



hyogo times

December, 2007

Rain will change into snow soon.
What shall we do with snow?
Making a snowman
or a snow hut?
Or doing snowball fight?!

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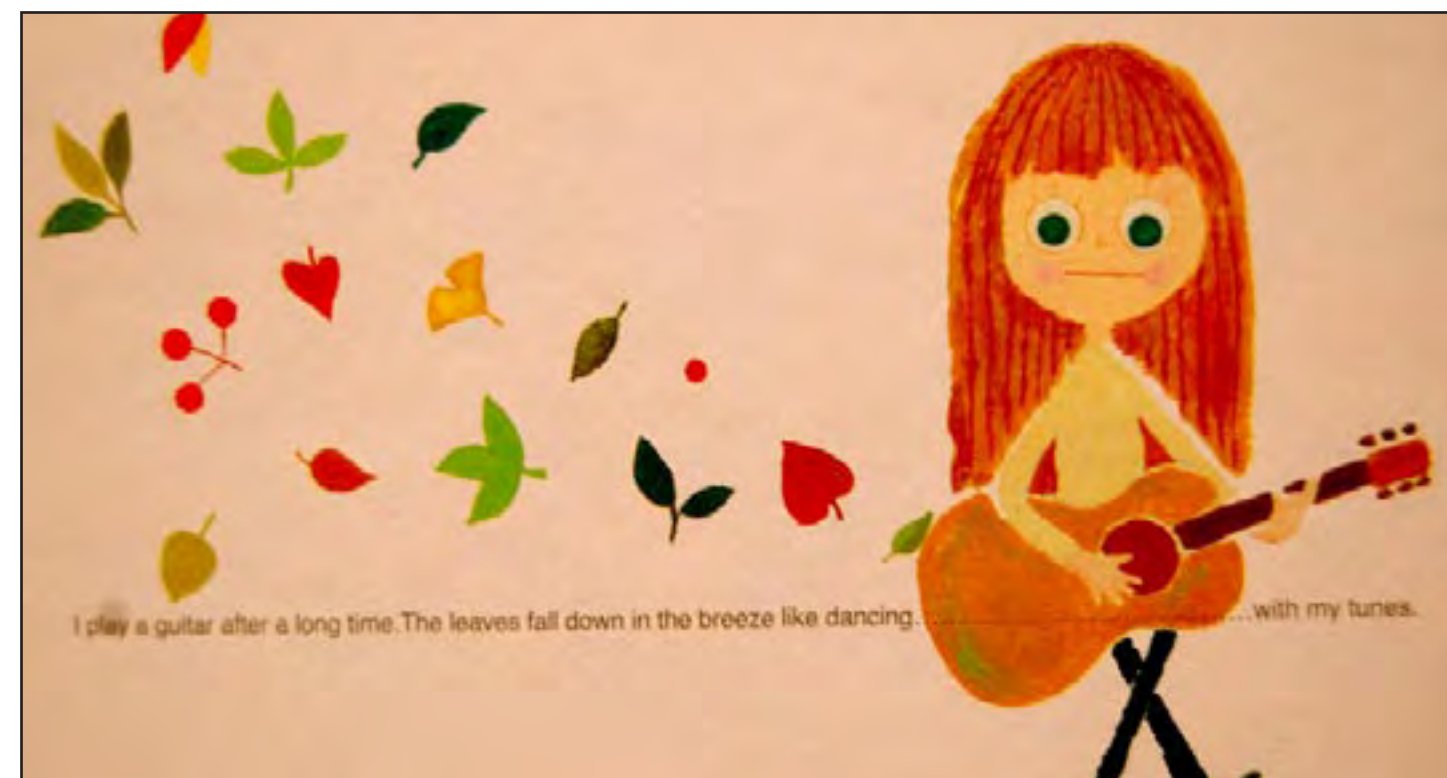
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Photos by Wendy Boon

This month's cover photo is of an "English" Christmas card spotted by Wendy Boon.
Send your photos to: submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, photos, 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
<http://hyogoajet.org>

From The Editor...

Well the year is coming to an end and so is my tenure at the Hyogo Times.

Although it doesn't feel like the end of the year (its cold for starters, and it's still pretty much the middle of the school year), it's time for me to wrap up 2007 and get myself all prepared for 2008 — particularly for my triumphant return to my homeland.

I only have eight months to achieve what I should have done in the past two years; so unfortunately I have to hand over the reigns of the Hyogo Times.

Next month Kevin Shannon will be taking over the highly coveted role of Editor in Chief. Congratulations to Kevin on his new appointment! Also joining the ranks in the new role of Assistant Editor is Emerald Huang. I am confident that with Kevin and Emerald at the helm working in close cahoots with Jeff Morrice, the Hyogo Times will go from strength to strength!

Time has been flying recently. Before I worked on the Hyogo Times, the 16th of the month seemed to take forever (you know how it is... payday and all that). However, the Hyogo Times deadline seemed to come too quickly every month! Thus, I always forgot to send reminders about the looming deadline, and each Hyogo Times has been released late.

I take full responsibility for the tardiness of the Hyogo Times in the last 6 months, and apologise profusely. I really feel like I have let the side down a lot. So my humblest, most deep Japanese-style



bows to you all!

Anyway, I have enjoyed reading the monthly submissions, and I appreciate the time and effort that has gone into the articles each month. A particular thank you to the regulars; and also to friends that submitted graciously in the months when I was short of articles. There is a load of talent in Hyogo! Please keep submitting!!

Good luck to all in the New Year; I hope 2008 brings you good times and happiness!

—Tori

and from The PR...

Hello once again! Or as the natives would say, "kon-nichiwa!" It sure is cold outside! I hope by now everyone has invested in proper staying warm products, and are quite comfortable in un-insulated paradise! Soon we will all meet together in Kobe for our mid-year conference, and if you have the time, please come check out our charity events and let's enjoying Kobe together!

Speaking of enjoying, how are your New Year's Resolutions coming along? Have you been exercising every day? Studying Japanese more? Saving money? Cutting back on chocolate/alcohol/McDonald's/karaage-kun?

Normally at times like these, people in positions of extreme power and influence, such as the Hyogo PR, tend to give advice on good resolution ideas. I am going to do something different. I am going to offer good, solid advice on how to stick to whatever resolutions you may have made already, but IN JAPAN!

Let us begin by discussing the positive reward system. If you want to study more each week, how about making a deal with yourself? For every hour you study, you can spend one hour heating your house. Sound like a solid deal? If you study all day at work, you get a nice

warm night's rest. If you just couldn't pull yourself away from the internet during your free time at school, then perhaps you can spend the next day looking up hypothermia on Wikipedia.

