

kyogo times

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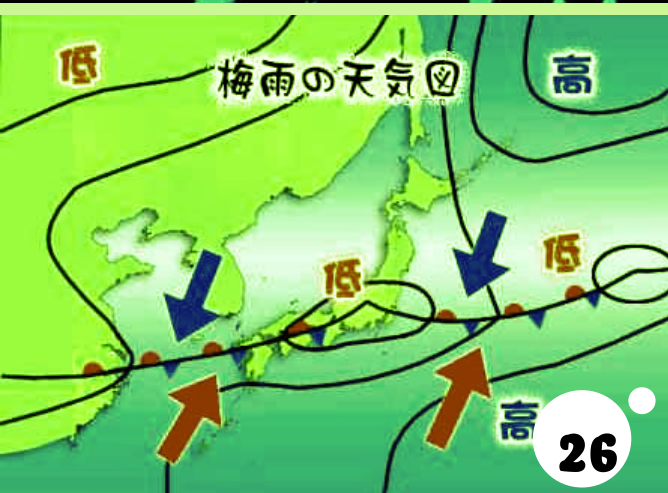
Tourism in today's Japan



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

Submit by the 15th of each month to:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net

Visit us online!

Message from the Editor

Hey there Hyogo,

Looks like we're officially getting into that time of year where it's a party all the time! There are lots of events coming up in the next few months, so keep your ear to the ground (and your eye on our calendar) to stay on top of what's afoot!

May gave us some of the best weather Japan has to offer (and some typhoons just for fun), but June is coming, so check out our tips on surviving the rainy season. We've got a fun elementary lesson for ESS, and some intriguing travel information for you too!

But as the weather heats up, we also get closer to the end of the JET year.

I would like the July issue to include some reflections by JETs (both returning and not-returning) on this process of transition and change. These reflections can take any form, so please submit whatever you like that is inspired by this change.

If you're sticking around Japan, please also check out our list of wanted writers!



Omanohashidate

Take care and stay dry,

Lemmon

P.S. If you get a chance, see the *Transitions* art show in Kobe, up until June 4th!

WRITE FOR TOHOKU

The *Write for Tohoku* e-book, a collection of nonfiction short stories about Japan, is now published and ready for purchase! All proceeds go to Japan Red Cross. Alon Adika, a Kobe JET alum (2006-2009) is among the JETs and JET alumni included in the work. Go to <http://fortohoku.org> to download a copy!

Message from the Online Editor

Dear Hyogo,

Do you have a digital camera? Do you have some awesome photos you'd like to show off? The Hyogo Times has a groundbreaking new online photo pool, and you're welcome to contribute! Yes, this is the first public photo group dedicated to Hyogo Prefecture on the internet! Anyone can contribute as many photos as they'd like, and eventually we may start using them on the website or in the publication. As long as the photo was taken in Hyogo (and it's "appropriate") you are welcome to add it. Here's the URL: <http://flic.kr/g/fvTLh>

I know you can all find at least 15 minutes of free time somewhere. Pick out a few of your best photos and upload them to the site.



Even just a few added photos would make a big difference!

Jonathan

P.S. The group is on Flickr so you will need an account to join (they're free, and easy!).

Message from the PR

I wanted to let everyone know that Hyogo AJET has been going through some changes. Andrew and David will be leaving their PR posts, but I'll be sticking around, and as of April will be joined by Kelly Zuniga, Sifton Anipare, Nicholas Chan, John Buckner, and Chinyere (Chi-Chi) Okoli. I'm definitely excited to have gotten such a big response from some very promising people, and we all have high hopes for the coming year! Our main theme for the year seems to be unity, as we hope not only to have more events that draw people from all over the prefecture, but we hope to get those pesky Kobe JETs out for some Hyogo events, and at some point we'd like to assist National AJET with block events.

Please remember, we are always looking for event ideas, so feel free to send us an email at pr@hyogo.ajet.net.

Our big events coming up include the Farewell Party, scheduled for June 17, and the Welcome Party on August 20. There will also be some beach parties, hikes, and probably a few smaller events sneaking in there as well, so keep an eye on Facebook, the Hyogo Times calendar, and the Yahoo mailing list for invites.

Cheers,

Sarah Lewis



News from your National AJET Rep!

Hello again, Hyogo JETs!

Enjoying the soon-to-be-smoldering weather? I only have a few very brief announcements this month. Brief but important, so don't start scrolling or clicking somewhere else just yet... Yeah, I saw that.

Officially as of June 15, Miriam Rollason will be taking over this little chunk of Hyogo Times as the new Block 6 Representative for National AJET, and I will be relocating to the Hyogo AJET team. Please support her in every which way you can – I know she'll make a great rep! いろいろお世話になりました and いろいろお世話になります to you all!

Speaking of representin', Valentine's Day block party was such a success that Osaka AJET has decided to make it a continuing habit, and they have graciously opened up their exclusive sayonara formal to the rest of us in Kansai – the best part is, the party is already set in Kobe so we don't have to work nearly as hard to get there! Let's hear it for the two best words in the English language: de-fault!

Block 6 & Block 7 National AJET Sayonara Formal/Farewell Party

@ the Portopia Hotel in Kobe:
CLUB Keynotes

www.portopia.co.jp/en/index.html

© Saturday June 25
6:30-7:00 Check-In

© 7:00pm – 9:00pm
Dinner Buffet and
All-You-Can Drink Bar

© Featuring: Dancing,
Bingo, Karaoke, Prizes,
and Performances

© (before June 4) Pre-Paid
Ticket/"Attending" on the
Facebook event: ¥6,500

© (after June 4) Pre-Paid Ticket/
"Attending" on the Facebook
event: ¥7,000
Door Price: ¥7,500
Dress Attire: Business to Formal

There are already plans in the works for an after-party, so if you can't make it to the upscale gala event, please consider the ensuing mayhem that will flow into the streets of Sannomiya once the party wraps up. You'll be sad you missed it (just like those who missed the last party!). RSVP on Facebook (www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=179546815427264), or by e-mail to Osaka AJET (ojet@gmail.com), or me and/or Miriam at block6@ajet.net. Save yourself a bit of yen and sign up asap!

