

hyogo times

july/august
2009



Sayonara, Departing
JETS...



and Welcome New
JETS!

Contents

Messages

4.....	From the Editor
5.....	Meet the New Boss
6.....	From the HAJET PR

Every Month

14.....	Rametary: Ramen Quick Hits
15.....	Wheel Of Jeopardy!
16-17.....	Getting to Know Some Random JETs
22-23.....	Travel Japan: Shoudoshima
24-24.....	Recipe of the Month: Kechina Kitchen
29.....	Maigo in Hyogo

Features

7.....	Where are they Now?
8.....	A Hyogo Times Movie Review: Brendan Fraser Movies
9.....	Going Postal — A Rant
18-19.....	There Will Be Cilantro
19.....	Facebook Snapshots of The Lost Week
20-21.....	How To: In the Cold Pool - A Guide to Onsen
26.....	Words of Wisdom: My Time in Japan
27.....	The JET Laws
28.....	JET EFFECT

Special Feature

10-11.....	If You Could Do it All Again...
12-13.....	かけら — Fragments

On the cover...



Cover art by Chip Boles

Goodbye old friends. Gonna miss you. Hello new friends! Let's enjoy!

Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Matthew Stott
Design Editor: Jeff Morrice

Contributors: Chip Boles, Gareth Cottam, Clay Eaton, Kate Emory, Kym Farrant, Joy Feddes, Kerk Low, C. W. Newman, Emma Nicoletti, Sarah Porretta, Paul Schuble, Goran Seletković, Lester Somera, Matthew Stott, Andrew Tamashiro and Suzie Winterton .

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

Visit us online at:
<http://hyogoajet.net>

From The Editor...

AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH-
HHHHHHHH!

It's getting too hot for me! The school has gone from being an icebox to being a human-sized oven, and I'm sure that if I left cookie dough on one of the metal counters in the science lab, it would bake! I hope you're all gearing up for the summer heat because while it isn't nearly as bad as the first year I came, I can only assume it'll get worse since it's only July!

The past June saw the HA-JET Committee organize the Sayonara Beer Garden at the Sogo Building in Kobe for us and I'm sure many of you also have had your very own farewell parties to attend elsewhere. (I never thought of farewell parties as a "thing to do" but there's so many people leaving, that it is!) Or if you have teachers like mine who don't drink alcohol or are too lazy to organize an *enkai*, they might just ask you to stay after school just to feed you macha cake! Although the cake and the gestures are sweet, as a JET who is leaving, it does make me teary-eyed.

This month makes me teary-eyed for another reason. It will see me as editor of the *Hyogo Times* for the last time. It has been a fun year and I've really enjoyed reading your submissions and admiring/laughing at the crazy photos. Next month, I will be replaced by the brilliant Matt Stott, who was also one of last month's "Random JETs" (did you catch that? ^_~) and I expect that he will do greater things with this magazine than I ever could.

However, before I leave, I must express my gratitude to



those who helped me and contributed something in the past year.

Firstly, I cannot say enough thanks to my regulars because without them, the *Hyogo Times* would not exist.

Secondly, I would also like to thank the individuals who submitted something to us even when they thought it wasn't good enough. You never know until you try, right?

Next, to our artist-in-residence, the awesome Chip Boles — thank you for being generous enough to work on the covers. I will always be a fan, and not just

on facebook.

Finally, to my fantastic publishing partner, Jeff Morrice — thank you for staying with me as the Design Editor this year. As much as I think of this publication as my own, Jeff is the one doing the real work. You make the *Hyogo Times* what it is now.

Good luck to everyone (staying or leaving)! I hope you've enjoyed the *Hyogo Times* so far and will keep on reading it long after I leave!

Rock on and peace out!

— Ann Chow

Meet the New Boss...

First, a hearty welcome to the newest members of the Hyogo JET community. And I have to say, you really are subjected to some psychological torment at the beginning of your tenure: in the lap of luxury in one of the swankiest hotels in Shinjuku one week, languishing like Solzhenitsyn at Yashiro Orientation the next.

You have my sympathies, but we all went through it, and you'll have to get used to the fact that you're in a land where the law of non-contradiction doesn't always appear to hold. Why do they insist on flinging the most fluent Japanese-speaking ALTs into the deepest, darkest recesses of the *inaka*? (Actually, there's a good reason for that.) Why, in one of the world's most hypermodern democracies, do squat toilets continue to be installed in public restrooms? Why does your mobile phone seem to possess more processing power than the workstation in the teachers' room? These are not easy questions to answer, not for anyone.

Never fear — you can always count on your *sempai* to show you the ropes, and in this bumper issue of the *Hyogo Times* some of the best and brightest in the Hyogo JET community dispense their wisdom. Suzie Winterton resurrects her "JET Laws," peeling the sugar-coating off the ALT experience in her wry fashion. Emma Nicoletti shows how it is actually possible to slash your food bills (which means, of course, more money to spend on booze and travel). Chip surveys JETs and non-JETs to find out what they wish they had known when they

first came to Japan. And we also have an inspirational guest contribution from a former JET, Sarah Poretta, showing where our JET experiences can take us once we return to (I can barely bring myself to say it) the "real world."

We're eager to meet you, so do try to come along to the functions Hyogo AJET is organising for August: the SOGO Beer Garden Welcome Party (where you will be introduced to the concepts of *tabehoudai* and *nomihoudai* — oh you are going to love Japan!) and the Kobe Welcome Happy Hour.

To the continuing JETs: if, like me, you have travelled during the summer break, welcome back to a long, hot, sticky summer. At least the teachers' room is air-conditioned (I hope so, anyway) — nobody is looking forward, I'm sure, to returning to the lower circles of Hell that pass for classroom when teaching begins again. Hang in there — it's not long 'til autumn.

Finally, I must take my hat off to Ann Chow for her sterling ef-



forts as editor: her prodding and cajoling always yielded a great writing team, making the *Times* a continually entertaining read. (Pause for *kampai*. "Kampai!") And I want to thank Jeff and Chip for staying on as design editor and cover artist: *HT* has never looked better, lads!

Remember, readers: *Hyogo Times* would not exist without your contributions, so please keep them coming — be they recipes, poems, film reviews, travel stories or lesson ideas (to list but a few suggestions).

Enjoy!

— Matt Stott

From The HAJET PR...

Hello hello... How are you holding out in this heat? I'm struggling big time, but at last, my school has turned the air-con on today! The nice freezing temperature of 28 degrees!?! Urgh. I will continue to "glow" for the rest of the summer. ☺

Anyway, you might be thinking, "Why is Kym writing to us here in the HAJET PR section?" Well, that is because HAJET has been going through some massive changes over the last few months.

Whilst I still don't fully understand the transition to all the new forums and HAJET on Gmail, I am happy that it works, and I'm extremely happy that we have wonderful people like Goran, Colin and Brandon, who actually understand computers to make that happen.

From this day forward, HAJET will be an open community. Before, the roles of planning events and organizing were all left up to a few poor souls (Matt's done such a great job!!).

Now, we want everyone in Hyogo to get involved, so if you have any ideas or plans, then why not bounce them around in the HAJET forum? Want to go rafting this September? Skiing this winter? Someone to join you sampling the sake in Nada-ku? Well, get posting on the forum. There are many second-, third- and fourth-year JETs who have lots of knowledge, and some crazy people can even speak Japanese (ideal for making reservations)!

Facebook is also a great



tool for events' information. If you'd like to get the word out to the whole prefecture, then just email me and I will make it happen. Best of all, this year's HAJET membership is free, and if you'd like a membership card (200 yen to cover cost of making the card), then you can continue to get discounts... because you are beautiful.

Now onto some serious stuff, I CANNOT believe that it is August already!!! And that means one thing: some wonderful people will be going on to bigger and better things.

I know I'm losing a lot of friends this year, but I want to wish everyone good luck for the future. I will continue to stalk you via facebook. ☺

Useful Info:

pr@hyogo.ajet.net
www.hyogoajet.net/forum
 (not ".com" !)

— Kym Farrant

Where are they Now?

Editor's note: This gem of an idea for a Hyogo Times column was Sarah's, and we hope other Hyogo JET alumni will follow suit!

► **Name:**

Sarah Porretta (nee Nock)

► **Age:** 32

► **Placement school/s and location in Hyogo/Japan while on JET:**

ALT at Kasumi High School, I was also National AJET Chairperson. 1999-2001.

► **Current occupation & jobs held since leaving the JET programme:**

I've just returned from a year out travelling in Africa and South America, but most recently I headed up stakeholder communications for BAA, a company that owns seven airports in the UK. I was responsible for communications strategy around their expansion and construction plans, dealing with residents associations, pressure groups and political stakeholders as part of a very busy team. I was also part of the 'crisis' team at Heathrow Airport, and believe me there are a lot of those - ranging from strikes to terror alerts to plane crashes.

To get to that job after a brief period temping and volunteering after JET I worked for two major UK charities as a fundraiser, then worked as a communications manager for Microsoft, then got a job at BAA as community relations manager during the construction of Terminal 5 at Heathrow.

► **Highlight/funniest part of your JET experience:**

When I was AJET Chair I was on the way to the airport to address all the new JETs on their

arrival in Tokyo and I stopped off at a beach BBQ in Tottori ken. Someone broke into my car and stole ALL my clothes and I had to address the audience in Tokyo wearing a borrowed suit and bright pink flip-flops.

There was also a time in Hamasaka where we all decided to go skinny-dipping and everyone lost their clothes because it was so dark... you can imagine the rest.

