

# ***Hyogo Times***

August 2007



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Out and About the Yukata Matsuri

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*All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose, and any ideas to contribute or improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.*

*Submit by the 15th of each month to:*

**[submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com](mailto:submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com)**

*<http://hyogoajet.org>*

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## From the Editor



Bloody hell it's hot!

I've just clicked into my 3rd and FINAL year on the JET program and I must say; Japanese weather does not get any easier. I spent the whole winter whinging (*whining*) about being too cold, and now it's too hot! There is just no pleasing some people.

I remember back to my first summer. It was a hot one. I could hardly sleep for the heat (I was being tight with the aircon back then - oh those were the days) and I completely destroyed all of my NEW "work clothes" with big dirty sweat marks. Charming it was. Somehow the washing machine that has no trouble ripping apart the hems on every item of clothing I own has trouble getting out sweat marks. Hmph. "Chic and refined products for your urban single life" my arse! (That's the cute message on my washing machine).

The first summer was difficult at work, too. I wasn't quite sure of what was expected of me, and was more than a little confused at my apparent lack of actual work to do. I'm sure you all know what I am talking about. Now I am used to my surroundings, and know how to fill my days without resorting to Japanese study. Of course, if anyone asks, I fill my days with lovingly creating lesson plans and activities for my more than worthy students... And sometimes surfing the internet (research for lesson plans) and taking a splash in the school swimming pool (to keep my fitness for when classes start). I am \*that\* hardworking. You all probably wish you were me.

This is my second issue of the *Hyogo Times* as editor, and I must say it has been a little

more challenging than I originally anticipated. I was expecting to have to sift through masses of emails, selecting only the most original and thought provoking articles. Instead, I have been cracking the whip on the regulars, and spamming the JET server! I am quite pleased with what I have managed to come up with, though. I think I really have a talent for annoying people until they cough up something great.

This month we have a new regular columnist on board. Heather Whited is an incoming JET, who will be writing each month on her experiences as a first year JET. Her first article is about the trials of packing up her old life. I'm sure you can all relate! In other *Hyogo Times* news, I am also hopefully going to have articles about different parts of Hyogo Prefecture, so we can all learn the lay of the land. The focus this month is on South West Hyogo. If you are an expert on your locality, whatever part of Hyogo that may be, please get submitting for the next issue.

And finally, if you have any problems whatsoever with the content of the *Hyogo Times*, please email me directly. This is a publication for JETs, by JETs. If you have any ideas for articles, or if there is anything you want to see published, let me know! Although I may seem like a God in human form, I am actually not... Who told you that? Did Steve tell you that?.... so I don't know what you are thinking about the *Hyogo Times* unless you tell me (in 500 words or less, please).

Enjoy the summer!

Tori

Submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

## From the PR

Welcome new JETs!!! After months and months (and months and months...) of waiting you have finally arrived and can now enjoy the wonderfully humid Japanese summer! For those who haven't studied any Japanese yet, I have prepared a list of useful phrases for you to use, courtesy of Hyogo AJET:

"暑いね。"

"Atsui ne"

"It's really hot, don't you think?"

"私の国も季節もありますよ。"

"Watashi no kuni wa kisetsu mo arimasu yo."

"My country has four seasons too."

"暑い。"

"Atsui."

"It's \$%#%&# hot!"

"外国人は毎日ハンバーガーを食べないよ。"

"Gaikokujin wa mainichi wo hanbaagaa tabenai yo."

"No, foreigners do not eat hamburgers every day."



"暑いよ。"

"Atsui yo."

"Turn on the #%\$% air conditioner now or you will have one angry foreigner in your staffroom!"

"お先に失礼します。"

"Osaki ni shitsureshimasu."

"There is no way I'm sitting in this office for another 6 hours with all of you!"

I hope these help you in your first months here, until you get a better grasp of the Japanese language.

This is a very exciting time for all of you Newbies, of course, but it is also an exciting time for all of us recontracting people. Meeting new people is one of the best things about this program, and I hope you all get the most out of it. The AJET committee is working hard to plan events to bring everyone together and have a good time, and the more people who come, the better everything will be. We are here for you and your participation, and feedback is crucial to AJET's success.

If you are interested in signing up for AJET please contact anyone on the committee and we will get you started. If you have any suggestions or comments for us in general, do not hesitate to email me at [hajetpr@gmail.com](mailto:hajetpr@gmail.com). Also, if you have not signed up for our yahoo group, it is definitely the best way to stay updated on everything that is going on in Hyogo. Just search for "Hyogojets" and you'll find it.

Until next time, let's enjoying together!

Brandon



# Dating 101:Yokoso Japan

Brenda McKinney

As this is the first issue going out to all the new Hyogo JETs, I thought I would take this opportunity to welcome all of you and start with the Dating basics. There might be a few repeats for those of you who have been here for a while, but hang on to your hats, because we've got a lot to share!

## Part One: Good ways to meet people

### **Gaijin Bars (or Foreigner Bars)**

You will soon know all the most popular ones from Himeji to Sannomiya to Shinsaibashi. This is a good place to meet some international Japanese people, usually excellent at English and often interested in talking to foreigners. It's not called an exchange for nothing... if a cute someone catches your eye, take a chance and show them how flirting is done in your culture! You never know what might happen!

### **Konpa**

A *konpa* is basically a group blind date, and a popular way to meet new people (especially among college students). One guy brings two of his friends, a girl brings two of hers, and everyone goes out to dinner. If dinner goes well, there's usually a "round two" at a second place, like karaoke. Then, people can exchange numbers if they're interested in anyone at the end of the night. Even if you don't meet anyone, it can be a fun excuse to go out with some new people (and maybe practice some of that Japanese you'll be learning very soon...).

### **Internet Dating**

I've never done this, so I'm not a huge expert, but it is common in Japan and I personally know of one ALT who met their girlfriend through an online dating service. It works much the same way it does in America: you create a profile, others create their own, and then you can contact people you think would be a good match or want to meet (and vice versa). It seems like this option is more popular with foreign men than women, but it's worth a try if you're computer savvy and want to increase your dating pool. Just be careful not to let your Kyoto sensei catch you updating your profile between

classes!

***MySpace Japan (just started!), the Facebook (new to Japan) and Mixi (like the Japanese MySpace).***

Ok, I know what you're thinking. Yes, these are social tools for keeping up with people you already know, but I know of one girl who went to a house party with about 40 people she met strictly through Mixi and another who went to a Beach BBQ party with people she met on Mixi. You never know who else might show up!

### **AJET Events and Trips**

It's a good chance to get to know that cute ALT you met at Yashiro a little better. We've got some fun stuff planned for the year and there - always an after-party or two - come for the fun, stay for the guy/girl.

### **Part Two: LDRs - The Long Distance Relationship**

I have a confession to make. When I started writing this column a year ago, I kicked it off with a long article all about how great LDRs (Long Distance Relationships) can be. With modern communication, like webcams, it's easier than ever to keep things going strong (communication is key, right?!) and we definitely receive the time and financial resources through our jobs to make visits possible. I should probably have followed that first article with an amendment about some of the problems that can occur the big time difference, a lack of intimacy (even just holding hands), working on quantity (communicating too much) over quality (sharing the big things), the way Japan will inevitably change you (one person may feel left behind) and not being able to fully translate the experiences you are going through. It's not fun to admit, but you should be honest and realistic about the challenges. A year later, I'm back to the single girl once again...but don't be discouraged. It's DIF-FI-CULT, but people do make it work. If you have decided that the LDR is the way to go, be strong and hang in there! Just make sure

you have a plan for when you will actually see each other (a light at the end of the tunnel) and make the most of your time here. Yahoo BB has great international phones rates, too, by the way ;)

### **Part Three: The Kinky Side**

#### **Love Hotels**

Even if its with a friend to take pictures, you should definitely try to make it to a love hotel while you're in Japan. Its like a theme hotel with rooms that you have the option of renting by the hour (pretty sure you can guess why). Osaka has no shortage of this eclectic form of lodging, but you may be surprised how many you have in your area (even in the *inaka*). A couple I know recently booked a bondage Hello Kitty-themed room with karaoke at the Adonis Hotel in Osaka. Enough said.

