

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

05.2015



INSIDE FASHION WEEK



PLUS

LODGING FOR (ALMOST) NOTHING

NOWRUZ IN JAPAN

THE TOKYO YAMATHON

NIIMI'S ENGLISH SALON

BILL BUR VS BEAT TAKESHI

FLAG FOOTBALL IN KYUSHU



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

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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Steven Thompson
Head Editor
4th-year Fukushima ALT



LETTER FROM THE AJET CHAIR

Xan
National AJET Chair
5th-year Fukushima ALT



CLICK ME TO SEND YOUR THOUGHTS ON ANY ARTICLE IN CONNECT!

MY FINAL ISSUE IS HERE, after two years and 21 issues as head editor. I can't begin to express how much of an honor and privilege it's been to hear your stories and work with so many of you. I'm very proud of what Connect has accomplished, and it's absolutely thanks to the support and strength of the fantastic Connect staff, and each and every one of you: the writers, the photographers, the artists, the commenters, and everyone who supported our new features and transitions when they were just starting. I've learned tons, not just about your corners of Japan and areas of expertise, but also about working on something so beautifully collective. I can honestly say this has been one of the most important things to me during JET.

Still, I can pass everything off with full confidence, thanks to my capable and eager successor, Rajeev Rahela. Working with Patrick, our head designer, Rajeev will make sure Connect gets better and better. I know he'll do great work for you all, and I hope you continue sending all of your great stuff to him.

I'll be reading, as always.

HELLO, AND WELCOME TO THE BEGINNING OF THE END! Not the actual end, you understand—just the end of the AJET National Council 2014-2015 year! Our council of 19 representatives has been working their butts off all year long, in a variety of roles: delegation, events organizing, arranging awesome deals for the JET community, and even editing a monthly magazine! But with elections officially wrapped up, and surveys for new reports in the bag, it's time for this Council to trade off their roles to successors. Once June 1st hits, myself, and most of my fellow Councilors will be moving on. Although I have only been Chair for these last two months, I want to thank everyone who has helped us this year. Truly, thank you all for your support!

Every end is accompanied with a new beginning. That same June 1st, an all-new, expanded team of Executive Officers, Block Representatives, and Appointed Leaders will be stepping into some big shoes, and rocking the country with their amazing creativity, uniqueness, nerve, and talent! Sterling Diesel will be stepping into my role as Chair. Look forward to her letters, reflections, and drive to do better by the JET Community! Let's hear it for the AJET National Council of 2015-2016!

This year marks my fifth and final year with the JET Programme, and everything feels a little bit bittersweet. My last opening ceremony. My last sakura season at my schools. My last sports day. My last omiyage! I've loved every second of my time here on JET, both the good, and the not-so-good. I'll treasure the memories I've made—but I'm ready to go. The world is a huge place, and I haven't even seen a quarter of it. Leavers like myself now get to take the skill set they've developed on JET, and go on to do something amazing with it. What's next for you? Peace Boat? Grad school? Embassy staff? Backpacking across the rest of Asia? As JETs, there's no limit to what can do, and where we can go. Welcome to the beginning of the beginning!

Keep in touch, and tell me about your JET (or post-JET!) adventures at xan.wetherall@ajet.net!

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COMMENTS

COVER SUBMISSIONS



Send your photos for next month's cover to connect.editor@ajet.net. Photos must be submitted by the 25th of the month and include your name, prefecture, and title (if applicable). Photos must belong to you, and be of high resolution (1280x720, 300dpi, or higher).



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Olivia Lee
Kumamoto

Olivia Lee
Kumamoto



Josh Del Pino
Shimane



Kseniya Vaynshtok
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Chris Moore
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Penny Fox
Shiga



Josh Del Pino
Shimane

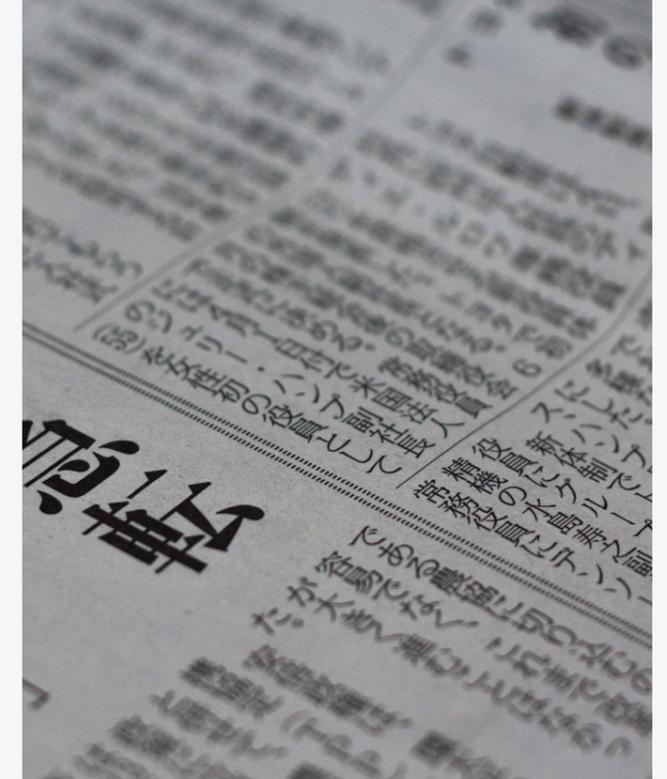


NEWS & EVENTS

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Events Calendar



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In the News



ERIKA KLEIN

connect.news@ajet.net

This photo was taken within two weeks of my arrival in Japan for JET, two years ago. Working on Connect this past year has really added to my experience here, and I encourage you to get involved—if not with AJET, then with your local community or a pastime you enjoy (whether in Japan or on your next adventure). I'll be back in the U.S., but I can't wait to see where the magazine goes from here!



LACEY LEE

connect.events@ajet.net

Hello readers — I hope all is going well in your respective realms. As the perfect start to a season of good weather and friendly gatherings, I'm looking forward to a trip to Hong Kong! It'll be a timely break from work and a nice transition to the new year. Though this is the last issue for me as editor, you can bet that I'll still be an avid reader. Best to the magazine, and farewell!

P.16
U.S. Bases in Okinawa



P.18
Tokyo Yamathon

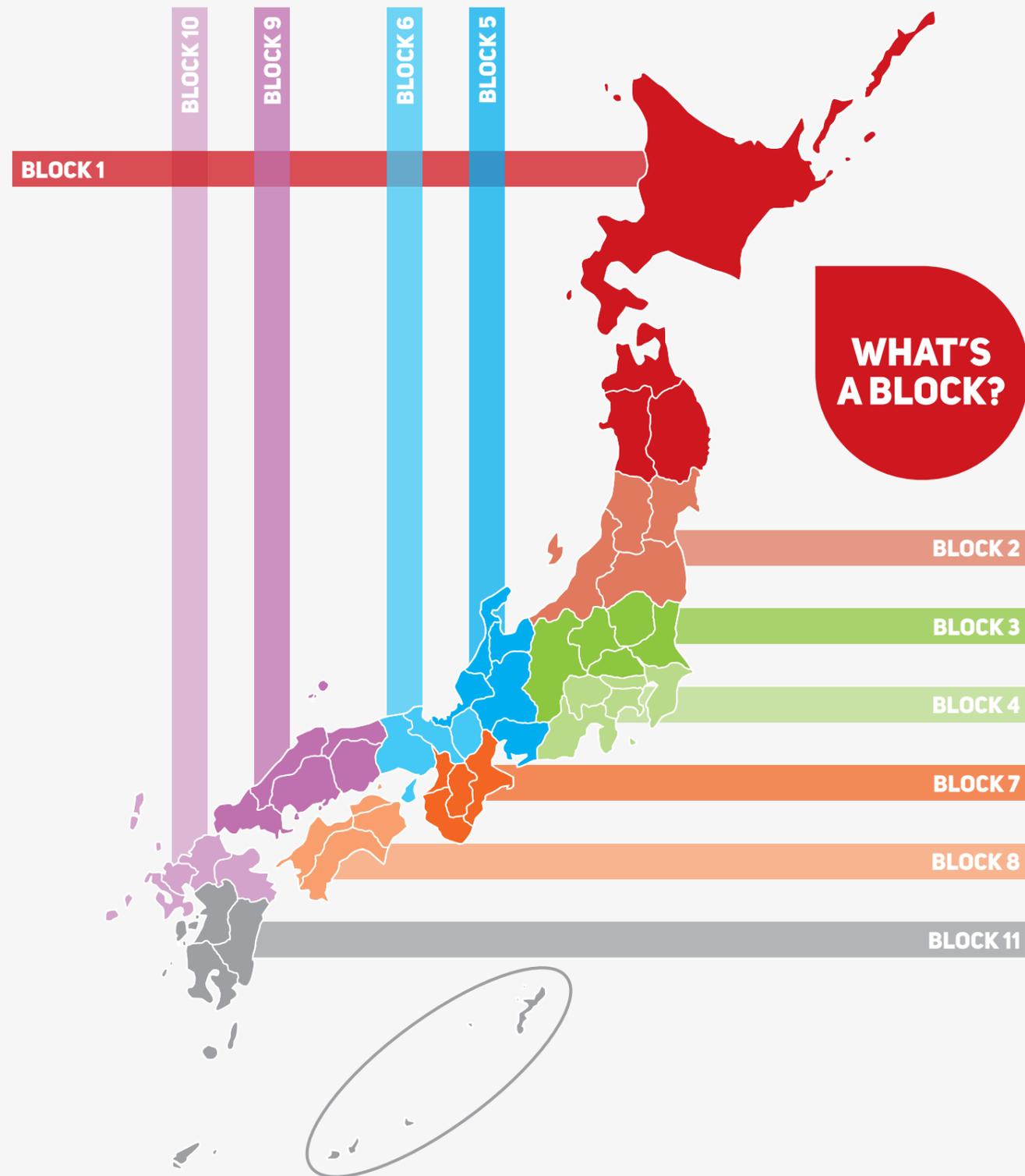


EVENTS CALENDAR

MAY - JUNE

May is here and the weather is warming up, tempting us with numerous flower viewings and festivals held in and around Golden Week. It's a good time to set out and experience spring before the rainy season arrives! Enjoy all of the beautiful outdoor events available to you this month and if possible, find even more!

If you'd like to see your area's events included on this calendar, [contact us](#) or see the [AJET events calendar](#).



400,000 TULIPS FESTIVAL 2015

Ichinoseki, Iwate
4/18-5/17 [Website](#)

HACHINOHE WINE FESTIVAL 2015

Hachinohe, Aomori
5/24 [Website](#)

MATSUMAE SAKURA FESTIVAL 2015

Matsumae, Hokkaido
4/29-5/20 [Website](#)

TOHOKU ROKKONSAI

Akita, Akita
5/30-31 [Website](#)

YOSAKOI SORAN FESTIVAL

Sapporo, Hokkaido
6/10-14 [Website](#)

TOYAKO MANGA AND ANIME FESTA 2015

Toyako, Hokkaido
6/27-28 [Website](#)

SENDAI AOBA FESTIVAL 2015

Sendai, Miyagi
5/16-17 [Website](#)

ROSE FESTIVAL

Murayama, Yamagata
6/4-7/5 [Website](#)

SHIRONE GIANT KITE BATTLE

Shirone, Niigata
6/4-9 [Website](#)

OJIYA BULLFIGHTING

Nagaoka, Niigata
6/7 [Website](#)

LAKE HYOKO IRIS FESTIVAL

Agano, Niigata
6/14-30 [Website](#)

NIIGATA MICROBREW BEER FESTIVAL 2015

Chuo Ward, Niigata
6/27-38 [Website](#)



UESUGI KENSHIN EXHIBIT AT SANO FOLK MUSEUM

Sano, Tochigi
2/21-6/14 [Website](#) / [More Info](#)

YOKAI WATCH TREASURE HUNT AT EDO WONDERLAND

Nikko, Tochigi
3/21-5/24 [Website](#)

ZENKO-JI GOKAICHO 2015

Nagano, Nagano
4/5-5/31 [Website](#)

ANTIQUÉ WONDERLAND

Mito, Ibaraki
4/11-5/17 [Website](#)

SPRING BEER FESTIVAL AT KEYAKI HIROBA 2015

Chuo Ward, Saitama
Season 1: 5/14-17
Season 2: 5/21-24
[Website](#)

NAKANOJO SANADA NINJA WALK

Nakanojo, Gunma
5/17 [Website](#)

76TH BLACK SHIP FESTIVAL 2015

Shimoda, Shizuoka
5/15-17 [Website](#)

ZOMBIE WALK IN YOYOGI PARK 2015

Shibuya Ward, Tokyo
5/16 [Website](#)

RED BULL AIR RACE CHIBA 2015

Chiba, Chiba
5/16-17 [Website](#)

SHONAN FESTIVAL 2015

Chigasaki, Kanagawa
5/16-17 [Website](#)

THAI FESTIVAL 2015

Shibuya Ward, Tokyo
5/16-17 [Website](#)

SHIBUYA-KAGOSHIMA OHARA FESTIVAL 2015

Shibuya Ward, Tokyo
5/17 [Website](#)



TRANSCENDENT EMBROIDERY VOL. 2 2015

Kobe, Hyogo
4/18-6/28 [Website](#)

SAMURAI IMAGES FROM MUSÉE GUIMET EXHIBITION AT TORAYA KYOTO GALLERY

Kamigyo Ward, Kyoto
4/18-5/31 [Website](#)

BELGIAN BEER WEEKEND 2015

Yokohama, Kanagawa
5/21-24 [Website](#)

KOMAZAWA OKTOBERFEST 2015

Setagaya Ward, Tokyo
5/29-6/7 [Website](#)

JAPAN GOURMET FESTIVAL 2015

Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo
5/30-31 [Website](#)

YOKOHAMA CENTRAL TOWN FESTIVAL Y156

Yokohama, Kanagawa
5/30-31 [Website](#)

SUIGO SAWARA IRIS FESTIVAL 2015

Katori, Chiba
5/30-6/28 [Website](#)

SENGOKU MUSOU EXHIBITION OF SWORDS

Okazaki, Aichi
3/14-5/17 [Website](#)

"DREAMS AND IMPRESSIONS OF SPACE" EXHIBITION AT NAGOYA CITY SCIENCE MUSEUM

Nagoya, Aichi
3/14-5/24 [Website](#)

WAKAMIYA FESTIVAL

Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine, Nagoya
5/15-16 [Website](#)

45TH ANNUAL KOBE FESTIVAL 2015

Kobe, Hyogo
5/16-17 [Website](#)

YOKAICHI ODAKO MATSURI

Higashi-Omi, Shiga
Fourth Sunday in May
[Website](#)



2015 GENKI MAMACHARI 8H ENDURANCE RACE

Sodegaura, Chiba
6/7 [Website](#)

VIET NAM FESTIVAL 2015

Shibuya Ward, Tokyo
6/13-14 [Website](#)
Salsa Street Festival 2015
Shibuya Ward, Tokyo
6/20-21 [Website](#)

25TH ECHIZEN POTTERY FESTIVAL

Echizen, Fukui
5/23-25 [Website](#)

BRAZILIAN DAY NAGOYA 2015

Nagoya, Aichi
5/30-31 [Website](#)

NOTO YOSAKOI FESTIVAL 2015

Nanao, Ishikawa
6/12-14 [Website](#)



62ND KYOTO ANTIQUE FAIR

Kyoto, Kyoto
6/19-21 [Website](#)



1,200 YEARS OF MOUNT KOYA

Koya, Wakayama
4/2-5/21 [Website](#)

WHALE WATCHING

Muroto, Kochi, Tosa, Kuroshio, and Hata cities, Kochi
Late April - late October
[Website](#)