► **How the JET programme has benefited you career-wise:**

After JET it was just onwards and upwards. Going home and re-adjusting was tough at first but JET really is something I am still very proud of ten years on and it's amazing how often you meet other JETs or the topic of Japan comes up.

► **What transferable skills JET gives you:**

In my last job I needed an assistant so I posted an advert on the UK Jet Alumni site and employed an ex-JET. He's now doing really well as a media relations manager at BAA. The reason I went looking for an ex-JET for my team? Great communication skills, confidence, an outgoing personality, adaptability and tenacity. Those are YOUR transferable skills, and no doubt more.

► **What advice you would give to current JETs for getting the most out of the JET experience in order to further their career afterwards:**

If you want to be a teacher afterwards then throw yourself into teaching but also take some exams in Japanese as it looks really good on your CV. Write for the *Hyogo Times* or on the many

TEFL websites. Be as involved as you can be.

If you're not aiming at teaching then get as much experience as you can outside of the classroom. Take on a position of responsibility through AJET, start a club, start a fundraising campaign. Do something that shows you have initiative and can manage a project. My most valuable experience on JET was being AJET Chair for a year – chairing meetings, communicating to JETs, public speaking, managing a budget, writing articles and newsletters. All good stuff. I'd also take some exams in Japanese to show that you used your time effectively. Japanese ALWAYS impresses people because it's perceived as such a difficult language. I've never used my Japanese in my career (it's not very good now anyway!) but it has come up a lot in interviews.

► **Any tips for job hunting after JET:**

Be strategic and determined. The job market is tough right now, as you know, so find a boring temping job that pays the bills and volunteer for one day a week or find an internship in something you do want to do. Use ex-JETs. Ever heard of LinkedIn? You need to get to grips with it and get your profile on there. There's a JET Alumni organisation on there so join it and get hold of ex-JETs who work in the field you want to work in and ask them for advice. Or get involved with your local JET Alumni when you get home. People like me are always willing to talk to ex-JETs, so use and abuse us. And if people do help you then remember to say thank you.

A Hyogo Times Movie Review

Brendan Fraser Movies

By Awaji Kate

Okay, I'll come out and admit it. I am LAME. With capitals! Here I am, 24-years-old and teaching in Japan... and you know what I love to do most in the world? Watch children's movies. Yep! Guilty!

I love kid's movies! There

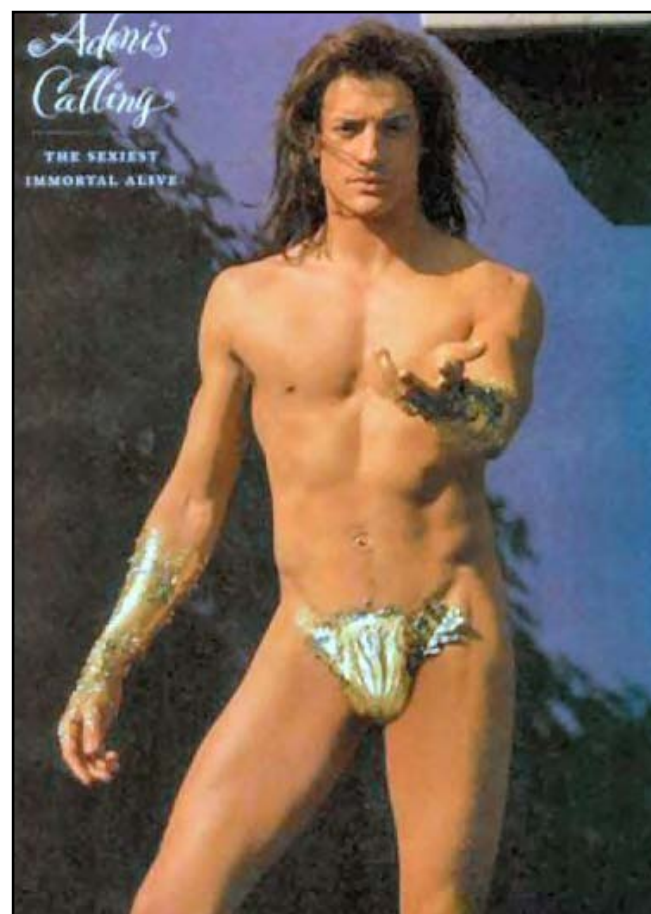
is something nostalgic about sitting down and watching something that was made for 10-year-olds. No deep meanings or heavy drama. I dig it! So for your movie review: screw *Slumdog Millionaire* or *Gran Torino* — I'm going to write about two very awesome Brendan Fraser movies.



The first movie, just recently out on video is *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. Based off of the eponymous Jules Verne novel, this isn't so much a remake, but more of an update on the subject matter.

The movie takes place in present day, and instead of a mission to discover if you can truly dig to China, Brendan Fraser portrays a vulcanologist who is on a mission to

discover what happened to his missing brother. The brother disappeared ten years prior in his search to prove that Verne's novel was based on fact. So off on the adventure he goes with his teenage nephew in tow. Add in a smoking hot mountain guide (one of the more funny bits are the boys calling "dibs" on her) and you have Grade A family entertainment! The movie was made to be shown in 3D and there are plenty of moments where it is painfully obvious. Other than that, *Journey* is fast-paced, exciting and brainless entertainment (right up my alley!) 3.5 outta 5 points. (5 outta 5 for Brendan!)



The second movie, *InkHeart* is another book-based movie adapted from the German children's book of the same name. Starring Brendan Fraser, Helen Mirren, Anthony Serkis, Jim Broadbent and Paul Bettany.

Like many book-to-movie deals, this one suffers from too much plot trying to be fit into an hour and a half. The story revolves around a man who can literally bring a story to life by reading aloud. Unfortunately for him and his family, when he reads aloud from the novel *InkHeart*, the villains come out and his wife is sucked

out a way to get her back while on the run from said villains. Even with story changes and character cuts, there are still moments where the plot jumps around a bit much.

The acting is good (really, it HAD to be! Look at that cast!), but the actors really didn't have much to work with. One realm where the movie does pretty well is relaying the relationships and emotional ties between each character. *InkHeart* is WAY better than similar book-to-movie *Eragon* was, but not quite a *Harry Potter*. 2 outta 5 points (a bazillion for Paul Bettany with no shirt on).



Going Postal — A Rant

(The author makes no pretence to be reasonable, understanding, or to having written a well-thought-out article.)

Today I went to the post office. A simple little operation—I go down the hill, turn left and walk for two minutes before entering the air-conditioned grey sterility of post offices worldwide. It's an operation I have executed almost monthly for two years, with no other hitch than a refusal on the part of the French postal service to acknowledge my uncle's house existed — but that's another story.

What now concerns me is the fact that I hate, hate HATE officious, red-tape-loving, preaching salarymen. I hate them. I hate them more than I hated going to my *2-nen-sei* class at the start of last year when they were on the brink of staging a mini revolution and making a guillotine out of *New Crown*. I hate them more than cockroaches. I hate them more than capsicums. And no, I do not know what a capsicum is in Northern Hemisphere. Google it.

Anyway, you get the idea. Now, why don't I like them? What has inspired this tirade against the common salaryman and made this otherwise un-assuming ALT go—aha—postal?

I sent a box to my family today — the first of several of my move back home, and containing a backlog of *omiyage* big enough for me to have sent the stupid thing by boat. Fine, you think. Fine, I thought. I had put all the stuff in a bag, packed it in neatly and — since it was a recycled filing box — covered the whole thing in some strong brown tape I found in my apartment. It took about ten minutes of fussing over the labels for the usual lady to be happy to stick it all on and for me to hand over my money, and on my way out the man who usually sits at a desk behind the front counter says,

"Excuse me, a minute—"

Normally this guy just sits at his desk behind the front-desk ladies as sort of lifeguard in a sea of stamps, boxes and customs regulations. He's there for the girls when they



have a question, or are in training, or stick a stamp in the wrong corner. Put a wrong rule in and the correct one, three times longer, comes out... along with a cynical look in his eye, as if he's not sure you quite get it yet but will give you the benefit of the doubt.

He pats my box. Guess what?

I have used the wrong kind of fucking tape.

Now, my Japanese is pretty good. I understand most of what's said to me in daily life, and I'm reasonably confident in my ability to get around or sort out the meaning of what's been said eventually.

I didn't understand a word this guy was saying. No, that's a lie — I understood "basically..." and what came after that was a two-minute lecture in specialised post-office *keigo*. I did my best. I frowned. I did the patented confused gaijin "ha?". I waited patiently with blue eyes wide while my ears went into overload. And when he was done he looked at me while my brain reviewed the last two minutes and tried to sort out a rough summary of what it had understood. What arrived in the consciousness was something like, "You have used a crappy box and held it together with the wrong kind of tape, and while I am telling you of all the nasty things that this means can happen to what you

have put inside of it, I'm not going to tell you where you get proper boxes or tape, or tell you it would be best not to send it."

I say, "So...in the end, I can't send this today?"

Blink, blink. Evidently, the *gaijin* does not understand. So he starts talking again — in *keigo*, in specialised post-office speak, only slightly louder. The lady who served me is standing to one side and looking from my face to Lifeguard's with a carefully blank expression. The lecture ends. I stare at Lifeguard. What is he telling me? Is he telling me I fucked up and he'd really like me to take it away and do it all again? Is he telling me my package won't reach home? What do I say without saying "I didn't understand a WORD of what you just said, what exactly are you getting at?"