Another effective method of enforcement is through punishment. I prefer Grandpa Kramer's method, at least when it comes to breaking addictions such as McDonald's. Many grandpas and even fathers, upon discovering that a child has started smoking, will force them to smoke a whole pack at once, or maybe 10. This leaves them feeling horrible, a lesson that the mind easily remembers. So, if you want to break away from a certain food group, or fast food in general, gorge yourself! That's right, Super-Size yourself every day for a month! Try it! I guarantee you won't even be able to watch a McDonald's commercial for a long, long while.

Well, that's as much valuable information as I can give away without charging you all by the hour, so I'll see you next month!

—Brandon



Fresh Meat

Say hello to the new H.T. editors

The *Hyogo Times* is going through some ch-changes. Our fearless leader Tori is moving on to greener rice paddies, leaving nothing but unqualified newbies in her wake, scrambling to pick up the pieces. Next time you see us we'll have a new

captain at the helm of the good ship *S.S. Hyogo Times*, and he's bringing along a... well, whatever it is you call an assistant captain. Let's see, Picard called Riker Number One, but he was really Number Two... Damnit... so confusing...

The Hyogo Times' new Editor in Chief, Kevin Shannon

Hey all! I'm apparently going to be the new editor of this wonderful newspaper, so I thought I should probably tell you a bit about myself. I'm 22 and I'm from Ireland — the land of saints, scholars and Guinness — or "the little country beside England" to my school kids. With red hair, blue eyes and the surname of Shannon (the longest river in Ireland), I'm pretty much as Irish as they come.

I only arrived in Japan at the end of July and love it here. I'm currently living in Hamasaka, a little fishing village in northern Hyogo. It's miles and miles from civilisation but has beautiful scenery and a lovely beach.

Despite what I said in my interview (I may have lied just a little!), I had no real interest in Japan before I came here. I spoke no Japanese (still don't really), never taught before and my entire logic for coming here was 'Ah sure why not — it might be a bit of craic' ('fun' for the non-Irish natives).

I turned out to be right and I really enjoy teaching at my two senior high schools. I'm not sure how long I'll be here for but I know I'll be sad to leave.

Anyways, I hope you'll keep reading the *Hyogo Times* and send me lots of articles (of



Traditionally leprechauns wear flamboyant green hats, but Kevin makes an exception for the holidays.

all kinds) to help keep this paper in business. But remember — you'll never get your hands on me Lucky Charms!

P.S: I don't always look as stupid as I do in this picture.



These drunk leprechauns have little to do with this intro, but we had to fill some space.

The Hyogo Times' new Assistant Editor in Chief, Emerald Huang

Hi Everyone!

My name is Emerald, and yes, I have two sisters named Ruby and Crystal. My parents aren't jewelers, by the way.

I'm a first-year JET, and I teach at a senior high school in Kakogawa. I went to the University of Toronto and majored in Spanish and cinema studies.

I love traveling and cooking — there doesn't seem to be a day that passes by without thinking about how to indulge my taste buds or planning the next trip to a foreign country I haven't been to.

I'll be the Assistant Editor for the *Hyogo Times* as of January, 2008. I hope to bring you something enjoyable to read after a hard day of work (really??).

Cheers!

Emerald Huang



Bar Trinity

JETS

1 free shot or soft
drink with another purchase
*Limit 1 per person per day

Countdown Party!!!
All You Can Drink
Sonic, Second Chance,
and Trinity

DJ Events

12/15 - House & Electro
12/22 - Drum & Bass

TEL: 078. 333. 1286

SUN-THURS: 19:00-2:00 FRI/SAT: 19:00-5:00

The ALT Perks

Life as a first-year JET

By Heather Whited

Reasons why I can't help but like my job, even on days when my sanity is threatened:

Miscommunication has never been so much fun!

I am trying my hardest to learn Japanese. Really, I am. Just ask all the teachers at school who now run whenever they see me coming towards them with my textbook clutched to my chest.

Whenever I think I know how to say something, I give it a go. Last week, the weather was perfect here in Himeji. While I was getting my coffee and admiring one of those gorgeous days, I smiled at another teacher and thought I'd comment (in Japanese) on the pleasant morning we were enjoying.

What I thought I said was "li tenki desu ne" (Isn't the weather good?). What I really said was "li denki desu ne." I wasn't quite sure I why her brow wrinkled the way it did, or why she peered up at the lights afterwards, until I realized later that I'd just made a declaration about how nice the electricity was.

Once she realized my intention she was quite amused. I'm expecting a gift of light bulbs on my desk any day now.

Fringe benefits

And by that of course I mean free food. Any time there's some-

thing in my vicinity that I admit to never having tasted before; I am immediately given some to sample. If I like, it (and sometimes even if I don't), I am showered with whatever new food I've discovered.

Sometimes, there's no reason for it, like when I was approached

gifts. Namely, my inability to cook. After weeks of seeing me with a Lawson's bag in tow at lunch time, my kyoto-sensei stopped me as I passed his desk.

After inspecting the contents of said Lawson's bag, he gave me the bento his wife made him for lunch that day, complete with a sympathetic shake of the head.

Maybe that's also why an expertly and beautifully wrapped English cookbook of Japanese recipes was left on my desk this morning...

Secret English skills!

Now, all of you have been in school long enough to know that the standard response to greeting one of your students "Good morning!" is normally to have them stare at the floor and mumble something you can't hear under their breath.

I was not expecting to greet a third grader at my junior high one morning and have him grin at me and say "Hey baby! What's up?" I had never heard a Japanese teenager do such a good impression of an American

one.

Then there are the boys who have gotten a hold of a travel guide and have memorized some of the book's English phrases for medical emergencies. However



What the hell are you saying?

by one teacher who had an unopened Cup o' Noodles that he thrust into my hands with a hearty bellow of "Present!"

Of course, sometimes there's a good reason for the culinary



Japan is filled with gaijin paparazzi who stalk gaijin ALTs for tabloid fodder.

helpful they might be when traveling, "Help, I've been hit by a car!" and "I have diarrhea" are simply not that useful during our typical class.

Or take the quiet teacher in the corner who, while listening intently to a deep conversation of mine with another teacher about natto, pipes up out of nowhere with, "Well, typically they enjoy natto around Tokyo, but it's only recently that people in the Kansai area have gotten a taste for it". Who knew that such a resource was lurking only a desk away?

Now if she could only elaborate on why the hell it has to stink so badly.

I am a trendsetter, rock star, comedian and psychiatrist all rolled into one!

This is especially true at elementary school, which always kind of leaves me with an inflated ego.

Maybe it's the group of girls that inevitably crowds around to look at my earrings and shoes with heartfelt wonder. Or maybe it's the hoard that swarms upon me with paper and pencil for my autograph after class. Or maybe it's the way that everything I say elicits gales of riotous laughter.

me gives me that warm fuzzy feeling deep down inside. Of course, that could be school lunch hitting my stomach.

