

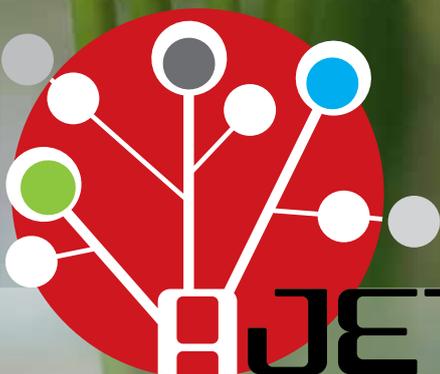
AJET

# CONNECT

magazine

November Issue

2013



AJET

# AJET PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE CALLS

Ring-ring! It's the future calling. Join the second ever AJET Professional Development Conference Call. Our guest speaker is former JET, Mr. Clifton C. Strickler, a Harvard Law graduate and Associate with the international law firm, Latham & Watkins. He is a member of the firm's Finance Department, involved in financings for energy projects in Southeast Asia and cross-border mergers, as well as acquisitions and joint ventures involving Japanese companies. Mr. Strickler also serves on the firm's pro bono committee and represents international non-profit organizations operating in Asia. Join us on **Saturday, November 23 from 10:00 - 10:30 am** to hear what Mr. Strickler has to say about turning your JET experience into professional success. Space is limited to the first 30 participants.

Click [HERE](#) for more info and to register.

... IT'S TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT

## NATIONAL AJET ELECTIONS

### 2. A PLAN

How about becoming an AJET National Council member for an opportunity to contribute to National AJET - your national JET community!

**Elections are in February.**

### 1. THE FUTURE

Thinking about recontracting next year? Want to get more involved and at the same time work on your professional development?

Contact your Block Representative or Executive Team to learn more about what it takes to be on Council and what we do! Find a link to the contact form here.



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF CONNECT MAGAZINE!

Happy November, everyone! As usual, I'm excited to bring you this month's edition of Connect magazine along with shiny news and improvements. As we hope you've noticed, we're always looking for ways to make Connect more accessible, more interesting, and more open to you all. It's my personal goal to be constantly moving Connect towards an open community of writers and readers sharing their events, news, That's why, starting *right now*, we're publishing online using issuu.

If you follow some of the AJET community's other amazing publications, such as @API, The Akitan, or Yomoyama, you're already familiar with issuu. Essentially, issuu allows us to bring you Connect in a new format that is easier to read, share, and follow. We still offer PDF downloads of every one of our issues at <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect>, for those of you that like to download Connect and keep it with you. For reading in a web browser, though, we believe issuu is the way to go. Allow me to explain how issuu works so you can jump right into reading online.

You'll find our main issuu page at [issuu.com/ajetconnect](http://issuu.com/ajetconnect). Once there, you'll see all of our published issues (at the time of this writing, just October and November, but we're working tirelessly to convert all of our old issues to be compatible with issuu for your perusal). Click on the lovely cover photo of the issue you want to read, and you'll be immediately taken to issuu's online reader. There, you'll see the magazine's cover floating with an arrow to the right. If you click on the right side of the screen, you'll turn the page. Click the left side to turn back. Simple enough to start!

In the bottom-right, you'll find a black bar with a few buttons. Let's talk about those. The 3x3 grid button opens a really neat scrolling page display, which shows you a tiny preview of the pages ahead, so you can take a look and click to navigate ahead. The magnifying glass is, of course, your search button. Whether you want to look for mentions of sumo, recipes, your friend's article, or Hugo's email address, the search feature will bring up every instance of that term in the issue. The next button, which looks like a stack of papers, brings the magazine to full size, which is silly because it's much too big for a computer screen at

full size. The button next to that one is much more useful because it brings the view to full screen! This is the recommended way to read the issue, as it cuts out the rest of the site and shows the magazine in all its glory.

I already mentioned clicking to the left and right to flip through the pages, but there's a few more tricks you can do in issuu. For starters, if you want to get a closer look at the issue for easy reading, click anywhere on the page to zoom in to a reasonable reading distance instantly and smoothly. Your mouse will now move you around the page. Click again to zoom back out. Also, all the links that are clickable in the PDF are still clickable in issuu, so keep emailing us and visiting our writer's blogs and sites! When you hover over the page with your mouse, all clickable links go blue for easy spotting.

Now that you've read the magazine, we hope that you want to share it with others! If you see a feature that's interesting to you, or if it's one you've written yourself and want to post to your social media networks, you can do that! Click the blue Facebook icon next to the black navigation bar to immediately share the whole issue, or click on the Share tab beneath the issue. Opening the Share tab brings a wide range of options for sharing. You can share a specific page to Facebook, Twitter, tumblr, and more! Or, you can embed the issue on your blog (if you ask super nicely). If you create an issuu account, you can also follow Connect (and other AJET publications!) and see whenever we publish a new issue by clicking Add To.

All the best,

Steven  
3rd-year Fukushima ALT  
Head Editor of Connect Magazine



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## KAY SAYS...



*Hola* from Fukuoka! Growing up, my father always said that, "your happiness, and therefore success, is directly correlated with how much you can help others." I truly believe that service is the key to a better community and world, which is also my philosophy for National AJET—our national JET community. This is why your Council is supporting JETs who are doing good things! How, you ask?

Starting November 1<sup>st</sup>, AJET National Council proudly presents the *Race to the Top Challenge*. Meaning, your AJET Prefectural Chapter could win up to 60,000 yen to support your next volunteer or charity event! Where does this budget come from? Well, remember getting info about how to set up your internet, phone, etc. at Tokyo Orientation, and see this lovely Connect magazine you're reading right now? That was your AJET Director of Corporate Events (Tamara Rytter, Okinawa ALT) hard at work selling table space at the AJET Info Fair to those various organizations, and AJET's Director of Corporate Advertising (Aaron Gilling, Saitama ALT) is the Mad Man responsible for selling Connect ads which raise the funds we're using to support the most deserving (AKA the most active) AJET Prefectural Chapter! Don't miss p. 31 for the details.

On a personal note, I recently took a trip back to Pennsylvania to visit family and meet my newborn niece for the first time. As

JETs, we spend months and perhaps years away from our homes. As you build your JET life and grow in Japan, it's inevitable that your previous environments grow and change too—without you. Although I'm missing being an accessible aunt, it reminds me that there are always pros and cons to every situation which keeps me humble of where I am at the moment.

The important thing is to always follow your own path. And, in this moment—all 4,372 of us from 40 countries—our paths led us here to Japan. I think that's pretty amazing! The people you meet, relationships you develop, you're always in the right place at the right time for a good reason or else you wouldn't be here! And, I only hope that each of you continue walking your path.

Until next month, *salud!*

Yours in JET community service,

Kay  
3rd-year Fukuoka JET / 2013-2014 Chair

# meet the CONNECT team!



**Steven Thompson**  
Head Editor

My oh my, when did it get so cold? I love it! Having grown up in America's Sunshine State, Florida, I still take great joy in chilly weather and snowy scenery, and I just took a wonderful nature hike to see Fukushima's best fall foliage at Goshiki-numa. I'd highly recommend it! As it gets colder, that means more time for TV and blankets and warm food. I'm writing a list of things to watch/listen to/play and rubbing my hands in anticipation (and also because the staff room is freezing).

**Melinda Lange**  
Layout and Design



Hey all! It's November and you know what that means...!!! It means that it's time to break out the longer sleeves (whether or not you're cold), stock up on delicious persimmon fruit, and get your hiking gear ready to see the leaves change color around the scenic mountains and hiking trails around Japan! As for me, I plan on visiting Nikko at least once this season and putting on my photographer hat to capture all the beautiful foliage in the area. If you ever get the chance, come over and check it out! You won't be disappointed.



**Matthew Jones**  
Culture Editor

Well hello there my lovely, lovely readers! If you can tell that I'm a bit happy, it's because the weather down here in Nagasaki has FINALLY cooled off. I'm from Ireland, which the Romans called Hibernia, or the land of winter, so you can guess that I love the cold. However, Nagasaki never really gets cold, it just gets more bearable to go out to tropical islands. I know, first-world problems, right?

This month is also my birthday month, so I have a second reason to be of good cheer, and what's that just around the corner? Is it my American friends cooking an enormous turkey dinner? This month just can't get any better.

Well, I guess if you really wanted to make me the happiest editor in Connect, you could always read my section...



**Tom Morin-Robinson**  
Entertainment Editor

Hey everyone! They took their sweet time, but the leaves finally turned, offering up their colours for that full week of fall that graces Japan each year. In the mood for some Halloween spookiness, I made my way down to the base of Mt. Fuji to explore the gloomy woods of Aokigahara, notable for being Japan's most popular suicide spot. As usual, I've been working on my photography which you can check out at [tommrphoto.tumblr.com](http://tommrphoto.tumblr.com). And as always, if you find yourself with a story in need of telling, get in touch at [connect.entertainment@ajet.net](mailto:connect.entertainment@ajet.net)!



**Lineng Tee**  
Fashion & Beauty Editor

Hasn't the weather been erratic, dear readers? I shivered in a sweater, scarf and thick tights, broke in my new rain boots and raincoat, and cycled across town in yoga pants...all in the same week! Oh, and I danced like a maniac when Backstreet Boys stopped by Saitama! Autumn leaves are gradually making their glorious, fleeting presence felt across Japan, and I hope you are excited about putting together stylish, comfy ensembles, since 'tis the perfect season to experiment with layers, textures and colours. See you kings and queens of style next month—when we can chat about wool, heat tech and leg warmers. Brrr. [connect.fashion@ajet.net](mailto:connect.fashion@ajet.net)



**Ariane Bobiash**  
Food Editor

Greetings! October has gone by in a flash. In mid-October, I trekked up to Kansai to take part in the Osaka Rainbow Pride Festa, a subdued event compared to other countries', but lots of fun nonetheless. The weekend also happened to be Canadian Thanksgiving, and with November now upon us too, Happy Thanksgiving to all our North American readers out there! I'm planning on having a potluck later this month and can't wait to see what delicious goodies turn up. What will you be feasting on over the holidays?! Get Xan and I drooling at [connect.food@ajet.net](mailto:connect.food@ajet.net)

**Xan Wetherall**  
Food Editor



November! Smell that crisp, clean air! Feel that cold snap in the air! Taste that delicious... everything! For a foodie, fall really is one of the best times to be living in Japan! Have you had a bite of the first sanma fish of the year, grilled over an open flame, topped with grated daikon and a spritz of citrus? How about a sweet slice of an orangey persimmon, or a fresh-roasted chestnut? Seasonal eating is what it's all about here—make sure you don't miss out! Got any dishes Ariane and I have got to try? Hit us up at [connect.food@ajet.net](mailto:connect.food@ajet.net)!



**Hugo Dragonetti**  
Sports Editor

Hey! I hope you all had an amazing October. I know I'll be eating a lot more *tonkotsu* ramen as we enter a time of falling leaves and dropping temperatures, but I'm hoping that I can remain active.

Colder weather should mean fewer commitments, and thus more time for cycling and swimming, as well as booking a holiday in the sun. I'm really looking forward to helping out at a sumo festival in my town before the lull sets in though. Have a 'leaf' through this month's issue, and get in touch if you've got a story to tell. [connect.sports@ajet.net](mailto:connect.sports@ajet.net)



**Caroline Bellinger**  
Travel Editor

When the thermometer drops, my mood lifts. That's because, living in Yamagata, I'm blessed with more than 20 ski resorts nearby. Sure, it gets cold—really cold. I've already put my electric blanket on my futon and prepared my kotatsu in anticipation of the ice-box my apartment will become. But for me, winter = fun times. Onsen! Snow festivals! Red wine! And my snowboard, relegated to the corner of my spare room for the past seven months, will soon be strapped to my feet. But first, autumn. Onsen! Fall festivals! Red leaves! What are your autumn travel plans? [connect.travel@ajet.net](mailto:connect.travel@ajet.net)



**Kelly Merks**  
Events Editor

November means one thing to me: Thanksgiving! The holiday is one of Americans' most beloved, and I am certainly no exception. I'm looking forward to cooking with friends at our various potluck dinners. Turkey--and its tryptophan coma--with stuffing, fresh cranberry sauce, sushi, curry rice... Yummo! I've been in the kitchen a lot lately, experimenting with making my own herb salts and furikake--the Japanese-style seasoning sprinkled on cooked rice. What's cooking up in your area? We want to know! Tell us at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).



**Michelle Castro**  
Volunteering Editor

Hello, readers. This past month, I spent some time kayaking to Miyajima island in Hiroshima. I spent a day on the water and enjoyed a beach side lunch before kayaking through the Miyajima *tori* gate. I also spent some time competing in a half-marathon in Shimane Prefecture. It was exciting to run the race with students who were wearing their school club uniforms and being cheered on by a brass band and several *taiko* groups. See you next month! If you have a volunteer story you would like to share, shoot me an email at [connect.volunteering@ajet.net](mailto:connect.volunteering@ajet.net)



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*This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online at <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect>. Read Connect online and follow us at <http://issuu.com/ajetconnect>.*

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# ASK / CONNECT

Ask/Connect is your space to get in touch with the AJET Council, Connect staff, and the Connect community. If you have a question about life in Japan, would like to know something about AJET, want to respond to any of the articles or editorials in this month's issue, or if you just want to say something nice about us, here's the place to do it! **Ask your questions at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net) or via the National AJET Facebook page and Twitter!**

Here's what we heard this month!

What is the relevance of AJET? Back in the post internet days, you needed a central body to help connect people, but these days with all the different types of social media, what function does AJET fill? Oh and who else but me noticed the AJET web site was down for around 2 weeks??

- Rob Maxwell

Thanks for asking this question, Rob, and thanks for all your work on the first Connect team 2 years ago! With all the groups in Japan, it can be hard to pin down exactly what the AJET National Council does for the Japan-wide AJET community. We spoke with Julia Mace, Block 8 Representative and AJET's Public Relations Director about this.

"I'm so glad you asked! As you know, being a former AJET National Council member yourself, many JETs don't really know what AJET does. I'm proud to let you know that AJET does more than just keep JETs connected on social media, we provide a central hub for resources and represent JETs' interests to CLAIR and the three Ministries of the Japanese government and CLAIR that support the JET Programme. Let me lay it out in a way that's a little more tangible:

AJET produces the trusted teaching resources Planet Eigo and Foxy Phonics. Planet Eigo been around for 19 years. Because the language barrier can make working in schools difficult, Planet Eigo is fully bilingual. This book was fully produced by AJET: volunteer JETs working for the entire JET community. AJET actively creates professional development opportunities for JETs, such as our recent conference call with Ann Sado. We also seek out ways for JETs to gain professional skills, as with our special discount with ITTT for TEFL certification.

AJET also works with companies to provide discounts for JETs in other sectors, such as with White Rabbit Press. They produce a lot of useful Japanese Language study materials.

AJET volunteers organize the Information Fair at Tokyo Orientation. Here, new JETs gain information on volunteering, getting a cell phone, getting an English-language newspaper, and Special Interest Groups that support JETs with specific lifestyles. AJET works with dozens of groups to put this together to help enrich JETs' lives.

Peer Support Group is an AJET group that provides advice and counseling services from 8:00pm - 7:00am. During the day, if a JET needs some help they can usually turn to their supervisor, but at night, it's not so easy. That's why PSG was created, so JETs have access to help and get advice whenever they need it.

Twice a year AJET National Council surveys the JET community. We use the information we gather through these surveys to offer ideas and suggestions we present to CLAIR and the Three Ministries. AJET is always trying to gain more government support for training and services to benefit JETs from all countries in all the rolls on the JET Programme. AJET's volunteer National Council stands up in front of the Ministries and asks them to do good things for JETs and the JET Programme.

On the local level, prefectural AJET chapters often put on a variety of events, from socials to charity auctions. These local AJET chapters are also run by volunteer AJET members who make sure JETs have lots of opportunities to get together and interact with their communities. AJET Block Events are similar. These events take place in local regions of Japan (such as Tohoku or Shikoku) and give JETs the opportunity to meet JETs from outside their prefecture, but who still live "close to home."

What are the current initiatives of NAJET? What are new initiatives that NAJET wishes to explore and requires help with? Beyond the fuzzy mission statement in the constitution, what is NAJET currently doing? In what way (beyond surveys) is NAJET trying to actively engage with CLAIR and MEXT to make ALT workplaces better?

- Nelson Bartley

This ties in a bit with Rob's question, so we thought it'd be good to answer them here together! Connect spoke with Kay Makishi, Martin Barry, and Alan Inkster (this year's AJET Executive Council) about the National Council's current activities.

**Martin:** "First, I think it's important to clear up some misconceptions about all these acronyms flying around. National AJET is defined as our national JET community. Meaning all 4,372 JETs together make up National AJET.

The AJET National Council is a group of 19 elected and appointed JETs volunteering to serve National AJET because we're passionate about making JET life better. The current council's three largest projects to date have been (1) Professional Development Calls, where JETs have an opportunity to join a conference call with a successful professional. We held our first session recently and Ann Sado, an entrepreneur, gave a motivating and insightful talk to JETs. (2) Family Link is currently in the process of being rolled out. It aims to connect JETs with Japanese families so they can build a relationship and hopefully spend time together during holidays and events. (3) Race to the Top Challenge is a project started to encourage JETs around the country to volunteer more. Learn how your chapter can win 60,000 yen by getting more involved by clicking [HERE](#).

On top of these main projects, this council has undertaken new initiatives to improve AJET and build our community. The Director of Social Media, a new position created by this council, keeps us connected with JETs on Facebook and Twitter, we have a new website in the making, we assist SDCs by helping to find speakers, we are increasing collaboration with JETAA, and we will run fun projects like creating a mascot and producing a calendar with JETs' photos too."

You can find a history of previous council initiatives at <http://ajet.net/past-councils/>

**Kay:** "AJET National Council has a designated CLAIR liaison. This year, our AJET liaison at CLAIR is Scott Borba (a former Kumamoto JET). I recently had an in person meeting with Scott and Mr. Takahashi (Director of the JET Programme) at my CO in Fukuoka. During this meeting, I suggested to have an AJET liaison for each of the Three Ministries (MIC, MOFA, and MEXT) so JETs can have a direct link and provide insights and recommendations on how to improve the Programme. Aside from CLAIR and the Three Ministries, AJET is involved in dialogue with various organizations such as Teach For All, US Center for Citizen Diplomacy, CULCON and more to work on bringing innovative teaching to the classroom specifically to incorporate more technology."





## READERS' POLL

Every month, we'll ask you guys what you think about various topics and questions submitted by members of the AJET community. You can find the results for last month's question, and this month's question here!

Cast your vote and add your voice [HERE](#). You can also submit your own idea for a poll topic at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net)!

### This Month's Question

From the viral YouTube video "Racism in Japan" (discussed in the April 2013 issue of Connect) to textbook revisions, there's been a lot of discussion of Japan's view of historical events and current international interactions. One particular sticking point is official government visits to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which honors Japan's war dead including war criminals. Shinzo Abe recently declined visiting the shrine in the face of protests overseas.

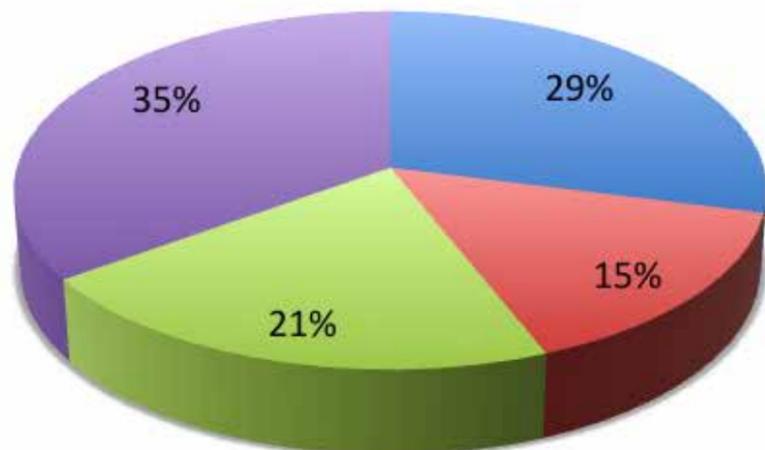
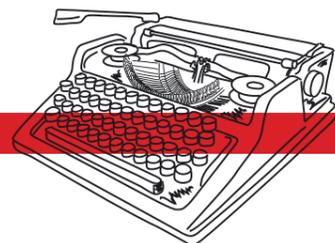
**Do you think members of the Japanese government should cease visits to Yasukuni Shrine?**

- Yes
- No

What do you think of Yasukuni Shrine? Make sure to send your opinions to us at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net) in response to this month's articles and editorials!

## Last Month's Results

When it comes to the 2020 Olympics, most of you said you simply don't care about it. Fair enough! Many current JETs won't be in Japan when the time comes, after all. Among those of you that do care, your feelings were generally positive (if mixed). Tell us your thoughts about it at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net)!



- Yes
- No
- I have mixed feelings
- I don't care



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# GETTING READY FOR THE NEXT STEP:

## A SIMPLE ACTIVITY FOR SETTING AND ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

Matthew Porter, Hiroshima



This article is based on a workshop I delivered at the 2013 Hiroshima JET orientation in August as a JET alumnus (Hyogo '99 – '02). Although the goal of the workshop was to help new and continuing JET Programme participants create professional goals and develop a plan for accomplishing them, the method can actually work with personal goals such as learning to play the guitar or a foreign language. The steps introduced below were influenced by an inspiring workshop I attended for an English conversation textbook conducted by Chuck Sandy, which I modified with concepts from the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) mnemonic introduced by George Doran in the 80s for business management.

Taking control of your personal development by following the steps outlined below can reveal possibilities that luck wouldn't have and propel you in new directions of growth. At the very least, if the steps are taken seriously and met with honest, concrete, and detailed reflection, you will have a better understanding of your goal, how much work it actually entails, and how long it will take.

I recommend carrying out the following activity with a partner, giving each other feedback by asking probing questions and keeping a written record of your answers and your partner's advice. However, the steps can be followed even without a partner.

### Step 1: Create a "big" goal statement

Begin by describing what you want to do and why. For example, create a statement such as this: "I want to improve my Japanese so that I can get a job in Japan as a programmer at a gaming company." This is called a "big" goal because it's actually made up of smaller, measurable steps that need to be achieved in order to realize the goal. Having a big goal can give your life direction, but these big goals can be problematic when they are not clearly defined. What does it really mean to learn Japanese? Without having a clear understanding of what you want to achieve, it might be hard to see what exactly needs to be accomplished,

when you need to accomplish all of the steps involved, and to stay motivated.

### Step 2: Analyze the objectives

Your big goal is really made up of lots of smaller steps. These steps should be well-defined. What you need to do should be pretty specific and clear and you should be able to judge whether you've completed each step. I'd like you to take the big goal you created above and try to see each of the smaller steps involved. If you're working with a partner, your partner's advice here is essential. Too often, people are pretty lazy at this stage. For example, maybe you want to travel around the world because you want to go and eat at the very best restaurants in each country. When you start to think about the steps involved, is it simply a matter of just saving up money, buying an open ticket, and arriving at the airport in time for your flight? For some people, maybe that is enough, but you could also start by researching four-star restaurants around the world, researching those locations and travel regulations, and then planning dates. Some may think that the first option is the better trip, and that is fine. But, imagine if it was your job to plan trips like that for clients? More thought would definitely be expected if not necessary because you would want your clients to have an enjoyable trip. Why demand less from yourself?

The Japanese language example from above could easily be broken down into many smaller steps. For example, it could start with researching what level of Japanese is needed to work in the target industry, analyzing your current level of Japanese, and then setting goals for each language skill area (e.g., speaking and listening). Being detailed is important here, as is understanding how each step is evaluated. If research is your first step, how much research do you need to do? What questions do you need to answer? How do you know they are answered? Defining this information can help you successfully complete the step, but remember to carry out this process with each step. Our wannabe programmer might assume that most companies require JLPT N1 of non-Japanese hires, but through her research

find out that they use the Business Japanese Proficiency Test. This might change her focus when analyzing her current ability and setting goals for specific language skill areas. At this step, it is also important to think about the manageability of each step. She might find it manageable to research and analyze her abilities on her own, but then realize that the amount of Japanese improvement needed could only be achieved by taking an intensive course. This would then add more steps to the big goal, such as finding a good school and changing her visa status.

### Step 3: Create a timeline

Once you've broken the goal down into smaller steps, it's time to think about how long it will take to complete each step, set deadlines, and also see which steps must be completed sequentially and which can be done consecutively. Setting a deadline for each step is essential in helping to maintain motivation and creating a point of reference when reflecting on your progress. For example, the wannabe programmer could have decided she needed to improve her spoken Japanese. During step 2, she decided that this meant being able to respond in slow, semi-formal Japanese to some basic questions asked at an interview which she found in a Japanese interview book for university students. From her research, she could have learned that a lot of gaming companies have their job fairs in the fall and do final interviews in the late winter. So, she would want to be able to respond to those basic questions in slow, semi-formal Japanese before January. Knowing this, she could then determine how much of her available time she could spend on that step. While working on her timeline, she'd also start to see that some of her steps are naturally sequential, but that some could also be done consecutively or could be undertaken based on priorities, interests, or strengths/weaknesses.

### Continuous Evaluation

An important factor in all of this is regularly reflecting on your goal, steps, and progress from the time you first start making your plan. While working on a small goal, you might realize another

step or another way to achieve your goal that would eliminate the need for that step. Perhaps the person in our example is always looking at job listings and finds a company that is hiring English programmers with only rudimentary Japanese skills. This might cause the person to forgo working on the step she laid out in detail above and spend time instead working on a different goal unrelated to Japanese but necessary to land the job she desires.