#### **Clubs**

Like the *Gaijin* bars, this is a good place to meet people who might know more than the average level of English. While they're not as popular in Japan as they are in, say, America or England, you'll probably find the experience at Dance Clubs to be similar to home. Some places also offer *nomihodai* (or all-you-can-drink) specials; spending the night is night in Osaka at one of these places and taking first train home is not uncommon for many JETs.

#### **Nampa**

This is like the traditional pick-up...on crack. *Nampa* is the word for picking up girls. There's formal rules, clubs with meetings, even a national website: The *Nampa Kenkyuukai* (Nampa Research Association) <http://www.nanpa.ne.jp/index.html>

#### **Hostess Bars and Snack Bars**

Have you noticed the funny-looking guys with long, bleached hair and dark, tight suits standing on corners in Kobe or Osaka? These are recruiters for host bars. It's not quite prostitution, but in the same family. They have flyers if you want more info. Snack Bars, on the other hand, are like small, fancy, local bars, but often have karaoke, cost a little more, and have waitresses that are sometimes willing to do more than serve you drinks.

#### **The Gay District in Osaka**

Near Umeda, there's a small strip known as the gay district with bars and clubs. I'm going to leave out the details (full article to come), but

it's not far from Osaka Station.

### **AJET Events and Trips**

Once again, I'll let you figure out why for yourself. I will say, however, that happens after the workshops at JET conferences seems to be a bit more lively than the lesson planning tips you'll receive during the day.

### **Part Four: The next Step. Where to go With Your Date**

#### **Kobe**

Kobe is not the most touristy city in Japan, especially compared to nearby Kyoto, but it is actually known as the dating city due to the romantic views and ambiance. Take a stroll through Motomachi and Kitano, watch the lights reflect on the shallow water of the Kobe Pier from the top of the Ferris wheel, or take your date to taste-test the different street foods in China Town. It's a win-win situation.

#### **Kansai Scene and Hot Pepper**

Check out these free publications for ideas and deals on where to go out to eat in Kansai

#### **Himeji & Kyoto**

With so many World Cultural Heritage Sites at your toes, you will have enough to talk about and look at, even if the date is not going well.

And that's it! So, now that we've taken care of giving the lowdown on getting down with someone in Japan, we're free to focus on some of the more spicy details. Send in your questions or stories and, as always, get out there and work it!

*"You call it madness, but I call it love."*

- Don Byas





# You Are What You Bleed



Robin Crowder

If you're living in Japan, chances are you've been asked countless numbers of times what your blood type is. Chances are also, that upon answering, you are faced with wide eyes and a loud, "Eh-hhh!" - either at the revelation of your type, or over the fact that you don't know what kind of blood you have. If you ever watch anime, you'll probably find that even make believe characters are created with a specific blood type. So what's the big deal? What makes blood type so important in the Japanese culture?

The belief in the power of blood types is not originally a Japanese thing, and actually dates back to around 1907 when the Nazis in Germany began investigating blood types as a way to help their eugenics research and claim physical superiority. It wasn't until 1927 that the notion reached Asia via a psychology report, and that it was snapped up by the militarized government to try and breed better soldiers. The research eventually petered out until in 1931 when administration worker Furukawa Takeji proposed a link between blood type and personality, rather than between blood type and physical differences. In the early 1970s, the theory was revived by a popular Japanese journalist with no science background named Masahiko Nomi who inspired people through his writing. Eventually claiming authorship to ten books on the subject, Nomi succeeded in starting a "fad" that has lasted over 30 years.

Blood types, as most people know, are classified as per the ABO system - a person can either be blood type A, B, O or AB. The Japanese belief is that the kind of blood coursing through your veins plays a role in the type of person you are. To complicate things even more, blood types are medically classified into positive or negative depending on something called the Rh Factor, but luckily this has no bearing on determining personality since negative blood types are virtually non-existent in Japan.

While there are numerous different resources on the web, and they often contradict each other on specifics, there is a general consensus about the type of person each blood type breeds. *(I have also drawn from these numerous sources, so please don't quote me in an official paper!)* Curious about why you behave the way you do? Maybe your blood type can explain it...

## TYPE A "Cool Personality"

About 40% of the world's population is blood type A. This group is known primarily for being introverted, obedient, shy and sympathetic. Though As appear outwardly calm, they are often very nervous on the inside and are quite sensitive to public opinion. They are considered to be the most artistic and the most animal loving of the types. A people strive for



perfection, but are often pessimistic about achieving it. Ironically, As are generally thought to be very law-abiding, but some of the most famous A Types include Hitler, OJ Simpson, Richard Nixon and Britney Spears with her dangerously illegal mothering methods.



## TYPE B "Active Personality"

B blood types make up only about 11% of the world's population. They are called the active group because they are known for being strong-minded, goal-oriented and dedicated to completing the task at hand. Bs are noisy and cheerful, with an optimistic outlook on life. They are very independent and don't often work well in groups, preferring instead to search out their own path in school, work and life. Because of this trait, B people are commonly seen as egocentric, rather than being recognized for their individualism. Famous type Bs include Paul McCartney, Leonardo DiCaprio, Luciano Pavarotti and Jack Nicholson, some of whom have certainly shown that they do much better as individuals than team players!

## TYPE O "Hot Personality"

This is the most common blood type in the world, flowing through the veins of about 44% of the population. O types are fiery, energetic, extroverted people who adapt easily to change. They enjoy being the centre of attention and generally appear very self-confident, which sometimes has them classified as self-centred. Os are great initiators but often lack the attention span to follow through on many of their projects. It is said that people with O blood type have the "gift of the gab" - an ease with words. This trait is demonstrated by numerous famous Os, including Queen Elizabeth, John Lennon, Elvis Presley and



Al Capone.

## TYPE AB "Carefree Personality"



Finally, ABs make up the smallest portion of the global population, ringing in at only about 5%.

ABs are said to have a sort of split personality, sharing traits from the three other blood groups; this unpredictability makes it the least favorable type in Japan, and the anime bad guys are commonly AB bleeders! They are shy or outgoing and confident or timid, depending on their grasp of the situation. People with AB are considered diplomatic, trustworthy and reliable, but can balk at having too much responsibility. They are good at seeing and avoiding problems, helping them to make a harmonious contribution as an individual or team player. ABs have a desire to help others, but their unpredictable mood swings often makes this difficult. John F. Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Mick Jagger and Thomas Edison are all famous ABs who demonstrate the manic traits of this blood type.



# ***Ironie Chef***

## *Summer Cooking*

### *Panzanella* (Serves 2)

Now, summer eating is all about what's in season and freshest so that you've got to do minimal work to it to make your dinner as fabulous as possible with minimal fuss. All of these are good things.

Let me introduce two friends to you. Plebe cook, meet Mr Tomato and Ms Basil. They are the very best of friends. Together, in summer, they will get married, such good friends are they. Mr Tomato and Ms Basil are in season and lusciously ripe and are just waiting to have all their flavorful juices mixed together and then spread all over everything else. (maybe this will tear you away from the porn).

Tomato and basil are the very basis of incredible and easy summer salads, and while Panzanella is one of the most basic recipes Ironie Chef is going to give you, it will impress with its simplicity and complimentary flavors (maybe Ironie Chef should ditch the HT and take up writing food porn instead).

