

12.12

*ht*

hyogo times

.....*Inside*.....

Kobe Marathon

Miso Green

The Iga Ninja Museum

## Contents

- 3 • Message from the Editor
- 4 • Message from the PR
- 5 • Travel: Ogasawara
- 12 • Restaurant Review: Anyone for Chilean?
- 14 • The Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage
- 18 • Kicchiri Kitchen: Deep fried Lotus
- 19 • Love & Relationships: Hope...
- 21 • J-Word Play
- 21 • Useful Information
- 24 • December Calendar

## Features

- 16 • Miso Green
- 20 • The Iga Ninja Museum
- 22 • Marathon

## Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Imogen Custance  
 Online: Dana Warren  
 Designer: Karen Cornish  
 PR: Anna Henley

**Contributors:**  
 Imogen Custance, Emily Lemmon,  
 Paul Schubles, Dwayne Cobourne,  
 Lauren McRae, Uluwehi Mills,  
 Anna Henley, Jon Burroughs  
 and Veronica Chung.

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](mailto:publications@hyogo.ajet.net)

## Message from the Editor

### Season's Greetings!

The Christmas tree is up outside the school office. Seeing it this morning, I am not going to lie, I gasped in delight and was therefore very happy that it was in the middle of first period and no-one else was around. Christmas is upon us! Okay, not for a few more weeks, but when you count weeks by weekends, it's practically tomorrow. I should really get on and try to do something resembling Christmas shopping. Or just claim shipping is far too expensive and decide to ignore it (though where's the fun in that?)

A small part of my being still rejects the idea that I have to take nenkyuu so I don't have to work on Christmas Day, and a Christmas cake should still involve a fruit cake rather than a pile of strawberries and cream, but Christmas is Christmas is Christmas. Fairy lights twinkling, Christmas songs playing and shop windows... displaying(?) all give me that little skip in my step that makes me feel like a five year old again. I may not decorate my house/room/desk in any way at all ("Whaaaat?" I hear you cry) but that doesn't stop me oooing over decorations and cards in Loft (sooo pretty, but sooo expensive ><) or appreciating the indignation on

my ex-coworker's face upon being told he couldn't put Christmas lights on his desk because of the resulting increase in the school's electric bill.

Whether you're spending the holidays in Japan, overseas, at home, with family, with friends, on your own or some combination of the above, I hope fun times are had, and far too much food is eaten (since that's the point of Christmas right?)

So anyway, what do we have for you in this month's edition of the **HT**? Nothing overly festive (the joys of writing for a deadline halfway through November no doubt) but wonders nevertheless. The second installment on the Pilgrimage trail takes us to Hokkezan Ichijō-ji, and yours truly got a bit carried away writing about the Ogasawara Islands. We also have a new contributor in the shape of Ulu Mills who's looking to help us actually become eco-friendly rather than just use it as a topic for speech contests/to sell people new electronic equipment/more cars/etc. Hope springs eternal in Love and Relationships, we have a restaurant review for when that hope proves fruitful, and another delicious installment in the recipe corner that I am very excited to try out as lotus roots are really tasty. This month's message from the block (6 that is) comes courtesy of the lovely Anna.

It is getting colder, so grab a hot chocolate, curl up under a kotatsu, and enjoy.

And

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

*Imi*





## Message from the PR

### As the freedom of exams

approaches, so does the season of sexy white masks and Rilakkuma blankets. I personally am delighted that it is now December because that can only mean two very important annual events – Christmas, and heating in the staffroom! (I am very sorry if you are one of the people to whom that doesn't apply, you have my condolences). The last weekend of November nearly killed me with having to choose between ice block hands or ice block feet.

My feet have had another treat this week due to a wonderful discovery – I suddenly have a kotatsu! I have in fact always (a year and a half) had a kotatsu but because I couldn't find a way to plug it in, I thought it didn't work. Imagine my delight when, while searching for a rogue sock, I found the cord in the back of my closet. I'm telling you, I am pretty blooming cosy as I write this!

In much more exciting news – it's nearly Christmas! Yay! This means that tomorrow is my first day of Christmas lessons. Time to dig out my furry angel earrings and give the first years a party they will never forget.

If you have never done this before, it may be wise to accept now that they will never find it as exciting as you do, but candy definitely helps. I'm going for Christmas jeopardy, bingo, Christmas song gap fill, and a sort of English challenge pass the bauble game. I am certain they will love it, but if they don't, I am sure they will be too high on E numbers to care. Win.

Outside the classroom things will be getting pretty festive too. I really recommend the German market underneath the Umeda Sky Building (from now till Christmas). It has food, Christmas lights, carol-singers and *real* mulled wine. It's the perfect thing to get you in the spirit of the season. Also, there is the Kobe Luminarie which is a memorial of the Hanshin earthquake in 1995, and a celebration of Kobe's recovery. It looks like the best Christmas lights display you have ever seen (despite not actually having anything to do with Christmas). An AJET group is going on December 12th, so you should come along if you can. If you can't come then you should try and get down there because it really is stunning, and the festival food is delicious!

Anyway, I hope you all survive the beginning of winter, and get your homes ready for the post-New Year kotatsu-fest (dig out your cords)! If you are travelling over the winter break, stay safe, and have wonderful holidays!

Anna Henley



# Ogasawara.....



## Ogasawara: Out of the Ordinary

### I like my travelling.

I like it when it's cheap even more, and there's something in my brain that tells me I should only use nenkyuu if I'm leaving the country. On top of that, I don't like going away if there isn't already a national holiday involved in some way, just for that extra day or two away. It makes the nenkyuu go that bit further after all. It was a bit of a departure then, to head to Ogasawara's Chichijima for a week in spring vacation.