SAKAIDE SALT FESTIVAL 2015

Sakaide, Kagawa
5/16-17 [Website](#)

LIVE EARTH MATSUYAMA 2015

Matsuyama, Ehime
5/17 [Website](#)



MINAZUKI/NAGOSHI NO HARAE SUMMER PURIFICATION

Various shrines throughout Kyoto
6/25, 6/30 [Website](#)

"ANCIENT SUTRAS FROM THE HEIAN PERIOD" SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT NARA NATIONAL MUSEUM

Nara, Nara
4/7-5/17 [Website](#)

WAKAMATSURI FESTIVAL 2015

Wakayama, Wakayama
5/17 [Website](#)

WINE FESTA MIE 2015

Suzuka, Mie
5/18 [Website](#)

UCHIWAMAKI (PAPER FAN SCATTERING CEREMONY)

Toshodaiji Temple, Nara
5/19 [Website](#)

UKAI (CORMORANT FISHING)

Ozu, Ehime
6/1-9/20 [Website](#)

AJIOJI FESTIVAL

Ajioji Shrine, Kagawa
6/4-15 [Website](#)

IYA NO KAZURA BASHI (VINE BRIDGE)

Miyoshi, Tokushima
Open all year round. [Website](#)

ONOMICHI-JODOJI TEMPLE TREASURE EXHIBITION

Fukuyama, Hiroshima
4/24-6/7 [Website](#)

ANNUAL IZUMO TAISHA GRAND SHRINE FESTIVAL

Izumo, Shimane
5/14 [Website](#)

TRADITIONAL LOG RAFTING

Kitayama, Wakayama
Regularly scheduled times; reservation recommended.
[Website](#)

BELGIAN BEER WEEKEND 2015

Kita Ward, Osaka
6/3-7 [Website](#)

SHIKOKU X SHUKOKU 2015 IN OSAKA

Kita Ward, Osaka
6/7 [Website](#)

TEQUILA FESTA OSAKA 2015

Kita Ward, Osaka
6/21 [Website](#)



TAMANO PORT FESTIVAL 2015

Tamano, Okayama
5/16-17 [Website](#)

TOUKASAN FESTIVAL 2015

Naka Ward, Hiroshima
6/5-7 [Website](#)

YAMAGUCHI GION FESTIVAL

Yasaka Shrine, Yamaguchi
7/20-27 [Website](#)

IN THE NEWS

MARCH - APRIL

KURASHIKI TENRYO SUMMER FESTIVAL

Kurashiki, Okayama
Late July [Website](#)

BELGIAN BEER WEEKEND 2015

Chuo Ward, Fukuoka
5/8-17 [Website](#)

KAWAWATARI JINKOSAI

Tagawa, Fukuoka
5/16-17 [Website](#)

YUNOHIRA HOT SPRING FESTIVAL

Yufu, Oita
5/17 [Website](#)

31ST KASHIMA GATOLYMPIC

Kashima, Saga
5/31 [Website](#)



GENSO TEIEN IN OKAYAMA KORAKUEN GARDEN

Okayama, Okayama
Late July - mid August
[Website](#)

IRIS WATCHING AT LAKE KAGURAME

Beppu, Oita
6/7-7/6; Festival day on 6/21
[Website](#)

HAKATA GION YAMAKASA FESTIVAL

Fukuoka, Fukuoka City
7/1-15 [Website](#)

NAGASAKI PEIRON CHAMPIONSHIP

Nagasaki Harbor, Nagasaki
Last weekend of July
[Website](#)

HOSOKAWA CHAWAN FESTIVAL

Chuo Ward, Kumamoto
4/4-6/28 [Website](#)

20TH MIYAZAKI INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Miyazaki, Miyazaki
4/29-5/17 [Website](#)

CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL OF SPRING

Kumamoto City Zoo and Botanical Garden, Kumamoto
Golden Week [Website](#)



MOKU O KEAWE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL IN MIYAZAKI

Miyazaki, Miyazaki
7/4-5 [Website](#)

17TH SEAGAIA TRIATHLON 2015

Miyazaki, Miyazaki
7/12 [Website](#)

KIYOMASA PUBLIC FESTIVAL

Kato Shrine, Kumamoto
7/26 [Website](#)

SUBMIT YOUR LOCAL EVENT HERE

MARCH 13

Despite Japan's strong anti-nuclear weapons stance as the only country to have experienced atomic bombings, it decides against supporting an Austrian initiative in the U.N. to eliminate nuclear weapons, as doing so would present a conflict of interest with Japan's nuclear protection from the United States. ([Source](#))

MARCH 17

Japan's central bank governor Haruhiko Kuroda announces that inflation has come to a halt, possibly resulting in Japan's economy again detrimentally experiencing deflation. ([Source](#))

MARCH 19

U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai adopts seven goals designed to lessen the risks of environmental disasters and climate change, but the lack of "specific numerical targets" draws criticism. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

MARCH 23

New Okinawa governor Takeshi Onaga demands that the central government stop work on a new airfield, provoking long-existing tensions. The airfield has already been delayed for years by public opposition and environmental concerns, but is intended to relieve military burdens on other areas of Okinawa. However, Governor Onaga and his supporters want the base entirely removed. ([Source](#))

MARCH 31

Japan extends its trade embargo and other sanctions against North Korea to 2017, due to North Korea's lack of results in its reinvestigation into abducted Japanese citizens. ([Source](#))

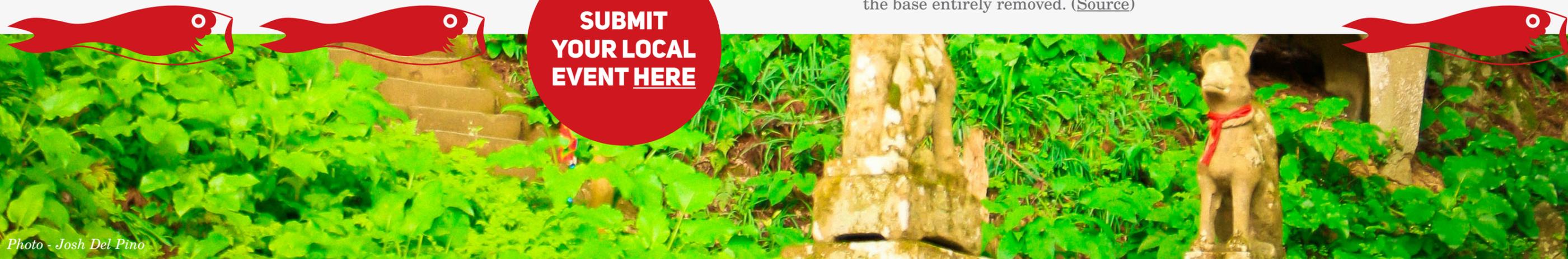
MARCH 31

Supporting its U.S. ally, Japan decides not to become a founding member of the new Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which the U.S. regards as a "challenge to American-led institutions like the World Bank." Japan's ongoing confrontations with China and its resulting desire to strengthen ties with the U.S. also influenced leaders' decision. ([Source](#))

MARCH 31

Shibuya becomes first district in Japan to "recognize same-sex partnerships as the 'equivalent of marriage,'" though the equal rights granted to same-sex couples are currently applicable only in that area. ([Source](#))

Photo - Josh Del Pino



U.S. BASES IN OKINAWA AN OVERVIEW

ERIKA KLEIN (HYOGO)

U.S. MILITARY BASES IN Okinawa returned to media attention on March 23rd, when Okinawan governor Takeshi Onaga demanded work be suspended on a new airfield to replace U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. By threatening the revocation of environmental permits necessary for construction, Onaga is now openly clashing with the central government, challenging their long-lasting attempt to relocate the airfield from densely populated Ginowan City (1). Onaga was elected by a landslide margin in November 2014 on the platform of removing rather than relocating the base, and his endeavors reflect Okinawans' long-held discontent over U.S. bases on their land (2).

HISTORY

Intending to use Okinawa as a stage from which to attack mainland Japan in 1945, U.S. invading troops took over Japanese bases originally built to defend against them (3). The U.S. continued to occupy Okinawa after WWII, with land forcibly acquired from residents for bases allowing the “keystone of the Pacific” to prove its strategic value during conflicts including the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Cold War (4). Signed in

1951 and revised in 1960, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty assured the U.S. position in Okinawa, giving the United States “use by its land, air, and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan” (5). By 1955, U.S. bases occupied 14% of total land in Okinawa, resulting in demonstrations by discontented residents (6). However, residents' desires, historically disregarded, continue to carry little weight.



RECENT ISSUES

Today, 74% of U.S. military bases in Japan are located in Okinawa, “an area that only amounts to 0.6% of mainland Japan” (7). Numerous incidents involving the bases and their close proximity to residential areas have

brought the issue to national attention and strengthened residents' calls to reduce the bases' burden on Okinawa. In 1995, the rape of a 12-year-old Japanese girl by three American servicemen became a turning point, inciting renewed anti-base protests including a rally of 85,000 Okinawans (8). The resulting Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) final report pledged that “approximately 21 percent of the total

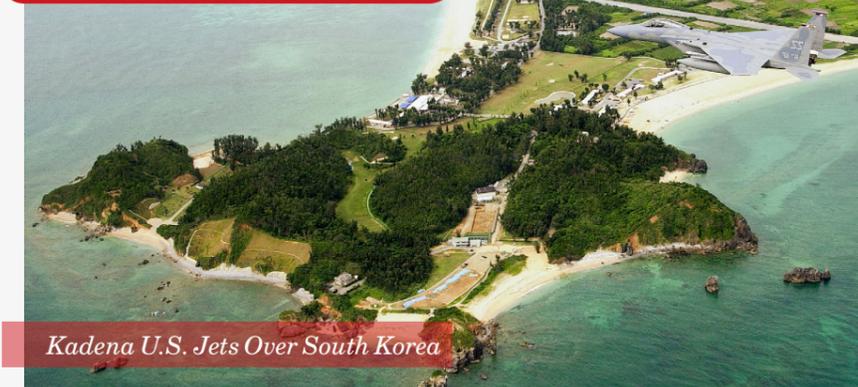
acreage of the U.S. facilities and area in Okinawa...will be returned,” including Futenma Air Station (9). However, the report's stipulation that Futenma's return involve the “relocation of its assets to other facilities and areas in Okinawa” greatly delayed its implementation, and



Kadena Air Base Jets
Photos - Wikicommons

protests, environmental issues, and politics (Governor Onaga's demands being the latest) continue to hinder the process nearly 20 years later (10). Other incidents, such as a helicopter crash into an Okinawan university in 2004 and assorted aircraft noise complaints, burglaries, and assaults have also heightened Okinawan concerns.

DESPITE OKINAWANS' VALID GRIEVANCES, THE BASES PLAY A NOTEWORTHY ROLE IN OKINAWA'S ECONOMY, FROM EMPLOYMENT TO ECONOMIC STIMULUS FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT



Kadena U.S. Jets Over South Korea

NO EASY SOLUTION

Despite Okinawans' valid grievances, the bases play a noteworthy role in Okinawa's economy, from employment to economic stimulus from the central government (11). Further, the bases are necessary to fulfill the

agreement of a U.S. security umbrella for Japan, whose post-WWII Constitution's Article 9 pledged Japan to “forever renounce war” and “never maintain...land, sea, and air forces” (12). Though mainland Japanese express sympathy for the Okinawans' plight, they are unwilling to take Okinawa's place by “accept[ing] a U.S. base relocating to their backyard,” preventing an easy fix (13).

ARTICLE 9 IMPLICATIONS

Recently, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's right-wing, nationalist policies and Japan's security challenges (most lately the ISIS hostage crisis) have caused Japan to reconsider Article 9, allowing Japan to potentially increase its military capabilities and host fewer U.S. bases. Abe



announced a reinterpretation of Article 9 in July 2014 to allow for collective self-defense, and has repeatedly expressed his intentions to revise the Constitution, possibly removing the military limits entirely (14). However, changing Article 9 would have implications

far beyond the U.S.-Japan alliance. East Asian countries including China and South Korea, which “suffered... at the hands of Japanese 20th century imperialism” and still routinely denounce Japan's “barbarous wars of aggression” and exploitation of “comfort women” (wartime sex slaves), object to Japan's potential remilitarization (15). By providing Japan's security, the U.S. has arguably helped serve as a stabilizing factor in East Asia (16).

LOOKING FORWARD

Besides continuing efforts to relocate Futenma, other plans involve transferring troops to Guam, Australia, and Hawaii (17). In March 2015, Japan, China, and South Korea agreed that their leaders should soon hold a trilateral summit to help “mend...frayed ties” (18). The region also awaits Abe's upcoming statement on the 70th anniversary of WWII, which must express remorse rather than overt Japanese nationalism in order to maintain harmonious relations and give Japan any chance at “tak[ing] a leading role in Asian security by easing Japan's self-imposed restraints on its military” (19). In the meantime, as they have since WWII despite recurring promises of change, Okinawans may be resigned to their struggle with the central government and to continue their lives alongside U.S. bases.

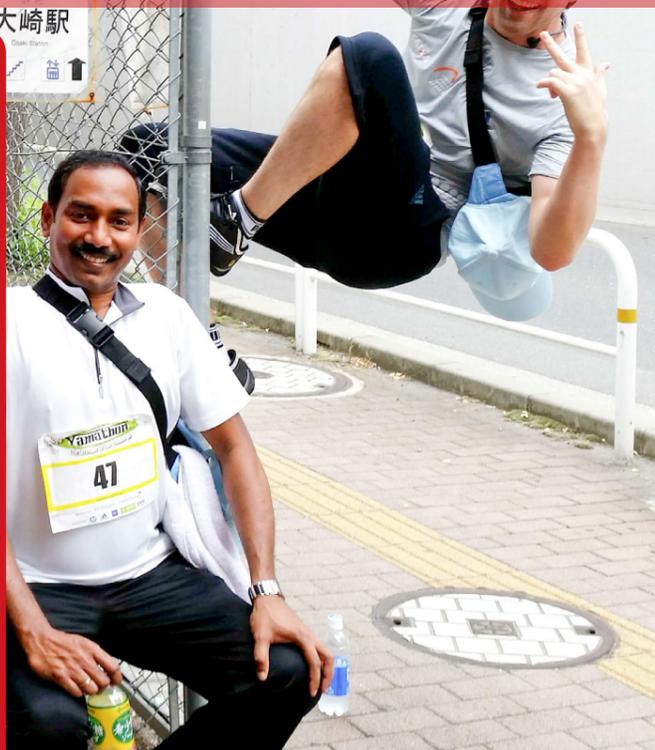
THE TOKYO YAMATHON

RACING ALONG THE YAMANOTE LINE FOR TOHOKU RECOVERY EFFORTS



If you've never heard of the Tokyo Yamathon, then now's the time. The basic premise is this: you, plus a few friends, walking (or running!) the length of Tokyo's infamous Yamanote line in one day. You'll join hundreds of other participants, snap pictures at each station to chart your progress, and get to see Tokyo in a way that many people never do. It's an awesome way to meet new people and give something back to Japan in the process—all of our proceeds this year are going to Nadia, a Tokyo-based NPO supporting the many rebuilding efforts in Tohoku. Yamathon donations are specifically being used to build a playground as part of a brand new pre-school complex in Rikuzentakata. As well as the event itself, we'll have a Tohoku food and crafts fair with tons of locally made goodies, and a cracking afterparty to help you unwind. For more details, including how to take part, you can click on over to our website tokyo-yamathon.com, then don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for updates. Join us on May 30th! We'd love to see you there.

