

AJET

# CONNECT

magazine



25th Anniversary

October 2012 Issue



# October

October's something of a limbo month in Japan. If Goldilocks were to visit, it'd probably be her favourite time of year: co-workers have ceased bemoaning the "atsui!" weather of summer, but haven't yet progressed to the shivering "samui!"s of winter. Nope, everything is just right. (Sadly for Goldilocks, I think the visa-issuing authorities would have something to say about a little girl breaking-and-entering, eating food intended for a family of bears and then fleeing the scene of the crime).

Speaking of fairytales, the Connect Team has been hard at work conjuring up another spellbinding selection of articles to keep you enchanted until next month. Just what the Fairy Godmother ordered, October sees the launch of a brand new Connect feature: the Stone Wall. Every month, a JET from the LGBTQ community will be here to share their own experiences of being queer in Japan. For the first chapter, turn on over to page 9!

Elsewhere, it's hard to pick a single highlight amongst this month's offerings. We may not be able to teach you how to turn a pumpkin into a stagecoach, but, over in Culture, we can certainly show you how to make some delicious seasonal pumpkin-based goodies! As if that wasn't enough, in Travel we take you on a three-day magic carpet ride around the oft-overlooked isle of Shikoku; in Entertainment, we survey the dazzling history of the samurai film; and in Events, we explore the curious link between Marie Curie and a rural Japanese village in Tottori-ken.

You've probably also noticed that we've been busy revamping the look of Connect too, as well as providing you with a new-and-improved Events Calendar to make sure your weekends are as choc-a-block with activity as a school bunkasai. These are just a few of the changes we've got planned over the coming year...so stay tuned each month to watch Connect grow! And remember, Connect is your magazine: for JETs, by JETs; so if there's any way in which we can help you Connect with the JET community, we're only ever an e-mail away!

Lastly, I'd like to thank our wonderful designer Melania, our never-tiring team of editors and all of our individual contributors for helping to make Connect what it is. You're all flippin' brilliant.

Until next month...!

Jim (james.kemp@ajet.net)

Photo courtesy of Lizette Anne Marie Photography.





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This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can also be found online at <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect/>

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This month, Connect launches a brand new feature: The Stone Wall. Every month, a JET from the LGBTQ community will be here to share their own experiences of being queerin Japan. First up, Arrun Soma talks about arriving in Japan with his boyfriend... as the first openly gay people his BOE has ever dealt with.

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This month we asked you to send in your own real-life ghost stories...here, Sarah Blenkhorn talks you through a few of the best, complete with a look at some of Japan's creepiest urban legends!

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There are few foodstuffs more synonymous with the month of October than the pumpkin. But did you know Japan has its own breed of pumpkin? ...introducing the kabocha! Here are some tasty kabocha-based recipes for you to try out! (And not a carver's knife or candle in sight!)

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Since moving to Japan, chances are you haven't been blessed with an oven. Inconvenient as that may be, it shouldn't stop you rustling up a delicious treat! Pia Titus talks you through a delicious, oven-less chocolate cake!

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## AJET Peer Support Group

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# MARK SAYS...

## A message from the Chair of AJET

Doesn't this magazine look great? I am so proud to work as part of such an amazing AJET team. Not only do we do great work like the monthly Connect Magazine, but we are hard at work on so many other projects that help make your JET experience a more positive one.

Many of you were at Tokyo Orientation over the summer so you saw the AJET team in action firsthand. They are a great group of people, who I am truly lucky to work with. Just recently someone on the team was mentioning how rewarding the work that we do is. It's a very true sentiment. Getting to work with a great team on projects that span both Japan and the globe is honestly so exciting.

Recently, I've been reading a book summarizing the latest research in human motivation. It talks about what drives us to direct our own lives, to create new things, to learn, and to do better for our communities and world. Getting paid is actually a very low level need. Obviously, most of us need a salary to meet our basic needs, but it only goes so far in fulfilling us. It turns out that other needs—for creative expression, for being a part of something beyond ourselves—are what really gets us going. We are often at our best when we are a part of this kind of work.

So, this is my challenge to you: get involved! Many of you are already a part of an AJET project and I applaud your efforts! And for those who aren't... it's never too late! As a JET community there is certainly some place that could use your unique set of talents or ideas, whether it's our community at large or the smaller everyday communities in which we live. As a group of over 4,000 members, we have a lot of strengths and potential that is just waiting to be harnessed.

Sure, getting involved takes a bit of work and commitment. But the rewards almost always outweigh the effort. Working with this year's council has truly been one of the highlights of my JET experience. I've grown and learned so much. Beyond that though, I think we've done work that helps the JET community itself be a better place. There is something very meaningful in that. From setting up volunteering outreach in local children's homes to creating online lesson plans and curriculums, the number of projects JETs are involved in is endless. Life is way more interesting and full of possibility when you step up for a new challenge. If you need some ideas, ask your block reps or local AJET chapters what you can do!

In closing, I'd like to give a big shout out to my National AJET Team! Lots of love and props to all of you! Also, a shout out to the local prefectural chapters! From what I've observed, you are off to a terrific start this year. I look forward to seeing the efforts of even more people across Japan in the future! Happy autumn everyone!

# MEET YOUR EDITORS...



## **Sarah Jane Blenkhorn, Culture:**

October is a favourite month of mine. Culturally, there's a lot going on, with holidays like Sports Day and the North American traditions of Halloween and Canadian Thanksgiving. In Japan, some foods are at their prime, especially the kabocha, so we've collected some easy-to-make kabocha recipes, plus a clever rice cooker cake! In honour of Halloween, I went looking for JETs' stories of ghosts and other things that go bump in the night. Within are a few of the stories I heard. Let me know if you've got some others! [sarah.blenkhorn@ajet.net](mailto:sarah.blenkhorn@ajet.net)

## **Amelia Hagen, Travel**

Fall weather is upon us and with it comes two three-day weekends. These are perfect opportunities to get your travel on! This month I share my experience of a whirlwind three-day trip around Shikoku and then, ten highly-touted hostels all around Japan! Nagasaki JET Matthew Wypycha also tells us why we should jump on visiting Brunei. Want to tell us about an awesome trip you've taken? Holler at me at [amelia.hagen@ajet.net](mailto:amelia.hagen@ajet.net) today! (And stay tuned in November for our All Japan Omiyage Encyclopedia!)



## **Ruth Rowntree, Sports**

Hi, folks! In Japan, Autumn is known as the season for eating, reading AND SPORTS! So while you are filling up on good food and ripe reads, be sure to avail of the various Autumnal-appreciation activities on this month; whether it's Dragon Boats in Kagoshima or Alpine Route rambles in Nagano! This month, read about the Grass Skiing Championships that went down in Miyagi-ken and check out the scoop on the ALT Soccer Tournament Group as they kick-off another season of fun and footie! [ruth.rowntree@ajet.net](mailto:ruth.rowntree@ajet.net)

## **Chris Barstow, Entertainment**

October is traditionally the time of year to whip out the pumpkins and skeleton onesies whilst trying to avoid tooth decay and diabetes. However, whilst the omiyage oneupmanship of the average Japanese community makes 'trick or treat' a rather complicated Hallowe'en tradition to uphold, this month we review a horror flick that will provide perfect viewing for anyone wanting to indulge in a spot of seasonal scariness. Continuing this month's celluloid flavour, we also take a look at the fascinating history of samurai films through the ages. Until next month...! [chris.barstow@ajet.net](mailto:chris.barstow@ajet.net)





### **Neetha Mony, Volunteering:**

In the past couple months I've received a lot of questions about volunteering in Tohoku. This month, we'll look at what to consider when planning Tohoku volunteer work and figuring out pesky details. Also every month we'll be spotlighting a different volunteer organization; so if you've got a group you want to share with the JET community, email me your submissions! For October, we look at Habitat for Humanity Japan. Check out a firsthand account of volunteering with them in Tohoku. See you next month! [neetha.money@ajet.net](mailto:neetha.money@ajet.net)

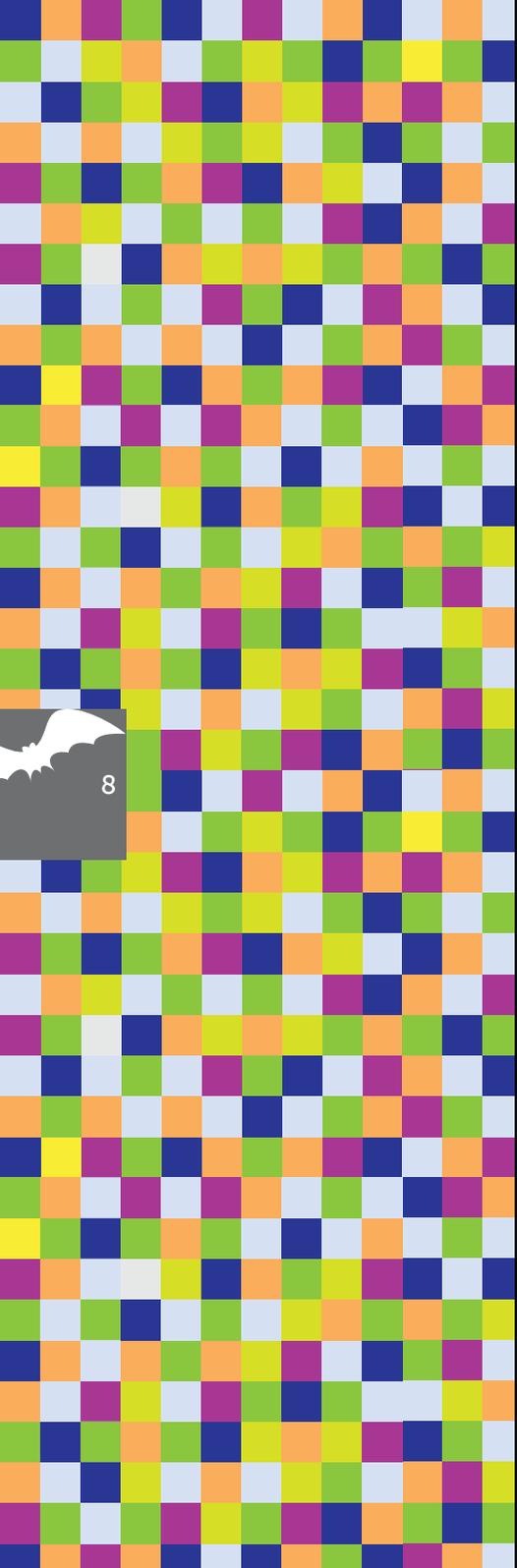
### **Steven Thompson, Events:**

This month we feature two amazingly unique festivals to Japan and the experiences had by two amazingly unique JETs. Toyama's Catherine Danley describes the mysterious wonder of Toyama's Owara Wind Festival, whilst French CIR Anthony Lieven lovingly recounts the story of how France and Japan became connected through the unique Marie Curie festival. To help you see and do as much as possible, we've also included an expanded Events Calendar this month! Enjoy! [steven.thompson@ajet.net](mailto:steven.thompson@ajet.net)



### **Annabella Massey, Fashion:**

Welcome to the October issue of Connect magazine! This month, the Fashion and Beauty section brings you two articles by first-year JETs giving us their unique impressions and interpretations of current Japanese style. Cecelia Towns takes a trip to Shibuya and Harajuku, presenting us with the lowdown on Tokyo's world-famous fashion hotspots, while Mabaleng Kgaphola delivers a sleek photoshoot straight out of gorgeous Miyazaki prefecture. Have a great October! [annabella.massey@ajet.net](mailto:annabella.massey@ajet.net)



# HOW TO POLICE THE INTERNET: COPYRIGHT OR COPYWRONG?

James Kemp

In what is becoming an increasingly global series, the latest episode in “How to Police the Internet” is here. If you missed the previous installments—including “Say Goodbye to Megavideo” and “Not So Fast, SOPA!”—then now’s your chance to get in on the debate. Yep, passed back in June and coming into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month, the Japanese government has introduced an important reform to Japan’s internet piracy laws. For the first time in the country’s history, illegal internet downloads can now be treated as a criminal offence, rather than a purely civil matter. In other words, internet pirates can now be summoned to court (with the threat of imprisonment) by the State, rather than by a private individual merely seeking compensation.

The law itself isn’t exactly straightforward. The part which has resonated most strongly amongst the global media, for obvious reasons, is that those who knowingly download copyright-infringing material now face up to two years in prison or fines of up to two million yen. As the gloss on the meaning of the legislation has become clearer, however, it’s now apparent that many of the panic-stricken headlines populating technology blogs back in June were unfounded. One such headline read “YouTube to be made illegal in Japan”. Actually, this isn’t the case. Sure, when you watch “Gangnam Style” or “Honey Boo Boo Child” on YouTube, your browser stores the data in a cache, which is, technically, a form of downloading. However, contrary to initial belief, the legislation doesn’t include such caching in its definition of “downloading”. So, for now, simply watching YouTube videos is as safe as ever (K-pop and dubious child pageant fans, breathe a sigh of relief).