My agonising over the correct reply is too long. He says the same thing *again*. By this time the lady who served me has an expression on her face somewhere between sympathising with me and wanting to laugh, caught in a riptide of technical terms in a sea of red tape. When he finally stops this time, I pick up my free plastic fan from the desk and wave it in the vague direction of my face.

"Yes, sir," I say. "Thank you very much." Banzai Japan.



Compiled by Chip Boles

If you could go back and start JET all over again, Groundhog Day-style, what knowledge would you bring with you? What do you wish YOU had known when you first arrived in Japan?

I put this question to my friends, other gaijin, current and former JETs and Non-JETs, and such Nihon-associated persons. They had this to say...

LEARNING JAPANESE

...“It seems so simple, but to live here, you HAVE to study Japanese.... at least minimally, so you're not “that foreigner” who can't even ask where the toilet is.”

...“Japanese does not just magically sink into your head because you are living in Japan (for some reason I thought that just because I would be living in Japan, I would automatically learn Japanese). You actually have to work at it, and study and speak it.”

...“Every word you know before arriving in Japan is a huge advantage.”

...“I am a wordy person — to say the least — and when I can't use my words, it's usually not the easy choice to go struggle thru conversations with even the epic-ly friendly Nihonjin I've been lucky enough to meet, especially with my godawful Nihongo. But it gets *way* easier. And like everyone says, I've gotten exponential returns on the work I've put in. Ganbatte!”

COMMUNITY

...“As great as the JET community is, it is important not to spend all your weekends partying with gaijin. Your town will have some wonderful people in it and the more time you spend there and the more activities you are involved in, the more you will love it. You can meet gaijin everywhere, but you'll probably only get one chance to live in a Japanese town.”

...“Find a balance between only hanging out with foreigners and only hanging out with the locals. I CANNOT STRESS THIS ONE ENOUGH.... especially for JETs. It's tempting (and so easy of course) to only hang out with foreigners (oh the sweet familiarity and proximity). But at the end of the day, you're in Japan. Meet Japanese people!

...“But on the other hand....don't snub all foreigners and only hang out with the locals. Japan's a place some people come to find something or to escape something so you'll meet all sorts of characters. Sometimes the play is badly cast, but there are a lot of interesting cats here, too. I can't even recall how many times I have leaned on foreign mates after an outrageous day here in Japan. We need to support each other in the “gaijin” community b/c we can't always expect Japanese to understand what we go through here.”

...“I don't think I could have understood how easy/tempting it would be to hang out with only gaijin (and only JET gaijin, at that—don't be a JET stereotype, folks, essentially snubbing non-JETs...) and never hanging out with Japanese folks.”

SUPPLIES

...“Japan has cool, cheap glasses available easily. One can seriously stock up on nice pairs for 5000-6000 yen each, depending on how cheap you find the frames. Bring your prescription from home.”

...“Bring heaps of deodorant, toothpaste, whatever creature comforts you'll need for the first couple of months.”

...“I wish I had known about how the weather would affect me personally. I'm prone to ear infections and I got 3 or 4 within the first 8 months. The OTC stuff I use back home (Sudafed) to prevent a situation I feel coming on is actually illegal here so... that has made things pretty difficult for me a few times, especially when I was just 2 weeks in last summer >.< I should have snuck some in.”

LIVING IN JAPAN

...“When eating edamame, eat the beans only, not the pod containing them.”

...“Every festival (matsuri) is a good festival even if you didn't intend to be there.”

...“I know it is drilled into all the newbies but still:

Every situation is different. Your situation and the best response to it will be completely different to what your neighbor's situation is.”

...“Japan has four distinct seasons. It will be VERY hot in summer and it will be VERY, VERY cold in winter. But Japan does sell clothes so no point filling up your luggage with thermal underwear.”

...“In a word: BALANCE. Find a balance between all work and no play and getting on the piss every night/ (abusing your vice of choice) and thus living beyond your means.”

...“When soaking in the onsen, do not let your towel touch the water. Ever. Dame yo!”

...“It doesn't really matter where you end up living (countryside vs. city) as long as you're LIVING. Get some hobbies... travel... If you're city folk, get out to the countryside once and awhile. Country folk should come out and stare at the shiny objects in the city once and awhile. It's healthy and awesome! Surround yourself with good people. Do something every day for mind, body and soul. Sounds like new age BS but couldn't have been more true for me.”

...“We're afforded a certain amount of leeway as foreigners here but try to respect the culture. Japan is not YOUR country it's not meant to make you comfortable. Come with an open mind or at the very least, an open-ended ticket.”





Kentaro and Takuto scuttle back to the doorway they just exited from, dimpling their cheeks and wrapping their fingers around the doorframe.

"Sensei..."

"Yeah?"

"Come and have lunch with us," Kentarou says.

"Please come and have lunch with us," corrects Takuto, in a sort of giggly hiss.

"Please come and have lunch with us," Kentarou repeats, dimples deepening. I think of the carefully written monthly schedule of Suzie's Lunch Appointments, and the chaos that ensues should a class be skipped.

"I'm eating with the Year 2's today."

"Oh," says Kentarou.

"The-then that's okay," says Takuto, and disappears back around the doorframe.

"Thank you very much," adds Kentarou, with a bow.

"Mr Yuki, why are you standing? Sit down."

"せんせー、立てねーとしゅうちゅうできへんわ！"

I will remember Yuki, who cannot concentrate unless he is standing up, for the rest of my life. Or at least as long as I can.

I have an ongoing feud with Saya. It goes something like,

"I'm Japanese."

"Well, obviously, yeah."

"So I don't have to study English."

"Eh?"

"I'm Japanese, see."

"Yeah, so... what was your point?"

Ikuya comes up to my shoulder and has a face like a mouse whose only belief is that it can talk its way out of anything.

"Suzie, get me my bag, will you? It's the third one down, right behind you."

"...I beg your pardon?"

"So, my bag—"

"Get it yourself!"

"Tch."

Mie hangs out in the staffroom and hugs my arm when I run into her in the hallway.

"My mum got me a mobile phone."

"You don't look that happy about it."

"She told me she'd get it if I mailed her every morning. She never comes to see me or calls me and *now* she's saying that?! What the hell."

Mie lives with her grandparents. She's got an immediate family, but I don't know where they are aside from not with her.

Jintarou taught me something. He taught me to always remember that the most attitude-stricken child has a Spongebob pencilcase.

Shoyoko has a round face and a body to match. Her voice is soft and her hobby is writing love letters.

"She falls in love, writes a love letter, confesses, gets rejected in front of everyone, then falls in love again—" explains best friend Mai, with a bland wave of her hand.

Shoyoko's first love was Rei, who wears plain clothes and broke a window last year. She's been in love many times since then, but she assures me that she still likes him.

"Rei-kun's still number one, isn't he?" Mai grins. Shoyoko nods, smiles, and talks to Ikuya. This term's love.

Ryuichiro talks to me. He can't write his name in *romaji* and if asked to do it in *kanji* just writes "Ryu", but he'll sit down and have a chat to me.

"Ryu-chan, you know Popeye?" Spinach in the school lunch had reminded the JTE of it, and we'd been discussing it before catching Ryu's curious look.

"Oppa?" he asks, making the appropriate motions over his chest.

Stop laughing, and then explain.

Yui talks louder than anyone else and calls all the boys in the class "*omae*" when she's being nice. She hits them, too, and sneers at any girl who helps them or doesn't appear to despise them. The boys don't hit back. They stay in a row at the front of the classroom and if they're separated, they just shut up and do as they're told, trying to look as cool as possible about it.

One day I hope Yui finds a nice boy she went to elementary school with and falls for him.

And then gets rejected.

I run into Noza on the way to the train station on Saturday morning. He's going to clubs — basketball again, the same as when he was in middle school. It makes sense. I barely reach his shoulder.

"So I'm going back in August."

"Eh?! What? You're going back?!" says my former student, whom since he's graduated I've seen maybe twice. He looks genuinely upset, and I wonder if it's wrong to feel slightly self-satisfied about that.

Misato's nickname is Master — only the boys use it. I ask Mayuka how Misato got the nickname, and her brow furrows. She turns around to the other girls.

"Why was it?" she asks.

"Um — maybe, it was that!"

"Ah, that!"

My patented Blank Look succeeds in obtaining an explanation.

"There was this time when this thing happened," Mayuka says, "and they called her Mustard. I guess it became Master after a bit."

"...that does not make much sense," I say, trying to work out if an age difference of seven years can really render someone completely unintelligible.

"Boys," says Mayuka, patting my shoulder, "are just that kind of creature."

Kouta might have trouble writing in Japanese, let alone English — but he can backflip for the length of the sports ground.

"How many fathers do you have?"

Normally, this first question on the "How many (...) do you have" worksheet gets me "One, obviously!" responses.

"Zero!"

"Uh... yeah?"

"Yup. When I was about one or two he said he was going to work but he lied because he never came back home!"

"I see. Better put down 'zero' in the box then."

Maiko waits for Shoichiro to finish practice, and they walk to the station together. He waits with her until her bus comes.

No one appears to tease them about this.

It's ten in the morning on Saturday, and I woke up fifteen minutes ago. The doorbell rings, and rings again with the insistency of someone who either KNOWS I'm home or just likes the idea of pushing buttons.

The opening door nearly decapitates several small children.

"Ah," I say. They recover miraculously.

"We've come to play!"

