



# ht

hyogo times

09.13

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

Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri  
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Hyogo's new PAs

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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: [hyogotimespublications@gmail.com](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com).

## Message from the Editor

### Greetings!

As we move into September the August heat gradually dissipates, soon to be just a sticky memory, and new excitement arrives in the form of the start of school. First time ALTs will have the joy of their first sweltering opening ceremonies; at least one student will faint, either from heat or excitement at their incredibly 'kawaii' new ALT. Just make sure you don't do as I did and try to run off stage before receiving your full school bow of welcome. Not only is there a power trip to be had when several hundred people dip their heads in deference to you, but it's pretty blooming embarrassing if Kocho-sensei has to chase after you!

With summer memories buoying us up, the first weeks of school will pass in a blur, but don't forget that September not only includes two deliciously long weekends for exploration and/or relaxation, but also a plethora of autumnal festivals; from the Nishinomiya Matsuri on the 23rd, where foreign residents are invited to carry their own shrine; to Kishiwada Danjiri which festival fanatic Paige remembers on page 12 as one of her very favourites.

To beat the post-Welcome Party blues, or for moments caught between classes and action packed weekends, have a browse of this month's issue where you'll find musings on making long distance relationships work; modern culture in the form of the Future Shorts Film Festival; and, at the opposite end of the cultural spectrum, the next stage of our Kannon pilgrimage; plus regular features Miso Green, Kicchiri Kitchen,

Where are they now? and introductions to our charismatic new Hyogo CIRs.

I wish you all a fun-filled September, with genki students and minimal typhoon action – on that note: keep an eye on your neighbours for when to hang out washing; losing your delicates to a storm is never ideal, especially when considering the 'metcha kawaii' [read repulsive] ones you'd have to buy in replacement.

Submissions big and small to new email account [hyogotimespublications@gmail.com](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com) by the 15th of the month.

Until October,

*Char*



Hello 大家!

## Message from the PR

### Hello Hyogo,

First off, thanks to all of you who came to the welcome party, I had loads of fun meeting some fresh and familiar faces. Let's continue partying this September! See the delights of our neighboring prefecture by coming on the Hyogo AJET Osaka night out on Saturday 28th September. The night will consist of a few bars, a club and maybe a sleep in the notorious Capsule hotel - a must-do in Japan. See the Hyogo AJET Facebook event for all the details, and click 'going'!

As part of the HAJET committee I must shamelessly plug the Hyogo AJET Book Club once more. I feel you may be sick of me popping up on your Facebook notifications but alas I am popping up here too; I'll keep it brief...

The book: *Before I Go To Sleep* by S.J Watson.

The date: Sunday 6th October.

The place: Somewhere in Sannomiya, still tbc (but additional venues may come up for those further afield), check the [Facebook event](#) for updates.

September is now upon us and the start of the school term begins again. I hope all you new JETs have settled in a little bit into your new homes and schools. Enjoy meeting your returning students but be prepared as they might not be so fresh-faced after the long brutal summer.

My advice: wear a kawaii accessory or show off a souvenir from your summer travels to win them over again, or for the first time. I'm opting for a bow in my hair and a postcard from Paris.

Now let's go through the motions of opening ceremonies then get into the classroom, I'm itching to get away from this desk!

Hope to see a lot of you soon,

*Cherie*

newsflash  
white water  
rafting on  
shikoku!

This October long weekend head to Kochi prefecture on Shikoku for spectacular mountain views, crystal clear waters and a white-knuckle ride down the Yoshino River, one of the three greatest rivers in Japan.

Dates: 12th - 13/14th October  
**Limited availability.** Click 'going' on the [Facebook event](#) to secure your place!

**Don't miss out on one of the most exciting Hyogo AJET trips of the year!**



## Long Distance Love?

### For most reading, I'd assume

you understand the term 'long distance', but saying this to my Japanese colleague caused a bit of confusion. You see in Japanese this term would be translated as 'long distance **love**' (遠距離恋愛). My argument is that two people do not necessarily have to be **in** love (cynical I know) to be in a relationship. This caused some confusion, but for the sake of ease we settled on assuming said couple was in love.

Some couples would not agree with that the two words, "long" and "distance", should sit side by side, and would rather go for an all or nothing approach. However, even after all the scare stories thrown my way, I decided to go for it.

The intense experience of this new country, new friends, new job, and a new language may initially have seemed overwhelming, but it was completely what I needed, and I learnt that when you're busy you're invincible. Please don't misunderstand me and think I wanted to completely break away from my home country and all the important people (including my long term boyfriend) it holds. No no, it just means I'm happy, comfortable and settling, if not settled, here and I can actually do it all without them. I've been separated from all home comforts physically and emotionally and yet I have the ability to buy contact lenses, use an ATM and get a bus all on my own in this foreign land. Although this independence is empowering, it's not always so easy on relationships of any kind.

