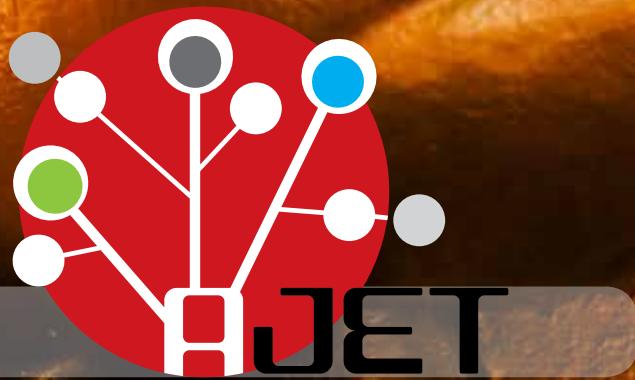




AJET **CONNECT**

magazine
September Issue
2013





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF CONNECT MAGAZINE!

Well, here we are! Another year of JET and another year of Connect magazine. I spent an amazing two weeks in Tokyo this summer welcoming the 1,500 new JETs who came to Japan. I did my best impersonation of a *sempai*, had some incredible dinners (with lots of fast food in between shifts), and got to meet bright-eyed and enthusiastic JETs from all around Japan. Best of all, I handed out hard copies of the Tokyo Orientation edition of Connect and made contact with hundreds of interested new contributors. I heard about so many great ideas and furiously scribbled them down. My excitement level for this year is hovering somewhere between mega-excited and ultra-mega-excited. We've got a lot of new things in store for Connect magazine, and we're starting a lot of them this very issue! Right now, you are clicking through a little piece of Connect history. Neat!

This issue sees the beginning of our stronger focus on Connecting (and a stronger focus on bad puns). Our new team of editors want you to get to know them, so you'll see personal writing from them every month in their sections, as well as a little about them in the Meet the Team spread on page 10.

As you're getting to know us, we want to hear more from you, dear readers! So we're giving you more ways to make your voice heard in the AJET Connect community (currently over 7,000 strong)! The new [Connect Reader Poll](#) represents your opinions and experiences on big topics every month. We're also taking your direct questions, feedback, jeers, suggestions, and tips over at [Ask/Connect](#), our new letters-to-the-editors section. Whether you want to respond to an article, or just ask about where to stay in Bali for break, shoot us an email and we'll answer in these pages!

We're placing more focus on what you guys are doing on JET, so we've also started [Spotlight](#). Every section every month will feature a JET (or group of JETs) who are doing awesome or

interesting things in Japan. Heroic volunteering, epic events, delicious recipes, stunning fashion—nominate someone you know and tell us about them!

We know there's already a lot of you out there writing on your own. Either for your prefecture's magazine or your personal blog. Get in touch with us about featuring your writing in Connect! We'll not only share it with our international readership, but promote your publication in return!

Our Master of All Things Layout, Melinda, has also been hard at work, making Connect easier to navigate and read. We're keeping a magazine-style two-page format, visually distinguishing the sections, and adding bookmarks to the table of contents so you can jump straight to the articles you're interested in.

It's my personal hope that these changes will not only make Connect a better reading experience, but also encourage you to contribute and participate in sharing the things in your life that deserve an admiring audience. We want to help your JET year be successful, active, and memorable. Get in touch with me, or any of the Connect team, anytime with your ideas and stories.

Enjoy the September issue of Connect. We'll see you next month!

All the best,

Steven Thompson
3rd-year Fukushima JET, Head Editor of Connect Magazine

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KAY SAYS...



Konnichiwa! I hope the new JET year is treating everyone well, whether you just arrived to Japan or you're starting your fifth and final year.

Last month, your 19 AJET National Council volunteers were busy welcoming over 1,500 new JETs over Tokyo Orientations A, B, and C. Your council volunteered two months of preparation work and 15-hour work days for two weeks in Tokyo to organize and run the AJET Centre, AJET Desk, AJET Info Fair, and eight AJET Workshops. A big thank you to the 16 JET presenters (listed at the right!) who made the workshops a reality with their hard work and dedication. If you are a new JET, we only hope that you found these resources helpful as you settle into your new life in Japan!

After meeting and connecting with many of the new JETs and *sempai* JETs volunteering as Tokyo Orientation Assistants (TOAs), I couldn't help but feel so proud to be affiliated with such high quality, dynamic people. At the same time, I feel so humbled and lucky to be able to learn from everyone, contribute to this program, and be a part of this community.

During the past several months, I have realized that our national JET community is only as great as we individual JETs make it. This year, my plan is to make AJET even *more* inclusive, open, and proactive than in previous years. I hope you will join me in this mission by getting involved in your local communities through volunteering, attending block events, participating in JET opinion surveys, and by just simply being proactive yourself!

Currently, we're supporting some exciting projects in the works such as a JET-themed podcast and professional development conference calls. Stay tuned for future Connect issues to learn more! If you have ideas on this or want to get involved more in the national AJET community, I'd love to hear from you! Please contact me at kay.makishi@ajet.net.

Remember that your experiences and how much you gain from them are always up to you. This is your journey, so embrace it. Here's to a new JET year with new beginnings and new adventures!

Yours in JET community service,


Kay
3rd-year Fukuoka JET / 2013-2014 Chair



AJET would like to recognize and thank the following JETs who led workshops at Tokyo Orientation this year. Your hard work and great advice were very much appreciated!

Using Pop Culture in the Classroom

Orientation A
Natasha Unwin
Peter Liang

Orientation B
Roland Carlos
Amy O'Reilly



Technology and other Tools in the Classroom

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Brent Wilson
James Thomas

Orientation B
Carla Rumbado
Robbie Blackburn

Life as an LGBTQ JET

Orientation A
Cameron Joe
Sabrina Zirakzadeh

Orientation B
David Greenwood
Ariana Coveney

Life as a JET Bringing a Partner or Family

Orientation A
Darin Seal
Laura Rogers

Orientation B
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Logan Morley

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ASK / CONNECT

Starting this month, we'll be featuring all your feedback and questions here! We'll do our best to respond, or if there's something we don't know, we'll find someone who does. If you have something you'd like to know about AJET, if you want to respond to any of the articles or editorials in this month's issue, or if you want to say something nice about our lovely photos, here's the place to do it!

Here's what we heard this month!

"I just got to Japan, and frankly, I have no idea where to begin when it comes to buying groceries / cooking. I've been eating ramen and curry around town the past few nights, and I figure I better start learning to cook Japanese at some point. I'll eat anything and everything at least once, so any recommendations would be greatly appreciated"

--Johnny Tastepe

Cooking in Japan can be a challenge with smaller kitchens, different ingredients, and an absence of ovens. If you're just starting out, we recommend the YouTube series "Cooking with Dog" (<http://www.youtube.com/user/cookingwithdog>)! Cute, informative, fun! If you'd rather dig through some recipes, the Japanese site Cookpad just launched an English version at <https://en.cookpad.com/>. You can find these links, and lots of helpful stuff on the Facebook group JETfood, run by Connect's own Xan Wetherall.

"Here's my challenge. I love travel (obviously! don't we all?), but I'm on a tightened budget for the new school year, so my disposable income for travel is way down. Is there any way to do this? I'd love to travel out of the country, and I'd be willing to go pretty much anywhere. There are destinations I'd love to see where I think I could make 20,000 yen stretch for over a week—Laos? Northern Thailand? Indonesia? Philippines?—but I can't find any cheap flights to those relatively distant places, especially at that high-demand time of year. On the flip side, places that are cheaper to get to (like Korea) would cost a lot more to stay in for 7-10 days. Either way, it's outside my budget."

Any suggestions from you brilliant travelers? Or is my budget just too low to get me out of Japan this winter?"

--Sukie Shirasagi

Where there's a will, there's a way! If you want to travel on the cheap outside of Japan, we've got some tips! For flights, consider budget airlines leaving from Japan's major airports such as Peach Airlines, Eaststar Jet, and Jetstar. Most of the time these aren't listed on aggregator sites like Kayak, but you can find amazing deals with time and persistence (such as 21,000 yen round trip to Korea!). There's always the ferry, too! It leaves from Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi prefecture for Busan Port in Korea. Overnight buses leave from major cities to Shimonoseki frequently, or you can utilize the Seishun 18 kippu, a special all-you-can-JR-train deal available during major vacations and usable throughout Japan.

As you mentioned, less touristy cities tend to be cheaper to travel around and stay in, but that doesn't mean Korea and Singapore should be totally off the table! Like anywhere, hostels and couchsurfing are your friends! Get in touch with some people before you go, find a place to stay and some cheap food and things to do once you're there! Happy traveling!

"Hey, guys! Just wondering if I should leave my short shorts at home. I am not sure about the "rules" on after-school clothing. I don't wanna be judged!"

--Meisha Spartan

Hey, Meisha! We've consulted with Lineng and she had the following great, knowledgeable advice that she always seems to be full of: "There is no after-school dress code per se, except that one should not dress too casually when visiting someone's home/an upmarket restaurant, and ladies should steer clear of anything that reveals shoulders and cleavage lest they receive unwanted attention. (See our article on page 28 for more on the drama of bare shoulders in Japan)

Among younger Japanese at least, shorts have become popular in the warmer months. No one seems to mind a flash of thigh, so after the summer you could pair your cute tailored or looser denim shorts (and miniskirts) with leggings, tall boots or knee-high socks. A skintight top with booty shorts probably isn't a good idea, but if your short shorts are worn to Starbucks or the supermarket, we say why not.

A caveat--whatever you wear might become a talking point simply because you are new to the community. Let it be said that although we've seen tiny pairs in the bigger cities, folk in smaller towns appear to favour lengths that range from mid-thigh to mid-calf. We suggest you observe what people your age are wearing before heading out in whatever makes you feel comfortable."

"Can you recommend some good smartphone apps to have here?"

--Nick Powers

We sure can! First off, there's iConnect, AJET's official smartphone app for iPhone and Android (<http://ajet.net/ios-app/>). It features lesson plans, emergency numbers, events calendars, subway maps, unit converters, and every issue of Connect magazine! For looking up Japanese words, imiwa (iPhone) and JED (Android) are our favorite dictionary apps. Google Translate recently added photo support, so you can take pictures of Japanese signs or writing and translate it on the fly. Google Translate also has a conversation mode and supports handwritten kanji input. Let's not forget LINE, the sticker-sending, instant-messaging, free-calling wonder app that's taking Japan by storm! If you need to train or bus around, Navitime finds the best routes! We'll have a full feature on smartphone apps soon, so keep an eye out!



CONNECT READERS' POLL

Every month, we'll ask you guys what you think about various topics and questions submitted by members of the AJET community. You can find the results for last month's question, and this month's question here!

Cast your vote and add your voice at ajet.net/connect. You can also submit your own idea for a poll topic at connect.editor@ajet.net!

This Month's Question

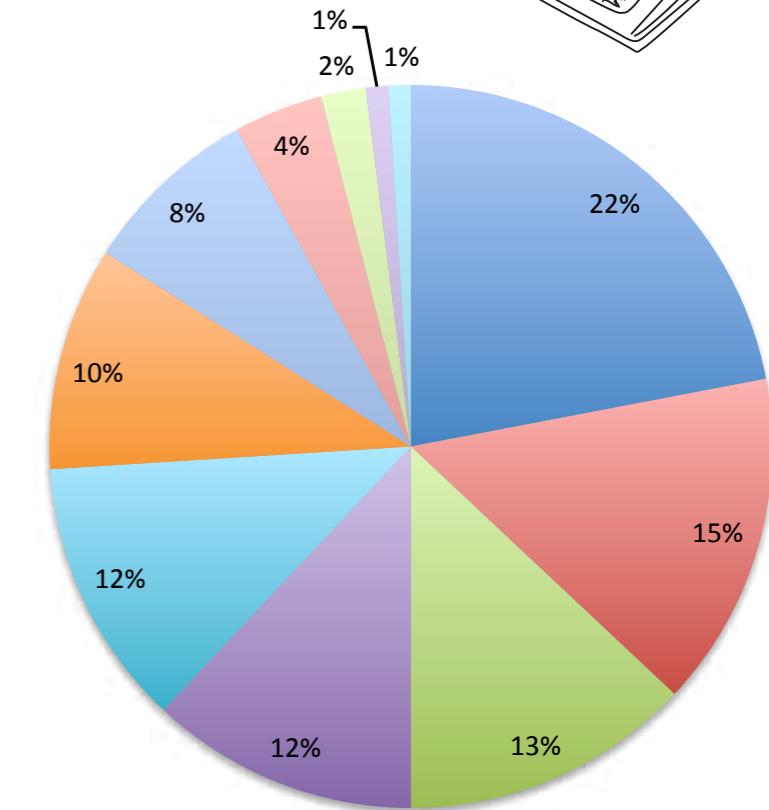
There's no better conversation starter in a Japanese office than the weather and changing seasons. **What's your favorite season in Japan?**

- Spring
- Summer
- Fall
- Winter

Last Month's Results

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO JAPAN?

- Japan is where I wanted to be
- Teaching/ professional experience
- Travel
- Japanese language immersion
- Cultural experiences (food, shrines, festivals, etc.)
- Something else
- Popular culture
- Financial security
- Family
- Cultural arts (literature, tea ceremony, calligraphy, etc.)
- Martial arts or sports





AJET'S NEW AND SHINY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

AJET Special Interest Groups, or SIGs, are groups of JETs and non-JETs in Japan connected by a common interest, passion, or identity. They can help you stay in touch, get questions answered, vent, meet new people, and join group events. This year saw the creation of two new AJET Special Interest Groups. We'd like to introduce them to you here! You can find more information about SIGs at the bottom of this article.

A Spotlight on an API Coffee Chat

Melody Wong, Okayama



API AJET is an official AJET Special Interest Group started in August 2012 which aims to create a supportive environment for all APIs living in Japan, and to bring further awareness about their experiences to everyone, including those who may not even know they exist. The main goal of API AJET is to serve and educate the community about what makes being an API unique in this country.

Having worked at Starbucks some years ago, I have learned that the coffee house is not simply a place to grab a "joe" and go. It's a place where people go to study, read, relax, or people watch. Most importantly, it's a place for friends to meet and talk. Japan, in particular Okayama, seems to do it right as it is sprinkled with cafes everywhere for people to come together, enjoy a cup of coffee, and share stories. This day was just one of those days, except these friends had a more focused agenda.

On the rainy afternoon of April 6, several brave souls gathered at a tiny coffee shop in Okayama City for some lattes and a small chit-chat about what it's like being an Asian Pacific Islander (API) foreigner living in Japan. It was an organized event sponsored by the Asian Pacific Islander AJET (API AJET) to allow API JETs to share their experiences as an "invisible gaijin" and for those who are not API foreigners to contribute



their thoughts. The group consisted of three Asian Americans, two Caucasian Americans, and two Japanese citizens. Both of the co-founders of API AJET (my buddy from Ibaraki Prefecture and me) attended the gathering. After some giggles and snapshots of our latte art, we relaxed and conversed.

After several hours of open, honest opinions and heart-felt stories, we managed to distinguish some positive and negative aspects. As pointed out by one of the non-API JETs, sometimes looking Japanese has its benefits in the classroom. When teaching English to Japanese students, the students may feel a bit comforted that a person who looks like them can speak perfect English and might lead to the breakdown of the barrier that English is too difficult for Asian people to learn. On the flip side, especially outside the classroom, an API foreigner will either get no attention when in a group of diverse-looking foreigners or receive all the attention in Japanese-speaking situations.

The main issue that one of the API participants mentioned was that it would have been helpful to have publications on the real JET experience, and not just "awesome" experience essays. Covering the everyday life of JETs from all backgrounds would help shed light into what to expect before moving to Japan and provide the early support that JETs might want.

Since the commencement of the special interest group, API AJET has created a Facebook group (<http://goo.gl/3Pona>), a Google+ page (<http://goo.gl/KRISi>), an email account (api@ajet.net), along with an online newsletter as mediums of support and education. If you're interested in attending future chats and other events, feel free to reach out to us.

Let's meet, let's coffee, and let's share!

VegJET: Reinvigorating JET's Vegan and Vegetarian Communities

Ariane Bobiash (Tokushima), Sara Beniamino (Osaka) and Holly McKenna (Tokushima)

Earlier this year, inspired by the creation of the JET-setters and JETfood Facebook pages, we decided to start a Facebook group to create a space for vegan, vegetarian, and veg-curious JETs to support each other and ask questions pertaining to living this lifestyle in Japan. As the group grew, a few members proposed turning the group into an official Special Interest Group so we could reach a wider audience...and here we are now!



Several incoming JETs this year expressed relief upon finding the group, and many current JETs questioned why one hadn't been started earlier. Along the way we discovered that similar groups had existed in the past, but were no longer active. We hope that this new community endures for as long as the JET Programme is around.



Now at over 120 members, we have many ideas on how we can grow and develop. Our first event as an official AJET SIG was tabling at this year's Tokyo Orientation, which was an amazing experience! We were met with lots of enthusiasm and received many questions from new JETs interested in maintaining a vegetarian lifestyle in Japan. For both orientations we had two vegetarian restaurant dinner outings in the evenings. We had a great attendance for both, and got to enjoy delicious food while making veggie friends headed to every corner of the country.

We are exceptionally pleased with VegJET's transformation so far, and very excited for the future! We are currently working on compiling useful websites and documents to help both current and incoming JETs adjust to Japan. Specifically, we hope to help with difficulties that arise when trying to maintain a veggie lifestyle in a foreign country where the concept isn't as accepted as it is in others, especially for those JETs who are not confident in their Japanese ability.

Projects we hope to work on in the near future include creating a VegJET website, a bilingual information pamphlet on vegan and vegetarianism to give to BOEs with VegJETs or incoming VegJETs, and organizing more meet-ups. If you have any questions about being vegetarian in Japan, join our Facebook group or contact us at vegjet.japan@gmail.com.

You can find a list of all AJET SIGs at <http://ajet.net/contact-ajet/special-interest-nationality-language-groups/> or join the forums at <http://sigs.ajet.net>.

Interested in creating your own Special Interest Group? Looking to get involved with groups in your area? Contact Director of Community Relations (and resident Food editor) Xan Wetherall at xan.wetherall@ajet.net.



meet the CONNECT team!



Steven Thompson
Head Editor

Hey everyone! Whether you're settling into your new apartment or gearing up for another fantastic JET year, I hope your summer is splendid. Outside of the crazy busy blur that was Tokyo Orientation, I've spent my summer driving along the coast, making new

friends, playing guitar at a charity music show, and catching up on the stacks of books, movies, and games queued up in the back of my mind. Let us know what you're interested in and up to! We're always looking for your writing, tips, questions, comments, and ego-inflating praise. Reach me at connect.editor@ajet.net, or any of the editors below!



Matthew Jones
Culture Editor

Hey there you lovely (not to mention sweaty) people! Summer is almost over, and soon we will begin that blissful transition back into the bearable temperatures of autumn. But until then, get out there, take advantage of the sun, and bronze your limbs.

As I write this, it is the season of *Obon*, and here in Nagasaki, I have plenty of festivals to look forward to. You will certainly have some festivals near you too, so get out there, take some pictures, and if you stumble across something interesting, send it my way! connect.culture@ajet.net



Tom Morin-Robinson
Entertainment Editor

Hey everyone, hope you've been making the most of your summers! Determined not to let the heat hold me hostage under my air conditioner, I've taken every available opportunity to get out of Tochigi. Between heading down to Okinawa for some quality beach time, running a triathlon up in Miyagi, and wolfing down dim sum in Hong Kong, nearly every week has been a new adventure. Classes are already gearing up again and with them another incredible year on JET! If you find yourself with a story that needs telling, hit me up anytime at connect.entertainment@ajet.net.



Lineng Tee
Fashion & Beauty Editor

It's been a crazy summer, what with road trips that involve waking up at 4 am to catch the sunrise, feverishly watering my thirsty pots of tomato and basil, continually stocking the freezer with popsicles and people-watching in trendy, mercifully air-conditioned cafes. In an effort to beat the heat, I've started using menthol body wash, carrying pretty *uchiwa* (Japanese fans) everywhere, experimenting with ponytail styles and stocking up on body wipes and waterproof make-up. I hope you enjoy this issue of Connect and I look forward to reading about your warm weather fashion and beauty favourites at connect.fashion@ajet.net.



Ariane Bobiash
Food Editor

Hey everyone! For me, summer time usually means doing a decent amount of traveling. I've been fortunate enough to be in Seoul, Tokyo, Jakarta, and Toronto this season, spending most of my time catching up with friends and family but also getting my hands on as much delicious food as possible. Favourite meals lately include sweet fried tempeh with peanuts in Indonesia, temple food in Korea and fruity parfaits in Tokyo. Besides stuffing my face, I've been enjoying the blistering heat (seriously—I hate the cold) and famous *Awa Odori* festivals here in Tokushima! What have you been eating? Let me or Xan know at connect.food@ajet.net!



Xan Wetherall
Food Editor

SUMMER! Boiling in your skin? Me too! Summer time is fun time, but it also means you have to get a bit creative in the kitchen. I tend to throw open all my windows, distribute electric fans in various corners, and mix up some homemade soda syrups! Right now, I'm stuck on lemon and plum. Maybe I should invest in a shaved ice machine next... it seems like the natural progression! Last month I went to Yamagata, and ate myself sick on cherries. This month, I can't stop slurping up chilled noodles! Got anything you've been nomming non-stop? Tell me and Ariane all about it at connect.food@ajet.net!



