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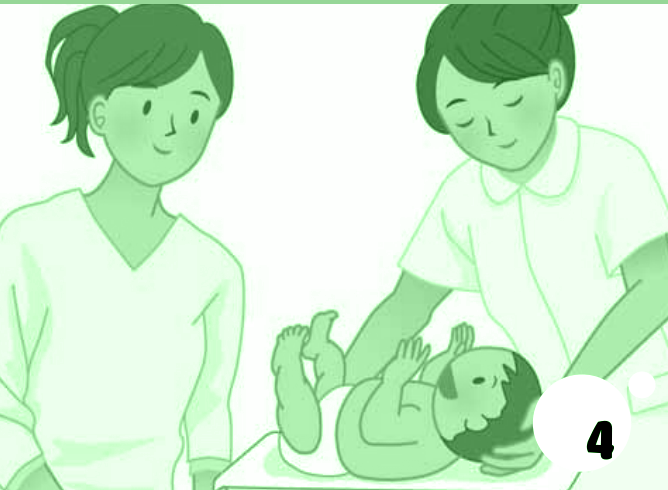
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hyogo times

Inside

Websites for you!
No itch is eternal
Tonomine Highlands, Hyogo





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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

Message from the Editor

Well the new month is

here and that makes me another year older. It's a little bit strange to be sitting here and contemplating the fact that I could have just had my last birthday in Japan. It somehow seems appropriate to start considering that (giant) change that will take place in my life over the next year as the season starts to shift too. Hopefully the scary fact that I have NO IDEA what I will be doing by this time next year will slowly morph from the terrifying I'm going to fail at everything and die (the deepest, darkest depths of Winter) to you know what, I can cope with this and do whatever I like (the heady hopes of Spring). With any luck the rest of you won't be facing such conundrums because your birthdays fall at better times of the year (though I will still say Autumn's the best – you just can't beat the colour scheme).

Random aside aside, what do we have for you this month? Not a huge amount I'm afraid (Oh new writers, where are you lurking?!?), but what we have will provide some distraction, especially if we have any more typhoons

swirling towards us in the next few weeks (though they should all be done soon right? Right? I nearly got stuck in Korea...). Wondering why dating can be so hard in Japan? We have a story of incredulity, woe and solution where you'll see there's hope yet (sort of ><). Contemplating the bigger questions in life? Our very own ex-editor relates her experiences of a course that is definitely not for the faint-hearted. Inviting people over but worried about fussy eaters? Hand-rolled sushi may well be the answer to your prayers. All that, plus a special introduction to some potentially very useful little websites.

Enjoy, and then get writing for us! The deadline, as always, is the 15th of the month.

Imi

P.S! If you have any comments or suggestions about the Hyogo Times, send them through to the same address as submissions:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net

P.P.S! Enjoy the cooler weather... I know I am!



Websites for you!

Japan Healthcare Information

Or **JHI**, is an organization that, (as its name might suggest), provides information about Japanese healthcare. Ever wished you could find an English-speaking doctor or dentist in your area? Had a health question you didn't want to talk to your JTE about? Or just confused about how your insurance works? **JHI** is here to help. They provide heaps of free services, as well as some paid. I hope you never have to use them (meaning you stay healthy all of your days in Japan), but it might be a good idea to know they exist, just in case.

I personally needed them back in May. I found a lump on the back of my head and needed to get it checked out. My Japanese is near N1 level, but I was scared and my medical Japanese was not

quite up to where it needed to be. That and I had no idea what doctor I needed to see. **JHI** helped me out. They were quick, easy to understand, and incredibly helpful. The lump I found turned out to be nothing, but I was incredibly grateful to **JHI** for all they did for me.

Due to **JHI** being such a helpful company, I decided to pass their info on to all of you.

You can check them out at: <http://japanhealthinfo.com>

Or like them on [facebook](#) as a reminder for whenever you may need them.