### Flexibility

A second important factor is your ability to maintain flexibility when evaluating your goal, steps, and progress. As mentioned above, having a big goal is fuel for personal development; however as you move towards your goal other possibilities can appear which could cause you to completely abandon your plan or make significant adjustments. However, don't fear these possibilities because they act as catalysts for deeper reflection about the direction your life is taking.

Everybody has a different way of going about personal goal setting and each person's level of detail and critical reflection varies greatly. Some people are already very skilled at setting personal goals without explicitly going through the steps above. If you are this kind of person, I hope this article got you to reflect a little on your style of goal management and you noticed something new. Other people might not be fluent with goal management or have not encountered this type of activity before. I hope that the steps above have shown you the benefits of a more structured, detailed, and reflective approach to managing your goals. Whether you're using these steps to think about career development beyond the JET Programme or to develop a new skill or hobby, I wish you the best.

Mathew Porter is a Learning Advisor at a university Self-Access Learning Center where he helps students develop and work towards achieving personal language learning goals and teaches a course on self-directed learning. He has MAs in Japanese Translation and TESOL.



**Aaron Gilling, Saitama**  
Block 3 Representative

October brought with it a whirlwind of weather changes (pun intended) to Block 3, with typhoons and earthquakes doing their best to sweep away the furiously enduring summer heat. All of this was probably in the hope that I would stop leaving copious amounts of sweat all over the Kanto region, and it worked, at least for now. The tumultuous weather was not enough to dampen the spirits of Ibaraki-ken however, where the famous Tsuchiura National Fireworks Competition went ahead as planned to sweep the sky with brilliant colour over the Sakura River.

At the beginning of October, football came home to Nagano in the autumn version of the ALT Soccer Tournament. There were teams in attendance from Saitama, Tochigi and Nagano. Success for the boys was found on the appropriately named team "Honsu Doom". Saitama Saiborgs and Tochigi Weasels put aside geographical differences to form the Saichigi Weaselborgs, the mascot of which is presumably some sort of bionic weasel that shoots lasers out of its one red eye. Big props to one of the two Saitama girls teams, the "Psychoborgs", who rabidly fought their way to second place after a dramatic penalty shoot-out in the final against the titans of Fukushima. All in all, it was a fantastic weekend event that brought together teams of ALTs from all over Block 3 and the Kanto area.

Here in Saitama, October has seen festivals galore with a local beer festival and international fair leading up to the famous Kawagoe festival bringing back the delicious locally brewed beer, ramen burgers, and hefty squid steaks all amidst a heavy backdrop of taiko drums and two storied Edo-style floats known as andon complete with battling dolls inside.

November is an exciting month to be in Block 3. Saitama AJET are having a big city scavenger hunt. Gunma and Nagano AJETs will each be hosting their annual Thanksgiving dinners, with Nagano AJET's dinner raising money for charity.

What's new with me? Well aside from nursing two terribly black toes after a wicked weekend at the soccer tournament with the Weaselborgs, I am eagerly awaiting a trip up to Hakodate in Hokkaido on the Cassopeia sleeper train for the November national holiday weekend. I would be lying if I said that I didn't find this the perfect way to live out my From Russia With Love James Bond fantasies. Definitely bringing a smoking jacket.

On the AJET side of things, I was heavily involved in writing the "Disaster Awareness and Preparedness" sections of the biannual report that will be sent on to the 3 ministries and CLAIR for AJET's meeting with the government in December. Thanks again to everyone who filled in the surveys. It was great to get feedback from JETs on this important issue. I have also been busy with sourcing companies to advertise in Connect magazine in my role as Director of Corporate Advertising, kind of like the Don Draper of AJET, minus the drunken philandering.

Coming to Block 3 (Ibaraki, Tochigi, Nagano, Gunma, Saitama) and need a cheeky tip on what to get up to? Get in touch and I will be on hand to offer travel advice or put you in touch with one of our local experts.



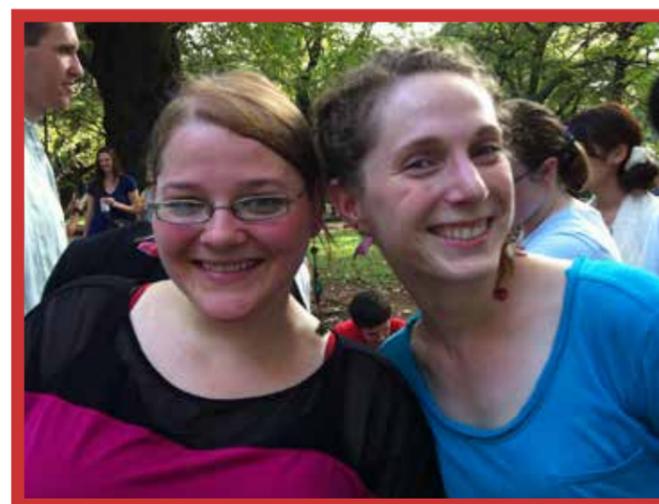
**Melinda Lange, Saitama**  
Head of Visual Media

Has another month passed already? I can't believe how fast the year is going by. The new JETs have had a few months to get settled in now, and we're still celebrating! We kicked off the new JET year with our annual welcome picnic in Omiya Park amid sweltering 36-degree heat. Despite that, there was lots of food and drink to share, and we had the chance to meet and mingle with both new JETs and JETs that we haven't seen in a while. Together we bonded, or rather slipped and slid between each other in the most endearing way possible—by being hot sweaty messes together in one big *gaijin* melting pot.

Recently, I and another Satte (Saitama) ALT participated in the City Hall Sports Festival at the local gym. We were on Team Education and shakily came in second place, with Team Agriculture placing first. You should have seen them at the tug of war—they definitely had practice! Our prizes for participation, aside from the general good feeling you get from hard work and exercise, was a cooling patch for our necks, and kitchen rags to... clean stuff—or ourselves—with I guess!

October was spent hanging out with old and new friends in my little area of Satte City, having fun improving my broken Japanese and also speaking English with whomever wants to practice. This month I've sung my fair share of karaoke and eaten more than my fair share (perhaps) of food, all in the company of these good friends. Local intercultural exchange FTW!

In November, we're gearing up to put the finishing touches on the reports that were written based on the Opinion Exchange Surveys you all took last month. We have three in all—Life After JET, Disaster Preparedness, and JET Involvement in the Local Community. We saw an amazing response rate (twenty percent!!!) and will be presenting the results to CLAIR and the Three Ministries at the Winter 2013 Opinion Exchange Conference. There, we will make your voices heard, and hopefully inspire great changes to the JET Program as a whole.



**Sarah Stout, Yamanashi**  
Block 4 Representative



We may have the fewest JETs of all the blocks, but Block 4 makes up for it in our dedication to the JET community and, of course, our regular outings to nearby Tokyo and Yokohama! Now that I am in my 5th year, I really want to take the opportunity to meet more of the block and help everyone get more involved before my inevitable departure.

These past few months have been busy with welcome parties. Shizuoka and Yamanashi held their first ever joint-event at the famous Katsunuma Grape Festival, well-known for neverending wine! October had Halloween parties, pub quizzes, and some sports and marathon days thrown in. November will bring Thanksgiving parties and autumn leaf-viewing events that people return to year after year. December has more holiday parties than you can shake a stick at, but don't forget, winter is coming, and we will be joining the annual, ever-popular ski trip to Hakuba with YETI (Yamanashi English Teachers International) in January. You may even be able to spot me tumbling hilariously down the slopes on the trip.

As for me, I am planning a springtime joint event here in Yamanashi with JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching) and local ALTs for professional development. I am also always keeping you all informed of the latest professional development opportunities via the AJET Block Facebook groups. I hope that some of them will be beneficial to you in the future.

Since winter is a busy time in and out of the block, block representatives and I are planning a Block 4 event for February! The details will be announced closer to the date so please keep an eye out on our Facebook group. I'm looking forward to meeting all of you there!

# CULTURE

## EDITORIAL Grief Abroad

This year, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, at a little before 5 pm, my Grandfather died. He died without pain, in his sleep, surrounded by his family. As a former police officer, he was a force of nature, still working in his garden up to the week of his death.

He was 87 years old. I was in Japan.

I decided to share this because it is a situation which, unfortunately, many JETs will find themselves in during their time here. The loss of a loved one can be devastating, no matter your age. When you add the isolation that some JETs can feel in Japan, it can make for a very tough time. Being away from old friends and family is already tough, and adding bereavement only makes matters worse.

I've never really been one for heart-to-heart conversations. As such, up until this, I have only told three people that my Grandfather died, and of those three, only one is in Japan. I have a good number of friends here, but I just didn't know how to talk about it, I mean, when everybody is having a great time, you don't want to be "That Guy" who brings everything down.

There are support services in place to help JETs deal with isolation or loss, but when you are dealing with a loss, it can be hard to imagine how talking to a stranger, over the phone, can help. Since many JETs are quite similar (we all signed up to the program after all), I can bet that many of you will feel the same about the support structures. Useful, yes, but maybe not for you.

The winter can be a tough time for JETs, both newly arrived, and those that have been here for some time. The cold weather, coupled with Japan's loss of "new-ness" leads to something which you have no doubt heard of many times: Stage Two. It can

be even more difficult if you lose someone close to you.

During such a hard time it is important not to dwell on your own troubles. Getting back in to the swing of things is essential to moving on and regaining a sense of normality. Going in to work, taking up a hobby, even just going for an evening jog can lift your spirits and help you move on.

I'm not really qualified to give a lot of specific advice on dealing with bereavement. It affects everybody differently, but there is one thing that I know that needs to be done: you need to say it, out loud, to a person. For me, talking about it with my family via Skype, or even just thinking to myself wasn't easy, but it was manageable. Saying it to another person, face-to-face, was much harder.

If you suffer a loss, or are going through a rough patch, talk to somebody, whether they're a friend, a member of the AJET Peer Support Group, or even me. Just don't go it alone, it's no fun, and it makes the process harder.

Above all, remember that you're not alone.

*AJET Peer Support Group – 8pm to 7am every day – 050-5534-5566 or on Skype at AJETPSG.*

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## THIS MONTH IN CULTURE...

This month we have another great lineup of articles for you. Pull up a chair, get comfortable and prepare for a treat.

If you are wondering where to get all the fixins for the forthcoming holiday season, check out my Spotlight, where I talk about two great services that I guarantee will have everything you need.

Most of you will have seen or eaten a mikan over the last few weeks. Let Harrison Fuerst, an ALT from the home of the mikan, Ehime, give you a bit of background into this juicy subject. Harrison also gives information about a great volunteering opportunity in Ehime, so be sure to give it a look.

Gabriela Romeu presents this month's current affairs piece. Gabriela is taking a look at the recent rise in Japanese Nationalism. If you want to know more about the recent textbook controversies, or the debates about disputed islands, you need to give this a read.

Finally, my editorial deals with an uncomfortable, but unavoidable, issue: the loss of a loved one while on the JET Programme.



"Life after the BOE" by David Namisato.  
<http://www.lifeaftertheboe.com/>

## SPOTLIGHT

### The Champions of Foreign Food

In Japan, it can be hard to find quality products from home. Things here are similar, but perhaps not quite right for your tastes. The holiday season is fast approaching, and we have Thanksgiving this month. Thankfully (see what I did there?), these two services in Japan have you covered. I swear that neither of these sites have paid me, but if they want to send me tasty treats, I won't turn it down.

If you're tired of the sweet hamburgers that are served up here, look no further than The Meat Guy. With a huge range of meats, from sirloin steaks to whole suckling pigs, The Meat Guy has a reputation for satisfying even the most carnivorous of JETs. If you order a turkey from him, you also have the opportunity to have it cooked and pick it up from a restaurant. Give his site a look and celebrate Turkey Day in style, with meat. [www.themeatguy.jp](http://www.themeatguy.jp)

If you want more than meat, say, 2.5kg of chocolate for example, The Flying Pig delivers Costco sized and priced goods anywhere in Japan. They have an arrangement with Costco, and—joy of joys—you don't need a Costco card to fill your house with enough sweet treats to make your dentist cry. If you need a little (or a lot of) cranberry sauce to compliment the gut-busting feast that you're planing, give them a look. [www.theflyingpig.com](http://www.theflyingpig.com)



# WORKIN' IN A MIKAN WONDERLAND

Harrison Fuerst, Ehime

We Ehimeans love our citrus, it's no secret. The simple fact that we enjoy going to the store to buy oranges should prove that. Words just can't quite do justice to the local growing culture or the sheer variety of citrusy goodness on offer.

Here in Ehime the shopping experience is more akin to gliding through farmers markets and down shopping aisles on a happy cloud, scooping up handfuls of *dekopon*, or *ponkan*, maybe an *amanatsu* or *setoka*, even a *harumi* or *haruka* with a nice bottle of *kiyomi* juice to wash it all down. Stop by the train station gift shop in our capital city of Matsuyama, and you will see that even Hello Kitty is an avid drinker of Ehime's own POM mikan juice. Add to this the array of mikan liquors, sweets, treats and pastries that are made all over the prefecture and the possibilities for deliciousness are endless. But each morsel of mikan goodness has to make the journey from shrub to shelf, and the start of that journey for your mikans may very well be the wind-swept mountaintops of the Sadamisaki Peninsula.

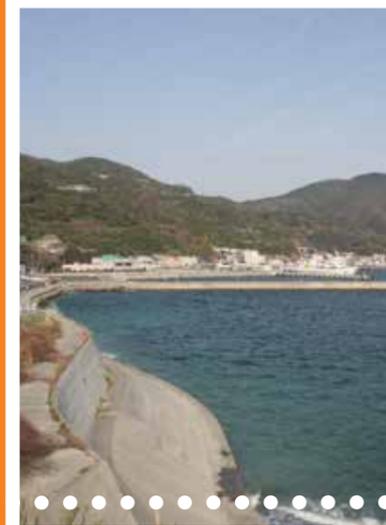
The countryside of Ikata covers the peninsula, and driving down the arterial road "Melody Line" (so named for its musical rumble strips) you'll notice Shikoku's only nuclear power plant and dozens of towering windmills amidst the forested mountains.

In the little ferry town of Misaki, on the tip of the Ikata peninsula, a significant number of families have a hand in either the mikan or sweet potato trade. This rural community, like countless others that dot the length of Sadamisaki Peninsula, is a perfect example of Japan's mesh of residential and commercial buildings on the coast, while the forested mountain terraces above are home to a complex network of narrow roads, monorail transports, and terrace plantations necessary for the harvest.

My own students have recounted their life routines, dividing their time on weekends between tending the orchard and playing video games, while their parents take on any extra work they can after their day jobs as teachers or firefighters or nurses. The elderly, too seem always to be walking the streets with their *karuikago* (light basket backpacks made of woven bamboo). Having spent some time farming in China's southern Guangdong province, I was determined to get my hands dirty and help work the mikan trenches. As luck would have it, I found a close ally in Misaki Middle School's Social Studies teacher, Mr. Asano.

Nestled within the terrace farming community named Hiraiso, the Asanos have built not only their home and a sourcing point for Ehime's mikan industry, but also an international work-camp volunteer program they call The Kikuya Project<sup>1</sup>. Beginning in February 2011, I was invited to come and learn the ropes of the mikan harvest with the Asanos, their friends, and a team of predominantly international volunteers. The work-camp volunteers had generally come through a website called NICE (Never-ending International work-Camps Exchange)<sup>2</sup> or Volunteers for Peace<sup>3</sup> and were a motley bunch: North Americans, Europeans, East Asians and Japanese folks from other cities. My farming acquaintances there have all come and gone, but there is always someone new, cooking and resting up for the next day's work in the volunteer house which has been dubbed "Kikuya". It is an aged and rustic wooden building perched at the top of a winding stone staircase overlooking most of Hiraiso.

My own mikan work experience began early on a cold Saturday morning at the start of *dekopon* season as I pieced together my farming arsenal between sips of coffee: *inari zushi* packed lunch,



waterproof jacket, a few layers of working clothes and gloves. Twenty minutes and one incredibly steep winding drive later, I arrived at the house, where the family were already gearing up. Mr. Asano's son, a student of mine, led me down a steep path through hedgerows, rusted gates, stone markers and dormant orchards. An odd mechanical sound attracted our attention and, much to my amusement, a local Hiraiso worker chugged slowly by from behind us, smiling from his perch on the tiny mikan crate transport platform that rides along the monorail system.

About 10 minutes into our descent we reached the day's work site and ran into two of the international volunteers, a young woman from Michigan and a German high school graduate. For five hours, we worked tree by tree transferring mikans to buckets, buckets to crates, and eventually crates to light trucks. Some well-deserved respite came in the form of a noontime picnic overlooking the sparkling ocean, laughing and watching the ocean traffic from our little mikan mountain.

Now that you know a little more about the juicy life of the mikan harvester, I suppose you'll want to get down to business and hit the orchards yourself. So, how exactly does one harvest a mikan? Well, once you're properly geared up (remember those layers since it gets cold up on the mountains!) you will need your stem cutters and a collection bucket. As for the buckets, each one of ours had rope threaded through the top that is also tied around a cleverly designed, inverted Y-shaped piece of wood. After you've selected your target mikan tree, find a sturdy branch from which to hang your bucket and get to work on cutting those mikans! Harvesting should generally be done in two cuts: first, snipping the fruit from the tree, and second, close to the skin, giving your mikan that distinctive "short stem with two leaves" look. This repetitive action provides mikan work with its distinct rhythm, like hammering a railroad spike or swinging pickaxes in a chain gang, a symphony of rustling and snip-snipping.

Even if you can't make it out here to Ehime's front lines of mikan harvesting, there are at least some good pointers for enjoying the fruits of our labor (pun very much intended). Here are a few things to keep in mind. First, for the sweetest of the sweet, shop around for *ponkan*, *kiyomi*, and *dekopon*. If you prefer a bit less intensity, reach for a standard navel orange or an *iyokan* instead.

When choosing your mikans you'll find the best flavors by going for the more deeply colored and flatter, wider specimens over the

lighter taller ones. Like most produce in Japan, each mikan has its own growing season, so always make sure to catch that first month or so for maximum freshness. Summer and autumn are the seasons to enjoy standard mandarin oranges, but after the New Year is when the real fun begins. Try a *ponkan* in January, *harumi* and *setoka* in February, *haruka* in March, and *dekopon* any time before May. By the time spring comes along, you can be ready for some *kiyomi*, too.

Although Imabari's Bari-san has taken the country by storm in the "nationally renowned cuteness" category, Ehime's lesser known prefectural character exudes a mikan-infused cuteness all its own. Mikyan is the darling mikan dog of Ehime, easily spotted with those two droopy green leaves for ears. If you happen to pass through the city of Iyo (a name the city shares with the old province that became Ehime as well as the second-most famous mikan variety, *Iyokan*) you might catch a glimpse of the armored Mikanmaru, Iyo's own city mascot. Even the police signage around Ehime will always feature a rotund orange Pacman-looking uniformed mikan officer. Last but not least, sports in Ehime are all mikan, all the time. Ehime FC's three footballing mikan mascots and the Mandarin Pirates minor baseball team are there to remind everyone what Ehime is all about.

Whether over in Hiraiso or elsewhere in Ehime, there is always mikan work to be done. So next time you find yourself stuck driving behind a little white mikan truck chugging along at a snail's pace, stop muttering under your breath and think about doing some work at an orchard! You won't regret it.

*Harrison Fuerst is in his third year as an Ehime ALT, formerly of Ikata-cho and now based in Imabari-shi. He can often be found beatboxing in school hallways with his students, editing Ehime's own JET publication The Mikan, hosting couchsurfers, cycling across the Shimanami Kaido, and concocting vegan Japanese meals. Feel free to get in touch with him via Facebook for recipe swapping or to get the inside scoop on the best of Ehime!*

Sources

<sup>1</sup> <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/kikuya2009>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nice1.gr.jp/lmj\\_LI-IK13/](http://www.nice1.gr.jp/lmj_LI-IK13/)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.vfp.org/p-1883-ikata-13-6.aspx>





# NATIONALISM: BY THE BOOKS

Gabriela Romeu, Okinawa

## Japan's Increased Nationalism

Japan's relations with China have been badly strained over the past year; due in part to the territorial disputes over a chain of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. However, prior to this current state of international affairs, tensions were already rising. This was partly caused by Chinese resentment over Japanese actions taken during World War II, as well as the allegedly deceitful historiographical accounts found in Japanese history textbooks. These textbooks are approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and adopted at the local level during textbook adoption conferences. These history textbooks caused a wave of protests and claims that they glossed over, or completely whitewashed, accounts of World War II atrocities. The biggest sticking points were the Nanjing Massacre and the use of non-Japanese Asian women as sex slaves, or "Comfort Women", during World War II.

## History Textbook Controversy

The current controversy over history textbooks began in 1965 with the historian Ienaga Saburo. Saburo claimed that the Ministry of Education was trying to deliberately conceal facts concerning the Nanjing Massacre and the use of comfort women in order to hide the dark side of Japanese history<sup>1</sup>. The debate continued until the mid-2000s, when the right-wing nationalist group, Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukurukai (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform 新しい歴史教科書をつくる会) created their own history textbook, Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho (New History Textbook 新しい歴史教科書). They lobbied influential Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members to exert pressure on the Ministry of Education to approve their textbook. During the authorization process, the Committee for Truth and Freedom in Textbooks released a highly signed petition that asked the Ministry of Education to reject Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho's manuscript. The committee said that the textbook would "pave the way for the revival of chauvinistic history education of pre-war and war-time Japan"<sup>2</sup>. Although the Ministry of Education revised over 150 points within the textbook, Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho was approved for school use.

Some of the more controversial aspects of the Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho were the rewording of events that gave the image that Japan was not an aggressor during World War II. For

example, when describing the invasion by Japan into Manchuria and China, Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho replaced "invade" with "advance" (*shinkō* 進行 or *susume* 進め)<sup>3</sup>. "Advance" can be interpreted as a neutral military term for a general military maneuver, not necessarily an invasion. "Nanjing Massacre (Nankin daigyakusatsu 南京大虐殺)" is often toned down by renaming the event as the "Nanjing Incident (Nankin jiken 南京事件)"<sup>4</sup>. Also, the timing for the Nanjing Massacre is edited to reflect that many Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed during the siege of the city instead of six weeks after Nanjing's surrender. The timing is important because it can be an accident of war or a deliberate war crime.

Although the approval of Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho was a victory for the right-wing organization, the textbook was a complete failure with less than 1% of the country's adoption rate into the schools. Due to the bad publicity, the Tsukurukai sold their rights to another textbook company, Jyūsha or "Freedom Inc."

Since 2006, the textbook controversy has been placed in the background, overshadowed by recent territorial disputes. However, as of March 2013, the territorial disputes have been reflected within textbooks, as MEXT approved two geography textbooks and six textbooks on politics and economics which described the Pinnacle (Senkaku/Diaoyu) Islands and Liancourt Rocks (Takehima/Dokdo Islands) as being solely Japanese territories. The approval of the textbooks was met with protest as Hong Lei, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, stated, "We hope the Japanese side faces up to history and reality, corrects mistakes and takes concrete steps for improvement in bilateral relations"<sup>5</sup>. A spokesperson from South Korea also stated "[Seoul] strongly protests against Japan for not looking squarely at history and having approved textbooks containing content that evades its responsibility, and we demand a correction of such textbooks"<sup>6</sup>.

In August of 2013, the Yokohama Board of Education ordered a recall of the 2012 version of *Wakaru Yokohama* or "Understanding Yokohama" because the textbook used the word "massacre" when describing the killing of Korean civilians in Japan shortly after the Great Kanto Earthquake. In 2012, an LDP member protested the supplementary textbook and stated the textbook "could affect historical concepts in [Japan] and diplomatic relations."<sup>7</sup> Of the 27,000 copies of *Wakaru Yokohama* which

were distributed, about half have been collected.

Although the history textbook controversy is gaining significant media attention, it is important to note that the history textbooks that allegedly whitewash historical content continue to show a low adoption rate within Japan, and the content in current textbooks has changed from those in the past to reflect historical sensitivity.

## The Pinnacle of a Sino-Japanese Dispute

On December 26 2012, Shinzo Abe was re-elected as prime minister in a landslide victory over the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Since then, Prime Minister Abe has adopted a more assertive yet nationalistic foreign policy by keeping a close eye on the escalating tensions with China, boosting military spending, pledging to revise Japan's constitution in order to loosen the restrictions on Japan's Self Defense Forces, and strengthening ties with Southeast Asia and the United States<sup>8</sup>. Critics of Prime Minister Abe say that this policy will antagonize China, and in turn cause further instability within East Asia.

The stability of East and Southeast Asia lie in the hands of Japan, China and South Korea. However, the current territorial disputes between Japan and China have brought an increase of military activity that could lead to an armed incident. In September 2012, the Japanese government purchased and naturalized three islands within the Pinnacle Islands chain from their private owner, causing large-scale protests in China and Taiwan, who trace their claim to the islands to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Japan claims that the islands were originally part of the Ryūkyū (Okinawa) Islands and that China and Taiwan only began to make claims when the islands were identified for having potential oil and gas reserves by the United Nations. Japan also claims that these islands, as part of the Ryūkyū Islands, were not part of the Potsdam Treaty, which obligated Japan to surrender their claim to all imperial territories after World War II<sup>9</sup>.