Hugo Dragonetti
Sports Editor

Hi there! Hope you've all enjoyed yourselves over summer and you're geared up for the coming JET year. I've just got back from a week of cycling around Shikoku. Starting off in Takamatsu, I rode to Tokushima and then followed the beautiful Yoshino River down to Kochi before riding up to Matsuyama. I enjoyed the whole journey, but nowhere as much as Kochi. Surfing at the amazing beaches in the south of the prefecture and trying the local specialty of *katsuo no tataki* are two things that I recommend doing if you visit there. See you next month! connect.sports@ajet.net



Caroline Bellinger
Travel Editor

Hey everyone! Hopefully you've managed to escape your desks these summer holidays to hit up Japan's beaches or cooler climates abroad. I left stifling Yamagata ken behind and headed to the gorgeous islands in Okinawa! You can read all about my adventure in the Travel section of this issue. If you haven't been able to take a break this summer, definitely get out and enjoy the many music, food and fireworks festivals. Need some inspiration? Have a travel question you need answered? Had a great adventure you want to share with others? Then get in touch! connect.travel@ajet.net



Kelly Merks
Events Editor

Summer is not complete for this American without some fireworks, and Japan does not leave me wanting! There seems to be a *hanabi taikai* every weekend somewhere in Tokyo or Saitama. Instead of traveling to escape the Kanto area's smothering humidity (Kumagaya, Saitama, is on record as the hottest, most humid place in Japan), my husband and I jumped into it feet first and moved apartments in July. I continue my two-year-long search for fresh jalapeños and have pretty much decided to wrap anything I can in *furoshiki*. Let me know what you're up to at connect.events@ajet.net.



Michelle Castro
Volunteering Editor

Greetings, summer is joyous here in Shimane and means bike riding to school and being serenaded by cicadas at night. After being at Tokyo Orientation, I went hiking and played in a waterfall in Tottori prefecture with some new JETs. I also attended the Block 9 baseball event to see the Hiroshima Carp play the Tokyo Giants. Enjoy all the sunshine and festivals in your prefecture. See you next month. connect.volunteering@ajet.net



CULTURE

EDITORIAL Coming Back to Culture Shock

12 A few days ago, I was stopped at customs in Osaka Airport. As I began to unzip my bags for inspection, I was trying desperately not to think of all the customs horror stories that I've heard. I stepped away and watched as the customs man pulled out all manner of items from my bag, plushy sheep dolls, sheep figurines, sheep key rings, sheep pencils and even the official 2013 Irish sheep calendar. Yes, it's a real thing, and no, I don't have a strange fetish. I'm Irish, and we just think that fluffy clouds on legs are cute.

I, like many JETs, visited home this summer. Now, varying degrees of JET-lag aside (get it?), we all had a similar enough experience. We went home, there were hugs at the airport, there were our bedrooms which were definitely NOT used as storage space while we were away, and there were copious amounts of "real" food.

We all have our own personal highlights from the trips home, whether it be stuffing down a massive Christmas dinner in the middle of July or just catching up with a few mates. I think that mine was going into a souvenir shop and remembering that I had to buy lots of cool Irish themed products, not just for myself, but for my friends and fellow teachers. **Being a tourist in my own country is one of the most surreal experiences I have gone through so far, and I've been to Tokyo, twice!**

So it was that I found myself trying to explain to the customs man why Irish people find sheep cute. Something tells me that when he saw the whiskies that I was transporting, he was eager to inspect them further, but fortunately, he had more people to

speak to and he let me pack up my farm animals and whiskey...I probably didn't help to break the stereotype of Irish people as being drink-addled farmers, but there's no helping that now.

If you have been through any talk about life as an ALT, you will have heard about culture shock. It can effect people in wildly different ways, and be caused by any number of factors. Fortunately, I didn't feel a single ounce of culture-shock when I returned to Japan. Perhaps it was my teachers realizing that there were no students in the school, so they could open their whiskies for "just a little taste". Maybe it was my heavily pregnant supervisor, who on seeing the fluffy sheep doll I bought for her daughter, or the tiny shoes I got for her soon-to-be son, could not stop saying *kawaii!*. Either way, no aspect of Japanese culture shocked me. The heat on the other hand...

I never miss my Irish home more than when I'm desperately hugging my air conditioning unit, begging for summer to be over. I have adjusted to life in Japan, with all its... interesting quirks, but I don't think I will ever get used to the weather here.

Or the toilets, but that's a whole other issue for my therapist to resolve.

Experience the same thing this summer? Have your own stories of culture shock or airport mishaps? Tell me about them at connect.culture@ajet.net

THIS MONTH IN CULTURE...

Hey there and welcome to my little corner of Connect. This is our first full issue, and we are just bursting with great content for you.

Starting off, we have Rachael Ragalye, who is giving us an eye-opening look into the world of Visual Kei, where the only thing more eccentric than the music, is their outfits!

Have you heard of "Abenomics"? It refers to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and his efforts to curb Japan's economic woes. Dustin Henrich asks if Abe's policies are the right way forward for Japan.

This month, we are spotlighting Sarah Kniss, and her efforts to blend in to Japan's martial arts culture. Catch up with her karate skills in the JET Spotlight section.

Finally, if you want to hear more from me, take a look at my editorial, where I talk about culture shock, and trying to bring a whole host of farm animals through Japanese customs.

Life After the B.O.E.
BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN, CIR. 2002-04)



Welcome Home

"Life after the BOE" by David Namisato. <http://www.lifeaftertheboe.com/>

SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Kniss, Karate Master-in-Training

My name's Sarah. I'm in Omura City, Nagasaki, and I'm starting my third year. I'm learning Okinawan karate. There are three of us ALTs, all girls, and our teacher is a seventh-level black belt. We practice twice a week. We also learn a little *kobudo*, which is the use of traditional weapons. So far, we've just started learning how to use a bo staff. I really wanted to get involved in some kind of Japanese cultural activity, so when I was invited by another ALT, I became interested. I had done a little bit of European fencing in the past, so learning a form of unarmed fighting really appealed to me. Okinawan karate differs from mainland karate in that it aims to end a fight with one hit, concentrating all your power into each move. Our style is called Shorinryu. This style is still focused on practical use, rather than competition or show. I think that it's super cool. Every time I tell a Japanese person I'm learning karate, they're always surprised. My friends and family back home were surprised too! I hope my enthusiasm inspires others to learn more about Japanese culture and martial arts.



ROCKING OUT TRADITIONALLY VISUAL KEI

Rachel Ragalye, Gunma

What do glam rock and traditional music have in common? A lot more than you'd think. This month, Connect peeks behind the costumes of the visual-kei genre.

A series of fortunate connections and a producer's need for an extra native English speaker unexpectedly found me traveling to a recording studio in Chiba one evening in early June to narrate for a film project.

The producer's assistant was waiting for me when I walked in. He was clearly a rock music fan: thin frame, black jeans and T-shirt, chin-length hair, silver jewelry. While we waited for the other people working on the project to arrive, our conversation naturally turned to music. As it turned out, he was a *shamisen* player (a three-stringed instrument similar to a banjo).

He had studied under the Yoshida Brothers, the *shamisen*-playing duo whose song "Kodo (Into the Sun Remix)" spurred on their U.S. popularity after it was used in a TV commercial for Nintendo's Wii video game console in 2007. In addition to doing very well in his own right, he also performs with other groups.

It was to one of these groups that he happily introduced me, handing me a flyer for their upcoming live performance in August at EDGE Ikebukuro. He indicated one member—a girl holding a *shamisen* wearing a kimono-esque outfit. "This is me," he said with a smile. I was speaking with "Kanade," the drag-wearing *shamisen* player of the 'visual-kei' band Crow x Class (~黒鴉組~).

Needless to say, my evening was pretty cool.

Visual-kei: a brief history

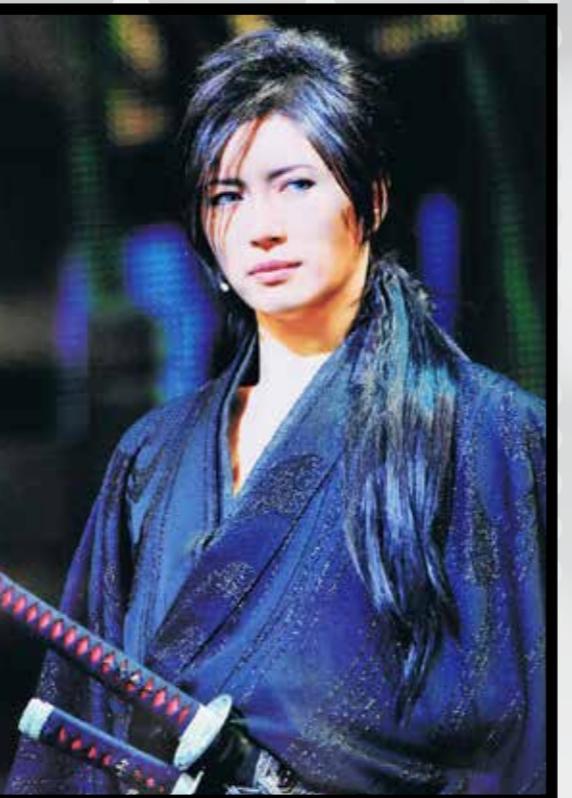
The term *visual-kei* (ビジュアル系, literally 'visual system') first came into use in the early 1990s to indicate a new style of Japanese rock music that drew heavily from Western hard rock and glam metal bands such as Kiss, Twisted Sister, and Motley Crue. It is said that the term *visual-kei* owes its origins to the slogan "Psychedelic violence—Crime of visual shock" that appeared on the second album 'Blue Blood' (1989) of X Japan, the group that would prove to be both the most successful and the most influential of the first generation of *visual-kei*. The *visual-kei* movement lost steam in the late 1990s after the break-up of X Japan in 1997 and the death of the band's guitarist



Compared to their first-gen predecessors who played only hard rock or glam metal, the *visual-kei* bands of today represent a diversity of styles that range from gothic rock to "symphonic power metal" and everything in between. As such, the reason that such diverse types of bands are marketed under this label is not so much found in their music as it is in their astounding use of visual elements. *Visual-kei* has consistently employed the use of elaborate costumes and makeup. Costuming styles range from plays on traditional Japanese attire to courtly garb from an imagined 1680s France. However, whereas the first generation of *visual-kei* artists followed gender conventions in their costuming, androgyny and cross-dressing now factor largely into band members' deportment. (For a stunning example, check out the picture of the guitarist Hizaki from the band Versailles.)

When visual-kei meets 'wagakki'

Considering that experimentation with blending traditional music with popular genres—such as rock, pop, and jazz—began at approximately the same time as the first *visual-kei* movement, it is not surprising that eventually a *visual-kei* band would marry the two. Indeed one can occasionally hear traditional instruments featured in the work of mainstream *visual-kei* artists such as the performer Gackt, and his song "Returner" (Yami no Shuuen).²



What sets Crow x Class apart is that they claim to be the first *visual-kei* band whose members are players of *wagakki*, or traditional Japanese instruments. The members of Crow x Class use a wide variety of instruments in their music. "Kanade" plays the *shamisen*, "Mikage" plays the *shakuhachi* (flute), "Shion" is on the *koto* (stringed instrument similar to the Chinese 'zheng'), "Saku" plays the *wadaiko* (Japanese drums), and "Kurona" is the vocalist. It is with this eclectic assortment of instruments that they create their own take on rock music.

According to the band's website, their music has been described as "beautiful but edgy", an attempt "to create a new image for traditional instruments" and "make their sound accessible to a new generation."³ I have to agree with that—the music of Crow x Class definitely has the feeling of rock, but achieved through bringing together the diverse, if not slightly haunting, sounds of instruments that, under different circumstances, usually bring to mind images of festivals, tea houses, and NHK historical dramas.

Whether you care for their music or not, what is remarkable about Crow x Class is how, through their performances, they are creating another space in which to explore, play with, and redefine a particular idea of "Japaneseness."

This quality of something being Japanese is usually grouped into one of two categories: traditional and modern. These two extremes seem to provide all we need to neatly sort Japanese culture; tea ceremony, for example, is traditional, while maid cafes in Akihabara are modern.

By calling something traditional, it tacitly implies that the item or practice is no longer part of the everyday experience. As such, it is easy to write off "traditional" Japanese things as the prerogative of little old kimono-clad men and women, hunched with age. And while there are those of all ages dedicated to passing down "traditional" practices in as unchanged a manner as possible, the truth is the 'new' and the 'old' are continuously engaging and influencing each other. There is a tension between the two that prompts both innovation and "root-seeking." However, because these practices are no longer part of the everyday, special times or places must be created for their use. Crow x Class has taken traditional instruments out of the festivals, tea houses, and concert halls with which they've become associated, and brought them into a *visual-kei* live house where they become the tools of playful identity (re)making.

That night, after I finished recording my narrations (in one take, I'll have you know) and headed out to catch my train home, I had that flyer for Crow x Class's upcoming concert tucked safely in my bag. I plan on attending in my *yukata*, accented with as much silver and leather accessories as I can find, rocking out to tradition.

Rachael is a second year High School ALT in Takasaki city, Gunma Prefecture. She is a dyed-in-the-wool student of anthropology, and spends her free time practicing 'wadaiko' or hip-hop dancing.

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² Seibt, Oliver. "Asagi's Voice: Learning How to Desire with Japanese Visual-kei," in Vocal Music and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Music, edited by Christian Utz and Frederick Lau, 248- 265. New York: Routledge, 2013.

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ABENOMICS

WILL ABE'S "THREE ARROWS" HIT THEIR TARGET?



Dustin Henrich, Osaka



Japan is currently in a two-decade period of on and off recessions. The national debt of Japan recently exceeded one quadrillion yen (¥1,000,000,000,000,000). This is a ludicrous figure, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is looking at ending this cycle of recession and bringing Japan forward as an economic super-power. To achieve this, he has instituted a series of reforms, commonly referred to as his "Three Arrows."

The name refers to a legend from Yamaguchi Prefecture, where Mr. Abe is from. The legend says that a feudal lord in Yamaguchi asked his sons to each break an arrow. The lord then gave his sons three arrows bound together and asked them to try to snap them, but none of the boys could do it. The father said one arrow can easily be broken, whereas three arrows together cannot.

Like the Yamaguchi lord, Mr. Abe plans to bring Japan out of its recession with his "three arrows" policy. The three arrows are:

- Directing the Bank of Japan to launch a monetary policy of 2% inflation growth, a sales tax increase, and to encourage growth of private investment.
- A large fiscal stimulus package aimed at improving public works and creating jobs.
- Structural reforms to the labor and agriculture industries.

Arrow 1

To counter Japan's near two-decade period of deflation, monetary reform and a return to inflation were the first of three arrows. By adopting an inflation target of 2% over the next decade, Mr. Abe wants that growth to increase wages and increase consumption. According to *The Economist*, Mr. Abe's advisors "are convinced, and have convinced their boss, that getting Japan out of its deflationary funk...is about shaking people out of a deflationary mindset."¹

With inflation, the value of the yen goes down when traded against other currencies. For the last four years, the yen has been trading at less than 100 yen to a U.S. dollar. Recently, the yen has reached parity with the U.S. dollar and the newly-cheap yen has spurred on an increase of foreign trade and investment. Since companies and consumers now get more yen for their own currency, there has been a marked increase in the amount of

Japanese goods being exported. An increase in foreign tourism has also been seen, with visitors taking advantage of the cheap prices in Japan.

Current evidence shows that this plan does seem to be working, at least in the short term. Toyota is a major exporter and has seen a threefold increase to their net income over the past 12 months. Sony, too, has reported improvement, with the company turning a profit for the first time in five years.²

The goal is to create a "snowball" effect. Corporations' profits are set to continue rising due to the increased exports and foreign consumers taking advantage of the weaker yen. Corporations should reinvest that money domestically to increase wages and hire more workers. Higher wages could lead to more consumer spending, thus sales tax revenue would bring more money into the government. To take advantage of this increased spending, and to further reduce the debt, Mr. Abe is calling for an increase in sales tax, to 8 percent in April 2014, and to 10 percent in October 2015.

However, doubt is already being cast on Abe's first arrow. The second quarter of 2013 reported a growth figure of 2.6%, down from 3.8% in the preceding 12 months. Analysts state that continued caution among Japanese corporations was the cause of this growth slowdown.³

Inflation does not affect everything equally. On the plus side, exports and tourism have increased; however, the price of imports, especially fuel, have also increased. In the wake of the Fukushima disaster, Japan's future development of nuclear plants is mostly on pause. This means that a lot of industries still rely on imported fossil fuel for power, as a result, the higher fuel costs are eating into business and consumers' incomes.

With Japanese buying power on the line, other economists are concerned that raising sales tax too soon could hamper Japan's recent progress. As of now, tax increases are only likely to happen if Japan's economy looks like it can sustain its growth. Mr. Abe's advisers have stated that sales tax should rise at a slower rate over a longer period to avoid further increasing the strain on Japanese consumers.

A lot is riding on the success of Mr. Abe's first arrow. A report from Moody's Investor Service said that Mr. Abe "needs to spur corporations to increase wages and investments. Otherwise, Abe's administration risks adding more debt without igniting the growth to pay for it."⁴



Arrow 2

The recently announced public works budget is being pulled in two directions. Some advisers are suggesting that funds should be allocated towards disaster prevention for all of Japan, while others point towards the recovery of the Tohoku region. On top of that, the country's neglected infrastructure has put many tunnels, dams, and bridges in need of urgent repairs.

Mr. Abe's administration increased the public works budget to 5.3 trillion yen, at least until the end of the fiscal year 2014. This is an increase of 15.6% over the previous budget, however, it is only temporary. The government has stated that the next budget will include a 10% drop in the public works section.⁵

Mr. Abe said that nationwide projects will not only help make Japan safe from disasters, but also to promote growth in regional economies. Construction workers will be employed for public works, leading to an increase in consumer spending in all areas of Japan. However, Fukushima residents have pointed out that allocating funds to national public works projects takes money away from disaster-hit areas like Fukushima and the Tohoku region. It is incredibly expensive to remove radiation-tainted soil and water. Plans to barricade contaminated water surrounding the plants from other buildings and the removal of debris from the reactors could cost an estimated 8.7 billion yen.

Arrow 3

Japan's labor market needs to become more flexible in order to help startup businesses. This would promote entrepreneurial growth, and create more jobs. Yoshihito Kaneda, president of Fact-Real Inc. said "structural reforms are often put on the back burner to tax breaks or monetary easing because their benefits are much less obvious."⁶

Another challenge that small businesses and startups face is financial. Banks in Japan require 80% of a loan to be personally guaranteed for repayment. Many businesses fail in the first year, so being able to start over easily needs to be an option. A removal, or reform, of the personal guarantee requirement would

make it safer to start a new business, but so far, nothing has happened.

Other areas where Mr. Abe's administration seeks reform include: the rules regarding dismissal of workers as well as support for women who go back into the workforce after having children.

Agricultural reform is another matter. Mr. Abe wants to improve Japan's farmers' competitiveness by combining the now-separate, small farms into large-scale farms. The problem is that this reform goes directly against the interests of the small farmers who are a key support group for Mr. Abe's LDP party. The U.S. Trans-Pacific Partnership is also gaining traction, and it would be the first time that Japan would have a free trade agreement with regards to agriculture. This could be the bump Japan needs to reform its agricultural industry into a more competitive and cooperative industry.

All three of Abe's arrows have to hit together in order to succeed in getting Japan back on track. Success is also dependent on Mr. Abe building confidence in Japanese corporations to reinvest at home. Japan's economic troubles did not appear overnight, nor will they go away as quickly.

Dustin Henrich is a 2nd-year ALT originally from Missouri and now living in Osaka. He has done some research into Japan's economy, and asks questions. When he isn't writing or making websites, you can find Dustin doing body-weight exercises or yoga.

Converse with Connect! Send your feedback, comments, and questions to us at connect.editor@ajet.net

Sources

¹ Japan and Abenomics: Once more with feeling. (2013, May 18). *The Economist*, 20-25.

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ENTERTAINMENT

EDITORIAL Tom Reviews "Hausu"

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The year is 1975, and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* has just shattered box office records. Impressed, Japanese studio executives begin their hunt for a script to replicate its success and fill Tokyo cinemas. Every big blockbuster starts with a catchy title. Gnashing, chewing, and tearing, the elegant and evocative "*Jaws*" was a title that screamed horror and excitement. Perhaps with this mind, director Nobuhiko Obayashi settled on an equally concise name for his 1977 teen horror flick: *House*. If he was attempting to conjure images of dread they remain obscured, but vague title aside, *House* is an extremely entertaining ghost story with a heavy dose of psychedelic craziness.

Concealed within all the trappings of a gruesome horror film, *House* contains an (almost) touching coming of age story. Gorgeous, a typical high school student, is excited to spend her summer vacation at her father's cottage. But her plans change when he introduces his new girlfriend, the ethereal Ryoko. To punish her father, Gorgeous decides instead to bring her cat Blanche and six of her creatively nicknamed friends, Melody, Fantasy, Prof, Kung Fu, Sweet and Mac to visit the home of her estranged aunt. All seems well, but when her aunt turns out to be a ravenous ghost, thirsty for the blood of unmarried virgins, things soon take a turn towards the sinister and downright crazy. The girls find themselves facing off against everything from aggressive lamp shades, killer pianos, and even a giant pair of disembodied lips from a briefly explored alternate dimension.

While all the blood-soaked action is enough to keep you on the edge of your seat, the most memorable parts of the film are the ones that showcase Obayashi's completely off kilter special effects. The unorthodox use of stop motion, plainly crayoned-in animations and bizarre collages, make *House* a visual feast that crackles with the all the intensity and insanity of a bad acid trip.

A prime example of what can be found along the wildest fringes of Japanese pop culture, *House* is certainly deserving of the cult following it has amassed. If your curiosity has been piqued, *House* was given a re-release by The Criterion Collection in 2010 and is widely available.

Have you watched, listened to, read, or played something strikingly great or wonderfully bad recently? Got questions? Tell me about it at connect.entertainment@ajet.net



THIS MONTH IN ENTERTAINMENT...

It's been a rock and roll summer in Japan, with huge festivals cropping up all over the place. The biggest musical event of the summer, or more accurately of the year, Fuji Rock, sets up shop once again in Niigata to deliver three days of ear-splitting goodness that probably spurred noise complaints all the way down to Kyushu. Recently departed Saitama JET Becca Ross was lucky enough to be able to attend the festival two years in a row and has an exciting rundown of the events for you.