THE TOKYO YAMATHON TEAM
International Volunteer Group Japan



Photos - Tokyo Yamathon

THIS MONTH IN... ARTS & CULTURE



VERITY TOWNSEND

connect.culture@ajet.net

I can't believe it is May already! I have really enjoyed working as Culture Editor this past year, yet the time has just flown by. I'll be sad to leave my little town in July but I'm also looking forward to starting my post-JET life. As Jiddu Krishnamurti said "One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end."



COLIN O'NEILL

connect.entertainment@ajet.net

During your first year abroad, daily life provides enough challenges for complete mental and emotional stimulation. But as time wears on, things that were once taxing become part of your routine. Here is a time to take yourself to task; reinvent your life **again**. Last year, my regeneration came in writing for this magazine. Whether you decide to work for CONNECT, run a marathon, or learn to play an instrument, do *something* humbling, stressful, and frustrating. Cheers to the **NEW!**



ERICA GRAINGER

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Au Revoir Everyone! May marks the final Connect issue before we welcome a new team of talented staff. I hope everyone enjoyed reading Connect. I'll leave you all with these final immortal words, "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening" (Coco Chanel).

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Tokyo Fashion Week



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VS



TOKYO FASHION WEEK

DRESSES, DEBAUCHERY AND PERRIER-JOUËT!

Photos - Erica Grainger, Verity Townsend, Japan Fashion Week Organisation, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Tokyo Japan

ERICA GRAINGER (FUKUSHIMA), VERITY TOWNSEND (HYOGO)

Who, What, Where and Wear? Every year, Mercedes Benz Tokyo Fashion Week (MBTFW) has their Autumn/Winter Collection, and we attended all of it. Now, it's time to reveal all the juicy details about MBTFW!



KEITA MARUYAMA

TUESDAY THE 17TH

Erica

Today had a really diverse range of designers, which was reflected in their collections. Patchy Cake Eater was bright and colourful with many patterns, patches and blazers. ETU by Restu Anggraini/TOTON came from Jakarta fashion week and disappointed me with too many grey, beige and cream tones. It was influenced by Muslim culture and very conservative. Black by VANQUISH was the highlight and transported me to another world, simply unbelievable!

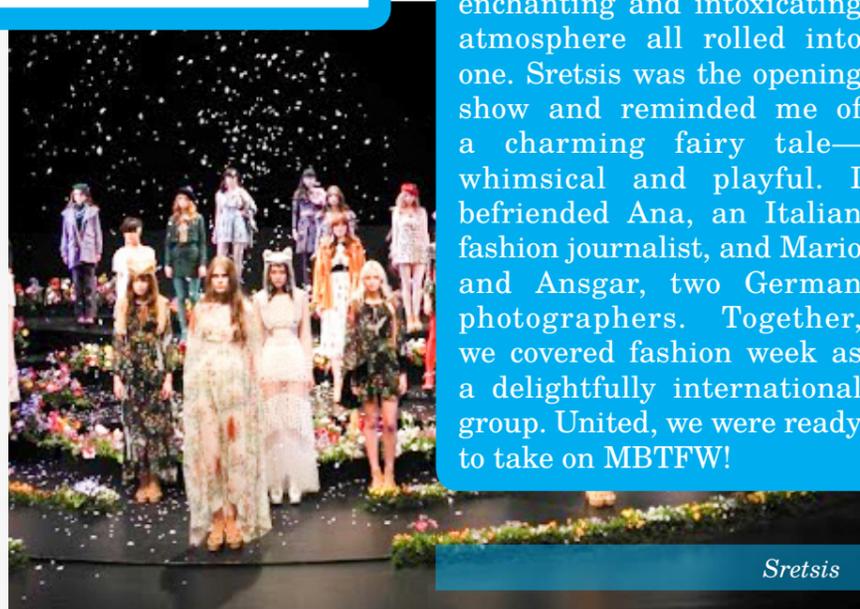


ETU by Restu Anggraini /TOTON

MONDAY THE 16TH

Erica

The opening day of MBTFW had the most chaotic, enchanting and intoxicating atmosphere all rolled into one. Sretsis was the opening show and reminded me of a charming fairy tale—whimsical and playful. I befriended Ana, an Italian fashion journalist, and Mario and Ansgar, two German photographers. Together, we covered fashion week as a delightfully international group. United, we were ready to take on MBTFW!



Sretsis

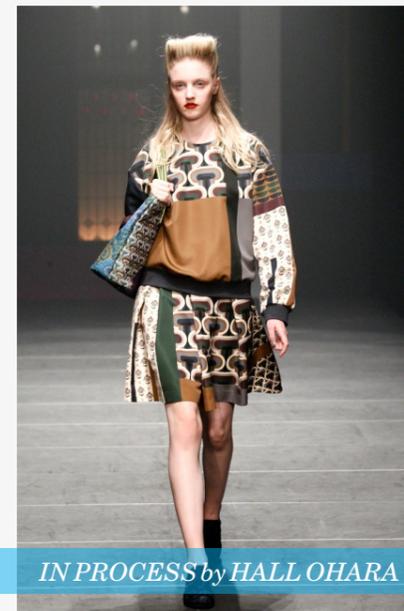


Patchy Cake Eater

WEDNESDAY THE 18TH

Verity

Wednesday marked my first full day on fashion week, and I was extremely excited! YUMA KOSHINO created a startling combination of harmony and dissonance by layering contrasting cuts and fabrics in complimentary colours—such as floaty feminine flowery prints topped off with sharp tailored crop jackets. IN-PROCESS BY HALL OHARA featured 60s-inspired prints moulded into modern silhouettes. Haori de TiTi had cloche hats and flapper dresses that created the atmosphere of a stately home in the 1920s!



IN PROCESS by HALL OHARA



YUMA KOSHINO



DRESSEDUNDRESSED



CHRISTIAN DADA

THURSDAY THE 19TH

Verity

Starting off the day, DRESSEDUNDRESSED had an uncluttered, androgynous feel to its collection. CHRISTIAN DADA broke out the old Nirvana CDs and gave the audience equally sharp fashion—gothic rock chick clothes with bright embroidered details topped off with tall Russian-style fur hats. KBF showcased a lot of knitted pieces—big chunky sweaters and quilted A-line skirts reminding us that spring isn't here yet.

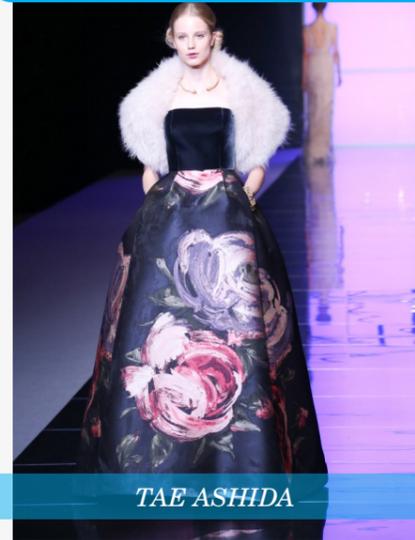


KBF

FRIDAY THE 20TH

Erica

Today we had 12 shows in 11 hours! I felt manic and discombobulated at times. We managed to see 11 shows. The best were, TAE ASHIDA and YUKI TORII INTERNATIONAL. TAE ASHIDA was decadent and breathtaking, held at the Grand Hyatt Tokyo. International diplomats were the guests of honour and it all felt quite surreal. YUKI TORII INTERNATIONAL contained a beautiful collection filled with rich luscious velvet and elegant ensembles. Simply stunning!



SATURDAY THE 21ST

Verity

Fashion Week's biggest day. Lack of sleep made us think there was a ghost in our atmospheric Hitchcockian *ryokan*. Fortunately, Shibuya Hikarie has great coffee and this sustained us through the high impact shows. From sulvam's asymmetric tailored menswear to SINA SUIEN's Asian odyssey, there was variety amongst the award winners in fashion and presentation. The final show, FACETASM's dual-runways showcased some heavy layering and crazy contrasting, perfectly summing up this season's prevalent trends.

ERICA'S MOST MEMORABLE DESIGNERS

1. JOTARO SAITO – Elegant and seductive show featuring Japanese kimonos for men and women. It fused the traditional with modern design and stirred my heart and senses, and left me tearing up.
2. Black by VANQUISH – Tailored menswear with a glam-rock vibe, featuring a galactic space show that took my breath away.
3. TAE ASHIDA – Juxtaposing classic and modern, with a variety of styles ranging from daywear attire to evening wear with classic 1950s ball gowns and James Bond style evening dresses.
4. haori de TiTi – Posh and elegant 1920s and 30s feel, inspired by Agatha Christie and the British aristocracy.

"MOST UNIQUE"

JOHN LAWRENCE SULLIVAN – A short film followed by a futuristic 3D cube runway.



VERITY'S MOST MEMORABLE DESIGNERS

1. SINA SUIEN – Beautiful collection inspired by Asian legends with a Tang Dynasty flavour, presented in a calming, experimental theatre-style.
2. HIROKO KOSHINO – An ethereal woodland-themed show. The brightly clothed models emerged from silhouetted trees onto the misty stage looking like graceful deer.
3. tenbo – Takafumi Tsuruta's simple yellow and white designs used models with physical disabilities and explored how clothing should fit the needs of the individual. Truly heart-warming.
4. writtinafterwards – Rightly coloured children's clothing show with a theme of world peace... and a giant alien!

WORST SHOW - "WHAT THE...?"

D.T.T.K – Terrible, Awful and Disturbing Rap show. Did I say awful, maybe that's being generous...?



D.T.T.K



The International Press



tenbo Fashion Models



HIROKO KOSHINO



SINA SUIEN



The Glamorous Verity & Erica



Verity & Henry Holland



tenbo



writtinafterwards



Erica & Ek Thongprasert



Erica with the Model of the Week



JAPANESE FASHION IN FILM

1980s & '90s CENTURY END HIGHS AND LOWS

ALEX CARLSON (MIYAGI)

THE SPECTACULAR RISE and dramatic burst of the economy shaded all aspects of Japanese life during the 1980s and 90s. During the former decade, Japan witnessed unprecedented economic growth, culminating in a bubble economy. While the early 80's saw record unemployment in the US, Japan's rate sat firmly below 2%. Women, though rarely able to advance in corporate Japan, could take advantage of greater disposable income and carve out a place for themselves as arbiters of taste, thereby challenging assumptions about Japanese femininity.

RURAL/URBAN DIVIDE

In *Fire Festival* (Yanagimachi Mitsuo, 1985), Japan is defined by increasing contrasts. Set in a remote village on the Kii Peninsula, a rural community is stuck between the past and progress. Kimiko, now a hostess working in the city, causes quite a stir upon her return. Walking around the aging fishing village in red heels, a tight-fitting, low-cut shirt (that would define the emerging *bodicon* style), and large, teased hair, Kimiko stands in stark contrast to the locals' utilitarian appearance.

The increasing divide between traditional and modern, between urban and rural, is all evinced in the locals' reaction to Kimiko. She is definitely not representative of your average company employee. Yet, through her fashion choices we can see a larger trend emerging: agency as obtained through consumption and fashion.



80s Idol, Matsuda Seiko

KAWAII CULTURE

Far away from rural Japan and into the suburban high-rises of the middle class, we find another kind of feminine fashion that began in the 1980s: *Kawaii* Culture. Known as the "golden age

On the Road with "Beat" Takeshi

of idols", icons like Matsuda Seiko, helped sow the seeds of *kawaii*, often through a childish (*burikko*) style of dress. In *The Family Game* (Morita Yoshimitsu, 1983), the eldest son of the Numata family takes an interest in just such a girl. One day, with her parents absorbed by the TV, he visits her bedroom. "It's bright and cute, isn't it!?" She exclaims. Plush and pink and all things fluffy dominate the scene. Numata, slightly overwhelmed by it all, leaves most of the talking to Mieko and her giant rabbit.

THE 1990S

In the early 90's, amidst a climate of falling stock prices and bad loans, Japan fell on hard economic times. The sense of loyalty to one's employer and duty to the country that had fueled Japan's postwar recovery was beginning to collapse. In 1995, the Kobe Earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyo subway attacks further shook confidence in the institutions that had defined Japan for decades. In this fracturing, scholar Andrew Gordon notes the splintering of society into "micro-masses". Fashion was a key element in proclaiming identity within each of these subcultures. The signature

garish tattoos of the *yakuza*; the flared pants and floppy sunhat of a back-to-the-earth hippy; the torn jeans and leather jacket of the biker—these signature traits of various Japanese subcultures are all found in Kitano "Beat" Takeshi's 1999 road movie, *Kikujiro*. Though different in appearance, all the individuals Kitano and his young travel companion meet during their journey share one trait in common: they represent the growing number of Japanese who no longer had a place inside Japan's once secure corporate society.

KOGYARU

The *kogyaru* subculture was defined by fashion and eventually became representative of "Japanese style" to many abroad. Making his live action debut with 1998's *Love and Pop*, Anno Hideaki (of *Evangelion* fame) focuses on the lives of four teens immersed within this *kogyaru* world. The girls' style is immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with Japanese pop culture: it is the wholesome uniform of Japanese high school girls stripped of *kawaii* and injected with adult sexuality. The white "loose socks",

the hiked-up skirt, and the conspicuous coloring of both skin and hair became both iconic and a cause for distress within Japanese society. The film shows how youth and sexuality as embodied by the *kogyaru* became associated with the phenomenon of *enjo kosai* (compensated dating) and general concern about the depravity of modern youth culture.

FINALLY...

"Appearances are reality." If Donald Richie is accurate here, then film is uniquely suited to transmit past realities to us. However, countless appearances emerged during these two tumultuous decades, suggesting "reality" is complicated. These four films show we've only just begun to scratch the surface.

Originally from the Windy City, Alex Carlson is now a second year ALT based in Sendai. He enjoys the movies, rock 'n' roll, and drinking outside – ideally all at once. Outdoor screening of Wild Zero, anyone? He can be reached via e-mail: acarls68@gmail.com.

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Kiwako as the Feisty Kimiko

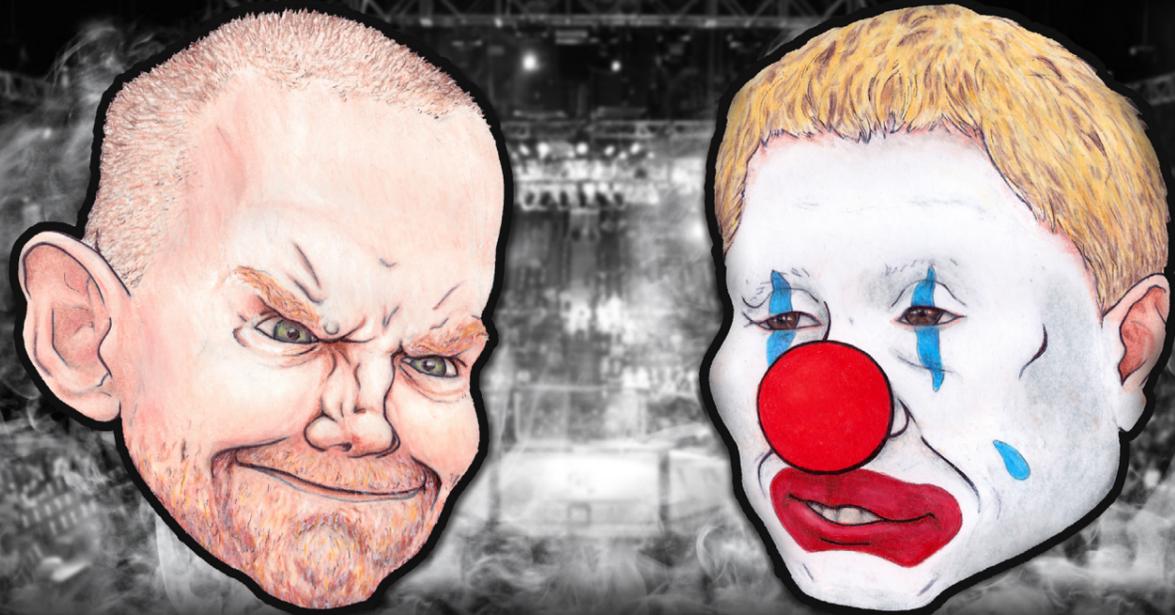


Burikko Style



Love and Pop's Rebellious Girls

Photos - Art Theatre Guild, Bandai Visual, CBC Sony, Cine Saison



BILL BURR **VS** TAKESHI KITANO

COLIN O'NEILL

Illustration - Anna Stiff

WELCOME ladies and gentlemen to the main event! Introducing, on the LEFT... scaling in at an undisclosed weight due to insecurity, measuring 5'10" when he's not slouching on stage, a stand-up comedian from Canton, Massachusetts: Bill Burr! And on the RIGHT...director of 18 films (18 more than our challenger), professor at Tokyo University of the Arts, at 165cm tall, he'll look up and watch you scroll down and down his IMDB page: Kitano "Beat" Takeshi! As our contenders face off, let's figure out how we can connect comic VS acclaimed director, New England redhead VS Japan's go-to stone-faced actor, a perpetually unsatisfied kvetch VS a taxi-driver turned entertainment king.