Elsewhere, it’s been clarified that, for the purposes of the legislation, “downloading” only includes “audiovisual recordings”, so material which does not fall into this classification—i.e. comic strips and text—can also continue to be downloaded without fear of retribution. There’s also no problem with emailing legally-acquired material (i.e. songs ripped from a music CD) to others: such an activity falls within the “personal use” exception

of the legislation, such that it too does not attract the label of “piracy”.

On top of this, the requirement of “knowledge” further constrains the net which can be used to catch potential offenders. The legislation itself provides that only those who “knowingly” download illegally-obtained content will be guilty of an offence. This means that the police are less likely to pursue those everyday cases of individuals downloading an illegal song here-or-there, for it is such cases where intent is harder to prove. Instead, the focus is more likely to be those individuals who consistently download reams of pirated material, since it is easier to infer that said individuals are knowingly breaking the law. Of course, the only way to guarantee one’s safety is to follow the word of the law itself: while it remains in effect, the police do retain the power to prosecute even one-off offenders; in reality, however, the practicalities of doing so appear to militate against the kind of Orwellian outcome first foretold back in June.

This will do little to silence the law’s critics, however. Opponents argue that copyright laws not only empower big businesses by intimidating Internet users, but also stunt the level of creative innovation necessary for a culturally vibrant and economically powerful society. Furthermore, such critics argue there are more effective ways to deal with the issue of internet piracy, pointing, for example, to the fact that the government budget for culture in Japan is currently only around 100 billion yen, a figure dwarfed by other Asian media giants. Finally, opponents have spoken out against against the punitive nature of the new amendment, stating that the government should focus its efforts more heavily on the swift removal of illegally uploaded material in lieu of demanding compensation from, and potentially imprisoning, private individuals.

*So what do you think of the Japanese government’s new web policy? Email Connect with your thoughts ([james.kemp@ajet.net](mailto:james.kemp@ajet.net)) and we’ll publish a selection of the best comments in November’s issue!*

# MEMOIRS OF A GAY-SHA

Arrun Soma

The teachers at my senior high school are freaking out. They're in a proper panic. They're wondering what having an openly gay ALT means, whether I'll share my lifestyle with my students, whether I'll hang rainbow flags up around the buildings, and walk around in a tank top and cut-off jean shorts. I've even been told by another local ALT that some teachers are worried my boyfriend and I will make sexual advances towards our male students. It's rough, to say the least, that we're being thought of as sexual predators, just because we're gay. It's utterly wrong. But there's a fabulously silver lining at the same time – and we couldn't be happier. We're two men living together in a conservative part of Japan. They've never had an 'out' gay couple here in Hiroshima prefecture. It's potentially pioneering, and hopefully it will help to change certain prejudices held by the Japanese people we encounter. Hopefully. Here is our story.

My partner Jake and I are from New Zealand. It's a liberal land, and they're currently on the way to passing a marriage equality law, giving LGBT people the right to get married and adopt children. On applying for the JET programme, we knew Japan would be a test. We signed up as a couple, both writing 'male' on the application form. Well somewhere, somehow, someone didn't check the paperwork properly and it was assumed we were a heterosexual married couple. That meant we were placed in the same city, which was naturally very exciting. But it was a complete surprise when I got an email from my predecessor to the effect of "Welcome! The staff and students at your high school are really excited to meet you and your wife." Wife? At first, I laughed. Then I sent an awkward email back telling my predecessor what the school didn't want to hear. I'm gay.

At this point, both our senior high schools (we teach at different schools) went into damage control. While other LGBT JETs may have the choice to stay in the closet, giving them time to decide if they want to be out at work, we had to reveal our sexuality to some of our Japanese colleagues and bosses immediately. While it didn't bother us, it felt like we were being judged, without even stepping foot in the country. My predecessor told me my JTEs want me to stay in the closet, and not mention anything about my sexuality to anyone at school.

It was nerve-wracking arriving in Japan. Luckily I have the country's best supervisor, and after arriving in Tokyo, and then meeting her at Hiroshima Airport, I asked her about our situation. She said it was fine that we live together, and that although other teachers are very worried, she just wants me to feel comfortable and happy. She even offered Jake and I a bed at her house on our first night in 'real' Japan, before the power and gas were connected at our apartment.

So yes, Jake and I now live in an apartment together, and we are over-the-moon. Living together in our own place is the next big step in our relationship, and we never wanted to live apart while in Japan. But it's by pure luck that we live together. On thinking Jake and I were married and heterosexual, our schools decided we could share an apartment. So the contract was signed. But on later finding out that we were gay, it was too late for the schools to back out of giving us a shared apartment. We've even been told that if our landlord ever asks, we're just two 'really good friends' who're living together to save money.

We've also had a meeting with the Hiroshima Board of Education. It wasn't by choice. We were summoned to a

IT WAS A COMPLETE SURPRISE WHEN I GOT AN EMAIL SAYING "THE STAFF AND STUDENTS ARE REALLY EXCITED TO MEET YOU AND YOUR WIFE."



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mini-conference, where two bureaucrats wanted to reaffirm their concerns, but also offer support. I was nervous about the meeting, but really, they just wanted to state that we're the first openly gay people the BOE has had to deal with, and so our schools and the BOE are concerned. We were told to withhold any public-displays-of-affection, like holding hands or kissing on the street (which we don't do anyway). The BOE offered their support to us and they told us that, should we experience any problems, they'd look out for us. I told my supervisor the meeting went well, and she said that most of all, the schools and the BOE didn't want to offend Jake and I. They didn't. We understand that this world is different, but at the same time, we hope that it will change.

So what does all this mean? I think it can only be good. Yes, some of it is tough: being thought of as sexual predators is about as far from "ideal" as one could get. Quite frankly, it's absolutely insulting. But being Hiroshima's first openly gay ALT couple can only pave the way for others like us. Jake and I were completely aware that when we came to Japan, we would have to suppress some of who we are. At my former workplace back in New Zealand, out of 40 people, I was one of six gay men and I had a rainbow flag at my desk. I never expected Japan to be like that, but perhaps our presence here (along with that of the rest of the LGBT community) will start to normalise homosexuality for this country.

Despite all that's happened, and the worries of our JTEs, I'm really excited. Jake and I are just two normal people who love each other, and I'm excited Japanese people will have the chance to realise that. I'm excited to help dispel the fears of Japanese people who think bad things of the

LGBT community. Jake and I are most definitely being judged, even if we don't see it or hear about it, but I say bring it on. Jake and I are comfortable with who we are. We are (or at least we think so) two normal, nice guys, who love and respect our families and friends, and who put a good effort into the work we do here in Japan. So if we're judged on that, then hopefully the Japanese people who know us will respect us for who we are.

Further to that, maybe it'll make it easier for Japanese people who identify as LGBT to come out or at least feel like they're not alone. While I'm so happy with being out of the closet, it saddens me that so many Japanese people are restricted by society's views. I hope that by just being who we are, Jake and I can change those views in the community we live in here. I'm not a martyr, just someone that cares for those who can't express themselves the way they want.

Many people experience severe pain through the coming out process. I was one of those people. But I'm just one person. It feels to me like most of Japan, as a country, is in the closet. And while I absolutely respect Japanese culture and tradition, I'm also passionate about creating change where it's due. So as I write this article, during some downtime at my senior high school, the JTEs are passing by and walking around me. I've kicked my shoes off, and I'm wearing a pair of rainbow coloured socks I just bought. I'm hoping it's the small things that will slowly start to create the big change.

*Arrun Soma is from New Zealand living in an ALT in Hiroshima-Ken.*

# GIVING UP THE GHOSTS

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Japan is no different from other countries in its love of ghost stories. And quite a few stories about ghosts here take place at schools. Here are a few, passed on by JETs!

## School Spirit

A school in Fukuoka was the home of a ghost until not so long ago. At night, some teachers working after hours would see the pale specter of a girl. If spoken to, she would simply disappear. One evening the vice-principal, who was the last to leave the school, turned off all the lights before heading out. He hadn't even reached the door before the switch on his desk flicked on by itself and the lights popped back on. The next day, a Buddhist priest was called in. As the story goes, the school had been built over an ancient graveyard. ~ Casey

## Salt of the Earth

"I had just moved into my new apartment at a university in Okayama. The school was in a valley surrounded by mountains that were dotted with graveyards. The university's founder had built the facilities in a short time. This had meant cutting corners and forgoing some important rituals, including the sacred rituals of blessing the land with salt and sake to purify it and protect it from negative energy and lingering souls.

"Some students were eager to tell me stories of eerie happenings on campus and show me grainy cell phone pictures of 'lost souls. I didn't know what to believe.

"Then, one night, I woke to a 'presence' in my room that chilled my spine. The thing screamed a dying whisper into my dreams that startled me upright. I shouted at whatever it was to get out."

"Luckily, one of my friends knew what to do. He helped me to purify my room with salt. After we had conducted the salt ritual, the 'thing', whatever it was, gave me no more trouble." ~ Sam

Japan has plenty of scary urban legends, too. Here are a few of the most famous relating to schools and to children.

## Stalled

When nature calls, watch out for the ghost of Hanako. She can be found on the third floor of a school near you, in the third stall of the girls' bathroom - waiting. Some stories say she died in the bathroom stall during a bombing raid in World War Two. Others say she was murdered there.

## Cape Fear

A man with a pale face stands by the door inside the school bathroom. When students enter, he asks them, "Do you want a red cloak or a blue cloak?" Those who answer "red" are stabbed and die in a pool of blood, and those who say "blue" get the blood sucked out of them and die blue-faced.

## Watch Your Mouth

Kuchisake-onna is a terrifying spirit. Children walking home from school alone meet a woman in a surgical mask who asks, "Am I beautiful?" If the children say no, the woman kills them with scissors. If they answer yes, the woman takes off the mask to show that her mouth is slit from ear to ear... then she slits their mouths, too.

# COOKING WITH KABOCHA!

Ariane Bobiash & Paul Champaloux



VEGGIE CURRY



ROASTED KABOCHA & SWEET POTATO

I am one of the few who find Japan's muggy summer weather to be a welcome change from Canada's short-lived and often relatively nippy season. However, as the steamy heat subsides, I can't deny how much I enjoy the cooler days and breezier evenings. Though certain fruit and vegetables are harder to come by in the fall, we can look forward to the delicious and nutritious Japanese produce that takes center stage at this time of year. One of Japan's favourite fall offerings is the tasty kabocha, or Japanese pumpkin. You might find the vibrant orange squash in your next order of veggie tempura, or roasted and lightly seasoned as a teishoku side dish at a local restaurant.

Those of you who are more likely to purchase instant ramen and a bento from Lawson than to bust out the chopping board and saucepan may be a little confused at what to do with this vegetable. But fear not! Even the clumsiest of cooks can pull off preparing this beta-carotene-and-vitamin-c-packed wonder. One of the simplest methods of preparation is to slice the squash (don't remove the skin, which is edible and healthy—it will soften during cooking), remove the seeds (you could try roasting them separately as a healthy snack!), cut it into thin slivers and roast it in a toaster oven or in your microwave using the oven setting. Using only my toaster oven, I had delicious roasted squash cooked in just 10 minutes! You can season the kabocha with a splash of olive oil and some salt and pepper before roasting, but this certainly isn't necessary due to its naturally fluffy, sweet taste.

Though you could easily stop there in your kabocha adventures, why not spice things up and add some cubed kabocha to an easy vegetarian curry, or try your hand at making *kabocha gyoza* (Chinese fried dumplings)? These are a unique alternative to the pork-filled variety! Here are my home-crafted recipes for these two personal kabocha favourites!

## Kabocha Veggie Curry

### Ingredients:

- ◆ Equal amounts kabocha, sweet potato, carrots, eggplant and mushrooms (any favourite vegetable, really!)
  - ◆ Curry cubes or powder (I recommend S&B's Spicy Curry Powder, which you can find in small red tins)
  - ◆ Våvegetable oil and water for cooking, as needed
1. Chop up your kabocha and other vegetables. If you like, you can also throw in some cubed deep-fried tofu (aburaage, the kind with the rough yellow skin) or your protein of choice
  2. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a saucepan on medium heat and add veggies.
  3. After about 5 minutes, add a splash of water to steam the veggies and cook for about another 10 minutes.
  4. Once everything is tender, add curry cubes or curry powder. Add water little by little until you achieve the desired consistency. (Curry can be delicious both soupy and super thick, depending on your preference!)
  5. Serve with rice or bread.

When considering your protein fix, I added seitan to this recipe, which is a chewy vegetarian protein made from wheat gluten. You can make seitan on your own or buy a can premade for a couple hundred yen at your local health food store.

## Kabocha Gyoza

### Ingredients:

- ◆ 1 pack of gyoza/wonton wrappers (available at most grocery stores)
  - ◆ 2 cups of roasted or boiled kabocha, roughly mashed
  - ◆ 1/4 cup chopped spring onion
  - ◆ 1 tablespoon each of finely chopped garlic and ginger
  - ◆ 1 tablespoon sesame oil (goma abura)
  - ◆ vegetable oil for frying the gyoza
  - ◆ soy sauce, mirin (sweet cooking sake), salt and pepper to taste
  - ◆ small bowl of water to use for sealing the gyoza
1. Heat the sesame oil and add your chopped spring onion, garlic, and ginger, keeping the heat low to avoid burning.
  2. Once cooked (after around 3-5mins), add the kabocha, soy sauce and mirin, and mix well.
  3. Sufficiently mixed, let your filling cool.
  4. Meanwhile, place a gyoza wrapper flour side up on your palm and lightly wet the outer edges.
  5. Place about a tablespoon of filling onto the wrapper, fold it over into a half moon shape and crimp the edges together (look up dumpling making videos on YouTube if you're unsure how to do this!). Be careful not to overfill the dumplings!
  6. Heat the vegetable oil in a pan and fry the gyoza once the oil is hot. Once the outsides are lightly browned (usually after about 3 minutes), they are ready to eat!