2 TB Balsamic vinegar  
2 TB Olive oil

2 Large ripe tomatoes (or 1 1/2 punnets cherry tomatoes) roughly chopped.  
1/2 red onion, finely chopped  
1/2 tin borlotti/ cannellini/ haricot beans, drained (these aren't necessary, but are great if you can find them)

1 red, orange or yellow capsicum, charred, skinned and sliced.  
1 loosely packed cup fresh basil leaves.

1/2 a baguette. (Ideally you would use day old wood fired artisan Tuscan bread, but let's not start flogging that argument again... use what is available, but make sure it isn't your standard white Pasco supermarket bread, unless it's completely unavoidable)

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the balsamic and oil. Add some salt and pepper.

Take the top off the capsicum and take out the seeds. Place it under a grill, and grill until the skin is blackened and charred. Put the hot capsicum into a

bowl and cover with cling wrap and leave to cool.

Cut up the tomatoes, add to the balsamic and oil mix. Add the beans and the onion and gently mix until all combined.

Once the capsicum is cool enough to handle, it should be easy to just peel the blackened skin off, so that it's all soft and slimy. Slice the capsicum into long ribbons and add to the tomato mix.

Wash the basil and gently tear the leaves into large pieces into the bowl - do not cut the basil as it bruises the leaves and makes the oils bitter apparently - and mix. Leave the panzanella for an hour or so for all the flavors to amalgamate.

Slice the baguette in half and toast if it is fresh. Tear the bread into chunks and stir through the salad so that it soaks up the liquid in the salad.

Panzanella can be served on its own, or with grilled chicken, or mozzarella cheese (goats cheese is great if you can be arsed to get to Costco) torn through it as well. Olives are also a great addition.





# Packing for JET

Well, it's official. There are ants in my pants over this move. I used have that phrase used to describe me all the time when I was little (younger, I should say, seeing as I may have grown all of half a foot since elementary school) and since my imagination was inconveniently vivid, I could see in my head exactly what it would like if there were ants crawling all over my rear. Not a pretty sight, trust me. My imagination's still pretty vivid, so right now, I'm having some uncomfortable flashbacks. *EEK.*

The point is, I've gotten to where every time I try to sit still and focus on something, I start thinking too much. My thoughts simmer and cook and they end up as this feeling that makes me feel like my blood's been turned into fine Champagne (okay, okay, soda works here as well), all bubbly and excitable, too contained in too small of a space. I keep thinking about how much things are going to change. Even though I know it's all going to change for the better, even thought I know copious amounts of sushi await me, it's still not easy to think that soon I'll leave behind most everything familiar.

I'm condensing my life into two suitcases, which means I've got to leave a lot behind. At the risk of sounding materialistic, I'm going to miss some of my things that'll stay here. There's comfort in favorite sweatshirts during cold weather, but there's not room. I've gotten used to the sight of shelves and shelves of books that I've insisted on lugging around during all my previous moves. I bought this stupid statue at a thrift store once, a goofy robot with fat legs and buggy eyes. Underneath it is inscribed this bit of wisdom: "Handle with care; they don't make love machines like me anymore." For four years, every place I've lived has

Heather Whited  
(Incoming First Year ALT)

had a Jeff Buckley poster hanging on the walls (in one notable case, three of the same one). I've got a set of the first four Harry Potter books brought back to me from a vacation in Ireland. The first one's even called *Philosopher's Stone*! I've got a British flag that's hung over the last five beds I've slept in. A friend bought me a David Tennant figurine for Christmas this year that I'm overly sentimental towards because it was a bad time for me and this *Doctor Who* action figure was kind of a sign that everything was going to be okay. I've got a poster from a concert my sister and I went to a few weeks before she moved to New Zealand. I still remember stealing it while a sound guy's back was turned. I still remember standing on the shoulders of her boyfriend, who had just made short work of a six pack of Miller Light, and I remember how I balanced, risking life and stubby limb, to see Colin Meloy come on stage with the rest of The Decemberists.

Some of it will make the cut. Some of it won't. All in all though, I know it won't end up mattering all that much. I'll put it in my mom's attic and she and all of that stuff will be there when I want it. Besides, I've got that good imagination, so if worst comes to worst, I'll just think really hard and imagine a Jeff Buckley poster on the wall in front of me, or a Union Jack swaying when I open or close a door and make a little breeze.



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## Learning More About Southwest Hyogo

# Himeji

Jeff Weese

Being in the far Southwest of the prefecture, Himeji is often overlooked except for a random day trip to check out the famous Himeji Castle, which happens to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Well, there is plenty more than just the castle to fill your day with excitement, so take off your coat and stay a while. The castle is a great place to start as it is well known through out Japan as one of the most well maintained and least altered castles. You won't find any elevators or restaurants in the castle, but will instead be welcomed with beautiful grounds and the castle in its original design for the most part! If you time it correctly, you can even get a very informative guided tour in English, free of charge! Don't leave the castle grounds without stopping by the beautiful gardens just West of the castle!

Still craving a little more culture and brilliant natural settings? Mt. Shosha is a short bus ride away from Himeji city center where you will surely recognize some of the temple complexes from the blockbuster movie, *The Last Samurai*. You can easily spend hours wandering around the entire mountain tabletop area, but if you want to catch the trees in a magnificent state of crimson and bright orange or the sakura trees in full bloom, make sure to visit in the Fall or Spring.

By now you have certainly worked up an appetite, so head back in to the city where you will find a plethora of options. Baobab is a great curry restaurant that serves up very interesting international curries (not Japanese curry) with flavor infusions such as spinach almond or green coconut Thai curry. Baobab can be found on the pedestrian shopping street that runs parallel (and to the East) of Miyukidori (the main pedestrian shopping street) about half way in-between the castle and the station.

On that same street but closer to the station you will see Len, which specializes in Asian Infusion dishes. You can find delicious dishes with Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, Japanese, and Vietnamese influences.

Another good option is Blue Plate, which claims to serve international food, but their specialty is definitely the pasta. Your set meal will include salad, homemade fresh baked bread, soup, your main course (I like the *ume* cream sauce) with a finale of coffee and dessert.

As for entertainment venues, Himeji does not have dance clubs worth going to...Osaka and Sannomiya are your better bets for that..but there are a few interesting bars worth your time and money. Public House Hosanna is a British style pub with fish and chips to snack on and pints of Guinness to quench your thirst - though a little pricey.

Nobu is a newly opened narrow stand-up bar that serves most drinks at 500yen, a good set up for meeting people with everyone standing around chatting.

If sitting is your style, Mr. B's is another newly opened bar that has drinks of your choice for 500yen. Barry the owner claims you are in America once you've entered the door and he also serves some nice American food if you are missing it already!

Tiger Pub (above the Sports Bar) is also in the Uomachi/Tatemachi area (NW of the station by 7 min. walk) and has a good happy hour until 9pm. Tiger Pub usually hosts several parties throughout the month and packs the place out with a good mix of *Gaijin* and Japanese.

If you google Himeji Castle or Mt. Shosha you will find more information but if you would like to learn more about Himeji city, ask an ALT that lives in this area or stop by the information desk outside the Central Exit of the station. This is a good website to use as well [www.himeji-kanko.jp/english/](http://www.himeji-kanko.jp/english/)

As all good things do come to an end, eventually it will be your time to leave but remember to come back and visit Himeji again...Its worth more than just a single day trip to the castle!



## Restaurants, Bars and Other Things That Make Life Better in Aioi, Ako... and even Kamigori

Nate Lepley

Welcome to the wild wild west! Fortunately, it's not hard to escape to Kobe or Osaka from here, but if you want to kick it local-style, here are a few options.

