

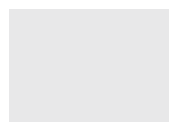
November
2006

hyogo times



<http://hyogo.net>

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Banshu Autumn Festival, Arakawa

hyogo times staff

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editor: Robin Crowder

design editor: Karen leBlanc

contributors: Jeff Weese, Fiona Douglas, Tori Lowe, Micah Jorrisch, Amanda Brown, Ironic Chef, Lorna Young.

...

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

<http://hyogoajet.org>





From the editor

actually majored in French – not English – with a minor in Communication Studies and quite frankly, I’m not entirely sure how that fits into my JET job description! However, my biggest concern has recently become not being able to speak any of one my three languages properly by the time I leave this country: my English is rapidly reaching a first grade level, there is little opportunity to use my French, and my sarcasm is a language that is just not spoken here!

That being said, I hope to put all three of those languages to use in co-editing and writing for the Hyogo Times. The rest of the editorial team and I have a lot of new ideas that we want to try out, and we really hope to increase not only readership, but also the number of submissions – after all people, this is your paper and you make it what it is!

J’aimerais aussi lancer “Le coin francophone” à fin de réunir et d’inclure tous les JETs francophones et francophiles en publiant des articles, des publicités et des événements ayant lieu dans la communauté franco-japonaise. Néanmoins, le succès du coin dépendra de vos soumissions – envoyez moi vos articles, vos critiques littéraires ou musicales, vos poèmes, vos recettes, vos blagues...peu importe le sujet du texte, à moins qu’il soit rédigé en français!

I really hope that you enjoy the new face of the Hyogo Times and if we decide to go environmentally friendly, that you diligently download each edition – maybe you’ll even be inspired to send us a submission every now and then! After all, once your “fifteen minutes of gaijin fame” die out, what better way to rekindle that feeling than by seeing your name in print?

To submit something (anything!) to the Times, just email your writing to **submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com** by the 15th of every month.

submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

Hey hey!

My name is Robin and I am your new Hyogo Times editor! I think that this is supposed to be more of a “let’s meet the new kid!” column than an editorial, so it’s pretty lucky that I spent all of September perfecting a stellar self-intro that I can now recite in my sleep. Plus, you guys are a captive audience of readers, so you’ll probably be just as responsive as most of my students! Don’t worry, I’ll spare you the “Getting to Know Robin” crossword activity...

I left frozen forests of Canada for the muggy metropolises of Japan three months ago because I had no idea what to with the rest of my life and this seemed like a pretty fun place to procrastinate. Of course, if my school ever asks, I came to learn about Japanese culture and ESL teaching... I



From the PR

One weekend relaxing on Ikumi beach down in Kochi-ken in September was obviously not enough, so I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to go there and soak up the sun, sea and surf one last time before the cold weather hit. Aaaaahhh! You can surf all year round, so if you want to don a wet suit any time soon, or even just store details of this place in your memory for future reference when the warmer weather rolls around again, then check out the coolest place in Kochi-ken on page 18.

Inspired by the changing of the seasons, Hyogo AJET has decided to make some changes of our own. You might have noticed that the Hyogo Times is looking a little different. Look out for some new faces, regular writers and new sections in this month’s issue. One new regular section I’m particularly excited about is, “Lesson plans: then and now”. Be thankful that you’re not working with “Linguaphone” in the classroom!

Coming up this month are two events that are a first as far as Hyogo AJET goes. If you find yourself missing your granny, then why not act like her and head to “Sally’s” for the first ever Hyogo AJET Bingo Night! There will be a prize for the best granny jumper. On the way in remember to grab your sherry, half-pint of lager and lime, whisky, or whatever be your Gran or Grandad’s favourite tippie. The second event we have planned is the Hyogo AJET Thanksgiving dinner in Himeji. Come, gorge, be merry and...erm, thankful!

In the mean time, curl up with your copy of the Hyogo Times on the sofa (or read it on the toilet), get buying those winter woollies, stay warm and keep smiling – and if you feel so inclined, and inspired by what you see in this issue, write for the Hyogo Times!

Hello dudes and dudettes!

After spending two weekends in the space of a month hanging out on a beach in Shikoku, I guess you could say I’m pretty chilled.

Have a great month!

Fi X

meet the HT team!

Jeff Wiese

Travel is what I came to Japan to do – the majority of my weekends and holiday breaks are spent exploring both the well traveled and less traveled roads of Japan. I want to tell you all about hidden treasures that Japan has been keeping from us and help you book your calendar full of unforgettable weekends. If you have any travel stories, questions, suggestions, or advice... email travelingjapan@gmail.com

Lorna Young

Hello fellow Hyogo JETs I'm Lorna Young - those of you that met me at Yashiro may remember me as the Welsh one. I live in Shingu, just outside of Tatsuno city. Its a small village and in many ways it's like being back in the Rhondda Valley where I grew up... I escaped the Valley by going to study in Bristol and when it was time to move on again JET came to the rescue! Back in the UK I do Jitsu so I have an interest in Japanese martial arts and I hope to try some out while I am here. I look forward to writing about these attempts as well as my travels, fantastic discoveries and general moans and groans that go along with being a first year JET!

Amy Piesse

Hi, I'm Amy, and in my other JET lives, I'm the hard-working secretary for your Hyogo AJET. So seeing as I'm not feeling mentally challenged by the rampant gossip and social planning that fills most of the minutes that I write, I thought I'd turn my hand to writing outrageous lies and more rampant gossip for a wider audience. Oh, and hopefully I'll be bringing a little more culture into your lives with reviews and other clever little things. Enjoy!

Karen leBlanc

Hey chickens, I'm a second year JET from Australia. When I'm not fighting people (taekwon-do) or dancing, I am designing your HT from my little mountain village. I am an artist and designer, and I hope you enjoy what our lovely team puts together.

Brenda McKinney

My name is Brenda McKinney and I am your new 'love doc' (otherwise known as the Love and Relationship column) girl. Before Japan, I spent the first years out of college working my way through the corporate jungle in my hometown of Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA). Now I am a high school ALT in Takasago, living in Akashi. YORUSHIKU! As is often the case, the HT relationship column has mostly been a forum for advice and reflections. Since it seems to work, I'm steering it that way again. My sleeves are rolled up and I am ready to dig in to the (wild?) world of the expat and Japanese dating scenes alike. Please send your questions/ thoughts/anything to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com.

