

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

FEBRUARY
2016

SCORE! SPORTS FOR CHARITY

WHAT'S COMING TO JAPAN IN 2016?

THE ULTIMATE BENTO GUIDE

WHY JAPAN MAKES HOLLYWOOD WAIT

CELEBRATE SHINICHI HOSHI'S 90TH BIRTHDAY



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



the art issue

C is a special art issue of Connect that will act as a public portfolio for the expat community in Japan.

Go to **this site** for more information and to send us your work! Submissions are open until March 2016.

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This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online at AJET.net here. Read Connect online and follow us on ISSUU.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello! Welcome to the January 2016 edition of Connect magazine.

I hope that the Holiday season has treated you well, and you've a spring in your step to greet the new year with. The Connect team sure has! We've always got treats for you, but these are 2016 treats, so they're extra special!

This year is all about "New Year, New Me-als." I want to try cooking something new as often as I can; what are your goals?

The weather has become rather cold of late—not just in Japan, but in various parts of the world. Appreciate the beauty of it all... make the most of it for 5 minutes before running indoors and hiding under blankets and a kotatsu. That's where you'll find me! But if not, the slopes are alive! Here in Gifu, there are a plethora of ski sports, and locations, to take part in some powdery fun.

This month we have: a sporting charity helping those after the 2011 earthquake; a guide to the ultimate bento; a heartfelt book review giving an insight into grievances; the wonderful block events calendar, and many more.

Once again I'd like to thank all those who contributed to this month's issue. I hope you will all enjoy reading it as much as I did. And if you haven't already, please take a look at our special January edition of Connect!

Have a great February!

Rajeev Rahela
Head Editor
2nd-year Gifu ALT



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SUBMISSIONS**

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IN SUBMITTING A
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THE NEXT ISSUE?
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INFORMATION AND
TO SUBMIT YOUR
PHOTOS!**



NEWS & EVENTS

NEWS EDITOR

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Margaret Pickard

So begins the daily delicate shuffle across icy parking lot to avoid eating it in front of students.

EVENTS EDITOR

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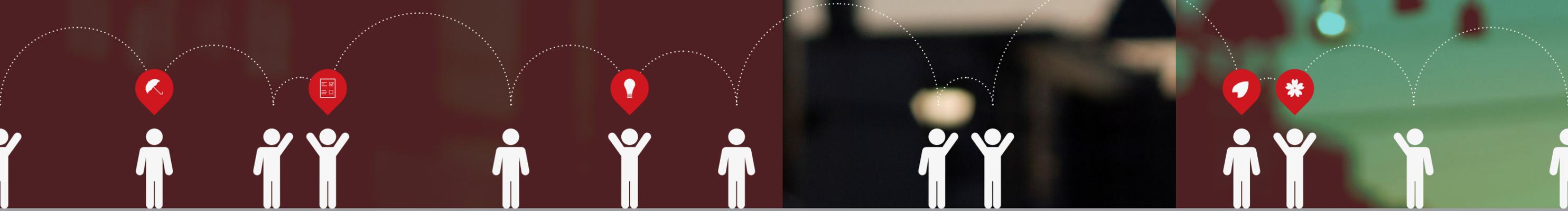
Jennifer Sanchez

What do you mean hibernating season is over?

 Illaura Rossiter

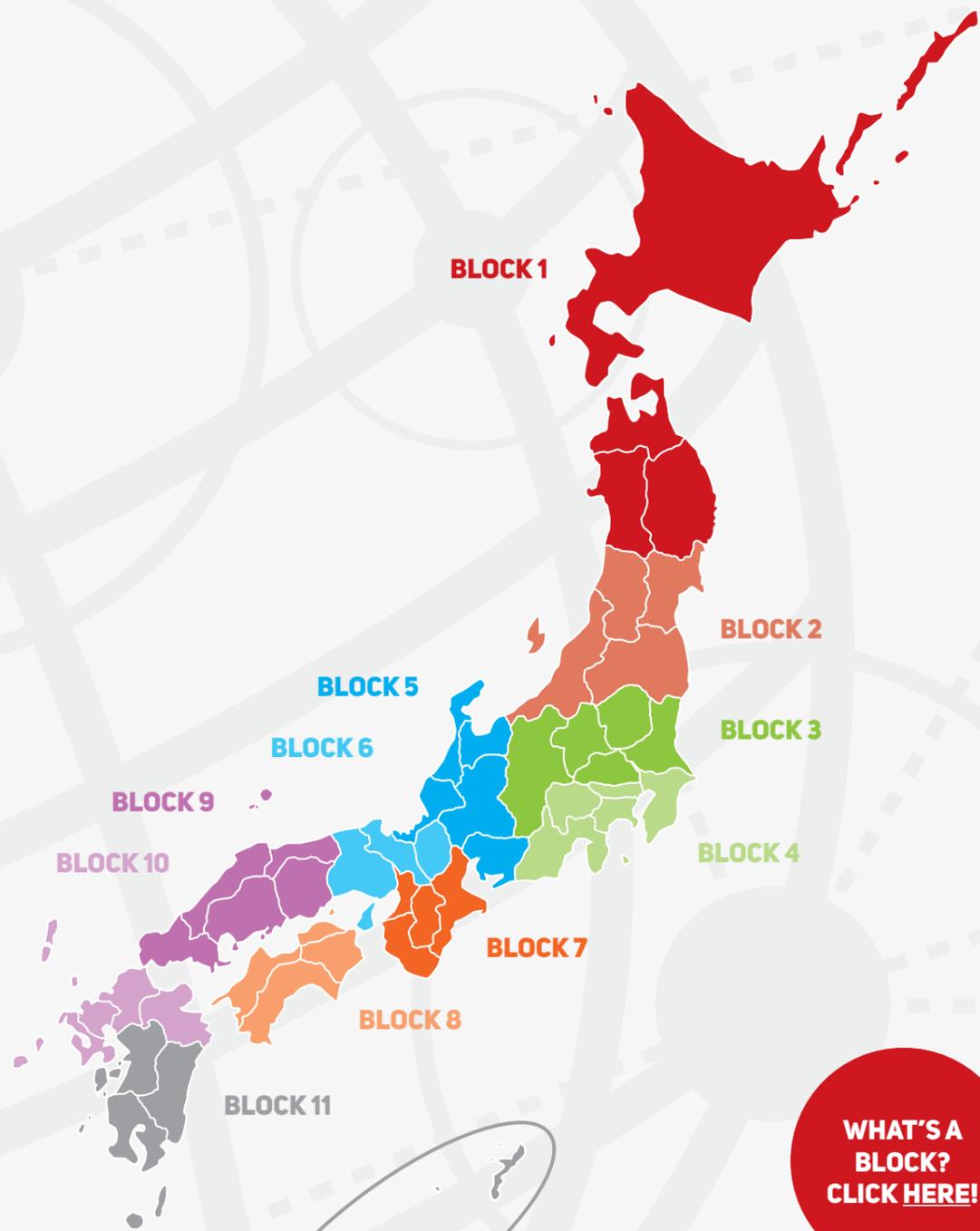
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EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY



HOKKAIDO YUKI MATSURI (SNOW FESTIVAL)

5-11 February 2016
Odori Park Site & Susukino's Ekimae-dori Site, Sapporo
5-18 February 2016
Tsudome Communitie Dome Site, Sapporo
[Website](#)

YUKI AKARI (OTARU SNOW LIGHT PATH FESTIVAL) 2016

5-14 February 2016
Otaru City, Hokkaido
[Website](#)

HACHINOHE ENBURI 2016

17-20 February 2016
Hachinohe ([Map](#)), Aomori
[Website](#)

KUROISHI JANKARA YOI YOI SAKE FESTIVAL 2016

20 February 2016
5-2 Ichinomachi, Kuroishi City, Aomori
[Website](#)

IWATE YUKI MATSURI 2016

Until 7 February 2016
36-1 Maruyachi, Shizukuishi-cho, Iwate-gun, Iwate
[Website](#)

YOKOTE KAMAKURA SNOW FESTIVAL

15-16 February 2016
Doro Koen Park, Yokote City, Akita
[Website](#)



MATSUSHIMA KAKI MATSURI

6-7 February 2016
Matsushima Bay, Miyagi
[Website](#)

RIYU SAWA GOD WINTER FESTIVAL

20-21 February 2016
Tachiyazawa, Shonai-machi, Higashitagawa-gun, Yamagata Nishiyama 1-67
[Website](#)

SHINOBU SANZAN AKATSUKI MAIRI

10-11 February 2016
30 minute walk from Fukushima Terebi Mae Bus Stop
Fukushima Station, Fukushima City, Fukushima
[Website](#)

OJIYA HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL AND LIGHTS

27-28 February 2016
Nishinaka (Tournament) and Hirasawa (Rides), Ojiya City, Niigata
[Website](#)

TOKAMICHI YUKI MATSURI

19-21 February 2016
Jogaoka Pureland/Tokamichi High School/Around Tokamachi City, Niigata
[Website](#)



MITO PLUM FESTIVAL 2016

20 February 2016 - 31 March 2016
Karaku-en and Kodokan Park in Mito City, Ibaraki
[Website](#)

SUIGO SAKURA ILLUMINATION

Until 28 February 2016
1051 Oiwata, Tsuchiura, Ibaraki
[Website](#)

OKUNIKKO YUMOTO HOT SPRING SNOW FESTIVAL

13-27 February 2016
Okunikko Yumoto Hot Spring, Nikko, Tochigi
[Website](#)

OIGAMI ONSEN YUKI HOTARU

9 January 2016 - 27 February 2016
Oigami Onsen, Oigami, Tone-machi, Numata-shi, Gunma
[Website](#)

KONOSU SURPRISE DOLL FESTIVAL 2016

16 February 2016 - 06 March 2016
First Floor of Erumi Konosu Shopping Mall, Konosu City, Saitama
[Website](#)



INTERNATIONAL FUREAI FESTIVAL

14 February 2016
4-5-1, Chuo, Chuo-ku, Chuo City, Chiba
[Website](#)

THE 19TH JAPAN MEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL

3-14 February 2016
The National Art Center, Tokyo (closed on 9th)
[Website](#)

ODAWARA PLUM FESTIVAL 2016

6 February 2016 - 6 March 2016
389, Sogabessho, Odawara, Kanagawa 250-0205
[Website](#)

YOKOHAMA CHINATOWN LUNAR NEW YEAR 2016

8-22 February 2016
Yokohama Chinatown, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa
[Website](#)

MOEGI NO MURA ILLUMINATION

Until late February 2016
Kiyosato 3545, Takanecho, Hokuto, Yamanashi Prefecture
[Website](#)

SETSUBUN-E WITH FAMOUS SUMO WRESTLERS!

