

AJET CONNECT

November 2011



October Photo Contest Winner



Harry Stoneley

Secluded Shinto shrine, near Kaiyo-cho, southern Tokushima prefecture, Shikoku.

Welcome to Connect

The monthly e-zine produced for JETs, by JETs, featuring the best news and articles from all over Japan. We are currently looking for writers, editors, photographers, and artists who want to create content for this national publication!

We need YOU, the JET community, to get involved.

Send us your short stories, news articles, photographs, comics... whatever it is that you do best...to communications@ajet.net.

We're waiting to see what you've got!
Make your voice heard!

AJET Connect Workplace Safety Advisory System

NSFW4
SEVERE RISK OF TRAUMA
CANNOT EVER BE UN-SEEN

NSFW3
MAY SURPRISE OR OFFEND EVEN
SEASONED INTERNET VETERANS

NSFW2
AS PORNOGRAPHIC AS ANY OF
THOSE RIDICULOUS EVONY ADS

NSFW1
SOME PAGES NOT SAFE FOR PEOPLE
WITH SCREENS SEEN BY COWORKERS

SFW
PROBABLY HARMLESS, SAFE
FOR PEOPLE 50+ YEARS OLD

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for JETs, by JETs

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EDITORIAL Sarah Blenkhorn **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS** Cailin Arena (News)
Annabella Massey (Fashion & Beauty) Amelia Hagen (Travel) Simon Daly (Food) ..
(Entertainment) Adam Chludzinski (Sports) Lisa Cross & Sarah Blenkhorn (Events) Bryan
Darr & Sarah Blenkhorn (Education) Sarah Blenkhorn (Culture) Simon Bender (Short Stories)
Miriam Rollason (Volunteering) **ADVERTISING** Amelia Hagen & Miriam Rollason
ADMINISTRATION/ACCOUNTING Mark Noizumi **IT** Kevin Mitchell

www.ajet.net

communications@ajet.net

Greetings JETs!

Matthew Cook

It's been another exciting month in the world of the JET Programme. Not only was there a conference for the JET Alumni Association International in Tokyo and a collaborative volunteering trip with Paul Yoo's Volunteer Akita and JET Alumni in Tohoku (all to be spotlighted in next month's issue of Connect), but the JET Programme received a mention by United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in her address at the U.S./Japan Council Annual conference.

After highlighting how important the ties between America and Japan are, she turned her focus toward the issue of the future of education in Japan. Citing the 50% drop in the number of young Japanese students studying abroad in the past 14 years, Secretary Clinton stated her concern toward the future of its ties with Japan.

You can read or watch her entire speech here: www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/10/175151.htm

Secretary Clinton mentioned that the U.S. was "redoubling" its efforts toward connecting Japanese students to universities in America and doing "whatever it takes" to reverse this trend. She spoke directly about initiatives to mobilize JETs in Japan to make Japanese students aware of the options they have to live, study, and learn abroad via Education USA.

I've personally been in contact with United States embassy officials and Education USA about how AJET and you, the JETs

across the country, can help to further our internationalization efforts on a grassroots level. By assisting with large-scale internationalisation initiatives like this, we can increase the impact we have on our students' lives exponentially. We might not be able to give each and every student the money to live, travel, and study abroad, but we can surely show them the means by which that can become possible.

In Osaka, we've slated a time for a representative from Education USA to address JETs, and our Japanese colleagues, at our ALT Skills Development Workshops (Formerly know as Mid-Year Conference). This is so that we can all be aware of the opportunities available to our students. There has also been a collaboration with the U.S. Embassy to bring in the best of speakers for our fellow JETs.

Learn more about Education USA at: <http://educationusa.state.gov/>

You may be saying to yourself, "I'm not American, why should I get involved with Education USA?" That's a fair enough question. Here's why:

How much has the JET Programme helped you to see another culture and way of life? How much do you value that experience? How would you like to be able to CONNECT one of your students to a similar opportunity to study and experience a foreign culture that they might never have known they had a chance to?

The more Japanese students that study abroad, the more that they can share with their classmates, friends, and families. By giving our students an opportu-

nity to see other cultures, we will have empowered them to touch the lives of those around them with that same experience. In the end, our impact as JETs can amount to much, much more than we ever imagined.

In the coming months, AJET will begin distributing information about a variety of ways that JETs can assist their students who have chosen to pursue studying abroad in a foreign country. If you would like more information about initiatives like this, or access to materials and speakers for your contracting organizations, please email us at education@ajet.net

For now, though, enjoy the leaf-changing and the cooler weather, and I'll connect with you again next month!

Matthew Cook
AJET Chair
chair@ajet.net



NOBODY TELLS THIS TO PEOPLE WHO ARE BEGINNERS
I WISH SOMEONE TOLD ME.

ALL OF US WHO DO CREATIVE WORK, WE GET INTO IT BECAUSE WE HAVE GOOD TASTE.

BUT THERE IS THIS GAP.

FOR THE FIRST COUPLE YEARS YOU MAKE STUFF, IT'S JUST NOT THAT GOOD. IT'S TRYING TO BE GOOD, IT HAS POTENTIAL, BUT IT'S NOT.
BUT YOUR TASTE, THE THING THAT GOT YOU INTO THE GAME, IS STILL KILLER. AND YOUR TASTE IS WHY YOUR WORK DISAPPOINTS YOU.

A LOT OF PEOPLE NEVER GET PAST THIS PHASE, THEY QUIT.

MOST PEOPLE I KNOW WHO DO INTERESTING, CREATIVE WORK WENT THROUGH YEARS OF THIS. WE KNOW OUR WORK DOESN'T HAVE THIS SPECIAL THING THAT WE WANT IT TO HAVE.

WE ALL GO THROUGH THIS.

AND IF YOU ARE JUST STARTING OUT OR YOU ARE STILL IN THIS PHASE, YOU GOTTA KNOW ITS NORMAL AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO IS

DO A LOT OF WORK PUT YOURSELF ON A DEADLINE SO THAT EVERY WEEK YOU WILL FINISH ONE STORY.

IT IS ONLY BY GOING THROUGH A VOLUME OF WORK THAT YOU WILL CLOSE THAT GAP

AND YOUR WORK WILL BE AS GOOD AS YOUR AMBITIONS

AND I TOOK LONGER TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THIS THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER MET.

IT'S GONNA TAKE AWHILE. **IT'S NORMAL TO TAKE AWHILE.**

YOU'VE JUST GOTTA FIGHT YOUR WAY THROUGH.

Jet Effect





Estelle Hebert

Tell us about yourself

My name is Estelle Hebert and I'm a second year JET in Hiroshima City. Honestly speaking, before coming to Japan, my knowledge of Japanese culture and language was pretty much zero... I came here for new inspiration to make a documentary project after completing my Masters degree in Toronto, Canada. I had just wrapped up a 2-year documentary project, and I felt it was time for me to move on to a new place, a new environment, and new experiences. An ex-JET spoke to me about her experience in Japan, and soon after, I was on a jet plane heading to what I now consider one of the most extraordinary countries I've ever visited.

What project are you involved in? How did you get involved?

Last July, I traveled to Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture simply to volunteer and provide post-tsunami relief efforts. Through couchsurfing.com, I met a fantastic girl named Chizu, who hosted me for my entire trip there. She had survived the tsunami, along with her family, and my home stay ended up being the best highlight of my entire year spent thus far in Japan.

After volunteering for a few days, Chizu and I ended up driving along the coast of Miyagi Prefecture for a few hours. The long and winding road led to the fishery village of Funakoshi, where I was amazed to see the fishermen continuing their business despite the entire village being in ruins. I was particularly touched by the fishermen's testimonies, including Tetsuo-san, who stood next to his son and grand-

son's gravestone, trying to find words as he glanced at what was left of his hometown: just a few standing houses amongst immense piles of rubble.

After listening to a few testimonies, observing the beautiful landscape, and witnessing the fishermen's positive spirit and relentless efforts, I decided to hop on board and make use of my documentary media background to help share the story of Funakoshi to the world.

I have recently launched a fund raising campaign called Brighter Than Tomorrow, in support of the local community of Funakoshi by assisting to provide the local fishermen with much-needed fishing gear/equipment including storage space (refrigerators) and out-boat motors. The campaign also aims to inform the international community of the ongoing activities taking place in the village, in support of a reconstruction plan that has yet to be approved by the local government. In doing so, I'm working on a feature-length documentary telling the remarkable journey of a small group of fishermen working tirelessly to keep both their businesses and hometown alive despite having lost friends, family members and their livelihood in the tsunami.

When and where does your project take place?

The ongoing campaign was launched on October 29th, and will end on December 31st, 2011. The idea is to bring money to the fishermen at the start of the New Year to help them purchase some much-needed equipment. In the meantime, the documentary is currently under production. I am traveling to Ishinomaki and Funakoshi every month for film shoots. I plan on filming over the next 12 months before hitting the editing room.

The campaign is reaching out to people all around the globe, while the documentary is being filmed in Funakoshi and Ishinomaki. Once completed, the documentary will be submitted to all major International Film/Documentary Festivals.

How many people are involved?

I am currently working as an independent artist, in partnership with Chizu Ishikawa, whom I met last July during my volunteer trip.

Inspired by the fishermen's strength, patience, and kindness, Chizu often travels to Funakoshi, her mother's hometown, from Ishinomaki (where she currently resides) in support of the local community. Like many others living in the area that survived the tsunami, she doesn't want to be forgotten, nor

does she want the community of Funakoshi to be left behind. She hopes that the story of Funakoshi will reach many across the globe, and that the locals will be able to return to their village in the near future. She also likes to quote her mother's cousin, one of the fishermen, "Even though the ocean is responsible for giving us such a hard time, we're still surviving thanks to its resources"... evoking what many Japanese believe the ocean to be: a true blessing of nature.

Other JETs in Hiroshima-ken have offered me their services to assist me during film shoots. In terms of monetary contributions, I am reaching out to everyone I know, including my Japanese co-workers, my circle of friends in Japan, the JET community, as well as everyone else I know outside Japan. We are relying tremendously on word of mouth.

What impact does your project have on you and your community?

So far, on a personal level, it's been a life-changing experience. I've always tackled humanitarian issues in my past documentary projects, yet this is the first time I feel such a tremendous connection with those whom I'm documenting. I am feeding off the amazing support from everyone in my surrounding, and most importantly, from the local community of Funakoshi who want this documentary to become a reality.

It's difficult for me to put into words everything I experience when I'm up north in Tohoku. You would think it would be easier—on an emotional level—to be there a second or third time, but it's not. Deep inside, I know I'm able to make a small contribution in support of their recovery. And being involved with a community that is both struggling yet determined to return home some day, it's quite touching.

Although no one can imagine what it must feel like to lose everything, I always come back from Miyagi feeling both grateful and troubled, stunned yet amazed, distraught but inspired...

For me, this project is a chance to make use of my documentary background in support of a small community that is relying on as many individuals as possible to make their journey to recovery slightly less bumpy. Slightly.

In terms of the community, I am convinced the impact will be quite positive since they need money to purchase some necessary fishing equipment, as well as the need for as much media attention as possible. They need people to document

their ongoing activities, in the hopes that it will pressure their local government to accept a reconstruction plan.

What advice do you have for other people who wish to do something similar?

This may sound cliché, but make sure you are passionate about your project. Without passion, you cannot achieve great results.

I have two passions in life: one is traveling and the other is documentary making. The JET program has allowed me to pursue both of these passions, and I am more than grateful for that.

When starting a project, don't worry so much about the end result... just follow your instincts! You can't always rely on other people to get things done in life... you have to be the one that makes things happen. Be a leader, and I promise you that others will follow in your footsteps and give you the support you need if you are passionate, determined, and able to adopt an empathetic and positive attitude.

Lastly, don't be afraid to challenge yourself. Take risks. If you believe in your project strong enough, the risks won't matter to you.

If you would like additional information on the project, please visit the campaign page and/or website:

www.indiegogo.com/Brighter-Than-Tomorrow?a=289695&i=addr
www.brighterthantomorrow.com



LIFE AFTER JET





Life After JET with Anthony Bianchi.

This month, Life After JET was pleased to interview Anthony Bianchi, a former JET who became the first American-born elected official in Japan. Bianchi was voted into the city council of Inuyama City, Aichi Prefecture in April 2003, after becoming a naturalized Japanese citizen in 2002.

Bianchi was kind enough to offer us thoughts on his time on JET, and how he feels about the future of the Programme

Where are you from?

Brooklyn, New York

What year(s) were you a JET and where were you placed?

1989 – 91, Aichi Prefecture Compulsory Education Division

What have you done since your time on JET?

I worked for Kiyosu Town (which has since become Kiyosu City) for two years after JET. After that I returned to New York for a while. I started to work on a MA in ESL with the idea of returning to Japan.

During that period I also taught Japanese at LaGuardia High School for a year. I was working as the Academic Director at the ELS Language Center in Wagner College in NY when I decided to return to Japan.

How did you go from being a JET to being a politician?

First let me give you a little background. In Inuyama I started a program based on my JET and subsequent experience. It is called the Native English Teacher (NET) Program. I started and ran it for seven years before leaving to run for office. The program continues to this day and has six teachers all directly employed by the city. The teachers here must have some ESL qualification. Currently, all teach their own classes based on original materials created by the group. The materials have been turned into a workbook. The participants here are pretty much accepted as regular teaching staff at their schools.

That was not always the case. That is where my journey into politics begins. There was quite a bit of resistance to what we were doing with the NET Program. At first I thought it was because our program was not part of the official curriculum or because our qualifications were not recognized by the officialdom, or of course because we were foreigners.

In my contact with average citizens, I found that no matter what the area may be, they they also had similar difficulties in dealing with city hall. So our difficulties were not necessarily because of our qualifications or the status of our curriculum, or our being foreign. There was a wall between the average person and city hall that had to be knocked down. It had to be knocked down for the sake of our students, and for the sake of everyone living in Inuyama.

I followed this realization with a number of years of complaining about a variety of things. I would lobby



the mayor, council people, city workers and the board of education alike. Then there just came a point where I got tired of complaining. That is when I decided to run for office. I thought that if the citizens agreed with what I was saying I would get elected. I could then deal with various problems from a different position.

What do you think the biggest change to the JET Program has been since you were a JET?

Because I am not in everyday contact with what is happening, it is difficult to say. That being the case, I would point out two changes that occur to me off hand. One is the increase in the numbers of participants and consequently cost. This has caused the program to come under greater scrutiny.

Anecdotally, I would say it seems the JET universe, and the society in general, has become more accustomed to the presence of foreigners. On the societal level this is due in part to the existence of JET. On a more up close and personal level, I understand that JETs are more integrated into the work place than before. For example, In my two years I never sat in the teachers' room. I was often left alone in a comfortable but empty room and let out only for classes.

What advice would you give to JETs in their first year on the Programme?

Enjoy Japan. Make an effort to learn the culture and language. Participate in local activities outside of your official duties. That is for yourself. More importantly, never forget that as an ALT you are here for the students. Prepare for your lessons as

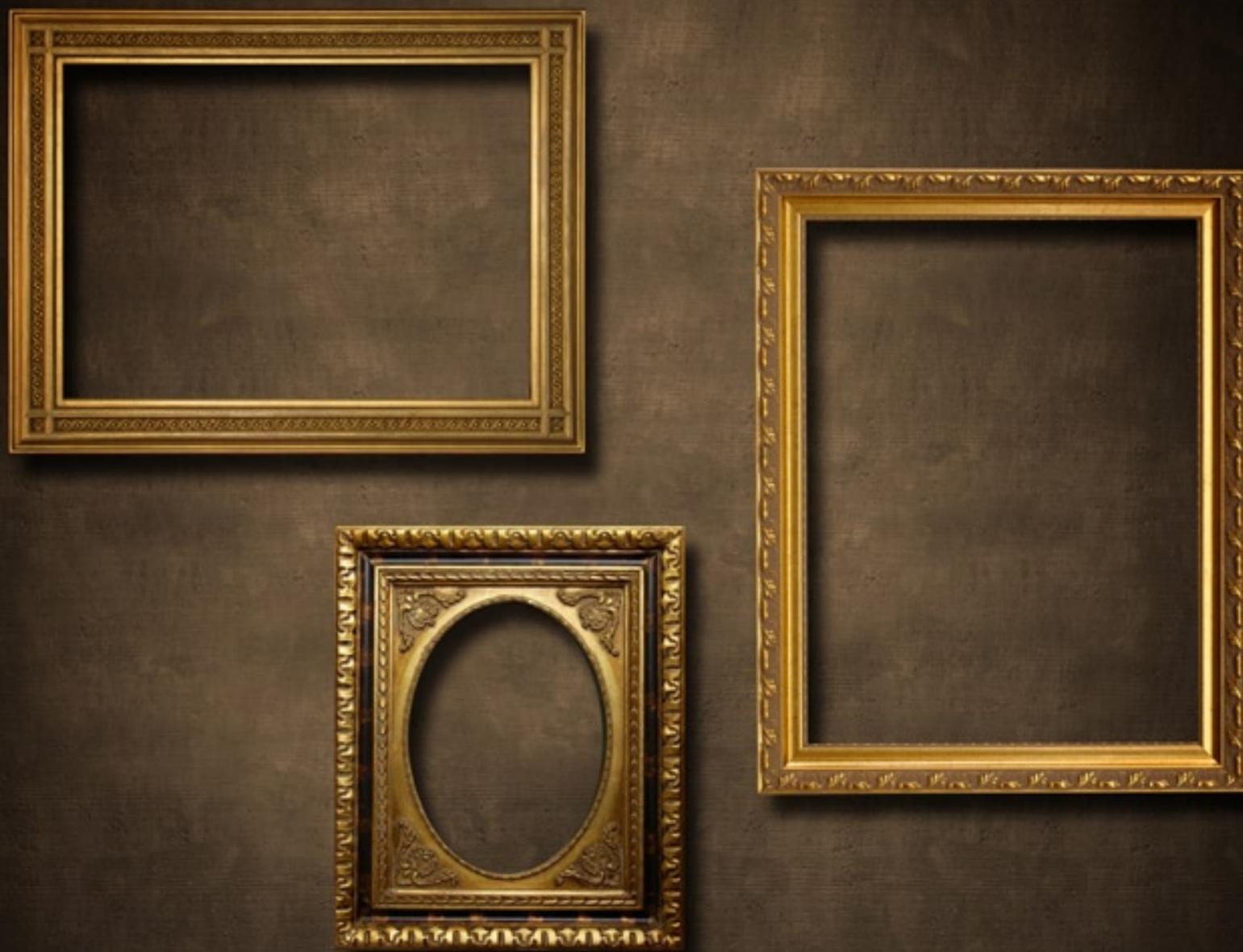
much as you can. Try to go with the flow at your schools. You may feel you don't agree with some things, but rest assured no one is consciously trying to put you in a difficult position. If you feel something needs to be changed, address it firmly, calmly and be as patient as possible. I'll end by saying it again, don't forget your greatest responsibility is to your students. If you take that responsibility seriously, you will be taken seriously and respected by those around you.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the programme, and how should we be combatting that?

I mentioned earlier that the program has come under greater scrutiny. That is due to mostly budget related reasons. This was most apparent during the "jigyo shiwake" hearings. To be honest, I don't think the program got proper considerations during its evaluation by the oversight committee.

Although I think JET could use some retooling and needs to redefine its goals, the program has great benefits for the country. One of the greatest, but overlooked, is the former participants themselves. They all have a great knowledge, understanding and affection for Japan. All have gone on to various careers and are a great but underutilized network.





culture corner

In Celebration of Japanese Culture

Here in Japan, our second home, early November is marked by a national holiday. Culture Day is relatively new, as it was introduced in 1948, replacing the birthday of the Meiji emperor as a holiday. It is celebrated on November 3rd and its purpose is to celebrate the arts, culture and scholarly achievements of Japan.

But hold on. Just ONE DAY?! Considering Japan's two thousand year plus history, and the deep, deep well of the country's cultural heritage, perhaps a longer holiday is in order. And of course, Japan's city-dwelling modern culture, with all of its bizarre and fascinating quirks and kinks, is just as intriguing as its country cousin.

What brought most of us to Japan? The culture here. Some of us pictured the grim-faced, honour-bound samurais and white-faced geishas encased in florid silks of the far past. Others imagined the beautiful, spare natural scenes painted by ukiyoe artists like Hokusai. Others thought of Bladerunner, shabby, neon-lit alleys hiding cutting edge technology and pixellated sex. One Piece, salarymen, Sailor Moon, the tea ceremony, Spirited Away, maid cafes, The Seven Samurai, robots, Departures... wave upon wave of images from this distant, different country washed up in our minds and dragged us back across the sea with them.

When we got here, were you disappointed? Vindicated? Delighted? Was Japan just what you thought it would be? I found myself, very luckily, in a relatively untouched and traditional area

of Japan. I added, to all those images we have, my own hands-on experience of Japan.

Still, after all the splashy and obvious examples of Japanese culture, the greatest delight I have found is in discovering the quiet, unobtrusive everyday culture of the people I meet. The manners and age-old greetings. The little shadowed shrine in the corner of the house, of the gym, of the store. Worn stone 'O-Jizo-samas' at the crossroads. Culture comes in many forms. The customs and traditions of a country are a part of its culture. So are the common mindset and behaviour of that country's people. Japan is very distinct, having taken on the customs of other countries – notably China and Korea, but more recently the West – and transformed them into something uniquely Japanese.

In celebration of Japanese culture, in this issue of Connect, we'll take a look at the most Japanese of sports – professional sumo. And I think perhaps we should name all of November 'Culture Month' in Japan.

About the Editor:

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn is a second-year ALT in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture, touching the Sea of Japan. She has lived in this corner of Japan for over four years. A former actor, writer and holder of many odd jobs, she hails from Nova Scotia, Canada. She has taken up many traditional Japanese arts, including shigin (a form of chanted recitation), community drumming and aikido, as well as the newer art of karaoke. She is presently the Block 9 (Chugoku Region) representative and cultural coordinator on the AJET national council.

Calendar of Cultural Events in November 2011

November 2nd - 3rd Ohara Festival Kagoshima Kagoshima Prefecture	At this, the largest autumn festival in Southern Kyushu, you will be treated to a street parade of no less than 22,000 dancers. It attracts crowds of over 600,000.
November 2nd - 4th Karatsu Kunchi Festival Karatsu City Saga Prefecture.	The Otabisho Parade on November 3, the national holiday, is the main attraction and features 14 floats. All 14 floats are paraded around the city until they reach Nishinohama Beach, where they are energetically dragged into the water.
November 2nd - 6th Saga International Balloon Fiesta Saga City Saga Prefecture	An Asian maximum grade hot air balloon festival held on Kase Riverside in Saga City, Saga, The Saga Balloon Fiesta is not to be missed. In the past, featured balloons have included Doraemon and Pikachu. . The festival isn't all about balloons - check out several concert stages and international food booths as well!
November 3rd Awa Muppet Show Awa Puppet Theatre Kisawa Tokushima Prefecture	Though still an amateur art after, the rural puppet drama of the Awa region is just as famous in Japan as the bunraku puppet drama of Osaka. At this annual event, classic plays are performed on an outdoor stage.
November 3rd Betchya Festival Kibitsu-hiko Shrine Onomichi Hiroshima Prefecture	Men wearing striking masks or dressed as lions, run around the crowded streets looking for children to 'thrash' with bamboo whisks. Legend has it that children 'beaten' in this way will be safe from illness for the coming year.
November 3rd Hakone Daimyo Gyoretsu Hakone-machi Ashigara-Shimo-gun Kanagawa Prefecture	An annual tourist event held on Culture Day (a national holiday), November 3rd, at Yumoto Onsen, Hakone. A procession of a total of 170 people dressed up as samurai warriors and princesses parades over a distance of some 6 km in the hot spring town.
November 13th - 27th Kyushu Basho (Fukuoka Grand Sumo Tournament) Fukuoka City Fukuoka Prefecture	Tickets vary in price and can be purchased from convenience stores or at Fukuoka Kokusai Center, where the event is held, on the day of the event. AJET chapters, such as Fukuoka, Oita, and Hiroshima have organized to go around the weekend of November 26-27.
November 22nd Gaikokujin Star Tanjo 2011 Fukuoka City Fukuoka Prefecture	Fukuoka Now International Magazine presents its second annual event showcasing Kyushu's most talented foreigners. Join the live audience and party as finalists perform live on stage before a panel of celebrity judges. There will also be drinks, DJs, dancers, and delicious food at Fukuoka's newest venue, JR Kyushu Hall, high at the top of Hakata Station. Tickets are 1,000 Yen. More information can be found at gaijinidol.com.
November 30th Kobe Marathon 2011 Kobe City	The Kobe Marathon 2011, consisting of full and quarter marathons, also welcomes disabled athletes. It will be held November 30th, starting in front of the Kobe City Municipal Office at 9:00am. http://www.kobe-marathon.net/english/outline.htm



so get out there and make the most of it.
 You are cordially invited to take part in
 the 2012 Hokkaido Snow Tour. For package
 details and costs please visit HAJET.org
 Deposits must be paid by November 30th.
 Sapporo Snow fest, Niseko and much more.

HAjet



How to Make an Obasan Mad at You in Okinawa

Adam Nakama

Okinawa offers the JETs here some pretty unique experiences, and none so unique as driving. It's not just country driving, the way most ALTs must if they live out in the inaka and their schools are on separate mountaintops. Instead, Okinawa JETs have to endure Japanese city driving in all of its rage-inducing glory, something most other foreigners don't get to see.

Even though pretty much every ALT drives here, most of my JETs still freaked out the first time I got behind the wheel. "Are you

okay?" they would ask. "It's on the left side, so it's harder, right?" But it's not the switched sides they're worried about. Really, it's the hidden rules of Japanese driving that will get you in trouble.

Every culture has hidden rules, little folkways that most everyone follows without thinking about it—they probably aren't even aware such rules exist. But if you break these rules, you are immediately marked as gaijin—or a jerk, if you're native. The unspoken shroud around these folkways makes Japanese culture seem alien and impenetrable to the average foreigner, and the sudden chill in the room when you've broken such a rule is baffling if you don't even know what you did wrong.

But driving is a special case. It's the one time when the hidden rules become apparent, because if you don't follow them, then you risk crashing your car. You learn fast or you die. But on the way, you get insight into one of those rare sights for a foreigner: Japanese anger.

Most days, I have to weave through cramped back-streets to get from my apartment to the larger main roads and then to my school. These roads comfortably fit approximately one and a half cars. They twist and curve, and occasionally backtrack on themselves. It is a literal maze. And yet Okinawa is crowded enough that almost all of them see regular use. You can imagine the problem that right-of-way

presents on such crowded streets that can't fit everyone.

Early on, I would be puttering around a corner, only to have a crazy obasan cut me off and I would see that rare face I call The Sneer. The Sneer is something that is unique to Japanese culture. On men, it is a literal sneer, one side of the mouth tugged down, brow furrowed, and eyes straight ahead in a refusal to acknowledge your presence. On women, it is much the same, except the lips are tightly drawn into a bunched little purse. It is a face that says, "You have screwed up, and you should know better."

