

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

DECEMBER
2016

Tips, tricks, and tales for the joyous season

The freedom of owning a scooter

Tax advice for U.S. JETs from an expert

Tokyo Fashion Week

An interview with a coffee connoisseur



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

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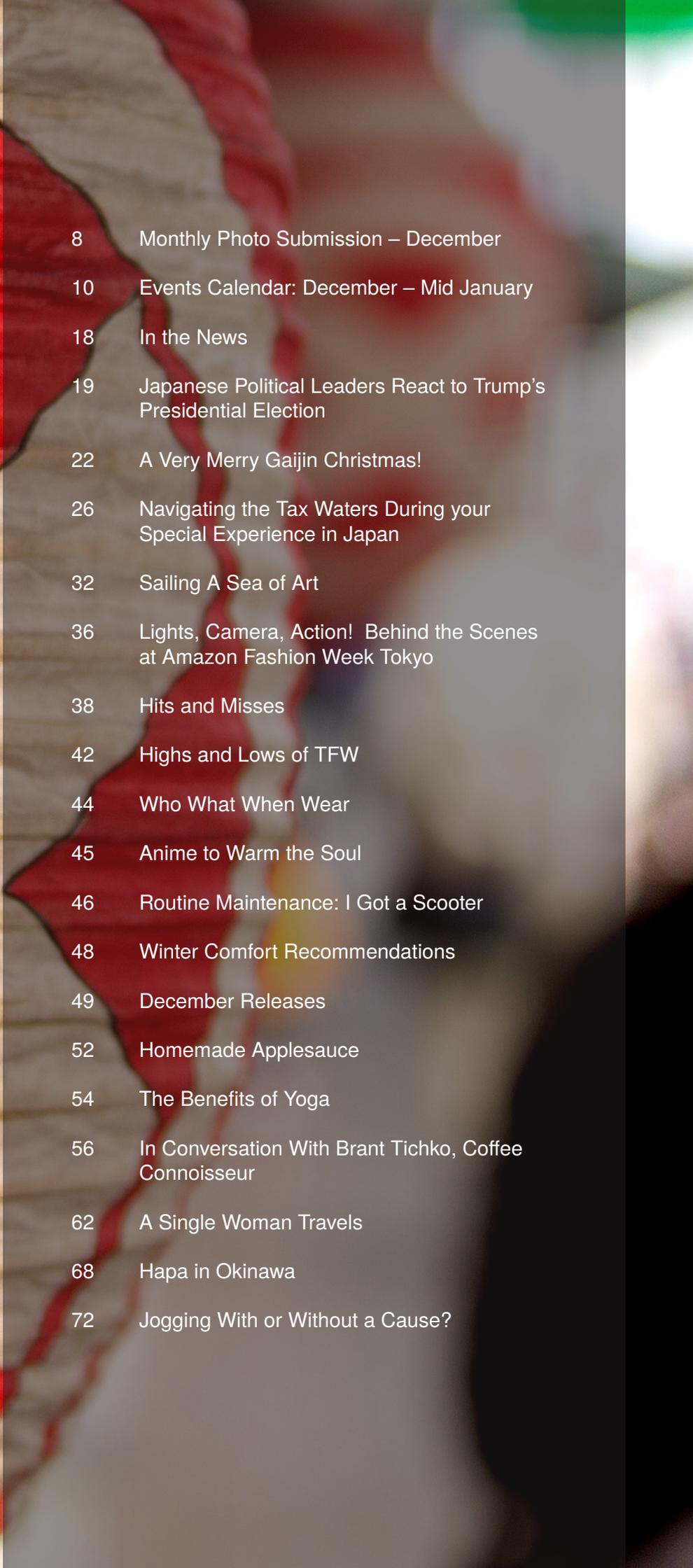
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One cool thing about teaching in Japan — and perhaps especially with JET — is that you meet people from all over the world and all walks of life. Sometimes it grinds against ingrained stereotypes you didn't know you had! I remember years ago when I met someone from a communist country for the first time, and was shocked to discover he wasn't the monster that American television and comics would have me believe. More than that, I was shocked *that I was shocked*. I knew intellectually that the world was big and the people in it varied and complicated and beautiful in their own ways. So I hadn't realized I held those prejudices until I came face-to-face with them. It made me wonder what else I took for granted and what else I needed to examine. It was the first lesson I learned after leaving the U.S. for the first time, and it remains one of my most valuable.

I grew up in a mostly traditional Catholic house. By mostly traditional, I mean going to church on Easter and Christmas so that God would forgive us for sleeping in all those other Sundays. Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, the 4th of July — those are my holidays. What are yours? I'm constantly delighted by all the different ways of celebrating that have been dreamt up around the world; seems a shame to ignore a single one. Ask around, and see if you can't join in on some holidays outside your comfort zone this season.

For one, you've got great access to Japanese holidays — or, rather, Japanese spins on holidays you're already familiar with. If you've never done it, participate fully in a Japanese New Year celebration. Go to one of the thousands of temples and help with ringing those big bells 108 times — I would be very surprised if you aren't welcomed with open arms. At night get under a *kotatsu* with some friends and watch NHK's New Year coverage while eating mochi. Even if you don't understand Japanese, you'll remember it forever to the time you *really* spent New Year's in Japan. If you're unsure about finding a celebration yourself, ask your coworkers or people in your neighborhood. Who knows, you might even find yourself the recipient of some *nengajo* postcards (traditionally filled with a bit a cash).

But I don't just mean Japanese holidays! Remember, through AJET you have a huge network of people from all over the world. You could join in on a holiday you never even knew existed. It's a big wide world, but we've managed to stuff quite a lot of it into the AJET community. Don't let it go to waste.

Be respectful, be humble, but above all, be curious. Be good to everyone everywhere, and have a very happy holiday season from all of us at CONNECT.

Timothy Saar
Head Editor
2nd Year Gifu ALT





NEWS AND EVENTS

A photograph of a Japanese festival parade. The image shows people in traditional, colorful, patterned clothing. The patterns include floral motifs, birds, and geometric designs. The colors are vibrant, including red, white, blue, and yellow. The people are walking in a parade, and the background is slightly blurred, suggesting movement.

NEWS EDITOR

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Lauren Hill

My students are watching TV on their little electronic dictionaries now. I'm suddenly waaay too old for this!

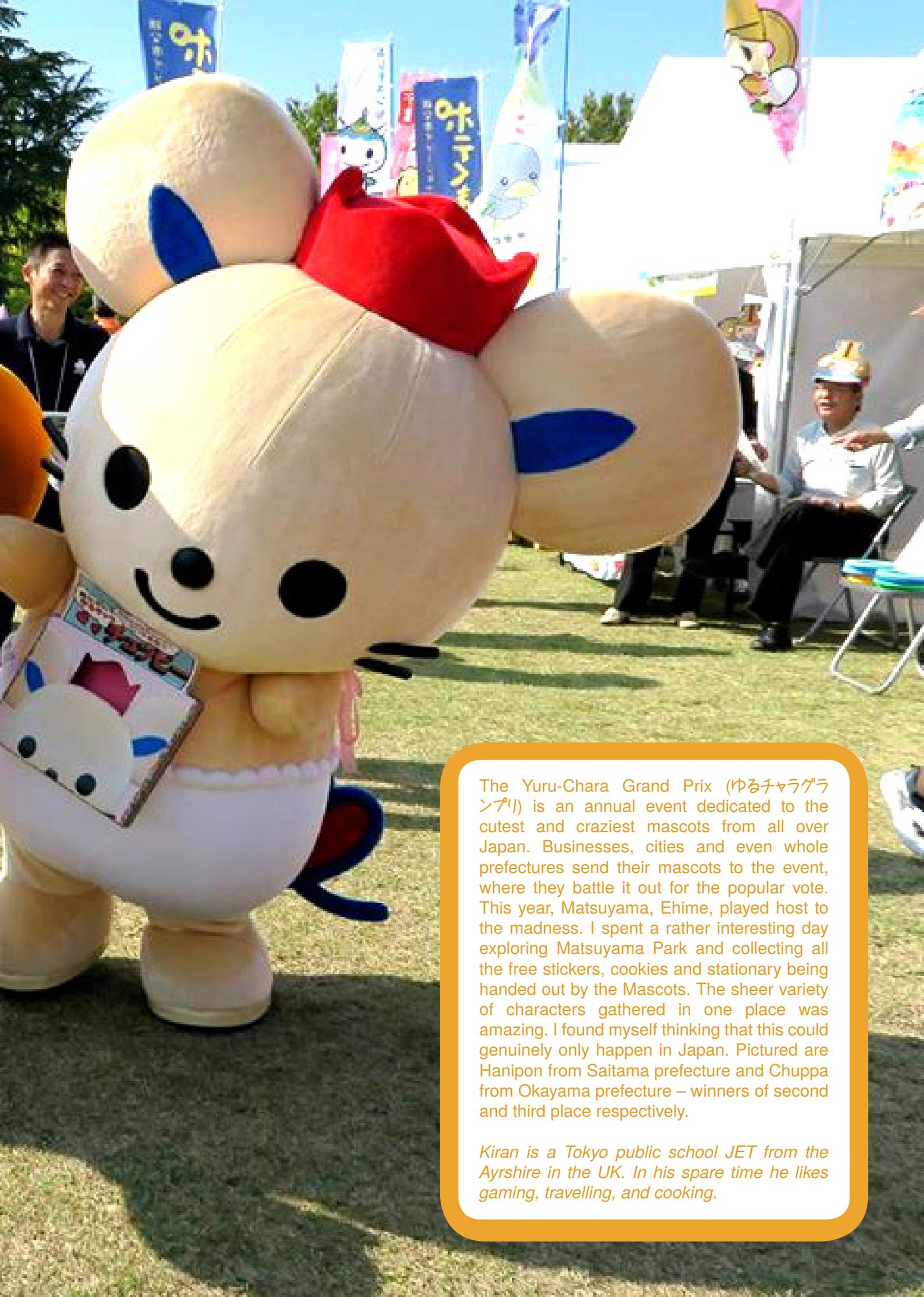


Yuru-Chara Grand Prix

(November; Matsuyama, Ehime)

Kiran Trivedy (Tokyo)





The Yuru-Chara Grand Prix (ゆるキャラグランプリ) is an annual event dedicated to the cutest and craziest mascots from all over Japan. Businesses, cities and even whole prefectures send their mascots to the event, where they battle it out for the popular vote. This year, Matsuyama, Ehime, played host to the madness. I spent a rather interesting day exploring Matsuyama Park and collecting all the free stickers, cookies and stationary being handed out by the Mascots. The sheer variety of characters gathered in one place was amazing. I found myself thinking that this could genuinely only happen in Japan. Pictured are Hanipon from Saitama prefecture and Chuppa from Okayama prefecture – winners of second and third place respectively.

Kiran is a Tokyo public school JET from the Ayrshire in the UK. In his spare time he likes gaming, travelling, and cooking.

Events Calendar:

December - Mid January

Lauren Hill (Tokyo)

Block 1

Hokkaido
Aomori
Iwate
Akita

Block 2

Miyagi
Yamagata
Fukushima
Niigata

Block 3

Ibaraki
Tochigi
Gunma
Saitama
Nagano

Block 4

Chiba
Tokyo
Kanagawa
Yamanashi
Shizuoka

Block 5

Toyama
Ishikawa
Fukui
Gifu
Aichi

Block 6

Shiga
Kyoto
Hyogo

Block 7

Mie
Osaka
Nara
Wakayama

Block 8

Tokushima
Kagawa
Ehime
Kochi

Block 9

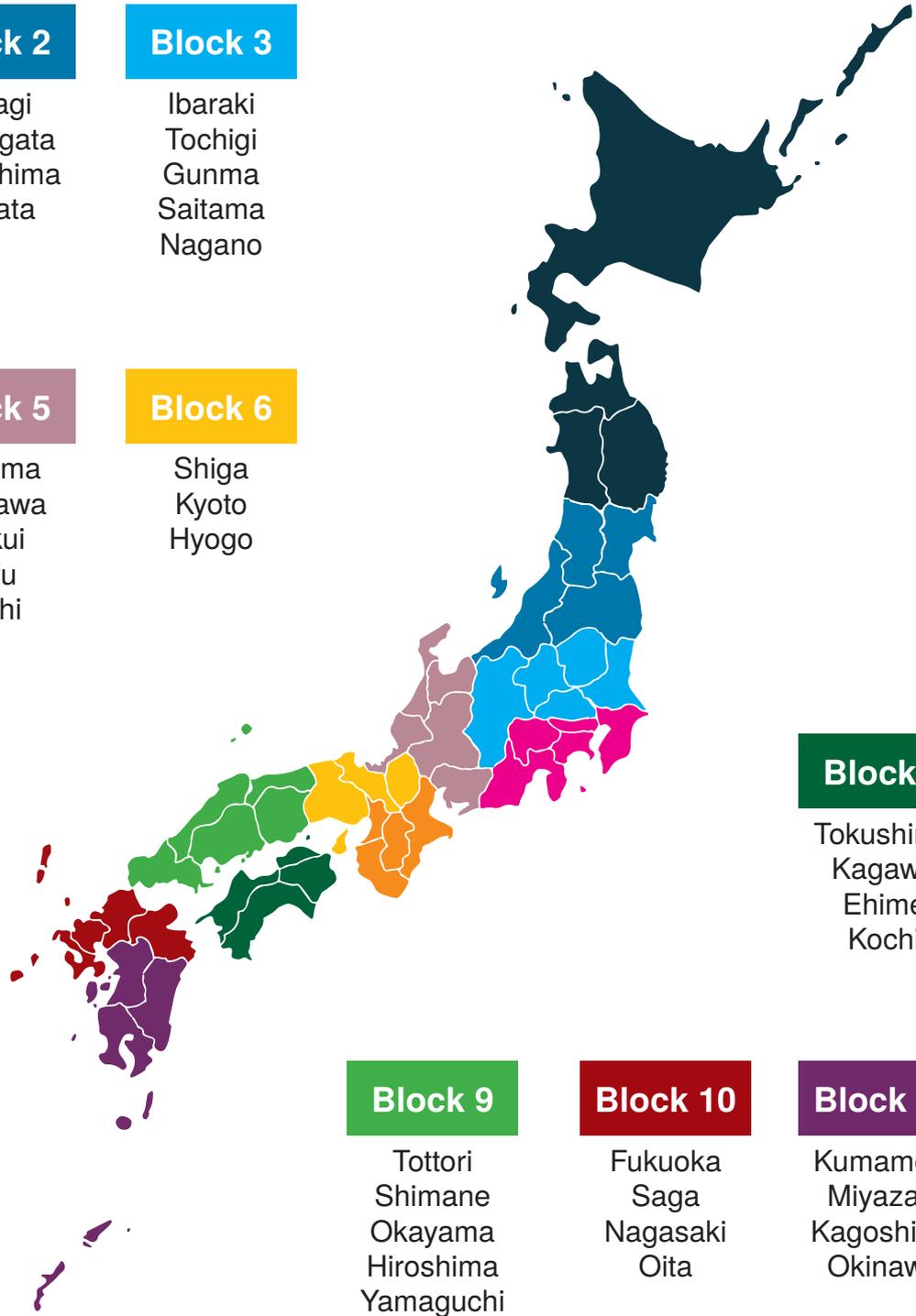
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa



Block 1

Snow Story Event

12 Nov. – 12 Feb.

Otaru City, Hokkaido Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Sapporo White Illumination 2016

18 Nov. – 14 Mar.

Odori Park, Ekimae Dori & Minami

1-jo Dori, Sapporo City, Hokkaido

Prefecture

Website

Munich Christmas Market in Sapporo

25 Nov. – 24 Dec.

Sapporo City (multiple sites),

Hokkaido Prefecture

Website

Naked Festival

31 Dec.

Iizume Inari Shrine, Goshogawara

City, Aomori Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Namahage (Folk Demon) New Year's Festival

31 Dec.

Oga City, Akita Prefecture

Website

Koshio Sominsai (Naked Festival)

02 Jan.

Koshio Shrine, Hanamaki City, Iwate

Prefecture

Website

Misogi-Sai (Winter Swimming Festival)

13 Jan. – 15 Jan.

Samegawa Shrine, Kikonai Town,

Kamiiso District, Hokkaido Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Block 2

The 6th Niigata Doburoku (Home-brewed Sake) Expo

03 Dec.

Hotel New Greenpia, Tsunan Town,

Niigata Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Toshikoshi Matsuri (Year End and New Year Festival)

04 Dec.

Sengen-ji Temple, Yonezawa City,

Yamagata Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Sendai Pageant of Starlight

09 Dec. – 31 Dec.

Kotodai Park, Sendai City, Miyagi

Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Daruma Doll Fair

17 Dec.

Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Shoureisai (New Year's Fire Festival)

31 Dec.

Mt Haguro, Tsuruoka City, Yamagata

Prefecture

Website

Naked Festival

05 Jan.

Asuka Shrine, Sakata City, Yamagata

Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Matsutaki Matsuri (Fire Festival)

14 Jan.

Oosaki Hachimangu Shrine, Aoba

Ward, Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture

Website

Mukonage/Suminuri Festival (Bridegroom Throwing Festival)

15 Jan.

Matsunoyama Onsen, Tokamachi,

Niigata Prefecture

Website in Japanese only



Block 3

Flower Fantasy Illuminations

22 Oct. – 05 Feb.

Ashikaga Flower Park, Ashikaga City,
Tochigi Prefecture
Website

Night-time Illuminations

05 Nov. – 26 Mar.

Tobu World Square, Kinugawa
Onsen, Nikko City, Tochigi Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Starry Sky Illuminations

12 Nov. – 09 Jan.

Ota City Northern Athletics Park, Ota
City, Gunma Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Suigo Sakura Illumination 2016-2017

19 Nov. – 19 Feb.

Kasumigaura Park, Ibaraki Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Karuizawa Winter Festival

26 Nov. – 11 Feb.

Main Streets, Karuizawa, Nagano
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Chichibu Yomatsuri (Night Festival)

02 Dec. – 03 Dec.

Chichibu Shrine, Chichibu City,
Saitama Prefecture
Website

Koga Chouchin Saomomi Matsuri (Bamboo Pole Lantern Festival)

03 Dec.

Koga Station Area, Koga City, Ibaraki
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Oguri Hangan Matsuri

04 Dec.

Shinji Elementary School, Chikusei
City, Ibaraki Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Miyada Village Wine Festival

10 Dec.

Miyada Village Gymnastics Centre,
Miyada Village, Kamiina District,
Nagano Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Teppo Matsuri (Gun Festival)

10 Dec. – 11 Dec.

Iida Hachiman Shrine, Ogano,
Saitama Prefecture
Website

Hiwatari (Firewalking) Festival

21 Dec.

Kabasansaenazumi Shrine,
Sakuragawa City, Ibaraki Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Ice Garden Lantern Festival

27 Dec. – 31 Jan.

Kekeyu Hot Spring, Ueda City,
Nagano Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Akutai Matsuri (Cursing Festival)

31 Dec.

Oiwa Bishamonten, Ashikaga City,
Tochigi Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Musha-Sai (Japanese Archery Festival)

04 Jan.

Futarasan Shrine, Nikko City, Tochigi
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Nozawa Fire Festival

13 Jan. – 15 Jan.

Nozawa Onsen Village, Shimotakai
District, Nagano Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Takoage and Dondoyaki (Flying Kite and Fire) Festival

16 Jan.

Tone Riverside, Toride City, Ibaraki
Prefecture
Website

Block 4

Winter Cherry Blossom Illumination

21 Oct.– 15 Jan.
Ueno Park, Taito Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website

Sagamiko Light Illumillion

22 Oct. – 09 April
Sagamiko Pleasure Forest, Sagami-hara City, Kanagawa Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Toki no Sumika Winter Illuminations 2016-2017

29 Oct. – 20 Mar.
Toki no Sumika Resort, Gotemba City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Tokyo Dome City Winter Illuminations 2016

10 Nov. – 19 Feb.
Tokyo Dome City, Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Midtown Christmas 2016 (Winter Illuminations)

15 Nov. – 25 Dec.
Tokyo Midtown, Asakusa District, Tokyo Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Art Illumination at Lake Yamanaka 2016-2017

19 Nov. – 03 Jan.
Lake Yamanaka Flower City Park, Minamitsuru District, Yamanashi Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Christmas Market

26 Nov.– 25 Dec.
Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Atami Kaijo Hanabi Taikai (Fireworks Display)

04 Dec., 11 Dec. & 18 Dec.
Atami Port, Atami City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Akibasan Fire Festival

06 Dec.
Akibasan Shrine, Itabashi District, Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Hobby World Christmas Festival

10 Dec. – 11 Dec.
Shizuoka Hobby Square, Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

The 47 Ronin Winter Festival

14 Dec.
Sengakuji Temple, Takanawa Area, Minato City, Tokyo Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Akiha Fire Festival

15 Dec. – 16 Dec.
Akihasan Hongu Akiha Shrine, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Mikagura (Sacred Court Dance and Music Ritual)

16 Dec.
Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, Kamakura City, Kanagawa Prefecture
Website

Otakiage (Burning Ceremony)

28 Dec.
Narita-san Temple, Narita City, Chiba Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Countdown Japan

28 Dec. – 31 Dec.
Makuhari Messe, Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Winter Comiket

29 Dec.– 31 Dec.
Tokyo Big Sight, Koto Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website

New Year Fox Parade

31 Dec.– 01 Jan.
Oji Inari-Jinja, Kishi Town, Kita Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website

New Year Greeting at the Imperial Palace

02 Jan.
Imperial Palace, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website

Tondoyaki (Ceremonial Burning of New Year Decorations)

08 Jan.
Torigoe Shrine, Taito Ward, Tokyo Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Tokyo Auto Salon

13 Jan. – 15 Jan.
Makuhari Messe, Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture
Website

Block 5

Wajima Senmaida Aze Mantou (Thousand Candle Rice Field Display)

15 Oct. – 12 Mar.

Wajima City Rice Fields, Ishikawa
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Nagoya Antique Fair

02 Dec. – 04 Dec.

Fukiage Hall, Nagoya City, Aichi
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Ikenoue Purification Ceremony Festival

10 Dec.

Katuragake Shrine, Ikenoue, Gifu
City, Gifu Prefecture

Website

Cormorant Festival

16 Dec.

Keta Shrine, Hakui City, Ishikawa
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Donki (Fox and Tengu Gods) Festival

18 Dec.

Shimosawaki Choushouji Temple,
Toyokawa City, Aichi Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Buriwake Shinji (Yellow Tail Fish Festival)

01 Jan.

Kamo Shrine, Imizu City, Toyama
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Sandera Mairi (Lighting Candles Along Riverbank)

15 Jan.

Furukawa Riverside, Hida City, Gifu
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Block 6

Non-Verbal Theatre Performance: GEAR

01 Oct. – 30 Jan.

Art Complex 1928, Nakagyo Ward,
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

Kyoto Illumiere 2016-2017

29 Oct. – 09 Apr.

Rurikei Hot Springs, Nantan City,
Kyoto Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Kiyomizu-Dera Autumn Illuminations

12 Nov. – 04 Dec.

Kiyomizu-Dera, Higashiyama Ward,
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Autumn Exclusive Tour of Taizo-In Zen Buddhist Temple

18 Nov. – 04 Dec.

Taizo-In Zen Buddhist Temple,
Myoushinji, Hanazono Area, Kyoto
City, Kyoto Prefecture

Website

Moriyama Winter Firefly 2016 (Winter Illuminations)

19 Nov. – 31 Jan.

Moriyama Station, Moriyama City,
Shiga Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Kabuki All Stars Performance

30 Nov. – 25 Dec.

Minami-za Theatre, Kyoto City, Kyoto
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Kobe Luminarie

02 Dec. – 11 Dec.

Kobe Foreign Settlement, Kobe City,
Hyogo Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Arashiyama Hanatouro (Flower Illuminations Road)

09 Dec. – 18 Dec.

Arashiyama District, Kyoto City, Kyoto
Prefecture

Website

Oni-Oi-Shiki (Devil Dance Festival)

31 Dec.

Enryakuji Temple, Otsu City, Shiga
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Okera-Mairi Ceremony (Praying for Health)

31 Dec.

Yasaka Shrine, Gion District,
Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto City, Kyoto
Prefecture

Website

Kemari Hajime (First Japanese Ball Game of the New Year)

04 Jan.

Shimogamo Shrine, Sakyo Ward,
Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

Website in Japanese only





Block 7

Nabana no Sato Winter Illuminations 2016-2017

15 Oct. – 07 May
Nabana no Sato, Kuwana City,
Nagashima Island, Mie Prefecture
Website

Festival of the Lights Osaka

20 Nov. – 09 Jan.
Nakanoshima Park, Osaka
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Ramen Expo 2016

09 Dec. – 25 Dec.
Expo Commemoration Park, Suita
City, Osaka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Kasuga Wakamiya On-Matsuri

15 Dec. – 18 Dec.
Kasuga Shrine, Nara City, Nara
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Changing of Waterfall Rope Ceremony

27 Dec.
Kumano Nachi Shrine, Higashimuro
District, Wakayama Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

FM802 Rock Festival – Radio Crazy

27 Dec. – 28 Dec.
INTEX Osaka, Suminoe Ward,
Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Gae-Tae-Sai (Straw Ring Rising) Festival

01 Jan.
Yashiro Shrine, Kamishima Island,
Toba City, Mie Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Nyoudousai (Fire Festival)

01 Jan.
Oomiwa Shrine, Sakurai City, Nara
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Haraso (Fisherman's) Festival

09 Jan.
Kajika-chou Fish Market, Owase City,
Mie Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Doya Doya Talisman Festival

14 Jan.
Shitenno-Ji Temple, Tennji Ward,
Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Block 8

Kagawa Arts Festival (Various Exhibitions and Performance)

01 Oct. – 31 Dec.
Various Locations (See link for
details), Kagawa Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Illuminations Festa 2016

01 Dec.– 09 Jan.
Central Park, Kochi City, Kochi
Prefecture
Website

Winter's Summer Festival

03 Dec.– 04 Dec.
Akaoka Town, Kami District, Kochi
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Tokushima LED Art Festival 2016

16 Dec.– 25 Dec.
Tokushima City Centre, Tokushima
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Takamatsu Winter Festival

22 Dec.– 25 Dec.
Takamatsu City Centre, Kagawa
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Snow Carnival

Late December (Exact Dates TBA)
Mt Ishizuchi, Saijo City, Ehime
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Dai-Eyo (Big Mochi Carrying Contest)

02 Jan.
Nagaoji Temple, Sanuki City, Kagawa
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Mizu Abise (Throwing Cold Water Festival)

02 Jan.
Otsuki Town, Kochi Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Block 9

Around the World in Sand (South American Exhibition)

16 April – 03 Jan.
Tottori Sand Museum, Tottori City,
Tottori Prefecture
Website

Hiroshima Dreamination (Illuminations)

17 Nov. – 03 Jan.
Peace Boulevard, Hiroshima City,
Hiroshima Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Nishikawa ILLUMI 2016

18 Nov. – 15 Jan.
Nishikawa Ryokudo Park, Okayama
City, Okayama Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Morotabune Shinji (Winter Boat Festival)

03 Dec.
Mihonoseki Port, Mihonoseki,
Shimane Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Warai-Kou (Laughing Battle)

04 Dec.
Hofu City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Illusion on the Tottori Sand Dunes

10 Dec. – 25 Dec.
Tottori Sand Dunes, Tottori City,
Tottori Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Itsukushima Shrine Fire Prevention Festival

31 Dec.
Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima
Island, Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima
Prefecture
Website

Block 10

Virtual Reality Horror Attraction

22 Sep. – 31 Dec.
Huis Ten Bosch, Sasebo City,
Nagasaki Prefecture
Website

Saga Light Fantasy (Winter Illuminations)

28 Oct. – 09 Jan.
Saga Station, Saga City, Saga
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

The 12th Kurume Festival of Light

19 Nov. – 09 Jan.
Kurume City Centre, Fukuoka
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Oshiroi Matsuri (White Face Paint Festival)

02 Dec.
Oyamazumi Shrine, Kitakyushu City,
Fukuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Beppu Christmas Hanabi Fantasia (Stage Performance and Choir)

23 Dec. – 24 Dec.
Spa Beach, Beppu City, Oita
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Lucky Ball Scrambling Festival

03 Jan.
Hakozaki Shrine, Higashi Ward,
Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Devil Night Festival

07 Jan.
Daizenji Tamataregu Shrine, Kurume
City, Fukuoka Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Onja-Onja (Devil) Festival

07 Jan.
Karatsu Shrine, Karatsu City, Saga
Prefecture
Website in Japanese only

Toka Ebisu Festival

08 Jan.– 11 Jan.
Toka Ebisu Shrine, Higashi Park,
Hakata Ward, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka
Prefecture
Website

Horan Enya (Fisherman's Festival)

15 Jan.
Bungotakada City, Oita Prefecture
Website in Japanese only



Block 11

Greenland Winter Illuminations – Fantasy of Light

19 Nov. – 29 Jan.

Greenland, Arao City, Kumamoto
Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Toshi-Don Festival (Children’s Blessing by Gods)

31 Dec.

Koshiki Island, Satsumasendai City,
Kagoshima Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Mabuni-Hi to Kane no Matsuri (Fire and Bells New Year Festival)

31 Dec. – 01 Jan.

Peace Memorial Chapel, Itoman City,
Okinawa Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Feast of the New Year

01 Jan. – 03 Jan.

Shurijo Castle Park, Shuri District,
Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture

Website

Mt. Kuratake Ebisu Marathon

08 Jan.

Mt. Kuratake, Amakusa City,
Kumamoto Prefecture

Website in Japanese only

Matobakai (Naked Archery) Festival

15 Jan.

Shioji Shrine, Tamana District,
Kumamoto Prefecture

Website in Japanese only



In the News

Kelsey Lechner (Tochigi)



Japanese political leaders *react to* Trump's presidential election:

“As a very successful businessman with extraordinary talents, you not only made a great contribution to the growth of the US economy, but now as a strong leader, you have demonstrated your determination to lead the United States.”
-Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister

“[It is] important...to build trust. We also would like to...input the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance, as well.”
-Fumio Kishida, Foreign Minister

On the financial burden of supporting US troops in Japan: “Japan is making a sufficient contribution. I would like to continue underscoring that Japan is going to strengthen its own defense posture both in quality and quantity, strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance and strengthen ties with other relevant countries.”
-Tomomi Inada, Defense Minister
<http://bit.ly/2gafZwM>
<http://bit.ly/2eVtcDD>

4 November

An interview with 43-year-old comedian Pikotaro depicts his success from releasing his 45-second smash-hit “PPAP,” which stands for “Pen Pineapple Apple Pen,” and has gained popularity around the globe. The Chainsmokers, an American DJ duo, changed their Twitter name to “Pineapple & Pen,” and Justin Bieber called it his “favorite video on the internet,” which domino-ed into what Pikotaro calls the “Justin Impact.” The track has been covered and parodied by Korean pop stars, Olympic athletes, Indonesian police, and more.

