies. If your numbers are looking a bit scary, don't worry. There's always a way to make travel affordable—you'll have to compromise on some things, but chances are those aren't the things that will make your trip the amazing experience it's going to be. Remember your core reasons, and prioritizing will be a cinch!

STEP 5: THE BOOKING

Do your research well and do it ahead of time! Visas **first**, plane tickets second (unless you're going to China), then accommodation, tour packages, fancy dinners—anything that needs a reservation. Have your calendar open beside you and remember to account for different time zones; there is nothing worse than realizing after the fact that you booked for the wrong day!

STEP 6: THE PACK

Make a list and check it twice. Be brutal about what you really “need” to bring. Most things like toothpaste and other liquid toiletries you can buy upon arrival. I try to keep my bags light so I don't need to check them; that saves money on the bag fees and time waiting for your luggage after landing!

STEP 7: THE TRIP

Congrats—the hard work is over! Now you just need to focus on having fun and staying safe. Remember to leave your itinerary with someone you trust back home. Be aware of common scams and cons in the area you're visiting. Take the same measures abroad that you would at home to stay safe. You might consider buying travel insurance if you'll be gone long enough, too. But mostly: enjoy it!

Kristin Osani was an ALT for three years in Yamagata Prefecture. Currently she's traveling the world with her partner, also a Yamagata JET alum, while writing for both her own website, [Slomads Travel](#), and a start-up called [The Nose Milk](#).

Taiwan

COMMENTS?

LIGHT Brioche Buns

JACQUI TOULSON (YAMANASHI)

INGREDIENTS

3 TABLESPOONS WARM MILK

1 CUP WARM WATER

2¼ TEASPOONS INSTANT DRY YEAST (ABOUT 3 PACKETS)

2½ TABLESPOONS SUGAR

3 CUPS STRONG FLOUR (強力粉)

1/3 CUP WEAK FLOUR (薄力粉)