Jeremiah McKain

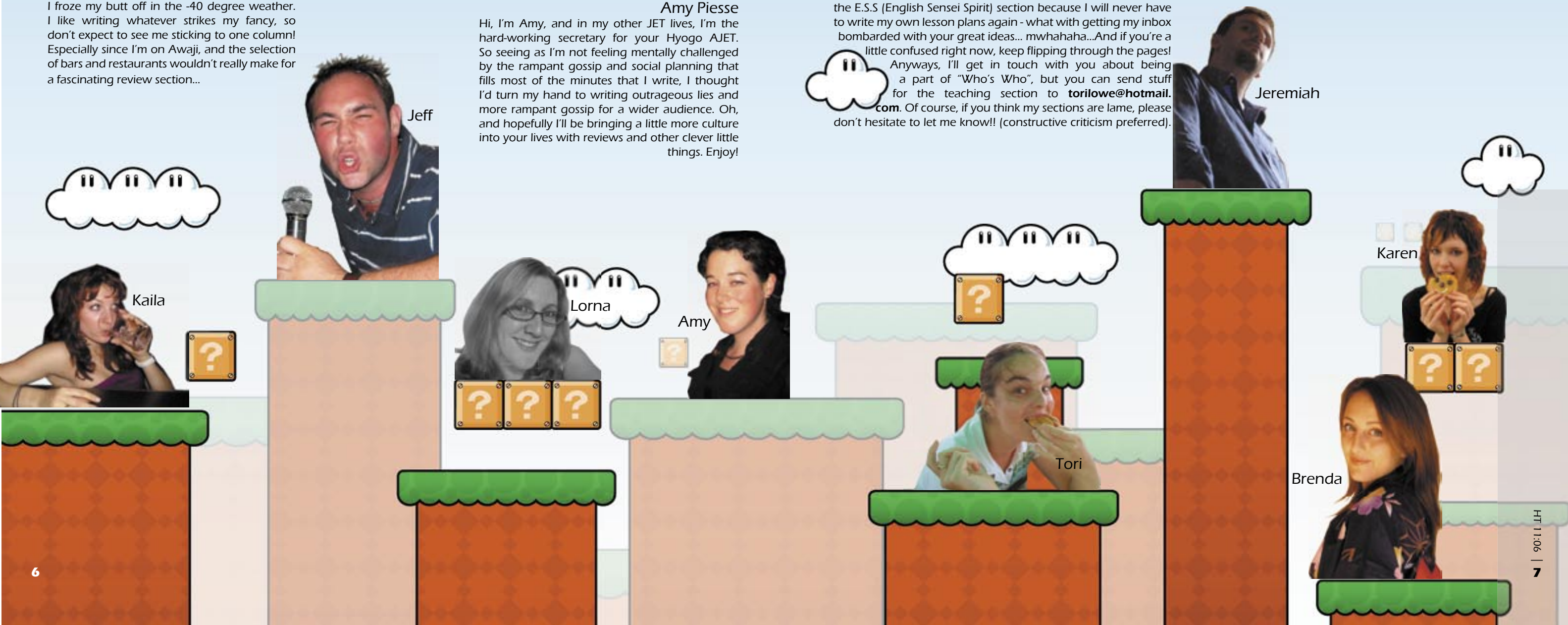
Greetings from Tajima – land of cows, mountains, and...did I mention the cows? Reporting live from the verdant green (soon to be barren white) hills, this is the Hyogo Times' new Society and Politics columnist, Jeremiah McKain, signing on. Each month, I'll be striving to provide my fellow JETs with a window on some of the controversies and contradictions of which Japan provides a never-ending supply.

Kaila Krayewski

My name is Kaila Krayewski, and I am a first-year JET. I come from beautiful British Columbia, Canada, where I spent most of my time doing all kinds of outdoor activities. I took my Journalism degree in our nation's capital, Ottawa, where I froze my butt off in the -40 degree weather. I like writing whatever strikes my fancy, so don't expect to see me sticking to one column! Especially since I'm on Awaji, and the selection of bars and restaurants wouldn't really make for a fascinating review section...

Tori Lowe

Hajimemashite! I am Tori and I am a second year jet. I will be taking care of compiling a helpful lesson planning section as well as a helpful people of Hyogo section for Times. I am excited about doing the "Who's Who in Hyogo" feature because I get to ask nosy questions to complete strangers...which is actually one of my favourite things to do! I am also stoked about working on the E.S.S (English Sensei Spirit) section because I will never have to write my own lesson plans again - what with getting my inbox bombarded with your great ideas... mwhahaha...And if you're a little confused right now, keep flipping through the pages! Anyways, I'll get in touch with you about being a part of "Who's Who", but you can send stuff for the teaching section to torilowe@hotmail.com. Of course, if you think my sections are lame, please don't hesitate to let me know!! (constructive criticism preferred).



IRONIC CHEF



chicken and rice soup

(or how to cook without involving the microwave at the conbini).
serves 2

Aren't you lucky. Someone's finally taken pity on those of you who have no clue as to how to use a saucepan to boil water. Take heed, kitchen philistines – I may have you whipping up culinary delights with which you can impress and amaze your latest JET conquest – or at least ensure that you're eating something other than toast...

Ingredients

- ◆ **1 Tablespoon of olive oil** (or vegetable, but if you're learning to cook, get some olive oil please)
- ◆ **1 Skinless chicken breast** – cut into 2 cm cubes.
- ◆ **1/2 brown onion** – finely diced.
- ◆ **Garlic** – 2 cloves, finely chopped, or very thinly sliced if you can't be arsed.
- ◆ **Ginger** – 3 cms, peeled (use a small sharp knife, watch your fingers) and then cut into matchstick size pieces.
- ◆ **Celery** – 1 stick, sliced. Yes, I know celery can be ridiculously expensive, but one stick isn't going to break the budget.
- ◆ **Carrot** – peeled, sliced once lengthways, then sliced into 1/2 circles
- ◆ **Rice** – 1/2 cup uncooked. Brown if you've got it, it's better for you and tastes kinda nutty, but white (let's perpetuate the obsession with whiteness, shall we?) will do.
- ◆ **Stock cubes** – 2 OR stock powder – 2 teaspoons
- ◆ **Water** – 750 mLs. If I really need to put a direction here, perhaps you'd be better off asking your mother to move to Japan, so she can change your nappy too...

method:

1. Heat a saucepan over a medium-high heat with half of the oil. Fry the chicken until it is lightly coloured and not pink anymore. Remove from the saucepan, and place in a bowl.
 2. Heat the remaining oil in the same saucepan over a medium-high heat and fry the onion, garlic and ginger until soft and translucent (there's a big word for all you English teachers out there). Add the celery and carrot and cook until slightly softened, about 3 to 4 minutes.
 3. Add the rice, water and stock cubes/powder and bring to the boil. Lower the heat to a gentle simmer, cover (with a lid) and go check your emails for the 78th time.
 4. After about 15 minutes, the rice should be almost cooked. Stir in the chicken and cook for another 5 minutes. Taste the soup and season with salt and pepper.
- Voila! You may not be Iron Chef brilliance, but you're on your way to weaning yourself off vile conbini oden.

Ironic chef takes no responsibilities for any food poisoning and/or romantic obsessions that may occur should you serve this to your friends...

Questions? Queries? Challenges? Ironic Chef welcomes them all. Email your witticisms or catatrosphies to ironic_chef675@hotmail.com



You Are What You Bleed

robin crowder

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

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

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



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

TYPE A "Cool Personality"

About 40% of the world's population is blood type A. This group is known primarily for being introverted, obedient, shy and sympathetic. Though As appear outwardly calm, they are often very nervous on the inside and are quite sensitive to public opinion. They are considered to be the most artistic and the most animal loving of the types. A people strive for perfection, but are often pessimistic about achieving it. Ironically, As are generally thought to be very law-abiding, but some of the most famous A Types include Hitler, OJ Simpson, Richard Nixon and Britney Spears with her dangerously illegal mothering methods.

TYPE B "Active Personality"

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

TYPE O "Hot Personality"

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

TYPE AB "Carefree Personality"

Finally, ABs make up the smallest portion of the global population, ringing in at only about 5%. ABs are said to have a sort of split personality, sharing traits from the three other blood groups; this unpredictability makes it the least favourable type in Japan, and the anime bad guys are commonly AB bleeders! They are shy or outgoing and confident or timid, depending on their grasp of the situation. People with AB are considered diplomatic, trustworthy and reliable, but can balk at having too much responsibility. They are good at seeing and avoiding problems, helping them to make a harmonious contribution as an individual or team player. ABs have a desire to help others, but their unpredictable mood swings often makes this difficult. John F. Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Mick Jagger and Thomas Edison are all famous ABs who demonstrate the manic traits of this blood type.