And so we return to long distance love... It's been over a year for me now, which means we, mainly I, survived the recontracting saga and, more importantly, our first year apart. If someone's willing to stay with you knowing you're 6,000 miles away for another 365 days then something's going right. And now, with the surplus of communication technology, keeping in touch has been a doddle. Even the time difference hasn't been too stressful; being 8 (or 9) hours ahead of time is quite tricky though. If you think of your day, you sleep for 8 hours, work for 8 hours and the 8 hours between is a mixture of socializing, relaxing and chore-doing. However, even against all the GMT odds we are still as strong as ever.

Long distance is more about adjusting to your new relationship pace. It can't be the same as the relationship you had back home and you cannot try and force it to be so – it'd cost a lot in airfare for starters. So you have to step back and take things slow again.

Communication is key; this may seem so obvious, but sticking to it is the hard part. Keep them in the loop on everyday happenings; take time to explain the little things like 'nenkyu' and how 'JTE' is not a typo of 'JET'. Say everything, anything, whenever you want, even if they won't read it until the morning. Mix it up; send letters, flowers, post cards, e-cards, Facebook pokes, Tweets, Snapchats... the works! Remember you are in a relationship and just because there's a whole body of water separating you doesn't mean you can slack on making an effort.

One letter flying across the world makes a huge difference.

### Effort × Miles Travelled = Impact

Don't look at long distance as a make or break situation, that's too much pressure on both sides. Make the most of your time here and enjoy the change of pace.

### 2nd Year Hyogo JET

In a relationship since May 2011;  
13 months long distance.



# Future Shorts Film Festival

## What is the Future Shorts Film Festival?

Showcasing the most stimulating independent short films from across the world, Future Shorts is the biggest international short film festival of its kind. Founded in London in 2003 the festival is now celebrated around the globe with over 1,700 screenings, across six continents in more than 350 cities in 90 different countries – that's one huge international community of movie lovers!

Every three months a feature-length programme of award-winning, cult and classic shorts from around the world is created by Future Shorts' top team in London. These films are then distributed to film enthusiasts the world over who host their own local screenings, becoming film entrepreneurs and promoters along the way.

Screenings hosted from London to Tokyo, Cairo to Kabul, take place in cinemas, art galleries, bars, clubs, theatres and warehouses and are often accompanied by DJs, live music and art. The festival is an ever-evolving collaboration of international talent, creating a platform for filmmakers to showcase their talents to millions worldwide. Future Shorts is well worth a visit to engage with the work of such talented artists and embrace the power of film.

Celebrating the finest in creative and innovative film, Future Shorts tells global stories to global audiences and encourages worldwide discourse on the most incredible tales. In under an hour each of the carefully selected shorts transports you to a new culture, each realistically and emotionally portrayed in a triumph of filmmaking.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Future Shorts Film Festival, and the festival's decade of global success is evident in the scintillating programme of films presented in the 2013 Summer Season. Allow Future Shorts just four hours to transport you to six different worlds; from exorcisms to Icelandic cult heroes, Louisiana to England, Ethiopian street children to animated Irish furniture... each story is captivating, engrossing and electrifying.

[As a pop-up festival, anyone can host a screening and join this global network, if you're interested in hosting a screening find more information [here](#).]

## Future Shorts in Kansai

With three different Kansai venues and dates, you're sure to find one to suit your calendar, but reserve online [here](#) to avoid disappointment and arrive early to bag the best seats!

### Kobe

- **Date and time**  
21st Sept 2013, 18:30 – 22:00
- **Venue**  
[Queen of Hoot](#), Kobe Kitano (see [map](#))
- **Capacity**  
40 people
- **Price**  
¥2,000 (6 films + 1 drink)

### Osaka

- **Date and time**  
28th Sept 2013, 18:30 – 22:00
- **Venue**  
ASAHI Lab Garden (see [map](#))  
530-0018 Osaka-shi Kitaku  
Komatsubara-cho 2-4, Osaka  
FukokuSeimei Building 4F
- **Capacity**  
40 people
- **Price**  
¥2,000 (6 films + 1 drink)

### Kyoto

- **Date and time**  
14th Sept 2013, 18:30 – 22:00
- **Venue**  
HUB Kyoto (see [map](#))
- **Nearest station**  
鞍馬口 (Kuramaguchi)  
exit 1
- **Capacity**  
100 people
- **Price**  
¥2,000 (6 films + 1 drink)

Charlotte Griffiths

Attention all film buffs: the Future Shorts Film Festival is coming to Kansai!

With thanks to [Wasabi Creation](#) for their help with this article.





**KYOTO 9/14**

18:30 to 22:00

Venue: HUB Kyoto

Nearest station: Kuramaguchi exit1

**KOBE 9/21**

18:30 to 22:00

Venue: Queen of Hoot, Kobe Kitano

4-9-2 Kitano-cho Chuoku Kobe

**OSAKA 9/28**

18:30 to 22:00

Venue: ASAHI Lab Garden

Osaka-shi Kitaku Kamatsubara-cho 2-4

Cost: 2000yen (1 drink + International crowd) \* 1500yen for students with valid student pass

もっと詳しく知りたい方は: [www.wasabicreation.com](http://www.wasabicreation.com)

登録はこちら: [hi@wasabicreation.com](mailto:hi@wasabicreation.com)

**Boneshaker / Frances Bodomo**

USA / 2012 / Drama, Comedy / 13 min

An African family, lost in America, travels to a Louisiana church to find a cure for its problem child.

