

AJET

# CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

NOVEMBER  
2018

Fashion and Gender - A Look At Genderless Fashion in Japan

Tokyo Game Show - An Insider's Look From The Showroom Floor

Disaster Preparedness - What You Need To Know To Stay Safe

Taking the Stress Out of Cooking - Best Meal Planning Apps

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# Seeking volunteer translators and Japanese proofreaders!

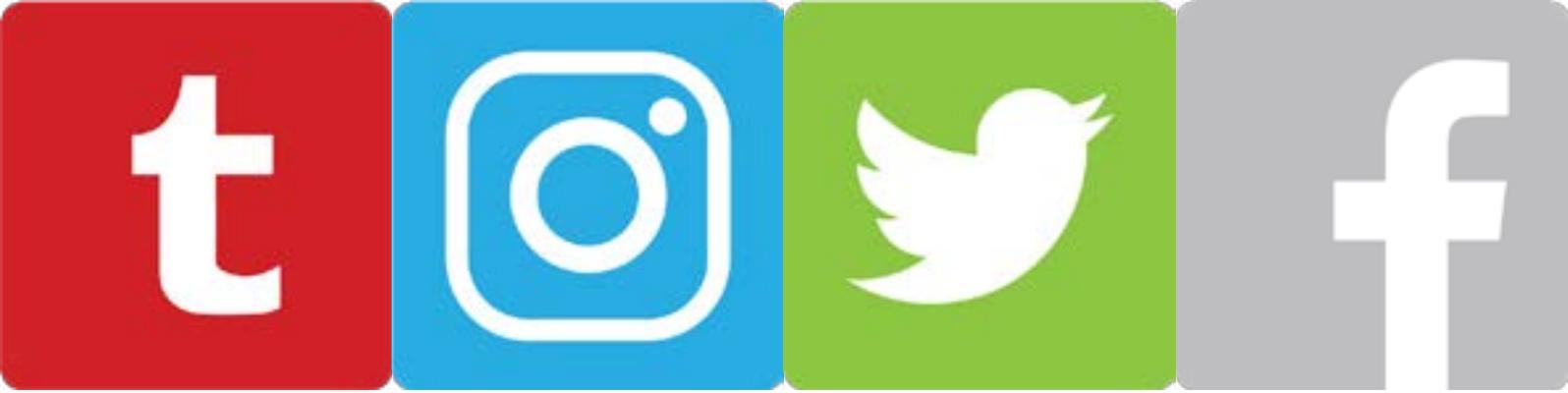
翻訳・ネイティブチェックボランティア募集中!

The AJET translation team is currently looking for volunteers with advanced Japanese proficiency (N2 equivalent or better) to assist with EN to JP translation of AJET reports throughout the year. It's a great opportunity to get real experience translating professional-level documents for a reputable organization while helping out the greater JET community, and all translators will be credited in each report.

We are also seeking native Japanese speakers to revise Japanese-translated reports. English proficiency is not required, but volunteers may receive native English checks in exchange for their work if desired.

J E T 参加者の力になりたい方、ボランティアしてみませんか？日本語に訳された A J E T 報告書を修正できるボランティアのご協力をお願い申し上げます。日本語のネイティブチェックの代わりに英語チェックを貰うのも可能です！興味のある方、是非下記のメールアドレスにご連絡下さい。

For questions or to volunteer, please contact the AJET Translation and Interpreting Coordinator at: [xy.teng@ajet.net](mailto:xy.teng@ajet.net)



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

With school festivals and trips out of the way, and classes in full swing - this month can feel like a long one. It's the perfect time to really get stuck into things at work. Yes, navigating Japanese conversations with co-workers (or coaxing a sentence or two in English out of shy students) counts!

It's also important to make time to focus on yourself, especially this time of year, and even more so if this will be your first winter in Japan. If you're missing home, check out the community section for a bit of inspiration. This month, one JET shares her story of finding strength, challenge and belonging through *karate*.

Unwilling to venture outside the *kotatsu*? No shame in that! Settle in and enjoy our exploration of the rural Niigata Fox Festival, one artist's reflections on identity and creativity, and an interview with three aspiring academic JETs.

*Ganbare!* The holidays are right around the corner!

Lauren Hill  
Head Editor  
3rd Year Tokyo ALT



Photo: Colette English



# NEWS AND EVENTS

## NEWS EDITOR

connect.news@ajet.net

## Tresha Barrett

*Purple haze. Purple pills. These are the daze.  
Enjoy the thrills!*

## EVENTS EDITOR

connect.events@ajet.net

## Peyton Goodman

*"Teacher? I prefer the term Educational Rockstar"*  
*-Unknown*

Photo: Rhema Baquero(Kobe)





# Events Calendar:

## November

### 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

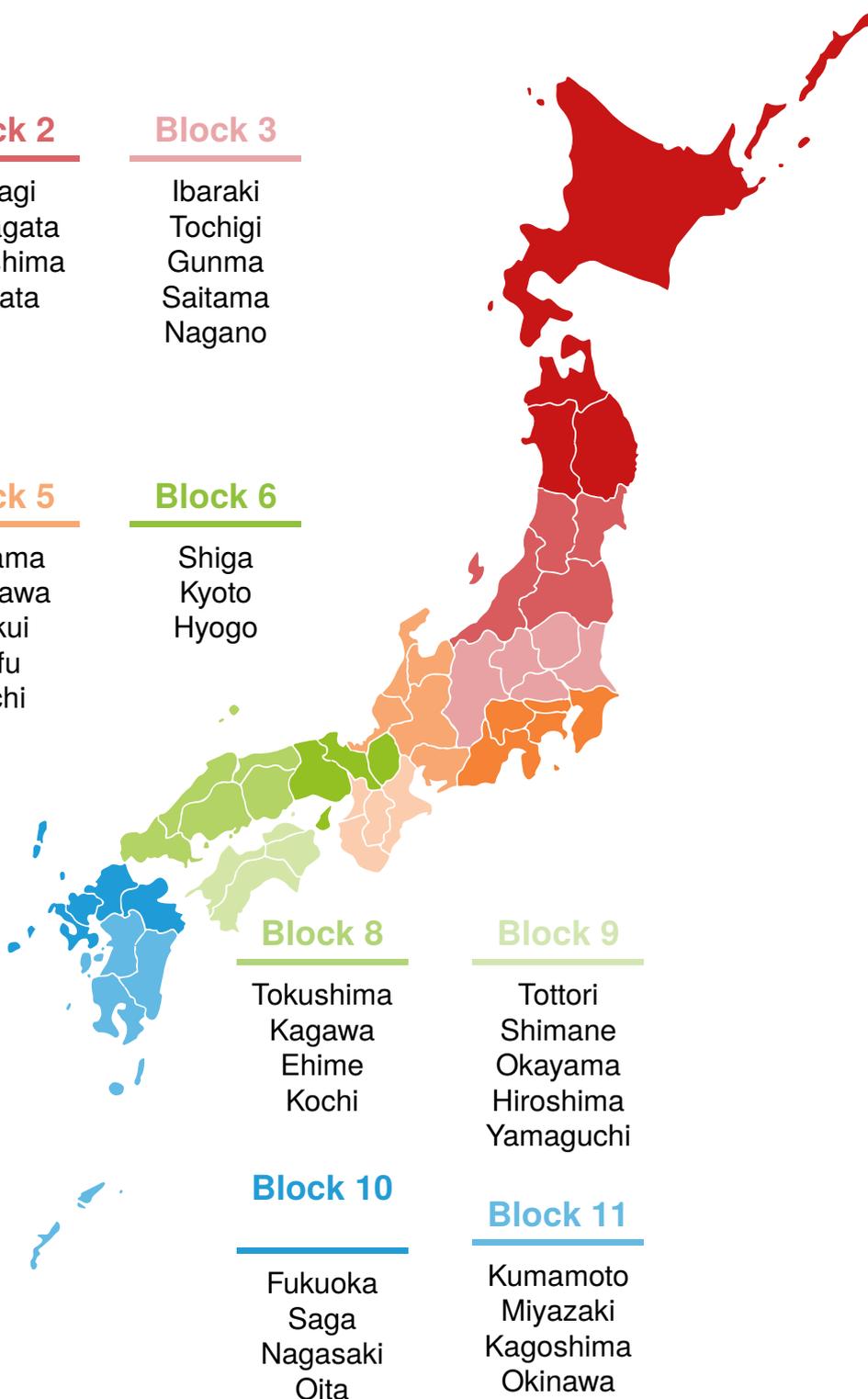
Tottori  
Shimane  
Okayama  
Hiroshima  
Yamaguchi

### Block 10

Fukuoka  
Saga  
Nagasaki  
Oita

### Block 11

Kumamoto  
Miyazaki  
Kagoshima  
Okinawa





## Block 1

### **Sapporo Sparkling Fes 2018**

19 October - 11 November  
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hirosaki Castle Chrysanthemum and Autumn Leaves Festival**

19 October - 11 November  
Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Fujiwara Festival of Autumn**

01 November – 03 November  
Hiraizumi Town, Iwate Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Yamabora! & Nature Walk Protect**

03 November  
Fujisato Town, Akita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **The 45th Hirasumi Arts and Culture Festival**

03 November – 04 November  
Hiraizumi Town, Iwate Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **The 5th Gundam Model Exhibition and Making Experience**

03 November - 04 November  
Hachinohe City, Aomori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **5th Joint Exhibition by Creators of Akita**

10 November - 11 November  
Yokote City, Akita Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Fujshiki Fall Festival**

17 November - 18 November  
Fujisaki Town, Aomori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Misawa Christmas Festival**

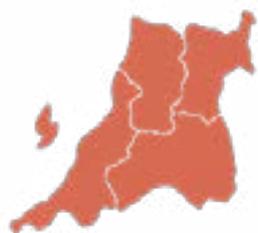
22 November - 14 January  
Misawa City, Aomori Prefecture

[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Hokkaido COMITIA 9**

02 December  
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 2

### **Matsushima Autumn Leaves light up 2018**

27 October - 25 November  
Matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hokkoku Kaido Arai Jidai Festival**

03 November  
Myokou City, Niigata Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Wakatochi Harvest Festival**

03 November  
Ojiya City, Niigata Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Tanakura Castle Food Festa**

04 November  
Tanagura Town, Fukushima Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Taimatsu Akashi**

10 November  
Sukagawa City, Fukushima Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Bio Product Food Taste Festival**

11 November  
Ooe Town, Yamagata Prefecture  
[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Unuma Koshihikari Colored Leaves Marathon Event**

11 November  
Unuma City, Niigata Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Heisei Nabe Battle**

11 November  
Tendo City, Yamagata Prefecture  
[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Kasuga Shrine New Festival (Kurokawa Noh Performance)**

23 November  
Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture  
[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Mitsuke-shi Roadside Tree Illuminations**

24 November - 14 February  
Mitsuke City, Niigata Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kohata Flag Festival**

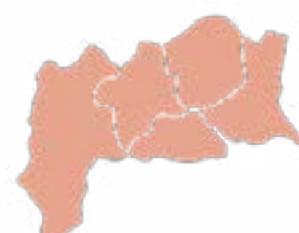
02 December  
Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Tsururinko Festival**

02 December  
Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Yokosuka Festival**

04 December  
Yonezawa City, Yamagata Prefecture  
[Website in Japanese only](#)



## Block 3

### **Kasama Chrysanthemum Festival 2018**

20 October - 25 November  
Kasama City, Ibaraki Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Flower Fantasy**

27 October - 05 February  
Ashikaga City, Tochigi Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kusakabe Music Festival 2018 Brass Jamboree**

03 November  
Kasukabe City, Saitama Prefecture  
[Website in Japanese only](#)

### **Tanada Camp 2018 in Autumn**

03 November - 04 November  
Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Utsunomiya Gyoza Festival**

03 November - 04 November  
Utsunomiya City, Tochigi Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hanno Festival**

03 November - 04 November  
Hanno City, Saitama Prefecture  
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

### **Bangarra Dance Theatre**

09 November - 10 November  
Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture  
[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 4

### **Tochigi Autumn Festival**

09 November - 11 November

Tochigi City, Tochigi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The Third Joshi Numata Sanada Festival**

10 November - 11 November

Numata City, Gunma Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Numata Ebisu Festival**

10 November - 11 November

Numata City, Gunma Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Night Festival of Mishima-sama**

14 November

Fujioka City, Gunma Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ramen Festival in Mito Part IV**

23 November - 25 November

Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Street Performance World Cup in Shizuoka**

01 November - 04 November

Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Matsuzaki-cho Autumn Festival**

02 November - 03 November

Matsuzaki Town, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Fujinomiya Festival**

03 November - 04 November

Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka City

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Mt. Fuji Ramen battle 2018 Autumn**

19 October - 04 November

Fujiyoshida City, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Malaysia Fair 2018**

02 November - 04 November

Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 8th International Friendly Run**

11 November

Tokyo City, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kambara Post Town Festival**

17 November - 18 November

Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 39th Hachioji Ichou Festa 2018**

17 November - 18 November

Hachioji City, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Matsudo Ramen Summit 2018**

23 November - 25 November

Matsudo City, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **YOGA×CAMP festival**

01 December - 02 December

Hadano City, Kanagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)





## Block 5

### Tajimi Festival

03 November

Tajimi City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Komatsu Citizen Tea Party

03 November

Komatsu City, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### The 66th Aigakusai 2018

03 November – 04 November

Nisshin City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Hashima-shi Catfish Festival

03 November – 04 November

Hashima City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Himi Food Festival

04 November

Himi City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Nanto Chrysanthemum Festival

03 November – 11 November

Nanto City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Ikeda Food Culture Festival

10 November – 11 November

Ikeda Town, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Shogawa Citron Festival

10 November – 11 November

Tonami City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Mikuni Onsen Crab Festival

17 November – 18 November

Sakai City, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Vol.60 Mammoth Flea Market Z 2018 Autumn

17 November - 18 November

Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Echizen Crab Festival

17 November – 18 November

Echizen Town, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Kuizome Crab Festival

18 November

Kaga City, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Wajima Crab Festival

18 November

Wajima City, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Oyada Hinkoko Festival

23 November

Mino City, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 6

### [Gion Odorianese](#)

### Sweets Exhibition (Nagoya)

23 November - 11 February

Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Tulip Park Kirakira Mission

(Winter Illumination)

01 December – 25 December

Tonami City, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Fiber Festival (Clothes Market)

02 December

Gifu City, Gifu Prefecture

01 November - 10 November

Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Nigohachi Festival

03 November

Higashiomi City, Shiga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### The 15th Ako Deshon Festival

04 November

Ako City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### Arashiyama Momiji Festival

10 November

Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 7

### **The 8th Akaho City Marathon Event**

11 November

Ako City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **GAGAKU, the 13th Japanese Court Music Concert**

17 November

Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kyoto no Niku(Meat) Festival 2018**

17 November - 18 November

Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kobe Marathon**

18 November

Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hyakkoku Dances**

23 November

Sanda City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Manyo Gagaku on Culture Day (Classical Arts Performance)**

03 November

Nara City, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 57th Ujisato Festival**

03 November

Matsusaka City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kawawake Shrine Autumn Festival**

03 November

Kurotaki Village, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Autumn Kemari Festival**

03 November

Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Shitennoji Wasso Festival**

04 November

Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **13th [Masse · Hashimoto] Persimmon-Festival 2018**

04 November

Hashimoto City, Wakayama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Osaka Bio Wine Festa 2018**

04 November

Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Mori-chan's Ramen Festa 2018**

09 November - 18 November

Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **ALL MEAT FESTA 2018 Autumn**

10 November - 11 November

Wakayama City, Wakayama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 33rd Owase Bushi National Contest (Singing)**

11 November

Owase City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Sake Festival**

14 November

Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Fashion's Night Out Osaka 2018**

17 November - 18 November

Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 30th Takatori Castle Festival**

23 November

Takatori Town, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Matsusaka Beef Festival**

25 November

Matsusaka City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Aekuni Shrine Festival**

05 December

Iga City, Mie Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 8

### **Autumn Tobe-yaki Festival 2018**

02 November - 03 November

Tobe Town, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Awa Odori of Autumn 2018**

02 November - 04 November

Tokushima City, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kagawa Skill Festival 2018**

10 November – 11 November

Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Tosa Kunimi Aji shuketsu (Food festival in Kunimi)**

10 November - 11 November

Kochi City, Kochi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hosenji Maple Festival**

18 November

Kanonji City, Kagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kompira Hot Spring Festival**

23 November – 25 December

Manno Town, Kagawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Tokushima Yokai Festival**

25 November

Miyoshi City, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)



## Block 9

### **Hiroshima Ramen Stadium**

02 November

Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hi-watari (Ritual Fire Walking)**

#### **Festival at Daigan-ji Temple**

03 November

Miyajima Island, Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 67th Ube City Festa 2018**

03 November - 04 November

Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Setouchi Ushimado International Exchange Festa**

04 November

Setouchi City, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 43rd Yakage Shukuba Festival, Daimyo's Procession**

11 November

Yakage Town, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Tottori Crab Festa**