I am cool enough to be recognized simply by a pair of shoes!

Japanese manners request that I leave my shoes at the entrance to the bathroom at my school, which unfortunately always gives away that it's me hiding in the stall at the end.

It never fails that if another teacher comes in when I am in the bathroom and spots my (apparently) trademark tan shoes with tiny black bows at the toes that that they greet me hello and strike up a conversation.

I like that my shoes are a symbol of me though, immediately recognizable by one and all.

And lastly, while we're on the subject of footwear, let me just take a moment to thank Japan for being perfectly cool with me wearing socks with any and all pairs of shoes.



Are those your outdoor shoes on top of the toilet seat? My word! Bad gaijin!!!

Ironie Chef Servin' up Sukiyaki

Sukiyaki Beef

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 Minutes

Serves: 4 people

You should use a traditional sukiyaki pan (or a portable hot plate with a big bowl on top—available just about anywhere) or an electric fry pan.

You should eat it as it cooks for a most delicious and warm winter treat.

Each person should have a small bowl containing a lightly beaten egg, and you dip the food in the egg as you eat it.

Method:

1- Rinse the noodles under hot water and drain. Cut noodles into 15cm lengths.

2- Remove and discard mushroom stems; cut a cross into the top of the caps.

3- Unwrap the thinly sliced beef from the packaging (the recipe here says to thinly slice the beef, but that's done for you in Japan).

4- Arrange the beef and all the other ingredients on a platter. Lightly beat the eggs in the individual bowls (with chopsticks to be culturally compliant).

5- Heat greased sukiyaki pan on a portable gas cooker at the table, add a quarter of the beef, stirfry until partly



No matter how closely you follow the recipe, your food will not look like this.

Ingredients:

- 400g of shirataki noodles
- 8 fresh Shitake mushrooms
- 600g beef rump steak
- 4 green onions, chopped finely
- 300g of spinach, trimmed, cut coarsely
- 125g tin of bamboo shoots, drained
- 200g firm tofu cut into 2 cm cubes
- 4 eggs

Broth:

- 1 cup (250mls) Japanese Soy Sauce
- ½ cup sake
- ½ cup mirin
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup (110g) caster sugar

cooked. Add a quarter of each of the vegetables, tofu, noodles and broth. Dip the cooked ingredients in the egg before eating.

6- As ingredients and broth are eaten, add the remaining ingredients and broth to the pan, in batches. Enjoy!

Love and Relationships:

Single Ladies... By Brenda McKinney

I was doing some cleaning in my little tatami apartment the other day when I came across the handouts from Tokyo Orientation. One sheet in particular, from a workshop for female JETs, caught my attention and I thought it was worth sharing a bit of it with all of you (either as a reminder or in case you missed it the first time around).

So this month, in the spirit of Girl Power ('cause I've been watching way too much of Scary Spice on *Dancing with the Stars* lately...), I'm taking you back to the beginning of it all (or, well, life in Japan). Here's another little tasty bit for the ladies, basically just some good info and reminders for women in Japan, taken from the Female JETs seminar. Oh, and once again, sorry to the lads. I promise I'll put something in here for you too one of these months!

The Scene – Dating & Relationships in Japan

First off, most foreign women (both JETs and non-JETs alike) agree that being single in Japan is usually different than being single back home. Oftentimes, being single back home is a matter of choice, but here in Japan, it seems more like a *given*. Back home, there always appears to be a "possibility" of finding love. In Japan, it appears to be a myth. And while all of us are involved in some form of community as members of this program, those communities don't always offer a ton of options.

Feelings of loneliness, mixed with living in a foreign land, can be profound. Random and everyday compliments are few (well, this could be different depending on your students and how *kawaii* they undoubtedly find you), and *sincere* attention



"Why'd we come to Japan? JET chicks. We hear they're desperate, right Enis?"

and human touch decreases.

Often, in regards to friendships and socializing, you must start from scratch. But more than that, the top issue women usually have to tackle as a woman in Japan is dealing with the realization of being a woman in a male-oriented society.

Ok, so that's a lot of negative news for the ladies. Moreover, for all you first years, this is the time of year when the "honeymoon period" might start to wear off and the small things (especially those just mentioned) can have a bigger effect than they normally would. This can lead to some really negative thoughts about not only Japan, but also dating.

So... what to do?

- Remember how awesome you are!
- Maintain a positive and healthy at-

titude and outlook on life.

- Be careful of feeling over-critical or defensive.

- Be careful of giving off "don't-talk-to-me-you-jerk" vibes, you have to be open and approachable!

- Try to develop a wide social circle.

Having a relationship can be overwhelming, but it may also be wonderful! So, hang in there, believe in yourself, have self-confidence, and don't wait for it or look too hard.

Most of all, ENJOY LIFE!!! It sounds simple, but sometimes you have to get out and make an effort here.

It's the holiday season so enjoy the time you have off. If you're not already going somewhere, maybe take a day-trip to see something new. Pamper yourself.

Most of all, just do what makes you most HAPPY.

Politics with Paul

DLPR.R.Y. — THAT SPELLS JAPAN! By Paul O'Shea

Last week I wrote a fairly heavy duty piece on the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and his successor Yasuo Fukuda. This may have been a little bit too much for some people — understandable really, given that I doubt many of you have a deep interest in Japanese politics — having said that of course, those few that do are probably the ones reading this, which in fact completely invalidates my previous point...

Anyway, this month I thought I would go back to basics and provide some background info on this wonderful country and its politics — an A-Z if you will, except with only six letters, one of which is repeated!

D is for Death Penalty

A not very well known fact about Japan is that it is a member of the international execution squad, and an active member at that. While it doesn't execute anything like the number of people that the big hitters like the U.S. and China do, it still manages a



few every year, and is not likely to stop anytime soon — a major 1999 survey showed almost 80 per cent of the population support the death sentence in cases of murder.

L is for Liberal Democratic Party

Democracy in Japan is not democracy as we know it in the west — in Japan, the person with the most votes gets elected!!! Sorry for that cheap Bush joke, but you know I have to keep your attention somehow...

Anyway, democracy in Japan has produced unusual results: the Liberal Democratic Party has been in power almost continuously since 1955, a feat unparalleled in modern democratic states. The party has broad support among



farmers, the bureaucracy and the middle and upper classes, being at once pro-business and yet agriculturally pro-protectionist — see R for rice.

P is for Peace

After the Second World War, when Japan was occupied by US forces (Japan is of course still occupied by US forces), the new constitution of Japan came into effect.

It included the famous Article 9 clause, in which Japan "forever renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." This means that constitutionally, Japan cannot go to war no matter how much it wants to.