To add to festival fever, I've dressed a top 5 list of bands you may have missed while head banging to the headliners. Alongside all the festival coverage, we throw this month's JET spotlight on Christian William, a folk musician placed in Tochigi. As a little extra, I've thrown in a review of the fantastically ridiculous Japanese B-movie, *Hausu*. Enjoy!



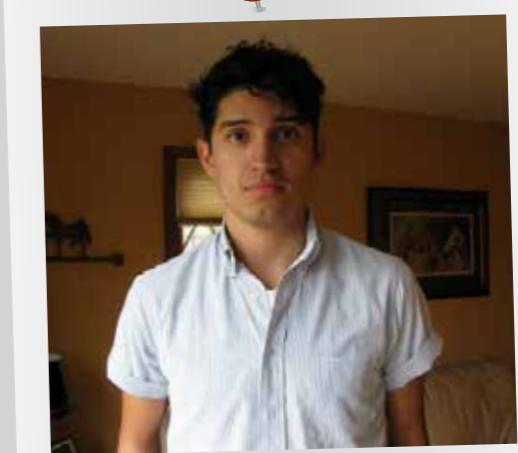
SPOTLIGHT

Christian William, One-Man Band With No Plan

Christian William is a second-year ALT living in Sano, Tochigi. A Chicago native and a musician at heart, Christian has worked for the Ravinia Festival as an intern and coordinator, tending to big names like Maroon 5 and the B52's all while performing his own material. While his musical roots owe much to Bob Dylan's unmistakable brand of folk rock, his influences are seated in the early 90s, with bands like Modest Mouse and The Smashing Pumpkins playing key roles in developing his sound. Since moving to Japan, Christian has turned an observatory in his school into a makeshift studio to record his folk album, performed at several local venues, and even wooed audiences in Tokyo's trendy Shimokitazawa district. Unfortunately, just as he was integrating into the Japanese music scene, he broke his ankle in a skateboarding accident. Not one to let petty things like physical trauma get in the way of his work, he has taken on a more electronic side-project. Using synth-emulators for classic video game consoles, he is working on releasing a chip-tune album with a darker sound, reminiscent of aggressive synth-poppers Crystal Castles. Keep an eye on his Bandcamp (<http://christianwilliam.bandcamp.com/>) for new releases!



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A CLOWN, A LION, FUJI-SAN, AND ROCK

Rebecca Ros, Saitama



I'm back in the UK, sat at my shiny new desk, in my shiny new clothes surrounded by my shiny new colleagues, and

I find myself taking a moment. Three weeks ago I was a lion. No prouder a lion has there ever been. Stood, furred and face-painted, amongst a merry band of other circus folk in the mountains in Niigata-ken, we were ready to take on the full force of Fuji Rock Festival.

Before I get carried away with whimsical circus-based tales of festival madness, let me take you back one more year. For myself, and most of my peers, it was coming to the end of our first year, and we'd invested what felt like 1,000,000 pounds on a ticket to a festival located nowhere near its namesake. Expectations were high and confused, as we really didn't know what we were letting ourselves in for. Having myself been to a few festivals all over Europe, and for others, the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many other places, the general assumption in our group was that we should attend the festival in fancy dress. After months of deliberation, it was decided that we'd all dress up as clowns. A hula-hoop and metres of pipe cleaner later we were clowned and ready to make our mark.

We stood out. Apparently dressing up isn't a 'thing' at Japanese



music festivals. This just made the whole experience that much better. I've never met such a large group of people so willing to become friends and chat in an instant. One photograph posed for, and the next thing you knew you'd be best buds and be arranging to meet at the Green Stage later on to watch Radiohead together. I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that that was one of the best summers I have ever had.

With this in mind, there was no stopping those who remained in Japan from buying a ticket for Fuji Rock 2013. In all honesty, I bought the tickets not even knowing who was playing. For me, it was all about the costume planning. A circus theme was decided, and I set about making my lion costume to go with Emma's lion tamer outfit. Other players included two cymbal-playing monkeys, a snake charmer, a clown, a unicorn, a rabbit, and Doraemon. Needless to say, this was an all-inclusive, eclectic circus; all were welcome. Turns out Jurassic 5 was performing. Win.

I should move on, and stop indulging in how brilliant our costumes were. How about the whole festival experience? Me oh my, it was pretty darn fantastic. Festivals I've been to before have this inherent air of chaos. Everything is dirty, even if it hasn't rained. The food area is swamped with depressingly empty kebab plates, the queues for drinks are on par with a flange of baboons vying over a new female, and the toilets are dirty beyond mention. Fuji Rock was an absolute idyll in comparison.

The summer of 2012 welcomed us with constant and brilliant sunshine. The summer of 2013, admittedly, was not so kind. However, despite the odd torrential downpour during acts such as Nine Inch Nails and Skrillex, our mood was not dampened.



Both experiences were clean and organised, as is the Japanese way. An impressive feat, considering that each day of the festival saw over 100,000 people in attendance. (2005 Stats.) Both years we pitched up our motley selection of tents right next to a blissfully cool mountain stream, out of the way of the daily trudge of human traffic. This was to be our little refuge for those few hours between the last burlesque act finishing in the Palace of Wonder, and the first late morning acoustic chords played by some trendy so-and-so with a fashionable fringe.

With our temporary home all set up and ready to stash our imperishable store of booze and t, we found ourselves falling into an easygoing routine for festival frolicking.

With the sun working as our silent cockerel, we were awake at 6:30 a.m. To say that we were full of vim and vigour would be a lie. Our start would be slow and sedate, much like a sloth on a Sunday. Having reclaimed our blown away tarps from the middle of someone else's tent-town, we'd all congregate in the middle of our own little village and start the ritual face painting; the first step to becoming full lion/monkey/snake charmer/rabbit/clown.

Once fully costumed and clad with a bum bag full of gin, 11:00 a.m. would mark the start of our 20-minute descent to the festival ground. Before we knew it we'd be by the Red Marquee buying our first meat pie of the day and sipping on a cool cider. What to see? Fret not, dear friends, for the festival is your oyster. At that time of day I found myself wandering over to the Café De Paris in the furthest corner of the festival. There, I found brass bands, pole dancers, eggs Benedict, balloon artists, buskers, and a stone circle in which I could bang away on a drum of my choosing.

Worried about what to go and see? Don't be, I never once found myself bored. This summer, with its occasional stroppy downpours of rain, meant that I took shelter in the Red Marquee, the only covered main stage, and therefore heard the delights of Haim, three sisters rocking out with impressively long hair, and Tom Odell, who regaled us with a Beatles cover of "Get Back." When I didn't fancy going to see Mumford and Sons, I made



some friends and popped along to watch Toro Y Moi on the White Stage for the first time, now I love him.

A day of discovering new talents was the perfect build up to the hugely anticipated headliners. On the menu this year were Skrillex, Nine Inch Nails, Björk, The Cure, The XX, and my personal favourite, Jurassic 5. The nature of Fuji Rock meant that even though thousands upon thousands of revellers were geared up and ready to ROCK OUT, there wasn't that claustrophobic, suffocating throng that is usually found at the front of the crowd. An air of mutual respect for each other's space allowed everyone to enjoy each gig to the max.

Once the climax of the headliners is spent, the party isn't. Head on over to the Red Marquee and take full advantage of the DJs until 4 a.m., after which you can roll, crawl, skip, run, hop, stumble to the Palace of Wonder. What a wonderful Palace it is. Easily my favourite place in the whole festival, here you rub shoulders with lap dancers, salsa with daredevil riders, and booze the early hours away with the artists who played that day.

My 'day' ended at around 5:30 a.m. with a sunrise trek back to the tent for an hour's respite. Who needs sleep? I don't, certainly not when dressed as a lion. 6:30 a.m. rears its head and its game on for two more days. Wasn't it exhausting? Yes, but it was absolutely, definitely and totally worth it.

Rebecca was a JET in Koshigaya-shi, Saitama-ken for two years, but has now returned to the UK before going off to study in Maastricht, NL. When not running around as a lion, she enjoys eating as much goat's cheese as is humanly possible.

FESTIVAL BANDS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

ENTERTAINMENT

Shugo Tokumaru (トクマル シューゴ)
With ten years of music making and five albums already under his belt, Shugo Tokumaru is hardly a newcomer, but still unforgivably easy to overlook. Perhaps one of the most dedicated multi-instrumentalists around, Shugo plays every single instrument on his albums. And forget just being able to play the guitar, drums and piano: whatever you've got, he will coax some music out of it. Using everything from the *koto* to the *kazoo*, Shugo Tokumaru will inspire you to start making music with the junk lying around your apartment. Featured in a 2010 Sony advertisement, one of his most popular tracks is "Rum Hee".

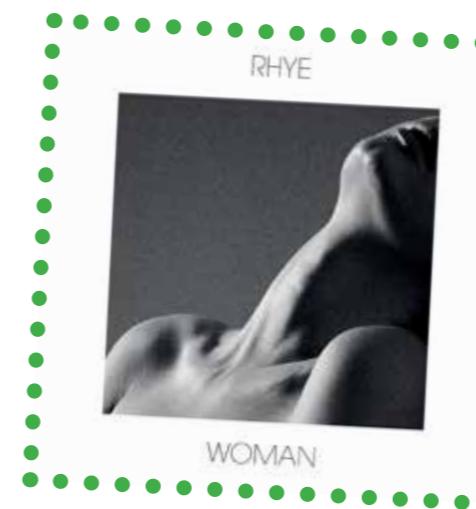


Tom Morin-Robinson, Tochigi

• Fuji Rock and SummerSonic both touted huge names in music this year, much to the delight of fans of all genres. And while mega-headliners like Nine Inch Nails, Bjork, The Cure, Metallica, Muse and NAS were on many people's must-see list, festivals of this size always have several breakthrough artists go unnoticed. Whether you're a seasoned festival goer looking for a new favorite, or you just need something fresh on your iPod, here are five Japanese and Western bands worth keeping an eye on over the next year.

CONNECT

September Issue 2013



Rhye

Candid, sensual, and heart wrenching are words that come to mind when describing the music of the Canadian-Danish duo Rhye. Their 2013 debut, *Woman* is a deeply personal album with lyrics that bridge the gap between love and sex in a refreshingly subtle and tasteful manner. While the stripped down piano lines and soulful hooks are captivating in their own right, the true standout here is the voice of lead singer Michael Milosh. Delivering his lines in a perfectly controlled and almost feminine countertenor, his quiet crooning is oft-compared to that of British R&B songstress Sade. If their single "Open" doesn't send shivers down your spine, I don't know what will.



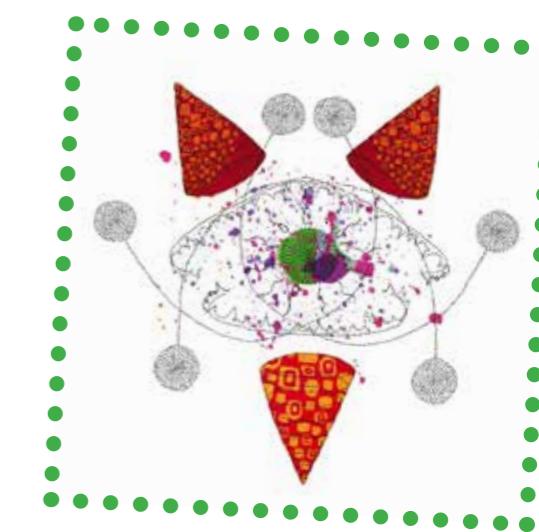
Kishi Bashi

An American of Japanese descent, Kaoru Ishibashi worked for many years as a touring member and violinist for high profile acts Of Montreal and Regina Spektor. Finally deciding to branch into solo work, he released his first full length album *151a* to critical acclaim late last year. He brings to the table bright and airy pop music, which he makes all his own through his incredible skill with the violin and by seamlessly weaving both English and Japanese into his songs. Most impressive are his live performances, which he does without any accompaniment by cleverly layering samples of his violin and beat boxing. His catchy single "Bright Whites" was featured in a Windows 8 spot.



Death Grips

When Kanye West's latest exercise in modesty, *Yeezus*, dropped earlier this year, many rushed to compare his new raw and industrial sound to this Sacramento hip-hop trio. While there may be some truth to the comparison, if played side by side, most Death Grips tracks would make even the most bombastic cut from 'Yeezus' sound like a lullaby. The name of the game here is volume: pounding industrial beats and grating noise are coupled to create some of the harshest beats around. Toss on main vocalist MC Ride shouting stream of consciousness lyrics at the top of his lungs about home invasion and swimming lessons and odds are that by the end of the concert you'll have cortisol leaking out of your eardrums. If any of that sounded positive to you, check out one of their bigger singles: "I've Seen Footage".



ONI NO MIGIUDE (鬼の右腕)

An all-girl band that made its Fuji Rock debut just this summer, "Devil's Right Hand" is a tough act to classify. Trading in their drum kit for bongos and with the lead singer armed with a steel drum, some tracks definitely give off a summery dub reggae vibe while others their guitarist belts out sweeping psychedelic rock lines. Either way, they will definitely get your head nodding. Their website (<http://oninomigiude.blogspot.jp/>) remains appropriately mysterious, their profile listing only a few of the girls' favorite things, namely: blankets, rice cakes, ketchup, and UNO. Still recording songs in their kitchen, these up and comers are definitely worth keeping an eye out for. Their first full length album, *Taoibakumeti*, was released just last February and is available at Disc Union or on iTunes.

ENTERTAINMENT

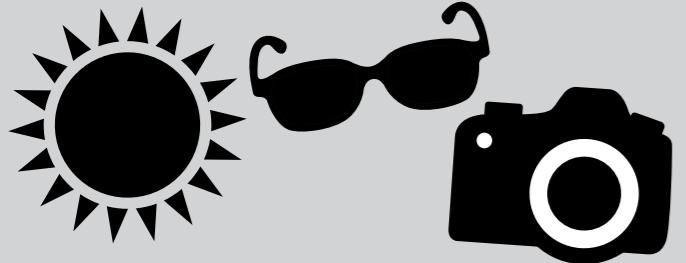
CONNECT

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FASHION & BEAUTY

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EDITORIAL Sun, Shades, and Dreams of Fall



Whether you've just arrived at your placement, returned to Japan after a couple of weeks back home or spent most days studying Japanese at your work desk, this past month must have felt like the cruellest of summers. I spent some vacation time in Taiwan, and boy was it humid there too!

In addition to feasting on delectable street snacks, I joined the locals who were consuming plenty of 'cooling foods' such as watermelon, coconut water and green bean soup. Since returning to Japan, jugs of iced *mugi-cha* (roasted barley tea), two showers a day and the gentle tinkling of my wind chime have kept me sane and hydrated.

Fashion-wise nothing on the streets of Taipei or in the shops of Hualien proved particularly appealing, although espadrilles, cute stationery and beauty items were unbelievably affordable across the island. I am happier in Okinawa than in Hokkaido, but on this

trip I found it difficult to look stylish with an oily nose and a brief bout of heat rash. I also wish I knew Fujimaki-sensei's secret to perfect hair all day, everyday.

If you are reading this as sweat drips off your brow, do hang in there...Autumn Equinox Day falls on 23 September, and not only do we get the day off, I promise air-conditioning will seem less inviting the day after—ask your supervisor or *sempai*. For the past two years the temperature where I live has dropped by an amazing 10 degrees Celsius the day after Autumn Equinox.

For those of you up north, September and October are great months to go hiking (isn't it wonderful how Japanese hikers are always so well-dressed and well-prepared?) and to pose for pictures under red Japanese maple trees. On the fashion front, we can soon look forward to designs in gorgeous shades of green (my favorite colour!), statement outerwear as well as layered looks—all key trends for fall, a season that's always stylish and fabulous but also classic and comforting.

It's true that recently floral prints and crop tops have been all the rage...sadly I've never looked good in them. Good thing for universal crowd-pleasers like sundresses, sunblock and sunglasses eh? Enjoy the tail end of the shorts/sandal-wearing season (Beer! Beach barbecues! Clearance sales! Cheeky students who seem taller and tanner!), and see you next month ☺

Did you try out something I suggested? Have fashion tips you'd like to share? Let me know at connect.fashion@ajet.net

THIS MONTH IN FASHION AND BEAUTY...

For our first Connect issue after Tokyo Orientation 2013, the Fashion & Beauty section brings you two articles with a distinctly-summery vibe.

First up, Josiah David casts his keen eye on Tokyo summer street fashion, and with his fellow fashion mavens, curates a pictorial spread of what's hot and what's not. Whether you're a fashionista who (dis)agrees with their verdicts, are curious about Japanese style trends or live in the *inaka* where Crocs are a fashion staple, you have to admit that Japanese street style is a delightful mix-match and fabulously vibrant. And the styles and genres Josiah discusses over the next few pages are certain to provide inspiration for your next outfit!

Next, Rachael Ragalye draws our attention to the still-touchy subject of bare shoulders. Funny how Japanese ladies have to cover their arms and shoulders when nobody bats an eyelid at the sight of miniskirts. Back home, you'd probably not think twice about wearing sleeveless/strapless tops, especially if it's hot out, but the general opinion (at least away from Tokyo and



Osaka) is that bare shoulders are provocative. Rachael tells you what a major Japanese fashion magazine thinks, and shares her expert advice on how to avoid unwanted attention and style your current sleeveless pieces to look occasion-ready.

SPOTLIGHT

Tristan Salvanera, Smooth and Simple Style



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This month, meet Tristan Salvanera, a second-year ALT living in Yamanashi. When not dancing and teaching hip-hop, he enjoys biking around town in search of the perfect bowl of ramen, sharing travel stories and adding to his collection of Air Jordans.

My style is best described as...

Classic and comfortable. I prefer neutral colors like beige, brown and grey. A personal favorite is to pair a crisp white v-neck tee with dark jeans, a timeless look popularized by James Dean and Steve McQueen. Make your outfit pop by accessorizing with a conversation starter. I recommend a cool watch, pageboy cap or polka-dotted bowtie.

My favorite places to shop at in Japan...

Adidas Originals, Global Work, Uniqlo.

Tips for my fellow JETs...

Look for clothing that offers comfort and breathability. Lighter fabrics and shorter styles give you a nice tan while keeping the summer heat and humidity at bay.

The Japanese workplace dress code may suggest collectivism, but don't be disheartened. Remember that being fashionable and creative within the perceived rules of style is all about balancing colors and accessories. Japanese fashion is cool because it is all about experimentation and co-ordination.



DO WE LIKE IT? TOKYO STREET STYLE

Josiah David, Yamanashi

Do We Like It? is a collection of current trends in Japan that are antithetical to the stereotypical or outlandish image many have of Japanese fashion. We're forced to ask ourselves, "Do we like it?" Each installment, we ask our contributors to give a Yay, Nay or IDHI (I don't hate it) to describe their reactions.

This month's contributors:

Photography and commentary:

Sara Ben-Abdallah, freelance photographer, Tokyo

Commentary:

Jody Dixon, probably the best-dressed ALT in Yamanashi
Annabella Massey, former AJET Connect Fashion & Beauty editor
Miriam and Siobhan, former residents of Japan who blog at remotelyfashion.blogspot.com



Flower Pants

Debuting across Japan this past spring, floral printed trousers and skinny jeans have become hot items from Fukuoka to Hokkaido. Take your pick from monochromatic to muted phantasmagoria. Shooting in the streets with Sara, we noted that while everyone in Shinjuku was wearing them, Harajuku and Shibuya had nary a pair.

Do we like it?

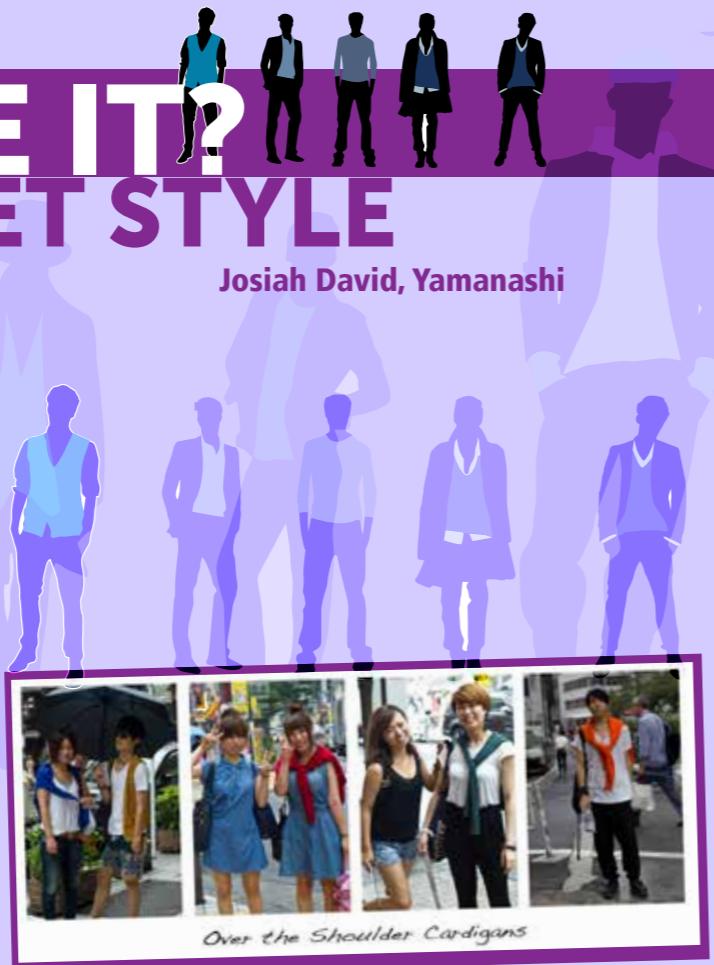
Josiah: IDHI. Lots of ugly ones, but I can't be mad at a ridiculous print. Slim-fit looks much better than its baggy counterpart.

Sara: IDHI. I can't help but think of Peggy Bundy (from *Married with...Children*).