ROUNDS 1-3: BACKGROUND

Born 1968 in Northeastern America, Bill Burr is a conglomeration of 'Generation X' disenfranchisement and Bostonian aggression. While accepting the social diversity of America that 'Baby Boomers' never grasped, Burr was a typical Masshole with loud, unabashed passion. Burr finished school and settled on a job unloading trucks. After gaining the respect of his coworkers through his work ethic, Burr realized his humor thrived in environments of unfiltered conversation. Mix an opinionated, socially aware, hard worker: you've got the perfect recipe for a comic. Burr soon moved to Boston to start stand-up comedy.

Born 1947 in Tokyo during

Japan's post-war period, Kitano was raised with the expectation to assist his father with the family's financial responsibilities. In a culture that still values lightness in skin tone, representation that you don't work outside, Kitano was outcast at school because of his meager social status.

After high school, Kitano attended Japan's renowned Meiji University. But even amongst the country's brightest minds, he was more comfortable spending time with futen zoku. A subcultural social group characterized by rebellion against "The Man", futen zoku were people Kitano identified with: low-income, misunderstood outcasts. Kitano left Meiji University to pursue a more emotionally expressive career

field: comedy.

ROUNDS 4-6: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Unconventional paths led Burr and Kitano to comedy. But does 'comedy' mean the same thing internationally?

American comedy has roots in England's 18th century music halls. Initially privileged entertainment for economically elite, comedic acts gained popularity when music halls provided the working class access to performances. However, the expansion of audiences brought censorship and regulation of comedic content by a division of the British Royal Household, the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Even after gaining independence, American comedy avoided extreme subversion for a century.



I Love Lucy, Chocolate Scene

American comedy distinguished itself from British vaudeville and burlesque shows with sit-coms, variety shows, and stand-up in the post WWII era. TV and radio became the primary vehicles for entertainment.

On the other side of the world, Japan's comic origins have a similar story. Comedic storytelling began as

entertainment for the *daimyo* (feudal lords) and *shogunate* (military commanders) before being performed at public venues in the Edo period. The art-form became known as *rakugo*.



Calbee's Consome Panchi CM

While *rakugo* is still practiced, contemporary Japanese comedy emerged in the same post-war period that defined America. *Owarai*, a blanket term for television comedy, brought more exposure to

American audiences in a new way, repetitive styles are tossed aside.

Americans often regard comedy on a tiered system of difficulty. The bottom, and easiest, tier would be scripted television, then film, sketch comedy, improvisation, and finally, stand-up. While difficulty level certainly isn't perfectly correlated with enjoyment, the intimacy and pressure of stand-up routines are acknowledged and respected.

Comedy in Japan has a heavy focus on mannerisms and wordplay. Humor is highly contextual because homogeneity allows much to be inferred from very few words. Therefore, most Japanese material crossing abroad is either bizarre or lowbrow. Without a background in Japanese, homophonic wordplay falls flat and the ability to anticipate punch lines is completely lost in the 'S-O-V' grammatical structure.

variety shows and manzai, traditional two-man stand-up. Using 'wisdom of the fool' humor, *manzai* duos perform as two characters: *boke* (fool) and *tsukkomi* (straight man).

ROUNDS 7-9: UNIVERSAL HUMOR?

Now, with the subjectivity of comedy amplified by cultural deviations, "humor" is a little more difficult to connect than "history".

In Japan, a society built around tradition, being a small part of a proven group system is favored over independent success. Virtually the only ways to break into the comedy industry in Japan are through the talent agency, Yoshimoto Kogyo, or the comedic school, New Star Creation. That would be manageable if they weren't corrupt organizations with yakuza ties and near monopolies on representing active owarai entertainers.

ROUNDS 10-12: THE EDGE OF COMEDY

Yet, despite these monumental differences in cultural comedy, this is the point when Bill Burr and Kitano Takeshi overlap.

Perfecting his act in Boston, Burr dedicated his first few years to clean comedy, despite idolizing comics like George Carlin. But America's post 9/11 media frenzy presented more limitations on material and sensitivity to what was inferred or interpreted by the comedy audience. Bill became pessimistic about the progressive ideals America purported to represent and changed his style.

Burr began working on groundbreaking shows like Chappelle's Show, delivering unabashedly vulgar tirades (like the infamous "Philly Rant"), and churning out stand-up specials discussing topics like domestic violence and gender equality.

Kitano Takeshi found his edge, and comedic partner, working at a Tokyo theater. Kitano "Beat" Takeshi and Kaneko "Beat" Kiyoshi discussed

the formation of a manzai duo. While maintaining the traditional form of a boke role and a tsukkomi, they reinvented the material using curt language, risqué jokes, and nude flashing. Long revered comedians like Kinichi Hagimoto were pushed out of television as, "The Two Beats" stormed the entertainment industry.

Kitano's big break came when Fukasaku Kinji relinquished directorial involvement in the movie, Violent Cop. Since Kitano was playing the lead, he offered to rewrite the script and direct the film. Kitano's filmmaking debut was another show of his creative versatility against the grain of comedy tradition. Refusing to adapt popular manga for film or follow other fast-tracked success methods, Kitano was simultaneously capable of making original action films like Outrage and silent artistic films like Hana-bi.



JUDGES DECISION

The connections between Japanese and American comedy are clear; further examples include the ideas for Silent Library (Gaki no Tsukai ya Arahena de!!) and MXC (Fuun! Takeshi Jou). A show created AND hosted by Kitano Takeshi

is an undeniable cultural crossover! But how does this tie into Bill Burr?

Like Kitano, Burr believes in authentic material and creative freedom. For the same reasons he joined Chappelle's Show, Burr got involved with the best TV program of all time, Breaking Bad. Burr then co-founded the media platform All Things Comedy in 2012, showcasing professional comics and their podcast material to promote independent exposure.

Kitano's goal of pushing comedy boundaries continued after "Beat Takeshi's" avant-garde trailblazing. Kitano went on to host his own radio show, an after-hours interactive comedy program on Nippon Broadcasting System. However, opportunities like that were short lived without complete creative control. Kitano vowed to provide an alternative resource for creatives in Japan. In 2000, Kitano formed his own production company and talent agency, Office Kitano.

There's much more to this connection than sharing a bacon number: Burr and Kitano are one in the same. These gentlemen impact entertainment media and tackle social constructs by being culturally critical and investing in originality. Don't let appearances deceive you. If Bill Burr is linked to Kitano Takeshi, you're connected to Japan, too.

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THIS MONTH IN... LIFESTYLE



NICK POWERS-MAHER

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This is a big month for me. As you're reading this, I'm currently pigging out in Bali...on my first ever solo international trip (Japan doesn't count.) I almost fainted when I bought my plane tickets, and I'm probably going to faint from all the curry and beach cocktails. When I get back, I'll be preparing for Sports Day and the Best Enkai Ever, and trying to convince my teachers to take selfies with me as their going away present to me. Oops, I just dropped a tear in my *nasi goreng*.



TOM LEGGE

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As the sun sets on my JET tenure, this issue of Connect is one of the many loose ends to be tied before heading into the unfamiliar territory of life in Osaka, Tokyo or whichever city is crazy enough to hire a schmuck like me. I'd like to thank colleagues, contributors and, most importantly, you, the readers. Without you, we are but a tree toppling in the woods. Thank you for hearing our sound.



SIMON GRIFFIN

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"We've come a long, long way together, through the hard times and the good, I ought to celebrate you..." With this issue, my year as a Connect editor has come to an end. I hope I've been able to bring you some interesting, useful and insightful articles over the last year. And as a final thought, as Confucius says "Travel far, travel often and always bring your own toothpaste". Peace out!

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Nowruz ナウ



P.38

Gotochi Ramen



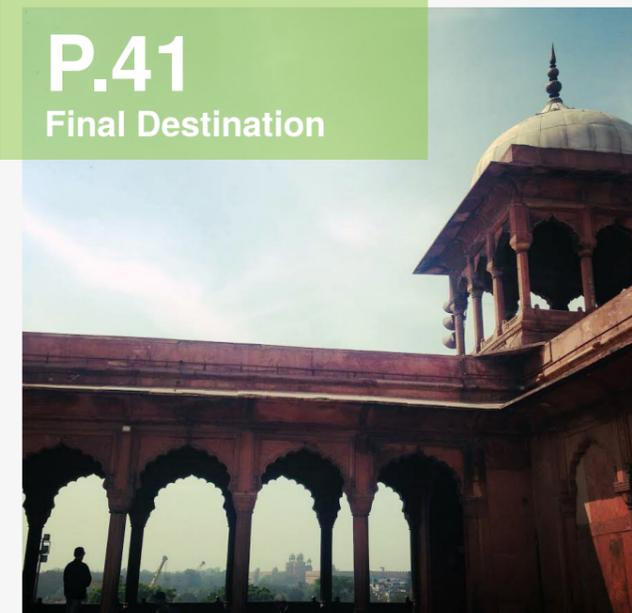
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Nikujaga



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Final Destination



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Lodgings for Nothing!



NOWRUZ نوا

SABRINA ZIRAKZADEH (OKAYAMA)

MARCH 21ST MARKS THE start of *Nowruz*, the Persian New Year. This year, I decided to try to host my first Nowruz celebration on my own.

There are three main Nowruz dishes: *ash reshteh* (soup made with beans and Iranian noodles), *sabzi polo ba mahi* (herbed rice with fish), and *kookoo sabzi* (herb-filled omelet). Other appetizers, desserts, and main dishes accompany these dishes. Finding the necessary ingredients in Japan is tricky; it's difficult to find the appropriate fresh herbs, and there is no suitable white fish for the *sabzi polo ba mahi*. Fortunately, I found seasonings and *reshteh* noodles at my local import store. With the ingredients for the main dishes in hand, I chose my additional dishes

based on what was available in Japan. My final meal consisted of ash *reshteh*, *sabzi polo*, *kookoo sabzi*, *naan berenji* (rice flour cookies), *masto khiaar* (cucumber yogurt dip), and saffron chicken.

THERE ARE INTERESTING PARALLELS BETWEEN OSECHI AND NOWRUZ MEALS. OSECHI ALSO INCLUDES BEANS, SEAFOOD (SHRIMP), EGGS, AND GREENERY (SEAWEED), BUT DOESN'T INCLUDE NOODLES AND RICE. LIKE IN NOWRUZ, THE BEANS IN KUROMAME STAND FOR HEALTH AND THE SHRIMP, WHICH RESEMBLES THE SHAPE OF A LONG BEARD, SYMBOLIZES LONG LIFE.

Each dish comprising the meal has a special meaning. The beans in *ash reshteh* symbolize health while untangling the noodles to eat will bring good luck and fortune in the year ahead. The herbs in *sabzi polo* and *kookoo sabzi* represent

rebirth, and the fish and eggs represent life. Finally, the combination of noodles and rice helps with future success. Other dishes are chosen based on what we want for the New Year, what we value most,

and also just what tastes the best. My Nowruz spread will, I hope, bring good health and fortune, rebirth with the spring, long life, peace, and restfulness.

There are interesting parallels between *osechi* and Nowruz

OTHER DISHES ARE CHOSEN BASED ON WHAT WE WANT FOR THE NEW YEAR, WHAT WE VALUE MOST, AND ALSO JUST WHAT TASTES THE BEST.

meals. *Osechi* also includes beans, seafood (shrimp), eggs, and greenery (seaweed), but doesn't include noodles and rice. Like in Nowruz, the beans in *kuromame* stand for health and the shrimp, which resembles the shape of a long beard, symbolizes long life. However, the *kombu* seaweed symbolizes joy rather than rebirth, and the egg dishes have more specific meanings than in Persian tradition. *Datemaki* (rolled omelet with fish) symbolizes many auspicious days, *kazunoko* roe is for many children, and the separation of egg white and yolk in *nishiki tamago* symbolize silver and gold, a wish for wealth and good fortune. It is also more important to include as many of these traditional

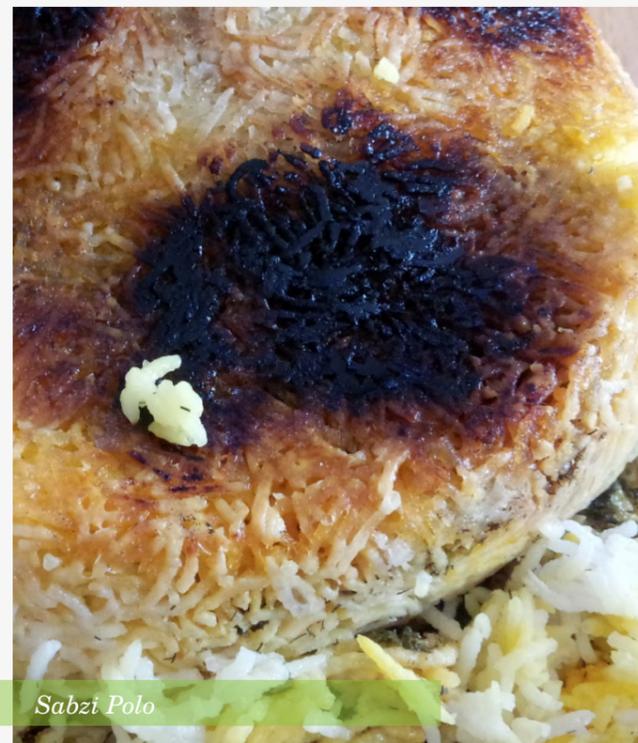
dishes as possible in *osechi*, rather than tailoring the food to your personal values as Nowruz does. (Check out the [December 2012](#) issue of *Connect* for more information on *osechi* symbolism.)

While finding recipes and ingredients that worked for Nowruz was difficult, I was surprised at how many items I was able to find, and how easily most Nowruz dishes suited Japanese kitchens, since most are stovetop foods. I also enjoyed learning more about the meanings behind the different Nowruz dishes, and seeing in what ways they overlapped and differed from *osechi*, which I hope to discuss

WHILE FINDING RECIPES AND INGREDIENTS THAT WORKED FOR NOWRUZ WAS DIFFICULT, I WAS SURPRISED AT HOW MANY ITEMS I WAS ABLE TO FIND, AND HOW EASILY MOST NOWRUZ DISHES SUITED JAPANESE KITCHENS, SINCE MOST ARE STOVETOP FOODS.

with my students soon. I hope to further master my Nowruz meal next year and gain a deeper understanding of the history of my own culture to keep with me during my time in Japan.