Stars 9-year old Oscar nominated Quvenzhané Wallis (Beasts of the Southern Wild). Official selection Sundance Festival 2013.



**La Huida / Victor Carrey**

Spain / 2011 / Action, Drama / 13 min

Chewing gum. A dog leash. An Australia shaped stain on the wall. A bent traffic light... Each of these elements has its own story, even though all of them together can create a new plot..

Winner at Chicago Film Festival and Hugo Gold Award winner. Winner of 77 awards and more than 200 selections.



**The Pirate of Love / Sara Gunnarsdottir**

Iceland / 2013 / Animation, Documentary / 10 min

The Pirate of Love is an animated documentary about an outsider musician, Daniel C.

Official selection AFI Film Fest & New Directors/New Films 2013.



**The Hidden Smile / Ventura Durall**

Spain / 2011 / Drama, Political / 13 min

Following a 10-year-old kid who arrives at the Ethiopian capital after escaping from his home and his misfortunes to integrate into a street children group, The Hidden Smile constructs a realistic tale on the values that flourish in a society formed by children.

Winner of Best Documentary at Abu Dhabi Film Festival and official Sundance selection 2012.



**Irish Folk Furniture / Tony Donoghue**

Ireland / 2012 / Animation / 9 min

In Ireland, old hand-painted furniture is often associated with hard times, with poverty, and with a time many would rather forget. In this animated documentary, 16 pieces of traditional folk furniture are repaired and returned home.

Sundance 2013 winner for Best Animation short film.



**Volume / Mahalia Belo**

Russia / 2012 / Action, Drama / 27 min

Sam lives in a place where everything is polished and secrets are cleaned up and kept. So when Georgina goes missing, everyone acts like nothing happened. But Sam can't stop thinking about her, the enigma who lived next door, swimming daily in her pool. As Sam drifts back into his memories of Georgina, he comes to realise he may know more than he wants to remember..

Winner of the British Independent Film Award for Best Short.





# Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri

## In the whirlwind that was the first

few months of living in Japan, I was lucky enough to have two second year JETs to hold my hand. They showed our ragtag crew around the area and together we went to a Hanshin baseball game, a tour of Kobe, and even to Hikone castle. On one such outing, we were taken to the Kishiwada Danjiri festival in Osaka and, even after the innumerable festivals I've been to, it still ranks in my top three festivals in the Kansai area.

As it was the first festival I went to in Japan, I had no idea what I was in for. We arrived at around four in the afternoon on the second day of the event. It was a balmy sunny day, the intense heat of the afternoon just easing off. Upon exiting the train station, we were halted by the immense crowd gathered along the side of the road. It seemed we had arrived at a popular viewing spot. We waited to see what would appear. Enough sandbags to fuel a civil war lined the side of the

streets. We noticed an abnormal number of security personnel patrolling the roads along with a number of parked ambulances. My sempai filled me in on the details of the festival...

The Kishiwada Danjiri matsuri is the most famous of the Danjiri (cart pulling) festivals. Like the majority of festivals, this ritual started out as a prayer to the Shinto gods for a good harvest. The Kishiwada Danjiri matsuri's carts are maintained and carried by the various guilds of each region in Osaka. Each guild is attired in matching happi coats and headbands, girls wear their hair in elaborate braids and the carts themselves are carved with gorgeous ornate patterns. For an idea of scale, the wooden carts are too big to fit into a Japanese apartment. Whereas there are some danjiri festivals where the carts are slowly walked to their point of destination, the Kishiwada Danjiri matsuri is known for the

exciting speed at which they pull the carts.. In true Osaka style, Kishiwada Danjiri matsuri carts are hauled at top speed; with Daiku-gata (carpenters) hopping and cheering on the carts' roofs, often resulting in fallen carts and injuries. The abundance of ambulances makes sense. Crashes happen often enough that shop owners can even buy special danjiri insurance for their buildings.

Fully informed, I was now ready for some prime danjiri pulling.

In the next half hour, we saw two carts pass by, but they weren't traveling at a concerning speed. We decided to move our party to the food stalls and possibly a spot with more action. As is the risk of traveling in a group of visible minorities, we were pulled into the tourist information building by a group of "helpful" middle aged women. It soon became apparent that they wanted a photograph of foreign

people in happi coats. We were more interested in nourishing our stomachs, but their insistence was overwhelming. The whole ordeal took about twenty minutes; I don't think we would have been able to escape without first being photographed. We were finally sent away with a number of pamphlets, maps, and complimentary rope head bands to make room for the next group of tourists.