Jody: Definitely a Yay! This trend has pervaded boutique racks well into the summer. My favourite combination: solid tee + flower printed pants + heels = effortless and très chic.

Annabella: Yay!

RemotelyFashion (RF): Yay-ish. We are Goldilocks about this print: not too big, not too small. We like them just right. Also, keep the fit slim. We especially like them with classic brogues. As autumn is on its way, dark and stormy flowers will look best.



The Shrug

A classic never dies, apparently... no matter how hard we try to kill it. The globally prevalent revival of this classic 50s look is (d)evolving. Rolled-up ankles for men have transformed into belted shorts and the shrug is the new 'it' accessory, even if it isn't original, interesting or even practical. (What on Earth do you need a sweater for in this weather?)

On the street, however, I had a change of heart. When asked why they were captivated by this trend, some Tokyoites mentioned the practicality of having an outer garment in inclement weather while others showed us how it allows *layering* (yessss, honey) on a summer ensemble without bulk or perspiration.

Do we like it?

Josiah: IDHI. While I appreciate some street-urchins mixing it up with an off-the-shoulder twist, it usually comes off narcissistic and *nouveaux riche*.

Sara: Yay. I was sold by our subjects explaining their layering style to me.

Jody: Nah, Nay, Nay! Convenient, yes, but reminiscent of tennis players, polo clubs and everything else snooty. Also oftentimes worn incorrectly, so I say put your arms through those holes and accessorize instead!

Annabella: Nay! Unless your cardigan is essentially a really fabulous cape...don't.

RF: Yay. Tried and true, preppy, and actually quite charming. French men have been rocking this look since time immemorial and we can't say no to our Gallic cousins. We think this style looks best with ankle-grazing trousers and horn-rimmed glasses (on both boys and girls).

Tattoo Leggings

Conservative mothers of the world rejoice! When your daughter coyly sneaks the idea of her getting a tattoo into your weekly phone calls, buy her a few of these babies and put that conversation to bed. On the streets for our shoot in Tokyo we saw none.

Do we like it?

Josiah: IDHI. I appreciated the Japanese ingenuity, seeing as this idea has been around in other parts of the world for a long time but never executed with such mainstream appeal.

Sara: Trend over, case closed.

Jody: Nay! Just get inked, won't you? I give a thumbs down... maybe since it isn't particularly amazing for individuals such as myself who were born with natural tans.

Annabella: Nay. Precious in theory, tacky in practice.

RF: IDHI. Usually in agreement about everything, this trend made the two-headed beast snap at itself. While it burns Miriam's eyes, Siobhan thinks the trend is adorable in its own Harajukian way. While Siobhan might never wear them, they make her feel incredibly nostalgic for Japan. Miriam believes that if you want a sailor tattoo on your ankle, go ahead and get on with it. You must commit!



The Signature Collar

The Peter Pan collar is indefatigable, evolving and adapting to stay current. A quick search on YouTube will yield many fun and creative and DIY projects for creating your own separate collars/statements pieces. On the streets, signature collars (lace, sequins, velveteen...) were aplenty.

Do we like it?

Josiah: Yay! The sheer versatility of these collars makes them the perfect way to spice up your outfit for any season. Spikes, beads, leather, silk, whatever. Timeless.

Sara: IDHI. Too feminine for me. Who really wants to walk around with an s-load of fake pearls on their collar?

Jody: Yay. These collars are delightfully feminine and come in detachable versions or as appliqués. With a necklace crafted to mimic the Peter Pan collar, any collarless top can be made to look instantly dressier.

Annabella: Yay!

RF: Yay! Peter Pan collars are youthful, polished and playful—think Victorian child.



The 90s Revival

People have been saying "The Nineties are back!" for a while now, but you've not seen it done like this before. We're talking about flirting with the boundaries of sexuality, taste and the diversity that the decade offered.

On the streets, they were giving us *everything*. I was living for these folks. My favorite look was worn by a girl called Ami in tiny denim shorts, crop top and Art Deco earrings like the top of the Chrysler Building.

Do we like it?

Josiah: Yay on every level! There's a freedom about this look that is so sexy. It's Sears-bargain-basement meets '*Comme des garçons*'.

Sara: IDHI. I guess it's nice for the summer?

Jody: In love! Yay! The great thing about this look is that it comprises almost every trend you can think of. I am particularly keen because it encourages expression and you can get away with just about anything!!

Annabella: IDHI. I appreciate it, but I'd never want that on me.

RF: IDHI. We like some things about the 90s revival, but it's not as exciting as some other trends for fall. It mainly elicits childhood memories and is therefore oddly comforting. We're happy that velvet is once again the go-to fabric for party dresses. But we were traumatized by skirts over trousers back then and are still seeing a therapist about it now.

Josiah David is a third-year JET living in downtown Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture. Graduating with an honors degree in Art History, his area of specialization is Japanese contemporary art and fashion.



Rachael Ragalye, Gunma

BARE SHOULDERS SUMMER DRAMA IN JAPAN

I first came to Japan in June 2010. I attended a two-week long class at Japan Women's University, and it was *hot*. I felt as though the strength of the sun was at least twice what it was in my coastal hometown. Those of us taking the course had been warned several times prior to our departure that people in Japan tended to dress more conservatively than Americans and that we should pack accordingly. I'd brought some T-shirts and thick-strapped sleeveless tops along, deciding that I'd take my cues from what other Japanese women my age were wearing. Students at women's colleges are well known for having (or being pressured to have) great fashion sense, and none of the young Japanese women around me were sporting bare shoulders. Figuring that they probably knew something I didn't, my sleeveless tops stayed in my suitcase.

Three years later, bare shoulders remain a touchy subject. I'd forgotten to bring a change of clothing to my '*wadaiko*' (Japanese drumming) rehearsal a few weeks ago. Wanting desperately to take off my linen blouse but concerned about revealing the spaghetti straps of my tank-top underneath, I quickly consulted with a 27 year-old female member. I thought that since everyone was sweating profusely and in full-on rehearsal mode, divesting myself of my collared shirt would pose no problem. To my surprise she shook her head and advised me that keeping my shirt on would be for the best. "The guys' eyes would fall out of their heads otherwise," she added with a laugh.

Indeed, showing one's shoulders in Japan is not something that is taken lightly. However, we seem to be in the midst of some sort of a bare-shoulder revolution.

The sight of a bare-shouldered woman is enough of a break from the ordinary to make those around her take pause. It is a strong and conscious request to be the subject of attention. At least, this is the argument put forth by Japanese fashion magazine *CanCam*. Last month, the magazine published a nearly ten-page story about the "drama" that begins the moment a woman's shoulders are exposed.

The story is based on the results of *CanCam*'s poll of fifty Japanese men. While hardly an exhaustive survey, '*CanCam*' claims that whether at a drinking party, business trip or putting in overtime, the moment a woman "suddenly" goes sleeveless ranks among the top five moments in which a man falls in love. My favorite sentence from the article explains the phenomenon as such: "The moment when a woman suddenly goes from work mode to sleeveless mode, men feel the "drama" so much that their hearts begin to pound."

The story itself is a great read not only for the fashion advice dispensed but also for the creative manner in which it is presented. In keeping with the spirit of the article's title "*Midsummer's No-Sleeve*" Theatre ('*Manatsu no Nou Suriibuu Ekijou*'), each scenario is presented in the context of a mini-drama complete

with cheesy, romantic dialogue. Uncredited, supposedly-male opinions are superimposed on pictures of women showing how you, too, can ditch the jackets, shrugs and cardigans and join in the drama. It's definitely over the top in a wonderful, J-drama way, but the advice offered remains timely and relevant.

The featured garments fall into four categories—blouses, collared-blouses, sleeveless dresses and knitwear—and are in line with popular summer trends such as lace, bold punches of color, floral patterns and monochrome pairings. The possibilities are endless—a sleeveless cream dress with black piping, a boldly patterned collared sleeveless top tucked into a pair of khakis, a black top with a white lace skirt—experiment with different combinations to see what you like best.

Here are my two suggestions for combining this summer's trends with sleeveless styles:

Pair patterns or lace with a bold or solid color: Some people love the dynamism of clashing patterns, but I'm going to suggest sticking with one bold item in your outfit. I particularly like *CanCam*'s suggestion of a light blue peplum top with lace trimming over a white pencil skirt. Structured jackets over sleeveless dresses with eye-catching prints are a visual treat (and safe for work).

Don't forget structure: Many sleeveless tops are loose-fitting, so it's a good idea to have a structured piece in your outfit. That way, your torso doesn't get lost in a sea of fabric. Try pairing a flowy top with an asymmetrical hemline with a pair of fitted pants, or tuck a voluminous blouse into an A-line or pencil skirt. Consider a statement belt—it's a great way add sophistication, structure and color to your outfit.

As mentioned in the article, the cool thing about sleeveless fashion is that you can easily go from play to work just by adding a blazer or cardigan to your ensemble. This is a real boon for those of us shopping on a budget. A well-cut blazer is a great wardrobe staple and can take an outfit from the dance floor to the boardroom in under a minute.

Bonus: You can continue wearing your sleeveless tops in cool weather. I wear some of my sleeveless tops well into the fall months by layering long-sleeved heat-tech undergarments under my blazers. It's not as though I'd be taking off my blazer at the workplace anyway, so that little bit of ingenuity keeps me nice and warm.

Rachael Ragalye is a second-year ALT in Gunma who loves hip hop, taiko and Japanese movies. She has had many zany misadventures in her quest for love, fame and fortune. This is complicated by the fact that she is severely directionally-challenged. Ask her about her current obsession *Paradise Kiss* (both the movie and manga).

Source: "nuida sono shunnkann, dorama ga hijimaru: manatsu no nou suriibuu gekijou" *CanCam*. August 2013: 38-47. Print.



FOOD

EDITORIAL Beat the Heat? Eat the Heat!



30 It can't be overstated—summers in Japan get hot. It's not just the heat that drives the mercury either, but the stuffy humidity that crawls all over your skin. That moist heat of the Japanese summer often works in other more subtle, insidious ways against you—it can kill your appetite. To keep your stamina up, you've got to eat! Here's a couple hot (ha!) tips for foods you should eat to keep you cool over the long term!

Watery produce. That means watermelons, lettuce, corn on the cob, zucchini, and cucumber! Keeping your body hydrated on a hot day is important, so you can double up by drinking AND eating your water supply! A lot of people are all about squeezing lemons and limes into their water, but cucumbers are a great additive, too! Slice a cucumber up thinly, pop it in some water, refrigerate, and prepare to be cooled off! Food personality Alton Brown also recently suggested that simple syrup made with cucumber could serve as an excellent summer cocktail. That's my kind of summer kitchen experiment!

Hot peppers. Sounds counter-intuitive, don't it? But sweating is a vital part of your body's cooling system, so true to form, the sweat produced from eating a chili pepper is bound to make you, well...chilly! Hot peppers, horseradish, fresh ginger, and black pepper are all equally helpful candidates when it comes to the beat-the-heat sweats. In Japan, those suffering from summertime lethargy are often encouraged to eat curry! The combination of sweat-inducing spices, carbohydrates from the rice, and a good dose of sodium really works well to cut through the drowsiness. Which brings us to...

by Xan

Salt. Salt?! That makes you thirsty! Yes, but hear me out! When we sweat, it's not just water we're pumping out, it's vital sodium and other electrolytes, too. To replace them, you need that salt! Plain water might taste great when you're screaming around the beach on a summer's day, but to really recharge, consider packing your salt shaker! In Japan, many summer festivals sell lightly-salted cucumbers on a stick, and it's popular to sprinkle salt on watermelon and rock melon as a snack! Mexico takes it a step further, spritzes lime juice, then sprinkles salt AND chili powder on their watermelon, combining all three tips!

How about foods you SHOULDN'T eat during the summer? Well, as great as they seem for a scorching day, frosty beverages and iced comestibles should probably be nixed from the picnic list. Sub-zero-temperature treats are quick fixes, instantly producing a cooling effect and lowering your temperature in select areas, but your body soon rushes to compensate. Barry J. Swanson, professor and co-chair of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Washington State University, notes that "the body will physiologically respond to energy (i.e., heat) loss by increasing blood flow to the 'cool' region and bring the temperature back up to a physiological 'body temperature.'" What does that mean? It means your body cranks up your internal thermostat just when you need cooling down the most! So when you feel yourself getting a little hot under the collar this summer, just remember these tips, and dig in!

How delicious was that cucumber cocktail? Give me your thanks (or scolding) at connect.food@ajet.net

THIS MONTH IN FOOD...

Food, glorious food! This month in the food section, we're serving up some prime editorial, a side of spotlight, and two meaty main articles that are guaranteed to rev your taste buds up for some serious chow time!

First up, we take a look at the DOs and DON'Ts of summer eating! Ice-cold soda, or spicy curry: do you know which is more cooling in the summertime heat? Find out!

We learn what's so mysterious about former Tokushima JET Lance Kita's "mystery dinners" in our monthly Spotlight! Olivia Doggett walks us through the world of rice porridge, known locally as 'okayu', and how to make, eat, and adapt it to any season or taste!

Finally Kira Conley shows how to keep a lid on the heat when you're cooking up a summer feast by... not cooking at all! Check out her amazing recipes that never even glance at the stove top. Gentlemen, set a course to delicious!



SPOTLIGHT

Lance Kita, Maestro of the Mystery Dinner

Lance Kita, a former Tokushima JET still working in the area, is a bit of a foodie. He is known in these parts for discovering the best restaurants, throwing the best "wine-kais", and for his legendary "Awa Mystery Dinners." What is a "Mystery Dinner," you ask? After communicating with restaurant owners to decide on a set menu and price for the evening, Lance takes 10-12 lucky diners to three different establishments to sample food at each. Each dinner will be themed and often an appetizer will be eaten at the first restaurant, followed by a main dish at another before dessert at a third. When asked why he decided to start these events, he says, "(Many people) go to the cheapest, safest, or most familiar restaurants. Not being able to read the menu or know what's on the other side of the 'noren' curtain is daunting." These "Mystery Dinners" allow people to discover new places while also learning about the restaurant's concept from the head chef or owner. Though these events are ideal for foreigners with limited knowledge of Japanese or for new JETs, Lance explains that his events are popular with his Japanese friends as well.





お粥 OKAYU

Olivia Doggett, Fukuoka

If autumn in rural western Quebec was a colour, it would probably be gold. September and October mean fields of ripened corn and wheat stalks, fields polka-dotted with hay bales or framed by dying maple leaves. The soil can't talk, but if it could it would be saying "eat me." English does not contain a specific enough word for the celebration of food. There is no word for the kind of freshness that drips down your chin, or that demands to be eaten without salt or pepper.

32 Japan has a word though. *Shun* translates to season, particularly the Japanese culinary emphasis on appreciating food in the moment of its perfect ripened state. The word for autumn in Japan, 旬の食材 (*shun no shikuza*) literally means "food of the season." Harvest colours vary in the East, however. Instead of gold, there are miles of green, of rice on the cusp of being cut. Autumn is the time of new rice, which is supposed to be the softest, whitest, and therefore the best of any time of year.

To celebrate the rice harvest, here is a simple recipe for *okayu*, rice porridge. I created this after spending Golden Week in a 10-day silent meditation retreat along the coast of Chiba. After a few days of 6 a.m. breakfast, we were served *okayu*, presumably as a method of recycling leftover rice from days previous. After returning home to Fukuoka, I tailored a basic recipe, and still eat some kind of variation nearly every morning. While the basic recipe can stand alone, I added some flavour combinations that also work well. The options are endless though, so be creative. Happy harvest!

Basic Okayu Recipe

--Serves 2
--20 minutes

Ingredients:

250 ml cooked rice (I use medium-grain "ordinary" Japanese rice: 糙米 – *uruchimai*)
500-750ml liquid (the proportion of liquid depends on the consistency of rice porridge you want to have. I use the word

Berry + Almond + Maple Syrup

Ingredients:
Follow the basic recipe above, and for liquid, use ½ water, ½ milk or soy milk.
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup fresh or frozen berries
¼ cup almonds
2 teaspoons pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
2 drizzles of maple syrup



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Directions:

Follow the basic *okayu* recipe. When water and rice have absorbed, add the milk and a teaspoon of vanilla extract. While porridge is cooking, prepare your berries. If you are using frozen, take out of the freezer and set aside to thaw. If you are using fresh, wash and cut them. When the *okayu* is to your liking, divide between two bowls and top with the berries, chopped almonds, pepitas and a good drizzle of maple syrup.

Nashi Pear + Toasted Coconut + Raisin

Ingredients:

Follow the basic recipe above, and for liquid, use ½ water, ½ milk or soy milk.
¼ - ½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 medium-sized nashi pear; peeled and sliced.
½ cup raisins
2 tablespoons toasted shredded coconut (put in toaster oven or real oven for 2-3 minutes until golden)
1 tablespoon + 2 drizzles of honey
½ teaspoon of lemon zest (optional)



Directions:

Follow the basic *okayu* recipe. When water and rice have absorbed, add the milk, ½ teaspoon cinnamon, the sliced pear, raisins, and 1 tablespoon honey. When the consistency is to your liking, and the pear and raisin has softened, divide between two bowls. Top with toasted coconut, a drizzle of honey and some lemon zest (optional).

'Kuromame' + Black Sesame + 'Umeboshi'

Ingredients:

Follow the basic recipe above, and for liquid, I usually only use water, but you could also experiment with soup stock, milk or tea.
1 cup *kuromame* (black soy beans)
2 large *umeboshi* (dried plums)
2 teaspoons ground black sesame
2 sprinkles of chopped green onion
2 small dollops miso (optional; I use a mixed miso)
2 tablespoons *hijiki* (optional; it's sweet and sticky black seaweed)



Directions:

Kuromame are black soy beans, and are often found near the seaweed and *umeboshi* in the pickled aisle. They are sweet, and chewy. *Umeboshi* are salty and sour pickled plums. They are an

acquired taste, but once you like them, they are delicious! When adding the second half of water, add the *kuromame*. When the *okayu* is finished, divide between two bowls and top with one *umeboshi* each, ground black sesame, chopped green onion, miso (optional), and *hijiki* (optional).

More, more, more!

Banana + Cinnamon + Raisin + Walnut

½ milk/soy/almond milk, ½ water with a mashed ripe banana, ¼ - ½ teaspoon of cinnamon and ½ cup raisins added to rice mixture. Top with ¼ cup chopped walnuts, and a drizzle of maple syrup.

Corn + Basil + Goji Berry

½ steeped corn tea (I use a Korean brand), ½ water. ¾ cup frozen corn, thawed. Add the corn at the same time as the tea (after the water has absorbed), and 4 goji berries. Top with chopped basil and another goji berry on each bowl. Drizzle with honey if you like.

Mango + Coconut + Toasted Sesame

½ coconut milk, ½ water. ¾ cup chopped mango (fresh or jarred). Do the basic *okayu* recipe, but I recommend adding the optional salt, and a good drizzle of honey. Add the mango at the same time as the coconut milk, but reserve ¼ cup for topping. Sprinkle with 2 teaspoons toasted sesame (I use white sesame—throw it in the toaster oven for a 2-3 minutes until golden), remaining mango, and another honey drizzle.

Apricot + Almond

½ milk/soy/almond milk, ½ water. 1 cup softened and chopped dried apricots or 1-2 fresh ones chopped. Add the apricots at the same time as the milk. Top with ½ cup chopped almonds and a drizzle of honey.



33 Olivia Doggett is a second-year Canadian ALT living in Fukuoka City. She enjoys biking around, taking pictures where she shouldn't, puttingter around her kitchen, and traveling to inconveniently located onsens. She hopes to one day live in the woods, work from home, and reach nirvana. She's always hungry. See what she's up to on her blog: onionsniffles.com or on instagram: [onionsniffles](https://www.instagram.com/onionsniffles/). She's probably eating.

FOOD

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COOL SUMMER COOKING

If you can't stand the heat, get IN to the kitchen!

Kira Conley, Saitama

Japan is a country of seasons. Holidays and festivals are all linked to certain times of the year, and food is no different. Whatever is in season becomes the highlighted flavor of the dinner table. Fall is marked by apple-flavored drinks and hearty stew dishes, preparing us for the cold season ahead. In winter, we sit around bubbling hotpots, called *nabe*, with hot sake and friends, to warm our insides and comfort our cold bodies. Spring is the time when pink *sakura* blossoms seem to float into all food and drink, making everything light, fresh, and of course, pink!

But it is summer, the most brutal of all seasons, which makes us want to do nothing more than sit under a fan, curtains drawn, straining only to open a *combi* lunch or eat a pre-prepared meal from the grocery store. During these couple of months, anything that you eat tends to be of minimal effort or at least minimal cooking, resulting in a loss of those wonderful summer flavors and dishes. We substitute cooking for convenience, the mouth-watering for the thirst-quenching.

But it doesn't have to be this way. It is time we take a stand, a stand that will re-invent and reclaim summer food as flavorful, fresh, easy, and most importantly, refreshing! The following three dishes and dessert require no cooking or baking, yet still exhibit maximum summer flavor.

So if you can't stand the heat, get into the kitchen and try out these amazing and simple recipes that are guaranteed to keep anyone cool!

Cabbage Salad

A light side dish that goes great with any meal, at an affordable price that will make sure you don't go over budget for your summer travels.

Ingredients:

Salad
1/2 head cabbage, shredded
1/2 carrot, grated
30 grams sesame seeds
8 tablespoons slivered almonds
6 green onions, chopped



Directions:
Begin by making the dressing. Combine the soy sauce, wasabi, and lemon juice in a bowl. I suggest 1 teaspoon of the wasabi, but if you enjoy the spicy kick, add more! Once combined

1 package instant ramen, noodles crushed

Dressing

10 grams sugar
118 ml oil
75 ml rice wine vinegar
1 package powdered flavoring from ramen packet



Directions:

To first make the dressing, combine sugar, oil, vinegar, and the packet of ramen flavoring. Mix dressing, then add cabbage, carrot, sesame seeds, almonds, and green onions. If the salad dressing doesn't properly coat all the cabbage, add a dash more vinegar and oil until salad is completely coated. Refrigerate until salad is chilled. Just before serving, thoroughly mix salad and add crushed ramen noodles on top.

