

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

TOKYO ORIENTATION 2017



Stay Cool and Look Clean - how to be fashionably sweaty

Find the Fun - how to get involved with SIGs (and what they exactly are)

Studying Japanese - how to ganbaru the benkyou on your sumaho

Shinju-who? - how to have fun and understand Shinjuku

Hot and Tired in Tokyo - how to spend those orientation evenings



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

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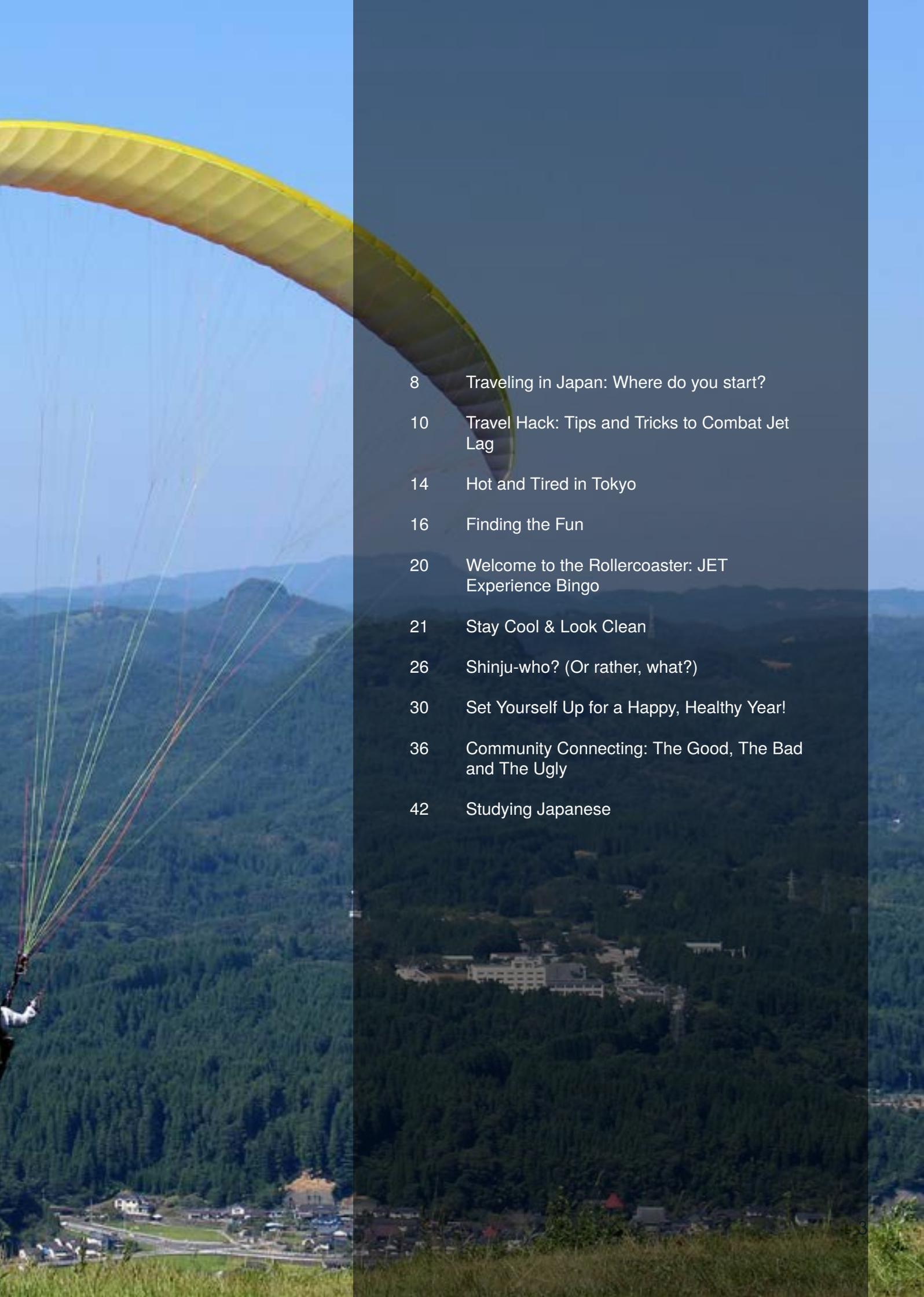
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Itterasshai! If you're an incoming JET, welcome to Japan! If you're a JET returning back from your holiday, welcome back! It's a brand new JET term, and I'm excited to bring you new and fresh content from all over our home away from home.

By now, the summer humidity known over most of Japan has settled in for the summer, and bugs abound; make sure you're protected from the heat and bug bites! For our very first issue of the term, we're bringing you more tips and guides to help you navigate your new life in Japan. From fashion tips and staying healthy, to the nightlife in Shinjuku after Orientation (or possibly a near Tokyo trip?), *CONNECT* brings you relevant and interesting content each month, so be sure to follow us!

Relish your time in Japan because before you know it, you'll be back in your home country after your time here with memorable friends, fond experiences, and a deeper understanding of a whole new culture.

Until then! Enjoy our monthly issues and *ganbatte!*

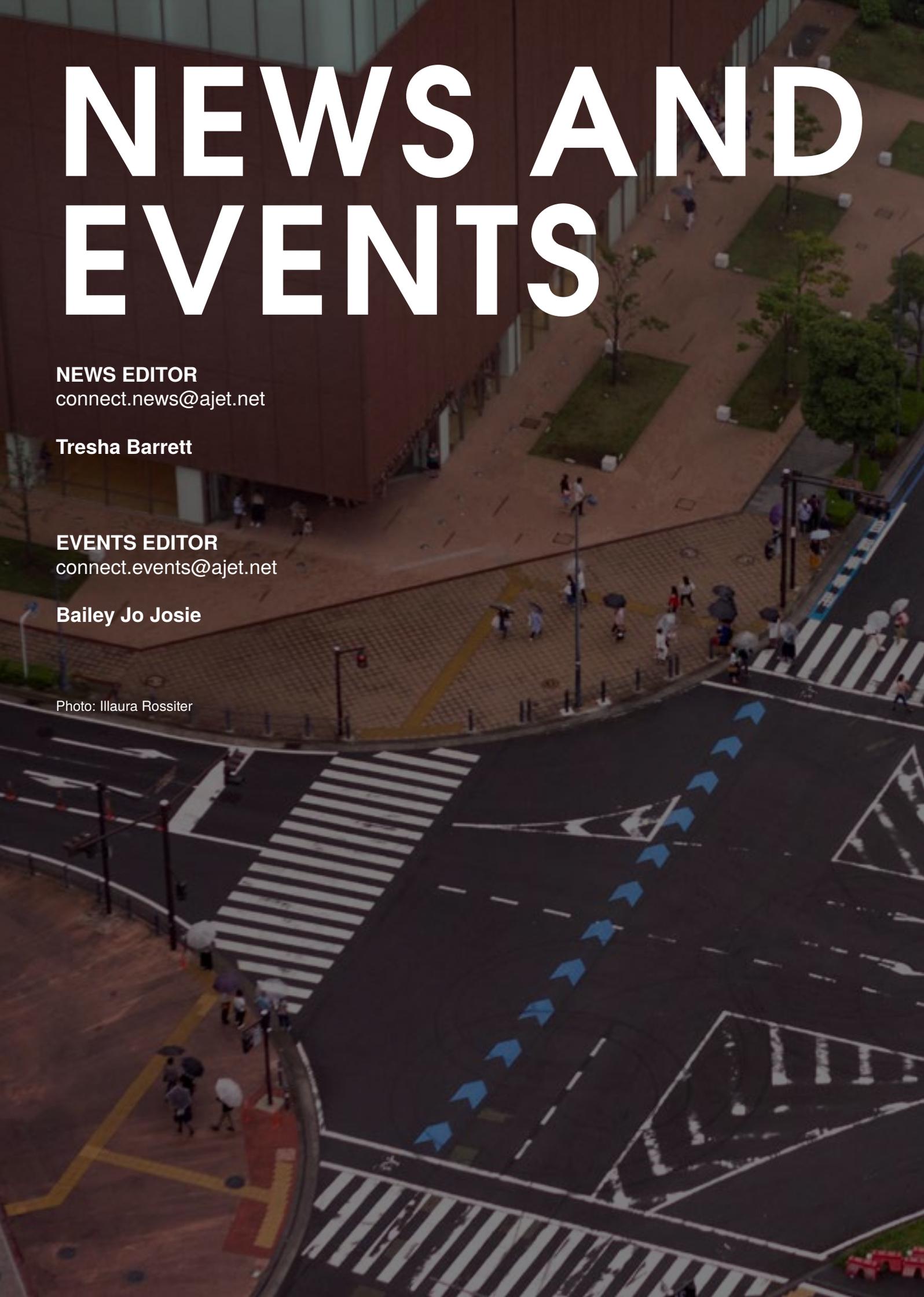


Lilian Diep
Head Editor
3rd Year Toyama ALT

Photo: Hannah Martin



NEWS AND EVENTS

An aerial photograph of a city street intersection. A large, modern building with a reddish-brown facade is on the left. The street is paved with dark asphalt and features white zebra crossings, blue directional arrows, and a yellow-painted area. Pedestrians are walking across the street, some holding umbrellas. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the intersection.

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合流注意

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バス停

Traveling in Japan:

Where do you start?

Bailey Jo Josie (Miyazaki)

Sooner or later you're going to figure it out — traveling in Japan is expensive. I discovered this very quickly after learning my placement in Miyazaki prefecture and wanting to make plans to visit my dear friend who lives in Joyo, which is outside Kyoto. Granted, I am very far south on Kyushu island so I should have known it will be a pain-and-a-half to travel, especially since I don't plan on buying a car. So, what are some options?