3 February 2016 (annual)
Shinshoji Temple, Shizuoka
[Website](#)



16TH NYUZEN RAMEN MATSURI

27-28 February 2016
5232-5, Nyuzen, Nyuzenmachi, Shimoniikawa-gun, Toyama
[Website](#)

SUGO ISOBE SHRINE MATSURI

10 February 2016
Sugo Isobe Shrine, Daishouji Shikiji, Ruotsu, Kaga City, Ishikawa
[Website](#)

KATSUYAMA SAGICHO FESTIVAL

27-28 February 2016
Around Katsuyama Honcho, Katsuyama City, Fukui
[Website](#)

GIFU NO FUYUTABI

1-14 February 2016
Nakao Okuhidaonsengo, Takayama City, Gifu
[Website](#)

DEMON AND FIRE FESTIVAL AT TAKIYAMA TEMPLE

13 February 2016
Takistan Temple, Okazaki City, Aichi
[Website](#)



20TH MUSIC FESTIVAL

07 February 2016
777 Bungei Seminariyo, Omihachiman City, Azuchi-cho, Kuwanomiji, Shiga
[Website](#)

KYOTO MARATHON

21 February 2016
From Nishikyogoku Athletic Park to Heian-jingu Shrine
[Website](#)

SETSUBUN MATSURI

3 February 2016 (Annual)
Ikuta Temple, Kobe City, Hyogo
[Website](#)



SWEAT JIZOU FESTIVAL

24 February 2016
Nakiri, Shima City, Mie
[Website](#)

WORLD HOBBY FAIR

07 February 2016
Kyocera Dome, Osaka
[Website](#)

SETSUBUN MANTORO

3 February 2016
Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Kasugano-cho, Nara City, Nara
[Website](#)

KUMANO OTOU MATSURI (FIRE FESTIVAL)

6 February 2016 (annual)
Higashimuro Area, Kamikura Shrine, Wakayama
[Website](#)



THE 17TH SHIKOKU SAKE MATSURI

20 February 2016
Sunrise Building, Imakomachi, Tokushima
[Website](#)

SOHONZAN ZENTSUJI TEMPLE FESTIVAL

27-28 February 2016
3-3-1 Zentsujicho, Zentsuji City, Kagawa
[Website](#)

EHIME MARATHON

7 February 2016
Ehime Ken-cho Mae, Matsuyama City, Ehime
[Website](#)

42ND ASHIZURI CAMELLIA FESTIVAL

7 February 2016
Garden Ashizurimisaki, Tosashimizu City, Kochi
[Website](#)

THE FIRST ANNUAL 'ENTIRELY ART' FESTIVAL

4-27 February 2016
Kago no Oto 650, Showa, Shimanto-cho, Takaoka-gun, Kochi
[Website](#)



A BIRD THEATRE PERFORMANCE OF SNOW WHITE

27-28 February 2016
Yodo Cultural Center, Yonago City, Tottori
[Website](#)

MONOBE SHRINE SETSUBUN FESTIVAL

2-03 February 2016
Monobe Shrine, Oda City, Shimane
[Website](#)

SAIDAI-JI EYO HADAKA MATSURI

Third Saturday of February
Saidai-ji Temple, Saidaijinaka, Okayama
[Website](#)

SHOTO GARDEN PLUM TEA GATHERING

6-07 February 2016
Kure City, Hiroshima
[Website](#)

HAGI PLUM FESTIVAL

27-28 February 2016 & 05-06/12-13 March 2016
1125 Tsubaki, Hagi City, Yamaguchi
[Website](#)



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HATSU UMA MATSURI

6 February 2016
Kuroiwa Inari Shrine, Ogori
City, Fukuoka
[Website](#)

YUTOKU INARI SHRINE

6 February 2016
Yutoku Inari Shrine,
Kashima City, Saga
[Website](#)

**NAGASAKI LANTERN
FESTIVAL**

8-22 February 2016
Chuo Minato Park, Nagasaki
City, Nagasaki
[Website](#)

TENNENJI SHUJOUONIE

14 February 2016
Tennenji, Nagaiwaya, Bungo,
Takada City, Oita
[Website](#)

OYAMA PLUM FESTIVAL

21 February 2016 to 20
March 2016
Okubodai Baien and
Furuyadai Baien in
Oyamamachi, Hita City,
Kusu, Oita
[Website](#)

SENGOKU HIGO MATSURI

14 February 2016
Nagomi Town, Kumamoto
[Website](#)

**THIRD ANNUAL HOPPO
CULTURAL FESTIVAL**

28 February 2016
Hoppou Cultural Center,
Hoppoumachi, Miyazaki
1pm-3pm

**KAGI HIKI MATSURI
(LOG TUG-O-WAR FESTIVAL)**

20 February 2016 (annual;
third Sunday of February)
Nakatsu Shrine, Kanoya
City, Kagoshima
[Website](#)

**YAESE SAKURA MATSURI
(DAY & NIGHT)**

07 February 2016
Yaesemachi Park, Okinawa
[Website](#)

**GOT AN EVENT
TO PROMOTE?
LET OUR EDITOR
KNOW HERE!**

IN THE NEWS

DECEMBER - JANUARY

DECEMBER 16

In a controversial decision, Japan's Supreme Court upholds a 19th century law requiring married couples to have the same surname. The law does not stipulate whether the name taken must be the man's or the woman's; however, court papers show that 96% of couples choose the husband's surname. The ruling means more headaches for women in the workplace who keep their maiden names for professional reasons and must now jump extra hurdles because their legal names are different. The United Nations, citing gender discrimination, has pressured Japan repeatedly to revise the law, citing it as one of the few countries that requires married couples to pick one surname.

(Source)

DECEMBER 28

Japan and South Korea come to an agreement on the long-term issue of "comfort women", a euphemism for women forced to work in Japanese military brothels during World War II. Under the terms of the agreement, in addition to a "heartfelt apology", Japan will give 1 billion yen to the 46 surviving Korea women forced into sexual slavery under Japan's rule. Korea confirms that, given Japan fulfills its promises, the deal will be "irreversibly" resolved. The agreement gives hope to those who hope to see a thaw in the notoriously frosty relations between Seoul and Tokyo.

(Source)

DECEMBER 30

A team from Japan will decide the official name and symbol of Element 113, marking the first time scientists from Asia make an addition to the Periodic Table of Elements. The announcement comes from the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which decided the team's studies published from 2004 to 2012 give it the strongest claim to discovery.

In addition, joint-teams from Russia and the United States have been awarded claim of discovery and naming rights for Elements 115, 117, and 118, completing the bottom row of the periodic table.

(Source)

JANUARY 8

A survey conducted by Expedia Inc. shows Japan comes first in the world in disregarding annual leave, with 53% of Japanese respondents admitting they do not know how many vacation days they are owed. Concerns over delays in meeting deadlines, shortages of staff, and perceived inconvenience inflicted on colleagues are among reasons given by workers in not taking their paid leave. Japan also topped the poll in ratio of workers who feel guilt in taking vacation (18%) and who say they "cannot get work out of their minds" even during holidays (13%).

(Source)

JANUARY 11

Japan and the UK announce a commitment to deepen defense cooperation in 2016, with UK Defense Secretary Michael Fallon announcing reciprocal access to military bases and joint combat exercises, including some involving the Royal Air Force's Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft in Japan. London and Tokyo have also agreed to increased information-sharing in the interest of cyber security and are looking into working with the US in joint cyber exercises. Last year, the UK cited Japan as its "closest security partner in Asia".

(Source)

 Sterling Diesel

COMING TO JAPAN IN 2016

JACK POWERS (HOKKAIDO)



HOKKAIDO SHINKANSEN (MARCH)

The frontier will come even closer to the average salary-man this year. Hokkaido will become accessible by bullet train for the first time on March 26. The existing line between Tokyo and Shin-Aomori bullet train will be extended into Shin-Hakodate at Hokkaido's southern tip. Japan Railways officials announced there will be 13 round-trip trains every day. The reported travel time between Tokyo and Shin-Hakodate will be around 4 hours and 10 minutes. Early reports out of JR Hokkaido are that a reserved-seat ticket on a bullet train between Shin-Hakodate and Tokyo will cost 22,690 yen, which is slightly cheaper than current airline fares between Tokyo and Hakodate. However, travelers wanting to go on to Sapporo and beyond will have to switch onto regular JR Hokkaido trains.

(Source 1, 2)

Jack Powers is from Chicago, Illinois. He is a middle school and elementary school assistant language teacher in Niikappu, Hokkaido. His hobbies include walking and eating apples. His favorite book is "The Hobbit."

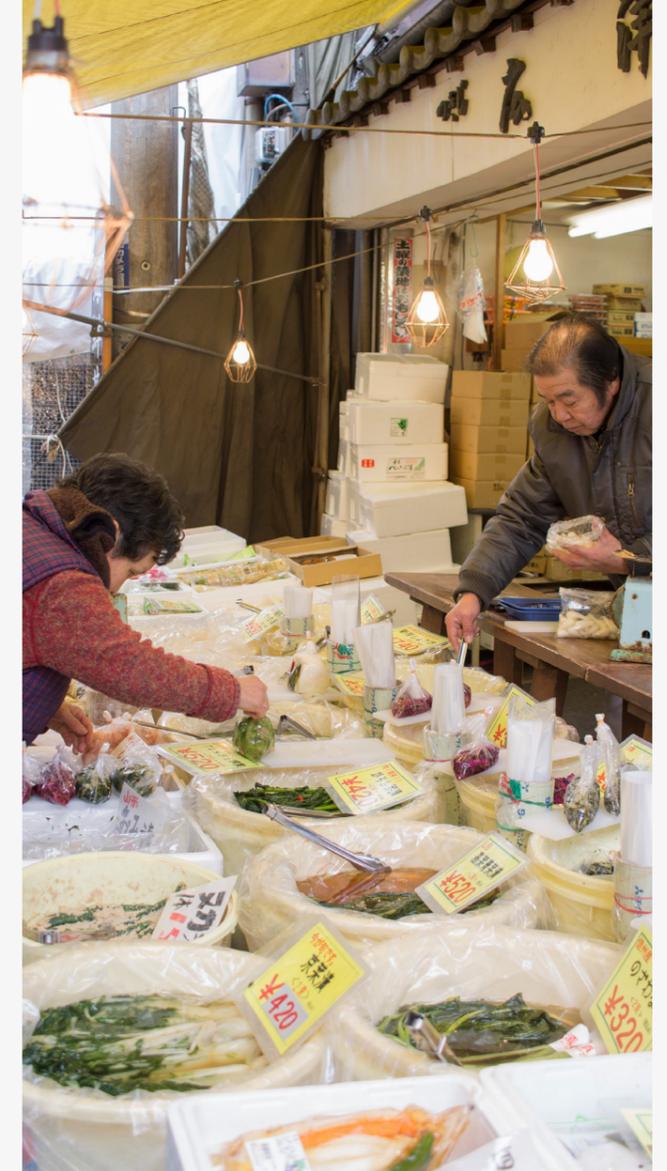
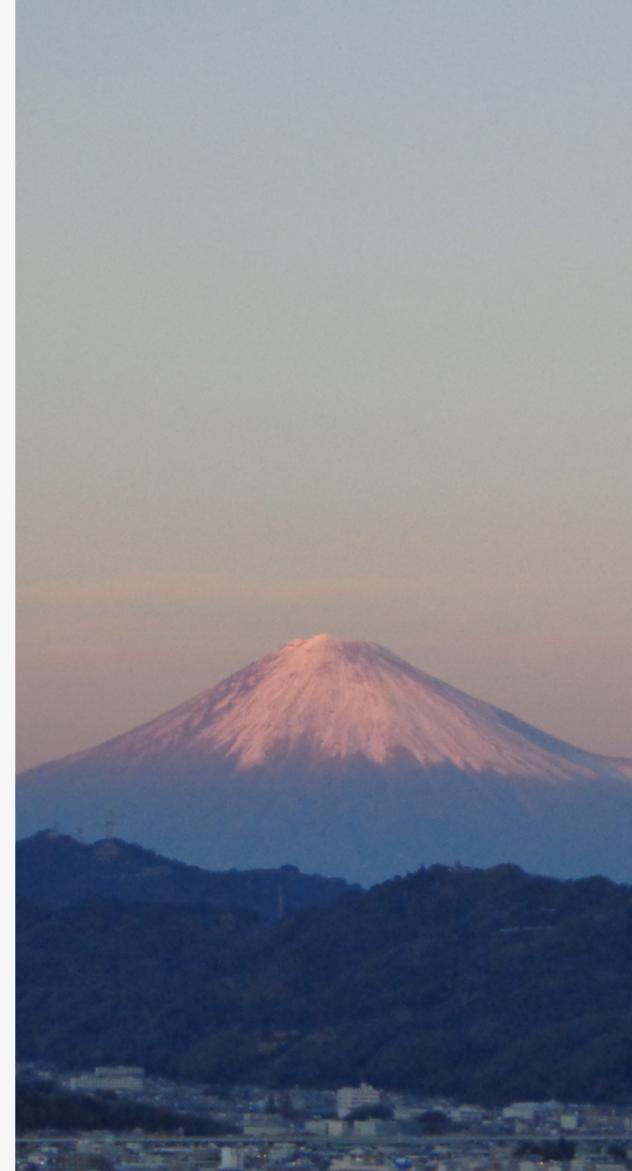
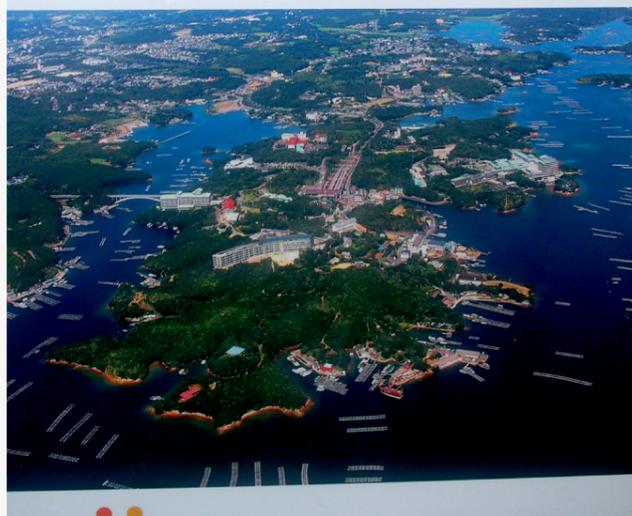
開催まであと