- ◎ Not leaving Japan: [check](#)
- ◎ No national holidays: [check](#)
- ◎ Paying nearly ¥50,000 for FERRY tickets: [check](#)
- ◎ Worth it? [most definitely.](#)

The Ogasawara, or Bonin, islands (小笠原諸島) are approximately 1000km south of Tokyo, and almost due east of Okinawa. The islands were designated a natural world heritage site in 2011, for the same reason as the Galapagos

Islands; they have never been connected to a continent, resulting in numerous varieties of flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world. They also play host to egg-laying sea turtles, dolphins, and are a prime location for whale watching if you're there in the right season (we were ^\_^).

There's also no airport.

Instead, you have the Ogasawamaru ferry (小笠原丸) which leaves Tokyo once a week, takes (at least) 25.5 hours to get to the island of Chichijima (父島), stays there for 3 days, then heads back to the mainland. There is no other ferry (though there are the occasional cruise ships) and NO AIRPORT. If you're going, it's taking a while.

I'm not lying when I say that I like travelling. I'm one of those terrible people who likes collecting countries and getting to see as many places as I can in any given trip. To dedicate

4 days of nenkyuu to a trip where I would be spending over 2 whole days on a boat, only visit one, small island, and not actually leave Japan, was not something I would have expected to be doing to say the very least. Huzzah for trying new things, friends' travel suggestions, and for having a Japanese friend move there last year.

So let's start with the ferry. That was a long ferry ride. Take a good book, or multiple books, or people you're fairly certain you don't mind spending time with. Alcohol also helps, though not, as we discovered on the way back, if the seas are rough. As the lowest class of passenger (better sleeping areas get expensive very quickly) we were presented with sleeping tickets as we boarded the ferry. We were very, very lucky. Having two tall(ish) Americans with us, the ticket-distributor decided that we needed slightly more

space than that being assigned to the average Japanese passenger. This was a lifesaver, the extent of which was made apparent as soon as we made it to our sleeping quarters. I'm pretty certain that the area set aside for each passenger would sleep a child okay, but it was very tight for some of our fellow passengers. If we hadn't been given the extra space, there would have been a lot of people with feet in their faces. Having established we could indeed tessellate ourselves in such a way as to avoid cheesy dreams, we headed outside to wave Tokyo goodbye.

The journey out to Chichijima was brilliant. The Pacific was behaving very nicely, there wasn't a cloud in the sky and the thrill of being at sea took over. The ferry isn't huge, so exploration was quickly over, with the bar discovered and restaurant menu perused. Both being quite expensive, we were reasonably pleased with ourselves for having brought supplies (though the Guinness machine that made cans of the black stuff have a proper head – that we couldn't resist). As we went along, there were flying fish for company, and a beautiful sunset before the stars came out. Star-appreciation was rather short-lived though.

The outside deck is locked at 10 o'clock; an unfortunate consequence of the number of people wanting to commit suicide by jumping off the ferry in the middle of the night. Now locked inside the boat, we played cards, had snacks and generally made merry. When the lights went off in the sleeping area we headed to the general areas before sleep later in the night.

Morning was an unfortunately early affair. Despite having no windows in the sleeping area, sunrise was announced by all the lights being turned on. Being Japan, this also meant half the boat decided to dutifully get up. Earplugs and an eye mask would have been good at this point, or having gone to bed earlier the night before. Still, it was only a few hours before we would be arriving at Chichijima.

Going up on deck and looking out at the nothingness of the Pacific was a bit of an odd experience. Looking down at the (now much cleaner) water and wondering just how many fathoms it was to the bottom was a slightly sobering experience. I'm not going to lie, I also had a moment of 'what if we sank...'. But before long the captain was on air telling us what we'd all been waiting to

hear – Chichijima was in sight.

As we came into port, it became blindingly obvious just how tiny this little area of Japan really was. Over the few days we were there, I'm fairly certain we used every road on the island. That wonderful mine of information, Wikipedia, lists the population of Chichijima as being around 2,000. Given that there are at times at least 300 people coming in on the ferry, and there are sometimes cruises in as well, the island's population rapidly swells as the passengers disembark. It also gives a possible explanation as to why there isn't, and I feel shouldn't be, and airport on the island – there is no way that it would cope. Accommodation, especially at the cheaper end of the spectrum, is pretty hard to come by and camping is banned. We ended up staying at the Ogasawara Youth Hostel when our first choice of hostel was already full. Whilst it wasn't bad, it was definitely a **youth** hostel, and full of what appeared to be a school trip. The management were pretty strict about lights out, being quiet and not getting back too late. Raucous parties are something I would guess are few and far between. I would personally not stay there again, not because it was dirty or anything, but



## ...continued

I think I would rather pay that bit more and not be treated like a child.

Anyway, established at the hostel, we ventured forth with the friend who had moved to the island about a year beforehand (she likes nature and being away from the swathes of people present in the rest of Japan). Having a friend in residence was fantastic. Our first stop was for a long overdue lunch, and that meant papaya curry. The purveyor of this truly delicious take on curry was a dude selling curry-rice, spam donburi and a few other things, all in huge quantities for take away. The papaya curry was ¥500, and for that you got enough food to feed you for at least two meals, and all kinds of deliciousness. Not very spicy (something I usually disapprove of), but a fantastic, at times sweet, at times savoury, delight with a whole pile of fluffy rice. It was in fact so good that I insisted on getting it again to take on the ferry ride back (they have microwaves dotted around, though I seem to recall eating most of it before re-heating became necessary). First time around, curry was consumed on the beach overlooking the clear

blue waters of the harbour. A very, very good memory.