Finally, speaking of the Hyogo AJET team, we humbly request your help this upcoming year. Our team will be bigger and (our aim is to be) better than ever, but we can't do it without your input. This year we really want to branch out of our little niches and see more of what our ken has to offer, but being an awfully big ken it's difficult to know what that is all by our onesies. That's where you come in. If you know or you're curious about upcoming events, festivals and overall good times that are or are not happening in your area by all means, tell us! Your input will be even more essential over the summer when our adorable new baby JETs arrive – please, think of the children. Won't someone please think of the children? Anyhoo, hit us up with all your knowledge and intel, anytime, any PLACE. Bring it, just bring it on!

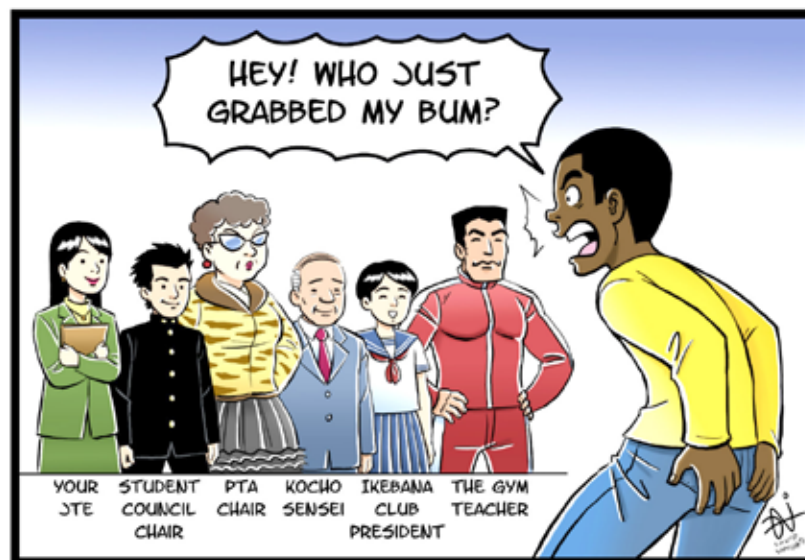
This is your friendly neighbourhood Block Rep signing off, and your new chariot-riding Hyogo AJET rep signing on... or vice versa... whatever, I'm not picky,

Sifton ^__^

Hehe...

Life After the B.O.E.....

By David Namisato



They all did.

(Just be glad your bum is all they grabbed.)

David Namisato is an illustrator in Toronto, Canada, and a former CIR (Ajigasawa-machi, Aomori-ken, 2002-04).

David's recent projects include children's picture book, *Fly Catcher Boy* written by Rebecca Kool and published by Gumboot Books, *Gabe and Allie in Race Through*

Time, a time travelling Canadian history comic appearing in *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*, illustrating Archie characters for trading card company 5finity Productions, and of course the monthly *Life After the B.O.E.* comic.

www.lifeaftertheboe.com

洒落

Paul Schuble's

I-word play

新しい車
は新型。
では、古い
車何がた？

A new car is new model.
So what model is an old car?

Answer:

がたがた
(the sound of rattling/clattering)

While がた can mean type or model (yes, as in that shingata influenza), a double がた is the sound of something rattling, like an old car.

Travel Japan!

Tattori.....



Tottori, Tottori-ken

Tottori is situated on the sea

of Japan, with the Sendai river running through it. Japan's largest sand dunes stretch 16km along the coast of Tottori-ken, and they are the main sightseeing destination.

I have visited Tottori City twice now – in spring and in winter. It was lovely in both seasons, but with summer coming soon I would definitely consider visiting again as the beaches look amazing. Near the dunes you can go swimming, and further up the coast is good for surfing too.

There is a lift at the sand dunes for ¥200 each way, but you will still need to walk up the sand dunes, it is really just a novelty. It doesn't take long to hike up, and the views are definitely worth it. For a moment you may think you are in another country, as there are camels at the sand dunes! You can ride a camel for ¥1,800, or ¥3,000 for two people. To have your photo

taken with the camel is ¥500. There is also a horse carriage ride which costs ¥1,000 per person for a 15 minute round trip along the dunes. From April 19th to November 30th you can do sand boarding at the dunes. There are many souvenir stores around the area, and it can feel a little touristy, but once you are at the top of the dunes it is just natural scenery all around you.

We stayed at Yanagijaya free campsite which had a nice kitchen area, clean toilets, and areas to have camp fires. At night we went into town to enjoy the onsen. Tottori is known for its hot springs. Tottori Hot Spring is just five minutes from Tottori station, but there are many others in Tottori and the surrounding areas.

One of the best parts of travelling for me is trying the local foods. Tottori is known for crab (winter), mushrooms, shallots, beef, and pears (late summer/early autumn). Pear soft-cream has a very mild taste, but is delicious. Near Tottori port there are seafood markets, and we also found some nice restaurants with very fresh seafood for lunch.

Where to stay

We stayed at Yanagijaya Campground (柳茶屋キャンプ場) which is a free campsite right next to Kids' Land (こどもの国 Kodomo no kuni). From Tottori Station it is about 20 minutes by bus. It is west of the sand dunes and is a lovely shady campground with toilets and kitchen area.

© 0857-20-3227

© www.oreraryu.com/field/yanagijaya.html

Next to the campground is the Tottori-shi cycling terminal. It is a guesthouse as well as providing information about cycling in Tottori. Rooms are priced from ¥3,000 a night.

© 0857-29-0800

There is a Toyoko Inn in Tottori called Tottori-eki Minami-guchi which is priced from ¥5,000 a night for a single room with breakfast.

© www.toyoko-inn.com/eng

Oasis Minshuku (オアシス) is just five minutes from the sand dunes. Rooms are priced from ¥4,000. Breakfast is ¥500 and dinner is ¥2,500.

© 0857-23-0227

Ladies Inn Tottori (レディスイン鳥取) is for women only and rooms range from ¥4,500 – ¥5,300.

© 0857-23-8161

Wel City Tottori (ウェルシティ鳥取) is a business hotel with Western-style rooms from ¥4,500. Dinner is available from ¥1,000.

© 0857-22-8100

Getting there

We drove a car to Tottori City which takes about 2 ½ hours from Himeji.

By train it can take two hours from Himeji (with a few changes) and it costs ¥4,200 each way. There is also a direct train from Himeji which costs ¥4,600 and only takes 1½ hours.

Other Information

Tottori information centre at JR Tottori station is very helpful, and they can help you to arrange accommodation or suggest sightseeing.

