

AJET

# CONNECT

magazine



September 2012 Issue



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# Hello!



September. The revolving door of the JET Programme continues to spin. My time at Tokyo Orientation last month was a real eye-opener. At my own Orientation in 2011, I was far too jet-lagged and dazed to really branch out, but this time around I was lucky enough to meet so many of you! I'm not lying when I say that my two weeks in Tokyo truly stand out as a highlight of my whole JET experience. I really hope that all of you new faces I met have spent the past month settling in wonderfully!

That's the thing about JET: people come, people go... and even those who decide to stay may end up somewhere completely new this time around. As my own one-year milestone passes, September's a time I find myself getting reflective. Aptly, then, it's also a month for moon-viewing in Japan. For gazing into the unknown and thinking. About what we've achieved so far, what we still want to achieve... and just where the next stop on the revolving door might take us. (And, of course, it's comforting to know that those friends we said goodbye to are, somewhere, looking up at the very same moon).

September is also the month of a new school term, of sports days, and of a slow farewell to summer. To help you fight off those end-of-August blues, this issue we're going back to basics and serving you up a slice of classic Connect! Our editors have been trawling those dirty grassroots to give you the very latest from JETs just like you! In Entertainment, Steven Thompson reports on this year's Summer Sonic Festival (~~editor's note: secure free pass for next year~~), while Adam Hacker shares an amazing story of a 'Hitchhiker's Guide to Kyushu' over in Travel. Interested in volunteering in Honduras or Cambodia? We've got the 'how-to' in Volunteering! And for all you fashionistas up in here, Josiah David's take on Vogue's latest Gaga feature is most certainly 'in' this season.

So grab yourself an oolong-cha and kick back with this month's selection! Oh, and how amazing is that cover photo? Props to Fukushima's Jon Dart, our Photography Competition winner, for a job spectacularly done! (...think you can take my snap for the next issue, Jon?)

Stay Connected! And if you want to get involved in October's issue, email me at [james.kemp@ajet.net](mailto:james.kemp@ajet.net)! See you next month!



# MARK SAYS...



I love this time of year, when everything is new and starting fresh. Beginnings are such an exciting time. In my prefecture, Fukushima, we just finished welcoming thirty-seven new JETs! August is always so full of gatherings, welcome parties, and activities that by the time September comes, some of us need to stop and catch our breath. I certainly know I do!

Now that the welcomes are winding down, it's time for another school term! For at least 1,500 of you, your first days of the school year have just begun. I want to wish you lots of luck in your new jobs. I'm sure you'll be fantastic. And to those starting up again, lots of luck to you as well! I'm sure you're already fantastic, that's why you're here another year!

Recently the Fukushima Superintendent of Education gave an address to the new JETs in our area. He had three challenges for the new ALTs: that you would—1) love your placement, 2) love your colleagues, and 3) love your students. That was his whole address. On the one hand, I really enjoyed his words because if you were to love those things you'd almost certainly have a great year here; but on the other hand my mind kept questioning, is it really possible to simultaneously love those things?

I've wracked my brains for the last few weeks on this one. The one thing that I keep coming back to is that I've seen JETs who are miserable leave who are then replaced by successors who love every aspect of the formerly "miserable" position. In my own position, I had numerous people tell me they thought I wouldn't enjoy my placement when I first arrived. ("Oh, you're all the way out there? Sorry...") But in my own experience, it has honestly been the perfect placement. It's no exaggeration to say I feel like I won the jackpot with this one. But I'm sure if I claimed to have the best placement on JET there are a lot of you reading who would debate that. But that's not a bad thing. Quite the opposite: I think that's awesome.

What these thoughts have led me to decide is that you can make a choice to love a place and its people. Love is a decision. And to the extent that we can make an effort to love our placements, our colleagues and our students... Well, I think that's an excellent goal to strive towards as we begin a new year in Japan.

Best of luck in your new school year!



# FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO JAPAN

## MY FIRST MONTH ON JET

Karmen Rabe

In a matter of a month after my interview, the news came. I'd been selected from over a thousand applicants to join the prestigious JET Programme for 2012. The list of "Things To Do" suddenly exploded. I had to get my visa and passport in order; hand in a notice of resignation to my employer; attend a farewell ceremony at the Japanese Embassy in South Africa; and, finally, with all that done, I had to see off my friends and family. Everything happened so quickly I hardly had a chance to truly realise just how big this new adventure would be!

Roughly thirty South Africans departed from the Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. We flew for fourteen hours straight to Hong Kong, most of which was spent being very excited (and subsequently unable to sleep)... Hello, jet lag! From Hong Kong we flew another five hours to Narita Airport. Our new lives were beckoning! During Tokyo Orientation, my friends and I visited Harajuku, where we received a taste of everything from shaved ice (a first!) to cool-drink in a duck-shaped bottle. The evening temperature of around 30 degrees—coupled with an insane humidity—justified the shaved ice... but the duck bottle still evades explanation.

In a few days, Tokyo Orientation was over and, one-by-one, we headed our separate ways. I was lucky to be placed in Kumamoto-shi with a fellow South African countryman! From the second our little plane touched down on the runway, I knew I was home. Kumamoto is gorgeous beyond description. Majestic trees covered mountaintops and every so often a shrine would peer at me through the green. I was ecstatic to learn that *the* Kumamoto Castle is situated roughly five minutes from my apartment! My first visit to the Castle blew my mind. Standing atop the highest tower, I thought to myself: "Karmen, you're standing in a 400-year-old castle in Japan!" It was a profound moment,

since just a few weeks before I was not even sure whether my JET application had been successful.

I've always been adventurous, but my friends doubted I would be able to live on my own in a foreign country and not panic. This trip is also my first time in a foreign country... ever! Therefore, I was understandably a bit worried about how to go about things at first... "What if I burn my apartment down?"; "What if I lose my key?"; "What if I get desperately lost?"; "I can't cook – will I starve!?" were just a few of the questions swirling in my head. (Not to even mention *the bugs!*) Luckily, all of my fears have been thus far quite unfounded! In fact, I learned pretty soon that "getting lost" is actually a very good way of learning where things are; and the only bugs I've seen have been little spiders! No cockroaches... yet!

My colleagues are super friendly, even those who hardly understand English. I don't officially start teaching for a few weeks, so my time in Kumamoto until now has been spent with a series of orientation activities, and a different local cuisine for lunch every day! The new ALTs have also been treated to several "tours" of the local region, and much to our delight the nightlife here is fantastic! Karaoke, bars, music, clubs, pool, darts and even movie theatres... Kumamoto-shi has got it all!

If I can give any advice to new JETs feeling perhaps a bit disorientated, it would be to just take things one day at a time! Sure, we may have all found ourselves in completely different placements, but you still have the choice to be positive, open-minded and relaxed about your situation. Be yourself, be friendly and be willing to accept help and advice. Also, listen to your sempai! They've been through this before and understand more than you may think. Good luck!



# A SUPERSTAR IN JAPAN?

Ahmad Butt

How does it feel to be a celebrity? Many people aspire to become famous. Today's 'celebrity culture' is testament to the public's proclivity for fame. Living in the small city of Tosu in the sleepy prefecture of Saga, I do not profess to be a celebrity. In fact, I have never been featured in a J-Pop song and I have yet to appear in a talent show. Yet I believe I can comprehend, at least partially, how it feels to be well known. Indeed, like many other foreigners, I am privy to a Japanese phenomenon that I call 'Gaijin Celebrity'. Simply put, if you are a foreigner in Japan you are a source of indubitable intrigue, which can lead to random, comedic and often surreal occurrences.

You will be frequently told that you are devastatingly handsome. Posses of small children will unexpectedly appear, run up to you, ask you where you are from, randomly high-five you and then run away, giggling. Colleagues, acquaintances and unknowns will initiate conversations with you in sultry voices and ask leading questions such as 'what do you think of Japanese women?' Your incredible dexterity – i.e. your awe-inspiring ability to use chopsticks – will start/prolong many conversations. In Japan, you will always be a celebrity.

Here in Tosu, the illustrious home of Sagan Tosu and the Tosu Premium Outlet, I have been much amused by my celebrity status. I have taught at all of the high schools in Tosu and thus any trip into the outside world will invariably involved being waved at, nodded at or at least called out to by a current or past student. Students are intrigued that I have a normal life full of mundane tasks such as shopping and eating. The phenomenon itself can be very heady. Suddenly, life at home begins to feel rather foreign; mundane, even.

After the end of the summer school term, I returned to England in order to refresh my Britishness (eating fish and chips, having afternoon tea, buying a new bowler hat and so forth...) and, more importantly, spend time with family and friends. 'How does it feel to be a foreigner in Japan?' was a question I was asked numerous times. Normally, I resorted to regaling listeners with an assortment of foreigner-in-Japan anecdotes. However, I struggled to answer this question to my own satisfaction. Most unsettlingly was the recognition that as a foreigner in Japan I would always be the proverbial "Other". Where do foreigners fit into Japanese society?

Japan is startlingly homogenous, with foreigners constituting a negligible percentage of the total population. Accordingly, foreigners are fascinating because they are viewed as permanent outsiders and not fledgling members of Japanese society. Foreigners are intriguing as they are a conduit to an 'alien' way of living. But this should not be taken as evidence of the Japanese people wanting to emulate a western way of living. Instead, the import of western culture has prompted profound soul-searching about what it means to be Japanese in a modern, globalised and interconnected world.

So how should we foreigners respond to our celebrity? New environments, new ideas and new people challenge us to reconsider ideas we have long believed to be infallible. The opportunity to live in Japan is a chance to experience a unique culture but also an opportunity for reappraisal. The way we react to a new environment and reformulate our personal identity is a profound and rewarding process. Today's rampant celebrity culture should not be celebrated

*"Ahmado-sensei...who are they?" a colleague enquired in uncertain English, simultaneously pointing across the room whilst keeping his eyes transfixed on the soccer match we were watching. I looked at my friends sitting across the room. "Oh, they're ALTs from Saga-ken. Just friends," I replied nonchalantly hoping to pre-empt any further questions. "Oh! Two wives? Two girlfriends? They cook for you?" another colleague piped in excitedly. "No! They're just friends! They wanted to see a soccer match," I replied rather bemused. The inquisitive teacher, somewhat deflated by my reply, leaned back on his seat. "Do you want some snacks?" he asked a few minutes later. I gratefully accepted some biscuits. Not long afterwards, the teacher motioned with a box of biscuits towards the other two ALTs and said resolutely, "Please ask your wives if they want something to eat." Naturally, I accepted the box of biscuits.*

but should instead prompt us to think about ourselves. People aspire for individual recognition because we want to feel unique and thus have some self-worth. Yet why do we have to emulate or become celebrities to think we are worth something? I know that I cannot be typecast as a gaijin celebrity in Japan. Living in Japan, one is able to appreciate the diversity of life.

It leads to a rather simple conclusion, really: all individuals are worth something, which is neither quantifiable nor acquirable through fame.

# JET EFFECT

Chris Allison

## Hello! Who are you?

Hi! My name name is Chris Allison and I am a third year ALT in Oita-ken. This is my last year on JET so by the time this is released I will probably be back State side.

## So, what special project have you started during your time on JET?

For the past six months or so, I have been developing an inaka travel site called "The Inaka" where people from all over Japan submit pictures and information about their town's sights, restaurants, onsen and festivals in order to create the most complete, useful, and picture-oriented guide Japan has to offer. The website is [www.theinaka.com](http://www.theinaka.com) and was just released this May. It is growing fast and I hope to have an effective guide for each prefecture by the end of summer.

## How did you come up with the idea for The Inaka?

Last summer I realized I had two very big problems with traveling in Japan: first, it's terribly expensive; and second, related to this, it's near-impossible to find any valuable travel sites. The travel sites that are out there are difficult to navigate, tend to only highlight the main attractions in the prefecture, and quite often only have one picture. This is not enough when it comes to making travel plans. A lot of times you will have to search through several pages until you find something from the city you are going to, and when you find it there is only one picture. This is not enough. There had to be a better setup for travel websites with information based on the city instead of the prefecture as a whole.

*It was from these frustrations that The Inaka was born.*

Every JET knows about their town's sights, restaurants, onsen, and festivals, but their knowledge and pictures essentially die when they leave Japan. The Inaka will offer a database to store that info to be an "Inaka Guide" for generations to come. I hope this will make it easy to find information and pictures of sights specific to the city you are going to and not just an overview of the prefecture.

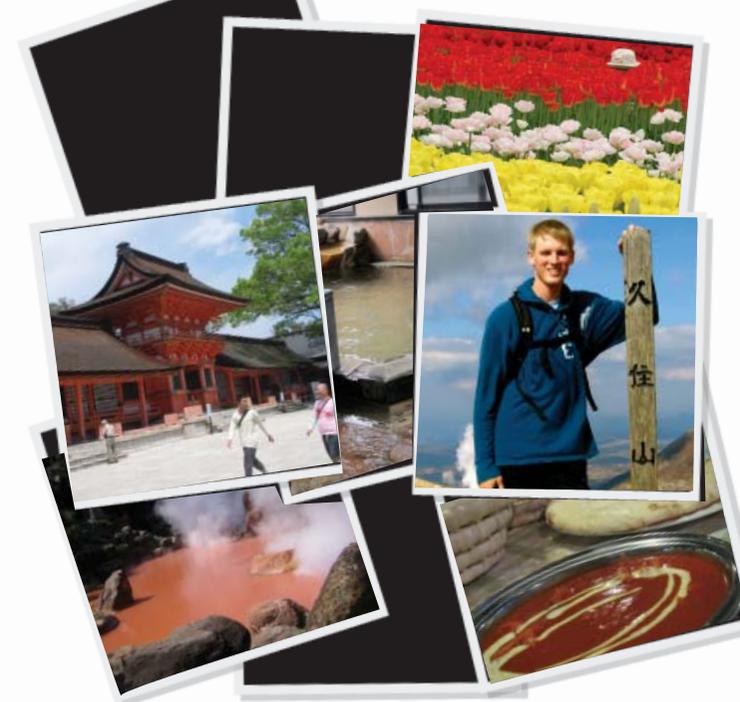
## So who do you hope to impact most directly by the building of The Inaka?

The Inaka hopes to have a great impact on several groups.

First and foremost, The Inaka will be a great help to incoming JETs. When The Inaka is complete it will offer a guide to new JETs about what their towns have to offer. The Inaka will share what restaurants are good, where the best onsen are, what festivals there are to look forward to, and of course what sights there are to see. It will also help new JETs explore other towns and meet JETs from other cities.

Moreover, The Inaka hopes to help current JETs restore a sense of adventure to their lives in Japan. After living in here for awhile, Japan starts to lose its mystique. JETs tend to become less adventurous and get comfortable with their daily routines. The Inaka hopes to introduce JETs to new places and bring back that sense of adventure that existed in the beginning.

Finally, The Inaka also was created to help out local businesses and communities by bringing more travelers into the small towns. Every town has restaurants, onsen and festivals that are worth a try, but if people don't about them, then they won't go. The Inaka allows for JETs to upload recommendations and ratings for these establishments in the hopes of giving a helping hand to local businesses.



## What advice do you have for other JETs looking at starting their own initiative from scratch?

The best advice that I think I can give to anyone who has a project or activity they are thinking of doing is to just simply this: do it! Too often we let excuses like, "I don't know how" or "I don't know where to start" get in our way, and honestly those are terrible excuses. This time last year I was barely able to navigate my own laptop. With a lot of time, work and countless hours of "How To" videos on YouTube, I was able to make three websites and I learned a lot.