1½ TEASPOONS SALT

2½ TABLESPOONS (35G) BUTTER, SOFTENED

2 LARGE EGGS

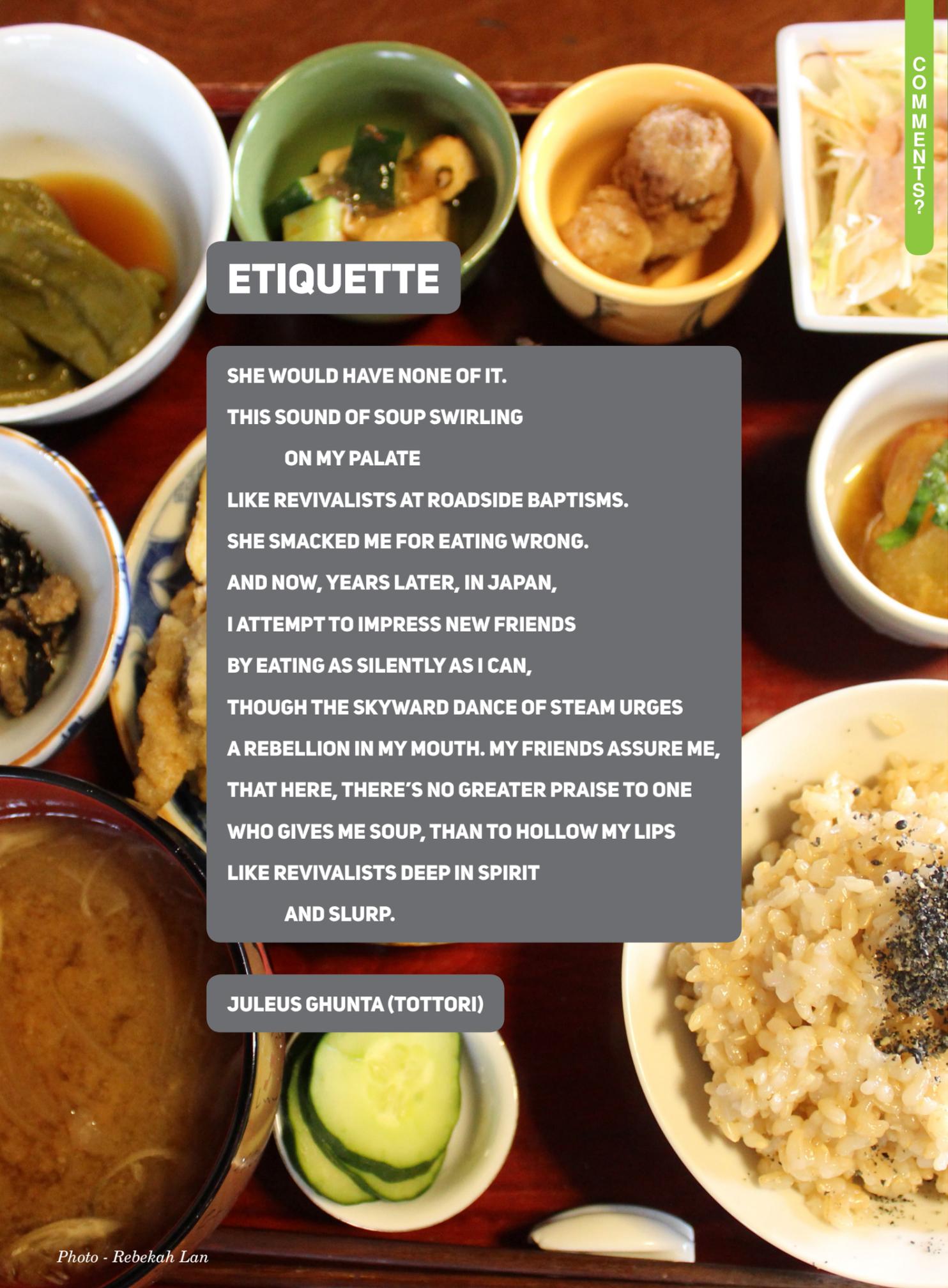
SESAME SEEDS

DIRECTIONS

1. The milk and water should be **lukewarm**—not hot.
2. **Combine** the milk, water, yeast and sugar. **Let stand** five minutes until the yeast is foamy.
3. **Sift** flours and salt together into a large bowl. **Add** butter, and **rub** it into the flour until crumbs form.
4. **Add** one egg and the yeast mixture. **Mix** together until a wet dough forms.
5. **Knead** the dough** with your hands. It will be sticky at first, but will firm up after kneading.
***For the kneading technique, watch [this YouTube video](#).*
6. Once the dough is smooth and stretchy, **form** it into a ball, **place** back into the bowl, **cover** and leave it to rise in a warm place for an hour or two.
7. Once the dough is roughly double the original size, **ease** it slowly out of the bowl onto a clean, lightly floured surface.
8. **Press** the dough out into a rectangle. **Fold** up the bottom third of the dough and press it down. Do the same for the top third so that it forms a long roll.
9. **Divide** the dough into equal portions. Keep in mind that the cooking times are for nine rolls and adjust appropriately.
10. **Form** each piece into balls. **Line** a baking tray with parchment and lightly **flour**.
11. **Place** the balls on the tray. If your oven is small, make two batches as these rolls swell considerably.
12. **Cover** lightly with saran wrap and **leave** to rise in a warm place for two hours, or in the fridge overnight.
13. **Preheat** the oven to 200 degrees Celsius (400F).
14. **Beat** the remaining egg and **brush** on top of the rolls. **Sprinkle** with sesame seeds.
15. **Bake** for 15 minutes, or until the tops are golden brown.

Photos - Jacqui Toulson

COMMENTS?



COMMENTS?

ETIQUETTE

SHE WOULD HAVE NONE OF IT.
THIS SOUND OF SOUP SWIRLING
ON MY PALATE
LIKE REVIVALISTS AT ROADSIDE BAPTISMS.
SHE SMACKED ME FOR EATING WRONG.
AND NOW, YEARS LATER, IN JAPAN,
I ATTEMPT TO IMPRESS NEW FRIENDS
BY EATING AS SILENTLY AS I CAN,
THOUGH THE SKYWARD DANCE OF STEAM URGES
A REBELLION IN MY MOUTH. MY FRIENDS ASSURE ME,
THAT HERE, THERE'S NO GREATER PRAISE TO ONE
WHO GIVES ME SOUP, THAN TO HOLLOW MY LIPS
LIKE REVIVALISTS DEEP IN SPIRIT
AND SLURP.

JULEUS GHUNTA (TOTTORI)

Photo - Rebekah Lan

THE QUINTESSENTIAL OKINAWA SOBA

WENDY NG (OKINAWA)

Photos - Wendy Ng



RECOMMENDED SHOPS ON THE NEXT PAGE!

OKINAWA SOBA IS MADE of wheat flour, and looks and tastes vastly different from Japanese buckwheat noodles. These differences caused some problems when Okinawa was given back to Japan in 1972.

According to Japan's Fair Trade Commission, soba noodles must contain at least 30% buckwheat. In 1976, the Fair Trade Commission tried to make Okinawa rename the dish because it did not fulfill the requirement. Okinawan representatives negotiated with the Japanese government and fought to protect their traditional cuisine. Finally, on October 17, 1978, the name "Okinawa soba" was officially accepted. This momentous date was declared "Okinawa Soba Day" and has been commemorated in Okinawa every year since 1978. On Okinawa Soba Day, many soba-related events are held throughout Okinawa and shops offer discounts and promotions.

While there were no clear records explaining the history of Okinawa soba, people maintain that the royalty ate this type of noodle in the Ryukyu Kingdom period. During the late Meiji period, there were records of shops selling *shina soba*, or 'yellow

noodles'. More shops started to sell Okinawa soba during the Taisho period. After the war, Okinawa soba was revived due to the increased supply of wheat rations by the military. Since then, Okinawa soba has been the most loved noodle dish among the locals.

The most common type of Okinawa soba is served with thick yellow noodles in pork or bonito broth. The noodles are accompanied by juicy pieces of stewed pork belly (*san mai niku* 三枚肉) or pork spare ribs (*soki* ソーキ). Other toppings such as fish cake, green onions and pickled ginger are also popular. Most Okinawans like to spice up their bowl by adding a few drops of *koregusu* (コーレーグース), Ryukyu-ben for hot chill peppers soaked in *awamori* (an alcoholic beverage indigenous to Okinawa.)

Every Okinawan swears by his or her favorite soba shop, and each shop has its own style. After living in Okinawa for close to 2 years, my gastronomical adventures have taken me to a number of well-known Okinawa soba establishments.

The quintessential Okinawa soba is not just a bowl of yellow noodles with pork; it is a

bowl of Okinawa's culture and history, and—most importantly—Okinawa's spirit. I will never forget the kind hospitality of the Okinawan people who served me bowls of soba that were prepared with overflowing pride and sincerity. "*Ichariba Chōde*" is a famous Okinawan proverb that means: "Once we meet and talk, we are brothers and sisters". For me, once we meet and share a bowl of Okinawa soba, we are like brothers and sisters.

REFERENCES:

- 沖縄そばの沖縄生麺協同組合
- 沖縄インターネット放送有限会社

Wendy is a second-year JET from Singapore. Other than suffering from Compulsive Obsessive Travel Planning Disorder (COTPD), she has symptoms closely associated with Compulsive Obsessive Eating Disorder (COED). She spends most of her money and time touring and eating over all Japan. Currently, she is the editor of the Okinawa JET's magazine, Ryukyu Star.

しむじょう (SHIMUJO)

2-124-1 Shuri, Sueyoshicho, Naha city, Okinawa 903-0801

Telephone: 098-884-1933

Hours: 11.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., closed Wednesday

Shimujo's popular set meal consists of a big bowl of soba with pieces of sanmai niku, tangy *mozuku* (a kind of seaweed produced in Okinawa), *jushi* (a rice dish that usually contains vegetables and pork), and *jimami* for dessert (peanut tofu).