Sabrina Zirakzadeh is a third-year ALT in Okayama prefecture with a huge kitchen and not enough time to use it. She enjoys traveling and trying local dishes, music, and writing about things that interest her. Check her out at [Jupiter-Star](#) or follow her on Twitter [@jupiter-star!](#)



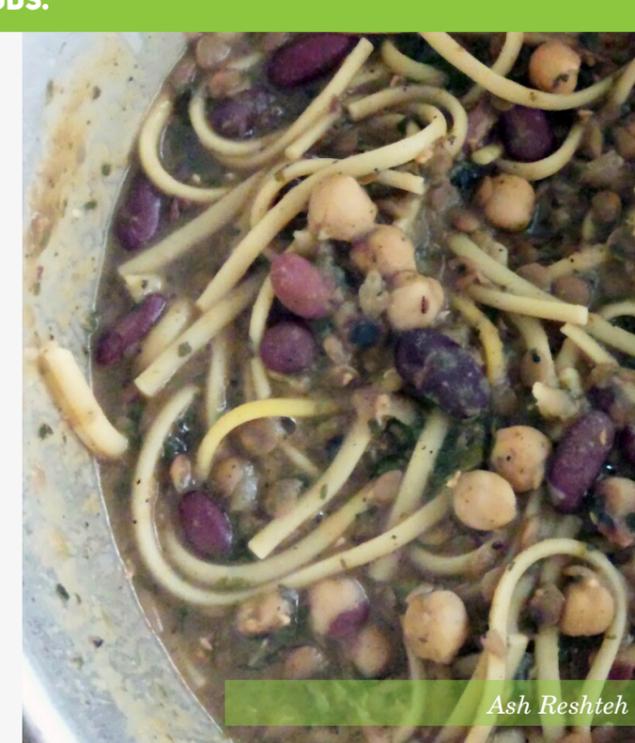
Sabzi Polo



Saffron Chicken



Masto Khiaar



Ash Reshteh

Kookoo Sabzi

Photos - Sabrina Zirakzadeh

GOTOCHI RAMEN ACROSS JAPAN

KAMUELA LAU (IWATE)

GOTOCHI RAMEN (ご当地ラーメン) is ramen unique to a certain region in Japan. The variation is vast; some ramen have thick noodles and some have thin ones. Some have a thick, rich soup (*kotteri*, こってり), while others have a light soup (*assari*, あっさり).

“Sapporo ramen” generally means *miso* ramen. However, according to many of the cooks at ramen establishments in Hokkaido, milk miso ramen is also very popular. In areas closer to the ocean, like Hakodate and Aomori, *shio* (salt) ramen reigns supreme. Also, as these regions are famous for fish, *gotochi* ramen in these areas often have a slight fishy taste; in Aomori,

there is a distinct sardine taste, and the noodles are on the thicker side.

In Mito, Ibaraki, all of the locals talk about stamina ramen. Stamina ramen was created in Mito city, and is eaten both hot and cold. It has a unique broth, which is both sweet and savory, and the special feature is Japanese squash, or *kabocha* (かぼちゃ).

Tokyo has many varieties of ramen. This is likely because of influence from all around Japan as well as all around the world. For example, there is one ramen shop that has almost any kind of ramen imaginable, such as

ramen with ribs, chicken, or steak. “Tokyo ramen” generally means *shoyu* (soy sauce) ramen, but *tsukemen* (dipping ramen) and *abura soba* (broth-less oily noodles) also originated there and are quite popular.

Kyoto is the cultural capital of Japan. However, it is also quite urban and modern. Tenkaippin is a nice example of modern Kyoto ramen. Although it is now a chain that can be found across the country, it originated in Kyoto, and the original flavor hasn’t changed, according to the cooks.

Hakata ramen is possibly the most famous in Japan.

Stepping off the train, one is bombarded with advertisements for the dish, which has a *tonkotsu* (pork bone) base (which is very common in Kyushu), with thin noodles. One particular restaurant has autographs from several Japanese celebrities. Kagoshima is famous for black pork. Thus it comes as no surprise that many ramen shops have

ramen with black pork *chashu*. Kagoshima ramen also has a *tonkotsu* base and thin noodles.

The trend, from north to south, seems to be miso, shoyu, tonkotsu, with salt-based being more popular in areas close to the ocean. Noodles tend to go from thick to thin. One ramen cook explained that thicker noodles lock in heat better, so they are more popular in colder areas.

Ramen in Japan is as diverse as the language and the culture; it is nearly impossible to know of all the differences in each region.

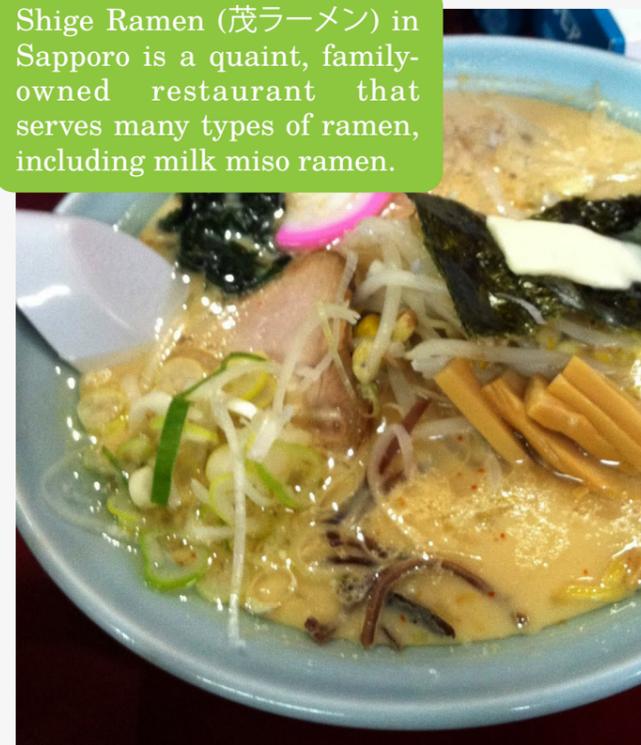
Kamuela is a 1st year JET in Kamaishi. Aside from ramen, his interests include video games, swimming, and hiking. For more information on his ramen research, visit [日本のご当地ラーメン研究 Japanese Ramen Research](#).

KAMUELA'S RAMEN-YA RECOMMENDATIONS. CLICK THE PHOTOS FOR MORE INFO!

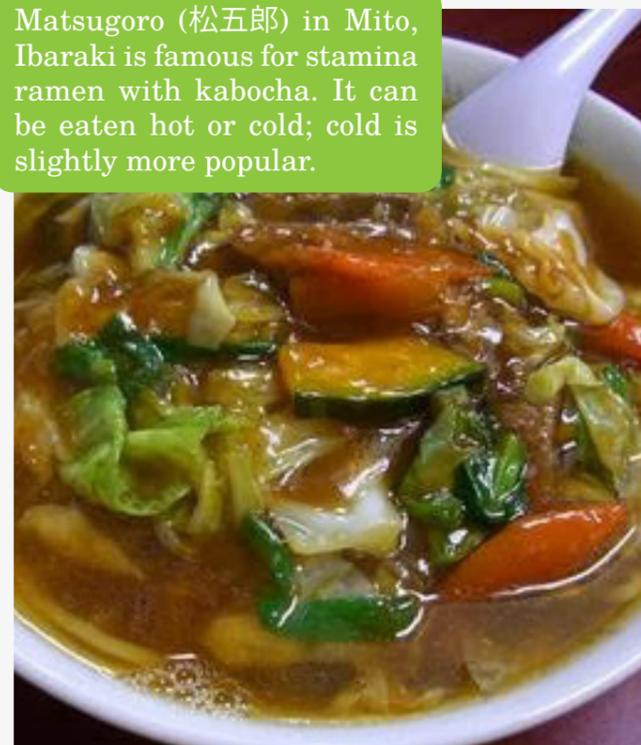
Ramen Guutara (らーめんぐうたら) in Mitaka, Tokyo is popular with ICU students. This restaurant serves modern, savory ramen.



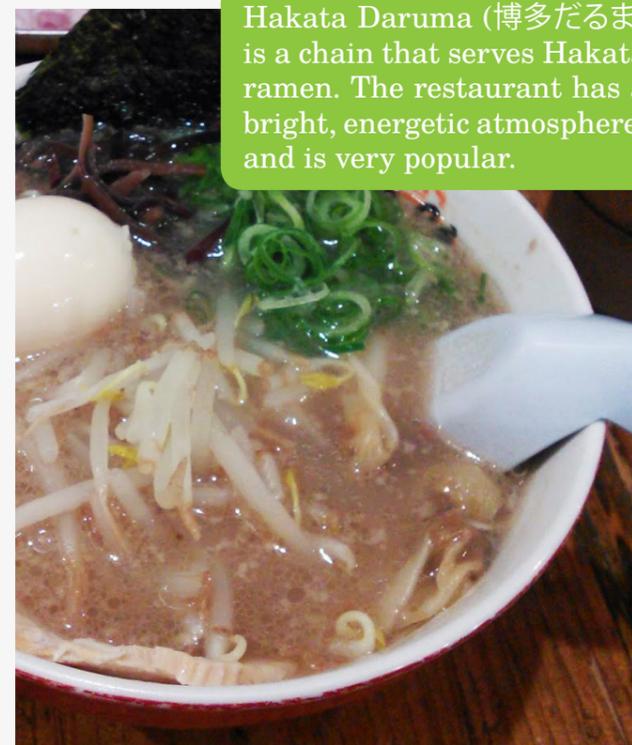
Shige Ramen (茂ラーメン) in Sapporo is a quaint, family-owned restaurant that serves many types of ramen, including milk miso ramen.



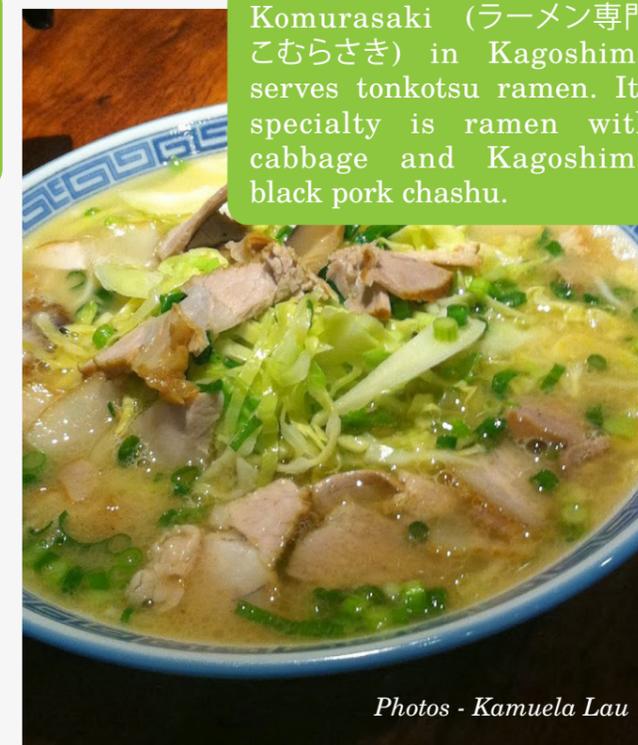
Matsugoro (松五郎) in Mito, Ibaraki is famous for stamina ramen with kabocha. It can be eaten hot or cold; cold is slightly more popular.



Hakata Daruma (博多だるま) is a chain that serves Hakata ramen. The restaurant has a bright, energetic atmosphere, and is very popular.



Komurasaki (ラーメン専門こむらさき) in Kagoshima serves tonkotsu ramen. Its specialty is ramen with cabbage and Kagoshima black pork chashu.



Photos - Kamuela Lau

DEMYSTIFYING NIKUJAGA

ORRIN HEATH (KYOTO)

THE ORIGIN OF NIKUJAGA is somewhat of a mystery. Maizuru, Kyoto and Kure, Hiroshima both claim to be the birthplace of nikujaga, but which one is the true home of the food?

Often referred to as “mom’s home cooking,” nikujaga is a simple dish of beef or pork, potatoes, onions, carrots, soy sauce, sugar and sometimes konyaku. It’s a popular winter food, best eaten hot on a cold night.

...IF IT'S THE MEAT AND POTATOES YOU'RE HANKERING FOR, MAKE A TRIP TO MAIZURU OR KURE.

As the story in Maizuru goes, a man named Heihachiro Togo studied naval science in Britain from 1871 to 1878 and there he fell in love with

British beef stew. When he came to Maizuru in 1901, he ordered the cooks at the Naval Base to make the stew. However, they didn't have red wine or butter, so they used soy sauce and sake instead. In 1995, Maizuru city decided to promote itself as the birthplace of nikujaga. The vice president of Maizuru city's sightseeing association, Takao Shimazu, had read that nikujaga originated in Maizuru but he couldn't verify it.

Kure City decided to also claim it was the birthplace of nikujaga in 1997. Their argument was that Togo was stationed at Kure from May of 1890 to December of 1891, so he must have introduced it there first. Kure put on a food festival, promoting it with a poster claiming Kure as the birthplace of the dish. Finally, both cities agreed to compete

in a friendly rivalry over where nikujaga originated.

Did nikujaga originate in either city? I guess that really isn't clear. Nikujaga is in the old Japanese Navy cookbook, so it must have come from the Navy in some way or another. Regardless, if it's the meat and potatoes you're hankering for, make a trip to Maizuru or Kure.

Orrin Heath is a fourth-year ALT in northern Kyoto prefecture near the Nihon Kai. Recently he has been spending most of his free time with his wife and 10-month-old baby. However, when he is not busy with that he is enjoying the outdoors. He also enjoys making and uploading videos to YouTube. You can find the videos Orrin uploads on YouTube.

Home-made Nikujaga
Photos - Orrin Heath

Maizuru Nikujaga

COMMENTS?

FINAL DESTINATION WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR DESTINATION IS HELL

PIA PETERSON (YAMAGATA)

TRAVEL IS WONDERFUL. It exposes us to wondrous new experiences, enlarges our horizons and allows us to grow and develop as people. We come home renewed, refreshed and ready to plan out the next trip. At least that's how it's meant to be... In this article Pia Peterson discusses her latest trip, how things may not have gone quite to plan, and some tips on how best to cope, when the unfortunate, the unavoidable and the unlikely occur.

Like most of you, I am obsessive about using my paid leave carefully. For the amount of time that goes into looking up tickets, destinations, places to stay,

how to get around, etc., you'd think that a planner like me would have everything pretty well under control. Sometimes that's true, but more often than not, being prepared is only part of the battle. The rest, as it turns out, is about maintaining your sanity and writing copious amounts of “thank you” notes. In March, I took a long anticipated trip to India. I was meeting up with a Japanese friend who had been traveling since January, and I was going to tag along for the last two weeks of his journey across the country. Tickets were bought, a visa application thing was sent off and I bought a new dress. Ready!

Perhaps that's where it all started to go wrong. Over the next few weeks I missed planes, was navigating a foreign country without my passport, was given Herculean tasks by embassies, dropped my phone in the Ganges, got sick, ran out of money, and that's just the start! However, throughout the ordeal, I was encouraged by strangers and friends, and some of the planning I had done before my departure came in handy after all. If you ever find yourself in what seems like a hopeless travel situation, don't unravel—just keep a few things in mind.