Interpreting this has been controversial, to the extent that a refueling mission in the Indian Ocean was recently cancelled because

of opposition claims that it was unconstitutional. Japan is (probably) the only state in the world with such a clause (I haven't read the constitution of the Vatican City, though not many people have. Does the Vatican City have a constitution?!).

R is for Rice

Despite being a country with few natural resources, and thus heavily dependent on international trade, Japan pays huge subsidies to its rice farmers, and slaps hefty tariffs on rice imports.

The same happens with other agricultural products, which is the reason why we pay 10,000 yen for a melon.

Well actually I don't pay that, the only times I've had melon in Japan have been at the expense of the Board of Education, in Yashiro and Tokyo, and I stuffed my face. Because I am a pig.

R is also for Racism

We all know that racism exists in Japan, and those of us from the West can be happy that we stand on top of the racial hierarchy (of foreigners) which many Japanese people have inculcated into their minds from an early age.

The reason racism in Japan is so fascinating is not that it is serious, which it rarely is — unlike many Western coun-

tries — but that it is ignored or denied by so many Japanese themselves.

There is no law governing racist discrimination! In fact, bars, onsens, pachinko parlours, etc... have been able to put up signs which say JAPANESE ONLY, without fear of prosecution! If you are interested in reading further, look up the Otaru Onsen case on the interweb.

Y is for Yasukuni

This Tokyo shrine is the resting home of all Japanese war dead, including several Class A war criminals, and thus is a Mecca for ultra-nationalist activists.

It is also a major issue in Japanese international relations, caus-



Onsen racism at its finest!

ing consternation among other Asian nations when it is visited by Japanese prime ministers, and was the topic of the first article I wrote for this paper, which I thoroughly recommend, as it is a thrilling read. Indeed.

Ok, so maybe this should be called a DLPRRY instead of an ABC, but that's life. Stupid alphabet. I've given out my email address, in search of comments and criticisms, but all I've got are offers to increase the size of my penis. And I keep telling you girls (and some boys), I'm taken! Ha!

No but seriously, my address is sheabie@gmail.com. Write to me if you like.



What can't be Hello Kitty'd?



The Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo is a memorial to all who died in the name of the Emperor of Japan .

Travel Japan

Time travelling in Takayama

By Jeff Weese

Hidden in the valleys of Gifu prefecture is one of Japan's most famous historic towns overflowing with natural beauty, historic buildings and some of the best sake that will ever touch your lips. Exploring this quaint little town will give you one of those "I'm in Japan" moments.

The main attraction of Takayama is the old streets (Sanmachi) that are lined with sake breweries, miso shops and museums telling of Takayama's past. It is easy to get lost wandering these streets gazing at the architecture, sampling infamous Hida beef or sipping the local brew.

Within these streets are where most of the city's sake breweries lie. Each is easily identifiable by the large weaved baskets hanging above the doorway (they kind of look like gigantic bee hives). Sampling the sake is encouraged (though be careful that sampling



them all can easily put you on your backside in an hour's time!) and only costs between 100 - 400 yen!

Some refined, some unrefined, some sweet, some bland... there are so many different ways of making sake, just as there are a variety of ways to brew beer or roast coffee. It's easy to get caught up in it all and end

up spending an entire afternoon tasting the sweet juice of Japan.

Just outside of this area are a few morning markets that always have great local produce and crafts. It's easy to stroll through these markets on your way to the Takayama Yatai Kaikan mu-

seum where several enormous portable shrines sit waiting for the great festivals, which occur from April 14-15 or Oct. 9-10 every year. For only a few hundred yen, it is definitely worth a look and you can get an English audio guide to lead you through the museum.

If you have a chance to check out these shrines in action, I would highly recommend it! From the videos of the festival, it looks like this one could easily put all other festivals in Japan to shame.

Once you're neck has had enough from craning it upward to capture the whole shrine, just outside is a fantastic serene



temple and a miniature replica of Nikko, one of the greatest temple complexes in all of Japan.

A bit further out of town is a very well organized open-air museum (Hida no Sato) with old traditional thatched-roof buildings that were built all over Japan but later transported to Takayama for preservation.

For a handful of shrapnel you can enter the park and walk through the buildings, some which are still used for their original purpose, such as woodwork or other crafts. The lush forest that surrounds this area, accompanied by the streams gradually flowing down to the lake at the front make for fantastic photo opportunities! After leaving the park, head up the road a bit further for a very different view of Japan.

At the top of the hill sits an unusual looking building that cradles a giant red ball in the center of the roof. This building is the head of the Mahikari religion. It combines several different aspects of different religions and while some think

it could very well be a cult, others consider it their place for prayer and worship. To avoid offending anyone and their beliefs, you will have to check it out for yourself or at least check out the wiki site on the religion and building. BIZ-ZARE!!!

Before leaving the magical town of Takayama, make sure to pick up some sake for the road, both for yourself and for omiyage, of course. The little monkey child called sarubobo who is usually red with a black hoddie is also very popular for omiyage.

How to get to this fascinating little place and

where to stay? Get to Nagoya however you like (local trains or Shinkansen depending on your budget) and then take the limited express Hida bound for Takayama. From Osaka it should take between two and five hours depending on which route you decide.

A great minshuku to stay at is Sosuke Minshuku and be sure to have the meal at least once to have a taste of Hida beef and other local specialties! The owner is very friendly and speaks a reasonable amount of English. The rooms are Japanese style and the front room has a great fire pit that you can relax around and chat to the other minshuku guests.

The Lonely Planet guide books says that if you only have time to see one thing in central Japan, make sure it's Takayama and I fully agree!

Happy Travels!



*** Editor's note: Enlightenment is most certainly not guaranteed.**

“Hello everyone. I am students from high school”

Horrible grammar, terrible spelling — these quotes from senior high school students will make you laugh or bring you to tears. Some are ridiculous, some are just funny, but others are strangely poignant, thought-provoking and shockingly insightful.

Submitted anonymously by an ALT, these quotes were part of a class assignment asking graduating senior high students to deliver their words of wisdom to the young junior high students who would soon be roaming their halls.

“...Flankly speaking, in those days, I got irritated at my family. They interferred with me one by one. I wanted neglect. I wanted left alone. But now I loves my family.”

“You should be careful of the high school teachers. They are very clever. They are moral humans. However, some of them are individual. I want you to be sincere and nomal humans. Good luck!!”

“...’There is a feeling of all members in one ball. The ball is very very very heavy.’ This is my teachers speech. What he said depressed me weighed on my heart. I could not be unable to stand the pressure. But if you win a pressure, you can win a game. You may be irresolute. Let’s give it a go! I think that it is at the top of all. Don’t be afraid of failing. Do your best. And your body is everyone’s treasure. Don’t ever forget to smile!”