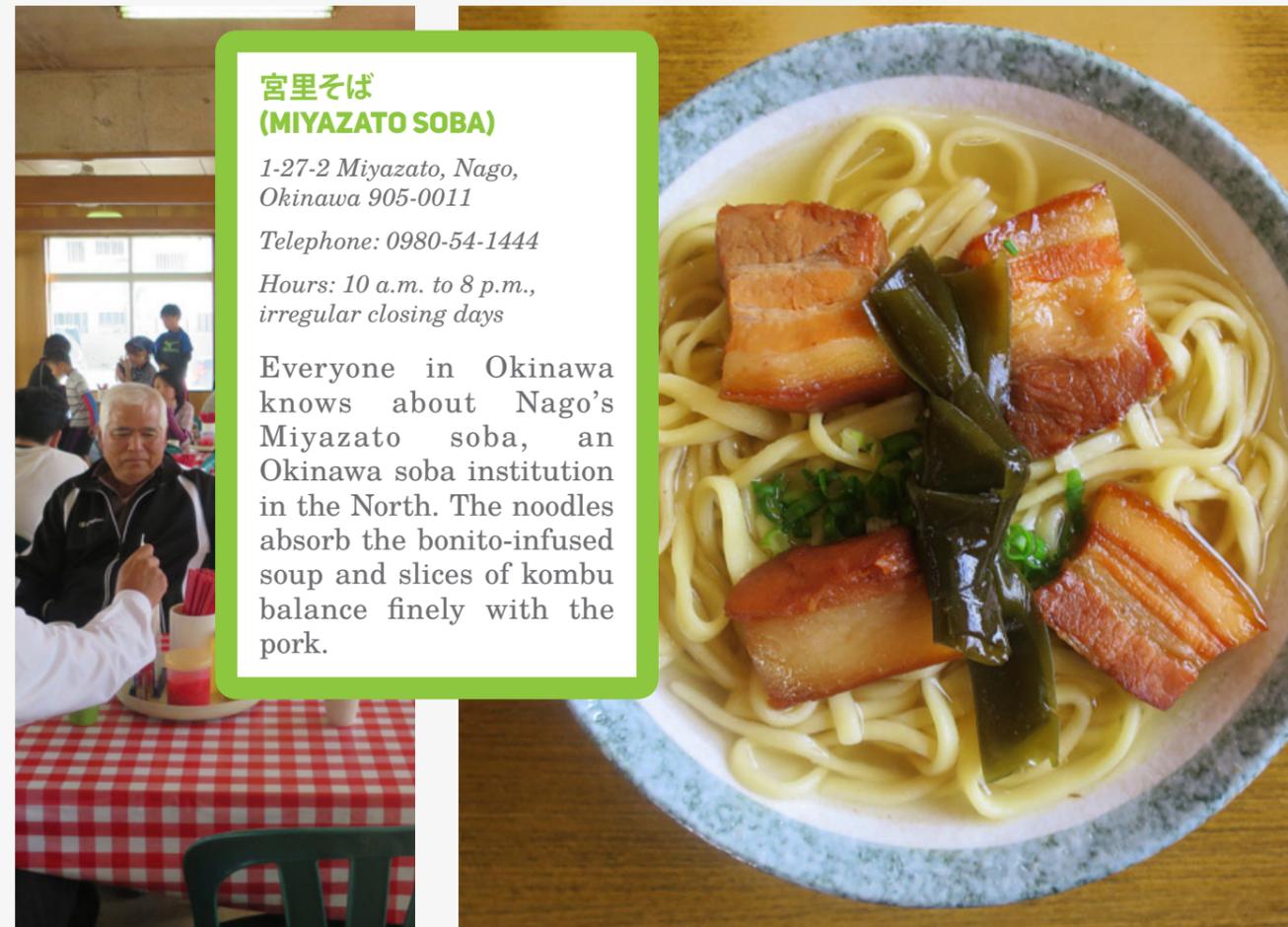
宮里そば (MIYAZATO SOBA)

1-27-2 Miyazato, Nago, Okinawa 905-0011

Telephone: 0980-54-1444

Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., irregular closing days

Everyone in Okinawa knows about Nago's Miyazato soba, an Okinawa soba institution in the North. The noodles absorb the bonito-infused soup and slices of kombu balance finely with the pork.



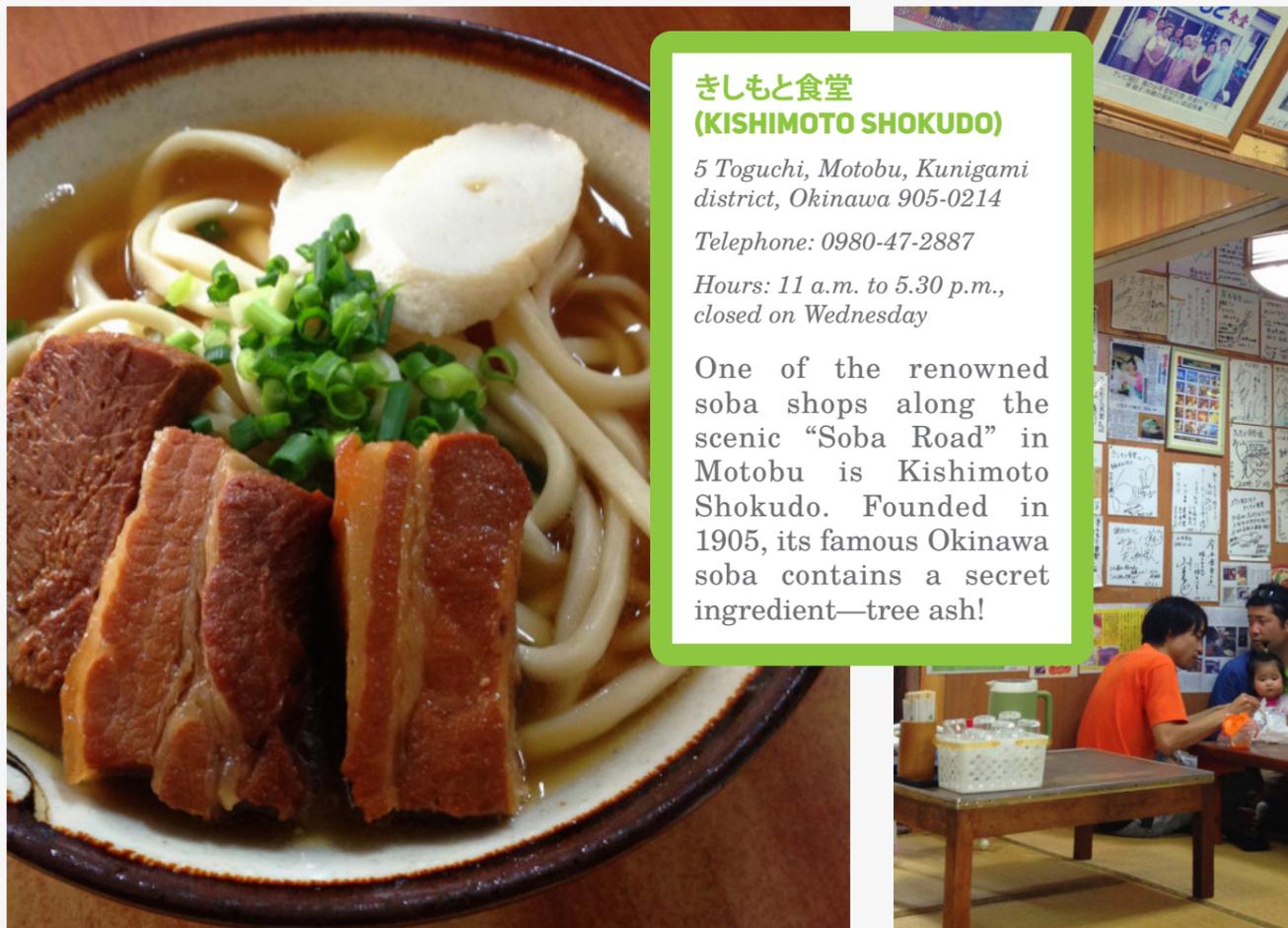
きしもと食堂 (KISHIMOTO SHOKUDO)