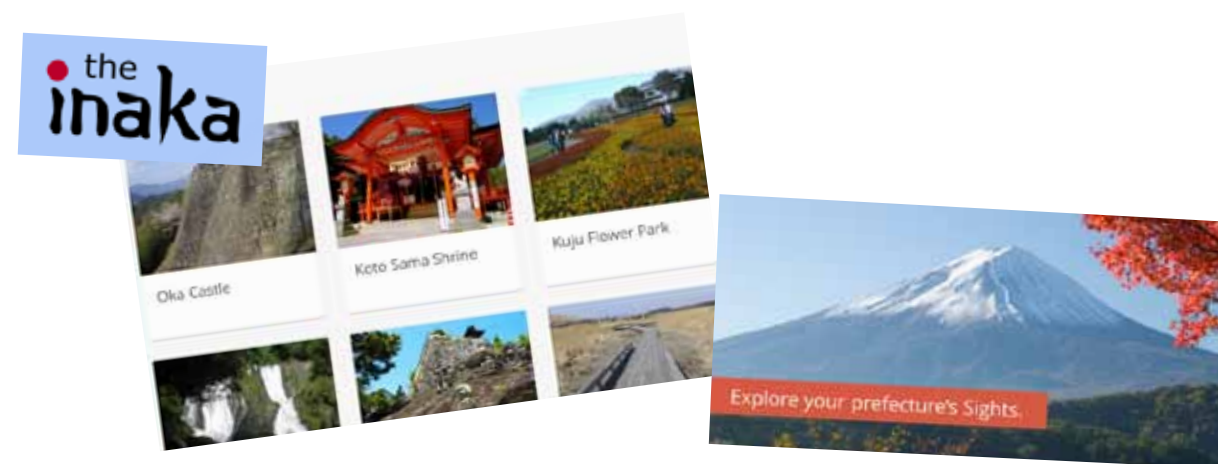
The Inaka

Japan has hundreds of travel websites out there, but you can generally classify them into two categories:

1. There are travel sites that cover specific cities like Tokyo or Kyoto, and,
2. There are sites that give highlights of the must see sights in each prefecture.

Both have their purposes, but **The Inaka** tries to break through these categories to be a more useful travel site for JETs.

If you have lived in Hyogo for a month, chances are you are pretty familiar with the famous attractions spread out throughout your prefecture. You may know all about Himeji Castle, but say you were heading to visit your friend in Miki, how familiar would you



be with what you could see and do there?

The Inaka allows us to share pictures and information about sights, restaurants, onsen, and festivals from our towns as well as rate and comment on them. Think of it as a kind of Yelp for travelers in the countryside of Japan. It allows us to see what the sites are, see the prices, and get a better understanding of what a town has to offer before spending money and time getting there.

A few months back I was traveling in Oita, and I heard there was a nice flower park in a town not too far away. When I got to that town, I found that there were two flower parks that I could choose from. Assuming that they would be pretty similar, I chose to go

to the closest one. When I got there I found out that it was no more than a mere garden, maybe a couple hundred flowers. Disappointed, I headed back into town and met a friend for lunch. After talking with him I found out that the one a bit further out had hundreds of thousands of flowers all laid out in spectacular designs. If I could have checked a website like **The Inaka** out, my trip would have been completely different.

That is just one example of how The Inaka can make traveling easier and better for us JETs, but the site does a whole lot more. JET is always looking for ways to give back to Japan. The Japanese people are investing in this program to not only benefit their language ability, but also to promote tourism and

relationships between our countries. Through **The Inaka**, JETs are given a special opportunity to give back by promoting their local businesses and tourism to not only other JETs, but English speakers all over the world.

So if you have a few minutes, please upload some pictures and information about the sights, restaurants, onsen, and festivals in your town. It certainly does not take long, and will be beneficial to everyone. Together we can build the most effective and complete travel website out there. I can't wait to see what Hyogo has to offer!

So check it out at: www.theinaka.com

Christopher Allison

No itch is eternal

JETs are a varied and

interesting group mostly characterized by their relative intelligence (usually anyway) and their flexibility and willingness to try new things. Hey y'all – I've got a hell of a things for you to try!

I first heard about *Vipassana* from a tour guide in Cambodia, but it seemed like a thing to do in Japan since it's a Shinto-Buddhist nation. Although it's not religious or sectarian, the philosophy behind *Vipassana* is deeply grounded in Buddhist thinking. As many of us learned in high school lit and history classes, the basic tenets of Buddhism hold that life is suffering because of human desires – specifically craving and aversion – which stand between humans and their freedom.

But how not to feel and act with craving for the wonderful things in life? How not to feel and act with aversion to life's pains? I jumped into *Vipassana* without quite understanding that this is its focus and purpose. "You have to go to the root of these things," they said. I pictured each person carrying varying sizes of personal baggage mountains. I imagined the time it would take to peel all those layers back (some much thicker than others) to get to the 'root level' underneath it all. How could any person uncover, or even hope to glimpse, this so-called root in a simple manner, and within the span of ten days?