© 0857-22-3318

Sand boarding is ¥2,500 for a 2 hour lesson and rental. Sand boarding season is April 19th–November 30th. Reservations are required.

© 0857-23-1749

Lauren McRae



Callin'
all politicians

The Airport Problem

Boasting one of the worlds

most extensive and modern railway systems, Japan is not frequently seen as a major air hub, but in fact the archipelago nation is host to around 100 airports. Hyogo JETs are fortunate to enjoy a wide range of convenient air travel options. Three domestic airports (Itami, Kobe, Tajima) are located entirely or partially inside of Hyogo, with international flights to Asia, Europe and North America, and the Middle East flying out of Kansai International Airport.

When the construction of Kansai was completed, all international flights were moved from Itami, which then became a domestic only airport. Despite the lack of international flights, Itami has remained a popular airport due to its close proximity to Kobe-Kyoto-Osaka and the wide range of Japanese cities it flies to. Kobe airport was built as

a rival to Itami, and though its destinations are comparatively limited, it offers service to major destinations like Okinawa (Naha), Tokyo-Haneda, and Sapporo (New Chitose). The discount Japanese airline Skymark is currently planning to begin long haul international routes, and may introduce a Kobe-Narita route to coincide. Drivers who leave their car at Kobe Airport and take the bay shuttle to Kansai International receive free parking. Even those living in rural northern Hyogo can enjoy the benefits of fast, cheap air travel. A very quick commuter flight from Tajima Airport to Itami and a transfer can have you in downtown Tokyo in about three hours.

The benefits, however, do not come without problems or controversies. Many questioned the wisdom of building Kobe Airport when Itami already existed, but now that it is built,

the argument has turned to whether or not Itami should remain. Located in a dense residential area and subject to strict operating time restrictions to limit noise pollution, expansion of Itami is almost impossible. Rail access to the airport is limited to the Osaka monorail which only runs to the northern suburbs. Osaka's governor, Toru Hashimoto, has vigorously argued that Itami should be closed and its domestic flights moved to Kansai and Kobe.

The issues in Kansai are reflected throughout all of Japan in what has been called "the airport problem" (空港問題). With a tepid economy and a glut of transportation options, can Japan really afford all of these airports? Even when the economics make sense, limited space, operating restrictions, and heavy competition from competing air hubs



in neighboring countries all make maximizing the potential very challenging.

The most famous airport problem is Narita Airport, Japan's leading international airport. As the Japanese economy was approaching its boom in the 1970's, the strain on Tokyo Haneda airport was evident, and with no feasible options for expansion, the decision was made to build a new airport. Planners eventually settled on rural Narita city, an hour away from central Tokyo. Local resistance to the airport was fierce, marked by several armed skirmishes with police and some deaths. To avoid a repeat of that chaos, future airports such as Kansai were constructed on artificially built islands away from land. Though this solved the space issue, it did not relieve the access problem, as the airports are still located some distance away from the major metropolitan centers.

Service has also been a headache. Long plagued by complaints about the travel time between Narita and Tokyo, regulators finally relented and allowed Haneda airport to offer limited international service again last year. At the

same time, a renovated Ibaraki Airport began offering service to some international and domestic locations. With such an array of airports in the Tokyo region there is concern that the spreading out of service will dilute Japan's air hub capabilities to such an extent that Seoul's Incheon Airport will establish an overwhelming position as the major air hub in East Asia. For many air travelers in Japan, it is already cheaper and quicker to make an international connection at Incheon rather than at Haneda or Narita.

Airlines in Japan are also saddled with mounting troubles. The two major network carriers, Japan Airlines (JAL) and All Japan Airlines (ANA), have been hit hard by fuel price increases and competition from low cost carriers. JAL, once the national carrier of Japan, was forced to slash routes, lay off employees, and seek government assistance to avoid financial collapse. ANA has responded to the increased competition by getting into the act with plans to establish its own low cost airline.

Innovation is coming in technology as well. ANA will take the first delivery in 2011



of Boeing's new long range 787 "Dreamliner," constructed of composite materials designed to reduce fuel consumption. Skymark will be the first Japanese customer of the huge Airbus A380, capable of hauling over 500 people. Not to be outdone, Japan's rail system may take a huge leap forward if the long planned Chuuou Shinkansen – a one hour linear motor shinkansen between Tokyo and Osaka – is realized. Add to this the plan to make Japan's expressways toll free and it becomes evident that competition in the Japanese transportation industry will remain fierce.

Regardless of the outcome of that struggle, Japan will be forced to reexamine how it approaches transportation infrastructure development and what models will be essential for success in the future. Perhaps more difficult than deciding what should be built is determining what ought to be done with what has already been built. The airport problem looks to be a puzzle that will perplex well into this decade and beyond.

Colin Fukai

Picture Books!

A while back, one of my

elementary schools requested that I read some English picture books to my sixth graders. So I ran to the nearest *Junkudo* (an hour away) and picked up the three most interesting (but still simple) I could find from their small selection. I was surprised how well it went over, considering that this was one of my more difficult classes that didn't really seem to have a lot of confidence or interest in English. So I started always bringing the books with me as sort of 'break glass in case of emergency' tool. They proved to be especially useful in my younger classes when I had extra time because other activities went shorter than expected. The reception was even better than with my sixth graders – little kids love pictures books regardless of what language they're in. The books were probably even *more* exciting because they were in English.

It came time to teach animals to my first and second graders at the same elementary school. One of the books I had happened to pick up was *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carl (a classic for many of you, I'm sure). The book introduces twelve or so animals and gestures commonly associated to them in simple

English. So I thought to myself, "Hey, why not use this book as a jumping off point for the animal lesson?" What was a spur of the moment idea turned into a three lesson mini unit that was really fun for the kids and got them to remember the names of the animals in the book really well.

The lessons go as follows (please note that each "lesson" was actually only about fifteen or twenty minutes out of the class period).

Lesson One

For the first lesson I read the book twice. The first time the kids just listen. The second time I have the kids do the gestures as written in the book after each page – cat arches its back, gorilla thumps its chest, etc. (be careful on the donkey page! I usually just have the kids do a small one foot kick, but some kids may actually try to stand on their hands and kick as pictured so make sure they don't accidentally hit anyone). Each page ends with 'I can do it! I can do it!,' which I try to have the kids repeat as they're doing the gestures (though some kids will just say it on their own – super cute!).