It is a process and you will fail over and over and over again, but eventually you will get it right. You just have to keep working at it. I know my advice is not original, but the truth rarely is.

Thanks for your time! And good luck with The Inaka!

# Culture

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn



When you think of Japanese culture, what springs to mind? Japanese culture spans thousands of years, and is instantly recognizable across the globe—think of maiko, of samurai, of salarymen, Pokemon, Dragonball, Tokyo’s skyline, Harajuku girls, Mount Fuji... the list is seemingly endlessly. It’s a fascinating patchwork, and trying to understand it is an ongoing challenge for the foreigner living in Japan.

I live in Shimane Prefecture, arguably the birthplace of Japanese culture, in a small city where I am immersed in the culture of everyday life in Japan. I ride a bike to work, eat with chopsticks, greet my neighbours in Japanese and enjoy a life quite different from my former life in Canada.

In the culture pages of Connect, it’s my hope to achieve two things: first, to introduce some of the more interesting aspects of both traditional and modern Japanese culture and hopefully shed some light on them; and second, to share our stories as people from other countries who have made our home here. To do this, I need your help, your stories and your knowledge about Japan. You can send your writing, ideas or comments to me at [sarah.blenkhorn@ajet.net](mailto:sarah.blenkhorn@ajet.net).

In this issue of Connect, we offer an insight into Japanese etiquette, starting with introductions and greetings, and a rundown on autumn in Japan. Inspired by my climb up Mount Fuji this summer, I’ve looked into the significance, history and geology of the most-climbed mountain in the world.

I hope you enjoy the read!

# THE MOUNTAIN

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

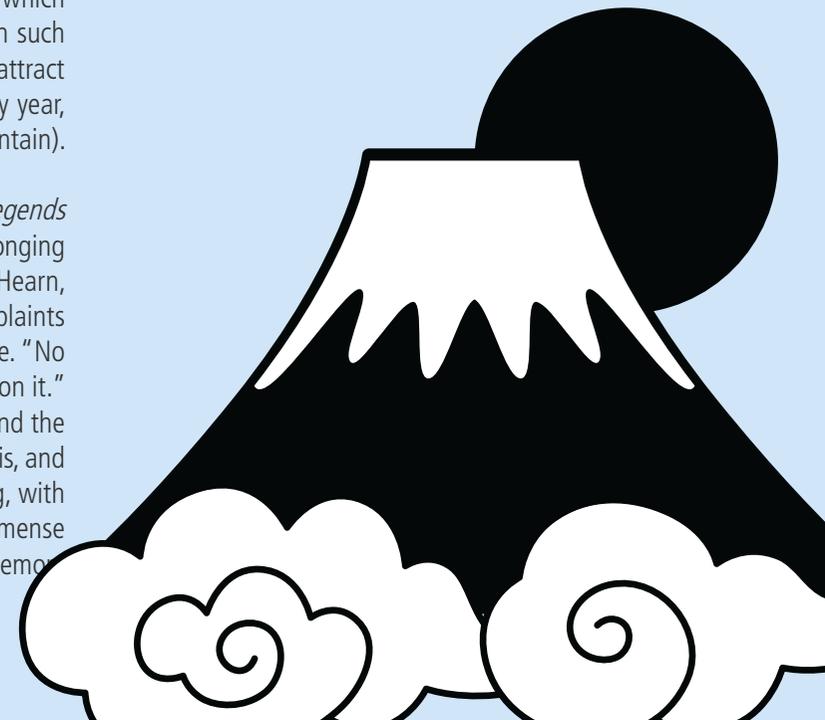
富士山

仙客來遊雲外巔  
神龍棲老洞中澗  
雪如丸素煙如柄  
白扇倒懸東海天

*“this great peak above the clouds, where wizards come for sport,  
the deep pools of whose caverns ageless dragons have inhabited,  
the snow, like white silk, the rising smoke, like a handle,  
a great white fan inverted, in the heavens above the eastern sea”*

So Ishikawa Jozan (1583-1672), a famous poet of the early Edo era, described Mount Fuji, capturing the spirit with which Japanese icon has traditionally been viewed in its homeland. There are few places or things in Japan imbued with such reverence as its soaring peak. It has inspired countless works of art and literature over millennia, and continues to attract earnest pilgrims and adventurous thrill-seekers to scale its flanks—about 300, 000 people climb Mount Fuji every year, most of them with the intention of viewing Fujisan’s *go-raiko* (五来光: a sunrise viewed from the top of a high mountain).

Of course, Fuji has captured the imagination of the West as well. F. Hadland Davis, in his 1912 book *Myths and Legends of Japan*, recorded this description of the mountain: “Fuji dominates life by its silent beauty: sorrow is hushed, longing quieted, peace seems to flow down from that changeless home of peace, the peak of the white lotus.” Lafcadio Hearn, an author beloved in Japan, had climbed Mount Fuji fourteen years earlier, in 1889. His diary is crammed with complaints about the physical strain of the climb. His first impression from the top of the mountain was significantly less effusive. “No spot in this world can be more horrible, more atrociously dismal, than the cindered tip of the Lotus as you stand upon it.” But despite his discomfort, he too was seized by the magic of the moment: “. . .the view for a hundred leagues—and the light of the far faint dreamy world—and the fairy vapors of morning—and the marvelous wreathings of cloud: all this, and only this, consoles me for the labor and the pain. . . . Other pilgrims, earlier climbers--poised upon the highest crag, with faces turned to the tremendous East--are clapping their hands in Shinto prayer, saluting the mighty Day. . . . The immense poetry of the moment enters into me with a thrill. I know that the colossal vision before me has already become a memory ineffaceable. . . .”



The meaning of the name “Fujisan” itself is moot. Some say it derives from the Ainu language used by the Japanese aboriginal people and means “everlasting life.” Others say that the name is from the Yamato language and refers to Fuchi, the Buddhist fire goddess. The kanji that make up the name Fuji (富士) were selected long after the mountain was named, and chosen because their pronunciation matched the name.

Mount Fuji stands at 3,776 meters, or 12,285 feet, ranking it the 35<sup>th</sup> tallest mountain in the world. Its diameter is thirty miles, and it stands on the border of Shizuoka and Yamanashi prefectures. Mount Fuji is 62 miles (100 kilometers) west of Tokyo and, on clear days, can be viewed from the Japanese capital.

### Myths and Legends

Fujisan is said to have been created in one night, startling the local family of woodcutters who witnessed it. (This does roughly correspond with geological evidence of an eruption in the early B.C. era.) From those early days, Fuji has been regarded as sacred. It has been the home of numerous gods, spanning the Shinto and Buddhists faiths. Shinto teachings see Fuji as the dwelling of Sengen, the Shinto goddess of nature, whilst since Buddhist times Fuji has been the dwelling of Dainichi Nyorai, the Buddha of All-Illuminating Wisdom. In Buddhist thought, Fujisan is one of the three holy mountains of Japan, along with Mount Tate and Mount Haku. Those of the Fujiko sect believe the mountain itself is a being, with its own soul.

### Climbing Mount Fuji

*“If you never climb Mount Fuji, you are a fool, but if you climb it more than once you are also a fool.”*

*“Fujisan is a mountain for looking at, not for climbing.”*

The first known ascent of Mount Fuji was by a monk around 700 A.D. According to legend, the climber was

Buddhist monk En-no-Shokaku, the founder of Shugendo, a sect that stresses physical endurance as the path to enlightenment.

For centuries, only holy men and male followers were permitted to climb the mountain. However, after the Meiji restoration, the mountain was opened to all who wished to climb it. The first ascent by a foreigner was by Sir Rutherford Alcock in September 1860. Lady Fanny Parkes, the wife of British ambassador Sir Harry Parkes, was the first non-Japanese woman to ascend Mount Fuji in 1867, ignoring the ban on female climbers to do so.

Mount Fuji is the most climbed mountain in the world with approximately 300,000 people trekking to the summit every year. About 30% of climbers are foreigners.

The official season to climb Mount Fuji is in July and August when the weather is mild and most of the snow has melted. It can be extremely busy on the mountain, with queues at congested sections. The steep climb, following four different trails, usually takes 8 to 12 hours to ascend and another 4 to 6 hours to descend. Weather conditions on Mt Fuji are so unstable that the climbing season is limited to these two months. In the off-season, Mt Fuji is prone to avalanches and wind conditions similar to those found on an 8,000m Himalayan summit. Climbers have been literally blown off the mountain to their deaths, or have succumbed to hypothermia.

A lesser problem is altitude sickness, which commonly occurs above 2,500 meters. If you suddenly feel dizzy, abnormally fatigued or have difficulty breathing, have a good rest or make a slow descent.

There are plenty of great guides online for hiking Fuji—if you’re considering the trek yourself, please check them out beforehand!

### Still Alive and Kicking

*“Volcanoes are either active or dead, and Fuji isn’t dead”*  
~Tsutomu Takekawa, the mayor of Fujiyoshida, a town near Mount Fuji

Mt Fuji is a young, active volcano, dormant but not extinct. The volcano is above a subduction zone where the Philippine Sea plate is sinking beneath Japan. However, Mount Fuji is not solely generated by the subduction of plates. Scientists at Kyoto University have discovered a tear in the Philippine Sea Plate directly beneath Mount Fuji that permits enormous volumes of mantle material to replenish Mount Fuji’s magma chamber.

There are actually three volcanoes within Mount Fuji’s cone. Fuji has erupted at least 16 times since 781 AD., with the largest recorded eruptions occurring in 1050 and 930 BC. The last significant eruption was in 1707. The explosive eruption ejected 850 million cubic meters of ash and effectively blocked out the sun in southern Kanto, causing starvation in nearby regions and raining ash as far away as Tokyo.

Experts don’t know if the next eruption is close or a hundred years away, but they are generally agreed that there will be one.

### Fuji’s “Suicide Forest”

Aokigahara, the ‘sea of trees’, is a forest at the foot of the mountain. Folk tales tell of demons, ghosts, and goblins haunting the forest, and Aokigahara used to be one of many places poor families abandoned the very young and old. Aokigahara is the world’s second most popular suicide location after San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge.

# AUTUMN BREEZES

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

I have often heard Japanese people boast, with unexpected pride, “Japan has four seasons.” This is often followed up with, “How about your country? Does it have four seasons?” Well, yes, I reply, Canada does indeed have four seasons—although summer is woefully short and winter painfully long. That being said, even a Canadian winter pales in comparison with the length of the Japanese history—two millennia and counting—of celebrating each season and the treasured symbols of each.

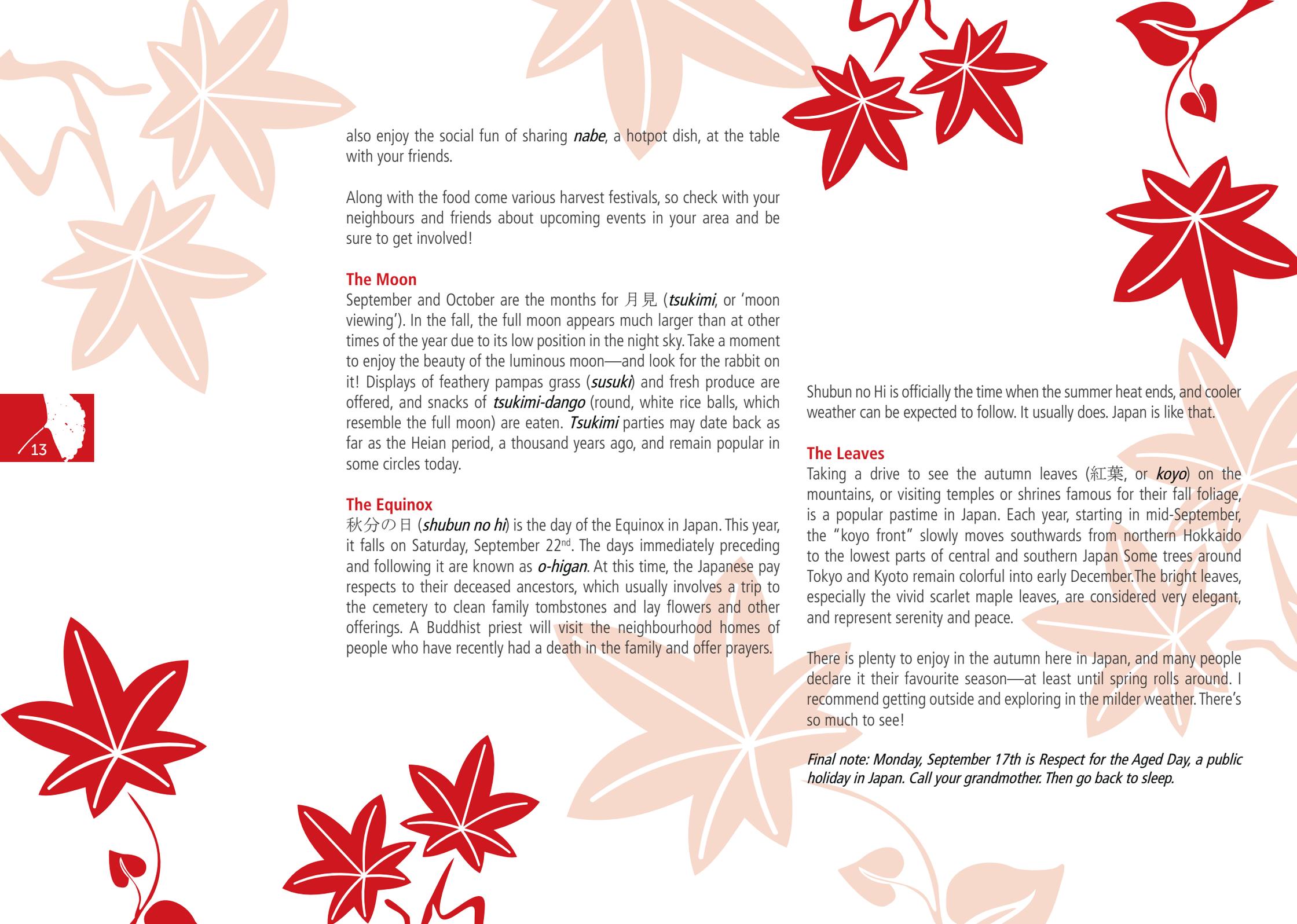
With autumn upon us and the grueling heat and humidity of summer in the Land of the Rising Sun almost broken, it’s time to look at the coming season. What does autumn mean in Japan? What can we look forward to in the next few months? Here are four major symbols relating to fall in Japan.

## The Food

In my experience, when asked what is best about fall in Japan, most Japanese people will instantly reference the season’s “delicious food.” This is definitely a country that takes its food seriously, and autumn has been dubbed 旬の食材 (*shun no shokuzai*, or ‘the season of fresh food’) for good reason.

This is the time of harvest, when heavy, golden-headed rice stalks blossom in the fields, conjuring up images of steaming white grains at the table; of *tatami* and *nihonshu*. But the harvest season is not just about rice. The fields, forests and trees yield chestnuts, persimmons, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, ginko nuts and fresh mushrooms, including *matsutake*, a highly prized and very expensive mushroom that can be compared to the European truffle. From the sea comes *sanma*, or mackerel pike. Toward the end of the fall season, you can find *oden*, a simple stew with a variety of ingredients, in any convenience store, and





also enjoy the social fun of sharing *nabe*, a hotpot dish, at the table with your friends.

Along with the food come various harvest festivals, so check with your neighbours and friends about upcoming events in your area and be sure to get involved!