So now that you know, donate some time next issue when the Hyogo Times presents the first installment of your monthly Blood Type Horoscope!

Oh toilet, where art thou?

mikah jorrish



Ah, the traveler's never-ending dilemma. No, no, I'm not talking about Montezuma's revenge (although that's gotta be top five) or even ways to know if she's a lady boy or not (a close second). I want to discuss the first phrase learned by most when venturing forth to new adventures: "Where is the toilet?" ("loo" for you Brits!), "Où est la toilette?", "トイレはどこですか." Whatever the language, finding or not finding one of these shrines to the poopoo gods can make or break your day in a new country or city. Japan can be especially tough for the non-Japanese speaker. Well, lucky for you I am here to guide you along the path of poo, restroom reconnaissance, and lavatory location. You're in good hands (don't worry I wash them... most of the time)

shitty city

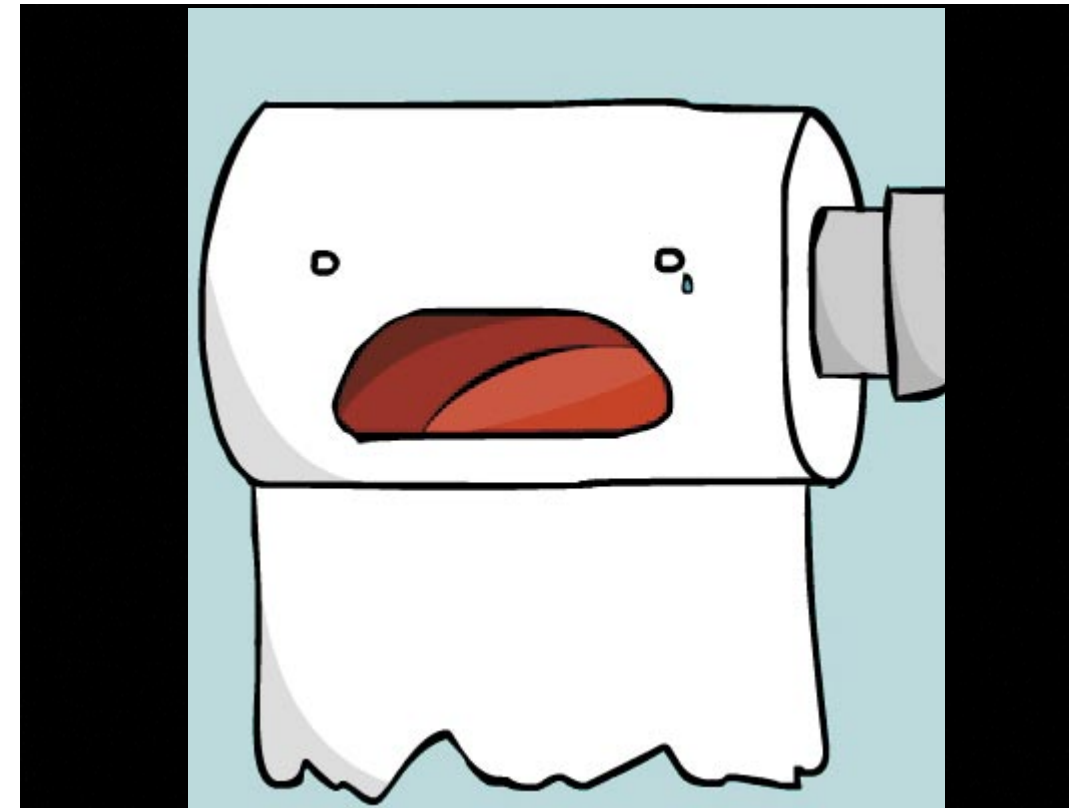
So, you've just exited the super duper fast Shinkansen in one of Japan's ginormous (gigantic AND enormous) cities and you gotta go..badly! That Pocari Sweat/Ume-shu combo that you thought was a genius little concoction isn't looking so hot now eh? Luckily, since Japan charges you an arm and a leg to travel around, there will always be a bathroom before you exit any medium or large sized train station. Doubly lucky, as the now flush (no pun intended) Shinkansen user, you will find yourself in the part of the station where toilets are fit for the emperor. Bidet here you come! Although beware, as most of these station toilets must be used before you get rid of your ticket! Some stations such as Sannomiya have toilets, which can be used without a ticket, but you better bring some toilet paper with you or you will find yourself in a bit of a mess! Your butt has been warned!

So the JET program placed you in lovely Butthole, Japan: population 326, and that includes the roaming gang of killer old women on bikes! Naturally, you're bound to long for the big city amenities. After your eighth Grande Frappuccino, you find yourself roaming the streets of this bustling city and your bladder is starting to feel like David Bowie's overstuffed underpants in the Labyrinth (childhood trauma anyone?). Where to go to exorcise these urination demons? Good question, as there are many places to turn to. Here is a list of a few of my top picks (in no particular order)

- **"The Can of Consumerism"** - Fear not, for all major Japanese department stores are also havens for those with baby bladders. These places are so big that they must be equipped with their own facilities. Life size replica of Doraemon is not included.

"Java and a John" - Your first thought might be Starbucks, but my vote goes to Doutor whose toilets are bigger than my apartment.

"Fast food Felicity" - Ain't standardization great! You can always count on McDonald's delivering the goods when it comes to toilets! Other good places include Mos Burger, Subway, and Mister. Donut. Try to avoid fast food places like Yoshinoya and Coco Curry, as their bathrooms can be a bit unsanitary, much unlike their delicious food.



inaka kaka

A great way to see Japan is by car. Ok, maybe not so great when you've got five sweaty gaijin butts stuffed into your buddies k-car, but it's an adventure right? While on one of these "adventures" you will inevitably find yourself in small town Japan lost, confused, and with some serious issues - really shouldn't have eaten those raw oysters that came with your fried pork and curry last night (personal experience...don't ask)... As hopeless as this seems, do not fret for you still have options. Most of even the smallest of towns have some kind of a convenience store. Whether it is one of the big boys (Family Mart, Lawson's, 7-11) or a mom and pop knock-off, they are bound to have a bathroom to lure in unsuspecting gaijin like you. A good rule of thumb is, the smaller the town, the more likely that you're gonna find a squatter toilet. It is true there are some towns without even a (sort of) public facility like a convenience store, so if worse comes to worse, do as the locals do - find a nice grassy null by the side of the road, pull a squatter, and do your thing. Just try not to notice the three old men staring at you intently the entire time. Have fun, and may the fecal force be with you!



JAPAN: travel review

jeff weese



yakushima - an island of magic

If you want to see the best wild monkeys in Japan, the oldest cedar trees or bathe in a 100% natural outdoor tidal pool/onsen, head to Yakushima. The island is actually a volcanic land mass rising 2000 meters out of the ocean, and while it is geographically in the Okinawan island chain, it is considered a part of Kagoshima prefecture. Yakushima is not only considered a UNESCO World Heritage site, but it was also the first of Japan's 13.



The island is also one of the most rain-soaked spots in Japan (it rains 35 days out of the month) due to all that meteorology stuff that I don't get...BUT, the Yakushima Environmental Culture Village Center in Miyanoura Port does an excellent job of thoroughly explaining the ins and outs of the area, and they can also make recommendations on an island encompassing itinerary.