(Recipe from my grandma, Jackie Bauder)

Tuna Carpaccio

Impress friends with this cool, sophisticated dish with a kick. The presentation is beautiful, and the taste is even better!

Ingredients:

Dressing
1 1/2 teaspoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon wasabi
1/8th of a lemon, juiced
Salt and pepper
Pinch of fresh grated ginger



Salad
Avocado, sliced
Cucumber, cut into circles
400 grams sushi-grade tuna, pre-sliced
Fresh sprouts (radish, broccoli, etc)

Directions:

Begin by making the dressing. Combine the soy sauce, wasabi, and lemon juice in a bowl. I suggest 1 teaspoon of the wasabi, but if you enjoy the spicy kick, add more! Once combined

thoroughly, add the salt, pepper, and grated ginger (again, to your taste). Set aside.

For serving, arrange the tuna, cucumber, and avocado in an alternating pattern on a plate. Drizzle the dressing on top, and scatter the fresh sprouts on top for decoration.

(Original recipe donated by Alana Schramm, altered by me)



ITALIAN SALSA

Easy, easy, easy, and tasty, tasty, tasty!

Ingredients:

Salsa
1/4 red onion
Clove of garlic
Yellow bell pepper
4 tomatoes, medium size
Bunch of fresh basil
118 grams olives, sliced
5 grams dried Italian herb mix
15 ml balsamic vinegar
15 ml olive oil



For Serving

French bread, sliced
200 grams fresh mozzarella cheese, in round slices

Directions:

Chop onion, garlic, bell pepper, tomatoes, fresh basil and olives. Conserve some basil for decoration. Combine all in a bowl and add the Italian herbs, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil. Combine and let marinade in the fridge. When serving, prepare by placing sliced mozzarella on top of a slice of French bread, then adding a generous amount of the Italian Salsa. If you can stand the heat, toast the bread first, then add the mozzarella and salsa. Serve with one sprig of basil on top.



(Original recipe)

Berry JELL-O Pie

This dessert is one of those things that will be devoured. It won't be long before you're saying "JELL-O" to your third or fourth helping! Even if you can't find JELL-O, you can substitute freely for another instant jelly dessert with similar measurements!

Ingredients:

JELL-O Topping
3 oz package of JELL-O



475 ml boiling water
240 grams frozen or fresh fruit

Crust

150 grams graham cracker, digestive, or similar, crushed
30 grams granulated white sugar
85 grams butter melted

Whipped Cream

200 ml whipping cream
15 grams granulated white sugar
5 ml vanilla
Pinch of salt

Cream Cheese Mixture
220 grams cream cheese, softened
235 grams granulated white sugar

Directions:

Begin by boiling water for the JELL-O. Once it comes to a boil, combine with the JELL-O mix, and set aside to cool.

For the crust, put cookies in a Ziploc bag and crush. Once the cookies are crushed completely, add the sugar and melted butter. Spread into a 9"x9" greased pan and place in the fridge to chill.

Chill a bowl in the freezer, and use it for making your whipped cream. Add the cream, and begin whipping it with an electric mixer on medium-high, a hand mixer, or a strong arm and a whisk. Once the cream starts to thicken, add the sugar, vanilla, and salt. Continue to whip until the cream becomes fluffy, and forms a soft peak when you remove the beater from the mixture.

In a separate bowl, combine the softened cream cheese and sugar. Use a spatula to fold the whipped cream into the cream cheese and sugar mixture. Spread the cream cheese mixture onto the chilled crust. Make sure to go all the way to the edge of the pan.

Evenly place your fruit on top of the cream cheese mixture, then gently pour the JELL-O mixture on top. Return pan to the fridge, and chill until the JELL-O mixture has completely set.

(Adapted from natashaskitchen.com, joyofcooking.com, and pastrychefonline.com)

Kira Conley is a third-year JET in Saitama prefecture, famous for its proximity to Tokyo. When she isn't baking up a storm in her oven/grill/toaster/magic box, she enjoys the finer things in life, like yoga and watching movies.

Photos all credited to Kira Conley.



SPORTS

EDITORIAL Getting Out of Your House

I'm not really a fan of the cold weather, and I find it more difficult to enjoy the great outdoors during Japan's freezing winter months. With that in mind, I decided to use the break from teaching this summer to spend time outside in the sweltering heat. Spending a week cycling around Shikoku was an amazing experience. If you get the opportunity, I recommend riding along Route 32 from Miyoshi to Kochi. You'll be alongside the Yoshino River for almost the entire journey, and you'll be able to take in some stunning views. Having only really seen Shikoku promoted as a cycling destination before going there, I was impressed by the variety of other outdoor activities on offer there. On my travels I came across numerous English-speaking instructors offering rafting and kayaking along the Yoshino River and surfing at the gorgeous beaches in the south of Kochi Prefecture, towards the Shimanto River. I also noticed some great areas for hiking, such as Mt. Ishizuchi in Ehime Prefecture. I highly recommend it as a travel destination if any these activities sound like your kind of thing.

If you're a new JET reading this, I hope you're settling in and feeling excited about the year ahead. If you're continuing on the programme, hopefully you're back at school after the summer break feeling refreshed and positive. Whichever of the two categories you fall into, those first few weeks back at school after the summer break are a great time to start something new. You might still find the weather uncomfortably warm, but your students and co-workers will probably be more relaxed than at certain other times of the year. If you've been hoping to get involved with *bukatsu* then the back-to-school period is an ideal time to make it known in the staffroom. Alternatively, you

might like to use the start of the JET year to discover new ways to stay active outside of school. Your local city hall should be able to help you if you're searching for a gym, pool or 'dojo'. They might also be able to point you in the right direction if you're trying to find a locally based club for activities such as walking and hiking.

If you enjoy running, I recommend checking the Japanese race entry websites (runnet.jp, sportsentry.ne.jp, et al.) over the coming months. There will be listings for races taking place throughout Japan during the cooler months. The running races here are great fun. There's always a great atmosphere and the spectators are very vocal in their support of the participants. No matter what your level is, you should be able to find a race that's suited to you.

If you're looking for a sporting event to spectate at, you could check out the Grand Sumo Tournament taking place from September 15th until September 29th at the Ryogoku Sumo Hall in Tokyo.

What's your favorite way to get outdoors? Have a hiking or biking recommendation? Get in touch at connect.sports@ajet.net



THIS MONTH IN SPORTS...

The intense heat of summer may have you wishing you could spend more time in the water. Check out my article on open water swimming if you feel like splashing your way through the water at one of Japan's great lakes or beaches.

Whether you're interested in the Japanese art of sumo or you're struggling to see its appeal, you should check out Reid Parker's article. Reid, a 2nd-year ALT based in Yamaguchi prefecture, gives us a fascinating insight into what it's like to train for and compete in a high school sumo tournament. If you've got any reservations about the seriousness of the sport, this article may just change your mind.



SPOTLIGHT

Spectator Sports in Japan

Baseball - Baseball remains the most popular spectator sport in Japan, and pro baseball games here are well known for having a great atmosphere. Tickets sold at the stadiums start from around 1,000 yen.

Soccer - Soccer, or football, is another popular spectator sport that you might consider going to see during your time here. If you buy them in advance, tickets for J. League Division 1 (J1) games start at 2,000 yen.

Sumo - Sumo, although less fashionable than the previous two, still attracts its fair share of devoted fans, particularly from the older generations. There are grand tournaments around this time of year in Tokyo (September) and Fukuoka (November). If you arrive early, you can buy general admission seating tickets on the door for 2,100 yen.

Cycling - *Keirin*, a form of track cycling, is a less well-known Japanese spectator sport. Races take place over distances of around 2km, with the cyclists sprinting for the last 600 metres at speeds of around 70km per hour. Although it's a very popular betting sport in Japan, there's no obligation to gamble if you decide to watch some races at your local velodrome. Seats in the main stand are usually under 500 yen.





STINGS WON'T STOP ME: OPEN WATER SWIMMING IN JAPAN

Hugo Dragonetti, Kumamoto

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About ten minutes before the race began, the event organiser casually announced that there were jellyfish in the water. The relaxed way in which it was mentioned, and the fact that the race was still going ahead, made me think that I'd be unlikely to encounter many jellyfish during the swim.

It was 14th July 2013, and I was at an open water swimming event at Shikanoshima, Fukuoka prefecture. 'Open water swimming' is a generic term used to refer to swimming in bodies of water such as lakes, rivers or the sea. The popularity of the sport has increased massively in recent years, benefiting from both its association with triathlon and its inclusion in the 2008 Olympics in the form of a 10km race.

By the time the organiser had mentioned the jellyfish, I'd already signed in, had my race number written on my upper arms with a marker pen, collected a timer chip to be worn around my ankle and a swimming cap. At this event the colour of the swimming cap worn by the participant indicated the distance that they'd be swimming. Not really knowing what to expect, I'd cautiously chosen to compete in the shortest of the four available distances: 400 metres, 800 metres, 1.6 kilometres and 3.2 kilometres. There was a friendly atmosphere among the competitors and, once everyone had signed-in, we took part in a clean up of the beach together. Other swimmers asked me about the popularity of open water swimming in the UK and gave me words of encouragement when I told them that it was my first race.



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reacquainted with swimming after an eighteen-year absence from the pool was difficult. I found that my breathing, kicking and stroke technique all needed to be corrected. I was also made aware of how difficult swimming long distances in the sea can be when I visited Okinawa earlier in the year. I decided to enter an open water swimming race to gain more confidence in my swimming ability.

Before the race started, the organisers gave us a couple of minutes to warm-up, which meant getting into the water and acclimatising to it. The temperature that day was around 30 degrees and the water was flat and warm, which seemed perfect for swimming. There was a countdown followed by a foghorn to signal the start. We began the race standing in the water by the shore, and the first few metres of the race involved running through the water. As the race got underway, a single competitor, swimming butterfly, quickly sprinted ahead of everyone only to lose all momentum after the first twenty-five metres and rejoin the main pack. Although open water swimming races don't require a specific stroke, freestyle is considered the most efficient and is consequently the most commonly used stroke.

For the first forty metres, I was making good progress swimming freestyle towards the first of the buoys. After that, I began to regret having replaced my scratched and fogged goggles with a new pair that allowed me to see almost as well as I would were I not underwater. The clarity of the new lenses meant that I was able to see swarms of glowing neon blue moon jellyfish in my path. Although I stood a better chance of avoiding them, it was unsettling to be able to see them so clearly all around me.

By swimming freestyle, I felt that I was more likely to make contact with the jellyfish as I extended my arms forward,

so I switched to breaststroke. Although wearing a wetsuit would have provided protection against them, the warm July weather would have made wearing one an uncomfortable experience in itself. Over the course of the race I was stung at least six times. Each sting felt like a brief stroke on the skin from a burning paintbrush. The most painful was to my left shoulder and neck, but the stings left nothing more than some redness that disappeared within an hour of finishing the race. I'd recently finished reading *Swimming to Antarctica* by Lynne Cox. She describes swimming in locations as varied as the Bering Straight, the English Channel, Iceland and Argentina. Recalling her description of swimming into dead dogs during a race in the Nile, I felt that I could cope with some moon jellyfish.

I eventually finished circling the buoys that made up the race's 400-metre course, and made it back to the shallower jellyfish-free water. I then briefly reverted back to using freestyle until I could stand in the water. After that, I ran, with some difficulty, to the shore, where I was greeted with cheers and applause from those who had already finished. I finished the 400-metre race in eighth place out of only twelve competitors. I was very happy and extremely relieved that I'd managed to complete my first race without finishing last.

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Aside from the jellyfish, the race took place in an incredibly safe environment. Throughout the race there was always at least one lifeguard for every three swimmers. The lifeguards, kneeling on paddleboards, monitored the swimmers closely and brought at least one swimmer who'd decided to quit the race back to shore. I'd definitely recommend entering an open water swimming race if you're looking for a challenge. It's a fantastic way to take advantage of Japan's beautiful lakes and beaches.



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SUMO, WHY NOT?

Reid Parker, Yamaguchi

Every Thursday that I go to Hibiki High School, I dread going to training. The first part is mental. I know what's coming. I know it's going to hurt regardless of how strong or weak I'm feeling. I know that I'll be gasping for breath and my legs will give out. I know that I'll get thrown to the ground and I'll probably bleed. But once I get there I feel that the battle is won.

My first day at Hibiki High School was memorable not for teaching the *genkiest* class of girls with Kubo-sensei, nor playing tennis with the club coach, it was being in the audience for the high school sumo training. The little dojo struggled to fit the thirteen half-naked behemoths that train Monday to Saturday. It felt steeped in history, masculinity and great pride. It was quite magical. The wood-panelled walls were covered in awards, newspaper clippings and pictures of past professional champions. In the middle of it all was the ring or *dohyou*. I spent an hour watching the high school students practicing sumo, and was amazed by their explosive power as they crashed their bodies into one another, hands whirling for a grip on the *mawashi* (loin cloth). I must have looked silly, like a goldfish, with my jaw dropped during the entire training session, mouthing hopeless Japanese to the coach. A short prayer was then offered to a miniature shrine, the ring was swept and watered, and the coach invited me to join next time—to actually practise! "Sure, why not?" I thought. Later however, I started wondering, "What have I gotten myself into?"

Before my first training session, Kubo-sensei reassuringly told me that she had seen big tough boys cry there. Nonetheless, I was beside myself with excitement when Coach Asaoka, a sumo coach of 27 years, helped me put on my brand new *mawashi*, which I didn't look completely ridiculous in. After practicing the *shikko* (stomp) for a fraction of the time that the juniors did, my legs burned. After that, the *butsukari*, which involved exploding up from a crouch to drive Kaijyou, a 106kg high school student, across the ring. It wasn't easy. Coach Asaoka, beaming, said that

I was the first ALT to come to the dojo, let alone show an interest or practice with them. I was even more surprised when he told me that I'd better practice for the Chofu tournament, where I'd be fighting against junior high school students, in two weeks time. He also invited me to visit the Sakaigawa sumo stables, where the pros train and live, during the Kyushu tournament. Apparently this is an amazing opportunity, even for a Japanese person, so I couldn't turn down this offer either.

The Chofu tournament took place in an impressive-looking *dohyou* located outside a spectacular Japanese shrine. Some elementary school boys and girls were warming up and soon it was time for the junior and senior high school students to show some real muscle and fat. Being bare-bottomed in my

mawashi in public didn't feel so strange, but being skinnier and quite a few shades paler was a little embarrassing. It wasn't hard to get excited though, because there were others around me getting psyched up to wrestle for the glory. We started the *shikko* to warm-up, and I was focusing on the technique when cameras appeared out of nowhere. I felt like I was some sort of

This might help to explain why the popularity of sumo in Japan is waning. It seems that boys in Japan generally aspire to be like the soccer and baseball players who they idolize on TV, not wrestlers weighing over 150 kilograms. It's true that in sumo, a sport where the main objective is to push the other guy out of the ring, being heavy is absolutely necessary. Pushing such weight requires immense power though. So, underneath the fat is a lot of muscle built up through countless squats and push-ups.

The Kyushu *basho*, held every year in November, is one of the six major tournaments that determine professional rankings. The crowds at the tournament are greater in numbers towards the end of the two weeks, but the bouts during the early days are no less captivating, with many great spills from the *dohyou*. If you get the chance, I absolutely recommend heading to this or one of the other tournaments, and witnessing a fascinating and uniquely Japanese ritual that's over 300 years old.



freak show and that any laughs from the crowd were directed at me. I started thinking, "What the hell am I doing dressed in only a thick loin cloth, the only westerner for miles, in a traditionally Japanese sport?" Coach Asaoka believed in me though, so I swallowed those bitter feelings.

My fight was the second of the day. I remembered the right etiquette, and put up a reasonably strong muscliest 14 year olds I've ever seen. My second fight was against a very heavy lad who I managed to topple. I was grinning from ear to ear. "Let them take their pictures now" I thought. I was no longer camera-shy, but I had torn skin off my heel in the fight, and it hurt badly. Coach taped me up, but I still found it difficult to maintain my footing and I was well beaten in the next two fights. It was a relief to finish and I felt I'd given it my all. The other sumo seemed pleased too.

Before training with them and seeing the way that they fight first-hand, I, like many other people, didn't believe that sumo was a serious sport. I thought that the size of the wrestlers and the seemingly simplistic nature of their bouts made it a bit of a joke.



TRAVEL

EDITORIAL Questions of Travelling and Morality

Unless you have been living under a rock, you will know that earlier this year, Russia's government adopted a federal bill banning the distribution of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" to minors. Non-traditional relations, of course, being anything that isn't a union between a man and a woman. Individuals, media organisations and foreigners found breaking the law will be subject to heavy fines. This follows a decision in June 2012, where Moscow's top court ruled that no gay pride parades may be held in the city. For the next 100 years.

Understandably, these new laws have sparked a major backlash within the world's LGBT community and beyond, and now many are calling on a boycott of Russian products and of the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

Travel guide icon, Arthur Frommer, has recently joined the fray with a condemning blog post urging travellers and the tourism industry to take "appropriate action" against the world's largest country. Like a 'to Russia with love' letter—minus the love. He specifically mentions Americans, but it applies to travellers from all countries. Here's a snippet:

Several gay authors of Frommer travel guides have already informed me that they will no longer risk travel to Russia as long as the 'pro-gay propaganda' statute is in effect. Some among them are calling for a broader boycott of all travel to Russia by all Americans, gay or not, as a protest against this denial of human rights.

In the words of another Frommer author: 'The new Russian law is extremely dangerous, borne of dark nationalism, and through its virulent ignorance, the stage is set for a witch hunt. History has shown only too clearly what can happen

when a government provides for the systematic silencing and disenfranchisement of an unpopular minority.'

Certainly, the development should cause grave concern among right-minded people interested in the protection of human rights. And when such prejudice prevents Americans from traveling without fear in another country, that prejudice should also be condemned, and appropriate action taken by persons in travel and tourism.

As both an avid traveller and someone who has a firmly rooted moral conscious, situations such as this leave me incredibly torn. Do I boycott Brazil because the money to host the World Cup next year should have been spent on the country's dire health and education systems? Is recommending China as a travel destination to friends suggesting I support its human rights violations? Should I even be living in Japan given my strong opposition to this country's disgusting whaling practices? I could just go home to Australia, I suppose, but what of my despair at my government's ongoing support of the barbaric act of live export?

If I considered all these issues before beginning my travels around the world nearly six years ago, I don't think I would have ever left my house. However, now that I am aware of—and affected by—these things, what choice do I make? Do I support the causes I feel so strongly about, or do I accept that very few places in the world are free from the guilt of causing some sort of human, environmental or social atrocity, and travel to further educate myself—and hopefully others? These things, after all, are generally the actions of the country's government, rather than fault of the wonderful, everyday people we meet in our travels.

What do you think? Let me know at connect.travel@ajet.net

THIS MONTH IN TRAVEL...

In the immortal words of Buster Poindexter, we've been feelin' hot hot hot here in Japan this summer. While many of you have taken up permanent residency in front of the air-con, Shiga JET Dusty Wittman found refuge in the cool, tangled forests of Yakushima. Read his account of tackling a trek that rivals Fuji.

Being a snow bunny myself, I was a little unsure about heading to tropical Okinawa during the height of summer, but lazy days on white-sand beaches, hikes to waterfalls and scuba diving in crystal-clear waters told me I'd made the right decision for my holidays. Chill out as I take you island-hopping with me in this issue.

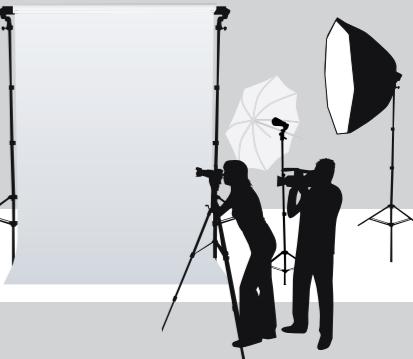
Finally, we have a Spotlight on Yamagata JET Andrew Canavan, who decided to spend summer bravely tackling the hot and heady melting pot that is India. I hope you're inspired!



SPOTLIGHT

Andrew Canavan, Yamagata's Intrepid India Traveler

With summer approaching and tons of *nenkkyuu* left, I decided to take a solo trip to India for three weeks. I found flights with China Eastern from Narita to New Delhi for 55,000 yen return. After organising a visa and borrowing a Lonely Planet guide, I was set. The first stop on my journey was New Delhi, the chaotic, pulsating capital of India. From there, I took the narrow gauge 'toy train' to Shimla. Once the British summer capital, remnants of its colonial past still linger today. Incidentally, it's also home to enterprising monkeys who steal cameras, sunglasses and other valuables from tourists before trading them back for eatables. Next up was Amritsar to behold the Golden Temple, a glistening oasis within urban madness. This Sikh temple is run by an army of volunteers who serve up to 100,000 free meals to pilgrims every day. Heading north, I stopped at McLeod Ganj, which is also known as 'Little Lhasa' due to its large population of Tibetan refugees. The Dalai Lama and his followers have been based in this relaxed high ground since 1960. Finally, a trip to the spectacular Taj Mahal in Agra before flying back to Japan. India left me with a lasting impression of a vibrant, noisy, colourful place with inherently warm people. Definitely worth a visit!



JAPAN'S WILD WEST



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TRAVEL

A high-speed ferry ride from Kagoshima City brought me to Yakushima, one of the most mysterious places in Japan. The sun had set, but I could still make out the jagged outline of the mountains, and clouds came and went like a giant's breath on a cold winter day. From the east port of Anbo, I took a bus to the south side, where I was to spend the night before starting my hike the next morning. After a restless sleep, I was driven to the trailhead at Onoaida Onsen, then my ride disappeared and I was on my own. I was surrounded by lush green with no signs of civilization except for the occasional pink ribbon tied to a branch, marking the trail.

