

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

APRIL
2018

What's in the bucket bag? - The Elementary School Paper Trail

Experience Kyoto's craft beer Renaissance!

Kiara Cottage: Homemade cookies fostering community

Atomic Storytellers: Can A-bomb apprentices tell it like the survivors?

Body Shaming in Japan: What to expect and how to beat it!



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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Spring is finally in the air! Happy Easter to all who celebrate, April Fools' for some lighthearted fun, and *Hanami* out in the fresh outdoors! Now that it's getting warmer throughout the country, make sure to take care of yourself with seasonal allergies and nasty colds that come with the change in temperature. (Check out our article on how to cover up some allergy afflictions in our Fashion section!) Allergies aren't going to keep me down, I'll say!

I hope you had a great graduation experience this year and were able to take advantage of that mini break to get any travelling or self-pampering done. Now that it's April again, the new school year starts. You might find yourself wondering how Japanese school children deal with school notices (we've got an article for that), or how Josh Mangham did in his first Tokyo Marathon (we've got an article for that), or what to do now that it's safer weather to travel outside (we've got plenty of articles for that!). If not, then you are now, because I've certainly learned quite a lot from this issue.

Read on to find more interesting articles and stories brought by readers like you. Also, stay tuned for our end of the year issue and our creative issue coming up! Take care of yourselves and enjoy one of Japan's "four seasons" while you can.

Lilian Diep
Head Editor
3rd Year Toyama ALT



Photo: Evashree Pillay



NEWS AND EVENTS



NEWS EDITOR

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Tresha Barrett

I'm here, just flowing through time which doesn't exist but controls like the strings on a puppet...

EVENTS EDITOR

connect.events@ajet.net

Bailey Jo Josie

*Blow that homesick blues by having a party with your JET mates, where you watch *The Room* and film everyone's reactions.*

Photo: Shantel Dickerson



Events Calendar:

April

Bailey Jo Josie (Miyazaki)

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

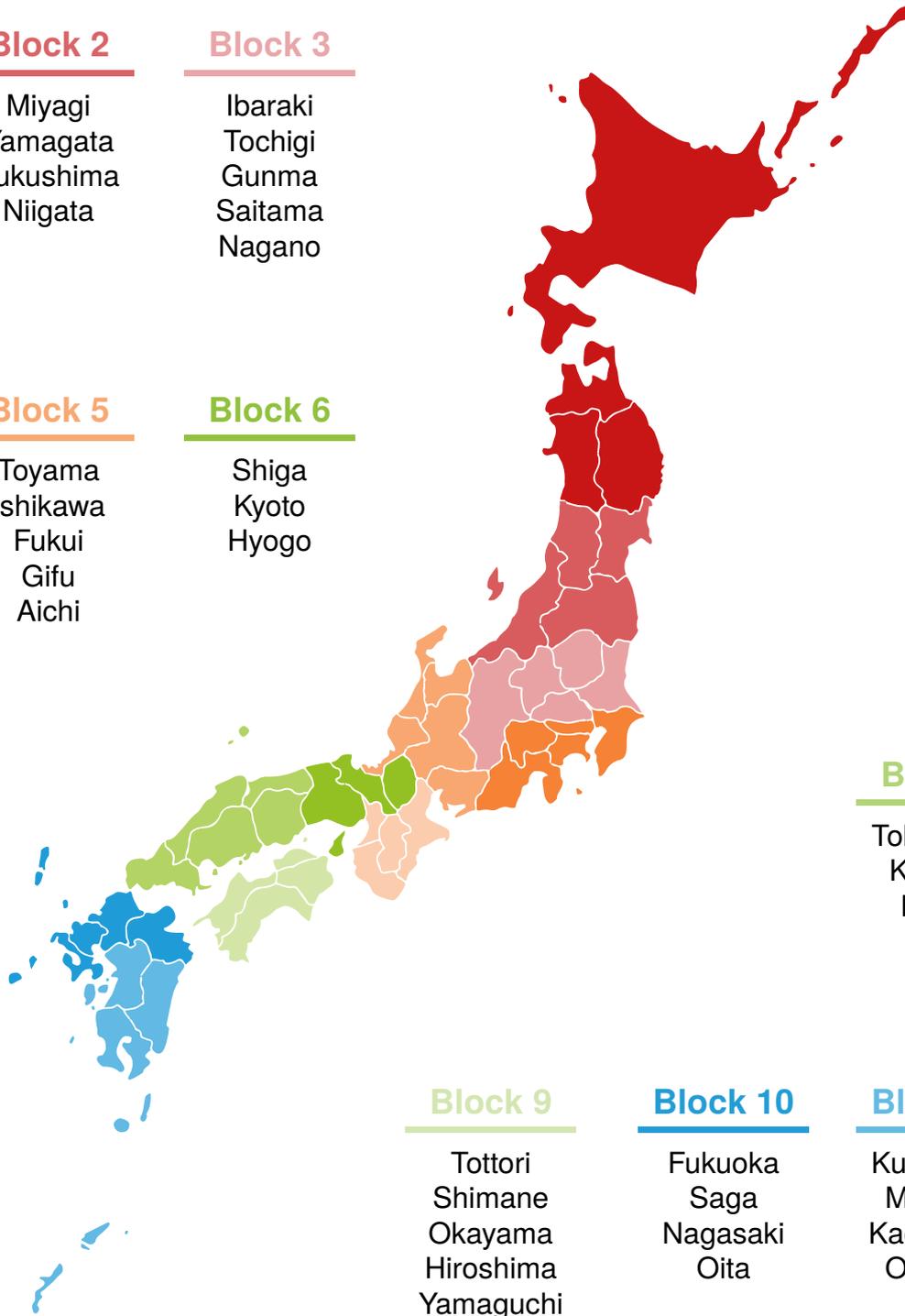
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

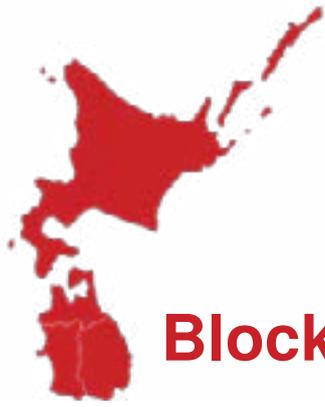
Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa





Block 1

Senshu Park Cherry Blossom Festival

Mid to late April
Akita, Akita Prefecture
[Website](#)

Hirosaki Cherry Blossom Festival

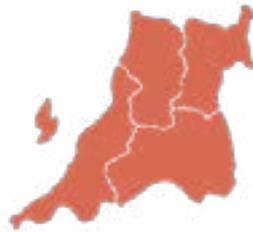
22 April - 7 May
Hirosaki Castle, Hirosaki, Aomori Prefecture
[Website](#)

Sapporo Lilac Festival

16 May - 27 May
Odori Park, Sapporo, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website](#)

Japan Wine Festival

26 May - 27 May
Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 2

Tatenokawa Kura Festival

8 April
Sakata, Yamagata Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 76th Bunsui Sakura Matsuri Oiran Parade

15 April
Tsubame, Niigata Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sado Shokunojin

21 April - 22 April
Sado, Niigata Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yoneyama Tulip Festival

26 April - 10 May
Tome, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Arabaki Rock Fest

28 April - 29 April
Kawasakimachi, Shibata-gun, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Fukushima Ramen Show

28 April - 7 May
Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 3

Oigami Onsen Bikkuri Hina Doll Festival

17 February - 1 April
Numata City, Gunma Prefecture
[Website](#)

Koedo Kawagoe Spring Festival

End of March to mid May
Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture
[Website](#)

Ramen Festival in Oyama

29 April - 30 April
Oyama, Tochigi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Tanada Camping

14 April - 15 April
Ueda, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Inashiki Tulips Festival

15 April
Inashiki, Ibaraki Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)





Block 4

Hakone Sweets Collection

1 February - 8 April
Ashigarashimo-gun, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Japanese Woodblock Print Exhibition

6 February - 1 April
Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Midtown Blossom 2018

16 March - 15 April
Tokyo Midtown Complex, Minato Ward, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Weeping Cherry Tree and Daimyo Garden Illuminations

21 March - 5 April
Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo City, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Togenkyo Spring Festival

25 March - 22 April
Fuefuki, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Vans Warped Tour Japan

31 March – 1 April
Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website](#)

GOOUT JAMBOREE

13 April - 15 April
Fujinomiya, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Shionoyama Wine Fest

14 April
Koshu, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Japanese Sake Tasting in Nihonbashi

14 April
Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Narita Taiko Festival

14 April - 15 April
Narita, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Rainbow Disco Club

28 April - 30 April
Kamo-gun, Shizuoka Prefecture

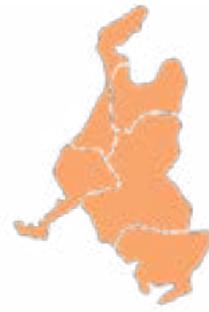
[Website](#)

Greenroom Festival 2018

26 May - 27 May
Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)





Block 5

Gero Hot Spring Winter Fireworks

6 January - 1 April
Gero City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Marvel Exhibition

17 March - 10 June
Nagoya City Science Museum,
Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Suisen Misaki no Kagayaki

25 March - 27 May
Nyu Town, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Ogaki Boat Trip

31 March - 15 April
Ogaki City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Asahi Funakawa "Spring Quartet"

7 April - 22 April
Asahimachi, Toyama Prefecture

[Website](#)

Manyo Love Song Live

8 April
Echizen, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sakura Roundtrip Bus

8 April - 15 April
Echizen, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Spring Green Music Festival

28 April - 5 May
Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 6



Block 7

Awaji Flower Festival

24 March - 26 May

Awaji, Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Springtime Special at Taizo-in Zen Buddhist Temple

31 March - 15 April

Ukyo Ward, Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website](#)

The 50th Kusatsu Shukuba Festival

29 April

Kusatsu, Shiga Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Nabari Sakura Matsuri

23 March - 13 April

Nabari City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Ando Cherry Blossom Festival

7 April - 8 April

Ando-cho, Nara Prefecture

[Flyer in Japanese only](#)

Iga Ueno Ninja Festival

7 April - 6 May

Iga, Mie Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Wired Music Festival

8 April

Kuwana City, Mie Prefecture

[Website](#)

Nagano Sake Messe

16 April

Osaka, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sakai Knives Festival

21 April - 22 April

Sakai Kita-ku, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Osaka Wine Festival

22 April

Kashiwara, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Spring Kemari Festival

29 April

Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture

[Website](#)

Suna (Sand) Festival

29 May

Shirarahama Beach,
Shirahamamachi, Wakayama Prefecture

[Website](#)



Block 8

Big Hinamatsuri

18 February - 8 April

Katsura Town, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Spring Uzu Festival

3 March - 30 April

Naruto City, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Tamamo Park Ueki Market of Spring

11 March - 8 April

Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Akehama Seaside Illumination

11 March - 14 April

Seiyo, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Okayama Cherry Blossom Festival

31 March - 1 April

Nankoku, Kochi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Bonito-Searing Workshop

1 April - 31 October

Takaoka-gun, Kochi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Tobe-yaki Festival

21 April - 22 April

Tobe-cho, Iyo-gun, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)



Block 9

Oden & Japanese Sake Train

1 December 2017 - 30 April 2018

Hiroshima, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Asoberu Uchuhaku

17 March - 6 May

Sakaiminato, Tottori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yonago Cherry Blossom Festival

30 March - 8 April

Yonago, Tottori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Matsue Musha Gyoretsu Warrior Parade

7 April

Matsue, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Yasugi Park Cherry Blossom Festival

4 April - 8 April

Yasugi, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Bicchu Takahashi Machiya Street Hinamatsuri

30 March - 8 April

Takahashi, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sera Kogen Nojo Tulip Festival

14 April - 14 May

Seracho, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website](#)

Kintai Bridge Festival

29 April

Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture

[Website](#)

Lohas Festa Hiroshima

25 May - 27 May

Hiroshima, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)





Block 10

Bakumatsu-Meiji Restoration Memorial Museum

17 March - 14 January 2019
Saga, Saga Prefecture

[Website](#)

Omura Flower Festival

25 March - 20 June
Omura City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Fukuoka Castle Sakura Festival

29 March - 8 April
Fukuoka, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website](#)

104th Beppu Hatto Hot Spring Festival

30 March - 3 April
Beppu, Oita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Chikugo Japanese Sake Culture Exhibition

7 April
Chikugo, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Hita Music Festival

15 April
Hita, Oita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Circle `18

12 May - 13 May
Fukuoka, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Photos:
Illaura Rossiter
Shantel Dickerson
Evashree Pillay
Evashree Pillay
Hannah Martin
Jessica Craven



Block 11

Okinawa Flower Carnival

20 January - 6 May
Kunigami District, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Satsuma Hina Doll Festival

3 February - 26 April
Kagoshima City, Kagoshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Miyazaki Hatsu Katsuo Fair

9 February - 16 May
Miyazaki, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Mochio Sakura Matsuri 2018

30 March - 8 April
Miyakonojo, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Ryukyu Kaiensai Fireworks Festival

14 April
Ginowan Seaside Park, Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website](#)

Takeda Style Mounted Archery

15 April
Kumamoto, Kumamoto Prefecture

[Website](#)

Kagoshima Spring Festival

28 April - 30 April
Kagoshima, Kagoshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

Isa Dragon Cup

29 April
Isa, Kagoshima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)





In The News

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)



Photo: Colette English



Tokyo Marks 73 Years after U.S. Air Raids

Tokyo has marked the 73rd anniversary of horrifying U.S. air raids during World War II which killed approximately 100,000 people. A Buddhist memorial ceremony in Tokyo's Sumida Ward was held on March 10 to commemorate the lives lost in the 1945 bombing which destroyed the eastern section of the Japanese capital. The service was attended by the younger son of Emperor Akihito, Prince Akishino, his wife Princess Kiko, and Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike.

Governor Koike stated that though most people who make up Japanese society now have no experience of war, memories of the attack should not be forgotten.

"It is our responsibility to pass on our knowledge (of the air raids) to the next generation so that the tragedy of war will not be forgotten, as well as to protect the peace and safety of the world."

Junko Arai, 84, who was 11 years old at the time of the attack, recalled her parents' decision to split up as they fled the bombings so as to better the chances of one of them being able to stay alive to raise their daughter. Only her mother survived. Arai stated that she hopes there would be no more wars as the war had such a devastating effect on many families, including hers.

Another participant, Hideo Yoshida, 83, from Fukushima, has been attending the yearly event for the past 30 years.

"I still think today that if there had been no war, everyone could have had different lives," he said. Yoshida's father had gone missing during the bombing and his older sister had died two years later after sustaining severe burns.

The predawn attack 73 years ago on March 10, 1945, involved roughly 300 U.S. B-29 bombers dropping incendiary bombs on some of Tokyo's most densely populated areas. Subsequent to that attack, the United States bombarded other areas across Japan, and atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki just a few days before the war ended on August 15 that year.

The commemorative service was attended by about 600 people, including survivors and relatives of victims of the attack.

Source:
<http://bit.ly/2HqtOjg>
<http://bit.ly/2HmxUJt>

Photo source:
<http://bit.ly/2ImK8TO>

Japan's Food Prices to Rise in 2018

According to reports, this year will see an increase in the price of food and drinks in Japan. This rise is said to be due to the growing cost of raw materials and distribution as well as Japan's problematic labor shortage. Bread and sweets will soon cost more, as three major milling companies

have raised their prices for flour by up to 4 percent. And pre-cooked rice will see a greater increase of 17 percent by packaged food company, TableMark.

For those looking to indulge in cherry blossoms and beer this spring, beverage-makers Asahi,

Kirin, Suntory, and Sapporo will also be hiking up their prices for beer and kegs. Additionally, a 10 percent price increase will be added to wholesale bottled beer.

Source:
<http://bit.ly/2H3Rie2>



Coca-Cola to Launch its First Alcoholic Drink in Japan

Fizzy drink giant, Coca-Cola, will soon be launching its first alcoholic drink exclusively in Japan. This is the first time that the soft drink company is venturing into the hard stuff — except for a brief dabble in the wine business back in the 1970s.

"This is unique in our history," said Jorge Garduño, president of Coca-Cola's Japanese business. "Coca-Cola has always focused entirely on non-alcoholic beverages and this is a modest experiment for a specific slice of our market."