• “At first, we can make friends in junior high school time, that is, it is very important for the form of a humen. If we have good friends, we will have a full life. However, if we have bad friends, we won’t be able to have a full life. It is the very unhappy thing...”

“My skull cracked at school because of playing with my friends. So I entered hospital. The hospital had old people. So, they were not young people. When I felt said, my friends in my junior high school existed near me. There were not sad feelings at all. So I want to say for my kind friends, ‘Thank you very much.’”

“...A picture drawn by a human hand is colorfulness. It is warm. Many pencileslines gave a tastefully. Anyhow, we like to draw pictures.”

“At age of 13, I was tormented. My parents watched me in silence... One day, my mother who looked at my state said to me while crying, ‘I do not want to watch the situation that you suffer.’ And as, my father who did not say anything said to me, ‘I go complain to a bully!’”

“The words that I who become a senior high school student send to a junior high school student are the words ‘when I do it, I do it.’”

• “...Please regard a dream as important, everybody. And Please grant a splendid dream sometime. I pray for your good luck.”

“...I like baseball. I like soccer. I like basketball. But I like table tennis best of all sports. My dream is that table tennis becomema-jor sports. Let’s play table tennis together, young men.”

• “...’All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.’ I think that is right the street. I do not have a dream. I cannot be a regular customer. Therefore I do not understand what I study for. Do you have a dream? You had better have a proud thing and aim.”

“Everybody and his brother has 24 hours in the day.”

“I entranced to the east high school this spring. At first I was very hard every day. But I have a lovely time now.”

• “...It is the school sports of my most wonderful memory. Our class practice centipede race every moring and after school. All of us raise our voice and everyone was desperate. On the very day of the school sports, we ran with all our might and we won. Finally our class won the victory. We crow with delight. Even now, I remember that feeling vividly...”

• “...It is very hard for me to play tennis in the culb. So I am very busy. Now I have no time to study. To tell you the truth, I lag behind at school. I am sunk in apathy. I am regreting now. ‘Its no use crying over spilt milk.’ I don’t want you to become like me.”

• “If you don’t have to study English, what do you think? I feel very happy, because it is very difficult to study English. But do I really feel happy? To tell the truth I think very complicated, because I want to study English still. Do you think the same, don’t you? Why do we want to study English? Because it is for a test... And please find the pleasure of speaking English by yourselves... Someday we speak English very well.”

“...Study is toilsome when I enter the high school. I did not have a future dream...”

• “...I think talking is the best means to communication with other people. And when you talk with other people, please smile. If you smile when you talk with your friends, they can relax...”

Should I stay or should I go now?

By Kevin Shannon

Most of us have been looking forward to the Christmas holidays for quite a while. As the weather gets worse and the students get more annoying, sometimes it is the only thing keeping us going.

But the question is where should we spend these wonderful days? Should we go back home and spend Christmas with the family and friends we left behind? Should we pack our bags and go tramping around Asia? Or should we just relax in our local towns and experience Christmas Japanese-style.

As autumn came around and my swims on the beach got less frequent, I decided I needed to sit down and have a proper think about this question. The three options were soon narrowed to two as I ruled out staying in my little fishing village in the countryside.

It's a wonderful place but Christmas here would've involved me sitting all alone under my kotatsu, eating a bowl of rice singing, "I

wish me a Merry Christmas, I wish me a Merry Christmas..."

Different — yes, but not really very fun.

This left me with a choice between going home and going travelling. For some it is an easy choice but for me it wasn't. I knew I'd miss out on a great time whatever I did.

Going home is wonderful. You see all the people you've been missing for the last six months — boyfriend/girlfriend, friends, family etc. To see their faces, hear their voices, hug them, kiss them or whatever — it just feels amazing. For all the new wonderful and amazing friends we've all met in Japan, they just don't quite compare to that big brother you've always looked up to or to that friend you've known since that first scary day at school.

Aside from the people, going home also means a break from Japan. Most of us love Japan, but there are very few who haven't at some stage wanted to scream because of some frustrating Japanese thing that wouldn't happen

back home. Back home I can read signs, talk to people, order at a restaurant (pointing at some kanji you don't understand and saying 'please' does not count as ordering!), eat at a table and keep my shoes on in the house. A few weeks of that would be like a long bath after a hard day — it'd feel wonderful and make me relaxed and ready to face the next day (or six months, as the case may be).

Returning also means you get the proper Christmas with all the proper things that Christmas should have — Christmas turkey, Christmas tree, Christmas songs on the radio, Christmas lights in the streets, Christmas chaos in the shops and of course Christmas visits from those relatives you don't really like.

Japan tries to do the Christmas thing (and it really does try) but they don't really get it. Whether it is the remixed *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, the pink fluffy reindeer or the "Melly Christmas!" you get from the locals, it just isn't quite right.

However for many going home

is just an incredible waste of time. Time is precious and being here in Japan gives us all a great base for travelling (Japan, Asia, Australia, etc.) over the Christmas period.

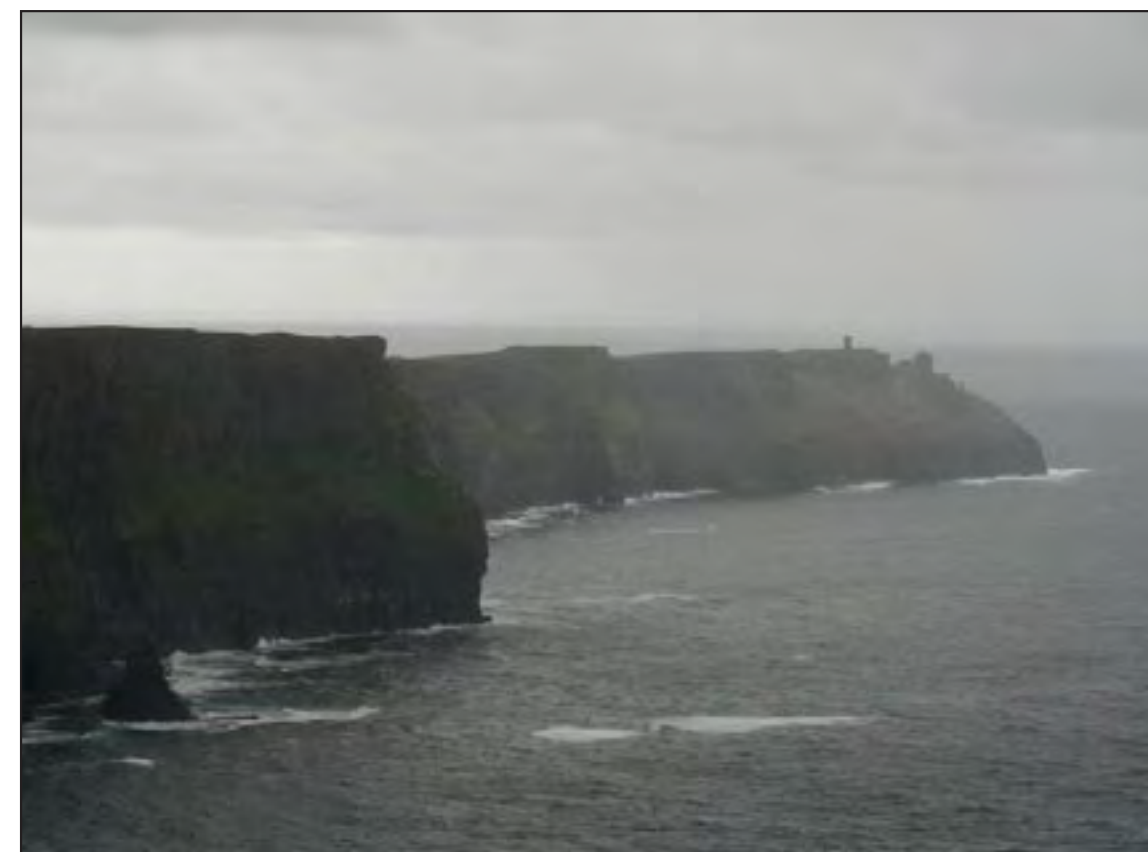
This is probably the easiest period for us to get a decent bit of time off from our jobs to go exploring. To return home to places and people you've seen so many times before when there is a whole big exciting world to be explored can just seem stupid.