5 Toguchi, Motobu, Kunigami district, Okinawa 905-0214

Telephone: 0980-47-2887

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., closed on Wednesday

One of the renowned soba shops along the scenic "Soba Road" in Motobu is Kishimoto Shokudo. Founded in 1905, its famous Okinawa soba contains a secret ingredient—tree ash!



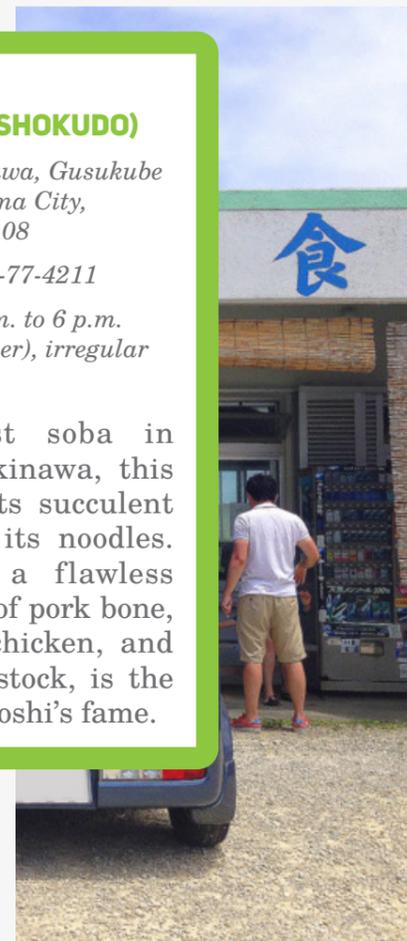
丸吉食堂 (MARUYOSHI SHOKUDO)

975 Aza-Sunagawa, Gusukube Town, Miyakojima City, Okinawa 906-0108

Telephone: 0980-77-4211

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (8 p.m. in summer), irregular closing days

Unlike most soba in mainland Okinawa, this soba hides its succulent meat under its noodles. The broth, a flawless combination of pork bone, spare ribs, chicken, and bonito soup stock, is the key to Maruyoshi's fame.



THIS MONTH IN... COMMUNITY

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Pet Social Network



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Lesson in Black Belt



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Comics



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Spotlights



HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA

connect.sports@ajet.net

This month brings you some articles on traditional Japanese sports to end the year. I qualified for the Beppu Oita Mainichi marathon, with a time under 3.5 hours. For those who ran the Tokyo Marathon, congrats. That is one major marathon under your belt. I also enjoyed the winter with a summer back home in Australia, where the Asian Football Cup and Cricket World Cup was held. This year the Rugby World Cup will be on with the National side hoping for a top 8 finish. Can they do it before the real test in 2019 Tokyo?



NATHAN BERNE

connect.volunteer@ajet.net

If I'm still upright, then I've survived my final Hadaka Matsuri (might even have a lucky shingi!!). Win or lose, I'm ready for some green, some sunlight, and some bike trails. This spring marks the end of my two busy years as a P.A., my final graduation at JHS. It's amazing seeing my kids march off to the next chapter in their lives, and in my 5th year on JET, I'm privileged to have seen my first class of grads heading off to college. Mind-blowing. For Golden Week, I'm planning a Mad Max-worthy roadtrip so let's swap stories in April!

THE PET SOCIAL NETWORK

COURTNEY NIKOLAY (IBARAKI)

READ MORE
HERE ON
AJET.NET

Photos - Courtney Nikolay, Farah Iqbal, Susan Roberts

MAYBE IT'S THAT I'M TURNING 30 in a few months, or maybe it's just because I moved to rural Japan with no Japanese language skills and a less than full social calendar....

Regardless of the myriad of likely reasons, I have spent

In Japan, with a pretty intense language barrier and a less robust non-profit scene than I was accustomed to, I was really struggling to connect more deeply with the locals in my community.

Looking back, I've always

seemed to indicate that I was probably terrorizing rather than helping them.

As I researched animal welfare issues in Japan, I learned that more than 170,000 dogs and cats are killed by animal control every year nationwide, which breaks down to nearly 500 legal killings per day. In most towns, stray animals are given a five-day holding period to be claimed, and are thereafter euthanized by the Department of Public Health. At the same time, pet stores continue to breed rampantly, vendors sell cats and dogs for high premiums, and the popularity of cat cafes continues to rise. People are clearly investing their time and money in animals from pet stores and cat cafes, but this disconnect persists between those economically advantageous gestures and the public's interest in the already present street animals.

Tired of being a passive bystander, I Googled local animal shelters for volunteering opportunities, and instantly came to the Japan Cat Network. Their [website](#) (in English!) sought volunteers to socialize with their population of cats and dogs at a shelter in

found that my most genuine moments of authenticity and bliss have occurred when I am connected to my community, connecting to a cause bigger than myself. Here, I've found this outside my front door, in the form of a few stray cats.