The company is introducing a canned version of Chu-Hi, an alcoholic drink that's made with *shōchū* and carbonated water. These drinks usually come in a

wide range of flavors such as lemon, kiwi, lychee, white peach, grape, and strawberry.

Chu-Hi, which is marketed by Japanese beverage companies such as Asahi, Kirin, and Takara, usually has between three and nine percent alcohol and is popular among women and young people.

"We haven't experimented in the low alcohol category before, but it's an example of how we continue to explore opportunities outside our core areas," said Garduño. He also advised that this new alcoholic launch does not indicate that it will be seen elsewhere.

"It makes sense to give this a try in our market," he said. "But I don't

think people around the world should expect to see this kind of thing from Coca-Cola. While many markets are becoming more like Japan, I think the culture here is still very unique and special, so many products that are born here will stay here."

Japan does seem to be a testing ground for Coca-Cola, as it has previously launched quite a few off kilter products here, including a peach flavored coke and a coffee flavored version.

Source:
<http://bit.ly/2FIIBzs>

Image Source:
<http://bit.ly/2FqyiWT>



Kyoto Unveils a Fancy New Tourist Train

Eizan Electric Railway Co. in Kyoto recently unveiled a snazzy new train which is set to cater to the growing number of tourists who have been visiting Japan's former capital.

Aptly named "Hiei", because of its scenic sightseeing route from central Kyoto to the base of Mount Hiei, the train is expected to become a new tourist attraction after its official release on March 21.

"We are seeing an increasing number of tourists at home and abroad using the railway. We want many people to experience the new train car," an official of Eizan Electric Railway stated.

The train features a large gold oval design on the front, elliptical windows, and a lush interior that boasts light-emitting diode devices. The ellipse motif is said to not only be inspired by the railway route map but also spiritual

energy and the sacrality of Hiei Mountain. The Hiei, which will run on the Eizan Main line, is set to operate every 40 minutes every day (except Tuesdays) at no extra cost.

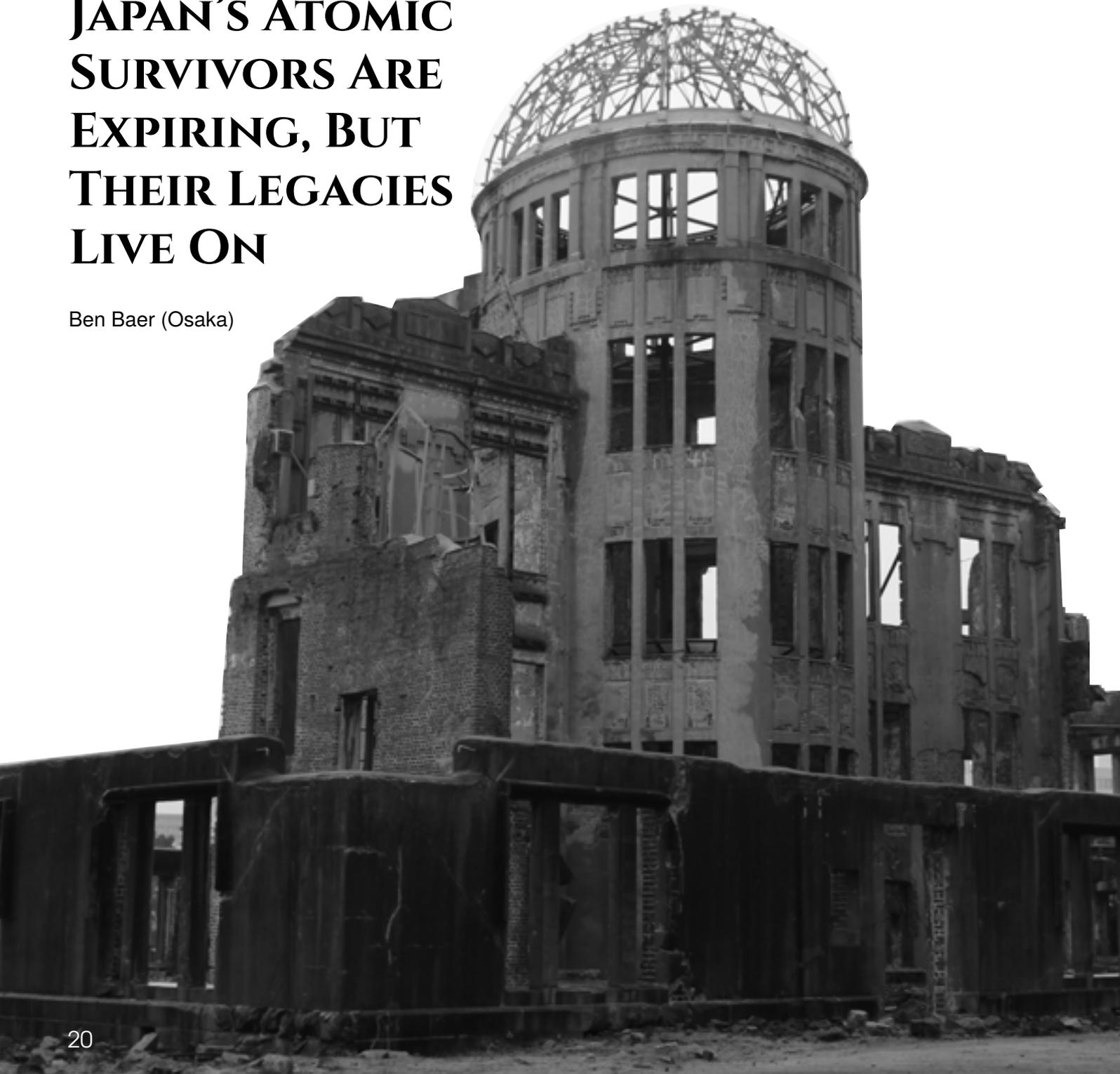
Source:
<http://bit.ly/2Fod9wo>

Image Source:
<http://bit.ly/2Fod9wo>

THE FUTURE OF *HIBAKUSA*

JAPAN'S ATOMIC
SURVIVORS ARE
EXPIRING, BUT
THEIR LEGACIES
LIVE ON

Ben Baer (Osaka)



Observing the first successful test of his atomic bomb in July, 1945, Robert Oppenheimer, head researcher of the Manhattan Project, recalled a line from the Bhagavad-Gita to express the weight he now felt upon his shoulders: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." (1)

On August 5, less than one month after the demonstration in Los Alamos, Oppenheimer's fears were realized when the United States detonated Little Boy over the city of Hiroshima. Three days later, Nagasaki would be devastated by Fat Man, signaling the end of World War II and ushering in the Atomic Age. The two attacks ultimately resulted in the deaths of an estimated 140,000 people, mostly civilians, and remain the only incident of nuclear weaponry's use in history.

72 years later and approaching their twilight years, *hibakusha*, survivors of the bombings, are becoming few and far between.

In an effort to combat the dwindling number of *hibakusha* able to share their stories publicly, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare has earmarked 30 million yen (USD \$280,000) for 2018 to train, fund, and provide for a new generation of storytellers traveling within Japan and overseas. (2)

MEMORIES BURNT INTO THE ANNALS OF TIME

"It's been 70 years since the bombings, and we survivors are getting old," Terumi Tanaka reflected during a 2015 survivors' conference. "Time is limited and we must hurry." (3)

The 85 year-old Tanaka sits as secretary general of *Nihon Hidankyo*, The Japan Confederation of A and H Bomb Sufferers' Organizations, and is one of the *hibakusha* working to pass on his experiences to a new generation. Sunao Tsuboi, Hidankyo's co-chair, echoed his colleague's sentiments during an event on the 70th anniversary of Hiroshima's destruction, explaining, "People like me are losing the strength to talk about their experiences and continue the campaign against nuclear weapons." (4)

"In 10 years, I'd be surprised if there are many of us left," added Hiroshi Shimizu, Hidankyo official and atomic bomb survivor. (4)

In 2012, the governments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki began providing formal training to participating *hibakusha*. The cities' hopes were that with assistance and financial support, aging atomic bomb survivors

could more easily disseminate their experiences as they advanced in age. Demand from universities, museums, and peace organizations has continued to rise in recent years due to the reemergence of nuclear threats in the public discourse. Unfortunately, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum received over 180 requests for atomic bomb storytellers to hold talks at universities, high schools, and museums in 2016 alone.

With an average age of 81 years, most *hibakusha* are physically unable to manage the extensive travel necessary to accommodate such a large number of requests. (2) In addition, many atomic bomb survivors are retired, further adding to the difficulty of travel and lodging.

To remedy this, a new generation of storytellers, dubbed "A-Bomb Legacy Successors" are being trained to ensure that the experiences of atomic bomb survivors are not forgotten and that the atrocities of nuclear war don't find themselves relegated to history books and film reels.

EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS

The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare hopes that not only the experiences, but the emotions, of hibakusha can be preserved for generations with the help of A-Bomb Legacy Successors. As of March, 2014, there are an estimated 164,621 living hibakusha. However, only a fraction of those are willing and able to meet the taxing demands of organizations requesting their services. (2)

The A-Bomb Legacy Successors, also known as “memory keepers,” will begin receiving formal instruction from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare began March 1, 2018. This will supplant previous methods of having local governments provide individual training region by region. Due to an increased demand from overseas institutions, the ministry has stated that its training will include lessons in both English and sign language for storytellers being dispatched abroad. (5) However, language training is only one small part of the program.



LEARNING A LIFETIME IN THREE YEARS

As of October 2017, there were 243 trainees of varying ages, 89 active legacy successors, and 15 mentor hibakusha active in Hiroshima alone. (6) With increased funding, the number of trainees and active storytellers will continue to climb, but the training is rigorous. During their first year, legacy successors devote themselves strictly to observation and instruction. Hibakusha give their own presentations, primarily in museums, and successors act as passive observers. This is supplemented by formal instruction from the hibakusha.

It isn't until their second year that successors even begin learning the intimate details of their mentors' stories. It's also during this time that storytellers begin working with the hibakusha to tailor scripts that capture

both the feeling and facts of their legacy. The third and final year of training sees legacy successors hone their presentation and storytelling skills. Even after completing three years of instruction, a prospective A-Bomb Legacy Successor can't become official without final approval from the hibakusha they've studied under. Simply completing the course does not guarantee a position among the growing ranks of memory keepers.

Ideally, hibakusha themselves will be able to continue sharing their experiences first hand for years to come, but faced with the reality of their advancing age, the government feels now is the time to begin the arduous and lengthy process of training the next generation on a large scale.

PICKING UP THE PAST

Among those taking up the mantle of A-Bomb Legacy Successor is Mika Shimizu, a 32 year-old high school teacher from Tokyo. Shimizu hopes that her own youth and experience with school aged children can help frame survivors' stories in a relatable way.

"Even if we hear the same story, the way each of us retell it would be different, because we all have different sensibilities," she explained at a 2015 Tokyo training seminar. (3)

Yasukazu Narahara, a 39 year-old trainee successor in Tokyo, says of his mentor, Emiko Okada, "I hope I can build a relationship with her like a son". (7)

"Mrs. Okada focuses a lot on children because she doesn't want to repeat the experience of her sister," who perished in bombings, Narahara explains. "She saw so many children and babies killed in the aftermath of the bombing, and she never wants that repeated. And I strongly feel that way, too." (7)



Ben is a fifth year ALT from the United States. When he's not wiping chalk off his pants, he can be found loitering outside of convenience stores, watching Star Trek with a bowl of cereal, or trying to find the kebab tent at a matsuri. He can be contacted at Fukuiben89@gmail.com. He also has a Twitter page with nothing on it and no idea how it works [@BenBaerWasTaken](https://twitter.com/BenBaerWasTaken).



CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

Mr. Narahara and Ms. Shimizu are among the roughly 200 people currently enrolled in the three year program. However, despite the tremendous efforts being made by individuals and by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, there remain concerns about the efficacy of the program.

"The biggest challenge is how to tell a story about someone's experience in someone else's words," says Ayami Shibata, an official working with the training program. "Many find it difficult to decide whether to speak first-person and which parts of their mentor's life to focus and to inherit." (7)

Mrs. Okada, despite training a dedicated storyteller herself, still wonders, "Can successors pass on the words that come out of our souls, something so painful, our experiences and thoughts and feelings?" (7)

With the average hibakusha's age hovering around 80, it is more important now than ever to assure that their experiences are not forgotten. The importance of this program has been highlighted in Japan and abroad in recent weeks. Reignited interest in nuclear weapons dots the news with increasing regularity. If the world is unable to learn from those who have experienced their horror first hand, it may all too soon forget why hibakusha and their protégés are fighting to keep those memories.

Sources:

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Photos:

- Shantel Dickerson
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Trap-Neuter-Release

Bailey Jo Josie (Miyazaki)

A day in the
life of saving
some cats



It's a crisp,
sunny day off
the east coast
of Kyushu and
we're all on a
boat, heading
towards a
small island,
on the prowl
for some
pussycats.



To be specific, we're looking for some stray cats for Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR), a system of population control amongst stray and feral animals. According to the Japan Cat Network website, TNR is "a humane, effective way to reduce the number of stray and abandoned cats living on the streets." The website claims that this not only improves the cats' quality of life but also their surrounding environments: if fewer animals are able to reproduce, then the reality of overpopulation and starvation are decreased.

Erin Cushing, an ALT in the Miyazaki prefecture and avid cat lover, is an active participant in the local TNR program, generally called TNR Miyazaki. She says that she was told that the original TNR group began in Tokyo and that it slowly spread throughout Japan.

"Other people would catch wind of the ideas and create their own local group. This one was founded by some older Japanese women who felt concerned about the surplus stray cat population in their neighborhood. Once they began a TNR program, they also collected money for an old house they could convert into a makeshift shelter," Cushing said.

Today, we are on the humble island of Shimanoura, where TNR is especially important, due to the limited resources for the animals.

We set out with the other volunteers and find our way to a building that keeps food dishes, beds, and makeshift shelters for the local felines. Armed with fried fish from the *conbini*, live traps, and protective gloves, we get to work.

We learn that we are trapping female cats only, which is frustrating at times because the females, it turns out, are way too smart for their own damn good. It also doesn't help that the males are greedy little fluff rolls who keep trying to take the bait, knowing full well that they're not the ones getting sent away to be snipped. One of the males is enough of a pain and enough of an enduring fatso that I call him "Muta", a reference to the very fat, gluttonous cat in the Ghibli movie, *The Cat Returns*.

When we're not getting Muta out of the live trap, we are patiently waiting to trap the female cats — a job that seems almost impossible.



Though I've come close to getting one of the cats in a basket, the claw marks on my hands prove that my way may be a little too rough for these feral felines. Luckily, Miss Cushing has the right kind of finesse for the job — each little cat she's able to get into a trap or into a basket is met with a resounding "JOUZU!" (which is basically Japanese for "damn, Erin, you're a pro at this!").

Of her skills, Cushing says, "If you are too tense or excited, a stray cat will be onto you in a flash. I catch cats by pretending I don't notice them. No eye contact, no sudden movements. It's all about being quiet and casual. Definitely no fear. I don't know if I'm so good at catching cats, but that's how I do it. I learned through years of living with cat-lovers."

A couple hours later, things are winding down. We (mostly Cushing) have trapped quite a few cats and as the cats are carefully loaded onto the boat for the mainland, we learn that what happens next isn't just N for Neuter. Before the cats are released back onto the island, they undergo health assessments and medical care if needed. We learn that all the kittens that were trapped would be taken to the local shelter and put up for adoption or fostering.

Due to these procedures, the group can only TNR about twice a year.

As we cut through the ocean waves, I find myself excited for the next event and hoping that I'll be able to be a bigger help next time. Cushing says that part of the reason Miyazaki TNR is bi-annual is because it is a big, costly event — and with over 125 trapped cats overall, I'm of a mind to believe her.

If you're interested in volunteering with your local TNR group, Cushing says to reach out in your community. "TNR and animal protection groups are always trying to network. So asking around will definitely pay off," she says.

Another great place to start is the [Japan Cat Network group on Facebook](#), where Japanese and foreign cat-lovers come together to help find homes for these cats, as well as organizing events. Even if you just want advice on how to best feed the stray cat that probably hangs around your apartment building, the Japan Cat Network can help.