Otherwise, it's BYO at the park or your apartment.

\*There is a video rental shop: Miraculously, there is a Tsutaya in Aioi. Get a membership card, pronto!

### Aioi

Perhaps the coolest thing about Aioi is that it has a bullet train station. The other notable thing about Aioi is its city icon: A plucky, anthropomorphic daikon radish named "Daichan," based on an *actual real-life vegetable* that drew national attention because it managed to grow through the pavement of a city street (only to be slashed to death by some horrible, mean-spirited person).

"Nate, that's truly amazing," you say, "but what on earth can a formerly sane person actually DO there?" Good question! The only time when people who don't live in Aioi actually go to Aioi is in late May, when the city hosts the Aioi Peron Festival. The rest of the year, Aioi is a place people usually leave when they are looking for urban pleasures such as karaoke, going out late, cinema, or anything like that.

If you are determined to stay in Aioi, or have accidentally gone to Aioi and can't leave for some reason, here are a few things that actually do exist:

\* There is a bowling alley (look for the giant bowling pin visible from the station).

\* There are a few decent eating establishments. **Raechan** (*okonomiyaki*); **Hakkaku Ramen** (88-yen gyoza on days ending in 8); **Edo-ya** (*yakitori*, with an English language menu written by a former Aioi JET); the little cafe next to Edo-ya; a Malaysian restaurant down the street from the station; and **Bravo Pizza** (expensive, but they deliver).

\* There are several bars, albeit in rather inconvenient places. The most accessible (and consequently the local JET favorite) is Panda, in one of the cabins near the big parking lot south of the station.

### Ako

Ako is about as far west you can go in Hyogo before it's Okayama. It's kind of like Oz, because every year some Hyogo JETs find themselves magically transported here due to a tragic mix of excessive alcohol consumption, sleepiness, and a terminal station for some of JR's limited express trains heading west from Osaka and Kobe.

Some people actually go to Ako by choice, as well. Why? Maybe because it's the hometown of some badss dudes - google "47" and "revenge" someday when you're in the mood for an entertaining samurai story.

So anyway, what to eat? A requisite stop is **Minato-ya** (*okonomiyaki*). Be sure to try Minato's *negi-niku-jagga tomato-chizu*. Another excellent restaurant is **Sakura-**

**gumi**, an Italian restaurant near Ako Castle.

Drinking? Check out Konpa cocktail bar, Rengaya, or Holanda-ya. Singing? Swing Karaoke is fun, but not cheap.

Beyond food and drink, what else does Ako have to offer? There are plenty of outdoor activities to partake in (local experts to ask are Minato and Ewan (find them both at the *okonomiyaki* shop). If you're interested in getting international, hook up with the Ako International Friendship Association (AIFA). They offer biweekly Japanese classes for foreigners on Tuesdays.

### Kamigori

While there is almost nothing to do in Kamigori, Joe lives there, and he's awesome. But if you're looking for him on a weekend, I bet you won't find him there!





# Kakogawa

Tori Lowe

Kakogawa's main claim to fame is a Special Rapid stop on the JR Kobe line. That officially makes us Awesome. Also, for those coming from Ono, Nishiwaki, and other places in Bumblefuck Central Hyogo, there is the Kakogawa Train-line, which terminates here.

One of my favorite things about Kakogawa is the river. There is loads of grass and room to move. There's also a marathon course for those athletically inclined people. I prefer just to head down there for Barbecues and random fireworks, and a spot of tennis on the tennis courts.

Another great place in Kakogawa is Hioka Park. The best access to there is from the JR Kakogawa line Hioka Station. The cherry blossoms there are fantastic. There is also a full sized rugby pitch, a small baseball stadium, and an athletics centre, where they offer cheap aerobics and other group exercisey stuff.

Kakogawa also has loads of nice places to eat and drink. South of Kakogawa train station, there are a few roads off the main shopping mall that have a lot of nice izakayas. My favorite is Anchan's, who serve a variety of Japanese foods, from Sushi to Kushikatsu (deep fried delicious stuff). The owner used to be a fisherman, so he knows who to get the best fish off! For adventurous people,

they are also licensed to serve Fugu (of *The Simpsons* fame). You can also often find certain ALTs getting a bit happy at the Secret Tree Bar (*Himitsu Kitchi*), where they will serve you just about any drink you for, and have delicious western-style food to boot.

There are a couple of bars around the place, such as the Hoohar Bar, The Reggae Bar, The Standing Bar, and Takuro's Bar. They are all a very short walk from the station (all within a 5 minute walking distance). If you like a bit of acoustic music, the owner of Takuro's often lets his customers play to the small bar from a little stage he has set up in the corner! Kakogawa also has a load of snack bars, and even a foreign

strip-club. I have yet to go to the Titty bar, but it looks very exotic from the outside...

Add to all this a cheap bowling alley (2000yen for a lane for 2 hours, as many players as you like), Karaoke, internet cafes, a movie theatre and the biggest Mitsubishi factory IN THE WORLD\*, and you have a happening town that everyone wants to live in! Come and visit some day!

\* This may not be true.



# Driving You Crazy!

## An Interview with Grayson Pritchard

Hyogo JETs, please welcome our newest sponsor, Wataki Automobiles! Wataki Automobiles is a very popular car rental company with JETs and ex-JETs alike and is where you can find Grayson Pritchard working hard for you so you don't have to endure the headaches associated with sorting out a vehicle in Japan. Grayson used to be a JET in this very prefecture and is now a successful representative for Wataki Automobiles. Read his story about how he transitioned from JET to Wataki and learn a bit about getting a car in Japan!

Grayson was on JET at Izushi High School in the north of Hyogo-ken for 3 years from 2001 to 2004. During his time as an ALT, Grayson was involved in many extra curricular activities that just made it impossible for him to leave! "Each year I decided to renew my contract because I just felt my time in the area wasn't up. I'd gotten involved enough with projects in the community that I had to stick around and see them to completion," said Grayson. His achievements include (but are not limited to!) building an Ultimate Frisbee league in the area, and helping to build an Afro-Cuban music/salsa dance scene in Tajima. Community minded, fit, and with a good sense of rhythm? Watch out ladies!

After his JET program gig ended, Grayson was lucky enough to land himself a job with Wataki Automobiles, which is situated in Toyooka (also in the North of Hyogo-ken). When asked about the transition from JET to Wataki Automobiles, Grayson said, "Working for a Japanese company is very different from working as an ALT.

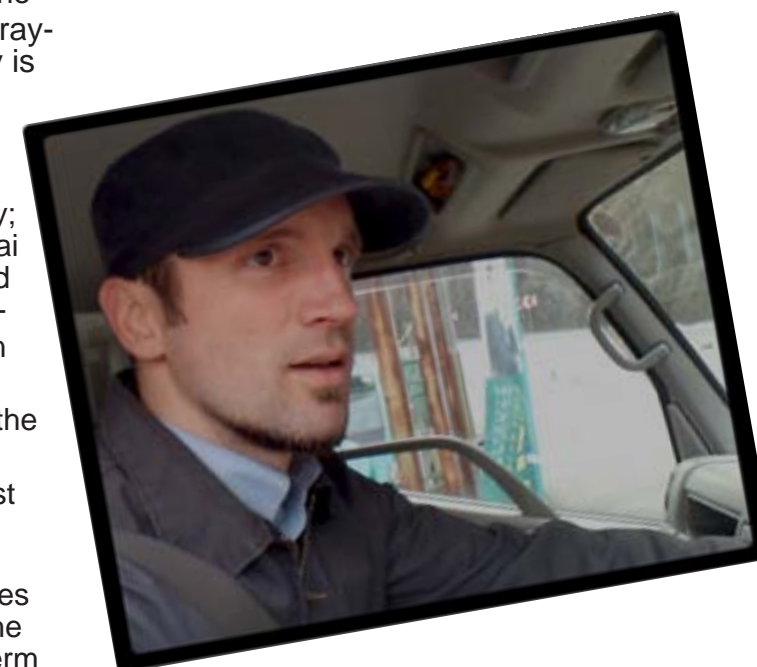
Companies operate quite differently from schools, though there are some similarities. There's the same kind of staunch bureaucracy; the same kind of pecking order -- sempai-kohai thing, age equals superiority kind-of-thing. And there are much higher work expectations!" Apparently, Wataki Automobiles makes Grayson work pretty hard for his pay- he said it was an eye-opening experience to see just how high the level of service that he and his coworkers are expected to give their customers. Yep, he must surely miss the life of an ALT!