Serve your dumplings with a simple serving sauce (equal parts soy sauce and rice vinegar with a dash of chilli paste) to complete this simple yet delicious snack!

## Paul Champaloux

I hate—no, I loathe cold weather. “Crisp” weather (as some people call it) is just not for me. But what I do like about the cooler seasons are my 3 Fs: fall, fashion and food. Bundling up in my favorite mod pea-coat and inhaling winter nabe (Japanese clay hot pot) certainly make the season pass more gracefully. It's the fashion and meals combined that make me forget about my irritating hangnails and ashy legs. While eating my way through the cold months, I thought it would be fun to finally cook with a kabocha squash (since I've always been in love with the intense fall colors of the kabocha). Here's a Kabocha soup to help you ease your way through the cold months. This soup is creamy and thick; a perfect soup for a cold, rainy day.

## Kabocha Soup

### Ingredients:

- ◆ 1/2 kabocha
  - ◆ 1/2 onion
  - ◆ 1 cup milk
  - ◆ 2 cubes chicken bouillon
  - ◆ 2 1/3 cups water
  - ◆ 1 tbs butter
  - ◆ salt and pepper to season
1. Slice onion thinly. Take out kabocha seeds and cut kabocha into large blocks.
  2. Place kabocha on a plate and microwave for 4 minutes.
  3. Take off skin and slice kabocha thinly.
  4. Saute onion slices with butter in a pan. Add kabocha slices and saute with onion. Add chicken bouillon and water.
  5. Simmer onion and kabocha until soft.
  6. Puree your soup!
  7. Put back in the pan and add milk. Heat the soup over low heat and season with salt and pepper.

(...with a little help from [japanesefood.about.com!](http://japanesefood.about.com/))

## Who-Needs-an-Oven Chocolate Cake

Pia Titus

I love food. I look for any excuse to make food for other people. Recently my unsuspecting English Club decided to have a party in celebration of what can only be described as the 'coup des tartes' of the Sonobe High School cultural festival. It was decided that a cake was needed – here was my chance! But what to do without an oven? I decided if MacGyver could get out of a tricky situation with some nasal spray and a paper clip, I could surely bake a cake in a rice cooker. I used a recipe from happyhomemaker88.com. The cake was fantastic!

Ingredients:

- ◆ 130 gm / 0.5 cup butter, room temperature
- ◆ 120 gm / 10 tablespoons sugar
- ◆ 3 eggs
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon vanilla essence
- ◆ Cocoa mix
  - ◇ 30 gm / 4 tablespoons cocoa powder
  - ◇ 70 gm / 5.5 tablespoons sugar
  - ◇ 110 ml / 0.5 cup water
- ◆ 150 gm / 1.5 cup flour
- ◆ 1.5 teaspoon baking powder
- ◆ 1 block Meji chocolate of your choice, chopped

Method

1. Chop butter into small pieces and mix with sugar, using a fork to break up the larger pieces. Once well combined, cream them with a whisk until light and fluffy. This is going to take a bit of elbow grease, but the more you cream, cream, cream, the better the consistency of your cake.
2. Add eggs, one at a time. Add vanilla essence and continue to beat for 2 minutes. The mix will look a bit runny and lumpy. You want the lumps to be as small as possible.
3. In a small bowl, mix the cocoa powder, sugar and water.
4. Sift flour and baking powder together.
5. Gently fold the sifted flour and cocoa mixtures into the butter and egg batter alternately. You should begin and end with the flour mixture
6. Add the Meji chocolate chunks and give a last couple of stirs.
7. Pour mixture evenly into greased rice cooker pot. Give the bottom a couple of good hard taps with the heel of your palm.
8. Select the "Cake" function on your rice cooker if it has one, or just set the timer for 80 minutes and turn it on. Check regularly – the cake is done when an inserted knife comes out clean.

9. Cool the cake for 2 minutes before inverting it slowly onto a plate. If you want to frost and decorate your cake, try making ganache!

### Ganache

Ingredients:

- ◆ 250 gm chopped dark chocolate
- ◆ 1 cup cream

1. Put chocolate in a bowl. Gently heat the cream until it just comes to the boil. Remove from heat immediately. Pour over the chocolate, and whisk until smooth.
2. For a rich sauce, allow the ganache to cool slightly before pouring over the cake. For a fluffy frosting or chocolate filling, cover and cool it in the fridge until thick, then whisk it until light and fluffy.



BEYOND THE SWORD:  
**THE DIVERSITY OF  
SAMURAI FILMS**

Alex Ness

When I tell people that I love samurai films, they usually go on to ask how many swords I own. The answer is, in fact, none. Many people have the impression that samurai films are all about sword-fighting, but despite depicting a single class of warriors at a single period of time (usually the Tokugawa era, 1600–1868), the samurai film is amongst the most diverse of all film genres. Like most movies, samurai films examine the themes and values of the society in which they're created, more than the one in which they're set. The golden age of the samurai film was a fascinating and tumultuous time in Japanese history, and the films produced then examined feudalism, militarism, loyalty and honor, class struggles, justice, and even homosexuality. For ease of reference, the samurai film genre can generally be divided into three phases: pre-WWII, post-WWII, and contemporary.

Unfortunately, because of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, the bombing of Tokyo during World War II and the destructive power of Japan's humidity (of which we can all sympathize), very few of the thousands of films made between 1897 and 1930 survive today. Thus, the most important samurai films of the pre-WWII era, which *are* still available to watch today, came from the 1930s and 40s. *Humanity and Paper Balloons* was the last film by director Sadao Yamanaka (who was drafted just before the film's release and was killed serving in Manchuria), and 75 years on, it still stands out as a classic. The film takes place in the Tokugawa era, in a poor district of Tokyo. It opens with the suicide of a rōnin (a samurai without a master) by hanging. One man calls the rōnin a disgrace for having not committed seppuku (ritual suicide) in the traditional way. Another man tells him the rōnin was a pauper, having had to sell his sword in order to buy food. Whilst earlier films romanticized the past, *Humanity and Paper Balloons* was critical not only of Feudal Japan but contemporary poverty and the political corruption which covers it up.

These themes would have certainly resonated amongst the Japanese audience watching in 1937. Just a year earlier the country experienced the "February 26 Incident," in which 1,483 Japanese troops occupied the center of Tokyo and killed several prominent politicians. The troops saw the extreme poverty in rural Japan as the fault of these politicians, and demanded a Shōwa Restoration to restore power to the Emperor and abolish the Taishō democracy. Their rebellion did not succeed, but the militarism that inspired them would arguably go on to drive Japan into World War II.

As the war approached, the Japanese government began to use film as propaganda. One week before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Kenji Mizoguchi's film *The 47 Rōnin* was released. Based on a legendary historical incident, the film depicts a group of samurai who take revenge on a court official who forced their feudal lord to commit seppuku. After committing the crime of murder, the rōnin themselves commit seppuku, demonstrating the cherished ideals of loyalty, bravery, and self-sacrifice. Despite being propaganda, Western audiences would barely be able to recognize it as such. The film is as austere and stoic as its characters, and its subtlety is its strength.

Just as Japanese society went through tremendous changes post-World War II, so did the samurai film. Under the Allied Occupation, which lasted until 1952, many Japanese people were torn between nostalgia for pre-Modern Japan and the increasingly attractive ideals of democracy and individualism. It is unsurprising, then, that many samurai films of this period emphasized the conflict between ninjo, the samurai's conscience, and giri, their duty. Widely considered the most influential samurai film ever made, Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* is also the most popular in the West. When a village of farmers is attacked by bandits, several men go to the city to hire samurai to defend them. Many of the samurai ignore them, several spit on them, and one even threatens to kill them, because at this point in history, it would be an



insult for a samurai to be employed by a peasant. However, the farmers manage to recruit a samurai who is motivated more by conscience than by honor. With his aid they recruit a group of samurai to defend the village, and the film ends with a rather contemporary statement: that the future does not belong to the samurai, who clearly occupy the upper classes, but to the people, who are free to choose their own future.

Few samurai films, however, offer as scathing a rebuke of nostalgia and tradition as Masaki Kobayashi's 1962 film *Harakiri* (in 2011, the film was remade by Takashi Miike as *Harakiri: Death of a Samurai*). It is revealed over the course of the film that the hubris of a samurai clan and their mindless adherence to honor has led to the death of many innocent people, and in the face of evidence proving their honor to be meaningless, they cover it up and pretend it had never happened.

Kobayashi is making a clear statement that honoring authority or a code like bushido is meaningless, because it still allows dishonorable (and cruel, and unjust) actions. Similar themes run through Hideo Gosha's *Sword of the Beast*, which came out a year later.

While the samurai film declined in popularity in the 1970s, contemporary samurai films continue to be a lens through which artists can examine Japanese society. Yoji Yamada's 2002 film *The Twilight Samurai* takes place a few short years before the Meiji Restoration. Because the country had been at peace for so long, few samurai still served in military roles, instead working as bureaucrats. The main character, a poor samurai, looks beyond honor and duty to find happiness in his family. In 1991, Japan's asset price bubble collapsed, severely damaging the economy in a period referred to as the "Lost Decade." Stock prices bottomed out in 2003, just a year after Yamada's film was

released, and it is conceivable that his film is a reflection of many of the economic anxieties faced by Japan at the time.

Social anxieties are also explored in samurai films. In 1999 the acclaimed director Nagisa Ōshima released his controversial film *Taboo*. It concerns the practice of shudō in a late Tokugawa era training school. This practice allowed experienced samurai to take a young male apprentice as a lover until he came of age. This would form a bond of friendship that would continue even after the apprentice came of age and the sexual relationship ceased. Ōshima spoke openly about his intentions for the film: "I wanted to surprise the Japanese public by choosing a work that was slightly different." Perhaps most surprising in the film is the performance by Kitano "Beat" Takeshi, an actor well known for his roles in action and Yakuza films, as a military commander torn between his sense of duty and his attraction to a young samurai.

The popularity of the samurai genre makes finding films relatively easy. For those who speak Japanese, public libraries often have treasure troves of films available to watch for free. For those who don't, the Criterion Collection in the United States and the Masters of Cinema in the UK have released many important samurai films, and Hulu and Netflix have many titles available for streaming. While samurai films are set in a single period in history and depict a single class of warriors, they portray a wide range of themes and social issues that are as relevant and contemporary as any in cinema, and the films they have influenced range from 1960s Westerns to Star Wars. They are definitely worth seeking out for anyone interested in Japanese history, art, or culture.

*Alex Ness is a first-year ALT living in Masuda, Shimane Prefecture. He still hasn't tried nattō, and don't you dare tell his students that.*

LET'S REVIEW!

# THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

Alyssa N. Markham

Scary movies are a peculiar creature. It seems that most films in this genre center on identical archetypes being paraded out again and again. Sure, they're dressed up in different costumes and stuck in new and increasingly unrealistic scenarios, but in the end, the majority of horror films are simply a game of 'can we turn these leftovers into another meal'.

Mostly, I don't mind. Horror remains my genre de choix. But even with my deep and abiding love for a good old fashioned horror schlock fest, I occasionally wish that someone would take the horror genre and do something new with it.

The Cabin in the Woods is the answer to that prayer.

Joss Whedon, long of Buffy fame (and Firefly, and Angel, and Dollhouse, and Doctor Horrible, and The Avengers—but who's counting?) is no stranger to horror. Knowing this, I went into The Cabin in the Woods with high hopes. By the end, I was stunned, tingly, and ready to watch it again right then and there.