17 November

Tottori City, Tottori Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **National Championship of Spitting out Seed of Kaki**

23 November

Nanbu Town, Tottori Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **The 24th Iwami Kagura**

#### **Tournament**

25 November

Gotsu City, Shimane Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ohitaki Festival**

08 December - 09 December

Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 10

### **Saga International Balloon Fiesta**

31 October – 04 November

Saga City, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hakushu Festival and Parade on Water**

01 November - 03 November

Yanagawa City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

### **Sumiyoshi Shrine Yokozuna Dohyo-iri Dedication**

02 November

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, Korean](#)

### **Karatsu Kunchi Festival**

02 November - 04 November

Karatsu City, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Hakata Kenjo Dochu**

03 November

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, Korean](#)

### **Shonai Kagura Festival**

03 November

Yufu City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

### **Sennen Akari Festival (Bamboo Lights)**

03 November

Hita City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Omura Autumn Festival and Local Gourmet Fair in Omura**

04 November

Omura City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Kyushu Rainbow Parade 2018**

04 November

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, Korean](#)

### **Hoshika Okunchi**

05 November

Matsuura City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Maruyama Hana Festival**

10 November - 11 November

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Onogawa Battle Festival**

10 November - 11 November

Oita City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Maruyama Hua Festival**

10 November - 11 November

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Fukuoka Grand Sumo Tournament**

11 November - 25 November

Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

### **Oita International Wheelchair Marathon**

17 November - 18 November

Oita City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Nagasaki Bayside Marathon & Walk**

17 November - 18 November

Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ishiba Sumo**

18 November

Arita Town, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Koishiwara Pottery Festival**

23 November - 25 November

Toho Village, Fukuoka Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

### **Shine! Imari Festa**

01 December

Imari City, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Yansa Festival**

01 December

Nakatsu City, Oita Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Huis Ten Bosch Large Orchis Graminifolia Exhibition**

01 November - 18 February

Sasebo City, Nagasaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ohitaki**

08 December

Kashima City, Saga Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)



## Block 11

### **The Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary Ohara Festival 2018**

02 November - 03 November  
Kagoshima City, Kagoshima Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ryukyu Kingdom Festival Shuri “Ancient Rite Line”**

03 November  
Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Yamanokuchi Yagorodon Festival**

03 November  
Miyakonojo City, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Satsuma Sendai Hanya Festival**

04 November  
Satsuma-Sendai City, Kagoshima Prefecture

[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, etc](#)

### **The 37th Aya Horse Racing**

04 November  
Aya Town, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ishigaki-jima Festival**

05 November - 06 November  
Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Shiiba Heike Festival 2018**

09 November - 11 November  
Son Village, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Ramen Joshi Haku in Kumamoto -Ramen girls Festival- 2018**

15 - 19 and 21-25 November  
Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Yatsushiro Myoken Festival 2018**

22 November - 23 November  
Yatsushiro City, Kumamoto Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

### **Naha Marathon**

02 December  
Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

### **The 32nd Aoshima Pacific Marathon 2018**

09 December  
Miyazaki City, Miyazaki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)





# In The News

November 2018

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)



Photo: Lauren Anderson

# Tokyo Passes Bill to Ban LGBT Discrimination

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has passed a bill prohibiting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people, as well as those belonging to other sexual minority groups.

The goal of the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance, which is expected to go into effect in April 2019, is to eliminate hate speech and discrimination against a person's sexual orientation or gender identity in the time leading up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics.

The motivation for the bill is to uphold the Olympic Charter, a set of rules and guidelines that stipulate the organization of the Olympic Games. With regard to human rights, the Olympic Charter states that "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The bill, aptly named "the ordinance aiming to realize the idea of respect for human rights in the Olympic Charter," seeks to educate the public about LGBT rights.

The ordinance states: "The Tokyo Metropolitan Government, citizens, and enterprises may not unduly discriminate on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation." It also pledges that the government will "conduct measures needed to make sure human rights values are rooted in all corners of the city and diversity is respected in the city."

As part of the ordinance, cases such as hospital visits and the renting of apartments for same-sex couples are to become more accessible. Tokyo will also regulate the use of public spaces, such as city parks, to prevent intolerance.

Human Rights Watch, an international non-governmental organization conducting research and advocacy on human rights, was a participant in the government's open consultation to ensure the act fulfills the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter.

"The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has enshrined in law its commitment to hosting an inclusive and rights-respecting Olympic games," said Kanae Doi, Japan director at Human Rights Watch. "The authorities now need to put the policy into action and end anti-LGBT discrimination in schools, workplaces, and the wider society."

The organization does note, however, that Japan's national government has taken certain steps to recognize and protect LGBT individuals in recent years. A "Guidebook for Teachers," which stipulates how LGBT students should be treated at schools, was issued in 2016. Japan was also one of the countries to lead a UNESCO conference on LGBT student bullying that same year.

Furthermore, some local authorities have been taking steps to improve LGBT rights. As of April this year, same-sex couples in Fukuoka have been able to have their partnerships legally recognized; and last year Sapporo began to issue official partnership vow papers to those who wanted their same-sex union to be legally recognized.

Source:  
<https://bit.ly/2yrFfo1>  
<https://bit.ly/2GzUMXH>

Image source:  
<https://flic.kr/p/bRY1xn>  
Rainbow flags and umbrellas at the Tokyo Rainbow Pride Parade in 2012. Photo by Lauren Anderson licensed under Creative Commons Attribution & ShareAlike.



Tsukiji Wholesale Fish Market has closed its doors after 83 years of hustle and bustle. Famed for its fresh seafood and early morning tuna auctions, Tsukiji Market has been home to hundreds of seafood vendors since 1935, and is believed to have been the biggest fish and seafood market in the world.

An average day at the market would see millions of dollars and millions of pounds of seafood passing hands as sellers, buyers, and spectators converge at the 57-acre site.

On October 6th, however, the historical landmark in Tokyo completed its final predawn tuna auction before its scheduled relocation to Toyosu, located 2 kilometers south in Koto Ward.

The new facility, Toyosu Fish Market, is set to begin its operations on October 16. And with the new location, comes a new look. The wholesale food market will be

housed in a pristine, fully-enclosed and air-conditioned facility that will have a more visitor-friendly vibe.

This will, of course, align well with the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, during which Tokyo will see millions of new visitors.

According to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the reason behind the closing of Tsukiji Market is its aged structure (built 83 years ago) and a shortage of space. The soon-to-be available space will later be transformed into an establishment that will prove useful and convenient for visitors during the Olympics Games.

The final auction at the market was met with great emotion as the facility's relocation was not welcomed by all. Prior to closing, some vendors and workers held protests against the move and many citizens voiced concerns about losing another one of Tokyo's historical sites.



# The End of an Era: Tokyo's Famous Tsukiji Market Closes after 83 Years

"Like it or not, today is the final day," said Yutaka Hayama, president of the Tokyo Fish Market Wholesale Cooperative Workers on the day of the move. "But let's take all of the grit, skill, wisdom and strength we have cultivated here at Tsukiji to the new market. We will start a new chapter of our history there."

Source:

<https://bit.ly/2C6A0xB>

<https://bit.ly/2A2W5vF>

Image source:

<https://bit.ly/2A2W5vF>

TreshaBarrett01 – seafood and products being sold at Tsukiji Market

TreshaBarrett02 – Fresh tuna being examined before the last auction at the Tsukiji fish market





# NIGHT OF THE FOX

Carolyne Wilhelm and Sarah Oeste (Niigata)

“Follow the tofu!” Or at least that was the plan until it rained all day. The Night Fox Festival, as it translates, is a small but nice festival in Niigata Prefecture. The festival started in the 1980s because a man wanted to create a festival that would reconnect people with nature. True to its nature-loving founder, the first part of the festival is held at a small shrine high up in the mountain town of Tochigahara. The drive up there can be daunting. We had a few scares (to make room for incoming cars) where we came so close to the barrier-less edge of the road, that I was forced to appreciate the amazing beauty of an unobstructed view of lush forests and terraced rice fields.

At the shrine, there was a simple stage for performers, some food stalls, and moss covered trees straight out of Ghibli movies. You half expected them to come alive and start singing or flinging apples. I arrived during the taiko performance. Two drummers set out a booming beat while another man played the flute. I got a sense of entering a new world as we walked through the trees to the sound of drums hammering through our hearts.

Eventually the drummers fell silent, but the flutist continued to play, his music accompanied by the sound of rain on umbrellas. He played a tiny flute that sounded like a bird whistle. He alternated between playing one and two flutes seamlessly. He even had a shaker around his ankle. What a one-man band! The most surprising part of his performance though was when he played “Amazing Grace”. As foreigners, we are accustomed to not recognizing the music at festivals. Imagine how we looked when after a few seconds we realized that we recognized a song! Of course, it still had a distinctive Japanese sound. Any trip to a store can tell you that Japan takes many western songs and recreates them. Nothing like an upbeat swing jazz version of “My Heart Will Go On” eh? However, the rendition of “Amazing Grace” was still a special moment. As soon as we heard it, our eyes widened and jaws dropped.

Next came the dancers. Two guys and two girls danced while a traditional band sang. Everyone crowded as



close together as our umbrellas would allow to watch the four dancers move in slow, deliberate steps while three men sang a song that you knew has been sung for generations.

Then came time for the giant tofu, the event that drew us to the festival in the first place. The tofu was about the same size as a tatami mat; roughly two meters long and one meter wide. First, the priests and volunteers flipped the tofu out of its mold and on to the griddle so they could then add it to the bin of hot oil. Suddenly, a gasp spread through the crowd. Tragedy had struck. With a slip of some hands, a fifth of the tofu was scattered on the ground, and mixed with the mud and turned up grass. However, the volunteers pressed on. Putting the tofu in the hot oil was an easier endeavor. It sizzled and fried perfectly. There are few things that warm the heart like the sound and smell of frying food. Getting the fried tofu out was simple, but once again, the tofu had to be flipped. The volunteers were tense and the crowd stared anxiously as the giant tofu flipped, and in two seconds, it was once again held firmly in the arms of the volunteers. Everyone cheered as the golden tofu now resided happily on its plate.

The tofu was blessed by the priests and we got our 100 yen rental lanterns for the walk. We followed the tofu down the road, but we weren't able to take the forest path since it was too muddy and dangerous. A big part of this festival is when we are supposed to walk through the woods. This is where the "Fox" and "night" come in. We are supposed to walk through the woods at night like foxes do and connect with nature. Our "connection with nature" would have to be put aside for tonight. As the dusk set in, we waited for the buses that would take us down the mountain to the second location of the festival.

It was equally full of surprises – festival food I had never tried before (like takoyaki); the Night Fox Festival's very own mascot (you may be able to guess what animal it was); and a magical dance performance. As the crowds gathered around, lanterns approached down the mountainside – the fox spirits came to pay us a visit. They then danced in the darkness, illuminated only by the central bonfire and the occasional camera flash.

And the giant tofu that had drawn us in to the festival in the first place? It was cut up into small squares and every festival attendee tried it, perhaps bringing the day into a full circle.

The best part of Niigata is all the small hidden surprises that can be just around the corner. Little adventures that few have ever seen before. The Night Fox Festival was intimate and small, a gem deep within the mountains. Sometimes it felt mysterious and wondrous, and other times it felt almost like a neighborhood barbeque, welcoming and quaint. As we took those winding roads back down the dark mountainside at the end of the night, we felt content.

*Carolyn Wilhelm is a first year JET from the U.S. Her hobbies are watching movies, getting lost, meeting new people, and appreciating the amazing views the world has to offer. She tends to do odd things like study French for eight years then move to Japan. Her main goal in life is to eat her way around the world.*

*Sarah Oeste is a first year Canadian ALT based in Niigata Prefecture. She has her M.A. in Canadian history, and enjoys doodling, watching movies, and snacking on fruit. She's looking forward to exploring Japan and might finally learn how to ski on the mountains that surround her home.*



# ARTS AND CULTURE

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*"I'm wearing Spiderman pants." - Anonymous Senior High School Student Who Should Really Keep That To Himself*

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*"Fashion is the armor to survive the reality of everyday life." —Bill Cunningham*

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### Tayla-Paige van Sittert

*If you think you're better than others, you're worse.*

Photo: Ashley Hirasuna



**KEN** 研

究 **KYUU**

**SHITSU** 室

ACADEMICS,  
SCHOLARSHIP AND JET

Merran Eby (Fukushima - 2012-2017), Nash Sibanda (Ibaraki), Emily Ridgway (Shiga)

JET brings people from many different walks of life to Japan for all kinds of reasons. One of the few things we have in common is higher education - by virtue of JET's bachelor's degree requirement, all participants have had some extended contact with the world of academia and scholarship. Many JETs have taken their studies further, either before or after their time in Japan, yet more choose to live and work in this country to further explore and develop their academic pursuits.

With this in mind, this piece spotlights the academic work and interests of three JETs - two current and one former - and explores some of the ways in which their scholarship and their interest in Japan intersect. Hopefully further installments of the 研究室 (*kenkyuushitsu*, which my J-E dictionary assures me means "laboratory" or, better yet, "professor's office") will be able to showcase even more scholarly work in future. This is not an attempt to subtly transform *CONNECT* into an academic journal - just a chunk of the culture section where any of us can nerd out about whatever gets us excited. No peer review required.

# MERRAN EBY

## EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

I arrived in Japan the year after 3/11. Due to a mass exodus of Fukushima JETs following the triple disasters, I was one of eleven new ALTs that year who were placed in the coastal city of Iwaki, which lies roughly 60 kilometres south of the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Quite a few of my students were evacuees from the exclusion zone, and even among those who were not, many had nevertheless lost loved ones or homes to the

tsunami, earthquake, or related accidents. From the beginning, I found myself living and working in a place that bore the still relatively fresh psychological and physical scars of disaster.

Outside of my regular work as a JHS ALT, I ended up getting involved in a number of recovery projects during my time in Iwaki. This included doing manual labour with the volunteer cleanup crews; helping to organize fundraising events; presenting at a revitalization-focused international forum on behalf of Fukushima's foreign community; and teaming up with a couple of other ALTs for translation work with a local community association in order to bring the stories of Iwaki's tsunami survivors to the English-speaking world.

As my time in Japan drew to a close, I decided that when I left I wanted to pursue graduate studies in a field that would allow me to contribute in some more meaningful way towards building resilience to disaster. I had originally thought of this with only Japan (and specifically Fukushima) in mind, but that has since morphed into a wider interest in coastal disaster risk reduction, community resilience, and international development as a whole. After all, there are plenty of other countries out there that are just as vulnerable and much less well-off. My current research focuses on the impact of community-based disaster risk reduction on the mitigation of disasters in the long term, as well as the importance of both education and the validation of local knowledge in creating more well-informed (and hence more resilient) communities. One unexpected result of this has been my recent deployment to Hanoi for a six-month internship with UNDP Vietnam's Climate Change and Environment unit, where I currently work on a number of projects related to biodiversity, chemical waste, and environmental management.

I am currently undecided as to what to pursue when I finish next spring, but if I do not jump into further development work, I have been toying with the idea of eventually returning to Japan in a further academic capacity: much of the world's top Disaster Risk Reduction work happens there. Regardless, there is no question that I would not be where I am now had I not been accepted into the JET Programme, and had the powers that be not placed me where they did. Whatever comes next, I will always be grateful for the profound impact that my time there has had on the course of my education and career.

# NASH SIBANDA

## CINEMA HISTORY AND LOCAL AUDIENCES

My background is in film studies, one of those difficult-to-fully-define liberal arts fields that is perpetually the butt of any criticism about the worth of university degrees worldwide. After a shift away from theory, through production, and ultimately into cinema history, I completed my PhD in June 2018. My work was done in the UK and focused very much on a domestic story: the coming of sound to British cinemas in the 1920s and 1930s. This was part of a wider research project looking at early British sound cinema.

Almost since the beginning of the project I've hoped to be able to someday replicate the scope and methods of that study in Japan; To look at similar inflection points in Japanese cinema history. Much has been written on the films and directors of Japan, but little on the lived experiences of cinemagoers and what it was like to operate and manage cinemas and cinema chains in the 20th century. To do this kind of work would require a number of things: competence in Japanese, access to historical records, and being able to visit places of interest. Coming to Japan was a natural next step.

Recently I attended a media, communications, and film studies conference in Tokyo entitled *Fearful Futures*. The conference covered a range of subjects and research projects, from the impact of new technologies on political and cultural communications to the ways in which progress has become a cause for concern among communities around the world. Academics from around the world were in attendance, with large numbers from India, Pakistan and South-East Asia.

The final keynote presentation of the conference focused on the state of film studies in Japan. Three university lecturers and researchers, one from Osaka Kyoiku University and two from Waseda University, discussed the difficulties facing film

researchers and educators in Japan. Film studies in the country has largely been neglected by policy makers and administrators, resulting in the underdevelopment of the field, at least compared to other developed nations. Japan's film historians are further hampered by a distinct lack of existing archival sources and myriad difficulties with access to those that do exist. I was encouraged by the presence of many academics whose non-fluency in Japanese had not completely prevented them from conducting research, but the expense and hassle of working with translators for the large quantity of material that historians must trawl through is prohibitive for non-funded researchers.