It is comforting to know that Wataki Automobiles are working Grayson so hard, as it is one of the most popular, if not THE most popular, long-term

car rental companies amongst JETs in Hyogo-ken. Having a car in Japan is important to those people stuck out in the inaka. It can also be a handy item for those people living in the shitty who are eager to explore a bit more of Japan at their own pace, or just get from A to B comfortably during summer/winter/rainy season! However, owning a car, as you know, can be rather expensive particularly in the land of the Rising Sun, so it's best to speak to the experts before making any rash decisions. Also, when buying a car there is all sorts of red tape and hoops to jump through before your car is yours.

At Wataki Automobiles, they recommend leasing a car, as all maintenance and upkeep is provided by the lease company- including the pesky "shaken", which is the inspection fee of your car. Shaken has often been known to destroy a couple of months worth of social engagements! Also, leasing companies will find you the best insurance for your needs. Wataki themselves are a liaison for Kyoei Kasai insurance company, which is one of the more reliable insurance agencies out there!

If you want to know more about leasing a car, please don't hesitate to call Grayson. He is a really great guy and very helpful. And bonus, he is a JET alumnus, so he is well equipped to deal with your needs! You can contact him at the International Division of Wataki Automobiles Toyooka, on 0796-22-4155 or email him at stickmanwataki@gmail.com.





# Japanese History and Culture Lesson

## Meiji Ideology and the Search for a National Identity

Tori Lowe

*This is the first part of a three part extravaganza for those with a limited knowledge of Japanese history regarding the Meiji Restoration!*

The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), was a turbulent time in Japanese history (Daikichi 1985, p.6). Japan began a rapid transformation from feudalism, with its autonomous domains, to a modern nation-state with one central authority (Anderson 1991, p.95). The catalyst for this change was the need to strengthen the Japanese country against colonialism and its associated exploitation (Reischauer 1988, p.79). In order to defend Japan from the West, the Meiji revolutionaries saw the need to implement strategies to conform Japan to what they perceived as Western 'civilization.' Rather than allow the gradual assimilation of Western concepts into the Japanese lifestyle, the Meiji restorers rigorously pursued their adoption (Daikichi 1985, p.6). That is, a new 'way of life' was enforced upon the Japanese people. However, the immense transformation from feudal country to united nation-state could not have occurred without the active participation of the general population. A sense of 'nation' and 'national identity' had to be instilled in the population whilst in the process of 'state' building.

The Meiji Restoration refers to the period in Japanese history when the Tokugawa Shogunate regime, or *bakufu*, was forcibly replaced by the Emperor - the Imperial family was 'restored' to what was believed as its 'rightful place' as the central authority of Japan (Anderson 1991, p.94). In 1868, the *bakufu* was overthrown by a band of middle-ranked samurai under the banner *Sonno Joi* - 'Revere the Sovereign, Expel the Barbarians' (Anderson 1991, p.94). The Meiji Restoration was not just the restoration of power to the Imperial court, but also was the commencement of 'a series of reforms calculated to create a unified modern nation' (Lu 1997, p.305). The seizure of power in Japan, and the subsequent modernization of Japan, was thus done in the name of the Imperial family, and so the Meiji Restoration was named after the first Emperor, and spans the length of his reign (Reischauer 1988, p.82)<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst the Meiji leaders had been calling for "Imperial Restoration" others had been calling for "Renewal" (Daikichi 1985, p.27). Agrarian uprising had shaken the rhythmic pastoral life of the people and brought with them new concepts of reform (Daikichi 1985, p.27). The influx of foreigners, or 'barbarians' as they were known, had also awoken a sense of uncertainty within Japan. 'Barbarian' penetration was abrupt and menacing, and those with any kind of political awareness were willing to rally behind any self-defense measures conceived by the new centralized government (Anderson 1991, p.96). However, the fragmentation of the country had to be overcome.

In the early Meiji period, questions of 'how to make the government stable, how to catch up with Western nations, and how to enrich the nation through industrialization' were continually debated (Lu 1997, p.345). It was during this time that slogans such as '*bunmei kaika*' (civilisation and enlightenment), '*fukoku kyouhei*' (a wealthy nation and a strong army) and '*shokusan kogyo*' (encouraging industry) were popularly used as emblems of national policy (Gluck 1985, p.18). All of these slogans are indicative of the understanding the Meiji leaders had of the position of Japan amongst

other nations. They realized<sup>2</sup> that if they wanted equal treaties with, and to avoid being exploited by, Western nations, they had to be accepted as a modern nation-state. As Japan had been isolated for so long<sup>3</sup>, there was little knowledge of international relations and international relations were viewed from position within the national hierarchy based on the supremacy of superiors over inferiors (Anderson 1991, p.97). The Meiji government did not want Japan to be seen as inferior, so set itself the task of creating a nation-state that would be able to meet the West on equal terms (Beasley 1973, p.1).

Meiji Restorers had used Western military technology and techniques to overthrow the *bakufu* and centralize the governing authority, but could not rely on brute force to maintain political legitimacy of their new state (Anderson 1991, p.94). Bruce Stronach (1995) defines the 'state' as 'the coercive and legal power of the government and its institutions to command compliance from the population over which it rules' a purely political concept and is made up of both machinery of the state, the laws, and the institutions of a political system, as well as 'the government' (p.xvii). To maintain a state that was relying on the strength of just one institution, the military, to command compliance would be exhausting on resources and could only be a temporary measure if Japan was to modernize to Western standards.



The implementation of the state was largely aided by the power systems in place during feudal times. Hierarchies that were well established during the feudal regime enabled the central government to be dispersed to even the smallest of country hamlets (Gluck 1985, p.11). The Meiji government had strong links with the samurai elite, wealthy landlords and a newly emerging bourgeoisie (Tipton 2002, p.36), which gave them access to the top levels of the existing hierarchies. The state was thus able to directly exploit the peasant class that it had freed from the subjugation of the old feudal systems (Anderson 1991, p.95). By making use of the power of people with positions of consequence, the Meiji government was able to fortify the bases of the government (Lu 1997, p.305). Village administration was used to carry out matters of national administration, such as tax laws, land-value fixing and the establishment of schools (Daikichi 1985, p.28). The Meiji government had the 'power' resources, other than their own military, required to coordinate the new state.

To be continued...

Due to space issues, we are unable to publish the Bibliography. If you would like a copy of the Bibliography, please email [torilowe@hotmail.com](mailto:torilowe@hotmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> The Meiji Restoration is often divided further into 'early Meiji' and 'late Meiji' periods. The early Meiji, 1868-1887, are seen as the 'pragmatic decades' of Meiji, which were characterized by political developments including centralization, conscription, tax reform, the movement for parliamentary government and the drafting of the constitution (Gluck 1985, p.17). The late Meiji period is characterized by the promulgation of the Meiji constitution and the issuance of the Imperial Rescript on Education (Lu 1997, p.345).