Because that's what I'm talking about – a ten day residential course with a lifestyle pretty different from what most of us are used to. Basic ground rules were things like total

segregation of the sexes – so I lived, ate, and meditated only with the women in the women's half of the center, walked in the women's garden, and saw the men only on their side of the meditation hall and from across the driveway that separated our garden from theirs. Noble silence – that is, not talking, nor communicating with gestures – with the other meditators (you can talk to the staff if you need anything or to the teachers if you have a question, naturally). No lying, stealing, or killing (this includes eating meat, incidentally, so all the food provided was vegetarian).

It might seem like being unplugged and not speaking would be difficult, but I actually didn't have much trouble with that personally. Occasionally I would want to tell someone something, and more often

I would think of a question I wanted to ask someone regarding my future travels or plans. In my usual life, when thoughts like that come up, I either make a note or address it immediately (send an email, etc.), but during the course I had no pen, I had no notepad, I had no email. So things had to wait.

The eating situation is kind of like being a kid again; there is what there is, and if you don't like it, that's just too bad. I think that in itself is a humbling technique. Also, we had fruit for dinner (not dinner...teatime... but it was at 5pm and was the last 'meal' of the day) which was sort of delightful.

Our days started at an hour I still consider pretty nuts, but there, and then, it just seemed like part of the lifestyle of the center, however temporary,

you kind of get used to it. Every morning, we'd be woken by the bell at 4am, chiming, and chiming again, to rouse us from sleep. From 4:30 to 6:30, we were to meditate either in the meditation hall upstairs or in our own rooms. 6:30 was breakfast and then a break until 8, when we would have an hour long group sitting session, meaning everyone would meditate together for an hour. At 9, we would have our morning instructions, and then meditate until 11, which was lunchtime.

At 1, we would begin to meditate on our own again, and then at 2:30 we'd start the afternoon group sitting. At 3:30, we would receive afternoon instructions and meditate until 5, which was tea time. During tea time, new students (me!) could have fruit, while older students (who had

undertaken not to eat after noon) could have only tea, coffee, or water.

At 6, we'd gather for the third and final group sitting of the day, followed at 7 by the discourse. For English speakers this was a video (for non-English, audio only) in which the teacher (S.N. Goenka, in India) would explain particulars, (somehow magically) answer questions I was considering asking at question time, and in general provide a context for what we were practicing. After this, we'd return to the hall, meditate (the Japanese discourse usually took a bit longer than the English one, so I would have a break to brush teeth and otherwise prepare for bed) until 9, and then it was question time, or else bedtime if you had no questions. Lights out was 9:30, which seems



...continued

early but ISN'T if you get up at FOUR.

If you've been counting, that's about ten hours of meditation each day. You're doing it constantly, like it's your job, and for these ten days, it basically is. During breaks, I was mostly walking in the garden, stretching, or napping. I started showering at 4 in an effort to be more awake for the 4:30 – 6:30 meditation time slot.

How I felt about the meditation changed from day to day. Some days I felt great, I was feeling it, everything was going just as I wanted it to – I was alert, engaged, attentive, focused. Other days I sucked at meditation. I couldn't stay awake, I couldn't stop daydreaming or narrating or spinning my wheels, I couldn't feel anything on my body. Sometimes I couldn't have removed the serene smile from my face with a pry-bar; other times tears would be streaming down my face for no discernable reason.

When I went to the assistant teacher during afternoon question time on about day seven to say "Why can't I get it to work today if I could yesterday?" The answer was this isn't about getting it to work, this is about facing reality.

"This isn't about getting it to work." Contrary to my previous ideas on what meditation must be, what it must be for (sharper vision, clarity, quieting the mental noise, becoming more centered), this course was, and is, different. All those things are ancillary benefits and almost prerequisites to the real core of what *Vipassana* is supposed to be about, and what it's really supposed to do for you.

What the technique teaches is to become aware of sensations on the body, both pleasant and unpleasant, and to not react to them. To feel an itch, to observe it, to not seek its immediate undoing but rather "Let me see how long it lasts. After all, no itch is eternal," and by so doing, to understand at the level of physical experience that which everyone already knows

intellectually; that nothing lasts forever. That every feeling which arises also passes away, that every thing which lives also dies, that every object crafted or built must eventually, eventually, decay and fall away. And if nothing is permanent, then why get so upset? Why get so attached?