The official video has reached over 70 million views on YouTube and had been the top music video on the platform for three weeks. (He had started a channel on YouTube in late August since not many people came to his live shows, despite being in the entertainment industry for over 20 years.) “PPAP” landed the 77th spot on the Billboard Hot 100, landing Pikotaro a Guinness World Record for the shortest song to ever make the chart, and nabbing attention away from music industry giants SMAP and Utada Hikaru’s new releases.

Pikotaro even performed live to the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan on October 28. “I think the only way I could get this level of attention without ‘PPAP’ would be by starting a war,” Pikotaro commented.

When asked why he thinks his track succeeded, Pikotaro gives three reasons:

“First, it’s in English. Fully in English. Second, ‘pa pi pu pe po’ feels good to say.” Finally he also believes that no one has made anything as silly as “PPAP” before.

“The key is to do things every day. Even if you aren’t sure if you can succeed one day, you have to keep doing it,” he advises.

<http://bit.ly/2eAyucM>

5 November

Human rights reporter Jake Adelstein criticized Japan for its handling of rape and other sexual assault cases. Based on both governmental and expert figures, it is estimated that only 4-18.5% of victims report their assaults, and charges are dropped in over 50% of prosecuted cases. Even if they are convicted, first-time offenders usually get off on a suspended

sentence. “How powerful can women be in a society where convicted rapists are able to walk away without spending a day behind bars? Is an apology and financial compensation sufficient punishment for sexual assault? Perhaps these are the first questions the government should be asking,” Adelstein poses.

<http://bit.ly/2ft9OIk>

6 November

Incredibly radioactive sludge has been found in car wash septic tanks in Fukushima. The sludge is releasing 57,400 becquerels per kilogram, which is seven times higher than the government-set limit of 8,000 becquerels per kilogram.

It is believed that the radioactive sludge, which likely weighs several thousand tons, accumulated from washing ash and soot stuck to vehicles immediately after the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant meltdown in March 2011. Some maintenance facilities are manually scooping up the sludge to avoid overflowing.

Companies that install septic tanks were aware of the issue,

yet did not go public out of fear of losing customers. The radiation issue was also looked over in part because the decontamination law only requires companies to report radiation levels of sewage sludge and incinerated ash, not any other wastes.

Many prominent vehicle associations have urged the national government and Tokyo Electric Power Company, which manages the Fukushima No. 1 power plant, to address the problem, but the Environment Ministry admitted that their calls have not been heeded.

<http://bit.ly/2gdF9ZY>

8 November

A 15-meter deep sinkhole formed in downtown Fukuoka near Hakata station at 5:15 am, swallowing a five-lane road and damaging sewage pipes and communication lines. While traffic, electricity, gas, water, sewage, and telephone services had been disrupted until the 13th, no injuries or deaths occurred. The sinkhole has been filled with soil and vehicles will be able to pass over it when experts deem the foundation safe.

<http://bit.ly/2eZGSAM>

<http://bit.ly/2fTgD0c>





A VERY MERRY

Gaijin Christmas

OUR TOP TIPS FOR A MEMORABLE HOLIDAY SEASON IN JAPAN

Lauren Hill (Tokyo)

Living in a foreign country can sometimes feel pretty isolating, especially during the holidays, when there's so much emphasis on spending time with friends and family. If this is your first year in Japan, it may also be the first time you've been so far away from loved ones back home, but try not to let it get you down. We've put together a short guide to making the most of the festive season right where you are!

STAY HEALTHY

Seasonal coffees are upon us and the temptation to eat nothing but festive snacks is real, but your body will thank you for a glass of water and some fruit or veg. In fact, there's no better time than the holidays to get stuck into learning how to cook healthy, hearty, traditional Japanese food! Here are some tutorials for *chirinabe* and beef *sukiyaki* to get you started.

If you're worried about all the bugs going around, lemon juice (hot or cold) is a great way to keep your vitamin C up. We're not saying you *have* to drink a two litre bottle of CC Lemon in one go, but we won't judge if you do!

WRAP UP

The last few weeks have been a real weather rollercoaster, but now temperatures are definitely dropping, and the whole country is settling in for the big freeze. Make sure you're stocked up on jumpers, gloves, fuzzy animal socks, and whatever it is that helps you feel snug. Stores like Loft, Tokyu Hands and Plaza all have huge winter sections right now, full of clever bits and bobs to help you keep warm.



DECORATE

Shops have been at it since November 1st, and now it's December, you can do it without shame. Living spaces in Japan are a lot different to what you're probably used to back home (read = *smaller*), but it's amazing what a little bit of sparkly tinsel or a grooving Santa Claus can do for a place. Your options are pretty much limitless here, but if you're on a budget, Daiso has quite a lot of variety and tends to be surprisingly good quality. Stick some festive songs on and get to work!

SEND CARE PACKAGES HOME

They say the best part of any occasion is the gift – giving, that is! If you're not going to be with loved ones this winter, then what better way to show you care than a box stuffed with their favourite snacks and homemade gifts? Pinterest has tons of inspiration, but really, you know your friends and family better than anyone. There's no need to stick to an instruction sheet; have fun with it!

On the other hand, if you're not the crafty sort (or you don't fancy your chances against the Christmas shopping crowds), there are plenty of subscription services that'll let you send a one-off gift box to that special someone. One of our favourites is Buddy Box, described by its creators as "a hug in a box!" The box is aimed at those with depression, but is filled with interactive seasonal surprises that are sure to delight almost anyone! All proceeds go to support sufferers of mental illness, so you can rest assured you're supporting a brilliant cause when you wrap up your pressie shopping. Plus, as of recently, Buddy Box ship globally!

TREAT YOURSELF TO A LITTLE SOMETHING

It is Christmas after all, and whether you're a new JET or not, you've worked hard this year. It's understandable to get caught up in your gifts for others, and even a great thing; just make sure you're on your own "to buy for" list. You've earned it!

SKYPE FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Take this one as far as you want to. We all know there's no substitute for a face to face conversation sometimes, even more so when you live a world (and a couple of time zones) away. Grabbing a quick call to wish your parents a happy holiday can help you feel in touch with the festivities, but why not go all out and have your family set a place for the laptop at the dinner table so you're there the whole time?

Winter's also the perfect time of year for getting cosy with season upon season of your favourite Netflix show, and you can still share your marathon day with friends, no matter the distance! Netflix is on the warpath against most screen sharing apps, but if you use Google Chrome then Showgoers is one they're yet to wipe out. The only catch is the show will need to be available in both your region and your friend's. Good thing Netflix seem to be releasing a new original almost every day, right?





TAKE A TRIP

If you're a private school JET, you'll have a gloriously long New Year break right around the corner, but if not, this is an ideal time to take your *nenkyuu* and do some travelling!

For many of us, China and Korea have never been closer! If you've always wanted to pay a visit, why not now? [Peach Aviation](#) and [Cheapo Air](#) can help you out with prices you'll barely believe. That's not to say there's nothing to do if you don't fancy a flight! The [Japan Bus Pass](#) from [Willer Express](#) is valid for up to three long distance coach journeys a day, for between three and seven days. The best part? The days don't have to be consecutive. With some clever planning, the 15,000 yen five-day pass could see you through three separate trips!

GET OUT AND EXPERIENCE A JAPANESE WINTER

If you're in Japan for the winter, try not to feel like you're *stuck* here. Sure, flights over Christmas and New Year are insanely pricey, but if you're sticking around, you've an awesome opportunity to experience lots of Japanese seasonal traditions! Christmas is gaining popularity every year, mainly with young people, but New Year is when Japan really lets loose. Some of the most interesting festivals, stunning fireworks, and amazing food appear at this time of year. Check out our events calendar to see what's going on near you!

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH FELLOW JETs!

As the song goes, we're all in this together, so why not round up some friends and keep each other company? Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah or Thanksgiving this winter, there's no reason to be lonely! This month, we asked for some of your best festive memories in Japan. Here's what you said:

"Christmas day in 2015 was actually a work day for private school JETs. It was really up to me to make sure that I remained sane during the holiday season. Being an Australian means I'm fortunate enough to be able to contact family members with only a small time difference, so I chatted to my family after finishing work to wish them a merry Christmas. My sister was pregnant at the time and it was nice to hear that she was doing great. Later on, I headed to Tachikawa to hang out with some fellow JETs who also hadn't gone home for the holidays. As a group, we'd learned the traditional way to spend Christmas in Japan was with friends and a bucket of KFC. KFC Japan actually specialises in putting together holiday packages, so while it was a first for ordering takeaway on Christmas, I definitely couldn't complain about the food. I guess the best part of the get

together was having the chance to share festive memories from when we were growing up. I'm from a family of eight, so I had plenty of tales to tell."

– **Scott Reid, Kunitachi City, Tokyo Prefecture**

"While Tokyo has plenty of its own Christmas traditions, Hanukkah celebrations are a little harder to come by! Last December, I threw a small Hanukkah party for JETs and Japanese friends alike! The festivities included lighting the menorah (a nine-branched candle holder), playing dreidel (a gambling game with a spinning top and chocolate prizes), and eating traditional oil-based foods like latkes (fried potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (doughnuts with strawberry jelly). It was wonderful sharing such a family-focused holiday with my close friends and I can't wait to host Hanukkah again this December!

So to make the most out of your holiday season abroad, grab some friends, a cheese plate (or two!), turn up the Charlie Brown Christmas soundtrack, and raise a toast to a **ハッピーハーナカー!**

– **Ali Tretter, Kita Ward, Tokyo Prefecture**

Navigating the Tax Waters

During Your **Special Experience in Japan**

By Kevin Matthews, CPA, PHR, MBA, MAcc



鉄

人

カラオケの鉄人

0430

100名収容大パーティールーム
パーティールーム内
ドリンクバー・化粧室完備!

03-33456430

20時
7時
矢印整理
待差式

のまもん
大島

JUMBO



What an exciting time!!! That was the feeling I had, when I stepped off of the plane after arriving at Narita Airport. I had just flown Business Class (they did it Business Class back then) and then had a relaxing ride from Narita to Tokyo. We were greeted at the door by a man all dressed up with a top hat and he opened the door for us. WOW!

Over the next few days, we would learn about what it took to survive and thrive as ambassadors of our nations to the country of Japan. In one of the seminars, it hit me... Taxes. I wasn't worried as I had been filing my own taxes, but some of the people said it would be different in Japan. How hard could it be? Well, I found out really quick; it was hard.

Perhaps, it wasn't so hard, but so different. I used to file my taxes using a 1040-EZ, but now I was told that I could no longer do that, because I was living in a foreign country. What were these differences? How is a US citizen or green card holder taxed, when living in Japan? Finally, how does the US prevent "double taxation?" These topics will be discussed as we explore how the JET can keep compliant with the tax laws of our home country.

WARNING: This article is not intended to make you a tax expert. If you need assistance, please seek out the advice of a CPA, Enrolled Agent (people who have passed a test with the IRS and have received a special status to represent people before the IRS) or a tax attorney. The information in this article is for general informational use only and should only be used after consideration of your specific situation.

What's the Difference?

First question, how is it different? We will discuss this more into the second and third sections, but your taxes are going to get a little more complicated. First, you will have to complete additional forms and really consider your situation as you begin to ask how you will complete your tax filings. Because of the additional forms, filing your taxes on your 1040-EZ or 1040-A will no longer work.

Second of all, you are going to have to separate your income into pools of foreign income (i.e. income in Japan) and domestic income (income from back in the US). This is because only foreign income can be excluded or qualify for the foreign tax credit. Finally, as we will discuss in the third section, your taxes are more likely to get extended, because you are going to want to meet one of the residency tests, which will exclude your income.

Worldwide Income?

The second question, how are US Citizens and Permanent Resident (or Green Card holders) taxed? While the first answer, which may come to mind is the "by the IRS," this answer does not get to the point relating to your special situation. If you ask your French, UK or Irish colleagues about their tax requirements, they will likely tell you they filed a form with their home governments to say they are going to live abroad. This form stops their requirements to be taxed in their home country, while they live in the foreign country.

The US (and some other countries) does not work in this manner; instead, the United States taxes your worldwide income. This means that a dollar you make in Japan is taxed in the US, just as much as a dollar made back in your hometown.

One might say, "Worldwide Income? But that's not fair!" In this case, Congress agrees and they offer some relief measures, which brings me to the third section: how does the US prevent double taxation. Taxed once in Japan and then once again in the US would not be a fair regiment, so Congress passed two sections to the tax law.