Visiting the island during the summer 14 months means you can swing around to

Inakahama beach where the sea turtles make their annual trek to the pristine white sand to lay their eggs. If you continue around the island you will come across many many many waterfalls including Ohko-no-taki, Torohki-no-taki, and Senpiro-no-taki. Ohko-no-taki is one of Japan's great 100 waterfalls, and the body of water that it crashes into is also on a list of Japan's great bodies of water. (I think it is great that EVERYTHING in Japan is ranked on a list of some sort!)



pictures opposite page: L>R: monkey crossing, Inakahama beach, Yakushima coastline, this page: L>R: Yakushima arrival, Ohko no taki, Yakuzaruko.

Not only will you come across these photo worthy cascades of water, you will also run into a monkey or two or five hundred. If you aren't careful, you will literally run over them! They are ubiquitous on the island, and are commonly found just sitting in the middle of the single lane mountain roads. Most of them seem completely unfazed by people or cars, probably because they are too busy picking bugs out of each other's coats or getting some monkey lovin' on. Rolling down your window and casting them an inquisitive look will definitely get their attention, and you will either end up with a monkey in your car or a teeth clenched, growling showdown. Some of the monkeys (yakuzaru) are quite aggressive and will claim your snacks, car, or

woman if you are not careful... One man was out of his car taking pictures while his wife stayed in the car, and in the few seconds he was gone, a monkey had jumped on the windscreen and was eyeballing the woman! The monkey started to scratch his balls, as if staking his claim on this newly found female. At the wife's honk of the horn, the husband returned only to find that the monkey wouldn't let him back in the car! The yakuzuru was guarding the door and giving a vicious monkey hiss every time the man tried to reach for the door handle. If the monkey could talk, I'm sure he would have said something like, "Yo' bitch is mine now!"

While the monkeys have character, the great cedars could tell the story of a thousand



years. The cedar that is said to be the oldest (7000 years old) is called jomon-sugi. While this is probably the main sight of Yakushima, it is a 10-hour round trip hike, making it barely possible as a day trip. Along the hike you will also pass by Wilson's Stump: I know, you are thinking "it's a stump", BUT the rotted out stump creates a space inside the same size as an 8 tatami mat room! That's bigger than some of our apartments! If you don't have enough days to make the trek, there are plenty of other cedars that fill the mountain air with their sweet scented wood and Yakusugi land is an area high up in the mountains where Yaku-sugis (cedars) date back 1000, 2000, and 3000 years. There are several different hikes you can do from the trailhead ranging from 30 minutes to 3 ½ hours.

After you are done trekking through the magical forests, head to one of the many onsens on the island to soak your tired feet. While I'm sure most of them boast breath taking views, Hirauchi Kaichu-onsen is the coolest onsen I've ever been to. It is an onsen made up completely of tidal pools, so it's up to the tides as to when you can bare all and jump in. There is no lady to take your money, and no building at all for that matter...just 100% pure onsen/ocean water

16 heated from thermals in the rocks. This onsen

is not for the shy as it is mixed, nude, and open to prying eyes from above....but nothing to really be afraid of! The best time to go is actually at midnight (something related to the tides), plus you can walk around a little more comfortably without getting the gaijin stare down.

If you have extra time, book a kayaking trip down the Anbo or Miyanoura rivers. Crystal clear water from above will wash you swiftly down stream, but you will still have enough time to sit back and enjoy the awesome lush green surrounding mountains. There are several companies that make the trip but you can expect to pay about 8000yen... while the price is a little steep, the view is worth it!

Before leaving the island, make sure to stop at one of the many omiyagi shops between the airport and Anbo Port to try all the local specialties like tankan, ponkan, (both are kinds of oranges), passion fruit, and others. You will also be able to find a plethora of cedar goods, anything from cedar shavings to complete living room furniture sets! From there, pick up one last meal of flying fish (also a specialty) from an Anbo restaurant or a tasty dessert from Smiley Café, also in Anbo.

As for accommodation, Anbo is probably the best place to base yourself, but Miyanoura isn't half bad either. There are many minshukus

and ryokans that you can get details of from the tourist information center (09974)2-0091 or yakushima@yksm.com. I can recommend Yaedake Minshuku ((09974)2-2552) in Miyanoura port. They are well known for serving up a great selection of local foods at mealtime, and the owner and staff are gems. They will be more than happy to inform you of the local festivals going on, a local izakaya to hang out at, or which car company is best to rent from. Not only will they be happy to tell you all about these things, they will sort it all out for you! There was no need for us to make a single phone call to anyone! For a great room, delicious meals, and personal travel/information agent, their price of just over 6800yen pp/pn is a steal!

Getting to, around, and away from Yakushima is a little involved, but well worth the effort! From Osaka Itami or Kobe airports there are several flights a day to Kagoshima, where you will need to connect to another flight (only 25min) to Yakushima on a prop plane. From the airport it is easy enough to sort out the bus to either Anbo or Miyanoura Ports. Alternatively you can take the high-speed ferry from Kagoshima to either port on Yakushima

Island, which takes 2 hours. Once on the island, it is possible to get around by bus...but you won't see nearly as much as you will if you rent a car. Rentals are reasonably priced at around 4000 yen a day for the smallest class. Without a car you won't be able to pull over to take pictures of monkeys scratching themselves nor will you be able to take a moonlight dip in the at remote little oceanside onsen. Keep that in mind.

I think the best thing about Yakushima was that big business hasn't even blinked an eye at the island yet. There is not one single Family Mart, 7-11, or Lawson's on the island. I know you are thinking that isn't possible in this country, but believe it. There is something about buying a cake snack or onsen modesty towel from the little obachan's corner store that assures you it is she keeping the profits, and not some big business execs sitting behind cedar desks in leather swivel chairs. Another interesting thing is that while Yakushima is well known among the Japanese, it is almost unheard of to foreigners. Your Japanese co-workers will be insanely jealous of you. I encourage you to be a pioneer and get out there and do it...it is truly a magical island.



surfing shikoku

fiona douglas



My Calling:

Before I start, I want to share something with you - I have wanted to surf for years. Perhaps I should be more specific: I have wanted to surf since watching Brad Willis and similar "spunky" dudes on dodgy T.V. shows imported from Australia and the U.S. to the drizzly U.K. And, despite the bad acting with which Keanu Reeves is synonymous, I'd also be lying if I didn't admit that "Point Break" played a huge role in my dream to one day ride a wave. Wait - it only gets worse... not only have I seen the movie "Blue Crush," but it actually clinched the deal. I was destined to be a surfer chick!

I want to share my experiences and the little slice of heaven I recently found on the beautiful island of Shikoku. Let me enlighten you...

Spreading the Word

It follows that if this place is indeed Heaven, then our guesthouse host is God. This man is unbelievably chilled! After realising that the restraints of city life were denying him his right to surf, Ten decided to move to Shikoku and set up the ikumi minshuku, at just a five minute walk from the beach. One night with breakfast in this cozy guesthouse, costs 3500 yen (4000 yen peak season) per person. Without breakfast it'll set you back a mere 3000 yen (3500 yen peak season).

At 500 yen, the breakfast is well worth it. Not only can you have a hearty meal of toast, eggs, sausages and salad, but you can also have a cup of good fresh coffee...mmmm, divine! Meals are served in "Da Hawaiian Kitchen." - or "DHK" as it's also known - and the kitchen is actually an internet burger café attached to the guesthouse and run by Ten. Burgers come in three varieties: regular, hungry and yokuzuna. Or, if you share Ten's love for the Hawaiian-famed spam, then this is the place to truly indulge!