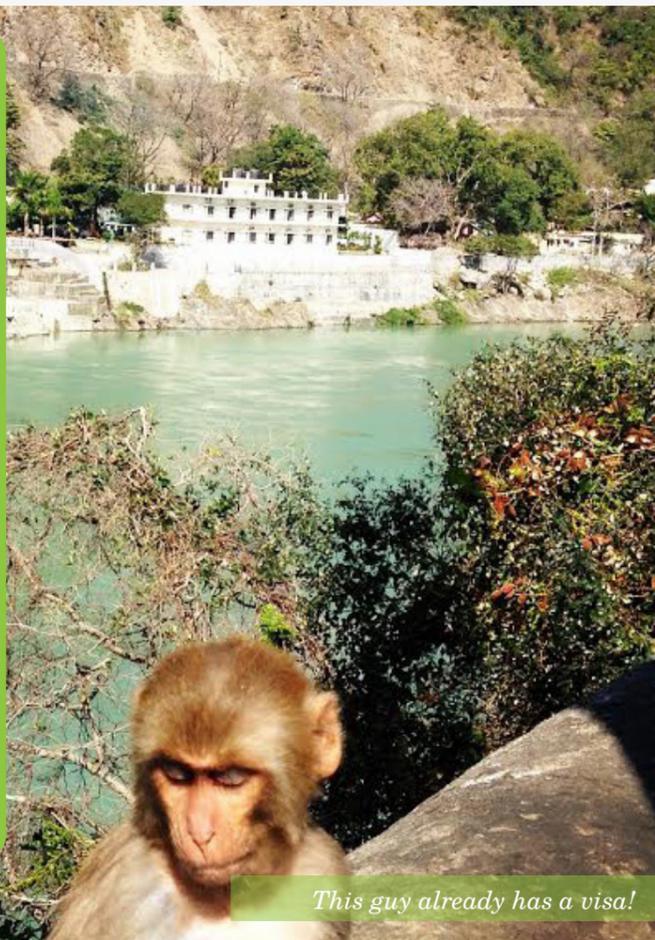
ROLL WID IT

In Shanghai I was so stressed out I couldn't uncross my arms even while sleeping. In India, we got off course when the trains ran late (seventeen instead of eleven hours, a day late, four hours late and arriving on a different track entirely). Regardless, train travel was still one of my favorite parts of the journey. The camaraderie that is nonexistent when you're a tourist among locals is built up when you all have to undergo something shitty together and can manage to be nice to each other in desperate times. Food shared, snacks bought, drinks drank, books loaned and magazines borrowed, this is always more constructive than whining about it.

“Spice is the variety of life.”
Photos - Pia Peterson

VISAS

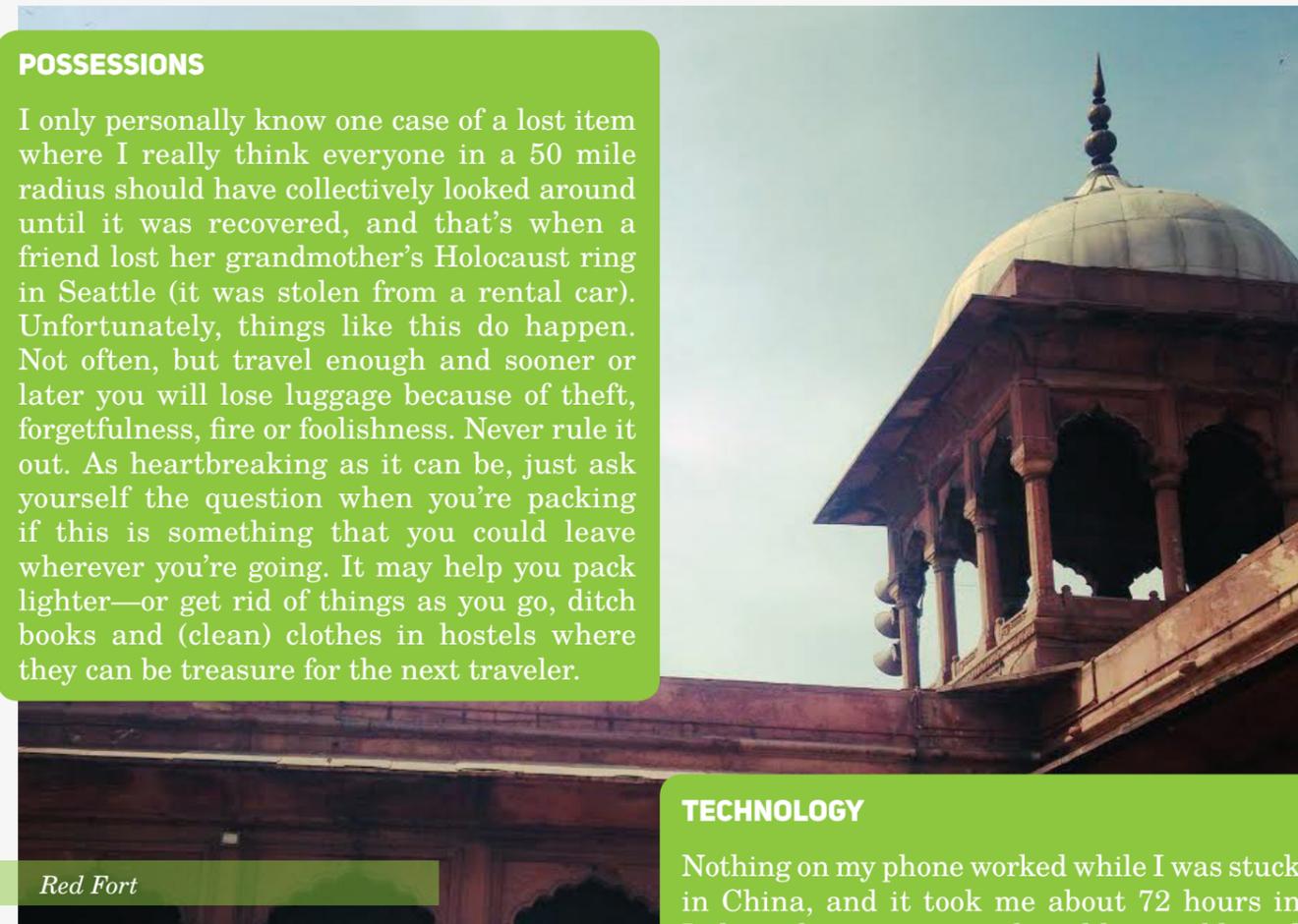
I almost missed my first flight due to confusion, where was my visa? I didn't know. I'd done some research and found out that American citizens were on the shortlist of people who could get a visa on arrival in Delhi. In Shanghai, I was told a visa on arrival was not an option. Tourist and transit visas are the most common ones you'll run into, but be careful and give yourself plenty of time when dealing with these visas. After all, you're an immigrant in a foreign country separating yourself from your passport. Dropping that in the mail slot can feel like cutting off your dæmon and you want to take no chances. I recommend going to the appropriate embassy, which has a very efficient staff that know a hell of a lot more than the internet does. A major revelation to absolutely no one, but the internet can be misleading, especially when it comes to complicated bureaucratic processes between countries and their citizens.



This guy already has a visa!

POSSESSIONS

I only personally know one case of a lost item where I really think everyone in a 50 mile radius should have collectively looked around until it was recovered, and that's when a friend lost her grandmother's Holocaust ring in Seattle (it was stolen from a rental car). Unfortunately, things like this do happen. Not often, but travel enough and sooner or later you will lose luggage because of theft, forgetfulness, fire or foolishness. Never rule it out. As heartbreaking as it can be, just ask yourself the question when you're packing if this is something that you could leave wherever you're going. It may help you pack lighter—or get rid of things as you go, ditch books and (clean) clothes in hostels where they can be treasure for the next traveler.



Red Fort

TECHNOLOGY

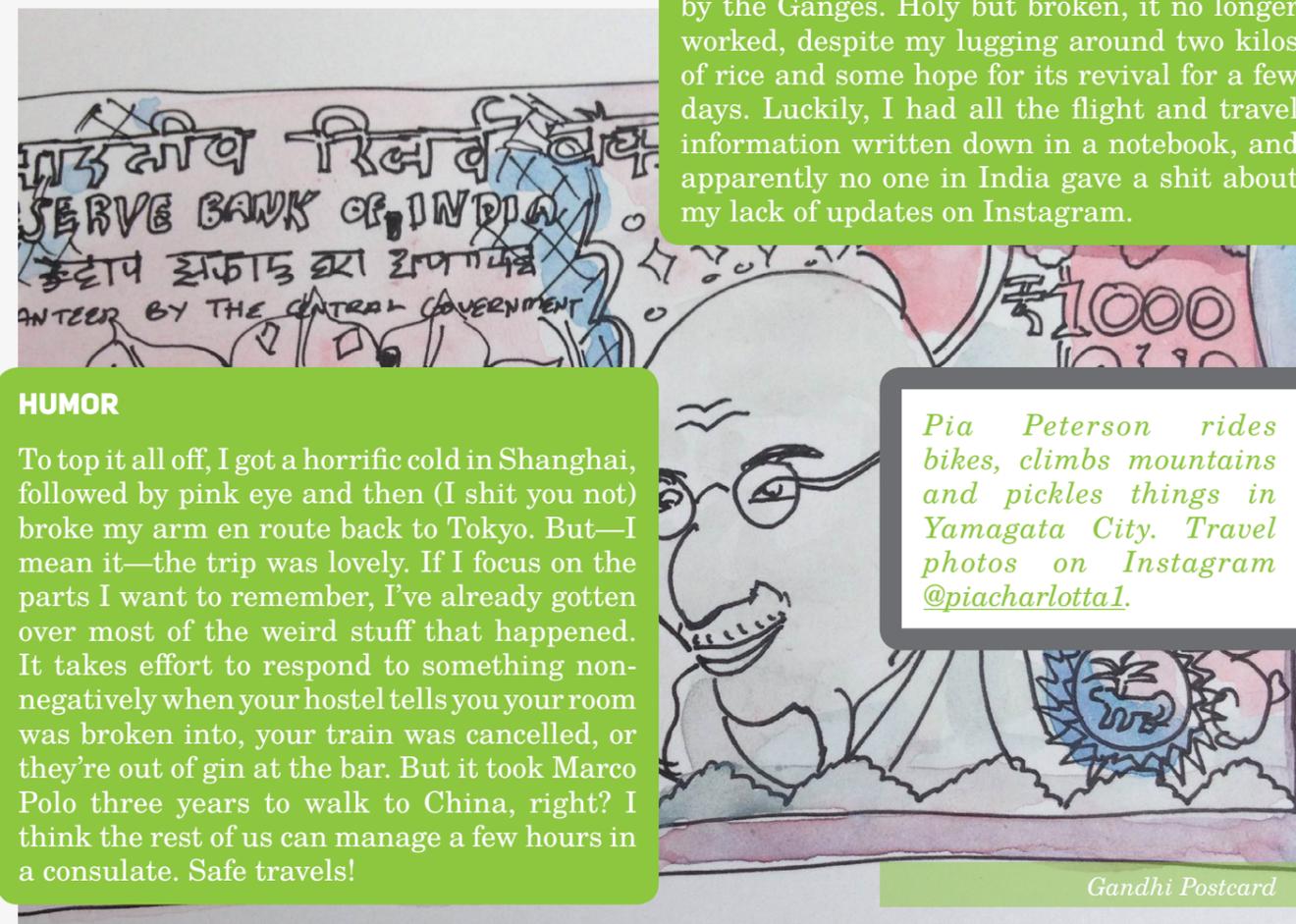
Nothing on my phone worked while I was stuck in China, and it took me about 72 hours in India to leave it on a rock and have it blessed by the Ganges. Holy but broken, it no longer worked, despite my lugging around two kilos of rice and some hope for its revival for a few days. Luckily, I had all the flight and travel information written down in a notebook, and apparently no one in India gave a shit about my lack of updates on Instagram.



An Indian Truck

BOOKS!

It blows my mind when I'm traveling with people and they tell me that they don't have a book on them. It's like having the guy next to you casually mentioning that he can breathe even though he was born without lungs. I can't stress enough the amount of time it is possible to spend waiting in some places. It's like the saying that anywhere is within walking distance if you have the time. As long as the place you are waiting in is above the high tide line, you could theoretically be there forever. I spent two full days alternately reading a book and staring at a wall in the Indian Consulate General in China. Make that time constructive and you won't lose your mind, or have time to work yourself up over who and what are making you wait, which breeds negativity that can ruin a trip.



Pia Peterson rides bikes, climbs mountains and pickles things in Yamagata City. Travel photos on Instagram @piacharlotta1.

Gandhi Postcard

HUMOR

To top it all off, I got a horrific cold in Shanghai, followed by pink eye and then (I shit you not) broke my arm en route back to Tokyo. But—I mean it—the trip was lovely. If I focus on the parts I want to remember, I've already gotten over most of the weird stuff that happened. It takes effort to respond to something non-negatively when your hostel tells you your room was broken into, your train was cancelled, or they're out of gin at the bar. But it took Marco Polo three years to walk to China, right? I think the rest of us can manage a few hours in a consulate. Safe travels!

LODGINGS FOR NEXT TO NOTHING SLEEPING IN A REAL BED FOR REAL CHEAP

DAVEN LU (AOMORI)

Photos - Pia Peterson, Rakuten

WHEN TRAVELING, ONE MAY find that hotels are one of the most costly expenses. Fortunately, cheap lodging can be had in Japan. If you're spending more than 2,500 a night on lodging, then this is an area in which you can likely cut costs without sacrificing the overall experience of your trip.

Capsule hotels and hostels are often thought of as the cheapest options, and this may be true in many places, but sometimes it is possible to

get even cheaper prices, while still having your own room, a proper bed and heating. Here are some tips that you may or may not already be aware of.

...SEARCHING ON RAKUTEN'S ENGLISH SITE YIELDS A LOWEST PRICE OF 1,000+.

TIP #1: SEARCH IN JAPANESE

This is how you will find the best deals. Ethics aside, price discrimination—unofficially dubbed as the foreigner tax—is real, and there are a handful of hotel database giants that make a killing off of foreign visitors' lack of Japanese.

Let's look at Osaka for example; as of today,

WHEN SWITCHING TO JAPANESE, A WHOLE SLEW OF BEFORE-HIDDEN OPTIONS SUDDENLY BECOME AVAILABLE.

Hotel Zipangu
 ★★★★★
 Guest Review Score 3.79
 1-2-9, Haginochaya, Nishinari-Ku Osaka-Shi, Osaka, 557-0004, Japan
 JPY 1,075 ~ 2,850 per night per person

心斎橋・なんば・天王寺・市内南部
ホテル サンプラザ2
 ★ J R 地下鉄各駅に近く便利! お部屋でWiFi、24時間個室無料シャワー完備、門限なしです★
 [お客様の声 (983件)] ★★★★★ 3.61 [最安料金] 454円〜 (消費税込490円〜)
 〒557-0002 大阪府大阪市西成区太子1-2-20 [地図を見る]
 アクセス : J R 新今宮駅東出口より徒歩2分/地下鉄 動物園前駅2番出口より徒歩1分
 駐車場 : 無し
 宿泊プラン一覧 航空券付プラン一覧

searching on Rakuten's English site yields a lowest price of 1,000+.

When switching to Japanese, a whole slew of before-hidden options suddenly become available. They may be at the cost of some amenities that western cultures take for granted (TV, electrical outlets, a full sized bed), or they may very well be the exact same room.

In 2014, I was able to book a room for 500 a night, so I stayed in Osaka for two weeks (shout-outs to Hotel Diamond). This hotel had a shared communal bathroom, and the room to sleep in was about 2m2, but I still had blankets, a futon, and quality sleep.

TIP #2: BOOK APPROXIMATELY 90 DAYS IN ADVANCE

Many hotels and companies allow you to book even further in advance, but I find that 3 months before travel seems to be the sweet spot. Unlike airplane tickets, hotel bookings are 100% refundable generally up until 7 days before your reserved day, and after that, hotels are allowed to bill you for cancelling the reservation.