PERSONAL PET CONNECTION

As an avid animal lover that has two adopted shelter cats waiting for me back home in the States, I saw the hordes of stray cats running around my neighborhood, and began to brainstorm ways to help feed and house them. I tried calling them over for belly rubs and treats, but their looks of confusion only

LOOKING BACK, I'VE ALWAYS FOUND THAT MY MOST GENUINE MOMENTS OF AUTHENTICITY AND BLISS HAVE OCCURRED WHEN I AM CONNECTED TO MY COMMUNITY, CONNECTING TO A CAUSE BIGGER THAN MYSELF. HERE, I'VE FOUND THIS OUTSIDE MY FRONT DOOR, IN THE FORM OF A FEW STRAY CATS.



Courtney at the JCN Shelter

countless hours during the last six months reflecting upon one main question. "How can I spend my time in Japan doing things that are important to me, that bring me happiness, give me a sense of meaning and purpose, but also benefit my community and the world?" Needless to say, my nightly binge-watching of *Lost* or *Friends* didn't lead me any closer to an answer.

Inawashiro, Fukushima, and despite a three and a half hour train-ride between us, I was impressed and inspired. I contacted them immediately, and within a day, I was in touch with the volunteer shelter manager, and soon after hopped a train across

Fukushima for my first visit.

INTO INAWASHIRO...

After a long ride and a walk past the most idyllic autumn landscapes of Inawashiro, I arrived at Japan Cat Network's Fukushima-based shelter, and was greeted by a group of busy, enthusiastic people. The volunteers and interns were in the midst of preparing a wine and pasta party that evening; just one of many annual fundraising events coordinated and attended by JCN's devoted volunteers.

For only 2,500 yen, the group explained, attendees could

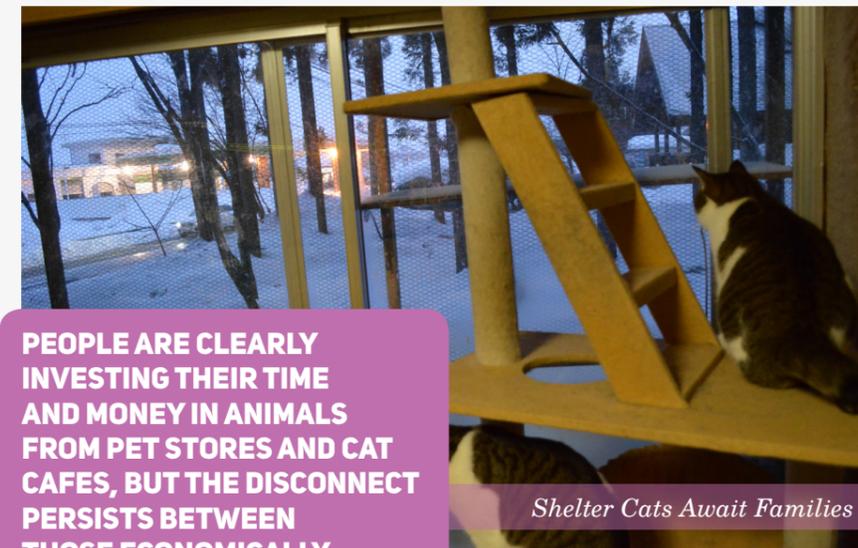
dive into bowls of vegan pasta and plates of garlic bread, and "kampai" with a glass of wine to benefit the animals of Fukushima. With the money raised, JCN was able to spay three kittens, and purchase some high quality cat and dog food for its shelter guests.

During my weekend of volunteering with Japan Cat Network, I enjoyed endless servings of vegan pasta to benefit the animals, strolled through the Inawashiro woods with the incredibly well-loved dogs of the shelter, Addy and Cha Cha, and socialized with the more than 30 cats that were waiting to be fostered or adopted by a caring human. Oddly enough, though I had come to JCN for the animals, it seemed that I'd be returning for the amazing people, too.

A NETWORK'S NET WORTH

Susan Roberts, one of the founders of Japan Cat Network, first arrived in Japan from the United States in 1993, and was shocked by the number of stray animals on the streets.

For the past twenty years,



Shelter Cats Await Families

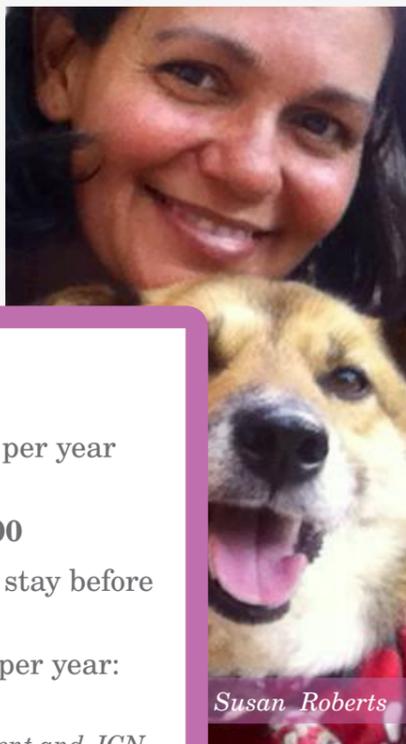
PEOPLE ARE CLEARLY INVESTING THEIR TIME AND MONEY IN ANIMALS FROM PET STORES AND CAT CAFES, BUT THE DISCONNECT PERSISTS BETWEEN THOSE ECONOMICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS GESTURES AND THE PUBLIC'S INTEREST IN THE ALREADY PRESENT STREET ANIMALS.



Homeless Pup at JCN Awaits a New Family

Susan has remained an active change-maker in the animal welfare arena, helping to improve the lives of hundreds of animals and give them a fighting chance. In response to the March 2011 Tohoku disaster, when hundreds of thousands were evacuated from disaster areas, she and dozens of other volunteers took to the ground to support the evacuees and rescue their animals from radiated areas. United by their common goal, Susan and a dedicated team soon founded the Japan Cat Network (JCN), and based

or stray animals, organizes sterilization campaigns, and provides advice to people seeking information about animal welfare issues in Japan. Since 2011, JCN has rescued nearly 700 animals while also successfully advocating for more accessible spay and neuter programs,



Susan Roberts

their communities, and have begun offering subsidies to residents to cover the cost.”