As many of us know, Japan is very much a watch-and-learn culture. Very rarely will somebody tell you what to do, unless it is your coordinator and she is particularly well-trained or you've made a huge problem. Most of the time, you are just expected to see what people are doing and how they are doing it, and you are supposed to follow along. This is the same expectation held for all Japanese people, from the youngest children to the students you see every day to, of course, well-adjusted adults. And when somebody breaks away from the group, whether willfully or out of ignorance, "You should know better," is a phrase that quickly follows.

We're gaijin, so we get some amount of grace. People just assume that we have no idea what's going on (they're usually right) and just do their best to work around the problem we don't know we're causing. All we see is the usual friendly faces. The Sneer is reserved for people who actually should know better, i.e. Japanese folk.

But on the road, all the rules change. The unbreakable wall of gaijin hospitality crumbles as cars swerve around you and everyone tells you that you suck by determinedly refusing to acknowledge your existence except with the most foul straight-ahead stare. The Sneer is the Japanese equivalent of road rage.

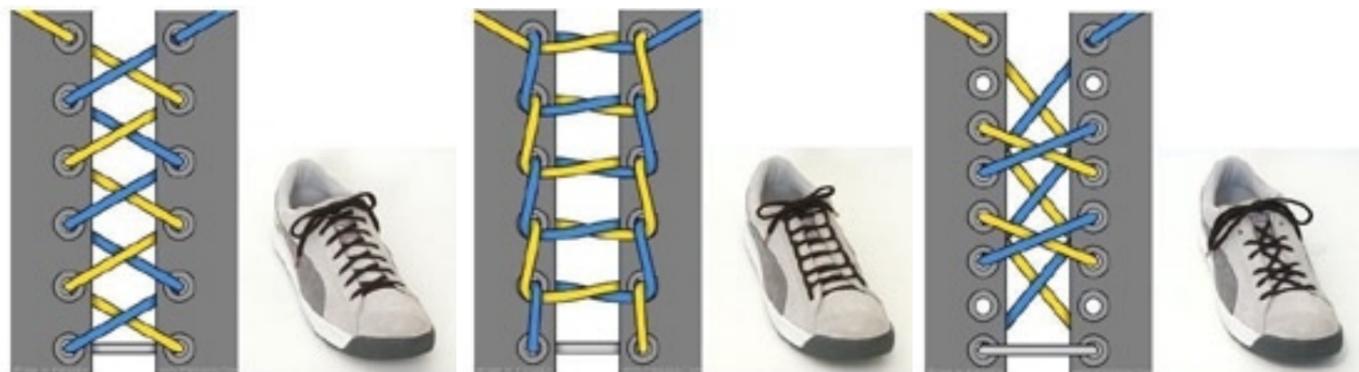
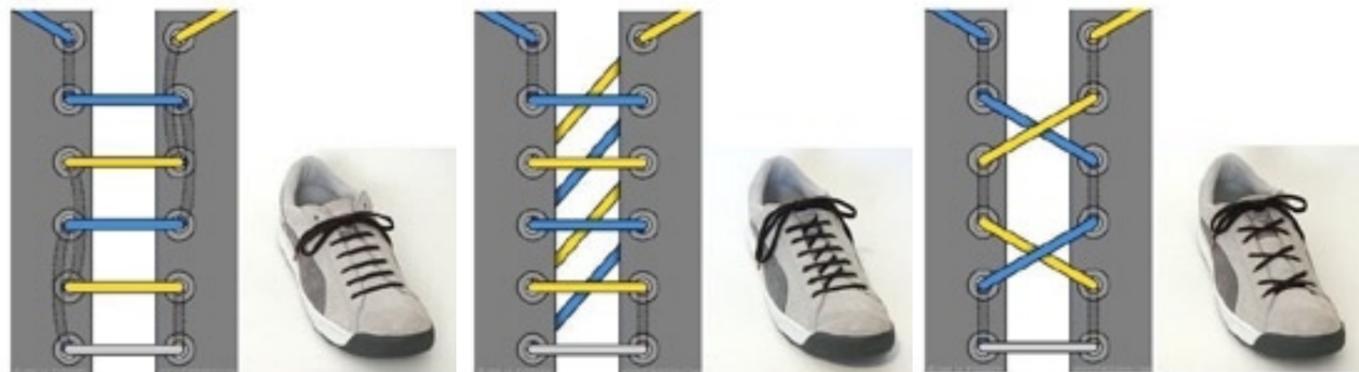
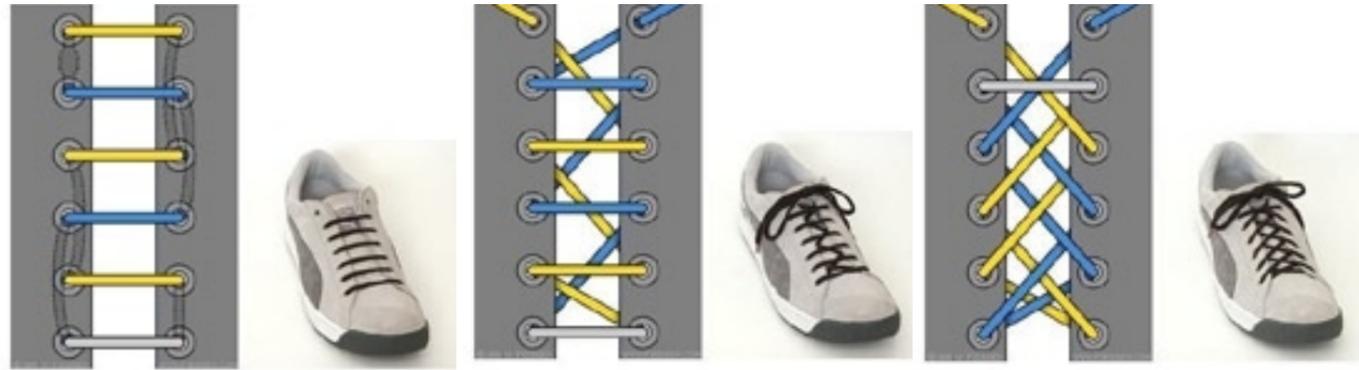
If you're attentive and become proficient in reading lips, you can pick up some foul language. The older the other driver is, the more expressive they are likely to be; an upset ojisan cutting me off at an intersection is the only time I've seen the word "teme" used outside of some trashy anime. And, really, once you get over the initial shock and hurt, it's quite fascinating. You didn't die in a horrible crash, and the damage to your reputation is already done. The only thing you can do is try to laugh it off and learn something, both about your mistake and Japanese people.

Rage and terror aren't the only things you encounter on the road in Okinawa. The polite consideration that sits at the heart of much Japanese culture can be seen, too. When four cars pull up to a tiny intersection with no light, you can see the true spirit of "doozo" rather than the more formulaic everyday uses, what with everyone bowing and gesturing and quite earnestly wanting the other people to go first. A lot of foreigners quickly

become jaded about the concept of tatemae—that Japanese people will say polite things because it's expected of them. But that expectation comes from a real place, from a genuine desire to respect other people and help them and put the needs of the group above your own. And that feeling is present far more often than many of us might believe from the frequent and casual use of the polite language of exaltation and humility—or just the number of times you're expected to say I'm sorry before hanging up the phone (if you haven't had that experience yet, it's a lot). There's a reason it's a cultural value, and there's a reason it works.

Japanese people are actually very emotional. People of both genders have no hesitation about crying if something moves them, even publicly. But at the same time, it is a very private culture, so that all but the strongest emotions tend to be hidden behind that wall of tatemae. It's easy to believe that they are Vulcan-like emotionless automatons, but nothing could be farther from the truth. The trick is knowing when and how you're able to see those emotions, whether you're a native or a foreigner. As many of us know, enkais are one such place. The Okinawan road is another. But there are tons more hidden little roads to the emotional core to discover. I hope whatever you might find is a little less prone to permanent bodily injury than mine.

Pimp your Ride



November belongs to Shikoku!

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Shikoku may be the smallest and least populated of Japan's main islands, most famous perhaps for its natural beauty and 88-temple pilgrimage, but in terms of the people there, it is bubbling with energy and vitality. In November, expect an extra burst of energy as Shikoku welcomes all to the Shikoku Field Day!

The Shikoku Field Day is the main Block Eight event of the year. Block Eight is comprised of Shikoku's four prefectures: Ehime, Kagawa, Kochi and Tokushima. Lisa Cross, the event coordinator (and the legendary AJET Block Eight representative) says, "The event is open to the entire block and beyond for the purpose of coming together and having lots of fun. It's also supported by all the prefectures on Shikoku. I want people to be able to build and maintain friendships across prefectures."

The Field Day is a one-day (overnight optional) gathering of Shikoku-ites and their friends to play games more focused on fun

than competition. The games and following barbecue will take place at Shikoku Saburo no Sato, in Mima City, Tokushima Prefecture, on the afternoon of Saturday, November 26th. Afterward, attendees can stay the night in a tent or cottage and participate in the evening's ongoing revelries, or head back home.

(Just to note that at the moment reservations for cottages are closed but people can still rent tent spaces up until November 10th.)

Many of the day's games are taken from the New Games Movement of the 1970s. No prior knowledge of the rules is required to participate. Exciting games may include; capture the flag, catch the dragon's tail, bola, slaughter, caterpillar and rock-

paper-scissors. In keeping with the spirit of the event, teams will be randomly determined on the day and distinguished by bandanas (provided), which will have the side effect of making participants look totally great. Awards will be given, but not all of them will be for winning. Some awards will have inherently magical properties.

Lisa says, "I really hope that people will come out and have an awesome time. People are already excited about the event so, hopefully attendees will have a great time. If it goes well, this year, it could become an annual event. It could also be used as a springboard for other awesome block events."

She has some thanks to add, too. "I'd like to thank all the prefectural AJET organizers in Ehime, Kagawa, Kochi and Tokushima who have helped tremendously with the promotion of this event. A special thanks to Adam Black, Amy Yoshimaru, Julia Mace and Mark Boyle for their dedicated support. Your help is highly appreciated!"

Shikoku Field Day promises to be an exciting and unpredictable day to remember! Eat, drink, play, and be merry. And Lisa's final comment? "I hope to see you all in November!"





Sumo

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Of all the sports in the world, none is quite so unique as sumo wrestling. In what other sport do the pre-match rituals last longer than the game? Where else will we see the competitors and referees wearing styles as dictated over three hundred years ago? For that matter, what other sport boasts referees more gorgeously attired than a courting peacock? Where else will we see quite so much salt tossed, or so many girthful bellies slapped?

While baseball may be the more popular sport in Japan, few Japanese will argue that it has replaced sumo as the national sport. While baseball is a recent import from across the water, sumo is a homegrown sport born from the rituals of Shinto. Originally, sumo bouts were held as part of fertility and harvest festivals (and some still are). Even today in Tokyo, the top-ranking sumo wrestlers take part in the New Year ceremonies, and in the bean-throwing ceremonies at certain temples on Setsubun (a holiday in early February, marking the beginning of spring in the old calendar).

Watching the bimonthly professional sumo matches means taking a step back into the antique rituals of the Edo era. Pro sumo tournaments began in the 1680's, and the gyoji, or referees, still wear the elaborate embroidered garb, stiff with gold, of an Edo courtier and soft black caps that tie under their chins. Holding an object like a fan out before them, in strong voices they call the names of the combatants and the names of the winners. Despite the

heavy garb, they are quite swift. The rikishi (wrestlers) still wear the glossy top-knotted hairstyles and loin cloths designated to their class long, long ago.

In front of the Grand Sumo Tournament stadium, the colourful banners of hundreds of sponsors flutter in the wind. Inside, people sit on tatami mats with floor cushions close to the ring (or in bleacher-style seating at the back), spreading out their lunches and beers as if they were at a picnic. The best seats, of course, are the cushions closest to the dohyo (ring), but those struck me as rather dangerous. Sumo wrestlers are thrown with great force from the ring, and have been known to fly into the spectators kneeling below them.

The fights are still conducted on a raised earthen platform with a dohyo (ring) formed from buried bags of rice. Above the dohyo is suspended a large roof, reminiscent of a Shinto shrine. The bouts open and close with the same ritual movements of purification and intimidation. A drink from a ladle of clear water and a sprinkling of salt on the earthen surface of the ring purify the body and the place. Stretching, stomping, and belly-slapping are intended to prepare the body and 'psyche out' the opponent. These may be repeated several times before the match actually commences. The match itself is swift, ending when a wrestler is thrown from the ring or touches any part of his body other than his feet to the ground. Then the next match will commence. As famous wrestlers enter the ring, zealous fans call their names (this is also done in kabuki, when famous actors make their entrances).

In sumo, there is the east division and the west division. They have separate entrances to prevent wrestlers in the different divisions from seeing their opponents before the fights. Wrestlers train in different 'stables.'

The top-ranked wrestlers are quite different from the low-ranking wrestlers who start the afternoon matches. For one thing, they're bigger. Sometimes much, much bigger. There are no weight divisions in sumo, but it stands to reason that bigger is better in this sport. Skill counts for a lot, but the best wrestlers are skilled and huge. And although, yes, they are fat, they are also extremely muscular. They eat a special stew called chankonabe and drink lots of beer to stay 'fighting fit' The other noticeable difference? Fewer Japanese wrestlers. There is a famous and popular Bulgarian, Kotoishi (they all take, or are given, Japanese names) who is in the top five. The yokozuna (reigning champion) is Hakuho, a Mongolian, and the former champ, a media bad boy, was the Mongolian Asashoryu, who recently retired. Japanese sumo wrestlers are usually smaller than their international rivals. The number of non-Japanese wrestlers each stable can have has been limited, to prevent non-Japanese from completely dominating the sport because of their size and strength.

This year, sumo was disrupted and the March Grand Sumo Tournament cancelled when a fight-fixing ring was discovered. Sumo's reputation has long suffered from allegations of rigging and connections with the yakuza. It was reinstated in May, but the smear on sumo remains.

A short glossary of sumo terms, for the budding enthusiast. (adapted from Wikipedia)

chankonabe (ちゃんこ鍋)

A stew commonly eaten in vast quantity by sumo wrestlers as part of a weight gain diet. It contains dashi or stock with sake or mirin to add flavor. The bulk of chankonabe is made up of large quantities of protein sources, usually chicken, fish (fried and made into balls), tofu, or sometimes beef; and vegetables (daikon, bok choy, etc).

chikara-mizu (力水)

Power-water. The ladleful of water with which a wrestler will ceremonially rinse out his mouth prior to a bout, handed to him by either the victorious wrestler of the previous bout if he was on the same side of the dohyō, or by the wrestler who will fight in the bout following.

chonmage (丁髷)

Traditional Japanese haircut with a topknot, now only worn by rikishi and so an easy way to recognize that a man is in the sumo profession.

dohyō (土俵)

The ring in which the sumo wrestlers hold their matches, made of a specific clay and spread with sand. A new dohyō is built prior to each tournament.



dohyō-iri (土俵入り)

Ring-entering ceremony, performed only by jūryō and makuuchi divisions. The east and west sides perform their dohyō-iri together, in succession; the yokozuna have their own individual dohyō-iri performed separately. The main styles of yokozuna dohyō-iri are Unryū and Shiranui, named after Unryū Kyūkichirō and Shiranui Kōemon. A yokozuna performs the ceremony with two attendants, the tachimochi (太刀持ち, sword carrier) and the tsuyuharai (露払い, dew sweeper).

gunbai (軍配)

A war fan, usually made of wood, used by the gyōji to signal his instructions and final decision during a bout. Historically, it was used by samurai officers in Japan to communicate commands to their soldiers.

gyōji (行司)

A sumo referee.

hakkeyoi (はつけよい)

The phrase shouted by a sumo referee during a bout, specifically when the action has stalled and the wrestlers have reached a stand-off. It means, "Put some spirit into it!"

heya (部屋)

Room, but usually rendered stable. The establishment where a wrestler trains, and also lives while he is in the lower divisions. It is pronounced beya in compounds, such as in the name of the stable. (For example, the heya named Sadogatake is called Sadogatake-beya.)

honbasho (本場所)

A professional sumo tournament, held 6 times a year in the modern era, where the results affect the wrestlers' rankings.

mawashi (廻し)

The thick-waisted loincloth worn for sumo training and competition. Those of sekitori wrestlers are white cotton for training and colored silk for competition; lower ranks wear dark cotton for both training and competition.

rikishi (力士)

Literally, Strong man. The most common term for a professional sumo wrestler, although sumōtori is sometimes used instead. See 力士 in Japanese.

shikiri (仕切り)

Toeing the mark. The preparation period before a bout, during which the wrestlers stare each other down, crouch repeatedly, perform the ritual salt-throwing, and other tactics to try and gain a psychological advantage.

shiko (四股)

The sumo exercise where each leg in succession is lifted as high and as straight as possible, and then brought down to stomp on the ground with considerable force. Shiko is also performed ritually to drive away demons before each bout and as part of the yokozuna dohyo-iri.

shikona (四股名)

A wrestler's "fighting name", often a poetic expression which may contain elements specific to the wrestler's heya. Japanese wrestlers frequently do not adopt a shikona until they reach makushita or jūryō; foreign wrestlers adopt one on entering the sport. On rare occasions, a wrestler may fight under his original family name for his entire career.

tachi-ai (立ち合い)

The initial charge at the beginning of a bout.

yaochō (八百長)

"Put-up job" or "fixed game", referring to a bout with a predetermined outcome.

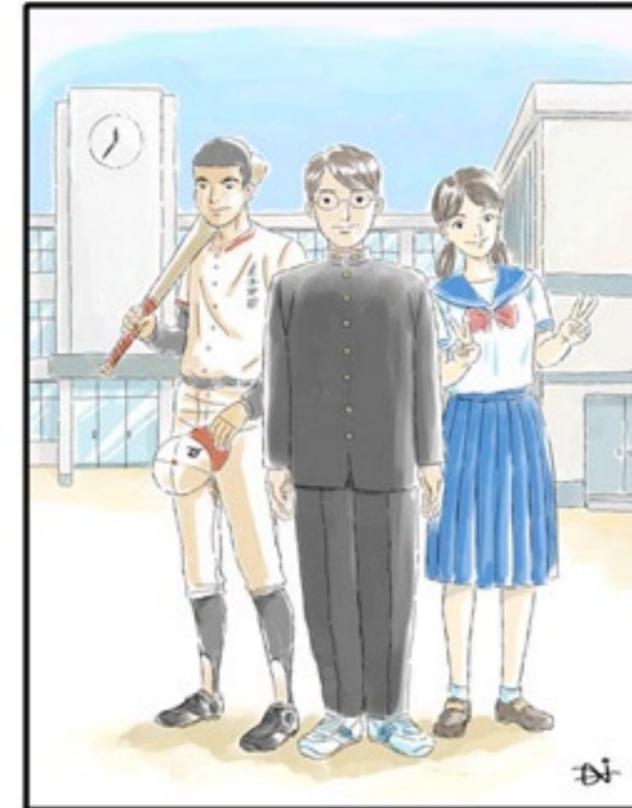
yokozuna (横綱)

Horizontal rope. The top rank in sumo, usually translated Grand Champion. The name comes from the rope a yokozuna wears for the dohyō-iri. See tsuna.



Life After the B.O.E.

by David Namisato



The students you thought you were getting.



The students you actually got.



volunteering Japan



The No Impact Experiment

Lana Rosato Kitcher

As a student in university, I came across the documentary *No Impact Man* (2009) and went to see it at small indie Film Theater in NY. It was ultimately this short film that inspired me to write this article. I was moved by the passion and commitment exhibited by the subjects of the documentary, and by the sacrifices and discoveries made by Colin Beavan and his family.

Colin Beavan is a middle class liberal living in Manhattan with his wife, daughter, and their dog, Frankie. Colin realized that he worried and complained about the state of the environment, but he never actually did anything to make it better. He decided to take action by doing a one-year experiment and wrote about it on his blog regularly (www.noimpactman.com). This was the turning point in the Beavan's lives. Not only did they find a more sustainable way to live, they also discovered that by living their "no impact approach," it actually made them happier. They were healthier, had more time for family and friends, and got more satisfaction out of life in general.

After the experiment, Colin Beavan wrote a book called *No Impact Man*, and founded the No Impact Project (<http://noimpactproject.org>).

Until recently I had nearly forgotten about the project, getting caught up in things as a university student and in my first year on the JET Program. In a lull toward the end of last winter, I was randomly inspired to search for the book. I found it, ordered it, and read it in a matter of days. I've always been conscious about not creating extra waste and trying to recycle whenever possible, but reading this book opened a whole new world of awareness for me. I looked into the websites mentioned above, and offered to do some volunteering for the project. While doing this, I stumbled upon the No Impact Experiment, and decided to participate in the September No Impact Week co-hosted by YES! Magazine (www.yesmagazine.org) and the No Impact Project.



NIP sponsors regional and international No Impact Weeks several times a year, and participation is open to anyone who is interested. Participants register on the website, and connect with other people around the world who have made the pledge to do a one-week version of Colin's year-long experiment to discover the benefits of living mindfully, while simultaneously helping out the planet and making a difference.

During the week from Sunday through Sunday, each day presents you with a new theme and challenge. The first day's theme is consumption; the next day is trash, transportation/take action, food, energy, water, giving back, and the eco-Sabbath. Each day's challenge is added to the previous one's, so by the end you should be consuming less, creating no trash, eating better, using better transportation, spending more time with the ones you love, and giving back to your communities.

After signing up for this challenge in September, I've discovered that being more aware of how much I use and waste, what I eat, what I buy, where things come from, trying to use less technology and getting involved in the community really has made a large and positive impact on my life. Being aware is only the first step, but it is a very important one.

My challenge to you is to challenge yourself. Try this one-week experiment. Maybe it will mean nothing to you, but maybe it will change the way you see the world. Are you happy as things are now? Are you aware of the kind of impact you make on the planet? Do you think your current habits could actually have a negative impact on your life? Check out the No Impact Project online to figure out when the next No Impact Week will take place. If you are interested in getting involved right away, you can also volunteer to organize an international giveback day, or join/create some regional events, too.

Finally, there is a section on the website that is geared towards educators (aka us!). There are environmental lesson plans posted on the website. These are mainly intended for native English speakers, but with a little bit of editing they could probably also be used by an ALT who wanted to teach his or her students about environmental issues, or by a CIR doing adult conversation classes.

Will you be the next "No Impact huMan?"



I am currently on my second year of JET, and plan to move back to NY after my contract ends in July 2012. I'm hoping to either get an MBA or MFA, but haven't quite decided which. I'm interested in a lot of different things, and this generally makes it difficult to decide what I want to do with my future. I dare say the best thing to do for now is to take life day by day, and to take advantage of every opportunity that comes my way! Recently, writing has been on my mind so we'll see if there's anything I can do with it in the future! Please feel free to check out my blog at <http://LanaKitcher.blogspot.com>.



PEPY Ride Hyogo

Emily Lemmon

PEPY (formerly "Protect the Earth, Protect Yourself") has a new acronym to reflect their changing focus as an organization. Though they still care about the earth and sustainability, PEPY's true focus is on education in Cambodia, and the hope that an investment in today's youth of that country will lead to a better future for all.

I've been wanting to go on a PEPY tour in Cambodia for some time now, having become almost accidentally involved in fundraising for them back in the spring of 2010. I stumbled into leadership of the PEPY Ride Hyogo – JETs on Jitenshas – when I innocently inquired about the Hyogo ride, assuming then that it would be out of my league either because of my full calendar or because of my inexperience at riding a big-kid bike.

But the great thing about being in charge is, you get to say where and when and how hard, far, and fast you'll be going, so the latest string of Himeji-based

Hyogo PEPY rides have been leisurely bike strolls from Himeji station to local points of interest, most frequently and especially Mt. Shosha, the famous location of The Last Samurai, and Taiyo Koen, the eclectic collection of world monuments gathered helter-skelter round.. an old folks' home?

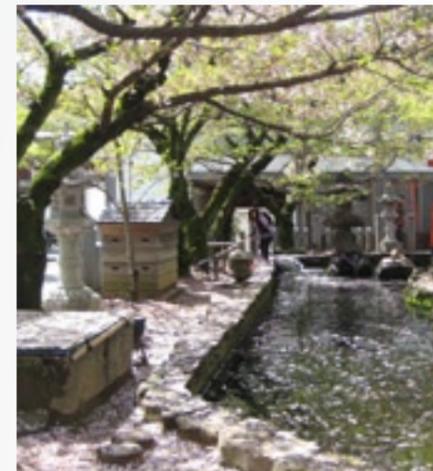
The bike rides' seasonal timing, visitation of temples and shrines (and oddities), and frequent breaks for things like eating suit me just fine. We do two rides each year here in Hyogo: one in the spring, which we try to time for enjoyment of those ephemeral sakura blooms, and one in the autumn to take in the vista of Japan's other great arboreal showman, the momiji.

We attempt in our Japan-local rides to emulate the ideas espoused by PEPY in their Cambodia tours. Sustainability and human power (so, the bikes), sightseeing, learning, and donation to a good cause. Participants will be donating to PEPY, and will also have the option of donating to ongoing cleanup efforts here in our own Japan.

This fall's ride will be much like last autumn's; Himeji Castle is still in its scaffolding box, but we are going to make a new shrine stop along the way. The focal point will be Mt. Shosha and Engyo-ji, the temple located at the top. JETs (and friends) will have the option of taking the cable car or hiking up the mountain, where we'll have a picnic lunch (the most eco-friendly and healthy-looking lunch wins the bento prize!). I've done some new research on the Saigoku Kannon 33-Temple Pilgrimage, of which Engyo-ji is the 27th Temple, so I'll be able to give a more knowledgeable tour of the grounds to anyone interested in following along.

I love the PEPY Ride because every one of them that I've been on so far has been filled with fair weather, good scenery, and a feel-good group of people from all over the place, gathered to meet new friends and have a good time exploring a part of their (or their neighboring) prefecture. We capitalize on some of the best seasons in this country and spend the whole day outside, getting lots of exercise and fresh air, and finish the day good-and-tired, a little worn out, but happy.

The next ride will be November 19th, starting from Himeji station and lasting until about sundown. Our plan is to use the free rental bikes available from the Himeji tourist office, but participants can also either rent one from the station (300 yen) or bring their own. All participants should also bring a picnic lunch (combi bento will cause you to lose the bento contest), and 500 yen to get in to the temple on top of Mt. Shosha. The ropeway costs 900 yen round trip.