Photos:
Miyazaki TNR

KYOTO BEER FESTIVAL

Nick Colaccino (Shiga)



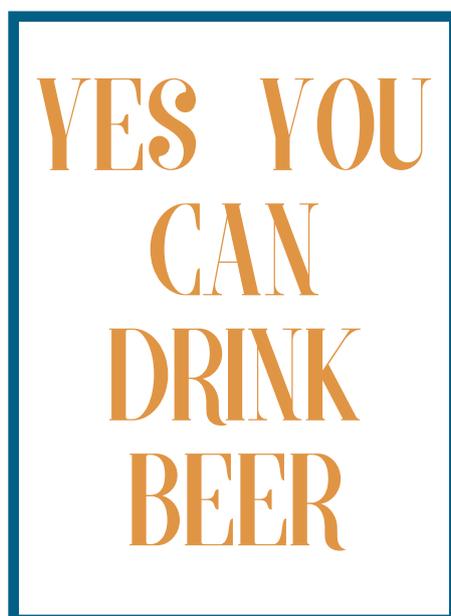
If you are like me, the recent boom in Japanese craft brewing has been a boon to your weekends. It seems that with each passing month a new brewery is popping up, and yet every time I go to the market, I'm confronted by overpriced imports of low quality ales or the same three Japanese crafts (obviously excluding Asahi's terrible excuse for a stout). Too much of anything is a bad thing, and too much mead mediocrity will suffocate the palate. Fear not! As warmth comes back to the islands, the craft beer springs begin to thaw and flow down to us thirsty satyr in the form of beer festivals.

As the last cherry blossoms fall, the Kyoto Craft Beer Festival (地ビール祭り京都), to be held on May 13, is the perfect opportunity to keep the party going and experience all the wonders of beer culture that Japan has to offer. Celebrating its ninth year, this festival has had plenty of time to perfect the art of the booze bonanza. They pull customers from all over the world to create a vibrant and lively atmosphere of springtime frivolity. You never quite know who you'll run into.

Last year, my incessant habit of being on time to appointments meant that I was sitting around the festival waiting for my tardy troupe of friends, when I heard the confused cry of a wounded foreigner hitting the language barrier. An older gentleman was at the ticket counter desperately trying to understand how the ticketing worked while the staff was vainly trying to explain with a mixture of nouns, verbs, and gestures. The conversation

seemed to reach an understanding when he handed them 400 yen and received a ticket. I thought everything was going to be all right, until he asked, "So with this I can drink *all* the beers?" (implying the amazing deal that was a 400 yen *nomihoudai*), and the Japanese staff — with emphatic drinking gestures — replied, "Yes, you can drink beer!"

Seeing as I was just twiddling my thumbs waiting for friends, I



jumped up and told him there was a misunderstanding and that a 400 yen ticket is the price of only one beer tasting. We got back in line together and got him a proper ream of six tickets for 2,100 yen. By that point (I'm happy to say) my friends had still not arrived. So my new best-friend, Frank, and I crossed over into inebriated Narnia. We got to talking about the usual: Where ya from? How long ya been in Japan? How'd ya find out about this? Etc... Apparently,

Frank had a nifty app that alerted him to any and all craft beer events and bars that were near him at any given time. "Wow," I thought, "this guy must be a *raging* alcoholic." Far from it; Frank is a lifelong employee of the beer industry in America and the father of a founding brewer at Melvin Brewing Company — one of my favorite breweries back home — who likes doing "market research." It turned out he was a wealth of information and anecdotes about the world of beer and the history of the beer industry in the last 40 years.

After getting tickets at the main entrance, you have to go to the park (located about one-third of the way down the arcade) to pick up your commemorative glass — while supplies last. The queue for this was enough to put the British to shame. So Frank and I took turns hopping out of line to grab beers. By the time we had reached the front, one of my friends finally decided to arrive. The three of us were able to get through nearly our entire reams of tickets before the rest of our group waded through the crowd. We said goodbye to Frank who wandered off in a haze of what I can only describe as flavorful, inebriated, jet-lagged happiness. (Though it wouldn't be the last time we saw Frank. About five hours later we would run into him and the family he had ditched at Kinkakuji to come to the festival).

Not every festival comes with this kind of story, but every festival will leave you with some sort of memory. Even if you are not interested in beer and/or have children, the Kyoto Craft Festival

has all the standards of a bonafide Japanese *matsuri*, with succulent skewered meats, sugary sweets, grilled corn, yakisoba, takoyaki, and grilled corn (corn is the only addiction I suffer from more than beer). If you come with no taste for beer and an already satiated stomach, then park yourself in the park and dance off your last meal to live music. And if you do go for the beer, with over thirty domestic breweries in attendance, it would be difficult to leave unsatisfied.

The Kyoto Craft Beer Festival will be held on May 13 from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. The festival takes place in Sanjo shopping street (三条会商店街). The closest stations are JR Nijo and Nijojo-mae on the subway. You can also take a bus or walk from Kyoto station, though it is a bit of a hike. Tickets go on sale April 1 (no joke) at 10 a.m. If you buy in advance, the six ticket ream is discounted to 2000 yen (day-of: 1 ticket = 400 yen, 6 tickets = 2,100yen). Unlike previous years, you *cannot* use your tickets to get a commemorative glass this year. Those will cost 500 yen and be sold from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the festival. Lastly, you do not have to buy tickets to enter the venue, and food can be bought with cold, hard cash.

In an honest critique, the festival suffers from the venue. As with most streets, the arcade road is extremely narrow. With vendors

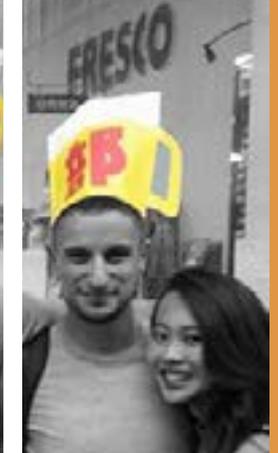
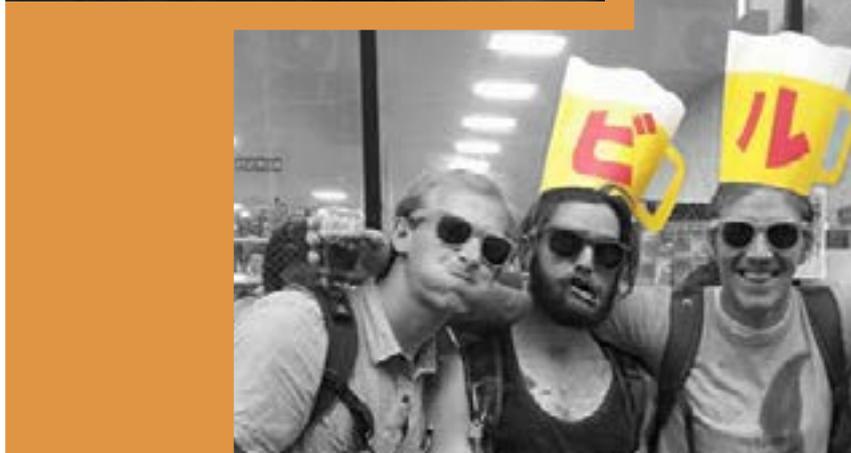
taking up and lines of waiting customers extending into the road — not to mention the oddly high number of prams — it can become a stand still at points. A bit of life advice: get there early, and plan ahead. Grab a map at the ticket table and scope out the brews and foods that you want to try, and then set out on a mission. Seeing as it is a Sunday festival, finishing your day a little early will give you time to sober up and beat a hangover before work on Monday.

Beer culture around the world is a vibrant and friendly party that never ends. In recent years, Japan has been offering its own creative twist on the age old traditions. We are unquestionably in a golden age of craft alcohol, and that means carefree days with old friends and new acquaintances, flavorful drinks, and great memories. It would be a shame to live through yet never enjoy the riches all around!

For more information about the Kyoto Craft Beer Festival, please click [here](#).

Nick is a 4th year JET in Shiga Prefecture. He is an avid hiker, musician, beer enthusiast, charcoal griller, hitchhiker, and all around adventurer. If it's outdoors, he's down. You can follow him on [YAMAP](#), [INSTAGRAM](#), and read more of his work on his page, [Rafiki's Nikki](#).

Photos:
Nick Colaccino



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In the cherry blossom's shade there's no such thing as a stranger. - Kobayashi Issa

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Yeah But Have You Heard Of...

THE LIGHT OF IYA VALLEY





Originally published in Odd Magazine.



Amir Bagheri (Kagawa Prefecture)
Photo-series by Shintaro Miyawaki
Special Thanks to Naoki Shiota

Around a thousand years ago, on March 22, 1195, an epic battle took place in Takamatsu city, Japan. The battle is known as “*Battle of Yashima*” which was part of a greater series of wars, known in Japanese history as “Genpai War.”

The Genpai War was a conflict between the *Taira* and *Minamoto* clans, which lasted for five years. Before this war, the Taira clan, also known as “*Heike*” (House of Taira), was one of the main four clans that dominated the Japanese politics from 794 to 1185.

The Battle of Yashima led to the downfall of Heike, which forced the remaining members of House of Taira to flee their homes in order to avoid brutal death. Not too far from their homes in Takamatsu, they managed to find rescue in the mountains of Tokushima Prefecture. Deep in the forests of Tokushima, there is a heaven known as “Iya Valley;” a place that became the safe haven for the remaining members of Heike.

For near a thousand years, the few surviving members of the Taira clan have been living in the Iya Valley. Over the past few centuries, they have managed to build villages and a community that they call their own again. It is worth noting that they are (almost) completely off-the-grid from the Japanese government

today, and have a fully self-sufficient anarchy, powered by renewable energies and organic farming.

The photo-series, *The Light of Iya Valley*, was captured by Shintaro Miyawaki, a renowned Japanese photographer, and a person I have the honour to call my friend. Over a cup of coffee, he told me that he initially became interested in this project because he wanted to represent isolated minority groups throughout Japan, as he feels a great amount of sympathy towards them.

What stood out to Shintaro during this project was the unique personality that people in the Iya Valley carried. He mentioned the lack of hope that is present amongst people who live there, yet there is also a sense of pride as they are independent of the outside world.

While the younger generation is, now, slowly fleeing from Iya Valley, there are many others who are leaving their jobs and homes in other parts of Japan to join this community.

You can purchase the photobook, *The Light of Iya Valley* on Amazon, or if you're in Japan you can buy it directly from Shintaro himself at his Coffee Shop & Bookstore.



Comfortable in Our Skin

Five JETs Talk Fashion, Race, and Being
Themselves in Japan

Abby Ryder-Huth (Gunma)

In an interview describing the process of fashion from a designer's imagination and into our wardrobes, Marc Jacobs said, "Clothes mean nothing until someone lives in them." Our fashion, grooming, and all the rituals that go into our style become vehicles for self-presentation, animated by the significance we ascribe them. Behind these significances, cultures, histories, and so many competing narratives of what a certain kind of body means are pulling at the threads, shifting how we make sense of style and how it affects our worlds.

This month we hear from five distinct voices on how race, culture, style and expectation play a part in who they are, and how they move through life in Japan.



As a black woman with locs (dreadlocks for the uninitiated) and a wardrobe full of loud prints and bright colors, I am used to a lot of looks, questions, and unsolicited touching back home in America. The looks and inappropriate touching have increased tenfold since coming to Japan. I had mentally prepared myself, of course, but after the third month I was doing everything I could to make sure I didn't stand out, which included considering my clothing.

When I began packing for the move across the Pacific, I had enough clothes, shoes, and accessories to pack five suitcases, and paring it down to only two was surprisingly difficult. What I was left with were very basic articles of clothing that were work appropriate, but nothing that I would consider very me — something I used as an excuse to try to blend in as much as I could. However, and this should come as a surprise to no one, that didn't work. I am a black American wherever I go. Being in Japan has taught me a lot about myself, not the least of which has been how much my identity and self-expression is tied into what I wear. Now, instead of toning myself down to blend in, I embrace sticking out.

— Brittany Joi (Kochi)



At 5'3" (160cm), I am just below the average height for an American woman, and just above average for an Asian woman. In the States, it's not unusual to find me shopping in the teen clothing section, since those will require alterations and come with a cheaper price tag. The sleeveless top I bought for my JET interview? Size 00 short, and I still had to hem them. My short(er) stature is almost certainly what leads to an unconscious desire to make myself taller in other ways, including sitting on desks.

When I first went clothes shopping in Japan, I felt awkward because I absolutely did not fit what Japan labels as small or extra small. I always had to grab the medium size, but then I realized that for the first time, everything FIT. No more hemming cuffs, no more finding out the smallest size is still too big. I love that it's okay in Japan for grown women to be "cute" as opposed to "sexy," and have fallen in love with *otome*, EGL and *wafuku* — three styles that allow me to embrace my petite size and look fabulous.

— Kelsey Wong (Kyoto)

There is an overt and even loud intersection between race and fashion in Japan. As a black person, this collision screams even louder to me. From my experience in working in the music scene here, black culture and people are often used as an aesthetic. I have seen Japanese people with braids, twist, dreads, and du-rags. Granted, this style can be attributed to Hip Hop culture, but since we know that the roots of Hip Hop are essentially black, the style is inseparable from black people. Though it is wonderful that many people around the world have Hip Hop, Reggae, Rap and R&B among many genres of music to expose them to and give them (depending on your taste of music) a positive association with black people, in Japan, the level of interest in black culture can sometimes come off as shallow and insensitive. This is especially true for fashion. I went to a club where some Japanese reggae dancers painted their skin a darker hue to make themselves look more “ethnic”. I’ve also seen images of the sambo (racist caricature) used as logos for both rappers and a coffee shop. These are obvious examples of how fashion and race in Japan can collide in the most catastrophic way. However, because Japan is considerably a homogenous society without a concept of race many people chalk it up to ignorance and give incidences like these a pat on the back.

On the other hand, I’ve also shared beautiful moments through fashion with Japanese people. I have met some people who not only like the Hip Hop and reggae fashion but have a genuine interest in the cultural origins as well. For others, Hip Hop and frankly black marginalized culture serves as an outlet through which they can explore individuality through fashion. As for me, what I rock (wear) is intentionally me: unapologetically black, sexy, masculine and flamboyant.

Fashion is a statement. So, when I walk in a room, I want people to see a confident black man who can wear anything and still be comfortable in his skin. Be it a suit, jeans, t-shirt and a blazer or sneakers, trust and believe there will be a lot said fashion wise (if looks could kill ha-ha). I figure people are going to look at me anyway because I’m black, might as well give them something more to talk about.