Several pairs of shoes later, they've found my dartboard. I'm still not very awake, but I manage to inform them that since the darts are in fact real and can inflict serious damage, they will take it in turns and anyone not throwing will stand back against the wall, thank you very much.

"Sensei, get the dart out for me."

I'm not sure how, but Natsu has managed to stick a dart in my ceiling and Yuto has, out of a total of ten rounds, managed to hit the actual dartboard about twice.

My squeaky hammer has also been found — a dart into the wall equals one hit, so Yuto will probably have a rather impressive bruise tomorrow. What the ceiling merits I can't quite decide yet.

"Sensei," says Yuto, his eyes sparkling like the tip of the darts in his hand, "your house *rocks*."

I pull the dart out of the ceiling and hand it back to Natsu, wondering if I'll regret it.

"Would you," I say, to the room at large, "like some watermelon?"

The chorus of "YE-ES!!" partially deafens me, and I wonder if this is what it feels like to be a teacher — a weird kind of mix of love and pride and frustration and just the plain simple wish of ten minutes alone with a coffee pot.

A Hyogo Times Ramentary Restaurant Review:

Ramen Quick Hits By Andrew Tamashiro

So my buddy Mark's co-worker suggested a spot called [Zundouya](#) Ramen in Himeji, and since we were heading down there to look for gear for Taj Ultimate (the ultimate frisbee tournament that took place July 11-12), we stopped by for a taste.

The chain has four locations in Himeji alone, with another slated for Osaka in 2011. It's a pretty funky little spot, with reggae music in the background and all young folks working there. Our cute waitress had like four wristbands and a sweet blond hairdo underneath a towel.



Zundouya does *tonkotsu* ramen, with varying degrees of thickness (four levels, from *assari* to *kotteri*) and they also allow you to choose the kind of noodles you want (we both went thin). Mark got the *chashu-men* with *kotteri* broth and I got the normal ramen with normal broth. We also sprung for fried rice and gyoza (because hey, a bowl of meat and noodles floating in fatty pork broth just isn't bad enough for you).

The table had garlic cloves and a garlic press in case you wanted to up the deliciousness at the expense of your companions' noses, but we abstained. My ramen came with *negi*, some absolutely *melt-in-your-mouth-like-butter* pork slices, a slice of *nori* (seaweed), a full soft-boiled egg, and a fair-sized serving of those aforementioned thin



noodles. It was pretty darn good. The oil in the broth kept the heat locked in the broth so when you pulled a serving of noodles, they were far hotter than the soup you'd sip from the top of the bowl. The entire bowl was fairly well put together, but I felt like the noodles were a bit too soft.

The real star of this meal was the fried rice, in my opinion, which is saying something considering I liked the ramen. A little smaller than most ramen places I go to, but with some nice ingredients and without any hint of oiliness.

The gyoza was average.

Rai Rai Tei is a chain that I've found in both Kyoto and Hyogo, and is hard to miss since the place is usually huge and yellow. The characters 来来亭 are often at least 8-10 feet tall on the side of the building, so you shouldn't have any trouble finding it. I've been to the outposts in Fukuchiyama and Toyooka and I've tried both the normal ramen and signature *negi* ramen.

If you like *negi*, then this is your kind of ramen restaurant. They pile on the stuff like it's going out of style. Slightly crisp without being too pungent or stringy, the sliced onion makes for a great complement to the noodles floating in a broth that's probably too fatty for its own good.

I've never been one to shy away from consuming chunks of lard if they're properly placed, but they seem awfully out of place in this particular soup. The noodles were pretty normal, but the *chashu* was pretty darn good. It's so nice to know that not every place has tough, chewy pork slices that taste like they've been boiled to death before being grilled.

The normal ramen is simply a less garnished version of the *negi* ramen, so I'm glad I tried it before I went with the more expensive (and far more popular) version. A solid soup with too much fat, average noodles and toppings, really only made noteworthy by the pork and onion.



WHEEL OF JEOPARDY!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: The FINAL Edition! By Joy Feddes

So this is it for my pearls of wisdom, my insights into your soul! Hope you've enjoyed them.

1. I'm leaving Japan:

- a) Only because they are making me.
- b) Oh, how I yearn for the homeland.
- c) I'm not. I chose mindless repetition of "toilet" over living with my parents.

2. Have you mastered a Japanese art while you were here?

- a) You mean like ikebana? Yeah!
- b) Yep, I've mastered the "ehhhhhh..."
- c) I told someone "maybe" when I meant "no." I think that means I have.

3. Will you remember me?

- a) Of course! You did that thing for me that one time, at that place, and it was great.
- b) I will, until we stop writing because now that we aren't bitching about our schools, we have nothing in common.
- c) No, I'm already trying to forget you.

4. What's the quickest way to your heart?

- a) The smile of a 6-year-old pretty much melts me.
- b) Sweet nothings... made of diamonds.
- c) Rice!

5. What's your relationship with cockroaches?

- a) I haven't met a roach I didn't kill. I like broiling them.
- b) I manage, but I get annoyed when they forget to turn off the lights.
- c) My apartment is a haven of bug-free living, suckers!

6. Chu-hai:

- a) My mission at home is to find a dealer, I mean seller, of this gold.
- b) I take it back. It's not sweet nothings made of diamonds — it's yuzu chu-hai!
- c) It's what's for dinner.



7. Sometimes I think I've written these questions before:

- a) And I think I've answered them, but differently!
- b) You do it for the earth. Recycling is so hip these days.
- c) No, this is all-new drivel.

8. Did you know there are three different ways to pluralize octopus?

- a) It's true octop-usses/i/odes, and they have four hearts.
- b) Thank goodness you told me. I hadn't learned anything yet today.
- c) I did know that because I'm the world's best English teacher.

What your answers mean:

Mostly As: You might not believe this, but I'm so happy to never have to see your ugly face again. Kidding! Mostly As, it has been as slice, a slice of pie. Let's go do some karaoke to complete our friendship. I'll remember you, for a year at least! You'll remember me for longer, but you'll know I've forgotten you because

you'll be on limited profile on Facebook.

Mostly Bs: The puns available for the letter B are many, but I'm too tired to come up with anything other than remember to B yourself. Whether you're going home or staying here, never let anyone convince you that you'd rather be Mostly Cs. We all know they are well-meaning jerks. My parting words to you are stolen from Emma. Remember, "English is different in different countries," so don't be an ass and let your kids put the u in colour.

Mostly Cs: Hello lovely jerks. Are you ready for your next year of Japan living? I might ask you to send me the new flavours of Kit Kat once it gets cool enough to send chocolate through the mail without massive meltage (So expect me to ask you... in November). I was kidding about the jerks thing, I was just trying to make Mostly Bs feel better about my sad pun. My time is done, and time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies, however, like a banana.

Getting to Know Some Random JETs

❖ **Name:** Kerk Low.

❖ **Please call me:** Kerk.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Hyogo Technical High School (Wadamisaki), Kobe Technical High School (Wadamisaki) and Kobe Suzurandai High School (Suzurandai).

❖ **How we know you:** You might not find me at drinking events. Otherwise, I'm the one standing in the corner eating and not talking much.

❖ **Birthday:** 24 December 1977.

❖ **Born and raised:** Singapore, Singapore. It is the size of Awaji Island.

❖ **Family:** Parents, one elder brother and two elder sisters.

❖ **University and Degree:** Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland. BEng in Environmental Services Engineering.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Part-time sushi staff, part-time primary school teacher, technical school lecturer.

❖ **Travels:** Malaysia (for Scout events and camps), Sabah (Three-day Sabah Adventure challenge), Scotland, Germany (Berlin), America (Chicago and Boston), Bali, Japan.

❖ **Hobbies:** Illustration, baking, karaoke, origami, guitar, kayaking, Scouts and others.

❖ **Staying another year?** Going to max it all out!

❖ **Favourites:**

Food: If it breathes or walks, I eat with rice! Bwahahaha!

Sports: Right now, the only sports I do is walk from my apartment to the school.

Music: L'Arc-en-ciel, B'z, Marilyn Manson, Marron 5 and many more. Mostly rock and pop.

Shop: Baking shops that sell ingredients and equipment.

TV Show: Gummi Bears, Duck Tales, House MD, Blackadder and 笑ってはいけない.



Movie: Action and/or comedy are good stuff.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** My team for the first time entered a three-day adventure challenge in Sabah with minimum training. We managed to survive it. Our team name was Cut-Away (term used for cutting the strings in parachutes if it gets tangled up).

❖ **Best life experience:** When my baking is a success and dragging myself to write in my blog (<http://10wkerk.wordpress.com>).

❖ **Motto to live by:** Hope for the best but be prepared for the worst..

❖ **I remember when:** I thought you could make Gummy-Berry juice from real berries!

❖ **What are you drinking?** Warm water..

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Any one who would like to meet me.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** Highly unlikely because I am a background player. I do not play well as the main character.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** I get my freedom and time.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** like to spend time with my loved ones and like Nigella Lawson, bake something luscious to enjoy over a cup of fruit tea.

(ξ^▽^ξ) ホホホホホホホホ

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I stabbed my left eye with a pen-knife... it was a freak accident. エーイ /_・)/D・・・ ----- →;° o°)ザク!

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Be nice, be patient, be real.

❖ **When class is TOO QUIET I...** would pinch myself to see if it is a dream!