### The Moon

September and October are the months for 月見 (*tsukimi*, or 'moon viewing'). In the fall, the full moon appears much larger than at other times of the year due to its low position in the night sky. Take a moment to enjoy the beauty of the luminous moon—and look for the rabbit on it! Displays of feathery pampas grass (*susuki*) and fresh produce are offered, and snacks of *tsukimi-dango* (round, white rice balls, which resemble the full moon) are eaten. *Tsukimi* parties may date back as far as the Heian period, a thousand years ago, and remain popular in some circles today.

### The Equinox

秋分の日 (*shubun no hi*) is the day of the Equinox in Japan. This year, it falls on Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The days immediately preceding and following it are known as *o-higan*. At this time, the Japanese pay respects to their deceased ancestors, which usually involves a trip to the cemetery to clean family tombstones and lay flowers and other offerings. A Buddhist priest will visit the neighbourhood homes of people who have recently had a death in the family and offer prayers.

Shubun no Hi is officially the time when the summer heat ends, and cooler weather can be expected to follow. It usually does. Japan is like that.

### The Leaves

Taking a drive to see the autumn leaves (紅葉, or *koyo*) on the mountains, or visiting temples or shrines famous for their fall foliage, is a popular pastime in Japan. Each year, starting in mid-September, the "koyo front" slowly moves southwards from northern Hokkaido to the lowest parts of central and southern Japan. Some trees around Tokyo and Kyoto remain colorful into early December. The bright leaves, especially the vivid scarlet maple leaves, are considered very elegant, and represent serenity and peace.

There is plenty to enjoy in the autumn here in Japan, and many people declare it their favourite season—at least until spring rolls around. I recommend getting outside and exploring in the milder weather. There's so much to see!

*Final note: Monday, September 17th is Respect for the Aged Day, a public holiday in Japan. Call your grandmother. Then go back to sleep.*

# ON JAPANESE ETIQUETTE

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Etiquette: the customs or rules governing behaviour regarded as correct or acceptable in social or official life.

A country can be defined by its rules of etiquette, and Japan's in particular are known for their formality and detail. Although social conduct in Japan has changed a lot, especially since the Second World War, proper etiquette is still regarded as an important way to build and maintain harmonious relationships.

Trying to navigate daily life, make friends and get along with co-workers can be a challenging task for foreigners living in Japan, bowed over by the intricacies of Japanese etiquette. Some simply choose to ignore it, not really minding or noticing if they come across as socially clumsy or boorish. Others try to be polite and worry about how we come across: are we wearing the wrong slippers? Was the bow to the mayor too long? Did I just say "Thanks for the great meal" when I meant to say "Thanks for your hard work" again?

Generally, Japanese people don't expect people from other countries to know all of the Japanese rules of etiquette, and many are familiar with Western customs, such as greetings (including the infamous "Hihowareyou,Iamfinet hankyou,andyou?" that ALTs are barraged with every day) and shaking hands. However, that shouldn't be taken as an invitation to resignation. Asking questions about what to do and showing a willingness to learn will win you a lot of good feeling in Japan. The best thing you can do in any given situation is to observe what people around you are doing and then imitate them.

***Let's start with some basics!***

## Introductions

Introductions between people are usually conducted by a third party known to both people. If possible, you should wait to be introduced. Try not to make extended eye contact, as it can make people uncomfortable.

Depending on the relationships (a casual friend, a co-worker, a boss, et cetera) introductions can seem excessively formal and polite. It's difficult to form close relationships, particularly professional ones, quickly in Japan – they tend to be built slowly, based on regular interaction, eating and drinking together, and establishing your credibility.

## Bowing

Japan is the home of the polite bow, and the rules governing it are complex. As a teacher in a commercial high school, several times I have witnessed the entire student body practicing correct bowing, with correct timing and body angles (1 second, 15 degrees for a light bow, and 3 seconds, 30 degrees for a formal one). The bow is used to greet people, say farewell, show respect, show humility, apologize and express understanding.

As a foreigner in Japan, bowing takes time to learn, but a polite little bow is acceptable in most circumstances. Some people new to Japan take bowing to an extreme. I witnessed a young teacher bowing to everyone at a party in a bar as if they were the prime minister, and holding the bow for thirty seconds. The Japanese recipients of his bows giggled nervously, unsure if he was crazy or making fun of them.

Bowing becomes more natural to us the longer we stay in Japan. As I was talking to my senior teacher at school the other day, the principal unexpectedly came out of his office behind us. I turned and gave a formal bow. The teacher, chuckling, said, "You bow like a Japanese person!"

## Names and Titles

Japanese people commonly address each other by surname. Only close friends and children are usually addressed by their first name. In addition, people rarely address each other just by name, but usually attach an appropriate title to the name. The most often-used titles are:

- ♦ **-san:** this is the most frequently used, and can be seen as the equivalent of Mister, Missus or Miss;
- ♦ **-sama:** this is the formal version of -san and is frequently used in written correspondence. It is too polite for casual situations;
- ♦ **-kun:** this is an informal address for boys;
- ♦ **-chan:** this is an informal address for children, family members and very close friends;
- ♦ **-sensei:** this is used for teachers and doctors especially;

## Receiving Name Cards

(名刺, or meishi)

Exchanging name cards is not so common amongst casual friends, but in more formal situations, people frequently exchange name cards. The cards establish who a person is (name, company, rank, et cetera) and, more importantly, how they should be addressed. If you are given a name card, take it in both hands, read it carefully, and then acknowledge it with a bow. Treat it carefully and with respect. Don't write on it, fold it or put it in your back pocket.

As a proud Brit, I eagerly awaited the opening ceremony for the 2012 Olympics to see how my country would artistically represent itself to the outside world following the slick propaganda machine of the preceding Beijing Games. Featuring a flatulent comedy mute, traffic wardens dancing to glam-rock, pyjama-clad youths somersaulting on gurneys and a parachuting, knicker-exposing Queen, it was safe to say: if the ceremony's aim was to retain Britain's reputation as a nation of eccentrics, it definitely deserved a gold medal.

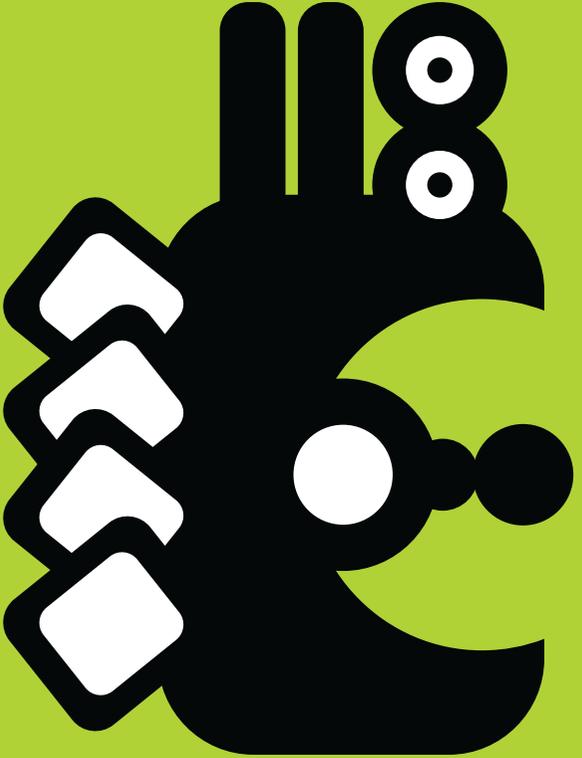
Japan's take on entertainment can be equally baffling and downright peculiar. Why do adverts and pop videos always have to resemble the most vivid of cheese dreams? Why are there so many sobbing women in inset boxes on TV shows? And how do they work out the royalty cheques for AKB48?

However, despite the constant puzzlement, Japan's music, film, TV and literature can offer a fascinating insight into what makes the country tick. Whether you're fresh off the plane and sampling the delights of Pocky, Pokemon and purikura for the first time, or are a fully adapted, bi-cultured stage 4-er, Japan's rich, diverse entertainment output can continue to provide a box of delights to be discovered.

In this month's issue, we review the Summer Sonic festival that took place in August as well as debunking some of the mystery surrounding the comedic art of manzai.

We are always looking for contributors for this section, so if you're interested in writing any features or reviews about anything entertainment-related, please contact me at [chris.barstow@ajet.net](mailto:chris.barstow@ajet.net).

*Chris Barstow is a second year ALT in Yamagata Prefecture. He believes that the Olympic programme would be enhanced by the addition of mamachari road racing, daikon tossing and gurney somersaulting.*



# ENTERTAINMENT



# SUMMER SONIC 2012

Steven Thompson

What do Green Day, Franz Ferdinand, Sigur Ros, Gotye, Passion Pit, Pitbull, Ke\$ha, Rihanna, and the giant city-destroying monster Godzilla have in common? They all descended on Tokyo and speak little Japanese. . . . and they all make great music (well, I don't really care for Ke\$ha, myself)! These artists were just a few in the impressive roster of Summer Sonic attendees this summer. Across two days in August, more than 130 artists and bands showed *up* to show *off* in Chiba's QVC Marine Field. The event straddled all genres from thrash to electronic, pop-rock to rock-rap. There are few other festivals in Japan (or indeed, *the world*) where you can be entranced by the grungy guitars of Garbage in one hour, then walk next door to the intoxicating nostalgia of Tears for Fears (who caught me off guard with a melancholy re-making of "Billie Jean"!).

The festival itself was decently crowded, but organizers managed to avoid making this a problem with an "L and R block system," assigning each attendee to either the left or right entrances for two different areas. As a result, entry to your venue of choice was never too much of a chore. There were seven stages in all, although most of the headliners played on the three main stages (two of which were actually inside air-conditioned buildings). But wait, what kind of festival is it if I'm not muddy and sweating in a field? Well, my friend, it's an awesome one, that's what. I was much more comfortable dancing indoors to Passion Pit's performance than I was moshing outside during Green Day. Passion Pit's Michael Angelakos was shockingly pitch-perfect and full of energy, a surprise for those who saw the band two years ago at the festival and were underwhelmed; they performed a string of singles from their critically-acclaimed *Manners* album as well as several new tracks from *Gossamer*, which was released this summer.

Green Day showed how the veterans roll, their two-hour set closing the night on Saturday. The crowd exploded with excitement when Billie Joe asked if there were any "old school Green Day" fans in the crowd. For those who

answered "yes," they did not disappoint, playing tracks from their vintage "*Dookie*" and "*Insomniac*" albums, such as "Geek Stink Breath" and one of my personal favorites, "Longview." Along with their two-hour set, they were one of the few acts to also play an encore.

Sigur Ros was the other headlining act for Friday night. Brent Barron, an ALT in Fukushima prefecture, said of them, "Sigur Ros is a religious experience, pretty much. For over an hour and a half, people just stand there listening, hardly moving, being entirely swept away. His songs all push past the 6-7 [minute] mark, and all bloom really slowly until they just burst apart toward the end and you're flung headfirst into musical nirvana. Then it's over and you weren't even moving, but you're breathless and, holy wow, I need to see them again before I die." (Apparently, Adam Lambert was playing at the same time as Sigur Ros. A person who actually went to see Adam Lambert could not be reached for comment).

Sunday's lineup belonged mainly to hip hop and pop. Pitbull, Ke\$ha, Gym Class Heroes, Azealia Banks, and Rihanna all drew sizable crowds throughout the day. Bands that defy genre-labeling also took the stage on Sunday, with Foster the People, Jamiroquai, Garbage, and Tears for Fears all putting on great sets.

The Marine Stage's schedule on Sunday started with Pitbull, who controlled the stage incredibly well, and seemed to always be moving, despite the oppressive heat on Sunday. Ke\$ha, in an uncharacteristic act of unprofessionalism, began her set more than thirty minutes late, hardly compensating with a lethargic and uncommitted performance. She didn't disappoint, however, when it came to talking about glitter and alcohol.

Rihanna rocked the stage with impressive choreography and an elaborate Egyptian set in the evening, performing

her entire catalogue of singles. While she seemed less comfortable performing her older material in the first half of her performance, by the time Rihanna launched into her household-name hits—"Don't Stop the Music," "Only Girl," and "Umbrella"—her act was polished and impressive. Her energetic show ended on a high note, with fireworks erupting from behind the stadium, timed perfectly to the climax of Rihanna's last song. You could literally feel the floor of the stadium moving from all the jumping around.

On the other side of the festival, Garbage and Tears for Fears were both wrapping up great performances.



Garbage was one of the few bands I saw whose sound levels were consistently perfect and loud (for some reason, many of the acts, even the outside ones, were quiet). Frontman Shirley Manson, vibrant in bright red, remarked on the fact that it had been ten years since they'd last played at Summer Sonic. She also echoed a remark heard throughout the day: that the crowd was bigger than she'd ever seen before, and more enthusiastic and involved than ever.

For Tears for Fears, it had been a staggering twenty seven years since they had last played in Japan, and aside from playing familiar hits like "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," they also played the often-covered "Mad World." Singers Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith traded off on different songs. Although Smith seemed to be having more fun, Orzabal certainly outperformed him. Even this, however, was not enough to draw the crowds: the turnout for their show barely filled half the venue.

Gotye put on a crowd-pleasing set on Friday night featuring fan-favorites from "Like Drawing Blood," and the inescapable track "Somebody That I Used to Know" from "Making Mirrors." Able to play several instruments throughout a single song, Gotye also had one rare quality among the Western musicians: he could speak Japanese. Many artists that played at Summer Sonic seemed to have been taught a single word: arigatou. Though admittedly some were a bit bolder, daring to try an "arigatou gozaimasu," anything beyond that was a rarity. An exception was Billie Joe of Green Day, who formed a habit of shouting "Genki?!" at the crowd every few minutes, to thunderous replies. Of course, the Japanese audience could understand the English "Thank you"s and "I love Japan"s that were thrown out, but more complicated directions were often hilariously met with silence. Gotye, on the other hand, was not only chatting with the audience, but even kept his Japanese going when the performance was having PC problems, bemoaning "PC...baka desu!"

The overall lack of Japanese ability from the performers underscores the interesting nature of popular music in Japan. Japan consumes a prodigious amount of Western music and the Japanese turn out in their thousands for concerts by Western artists, yet those very artists are unable to participate in the impromptu back-and-forth that is usually a staple of any live music concert. What's more, of the few Japanese acts that I checked out, only one (the Okinawan band, Begin) drew a crowd remotely comparable to the Western headliners. Even Walk off the Earth—a lesser-known Western group that gained rapid fame via a YouTube cover of Gotye's "Somebody that I Used to Know"—drew a huge crowd on the beach, easily out-sizing the turnout to most of the Japanese bands' sets. Perhaps it's simply because many of the Japanese acts are much more easily accessible in their native Japan throughout the year, but it was certainly a trend one couldn't help but notice across the two-day event.

That being said, Summer Sonic was a shining example of the ability of music to leap language barriers and bring people together. Crammed in shoulder-to-shoulder to watch their favorite bands play, foreign and Japanese festival-goers alike forged new friendships, carved from such simplicities as a shared lyrical knowledge of Rihanna's "Umbrella."

If that isn't grassroots internationalization, tell me what is.

*Steven Thompson is a second-year ALT living in Fukushima prefecture. As his students have keenly observed, he is a "tall man every day." When not maintaining his height or providing his services as a jungle gym for the local kindergarten, he writes fiction, blasts classic rock in the car, and encourages Japanese gamers online to trash talk. He is also your friendly neighborhood Connect Events editor for this year. He will not perform Rihanna on demand at karaoke.*

All photos used with permission of the person who took them, Brent Barron, who also gave his consent to be quoted in the article.