Recently, tensions have intensified as Chinese fighter jets have entered the Japan Self Defense Force Air Identity Zone. Japan also claims that Chinese naval vessels have used weapon-guided radars on vessels of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. In a press conference, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that China wished to expand its territory "by coercion or intimidation"<sup>10</sup>, he implied that he would break economic ties with China, and



stated that the "United State's presence in Asia is critical to deter China from taking territory by other countries"<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, Prime Minister Abe has met with U.S. President Barack Obama, U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in order to revise bilateral defense guidelines reflecting current or rising trends in the Asia-Pacific region. As a response to the recent intensification of military activity in the East China Sea, the United States offered to send MV-22 Osprey transport aircraft from Okinawa should the U.S. "need to support any sort of Japan-U.S. security treaty"<sup>12</sup>.

As the tensions increase over historical debates and territorial disputes with Asian regional powers, relations with China will continue to be strained.

**Ultimately, it is important for both nations to have an open dialogue.**

However, with the cancellation of important meetings by Chinese officials to Japan and Japanese officials to China, this task is looking to be increasingly difficult.

Gabriela Romeu is first-year ALT in Ginoza-son, Okinawa. She is a self-described "loca" who is working on her Miami-tan in Japan. Follow her travel adventures on her blog: [DontTouchMyShisa.blogspot.com](http://DontTouchMyShisa.blogspot.com) and on Instagram: [gaberomeu](http://gaberomeu).

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# THIS MONTH IN ENTERTAINMENT...

Another month, another issue of Connect's Entertainment section. This month, Kagoshima JET Adam Carter travelled to Fukuoka in order to report on the city's 22<sup>nd</sup> international film festival. Held in high esteem, the festival is where many Asian films make their debut. Of the 22 films screened, Adam features his two favorites: an Afghani film called *The Patience Stone* and an Indonesian film called *Atambua 39° Celsius*.

Next, Fukushima JET and our very own head editor Steven Thompson made his way down to Tokyo to cover one of the biggest gaming events of the year: Tokyo Game Show (TGS for those in the know). If you're keen to know what the Japanese gaming gods have in store for us over the next year, be sure to check out his article!

If you need some fresh tunes on your iPod and are sick and tired of idol groups, be sure to check out my spotlight on the Japanese math rock band *toe*. Finally, when those gloomy November days start getting you down, consider catching a show from the list of concerts I've lined up from around Japan. Happy reading!



# ENTERTAINMENT

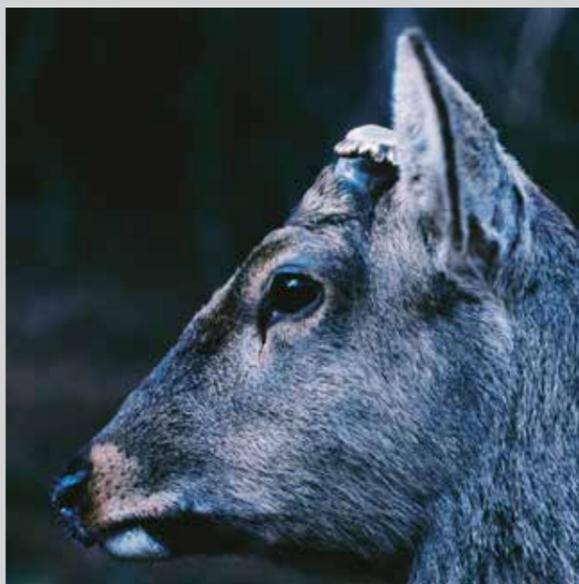
## EDITORIAL Tom Reviews a band called 'toe'



Formed in 2000, *toe* is comprised of Kashikura Takashi on drums, Mino Takaaki and Yamazaki Hirokazu on guitar, and Yamane Satoshi on bass. Through frequent touring, they've become a notable presence in the Japanese alternative music scene. While they've only released two proper full lengths and a handful of EPs, the group has perfected a signature instrumental sound, blending the more melodic elements of post-rock with the rhythmical complexity of math rock.

All *toe* tracks feature the two dueling guitars of Mino and Yamazaki. This allows for uniquely layered melodies that shift seamlessly from complement to competition and back as both guitarists bring their sounds closer and further away from each other as they see fit. While the use of two guitars definitely produces some impressive melodies, one feels that the songs actually tend to be led along by the drummer, Kashikura Takashi. Obvious technical proficiency aside, his fluid playing creates a fascinating central beat that one cannot help but focus on as the guitars weave around it. This structure lets the band avoid sounding sterile, an issue I find plagues many math rock groups.

The band's 2005 debut full-length, the interminably titled *The Book about My Idle Plot on a Vague Anxiety*, remains their most popular and accessible release. An introspective album, it tends to be quieter and more melodic than their later work. Fans of *The Album Leaf* and *Explosions in the Sky* will certainly appreciate some of the more cinematic songs on the record, like "Mukougishi Ga Shiru Yume" and "Tremolo + Delay." Even



for listeners unfamiliar with post rock and math rock, the album IS highly enjoyable and a perfect complement to a chilly fall day. *The Book about My Idle Plot on a Vague Anxiety* has recently been re-pressed on vinyl by Top Shelf Records and is, at the time of this writing, available at their website <http://www.topshelfrecords.bigcartel.com>. It is also available on compact disc at *toe*'s own website <http://www.toe.st/> or digitally through iTunes. Visit the band's website for up to date information about their upcoming tours.

*Have you read, watched, played or created anything interesting lately? Be sure to let me know at [connect.entertainment@ajet.net](mailto:entertainment@ajet.net).*

# SPOTLIGHT



## Five Concerts to see in November

### Kyary Pamyu Pamyu

**What:** The Harajuku pop queen herself.

**When:** Saturday November 2nd, 6 PM.

**Where:** Nitori Cultural Hall, Sapporo (Access from JR Sapporo station)

**How much:** 5,000 yen

### Franz Ferdinand

**What:** Just the indie rock heroes you know and love.

**When:** November 19th, 20th, 22nd, 7 PM.

**Where:** Zepp Tokyo, Tokyo on the 19th and 20th (Access from JR Daiba.

Zepp Namba Osaka on the 22nd (Access from JR Namba station)

**How much:** 7,000 yen

### Atoms for Peace

**What:** The rock supergroup fronted by Radiohead lead singer Thom York.

**When:** Tuesday November 20th, 7 PM.

**Where:** Zepp Namba, Osaka (Access from JR Namba station)

**How much:** 9,000 yen advance

### Electraglide 2013

**What:** One of the largest electronic music events of the year. The 2013-edition features James Blake, Machine Drum, !!!, and Modeselektor.

**When:** Friday November 29th, 8 PM.

**Where:** Makuhari Messe, Chiba. Access from JR Kaihin-Makuhari station.

**How much:** 8,800 yen advance—9,800 yen at the door.

### Hostess Club Weekender

**What:** Tokyo's thrice-yearly mini-festival.

Saturday line up: Neutral Milk Hotel, Okkervil River, Sebadoh, Delorean, Temples.

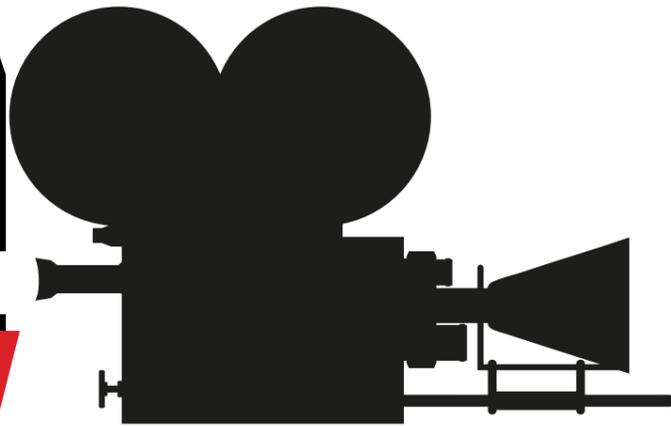
Sunday line up: Deerhunter, Juana Molina, Four Tet, Omar Souleyman, Austra

**When:** Saturday November 30th, 1 PM and Sunday December 1st 12 PM.

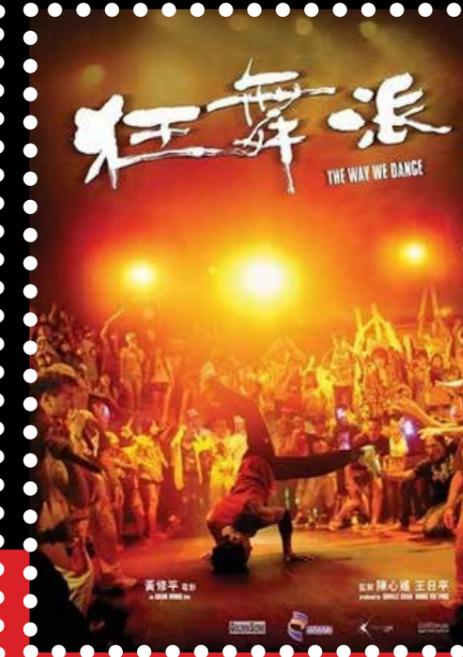
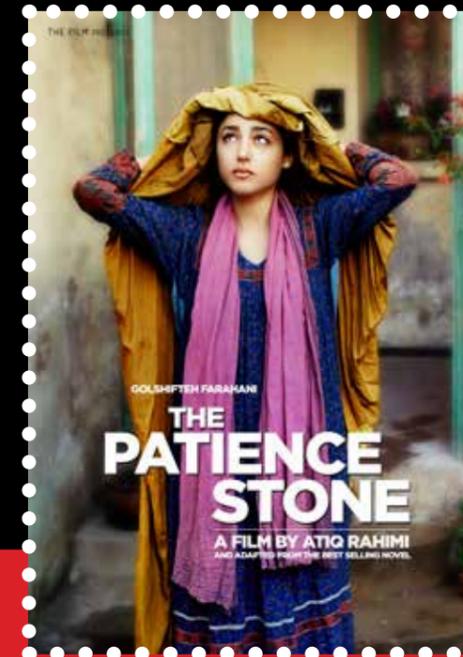
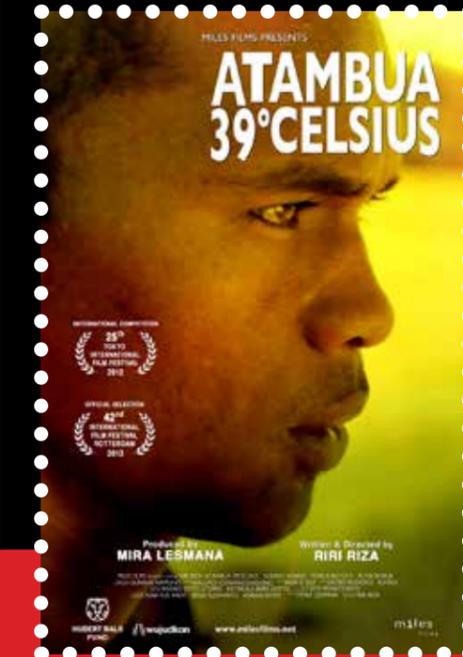
**Where:** Yebisu Garden Hall, Toyko. Access from JR Meguro or Ebisu stations.

**How much:** 1-Day Pass: 7,900 yen—2-Day Pass: 13,900 yen

# FOCUS ON ASIA FUKUOKA FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW



Adam Carter, Kagoshima



Since Fukuoka is geographically Japan's closest city to the Asiatic mainland, the city has always been a sort of gateway of exchange between Japan and the rest of Asia. Due to this proximity, the city was once Japan's link to the outside world, and any visit to Fukuoka's huge port makes it clear that this trade hub status still applies. But this relationship between Fukuoka and the rest of Asia goes beyond economy; the cultural ties are also an important factor.

Every September in Fukuoka is "Asian Month" during which around 50 cultural events are held. Inaugurated in 1991, the "Focus on Asia – Fukuoka International Film Festival" is one of the major events of "Asian Month". Beyond providing a showcase for films from all over the continent, the festival also invites film directors, actors and actresses as guests to promote exchanges through discussions and symposiums.

This festival is held in high regard, as many films premiere at the festival, which makes this festival the origin for a lot of Asian films to a broader audience. Another attraction is the fact that all films have English and Japanese subtitles, making it accessible to locals, students and visitors from all over the world. In many cases, films exhibited at the festival have become distributed within Japan or the directors featured have been offered joint production opportunities. Due to its focus on Asian films, the festival attracts the attention of some of the most influential Asian film press outlets, film distributors and fans.

I attended this year's festival on behalf of AJET Connect and was thoroughly impressed by the range of films, the festival's organization and the caliber of directors in attendance.

This year's festival included 22 films, which all competed for the Audience Winner Prize. In 2011, this award went to the amazing Iranian film *The Separation*, which deservedly went on to win the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. This year's winner was *The Way We Dance*, which comes on the heels of other popular films based around hip-hop dance competitions. The film, by acclaimed Hong Kong director Adam Wong, follows a college girl's attempts to

join a hip-hop dance team, and documents the complications she encounters, especially after rival gangs become involved. The movie is highlighted by amazing dance sequences. It is interesting to note that even though we think of hip-hop dance as being primarily an American art form, in this film we see an Asian bent, as they refer to the "tai chi" style these dancers incorporate into their act. The director obviously planned the film around the dance sequences, as all of the actors are professional dancers with years of experience. While I enjoyed the film, I felt it lacked some of the dynamism of the other films in this genre (such as *StreetDance* and *Step Up*) because of the static camerawork and the storyline being a bit melodramatic at times. But overall, it's a high-energy film helped along by some great performances, especially the lead played by the young and talented actor Cherry Ngan.

The festival also included four special features: a six-film retrospective on South Korean director Lee Chang Dong, a four-film retrospective on Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul's films, a one-minute film competition and a look-back of Japanese cinema in 1964, the last year Japan was awarded the Olympic games. Films such as *Tokyo Olympiad* held a special nostalgic appeal now that Tokyo has been awarded the 2020 games.

Two films stood out for me at this festival. *The Patience Stone* is a powerful film that Atiq Rahimi, an Afghan who's been living in France since the mid-1980s, adapted from his 2008 novel of the same title.

The film, set in war-torn Kabul, follows a young Afghani wife who finds herself pouring out her anger and eventually her secrets to her husband, a former war commander who now lies comatose in their living room. Without any one to support her, she finds solace from her loneliness by revealing her inner thoughts to her inert husband. In doing so, she discloses secrets that she could never tell him before, but soon starts divulging deeper secrets that she knows would infuriate her husband if he could hear her. Can he? This film is very powerful; the audience feels like they are covering with her in the makeshift bomb shelter and it really exposes some of the cultural mores that

women in her culture experience. The silent scenes of the wife and comatose husband contrast with erotic scenes of passion with a young soldier, creating a very evocative, yet uncomfortable mood in the theater. Love versus death and oppression versus liberation are some of the themes this amazing film explores.

Another memorable film was *Atambua 39° Celsius*, which comes from the renowned Indonesian filmmaker Riri Riza. The film is set in Atambua, a very hot, dusty town near the Timorese border (which was granted independence after a bloody war in 1999) and follows the fate of one of the many families that were torn apart by the war, particularly the relationship of a drunkard father and his teenage son. The son listlessly replays the cassette tapes his mother sent years earlier, urging the father to bring their son to the new country of East Timor, but the father Joao drowns himself in alcohol to forget his family and obligations, having made a pledge to never set foot in Timor unless it was returned to Indonesia. When a girl from the old community reappears, the boy takes an interest, which sparks a series of events that leads the viewer to understand the conflicts on a deeper level. The magic of the film is in its simplicity and its cinematography. Just like famed Indian director Deepa Mehta's "Fire, Earth and Water" trilogy, this film presents a lyrical view of these islands, which serves as an idyllic backdrop for a very emotional and hard-edged drama in which the characters struggle with themes of honor and identity. *Atambua 39° Celsius* shows just how effective a low-budget film with local actors can be.

The Focus on Asia festival also offers Q&A sessions after many screenings, as well as autograph-signing for film groupies. Though I do not know these directors by name, it is fascinating to hear them explain how they conceived and produced the films in person.

This festival is becoming more relevant every year as the popularity of Asian film continues to rise. The current generation of Asian film directors, particularly from Thailand and Indonesia, is generating a lot of interest in the world—a theme addressed in the festival's commemorative symposium titled "Reading the

Future of Cinema from the New Tide of Asian Films." Led by Thai Film Director Apichatpong Weerasethyakul, the only Southeast Asian to win the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, the symposium featured three of Asia's top film directors and producers and analyzed the present state of Southeast Asia's vanguard film industry, giving special attention to the issue of freedom of expression.

With its range of cultural activities, dynamic energy and non-stop nightlife, the vibrant city of Fukuoka is the perfect place for JETs to visit over break or a long weekend. I would recommend tying together next year's festival (which will also be held in mid-September) into a trip to Fukuoka, as there is certain to be a wide range of fascinating films over 10 days to choose from.

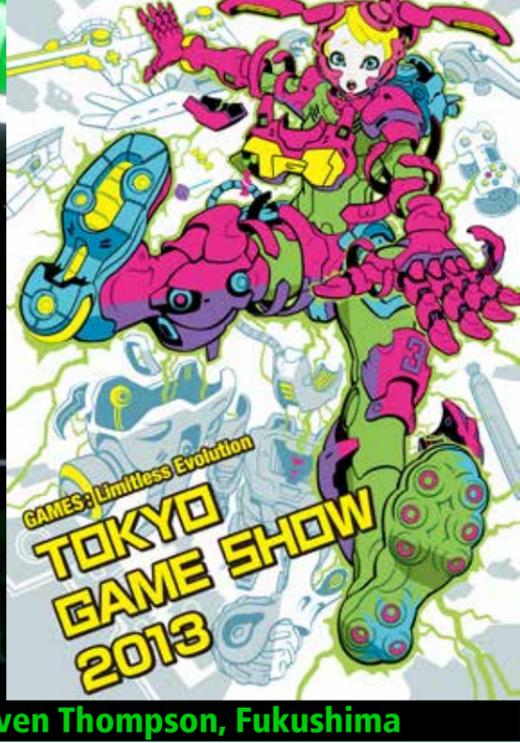
DETAILS: Tickets are 1,200 yen per show but they offer prepaid ticket packs of 5 shows for 4,000 yen. A pass for the entire festival is 10,000 yen. [All films are shown at the Canal City Mall, which has a range of shops and the not-to-be-missed Ramen Stadium food court featuring ramen shops from all over Japan].

DATE: The 2014 Festival will be held in mid-September; official announcement will take place in May of next year.

WEBSITE: [www.focus-on-asia.com](http://www.focus-on-asia.com)

*Adam Carter (1st-year ALT, Kagoshima) has been traveling, studying, working and gallivanting around the world for the past 17 years. Besides writing for newspapers and magazines, he has written several guidebooks but insists it's not as glamorous a lifestyle as it sounds. Adam started his own non-profit called Cause & Affect Foundation, but this month he shows that having a father as a film professor and film critic pays dividends.*





# A GLIMPSE OF GAMING'S FUTURE

Steven Thompson, Fukushima

The Tokyo Game Show has a history as one of the world's big video game expos, along with the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in America, GamesCom in Germany, and the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) in various locations. Last year when I went, I was a little underwhelmed, but I had big hopes for this year with the next generation of game consoles set to arrive in a few months and a press badge in my hand. While I did get my hands on both the PS4 and the Xbox One, the overall atmosphere of this year's show was one of enjoyable sparsity, despite having a record-breaking attendance of over 270,000 visitors in its four days.

Entertainment's *Titanfall*, a fast-paced first-person shooter which draws from *Call of Duty*, *MechWarrior*, *Halo*, and myriad other titles. It was granted the show's "Future Award" for upcoming titles. Most of Microsoft's neon-green booth was dedicated to the game, and the wait time to play it was hardly ever less than 2 hours. There was also an awesome, moving, lighted Titan 'embedded' in the floor. The game is blisteringly fast, with combat happening on multiple levels and varying between the powerful mech walkers and the agile pilots. Also notable at the booth was the participation of many members of the development team, who gave interviews with an interpreter.

Sony, of course, didn't just sit on its hands. *Deep Down* attracted a lot of attention with jaw-dropping graphics and a surprise free-to-play announcement, garnering one of the longer lines at the booth. *Assassin's Creed 4*, *Knack*, and *Killzone: Shadow Fall* also had enormous lines, but thankfully Sony continued its system of handing out tickets and dividing the main line into individual lines for each game. Even still, the booth was packed—easily twice as busy as Microsoft's—with dozens of games for the PS3, PS4, and Vita all playable.

One of the biggest surprises came in the form of the PS Vita TV, a Japan-only piece of tech (for now, but keep your fingers crossed) which allows you to stream PSP and PS Vita to your living room TV. The games look great, there's zero lag to be found in the connection, and it's only \$100. More good news for the Vita came with the announcement of an unsurprising, but welcome, *Monster Hunter* title—*Monster Hunter: Frontier G*.

Yet, many titles were video-only, so hands-on time was scarce. It wasn't all bad, as Hideo Kojima showed up with a long gameplay video for *Metal Gear Solid V*. I was able to get a hold of both the PS4 and Xbox One controllers, and can say both have made significant changes. Xbox One's improved rumble capabilities were shown off in a tech demo where you could feel an engine idling and revving, or a minigun chamber spinning up realistically in the controller itself. PS4's imbedded Move features

work smoothly, and the improvements in shape and form are a welcome update to the DualShock.

Prolific (and famously strange) Japanese developers Hidetaka "Swery65" Suehiro and Goichi "Suda51" Suda showed off their upcoming next-gen titles, *D4* and *Shadows of the Damned* (respectively). *D4* (short for "Dark Dreams Don't Die," of course) has a decidedly 'cult-classic' vibe to it, and is designed around the Xbox One's Kinect 2.0 motion controller. While waiting in line for other games, one could watch people flailing their arms to fight flight attendants, navigate menus, and wash their face. *Shadows of the Damned* is a rare collaboration between Suda51 (known for strange classics like *Viewtiful Joe* and *No More Heroes*) and Shinji Mikami (creator of *Resident Evil*). The result is an action horror game with a dark punk rock vibe. Very stylish, very weird. Definitely one of the bigger draws of the show though, with a large ad posted outside the convention center.

Beyond the typical Microsoft versus Sony competition, one interesting showdown at TGS was between *Disney Infinity* and *Skylanders*. Both employ a similar "toys into video games" concept, and both are hitting Japan for the first time. It'll be interesting to see if Disney's superior backlog of characters can gain it the traction it needs to topple *Skylanders* in Japan. The booths were set up directly next to each other in the Children's Games section of the show.

Notably absent from the show was the highly-anticipated (and presumed dead-in-the-water) title *The Last Guardian*. Locked in development for almost a decade now, its lack of presence at Sony's booth was keenly felt and duly noted. Also missing were some big next-gen sequels like *Persona 5*, *Kingdom Hearts III* (shown later at Japan's D24 expo instead), and *Final Fantasy XV*.

about upcoming big-name games, it was the perfect year for indie developers to make a splash. This section turned out to be one of my favorites, as one could actually speak directly with the developers while sitting and playing their works. I counted more than 50 booths in total on the public days, with titles covering every genre, from scrolling shooters to puzzle RPGs to interactive narratives. The indie showing was decidedly international as well; I personally met with developers from America, the Philippines, Thailand, Brazil, and France. My personal favorite title was a *Metrodvania*-style game titled *La Mulana 2* (linked below).

The section also featured a main stage, which was surprising. The stage featured developer interviews and entertaining showings such as a character design showdown, where two teams of artists raced to bring a character concept to life in 3D. Even Toho (famous fan developers of character shoot-em-ups) made a presentation at the indie stage. For a country whose game culture is decidedly locked on large studios and long-running reiterations (not to name names, *Final Fantasy*), it's a huge step in the right direction for a show like TGS to dedicate a space to independent games, and I hope this section only expands in subsequent years.

## Wrap up

All in all, Tokyo Game Show remains Japan's biggest video game event, and it has the fanfare, crowds, and exhibitors to prove it. Despite some underwhelming showings and a surprising lack of playability amongst titles, the increase in smaller developers, and lots of improvements to the organization and layout of the show from previous years made the whole thing more convivial overall. With a bare-bottom admission price (1,000 yen in advance) and a central location, any gamer living in Japan owes it to themselves to make it out at least once.

## Indies and others

A new change made possible this year by the exile of the cosplayers to Hall 9 across the street was the first dedicated section for indie game developers. With the general lack of excitement

## Links

- <http://expo.nikkeibp.co.jp/tgs/2013/en/>
- <http://newproject.nigoro.jp/en/>
- <http://www.heatpotgames.com/>

## Cosplayers

Arriving at the show, I immediately noticed the crowds seemed much less...crowded. It turns out that one of the big changes this year included corralling all of the cosplayers across the street in a separate building. In years previous, the cosplayers brightened (and clogged) up the spaces between exhibition halls, giving the show a never-ending crowd feeling. While part of me appreciates the utility of moving a large chunk of non-moving crowd to its own space, I missed the constant parade of familiar characters while moving from hall to hall.

That didn't stop us from seeing cosplayers though, and western games had a larger presence than ever among the costumed fans. We encountered a group of about 13 assassins (which was about 80% Ezio Auditore from *Assassin's Creed II*) in addition to lesser-known characters such as Faith from *Mirror's Edge* and The Wanderer from critically acclaimed indie darling *Journey*. Part of the joy of attending any fan expo for a favorite hobby is talking about it with people, and the cosplayers from American games are always excited to discuss their favorite titles.