!Σ (￣ロ￣lll)

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Nay. Reward for their efforts.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** I was teaching the class when suddenly the classroom's back door and in came a mummy. He was wrapped real good with rolls of toilet paper from top to bottom by his buddy. Everyone was stunned! (;°ロ°) ナンジャコリヤ

❖ **Name:** Goran "I turn with the hand-brake" Seletković.

❖ **Please call me:** G.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Kitasuma SHS, that's North Suma-ku as the name suggests.

❖ **How we know you:** If the words "BOOYAH!" or "Fool" mean anything to you, it's highly likely that you know me. To spare the innocent, we should probably leave the details of the "how" out of this.

❖ **Birthday:** 20th May.

❖ **Born and raised:** Born in the ancient town of Split located along the Dalmatian coast in the former Yugoslavia. Exposure to my Greek-Illyrian heritage and Slavic upbringing took an unexpected rural turn when the family up-and-moved to the other side of the world, and settled in the lowest populated area of Western Australia: the Gascoyne Region. There, I enjoyed living in the great outdoors on a plantation at the edge of the Great Western Desert in the banana-growing town of Carnarvon.

❖ **Family:** The usual suspects... father, mother, sister and a handful of friends that might as well be family.

❖ **University and degree:** Computer science at Edith Cowan University. It might not be immediately obvious, but I love getting my nerd on.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Plantation worker, pizza delivery driver, help desk support officer, IT administrator, IT con-

sultant, webmaster.

❖ **Travels:** That's why I'm here. I'm a late bloomer when it comes to travel but as soon as I had a taste of it, I just had to get out of Perth. I love getting lost in Japan, especially when someone else does the trip organizing. It's just SO easy!

❖ **Hobbies:** About a billion of them, unfortunately I'm very haphazard as I don't constrict myself to any one hobby at any given time. Blood-pumping. Adrenaline-flowing. Thought-provoking. If you're a hobby that can be described by any of these, then I'm probably into you.

❖ **Staying another year?** Officially... yeah sure. Un-officially... I can see just about as far into the future as you can, so it's all really open to discussion, isn't it? I'm just gonna go with the flow for now.

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Cocoa — hands down.

Sports: Yes...

Music: Ready-Steady-Go by L'Arc-en-Ciel... at the moment.

Shop: I don't understand the question.

TV Show: Don't have time nor would I understand it if I did. I like documentaries.

Movie: Oh come on, we all know "favourite" things change depending on your mood. Right now I feel like saying Willow. [Ed. note: and you are no less of a man for it, G]

❖ **Most proud achievement:** Volun-

teering to climb up to the top of a ship's mast, in the middle of the night, while sea-sick, to let down the sail... and only vomiting once, on an empty stomach.

❖ **Best life experience:** The past couple of years in Japan.

❖ **Motto to live by:** What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

❖ **I remember when...** I had temporary amnesia from being knocked out on a football field. The world has never looked the same since.

❖ **What are you drinking?** The sweet nectar of life.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** My 12-year-old self. We'd have a lot to talk about.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** If you elect me president, I'll sort it all out so that we won't need presidents anymore. The road to change will be tough and hard decisions will have to be made, but as God... is my witness, I'll be sure to make them. So make your vote Good. Heck, make it Great! Vote "G" in 2010!!!

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** Constantly being stared at.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** ask if anyone else wants to tag along to keep me company.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** My name means Mountain Man in the old tongue.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Shatter the ice early. Once the ice is out, the teaching becomes much easier.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** Burst out into spontaneous "Booyah!"

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Of course. If they're good students, they get to hang out with me. If they're not then they don't get G time.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** First Halloween in Japan. I dressed up as Dracula and casually strolled through the hallways. Most students let out yelps of surprise as soon as they saw me, but one came close to fainting. She was rooted to the spot and as I approached her legs failed. It wasn't until I spoke that she realized it was me and started to calm down.





There Will Be Cilantro

By C. W. Newman

You think to yourself, "Hey, it's Japan. Land of technology! World of the Future! Transistors, internal combustion engines, and friggin' robots!" You are prepared to deplane into a Utopian technological wonder world of delights. And so you do.

Make no mistake about it. When you finally emerge from customs, fingerprinted and scanned, you find yourself needing to embark on a second journey to the city center, because its vastness has pushed the airport into another area code entirely. The scale is overwhelming. The sprawl is overwhelming. The *smell* is overwhelming.

It's a month later, when you are finally settling into your apartment, strange surroundings having become your home, that the whelm starts creeping back down to manageable levels. You've realized how the traffic signage is slightly different from that of your home country. You've started to recognize the daily routines of your new neighbors. You've accepted the size of the insects. In a no-longer-weird amalgam, it is suddenly normal to pass an old man doing calisthenics with an 8-foot dragonfly next to a triangular stop sign each morning.

Eventually, you come to think that you are not who you were when you arrived. You are more native, now, than foreigner; twisted and different. You go grocery shopping at MaxValu... every day. You light up Mild Sevens. You eat your salad with chopsticks. You even sit down when you shower, because it seems like the right thing to do. You're turning Japanese.

And then, you look for cilantro.

Who knows? Maybe things are different in Tokyo or Osaka. Maybe foreign denizens of the enormous megalopoli can fool themselves into thinking they live in a protected pocket of their own hometown; some kind of Lost World where all the dinosaurs have evolved into five-foot-nothing drunken business men and orange-haired harpies screaming "kawaii" to communicate. Maybe somewhere buried behind the constant neon assault of the cities, a secret revolutionary movement provides familiar provisions to fortify the embedded outsiders. Maybe the grocery stores dotting those urban heat islands are filled with all the comforts of home.

Whatever the situation, things are different out here in Tajima. When you decide that Kagome salsa can't cut it anymore and reach for the DIY materials, you get

nothing but a strange stirring deep in your gut: Absence.

And the absence of appropriate seasoning is just the start. Again and again, like a fight sequence from Adam West's *Batman*, that feeling hits as you look for things that you know ought to be close at hand. Movie Theater? BAM! 24-hour ATM? POW! Your milkshake? ZAP! As you reel from these terrible blows, you find yourself turning to the only possible comfort, slim though it may be. You embrace "suitable replacements." Pizza time becomes okonomiyaki time. A night of clubbing becomes a night of karaoke. Your shameful addiction to the OC morphs into a shameful addiction to some anime recommended by the girls in the tennis club. Shhhh! Don't tell.

Of course, you still lean a little on your Costco card, but you start thinking "Maybe I prefer Kirin Classic to my watery domestic." In fact, you do. And even though your 3,000 yen meal might cost one fourth as much back in the motherland, you think that the portion size is just right. And you find that you actually prefer a buckwheat husk-filled makura to the marshmallowy goose down pillows you used to love. As the years go by, the things that you find to compensate for all those initial absences become part of you.

The new you probably doesn't care. In fact, you're proud that you have assimilated as much as you have from this country. You are eager to display your new components to the family and friends you left behind. Will they believe all the things you've become? Will they be tolerant of your need for crackers to be wrapped in packs of three? Will they understand your disappointment with the meager citrus selection? Will they help you find imported CalorieMate?

And that is the real kicker about going "home," wherever it may be. When you get there, you're going to lose all of this, and you're going to feel the absence all over again.

But, there will be cilantro.

FACEBOOK Snapshots OF THE Lost WEEK

the appearance of domestic H1N1 influenza cases in May 2009 saw the closure of every school in Hyogo, unfortunately, because teachers in Japan are treated like slaves, the vast majority of us still had to come into work to sit around in student-less schools. we passed the time in myriad ways; knitting, writing poetry, planting sweet potatoes. it was probably the first week all year that every ALT in Hyogo was on Facebook at the same time...



Matt Pockat Hyogo Prefecture has closed all prefectural schools until the 22nd. This affects 1440 schools and 640,000 students.
May 18 at 3:04pm · Comment · Like



Stacey Shanahan My teachers are trying to get me to wear the swine flu masks. I'm pretending like I don't understand their Japanese.
May 18 at 11:17am · Comment · Like



Matthew Findlay does not fear the flu of the swine. My mighty immune system has defeated more heinous foes than you. Come, throw yourself against the walls of my fortress, porcine invader, and you will break like waves on the cliffs of Dover!
May 18 at 9:00pm · Comment · Like



Eric Lord is bored stiff - why, butafluman, why?
May 19 at 11:19am · Comment · Like



Patrick Kwan notices a lot of friends online in the Chat box during work time. Most of them are fellow ALTs from Hyogo Prefecture. Hello, friends!
May 19 at 11:20am · Comment · Like



Daniel Kling has a theory. They stopped calling it 豚インフル (pig flu) and started calling it 新型インフル (new type flu) last week because Japanese people have caught it and it's no longer just an icky foreigners thing.
May 20 at 10:07am · Comment · Like



James Johnson 's boss is now reading my comic books at his desk.
May 20 at 12:15pm · Comment · Like



Portia Adams : fellow teacher told me just before lunch that I should take this opportunity (swine flu) to go home and "have a rest." I respond by saying I get to leave at 2 (which is already early) and the teacher looks at me crazy and says "you are so sweet"...I took the hint, packed up my s--t and snuck out the back.
May 20 at 1:45pm · Comment · Like



Matt Pockat Dear Swine Flu/新型インフル, Because you're freaking everybody in charge of this prefecture out, I spent my day cooking, practicing guitar, playing soccer and swimming at Satsu Beach and then discovering a waterfall trail with Buddha statues all over the place. Thanks! Matt
May 20 at 6:31pm · Comment · Like



MaryEllen Kennedy climbed the Harima Alps yesterday. Yeah, mountains!
May 21 at 7:30am · Comment · Like



Kate Emory Capitans log: Day Four. The Natives are getting restless. Fewer and fewer turn up in the office. There has not been a face mask to be seen, so I must believe that the Swine Flu has taken them out. Those that turn up tend to enter the office with strange groans-hangovers maybe?
May 21 at 8:42am · Comment · Like



Clay Eaton might be teaching his teachers the art of frisbee tomorrow. Don't tell the man (or the PTA).
May 21 at 4:47pm · Comment · Like



Cain Gibbs is enjoying the breeze through his closed windows. Seriously. Also, Cain is taking suggestions for how to kill one more day at a school devoid of students, energy, and influenza. (X_X)
May 21 at 10:56pm · Comment · Like

A Hyogo Times How-To:

In the Cold Pool - a Guide to Onsen

By Matthew Stott

Onsen. If this is your first time in Japan you've doubtless heard rumors of it, but chances are there is nothing like it in your home country. Naturally, therefore, you must be champing at the bit to cast off the fig-leaf (so to speak); to render yourself naked as the day you were born before a large group of strangers. Of course you are.