Amongst all of its diverse arts genres, it's perhaps fair to say that Japanese comedy is more prone than most to be lost in translation to the casual foreign observer. However, beneath its slapstick shell, the Japanese comedy style of *manzai* is a surprisingly skilful art form with a rich history which belies its role as a modern day TV variety show staple.

The fast-paced double-act stand-up comedy of manzai revolves around the repartee of a straight man (*tuskkomi*) and a funny man (*boke*), not unlike western acts such as Abbott and Costello and Morecambe and Wise. The performers (*manzaishi*) exploit double meanings, puns and malapropisms in their self-written material for comedic effect, with the frantic pace of delivery adding to the impact of the punchlines. As well as witty wordplay, manzaishi also incorporates elements of physical comedy, with the *tsukkomi* often berating the *boke* for his linguistic errors and misunderstandings by striking him on the head. It is also common for props such as paper fans (*harisen*) and drums to be incorporated into the routine.

Manzai's roots reputedly stem from the Heian Period between 794 and 1185, where male duos would travel around their neighborhoods and perform entertaining routines to help celebrate the New Year. However, the modern day version of manzai was cultivated in the Osaka area in the 1930s by the Yoshimoto Kogyo company, who remain leaders in the genre to this day. Acts such as Entatsu Yokoyama and Achako Hanabishi evolved the genre from its historic form by incorporating slapstick elements borrowed from the era's Hollywood comedy icons. Although it is now popular nationwide, the Kansai area remains the spiritual home of manzai, with most acts performed in a rapidly spoken local dialect, peppered with regional slang.

Takeshi Kitano, famous for directing art-house movies such as 'Violent Cop' and 'Hana-bi', started his career as a member of the manzai act 'The Two Beats' alongside Kiyoshi Kaneko. Together, they pushed the boundaries of taste and decency as they grew to become manzai's most popular act in the 1970s.

Variety show hosts Hitoshi Matsumoto and Masatoshi Hamada, otherwise known as 'Downtown', also had an influential impact on the development of manzai. Their unorthodox meandering delivery, combined with their lack of acknowledgement of their audience in their routines, set them apart from their contemporaries and helped them become huge stars in late 1980s and early 1990s. Whilst they have diversified their output subsequently, their legacy can still be seen in manzai acts of the modern day.

As well as their continued presence on TV variety shows, manzai acts also can be seen at a number of live venues such as Namba Grand Kagetsu Theater in Osaka. Kansai's pride in its comedic heritage can also be seen at the Osaka Prefectural Museum of Kamigata Comedy and Performing Arts, where costumes and artifacts relating to manzai can be found.

Whilst perhaps a decent knowledge of the Japanese language might be required to get a full appreciation of the linguistic nuances of manzai, there is still something universally appealing about people being repeatedly hit over the head. And for that, no translation at all is needed...



# MANZAI

THE JAPANESE ART FORM

# Events

Steven Thompson

Hello and welcome to the September issue of Connect! Whether you've just arrived in Japan, or have just returned from a lengthy summer break, you'll soon be settling into a normal work schedule in your home away from home. But that doesn't have to define your next year: with the weekends come opportunities to escape the staff room and dive into whatever's going on in your local area. To help you do that, we've made you a lovely events calendar, which will give you a nice overview of some of the biggest and best events throughout Japan for this month, including the Yokohama Beer Festival and an ALT Soccer Tournament! Check it out if you have a free weekend that's just begging for a road trip!

For those of you who can't get out this month, or are trying to save your yennies, I have some information for you about the yearly tradition of moon-viewing. It's an event that literally anyone can participate in and enjoy this September, so have a read if you're looking for a simple and beautiful event right in your own backyard.

This month in Events we're talking about my own local area Tohoku, where—the old adage goes—civilization once “ceased to exist.” Nowadays we're much more civilized up here. We while away as many hours on YouTube as the city folk, and put on a whole funhouse of festivals throughout the fall. For September, Aoife Bradley and Chris Barstow both report on Yamagata's Hanagasa Matsuri, a festival on a similar scale to Sendai's Tanabata. Chris provides some background on the festival for the unacquainted, whilst Aoife tells us about her experience participating in the parade with her school!

Also this month, Brad York speaks about his experience organizing a club-music and dance event under the broader group of festivals called Project Fukushima. This is a project which hopes to revitalize the Fukushima area and challenge the assumptions that have built around the prefecture in the past year. Brad also explores what each individual can do to make a difference in their own area, no matter where they live.

But don't just read about amazing adventures and wonderful events, go out there yourself! Find something to participate in, stumble into a festival without planning to, let people invite you out, and say 'yes' as often as you can. You'll be surprised where you wind up, and make awesome memories, I guarantee you! What's more, don't stop there: be sure to share your memories with the whole JET Community with a report for next month's Events section. It's as simple as sending me an email at [steven.thompson@ajet.net](mailto:steven.thompson@ajet.net)! I can't wait to talk to you!

*Steven Thompson is a second-year ALT living in Fukushima prefecture. He learned this summer that the sun in Japan can burn you just like the one in Florida. He's excited to be editing the Events section, as it means he can drive halfway across the country for “research.” He is also the co-president of Fukushima AJET, and wants to give Fukushima a big ol' hug.*



# JAPAN EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER 2012

Event name	Location	Date
Owara Kaze-no-bon festival	Yatsuo-machi, Toyama City, Toyama	Sept. 1-3
Echigo-Tsumari Triannual Art Festival	Tokamachi city, Niigata	Sept. 1-17
Karsau Children's Sumo Tournament	Kamigamo Shrine, Kyoto city, Kyoto	Sept. 9
Fall Grand Sumo Tournament	Tokyo Ryogoku Kokugikan, Tokyo	Sept. 12-26
Jugoya (Moon viewing)	Throughout Japan	Sept. 12
Sapporo Autumn Food Festival	Odori Park, Sapporo, Hokkaido	Sept. 14-30
Itoman Great Tug of War	Itoman City, Okinawa	Sept. 14
Chokusai Iwashimizu Festival	Yawata, Kyoto	Sept. 15
Great Japan Beer Festival (BeerFes)	Yokohama, Kanagawa	Sept. 15-17
Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Festival	Kamakura city, Kanagawa	Sept. 15-17
Kumamoto Drunken Horse Festival	Kumamoto city, Kumamoto	Sept. 16
Open Day at Heian Shrine	Kyoto city, Kyoto	Sept. 19
Tokyo Game Show	Chiba, Tokyo	Sept. 22-23
Fukushima Samurai Festival	Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima	Sept. 23
Kyoto Comb Festival	Higashiyama, Kyoto city, Kyoto	Sept. 26
ALT Soccer Tournament	Sugadaira, Nagano	Sept. 29-30
Confucius Festival	Nagasaki city, Nagasaki	Sept. 29



# MOON-VIEWING IN JAPAN

Steven Thompson

*Otsukimi* (お月見 literally “moon viewing”) is a Japan-wide event that takes place every year in September or October, to correspond with the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the Chinese lunar calendar, *jugoya*. This day is said to be the day when the full moon is at its brightest and most beautiful of any time during the year. Out of the twelve full moons we get in a year, the autumnal harvest moon is thought to be the most sublime. This year, it falls on a Wednesday night, September 12<sup>th</sup>, and provides a perfect mid-week break in which to relax and take in the simple beauty of the full moon. This is an event that pretty much every JET can participate in, no matter where you live in Japan. All across the country—at temples, shrines, and parks—people will gather to take part. Even if there’s no official moon-viewing going on in your town or village, chances are there will be something in the nearby area. Almost certainly one of your friends or coworkers is doing something at their house. There’s really nothing special to be done besides enjoy a quiet moment under the full moon. In the entire year, there are few other events that are so both so accessible and yet so humbling. It’s certainly grounding to think that, all throughout Japan, millions of people will be looking up at the same moon you are. The same moon shining down on our loved ones back home, too.

A popular saying in Japan says, “better *dango* than blossoms,” meaning a feast for the eyes pales in comparison to an actual culinary feast. There’s no need to be so cynical when it comes to moon viewing, though, as you can enjoy *tsukimi dango* while appreciating the harvest moon. That way, you can fill both your eyes and your stomach with beauty. Traditional Japanese arts are also often observed during *otsukimi*, such as music, dance, and tea ceremony. The common thread for these collaborating events is that they focus on quiet, relaxed beauty, rather than the loud, flashy kind found at your usual town matsuri. Nothing is quite so peaceful and refreshing as sitting on *tatami* drinking fresh green tea, watching the moon to a background accompaniment of *koto*.

If you have a few hours this September 12<sup>th</sup>, I’d encourage you to find a nice spot in your area and have a look at the sky. Bring some friends with you, or make some new ones. Consider it a trial run for all the festivals and events you’ll be participating in this year. Spend some time connecting with Japan, and make sure to keep an eye out for the rabbit-making *mochi* who lives on the moon.

*Steven Thompson is a second-year ALT living in Fukushima prefecture. Since he never plans anything in advance, he fully advocates gate-crashing local festivals and eating all their fried food.*

- The image labeled “Moon Viewing” was shot at Katsurahama beach in Kochi, Japan and is used with permission by the Kochi International Association.
- The image labeled “Otsukimi Dango” is also from Kochi, Japan and is used with permission by the KIA.
- The image “Rabbits and the Moon” is, to the best of my knowledge, a public-domain image commonly used on personal blogs.



# PROJECT FUKUSHIMA

Bradley York

“未来はわたしたちの手で  
The future is in our hands.”

Five months after the disasters, the rally cry of Project Fukushima remains unchanged. Project Fukushima began when Michiro Endo, Yoshihide Otomo and Ryoichi Wago, two established musicians and a poet all born or raised in Fukushima, came together to address the stigma that was quickly being attached to the prefecture's name. They sought to give a voice to the people of Fukushima, whose 'story' had so far been told primarily through media in Tokyo. In their mission statement, the founders endeavored to hold a festival,

“Even amidst a crisis that may cause our hometowns to be lost. We would like to think about the future of Fukushima by retaining its connection with the outside world and the hope of continuing to live in this land. For that too, we need a festival. We need a place where people can gather to converse.”

The free festival took place near Fukushima City and included over 400 performers and nearly 13,000 attendees. It also featured a 6,000 square-meter quilt made from *furoshiki* (multi-purpose cloth) collected from all over the country. The *furoshiki* was symbolic in that it functioned as both a practical solution to the potential of cesium exposure, and as a work of art with a message: working together, the people of Fukushima could contain the spread of radiation. It was a great success, with NHK and other broadcasters even devoting special segments to covering the event.

From the dialogue that began there a year ago, Project Fukushima has since diversified to include Dommune Fukushima, an internet media broadcaster; School Fukushima, a platform for launching cultural workshops with group leaders in lieu of traditional teachers; and DIY Fukushima, which funds the organization by providing artists with a means to donate their works to be sold for charity. When considering this year's Festival Fukushima, however, the diversity of opinions and divisions that had become apparent since its inception led Otomo to reconsider the group's approach.

“Music and art make invisible lines visible, and cast doubt on them... At times, it occurs to me that the exact opposite of this richness is a message like “Let's unite as one.” Divisions come about because people say things like “Let's unite as one,” in spite of the fact that people have a variety of opinions. It's fine to say just after a disaster happens, “let's work on the cleanup together,” or, “let's work together to contain the damage.” But people cannot be united forever.”

To this end, the theme for Festival Fukushima 2012 became “Flags Across Borders,” with synchronized worldwide events central to its execution. The hope was that people throughout the world would gather together, using their own creative visions for a cultural event, large or small (the only requirements being the use of the word “Fukushima” in the title



and that flags be present). Flags, made from cleaned and decontaminated pieces of last year's gigantic *furoshiki*, could be distributed to participating events, or handmade flags could be created locally. These participants would all be joined in purpose, their unique approaches to the topic of 'Fukushima' the foundation of this global festival.

As a DJ and organizer of club-music events here in Fukushima for over ten years, I was excited to be one of the participants in this year's Festival Fukushima. Over four months, our loose-knit community of DJs worked with community members to secure a public park for a day and hold our own free festival. The festival became known as Dance Music Fukushima. As well as the array flags provided by Project Fukushima, it brought together more than thirty volunteers, forty DJs on three stages, and concluded with a live performance by Tokyo's Open Reel Ensemble. Various foods and local produce were sold while more than two hundred people, young and old alike, enjoyed the festive atmosphere.

Just as Project Fukushima's inaugural festival provided a springboard for its subsequent initiatives, we were able to launch our own Dance Music Fukushima charity. With any luck, our festival will continue annually. It wasn't a very large event by comparison, but I realized as more and more people came together to help make it happen, that we truly were a part of something bigger. It became apparent that ours, like every event under the blanket of this year's Festival Fukushima, would contribute to casting Fukushima in a more positive light. As Otomo Yoshihide concluded in a lecture given just months after 3/11, "It's no exaggeration to say that our future depends on whether the name 'Fukushima' remains saddled with negative connotations, or if it's remembered as being the honorable name of a place that took the initiative in creating a new future."

I am honored to continue to play a part in our new future.

*Bradley York is a former JET Programme participant who spent three years as an ALT in Fukushima City before joining the Koriyama City BOE as an elementary English Instructor. He rarely sees daylight on weekends and can be found routinely wandering the aisles of Daiso, daydreaming and scheming.*

*More info can be found at [www.pj-fukushima.jp](http://www.pj-fukushima.jp) and [www.facebook.com/DanceMusicFukushima](http://www.facebook.com/DanceMusicFukushima)*





The Hanagasa Festival has developed into one of the most popular festivals in Northern Japan, attracting up to a million spectators to Nanokamachi, the main thoroughfare of Yamagata City, every year. It has grown to feature around 100 marching groups and 10,000 participants, and has joined Sendai's Tanabata, Akita's Kanto, and Aomori's Nebuta in becoming an essential fixture of the summer *matsuri* calendar in Tohoku.

The festival takes its name from the cone-shaped bamboo hats adorned with red safflowers which are not only worn by participants, but also serve as props in the famous Hanagasa dance. Participants perform an elaborate 18-step formation dance, tapping, waving, and scooping the hats in time to the uplifting sounds of the 'Hanagasa Ondo'. The "Ondo" itself is characterised by its distinctively triumphant cries of '*yassho makasho*' set against taiko beats. It is based on an earlier Meiji-Taisho-era chant called the 'Dontsuki song,' which was popular throughout the region amongst agricultural workers whilst they were reaping the rice harvest.

Whilst the traditional dance routine is renowned for its sedate synchronised motions, recent years have seen an increase in dance troupes adding their own energetic twists to the Hanagasa, with sports teams and hip-hop dancers gyrating amongst the kimono-clad *obachan*. The result is a highly uplifting and dynamic festival, where the smells of delicious street food mingle in the summer heat with the energy of the *taiko* drummers to create an overwhelmingly positive vibe.

Taking place in the first weekend of August each year, a visit to Hanagasa is highly recommended, if only to witness that, despite its recent troubles, the Tohoku area has refused to shed its alluringly optimistic spirit.