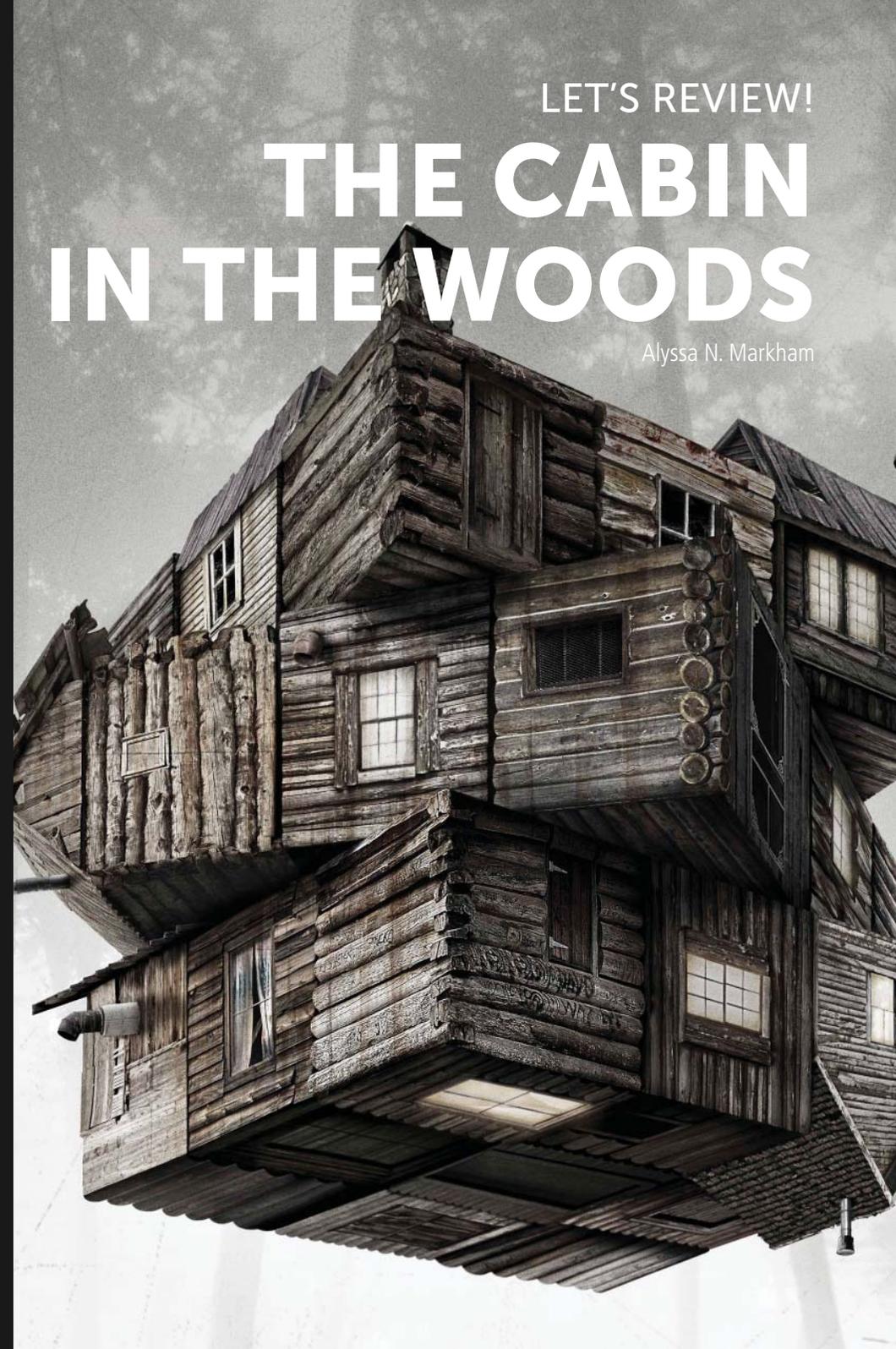
The surface plot of this film will be very familiar. Five friends set out for a weekend of fun and revelry at a secluded cabin, unaware of the danger waiting for them. It's practically the tagline for every horror movie ever written. The secondary plot, however, is what makes this film unique. Soon after the movie begins, the audience realizes that there are other forces at work here, controlling the situation for a purpose that slowly unravels. The reveal for this is so well done that I don't want to risk ruining it by saying any more.

The Cabin in the Woods is what I would call a genre breaker. It blends horror, comedy, science fiction, fantasy and drama together into a film that is both all of the above, and not really any one of them. It also manages to find the perfect balance between creating a scary atmosphere and working in brilliant moments of comedy that put you at ease... just enough to be frightened by the next turn of events.

Not only is the film original, but it's exceedingly well crafted. Every twist and turn is well thought out, and all loose threads are brought to satisfying conclusions. Whedon is a master at building tension, and his talent shines in this film.

I could write pages and pages on how much I enjoyed this movie. I could talk about the use of foreshadowing, the reimagining of clichés, and the best example of a Chekov's gun that I've seen in a long time, but I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to say that the makers of The Cabin in the Woods have done something truly remarkable—they've made a horror film that surprises. To a certain degree, they've changed the genre. See this film. Even if you don't like horror, make an exception. You can thank me later.

*Alyssa Markham is a second year JET living in the small town of Sakegawa in Yamagata Prefecture. Her top five movies are In America, Inception, Misery, The Sandlot, and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.*



# MARIE CURIE IN JAPAN

Anthony Lieven

In the middle of the oppressive heat of summer, there are moments when we forget (or simply stop complaining about) the heat. Our body feels the excitement of a summer festival in Japan and the sweat begins to feel refreshing, the sun invigorating. All around Japan, there are many different festivals, from world-famous ones to local ones.

My town here in Japan, Misasa, has a bit of both, including the famous Curie Festival in August. Misasa is a small town of around 7,000 people in the central part of Tottori prefecture. It is known for its unique onsen (hot springs) as well as the Nageiredo, a National Treasure from the late Heian period located on the cliff of Mount Mitoku. Misasa's onsen history started more than 800 years ago with the Legend of the White Wolf. A man called Samanosuke Okubo was on his way to Mount Mitoku when he saw a white wolf. He wanted to kill the rare white wolf, but decided against it. That night, the great Buddha Myoken appeared in Samanosuke's dream and, as a reward for not killing the wolf, showed him a source of hot water flowing from underground which could heal all kinds of diseases. It is this hot spring which birthed the Curie Festival and, with it, Misasa's very own French connection began.

The Marie Curie Festival is, no surprises, dedicated to the legendary French-Polish scientist of the same name. While it may seem strange that there's a festival in a small Japanese town dedicated to Marie Curie, the reason is quite simple: Misasa's hot springs are rich in radium, and it was Marie Curie herself who discovered the element during her pioneering research on radioactivity. As a result, the people of Misasa wished to create something to honor this connection and promote Curie's accomplishments.

In 1951, the people of Misasa held the first Curie Festival. From then on, exchanges between Misasa and France grew stronger and stronger. In 1990, Misasa became a sister city with Lamalou-les-Bains, located in Southern France and also famed for its hot springs. Since 1993, a French CIR has been employed in Misasa's town office through the JET Programme.

This year's festival started with a ceremony dedicated to Marie Curie, expressing gratitude for her research and for the town's unique hot springs. The ceremony consisted of flower arrangements and water offerings placed in front of statues and portraits of the famous scientist. Speeches were given by both Japanese and French representatives, as well as Misasa's junior high school students. The students also put on a short concert. This opening ceremony is unique among Japanese festivals that I've seen, and represents the strong friendship between Misasa and France that's nearing its sixtieth year.

After the opening ceremony ended around noon, the event changed into a more traditional local festival with lots of activities familiar to anyone who's been to a Japanese matsuri in the past. Throughout the day there were food stands, fish catching games, stage plays, fireworks, and lots more.

At sunset, the main event started: a dancing performance called the Waiwai Parade. "Waiwai" translates as "make some noise." For this event, different teams of dancers gathered and perform Misasa's traditional songs and dances. The most popular of these is the "Misasa Kouta." It's difficult to describe the song, but the story behind it says that, in 1927, Ujo Noguchi visited Misasa. Upon arriving at





a local ryokan, he improvised a poem titled “Misasa Kouta” describing his feelings when he came to the town. Then, a songwriter called Shimpei Nakayama made a song of it, and the choreography was created by Yutaka Shimada. The song was recorded two years later in 1929 and became very popular. So popular, in fact, that a silent movie titled Misasa Kouta (produced by Shozo Makino, known as the father of Japanese cinema) was shot in Misasa the very same year. The movie, which has been partially restored by Kyoto’s Ritsumeikan University, incorporates some scenes of the dance and song.

Misasa often recalls the story of “Misasa Kouta” and maintains a deep interest in cinema. For instance, in 2011, a movie called *Koitanihashi~La Vallée de l’amour~*, which takes place in Misasa, was released nationally. The title refers to the name of a bridge that crosses the Misasa River, Koitanibashi. It was given the French name, La Vallée de l’amour (Love Valley). In fact, during 1987’s Curie Festival, the bridge was inaugurated by the French Ambassador to Japan as a commemoration of international exchange between France and Misasa. The final fireworks of every year’s Curie Festival start near this bridge and close the festival.

Misasa’s other big festival of the year is the Hanayu Festival, which celebrates the birth of the Shakayamuni Buddha. The festival also gives thanks for the healing properties of the town’s rare hot springs. They do this with a giant tug of war event called jinsho. The jinsho is made up of two parts, male and female. Each part is built with plaited wisteria vines, and can reach 80 meters long, 1.5 meters wide, and 2 tons in weight. After the male and female parts are successfully connected, the tug of war starts at the Ryokumon (Green Arch) and at that point the two teams (East and West) begin to pull.

It is said that if the East wins, farming will be bountiful that year; and if the West wins, commerce will prosper. This event has been held since old times, and took its current shape in 1873. Touching the rope used in jinsho is said to prevent illness. Besides the Curie Festival, it is one of

the most important festivals in Misasa, drawing many local residents and tourists to participate in the citywide tug of war every year.

I’m the tenth CIR to come to Misasa, and I feel very lucky to have been placed here. As an ardent fan of Japanese cinema and a native-born French citizen, I have been very happy to learn about Misasa’s connection to France and film. I decided to channel these passions into some work here in Misasa via a monthly video project that aims to introduce Misasa to the world and promote this lovely place. I was even lucky enough to shoot parts of this year’s Curie Festival (despite August being incredibly busy for CIRs). If you’d like to see the Curie Festival in action, or see any of the videos in the project, please follow the links at the end of this article.

As a final word, I would suggest to other JETs to take the opportunity to record your own experiences here. Video is a very expressive media and it has become incredibly easy to work with. There are good cameras at reasonable prices and sites like YouTube and Vimeo make it a breeze to share what you’ve filmed. If not video, then pursue any media to express your feelings about your home in Japan: photography, painting, manga, writing; the most important thing is making something you like and putting effort into it!

*Anthony Lieven is a French CIR in Misasa, Tottori since July 2011. He loves cinema, and people in his town know him as the local Tom Cruise. They are also curious about his giant nose. But who is he? Who knows...?*

Misasa video project: <https://vimeo.com/redtshirtguy/videos>  
2012 Curie Festival: <https://vimeo.com/48124623>



# TOYAMA'S OWARA FESTIVAL

Catherine Danley

I was introduced to the Owara Kaze no Bon festival my very first day in Toyama. I was picked up from the airport and taken straight to my base school to meet everyone, despite my sweaty jet-lagged appearance. There were a lot of memorable events from that day, but one I will never forget is the vice principal being introduced as an Owara dancer from Yatsuo. It was said with such reverence and awe that I made sure to throw a few extra bows and yorishikus his way, especially because I had no idea what the big deal was.

In Toyama, the Owara festival is just that—a big deal. It's the grandest, and certainly the most beautiful, Japanese festival that I've ever seen. For a small prefecture like Toyama (often known only for delicious fish and heavy snow), the Owara festival is a time to show off. Beautiful by day, the Owara festival is magical by night. Every dancer wears a straw hat, angled over their face like a mask. This beautiful dance becomes an ancient masquerade, where only the dancers' lips express their concentration, ease, or excitement.

The dancers are everywhere—in the streets, in the temples, and even under the torii gates. In the temples, the men and women take turns on the stage, dancing together briefly, embracing in the dance for just a moment, as one group exits and the other enters. Some are young, and some are old. The entire town comes together to celebrate this sacred wind dance, and everyone is welcome to join them. The dance itself is almost a ceremony; arms and legs stretch out in precise movements as dancers move about. The majesty of Owara is not in a single dance or performance; it is in observing a community coming together to celebrate the season in both elegance and tradition.

This year I managed to enjoy the festival right before a thunderstorm's sudden downpour. One moment I had been watching the dancers perform at the temple, and the next thing I knew I was quickly making my way through Yatsuo in the pouring rain. Despite being soaked down to my bones, Yatsuo seemed even more beautiful in the thunderstorm. Lantern light bounced through the rain and off the glistening streets, Owara music continued to pour out of buildings, and the Japanese shouted gambare as my friend and I made our way up the suddenly lonely streets back to the station.

In the past two years of attending the Owara festival, I have had very different experiences. Though the dance appears timeless, the festival holds something different for everyone. For my students, it is the dance they are proud to learn and perform at their sports day; for my vice principal, it is his heritage; for the visiting foreigners, it is a glimpse into the old Japan we are all looking for.