There are many online resources to help figure out the best ways to get across the country or even just to the next town or village. You're obviously going to go straight to Google to help, but don't forget that you have other, even more reliable sources than just searching through the internet; there are many Facebook JET groups that have people with many different perspectives on the best ways to travel. Ask them, and decide what's best for you. There are also specific websites for each mode of transportation.

Trains

For trains, I've found that westjr.co.jp is the easiest and least confusing website, at least for someone like me who only knows a fair amount of Japanese. I looked through quite a few sites before coming to it and it is as close as can be expected to a trip planning website for Amtrak (an American train system) or similar public transit. I used Google to find my closest station and then I could input that station into the website as well as my destination. It shows the amount of time it would take to get there, how much money it would cost in yen (one way) as well as other options like seat reservations. An option I

especially love is the feature which shows the last available train on your route. With this website, it is more than easy to navigate the different train systems throughout Japan. Other sites that help with the eastern part of Japan and Hokkaido are www.jreast.co.jp and www2.jrhokkaido.co.jp.



Airplanes

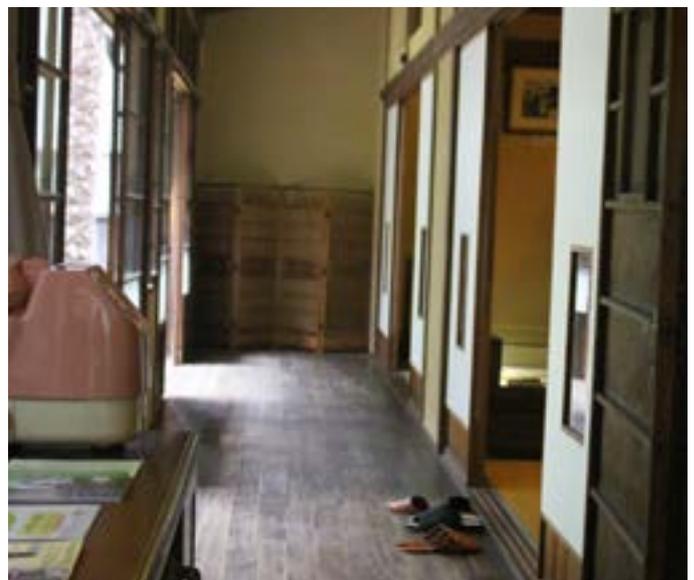
Flying is another option, especially for those of us who don't live on the main island of Honshu; I personally have been using Expedia for years and it's never really steered me wrong. I have been told that Kayak and Google are great for getting tickets as well, but it all depends on personal preference. I'll probably fly at least once to see my friend in Joyo and the upside is that the flight is only one hour, as opposed to roughly 8 hours on the train. The downside is that it costs more than the train, though only by about 10,000 *yen*. It gets to a point where you must decide between money and convenience. For me, I think I'll just cross that bridge when I get to it. Another site that's really helpful is Skyscanner; available in both English and Japanese, it helps you see the lowest prices available from multiple airlines.

Cars

Like I said earlier, I don't plan on buying a car. This is mainly because I don't want to pay the extra costs, but sometimes JETs are contractually required to have cars. In this case, the main thing to be aware of is tolls. It is possible to drive across Japan, but do your research on relevant toll roads — they are everywhere, at least around Kyushu. If I go anywhere with friends who happen to own cars, I'll be sure to at least pitch in for gas money. I want to explore as much of my prefecture as possible and attend as many festivals as I can, so there are times when a car is the best option.

Other modes

There are of course other ways to travel around your area: buses, bicycles, and even mopeds — all in all, it depends on your circumstances and what you're most comfortable with. Your best resource, though, would undoubtedly be your Japanese friends — get out there and explore!



Photos: Ashley Hirasuna

TRAVEL HACK

Tips and Tricks to Combat Jet Lag

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)

Some people are lucky enough to be able to hop on a plane and travel across time zones without suffering from the infamous and dreaded case of jet lag.

But, unfortunately for us mere mortals, the all too familiar daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, headache, insomnia, and even stomach problems are just a few of the consequences that we must deal with after these long-distance travels.

When your internal body clock no longer matches with the time of your new destination, it can be more than a little inconvenient. Case in point: Tokyo Orientation. Here, you'll be given several hours to recoup after your arrival in Tokyo, as

Orientation doesn't start until the morning after your arrival.

However, this isn't enough time for your internal clock to adjust because for each time zone crossed, it can take up to a day for your body to get in synch with the local time. So when you're tossed in a whirlwind of seminars, workshops, meet and greets, and a need to explore while feeling like you're trudging underwater, things can get quite overwhelming.

Thankfully, there are some ways to deal with jet lag, but just like grandma's miracle cold cures — a lot of the suggestions out there just do not work. Sorry, grandma. Instead, I've come to your rescue! Below are five proven ways to avoid and combat jet lag:

1 Start adjusting your sleep pattern before your trip.

Experts suggest that it would be ideal if you try to put yourself on a similar time zone as your destination days before your flight. This shift should be done gradually — and it's important to note that if you're flying east, you should go to bed earlier; and if you're traveling west, you should start going to bed later. Studies have found that when you attempt to gradually delay or advance your inner clock before you take a trip, the adjustment to the time difference will be faster and easier on your body; hence the effects of jet lag will be reduced.

2 I'm already on my flight! What do I do?

No need to panic; stress is not your friend at this time. As an aside, stress can make jet lag worse. The first thing to do is adjust the time on your watch or clock to match the time at your destination and then act accordingly. That means you should try to eat and sleep according to the local time. You must also avoid sleeping pills, as this will not help your body to naturally adjust to the new sleep pattern. This may be a tall order since it's not easy for many of us to simply force ourselves to sleep when we want to, so if you find yourself a little frustrated and unable to fall asleep, simply try to relax and get as much rest as you can. Sleep aids such as earplugs, noise cancelling headphones, and a proper eye mask would also be of great help to you here.

3 Figure out how to work with the light.

Our circadian rhythm (biological clock) helps us to know when to fall asleep and when to wake up; and our exposure to natural and artificial light has a major effect on this. So before (and during) your trip, try to control your exposure to these lights. What this means is if you need to adjust to an earlier time zone, try to bask in the morning sun and avoid the late afternoon light. And if it's a later time zone, just do the opposite. Oh, and there's an app for that. The iOS app, [Entrain](#), uses mathematics to help track and recommend the best time for light exposure in order for you to adjust to a new time zone. Notably, when you arrive at your destination, try to expose yourself to as much sunlight as possible (at the right time) and you'll find yourself adjusting a lot quicker to the new time zone. Staying indoors actually worsens jet lag — so take advantage of those breaks between workshops and seminars.

4

Stay hydrated.

It's important to stay hydrated before, during, and after your flight. Drink lots and lots of water, as dehydration essentially worsens the symptoms of jet lag. And as tempting as it is, it would be best to try and avoid too much caffeine and alcohol as they may not only dehydrate you, but if consumed within three or four hours before you plan to sleep, can disrupt it.

5

Anchor yourself to the new time zone.

Jet lag occurs when your circadian rhythm is thrown off, so one of the best ways to combat this is by 'anchoring' yourself to the new time zone. Resist taking naps, and try and get at least four hours of sleep at night. This is called the 'anchor sleep', and it would be ideal if you're able to sleep for a minimum of four hours straight so your body can adjust to the new time.

Sources:

<http://wb.md/2ilsSfn>

<http://bit.ly/1xwFsAS>

<http://bit.ly/2sW15jC>

Image source:

<http://tandl.me/22S5cFJ>

In summary, to truly make the most of your Tokyo Orientation experience and not be weighed down by jet lag, the best things to do are adjust to the local time, bask in the sunlight, hydrate, and get some anchor sleep. Now go forth and conquer!



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HOT AND TIRED IN TOKYO:

How to Spend Those Orientation Evenings

Jack Richardson (Yamagata)

So, you've made it. You've been chivvied all the way from inside the airport, onto the plane, off the plane, and into the hotel. You've been through a day's speeches and workshops, your smart clothes are like cling film in the heat — and you find yourself in the middle of the biggest city in the world, probably jet-lagged up to your eyeballs, with a whole evening to kill. Where to start?

Well, your deep *inaka* placement aside (it will be wonderful, don't worry), there's no denying the cultural capital permeating this Eastern Capital. (See what I did there?) The nights are few and short — unless you can adjust to your new time zone weirdly fast — so, you'd better get a move on! For your consideration, here's a list of some of the sights, sounds, and tastes that you might seek out during your stay. Naturally, all just a few stops from Shinjuku.