Keeping on the theme of food (when in Japan...), one of Ogasawara's specialities is turtle. Turtle sashimi and stew are on quite a few menus, and an interesting thing to try, though not necessarily go back to. The shimazushi (island sushi) on the other hand, is something I really wish I'd had earlier on in the trip as this would have let me continue to stuff my face with it at every available moment thereafter. The fish is dipped in soy sauce before being put on its bed of rice, and rather than wasabi, is served with mustard. One of the biggest surprises on the food front was the very run down, but fantastic, Korean restaurant in town. By the sounds of it, there are locals who have eaten there and rave about it and those who think it's dirty and wouldn't go near it with a 10 foot pole. We hadn't been intending to go, but we left dinner slightly late on our final night and everywhere (I kid not) was full, or already closed for the night. Hence, Korean, and what turned out to be the best Korean food I've had outside Korea. The (actually spicy)

kimchi was both delicious and included free top-ups. I ate a lot of kimchi.

In terms of things to do on Chichijima, there are at once a lot, and also very few. Given when we were there, we had booked a whale watching tour in advance (recommended – they fill up). We were really looking forward to it, then got a phone call the night before saying it was likely to be cancelled because of the weather (seas too rough for the boat). The following morning, we received the phone call confirming that this was indeed the case. We were hopeful that the subsequent day would be possible, but other people had booked tours for then, so it wasn't. Suddenly, we had a day on our hands where we weren't exactly sure what we'd be doing, and had lost our one opportunity to go out and see the whales.

I would worry that for quite a few people this would lead to a day of wondering around a small town multiple times and not really doing anything; we had a local on hand who managed to procure what was apparently the last rental car on the island (that could

take all 5 of us) so all was not lost. We rented snorkelling stuff and headed off to look at some of the reefs surrounding the island, along with the occasional sunken battleship. It was cold (we're talking March here, and Okinawa isn't overly good for being in the sea then either) but just about bearable with the wetsuits, and really very pleasant whenever the sun came out (it was hiding a lot more in the afternoon – bah humbug).

Fortunately (when not considering it would have been ideal for watching the whales) the following day was bright and sunny. This was our main hiking day. Onigiri and other walking items purchased at the supermarket, we picked up our pre-booked (well in advance) rental car, and met up with our friend (who would be guiding from her scooter). Since the island is a nature reserve, there are quite strict rules about the different areas that you can visit without having permission and/or a guide. As a resident of the island, our friend was able to take us to a lot of places that would have been off limits if we'd just been walking on our own. There are guides that you

can hire that enable you to do what we did too though.

Hiking and walking is something that I've really come to enjoy since moving to Japan, and Chichijima was a great location to do it in. We headed up to one of the highest points on the island before venturing down to a nearly deserted beach of green sand, then on to what could have been the set of a horror movie – vines and creepy looking trees galore. Each place was really different. Something that made sense, but you had to remember, was to vinegar and brush your shoes before entering different parts of the islands. They really, really don't want seeds going to places they wouldn't otherwise get to. We also did some night walking, again guided by our friend, to see giant fruit bats and glowing mushrooms. It hadn't rained so the mushrooms weren't doing their thing, but the bats were as advertised - huge. There were quite a few other people on tours (some of the guides got a little confused since our friend wasn't an 'official' guide) but they didn't get to wander off through the island to a deserted beach in the moonlight after bat time was over. We did. No whales, but a magical day.



## ...continued

On the morning of our final day (the ferry leaves in the afternoon) we had booked a half-day tour of the WW2 sites on the island. This was also a mini-hike, but with added information and learning opportunities. The tour (as with most tours on the island) was not cheap, but came recommended by our friend, and the internet in general, and proved to be a great choice. Whilst not available in English, I was travelling with people who were able to translate anything that I couldn't follow (there was a fair bit) so it wasn't a problem. The rain was. It absolutely poured and we were out walking around in forests. There was most certainly no whale watching going on **that** morning. As a mixture of hike and history lesson, we were led to various sites left over from the war. We were also able to go to places we hadn't been able to the day before, enabling us to cover even more of the island. If your Japanese is good enough, or you go with someone who can translate, I wouldn't miss it.

And so we reached the end of our time on the island. We got back to the hostel, collected our bags and ferried ourselves back to the boat. As we arrived, what seemed to be half the

population of the island were in and around the dock to wave us off (the weather had cleared up by this point). As we left, everyone aboard elbowed their way to the right hand side of the boat to return the waves, and whale-watching/diving tour boats streamed out alongside us, crews merrily waving and shouting their goodbyes.

It was very odd.

On the surface, it's really great being waved off by all these people; the school brass band playing, cheerleaders doing twisting dives into the water, the fire engine spraying its hose. Then you realize that exactly the same thing happens every time the boat leaves (well, I guess it might be different if it's raining). Suddenly, everything seemed a little bit fake, and it really made me wish that I'd been able to stay on the island during the 'off' time too (when the boat's not in port) to see how different things are. It's a very clean and well maintained place (well, it is part of Tokyo I guess) that frequently didn't feel like you were in the middle of the Pacific. The street lights were better than in my town of Sasayama, the roads were immaculate, and the buses,



## Links

Ferry times, prices & information

General information

World War 2 tour; others also available: Japanese only

Ogasawara Youth Hostel



of course, ran perfectly to schedule. Yet there was also a sense that they were desperately trying to be a tropical island paradise. One of the omiyage sold on the island was Ogasawara rum. It was awful, but it's a tropical place, so of course they're going to sell rum. A lot of the restaurants and bars also seemed intent on incorporating 'we're a tropical island' motifs, but there wasn't any of the relaxed atmosphere that you'd usually expect to go with that. It almost felt like a theme park at times – a sanitised version of a tropical island containing the trappings that Japanese people generally associate with them.