It makes sense; we all know that this is naturally so. Build something out of stone and it will last longer, but even that is not forever. Everything good needs replacing. Change is all there is. We know it, we know it. So why do we still get all bent out of shape about it?

The message behind the meditation is that there is this huge gap between knowing something intellectually and understanding it in a way that really sinks in and applies to your life. This gap is the difference between hearing about something, reading about it, knowing about it, thinking about it, and experiencing it for yourself. The aimed outcome of the course is for a person to

be able to enjoy good things without reacting to them with clinging and craving, and to endure unpleasant things without panic and aversion; to maintain equanimity at all times with the understanding that this too shall pass.

I wanted to say, this is for everyone, (and it is!) but it's also not for everyone. I don't know. It's hard. It's a little out there compared to the normal everyday life of myself and most of the people I am close to. I loved it, but I also hated it; I wanted to run away, I wanted it to be over. I wholeheartedly recommend it, but I hesitate to recommend something that was painful to do. And when I say painful, I kind of mean physically. My back pretty much hated me most of the time I was there. During the sittings of 'strong determination' (about the second half of the course, the one-hour group sittings become attempts to sit for the entire hour without changing your position) I understood the poetic description 'singing with pain.' The course

is great, but at times it also sucks. It's like medicine, it's like exercise: you don't always do it because it's enjoyable in the moment. You do it because it does something for you.

Basically, to really understand it, you have to do it yourself. That was another message that was emphasized there... no one can give you understanding, you have to find out for yourself. And you shouldn't just take someone's word for it; you should pass your own judgment based on your own experience!

The course is completely free of charge, and there are two meditation centers in Japan, the older and more established of which is just over the border in Kyoto (not far from Sasayama). If you don't have the *nenkyuu* now, you can always wait 'til your contract ends in the summer, or even until you get back to your home country! Look at the website, see where the centers are, read all the things, and decide for yourself!

Emily Lemmon

Link to main webpage:
www.dhamma.org

Direct link to the schedule
for Kyoto center:
www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schbhanu.htm

手巻き寿司: Hand rolled sushi

Ingredients

Toppings

- ◎ egg (beat with a little sugar and salt, make into an omelette and slice thinly)
- ◎ cucumber (roll in salt on a chopping board and slice it thinly)
- ◎ canned tuna (mixed with mayonnaise)
- ◎ ham (sliced)
- ◎ seafood sticks (kani kamaboko)
- ◎ seaweed sheets (nori)

Sushi rice

- ◎ 2 cups of rice
- ◎ 4 tablespoons vinegar (su)
- ◎ 1 ½ tablespoons sugar
- ◎ 1 teaspoon salt

Step one

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

Step two

Put the rice (plus the normal amount of water for 2 cups of rice) 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, and sprinkle it over the rice while ‘cutting’ it with a rice paddle, don’t stir or flip the rice!

This is an easy, delicious dish. You can easily change the toppings to suit your taste. This is a great dish to make for visitors or when you go home and get asked to make something ‘Japanese’!

Step four

Prepare toppings.

Step five

Put toppings, rice and seaweed sheets on the table with soy sauce and mayonnaise and everyone can make their sushi rolls as they like them.

Lauren McRae

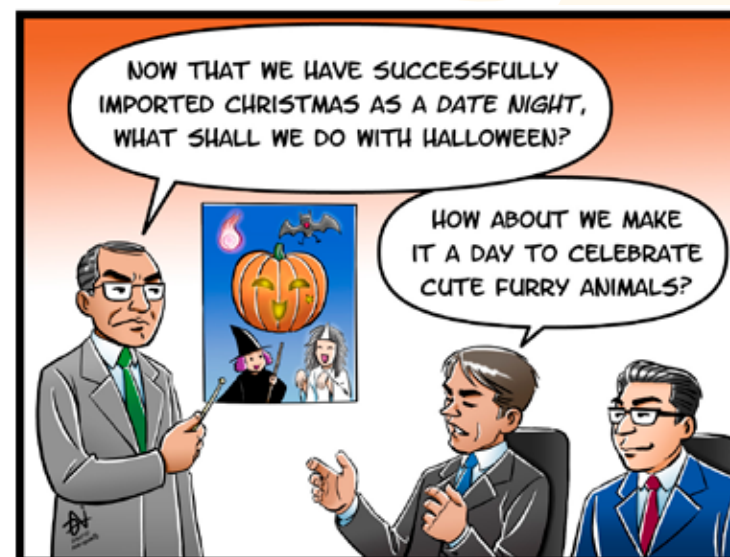
Life After the B.O.E..... By David Namisato