That being said, it was also an opportunity to meet like-minded people with similar academic interests, and to see examples of what is indeed possible within the realm of film studies in Japan. It has given me even more impetus to improve my Japanese ability. More than anything, however, it has shown the extent of the vacuum where Japanese cinema history is concerned. Historical cinema projects, like the one undertaken for my PhD, have been undertaken by film scholars in many countries of the world, looking at all kinds of interesting things. This work has yet to truly be undertaken in Japan. Several researchers have started and made great strides. Provided I can grapple with the language, I hope to join them someday.

# **EMILY RIDGWAY**

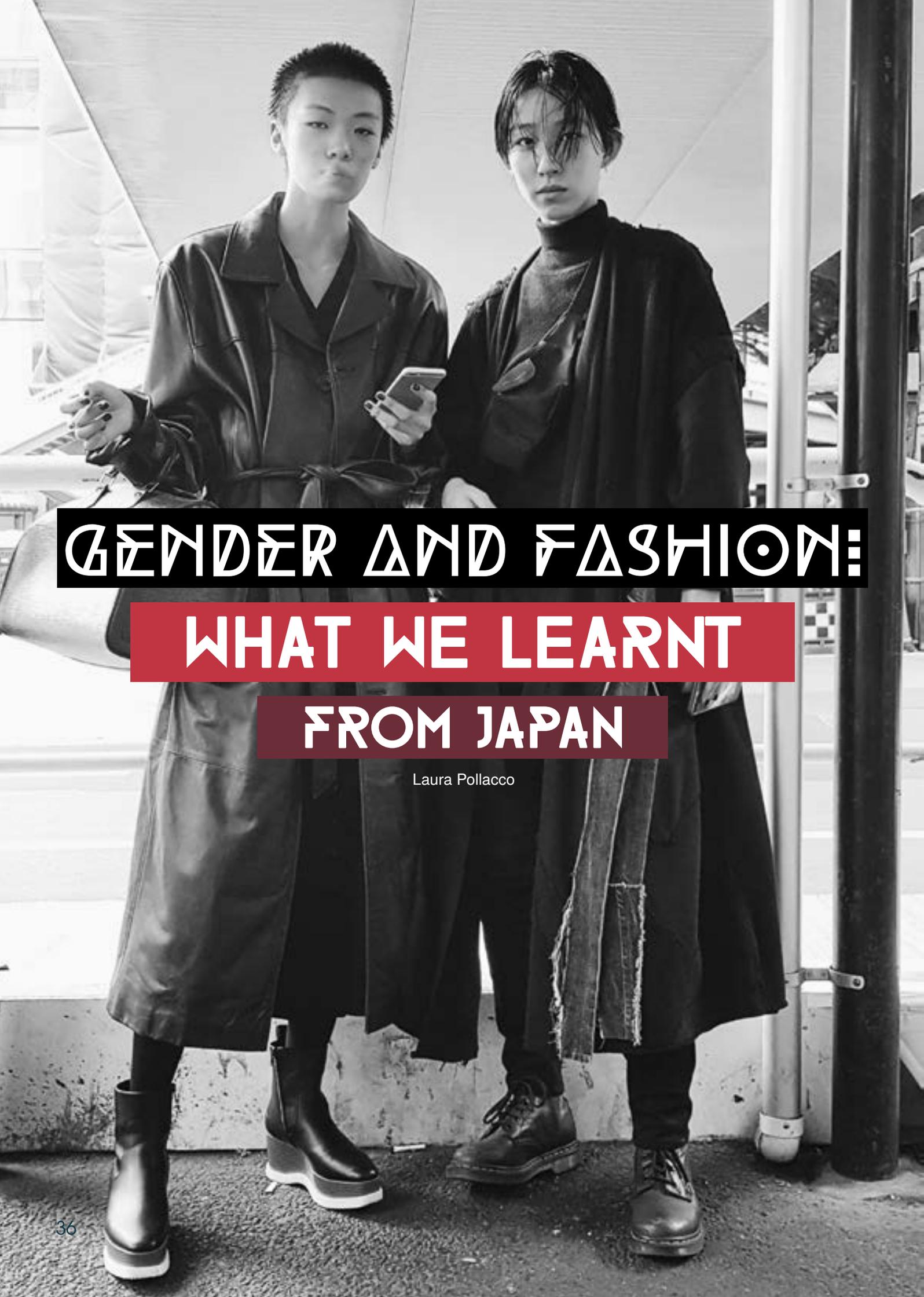
## INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN ANTHROPOLOGY AND HEALTHCARE

I'm Emily. I'm 24 years old, from New Zealand, and currently living in Shiga. I did my Master of Arts in Anthropology, with my thesis topic being 'Child Oral Health in Northland, New Zealand: Exploring the Local Biology'. Sounds pretty dry right? Teeth, some obscure place in New Zealand, and as far removed from teaching English in Japan as you could possibly get in a thesis topic. So what the heck am I doing here? And how does my thesis (in a roundabout way) relate to me being on the JET programme teaching rural JHS students the finer points of conditionals? Well, basically, anthropology. Anthropology is an amazing and thoughtful way to examine the world. Anthropology makes me hungry to 'understand' why humans do things and what that means.

To be brief, this hunger for understanding the human condition is what my MA was on, but looking specifically at oral health medical practices and the norms and beliefs held by families and dental practitioners in Northland. Anthropology is a thought process, a way of judging things without placing value on them (or so we try). In my MA, I found

that there was a disconnect between the family behavior that the government thought created poor oral health and what was actually happening. And I found this by taking an anthropological approach of talking to people (interviews) and being nuanced and thoughtful (discourse analysis of policy). I found targeted resources were missing the mark completely and having no effect; the government at the time of my research thought that families needed more education on how to care for their teeth. But what families really needed was money to afford healthy food and for families as a whole to be able to afford oral healthcare (in New Zealand, oral healthcare for children is free. For adults it isn't, which kind of affected how families as a unit valued their oral health). Also, I found it would be good if there were more targeted approaches to alleviate social inequality, which is pretty great at messing up health outcomes. Looking at oral health anthropologically helped me uncover some of the root causes of poor oral health for kids in Northland, that would have otherwise remained hidden, by talking to people on the ground and looking at things in detail.

I guess, kind of, being on JET is an anthropological fieldwork experience. It's so interesting being surrounded with the different norms that can be so minute that you can blink and you'd miss them. I think everyone could benefit from this kind of anthropological curiosity while they're here in Japan. Reflect on yourself - why do some things seem strange, what is your cultural norm, and where does that come from? What is the Japanese cultural norm, and what's the rationale behind that? How does that change things for you, and how does that affect those around you, both Japanese and foreign? Life to me is one big anthropological journey, thinking about things and what the hell they mean. It's pretty fun; maybe you can try it, too.



# GENDER AND FASHION:

## WHAT WE LEARNT

### FROM JAPAN

Laura Pollacco

# GENDER NEUTRAL FASHION

IS ONE OF THE MOST TALKED

ABOUT ONGOING TOPICS IN THE

FASHION INDUSTRY CURRENTLY.

Gender neutral fashion is one of the most talked about ongoing topics in the fashion industry currently. Many articles have covered the cultural shift that we have been seeing over the last seven or so years in an effort to figure out what it is we truly want when we talk about gender neutral fashion, and it's certainly been a topic that this section of Connect has spotlighted before. Japan is still very conservative when it comes to gender and its views on non-traditional gender identities, but at the same time Japan has a whole fashion subculture which ignores gender entirely. You can certainly see this in the trendier areas of Tokyo. Oversized, boxy silhouettes allow for a blurring of lines between male and female, and long loose pieces that adhere to no fixed masculine or feminine form. Western fashion often hails this style as being fashion forward and avant-garde, the West finding itself somewhat behind in this regard. Japan has, however, been leading the way in this trend for a lot longer than many realise.

For almost 50 years, Japan and Japanese designers have had a huge impact on the evolution of genderless fashion in the West. Many fashion historians believe it was a handful of designers from Japan that really showcased how

clothes did not need to be designed with gender in mind. It was the arrival of these designers, alarming to some in the industry, that really heralded a new dawn for fashion design and its relation to gender (or in this case, lack of).

Rei Kawakuba, Issey Miyake, and Yohji Yamamoto are three designers that really shook things up in the Western fashion scene in the early 1980's. A fourth designer, Kansai Yamamoto, took his designs to London a full decade earlier and thrived in the bright music scene emerging there, forming a great relationship with the singer David Bowie, an androgynous icon at the time. Bringing their avant-garde designs from Japan to Paris, they created controversy by rejecting the idea that clothes should be designed to fit the body. Instead they focused on first creating the garment as a piece independent of the wearer and then allowed the wearer to fit it to themselves.

'The designs by Kawakubo, Miyake and Yamamoto were known for being gender neutral or unisex. Gender roles are determined only by social rules and regulations formed by society. Clothing constructs and deconstructs gender and gender differences. Clothing is a major symbol of gender that allows other people to immediately discover the individual's biological sex. These three Japanese designers challenged the normative gender specificity of Western clothes.'

(Kawamura, 2004: 132-133)

They did not dress the men as men and the women as women; they simply aimed to create garments that covered the wearer regardless of their gender. Many critics saw their designs as tasteless. Some said of Kawakubo's designs that the women looked like crows (this would be due to the voluminous swathes of black fabric that covered the body). Others saw it as the dawn of a new aesthetic, a new way of looking at fashion and the way we gender our clothing.

Despite their reluctance to be labelled as 'Japanese designers,' which made them feel pigeonholed into a group rather than recognised as individual designers, their designs have taken influence from Japan. Inspiration can be said to come from what surrounds you, so it stands

to reason that their upbringing in Japan had an impact upon their designs. For example, the influence of the boxy shape of the kimono that, to a western perception, does not adhere to a strict masculine or feminine silhouette, can be seen to an extent in their designs. The kimono, like their designs, is a garment created independent of the wearer - only once someone puts it on does it take any form. The fact that, again to a western perspective, male and female kimono are not overly dissimilar in style and shape can create a more gender neutral starting point.

Japan was not the only place they drew inspiration from, though, and this can be quite obvious in Kawakubo's choice of brand name, *Comme Des Garcon* (Like the Boys), a nod to the much revered Coco Chanel. Chanel was certainly a starting point for the movement towards genderless clothing. She took inspiration from working men's clothing and adapted it for women, doing away with the tight, restricting corsets and skirts of the time. This trend made its way over to Japan in the mid 1920's, when the Japanese *moga*, or 'modern girl', began dressing in a westernized fashion, eschewing the kimono and opting for slack trouser pants and loose clothing. This was a far cry from the traditional Japanese view of feminine, and they were often tormented in public and called 'garcon' by newspapers at the time. This, too, seems to have impressed itself upon the way the designers created their own collections. But where Chanel still tailored mainly for women, Kawakubo, Miyake, Yamamoto, and Kansai created garments meant for either sex to wear. Though Chanel was one of the pioneers of genderplay in fashion, these designers combined their own cultural understandings of

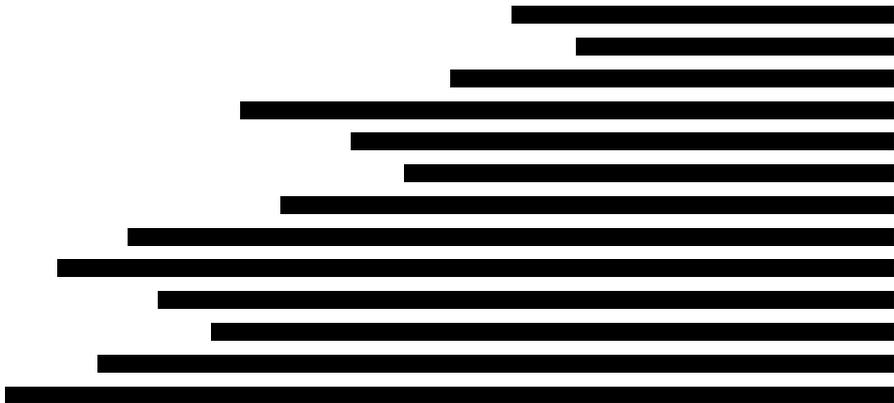
fashion with modern techniques to create something entirely new. It was a blend of both Japanese and Western aesthetic, both married and deconstructed at the same time, that allowed the designers to make a name for themselves that still holds power today.

Kawakubo, Miyake, Yamamoto, and Kansai, among many others, have sparked many subcultures of fashion, not just here in Japan, but globally. From this we have seen a rise in clothing designed for any and all people, regardless of gender. This has allowed many to express themselves in new ways, personal ways. Here in Japan, their vision lives on in the fashion subcultures, like genderless kei, that we see today. In doing so, Japan keeps the rest of the world on its toes, watching to see what will come next.

*(Harvard referenced)*  
KAWAMURA, Y (2004) *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Oxford/New York: BERG



**THIS HAS ALLOWED MANY  
TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES  
IN NEW WAYS, PERSONAL  
WAYS**



# NOVEMBER RELEASES

Sarah White (Fukui)

## MOVIES

2 Nov.

- **Venom (2018)**
- **Fahrenheit 11/9 (2018)**

3 Nov.

- **Status Update (2018)**
- **Paul, Apostle of Christ (2018)**
- **Backstabbing for Beginners (2018)**

9 Nov.

- **Johnny English Strikes Again (2018)**
- **Bohemian Rhapsody (2018)**
- **Uncle Drew (2018)**

10 Nov.

- **Mandy (2018)**
- **Billionaire Boys Club (2018)**

16 Nov.

- **Sicario: Day of the Soldado (2018)**

17 Nov.

- **A Ghost Story (2017)**

23 Nov.

- **Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald (2018)**
- **It Comes at Night (2017)**
- **Bleeding Steel (2017)**

30 Nov.

- **Hereditary (2018)**
- **The Nutcracker and the Four Realms (2018)**

## GAMES

6 Nov

- **ARK: Extinction (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**
- **GRIP (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)**
- **Omen of Sorrow (PS4)**
- **Carnival Games (Switch)**
- **Brawlhalla (Xbox One, Switch)**
- **Overkill's The Walking Dead (PC)**
- **Deracine (PSVR)**
- **World of Final Fantasy Maxima (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)**
- **Monster Boy and the Cursed Kingdom (PS4, Xbox One, Switch)**

7 Nov

- **HellSign – Steam Early Access (PC)**
- **Kursk (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**
- **Steel Rats (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**

13 Nov

- **Hitman 2 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**
- **Spyro Reignited Trilogy (PS4, Xbox One)**

14 Nov

- **Fallout 76 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**

15 Nov

- **Warhammer 40,000: Mechanicus (PC)**
- **Underworld Ascendant (PC)**
- **The Settlers History Collection (PC)**
- **Battlefield 5 Deluxe Edition (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**

16 Nov

- **Pokemon Let's Go Pikachu and Let's Go Eevee (Switch)**
- **Civilization 6 (Switch)**