We've also consistently raised hundreds of dollars for PEPY's educational initiatives in Cambodia! Find out more about PEPY and what they do (including how to donate, and their tours in Cambodia) here: www.pepyride.org

Here are the photos from Spring 2010:

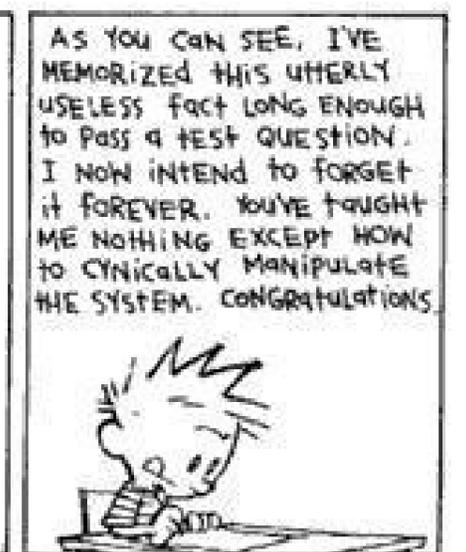
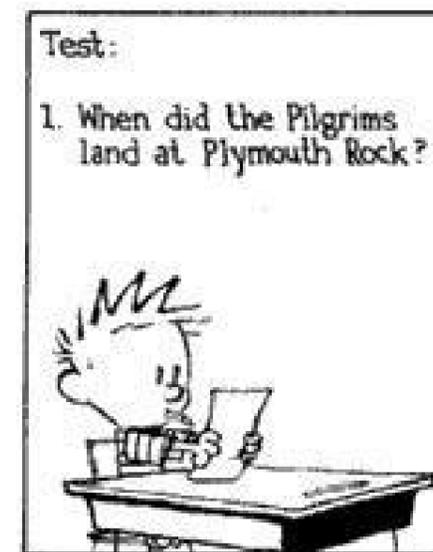
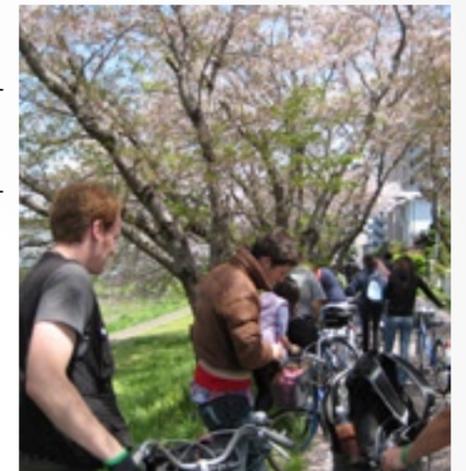
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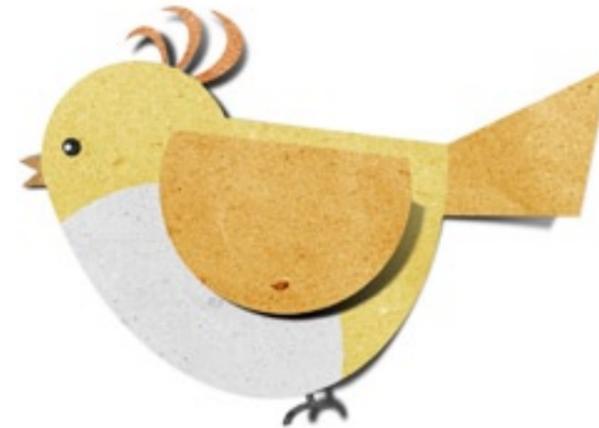
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And here are the photos for Spring 2011:

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Just a Little Bike Ride in Cambodia

Anne Smith

It must have been at Tokyo Orientation when I first heard about the PEPY Ride. 1000km by bike across Cambodia! Woah! I was there...well, almost. For most of my life, I've had this "up for anything" attitude that got me into many interesting situations. The potential for fun was all I needed to lure me into some interesting situations. Something had just clicked in me though. I guess it's that adult thing that comes around and turns us "party girls" into capable citizens. While I'm still up for fun, something stops me now and makes me THINK before jumping into a new adventure. Those new thinking skills made me file that 1000km away and I instead focused on making it through my first year in Japan, which is not a small task, as you

know. I didn't travel outside of Japan my first winter. I opted for travel around Kanto and sticking it out in my frigid, central heatless apartment in Akita. Spring came and that 1000km was still on my mind (this time mostly because of the 10 feet of snow all around!). And it started; I delved into learning more about PEPY. Who are they anyway? What do they stand for? What is going on with this crazy bike ride? I read their entire website and with each section I got more and more excited. PEPY is my kind of organization- self-reflective, constructive, and aimed at empowering Cambodia through supporting teachers. This bike ride would challenge me, educate me, AND support education?! I stopped myself over and over, but I kept coming back to the PEPY Ride.

That fall, I turned in my paperwork and started to prepare for my trip. As far as training goes,

I just continued with what I had been doing. I ran 3km four times a week and did my usual weight lifting. I was not a cyclist; in fact, I didn't even own a bicycle. All that pre-Cambodia exercise didn't get my bottom ready for a bike seat, but it made me feel confident that I could take on a physical challenge.

The plane took off for Phnom Penh via Bangkok. About four hours in, I suddenly got hit with the thought, "Ah!! Where am I going? What am I doing?" A driver was arranged to meet me at the Phnom Penh airport and to take me to the bus stop for Siem Reap. In Siem Reap, a PEPY representative was coming to pick me up. I was to join my fellow PEPY Riders that first night in Cambodia. I'd done my research. The trip itinerary was set, and I had the schedule with me, but still! I just couldn't believe I was actually going to Cambodia.

In the back of that first tuk tuk in Phnom Penh, I had to admit to myself that my little freak out was justified. I was in a place unlike anywhere I'd ever been before. I sat in the back and took it all in.

During the first few days at Siem Reap, we did several short rides. I felt like the happiest person in the world to be riding around a bend and to have Angkor Wat appear before me. Where some people only get to spend one day here, we spent three leisurely beautiful days. One of them was with students from a PEPY school playing a game on the grass. After these three days, we packed our panniers and started our 1000km! It still makes me smile that 20 meters out someone's pannier fell off! As we continued to do throughout the ride, we all gathered around with smiles to help a fellow teammate get back on track.

My three weeks in Cambodia are hard to sum up in words. All I can say is that it was the most amazing thing I have ever done. Thinking back, I remember dancing, laughing, singing, biking, thinking, and feeling in ways I



never had before. The PEPY Ride changed me. I have never had a vacation where I was happy to wake up at 5am, but those early mornings when we'd see the sunrise and pedal 60km before 10am made me want to experience them over and over. I learned that I love the challenge of pedaling my own way (especially in flat Cambodia!). It was clear that we weren't there to 'volunteer' or 'give back.' We were encouraged to be students of what Cambodia had to teach us. As we rode past forgotten ruins and through the beautiful countryside, we were introduced to Cambodian-run NGO's and saw their amazing work. We met children who

screamed "hello" louder than even the genkiest shogakusei. A few evenings, the PEPY team leaders led discussions on development issues that had us all thinking of things we hadn't considered before. I saw for myself a small glimpse into how development works (or doesn't sometimes!) and I left Cambodia with a new understanding of how my part of the world affects others. My new thinking skills got larger and broader. I'm happy to say that both my legs and brain are in much better shape now!

PEPY Ride VII is scheduled to take off December 28th, 2011. As usual, it will introduce participants to inspiring social programs, fascinating historical sites and scenic backroads dissecting Cambodian landscape. From the Angkor temples in the north to the country's capital in the south, you will cross this country by your own pedal power, exploring off-the-beaten-track Cambodia while supporting the community development projects that you visit along the way, ensuring your impact will last much longer than your tour. If you're interested in joining the adventure of a lifetime, I encourage you to learn all you can about this amazing organization.

Check out pepytours.com or email me at ajetsig@pepyride.org





A Winter of Change with Habitat for Humanity

Will Perera

Stop me if any of this sounds familiar – when I first came to Japan as a JET I was fresh out of university. I had a general level of interest in Japanese history and culture, and a vague ambition to travel without becoming poor(er) in the process.

The first time I encountered Habitat for Humanity was at their welcome desk at Tokyo Orientation. I wish I could tell you that I knew then just what an extraordinary opportunity I'd found, but let's be realistic – I was far too preoccupied with jet lag, information overload and wondering if all these stories about naked men sharing hot springs were true.

Habitat for Humanity International is an NGO that began in the United States, but is now active in over 100 countries worldwide. The approach is simple; Habitat provides interest-free loans to needy families for the construction of a home, along with advice and expertise to put the house together. The loan is then repaid to the local Habitat affiliate, who are able to use the repaid funds to help the next family. Volunteer teams from overseas, along with corporate sponsors, provide one-off injections of

capital that help speed this process along, helping more and more families in an efficient, sustainable manner. It has become particularly well-known in the US through its association with celebrities like Brad Pitt, and through the ongoing involvement of former president Jimmy Carter.

Fortunately for me, one of the existing Gunma JETs had chosen to lead a Habitat team that year and I heard all about it at the prefectural orientation. A trip to do volunteer work – great! An opportunity to visit a country, Sri Lanka, that I would probably never otherwise see – fantastic! It will cost this much – yikes! (Back in 2001 the pound was worth almost triple what it is now against the yen) Still, at that point I still didn't have a good handle on using yen, so it didn't bother me too much. What followed was eight months of meetings, fundraising events and preparations that gave me a great opportunity to meet fellow JETs and explore my host prefecture far more efficiently than I would have managed otherwise. Fundraising is a whole other story in itself, but suffice it to say that after eight months we had far surpassed our minimum donation target. Because of this we had the option of using some of the contributions to offset our personal costs for the trip, but we elected as a team to give the whole amount to the charity. When Golden Week came around we were on a

plane bound for Sri Lanka, via Singapore, to begin our volunteer trip.

Working on the Habitat build site was a humbling experience; coming from first-world countries we rarely think deeply about the true meaning of a home. The poverty trap is a familiar story - if you don't have a home, you can't get a job; if you don't get a job, you can't get a home. Any of us would feel trapped in that situation. Now imagine that you are in this situation, but you also have a family to protect and support. The country where you live is suffering through a protracted civil war, the local infrastructure is patchy at best and malaria and other serious diseases are rife. Many people would give up at the outset, but the families that we met and built alongside had not – despite all the obstacles in their way, they had chosen to fight on and to build something strong that would keep them, their children and future generations safe and dry, and give them a chance to work towards something better. Being given the opportunity to play a part in that, knowing what that house meant to those brave, extraordinary people, felt like a far greater gift than the money that we had brought. Habitat trips are organised so that the volunteer teams are able to present the house keys to the families at the end of the programme – unashamed tears and smiles abound.

The actual build work was pretty low skill, which was just as well because so were we. Our team was split across two sites, one nestled in the jungle, where we spent most of the time digging a really deep hole for a toilet, and the other on the outskirts of a village where time was spent sifting soil and sand to be used for cement mixing for the floor.

Habitat houses are built at minimum cost, designed to provide the most effective balance of safety, strength and liveability for the local climate, using locally sourced materials at minimal cost. A key feature of this approach is the concept of sweat equity; beneficiaries are required to work a certain number of hours themselves in the construction of the house, as this personal investment improves both their personal sense of gratitude and the likelihood of the loan being repaid. As a result, the people that you build alongside are the ones who

will benefit from your work. Often, existing Habitat homeowners will also come along to lend a hand – as a result, both build sites were lively, fun places with plenty of laughter and singing to accompany the hard labour. Children came around to meet us and play (yes, kids on a building site - it's as scary as it sounds), while senior family members sat back to offer moral support. At break times co-workers would scamper up a nearby tree to cut down a coconut which we would all share before getting back to it – there's nothing sweeter when you're hot, dirty, tired and happy. I definitely ached at the end of each day, but it was the good ache of having worked hard at something worthwhile. In the evenings our team got together and talked about our experiences from the day – we didn't want to waste the opportunity to share what we had seen, and felt.



There was also time for R&R during the trip and we visited local landmarks, went swimming and did plenty of the fun stuff you might expect on a trip in Asia. We visited the elephant orphanage and saw them herded to the river to bathe, we climbed Sigiriya, the Sri Lankan mountain palace which has been declared the 8th wonder of the world (yes, I know there are a lot of those, but if you can't trust Wikipedia then who can you trust?). We came back home with all the suntans, photos and fun stories that you could wish for from a holiday (plus we were all a few pounds lighter and looking pretty

buff). But more than that, we came back spiritually enriched, with the satisfaction of having done something to tangibly help others and seen the results with our own eyes.

When JETs come to Japan most are aware that the time is finite; just a couple of short years to see and experience as much as possible in Japan and Asia (while hopefully making a dent in those student debts). There were a couple of times during the lead up in that first year, spending time and money on fundraising activities and vaccinations, where I considered giving it a miss and just having a good time. But, looking back, Habitat may have been one of the most defining experiences of my life, and career.

Having participated in the Sri Lanka trip in 2002 I also led a team to the Philippines in 2004 and have stayed involved ever since, doing keynote speeches, translations and providing whatever other support I can. It's amazing how many people you meet who have been involved in Habitat in some way, or at least heard about it – Habitat might be the deciding factor in getting you that job, or the talking point at a networking event that gets you that vital business card. My experiences also inspired me to return to study, and I completed a master's degree in Development Management last year.

Habitat also enriched my JET experience; my involvement in voluntary work won me great respect among the teachers at my schools and people in the village, who were extremely supportive of my fundraising efforts and took a real interest in my stories. I made good friends, and gained the confidence to take a stronger leadership role in the JET community. Plus, when I get to hang out with Brad Pitt we're going to have loads to talk about.

Will Perera was a Gunma JET from 2001 to 2004; he is currently Education Operations Director at British Hills, an intensive language and culture study resort in Fukushima-ken. If you would like to hear more about his experiences with Habitat, JET or Japan, or just buy him a beer, he can be contacted at willperera@gmail.com.

For more information about Habitat for Humanity, or how to participate in your own trip, please go to http://www.habitatjp.org/contents_e/involved/index.html

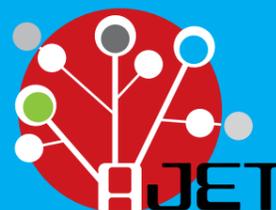


AJET PEER SUPPORT GROUP

050-5534-5566, is an English listening & referral service which operates on the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. We are open to all JET Programme participants every night of the year, from 8PM to 7AM. Our volunteers are all current JET Programme participants, trained for AJET PSG.



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TRAVEL

Travel

Amelia Hagen

November is finally here and you know what that means....we're in the heart of winter vacation planning! Those few weeks around the end of December and beginning of January are a primetime to explore the Japanese world around you or head to warmer foreign lands, if you are not heading home for the holidays.

Spending the holidays in Japan can be a rewarding cultural experience for those that have their eye on visiting a shrine on New Year's Day. If you are planning to take a trip somewhere, it is recommended that you book in advance as, of course, Japanese people will be traveling as well. This would pertain to snowboarding trips in Hokkaido, onsen stays, etc. While I'm on the topic of Hokkaido, AJET strongly recommends that any February Snow Festival plans, if they have not been made already, be made as soon as possible. Flights and hotels fill up quickly and prices rise just as fast.

Staying in Japan this holiday season and looking for a unique destination? Check out this month's travel piece on Mt. Koya in Wakayama Prefecture. Though Mt. Koya is a day trip away from Osaka, try a temple stay for the full experience. I had the pleasure of visiting Mt. Koya on spare day I had in Osaka this past spring. I actually would have never had the opportunity if it had not been for the massive binder full of information on it at my hostel.

Now onto all of you dreaming of Thailand, minus Bangkok. When I arrived in Japan on JET, I was told that I should book interna-

tional flights two months prior to my departure date. Now, I purchase airline tickets at least two months in advance. If you are pining for swaying palm trees and turquoise waters this winter and have not yet solidified plans, Connect has some treats for you that may spark your imagination.

In the 1990s, Thailand's tourism industry exploded and it led Southeast Asia in this department. In the last decade, up-and-coming Vietnam has benefited from being called 'the new Thailand' without the crowds. Now, it seems Laos has taken on the role of, dare I say, 'the new Vietnam'. Laos is, for the time being, Southeast Asia's hidden gem. Thinking Laos may be a bit rustic for you? Jet to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's supercity, and then, see what it's like to spend a week scuba diving off Borneo. Read on to get the winter vacation brainstorming started or explore travel options for the future!

About the Editor

Amelia Hagen is a fourth-year ALT in the home of Ayumi Hamasaki, also known as Fukuoka Prefecture. When she is not traveling to the far ends of the earth, she enjoys chodo-ing, or paying with exact change, fist-bumping Hello Kitty at Oita's Harmonyland, and searching for the next jetset bargain. Amelia is the former president of Fukuoka AJET.



Mount Koya Monogatari

Elysse Hurtado

The holiest Buddhist site in Japan. That was the initial attraction for me in going to Mt. Koya, despite a friend of mine having suggested it as a nice place to get away from the summer heat. After punching the name into Wikipedia and reading that line, I was sold. Buddhism had always held a strange attraction for me, an answer to a lot of the spiritual problems and questions that had danced in the back of my head for years, and adding a 'most' caption always seals the deal for a completionist like me, so I added it in as a one night stay on my trip.

However, Mt. Koya has no hotels, no youth hostels, no inns of any kind. If you want to spend the night, you have to reserve a bed at one of the nearly 120 temples

dotting the broad surface of the mountaintop. The mountain itself is not particularly high, requiring only a 10 minute, quite picturesque cable-car ride to the top. But the 'peak' is so wide that it takes a full three quarters of an hour to walk from one end to the other, and if you hadn't watched the countryside fall away as you ascended you would believe it was just another small country town. Exiting the cable car the air was instantly fresher and cooler, and walking through the town was relaxing. I wandered the narrow streets, passing temple after temple, looking for the temple association building to exchange my voucher. In order to stay at a temple you had to put in a reservation, go to the association and pay the required fees, and in exchange you would receive a voucher for the stay that you brought to your temple. This way the temple itself was not involved in the potentially questionable handling of lucre.

With voucher in hand I made my way towards the temple that I would spend the night at, snapping photos and enjoying the respite from the endless pressure cooker that is summer in Japan. As I passed through the narrow wooden gate for my temple a tranquilly trickling koi pond caught my eye, and of course the omnipresent bonsai tree and rock garden were also a welcome sight. Inside I was greeted by a monk who couldn't have been more than two or three years younger than myself, head fully shaved as tradition dictates, who proceeded to show me to my room. Going up a narrow flight of stairs in the slippery vinyl guest slippers was slightly panic-inducing, but once inside my actual room it was well worth the effort. It appeared this temple had recently been renovated. The wood and tatami flooring was virtually brand new and gave off a pleasant, country aroma in the heat of the midday sun. It

had a small tv, an alcove with a decorative hanging and flower vase, a small bathroom with toilet and sink only and its own set of slippers. The view from my window was none other than the delicately shaped koi pond and rock garden I had passed on the way in, and it was very hard not to give in to my inclination to simply relax for the rest of the day.

Instead I dropped off my suitcase and headed in the direction of the Okuno Temple, only twenty minutes up the road on foot. This was the temple founded by the head of the Buddhist Shingon sect, Kobo Daishi, and also his tomb. Surrounding the temple was a vast, tall forest that doubled as a cemetery for the country's most honoured dead. The gentle rustling of the endlessly tall and narrow pine-

like trees and the soft call of birds acted almost as a requiem as I wandered down the stone path past graves of former prime ministers, spacemen, and celebrities. It was here, growing stronger as I drew closer to the temple, that I first felt the burgeoning sense of peace and calm that grew to characterize my memory of Mt. Koya. The patterning of the light filtered by the trees, the earthy scent floating in the air, and the cool breeze that gently brushed my cheeks all contributed to the well-being, and when I finally came in sight of Okuno Temple I was hard-pressed to imagine leaving.

The temple itself was smaller than I had expected, but somehow fit in perfectly as if it had grown organically out of the mountain and forest. One of my favourite scents, that of the

altar incense, perfumed the air and brought further peace, and when I had proceeded to the back of the temple where the tomb was purported to be I was greeted with the chants of a Buddhist monk saying prayers for an elderly woman beside him. In that moment everything seemed right. Not only was there a sense of sacred, familiar from my Protestant upbringing, but also a deep and abiding contentment and fulfillment. I found myself sitting by the side of the tomb, eyes closed, feeling so



integrated and connected with the world around me that it was an effort to get up and leave. But sooner or later I knew I had to return to society, before I got lost in the woods after dark.

After buying a charm that protected against misfortune from the temple commissary I made my way back down the wooded path, through the town, to the other side of the mountain where a giant gate provided a breathtaking view of the surrounding countryside. In the past this was how all visitors (except women, who were not permitted) ascended to the temple, on foot. As the sun began to go down I quickly visited a few of the other holy sites before they closed, and made my way back to the temple for the evening meal. As is common in Japan both dinner and breakfast were included in the night's stay, but not just any meal; this was the famous vegetarian Buddhist cuisine devised by monks to conquer the lack of meat in their diet. While I couldn't tell you half of what I ate (so many colors and flavors and shapes), it was so good that I probably would never miss meat if I could



eat like that every day. After dinner I was shown back to my room to change, and then to the communal hot spring that was part of the temple. And here is where my first real challenge began, as in Japan, communal bathing is done in the nude. At first I was extremely nervous, partially due to my having a tattoo and navel piercing which are frowned upon here, but when I entered and found only one other woman in the woman's bath who paid absolutely no atten-

prayers. I slipped and scuffled my way after him in my recalcitrant slippers and, out of a misguided sense of duty, arranged myself in the kneeling pose customary for devotions. However, I had not counted on the prayers being longer than five minutes, and by the ten minute mark I was in considerable pain. Too stubborn to give up and appear like a failure midway through I tried my hardest to focus on the relaxing sonorous chanting and chiming of the prayers to keep

rubbery-legged way to a delicious meal.

Following the meal I quickly packed and took off to get a glance at some of the sites I had been unable to visit the night before, and reluctantly made my way back to the cable car to move on to the next stop on my itinerary. Even as we descended the mountain I could feel some of the residual peace from the night before, comforting me as I journeyed onward, alone in my thoughts.

Though I have not had the chance to go back to Mt. Koya since, the desire is never far from my heart. However, every time I revisit it in my thoughts I feel a faint shadow of the calm and connection that I was blessed with on that day, and cannot help but be thankful. Though I can't say for sure what produced it, I am sure it is still there, waiting for me and anyone else who is willing to let it in.

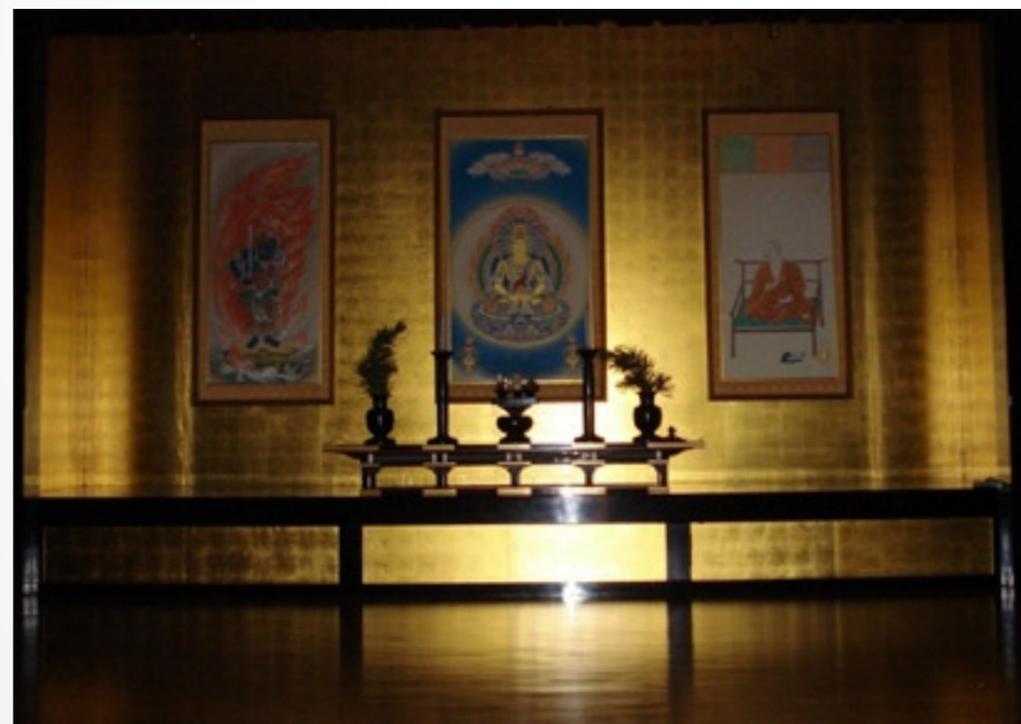
Elysse Hurtado is a first year CIR living in Ibaraki, where she fills all her new-found free time with books and writing and cooking and basically anything creative. Current projects include teaching herself Chinese, crocheting a random stuffed animal, a series of short-stories on her blog, and travelling as much as possible. Elysse misses having a social life very, very much.

tion to me I quickly relaxed and adopted a similar attitude.

Once I had my fill of the super-heated, purportedly healing waters I used trial and error to return to my room, drink some of the green tea provided, and watch some tv before stretching out for the night on the Japanese futon laid out on the floor for me while I had been bathing.

In the morning I was awoken at 6am by the priest from the night before, as I had elected to take part in the daily morning

my mind off the sharp, burning pains in my lower legs. When the prayers finally finished half an hour later I was so relieved to be able to get out of the pose that I didn't register that my legs had gone completely numb from the knees down. As the head monk waited for me to stand up so he could take me to my breakfast I was horrified to find that I couldn't even get up, let alone walk. After falling three or four times the monk gently insisted that I should wait until sensation came back, and five humiliating minutes later I was finally on my



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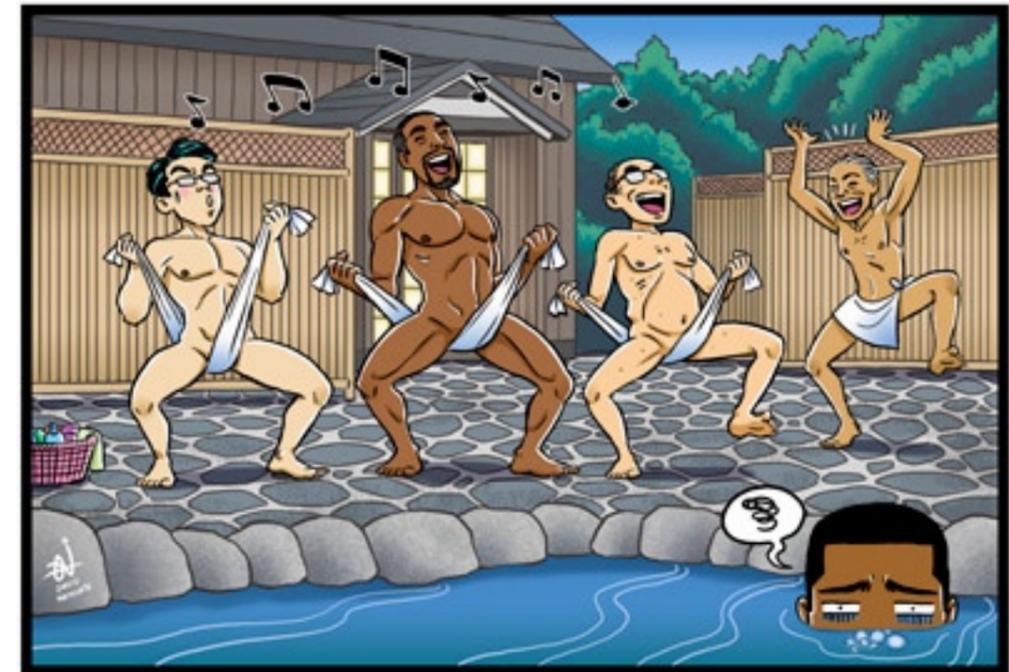
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Life After the B.O.E.

BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN, CIR, 2002-04)



You were worried that your dad would be weired out by your office at the onsen. Unfortunately, he fit right in.