We then found an intersection where a large number of carts were passing through. The excitement built up in a linear relation to the swelling crowds. Drums were beaten, unique guild cheers chanted, and accompanying pipe players let out a cheerful melody. None of the carts tipped over, but the lithe acrobatics of the Daiku-gata on the carts were suitably awe inspiring.

With the party in full swing and the evening festivities just beginning, behind us a cloud of impending doom slowly approached. The sky started to fall, and so ended the adventure of my first festival in Japan. My Kishiwada Danjiri matsuri was short and sweet, but unforgettable.

Split over two weekends, the festival takes place each year on the Saturday and Sunday before the **Respect for the Aged** national holiday. This year the first, and more

famous weekend, will be the 14th and 15th of September, followed by part two on the 12th and 13th of October. If the festival is rained off, like last year, it is often rescheduled for the following day.

Paige Ngo

## The jargon uncovered.

### Hiki-dashi (Opening pull)

The opening pull of the Danjiri Matsuri is done with high spirits and speed. A 6am siren signals all thirty-five Danjiri teams to tug their carts in a mad dash through the streets of Kishiwada.

### Yari-mawashi (Corner turning)

Working both front and rear levers in unison, Danjiri teams literally "skid" their heavy carts around each street corner. Accompanied by the beat of drums and shouts, turning corners is one of the most dramatic elements of the festival.

### Daiku-gata (Carpenters)

The privilege and risk of being on the roof of the carts belong to Kishiwada's local carpenters. As the most visible member of the Danjiri team, each daiku-gata creates his own style of dance. "Hikoki-nori" (the Airplane dance), performed by spreading your arms wide and standing on one foot, is particularly famous.

### Horimono (Wood carvings)

Each of the massive carts is adorned with a number of intricate wood carvings. The carvings depict celebrated battles and records of war in ancient Japan.

### Hi-iri Ei-kou (Parade of lantern-lit Danjiri's)

In the evenings, brilliant red lanterns are affixed to each cart, and the carts are slowly marched along the main parade route. The bright lanterns and costumes and the rhythmic drums and chants blend with the sounds and smells of night vendors to produce a wonderfully different experience: an evening matsuri.

Above Danjiri Terms were paraphrased from [here](#).

## Lets go!

### Weekend 1

Saturday September 14th  
(6am – 10pm) and  
Sunday 15th (9am – 10pm)

### Weekend 2

Saturday October 12th  
(6am – 10pm) and  
Sunday 13th (7am – 10pm)

### Testing

Sept 8th and 13th 2pm – 4pm

See [here](#) for more details.







## Nariai-ji

### Our pilgrimage takes us next

to Nariai-ji, temple 28, located in the northern reaches of Kyoto Prefecture. Getting there is a task, but the temple is located on a hill above Amanohashidate, which makes for a great day or even weekend trip.

Amanohashidate is one of the three traditionally recognized **Most Scenic Places in Japan** (the others being Miyajima and Matsushima); it's worth noting that all three have a certain charm that comes from this status. They were tourist destinations before photography, but tend not to be quite as overwhelming or overrun as, say, the iconic Kiyomizu-dera. Still, their surrounding tourist service areas being both old and in consistent use means an earthier feel to them, not so much with the flashing lights you might find at other tourist locales, but also not a ghost-town feel, as the destination is still on the list for many visitors, Japanese and foreign alike.

The legend goes that a ladder (**Amanoukhashi** or Ladder to Heaven) was placed between heaven and earth so that the god Izanagi-no-Mikoto could go back

and forth between them to visit his sister-lover Izanami-no-Mikoto. But one day Izanagi-no-Mikoto was careless and fell asleep on the earth, so he failed to return to heaven on time. The ladder fell to the earth and became a spit of white beach and pines, and the connection between mankind and the heavens was broken.

The isthmus is best viewed from two lookout points, one on each side of the sandbar itself. Chairlifts will bring you up to the lookouts, and you can walk the entire length of the long spit of land as well, as it is a gorgeous park. If it's hot, feel free to bring a bathing suit and make use of the beaches facing onto beautiful waters!

Nariai-ji is located on the north end of the Amanohashidate sandbar. As is perhaps fitting for its lovely locale, the temple is dedicated to the aesthetic of beauty, and the Kannon image enshrined here is known as the Bijin (beautiful) Kannon. The Kannon image type is the Sho Kannon, and it is displayed only once every 33 years. It is said that if you pray to this Kannon,

you will become beautiful. Both the secret Kannon image and the maedachi that stands in front of the zushi were carved sometime in the Heian era (794 – 1185).

According to legend, Nariai-ji was founded in 704 by a wandering holy man named Shinno Shonin who lived in a hermitage up on the mountain. One winter, the villagers were unable to get food up the mountain because of the intensity of the winter snowfall. He prayed to Kannon, and a wounded deer appeared. Although he was loath to harm the creature, he knew it to be a gift from Kannon, so he took just enough to sustain him from the deer's thigh. When the villagers were able to get to him, they pointed out that the Kannon image in his hut had her leg cut. Shinno mended the self-sacrificing statue, and thus the temple was named **nariai**, meaning "neatly finished".

