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Inside.....

Christmas in Japan

China's New ADIZ

Skills Development Conference & Enkai

Contents

3

Message
from the
Editor

4

Message
from the
PR

5

Kicchiri Kitchen:
Chicken Nabe

8

FEATURE:
Christmas in Japan



6

FEATURE:
Kobe's Luminarie



10

FEATURE:
OEFF Review

12

Restaurant
Review

14

FEATURE:
SDC Review

16

FEATURE:
SDC Enkai

18

FEATURE:
China's ADIZ

20

Kannon:
Temples 14 & 15

24

Recipe:
Persinamon
Cake

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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.

Message from the Editor

Season's Greetings!

Well, a short but sweet koyo season is rapidly fading as the chill of winter takes hold. Kotatus and electric blankets across the region are being dusted off and plugged in, and those without shiver with cold and poorly concealed envy. Thanks to the sudden switch from Halloween to Christmas decorations in shop windows it may have felt like the holiday season was upon us from the 1st of November, but now December is truly here.

December brings us festive celebrations, end of term exams and farewells to 3rd years. Along with all that comes the [in]famous *bonenkai*; or, as my invitation appropriately translated it, "the year forgetting party". Look forward to lots of organized fun, compulsory drinking and excellent bingo prizes – last year I came away with a Kitty-chan roomba! My tip: make friends by grabbing a bottle and running round to top people up. Be aware that if drinking sake when someone offers you a top-up, it is polite to finish your drink immediately so you can accept the offer – losing count of your sake top-ups is both easy and dangerous. Fortunately, the rule is: what happens at *enkai*, stays at *enkai* (until the next one anyway).

If you're staying in Japan over Christmas, make sure to go local and pre-order yourself a bucket from KFC and follow it up by a strawberry-topped cake – not quite turkey and Christmas pudding, but certainly a cultural experience! A further festive confusion is to be found at the Osaka Christmas market, where you can get a taste of traditional German markets and a much needed mulled-wine. However,

approach the nativity scene with an open mind, for, as at Japanese temples, you may just find baby Jesus in his manger being bombarded with ¥1 coins! Internationalization at its best.

Myself, I will be returning to Blighty for the first time, the family are already stocking up on cider, cheddar cheese and real bacon, and I have raided the local traditional Japanese gifts shops for as much kitsch as my suitcase can hold (though I later discovered many of my gifts at Daiso for significantly cheaper).

Of course, whilst away I will be staving off Japan-sickness with the December issue of the Hyogo Times. You can tell the weather's changing by all the indoor activities we have this month; two recipes, a restaurant review and a follow up on the Osaka European Film Festival. For those braving the cold for the beautiful Kobe Luminarie, you can read up here on what it's all about. Plus Lorna's been researching local Christmas plans, and there's much more besides. So curl up under your kotatsu, enjoy a leisurely read and we'll see you in January when the Hyogo Times will be introducing some exciting new regular features for 2014.

**I wish you all a very Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!**

Char



Hello x 2!

Message from the PR

The short sleeved shirts and cool-tech innerwear of summer have finally given way to the scarves and gloves and berets and socks and layers layers layers of winter. With the weather switch now firmly jammed on cold, many JETs, especially those from warmer climates (namely, those from the Southern hemisphere who greeted summer smugly) may be struggling with the change of seasons.

At this time, many may experience Seasonal Affective Disorder, more commonly (and appropriately) known as SAD. It is important to be aware of the ways that being sad and having SAD can affect your mood, and to take action before it overwhelms. Symptoms of SAD can include not eating, eating too much, not sleeping, sleeping too much, overuse of stimulants such as alcohol or tobacco, being in a constant state of sadness or irritability, lack of energy, and withdrawing from social situations.

Luckily, with the introduction of a few endorphins into your system the symptoms of SAD can be alleviated or even eliminated. Make sure to get enough sleep. Eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of greens and fish. Watch how much you drink, or smoke. Exercise and stretch. Make plenty of time for your friends. Try to get outside in the daytime hours for vitamin D. And reach out if you are struggling. There is always help on hand if you need it. The AJET Peer Support Group offers phone counseling from 8pm to 7am

every night, and can be reached on 0120-437-725. You can also contact the CLAIR JETLINE during office hours, 9am to 5:45pm Monday to Friday on 03-5213-1729.

If you are looking for something to get you out from under the kotatsu and out of the house, from 5 December to 16 December Luminaire will light up Kobe's Motomachi area. If you lack a significant other to do romantic things with or want to appreciate the glittery spectacle with friends, why not join Hyogo AJET on December 12 to see the lights and gorge on festival food. You can also read more about the history of Luminaire a fabulously written and incredibly well researched article on page 6.

For those going home for Christmas and the New Year, please enjoy your time with your family and friends, eat, drink, and be merry. For those of you travelling, stay safe, have fun, and remember the sunscreen if you are heading south. Finally, for those staying in Japan, stay warm, get up early on January 1 to climb a mountain and see the sunrise, or visit a temple at midnight to receive blessings for the year ahead. And latch onto an Oshogatsu event if you can. Merry Christmas!