After we finish with the book, I use flashcards and drill the kids on the animal names and gestures. Since it's all still new at the point they may need quite a bit of repetition, especially with the more unusual animals: buffalo, camel, crocodile, parrot (the parrot doesn't actually have a gesture in the book so it's your choice if you want to include him or not. When I did, I used an arm flapping motion). After enough drilling, we play a simple gesture game. First I do the gestures and the kids have to guess what animal I am. Then I call out an animal and the kids have to do the correct gesture.

Lesson Two

In this lesson we review and consolidate what we did in the first. I read the book for review, but only once, and I have students do the gestures as I read. Afterwards we drill the animals again with flashcards and gestures. They should be starting to get the hang of them now, but make sure to work on the ones they have trouble with. We ran out of time this lesson due to other activities so we finished with a quick round of the gesture game for practice.

Lesson Three

This was the grand finale. We drilled the animals with flashcards and gestures one more time, though this time I asked students, "What animal do you like?" because we had also been working on that as well (but with fruit). By this time, the kids have all the animals and gestures down (the HRT and I were so proud of them!) so we played the Mysterious Animals game from Englipedia. The kids have a secret animal card on their back and have to guess what it is by having another student perform the right gesture for them. If they get it right they would come to me or the HRT, say the animal name, and then get a new card. There are sets of cards on Englipedia, but since I used *From Head to Toe*, I made my own set using clip art I found on Google. I laminated the cards (since the little ones have a habit of destroying things), punched a hole in each one, and then tied a string through it so I could easily put it over the kids heads. The kids had a ton of fun! The only problem was, the kids were so good at the animal names and gestures that the HRT and I had our hands full giving the kids new cards so they could keep playing!

Points to be careful of and resources

- Some of the animals in the book are a little 'unusual' (I'm pretty sure Japan doesn't have anything like a buffalo) so check with your HRT if it's ok to just stick with the ones in the book. I've never seen anything saying you should teach *these* animals and not *those*, but better safe than sorry!
- Many large bookstore chains such as Junkudo and Kinokuniya carry some English picture books, but they are a little expensive (*From Head to Toe* cost between ¥1,100 and ¥1,300). However, if you are OK with online shopping, Amazon Japan (amazon.co.jp) carries *From Head to Toe* cost for only about ¥600 (wish I had known this)! What's also great about Amazon Japan is that domestic shipping is free, you can pay at your local conbini, and the site can be viewed in English!
- Detailed instructions for Mysterious Animals can be found on Englipedia here: http://jhsenglipediaproject.com/esp_game_mysteriousanimals

Emily Love



The cards used for this activity can be downloaded directly from the *Hyogo Times* website. Go check!

Temari Zushi

Temari Zushi 手まり寿司 (sushi balls) are easy to make, look great, and taste delicious. Just choose your favourite toppings.

Sashimi (刺身) is filleted fish that you can find in the seafood section of the supermarket. Most fish can be eaten raw, so there are many types of sashimi, with the most popular ones being tuna and salmon. Sashimi can be already thinly sliced or you can do this yourself at home. Scallops, octopus and squid can also be thinly sliced and be used in this recipe.



Ingredients

- 2 cups rice
- 1 tablespoon sake
- 5cm x 5cm piece of kelp (konbu)
- 4 tablespoons vinegar (su)
- 1 ½ tablespoons sugar (satou)
- 1 teaspoon salt (shio)

Various toppings

tuna (maguro), flathead (hirame), seabream (tai), scallop (hotategai), yellowtail (hamachi), smoked salmon, shiso leaf, wasabi, sweet and sour ginger (syoga no amazuke) (light pink flat pieces of ginger)

Step One

Wash the rice, drain it and set it aside for 30–60 minutes before cooking it.

Step Two

Put the rice (plus normal amount of water for two cups of rice), sake and kelp in the rice cooker.

Step Three

Once cooked put the rice in a large bowl, mix the vinegar, sugar and salt in a separate bowl, sprinkle it over the rice while 'cutting' it with a rice paddle, don't stir or flip it.

Step Four

Roll the rice into the size of a table tennis ball.

Step Five

Put a square of plastic wrap on your hand, put a piece of seafood, wasabi and shiso leaf (optional) on the plastic wrap.

Step Six

Put a rice ball on top and twist the plastic, then untwist it.

Step Seven

Serve with extra wasabi, soy sauce and ginger.

Lauren McRae

Maigo in Hyogo

Last months Maigo in Hyogo was Takarazuka Grand Theatre... But, where's this?



Tajomaru

The **kendo club** at my school was, historically, rather disappointing, despite the majority of our student body coming from a middle school with a very respectable team. For the past two years, they have only had about three active members, and the student with the strongest swordsmanship, who competed at the national level in junior high school, gave up competing in favor of managing the club (which mostly consists of passing out cold beverages). Even three years ago, however, when the club had nearly ten members, “practice” consisted of peeping into the girls changing room with binoculars for thirty minutes, then going home. Imagine my surprise, then, when amongst the new batch of freshman was someone who takes the sport seriously enough to bring her *shinai* (*kendo* sword) into TSUTAYA with her en route for home.

I bumped into this student in the *jidaigeki* (period film) section and therefore immediately asked her for a recommendation. *Jidaigeki* films are typically set in the Edo Period and usually

incorporate samurai and swordplay to some extent. This student was literally carrying around a sword, albeit wooden, in a video store while browsing through movies about ninja and samurai; who better to ask for a recommendation?

The answer, in short, is anybody but a fifteen-year-old girl. She was torn between suggesting *Goemon*, about the legendary Japanese bandit who stole from the rich and gave to poor in true Robin Hood fashion, and **Tajomaru**, the untold story of the bandit from the famous short story “In a Grove.” According to the student, *Goemon* overuses special effects and, therefore, the fight scenes and storyline in **Tajomaru** would be much more interesting. I hate to slander my poor student, especially since it is rare to meet a Japanese person genuinely interested in domestically produced films, but ultimately I was unimpressed with **Tajomaru** (Nakano Hiroyuki, 2009). However, I think the issue goes deeper than this film in particular.