*Chris Barstow is a second year ALT in Yamagata. What he lacks in rhythm when dancing the Hanagasa, he makes up for in enthusiasm...*



# HANAGASA

## AN INTRODUCTION

Chris Barstow

# HANAGASA, MY EXPERIENCE

Aoife Bradley

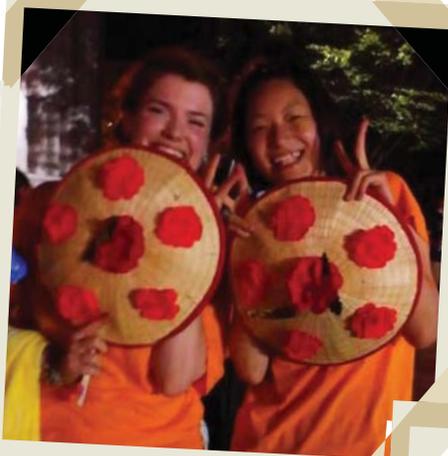
This year was my second time to participate in Hanagasa, and my first year to actually dance in the festival. Last year, my first proper encounter with my students at Ha-chu Junior High School was participating in Hanagasa with them. I rocked up to the meeting point in sweltering heat, wearing a luminous yellow *happi*, with no clue what was going to happen. Thankfully, I didn't have to dance, but just had to follow the students as they danced down Nanokamachi carrying a placard with the other school teachers.

That experience alone was such great fun that I didn't hesitate in agreeing to participate again this year... and ended up throwing my hand in twice! First, I once again served as my junior high school's personal placard-carrying mascot. However this time I received something of a promotion, walking as the "face of Ha-chu," alongside the principal and vice principal at the front of the group! Embarrassed as I was, having people of all ages sticking out their hand out to shake yours, snapping pictures of you from every angle, is certainly an experience to remember!

After this, I was also lucky enough to actually dance in the Hanagasa with my senior high school, Yamagata Commercial High School. Our group of about forty consisted of a handful of third-grade students, one of my JTEs and myself. I was pretty nervous. Although we had practiced a lot at school, I still wasn't sure that my hat spinning measured up to that of my peers. Noticing my nerves, one student offered to "*kawaii*" up my hair for the event! Emerging from her house with our hair did, we kitted ourselves up with our orange t-shirts (designed by the students), and put cute, glittery stickers on our faces (so cute even the usually-reserved boys couldn't resist)! Arriving alongside our rivals was such a rush: decked out in their similarly extravagant costumes, all the other groups looked amazing!

After a rain delay, lots of waiting around and copious amounts of picture-taking, it was finally our group's turn to start the dance down Nanokamachi. It was really fun, but my hat was it hot! The finesse of our hat spinning quickly wore off in the heat, but we *ganbatte'd* all the way to the end! I was happy to see so many familiar faces as we moved down the parade route, especially at the end where a group of ALTs and Yamagata buddies were waiting for us. We ended the procession with more photos, tons of water, and a shower of *otsukares!* It was such an awesome experience and one that I would certainly recommend you get involved in next year!

*Aoife Bradley is a second-year ALT in Yamagata City. When she is not pouring over the latest story involving Becky and the crew in New Horizon at JHS or introducing One Direction at SHS she is trying to convince people that Ireland and Iceland are different places and that she is not from the latter. While at the same time deflecting the question from students about whether the most recent male ALT seen in her company is her boyfriend. :)*



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Hello, old and new JETs, and welcome to the fashion and beauty section of Connect magazine! I hope you all had long, indulgent summers, and it was great meeting so many of you at Tokyo Orientation this year! This issue —the first Connect of 2012-2013—launches with Josiah Hussey's tackling Lady Gaga's latest Vogue cover. On a side note, expect the 'Fame' hype to last here for quite some time. I passed the futuristic Tokyu Plaza Omotesando Harajuku the other day, now furnished with a Lady Gaga pop-up store where her new perfume made its first Tokyo debut. As it turns out, everyone wants a spritz of Gaga's signature theatrics (inspired by Belladonna, the perfume is apparently 'black like the soul of fame but invisible once airborne'—yes, in both a metaphorical and literal sense) and it didn't look as if the little monster crush was destined to melt away any time soon.

Another major fashion event which took place over the summer was the launch of the highly anticipated Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama collaboration. Whether you're an art aficionado or a fashionista (or, as is likely, both), all parties should be excited by this partnership. Kusama pries the polka dot away from its usual twee connotations and gives it her own overtones of surreal obsession; it's interesting to see how she does this in fashion form, though she doesn't appear to have struggled too much. In her own words (as told to The Cut): "Marc Jacobs' sincere attitude towards art is the same as my own. I respect him as a wonderful designer. Louis Vuitton understands and appreciates the nature of my art. Therefore there isn't much difference from my process of making fashion."

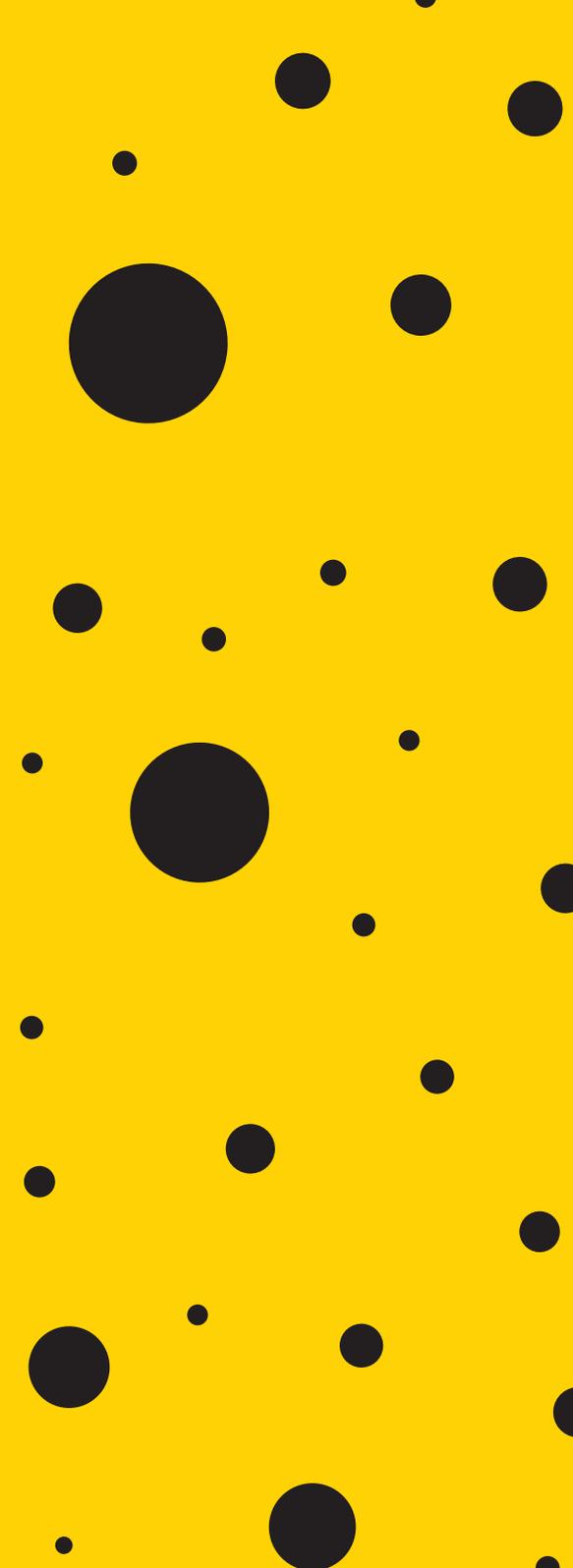
The fever surrounding this collaboration extends across the world. Selfridges department store in London has just revealed its perforated, polka-dotted concept store, designed exclusively for this collection, and 24 of the coveted display windows have been dedicated to it alone. If you're passing by a Louis Vuitton store in Japan, drop in and take a look. There's more of the collaboration to come this September, when the entire Yayoi Kusama bag collection will be revealed and released. But if you don't fancy journeying to one of the branches, check out 'Louis Vuitton x Yayoi Kusama—The Looks' or 'Louis Vuitton Presents Yayoi Kusama Her Story: Signature Patterns' on YouTube for a one-minute-something visual treat.

As ever, if you're interested in contributing to Connect's fashion and beauty section, or if you have any comments or questions, don't hesitate to contact me at [annabella.massey@ajet.net](mailto:annabella.massey@ajet.net). Have a great September!

*Annabella Massey is a second year UK ALT based in Yamanashi Prefecture.*



# FASHION & BEAUTY





# DON'T BE A DRAG, JUST BE A QUEEN: VOGUE GOES GAGA.

Josiah Hussey

Back to snag her second cover of the international fashion bible, agent provocateur Mother Monster is giving you everything you need

in dragged-out Muppet elegance. Gaga's second cover also marks the largest issue of Vogue to be released yet, at a staggering 900 pages. Launching a publicity circus to pimp her debut perfume, 'the most hyped celebrity fragrance ever' according to Elle Magazine, the cover shot and photo spread were leaked via Gaga's twitter. This makes for the second major promotional leak for Gaga this year. An earlier tweet contained a poster for her upcoming role in the *Machete* sequel, *Machete Kills*, hitting American theatres sometime in early 2013.

After the cover and a couple of photos were leaked over Twitter, Drag superstar Rupaul tweeted Gaga, giving her kudos for her "channeling" of him. Back in 2009 with World of Wonder productions, Rupaul debuted the first season of the cult reality competition *Rupaul's Drag Race*, "the search for America's next drag superstar." Now just out of its fourth season, the show has garnered widespread praise from fashion designers, celebrities, socialites and even professional athletes, such as Bob Mackie, Cher, Johnny Weir, Rick Fox, John Sally and Gaga herself. The climactic end to each episode, referred to as the *lip-sync for your life* where one queen is asked to *sashay away*, has (so far) featured two of Gaga's hit singles, 'Bad Romance' and 'Born This Way'. This season's winner, *Sharon Needles* (get it?), also received a personal tweet from Gaga, praising her for her ninth episode runway look.

Gaga's emulation of Rupaul has not gone unnoticed by fans. This has since sparked an online petition to get Goddess Wintour to put Rupaul on an upcoming cover of Vogue. Who wore it best? *Rupaul's Drag Race All Stars* premieres on American network Logo on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and I'll be religiously following it from overseas.

Gaga's cover shot has her in couture produced by the creative director of Louis Vuitton and prince of the LVMH Group, Marc Jacobs.

Flashing back to her debut Vogue cover in March 2011, Gaga wore a cream coloured, kimono-inspired mini dress by Haider Ackermann, a major dark horse in the fashion industry. As with the other Antwerp designers (the Antwerp Six; Ann Demeulemeester and Dries Van Noten), Ackermann's eerily beautiful aesthetics—like Jean Paul Gaultier on Quaaludes—possess that gritty aura of unappreciated genius that once surrounded Gaga, making him ideal to dress her.

For Gaga's first cover of Vogue, using a designer with the proper amount of industry recognition (having been called 'the next Lagerfeld') while still lacking that exact amount of mainstream appeal was entirely appropriate - and Ackermann's dress looked divine. The second cover's sentiment is altogether different and Wintour's selection of a fuchsia mermaid dress by Marc Jacobs does just the trick. There's no need to beat around the bush (*and we're not talking about that hair, Fozzie Bear...*): Mother Monster is here and she deserves to be dressed down in the absolute best. That's Marc Jacobs couture—get into it.

In her photo spread, Gaga wears a couture creation (from the same Marc Jacobs collection) by the indefatigable Stephen

Jones. From 1980 to the present day, Stephen Jones has been one of a handful of leading milliners respected for his high fashion and work-of-art couture headpieces. On a par with leading milliner Phillip Treacy and endorsed by high fashion journalist, pariah and socialite, Isabella Blow, Jones is a name that needs to be in your repertoire... unless you want to be one of those people who only knew McQueen after Gaga. Much like the fuchsia feather-and-fur hat Gaga rocks in the nude, his work is larger than life for a clientele who are anything but wallflowers. Jones is just one in a constellation of fashion giants to have been educated and groomed at London's internationally renowned Central St. Martins (Stella McCartney, John Galliano and Alexander McQueen). If you've seen a headpiece come down the Dior runway in the past decade, there's a good chance Stephen Jones' genius touched it.

Since 1990, Jones has also been involved in numerous product developments in the Japanese market, including *Jonesgirl*, a fragrance similar to Burberry Blue Label in its exclusive availability in Japan. He is also involved in designing kimono and traditional Japanese accessories, as well as releasing hats in Japan.

If you're a girl who likes to try something different, why not let Stephen Jones inspire you to check out some Japanese millinery shops? From relatively inexpensive to exasperatingly prohibitive, hat shops in Tokyo are some of the best in the world. There's sure to be some at Vogue's 4<sup>th</sup> annual international shopping event, *Fashion's Night Out*, hitting Harajuku and Omotesando Hills on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Last year's event was hosted in Tokyo by Wintour and her team; this year will see Japan's premier supermodel Tominaga Ai and actress-singer Tsuchiya Anna acting as hosts.



Sayonara, summer! Hello again, autumn! The weather is thankfully cooling off a bit but I hope that you enjoyed the best of the summer sun, had many amazing adventures and, of course, got wrapped up in the amazingness that was the 2012 London Olympics! How did your country do? Ireland threw a few prized punches and hot-hoofed it to the podium,! We may not have quite made it to the top of the leader board, but wow—what a show!

Now, it's on with the AJET Connect show! This month's Sports Section features community-interest and involvement articles from opposite ends of the country—Fukushima and Kumamoto, as well as top tips on how to stay 'on the ball' during this hectic time of year.

From time to time our wellbeing runs the risk of being traded in for frantic fun and other antics so we've served up some common-sense tips for tackling life here!

In Fukushima, sports events are being used to help struggling businesses and communities in a very real way; this month, we give you the lowdown on one such project that got underway this summer—and what is yet to come from it next spring. What exactly happens when American Football comes to small-town Japan, in a big way? Read and all will be revealed.

Down Kumamoto way, the NiKyuBee is fast approaching next month. Say, what? What's that mouthful? Ni-Kyu-Bee. There is indeed a method behind the mad-sounding name for this event. If I tell you that it's a NiKyuBee... ach Frisbee Tournament all becomes a bit clearer, doesn't it? (No?) This year is the second installment of this awesome event and the 2012 episode is bound to bring more participants flying to this part of Japan for two days of fun and frisbees! For a deeper insight into the game—and the name—get reading!

A big "thank you!" goes out to the contributors for this edition, and to those of you who sparked an interest in sending in future submissions! If you have any sporting tales to tell or events to herald for upcoming editions don't hesitate to get them through to me, and subsequently the masses at [ruth.rowntree@ajet.net](mailto:ruth.rowntree@ajet.net). Enjoy all September serves up and be sure to arrive fresh, fantastic and feisty at the other end!



# SPORTS

Ruth Rowntree



# (AMERICAN) FOOTBALL IN FUKUSHIMA

Steven Thompson

This past summer, teams from across the Tohoku region gathered in Fukushima city for a long day of American flag football at a local high school. The event saw teams from four prefectures - Fukushima, Niigata, Tochigi and Miyagi—squaring off in an all-day tournament. After some fierce matches, the finals came down to Fukushima and Miyagi, and ended in a tie. All of the teams practiced and played with Fukushima high school students, who were eager to get in on a sport that isn't usually played in Japanese schools.

The event wasn't just about playing football and scaring Japanese high school students, though. It was about bringing people from other prefectures into Fukushima to see how things are and to show their support. After some (mostly) friendly competition, the teams all went out to local restaurants and stayed in a small, locally-owned hotel that was prepared to handle a bunch of sweaty, loud football players. It may seem like a small favour, but one of the biggest problems facing Fukushima a year and a half after the March 11<sup>th</sup> disasters is simply bringing people, and their business, into the prefecture. What the local people want most is some return to normalcy, and for people to stop being afraid of Fukushima. "We really want to show people that Fukushima is more than just a disaster area," said Gene Lyu, the organizer for the event. By having JETs from other prefectures come to visit, participants can take their positive experiences and stories back with them to their home prefectures. And that alone helps bring tourism, business and support to Fukushima.