## Games

Of course, the main feature of Tokyo Game Show isn't the game fans, but the games, and this year saw some big titles on display. The undisputed game of the show was developer Respawn



# FASHION & BEAUTY



## EDITORIAL Staying Slim or Staying Warm?

In last month's editorial, I mentioned the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week TOKYO, held at various locations centered around Shibuya and Roppongi. Did any of you enjoy the Zakka Runway or dessert showcase? There were certainly many lovely and tempting creations on offer! Missoni presented their runway looks for S/S 2014, while emerging designers and fashion college students shared their unique points-of-view. Because of the marvelous interwebs you can still check out their designs at <http://tokyombfashionweek.com/en/schedule/runway/>

While killing a couple of hours waiting for a friend to be done with classes, I stopped by a large newsagent in Ikebukuro. I've been in Japan two years now, and for the first time I did some close reading of magazine pages where Japanese ladies share their weight loss stories. Going from 70 to 62 kg takes effort, but here were women who weighed 55 kg before and 40 kg after, who stick to a detailed, daily routine to maintain their super slimline figures. The change was so dramatic it made me regret the large bagel I had scoffed that morning and consume less sushi than I wanted to at dinner.

A couple of days later at my local bookstore, I noticed many mooks (magazine books) devoted to weight loss, all of which came with a DVD, exercise tools and detailed photos, illustrations and instructions. I'm sure they had always been there, but I hadn't paid much attention, since I could hardly keep up with the mind-boggling, beautifully shot and artfully-designed array

of zakka, travel, food and fashion magazines that arrive each month.

I decided to ask a few Japanese friends and colleagues about the pressure to stay slim, and several confided that they get especially hungry in the colder months. Sure they want to taste many things, but through sheer discipline they stop eating when they are 80 percent full. That's a healthy concept, but I don't think they need to worry about weight gain anytime soon, what with their delicate ankles and tiny waists. Some of my students have larger lunch bento than they do! A recent Japan Times article mentioned that most Japanese women are prone to hieshou, a tendency to be chilly, and are as such, hypersensitive to changes in temperature. It dawned on me that maybe my acquaintances' constant comments about the weather were not only out of habit or politeness...

I'm interested to hear your views. I'm of the opinion that it's okay to put on a little padding in winter, and shed it before beach season. Not very disciplined or high-fashion, but there are so many delicious and nourishing foods to enjoy while snuggled under a kotatsu...nabe or yudofu party anyone?

*I'm interested to hear your views at [connect.fashion@ajet.net](mailto:connect.fashion@ajet.net)*

# THIS MONTH IN FASHION AND BEAUTY...

This month, it's all about fall/winter fashion. After those dog days of summer, working, playing and sleeping in the land of the rising sun have finally gotten more comfortable, and what better way to embrace the change in season than heading out to grab a bite or dance in the snow in your sleek coat, gorgeous scarf and comfy boots.

Stephanie Goh shares her fun and fearless style in JET Spotlight, and she's right—fashion is an adventure, so let your personality shine through! I definitely subscribe to the adage—if you look good, you feel good.

In the same vein, I've rounded up our JET brethren Jenson Deokiesingh, John Weber and Karen Ho to join me in giving you a fun, easy-to-implement guide to getting dressed in the colder months. We had a great time putting together a mix of basics, fall trends and personal style tips which we hope will inspire you to shake things up a little during your next shopping trip or clothes swap.



# SPOTLIGHT

## Stephanie Goh, Leading Lady

This month, we talk to Stephanie Goh, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year ALT in Tomioka, Gunma. An *anime* and *manga* enthusiast, she loves *進撃の巨人* (*Attack on Titan*) and *Gangsta*, while her favorite manga writer is Inoue Takehiko (*Slam Dunk*, *Vagabond*). This *genki* lady is also keen on *kendo*, goalkeeping and snowboarding.

### *Tell us about your style!*

You could describe my style as basic with a twist. I shop everywhere. I will wear a MINT NeKO scarf with UNIQLO slacks and a tee from a flea market. Cath Kitson bag with Harley Davidson boots—why not? Now that we're in Japan, leopard print is essential. You know, *when in Rome*. My wardrobe is filled with red, orange, forest green, heather grey, black, off white and navy blue.

Keeping up with the latest trends isn't a priority for me. Instead, I like to imagine that I'm living in an *anime* or movie and dress accordingly. Most work days call for little more than jerseys or slacks with a hoodie, so I seize the opportunity to play it up on my days off.

### *My fall/winter style/shopping strategies:*

Hats, scarves, and leather motorcycle boots are staples. Add

zing to basics with bold statement pieces. Giant scarves with bold colors in particular make amazing inanimate companions as the mercury dips. Use them as shawls, ponchos, hoods and snowboarding masks!



# OUR FALL AND WINTER LAYERING GUIDE

With so many options for fall (neither too warm or too cold to limit your sartorial choices), putting together occasion—and weather—appropriate ensembles can get a little overwhelming, especially with fashion magazines, websites and store window displays falling over themselves to offer styling advice. With a bit of experimentation and careful reading, however, you might notice a few bits of advice that get repeated over the years (because, well, they look good and get the job done). It might seem a little strange for someone who grew up in a tropical country to enjoy autumn this much, but heck, there's nothing standing between me and momijigari (autumn leaf viewing) once I get warm. Below, I offer up a quick, yet varied, checklist for readers thinking of supplementing their existing wardrobes. I also convinced three cool cats to generously share their style tips—complete with pictures of their groovy threads—so there's really no reason for any of us to feel (too) chilly or dowdy in the coming months.

## A PRIMER: THE BASICS

Flannels and sweaters are perennial cold weather favourites, but what if you are new to the layering game?

A basic rule of thumb is that the thinnest layers should be closest to your skin, and 1 layer of wool is warmer and less bulky than 3 layers of cotton. Read on for some ideas to get you started:

### First layer

Heat-retaining synthetics such as Uniqlo's heat tech Thin long-sleeved tops (1 turtleneck, 1 crew neck, 1 v-neck) Silk blouses

### Second layer

Button down or slim fit shirts—take your pick from polka dots, denim, plaid, striped, houndstooth, neutrals etc. Fine gauge sweater in cashmere, merino wool or a cotton/cashmere blend

### Third layer

Chunky cable knits in acrylic or lambswool, leather jacket, tweed blazer, down vest or gilet (so versatile under suits or over work shirts), quilted jacket, christmas cardigan, belted sweater dress

### Bottomwise

Skinny jeans, raw denims, well-fitting flared leg or boot leg pants, wool straight leg trousers. Tweed, curdcoroy, velvet work nicely, as do skirts and dresses with thick wool tights or two pairs of leggings.

### Outerwear

Find a well-cut coat (or three) that you like, in a flattering hue and comfortable fabric, since that's what you're going to be seen in most often whilst out and about. These six types are always in style: peacoat, trench, parka, wrap, military and top coat

### Accessorise, accessorise, accessorise

☞ Stock up on cozy shawls or scarves (try leopard, zigzag prints or an infinity scarf if you already own neon, pastels, neutrals, tartan and abstract prints).

☞ Invest in a pair of comfortable boots (pick a style and height that suits you) but don't hesitate to continue wearing your leather shoes, flats, sneakers, moccasins and pumps on sunny days.

☞ Headwear, gloves (buy something either really cute or a pair made with thinsulate), choice of bag, socks and jewellery (have fun with necklaces, earrings, bracelets and rings!) can make or break an outfit. Play with metallics, sequins, leather accessories and scent! Think out of the box and try something new every couple of days.

### Balance is everything

To ensure you look sleek and streamlined, think about proportion. A loose sweater top should be paired with slimfit trousers, a voluminous skirt with a fitted blouse. Think about how you will look and feel as you pile on and peel off layers moving between the train station, hiking trail, lunch and karaoke. I love black, navy and grey no matter the season, and these are definitely popular colours in the wintertime. Still, I'd recommend that you consider plumming for autumnal hues such as forest green, mustard and cranberry red. To make your neutrals really pop, try a bit of red (so festive), a splash of green (very popular this year), bright blue/fuschia (instant pick-me-ups) or even crisp white for contrast.

## THE 411 ON FALL FASHION

*Jenson Deokiesingh currently resides in Trinidad and Tobago, where he works as a freelance writer. A Toyama JET for five unforgettable years, Jenson loves photography, travelling, stargazing and writing about love. Check out his blog at <http://trinitraveller.wordpress.com>*



When I ask my Japanese friends, "What is your favourite season?" I usually get two responses: spring, because of the all-encompassing beauty of the spectacularly gorgeous cherry blossoms; and fall—of course—for its fabulous fashion. From Okinawa to Hokkaido, there's no denying that Japan's most fashionable season is upon us.

Each February and March, the major fashion capitals of the world provide a highly-anticipated forecast for end-of-year fall fashion trends. Allow me to joyfully break down some of the chicest styles to ensure that you enjoy la dolce vita.

### 1. Supersize Me

Take a peek into my closet, and you may be alarmed by the sheer number of scarves I own. A scarf is a versatile and must-have fashion item that lends itself to transforming any outfit almost immediately from drab to Milano-chic. Whether printed, textured or monochromatic, scarves are enjoying a bit of a renaissance, with their oversized counterparts currently seen everywhere.

An oversized scarf can appear intimidating because of its voluminous nature. Nonetheless, ladies will soon find it becoming a wardrobe favourite, for when wrapped around the shoulders as a shawl it provides a boho-chic style a la the Olsen twins. As day eases into night, your scarf can be artfully rearranged around

the neck, leaving you fashionably comfortable and effortlessly stunning. Men can achieve a similar result with ever-popular Aztec printed scarves. For something a little more haute couture or sophisticated, opt for textured monotone blanket-esque scarves tied Ascot-style.

If you're still unconvinced, the oversized scarf is also the perfect accessory for a romantic date in Kyoto's Pontocho. Hint: it easily unwraps to envelop two people in a cozy embrace.

### 2. The New Black

You heard it here first—burgundy is the new black, the ideal autumn shade. Look no further than Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Hollywood's current "It" boy to see this trend done to perfection. Worn with a crisp white shirt paired with a skinny black silk tie, the burgundy suit is for the man that dares to be different. For a tamer yet equally sensational look, my recommendation is to invest in a well-tailored pair of pants. With a simple white t-shirt and slim fit blazer in a Herringbone finish, there's no way you won't radiate classy and cool as you hit the streets of Tokyo.

Or take it a step further—push boundaries and make people sit up and take notice! Go unashamedly gaudy by mixing vibrant colours and patterns. My recommendation for the ladies is a gutsy one—combine an orange cable knit sweater with wine-coloured tuxedo pants and get ready to join Japan's fashion elite. If orange is just a bit too risky, grey works a charm. Remember to keep your megawatt smile on as you work your way around the room in your killer stilettos and edgy, modern (preferably gold) necklace.

### 3. Coloured Socks

Guys, do you want a leg up (pun intended) on the fashion competition? Try wearing cropped pants and punctuating your get-up with a bold pair of patterned socks. In the last couple of years, there's been a sock resurgence in the fashion industry (and deservedly so).

Socks—argyle, polka dot, striped or plain outlandish—are an inexpensive and effective way to subtly inject character and a sense of fun into sometimes very formal, fussy ensembles. Don't believe me? Former US President George H.W. Bush was able to seamlessly add colour, humour and style to his very stiff grey suit with a single pair of socks. Who says octogenarians can't have fun? At this point I have to opine that ladies should steer clear of coloured socks unless you are intentionally going for geekchic or a Lolita look.

### 4. Trench Coats

If there is one fashion trend from New York's 2013 Fall/ Winter Fashion Week that all women should pay attention to, it is the reinterpretation of the film noir genre. Classically feminine and deceptively stylised (often using the finest haberdashery fabrics), this trend pays tribute to 1940s Hollywood glamour. For those looking to re-imagine this iconic look, I recommend getting a cashmere or wool signature trench coat with exaggerated shoulders. Pair it with a Veronica Lake hairdo and a matt lip. My colour choice for film noir inspiration in 2013 is red. I'm certain that you'll have everyone whispering that "she's dressed to kill".

For men, the classic, quintessentially-English Burberry trench coat is a wise investment. The general rule of thumb is to select one coat size up to ensure your movements are not restricted. Although colour features prominently in my personal style, I firmly

believe that this piece deserves a place in anyone's wardrobe. And there we have it. Four trends that are certain to (quite effortlessly) turn you into a chic trendsetter for fall/ winter 2013. Remember: fashion is fun, fashion is art, but most of all, fashion is confidence. Happy shopping and enjoy the unparalleled beauty of fall!

## WHO SAYS WE CAN'T DO QUIRKY COOL IN WINTER?

*John Weber is an ALT living in the tundra of Hokkaido. Accumulating 1930s drums, Japanese compact cameras and dolphin bones found while hiking keeps him busy. John can read hiragana and katakana, but mostly just enjoys perusing Japanese pop-up books about Gnomes.*

### Outfit 1

Outfit 1 is an everyday fall getup that takes me into the beginning parts of pre-snow winter with a proper overcoat. For extra warmth, heat tech long underwear can keep the chest and legs toasty—vital protection against the wind chill in Hokkaido. A pop of color at the collar keeps things interesting.

The brass cuff in my first outfit was stamped with my middle name, "RUSH," and is a nice conversation starter. I strolled through SOHO for an hour trying to locate the store and the maker still thinks my engraving is a tribute to a Canadian rock band.



Heavy gauge olive sweater and multi-striped Oxford. 511 jeans. Accessories: WWII-era mittens, John Henry railroad spike cuff, daily watch, vintage USA Converse, skull and bones conspiracy theory socks, absinthe keyhole sunglasses, and autumnal orange watch cap.

## Outfit 2

Blue oxford, burgundy striped bowtie, mixed pattern Harris tweed sport coat, split toe cognac oxfords, sleek secret agent gloves, grey check wool pants, midnight grey flip brim Akubra, fishing bag.

Número Dos is for classy nightlife types. This outfit has a really basic color scheme jazzed up with several wild pieces. A sweater vest or cardigan could be worn under the jacket if you want to trudge through a blizzard or are concerned about having a moment of separation anxiety from the jacket while indoors.

I like hats and shoes, but never leave the house without my watch. Timepieces are a classic nod to being a grown man.

Most of my outfits utilize olive and/or grey. These fall/winter "twins" work well with navy and brown while providing a nice contrast to all the fun colors. I think wearing too much black can be a downer and make life seem a bit too serious. Layering should be about 1) staying toasty whatever the climate 2) being able to remove certain pieces while still retaining some cohesion in your style/outfit.



## John's Top 5 Winter Tips

1. Don't be ashamed to wear industrial snow boots!
2. Please do invest in some quality gloves, hats and scarves.
3. Have fine wool drycleaned and it will last you a lifetime.
4. Synthetic long underwear makes being outside a bit more cozy without having to wear 30 flocks of down feathers in a ski coat. However, if you're in a place that gets below -25 at night, I suggest buying said flock of feathers ski coat.
5. Fashion is fun, but being comfortable should be the end goal.

## MIX IT UP FOR HEAPS OF FUN

Karen Ho is a 1st-year ALT in Kofu, Yamanashi. She loves fashion, photography, videography, and minions!

Fall has to be the most forgiving of seasons when it comes to fashion (goodbye sweat stains!). The best way to dress for the current weather is to LAYER UP! Here are some tips to help you stay warm and stylish without looking as puffy as a marshmallow or, worse, the Michelin Man.



## Look One: Red + Gold = Classy

H&M patterned tunic dress, UNIQLO wool cardigan, H&M waist belt, TNA black leggings, Michael Kors tortoise watch, Tiffany & Co Elsa Peretti Bean Necklace

I love wearing cardigans, especially if they come in vibrant colours. For Fall, I suggest earthy tones like burgundy, mustard yellow or deep greens to match the season's foliage. If they suit your skin tone, brighter hues like this orangey-red cardigan add zing to your ensemble.

I paired the woolly cardigan to contrast with a silky patterned tunic. If your outer layer is in a bright colour, stick with neutrals for the inner layers.

Belts add visual interest, and are a great way to create a defined waist—essential when you have on many loose layers.

Since there's a lot going on (bright colours and patterns), I kept my jewelry small and simple. You want to add an accent, not create a distraction.

I'd complete the look with a pair of black leggings and flats. Knee-high black/dark brown leather or suede boots would also work well.

If the temperature continues to dip, throw on a trench or any other long coat that covers the length of the cardigan. Top it off with a scarf for extra coziness!

## Look Two: Casual Double Denim

UNIQLO Jean shirt, GAP turquoise cardigan, American Eagle Skinny Jeans, H&M patterned scarf, Vintage leather belt, Michael Kors tortoise watch

Jeans shirts and pants are a must-have for Fall! I know what you're thinking...isn't double denim a fashion faux pas? Fret not, this look can work if you keep the following tips in mind!

Try to make your jean shirt and pants as different from each other as possible. For me, I paired a plain, pair of dark wash skinny jeans with a patterned, and more feminine looking jean shirt. You can opt for the reverse—ripped or distressed pale indigo jeans with a plain, dark and crisp jean shirt. The greater the contrast, the better the double denim look!

To create even more contrast, add a belt such as the dark brown one shown here. Experiment with weaved, coloured or studded belts to add texture.

Next, how about a cardigan or knit sweater? I personally wouldn't recommend pairing a red top with blue jeans. Stick with similar cool hues or a classic black/white/grey cardigan.

Finish it off with a scarf! Since I don't have much going on with this look, I picked a patterned scarf with yellow details. When it comes to accessories, try to go for a complementary colour (blue and orange, purple and yellow), which helps contrast or serve as a focal point while tying everything together nicely.

A pair of black or white Converse/Keds shoes completes this casual get-up for a day out with your girl friends.



## Look Three: The Geometric Sweater

ZARA geometric sweater, American Eagle flared black jeans, H&M reptile green belt, ALDO purple rectangle studs, Top It Up brown yarn pom pom hat

You might've noticed a trend here... I like pattern, shape and colour! This sweater looks great if the rest of your outfit is kept simple. You can layer any sweater with a great print over a plain collared shirt for added warmth and a more preppy look.

I wore black flared jeans to make the outfit a bit more feminine. Dark blue jeans or a simple skirt with black stockings work too—just keep it simple.

I always try to wear accessories that compliment the look. The gold buckle on my textured green belt works well with the ensemble, without drawing too much attention. My purple rectangular shaped studs subtly reinforces the geometric theme. And yes you guessed it. Purple and yellow work so well together as they are on opposite ends of the colour wheel.

Japanese seem crazy about beanies and cute-looking yarn hats. Good thing I brought my brown pom pom hat over from Canada! Go dig out your slouchy hat from last winter now!



## The bottom line when it comes to layering:

Contrast, contrast, contrast! Think complementary colours, play around with solids, prints and patterns, mix and match different textures, and accessorize! With a little bit of experimentation anyone can look effortlessly stylish and comfortable.

# FOOD

## EDITORIAL Wonderful Cheese is Wonderfully Easy

After interviewing last month's Spotlight, Laura Lou, I got kind of obsessed with milk. In her blog, "The Lazy Beggars' Guide to Cooking in Japan", Laura explores the too-familiar concept of leftover school lunch milk. If you get milk in cartons at school lunch, you know what I'm talking about—unopened milk ends up in the staff room, lonely, neglected, and largely ignored, save to turn the occasional instant coffee into a latte. Even I, a consummate milk-lover, have trouble getting through that much milk before it starts smelling... suspicious.

Laura's solution? Cheese! After one hesitant attempt, I was a converted believer. Soft, home-made farmer's cheese, the consistency of either firm ricotta or soft cottage, at my fingertips in under 10 minutes. Too good to be true? Here, cribbed and rudely edited from the blog itself, is the recipe:

### WHAT YOU NEED

One liter whole (ABOVE 3.5% milkfat!) milk. Remember, one liter is 1000 milliliters, so count how many of those little lunch milks you'll need!

- 2 tablespoons of an acid – any acid. Lemon juice, rice vinegar, citric acid, etc.
- A saucepan all this will fit into.
- A clean, finely-woven cloth of some sort- a napkin or a kitchen towel will work in a pinch!
- A strainer and a big bowl for the strainer to sit in.

### WHAT YOU DO

Pour the milk into the saucepan, and heat at medium-low until it starts to froth. You don't want to boil the milk—your goal is to heat it, or "scald" it, to just prior to boiling. Once you've got your milk sitting frothy and hot, add your two tablespoons of acid. You should immediately begin to see curds form. Give it a quick stir to distribute the acid (no more than that, though—the less you stir, the plumper the curds!) turn off the heat, and let it sit for a bit, to allow the curds to fully form. Meanwhile, arrange your cloth-of-choice in the strainer, and place it over your big bowl. Once the curds have fully formed, SLOWLY pour the contents of the pot into the strainer. Lift your strainer full of curds out of the whey, and pour it into another container. At this point, you can make your cheese call; for a softer cheese, your work here is done. Pour your curds into a bowl or plastic container, and enjoy some home-made cottage cheese. Want to go hard? Give your cloth some firm squeezes to eke out that extra whey, let it sit for a few minutes, then roll it out onto a dish. Tada! Farmer's cheese is now ready to eat!

Amazing, right? Now, let's get customizable: once you've added the acid and allowed the curds to separate, but before you drain them out, you can add flavors—ANY flavors you want! I like to add a little bit of salt to the mix, as well as a touch of rosemary. I haven't tried it yet, but I have a good feeling about the addition of toasted cumin seeds. It's also worth noting that the kind of acid you use (vinegar, lemon juice, etc) will change the flavor and softness of the cheese itself. Play around, and figure out what kind of cheese you like!

Finally, the whey I mentioned earlier? It can actually be used in any recipe that calls for water or milk! Try it out as an interesting base for soups and stews.

*Want more? Check out Laura's blog yourself at <http://lazybeggars.wordpress.com/>! Made a delicious school milk cheese? Tell me about it! [connect.food@ajet.net](mailto:connect.food@ajet.net)*



# THIS MONTH IN FOOD...

We have some great content for you here in Food this November, especially for those of you living with special dietary requirements!

First off in Spotlight we have the lovely Amanda Kirchoff of Kumamoto sharing a fabulously fall-appropriate root veggie sauté recipe. Gotta eat those sweet potatoes while they're in season! Then, Xan fills us in on how to get rid of all that school lunch milk that's been piling up in the fridge at school, with just a bottle of acid and a smile: get ready to get cheese-making!

We then have a piece by Leslie Capobianco, first year JET living in picturesque Yakushima, an island that is a part of Kyushu's Kagoshima prefecture. Follow Leslie as she tells her tale of being a vegan on the secluded isle.

Finally, Donal Benson and Autumn Widdoes fill us in with what it's like to live a gluten-free life in Japan, with special Connect extended edition pieces!



# SPOTLIGHT

## JET Recipe of the Month, Sweet Root Sauté

As Amanda Kirchoff, a second-year JET in Kumamoto puts it, "Fall in Japan is the best season for versatile, flavorful cooking." This month, she shares the perfect recipe for getting into that hearty fall mood.

### Ingredients

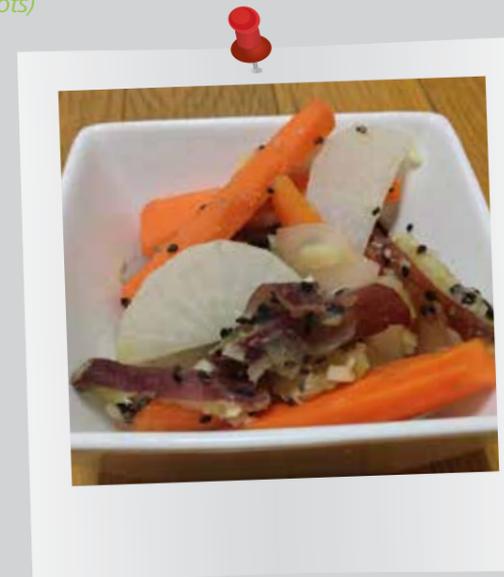
~300g sweet potato  
4 carrots  
½ daikon  
1 onion  
1 bulb (yep, all the cloves) garlic  
3 tablespoons honey  
1 tablespoon sesame seeds  
Salt plus whatever spices you have on hand (I used a leftover Thai curry spice packet) -- to taste  
Olive oil for the pan

### Instructions

- 1) Ready a large pot of water to boil
- 2) Peel and chop all the veggies, starting with sweet potatoes
- 3) When water is boiling, toss in sweet potatoes
- 4) After 5 minutes, add in carrots and daikon and boil for another 5 minutes
- 5) Drain and leave in colander while you heat olive oil in a large fry pan/wok and sauté garlic and onion together.
- 6) Toss in potato, carrot, and daikon—add more olive oil if necessary.
- 7) Flavor with sesame seeds, salt, spices, honey and stir around until all veggies are cooked to your liking. Enjoy!

Feel free to change ingredients and amounts according to what you have on hand!

*(Recipe adapted from <http://gocookyourself.com/post/62613931058/honey-roast-roots-5-6-potatoes-2-3-carrots>)*



# ALONG CAME A VEGAN

Leslie Capobianco, Kyushu



THOUGH CHALLENGING,  
THE EXPERIENCE OF  
BEING A VEGAN  
IN THE INAKA  
HAS BEEN  
NOTHING SHORT  
OF  
REWARDING.

Three days after arriving on my island in south Kyushu, I sat in my BOE, startled by the construction worker who'd come up to the office window and knocked. What was going on? After a standard greeting and swift discussion, both the construction worker and my office coworker stared in my direction. Summoned, I went to the window, as both men pointed toward the parking lot next to the one main road on Yakushima. "Car?" I asked in English, beginning the pandemic of confused stares. "I mean...*kuruma*?"