After you've ensured you'll have enough energy to fuel you until lunch time, the moment of reckoning is nigh. It's time to hit the waves, or at least get a surf board and look like a surfer. We rented boards from Ten's friend at "Eccentric 99," who will give you surf lessons and a day's board rental for 5500 yen (it's 5000 yen if you book through Ten.) As a complete beginner, I found lessons to be a sound investment. During the peak season be sure to book lessons in advance. A day's surfboard rental alone costs 3000 yen, and the rental includes your rash guard for the day. I recommend you pick up one of these. Trust me, the rash does not add to beach babe status, and I don't want to sound like a pansy, but it weally weally hurts!

After a few failed attempts at trying to clamber onto the surfboard and getting hit by

wave after wave, flashing my instructor in the process (chotto hazukashi!), I finally managed to stand up. I was on my way to becoming a full-fledged surf dudette! At one point, I was propped on my surf board, bobbing in the water and looking around at everyone else, contemplating leaving school life behind me... It turns out that I did love surfing as much as I'd hoped I would. In fact, I loved it enough to make the trek again a few weeks later.

Life after surfing

Regardless of the amazing surf, Shikoku itself is enough to lure even the most loyal urban dweller. Even just visiting Shikoku for a few days, you can see why people would choose to move here: the scenery is beautiful; life moves at a slower pace and; there is a unique and alluring sub-culture. The lifestyle here is obviously very agreeable - everyone is so laid back and there's a real softness to the people that I have not encountered anywhere else in Japan. This ambience, as well as the surf, is enough to lure me down here on a regular basis.



The expressway to Heaven

We took the Taco Ferry from Akashi to Awaji where we drove the length of the island. Tip: try and get on the Kobe/Naruto expressway as soon as possible, as it is the best way to cover the island. Next we crossed the Naruto bridge and followed signs for Tokushima and then route 55. The minshuku is right on route 55. It's an easy drive, but it will take you about 5 hours from Akashi. Remember to pack snacks! You can also take the train and Ten or Hide will come and pick you up at Kaifu station.

Check out Ten's website, which has links with maps and even a webcam of Ikumi beach. <http://ikumi-ten.moonfruit.com/> You can e-mail him, but he prefers to deal with English-speaking guests over the phone. After years of working in a bar in Osaka, his spoken English is brilliant. You can reach him at **090-3289-4872**.





life as a
first year jet

into the darkness at kiyomizu
lorna young

As a complete infant in the life of a JET, I know I have very little to draw on when telling you my most inspirational experience since being in Japan, but I am going to do it anyway.

Sadly, on my first visit to Kyoto, most of my first day was pretty much wasted as time was spent trying to find a place to stay and trudging through the city in search of food. You'd think in such a big city we would have stumbled across a restaurant long before we did. We passed two McDonalds, which we refused to succumb to, before eventually eating at the train station at nearly the point of starvation.

Believe it or not, our first day was salvaged by a heavy thunder storm which forced us inside the National Museum for shelter. This museum is definitely worth a look around - if not for the fantastic art, then just for the amusing English translations next the exhibits!

However, despite the trauma of the first day, the whole weekend was made worth while when we got to see the marvels of Kiyomizu Temple. It was even worth the hike up the hill in boiling hot weather to see the striking red tiered structure and the impressive, highly stilted temple.

The site has its quirks, like the love stones that you have to walk between to ensure love finds you and the water that you have to catch

in a cup on a stick to name just a few, but by far the greatest experience at the Temple was the journey to the wishing stone.

After paying what was by far the best 100 yen I have spent to date, we were asked to take off our shoes, and were shown down a flight of stairs where we were told to hold onto a rope and not let go until we come back out. This turned out to be good advice since we entered in to a room so dark I couldn't tell if my eyes were open or closed. We were led blindly by the rope in our left hand around a few twists and turns, being forced to concentrate wholly on our own physical presence due to the lack of sight. It was quite extraordinary!

Eventually, after what seemed like ages of wandering in darkness we came upon a very dim but extremely well received, ray of light beaming onto a large piece of marble: the wishing stone. I placed my hand on the cold marble and wished that it would be as cool outside as it had been in the tunnel...needless to say my wish did not come true!

This may seem like such a simple experience, but it made me realize how much we rely on sight to experience things. The total darkness forced me to appreciate my other senses: being denied my sight really opened my eyes, if you'll excuse the pun.

Kobe Regatta & Athletic Club

Recently arrived in Japan?

Here are two ideas to improve your quality of life:

1. Find the nearest 100 yen store;
2. Come and join The KRAC.

The KR&AC is a Sports & Social Club for people living and working in Japan; we currently have 21 different nationalities and our own clubhouse/bar/restaurant/gym/badminton/tennis courts.

Do you want to play indoor soccer?

It's free for members. Badminton? Same deal. Free weights? You guessed it: Free!

Maybe you want to go and have a drink where everyone knows your name?

We have regular Happy Hours, Tues - Sat 6-7:30pm. A good place to meet people and have a laugh, we are pretty casual down here.

Want to explore the area but also save some money?

We have discounts available in many local shops and restaurants for our members.

Need some advice on where to go and what to do in Japan?

Many of our members have spent years living in Japan. We have a network of contacts built on years of experience. If you need help with something then someone at the club knows the answers.

Play Sports?

Soccer, tennis, softball, rugby, cricket, darts, field hockey, rowing, sailing and we can help you if you want to play golf.

Need a convenient meeting place before you head out for the night?

We are a 10 minute walk from Sannomiya JR, Hankyu & Hanshin Stations.

Want a place to book a party/function/meeting?

We do it all the time, give us the details and our (friendly and pretty chilled out) staff will help.

Finally; most people who join tend to stay in Japan for longer than they initially planned. We must be doing something right.

So, now you know what we offer; how can you not join?

Pop in for a visit anytime and speak to some of our members/barflies.

Upcoming October Events

Flea Market: Saturday, 21st October

Annual Halloween Party: Saturday, 28th October

If you join the Club now, you can take advantage of current Membership Campaigns for Under 27s; Single Ladies, and Zero Yen Campaigns. Membership Prices available from as little as JPY6,000 a month, and the joining fee has been completely waived!!

Contact the Office

for an Information Package & Application Form:

Tel: 078-231-2271 from 10am to 7pm except Mondays

Email: info@krac.org

How do you get here?

Visit the KR&AC website at www.krac.org for a map & directions to the Club

Kobe Regatta & Athletic Club
Founded 1870

A different kind of memorial

robin crowder

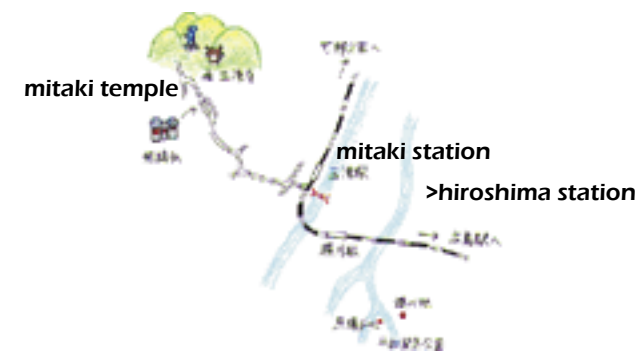


Though just as inspiring as the peace memorials of Hiroshima proper, the feeling of peacefulness exuded by the Mitaki Temple woodlands and its complex system of shrines, pagodas and tombstones is breath taking in a very special way: it is a humbling place seemingly untouched by the outside world.