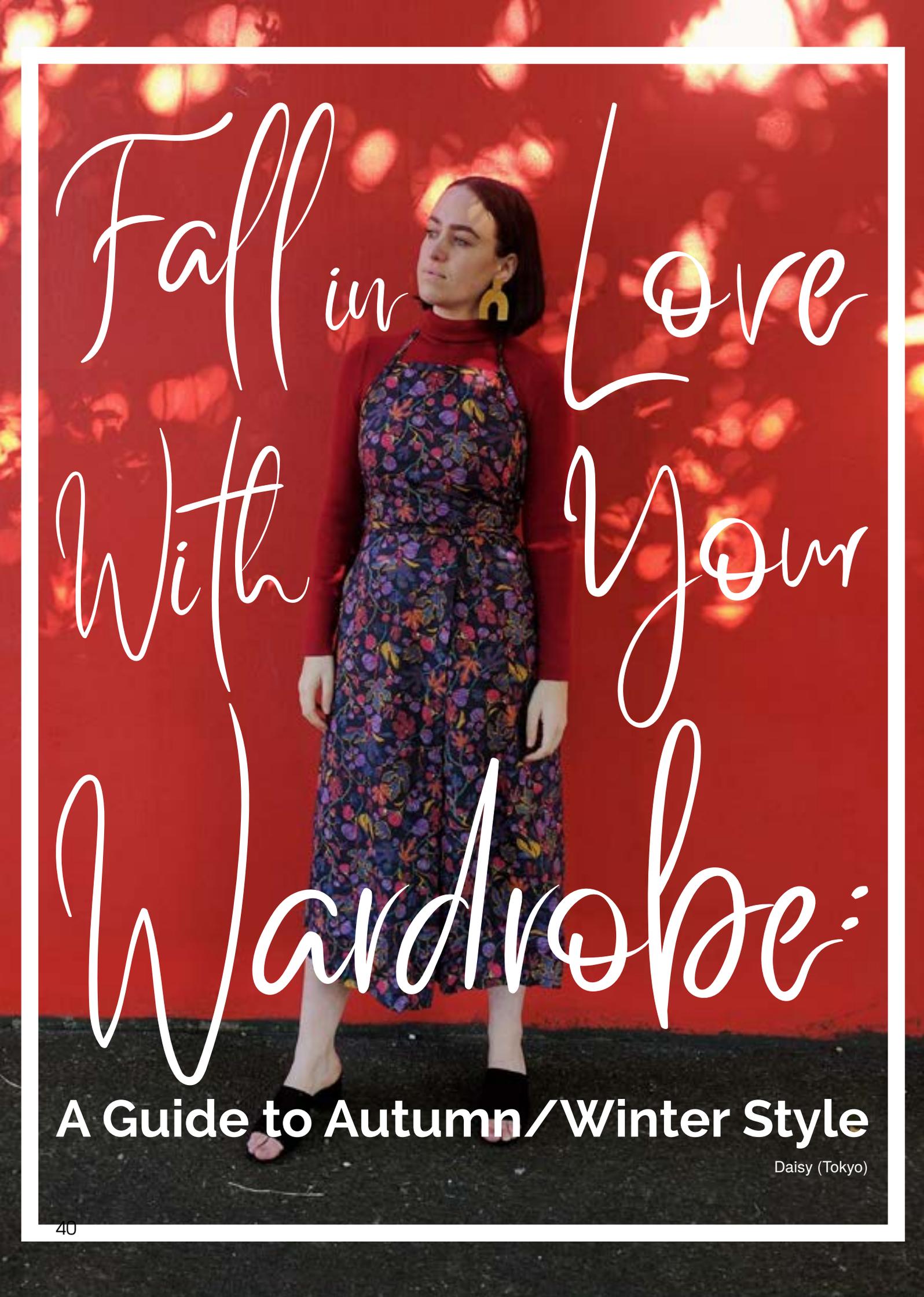
20 Nov

- **Wreckfest (PS4, Xbox One)**
- **Battlefield 5 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)**
- **Warframe (Switch)**

Sources:

<https://www.imdb.com/calendar/?region=jp>  
<https://www.vg247.com/2018/08/01/video-game-release-dates-2018/>

Photo: Jake Hills on Unsplash

A woman with dark hair is standing in the center of the frame. She is wearing a vibrant red turtleneck sweater under a dark-colored dress with a colorful floral pattern. She is also wearing large, gold, crescent-shaped earrings and black high-heeled sandals. The background is a solid red color with numerous out-of-focus, warm-toned bokeh lights scattered throughout, creating a festive and autumnal atmosphere. The entire scene is framed by a white border.

Fall in Love  
With Your  
Wardrobe:

**A Guide to Autumn/Winter Style**

Daisy (Tokyo)

Autumn is here, and with cooler days ahead, it's time to start thinking about how you can transition your wardrobe into winter. If you come from a land down under (like me), you may have never experienced a winter as cold as the ones here in Japan. After making it through a couple of winters in New Zealand and Hokkaido, I have finally mastered the art of both staying warm and looking stylish. I now live in Tokyo, and though it definitely doesn't get as cold as it might further up north, the same principles can apply when it comes to your wardrobe. So, here are a couple of hot tips to help you stay warm this winter and make your wardrobe work all year round!

## Prepare:

Make getting ready in the morning extra easy by packing away your super summery pieces like tank tops, shorts and swimsuits. These can be stored in your suitcase or at the back of your cupboard! If you notice any gaps in your wardrobe, now is the time to go and buy those pieces that you are missing so that you're ready when the temperature drops.

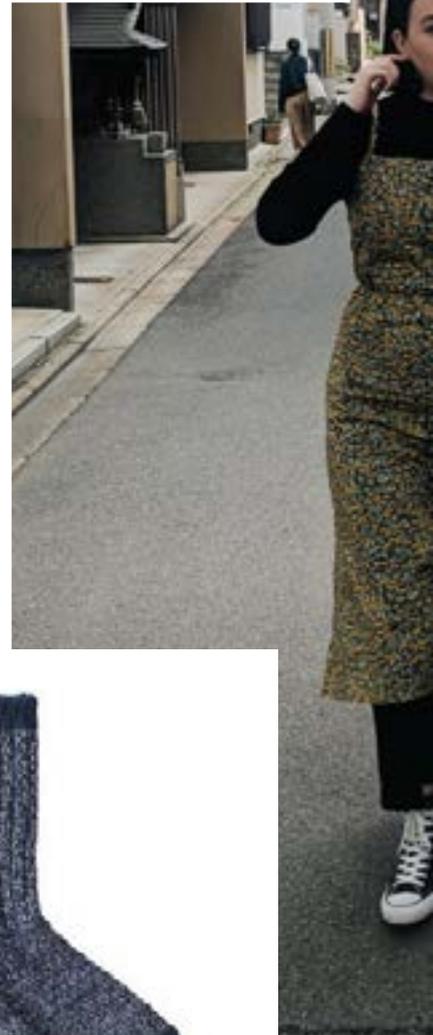
## Shop:

Instead of buying a whole new winter wardrobe, invest in a couple of great basics that can be worn multiple ways. My favourite winter staple is a turtleneck because it can be worn alone with skirts or pants, under dresses, and under tops. I buy most of my turtlenecks from Uniqlo, second-hand stores and flea markets.



# Winter Fabrics:

The best fabrics for cold weather are natural ones like merino wool, bamboo, and silk as they breathe and layer well. They also break down much faster than synthetic fabrics, making them a better choice for the Earth! Merino wool is well known and loved in Australasia for its unique thermal properties. Merino fibres have a natural crimp that traps air and acts as an insulator. Its moisture-wicking properties draw sweat away from the skin, keeping you dry and comfortable. Merino is also hypoallergenic (great for those with sensitive skin!), easy to wash (which you rarely need to do), odour resistant, and naturally static resistant. Here in Japan, you can buy merino products at stores like Uniqlo, Patagonia, and Montbell. There are also tons of merino products available online. If you are very active or on a budget, synthetic fabrics are a cheaper option. Japan's synthetic alternative to merino wool is Heattech by Uniqlo. Its properties mimic that of merino in that it retains warmth, fights bacteria, prevents static, prevents odours, and is super comfortable. Made of acrylic, polyester, spandex and rayon, Heattech is super lightweight and comes in a bunch of colours, styles, and prints.



# Style:

When it comes to winter fashion, functionality and practicality are really important. With age and experience, I've learned that being warm (and happy) is way better than looking 'cool'. This is after one too many times leaving the house in a fabulous, fashionable look but being cold all day long. So, how can you stay warm and look cool? Learn to layer! Layering allows you to continue wearing your favourite pieces all year round and eliminates the need to buy a whole new winter wardrobe! I generally stick to the 3 layer rule which includes a base, a middle and an outer layer. I also throw some of my favourite summer dresses into the mix to ensure they are getting all the wear they deserve. Your base should be something that fits well as it is worn close to the skin. Its job is to wick sweat and keep you dry. If you haven't already, try a heattech singlet or cami. Your middle layer should be something that keeps you warm. An insulator! Think jumpers and

cardigans. Finally, your outer layer will be your jacket or coat and should be what protects you from the elements. If you don't have one yet, start taking notice of what people in your area are wearing to get an indication of the outerwear that best suits your local climate.

Don't forget your feet! As long as it's not raining, you can slip on some socks to keep your toes warm and continue wearing your favourite sandals right through winter. Japan has no shortage of fun printed socks! Obviously, sandals aren't really ideal on wet or snowy days, so make sure you get your hands on some water-resistant footwear. Alternatively, you can give your sneakers or boots a spray with some waterproofing solution. When I lived in Hokkaido, Sorrells were the way to go! Vans and The North Face also do a puffer style boot that will keep your feet nice and toasty. If you're on a budget, go for gumboots worn with thick woolly socks.

When winter rolls around, don't hide out under your kotatsu! Edit your wardrobe to make getting ready in the mornings easier, and give yourself more time under the covers. Get creative with your wardrobe by learning to layer your favourite spring and summer pieces with a couple of great winter basics. Staying warm will never look so cool!

*Daisy is a first-year Tokyo JET from the Gold Coast, Australia. In her spare time, she eats burritos and shares her DIY sewing creations on Instagram @\_diydaisy.*



A large, colorful banner for the Tokyo Game 2018 event. The text is rendered in a bold, stylized font with a pink-to-white gradient and a thick black outline. The background is light blue with green abstract shapes. The banner is hanging from a chain.

**TOKYO  
GAME  
2018**

Sarah White (Fukui)

# Highlights



It was that time of year again. In September, *Tokyo Game Show* lit up Makuhari Messe in Chiba, Japan. This four day expo is only open to the public for a limited time, but it's one of the best places to be for industry insights and sneak peeks into what's coming for the video game world. We were lucky enough to have Chad Grover and Dave Wilson, JETs in Tokyo and Akita, attend this event as Connect contributors and share their experiences. Both were able to test long-awaited games like *Kingdom Hearts 3* and the remake of *Resident Evil 2*, each giving unique evaluations of the gameplay. Furthermore, they provided some insight into Kojima's newest project, *Death Stranding* as well as the latest installment of *Dead or Alive*. Read on to hear all the details! I can certainly say that, after reading them myself, I think 2019 is shaping up to be a big year for video game fans! I couldn't be more excited!

# DAVE'S TAKE

Dave Wilson (Akita)

## Kingdom Hearts 3

The long awaited final entry of Sora's 16 year adventure is almost here, and it's a lot of fun. For the demo, we were able to select a *Toy Story* or *Hercules* stage. I chose the *Toy Story* one.

The demo kicked off with the familiar blue sky-patterned walls of Andy's bedroom. Something that immediately grabbed my attention was how true to the movie this room looks. After a short story sequence and finally gaining control of our hero Sora, I was immediately thrown into battle against a longtime series enemy: the Heartless. Without a doubt, the controls are the tightest they have ever been, with attacks and dodge commands feeling much less floaty than they have in previous entries in the series. Every button press felt snappy and responsive, creating a great sense of control.

Longtime fans will notice the lack of quick-time-events during battle, something introduced in KH2 and something of a staple to the combat system since. Replacing this is the ability to charge up your keyblades, three of which were available in the demo, and all were equipped to Sora in tandem. As you battle enemies, you build up a meter that, when full, can be activated using the triangle button. Unleashing this meter while using the *Toy Story* keyblade, we were given a new set of moves and finishers unique to the weapon, including one move that used the Spinning Teacup ride from Disneyland to finish off enemies.

Following this encounter, Woody and Buzz joined the party, and we ventured out of Andy's window. The number of party members you can field at once has been increased from previous entries, so no longer will you have to take Donald or Goofy off your team to fight alongside bonus party members. We were able to field a total of 5 characters at once in this demo.

Fighting through waves of heartless, we arrived at our destination: Galaxy Toys. Here, we were pitted against a group of enemies riding in robotic mech suits. Upon dashing up to an empty one, I was prompted with the option to hop in and pilot it. At this point, the game switched to a first person perspective, and we were able to dispatch the enemy mechs using an arm mounted cannon and some quick dashes. The seamless switch to an FPS control scheme was refreshing, and it makes me excited to see what other gameplay shake-ups they offer in the full title.

My time with *Kingdom Hearts 3* was short, but it was a joy to play. With great visuals, tight controls, and fun new mechanics, it seems like it's going to have a lot to offer. Both for long-time fans and newcomers, this is certainly a title to check out when it drops worldwide on January 25th next year.



# Resident Evil 2

breathes terrifying new life into the locations longtime fans have come to know and love.

Many of the areas were completely dark, lit only by Leon's flashlight. This results in some very tense encounters with enemies, as you are almost completely unable to see them unless you are pointing your flashlight directly at them. Combat controls feel very similar to those found in *Resident Evil 4*. The shooting feels tight and responsive, but your gunshots feel deliberately less powerful than entries such as RE4. In one encounter, even when aiming for the head, a zombie took several shots to take down and, after a moment, proceeded to stand back up and chase after Leon. This helps create a sense that you really want to choose when to use your ammo and when to run.

The environments aren't the only thing that have been fleshed out, either. Side characters, such as the ill-fated Officer Marvin, who in the original 1998 release had only seconds of screen time, now have fully formed identities of their own. Fully redone voices, dialogue, and full facial motion capture really help sell the atmosphere as well.

The remake of *Resident Evil 2* is shaping up to be a game that not only retreads ground that longtime fans are familiar with but also offers such an expanded and reimagined way to play the game that it feels like something completely new. The new perspective and environments come together to make an immersive experience that is both terrifying and incredibly fun to play. Make sure you stock up on green herbs and ink ribbons for the return to Raccoon City on January 25th next year.



The remake of *Resident Evil 2* is something I have been looking forward to with equal parts excitement and apprehension. Having played the game for even just 15 minutes, I can say that I can't wait to dive back in for more.

For the demo, we were given the choice of a more puzzle/survival horror-based Leon demo, or a more action-based Claire demo. Being unable to resist exploring the police station in full 3D, I chose the Leon demo. The demo begins with Leon entering the station for the first time. While the original 1998 release used fixed camera angles with pre-rendered backgrounds, this remake has opted for full 3D environments and an over-the-shoulder camera. This places the player directly into the environments with Leon and

# Dead or Alive 6

While I'm admittedly not the most experienced *Dead or Alive* player, the newest and flashiest entry from Team Ninja offers some systems that make it an easy game to pick up and play.

One of the main draws to this series has always been the visuals, and 6 seems to be no exception to the rule. While this is a working build of the game, and I noticed some framerate drops and jagged edges, the game is a marked improvement over *DoA5*. The fighters look as gorgeous as ever; as fights go on, dirt and sand sticks to clothing, and skin gets more and more bruised and sweaty. Special moves cause colourful auras to surround fighters, and stage hazards can lead to vibrant explosions. This leads to some really cinematic fights. The stages themselves are just as over the top as fans would expect. In one instance, a character was punched into a dinosaur egg, causing the character to be mobbed by pterodactyls.

While not being able to dive too deep into the mechanics of the game in 15 minutes, I found a clear new addition to this entry in the special meter below the health bar. As fights go on, you build up the meter which you can use to unleash special moves. This can be also be used to string together an auto combo by pressing R1 multiple times, ending with a powerful super move. These additions seem to make the game



a lot more accessible to seasoned veterans and casual players alike.

After 15 minutes, I felt like I had only scratched the surface of this game, and the new systems added a fun element to the game and left me wanting to dig deeper. Both the demo and booth stressed that this was a working build of the game, so I would expect to see more announcements and features to be announced before it launches on February 15th next year.



*Dave is a JET Coordinator living in Akita Prefecture. He enjoys eating at restaurants, eating at home, and a good post-onsen milk.*  
@davewilson720

# CHAD'S TAKE

Chad Grover (Tokyo)

*Kingdom Hearts 3*



The first thing we got our hands on at the show was *Kingdom Hearts 3*. After waiting for an hour in line, we were treated to a lengthy preview of one of the most anticipated games in recent years. At the start of the demo, players may choose between the Mt. Olympus scenario (i.e.: Disney's *Hercules*) or Andy's Room, from Pixar's renowned *Toy Story* franchise. For the sake of covering all of our bases, Dave chose *Toy Story* and I elected for *Hercules*.

The Mt. Olympus half of the demo pits Sora, Donald, and Goofy against the mountainous two-headed Titan, who can be seen dropping boulders downward as he stands on the peak of Mt. Olympus. Beginning at the base of the mountain, players must scale its rocky walls, dodge landfall and deal with an array of Heartless before arriving at the summit to do battle with the colossal monster. The entire thing plays out like an exciting set piece ripped straight from an action movie and is far more exhilarating than anything else you may have already seen in a *Kingdom Hearts* game. My only complaint about the sequence itself is that Sora is limited to a horizontal or vertical axis when running up the sides of the mountain, meaning that progressing in a diagonal motion is impossible. This makes dodging falling debris more challenging, to be sure, but paints the picture that its controls are less than intuitive and feels outdated in the year 2018.

After finally reaching the top, Sora

and friends are able to engage the Titan on an even playing field. In classic *Kingdom Hearts* fashion, players can lock-on to its feet and attack by way of Keyblade and/or magic spells, rendering the boss immobile before hitting its weak spots: the twin heads. The narrow cliff on which the boss stands makes for a tight squeeze when dodging its stomping feet, and players must take care not to get knocked off and plummet back to the starting point. Eventually, the three party members can summon the Big Magic Mountain train (oddly reminiscent of *Mario Kart*'s infamous Rainbow Road course) which transforms the game's mechanics from action RPG to on-rail shooter. As the train tracks nosedive toward the Titan, players must bombard it with cannon fire to prevent its counterattack and deliver the finishing blow. The visuals in the final moments of the demo are stunning, with each successive hit resembling fireworks that explode with neon colour contrasting against the dark, barren sky.