Rock Out

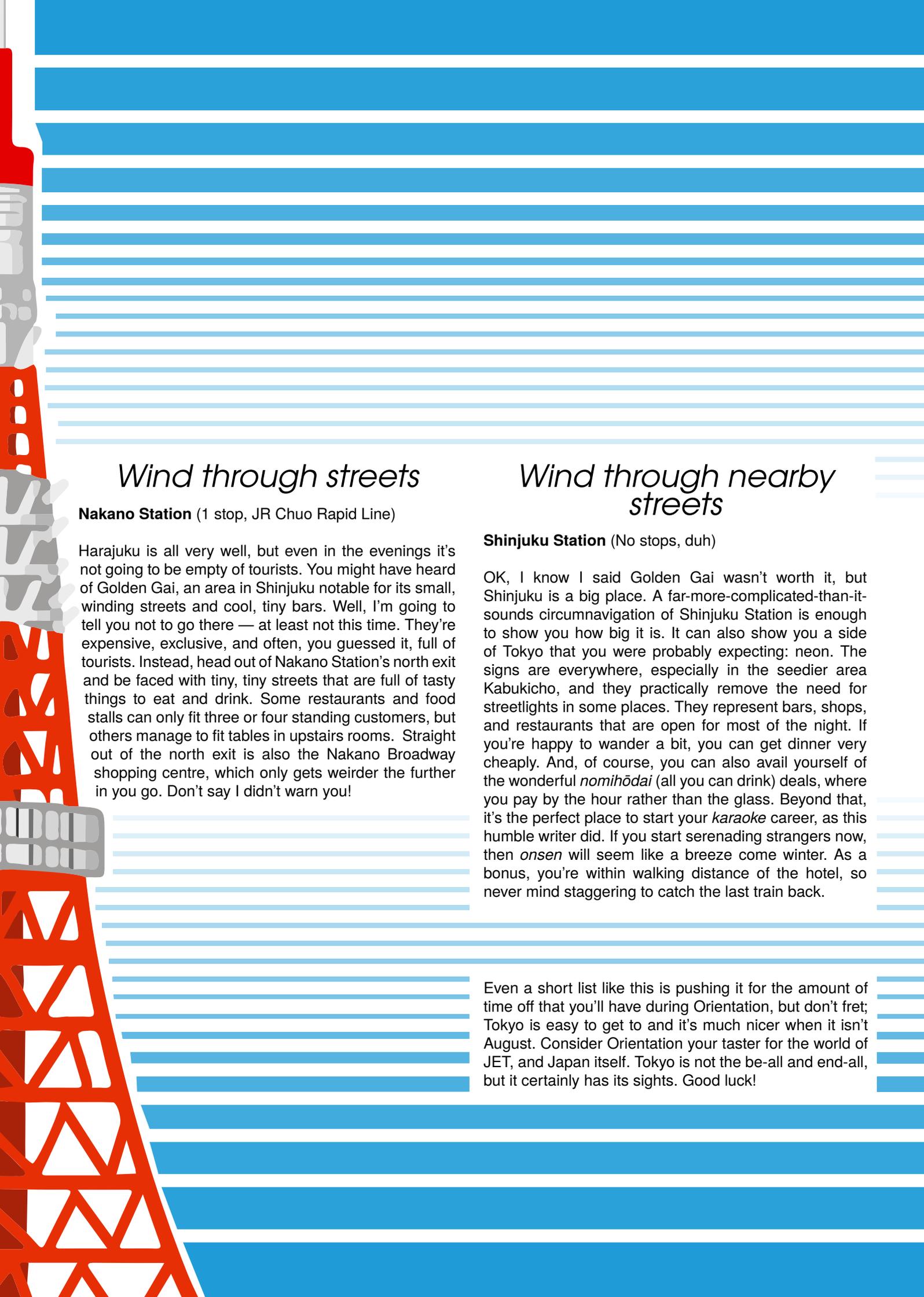
UFO Club, Koenji Station (2 stops, JR Chuo Rapid Line)
Club Heavy Sick, Hatagaya Station (2 stops, Keio New Line)

I get it, you're tired. Well, nothing's going to wake you up like a healthy dose of noise. Tokyo's underground music scene combines punk, rockabilly, a dash of blues, and a whole lot of volume — packed into a small space. Shows are often small and intimate, with acts mingling with the spectators in the crowd. Drinks are not too expensive (around 500 *yen*) and entrance fees (around the 1500-2000 *yen* mark) often include one drink: these are regular bars that need to fund their music, rather than venues that serve drinks, so expect a relaxed (relatively speaking) atmosphere that you can dip in and out of. Best of all, shows tend to start early at around 7 p.m. and finish up before midnight, leaving you with plenty of time to scurry home for some semblance of a good night's sleep, or to get some late-night food.

Calm down

Meiji Shrine, Harajuku Station (2 stops, JR Yamanote Line)

For the opposite effect, check out the Meiji Shrine. Embodying the spirits of the Emperor Meiji (1852-1912) and his wife, the shrine is open from sunrise to sunset. It's summertime (I'm sure you guessed), which means you have until about 10 p.m. to wander the wooded paths and/or beg the Emperor's deified spirit for good luck. Despite being in central Tokyo, the Meiji Shrine and its grounds are remarkably quiet. Plus, Harajuku is on your doorstep if you fancy some food or drink, or Yoyogi Park is next door if you're looking for open grass.



Wind through streets

Nakano Station (1 stop, JR Chuo Rapid Line)

Harajuku is all very well, but even in the evenings it's not going to be empty of tourists. You might have heard of Golden Gai, an area in Shinjuku notable for its small, winding streets and cool, tiny bars. Well, I'm going to tell you not to go there — at least not this time. They're expensive, exclusive, and often, you guessed it, full of tourists. Instead, head out of Nakano Station's north exit and be faced with tiny, tiny streets that are full of tasty things to eat and drink. Some restaurants and food stalls can only fit three or four standing customers, but others manage to fit tables in upstairs rooms. Straight out of the north exit is also the Nakano Broadway shopping centre, which only gets weirder the further in you go. Don't say I didn't warn you!

Wind through nearby streets

Shinjuku Station (No stops, duh)

OK, I know I said Golden Gai wasn't worth it, but Shinjuku is a big place. A far-more-complicated-than-it-sounds circumnavigation of Shinjuku Station is enough to show you how big it is. It can also show you a side of Tokyo that you were probably expecting: neon. The signs are everywhere, especially in the seedier area Kabukicho, and they practically remove the need for streetlights in some places. They represent bars, shops, and restaurants that are open for most of the night. If you're happy to wander a bit, you can get dinner very cheaply. And, of course, you can also avail yourself of the wonderful *nomihōdai* (all you can drink) deals, where you pay by the hour rather than the glass. Beyond that, it's the perfect place to start your *karaoke* career, as this humble writer did. If you start serenading strangers now, then *onsen* will seem like a breeze come winter. As a bonus, you're within walking distance of the hotel, so never mind staggering to catch the last train back.

Even a short list like this is pushing it for the amount of time off that you'll have during Orientation, but don't fret; Tokyo is easy to get to and it's much nicer when it isn't August. Consider Orientation your taster for the world of JET, and Japan itself. Tokyo is not the be-all and end-all, but it certainly has its sights. Good luck!

finding the fun



**Getting Out and Maintaining Your
Interests in Japan**

Sabrina Zirakzadeh (Osaka)



Are you unsure about pursuing your interests and having fun in your new home? Don't be! There are plenty of ways to explore your interests in your new community. The key is to be open to new experiences and be willing to reach out to others. Don't be afraid to get out there!

To begin with, a great resource is the National Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET). AJET uses a block system to organize various regional events across Japan, such as sports tournaments, parties, cultural explorations, theater performances, theme park trips, and more! There is bound to be something for everyone. Your AJET representatives and *senpai* JETs can also advise you on how to get involved in your hobbies, or how to find new or similar hobbies in your area. Whether it's learning how to search for and buy tickets to your favorite music acts, or finding the best places to keep up with your physical training, there is bound to be someone who can help you learn the ropes and keep up with what makes you happy — even in Japan!

There are also social groups that **do not** have an official AJET affiliation, but are largely created by and for the JET community. Feel free to join and connect with fellow JETs who share your interests!

- **JETFit:** Help each other reach your fitness goals through eating healthy and staying active. Advice on Japanese gyms, training in the countryside, group challenges, and more, can be easily found here — no matter your fitness level.
- **JET Food:** Trade recipes, share photos, and find ingredients that you'll need for your next masterpiece! This is also a good group for foodies and cooks looking for tips on how to navigate Japanese kitchens, source ingredients that are scarce in Japan, and get recipes that will help you to make the most of your stay!
- **JET Gaming Enjoy!:** A group for tabletop and console gamers of all kinds. Information on events, such as Tokyo Game Show, new releases, and organization of online or in-person gaming groups are found here.
- **JET Ladies+:** A community for all female-identifying and DFAB JETs to ask questions, share experiences, and share important resources for life in Japan.
- **JET Programme Couples and Families:** A group for those participating in the JET Programme with dependents or partners. Share information and get advice on bringing your family to Japan, housing, schooling, local community involvement, and most importantly, connecting with other families among the sea of single JETs surrounding you.
- **JET Photography Club:** A community for sharing and discussing all things photography-related. Whether you're a serious photographer, an Instagram junkie, or a beginner who's wondering which smartphone lens to buy, this is the place for you!
- **JET-Setters:** A group of like-minded travelers in the JET community. Here you'll find locals with advice for incoming travelers, and other travelers who have previously planned the same trip as yours. This group is indispensable for JETs wanting to get the most out of their travels in, around, and outside of Japan.
- **VegJET:** An open community and useful resource for vegan and vegetarian JETs living in Japan. Share information on veggie life in Japan, events, recipe ideas, and much more. Join this group if you're a current or incoming JET wishing to maintain a compassionate and healthy lifestyle!
VegJET Email



Finally, there are also Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that are directly affiliated with AJET and they're usually designed as support networks for JETs of different cultural backgrounds. The following groups are active SIGs and ways to get connected to their respective communities:

- **API AJET**: Created to provide a supportive environment for the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community living in Japan. To increase awareness about API diaspora issues, encourage dialogue, and act as a resource for anyone interested in understanding an API's unique perspective as a foreigner in Japan.
API AJET Email
 - **Hola JETs**: A group created to focus on topics related to JETs of Hispanic and Latino descent. Open to anyone who wishes to experience Hispanic and Latino culture while in Japan. *¡Bienvenidos!*
Hola JETs Email
 - **JET Christian Fellowship**: A community that helps JETs connect with their local churches and with other Christians to understand and share God's love and the Gospel.
JET Christian Fellowship Email
 - **JETs of African Descent**: A platform for discussion, support, and announcements relating to the JETs AD community. Find useful information and resources on hard-to-find beauty products, foreign foods, events, and other topics relevant to the JETs AD demographic.
JETs of African Descent Email
 - **Stonewall Japan**: An English-speaking LGBTQIA group in Japan that connects the LGBTQIA community, shares information and resources, provides a safe space for members, organizes events, and maintains resources on the website and online community.
Stonewall Japan Email
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Moving to a new country is an exciting adventure! There are new places to explore, new foods to eat, and new people to meet, but it is also possible to continue to do what you loved back home. Take time to ask and learn about your area and ways you can get involved. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there, and start making your own way in your new home!