Niggles aside, let's get back to our departure. Just as the other boats started to return to port, we finally got to see some whales. Given we hadn't made it out on the tour; this had me squealing and jumping up and down in delight. They were diving, water-spouting and generally appeared to be having a great time. There were a few that even looked like they were waving us off with their tails (much better than the boats, which just got annoying after a while). Whales and clear blue skies – it was a great way to end the holiday.

Or would have been if that's where it ended. The seas were a lot less relaxed come the middle of the night. The reason for the sick bags dotted around the boat became very obvious. Still, we all made it back alive and as far as I know no-one on the boat ended up covered in sick, so all was good.

The ferry arrived in Tokyo in the afternoon so we a few hours to spare before our night bus back to Osaka in the evening. Upon arrival home the next day, I'd been travelling for over 36 hours.

I went straight to work.

Like I said (quite a while ago, I ramble, apologies), nenkyuu's precious.

But Ogasawara was worth it.

Imi



## Anyone for Chilean?

### My constant search for

international cuisine has taken me all over Hyogo – well, all over the Sannomiya and Motomomachi areas of Kobe, anyway. There is more than enough to satisfy in this area alone; a seemingly endless list of new holes in the wall to explore. Perhaps one of my most interesting finds was one that claims to be the first and only Chilean restaurant in all of Japan: **Gran Micaela y Dago**, on Kitano hill.

As we walked in, we were greeted by an elderly couple at a table near the door, a Western man and a Japanese woman. The proprietor seated us at a high table (in English, no less – fear not, first-years!) and I took in the surroundings. Pictures on the walls of a man in a navy uniform... who looked strangely familiar. My gaze wandered back to the old man by the door, back to the picture, back to the man. With my rudimentary grasp of Spanish, I surmised that the restaurant was named after two people, Micaela and Dago... clearly a navy man who had married a Japanese woman, and later returned to Japan to settle down and open

a restaurant. The proprietor appeared half-Japanese and was the right age to be the son of just such an elderly couple as that by the door... I was there in the presence of Micaela (AKA Michiko) and Dagoberto themselves, who had since left the daily workings of the business to their son! Proud of my Holmes-caliber detective work, I turned back to the menu – which explained all of this and more in detail, right there on the front cover. (I reserve my right to be proud anyway.)

The restaurant, which opened in 1974 and relocated to Kitano in 1995 after the great Hanshin earthquake, was small, with warm décor and comfortable mood lighting. The staff – the eponymous Micaela y Dago and their son – were friendly and talkative. A highlight of the night came in the middle of dinner, when Dago picked up a guitar and treated us to folk tunes, some new and some more familiar.

Oh, and the food was excellent.

Chilean food, it turns out, is most similar to Spanish and other Mediterranean cuisines.

Not knowing what to expect, and unable to decide, my companions and I picked an assortment to try and cover all the bases. We started with the Chilean salad (¥800), a simple plate of fresh tomatoes topped with a bit of onion and coriander and some light dressing. Frankly, I'm usually no great fan of tomatoes, but these were so fresh and sweet that I saw the fruit in a whole new light. We followed up with a scallop and shrimp **ceviche** (¥900), chopped fresh vegetables and seafood, served cold; it was delicious with or without the hot sauce it came with. (The proprietor pointed out that, as a rule, Chilean food isn't particularly spicy – which came as something of a relief to me.) We also had **empanadas** (¥500) with beef, eggs, olives and raisins, and to finish our course we ordered the **pastel de choclo** (¥1,600), which the menu described as a "sweet corn gratin." At the bottom of the hot earthenware bowl was a layer of ground meat with eggs and vegetables, topped with a crust of (very) sweet corn. It was heavenly, and we were lucky to get it – as

the kitchen can only make five dishes of it per day.

Driven to try as much as I possibly could while still being able to walk out of the restaurant on my own, I also had "Chile's No.1 Cocktail", a **pisco sour** (¥700). **Pisco** is a grape brandy made in Chile and Peru; the cocktail is made by shaking the brandy with lemon, syrup, and an egg white, and topping with a bit of cinnamon for aroma. A friend tried the **sangria** (¥700); neither drink disappointed. I was left wanting to try more, especially their selection of Chilean wines.

If you find yourself in Kitano at dinnertime, I strongly recommend stopping by. The food is delicious, the staff are warm and welcoming, and the

atmosphere is cozy and comfortable. The menu is a little pricier than your conbini bentos and Sukiyas, but bring a few friends to split costs (and more importantly, dishes!) and you can easily walk out with a reasonable bill. And as always with a good restaurant – it's worth it!