— Samuel Buchanan (Miyagi)

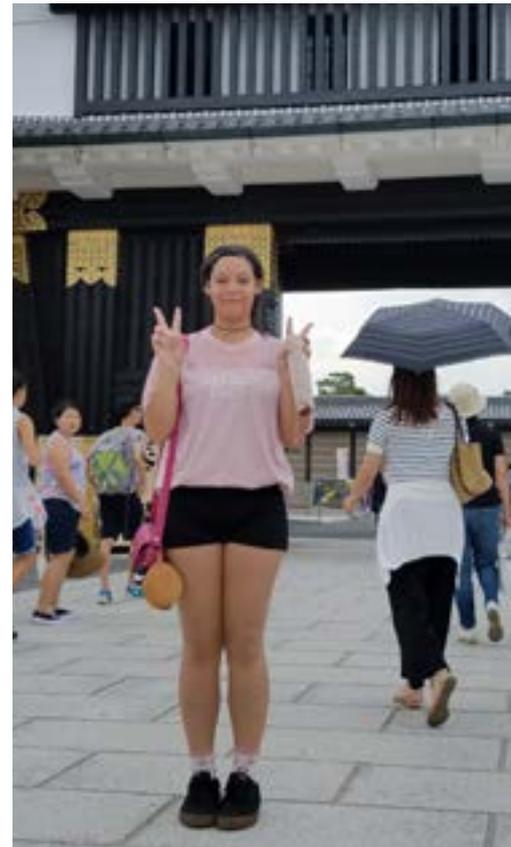


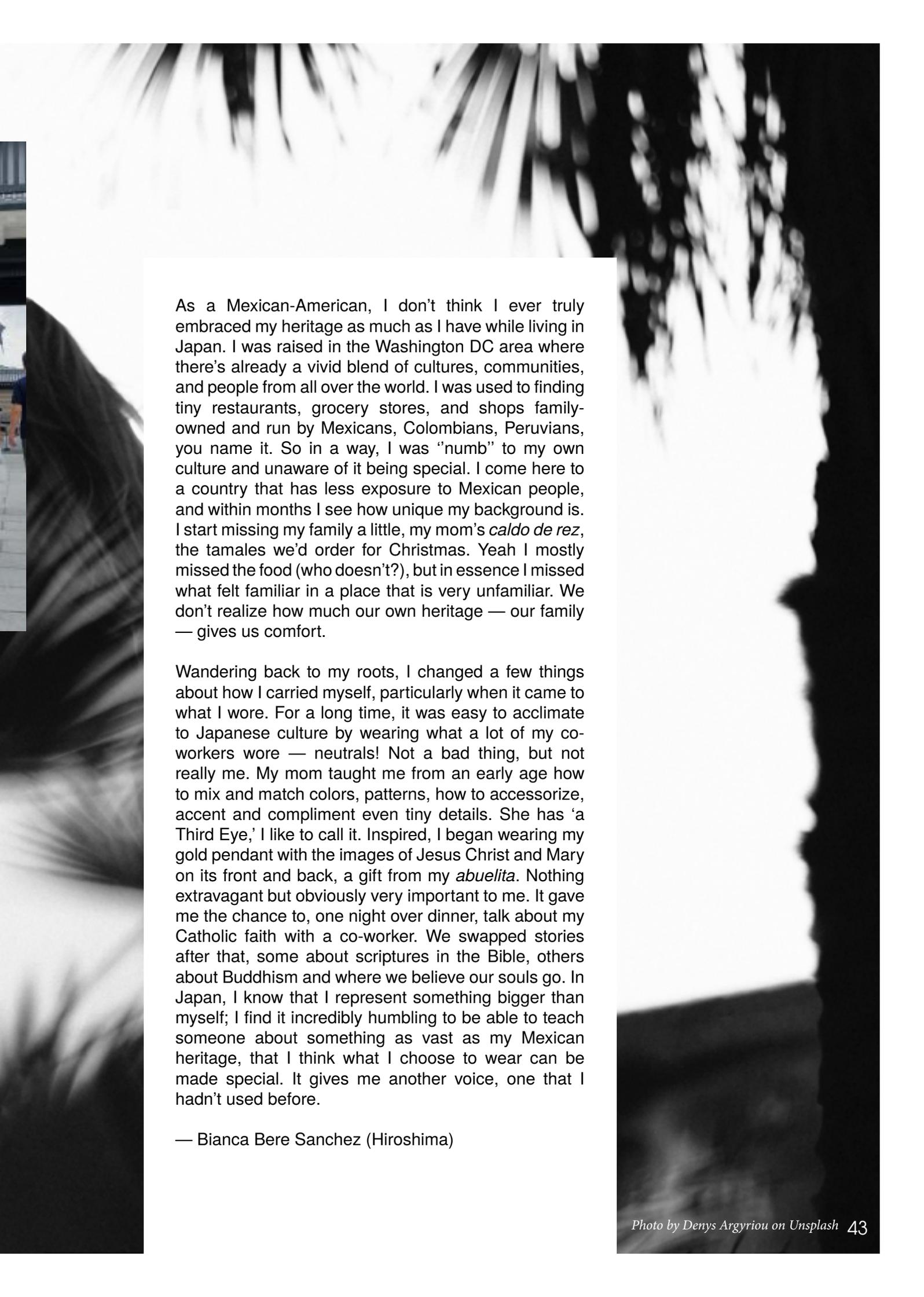
My POC experience with fashion, race, and identity while in Japan has been an interesting one. I have an eclectic style ranging from androgynous urban street, frilly feminine, Gothic, to Lolita so I really dress differently depending on my mood. Being in Japan though, these clothes are available to me but not in my size. Being a medium or large in America means I am an XL or a XXL here and that is not always easy to find. When I do find clothes that are my size, they don't always fit my body proportions. I have a pear shaped body so finding shorts or pants that fit me is almost impossible unless they stretch like sweatpants. Shirts here in Japan only fit me if they are the overly baggy style. I also live in the countryside so crop tops, shorts, and tank tops even in the summer get me glares from almost everyone in my town. I can feel more comfortable if I go into Tokyo, but I don't live there so going there often isn't always possible. A friend of mine and I also got comments like, "Isn't your stomach cold?" in mid summer heat for wearing crop tops. Even wearing simple shorts I am told I am dressed very sexy that day.

Being told I am dressed in a sexy way makes me uncomfortable because I have darker skin and I have a lot of curves so I feel like I am playing into a stereotype that has been demonized — overly sexual black girl from America. It makes me want to dress more conservatively just so I don't have to have those awkward encounters and eyes always on me, but I know if I do I won't be comfortable that day. I am uncomfortable both physically in clothes that don't fit properly and uncomfortable because fashion and style is a main way I express myself and my individuality. I often travel alone as well so for safety reasons I will often tone down my outfits when I know I will be out late or far away from my home.

At the end of the day, it is not a life or death situation if I compromise my outfit to better fit everyone else's cultural ideals here, but it does make me sad at times. And some days I really don't mind if someone here ends up walking into a pole because they were too busy being shocked by my exposed legs or collarbones.

— Serena Foster (Saitama)





As a Mexican-American, I don't think I ever truly embraced my heritage as much as I have while living in Japan. I was raised in the Washington DC area where there's already a vivid blend of cultures, communities, and people from all over the world. I was used to finding tiny restaurants, grocery stores, and shops family-owned and run by Mexicans, Colombians, Peruvians, you name it. So in a way, I was "numb" to my own culture and unaware of it being special. I come here to a country that has less exposure to Mexican people, and within months I see how unique my background is. I start missing my family a little, my mom's *caldo de rez*, the tamales we'd order for Christmas. Yeah I mostly missed the food (who doesn't?), but in essence I missed what felt familiar in a place that is very unfamiliar. We don't realize how much our own heritage — our family — gives us comfort.

Wandering back to my roots, I changed a few things about how I carried myself, particularly when it came to what I wore. For a long time, it was easy to acclimate to Japanese culture by wearing what a lot of my co-workers wore — neutrals! Not a bad thing, but not really me. My mom taught me from an early age how to mix and match colors, patterns, how to accessorize, accent and compliment even tiny details. She has 'a Third Eye,' I like to call it. Inspired, I began wearing my gold pendant with the images of Jesus Christ and Mary on its front and back, a gift from my *abuelita*. Nothing extravagant but obviously very important to me. It gave me the chance to, one night over dinner, talk about my Catholic faith with a co-worker. We swapped stories after that, some about scriptures in the Bible, others about Buddhism and where we believe our souls go. In Japan, I know that I represent something bigger than myself; I find it incredibly humbling to be able to teach someone about something as vast as my Mexican heritage, that I think what I choose to wear can be made special. It gives me another voice, one that I hadn't used before.

— Bianca Bere Sanchez (Hiroshima)

GREAT LOOK FOR SPRING

The Face Tells a Story

Hay fever is, first and foremost, a health issue that creates difficulties in functioning and in performing day to day tasks. But it affects our appearance as well; even allergic reactions that don't appear topically as rashes or irritations can have a visible effect on the skin. Blowing your nose and wiping teary eyes can cause redness, and the fatigue from allergies can make your eyes swollen and your skin dull. So, what can we do to stop the suffering?



and nose symptoms as well. Ionized facial spray can prevent pollen particles from entering your nose or eyes (as well as set your makeup while it's at it).

Using a moisturizing eye cream and a cooling mask can help reduce puffiness. If you don't want to spend money on a cooling mask, pop a couple of spoons in the freezer for up to 5 minutes and lay them under and around the eyes — the effect is similar. For the body, emulsifying bath oils like the L'occitane Amande Huile de Douche help relax itching and rashes and give your skin that desired glow. Applying some coconut oil with a cotton tip relieves redness and burns around the nose and in the corners of the eyes.

For persisting or severe symptoms, be sure to consult with your physician.



Allergies Inside-Out

Preventative treatment for hay fever is possible and recommended. Don't wait for the sneezing and itching to start — a full-blown allergy attack is much harder to treat. Over-the-counter antihistamines are available for purchase at any drugstore, and taking them regularly during springtime will keep the attacks at bay and help you release a sigh of relief (literally). Use the allergy and pollen forecast to assess when your symptoms should start, and begin the antihistamine treatment about two weeks prior to that time. Drops and sprays can relieve eye



Plump, Dewy, Glowing

When it comes to makeup, a healthy glow all over the face is in for spring. Set those matte foundations and powders aside and pull out some illuminating primers and BB or CC creams. An affordable option is the Revlon Colorstay UV primer, which is an illuminating primer with an SPF of 40, combined with your favorite light foundation. A more luxurious primer option would be the Guerlain Météorites Primer Perfecting Pearls a beautiful and non-mattifying primer. For that true glow-from-within look, combine one drop of liquid highlighter with

SKIN

Idit Greenberg (Tokyo)

any liquid foundation. I personally use Cover FX Custom Cover Drops. Even on a bare face, you can always use your trusty highlighter. Use it sparingly and gently on your cheek bones, the inner corners of your eyes, and the cupid's bow above your upper lip, and avoid any hard, unblended lines. My absolute staple "ride or die" highlighter is the Stila Heaven's Hue Highlighter in the shade "kitten." It melts in perfectly, leaving my face looking bright, plump, and healthy without looking metallic.



The Eye of the Tiger

Naturally, the eyes are not left out. Continuing with the barefaced trend, give your eyes a thick coat of mascara (twiggy lashes are still in!) and a light dusting of a tan colored eyeshadow inside the crease and outer corner. A simple trick is to use your bronzer as eyeshadow. That way, you can create a natural, simple, barely-there accent. My staple bronzer is the Benefit Hoola Matte Bronzer together with an Etude House Play 101 Blending Pencil Finger Brush9.

That Glossy Goodness

You can love it, you can hate it, but there's no denying it — lip gloss is back! Even I, as a person who has avoided lip gloss since her Bat Mitzvah, and who hates how her hair gets caught in that gloopy substance, have purchased no less than three of them. Sure, it takes us back to the early 2000's, but that's all coming back now (and tattoo chokers are here to prove it). The wet lip trend coheres with that fresh, supple and plump look for spring.



Idit Greenberg is an Israeli who has lived in Japan since December 2015. She works as an English tutor but her interests range from fashion and beauty to boxing and Muai Thai. She is a presenter in a series of YouTube videos teaching Hebrew for beginners, and is working on fulfilling her dream of writing for a global magazine. You can follow her on Instagram [@iditgreenberg](https://www.instagram.com/iditgreenberg).



APRIL RELEASES

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 April!

MOVIES

6 Apr. *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (Action, Adventure, Comedy): Directed by Jake Kasden, starring Dwayne Johnson, Karen Gillan, and Kevin Hart

13 Apr. *Pacific Rim: Uprising* (Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi): Directed by Steven S. DeKnight, starring John Boyega, Scott Eastwood, and Cailee Spaeny

14 Apr. *City of Ghosts* (Documentary, War): Directed by Matthew Heineman, starring Hamoud Almousa, Hussam, and Mohamad Almusari

20 Apr. *Ready Player One* (Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi): Directed by Steven Spielberg, starring Tye Sheridan, Olivia Cooke, and Ben Mendelsohn

27 Apr. *Avengers: Infinity War* (Action, Adventure, Fantasy): Directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, starring Karen Gillan, Letitia Wright, and Chadwick Boseman

MUSIC

31 Mar.-22 Apr. *Ambitions* One Ok Rock (J-Rock)

5 Apr.-12 Apr. *Wooyoung* (K-Pop)

11 Apr.-15 Apr. *24K Magic Tour* Bruno Mars (Pop)

15 Apr. & 17 May-18 May *The 2nd World Tour* Monsta X (K-Pop)

15 Apr. 223rd Sunday Concert (Symphony)

GAMES

10 Apr. *Extinction* on PS4, Xbox One, PC (Action, Adventure, Single-Player Game)

20 Apr. *God of War* on PS4 (Action, Adventure, Single-Player Game)

OTHER EVENTS

2 Mar. Japan Baseball 2018 Season Begins—Nationwide (Baseball)

20, 21, and 23 Mar. *Jekyll VS Hyde*—Tokyo (Musical Theater)

Sources:

1. <http://imdb.to/1DZWXgA>
2. <https://bit.ly/2ujgLyE>
3. <https://bit.ly/2HYOAqw>
4. <http://bit.ly/2GBLBrh>

Photo:
Ashley Hirasuna

A drag queen with dark, curly hair and dramatic blue eye makeup is performing on a stage. She is wearing a red lace corset over a black fishnet top, black lace stockings, and black high-heeled shoes. She has a pearl necklace and black gloves. Her right arm is raised, and she is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a dark stage with a wooden panel and a yellow top hanging on a rack. A spotlight is visible in the upper right corner.

Drag

*yourself to
Hokuriku!*

Benjamin Ryo Ogawa (Ishikawa)



The 3rd Annual Ishikawa Drag Show and Party will be held Saturday, June 9th from 19:30 at Bar Puddle/Social in Kanazawa, Ishikawa. Starting as one-off theme birthday party of a since repatriated ALT, this event has quickly expanded to include trappings from a wide array of drag traditions including lip-sync performances, audience participation games à la the Rocky Horror Picture Show, as well as judged walks and titles influenced by both ball culture and International Court System affiliated pageants/competitions. All this fun is melded into a party replete with ample dance space and refreshments that keep us all rockin' into the wee hours of Sunday.

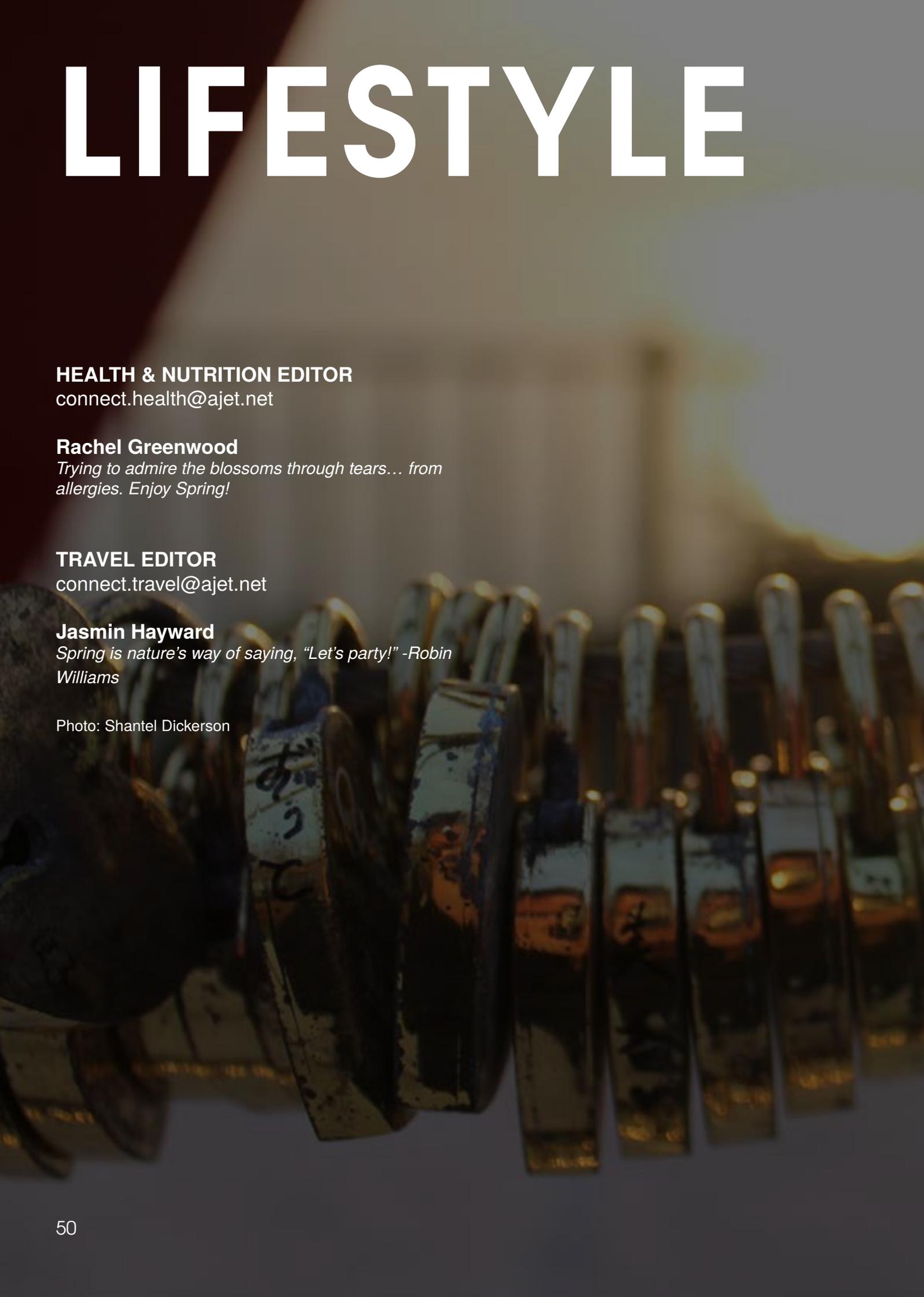
The Ru-nessaunce in drag has been heralded as a golden age for the art form, but while this brand of drag is experiencing a big cultural up swing and inflation in cultural capital, it hasn't necessarily meant that people are flocking to local or regional drag shows. Furthermore, while Drag Race has made some forms of drag more readily consumable, it has also been a platform for transmisogyny, gatekeeping, and erasure that unfortunately obscures many valid expressions and articulations of drag, as well as their diverse influences, associated arts, practitioners, and activism which bridge drag's pasts and presents.