Photos:
Illaura Rossiter

WELCOME TO CITY LIVING THE ROLLERCOASTER NIHONGLISH TEACHING JAPAN JET EXPERIENCE NEW CHAPTER BINGO

Abby Ryder-Huth (Gunma)

Finally realizing there is life after jet lag

Someone asking you if you like *natto*

Wondering if you bowed correctly

Realizing you might be lost...

Can't. Stop. Sweating.

WHAT IS THAT BUG?!?!

Discovering your new food obsession

Omiyage overload

Pre-jikoshoukai jitters

Falling in love with your prefecture

Exploring your neighborhood... without getting lost!

There's still more paperwork???

E.S.I.D.

FREE SPACE!

E.S.I.D.

Someone complimenting your use of chopsticks

Finally rocking at Cool Biz

Learning names, forgetting names

Feeling bewildered in the grocery store

Ganbaremasu -ing

VENDING MACHINES!

Trying something you never would have done in your home country

Meeting a mythical 5th year JET

Reminding yourself it's okay to be homesick

Alone in the teachers room

Successfully setting up your phone, internet and utilities

Post - *jikoshokai* relief



STAY COOL & LOOK CLEAN

Summer Style Survival
Abby Ryder-Huth (Gunma)

Two months after NASA announced its mission to send a spacecraft within 4 million miles of the sun, you, dear new Japanese resident, may feel you have beaten the spacecraft there. You are, after all, in the Land of the Rising Sun, and it rises at 4 AM. You know, because at 4 AM you are wide awake, far from home and ready to start another steamy day. You may have no climate-controlled space suits but you do have a closet full of business wear ready to sweat through. So without further ado, let's get dressed.

It's hard enough being the new kid — uh, teacher — in school without having to worry about how fervently the climate seems intent on making things worse. No one wants to be sweaty, smelly, sticky, or stained, so here are some tips straight from your JET *senpais*.



PREVENT

- It may seem counterintuitive, but layering up can help you get through the heat. Uniqlo's Airism line of moisture-wicking wear has plenty of fans, but even a cotton camisole or undershirt can help absorb sweat and keep the rest of your outfit dry.
- Cooling pads, originally designed for people with fevers, are widely available at pharmacies. Slap one on your neck, back or forehead and let the cooling gel soothe you. Think of them like ice packs for your body.
- Sun protect! Biore, Skin Aqua and Nivea are three very popular sunscreen brands, but there are plenty to choose from. Watery essence or gel type sunscreens go on light and clear and often have moisturizing properties. Milk types are smooth with a matte-finish and are meant to help fight oily skin. If you're going to be spending a lot of time outside, choose something waterproof and more substantial, such as Kose SportsBeauty.

PREPARE

- Not sure what the day has in store? Bring extra clothes. Leave a suit at school, as well as a clean shirt. Failing that, carry one in your bag. It's pretty uncomfortable to make your grand entrance into the teachers room feeling like you've just come from the gym, but it's even worse to face your students that way. Bringing extra school clothes may be the best overpacking you ever do.
- When it comes to makeup and facial hair, stay minimalist and tidy. You will sweat, and some people find they have more acne breakouts than usual. Even lightweight makeup can feel like it's melting off, so stick with waterproof products when you can. Even if you forgo your usual grooming routine, don't cut out sunscreen!

DAMAGE CONTROL

- ▮ You biked to school, the AC broke, or that 90% humidity just caught you off guard. Thank goodness for your extra clothes! Powder sheets like Biore Sarasara or Sea Breeze are the next best thing to a shower. They are designed to wipe away sweat and stickiness, and leave you smelling fresh and clean. Check your local supermarket or pharmacy for the widest (and cheapest!) selection, including unscented and extra-cooling varieties.
- ▮ Handkerchiefs, fans and towels are ubiquitous in the Japanese summertime, for men and women alike. They are also widely available (sometimes even as promotional freebies) and using them will have you feeling like a local.

FASHION TIPS OF THE TRADE

- ▮ Go for cotton and linen — but watch out for wrinkles!
- ▮ Be sure to stay professional. Knee or mid-length skirts, lightweight trousers, and short sleeved blouses are all safe bets for ladies, while men and women alike will look sharp in short-sleeved collared shirts or polos. Stay away from shorts, sleeveless shirts, and anything low-cut or revealing.
- ▮ Neutral colors may help you feel like you're blending in, but bolder colors aren't off-limits. Take cues from your colleagues, and when in doubt, aim to dress a little more conservatively.
- ▮ Didn't pack right? Never fear. There are plenty of places to shop, and not all of them will break the bank (especially before your first paycheck!). Uniqlo and GU are top bets for affordable, quality clothes, and for a slight splurge, MUJI will have you decked out in cool, linen-y style. Tokyo and other major cities even have western favorites like H&M and Forever 21, which stock a wide range of sizes.
- ▮ Stay away from the Three S's: Don't be Smelly, Sloppy, or Sexy. Stick with the Three C's instead: Confident, Collected, and Cool. You'll be sure to turn heads — in the right way.

Photos:
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LIFESTYLE



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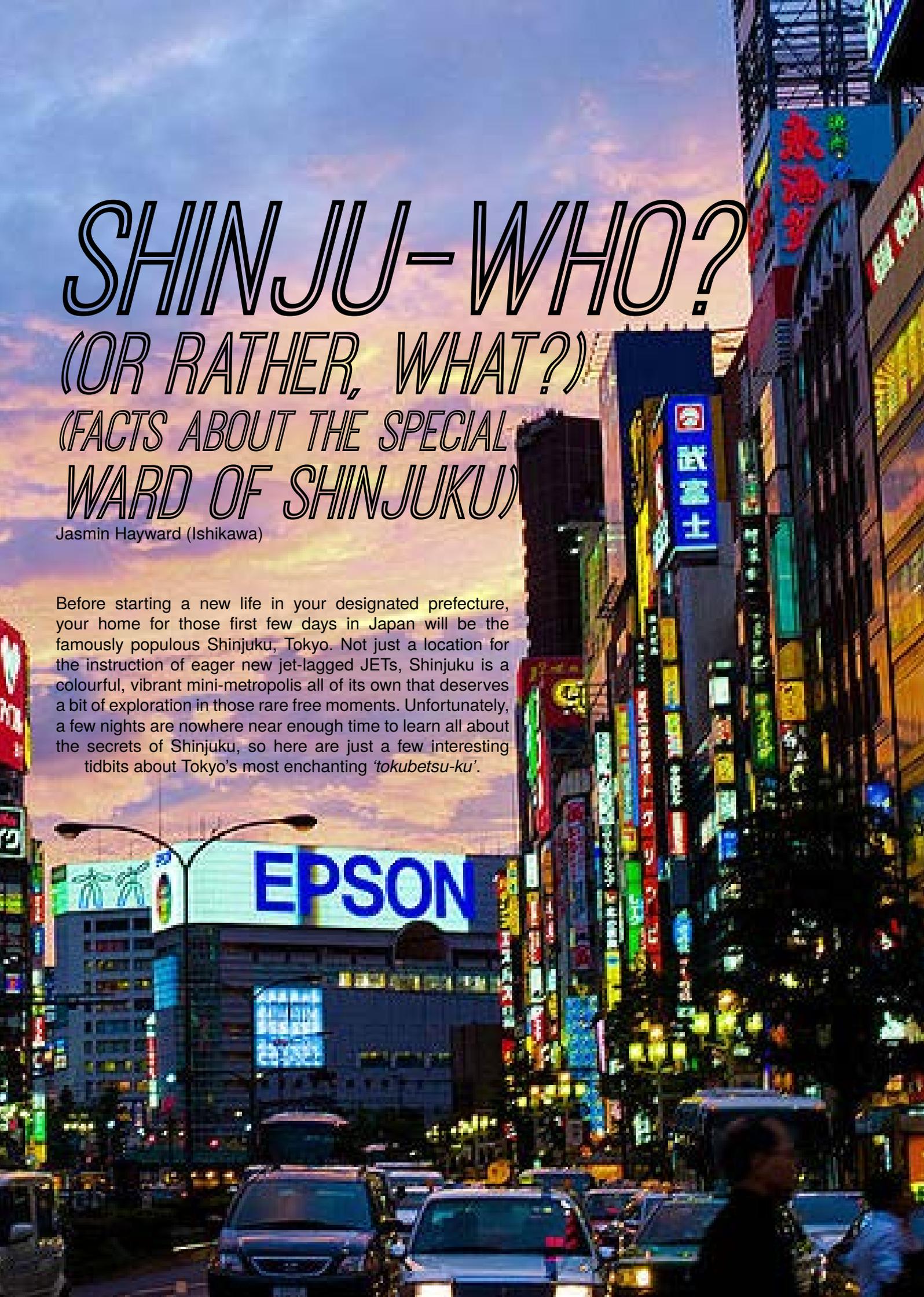
SHINJU-WHO?

(OR RATHER, WHAT?)