Led by its initial American founders, the Japan Cat Network has formed a growing international volunteer and donor base. Most recently, volunteers have hailed from Australia, England, the United States, Poland, Ireland, and of course, Japan.

WE WANT YOU!!

No matter your situation, JCN encourages every community member to consider adopting an animal from a shelter instead of buying it from a pet store. As their efforts show, there are thousands of small ways to make a big difference for local non-profit organizations; we just need to be savvy and utilize the resources around us.

“Instead of feeding stray



Volunteer with Happy Dog

DOG AND CAT STATS FOR JAPAN

- Estimated pets euthanized per year since 2010: **170,000+**
- Pets euthanized per day: **500**
- Permitted period of shelter stay before euthanasia: **5 days**
- Pets adopted through JCN per year: **700**

Source: Japan Ministry of Environment and JCN

their determined new animal welfare group in Inawashiro.

You can hear from Susan herself in the [December 2013](#) issue of Connect.

In the ensuing four years, the Japan Cat Network has followed their mission of serving the people and animals of Fukushima through operating a small, low-budget community shelter. In addition to providing a supportive home environment, JCN also regularly rescues and re-homes newly abandoned

and has even contributed to changes in city policies.

“In fact,” Susan explained, “most city offices now understand how important animal sterilization is for

LED BY ITS INITIAL AMERICAN FOUNDERS, THE JAPAN CAT NETWORK HAS FORMED A GROWING INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER AND DONOR BASE. MOST RECENTLY, VOLUNTEERS HAVE HAILED FROM AUSTRALIA, ENGLAND, THE UNITED STATES, POLAND, IRELAND, AND OF COURSE, JAPAN.

動物救助団体

JAPAN CAT NETWORK



HELPING PEOPLE HELP PETS

CHECK US OUT!



HOW TO HELP

GIVE TIME! GIVE LOVE! GIVE ONLINE!

Whether you wish to work directly at a shelter, organize fundraising events, or advocate for the humane treatment of stray and abandoned animals in Japan, the Japan Cat Network has a volunteer opportunity for you.

- **Have a free weekend near Fukushima?**
Hitch a ride to Inawashiro and volunteer some time with the pets.
- **Finishing your contract with JET this summer?**
Consider staying in Japan to be the next Shelter Manager, and encourage your successors to join.
- **Social media addict?**
Work remotely and update JCN's [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Pinterest](#) accounts, or help maintain their [Facebook](#) page and [website](#).
- **Noticing a few extra stray animals in town?**
Contact JCN directly for advice on other ways to extend the Network!!

To learn more about volunteer opportunities and the Japan Cat Network, visit their [website](#) or email them at info@japancatnetwork.org.

animals, spay or neuter them,” Susan urges. “Educate others on the importance of spaying their pet, and when you travel abroad, volunteer with an animal shelter. There are opportunities all over the world to get involved! You can do something. Everybody can do something. Even if it’s not

directly for the animals, do something.”

For my own 30th birthday, I’m asking my friends and family to make a small donation to my [Indiegogo fundraising page](#), with the goal of raising \$500. Anyone interested can do the same, so please

consider converting your own event into a fundraiser, and ask friends or birthday guests to bring high-quality dog and cat food, kitty litter, or cash donations in lieu of food or birthday gifts for the benefit JCN and other shelters.

This March, a group of ALTs from Ibaraki plan to journey north together for a weekend of volunteering together at the JCN shelter. Along the way, we’ll spend time with local university students, and relax in one of the many onsen of Inawashiro.

Courtney Nikolay greatly misses her cats back home in Wisconsin, and will be showering them with cat nip and bacon treats when she returns in August. In the meantime, she will continue to spend her time volunteering, wondering what all of the gel-covered food in bags at the grocery store is, and watching obscene amounts of Lost until she discovers how a person can become another person who is also a smoke monster...

A LESSON IN BLACK BELT: JUDO IN AMERICA AND JAPAN

JONATHAN DYER (KUMAMOTO)



THE 'GENTLE WAY'

Anyone who's spent more than five minutes doing judo knows that there is nothing particularly 'gentle' about 'the gentle way.' It's a classic example of an English word being chosen for a Japanese translation because of its secondary meanings. A more accurate translation would probably be "the way of yielding." Judo, you see, emphasizes the idea of using your opponent's motion against them in a fight.

But gentle? My aching shoulder is testament that it is not. When judo was formally founded in 1882 by Jigaro Kano, it was arguably the first true fusion of martial arts and modern sports. As a style of martial arts, judo follows an established curriculum that is focused heavily on throws, pins, and submissions, such as chokes and arm locks. Judo was the first system to use coloured belts, called *obi*, and players grapple with each other by gripping the sleeves and lapels of their thick jackets, called *gi*.

Previous styles of martial arts certainly had sport-like competition components, but judo was the first to design a corpus of techniques based

on the idea of maintaining the health of its practitioners over a long period of time. In some ways, judo is as much a form of P.E. as it is a style of martial arts. Some even go so far as to suggest that judo is not particularly good for fighting. However, many great martial artists like Gene Lebell, Fedor Emelianenko, and more recently Ronda Rousey are testaments to judo's fighting power.

JUDO IN AMERICA

I started judo as a freshman in college, and I quickly found myself in over my head. The college team was heavily geared towards success in competition, and not a particularly healthy environment for beginners. Later, I found a mixed martial arts dojo in my home town that took a far more user-friendly approach to learning judo. The school has some of the toughest fighters on the west coast (not just in judo!), but these same people are also kind and excellent teachers. The teachers and

many of the students there have spent time training abroad in Thailand (for Muay Thai) and Japan (for judo). After training with them for five years, they were happy to hear I was coming to Japan to teach English. They informed me that training judo in Japan would drastically improve my skill level. That is, provided I could survive the experience.