### Gran Micaela y Dago

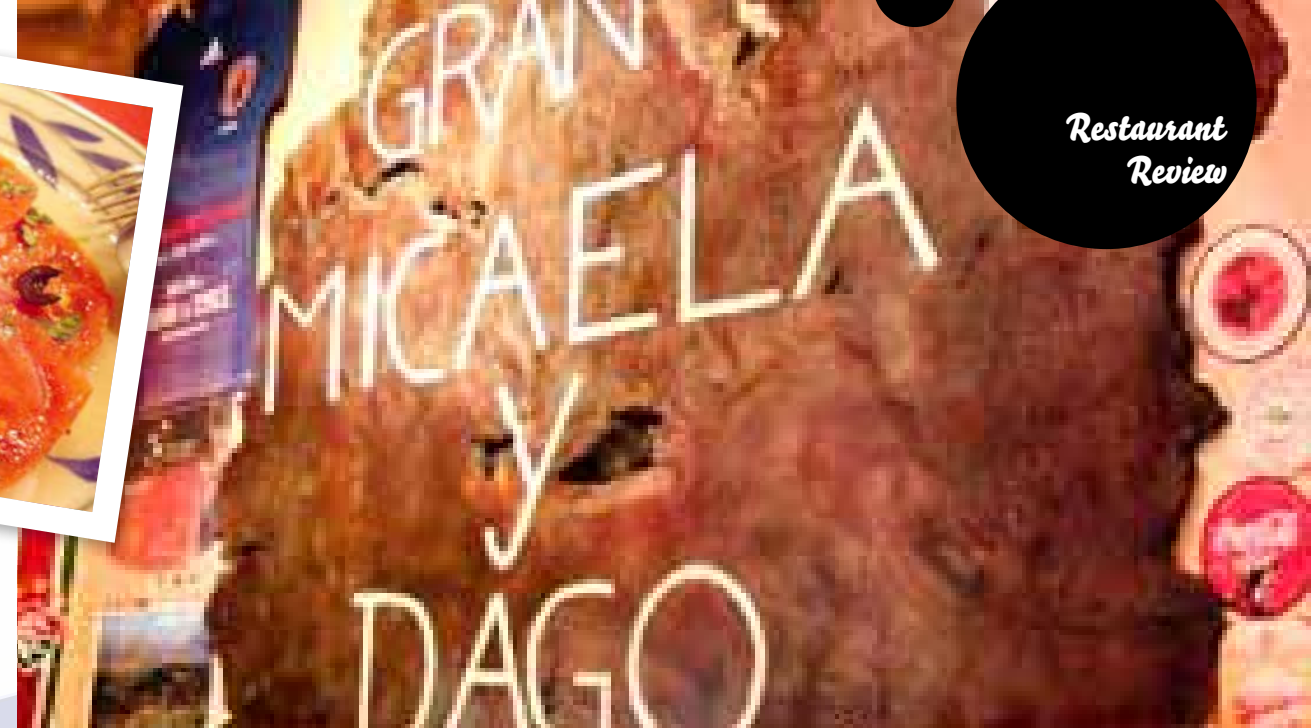
Kobe-shi, Chuo-ku,  
Naka-yamate-doori 2-13-8  
神戸市中央区中山手通  
2-13-8エール山手ビル2F

**Open:** Daily 17:30 – 24:00

**Tel/Fax:** 0782410367

Website with menu  
and access ([Japanese](#)).

Paul Scheible





## 法華山一乗寺 Hokkezan Ichijō-ji .....

If the leaves are still holding on, our next temple (number 26 on the pilgrimage list) is another great place to see them. **Ichijo-ji**, located in Kasai City, was built in 650. Its three-storied pagoda, completed in 1171, is a Japanese National Treasure and is also the oldest pagoda in Hyogo prefecture.

Access to Ichijo-ji is by bus or car. You can take a Shinkai bus bound for Yashiro (社) from Himeji Station Kitaguchi. It's about a 35 minute, ¥630 ride; get off at the **Hokkesan Ichijo-ji** (法華山一乗寺) stop. If you drive, take the Sanyo expressway to the **Kakogawa-kita IC** (加古川北IC), then head north on 43. When the road ends at 三口 intersection, turn left. When you come to 三口西 (the very next light), turn left. Follow 206 until you see signs for Ichijo-ji on the left.

The parking lot is located next to one of the remarkable aspects of this particular temple – its Jizo-do. A Jizo-do is a hall in which Jizo is enshrined; most of the temples on the pilgrimage (and indeed, in general) have an area for making

dedications to Jizo, where small statues or other items are dedicated to this guide and protector Bodhisattva, but fewer of them have a building where the figure is worshiped. This Mizuko Jizo's area was larger than ones I have seen at the other temples I've visited, and a little less austere as well. Mizuko Jizo is in charge of conducting 'water babies,' or babies who do not survive pregnancy, back through the flow of life to their next incarnation. The one at Ichijo-ji is rows and rows of little statues, all outfitted with knitted things or other accouterments, but these three hexagonal areas were full not only of statues with bibs and collars and knitted things, but also toys, a few clothing items for babies, pinwheels, and other such dedications.

The Miko Daimyoin and Inari shrine areas, both being Shinto and not Buddhist, are lovely peaceful areas in the forest beyond the Jizo-do. There's also a lovely Benzaiten shrine in the middle of a pond. As you'll recall, Inari are the fox creatures, messengers of the

gods and patrons of wealth and the harvest. Benzaiten is patron of water, words, speech, eloquence, and music – in short, things that flow. Many of the temples along the pilgrimage route have one or both of these shrines somewhere on the grounds.

The stairway by the main entrance leads up to the picturesque pagoda and the main hall where you get your stamp and seal, and can look down over the mountainside. Even further up the mountain is the Kaizando, or founder's hall. This part of the temple complex was partly damaged by storms and landslides in late 2011, but the path is not especially difficult or steep.