<sup>2</sup> It is hard to decide whether or not they really had to Westernize to maintain power over their own affairs; however, the experiences of other Asian nations show that they were probably right to do so.

<sup>3</sup> In 1636, Japan began a period of self-imposed seclusion that lasted until the 1850s when Japan was forced to open its ports to American ships (Reischauer 1988, p.68; p.78).





# Getting to Know Random JETs

**Name:** Adela Levis

**Please call me:** Adela

**School and Location in Hyogo:** Sayo High School, 1h north-west of Himeji

**How we know you:** Bar hopping with Robyn Bailey in Kobe, AJET

**Birthday:** April , 29th 1983 - Taurus all the way

**Born and raised:** in Zagreb, Croatia and Saarbruecken, Germany

**Family:** my bad-ass sis, 19, my mommy and daddy and my kitty "Jaeger"

**University and Degree:** B.A. German Lit with French Minor (ummm...you know)

**Other jobs you have had:** McDonalds, finish carpentry, tutoring

**Travels:** Barcelona, France, London, Germany, ex-Yugo

**Shumi wa nan desuka:** apparently studying... and going out to cause gaijin trouble

**Favorites:** picnics, daisies, vodka, feminism, animal rights

**Food:** PIZZA, the wood-oven kind

**Sports:** ugh, I wish

**Music:** African, Spanish, French, reggae

**Shop:** damn you capitalists

**TV Show:** since "alluc" I am sick of all of them

**Movie:** .45 (check it out on alluc.org)

**Most Proud Achievement:** coming here

**Best life experience:** living in Orleans, France

**Motto to live by:** "Don't dream your life, live your dreams"

**I remember when...** America had a president who didn't suck ass

**What are you drinking?** Water out of a "<3 KISS" bottle

**Best thing about JET so far?** getting invited to Japanese families' homes

**Why should we elect you President of the World?** Because I am a pacifist, but know how to kick ass

**Funniest story involving a student?** A Special Ed student bursts into the packed teacher's room and proceeds to very loudly ask me a question in Japanese. Since I only understood "In America" and something that I thought meant "hot" I figured he was asking me if it was "hot in America." Patiently, using the few words of Japanese that I know and English, I explain that "Yes, in the south it is the case, but in the north only rarely." He walks away satisfied, when a young, hip, male teacher walks over to me and calmly informs me that the student had asked me if we "had life-style related diseases"

**Other interesting trivia:** I need a sewing machine-got one?! And I am set on learning to play the Harmonica.

**My top tip for teaching:** Don't get irritated no matter what, let the JTE take care of the trouble makers.

**When the class is TOO QUIET I...**start singing

**Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** Why not?!

**Name:** Emily Duncan

**Please call me:** Emily and not "Mary" as many locals are want to do.

**School and Location in Hyogo:** Himeji Nishi Senior High School. That's in Himeji, a few minutes behind the castle.

**How we know you:** [see page 3]

**Birthday:** November 4 - Scorpio with a Leo Rising

**Born and raised in:** Born - Rock Hill, South Carolina. Raised in and around Athens, Georgia

**Family:** my dad and 2 younger sisters, along with our cats, Moustafa and Snarf.

**University and Degree:** University of Georgia/ BFA in Painting with a minor in Japanese

**Other jobs you have had:** I've worked since I was 15, so I've had too many crap jobs. Most have been in the "customer service industry." The longest job I had before JET was working in a video store for close to 5 years.

**Travels:** all around the American southeast; I've seen all the main islands of Japan; Korea; New Zealand, Thailand; Cook Islands

**Shumi wa nan desuka:** *saikin?* Studying Japanese, reading and sleeping. Sometimes drinking.

**Favorites:**

**Food:** Mexican food, dill pickles, cheese, and pizza. All of which you can get but a pale ghost of in Japan.

**Sports:** N/A

**Music:** *Never ask the members of my tribe this question. There's too much music, and we want to add so many qualifiers to the answer.* Recent rotation: Flaming Lips, Eef Barzelay, Garbage, Ben Folds.

**Shop:** Tokyu Hands. I rarely buy stuff, but I love going there.

**TV Show:** past - *The Adventures of Pete and Pete* and *Dave Attell's Insomniac*

present - *My Name is Earl* and *Mythbusters*

**Movie:** [see music disclaimer] How about some Asian stuff I liked? *Kikujiro* is really good. As is Shohei Imamura's *The Eel*. Imamura also made a film called *Black Rain* (*Kuro Ame*) which is about the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing. Prepare to feel sad.

**Most Proud Achievement:** when my dad came to Japan and could see what I do here.

**Best life experience:** living here and being tested on an almost weekly basis. It's good to know what I can do.

**Motto to live by:** "Picture me rollin'"...Nah, that's not a motto. I don't really have one. Do I look like I have time to hang motivational posters 'n shit in here? I's gots stuff to do!

**I remember when...** I ate the world's largest jawbreaker. It was about as big as a softball and had a special re-sealable plastic case. Thinking about it now, all I can think is, "Damn, that was *nasty*."

**What are you drinking?** Water and occasionally that Red Vitamin Water stuff.

**Best thing about JET so far?** meeting cool people, traveling and eating all kinds of weird stuff that I would never eat at home (and sometimes, never eat again - i.e. *tako no tamago*. Damn, that was nasty too)

**Why should we elect you President of the World?** That's one of those things that you'll think is a good idea when you're drunk. Then, the next day, you'll wake up and check your camera to look at all your awesome pictures only to find that you took a picture of some dude, your feet, and a door handle. Around that time the idea of having a "President of the World" won't seem so cool.

**Funniest story involving a student?** When my friends came to visit last year I had them come to school. On the fly we decided that since my school is Himeji Nishi and we're on the west side of town, we would teach the kids the "westside" gang sign. I got a great shot of the whole class doing it. Even a few boys got a pimp lean going on. The best part was the JTE directing the kids by saying, "Please copy me. This is how you should do it. Hold it up high!"

**Other interesting trivia:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Xn6AumD9R0>

**My top tip for teaching:** Patience. Smile and repeat yourself if you need to.

**When the class is TOO QUIET I...**talk in a funny voice.

**Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** Yay. Just be careful that it doesn't become "stupid human tricks" time in class.





# Getting Nekkid in Public:

## Onsen Etiquette

Tori Lowe

Looking into my crystal ball, I see you getting naked with a lot of strangers... I see you confused and feeling vulnerable... I see you hot and sweaty and did I mention naked? Mmm oooo yeah...chica wow wow.

Onsens can be a bit daunting at first, particularly if you are quite a modest person and not used to getting naked in a room full of strangers. Those of you that have been here for a year or more would probably by now be quite familiar with the ole group bathing thing, and into it BIG TIME (perverts). No doubt you are chomping at the bit to take the new JETs in your town to the nearest fabulous Onsen that you know of; and not just because you want to see them naked. The joys of onsens are many; as are the general codes of practice once inside.

Most Onsens have soap and shampoo, but you might want to take your own just in case. You should put it into a plastic basket, or some kind of waterproof bag to take into the Onsen with you. It gets wet in there! As you are only allowed to have soap and shampoo in the shower part of the onsen, it's best to have some way to keep all your products together for when you move into the baths. It is absolutely essential that you wash thoroughly before getting into the bath, and that you have rinsed all the soap off yourself.

If you are particularly modest, you should take in a "modesty towel." This should be no bigger than a hand towel- you will look completely ridiculous if you keep a big towel wrapped around you and that is probably the easiest way to bring unwanted attention onto yourself!! The towel should NEVER go into the water of the bath. You have to drop the towel before you enter the bath water. Pointing to the other side of the room and shouting, "What's that over there?" is a perfect way to cause a diversion if you are worried about someone seeing you without the towel.