ホテルリブマックス大手前
 京阪線&地下鉄谷町線「天満橋駅」徒歩1分の好立地! 梅田へも電車1本! インターネット接続無料。ビジネス・観光に最適◎
 [お客様の声 (1009件)] ★★★★★ 3.37 [最安料金] 1円〜 (消費税込1円〜)
 〒540-0008 大阪府大阪市中央区大手前1-6-5 [地図を見る]
 アクセス : ●京阪電車 天満橋駅14番出口より徒歩1分 ●地下鉄谷町線 天満橋駅3番出口より徒歩1分/東梅田より2駅
 写真を見る 宿泊プラン一覧 航空券付プラン一覧

As an aside, Willer Express Bus service only lets you book up to 90 days in advance. This is important because if you are one of the first bookings for the day of departure, you get the lowest price they are willing to sell a ticket for. Booking exactly 90 days in advance means you will very likely be the first booking for the departure date because the departure slot just opened.

TIP #3: STAY DURING YOUR BIRTHDAY

When making online reservations, you may find a hotel that has an offer where you can stay for one night for as low as 1 yen (again, assuming you searched in Japanese). You will arrive, physically pull out your wallet, and give the attendant a one-yen coin.

Some hotels will only let you stay for 1 yen on your birthday, but some will allow you to get the crazy price a few days before/after your birthday, so if you play around with reservation dates and abide by the hotel booking rules, it shouldn't be difficult to spend three nights essentially free.

The larger the city, the more effective this search strategy becomes. My go-to sites are Rakuten Travel, Hostelworld,

and Booking.com. Certainly taking the time to optimize cost-savings may not be worth it to everyone. It's also very possible that the quality and cleanliness of the cheapest hotels will be far below your expectations. For me, all that matters is that I get a bed, blankets, a shower, and a warm room. Hopefully you learned something useful and happy bookings!

Daven Lu is a second-year ALT located in Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture. He travels for the sake of meeting other competitive Super Smash Bros Melee players, while also enjoying what other cities have to offer. Occasionally, he also travels to enter Dance Dance Revolution tournaments. Want to play Melee/DDR and are up in Aomori? Send a LINE message over to mysticsoup.

SOME HOTELS WILL LET YOU STAY FOR ONLY 1 YEN ON YOUR BIRTHDAY.

THIS MONTH IN... COMMUNITY



HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA

connect.sports@ajet.net

One year older, one year wiser, one more year to celebrate harder. The year has been like my marathon runs, ups and downs but a lot learned along the way. The journey was more important than the finish. It's been a privilege to be part of the CONNECT. One thing I have learned from this year is best said from one of the sports articles this year. "Be patient! Everything takes longer than expected in Japan and there are a lot of processes to go through, but persistence will pay off." Persistence sure does pay off. Hope you've had a stellar year and cheers to the next one.



NATHAN BERNE

connect.volunteer@ajet.net

Out with the old! In my five JET years, I've learned and endured so much as an ALT, editor, PA, TV host, and 5-time Hadaka runner. Lots more to do, though; I still have mountains to climb, degrees to complete, mikoshis to carry, shingi's to grapple... nice to be a part of the legacy of JET, though. I've learned to keep studying, keep exploring, keep my eyes open and mouth shut, and keep it real. Best of all: keep a deep appreciation for what I've received and given in my half-decade in Japan. Catch you on the flip!



P.48
Kyushu Touchdown



P.50
Running Regularly



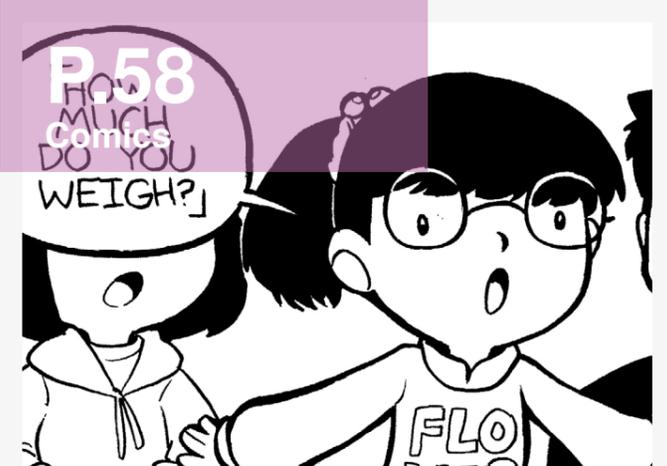
P.52
Mt. Fuji



P.54
University Masters



P.56
Hammer Time!



P.58
Comics



P.60
Spotlights

TOUCHDOWN IN KYUSHU

KARILL FRYE (KUMAMOTO)

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, when football was invented, it was intended as a full contact sport where the only way to stop a team from moving the ball forward was to tackle the ball carrier. It wasn't until much later that another form of the game was introduced: flag football. While holding on to all other fundamental aspects of the full contact variety, flag football just replaced the tacking with pulling flags off the side of the ball carrier.

Playing the game is easy to learn, especially if you have past experience in football. Each team consists of five players: one quarterback and four receivers. With a quick pace of trick plays and forward passes, each team scores as much as possible on offense. On defense, defending the pass, having one pass rusher and taking opponents' flags is

the name of the game.

Back in the States, my passion for American football when I was 10 years young. My uncle introduced me to his team, the Miami Dolphins, which ignited my desire to play the game. When I joined the JET Program, I thought I would have to sacrifice my traditions of following my favorite team and playing scrimmage games with my friends. I mean, American football in Japan? To my surprise, three months into my time in Japan, I was playing wide receiver in various tournaments around Kyushu.

THE SPORT IN KYUSHU

As I learned more about the community from my fellow football enthusiasts, I found that there is quite a large community in the greater region of Kyushu; and it's only growing bigger as



popularity of the American sport grows in Japan. The greater community has about 8-10 fully functional teams that play in three large tournaments throughout Japan's southernmost island. A smaller community also exists in Kumamoto City that consists of 4 different teams, including one all-foreigner team. The Kumamoto community has the luxury of being a close knit group that practices and holds scrimmage games throughout the year. The community exudes no pressure to be an all-pro athlete, and anyone is welcome to play.

The Japanese teams that play have a great grasp on the fundamentals of the sport and continue to improve in play-making and finding the open receiver. Since flag football does not rely on tackling, the heaviest focus for most teams is speed and avoidance. Similar to other Japanese sports, players focus on perfecting certain areas. In the case of the flag football play that I have witnessed, teams continue to improve on their route running and timing.

I was introduced to the flag football community through an ex-JET, Greg Rammit, and a current JET, Terrance Bullock. The all-foreigner team in Kumamoto City gave me a way to feel more comfortable

in a new environment, make lasting friendships and still hold ties to my favorite sport. "In Kumamoto, it's pretty easy to form a team of five and scrimmage with the local teams," Greg told me. "The other local teams practice a lot, so whenever we have a full team ready to go its easy and convenient." The team consists of past and current JETs, some of whom are fathers with families here in Japan. I have personally taken trips throughout Kyushu with my teammates and relaxed over drinks in the city after a hard practice.

Getting introduced to the community is just as easy. If you are interested in playing in Kyushu you can ask myself, Greg Rammit or Terrance for information. Greg has been in Japan for over 12 years with his family of four. He has background in rugby from his days growing up in New Zealand. He even had the opportunity to play full contact football here in Japan for 3 years. Terrance is currently the Prefectural Advisor for Kumamoto City JETs. He has been in Japan for 3 years, and brings his skills of speed and good hands from

of charge and the three tournaments throughout the year range from 1,500 to 2,000 yen, depending on the tournament.

For those of us from America, if you ever feel the urge for a small "taste of home" or keen to learn about the fast paced game of football, feel free to contact me for more information. The community provides a relaxed atmosphere where you can play football and more importantly create lasting friendships with your time in Japan.

Karill Frye is a first year Assistant Language Teacher in the land of Kumamon, Kumamoto Prefecture. He has a passion for many things, one of which is American football. He is an avid supporter of the Miami Dolphins [undefeated '72!]. In his spare time, he likes to go for a drive around places to meet people who share the same passion for football. He also spends his time at school coaching basketball, helping his students become the next Michael Jordan so he can one day pay back his losses from the various bets he has made.

**CONTACT
KARILL FRYE
HERE IF YOU'RE
INTERESTED
IN GETTING
INVOLVED!**



Pregame Warm Up

THE GREATER [KYUSHU] COMMUNITY HAS ABOUT 8-10 FULLY FUNCTIONAL TEAMS THAT PLAY IN THREE LARGE TOURNAMENTS THROUGHOUT JAPAN'S SOUTHERNMOST ISLAND.

his days playing basketball in America. If you happen to find yourself outside the Kumamoto prefecture, you can find information about the league at www.kyushuflag.justhpbs.jp. The scrimmages in Kumamoto City are free



Set Plays in Motion
Photos - 熊本かんつ



Team Kumamoto

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF RUNNING

HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA

Get the Right Shoes and Gear

RUNNING IS A GREAT WAY TO STAY FIT, AND YOU CAN DO IT ANYWHERE. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN STARTING A REGULAR RUNNING ROUTINE, REMEMBER THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS:

1. THOU SHALT RUN

Many people read trainers advice and buy all sorts of gear, but don't know the basics to running. First start, then refine.

2. THOU SHALT SET A ROUTINE

If you are a keen to start running, start now. Get your runners and run a few kilometres. Get into the habit. Once it becomes a part of your routine then start leveling up by getting the right gear .

3. THOU SHALT HAVE GOALS

Find some fun runs in your area and enter them. By entering these runs you set yourself a goal and a training plan to stick by until race day.

4. THOU SHALT CROSS TRAIN

It is important to vary your training schedule to train all muscles, and give your training schedule variety to keep yourself

motivated. **Cycling**, to work your leg muscles for hill work. If you are in the gym set the bike setting to moderate to high resistance. Don't cycle the day before or after your run. Easy cycling is recovery for your legs. **Swimming**, for recovery after long runs and building your cardio. **Rowing**, trains your glutes.

5. THOU SHALT HAVE A LONG RUN DAY

You must have a day where you run long distances to prepare yourself for the longer distances of half marathons and marathon races. You need to give your legs the experience to able to run this distance and you need to practice how you will run on race day, taking your fluids and gels while running. Pick a course with *combin*i so that you can go to the toilet and buy snacks or drinks during your long distance training.

6. THOU SHALT HAVE A NO RUNNING DAY

You must have a day when you don't run to rest your knees and legs. This is the day when you can do cross training. A good day is after your long run day.

7. THOU SHALT SHOW ETIQUETTE

You are running on roads and walking paths. Showing etiquette on shared running exercise routes is important. A 'hello' or 'konnichiwa' when you run past fellow runners is welcome.

8. THOU SHALT GET SLEEP AND STAY HEALTHY

Sleep is very important for long distance runners. You need to rest and get your eight hours. Your body has taken a "running" beating and your immune system needs to recover. Make sure you are sticking to a healthy diet. Some yoghurt and bananas to get the protein, and

carbohydrates you need to recover from the run. A post run meal is also important. Eat lean meat (oily fish or chicken) and vegetables and carbohydrates.

9. THOU SHALT WARM UP AND WARM DOWN

This is important before and after the workout to get the blood flowing to prevent injury. Make sure you stretch before and after runs. A warm up run is important as this run gives your body time to get ready for the training session without

giving it a big surprise which will cause unwanted injuries. Also warming down is important so keep running at a slower pace, or even walking, to keep the blood flowing to prevent lactic acid from building. Self-massages around the calves and putting ice on your knees is also good for recovery.

10. THOU SHALT RUN FOR FUN

Run with friends, run with a group. Run with people around you. Run on a popular or crowded route. Just having like-minded people makes running that much more enjoyable. Share your enthusiasm about running with others. By planning your training into your weekly schedule of social and work commitments, you are able to reap the full benefits of a healthy lifestyle and really say you are running for fun.

**BORN TO RUN?
LEARN MORE ABOUT
WHAT YOU NEED AT
AJET.NET.**

Step Sports - Great for Runners



*Relay Marathons - Really for Anyone
Photos - Hiroshi Fukushima*

MT. FUJI: THE CLIMB

ONE OF THE BEST, if not the best and most famous hikes in Japan is climbing to the top of Mt Fuji to see the sunrise. Climbing season officially starts the first week of July, so it's time to get ready!

Check out these photos for inspiration, and visit AJET.net to learn how to get prepared for your climb.



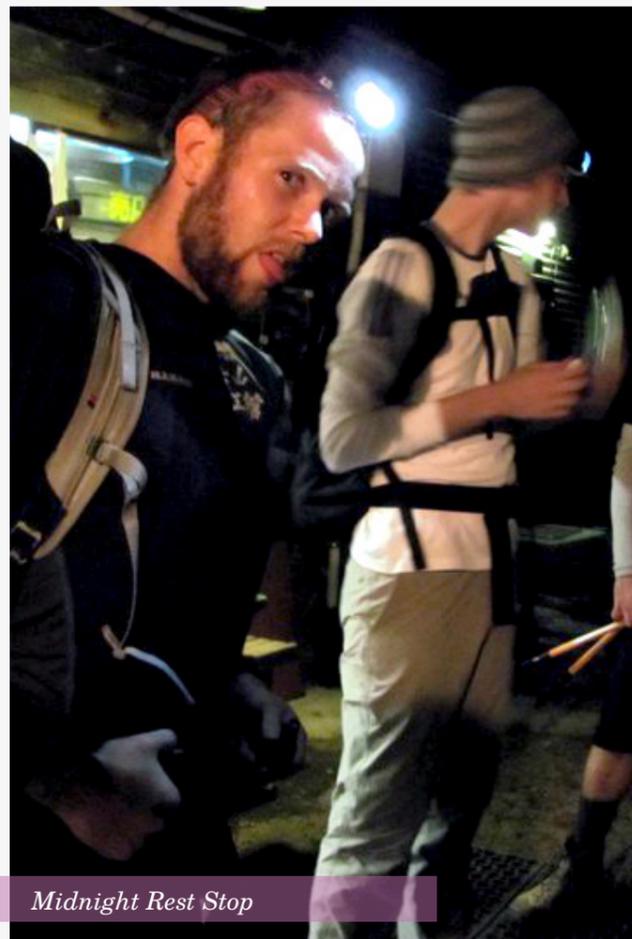
View from the Top



Descent from the Summit Gate



Pre-descent Victory Pose



Midnight Rest Stop



Just Three More Hours...

OXFAM'S SEA-TO-SUMMIT CHALLENGE

Feel like taking on the 'real' Fuji climb? Oxfam Japan offers the yearly challenge of making the traditional pilgrimage from the sea at the bottom of the mountain to the very top. The 23-hour climb supports Oxfam's ongoing charity efforts and is a vastly different experience to the standard climb from the 5th Station.



Pre-departure Assembly

Photos - Nathan Berne, Hiroshi Fukushima

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSITY

CHARLOTTE BEST (OKAYAMA)

HOSTED AT A LOCAL UNIVERSITY, Niimi-shi's after-hours English Salon brings education to an all-ages discussion forum

BEYOND ANY EKAIWA...

Tuesday, March 10th, marked the evening of Niimi English Salon's 249th class. Nicole Halseth, that evening's ALT guest speaker, was nervous.

"I want them to love British Columbia," said the first-year JET. "But I'm worried I included so many photos of snow that they'll just think—Oh, Canada looks cold."