Over the last 3 years the Ishikawa Drag Show and Party has sought to provide a venue that is open and inviting for anyone and everyone to participate in a hand-made and communal night of gender play, invention, embodiment, performance, experimentation and fun. At its best, drag can be an invitation for anyone to re-approach gender with a lightness that opens up self-expression, exploration, and re-invention. To this end the Ishikawa Drag Show and Party seeks to blur the lines between performer and spectator, the seasoned and first-timers, etc by striving to provide space for as many kinds of drag as we can. Our show won't be arbitrarily limiting performances to artificially narrow definitions contingent on gender-identity or anatomy. Everyone is welcome, and encouraged to dress-up (or down) as much (or as little) as they like and to hangout, sign-up for a number, a walk, or to participate in games throughout the night! So, let's break out our binders and bust-up some binaries, and fracture the patriarchy in the flyest fishnets, because June 9th is almost here lovelies!

Benjamin Ryo Ogawa is a 3rd year CIR based in Uchinada, Ishikawa who strongly identifies with Ice Bear of We Bare Bears. Ben also digs gardening, and making bad puns.

Photo: Ollie Luftie

LIFESTYLE



HEALTH & NUTRITION EDITOR

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Rachel Greenwood

Trying to admire the blossoms through tears... from allergies. Enjoy Spring!

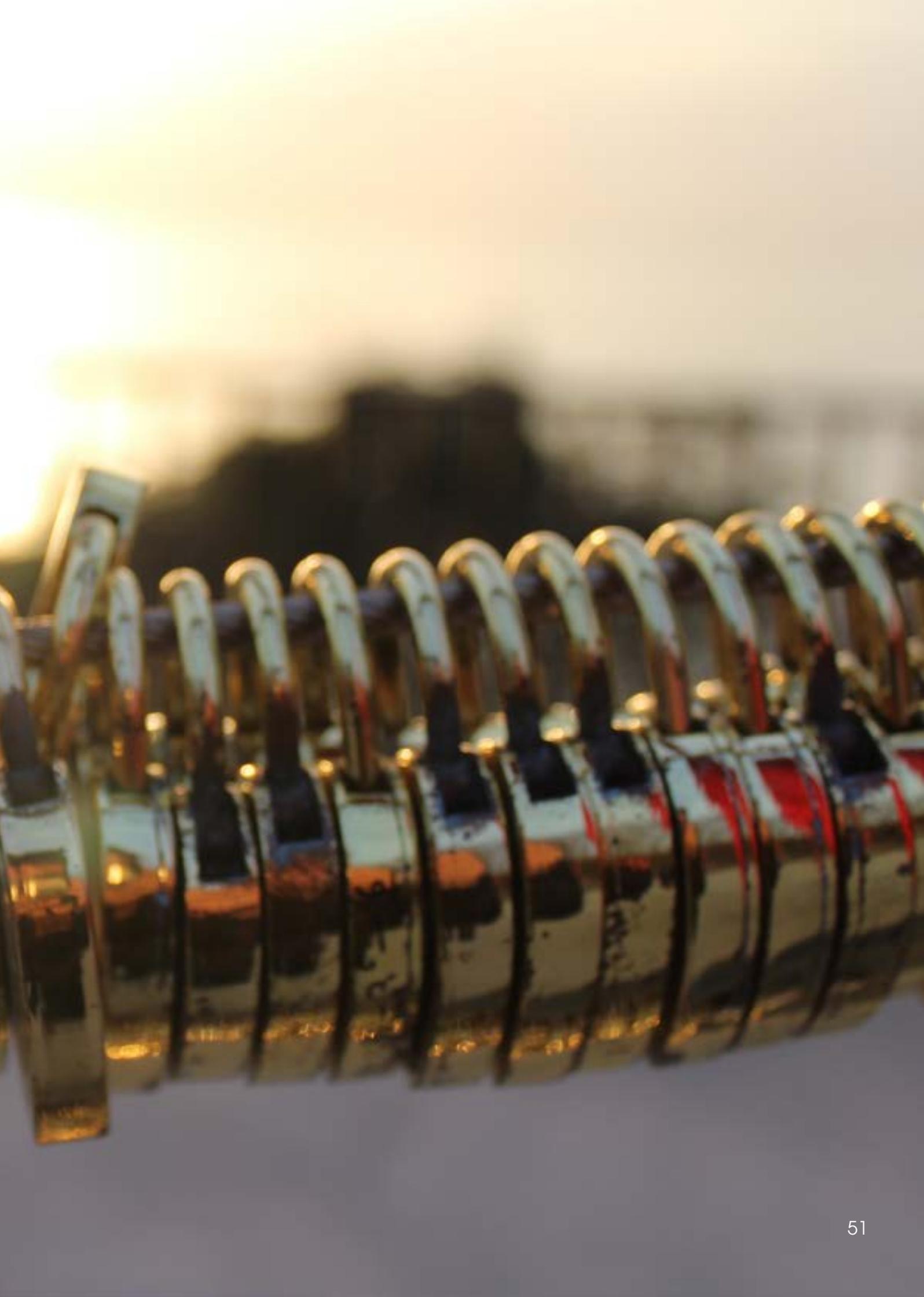
TRAVEL EDITOR

connect.travel@ajet.net

Jasmin Hayward

Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's party!" -Robin Williams

Photo: Shantel Dickerson



KIORA COOKIES

Rachel Greenwood (Oita)

Tucked into a corner of rural Oita, perched on a small rise amidst rice paddies with a backdrop of forested hills, sits a tiny cottage where a former JET from New Zealand makes it her life's work to cook delicious things and bring handcrafted goods to the market. The little cottage in Joanne Tomooka's garden has served several functions over the years, including hosting family, friends, tour groups, and city kids experiencing farm life. In its current incarnation, the cottage hosts handmade items from contributors from all over Japan, all foreign women doing their best to bloom where life planted them. But one shelf is made over entirely to Joanne's yummy home baking — muesli, jam, and cookies. She sells these items at local markets as well as at the cottage, and has agreed to share one of her famous cookie recipes with you! (see Kiora Cottage on Facebook, and read about Joanne's story of her switch from ALT on [page 74](#))

Oatmeal and Raisin Cookies



INGREDIENTS:

- ◇ 114g butter
- ◇ 1/2 cup brown sugar
- ◇ 1/2 cup white sugar
- ◇ 1/4 tsp baking powder
- ◇ 1/4 tsp baking soda
- ◇ 1/4 tsp salt
- ◇ 1 egg, beaten
- ◇ 1/2 tsp vanilla
- ◇ 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- ◇ 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- ◇ 1 cup flour
- ◇ 3/4 cup raisins
- ◇ 3/4 cup rolled oats

METHOD:

1. Melt the butter.
2. Add the sugars and let cool.
3. Add baking powder, baking soda, salt, egg, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
4. Add the flour, raisins, and rolled oats.
5. Place in spoonfuls on a baking tray and bake for 10-15 minutes at approximately 180 degrees.

Last month, we profiled Oita ALT Josh Mangham and his goal of running the Tokyo Marathon. We are pleased to report he crossed the finishing line! You can read all about it on the [Connect website](#) or on his [blog post here](#).



tokyo marathon update

SAKURAJIMA DAIKON

The World's Biggest Blessing from a Volcano
Kana Iwai (Kagoshima)



People in Kagoshima living alongside the volcano

Kagoshima Prefecture is located on the southern part of Kyushu Island in the southwest of Japan. Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark was designated a National Geopark in 2013 for its uniqueness in having an active volcano: Sakurajima, one of the most active volcanoes in the world within 4km of a city with a population of about 600,000, Kagoshima city. Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark hosts various activities such as events or tours that allow participants to experience the connection between the earth, nature, and people.



Mega-Daikon Harvesting

On February 11, the Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark held a Sakurajima Daikon (white radish) Harvesting and Cooking Class targeted at international people living in Kagoshima Prefecture to introduce them to the great mega-daikon, which is only cultivated in the soil of the volcano. Sakurajima daikon are the biggest in the world — one weighing 31.1kg with a circumference of 119 cm was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records.

15 participants, including ALTs from Australia, England, Canada, and the US, who teach English in Kagoshima Prefecture attended the event at Farmland Sakurajima at the foot of the mountain. The owners, Tomomi Muroya and Toshikiyo Murayama, grow many kinds of vegetables using organic fertilizers like marine plants.

Before harvesting, Mr. Murayama explained why Sakurajima daikon grow bigger than other species. The soil of Sakurajima is mixed with pumice accumulated through eruptions. This pumice has many small holes and absorbs rainwater very well. Water comes out from the holes in the pumice when there is a drought, which protects the farm from drying. The draining and water retention properties of the pumice help to maintain optimal moisture levels, helping them grow.

After the lecture, it was finally time to harvest! The participants dug them by squatting down and putting their hands under the big leaves as taught by Ms. Muroya. They were so amazed at the size of the vegetable when it came out from the ground! The ALTs and other participants had a really good time during the activity.

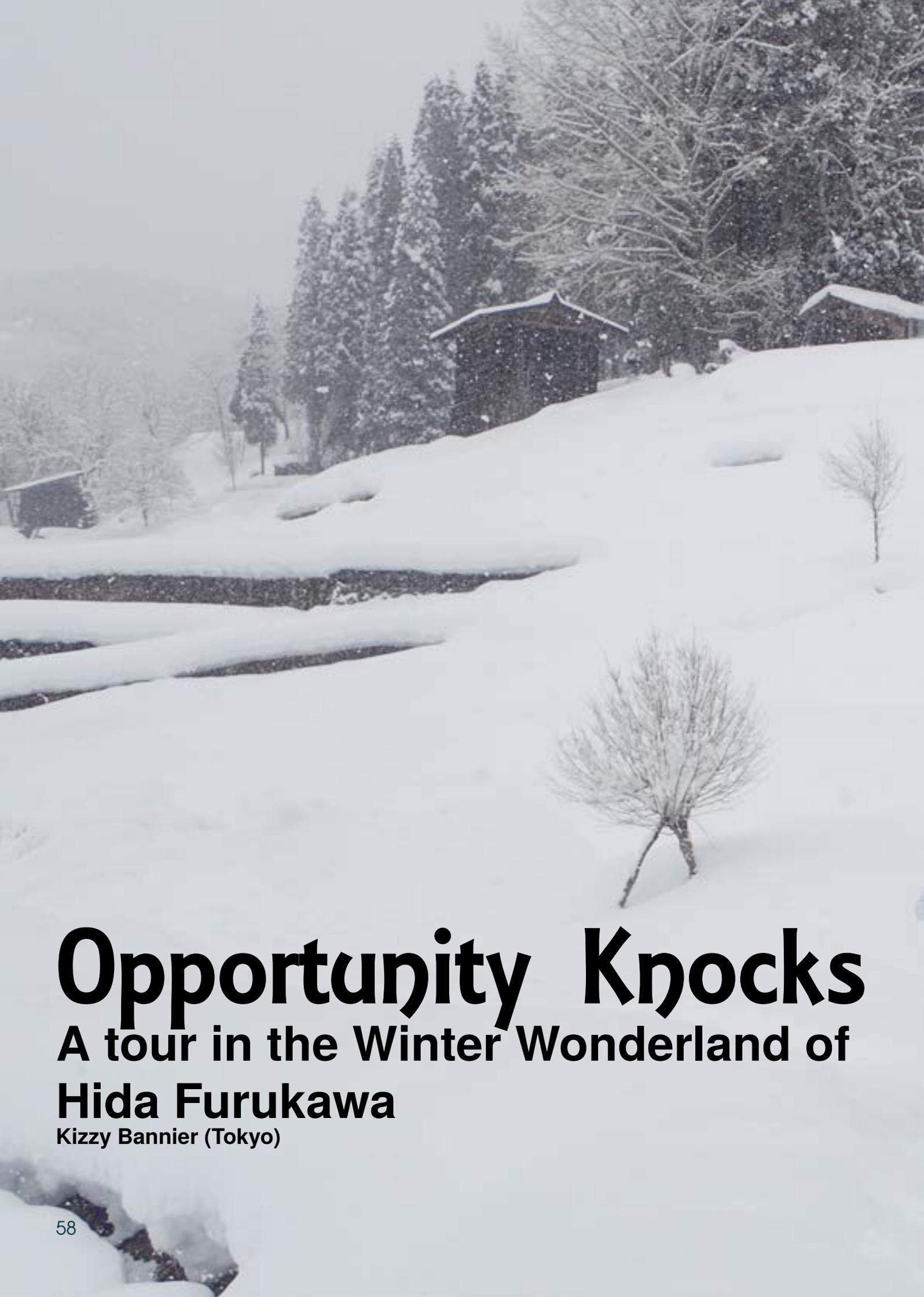
Mega-Daikon Cooking

For the latter half of the event, participants moved to a community center for a cooking class taught by Ms. Muroya. The dishes were daikon and carrot salad, miso soup with daikon, rice mixed with daikon, and daikon *karaage* (deep fried). They were all made with the Sakurajima daikon harvested by the participants.

Before starting, Ms. Muroya handed a daikon stick to everyone to enjoy its fresh and sweet raw taste. Then they separated into three groups to make the different dishes for everyone to share afterwards. Participants took turns peeling, cutting, and cooking the daikon and other ingredients.

After an hour and a half, the four unique dishes were completed successfully. Everyone sat at the table together, said "*Itadakimasu*," and really enjoyed the delicious Sakurajima cuisine. The daikon used for the lunch was delivered directly from the farm to their plates within a few hours. Throughout the event, it was a great opportunity for the participants to experience the blessings of the volcano.





Opportunity Knocks

A tour in the Winter Wonderland of Hida Furukawa

Kizzy Banner (Tokyo)



From Snowkyo to Hida Snowscape

The snow fell in Tokyo on a dreary Monday afternoon, and it kept falling. Fresh from my first haircut in Japan since arriving in Tokyo six months before, I felt like a new woman and ready for anything.

I ventured out for a fun filled `Snowkyo` evening, resulting in a snowman named Pedro and some much-needed laughter.

By the next day the snow had melted away as had any further chance of snow fun. But while flicking through a magazine

opportunity knocked. There was an article advertising to spend a weekend in Hida Furukawa, complete with guided tours, rural accommodation and snowshoeing for almost a pittance as part of a local promotion tour initiated by the council and local tour group.

I applied before this opportunity passed me by and waited with baited breath. A few days later I got a confirmation email that my husband and I had been 2 of 8 people selected.



Adventure is Out There

A few weeks later, we left Tokyo in the early morning and departed for our destination. Next stop: Adventure! As we wound our way into the `Japanese Alps,` the snow started to fall, first as a light dusting which eventually

became car height snow piles along the roadside.