140日

Ise-Shima Summit

伊勢志摩 サミット2016

平成28年5月26日(木)・27日(金)



G7 SUMMIT (MAY)

The 42nd G7 Summit will be held from May 26-27th in Shima, Mie Prefecture. Combined with practical factors like easy accessibility, the site was chosen because of its close proximity to the legendary Ise Shrine. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe looks to show off the majesty of traditional Japanese culture to other world leaders, a popular move among his conservative base. Abe has said that he “hopes world leaders would feel and enjoy Japan’s rich culture and tradition, along with its beautiful scenery.” The summit is expected to be a boon for Mie’s economy. The G7 is comprised of Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, and Italy.

(Source 1, 2)

VOTING AGE LOWERS FROM 20 TO 18 (JULY)

Legislation passed last June to lower Japan’s voting age to 18 will take effect this July, in time for the Upper House elections. The step is meant to address the growing imbalance between young and old in Japanese politics. Less than a third of people in their 20s exercised their right to vote in 2014’s general election. That number jumps to 60% and 68%, respectively, for people in their 60s and 70s. The unanimous decision from the Upper House of the Diet will add 2.4 million new voters. It remains to be seen how many of these young voters will actually go to the polls and how their political interests will affect upcoming elections.

(Source 1, 2)

MOUNTAIN DAY (AUGUST)

The Diet passed legislation for a new national holiday in 2014. The legislation will take effect this year, with its inaugural observance landing on August 11th. The holiday is dedicated to mountains and is Japan’s 16th national holiday. Mountains make up roughly 70% percent of the Japanese archipelago and are seen as spiritually significant in the Shinto religion. The Japanese Alpine Club helped lobby for the new holiday as a way to better connect people with the outdoors. Though Japan already has the most national holidays of any G8 country, the Diet’s passage of the law is likely aimed more towards relieving Japan’s obsessive work culture than appeasing mountain-climbing fanatics.

(Source 1, 2)

TSUKIJI MOVES (NOVEMBER)

Tsukiji, the world’s largest wholesale fish and seafood market, is scheduled to move in November. The government’s decision to relocate the market can be traced back all the way to 2001. Early preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics motivated the government to move ahead with its long-dormant plan. The world-famous market, which celebrated the 80th anniversary of its founding this past year, will move three kilometers south to Tokyo’s Toyosu district. It’s unclear how the relocation will affect the market financially this year, especially with November being part of its busy season. Tsukiji racked up 3.5 billion US dollars in sales in 2015. The current site will be used to complete Loop Line 2, planned to be a major transportation artery for the 2020 Games. Pour out some extra soy sauce on your sushi for the old Tsukiji this year.

(Source 1, 2)

Ashley Dorrell, Margaret Pickard, Wikicommons

ARTS & CULTURE

CULTURE EDITORS

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Rayna Healy

Trying to keep morale strong after returning from a tropical Winter vacation in Cambodia. Lots of time under the kotatsu is all that can help me now

Joyce Wan

Have already broken my resolution not to sleep in any more airports in 2016.

FASHION EDITORS

connect.fashion@ajet.net

Elena Galindo

Erica Grainger

*February's my favorite month, with my birthday & Valentine's Day!
Cue: champagne & romantic red attire!*

ENTERTAINMENT EDITORS

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Timothy Saar

*Started three hobbies this year: calligraphy, volleyball, and LARP.
My geek has grown too powerful.*

Sabrina Zirakzadeh

*2016 so far: Rediscovered classic sci-fi and subjected my neighbors to nonstop Hamilton.
Fun times!*

 Illaura Rossiter

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FACES IN FASHION

JUN TAKAHASHI OF UNDERCOVER

ELENA GALINDO (SHIZUOKA)

Age: 45

Occupation: Designer

Label: UNDERCOVER

Originally born out of inspiration from punk music and punk sub-culture, UNDERCOVER is a label that doesn't subscribe to any fashion rules. The punk spirit, though subdued, continues to live on in pieces that are easily recognizable as inventive and edgy, with the occasional touch of humor. This is a brand for those who don't take themselves too seriously, and who aren't afraid to be rebellious, by pushing the boundaries of fashion.

CLAIM TO FAME

Jun Takahashi is the designer and founder of UNDERCOVER, a label with an almost cult-like following at the forefront of Harajuku fashion culture in the early 1990s. Heavily influenced by punk and the Sex Pistols, Takahashi's earlier designs strived to go against the grain, which helped garner the label many dedicated fans from a variety of fashion sub-cultures and counter-cultures.

Takahashi and his designs do not only appeal to trendy individuals imbued with the punk spirit—Takahashi has shown at Tokyo and Paris Fashion Week, and is twice the recipient of the Mainichi Fashion Grand Prize. Today he continues to produce avant-garde pieces for UNDERCOVER, as well as more commercial designs through collaborations with labels such as Nike and UNIQLO.

[Official Homepage](#)

[Official Instagram](#)

 *Elena Galindo*



WHEN SEXY ISN'T PRETTY A CULTURE SHOCK IN JAPANESE “PRETTY” STYLE FASHION

MISHA JANETTE (TOKYO)



 Misha Janette

There comes a tipping point, the “hump” as we’d say, when nothing in an adopted culture can really be all that surprising anymore. This is especially true in my experience working in fashion in Japan. I’ve seen my share of fashion with flair while living in Tokyo—the yamambas, cyber goth, shironuri and kigurumin—but they wouldn’t make me surprised. In fact, those are something I *expect* to see as someone interested in the subcultures.

But recently I was learning about a type of fashion that that honestly took me by surprise. I had never really cared to pay much attention to it, but when I did I was taken aback in a slow-simmer way. Kind of like hearing a country cover of a hip hop song that takes a few minutes to process. So what was this fashion that confuddled me? It’s *drum roll*

... “Mote-kei.”

Mote-kei (mo-tay-kay) is translated as Pretty-style but it literally means “attractive-style”. It is a way of dressing pretty, with a defined goal of catching or keeping a (Japanese) man/woman. Learning about mote-kei and just how penetrative its ideas for catching the opposite sex through clothing are really awakened in me a renewed urge to get to the bottom of something. Usually fashion is just fashion. But sometimes there is something more there. Luckily, I had the perfect opportunity to go head-to-head with it. And you may find it curious as to what happened... [...]

In Japan, it is well known that the magazines are very segmented into defined genres. But when it comes to young fashion, there are two major groups: Aka-moji (Red-letter) and Ao-moji (Blue-letter) magazines. The latter refers to Harajuku styles, where people dress for themselves and their personalities. While the former Red-letter magazines refer to dressing for *someone else*. [...] I couldn’t believe that the style lived up to its name: it was really all about being “attractive” to men. It flew in the face of my personal (and perhaps clouded) stance, that “fashion” was always something very personal and for ourselves only. This “Pretty-style” actually seemed very... taboo.

“SWEET” OVER “SEXY” SEEMS ALMOST TABOO?! UNDERCOVER

In the west, “dressing for men” obviously means something VERY different. The makeup can be high-maintenance “natural” or very “glammed-up”, but the clothing is always, always SEXY. Lots of skin, legs, cleavage or tight, tight, tight. That is what “dressing for men” means 90% of the time. So while looking at the styles in the Red-letter Japanese magazines, I noticed they were showing skin, but it was very calculated ..and there was not a lot of it. They were demure, sweet, and innocent, with just a bit of spice. Not standing out too much, looking very approachable, and most certainly following “mass market” trends were the main schtick. It almost seemed retro. I couldn’t get

the term “Mad Men-era” out of my noggin when reading it. But I needed to learn more. Is this REALLY what Pretty-style was all about?

IT'S ALL FANTASY? UNDERCOVER

[...]

The most important keywords of Pretty style to note is romantic fantasy. I learned at the magazine that much of Pretty style is about the girls writing romantic fantasies in their minds. The uniform for this happens to be flirty, fuzzy and comfortable. Although everyone says that the fuzzy, soft clothing is so that guys will want to put their hand on you, I personally think it's really just because it's comfortable to wear...for the *girls* themselves. [...]

I could understand the fantasy part, but I couldn't believe that this was all really for the men. Do men really prefer this sweetiepie sort of fashion?? I wanted to call up my Japanese boyfriends and ask. But then I realized that thought alone meant I was trying to discredit the culture here by believing that the sexed-up version of a woman was somehow “correct” and a far more girlie “Pretty-style” couldn't be. [...]

PRETTY-KEI, PRETTY TOUGH TO PULL OFF UNDERCOVER

Perhaps because the season is changing and it makes us all a bit weird, but I had a thought: Should I take on a challenge?! Try Pretty style?! I was laughing at myself for thinking it. But looking through the clothes in the magazines, I realized that

every page had something soft on it. It looked so comfortable and warm. I looked in my closet and: no sweaters! Not one knit item. I always thought of knit as fuzzy, like mold is fuzzy. Ick, not for me. But this time... maybe. Alright, I got this. At least I could get a fuzzy sweater, right? [...]

So finally I bit the bullet and went for the fuzziest thing I could find in the most Red-letter brand in Laforet; Snidel. Snidel! I know, surprising right! I was trying to be inconspicuous and practically tiptoed in but that's hard when I'm a foreigner who stands out, and the sales assistant recognized me from Bunka. My cover was blown! In any case, I tried on a sweater and skirt ensemble that was SO fuzzy, it was like a carpet. I couldn't tell if this made me “mote” or not. I was feeling uneasy about this experiment... [...]

..but life never turns out the way we expect, does it? Turns out I was going to be the least “pretty” of em all. Those fuzzy hairs? They were flying everywhere! It was in the air, on their clothes, and in the food! I was swallowing them. They were like magnets to everything but the vessel they were *supposed* to stay on. I was being more of a nuisance than a prodigy. And then one of my male guests said to me, “You look very Harajuku today.” Huh?!! The point was to not look Harajuku. I failed big time. I am going to stick to my styles I know best. But I am sure feelin' this retro style kick, pretty style or not.