*(FACTS ABOUT THE SPECIAL
WARD OF SHINJUKU)*

Jasmin Hayward (Ishikawa)

Before starting a new life in your designated prefecture, your home for those first few days in Japan will be the famously populous Shinjuku, Tokyo. Not just a location for the instruction of eager new jet-lagged JETs, Shinjuku is a colourful, vibrant mini-metropolis all of its own that deserves a bit of exploration in those rare free moments. Unfortunately, a few nights are nowhere near enough time to learn all about the secrets of Shinjuku, so here are just a few interesting tidbits about Tokyo's most enchanting 'tokubetsu-ku'.





1 **Shinjuku station is the busiest station in the world**

You probably knew that one already, didn't you? But did you know what makes it so busy? Often described as a labyrinth, Shinjuku's main railway station has, on average, 3.64 million visitors every day using its 36 platforms, 200 exit points, and both its underground and overground train facilities. If that wasn't enough, you only need to walk a short distance through a series of connecting hallways to get to another five train stations in the area, with another 17 platforms between them. What's more, around 25,000 trains go through the overground and underground platforms at Shinjuku every day. So efficient are the staff, however, that at peak times there are only two minutes between trains on the same line. Infamous not only in Japan, in 2013 British painter Carl Randall depicted the station in a series for an exhibition at London's National Portrait Gallery.

2 **Shinjuku is the most international part of Tokyo**

So, what better place to start your journey as international residents of Japan?! Approximately 10% of the ward's 337,556 citizens are estimated to be non-Japanese; of these, the majority hail from China, Vietnam, and Korea (and because of this, Shinjuku has a thriving Koreatown, Shin-Okubo). Not only this, but Shinjuku also has more French and Nepalese residents than any other area in Japan. *C'est magnifique!*

3 **Godzilla lives in Shinjuku**

We all know about the giant, green reptile who destroys skyscrapers, but did you know that in 2015 Shinjuku granted the iconic character citizenship? According to his residency certificate, Godzilla has been granted this honorary residency to promote 'the entertainment of and watching over the Kabuki-cho neighbourhood,' as well as to 'draw visitors from around the globe.' The 'King of Monsters' has even been appointed as a tourist ambassador by the Shinjuku City Office. You can visit Godzilla at the Hotel Gracery, where a statue of the monster's head rests and roars on top of the building.

4 **Shinjuku towers above the rest**

An economic hub, Shinjuku's 'skyscraper district' is home to many of the tallest buildings in Tokyo, including Tokyo Opera City Tower, Shinjuku Park Tower, and of course Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building No. 1, previously the tallest building in the capital. Also, some of these buildings just happen to house the Japanese headquarters of major international companies, such as McDonald's Japan, Subaru, and electronics manufacturer Seiko Epson. It's even home to some of Japan's most luxurious hotels, including the Hilton Tokyo, and Park Hyatt, the hotel famously featured in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*.



5 **Shinjuku is the centre of Tokyo politics**

As the location of Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building No. 1 (which houses the governor's office, the metropolitan assembly chamber, and all administrative headquarters), Shinjuku is the *de facto* home of Tokyo's metropolitan government. However, for geographical reasons Shinjuku is not named as Tokyo's prefectural capital. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building No. 1 has become famous in its own right, though, appearing in many of Japan's science fiction films and novels. The building itself is known for its unique design, which is intriguingly based on both a computer chip and a gothic cathedral.

6 **There's more to eat in Shinjuku**

That's because Shinjuku has more restaurants than any other ward in Tokyo. In fact, there are an estimated 5,795 eating establishments in the ward as of summer 2017, from tiny eateries to giant fast food outlets — 18 of which are Michelin-starred. Shinjuku is also home to one of the cheapest Michelin-starred restaurants in the world, Nakajima. The basement restaurant, which specialises in sardines, can be found near Shinjuku station and offers a full set meal for only ¥800.

Photos:
Jasmin Hayward

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Shinjuku: a mythical metropolis in a modern world

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Shinjuku has long been celebrated as one of Tokyo's most captivating locations, and it's easy to see why. At once, incredibly international and unmistakably Japanese, very modern yet proudly established — it is a cosmopolitan haven just begging to be discovered. You can get a taste of tradition with a visit to Hanazono Shrine or cup of green tea in Shinjuku Gyoen, or sample the city's exhilarating nightlife in one of its incomparable districts. Perhaps, Kabukicho, — Japan's largest red light district — Golden Gai, — with its narrow passageways and shanty-style bars — or Omoide Yokocho, — for more narrow alleyways, tiny bars, and great food — affectionately known as 'Piss Alley.' Shinjuku even has the largest LGBTQ+ community in Asia and boasts the world's largest concentration of gay bars: Shinjuku chōme.

all this, it's easy to see
one could fall in love with
uku. But don't just listen to
o check it out for yourself!

Set Yourself Up for a Happy, Healthy Year!

Health Tips for a Year in the Life in Japan

Jocelyn Russell (Gunma)

Stepping off the plane at Narita Airport is surreal experience. Excitement mixed with a bit of fear as you nervously laugh with the random people from your flight about the large number of foreigners in line at customs. From that point forward, it can be a whirlwind of English teaching seminars and the exciting lights beaming all across Shinjuku. A couple days later and you're whisked away to your new home in Japan. While enjoying all that life in Japan has to offer, it can be very easy to forget the basics, such as how to take good care of yourself.

Whether this is your first time in Japan or it's been a longtime reunion in the making, the thrill of moving here to work can shake up our health in many

ways. Speaking from experience, I can say with certainty that I felt like my first year was riddled with illness of different types and days when I'd never before been so lethargic. Looking back as a second (almost third) year JET, there were many mistakes I made during my first year which may have contributed to how I felt.

Consider the following a sort of foundational to-do list that you can change as much or as little as you like. The first year of JET is an incredible, life-changing experience, but can also be a bit tough. These are just some pieces of advice that I wish I had received prior to my arrival.

1 Be extremely careful in the heat

While we're all placed in a wide variety of locations and climates across Japan, nearly all JET participants will agree that Japanese summers are difficult to endure. Nearly 2,000 people were taken to the hospital in the first week of July 2017 alone (1). Heat stroke (熱射病 *ねっしゃびょう* *nesshabyou*) is not to be

■ taken lightly, especially while moving and settling into your community. Make sure to always be drinking fluids, ideally water. If you're planning on being active, buy a sports drink or prepare your own at home with mix you can find at any grocery or drug store. Chilled barley tea (麦茶 *むぎちゃ* *mugicha*) is also great in cooling and hydrating the body (2). You can brew your own with tea bags from your local grocery store. Chances are your workplace will have some ready in the fridge!

2 Learn and enforce your limits

As an ALT or CIR, work life can become fairly busy fairly quickly, often times with no prior warning. That being said, it is crucial that you learn and enforce how much you can do during your working hours. Especially during the first year, when staff and students are overjoyed to meet

■ their new co-worker/teacher, it can be easy to become overwhelmed. For example, while you may want to accept invitations to join three club activities after classes, understand that your workload may increase at any given time. A heavy workload plus joining many club activities can make for a very tired JET, even to those who are fresh to the position. Instead of going ahead full throttle, make a club activities schedule, giving yourself time to recover from class and prep work and still visit some clubs at the end of the day.

Be cautious of the "JET burnout": enjoy your new life here, but also remember to take baby steps along the way. You will be bombarded with offers to join club activities, help out with community events and attend a large number of social gatherings. Take advantage of this exciting time and experience your new community! However, know when it is time to step back and do what you want to do, not just what your community is inviting you to do.

3 Everything in moderation

If there is anything I can always remember my mother telling me is that it is important to take everything in with moderation. You can apply this to nearly all aspects of your life in Japan, but let's specifically look at it from a food and drink standpoint. It's a time of festivals and drinking parties with friends and co-workers and newcomers may find

■ themselves wanting to experience all of the new and exciting food and drink that Japan has to offer. When the festivals have come and gone and the number of drinking parties begin to dwindle, Japanese convenience stores and vending machines often lure us with delicious smells and intriguing flavors. While you should go ahead and expand your palate, proceed with caution. Food and drink found at festivals, drinking parties and even convenience stores and vending machines are not always the best for your health. Enjoy your new culinary adventure with moderation and you'll be setting yourself up for a healthy time in Japan!

4 Be proactive for cold and flu season

Coming to Japan does not exempt one from contracting the flu and common cold. For many new JET participants, this may be the first time you've worked closely with children and young adults, so it is best to prepare for the worst. Cold and flu season generally hits schools at the end of October and continues into the spring. While your days may be very busy with prep work being squeezed in between classes, take the 30 seconds needed to properly wash your hands and finish with some hand sanitizer (if available). Washing your hands after class, before/after eating (especially if you're eating with students), and after using the toilet are key in keeping yourself healthy and stopping the spread of germs.

While wearing a mask during our day to day activities has a disputed reputation for illness prevention and the spread of germs, it is considered polite to wear a mask when you are sick. I personally only wear a mask for preventative reasons: if I'm sick or teaching a class that has experienced a flu outbreak. If you do need to wear a mask, make sure to always wash your hands before putting it on and before you adjust it. It is also best to change it often during the day (3).

If you are willing and able to, it is highly recommended that you vaccinate yourself against the flu. Most clinics will have vaccines available for around 3,000-4,000 yen and some do not require an appointment. If you're unsure how to go about getting vaccinated, ask a co-worker how they get their flu shot. Often times, teachers will go together to a nearby clinic to get vaccinated. Ask if you can join them!

Japan does offer a wide variety of over-the-counter medicines to ease the symptoms of common illness. While Google is great in finding out what medicine is for what, it might be easier to ask another trusted JET participant or expat in your area for recommendations regarding OTC medications.

Keeping spaces clean is also key in stopping the spread of illness. The virus that causes the common cold can stay alive on a surface for nearly 24 hours (4)! If you travel to many schools, chances are your desks are shared by other co-workers. When you arrive at your school, a quick wipe down of everything you use will work wonders. Cleaning spaces should not be confined to just your workplace! Make sure you keep your living spaces clean regularly.