Kylie Pinder



Kicchiri Kitchen

Simple Chicken Nabe for One

Ingredients

Serves: One
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 25 minutes

Soup base

- 8g of your favourite dashi stock in 500ml of boiling water
- 2 tsp mirin (Japanese rice vinegar)
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp soy sauce

Nabe

- 100g cubed chicken thigh
- One carrot, thickly sliced
- 1/4 of 1/2 a daikon radish (大根), thickly sliced
- 4 shitake mushrooms
- 1/3 of a 1/4 of hakusai cabbage (はくさい)
- 1 egg
- 1 packet of fresh udon
- Olive oil for frying

As the "samui" grunts enter the staffroom you know what's coming: winter. My solution to tackle this season is nabe, lots of nabe. Nabe is a soupy hot pot recipe literally full of meat and veggies ready to cure your winter blues (or flu?). It can be enjoyed party style with all your friends gathered round a portable stove, or by yourself. Just you and your nabe. There are all sorts of traditions and rules about the cooking order of ingredients when it comes to this little ceramic pot, but here's my version.

Step one

Heat your nabe pot and keep at a medium flame. Add olive oil.

Step two

Brown the chicken.

Step three

Add soup base, carrot and daikon (these take the longest).

Step four

Turn the heat to low, cover nabe and simmer for 10 minutes (or until carrots and daikon become softer but not fully cooked).

Step five

Tip in the mushrooms and cabbage then cover again. Simmer for 2-3 minutes.

Step six

Remove the cooked ingredients and add the udon to the broth. Crack the egg onto the udon and cover. Cook for 3 minutes.

Step five

Eat the vegetables and chicken first then finish with the udon or, as I like to, eat them all together with the soup!

Cherie Pham



1

Christmas in Japan

"So, what will you be doing this year at Christmas?"

This question was met with various permeations of bemusement, amusement and indifference. These were the most common responses:

- "Nothing really"
- "Working" (this is a *Japanese* office after all)
- "Having a party with friends"
- "Drinking"
- "At lectures"
- "Eating Christmas cake"
- "What? Should I be doing something?" (Terrified that the foreigner is going to take personal offence at their lack of respect for their country's yuletide festivities).

In general the responses reflected lukewarm enthusiasm and an erratic recognition of the familiar Western trappings of Christmas – Christmas cake, but not Turkey or sprouts; Christmas trees, but not mistletoe. The external trappings of Christmas are limited to 'Rocking around the Christmas tree' being piped over the *depato* intercom, snowflake patterned bed socks in the *hyaku-en* store and the occasional unnerving inflatable Santa outside the local love-hotel. The religious aspect is almost unknown, although some

recognized it as a nominal celebration of Jesus's birth, and one friend even shocked me with a note-perfect rendition of 'Away in a Manger'. Also, to my surprise, most people saw Christmas as a time to celebrate with friends or lovers, rather than the overwhelming family-centric emphasis in the West. School kids plan Christmas parties at each other's houses, students group together in dorms to watch *Love Actually* whilst eating pizza; couples smooch under the Christmas street lights; and more than one adult cheerfully admitted they were looking forward to getting utterly inebriated with their colleagues after work (a noble Christmas tradition in itself). Instead, New Year in Japan is the time for family reunions, *osechi* and gift-giving, rather than the drunken countdown in an overpriced nightclub which passes for celebration in the UK.

It is interesting which festivals have been imported to Japan. It's hard to imagine transplanting O-Bon, *hanami* or *natsu-matsuri* to the UK, not least because you would freeze to death in a yukata during an English summer. These holidays are too closely embedded within their cultural context, centuries of tradition, belief and even the landscape of Japan itself, to truly transpose anywhere else. Similarly, it is hard to imagine Japan embracing Thanksgiving or Bonfire night with the same zeal (although

numerous people expressed an interest in Easter eggs – chocolate is the unsung hero of international integration). Such festivities resist material transplantation precisely because their essence is immaterial. Whilst Japan has plenty of fireworks, they'd be equally as bemused about burning an effigy of a 17th century catholic rebel constituting a good time, as the majority of foreigners at Osaka's Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri were every time imminent death bore down on them in the form of a ten-tonne *mikoshi* shrine travelling at high speed down a narrow alley. You could just see the cross-cultural confusion in their faces.

It is a depressing truth of cultural exchange that is the material which tends to be imported. After all, plastic reindeer antlers and discounted boxes of liqueur chocolates pack a lot easier into a suitcase than centuries of spiritual and national tradition – and money, of course, packs lightest of all.

Christmas in the West is an increasingly secular festival, with social commentators decrying the erosion of religious significance, though of course irritated pagans would argue that Christianity itself usurped the origins of the mid-Winter celebration long ago. Christmas in Japan exposed for me the unsettling reality behind the yuletide facade. Despite my



ingrained cynicism for anything approaching merriness, even in the coal-black, shrivelled up organ I call a heart there remained a vague hope for the anodyne seasonal platitudes. Peace on earth, good will to all men, joy and harmony, and so on. Or, as 'Don't they know it's Christmas?' reminds us every December, our blithe acceptance of the suffering multitudes briefly becomes an uncomfortable astringency amongst the Christmas saccharinity. Yet I had to accept the truth that Japan can so easily absorb Christmas because so little of its mainstream celebrations remain un-commercialised; and Japan can teach most of us decadent capitalist societies a few lessons in hard-bitten consumerism.

Probably this is the same reason Halloween and Valentine's Day have taken off in Japan: you can make money out of them. This is, after all, the nation that invented White Day (March 14th) simply to boost sales of white chocolate, marshmallows and white lingerie (no comment on the last). No-one makes money on Ash Wednesday. So much of Christmas celebrations at home depend on eating the right food, hanging the appropriate decorations, writing the necessary cards and dutifully waiting to be disappointed by snow if you hail from the UK. I hadn't realized Christmas for myself had become a monotonous checklist imposed by advertisements and women's

magazines, until I startled Ruriko-chan by lapsing into hysterics when I asked her what she ate for Christmas every year and she blithely replied 'lasagna!' At least Japan does not pretend Christmas is anything other than an exercise in excess of every kind.