So far, I have managed to do so. There have been some close calls though, and training judo here is definitely different than training judo in the States. The biggest difference is in the way that the sessions are organized. In the States, a judo lesson usually starts with a long warm-up, consisting of numerous different drills and exercises. Next, two or three throws are practiced/taught, sometimes followed by drills emphasizing *renraku-waza*; the method of chaining the techniques together. The class ends with several minutes of *randori*, or free practice. *Randori* is a style of sparring designed to emphasize experimentation with different techniques, and a give and take between *tori* and *uke*. The point is to try and throw your opponent,

but in a way that allows for mutual benefit of the practitioners. One should not be ashamed to take a fall during *randori*—or several falls as is usually the case. This is markedly different than *shiai*, competition, in which *judo-ka* (practitioners) will usually do their best to avoid falling on their back. Sometimes this can lead to some unusual body contortions and injury.

JUDO IN JAPAN

In Japan, warm up exercises tend to be very limited to a few tumbles, followed by an extensive session of *uchi-komi*, a repetition exercise where you set up a throw but do not fully execute it. This might be followed by a small number of actual throws, to get the body ready for what

is to follow. The Japanese do *randori* sessions far longer than anything I experienced in America. It's positively exhausting, and the skill of the Japanese judo players can add a significant amount of pain to your suffering. If you still have some energy left at the end of the session, then you might find yourself doing push-ups, sit-ups, etc. followed by stretches.

One piece of advice I might give to other ALTs who want to practice judo is that when you introduce yourself to the team, emphasize that judo is often trained much harder in Japan than it is in America (I don't know about other countries, sorry British/Commonwealth/other English speakers!). If, during the session, the coach offers you a break, don't be afraid



JUDO HAS BEEN A FANTASTIC TOOL FOR INTERACTING WITH MY STUDENTS AT THE KUMAMOTO SCHOOL FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED... STUDENTS WHO DON'T HAVE A GOOD GRASP OF WHAT I LOOK LIKE HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO FILL IN THE BLANKS BY "SEEING" ME ON THE MAT.

Students and Teachers at Mougakkou



Ikkyu (Brown Belt) Test
Photos - Jonathan Dryer

to take it. The point should be for you to push yourself past your comfort zone every session, not to die of cardiac arrest by trying to match the pace of people who have been training since they were small children.

The coaches are all teachers, often P.E. teachers, so their goal is to see you get better by trying your best, not to hurt you. Besides, judo clubs tend to be small, and the coaches are usually ecstatic to have the school's resident foreigner training with the club. My experience with the coaches at all three of my assigned schools (as well as some unassigned schools!) has been nothing but positive. If you find yourself in a situation that is otherwise, I would suggest finding another club to participate in. Your health and happiness are the most important things.

IMPROVING STUDENT RELATIONS

Practicing judo is a great way to interact with your students and teachers, as is participating in any club. In my personal opinion, judo does have a couple of special characteristics that make it particularly good for student-ALT relationships. First, students who are normally shy and don't have the confidence to speak English (or Japanese, for that matter!) with the ALT benefit hugely from having the opportunity to throw you in randori. There is a very strong sense of camaraderie that comes from taking turns falling on tatami. Students who would not make eye contact with me when I first arrived are now making jokes

with me and having English conversations. I attribute this specifically to our time spent together on the mat. I have had students tell me that doing judo with me is "cool," or ask when I would be coming back for another session.

Stylistically, Japanese judo players benefit from having the opportunity to grapple with a foreigner. Japanese judo is naturally very clean and orthodox, whereas judo in other countries tends to be "impure," and focuses on grips and throws more akin to western styles of wrestling. As an American judoka, my orthodox judo has

thing for us and I would not consider it possible in many other sports.

Judo can be tough, but it is also fun and rewarding. I encourage any ALTs curious about it to try and join their club for a session. Most schools will have spare gi and obi lying around because judo is taught in gym class. If you get serious, a moderately good gi can run between 10,000 to 20,000 yen, but will last you a few years and isn't a bad investment. I own two gi, a newer Mizuno brand and my first gi from six years ago. It's a little torn and bloody, but it still has some fight (and plenty of memories) left in it.

ONE PIECE OF ADVICE I MIGHT GIVE TO OTHER ALTS WHO WANT TO PRACTICE JUDO IS THAT WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO THE TEAM, EMPHASIZE THAT JUDO IS OFTEN TRAINED MUCH HARDER IN JAPAN THAN IT IS IN AMERICA...IF, DURING THE SESSION, THE COACH OFFERS YOU A BREAK, DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE IT.

improved by sparring with my students. And I've noticed that my students are using the Russian grip a lot more now than when I first started doing judo with them, as well as my favourite submission technique.

One final note: judo has been a fantastic tool for interacting with my students at the Kumamoto School for the Visually Impaired. Judo is a largely tactile sport, and is naturally very popular with people who have some kind of inhibited vision. Students who don't have a good grasp of what I look like have had the opportunity to fill in the blanks by "seeing" me on the mat. This is a special

Jonathan Dyer is a Senior High School ALT in Kumamoto Prefecture. He was born and raised in San Diego, California, and came to Japan to improve his understanding of the language and the culture. In February 2015, he'll test for a black belt at the municipal dojo in Suizenji, Kumamoto City. Hopefully he won't be destroyed too badly!

THE AJET PEER SUPPORT GROUP IS RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS!



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APPLICATION



THE AJET PEER SUPPORT GROUP (PSG), THE JET COMMUNITY'S ANONYMOUS LISTENING AND REFERRAL SERVICE, IS CURRENTLY RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS FOR THE 2015-2016 JET YEAR.

ABOUT PSG:

PSG is a confidential and anonymous resource provided by JETs, for JETs. Our volunteers are trained to listen and support callers through a wide spectrum of challenges, and put them in touch with the appropriate resources.

PSG operates from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. 365 days a year, and is the only overnight support service designed to serve JETs nationwide. Contact us at [050-5534-5566](tel:050-5534-5566), on Skype at "AJETPSG", or check out our website at www.ajet.net/psg.

WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

Any re-contracting JET (ALT or CIR) is eligible to volunteer with PSG. We seek open-minded and dedicated volunteers with an interest in assisting other JETs, and a willingness to learn PSG's specific way of accomplishing this.

PSG Volunteers are NOT counselors, but peers who train to be an effective listeners and a resource for other JETs. Prior training in psychology or counseling, or service in support roles may be helpful, but is not required. All selected volunteers will undergo approximately 25 hours of training and role-play exercises to understand PSG's specific mission and techniques.