The hondo, built in 1779, was moved 2km down the mountain to make it more accessible to visitors because of that very severity of the winters on the San-in coast. The staff inside were quite friendly

(and went so far as to insist that we take the bus back down the mountain rather than walk because of bear sightings), and the temple felt very welcoming.

From the observation point on the north end of the isthmus, you can take a bus to the temple, or you can hoof it; the walk is not long, but it is steep. The temple gate appears first, then a garden next to the 5-story pagoda which is shiny and new and sticks out amidst the rest of the older wooden structures. Completed in 2005, it contains relics of the Buddha donated by a temple in Sri Lanka.

You'll notice that the temple bell is not available for ringing. The story goes that in 1609, when the bell was cast, many local people came to watch. One woman holding a baby got too close, and the child fell into the molten bronze and died. The bell was rung once when it

was dedicated, and sounded like the crying of a baby. This made everyone so sad that it was decided the bell will never be rung again.

The hand and mouth purification fountain is also special. The water is drawn from a mountain spring 2km away at the original site of the temple; it is delicious and cold all year round. The basin it sits on, cast in 1209, looks like an iron bathtub, and may have been used for boiling large quantities of water.

Take a walk, say a prayer, taste the ice cream, and enjoy exploring Nariai-ji and Amanohashidate!

For more information on transportation, check out [these two](#) sites out. From some parts of Hyogo, it's quite convenient to drive up this way, especially if you can get people to split gas and tolls with you.



For more legends about Nariai-ji, look at [this](#) website.

Happy pilgriming!

*Lemmon*



## Hyogo's new PAs

### Along with an influx of eager

new ALTs, this JET year two charming new CIRs have arrived in our great prefecture. Let's give a warm welcome to Joshua and Simon and find out just what those mysterious PAs actually do...

### Joshua Kaplan

"I'm one of the two new Hyogo Prefectural Advisors, hailing from the United States with interests in running, literature, cooking, history, language, and music ranging from hip-hop to samba, and k-pop to rock. I first became seriously interested in other cultures after taking a class on world religion during high school. This experience made me determined to learn at least one other language to a near-native level, and therein find out what qualities are common to all cultures.

I left the Chicago suburban area I had lived in for most of my life and set out for Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. There I choose to study the Japanese language for its "foreignness" (farther from English than European languages) and a vague preexisting interest in Japan. Starting with just a Japanese minor, I decided to switch to a more intensive course of Japanese language study, along with courses on Chinese and Japanese literature, history, and society.

For my third year of college, I enrolled and completed Middlebury College's summer intensive Japanese language program, then studied abroad for one year at a university in Osaka called Kansai Gaidai. At Kansai Gaidai, I developed a taste for karaoke, *junbungaku* literature, Japanese beer and *okonomiyaki*.

I came back to the United States for my final year of college, working at my college's Office of Overseas and Off-Campus Programs and completing my senior thesis (on Japanese activism in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear accident). That academic year, I focused on studying formal office and literary Japanese. I graduated with bright anticipation of becoming a CIR (Coordinator of International Relations) as part of the JET program.

I began that position as a new CIR employed by Hyogo Prefecture this August. One of my roles consists of being a Prefectural Advisor (along with my Australian counterpart, Simon Tyler). Together, we provide a layer of support for 200-plus ALTs in Hyogo at the prefectural level. We answer questions and concerns over email and telephone (from 9am – 4:45pm during the summer; Joshua Kaplan: 078-230-3280).

Also, I work at the Hyogo International Association (HIA) in central Kobe, a public organization that works toward a more cosmopolitan society (providing aid to foreign residents), international exchange (through exchange programs and sister city/region relationships), and a more capable workforce of global citizens (through training programs and support for foreign study abroad students).

I have three specific roles at HIA that I want to get ALTs involved with. One is international exchange events, through both HIA and local international associations, such as presentations about one's home country and weekend homestays for JETs across Hyogo. The next role is promoting the language-learning resources (for Japanese as well as other languages) we offer such as a free lending-library and language classes. Finally, I write for the "Hyogo: Heart of Japan" blog about interesting places to visit across the prefecture. I hope that everyone can help me find spots off the beaten path around Hyogo, guiding me around or even just pointing me in the right direction.

In any case, I look forward to meeting everyone through my reporting for the Heart of Japan blog, orientations, and AJET events!"



### Simon Tyler

"My name is Simon Tyler, and I'm from Perth in Western Australia. As those of you who have already met me know, I have a physical disability (Cerebral Palsy) and use crutches to get around. Basically, if you see a disabled guy on a fancy pair of crutches somewhere in the Kansai region, odds are it's me.

Although I was raised in Western Australia, I was originally born in Britain, and both my parents are British, so personality wise I'm a bit of a mix of both cultures.