Contrastingly, the temple knows all too well the horrors of the world. Originally named Mitaki for the three waterfalls in the area – Koma, Bonon, and Yumei – it was, for many years, simply the home of Buddhist monks. However, when the A-bomb was dropped in 1945, many residents of Hiroshima escaped to the hilly area to soothe their burns with the cool mountain water and

were tended to by the monks. The largest Mitaki temple was actually built in 809 in Wakayama City, but was moved in 1951 to become part of the peace memorial. The temple became known as Mitaki Kanon – a name combining the healing waters with the Goddess of Comfort – and is now an unofficial memorial to the nameless Hiroshima victims, while its woods are considered a regional treasure.

The trees around the area create a dense forest, which would probably be particularly beautiful during the momiji, and can make you forget that you are only 15 minutes outside of Hiroshima's downtown core. There are hundreds of tombstones built into the rocks



of the mountain, erected after the deaths of the mostly unidentified victims who fled to the temple. Some of the stone icons are quite large, but some of the smallest are nestled amongst the shrubbery, almost hidden to unseeing tourists. Regardless, it is clear that in this situation, the size of the memorial by no means reflects the importance of the person. In fact, the largest statues of all are four person-sized Buddhist monks who greet visitors only a short way up the trail, and whose presence is framed by big maple trees and silhouetted against one of the area's three waterfalls.

Having visited Mitaki during the first weekend of October, just as the air was starting to cool down and the nights were almost cold, it was interesting to see that many of the statues were dressed in tiny, red, crocheted hats and shawls to keep their naked heads and bodies warm. Seeing the time and effort taken by someone to carefully dress and protect the stone memorials of people he or she had likely never even met was a feeling that I can't even describe. There is a certain underlying harmony between the past and the present, and the power of belief combined with the faith of commemoration that one has to feel to fully understand. And though the Mitaki Temple is open to visitors (there is even a small café to accommodate the hungry traveler!) and the memorials deserve people paying their respects, I couldn't help but feel that I was almost an intruder into a sacred place.

To walk the entire course and visit all of the temples, you'd cover about 2.6km, but I admit that I did not have the time to do the full hike. The majority of the trek is uphill and branches off into two sections – both of which lead to a bird's eye view of Hiroshima City and make a loop around the main temple. Getting to the area is pretty simple, easily accessible by car, by train and by bus. If you're driving, the best plan is to stop in at JR Hiroshima station and visit the tourist info centre – they can give you a map and explain the most direct route. The only downfall to driving is, as with most of Japan, many streets do not

have names, making it a little more difficult to figure where you're going! There is also limited parking. However, the #22 bus going from Kamiya-cho to Mitaki Konan leaves the station once an hour and takes only about 15 minutes. It drops you at the entrance to the woods and from there it is about a 20 minute walk up to the Temple – which is the same if you were to drive. By train, hop on the Kabe line toward Yonogawa and get off at Mitaki Eki – it is about a 20 minute walk to the grounds entrance.

These harmonious woods are well worth the visit, whether you do the full hike or just visit the smaller temples. If you have a spare half day and are in the Hiroshima area, take the time to make a short side trip – you will not be disappointed!

picture: The four large Buddha statues stand guard over some of the tombstones. Kelly Gilmartin.



Who's who in Hyogo

tori lowe

Hyogo is one of the biggest prefectures in Japan and is the one with the most JETs – there are over 200 of us prowling the streets 'round these parts, so chances are there are more than a few people you've never met! In this new section, two arbitrarily selected different JETs will be "profiled" every issue, giving everyone a little taste of who's who in Hyogo. At some point in the month, Tori will send out an email to about eight random people, asking them to answer some questions that we think should have been an integral part of the JET interview. The first male and female to write back will have their self intro (just think, when school starts next year, your intro will already be prepared!) and mug shot published in the next edition of the Hyogo Times. Naturally, no one is required to answer back, but it's all in good fun...don't forget to include your picture when you send your response!



fiona douglas

Name: Fiona Douglas

Nickname: Fi

School and Location in Hyogo: Takasago High School in East Harima

How we know you: You mean you haven't heard of me? I'm the Prefectural Representative for Hyogo... honestly!

Birthday: 24th March 1983

Born and raised: I'm fae Dundee, Scotland, ken?

Family: In the style I tell my kids, "In my family I have four people: me, my dad, my mum and my sister. I also have a cat."

University and Degree: St. Andrews, MA Modern History and Philosophy

Other jobs you have had: newspaper girl; sales assistant in GAP (I still have nightmares), Mothercare (enough to put you off kids for a while); bar maid and waitress in a variety of "interesting" bars; oh yeah, and a tour guide in the dullest museum in my hometown.

Other travels: The usual Brit beach holidays in Europe. I won't bore you with the details just don't diss "Club 18-30" holidays if I'm within earshot. Also, I took a few working holidays in the U.S. and Canada.

Your career goals from here: Hhhmm, Tori you don't make this easy. Can't I tell you what type of cheese I like? That's easy – brie! Oh, how I miss good cheese!

Your travel goals from here: Next up is Thailand at Christmas and whatever else I can manage in South East Asia before I leave. South Korea, Vietnam and Hong Kong are definitely up there. Within Japan, I'm yet to make it to Hokkaido, but am hoping to do that in February next year.

Hobbies: I like jogging, music, reading and sleeping.

Sports: Since coming to Japan I've played Frisbee and soccer, but my heart will always lie with netball.

Fave Food: sashimi is the reply in Japan, but at home nothing beats a good steak.

Fave Music: I listen to Madonna, Britney and Christina and I'm not ashamed of it. Right now you'll find me listening to Frank Sinatra, David Bowie and the Kooks. I love picking up random bands from soundtracks too.

Fave Shop: TopShop and H&M. Looking at their websites makes me homesick.

Fave TV Show: I don't watch T.V. much but maybe "This Morning", a British morning T.V. show.

Fave Movie: I'm in the process of being educated on good "intellectual" movies. Just between you and me though, I really like Sister Act II.

Fave Qualities in others: good sense of humour, laid-back attitude, motivation and passion.

Most Proud Achievement: No specifics. I feel most proud when I make it through intimidating situations relatively unscathed.

Best life experience: going to the U.S. on my own when I was 19 and meeting new people. This was the first time I traveled on my own.

Tips for teaching: Don't get mad, just make a joke! They'll like you a lot more for it.

Motto to live by: "If people don't like you that's their problem." It's rooted more in self-preservation than arrogance.

Any funny stories?: When I was three I washed my hair down the toilet. Not my finest hour.

Other interesting trivia: I've got nothing.



Name: Jeffrey Ryan Weese

Nickname: Costco (yep like the superstore)

School and Location in Hyogo: Taishi High school just west of Himeji

How we know you: Ken from Barbie Girl (Fi was Barbie) at the Back to school beer garden or that guy that you know from HAJET, but you don't really know what he does.

Birthday: March 7th (I'll be expecting presents)

Born and raised: Seattle, Washington (Tacoma for the very very few Seattlites living in Hyogo)

Family: Dysfunctional

University and Degree: Western Washington University studied marketing

Other jobs you have had: Ski guide, barista, and man whore

Other travels: Been to 28 countries and countless amazing places in Japan...so where to begin?

Your career goals from here: Probably not teaching, but would like to learn some of that Japanese they speak round these parts and use that down the line.