*Catherine Danley is a second-year ALT living in Toyama prefecture. This year she has learned just how wonderful driving is as she explores the beautiful mountains and inaka of Japan. Good food and beautiful scenery are two of her favorite things, which makes Toyama one of the best kens to live in. Catherine is also the publications representative of Toyama AJET, and wants to give a shout out to the fine folks of Toyama.*



# JAPAN EVENTS - OCTOBER 2012

EVENT NAME	LOCATION	DATE
Rakuten Japan Open Tennis Championships	Koto, Tokyo	October 1 <sup>st</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>
Held at the Ariake Colosseum and Tennis Park, the ATP tournament will feature top-ranked players from all over the world, such as gold-medalist Andy Murray <a href="http://en.rakutenopen.com/">http://en.rakutenopen.com/</a>		
Yokohama Oktoberfest	Yokohama, Kanagawa	October 1 <sup>st</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
Japan's largest Oktoberfest will be celebrated at Yokohama's famous Red Brick warehouse and feature all the fine German beer you could want. <a href="http://okt-fest-jp.com/okt-ykhm2012-1.html">http://okt-fest-jp.com/okt-ykhm2012-1.html</a>		
Yokohama Jazz Promenade	Yokohama, Kanagawa	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>
Yokohama is widely known as the jazz hometown of Japan, and this event will feature dozens and dozens of acts at venues across the city. It'll also feature a new talent competition for people looking to break out. <a href="http://jazzpro.jp/en.php">http://jazzpro.jp/en.php</a>		
Nobunaga Festival	Gifu city, Gifu	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>
Dedicated to Oda Nobunaga, this is one of the representative festivals of Gifu. The festival features a procession of samurai warriors, demonstrations of ancient weaponry, and open markets. <a href="http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/02_event/02_06.html">http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/02_event/02_06.html</a>		
Saijo Sake Festival	Saijo, Hiroshima	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>
Held in east Hiroshima, this festival not only features hundreds and hundreds of brands of local sake, but also Hiroshima cuisine and festival events. <a href="http://sakematsuri.com/">http://sakematsuri.com/</a>		
Iizaka Fighting Festival	Iizaka, Fukushima	October 6 <sup>th</sup>
To honor a Japanese war god, this notoriously rough fighting festival (kenka) involves carrying and slamming portable shrines into one another. One of the top three in Japan. Iizaka is also famous nationwide for its hot springs. <a href="http://www.f-kankou.jp/cgi-bin/f-kankou/asobu/page.cgi?id=65">http://www.f-kankou.jp/cgi-bin/f-kankou/asobu/page.cgi?id=65</a>		

Beppu Mixed Bathing World Art Festival	Beppu, Oita	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – December 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Throughout the winter, there will be eight different art installations throughout Beppu including avante garde performances and said mixed bathing. <a href="http://mixedbathingworld.com/en/whole/about/">http://mixedbathingworld.com/en/whole/about/</a>		
World Festa Yokohama	Yokohama, Kanagawa	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>
This event features cultural performances, foods, and goods from all over the world. Centering around Yamashita park and Yokohama Chinatown, a wonderful international festival. <a href="http://www.open-yokohama.jp/event/detail.html?CN=63546">http://www.open-yokohama.jp/event/detail.html?CN=63546</a>		
Shinyuri Film Festival	Kawasaki, Kanagawa	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
This film festival focuses on student and amateur work with dozens of screenings throughout the city and various panels and discussions. <a href="http://www.siff.jp/siff2012/">http://www.siff.jp/siff2012/</a>		
Tokyo Motor Week	Odaiba, Tokyo	October 6 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
This event plans to celebrate the wonderful world of cars and motorcycles, hoping to emulate a school festival atmosphere with rides and experiences, as well as demonstrations and a flea market. <a href="http://www.jama-english.jp/release/release/2012/120920.html">http://www.jama-english.jp/release/release/2012/120920.html</a>		
Scottish Highland Games	Chiba, Tokyo	October 7 <sup>th</sup>
A series of Scottish sporting events held annually around the world to celebrate Scotland's history and culture. There will also be traditional music, dance, and food (haggis!) <a href="http://www.japanhighlandgames.com/">http://www.japanhighlandgames.com/</a>		



Uji Tea Festival	Uji, Kyoto	October 7 <sup>th</sup>
Held near the Ujibashi Bridge, this festival honors three great tea masters with many different tea ceremonies and events. <a href="http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/yamashiro/02/">http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/yamashiro/02/</a>		
Sapporo Marathon	Sapporo, Hokkaido	October 7 <sup>th</sup>
A citizen's marathon featuring a variety of courses ranging from 2 km to a half-marathon. <a href="http://www.city.sapporo.jp/keizai/kanko/event/event_calendar_english2012-2013.html">http://www.city.sapporo.jp/keizai/kanko/event/event_calendar_english2012-2013.html</a>		
Tokyo Grand Tea Ceremony	Koganei, Tokyo Tokyo, Tokyo	October 7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> October 13 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
Held at two venues in Tokyo, this event offers both indoor and outdoor tea ceremony, as well as beginner's tea ceremony workshops. <a href="http://www.bh-project.jp/festival/eng/event/data/daichakai2012">http://www.bh-project.jp/festival/eng/event/data/daichakai2012</a>		
Osaka Autumn Festival	Hannan, Osaka	October 7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>
The districts of Osaka are represented by dozens of floats that are set out on the bay with lanterns. <a href="http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_7720.html">http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_7720.html</a>		
Kunchi Festival	Nagasaki city, Nagasaki	October 7 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup>
Taking place around Nagasaki's Suwa shrine, this is one of autumn's largest festivals. Featuring both traditional Japanese and Dutch performances and events, this one can't be missed. <a href="http://www.at-nagasaki.jp/foreign/english/kunchi/">http://www.at-nagasaki.jp/foreign/english/kunchi/</a>		
Hachiman Festival	Takayama, Gifu	October 9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>
Often praised as one of the three most beautiful festivals in Japan, the autumn festival at Sakurayama Hachimangu features impossibly ornate yatai floats adorned with hundreds of lanterns. <a href="http://www.hida-hachiman.org/en/02_festival/index.html">http://www.hida-hachiman.org/en/02_festival/index.html</a>		
Ikegami Mando Parade	Ota, Tokyo	October 11 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup>
A parade featuring hundreds of unique mando lanterns, commemorating the death of Buddhist priest Nichiren Shonin. Attracts thousands of worshippers throughout the evening. <a href="http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/ikegamihonmonjioeshiki.html">http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/ikegamihonmonjioeshiki.html</a>		
Ainu Marimo Festival	Kushiro city, Hokkaido	October 12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
A festival that not only celebrates Hokkaido's indigenous Ainu culture, but also Lake Akan's unique marimo algae formations, which are the largest in the world. <a href="http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/marimo.html">http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/marimo.html</a>		

Japan Aerospace Exhibition	Nagoya, Aichi	October 12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
One of the world's largest gatherings related to aerospace technology, the exhibition is open to the public for two days, featuring many modern and futuristic aircraft and technologies. <a href="http://www.japanaerospace.jp/english/">http://www.japanaerospace.jp/english/</a>		
Nagoya Street Performance Festival	Nagoya, Aichi	October 13 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup>
The street performance festival in the fashionable neighborhood of Osu features monkey tricks, rock music kabuki (seriously), gold dust shows, and a parade of courtesans. <a href="http://www.ncvb.or.jp/en/contents/event/?season_id=3">http://www.ncvb.or.jp/en/contents/event/?season_id=3</a>		
Midosuji Kappo Parade	Osaka, Osaka	October 14 <sup>th</sup>
One of Osaka's busiest streets closes to traffic and floods with people who can enjoy parades, performances, marching bands, and many vendors. The idea is to dive into everything Osaka, and is a good way to introduce yourself to the city's culture. <a href="http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_8637.html">http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_8637.html</a>		
Cormorant Evening River Fishing	Gifu city, Gifu	Until October 15 <sup>th</sup>
Held every night until the 15 <sup>th</sup> on the Nagara river, this traditional method of fishing called ukai uses trained cormorant birds and takes place at night amongst floating lanterns and music. <a href="http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/01_sightseeing/01_01.html">http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/01_sightseeing/01_01.html</a>		
Nada Fighting Festival	Himeji city, Hyogo	October 14 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>
Held at the Matsubara Hachiman shrine in Shirahama, this is the largest of the fighting festivals in Japan. Enjoy the chaos and revelry of the mikoshi shrines smashing into one another. <a href="http://www.nadamatsuri.jp/index.html">http://www.nadamatsuri.jp/index.html</a>		
Tokyo Fashion Week	Tokyo Midtown, Tokyo	October 16 <sup>th</sup> – 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Shibuya becomes the center of the fashion world for this week in October. With collections showing from dozens of world-famous designers. <a href="http://tokyo-mbfashionweek.com/en/">http://tokyo-mbfashionweek.com/en/</a>		



Nikko Autumn Samurai Festival	Nikko, Tochigi	October 17 <sup>th</sup>
In the beautiful Nikko national park at Toshogu shrine there will be a stunning parade of 800 samurai, along with yabusame horseback archery. <a href="http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/shukitaisai.html">http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/festival/shukitaisai.html</a>		
Takaranoichi Market Festival	Osaka, Osaka	October 17 <sup>th</sup>
Held at Sumiyotaisha shrine, this festival celebrates the founding of Osaka with a sumo tournament, old-style flea market, and grain-offering rituals. <a href="http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_6186.html">http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/search/detail/event_6186.html</a>		
Tokyo International Film Festival	Roppongi Hills, Tokyo	October 20 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>
This year marks the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of this film festival. Films shown here have gone on to win numerous awards. This year features a documentary about the 007 film franchise, the anticipated autobiography of Python alum Graham Chapman, and a James Cameron-directed adaptation of Cirque du Soleil. <a href="http://2012.tiff-jp.net/en/">http://2012.tiff-jp.net/en/</a>		
Nagoya Samurai Festival	Nagoya, Aichi	October 20 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup>
Celebrating the Three Heroes of the Warring States period of Japanese history, the samurai festival in downtown Nagoya features a huge procession of costumed participants and demonstrations of samurai culture. <a href="http://www.nagoya-festival.jp/?page_id=932">http://www.nagoya-festival.jp/?page_id=932</a>		
Kyoto Jidai Festival	Kyoto city, Kyoto	October 22 <sup>nd</sup>
One of Kyoto's three famous festivals of the year, the jidai matsuri, or festival of the ages, is held at the Heian shrine and recreates a 1,000 years of Japanese history as the 2,000-person parade comes through in chronological order. <a href="http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/04/">http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/04/</a>		
Kurama Fire Festival	Kurama, Kyoto	October 22 <sup>nd</sup>
The city comes alight with torches carried by people all over town and of all ages. As night falls, a procession of large watch fire torches are carried to Yuki temple. <a href="http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/18/">http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/18/</a>		
Yamaboko Float Festival	Kameoka, Kyoto	October 23 <sup>rd</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup>
Known as the "mini-Gion festival" after Kyoto's more famous summer version, the floats and lanterns of Kameoka's festival are not to be missed and celebrate the traditional history of the city. <a href="http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/tamba/04/">http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/tamba/04/</a>		

Sound Live Tokyo	Ueno, Tokyo	October 26 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>
This non-traditional music festival seeks to explore the concept of "sound" and how it can be used for expression and art. <a href="http://www.soundlivetokyo.com/">http://www.soundlivetokyo.com/</a>		
Futon and Drum Stand Festival	Kizugawa, Kyoto	October 27 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>
A procession of shrines topped with drum stands and futon carry children through the town as they taiko their little hearts out. <a href="http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/yamashiro/04/">http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/yamashiro/04/</a>		
Ama-no-Hashidate Winter Fireworks	Miyazu, Kyoto	October 28 <sup>th</sup>
One of the latest fireworks festivals you'll find in Japan, this one happens to take place over one of Japan's famous three scenic views: the Bridge to Heaven. <a href="http://www.city.miyazu.kyoto.jp/~sight/event/fuyuhanabi/fuyuhanabi.htm">http://www.city.miyazu.kyoto.jp/~sight/event/fuyuhanabi/fuyuhanabi.htm</a>		
Kawasaki Halloween Events and Parade	Kawasaki, Kanagawa	October 26 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup>
Over the weekend, Kawasaki will transform to include Monster Streets and haunted houses. The actual parade on Sunday draws thousands of participants in full costume every year. Anyone can register to walk in the parade and show off their costume. <a href="http://lacittadella.co.jp/halloween/english.html">http://lacittadella.co.jp/halloween/english.html</a>		
Festival/Tokyo	Ikebukuro, Tokyo	October 27 <sup>th</sup> – November 25 <sup>th</sup>
A performing arts festival featuring everything from black box productions to full costumed pieces. Each show usually runs a week, with several running at one time throughout the Ikebukuro area. <a href="http://festival-tokyo.jp/en/">http://festival-tokyo.jp/en/</a>		



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# ONE OF HEAVEN'S ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

Cecelia Towns

If anyone were to ask, I would say that I have a bit of a relationship with fashion: my mother was a seamstress, I know how to sew, and before JET I spent the last three years of my life in New York city. Of course, those things in and of themselves don't necessarily give me the skills to be the editor of Vogue, but they do, however, help me have an eye for good style.

With that in mind, I pretty much thought I'd died and gone to heaven in August when I spent a week in Tokyo. I traveled to a number of places around the city, but fashion-wise, the two places that stood out most were Harajuku and Shibuya. I'm sure those locations are beyond cliché for people familiar with Tokyo fashion, but for those of us visiting for the first time, stopping there is an absolute must. Pause for a moment and picture everything you know about Japanese fashion: lots of loud colors, but plenty of pastels too; pantyhose with cool designs, harem 'MC Hammer' pants, key-chains, buttons, earrings, sheer socks with ruffles, an excess of heels, leggings. flowing dresses and shirts, finally topped off with spiked bookbags in every imaginable shape. Yes, that's Harajuku, and in particular, that's Takeshita street.

Shibuya is somewhat similar to Harajuku in the sense that it has Shibuya 109. This is like an American outlet mall (as far as store quantity and variety goes) with clothing that caters to females only (aged 14 – 29ish) and is a staggering ten floors high! It also has your H&Ms, your Forever21s, as well as a sprinkling of high-end stores and entertainment. Capital "O", Capital "M", Capital "G"!

By now, you can imagine where I'll be going for my Christmas shopping. The prices are comparable to what one would find in the States for similar items, but the variety and quantity of items in both Harajuku and Shibuya makes it pretty certain that whatever is bought will not be re-gifted! Even if you're not totally into fashion, take some time to check out Harajuku and Shibuya next time you're in Tokyo. Being able to see the content of Japanese fashion magazines in the flesh (and experiencing the sheer characteristic madness of both districts) makes the trip well worth it.

*Cecelia Towns is a first year JET living in Miyakejima, one of Tokyo's islands. Her favorite pastimes are running (which she now gets to do alongside the ocean!) and sewing.*



# STYLED BY JAPAN

Compiled by: Mabaleng Kgaphola  
Photographed by: Grace Lee, Edmund Lim and  
Meagan McClendon  
Assisted by: Grace Lee, Edmund Lim and  
Meagan McClendon

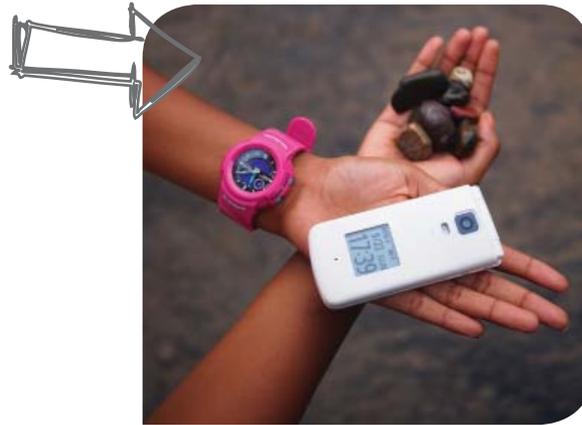
The 'Styled by Japan' compilation/ photo shoot is themed according to trends which reflect what I consider to be the current Japanese style: fashion-forward, daring, fun, a mixture of other fashion trends from across the world, and experimental. The models used in the shoot are everyday people inspired by this movement followed here.

Models:  
Meagan McClendon  
Jessica Wang  
Mabaleng Kgaphola  
Holly Harris  
Edmund Lim

*Mabaleng Kgaphola is a fun, fearless South African first year JET based in Miyakonojo City on Kyushu Island. She takes pleasure engaging with the world of fashion (making her move to Japan a wise one). The world of literature another hobby of hers, which is why she majored in English Literature. Strange combination, but it works.*

## TWO MUST-HAVE ITEMS

A flip phone is a huge trend in Japan and you can find them in assorted colors and designs. Many Japanese girls love to add an element of cuteness by putting colorful stickers on these beauties. The second most popular item that Japanese people love to have is a collection of watches. These can be designer pieces, such as the shocking pink G-Shock watch pictured here, or a simple, cheaper but still stylish model. Either way, it makes no difference.



## CAPTURING HER BEAUTY

Seeing as they met here, this couple seem to have been brought together by Japan. Meagan, a fashion-forward dresser, is wearing a type of small heel worn by many Japanese ladies. These shoes are paired with colorful red stockings and shorts which show off her legs—a huge cute trend here.



## SURROUNDED BY THE BEAUTY OF JAPAN

That's me, captured by the beauty of a waterfall in Kagoshima. A Pandora hat is one of the hottest types of hats in Japan. This particular one has a black bow on it and is from Aeon mall in Miyazaki city. It can be worn with anything on a hot day. Pandoras can be a great accessory, turning a plain outfit into a stylish one. Matched with a knitted jersey and a fabulous watch, one can never go wrong..



## HIGH SCHOOL FASHIONISTAS

The story behind these two images is pretty awesome, unbelievable and somewhat inspiring. Not only are these four boys high school students dripping with Japanese style from their bags to their hair, but my assistant and I bumped into them at a second-hand store... Yep! Japanese fashion is not the cheapest, but you can make it work, even on a tight budget.



## MONDAY NIGHT AT CHERRIES BURGERS

Meagan is wearing a lace and cotton knitted throw-over jersey which can be matched and worn with anything that reveals arms and a bit of skin.



## SIMPLISTIC CHIC

This outfit is cute, simplistic, and is a very versatile look. Japanese style can be "out there" and in your face, but it can also be subtle. Holly is wearing a knitted jersey over her outfit. This is a huge trend here, especially this season.

## JESSICA PONDER, "WHY DID I...".

Leaning on her car, Jessica is wearing pumps from Zara (Japan). These are a great choice: their gold detail goes with the cute doll skirt and soft leather jacket. And of course, a McDonald's beverage completes the cute look that many Japanese girls love. We are lovin' it!

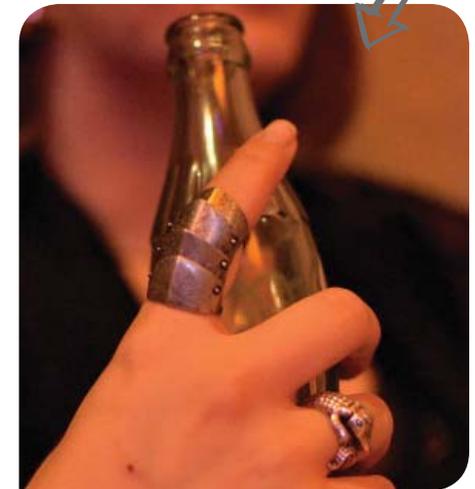


## RINGED WITH AN ARMOR

Meagan is wearing a ring shaped like armor. She says that she traveled long and hard to finally purchase this rare piece, as she had heard prior to coming to Japan that she could get one of these rings here. I think this is a masterpiece: a rare piece of artistic jewellery. Simply exquisite!

## JAPANESE STYLE MIXED WITH AFRICAN TENSION

The shirt that I am wearing in this image is one of my Japanese-bought items that I will probably cherish forever. It has tailor-matching silver accessories on the collars. I matched this with a white scarf that I also bought in Japan and a pair of insect-inspired colorful studs.



# THE ALT SOCCER TOURNAMENTS 11 YEARS OF GOALS AND GLORY

Chris Moore

The ALT Soccer Tournaments started back in 2001. These tournaments, and all the fun that goes with them, were created for foreigners living and working in Japan and interested in the glorious game—the global game, of soccer.

The ALT Soccer Tournaments get underway in autumn and spring every year and, due to the geographical concentration of the masses and the availability of some glorious pitches, there are actually two separate tournaments held in two different regions of Japan. The Western Japan Tournament is held on Awaji Island in Hyogo-ken and the Eastern Japan Tournament happens at Sugadaira Kogen in Nagano-ken. The tournaments cater for both men and women's teams and have been going strong for the past eleven years. Here, Chris Moore fills you in on how it all came about...

It all kicked-off with a wistful, but wishful, phone call from a fellow JET who, like me, was struggling to fill the drowsy summer days at school.

"Ey mate, this village where I'm at in Nagano, it's got the lushest grass pitches I've seen outside of Yorkshire. Whadya reckon we rent a few and have a tourney up here?"

That's essentially how it started. And once we put our random brainwave into action, setting up our first-ever ALT Soccer Tournament in lofty Sugadaira Kogen back in October 2001, we never looked back.

For our first tournament, we had just eight men's teams attend. They came from as far away as Hyogo and Fukushima and it was beyond chaotic. The number of people who actually turned up bore absolutely no relation to the number of people that had reserved. On top of that, we were engulfed in a disorientating, breezy mist for almost the entire weekend. Carloads of participants passed each other on the narrow mountain roads, shrugging cluelessly as they searched for the right pitches (Sugadaira has over one hundred packed in there). There is no education like adversity, I guess, as despite the chaos, the weekend was a massive hit. Exhausted players and supporters made the long trek home with new friends, merry-but-muddled memories and only a few injuries.

After that, the tournament grew and grew. The next year, we held our first women's tournament, and then following the 2002 Japan/Korea World Cup we started a tournament at the England team's base camp on Awaji Island in Hyogo Prefecture, for the good folk of Kansai and Western Japan.



To date, we've probably had over 10,000 people attend our tournaments—though it could be a lot more as we've never really been able to keep count! After the JET Tokyo Orientations, we are the best-attended event in the JET calendar.

Our theory is a simple one; provide some grass, some balls, some beds, some music and a few beers. After that, it all kind of takes care of itself.

Participants must have countless tales to tell: hundreds of 'world class' goals have been smashed in; lifelong friendships have been made; a good few have met future wives and husbands over the years. We're also probably very much responsible for lowering Monday morning productivity throughout the JET community (something we're especially proud of!) And, best of all, we've raised millions of yen for some great causes along the way. If you are keen for a healthy dose of fun and football, you can check out our website here: <https://sites.google.com/site/altsoccertournament/>

### **Western Japan Tournament, Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture (November 2012)**

Mark it in your diaries, folks!! The next Western Japan Tournament is on 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November. Unless you've been hibernating excessively you should still have time to sign up before 26<sup>th</sup> October!

In June 2002 'The Bellybutton of Japan' was chosen by the England team as its base for the 2002 World Cup. At the time, Awaji was famous only for its plump, sweet onions and a huge solid gold ingot (I kid you not). However, the arrival of Beckham & Co. put this sleepy corner (of a sleepier island) under the microscope for a brief, but meteoric, month. Our tournaments owe Mr. Beckham a great deal of gratitude as he scored the free kick which sealed England's qualification for the Japan World Cup on the night of our inaugural tournament in Nagano! So, in the manic months that followed, we managed to persuade

the locals to lend us their brand new grounds for a couple of times a year. Ten years later, we are very much part of the Awaji's scenery.

Our regular teams are drawn from basically everyone west of Nagoya—urban and rural. It's a hearty mixture of lads and lasses, but everyone has the same passion for fun and a bit of footie.

"I have never played this 'soccer' before!" is often the cry from folk thinking about getting involved. Welcome to the club! The beauty of the game is that it's so easy to get involved. A great number of participants have never kicked a ball before or haven't done so for years. Don't let that hold you back!

### **Eastern Japan Tournament, Sugadaira Kogen, Nagano Prefecture (June 2013)**

When Brian Clough famously said, "If God had wanted us to play football in the clouds, he'd have put grass up there", he had obviously never been to Nagano...because in Nagano, both are possible. Every year, in early June and late September, our original tournament is held in the cool, fresh hills of northern Nagano. Hidden away within the hills are over 100 grass pitches, used mainly for rugby but, just perfect for our needs.

Since 2001, we've been using the unrivalled facilities of Sania Sports Park. Surrounded by serene rolling hills, it's quite a special place. It's not unusual to see wild deer, boar, antelopes or raccoons wander across the pitches between games. Generally, this tournament is attended by teams from the Northern and Western prefectures of Honshu, as well as from Kanto. Teams play several games on Saturday morning and afternoon, before stumbling back to the hotel for a good scrub. After that, we have a hearty mountain barbecue, a vexing pub quiz and then a thumping party that, over the years, has created quite a few 'interesting' moments in JET history! Sunday brings more football, although the pace of play is considerably slower...

We just held our autumn tournament at the end of September, but we'll be back again in June, so keep an eye out for the next tourney: <https://sites.google.com/site/altsoccertournament/index>

### **How do I get involved?**

Well, first of all have a wander around our website (just Google 'ALT Soccer', we're the top hit). Everything you need to know is there, from the rules of the game to the prices for the tournaments.

You can contact us at [Altsoccertournament@gmail.com](mailto:Altsoccertournament@gmail.com) and we'll try and put you in touch with your nearest team. We also have lots of tournament info, pictures and videos on our Facebook group page. Hope to see you there—and on the playing fields, someday!

*Chris Moore is an ex-JET from the UK who enjoys laminating so much that he decided to stay in Japan long after the JET Programme told him that he could no longer come to school. Chris was placed in Gifu-ken as a JET from 1999-2002, though he now lives in Yamanashi-ken where he contemplates the future of Mt. Fuji... and just how far it could fling its contents.*

*All pictures were taken by Chris Moore and used with his kind permission.*





# GRASS SKIING CHAMPS

## KEEPING IT MEAN, GREEN AND GRASSY IN MIYAGI

Lee Choon Lim

The popularity of grass skiing may traditionally trail behind snow skiing. But, if last month's Takamadonomiya Cup Grass Ski Competition in Miyagi-ken was anything to go by, that standard snow-sport had better come up with some new moves!

The 19th Takamadonomiya Cup Grass Ski Competition took place early last month in Shichikashuku-machi, Miyagi-ken. Teams from the Czech Republic and Taiwan slid in alongside locals from Hokkaido, Yamanashi, Tokyo, Tsuru and Shichikashuku, as they sought to outdo one another on the slopes. As guest-of-honour, Her Majesty Takamadonomiya Hidenka brought both her namesake and chicness to the grassy knolls.

Grass skiing started in France in 1966 as a method of training for alpine skiing. Short skis on rolling treads (like those on tanks) or wheels were used. These skis were attached to boots and skiers practiced on a grassy slope. Et voilà! Grass skiing evolved and became a competitive sport.

Skiers are well familiar with the sheer delight of sliding across, and plunging into, snow but, while grass skiing bids no less fervour, this grassy sport is definitely not for the faint-hearted - nor the brittle-boned. Brave souls start young; the youngest competitors at Shichikashuku were just 11 years old.

It is the International Ski Federation, known in French as Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS), which organises ski sports into various disciplines. At the 19th Takamadonomiya Cup, grass skiers competed in two disciplines: Super G and Giant Slalom.

Super G is a "speed" event, as opposed to technical events like the Giant Slalom. Proficiency is attributed to thorough course inspection and aggressive course tactics whereby the most direct and dangerous line down the hill is chosen. The direct yet dangerous route worked for some!

Giant Slalom involves skiing between sets of poles, or "gates". On the second day of competition, skiers braved the rain while completing the course along a grassy slope of a hundred metres.

The Czech Republic team's grassy roots and tactical routes were obviously well cultivated as the results really came through for them on the day. Czech skiers clinched the top spot in both the Junior and Open categories of the Giant Slalom discipline.

Junior skier Martin Bartak finished the two runs in a time of one minute and seven seconds. Upon receiving his award, Mr Jiri Russwurm Jr., 35, said, "Big thanks to everyone. I'm proud to be here." He topped his category with a time of one minute and three seconds. Czech Team Manager, Mr Jiri Russwurm, 60, shared his son's pride to have been part of the competition and promised to lead the "best of the best" to participate in next year's world championships in Japan.

Indeed the Grass Ski World Championships will be held next September in Shichikashuku! Competitors from Europe, Iran, Lebanon and Taiwan are expected.

In the meantime, if you venture to Miyagi-ken, make sure to enjoy the awesomeness of grass skiing. Sure a little bit of downhill dirt won't hurt now, will it?

*Lee Choon Lim is a first-year ALT nestling in the mountainous and scenic Shichikashuku-machi in Miyagi-ken. Her must-dos include running to the majestic Shichikashuku Dam, refining her culinary skills and watching her favourite Johnny's artistes on TV.*

*All pictures were taken by Lee Choon Lim and used with her kind permission.*





# WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT BRUNEI

Matthew Wypycha

First, some fun travel trivia! Without consulting a map, can you name the three nations which make up the island of Borneo? Indonesia, Malaysia and the other 1% . . . . Negara Brunei Darussalam!

Independent since 1984, Brunei's small population of roughly 400,000 sits pleasantly on the South China Sea. This is definitely not your average South East Asian country, as the capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan (more commonly known as the BSB), is one of the cleanest cities I have ever visited, and it's where almost all of the action is. While travelling, definitely make a visit to the Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque. The night view is stunning. Spending a few hours in the Kampong Ayer water village is also a nice way to spend an afternoon. From there, a quick water taxi will bring you across the river to a neighborhood completely afloat. Walk right down the street from the Sultan's Palace over to the National Brunei Museum to see some truly impressive Islamic art and sculpture.

Whether trekking through Sarawak or lounging on the beaches of the Sabah region of Malaysia, Brunei is easily accessible by jet-ferry or bus. Additionally, there are five daily flights that hop over from Singapore. English friendly and with a slow pace of life, Brunei is definitely worth a visit if you find yourself in the area. And if you're lucky, you might even see the Sultan himself enjoying a quiet afternoon with a latte and a newspaper!

(Note for travelers: Brunei is a dry country and alcohol is not sold anywhere within its borders. However, permit-holding foreigners are allotted a daily alcohol allowance which they can bring from nearby Malaysia).

*Matthew Wypycha hails from the humble, post rust-belt city of Buffalo, New York and is now a fourth year municipal JET ALT living in Sasebo City, Nagasaki Prefecture. In no particular order, Matt enjoys alpine skiing, live concerts, non-fiction, and kaiten sushi. Hugs and high fives to all the travelers!*

# DIY SHIKOKU IN TRES DIAS

Amelia Hagen

So you'd like to visit Shikoku. But you don't have energy to visit the 88 shrines on its famous pilgrimage. You also don't have the *nenkyu* to fully explore all of the island's four prefectures. Furthermore, you aren't able to drive in Japan. You might just be sitting there thinking, 'How the *heck* am I going to see and do some of the best of what Shikoku has to offer?' Well, here's a little somethin' somethin' to get you started! As a heads-up, whilst this might not be the *cheapest* itinerary, it will certainly allow you to maximize your time around Shikoku.

## Day 1:

- ◆ Begin your Shikoku voyage in Takamatsu
- ◆ In the morning, check out the Takamatsu Castle Ruins
- ◆ Stroll around Ritsurin Garden
- ◆ Grab some *sanuki udon* by Takamatsu JR station
- ◆ Hop on the 12:49pm train to Tokushima City—a rare, direct two hour train (1,410 Yen)
- ◆ Wander around, visit a few local temples
- ◆ Hit up Tokushima Castle Ruins and Museum
- ◆ Spend the evening in Tokushima

## Day 2:

- ◆ Take the 6:49am or 9:03am limited express train via Awaikeda for the 2.5 hour trip to Kochi City (5,100 Yen)
- ◆ Pick up helpful brochures at Kochi's awesome tourism office by the station
- ◆ Enjoy Kochi Castle Park and grab a lunch featuring local *katsuo no tataki*
- ◆ Walk across the tiny, cute Harimaya Bridge
- ◆ By 2-3pm, catch the train and then Anpanman bus to the Anpanman Museum (note: if you *really* like Anpanman, you can pre-order Anpanman *bentos* the night before your train through one of the *omiyage* shops in Kochi Station. Simply ask one of the shop attendants and they should be able to provide you with the phone number).

## OR

- ◆ Catch the bus from in front of Kochi JR Station to Katsurahama Beach to see the uber-famous Sakamoto Ryoma statue and venture over to Sakamoto Ryoma's Hometown Museum
- ◆ Take in dinner and drinks with the raucous crowd at Hirome Market (Kochi City is Japan's Drinking Capital, don't you know?)
- ◆ Spend the evening in Kochi

## Day 3:

- ◆ Jump on the 8:20 train to Uwajima, Ehime via Kubokawa (4,000 Yen)
- ◆ Eat lunch during the scenic train ride, arriving in Uwajima a bit after 12pm
- ◆ Visit Taga Shrine, the fertility shrine there. Marvel at the giant wooden phallus.
- ◆ Next door, check out the Dekoboko Shindo three-story sex museum.
- ◆ Hop on the 2:56pm limited express train to Matsuyama (3,000 Yen) as this arrives around 4:20pm.
- ◆ Do the short hike up to Matsuyama Castle
- ◆ Take a dip in the waters of Dogo Onsen, Japan's oldest onsen.
- ◆ Before you head home via overnight bus or late train, be sure to pick up some *mikan mochi* for your friends!

Of course, it is impossible to do **everything** around Shikoku in three days but I found that this trip came close. I still would have liked to have seen the Naruto Whirlpools in Tokushima, to have re-visited the 'Jungle Onsen' outside of Matsuyama, to have perused the Kochi Prefectural Museum of Art, and to have hopped over to oh-so-artsy nearby Naoshima. Maybe next time...!

# MY TOP TEN HOSTELS AROUND JAPAN

Amelia Hagen

Tired of searching Hostelworld? Here are 10 top-notch hostels from Hokkaido to Okinawa guaranteed to knock your socks off!

1. **Backpackers Hostel Ino's Place—Sapporo, Hokkaido**

Recommended by Hokkaido JETs, Ino's is your best bet for a homey stay in Sapporo. Located only 15 minutes by train from Sapporo Station, it also has a birthday discount and a special three night package during the fall.

2. **Guest House Mintaro Hut—Yamagata City, Yamagata**

Mintaro Hut is an open home converted into a guesthouse just 15 minutes from Yamagata Station. There's even a 100 Yen Corner where a selection of drinks and are available. Animal lovers take note, three cats occupy this little abode.

3. **Toco Tokyo Heritage Hostel—Taito Ward, Tokyo**

The Toco website previews a designer's paradise: an edgy layout and smart staff define this boutique hostel. The lively bar lounge opens nightly at seven and attracts a crowd of guests. Oh, and if you're interested in Toco Tokyo, be sure to also check out its sister hostel, Nui!

4. **Guest House Pongyi—Kanazawa, Ishikawa**

Just 5 minutes from Kanazawa Station, Pongyi formerly served as a *kimono* shop and was recently remodeled into a house. The staff routinely receives rave reviews for their kindness and willingness to go the extra mile. 100 Yen of your bed rate even goes to Tohoku aid!

5. **Hostel Ann—Nagoya, Aichi**

Conveniently nestled near Kanayama Station in the heart of Nagoya, Hostel Ann is a quiet, cozy hostel that was once a *ryokan*. Like other places on this list, Hostel Ann gets points for its accommodating and friendly staff who are able to answer questions you have before you've even thought of them.

6. **Osaka 64—Osaka City, Osaka**

Amidst the countless hostels, budget hotels, and hotels that populate the city, Osaka 64 really stands out. A chic design and a variety of rooms complement the cool lobby bar that opens at night to make Osaka 64 a fun, classy choice when staying in Kansai.

7. **K's House Hiroshima—Hiroshima City, Hiroshima**

I have an inkling that many JETs have already heard of the K's House hostel chain in Japan. Its having been voted the number one hostel chain in the world in the 2010 Hostelworld.com Awards may have something to do with it. The Hiroshima branch doesn't fail to disappoint.

8. **Khao San Fukuoka—Fukuoka City, Fukuoka**

Fukuoka is home to only a handful of hostels but Khao San, similar to the rest of its hostel chain across the country, takes the cake. Not far from Hakata Station, you'll find maps, information on local events taking place, and an impeccable English-speaking staff.

9. **Pension Aoshima—Aoshima, Miyazaki City, Miyazaki**

This pension is a few minutes' walk from Aoshima Beach and run by an extraordinarily hospitable couple. Want to surf? They'll help you rent boards or let you borrow the pension's. Bikes are free to borrow, too. Rooms are basic and clean, but the owners' sincerity and helpfulness are what you'll remember most.

10. **Sora House—Naha, Okinawa**

At a rate as low as 1,700 yen and at only a minute walk from Miebashii Monorail Station in Naha, Sora House can't be beat. The open common room makes meeting fellow travelers ridiculously easy. You can even get your tan on up on the rooftop here. Sora House encompasses the laidback vibe of Okinawa incredibly well, so if you want to chill out, this is the place to stay.



Neetha Mony

*Some of us already know the international nonprofit organization Habitat for Humanity (HfH) from their work in our home countries. HfH's goal is to provide decent housing to those who need it, for which they are very much reliant on the work of volunteers. In 2002, Habitat Japan was established and they focused on fundraising and sending Japanese volunteers to international HfH building sites. Since 3.11, most of Habitat Japan's work focuses on disaster response and supporting those affected by the natural disasters. While they continue to organize international volunteer trips, every week Habitat Japan volunteers head to Tohoku to take part in recovery efforts.*

*Projects vary depending on the needs and schedules in the area. The first time I worked with Habitat Japan, we helped clear debris and plants so a house could later be built at that site. In September, I had a chance to work on a building project and I couldn't pass it up. Habitat Japan posted a call for volunteers for Monday, Sept. 17 to Wednesday, Sept. 19. Since that Monday was a holiday, I decided to go to Tokyo for a day and then take a day bus from Tokyo to Sendai. I hope the following diary helps in understanding how Habitat Japan's Izushima program works.*

### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

I arrived in Sendai with plenty of time to grab food and search for last minute supplies. (FYI: Daiso carries rubber dipped gloves if you can't find them elsewhere!). The train from Sendai Station to Tagajo Station takes about twenty minutes and then there's a ten minute walk from the station to the Habitat house. Once I got to the house, I met the rest of the 13 member team and we had an orientation about the Izushima project. Izushima is an island off of Onagawa Town in Miyagi prefecture and home to about 650 people. Many people in Izushima relied on growing sea pineapples as a source of income. The tsunami destroyed all those

facilities and almost all the homes on the island. Habitat Japan and It's Not Just Mud have helped in some of the rebuilding efforts on the island. On this trip, the team would work to complete a building that had been started. This building would serve as a multipurpose community center. The orientation was all in Japanese, but the Habitat staff and some of the volunteers spoke English so I was still able to understand. The Izushima volunteer project participation fee was 10,000 yen, which included transportation from the Tagajo office to the site and back, meals for Tuesday and Wednesday, and insurance. After the meeting, we set out our futons, took showers (there wouldn't be shower facilities on the island), and went to bed.

### **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**

I woke up at a cheery 4:30am and at 5:15am we all piled into the vans and left Tagajo. On the way we stopped at a combini and were told to get 1500 yen or less for breakfast and lunch, which the Habitat staff paid for. At about 7:15am we arrived at the ferry dock. We unloaded our things onto the ferry and the construction materials were transferred to the boat of a local man who was also volunteering. After a forty minute ferry ride and a twenty minute car ride, we were finally at the site we'd be working and staying in. We put our belongings in the temporary volunteer house and geared up to begin our work.