I had a long hike ahead of me that day, but I quickly lost track of my goal. The trail was relatively easy-going, fooling me into thinking that I could take my time. Two hours later, I found myself at the foot of an overgrown, gnarly, scrambling path. Up and over rocks and roots, pushing through untamed brush, every step was a fight against the tenacious spirit of Yakushima. All day I only saw three other hikers—heading in the opposite direction.

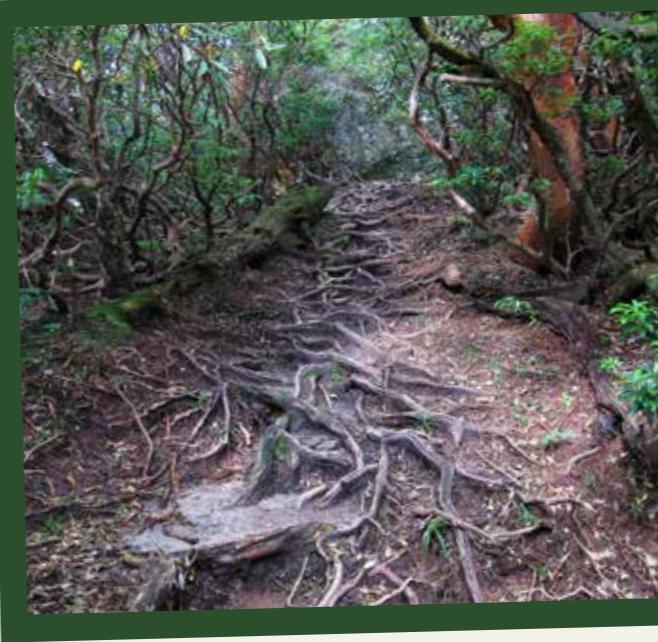
By the five-hour mark, I had reached a hazardous river crossing. I looked across and spotted a pink ribbon just upstream. My path was some basketball-sized stones, and the first step off the bank was well beyond my normal stride. With a leap, I jumped, landed and slipped off, just managing to catch myself with my hiking pole. Thankfully, I didn't get wet. Confidence boosted, I was ready for the next leg of the journey. And then it started raining.

Yakushima is the wettest place in Japan—locals say it rains 35 days a month. Luckily, I had packed proper rain gear, a pack cover and gaiters. However, despite my preparation, I ended up soaked, boots and all.

As a result of all the rain, the forest was thriving. Everything that wasn't alive was covered with a coat of moss. Every shade of green was represented in that mystical grove. Trees grew unrestricted, twisting their way to the sun or 'running' away from an unseen predator. Roots intertwined underfoot. Fog moved in and out like ghosts on Halloween. Admittedly, being alone on that trail gave me the chills.

Exhaustion had crept in, and I was running out of time and willpower to get to the hut. Soon I passed the bus stop for the start of the Yodogawa Trail—some use the bus as a way to cut off a day's worth of hiking. Another 45 minutes and I had reached my destination. Wet, tired, and hungry, I laid out my bed on the hard, wooden bunk inside the Yodogawa Hut, cooked a cup-noodle dinner, hung my gear out to dry and snuggled into my sleeping bag for some much-needed sleep.

When I woke up, the sun was shining. Though I wasn't



eager to get back into my wet boots and hike another full day, some hot oatmeal in my belly put me back in the fight. From the hut, the trail was easier to follow since that part is much more frequented, unlike the man-eating maze of the previous day. The island is basically a giant chunk of granite covered by vegetation. In place of soil, there are boulders and rocks, so instead of growing into the ground, the roots cling onto, under and around the rocks, zigzagging in all directions like a giant web waiting to catch fatigued ankles. It was an amazing sight. One I've only seen on Yakushima.

The forest soon gave way to low-lying bushes, making the path clearly visible. On the way, I took a short side-trail to check out the view from the top of Kuromi-dake and, through the shifting mist, I could see the coast. The next two hours flew by and, before I knew it, I was standing on top of Miyanoura-dake, the highest point in Kyushu! Relishing in my victory, I had nearly forgotten my wet feet, aching knees and multiple leech wounds from the previous day.

The view was spectacular, and the air was refreshing. A shaggy, green carpet of waist-high bushes covered the peaks. Gray stones were scattered about like freshly-cracked pepper on a crisp salad. More than a few of these stones showed an uncanny resemblance to a human or robot—perhaps it was a Gundam graveyard. Whatever it was, it fit with the overall haunted feel of the island.

It was downhill from there and, in three hours, I arrived at the Shin-Takatsuka Hut. It was still early, so I opted to push on to the original Takatsuka Hut an hour farther. I immediately realized why a new hut had been built—this thing was literally a big concrete box, and my home for the night. It's almost impossible to describe the feeling of being in that forest at night where there were no lights, no electricity, no artificial sounds, or anything else between me and nature. It was truly magnificent.

The next morning, I didn't waste any time getting out of bed and, after a quick breakfast, it was time to take a 10-minute stroll to the legendary 2,000-year-old cedar tree called Jomon-sugi. The oldest tree in Japan, and one of the oldest in the entire world, it is the main reason most people visit Yakushima. Luckily for me, the hordes were still making the arduous five-hour hike from the Shiratani-Unsuikyo bus stop. From Jomon-sugi, the trail was easy-going with no worries of getting lost. I was cruising along, passing two-legged trees, three-legged trees, wedged trees, trees to walk under, over, and through, and unfortunately, there was also a fallen tree—a 200 year-old titan that had buckled during a storm just a month before.

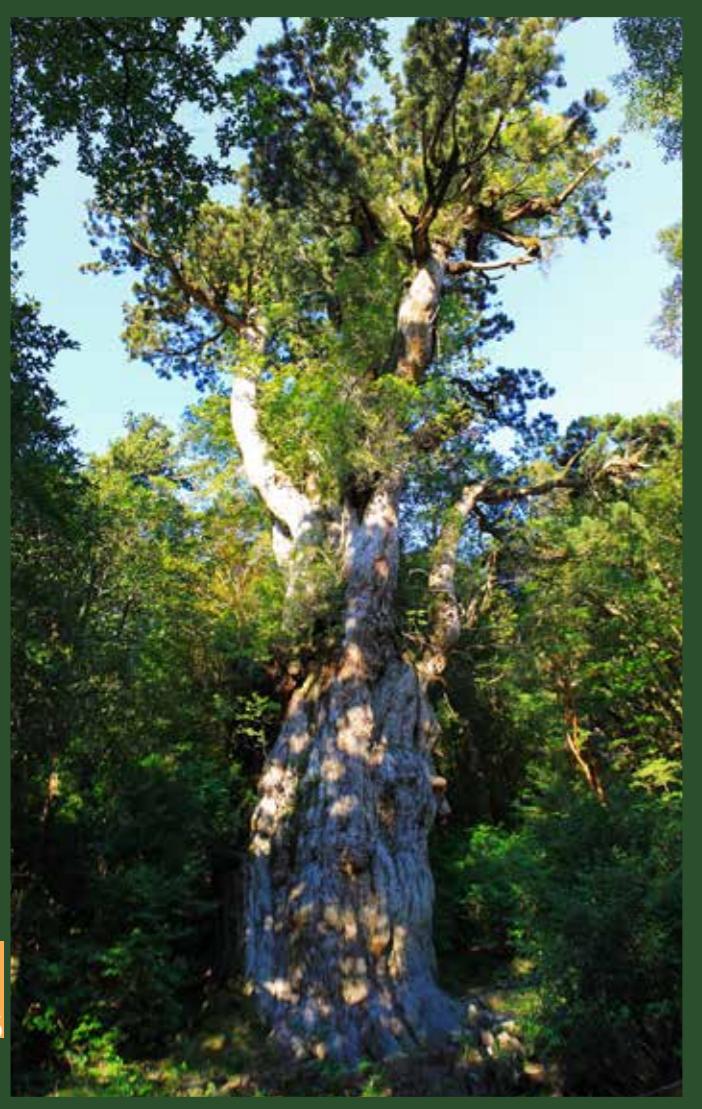
Shortly after passing Wilson's Stump, the trail merged with an old set of logging rail tracks. It felt strange to walk on a man-made surface after two days of root and rock scrambling. Three hours after leaving the hut, I came to the second-most famous attraction on Yakushima: the Princess Mononoke forest, which inspired Miyazaki's animated film of the same name.

By that time, the crowds had started to arrive from the opposite



TRAVEL

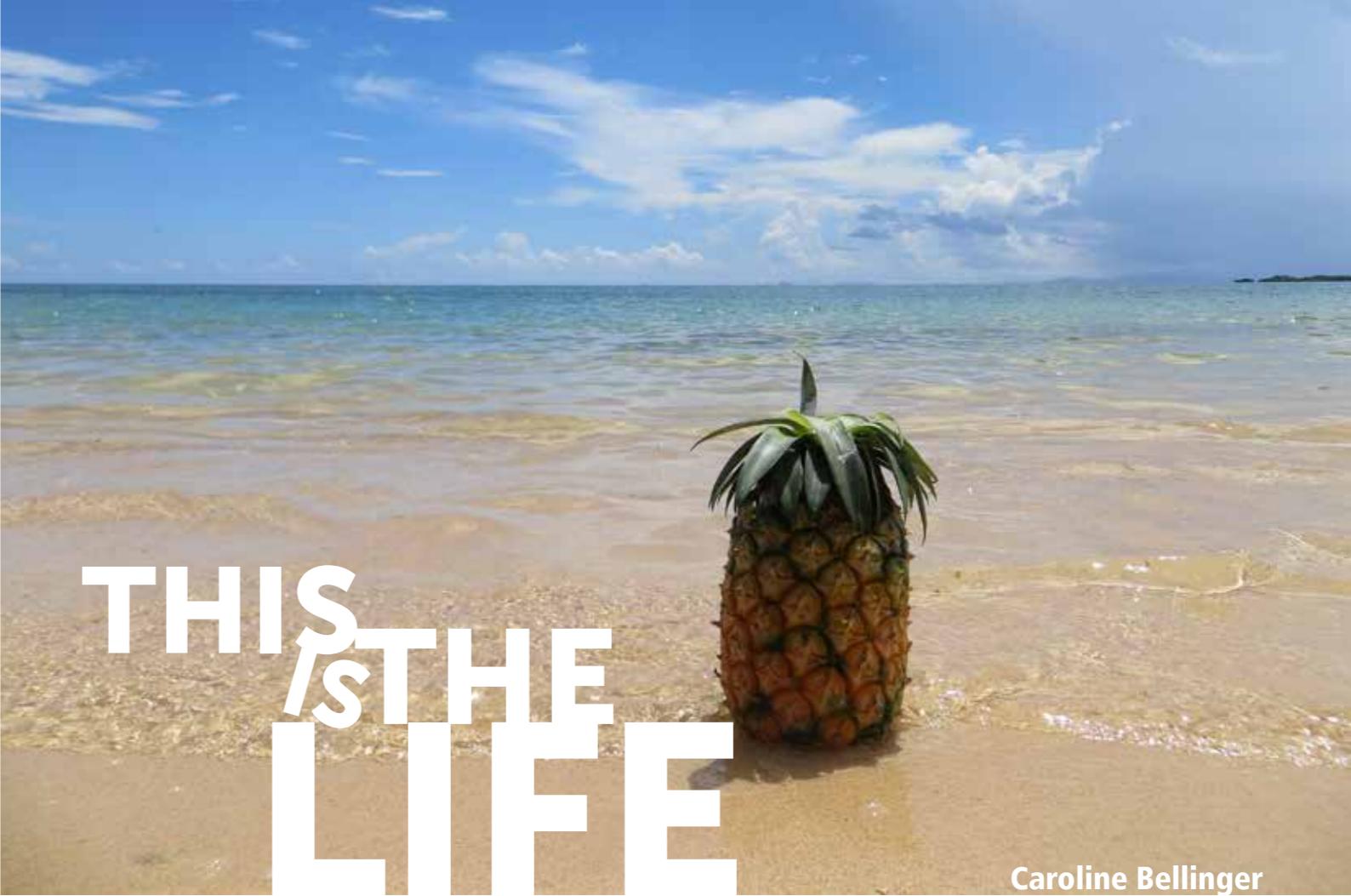




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direction and my descent was slowed considerably. I pushed on past more old trees, more moss, more streams, and way too many people until, at last, I heard the roar of a waterfall. I had arrived at Shiratani-Unsuikyo. From that point I had a choice: hike down a fairly uninteresting trail or put my exhausted body on the bus heading straight to Miyanoura Port. Deciding that 24 hours of hiking in three days was enough, it was straight to the port for me. Tipsy and full of local delicacies from a stop in the town, I cozied into my first-class seat aboard the ferry and watched the sky fill with orange and red as the sun set over the Pacific Ocean.

Fifth-year JETs are often called unicorns. This status appropriately fits Dusty Wittman, as he is often seen doing things that only mythical creatures can or should do. He thrives off the unexpected and seeks the unknown. His pastures include the depths of the sea, the peaks of the land, the heights of the sky and the meadows of Shiga-ken.



Caroline Bellinger

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THIS IS THE LIFE

It was about three minutes after leaving New Ishigaki Airport—as we whizzed past row upon row of palm trees—that I suddenly had the thought: “We’re not in Japan anymore, Toto”.

Now, I’m not usually in the habit of narrating my travels with internal monologues derived entirely from movie quotes, but there was definitely a sensation that I’d left the farm behind and had found myself in a magical land where I would spend the next 10 days skipping along yellow-sand paths to emerald seas.

It turns out the sand was more white than yellow, and the water was that crystal-clear aqua you imagine only exists in the pages of luxury travel magazines (incidentally, does anyone ever really look *that* good exiting an infinity pool in a monokini?). This certainly wasn’t a Japan I’d ever encountered before.

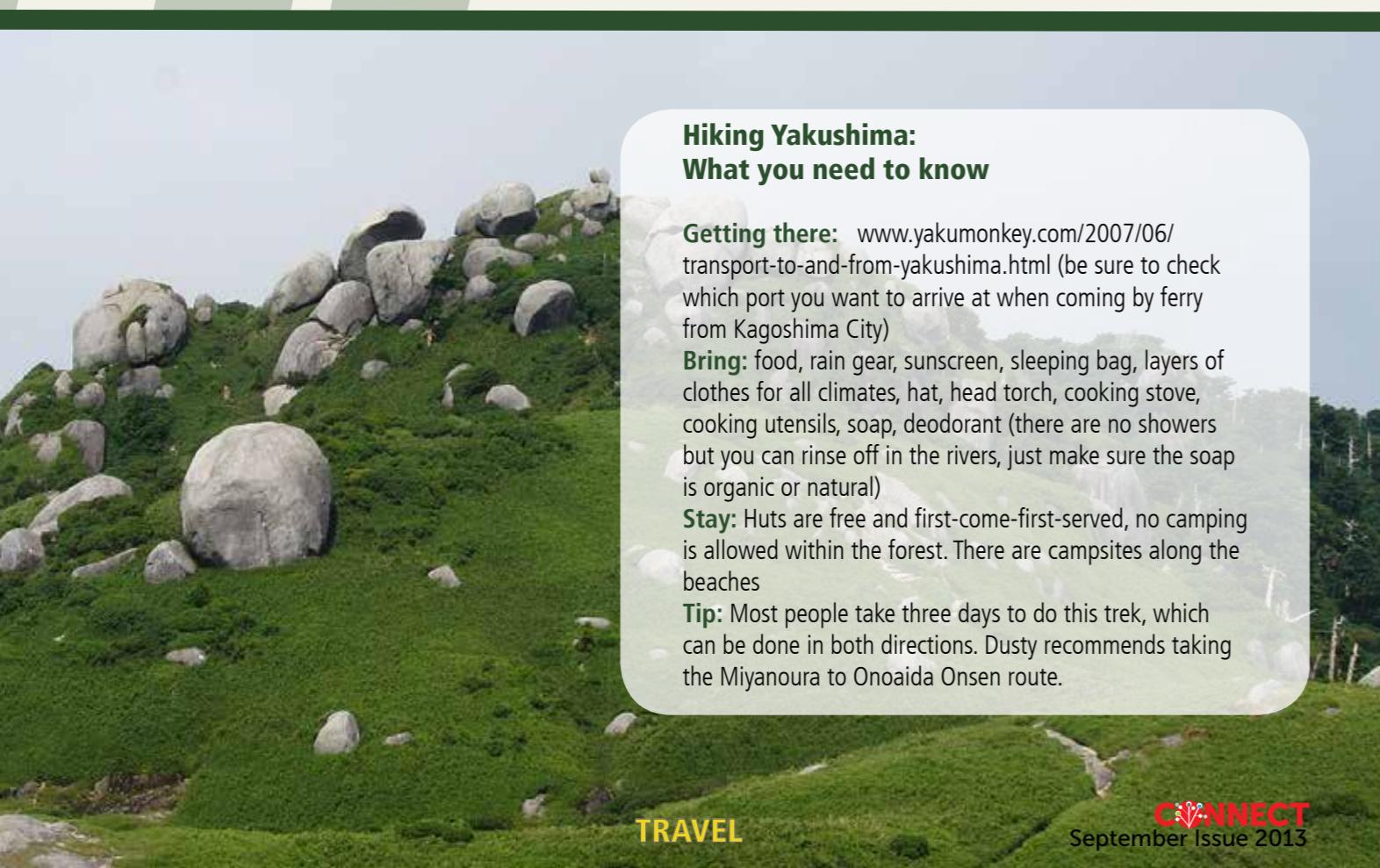
The palm trees eventually gave way to overgrown fields harbouring long-abandoned concrete structures (*Was it Cuba,*

with its grand buildings left to ruin, that this reminded of?).

The fields turned into dusty, suburban streets, flanked by low-slung power lines and the occasional street-stall bearing fruits and hand-made crafts (*Mexico? Guatemala? C’mon, think*). Then we hit the city—slow-paced, tropical and nestled gently between the glistening ocean and the jungle-clad mountains. Dark-skinned locals, who looked more Pacific-Islander than Japanese, wandered the streets in bright shirts and flip flops. ‘Rush hour’ was an unfamiliar concept here. (*Ah ha! Hawaii! Of course*).

Ishigaki-jima is the gateway to the Yaeyamas, a cluster of islands renowned for their all-you-can devour buffet of lush landscapes, postcard-perfect beaches and superb snorkelling and diving. And this summer holiday was going to be an unabashed degustation of everything on offer.

My travelling companions and I piled into our rental car, making



Hiking Yakushima: What you need to know

Getting there: www.yakumonkey.com/2007/06/transport-to-and-from-yakushima.html (be sure to check which port you want to arrive at when coming by ferry from Kagoshima City)

Bring: food, rain gear, sunscreen, sleeping bag, layers of clothes for all climates, hat, head torch, cooking stove, cooking utensils, soap, deodorant (there are no showers but you can rinse off in the rivers, just make sure the soap is organic or natural)

Stay: Huts are free and first-come-first-served, no camping is allowed within the forest. There are campsites along the beaches

Tip: Most people take three days to do this trek, which can be done in both directions. Dusty recommends taking the Miyanoura to Onoaida Onsen route.

TRAVEL

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TRAVEL



no subtleties about our joy at having air-con, for let me reiterate, this was the middle of summer and we were now less than 100 km from the Tropic of Cancer. In simple terms, it was hot. Damn hot.

We planned to spend two nights on Ishigaki before hopping across to some of the nearby smaller islands, so we wasted no time in loading up on supplies (equal parts local fruit and local beer, snorkels and flippers and a bottle of vinegar to treat potential *habukurage*—box jellyfish—stings).

We headed up the coast, and it took approximately 17 minutes before the floor of the rental car was coated in a ‘let’s-hope-we-don’t-need-to-pay-extra-for-this’ layer of sand. But we didn’t care. We were carefree. It was 2013, the summer of Two Door Cinema Club, and, for the next 48 hours, it was just us and the open road. “This is the life,” we quipped to each other knowingly, for we had unlocked the secret to the universe.

We gazed over the East China Sea at Hirakubo-saki, the far-northern tip of the island marked by a lighthouse, and indulged our eyes and our stomachs during a picnic at the gorgeous Tamatorizaki viewpoint. Happily, Sunset Beach delivered what it promised and we were able to tick ‘frolicking with butterflies’ off our bucket list at tranquil Banna Park. Yonehara Beach gave us a pleasant afternoon of General Bumming About, before we gorged on *beniimo*, the region’s famous bright-purple sweet-potato tarts, washed down with tangy *shikwasa* juice, made from the small, green citrus fruit native to Okinawa.

Between all the frolicking and gorging and bumming, we also took the time to brush up on our basic first aid, given everything on the island and in the water could potentially kill us. We had been right in thinking vinegar would alleviate the searing pain of a *habukurage* sting, however, we discovered that with certain other creature bites, it would actually make things worse. The long list of emergency treatments included sucking out the venom, never sucking out the venom and drinking

the tears of a virgin while bareback riding a unicorn. Alas, these are the risks you accept when your flirt with freedom and annual leave.

From Ishigaki, it was a 40-minute ferry ride to Iriomote Island, which has been described as Japan’s “last frontier”. If you’ve ever wanted to really get off the grid—live like Jack and Kate and Hurley in the untamed recesses of J.J. Abrams’s mind—Iriomote is the place to go. Home to just over 2,000 people, the island is mostly dense jungle and mangrove forest. Mother Nature has really gone to town here, giving us hidden waterfalls to hike to, rivers to kayak, mountains to climb, coral reefs to snorkel, and constellation-filled skies to sleep under. We spied iridescent blue lizards, ridiculously beautiful butterflies, stoic eagles, rowdy geckos, slippery river eels, water-fearing turtles and fish and coral and anemone of every colour imaginable. The elusive *yamaneko*, or mountain cat, found only in this tiny corner of the planet was, however, not to be spied.