The Land of a Million Elephants

CJ Stearns

“Are we there yet?” I grumbled like a five year old, staring blearily out of the plane window at the spinning prop.

After the tireless bustle of Vietnam and several days spent hiking the wondrous temples of Angkor, Cambodia, I was in need of some rest. It had been a long, beautiful month, but our trek through the lands of the Mekong was coming to a close. Only tranquil and “undiscovered” Lao PDR (People’s Democratic Republic), also known as ‘The Land of a Million Elephants’, was left waiting.

After a border check in Pakse we received our 30-day visas and flew the rest of the way to the capital of Vientiane to begin our tour of northern Laos. Resting only a river away from Thailand, Vientiane feels like it should be busier. Instead, the streets are quiet, the air is calm, and people stroll down wide, almost European avenues.

Even from the start Laos was surprising us – for though it acted and moved like a town that knows it’s forgotten, its capital did business like any tourist

hub would. Streets were lined with modern cafes and bookshops the likes of which you could find in any western city. There were tuk-tuks and street stalls and temples of course, but there were also modern fountains and gardens and benches. The atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed.

After a short few days in Vientiane, we left for the little town of Phonsavan (also known as Xieng Khouang to the locals) and its “Plain of Jars.” Where they came from, how old they are, or what they were used for, no one knows. Actually, the only “facts” that anyone has about the Jars are only pieces of educated guesswork. The only thing people know for sure is that there are thousands of large, solid stone jars between 1 and 3 meters in height and width standing on the hillsides of north-eastern Laos, and they have been there since long before anyone’s great-great-grandmother’s great-great grandmother can remember. Tour guides will try to tell you one of many stories about their origin, but in truth they know little more than you do. A carving on one single jar at Site 1 depicts a man with his arms spread wide and his knees bent – the only clue remaining about their history. The Jars are a megalithic mystery, and are being considered for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

Standing beside these ancient stone pots, there were two questions running through my mind – “What were these for?” and “Where are those MAG markers?” Sadly, during the war, eastern Laos became an uninhabitable bombing zone. Large bomb craters divot the Jar sites, having blasted many of them out of existence. What’s left is surrounded by tall grass riddled with UXO (Unexploded Ordnances).

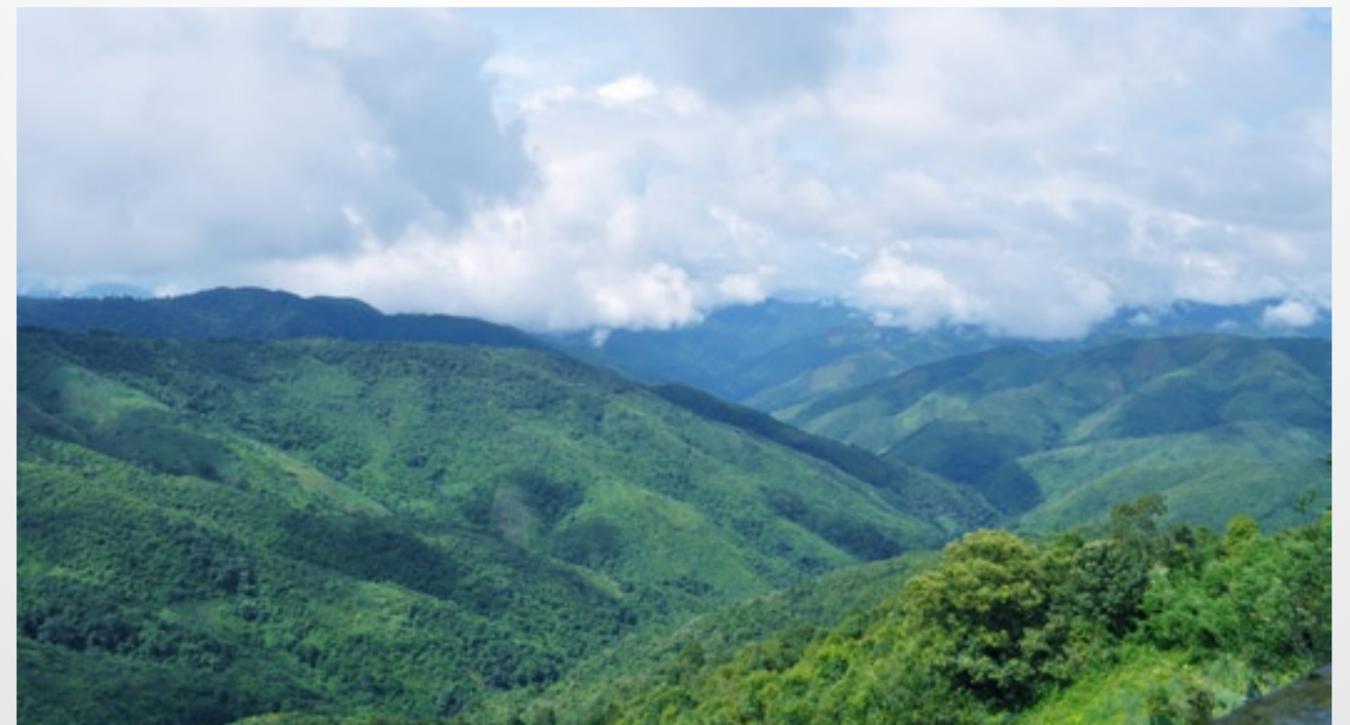
The Mines Advisory Group has gone through the Jar sites, clearing trails for visitors. They left markers on the sides of the trails, one side white, one side red. Stay on the white side, and you’re safe. Go on the red side, and things might get very literally ugly for you.

The Plain of Jars is not the only place in Laos that has had a lasting relationship with UXO. Hmong villages not far outside of Phonsavan (you can get a guided tour from any hotel in town) are also known as “bomb villages.” These villages were so littered with bombs that the people decided to use the metal from them to build their homes anew. Traditional Hmong stilt houses in the Phonsavan area stand on metal bombshells. Their animal troughs and fences are made of bombshells. Our guide, a young Hmong man, told us that there used to be more things made of bombshells, but the people have started selling the metal for money. It was a sad place to visit, but the people are a proud reminder of the resilient human spirit.

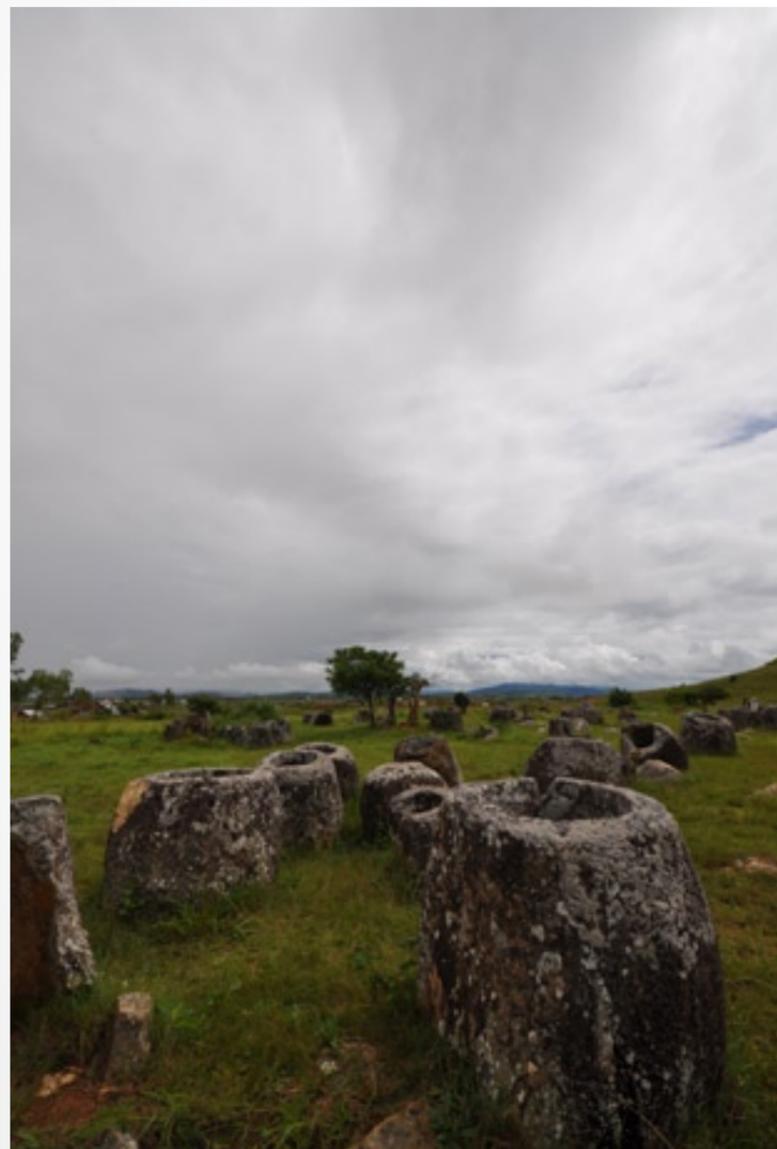
Leaving Phonsavan behind and heading back south, we came to a still small but only once quiet town called Vang Vieng. Now this is the place to get your relax on - and there is no place quite like it. A decade or so back, Vang Vieng was a haven for the wilderness explorer. A lush river valley surrounded by beautiful karst mountains, Vang Vieng is one of the best places in Laos for hiking, rafting, bicycling and tubing. In recent years, it has become an increasingly popular destination for tourists and expats. Currently, its main draws are the river tubing and the cafes.

No longer an empty, quiet wilderness in which to lose yourself, the Vang Vieng River Valley now offers its own unique tubing experience: floating down the river from bar to bar, losing yourself in booze and music instead. And if you can’t get enough of that when the day is over, there are the streets of open-air cafes in town that blast “Friends” re-runs nonstop. But keep in mind that those “special pizzas” and “happy shakes” might make you feel “happier” than you expect. Do not order unaware....

The road between the current Laotian capital and the ancient, Luang Prabang, is a beautiful one. The contrast between the country and the cities, however, is great. With the cafes and bookshops left far behind, the mountain villages are sadly impoverished. It seems the booming Laotian economy literally drives its business right past them. But the people, in typical Laotian style, are just as warm



and friendly there as they are anywhere in Laos. Passing through those mountains during the rainy season, the only road was often held up by mudslides (here as in anywhere in Laos, travel will be slow). However, the villagers came out of their homes and mountainside fields to help dig it out with smiles and teamwork. Digging my hands into the mud with them was an experience I won't soon forget.



At the end of our tour was Laos' greatest treasure: the ancient capital of Luang Prabang. It is so serene, the temples and French colonial architecture so lovely, that UNESCO deemed the entire city a World Heritage Site.

In Luang Prabang, saffron robed monks walk the streets, the Nam Khan and the Mekong flow together, and the jungle simmers. As recently as 2003, travelers say that Luang Prabang was a per-

fect unknown getaway, a chance to see a slice of real Laotian life, in one of the most beautiful cities on earth. But those days now seem to be on their way out. Though the town remains as beautiful as ever, five-star hotels and fancy restaurants are threatening to turn it into a hollow façade. As the tourist industry grips the main nerve of the town, it edges locals out and around it. Fortunately, this process is slow and for now, Luang Prabang goes on as it always has, despite the world pushing its way in. As long as the monks meditate (no pictures, please), the quiet night market continues its hum, and the waterfalls around the town stay pure, Luang Prabang will remain a jewel of the jungle.

In my experience, Laos is a land of surprising diversity, though I have only seen a very small part. However for a person who likes rough-and-tumble adventure and some mud on her shoes, and whose previous research told her that Laos was one of the last "undiscovered" nations, it felt pretty discovered. Though this may be a personal disappointment for me, I feel this is great news for the Laotian economy as it begins to pick itself up and follow the lead of Vietnam and the "Asian Tiger" economies. For the time being the big-hearted Laotians seem content with what they have, so I can only hope that Laos remembers to keep its culture and character intact as it slowly rouses itself and enters the world stage. Although the state of development in the tourist industry is slightly disappointing for the rough adventurer, it is perfect for someone a bit less rough that would like to see a still little-explored culture. I would say hurry to get there, but once you are in Lao PDR, do as the Laotians do, and Please Don't Rush.

CJ Stearns likes the wind in her hair, mud on her clothes, and the road moving beneath her feet. Between teaching some awesome kids in Hyogo prefecture and traveling, CJ is writing her blog, Culturewhore, at Wordpress.com. A shameless plug, but what can you do.



Diving from a Malaysian Oil Rig

Eryk Salvaggio

When I was a kid I dreamed about flying.

It was always simple in dreams. I'd wake up with the euphoric feeling of having figured something out: The secret to flying was to jump, then repeat the jump while still in mid-air. The younger me would attempt this repeatedly, the older me would let the dream die and go brush my teeth.

Somewhere in my subconscious, there's a pile of failed flying strategies. I remember sitting on a chair tied to a rope, and then pulling the rope, perplexed by my failure (I still can't really explain why that doesn't work).

The young scientist would take to the water and study the floating sensation, trying to reproduce it on land, seeking the holy grail of buoyancy.

Standing underneath a Malaysian oil rig some twenty years later, I've finally got it sorted.

Turtlegeist

On paper, sleeping on a decommissioned oil rig off the coast of Malaysia may look like your life has gone horribly awry, the end result of finding a suitcase full of cash or putting a vital organ up as collateral in a poker game with Kazakh gangsters.

It's actually the best vacation you can have in Asia.

Yes, sometimes my nose was filled with exhaust fumes or the oily grease from the freight elevator and my feet were caked with black residue every night. But all that was a small price to pay for a captivating and beautiful diving experience.

Most people don't visit Malaysia for the palm oil industry or the shark teeth traders. The lure of the seaside is the island of Sipadan. It was once called the best diving in the world by Jacques Cousteau, who made a film about the place in 1989 called "The Ghost of the Sea Turtle," which I hope is a school-horror film about the world's slowest poltergeist.

Sipadan, Cousteau said, was "an untouched work of art." It's the result of coral growing on the caldera of an undersea volcano and hosts about 3,000 species, which made fish spotting almost frenetic.

The rig has a house reef and is surrounded by ocean, so even my "controlled water dives" were in real reefs, far superior to the poor suckers in the PADI training DVD's who were hanging out in swimming pools until their third or fourth dive.

Cut My Line, Set Me Free

I rolled backwards from a boat and was suddenly underwater, breathing.

You're trained to breathe through your mouth and out through your nose, which clears water from your mask, which you've spit-polished at the surface to avoid fog.

You are instantly immersed in water and bizarre animals: Chocolate-chip starfish, pufferfish, sea turtles and underwater snakes pay absolutely no atten-



tion as you come to a graceless thud upon the ocean floor. The short hiss of your air regulator alternates with the sound of bubbles flowing to the surface.

Aside from the low rumblings of the occasional motorboats or the squeaking sound of pressurizing ears, all you can hear is your breath. Which is a crucial aspect of diving. Not just because you'd die without it, but because movement underwater is so dependent on your lungs. And bubbles are cool. Through plastic and saliva, I saw the silver half-circles of exhaled air escaping from other divers, rising to the surface like jellyfish. With enough people it's like floating in Alka-Seltzer. Poked bubbles stay intact, slipping around my fingers like blobs of mercury.

Your lungs become legs – or elevators – controlling your vertical position. Exhale and hold your breath and you'll descend, inhale and hold and you'll rise. This made breathing confusing, and some-

times I floated off as though I'd had too many Fizzy Lifting Drinks in the Bubble Room.

But you're flying. The controls were surprisingly intuitive, shockingly reminiscent of those boyhood dreams where I jumped and then jumped again while jumping. That works underwater, and if you are in an artificial reef you can fly over houses and machines and feel like you've suddenly made your inner 9-year-old really proud, so proud, in fact, that you will probably pee your pants, but perhaps that is not from joy so much as the salt water and the pressure of the sea upon your bladder.

I'll Be the Lost Sailor

Writing about the world under the sea is a lot like writing about dreams. It's difficult to relate to the experience without having been there, and so these vivid and surreal experiences get reduced to some simple common vocabulary. Choose your own awkward metaphor:

A snowstorm of fish; standing next to wallpaper made of fish; replacing your eyeglasses with a fish, etc.

Trumpetfish, starfish, squirrelfish, dogfish. The Celebes Sea can append the word "fish" to any noun you can think of and make it into a real thing.

So, yes, I saw a lot of fish. I saw walls of rock and discarded house frames coming to life thanks to coral and anemones. I saw an octopus change colors three times. I saw a sleeping shark. I was nearly grazed by an indignant sea turtle. I was surrounded by a tornado of silver scales and hung upside down to look at a grouper the size of a German Shepherd. I was glared at by a barracuda and smiled at by clownfish.

I don't know what the trumpetfish was doing, but there is a thing called a trumpetfish down there, hanging out looking like a trumpet.

I Want To Live In a Bathysphere

This isn't what Jacques Cousteau wanted me to get out of my Sipadan diving experience, but now there are lots of things I'd like to someday throw into the sea.

I'd like to see my doomed 2002 Hyundai Accent – rotting away in my parent's driveway – covered with pink and yellow anemones standing guard over yellow and white clownfish. Let's throw a shopping mall under water! Escalators caked with barna-

The take-home message of the diving rig seems to be that whatever we throw into the ocean will become beautiful eventually. Let's not take that lesson too seriously, I guess.

Like a Fish in a Goldfish Bowl

No one seems to talk about the sensual experience of diving. It's hallucinogenic: Your body moves differently, your perception of time goes faster, internal body parts start moving you. Clumsy land-lubbing metaphors only go so far toward an accu-

all; somewhere in our genes is all the information we would ever need to become a fish, just outpaced by evolution and outdated by our bodies.

And yet, the human body does not become more beautiful under the sea. Salt water and pressurization do all kinds of awful things that nobody ever tells you about. Water seeped into my body and turned me into a sagging prune of flesh. Divers have to pee so badly that everyone openly urinates through their swimsuit and into the sea (No wonder the turtles are annoyed). You spit on your mask to stop the fog; snot and phlegm get hucked up through your nostrils and form green strings across your face.

At night, you're forced into the heavy toil of rig life, which involves eating too much delicious food, drinking reasonably priced beer and listening to awesome Malaysian guys cover Bon Jovi songs while you play board games.

If the generator is working, you'll lie your head down in an air conditioned room to the distinct sensation of rising and falling with every breath, and see fish coming through the darkness of your eyelids to carry you off to sleep.

Peeing in your pants is a small price to pay.

Eryk Salvaggio is a second-year ALT based in Fukuoka. He runs a blog about the Japanese expat experience, online at thisjapaneselife.org.



cles, sea fans stretching out on clothes hangers, sea turtles resting in elevator shafts.

Beneath the rig, a giant steel letter "A" was being devoured by coral. The fish are living among pneumatic tubes and pipes once put to some unknown but undeniably filthy industrial purpose, resurrected as the skeleton of some oceanic cyborg.

rate description; they are the linguistic equivalent of wearing diving fins on land.

When I closed my eyes at night, I could feel myself rising and falling with my breath. I saw a treehouse with a giant fish tied to it for use as a staircase. It would seem there is something about a fish that taps into some fundamental starting strand of our DNA. We were fish once, after

AJET PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST!

Entries Close 20 November 2011

Welcome to AJET Connect's monthly photography contest! Submissions relevant to the JET experience are welcomed from current JET Programme participants. Your submission will be featured in the NEXT issue where our readers can vote on their choice for the best photograph. The winning entries will be entered in the yearly AJET Photography Contest.

To Enter

- 1_your name
- 2_your mailing address
(this will not be published)
- 3_your JET number
(this will not be published)
- 4_a title and brief caption describing the scene

Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Send your entries to contest@ajet.net. Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter. In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.

Ownership/ Use Rights

Photographers retain the rights to their photograph. By entering the contest, photographers agree to have their submitted photograph published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Photos will be credited to the author named in the entry form.

FOOD



Of bounty and banquet

Simon Daly

The yukimushi (Prociphius oriens) are whispering in my garden of the snow soon to fall and I am starting to get excited about the upcoming celebrations where food comes to the fore. It is an interesting dichotomy sometimes to be a “Westerner” from the southern hemisphere. We have the memory of warming food at festive times entrenched somewhere deep in the collective unconscious, but it is oftentimes out of sync with the topsy-turvy seasons I grew up with. My time spent in the north has made me appreciate dense cakes, spiced pies and roasted meats with rich gravies more than I ever have before. Fortifying foods make so much more sense when they coincide with the seasonal cycle. Being in Japan I usually have to make them myself, but that is all part of the fun. I cook well in large part because I cook often, whether for my family or for friends, it is always appreciated, but it has had unexpected upsides too.

Knowing what spices go into a pumpkin or sweet potato pie has not only helped me make them for acquaintances (along with the implied obligatory personal consumption) but also it has helped in the classroom. It would be time consuming and expensive to make enough pie for all of the students I teach, but what could be simpler than mixing together some cinnamon, nutmeg, clove and allspice in a jar so that everyone can everyone can share at least the scent of autumn indulgences? Even better, take them separately and whole. Sense memories are so strong (particularly smell for reasons unbeknown to me) that not only will

this have you reminiscing about eggnog, but what is more you may be able to engage with subsections of the classroom who might otherwise not be so simply enticed into cultural studies.

I guarantee you that a mere jar of spices will elicit interested and surprised noises from your students and fellow teachers, the down side of this however is that it will only serve to increase your own cravings. To that end I have this month gone to great lengths to come up with the simplest and most foolproof from scratch apple pie you have ever seen, so much so that it doesn't even require a pie tin. You will of course need to learn how to use the hidden oven settings on your undersized microwave, but it will be well worth it. With your newfound thermal proficiency you will likely find that, whether for thanksgiving or just for personal enjoyment, the other sweet treats of the harvest are simpler than you think. You will of course need to make some substitutes, but Japanese pumpkins and sweet potatoes work as fine substitutes for their North American counterparts. Carrots on the other hand, as in Jess's recipe, are pretty much the same wherever you go.

Food is best shared and this sharing is usually best done in person, however we are a scattered and sometimes sparse community. If you cook something and want to share it I would love to hear from you. I am also happy to field requests for the recipes or ingredients you would like to see covered in the AJET Connect food section. Happy Thanksgiving.



Dumplings Aomori

Japanese Apples in vodka pastry
Serves 2 or 4 depending how hungry you are.

Simon Daly

I love to know where my food comes from and while it does not determine everything I buy, it is something I factor in when I shop. Where I can I like to buy food from local producers. On top of factors such as personal preference, value for money and where possible organic manufacturing, how far food has had to travel to get to my table is something I believe is really worth thinking about. That said, different areas are better for growing or producing different food products and so for the best quality ingredients one needs to be flexible. The area I live in would be great if all I wanted to eat was giant crabs, scallops and milk, but I for one could not live by these products alone. Then of course there is the four months a year that Hokkaido is hidden under ice and snow.

Our home garden was a bounty of vegetables, herbs and berries this year and if I don't drink

another homemade mint-laden mojito diablo for six months my body will probably thank me. I would have loved to be able to grow more fruit except that fruiting trees for the most part need to be well established before they produce much that is worthwhile. Over the last long weekend my family decided to make a trip to pick some late season fruit in a town in Hokkaido famous for its apples called Niki-cho. We also picked the very last of the prune plums and grapes they had on offer. In typical fashion it came up in conversation with people around us that by reputation Aomori apples were by far the best in Japan. I decided I should research the subject more.

Contrary to what you may be assuming I was not on a quest to prove that good apples could be found from regions other than Aomori. I was on the search for Japan's best cooking apple. My New Zealand cooking heritage decrees that the best cooking apple is a Granny Smith, but I have not come across them here. I assume it is because Granny Smiths are small, tart and green with leathery skins that they are not more popular here whereas most apples I have eaten in Japan are large, sweet and watery with paper-thin skin. Of

course the first apple I looked for was the omnipresent Fuji and to my surprise the name had nothing to do with the mountain. It comes in fact from the it was developed in the town of Fujisaki (藤崎) in (of course) Aomori. I new that I didn't want to use Fuji apples, but I had no idea what other varieties of Japanese apples were out there.

The thought hit me that perhaps I could investigate what varieties of apples Japanese people liked to cook and I was astonished when I found out that baked apples are actually not uncommon in Japan in the form of Yakiringo (焼きりんご). What surprised me most was that although I had never come across them in Japan until now, they were so well known that everybody I talked to knew exactly what I was talking about. I sourced some recipes to try to find out what sort of apples were best for baking in the Japanese opinion however they were not particularly enlightening. Time and again it was the same huge pink apples in every recipe I looked at. It was, in the end, only by chance that I did find a variety of Japanese apples that are renowned for cooking. The well know Crispin apple is actually originally from Japan and was originally called a Mutsu. Mutsu is the name of a historical province in Japan that at its height covered the entire area that is now Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate and Aomori as well as some parts of Akita and the huge distinctive bay in Aomori still bears this name.

The question then moved to what to do with the apples. For many people there is not much better than an apple pie, but they can be tedious to make. I had been kindly passed on a recipe for Vodka pastry, which I have reworked here, but I had a suspicion that it might be too much work for many out there to make pastry from scratch as well as preparing a filling. Apples baked in pastry have many names but are most commonly known as Amish Dumplings. This recipe is a real amalgamation of knowledge and cultures, of traditional food and new ideas. I am quietly quite confident that Michael Pollan would agree with me when I say that simply prepared, this most desired of botanicals could not be a more fitting way to give thanks for friends and family.

Homemade vodka pastry

- » 1 cup of flour
- » 1 tablespoon sugar
- » Small pinch of salt
- » 2 tablespoons cold butter
- » 2 tablespoons vegetable shortening
- » ¼ cup of cold vodka

For the filling

- »2 apples
- »2 teaspoons brown sugar
- »1 teaspoon cinnamon
- »2 teaspoons of butter
- »2 cloves

Mix flour, sugar and salt in a bowl for your pastry. Add cold butter and vegetable shortening and "rub into" the flour. If you have a food processor add all these ingredients and pulse for a few seconds until the mixture is sandy and completely combined. Sprinkle a little cold vodka at a time over the mixture and fold through with a rubber spatula. You want the dough to become a little tacky and slightly pliable, but not so sticky that it is impossible to work with. Cover your pastry and leave to rest in the fridge.

Note: Adding vodka to the pastry is a stroke of genius (thanks Rob and instructables.com) as it allows you to add more liquid to your pastry than you usually would and this makes it easier to work with. The vodka however cooks out of the pastry much more easily than water would so as to leave the finished product wonderfully crisp.

With a small sharp knife cut into the stalk end of your apple and remove the core making sure to not right through to the bottom. You want to leave the bottom of the apple sealed so that the filling does not ooze out and ruin your pastry. Repeat with your second apple. Mix together brown sugar cinnamon and butter and fill the cavities of the apples.

Remove your pastry from the refrigerator and cut it in half. With your hand press one half onto the bottom of the apple and quickly but carefully work it around to completely encompass your apple, pushing it with your thumbs little by little. Bring the pastry up to a join over the sugar and butter filled opening at the top. Press a clove into the top to mimic an apple stalk.

Place apples on a baking tray and cook in an oven preheated to 180 degrees Celsius for 25 minutes or until the pastry lightly colours and crisps. DO NOT serve immediately from the oven. Leave the apples to cool for at least ten minutes to and then serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. Half an apple would represent a small slice of pie, or a whole apple a much larger piece (approximately twice the size). How much you decide to eat in the end is none of my business. Enjoy.