5 Self-care is key

I personally love how mainstream the term "self-care" is becoming. I have found this to be even more important to me since moving to Japan. While this life may be everything you have been dreaming of, moving to a foreign country can pose some difficulties and there very well might be days that are hard to get through. In those times, putting yourself first is so crucial. Make sure you are getting proper rest and know when to say "no" when you're beginning to feel tired. Don't be afraid to sit out on something because you know you might not feel at your best when you finish. Take time a couple days during the week to do whatever you want to do. Do what you love every so often, whether it be a hobby or just relaxing with Netflix or a book. Regular self-care is important to schedule into your weeks during the first year on JET.

The first year on JET is a fantastic one; there is so much to do and so many new faces to meet. My advice is to take in as much as you can during this special year, but remember to put your health and well-being first. A healthy body and mind makes for a great time in Japan, so don't forget that when you go off to exciting places!



There are many free resources for JET participants and other expats in Japan to take advantage of if there ever comes a difficult time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the following sources:

AJET Peer Support Group (8pm - 7am)
Tel: 050-5534-5566
Skype: AJETPSG
Tokyo English Life Line: (9am - 11pm)
Tel: 03-5774-0992

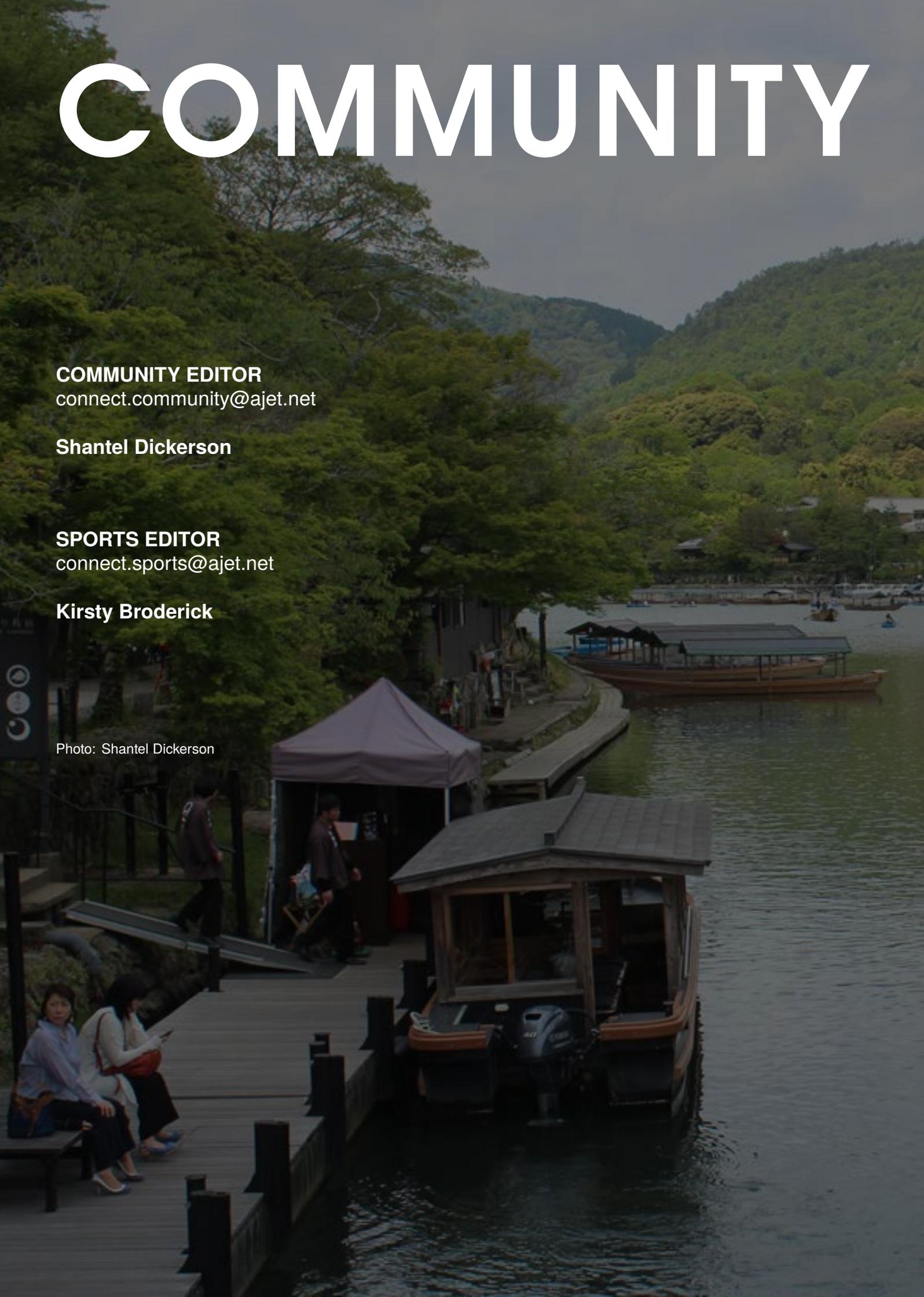
Sources:

- (1) <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003800461>
- (2) <https://eatdrinkbetter.com/2014/09/02/barley-tea-benefits/>
- (3) https://phd5.idaho.gov/PanFluSouthIdaho/docs/Pandemic_Flu_Guidance_for_Non-Health_Care_Employers.pdf
- (4) <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/how-long-do-bacteria-and-viruses-live-outside-the-body.aspx>

Photos:

Illaura Rossiter
Shantel Dickerson

COMMUNITY

A scenic view of a lake with traditional Japanese boats and a forested background. The image shows a wooden dock with a boat in the foreground, a purple tent, and people sitting on a bench. In the background, there are more boats and a forested hillside.

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Photo: Shantel Dickerson



Community Connecting: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

9 interviews to shed light on what connecting to the community looks like in Japan

Shantel Dickerson (Oita)

You are making your way to Tokyo Orientation, and wondering, "How the heck am I going to make a home in my new country?" Or, you have been here for a few years, and you still find yourself asking the same question. How in the world is a foreigner supposed to integrate into the famously impenetrable community circles of Japan? Take a look at these nine authentic stories, experiences, and tips from JETs across Japan, on what community connection, or lack thereof, looks like.

Meet the Interviewees!



Vi Phan

Sakata City, Yamagata
(1 year on JET)



Kaia Marie Range

Kamagaya City, Chiba
(1 year on JET)



Jonathan Foster

Niimi City, Okayama
(1 year on JET)



Jesse Anne Blyth

Adachi-ku, Tokyo
(3 years on JET)



Simon Woodgett

Fukui City, Fukui
(7 years on JET, as ALT)



Dorian Cervantes

Sosa City, Chiba
(1 year on JET)



Devon Williamson

Nonoichi City, Ishikawa
(1 year on JET)



Arden Taylor

Kahoku City, Ishikawa
(2 years on JET)



Andres Marrero

Kobe City, Hyogo
(incoming,
previously lived in Japan)



Q: How do you define 'community'?

Andres – When I think of community, I tend to look at it as the people you surround yourself with. Those people will often times be your identity.

Devon – A group of individuals who are passionate about something together — be it their geographical location, a hobby, a language... Even online communities can be very close-knit!

Jesse – I define community as a group of beings that communicate with one another and share a common goal.

Q: Tell us a story about your most memorable 'community' moment.

Devon – The online community JET Ladies+ helped my mental health get back on track. For months, I had problems finding counseling and medication in Japan. During a depressive low, I turned to JET Ladies+ for help. This community saved me, and I'm very grateful!

Johnny – I discovered a shrine in the middle of a forest, and as the sun set, it grew quite creepy. I noticed a flashlight coming towards me, and I felt very vulnerable. However, it turned out to be an elderly man playing Pokémon Go! We chatted there for nearly an hour, making me feel comfortable even in the creepiest of places.