Your travel goals from here: Doing China with Casey and Nick over winter break so too excited to see past that for now (yes, that will make 29).

Hobbies: Ummm, guess you could say traveling

Sports: love me some skiing and a summer baseball game with cold beer in hand.

Fave Food: In Japan, Tonkatsu...from my travels, Thai food...from back home, Mom's meatloaf!

Fave Music: I really do like a bit of everything, but for fave music I would have to say pop rock kinda stuff. You know, like U2, Nickelback, Coldplay, Matchbox 20. Also a bit drawn to the twang of country music, but I'm a closet cowboy so you wont see me with my cowboy boots on anytime soon.

Fave Shop: Don't really like to shop. In my year in Japan, I think I have bought 4 shirts. 2 of them were omiyagi kinda T-shirts and the other two were picked out by Casey.

jE f f wE Es e

Fave TV Show: Las Vegas! Used to go to Sin City every year in March with my buddies so it is very natsukashi!

Fave Movie: I love Ocean's Eleven (There we go with the Las Vegas theme again)

Fave Qualities in others: Sense of humor and easy going. I strongly dislike up tight people. Just enjoy life!

Most Proud Achievement: Getting a job at the 4th largest ad agency IN THE WORLD...then leaving 4 months later to travel.

Best life experience: I think people are fascinating and I would have to say meeting all the people I have met through traveling have created an overall amazing life experience.

Tips for teaching: Just make English fun. When we do something boring like vocab, we say the word in English and the meaning in Japanese and they think my accent is hilarious (I do dice it up pretty good).... BUT they remember it!

Motto to live by: Don't let the man get you down! Any funny stories? There is always context and it just never ends up as funny on paper so, we can hang out sometime and I'll tell you of the good times.

Other interesting trivia: Well, I am a quarter Japanese, bet you couldn't guess that one.



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Bombay offers Hyogo AJET members 10% off your total bill! Stop by on Thursday when live music spills out onto the streets of Akashi!

Open everyday except Monday from 11:30-14:15 and 17:00-22:30



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ESS: English sensei spirit

tori lowe

Since we are all ALTs, I thought it might be cool to have a special teaching section in the new look of the Hyogo Times! I don't know about you, but I am sometimes expected to come up with a lesson plan in under 15 minutes (erm, nothing to do with poor planning...). There are loads of helpful websites out there, but finding something you know will work is often pretty tricky. Oh the hours I have spent trawling ESL websites....

But now, I'm going to make life easier for you – this section will offer a few choice lesson plans for people caught short of time. Surely some of you have been struck with flashes of brilliance that worked out in the class room, so send 'em this way! If you feel like you are under-utilized, and your amazing knack for lesson plans is under-appreciated at your school, its time to take your talent to a bigger audience! Email lesson plans to torilowe@hotmail.com.

I am on the search for lessons that take under 15 minutes to prepare and that have worked in your classes. They can be for primary, junior or senior high school, and if you have any ideas about how to adapt your lesson for other age groups, those would be greatly appreciated as well. If you have a lesson plan for which you have spent some time making a worksheet, by all means, send it along too – we can publish the worksheet for others to plagiarize. In the Japanese spirit of group mentality, "let's working together!"

Once we have a few lessons on the go, I want to add a feedback section: boost your fellow JETs' self-esteem by gushing praise for their fabulous lessons! Of course, constructive criticism and suggestions would also be just as helpful...

And now...the first idea for a quick lesson, courtesy of ITC West.



"Mr Perfect or Ms Perfect"

For: Senior High School, but I have a feeling this could work with Junior High.

Time limit: As long as you want! (I managed to stretch this over a 50minute class)

Materials: About 6 sheets of blank paper (B4 or A3; for a class of 25 students)

Preparation: Next to none!

Execution: Get the students into groups based on sex (girls with girls, boys with boys). Each group has to create their own "Mr Perfect or Ms Perfect". It's more fun to make the boys make "Ms Perfect" and the girls make "Mr Perfect". Get the students to think about height, weight, personality, looks... etc. Basically they can go anywhere with this. Lower level classes can concentrate on basic looks (brown hair, blue eyes, freckles, big bum), but you should encourage higher levels to think more about hobbies or personal characteristics. They should draw their person and label each part. They can get creative with the drawing, but encourage them to have more labels than actual detail in the pictures!! Let (umm, *MAKE*) the students present their perfect person at the end of the class. I told my students to come up with at least 10 points of perfection; and made them present their perfect person as a group so that each person had to speak. Presentations took 10minutes.

Notes: The students really enjoyed this activity. Of course it was hard to keep the whole class on task for the entire lesson, but just keep circulating and giving them a few ideas by asking questions like "How old are they?" "What are their hobbies?" "Who do they look like?" , and anything else you can come up with.



Let me know how this lesson goes if you are tempted to try it!

To make this section really work, I need submissions from YOU. Please email all lesson plans and ideas, and any comments you might have, to torilowe@hotmail.com.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

submitted by fiona douglas
...a dialogue from a really old lesson

lesson 9: visitors

It's Saturday afternoon. There's a knock at the door. Our neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. White have arrived. The maid opens the door and lets them in. She shuts the door, and shows them into the lounge. We greet them, shake hands with them and ask them to sit down.

A few minutes later we hear a ring at the door. It's Betty Smith, my wife's niece. She's just arrived from the country, and she's going to stay with us over the week-end. She kisses her aunt, who introduces her to the Whites, and we all sit down.

The ladies talk about the weather and the latest fashions. We men discuss politics, business and the latest news. Presently the maid brings in the tea on a trolley: a pot of tea, cups and saucers, hot water, a jug of milk, and sugar; also sandwiches, bread and butter, jam, and cakes. My wife pours out the tea. I hand it round. My niece passes round the sandwiches and cakes. We all enjoy the tea very much.

*This lesson was brought to you by Linguaphone.
"Upper Class Education Publications", Yesteryear*

let's enjoying fun!



Please be inspired to send in anything amusing that you come across, such as a sign,
a t-shirt, an incident, or whatever.

Student submissions get some of the best feedback.

Please submit them in their original writing, warts and all.

You can send a story or a picture or both to:

submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

jeff weese



What's different?



submitted by amanda brown

english!

My high school is pretty high level, and every year I ask the 2nd year students to write entries for a "culture dictionary." The idea is that they're writing about something they already know about and like, so they tend to write more. Here are some of the good entries - maybe you can learn something about Japanese pop culture, or at least see how the kids interpret things.

Chibi Maruko-chan: Maruchan is a stupid girl. She goes to an elementary school. She lives in Shimizu. Her family is very interesting. She has her parents, grandparents, and an older sister. Her mother is dangerous, her father is drinker, her grandmother is mild, grand father is very fun. But he has hair trouble! Her old sister likes Hideki Saijo. Do you know? Maruchan's friends are original. For example, Mr. Hanawa is a rich man. Ms. Migiwa loves Mr. Hanawa very much and Mr. Yamada laughs in strange voice. Her best friend is Tamachan, she is very kind but sometimes crazy. So she spends a full life everyday!! This anime is broadcasted at 6:00pm every Sunday.

Aiko: Aiko is one of a popular singers. She is from Osaka. She sings a lot of songs which is about girl's sad love story. She makes the songs herself. Her words are so great. We can share feeling with her words. Her latest song was the theme of a drama. If you are disappointed in love, please listen.