"No," my coworker replied, walking over to the desk with a Japanese-English dictionary. Five minutes later, I learned that they didn't need me to move my car but to come outside and translate for someone. "Translate?" I thought. "I don't speak Japanese! How the hell am I going to translate?" There, standing by the bus stop, was a French couple, worried they'd missed the last bus to a neighboring mountain for their 7-hour hike. It was only that very same morning that I'd even realized the island had public transport.

Just as I began to ask what time the bus was supposed to arrive, the unmistakable turquoise behemoth drove by. I'd inadvertently caused the couple to drift away from the bus stop, and the bus driver, seeing no one standing in wait, blazed on to his next location. Without thinking, I ushered the couple into my car, chasing after the bus in hopes of catching it. Only after we drove past the road to the mountaintop did we realize we were chasing the wrong bus.

As a gesture of thanks for taking them up the mountain myself, I was later invited to dinner by the Parisian couple. Agreeing to meet where I'd picked them up that morning, we walked around the town in search of a place to eat. Tucked between two lantern-lit alleys, we climbed onto the tatami mats of a restaurant and began to study the menu. After managing to decipher the cryptic choices, I swiftly realized that nothing I'd read was vegan-friendly. Deciding it best not to uproot us from the restaurant, I sat in wait, reminded of the foreboding words that I would never be able to eat out in Japan, dejected.

Alarmed by my simple request for white rice among a voluminous list of local delicacies—and strikingly juxtaposing the several items ordered by my friends—the restaurant server questioned my order. As a vegan, I had anticipated such a situation as this—one where I would be faced with a limit on what I could eat while out. In fact, I'd dreaded such a situation.

When I first learned about my placement on Yakushima, my initial thought was that my coordinator was pranking me. Certainly no one was *actually placed* on the island that inspired Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*? It had everything: waterfalls tucked between tree-covered mountains, monkeys, deer, onsen on the beach, rivers, tropical fruit gardens, botanical gardens, UNESCO World Heritage Status, the oldest cedar tree(s) in the world. For a good two days after, I was usurped in a maelstrom of euphoria. I told everyone. I researched everything. However, the feeling was quickly replaced with anxiety, enough to cause me to reconsider accepting the position.

"There's no way you can be a vegan. I'm sorry." Not five minutes into my discussion with one of my predecessors, I was told that one of the most significant ideals of which I upheld would need to be abandoned in exchange for my job. "What?" I questioned. "What do you mean I can't be a vegan anymore?" "It's too difficult," she replied. "Impossible."

From that point onward, I shifted my gaze, almost obsessively, on remaining vegan. Among several sites, I serendipitously stumbled upon the newly formed VegJET Special Interest Group, who offered tremendous support, but it seemed that every time I was given support, I was met with a prophetic claim of impending doom.

It seemed that every time I spoke to a non-veg JET, I was asked if there was any way I would be willing to budge—that my situation wasn't worth the waves I was going to create for myself. "Maybe you can become a pescatarian?" I was advised. "I just don't know what else you're going to eat..."

It was true. What was I going to eat?

After that, the questions seemed to come in a rapid barrage. Would I be allowed to eat with students at the schools? Was I to be hammered down by my principals and coworkers because I was the proverbial nail that was sticking up? What happened when someone cooked for me? What happened when I was invited out to dine? What happened when I visited the neighboring island once a month, where there wasn't a *conbini*, let alone a supermarket—the same island where my predecessor gave up her vegetarianism by eating a lobster, still alive, because of the significance of the gesture made by the island's famous older couple.

Was I going to be able to be steadfast, or would I fail to uphold my personal beliefs for the sake of assimilation? After several weeks of questions and anecdotal stories from predecessors and current JETs alike, my predecessors had convinced me that my 14-year, meat-free streak was going to be unceremoniously taken from me. Despite the promises of my predecessors to do their best to inform every one of my diet, I began to view Yakushima as less the paradise of my dreams and more as my moral executioner. It wasn't until I'd arrived to Yakushima, however, that I found out the truth.

"I don't know how to tell her you don't eat meat," the French girl said. "I do." I replied, handing the old woman awaiting our orders a simple, small white piece of paper. It read—in both English and Japanese—"I am a vegan. I don't eat meat, fish, egg, milk, etc." To my surprise, my friends wore the same look of consternation as the woman. Concerned about my living in Japan as a vegan, they asked how I planned to survive. "Well," I said. "Vegetables are everywhere." They stared. "And this morning, my principals agreed to let me dine with students." It was true. All but one principal had agreed to allow me to eat with the students. As he matter-of-factly pointed out, "You eat only vegetables. How bad of an influence can you really be?"

"Right," my friends stated, still unconvinced I was fully considering the arduous task ahead, "but there must be some things you can't get here?" they each questioned. While it was a meritorious observation that I lacked much of what I had back in Orlando, Florida, I wasn't going to starve. There was always produce to be had—whether tucked away in an unassuming shop, given to me by generous Kyoto-sensei, or found at a Saturday market or road-side stand. Chickpeas, tahini paste, or even certain products like vegan rice crispy treats and shampoos I managed to find online from various sites like iHerb.com and Amazon.jp.

"I'll manage," I said, hopeful. Our discussion was punctuated



Vegan sweet potato birthday cake lovingly whipped up by my Japanese 'grandmother'

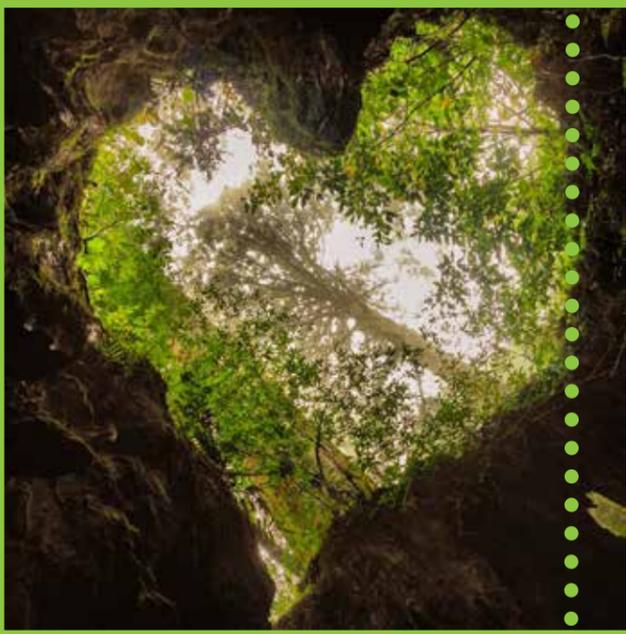


Southern coastline of Yakushima



View from the largest town on the island, Miyanoura





The view from inside a thousand-something year old Japanese cedar makes it clear it's impossible to feel anything but love for the island of Yakushima.



Tourists and locals who make the pilgrimage to Yakusugi Land in Anbo might be privileged enough to pet Hiro, the yakushika (Yakushima deer)



Just beyond the fence, a short walk from my house, is Miyaura Elementary, one of the five elementary schools at which I teach.

by the return of our server as she began littering our table with bowls and plates of foods I couldn't eat. Last, she laid down the rice in front of me, and walked away from the table. My new friends stared at me with guilt—guilt because of my one plate to their ten and because they'd unknowingly invited a vegan to a sushi bar. Guilt because they knew that their questioning only left me frustrated.

However, before we began to eat, the woman reappeared.

"*Chotto matte!*" she exclaimed, hand raised, rushing into the kitchen. Confused, we waited. Several minutes later, the woman returned and laid before me half a dozen plates. Before me were a vast array of vegetable tempuras made all especially without egg. She then put down vegetable sushi without any fish, egg, or embellishments made by the sushi chef who was now staring at me more than before. To the left of it was *edamame* pods leaping over the sides thanks to a crowded bowl, and a plate of tofu, swimming in sweet Yakushima soy sauce, free of fish flakes.

I stared down in disbelief before looking at her. It was only after a swift game of charades later that she finally understood that what she'd prepared for me was enough—no need for more food. (The idea that a vegan can be full AND have enough nutrients from vegetables alone seems to confuse everyone.)

Here I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to eat out at restaurants, when the reality was I now had too much food before me. This was the reality—not that depicted by others. The old couple on the island I visit once a month didn't have a lobster waiting for me but a vegan feast. The following month, despite not dining with them, the gentle couple had a homemade, vegan sweet potato cake delivered to me for my birthday. There was also an hour-long conversation at my *eikaiwa* about why I was a vegan, whether or not we could make vegan food together, and even a few declarations from members to eat more vegan meals.

Since arriving to Yakushima, I've had no less than four vegan dinner parties for coworkers. I've had coworkers excitedly declare which *omiyage* I can eat, and regrettably inform me of which I can't—something I relish just as much due to the simple fact that they take my veganism as seriously as I do.

Though challenging, the experience of being a vegan in the *inaka* has been nothing short of rewarding. I encourage those who perhaps are in similar situations to remember that at the root of our job is cultural exchange, and while we certainly need to be willing to demonstrate an interest in the Japanese culture, we need not bend our convictions. Remember, even though we may not speak the same language, nor eat the same foods, our different cultures are always able to come together with mutual appreciation in the recitation of, "*itadakimasu!*"

Leslie Capobianco is a first-year ALT living on the island wonderland that is Yakushima of Kyushu's Kagoshima-ken. When not riding her road bike, you can find her playing in the mountains, relaxing in a hammock, or cooking up a vegan meal. To read more of Leslie's (mis)adventures, visit [TheFireDemonDiaries.Wordpress.com](http://TheFireDemonDiaries.Wordpress.com).



# GLUTEN-FREE IN JAPAN

These next two pieces came courtesy of members of the group JETfood, you can find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JETfood/>.

You can also read the rest of Donal and Autumn's writing on gluten-free living in Japan on our website at <http://ajet.net/category/ajet-connect-magazine/>.



## LIVING WITH シリアック病

Donal Benson, Hyogo

My name's Donal, I'm a second-year JET from Australia living in Kobe City, and I have had Coeliac Disease for four years.

My first experience with Japan and Coeliac Disease came one week into a University exchange program I did back in 2010. I was called by my doctor, a week after I arrived, to inform me that I had Coeliac Disease and to stop eating bread. It was a difficult time. I got sick a lot, as I was still learning what I could and couldn't eat. But I passed my exams and learned a lot about what it means to have Coeliac Disease in Japan.

What is Coeliac Disease, you ask? Here's a quick breakdown for you:

Coeliac Disease is an auto-immune disorder that affects the stomach and intestines when it tries to process gluten, and it's incredibly common in Western society. It affects 1 in 133 Americans<sup>1</sup> and about 1 in every 100 Australians<sup>2</sup>. Reactions to eating gluten range from absolutely no reaction to being rendered comatose in hospital<sup>3</sup>. It can be pretty severe. And it takes only 1/40 of a slice of bread to do damage to your stomach. If left untreated, it can also cause a range of further complications, the worst of which is bowel cancer<sup>4</sup>. There's no cure, too. Only a life-long gluten-free diet is the only known preventative measure around.

So just what is gluten? As Seth Rogen says in *This Is The End*, "Gluten's a vague term. It's something that's used to categorise things that are bad. Y'know, calories, that's a gluten. Fat, that's a gluten."

He's right, and he's wrong. Well, mostly wrong.

Okay, all wrong.<sup>5</sup>

Gluten is a protein found in grains—wheat, rye, barley, and triticale—and oats<sup>6</sup>. It's also found in any products that use a derivative of these grains. The most common use for gluten is as a thickening agent for sauces and pastes, and it's what gives bread that "stretchy" feeling. It's in almost everything, even some things that might surprise you. Like soy sauce. Yeah, soy sauce—the base ingredient for a lot of Japanese food, meaning that eating it is out of the question.<sup>7</sup>

With that in mind, you might be thinking "Geez, how can someone with Coeliac Disease survive in Japan?" It's a good question, and I've found the answer to it is "Pretty easily, as long as you keep it simple."

(Continue reading at AJET.net)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.celiaccentral.org/ceciac-disease/facts-and-figures/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.coeliac.org.au/coeliac-disease/#Coeliac3>

<sup>3</sup> <http://celiacdisease.about.com/od/symptomsofceliacdisease/a/celiacsymptoms.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://umm.edu/programs/ceciac-research/health-information>

<sup>5</sup> Yes, it's a comedy. Their job is to be funny. I know.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.coeliac.org.uk/healthcare-professionals/diet-information/oats-in-the-gluten-free-diet>

<sup>7</sup> I have had special gluten-free Japanese foods made for me at Koyasan, in Wakayama Prefecture, and I have made my own using gluten-free soy sauce from Australia.

## A GLUTEN-FREE JOURNEY

Autumn Widdoes, Okinawa

When I first arrived in Japan in late July 2010, I knew that I was about to embark on a very different experience than anything I'd ever faced before in my life. This wasn't my first trip overseas, or even living in Asia, but it was my first time living in Japan, and my first overseas experience since going gluten-free in my mid-20s. I had followed a relatively strict gluten-free diet up starting in 2007. Up until 2010, I had been living in New York, which is a city with an abundance of options for those of us following this diet. Before moving to Japan, I did a ton of research on what I could and couldn't eat in Japan and had emailed my coordinator in Ishigaki, Okinawa as well as my fellow JETs on that island.

I figured that if I made it clear to them what gluten was and what I could and couldn't eat, then everything would be right as rain. Even after all this research, I didn't completely comprehend or perhaps was just in denial of how much gluten was in the Japanese diet. Unfortunately, as soon as I reached Tokyo, I realized I hadn't prepared enough for the lack of culinary options. Beginning at the Keio Plaza, I found that the odds were not in my favor. Hunting for food I could eat without getting sick seemed daunting.

When all that was served for lunch the second day of TOA was spaghetti, I started to get a panicky feeling, and I still hadn't made it to Ishigaki, a small island in the Yaeyama region of Okinawa. Since I was without a kitchen for those several days and I didn't have a gluten-free dining card, I had to rely on those around me to help me figure out what was safe and what was unsafe to eat. I also no longer had the gluten-free labels that I had grown accustomed to and, while I did know how to cook for myself, I suddenly felt overwhelmed by the lack of anything familiar. I was out in the deep ocean without a life preserver. It's easy for someone with a dietary limitation to feel isolated from others, since eating is such an important part of socializing. Moving to a foreign country, where you barely speak the language, and also have a dietary limitation can be extremely overwhelming and have a real impact on the culture shock you face as you adjust to your life in Japan. Moving to Japan threw me back into the process of relearning how to live a healthy, gluten-free life.

(Continue reading at AJET.net)



# SPORTS

## EDITORIAL Sumo Slowly Going the Way of the Dinosaurs

In the first week of November every year a Buddhist temple situated in the mountains above my town hosts a sumo festival. The first few hours take the form of a tournament in which elementary school students, both boys and girls, fight it out in the temple's own *dohyou*. Families sit, watching and cheering, on tarpaulin sheets laid at the dusty edges and on the nearby grass slopes. Later in the day, three top level *rikishi*, including one of the current *yokozuna*, arrive at the festival and entertain the crowds by play-fighting with, and pretending to lose to, the children.

After arriving, the wrestlers are led through the temple grounds, along a path lined with adoring fans, yet it's here that one of the problems facing the sport becomes apparent. The loudest cries of excitement come from people in their sixties and seventies. The same is true at tournaments throughout Japan.

The dominance of foreign wrestlers in recent years is a commonly given explanation for the general population's disinterest in sumo. The suggestion is that the country's become alienated from its national sport due to the lack of a Japanese *yokozuna* since 2003, or a Japanese winner of an annual tournament since 2007.

Minor scandals involving foreign wrestlers haven't helped the sport's image either.

A drugs scandal in 2008 saw three wrestlers, all Russian nationals, expelled from the sport for allegedly smoking marijuana, and more recently the sport's first Czech-born professional wrestler admitted to injecting himself with insulin in an attempt to gain weight.

But the biggest scandal in sumo's history involved a good mix of Japanese and foreign nationals. The 2011 match-fixing scandal in which text messages sent among wrestlers showed that victories had been bought, sold and traded is the incident

thought to have really hastened the sport's decline. The scandal led to the cancellation of one of the six annual tournaments and the expulsion of 23 wrestlers from the sport.

The sport's decline isn't just reflected in the numbers of spectators turned off by the scandals either. Participation levels reached a new low last year with only 56 people applying to take the sport's entrance exam. In response to the news, Harumafuji (pictured) said, "Of course there are people who feel there is no need to put themselves through such hardship in an age of convenience."

Indeed, it's not difficult to see why young people might shy away from the 'hardship' of life at a sumo stable. In 2007, a 17 year-old trainee was pronounced dead from heart failure the day after being tied to a pole and beaten by three senior wrestlers on the orders of a stable master. More recently, in 2011, a stable master received a warning from the Japan Sumo Association for beating three of his wrestlers with a golf club.

These things reflect poorly on the sport, but they are not what sumo is about. As out of favour as the sport may be, I'd still strongly recommend attending at least one sumo tournament in Japan.

*Is there a sport that you feel strongly about? Let me know at [connect.sports@ajet.net](mailto:connect.sports@ajet.net)*



# THIS MONTH IN SPORTS...

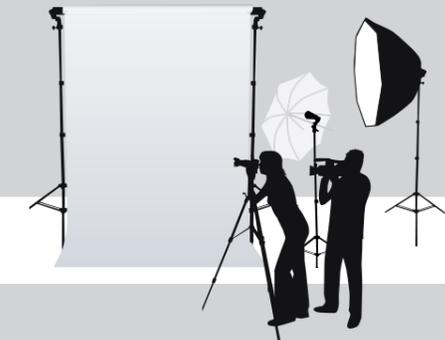
The first article in this month's Sports section is an excellent introduction to rock climbing written by Michael Martin. He explains the different types of rock climbing and discredits some of the myths surrounding the sport. If you're interested in trying rock climbing, you should definitely take a look at this.

In the next article, Simon Griffin shares what he's learned from practicing kendo and kyudo in Japan. The article highlights some of the differences between the two arts, but also considers their shared underlying message. He also describes some of the difficulties that he encountered during the early days of his kyudo training.

Lastly, Yamagata-based JET Sam Ghiradello has written about representing Japan at an Australian rules football tournament in Thailand. The article provides a great insight into the increasing popularity and presence of Australian rules football within Japan and other countries within Asia. Check it out!



# SPOTLIGHT



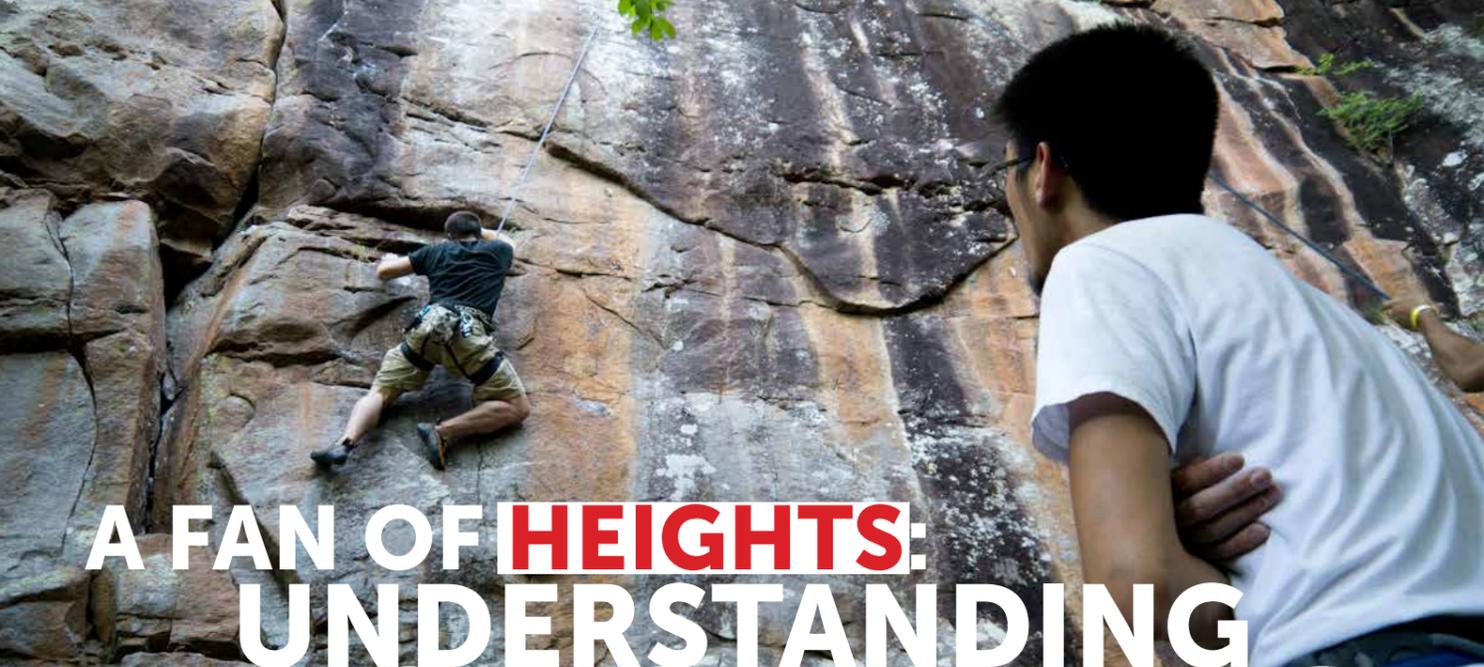
## Michael Martin, Apprentice Adventurer

Growing up in the Great Plains of the United States, Michael didn't have much chance to get into mountain sports. Nonetheless, a friend introduced him to a rock climbing gym during his college years and he has never looked back.

These days, Michael, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year JET, lives in the mountains of Yamanashi. Although for the most part they aren't known for their climbing routes, the Minami Alps host a plethora of hiking routes that Michael was able to cut his teeth on. Among his favorites are the holy mountain Shichimenzan and the colossus Kitadake, Japan's second tallest mountain.

Even though he considers himself lazy and averse to exercise, Michael has found that exploring the hidden mountaintop temples and remote trails of Japan are a great way to access the traditional culture and history of Japan.





# A FAN OF HEIGHTS: UNDERSTANDING ROCK CLIMBING

Michael Martin, Yamanashi



I walked down the quiet, country road with a gentle wind brushing against my nervous palms. As I neared Pirania, I began to hear muted voices, shouts, and hollers. I took a deep breath before reaching to open the sliding doors. The air, laced with the tickling scent of airborne chalk, served to calm my nerves and evoke feelings of nostalgia.

After a summer-long absence I was finally walking back through the doors of my local climbing gym. My anxieties immediately faded away as familiar faces greeted me. Memories of hard work, motivating friends, and most of all accomplishment washed over me. With a renewed spring in my step, I set my bag down and began to lace up my old, comfortably worn climbing shoes.

My passion for rock-climbing often finds its way into conversation. In fact, not many climbers seem capable of containing their enthusiasm even among complete strangers.

The amount of people genuinely interested in the sport always surprises me, but there seems to be some common misconceptions surrounding it. Many times I have met wide-eyed faces with reassurances that no, rock climbing is not exceptionally dangerous, suitable only for well-conditioned athletes, or dependent on all sorts of complicated equipment.

Quite to the contrary, rock climbers are usually very safety-oriented and many exercise-adverse individuals find themselves swept up in the climbing spirit after just one trip to the gym. Furthermore, the type of climbing that is most popular among the youth in Japan requires almost no gear at all. Do you need to be in shape to start rock climbing? Or to enjoy it? Absolutely not.

Just the other week, I dragged a friend along to the gym. She bragged at not having exercised once in her life aside from what was required by the Japanese school system. I simply smiled in

response to her assertions that she wouldn't be able to raise herself more than a foot off the floor.

When we arrived, I introduced her to the gym operator. He also acts as an instructor, and, after finding a good pair of rental shoes for her, he had her right up on the wall. At the end of the day she had finished at least a half dozen routes and not fallen once.

Of course, her entire body was sore for a few days afterward, but that's the beauty of climbing: it's a full body workout that feels nothing like exercise!

Most people have probably seen pictures of climbers calmly posed hundreds of meters above the ground, entirely dependent upon a complicated network of ropes and carabiners to keep them from plummeting. Indeed, there is a type of climbing known as 'big wall' in which climbers usually sleep suspended over thin air. This, however, is the exception and not the rule. Rock climbing can be generalized into three distinct forms: traditional, sport, and bouldering.

Traditional climbing is usually just called 'trad'. Trad is done on rock walls with almost no pre-installed gear, meaning that safety devices must be placed and removed by the climbing team. It takes a fair amount of experience to get into trad.

More common is sport climbing, which features walls with pre-set bolts drilled into walls to which climbers attach safety gear. Sport climbing is extremely safe when done correctly and requires less equipment and experience than trad climbing. Sport climbing beginners are started on top rope routes, which means that the rope is already fed through the finish of the route so that the climbers can effectively ignore the rope and focus on climbing.

A third type of climbing called bouldering is most common with the youth in Japan. As the name implies, bouldering is done on boulders or other short sections of rock. Because of the low heights, no ropes are necessary. Instead, a thick foam crash pad is placed under the climber to cushion any falls. In climbing gyms the crash pads are especially thick. While bouldering at higher levels is exceptionally difficult, it is also great for introducing beginners to the sport with due to its simplicity and safety.

I have introduced many people to the sport, and not so long ago I was a beginner myself. Through this experience, I have come to the realization that rock climbing is undoubtedly addictive—and not without good reason! Different people get hooked on different aspects: the sense of accomplishment when topping out a route, the thrill of using every last muscle in your body to achieve a goal, the joy of being removed from the ground, or just the satisfaction of a healthily sore body the day after a good climb. Our addiction is fueled by a million different justifications.

Newcomers are often held back by a few simple mistakes. If you want to look like a pro on Day 1, take heed of the following tips.