So, Japanese Christmas remains not a big deal, at least in my small corner of Hyogo. People will continue go to work or college, perhaps choosing to throw a party or purchase some fluffy Santa hats if they so wish. Christmas remains just one more festival among a plethora in the land of *matsuri*. If you feel obliged to take a message from it though, it may be less about the celebration and more about its existence in the first place. The ease with which Japan adopts festivals regardless of religious or national affiliation reflects an inner inclusivity that is often overlooked in the stereotype of an insular society. Just as *jinja* and *o-tera* nestle comfortably side by side, the opportunity to enjoy yourself overcomes any other prejudice. So that is why this year I will be sat in front of *Love Actually*, proudly with themed bucket of KFC in hand. A Merry Christmas to one and all indeed.

Lorna Petty

The Osaka European Film Festival: Jin & The Robber

Taking my own good advice

from the November issue, I took myself off to Osaka to indulge in some European culture at the 20th anniversary of the Osaka European Film Festival. Over the festival's final weekend I enjoyed two films at the Hotel Elsérine. Although on very different topics, both were well-executed examples of Europe's cinematic talent.

First came **Jin**. Directed by Reha Erdem, the film follows the titular protagonist, played by a magnificent Deniz Hasgüler as, having left her Kurdish guerilla group, she fights to survive in the Turkish outback.

The opening five minutes set the tone for the film. A sequence of spectacular panoramas and close-ups show us the beauty and ruggedness of the mountains which will be the background for our filmic journey. The peace of these almost documentary-style shots is suddenly shattered by cacophonous gunfire. This juxtaposition of peaceful nature

and indiscriminate violence is a recurring technique. Following our dramatic introduction to the Turkish landscape (both physical and social), we meet Jin at the moment she abandons her guerilla unit and chooses to take on the wilderness on her own.

Although her motive for leaving is never completely clear, and the aim of her journey ambiguous, Jin's struggle to escape from conflict and enter the civilian world is a modern-day fable of courage against the odds. At first glance the wild landscape in which she roams seems threatening, but we come to realise that it is her haven. Whilst living off the land is never exactly easy, the greatest threats she encounters are manmade. The few moments of human contact in the film are fraught with uncertainty, danger and predation, whilst the forest offers freedom, if not safety. Jin comes to relate closest to the wild animals around her, even at one point referring to a bear as "comrade". They are her equals

in their respective fights for survival against the brutality of man.

At times the parallels with nature were a little overplayed for my taste; one such scene using a close-up shot of a lizard's rising and falling chest to mirror Jin's harsh breaths following a narrow escape. However, the connection between the girl and her surroundings lends itself to a powerful message about the destructive nature of human conflict, and its effect on people's and the natural world's vivacity.

Whilst Erdem uses the Turkish-Kurdish conflict as a backdrop, the film becomes a universal metaphor for the devastation of conflict. Even with minimal dialogue the Turkish director's 120 minute epic speaks volumes about the effects of unrelenting war and gives an insight into a lifestyle we can barely imagine.

In the post-screening discussion with Florent Herry (responsible for the breath-taking camerawork and majestic depiction of the province's rugged beauty) it was fascinating

to learn that Erdem conceived and realised the project in just three months. To avoid political pressure affecting the narrative it remained a "hidden movie" until post-production, and the director even turned down assistance from a guerilla unit so as to avoid any element of bias. Herry explained that, as a secret project, the budget was incredibly limited, which makes the spectacular cinematography even more impressive. Polemical subject matter aside, any film whose ethereal camera work makes the idea of living in mountain caves attractive is a must-see.

The plot of the second film I saw was incredibly different: a marathon runner who robs banks. **The Robber**, directed by Benjamin Heisenberg and released in 2010, was an encore screening at this year's OEFF, having been so well received its first time around. The film is based on the true story of Austrian record-breaking runner and criminal Johann Kastenberger, whose story was made into a novel in 2005 by Martin Prinz. The film made for a fascinating and exhilarating

viewing; part action thriller, part engrossing character study.

Even putting aside the conventional assumption that the audience should relate to the protagonist in some way, you may still struggle watching the story unfold as questions about motive and the character's emotional state remain frustratingly unresolved throughout. However, this could also be seen as Johann's antisocial, sociopathic behaviour being rendered tangible for a spectator. Whilst in most films we get to know the leads in the first ten minutes, Heisenberg makes this the very crux of the film, and still after 97 minutes we are left with questions – not, perhaps satisfying, but certainly stimulating. But it's not all about the psyche of our protagonist; no, add to that mystery thrilling chase scenes to rival Hollywood and you have a film which will keep you glued to the screen and constantly wondering how you can root for someone who shows no remorse.

Although the two films I saw could hardly have been more different from each other they both made me thankful for the freedom I enjoy.

Both protagonists seemed to be trying to break free; Jin sought to escape the violence of her daily life and Johann's repeated criminal activity felt like a desire for reassurance of his freedom. Both are running towards and from destruction.

Festival director Patrice Boiteau's wonderfully varied choices demonstrate how cinema can act as a window into stories, cultures and worlds we would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience or attempt to comprehend. I am already eagerly anticipating what the 21st edition of the festival will bring to Japan.

Charlotte Griffiths

<http://www.oeff.jp/en/>



Gimmicks Galore at Kagura

Living in Hyogo you can't get away from the big, fat, drunken cow in the room: Kobe beef. Locals boast about its Hyogo roots; and many travel far to taste the real deal. Of course it comes with a hefty price tag, so it's almost essential you pick the right spot among the bright mooing lights of the ken's capital.

A good excuse to splurge on this cuisine is when impressing visitors, so when my aunt and mum were over I took advantage. A little background check first; both guests are restaurateurs who have eaten and/or sold Kobe beef, and each owns a teppan-yaki (hot plate) restaurant. They can be a tough crowd, but I was quietly confident as a Japanese friend recommended the Kobe beef specialist (and you can't beat a good recommendation). This was not the first time I'd tasted the hops-filled animal either, so I had a few memories as a baseline.

I'll walk you through the experience. The restaurant is Kagura (神楽), its Kobe branch is a mere 5 minutes stroll from Sannomiya JR and on

the 7th floor of the Progress Kobe building, overlooking (some of) the great city. We were taken through to the teppan-yaki tables by some over-genki waitresses. There were two hotplates in the main room with a few punters (of the gaikokujin variety) sat round chatting and drinking as the chef on the other side of the hot plate entertained. The staff was very attentive, but I felt an air of Westernization (not just from the dining gaijin) as they pulled out our seats and began their memorized English script.

We sat in a row of three with the waiters and chefs looking over us from the other side of the teppan-yaki, as they gave their explanations of the meat sets. After some thought we opted for the 'domestic beef' set (Miyabi fillet), 'Japanese beef' set (Kagura sirloin) and the sumo of all sets, the 'Gyu' set – Kobe beef. Happy with our choices we proceeded to drink sake and catch up.

In Japan, the few teppan-yaki restaurants that I've been to have never had a 'show'; seeming to

follow a no-theatrics-at-the-table sort of policy. Hence why, as the first chef began, the feeling of westernization grew stronger. Our vegetable chef was a happy-go-lucky type with, what I'd call, lots of personality. Bless his chef-in-training heart, he tried. A few dropped pepper shakers and some bad puns about a prawn later and our vegetables were cooked. They were (credit to him) delicious, a medley of seasonal Japanese yasai.

The grand entrance of the beef came, presented on a wooden block baring all its marbled glory. It was set down next to us for full admiration, and then Genki Waitress 1 drops it on the unlit hotplate. Five second rule?

In all honesty we would have felt a little cheated if the geeky trainee chef were to cook our steaks, but low and behold the big dog stepped out and blew him out of the water with his juggling skills alone. The chef cooked our steaks medium and to perfection, with a big showy fire to start. We each tried all three. The Kobe beef itself was rich in fat which created

the melting sensation. It oozed with flavour and required minimal chewing. After two mouthfuls I felt saturated with my daily allowance of fat. Yes it is tantalizing and yes, it does taste like meat-flavoured butter but, is it worth ichi-man per 100g? Honestly? Not really. I thought the good old 'domestic beef' was a fine piece of fillet and at almost a third of the price, you can't complain. The middle one (Japanese beef) was well, a bit in the middle really.

After the steak, I couldn't move from the sheer richness of the beef, but alas the set must go on: garlic rice, lobster (average), tea, green tea ice cream then green tea itself. It was a modern day banquet. We were thoroughly satisfied with the amount we indulged in.

On leaving the premises Genki Waitress 2 chased us down with the staff camera and a box of dress up head gear demanding a photo. In my best Japanese and numerous bows, I politely refused several times, she was unconventionally forward yet I wore her down. The used head

wear, dinner-theatre and English 'jokes' made the place feel incredibly gimmicky. Although the food was good, not *ohmygodIwanttodienow becauseIwillneverbethishappyagain* good, but still above average, the atmosphere of the place was just not 'Japanese'. Do note, however, that back in England we use these gimmicky fire tricks and juggling acts to lure customers for a teppan yaki experience, and it does work. My party, however, had seen it all before and wanted to experience some authentic Japanese cooking, and a bit of modesty (I'm looking at you cow-shaped trophy, staring at us from behind the hot plate).

Despite this, I would recommend Kagura for a party! It is a great venue; they have a large semi-private area with about 3 hotplates sat side by side. As we were leaving a joshikai was starting, around ten glamorous girls marched to the sunken seats of the back room where three chefs were waiting to serve them. I would describe the place as a bit of (expensive) fun, but for a more authentic experience look for

somewhere low on foreigners, and if there's no English simply ask for the *osusume* – just make sure you take plenty of cash!

Cherie Pham

Tell me more!

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Lunch

11:00-14:30 (L.O) (¥2,000~¥15,000)

Dinner

17:00-21:30 (L.O) (¥5,000~¥15,000)

What I ate

Gyu course (120g) ¥14,091

Kagura course (120g) ¥7,508

Miyabi course (160g) ¥7,350

A review by two JHS ALTs

Hyogo Board of Education's annual Skills Development Conference

This year's Skills Development

Conference was a pleasant surprise. Sort of. Well, there were pieces that were helpful and interesting. Unfortunately, there were more parts of the Conference that were frustrating and disappointing.

On the plus side, it is advantageous for the majority of ALTs that the conference is on Awaji. Seeing as some ALTs have a long way to go, whether to Kobe or Awaji, the easy accommodations and parking is a definite plus.

A negative point is that the planning and preparation were poorly executed from our viewpoints. The information and reservation papers were late. Not everyone received the questionnaire emails or documents. Our schools were scrambling on the due date trying to get everything ready to send back for the SDC. The reuse of a snarky document to relay information was just dreadful. It was an unprofessional beginning to a professional development conference. We would also recommend not opening the conference by stating that ALTs complain all the time. It was offensive and did not put us in a mood to cooperate.

Following the Current State of English Education in Hyogo speech, there was a keynote lecture by Matthew Rooks, an associate professor at Kobe University. Having a former JET participant as the speaker was a welcome relief. Rooks, as a former ALT, knew about the circumstances and could relate to the difficulties that surround working in Japanese schools. It was also encouraging to hear about education in the universities so we can be more forward thinking as we prepare our students for their future education opportunities.

The main point Mr Rooks discussed was the awesome educational concept of autonomous learning. However, unless the ALT is in charge of the classroom, it is nearly impossible to simply implement autonomous learning without the explicit cooperation of JTEs. Autonomous learning needs to be cultivated and encouraged in every class by the main teacher in charge. It is important to educate the main instructor in the skills and implementation of autonomous learning. Unlike many things in a school system, this concept is something that can be used in a classroom

without all of the bureaucracy that is so prevalent in education. All the main teacher has to do is agree to put in the effort and actually try to involve the students in their own education. No special papers, stamps, or meetings required!

During the workshops this year, we had a lot of really thoughtful interactions between ALTs, JTEs, and larger groups. Nearly every group said, "Where is the JTE evaluation?" Should they use this method again next year, we fully expect there to be a JTE evaluation as well. Team teaching is a two-way street. We understand that the checklist was to provide communication between ALTs and their JTEs, but whenever the ALTs share their ideas – if we are to believe the opening speech – it comes across as complaining. We need to remove the stigma of ALTs voicing their concerns in the workplace. It could be as easy as a change in language from the ALT complaining about their schools to the ALT giving their JTEs feedback.

On Friday afternoon, we listened to some ALT presentations that fit pretty well into the theme of autonomous learning. These presentations were a great way to see examples of how to use the information from the conference. Unfortunately, the email for recruiting presenters was unclear and did not sound applicable to anyone other than SHS ALTs. Thankfully, the ALTs who presented showed their natural ability and left us with some great ideas to think about. Some lent themselves more easily to the JHS level than others, but it was still motivating to see ALTs thinking outside the box.

The points that stuck out to us were "No zombie! No robot!" in Ashley's presentation about student skits and taking a poll to learn student interests and learning styles in Alicia's presentation about motivating students. We've often taken polls at the end of a school year to see what the kids liked in order to adjust our teaching the next year, but no two classes are the same. It makes much more sense to evaluate your teaching earlier in the year and then adjust from there. We have used rubrics to evaluate skits before, but it

was a great idea to incorporate entertainment into the grade to make sure the students keep it fun. Another gem that has surfaced since the conference is the "Say What?!" YouTube channel. For those who haven't seen it yet, check it out [here](#). It's an ongoing project of Ashley's that really speaks the kids' language.

Overall, the priority of the Skills Development Conference is to develop skills. After all, it's in the name. However, the main problem with the Skills Development Conference of 2013 was that there was little to no actual developing of skills. We are presented with great ideas and goals but no down-to-earth, realistic ways to achieve the goals and ideas. Please give specific examples of methods to use to achieve the concepts proposed.

Our annual Skills Development Conference is two long days of meetings, lectures, and workshops. It is amazing that so many people come to Hyogo's every year. Hopefully the SDC will continue to evolve and improve so future ALTs and JTEs will find themselves better prepared for the challenges of teaching English.

Otsukaresama deshita!

November 21-22, 2013
Attended by 485 ALTs and JTEs



Feature



Skills Development Conference Enkai



>>>>>>>>> All photos taken by Matt Lim



What's Yours is Mine: China's new ADIZ

Maybe you have recently thought

to yourself, "Gee whiz, I've been working so hard creating engaging lessons, exploring a new country, and learning a new language, I have had no time to stay up to date on global current events." Even worse, with the holidays right around the corner, you have started to worry that you won't have anything interesting or relevant to share when you finally see your loved ones! Don't fret, all you need to do is sweep those thoughts of amazing holiday dishes aside and make way for a serving of international affairs concerning your current country of residence, Japan.

On November 23, 2013, China implemented an Eastern China Sea air defense identification zone (ADIZ), a move common for many countries as a way to identify or, if necessary, take action against incoming aerial objects. However, China's move has been seen as an unnecessary escalation of tensions between Taiwan, South Korea and, most importantly, Japan. The reason is that China's new ADIZ covers the air space of a number of disputed territories and in Japan's case those disputed territories are the Senkaku Islands, or Diaoyu Islands for the Chinese (Taiwan also lays claim to what they call the Tiaoyutai Islands, but they

are often ignored). These islands are currently uninhabited and were so when Japan first laid claim to them in 1895. Although business ventures were attempted, they failed and the islands were uninhabited once again. So why such a struggle for these tiny islands? Well in the late sixties and early seventies, research showed potential for oil reserves underneath the islands and if one thing can be said about oil it's that it has a funny way of surrounding itself with diplomatic dispute and war (cough, Middle East, cough).

The dispute tends to play itself out like a dysfunctional holiday meal: distant relatives awkwardly receive each other and everyone waits for the earliest opportunity to start eating and drinking as much as possible while ignoring each other. Then of course a harmless conversation of the weather turns into a belligerent screaming match across the table, some on the sidelines are egging it on while others shake their heads in dismay. Finally someone leaves, slamming the door behind them. Things settle down and kind of return to normal, that is until the next family get-together.

The timeline of this dispute can be found here. It shows that Japan and China often have moments of escalation followed by years or months of calm, with the hope that an agreement can be reached diplomatically. When this does not happen one party does something foolish, like when Shintaro Ishihara, a nationalist Diet member, tried to personally buy the islands, or when Chinese surveillance ships were sent to the islands for law enforcement during September of last year as anti-Japanese protests raged through China. These flare-ups tend to die down, but with each new one the flare tends to go a little higher, the risks greater.

For instance, think about the worst case scenario for this recent development. A Japanese passenger airline, flying over territory it believes to be its own, refuses to give flight plans ahead of departures and ignores incoming Chinese communications. The Chinese, perceiving a threat, force the aircraft down, or worse shoot it down. Japan retaliates along with its treaty-bound ally, the United States, and before we know it nukes are airborne. If you're thinking, "Wow, that escalated quickly," I'm right there with you (although

that last part is more for dramatic effect). However, parts of this scenario aren't so far-fetched. Although both All Nippon Airways and Japan Airlines initially decided to send flight plans ahead of departures, both have stopped sending the information due to pressure from the Japanese government.

For the most part world outrage has been targeted toward China. Days after the ADIZ's establishment world leaders described the unilateral action as extremely dangerous and that the claims should be dismissed. More specifically, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade called in its Chinese ambassador for an explanation, and the United States flew B-52s over the zone on what it called a "routine training mission." At the time of this article's writing the United Nations is also calling for the situation to be handled diplomatically. By the time you're actually reading this hopefully the situation will look a lot brighter.

One final note to discuss with your family over the holidays: why did China act in such a way that quite obviously labels it as an aggressor? One who is not part of China's political leadership can only venture guesses, so here are mine. Currently China may see

an opening on the world stage, and more specifically Asia, to assert its power as the rest of the world still collects itself after the devastating global recession. With other nations trying to get their own houses in order and the West intently focusing on deals with Iran and Syria, China may be experimenting on how it can act and how the world will respond to see what it can get away with in the future. Americans will remember that President Obama canceled his trip to the Asian-Pacific Economic Summit in October to deal with the government shutdown, a decision many view as benefitting China. Lastly, China has continuously struggled with popular demands for more freedoms; this was violently expressed by two terrorist attacks in late October and early November. What better way to divert attention from domestic injustice then with a rallying nationalist cry? As an American it's ironic that I should write this so close to Thanksgiving, a holiday celebrating the land grab policies of settlers. How the times have changed.

Sean Mulvihill



Temples 13 and 14:
Ishiyama-dera
and Mii-dera

Ishiyama-dera, temple number

13 on the route, and Mii-dera, number 14, are both located along the southern edges of Lake Biwa. We'll take them on in numerical order.

Ishiyama-dera is a beautiful temple upon a mountainside overlooking the lake; it is built on and amongst wollastonite rock formations that give it a different look from other temples I had seen along the pilgrim trail. It is also famously the place where Murasaki Shikibu began to write the classic *Tale of Genji*. (Author's confession: I have never read the *Tale of Genji*, and so while I should have been more awed to be in the very place she began that work, I was actually more into the rocks, the water, and the trees)

The principal image at Ishiyama-dera is of Nyoirin Kannon, the wish-fulfilling Kannon, and this one is specifically linked to marriage

and finding a partner, as well as being released from addictions. The image is only put on display once every 33 years and upon the enthroning of a new emperor. The zushi, which contains and protects the image, bears the imperial crest, and the key to it belongs with the Imperial Household Agency in Tokyo. When Imperial order allows the Kannon image to be shown, a representative of the Emperor comes to the temple and opens the zushi himself.

The grounds are full of interesting sights; the first few of which you will encounter are the gate, impressive as always, and then a small cave near the temizuya (hand washing station). Passing through the narrow cave is said to bring good luck. Further rock formations include the Kekai-ishi, the unique rock grove formed of wollastonite: this striking feature

was formed when a mass of limestone was heated by granite magma around 200 million years ago. The main Kannon image of this temple was placed on an outcrop of this rock formation, and then the temple was built around it. You will see coins on the rocks as offerings to the energy of the place. The effect is that the rocks look like they were caught in time while flowing.

Below the Hondo (main hall of worship), you'll see the red well, a sacred spring that is the source of water for all the temple rituals. The water runs through a series of caves all throughout the temple area. There's a Benzaiten, shrine to the patron of everything that flows (from water to artistic inspiration). Look for the mini-pilgrimage, containing a small shrine for each of the 33 stops. There is a pagoda, 2-storied, called a tahôtô; it is the oldest surviving example



of a tahōtō in Japan. Found only in Shingon temples, this form of pagoda incorporates the original Indian architecture of the stupa more visibly than other forms of pagoda.

Ishiyama-dera also has a monument to Lady Murasaki Shikibu, and you can also visit the moon-viewing platform (location the same, but the platform itself has been renovated many times) which is said to have inspired her great work of literature. It is tradition to write poetry as you watch the harvest moon rise; from this spot the moon is reflected in Lake Biwa as it ascends.

Temple 14, Mii-dera also has a lovely moon-viewing pavilion, but its claim to fame is the temple bell. Miidera's mark on the map is a large bell, and the temple is famous for more than one of the deep bells that often

characterize Japanese Buddhist temples. One of my favorite aspects of Mii-dera was its temple legend.

Not the one about the stolen bell (in which Benkei stole the Miidera bell during a raid [warrior monks back then, go figure], and as he carried it away toward Mt. Hiei it began to toll mournfully as if it wished to go home. It wouldn't stop, so Benkei brought it back to Miidera where it belonged), but one about the great serpent of Lake Biwa.

In that story, a man stops some kids from tormenting a snake, and then stops at an inn where he sees a beautiful attendant, hangs around for a few weeks and falls in love with her, they get married, etc. When they get ready to have a kid, she is like "don't go into this room until I come out, or say it's okay," so he agrees, but after a while the silence is really scaring him, so

he peeks in and sees the newborn baby being cuddled by a big snake. She of course is his wife/the great serpent spirit, and since he broke contract, she now has to go back in the lake. However, she leaves a note saying the baby is holding a jewel that keeps it from being unhappy, so the baby doesn't ever really cry. Then the local overlord hears about this jewel, demands it, has it seized, and the baby starts crying. The serpent had said if the baby were to ever get cranky, to bring it to this spot near the lake and it'll be okay. When the father does this, the serpent reappears and explains that the jewel was actually one of her eyes, and while she's at it, she doesn't really mind giving up the other one if it will make the kid happy. So she produces a second jewel and is therefore blind, but she says, in the evening go to Mii-dera and ring the bell so she'll hear it and know everything is okay.

So I really liked the idea of the Great Serpent of Lake Biwa swimming around down there, blind, but whenever pilgrims ring the bell (said to be the best-sounding bell in Japan), she is reassured that everything is a-OK.

The principal Nyoirin Kannon image at Mii-dera is not the principal image of the entire temple, but rather of the Kannon-do, or Kannon temple, there. The Kannon-do was relocated to a position lower down the mountain in 1481 so that female pilgrims, who were not allowed past the main gates of the male-only temple complex, could worship the Kannon.

Next to the Kannon-do you will find a pilgrimage temple, with images from 100 sacred places (33 from the Saigoku, that's the one we're on, 33 from the Bando pilgrimage (around Tokyo), and

34 from the pilgrimage in Chichibu (in the Chichibu mountains in Saitama). As you explore Mii-dera, take note of the beautiful structure of the main hall. Nearby, you will find the spring that gives the meaning of the temple name (三井寺 means three-wells-temple, apparently three different royal folks bathed in the sacred spring!), which still makes gurgling noises as the water bubbles up around the rocks. Above the viewing window, you'll see a beautiful carving of a dragon. Close to all this is Benkei's bell. You should also take a walk through the treasure hall/museum in the main area. On your way up to, or away from, the temple, take note of the Biwa Canal, constructed in 1885 and one of the first uses of dynamite in Japan.

How do I get there?

To get to Mii-dera, take the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto line and alight at the Miidera station, from which it's a ten minute walk.

For Ishiyama-dera, from Kyoto Station it's a 13 minute train ride to the JR Ishiyama Station. Take the Tokaido line to Ishiyama Station and follow posted maps and signs. If you take Keihan, change to the Ishiyamasakamoto line (石山坂本線) and then get off at the Ishiyamadera station, from which it's a ten minute walk.

Happy trails!

Lemmon

Websites

Ishiyama-dera [main page](#)

Mii-dera [main page](#)

Another
Recipe!

Super Sticky

Persinnamon Cake

Ingredients

- 125g flour 125g
- 100g oatmeal
- 100g golden caster sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3 persimmons (skinned and then grated – forms a bright orange pulp)
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 4 tbsp plain yoghurt
- 1 handful of chopped walnuts
- 1 handful of chopped raisins
- butter (to line the cake tin)

In Japan, where a single apple can easily set you back a whopping ¥500, if someone offers you free fruit, you take it and run. In November, however, this attitude, led to my having nine ripe persimmons and no clue how to eat them all before they went bad. Naturally, this led to a day of experimental baking [due to a woeful lack of recipes using the fuyu persimmon we get in Japan]. The result, judging by the rapid disappearance of the cake from the staffroom, was a success.

Step one

Throw your dry ingredients together.

Step two

Mix in the gooey persimmon mush, followed by the honey.

Step three

In a separate bowl whisk up your eggs, vanilla and yoghurt, then add to the mix.

Step four

Stir everything together until smooth before folding in the walnuts and raisins (taste the batter and add extra cinnamon if so inclined).

Step five

Pour everything into a circular 9" greased cake tin and bake in a preheated oven at 180° C. Check after 30 minutes; stick a knife in and if it comes out clean the cake is ready! I think my oven cooks a little cool, so I cooked for a further 15 minutes.

Note: it is very moist and sticky thanks to the persimmon juice and honey. If you prefer your cakes a bit drier, add a little more oatmeal to the mix. If I make this again I would like to add some nutmeg, but spices in Japan can be tricky to find, and expensive when you do!

Charlotte Griffiths

Where are they now?

Jonathan Shalfi is interviewed by Arjan Tulsi about his memories of being a JET in Hyogo, and what he's up to now.

When were you in Hyogo and where were you placed?

I was in Harima-cho from 2009 to 2012, teaching at Harima-Minami Senior High School. In my first year I also had a visit school one day a week (Kinjo High School – a night school in Akashi).

What was your favourite trip that you took when you were a JET?

My favorite trip was when I visited Hokkaido in August of 2010. Most people think of Hokkaido as a place to go to ski or snowboard, but there's a lot more to the place. There are some beautiful national parks and you get to see all kinds of landscapes and animals you won't elsewhere in the country. Plus the weather is nice during the summer months – while Hyogo was sweltering it felt like early fall in Sapporo.

Knowing that you like onsen and the outdoors, are there any onsen or hikes you'd recommend?

Though it's something of a cliché I always enjoyed the rock garden hike at Mt. Rokko. It's easy to get to and has good views. The old rail trail near Takarazuka is another good one, especially in the summer when you don't feel like sweating too much. If you're willing to go a little farther, I can recommend Yatsubuchi-no-taki, a hike in Shiga-ken. The Lonely Planet Hiking in Japan book is a good English-language guide.

As for onsen, you have to visit Kinosaki. We're lucky to be living in Hyogo because of it. Even in the summer it's nice, as there are nice beaches nearby where you can go swimming. Closer to home I always liked going to Kobe Sauna in Sannomiya – the onsen they have there is actually pretty good.

As a selective meat eater, is there anything that you'd rate as a must try food-wise in Hyogo?

For a meal you should try The Mid Diner, an almost-24 hour restaurant near Sannomiya. The food is pretty good and it's inexpensive (and there are non-meat options); plus there are a few tables on the sidewalk, and you know how special that is in Japan!

For something sweet you have to visit Juchem, the bakery that introduced the now ubiquitous baumkuchen to Japan more than 100 years ago. One of the company's first stores is still open, near Motomachi (café area upstairs).

What's your favourite memory of Hyogo?

My favorite memory (I should say memories) is the classes I taught. Teaching was rewarding and sometimes a lot of fun, especially when we did special lessons about American holidays or traditions. I'll always remember the multiple choice "quizzes" I gave the students to test them on their knowledge





of Americana. (E.g. Who is the popular mascot of July 4th? Most common answer: Captain America.)

What did you do immediately after leaving JET?

I immediately went to San Diego, where I started my graduate degree.

Did you suffer any culture shock?

Actually, no. Half the reason is that I went straight from teaching to starting a demanding graduate program, so I didn't even have the time to feel sad or lost in my new surroundings. The other half of the reason is that there are a lot of Japanese students in my program, San Diego has a lot of Japanese culture, and I was able to start

What are you doing now?

I am currently a student at IR/PS, the School of International Relations/ Pacific Studies at UC San Diego. I'm studying for a master's degree in international relations, focusing on Japanese energy policy. I'll be graduating this summer and plan to move back to Japan to pursue a PhD.

How did I end up doing this? Like a lot of JETs I knew I wanted to make Japan part of my life, and I wanted to be able to return to the country in the future. I thought about what I was interested in, how I could use my background (I studied engineering as an undergrad), and how I could make it back to Japan.

The inspiration to study energy policy came in two parts – one was the experience of living through March 11th and seeing the changes in Japan's energy use. I was fascinated by how energy became such a big part of the national dialog, as people were beginning to realize just how great the implications of the country's energy choices were. I wanted to

know more. The second thing that led me to study energy policy was, frankly, a lot of time at Junkudo. The store near Umeda (the big Maruzen one) has a big section of English language textbooks. Looking through some books on energy and environmental policy I realized this was something I was interested in and could study. It wasn't hard then to research some schools and go through the application process.

Things have been working out well. This past summer I had an internship in Tokyo, doing research on the expansion of the country's use of renewable energy. This spring I'll return to Tokyo to study abroad at Todai.

Any advice for current JETs looking to go to grad school?

The most important thing is to know what the ultimate goal is – this could be a type of job you want, a place you want to live, or even a lifestyle you want to have. From there you figure out how graduate school will help (or if it



even will). What kind of degree do you need? What is a good school to go to? And, how can you prepare for graduate school (as the work starts before you even enter)?

To know what the ultimate goal is you have to know yourself. I think everyone has some idea of what they want – even if it's vague or broad, think of this as a starting point. The more you pursue it the clearer the path will be.

To know what kind of degree you should study, I recommend visiting the Junkudo in Umeda that I mentioned earlier. Look through textbooks on different subject and see what you're interested in. If you want to go for an MBA, for example, find some business school textbooks and see if that's what you really want. You might be surprised at what piques your interest!

You can start researching graduate schools online, but once you have some options contact the schools. Talk to professors or administrative staff. You'll have introduced yourself to the school (which helps in the application process), and will learn more about the school itself. If possible, find time to visit schools before you apply. Even if you have to take a trip back to your home country, I highly recommend it.

Lastly, get started on graduate school before you actually enter the program. Find out what classes you'll be taking in the fall and get a head start on the material.

You should start the whole process at least a year in advance (of when you finish JET). You can't rush through making a big decision like attending graduate school.



Any advice or tips for current JETs?

My advice is to always be thinking about what you want to do after you finish. You don't have to be doing intense research about future careers but keep it in the back of your mind, and talk about it with your friends. It's almost a luxury having years to figure out what you want to do with your life!

December

Hyogo AJET event

Hanshin

Harima


Kobe

Tamba

Awaji

Tajima

Outside of Hyogo

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Japanese Language Proficiency Test Future Shorts Film Festival (Kobe)	2	3 Bon Jovi concert (Osaka)	4	5	6	7 Future Shorts Film Festival (Osaka) Block 6 Christmas charity bakesale (Kobe)
8 Book Club (Kobe) Block 6 Christmas charity bakesale (Kobe)	9	10	11	12 Kobe Luminarie by AJET	13	14 Ako Gishi Sai (47 Loyal Samurai Festival, in Ako)
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Kobe Luminarie (Dec 5 th – 16 th)		Kyoto Arashiyama Hanatouro 2013 (December 14 th – 23 rd)				
Nara Kusuha Wakamiya On-Matsuri (December 15 th – 18 th)			Ramen EXPO (Osaka Expo Park) 2 nd stage			
22	23 The Emperor's Birthday	24	25	26	27	28
2013 Ramen EXPO 2 nd stage (Dec. 20 th – 25 th)						
29	30	31 	New Year's holiday period (Hyogo prefectural JETs paid leave)			

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

ht

Japanese winter, justifying over indulgence in every form!