So in the end, I learned a

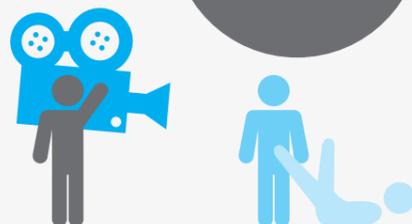
lot about the differences in being a “man's girl” in terms of style. I was happy to see that sexy doesn't necessarily mean Pretty kei. There is a lot of pressure for girls in the west to be sexy as if that is the only way to attract men. But here in Japan there is a whole 'nother layer and way of doing things. This doesn't mean I don't think a lot of it isn't silly, because it is. But if we want to talk silliness, one only needs to look at our Cosmopolitan (smh). Dating culture is also obviously way different (another topic for another day).

Born in Washington State, Misha moved to Tokyo in 2004 to study at the prestigious Bunka Fashion College which counts Yohji Yamamoto and Kenzo as graduates. Misha was named as one of Business of Fashion's “500 people shaping the global industry” (BoF500) for Japan along with Comme des Garçon's Kawakubo Rei and Junya Watanabe in 2014. You can find her on [Instagram](#) and at [her website](#).

Read the full piece [here](#).

THIS ARTICLE IS A DIRECT EXCERPT FROM THE ORIGINAL AT TOKYO FASHION DIARIES.

NOW, POSE FOR THE CAMERA!



STAFF BOOK PICKS

KAFKA ON THE SHORE HARUKI MURAKAMI

This book will make you want to visit the forests of Shikoku and eat unagi. My favorite character is Nakata because I am also an illiterate in Japan!

Becca Simas
Co-Sports Editor

Japanese Fairy Tales

BUY

Yei Theodora Ozaki

Trout Fishing in America

BUY

TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA

RICHARD BRAUTIGAN

Introduction by BILLY COLLINS

HARUKI MURAKAMI

KAFKA ON THE SHORE

BUY

JAPANESE FAIRY TALES YEI OZAKA

As a child, fairy tales fostered my affection for foreign cultures. This book provides a reference point for being in one of those cultures.

Liam Nolan
Copy Editor

TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA RICHARD BRAUTIGAN

This book has nothing to do with fishing, but Brautigan is a cool writer who inspired Murakami (and even called Japan home for a while).

Pia Peterson
Co-Travel Editor

iTunes

SHINICHI HOSHI, JAPAN'S SHORT SCI-FI MASTER

RACHEL PATERSON (OKAYAMA)

2016 is the 90th anniversary of the birth of Shinichi Hoshi, one of Japan's most beloved and popular authors. Despite this, outside of Japan his work remains relatively unknown. Since many of Hoshi's works will be re-released this year in honor of his birthday, why not acquaint yourself with this little-known, but wonderful, writer?

Shinichi Hoshi was born in 1926 in Tokyo. He studied agricultural chemistry in university but dropped out of his graduate studies program to work at a pharmacy and to pursue writing. He published his first short story, *Sextra*, in 1957. He specialized in short-short stories—often referred to as “flash fiction”—with most of his fiction being less

than five pages long. Hoshi is the most prolific short-short writer in Japan, with over 1,000 works published before his death in 1997, and more than 100 collections currently in publication. (1)

Hoshi's stories cover many genres, but he is best known for his poignant science-fiction. His most famous work, *Bokko-chan*, tells the story of a robot built to work at a bar and the men who fall in love with her without realizing she isn't human. Other tales include aliens befriending children who forget them once they are grown, mysterious holes in the earth from which nothing emerges but people still flock to, and otherworldly beings observing humanity's first

foray to the stars. Rather than weaving epic or scientifically precise tales, Hoshi used sci-fi elements to highlight the human condition. His stories inspired writer Haruki Murakami (*Kafka on the Shore, 1Q84*) and anime legend Tezuka Osamu (*Astro Boy, Metropolis*), and are still much beloved by Japan to this day.

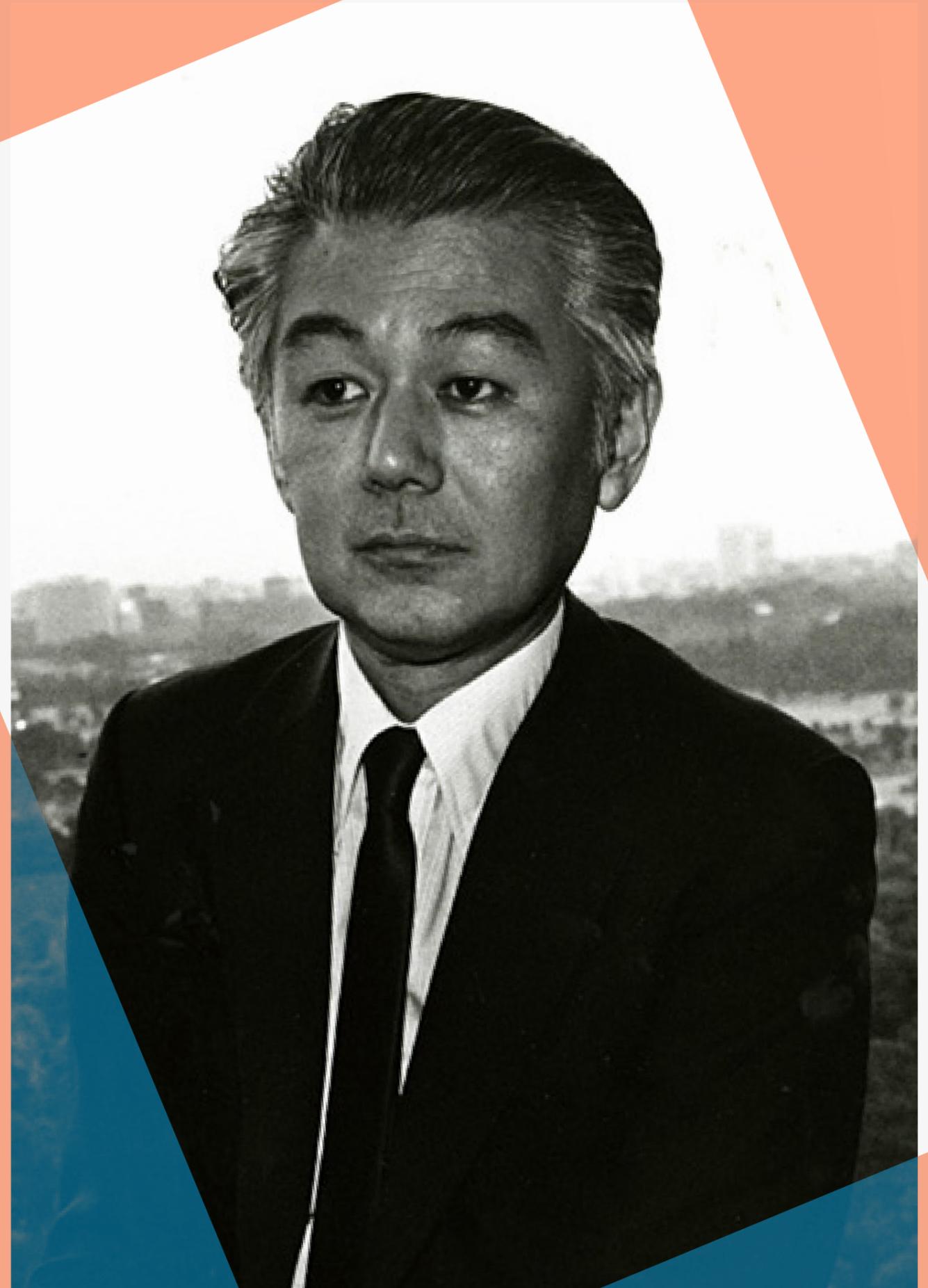
The short length of Hoshi's stories makes them easily accessible to most levels of Japanese learners, while their subject matter shines a light illuminating Japanese attitudes in a unique and insightful way. For fans of sci-fi, the human condition, or poetic writing, Shinichi Hoshi is one Japanese author you must seek out.

Rachel Paterson is an ALT living in Okayama. She loves science-fiction of all kinds and thanks her partner for introducing her to Mr. Hoshi's work.

SOURCES

(1) *The Hoshi Library*

📷 新潮社



BOOK REVIEW

WHERE THE DEAD PAUSE AND THE JAPANESE SAY GOODBYE

RAYNA HEALY (SHIMANE)

Marie Mutsuki Mockett, an American woman, was struggling with depression while dealing with the loss of her father and the prospect of burying her grandfather's bones in Japan. That's when disaster struck in the forms of an earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster, the latter of which occurred just 25 miles from her family-owned temple.

Mockett's return to Japan after the disaster led her on a journey deep into the heart of a suffering Japan. She comes face to face with not just her own grief but with the grief of an entire nation. In her book, *Where the Dead Pause and the Japanese Say Goodbye*, we follow Mockett across Japan as she meets with priests and tsunami survivors. Mockett sees that in Japan "there are all of these wonderful traditions which take individual pain... and cast it against the backdrop of... human suffering" (1). This doesn't exactly shrink your own individual pain but grows the context in which you see it.

Grief, of course, is utterly personal and intimidatingly big. In the West, there are few rituals surrounding grief (2). Grief is a private wound that is nurtured on a more individual level. In Japan, grief and death have a communal place. Every year when the deceased are welcomed back during *Obon*. Mockett found *Toro Nagashi*, a lantern floating festival at the end of *Obon*, a particularly poignant experience. During this event, people write the names of deceased family members on lanterns and float them in a river at sunset. This represents the return of deceased souls to the afterlife.

The river lights up like a night sky, an enormity of souls remembered and beloved. It's impossible to keep track of one's own lanterns in a river filled with so much light, dispersing the concentrated grief. Mockett notices that the lanterns begin to cluster together as they travel farther and farther down the river. For Mockett, watching the lanterns cling to each other, and being surrounded by hundreds of anonymous people during a goodbye that was deeply intimate, made her realize that "[p]eople are

not actually alone. Whether they are alive or dead, they are not alone" (3).

Mockett's book explores grief and recovery through her own experiences and through the cultural lens and national experience of a grieving Japan. It's worth the read for the insights, ideas, and cultural commentary on grieving in Japan and a reminder that hope lies in a compassion born of common human experience.

SOURCES

- (1) "After Father's Death, A Writer Learns How 'The Japanese Say Goodbye'" NPR. NPR. Web. 15 Jan. 2016.
- (2) Murray, Colleen I., Katalin Toth, and Samantha S. Clinkinbeard. "Death, Dying, and Grief in Families." 75-95. Online.
- (3) Mockett, M. M. (2015). *Where the dead pause, and the Japanese say goodbye: A journey*. W. W. Norton & Company.