I first visited Japan in 2005 and have been back too many times to count. I've mainly lived around the Kansai region, and studied at Kansai Gaidai for a year back in 2008. In total I've spent around two years living in Japan. This is my first time living in Hyogo and Kobe, but I've been here a few times before. So far I'm really liking Kobe, and all the Hyogo (and Kobe!) JETs/CIRs have been really awesome.

Before coming on JET, I worked for a few years as a systems administrator, and at various times have also worked in everything from finance, to travel, and even in the taxi industry as a radio operator (that really sucked).

I really feel like my background has helped to prepare me for JET, because the CIR and PA positions are such diverse roles. Believe me when I say that when you've had to deal with a taxi driver being choked half to death at 10:00 on a Saturday night, nothing freaks you out any more.

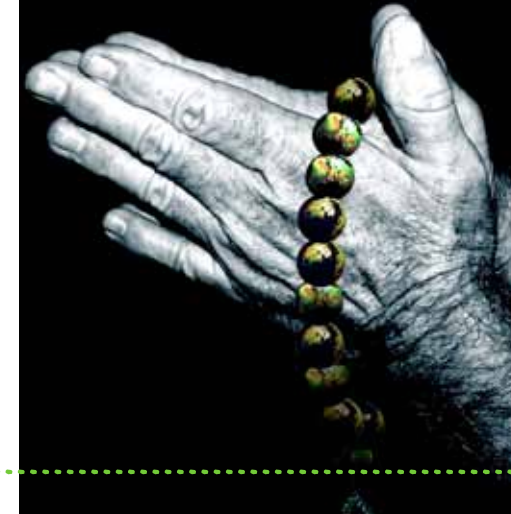
Joining JET has been a really long journey for me. I originally wanted to come over as an ALT, but after starting to study Japanese seriously, I decided I wanted to push my language skills even further. I passed JLPT N1 last year, but I still feel I have a lot of room to grow, particularly in terms of business Japanese.

Studying contemporary Japanese society at university also made me aware of some of the issues that Japan is facing, particularly in regards to its aging society and (relatively small) foreign population. Although CIRs are obviously limited in what we can do, I strongly believe that providing opportunities to positively interact with foreigners – however small – makes a big difference to people's attitudes. I personally try as hard as I can to strike a balance between cultural awareness and foreignness.

I'm really looking forward to meeting you all this year and working for you as your PA. Being in the prefectural government offices means it can be kinda hard to get out and see you guys, but we're always here for you. If you're ever stuck, need help, or just want someone to listen. So far we've been contacted about everything from tax refunds to holiday leave and even (really badly) grazed knees. I never thought I'd be asked to translate the directions on a bottle of antiseptic lotion...

Even if we can't answer your question directly, we have access to a huge network of people who probably can. I should probably add that we aren't the JET police, and we aren't going to get you fired or in trouble. Anything you contact us with is strictly confidential. Please don't ever hesitate to contact us if you, or anyone else you know, needs help."





## Spreading the Good Word

### This year, I served as a helper ALT

at our anticipated/dreaded Yashiro orientation. I decided to volunteer to help in part because the preparations would give me something to do during the summer besides bum around on social networking, and in part because I recently quit drinking, and thought that the Beer Garden welcome party would ultimately be wasted on a sober vegetarian. I wanted a different opportunity to meet newcomers, but also, because I anticipate this being my last year as a JET, I felt compelled to pass my torch somehow.

Because eco-friendly explorations have recently become a focal point in my life, I wondered how much it might come up at this orientation. I spoke in the first Miso Green I wrote about how jarring it was to arrive in Japan to so much plastic, and how long it took me to find solutions, and I wondered if many other new JETs felt the same way. I anxiously awaited Q&A sessions, when I might be able to share the effective ways I've found to improve my life in Japan.

It didn't come up as much as I had hoped. I managed to share a couple of my favorite ideas, including one about omiyage (rather than buying a ton of individually packaged, suitcase-dominating snack boxes, buy a famous ingredient from the place you are visiting, and when

you get back to Japan, make snacks that utilize it to distribute. Brilliant, right?) I also encouraged a JET who lives in my region and was looking for kitchenware to head to my favorite recycle shop instead of a Daiso, but I (rather reluctantly) gave him directions to both. Later, I bit my tongue about mentioning the fact that I write this article when our dear editor made her pitch about submissions to the Hyogo Times to the crowd because I didn't want to draw focus away from the point she wanted to make (we could always use more contributors, nudge-nudge).

As I reflect on my experience at the orientation, I notice so many similarities regarding my desires and hesitations about sharing how I live, and those of the religious devotees I've met over the years. This certainly isn't a novel idea; a quick Google search of "green religion" or similar terms yields many links to many articles celebrating the global sustainability movement as the next great era of humanity, or demonizing profiteers and followers as worshipping a false god (of which, I don't personally believe Al Gore is one, though it makes for a great image). I agree with much of this, and like any religion, there is a good and a bad way to practice it.