As the screen faded to white and thanked me for playing, I realized just how far *Kingdom Hearts 3* has come. When the project was first unveiled at E3 2013, it was apparent that the game was still a long way from completion. Now, more than five years later, Sora's final adventure has taken shape quite nicely. Long-time fans of the series have something special to look forward to (and newcomers some catching up to do) when *Kingdom Hearts 3* launches in January 2019.

At the start of the *Resident Evil 2* demo, players may choose which main character they wish to embody: Leon Kennedy or Claire Redfield. Each character underscores their own unique scenario which is drastically different from the other. If you choose Leon, you begin just as he arrives at the deserted Raccoon City Police Department on his first day of work. If you choose Claire, you find yourself in the midst of a frantic boss battle from much later on in the game. I opted for the former, choosing Leon's campaign because of the emphasis on exploration and creepy ambience.

The facial expressions and animations were the first thing I noticed about *Resident Evil 2* that impressed me. Characters who convey complex emotions, such as pain or fear, appear lifelike and lip movements synchronize realistically to the characters' speech. How the game renders human hair is equally remarkable. I met a zombie woman whose hair was so unkempt that it resembled a tangled spider's web, and it made the encounter all the scarier. Ultimately, these are the best all-around character models seen in a game since *Half-Life 2*.

For a time, the *Resident Evil* franchise veered away from its methodical survival horror roots to focus on more flashy, action-oriented gameplay, much to the ire of its hardcore fans. Early 2017 saw the release of *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* which appeased veteran fans by marking a return to the survival horror genre and celebrated what garnered the series' notoriety in the first place. In 2018, I am pleased to report that the *Resident Evil 2* remake follows the same design philosophy as its predecessor. Ammunition and healing items are sparse, meaning

# Resident Evil 2 Remake



that any encounter the player has with an enemy could be their last. One feature that I especially like is how the game's interface gives you a visual cue (via its crosshairs) when Leon or Claire's weapon is drawn and stable, ensuring maximum accuracy. Players are encouraged to take their time and make every shot count. Conversely, if you whip out a weapon and fire it off in rapid succession, your shots will be far less accurate. There are a wide variety of ways to interact with the environment, as well. Everything from kitchen cupboards to desk drawers can be investigated, meaning that exploration and a keen eye for detail are paramount.



The *Resident Evil 2* remake has far superseded what I envisioned when Capcom announced the project three years ago. After years of controversy and developmental duds, the Japanese studio has finally found their groove in the modern era of gaming. With easily the strongest overall showing at Tokyo Game Show 2018 (i.e.: other flagship titles included *Mega Man 11* and *Devil May Cry 5*), Capcom has the beginnings of another golden age on their hands. *Resident Evil 2* is only the beginning.



# Hideo Kojima and Death Stranding



Industry icon Hideo Kojima took to the PlayStation stage on Sunday afternoon to greet a crowd so large that it stretched out to the far end of the convention hall. His latest project, the Lovecraftian horror-inspired *Death Stranding*, has remained shrouded in secrecy since its public unveiling just two short years ago at E3 2016. After Kojima announced on his personal Twitter account that he had “something fun” planned for the show, fan anticipation and rumours swelled over what he and the Japanese voice cast had in store for us.

During his onstage interview, Kojima introduced various new characters who will feature in *Death Stranding*, complete with concept art, screenshots and the actors lending their voice talent and/or likenesses. One of the said characters, fitted with a skull-like mask and modelled after actor Tommie Earl Jenkins, will be voiced by the legendary Japanese voice actor Akio Otsuka. As the voice of the titular character Snake from Kojima's cherished *Metal Gear Solid* franchise, Otsuka elicited a huge fan reaction when he made his appearance, uttering

his famous catchphrase, “Kept you waiting, huh?”

Another character Kojima elaborated on was the Man in the Golden Mask, an enigmatic individual seen in previous trailers taking an antagonistic stance toward the game's main character Sam. Kojima debuted a brand-new video which showcased the Golden Mask, who can be seen using his powers to spawn a monstrous enemy for our protagonist to fight with (or run away from, which Kojima assured us, is a viable strategy here). Voice acting veteran Troy Baker returns to play the Man in the Golden Mask, marking the first time he and Kojima have worked on the same project since 2015's *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*.

As the presentation drew to a close, Kojima clarified a comment he made onstage at Tokyo Game Show two years prior. In 2016, when asked about the far-off release date for *Death Stranding*, Kojima reassured the audience that they would be able to play it “before the year Akira is set in,” which happens to be 2019. Fast forward two years and concrete details have yet to be announced. Kojima playfully retorted by asking, “[w]hich Akira are you referring to?” as a clever means of sidestepping the question. Speaking earnestly, he informed everyone that his studio's plans for the release remain unchanged and that he is tremendously thankful for all of the support, pleading with fans to wait just a little bit longer.

*Chad Grover is a fifth year ALT based in Tokyo. His hobbies include video games, professional wrestling, and getting told he looks like Seth Rogen a lot. You can ask him which brand of canned coffee he's currently addicted to on Twitter @chadgrov.*

**A R T I S T  
B I O G R A P H Y**

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***LISA YANAGIDA***

While working as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Rwanda, Lisa Yanagida decided to capture the lived experience of the people in Kabarondo Village in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. Her experience in this fascinating part of Africa not only kindled a passion for a more serious artistic journey but also inspired an interest in celebrating multiculturalism.

In addition to working on an anthropology major at Indiana University, she pursued theatrical costuming, working on design, pattern development, and garment construction. Lisa is a master weaver: she enjoys weaving between the theater, fashion, and the art worlds as well as between media (acrylic, watercolour and fabrics), often merging them in her works. Having lived in Rwanda and America and with a Japanese background and an interest in people's lived experience, she also tends to weave different cultures together to create a wonderful hybrid that reflects an interesting perspective on a globalised world. Ultimately delving into a character's attitude and values is important to her, allowing her to develop a costume or art piece that reflects a very personal mood and style.



## AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY



During my last 6 months working as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I was scrambling to document what my life was like in order to remember this formative time. I found inspiration from the people in my community and decided to create a series of paintings that was later displayed at the Peace Corps Rwanda Office in Kigali. Educating people about the friends I made while in Rwanda through art allows me to show more of what life was like in the community of Kabarondo, Kayonza District.

These watercolor scenes titled "Daily Life in the Village of Kabarondo" include my neighbor Butare, who sits in front of his house every day and works as a tailor; Natasha, the little girl that comes to read picture books; Theophile and his family on his daughter's first birthday; Liliana on her wedding day; a mother and child visiting the Kaboga household; Ecole Secondaire Cyinzovu students Pendoka and Chifulah; and Simba, the dog from Rwamagana.



**Natasha Gasaro has a special place in my heart. She became my family in Rwanda.**

My students would sometimes question my nationality as an American when I told them my father was Japanese, which would eventually lead to a teachable moment about America as a mixing pot. With these instances in mind, I worked on a piece that merged America, Japan, and Rwanda, incorporating the available materials at hand: Rwandan fabric, known as igitenge or kitenge. I pieced together and handsewed igitenge scraps into a stylized woman in a kimono. This piece, titled “Between Worlds”, was later displayed at Inema Art Gallery in Kigali during an event that discussed diversity in America for a Rwandan audience.

The woman’s clothing is a stylized kimono and has a quiltlike quality, with different igitenge pieces forming the image. In a regular kimono, there is a special pocket in the rectangular sleeve, so I included one as a 2D piece. I thought it was a meaningful nod to a small cultural aspect.

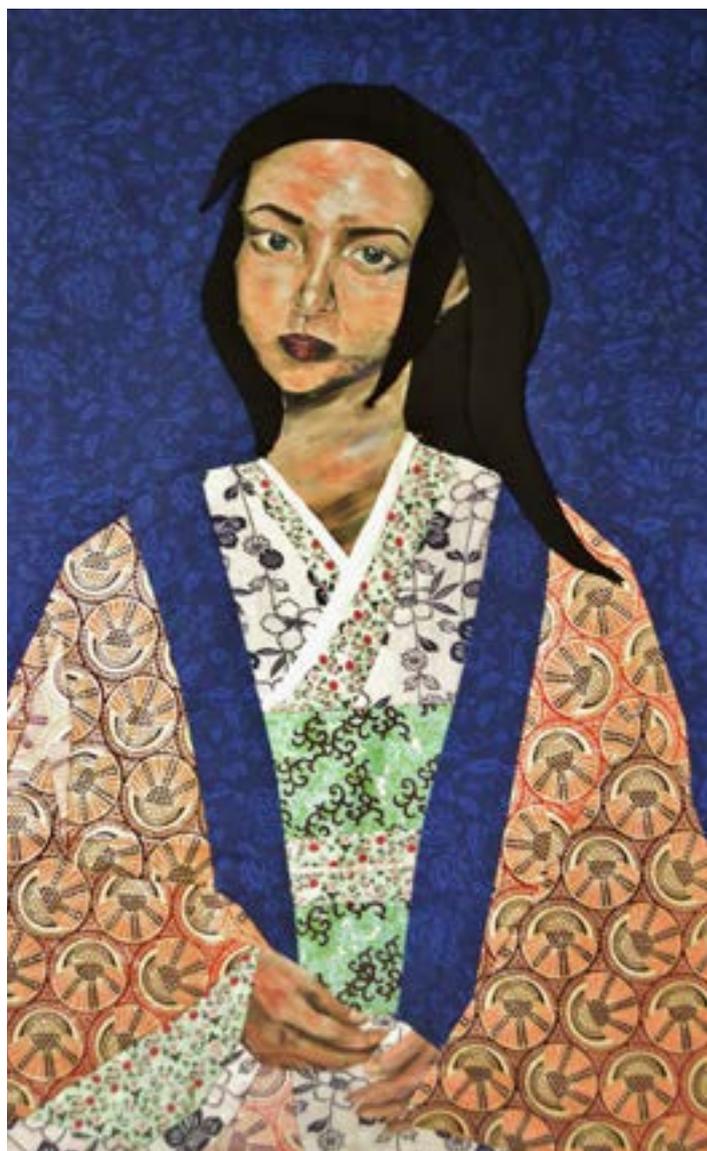




The mixed media piece “Interconnected: a portrait” is a personal conglomeration of new and recycled materials. There is fabric from my childhood yukata, Congolese igitenge bought in Musanze, Rwanda, and odds and ends from my mother’s American fabric stash. I also experimented with silk painting for the face and hands.

Because igitenge is made of cotton, it was also ideal for making yukata. Art and fashion are part of both Japanese and Rwandan culture, and bringing those cultures together with American techniques allows me to show my own perspective, especially in a culturally reflective and feminist context. Making yukata in my village of Kabarondo with the intent to wear them during a summer matsuri in Japan was also a way for me to feel connected to my heritage.

The second piece done with igitenge is called “Strength: A Rwandan Woman”. Family work is still largely gendered in Rwanda, with women taking care of children, cooking, cleaning, and providing food. I often saw mothers strap their children to their back with igitenge and farm the land at the same time. Their strength is the backbone of Rwandan culture, and they are worth so much more than they are credited for.



# A CHANGE IN STYLE

After finishing my Peace Corps service in Rwanda, I knew I wanted to continue pursuing art in my free time. I was unsure of the direction it would take, so I started to look at influential artists of the past. I wanted to create art with a social impact that provoked discussion about taboo topics.

Frida Kahlo often painted about her experience as a woman dealing with physical and emotional pain, including the strain of infertility. In her painting, 'Henry Ford Hospital', Frida painted an image of her miscarriage, connecting her image to her child by a floating ribbon-like umbilical cord.



In the piece, "Melancholy on Display", I wanted to convey a different aspect of womanhood by depicting how the male/societal gaze is prioritized over a woman's personal comfort, including when a woman has miscarried. Women are under such pressure to behave and look a certain way, even at the expense of their health. I wanted to make a piece that connected the idea of miscarriage because of the utter lack of conversation surrounding it. Miscarriage can be very psychologically and physically painful for women, yet it is not often

discussed or acknowledged that a woman might have had a child that no longer lives. This piece promoted that discussion while referencing Frida's imagery.

(While most of the piece is in acrylic paint, the irises are embroidered. This meant I had to first embroider the eyes and then build the frame and canvas before starting to paint.)

I find that people are more connected to art when they hear the story behind the artwork. While I never expose all of the meaning, I do want to be able to share the vulnerable thought process behind my drive to create and share artwork. Of course, art can be pretty, but it can also be gritty and uncomfortable; I'm still learning to be okay with that. I would like to move in a direction where my art has meaning rather than just being aesthetic.

# FUTURE ART

The term 'Motherland moment', has recently been trending in the Asian American community largely in part to the premiere of the movie Crazy Rich Asians. The 'Motherland moment' is essentially the experience of people with Asian heritage plus another nationality (for example Chinese American) visiting their heritage country for the first time and realizing the simultaneous mix of nostalgia and foreign elements in this new environment.

I knew that living in Japan would influence the direction of my art, but I think I underestimated the 'Motherland moment'. I feel a specific need to create heritage-driven and historically-focused art now that I am in Japan.

After visiting Kotonoura Onzan-Soh-En, a public garden that was acknowledged by the Agency for Cultural Affairs for its cultural properties, I definitely was inspired by the history and the scenic beauty. While I have yet to translate that inspiration from nature into art, I have been able to gain more understanding of my heritage and what brought me to this point in my life.



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*"You got dreams in life? That's lit." -Pillboi, The Good Place*

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Photo: Colette English



Be 

# PRE- PARED



*How to be Ready in*  
**DISASTER SITUATIONS**

Emily Liew (Fukushima) 2015-18

So you made it to Japan--there was a heat wave, a hurricane with torrential rain and flooding, a terrifying earthquake that you thought you'd experience at some point, but not this soon. Or perhaps you've been in Japan for some time and all these things happening in a short span of time has finally prompted you to ask yourself, "What is disaster preparedness and how do I actually do that?" I hope some of this information will help you feel more prepared in the face of whatever may come. Hooray for disaster preparedness!

## WHAT TO KNOW

The first order of business is to register with your embassy so that they know you reside in Japan and have your contact information. Contrary to what some may think, your embassy does not just receive a list of your information once you enter the country. In case of an emergency, your embassy will contact both you and your family. If you need to leave Japan or have lost or were unable to retrieve your passport, they can help you. If they are unable to contact you for any reason, make sure to contact them once you are able to.

Next, walk around and familiarise yourself with your neighbourhood. Know where the high ground is and what areas to avoid. Know where the evacuation sites and shelters are. They'll have signs outside the buildings, which usually include your schools, and a list of them should be available on your city/town/village website.

One of Japan's most common natural disasters is earthquakes. 30-50 percent of earthquake-related injuries in recent years were caused by falling objects or furniture, and other heavy items toppling over or sliding into people. You can prevent this by anchoring large items, such as dressers and bookcases, to the floor or walls. You can buy brackets to attach to furniture from home centers. Prevent things sliding by applying anti-slip tape or padding to the legs of furniture, electric appliances like your microwave, and aquariums if you have one. Be aware of items that may catch fire, such as electric appliances and heaters. Store them properly when not in use and away from curtains. You can also apply anti-shatter film to glass panes.

Make sure you have an escape route and ensure that it is clear of obstructions at all times.

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KITS

## *Bousai Setto*

One of the most useful things to have at all times is an emergency preparedness kit. These should be kept at home, on your person, or in your car. Kits can be bought online from Amazon or Rakuten, at home centers like Daiyu 8, Cainz, Viva Home, Ito Yokado, and at department stores such as Tokyu Hands. These places normally have an emergency supplies corner, and if you go shopping on August 31st, Emergency Day (*Bousai no hi* 防災の日), supplies will be on sale. Kits can vary in price and number of items, and there are kits made specifically for children and women. Depending on how extensive of a kit you want, it can be 5-6,000yen for a smaller one or just over 10,000 yen for a bigger one. You can also make your own or supplement a store-bought kit by buying extra supplies. If you decide to make your own, make a list and visit your local home center, 100 yen store, and supermarket.

The Tokyu Hands department store in Tokyo sells emergency kits in a range of sizes, the smallest of which costs 3,758yen. You can grab it and go, keep it on your person in your everyday bag, or clip it to a smaller bag/purse that you use.

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HANDS





## THIS KIT CONTAINS:

Bright coloured dry bag that can also be used to hold water

Emergency toilet bag, up to 700cc

Mask

Wet Wipes

Instructions for different disasters in English

FM radio with light, 5 year shelf-life batteries included

Emergency blanket

Can opener

125ml water in pouch

yokan (red bean hard jelly), 5 year shelf life

Band-aids

Pen and whistle



A larger kit from Daiyu 8 was 2,980yen. I kept it in the entranceway of my house to grab on my way out if necessary.