The building we'd be working on was only walls and a ceiling and at 9:30am we had a quick meeting about the day's work. The man from the boat was helping with construction work and two local women made sure we had plenty of snacks and drinks at breaks. Before I knew what was happening, I was given a hammer and told to put nails along the chalk marks on the walls. I have very little building experience but gained confidence as I realized no one was watching me work. Once all the nails were in place, windows were cut into the walls and I helped take down support beams. Then, tasks were divided up. Some people measured and drew lines on more plywood, marking where



nails would go. Others weatherproofed pieces of wood for a table and another team was doing work on the roof. I helped install the insulation to the walls and ceiling of the building. At around 1pm we took our lunch break in the housing shelter. It was interesting talking to other people on the team and hearing their reasons for volunteering. We had a diverse volunteer group and I met some genki college students from Tokyo. Some of them had lived abroad or were international students and I sat in awe as they switched from English to Japanese and back all in a sentence.

After lunch we finished putting in the insulation, covered it with plywood and nailed it in. The roof work was progressing; one group started building a table and the entrance way, the other painted the outside of the building to weatherproof it. Another girl and I were given the task of rebuilding a bench that had been taken apart for shipment to the island. Like a puzzle with only a picture to look at, it was mainly trial and error. Other teams finished the front windows and we called it a day at 5:30pm. For dinner, everyone pitched in with prepping, cooking, and setting the tables for a family style meal. One of the ladies from Izushima gave us a *ton* of shelled scallops and scallop sashimi, too. After dinner we set up our sleeping bags and had a quick meeting before bed. At the meeting we each shared our impressions of Izushima.

finished assembling and repainting the children's bench while another finished the roof and entranceway. It was a lot of work but the finished building looked pretty sweet! We spent 2:30-3:30 finishing up, packing everything up and loading it into the van, unloading it at the ferry port, and loading everything onto the ferry. People on the ferry helped us carry things and didn't care that the ferry was behind schedule because of us. Once back on the mainland, we loaded everything into the appropriate vans and those of us who had to catch trains and buses headed out early. We made it back to Tagajo at 7pm and I took the train to Sendai, quickly grabbed some combini food for dinner, and boarded my night bus at 7:50pm. Since I hadn't had a chance to get omiyage, I bought some zunda dango at the first pit stop and then slept all the way to Kyoto.

**MY IMPRESSION**

Habitat Japan offers a quick way to volunteer and see how Tohoku is today. Every month they post calls for volunteers on their website and Facebook pages. It's easy to get involved so don't worry about your language or building skills. And the Habitat members of staff are all truly awesome to work with!

You can find out more about Habitat Japan at [http://www.habitatjp.org/index\\_e.html](http://www.habitatjp.org/index_e.html) and <http://www.facebook.com/habitatjp.en>.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19**

On Wednesday, we woke up at a more respectable 7am and enjoyed leftover curry for breakfast. At 8am we had our brief meeting and then continued our work. A few volunteers from It's Not Just Mud joined the work, which really helped. While I worked on continuing to assemble the bench from the day before, most people were working on roof details. Before long, it was already lunchtime and we had kimchi yakisoba. We couldn't relax too long, though, because we needed to finish working by 2:30pm so that we could pack up and catch our 3:30pm ferry. My group



# 東北

## TOP TOHOKU TIPS

Neetha Mony

In July, I had the opportunity to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity Japan in Miyagi-ken. It was an amazing experience and one I'd definitely recommend. Before you jump in, however, here are some important pointers to consider when planning your own volunteering stint in the Tohoku area.

### IT'S FAR!

Factor in travel times and when you're expected to be at the organization. Not only do you need to get yourself to Tohoku, but the organization's office may not be easily accessible or in a major city. Habitat's Tagajo office is a twenty minute train ride from Sendai station plus a ten minute walk. Most organizations also prefer you to show up the night before your volunteer work begins.

### HOW TO GET THERE

Depending on where you live, you may have to fly or take serious nenkyu to make a trip to Tohoku, but plane tickets can be expensive unless you plan well in advance. If you live fairly close to Tohoku, trains may be a convenient option, but the option I prefer for cost and convenience is the highway bus. There are many companies out there so look into which ones offer services to Sendai.

### SAVE SOME MONEY

If you want to fly, start planning your trip months in advance. For buses, Willer Express offers a bus pass that even residents can use. The hard part is that someone outside of Japan has to purchase it. Once you set up an account online and someone buys the pass for you under your account, you can make reservations on the Willer

website. Instead of a ticket, you receive a reservation number to show when you check in for your bus. Willer offers three-day, four-day and five-day passes, which means that in the two months from the date you purchase the pass, you can travel that many days on any Willer buses that offer relax seats and below. For example, with a 12,000 yen four-day pass, I traveled roundtrip to Sendai and Tokyo within a two month span. One way to Sendai on a relax bus is almost 9,000 yen, so it really does offer huge savings. For more information, visit: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2369.html>

### PACKING

The organization you work with will send you a list of what to bring with you, so pack well. In the hard-hit areas, volunteer shelters will have the bare minimum, so you'll need to bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and maybe even food and water (depending on the location of the nearest combini). Habitat's Tagajo house has bedding and extra gum boots to work in, but you still need to bring work gear, such as gloves, comfortable work clothes, and rain gear. We also stopped at a combini before going to the work site, so food wasn't an issue.

### DON'T OVERDO IT AND HAVE FUN!

Stretch, take plenty of breaks, and meet amazing new people. My team included five awesome college kids from Kansai and Kyushu, which made the work more fun. If many people are interested, you can even form a team and work together in Tohoku.

### SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND YOUR JAPANESE COMMUNITY!

**hollow are his words,  
an empty promise now lost  
to another night**

Anni Pullagura  
Shimane



### **MONTHLY HAIKU CONTEST**

Got a haiku of your own you want the JET community to hear? Submit it for October's Haiku Competition! Contestants may submit one original haiku to [contests@ajet.net](mailto:contests@ajet.net). Haikus should be received by **October 24th**. The Competition is open to current JET participants only. The winner will be decided by means of an online poll, with the winning haiku (and runners up) being published in next month's issue! Happy haiku-ing!

Welcome to AJET Connect's monthly Photography Contest! Send us your photos and battle it out with other works of art from all over Japan in the hopes of becoming the highly coveted Photo of the Month. The photo with the highest number of votes will have the honour of being featured on the cover of the next issue, as well as being entered in the annual AJET Photography Contest.

Send your entries to [contest@ajet.net](mailto:contest@ajet.net). Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter. In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.

Please submit your photos by October 25<sup>th</sup>. A shortlist will be created and you will have one week to vote for your favourite photo via online poll at [www.ajet.net/photos](http://www.ajet.net/photos). Voting will be open from October 26<sup>th</sup> until midnight on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

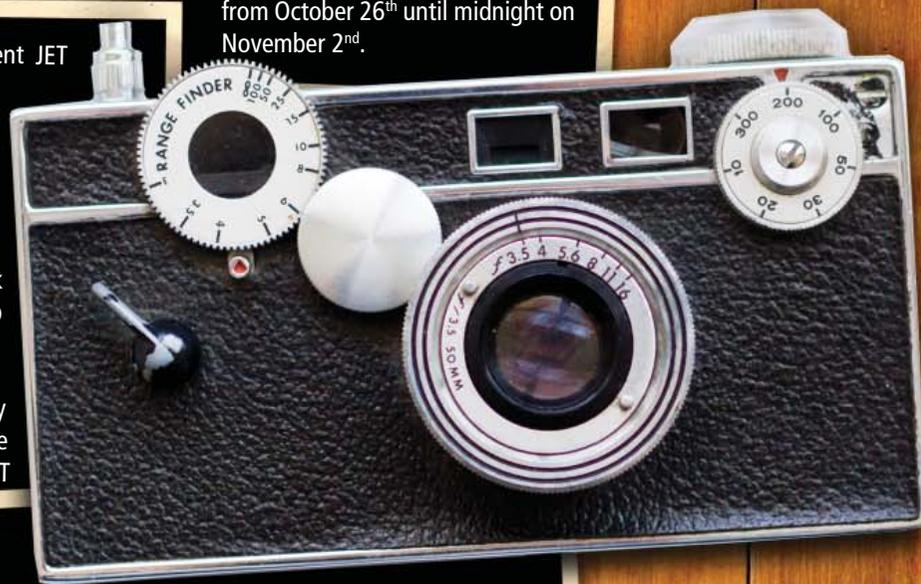
Submissions are welcomed from all current JET Programme participants. The theme for October's Photography Contest is "Weird and Wonderful Japan"! Yes, this month we want your photos of the weirdest sights, trends and vending-machine contents that Japan has to offer! Of course, you're free to interpret the theme however you will! Think outside the box and your photo may end up on top of November's issue!

Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. The theme for October's competition is "Weird and Wonderful Japan!"

#### Ownership/ Use Rights

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

# MONTHLY PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



# PHOTOGRAPHY WINNERS

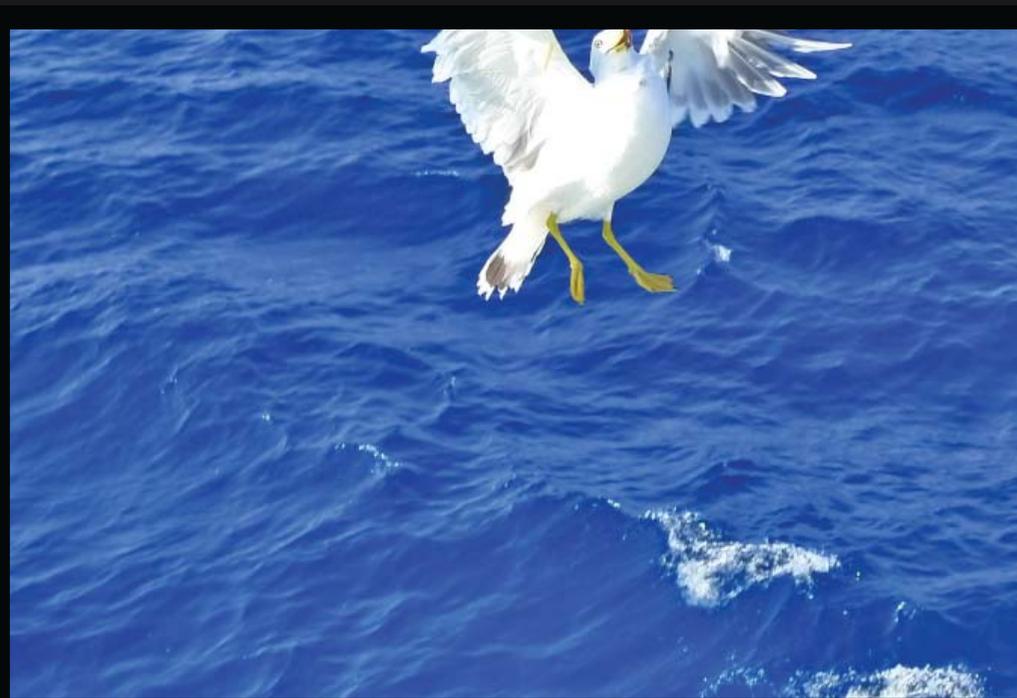
Freeze Mother Fu%#er  
Tahi Scandlyn, Fukushima #2

You've already seen Catherine Danley's spectacular winning photograph on the cover of this month's issue, now take a look at the two runners-up from the September Photography Competition!

If you're interested in entering October's Photography Competition, flip back to the previous page for more details!

FIGHT!  
FIGHT!

Fight or Flight  
Leroy Pasco, Kochi #3



# 文を続ける Chain Story #4



Students improvise sentences based on what others say before them.  
他の生徒の言葉を使って文を作る。



None  
なし



All  
全員



10 mins  
10分



JHS3  
中学校3



## Summary

Students sit in a circle and create sentences by adding words to what the students before them said.

## 概要

他の生徒の言葉を使って文を作る。

Have the students sit in a circle.

The first student begins by saying a word.

The next student repeats the first word and adds his or her own word.

The third student repeats the first two words and adds his or her own word, trying to begin a sentence. This continues with each subsequent student.

If a student wants to end the sentence (at an appropriate time), they have to say, "period." The next student will begin a new sentence, hopefully continuing the story.

- 1 生徒を円にして、座ってもらう。
- 2 一番目の生徒が単語を1つ言う。
- 3 次の生徒がその単語を繰り返して、最後に単語を一つ付ける。
- 4 次の生徒が前の2単語を繰り返して、文法に従って単語を1つ付ける。このステップを次々と繰り返す。
- 5 文法の正しい文になったら、生徒は「ピリオド」と言って文を終えることができる。次の生徒が新しい文を始める。なるべく前の文に関連している文を作るように生徒に指示する。

## Variations

Students may need guidance in picking the correct part of speech. Don't hesitate to assist them if they are having difficulties.

If students are having a difficult time at the beginning, give them a prompt, such as, "Junko went to the beach and...."

If a student makes a mistake, have them perform an English Challenge such as saying a tongue twister or talking about a subject for 20 seconds in front of the class.



## バリエーション

文法的に正しい単語を選ぶことは生徒にとって難しいので、迷っているならヒントを出すと良い。

活動の始まりに生徒が迷っているなら、「Junko went to the beach and…」などの振り出しをあげる。

生徒が間違えたら、早口言葉や短い発表などの英語罰ゲームをさせる。