**Ichijo-ji** is a wonderful place to spend an afternoon exploring. Get in your car or on a bus and check it out!

Lemon





## Miso Green: The Hyogo Sustainability Guide

### Around the time that I got

wind of my acceptance into the JET program was when I also first stumbled upon a blog called “*The Zero Waste Home*,” written by a California mother named Bea Johnson, whose family had collectively decided that they had trashed the world enough. Their level of conservativeness is what some would call extreme, and what others would consider bordering on cruelty: training their young sons to urinate on the lemon trees because they thrive in acidic soil, shopping for non-synthetic clothing solely at thrift shops, pre-loading the meat counter scales with glass jars so as to avoid the unrecyclable waxed deli paper. But for me and many others, it was a source of inspiration – a family of four that created less than 250 grams of unrecyclable trash per year, an amount that they could inventory with ease, and in a way that they considered not just attainable, but comfortable.

I read the blog steadfastly and treated my JET appointment as a fresh start. My guilt over my contribution to the dire status of the environment was beginning to crush me, so since I would be rebuilding my home base from scratch anyway, I planned to create a system

where I’d bring home no plastic wrappers, waste less electricity, and make whatever I could to avoid unnecessary products. My partner and I dreamed of coming, learning new crafts from Japanese masters, saving tons of money, and then coming home and establishing a farm where we could live our lives self-sufficiently.

Then I arrived in my placement city and went to a grocery store. I was overwhelmed to the point of tears when I saw the amount of plastic and styrofoam that cloaked every piece of food, and that nothing being sold by weight meant buying far more of that cloaking than necessary. The first freezing winter and the thin blood I’ve developed from my Hawaiian upbringing left me with no choice but to combat the complete lack of insulation in my apartment by blasting multiple heaters at all times. The language barrier prevented us from finding certain necessary ingredients for reproducing Bea’s recipes for replacing household goods, nor could I find any masters to teach me the crafts I was desperate to learn. As we spent more than we ever expected in that first year, the dream of the farm has been pushed further and further into the future.

But, I’ve certainly discovered a lot in terms of feasible compromises. There is way more plastic than I’d like in our apartment, but you wouldn’t notice it unless you spent some time looking. We only throw out garbage for burning once a month, and I give credit to Bea for this; the three Rs of ecofriendliness we are familiar with (reduce, reuse, recycle) become five through her (refuse, rot), and I’d like to add a sixth especially for us in Japan (reorganize). In this inaugural column, allow me to present six ways that you can start creating less waste immediately.

**1. Refuse.** You do not need plastic register bags. Ever. Get a couple of compact eco-bags and memorize this phrase: 袋は要らないです。 *Fukuro wa iranai desu.* “I don’t need a bag.” Most cashiers will thank you when you say this. And emptying that drawer where you shove all those plastic register bags for “future use” (even though you always have more than you ever need) will be your instant reward.

**2. Reduce.** Buy in larger quantities whenever doing so is an option. Make the occasional trip to Costco or order from [theflyingpig.com](http://theflyingpig.com) to buy

non-perishables in bulk and avoid the need for piles of single-serve packaging. For fresh stuff, seek out local farmer’s markets to cut the carbon footprint of your food (I’ll cover some of these in future columns). Make smart choices at the store to avoid unnecessary packaging. Which piece of fruit looks more edible, anyway: that beautiful, naked Fuji apple, or the peach you wouldn’t know was pink because it’s covered in Styrofoam netting and nestled in a plastic tray? Hmmmmmm, decisions.

**3. Reuse.** When you have a choice, purchase something that comes in a container you can foresee repurposing for something else. I keep my laundry detergent in a champagne bottle and my beans and grains in glass pasta sauce jars. Really classes up the joint. In future columns, I’ll show you other creative ways to reuse things that would otherwise end up in the garbage.

**4. Recycle.** Probably the easiest and most supported of the six Rs in Japan. Your town most likely has an intricate schedule for disposing your recyclables, and I urge you not to be lazy and throw stuff in the burn pile. Neither of us want to breathe

burning plastic, right? But see #6 for the easiest way to make this a saner process.

**5. Rot.** While compost doesn’t seem like a feasible option in our typically tiny Japanese apartments, there is a fantastic, and simple, option for doing so: *bokashi*. You can research it now, but feel free to be lazy since I’ll cover it in an upcoming issue.

**6. Reorganize.** Sorting the recycling is second only to folding laundry on the list of chores I want to do the least. But, by keeping our recyclables in labeled drawers according to disposal day, I have no problem getting them out on time when I’m groggily beginning my commute to work. The drawers stay in a closet out of sight, and thus being a responsible recycler isn’t a role that conquers my living space. Eight overflowing garbage cans in my kitchen would not be an option.

Keep your eyes peeled for more sustainability tips catered specifically to us in Hyogo. Not only do I plan to cover more to file under the six Rs, but I’ll share recipes for household products and basic foodstuffs to help you reduce packaging and keep control over what you put on and

in your body. We use a lot of hippie words these days: eco-friendly, green, sustainable, organic... all with their roots in the earth. But the Japanese word for natural – *tennen*, begins with the kanji for “the heavens.” Perhaps at this point in humanity, living in a way that is absolutely friendly to the earth is a “pie in the sky” dream; something that would take drastic sacrifices to reach. But every small sacrifice, every forgoing of convenience and head turned away from attractive marketing for the sake of a more beautiful end, brings you closer to the pie, and is really only a sacrifice at first. I can finally say that my home in Japan is a stepping stone towards the one I hope to have upon my return to permanence. It is a source of sanity and no longer of frustration. I hope you too discover new ways to keep eco-minded in Japan. If you do, share them!