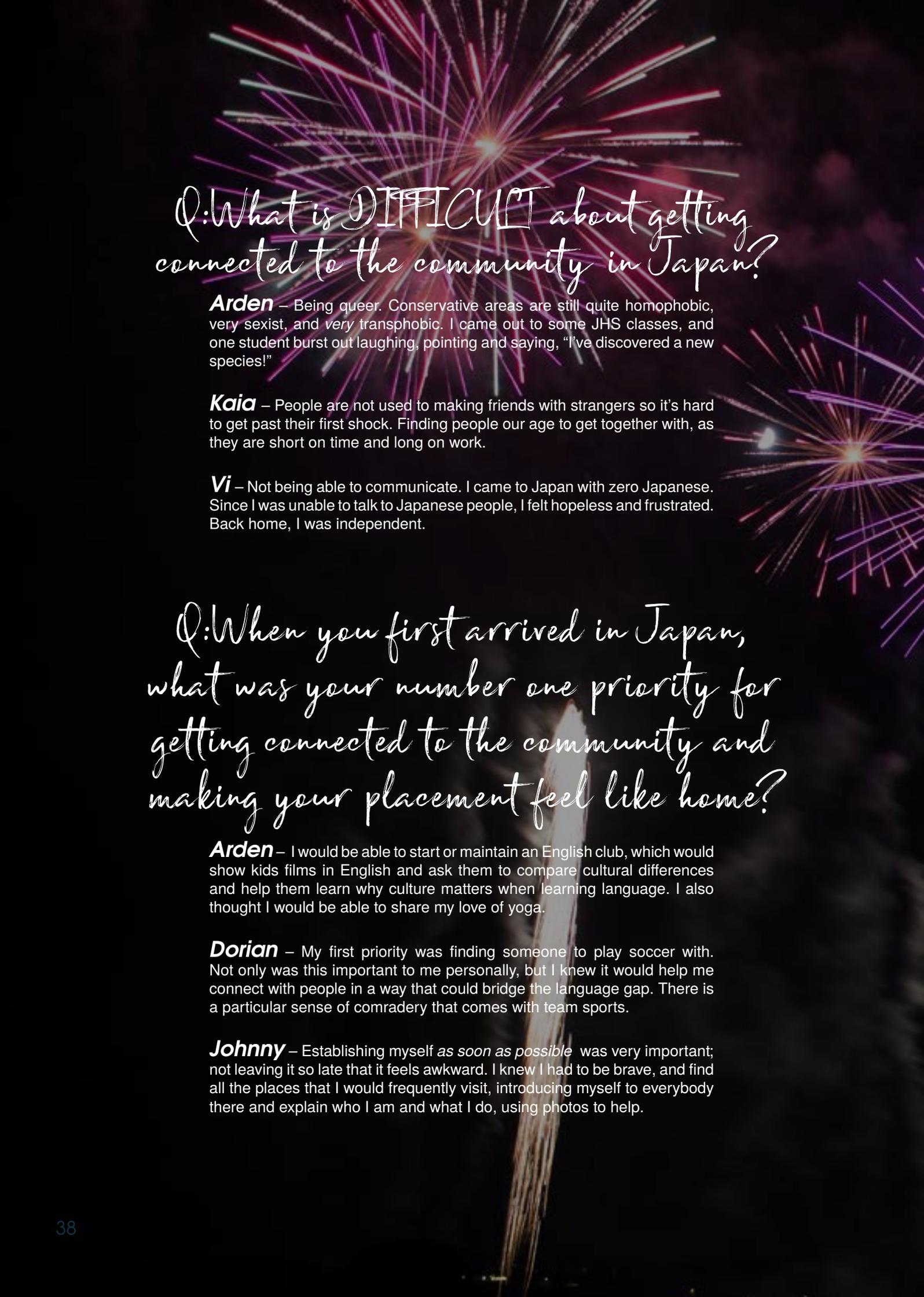
Vi – At my school's *bonenkai* (忘年会: the end of the year party), we did *karaoke* and each table had to perform, but no one at my table wanted to sing. I told them I would sing only if the song was in English. During my performance, I saw my co-workers singing along with me. At the moment, I realized that I had always been part of my school's community.

Q: What is EASY about getting connected to the community in Japan?

Dorian – Attending local public events such as tea ceremonies and festivals. Japanese people are proud of their culture and welcoming of foreigners in those settings.

Jesse – Japan is filled with mom-and-pop shops and I can't count the number of times I've stumbled into a small business and instantly been made to feel at home by its owners.

Simon – Japanese people are so open to meeting foreigners. Japan is so active in fostering a sense of community and maintaining and respecting traditions — even the younger members of society.



Q: What is **DIFFICULT** about getting connected to the community in Japan?

Arden – Being queer. Conservative areas are still quite homophobic, very sexist, and very transphobic. I came out to some JHS classes, and one student burst out laughing, pointing and saying, “I’ve discovered a new species!”

Kaia – People are not used to making friends with strangers so it’s hard to get past their first shock. Finding people our age to get together with, as they are short on time and long on work.

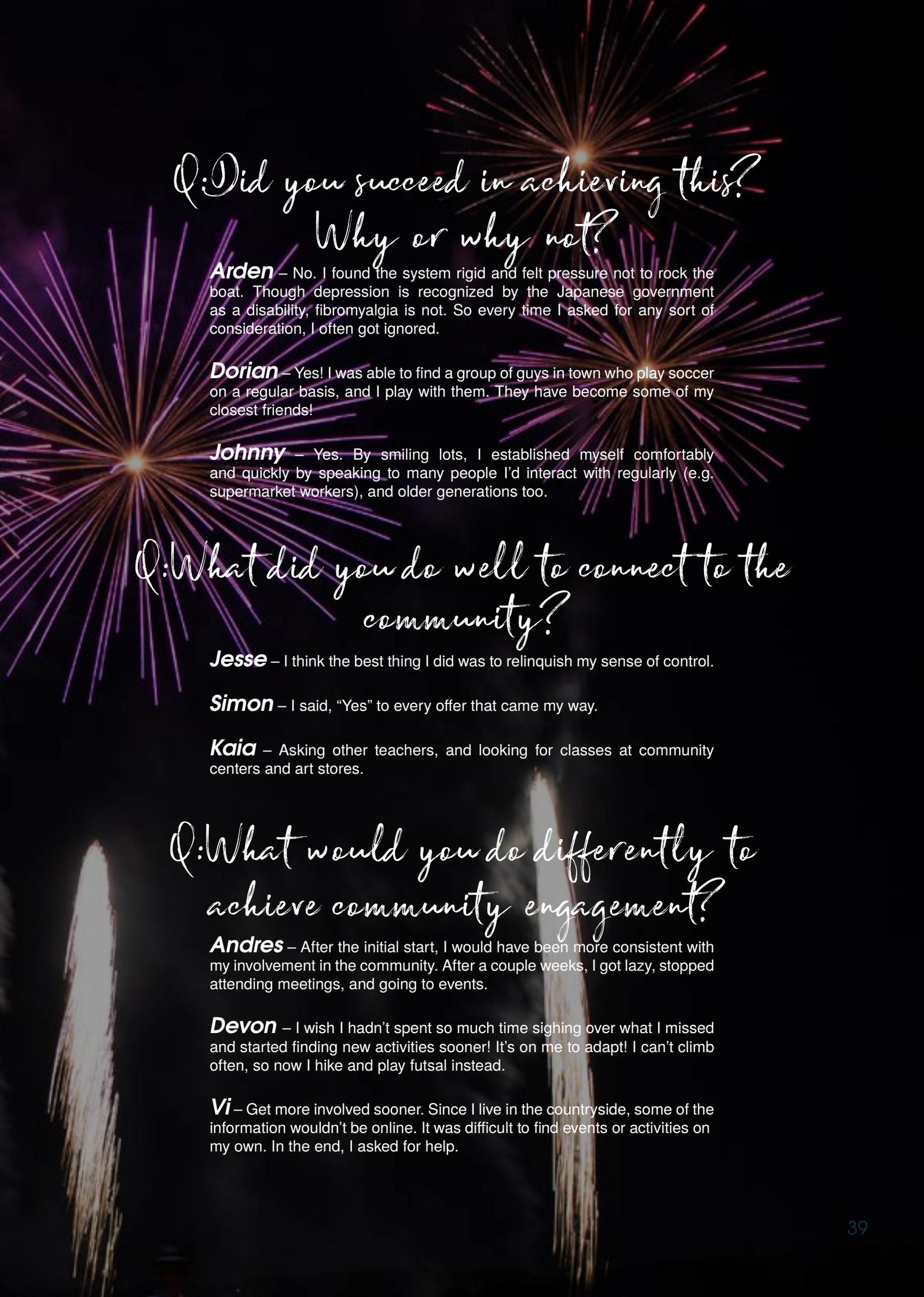
Vi – Not being able to communicate. I came to Japan with zero Japanese. Since I was unable to talk to Japanese people, I felt hopeless and frustrated. Back home, I was independent.

Q: When you first arrived in Japan, what was your number one priority for getting connected to the community and making your placement feel like home?

Arden – I would be able to start or maintain an English club, which would show kids films in English and ask them to compare cultural differences and help them learn why culture matters when learning language. I also thought I would be able to share my love of yoga.

Dorian – My first priority was finding someone to play soccer with. Not only was this important to me personally, but I knew it would help me connect with people in a way that could bridge the language gap. There is a particular sense of comradery that comes with team sports.

Johnny – Establishing myself *as soon as possible* was very important; not leaving it so late that it feels awkward. I knew I had to be brave, and find all the places that I would frequently visit, introducing myself to everybody there and explain who I am and what I do, using photos to help.



Q: Did you succeed in achieving this?
Why or why not?

Arden – No. I found the system rigid and felt pressure not to rock the boat. Though depression is recognized by the Japanese government as a disability, fibromyalgia is not. So every time I asked for any sort of consideration, I often got ignored.

Dorian – Yes! I was able to find a group of guys in town who play soccer on a regular basis, and I play with them. They have become some of my closest friends!

Johnny – Yes. By smiling lots, I established myself comfortably and quickly by speaking to many people I'd interact with regularly (e.g. supermarket workers), and older generations too.

Q: What did you do well to connect to the
community?

Jesse – I think the best thing I did was to relinquish my sense of control.

Simon – I said, “Yes” to every offer that came my way.