As we arrived at our journey's end, excitement was building for what lay ahead...

Picture Perfect

The picture-perfect town that greeted us was a quaint, peaceful, and stunningly beautiful sight.

Our walking guide showed us how the history of the town was still alive and well, both physically and in spirit. From the preserved houses expertly built by local carpenters and craftsman, each with their own wooden signature, to the 7th generation candlestick maker still living in the same house his ancestors had 120 years prior, passing on his knowledge to his 8th generation apprentice.

Our overnight stay led us to Tanekura, a local village of about 20 people. The accommodation was an authentic experience complete with dinner prepared by a village resident using only locally sourced ingredients.

Like any authentic Japanese experience, the day was completed with a private onsen.

Take a Chance

The next morning, we peeked out to see what weather awaited us and we were amazed by the snowfall that had created perfect snowshoeing conditions.

We grabbed our snowshoeing gear and trekked off into the snow hills of the village for a few hours. It was a magical experience, with untouched snow cover for miles around the valley and so much fun to be at one with nature.

As we finished up our experience and made our way back to Tokyo, I looked out of the bus window toward a glorious sunset over Mt Fuji as if to welcome us again.

It was in that moment I acknowledged that when opportunity knocks, you should always open the door.

Kizzy is a first year JET Who lives in Tokyo with her husband. She goes on too many holidays and eats out too often. Since arriving in Tokyo, she has a new passion for origami.





You are
beautiful in
any size

ta
junio
fairly of
to lose the
unwarranted
at a young age
appearance a lot
speaking countries,
Asia.

Rather than a mere “cultural
pressure towards women, espe
concern.

What we deal with

1. Coworkers policing what we eat

Whether it's melon *pan*, a homemade bento, or a salad, there's always someone there to make a live commentary on what we're having for lunch. The calories in *kyuushoku* are exempt, of course, as you are expected to finish all of it!

2. Students' body image

New Year's Resolution writing assignments littered with the terms, “diet” and “weight”, particularly among female students.

3. Unwarranted comments by strangers and Japanese peers

You can feel the stares intensify, and sometimes, your Japanese friends and complete strangers may grab or prod at your stomach.

4. Difficulty with buying fashionable clothes in Japan

“Free Size” is very restrictive, so your only affordable options may be GU, Uniqlo, or non-Japanese franchises like H&M. Cute clothes in other shops are only displays.

5. Comparing with other people (locals and expats)

Going to local events might heighten your sensitivity with how different you are from the people around you, especially in a physical sense.

6. Body image in the media

Japan isn't the only country that promotes a certain size in the media, but the “before” pictures would be considered as “afters” in Western countries.

How to deal

1. Teaching body positivity in the

You can teach affirmations, share articles, or discuss body image at any proficiency level. Here are some examples of what's done in the classroom: [Steffi's lesson]

2. Being assertive in refuting comments

Being body positive can be difficult when you receive negative feedback. Practice direct and honest communication of your beliefs. Maintain eye contact and use a firm tone. If a language barrier, there are many non-verbal cues.

3. Affirmations

Overcoming negative perceptions of your body is a long journey. Saying affirmative statements to yourself can help your mind to gradually accept and love your body.



Body Shaming in Japan: The female Expat Weigh-In

Farrah Hasnain (Shizuoka)

Scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed, I came across an [article from Vice](#) about an expat woman of color experiencing blatant comments on her weight in China. I began to recollect my own memories from living there. I taught English in Zhuzi and Guangzhou. It was through an exchange program during the spring and summer of my 2nd year in university, before applying to the JET Programme. I lived with a host family, but I went out on my own often. My host mother would grab the thick brown flesh on my arms and my stomach, commenting on how I needed them to be “healthy” and find someone. Complete strangers would make similar remarks. I had experienced similar comments on my body back in the US, especially in the Pakistani community in DC. I used to internalize them, feeling that I had to make myself smaller to be accepted. After returning from China, I started to embrace my body more; my days in university were during the peak of the “body positivity” movement in the US and other English-speaking countries, and even Japanese celebrities such as Naomi Watanabe would provide excellent body-positive representation in

the “body difference”, I started to view this as a cultural epidemic that should end. I was already aware that this kind of body shaming, especially women of Asian descent, was a global product of social stigma and fear, rather than a legitimate health

Living with it

Classroom

Examples about body image, and more examples that other ALTs have

Comments

When you're confronted with less open communication to reinforce your body, declare “I” statements. If there is no verbal cues of assertion.

Your body can be a strenuous journey. Loving to yourself can help train your body.

4. Finding alternatives

Sometimes, we have to work harder to find sources that fulfill our bodies and minds. Hard time finding clothes? Check out the [JET Ladies+ Clothing Exchange Group](#) and other websites that can ship to Japan. Do you eat out of stress? Try another method to exert that energy, such as writing, running, or even meditation. Most elements of body positivity are based on our mental health and wellbeing, and it's healthy to maintain a balance with your body and mind.

5. Positive role models

In the age of the internet, more and more people of all sizes are defying the conventions of all kinds, including the “ideal” size. Representation is more accessible than ever! Many Instagrammers, Youtubers, and even Japanese celebrities like Naomi Watanabe can help reassure that you are beautiful in any size.

Farrah is a 4th-year JET at a senior high school in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, Japan. She enjoys traveling, conducting research, and binge-watching Netflix shows.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2GFcV7N>
Photo: <http://bit.ly/2GFAddO>



COMMUNITY



COMMUNITY EDITOR

connect.community@ajet.net

Shantel Dickerson

The only thing I love about Winter: it has bestowed its most precious gift -- Spring!

SPORTS EDITOR

connect.sports@ajet.net

Kirsty Broderick

Photo: Micah Briguera



*FAMILY
SPOTLIGHT*

The Lowdown On The Elementary School Paper Trail

Rachel Greenwood (Oita)

ALMAN SINEMASININ SONU
AĞAŞ KİTAP

Section 1

Are you:

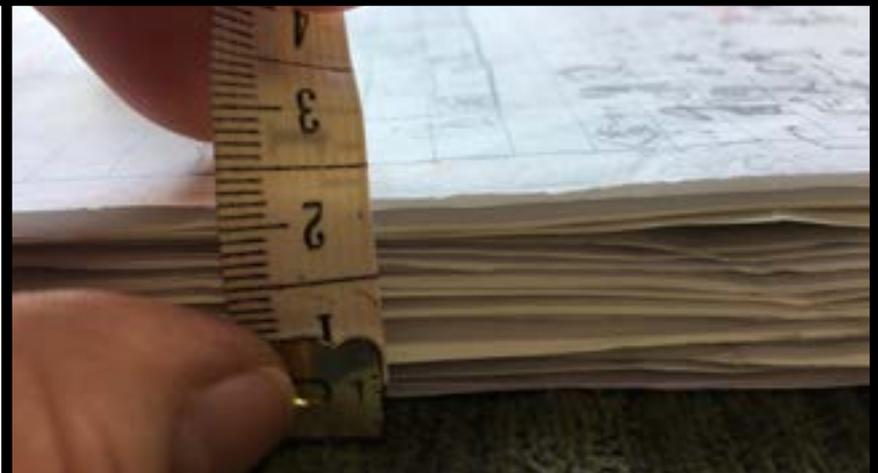
- A. Parents soon to start your kids in Japanese school?
- B. A teacher curious about what your students lug around in those cute backpacks?
- C. Someone with an interest in ecology, waste, and recycling?
- D. Anyone else?

If you answered a, b, c, or d, congratulations, you passed the test! You may now move on to Section Two to discover the secrets of the elementary school paper trail.



Section 2

If you are now thinking, “Wow, I can’t believe she kept a whole year’s worth of notices”, points off for you, because this is just one MONTH’S collection, from early February to early March. And no, it’s not an especially busy time, this is normal — actually, this is not quite all of it. There are 2-3 ‘prints’ (photocopied *homework* pages) every day, and not all of them made it back into the pile, though the ones that did make it back made a 2cm stack of paper!



Test Sheets: The next largest is the pile of *tests*. You may have seen the viral video about the benefits of Japanese elementary schools, one of which was ‘no testing’. This just means no nationally administered progress test. In reality, there are LOADS of tests — this is one month’s pile, which amounts to pretty much daily testing. Even though some of these papers are more like worksheets, they still take the form of quietly writing the answers then being scored on the results.



Weekly Fourth Grade Newsletter:

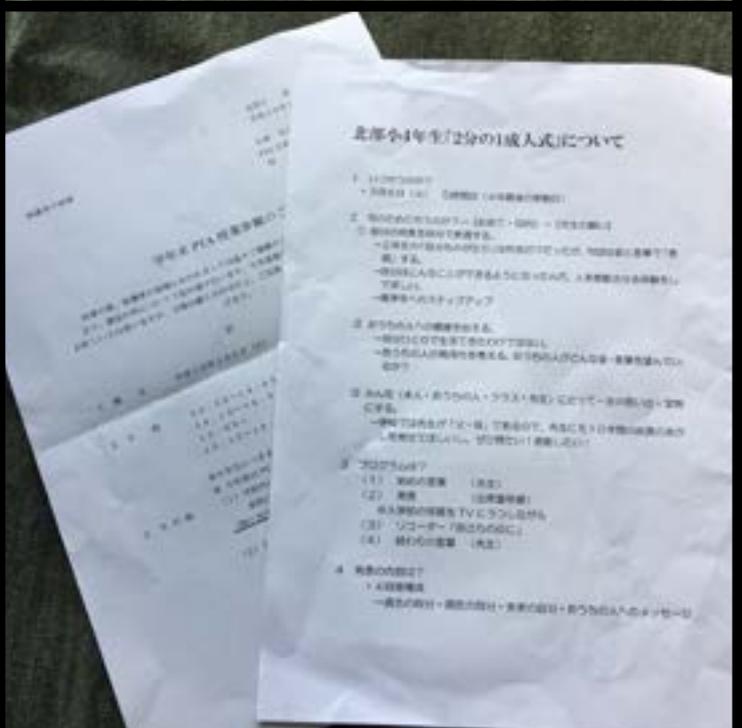
The final one is extra long as it includes the monthly PTA class meeting agenda and notes. Sometimes there will be a class newsletter and a school newspaper as well.



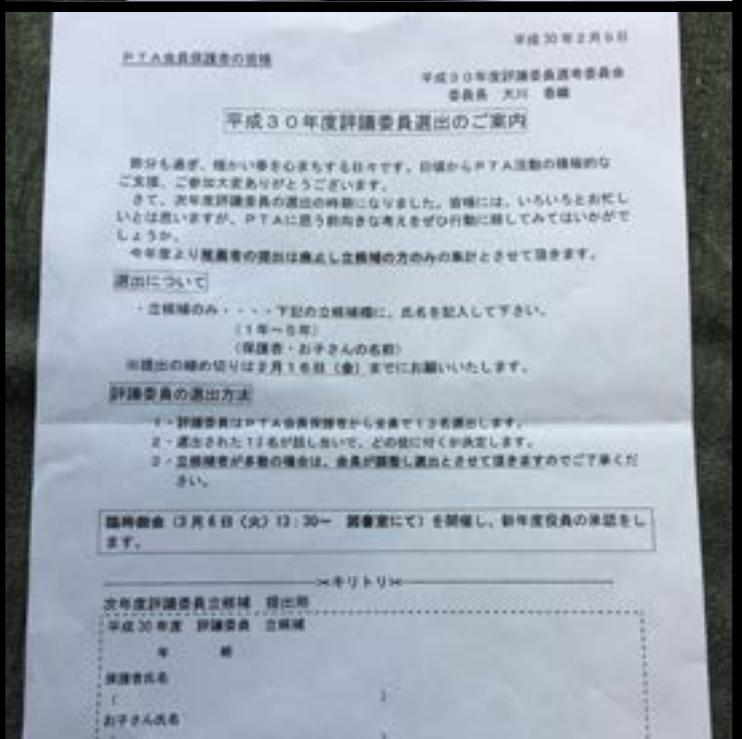
More newsletters: Monthly prefectural education newsletter, PTA newsletter and an information booklet about special needs options.



Event Notices: PTA organizes the monthly observation lessons at school, so information about them comes from the PTA. This month, the 4th graders (age 10) had a special “Half Way to Adulthood” celebration — we got three different letters about that!



PTA Election notice: With the new school year coming up, this is the first round, calling for volunteers for the PTA council.





Tsunami Evacuation Drill: Parents are invited to attend an emergency drill to practice for picking up their kids in the event of a major earthquake or tsunami.

ほけんだより  2018年2月7日
臨時号
北部小学校
保健室

インフルエンザがたいへん流行しています！

北部小学校ではまだまだインフルエンザの新しい型が舞えません。北部小学校では、B型が流行っていますが、あまり熱が高くならずじ熱が続いている人や、喉の痛みや頭痛のみの方が病院を受診してインフルエンザが発覚する事例が少なくありません。いつもの様子と比較しながら、不調が続く場合は受診をお勧めします。

インフルエンザの出席停止の人数の経過をお知らせします。

1/29 (月)	1/30 (火)	1/31 (水)	2/1 (木)	2/2 (金)
B型17人	B型7人	B型10人	B型15人	B型35人

(3-2学年児童数、6年生学年児童数)

School Nurse: Health information — it's February so it's all about influenza this month. Also with *furigana*.

北部小学校
スクールカウンセラーだより 2月号
2018年2月発行

ご来校のみならず、こんにちは、
スクールカウンセラーの
教員健策(まえばよしみ)です。

今年の冬はいつもより早く届きます。
星の日は軍の旗印でアキトキヤること
し... だからこそ、夢になったとき、

自分の気持ちのつきあいかた

- * わたしたちが「一瞬つきあうことがむずかしい」
気持ち「揺り」ではないでしょうか。
「揺りをのこさこんでイライラしつぱなし」
という状態はつらいですね。
「揺りをバクハツさせておだちとスゲンカ」
というのでもいいんだなあ...

School Counselor: Advice and information from the school counselor.

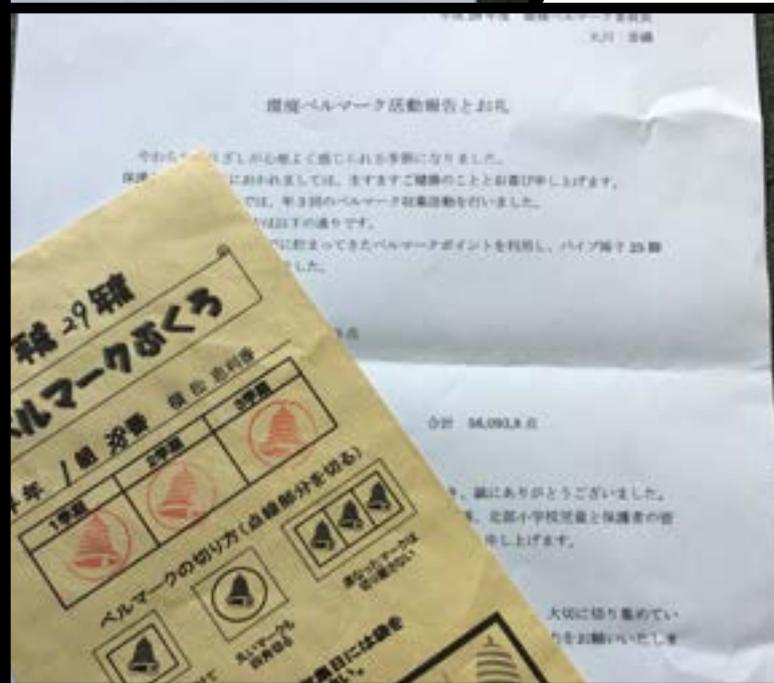


Advertising: More than usual this month as spring break is coming up. Rental bikes, horse riding, a show, and various kids' activities, camps and trips.