About

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

David recently released the *Life After the BOE* book! Check it out, along with more *Life After the B.O.E.* comics at his website!

www.lifeaftertheboe.com



At the Japanese Ministry of Reinterpreting Foreign Festivals and Holidays.
-外国祝日解釈省-



Hyogo Prefectural Advisors

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A second-year CIR from Seattle, USA.

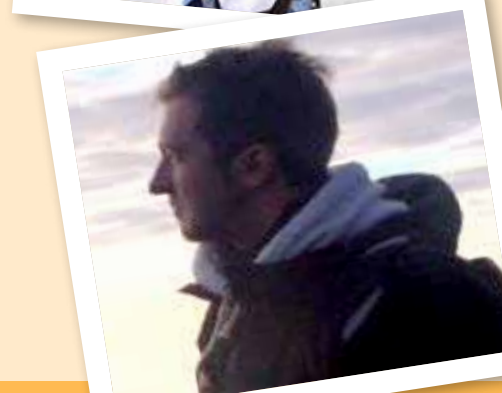
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Looking forward to hearing from you!
We'd like to know how you're doing.



Finding love or having good sex... in Japan

In a 'normal' country, one

can either choose to search whole-heartedly for love (and leave sex for later) or decide to show 'true love' his/her middle fingers and just go straight for the good old sex. Note – in a 'normal' country. When I say 'normal', persons who live in Japan know what I mean. I am not saying that Japan is abnormal. I would never dare say that, my mother raised me better **big grin, looks around with a guilty smile**. But let's just say that Japan is 'special' ...very 'SPECIAL'. Where else in the world is finding a flying pig easier than finding love; and exporting your sex life (only able to have any good sex while on vacation in another country) is the order of the day? OK! Now, you get it!

On some level, I believe that everybody wants to find love (wherever it's hiding its ugly ass). One may, from time to time, indulge in a little 'good sex' campaign but deep down the ultimate goal is to find 'The One'. Well, that was my thought when I first came on the Banana Boat from Jamaica to this planet, Japan. I was eager, bushy tailed and bright-eyed. I was thirsty for some Asian

meat and started looking for a nice 'pork chop' to devour. So, I did what any respectful up-standing citizen of the LGBTIQA community would do. I hit the internet to see what's out there; I scouted out my community and work place and the small expat groupings I knew of. I crossed out the expat group very soon afterwards, not that there wasn't any 'meat', but none that I was THEN looking for. I was fresh off the boat and wanted ASIAN meat! American and Canadian 'cuisines': been there, done that! So, naturally the next stop on the train would be to see what 'cuisine' my co-workers were serving up, IF ANY! Well, I boarded the train and exited at 'co-worker central'. Big disappointment! Talk about closet-cases and denial. It was a case of fantasy, intrigue and novelty at first; followed by reality shock and mixed signals on their part. These Japanese civil service men were a special breed only found in Asia. They were only gay on certain days of the week and at certain times of the month. It was like they were on a 'cycle' (pun intended). Seen that I get dizzy easily, I figured these guys' crazy

cycles and I weren't going to match too well. I soon served them their 'walking papers'.

Then, when all else had failed, I thought to myself there is no way in hell the internet is going to let me down (Forgive me, I was still thinking as an Earthling). Being a Jamaican in Japan, a certain degree of 'celebrity' status results, and under the rainbow it's even crazier. I don't know what it is... maybe it's the myth of 'black men', or some loud mouth leaked a story about Jamaicans, or they saw Asafa Powell's picture (Oh lord... TESTIFY!!!! Jeezz), but the Japanese go wild for the islanders. So, finding a date wasn't the difficult part. The difficult part was maintaining some sort of friendship after 7 days. It was so predictable that I developed a '7-day Theory' that I passed on to my friends for testing. So said, so done! These Japanese boys were so predictable that it would be fun just waiting for day 7 and for them to disappear. This is how it works: you would meet and they put you through the INTERVIEW PROCESS; have another date; maybe some sex (lolol)...and that's it!