The mostly deserted 58 km road that runs halfway around the island is perfect for wind-in-hair scooter daytrips to isolated beaches, like Hoshisuna-no-hama, where the sand is shaped like tiny stars (truly!). Every morning we’d set out with our snorkel gear, beach towel and picnic supplies of avocados, tomatoes and 200-yen pineapples picked up from honour-system stalls on the side of the road. Every evening we’d return sandy, sun-kissed and just that little bit more at one with nature. Or perhaps that was how we justified coming to accept that a swim was as good as a shower, and the need to brush our hair was now redundant.

We were also pleasantly surprised to find ourselves smack-bang in the middle of the ‘*sagaribana*’ flowering season. These unique trees blossom only at night and, by dawn, the flowers have dropped. They hang in bunches and, between their enchanting perfume and their almost phosphorescent appearance, it was fun—in a nerdy kind of way—to imagine we were standing in a magical grove on Pandora.



TRAVEL

Star-gazing had become our favourite evening pastime and we quickly fell into nature’s intended sleeping patterns, dozing off a few hours after we’d finished our camp-cooked dinner and rising with the sun. We’d found a perfect patch of paradise and wanted to stay forever, but Mother Nature had other plans.

By day three on Iriomote, we heard a category four ‘super typhoon’ was headed directly for the Yaeyamas. We had noticed the wind picking up, and could hear the waves thrashing on the beach as we tried to sleep that night. With nought but a tent to protect us, we decided it was time to vacate and, the next morning, caught the last ferry to leave the island before services were cancelled. We decided against our planned overnight trip to Taketomi Island and instead headed back to Ishigaki, where we bunkered down for the next three days while wild winds and heavy rain pummeled our hostel. We read and cooked and napped and watched early episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* until the power went out. It was a little scary monitoring online the typhoon coming directly for us—counting down the hours until impact at around midnight. I’ll admit I didn’t sleep much that night, half expecting a tree or a car or a cow to come smashing through our window.

After three days of typhooning, it was safe to go outside, but not safe to scuba dive, which had been our plan for our final few days on Ishigaki. We instead took a day trip to Taketomi (population

350), hiring bicycles to explore the tiny island and snorkel its shallow bays. The marine life wasn’t as rewarding as it had been on Iriomote, but it was good to finally be back in the water after being cooped up inside. Taketomi is regarded as a ‘living museum’, and boasts a small village of traditional houses with red-tile roofs topped with the ubiquitous *shiisa* statues—the half lion, half dog protection charms from Okinawan mythology.

By our last day on Ishigaki, the seas had finally calmed enough to enjoy a day of diving. We headed to ‘Manta Scramble’, just off the coast of Kabira, in the hope of seeing the manta rays that inhabit the area from June to October. Perhaps the typhoon had scared them off, but we were unlucky on both our dives. From the photos and videos we’d seen, an encounter with these magnificent creatures, which can grow up to 7m in width, is something pretty special.

However, as we all know, when one manta-spotting door closes, the door to a beer festival opens. As fate would have it, that very night the annual Orion Beer Festival was happening back in town. A few thousand locals, live music, fireworks, beer and a seriously laid back vibe was altogether a respectable way to cap off our island getaway.

Additional photos by Rose Murphy

Need to know

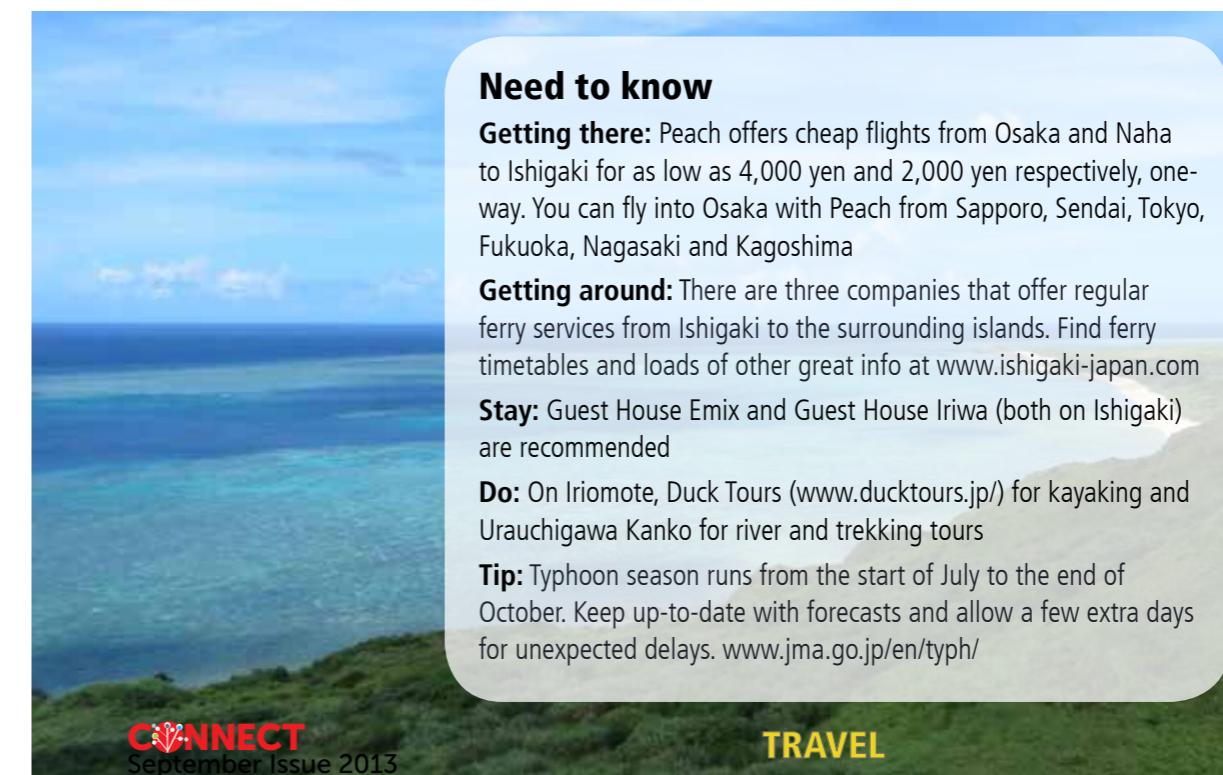
Getting there: Peach offers cheap flights from Osaka and Naha to Ishigaki for as low as 4,000 yen and 2,000 yen respectively, one-way. You can fly into Osaka with Peach from Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo, Fukuoka, Nagasaki and Kagoshima

Getting around: There are three companies that offer regular ferry services from Ishigaki to the surrounding islands. Find ferry timetables and loads of other great info at www.ishigaki-japan.com

Stay: Guest House Emix and Guest House Iriwa (both on Ishigaki) are recommended

Do: On Iriomote, Duck Tours (www.ducktours.jp/) for kayaking and Urauchigawa Kanko for river and trekking tours

Tip: Typhoon season runs from the start of July to the end of October. Keep up-to-date with forecasts and allow a few extra days for unexpected delays. www.jma.go.jp/en/typh/



TRAVEL

VOLUNTEERING

EDITORIAL Opportunities in a New JET Year

Going to Tokyo Orientation as the AJET Block 9 Representative and being a Tokyo Orientation Assistant marked the start of my third year in the JET Programme. Making a conga welcome line at the airport and helping JETs find the workshops they were looking for has recharged my enthusiasm for teaching in Japan. I loved making that connection with the new JETs, and sharing whatever knowledge I might have about the Program during Tokyo Orientation. Now I am back to living in the countryside. I spend my days living in a culture I have grown to love and still have so much to learn about. From charity bike rides to community bake sales, I have been able to be more grateful for the opportunity to work in this country and live in Shimane Prefecture.

As your Connect Volunteer Section Editor and AJET Director of Volunteering and Aid, you can look forward to hearing about the altruism and kindness of the JET community. I am working on cleaning up the volunteer section of the current AJET website <http://ajet.net/opportunities-to-volunteer-by-prefecture/> by taking the current list of opportunities that are listed by prefecture and making an additional list that categorize them by interest. Helping you find what you need when you need it!

Lastly remember that this magazine is made by JETs for JETs, and



if there is a specific organization or charity event you want me to feature, please let me know. I want to share your stories. See you next month.

Got a question about volunteering in Japan? Want to tell people about a worthwhile cause you know of? Reach out to me at connect.volunteering@ajet.net.

THIS MONTH IN VOLUNTEERING...

In this month's volunteer articles, the focus is on the continued efforts of JETs to help clean up after the 3/11 Tsunami. First we have Yolanda Espiritu, who volunteered twice for Habitat for Humanity (you can, too! http://www.habitatjp.org/index_e.html).

Second we have Natasha Austin, who took two road trips with friends up to Miyagi Prefecture with the group Be One Tohoku Aid (<http://www.b-1.jp/tohoku/en/>) to help with the relief efforts. Both of these women give insights to what it was like to be a JET during the earthquake and how you can help out, too.



SPOTLIGHT

Jaime Lam, Advice from a Shrine-Builder

It is so fitting that I participated in the ceremonial rebuilding of Ise Shrine the day after saying goodbye to two very dear friends and the day before Mie Orientation. The act of rebuilding the holiest shrine in the country reminds us that even our most sacred edifices do not endure. All we can do is be as good to one another for as long as we can. Every human interaction is an opportunity to influence someone's life for the better. These interactions may last only a few seconds, they could last 3 years, or 20. Whether or not they will end or change is the wrong question to obsess over; we all know the answer to that question. The question worth pondering and committing ourselves to is whether or not we will do something worthwhile with our ephemeral time together.

Jaime is a 4th year PA/CIR living and working in Mie Prefecture, but don't tell him that; he might not believe you. He is rarely sighted outside of the Aikido dojo, but if you do manage to catch a glimpse of him, he'll probably be looking at something through a camera viewfinder while his friends yell at him to hurry up.





ABOUT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Yolanda Espiritu, Aomori

"Habitat works with local communities, governments and other organizations, but the focus is always on providing permanent housing solutions for people vulnerable to, or afflicted by natural disasters, conflicts and other calamities."

"Rebuilding homes and lives after a disaster may take many years. But Habitat starts from the Day After."

— From the Habitat for Humanity website

Since the Tohoku disasters in March 2011, there has been a Habitat Japan team working in Miyagi and Ofunato to rebuild their community. I had the pleasure of going to Ofunato twice. I was not only able to help build a home, but was also able to see a school and its remains after the tsunami hit. Wherever we went in Ofunato, our staff didn't miss a chance to share something about the town.

In the car, staff would share with us the history of the places we drove by. We visited different parts of Ofunato, and met locals who were enthusiastic to work together and share their story. I not only learned how to nail shingles on a roof, but cut (and ate) kelp for the first time! I also got to work on my painting skills as we helped a local shop owner paint her building. In this way, you learn various skills and work on different projects to redevelop the community.

It's great that with Habitat, there is no expertise in construction necessary, and it's not just construction work that we do. You never know exactly what kind of project you will do, actually. For example, the second time I came, I helped clear trees and branches to make way for a new castle that is currently being renovated. The staff members were accommodating to foreigners and Japanese-natives alike, being bilingual English-speakers who provided scenic stops, and were incredibly informative about Ofunato. After a hard day's work, we would go and shower at the local onsen, then eat dinner together. In this way we ate, slept, and worked together. It didn't matter that there was a language barrier, because we all worked together with the same heart and mind.

Now in her 2nd year on JET, Yoyo is involved in volunteer programs she both coordinates and finds as Aomori AJET's Volunteer Coordinator. One of her goals is to create a Habitat for Humanity JET team to travel and volunteer abroad! Contact her for more info at yolanda.espiritu@ajet.net



VOLUNTEERING



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Natasha Austin, Shimane

VOLUNTEERING IN MIYAGI



On the day of March 11th 2011 in Shimane Prefecture, I didn't even know anything was wrong until I saw multiple messages from friends and family back home wondering if I was ok. For weeks afterwards I followed the news, it was shocking to think a disaster so large had occurred so close to me. In Shimane we were experiencing very little impact, no power outages or noticeable food shortages.

I felt a need to go and help out, but there were two main reasons why I went. The first was that Japan had sent rescue workers to New Zealand only a few weeks before the tsunami struck Tohoku to help with recovery efforts after the Christchurch earthquake. These workers were on the ground almost immediately after the earthquake and worked tirelessly for days to help. The other reason I wanted to give back was the kindness of Japanese people. I was welcomed to Japan so warmly, and on a nearly daily basis I see examples of how the Japanese go out of their way to help the foreigners in their communities. I wanted to do anything I could to give back in return.

After a little research, I discovered that Kesennuma City was taking volunteers. In the summer of 2011, I rounded up three friends and we drove north to volunteer for a week. There were a huge number of volunteers; each day was in excess of 100 people just at our centre. Groups were set up each morning and sent out to different sites. For a couple of days we worked in rice fields, removing debris and sorting fishing gear which had been swept inland. A large part of the job was untangling nets that had been wrapped around debris. We were working alongside fishermen who could only go back to work once their nets have been salvaged and repaired. One man explained to me that the government was slow on providing compensation and that the nets were too expensive to replace.

Another site we volunteered at was a family home. The waterline from the tsunami was well into the second story and we worked with the owner to clean up as much as we could. Furniture which couldn't be cleaned was removed, and other photos and yearbooks were put aside to be saved. The owner told us she was at home with her baby son when the earthquake hit, but they managed to make it inland before the tsunami reached their house. The area around their home was like a ghost town, with shells of houses or even just foundations remaining. The house next door had a shipping container in the living room yet to be removed.

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As this area didn't have electricity or running water yet, I was out at the water pump washing shelves. There I met a lively older man who told me his son had been to New Zealand on a high school exchange and was a fan of rugby. It was a fun and completely normal conversation excepting the fact that we were standing in a nearly abandoned town buried under a couple of inches of dried mud. It left me amazed at the inner strength some people possess.

During this first trip, we had the chance to work alongside and forge friendships with a number of Japanese people. From a JHS English teacher, to a Tokyo University student who had lost his friend and his entire family, to an onsen owner who lost a number of family members, everyone we met had an impact on us. This experience made me want to return the following summer.



In the summer of 2012, I again rounded up a few friends for the trip north. This time we were able to get seven Shimane ALTs and one JTE to give up some of their holiday to volunteer.

We went to Ishinomaki, and volunteered through the group Be One Tohoku Aid. Upon returning to Tohoku, one of the first things that struck me was how much had changed in a year. Newly opened supermarkets were dotted around the place, and hundreds of temporary housing structures had been erected. We stayed in volunteer housing in a slightly different ghost town. By night there were still no streetlights or lights to be seen in any of the homes in the area. During the day there were dozens of construction crews working on houses and businesses in the area. Although the infrastructure is still a long way away from

supporting a permanent population, people are beginning to return to Ishinomaki during the day for work.

Another difference between my first and second trip was the type of work we were doing. One of the major projects was stripping out the internal walls, floors and ceilings of houses. We

were removing debris from within the housing structures so they could be bleached and refitted. As the water line was well above the ceiling this also involved dusting sand from the roof rafters. This work meant that the future residents could be assured of a safe and healthy home. The block we were working on was one of five townhouses owned by the same man. When the tsunami hit he still had loans out on the houses and his compensation was far below what was needed to rebuild even one of the houses. Any labour we could provide was money he could save later.

One of the other projects was a playground revamp in a government-housing complex. Different organisations were working together to get new equipment, benches

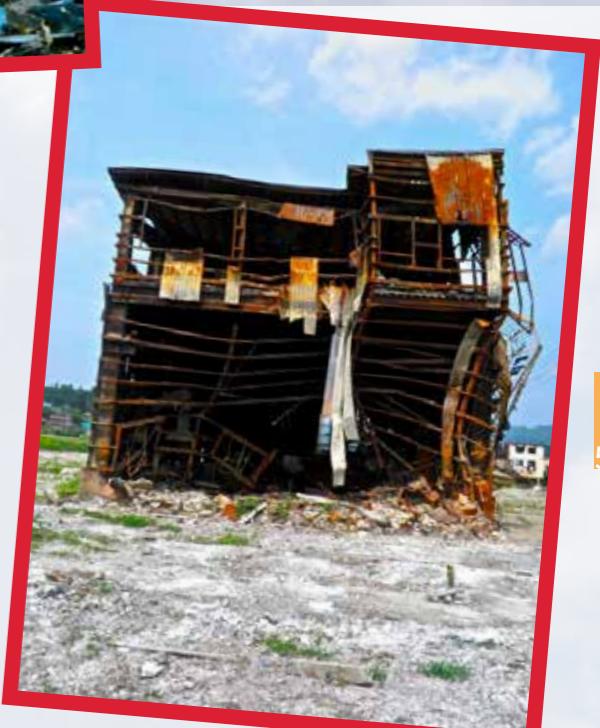
and gardens sorted for the park. When we arrived, there was only a little weeding left to do, so we had a lot of time to play with the local kids. It only took a couple of games of basketball and soccer before the kids had completely won us over. It was great to see what Be One was achieving, and how easily they were adapting to the needs of the community as time went by.

After volunteering, a number of Japanese people have thanked me. They are often teachers who have summer holiday commitments and have no way to get to the affected areas to help out. I am



extremely glad that I was able to go and do something no matter how small the impact. Even if the physical work is done in the area, volunteers are still needed to help mend the community. I believe that this is one area where volunteers (especially JETS) can make a big difference. One of the volunteer organisers said it is hard for residents to feel like they matter, especially when TV crews turn up for the anniversary and disappear a day later. They need continued support. I think that when foreigners go to the area, people will realise they not only have Japan behind them, but also the world.

Natasha was an ALT in Shimane Prefecture for three years. Now she is off to her next teaching adventure in Ruwais, United Arab Emirates. In her free time she likes to train for triathlons and plan her next backpacking trip.



EVENTS

EDITORIAL

Mt. Fuji—Beautiful, Destructive, Symbolic

One of my first and favorite memories as a JET is attending the Yoshida Fire Festival in Fujiyoshida City, seated on the northeastern slope of Mt Fuji, or *Fujisan*, in Yamanashi. For the last 500 years, Fujiyoshidans have appealed to Mt Fuji's *kami* to spare them from pyroclastic activity for another year.

For my husband and me, being a part of this festival was our first experience of a Japan we had only read about. A dichotomous Japan, one steeped in tradition, but still knowing how to throw a giant weekend-long party. A Japan that, no matter how much rain fell that weekend, kept its (literally) hundreds of blazes alive. Not only was it our first *matsuri*, but it was also our first venture out of the Kanto plain into the mountains, our first time to enjoy the spoils of a Japanese taco truck, speak Nihonglish with drunken, *mikoshi*-carrying *ojiisan*, and experience a Strong Zero hangover.

Just as memorable was what we did not see: *Fujisan* herself. We visited the beautiful Sengen Shrine at her base and asked nicely, but she remained an elusive temptress, keeping herself shrouded in clouds after the rain stopped. We would visit twice more before having a good view.

Mt Fuji's last eruption was in 1707, following a magnitude 8.6 earthquake, yet scientists today consider it an active volcano. Some like to remind the public every few months that the Tokyo-area Tokai fault line is well overdue for its next major quake, and they often mention *Fujisan* in the same breath.

Since 2011's Great East Japan Earthquake, Mt Fuji has received extra attention. The volcano lies on the edge of a subduction zone—where one tectonic plate slides beneath another—leaving it vulnerable to strong seismic activity. In 2012, a three-year survey by the University of Tokyo reported their discovery of a long-buried, 30-kilometer fault line directly beneath the volcano. A quake directly beneath Mt Fuji may energize its magma chambers into eruption, or could trigger a collapse, sending massive, muddy landslides toward nearby towns. Painfully aware of the area's dramatic geography, Yamanashi, Kanagawa, and Shizuoka's prefectural governments are working together to make an escape plan for Mt Fuji's next violent event, be it with lava, mud, or both. Up to 750,000 may have to evacuate in the event of a very large eruption—not including the 10,000 climbers *Fujisan* sees on an average day during its climbing season.

Mt Fuji made headlines this summer when UNESCO added it to its World Heritage Sites list, of which many Japanese people take immense pride. Through the years, Fuji has inspired countless works of art and helped form contemporary Japanese culture. The juxtaposition of Mt Fuji's influence and beauty against its near-certain destruction of itself and everything around it is another layer of that famous Japanese paradigm: nature is beautiful because it is fleeting. It is why we observe *hanami* and even why the yakuza traditionally get tattoos of *sakura* blossoms.

I did not recognize it at the time of the festival, but Fujiyoshidans clearly understand what volatile machinery they live with.

Do you live near Fuji and want to share your feelings? Or just want to ask a question or talk about events in Japan? Hit me up at connect.events@ajet.net

THIS MONTH IN EVENTS...

Summer events vary all over Japan, but there are constants no matter where you live. This month's Events section features *natsu matsuri* (summer festivals), that most exuberant of Japanese events that is in nearly every community, no matter how big or *inaka*.

Verity Townsend in Hyogo writes about Himeji's *Yukata Matsuri*, featuring two of the most fashionable dogs Connect has ever seen. Writers from four other prefectures contribute profiles on what makes their local *matsuri* unique and so very awesome.

You'll notice the new Events Calendar at the end of this section. We've organized it by AJET block, so that you can find out what's going on in your area! Know something coming up you think people should come see? Let me know!

Also, some *sempai* JETs spell out in the JET Spotlight what September means to them, so take note and try something new. Send me any thoughts, questions, ideas, or musings at connect.events@ajet.net.



SPOTLIGHT

JET's Super Sempais' September Advice

The JET Programme welcomed more than 1,500 new JETs to Japan this summer. Moving to a different country is an important life event, no matter how old you are or where you came from. Make the most of your first, second, or fifth September here with these words of advice from JET *sempais*.

September is a good time to...

"Learn more about your students as you help them prepare for their sports and cultural festivals."

Judith LaFaver, 3rd-year ALT, Osaka

"Barbecue! It's the end of summer, so you can get your final fill of *yakisoba* as well as grilled veggies and meat!"

Ashly Schanback, 3rd-year ALT, Gunma

"Take a small vacation! Take advantage of that extra day off and go somewhere new for a day."