## THIS KIT CONTAINS:

**Emergency drawstring bag made of reflective material**

**Rope**

**Gloves**

**Mask**

**Raincoat**

**Multicase for small items like medicine**

**Slippers (useful if walking over broken glass)**

**Cutter**

**Whistle**

**Collapsible tank for water**

**Tarp and emergency blanket**

**Clear plastic bags for storage**

**Eating utensil set (cup, knife, fork, spoon)**

**Flashlight**

**Pocket tissue and wet tissues**

**Emergency toilet bags**

**Band-aids**

**“Etiquette Set” including nail clippers, tweezers, etc.**

Utilities can often be shut off for long periods of time, so make sure to include emergency food such as a tin of biscuits, dehydrated food that can be eaten without being heated, and bottles of water. Other items to consider are: a spare change of clothes including underwear, feminine hygiene products (tampons can be used in first aid or as fire starter in a pinch), dry shampoo, deodorant, a first aid kit with gauze, tape, and antibiotic cream, and even playing cards. If you have pets, make sure to include supplies for them too. *Furoshiki*, traditional Japanese wrapping cloths, are also useful and can be tied in a number of ways to carry supplies, provide warmth, cover your mouth and nose in case of smoke, or waved to attract attention. They come in a variety of sizes and patterns.

Last but not least, make sure to have a copy of all your important documents (passport, drivers license, medical forms, address in English and Japanese, contact numbers, etc) in a clear, waterproof bag or file. If you need to evacuate you will most likely be expected to register at your closest evacuation shelter. You will need to be able to write your name and address in Japanese in order to register and receive supplies, so make sure to practice!





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Tokyo Emergency Preparedness Book: Let's Get Prepared](#)

[Tokyo Emergency Preparedness Book: Other Disasters and Countermeasures](#)

[Tokyo Emergency Preparedness Book: Survival Tips](#)

[Tokyo Emergency Preparedness Book: Disaster Facts and Information You Should Know](#)

[Information on Japan's Warning Systems and What to Do During a Disaster](#)

[Emergency Supplies Available at Tokyu Hands](#)

[Japan Meteorological Agency Website, English \(check for updates on earthquakes, etc\)](#)



# Reviewed

# JAPAN

# 100

# HIDDEN TOWNS

Lauren Hill (Tokyo)

One of my favourite things about living in Japan, specifically the insanely well-connected Tokyo area, is just how *easy* it is to travel, and the seemingly endless locations waiting to be discovered. A day or two spare and an hour's train in a different direction can have you wandering a local village you'd never heard of before, and longer stretches offer the chance to hop on a plane or train to any region that takes your fancy. From snow-capped mountains right out of a fairytale, to turtle-spotting on a tropical coast, there's a destination for every traveller. I don't think I'll ever get tired of exploring here.

That said, not every trip has gone strictly according to plan. This summer, my fiancé and I took a trip to Touhoku. It was our first visit, and like many others during the blistering early days of August, our main draw was Aomori's *Nebuta Matsuri*. After the apple-flavoured everything, the towering illuminated floats, the rousing chants of what looked to be the city's entire population... we headed to Akita for a change of pace, a day each in the smaller

cities of Odate and Oga. Odate's claim to fame is as the birthplace of national treasure Hachiko, the famously loyal Akita dog with his own statue in the centre of Shibuya. Oga's local legend is somewhat less welcoming. The *Namahage*, demonic creatures who beat down doors to police children's morals and raid families' *sake* stores, originated here. We had hoped to do a quick tour of Oga's highlights, visiting the Namahage Museum, taking in Godzilla



Rock and its stunning coastal setting, and finishing up with a walk around GAO, the local aquarium (they have polar bears!) What we didn't take into account was that a whole host of tourist attractions doesn't always mean they're close together, or that the town has a bustling public transport system. The limited bus service left us with just enough time to visit the aquarium. Fortunately, GAO is set above a gorgeous rocky shoreline, and the polar bears were full of energy despite the heat. The day wasn't a complete disaster, but we'll definitely be doing better research before our next trip to the area.

seasides, museums/galleries, wildlife/nature, and festivals. Throughout the guide, symbols for each of these can be used to easily pinpoint towns that appeal to you.

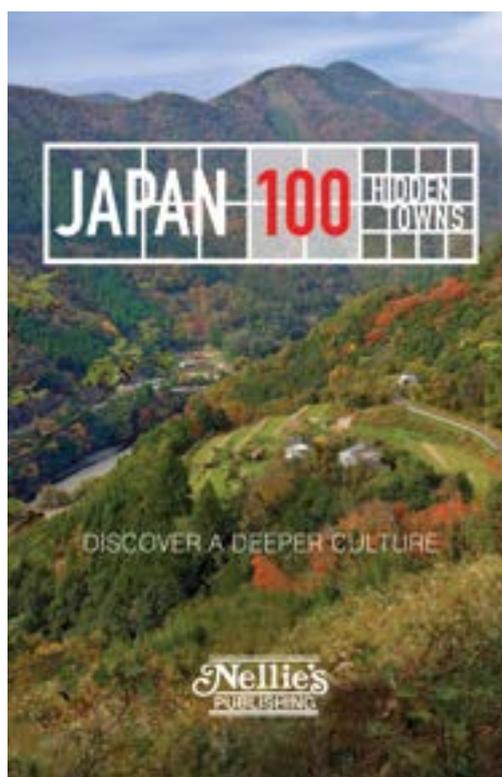
Each regional chapter provides a summary of the area's best-known features, expanding on individual prefectures, transport hubs and national parks. A helpful extra is the chart detailing average annual temperatures, plus another chart for travel times between prefectural capitals. All of this is then condensed into functional, accessible maps which act as an overview for each region.

As for the towns themselves, two-to-four-page sections pack in a wealth of tips, tricks, and unmissable points of interest. Stunning photographs bring the locations to life, food and drink recommendations take the difficulty out of meal planning, whilst *did you know?* boxes offer an insight into unique local legends and customs. Many of the featured towns see little to no foreign tourism, and it can be hard for non-Japanese speakers to navigate. For each town, you'll find pointers for both getting to and around - invaluable in spots where public transport may be infrequent. As is the case for many of Japan's busier tourist hotspots, some of the featured towns are best experienced during annual festivals, and the dates of these are listed in each section to help you get the most out of your visit.



Enter: [Japan – 100 Hidden Towns](#). Colour coded by region and highlighting lesser known gems in each of Japan's 47 prefectures, this off-the-beaten-path travel guide is essential for those who like to venture a bit further afield, past reliable English signage and regularly serviced stations. Tired of Tokyo? Got a case of temple fatigue in Kyoto or Nara? *100 Hidden Towns* invites you to "discover a deeper culture."

The book begins with a brief intro to common areas of interest for travellers in Japan: history, performance/arts, traditional crafts, local delicacies, hot springs,





# Top Picks By Region

**1.** **Hokkaido: Nakafurano**  
*Visit for:* Flowers and farm-fresh produce

**Tohoku: Tono, Iwate Prefecture**  
*Visit for:* Folklore and thatched-roof cottages

**2.**

**3.** **Kanto-Koshinetsu:  
Ogasawara Islands, Tokyo Prefecture**  
*Visit for:* Golden beaches, local crafts and tropical fruit

**4.** **Chubu-Hokuriku:  
Wakasa, Fukui Prefecture**  
*Visit for:* Stunning waterfalls, lakeside views and Jomon era history



**Kansai: Akashi, Hyogo Prefecture**  
*Visit for:* The oldest planetarium in Japan, octopus dishes, and the longest suspension bridge in the world

**5.**



**Chugoku: Masuda,  
Shimane Prefecture 6.**

*Visit for:* Gorge cycling and Iwami Kagura

**7 Shikoku: Shodoshima,  
Kagawa Prefecture**

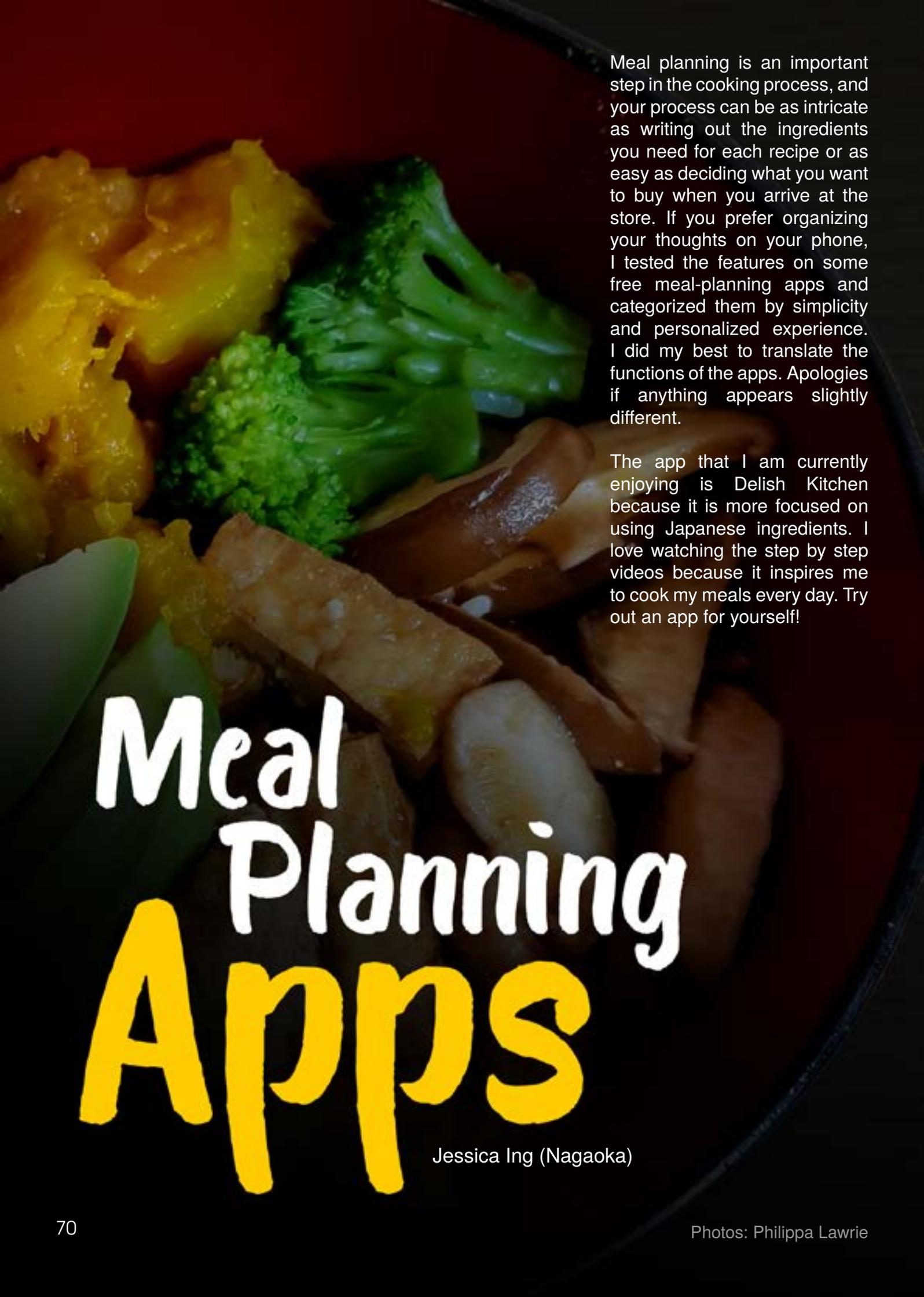
*Visit for:* Olives, art and *senmaida* rice paddies



**Kyushu and Okinawa: Miyakojima,  
Okinawa Prefecture 8.**

*Visit for:* Water sports, marine life, and beautiful sunsets

Towards the back of the book, readers will find advice on Japan's various modes of travel, plus tips on accessibility and travelling with children, and essential phrases for Japanese language beginners. This info is regularly updated on the book's [website](#), as are the entries for the towns themselves. With so many destinations to account for, *Japan – 100 Hidden Towns* comes as close as you can to a comprehensive guide for offbeat explorers. Since reading, I've already taken a trip to seaside spot of Miura, Kanagawa, and I know I'll be keeping this book handy in the future. The only thing left for Nellie's to do is market a scratch-off map for those determined to hit every town of the 100.



Meal planning is an important step in the cooking process, and your process can be as intricate as writing out the ingredients you need for each recipe or as easy as deciding what you want to buy when you arrive at the store. If you prefer organizing your thoughts on your phone, I tested the features on some free meal-planning apps and categorized them by simplicity and personalized experience. I did my best to translate the functions of the apps. Apologies if anything appears slightly different.

The app that I am currently enjoying is Delish Kitchen because it is more focused on using Japanese ingredients. I love watching the step by step videos because it inspires me to cook my meals every day. Try out an app for yourself!

# Meal Planning Apps

Jessica Ing (Nagaoka)



## Simplicity:

- App can be accessed offline
- Simple layout and call to action buttons
- Different icons are suggestive of what the user can do

## Personalized Experience:

- Plan your meals for the day, week, or months in advance
- Create recipes you want to remember to cook later, but you'll have to manually input information. A Facebook, Pinterest, or Souo link is available to share on other social media.
- Create an inventory list of what you have at home
- Create a shopping list for each store that includes price (price can be listed in ¥). Cross off items you buy in real time
- You can input food using barcode scanner, but you must have Barcode Scanner by ZXingTeam installed, and it doesn't work with Japanese products
- Occasional ads play on the free version
- Purchase Pro to unlock My Meal Plans, and buy individual recipes on FP Store

## Simplicity:

- App cannot be accessed without data plan or Wi-Fi access
- App is in katakana, hiragana, and kanji!
- Recipes are separated by main ingredient; vegetable, meat, fish, dairy, or salad
- Recipes are showcased under Recommended, Ranking, and Hall of Fame

## Personalized Experience:

- Similar to Instagram but uploads are about food
- You can get inspired by other chefs
- Save recipes in a folder for future meal ideas. You can also create a food list.
- Upload photos to your account to be featured under Hall of Fame or Rank!



## Simplicity:

- App can be accessed offline
- Prettier shopping list app

## Personalized Experience:

- Listonic Recommended requires an email to sync to in order to use the feature
- Purchase Pro to remove ads for one month (¥120), one year (¥1000), or forever (¥1750)
- The ordinary shopping list is stylized. Prices or food icon can be toggled on display Check off a box to show you purchased the item
- Language can be changed to input the names of foods in katakana



## Simplicity:

- App cannot be accessed without data plan or Wi-Fi access
- Phone notifications send user fresh recipes daily
- Automatically plays a cooking video when app is opened
- Journals recommended foods and food rank day by day
- Look up many recipes

## Personalized Experience:

- Save recipes for future reference
- Auto-populates the shopping list with the ingredients needed for the recipe
- A shopping list can be created from scratch
- Presents creative ideas and uses of commonly found Japanese ingredients
- Bargain Sale tab – when location is turned on or JP Postal Code is entered you can see sales from nearby stores. Add these to your shopping cart for check out
- Coupon tab lists points you can earn from docomo, edy, or nanaco
- Purchase Premium to unlock special recipes
- External link directs you to Delish Kitchen appliances on Amazon.jp

## Simplicity:

- App cannot be accessed without data plan or Wi-Fi access
- Create a customized or premade shopping list. Friendly prompts of other suggested items appear in shopping list search

## Personalized Experience:

- The Yum'd feature saves your recipe
- Recipes list the number of ingredients, nutrition factors, calories, meal preparation time. Written recipe directions are linked to an external yumly source
- Yum'd recipes can be scheduled into an app calendar for future meals
- Instacart can deliver ingredients to your home for any of your Yum'd recipes (Available only in Canada and the US)
- Set your dietary preferences to customize the recipe search, set preferred measurements to metric or imperial
- Explore guided, yumly certified videos categorized by popular, trending now, seasonal, quick and easy, kid friendly, cuisines, courses, diets, and dishes
- Yummy Store offers appliances, utilities, and miscellaneous things for the kitchen, cooking, storage, and gifts



# COMMUNITY



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*"Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like." -Lao Tzu*