There are currently a couple of Latter-Day Saints patrolling the area around Himeji station. They first approached me after I had just stumbled into a friend on my way to the tracks. As they began to talk, my friend immediately got on his phone. I don't know if this was on purpose or just coincidence, but convenient nonetheless. I was in a bit of a rush, but took a moment to talk to them. It turned out that one had gone to university in my home state, and I brought up what little ties to the Mormon community I knew about. At one point, they asked if I was Mormon, and I said a simple "no," and that was the end of their pitch to me. I asked how their mission was going, and while they didn't want to complain, they mentioned that the language barrier was certainly making it tough. I wished them luck. They gave me a flyer for the eikaiwa they hosted and asked me to spread the word about, which I later forgot about and lost. However I found their passive approach considerate, and now when I see them bike along my commute, we warmly yell salutations and wave to each other. The oft-present discomfort I feel around missionaries isn't there when I run into them.

Ecologically-minded practices are the same in this regard, in that they are usually the most effective when

they are not advertised as such. Even if a recently discovered innovation could change lives, if it's not presented to the right audience, people go on the attack. In an article about gas light indicators on Lifehacker, a commenter mentioned that he had an electric car and didn't share the problem, and then on came a slew of comments calling him a both a baseless do-gooder (I bet you're also a vegan who recycles) and a hypocrite (Those batteries are terrible! Get a bike like me).

The truth is that some sustainable solutions work for some people, and some don't. Some work better than others. Some work in some situations and not in others. I would love to cycle to work, but a 3-and-a-half hour commute every day just isn't feasible for me. I'm lucky to have public transportation, but if I didn't, I'd sure as hell try to get an electric car over a gas guzzler. It's far from the ideal solution, but it's at least a step in the right direction, philosophically if not technologically.

There are also times when I knowingly falter from the lifestyle I'm trying to maintain. In January I declared abstinence from convenience stores, but occasionally since I've ended up with saran-wrapped soba bento after waking up too late to pack my own lunch. In my sleepless fog,

I forgot to pack my metal water bottle and dehydrated coconut water for my trip to Yashiro, and reluctantly bought several bottles of sports drinks from vending machines to battle the ever-present dehydration headaches we all experienced there. It happens, and I'm never excited about it. Like religious devotees, I admit that I do not set a perfect example, but I let my indiscretions reaffirm my commitment. Perfect practice is an impossible goal, but still the goal.

I write this article, and I attempt to live this way because I believe that society as we know it is ultimately unsustainable. When a summer day reaches upwards of 40 degrees, or when an early spring day doesn't require a jacket, I am reminded about global warming. When I see young ladies on trains decked out in all things kawaii, I envision every item they wear in its eventual landfill home. Every time a politician turns a blind eye to an unforeseen impact caused by emissions, or genetic modification of food, I realize that apathetic leaders beget apathetic followers. The world feels too big in many ways and not big enough in others, and I worry about it often. Like many religious proselytizers, I desperately want people to pay attention to the dark fate we appear to be facing and make even miniscule changes

toward a better one, but I also know that force and intimidation are the worst ways to change anyone's mind.

But even for people who doubt the impact of plastics and emissions and oversized industry on global well-being, there is still so much to gain out of pursuing a life of simplicity and quality. My partner and I each manage to send home about half of our take home pays every month by doing the things I talk about in this article, but there's even more that we could be doing; I know a family of four in northern Hyogo that lives on just 70,000 yen a month, and I think I'll get to introduce them to you in October.

However, regardless of whether your motivation for reading Miso Green is to cut back on waste, find local food, save money, or quell guilt over what humanity has done to the environment, or whether you're just reading out of curiosity, or whether you're a member of my immediate family who just wants to see what I'm up to, I hope you are getting something out of this, and that it doesn't come off as too preachy.

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## Where are they now?

**Andrew Brasher**, originally of the USA, spent four years as an ALT in chic Kobe suburb Ashiya, and now lives and works just around the corner in Osaka.

### What are you doing now?

Right now I work at a video game company as an international coordinator. That title just means that I do translation but also have to help out in other way whenever interaction outside of Japan is involved. This can mean interpreting meetings, managing the English website, organizing business trips abroad, and so on.

### How has the experience of living in Japan helped you?

Well, this question is probably a bit easy to figure out in my case; I live in Japan and what knowledge I have of both languages and cultures is my most valuable asset to the office.

### What did you hope to gain from doing JET before you came out here? Did you?

I was just a nerd who really liked Japan since I had been in elementary school, so just coming out to work here probably accomplished what I was looking for.

### What is your favourite memory of Hyogo?

I wish I could land upon an answer that fits better with Japan but for some reason I keep coming back to Awaji Burger in Nishinomiya. I used to get it from time to time during lunch with Ryan (another JET, same year as me) and we'd just hang out in the park and chat, I enjoyed that time a lot. I also like Takarazuka a lot though, the theater, the Tezuka museum, and just how spacious and clean and good-looking the city is.