Olwehi Mills

[miso.green.ht@gmail.com](mailto:miso.green.ht@gmail.com)





蓮根のはさみ揚げ

## Deep fried lotus root with shrimp paste

### Ingredients

serves four as a side dish

- ◉ 2 pieces of lotus root
- ◉ 1 pack of shrimp paste (ebi no nerimono)
- ◉ 3-4 tablespoons of corn starch (katakuriko)
- ◉ about 1 cup of cooking oil

### serve with

- ◉ 2-3 tablespoons of grated daikon
- ◉ 3-4 tablespoons of ponzu sauce

### Step one

Peel the lotus roots and cut into slices just under 1 centimetre thick.

### Step two

Dust the lotus root slices with the corn starch.

### Step three

Put the shrimp paste on one slice of lotus root and put another slice on top, like a sandwich.

### Step four

Deep fry them until they become golden brown.

### Step five

Serve with grated daikon and ponzu sauce.

Lauren McRae



This is a  
**delicious**  
side dish that  
you can find at an izakaya  
but it is very  
**simple to make**  
at home too.

# Hope

ONE WAY

### Battered, bruised, saddened

and apprehensive are just some of the feelings one has after being a victim of numerous failed relationships. Each time your heart gets broken, you would swear on your Fendi tote that you will never go through this again. Then a few months down the road you find yourself at the mirror putting on your "face" and picking an outfit to go on another date. And the cycle continues. But I wonder, is dating a natural part of life (like wisdom teeth), or are we dating, optimistically, in the hope that someday our "other half" will show up; and when he/she does, we will be rescued from the paws of dating "hell" and taken to the land of happily-ever-after?

**Belief!** Maybe it's not even advisable to be an optimist after a certain age. Maybe pessimism is something we need to start applying on our skins every day, like moisturizer. Otherwise, how do you bounce back after reality batters your belief system and love does not, as promised, conquer all? Is hope the drug we need to come off of, or is it keeping us alive? What's the harm in believing?

"Believing" reminds me of childhood disappointments when you are anticipating a fabulous birthday gift (say, a doll house) and your parents bought you books (and I am not talking about myself.... How dare you think that! *\*smirk\**). Was it wrong to believe that you would get what you actually wanted? Or, was it wrong to just believe? Why not just approach life with no expectations and no beliefs and accept whatever comes your way, good or bad. But then, in not believing, wouldn't life be less fun?

Some people are afraid to believe. Is it that they are afraid that they might actually surprise themselves and get what they wished for? No! I doubt it. I think the real fear is that of not getting what you spend your life hoping for. But how many bad dates and failed relationship can one person go through all in the name of the Church of Optimism and Hope? Is it that these failed relationships and bad dates are the tests of your religion and should somehow 'strengthen' your belief system? Well, if that's the case, some Church members might just grow weary and fade away on the high-ways and by-ways (in a T.D. Jakes' voice).

Who then, shall be 'saved'? Is it that if you don't believe, you are punished by not getting your Prince Charming?

Well, there is something about Christmas, believing, faith and dreams coming true... During this fabulous season where we pile on the layers of fabulous scarves, cardigans, and ponchos (and yes, I can't believe these are back "in" in Japan... saw them in the mall yesterday) and anticipate a perfect winter, exercise your faith in the fact that your relationship dreams will be fulfilled and who knows, Santa might just grant you your wish this year.

From your fellow hopeful believer from the Church of Optimism and Hope, I wish all the readers a fabulous and bright Christmas and an even more fulfilled New Year.

(PS: Guess who is sitting on a Malaysian beach with their boo sipping margaritas while you are reading? Yes, you got that right!)

Dwayne Oneil  
Cobourne



## The Iga Ninja Museum

**So you think the exciting** title is going to be ruined by something boring and museumy? Think again! Last weekend three friends and I trekked all the way to Mie to discover the secrets of stealth at the *Iga-Ueno Ninja museum*.

First you have to take the ninja themed two car train from Iga-Ueno (a town which, from my hour and a half wait there, can only be described as purgatory with coffee), and then approach the museum through a park packed with red leaves and mini-ninjas. I am not talking about ninja models, I am talking about mega-cute red and blue children running everywhere in their hired “stealthy” attire. I was hoping that I would be given an outfit to run around in, but alas, in Japan I am too tall to be considered a child.

The first bit of the museum is a “ninja style” Japanese house where everything is set up to terrify your neighbours. There are magic doors and secret portals, staircases that turn into book shelves, floorboards that lift up, hidey holes for your weapons, and hidden guard spots for the stealthers (those of the stealthy disposition) themselves. Apparently using it all takes years of practice, but they didn’t give me the chance to prove them wrong.

There is an actual museum bit too, which was much improved by the opportunity to play on the mizugumo, shoes that allow ninjas to walk on the marshy ground that surrounds the castle. Unfortunately you might have to fight the mini-ninjas for a turn, but if you just whip out your gift-shop shuriken (throwing blade), that should be no problem!

The experience is rounded off by a ninja show, well worth the extra ¥300. You get to see a bit of ninja style meditation, a bit of shuriken-throwing, but mostly a lot of very cool looking/choreographed fighting. My personal favourite was the girl with the poison dart, but unfortunately she stabbed a balloon and not a member of the audience. Sad times.

All in all I would thoroughly recommend a trip out there, but don’t make my mistake – go in fancy dress!

Anna Henley

Paul Schuble's

## I-word play

食べると安心するケーキって何でしょう？

Answer: ホットケーキ (hot cake)

Our questions asks “What cake puts you at ease when you eat it?” Well, while 「ホット」 in katakana can mean “hot,” it can also be written (often in hiragana) to mean “relief” or “to be relieved” (はっとする). Relief cakes!