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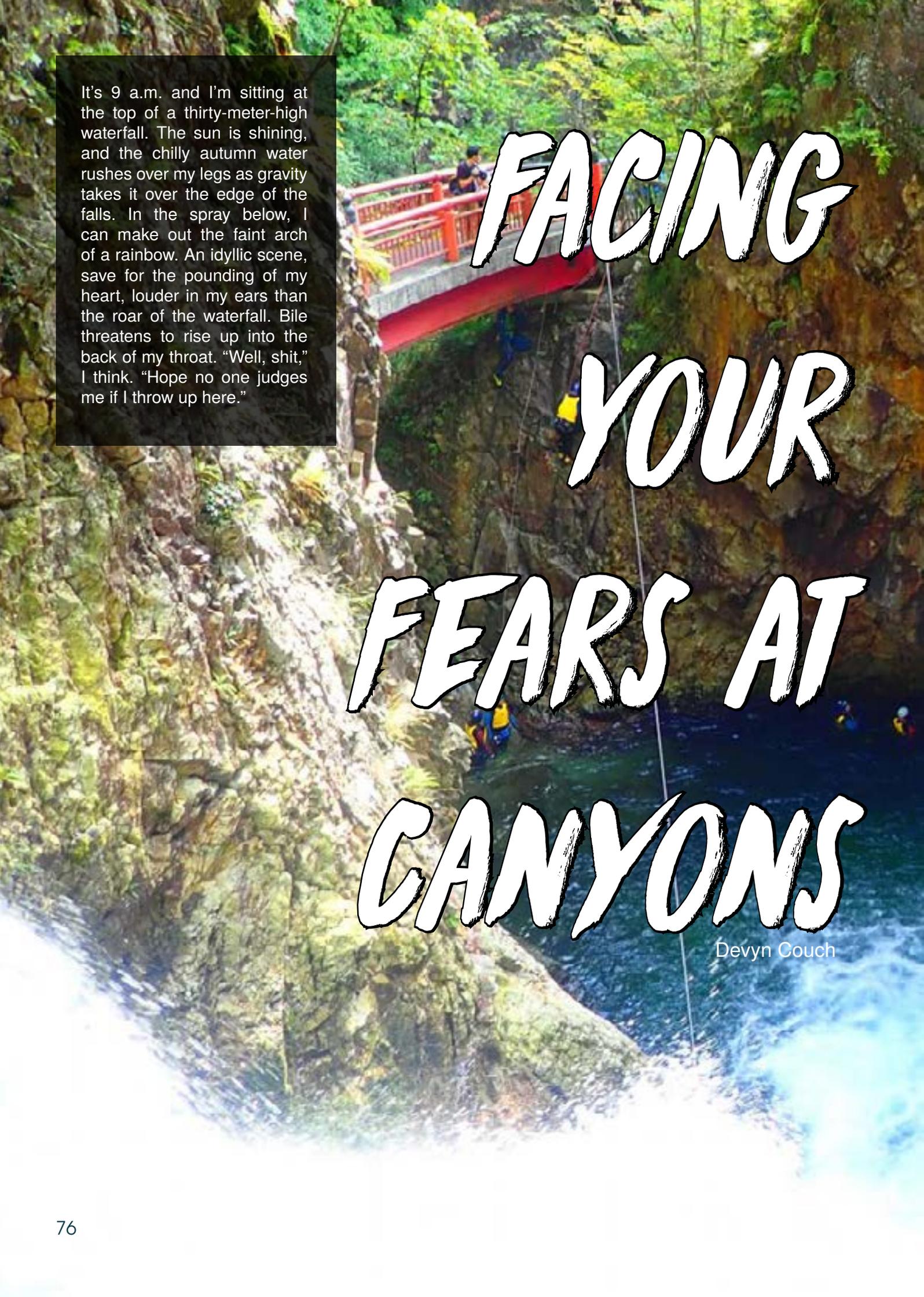
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*"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." Tim Notke*

Photo: Giovanni Perez





It's 9 a.m. and I'm sitting at the top of a thirty-meter-high waterfall. The sun is shining, and the chilly autumn water rushes over my legs as gravity takes it over the edge of the falls. In the spray below, I can make out the faint arch of a rainbow. An idyllic scene, save for the pounding of my heart, louder in my ears than the roar of the waterfall. Bile threatens to rise up into the back of my throat. "Well, shit," I think. "Hope no one judges me if I throw up here."

# FACING YOUR FEARS AT CANYONS

Devyn Couch

# FAST FORWARD

That was me, two years ago, during my first-ever canyoning experience - at the aptly named Canyons, located in scenic Minakami, Gunma.

(Spoiler: I did not, in fact, vomit.)

(Additional spoiler: I did scream like the smallest of children the entire way down. You win this one, acrophobia.)

You may be wondering why the hell someone with a crippling fear of heights would willingly put themselves through this kind of experience, when the details of what one is getting into with each course offered at Canyons is *very clearly* outlined. No, seriously. There's a video and everything, which is shown to all prospective adventurers by our lovely guides before we are even allowed to don the provided wetsuits, harnesses, and other protective gear.

# LESSONS LEARNED

Before leaving the lodge, the guides follow up with questions about our medical statuses and check to see if we have any canyoning-related fears they should be made aware of. There's no judgment here, which might be surprising, considering that this operation is run by a bunch of boisterous, thrill-seeking New Zealanders. However, all joking aside, they make it clear that they are consummate professionals, determined to ensure a safe and enjoyable time for all of us entering the canyon today. Stupidly, I don't raise my hand, because I'm determined to make my fear of heights a non-issue.

After all, I had just moved to a completely new country, without ever having set foot in this hemisphere before, and took a 15-hour plane ride to do it, too! One month in, I haven't built a super strong crew of friends (yet). All of those things should terrify me, but they don't. Like hell am I going to let some 30-meter waterfall stop me from engaging in new experiences and making friends with similarly outdoorsy people! *I've got this!*

Hailing from a shore town in New Jersey, I'm no stranger to water. Where I'm from, people learn to

have a healthy respect for bodies of water at a pretty young age, considering how much time we spend at the beach. That being the case, Fox Canyon's gently flowing, only knee-deep tutorial section—as well as the slides, small jumps, and so on that give us newbies a feel for what constitutes 'canyoning'-doesn't bother me at all.

This isn't the case for some of our party, who are self-declared weak or non-swimmers. In addition to our two experienced guides, our group includes a former swim instructor and a few other strong swimmers (myself included), who all make an unspoken agreement to keep an eye on them together.

We traverse the early part of the canyon, wading about, swapping names and sharing stories about where we're from originally, what brought us to Japan, what our plans are for the evening, and when all the festivities are supposed to happen. We make plans to exchange LINE and Facebook information in order to arrange future adventures. It's a great time spent in a beautiful location with a lot of awesome people who are all keen to see what Gunma has to offer. Really, can you ask for a better bonding experience than that?

Eventually, we all make it to the point that I'm determined not to be afraid of. Thirty meters? Psh. That's just a number. A small number, even! Nothing to worry about!

A (*small?*) number, that is, until I'm one of the last in line, listening to those who have gone ahead of me scream and swear their way down this naturally-occurring waterslide. Part of me wonders if any of them can see the panic setting in, or hear the tremor in my voice as I offer up encouragement and edge them on ahead of me. Hopefully they think it's the temperature of the water that's making me shiver like this.

"Go ahead," I say to each new acquaintance, falling further back in line. "I'll see you at the bottom!"

When I'm seated above what feels like The Void - The Realization of All My Deepest Fears - one of our guides, Mike, asks me how I'm holding up.

"Not great, man. This is... pretty high." Cue the nervous laughter and some kind of long-forgotten joke told in an attempt to break the tension that was creeping its way up my spine.

"It's going to be okay. Let's go over how to slide down again, hey?"

After some additional instruction, I'm feeling a little more confident. I can do this. He snaps a couple of pictures before I slide past the point of no return.

I resurface to the sounds of laughter and cheering. Shouts of "You made it!" and "What the heck was that sound that came out of your mouth?" greet me as I swim over to the rest of our crew, receiving congratulatory pats on the helmet and back as I scramble up onto the rocky shore. A grin splits my cheeks. If this is what invincibility feels like, I never want it to stop.

I'm at the head of the pack for the rest of our time in Fox Canyon, jumping off outcroppings, sliding headfirst down (smaller) waterfalls, cheering others on and psyching them up as much as possible so that they can also work on facing their fears. Lots of self-deprecating humor is involved, but hey, whatever works, right?

## **BACK TO THE FUTURE**

Two years later, I find myself staring down from the top of the same waterfall; but this time, I'm not afraid to admit that the height makes me nervous. Two of my good friends stand behind me, each one new to the canyoning experience. We're doing the more advanced Fox Plus course this time, so Mike (the same guide that talked me through a near-panic attack at this exact spot) gives us a choice of how high we drop from. I'm comfortable in my choice of "medium," because hey, I've got nothing to prove to anyone.

"See you on the other side!" I shout over the roar of the waterfall before pushing off. The fear is still there, but I recognize and embrace it instead of putting on a brave face or covering my insecurities with jokes.

A lot changes in two years, especially on JET. Friends come and go. In fact, only a few of those who were part of that first canyoning tour remain. There are new experiences daily - some great, some not. You face challenges and come out on the other side with a better understanding of yourself.

For me, this process began with signing up for an adventure in a corner of my home prefecture that I had yet to explore, organized by a group called GAJET, which I knew next to nothing about at the time. Since then, the bonds formed on that trip have blossomed into deep friendships; the fears I faced have inspired me to keep pushing myself to grow as a leader and

a human being; and the community I found through this experience inspired me to join GAJET in order to pass along similar experiences to new JETs, who are just starting their journeys in the prefecture we're all lucky enough to call home.

Since this will likely be my last year on the program, it seems fitting to bookend my JET experience with another trip to Minakami. Should I make it back up to Canyons before I leave Japan next summer, I think I want to try my hand at bungee jumping.

Who's with me?

*Devyn Couch is a third year JET, punk rocker, and (fancy) hat enthusiast living that #inakalife in Gunma, Japan. Future aspirations include: earning a ship captain's license, building a tiny home, and traveling as much as possible with a pet pig in tow. (Comic strips detailing their adventures are sure to follow.)*







# Get Out and Hike

**My Hiking Experience on one of  
Gunma's Mountains**

Talisha Vernon (Gunma)

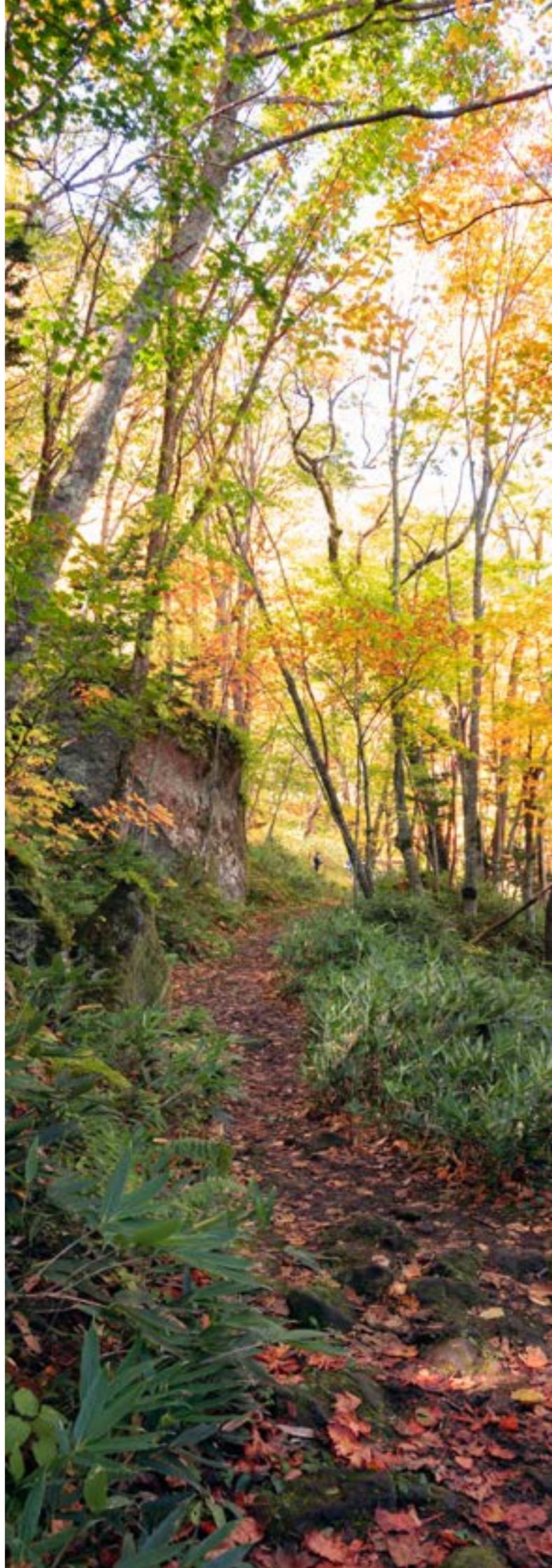
# Autumn is For Hiking

September 23rd marked the Autumnal Equinox, which means the beginning of autumn. Even though more people are out and about during the summer season, autumn is the season for exploring nature and the outdoors. For the new JETs, since most of you arrive in the middle of summer, this is the first season you will experience from start to finish in Japan. For JETs in their second year on, now that you are more comfortable living and working in Japan, perhaps you feel adventurous enough to explore more and more of what Japan has to offer.

WINTER IS COMING. I know it is natural for people to slowly start transitioning to life indoors when the weather gets cooler, but before that happens, it's important to get out and see what this lovely season has to give. At any given weekend in October and November, Takasaki Station is filled with tourists from near and far ready to explore the nature of Gunma. Gunma is mostly mountainous with a variety of great hiking trails and scenic biking paths. Some of the major mountains in Gunma are Mt. Nikko-Shirane, Mt. Asama, Mt. Haruna, Mt. Myogi, and Mt. Akagi. The last three mountains are collectively called the "Three Mountains of Jomo".

All of my life, I have lived in the capital cities of every country I've lived in. Hiking and nature were not always easy to access. So once I moved to Gunma, within my first year on JET, I discovered my love for hiking. Within my four years on JET so far, I have hiked multiple trails in Gunma as well as in other prefectures, and I eventually gained the courage to conquer Mt. Fuji in 2015. Having been hiking in multiple seasons, I cannot think of a better time to go hiking than in autumn with the changing of the leaves and cooling weather.

Even with my new love of hiking and my many years in Gunma, last month was the first time I hiked up Mt. Akagi, which is also one of Japan's Top 100 Mountains. From Lake Onuma at the base of Mt. Akagi to the top of Mt. Kurobi (the highest mountain in the Akagi mountain range), the elevation is 1,828 meters. Mt. Akagi, which means Red Castle, has a variety of trails and paths; so regardless if you are a hiking novice or if you have hiked Mt. Fuji multiple times, Mt. Akagi is for everyone.





## Connecting With Others

The local Gunma AJET committee (GAJET) helped organize and led a group of JETs and their friends and families up the Mt. Nabewariyama trail, a total of 1,332 meters. We met in the free Hime parking lot and while we waited for the last few people to show up, we just naturally started introducing ourselves and sharing our excitement for the hike. After a few false starts and dead ends, we started our two-hour hike.

This was a great opportunity to take a break from all the technology and really connect with the people I was hiking with. For me, I am always on my smartphone or on my computer at work, so this was a nice way to slow down and see the world around me.

I was able to meet new JETs and catch up with JETs I already knew. I had some deep conversations with people that I would have never had the chance to talk with otherwise. I even had short conversations with Japanese hikers as we all took breaks to catch our breaths. I learned about the different trees in the area from an older Japanese couple and spoke with multiple other hikers wondering where we were all from. Hiking might be one of the most unique opportunities to talk to strangers in Japan.





## Mt. Akagi With a 12kg (26lb) pack

Before I share my lovely experience hiking, let me first share that I am a mother of two-year-old twins, and I decided to bring them and my husband along for our first hike as a family. So with the twins secured on our backs, we had no problem hiking up most of the Mt. Nabewariyama trail. The trail begins with a rocky incline where the rocks act as steps to help you along the way. I believe that this was one of the most beautiful parts of the entire hike.

Once we made it halfway, we took a small break. We let the twins out of their carriers to run around the flat part of the trail. We ate snacks and waited for everyone to catch up with the rest of the group.

The second half of the hike was pretty easy. This part of the trail had a few wooden steps, but most of it was just a slight incline. Every once in a while, there would be a break in the trees where I was able to see out onto the city of Maebashi. It was a little foggy, but the view was still picturesque. In fact, if you hike Mt. Nabewariyama on a clear day, Mt. Fuji can be seen from the summit.

After taking pictures on the way up, we finally made it to the summit. We cheered in excitement at reaching the top for a job well done. We ate lunch, had more great conversations, and took a group picture to remember our time together.

We took the same path back down, taking an additional two hours. Instead of people being exhausted from just finishing a hike and getting into their cars and leaving, people were interested in continuing the sense of unity formed during the hike. Afterward, most of the group decided to go to the local *onsen*.





## Why I Love Hiking in Japan

Overall, my favorite part of the hike was hearing the other conversations happening around me. Even when I wasn't engaged in conversation directly, I still felt the community we were building. There is a great sense of camaraderie when hiking, both within your hiking group and with others passing by. Every time someone was heading the other way or was trying to pass, they greeted us with a smile.

With the colder months approaching and the school year becoming busier and busier, it's important to get out of our daily routines. For new JETs, autumn is the time to determine how much you will enjoy your winter. Find those people that you click with and develop a deeper bond as you go on a nice, lovely autumn hike.

*Talisha is a fifth-year prefectural JET in Gunma. As a child of parents in the U.S. Army, Talisha has only lived in capital cities in the countries her parents were stationed. Gunma Prefecture is the first time she has lived out in the countryside. Through this new, slower lifestyle, Talisha has been introduced to many adventures she simply wouldn't have had if she lived in a big city.*

# TELL

## *Tokyo Tower Climb*

**Bringing Awareness to a  
Global Issue**

Aimee-Lee Nash (Gunma)





and positive energy in the air. After we registered and received our starting chips, we made our way to a little corner to ready our bodies for this intense climb.