Not to worry, though. By the end of the presentation, topics discussed ranged from Canadian gender relations to knock-knock jokes. Class #249 was a hit, and helped maintain the crucial balance between formal teaching and informal discussion; precisely what makes the Niimi English Salon so engaging

and enjoyable for presenters and attendees alike:

HEROES EMERGE

Originally created in 2005 by Kiyoshi Yamauchi Sensei, a professor at Niimi College, the Salon has seen heavy involvement from local ALTs since the beginning. The ensuing ten years featured appearances from twenty-six individual ALTs, and has managed to provide a support system of sorts for the expats themselves.

Working on a volunteer basis, the Salon's ALTs meet in October to develop a full year-long curriculum, and collaborate to devise a set of topics for each 90-minute class. Using a rotating schedule of lead presenters, the group members generally split the time between an hour of formal teaching, and thirty minutes of informal discussion.

The schedule offers 16 Salon classes in winter (once a

Photos - Matt Pike, Charlotte Best, Yamauchi Kiyoshi, Angela George



Matt and Jack at Hanami

“THE SALON'S FOCUS IS ON PRACTICAL ENGLISH,” EXPLAINS MATT PIKE, A FIRST-YEAR JET WHO TUTORED ESL TO ADULTS IN CANADA. “WE AREN'T TEACHING WITH A SCHOOL TEXTBOOK, SO IT'S GREAT TO BE ABLE TO TEACH MORE DIVERSE AND CHALLENGING TOPICS.”

Matt Pike (Okayama)

“MY ENGLISH SALON FRIENDS HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH ABOUT NIIMI! THEY'VE SHOWN ME WHERE TO EAT, HELPED ME ORGANISE A GYM MEMBERSHIP AND JUDO CLASSES, AND EVEN TAKEN ME SKIING.”

Angela George (Okayama)



Angela at Her Place in Niimi

THE MASTER MOTIVATOR

Niimi's English Salon started as Yamamuchi's Sensei's project; his positivity, dedication, organisation and translation skills have assured its smooth running since the start.

"I don't think that the Salon would have been possible without the help of our ALTs," Yamamuchi Sensei says—though others insist that his guidance has proven invaluable.



Yamauchi-sensei, Salon Founder



Charlotte Seeing the Sights

“AS A FIRST-YEAR ALT, I HAVE FOUND VOLUNTEERING TO TEACH THE SALON TO BE AN OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE AND ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE. IT HAS HELPED ME MEET MANY WONDERFUL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY THAT I WOULD NEVER HAVE OTHERWISE MET, AND I HAVE MADE GOOD FRIENDS WITH THE ATTENDEES.”

Charlotte Best (Okayama)

explain more complicated topics. Thus, the forum helps to foster the “grassroots internationalisation” that has formed a principle stated aim of the JET Programme from the beginning.

week between September and December), and eight bi-monthly presentations between January and April. Topics have ranged from Basic Introductions to Idioms and Cultural Differences, and have even included Dating.

Beyond these practical English presentations and discussions, past Salons have also featured a look at Romanian history, an impromptu salsa lesson, and even a Rubix cube completion! Now a widely supported club, the Salon has since grown to host local social events, including a Christmas party and a Hanamatsuri picnic.

ALTS HAVE THE POWER

All Salon classes are pitched at a basic level, with translation and translated worksheets used to help

“All lessons were very useful and effective in our daily lives and for travelling abroad,” notes Tomo, a Salon attendee. “Having ALTs from many different countries, we participants get lots of cultural info.”

“My favorite thing about it [the salon] is when we are all talking, discussing free conversation,” explains Hiro Ishimoto, a long-time attendee. “This helps us improve our English.”

LAUNCH YOUR OWN LEGACY!

Based on Niimi's example, the Salon format can find roots in any town, and requires only clear aims and a plan. If interested, ALTs need only seek support from their local Board of Education, and can thereby promote the forum

or secure similar space at a local university.

“Working with other ALTs is such a fun way to meet up midweek,” says Jack Champion, a first-year JET. “Sometimes we even manage to get a drink or dinner together afterwards.”

On that note, the English Salon culminates with a traditional spring farewell party, and helps bring home the sentiment of formal education coupled with grassroots exchange. A profound success for years, the ALTs of Niimi invite everyone to try their Salon format.

Enjoy and ganbatte!

Charlotte Best is nearly through her first year as a JHS ALT on JET. Originally from Hong Kong and soon to return to London to train as a lawyer, she admits a weakness for bakery sweets, and spends her free time training for marathons.

HAMMER TIME!

COURTNEY NIKOLAY (IBARAKI)

Photos - Habitat for Humanity, Wikicommons

AMID THE 1.6 BILLION PEOPLE who live without adequate shelter, over 500 million live in the Asia-Pacific region. Enter the Habitat Youth BUILD Campaign: the largest volunteer-driven movement in the area, and a growing force in housing provision. Mobilizing 500,000 supporters worldwide, the group has shown increased participation from Japan, and launched new initiatives abroad in the fight against poverty.

living in poverty in countries like Sri Lanka and India.”

As of this spring, Youth BUILD 2015 has reached nearly six times the number of families aided last year (2014 brought homes to 1,700 families in 11 countries), and will continue in November with the building of another 100 houses as part of the 32nd Annual Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

SMART MONEY

During the 2014-2015 Campaign, more than 200 volunteers sought donations from over 1,000 people on the streets of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Oita. Habitat for Humanity Japan also hosted a workshop in the recovering Tohoku region, and highlighted pathways for donors to continue helping those still living in temporary shelters. In addition, 388 students went on a Global Village program to build houses around the world

with Youth BUILD.

In a particularly clever stroke, over 100 volunteers—primarily college students—accepted donations in Tokyo via interactive photo booths. To add a personal connection, donors were invited to pose inside event-themed cardboard houses to commemorate their participation.

COUNTRIES AIDED BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S YOUTH BUILD IN 2015:

- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- China
- Fiji
- Hong Kong SAR
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- New Zealand
- Nepal
- Philippines
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand
- Vietnam

THE CHALLENGE:

Beginning in Thailand on International Volunteer Day (December 5th, 2014), Youth BUILD crossed 15 countries to conclude on March 21st, 2015 in Nepal.

Net Result: 10,000 low-income families secured better quality homes.

FROM THE STREETS

“Every person needs a home,” said Saori Matilda Machimura, Communications Specialist for Habitat Japan. “That’s why the Habitat YOUTH Build Campaign is such a valuable initiative. It connects people from all over the world to make a long-lasting change; drastically improving the lives of those living without adequate shelter. It connects young people from Japan to those



Campaign Volunteers at Shimokitazawa Station

THE MAN BEHIND THE HAMMER

This year, former US President Jimmy Carter made his annual appearance for Habitat in Japan. A champion of social justice during his presidency (1977-1981), Carter and wife Rosalynn have since donated one week per year to hands-on builds through the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project (that’s 224 days so far!), and even garnered a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

This year, the Carter Hammer made a two-week visit to Tokyo from March 1-10th, celebrating Japan’s 33 campus Habitat chapters and 400+ student volunteers within Global Village.



Carter in Raleigh, NC

“The Youth BUILD campaign is a good action to let more people know what we are doing, and to get more young people involved in volunteer work,” said Riho Murata, a student who sought donations in Tokyo. “Many young people are making the world better, and this is a good opportunity to raise awareness.”

In a special display of solidarity and awareness promotion, the 2015 Youth BUILD campaign also promoted the Carter Hammer Challenge (#CarterHammer). Participants donated a minimum of \$100, and were allowed 24 hours to perform a good deed with a special hammer autographed by former President Jimmy Carter himself.

In the ensuing challenge, the hammer traveled to home builds, repair workshops, fundraising events, and presentations on housing and poverty, and left an inspiring trail across social media. Follow its Asia-Pacific journey and accompanying photos, videos, and stories at #HabitatYouthBuild and on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and

by visiting habitatyouthbuild.org.

For ambitious volunteers, Habitat for Humanity Japan continually seeks support, donations, and awareness promotion for anyone willing to lend a hand, raise their voice, or swing a hammer.

To play a part, throw on a hard hat and put your painting and construction skills to use with an upcoming Global Village international build trip. Those looking to give from home may apply to the House Supporter program for monthly donations, as BUILD continues to hammer

away.

Courtney Nikolay is finishing up her year as an ALT in Takahagi, Ibaraki. Come August, she will continue devising a plan to become a member of Congress, humanitarian, TV host, budding improv star, and group dog walker. She is always looking for suggestions about how to overcome the quarter-life crisis.



CHECK OUT HABITAT JAPAN!

JET AND HABITAT JAPAN

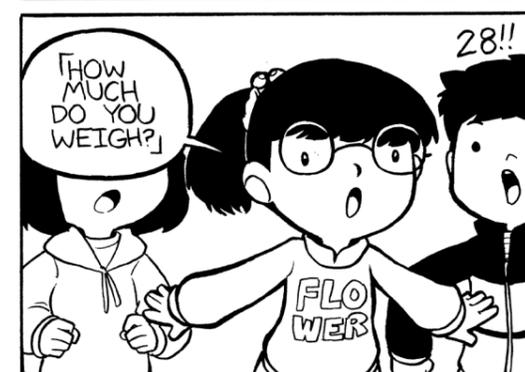
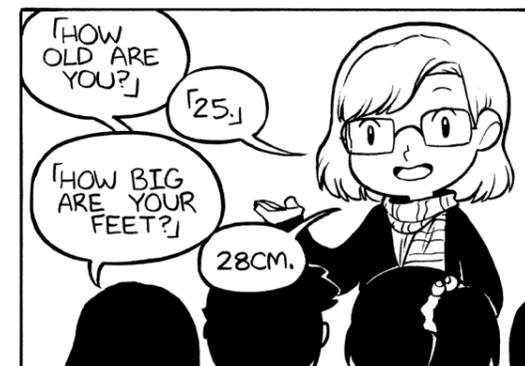
Aided by a long-running partnership with JET, Habitat for Humanity Japan’s Global Village Program has sent BUILD teams with JET volunteers to the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Since 2003, JETs have joined from Hokkaido, Sendai, Tochigi, Gunma, Mie, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, Hyogo, Hiroshima, Saga, Kagoshima, and Miyazaki.

Recently, JETs in Niigata raised one million yen in donations to the program, while 2015 also saw over 770 volunteers from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore traveling to construction sites in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Fiji to build homes for families in need.

COMICS



Marika.



MARIKA'S COMICS

Marika participated in JET from August 2013 - 2014 in Akita Prefecture. Her comic hobby started there and now she is back in New Zealand, working at an International English school in Japanese student services. She enjoys drawing comics in her free time.

Website • Twitter

LET'S SPEAK ENGLISH by Mary Cagle

Mary Cagle is an ALT in Miyagi prefecture. When she's not teaching elementary school kids, she's probably drawing comics! Besides Let's Speak English, she also draws a weekly action adventure comic called Kiwi Blitz. You can read both for free at marycagle.com and kiwiblitiz.com!

SPOTLIGHT NOMINATION?

Know someone in the community doing something neat or noteworthy? Nominate them for next month's Spotlight at connect.editor@ajet.net!

SPOTLIGHTS



OANA MARASESCU (OKAYAMA)

Originally from Romania, Oana Marasescu arrived in Canada as a teenager, and developed a passion for language, learning, and teaching. During her two years as an elementary school JET in Okayama-ken (2012-2014), she put forth an exciting new project: an entirely volunteer-made Classroom Games and Activities Book for Elementary School ALTs. Conceived as a bi-lingual supplement to classroom textbook curriculums, and based upon full immersion English language instruction, Oana's book features forty English language practice activities for ES students. With input from her Japanese homeroom teachers, Board of Education, and fellow ALTs, the project also featured How-To illustrations for the games, and a series of short instructional videos performed by ALTs.

The book was distributed at the 2014 Okayama ALT Skills Development Conference. It will also be available online soon. In the meantime, [read Connect's full interview with Oana at AJET.net.](#)



SANDY CHENG (KOBE/OSAKA)

Born in Taiwan, Sandy grew up in Brisbane, Australia. She always had a great interest in Japan and began the JET Programme in 2011.

Sandy was an AJET Block 6 Representative and has just finished up her term as AJET Chair this year. One of her biggest goals that she focused on was bringing the community together and supporting JETs. She enjoyed seeing JETs travel across prefectures for Block events, making new friends and hearing them say, 'I never knew JETs from ___ prefecture were so cool!' She hopes that JETs will make the most of AJET's website, resources, and most of all, the great JET network.

One of the most valuable lessons she learnt from JET was, "be the bigger person". When challenged, take a step back, relax and calm down. The advice she has for current or future JETs is, "Make the most of your time here. Learn a new skill, find a hobby, meet people, travel, see Japan and Asia!"

Sandy finished JET in April, and is currently enrolled in a 2-year voice acting course in Osaka. You can contact her at sandy.cheng@ajet.net.

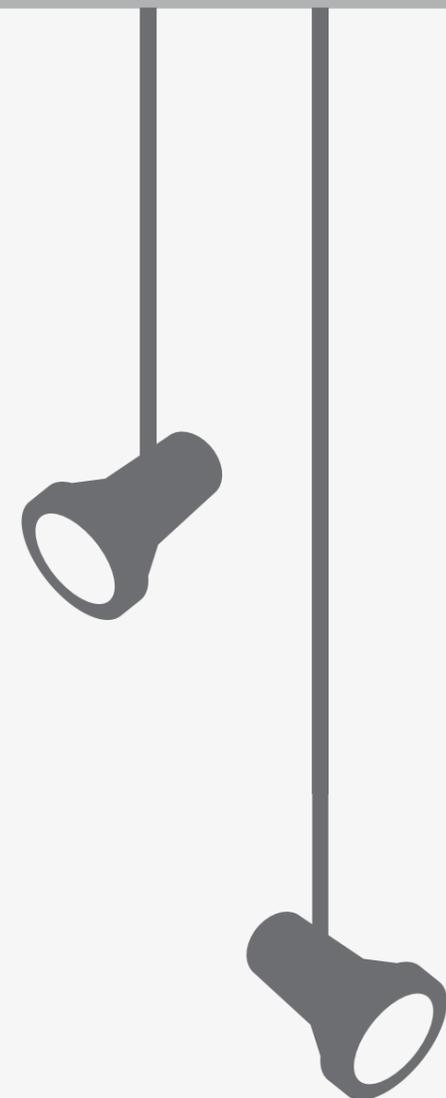


STEVE JOHNSON (SHIMANE)

What started as a brief adventure abroad in 2002 became a decade of community outreach for Steve Johnson. After arriving, he became a staple of Oda City, getting involved with *shorinji kempo*, *iaido*, and *taiko*. After 5 years on JET, support from teachers and community leaders resulted in a contract for Steve to continue teaching as part of Oda City's Board of Education (BOE) for 3 more years.

Steve returned to his hometown of Alberta Canada in 2010, but it didn't take long to realize that Oda was his **true** home. After creating an international charity event for Tohoku relief, Steve began corresponding with Oda City Hall in efforts to return permanently.

Now back in Oda, Steve's on the Iwami Ginzan Tenryo Daiko team, and working for Oda's BOE. Serving behind the scenes of Oda's education system, Steve has proven that, if you master the balance of employee expectations with communication of unique international perspectives, cross-cultural acceptance and integration is attainable.



CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

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

Contact Head Editor Steven Thompson at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

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

SPOTLIGHT

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

COMMENTS

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

PHOTOS

All of Connect's photos are provided by the community, from the cover to the articles and everything in between. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, send it to us at connect.editor@ajet.net.

HAIKU

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

COMICS

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



CONNECT WITH US

Interested in contributing to Connect? Want to stay up-to-date on interview opportunities, photo requests, and Connect announcements? Sign up to be a contributor at the [Connect Contributors Circle](#) online to receive updates from us, pitch your ideas, and discuss with the Connect staff and community.

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