If you have long hair, make sure it is tied up and out of the water. There is nothing worse than having someone else's long hair wrap around your naked back. And everyone will know if it is your hair, Blondy. Basically, nothing but skin is allowed into the bath. (OK, yes, you are allowed to dip your

pubic hair.. nit-picker).

Make sure you drink plenty of water before entering the onsen if you are planning on taking your time. It is very easy to become dehydrated. I once witnessed one poor girl pass out after a particularly hot onsen. So be careful. It was pretty undignified being sprawled on the floor, blacked out, completely naked, let me tell you! If the water is too hot in the bath, and you start feeling dizzy, get out of the bath as soon as possible, but slowly. Edging your way out bit by bit, without any sudden standing, will ensure that you are out safely!

A problem I find with going to an onsen is

"Where should I look?" I don't really know the answer to this question yet, but generally I try to avoid staring at the oldies in the bath for too long contemplating if my body will do what theirs is doing some day. \*Shudder\* There are often beautiful scenic views from the baths, so try to focus on these...

Other things to remember: pee before you go into the shower room. Running water will make you need to go. Also, try to get an idea of the layout of the onsen before you go in. There are usually maps or diagrams of the rooms at the reception desk. You don't want to miss anything!

Girls: it is bad etiquette to use the onsen when the painters are in. If you do still want to go, use a tampon and hide the string as best as you can. In regards to "personal grooming" you may find yourself feeling a bit exposed if you have gone for a bit of a Brazilian style; as the favored style over here seems to be the "bigger the better" in regards to bush. Apparently, having a pube-free pubic area means you have had crabs. Tut tut!

The main thing to remember about Onsens is to RELAX. And enjoy. And respect the fact that you are sharing the bath water with literally thousands of other people.



WEEKEND TRIPS FOR LESS THAN 20,000YEN!

# Amanohashidate

Angela Nicholson

Amanohashidate, roughly translated as "a bridge in heaven" is ranked one of the top three scenic sights of Japan and guess what... it's right on our doorstep! Situated in the northwest of Kyoto Prefecture it's a quick and relatively cheap trip to make for any beach getaway.

If you live on the southeast side of the prefecture you can take the limited express Tango Explorer all the way from Amagasaki to Amanohashidate (all on the one train folks) in just over 2 hours for

for around 5500 yen. Alternatively, you can take local trains for around 2700 yen, but it'll take you more than double the time.

From the south west side of Hyogo you can get from Himeji to Amanohashidate (going through Toyooka) for less than 3000 yen one way, but it will also take you about 4 hours.

If you live in Tajima, this is a short trip for you guys, just jump on a train to Fukuchiyama and from there take a short train up to Amanohashidate. It's as easy as that!!

If you're looking to spend the night in the area, check out some of the local *ryokan* where you can get one nights accommodation including two meals (one of which is crab - the local delicacy) for about 7500 yen per person. Of course, like most things in Japan, expect these prices to be higher in peak periods.

Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find a good English website for this area but if you can make your way around a Japanese website, or have a friend who can, then I recommend taking a look at this website for the Miyazu Amanohashidate Tourist Information Center <http://www.amanohashidate.jp/>. You'll find all the information you need on this site, including recommendations for local *Ryokan* and other places to stay.





# “Japan just wouldn’t be Japan without...”

Robin Crowder

Whether you’ve been here for three years or three months, no doubt your life as a JET has allowed you some time to reflect on the intricacies of the Japanese society and culture and while some aspects may be less than desirable, it is probably better to laugh them off and focus on the positive. After being asked many times by friends what I liked best about Japan, I finally decided to learn from a wise and witty master of late night talk show fame, and start listing off the things that make this country what it is. This is in my personal experience thus far, in no particular order, slightly sarcastic but generally genuine take on Japanese life, however, it is meant to be humorous and I hope it will not offend anyone!

Top 10 Greatest Things about Japan (*You will notice that karaoke did not make it onto this list!*):

## **There is an entire aisle in the grocery store devoted to tofu.**

Not only is the entire aisle devoted to tofu, but there are about 25 different types of tofu one can buy: soft tofu, firm tofu, silken tofu, grilled tofu, seasoned tofu, cubed tofu, deep fried tofu triangles, breaded seasoned tofu... not to mention the fact that all of this tofu is ridiculously cheap! No really, I heart tofu.

## **Onsens might just be the greatest thing in the world.**

Seriously, where Seriously, where else can you go to get that deep down clean, relaxed, post-onsen feeling? Furthermore, can you use your bathtub and shower as a place for social gatherings? I didn’t think so.

## **Onigiri - little triangles of carbohydrate goodness.**

Dr. Atkins would have a heart attack and die (oh wait, he already did that...) if he were ever to come to Japan. Onigiri is possibly the most interesting and convenient little snack/meal that has something for everyone - whether you’re vegetarian, vegan or mad carnivore, you can always find a filling that meets your needs. Not to mention their fun triangular shape...

## **The most random holidays ever.**

The Japanese seem to take holidays from around the world and combine them in order to make their own special holiday. For example, in October, there was no school due to “Health and Sports Day.” This month there is “Culture Day” and “Labour Thanksgiving Day” (because we work hard and are thankful for it, or because others are thankful for our labour? I’m still not sure...) I also look forward to celebrating “Coming of Age Day” as well as “Constitution Memorial Day” and of course, “Marine Day.” Excellent.

## **Convenience stores are actually convenient.**

Not only because *konbinis* are located on every street corner, or because you are likely no more than 500 m away from a Family Mart if Lawson’s isn’t your style, but simply the fact that you can buy breakfast, lunch and dinner, underwear, stationary, toiletries, magazines and any variety of other sundries in one “konbinient” location make Japanese convenience stores worthy of a place on this list!

## **The High Fashion of English on shirts.**

I occasionally feel guilty laughing at these English shirts since some poor Japanese soul probably spent a lot of time thinking up the translation, but sometimes the shirts are just hilarious, with connotations that are slightly extreme. For example, I saw a middle aged woman wearing a shirt that said, “What is please? Love is not pleasure, desire is pleasing. Do it spread eagle.” If I spoke enough Japanese, I would have asked her where she bought it! Occasionally, there is just a slight spelling or grammar mistake to make it funny only if you look close enough - for example, “After the clam comes a storm.” Another great example was worn by a young male with a picture of the new pope silhouetted in black, but wearing a gold cross. Below the picture it said, “Gold is dope.”...how can you not laugh at that?! It also boggles my mind, that in a country extremely anti-drug, we see so many people wearing shirts with gigantic marijuana leaves on them.

## **The national love of comic books.**

Though I have never really gotten into comic books myself, I love how in Japan everyone from the four year old girls learning to read to the middle aged business man to the old woman with a cane read “manga.” And it’s not as if they’re just skimming through the latest *Archie Digest* - no way, these are entire NOVELS in comic book form! Seriously, I saw a man on the train reading what looked like a gigantic 500 page book and was very impressed until I looked over and noticed that there were an awful lot of anime drawings on the pages. I wonder if manga is so popular because it is easier to the masses to read than a lengthy novel written in ambiguous kanji, or if Japanese people just really like pictures...

## **The “90 degree Nannies”**

Surely you have all seen this - the old ladies who walk around bowed over at an almost perfect 90 degree angle. I know that I shouldn’t find this amusing as the curvature is likely due to years of back breaking labour in the rice fields and I give them full credit for still being able to function in daily life... but I can’t help but wonder if they sleep with their legs sticking straight up in the air...