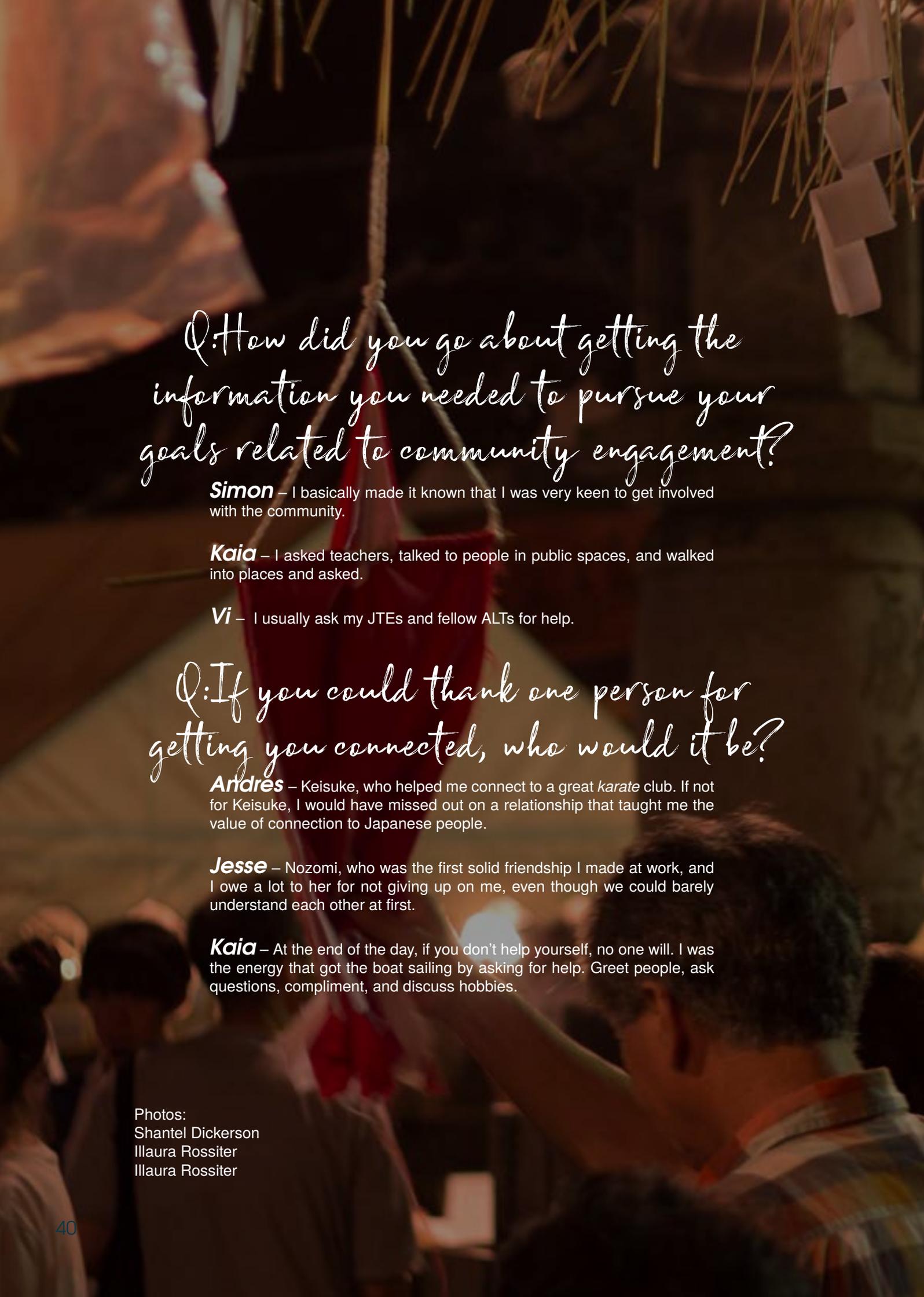
Kaia – Asking other teachers, and looking for classes at community centers and art stores.

Q: What would you do differently to
achieve community engagement?

Andres – After the initial start, I would have been more consistent with my involvement in the community. After a couple weeks, I got lazy, stopped attending meetings, and going to events.

Devon – I wish I hadn't spent so much time sighing over what I missed and started finding new activities sooner! It's on me to adapt! I can't climb often, so now I hike and play futsal instead.

Vi – Get more involved sooner. Since I live in the countryside, some of the information wouldn't be online. It was difficult to find events or activities on my own. In the end, I asked for help.



Q: How did you go about getting the information you needed to pursue your goals related to community engagement?

Simon – I basically made it known that I was very keen to get involved with the community.

Kaia – I asked teachers, talked to people in public spaces, and walked into places and asked.

Vi – I usually ask my JTEs and fellow ALTs for help.

Q: If you could thank one person for getting you connected, who would it be?

Andrés – Keisuke, who helped me connect to a great *karate* club. If not for Keisuke, I would have missed out on a relationship that taught me the value of connection to Japanese people.

Jesse – Nozomi, who was the first solid friendship I made at work, and I owe a lot to her for not giving up on me, even though we could barely understand each other at first.

Kaia – At the end of the day, if you don't help yourself, no one will. I was the energy that got the boat sailing by asking for help. Greet people, ask questions, compliment, and discuss hobbies.

Photos:
Shantel Dickerson
Illaura Rossiter
Illaura Rossiter

Q: Now that you have been in Japan a while, what new ways are you getting involved in your community?

Devon – I'm making myself available to other JETs who might need help adapting, especially in the area of mental health. I try to be responsive in the online communities which helped me.

Johnny – I teach European cuisine to kids and their parents. I bring my hairdresser random things like European cheeses and beers. I'm involved in sports, and volunteer at local events.

Simon – I created my own community event! Over the last 3 years, I have hosted seven co-ed, 5 a-side, football (soccer) tournaments with a great international mix of people.

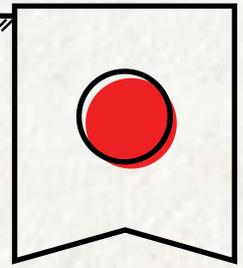
Q: If you could give two pieces of advice to incoming JETs about getting involved in their community, what would it be?

Andres – 1. Within the first 6 months in your new community, get involved with as much as you can because this is your golden opportunity. 2. Remember that JET is not just a job. It is a way to reach and inspire people from all over the world.

Arden – 1. Don't expect that you will ever be truly accepted as a member of the Japanese community. 2. Don't waste your time caring what anyone thinks. Be respectful of this new community of course, but keeping your sanity and self-respect are much more important.

Dorian – 1. Keep asking. If there is something you love to do, bring it up when you are having a conversation with people. 2. Use the proper channels. People are often referred so that when you enter a space you don't initially belong to, it is not perceived as intrusive or threatening.

STUDYING JAPANESE



Apps and Online Learning

Kirsty Broderick (Saitama)

A lot of JETs will want to improve their Japanese language abilities. There are many apps out there to help and with most people bringing or buying a smartphone, this is a great way to enhance your learning.



ANKIAPP



Operating System/Platform: iOS and Android
Price: Free

AnkiApp is a flashcard based learning system, ideal for studying vocabulary. You can download a variety of premade decks, or create your own. The app's secret weapon is the grading system; you grade how easily you recalled the answer, and with four levels from fail to easy, this grading informs the algorithm that schedules how frequently the cards come up.

Many of the features are available for use offline, making it great to use when out and about, or stuck in the teachers' room without any Wi-Fi. Reviews of loaded decks, created decks and other operations performed offline will automatically sync when you regain Internet connection.

Protip: Be honest when grading your reviews – otherwise you're just cheating yourself!





DUOLINGO



Operating System/Platform: iOS and Android
Price: Free

The popular language learning app Duolingo recently added Japanese to its repertoire. In Duolingo, you progress through forty lessons ranging from Hiragana 1 to Olympics. The lessons consist of varied activities involving translating from English to Japanese and Japanese to English and transliterating Japanese. Sometimes pictures are used to assist with vocabulary. Once you have completed the lesson you may review it as needed. Duolingo does not explicitly teach grammar points, expecting users to pick up the grammar through the sentences used.

Duolingo has gamified elements to motivate users. You may join a group and compete on the group leader board – moving up by completing more lessons and reviews. You also set a target of points to be met on a daily basis and the app maintains a record of your progress.

Protip: practice without sound to focus on writing and reading skills or with sound and not looking at your screen to focus on listening skills!



WANIKANI



Operating System/Platform: Online
Price: Trial the first three levels free, then subscription based

WaniKani is an online system focused specifically on *kanji*. The programme uses mnemonics to teach users *kanji* and radicals. You will also learn associated vocabulary. You learn the *kanji*, radicals, and vocabulary in small chunks; these are then added to your review list. The key to WaniKani is the spaced repetition system, meaning that *kanji* you have gotten wrong come up more frequently for review. The system is predicated on the idea that if your brain is forced to recall something just before it would have forgotten the item is better remembered in the future. This is similar to AnkiApp's grading system. However, it does not rely on the user honestly grading themselves.

"I've learned more *Kanji* and Vocab in 10 weeks using WaniKani than I have over the course of my studies, and I actually wake up early looking forward to it."
-Nicholas Jones, Tottori

Protip: To make the most of the free levels, wait to subscribe until you have stopped unlocking new lessons!



MIDORI

Operating System/Platform: iOS
Price: \$4.99

Midori is a Japanese to English and English to Japanese dictionary with 146,000 entries and 150,000 example sentences. Midori allows users to look up words with many different methods, including handwriting *kanji*, typing *romaji* or *kana*, or even mixing *kana* and *romaji*. Midori is completely offline, making it ideal for looking words up on the fly.

Not merely a dictionary, you can also bookmark words that you have looked up. The words can then be organised into custom categories and added to flashcards created within the app.

"I swear by Midori as my dictionary and personal Japanese database. It has a stellar UI and excellent functionality. Plus, it's constantly being updated." -Rachel Peters, Gunma

Protip: Try organising the kanji you may come across often with the bookmark feature - you can organise these into folders with titles such as 'school' 'shopping' 'medical' so they are easier to find!



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

Contact the Head Editor of *CONNECT*, Timothy Saar, at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

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

SPOTLIGHT

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

COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and issuu.com.

PHOTOS

Members of the JET community contributed to the photos you see in this issue. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Lehlogonolo Mokotedi, at lehlogonolo.mokotedi@ajet.net.

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.

COMICS

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



CONNECT WITH US

Interested in contributing to *CONNECT*? Want to stay up-to-date on interview opportunities, photo requests, and *CONNECT* announcements? Sign up to be a contributor at the [Connect Contributors Circle](#) online to receive updates from us, pitch your ideas, and get involved with the *CONNECT* staff and community. You can find the current *CONNECT* team and their contact information [here](#).

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