Compared with other films taking place during the Edo Period, **Tajomaru** is, as far as I am concerned, a **pop jidaigeki**. Kurosawa Akira, for example, was famous for making period dramas, and of particular note are those starring Mifune Toshirō. His *Rashōmon* won the prestigious Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, a first for Japan. *Seven Samurai* is considered one of the greatest films of all time, and without *Hidden Fortress*, every *Star Wars* would have been as bad as *The Phantom Menace*. These films were, perhaps due to the filmmaking technologies available at the time, gritty and realistic.



Viewing a Kurosawa film is akin to being transported back in time; that time also being an age where Japanese men (potrayed by Mifune) grew moustaches (potrayed by Mifune’s moustache) strong enough to hold swords on their own. **Tajomaru**, on the other hand, is littered with some very “pretty” actors that look as if they shave between takes; their faces might just as soon be found on an advertisement for a host club. This is not an overstatement; when a nobleman who kills the bandit **Tajomaru** usurps his name, sword and joins a group of thieves, they immediately give him a makeover. Apparently, being initiated into a marauding gang of bandits is equivalent to attending a junior high school slumber party.

Did I mention that after the makeover, the soundtrack switches to guitar solo compliments of the musical stylings of Jet? Up until this point in the film, **Tajomaru** is a serious effort by director Nakano Hiroyuki. In spite of the absurd-from-the-get-go prettyboy cast and likewise

too-much-like-a-soundstage-to-believable sets, **Tajomaru** addresses serious issues in the upper classes. However, that all goes out the window when the “new” **Tajomaru** decides to go on a montage rampage of theivery set to modern rock.

You would think, perhaps, that a film this ridiculous would at least have some over-the-top violence. In the seventies, films such as *Lady Snowblood* pioneered the blood shower; the idea that getting sliced with a sword or, if you were unlucky, having an entire limb cut off would result in an instantaneous monsoon of blood. Typically, this would drench the attacker a la Kill Bill (which is actually based on *Lady Snowblood*). Remember, though, that Jet is merely rock, not heavy metal, and blood is unbecoming on very fashionable bandits. Thus, the number of times **Tajomaru** shows blood on a human being that has been cut down, as opposed to merely on the blade that did the cutting, is once, and that character had to show his blood by default; he was wearing

his kimono open in order to display his shaved chest.

In conclusion, **Tajomaru** never decides what kind of *jidaigeki* it wants to be. It is too stylized and elegant to be realistic and too silly to be taken seriously. Its only appeal is as a pop period piece; one that appeals to a young female audience that can swoon over the pretty costumes and metrosexual men. There are modern *jidaigeki* that are good films, however. *Castle Under Fiery Skies* portrays the plight of craftsmen, as opposed to samurai, in a serious manner that successfully creates a compelling drama. *Kamui Gaiden*, at the other extreme, uses CGI extensively, yet carefully retains the raw, realistic feel of a Kurosawa period film through costuming, set design and other techniques. Give those a try; leave **Tajomaru** on the shelf.

Thanks for watching (something else)!

JJ Cappa

Ibaraki or Ibarrrrrragi!

In Ibaraki, my home for the last 9 months, it's both common and fun to say the prefecture's name with a long, rolling "r" while switching the "k" for the "g": "Ibarrrrragi!" Despite the energetic name, many people may not know much about Ibaraki-ken. However, they might know our prefecture's mascot, Mito Komon. Other than our being our cute, bearded prefectural cartoon character, he is a local historical figure and the star of the longest running Japanese drama of the same name. His popularity puts Ibaraki, a prefecture North-East of Tokyo, on the map for many.

The beloved Mito Komon is a character based on Tokugawa Mitsukuni, the 2nd Daimyo of Mito (our capital city) in the Edo era. This egalitarian leader lived in a manner similar to that of his people – choosing a small cottage in the woods instead of a luxurious castle. He worked his own rice paddy and even paid

taxes like the local farmers. In his television drama, a disguised Mito Komon travels with two samurai side-kicks, seeking out injustice and fighting corruption throughout Japan.

In his honor, Mito hosts a Mito Komon festival every summer. The festival includes a parade filled with dancing, elaborate floats, and good food. A "Mito Komon" makes an appearance, sporting his typical yellow hat and purple vest and thin, white beard. One of the first things I did as jet-lagged ALT was dance down the streets of Mito in the Mito Komon parade. Dressed in red and blue yukata, we newly-arrived gaijin were taught traditional Japanese dances. We were sweaty, unpracticed, uncoordinated, but happy, especially during the numerous "beer breaks."

A snow of pink, white, and red petals can be seen floating from Kairakuen Park in Mito. It is one of the three most beautiful

gardens in Japan, and it has more than 3 thousand types of plum trees. The blossoms are celebrated during the Mito Plum Festival held February 20th to March 31st. At Kairakuen, you can take a boat ride on Mito's Semba lake, feed the slightly scary black swans, or just lie under the cherry trees during hanami. You may be able to glimpse the Mito Art Tower above the cherry trees. This twisted, geometric landmark is an icon for the city. Riding an elevator to the top of the art tower and gazing over our capital is now, unfortunately, impossible, as the tower was structurally damaged during the Tohoku earthquake. Despite the damage, it still stands, defining our skyline.

There is a Mito Komon statute covered in giant Chrysanthemums in the small town of Kasama. The town has a Chrysanthemum festival from October till November,

where you can see our mascot in full bloom along with chrysanthemums the size of dinner plates. The festival is based around one of the three largest Inari shines in Japan. Kasama is also famous for pottery, so you can go shopping for some locally-made artwork or try your own hand at the craft in one of the many pottery studios.

In Ibaraki's Ushiku, you can view the world from inside the head of a Buddha. This bronze Buddha is the tallest standing Buddha in Japan. An elevator will take you up 120 meters. You can over-look the flower gardens and a nearby animal park.

"Ku be!" is "Let's eat!" in Ibaraki-ben. While at the Mito Komon festival or anytime during your Ibaraki sightseeing, you can sample our famous food. Ibaraki is known for its tender Hitachi beef, green-colored Hitachi Aki soba, and melons - we are the largest melon producer in Japan. Also, the Okukuji area is famous for apples. You can try a delicious, fresh apple or soak with then in a "ringo-buro" (apple-filled) onsen. Adding apples to the hot volcanic water is supposed to give you a good dose of vitamins, although it may give you the feeling of soaking in warm apple cider.