Bowing: In the past, samurai acted, they could cut their enemies down with their sword, katanas. So they bowed to express to others, "I am not against you." That means, "You can cut my head down, if you suspect me." Now, we don't have katana, but still use bowing when we meet others. How to bow in Japan: We bend forward about 30 degrees, but do not bend the head - that's the wrong way. Some Japanese bow almost 90 degrees, but that is usually used to apologize. And, bowing only the head, that is used when we meet neighbors. There are many ways to bow in Japan.



Bump of Chicken: Bump of Chicken are the most popular rock band in Japan. Especially, they are very popular among young people. Their lyrics make the listener be encouraged and happy. It's difficult to go to their live concert, because they prefer to hold their live concerts in small livehouse. We hope they continue to make very good songs more and more.

Matsudaira Ken: Matsudaira Ken is called "Matsuken." He is an actor and a singer. He performs a violent shogun, despite he never kills people. Because he loves people as a shogun. On the other hand, he sings a song called "Matsuken Samba." The song is very popular and everyone can sing it. Please ask someone to sing this song.

Onsen: Onsen is similar to a bath. Onsen is different from a bath in a natural spa. Take an Onsen is good for your health and beauty. Everyone can relax. How about an Onsen?



Pictures:

- > Which way to the castle?
- > Ito Go Fuck You
- > Close the door!
- > Danger danger!



JAPAN JUST WOULDN'T BE JAPAN WITHOUT...

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

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



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

Not only is the entire aisle devoted to tofu, but there are about 25 different types of tofu one can buy: soft tofu, firm tofu, silken tofu, grilled tofu, seasoned tofu, cubed tofu, deep fried tofu triangles, breaded seasoned tofu...not to mention the fact that all of this tofu is ridiculously cheap!

2. Onsens might just be the greatest thing in the world.

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

3. Onigiri – little triangles of carbohydrate goodness.

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

4. The most random holidays ever.

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

5. Convenience stores are actually convenient.

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

6. The High Fashion of English on shirts.

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

7. The national love of comic books.

Though I have never really gotten into comic books myself, I love how in Japan everyone from the four year old girls learning to read to the middle aged business man

to the old woman with a cane read "manga". And it's not as if they're just skimming through the latest Archie Digest – no way, these are entire NOVELS in comic book form! Seriously, I saw a man on the train reading what looked like a gigantic 500 page book and was very impressed until I looked over and noticed that there were an awful lot of animé drawings on the pages. I wonder if manga is so popular because it is easier to the masses to read than a lengthy novel written in ambiguous kanji, or if Japanese people just really like pictures...

8. The "90 degree Nannies".

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

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

Whether this is because I am the foreigner who speaks less than a little Japanese and probably walks around with a permanently confused look on her face, or because the Japanese are just generally helpful I don't know, but either way it's greatly appreciated! I have had post office workers reopen their wickets after closing because I got there late; random people in the grocery store point out every type of vegetarian sushi available after I asked if one kind contained meat; a friend even had a completely random stranger give her 1000Y for a cab after deciding that the temple she wanted to visit was too far for walking. Whether all these actions are of out sincerity or fear of the foreigner shaming traditional culture, it doesn't even matter...

10. The constant contradiction of old and new.

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

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

NOVEMBER EVENTS: KANSAI

compiled by amanda brown

CONCERT LISTINGS:

November 2: Adrian Sherwood
Club Quattro, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 START 19:00
5,800YEN (adv.with 1drink)

November 8: Mogwai
Namba Hatch, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 START 19:00
6,000YEN

November 9: Andrew WK
Namba Hatch, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y6,300
INFO:06-6233-8888

November 13: Lagwagon
Club Quattro, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y5,500

November 19: The Mars Volta
Zepp Osaka
OPEN 17:00 / START 18:00
TICKET Y6,700
INFO: 06-6233-8888



November 20: Rooster
IMP Hall, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y6,000
INFO:06-6233-8888

November 21: New Found Glory
Zepp Osaka
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y6,300
INFO:06-6233-8888

November 21: 65 Days of Static
Club Quattro, Osaka
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y5,500
INFO: 06-6281-8181

November 22: AFI
Osaka Banana Hall
OPEN 18:00 / START 19:00
TICKET Y6,000
INFO:06-6233-8888

Coming soon to Kansai:

Jamie Cullum (December), Basement Jaxx (January), Deerhoof (January), Tool (February)

*** A NOTE ON CONTACT NUMBERS ***

The contact numbers listed can either be for the venue or the ticketing center. The best way to get tickets is to stop by your local **Lawsons** and use the ticket machine there. It helps to have some Japanese ability (or a friend with some) to navigate the machine, but sometimes the staff is willing to help you.

FESTIVALS: *courtesy of Japanvisitor.com*

Shichi-Go-San Festival 15 November: Nationwide

Three, five and seven year-old children in their finest kimono are taken by their parents to shrines to pray for the children's future health and good fortune.

Shitenno-ji Wasso November 3

Shitenno-ji Temple, Osaka

A parade of thousands of people dressed as heroes and historical figures takes to the streets of Osaka. Colourful boat-shaped floats join the procession and add to the magnificent spectacle.

Mid. November Arashiyama, Kyoto

The festival recreates the atmosphere of the Heian court when the Emperor and his court leisurely cruised the Oi River in Kyoto. Five period-decorated boats filled with people in Heian costume, playing traditional instruments and reciting noh and kyogen begin the water parade followed by a larger flotilla of similar vessels.

Ebisu-san Matsuri November 18-20

Ebisu Shrine, Hiroshima City

Festival dedicated to Ebisu-san, the god of commerce, held, appropriately, at a shrine behind the Mitsukoshi and Tenmaya department stores. Many shops take part by selling bargain goods, and street-stalls appear all over the area.

Awa Puppet Theatre November 3

Kisawa, Tokushima Prefecture

Though still an amateur art after, the rural puppet drama of the Awa region is just as famous in Japan as the bunraku puppet drama of Osaka. At this annual event, classic plays are performed on an outdoor stage.



ART & COMEDY:

Musee d'Orsay: Impressionists from Paris Kobe City Museum

JR/Hanshin/Hankyu Sannomiya Station
Open 9:30am - 4:30pm, Closed Mon.
Admission 1500yen/1100yen/600yen

Shinji Ogawa - Interfering Worlds

(Famous Western works altered by erasing, supplementing, or substituting elements)
The National Museum of Art Osaka
Subway Yotsubashi Line, Higobashi Stn, exit 2
Open: 10am - 5pm, Closed Mon.
Admission: 4yen/20/130yen/170yen

The Pirates of the Dotombori- Live Improv in English
Sunday November 19th, doors at 7pm, show at 7:30
Balabushka in Osaka, no cover, one drink minimum
<http://www.piratesofthedotombori.com>

Second Chance

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RESTAURANT BAR SANNOMIYA-KOBE

ADDRESS: #10-11-12 Higashinaka Street, Chuo-ku, KOBÉ
TEL: +81-78-521-2544
E-MAIL: secondchance@secondchance.co.jp

TENTATIVE DATES FOR AJET EVENTS:

November

18th – Golden Oldies Bingo Night, Sannomiya
23rd – Hike up Mt Shosha and Thanksgiving Dinner, Himeji

December

9th – Christmas Party, Akashi

January

27th to 28th – Tajima Ski Trip
19th – Mid-year event (after mid-year conference)

February

9th to 12th – Hokkaido Snow Festival Trip
17th – Okayama Naked Man Festival

March

Elections for AJET committee (Handover in April)

To stay updated about upcoming events please join our
Hyogo Ajet yahoo group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hyogojets/>