Spiced Carrot Cake with Caramel Glaze and Orange-Rum Cream Cheese Icing

Jessie Laggis

Warning – baking multi-layer cakes in a typical Japanese kitchen takes a LONG time. And if you don't bake often and therefore have to buy every ingredient on this list, it won't be cheap either. That being said, if you've got a special, cake-necessitating occasion, and you like carrot cake and/or butter (it takes 2 200g packs of butter), this cake will change your life.

Ingredients for the cake

- » 1 cup (250ml) unsalted butter, plus more for pans
- » 1 1/4 cups (310ml) all purpose flour, plus more for pans
- » 1 1/4 cups (310ml) whole-wheat flour
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) baking powder
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) baking soda
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) ground cinnamon
- » 2 tsp. (10ml) ground ginger

- » 1 tsp. (5ml) kosher salt
- » 1/2 tsp. (2.5ml) ground allspice
- » 1 cup (250ml) sweetened flaked coconut
- » 1/2 cup (125ml) finely ground almonds
- » 3 cups (750ml) finely grated carrots
- » 1 1/2 (375ml) cups packed dark brown sugar
- » 3 eggs, separated
- » 1/2 (125ml) cup plain yogurt
- » 1/4 cup (60ml) orange juice
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) orange zest
- » 1 tsp. (5ml) vanilla extract



Ingredients for the caramel glaze and icing

- » 12 tbsp. (180ml) unsalted butter (yes, really)
- » 1/2 cup (125ml) sugar
- » 1/4 cup (60ml) buttermilk (I haven't found this in Japan, but you can curdle milk with a dash of vinegar)
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) light corn syrup or simple syrup
- » 3/4 tsp. (4ml) baking soda
- » 1 1/2 tsp. (7.5ml) vanilla extract
- » 1/2 cup (125ml) mascarpone cheese (if you can't find this, just substitute an equal amount of cream cheese, though large department stores and Jupiter usually have it)
- » 3 8-oz. packages cream cheese or 3.5 200g packages of cream cheese
- » 2 tbsp. (30ml) dark or spiced rum
- » 1 tbsp. (15ml) orange zest
- » 1 box (1-lb.) or about 830ml confectioners' sugar
- » 2 cups (500ml) finely chopped walnuts (available at Carrot, Jupiter, or nice grocery stores)

Step 1

To make the cake. Heat your oven to 350° F/180°C (but if you're working with a Japanese "moven," you might want to crank that up a notch or two). Butter and flour a 9" round baking pan and set it aside. If you've got access to something that holds more than one cake pan, go ahead and butter up 3 pans, but otherwise you're going to be baking just one layer at a time. I got tired of standing around and forced this into two layers instead of three. It worked fine but my top layer was a bit rounded. I don't mind a rounded cake, but if you're a perfectionist, stick to three layers. Heat the butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat; cook until it browns, stirring occasionally. Stick that in the fridge and chill it until it is solid-ish. Tip: pour your butter into a pre-chilled bowl to speed this process along. DO NOT put a heavy bottomed sauce pan in the fridge to cool like I did. It will take hours.

Step 2

While your butter is chilling, whisk together your flours, baking powder and soda, cinnamon, ginger, salt, and allspice in a good sized bowl. Finely grind coconut and almonds in a food processor (or buy them already ground – I found them at Jupiter). Combine nut mixture, carrots, and flour mixture; mix.

Step 3

In a bowl, beat together your now-solidified-browned butter and brown sugar until fluffy (about 1–2 minutes); beat in yolks one at a time. Add the yogurt, juice, zest, and vanilla; beat some more.

Add the flour mixture; beat a bit more. Whisk egg whites to stiff peaks (this means when you pull your whisk or mixer out the egg whites actually stand up at the departure point); carefully fold into batter. Mix as little as possible – the goal is to keep all those nice airy bubbles you just killed your arm putting into those egg whites. Divide the batter between pans, or guesstimate a third of the batter and pour that into 1 pan. Smooth top(s) with a spatula. Bake for 30–35 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Step 4

While your layers are baking, you can work on the glaze and the icing: In a sauce pan, combine 4 tbsp. (60 ml) butter, sugar, buttermilk, syrup, and baking soda; boil. Cook until dark, (about 3–4 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in 1/2 tsp. vanilla. This will thicken as it cools. Remove cakes from pans; transfer, right side up, to racks. Spread the glaze over each warm cake and let cool. The glaze will soak into the cake and more or less disappear, so it's still easy to ice.

Step 5

In a bowl, beat the remaining butter, mascarpone, and cream cheese with a mixer until smooth. Add the remaining vanilla, rum, zest, and sugar; beat and then chill for at least 20 minutes. Spread 1 1/4 cups (300 ml) icing evenly over 2 cake layers; stack the two iced layers and top with the remaining layer. Frost the top and sides, then press the walnuts onto the sides. If you can fit it in your fridge, chill before serving.

Jess Laggis is a 2nd year ALT in Sapporo where she lives with her husband, Brian, and all of his microbes. Suffice it to say that she spends large amounts of time roaming the Hokkaido mountains, playing the banjo, and experimenting with various edible and non-edible concoctions in the kitchen.





Pumpkin Ale

Brian Laggis

Having the ability to concoct your very own seasonally inspired ales is one of the best parts about being a homebrewer. Trying to capture the character of each season in a bottle can be a challenging, but rewarding process. Fall provides one of the best opportunities for such an adventure with its distinct flavors and colors. For me, pumpkin pie is one of the ultimate fall pleasures and every Autumn I try to transform its deliciousness into beer form. Which is always, well... delicious!

Using pumpkin as an ingredient in alcoholic beverages dates back to the first wave of American settlers who used it to make "beer". They used the plentiful pumpkins they had as a replacement for malted barley, the key constituent of beer, which was either unavailable or too expensive in the new world. In those days, beer was more than just a party in a barrel – it was a means of hydration. In Western Europe during that period, water was little more than a handy way to move sewage around so people rarely drank it. The brewing process kills most of the bugs that cause us to get sick so beer

was an essential part of their lives. In fact, it was probably a common sight to see entire families raising a disease free pint at dinnertime - drink up little Suzie. The first 'merkins brought the same phobia with them for the motherland, among other things, and thus the pumpkin beer was born.

Today's pumpkin beers are a far cry from the originals brewed by those early settlers, but they are probably much more delicious. The pumpkin actually gives little flavor to the beer so adding pumpkin is really just a fun way to embrace the spirit of the fall harvest (so if you're concerned about not being able to find those pretty orange globes you're used to, don't worry). The real character typically comes from the liberal use of pumpkin pie spices – most notably – cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, clove and allspice. It is important to keep in mind that there are a multitude of styles in this category, ranging from hearty pumpkin stout to crisp pumpkin wheat. I've brewed a quite a few in the past, but my favorite has to be a light colored Pumpkin Pie Flavored Ale. It really allows the spices to shine, while the hops and roasted malts take more of a supporting role. If you want to brew something akin to pie in a glass this one is probably your best bet.



If you are interested in homebrewing, but don't know where to start - I would suggest reading my article in the October issue for more details.

Preparing the Pumpkin - As far as pumpkins go - any will do (I used the green Japanese variety). I would suggest using smaller pumpkins if possible as they are sweeter and easier to work with. Bake the pumpkin until slightly browned - at around 200 degrees for about an hour (If you don't have the means to bake you, boil the pumpkin until soft). Before using it in the following recipe, be sure to mash it up with a potato masher or the back of a spoon.

EXTRACT METHOD:

Ingredients*

- » 1kg Crystal 60 Malt
- » 4kg Pale Liquid Malt Extract
- » 5 to 6 Cups of processed pumpkin
- » 60 g Hallertauer hops
- » 5g Irish Moss**
- » 1.5 tablespoons of Pumpkin Pie Spice ***
- » 1 packet of American Ale Yeast

Step 1

Bring your brewing water up to 68 degrees and soak 1kg of Crystal 60 and the mashed pumpkin for 45 minutes in a muslin sack, maintaining a more or less constant temperature.

Step 2

Remove the sack from the water and raise the temperature, stirring in the Malt extract as it comes to a boil.

Step 3

After the water begins to boil add half of your hops and start your 60 minute timer.

Step 4

At 15 minutes, add the spices and the Irish Moss

Step 5

At 3 minutes, add the rest of your hops.

Step 6

Remove from heat and cool down to 20 degrees

Step 7

Pitch your yeast and ferment for 2 weeks

Step 8

Bottle with 3/4 cup of sugar and bottle condition for 2 weeks

ALL-GRAIN

Ingredients*

- » 5kg 2-Row American Malt (2 Lovibond)
- » 1kg Crystal 60 Malt
- » 60 g Hallertauer hops
- » 5g Irish Moss**
- » 1.5 tablespoons of Pumpkin Pie Spice ***
- » 1 packet of American Ale Yeast

Step 1

Mash the grain and pumpkin at 67 degrees for 90 minutes and sparge as usual.

Step 2

Continue from step number three above

*All measurements are given in metric (sorry 'merkins)

**Irish Moss is a clarifying agent and is optional

***Pumpkin Pie spice can be made by combining 1 part cinnamon, 1/2 part ginger, 1/4 part nutmeg and 1/4 part allspice (or cloves).





WORKPLACE TIPS



CELTA

A Personal Experience

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

This is my second time around in Japan. The first time, I taught adult language classes at one of the big language schools. I enjoyed my time there and ended on a high note, with a teacher of the month award and a glowing reference. I had found my niche as an ESL teacher. On the other hand, in my three years with the school, I was frequently faced with my inadequate knowledge of the basic workings of my own language. Students would point out the oddities of a language point – let's say, for example, the use of the articles 'a' and 'the' – and my reply would be, 'Huh, I've never thought about that...let me get back to you.'

I knew that if teaching ESL was in my future, more training was necessary, and things clicked into place when I discovered a CELTA course in my home province, starting less than a month after my return home to Canada. CELTA, or the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, is a professional credential held by many ESL teachers. It is globally recognized, which makes it popular with native English speakers who want to travel and teach abroad. The courses are run by institutions all over the world – there's one in Japan, in Kobe, which is run on weekends by Language Resources - but all of the courses are validated and certificates are issued by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

(UCLES), a part of the University of Cambridge. It is highly prized in European countries, although the TEFL is more well-known in North America.

The CELTA is awarded upon passing the course, which includes six hours of assessed teaching practice to real classes at two or more different levels of ability – in my case, basic and intermediate. The course grade is determined primarily by the performance of the candidates in this teaching practice; there are also four written assignments due throughout the course, which are graded on a pass/fail basis only. The final grades awarded in CELTA are Pass, Pass B and Pass A.

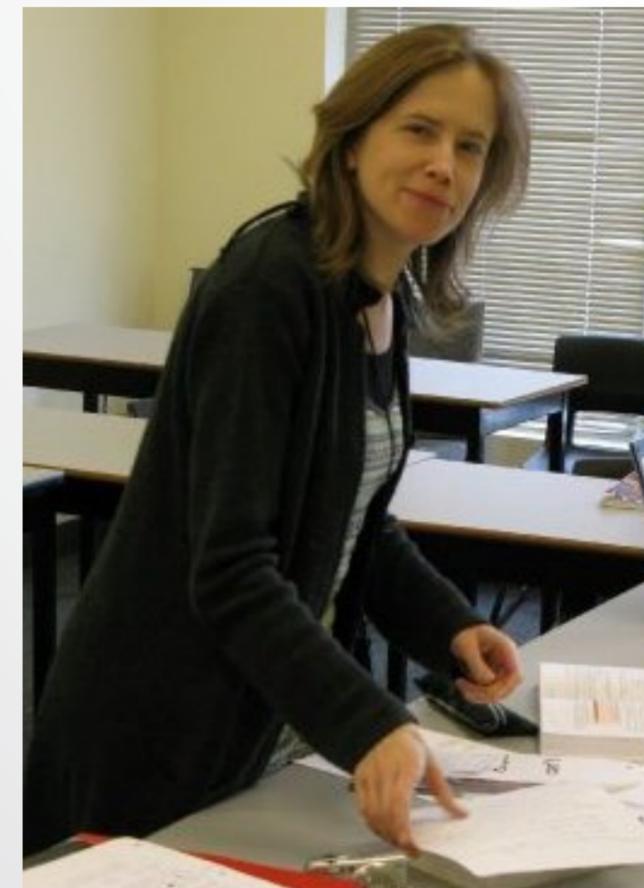
The full-time four-week course is very intensive. Even the part-time version of the course can take up more time than a full-time job for many candidates, especially those with no teaching background.

I applied and underwent a brutal phone interview, but was relieved by the end of it to hear that I had been accepted. While waiting for the course to start, I did my homework assignments – a series of about 50 questions designed to get the applicant thinking about the various aspects of teaching ESL, from the nuts and bolts of English grammar to classroom management.

For the four weeks of the course, I worked harder than I ever had in my life. Throughout high school and university, I'd been a lackluster student with no clear goals, but in that cold January, I had a

fiery will to succeed. I needed it. The average day started at 8:30am, when we taught English to volunteers – mostly immigrants to Canada or international students, of different ages and nationalities – for three hours, and then received feedback on our work and a grade, consisting of "below standard," "to standard" or "above standard." After lunch we came back for our own classes, studying teaching methods such as Test-Teach-Test and PPP, plus student learning styles and the history of the various methodologies of ESL teaching. It was a lot of information to take in. Then in the evenings we made our lesson plans and wrote our assignments. Over the four weeks, we had four assignments focusing on important aspects of ESL. One was a grammar analysis assignment, for example, while another was an in-depth study and needs analysis of a particular student. I was introduced to the excellent book, 'Learning Teaching,' though I most certainly had no time to read it until after the course. Every day was very different, and every day was very long.

A major aspect of the course was also the people involved. Our tutors were knowledgeable but strict, forcing us to rely on ourselves rather than seeking answers from them. My fellow classmates included a missionary, a tough, matronly housewife



in her fifties, a driven MBA student, other recent returnees from Japan and Korea, and a few twentysomethings, not long out of university. Despite the crazy schedule, we had time for sushi and karaoke, beers at a redneck bar and visits to the Saturday farmers' market. One fellow student from Florida fell in love with the Canadian winter and enjoyed such Canadian delicacies as ketchup chips. (An American friend of mine who did the CELTA in Seville wholeheartedly recommends travelling abroad to do your CELTA – he said it enriched his experience immensely).

Of course, in four weeks, you can't learn all the grammar that you would need to teach ESL. But the number one skill I took away from the experience was the ability to analyze language. Being able to explain the form, meaning and use of a word, a sentence or an expression to a person who has never experienced it before, and learning the skills needed to check their comprehension of that information, were vital to my growth as a teacher.

In my Oral Communication classes in Japanese high schools, the grammatical skills don't actually come up that often. But even in the dialogues the students practice, the words they must learn, the games we introduce, the ability to give instructions or demonstrate the meaning of a key point of English and to check that they are understood are key to a smoothly operating classroom with happy, motivated students.

Four weeks is a short time, but I had squeezed everything I could from it. In the end, receiving that diploma felt like a real achievement – something to be proud of.

You can find out more from the CELTA website:

www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/celta/index.html

For those primarily interested in teaching children, another qualification offered by Cambridge is the CELTYL—the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Young Learners. Like the CELTA, it runs as a full-time course for four weeks. It is equal in status, having the same number of hours of instruction, teaching observation, and supervised teaching practice, but focuses on the teaching of children.



Notes from Classroom

Nadeshiko

Dana Vielmetti

When the U.S. played Japan in the Women's World Cup soccer final this past summer, it seemed like a win-win for me. "Who are you going to root for?" asked friends who knew I'd soon be embarking on the JET Program. Deep down of course I wanted the U.S. to win, but after Japan's tireless play, dramatic comeback and the heart-wrenching images of March 11 shown at halftime, I was extremely happy to see Nadeshiko raise the trophy for their stricken country.

Now when the U.S. won the Women's World Cup in 1999 I was ten years old, and it was a huge deal. The women were on the cover of major magazines and getting interviews and endorsements all over the place. They were heroes to thousands of little girls across the country; I could name every player. I think a lot of America's success in women's sports can be attributed to that one win. I still have my Wheaties box with Mia Hamm on the front.

As an avid soccer player since age four, I couldn't wait to get to Japan, where I was sure people would still be celebrating and women's soccer would be enjoying a surge in popularity. Imagine my disbelief when in my first self-introduction lesson I found that not one of my students had watched the game. Nor a single student in the next class. Or the one after that. Eventually I came across one or two people who had seen the match, or at least highlights on the news. Granted, the game was shown in the wee hours of the morning over here in Asia, but it was the World Cup, for goodness sake! My awesome plan to bond with high schoolers over a love of soccer and Homare Sawa was met with blank stares.

I have to admit I don't really have a good finger on popular culture here right now, given my illiteracy and lack of a TV, but no one seems to be talking about Nadeshiko! I've seen a mention or two in the English newspaper about the players getting a raise in their semi-pro league and receiving an award from the Prime Minister, but nothing else. I have yet to bring up the game and receive more than a polite smile.

There is no girls' soccer team at the high school where I teach, only a boys' team. As an American, and a female athlete used to Title IV, it seems pretty wrong. Here baseball, another boys-only sport, is king. Just like football in the U.S. I don't know if there would have been more excitement had it been the men's team winning it all. It could just be the not-so-distant tragedy or the reserved nature of the Japanese people that caused their (in my eyes) muted response. To me, one thing seems clear. If the precise play and powerful storyline of Nadeshiko can't start a revolution in Japanese women's sports, I don't know what will!

Speak Louder Please!

The first time I played BINGO with Japanese students I might as well have been in a nursing home. "Bingo," someone whispered, as he stared down at his card and reached a timid hand approximately one centimeter past his shoulder. "BINGO!" I shouted, excitedly rushing to his desk to fan out my awesome patriotic prize stickers and simultaneously convincing 26 people I was completely crazy.

It's not a lack of interest in the game that causes this less-than-thrilled reaction. The students mark their answer cards quite seriously and announce "ichi" (one space to go) each time as if we're playing UNO. Nor is it the silly prize. Oh no, Japanese high schoolers around stickers are like kids in a candy shop, as every ALT knows. In actuality I think the kids love BINGO, and they just don't show it. Well, maybe they just don't show it like a typical American would when he or she wins. Here in Japan I have realized winning can be more embarrassing than exciting to some kids.

I have taken to announcing before every class now that we are going



to play "U.S. BINGO." I tell them this means they must throw their hand up, yell like they've won the lottery, and practically jump out of their chair. This always gets a laugh, but rarely do they then produce the desired effect. It truly seems to pain them to say anything loudly.

Take for another example Reading class, during which we often "read around the room." Each student reads one sentence of the paragraph aloud so as to practice speaking, and everyone else follows along. After basically every other sentence I feel compelled to say "speak louder please!" The students whisper the sentences like there is a burglar in the room, even when they are saying the words perfectly. Every time this happens I picture a traditional, old high school English teacher in the U.S. screaming "Speak up boy!" and rapping on the quiet student's desk.

I've tried everything to change this behavior (minus the desk rap-

ping). I cup my hands and yell "speak louder please." I put my hand behind my ear in mock exasperation. I ask the other side of the room if they can hear. The JTE implores in Japanese. I have everyone practice repeating sentences loudly after me. I've threatened a screaming contest outside. I've explained the importance of speaking confidently in another country. I've tried to bribe them with prizes for the loudest reader. "NOTHING WORKS!" I want to shout. Then again, maybe I should whisper.

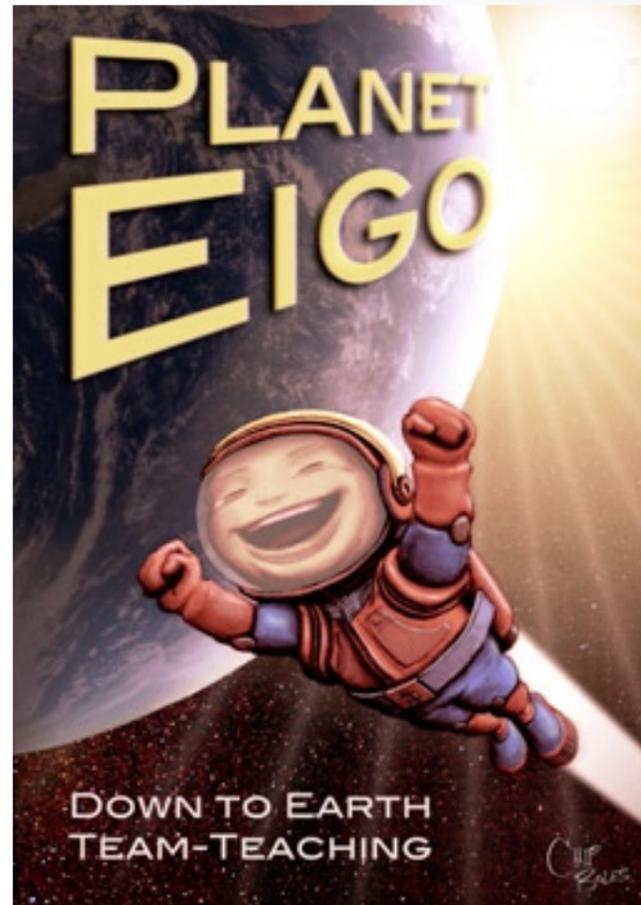


AJET BOOKS

Planet Eigo

¥4,000 non AJET member *
¥3,000 AJET member *

Planet Eigo is a collection of lesson plans and helpful teaching methods specifically designed for team-teaching in Japan. In addition to lesson plans, activities and games, Planet Eigo includes nearly 100 pages of detailed explanations on Team Teaching, Learning Theory, Instructional Planning and even has a section dedicated to teaching in Elementary Schools. Planet Eigo is also written with English and Japanese side by side, and is spiral bound for easy photocopying.

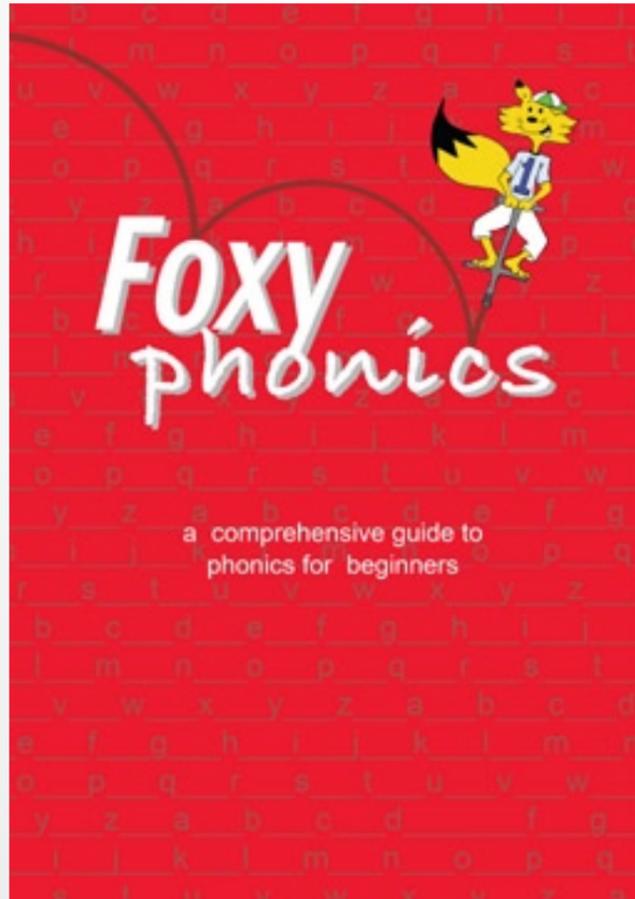


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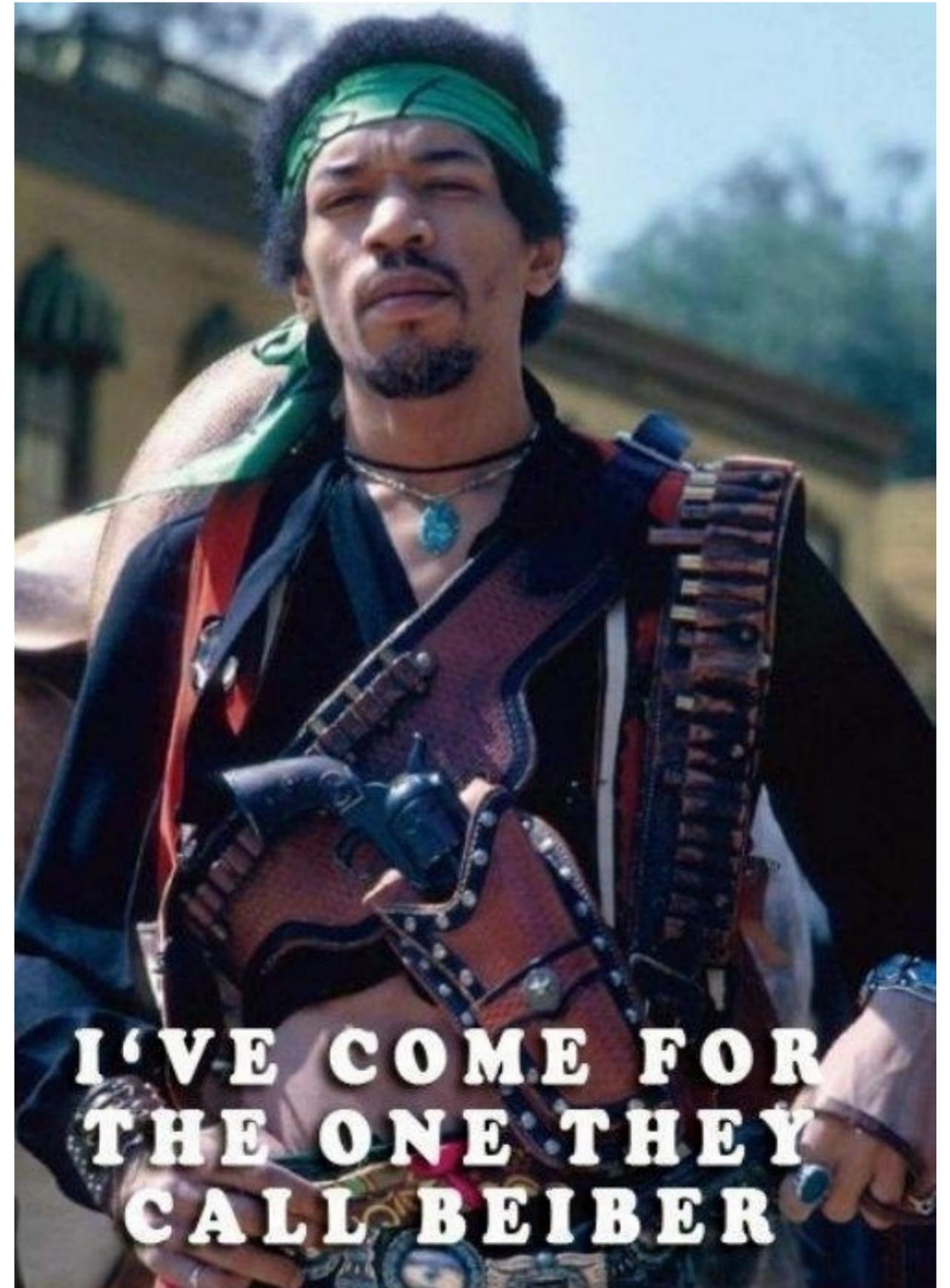
Foxy Phonics

¥2,000 non AJET member *
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Studies show that learning phonics in the beginning stages of language instruction is important for proper language development. Starting with the basic sounds, this book teaches phonics of English to students with over 100 worksheets, illustrations, phonics activities, and tongue twisters. This book is sure to set katakana English in its place.



Foxy Phonics and Planet Eigo can be ordered via email publications@ajet.net



this' the f**king watermark of 9GAG.COM

THE AJET CONNECT MONTHLY HAIKU CONTEST

**Create a haiku?
and maybe even a few?
don't mind if I do...**

Whether you're an experienced poet, or have never written poetry before, let inspiration strike and send us your haiku! Every month we accept haikus from JETs across Japan. Readers can vote on the best, and the winning entry will be entered into the annual contest next spring!

Voting is underway now - please vote for your choice.

Start counting out the words and composing!

This Month's Haiku

ENGLISH

PS3 Controller
Every curve I know
I push your buttons and play
Let me turn you on

Mike Livesey

Kanji Studies
Black symbols, white paper
Kanji makes difficult read
Achievement: watery eyes

Kezumie Weekley

careless in the sky
busy people toil below
freedom of a cloud

Richard Duffy

No tears on a cheek.
The pain, excruciating.
I feel not a thing.

Rainer Phillip Wessels

At the kyudojo
When I looked at the target
I saw my own face

Julia Mace

VOTE at
ajet.net/haiku

JAPANESE

心には
周りとともに
変化する
One's heart
along with it's surroundings
transforms

By Nathan Lysne

東山
風流だな
花盛り
higashiyama,
fuuryuu da na,
hanazakari.

Eastern mountain,
How elegant,
In bloom.

By Nick Hallsworth

地下鉄か
建物見える
地下は嘘
ちかてつか
たてのみえる
ちかはうそ

Subway, eh
I can see buildings
subway my ass

By Lena LeRay

Entries due November 20

Submissions should be original haiku accompanied by:

- 1_ your name
- 2_ your mailing address (this will not be published)
- 3_ your JET number (this will not be published)
- 4_ written in English or Japanese (if written in Japanese, your haiku must be accompanied by furigana and an English translation)

Contestants may submit one haiku (per category) each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter.

Ownership/ Use Rights:

Haiku authors retain the rights to their haiku. By entering the contest, the authors agree to have their submitted haiku published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Haiku will be credited to the author named in the entry form.

**Send your entries
to contest@ajet.net**



FASHION & BEAUTY

November 2011

Annabella Massey

This October, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Tokyo (JFW) has been staged in the metropolis, scheduled to run from the 16th to the 23rd. This was a particularly significant week for Japanese designers on many levels: it was a rebuilding of a concept which had already suffered a huge, unprecedented set-back. The Autumn/Winter 2011-12 shows were cancelled in March after the devastating earthquake and tsunami which gripped the entire country, toppling industries and overturning existing structures. Many of the original brands pulled out immediately – and besides, even if continuation hadn't been impossible, it would have been inappropriate. Japan was in no mood for fashion back then.

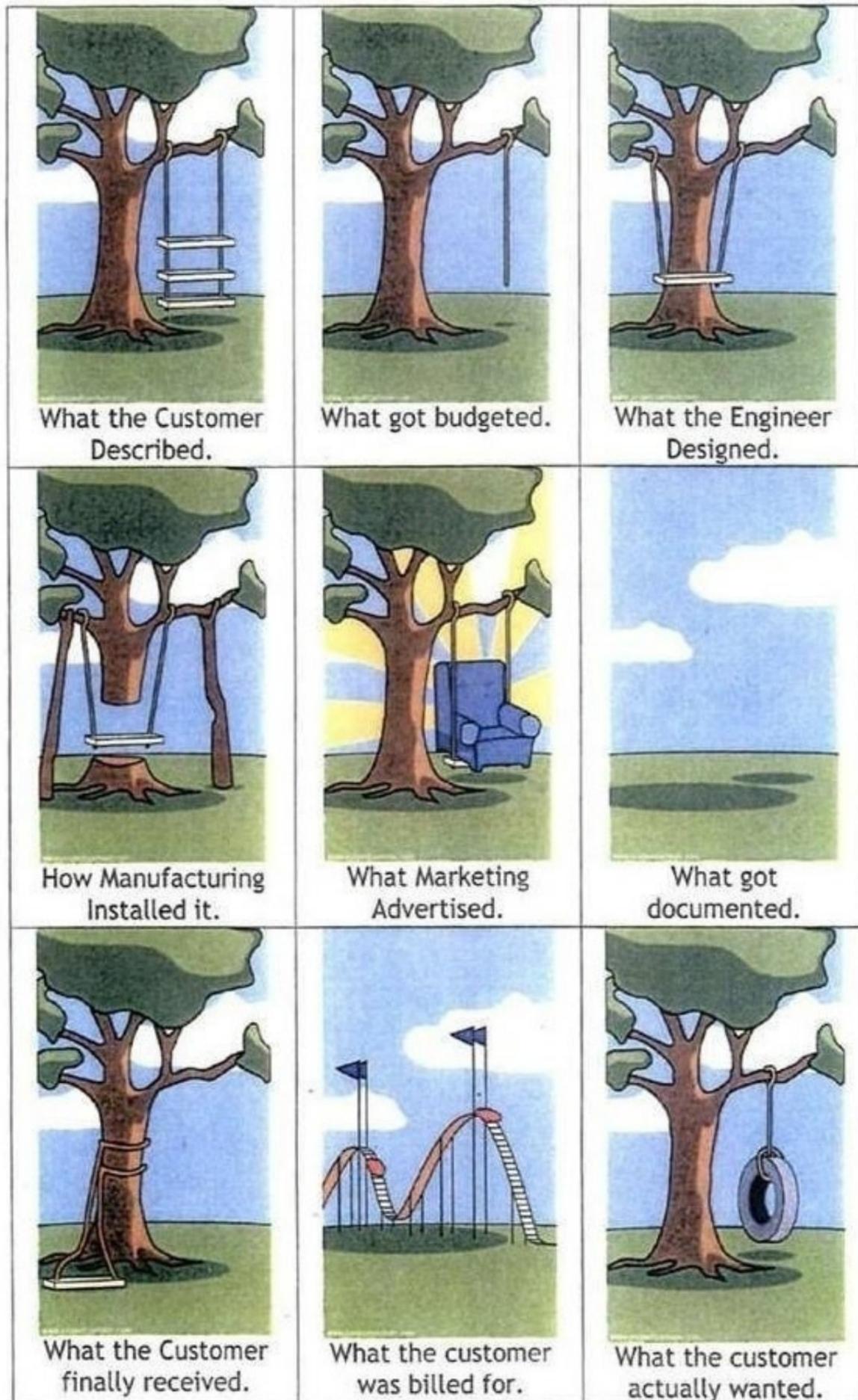
This time round, big-name sponsors and partners have been added to the ring, rallying round the fledgling showcase and nudging JFW out onto the world-wide stage: Maybelline and Mercedes-Benz, for starters. Paul Smith was announced as this year's international guest, kicking off Sunday with his 2012 Spring/Summer collection at Tokyo Midtown, titled 'I love Japan' (and he does; he's been coming over regularly since the early 80's, and he designed a T-shirt to support the relief efforts back in April). Easy-going and understated, the models sported flat loafers (brown, white, an occasional shout of turquoise or leopard-print), pyjama-esque trousers with drawstrings and plenty of slouch, little round 70's sunglasses and, sometimes, the delicious shock of buttercup-yellow in a pair of neat boots or in a mid-length skirt.

The international stars (Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Commes

de Garçons, Junya Watanabe, etc) usually show in Paris instead, but designers veering away from the catwalks in their home countries is nothing new: Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney decamped from London a while back. In the upcoming issues of AJET Connect magazine, I'm hoping to include in-depth profiles on the younger, up-and-coming Japanese designers who may have shown at JFW this month: Yasutoshi Ezumi, A Degree Fahrenheit (this particular collection was triggered by the Japanese honeybee), Mononari Ono (sheer overskirts, silk slips and long hair wound round in double buns), Somarta, matohu, and more. Basically: watch this space.

All these designers seemed to be working off their own set of influences through an eclectic, adventurous variety of themes: Etw.Vonnegut went lightly futuristic with flaked silver on the models' eyes and lips, short T-shirt dresses and detail which only showed itself when shone beneath a handheld light. Yasutoshi Ezumi shaped his collection around the title of 'String Theory': see the draped shape of the knit, the sheer, ribbed dress and the helix print on the tights for apt illumination. Elsewhere, we saw long lace and flower creations straight out of a conceptual forest, a 1930's Japanese sailing ship used as a stage, constant pop-culture references and Johan Ku's glow-in-the-dark creations.

This October and November are key months for fashion in Japan: if you're in Tokyo then, try catching Fashion's Night Out for an ongoing party and late-night shopping across 400 different stores. Take a look at the official JFW website for full collection reports and pictures: <http://tokyo-mbfashion-week.com/en/>.



FASHION'S NIGHT OUT

NOV. 5 2011 JAPAN

A GLOBAL VOGUE CELEBRATION OF FASHION

Tokyo: Fashion's Night Out

Annabella Massey

Date

Saturday November 5th, 2011

Time

15:00 – 20:00 (earlier than usual, in acknowledgement of Japan's need to save electricity post-earthquake)

Location

Approximately 400 participating shops around Aoyama, Harajuku and Omotesando, Tokyo

This November, Vogue's highly successful Fashion's Night Out will be hitting Tokyo – with the entire posse of international Vogue editors in tow. Anna Wintour, Emmanuelle Alt, Alexandra Shulman and the other fifteen editors will be converging in Tokyo to show their support for Japan and the recovery of its retail industry following the March earthquake. Exclusive events and offers will be held in the participating stores, including style seminars, one-off discounts, and champagne and food services. SJX have even invited a handful of

authentic geisha up from Kyoto to grace their shop-front for the night. Try scouting down Leonard Concept Store in Aoyama for cocktails between 17:00 – 19:30 – if you're not too busy desperately (re) entering the Burberry Blue Label raffle in Harajuku House, that is.

This gathering is in itself monumental (well, in fashion terms). As Condé Nast points out, this will be "the first time the Vogue editors will join forces for a single event." Fashion's Night Out is in its third year running and was originally the brain-child of (who else?) Anna Wintour and Diane von Furstenburg, who thought it up during the darkest months of the 2009 world recession in a bid to boost sales while still directly engaging with the consumer. The after-hours shopping event is always highly anticipated in London, New York, Paris and international cities worldwide. As the revamped Japan Fashion Week has indicated, Tokyo itself is poised to step into the leading world fashion scene and this huge power meeting of Vogue editors marks this tipping point.

As Anna Wintour states herself, "Japan is a major player in the global fashion community, both as supports and wonderful contributors to it. The country's educated consumers and its designers - from supremely inventive established names such as Yohji Yamamoto and Junya Watanabe, to exciting new labels such as Sacai - invigorate our world. We are thrilled to support and celebrate Japan's far-reaching influence and creativity with a very special Fashion's Night Out in Tokyo."

Please see www.vogue.co.jp/fno/ for more details.



THE ART OF MANLINESS





stereotype that men can't dress themselves. In order to easily match your ties with your shirts and suits, you need to own neckwear that complements the more expensive clothing already in your closet.

Match your tie to your clothing, not your clothing to your tie.

The point is don't buy a tie just because it looks great—buy neckwear that is of the right proportion for your body and is of

a color and pattern that works well with your shirts and suits. You want your ties to match your clothing—not look good by themselves.

Coordinating your tie, dress shirt, and suit isn't rocket science. All it requires is a basic understanding of proportion, pattern, and color which can be used to build an interchangeable wardrobe. Start with easy to match shirts and suits—then add a range of flexible neckties that accent and enhance the outfits you put together. Do this and you'll find yourself wanting to wear a necktie more often as it adds color to your complexion and makes you look better overall.

Principles of Matching The Necktie

Necktie Proportion

Necktie proportion relates to the necktie's width and length

in regards to a man's body build and clothing style. A large man with large suits and a wide front is going to look best when he balances it with a wider than average tie that is long enough to reach his belt buckle. A petite gentleman has the opposite problem and should look for smaller neckties that are not only skinnier width-wise but also shorter in length. These special size ties can be found at many online retailers

For those of us who are close to average in size, proportion can become a problem when we purchase from high-end fashion designers or pick-up vintage pieces from thrift shops. Average-sized men should try to wear ties ranging in width from 3 to 3.75 inches. Anything wider or thinner is best reserved for a man whose size calls for it—otherwise you are drifting into the realm of fashion, not style. Here is an example of a skinny tie worn right.



Here we can see this necktie is well within the range of acceptability.

Necktie Color

There is not a perfect answer to which color goes best with any given outfit. Two factors that determine the right color for a man

include the message he is trying to signal and the color combination that works best with the natural colors of his complexion.

For a muted but sophisticated look, consider pairing semi-solid and lightly patterned blue and green ties with cool blue colored clothing. If you're looking to draw attention to yourself, opt for the stark contrast of a bold red colored tie on a light colored shirt. The red tie is called the "power tie" for a reason; this combination works well for presenters as it captures wandering eyes and points them right to the speaker's face.

As far as what colors work well with a man's particular features, you'll want to mimic your natural contrast levels. Men with light colored hair and fair skin have low contrast and should stick with pastel and monochromatic color combinations. Men with dark hair and light skin are high contrast and will look best selecting color combinations which have clearly defined lines between them. If you have dark hair and medium to dark colored skin, you can pull off both low and high contrast tie and shirt/suit combinations. Your difficulty in this case will be separating acceptable suit/shirt/tie combinations from great looking suit/shirt/tie combinations. It's a small distinction, and one best made by taking the clothing in your wardrobe and experimenting with various shades.

What about how the colors within a necktie work with one another? Multicolored neckties fall into two categories—ties whose colors complement one another and ties whose colors do not, because the tie designer/manufacturer did not create the tie with a discerning eye. The colors on the computer screen

are not always true to real life, so I purposely choose to buy my ties through businesses whose judgment I trust. I can rest assured that 99% of the time my ties' color combinations will be solid and complementary, even if the colors aren't quite the same as what I saw online. Cheap ties and novelty neckwear often violate basic color combination rules and should be avoided.

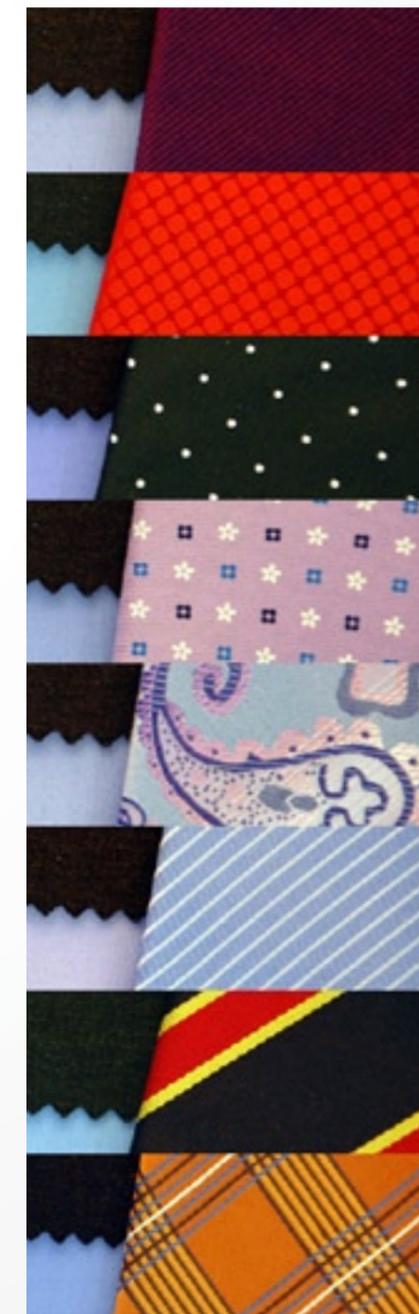
Finally, it should be noted that 8% of men are colorblind and have great difficulty matching clothing. If you fall into this category, the best advice I can give is to ensure your wardrobe is interchangeable and to consider working with a trusted clothier, friend, or image consultant who can ensure you're not wearing color combinations that clash.

Necktie Pattern

Matching neckties with strong patterns is the hardest neckwear issue for most men. This difficulty is directly reflected in neckwear sales—strongly patterned ties sell infrequently when compared to solid or semisolid ties. I rarely see them worn, and even then they are almost never worn to full effect. However when worn correctly, these rarely used neckwear gems can breathe life into an otherwise dull outfit. The key to wearing patterned neckwear is to first ensure that the tie's own colors do not clash (see above as to how to avoid this) and second, that the tie's patterns do not conflict with any patterns in your shirt or suit.

When combining a patterned tie with a shirt and suit ensemble, ensure the pattern is not already present in the clothing. A thin-striped shirt should not be combined with a thin-striped tie; however, that same thin-striped shirt will work well with a polka dot, solid, or even

thick regimental striped tie as the patterns are not similar. The reasoning behind all this is that similar patterns placed close to each other can create distorted visual effects such as the illusion of movement.



Starting at the top: solid twill, semi-solid repeating pattern, dotted, repeating multi-pattern floral, paisley, thin stripe, thick regimental stripe, and plaid.

If you're new to combining necktie patterns, the easiest way to add neckwear with complex pat-

Antonio via artofmanliness.com

When it comes to dressing for more upscale events, women have far more style decisions to make than men; we know we'll be donning some version of a dress shirt and suit. But when it comes to adding the finishing touch—the tie—some men feel confused as to how to choose a tie that will complement the other elements in their ensemble.

The biggest mistake I see men make when trying to match their neckwear to their clothing is that they have bought the wrong tie for the clothing in their wardrobe.

Like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, they will either frantically try to match garments together at the last moment or not care at all and reinforce the

terns is to ensure your suit and shirt are pattern-less. If this isn't possible, start with ties which utilize small repeating patterns such as dots, foulard, or small images (club or sport ties). Stripes are the next step, keeping in mind the rule of pairing them with shirt and suit combinations that either have no stripes or have ones that are of a different width and size than the tie's stripes. Paisley and plaid ties are solid options as well; I don't usually push them though as they are sometimes too eccentric for many men. Their larger patterns, however, make them even easier to match to a shirt and suit than striped ties.

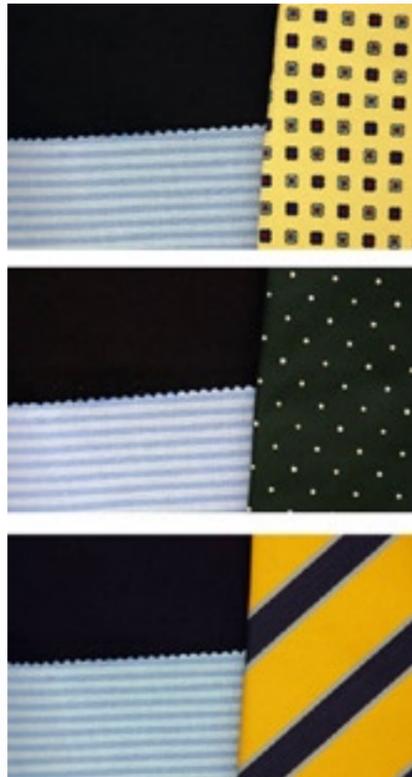
The Dress Shirt

The dress shirt is the first garment you should ensure matches your tie; next to the jacket, it is the most important clothing accessory in determining what tie color and pattern you can wear. However, unlike the jacket which you may peel off by lunch-time—your shirt stays on all day. Without a jacket, the dress shirt is the only surface upon which the tie sits, and if there is a color clash it will be impossible to hide. So get it right!

Starting off, the easiest shirts to match are solids. Whites offer a neutral base and match anything. Light blues are very close, as the few colors that would clash with them are seldom found in neckwear. Off-white and pastel colored shirts are easy to match as well, although you always want there to be a clear distinction between shirt and tie fabrics.

As for striped shirts, again you'll want to avoid matching similarly sized stripes. If there is any doubt that the shirt stripes are too close in size or width to the tie's pattern, move on and select another tie.

With check fabrics, look to match the casualness of the pattern with a tie that is more playful in tone. Club, foulard, and



Starting at the top: solid twill, semi-solid repeating pattern, dotted, repeating multi-pattern floral, paisley, thin stripe, thick regimental stripe, and plaid.

paisley ties all work, as do solid wool knitted ties with square ends. More advanced pattern matchers can combine various sized checks, but leave this to those with practice as the look can come off as too busy and distract attention from your face.

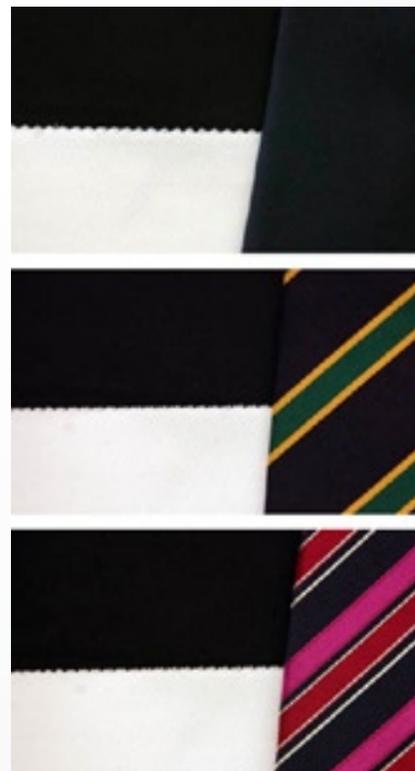
Finally, you should always avoid color combinations that are either too jarring for your lack of contrast or too monotone as to washout your complexion.

The Suit

Dark solid colored suits, especially grey and navy blue, go well with most tie color combinations by default. They are the easiest to match as most tie makers assume their wares will

be worn with one; if you have already matched the tie to the shirt, either a grey or navy suit will more often than not complement your ensemble.

The exception to this is when you take dark ties with blue tints and try to wear them with dark grey or black suits. Although it can be done, blue tinted ties rarely complement these dark suits, and they should instead be reserved for navy blue, blue, or lighter colored suits where the color combination is more natural.



Navy blue suit and a white dress shirt. At the top we have a very subdued combination that signals formality yet allows a man to blend in. In the middle a classic stripe, with a hint of color for individuality. The bottom is a bright attention grabbing piece of neckwear that would be used to call attention to the wearer.

If you're looking to combine a dark tie with a grey or black suit, look to deep purple or a dark tinted red.

If you're looking to draw attention to yourself while wearing a dark suit, select a bold and rich colored necktie with a small repeating pattern. A solid tie is an option as well, but when it's woven from a bright hue it can be too bright and come off as informal. Instead, choose a deeper and darker solid color tinted with black—this will still work with the dark suit while drawing the attention you seek.

Light colored suits invite darker colored ties for contrast yet can be worn with pastels successfully if the man wearing them has light hair and skin with little contrast. Bright and warm hues such as yellow, red, orange, and pink should be avoided.

Striped suits fall under the same rule mentioned previously—do not mix clothing with the same size patterns. Thus if you're wearing a pin-stripe suit with a thick butcher stripe shirt, I would advise you to pair it with a dot or foulard tie. Trying to fit in a regimental stripe or even a solid colored necktie is pushing the boundaries of looking sharp vs. looking like a clown.

Sport Jackets and Blazers

Similar to a suit, blazers call for more formal ties and are traditionally paired with stripe or club ties. Sport jackets, on the other hand, are often more informal, and depending on the tone of the fabric can call for a wool patterned necktie or silk foulard or paisley.

Consider matching smooth silk ties with rough weave jackets, while reserving the knitted neckwear for sport jackets that need a more casual feel. In both situations, the wearer should create balance by paying attention to the aforementioned rules of matching.



A tweed jacket worn with a small blue check dress shirt - 3 tie combinations. Notice how the navy tie darkens the whole look while the light blue paisley brightens it.

Other Factors to Consider When Matching a Tie

Tie Knot Style and Relation to Collar Style

Closely related to proportion, tie knot style is important when you are wearing a dress shirt with a spread collar or a narrow point collar. Each of these extreme angles calls for a tie knot that fits into the space afforded by the collar. Remember that bigger tie knots require more tie, while smaller knots require less. This sounds intuitive, but problems arise when a large man with a spread collar tries to use a regular size tie when tying a full Windsor knot. His options end up being wearing a tie knot that is dwarfed by the space in his collar or having a proportional knot on a tie that is 2 inches too short.

Necktie Length

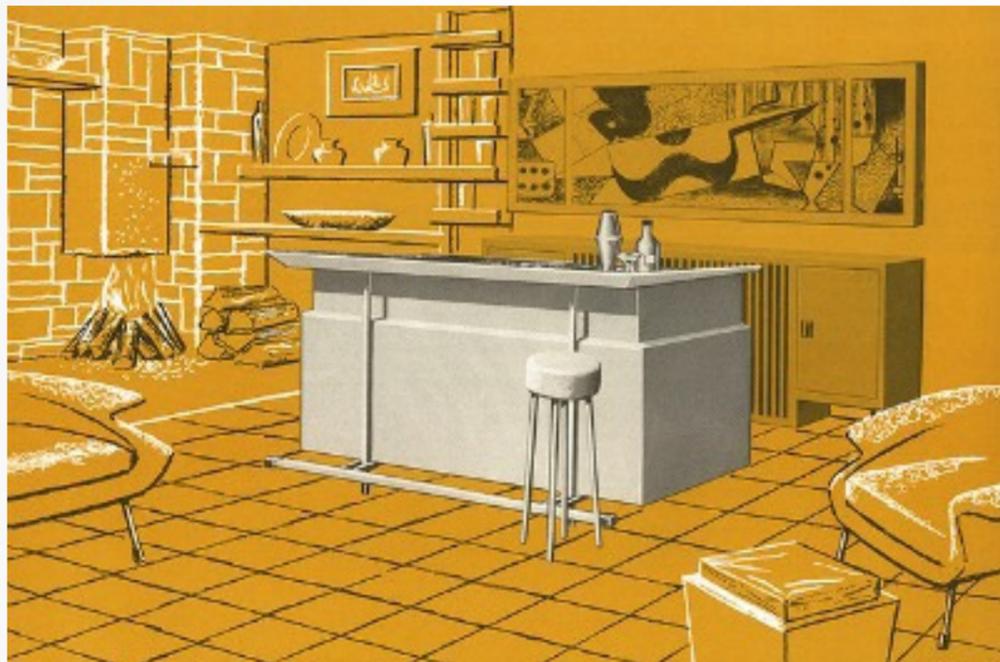
Most ties targeting Americans are 53 to 58 inches long. On an average-sized man this is long enough to accommodate any tie knot and with a little practice ensure the tie ends at the belt buckle. Larger men should look for ties that are 60 plus inches in length and shorter men should consider having their necktie less than 54 inches in length. Click here to see an offering of extra long neckties. For shorter ties, visit Josh Rogers over at Short-Shifted as he has assembled a great short tie guide.

Wearing a Vest

A vest can conceal 75% of a tie, which isn't necessarily a negative. Wearing a vest may enable a conservative gentlemen the opportunity to wear a more brightly colored tie without overwhelming his outfit. A dark three-piece navy suit and white dress shirt instantly appears more lively when paired with a pink and blue paisley tie.

Conclusion

Remember that mixing color and patterns is both an art and science. Although I've laid out a nice set of guidelines, they are by no means unbreakable laws. Instead, use this tie matching guide to build confidence, and then experiment on your own. You will find that occasionally a tie and shirt just go well together despite violating the "rules of style."



How to Stock a Home Bar

Jeff Trexler via artofmanliness.com

For the gentleman who enjoys entertaining, a properly stocked bar is a must. A well-mixed drink can help schmooze a boss, romance a date, and impress a friend. Mixing drinks at home for friends and family makes me feel like some swanky 1960s gentleman pouring drinks in his Space Age-inspired mid-century home. I love that feeling.

Starting a home bar can seem like a daunting task to any man, but it doesn't need to be so. Becoming a home mixologist should be fun! Today I hope to show you that stocking a home bar can be affordable and easy.

The Home Bar Rules

Home Bar Rule #1:

Pick alcohol you actually enjoy imbibing. When I first started my own home bar, I only picked spirits that I thought would impress guests when I had them over. I ended up spending a fortune for alcohol that I hardly ever used. While you'll use your home bar for entertaining, don't forget that a home bar's main customer is you. When you mix yourself a cocktail to sip on the weekends while you sit on the patio with your dog, you want to enjoy it. The dog doesn't care what your favorite gin is. That is of course if this pooch isn't your dog. He's so smug.

Another reason I recommend picking spirits you enjoy is that the home bar is your chance to share your personal tastes with your friends and neigh-

bors. I love seeing what other people enjoy drinking and the recipes they specialize in. What you stock in your bar and why you stock it makes for great conversational fodder.

Home Bar Rule #2

Start small. Repeat after me: Start small. Another mistake I made was trying to create a full working bar right out of the gate. Back when I bought my first house, I had a housewarming

party. I just had bottles of vodka, gin, and scotch. I wanted to be a good host, so I dropped a boatload of money at my local liquor store. While I had a wide variety of liquors, because I had never used most of them extensively, I had trouble making the drinks people were requesting.

So my advice to the man just starting out: start small, grow gradually. Stocking a home bar is a marathon, not a sprint. I recommend beginning by getting the ingredients needed to make the cocktails you enjoy and know how to make well. Like Manhattans? Canadian whisky and vermouth. Martinis? Gin and vermouth.

As you get more comfortable mixing drinks, expand your menu to include other cocktails. When I entertain, I like to email people a week before the party to ask them their favorite cocktails. I'll get the needed ingredients and practice during the week. *hiccup*

What follows are my suggestions on what a properly stocked home bar should have. But remember, use your own personal taste and take into account your own needs when making your final decision.

Alcohol

Gin

It's one of the base spirits for many popular cocktails, so definitely have plenty on hand. Gin comes in four varieties: London Dry, Plymouth, Old Tom, and Genever. I suggest starting off with a London Dry gin. Later on, add a Plymouth gin to the mix.

Vodka

An excellent liquor for doing shots with singing babushkas or for mixing into popular cocktails like Bloody Marys and Cosmopolitans. Vodka doesn't have a strong color, taste, or aroma, so it makes for a perfect mixing liquor. The differences between vodka brands comes down to what they're distilled from (potatoes, grains, sugar cane) and their texture in the mouth. Some (like Absolut) have an oily, silky texture while others (like Stolichnaya) have a watery, medicinal finish.

My go-to vodka is Grey Goose. Mixes nicely with just about anything.

You also have your pick between the different flavored and infused vodkas on the market. Personally, I stay away from flavored vodkas in my home bar. I can do my own infusing with garnishes, thank you very much.

Bourbon whiskey

An essential American whiskey for the southern gentleman. Great for sipping and classic cocktails like the Old Fashioned. Two bourbons that I recommend for the beginner mixologist are Jim Beam



and Wild Turkey. Very affordable and they taste nice. At least, I think they taste nice.

Scotch whisky

Like Jack Donaghy, I too enjoy staring out a window, while holding a glass of scotch. It soothes the soul and assists in the thinking of deep, manly thoughts. My favorite Scotch-based cocktail is the classic Rob Roy. I suggest having a blended and single malt scotch in your home bar.

Tequila

A must-have liquor for your trips to Margaritaville. What type of tequila you stock depends on what you plan on using it for. gold Tequila is usually the cheaper type of tequila and is a great pick if you plan on using your tequila for mixed drinks. If you'd like to take your tequila straight up, you'll want to go with this agave-based drink in its purest form—silver tequila. My favorite silver tequila is Patron.

Rum

This tasty liquor from the Caribbean is distilled from molasses. Dark rums are best for punches. Light rums are for mixing cocktails. I say start off with a light rum and add a dark rum when you have a big party where you'll be serving punch.

Other beverages to have on hand

Before I host a party, I'll add a bottle of wine and some craft beer to my selection. I'll also pick-up a pack of craft sodas for my guests who are on the wagon for whatever reason. A good host is thoughtful towards all his guests.

Mixers

Again, what mixers you decide to stock will depend on the cocktails you want to make. Here are the basics:

- » Club soda
- » Tonic water
- » Cola
- » Sprite or 7-up
- » Ginger ale
- » Orange juice
- » Cranberry juice
- » Tomato juice
- » Pineapple juice
- » Angostura bitters (Technically you don't use bitters as a mixer. They're to be used in splashes to add a bit of flavor to your drinks)

Garnishes

Garnishes add a bit of decorative panache to your drink. They also give you something to nibble on as you sip your drink. The type of garnish you add to a drink depends on the drink. Tequila-based cocktails often use citrus garnishes like a lime or lemon. Gin-based tonics use olives and onions. A man should never add garnishes to a scotch. That's sacrilege.

If you don't have a designated bar area with a fridge, you can prepare your garnishes the day of your cocktail party.

- » Cocktail olives
- » Cocktail onions
- » Horseradish
- » Limes
- » Lemons
- » Tabasco sauce
- » Salt
- » Pepper
- » Sugar
- » Ice



Glassware and Other Assorted Accouterments

You'll need the proper tools for your apothecary of invigorating elixirs. You can get pretty specific with your glassware. There are tumblers made specifically for certain cocktails. If you drink those cocktails frequently, but all means get them. But you can get by just fine without them. Here are the basics:

- » Martini glasses
- » Rocks glasses
- » Red and white wine glasses
- » Highball glasses or tall glasses
- » Beer mugs and pint glasses
- » Martini shaker and strainer
- » Toothpicks for the olives and onions
- » Napkins
- » A good Mixologist recipe book

Personally, I enjoy collecting vintage cocktail recipe books. I love trying different classic cocktails, plus they look nice in my home bar. You can find reprints of many old and popular mixologist books on Amazon.com. The Professional Mixing Guide Cocktail Recipe Book from 1947 is a good one. A recipe book that I'm quite enjoying right now is Vintage Spirits and Forgotten Cocktails. Also check out theVintageDrink.com. The site was started recently by a redditor who found his grandfather's old bartender guide and posted all the recipes online. You can search by name or ingredient, so it's quite handy.

- » A collection of appropriate cocktail sipping music. You can't go wrong with Sinatra and the other crooners. I also like to have some lounge and exotica music in the mix. Ultra Lounge has great collections of swanky lounge music.

Home Bar Storage

Some of you might be choking on your cocktail olive at the size of this list. You're probably thinking, "Sure, Jeff, this sounds all well and good, but where am I supposed to keep this in my tiny house/apartment/condo?"

A valid concern, for sure. I will attempt to resolve your doubt.

Remember Home Bar Rule #2: Start small. If you don't have room or any place to store your home bar, keep your home bar small. Pick two or three different liquors and stick with those. When I was in an apartment, I kept my small bar in a cabinet above the fridge, and I kept my mixers and garnishes in the fridge.



Also, you don't have to have your bar always stocked and prepared for a big party. When you host a party, stock up your bar to fill your needs. When you're not anticipating a party, there's no need to have gallons of tonic water or dozens of lime wedges on hand.

If you'd like something a bit more distinguished than your kitchen cabinet to serve as the home for your home bar, consider getting a cocktail cabinet or mini bar. They're small pieces of handsome furniture that you can usually put up against the wall. They're nice because they can serve as a gathering point without having a huge bar installed in your home. Cocktail cabinets take up very little space, but can hold quite a bit of alcohol and glassware. I have friend who picked up a vintage cocktail cabinet at the antique store. It was a bit rough, but with a bit of elbow grease he was able to spruce it up. Here's a nice example of a retro cocktail cabinet from the 50s:

A man with enough initiative can probably make his own cocktail cabinet. Imagine the pride you'll feel when you can pat your mini bar, hand your friend a drink and say, "See this cabinet here, Jim? I made this little beauty."

If you do move into a bigger place and you've really enjoyed being a home mixologist, then I can't recommend installing a permanent home bar in your home enough. Many homes today come with wet bars and storage space for a home bar. If you don't

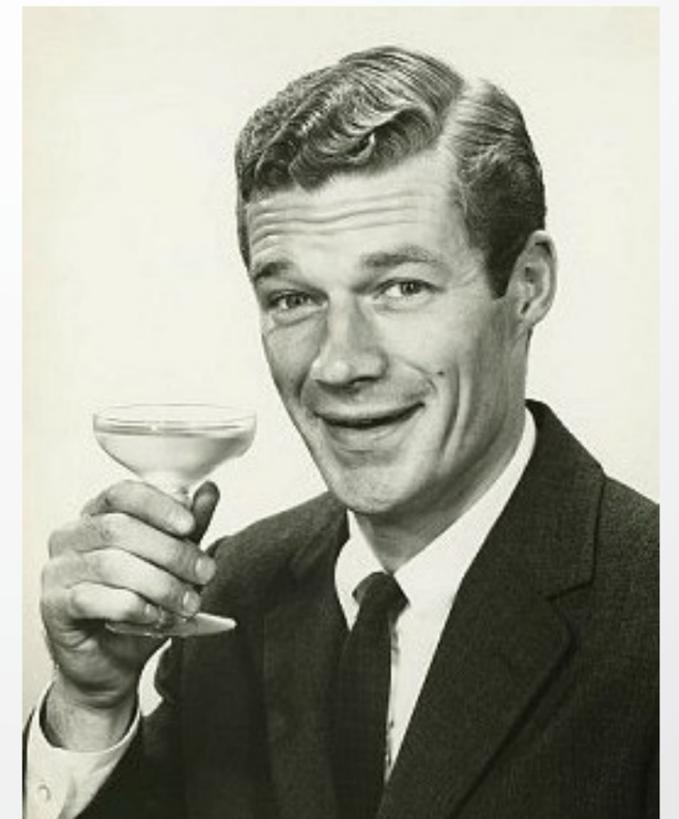
have that, with a little initiative and sweat, you can install your own bar in an unused room in the house.

A home bar will become a gathering point in your home when you entertain. I love standing behind my bar surrounded by a group of laughing people enjoying themselves on drinks that I made.

Well, gents, that's all she wrote. I hope this little guide was informative and a bit entertaining. But more importantly, I hope it inspired you to

get started with your home bar today. Don't wait!

Cheers!



Women Abroad





Long Term Coupling Up in Japan

Sarah Richmond

I arrived in Japan on a sweltering August day in the summer of 2006, fresh off the university boat and ready to get away from the 5 years I had dedicated to interviewing Rwandan genocide survivors. As any genocide scholar worth their salt will tell you, the quickest way to get wanderlust is to be trapped for months under a pile of books with titles like 'Season of Blood' and 'We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families'. And, as any JET will tell you, the perfect solution for a case of home country blues, is to move to Japan and karaoke your problems away with a giant, cereal filled parfait.

My masters professor sat me down half way

through my thesis and said to me, 'Sarah, you're burned out. I can see it from your lackluster writing (this was false. He could see it because I had just come into his office bawling my eyes out and brandishing the machete I had been given as a souvenir on my last research trip to Kigali, at his head.). Have you thought about taking a year off to clear your head?' He helped me fill out the JET application form and the rest was history. I've been here for five years, with a dusty incomplete masters still peering over my shoulder, but a wealth of other knowledge I am very pleased to be able to share with you. The editors of this magazine asked I write about women's issues in Japan, but apart from being an issue-filled woman myself, I'm not 100% sure what constitutes woman-in-Japan-related topics. I googled it and came up with a slew of 'How to Get a Japanese Man Friend' articles.

I asked my significant other, 'Do you think I would be able to write an article about how to find a Japanese boyfriend?'

to find a Japanese boyfriend?'

'Well, you certainly have experience,' he said.

'I've only ever succeeded in picking you up, I doubt that makes me an expert.'

'Are you saying that you need to pick up more than one?'

He had me there. In reality, you only need one fish to take a bite off your baited tackle.

So, you want a Japanese boyfriend? Actually, if you're anything like I was a few years back, maybe you don't. Maybe your J-boy (to ad-lib from everyone's favorite life guru, Oprah, for her phrase was obviously meant for this exact situation) 'A-ha Moment' hasn't quite arrived yet. When I first got here, all those many angst filled years ago, I was

infatuated with an American JET by the name of Jeffry who sat at the back of the Tokyo orientation in a shiny navy suit, with a black man-bag full of jelly beans. My J-boy awakening came about one Saturday morning about seven months into my first year, when I went to my friend's apartment and caught her watching a Japanese TV programme called 'Ikemen Paradise' - Hot Boy Paradise. After three episodes, I realized my eyes had opened to the world of Japanese boys. Jeffry had turned out to be batting for the other team (go back and read the sentence that ends with 'shiny navy suit, with a black man-bag full of jelly beans') and I had no viable options in my own BoE. That day, in Celeste's apartment, I realized that when in Rome, one should always try to do the Romans.

Sarah's Very Scientific Tips for Long Term Coupling Up in Japan

- 1_Don't go for someone just because they are Japanese. This may seem like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many people actually do this. If my boyfriend weren't Japanese, I would still like him. Even if he were Australian. *
- 2_You have to be prepared to make the first move. And probably the second one too. If you think boys you knew from back home were blind to your advances, Japanese boys are ten times worse. (Boyfriend says that this is an unfair assessment. He says 'I thought when you fluttered your eyelashes that it was just a 'gaijin thing')
- 3_Many of what you think are obvious moves on your part will be brushed off by him as aforementioned gaijin things. Your copy of He's Just Not That Into You probably says that if, when flirting, the boy does not respond to light physical touches then (chorus) He's Just Not That Into You. But things like touching, hugging, extended eye contact or being friendly and perky to him while ignoring everyone else in the room, will not work. You think you're busting out your best game, but meanwhile you're just checking off his list of Friendly Foreigner Attributes.
- 4_Throw away 'He's Just Not That Into You'. Now. That shiz does NOT apply here. In fact, toss out everything you have learnt about boys since the third grade playground incident with Adam Parker. Living in Japan means that dating wise, you're back to square one, honey.
- 5_Just keep swimming. Yeah, you'll be rejected because dating in Japan is still a battle field.

The game in Japan is the same as it is behind the barbed wire fences of my Johannesburg home - you have to pick yourself up and move on to the next option. Being a foreign woman in Japan can sometimes be a great ego booster, but those same differences that make you special can sometimes be the cause of your downfall when you decide to find something serious.

In my case, it was good luck, good timing and a good match of personalities, but none of that is particularly Japan-specific. Actually... maybe that IS the key to this whole thing. We're all just going through life looking for someone to share the same restaurant table with us. It doesn't matter if you're in Tokyo or Timbuktu, the whole dating game is a farce hinged on the magic combination of (i) mutual attraction that comes together at (ii) the right time. The only difference is that in Japan, a lot of the time, you have to buckle down and be the game master.

If there is one thing I want you to take away from me, it is this special, freshly written Sarah Japanese Dating Mantra: 'Ask A Boy Out, I Too Can Wear The Pants.'

What have you got to lose? Nothing. Even in Japan, pride grows back. And, if your pick up plan goes awry and the boy you asked out says 'sorry, I just don't like you like that', throw your hands up and wave them about in a sumimasen wave, laughing, 'No no! That's not what I meant! You obviously didn't understand my English / Japanese, you crazy boy.' Problem solved.

* Rugby World Cup 2011 wounds are still raw for this Springbok.

Sarah Richmond is an ex Sapporo City JET (2007 - 2010) who can't move on and still lives about ten minutes from her old BoE. She is currently trying to Make It On Her Own and teaches at an all girls Catholic school with a band of merry nuns. She is a Jo'burger, born and bred, and still misses some things about South Africa - like all the rest of the tall people. You can find her here thenomadsland.tumblr.com (i don't need this part. It is shameless self promotion)

Japanese study tips

漢字 FAILURE

The 5 Biggest Mistakes People Make When Learning Kanji

via tofugu.com

The Japanese learning industry has, for all intents and purposes, failed you. It's not your fault that learning kanji is like hitting your face on a curb, it's the industry as a whole. Sure, there are pockets here and there that are pretty smart about it, but they tend to be small and nobody really knows about them. Most likely, you know what your teachers says about kanji, or what Rosetta Stone Japanese (doesn't) say about kanji, or what your textbook throws at you... But, here's the problem, though: You're learning kanji from native Japanese speakers, and they have no idea what it's like to learn kanji anymore (and even if they do, they just emulate the way Japanese school children learn kanji), which really just doesn't work.

The Japanese learning industry, on a whole, has failed us when it comes to kanji learning. But, you can learn from their mistakes, and in doing so, learn how to fix the way you learn kanji.

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FAILURE No 1

You Learn Kanji Stroke By Stroke By Stroke...

Sure, there's something to be said about learning correct stroke order. I'm all for that, but the problem is that it ends up putting emphasis on learning kanji stroke by stroke by stroke. When kanji is simple, it's easy to learn this way. Three strokes? Only three things to learn. Huzzah! But, when you start out learning kanji like this (i.e. when you think of kanji as a bunch of strokes), you keep learning kanji like this. That's why in most Japanese classes, when the kanji homework goes out, people automatically see how many strokes a kanji has. "I know a 20-stroke kanji, I'm impressive!" people think. No. You're stupid. Thinking of kanji as a bunch of strokes just forces you to try and remember more. A 20-stroke kanji = 20+ different things you have to remember. If you think of a kanji as individual strokes making up the whole, then you've already failed. So how should you think of kanji, then?

止	口	土	土	夕	夕	大	女	子	宀	寸	小
止	口	土	土	夕	夕	大	女	子	宀	寸	小
止	口	土	土	夕	夕	大	女	子	宀	寸	小
止	口	土	土	夕	夕	大	女	子	宀	寸	小

FAILURE No 2

You Don't Learn Your Kanji Radicals

Oh sure, you might learn a few radicals here and there, like the water radical (just a few little strokes next to a kanji). "If you see this," the kanji resource says, "you'll know that this kanji probably has something to do with water." For the most part, though, radicals are a distant afterthought in the kanji-learning world, and this is an absolutely huge mistake. Most people teach radicals (if they teach them at all) as pieces of a kanji that help you figure out the meaning of the kanji if you don't know it. Although this works sometimes, why not just learn the meaning of the kanji in the first place?

Instead, learning radicals should be treated like building blocks. Remember how I said kanji should not be learned stroke-by-stroke? More complicated kanji should be put together radical-by-radical. If you take the time to learn the 200-250 kanji radicals (it may seem like a lot, but it's really a pretty quick process), you can put a fairly complicated kanji together in 3, maybe 4 steps. Think of radicals like the ABCs of English. You can't put together the word FAILURE if you don't know the letters F-A-I-L-U-R-E, right? By learning radicals first you're setting yourself up for kanji success. You cut down on the memorization required for every single kanji by 300-800%. Here's an example:

歩

Now, this kanji isn't particularly difficult, but you get the drift. Learning this kanji stroke-by-stroke would set you back eight steps (because there are eight strokes). Instead, let's take a look at the radicals that make this kanji up. If you learn all the kanji radicals (or, at least the ones I recommend), putting this particular kanji together can be done in a mere 3 steps, depending on which radicals you would use. That's a 260% less to learn which means you're saving valuable time and brain-space.

止 小 ノ

As you can see, these three "radicals" can be put together (like letters in a word) to create the kanji above. The first one (止) makes up the top portion, the second one (小) takes up the bottom, and the third (ノ) rounds it out. The best part is that you

associate these radicals with names and concepts, which means you can come up with some kind of mnemonic device to help you remember what goes where (more on mnemonics below).

In summary, everyone should learn their radicals before even thinking about learning kanji. If you don't, it's like building a highrise with no foundation.

Failure No 3

You Memorize Instead of Learn

Good things can be said about repetition and "memorization." I think they're a necessary part of kanji learning, but everything has its limits (and you can use all the help you can get when it comes to kanji). One of the problems I have with the "normal" way people have you learn kanji is that they give you 10-20 kanji, sit you down with a kanji worksheet, and have you write the kanji over and over again (and of course, the focus is on the number of strokes, right?). The problem, though, is with our brains. First of all, there's only so much information (or so many steps) we can fit in our short term memory. That means as soon as you move on to the next kanji, there's a good chance you're already forgetting the one before it. Another problem is that with too much repetition, our brains switch to autopilot. At that point you aren't learning any more, you're just going through the motions. To solve this, there are a couple of solutions.

Solution A

First of all, don't think of the kanji as strokes, think of them as particles. This will help you learn more effectively (and get the information in your long term memory more quickly). When you're practicing, think of the individual radical that you're writing, and how they go together to form the whole kanji. The more you do this, the faster you'll be able to learn kanji.

Solution B

Don't write a single kanji more than three times in a row. If you have multiple kanji to practice, switch back and forth and go back to previous ones. Come up with some kind of pattern. I would recommend something like this. Each letter represents a kanji, and each time it shows up it should be written for practice: A, A, A, B, B, B, A, B, C, C, C, A, B, C, D, D, D, A, B, C, D, E, E, E... etc. When you run out of space for "A" kanji, you would just start at "B" the next time around. This way you are forcing your brain to actually think and process the information, instead of hitting autopilot the moment you've written a kanji for the 4th or 5th time.

Solution C

Apply some kind of mnemonic strategy to your kanji. Mnemonics help you remember things. They basically leave hints in your brain that when seen trigger another memory, which really helps you to remember things more effectively. One way to do this is to come up with “stories” for your kanji. If you’ve learned the kanji radicals, it is pretty easy to do. If you take the example above (歩), we can use the three radicals to come up with a story to help us remember whatever it is we want to remember. The radical examples below are ones I’ve given meaning to. You can come up with your own meanings if you want to, or use a set that someone else has developed.

止 is a radical that means STOP

小 is a radical that means SMALL

ノ is a radical that means SLIDE

So, we can use these three concepts / words and put them together in a way that helps us remember that the kanji 歩 means “walk.” Here’s one: “Stop! It’s a small slide. We will walk from here” (you know, because zombies hang around slides). As long as you know the radicals already, the hints to trigger this little “story” will be right in the kanji, every time you see it. Of course, we could get even more in depth with it and start associating emotion as well as our senses. This gets into the concept of creating “flashbulb memories” for yourself (these are memories your brain produces during traumatic or incredible events, that’s why you remember where you were, say, when you learned about 9/11). By imagining the emotion you felt when you saw the small slide, or the smell of the aluminum, or perhaps even the shock you felt when you saw how small it was, you can make this memory a lot stronger by tricking your brain into thinking it was really important. The more senses or emotions you associate with it (you really have to imagine they’re happening, though!), the more likely you are to remember. This may seem like a lot of work at first, but it actually gets quite quick and easy as you practice.

You can even take this a step further and learn the pronunciation of the kanji like this as well. Once you know the meaning of the kanji, you can learn the pronunciation using a similar strategy. For the kanji 歩, the most common on-yomi for this kanji is 歩 (ho). When you know this, you can come up with another story that uses “ho” in it. Maybe something like: “When you walk around, be careful

about stepping on a hoe (ほ). Since we know the meaning of the kanji from the previous story, we can use that as our hint to figure out what the pronunciation of it is as well. Beyond that, though, I’d recommend also learning the common words that use that kanji, since there are often plenty of different ways to pronounce the same kanji, and learning through example is the best way, I think.

FAILURE No 4

You Learn Kanji Like Japanese School Children (i.e. In The Wrong Order)

When Japanese school children learn kanji, they go from simpler kanji meanings to more complicated kanji meanings. Sometimes, a simple kanji will have a simple meaning, but sometimes it won’t. Take a look at these kanji, for example. These are learned in secondary school (i.e. they are “higher level” kanji), but if you look at them, you’ll notice they’re really, really simple to write. Two or three strokes each.

乙 了 丈 勺

Even though these kanji are simple to write, the meanings aren’t as simple, which is why Japanese school children don’t learn them until later in their education. On the other hand, take a look at these kanji, which have very simple meanings associated with them, yet consist of many, many more strokes. These are learned by second graders in elementary school. We’re talking tiny little kids, with tiny little brains.

曜 線 鳴 算

The problem with a lot of Japanese learning resources is that they emulate this Japanese school children method of learning kanji. The thing they seem to have totally forgotten is that you, as someone who is learning Japanese as a second (or third, or fourth) language, probably are not a child (not to mention a Japanese child, in Japan), which means it really doesn’t matter if you learn kanji with difficult meanings earlier. You already understand the meanings behind the words, because you’ve learned them all in English. The difficult part is the actual kanji itself (and how to write / read them), not the meaning associated with that kanji. Because many resources forget this, you are introduced to more difficult kanji early on just because the meaning of the kanji is easier.

Instead, everyone should learn kanji based on the simplicity of the kanji itself. Who cares about the meaning. Start with 1-stroke kanji and work your

way up. There are approximately 2,000 kanji you have to learn no matter what, so you might as well put them in an order that makes a lot more sense. By starting simply and moving your way up, you are able to build one kanji upon another. You’ll find that more complicated kanji are really just made up of less complicated kanji (or radicals). But, if you learn kanji the way Japanese school children learn them, it feels random, overwhelming, and just plain confusing. Learning kanji isn’t the same as learning vocabulary in Spanish, German, or whatever. It’s its own monster, and should be treated that way.

FAILURE No 5

You Don’t Use The Best Tools Out There

I’m pretty sure most teachers today don’t say “okay, when you go home, I want you to go through your Smart.fm/Anki deck and practice your kanji.” No, it’s more like “okay, when you get home write this kanji a gazillion times in this kanji sheet until you feel tired and lethargic.” Now, you don’t need fancy tools to do anything. Tiger Woods could pick up a crappy golf club and still beat you every time. But, when it comes to language learning, it certainly doesn’t hurt, especially when the best tools out there are free.

Smart.fm and Anki are “intelligent” flash cards (i.e. they know when to bring back certain cards and know what’s giving you trouble so that it can help you learn more effectively). Even if you like the feeling of paper in your hands, these services will beat your handmade set almost every time (though Rainbowhill has a pretty good method if you do like using physical flash cards). These services will tell you what to study and when to study them (and in general, they’re usually right), which really helps take the pain out of flashcard learning, and will be your best friend when it comes to learning kanji.

2011 AMICA YEAR-END INTENSIVE COURSES

WHEN	December 26th - 30th, 2011 Morning session - 9:00am-1:00pm or Afternoon - 1:30-5:30pm 5 days: 4 hours/day (total 20 hours) * Please see note below.
HOW MUCH	¥33,000yen + tax = ¥34,650 AJET members (all courses) SAVING ¥2,000
HOW TO ENROLL	Contact us TODAY for an application form. Once complete you can send it back via fax or e-mail.
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AMICA
LANGUAGE SCHOOL

How British accents sound to Americans



Why hello there, good sir!
 I'm chuffed as nuts to see you looking as humbly jumbly as Her Majesty's watermelonst
 I remember my days at Oxford, we'd often dabble in a little rumpy pumpy before dingbanging a fresh todger, haha!
 We really knew how to sack the ol' throbbing wobbly on a saucy twat crumpett!

How American accents sound to the British

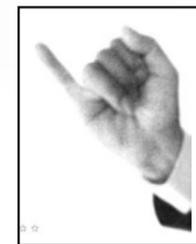


BEER AND VAGINAS HAAAAHA
 BALD EAGLES AND SHIT
 FUCK YES!
 HAMBURGERS IN MY FACE!
 MY PENIS IS BIGGER THAN AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER, MOTHERFUCKAAAAAS
 TOUCHDOWNNNNNNNNN!
 EXPLOSIONS AND PUSSY!!
 WOOOOOOO! YES! SHIT YES

Understanding Japanese Gestures

Rob Maxwell

Although before coming to Japan, one would be led to believe that Japanese keep body movements to a minimum when speaking, standing virtually motionless as they talk. In reality, after arriving in Japan we find this is far from the truth. Japanese commonly use up to 120 gestures, although many of these (about 50 or so) being mainly used by the older generation. Some are slowly being replaced by newer ones from the younger generation or simply left to disappear with time.



Kanojo 彼女 Girlfriend

Point your finger straight out, but with fist clenched. This gesture tends to be considered slang but isn't impolite to use, but it's not recommended for use by women.

NOTE: If you were to use this gesture in Australia, you would be asking if they had a small penis!



Okanmuri おかんむり Angry

Point both index fingers above your head, just like devils horns. If a married man makes this gesture, it would most likely mean his wife is angry (more often than not, at him). You only use this when talking about others.

The same gesture is sometimes used by men when talking about the tsunokakushi (角隠し) traditional Japanese wedding headwear. Tsunokakushi is a rectangular piece of cloth, which covers the bridal high topknot called Bunkin Takashimada (文金高島田), a kind of Mage (髷), Japanese traditional topknot. It's most often made of white silk.

This is traditionally worn to veil the bride's horns of jealousy, ego and selfishness. It also symbolized the bride's resolve to become a gentle and obedient wife.

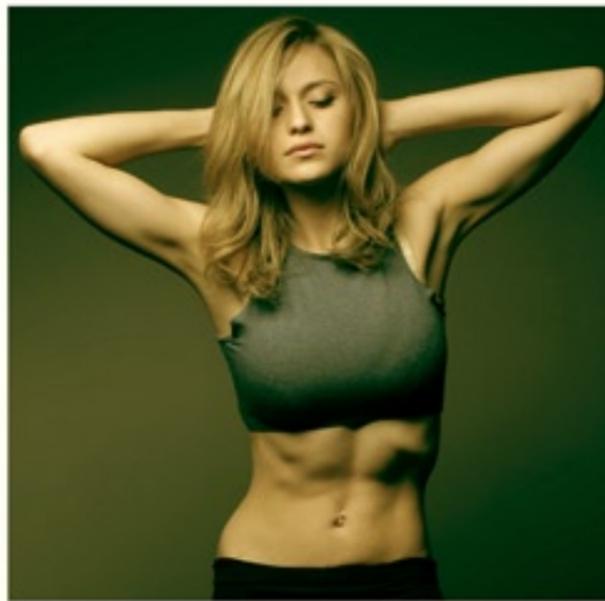
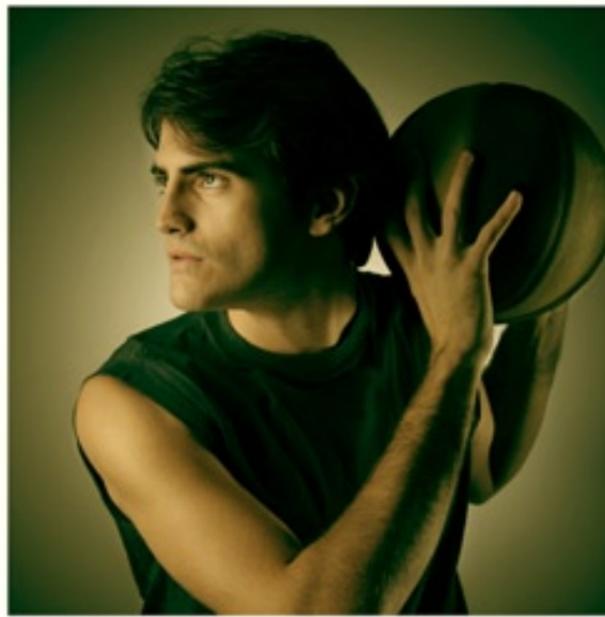


Atsui 熱い Hot

If you touch something hot, grab your earlobes with your index finger and thumb.

The earlobes are the coldest part of your body so this action is thought to cool the fingers.

Buy the book **HERE!**



SPORTS



Ichi Kyu Bee!

Will De Groot

The weekend of October 1st/2nd saw Kumamoto host its first ever beach Ultimate Frisbee Tournament. Hosted by KumAJET in association with Disc Sports Japan, Ichi Kyu Bee (Dai Ikkai Zen-Kyushu Beach Ultimate Tournament) invited ALT and Japanese teams from all over Kyushu to participate in the 2 day event.

About half of the teams arrived on Saturday and participated in a Hat Tournament. ALT teams from Kumamoto, Saga, Oita, Miyazaki as well as Japanese teams from Fukuoka and Nagasaki all arrived and played together in a format which mixed up teams, giving all participants a chance to meet each other, and play in a non-competitive, fun, manner.

Ichi Kyu Bee was an event which drew inspiration from the very successful and annually hosted Taj Ultimate. Both events were created and hosted by JETs for JETs and their Japanese friends. Both events strive to further the broad objective of the JET Pro-

gramme: grassroots internationalization. IKB's vision was to further strengthen the ties between Japanese and foreigners by providing a sporting event which encourages internationalization and friendship between local Japanese, Japanese from other prefectures, and foreigners in a setting that fosters camaraderie, sportsmanship, and respect.

The day proved a great success and with music playing over the four courts marked across the beach, Japanese and ALTs alike were able to socialize in a relaxed and light-hearted manner whilst playing Ultimate. In the evening teams retreated to their nearby bungalows to wind down and enjoy a well-earned BBQ and drinks.

Sunday saw the arrival of nine Japanese teams from six different prefectures in Kyushu, for a total of 141 participants. Out of the thirteen competing teams, the Kumamoto Powers (a shakaijin team associated with Disc Sports Japan) emerged victorious, defeating one of the three Fukuoka teams 9-7 in the final.

When KumAJET first set out to hold such an event, it was our hope that ALTs and Japanese people would come together and spend a weekend laughing, relaxing and making new friends. One of our goals for this year was to encourage grass roots internationalization. We feel we achieved this, and could not have hoped for a more successful weekend.

Will De Groot
ALT, KumAJET Leadership Team
Uto-Shi, Kumamoto Prefecture



Vaulting to Recovery

Adam Chludzinski

The 43rd Artistic Gymnastics World Championships took place this month in the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium over ten days, from October 7th to October 16th. As the main gymnastic qualifying event for the 2012 London Olympic Games, hopeful athletes gathered from dozens of countries to compete in both individual and team-based competition in a total of ten gender-segregated events: Floor, Pommel Horse, Rings, Vault, Parallel Bars, and High Bar for men, and Vault, Uneven Bars, Balance Beam, and Floor for women.

The AGWC was hosted by the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, and sponsored by several prominent Japanese government ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MOFA and MEXT, which are also two JET Programme affiliates), and the Japanese Olympic Committee. Televised domestically and internationally, the AGWC and other similar sports events are showing the world community that although the country of Japan suffered greatly in the Tohoku earthquake and resulting tsunami, its people are as strong as ever.

About eighteen months have passed since the Tohoku disaster, and Japan has started on the road to recovery. Much remains to be done however, and the athletes that competed this month wore a Tohoku emblem as a symbol of hope for the reconstruction.

In the final standings, the Chinese and American teams took home the men's and women's gold medals respectively. (Japan placed second in men's and seventh in women's) However, Japan may have been the overall winner in this competition. Events like this inspire hope, while bringing people together and furthering internationalism. May the road to recovery be a speedy one.





Keep On Running

Chris Barstow

There aren't many sports where the average Joe has the opportunity to compete alongside the world's elite. Most people are unlikely ever to find themselves on the tennis court with Roger Federer, on the golf course with Tiger Woods or in the boxing ring with Mike Tyson. However, one of the joys of road running is that it gives anyone the chance for anyone to line up in the same race as sporting legends like Haile Gebrselassie and Paula Radcliffe.

The running boom amongst the general public took off in the 1970s, initially gaining momentum in North America before spreading to Europe and Asia. Its ever-growing popularity can be seen as the culmination of a number of factors. As seasoned runners will testify, stepping outside your front door and starting to run is one of the most liber-

ating and stress-relieving things that you can do. Furthermore, running is seen by most as a form of personal challenge where you can compete against yourself to run faster than you ever have done before. In addition, as it doesn't require much in the way of money, planning or equipment, running is one of the most universally accessible pastimes to take up. The charitable aspect of running must also not be ignored and acts as a great motivator for people to train and participate in organised events.

However, whilst it is one of the few truly global sports, Japan has enveloped running into its culture like no other. It is by far the biggest participation sport in the country whilst only baseball can claim to have more spectators. Japan has also added its own twist to the sport and pioneered the ekiden, a long-distance team relay race. The first ekiden (its literal translation is 'station transmit'

representing the staging posts which acted as handover points during the race) was run nearly a hundred years ago between Kyoto and Tokyo and the structure continues to be used in numerous races for schools, universities and corporations as well as elite runners.

However, for all road runners, the marathon distance remains the blue riband event. The event was created for the first modern Olympics held in Greece in 1896 as organisers sought to commemorate the legend of Pheidipides. The messenger is reported to have run non-stop from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens to proclaim news of his sides' victory before dropping down dead from exhaustion. If only he had managed to swig on Pocari Sweat en route...

However, it is perhaps less well known that the quirky standard marathon distance of 26 miles

and 385 yards (42.195km), derives not from this epic run in Greece, but from the UK. For the London Olympics of 1908, the original course was extended from 25 miles to accommodate the Royal Family's request for a premium viewing position of the finish. The distance was later adopted as a standard and continues to be the ultimate test for recreational and professional runners alike.

All eyes will be on London again next year as the city hosts the next edition of the Olympic Games. Japan has had success at this level in recent years, with both Naoko Takahashi and Mizuki Noguchi winning gold medals. Gifu-based Takahashi was so revered for her triumph in Sydney in 2000 and subsequent World Record a year later that she was immortalised in her own manga series 'Kazekko'. Japan contin-

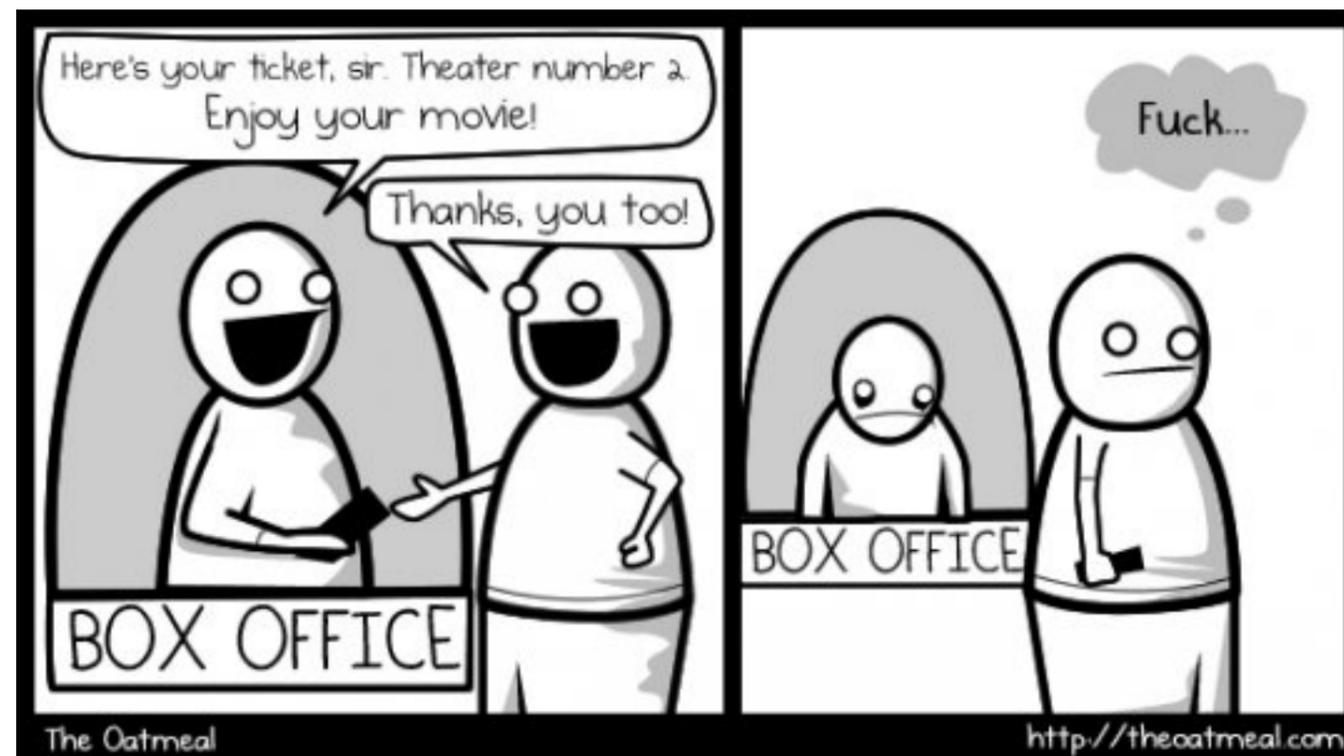
ues to have one of the strongest squads of long distance runners in the world and its best hopes for Olympic success next year lie with Yuki Kawauchi and Yoshimi Ozaki, both of whom will be seeking qualification in the Japanese trials to be held during February's Tokyo Marathon.

One of the largest organised races in the world with 30,000 participants, the Tokyo Marathon attracted a staggering 282,000 applications for the 2012 edition of the race, with the select group of entrants being chosen via a lottery draw. I was fortunate enough to be amongst the ballot winners and am currently in training for my debut over the 26 and a bit mile course. There has already been blood, sweat and tears, and that was merely trying to find a pair of running shoes in Japan to fit my size 13 feet. However, I'm

looking forward to the challenge of competing in what promises to be an unforgettable event. And whilst I expect to be nearer to the starting gate than to Kawauchi and Ozaki by the time they cross the finish line, I still think it beats going 12 rounds with Mr Tyson...

Entries for the 2012 Tokyo Marathon are now closed. However, Japan has numerous smaller marathons run throughout the year if you are interested in taking part - more information can be found at www.marathons.ahotu.com/calendar/marathon/japan

Chris Barstow is a first year ALT in Yamagata City. When he is not pounding the streets, he enjoys travelling, blogging, learning Japanese, reinterpreting power ballads in nomihodai karaoke bars and carb-loading at all you can eat restaurants.





In my view



The Alien Experience in Japan and the United States

Anna E. Engle

According to my mandatory alien registration card, I am categorized as an alien while I live in Japan. To me, this word has a negative connotation more powerful than “gaijin” or “gringo” (the Spanish equivalent to gaijin) could ever have. “Alien” brings with it the mental image of space ships and little green men with 8 eyes and tentacles, inferring that you are not from a different country, but a different planet.

The word “alien” has rubbed me the wrong way ever since I became involved with immigrants in the United States. After studying abroad for a semester in Mexico and Guatemala, I became very interested in immigration issues and began making many Latino friends in my community. Many of my friends are immigrants, some documented, and some undocumented. In the United States immigrants are sometimes called “aliens” or “illegal,” words that many consider negative.

Recently in the United States, certain states have been passing anti-immigration laws, some making it illegal to give a ride to the undocumented. This means a documented man can't legally give a ride to his undocumented mother. Alabama requires public school districts to document the immigration status of all students and their parents, sending the information to the state. The tragedy of involving the public school districts means many students won't enroll because of their status or their parents' status, which will create a sub-group of uneducated, disadvantaged students.

Arizona's controversial Immigration Law (SB 1070)

allows police officers to check the immigration status of anyone and makes it a state crime to not carry immigration papers. This means that if that you look like you could be an immigrant, the police have a right to demand your papers and check your status, no matter where you are and what you're doing.

Arizona's legislation is very similar to the rule in Japan for foreigners, though with potential repercussions a bit harsher: carry your passport or Alien Registration Card with you at all times or the police have the right to detain you, and you could go to jail or be charged 300,000 yen. How will they know you aren't a Japanese citizen? The same way Arizona's policemen “know” through racial profiling. I don't look Japanese, so I need to carry documentation at all times.

Yet many differences exist, and though I do not condone it, racial profiling makes more sense in Japan than in the United States. In Japan, most of the foreigners I have met were not born in Japan and are not citizens. The people who don't look like Japanese citizens usually aren't. However, Latinos have been living in the United States for hundreds of years, and 63% of Latino-Americans were born in the United States (2010 U.S. Census Bureau).

Still, I think Japan's policy of possible incarceration or a 300,000 yen fine is grossly extreme. Though I don't know any foreigners who have been stopped and checked, I still feel a little anxious leaving my house for a jog without my passport. But where would I put it, in my shoe? Still, my anxiety is nothing compared to how Latino-Americans living in certain states must feel. Even if their family goes back 10 generations in the United States, police in some states have the right to stop and ask for ID. What if they want to go for a jog? This certainly must make them feel like strangers in their own country, and as for me, I feel like a stranger, but I'm not in my country, and I won't have this problem when I go back next year.

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A Word to the Wise

Rosie

"Dear Rosie,

Oh my God, the cockroaches! Every time I pick up something in my kitchen, something scurries for cover and so do I. I'd never seen one of these things before I came to Japan, but now they're everywhere. I'm afraid to go into my kitchen. I'm sure you're thinking I'm a terrible slob, but I think I keep my apartment in pretty good condition.

People keep telling me to spray the damned things, but I don't like the idea of covering my house with poison. What should I do?

Signed, Trouble in Paradise

**Got a question or complaint?
Need some advice?
Send your question to Rosie
at communications@ajet.net**



Dear Trouble in Paradise,

Gokiburi, aka cockroaches, are a problem that many JETs have to face at least once.

As you mentioned, making sure that your house is kept clean is definitely important

for keeping away bugs of all types. It is said that roaches particularly like onion, so if you cook with it often be sure to wrap everything well. Especially food scraps that you put in the garbage. Also, try to take your garbage out regularly.

Did you know that these indestructible insects fly too? Make sure that windows and fan vents have screens, and try not to keep your doors open too long. Cockroaches may fly in when you're not looking.

If you take all of the proper precautions and STILL have roaches scurrying around, there are a few products offered that don't require you to feverishly spray toxins all over your house.

My first recommendation is a small black poison-trap capsule that you can place in small corners and cabinets. The cockroach will come eat from the capsule, and then feed it to their young. This will kill the main roach as well as the ones in its nest.

My second recommendation would be to buy a sticky roach trap. This is a small cardboard structure, often a house or hotel that has strong glue on the inside. The roach is baited into the house and then trapped on the glue until it dies. This may not get to the source of your roach problem, but it helps trap the wandering buggers. In my home, I use both types just to be sure.

Caution: Be sure not to squish roaches that you find, as this can release their egg packs.

Search ゴキブリほいほい (gokiburi hoi-hoi) on the Internet, or go to your local pharmacy, grocery store, or home goods store to buy these types of products.



The first thing I considered was time. More than money, I had to think about the time I would be able to give my bunny. Most of us want to have as many experiences as possible while we inhabit this small island and overnight endeavors are not usually pet-friendly. Cats, fish, and snakes are fairly independent pets but even couple of days might be too long to leave your critter alone. Luckily, I have a nearby friend who has already volunteered to be my appointed rabbit-sitter whenever I need her. Ask yourself, do you have someone reliable and available to care for your pet? Even if you're not traveling, are you able to give your animal its preferred amount of TLC? My bunny requires at least an hour of my attention and four hours of time outside of his cage which brings me to my next point – residence!

As our unofficial motto goes, "Every Situation is Different." Our accommodations are a huge example of that: ranging from one that's closet-sized to penthouse-sized. How much space can you give to your pet? And before all that, does your building even allow pets? Fortunately for me, my school owns the property I live in, so the only apprehension I encountered was about a gnawing-loving bunny and wood tatami floors. Is your environment pet-friendly? Needless to say this was a genuine concern but I was able to work it out with them (I just have a hefty price tag hanging over my head if said tatami are damaged at the end of my contract)

So you want to get a pet in Japan?

Jen Garcia

Maybe you miss your four-legged friend from back home. Maybe having a pet will keep you company at your apartment. Or maybe you just love animals. So as of late, you've come to find yourself thinking about buying a pet in Japan. I want to give a few words of advice, and things to consider based on my experience so far after buying a cute little fur ball myself.

I had wanted a bunny since before I left for Japan. Knowing I'd be there for at least a year I thought to myself, "I'll just buy one in Japan!" Upon telling this to several people, I got mixed reactions. They pointed out some really valid concerns not only for me but for the animal as well. The busy and exciting life of a JET has its own set of concerns to consider, aside from determining whether you are able to properly care for a pet.

This of course leads to the question of money!

We as JETs have a well-paying, contracted salary, as well as different expenses with added bonuses and expenses here and there. Owning an animal will become one of those set deductions on your budget every month –and you can't really cut back on spending when it comes to your pet's wellbeing. The initial expenses can be surprisingly large. I've seen some exorbitant prices for your average dog and cat here, let alone other animals that are considered 'exotic.' When I bought my bunny, I happened to fall in love with one in the cheaper range as far as rabbits go. (He was ¥8,400 compared to other types that were upward ¥25,000!) The cage, food, hay, toys, litter, etc. were all expenses that really added up. Are you willing and is it in your budget to spend that much?

Regardless of my situation, one of the most common questions I found in my research was, "Why do you want a pet?" Don't worry, there isn't one right answer that determines whether or not you shouldn't get a pet. The best answer to this question is actually listing the reasons why you shouldn't get one. For example, being overcome by the cuteness of this animal (a.k.a. buying on impulse), not having proper knowledge on how to care for your animal beforehand, and (like I've mostly talked about) recognizing if your lifestyle can meet the animal's needs.



If you realize getting a pet isn't the best idea for your situation, then consider going to one of Japan's many animal-themed cafes. I've heard of cat cafés in Tokyo, dog cafés in Osaka, and even a bunny café in Nagoya (being a rabbit aficionado, I went and highly recommend it). I know this is not the same as owning a pet, but it might take the edge off if you're really pining to pet some fur. Whatever the case may be, make the right decision and be happier for it.

Jen is a high school ALT in Tamba-shi, Hyogo-ken. When she's not changing her hair or nail color, she enjoys traveling and having fun, new experiences.

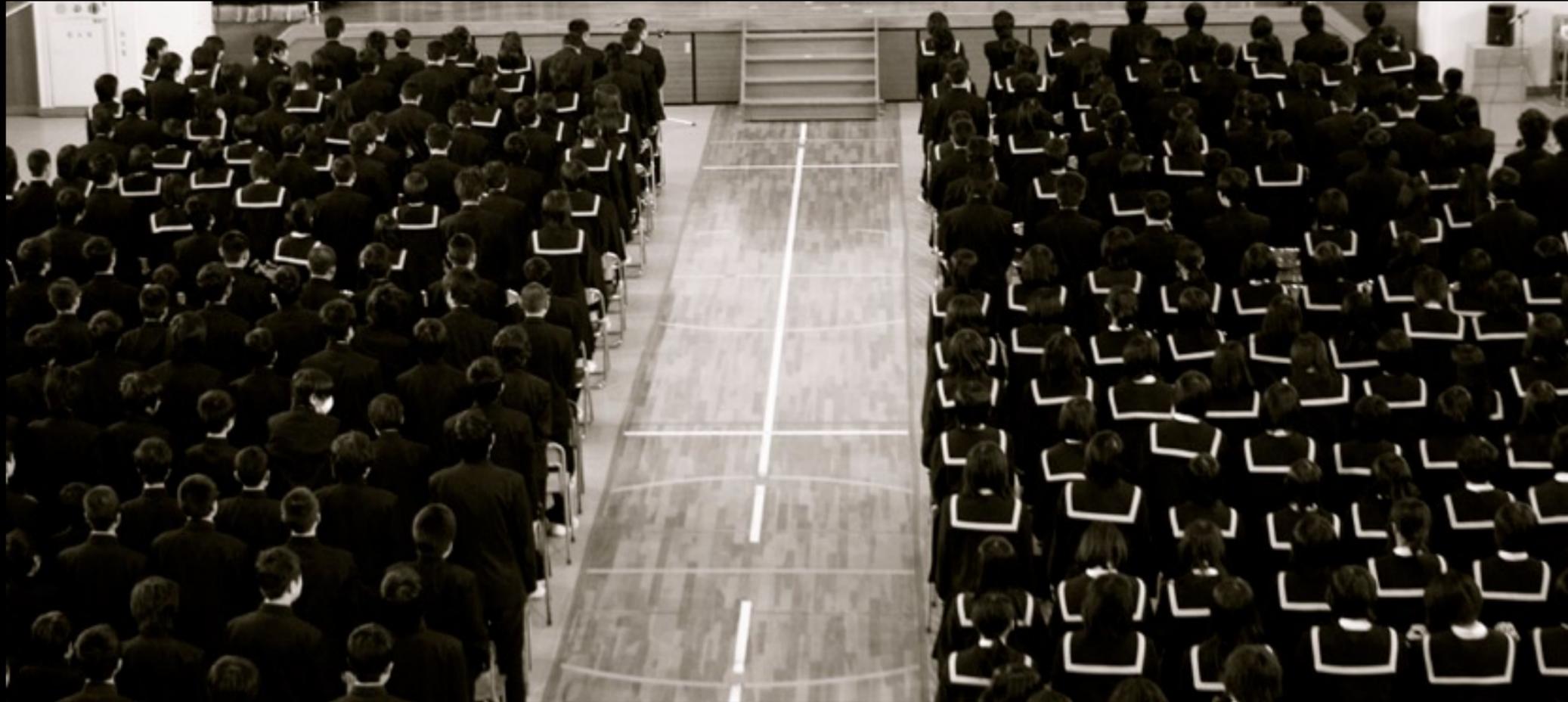




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Jennifer Garcia - The Path to Enlightenment



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Lana Rosato Kitcher - At Home in Serenity



Greg Ferguson - Cup of Goku



Shivonne Du Barry - Jorogumo

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