Yolanda Espiritu, 2nd-year ALT, Aomori

"Listen to the *taiko* drummers practice for the *Danjiri Matsuri*."

Diego Sanchez-Chavarria, 3rd-year ALT, Osaka

"Enjoy the brightest full moon of the year. Join your neighbors for an *Otsukimi* moon-viewing party. Complete the evening with fresh grapes, pears, apples or other fruit you picked yourself from a local orchard."

Denise Schlickernd, Saitama CIR, 2008 – 2013



Verity Townsend, Hyogo

YUKATA MATSURI



On the morning of June 23rd, I put on my vintage *shibori* (tie-dyed) yukata and set off for Himeji to meet my girlfriend and go to Himeji's famous Yukata Festival.

This festival has its origins in the 1740s, when Lord Masamine Sakakibara moved the Osakabe shrine from inside the Himeji Castle grounds to downtown Himeji. However, the date for the ceremony to move the shrine's *kami* (the spirit who lives inside the shrine) was decided on too hurriedly. At this time, yukata were primarily worn indoors and it was not usual to wear them outdoors. However, the citizens of Himeji did not have enough time to make formal kimono before the ceremony. Therefore, Sakakibara allowed everyone to wear the light, cotton summer kimono, and thus the Yukata Matsuri was born.

Now, it is a perfect excuse to wear yukata for the first time in the year, as well as view the variety of summer kimono being worn. The most popular colours for yukata among young women seem to be black or dark blue with pink flowers. In recent years, a two piece summer outfit called *jimbei*, made up of a loose fitting top and trousers, can also be seen being worn by women. These are decorated with colourful traditional-style prints and used to be only worn by men. The number of men choosing to wear yukata was somewhat smaller; however, they could still be found, sometimes accompanying their summer-kimono-clad girlfriends. The number of people wearing yukata was certainly greater than those who weren't, making this festival a must-visit for anyone interested in fashion and kimono. Even dogs were getting in on the act!

There are also many things to do at the festival. With around 800 stalls, it is one of the largest festivals in Western Japan. Many types of food can be sampled, from lightly sugared sweet potato to Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki*. As a lover of Japanese-style sweets, the unusual selection of *taiyaki* (fish-shaped sponge cakes with different fillings) flavours was an attraction for me. Soya cream, caramel, chocolate and strawberry competed with more commonplace fillings like *adzuki* bean paste and custard.



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Simple but fun attractions can also be enjoyed. For example, *obake yashiki*, or ghost houses, are complete with ominous creaking noises, eerie, fake beheaded bodies, and 'monsters' jumping out from behind curtains!

My advice to anyone wishing to attend this festival would be to go around 2:00 pm. It is quite relaxed during the late afternoon, but gets busier in the evening. I would also advise taking an umbrella and keeping an eye on the weather forecast. It is common knowledge that it tends to rain on at least one day of the festival each year! The festival is held on the third weekend in June.

Verity Townsend is a 2nd-year ALT in Hyogo Prefecture. She can natter on for hours about kimono, 60s and 70s Japanese and Indian cinema, and retro videogames.



Send your feedback, comments, and questions to us at connect.editor@ajet.net

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September Issue 2013

Our Fashion & Beauty Editor says:

Yukata have experienced a revival, and many young Japanese are eager to dress up in them at summer festivals. Its festive, myriad designs and cotton material (as opposed to silk) provide a fun and casual introduction to kimono-wearing. Consider donning yukata the next time you enjoy fireworks and *yakisoba* at *hanabi matsuri* (fireworks festivals). Or try the *nemaki* (lounging robe) after a relaxing pre-dinner soak at traditional *ryokan*.



EVENTS

NATSU MATSURI

Japan's Summer Festivals!

Anywhere you go in Japan during the summer, there's bound to be a festival on! Summer is a wonderful time for strolling outside with friends, taking in the competing aromas of festival food, enjoying traditional music or dance, wearing your finest yukata in your tennis shoes, and experiencing all the local culture on display as the town turns out to turn it up. Here's just a few of the hundreds of festivals that take place every year throughout this great country.

The Awa Odori Festival

Julie Pliner

If you find yourself out for an evening stroll in Tokushima City during the summer, the sounds of drums, bells, and *shamisen* emanating from across the city will undoubtedly excite and intrigue you. If you catch yourself dancing along to this upbeat rhythm, know that you are not alone, for the music of the Awa Odori dance festival has been inspiring merriment, celebration and unapologetic debauchery for more than 400 years! What began as an impromptu sake-fueled dance party among peasants, merchants and samurai has grown into Japan's biggest dance festival, and the second-largest dance gathering in the world.

These three days of celebration are not to be missed! Where else can you see more than 100,000 dancers of all ages, sizes, and nationalities take to the streets? Even we JETs get our dance on by joining with people from all over the world in the community dance troupe "Awasawa-ren," meaning, "Do not quarrel." Come visit Tokushima Prefecture and you, too, can take part in the fun! For as the Awa Odori lyrics say, "Fools dance and fools watch. If both are fools, you might as well dance!"

Julie Pliner is a 2nd-year JET who has been having a steamy love affair with Asia for the last 10 years. She likes parasite anecdotes, making faces at random babies, and sleeping on strangers' couches.

The Kokura Gion Festival

Cecilia Lam

In Kokura, Kitakyushu, the start of July is marked by the sounds of *taiko* (Japanese drums) filling the air in preparation for the Kokura Gion Daiko Festival. With the unique style of hitting the drums from both sides simultaneously, the festival is a Fukuoka Prefecture-designated Intangible Cultural Asset. The festivities begin with an "Uchi Hajime" ceremony on July 1, after which *taiko* teams play outdoors every evening, culminating in a three-day festival and competition held around Kokura Castle on the third weekend of July. Known as one of the big three Gion Festivals of Fukuoka, around 100 *taiko* teams participate each year, parading around the town while playing on drums that are pulled along the streets on decorated floats.

Cecilia Lam is a fifth-year ALT in Kitakyushu, Fukuoka, who spends much of every July practicing *taiko* and bug-proofing her apartment.



The Nebuta Festival

Alexandra Brueckner

The Nebuta Festival

Alexandra Brueckner

In Aomori-shi, we might hate the summer heat and humidity that August brings, but we also love it for a very simple reason: Nebuta.

From August 2nd through the 7th, every night is a giant party in the streets of downtown. Piercing flutes, throbbing *taiko*, jangling bells, and rousing cries of "Rassera!" are heard everywhere. Giant, dramatic floats wheel through the city. We don our *yukata* and take to the streets to exuberantly dance and bounce our way with the rest of the city's crowds during the nightly parades. The entire city might be nursing sore throats and achy feet the next day, but as soon as the first drumbeat pounds and the first flute trills, we're back in the streets to do it again.

Alexandra Brueckner is a high school ALT whose interests include globetrotting, geeking out over all things Joss Whedon, and eating as much fresh sushi as her stomach will allow.



The Tsukiji Festival

Teigan Babcock

When you hear the word "Tsukiji," your first thoughts normally flit to images of ultra-fresh sushi, sometimes still gasping and wiggling. However, Tsukiji's Hongan Temple is home to one of the most enjoyable summer festivals in Tokyo. From the end of July to early August, *Noryo Bon Odori* dancers and *taiko* drummers take over the temple grounds. They vie for space with food stalls, beer sellers, and shaved ice makers. The dancing is open to the public and invites revelers to come in costume. The goal is to create a fun and unique environment for dancing. So next time you're in Tokyo for summer, hop over to Tsukiji and see who your dance partner is!

Teigan Babcock is a 3rd-year ALT from Saitama Prefecture, home of everything not cool enough to be included in Tokyo.



The Wakasa Oi 'Super Ogase' Fireworks Festival

Nicole Giaccone

If you haven't been to Oi's renowned summer festival in southern Fukui-ken, you should mark your calendar for early August 2014. Not only are there epic fireworks with emotion-invoking music and festival food stands as far as the eye can see, there is also a mighty Flame Taiko performance. Oh, and the festival's defining feature: a tall, leaf-shaped "Super Ogase" log set ablaze to rain fire on the unfortunate runners beneath, who are spinning the log, crowd chanting, until the flames go out and the log falls to the ground. Spend the afternoon soaking up the sun at one of the area's many beaches, then cap off the night watching the horizon erupt in an amazing display of color and sound.

Nicole Giaccone is an ALT in Ono, Fukui, who is pumped to start her second year in a town even many Japanese people haven't heard of.

What's going on in your area? Festivals, concerts, and events of all colors are welcome in the pages of Connect! Let me know, and I'll spread the word at connect.events@ajet.net

EVENTS CALENDAR SEPTEMBER

Let us know about what's up in your block for next month! Your area's event could appear on the next Event Calendar and be promoted by AJET at ajet.net/events! Send them to connect. events@ajet.net.



*The block colours are coordinated to the map.

EVENTS



BLOCK 1

The 8th Sapporo International Short Film Festival

Sept. 11 – 16
Sapporo, Hokkaido
Since its first year, 12,000 short films have been submitted by filmmakers in 120 countries. The SSF presents quality short films to the public and works to educate future filmmakers.

Hanamaki Festival

Sept. 13 – 15
Hanamaki City, Iwate
With more than 400 years of history,
the people of Hanakami perform local
traditional arts, such as Kagura and the
Deer Dance, and parade through the town
with more than 150 *mikoshi*.

Sapporo Autumn Festival

Sept. 13 – 29
Sapporo, Hokkaido
This festival showcases Hokkaido's culinary richness during the autumn harvest season. From fresh vegetables to ramen noodles made of Hokkaido wheat to local *shochu* tastings, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

Ishikari Salmon Festival

Sept. 28 – 29
Ishikari City, Hokkaido
More than 100,000 people come to this
seaside city just to buy fresh salmon or try
and catch it themselves. Buy local foods
at street stalls and enjoy a preview of
autumn's seasonal cuisine.

Yamagata Imoni Festival

Yamagata Potato Festival
Sept. 1
Yamagata City, Yamagata
Ever wanted to see one-hundred chefs gathered at a six-meter-diameter cauldron to serve authentic Tohoku-style potato soup with mechanical cranes to thousands of people? If you're in Yamagata City, you're in luck!

Katakai Festival Fireworks Display

Sept. 9 – 10
Ojiya City, Niigata
If you needed more evidence the Japanese take their fireworks seriously, look no further. This display boasts the *yonshakudama*: the world's largest firework. A nearly-half-ton shell with a half-mile-wide, multicolored bloom big and bad enough to wake Godzilla.

BLOCK 2

Jozenji Street Jazz Festival

2nd Sat. & Sun. in Sept.
Sendai City, Miyagi
Grab a friend and a picnic tarp, and set up in central Sendai for a weekend of jazz music. Street corners become stages for 650 bands, and outdoor bars and cafes appear just for this occasion.

Aizu Festival

Sept. 22 – 24
Aizu-Wakamatsu City, Fukushima
500 people parade through Aizu in a historical reenactment of Japan during the samurai era. Spectators can enjoy plenty of swordplay on the Tsuruga Castle grounds.

BLOCK 3

Nakanojo Biennale

Sept. 13 – Oct. 14

Nakanojo-machi, Gunma

This month-long contemporary art festival aims to showcase the mountain village culture lost to Japan's rapid Westernization. More than 100 artists work alongside residents to create this village-wide festival, and no place is off-limits.

The Canyons Adventure and Mixer 2013

Sept. 14 – 15

Minakami-machi, Gunma

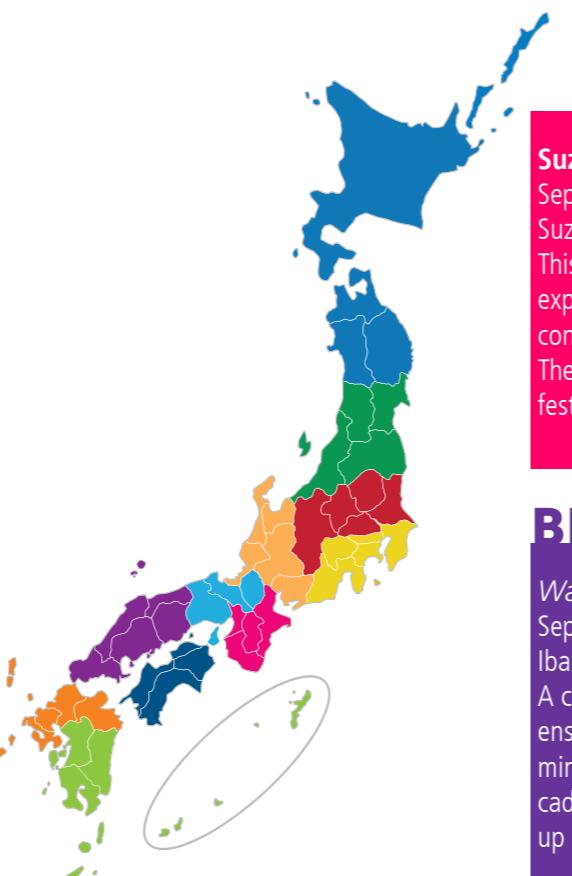
This event, brought to you by Gunma AJET, is a great opportunity to meet JETs from all across Block 3 in one exciting, action-packed weekend! Everything from canyoning to white-water rafting to BBQing and mingling. For more information, visit <http://www.gunmajet.net/news/canyons2013>

Ikaho Festival

Sept. 18 – 20

Shibukawa City, Gunma

Portable shrines are carried, with some encouragement and liquid fortitude, up 360 flights of stone steps to Ikaho shrine and onsen. The onsen's water is distributed as an offering to the deities of the hot springs and medical care.



BLOCK 4

September Grand Sumo Tournament

Sept. 15 – 29

Sumida, Tokyo

Rikishi, or sumo wrestlers, duke it out in Ryogoku Kokugikan's *dohyo* ring at this last of three sumo tournaments in Tokyo for 2013. Root for the *Yokozuna*, or show your support for the underdogs.

Burning Japan

Sept. 21 – 23

Minamiboso City, Chiba

To Burn, or not to Burn? The scorched Nevada desert that hosts the infamous Burning Man fest is far from this seaside town in Chiba, yet Japan is holding its own Burning Man-inspired celebration for a second year — one of Asia's three "Regional Burns."

Aichi International Women's Film Festival

Aug. 31 – Sept. 8

Nagoya, Aichi

This film festival celebrates its 18th year of promoting international exchange and the rise of women in the film industry. AIWFF screens short films of all genres and holds guest talks and symposiums.

BLOCK 6

Sake Tasting Party

Sept. 15

Kato City, Hyogo

From good land comes good rice, the adage goes, and the land in Kato City is great for rice that is used especially to make sake. Enjoy sampling high-grade sake in this pleasant inland town.

Takase Canal Boat Festival

Sept. 23

Kyoto City, Kyoto

This is the place to be if you prefer smaller, more interactive festivals. Participate in the *maiko*'s tea ceremonies, watch a samurai skit or two, and check out a replica of the boat that introduced water trade to Kyoto 400 years ago.

BLOCK 5

Ishikawa Curry Championship 2013

Sept. 15 – 16

Kanazawa City, Ishikawa

For 500円 per dish, enjoy sampling many different kinds of curry, including Indian, Thai, regional and local varieties. Vote for the best with your spoon.

Owara Kaze-no-Bon Festival

Sept. 1 – 3

Toyama City, Toyama

This seemingly somber nighttime festival merges Obon's ancestral worship and the local farmers' prayers for a bountiful rice harvest. Travelers come from all over Japan to hear the festival's haunting *kokyuu* and *shamisen* music and watch dances in streets filled with paper lanterns.

Kyoto Comb Festival

Sept. 23

Kyoto City, Kyoto

One of Japan's newer and odder festivals, the comb festival is the modern woman's tribute to the oft-overlooked hair accessory. Ladies, including Kyoto's famous *maiko*, sweep their hair up in ancient and modern Japanese 'dos and parade the streets, looking real fine.

BLOCK 7

Fiesta Mexicana Osaka

Sept. 21 – 23

Osaka City, Osaka

While September may be too soon for some new JETs to suffer random taco cravings, those who feel the pain should travel to Osaka for this unique multicultural experience, complete with mariachi bands, folk dancers, and booths of Mexican handicrafts.

BLOCK 9

Wadaiko Concert

Sept. 1

Ibara City, Okayama

A concert especially for Japanese drum ensembles. The performances can last 5–25 minutes and typically follow a *jo-ha-kyuu* cadence, in which the performance speeds up significantly toward the end.

BLOCK 10

Hojoya

Sept. 12 – 18

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka

Rooted in a nearly 1,100-year-old Buddhist ritual, Hojoya is one of Fukuoka's Not-To-Be-Missed festivals. Thousands gather at Hakozaki Shrine to see the ceremonial release of fish and birds to return to the air, forests, and waters.

BLOCK 8

Hyoge Festival

Sept. 8

Takamatsu City, Kagawa

Rightfully dubbed one of Japan's strangest looking festivals, the *tomozamurai*, or local warriors, channel their inner scarecrow and dress in costumes made from agricultural products and household items. (Seriously, you should Google this.)

Focus on Asia Fukuoka International Film Fest

Sept. 13 – 23

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka

One of the main events of Fukuoka's Asian Month, the film festival showcases films and holds discussions and symposiums between directors, actors and actresses, and festival guests. The festival also provides English subtitles.

Nagasaki Settlement Festival

Sept. 21 – 22

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki

An event of a different stripe, the elegant Glover Gardens is host to 19th-century, Western-style tea parties, mini concerts, and parades in period costume. Take the time to wander the hilly gardens, deemed one of Japan's cultural assets.

Karaage Festival 2013

Sept. 21 – 22

Nakatsu City, Oita

Carnivores, rejoice! This is exactly as it sounds: a gathering to consume Japanese-style fried chicken, an Oita specialty. More info at <http://karafes.com> (Japanese only).

BLOCK 11

Drunken Horse Festival

Sept. 15

Kumamoto City, Kumamoto

Also called the Fujisake Hachimangu Shrine Festival, this event gets its name from the tradition of parading decorated horses that were (yep!) given copious amounts of alcohol. While the horses are no longer intoxicated, they are still the prominent part of this yearly procession.

Shuri-jo Mid-Autumn Celebration

Sept. 21 -22

Naha City, Okinawa

This event is a reenactment of the Mid-Autumn Banquet, one of seven banquets held to entertain Chinese envoys during the Ryukyu era. *Ukanshin odori* and *Kumiodori* are performed under the harvest moon.

Sendai Ootsunahiki

Sept. 22

Satsumasendai City, Kagoshima

Think of a 5-ton, 300-meter-long rope. Now picture it in the hands of 3,000 people in a massive tug of war game. You're smiling, aren't you? That's the hope of the feudal lord who, when he created this event about 400 years ago, wished to raise local morale after many men were sent to war. The game continues today as a community-wide event.

CONNECT CONTESTS AND CONTRIBUTING

66 **GET
INVOLVED
WITH
CONNECT!**

Contributing

Go somewhere amazing recently? Have kitchen tips to share? Organizing an underwater Quidditch tournament? Here at Connect, we're looking for new writers **each and every month** to talk about their interests and adventures. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! So if you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors.

Not every article is an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, and more.

Spotlight

Every section of the magazine features one JET every month who's doing something interesting or praiseworthy. From fashionistas to volunteering superheros to master chefs, tell us about them and what they do! Can't pick just one JET to Spotlight? Tell us about a group, a town, or an event! As long as JETs are involved, we want to share it!

Ask/Connect

Make your voice heard! Do you have a question about workplace etiquette? Did you go to an event we highlighted? Want to comment on last month's articles or editorials? Just feel the overwhelming need to tell our editors how much you love and appreciate them? Each month we'll print your questions, comments, and witty observations so you can get Connected with us!

Photography contest

Get the perfect shot of the perfect moment here in Japan? Your photo could be next month's cover of Connect magazine! Every month we'll collect your photos and feature them online for the JET community to vote on. The highest-voted photo will be the cover for all to see! Email all photo submissions to contest@ajet.net. September's theme will be "Beginnings," so start thinking and start sending!

Haiku

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

CONNECT HAIKU AND PHOTO CONTESTS

Our cover photo and haikus are all provided by current and former JETs from around the world. You can submit your entries any time to contest@ajet.net. One photo will be selected for the cover of Connect magazine! All photos and haikus submitted will be featured each month here, though!

You've already seen John Weber's winning photo this month. Here are the other fantastic submissions we received!



"Red Bridge" – Kenny Wu, Wakayama



"Golden Child" -- John Weber, Hokkaido



"Rice Fields" – Kenny Wu, Wakayama

HAIKU

October's theme for haiku and photos is **primary colors**.

Buzzing cicada
Rice fields purring in the wind
Orchestral nature
✿ Joel Marrinan, Kumamoto

An umbrellasol
Always useful in Japan
The air is water
✿ Laura Welch, Miyagi

Glowing red sunset
Sea waves beckon me to swim
Oh what! Jellyfish
✿ Sam Hall, Nagasaki

WhyNot!?!JAPAN

The WhyNot!?! website has a lot of useful info in both English and Japanese for foreigners who live in Japan (mainly Kansai area) Town Guide (mapping out local Bars, Clubs, and Restaurants), Free Classifieds, Events & Parties, Exclusive Tours & Tickets, Jobs, Housing, Beauty Salons and much more.

Join Parties & Tours! Osaka/Kyoto/Kobe/Tokyo

Meet local Japanese people and make lots of new friends!



Mt. Fuji Tour



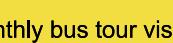
Rafting Tour



Awa Dance Festival Tour



Ninjya Tour



WhyNot!?! Tour!!!

We organize a monthly bus tour visiting places all around Japan. Our main trip is a Snowboard & Ski trip in winter, where about 300 people go to Nagano together for snow fun, a party and more! Buses leave from Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. Join us in this winter!

WhyNot japan.com

WhyNot!?! Party!!!

WhyNot!?! holds international parties! About 200 people at every weekend with a good mix of Japanese and non-Japanese from all over the world! all-you-can-drink style where live DJs play cool music at fashionable venues.



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