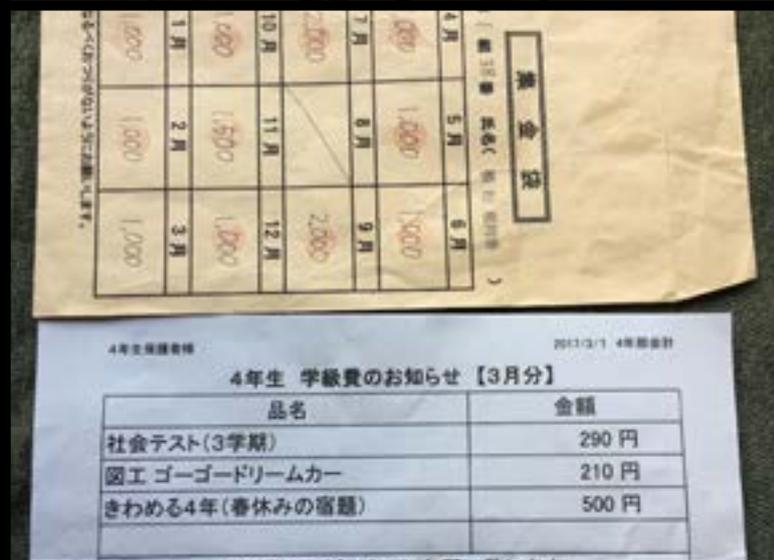
Survey: Each semester a small survey is sent out with some questions for the teacher and some for the parents.

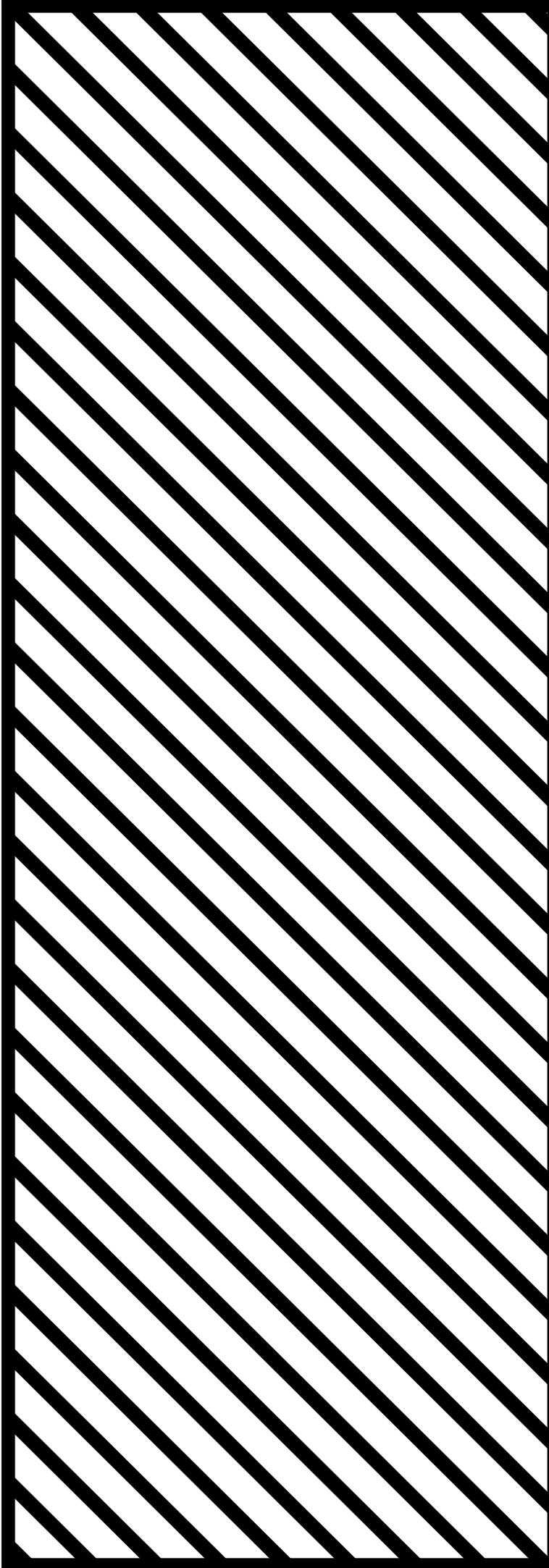


Bell Mark: This is a charity effort. Dozens of products are sold with a small picture of a bell on the packaging. Children collect these, and they are sent to a central Bellmark organisation to be exchanged for funds that are used to buy school supplies.



Shukin-bukuro: This is a money envelope, sent out to all parents monthly. Public school is free, but parents are expected to pitch in for extras, which often includes photocopying... Our school is currently ¥1000 a month.





What to do with all this paper? Our kyushoku menu goes on the noticeboard for easy reference, and event notices on the fridge as a reminder. I keep a slip folder for each child, with each type of notice kept together, and one more for the general school notices. Most of it is thrown out at the end of the year. At the start, I kept the homework sheets and tests in case we needed to look back on them, but we never did, so they tend to go directly into the recycling pile now (although, I don't think it's a solution to the paper mountain since many of these notices could be emails).

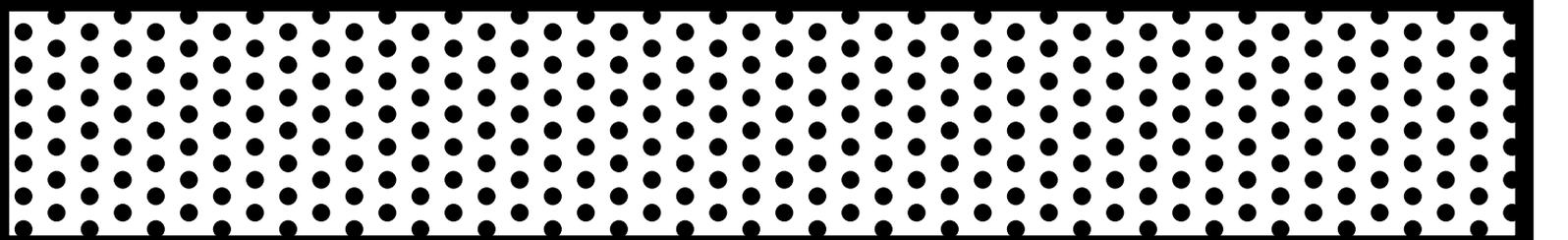
How to read it all? It's so much easier now with smartphone kanji readers and translators! You can ask the school to include furigana in your notices, and many of the 1st and 2nd grade notices will have it anyways to help the kids read. If you can, try to find a buddy parent at school who will be happy to answer your panicked questions over Line, late at night, when your child tells you you need 6 empty milk cartons by tomorrow morning, and who will tell you if there's anything in the letters that you absolutely need to know. It can be disconcerting when Japanese helpers, whether a family member or friend at school, breezily shrug off notice after notice as 'you don't need that' (though this would be my advice now after ten years of it!), so I always made an effort to try to read the notices myself to reassure myself as well as to satisfy my curiosity about what it all was!

I've become quite good at winnowing out the necessary information and you can find some tips below:

- Look for the word 'さて' - it signifies the polite introduction, comments about the weather are over and the real information follows.
- Formatting is your friend! Things to bring are often listed, and important things often in bold or in boxes.
- Look for the ¥ sign.
- Look for dates and times. Two dates on a notice probably mean a deadline for notification of attendance, and the date itself.
- A 'キリトリ' and scissors icon means you have to fill something out and hand it back.
- Learn the titles first — you'll learn which ones need some action and which ones can be left to figure out at your leisure.
- Finally, as your child grows, they'll be able to help you!



Photos:
Rachel Greenwood



A close-up photograph of a taco. The taco is filled with a large piece of white cheese, meat, and sauce. The background is blurred, showing more of the same dish. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

So, When Is The Last Time You Had Tacos?

**Monthly international
dinner party in Matsue**

James Alexander Jack (Shimane)



Shimane really is a great place, but after living in such a rural prefecture for a while, cravings for foods from back home steadily grow stronger. It's impossible to find good pizza, tacos, or falafel anywhere in this area, and it can even be a daunting task to find any in the large cities like Osaka and Kyoto. For this reason, James Hart and I started organizing monthly international dinner parties in Matsue six years ago.

I had already been doing some freelance cooking here and there, and James had plenty of space in his English School in Matsue — Hart Eikaiwa. Soon the parties evolved into an event where you cannot only eat quality international food, but also meet and network with other foreigners and internationally minded Japanese. For foreigners, especially those new to Shimane, it can be difficult to meet new people outside of their direct social and professional circles, so we're very happy to be able to bring people together over a nice meal.

Ever since the first international dinner party, the participation price has been all you can eat for 1500 yen. The types of food we cook on a regular basis include falafel, tacos, pizza, Ethiopian, and handmade pasta.

We also have seasonal dinner parties, such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. For Thanksgiving we always order a full-size turkey, Halloween is fancy costume night, and at Christmas Santa Claus himself always manages to find some time in his busy schedule to pay us a visit!

We like to shake up the menu every month, cooking food from many different countries, but our pizza nights are especially popular. Our pizza party on February 18th drew a large crowd, with over 50 people from many different corners of the world joining us! In order to be able to bake enough pizza for so many people on location, we had to get a large gas convection oven.

On the menu this time was:

- minestrone soup
- gorgonzola risotto
- potato salad
- homemade bread
- copious amounts of freshly made pizza
- chocolate mousse for dessert

Our New York style pizzas are made from a professional-grade, extra strong flour that we order from Hokkaido, which gives them a texture and chewiness that is not obtainable with regular Japanese supermarket flour. Most of our food is vegetarian-friendly, and there are always plenty of vegan options.

*Please come and join us at
one of our future events!*

Location: Hart Eikaiwa, 2 Chome-3-17 Gakuenminami, Matsue (a short walk from Matsue JR Station)

Time: 19:00 – 22:00

Participation fee: 1500 yen, all you can eat. BYOB.

Inquiries: 0852-61-4343, or send a message to James Alexander Jack or James Hart on Facebook.



2018

March 25th - Falafel Party!

Lebanese food. Falafel, freshly baked pita bread, hummus, baba ganoush, lentil soup and more!

April 22 - Taco Night!

Pick your favorite toppings! Masa corn flour for tortillas is almost impossible to get in Japan, so we're making our own masa from scratch!

May 27 - Ethiopian Dinner Party!

Nothing brings people together more than sharing the same large plate and eating Ethiopian comfort food with your hands!

June 24 - Pizza Party!

New York Style Pizza made on location!

James Alexander Jack (1976) likes to cook good food. When he's not feeding hungry foreigners, he works as a wedding producer, translator and musician. He has been living in Shimane since 2004 and is married with three children.

Photos:
James Alexander Jack

Kiara Cottage

All turned business
owner — shifting
away from
teaching to
pursue true
passion

Joanne Tomooka (Oita)



Like so many others, I came to Japan straight out of university in New Zealand, on the JET scheme, with the goal of staying for one year to make some money to pay off my student loans while experiencing a different culture. 22 years later, and I am still here...

After three years on the JET scheme, I married a local man and continued teaching privately at kindergartens and *eikaiwa* schools while raising two children. Living in the countryside and being a reasonably good teacher, I was in high demand. We also started taking in groups of junior high school students for homestay experiences as a part of Green Tourism.

I worked hard, juggled the different demands of my family and made a reasonable income, but never actually enjoyed it. I felt like my skills were badly wasted, but I could see no other way to work in the countryside of Oita prefecture.

Then, three and a half years ago, I was hospitalized for seven weeks with an autoimmune disease. As horrible as it was, I am now so grateful for this time in my life. The disease was brought on mainly through stress and was a great chance to look at what was really important to me in life. I promptly gave up all my teaching jobs and began to focus on a side business of making cookies, jam, and granola, which I had already been developing and selling through a number of different outlets

Sales steadily increased, and I was hearing lovely stories about the people who were enjoying the cookies, but I still felt a little disconnected from the process as I wasn't selling directly to customers. So, in November last year, I took the plunge and converted our cottage into a small shop called, "Kiora Cottage", where I now sell my own baked goods as well as handmade items made by long term residents from all over the world, who are living all over Japan.

The name "Kiora" is a combination of two words — "Kia Ora", meaning "welcome" in Maori and "Kiyoraka", which means "pure" or "natural". Like the combination of the words, I hope the cottage is a place where visitors can feel a sense of New Zealand in a natural, pure environment. I am currently only open three days a week, but am absolutely loving this new stage of my life.

The main aim of the shop is not to make lots of money. I am very fortunate that my husband has

a good job, so I don't feel too pressured to focus only on the financial side of things. My aim is to make connections with people and help others to make new connections through the shop. One way of making these connections is by asking people to run different workshops through the cottage. Customers are brought together in small groups with a common goal, such as seasonal medicinal cooking, and come away with not only new skills, but new friends. Another is by connecting different suppliers to help come up with new and original goods. Kiora Cottage is already becoming a place where locals come for a chat, and where customers feel free to talk with other customers and exchange information.

When people leave the shop, I hope they feel they have had a mini-overseas trip without having to leave Japan. I hope they feel a little inspired to try something new. I would also love to inspire other people who are in a similar situation to me to be brave and break away from teaching English. Please don't get me wrong; I am not trying to rubbish teaching. It is just that it's not for everyone and there are other options for those of us who are living in Japan and are not enjoying the teaching world.

Starting a new business is not easy. I have the support of the majority of my local community, but the attitude of a few in my immediate area sometimes make me want to just give up. When I first put signs up I got permission from all the land owners involved, but there was still a complaint put in by one of my stubborn, old neighbours. At first I was disheartened, but in the end I know he is just so opposed to anything new and that it is best to smile and nod at him and not take it to heart. You will never get the support of the entire community — 95% is good enough for me! I am still by no means a "successful business". It takes time. It takes connections. It takes a lot of trial and error. It takes hard work. Without the support of others, it is not possible. But if it is something you enjoy, it is also so rewarding.

If anyone is interested in starting anything similar, I would be more than happy to let you in on any of the things I have learnt on my journey. I have made many mistakes, but I feel that I have made something that is unique and that will evolve slowly over time. Hopefully Kiora Cottage will still be the place where "International craft and flavor comes to rural Japan" for many years to come!

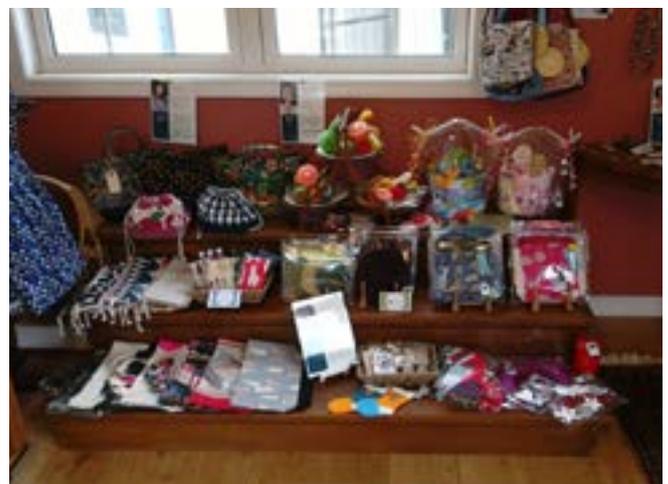
What is everyone buying at Kiora Cottage?

Cookies! ([recipe on page 52](#)) I currently make 8 different kinds, the most popular of which is White Chocolate & Pecan. Compared to Japanese cookies, mine are packed with flavour and at 300 yen for a packet of 7-9 (depending on the variety) they are great as a treat for yourself or as a small gift for others.



Locally Grown Tea. I am lucky enough to be able to stock tea which is grown right here in my town and processed by hand by a wonderful young couple. Prices range from 300 to 500 yen depending on the blend. You can also enjoy a nice cup of tea with cookies at the shop.

Handmade items from amazing long term residents all over Japan. *E-tegami*, pottery, jewellery, crocheted items, children's bags, bento bags, children's clothing... everyone has their favorite thing to look at each time they come. The quality of the goods is fantastic and the different approach Westerners take to handmade items is always a lovely surprise to Japanese customers.



Two tips for getting off the teaching English track and pursuing your passion:

1. Work out exactly what is important to you in life. Are you enjoying what you are currently doing? Is it impacting negatively on your family or your health? Can you financially afford to say no to teaching at this stage of your life?

If the answers to the above questions are 'no', 'yes' and 'yes', then perhaps it is time to take the plunge and try something new. Work out what it is that makes you happy, what skills you have and how they could be used to make a new business.

2. Get help. Ask questions. Check out the market. Sometimes we have amazing ideas that we really want to just run with, but I really encourage you to take your time and get help from a business consultant (there are some amazing women here in Japan doing this) just to bring you back down to earth for a while and head you in the right direction. Starting small while you are still teaching is a great way to go. Just try as many new things as you can. Some will work and some won't — and they are not always the ones you think are going to work! Go for it!