But this summer's tournament wasn't just a one-off event, worry not. In Gene's vision, the summer tournament is a mere trial run for something much bigger. Next spring, Gene and other members of the Fukushima community are planning a weekend filled with more football and more fun—and hopefully more teams from other prefectures! As well as hosting another tournament, over the two days the locals are: organizing workshops to teach kids the basics of American football; running a charity auction supported by local businesses; and, finally, staging a thrilling exhibition match put on by Fukushima's local, semi-professional football teams. All of the proceeds from the events will go towards ongoing recovery efforts and outreach in the area. Those participating and volunteering from other prefectures will also be invited to follow-up the event with another big night out at local restaurants, with accommodation arranged locally in Fukushima hotels.

With a successful practice run this summer already accomplished, the residents of Fukushima are looking forward to putting on an event that helps to revitalize the prefecture yet further. "It was a success in my book," said Gene, "It was a learning experience, and I'm definitely looking forward to doing it again."

So, if you think your prefecture has what it takes on the gridiron, put together a team! Or if you'd like to come and support in any other way, get in contact with Gene and Fukushima AJET. You can reach them at [gene.lyu@gmail.com](mailto:gene.lyu@gmail.com) and [fujetcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:fujetcouncil@gmail.com) respectively.

*Steven Thompson is a second-year ALT living in Fukushima prefecture. He has two left feet, neither of which are good at sports.*



All photos were taken by Kevin Hsieh and are used with his permission.

# NI KYU BEE...ACH FRISBEE TOURNAMENT 2012 ASHIKITA, KUMAMOTO

Adam Chludzinski

Do you enjoy making friends? Do you enjoy having fun? Do you enjoy Frisbee-throwing? If your answer is an enthusiastic 'Yes!' to any or all of the above, you might be a past player at last year's **Ichi (First Annual) Kyu (All Kyushu) Bee (Beach Ultimate Frisbee)** Tournament, or you may indeed be chiming in now with eager anticipation for this year's **Ni Kyu Bee!**

Ni Kyu Bee will be hosted by KumAJET this **October 13-14<sup>th</sup>** on the beautiful Otachimisaki Beach in Ashikita, Kumamoto. This two-day bonanza will not only give players a chance to meet new people and make new friends while competing in a friendly manner, but the BBQ on Saturday night will be an ideal time to unwind and enjoy the beautiful venue.

For those who don't know, Frisbee is indeed a sport with rules (no dogs on the field!). In fact, the **World Ultimate and Guts Championship** was held in Japan this past July.

Our goal for Ni Kyu Bee remains the same as last year's: to provide a sporting event which encourages internationalization and friendship between local Japanese, Japanese from other prefectures, and foreigners... in a setting that fosters camaraderie, sportsmanship and respect.

Newcomers are not only welcomed, but encouraged! The first day of Ni Kyu Bee will be a 'Hat Tournament,' a setup which places players onto randomized teams to give people a chance to make new friends, and to learn the basics of the game. The second day will follow a standard tournament format.

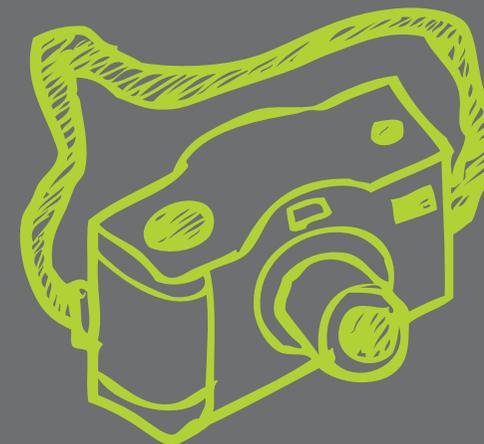
Last year over 140 participants on thirteen teams from six prefectures participated in Ichi Kyu Bee. It was the first time KumAJET had hosted an event of this scale, but based on **general consensus**, our team considered it a success. It is our goal to make this year's Ni Kyu Bee even bigger and better!

The official Facebook Page can be found **here**. Please direct all entries and any queries to [kumajet@ajet.net](mailto:kumajet@ajet.net).





# Travel



Amelia Hagen

Hello again to those of you who have re-contracted, and welcome to new JETs across Japan! Though summer vacation has come to an end, it doesn't mean your opportunities to travel have to! In an effort to showcase all of the AJET 'Blocks' around Japan, this issue we're kicking off a monthly "Block Highlight" feature showcasing the very best of a particular Block. First up, it's Block 10 and 11... Kyushu! But we're not interested in your average train or bus trip around the two Blocks... this is a hitchhiking extravaganza shared by four Shimane JETs! Read on to see just how they did it and get some great hitchhiking tips yourself!



You might be thinking that it's too early to start planning a little jaunt outside of your area for winter vacation. Contrary to what many believe, Thailand is not simply Khao San Road, ping pong shows and Full Moon parties. In *Golden Thai*, Elysse Hurtado explains why Thailand is an excellent place to experience a myriad of people, food, and breathtaking sights... all only a hop, skip, and a jump from Japan.

Contemplating a long winter trip but not sure who to go with? It can sometimes be difficult finding the right buddy or buddies for your trip. Choosing the wrong person(s) can result in something far from the vacation of your dreams. Lastly, I give a rundown of how to pick solid travel companions that you'll want to venture off with again and again.

So, get stuck in! Thanks for reading! I hope to connect with you next month, wherever you may be! And if you're interested in being featured in our travel section, don't hesitate to give me a shout at [amelia.hagen@ajet.net](mailto:amelia.hagen@ajet.net)!

*Amelia Hagen is a fifth-year ALT in the home of Ayumi Hamasaki, also known as Fukuoka Prefecture. When she is not traveling to the far ends of the earth, she enjoys chodo-ing, or paying with exact change, fist-bumping Hello Kitty at Oita's Harmonyland, and searching for the next jetset bargain. Amelia is the former President of Fukuoka AJET.*



# A HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO KYUSHU

Adam Hacker



After traveling to fifteen countries, I never imagined that hitchhiking around Japan would become possibly one of the greatest and most inspiring vacations of my life. Having never hitched before, I really had no idea of what to expect in the seven days ahead. Most friends and family thought I was nuts... luckily a few of my closest mates, Jason, Dan and Regina, were in on the madness. So with a day's lead on Golden Week, the four of us piled into my car and hit the road.

With nothing more than a backpack, the four of us set off south from Shimane prefecture to Kyushu, where we would begin our hitchhiking adventure. Our only plan was to visit all of Kyushu's seven mainland prefectures and to meet up in the exact point of origin, seven days later. The only restriction: no funds could go to transportation. While I could fill a book with stories from the adventure, here I'm going to stick to the basics to help you budding hitchhikers prepare for your own adventure!

Jason and I paired up and stood opposite Dan and Regina on a random intersection in Kitakyushu. We'd brought a white erase board and marker, so drivers could easily see our intentions. It wasn't until now that I began to wonder how this week would pan out. "Wow, what if no one picks us up?," I thought anxiously. But within ten minutes, a young couple pulled over and off we went! The driver, arms heavy with jewelry, mentioned having to make only one quick stop, before taking us to Fukuoka City. The stop, as it turned out, was to do a cash money handoff. What a start! Afterwards, he even bought us dinner and took us, as promised, directly into Fukuoka City.

After arriving, we found an affordable hotel, and explored the city's nightlife, deciding that in each city, we would try any locally famous food or drink. In Fukuoka, we tried Hakata Ramen, a delicious way to fill our stomachs. The next day, three different drivers took us all the way to Nagasaki, and Jason was only run over *once* by a crazy driver. So far, par for the course, really. We took turns communicating in Japanese and English with the curious drivers. Each had their own special story, too. And each showed themselves to be surprisingly loving and caring for two complete strangers from foreign lands.

From each of the people kind enough to help us out, we made sure to get advice on where to stay and what to eat... and each time found ourselves driven to the doorstep of their recommended locale. One young couple on their first date circled around to introduce themselves and see where we intended on going. After smiling at each other, they told us to hop in. Though originally setting off for a 5km drive, they would on that day end up taking us more than 200km one way, from Oita City to Miyazaki City.

We bought them dinner, a local fried chicken dish, and said goodbye. On the city outskirts, within two minutes, another car, this time a family of four, pulled over and made room for Jason and I.





The next night, a couple on their third date overheard us talking and chimed in, letting us know how impressed they were at our “drinking skills.” All too happily, we invited them to our table and spent the rest of our evening dining together. When we left to pay, our new friends had already settled the tab. On top of that, the pair then offered to drive us to our next goal, Kumamoto. The next morning at 8am sharp, there they were: engine running outside our hotel, waiting for us to climb aboard and resume our adventure.

***Looking back on that day, I remember a moment, as we left Kumamoto Castle, I simply stopped and thought “What I am doing here is special. This isn’t ordinary. Thank God, I’m so lucky to be here.”***

We all still keep in touch, and quite astonishingly, that couple, Shin-san and Mitsuko-san, got married one year later. Love is truly all around Kyushu.

Living in any place, foreign or native can wear you down. And living in rural Japan is no different. It was on this trip that I remembered why my parents took me abroad in the first place, to make new friends and gain life experience. ***This*** was the overall theme of our adventure. Meeting real people, in new cities. They don’t know it, but each of them changed my life that week. We met Dan and Regina as planned, each pair certain their experience was the absolute best (...an argument that will no doubt stand the test of time).

Hitchhiking in Japan is a sort of “choose your own ending” storybook. Depending on which corner you stand, which direction you face, and who is inclined to stop, the next step is completely unknown. What a rush I get looking back on this trip! What an ache in my stomach for wanting to do it all again. Good luck to anyone brave enough to give hitchhiking Japan a go! And certainly let me know if you do!

Thankfully, hitchhiking is legal in Japan, but there are some simple rules you should be aware of before setting off!

- ◆ Don’t hitchhike on or within 100m of a highway on-ramp. Put simply, it’s really dangerous and you’ll get fined if you’re caught.
- ◆ If a situation doesn’t feel right, avoid it. If anything escalates, call the police immediately.
- ◆ If someone runs over your foot, gracefully decline the ride.
- ◆ Bring enough yen, knowing your Japanese bank card may be region-restricted. Even though we had no travel costs, we each still spent over ¥10,000 each day.
- ◆ Keep an open mind and show you are thankful. Offer to buy your driver a meal rather than gas. (We tried this, but in fact had most of our meals paid for by our drivers.)

\*Reprinted with permission from JapanTourist.jp, Japan’s fastest-growing English language tourist website.

*Adam Hacker was a JET ALT in Yasugi, Shimane Prefecture. Tired of the traditional week-long vacation, he and friends set out to explore Kyushu. Adam wrote “Hitchhiking Kyushu” for the new travel site, [www.japantourist.jp](http://www.japantourist.jp) Read more about Adam’s adventure there!*



# GOLDEN THAI

Elysse Hurtado



Once upon a time, I saw a girl wearing shirt that said, *"Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go to Bangkok."* Pondering the message, I wondered just how "bad" the city really was. Well, after having visited Bangkok myself, I can tell you: the t-shirt was a strikingly accurate prophecy. There was more than one occasion I found myself recalling its message and wondering just how bad I'd been.

It all began with the flight in, which dropped me in Bangkok just 6 hours after I had originally intended. With trains ceasing at midnight, I found myself stranded at Makkasan Station, with only a motley crew of delinquent cab drivers and renegade tuk-tuks for company. Coating myself with an armor of self-determination, I marched out into the 28 degree evening air and found myself a cab, who not only acknowledged my destination ("Hua Lamphong? ...yes, get in!") but promptly turned on the meter ("Meter! Meter!") when I asked the price. Could things be turning around?

Not just yet. Speeding along the darkened Thai highways, the taxi driver whipped out his cellphone and began talking excitedly. I, of course, understood not a word. Not that it bothered Mr. Taxi Driver. Still driving, he forcefully proffered the phone to me, continuing to shower me in Thai. "Oh god," I thought with a sinking stomach, "I've been kidnapped." Forcing out a stifled, "Hello?," I was shocked to find the voice on the other end reply in perfect English. It was a woman. "So, where do you want to go?" she casually asked, "I'll tell him for you." "Hua Lamphong train station," I said. Twice. Sadly this inspired nothing in my taxi driver. If this was Japan, now would be the time for the taxi driver to let out an exasperated "Eh?!." Instead, he continued to speed down the highway to a destination unknown. Pulling into a gas station, he abruptly stopped and jumped out the car. Exasperated in the back seat, I watched on with a sick horror as he frantically ran the perimeter of the service station, asking everyone he could find if they knew my hotel, waving my reservation as he did. And still nothing.

A good twenty persons, two hours and 150baht later, we finally arrived. Welcome to Bangkok.

Luckily, this proved to be something of a storm before the quiet. Other than it being a sweltering 39 degrees every day, turning me into a human waterfall, and the inability to eat any food that wasn't fried or boiled (I've had enough food-poisoning on vacation, thank you), the days passed in a soothing haze that slowly settled my spirits and provided the mirror for reflection on so many things that I had desperately needed.

First and foremost, I made sure to ride the express boats plying the milky-green Chao Praya river, watching their intrepid operators leaping to the docks and back at every stop, revelling in the wind that scorns the streets of Bangkok to blow whitecaps into the water, and enjoying the sense of community with the other foreigners aboard. Through my many rides up and down the river I met people of all ages and nationalities and we shared backgrounds, travel tips and jokes, brought together by a loose mesh of camaraderie and convenience that added just that extra bit of sparkle to the day.

Many trips were needed because the river is lined with beautifully gilded temples and palaces, like the breathtaking Grand Palace or Wat Arun. Another highlight was the Vimanmek Palace, a colonial teak house from the turn of the century, which is an intriguing if not somewhat disturbing mix of local culture and British aristocratic tradition, complete with the original light-switches.

As soon as you leave the well-beaten tourist path the locals try their best to get you back on it, so the deeper I went into the bowels of the city the more often a cab/tuktuk/songthaew/motorcycle driver would almost angrily demand that I pay them for the convenience of a ride to somewhere designed to further strip me of my money. I politely declined their offers. I felt much more at home wandering the dirty, scrambled streets of the downtown, leaving behind the glitz of Pratunam and Silom. Yes, I preferred the uneasy co-existence between buildings and foliage, stray dogs and local children, vehicles and foot traffic, thank you. Every street corner was a little bazaar, crowded with tiny stalls welded onto bicycles or made out of motorcycle side-cars, some with handles for pushing or towing; each one quickly grilling skewered meats or peeling exotic fruits, sending up a flock of smells that changed with each new step. Some sold garlands of delicately woven flowers, gold and white; others had trinkets or lottery tickets or bottled drinks sweating in chips of ice.

In essence, Bangkok appears to be a city where the rules are made to be broken. Any price can be bargained for, any destination can be altered; traffic lights and pedestrian signals mean little, and you take your life in your hands every time you step off the curb. One rule you quickly do learn is that you'll never get anywhere if you wait "until it's safe," because in Bangkok, it never is. Speed limits, smoking bans, "no photography" signs: nothing is constant. Soon I was jaywalking and photo-sneaking with the best of them. In fact, the highlight of my time in Bangkok was the thrilling Bangkok Art and Culture Center, spiralling up nine stories of modern art exhibits, cafes, and student vendors.

The hum of kindred spirits was in the air and the art was a feast that I had been starving for. Though I spent an entire day combing the streets of the city for the smaller galleries listed on the Bangkok Art Map, most of them were closed or manned by curators anxious to sell me something I obviously couldn't afford; the few places I found that fitted my bill were inspiring and invigorating, but it took much legwork and stamina to find them.