Another reason to go travelling now is

that the JET Programme has supplied us all with a huge number of like-minded young people who love travelling. These are not like some of our friends back home who think a new experience is buying a different brand of cereal — JETs are willing to go off and see what there is to be seen in the big, bad world. Surely you should take advantage of this and go travelling with your JET friends over Christmas — you might never get such good travelling buddies again.

Of course there is a danger that Christmas becomes a kind of non-event if you go travelling, but I know with me that wouldn't happen. I'm the sort of guy who would be singing *Let it Snow* as I'm sitting on a beach burning myself to a crisp (I know because I've done it before).

If you are travelling for Christmas I encourage you not to lose the Christmas spirit. It may feel a little strange to be singing holiday



...or spending the Christmas break freezing your butt off back home?

tunes as you sit in some hostel in the middle of Asia, but it is also a hell of a lot of fun.

Nobody knows what will happen in the future so it is best to take all your chances when they come to you. Christmas gives us all the chance to go and have the experiences of a lifetime in places we'd never dreamed of going. Who would throw that chance away and go home to the boring life that we left behind?

I would.

I'm going to be spending Christmas in dark, cold, rainy Dublin while my JET friends are off travelling in Bali having amazing adventures.

Why? Well it wasn't an easy decision. Two years ago I spent Christmas away from home in Australia and it was probably the best Christmas of my life. The travelling I did with my friends there gave me some of the best experiences of my life and I will remember them until I die. Some of my friends went home

instead of going travelling and I still feel sorry for them. If they had any idea what they missed out on they would probably be in tears.

Going to Bali with my friends would be amazing. I know just how wonderful travelling is and I know the stories and tales my friends will come back with will turn me green with envy.

But despite all this I'm glad to be going home. I can't wait to see my family (and my dogs) again and to catch up with old friends. I adore everything about Christmas — from the lights in the streets to the songs on the radio to all those stupid traditions that every family has.

I know that when I'm sitting at the table laughing and joking with my family, full from a gorgeous dinner but with just enough space left for some piping hot plum pudding topped with melting cream (heaven in a bowl!), there is nowhere in the world I would rather be.

Now "Let it snow, let it snow..."



Would you rather be spending two weeks on a beautiful tropical paradise like this....

These boots were made for ME! An Osaka Christmas Shopping Miracle

By Myrie Eaton

Women in Japan seem to love boots. Standing on trains, walking on sidewalks, eating in restaurants... everywhere I look I see women in boots. Feeling it was one Japanese fashion trend I might actually be able to pull off, I wanted a pair of my own.

I seem to spend at least part of every weekend shopping, and I'm lucky enough to fit into Japanese shoe sizes, so I thought I would easily be able to satisfy my boot craving. I soon found many lovely boots that I would have loved to call my own, but all of them seemed to cost more than double my rent here (my rent's dirt cheap, but still). I know JET provides us with a nice wad of cash every month, but having spent the past four years as a starving student, I just couldn't justify spending that much on a pair of shoes (though I'm caving fast... money's meant to be spent, right?). Though it was hard, I resisted the temptation, and kept my cash in my wallet.

Last weekend, a friend and I were walking off a delicious Mexican supper in Osaka when we stumbled upon perhaps the most fantastic and ridiculous store I have ever been in. We were intrigued by the hilarious Christmas costumes (who doesn't want a plastic Christmas tree dress?) and leopard-print kotatsu table blankets displayed outside, and felt we needed to spend some time in this store.

Well, once we got inside, things just got better. The first floor was mainly dedicated to



an incredible variety of men's underwear, most of the "Black Man" brand. If you have someone on your Christmas shopping list that would enjoy briefs or boxers made of shiny, sparkly or sequined fabric, this is the place to come. There were literally hundreds of styles to choose from, from animal faces to anime characters to slightly more naughty style — I was more than a little disturbed by some of them. But, in any case, it made for very entertaining browsing.

The store felt magical, and once we were inside, it seemed to stretch indefinitely in all directions. We discovered a ballroom-dancing dress section (like the underwear, overkill on sparkles and clingy metallic fabrics), a makeup section, many boob-shaped pillows, a wall of clocks, a floor devoted to pots, pans and kitchen utensils, a curtained-off

room full of Japanese porn, and a corner stacked high with boxes of shoes. And on an insignificant metal shelf, my boots were waiting for me to find them.

It was my friend who first saw them — black boots with a ridiculous pink frilly ribbon for the low, low price of 1,000 yen. Unfortunately for my friend, her feet match her supermodel height and Japanese shoes just don't fit. However, it was my lucky day, as the boots fit me perfectly, and after chucking the ribbon they looked like all the expensive black boots in shops down the street. It was a Christmas shopping miracle!

So, next time you're in Osaka, looking for a way to kill those few hours between supper and clubbing, keep your eyes out for this fantastically bizarre and wonderful store — it won't disappoint!