## Useful information

### HYOGO PAs

078-362-3026

Mail: hyogo\_pa@yahoo.com

URL: [www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living\\_Guide](http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living_Guide)

### JETLINE

03-5213-1729

Call the JETLINE and talk to a CLAIR Programme Coordinator about anything you like. We are former JETs, and can answer most questions regarding the programme, and will try to help with any issues or questions you have regarding the workplace, or life in Japan. Hours are Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm Japan Standard Time.

### AJET PSG

050-5534-5566

Need to talk? Call the AJET Peer Support Group, a free, anonymous listening and referral service for JETs by JETs, every night of the year from 8pm – 7am.

### TELL (Tokyo English Life Line)

03-5774-0992

Call the Life Line for free, anonymous, and confidential telephone counseling from 9am to 11pm, 365 days a year. Trained volunteers can offer counseling and support, as well as information on a broad range of English-speaking services in Japan.



## Marathon

## I was sitting at home in

late May, feeling a bit lazy and wanting to do something exciting with my life when my friend called me on the phone and mentioned signing up for the Kobe Marathon. Maybe it was the wine, or maybe it was the fact that the marathon was over 6 months away, but I signed up immediately. A few weeks later, I was informed that because there were so many applicants, I was not selected to run in the marathon. My friend suffered the same fate. A bit relieved, I began to think about the time 5 years ago when I decided to run the San Francisco Marathon without training, and the extreme pain and agony I endured. It was by far the most mentally and physically grueling experience of my life and a day I would never like to relive.

Then one day in late June, I got another email from the Kobe Marathon organizers notifying me that because a few people had dropped out, I could now participate in the marathon. My friend was still not accepted so it was up to me to train alone. I began with a 6-month plan that later turned into a 4-month plan because of a few vacations over the summer. I found a weekly plan that gradually got more intense leading up to the marathon. It was perfect for my schedule: long runs on the weekends and short runs during the week. I started training in early August when it was still hot and humid outside, and finished in November when it was pretty cold and dark at night, so I was used to both extremes. It is amazing the progress you see in yourself in just 4 months. I still remember my first long run of 4 miles (6.5 km) when I was dying

and doubted my ability to run a marathon. By the end of the training, I was running around 20 miles (32 km) quite easily.

The marathon started in front of the Kobe City Hall in the middle of Flower Road. Thousands of people packed together on the street waiting for their turn to start according to their group number. For the first ten minutes or so it was almost impossible to run because of how many people there were. As it cleared, and I began to start running at a normal pace, I had to pee. I decided to use the first toilet on the course but the line was too long, along with every toilet there after. It wasn't until the 13th mile (20 km) that I ran off the course to a nearby Lawson's to quickly use the toilet because the pain was too much. After this I felt relieved and my legs were still fresh while we made the turn near Maiko

Park beneath the foot of the Akashi Bridge. We headed back towards Kobe City along the beautiful beach where hundreds of ships lined up to wave to us as we passed. I passed Home's Stadium around the 20-mile (32 km) mark and I began to feel my legs deteriorating beneath me. My toes were also rubbing on the insides of my shoes and I could feel blisters forming. I could not stop running because I knew if I started walking, I would not be able to run again like so many people around me. There were limp bodies everywhere on the ground in pain, massaging cramps, taping body parts, and even a few people on stretchers with paramedics surrounding them.

The most difficult part was still to come and as I approached the 22-mile (35 km) mark I saw the evil

Hamate Bypass and began to feel discouraged. The Hamate Bypass is the highway on-ramp made for cars that are approaching the Kobe Ohashi bridge. It is a massive incline that lasts a few kilometers. It is ugly, dark, and difficult. I powered up the bypass and by the 23rd mile (37 km) my tank was on empty. So much pain everywhere, but I kept telling myself that it would all be over soon. I needed to keep running if I wanted to hit my goal of 4 hours 30 minutes. More people around me began to walk and I could see the extreme pain on their faces as I passed them. When I saw the sign for the final kilometer I began to run faster than any moment during the race. The final stretch was lined with smiling faces, and huge signs of encouragement that were welcoming. For me it was the easiest part of the race because

the adrenaline at that moment made my body feel numb and it was almost like I was floating through the finish line. The moment I finished, I got my medal, and my whole body shut down. The pain was acute but the satisfaction of finishing a marathon made it all go away. I looked up to see my time was 4 hours 24 minutes, narrowly hitting my goal time. With only 5 minutes to spare, I could only think, it was a good thing I didn't wait in the line for the toilet.

Jon Burroughs

Pictures: Veronica Chung





# Hyogo Times December Event Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
<b>25</b> Mt. Shosha Autumn leaf festival, Himeji December 23rd – 25th	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b> <b>Kobe Luminarie 2012</b> 6 – 17 December Times depend on the day: check the website for more details.	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b> <b>Kobe Luminarie 2012</b> 6 – 17 December Times depend on the day: check the website for more details.
<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> <b>Himeji Castle World Heritage Site Commemoration Day</b>	<b>12</b> <b>Hyogo AJET at the Kobe Luminarie</b> Motomachi station, 7pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>Ako Gishisai</b> (47 Loyal Samurai Festival) Ako Castle Ruins, Ako city 10:30 – 15:00	<b>15</b> <b>Sparkling Christmas Champagne Soiree</b> Hurricane Sandy fundraiser
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>Kobe Luminarie 2012</b> 6 – 17 December Times depend on the day: check the website for more details.	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> The Emperors birthday	<b>24</b> Public holiday	<b>25</b> <b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> New Years Eve					

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