The other high point of my stay was the vipassana meditation course I took at Wat Mahadhat. Daily courses are given, and there is an English-speaking instructor. Since I was the only visitor at the time I entered I was lucky enough to be offered a one-on-one tutelage. After spending two hours learning the way of mindfulness I felt much more centered, and since returning I have continued to use the techniques I was taught.

From Wat Mahadhat, it was on to Chiang Mai, the aptly-named "Jewel of the North." The instant we touched down I felt the simmering frustration and anxiety that had plagued me in Bangkok evaporate. This was a different realm entirely. Gorgeously green mountains and clear, cool skies, laidback locals and good, hearty food. The city itself is so small that it's no feat to walk from one end to the other in less than two hours. In Chiang Mai, I attended one of the many cooking schools and learnt to make my own green curry and pad sew; I visited a tribal village in the hills and enjoyed the brisk mountain air and breath-taking vistas. From Burmese temples to affectionate graffiti, there was so much to enjoy. Even the nightly thunderstorms came as an incentive to relax, providing the perfect excuse to curl up in my hotel room with a book to the background music of the rain on my windows.

And, of course, no stay in Thailand would be complete without an obligatory Thai massage. Certainly, the stretches can be a bit painful, but by the time it's over

you feel loose, relaxed and completely invigorated. My only regret in Chiang Mai was that I had so little time to enjoy the city before Bangkok demanded my return.

As a whole, Thailand was both eye-opening and refreshing. The threads of Buddhism and monarchy, of modernization and globalization, weave a complex tapestry that is irresistibly alluring. Chiang Mai's pacified my shaky start in Bangkok, and proffered a much better idea of why the country is called the land of a thousand smiles. A land that's like a vast, golden sea: blinding and forbidding in intensity, but with waves that, if braved, can clear away your own clouds and shadows and offer a new path to follow.

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



# PICKING YOUR PERFECT TRAVEL BUDDY

Amelia Hagen

The time in which JETs typically plan trips for their winter vacations is almost upon us! (Re-appointed JETs, I think you have an idea of what I'm talking about). Newly arrived JETs, I have an inkling you'll soon meet *sempai* who have already chosen their destination(s) and/or booked flights. Before you hop on a flight, catch the train, or score a seat on an overnight bus, you've got to figure out if you're going solo or if you're going to have some cohorts. Want to travel with your BFFs? You may want to go over a few things first. Below are some helpful tips and tricks for finding your ideal travel companion!

## Budget buddies!

First of all, there's the money issue. Make sure your friend(s) have the same budget and taste as you. Amongst my group of friends, there are those who prefer to stay at luxury hotels when traveling abroad and those who live on a shoestring. I tend to stick to the middle, booking good value accommodation where I can get a lot of bang for my buck. You need to know upfront whether you're going to spend a fortune **or** stay in a shack somewhere in the Malaysian jungle.

## A Spontaneous Susan or a Rigid Rick? Match your travel styles!

Next, consider your travel style. Do you like to go with the flow or schedule activities throughout the day? If you enjoy spontaneity, you probably won't be a fan of someone who likes to plan out three to four cultural activities every day. But a difference in opinion here doesn't have to be a deal-breaker: a good compromise might involve breaking the day up into three sections—morning, afternoon, and evening—and choosing two things to do together while leaving one time period open for whatever!

Next, what are your buddies' daily routines like? If you travel with a morning person and you're a night owl, you may need to balance out the early nights and big nights out. And what about eating preferences? A friend of mine recently insisted that I go to Snake Alley in Taipei, home to a host of snake-related delicacies. Luckily, the two of us *weren't* travelling together.

Have similar interests you want to explore during your trip. A friend who wants to stay out of the sun is not going to jump up and down when you suggest five days spent on a white sand beach. Likewise, an adrenaline junkie might be antsy wandering through museums all day. Check and see what friends might be interested in seeing and doing on your trip. And never underestimate the importance of finding someone you can have healthy conversations with during your journey, either!



## Put the “pro” in “compromise!”

As with any group endeavor, travelling with others is all about the C word: compromise. On family holidays, I can still remember the pain of being museum-ed out night and day by my mom. But with a little compromise, we came to a solution we could all agree upon: one last museum and my sister and I could be set free upon the giant King of Prussia Mall next door. Even today my travels still invariably involve a little give-and-take: going out one night and staying in the next; climbing a mountain one morning and then vegging out in the afternoon. Respect everyone’s wishes and don’t insist that every activity be a group one.

## Test the waters!

If you’re concerned about traveling with someone for the first time, doing a ‘road test’ might help. Try taking a short weekend trip with your intended travel buddies first. That way, you have the opportunity to work out whether it’s a good fit in terms of habits, quirks, preferences, etc. I once had a nightmarish trip with another friend of mine, which could have been easily avoided by testing the waters ahead of time. Fortunately, I’ve since been able to find a handful of solid travel companions here in Japan, with whom it’s now hard impossible to travel without!

*Amelia Hagen is a fifth-year ALT in the home of Ayumi Hamasaki, also known as Fukuoka Prefecture. When she is not traveling to the far ends of the earth, she enjoys chodding, or paying with exact change, fist-bumping Hello Kitty at Oita’s Harmonyland, and searching for the next jetset bargain. Amelia is the former President of Fukuoka AJET.*



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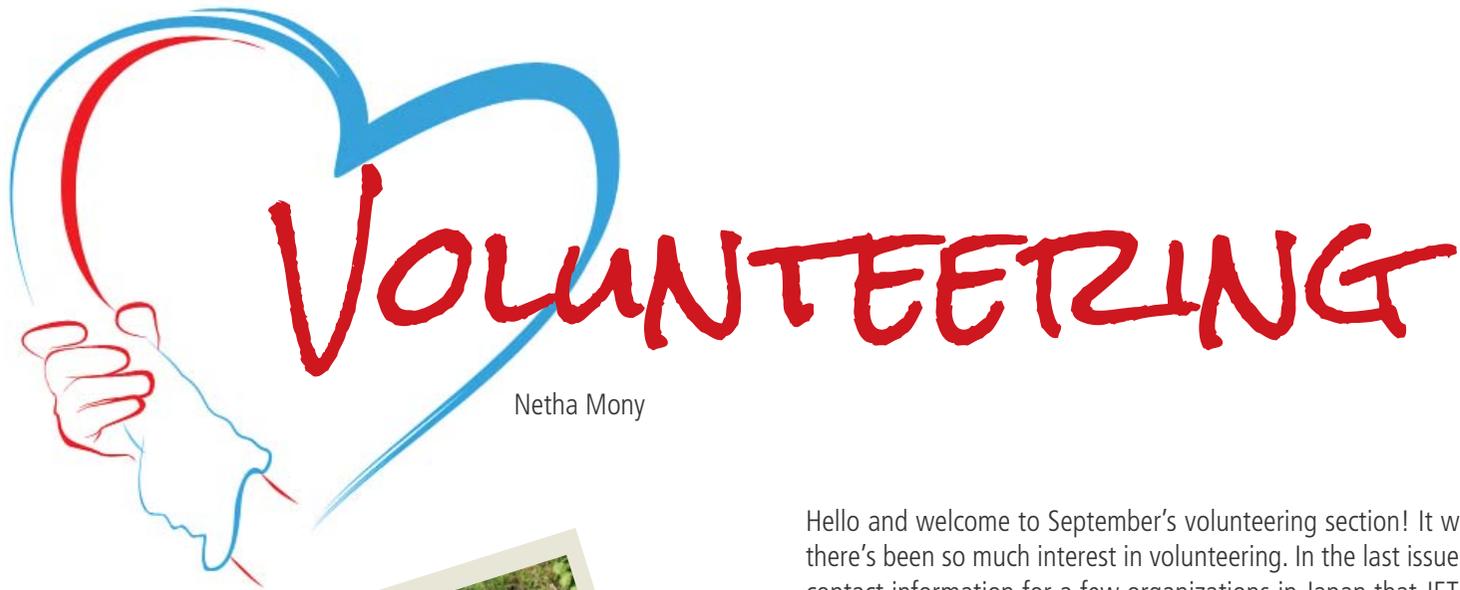


You have just arrived in Japan and immersed yourself in the fantastic Japanese culture. But hang on a minute... Start thinking about reuniting with your friends and family during the Christmas Holidays! As many Japanese go overseas for a vacation throughout this period, the flights will be tight. Don't miss out on booking your flights as soon as possible! We can offer you great early bird special tickets at STA TRAVEL. Book before your flight is fully booked and avoid disappointment!

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Departure: 01DEC-28Dec, 2012	Departure: 01DEC-28Dec, 2012	Departure: 01DEC-20Dec, 2012
<b>Return from JPY 49,000~</b>	<b>Return from JPY 60,000~</b>	<b>Return from JPY 35,000~</b>

\* Above flights will depart/arrive at Narita Airport.

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# VOLUNTEERING

Netha Mony

Hello and welcome to September's volunteering section! It was great meeting so many of you at Tokyo Orientation and there's been so much interest in volunteering. In the last issue of Connect, the volunteer section had brief summaries and contact information for a few organizations in Japan that JETs have worked with. If you have a volunteer story to share, we would love to feature it here in Connect!

Volunteer work can have many goals. Tohoku efforts focus on disaster relief and providing supplies to affected families. Smile Kids focuses on regularly connecting with children in foster homes and bringing joy to their turbulent lives. The Peer Support Group (PSG) and Tokyo English Life Line (TELL) are listening and referral services that deal with a range of questions and problems. Their goal is to help the caller either by providing information or working through a problem. Some organizations, like the Red Cross, concentrate on donations over volunteer work. The last group, which is primarily found in developing countries, focuses on the sustainability of the volunteer efforts. Sustainability is providing the local community with knowledge, skills, and resources so that the community feels ownership for their work and won't be reliable on outside help. This means that unlike all the other goals mentioned, the aim of this volunteer work is to one day not be needed.

When looking for an organization to volunteer with, consider its goal. In this issue, JET alumni, Nick Bradford and Monika Slupnicki, give advice on choosing a volunteer organization and share their experiences. Read on to find out more about how you can be involved in their sustainable projects abroad! See you next month!

[neetha.mony@ajet.net](mailto:neetha.mony@ajet.net)



# JUMPING INTO THE WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK

By Nick Bradford

Before finishing my time on JET in Kagoshima prefecture in 2011, I already knew that I wanted to continue living abroad. Getting another job teaching English in a different country was an option, but part of me was really drawn to different ways of helping others, which I found in the form of non-profit organizations (NPOs) working in development assistance. Friends and family had worked in the field, but their stories weren't always encouraging. In fact, there is a great deal of skepticism about the effectiveness of development work, as corruption isn't uncommon, and many other genuinely well-meaning efforts exacerbate rather than alleviate problems. This means that if you are truly interested in getting involved, it's crucial to take some time educate yourself on the issues often experienced in this sector:

**1. Be aware of the challenges of development assistance.** Just as it is important to have hopes and passion, it's important to try to grow in understanding about the challenges and complexities out there. Don't forget that there is more to responsible development work than the "warm fuzzy feeling" some may imagine it will bring them. Test your willingness to contribute to positive change by looking into some of the several books out there about "what's wrong" with development. These theories have been influencing change in the sector for decades. If you feel drawn to a specific issue or region, you should be able to find literature that is focused on what or where you are enthusiastic about. And don't forget to think critically about the variety of possible motives of both the authors of the existing discourse out there and of the people working with non-profits. One perspective with both facts and anecdotes to illustrate some general challenges can be found in the book "Despite Good

Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World Has Failed" by Thomas W. Dichter.

**2. Look for transparency and accountability.** There are endless NPO websites out there, so when you start focusing in on specific organizations, be sure you are keeping in mind the principles of responsible development. While too numerous to list here, a valuable "starting point" resource I can offer are the charity evaluation guidelines supplied by Charity Navigator, New Philanthropy Capital, and Keystone Accountability:  
<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=847>.

At the heart of these principles are the issues of transparency and accountability. Any organization following responsible standards and practices should be making it easy for the public to find answers to important questions, such as: What kind of data is available about the work the organization has been doing since it began? Does it honestly report its mistakes and shortcomings and take steps to address them? In what ways are its programs sustainable? These are a few of many questions you absolutely should be finding answers available for. If there is a lack of clear transparency about any and all relevant information, this is a serious problem. Trustworthy organizations will be passionate about meeting or exceeding the best practices in the sector. In correspondence or eventually an interview with a prospective non-profit, consider respectfully asking questions about information that doesn't seem readily available from your initial research. Other widely recognized websites that can be very helpful include the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving website (<http://www.bbb.org/us/charity/>), the expert-supported critical

evaluation site called Givewell (<http://www.givewell.org/>), and the non-profit organization database Guidestar (<http://www.guidestar.org/>).

**3. Be flexible and proactive.** This is in addition to the flexibility you likely already have when it comes to adjusting to a new environment. If you have no background in your field of interest, don't be surprised if it's hard to immediately find reliable organizations offering an ideal position. To the contrary, positions defined by comfy salaries, short-term volunteering, and an openness to those with little experience, may be red flags warning you to reassess the organization you applied to. Be open to unpaid work/long-term volunteering, and when you do find a position where you can gain experience, take initiative to learn as much as you can and show you are dedicated. Long-term patience and perseverance is needed to be a part of the change you want to see.

In my case, after doing my own research, I still believed in the possibility of finding a position in which I could help realise a meaningful and positive change. The principles referenced above were instrumental in leading me to my current position with a non-profit organization called PEPY, which operates in the Siem Reap province of Cambodia and has historically had a very close relationship with JET program participants. PEPY offers up the following resource: the principles reflected in the organization checklists at Voluntourism101: <http://voluntourism101.com/guide>. If you are interested in PEPY, you can contact the nation-wide group of JETs interested in learning about and supporting PEPY at [ajetsig@pepyride.org](mailto:ajetsig@pepyride.org) or you can sign-up for PEPY's newsletter at [www.pepycambodia.org](http://www.pepycambodia.org).

# HONDURAS' ART FOR HUMANITY

By Monika Slupnicki

My name is Monika Slupnicki, and I was a JET in Muroto, Kochi Prefecture from 2010-2012. Around December of 2011, I had to make a decision as to what to do after Japan. Fast forward to August 2012, and I am writing this from Central America, where my husband and I are starting a socio-tourism project for a charity organisation called Art for Humanity in Honduras. And, so far, we're having the time of our lives!

## What will you do after leaving JET?

The concept of volunteering crept up on me slowly. When my Prefectural Advisor left JET in 2011, a spot opened up to become a PA. I applied and got the position. It opened up my eyes as to how involved I could get in the JET community as a volunteer. I remember one occasion where a JET came to me in distress with a grave concern. I did my best to listen and to support them through an incredibly difficult time. It was at that moment that I realised both how rewarding and simple it is to help others.

Prior to becoming a JET, I worked in my native Australia as a registered nurse for thirteen years. It was a fulfilling job because I helped others in need, but my help was always rewarded financially. This left me feeling that something was lacking—that the fulfillment I felt was only partial. This sat at the back of my mind for a number of years. After leaving JET in 2012, I had a choice to make: do I return to Australia to a partially-fulfilling job, or do I take the plunge and volunteer? In making the decision, I didn't have only myself to consider. I am fortunate enough to be married to a man who was willing to go down the path of volunteering with me.