Well, easy there, tiger. There are a few things you should know about onsen in advance. First, a thumbnail sketch. Japan happens to be located at the intersection of three tectonic plates. For the Japanese, this is both good news and bad news. The bad news: earthquakes, regular and occasionally severe. The good news: hot springs! Lots and lots of hot springs, the wonderful progeny of water coming into contact with hot or molten rock, found throughout the archipelago from Okinawa to Hokkaido.

For thousands of years the locals have gathered at their local onsen to wash away their sweat (ten years' worth if one haiku master is to be believed) and their cares. And the last thing they need is to have that tranquility disturbed by the clumsiness of ignorant barbarians such as we, so listen up.

DO:

— Bring a few 100-yen coins (in addition to the entry fee, of course). You'll need them for the shoe locker at the front, as well as, in some venues, the locker in the change room. (Don't fret . . . there are usually change machines available.)

— Bring a small — I repeat — small towel. As in tea-towel sized, and if you don't have one, they can be purchased for a few hundred yen at most onsen.

— Bring a larger towel to dry yourself off with when you are finished. This towel remains in your change-room locker.

*"Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs."
—Ecclesiastes 5:15.*

— Wash yourself thoroughly at the bathing station, using the small towel as a washcloth. Then, when you're done, wash yourself again. You're not clean enough. When you're really done, spend a good two minutes hosing off any trace elements of soapy water from your body.

— Take regular advantage of the drinking fountain. You'd be amazed at the amount of fluids you lose, especially if you spend time in the sauna, so you don't want to dehydrate yourself, pass out and crack your head open on the hard floor. Blood and brains tend to be even less

welcome seeping into the communal bathwater than soap.

— Take time to explore the onsen, and don't forget that there is usually an outside section (the rotenburo) which is — trust me — a particularly good

place to be in the winter months. Especially if it is snowing.

— Bring a water bottle, purchased at a nearby vending machine, for the purpose of smuggling in sake. You will consume the sake in the bath, an experience I highly recommend... though I can't guarantee that you will get away with it at all venues.

**DON'T:**

— Enter the bath with soap on your body.
— Ever let the towel touch the bath water.
— Complain when you're booted out of the establishment for having a tattoo. Didn't you read the sign? (Oh, that's right, you don't read kanji.) Yes, the tattoo rule is intended to keep the traditionally heavily-tattooed yakuza away, and yes, they're fully aware that you're not yakuza, but they have to be fair to everyone, see? Your best bet is to cover the tattoo (assuming that it's small enough) with band-aids. The onsen staff won't be fooled (and they're unlikely to enforce the tattoo taboo anyway unless another customer complains), but they will be happy to look the other way.

— Stare. Your mother will have informed you that it is rude to stare. You will be stared at, of course, but that's different, because you're different. Be assured that they're not being rude, nor are they ogling you. My suspicion is that they are watching (and privately relishing) your reaction to what is bound to be an unfamiliar — and probably awkward — state of affairs.

— Use the bathroom scales in the changeroom. They never tell you what you want to hear.

— Forget to remove the toilet slippers when you leave the toilet.

— Leave skid on the towels in the sauna. Nobody wants to see that shit.

When it comes to onsen — and under the rubric of "onsen" I include the many large modern bath houses which are located nowhere near a natural hot

spring, yet offer the same facilities and more — we are spoiled for choice in Hyogo. (Just keep an eye out for the ♪ in your neighbourhood.) I personally recommend Taihei no Yu (next to Porto Bazaar, about 20 minutes' walk south-west of JR Tarumi) and James Yama (near Saty in the north of Tarumi-ku), chiefly because they are both within walking distance of my apartment. Arima Onsen in Kobe's Kita ward is a must-visit, and the perfect end to a hike across the Rokko Mountains.

If you live outside of the Tajima region and are willing to endure a long train ride, the picturesque resort town of Kinosaki, close to the Sea of Japan, offers a selection of onsen, open-air foot spas, and the unique sight of schools of yukata-clad tourists clicking along the streets in wooden sandals. Don't forget to sample the wasabi-flavored icecream, if only for the benefit of telling the folks back home that you did.

And don't forget your towel!





Travel Japan

The island of small beans - Shoudoshima

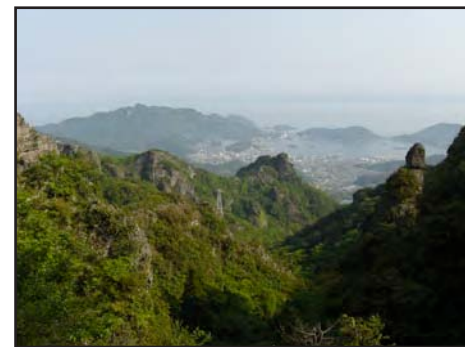
By Clay Eaton

It's summer again in Japan: the perfect time for swimming, eating somen, and budgeting for big trips in August. A great destination where you do all of these things is the island of Shōdoshima (小豆島). This nearby island (which according to the Japanese looks like a fat puppy) is close enough to not break the bank, but isolated enough to still feel like traveling.

Shōdoshima is the second largest island in the Inland Sea, after our own Awaji. Part of Kagawa Prefecture, it lies in between Shikoku and Okayama, not far from the border with Hyogo. In fact, on a clear day, you can even see it from the southern parts of our prefecture. Sitting in the midst of the Inland Sea it has been blessed with a Mediterranean climate. This translates to only sporadic rain, balmy winds and sunny days. With this climate, the island has also become the center of Japan's small domestic olive industry, and in true Japanese style, there's plenty of faux-Greek kitsch to go around.

There are no bridges to Shōdoshima, which gives it a nice air of tranquil isolation. The best way to get there is by the ferries, which sail from a number of destinations:

Osaka, Kobe, Himeji, Uno in Okayama, and Takamatsu in Kagawa. Prices vary depending on where you depart from, and whether you take the express ferry or slower car ferry, but the ferry from Himeji costs ¥1,480



per person, ¥7,180 for most cars, and ¥1,900 per bike. The ride is a pleasant 90 minutes through the Harima Sea on one of Japan's quintessential bubble economy-era ferries, complete with colorful booths and a large sleeping floor. The weather can be pretty hazy, but you'll still get a good look at the Ieshima Islands, a small archipelago that belongs to

Himeji city and is a nice little camping destination on its own. It won't be too long before you can make out the verdant peaks (well, sorta peaks) of Shōdoshima.

The express ferry from Kobe is also about 90 minutes, and costs ¥5,800 per person.

Taking the ferry from Himeji will put you at the Northeastern port of Fukuda (福田), while the ferry from Kobe arrives at the more populous

South end of the island at Sakate (坂手). From here the island is at your finger-tips. There are no trains on Shōdoshima, so the most convenient way to get around the island is by private car, either your own or a rental. By car, the island only takes about half a day to fully circumnavigate. If you don't have access to a car, the island also has a fine bus system that can get you around. And given the nice weather and beautiful ocean-side roads, another increasingly popular option is to travel the island by bike. While the mountains in the interior can get a little gnarly, the road around the island is easy to manage and you'll meet plenty of other bikers along the way!

One of the main attractions of Shōdoshima is the hunk of land itself. Volcanic formations dominate the island and are the source of its most lucrative export: granite. Shōdoshima's high quality stone is sought out but the construction companies of Japan's major cities, and the bulk of

Osaka castle is actually made of granite from the island. This industry hasn't been too great for tourism: it's a bit depressing to pass by a hillside that's been completely hollowed out for skyscrapers on the mainland. Still, there are many fully intact natural rock formations to keep you entertained. Perhaps the most notable of these is Kanka Gorge. From here, high in the interior mountains, you can enjoy not only the weird geological formations of the island but also a view that extends all the way to Shikoku. Exploring the gorge by cable-car ride or hike is also a fun distraction.

Like anywhere in Japan, Shōdoshima is famous for a set of local products for Japanese tourists to taste and buy and brag to their friends about. Somen, the thin wheat noodles you can find served cold throughout Japan in the summer, is one of the more traditional products found on Shōdoshima. You can find restaurants serving somen across the island, and you can even watch it being made at the Michi-no-eki in Murō. In fact, according to Wikipedia, Shōdoshima is one of Japan's three major somen areas (one of the others is right here in Harima). Soy sauce is another famous local product that the island has been exporting for generations. Over in Nōma, you can even tour the Marukin soy sauce factory, and with the ¥200 admission, you get a small bottle of the reputable condiment to boot. But the

most popular product of the island are the olives. On the south of the island along route 436, you can find the Olive Garden (which is not a restaurant noted for unlimited salad and bread refills (unfortunately)). This is the site of Japan's very first olive plantation, and isn't that special? If you have been craving high quality olives or olive oil, or the more eccentric olive chocolate, then this is the place to go.