Let me give you a little background on this mammoth structure. Tokyo Tower is a communications and observation tower. It controls broadcast signals for TV, radio and traffic information, as well as being used for collecting weather data. At 332.9 meters, it's the second-tallest structure in Japan after the Tokyo Skytree. It was built by Tachu Naito, who based his design on the Eiffel Tower. Construction started in June 1957, and the tower was opened to the public in December 1958. At the time, it was the tallest free-standing structure in the world, taking the lead over the Eiffel Tower by 13 meters after they bolted a 90-meter antenna to the top.

They called our group on the loudspeaker to get ready and we made our way over to the bottom of the steps. With our starter chips ready in hand, each person starts on their own. Five seconds pass before the next person can start their climb. "Climb on the left and overtake on the right", was one of the instructions given. I can't remember the rest as I was getting really nervous at this stage. I don't know why. It wasn't a race against anyone. But I guess my competitiveness could no longer be suppressed.

"Ready, set, go!" and I was off, bounding up two steps at a time. Why? I don't know. As I mentioned, my competitiveness sometimes gets the better of me. After about the 10th staircase, I realized I probably needed to slow down if I wanted to reach the top alive. I was out of breath. I kept to a strong pace, but no more bounding. Just single steps, one at a time. Then it was over. Five minutes and six seconds.

It doesn't have to be a competition though. Some people even walked it while having a conversation with their friend. You can go as fast or as slow as you wish. After completing the climb, we were rewarded with a beautiful view of Tokyo from the top. We received a token towel to show we completed the climb and a certificate with our name and recorded time. It was such a great feeling of accomplishment. The best part was, it was so quick. You don't need to have prior training. However, if you feel you'd need at least some sort of preparation but don't have the know-how, the only thing you'll need to sacrifice for a bit is the escalator. Take the stairs instead. And every time you do, think about this global issue. You're also allowed to think about how much better your derriere is going to look after all those stairs!

Some may think that because they are not as sporty or active with exercise, that it would be an impossible task to complete. But you really don't need to be an athlete or exercise fanatic to participate. The average time of completion is roughly 15 minutes. For those who walk to work or spend precious time searching for food brands only available in Costco - how long does that take you?

An event like this is for everybody. No one is excluded. Just like how depression can affect anyone, it doesn't discriminate or choose its victims based on intellect, money in the bank, the color of your skin, or even your physical capabilities. It's a very common mental illness that is not taken seriously enough and affects more and more people every year. Just bringing awareness to this issue was more than enough reason to take part.

It's important to mention that physical and mental exercise is really important as a foreigner in a country so different from our own. Mental exercise can be anything from reading to running, to planting flowers or to cleaning. It can be anything that makes you become mindful of that specific task. I enjoy drawing and practicing karate. My mind gets a break from life because the only thing I am thinking of when I am doing karate is karate. The same with drawing. It's important to give your mind the break it deserves.

I hope to encourage more JETs to take part next year. Perhaps we can band together a team of people and make an official event of it. The TELL Tokyo Tower Climb gives us the opportunity to get involved in events outside of our community (or within if you live in Tokyo), make new friends, and just have some fun while staying healthy.



*Aimee-Lee Nash was raised in Cape Town, South Africa. After completing her degree in brand management, she decided to travel some. She was 22 years old. Nine years and 50-something countries later, 'settling down' became a distant concept. In her free time, she's mostly training in a full-contact karate style called Kyokushin. Competing on an international level inspired her move to Japan. Aimee-Lee is living in Gunma, teaching English and practicing martial arts while taking full advantage of Japan's rich, unique culture.*

# Breaking Boards

How I Broke into the Karate  
Community

Jessica Ing (Niigata)





Dressed in my white karate *gi*, I stared at the four wooden planks before me, layered behind one another and held by two black belts on each side. I tried to drown out the pressure of the situation. With a crowd watching my every move, I swung my forearm towards the planks and made contact...

This past August, a friend from the local university introduced me to the karate world. Intrigued by the prospect of raising my fitness levels, I eagerly followed her to the *dojo*. A strong wave of “*oss*” greeted me as I first stepped foot inside. I briefly scanned the *dojo* and saw students chanting while practicing their forms. In front of the students was an instructor who looked to be in his late forties, donning a loosely tied *gi* with a clear view of his toned torso.

Isobe-sensei, as it turns out,

was not in his late forties. Now in his sixties, he would be tasked with training a new apprentice – a Canadian JET with little Japanese vocabulary. He taught me the basics: how to throw a punch, how to kick, and how to block. Every motion of my punch was critiqued, from delivery and hip swivel to the curling of my fingertips. For an entire month, I practiced these movements until they became second nature.

One day, when I arrived to the *dojo* wearing my usual workout clothes, Isobe-sensei approached me with a white belt in his hand. Newcomers to karate start off with a white belt, a symbol of a blank slate, ready to absorb knowledge. I had been practicing how to throw punch for a month, and now it seemed that I was ready for the next step.

Almost immediately after receiving the white belt, I was

informed that the *dojo* would be holding a karate presentation in September. With only a month and a half until the presentation, Isobe-sensei challenged me to break four wooden boards in front of the audience.

Besides breaking wooden planks, we would be demonstrating karate patterns (or *kata*). My movements were not fluid as I would have liked, as I would slowly drag my arms and legs behind me. I was afraid that I would fail in front of a large audience. I was also afraid that I would disappoint my sensei. Fortunately, the old adage – practice makes better – holds true. Over the next few weeks of intense training, I noticed there were improvements in the way I slid my feet across the floor, and the way I seamlessly transitioned from one motion to another.

Eventually, it was time to face the challenge of breaking the wooden board. Isobe-sensei demonstrated the wood-breaking routine. Of course, more detailed instructions would have been lost in translation, so he simply told me to copy his movements. With my trusty sensei holding up two wooden boards, I unleashed a blow without holding back. I was astonished as I heard a loud CRACK! Breaking through two wooden boards on my first try during practice gave me some reassurance that I could ace the upcoming performance.

The day of the performance came in a blink of an eye. The entire karate *dojo* looked fierce and ready to perform. We were all matching in crisp white uniforms standing proudly in front of the audience. First was our *kata* performance. We were

all in sync with our motions and speed; I couldn't have been more satisfied. Afterwards, the black belts began their sparring demonstration. The crowd cheerfully clapped every time a blow successfully landed.

Eventually, Isobe-sensei called each of us by name. It was time for the wood-breaking demonstration. The first white belt approached the demonstration area. Like me, he was also challenged to break four boards with a single strike. He took his initial strike, but the boards did not budge. He took a moment to gather himself. His next swing managed to break the first board. He took three more attempts, breaking one board on every try. When he returned to the seating area, I could see blood dripping down his knuckles.

Soon I heard my name and stood up to perform. Even in practice, I had never tried breaking four boards simultaneously; this would be my first ever attempt. I focused on controlling my breathing as I stared down the four wooden planks presented before me. The crowd was silent in anticipation, but I could still feel their gaze in the back of my mind.

"ISHYA," I yelled as I prepared to lunge at the boards.

Unfortunately, things don't always go smoothly as planned. My blow to the boards felt like a gentle knock on a door. Even so, a sharp pain emerged in my elbow after the failed strike. Sensing this, Isobe-sensei took away one of the boards, and readjusted the remaining three. My second attempt resulted in more pain than the first; I felt

tears trickling down my face. At this point, I seriously considered giving up, but the loud cheers from my karate teammates lifted my spirits. It was now or never!

My mind had one focus: break the boards! With my third swing, all three boards split perfectly. I'll never forget the moment when the crowd and karate members cheered in unison for my accomplishment.

After the performance, I was congratulated by my team. As happy as I was for breaking the boards, I could see that my teammates were equally – if not more – ecstatic. Worried about my injury, Isobe-sensei profusely apologized to me. Without wanting to worry my sensei any further, I told him that I was okay.

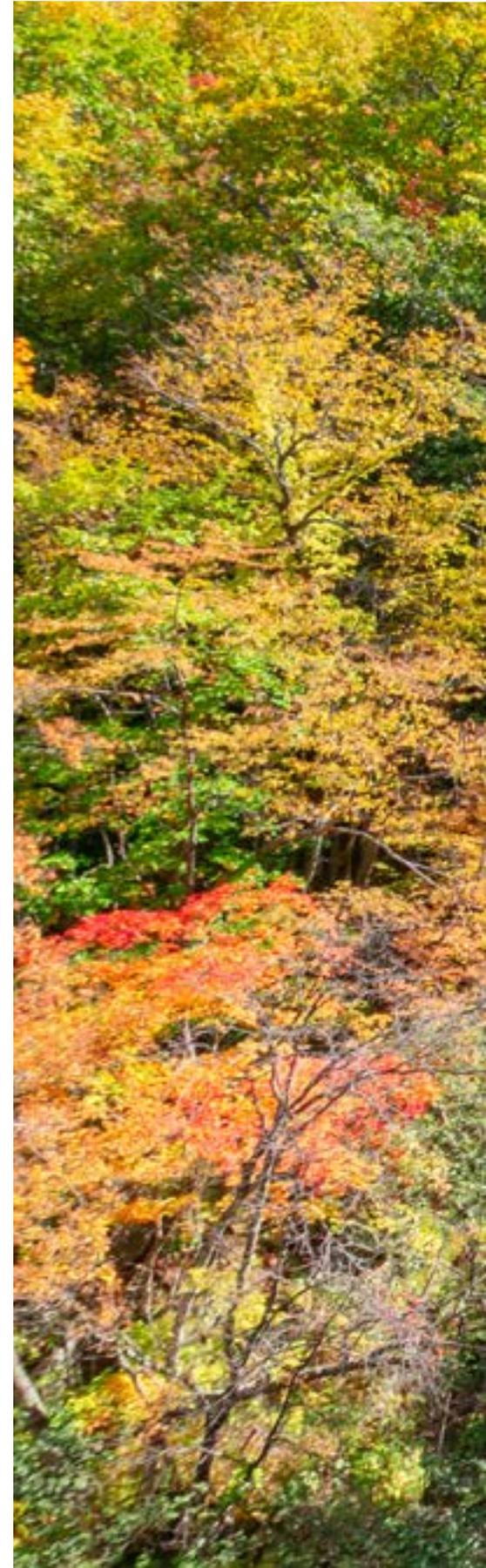
I can honestly say that the skills I've learned, and friendships I've made, go beyond the dojo walls. I feel a sense of warmth and community every time I put on my gi. When I first stepped through the dojo doors less than three months ago, I didn't know what to expect. Now, I look forward to learning something new every time I put on my uniform.

The training is not over yet. My goal is to break through four boards when my arm has fully recovered. I want to continue to grow stronger and learn as much as I can. My experience here has sparked an interest to continue practicing karate after my time with the JET Programme is over. I want to eventually become a black belt.

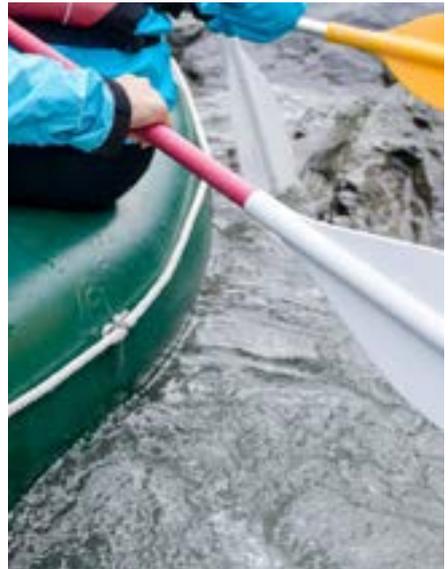
A mind that can believe will achieve great feats.

*Jessica Ing is a second-year JET in Nagaoka, Niigata. Besides practicing karate, she enjoys cooking, trips to the onsen, and photographing memories of her experiences in Japan. You can follow her adventures on [Instagram](#).*

Photo credits: Jessica Ing, Colette English







# FOREST OF THE FUTURE

Deborah Walter (Hokkaido)

Cicadas chirping in my ears, wisps of smoke tickling my nose, I felt the familiar sting of tears hiding behind my eyes. It was a Thursday evening in August, and we were gathered around the campfire - fourteen super staff, eight care workers, and around twenty campers of varying ages. We laughed, we sang, we danced; we threw wood into the fire and watched as the sparks floated towards the starry sky. Four days full of nature games and adventures all leading into this one final moment - everyone silently acknowledging that, come sunrise, we would have to say goodbye.

My name is Debbie, and I am a fifth year JET living in Hokkaido. I spent my summer vacation in Miyagi volunteering for Mirai no Mori, a non-profit organization aimed at empowering disadvantaged Japanese youth through English and outdoor adventures. There are many English camps all over Japan; we even have a volunteer one up here in Hokkaido! However, to my knowledge, there are no other camps quite like the one at Mirai no Mori.

Mirai no Mori's mission is to create life-changing outdoor programs for abused, neglected, and orphaned youths in Japan and support their growth into happy and successful young adults. Their programs are specifically aimed at children

who have been separated from their families and placed into children's care homes. They host many short weekend programs all throughout the year, but their most notable program is the summer camp--a series of three consecutive five-day sessions full of English games and outdoor adventures.

For three weeks, I worked alongside many amazing people to put on a great summer camp for around 80 campers total. Our staff was made up of about fourteen people from around the world: England, China, Korea, South Africa, the US, Canada, the Philippines, and Japan. Each of us brought a little piece of our own country to the camp, and together we brought its magic to life.

In the beginning, we did many of the typical camp activities like roasting marshmallows, making crafts, working a compass, and singing campfire songs. In addition, the campers also got to go on a "World Tour" where the staff, who came from different parts of the world, shared some element of their culture- a dance, traditional clothes, a game, snacks- with the campers. On the third day, we had a team-building Olympics-style competition and Dutch oven cooking. Everything the campers had learned over the first three days culminated in the main event of the fourth day: an eight kilometer stream hike to a waterfall, where campers had the chance to climb up and jump into the water below.

Unlike most camps, English is not the main focus at the Mirai no Mori summer camp. Of course, every activity we do has target English phrases that we encourage the campers to use when they can. However, at its core, Mirai no Mori aims to instill what they call the "Five Values" into each camper: kindness, respect, responsibility, courage, and leadership. Each day, the campers choose a badge to represent which of the five values they want to work on for the next day's activities. For example, they may choose to work on "respect" towards the other teams during the sports competition.

When I first discovered Mirai no Mori, I knew it would be a great opportunity to take what I have learned in my four years on JET to help make a difference in the lives of others. When I tell people about my job, without fail, the first thing I say is "I'm an English teacher"; but over the past four years, I have come to realize that being a JET is more than that. I have learned that it is absolutely okay for my students to make mistakes with English, and I have learned ways to encourage my

students to figure out the correct answers without my help, since that is a huge part of the learning process.

Mirai no Mori has a similar approach to learning. Although my position at camp was “Team Leader,” it was not my role to tell the campers what they should do. Rather, I was there to encourage them to learn from their own mistakes and to challenge them to push their own boundaries whenever they could. I will never forget one young camper in particular who, during the hike up to the main building before lunch, was holding his care worker’s hand the whole time because he was afraid. When it was time to hike back down to the campground, we challenged him to do it without the help of his care worker, since he had already gone through the trail once before. I hiked alongside him with a different care worker than his own, and with the exception of a few ledges that were a little too high for him to get down without help, not once did he hold my or the other care worker’s hand. In fact, when we finally reached the campground about 15 minutes after everyone else, we were welcomed

back with great applause and encouragement from the rest of the campers. For the rest of that day, this little camper was all smiles and laughter.

My favorite thing from this whole experience was seeing the campers’ growth in real time. Campers who were shy and not confident enough to participate in the activities in the beginning were jumping off of waterfalls multiple times by the end of the week. At the end of the summer, it felt like a year had gone by. In just five days, unforgettable memories were made, lasting friendships were formed, and campers left the camp with more confidence than when they arrived. I also left the camp with new perspectives on teaching, and I plan to incorporate what I have learned into my lessons. Volunteering for Mirai no Mori was an amazing experience that touched the lives of all who were involved. I highly recommend all JETs who might be interested to consider volunteering or donating to their cause.



*Debbie is a fifth year Hokkaido JET from the United States. When she's not running from the countryside into the mountains, she spends most of her free time anticipating the first snow of the summer while frantically knitting herself a new pair of gloves.*

Photo credits: Debbie Walter

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# CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

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Contact the Head Editor of *CONNECT*, Lauren Hill, at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net) with your submissions, comments, and questions.

## ARTICLES

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

## SPOTLIGHT

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

## COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and [issuu.com](http://issuu.com).

## PHOTOS

Members of the JET community contributed to the photos you see in this issue. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Ashley Hirasuna, at [ashley.hirasuna@ajet.net](mailto:ashley.hirasuna@ajet.net).

## HAIKU

Each month *CONNECT* will feature *haiku* from our readers. A *haiku* is simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your *haiku* along with your name and prefecture to [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net).

## COMICS

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