All prospective volunteers must have reliable home internet service (a smartphone alone is not sufficient). A landline telephone is even better.

TIME COMMITMENT:

Flexible. Members typically volunteer one to two evenings each month. Volunteers must submit at least ten open evenings each month (including two weekend nights), from which their shifts will be assigned.

Additionally, successful applicants will take part in mandatory training sessions throughout mid-May and June. While multiple sessions will be scheduled, in principle new volunteers will have to devote one full evening per week for five weeks to complete training, with individually scheduled practice role-plays to follow.

HOW TO APPLY:

Interested JETs may contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Amy McQuillan, at psgapplications@gmail.com, and request an application form or make further inquiries. Applications will be distributed until 15 March 2015. Please do not contact the hotline with recruiting-related questions.



SEE THE
FULL FAQ
AND DETAILS
HERE ON
AJET.NET

COMICS



MARIKA'S COMICS

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

Website • [Twitter](#)



LET'S SPEAK ENGLISH by Mary Cagle

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



SPOTLIGHT NOMINATION?

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

SPOTLIGHTS



DAVID KLUG (CHIBA)

Residing in Chiba, David Klug has split his four years as an ALT between Korea and Japan. Due to a lack of Asian study options in school, he took up an interest in Hong Kong films, Asian art history, and eventually Mandarin, where he made Korean friends who introduced him to opportunities abroad.

However, music has been part of his life since childhood. As early as middle school, he was experimenting with music sequencing, and went on to co-found R3al Jedi'z, a satirical rap group, he also produced a synthesized orchestral score for a film, and acted as keyboardist and producer for the band 2 Dudes and a Trout—all before university.

After producing/hosting two pre-YouTube music shows and DJing for two years, David continues to make music under the name Central Plaza. His inspirations include his older brother—a speed hardcore musician—and artists like YMO, CAPSULE, and Sakanaction influence his work. He aspires to start a band and play shows in Tokyo/Chiba, learn the guitar, and press his work to vinyl.

You can keep an eye on David and listen to his work [here](#) and on [SoundCloud](#).



JEREMY LANIG (KAGAWA)

Originally from Oregon, Jeremy served as a Mitoyo City ALT for three years before becoming a prefectural CIR for Kagawa. Since finishing JET in 2011, he's been working on various teaching, video, and musical projects. He co-founded Step-by-Step ~ English for Life, and supplements their English instruction with his own productions. Being in the *inaka*, Jeremy had plenty of room to explore his hobbies, so he picked up guitar in 2006 and from there started learning other instruments until he got involved in music production in 2011 and recorded his first video the next year. (Listen to "The Udon Song," "What Time Is It?" and "ABC to XYZ")

Says Lanig, "most children's songs are too fast or too difficult for Japanese students," so he uses his musical skills to make the songs more approachable and the language more accessible. If you're ever in Kagawa, you may run into Jeremy leading a video crew around for local television shows, something he does when he's not managing two English schools, graphic and web design, and writing and recording his own music.

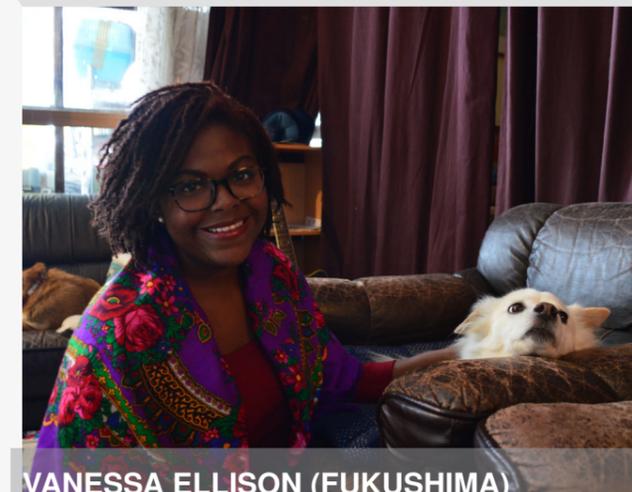


SARAH JONES (FUKUSHIMA)

Meet Sarah! She was a JET in Futaba, Fukushima from 2007-2011. After the devastating disasters of March 2011, she returned to America, but came back to Fukushima in early 2012. She now lives in Minamisoma, volunteering with two major organisations, 'Save Minamisoma Project' and 'Minamisoma City Volunteer Center'.

Save Minamisoma Project (SMP) began in 2011, and focuses on regular food deliveries to the people who were affected by the disaster. Sarah volunteers and helps deliver the food, which is loaded into trucks from Tokyo and brought to Minamisoma. Each delivery accommodates five to seven temporary housing compounds, about 1,200 people. Check SMP's official website [here](#).

Minamisoma City Volunteer Center (MCVC) aims to restore Minamisoma and repair the damage from the triple disaster. Sarah helps organise volunteer days and one of her strongest motivations is the memory of the disaster. "I want to show people that they are not alone, not forgotten and help them on the road to recovery," she says. MCVC is every day except Tuesdays. If you're interested in volunteering, give them a call at 0244 26 8934.



VANESSA ELLISON (FUKUSHIMA)

Relying solely on unpaid volunteers to manage the day-to-day operations of the shelter, the Japan Cat Network sees an ever-changing leadership team. Vanessa Ellison, a graduate student from Texas working toward a master's degree in International Sustainable Tourism, recently stepped into the role of Shelter Manager. As part of her graduate program's international internship component, Vanessa is spending four months with JCN to work to improve the organization's sustainability; both from financial and environmental perspectives. Vanessa hopes to build upon JCN's international partnerships, and to create new marketing and fundraising plans, a volunteer manual, an inventory list of JCN's assets, and a list of ongoing extended projects for interested volunteers.

"Green, in all aspects of the word," Vanessa jokes, as she works to advance the shelter beyond basic animal socialization. "There is more good to do here, but we can't do it by ourselves. "We have to reach out to more people. We are on the map. We get emails from people from all over the world, but that's why I'm here...to try to solidify partnerships, and to make sure things are sustainable beyond my time here."

CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

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

Contact Head Editor Steven Thompson at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

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

SPOTLIGHT

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

COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Click the comment button at the end of any article, or interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and issuu.com.

PHOTOS

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

HAIKU

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

COMICS

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



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