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Sonic
B1F, Yamashita Bld.,
1-13-7 Nakayamale-Dori
(078)-391-6641

Second Chance
2F, 2-2-12
Nakayamale-Dori
(078)-391-3544

DJ

Trinity
DJs
Kei, Kobashi, Ishi

Sonic
DJs
Jeffy, Andy, 2Z

Second Chance
DJs
Hiphop 104
Tomo
Mizu
Nanato
Ali
Satan
+ BMX Show

REGGAE
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Selector
Blaxument
Innlight
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Case in Point:

Beware the online translation pages

By Chip Boles

I found a site that translates whole web-pages from Japanese into English. Just to compare, I found a page on some local Aikido classes that had both English and Japanese versions. What follows is the Engrish the website churned out. Reminds me of my student's journal writings, actually...

English:	Engrish:
"Aikido is a modern Japanese Martial Art developed by Morihei Ueshiba from ancient Jujutsu styles. Shodokan Aikido is a style founded by Kenji Tomiki, one of his earliest students. It incorporates both formal paired kata training and "freestyle" randori."	"Aikido old flow is decended of technique softly, it is the martial arts which the planting lawn prosperous flat old man produces. As for Showa road mansion Aikido, Mr. wealth wooden Kenji who is the high younger brother of the prosperous flat old man it is something which is developed not only former shape practice, furthermore including random taking practice."
<p>— Aikido Benefits —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Self Defense— Application to everyday life.— Aerobic and general fitness, flexibility— Self Confidence— Japanese and English Instruction	<p>— Through Aikido —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Self defense technique is attached to the body.— Correspondence to various circumstances is attached to the body via the practice of everyday life.— Because it is possession oxygen motion, it is connected to shape-up. In addition attitude just it becomes pliant.— It is optimum to feeling conversion.— Because the guidance member is the Canadian graduate, it receives the guidance with English and the [re] increases. Whether (English becomes good!)



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Hyogo Times Haiku Time

General Haiku about Japan:

- Lazy curling smoke
Stretching into endless sky
Smell of fields in fall
- Busy rolling train
Silver rain falls on green pines
Warm watchers within
- Bright red umbrella
Crimson speck on misty day
Muffled sigh of grey
- Soft mist muffling
Blunting sharp mountain edges
Silver grey blanket
- Bright roadside flowers
Have forgotten fall has come
Still waiting for bees
- Dragon's red and gold
As winter tightens its grip
A promise for spring
- Cold beer, warm sake
A jubilant reception
Happy smiling face
- Commune with nature
Hidden surprising temple
Incense drifts open
- Language barrier
Is no match for persistence
Of smiles and kind words
- A flash of white teeth
The bonding laughter bursts forth
Precious time with friends
- Feeling of flying
Rushing wind brings soaring heart
Freedom on two wheels



Tick tock says the clock
Time slides by on silver hands
Too slow, yet too fast

As the last bell rings
The children pour forth from school
But I too feel free

Haiku about Koya-San:

Mute ancient cedars
Stand sentinel for the dead
Stoic guardians

Tiny pine seedling
Offering left to spirits
Memory of life

Crisp velvet darkness
Broken by glowing lanterns
Beacons to lost souls

Fading words on graves
Fleeting memories erased
Even stones find peace

Endless swarming crows
Can't erase the majesty
Of shining Buddha

And finally, Haiku about the school kids:

Uniforms strangle
Ruling mediocrity
Does the soul rebel?

Black hair and dark eyes
Impassive face hides the life
They secretly live

The flashing smile
A fleeting awakening
Before boredom creeps

What thoughts and feelings
Escaping with the giggle!
Grey day happiness

Body, thought, and deed
Smothered in crushing sameness
Freedom lives in mind

Hopes and dreams await
Beyond these walls? Destiny.
The freedom to choose

Head down and sleep comes
A fantasy land that dreams bring
Escape from English class

Orange persimmon
Bright flame burns on cloudy day
Joy against bare branch

By Rebecca Tucker

Getting to know some random JETs

- ❖ **Name:** Amy Baker
- ❖ **Please call me:** Amy "Daijoubu" Baker.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Mihara and Tatsumi Junior Highs, Minamiawaji City.
- ❖ **How we know you:** That's a very good question...
- ❖ **Birthday:** July 26th, 1985.
- ❖ **Born and raised:** Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- ❖ **Family:** Hungarian-German-British-Latvian.
- ❖ **University and Degree:** McMaster University for English and multimedia.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Rock climbing instructor, marina girl, bar wench, sales associate and assistant to a public art curator.
- ❖ **Travels:** "Around the world, around the world." Lived in Ireland, Denmark and now Japanland.
- ❖ **Shumi wa nan desuka:** Photography, traveling, music and films.
- ❖ **Favorites:**
- Food:** Udon noodles.



- Sports:** Rock climbing.
- Music:** Electro.
- Shop:** H&M.
- TV Show:** Lost.
- Movie:** E.T. (phooooone hooome)
- ❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Throwing up outside a Family Mart second week in Japan.
- ❖ **Best life experience:** Having the opportunity to both live and travel across the globe, meeting some incredible people along the journey.
- ❖ **Motto to live by:** "Please let's enjoy."
- ❖ **I remember when...** I used to think that whatever direction you were facing, North was always in front of you.
- ❖ **What are you drinking?** Not chu-hi.
- ❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** Getting paid to draw cartoons on the worksheets.
- ❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** You shouldn't.
- ❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** Student: "Amy, I have a pennis." Amy: "Oh, you like tennis?"
- ❖ **My biography will be called:** "The Life and Times of Amy Astman Baker."
- ❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Show up on time.
- ❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** become the gen-kinator.
- ❖ **Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** Oh hells yes!



- ❖ **Name:** Anna Chloe Farkas.
- ❖ **Please call me:** Chloe.
- ❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Shitoori and Hirota Junior High Schools, Minamiawaji.
- ❖ **How we know you:** As the

only tall blonde vegetarian in Awaji.

- ❖ **Birthday:** February 25th.
- ❖ **Born and raised:** Cleveland, Ohio, USA.
- ❖ **Family:** My parents and a younger sister, Bridget.
- ❖ **University and Degree:** Case Western Reserve University, Chemistry and English.
- ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in Colorado is by far the most interesting one.
- ❖ **Travels:** United States, Canada, Western Europe.
- ❖ **Shumi wa nan desu ka:** Soccer, hiking, anything outdoors.
- ❖ **Favorites:**
- Food:** Indian
- Sports:** Soccer, tennis
- Music:** Everything, but currently it's a lot of Ratatat and Justin Timberlake on my drive to school.
- Shop:** Hyaku yen!!!
- TV Show:** ER.
- Movie:** Amelie.
- ❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Eating octopus and learning that I like it.
- ❖ **Best life experience:** Traveling and living abroad.
- ❖ **Motto to live by:** If it smells like onions, you know you're home.
- ❖ **I remember when...** my

- apartment was warm.
- ❖ **What are you drinking?** Tea.
- ❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** The Awaji Girls!
- ❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** I'm a strong proponent of the four-day work week.
- ❖ **Funniest story involving a student?** Being propositioned by

- one of the 9th graders who used the words, "Let's sex!"
- ❖ **My biography will be called:** "It's Chloe NOT Anna"
- ❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Say little, do much.
- ❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** make faces.
- ❖ **Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** Nay — I tried this and now they just extort me for stickers.