Joanne came to Oita prefecture from New Zealand as a JET in 1996. After 16 years of teaching, she took the plunge to get out of English teaching and start her own business. She is slowly building up her business by bringing a small piece of the world to the countryside of Oita prefecture through the crafts of other expats living in Japan and some great home baking! You can find more information on the [Kiora Cottage website](#) and [Facebook page](#). Alternatively, you may contact her at the following email address: jotomooka@gmail.com

Photos:
Joanne Tomooka

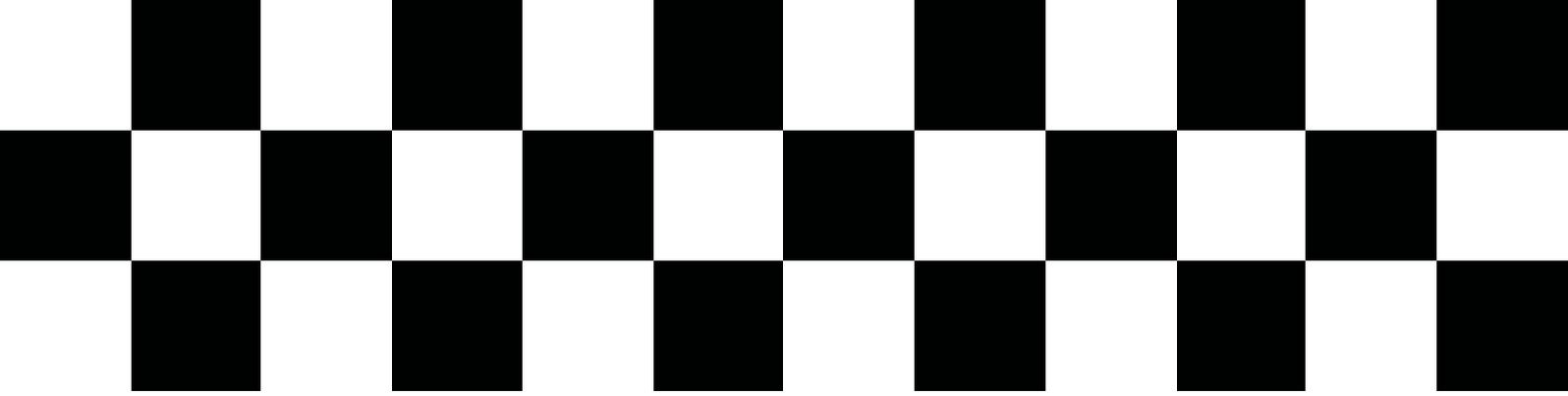




CHESS RENAISSANCE BLOOMING IN TOKYO

Richard F. Kruse III (Tokyo)

Photo by Jeswin Thomas on Unsplash



Japan may have been first exposed to chess by western traders as early as the 16th century, but the game remained virtually unknown until the widespread circulation of western culture during the Meiji era. Today, largely thanks to common appearances in western movies, TV shows, games, and books, most Japanese people are aware that chess exists, but few study the art, preferring traditional games such as *go* or *shogi*.

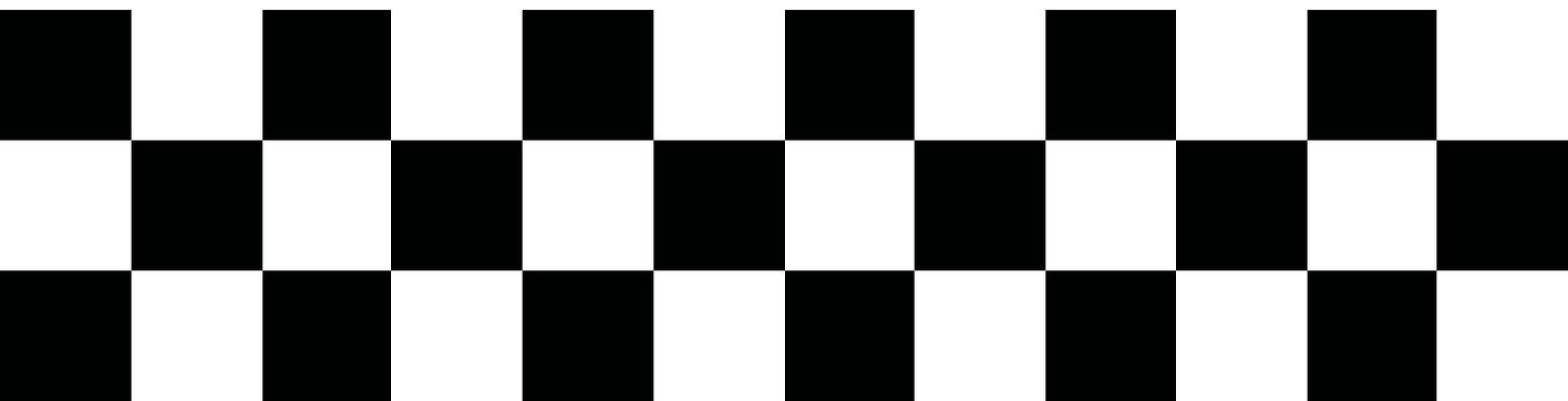
Chess and shogi are both derived from *chaturanga*, an Indian board game that developed in the 6th century and spread east and west through trade routes, slowly transforming over time into many popular regional variants. Both chess and shogi developed into their modern forms around the 15th century. Unlike chess, both shogi and go are ingrained in Japanese culture, each having hundreds of years of history and tradition, well established professional circuits, thousands of books of theory, numerous high school and community clubs, and the occasional shogi or go themed manga or anime that spikes the game's popularity. While chess doesn't have anything like the ubiquitous mainstream presence of shogi and go in Japan, it does

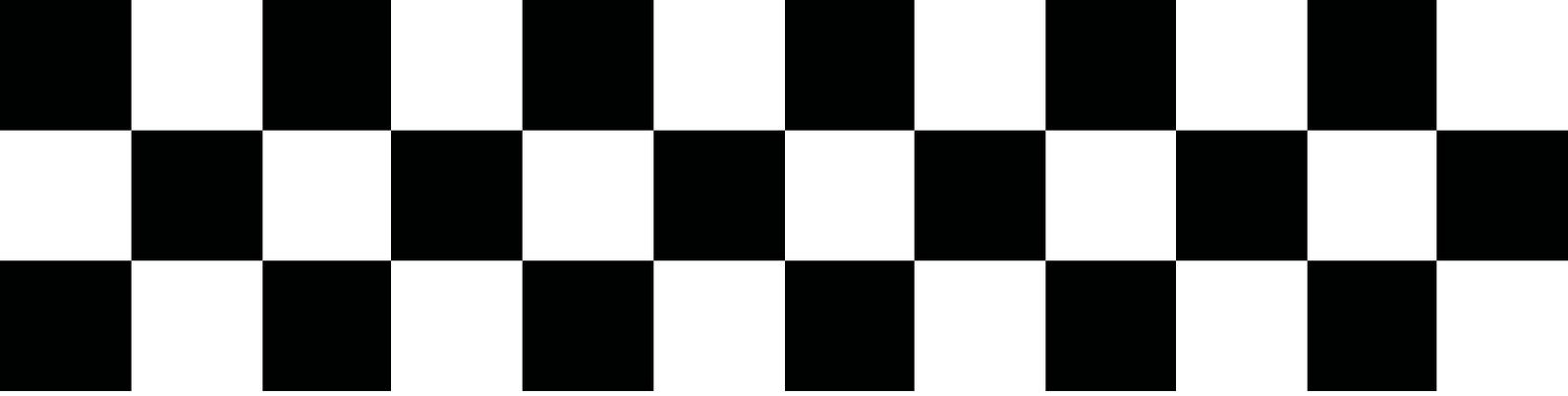
have a dedicated cult following, among Japanese and expats alike, which has been steadily growing since the 1950's and exploded thanks to new resources created through the internet.

For a modern aspiring chess player, the internet grants instant access to free advanced chess software, comprehensive news sites and community Wikis, databases containing hundreds of thousands of top level games, and even popular YouTube personalities, educational channels, and Twitch streamers. The biggest game changer in recent years has been the rise of free platforms like chess.com and [lichess](http://lichess.org) which attracted tens of millions of players from around the world. These sites offer free lessons and tactics training, host active forum discussions, maintain global chess news centers, and, most importantly, operate social media and community platforms for players all over the world, including Japan. A decade ago aspiring Japanese players or expats struggled to find available opponents nearby, now there is an endless supply of players just a click away. But maybe after learning the ropes and competing online for a while, you want to put

your skills to the test in the real world, over the board, and maybe make a few friends and share a couple of drinks. This is where the busy community forums from chess websites crossover with social media platforms, such as Facebook or Meetup.com. This is how I dove into the rapidly expanding world of the Tokyo chess community.

Most of my Tokyo chess experience has happened through [Tokyo Chess Meetup](#), a formerly dormant international chess group, revived last Fall after a six-month hiatus, by a very passionate new organizer and chess aficionado, Rafael Caetano dos Santos. Rafael was taught chess at a young age by his father, but never really played the game seriously. His interest rekindled in early 2017 and he began playing regularly online. His quest to find over-the-board games led him to the Tokyo Chess Meetup page. After a series of emails with the original founder inquiring about the current and future status of the group, Rafael was given the passwords and permission to take over the reigns as the new head organizer. Since being handed the keys to the kingdom, Rafael has been tirelessly working to construct





and maintain a new Tokyo chess community. He built and manages [club profiles](#) on several [social media sites](#), took out ad space to promote the group online, and traveled to dozens of meetups in the Tokyo area to garner interest for the new venture.

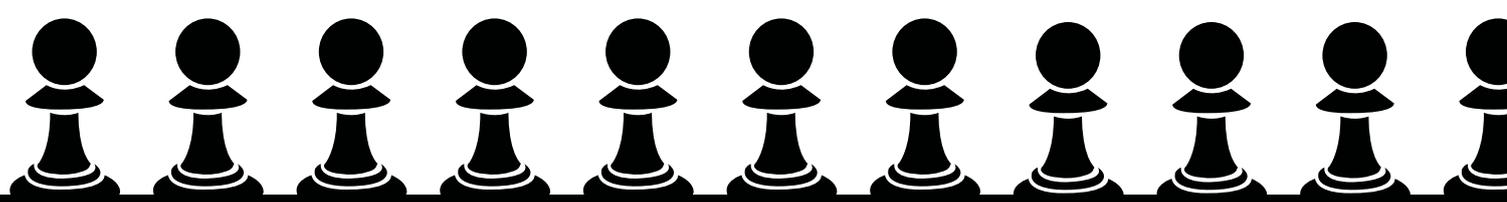
When Rafael took over the Tokyo Chess Meetup in November the group had 100 'interested' online members but hadn't managed to draw more than four or five people out to an event since 2015. By March 1, the meetup group had 225 members online and was drawing in one or two dozen new players at every meeting. Besides the monthly core meetings at Good Heavens Pub in Shimokitazawa, there are now bi-weekly crossover events with local international board game groups and the first Tokyo Chess Meetup open tournament will be held on April 1. When asked "where do you see this interlocking community going in the near future and how you would like to see it expand or develop?", Rafael responded, "I hope to get in touch with more and more chess enthusiasts who not only want to play with us, but also want to see chess become more popular here. I believe we can make chess bloom in Japan."

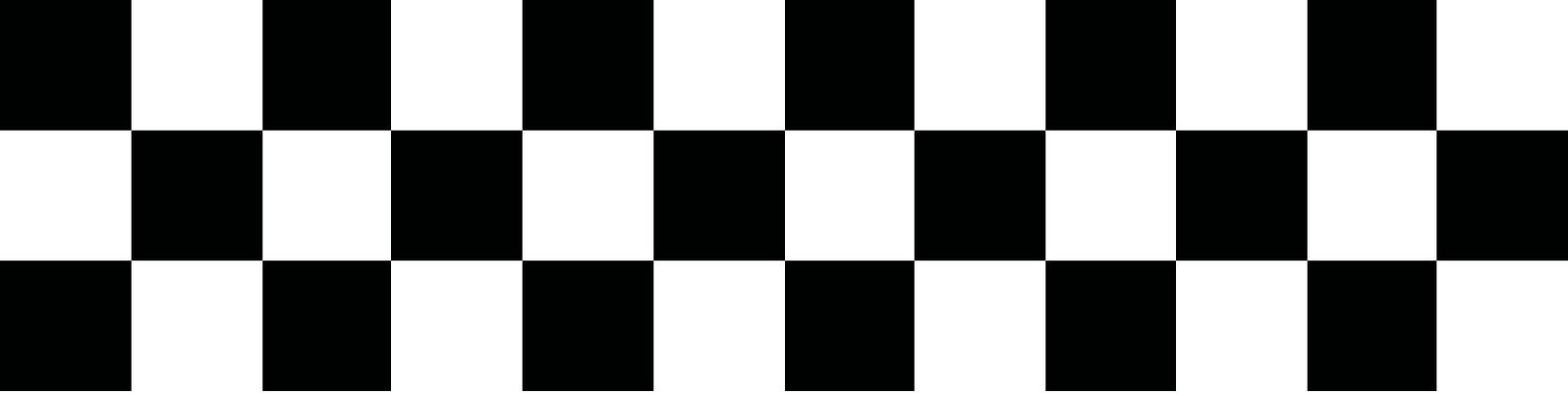
While entering a tournament might sound like a daunting venture to non-veterans, newcomers are more than welcome at meetup events. Most of the burgeoning chess community are beginner to low intermediate level players and everybody helps each other learn and get better. While many treat the practice and study of chess seriously, these are first and foremost social occasions. My favorite part of heading out to these events isn't the fantastic games you get to play, but the sense of community and interactions with fellow players from all over the world. Helping hands are always extended to new members, long occupied boards are given up if anyone is caught waiting in limbo between games for too long, and there's always a revolving band of people just enjoying a drink, chatting over chips, or spectating.

Education is a huge focus of expanding chess projects in Japan. A spin-off chess group based in Nishi-Kasai is being developed. The organizer is working with an international chess master from Uzbekistan to create a family friendly, free chess group based around the local community center, featuring free educational chess

programs for kids and adults and local school events. This project, Tokyo International Chess Club (TICC), is set to launch in late April.

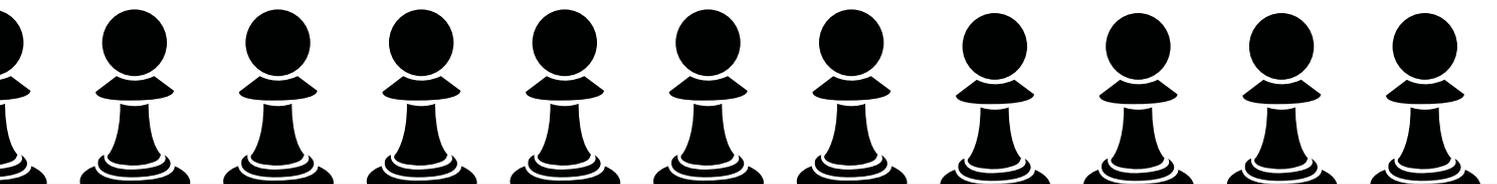
Although most of the chess experiences I've had in Japan are centered around the Tokyo area, the same resources are available wherever you are. A quick check online might turn up an active chess group closer than you thought. Is nothing nearby? Starting one up is easier than ever! You'd be surprised how many interested people are just waiting for someone to send out the beacon. Teaching about chess can make for a fun activity or history lesson in your school's English club. If all else fails, I recommend you take a portable chess set out along for your next picnic under the cherry blossoms this Spring. The beautiful scenery, sensual fragrances, and jovial atmosphere at your next chess *hanami* session will lead to fantastical games that exemplify the true aesthetic beauty and creativity of the sport, especially after a few drinks!





Richard F. Kruse III is a first year JET living in cozy Edogawa-ku, Tokyo's hidden jewel of the East. When not playing games with friends, he's probably reading or listening to a podcast. He wants you to know that he can hear Disneyland's fireworks from his window every single night. This is both a blessing and a curse.

Photos:
Richard F. Kruse III



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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, Ashley Hirasuna, at ashley.hirasuna@ajet.net.

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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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