### How do you find the Japanese working environment?

I think my job is for the most part a typical IT desk job kind of gig. I guess I'll say the one thing that's different about my working environment versus some other place is that almost everyone

on the staff has different action figures all over their desk. Lots of nerd merchandise everywhere. Honestly given what we do I feel more reassured that way, everyone is very passionate about what they do.

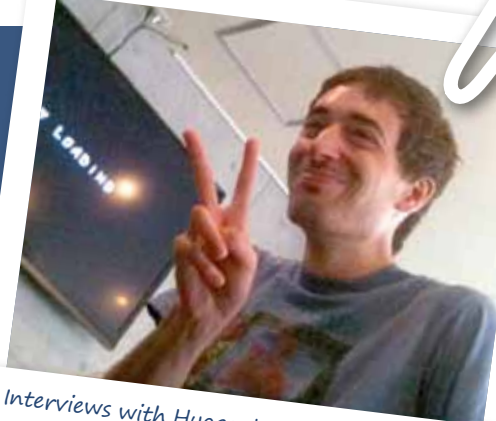
### Do you have any advice for ALTs looking to continue working in Japan post JET?

I was lucky because I got to be close to Kobe and Osaka while on JET and just met a lot of people from different walks of life. I've always had some curiosity about more rural Japan, but especially for people who want to continue working in Japan, what's most to your benefit is just to meet other foreigners in the city and get an understanding of what kind of jobs even exist out there. Good luck.

### Is there anything you miss from the US?

Honestly what I miss about the US is all of its cereal. That is why I am bringing an empty suitcase on my business trip next week and am going to fill it up with hopefully eight or more boxes.

Interviews with Hyogo JET alumni to find out what they are up to post ALT life...



## 海鮮丼 Kaisen don

*Kaisen don (or sashimi donburi) means seafood atop rice. This simple dish is made up of your favourite raw seafood layered beautifully across cold, seasoned sushi rice, the open sandwich of the sushi world, if you will. This colourful bowl is quick and easy to make and perfectly refreshing for these sweltering summer days.*

Kicchiri  
Kitchen

### Ingredients

Serves 2

- 1 cup of rice (sushi rice is preferred but any white grain)
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar (komezu 米酢)
- 1 teaspoon of roasted sesame seeds
- Seaweed/nori cut into strips – as much as you like!
- Any sashimi you like, I suggest three or four different types, such as salmon, fatty tuna, yellow tail, scallops. (I cheated a bit and bought a ready sliced pack with 3 types of fish)
- Soy sauce and wasabi on the side (optional)

### Step one

Cook the rice in your rice cooker (as shown in last month's Kicchiri Kitchen)

### Step two

Once cooked, transfer to a bowl and leave to cool for ten minutes.

### Step three

Mix the rice vinegar and sesame seeds into the rice bowl.

### Step four

Layer the sashimi artistically onto the rice (along with anything that came with your sashimi pack, like shredded daikon and perilla leaves).



### Step five

Bunch the nori and place on top.

Voila, picture perfect. Now devour.

Cherie Pham



What's  
on Japan?

The calendar  
for Hyogo Times  
is designed and  
maintained by  
Paige Ngo!

Hyogo AJET event

Hanshin

Harima

Kobe

Tamba

Awaji

Tajima

Outside of Hyogo

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> Magical Art Exhibition Akashi City (Aug 1 – Sept 1) Midsummer Snow Fest Rokkosan Country House	<b>2</b> Registration for the JLPT starts (Sept 2 – Oct 2)	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Tigers vs. Giants 6pm <b>Hanshin Welcome Party!</b> 7 – 10pm Nishinomiya Kitaguchi Stn.	<b>7</b> Tigers vs. Giants 3pm Hanshin Stadium
Owara Kaze-no-Bon 風の盆 in Toyama (Yatsuo, Toyama)						
<b>8</b> Tigers vs. Giants 3pm Hanshin Stadium <b>Kobe International Scrabble Tourney</b> 11:30 – 4 pm	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Tigers vs. Dragons 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>11</b> Tigers vs. Dragons 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>12</b> Tigers vs. Dragons 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>Kishiwada Danjiri</b> 岸和田だんじり祭 (Osaka)
<b>15</b> Sake Tasting Kato City <b>Kishiwada Danjiri</b> 岸和田だんじり祭 (Osaka)	<b>16</b> <i>Respect for the Aged Day</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Tigers vs. Swallows 2pm Hanshin Stadium <b>Nishinomiya Matsuri</b> 西宮祭 (Nishinomiya)
<b>22</b> Tigers vs. Swallows 2pm Hanshin Stadium <b>Nishinomiya Matsuri 西宮祭</b> (Nishinomiya)	<b>23</b> Tigers vs. Swallows 2pm <i>Autumnal Equinox Day</i>	<b>24</b> Tigers vs. Baystars 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>25</b> Tigers vs. Baystars 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>26</b> Tigers vs. Baystars 6pm Hanshin Stadium	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> <b>Osaka Night Out</b> 8pm start Shinsaibashi Stn
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>					





Heigh-ho,  
heigh-ho  
it's back to  
school we go!