The infamous natto is Ibaraki's stringy, stinky specialty. Whether you love natto or hate it, I suggest you give it a try if you are in Ibaraki. You never know. You might find that you like it. If not, well, just say, "Shanme!" ("It can't be helped!" in Ibaraki-ben).

Nothing is more satisfying than slurping ramen in a revolving restaurant on top of our Mt. Tsukuba after a challenging climb. The mountain is the subject many local legends. According to folklore, a deity came from the heavens and asked Mt. Fuji and Mt. Tsukuba for shelter. Mt. Fuji, in its pride and arrogance, did not think it needed the god's blessing, so it refused. Mt. Tsukuba, on the other hand, welcomed the god, and in return, the god blessed the mountain. So today, Mt. Fuji is a barren mountain, and Mt. Tsukuba is a mountain full of life. Beautiful forests of cypress trees and red pines cover our "purple mountain."

The revolving ramen restaurant is between the peaks of Mt. Nantai in the West at 871 meters high and Mt. Nyotoi in the East at 877 meters high. It was once said that the two peaks, as husband and wife, gave birth to gods or even Japan itself. They were worshiped in religious ceremonies. Now from the

mythical origin of Japan, over your bowl of ramen, you can view the entire city of Tsukuba from the sacred peaks. From the top, you can catch glimpses of nearby Tokyo, or even see all the way to Mt. Fuji. From October to February you can take a cable car up the mountain for a "Star Dusk Cruise." You can walk around the mountain and take in the night sky high above the lights of Tsukuba city.

There is a saying about travel, "Abroad to see wonders the traveler goes and neglects the fine things which lie under his nose." Often the best places to experience the "real Japan" are those far from the treks of tourists and crowds with hoisted cameras. So, if you are ready to see off-tour Japan, stop by Semba lake or dance in the Mito Komon Festival with a beer in hand. Who knows what fine things you will discover?

Susan Thomas
SHS ALT

Koshien Ramen!

Fure, fure, fure, fure!

(that's hooray in Japanese)

Like so many other Hyogo (and Osaka, and Kyoto, and even SHIGA I hear) JETs, I was dismayed when the huge behemoth of an event that was the Tigers baseball game was canceled due to rain last month. Seriously crushed. While I wasn't one of the people shelling out for shinkansen tickets, it was a good long drive down before Mother Nature eventually spoiled everything.

Nevertheless, we pressed on. From being down in the dumps, chugging beers in front of Koshien Stadium, we decided to enjoy the day as best we could. While "enjoy" would come to include the consumption of massive amounts of food and drink of all kinds, we started with an economical and convenient choice: **Koshien Ramen**.

Located within the shadows of the overpass that seems to graze the side of the stadium itself, **Koshien Ramen** is a mere hop and step from the gates of the hallowed Tigers playground. The rain which had caused the game to be

cancelled also ensured that customers weren't flooding into this place. Dressed in our Tigers best, and looking a bit worse for wet wear, we were looked upon sympathetically by the Hanshin-themed restaurant's owners. A round of beers and each face looked a bit brighter. Orders of gyoza and ramen were placed and spirits were lifted. The owner took the time to show us signed memorabilia he'd collected from over the years, even letting yours truly take a couple of (very careful) hacks in the restaurant.

The ramen was great. The gyoza was great. The beer was great. And while I won't deny that much of my newfound fondness for this humble ramenya is based on anything BUT the taste of their offerings, make no mistake, it's pretty darn good.

The moral of the story here is if you have a chance to get to a Tigers game, do it. If you have a little bit of time before that game to eat some ramen, do it at **Koshien Ramen**. It's WAY



better than the slop they attempt to pass off as ramen inside the stadium. And if you see a chubby Asian guy wearing a Kanemoto jersey, well, it might be me, but hell, there's a ton of those kinds of guys in the area on game days.

Andrew Tamashiro

English corner



Got English that deserves to be shared? Send it to Hyogo Times and it might be featured in the next issue!

In light of the recent "Rapture" talk... ^^

Photo taken by Emily Lemmon at the Sapporo Beer Factory in Hokkaido.



Participate!

Hyogo Times is currently looking for writers to contribute to the following sections:

- ☉ Love & Relationships
- ☉ Restaurant Review
- ☉ Book discoveries
- ☉ ... and many more!

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Tourism in today's Japan

A great credit to all

Assistant Language Teachers I know, we 'man'ed up. Many of us also found avenues to donate toiletries, stationary, second-hand clothes and the like. Now, there is another way we can all help, and it's all in the name of fun.

Self restraint (or *jishuku*) is underway in a big way. As explained in the New York Times, *jishuku* is voluntary self restraint, which has been seen by the greater Japanese public as the 'correct code of behaviour' for Post-Tsunami Japan. While many perished, others are displaced, and will be for some time. Japan called for power conservation to alleviate the struggling power grid, which turned into the sacrifice of all non-essential luxury items and activities. Those who are seen to be living frivolously (especially those in Kantou and Tohoku

regions) are inviting social condemnation. *Jishuku* is also responsible for our most beloved phallus being kept 'under wraps' at this year's Dankon Matsuri in Kawasaki.

That pesky old law that requires dancing establishments to have licensing for events after 1am (a costly and difficult process) that was largely ignored by officials in the past, has now become strictly enforced. Highways that were notoriously congested during Golden Weeks of the past were comparatively easy to pass this year. Sunday afternoon at Osaka Aquarium has become a stroll in the park, rather than the normal chaotic fight for a good vantage point.

This is what has prompted me to write this article. As a tourism advocate, I feel that it is my duty to spread the word. If you needed an incentive to travel, well, here it is.

Get travelling, the Japanese Tourism Industry needs you!

Akasaka district has become eerily deserted. The visitors information centre normally sees 3,000 people per day, but numbers have dropped dramatically to 500-600 people daily. An employee at the visitors centre said that in all her 20 years of working there, they had never before had so few visitors.

Just so you can get idea of what kind of numbers we are looking at, between March 11 and the end of March, accommodation



in the Beppu Hot Springs area alone received 33,000 cancellations. Tohoku and Kanto regions suffered 390,000 cancellations, while another 170,000 were reported in other areas of Japan. In March of 2010, 706,684 international visitors came to Japan, and only 50% of that number (352,800) came this year. While cancellations in Tohoku and the Kantou regions are understandable and for Tohoku most probably wise (I myself, fly into action at the slight bumping of a desk, let alone level 6 'aftershocks'), it's time people understood the real and current situation.