So, with that, my husband and I narrowed down our search of the myriad of available volunteer positions by selecting

a single criterion: we wanted our time and effort to result in self-sufficiency instead of nurturing dependence. If you give a man a fish, he won't be hungry that day, but if you teach a man to fish, he will never go hungry. We found a number of great opportunities, but the one that really stood out was the position of Activity Directors at Art for Humanity in Honduras (<http://www.artforhumanity.org/>). It is this vision that attracted us to the project and, ultimately, committed us to it for two years.

## What is 'Art for Humanity'?

Art for Humanity is a charity organisation, under which The Leadership Centre (TLC) operates. TLC is a three-year residential college which offers a degree in Business Administration. It is situated in a remote mountainous region in central Honduras. TLC provides an all-English college education for young and underprivileged Honduran women. The educational aspect appealed to us as it allows the women to leave the college with the skills and confidence necessary to take up professional roles and/or start their own business ventures. The aim of TLC is for this to have a ripple effect on Honduran society. Art for Humanity believes that:

*An educated group of ethical leaders is the best and greatest hope for permanently lifting Honduras out of an endless cycle of poverty. While outside aid in many forms can help individual families or serve as a temporary fix, the best long term solution is to educate capable Hondurans to assume leadership roles.*

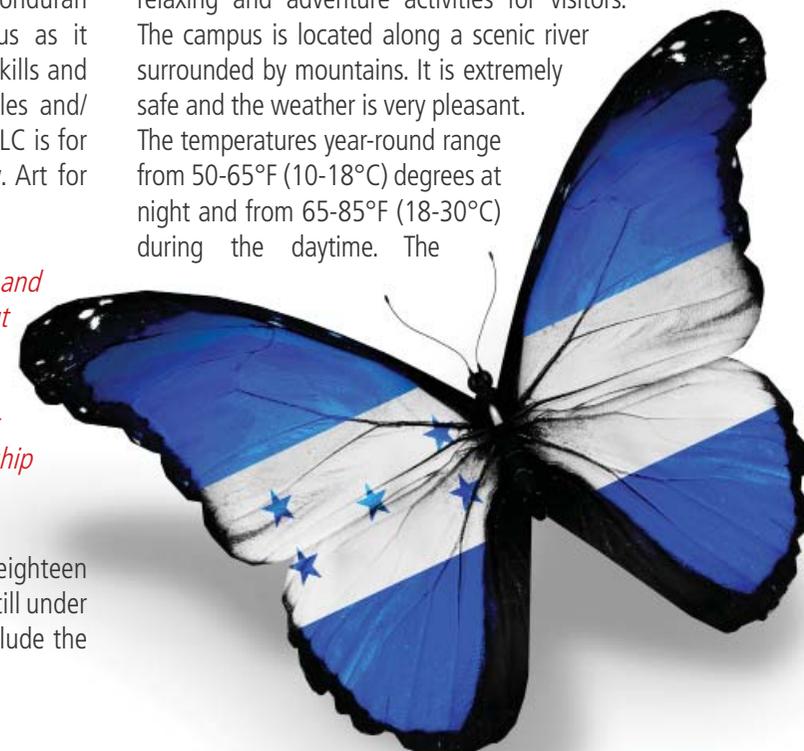
The college had its inaugural student intake eighteen months ago, and many of the facilities at TLC are still under construction. Some of the completed facilities include the

student and volunteer dormitories and kitchens, as well as the eating hall and the classrooms. There are many more projects currently in progress, such as the library and a second volunteer dormitory.

The students are accepted from poor families and attend the college at no cost. Each student has a sponsor who pays a monthly stipend for the girl's education. To pay for the development of facilities and operating costs, Art for Humanity has established an organic coffee farm on campus which should, in time, cover some of the costs.

## My work in Honduras

To provide further revenue for the college, my husband and I have been tasked with starting a socio-tourism project on campus. TLC is a perfect base from which to host both relaxing and adventure activities for visitors. The campus is located along a scenic river surrounded by mountains. It is extremely safe and the weather is very pleasant. The temperatures year-round range from 50-65°F (10-18°C) degrees at night and from 65-85°F (18-30°C) during the daytime. The



college is located at 4000 feet above sea level which means that there are no malaria-carrying mosquitoes in the region.

This ideal location allows us to offer our guests activities such as hiking, camping, horseback and motorbike riding, wilderness trips, river swimming, tours of the organic coffee farm, martial arts/self defence classes, Tibetan yoga, meditation, Honduran cooking with wood ovens, Honduran dancing and Spanish language immersion. Of course, for those that want to come and relax, we have plenty of hammocks where visitors can lie down, breathe in pure air and watch the chickens strutting around pretending that they are watchdogs.

The students are an integral part of the socio-tourism project in two main ways. Since the aim of the college is to develop leadership skills in the students, they will assist us in the running of the project. Secondly, we wish to provide a practical platform, in which the students will experience firsthand the running of a business.

The socio-tourism project that we are creating is called Relax for Renewal (<http://www.relaxforrenewal.com/home/adventure-activities>). We welcome campers but also cater to guests who prefer sleeping indoors. While Relax for Renewal is under construction, guests are sleeping in the volunteer dorms in their own bedrooms. We are currently preparing to build retreat houses and a bar overlooking our own private waterfall for guests. We are very excited to start this next phase of the project.

### How you can help

Art for Humanity believes that volunteers gain as they give, learn as they teach and feel more hope as they help.

Here at the TLC we have many ways in which you can help. For those JETs wondering what to do with all that spare *nenkyu*, how about coming to TLC and having a vacation with us? You'll get to experience a number of great activities and simultaneously help the poor help themselves. For

more information, have a look at our website at <http://www.relaxforrenewal.com/home/adventure-activities>. All JETs are welcome. Please contact me at the email below for packages and discounts for JETs and their families.

If you are unable to travel to Honduras, then you can volunteer wherever you live. We welcome any volunteers who could help with email projects, website development and research. We also need donations in the form of shoes, clothes, toiletries, sheets, towels and school supplies for the students. Financial support is always gratefully accepted. Art For Humanity is registered with the IRS (USA) as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and hence, your donations are tax deductible. For your donations of cash or gifts, we will gladly provide you with a receipt for tax purposes.

Another great way to help is to expand our network by promoting our fan page on Facebook with your friends and colleagues. We need people to spread the word about us and make people aware of Art for Humanity. To join the Fan Page click this link: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Art-For-Humanity/116004348441394>. Our fan page allows people to have the latest information on happenings at Art For Humanity and TLC.

If you're unsure what to do at the end of your JET contract and aren't quite ready to return home, consider volunteering your time with us! We are always looking for teachers to mentor students and teach a range of subjects such as English, maths, history and biology. We ask that volunteer-teachers stay a minimum of three months to provide continuity for the students. Alternatively, if you feel you've had enough of teaching, we are always in need of people who are willing to get their hands dirty. We have many on-going and planned building

projects. For those interested in organic coffee farming, we have many opportunities to learn and help with this venture. With this type of volunteering, we welcome you for however long you wish to stay.

If any of these appeals to you, if you have any suggestions or expertise that you think might prove beneficial to this project, or if you'd like more information, please contact me via email at [info@relaxforrenewal.com](mailto:info@relaxforrenewal.com).



Dear PEPY Supporters,

PEPY Tours is busy getting ready for the annual PEPY Ride and we'd love for you to join!

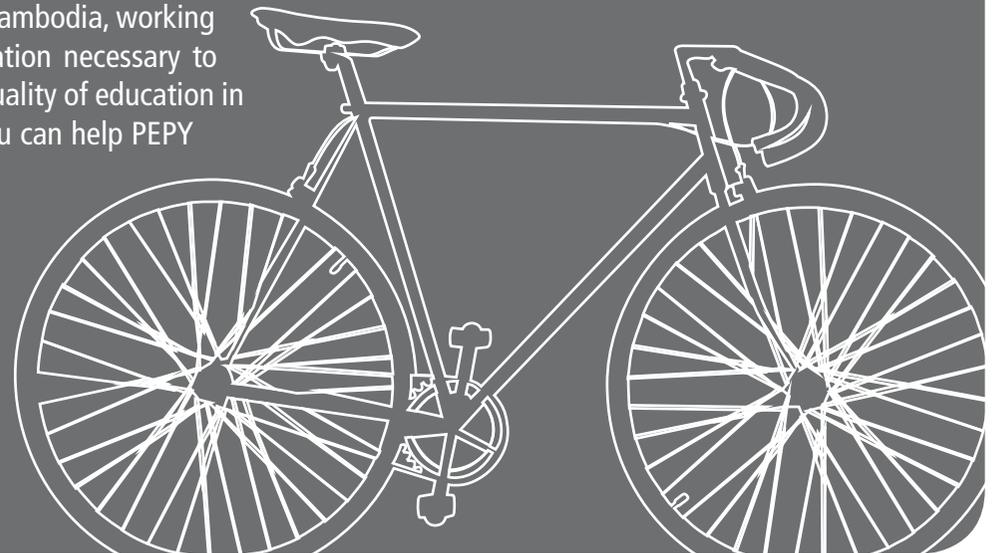
The PEPY Ride is PEPY Tours' biggest yearly fundraising event, and will take place from December 24th 2012 – January 12th 2013. This cycling adventure offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn, and cycle across Cambodia, all while continuing to support our educational and youth leadership projects. To learn more about how you can take part, please visit [PEPY Ride VIII](http://pepytours.com/tours/pepy-ride-viii), <http://pepytours.com/tours/pepy-ride-viii>.

During the trip participants will be introduced to innovative social enterprises, community development projects and local entrepreneurs, all working on creating positive change in inspiring ways. To add to that, the off-the-beaten-track style of this trip allows riders to get up-close-and-personal with Cambodian culture, history, language, and people, all while taking in some of the country's most beautiful rural back-roads.

The PEPY Ride VIII isn't just a journey across land, but a learning adventure that will introduce riders to new ideas, perspectives, foods, cultures, traditions and friends, as well as lots of exciting new places. And all while supporting PEPY!

Our mission is to invest time and resources in young people in Cambodia, working with them to connect them to the skills, systems, and inspiration necessary to achieve their goals, raise standards of living, and improve the quality of education in their communities. By participating in this cycling adventure you can help PEPY achieve this.

Thank you!



Hide from Hyogo noon  
Lonely leaf sweat drips on me  
No shade for the lost

Ramiro Castro

### MONTHLY HAIKU CONTEST

Got a haiku of your own you want the JET community to hear? Submit it for October's Haiku Competition! Contestants may submit one original haiku to [contests@ajet.net](mailto:contests@ajet.net). Haikus should be received by **September 24th**. The Competition is open to current JET participants only. The winner will be decided by means of an online poll, with the winning haiku (and runners up) being published in next month's issue! Happy haiku-ing!

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

This month, we're introducing a theme to the Photography Contest! September being the month of undokai (sports day) in much of Japan, we're getting into the fighting spirit! And so, our first theme is just

Please submit your photos by September 24th. A shortlist will be created and you will have one week to vote for your favourite photo via online poll at [www.ajet.net/photos](http://www.ajet.net/photos). Voting will be open from September 25th until midnight on October 2nd.

that: "Fight!" Of course, you're free to interpret the theme however you will—your photo doesn't have to be sports day-themed at all! Think outside the box and your photo may end up on top of October's issue! Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. The theme for September's competition is "Fight!" Send your entries to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net). Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter. In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.



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

# MONTHLY PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

FIGHT!

FIGHT!

FIGHT!

FIGHT!

FIGHT!

FIGHT!

# PHOTOGRAPHY WINNERS

You've already seen Jon Dart's spectacular winning photograph on the cover of this month's issue, now take a look at the runners-up from the July August Photography Competition!

If you're interested in entering September's (now themed!) Photography Competition, flip back to the previous page for more details!



蛇莓  
Kyle Duske, Ehime

#3



Kyoto Calm  
Danny Matson, Hiroshima

#2



Cranes for Peace & Remembrance  
Brendan Donnelly, Fukuoka

#4



Kewpie Cooler  
Ruth Rowntree, Kumamoto City

#5

# ALTS ONLINE: A REVOLUTION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

[<http://alts-online.wikispaces.com/japan>]

Hello fellow ALTs!

I would like to introduce a brand-new educational project that I hope will bring our wonderful JET community together in an exciting endeavour to make English real and engaging for our students in Japan. The project is a national website which will allow students to interact with ALTs from all over Japan. The website, ALTs Online, is a revolution in language learning. The idea is that each ALT will have their own self introduction page in the form of a graphic log (glog) and an interactive message board for sharing text messages, music and photos. The website further allows students to communicate with ALTs using their voice. The website's English level is divided into SHS and JHS allowing for multileveled content and a worksheet is also provided for those who are interested in accessing the website with their class through the school computer room.

ALTs Online is set up for the non-tech savvy, so don't worry if you have little to no experience with creating stuff online. To learn more, just visit the website and click on "welcome ALTs".

Come join the revolution!



# #51 Board Boggle® ボード・バググル



Students use letters on the board to create words. / ボードにあるアルファベットを使って、単語を作る。



Vocabulary  
単語



None  
なし



Groups  
グループ



10-15 mins  
10~15分



JHS1  
中学校 1



**Summary**  
“Board Boggle” is a game in which teams create words from a collection of letters. This game is adaptable for any level and is appropriate for reviewing vocabulary.

## 概要

「ボード・ボーグル」は、提供されたアルファベットから単語を作るチームゲーム。これは、全レベルへ適応できる、単語の復習に適切なゲーム。

Draw a four-by-four grid on the board and ask students to call out four vowels and twelve consonants to fill in the grid. Write only one letter in each square.

1 黒板に4 X 4の格子を描き、生徒に4個の母音と12個の子音を挙げてもらう。

Divide students into teams and give each team either a piece of paper or a section of the board to record their answers on.

2 生徒をチームに分け、書くための紙または黒板の一部を与える。

Give the teams a time limit to create as many words as possible, using only the letters available on the board. Letters may be repeated, for example, if “E” and “G” are on the board, “egg” is a suitable word.

3 時間内に、ボードにあるアルファベットだけを使って、できるだけ多くの単語を作らせる。文字は繰り返して使用しても良い。例えば、黒板に「E」と「G」があれば“EGG”は可。

Gather teams’ lists and tally the points. Verify that the students understand the words written by other teams.

4 全てのチームの単語リストを集め、点数をまとめる。他のチームの単語が理解していることを確かめる。発音の復習や理解の確認のために、単語を使って文書を作ってもらう。

ライティング

## Variations

For lower-level students, write ten consonants and one vowel on the board. Allow students to use any letters that are not written on the board. For higher-level students, set a minimum number of letters, require students to use only adjacent letters, or limit words to a certain category, such as verbs, animals, or things at school. As an alternative to using a grid, write a long word or phrase on the board and have students use only those letters instead.



## バリエーション

初級—10個の子音と1個の母音をボードに書く。ボードにないアルファベットだけを使わせる。上級—アルファベットの最小数を定める。例：4つ以上、など。または隣接しているアルファベットだけを使わせる。テーマ—全ての単語を特定のテーマに沿わせる。例：動物、学校にある物、動詞など。文書—長い単語か文書を書き、生徒にその中にあるアルファベットを使わせる。

## Remarks

If the students are cheating by intentionally using other teams’ words to boost their score, try using paper only or give points only to original words not found on any other team’s list. To review pronunciation and check comprehension of the words used, ask students to use the words in a sentence.



## 備考

自分のチームの点数を上げるために、わざと他のチームの単語を使う生徒がいる場合は、黒板の代わりに紙を使うか、または他のチームにない単語だけに点数を与える。発音と理解を確認するため、単語を使って文を作らせて言わせる。