## **People will drop everything and do anything they can to help you.**

Whether this is because I am the foreigner who speaks less than a little Japanese and probably walks around with a permanently confused look on her face, or because the Japanese are just generally helpful I don’t know, but either way it’s greatly appreciated! I have had post office workers reopen their wickets after closing because I got there late; random people in the grocery store

point out every type of vegetarian sushi available after I asked if one kind contained meat; a friend even had a completely random stranger give her 1000 yen for a cab after he decided that the temple she wanted to visit was too far for walking. Whether all these actions are of out sincerity or fear of the foreigner shaming traditional culture, it doesn’t even matter...

## **The constant contradiction of old and new.**

Japan is a country where the toilets warm your ass, wash your ass, hide the noises from your ass and flush the expulsions from your ass all on their own, but most houses have no hot running water. It is a country from which the latest technological advances often originate, but people still use almost only kerosene heaters. It is the land of every feature imaginable on a cell phone, but my students still use mini disc players. On any given street you can find old, traditional, Buddha statues on the roof, sort of falling down houses right next door to brand new, beautifully modern, Western style mansions. It’s fabulous.

Want to add to this list? If you can finish this sentence, “Japan just wouldn’t be Japan without,” send your thoughts for this new feature to [submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com](mailto:submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com). Whether your observations are sarcastic or sincere, they are surely echoed by other JETs and will make for interesting reading!



# English Sensei Spirit

## Introduction Gambling Game (for the newbies)

I would love to take the credit for this idea but actually, it came from a fellow JET who's just returned home. Me and my co-worker did this activity though and it was an absolute blast!! The kids absolutely loved it and we had lots of fun too. A word for the wise though...this lesson can get noisy, so it's best to do it in a classroom away from other classes...if you can.

**Time:** 30-50 minutes (depends on you).

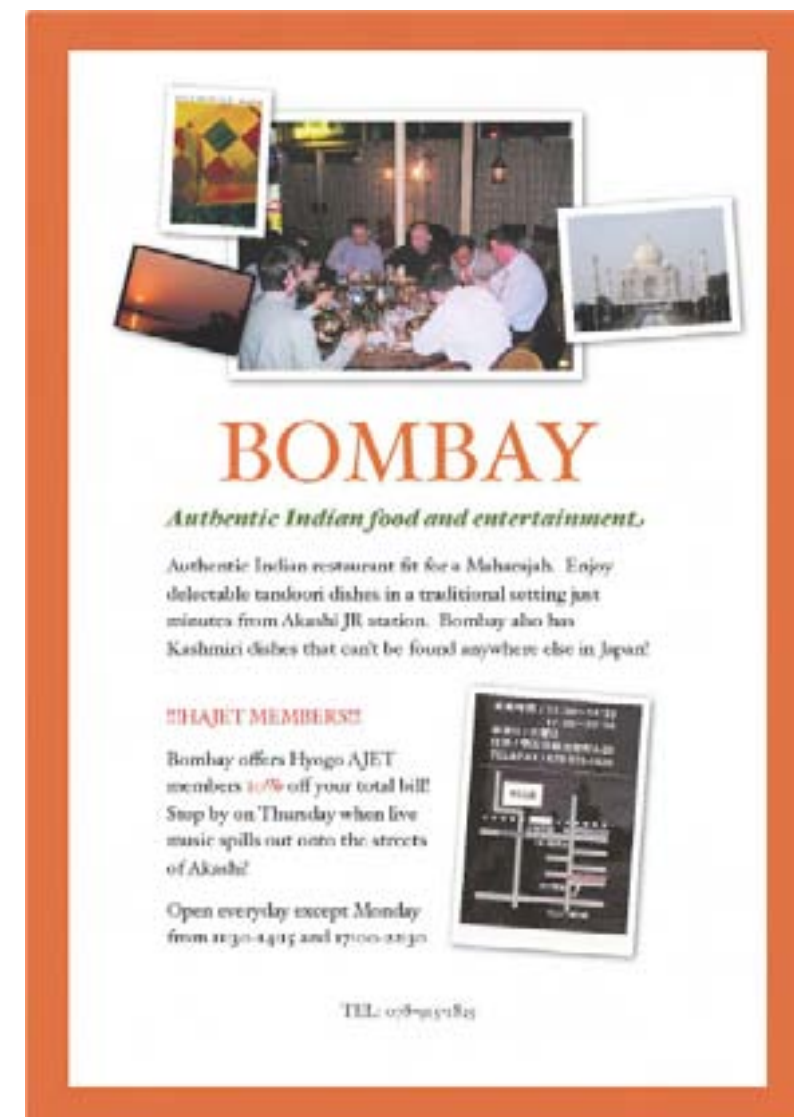
**Preparation:** Worksheets with multiple choice questions about you. Lots of (fake) money for the students to bet with! (you can buy at the 100yen shop, or make yourself!)  
The worksheet should have clear and simple questions. They must be multiple choice questions for this game to work! To take up a full lesson you probably need to have about 10 questions.

**Method:** In class, split the class into small groups. If you have 40 students then 10 groups of 4 is perfect. Try to keep the groups to 3 or 4 students. Obviously at the start of the lesson you need to tell them your name but don't give them any other information. Give each group a sheet with the multiple choice questions and a specified amount of cash per group and explain to them that they have to guess what the answer is to each question. Give them a little bit of time to look through the answers and if there are any questions or things they don't understand then now's the time to explain things.

Once every group looks like they have selected their answers you can begin the game. On the board write a list of all the teams (1-10) with enough area for them to write their answers underneath. Go through each question one at a time and have each group write their guess and place some money down as a bet on that guess. If they get the answer correct then they double their money. If their answer is incorrect then they lose all the money they put down...it's double or nothing.

As you go through each question and give the answer, once the students have stopped screaming because they won or lost, show them things like maps and pictures etc that correspond with the answers. For example, I asked the question "What country does Angela come from?" to give them the answer I pulled out a map and asked what country it was. Most of them recognized it. By making your introduction interactive it gets the students in a good mindset right from the beginning and my students had a lot of fun with this.

If you have anything you can give as prizes from home then a small prize for the winning team is always good. Otherwise candy and cool stickers work a treat too. ☺





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Reduced rates at AJET functions such as:  
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Back 2 School party, & river rafting  
expedition just to name a few

Membership Rates are 2500 for your initial membership and 2000 for a renewal. For more information, how to sign up, or questions, please direct them to the Hyogo AJET PR...Brandon Kramer ([hajetpr@gmail.com](mailto:hajetpr@gmail.com))

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# HYOGO AJET EVENTS

## 2007/2008

**September 1st:** Back to School Beer Garden, Coconuts, Himeji

**8th & 9th:** Surfing trip, Shikoku

**15th:** Osaka Scavenger Hunt (TBC)

**29th:** AFL Grand Final, Murphy's, Osaka

**October 13th & 14th OR 20th & 21st:** White water rafting/canyoning, Shikoku

**21st:** Paintballing

**27th:** Tajima Halloween Party (TBC)

**November 4th:** Mt Rokko Hike, Sannomiya

**18th:** Mt Heizian Hike, Kyoto

**22nd:** Thanksgiving Dinner, Blue Plate, Himeji

**December 2nd:** Hike?

**8th:** Christmas Party, Osaka? Akashi?

**January Mid-Year Conference Charity Event**

**26th & 27th:** Tajima Ski Trip (TBC)

**February 9th -11th:** Yuki Matsuri Trip (organized by Hokkaido AJET)

**16th:** Naked Man Festival, Okayama

**23rd:** Valentine's Event - Osaka?

**March 9th:** Hike?

**20th - 23rd:** Nisekko/Black Diamond Lodge Ski Trip, Hokkaido (TBC)

**April**