Misinformation in the media has damaged people's confidence in tourism in greater Japan, when it is only a small percentage of the country that has



been shut down to tourism. All major power outages in the Kantou region stopped well back at the end of March, and the beginning of Golden Week also saw the restoration of the Tohoku Shinkansen Line. On the international front, JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organisation) branches around the globe are scrambling to repair the damage done to Japan's reputation as a tourism destination.

British and Australian Governments are advising that nationals stay clear of the Fukushima plants at a 60 and 80km radius respectively. Obviously these warnings are on the conservative side, considering the Japanese national warning stands at 30km. The Australian government goes into further detail, advising people 'not to travel to Ibaraki, Tochigi, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima

prefectures, unless your presence there is essential, due to limitations on essential services, infrastructure damage, and ongoing concern about the status of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant.' However Aomori, also in the north, is open for business, and its famed Nebuta festival, with its giant hand crafted figures, is just around the corner! (August 2nd to 4th).

Summer holidays are almost upon us, and exam week is even closer. It is not only our duty, but our job to enjoy all our paid leave and inject some money into the tourism industry, and thus Japan. Get people back home on board too. International visitors spend more money and stay longer, injecting further funds into the now flailing industry.

So when you travel around Japan in the coming months, spoil yourself, you'll only be helping Japan too.

Jessica Grigg

Getting to Know Random JETs.....

Emily Love

I like: music, traveling, nerdy stuff, coffee, chocolate

But I don't like: mukade, the jingles they play at MaxValu while you're shopping, squid

I can: do a mean impression of Gackt at karaoke

But I can't: actually sing

I have: home-made fudge in my fridge. Right now. You jealous?

I want: silver high-tops, a cat, to learn how to dance

More Details

School and Location in Hyogo: Yamasaki East JHS, Shiso-shi

Birthday: January 14th

Born and raised: Illinois

University and Degree: University of Pittsburgh, Bachelor in Japanese Language and Culture with a minor in Studio Arts and some Global and Asian Studies Certificates

Other jobs that you have had: Just part times ones – this is my first real job

Travels since becoming a JET: Only old and new haunts in Japan

Travels before becoming a JET: Spain

Hobbies: listening to music, going to the city? I do live in the inaka..., playing shamisen (though I'm really bad about practicing), collecting paraphernalia for whatever I happen to be into

Staying another year? Yep

Favorites

Food: Italian is pretty awesome. Sushi and okonomiyaki are pretty swell to

Sports: Uh... does professional StarCraft count?

Music: I love a little bit of everything... Muse, The Killers, Big Bang, Buck-Tick, Poe, Led Zeppelin, Radiohead, Lady Gaga
Shop: Tower Records, Starbucks, Uniqlo

TV Show: Firefly, Criminal Minds, Dexter (Season 1), Coffee Prince, Battlestar Galactica, Harvey Birdman Attorney at Law, a handful of asinine variety shows
Movie: Lord of the Rings, Princess Mononoke, Detroit Metal City, Singing in the Rain, Hero, The Dark Knight, old Godzilla movies

Random Trivia

Proudest Achievement: Hmm... maybe getting JET?

Advice for the younger: Don't be a hater – spend your time and energy positively and on the things you like, not on what you don't like
Motto: Keep calm and put the bass in your walk

I remember when... there were only 151 Pokemon.

What are you drinking? “Blacker than a moonless night, hotter and more bitter than Hell itself... That is coffee”

Who would you like to meet? Hayao Miyazaki

Why should we elect you President of the World? I would immediately enact the *Bill and Ted Act* which states, “be excellent to each other”

Best thing about Japan so far? Transportation! Getting to see some of my current favorite bands and artists live

If it was my last day on earth I would... Have a really awesome homemade dinner with my family or do something exciting and excessive with my friends

Interesting fact about me: I once went to a summer camp for building robots out of lego

Teaching

My top tip for teaching: Knowing about what your kids are into (music, characters, etc) and working it into your lesson can spice up even the most tedious topics and worksheets

When the class is too quiet I... try and skip ahead to a game if I can
Bribery for students... YAY or NAY? Not really. I always forget my stickers when I go to elementary school and my middle schoolers don't really need it. Though I like to offer prizes for games

Funniest Story involving work: For Halloween we played a simple trick or treat maru-batsu game. Making my kids hop around the classroom wearing silly hats was awesome, but then one of the kids stood up and sang the theme to Evangelion



Jessica Grigg

I like: dipping my vegemite toast in a glass of milk

But I don't like: Natto

I can: dance for 7 hours straight, and hold a tune at Karaoke.

But I can't: get on a swing without getting motion sickness

I have: a sweet ride; '99 Honda Civic Sedan, manual transmission

I want: a packet of Tim Tams that never runs out!

More Details

School and Location in Hyogo: Sasayama Industrial High School, Sasayama 'city'

Birthday: 10th July 1986

Born and raised: Born in Perth, Western Australia, but grew up in Australind.

University and Degree: Murdoch University, Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Other jobs that you have had: Check-out chick, Vege gal, Bar wench, Business Travel Consultant

Travels since becoming a JET: Hong Kong, Macau and lots of places within Japan, including Toyama, Okinawa, and Koya-san.

Hobbies: Travel, Clubbing, Sewing, Cooking, Swimming.

Staying another year? **Surprise recontract!!** Japan you're not rid of me just yet ;)

Favorites

Food: Kaiten Sushi, Katsu-don, just about any kind of Nabe (excepting Motsu-nabe)

Sports: Field Hockey, Swimming, and Tennis

Music: Trance, and anything I can sing along to for those chill times

Shop: Uniqlo, Rakuten, Amazon... and Conan! (I have a thing for hardware stores)

TV Show: Game of Thrones

Movie: All time fave; The Little Mermaid. The world needs more Ranga Heroines.

Random Trivia

Proudest Achievement: Convincing the Hyogo BOE that they should ignore my 'No' and let me stay another year.

Advice for the younger: Don't be afraid to change your mind because of what others might think. You are the most important person in your life.

Motto: Mistakes, if you learn from them, are only experiences.