Perhaps the biggest tourist attraction on Shōdoshima is the set of "24 Eyes," a masterpiece of Japanese cinema based on a novel of the same name. Made in 1954, this movie follows the life of a Japanese teacher based on the island in the years before and after World War II. You can find the original school house that the novel was set in on an isolated peninsula along Naikai Bay, and further up you'll find the 24 Eyes Movie Village. Not only does this little park host a spruced-up version of the original village, but it appeals to almost every aspect of



Showa-era nostalgia, complete with traditional village houses, old candy shops, small museums about the Golden Era of Japanese movies and the author

of "24 Eyes," and, of course, a theater playing the movie on continuous loop. It's probably not the most exciting place you could ever visit, but it's a nice distraction on a sunny day.

There are a number of lodging options on Shōdoshima, from more expensive hotels to cheaper Minshuku and camping. One good spot is the Furusato Mura campsite (associated with the Michi-no-eki that makes the somen). Here you can camp in tents (from ¥2,100), or rent out a more extravagant trailer (¥14,700) or cabin (¥8,400). There is also a ¥300 per person charge. The best part of this campsite is the associated National Hostel (another option at ¥4,350 per person per night), the onsen of which has a commanding view of the Inland Sea and Shikoku, and is absolutely perfect at sunset.

That's all for now! As always, if you have any other suggestions or comments about Shōdoshima please submit them!

Recipe of the Month:**By Emma Nicoletti**

Kechina Kitchen

Cooking and Eating on the Cheap in Japan

Kechi and stingy share a common rhyme and a common meaning: CHEAP! I'd like to pass on some cooking-at-home information and advice I've adopted over the last two years living in Kobe.

Cooking at home

Without a doubt, cooking at home and bringing food to work is cheap and healthy. Even if the school lunch is only 380 yen a day, buying a loaf of bread, margarine, cheese, tomato, avocado and ham, making them into a sandwich and eating them over a week, will cost you less than 120 yen a day. Also, if you are like me and enjoy a weekend diet high in saturated fats (karaage), sugars (umeshuu) and carbohydrates (beer), it's

nice to give your body a bit of a break from the cafeteria's tempura and gluey noodles.

Where to buy?

Generally, try to avoid the supermarkets in the basements of department stores. Prices are usually cheaper in smaller supermarkets that are nestled in side streets or away from main stations. In my local area the winner is Toho whose selection is good and prices are low. I have heard that Supa Maruhachi stores are also good value. My best recommendation is to find a local Gyommu (業務) supermarket. Gyommu supermarkets sell dried, canned and frozen goods in bulk at really cheap prices.

What to buy?

In Japan it's cheaper to buy Japanese foods. I suggest that you eat Japanese-styled dishes during the week and leave satisfying your pallet for more varied flavours to Sannomiya's excellent selection of international restaurants on the weekend. Most Japanese dishes include various combinations of the following ingredients: dashi (だし soup stock), mirin (みりん sweet cooking sake), soy sauce (しょうゆ 醤油), oil (あぶら 油), rice and miso paste. I always keep a handy supply of these in my cupboard.

It's also good sense when buying for one or two people to buy things that don't spoil quickly or things that can be frozen

CHA HAN: FRIED RICE WITH MEAT, VEGGIES AND SOY SAUCE — AN EXCELLENT SIDE DISH OR MEAL FOR ONE

Ingredients

1 cup of cooked rice
oil
200g beef mince (any meat is ok)
100g bacon
½ onion
ginger (as much as you like)
¼ cabbage
1 cup frozen vegetables
1 egg
cracked black pepper/tobasco sauce
soy sauce

Directions

- Cook the rice.
- As the rice is cooking, heat oil in a pan at medium heat and add the mince. Break the mince into small pieces with the spatula. Cook the mince until it becomes a golden brown.
- As the mince is cooking, cut the bacon and onion into small pieces.
- Add the bacon, onion and ginger to the pan when the mince has started to brown.
- Beat the egg with a fork in a small bowl and push the mince mixture to one side of the pan.
- Pour the beaten egg into the empty side of the pan (try and keep it away from the mince mixture), and let it become firm on the underside.
- Once the egg is firm, mix it around on its side of the pan with a spatula and cook it until it is all firm.
- Mix the egg, frozen vegetables, soy sauce and salt and pepper into the mince mixture.
- As the vegetables are thawing, cut the cabbage into small pieces and add to the mince mixture (push the cabbage to the bottom of the pan so it wilts faster).
- Once the cabbage has melted mix in the rice.
- The best way to brown the rice is to let it sit for 90 seconds between mixes.



OKONOMIYAKI: A SAVOURY OMELETTE MIXTURE WITH CABBAGE, COOKED IN THE SHAPE OF A PANCAKE

Ingredients

200 g chicken oil
1 ½ cups of flour (こむぎこ 小麦粉)
2 eggs
½ cup of water
¼ cup of soy sauce
grated ginger (as much as you like)
½ teaspoon of dashi powder
1 tablespoon mirin
1 packets of soba noodles (そば), thawed if frozen
½ cup mushrooms
¼ cabbage
okonmiyaki sauce (brown sauce: お好み焼き ソース)
mayonnaise (thick is good)

Directions

- Cut the chicken into small pieces.
- Heat oil in a pan at medium heat and cook the chicken until it's a golden brown colour. Then take the pan off the heat.
- As the chicken is cooking, in a large bowl beat the eggs with a fork and mix in the flour (lumpy is good).
- Mix the water, soy sauce, dashi powder, mirin and ginger into the flour mixture.
- Cut the cabbage into small pieces and then add the cabbage, mushrooms, soba noodles and chicken to the flour mixture.
- Mix it all together.
- Clean the pan you cooked the chicken in and heat some



more oil in it at medium heat.

- Put half the flour mixture in the pan and spread it across the base of the pan, so it looks like a thick pancake.
- Cook it on that side for about 5 minutes, or until it is firm enough to turn.
- Slide it onto a plate and then turn it back into the pan so that the uncooked side faces down. (If you have a big spatula, simply flip it over.)
- Cook on the other side for another 5 minutes, or until it is firm.
- Put it on a plate and cover it in okonomiyaki sauce and mayonnaise.

When to buy?

Personally, I think shopping once a week rather than everyday is better because it saves time and limits impulse buying. It also encourages you to eat at home: if you've planned your meals and bought the ingredients, why eat out? If you do get landed in a place where the only local supermarket is a big chain store, it's worthwhile finding out its "cheap day." Each supermarket has a different cheap day, and some stores change which day it is regularly.

YAKISOBA: FRIED NOODLE STIRFRY WITH VEGGIES

Ingredients

200 g chicken (any meat is ok)
½ onion
1 cup frozen vegetables
¼ cabbage
grated ginger (as much as you like)
chilli paste (as much as you like)
¾ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons mirin
2 packets of soba noodles (そば)

Directions

- Cut the chicken into small pieces.
- Heat oil in the pan at medium heat and cook the chicken until it's a golden brown colour.

- Cut the onion into small pieces.
- Add the onion to the pan when the chicken pieces have started to brown.
- Add the ginger, chilli paste, soy sauce and mirin when the onion has become translucent, and turn the heat down a little bit.
- Add the frozen vegetables.
- While the frozen vegetables are thawing, cut the cabbage into small pieces.
- Add the cabbage as soon as it's cut and mix it well
- When the cabbage is cooked (when it has wilted), add the noodles and turn up the heat to medium high.
- Mix the mixture until most of the soy sauce is absorbed and the noodles are heated.

Words of Wisdom

By Gareth Cottam

My Time in Japan

Coming to Japan was an ambitious undertaking, but then, I'm an ambitious guy. I had many plans when I came to Japan such as traveling and becoming fluent in Japanese, to name a few. I like to think that I've achieved most of my goals here. Along the way, Japan has become my home. It is not going to be easy to leave.

I have made strong connections with the community, my teachers and my students. They have all had a profound impact on my life and I will miss them greatly. For those JETs that are also leaving, I'm sure you going through a similar emotional struggle. On one side, the sadness of leaving our new home that we have made here, but on the other side, the excitement that comes with the looming new adventure in the next step in our life. For those just arriving, your adventure has just begun.

When Ann asked me to write something for the *Hyogo Times* to sum up five years on JET, I was a bit hesitant. Ann asked me to share a few things that I learned about the strange and new of Japan that I don't give a second thought to now. How could I summarise the last five years?! In fact, I could probably write a book about my time in Japan. Part action, part romance, part comedy, ALL adventure. I have accumulated so many stories in my time here, I guess I'll just share a few and hope that's enough.

Shortly after arriving, my students had their Sports' Day. I nearly had a heart attack several times throughout the day watching the various events that they performed. There is one event in particular I can remember with startling clarity. The parents were asked to participate, and so three groups of fathers came out, each to hold a large bamboo pole upright for their children's team. No other support, just the fathers holding it in place. The first-year boys had to run to the pole, climb up and deposit a small flag in the top of the pole before scampering down, running around a check point and tagging the next runner.