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Japan from A to Z

By Kevin Shannon

A is for “Ahhhhhhh!!! I’m in Japan!!!” We’ve all had one or two of these moments of super-reality where you suddenly are fully aware of where you are. Sometimes it is really cool and other times it is just bloody scary.

B is for baseball. The Japanese are baseball mad. Absolutely crazy about it. If you want to befriend a Japanese guy, try baseball as a topic. Smile and agree with his favourite team/player and he’ll love you.

C is for crusts. What do the Japanese have against crusts? Why do no sandwiches in this country have crusts? Is there some big building somewhere which stores all the crusts or have the Japanese developed some bread-making technique where no crusts are created? To be honest I don’t care — I just want my crusts back!

D is for drink. With beer vending machines on every cor-

ner and shochu and sake available in cartons from the local convenience store, the Japanese definitely like to drink. Doesn’t mean they can handle their drink but we don’t really mind. After all, there’s nothing more amusing than watching your fellow teachers walk into fences and fall over after trying to out-drink the new kid.

E is for English teacher. Apparently we are supposed to help the kids learn English. I know — it’s a bit of a joke really.

F is for floor. Sit on the floor, eat on the floor, sleep on the floor — you live on the floor.

G is for gaijin traps. We all know them and whether we are driving our cars, cycling our bikes or just walking down the road we all live in perpetual fear of falling into them. As many of our predecessors (and some of us) can tell you, falling into them is a painful and humiliating experience.

rience.

H is for Hyogo, the best damn prefecture in all of Japan!

I is for ‘I want to go home!’ The days when you just hate everything about Japan. Stupid Japanese and their three flipping alphabets — it is all just stupid squiggles! I can’t understand anything! I don’t want to eat on the floor! I want my own bed and not a bloody mattress on the floor! I want to eat with a bloody knife and fork, not two stupid twigs! Why can’t I have a meal without f**king rice? I don’t want any more bloody rice! No, I want to cook my food! I don’t want any more raw fish — it tastes horrible! The kids are stupid — I don’t want to teach any more. I don’t want to be f**king genki — I want to be angry! If anybody mentions genki to me I will actually kill them. Why won’t the weird Japanese just leave me alone? I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!!!

J is for JET. After all, without JET most of us wouldn’t be here experiencing the wonders of Japan and its people. Of course, each of the 5,000-plus JETs has a different experience of Japan, but whether you are Junior High (who are definitely better off) or Senior High, in a city or stuck in the middle of nowhere, a teacher of the shyest class in the world or a class who threatens to kill you if you try to wake them up again, hopefully you are all thanking JET for the chance to be here.

K is for karaoke. Butchering as many timeless classics as you can while getting steadily drunk is what it is all about. It is quite strange — the more you drink the better you sound...

L is for love hotels. Whether or not you actually have somebody to love, these are definitely worth a visit. I mean who doesn’t want to experience a night in a Hello Kitty bondage room?

M is for Maeda-sensei, the King of Yashiro.

N is for natto. Fermented soy beans. Sounds bad and tastes a whole lot worse. The Japanese will find it hilarious that you don’t like it, and the fact that most of them also find it disgusting doesn’t take away from the humour.

O is for opposite sex. You do NOT have friends of the opposite sex. You have a boyfriend/girlfriend. No discussion. As for having a friend of the opposite sex to stay at your house... well you might as well be married then.

P is for photos. Maybe you hadn’t noticed but the Japa-

nese like to take a photo or two or ten thousand. And don’t forget the customary two fingers pose (the friendly one!)

Q is for questions. In Japan you’ll get more questions than ever before. Number 1 from the students is, of course, “Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?” often closely followed by “What do you think of Japanese girls/guys?” But aside from exceptionally personal questions of size and girth, there are bound to be a few more that will throw you off-balance for just being strange. “Why do foreigners park their cars funny?”, “Why don’t guys in your country pluck their eyebrows?”, etc.

R is for raw. Raw fish, raw octopus, raw squid, raw horse, raw chicken (inadvisable!) — the Japanese love their raw stuff!

S is for slippers. No matter how long I stay here I will always think that slippers simply are not the correct footwear to go with a suit. As for toilet slippers — why on earth would I want to wear slippers that hundreds of other people (probably with worse aim than me) have gone to the toilet in?

T is for toilets. Japanese toilets don’t seem to have a middle ground. Either you have the most complicated toilet ever known to man which will warm the seat, shoot water into interesting places, dry you and probably provide lunch if you know the correct button to press; or you have the squat toilets which are essentially a glorified hole in the ground. Call me old-fashioned but I just like one you can sit on, do your business and leave (after flushing of course!)

U is for umbrellas. The Japanese love their umbrellas. It’s raining — must get an umbrella. It’s sunny — must get an umbrella. With the umbrella dispensing machines, machines that wrap your umbrella in plastic and umbrella holders on bikes, the Japanese have this umbrella thing all figured out.

V is for vending machines. Japan loves its vending machines. There are over 5.6 million vending machines in Japan (about 1 for every 23 people) and they make about \$60 billion a year. Whether you want beer, cigarettes, sexual lubricants, disposable cameras or cup-o-noodle, you can get it at a vending machine. All a little strange but my three personal favourite items available from vending machines are: 1) Potted Plants 2) Disposable Nappies and 3) Underwear

W is for “Wakarimasen!” The single most useful Japanese word you’ll ever learn.

X is for X-Rated. Obviously, being a good Irish boy, this sort of thing wouldn’t interest me. But if it did suit you then the bright lights of Tokyo’s Shinjuku area are sure to impress. It is impossible for a foreign guy to walk (without female accompaniment) through this area at night without being subject to various attacks by what might roughly be called “salesmen.”

Y is for Yashiro Prison. With communal showers, piped-in music to wake you up, designated seats and 11 p.m. curfew, it is no wonder that even the Japanese teachers call it Yashiro Prison

Z is for Zebra. Because Z is always for zebra

January

9TH Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
SOMA, Osaka

9TH Avenged Sevenfold
Namba Hatch, Osaka

16TH Bon Jovi
Kyocera Dome, Osaka

For more information on other concerts check out
www.creativeman.co.jp and www.smash-jpn.com.

February

7TH Rage Against the Machine
Osaka-Jo Hall, Osaka

10TH The Police
Kyocera Dome, Osaka

March

11TH Celine Dion
Kyocera Dome, Osaka
First show

12TH Celine Dion
Kyocera Dome, Osaka
Second show