Bam! They vanish into thin air, without a trace. At first I thought it was just me, but then I spoke with some other Jamaicans here (OK!! Now I have just out-ed all the Jamaicans here...LOLOL) and I realized we were all being SERVED, Honey B.

So, after trying the dating scene, there is only so much one can take and no more (and this rule goes for other things too...LOLOL). So, like so many who have trodden this rocky road in their Gucci loafers before, I had given up on finding love and soon started looking for 'fun' (bigger mistake). Needless to say, my search grew weary; my patience faded and my frustration rose. Being Jamaican, one is accustomed to big chunks of meat that when served right makes any mouth salivate. Well, I am no different. I am 100% Jamaican, and I love dining at a well spread table with delicious pork chops, beef steaks and mouth watering sausages. Well, coming to Japan I didn't expect to find Jamaican 'cuisines' (of course not), but I expected that the 'meats' on the market

would be of a good quality and I would be able to 'work wid it' (as we would say in Jamaica). Well well well...I am no Jesus, so I don't do miracles and I can't turn water in wine; 5 loaves & 2 fishes into 12; and Japanese wieners into 'Frankfurters'. The Japanese 'cuisine' came up short (pun intended) of what I expected. I am not a bitch (do not comment on this...LOLOL); I am not hard to please. But there is a difference between incompetence and inability. Needless to say that the Japanese 'cuisines' that I have come across (I am not going to count...) can't 'stop a gap' (another phrase from home). And remember, I am not trying to be a bitch.

Keeping in mind that I am still not a bitch, there is an ongoing debate about 'the size of a sausage vs. technique used (to jerk... I mean BBQ, said sausage)'. If you're planning a fabulous BBQ in Jamaica and the person in charge of the sausage doesn't bring a big one, rest assured that the BBQ technique used is of an international standard and very much 'saaaattt out' (we would say in Jamaica).

So, with that background, silly me ventured out in Japan with all this in my head and again, my 'Rights To Good Techniques' were denied without prejudice!! It was like I entered the planet of small sausages and guys who can't BBQ **frustrated look**.

OK! So, being a relationship-frustrated, sexually-deprived foreigner in Japan, what does one do? What are the options? You have two roads before you: make your choice. On one road, you can either settle for mediocre burgers on the grill and temporary relationships (where you are sure that your case number will turn up on 'WITHOUT A TRACE') or you could choose to export your sex-life! (It's easier than it sounds and lots of fun... LOL... TESTIFY!!!!). I know which road I'm on. Where am I going for summer, again? **wink wink**

Dwayne Cobourne

砥峰高原

Tonomine Highlands, Kamikawa, Hyogo

So I went to the Tonomine highlands (where the movie **Norwegian Wood** was filmed, based on Murakami Haruki's famous book) for a moon viewing party. There was dancing, and taiko (two of the performers were JETs) food, etc. Good times basically! Here are a few pictures.

There is also a spring festival held on the first Saturday in March where they burn all the grassland for the new harvest. This also looked pretty cool, with singing and dancing while the fires burn away. Another festival takes place in mid-October to celebrate the silver grass found on the highlands (ススキ祭り).

It's possible to access the area via public transport: buses run from 寺前駅 (Teramae) and 長谷駅 (Hase), both on the Bantan line (according to Wikipedia at least ><).

Jon Burroughs



Hyogo Times October Event Calendar

Various Autumn/Fall festivals throughout the prefecture – ask your school or fellow JETs!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
30 Aioi Minato festival Hand fishing, Peron boats experience, Super Kids Boats... Free entry.	01	02	03	04	05	06 Kobe Jazz Street
07 Sasayama Food Festival 味祭り 6th–14th October	08 Sports Day National Holiday Awaji Hanasajiki Cosmoses flowers in bloom throughout October	09	10	11	12	13 Sasayama Food Festival 味祭り 6th–14th October
14 Nada Fighting Festival Shirahamanomiya Station 14th–15th October	15 Nada Fighting Festival Shirahamanomiya Station 14th–15th October	16	17 Awaji Hanasajiki Cosmoses flowers in bloom throughout October	18	19	20
21 Awaji Hanasajiki Cosmoses flowers in bloom throughout October	22	23	24	25	26	27 Halloween Night Takarazuka Garden Fields
28 Halloween Night Takarazuka Garden Fields	29	30	31	01	02	03

Background photography by Jon Burroughs.

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