- 1) As I mentioned, you don't need to be an athlete to start climbing. You're already well on your way to becoming a proficient climber if you can walk up a flight of stairs. The trick is to constantly move your feet up, and use your leg muscles to walk yourself up the wall whenever possible. This will significantly reduce the strain on your arms.
- 2) Sometimes it really does boil down to brains over brawn. When approaching a new route you should find the start, the finish, and all the holds in between before you even touch the wall. You need to plan out the route beforehand so that you won't waste precious energy searching for holds halfway through. Climbing is all about energy efficiency.
- 3) If you do get stuck, look for your feet. Most people will have a good idea of where the next handhold is, but footholds are often overlooked and can net you that few extra centimeters of reach you often need.



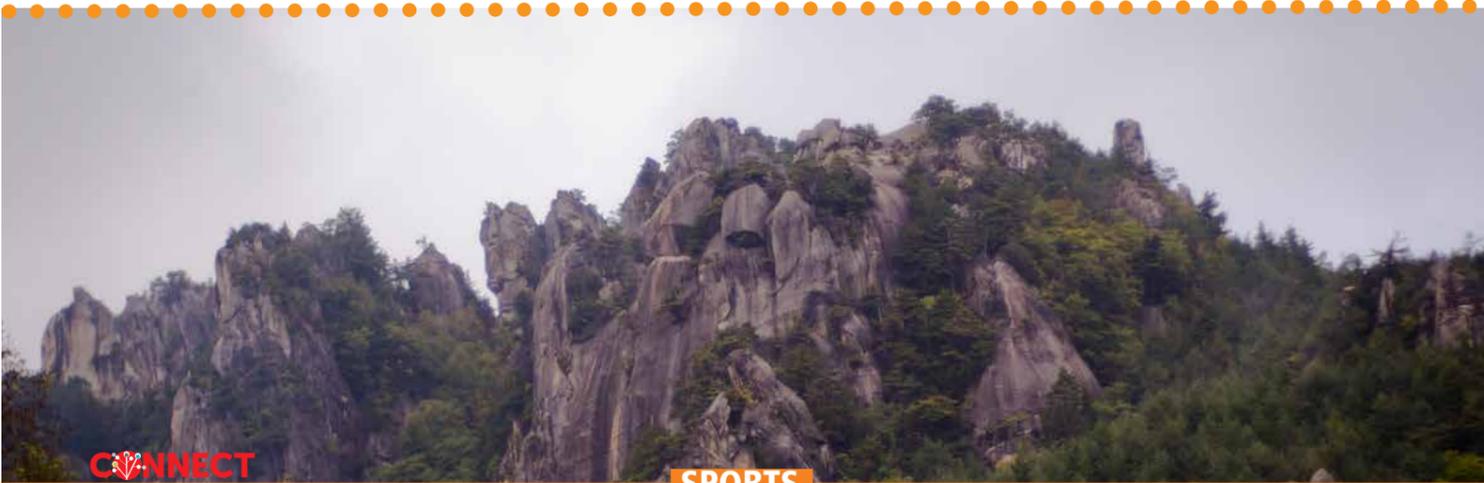
4) Let your arms stretch out. Anytime you maintain a bend in your elbows you are spending energy. There is usually no need to hold yourself into the wall unless you are actively making a move. If you find your arms getting tired unexpectedly quickly, this habit could be the culprit.

5) Trust your feet. Climbing shoes are unique for a reason. Their shape fits your foot like a glove and the rubber soles provide serious grip. An expert climber can use features on the wall that you probably wouldn't even see to support their body weight. Even smearing your foot across the texture of vertical rock can mean the difference between finishing a project and breaking in a new crash pad.

6) Breathe deep and don't freak out. I'm afraid of heights, as are some of my climbing partners. We manage the fear by focusing on each and every move. If you find yourself getting nervous, it's said that slowly taking deep breaths will stimulate the vagus nerve and help you calm down.

7) There is plenty more advice that I could impart, but the best way to learn is to get out there and get started. Climbers are notoriously friendly and gym owners won't mind first-time climbers showing up unannounced. If you don't have friends that want to come with you, go alone! Plenty of time is spent on a wall in a gym, but even more of it is probably spent on the floor socializing in between attempts. You'll make plenty of friends in no time at all.

I will warn you of one thing, though: I've never found anything half as addicting as the thrill of climbing. Don't be surprised if you suddenly find yourself spending every weekend at the crag—and unable to communicate to others without the constant interference of climbing jargon. As any seasoned climber will tell you, it's a small price to pay for the thrill of the climb.



# EXPERIENCES WITH MARTIAL ARTS: SWITCHING FROM KENDO TO KYUDO

Simon Griffin, Kyoto

During my time at university in London, I took up fencing as a hobby. Back at school, I had never been particularly sporty, and although I wasn't very good at fencing either, it was nice to have finally found something that I could at least enjoy. Upon arriving in Japan, I was encouraged to find and take-up some kind of Japanese cultural activity in order to become more involved in my community, improve my language ability and learn some new skills. For me, the natural choice following on from my enjoyment of fencing, seemed to be kendo, and so for a year or so following my arrival, I took lessons twice a week and proceeded to take some of the exams.

Initially I found it very enjoyable, but as the year progressed, I increasingly found it feeling more like a chore than a hobby, and my level of enjoyment seemed to steadily decline. In the summer the thick, heavy equipment would make it unbearably hot, and in the winter my feet would be white from the cold. During the breaks, I and the other students would sit, rubbing our feet

with our hands to try to warm them. I would come away each week, aching, truly exhausted, with a dry, hoarse throat from the shouting and usually with quite a headache. It took some time, but I gradually came to the inevitable conclusion that it simply wasn't for me, and decided to quit.

Around the same time that I quit kendo, I casually mentioned to an office colleague at a drinking party that I had an interest in learning kyudo. In truth, I didn't really have much interest, but I was simply making small-talk, and kyudo had been the first thing to come to mind. Considering the insincerity with which I had said it, I was more than a little surprised when I arrived at work the following Monday morning and found that my first lesson had already been booked, and my new teacher was looking forward to meeting me. Realising that I couldn't very easily excuse myself from it, I decided I had nothing to lose, and so, taking a friend for support, I began my kyudo journey.

From my first lesson, its contrasts to kendo were strikingly obvious. Whereas kendo was characterized by sharp, short bursts of loud, explosive power, kyudo was a slow, patient, silent activity, more akin to meditation or yoga than a fighting sport. Although its ancient roots may be loosely traced to military archery, in truth, modern kyudo finds its history more comfortably in ceremony, tradition and as a training art than as an offensive technique. Anyone who has seen a kyudo practitioner perform will know that in the time it takes to fire a single arrow, any approaching enemy would have long since arrived, attacked and conquered one's castle, before the arrow had even left the bow. It certainly had very little real-world application. For me, it certainly wasn't a criticism, but merely an observation, of how very different this new art was.

In the beginning I would be lying if I said it was easy. The bow itself is around two meters in length, which can feel very cumbersome to handle. Merely holding it straight with one hand, can be a quite a challenge for a beginner. Following that, the stances and the positioning of the limbs felt awkward and unnatural. My teacher would move my arms and muscles into



the correct posture, but they would immediately spring back the moment he let go. I simply didn't think it was possible to hold my arms in such a way. It seemed like I had a lot of learning to do in order to improve.

Those early days were also not without the occasional minor injury. Holding the bow incorrectly as it fired would often result in the bowstring snapping against the forearm or grazing the face as it passed. One day, when my technique was especially poor, the string caught against the back of my right ear, and for a week or so after that, I had a number of students asking me why one of my ears was purple. But I slowly came to find that the days when I made mistakes like that, it was entirely my fault, and with the correct technique, there should be no real danger of injury. As my technique improved, I found that although I occasionally hit myself, I did so far less frequently.

As the weeks progressed I came to learn the nature of the kyudo technique was a well-defined series of eight steps, beginning with positioning of the feet and ending with returning to a strong stance as completion of the process after the firing of the arrow. The whole process was comparable to an intricate dance routine, with step after complicated step to commit to memory and to perform in a strictly defined order. From the subtle positioning of the hands when setting an arrow in place, to fixing the gaze to the correct point ready for a shot. From remembering which foot to step with first to how long to hold the arrow before releasing. From all of this, I came to understand that the importance of kyudo was far less about the shot itself, but more the process of readying the body, mind and spirit for the journey, completing the action and returning to a readied state. Hitting the target was simply a byproduct of a good posture, and the goal was as much about perfecting yourself as it was about shooting in the right place. Sometimes I would miss the target by some distance but be praised by my teacher, for having done the procedure well. Usually my teacher would not even look to the target as I fired, placing more importance on my body as I released the arrow than on the arrow itself.

It was a slow process, but I gradually found myself getting better and better, until eventually, one day, everything (for that one shot at least) fell into place and I was able to hit the target. The sound of the arrow piercing the wood of the target instead of the sand that surrounds it is truly a very satisfying noise, one that even now, years later, I still very much enjoy hearing.

Even after two and half years of practicing, the act of hitting the target is still very difficult, and something of which the skill can sometimes feel very fleeting and transient. One week, I may



hit a few arrows in a row, but then I can go for weeks without hitting any. However, from watching masters shoot, I know I am certainly not alone in that. Even those who have studied the art for decades will frequently miss, and even hitting just half of one's targets at a competition would be considered a very high score.

Ultimately, looking back I realize that although on the surface kendo and kyudo do appear very different, at the heart they are two ends of a very polarized, but singular spectrum. Although one is loud and powerful, and the other thoughtful and quiet, they both have similar goals in mind: training the mind and body through defined steps and repetition. Truly martial arts. The path they take to get there may be very different, but the underlying message is mostly unchanged. For me at least, kyudo has simply been a better-suited and enjoyable path for me to travel along than kendo was.

The continued pursuit of self-improvement through strict discipline, practice and repetition seems to be a recurring theme that I can find almost anywhere in Japanese society if I look hard enough. In truth, similar practices can be found in most societies throughout the world, but the clear definition and order of operation seems to be significantly more noticeable and important here in Japan. Even in kendo, an art where everything happens with force and speed, there are still well defined disciplines and rules to the steps and the attacks, which one must follow in order to practice the art correctly. Whilst here in Japan I encourage you to find a path along that road that suits you, and matches with what you want from your hobbies, be it the defensive stances of karate, the careful strokes of a calligraphy brush, or even the quest for the perfect karaoke singing pitch, be sure to enjoy the journey, and I'll meet you at the other end.

Simon Griffin is a fourth-year elementary and kindergarten ALT from the UK, currently living in Yosano Town in northern Kyoto Prefecture. His house is just a short drive from the Amanohashidate, one of Japan's three most beautiful views. He finds the ease of living in Japan very refreshing, and can see himself here for quite a few more years yet. In his spare time he loves eating and traveling, so keep an eye out for him in a restaurant near you soon.



# 'AUSSIE RULES' FOR JAPAN

Sam Ghiradello, Yamagata



**Aussie rules is becoming more and more popular in Japan amongst Japanese and foreign residents alike.**

Australian rules football (Aussie rules) is played across Australia by people of all ages. Developed in the 1850s as a way for cricketers to maintain their fitness in the off-season, it often draws comparisons to rugby, due to the egg-shaped ball and the players' ability to tackle one another. However, Australian football contains elements of many other sports including, soccer, basketball and American football. Although it's only played professionally in Australia, countries all over the world run amateur leagues. Although it's still relatively unknown, Aussie rules is becoming more and more popular in Japan amongst Japanese and foreign residents alike.

AFL Asia is an organisation that encourages and facilitates the development of Aussies rules in the Asian region, and brings together a large number of teams for a tournament each year. This year the 2013 Asian Championships were held in Pattaya, Thailand, and consisted of teams from all over Asia, including the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Macau and Japan.

Competing under the name Tokyo Goannas, a team of members from different areas of the country was assembled to bring home the silverware from the 2013 Asian Championships. We were an assortment of unlikely characters, either looking to relive the glory days or achieve glory for the first time playing the Australian game. Whatever the motivation, it was a chance to represent Japan is something which none of us ever thought we'd do.

With Aussie rules being about as popular as skiing in Thailand, there were no ready-made grounds suitable in size, so we took to the green pastures of the Pattaya polo fields where two ovals



were prepared for the day's play. In a round-robin tournament we came up against the likes of Cambodia, Bali, Vietnam and eventual Asian Champions, Hong Kong. Unfortunately we had a relatively small squad of players compared to other teams and weren't able to make many player substitutions. This combined with the 35-degree August heat was enough for us to end the day with four losses from four games and no chance of playing in the finals. Although it was disappointing not to win, kicking back with beers and chewing the fat in the Pattaya afternoon sun wasn't a terrible result.

The Grand Final was fought out between Hong Kong and the Philippines, ending in victory to Hong Kong in a high-quality match. Hong Kong was boasting a squad of 50 players, including an ex-professional from Australia, and was the standout team on the day.

With the day's play all but over, it was time to celebrate into the early hours of the next morning and we were in the perfect place to do it. Pattaya is famous for its red-light district known as 'Walking Street', where you can get everything you want and everything you wouldn't want in one convenient location. Restaurants, bars, brothels and strip clubs, the place isn't for the faint of heart, and led to a number of Goannas being bathed on stage by two very pretty Thai guys.

Despite my aching body, sunburn and newfound fear of Thai massages, doing something that I love with a great bunch of blokes made this a trip that I'll never forget. Playing Australian football for Japan in Thailand—it's definitely one to tell the grandkids about.

If you're interested in getting involved with Australian Football in Japan, visit [www.jafl.org](http://www.jafl.org) to find out more.



*Sam Ghiradello is a third-year ALT in Yamagata City, Yamagata. Originally from Canberra, Australia, he loves the people, food and culture in Japan. He's a nomihodai enthusiast and very happy to call Yamagata home. He loves all sports and all things sport-related, especially Aussie rules. He spends the Tohoku winters stacking it down the slopes on his snowboard and healing his injuries with medically prescribed Yebisu. He likes to travel throughout Japan and overseas whenever he can, and more than half his wage goes towards omiyage-buying. In his words, "Yamagata is sick, so come check it out!"*

# TRAVEL

## EDITORIAL The Moral Question of 'Meet 'Em, Eat 'Em'

Oh Japan. Yes, you are a fascinating country—with your stunning scenery, your quirky culture, your intricately-made everything and your humbling *omotenashi*. But gosh darn, you also do downright disgraceful pretty well too.

Last month I heard there are plans to build a theme park in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, where tens of thousands of dolphins, porpoises and small whales are slaughtered each year. However, instead of riding rollercoasters and chowing down on corn dogs, visitors to this macabre park will be able to—according to government officials—“enjoy watching marine mammals while tasting various marine products, including whale and dolphin meat”.

Wait, what? I was instantly reminded of the *Simpsons* episode where Homer and the family go to Marine World and a PA announcement declares “Folks, we’re heating up the lobster tank, so hurry over if you want to pet them before you eat ‘em”.

This however, is not a joke, says Ric O’Barry, dolphin advocate and star of *The Cove*, an Oscar-winning documentary about the annual Taiji slaughter. “The mayor, city commission, dolphin-hunting union and dolphin dealers and trainers [in Taiji] lost their moral compass long ago,” says O’Barry.

According to reports, Taiji officials say they want to capitalise on their dolphin trade by keeping some alive for entertainment purposes in a separate ‘safari’ part of the bay, while others will be killed for catering. The herding up of the creatures could begin as early as this month and is apparently part of larger plans to turn the whole town into a park.

I’d barely had time to digest this perverse proposal when I saw

another story about Penguin no Iru Bar. No points for guessing what the drawcard is at this establishment. At least the purpose of these poor creatures is simply to provide avian eye-candy for drunk patrons, instead of the entrée in a set menu.

It appears that, rather than caving to ongoing global pressure to end its barbaric and unnecessary whale and dolphin-hunting practices, Japan is instead remaining steadfast—and now, with this Taiji ‘marine park’ idea, seemingly also (to use an Australian phrase) flat out taking the piss.

Of course, this isn’t the only instance where animals are the star attraction of ‘meet ‘em, then eat ‘em’ setups. In Nairobi, Kenya, you can capture the majesty of savannah-grazing giraffes, zebra and impala on your camera by day, then feast of them in local restaurants at night. While at a holiday park the Everglades in Florida, you can ride an airboat, watch an alligator show, then devour a serve of ‘gator bites.

However, it seems this disconnect between cute-thing-to-be-admired and food is particularly prevalent in Japan, where visitors to aquariums and marine parks will “*kawaiiiiiii*” all afternoon at dolphins and other cetaceans, then think nothing of it as they dip those very same animals into soy sauce over dinner.

*What are your thoughts on the Taiji marine park proposal?*  
[connect.travel@ajet.net](mailto:connect.travel@ajet.net)



## THIS MONTH IN TRAVEL...

I hope you’re feeling active, because this month’s Travel section provides some great ideas to get you out and about and exploring all things land, sea and mountain.

Hyogo’s incredibly brave Alexander Maas spent 44 days making the famous 88-temple Shikoku Pilgrimage—on foot! He even dressed the part. Walk 1400km in his shoes along the Path to Enlightenment.

Also racking up great feats of endurance is Yamagata’s Rose Murphy. Read how she unleashed her inner Power Ranger as she tackled the Iide Mountain Range. Not content on terra firma and dreaming of the Big Blue this winter vacation? Then join Shiga’s Dusty Wittman as he makes a splash with his expert guide to the best scuba diving destinations in Asia.

Meanwhile, I look at Taiji’s proposed “meet ‘em, then eat ‘em” marine park in my editorial.



## SPOTLIGHT

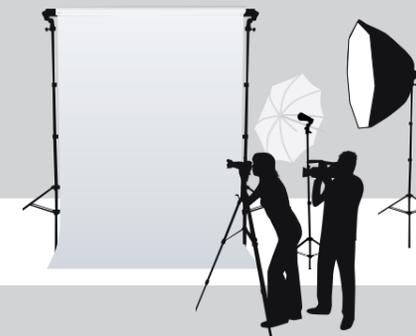
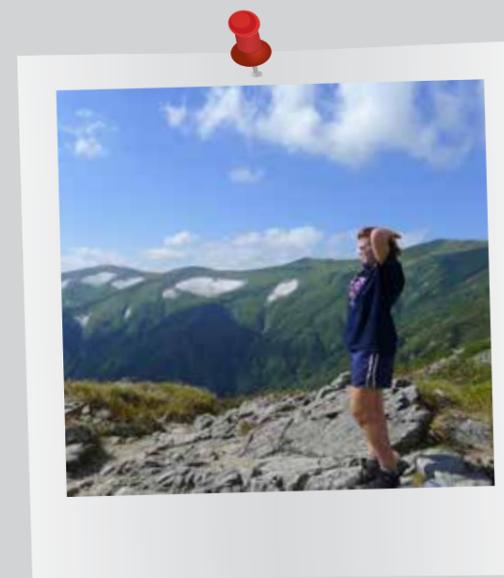
### Rose Murphy, Slightly Sacrilegious Power Ranger

Between Niigata, Fukushima and Yamagata lies the rugged Iide Mountain Range. Given a long weekend and clement forecast, we loaded our packs with FIGHT MAN energy gel, and eagerly stepped onto the forest trail. By mid-morning, we’d crested Mt. Jizo and spotted Mt. Iide. Skirting a plunging valley, we followed the ridge line up and arrived, tired and triumphant, at the hut to stake out a sleeping spot.

As the day grew longer, group after group arrived, and we unwillingly found ourselves in a massive game of ‘sardines’. Getting some air outside, we watched an eerie, red, harvest moon rise over Yonezawa City. Then, a voice in the darkness: ‘Shhhh. Grab your booze and sleeping bags and come to the shrine, there’s space there!’ Feeling slightly sacrilegious, we settled in for an evening of Onigorishi ‘demon killer’ sake with the mountain guides.

In the morning we parted ways and set off along the range. Some eight hours later, we arrived at the second hut. The third day began with a swift, dramatic sunrise. Beams stretched from the distant peak of Iide across a sea of clouds. Gassan, Chokai and Ōsahi poked their heads through their fluffy blanket. The final descent was relentless. ‘Laughing knees’ soon transcended into

‘sobbing-hysterically-knees.’ Then, at last, our saviour! A friend waiting to collect us. Together, we finished the trail, feeling like Power Rangers.



# THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Alexander Maas, Hyogo



Undertaking the famous 88-temple Shikoku Pilgrimage is extremely unusual, even for Japanese. During more than a month of walking, I met pilgrims who were walking and pilgrims who were camping and using public transportation for the majority of the journey both. More on them later. First, a little history.

The Shikoku Pilgrimage is a group of 88 temples scattered around the island of Shikoku. They are found in each prefecture and mostly follow the coast. The pilgrimage was established by Kobe Daishi, also known as Kukai. Or at least this is what most Japanese people believe. I have found differing opinions about this, but when it comes to Kukai, it is sometimes difficult to separate reality from legend. In any case despite the conflicting academic literature on the topic, the pilgrimage is now associated with Kukai and all the temples have a shrine dedicated to him. I will not go into his history here—it would be too long—except to say that he is the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism in Japan, the home temple of which is on Mount Koya. He meditated in Shikoku as a youth and returned for a few other reasons.



The traditional pilgrims, or *henro*, wore only white when undertaking the pilgrimage. I have been told this is because when people died they were dressed in white, and there was a good chance of dying while undertaking this pilgrimage back then, so the *henro* wore white so just in case they died, they were prepared. I went dressed as they would have, but I did not see anyone else dressed the same. Most people had the *kongozue* (walking stick) and *byakue* (the white, upper coat, robe-like clothing I am wearing in the picture) only. As such I got attention everywhere I went, when they saw I was a foreigner, that attention only intensified.

While the traditional pilgrimage is the 88 temples, there are also an additional 20. These are referred to by a couple of different names, but I found that the priests and other people who knew them would refer to them as *bangai*, or unnumbered temples. I walked to all 108 via the route shown by the black line on the map, starting in Tokushima, near Awaji Island, and walking clockwise around the island. The black circles are the places where I spent the night. The main reason I decided to walk the pilgrimage alone was because I was unable to find someone else who would willingly put themselves through such an ordeal, or have the ability to do it. While I started at temple 1 and went



consecutively, this is not required. You can start anywhere—and can even go in reverse if you want—however the path would be harder to find in that case.

It took me 44 days to walk the to all 108 temples and return to temple 1, a total of approximately 1400km. Walking to the 88 temples is meant to take 40-50 days, and including the *bangai* increases that to 50-60 days. Since I had to fit my trip into summer vacation, I went quicker by walking longer each day. While this distance translates to about 32km a day, how far I walked largely depended on where I would try to spend the night and the terrain I was walking though. I believe my shortest day was about 20km and my longest about 50km. Some days I did not stop until 10 or 11 o'clock at night. For parts of the trip, even though I was walking alone, my schedule overlapped with some other pilgrims and I occasionally walked with them for the day. I met people ranging from 30ish-year-olds who could speak English and were undertaking the pilgrimage because they believed that Kukai told them to, to a 72-year-old man who had walked the pilgrimage five times to another old man who I know nothing about except he was the closest thing to a religious zealot I have ever met in Japan.

As for food, most of the time I was near a convenience store around lunch time so I tended to eat there. However, some days I would need to carry food for the next day as well. If I had one recommendation for food, it would be the udon from the Nodaya restaurant out of the front of temple 88. I think it was the best udon I have ever tasted, and the flavour was all from the dashi.

As I said, I started at temple 1, which is on the east side of Shikoku, and walked clockwise around the island. The first few weeks were the most difficult—the heat, blisters and sore shoulders making those days an unpleasant blur. However, these subsided by about temple 24, at the south-east tip, and every day seemed to improve and be more pleasant and enjoyable (despite some blisters remaining for the rest of the trip).



This picture of the hut is an example of one of the most common places I spent the night, sleeping on the bench with my clothes drying over the walls. There are more of these in Tokushima than

the other prefectures. While I was often alone, there were a few nights when I had to share it with another pilgrim. Aside from these huts I slept in parks, train stations, on temple grounds, elementary schools, *michi no eki* (rest areas found along roads and highways)—once even in a public toilet—and anywhere else that looked like a good place to spend the night, preferably somewhere with a roof in case of rain.



While most of the path follows roads of some description, there are a number of occasions when you need to forge your way through mountain paths similar to the one pictured. This was actually one of the easiest mountain paths I had to walk, with the most difficult being at an almost 60 or 70-degree incline over rocks and boulders which, for the record, I would strongly advise against after any kind of rain or in poor lighting.



When you do finally get to the temples you will be confronted with the *hondo* (main building containing a statue of the Buddhist deity to which the temple is dedicated) and the *daishido* (hall with an enshrined statue of Kobo Daishi), although some temples combine these into a single building. The picture of the temple here is the *hondo* at Zentsuji, temple 75. It is one of the most famous temples on the pilgrimage.





The traditional procedures at each temple also varies depending on how serious you are, but some aspects seem to be consistent amongst everyone I saw at the temples. Before entering the gate you bow. You then visit the *hondo* and place an *osamefuda* in the correct box. This is a small slip of paper with your name, the date, your address and sometimes your age written on it. Next is a small offering - I used 5 yen coins and gave one at each shrine, so two per temple. You then offer a candle, then incense. From here on is where it varies a bit. At the shrine you say the sutras. Most are always the same but one changes depending on the deity housed in the shrine. After the *hondo* you repeat the steps at the *daishido*. When you finish at the *daishido* you can get your stamp book, or *nokyochō*, stamped and signed at the office for a 300 yen donation. This page from my stamp book in the photo is from the 15th *bangai*. Once that is done and you are leaving the temple, you turn and bow once more at the gate as you are exiting.



This last picture is the view from my climb of Otakiyama to get to the last *bangai*. The photo was taken after a thunderstorm, which literally turned the mountain into a huge waterfall.

There is so much I could talk about from my journey—I actually wrote a diary everyday—but I will instead leave you with some helpful information.

- To get to temple 1 in Tokushima, you can catch a plane to Tokushima airport, ride a highway bus from Osaka or, if you wish, catch a train from Okayama than transfer to a local train in the direction of Tokushima.
- While autumn and spring are the recommended times to go, all the pilgrims I spoke to preferred summer because it is much quieter. However, a word of warning, if you go in summer, be prepared for unrelenting heat, possible typhoons and a countless number of biting insects. I was bitten by a centipede while in Kochi prefecture, so it's not just mosquitoes you need to worry about.
- If you choose to walk, the one item you should have before all others is the pilgrims' walking map book. It is in Japanese, but if you can't read Japanese, you should still be ok as it uses basic symbols for the important places.
- I used <http://www.shikokuhenrotrail.com/> extensively to prepare everything before I left.

There are shops at temple 1 and a few others where you can get whatever you would need as a pilgrim. You can also buy certain items on Rakuten.

I'm sure that going with friends would make your trip much more enjoyable since you could share the experience with them, but be prepared to test yourself—both physically and mentally—if you decide to undertake the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Good luck!

*Alexander Maas is an Australian in his 3rd year as an ALT in Kobe city. A person with preferences for unusual or interesting things which results in his doing things most people would not. Where will he go or what will he do next? Have suggestion or a question about the 88-temple Shikoku Pilgrimage? Contact me at alexander.c.maas@gmail.com*

# THE BIG BLUE

Dusty Wittman, Shiga

## DREAMING OF THE BIG BLUE?

Well dream no more, because here are 10 reasons to get out of your cramped apartment and into the world's greatest playground. Diving is one of the best ways to enjoy the summer months, or the perfect reason to escape the cold winter. Whether you are thinking of getting your open water license, or are a seasoned veteran, you're sure to find something on this list to whet your appetite. Since you are likely to be traveling from Japan, I've only included locations within a reasonable flying distance, and listed them from incredible to average.

### 1: Palau



Palau is consistently rated among the top five best dive spots in the world. This archipelago is situated in the middle of the Pacific, with the nearest countries about 1,000 km away, save for the tiny islands of Yap (part of the Caroline Islands). Its remoteness, as well as its ocean conservation practices, provide a welcoming home to the biggest sea creatures you're likely to see. Giant clams big enough to lay down in, Napoleon wrasse the size of Smart cars, schools of barracuda, swarms of reef sharks, Manta rays, pristine coral gardens, and even a lake containing thousands of stingless jellyfish. A dive-site called Blue Corner is without a doubt the best I've ever experienced. It's better than an aquarium and makes 3-D IMAX feel like your father's old black and white tube TV.

**Getting there:** Fly to Palau International Airport (ROR), local bus for getting around

**Diving:** Sam's Tours (<http://www.samstours.com/main.html>)



### 2: Puerto Galera, Philippines



Look no further than this tiny diving village when it comes to pristine corals and sea life. Located in the Coral Triangle, the epicenter of the world's marine biodiversity, Puerto Galera is a macro photographer's 'wet' dream. However, if nudibranchs and sea horses aren't your thing, then check out the various wrecks, walls and canyons, all within a short boat ride from shore. If you're up for some serious diving, take a daytrip to Verde Island for a stunning reef and a dive-site called the Washing Machine.

**Getting there:** Fly to Manila International Airport (MNL), public or private transfer to Batangas Port, ferry to Puerto Galera

**Diving:** Frontier Scuba (<http://www.frontierscuba.com/>)



### 3: Similan Islands, Thailand



For the best diving in Thailand, skip the over-crowded waters of Phuket, and head straight to the Similan Islands located off the west coast in the Andaman Sea. This small group of remote rocky islands is home to unspoiled reefs, wrecks, and lots of fish. While these islands can be dived on a daytrip, the best option is a liveaboard. If you haven't experienced liveaboard diving, it truly is the best way to dive. How does waking up at a new dive-site each morning, diving up to four times a day, and spending the night under the stars sound?

**Getting there:** Fly to Phuket International Airport (HKT), ferry to islands or liveaboard boat  
**Diving:** Scuba Cat Diving (<http://www.scubacat.com/en/index.php>)



### 4: Liberty Wreck, Tulamben, Bali



Originally commissioned as an animal transport ship by the US Navy, the USAT Liberty has been taken over by a thriving crew of sea creatures. The remains of beams, engine parts, railings, armaments and decks poke through the dense growth of soft and hard coral as you make your way around the ship, ducking in and out of swim-throughs. What was once an inorganic hunk of steel is now a living, breathing, colorful paradise teeming with life.

**Getting there:** Fly to Denpasar International Airport (DPS), arrange transfer to Tulamben with dive shop  
**Diving:** Joe's Gone Diving (<http://www.joesgonediving.com/>)



### 5: Guam, USA



WWII wrecks and remnants, caves, walls, sharks and dolphins add variety and intrigue to the diving in Guam. This small American territory was once a brutal battleground, but now provides divers with a wide variety of things to see underwater, some of which can be reached via shore dives. The diving is great, but don't forget to check out the unique history and culture found topside.

**Getting there:** Fly to Guam International Airport (GUM), rental car for getting around  
**Diving:** MDA Divers (<http://www.mdaguam.com/guamdiving.htm>)



### 6: Ishigaki-jima, Japan



If you are looking for the best coral reefs in Japan, look no further than Ishigaki Island. The diving is effortless due to little current and calm waters. Dive sites like Manta Scramble, friendly English speaking dive guides, Southeast Asian-influenced food and a

very laid-back mood will leave lasting memories.

**Getting there:** Fly to Ishigaki Airport (ISG), arrange airport transfer with dive shop  
**Diving:** Diving School Umicoza (<http://www.umicoza.com/english/>)



### 7: Underwater Ruins, Yonaguni-jima, Japan



The jury is still out on whether or not these rock formations, found off the coast of Japan's western-most island, were man-made or a product of natural erosion. Having seen it with my own eyes, I still can't be sure which it is. However, mysterious ruins are not all you will find; hammerhead sharks, caverns and schools of fish will surely have you coming back for more.

**Getting there:** Fly to Yonaguni Airport (OGN) via Ishigaki or Naha, local bus or bicycle for getting around  
**Diving:** Yonaguni Diving Service (<http://www.yonaguniyds.com/>)



### 8: Okinawa Hontou (main island), Japan



If time is an issue, then save the extra flight getting to Ishigaki or Yonaguni and stay on Okinawa's main island. The atmosphere is not as charming as that of Ishigaki or Yonaguni, but the diving is worthwhile. Dozens of shore-diving sites and daily trips to neighboring islands, such as the Keramas, will keep you busy.

**Getting there:** Fly to Naha International Airport (OKA), city bus or rental car for getting around  
**Diving:** Reef Encounters (<http://www.reefencounters.org/>)



These last two places are not actually ranked even though they are listed as 9 and 10. They very well could be 1 and 2, but I can't say... They are on my list of 'must-dive places' and should be on yours too!

### 9: Sipadan, Malaysia

Even though rated one of the best in the world, Sipadan is a place that only a small percentage of divers will ever go. Diving here requires reservation weeks in advance since they allow only 120 divers in the water each day. Despite it being difficult to get a dive, the effort is more than rewarded by some of the best underwater viewing pleasure the Earth has to offer.

### 10: Chichi-jima, Ogasawara-shoto, Japan

The only access to this island is a 25-hour ferry ride from Tokyo. Though arduous, it ensures only a few divers will ever enter the water surrounding 'Father' Island. Daily dolphin and whale sightings and a unique culture are the main attractions here. Be sure to check the weather and ferry times before committing to a visit.

#### Things to remember:

When booking your diving vacation, always contact the dive operator first to check availability and to get accommodation recommendations. Also, for safety, don't forget to plan a full 24 hours of no-dive time before your return flight—use that day to explore the island's topside treats.

*Dusty Wittman is one of the few diving unicorns left in Japan. When he emerges from his mystical home in Shiga-ken, he can be found galloping for the nearest warm body of water. After earning his PADI open water certification in 2006, he has been exploring the world's oceans, seas, and lakes every chance he gets.*

# VOLUNTEERING

## SPECIAL FEATURE AJET's Volunteer Tracker and Race to the Top Challenge

This year, National AJET has set some very ambitious goals for JET community involvement: 1,000,000 yen raised for charity and 10,000 volunteer hours of community service.

AJET proudly introduces Volunteer Tracker! This system is designed to collect data on volunteer hours served, and charity money raised by JETs around Japan. You can enter figures for the entire JET-year: August 1, 2013 through July 31, 2014. Just fill out the Volunteer Tracker form [HERE](#) this data will be used to show the commitment JETs have to their communities, Japan and the world, when AJET meets with the Japanese Government and CLAIR in 2014.

### Race to the Top Challenge:

AJET also presents the *Race to the Top Challenge*. This challenge will run for six months, from November 1, 2013 through April 31, 2014. Fill out the Volunteer Tracker form and win up to 60,000 yen to support your next volunteer or charity event!

### How to Win:

That's easy! Just be the most caring, dedicated, AJET Chapter you can be! Then, log all of the awesome things you do in the Volunteer Tracker from November through April.

### Who is Eligible to Win?

Any official AJET Prefectural Chapter is eligible to win one or both of these categories for a total of up to 60,000 yen. The winning prefecture(s) will be announced in the May issue of Connect Magazine.

### What was that link again?

You can find the Volunteer Tracker form [HERE](#). AJET will also be emailing prefectural AJET Chapters with the link and posting the form in the AJET Block Groups on Facebook to encourage JETs to fill it out. Share the positive impact and start logging today!

### The Prizes

One prize of 30,000 yen will go to the prefecture with the largest number of community service hours. A second prize of 30,000 yen will go to the prefecture with the largest amount of charity money raised. The winners will be determined on a percentage basis in order to account for the differences in JET population from prefecture to prefecture.

### Disclaimer

The AJET National Council reserves the right to revoke prize money in the case of misconduct including but not limited to inaccurate recording, intentional lying, and unethical actions as determined by the Council. This contest is sponsored by the AJET National Council, a volunteer organization of current JET participants elected and appointed by current JET Programme participants to represent the JET community nation-wide.

Contact [exec@ajet.net](mailto:exec@ajet.net) for any inquiries.



CONNECT

November Issue 2013

# THIS MONTH IN VOLUNTEERING...

In this month's Volunteer section, I have some articles for you to enjoy. First William Mawinney writes about Refugees International Japan, an organization where you can volunteer, fundraise, or raise awareness about the issues refugees face.

Next Aaron Gilling takes a look at the organization AID for Japan, which helps orphans affected by the March 11<sup>th</sup> disaster. They organise home-stays with families in the UK and put on cultural exchange programmes in Japan.

In the Spotlight section we have tips for how to make use of the AJET.net website for charity events and lesson planning. Lastly, in my editorial space is the volunteer tracker and charity challenge from AJET. This system is designed to collect data on volunteer hours served and charity money raised by JETs around Japan. Read more about it on the previous page!



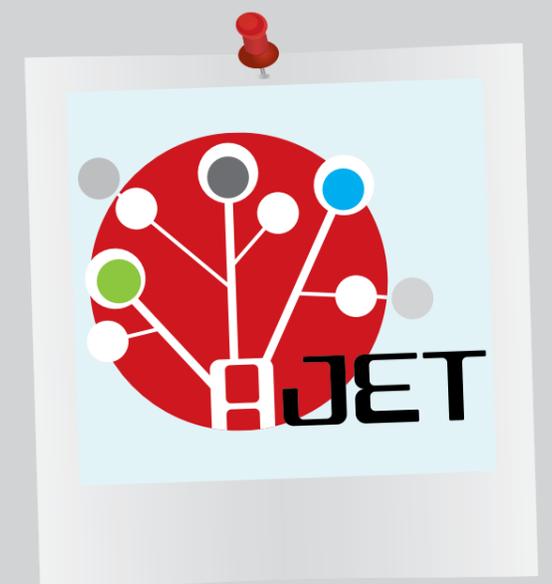
# SPOTLIGHT

## Starting an AJET Chapter

First, if you don't have an AJET chapter in your prefecture, then you should consider starting one! In everything from planning social events to volunteering in the local community, a local AJET chapter can promote a stronger relationship between JETs and the Japanese community. In the community section on AJET, you will find tips from other AJET chapters on how to create a chapter in your area and a breakdown of duties for possible positions on your AJET team.

On AJET.net you will also find pre-made worksheets that can help you with event planning and goal setting for the year. Once you have a chapter started, you can look into the benefits of working with your Prefectural Advisor on how to help new JETs become adjusted to life in Japan. This can be with contributing to the welcome packets that your prefecture sends to new JETs. For example, posting short interviews from current JETs about life in Japan can help new JETs get excited about coming and help prepare them for their new home.

Whether you're starting an AJET chapter in your prefecture, or working to improve one that's already there, make sure you get out and get involved to help both JETs and Japanese alike!



CONNECT

November Issue 2013

# REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL JAPAN RIJ (国際難民支援会)

William Mawhinney, Tokyo

Refugees International Japan (RIJ) is a volunteer organisation based in Japan that provides much needed funding to projects that help refugees around the world. RIJ provides hope to people who have lost everything—helping them recover their dignity, maintain their sense of self and move forward to make a valuable contribution to the community they live in, whether while still in exile or upon returning home.

To date, RIJ has distributed over 11 million US dollars to more than 820 projects in over 40 countries worldwide—giving hope to literally millions of refugees across the world. Currently, RIJ is funding projects for emergency mother and baby kits to Burmese refugees, providing Syrian children in Jordan with an education, and providing a pre-school teacher's diploma course support program in Northern Sri Lanka, as well as many other ongoing efforts.

## What can you do?

### Fundraise for RIJ Projects

Help RIJ by fundraising for refugee projects within your community. It is a great way to bring people together and also looks great on your CV! Get creative—organise a fun run, get children together to make crafts, host an event/karaoke night/party/coffee, have a bake sale or a raffle and ask local businesses to donate prizes. These are all great ways to develop recognised and proven skills in project management and organisation. Give your résumé an edge with RIJ!

### Volunteer

We are looking for motivated JETs to volunteer or intern. It is a great way for you to gain valuable experience within the community and enhance your marketing skills. JET volunteers can be involved in organising fundraising events and maintaining blog dialogue, or using particular skills such as making crafts, producing videos, or designing materials.

### Raise awareness of refugees

You can help the work of RIJ by raising awareness of the issues refugees face and how your local community can help. If permitted, teaching your students about refugees will help them understand global issues and other people's lives.

Any assistance you give will help us continue our valuable work. With the help of JETs, RIJ will continue to help more refugees around the world.

For more information on what we do or how to volunteer, contact Jane Best at [jane@refugeesinternationaljapan.org](mailto:jane@refugeesinternationaljapan.org) or visit their home page at [www.refugeesinternationaljapan.org](http://www.refugeesinternationaljapan.org)

Coming from New Zealand in 2012, William started teaching English at an eikaiwa while volunteering with RIJ. For the past year, he's been fundraising, gaining valuable knowledge about refugees and the struggles they face on a daily basis, and raising awareness of refugee issues among local communities. He enjoys the busy life of metropolitan Japan, visiting big annual festivals and getting lost in the alleys of Tokyo.



**Up late?**

**So are we.**

**AJET Peer Support Group**  
A confidential, anonymous resource by JETs, for JETs. Now available free over Skype.

**050-5534-5566** or **ajetpsg** **20:00-07:00**  
(You'll hear a short message in Japanese) (Voice calls only) Every night of the year

# AID FOR JAPAN

## BRINGING SMILES TO CHILDREN IN NEED FROM HOME AND ABROAD



**“Want to listen to The Beatles?”**

**“I want to stay with Akemi”.**

This is from the end of a national news report covering an orphan named Maria, from Tohoku, on a homestay in England. Maria went on a plane and saw another country for the first time. She went and rode a horse, every young girl’s dream. She enjoyed a traditional English Christmas, trimmings and all. Most importantly, she had the warmth of a hug from someone who cared about her on her birthday. The first time she had celebrated her birthday this way for a year. You can see a video of the news report here.

This is the work of Aid for Japan.

According to the July 2011 newspapers, 229 children under 18 years old lost both parents and 1295 children lost one parent in the March 2011 natural disasters. Some orphans have yet to be counted in this figure because their relatives are still in refugee camps and are yet to be reunited.

Aid for Japan is a charity organisation based in the United Kingdom which serves to help orphans affected by this disaster.

**Aaron Gilling, Saitama**  
They organise homestays with families in the UK and with the help of both English and Japanese volunteers put on cultural exchange programmes in Japan.

Akemi Solloway, the founder and director of the charity, is a remarkable woman. Unique even in today’s society, Solloway traded in her kimono-wearing life in Japan for what she calls the “reverse cosplay” lifestyle, wearing western clothing to teach Japanese language and culture in London. There, she has been at the forefront of Japanese-British cultural relations.

Her past activities include preparing a tea ceremony for the Mayor of London, working with the BBC on a documentary about Japanese ideals of beauty and assisting the Japanese royal family with a speech to an international gathering of martial artists. She even dressed Kelly Osbourne in a kimono for a magazine photo shoot ([www.akemisolloway.com](http://www.akemisolloway.com)). These glamorous accomplishments are mere asides from her to day to day work as lecturer in Japanese culture and the work she is putting into Aid for Japan.

Since March 2011, Akemi-sensei, as she is fondly called, has dedicated herself to doing everything she can to help and support those children and teenagers who lost their families in

the disaster. Having formed the organisation herself, she now works with her team of volunteers to drum up support and fund programmes such as homestays, cultural exchange trips in Japan, and events to help tie together the Japanese and British communities in London. Their work is very much a home and abroad operation.

In London, the organisation has put on events such as arts and crafts days, face painting at a pub and traditional Japanese musical performances. In Japan, Akemi-sensei has kept close ties with the Rotary communities here and over the summer held a residential course in Kiyasoto where children could interact with both British and Japanese volunteers to enjoy arts and crafts among other cultural activities.

Despite being currently based in the UK, Aid For Japan has plans to set up a Japanese branch in the near future. They encourage all JETs, regardless of nationality, to get involved by supporting the charity and volunteering at any of their fundraising activities. Volunteers will get a charity certificate as a sign of their contribution. If you would like to learn more, there is a charity appeal event on 3rd November where Akemi-sensei and other volunteers will be on hand to introduce their work.

Aid for Japan is also actively encouraging JETs to become volunteers for their cultural outreach trip to Kyoto from 26th-29th December, where you can help in exploring traditional Japanese culture and sharing your own culture with orphans from the Tohoku area.

As a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year JET who was part of the first post-March 2011 intake, I must say that the thought of where a JET Programme participant’s role lays in the recovery efforts has crossed my mind more than once. For me, living in Saitama Prefecture, safely inland and less prone to disasters, there is a sense that I am

geographically outside the sphere of being able to help.

When we look at work like that of Aid for Japan, helping children from as far away as the UK, it shows us that no matter how far away we are, we are never too far to help those in need. We are all one piece of a much a greater puzzle that will inevitably lead to a better life for the children and people affected by this great disaster.

Why get involved with Aid for Japan? I think Akemi-sensei puts it best.

“In my private life there have been crises. During those difficult times my parents and younger sister always supported and helped me. Without them my life would have been unbearable. A family’s warmth and love is incomparable. With Aid for Japan, I want to give something back”.

As JET Programme participants and cultural ambassadors let’s give something back and help Aid for Japan bring smiles to more children like Maria.

Find out more about Aid For Japan at [www.aidforjapan.org.uk](http://www.aidforjapan.org.uk). You can see a video of the news report [HERE](#).

Aaron Gilling is a British bloke (and a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year ALT) in Saitama Prefecture. When he isn’t plying his trade with the English language, Aaron enjoys cooking with liberal amounts of wine and reading up a storm. A big fan of sport, especially football (soccer), he is also fond of “turning his arm over” or playing cricket. Aaron is the AJET Block 3 representative on the AJET National Council and Director of Corporate Advertising, where he finds ads for Connect...by any means necessary.



Children with Japanese and English volunteers at a summer residential course in Kiyasoto. The children enjoyed hiking and songwriting in Japanese.



**BELOW:**  
Akemi Solloway and Aid For Japan volunteers drumming up support for the charity at a Japanese Matsuri event in London.



**ABOVE:**  
Picture from the summer residential course where they wrote a song.



# EVENTS

## EDITORIAL How Fancy Dining Can Help

On Friday, November 22, the Tokyo English Life Line (TELL) will hold its 18th Annual Connoisseurs' Auction, one of the non-profit's most high-profile fundraisers.

This year the Embassy of the Republic of Angola, based near the trendy Shimokitazawa neighborhood, will be hosting the event. It is tradition for a national embassy play host, with each year's auction tailored to suit the host's culture. This year's auction will include a catered food menu with Angolan flair, among other details.

According to TELL's Events Coordinator, Vivian Morelli, last year's fundraiser brought in a record 18 million yen, a number the organization is hoping to see raised again this year. The event has both live and silent auctions. Items auctioned live will include fine wines—for which the event takes its name—travel packages, and fine art pieces. The silent auction will feature an array of health and beauty services donated by Tokyo-area businesses, rare liqueurs, and unique jewelry works. Monies raised will help maintain the Lifeline and Counseling Center, which is the backbone of TELL's operations.

TELL opened in 1973 as an echo of Inochi-no-Denwa, a Japanese-language suicide prevention hotline that opened two years earlier. In its first year, TELL's counseling trainers took on 50 trainees. These trainees fielded 1,016 calls in its first eight months<sup>1</sup>, a number that has grown over the decades to more than 7,000 calls a year, 60 percent of which are from the Japanese community<sup>2</sup>. In the years since its inception, TELL has integrated other services, such as a Filipino-language help hotline, HIV/AIDS counseling, in-person counseling, and educational workshops on a myriad of topics.

TELL and the JET Programme have for years had a mutually beneficial relationship. As confidentiality is a crucial tenet of



*Patrons of 2012's Connoisseur's Auction enjoy fine wines and one-upping one another's bids at the Australian Embassy in Minato, Tokyo.*

TELL's operation, information is not collected from callers, but TELL has undoubtedly been a great service to JETs who suffer from mental illness; are dealing with culture shock, isolation, or anxiety; or who need a helpful, understanding mind. Likewise, many JETs have supported TELL's training and support services over the years, some becoming trained counselors themselves. More information on the event can be found here: [http://www.telljp.com/index.php?/en/auction2013/18th\\_annual\\_tell\\_connoisseurs\\_auction/](http://www.telljp.com/index.php?/en/auction2013/18th_annual_tell_connoisseurs_auction/).

*If you wish to support TELL but cannot attend the Connoisseurs' Auction, volunteers are sought for a variety of tasks. Email [event@telljp.com](mailto:event@telljp.com) to learn more about how you can help. Let us know about any events benefiting support networks where you are at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).*

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telljp.com/index.php?/en/history/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.telljp.com/index.php?/en/news\\_article/world\\_mental\\_health\\_day\\_october\\_10/](http://www.telljp.com/index.php?/en/news_article/world_mental_health_day_october_10/)

# THIS MONTH IN EVENTS...

November's Events section features contributions by two very talented, hard working JETs: Gunma's Ashly Schanback and Sabrina Zirakzadeh in Okayama. Schanback is the Vice President of Gunma AJET, one of AJET's most active chapters. She breaks down one of Block 3's more popular events, which was hosted for the second time by Gunma AJET in September.

Zirakzadeh is one of NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month)'s two illustrious organizers in Japan. Her article explains the awesomeness of the NaNoWriMo event and organization, and includes information on how to incorporate the event into your teaching routine.

November's Events Calendar is a little leaner than usual this month, but continues to provide information on unique events happening all over Japan. From Sapporo's celebration of local art to Okinawa playing host to one of Japan's best writing conferences, and the food fairs and seasonal festivals everywhere in between, you are bound to find something that piques your interest.

*If your prefecture or AJET Block plans an event, or even if you wish to share how great your event was, email us at [Connect](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net) so we can help spread the word: [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).*



# SPOTLIGHT

## 5 Places for Great Kouyou, Western Edition

November draws autumnal color south and west. While much of northern Japan's best *kouyou* are inside parks and other protected areas, the *kouyou* in the more populated southern regions are easier to access, and are therefore more likely to be crowded. But don't let claustrophobic thoughts deter you from taking it in!

**Arashiyama, Kyoto** – This western district of Kyoto City is rich with temples and popular cultural landmarks. Rent a bicycle for a day, or take the Sagano Scenic Railway to Kameoka, and return to Arashiyama on a two-hour guided boat tour on the Kozu River. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3912.html>

**Koyasan, Wakayama** – This temple retreat is magical in all seasons, but in fall the lush forest turns to some of Japan's most vibrant reds and yellows. Because its elevation is higher than most of Kansai, *kouyou* peaks here earlier than most places in Western Japan, so plan accordingly. <http://eng.shukubo.net/>

**Daisen, Tottori** – This volcanic peak next to the Sea of Japan, just meters short of Mt Fuji, dominates the area's landscape. Nearby observatory spots provide the best opportunities for taking in the scenery. <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/tottori/daisen.html>

**Kankakei Gorge, Kagawa** – This steep ravine on Shodoshima, one of Japan's "Top 3," is at its most breathtaking in autumn. Use the cable car to view from above, or hike down and back up

through the gorge's forests. <http://www.town.shodoshima.lg.jp/en/sightseeing.html>  
**Aso-Kuju National Park, Oita/Kumamoto** – Kyushu's climate does not lend itself to the intense foliage changes of other parts of Japan, but Aso-Kuju never fails to deliver. The Kuju mountains, Kurokawa Onsen, and the charming town of Yufuin offer some of the best *kouyou* on Kyushu. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e4570.html>

*Where have you seen some amazing kouyou? Send us your pictures and tell us about it at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).*



# BLOCK 3 GETS ITS FEET WET: RAFTING AND CANYONING IN GUNMA

Ashley Schanback, Gunma

Photos by Canyons Adventures <http://canyons.jp/en/gallery/photos>



On September 14th, more than 50 JETs and friends from across five prefectures gathered in Minakami, a small town in northern Gunma Prefecture. Minakami is known for its exceptional coupling of outdoor sports and nature. Beginning in 2012, Gunma AJET decided to invite all Block 3 JETs to experience the wonders of this town.

The 2nd annual Canyons Adventure and Block 3 Mixer offered JETs outdoor adventures such as canyoning (literally water-sliding down canyon rivers) and whitewater rafting during the day, followed by a BBQ mixer and an after party at night. JETs from Tochigi, Nagano, Saitama, Ibaraki, and Gunma gathered for adventure, hearty food, and good company!

The day began with a morning rafting trip. Due to drier weather, the Tone River's water level was unseasonably low, which made for a challenging trip. However, as one participant commented, "Poor conditions [were] made up for by great guides and fun jumps." The rafting tour also featured a nice balance of heart-pounding jumps from sky-high cliffs, as well as relaxing stretches of just floating down the river.

The first canyons trip was later that morning, when participants shot down the rapids of Fox Canyon. This adventure also features a number of epic cliff jumps, especially recommended for those who wish to conquer their fear of heights. One "Full Day" participant who tried both canyoning and rafting summarized the canyoning portion very precisely: "Best part of the trip hands down." According to the online feedback form, canyoning was better received than rafting on the whole. One "Full Day" participant who tried both canyoning and rafting wrote, "People (instructors and participants) were nice and it was perfect to first do rafting and then top it with canyoning in the afternoon."

In the evening, hungry adventurers were joined by other JETs and friends for a finger-licking-good BBQ at Tenjin Lodge. Everyone made the best of the BBQ with some good conversation and a bit of dancing. When the BBQ finished, interested participants headed to Canyons for an after-party with even more dancing and merry-making.

In all, these short two days turned out to be a memorable weekend getting to know JETs from all over Block 3. Thank you to all participants for helping make this event unforgettable! Whether you want a relaxing weekend soaking in nature and good company, or else a thrilling adventure-filled weekend, we hope to see even more Block 3 representatives next year!



*Ashly Schanback is a third-year ALT in Takasaki, Gunma. As the vice-president of Gunma AJET, she spends most of her extra time planning Gunma events after work. When not emailing like a madwoman, she also enjoys onsen, snowboarding, hiking, and N64 with friends. Feel free to email her at [vp@gunmajet.net](mailto:vp@gunmajet.net) if you're looking for guidance or a buddy for your next outdoor adventure (or onsen relaxation weekend) in Gunma!*

*Tell the JET community how fun your Block's shindigs are, too, at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).*



## NaNoWriMo IN JAPAN (AND YOUR CLASSROOM)

Sabrina Zirakzadeh, Okayama

I have a confession to make. I have a monkey on my back and I don't even want to get rid of it. For one month every year, it eats away at my time, my energy, my creativity, my soul, and my life. My social circle narrows to only those who suffer from the same problem as I do. My free time vanishes. Things that hold my interest the rest of the year take a back seat to this all-consuming obsession. It has even begun to invade my workplace. I have even drawn at least a dozen of my students into this wild, mad spiral.

My name is Sabrina, and I am a NaNoWriMo addict.

Those of you who are familiar with NaNoWriMo either just nodded sympathetically or ran for a bunker to wait until December comes and the madness ends. For those of you who don't know, NaNoWriMo, or National Novel Writing Month, began in 1999 as a challenge amongst friends to write their own novels together. Fourteen years later, it is now an international behemoth of an event where writers of all backgrounds, experience, and abilities attempt to write a 50,000-word original manuscript in just 30 days. Participants have from Nov. 1 until midnight on Nov. 30th to reach their 50,000-word goal, with no pre-writing allowed. Interested participants simply sign up on [NaNoWriMo.org](http://NaNoWriMo.org), update their word count, verify their final total before midnight on November 30th, and presto! You're a NaNoWriMo winner and a novelist in the making!

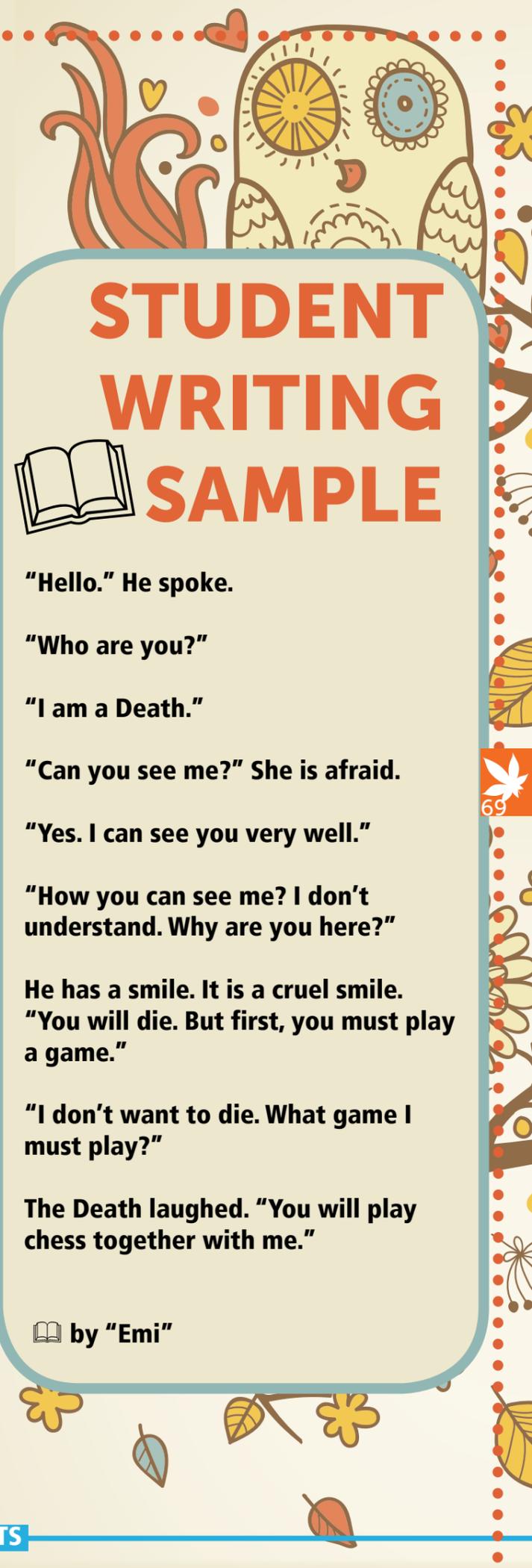
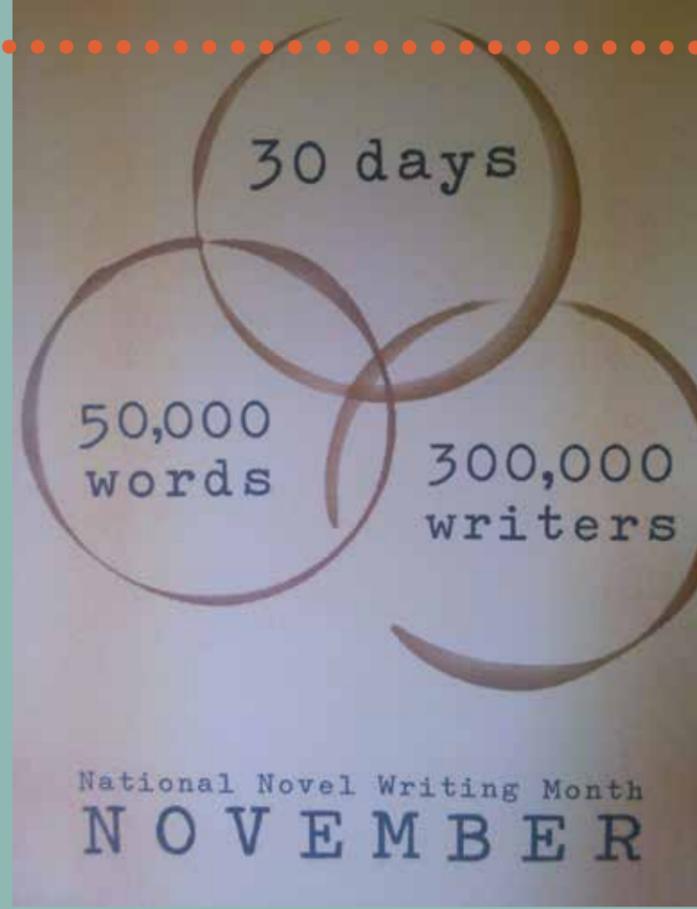
Any writer who writes 50,000 words or more receives free printable goodies, codes for complimentary copies of your novel, and, of course, the bragging rights to having written your own book. Fiction or non-fiction, poetry or prose, works of high literary art or short story collections about battling UFO machines... whatever you want to write! The result may be filled with errors, suffer from serious lapses in quality, or even turn into a different story halfway through, but the point of NaNoWriMo is to *finish*

*that first draft*, no matter how much editing it'll need down the road. There is even an unofficial National Novel Editing Month just for turning your madcap word scramble into something publishable. And publishing is a very real possibility; best-sellers such as *Water for Elephants* and *The Night Circus* began as NaNoWriMo novels and many internationally known authors have attempted the challenge despite already being published.

NaNoWriMo is not a solitary event. Every year, hundreds of participants around the world volunteer to be Municipal Liaisons, standing as local organizers and your personal cheerleaders/coaches/shoulders-to-weep-on-when-your-computer-eats-your-novel-in-a-power-surge, or whatever you need. The Municipal Liaisons' primary duty is to help set up events where participants (or WriMos, as we affectionately call you behind your backs!) can get out, recharge their creative juices, meet other writers, bounce around ideas when they get stuck, and share tips for making one shot of caffeine last for thirteen hours. These aren't just coffee house meets, either. Midnight Halloween kick-off parties, 24-hour writing marathons, trips to famous writer haunts, pub crawl-esque traveling write-ins, Thank God It's Over (TGIO) parties—anything you can envision happening with a laptop or writing pad in tow can happen!

Japan currently has two Municipal Liaisons, myself included, and we currently have kick-off parties planned in Osaka and Tokyo, two overnight karaoke and hotel write-ins, an online write-a-thon, weekly meets around the Tohoku and Chugoku regions, and TGIO parties at the Kobe Luminare and Tokyo Disney. And I haven't even mentioned the other events that other WriMos have put together everywhere else in Japan!

In addition to being a great writing exercise and a ridiculously fun way to meet people who sympathize with the lack of sleep, hijacked plot threads, and carpal tunnel syndrome,



# STUDENT WRITING SAMPLE



"Hello." He spoke.

"Who are you?"

"I am a Death."

"Can you see me?" She is afraid.

"Yes. I can see you very well."

"How you can see me? I don't understand. Why are you here?"

He has a smile. It is a cruel smile.  
"You will die. But first, you must play a game."

"I don't want to die. What game I must play?"

The Death laughed. "You will play chess together with me."

by "Emi"

**P**articipants can join NaNoWriMo any time before Nov. 30th by signing up at [NaNoWriMo.org](http://NaNoWriMo.org).

**Have you participated? Are you also a NaNo addict?**

**Tell us about you and your writing at [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).**

NaNoWriMo is also an educational tool and a charitable force for good! NaNoWriMo is a completely non-profit organization, powered entirely by donations and volunteers. In addition to running the November event, donations are used to promote literacy around the world, especially in elementary and secondary schools. NaNoWriMo provides computers, books, and other supplies to schools in need, funds author talks and guest readings for students, and much, much more.

In 2005, NaNoWriMo created the Young Writer's Program, a simultaneous event for writers under the age of 18 who are free to choose whatever word count goal they wish. The same prizes are made available to young winners, and teachers and educators who wish to work with the program are able to order additional prizes and motivational tools such as progress charts and stickers to share with their students. NaNoWriMo also runs year-round writing workshops, hosts spring and summer writing events similar to the main November challenge, and constantly works with other companies to help writers of all ages and background achieve their goals.

Last year, I challenged some interested students at my junior high school in the Okayama countryside to try the Young Writer's Program. Because the Young Writer's Program does not require students to create accounts like the adult NaNoWriMo site, my students just updated me on their progress and I served as the educator and verifier for prize purposes. The students loved the experience and the ones who tried writing entirely in English were surprised to see how much they were able to write in a second language. I'm hoping that this year goes just as well.

My personal NaNoWriMo journey began in November 2002. That year, I failed miserably to reach 50,000 words, but in 2003

I decided to try again, procrastinated like crazy, wrote like I was possessed during Thanksgiving break, and managed to squeak past the 50,000 mark with minutes to spare. Ever since then, I've set aside part of my November to traumatize keyboards, force characters out of ever more ridiculous plot holes, and have the time of my life doing it. I have yet to seriously edit anything that I've written during NaNoWriMo and don't particularly consider myself to be a writer, but it's still a lot of fun and an experience I love sharing with others, which is why I began volunteering as a Municipal Liaison in 2006.

2013 will be my twelfth NaNoWriMo event, my eighth as an official volunteer, and my second as a Young Writer's Program educator. I think by now it's safe to say that I'm hooked for life. My soul will belong to NaNoWriMo every November until my fingers finally fall off or my computer grows legs and learns to run away screaming on Halloween. However, no matter how long I've been at this, I love it too much and believe in it too much to quit. I hope that some of you decide to join us at some of the events around Japan and see what you can accomplish. I hope the next best seller I pick up was written by one of you. I hope that more ALTs use the Young Writer's Program to help our students realize what they're capable of, even in the scary world of English. Most of all, I hope that anyone who decides to give NaNoWriMo a whirl this year sticks with it for a long, long time.

*Sabrina Zirakzadeh is a 2nd-year JET living, teaching, and breaking laws of speed-writing physics in rural Okayama-ken. When she isn't mortgaging her soul to the NaNo overlords, she writes and records her own music about life, traveling, Japan... and yes, one about NaNo, too. Check her out at [jupiter-star.com](http://jupiter-star.com) or learn more about NaNoWriMo and events in Japan by following @NihonWriMo on Twitter!*

# EVENTS CALENDAR NOVEMBER



Remember: Every link in Connect is clickable!

Let us know about what's up in your block for next month! Your area's event could appear on the next Event Calendar and be promoted by AJET at [ajet.net/events](http://ajet.net/events)! Send them to [connect.events@ajet.net](mailto:connect.events@ajet.net).



## BLOCK 1

**Sapporo Art Stage 2013**  
Nov. 9–Dec. 8  
Sapporo, Hokkaido

Local artistry shines in this month-long art festival. Attendees can enjoy live theater performances, sculptures, paintings, and other fine art. Music performances also abound, including some by school brass band and choirs, in venues all over the city. <http://seesapporo.com/events/sapporo-art-stage-2013>

**Fall Fujiwara Festival**  
Nov. 1–3  
Hiraizumi, Iwate

A festival with a somber start—a memorial service for Fujiwara's lords—turns jovial with a children's parade and various dance performances, including the *Ennen no Mai*, an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property. [http://www.japan-iwate.info/app/location\\_detail.php?lid=52](http://www.japan-iwate.info/app/location_detail.php?lid=52)

## BLOCK 2

**Block 2 Skills Auction Night**  
Nov. 9  
Niigata, Niigata

JETs donate and bet on skills and services to raise money for Niigata's Charity Organization, benefitting rural education in Papua New Guinea. Enjoy a "feel-good after party" after your purchases at the fact-paced auction and revel in your altruism. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1409049669307153/?fref=ts>

**Taimatsu Akashi Festival**  
Nov. 9  
Sukagawa, Fukushima

Fukushima's famous fire festival lights up the chilly night sky every year in Sukagawa. 30-foot towers of straw and wood are lit up to commemorate the fall of the town's castle during Tohoku's rebellion. <http://www.city.sukagawa.fukushima.jp/taimatsu/index.html>

## BLOCK 3

**Saitama AJET Scavenger Hunt**  
Nov. 9  
Saitama, Saitama

We all harbor a desire to be the next Indiana Jones, right? ...Or is that just me? Whether you do or not, why not grab some friends and explore central Saitama City in this urban scavenger hunt? Register by Nov. 7 at [saitamaajet@gmail.com](mailto:saitamaajet@gmail.com).

**Nagano Ebisu-ko Enka Taikai**  
Nov. 23  
Nagano, Nagano

This large fireworks fest is one of Japan's oldest, dating back to feudal times. Shuttle buses are available from Nagano Station's east exit. <http://www.nagano-cci.or.jp/ebisukou/>

**Harvest Festival at Coco Farm & Winery**  
Nov. 16–17  
Ashikaga, Tochigi

One of the Kanto area's most popular winery events, complete with locally produced wines, cheeses, and breads, and live music performances. Come hungry! ... and with 3,000 yen. <http://www.cocowine.com/contents/english/special-events/harvest-festival>

\*The block colours are coordinated to the map.



## BLOCK 4

### Japan Pop Culture Carnival Nov. 4

#### Matsudo, Chiba

Get your *otaku* on for the 70<sup>th</sup> annual Japan Pop Culture Carnival, held, conveniently enough, the day after *Bunka no Hi*. Advance tickets are 4,500 yen, 4,980 yen at the door.

[http://www.morinohall21.com/event/13pop/13pop\\_c.html](http://www.morinohall21.com/event/13pop/13pop_c.html)

### Joy of Sake 2013

Nov. 7

#### Shinagawa, Tokyo

Level up your sake connoisseurship at this swanky event. 8,000 yen gets you in to this annual Hawaiian-themed sake tasting, boasting 380 sakes and specialty appetizers, held in a penthouse in one of Tokyo's upscale neighborhoods.

<http://www.joyofsake.com/tokyo.html>

### Tokyo Ramen Show 2013

Nov. 15–24

#### Setagaya, Tokyo

Ramen lovers: come one, come all! The biggest and best-known ramen event in Tokyo convenes at a public park west of Shibuya, featuring more than 30 regional ramen recipes. One bowl runs 800 yen, though some stalls will have mini-bowls available.

<http://www.ramenshow.com/index.html>

## BLOCK 5

### Tajimi Shudoin Wine Festa

Nov. 2

#### Tajimi, Gifu

Ten years ago, a local Catholic monastery began teaching viticulture to people with disabilities. Today, the wine festa celebrates the (literal) fruits of their labor and serves as a fundraiser to continue this occupational development. Tickets are 2,500 yen adv., 3,000 yen at the door.

<http://winefesta.cart.fc2.com/>

### Sake Marche

Nov. 2

#### Kanazawa, Ishikawa

This event brings together sake and foods produced exclusively in Ishikawa prefecture. Advance tickets are 2,700 yen; 3,000 yen on the day of the event.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1436215929936405/>

## BLOCK 6

### Gion Odori

Nov. 1–10

#### Kyoto, Kyoto

While seemingly traditional, this annual performance is only in its 60<sup>th</sup> year. The *maiko* and *geiko* of Gion perform at the famous Gion Kaikan each autumn, changing the theme of their performance every year.

[http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info\\_required/traditional/kyoto\\_city/24/](http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/24/)

## BLOCK 7

### VETRO MONTAGNA Koyasan

Nov. 9–10

#### Koya, Wakayama

Classic cars—Ferraris, Porsches, and Jaguars, among others—and their owners meet at Kongobuji to strut their stuff. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the cars go for a whirl around Shirahama. A fun if not entirely peaceful weekend on Mt. Koya.

[http://www.koya.org/event/t\\_vetoro.html](http://www.koya.org/event/t_vetoro.html)

### Kyuanji Maple Festival

Nov. 17

#### Ikeda, Osaka

Touted as the best site for maple viewing in all of Osaka, this festival celebrates the area's natural scenery and its national cultural property, the Ro Gate.

<http://www.ikedashi-kanko.jp/event.html>

### Shinnosai Festival

Nov. 22–23

#### Osaka, Osaka

In 1834 drug wholesalers created new meds to combat a cholera outbreak and offered prayers in the form of paper tigers to eradicate the deadly disease at Sukunahikona Shrine. The cholera is long gone, but the paper tigers are still around. Visit the Museum of Medicine just beside the shrine when you visit.

[http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event\\_54.html](http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_54.html)

## BLOCK 8

### Meet the World 2013

Nov. 30

#### Naoshima, Kagawa

Naoshima's English education is touted as among the best in Japan. Spend a day with elementary and junior high school students as they explore Naoshima together and guide you through some of the island's famous contemporary art exhibits.

<http://on.fb.me/1envNBf>

### All-Shikoku Field Day

Nov. 30–Dec. 1

#### Mima, Tokushima

Do you know how to plan *jan-ken*-tag? No? You've never been in a human pyramid, either? Get physical with JETs from all over Shikoku at this energetic event, and enjoy a BBQ and campout afterward. For more info, visit the Facebook event page: <http://on.fb.me/1c1SA4M>

## BLOCK 9

### Ebisuko Festival

Nov. 18–20

#### Hiroshima, Hiroshima

This popular festival honors Ebisu, the Shinto god who watches over laborers and businesses. The standard accoutrement of food stalls, dances, and games will be there, but the main attractions are big discounts at the local mall and the sale of *komazarae*, adorned bamboo rakes that are good luck charms.

<http://www.hiroshima-navi.or.jp/en/event/>

## BLOCK 10

### Kyushu Grand Sumo Tournament

Nov. 10–24

#### Fukuoka, Fukuoka

Sumo comes to Kyushu this month for the year's final tournament. As the Sumo and *Rikishi* wrestlers duke it out in the *dohyo*, watch their *banzuke* rankings rise and fall with their wins and losses.

<http://yokanavi.com/eg/theme/detail/45>

### Arita Pottery Festival

Nov. 20–24

#### Arita, Saga

This festival honors the traditional porcelain handicraft culture with the theme, "hospitality with a meal and pottery." Historically Arita porcelain, also called Imari porcelain, was important to various European countries.

<http://www.arita.jp.e.ew.hp.transer.com/>

## BLOCK 11

### Yatsushiro Fireworks Competition

Nov. 9

#### Yatsushiro, Kumamoto

Western Japan's only national fireworks competition welcomes *hanabi* craftsfolk from all over Japan. This free event takes place along the Kumagawa, and is sure to be a crowd pleaser.

<http://hanabi.gorotto.com/>

### Seaside Picnic Fish Festival

Nov. 17

#### Kagoshima, Kagoshima

Come to Marineport Kagoshima for a fresh fish bonanza, complete with BBQs, fish hot pots, markets, a "touch pool," and even quiz games. (This event was postponed in October because of a typhoon.)

<http://kagoshima-sakana.com/news/245-20131006.html>

### Japan Writers Conference

Nov. 2–3

#### Nishihara, Okinawa

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual JWC moves to Okinawa for the first time. Presenters include current and former JETs, among other professional writers.

<http://www.japanwritersconference.org/index.html>



# CONNECT CONTESTS AND CONTRIBUTING

## CONTRIBUTING

Go somewhere amazing recently? Have kitchen tips to share? Organizing an underwater Quidditch tournament? Here at Connect, we're looking for new writers **each and every month** to talk about their interests and adventures. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! So if you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors.

Not every article is an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, and more.

## SPOTLIGHT

Every section of the magazine features one JET every month who's doing something interesting or praiseworthy. From fashionistas to volunteering superheros to master chefs, tell us about them and what they do! Can't pick just one JET to Spotlight? Tell us about a group, a town, or an event! As long as JETs are involved, we want to share it!

## ASK/CONNECT

Make your voice heard! Do you have a question about workplace etiquette? Did you go to an event we highlighted? Want to comment on last month's articles or editorials? Just feel the overwhelming need to tell our editors how much you love and appreciate them? Each month we'll print your questions, comments, and witty observations so you can get Connected with us!

## PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Get the perfect shot of the perfect moment here in Japan? Your photo could be next month's cover of Connect magazine! Every month we'll collect your photos and feature them on online for the JET community to vote on. The highest-voted photo will be the cover for all to see! Email all photo submissions to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net). September's theme will be "Beginnings," so start thinking and start sending!

## HAIKU CONTEST

Each month Connect will feature a haiku from one of our readers. Haiku are simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send your haiku to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net).

# CONNECT HAIKU AND PHOTO CONTESTS

Our cover photo and haikus are all provided by current and former JETs from around the world. You can submit your entries any time to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net). One photo will be selected for the cover of Connect magazine! **All** photos and haikus received will be featured here each month, so give them all a little love!

You've already seen Scott Kawaguchi's winning photo this month. Here are all the fantastic submissions we received!



"A Flower for Fall" -- Scott Kawaguchi, Oita



"Monks of the Mud" -- Scott Kawaguchi, Oita



"Hakodate Sun Dog" -- Jeremy Blanco, Hokkaido



"Dusk Wading at Miyajima" -- Mary Vo, Kagawa

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INVOLVED  
WITH  
CONNECT!**

## HAIKU

Long lost thoughts at last  
Fluxes of a feeble fog  
Leaving men aghast.  
🍷 Giuseppe di Martino, Yamagata

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