One group of fathers, though, REALLY wanted to win. They positioned themselves to hold the pole and one father braced his foot against the base and turned to face the oncoming



student with his hands cupped. The running boy placed his foot in his hands and he proceeded to LAUNCH the boy into the air where he grabbed the pole, climbed the last few feet, placed the flag, and then DROPPED, and the father caught him and set him to run. In most western countries, I'm guessing something like this wouldn't be possible due to fear of lawsuits. (And yes... they DID win that race.)

That evening, after the Sports' Day, I had an enka with my teachers. The English teacher picked me up early and took me to an onsen, so we could soak before the party. I didn't really know what was going on and so imagine my surprise when I follow him into a room filled with naked men and he tells me to strip! I didn't even have a towel! It was an interesting close to the day and my first introduction to onsen culture.

Over the years, things like onsen trips and Sports' Days became common place and I started to take it for granted. I was happy when my friends and family came to visit me and I could live through it all again through their eyes. For example, the happy shock a lot of visitors get from seeing a beer vending machine for the first time, taking my Australian guests snowboarding

(the first time they have even seen snow!) or the shutter-bugging as my visitors photographed everything they saw, including their food!

My time in Japan has brought me a lot of happy memories: my students graduating from junior high school, and then watching them start their own adventures as they become university students, attending the weddings of some of my close friends, etc. Of course, I have a few bitter-sweet memories too, but on the whole, I've had a blast. I started skiing and snowboarding, salsa danced on stage with my Japanese salsa group (Moda Latina). I went swimming together with a whale shark and had my hand on its head while we swam. I even took part in the Okayama "Naked Man" festival and a billion and one smaller festivals throughout the years.

And now my time in Japan has come to an end. I will finish my fifth year on JET on July 31 and I've had to think about my future. I love Japan and it has become my home, but now I must move on. I will move to Taiwan and start an MBA. I know I will return to Japan in the future and who knows, maybe I can help improve the world economy just a little somehow. Like I said, I'm ambitious.

The JET Laws

By Suzie Winterton

Totally not plagiarised from Murphy's / God's Law in any way, shape or form except all of them.

• Any word translated as "holiday" will not mean "obligation-free time away from teachers and students" in 90% of all cases.

• There will never be a well-meaning Japanese person who speaks English around when you need one.

• You will never see your students outside of school until you are in a situation in which you really do not want to.

The more time you have, the less you'll do.

• When you have finally learnt enough

Japanese to talk to your students, they will start speaking English.

• Anything the students remember will in no way be related to what they need to know to pass exams.

• The students will only pay attention when you screw up.

• You will learn more from your students than they will from you.

• Any good weather will be succeeded by bad weather that lasts for twice as long. With bugs.

Any insect that isn't poisonous will arrive in hordes.

• Individuality is fine, just do it in big groups.

• Vitally important information about any event of consequence will be written in *kanji*.

• No Japanese map will ever be to scale. If on any at all.

• Non-paid leave does not happen, even as a preventative against insanity.

• Exciting things will happen in your area the day you are not there.

• The simpler a problem is, the more people it will take to solve it.

• Any Japanese word said with complete confidence in front of a large amount of people will be wrong.

• As soon as you master any kind of system, it will be changed.

• Children will be the only natives honest enough to tell you when you fuck up (and that *kanji* is overrated).

• To work out a Japanese woman's age: pick a number anywhere between eighteen and thirty. Even if you get it wrong they'll be happy.

The smartest kid in class will be a loudmouthed brat.

• The gym will always be the coldest place within school grounds — this includes the sports field.

• There is a Go Home Early Club at every JHS and Senior High, however unofficial.

• No *gaijin* will ever really interpret phrases like "you don't have to bring anything, really" correctly.

• As soon as you put alcohol to your lips you enter a special realm where anything you say is not only undone when you're sober again, but *will not be seen*.

• No matter how hard you try, you WILL end up telling children to clean up after themselves, not to point, and to avoid talking with their mouth full. It is pointless to resist this.

• There is no such thing as too much rice.

Dignity does not apply to gaijin.

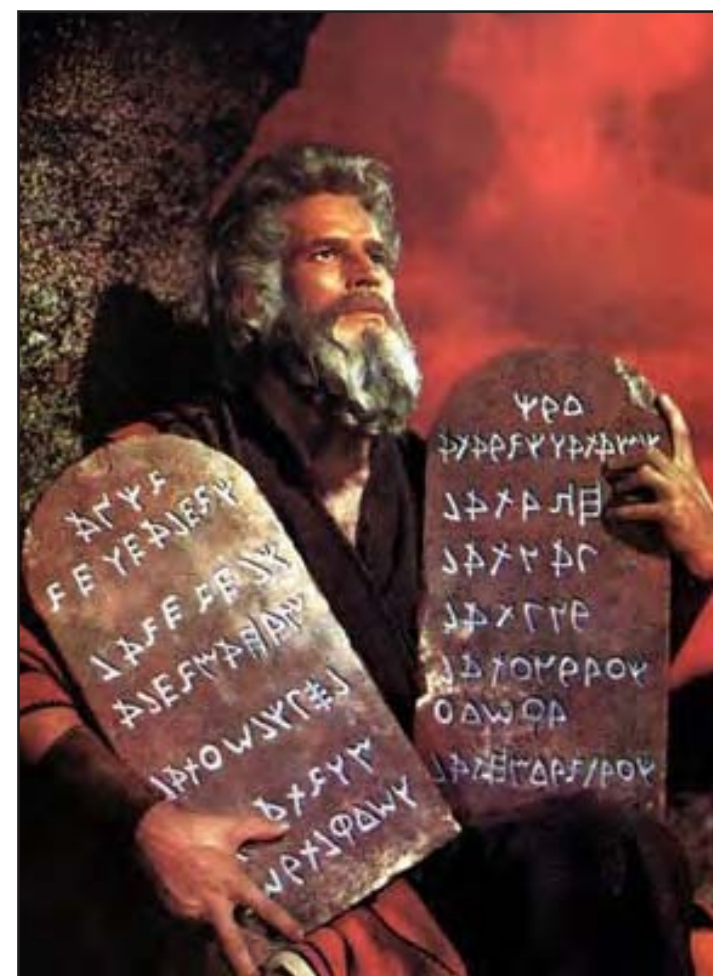
• No cooked and ready-to-eat fish is complete without everything still stuck on: tail, head, eyes and fins. You are expected to eat these.

• Children don't care about ridiculous threats, but they usually listen to them.

• Forget what you learnt in Social Studies and Science: Japan is the only country in the world with four seasons.

• Contrary to nursery rhymes, boys are cute and girls are scary.

• War masquerades as team activities for small children during times of "peace" — don't let the stickers fool you. They're the cause of it all.



Good news everybody! Kami-sama just said he's introducing new *kanji*!

International Cooking Event

From National AJET

In Toyoshina, Nagano, JET ALT, Alexander Brodie, along with a handful of foreign “guest chefs,” is hosting an international cooking event for his English classes. With one eye on the English language recipes they have researched and translated themselves, Japanese students are seasoning and sampling dishes from all around the world. Imagining the hearty aromas of Kebabs, Quiche Lorraine, and homemade Apple Crumble drifting from the kitchens of some of the local high schools is enough to get anyone grabbing for their aprons and Japanese-English dictionaries to get in on the fun.

What sets this class apart is how Alex structures the event: from start to finish the students are engaged in hands-on learning with authentic texts, materials, and people. Over the course of this unit, the students use English websites to learn about cooking terminology and international cuisine, translate English recipes, and make posters about the culture and food of other countries. Then, on the cooking day itself, the class is divided into cooking teams, each with a different recipe that the students have translated during the



previous lesson. What makes this day even more exciting is that Alex invites other JETs (fellow ALTs and CIRs) to join them as “guest chefs.” One or more of the student groups is assigned a “mystery dish” that will be revealed by the JET guest on the day. This dish is usually something from that JET’s home country, so you know you are getting the real deal! At the end, the students get to try all of the dishes in a ‘pot-luck’ style lunch.

Are you drooling to re-create this at your school? We asked Alex WHY? and HOW? and if he had any tips for JETs wanting to start a project like this at their schools. The WHY was easy: the activity is extremely motivating for the students. “The project also offers a chance to learn about foreign culture through the students’ own re-

search and the use of guest JETs... as well as the cultural aspect, it’s also a great way of giving the students a practical situation in which they can use English – an opportunity that rarely arises in the classroom,” Alex says. Surprisingly, the HOW turned out to be equally easy. Alex holds this event at both of his schools. He has found the lesson very adaptable, and has met with receptive and enthusiastic JETs (and of course students.) He recommends going into the proposal with all of the worksheets, recipes, and schedules pre-prepared, and some local JETs on board to help out. Luckily for any of you interested in doing something like this, Alex has done all of the legwork for you. Just shoot an e-mail to JETEffect@ajet.net, and Alex and the JET Effect team would be happy to hook you up with all of the worksheets and tips you’ll need.

Inquiries about this project or nominations of great JET projects that deserve to be honored in a JET Effect article can be sent to JETEffect@ajet.net



Maigo in Hyogo



What on earth is this Hyogo landmark, and where in Hyogo is it? The first reader to send the correct answer to publications@hyogo.ajet.net is so full of win, and will be announced in the next issue. Thanks go to Paul Schuble for the pic. If you have a photo of a Hyogo landmark that you think is appropriate for *Maigo in Hyogo*, send it in!

We Want Your Stories!

...and pictures, and opinions, and poems, and artwork, and essays, and....



Submit by the 15th of each month to:
submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com