Foreign Earned Income Exclusion and the Foreign Tax Credit

The first section they passed was section 911. Section 911, which is better known as the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion (FEIE), was passed back in 1951. Back then there was no limit to the income. But over time, a limit was imposed and it has changed and in 1986, it was reduced to \$70,000 of income. It was increased to \$80,000 in 2002 in years after 2005, it was adjusted for inflation. Congress added a housing exclusion along the way to where we are today. For 2016 the FEIE is \$101,300, which does not include the housing allowance amount. Since most JETs (at least when I was in) make less than this, I will not discuss the housing exclusion, which could raise this higher, but for our purposes, we will use the \$101,300 number.

So how does someone qualify for the exclusion? There are two tests: The Bona Fide Residence Test and the Physical Presence Test. The Bona Fide Residence test requires that you live in a foreign country for an entire tax year (for all of us, that is January 1 – December 31) as a tax resident of that country. If you live in Japan and are subject to their tax scheme, then you will likely qualify for this test. There is only one major thing: In order for you to qualify, you will have to wait to file your taxes until you have lived in Japan for an entire calendar year. For most taxpayers, this means you will not be able to file your 2016 tax returns until January of 2018! Yikes! If you go this route, you will have to extend your tax returns, not only by the standard 6 months, but you will have to file a Form 2350 to ask the IRS for an extension to the beginning of 2018.

The easier test and the one that I used when I was a JET, is the Physical Presence Test (PPT). The reason why it is more popular is because people qualify faster for the test. The way the test works is in order to qualify as a tax resident, you have to live outside of the US for 330 days out of 365 days. Now, this sounds easy, but the 365 confuses many people, because they think the 365 days have to be in the same calendar year, but it doesn't!!!

Instead, your 365 days starts when you arrive in Japan (or any foreign country where you want to use this rule) From your arrival date, count 365 days later and as long as you have 330 days in Japan, you will qualify for this test and you can exclude your foreign income you earned in Japan (Japanese salaries). If you arrived in Japan in August 2016, you will likely be able to file your taxes in August of 2017, thus you can file them sooner and you will only have to request an extension through October 15 of 2017, which is an automatic extension and can easily be filed using a Form 4868. The major trip up on the PPT is how many vacation days you spend in the US. You only have 35 days you can be there, so be wise about your use of them and track carefully.

The second section they passed was section 901 or better known as the Foreign Tax Credit. If you pay taxes in Japan (I am not a Japanese tax expert, but when I was in Japan, they excluded us from filing taxes for the first two years in Japan), you can tax a tax credit on the taxes you pay in Japan.

My experience has shown Japanese income taxes to be higher than US taxes, so it could potentially be very valuable in removing your taxes on your foreign income in the US, but facts and circumstances are different for everyone. Before deciding on this course of action, it is recommended you seek council of a CPA, Enrolled Agent or a tax attorney.

Finally, there are many rules for people living abroad. A couple of those rules is as follows:

People who are living abroad at the time of the tax return's due date (April 15th) are granted a special two-month extension automatically for filing and paying. If you pay after April 15th, but before the end of the extension (June 15th), you will not pay penalties on your payment.

If you open a bank account and have more than \$10,000 in your foreign bank account, you will have a requirement to file a form FinCEN 114 to report the account. Your account will not be taxed, but MUST be reported and the penalties for not reporting is pretty stiff. If you have not filed a FinCEN 114 in the past and were required to, please seek out the guidance of a CPA, EA or tax attorney, but especially one who specializes in international tax, because there are relief provisions, but you have to apply on your own in order to get them. Starting in 2016, these forms are due on April 15 along with the tax return and can be extended for 6 months.

If you have purchased investments in Japan, please seek out the advice of a CPA, EA or tax attorney, especially one who specializes in international taxes as there might be additional reporting requirements.

I know that the information in this article is a lot, and the last thing I want to do is to worry you about your taxes. First of all, have fun in Japan. Being a JET in Chiba City was one of the most rewarding experiences in my life and I would not be where I am today without those experiences. I loved being in Japan and look forward to the day I can return there for a visit to the place, where I experienced so much happiness.

Enjoy the moment. Enjoy the WOW! 20 years later looking back, as I am now, you will focus on the good times, provided that you take care of the tax returns as they require. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either myself or IRS office at the US embassy. When I lived in Japan, they were very helpful in showing me what to do.

Notes about the author: Kevin Matthews was an ALT JET from 1998-2000 stationed in Chiba City, where he taught in middle and elementary schools. His major was Asian Studies and he spent 8 years learning the Japanese language. Upon his return, Kevin earned a Master's in Business and Accounting and now owns his own practice (Beta Solutions CPA, LLC), where he focuses on business, payroll and international taxes for US citizens, permanent residents and immigrants to the US. He has been preparing tax returns for over 12 years.

ARTS AND CULTURE

CULTURE EDITORS

connect.culture@ajet.net

Annamarie Carlson

*And not a creature was stirring, not even —
wait no I'm still shivering in my futon. Stay
warm!*

Michael Sosnick

*It's problematic enough that Japanese
schools expect foreign Santas, but please
stop asking this Jew to dress up as Kris
Kringle.*

ENTERTAINMENT EDITORS

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Sabrina Zirakzadeh

*Have a safe and happy holiday season, no
matter who you are, where you're from, or
what you celebrate*

Travis Shaver

FASHION EDITORS

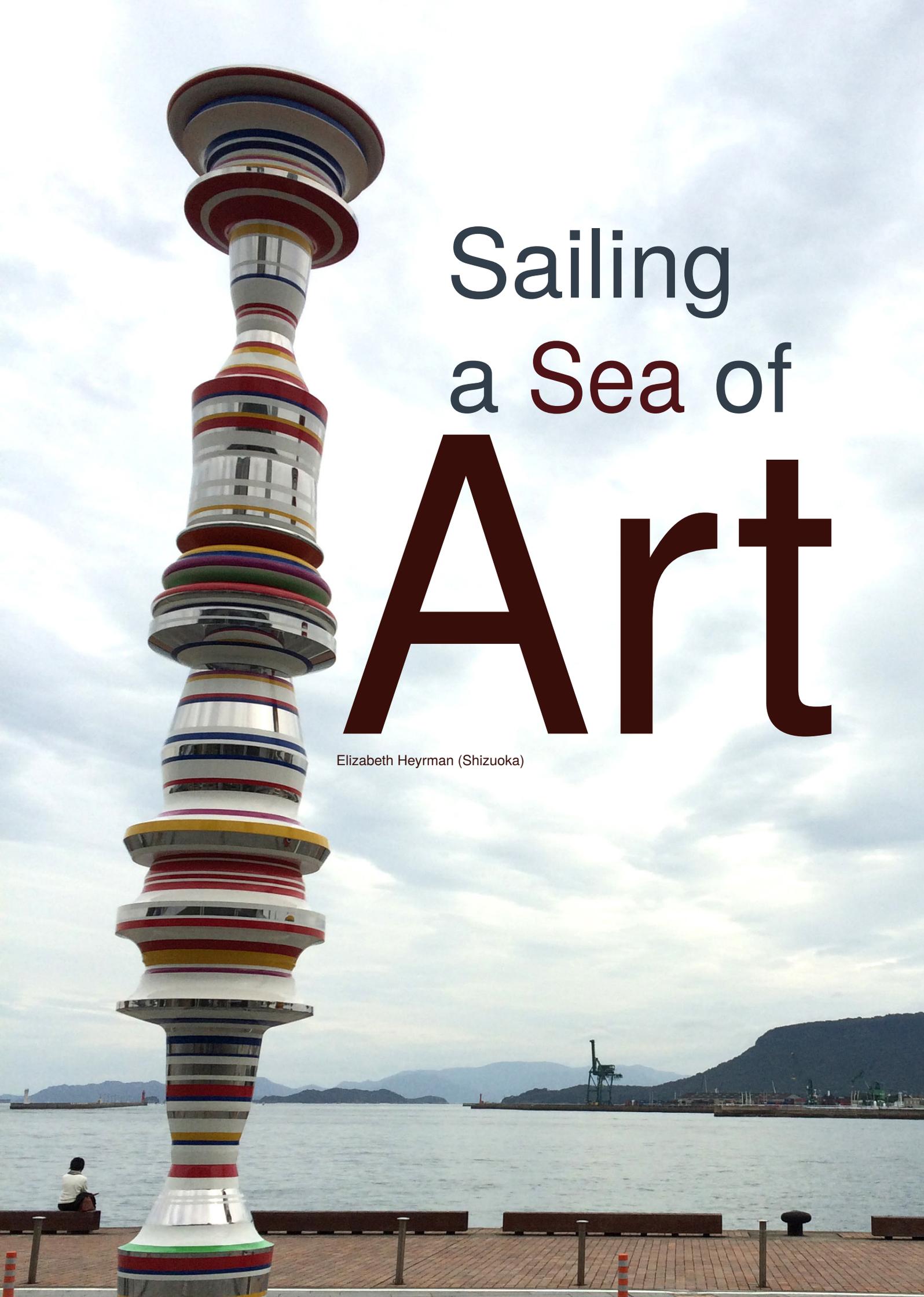
connect.fashion@ajet.net

Erica Grainger

*Tis the season to be jolly and fashionable, fa
la la la la, la la la la!*

Roxanne Ghezzi





Sailing a Sea of Art

Elizabeth Heyrman (Shizuoka)



The Setouchi Art Festival

My mom is always sending me these articles she finds online about cool stuff in Japan I just *have* to go see, usually with little regard for how far or inaccessible it is from where I live in Shizuoka Prefecture. She wanted me to go to some art museum on an island in the middle of the Seto Inland Sea, can you believe that? But when I was looking into it, I realized I could take a day off from work, take the train down to Okayama, and see a huge art festival in addition to this super-famous contemporary art museum.

So I did that.

Except... well, I didn't actually wind up going to Chichu Art Museum, and I only saw a fraction of the Setouchi Triennale Art Festival. I overbooked myself in October, so I spent my first full day in Okayama, crashed at my hotel, catching up on sleep. Then it rained on the second day.

I still loved it.

Despite the rain, I spent Saturday afternoon in Honmura Village on the island of Naoshima, in Kagawa Prefecture. I took a train packed with tourists from Okayama, where my hotel was, to Uno Port. It was already drizzling by the time I boarded the passenger boat to Naoshima. Guess who left her umbrella at the hotel?

The art featured in Honmura is the Art House Project: half a dozen old houses throughout the town, each turned into a work of contemporary art by a different artist. When I bought my admission ticket at the visitor's center, the wait for entry to one of the houses was already more than two hours. I wasn't sure what could possibly be inside that was worth such a long wait. Still, two hours would give me plenty of time to explore the other Art Houses in town.

The first house I visited may also have been my favorite. *Kadoya* seems like a traditional old Japanese building from the outside. Guests take off their shoes before entering, and view the house from a wooden walkway around a large room... with a pool of water in the middle. The only light in the room comes from the doorway to the outside, and the LED timepieces in the water cycling from zero to nine at varying speeds. (According to the brochure, each of the counters was set by a resident of the village.) A greeter warns visitors to watch their step, which makes sense as towards the back of the room, the walkway is indistinguishable from the pool in the darkness. I shuffled along in a straight line, trusting that the floor would be where I thought it was, and reassured the person who came in after me that it did indeed reach all the way to the back wall.

Next I went to: *Gokaisho*, a tatami room with lifelike flowers carved from wood, spread across the floor; *Ishibashi*, which contains works of art inspired by waterfalls and the local landscape; and *Haisha*, a former dentist's office transformed into a building-size collage. Still with more than an hour until my timed entry to the last house, I climbed a fairly intimidating hill to see *Go-o Shrine*. Visitors can freely see the shrine itself anytime, but are only admitted in groups of three or four at a time with flashlights to see the underground portion, including the base of the glass staircase visible above ground. I'm not inclined toward claustrophobia, but I had never before walked through a long, dimly-lit underground passageway the width of my shoulders, and I'm not in any hurry to repeat that experience. The glass stairs were cool, though.

Kagawa Prefecture is known for its udon, which is not something I was aware of when I went into an *udon* restaurant to kill the rest of my time — I was just cold, hungry, and damp. The noodles were great, and in true “me” fashion I was still eating when I realized I had less than fifteen minutes to get to my timed entry. I paid for my meal and headed back out into the steadily-worsening rain to get to the last Art House on my list, *Minamidera*.

It's a long, plain-looking black building. The reason for the three-hour wait: only sixteen people are allowed in at a time. The entrance is pitch-dark, and visitors have to feel their way along the wall to get inside. (My thanks to the guide who did her best to tell me what to do despite the language barrier.) Everyone then sits on long benches facing a seemingly-

dark room, but as their eyes adjust, the room grows brighter, and they can see that there are actually a couple electric lights illuminating the far end of the room.

When I left *Minamidera*, it had begun raining in earnest. I squeezed onto a bus full of people trying to get to the ferry port, from which I was able to see a sculpture by Yayoi Kusama, albeit from a distance in the pouring rain. Most of the art sites were closing for the day, so I started planning, trying to figure out how much more art I could see before I had to catch my train back to Shizuoka the next day.

With practically a dozen smaller islands to choose from, I decided to go to Takamatsu, the capital of Kagawa, mostly so afterward I could say I'd been to Shikoku. The train from Okayama to Takamatsu cross is a long bridge, passing over several tiny islands. As someone who loves trains and the sea, I was delighted. And as someone who loves art and history, I really enjoyed Takamatsu. There was art everywhere. I wandered around the sculptures in the port area, and walked as far as the Prefectural Hall to see the building, which was designed by architect Kenzo Tange. On the way back to the station, taking an underpass to cross a big intersection, I came across an installation of mirrors and sparkling lights arranged to look like constellations.

One of these days I'll actually make it to Chichu Art Museum. I likely won't be living in Japan in three years when the Setouchi Art Festival rolls around again, but I'd love to try to come back and see more of it. I feel like I only scratched the surface of what the area has to offer.



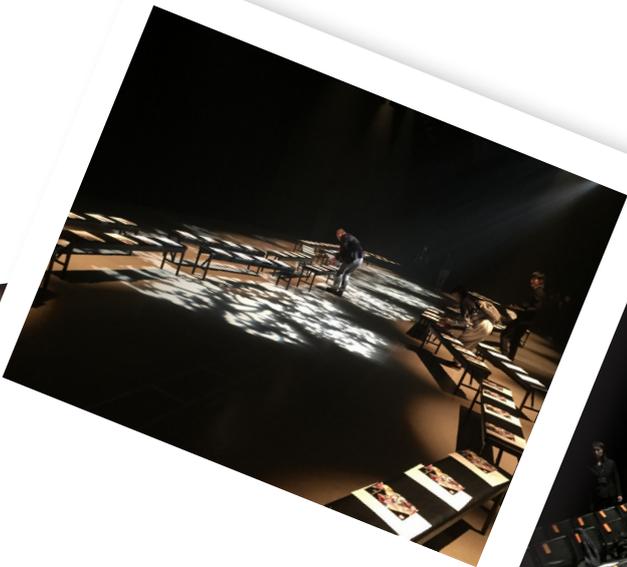


Elizabeth Heyrman's first book was a story about fish printed on her parents' Macintosh computer in 1996. She spends most of her time thinking about writing but occasionally does actually write things. She was born and raised in Kentucky and currently lives in Japan in a pit of spiders.

LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION

BEHIND THE SCENES AT AMAZON
FASHION WEEK TOKYO

Erica Grainger (Fukushima)



Ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes of a glamorous fashion show? Well, CONNECT has you covered. The following photos were taken in the moments before and after various fashion shows, capturing the atmosphere, preparation, and people that make fashion week happen!

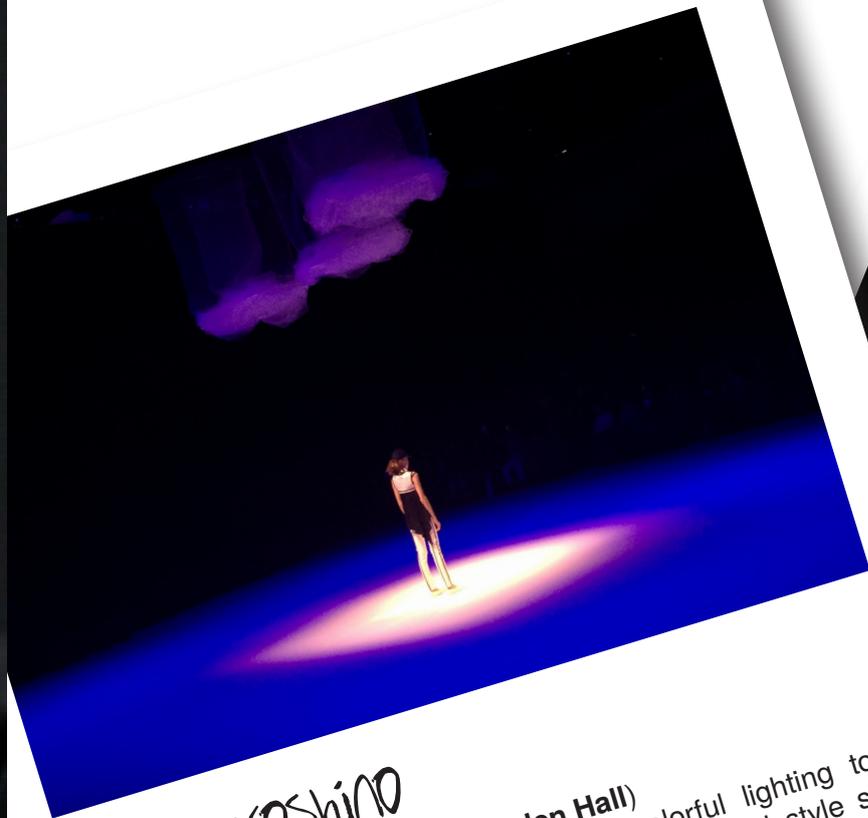


Hits and Misses

Erica Grainger (Fukushima) and
Roxy Ghezzi (Gifu)

HITS

ERICAS FAVORITE SHOWS



HIROKO KOSHINO

by Hiroko Koshino

(October 20th, 7pm at The Garden Hall)

It was a spectacular show from the colorful lighting to the choreography of the runway. Koshino's whimsical style shined through with her theatrical bird-beak hats! A flying success overall!



HAORI de TITI

by Tazuko Yamaki

(October 21, 6pm at Salon de Titi)

An elegant and stylish collection with feminine dresses in silk and lace in monochrome. Presented as an installation in Yamaki's shop, which contained complimentary Dom Pérignon champagne and colorful sweet appetizers!

HITS ROXYS FAVORITE SHOWS



BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

by Hidenori Kumakiri

(October 20, 9pm at Shibuya Hikarie Hall A)

One of the highlights was the designer, Hidenori Kumakiri popping out of a teddy bear on stage after the show! It also had great atmosphere with super upbeat music and a memorable band performance at the end.



PAMEO POSE

by Peli

(October 20, 1pm at Polygon Omotesando)

Based on traditional fashion from Spain. The show was set up in a store-like manner, so you could experience the fashion up-close and comfortably. The elegant style seemed easy to wear and so different from everything else.



MISSES WHAT HAPPENED?



BED j.w. FORD

by Shinpei Yamagishi

(Oct 21, 9pm at Shibuya Hikarie Hall A)

A disappointing collection with a mishmash of styles and asymmetrical hemlines thrown together in a last-minute hurry! The show had two runways separated by a cheap black curtain. Maybe there were some budget cuts at BED j.w. FORD?



ERICA

ROXY



DISCOVERED

by Tatsuya Kimura & Sanae Yoshida

(Oct 20, 5pm at Omotesando Hills Main Bldg B3 SPACE O)

The music was like an EDM concert featuring a fashion show. The fashion was a little dark, gothic-punk, and really disappointing. Did the designer dress the models with his eyes closed? The choice of makeup and hair was interesting, too. I couldn't quite tell whether I was at the DISCOVERED fashion show or Marilyn Manson's fan club.



HIGHS AND LOWS OF TFW

By Erica Grainger (Fukushima) and Roxy Ghezzi (Gifu)

HIGHS

ERICA

Meeting fashion designers and influential people in fashion. Eg. Anne Sofie Madsen and Chanu.

The atmosphere: Living and breathing fashion for 24 hours a day, everyday!

ROXY

Going to my very first fashion week
Seeing all kinds of interesting and super edgy fashion

Having an excuse to dress up and wear some of my favorite wardrobes

BOTH:

Meeting my partner in crime and working together



LOWS

ERICA

Returning home at 11:30/midnight every night & lack of sleep!

STRESS!

The waiting before shows! When will it start...?

ROXY

Being sick the entire time during fashion week!

Losing my voice completely and not knowing sign language

Leaving early to go to the doctor and missing half of the shows

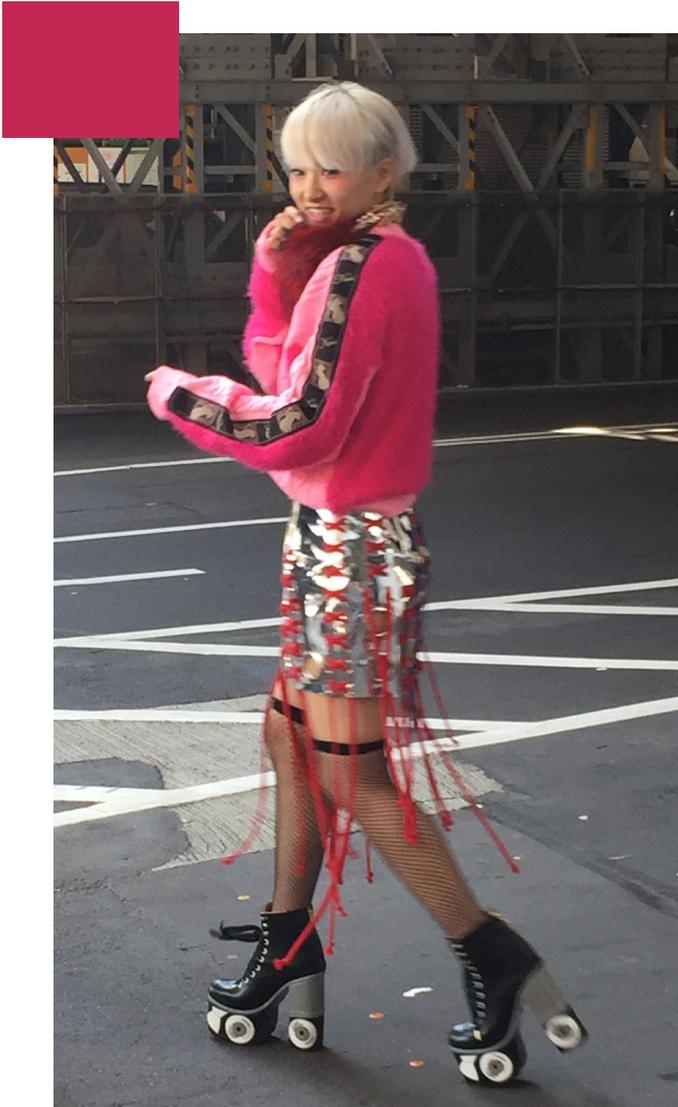
Having to choose between comfort and style

HUGE HIGH

Leonard Wong! Simply amazing and phenomenal from the opening act featuring the Japanese dance duo, Bambi and Aya to the finale with Wong's digitized face saying, "I'm Leonard Wong. Nice to meet you...let's meet again" in English, Japanese Chinese and Korean. Truly unforgettable!!!

Who What When Wear

Erica Grainger (Fukushima)



Who

Junko Motoyama, a Japanese model and fashion blogger

What

Her style is eclectic, experimental and unpredictable!

When

Thursday, October 20, outside Shibuya Hikarie

Wear

Clothing and shoes from Spank! and Candy.
Contact her on [Instagram](#) or on her [blog](#)

Who

CHANU, a Korean fashion designer

What

His style is edgy and he often wears zips, chains and edgy accessories!

When

Saturday, October 22 at Miyashita Park

Wear

ACUOD by CHANU (his own label)
Contact him at info@acuod.com



ANIME TO WARM THE SOUL

Chanelle Guillaume (Niigata)

Winter is coming! Or for those of us in northern Japan, winter is here to stay. If you're thinking, "Ahhhh, yes! Time to settle under my *kotatsu* and relax with my fave show," or, "What can I do after my awesome day of skiing/snowboarding?", fear not! Let me tell you some of my upcoming anime recommendations that might warm you up no matter where you are.

First up are shows that hit you right in the feels by making you experience a range of emotions such as, "Hold me. I'm sad" and "D'awww, finally something good happened!" What show does that best? Most shows in the Gundam universe, of course. For those who watched *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* Season 1, you guessed it: season 2 is out. Still reeling from season 1? Keep going. If you didn't catch the first season, there are a few places to stream online. Nothing like watching orphans who were forced to become soldiers to turn your heart to coal in order to numb the pain. If you're a fan of *Gundam 00*

or *Gundam Wing*, then this anime will definitely fill that Gundam void in your heart.

Mech anime not your thing, but still want all the feels? No worries! *91 Days* has you covered. Set during the prohibition era but with an Italian mafia twist, this 13-episode series, with a great visual and musical score, takes you on a ride for revenge. We follow Avilio and his quest to avenge his family, but little does he know who lurks in the shadows. Fast-paced action scenes mixed with a balance of thoughtful and cryptic dialogue keeps the audience engaged. Be sure to stick through it until the last episode.

Now that we have the emotional dramas out of the way, onto the happy ones, or at least ones that won't make you bawl your eyes out. *Bloodivores*, *Drifters*, and *Yuri!!! On ICE* are all ones that I humbly suggest after a long day's work surviving the freezing cold Japanese tundra. *Bloodivores* is based on a Korean manga. If a show about a strange virus affecting the entire world and a "child of hope" to save them all is your thing, give it a shot, especially if you just want to turn your mind off and just watch something.

Next in line: *Drifters* has finally premiered! The creator of *Hellsing* is at it again! If you like Quentin Tarantino-esque fountains of blood and

macabre tone and humor then this show is definitely for you, especially for any history buffs, given that old time warriors can be summoned into battle. Like *Hellsing*, it has some disturbing moments, but not many anime have had that shock value recently, so maybe *Drifters* can do that for you.

Yuri!!! On ICE is great timing for Japan. If you have Japanese television, then it's hard to miss the constant replays of Olympic ice skating footage (yep, still). This anime was hotly anticipated and isn't disappointing fans. Yuri, who vows to redeem himself through figure skating training, is the star of this show. Along with a Russian figure skater also named Yuri, they go on a journey to fulfill their dreams. The show is great at attracting viewers through its contemporary subject, but also its oodles of hot and steamy male ice skater fanservice that is sure to warm anyone up. This show is definitely one to snuggle up to, particularly for fans of the director of *Michiko and Hatchin*.

All of these shows are still airing on Japanese TV and can be streamed online. Stay tuned and stay warm!

Chanelle is a first-year JET in Joetsu, Niigata from SoCal who ardently believes that one day she will become a 16 year old magical girl, but until that one day happens (soon, soon I say!) she's satisfied with watching anime occasionally as well as playing video games.

Routine Maintenance I Got a Scooter

Omri Wallach (Ibaraki)

Life in Japan was going great. My teachers were nice, my students were a joy, and the other JETs around me became invaluable friends. Gone were my insecurities from arrival and not fitting in; I was starting to use more Japanese and do day-to-day tasks on my own. I could make a phone call without begging a PA to hold my hand. Yet, still, it felt like something was missing. Then I realized my routine had become just that — routine. Wake up, work, buy groceries, go home, sleep, repeat. Weekends were trips to the nearest beach or to the local dive, and I was recognized by name at karaoke. My routine worked; I was successful, and I was content. But most of all, I felt trapped.

Surviving in a completely different culture from the one you're used to can be tricky, but once you're comfortable, it is easy to fall into old habits. Back home it was the cycle of the student simply trying to put in the hours to get a degree. Here, it was about simply surviving the day-to-day. Before I knew it, I had once again set up a bubble that completely enclosed my life. Many JETs suffer from the same situation, and some can easily



bust out of their ruts, but I couldn't. Something needed to change — for me it was my limited access to transit. The bus service near my house was lacking, I was on the wrong side of the hill from the station, and I couldn't justify the costs of getting a car. I got by on a decent bicycle for the better part of a year, but I wanted more. I wanted to be able to go anywhere in my city, quickly, without planning for it ahead of time. So I made a small change to my commute: I got a scooter.

Why a scooter? Excellent question. Back home (Calgary, Canada), scooters and motorbikes seemed like a waste of effort. What's the point? Wheat fields are wheat fields, and it's too cold to use one half of the year. The second we touched down in Narita, however, I had a sudden urge to hit the roads with two wheels. Maybe it was the call of Japan's beautiful and mysterious landscapes, maybe I was convinced that I was the Great Teacher Onizuka come again — whatever it was, that urge always stuck with me.

Another reason I went with a scooter was its affordability. For the price of a car (and having to pay for inspection, etc.) I could buy two and a half scooters. Finally, getting a scooter license is relatively painless. With a standard Japanese driver's license, you can operate most standard motor vehicles, scooters or bikes. As a Canadian, it was easy to acquire a Japanese license (by which I mean, it was the biggest waste of *nenkyu* at the DMV, but a necessary evil). Besides, motorbike licenses are a hassle to obtain. Japan differentiates scooters and motorbikes by

engine displacement, and you need a higher level license for each tier. First you get your 150cc license, then you can get your 300cc license, and so on, just like in Mario Kart (I wonder where they got the inspiration). Unless you know someone with a bike, you get no practice, pay an exorbitant amount to take the test, and face an incredibly high failure rate. I'll stick to a 50cc.

The trickiest part of the process was finding a 50cc scooter that could support my 6'4" frame. On most scooters, I looked like a giant riding a tricycle. Thankfully, the local bike shop had a longer Yamaha model; it was an old pizza delivery scooter, delivery box not included. Since I was buying used, they threw in a Snoopy helmet complete with old-school racing goggles. Perfect. The catch? No test-driving, so your first drive is off the lot. "Remember," the shop owner said, "these things can only legally go 30 km/h. That being said, please head directly onto the thoroughfare we're located on, drive yourself to the nearest gas station, then all the way home on the main streets." A pat on the back and I was off.

That first ride was sheer madness. My first task was to turn left from the parking lot onto the road. Naturally, it took me all four lanes. I laughed in accomplishment, but the joy was short-lived. There were cars behind me gaining fast, so I gunned it. 30 km/h. I felt like Sonic. I was hanging on for dear life while busy moms were yawning past me in minivans. Thank God there was a traffic jam on the way home, so I got to coast and practice breaking. That was day one. By day two I was topping 60 km/h and wanted an upgrade. Funny what some

experience will do to you. That lazy traffic jam? This time I was sneaking by on the shoulder, laughing maniacally as I passed everyone stuck bumper-to-bumper.

At first, I used the scooter to enhance my bubble. Friends want to meet up for ramen on the other side of the station? I'm there in a flash. Running late for school? Not anymore, I'm already pouring coffee. Shopping became a breeze, and I could strap heavy things onto the back. It wasn't until a school baseball game, however, that the bubble finally burst. The game was out of town, and I needed to submit my transit plan. Did I want a ride, or was I going to train and bus? I opened a map, saw that it was a scenic 40-minute ride away, and most importantly, that I didn't need to take the highway. "I'm going to take the scooter."

Back to that feeling of being trapped in Japan, of being stuck in your own little bubble. When you're in a rut, something new can snap yourself out of it. Whether it's a scooter or a dance class or a job application, find something that shakes things up. For me, all of those negative feelings vanish when cruising down an empty highway in the *inaka*. Wide skies, rice fields, rolling hills, mountains. Open air and freedom. By the time I arrived at the baseball stadium for that game, I was barely focused on my kids playing. My phone was browsing maps, trying to figure out which side streets I could take to get to the beach, the next town over, or the next ALT meeting without asking for a ride. There was no bus schedule to check, no train stations to walk to, and nobody I needed to ask for favors. Japan finally felt as open to me as when I first landed and looked out over the countryside.



Winter Comfort Recommendations

Travis Shaver (Niigata)
Sabrina Zirakzadeh (Osaka)

CONNECT Recommends:

Yuri!!! On ICE:

What can be called a mashup of the Yuzuru Hanyu and sports anime crazes, this satisfies both genre anime fans and ice skating enthusiasts. With *Free!* slowly fading like a memory, ***Yuri!!! On ICE*** can warm your heart though the long winter months. — Emma Hanashiro, Homepage Editor

Love Actually:

The quintessential British romantic comedy about finding and falling in love over Christmas. I also enjoy the song “Winter” by Tori Amos. It paints a portrait of her experiences with hope, heartbreak and change set against the backdrop of a frosty white winter. — Erica Grainger, Fashion and Beauty Editor

I really like marathoning 90s American sitcoms like ***Full House***, ***Friends***, ***The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air***, ***The Nanny***, etc. Nothing like nostalgia to get through the winter! Plus, the DVDs are really cheap at Hard-Off, so I can work on my own personal collection. — Farrah Hasnain, Social Media

The “***Kingdom Hearts***” video games: I remember getting both ***Kingdom Hearts*** 1 and 2 on Christmas. They always meant escaping from the extended family as soon as I could to play all night long. Lately, Christmas is more about the people I spend it with, but that doesn’t mean I don’t still enjoy holiday gaming. — Timothy Saar, Head Editor

Readers Recommend:

Die Hard:

Because they (especially the first two) are the greatest Christmas movies of all time. I also recommend: ***X-Files***, because it’s the greatest TV show of all time; old-school SNES RPGs, because it’s the best game system of all time; and Christmas music, because it always cheers me up.—Adrienne Nicole

The Polar Express:

My family and I used to watch this every Christmas. Last year, I saw it on Netflix, and I began to watch because I was homesick. Funnily enough, my mom had sent me a Christmas tree and it arrived when I started watching it! —Ashley Dorrell

DECEMBER RELEASES

Travis Shaver (Niigata)
Sabrina Zirakzadeh (Osaka)

In need of entertainment? Each month, *CONNECT* brings you the latest information on upcoming releases and events in Japan. Here is the most anticipated entertainment for December!

Movies

- 1 Dec** *Blair Witch* (Horror, Thriller): Directed by Adam Wingard
- 16 Dec** *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi): Directed by Gareth Edwards, starring Felicity Jones and James Earl Jones
- 23 Dec** *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (Action, Horror, Sci-Fi): Directed by Paul W.S. Anderson, starring Ruby Rose and Ali Larter
- 23 Dec** *Pete's Dragon* (Family): Directed by David Lowery, starring Bryce Dallas Howard and Robert Redford
- 24 Dec** *Stonewall* (Drama): Directed by Roland Emmerich, starring Jeremy Irvine and Johnny Beauchamp

Music

- 5 Dec - 8 Dec** YOSHIKI CLASSIC Tour — Osaka City, Osaka, and Tokyo (Rock, Classical)
- 6 Dec** “The XX” Fuji Rock Festival — Tokyo (Rock)
- 28 Dec** *Live at Wembley: Babymetal World Tour 2016*, Babymetal (Idol Metal)

Live Theater and Events

- 10 Nov - 1 Jan** Cirque du Soleil's *Totem* — Nagoya City, Aichi (Circus, Performance Art)
- 25 Nov - 25 Dec** *Caleb Hunt*, *Private Eye* and *Greatest HITS! Revue* — Tokyo Takarazuka Theater (Humor, Mystery)
- 15 Dec - 25 Dec** *RENT: 20th Anniversary* — Tokyo International Forum Hall C (Musical Drama)

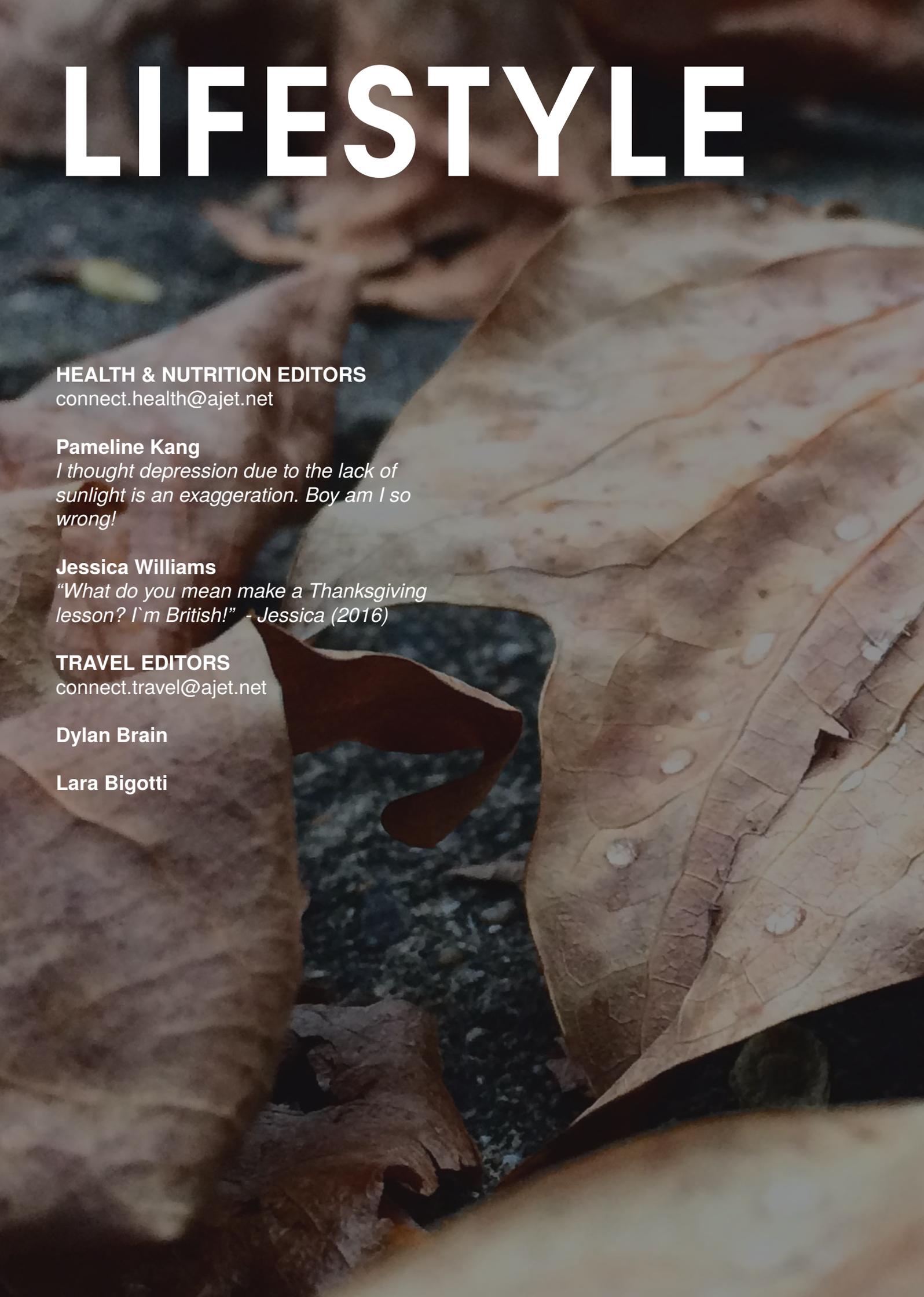
Games

- 1 Dec** *Super Mario Maker* on Nintendo 3DS (Adventure)
- 6 Dec** *The Last Guardian* on Sony PS4 (Action): Directed by Fumito Ueda

Sources

1. <http://imdb.to/1DZWXgA>
2. <http://bit.ly/MxVjLD>
3. <http://bit.ly/2aVRGOE>

LIFESTYLE



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Pameline Kang

I thought depression due to the lack of sunlight is an exaggeration. Boy am I so wrong!

Jessica Williams

"What do you mean make a Thanksgiving lesson? I'm British!" - Jessica (2016)

TRAVEL EDITORS

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Dylan Brain

Lara Bigotti





HOMEMADE APPLESAUCE

Ophelia Rose Morreale (Shimane)

Applesauce is a good recipe for *Fall* and *Winter*! I used the “wing it” method with coaching from my mom, who always makes applesauce with apples from our apple tree in California and who inspired the idea in the first place.

PREPARATION

- 1** Peel, core, and cut the apples into little pieces (any size will do but keep in mind they won't all fully break down. I went with pieces about the size of almonds.)
- 2** Put the apples on the stove on medium heat with just enough water to cover the bottom of the pan by a few cm. Stir the apples frequently and add water as needed so they don't get burned or scorched or dried out. After a while cooking they will start to become mush.
- 3** Depending on the apples you may or may not need to add sugar to sweeten. The linan apples needed no sugar, but the tart green apples my mom used to use always did. Also add spices according to your preference. I used cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, coriander, and allspice.
- 4** Continue cooking until the apples are completely mushy. I had an apple mountain (9 or 10 of those giant linan apples, each weighing about 175 grams/.4lbs) and it took about an hour or so to cook them down. The color should be kind of a mix between yellow and light caramel brown, though that could vary depending on the type of apple, amount of spices, etc. I think you'll know when it's ready though; it starts looking like applesauce. As it cools, it becomes more brown and a little red. If you want to you can mash out the remaining apple chunks with a fork or potato masher, but I just left them. I think it adds a nice crunch
- 5** Stick the applesauce in a container and keep it in the fridge. It'll keep about a week or two, but can be frozen indefinitely. Congratulations on your delicious home-made applesauce!

(Pro tip: 10/10 would recommend warming it up before eating.)

Ophelia is a musical theatre major from the Bay Area of California in the United States. She is currently a SHS ALT in the beautiful inaka of Shimane prefecture, home to ancient spirits and cherry blossom trees. She plans to eat her way through Japan. She heard it's a very popular and enjoyable thing to do. Happy Autumn!



The Benefits of Yoga

Jacqueline Gallegos (Yamaguchi)



Like many others out there, the words “yoga” and “meditation” always carried certain connotations for me. When those words came up in conversation, I usually pictured a laid back, new age hippie. Ironically, I actually knew many people in real life who did yoga and meditation that were nothing like those worn out stereotypes. Still, something inside me was always averse to trying these sorts of things out. I found them much too spiritual for my liking, seeing as I was always someone who was fundamentally analytical. I didn’t want to be the kind of person who would allow themselves to fall victim to nonsensical mumbo jumbo. So I was never willing to give any of it a try.

However, a couple of months ago, I found myself in a dire situation. I had decided to move to Japan to start teaching English and the transition started hitting me pretty hard. The change in climate and the stress from moving halfway across the world ended up making me pretty sick and anxious the first few weeks. I heavily considered the possibility of giving up and just going back home. In a desperate attempt to calm my nerves and start improving my health, I asked my mother for advice. She recommended yoga and meditation. Well, as the saying goes, desperate times do indeed call for desperate measures and at that point I was willing to give anything a try.

At first I liked the yoga and meditation because it gave me a bit of routine within the chaos of settling into a new way of life. But then I noticed that I started to feel better over time. I liked waking up and doing yoga first thing in the mornings because it felt like I was having a solid healthy start to my day. I also liked that the meditation was helping to lower my anxiety, especially on days that were hectic or days when I had an important event to attend.

While I don’t doubt that the improvement in my health and anxiety over time came largely from just adjusting to my new surroundings, I am thankful that I had the yoga and meditation as something solid to hold onto during those hard times. Now that I am becoming more and more used to life abroad, I have still found myself attached to them. In fact, I still make it a point to do yoga every morning. Again, because I like the routine, but also because I know it’s good for me. At the end of the day, yoga is still exercise and so I feel better knowing that I am always getting at least a little bit of movement in every day.

The meditation, however, I no longer do daily. At most, I will still do a session once or twice a week as I am falling asleep. I can’t say with 100% certainty that I think meditation works, but it did feel like it was helping when my stress was particularly high. Even now, on nights when I am having trouble falling asleep, putting on meditation in the background almost always has me fast asleep within the 30-50 minute time frame of the session. I wouldn’t call it spiritual by any means, but I do think it’s useful when you have to get up early the next morning.

Overall, I would at the very least recommend that people try yoga because I have found that it is a good way to exercise without equipment. Additionally, there are loads of free yoga instructional videos available online. I would recommend meditation for anyone having a hard time dealing with stress. Even though these methods might not work for everyone, it’s always good to give new things a try just in case they do end up being helpful in the end. In my case, they were.

Jacqueline is from Denver, Colorado. Jacqueline is originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Jacqueline now lives in Waki, Yamaguchi.





In Conversation with Brant Tichko, COFFEE CONNOISSEUR

Third year Brant Tichko is an elementary and junior high school ALT in Kobe. I first noticed him through his café-themed [Instagram](#). We met at Sannomiya Station, and he was kind enough to invite me back to his house for a cup of joe and to discuss all things coffee-related.

This interview contains some swearing. In order to most genuinely convey the conversation's tone, CONNECT has chosen not to censor it in this case.

Angela Hsu: Can you start by talking a little bit about your background?

Brant Tichko: I'm from New Hampshire originally. I went to a university in Massachusetts and double majored in Asian Studies and History; originally I wanted to be a university professor of Japanese history. But then I had to study abroad in Japan as part of my major, and when I came over they accidentally gave me the work visa. Well, after six months you can apply for the [work] visa anyway. So I was working part-time at an English café, and I'd meet anyone from college kids to ninety-year-old farmers, which was a really weird survey pool. [Working there] allowed for a lot of cultural communication, and I was like, this is really awesome!

I went home and finished my degree, but I thought, do I really want to travel the world to different libraries and just read documents? I love history, but I just felt like I should want more out of my experiences. And if you take Japanese courses, a lot of Japanese teachers tell you JET is the way to come to Japan. I just applied and got lucky, ending up in Kobe.

AH: Then when did coffee become part of the picture?

BT: In New Hampshire, coffee is like Dunkin' Donuts. Sitting down and drinking coffee, or going somewhere with a friend to get coffee, is not a very big cultural aspect of America. I know in European countries, people will just chill for hours at a café with their friends, just talking or reading a book. And in Japan, they have an obsession with European culture, so there's a lot of cafés everywhere! Coming back this time around I was thinking maybe I should open a café – not necessarily in Japan, but at least look around and get some inspiration, especially by looking more into the distinct specialty coffee scene.

I have a friend [now] who is a barista working out of a hair salon. His uncle owns the hair salon, and he has this little take-out window for coffee. If you get your hair cut, you also get a free latte or something. So that was how I met him, through the hair salon, and since then I've taken classes on how to correctly pour coffee, and done things like the bean-roasting seminar. It's been great being able to sit down with a real professional who works in the industry. Right now, with the third wave coffee movement, there's a renaissance where coffee is being treated as if it was wine. You don't just guzzle it down for caffeine, you're supposed to appreciate the

flavor of it, the hard work that goes into it, and be willing to pay six dollars a cup for this experience.

AH: But do you think that the third wave movement has succeeded? Like, do you think people appreciate these aspects of it you talk about? Because it seems to have just developed a new superficiality where people go to places because they're famous, and they can take cute pictures and say they're having a nice latte.

BT: Yeah, it's an interesting double standard. There are all these trendy café-hopping guides and books now, but I know owners in the third wave movement who refuse to appear in them. One was like, "No, I don't want to be the hipster place where young people who think coffee is cool come to drink it. I only want people who give a crap about their coffee, and who want to learn more about it."

I was listening to a coffee podcast the other day, and it talked about how expensive third wave coffee is. This barista was saying it's cool to be able to have a transformative experience with a cup of coffee, but not everyone wants that. Some people just want middle-of-the-road coffee. Like not shit, but still good, and mid-priced. Unfortunately we've created this pretension around coffee, to the point where the customer almost gets to have no opinion about it.

For a long time, you would go to these specialty places and the baristas would tell you how to drink it: You're going to drink this like this. And how dare you fucking put milk in my coffee, that's sacrilege!

The podcast compared it to putting ketchup on a really nice steak. But ultimately it's subjective, and you can't tell customers straight up that they're wrong. The podcast also talked about encouraging people to get more interested in the process of coffee. It's created this boom, which comes with a kind of trendiness. There will always be a trendy side to things, though, and I think there have also been a lot of benefits to this boom, in terms of the fair trade movement with coffee companies, and a desire to actually produce a better product.

AH: Is there a problem then – or maybe it's not a problem, maybe it just is – where specialty coffee is going to be a thing primarily for the upper-middle classes in developed countries? Do you think it creates a chasm between consumption and production in developing countries?

BT: In this documentary I watched called "A Film About Coffee," the taste-testers for many farms were white guys from specialty coffee companies like Blue Bottle and Intelligensia. There was one point where it was an American barista who went to a plantation in Mexico, and told the farmers he was going to make coffee for them. As in, you get to try your crop today! But obviously the farmers know their crop; they're the ones producing it.

So there's this Western guy, going to this third world nation, saying "this is how we drink your coffee." And he gave it to them, even though he didn't speak any Spanish, and they didn't speak any English. It was pretty fucked up.

AH: Yeah, it makes me wonder – do Ethiopians and Mexicans and coffee-producing countries even consume coffee like Westerners do? Because you have places like Vietnam, where they prepare it specifically over a slow drip and have it with condensed milk, whereas in Japan it seems to have been very internalized from Europe.

BT: That's a good question. It's actually something I've been wondering about, but I don't really know.

In Japan though, they started off with *kissaten*, which have been serving coffee for hundreds of years. But those places were focused on dark roasts, and the younger generation now is more interested in lighter roasts and appreciating the individual flavors of beans.

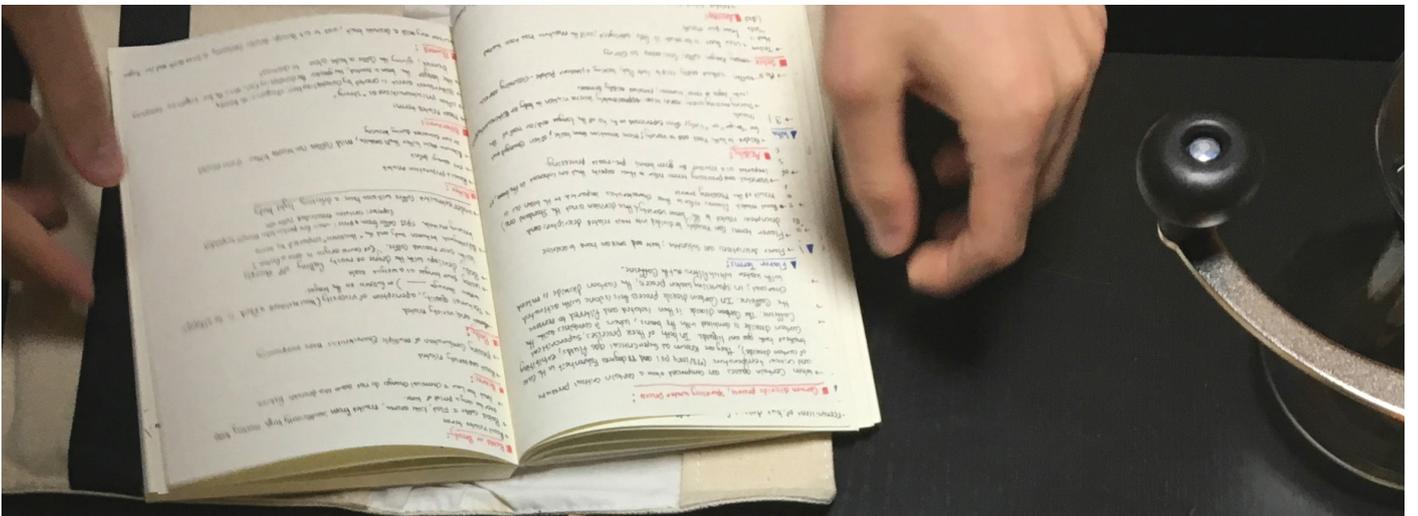
From a scientific perspective, we now know how the bean works, at what temperature it will burn, and how the fats and proteins of a bean break down, so we can create new preparation methods.

AH: I think it was Eddie Huang, a Taiwanese-American chef, who talked about how culture is globalizing — which also means it is unifying, and losing diversity. Do you think that's happening through the third wave coffee movement? Because I feel like every time I walk into a café these days there's the same minimalism.

BT: [Laughs] But that's a very Japanese thing. You're right though; Blue Bottle does it. But the minimalism is just Japanese aesthetics.

AH: So it's Japanese aesthetics that are spreading globally?





BT: I follow a bunch of food blogs and websites on Facebook, and I swear to God every day there's something saying "check out this awesome delicious thing in Japan!"

Maybe it's because I live in Japan and Facebook has altered my newsfeed, but I think Japanese aesthetics are getting popularized abroad. Obviously anime and manga are still big exports, but I think style and food — think about how *Jiro Loves Sushi* was such a big hit — spur a lot of people to come to Japan. So that aspect of Japanese culture has just been exported really successfully to Westerners.

I mean Blue Bottle's founder, James Freeman — he loves Japan. He bought a forty thousand dollar siphon coffee bar [from Japan] and had it shipped to California, just because he could.

AH: Do you want to be someone like him who continues this trend? Since you're learning about coffee from a Japanese person and taking classes here, I guess it's a Japanese style or understanding of coffee you've picked up.

BT: Yeah, I'm taking a lot of classes and paying to go to seminars and learn — which I feel like is almost better in Japan. Here they have the Japanese Specialty Coffee Association, with all these courses and certifications and exams you can take. In America, it's much more chill, just a few classes. And then an American friend told me 90% of those are rip-offs.

But it's great in Japan. I think I would be really happy to be a barista, not even owning a coffee shop, just getting to interact with people and chatting. I know it's a very simple, mellow, not very aspirational life.

But in February, I am going with a friend to a coffee farm in Thailand. Hypothetically, if that's something I'm interested in, I could potentially end up working on a coffee farm? I don't know, I guess it's pretty open.

AH: Let's imagine, then. What kind of café would you want to work in? That might be vague...

BT: No, I get what you mean. Even in Tokyo there's so many different types of cafés. When I go café-hopping I see lots of them, and one of the biggest ones there is Fuglen. They make really good coffee,

but if you read online reviews, the biggest critique people have is that they felt the baristas were kind of cold. Like, here's your coffee. Enjoy it. We're not talking. And I got that vibe too, but if you wanted to go there and read a book, it would be a good place to go.

One of my favorite places is Little Nap Coffee Stand in Tokyo. I walked in at 8 a.m. just fresh off the night bus, and I had never talked to these baristas before, but people said hi and asked me about my life. Then I came back a month later, and they remembered me! We became Instagram friends and started messaging each other — and that connection seems kind of absurd to me, because I've only met them twice — but we just hit it off.

So I think something like that, where you serve good coffee, chat, and listen to people's stories.

AH: Are there any local coffee places in Kobe you want to recommend to people?

BT: There's Streamer's Coffee, which is a chain from Tokyo. It's really mellow, the coffee is good, and the latte art exceptional. Unicorn Coffee does a lot of tea lattes, pulling and extracting them in the same way as an espresso, so it's a unique drink. And Labo Frank, near Kobe's Chinatown, is big in the coffee community. They give you a breakdown of the beans, and it's small enough so you can chat with everyone.

What I like about Kobe is that it is so small, especially next to Osaka, so everyone knows each other. And there's competition, but also not. Owners will say "I can't wait to check out that person's store, it seems like it will have very good coffee" or "this person opened a store and they don't really know what they're doing yet, but I might go talk to them and help them out."

There's a strong sense of community. People think, we'll do it for Kobe coffee, because everyone deserves a good cup of coffee.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Angela is a 3rd year JET from the United States living in Ibaraki. She likes books, billiards, and bad jokes. You can follow her whereabouts on Instagram

A SINGLE WOMAN TRAVELS

Samantha Clark (Philadelphia)



I have always been a very independent person. This is not a story about someone who is co-dependent or shy getting on a plane and shedding all of her insecurities. For most of my life, I have had no trouble identifying exactly what it was I wanted and achieving it. I wanted to get into a prestigious college, so I did. I wanted to be a scientist, so I became one. I wanted to travel the world alone, so I am. I thought this made me a dogged woman, or a stubborn woman, but to many, I am a highly unusual woman. Here is a bit of my story — my gift to all the other unusual, wandering women who wish to see the world on their own terms.

In the summer of 2016, I found myself quite literally between jobs. A year-long position I had been working since my college graduation the previous spring ended in May, but my full time position with the same company didn't start until September. I had been living at home, saving most of my paltry temp salary, with one goal in mind: to travel. Specifically, I wanted to backpack. At the time, I hadn't read *Wild* nor had I seen *Eurotrip*. I was just in love with the romance of backpacking. I wanted to carry all my possessions on my two shoulders, see how far into the world I could go on my own two feet. Because I love to be contrarian, I had actually always wanted to backpack Southeast Asia rather than the typical post-grad Europe experience. But the three months I had between finishing one job and starting another coincided with the rainy season for the countries I would have visited, and, despite my relative fearlessness at the prospect of spending three months traveling alone, I wanted to begin my solo female travels somewhere well-trod, with a good transportation network and a lot of English speakers. Thus, I spent Thanksgiving of 2015 sitting at my parents' dining room table with a notebook and a map of Europe. I picked the cities I knew I

absolutely had to see: Reykjavik, Florence, Paris, Amsterdam, Granada. Then I plotted outwards — what was a two-hour train ride from Brussels? From Venice? Soon I had an entire itinerary — 70 days, 10 countries. My parents decided to meet me in Amsterdam, my grandparents decided to meet me in Portugal, and a high school friend joined me in Iceland. For the rest, I was alone.

There are a couple narratives of solo female travel that I reject. One is that a woman has to have had an emotional trauma to set into the world alone. At the time I boarded my plane, I wasn't single, I wasn't bereft or missing anything. I wasn't really on a journey to "find myself" or looking for some particular brand of enlightenment that I could only find alone. I traveled Europe by myself for mostly logistical reasons. I had the time, money, and will to travel, and at 22, that situation is unique. There's a lot of practical advice for solo female backpackers, which largely centers on safety and loneliness. The safety advice I found useful but largely unnecessary. In my experience, if you've lived in any city as a woman, you're more than prepared to take on a new one. There's some extra effort involved with being in a new place and possibly navigating a language barrier, but as long as you have a map and keep your wits about you, gender is not a barrier to solo travel.

Loneliness, though, I think depends on the traveler. I began my travels in a heady mix of excitement with one of my oldest friends. We drove all over Iceland in a frenzy of jet-lagged excitement. But then, he went home and I flew to Brussels. The first night I spent in Brussels I found myself tearing up over dinner, unsure of how I was going to make it through two months by myself. The particular magic of seeing an entirely new country with another person was gone.

The next day, I went on a free walking tour of the city. I met three fellow backpackers, a solo Canadian guy and two girls from California. We headed into Brussels together. We ate frites and waffles and saw the Atomium. We shared stories and drank beer and saw palaces and monuments. We became the particular kind of spontaneous friends that you meet when you travel alone. And that happened the next day in Ghent, and the following day in Bruges, and by the end of my trip I had an entire continent's worth of new friends and new experiences. I saw a flamenco show with two Australian expats. I climbed Arthur's Seat with an outspoken Swedish student and a shy Hong Kong artist. Despite traveling alone, I didn't spend a single day by myself. I wasn't sure what traveling two months solo would mean to me. It was both easier and harder than expected. I had to solve all my problems by myself. When it poured rain in Cologne and I had to carry everything I owned in the world on my back to the hostel, there was no one to call for a ride. When a flight was delayed in Madrid, I spent the night in the airport. But I tried so many new things and met so many new people, which I would have never done had I traveled with someone else. My summer backpacking alone was an amazing experience; there is so much world to see and I intend to see all of it. But, for this traveler, I never would have explored it so fully if I had not explored it alone.

Samantha Clark is a biomedical engineer who lives in Philly and spends all her engineering money on traveling places that are not Philly.





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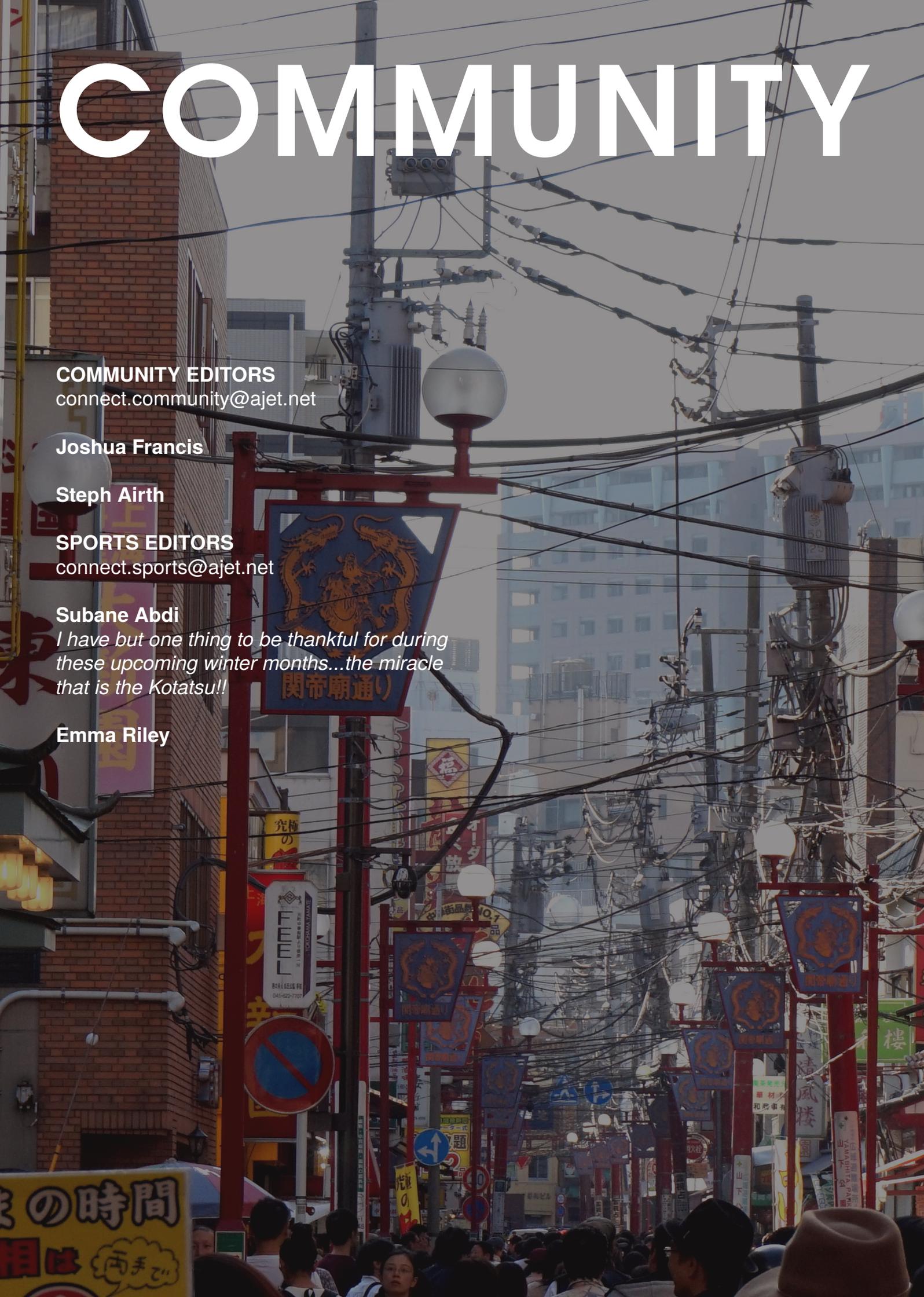
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Subane Abdi

I have but one thing to be thankful for during these upcoming winter months...the miracle that is the Kotatsu!!

Emma Riley



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HAPP

Shaina Some



PA IN

ers (Okinawa)

It's another one of my self-introduction classes.

I'm clicking through photos of Vancouver, Canada, explaining about where I am from and asking my students questions about my country and theirs. I land on a picture of my grandparents. "*Wah! Nihon-jin,*" ("Oh! They're Japanese,") the class mutters amongst themselves. Next, it depends. Sometimes the teachers will want me to clarify the photo. Sometimes I feel I can just move on. This particular JTE wants me to elaborate.

"No, not *Nihon-jin*. *Shaina-sensei*, what are you?"

What are you? The words are as familiar as my response. I smile, look around the class and explain.

"No, not *Nihon-jin*. My grandparents are from Hong Kong."

Not really. They're from Toishan and Hoiping, counties outside of Hong Kong.

The JTE presses on.

"Oh, so your mother is Chinese and your father is Canadian?"

Well, German-Irish...

"Both of my parents are Canadian, but my father was born in Germany."

I scan the class again and meet the eyes of some of the students, students who look like me and students who don't look like me, but who I know are half Japanese.

I currently live and work in Okinawa Prefecture, the southernmost prefecture of Japan. An island where 20% of the land is occupied by American military bases, where its second largest city, Okinawa City, is home to people of over 40 different nationalities, and an island with a long history of cultural fusion. Japanese, Chinese, and indigenous Okinawan blend together to create what Okinawa is today.

I'm mixed. Half. *Hapa*, *Hafu*. I can pass as white and I can pass as Asian. I think that most people with mixed identities can relate to this, but I'm never quite sure how other people see me. Until they start asking certain questions or commenting on my appearance, then I get a glimpse of what their first impressions of my ethnicity were. When I first came to Okinawa, my coordinator at my main school would always include mentioning my ethnicity when introducing

me to colleagues at the school. I was mixed but not Japanese mixed.

Before coming to Japan, I met a girl at my consulate's reception in Vancouver. She was also mixed, half Japanese and half British. She told me where she was placed (Wakayama) and I told her where I was placed.

"Oh Okinawa! They love people like us there! They think mixed people are so cute."

In many of my classes, there will be at least one student if not two who are part Okinawan and part something else. Jamaican, Peruvian, Filipino, Korean, white, black, American. Although people with visible mixed ethnicities may still be a minority, on the main island of Okinawa you might very well interact with someone who is mixed on a daily basis. I recently had a friend of a friend come visit from Kagoshima prefecture. As we walked along Naha's main tourist street, she remarked that Okinawa was very international, and particularly had many mixed Japanese. When I told her about the amount of mixed students in my classes she said it was rare to see mixed students in classes in Japan; "maybe there were one or two in the school."

Why is Okinawa so diverse? Large immigration schemes in and out of Okinawa during the 20th century into various parts of the world like Hawaii and South America definitely had a role to play. In October, Okinawa held the 5th annual *Uchinanchu* festival, a festival which welcomes those with Okinawan ancestry back to the island to explore, experience, and discover their roots. I saw some of the festivities on TV, and the delegations from different countries showed a sea of *hapa* faces, mixed Okinawan and something else. It was something quite unique to see how many people had participated in this festival were eager to share their blended identities and culture in Okinawa.

And of course, the American bases definitely have an impact on the number of mixed people in Okinawa. It would also be remiss to not address the negative stereotype of a mixed Okinawan, that is that they may come from a family where the American parent may or may not be present in their lives. This can bring up tensions of class, and even questions of sexual assault. In her blog on mixed race studies, Akemi Johnson writes an excellent reflective piece on what she sees as the mixed experience in Okinawa, being either the "island-half" or the "American-half," the latter being the preferred identity. She remarks that:

“If a biracial person speaks English, however, this hints at a different picture: a glamorous, international “half” with loving, married parents and enviable access to the United States.” (1)

Despite being told by the girl I met in Vancouver that Okinawans love mixed people, I indeed still had the assumption that they would face some discrimination, and that the aforementioned stereotype would be a prevalent in Okinawa. However, from what I can see with my small glimpse into my students’ lives as their ALT, I do not see explicitly see any of the mixed students experience any harassment or discrimination from their peers. If anything, these students usually have a good core group of friends. Sometimes they take the lead on the English activities I plan, and sometimes they are happy to let their friends do the work. Although not all of them speak English well, the important thing is that they should not be bullied for their mixed identities.

For myself, it is encouraging to live in a place where I see so many mixed people. Many are around my age and younger. Not only are the students diverse, but I have met many other ALTs in Okinawa who have mixed Asian ancestry. Although I am from Vancouver, which is a very ethnically diverse city in Canada, besides one or two other students in my classes, there were not a lot of mixed people around in my life. Coming to Okinawa and seeing so many people who may share similar thoughts and experiences to me has been a wonderful experience. Passing between cultures, examining issues of identity, and learning about who you are and where you are from may all be things that mixed people think about constantly. I know I do, and Okinawa is the perfect place for me to explore these things.

Shaina is from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and currently works as a first year ALT in Okinawa prefecture. During her time at the University of British Columbia she majored in Canadian Studies with a focus in immigration history, specifically Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies. In the future, Shaina hopes to pursue graduate work in Canada in immigration and settlement policy. Goals while in Okinawa include finally learning how to swim, practicing traditional Okinawan Eisa drumming and understanding more of the complex history of this beautiful island. This is her first time writing for CONNECT.

(1) <https://akemijohnson.com/category/mixed-race/>



JOGGING

With or Without a Cause?

The Constant “Haste” of Japan’s Running Culture

Tamarrah Brown (Hyōgo)



This month, the sports section brings you some insightful observations on the inner workings of Japan's thriving jogging culture from a Hyōgo JET. The article "Jogging With or Without a Cause?" shares the observations made by our contributor Tamarrah and will explore how spontaneous yet ingrained running is in the Japanese psyche.

We hope you will have an equally insightful journey through this article as you uncover the ubiquity of Japan's running culture.

I would like to address what I would deem a phenomenon that I have observed while living here in Japan. That is, the constant jogging from one place to the next, which (for the outsider) seems much like a 'rat race' where only the fastest will survive! My observations were made at three different times of the day, when people travel the most.

Mornings

Mornings! Don't you just love them? It's usually when the battle of the sheets and the eyes occurs, when rolling out of bed seems like a deadly mission. It simply makes either of the two world wars akin to daisies blooming on a warm summer day. It's really tough. But not to worry, just outside your apartment, rewards await and a decent chuckle or two makes the fight well worth it!

The Japanese humor will be in full swing. From people jogging at the same pace at which you somewhat briskly walk down the street, to people bolting by — all doing so in hopes of catching the magic school bus that will swoop them up from one stop to another jog, while en route to work, school, or play. It sure is a sight to behold!

Afternoons

Afternoons, hmmm... It is with great conviction that I declare the lunch break makes everyone go crazy! In a high school setting, both students and teachers alike are on the proverbial and literal road to success, jogging both

with and without a cause. They're jogging to the lunchroom and to the bathroom, they're jogging in the hallways and the walkways. Jogging over here, jogging over there, just jogging everywhere!

Evenings

Evenings; they're so serene. From the beautiful sunsets above to the clicking of heels on train platforms below. Oh yes! It sure doesn't stop there. The jogging goes on for as long as the Japanese are awake!

I'm sure there must be a logical explanation for the "jogging culture" (as I call it) in Japan, but for some foreigners it may seem quite bizarre. Why bother to jog if my steps and your jogging pace is the same? Answers, anyone?

Running in Japan

There's so much energy being exerted when jogging. In fact, if you desire to burn more calories by exercising, a jog would be your best bet over a walk. The 2012 Journal of Obesity proved that after a period of rest, joggers will eat 200 calories less than what they burned while exercising, while walkers will eat 50 calories more. But, it's not in the name of motion. It's all because the appetite suppressing hormone called Peptide YY is at its highest after a jog, so you won't feel as hungry as you normally would. However, it still works, right? So let's give credit where it is due! Jogging wins if you want to stay slim and trim.

Conversely, if you realize that your jogging pace is synonymous to the rate of another person's brisk walk, put jogging aside and walk instead! Research conducted by the University of Maryland Medical System in 2013 shows that a person weighing 200 pounds may lose 586 calories while walking for 60 minutes at 4.5 mph. However, if their speed was to increase slightly to 5 mph, they would essentially be at a jogging pace.

Though being healthy and staying in shape may be the reason for the eternal rat race we see in large cities such as Osaka and Tokyo (which Japan's larger than life "Jogging Culture" fuels), we can't deny that walking briskly would perhaps be the more practical solution in the situations mentioned above.

Messing up your makeup and ruining that crisp look to create a few sweat marks isn't at all worth it!

So Japan, please shed some light on the following question: Why do you have such a strong jogging culture?

Author's bio

Tamarrah is a free-spirited Jamaican creative who is a lover of life and all things fun. She is a beauty blogger and writer and is ridiculously passionate about teaching. She has a BSc in International Relations and Spanish and currently calls Takarazuka her home.

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HAIKU

Each month *CONNECT* will feature *haiku* from our readers. A *haiku* is 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.

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