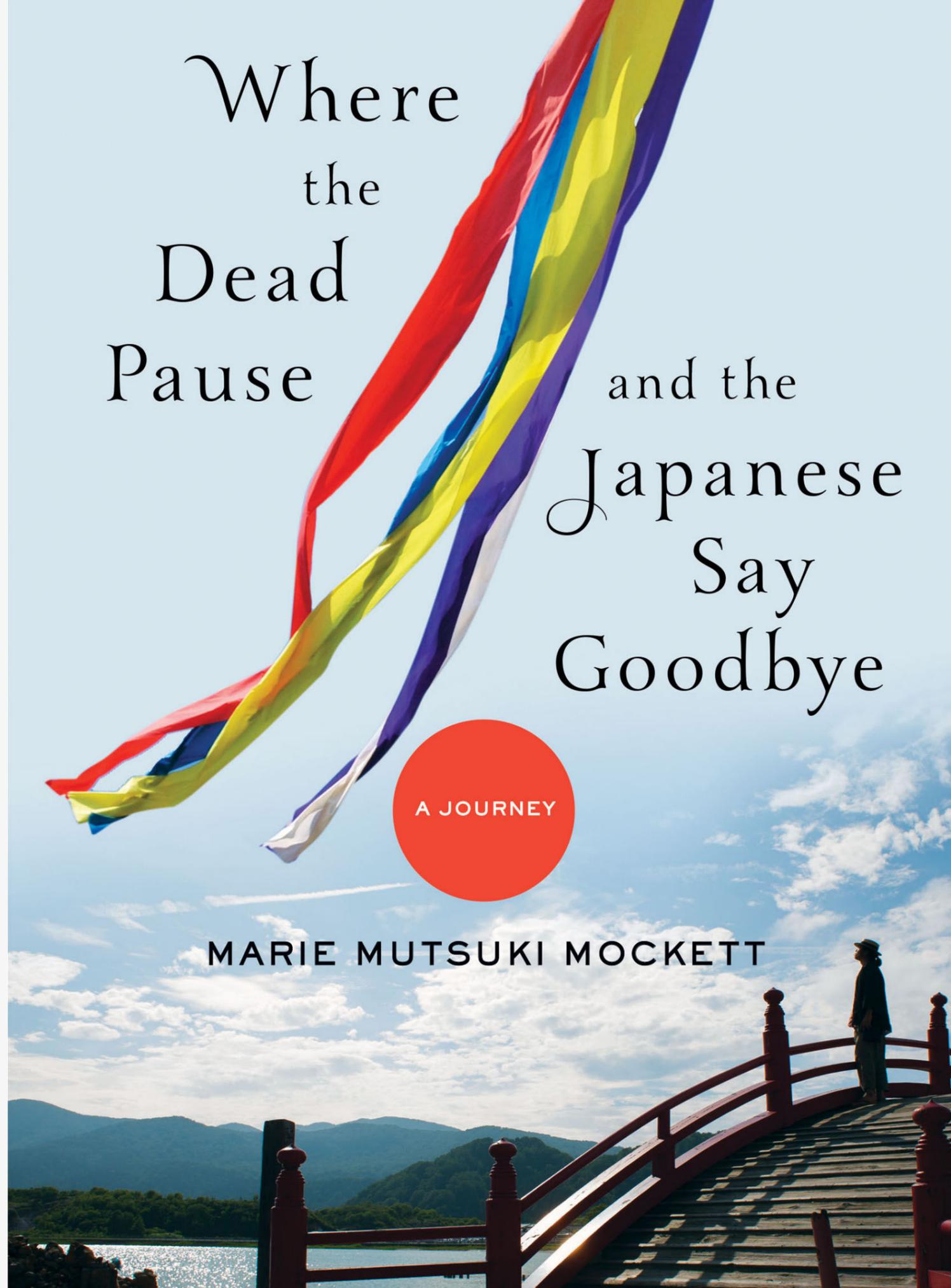
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Where the Dead Pause

and the Japanese Say Goodbye

A JOURNEY

MARIE MUTSUKI MOCKETT



BETTER LATE THAN NEVER WESTERN MOVIES IN JAPAN

DANIEL KENNEY (OKAYAMA)

If you're like me, you enjoy Hollywood movies. You also most likely enjoy watching them in theatres, with people, like a civilized human being.

However, if you enjoy Hollywood movies and you live in Japan, you may have noticed that most of the world gets to see them before you do.

What gives? What do Mongolia and Tunisia have that Japan doesn't? Does Japan simply like to let its foreign movies age, like wine?

The answer to that is, "Yeah, kind of." A combination of factors keeps most foreign releases from arriving in Japanese movie theatres on time, and it's not because the Japanese film industry is stupid and hates us, as I once thought.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE JAPANESE FILM INDUSTRY

In the 1960s, Japan had around 7,000 theatres, and attendance was high. These days, Japan has just over 3,000 screens, compared to the U.S.'s 40,000. In order to stay profitable, the time-honored strategy of raising ticket prices has been employed, plus expensive concessions and merchandising. In addition, Japan's domestic film industry commands most of the space on those screens, with an average of nearly 60% of the market since the 2000's. Hollywood hasn't commanded the Japanese market since the early 90s. This situation leaves Japanese distributors hesitant to take chances on foreign films that could tank, or cut into the profits of the newest Yokai Watch sequel. They're running a

PREPARATION IS KEY; PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Delaying a release is one way distributors secure that return. Seeing how a movie performs in other countries and markets gives them hard data they can use to convince people to part with their 1,800-2,300 yen. If you are Japanese language-savvy, you've seen the, "All of America loved this film" or "Worldwide Big Hit" messages before the trailer gets underway. Positive word of mouth gets people in theatres, after all.

The delay also buys time for promotion and merchandising. Hollywood A-listers have a chance to eat sushi on a variety show and sell their movie. Failing that, the Japanese dub actors often get touted as the stars of the movie and do press junkets. If you have ever stopped by the movie

That's because it is, and all of it needs to be okayed by Hollywood first.

PIRACY, OR LACK THEREOF

Another factor slowing down release dates in Japan is the lack of film piracy. You could argue the severe penalties against piracy (10 million yen and ten years in prison) keep most in Japan from pirating movies. Whatever the reason, piracy is not an issue here, and thus not a factor in timely releases as in China or South Korea.

Now that you have a general idea of why foreign movies take so long to get here, what is there to be done? Not much, I'm afraid. Japan isn't known for changing its ways, especially when there is no incentive to do so. All I can tell you is make patience one of your cardinal virtues.

Daniel Kenney thinks the fact that 'Yokai Watch the Movie 2: King Enma and the 5 Stories, Nyan!' beat 'Star Wars' in overall tickets sold paints a grim future for Japan. He also thinks Timothy Dalton wasn't a bad James Bond. Follow him on [Twitter](#) to see what else he thinks, or to tell him how wrong he is.

iTunes



WE'RE LATE!
WE'RE LATE!

FOR A VERY IMPORTANT...
RELEASE DATE!

OKAY... I'LL STOP...

JURASSIC WORLD
RELEASE DATES

2015.06.12
ICELAND,
MOROCCO,
USA, ETC.

2015.06.16
MONGOLIA

2015.06.24
TUNISIA

2015.08.05
JAPAN
...SORRY...

business and, like any business, they want a guaranteed return on their investment.

theatre gift shop, you may have noticed merchandise that seems Japan-specific.



MASTERING KYUUSHOKU CONVERSATIONS

(EMMA RUITERS, HOKKAIDO)



By the grace of the 1952 School Lunch Law, around 12 o'clock on weekdays, all across Japan, *kyuushoku*—that delicious, healthy lunch—is carried by earnest elementary and junior high schoolers to their classrooms, carefully distributed and promptly devoured by hungry students.

As an ALT teaching in elementary school, you may be expected to eat lunch with your students, and if you have you'll know it as one of two things: amazingly fun or soul crushingly awkward. This may include desperately utilizing your limited Japanese to understand the cute albeit incomprehensible *ichinensei*, fielding questions from four *sannensei* who seem to expect you answer them all simultaneously, attempting to get a conversation going with aloof *rokunensei*, warding off inappropriate questions or merely attempting to stymie your pain as absolutely everyone eats in solemn silence. From my first rather awkward *kyuushoku* experience, I have spent hours since attempting to foolproof my *kyuushoku* game, and have produced these seven tips for your reading pleasure. *Itadakimasu!*

1. BODY LANGUAGE: CHANNEL YOUR ENERGY

Entering the classroom can be nerve-wracking, especially when you don't know any of the kids in that class—worse when kids are rushing you, furiously *janken*-ing for you to sit at their table, and generally clamouring for your attention. With a precarious tray of ramen clamped tightly to your torso, you just barely manage to muster a nervous smile. Smile, keep your body language open, remember not to high-five (or is it *haitachi*?) anyone while holding your tray (oops...) and just enjoy the proceedings.

2. TAKE AN INTERESTING SET OF CHOPSTICKS

What elementary schooler can resist commenting on their *sensei*'s set of rad Pokémon chopsticks? You'd be surprised how much conversation can be had over just two pieces of wood. Sometimes, I switch it up and take in a pretty lacquered set—which female *yonnensei* never fail to appreciate.

3. MIND YOUR LANGUAGE (OR DON'T)

When I first arrived, fresh off the boat, I could not be parted from my polite *-masu* form while speaking Japanese, even if you enlisted the help

of Moses. This made me come off as quite formal and adult to the kids. At home, most of them never use *-masu* form. The best advice I got was to use plain form and *no* instead of *desu ka* for questions. I saw a noticeable improvement in my students' responses to me.

4. WEAR SOMETHING STRANGE

I guess I stumbled right into this one, but a regular part of my style is a lanyard with my keys and a big red gorilla on it. I know, I'm a veritable fashionista. However, this never fails to generate excitement wherever I go—even amongst *chuugakusei*! On days when I don't wear it, I get asked where it is.

5. ASK SOME LEADING QUESTIONS

Having asked around amongst my ALT friends, and from what works for me, there seem to be three real winners that really get the conversation going in elementary school. Warning: one of them is more appropriate for *gonensei* and *rokunensei*.

兄弟は何人の？

Kyoudai wa nannin no?

How many siblings do you have?

Kids like talking about their family, and this is usually a good way to go about it. It's also a really great way to know how your students are connected in the school, you'll find very often that the *ninensei* you're talking to is actually the sister of that naughty boy in Grade 6.

誰が好きの？

Dare ga suki no?

Who do you like?

I like to call this one Weapon X. This really gets the crowd going, but it can go two ways: “we're too young and innocent to like anyone” or total disclosure! Prepare to get the low-down on who likes whom and who is dating in the grade 6 class.

ドラマとかアニメとか漫画とか何が好きの？

Dorama toka anime toka manga toka nani ga suki no?

What drama/anime/manga/game do you like?

This question will probably garner you replies like *Yokai-watch*, *Dragonball*, *Crayon Shin-chan*, *Kyary Pamyu Pamyu* or *Youtube's Hikkakin*. What this also means is that you may need to keep hip on Japanese popular culture—good luck!

6. UP YOUR JANKEN GAME

I am sometimes asked, and this always comes without context, to play *Janken*—Japan's version of Rock, Paper, Scissors. A boy will turn around in his chair, and just command me to *Janken* with him. When you least expect it, they strike from the shadows, so make sure you're always prepared! Don't be afraid to issue a few challenges of your own. Remember: if two people's eyes meet, they have to battle!

7. BE OBSERVANT

Lastly, be observant. You'll be surprised about how much you can learn just by looking around—what books the kids are reading, what characters

they like from the placemats they use, and so much more. I've seen my kids studiously practicing their kanji or making origami before lunch is served. Asking them about it is bound to get a response, and maybe even a lesson worthy of *Wikipedia* on the intricacies of making *orizuru*.

Thus, we arrive at the conclusion of this navigation of *kyuushoku* niceties. Hopefully, this has provided you with inspiration, or maybe it's just enlightened you to this writer's lonely struggles. So the next time you drop your tray beside that cool *rokunensei*, remember to drop some *Weapon X* too; it may just be the tool you need to connect with those tricky pre-teens. And with that, *gochisousamadeshita!*

Joyce Wan



LIFESTYLE

FOOD EDITORS

connect.food@ajet.net

Alexandra Brueckner

If anybody needs me for the next two months, I'll be snowboarding waist-deep in Hakkoda's powder.

Mira Richard-Fioramore

TRAVEL EDITORS

connect.travel@ajet.net

Leah Gray

2016 has been an enjoyable year so far. I can't wait to see what the rest of the year will be like!

Pia Peterson

Taking advantage of this mild winter to get in the 3 R's—reading, running, and rewatching old films.

 Illaura Rossiter

LIFESTYLE

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NISEKO RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHT

ALEXANDRA BRUECKNER (AOMORI)

NISEKO'S
TEMPTING
CREPES



Japan's a haven for those of us who love winter sports, and Niseko, a huge mega-resort composed of four smaller ones that's located about an hour and a half by train from Sapporo, is widely considered one of the best spots in the country for powder hounds. Though for all of its powder stashes and pristine groomers, Niseko has a lot to offer off of the slopes, especially when it comes to food.

Whether you're craving something Japanese or otherwise, sweet or savory, cheap or a bit more expensive, Niseko has plenty of options that'll silence your growling stomach in no time. Here are seven spots that'll make your winter holiday memorable for more than just the time spent on the slopes.

RAKUICHI

There's *soba*... and there's *Rakuichi soba*. *Soba* master Rai, and his wife Midori, run this tiny twelve-seat restaurant, and the buckwheat noodles, painstakingly made in front of your eyes, are bound to be some of the best you'll ever have in Japan. Reservations are required (often months in advance) for a seven-course *kaiseki* dinner. However lunch is a first-come, first-serve affair, though be prepared to wait. The freshness of the food and care with which it's made makes it all worth it, though.

Reservations: 0136-58-3170

北海道 虻田郡二セコ町 字二セコ 431

LAZY?
WE LINK TO
MAPS!

THE NISEKO SUPPLY COMPANY

Quality cheese is something a lot of us are guilty of missing while living in Japan, but the fondue at Niseko Supply Company is amazing enough to fill that void. There is no way that you'll leave this place still hungry. Their cheese fondue weighs in at more than 200 grams of cheese allotted per person (!) and odds are that you'll be wiping down the pot with chunks of bread to get every last drop of it. Just make sure to save room for dessert; Niseko Supply Company is just as famous for its crepes as it is its melted cheese.

Reservations: 0136-55-8861

〒044-0081 北海道虻田郡倶知安町字山田 190-13

LAVA LOUNGE

If your cheese craving runs more towards the pizza end of the spectrum, Lava Lounge is where it's at. With none of the "ketchup on toast" disappointments that Japan is sometimes guilty of serving, Lava Lounge's pizza is the real deal. You can stick to the standard toppings like pepperoni, Hawaiian, and margherita, but the more unique offerings—like shrimp and snow crab with coriander or chicken, Camembert, and sun-dried tomatoes—are what make Lava Lounge worth a visit.

Reservations: 0136-55-8797

〒044-0081 北海道虻田郡倶知安町字山田 191-29

ABUCHA 2

A good portion of Abucha 2's menu is standard *izakaya* fare: *zangi* (Hokkaido-style fried chicken), skewers of pork and chicken, and plenty of *gyoza*. Those are delicious, to be sure, but if you come to Abucha 2 and don't indulge in some *shabu-shabu*, you'll be sorely missing out. Abucha 2's menu boasts lots of *shabu-shabu*, *sukiyaki*, and *nabe* options. Carnivores will love the high-quality Hokkaido beef, while seafood lovers can go for the snow crab option. And if spicy food is your jam, than the *kimchinabe* will be calling your name.

Reservations: 0136-22-5620

〒044-0081 北海道虻田郡倶知安町字山田191-29水墨1階

ABUCHA 2'S
JUICY MEAT



LAVA
LOUNGE'S
SEAFOOD
PIZZA



FRIDGE BAR

Though technically this place's name is Bar Gyu+, everyone knows it as the Fridge Bar... because its door is (you guessed it) an old-fashioned refrigerator door that you'll have to duck through to enter. Inside, the bar is homey and darkly lit and soundtracked by jazz. It's the perfect place to grab a drink, whether you're waiting for your dinner or digesting it.

No reservations needed, call: 0136-23-1432

〒044-0081 北海道虻田郡倶知安町字山田 167-21

MILK KOBO

Life is better with ice cream. Life is best with Milk Kobo ice cream. Made with fresh ingredients from a nearby ranch, Milk Kobo's ice cream is so good that you'll crave it even when you're half-frozen after a day on the mountain. The small café offers flavors like green tea, strawberry, cookies 'n' cream, and vanilla, and the on-site bakery means that you can pick up baked sweets like cheese soufflé and tarts, too.

No reservations needed, call: 0136-44-3734

〒048-1522 北海道虻田郡二七〇町曾我 888-1

HIRAFU INTERSECTION FOOD TRUCKS

If your wallet is getting a little slim or if you just want to grab a bite between runs, the food trucks that are near the main intersection in Hirafu, Niseko's largest resort, are your best bet. Whether you decide to go for the Turkish kebabs, fish 'n' chips, freshly made personal flatbread pizzas, or Indian food, your choice likely won't cost you much more than a thousand yen, and it's pretty much guaranteed to be just as delicious as any of the food you'll get in the town's restaurants.

HANA 1 CAFÉ

Hana 1 Café isn't much more than a tiny hut located at the base of Hanazono, one of the resorts that make up Niseko. Their hot chocolate is nothing short of amazing. It's made with real Hershey's syrup (no powdered mix here!) and milk that's steamed to hot, frothy perfection and then topped with a massive marshmallow that's nearly as big as the cup's mouth. It's the perfect way to warm up your hands and stomach between runs.

 Alexandra Brueckner, Texture.com



HANA 1 CAFÉ'S HOT CHOCOLATE

VIETNAM IN TINY BOXES

PIA PETERSON (YAMAGATA)

While breaking out of the daily routine and traveling around Japan is a pleasure, there is a lot to be said for getting out and exploring the neighbors that lie across that wee strip of blue ocean. Following on the heels of December's piece on Thailand, here's a glimpse at traveling in Vietnam and making the most of a cheap ticket.

VISA

Vietnam's visa process has changed recently, and the embassy website warns travelers to watch out for companies that promise visa on arrival, but then don't deliver. If you don't live near a consulate, then I recommend [My Vietnam Visa](#). For a "Visa Approval Letter", the My Vietnam Visa company charges US \$35, followed by a US \$25 charge for the actual visa at the airport. This can take 3 to 5 business days. Minimal stress, minimal waiting room time.

TRAVEL

Most airlines that fly to Japan service Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, and transfers in the country to smaller areas like Hoi An go for about US \$50. Once in the country, your options are endless. With a few weeks' notice, it's simple to get a Vietnam driver's license, and as of 2015 Vietnam is accepting International Driver's

Licences for conversion into temporary Vietnamese licences (you should talk to your local DMV or AAA representative for more info). You can then rent a bike for about US \$5 a day, or buy one outright for about US \$250 and resell it after you've made your journey. Buses are plentiful and there are many small-time travel agencies that will help get you a seat with legroom and, more importantly, air conditioning. Buses run about US \$1 for every hour. For example, a sixteen-hour bus between Mui Ne and Hoi An would be about US \$15. Watch out for taxis, which will likely overcharge you, and always ask a hostel if they can provide a bicycle at the time of booking. If you're driving a motorbike, traffic is hectic and we saw more than one vacationer with road rash and an arm in a sling.

WHERE TO GO?

Ho Chi Minh City

Formerly known as Saigon, it is the largest city in Vietnam. It's a busy place, with 6 million motorbikes for its 9 million residents. If you can handle the bustle and don't have a problem walking all over the fairly spread out city, you'll discover that it's a mecca of street food, cheap 'fresh beer' brewed locally, and specialized restaurants that only serve one or two

incredible dishes.

Hanoi

The northern capital of Vietnam. The winding streets and open cafes have earned this city a lot of comparisons to Boston or Paris. It is beautiful, with old buildings and lots of small lakes within the city's borders to wander around between meals. Hanoi is also the jump-off point for the mountains, Sapa, and the world cultural heritage site Ha Long Bay.

Hoi An

People go to Hoi An to fall in love, and end up falling in love with the city. Its "old town" was inhabited at various times in history by the Chinese, French, and Japanese, and has a remarkably well-preserved colonial atmosphere. The Vietnamese are extremely proud of Hoi An, and others come here for the beauty, food (crab doughnuts and banana flower salad, to name a few), and the beach.

Mui Ne

Quieter than the party beach town of Nha Trang, Mui Ne is an interesting place that is caught between Vietnam, Russia, and paradise. The influx of tourists during winter means that the beach town caters to foreigners, with a Mexican and an



Indian restaurant along the strip. It's also home to a remarkably quiet fishing village with miles and miles of empty beaches in the mornings. A relaxing break from the chaos of Ho Chi Minh City, Mui Ne gives you the option of learning more about Vietnamese food and culture away from the major cities. Though the creature comforts of a good huevos rancheros and bars aren't too far away if you need them.

Hue

Hue is famous as the old imperial capital of Vietnam, and hosts the Forbidden Purple City, the old imperial grounds- so beautiful it really did move me to tears. The city is gorgeous and interesting, and the imperial grounds, occasionally damaged in its 1,000-year history, has been remarkably well-preserved and

Phu Quoc, Ha Long Bay, and Sapa

These are three of the main tourism draws of Vietnam. They're incredibly beautiful and draw a lot of tourists, which for some people ruins the beauty. Aside from Phu Quoc, an island south of Ho Chi Minh City, they are easily accessible through organized trips from Hanoi. Unless you are centering your trip around one of these places, I recommend researching your options for a package tour. These are usually run by hostels, hotels, or independent travel agents who will take care of all of the steps of getting you safely down the fairly complicated road of point A to point B without stranding you on a

dock somewhere.

SAFETY

If you drop your wallet in Vietnam, don't expect it to be delivered to your house the next day. Tourism is a big business, and some people will try to take advantage of that. Make sure you don't get into unlicensed taxis or ones without meters, lock up your stuff in a shared hostel, and keep your cell phone and cash close to you at all times when you're out walking around.

BUDGETING

From Narita to Ho Chi Minh City, or Hanoi, airline tickets can run as little as ¥30,000. Once in Vietnam (where the exchange rate is roughly 20,000 dong for every ¥100), both food and accommodation can be remarkably cheap. Most meals cost less than US \$2/¥250, and a bed for the night can be US \$4.50/¥600, even in extremely popular areas. If you're staying in one place, you can get by fairly cheaply! However, if you're traveling around the country, here is some advice: We saw the majority of our money going to taxis at the beginning of our trip, so we started planning ahead. A few minutes of research on distances, neighborhoods, and Google Maps, as well as asking a reliable person ahead of time for a quote, helped us avoid any additional expenses.

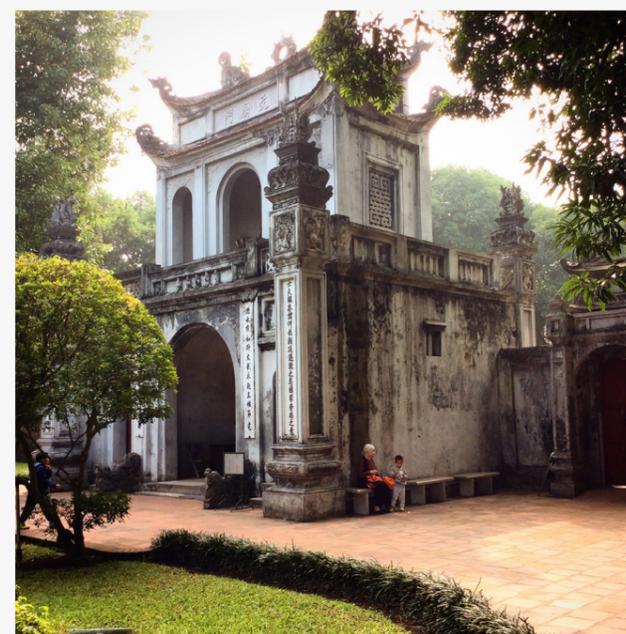
FOOD

This is one of the main reasons that people travel to Vietnam. A *banh mi* or bowl of *pho* on the street will be tasty, satisfying, and cost you less than a dollar. Because most of

the country is in the tropical zone, fresh exotic fruits and fresh fish are available everywhere for the same low price. I recommend taking a cooking class, preferably one that will give you a tour of the market and explain what *are* those green, spiky, football-sized fruits (spoiler alert: the famous stinky durian) and what to even *do* with a fertilized duck egg. I'll leave that one a mystery. Some great cookbooks about Vietnamese cuisine are *Into the Vietnamese Kitchen* by Andre Ngyuen, and *The Food of Vietnam* by Luke Ngyuen (no relation).

Warnings aside, the point of travel is to explore, discover, and enjoy yourself. Vietnam is a beautiful country with delicious food that is definitely worth a trip!

📷 Pia Peterson



WHITE WATER RAFTING IN SHIKOKU

LEAH GRAY (HIROSHIMA)



HEY,
REMEMBER
THAT TIME WE
WENT...

RAFTING?!

DID
SOMEONE
SAY
RAFTING?!

PERFECT DAYS, HAPPY RAFT, AND THE YOSHINO RIVER

Every now and then I have a day that I can look back on and say, “Wow, that day was perfect. I wouldn’t change a single thing about it.” The 2015 Hiroshima AJET White Water Rafting Trip turned out to be one of those days. Canyoning company [Happy Raft](#) was our gracious host, providing us with great guides, as well as all of our equipment.

GETTING READY

After signing the necessary paperwork, we pulled our wetsuits on over our swimsuits. The weather was absolutely beautiful, so, even though it was the beginning of October, I wasn’t worried about being cold. The staff handed us our lifejackets, helmets, and paddles. Everyone wrote their names on their helmets so that we could easily identify each other. Next, it was time to load up the buses. Most of the people there were a part of our group, but there was also another AJET group and some other smaller groups. Before long, we had arrived at our destination along the *Koboake* stretch of the valley surrounding the Yoshino River, or literally “small-dangerous to walk along” (1). The “small-dangerous” stretch is so named because, well, it’s a little dangerous, but you probably won’t drown if you fall out of your raft. I later found out that the *Oboke* area, literally “big-dangerous to walk along”(1), is so named because you probably *will* drown if you fall out of your raft.

NUMBER ONE BOAT

The water was a lovely emerald color, and I couldn’t wait to get it in. It was time to divide into groups and be assigned a guide. I grabbed my friends Allison and Kelsey, and we found three more people to complete our group. Our guide, “Sushi”, came over and introduced himself. He gave us basic instructions on how to steer the raft and work as a team, and what to do if someone fell out. Then we spent some time practicing on a calm stretch of water. His instructions for navigating rapids always got us to move quickly—someone from another raft later told me that they could always hear us as we went down the rapids because Sushi sounded like a drill sergeant. Our raft didn’t capsize once when it wasn’t supposed to, so all that time he spent yelling “GET DOWN” wasn’t wasted.

We rotated positions around the raft, but for the first part of the journey I was one of two people in the front. This meant that it was my job to stay in sync with the other person, and the people behind us were supposed to stay in sync with us. So, before long, we developed little chants to keep us all paddling at an even rhythm. Forward was “stroke, stroke,” at an even high pitch, backward was “back, back,” at a high-low pitch, and gentle was “slow, slow” in an exaggerated high pitch. Our little chants started catching the attention of other rafters, so to encourage some friendly competition, we started calling ourselves “Number One Boat,” and the

name stuck.

SURFING

Around lunchtime, Sushi asked us if we wanted to try surfing. Allison and I took him up on his offer. At the bottom of the stretch of rapids we had just navigated, the white water was ideal for testing our ability to “surf”, which basically meant “cling to the raft for dear life for as long as possible before you inevitably fall off.”

We watched as, one by one, the groups in front of us did just that—some lasting a few seconds, some lasting a good deal longer. Everyone was having a blast though, and with a mixture of anticipation and nerves, it was finally our turn. I braced myself, listening carefully for Sushi’s instructions, and then—oops!—we got pushed away by the current after only a couple of seconds in the churning water. Nothing to fear though; we hadn’t missed our opportunity. Sushi paddled back around, and before we knew it, it was our turn again.

The first few seconds were relatively uneventful, but then I felt the raft turn, and Sushi yelled, “Right, RIGHT!” along with a number of other directions that I only hazily comprehended.

I just gripped the raft as hard as I could and let my instincts take over, using my weight to balance against the pull of the water. Then I felt the raft start to tip back and pivot. Not good. Sushi continued to shout instructions at us, so I switched all of my weight to the front, hoping to keep the



raft from capsizing. We kept tipping back, and before I knew it, the boat was vertical! View the near spill [here](#). “Don’t fall on Allison, don’t fall on Sushi” was running through my head.

With a loud plop and a good bump to my chin, we managed to land right side up! Sushi started cheering, and then Allison and I did too as the current drew us away from the surfing spot.

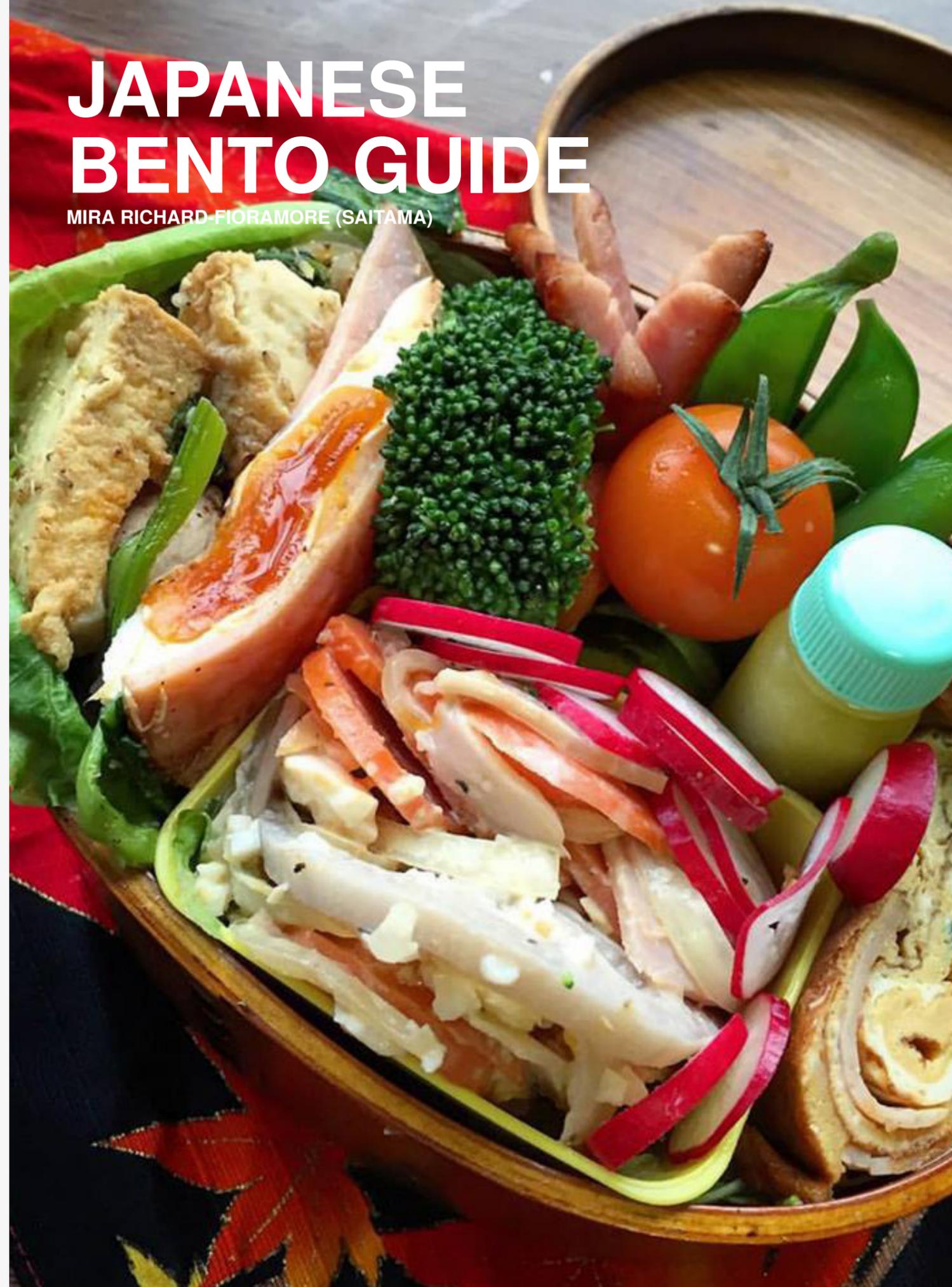
LOOKING BACK

The rest of the day went by too quickly—a delicious lunch, challenging rapids interspersed with lazy stretches of river, fun games, and, of course, all of the important team bonding moments. I was sad when it was over, but we got to debrief back at Happy Raft and see pictures from our adventure, which was a great way to wind things down. We thanked the staff profusely, and then it was time to get back on the bus and head home. As the Yoshino River finally disappeared from view and the sun sank lower and lower in the sky, I knew that I would have to come back to Shikoku and Happy Raft again someday soon.

SOURCES

- (1) [National Japan Tourism Organization](#)

📷 Happy Raft, Hiroshima AJET



JAPANESE BENTO GUIDE

MIRA RICHARD-FIORAMORE (SAITAMA)

If you have lived in Japan or are infatuated with Japanese culture, then you have probably noticed that most Japanese people, from students to the working force, bring a bento for lunch. A bento can be purchased at a store or made at home. If you have ever seen a Japanese person's bento box, you'll notice that the box contains various dishes. These dishes can either be homemade or frozen instant food that you only need to microwave. A bento box usually consists of okazu (Japanese side dishes), steamed veggies, steamed rice, cooked sausages, omelets, and many sorts of edible garnishes. These can include radish or cucumber slices, furikake over the rice, cherry tomatoes, green beans, nori decorations, lettuce, carrots, corn, and so on. The bento is usually assembled in the morning, but the side dishes come from whatever dish you have made the previous night. You can either make the rice at night and leave it in the rice cooker, or you can make it in the morning if you have time.

Now the most important thing when making a bento is to have a bento box! You can find these anywhere in Japan. Any 100-yen shop will have cheap versions. Tokyu Hands, Nitori, LoFt, or any other department store will have more expensive ones in stock. You can also find them on Amazon! A lot of these bento boxes are non-microwavable, so make sure you get one that is. If you did, however, get one of these non-microwavable bento boxes, simply heat up your side dishes in the microwave in the morning before adding them to your bento box so that when you eat it, it's still somewhat warm.

The second most important thing is the bento box "lunch bag". In Japan, people usually use a *furoshiki* to wrap their lunch box. You can buy cheap ones at 100-yen stores or more expensive ones at department stores or even souvenir shops!



WAIT,
YOU MEAN
EVEN I CAN MAKE
A BENTO AS
BEAUTIFUL?

YES!
JUST TURN
TO THE NEXT
PAGE.





In this guide, I provide some simple recipes that you can make in the morning and add to your bento.

There are 3 egg recipes that you can make for your bento boxes!

1. TAMAGOYAKI A JAPANESE-STYLE ROLLED OMELET

Contrary to popular belief, tamagoyaki isn't always plain. Tamagoyaki can include a variety of ingredients including spinach, onions, mushrooms, ham slices, cheese, green onions, seaweed or kelp, and so on. For this you need a tamagoyaki fry pan.

To make one rolled omelet, just add 2 eggs, 1 tbsp of soy sauce, mirin, and sugar to a bowl and mix well. Add whatever ingredients you want in your omelet and mix.

Pour a teaspoon of oil in your hot pan and pour a little of the egg mixture to cover the bottom of the pan. When the flat eggs have cooked, start rolling the egg into a log from one side to the other. Pour some more egg mixture in the pan until all covered. Lift the egg log up so that the newly added eggs can stick to the log and cook. Roll again. Repeat this process until all of the eggs have been used. If you notice the eggs still stick, just add ½ tsp of oil to the pan. Remove the rolled omelet from the pan and place on a cutting board to cool. Cut in 3 pieces 2-3 cm pieces.

2. EGG AND HAM レンジでハムエッグ

This consists of putting a slice of ham on a small bowl, cracking an egg over the ham, and putting one more slice of ham over the egg. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and microwave for 1 to 1.5 minute. Take out of the plate and onto a cutting board, slice in half. You should have an egg between ham slices sandwich. The yolk should still be runny.

3. BOILED EGGS

This one is easy. It consists of making boiled eggs. Make sure to not boil them too much because you want the yolk to be runny. Once cooked, peel the egg and slice in half.

BOILED VEGETABLES

You can add boiled vegetables to add colour to your bento! These can be cauliflower, broccoli, romanesco, snap peas, snow peas, peas, green beans, carrots, corn, or squash!

OCTOPUS WIENERS

Mini sausages are extremely popular in bento boxes. For this you need 7cm long sausages (the hot dog kind, or if you're in Japan, the bento box kind). With a sharp knife, slice half the sausage lengthways, turn the sausage 90 degree and slice again lengthways. You should now have 4 legs. Repeat this step two more times until you have 8 legs. Fry 2-3 minutes in a pan, the legs will expand with the heat and your sausage will look like an octopus!

SESAME STIR-FRIES

Sesame stir-fries are good healthy green "salads". They can consist of green beans, spinach, spinach and mushrooms, spinach and tofu, spinach and sliced carrots, broccoli, or boiled sweet potato slices, that are quickly stir-fried with 1 tbsp of soy sauce and sugar. 1-2 tbsp of sesame seeds are then added to the stir-fry and mixed until well coated.

VEGETABLE SLICES

These slices include radish or cucumber. They are often added simply to add colour, but can be eaten, too.

RICE, FURIKAKE, AND NORI

Once you have your steamed rice ready, simply add the amount you want to eat to the box and sprinkle some *furikake* over! You can make designs if you want with the furikake. Some parents like to cut out letters and write messages to their children with nori (but this takes A LOT of time).

LETTUCE CONTAINERS

Once you're ready to assemble, you want to make your bento as pretty as you can. If you ever visit the bento section of any department store, you will notice that they sell little silicone containers to put your okazu in. Well, if you don't want to use them or if they're not available in your region, then try to make them yourself with lettuce. I find red or green leaf lettuce works really well, rather than iceberg lettuce. Simply cut half of one leaf, stuff it in the bento box and add whatever okazu you have inside the

leaf. This adds a beautiful green to your bento box and decorates your okazu with nice frizzy lettuce cups.

DIET BENTO BOX

If you don't want to eat rice or are opting for a healthier low-carb version, then switch the rice for shredded cabbage! Just shred some cabbage with a cabbage shredder and you have a salad!

SALAD DRESSING

You can add salad dressing over the vegetables if you want, but if you do, your veggies may get soft and wilted by the time lunch comes, or worse, the salad dressing will have leaked out of your bento box. For salad dressings, I suggest buying 1 mini-salad dressing containers that they sell at the 100-yen shop! These are great for portion control!

CHERRY TOMATOES

Having different coloured cherry tomatoes makes a bento look even better! Experiment with yellow/orange/purple/red/green tomatoes to see which ones you like better!

ASSEMBLING

Assembling the bento box is up to you! Once you have all of your ingredients ready, you can then add them to your box one at a time to make it look good! I have attached photos of some bento boxes I have made. reference and have fun making your own!

 Mira Richard-Fioramore

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Sometimes I don't know what to say, so I just dance instead.

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 *Illaura Rossiter*

COMMUNITY

The Spirit of Ishizuchi-san

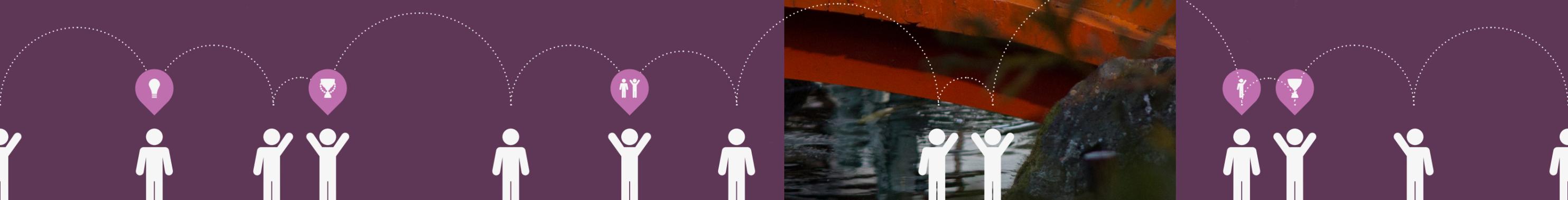
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THE SPIRIT OF ISHIZUCHI-SAN

RYAN MONAHAN (EHIME)

In Shikoku, the smallest and least populous of Japan's four islands, Mount Fuji's fame is dwarfed by another: Mount Ishizuchi. Although Mount Ishizuchi (1,982m) only measures in at half the height of Fuji (3,776m), Shikoku prides itself on claiming the tallest mountain in western Japan. To people living in Ehime Prefecture, the iconic jagged peak of Ishizuchi is just as popular an image—if not more so—as the snow-capped summit of Fuji.

Last October, I hiked Ishizuchi through an AJET-sponsored event. Traveling to the base of the mountain proved to be simple. The JR train line that encircles Shikoku makes a stop in Saijo city, and a bus heading to the most popular hiking trail collects passengers at Saijo station. After the long, winding bus ride, hikers can choose to begin their ascent by foot or travel by tram up the Ishizuchi Ropeway and begin their hike 800 meters further up the mountain. Although serious hikers may find the ease of the Ropeway unappealing, the crystal clear views of the neighboring mountains make it an unforgettable ride.

CHAIN, CHAIN, CHAIN...

In autumn, the trails on Ishizuchi wind through gorgeous autumn foliage. The changing colors intensify

with the higher altitude, and the deep reds and brilliant golds make for spectacular views. The beginning of the ascent was easy, but, before long, the trail climbed steeply. It became narrow, winding, and in some places, simply suicidal: at four different intervals along the trail, hikers can elect to forgo the beaten path and climb up rough rock walls aided only by enormous chains. No support system besides one's own two hands prevents climbers from falling from the chains. The potential danger of this portion of the hike is a true adventure, and many hikers choose to push themselves and climb almost vertically upwards, myself included. The thrill of flirting with death made the chains more than worthwhile, and the views from the chains were topped only by the summit.

Reaching the summit of the mountain proved to be as challenging as climbing the chains. At first, I was welcomed by a small gift shop and restaurant situated next to the famous-yet-humble Ishizuchi shrine. However, the small cluster of buildings that greeted weary hikers fools many into a false sense of accomplishment. The summit was reachable only by a narrow ledge of rocks along the edge of yet another cliff. The view of the jagged summit from the safety of the

buildings is iconic to Ishizuchi. Although dangerous, crawling along the edge of the ridge affords remarkable views of the surrounding Shikoku countryside—nothing but green, red, and gold trees rising and falling into the horizon. Holding the elevation marker stamped with “1982m” is a serious accomplishment for any hiker. This is one of my most memorable moments in Japan so far.

DARE TO HIKE?

I make the climb sound more dangerous and intimidating than it actually is. Although the lengths of chains really are a serious risk to one's safety, they are optional, and the length of sharp ledges leading to the summit is optional too. There is a narrow trail on the far side of the cliff. With a fair amount of self-confidence, anybody can tackle both the chains and the ledges leading to the summit. Those with acrophobia will find no better way to conquer their fears than by seeking out the challenging points of Ishizuchi. But I advise those a bit nervous with extreme heights *not* to climb down the chains. Looking down a sheer cliff while dangling from a chain is nothing short of terrifying, even for a thrill seeker such as myself.



TEMPLE #60 OF THE HENRO PILGRIMAGE

While Ishizuchi is an exhilarating hike, it has also long been considered a holy mountain by Buddhist sects. Those interested in Shikoku and Japan in general may have heard about the Henro Pilgrimage, consisting of 88 famous temples around Shikoku. Pilgrims can only reach temple number 60, *Yokomineji* (横峰寺), by climbing one of the trails leading to Ishizuchi's summit. Pilgrims must hike more than halfway up the mountain to pray at this temple, and many choose to continue up to the summit.

In fact, those continuing to the summit follow Kōbō Daishi's (the alleged founder of the Shikoku pilgrimage) footsteps, for he prayed on Ishizuchi's summit centuries ago.

The abundantly forested Shikoku is covered with towering mountains. But even with plenty of comparable mountains, Ishizuchi is truly a unique hike. The chains and the treacherous walk to the summit of the mountain draw in avid hikers seeking death-defying

excitement, and the spiritual nature of Ishizuchi appeals to countless more. I fully intend to climb the mountain a second time come spring. I hope to see you on the summit.

Ryan Monahan is a first-year Assistant Language Teacher from the small, unknown state of New Hampshire, in Northeastern America. He is truly lucky to be placed in Imabari city, Ehime, for the beautiful forests and mountains covering Shikoku are very similar to the landscape he grew up with. When he's not hiking or writing articles for AJET magazine, he's teaching English, studying Japanese, reading, running, or cycling.

 Ryan Monathan

HIKE,
EXTREME
SPORTS
OUTING...
WHATEVER.

ONE WORLD. ONE TEAM.

JENNIFER STOUT (MIYAGI)

"One World. One Team." Catchy, no? It's the motto of the United Sports Foundation, a non-profit based in Tokyo that uses the medium of sports to promote child development. Scores of non-profits were born from the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The USF is just one among them, bringing children opportunities for mental, physical, and emotional growth through a variety of sports under the direct instruction of top athletes: former Olympians and athletes representing Japan on the international level.

Although sports aren't something that come to mind when people brainstorm non-profits (especially in areas recovering from the

earthquake and tsunami), the USF founders saw firsthand how sports can bring people together, foster optimism, and restore smiles to the faces of children affected by the disaster.

Since its establishment in September 2011, the USF has extended activity across Japan in order to reach out to as many children as possible. One of the biggest events where the USF focuses much of its efforts is the "USF Sports Camp." I was a volunteer at the first USF Sports Camp in Miyagi, but since then we have held it three times in Fukushima and once in Tokyo. We are currently preparing to hold the camp in Shizuoka (March 23~25) and Nara (April 2-4).

Foreign Group Leader volunteers have a unique opportunity to engage with children outside the classroom to understand the international nature of sports. By participating with the kids in the various sports clinics and activities,

volunteers can experience the power of sports to transcend language and cultural barriers, as well as promote exchange between foreign residents and the Japanese community. Furthermore, in the International Sports Introduction, volunteers can introduce a sport from their home country, or show the similarities/differences between how the sport is enjoyed in Japan and other countries.

Volunteer applications are currently available on the [USF Home Page](#), and you can keep up with the USF's activities and other volunteer opportunities by following the [USF Facebook page](#).

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WAIT,
WASN'T
THIS JUST A
HIKE?

CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT



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

Contact the Head Editor of Connect, Rajeev Rahela, at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

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

SPOTLIGHT

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

COMMENTS

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

PHOTOS

All of Connect's photos are provided by the community, from the cover to the articles and everything in between. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Patrick Finn, at patrick.finn@ajet.net.

HAIKU

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

COMICS

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



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