I remember when... I ran around in skivvies and leggings shouting various 'Captain Planet' character phrases

What are you drinking? a cup of Tetley, then a Cuba Libre typically followed by some Aquarius

Who would you like to meet? Florence Welch, of the Machine

Why should we elect you President of the World? As the President of the World, every Man, Woman and Child would be required to give and receive, 1 hug per hour. No exceptions

Best thing about Japan so far? Accessibility of travel. In WA, drive for 5 hours and you'll still be in WA. Here, I could be in Toyama, Kochi or Hiroshima!

If it was my last day on earth I would... Eat black bean and beni-imo icecream on the beach with my best friends and family
Interesting Fact about me: I can touch my nose with my tongue.

Teaching

My top tip for teaching: Smile; if the students think you're enjoying yourself, they will be more engaged

When the class is too quiet I... Make a dramatic sad face, guilt works wonders

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Stamps seem to be enough out here in Sasayama. Love these country folk ^^

Funniest Story involving work: My student explaining that her classmate likes 'Porno' to the whole class. (Referring to the band Porno-graffitti)

Plum rain

In my first year, in mid-May, I was standing at a checkout counter in fluorescent-lit Jusco. “It’s hot isn’t it,” the lady remarked as she rang up my items. “Yeah, it’s like it’s already summer!” I replied. She considered this. “Well, yeah, except, first comes the rain, then summer,” she informed me. Oh, right, of course.

Six 100%-humid, sweat-inducing, mold-infested weeks later, I had come to understand what she meant.

Japan’s rainy season, 梅雨 (*tsuyu*, or *plum rains*, because now it’s ume season, y’all) is caused by the meeting of two huge air masses: the moist air over the Pacific comes up against the cooler continental air mass, and parks right over east Asia for about two months, providing Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and east China with plentiful precipitation. The season ends when the warm air mass associated with the subtropical ridge pushes this stationary front north, giving us pure, unadulterated summer swelter.

Japan’s rain starts first down in Okinawa, then progresses north like the cherry blossom front a few months before. Okinawa’s official rainy season dates are May 8th to June 23rd, and Tohoku can expect theirs from June 12th to July 27th. Hokkaido is the only area that gets off scot free, and is reportedly downright pleasant during the month of June.

Kansai’s rain period is June 6th to July 19th. The rainy season (clearly) does not keep strict dates, nor does it rain every single day within this period, but it does put a damper on outdoor activity planning, laundry-doing, and my general sanity levels.

To keep from losin’ your shit, here are a few helpful tips for the rainy season:

◎ Dehumidifiers: almost all the stores will be selling little portable water-absorbers by the truckload. It’s a good idea to stick them in the corners of your closets and other spaces you want to help keep dry. You’ll want to check these

from time to time and replace them when they get full.

- ◎ Don’t forget nooks and crannies like your shoes. They sell shoe-insert water absorbers too. The little things in your life can grow mold as well!
- ◎ Larger, electric dehumidifiers can be used to persuade the water out of your laundry. These can be pricey, but they can also be worth it.
- ◎ You may want to locate the nearest laundromat with dryers. Make friends with someone who can drive.
- ◎ Invest in rain boots and a decent umbrella. If you bike, consider those full-body plastic suits that look so silly. Or, an umbrella holder for your bike.
- ◎ You may also want to invest in lots of カビキラー (*kabi killer*, excellent for mold) and use it generously on your bathroom surfaces. Wet wipes are good too.
- ◎ Airflow is important. You may have the urge to shut your house up to keep the wet out,

but allow me to counsel you: you cannot keep anything out with your flimsy oft-penetrated walls. Better to keep the fans on. You may have to strategically aim the fans in problem areas when you leave for the day (for example, the top of my fridge would collect condensation since the freezer was cold. The condensation would turn to mold beneath the shelter of the microwave. When I went to work, I stood the fan on top of a chair in the kitchen so it would constantly be blowing on the top of the fridge, thus saving me from further mold-scrubbing experiences in that spot).

- ◎ Bugs like to get out of the rain too. This is also mukade season, so keep an eye on your drains, and you might want to surround your house with that bug-protection powder.

Remember that mukade hideously tend to come in pairs, so if you find one, try to find its brother too.

- ◎ You will sweat, a lot, and your hair will not behave. You might feel sluggish and unmotivated. Don’t worry, this is normal; just *ganbare*! If you do outdoor sports, they will be muddy, if indoor, they will be six times sweatier. Your students may also get a little weird, especially if you teach in elementary schools. Not getting to play outside for days on end sucks for them too.
- ◎ If travel is how you get your kicks, don’t despair. Japan Guide (www.japan-guide.com/e/e2277.html) points out that the rainy season means tourist attractions will be less crowded, and some locations are pretty awesome in the rain.

- ◎ June showers bring June flowers. This season is also a good time for irises and hydrangeas, so whether capitalizing on a sunny afternoon or just *gaman-ing* in your boots and raingear, consider taking in the views of these rainy season specialties.
- ◎ When sunny days do occur, imitate your neighbors in hanging outside every piece of bedding and laundry you’ve been saving for two weeks.

If you know of tips I haven’t mentioned, share them in the comments section of this article on the Hyogo Times website!

And don’t worry, rainy season also ends. Be patient with yourself and those around you, and it’ll just fly by.

Emily Lemmon

Hyogo Times June Event Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
29 Akashi Genjin Festival Akashi Tokushima Touch Rugby www.tokersajet.com/rugby/	30	31	01	02	03	04 Himeji Prom-stravaganza Kinosaki Yukata Festival A festival with Yukata fashion show, Miss Yukata contest, etc
05 Yumura Hot Springs Festival Yumura Hot Springs	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13 TOA Planning Meeting 13–14 June	14 Tea Ceremony Workshop Time: 13:00–15:30 Location: JICA Hyogo Fee: FREE of charge!	15 Ako Kotto-ichi (antique market) Oishi Jinja (Shrine) Held the 15th of each month	16	17 Hyogo Farewell Party	18
19 Ajisai Festival Tsumanosato Ajisai-en, Sairinji Temple	20	21	22 Himeji Yukata Festival Himeji	23 Himeji Yukata Festival Himeji	24 Himeji Yukata Festival Himeji	25 Block 6 & 7 Farewell Formal Location: the Portopia Hotel, Kobe: CLUB Keynotes Time: 6:30pm–9:00pm Fee: ¥6,500–¥7,500
26	27	28	29	30	01	02

For more indepth details about all the events, please visit our website: www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes