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.....inside.....

The Art of Bento

Perspective Above Mount Fuji

Where Are They Going?



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## Features

5 The Art of Bento

7 Perspective Above Mount Fuji

2 Hello! Message from the Editor

3 Hello! Message from the PR

4 Kicchiri Kitchen: Cold Somen Noodles

9 Review: Fuji Rock

11 Travel: Kannon

13 Let's Eat: Nomadika

15 Travel: Yakushima

17 AJET: JETAANY

18 AJET: Awaji Camping

19 Review: Beer Olympics

21 Let's Eat: Fusazushi

23 Ask Ava

25 AJET: Book Club

27 WATN: Goodbye

31 Calendar

## Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Charlotte Griffiths

Online: Dana Warren

Designer: Erika Horwege

PR: Matt Lim

Cover: Erika Horwege

Contributors: Claire Bronchuk, Ann Chow, Charlotte Griffiths, Ryan Hertel, Emily Lemmon, Matt Lim, Sean Mulvihill, Cherie Pham, Allison Stanfield, Dana Warren

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: hello!

*Hey there Hyogo,*

As I sat down to write this, my final Editor's letter, a huge thunder storm began. Out I went onto my balcony to watch the lights and marvel at the view which just never gets old. Sure, I was procrastinating, I'll even admit to indulging in a little melancholia. But that's natural at the end of a journey such as the one we are all currently on.

Nearly two years ago I came to Japan. I had very little idea of what was in store for me, or even what I wanted from the experience. There are many clichés I would like to employ, all of which I hope suit your experience too.

My time in Hyogo has been truly eye-opening: I wouldn't change a thing – unless it was to make each minute last a few seconds longer. Apart from the friends, memories and love of Japan, what I really want to take back with me is the eagerness to try everything once. I want to return to my home country with the same attitude I have here: saying yes to everything once. It is this that has truly made my experience. Of course it's also led to a few moments of embarrassment and awkwardness, but those make the best stories.

This week I have a lot of "lasts". It's Wednesday and I have already cried three times [wait...make that four], but I'm not ashamed to admit it. In fact,

I am proud. Of course I cry because I'm sad, but I wouldn't be sad if this job and adventure hadn't meant so much to me. Two years is the blink of an eye and an eternity.

My students often talk about their "precious thing/person/memory", and I've never wanted to use the phrase myself until now. My experience here will always be a precious memory for me and I want to thank you, Hyogo JETs, for being the only ones who will ever truly understand.

Going home is going to be tough. The dreaded "How was Japan?" question already plagues my dreams – how to sum this up in a word, a sentence, a soliloquy?! The only question I can answer without thinking: What was the most difficult thing about living in Japan?

Saying goodbye.

Hyogo, it has been an absolute pleasure to run the Hyogo Times for the last year. I hope you have enjoyed what we have put together for you each month. I know I leave the magazine in safe hands with Dana on the website, Erika on the PDF and my good friend, regular contributor Sean Mulvihill who will be taking over as Editor in Chief from August.

What's in this issue? Check the contents page yourselves this time – I need to get myself a tissue.

*Char x*



# hello!

## message from the PR

It's that time of year....

Every year July is a very exciting month for many people in the new JET community, as it's the month that the new JETs find out their placements. To the new JETs, welcome to one of the best, if not THE best, prefectures in Japan! I will go so far as to promise you that you will love many things about this place. I know you must be VERY excited, but don't get too eager to come over. Keep in mind that you have at least a year to explore and get to know this place, so take this time and spend it with your loved ones. Eat that local food you may take for granted. Visit that place that is special to you. However, don't feel sad because I'm sure you will all meet lifelong friends, find a local shop you can visit every week and discover a new special place, all within Hyogo. It will become your second home. So on behalf of the JETs in Hyogo, WELCOME! If you have any issues, feel free to browse the [Hyogo AJET website](#).

Unfortunately as new JETs come in, many of us (including myself) have to say bon voyage to our own JET experience. However long you have been here, the memories you have made are unique to you and will last a lifetime. As a JET leaving, I am very sad to leave this great place. I want to say a big THANK YOU to everyone I've met along the way, especially the Hyogo

AJET Team. They all have put a lot of effort into various things ranging from organising events to keeping the Hyogo AJET website up to date! Everyone else, please enjoy the rest of the time you are here in Japan. Try to challenge yourself this new year (even though it is half way through the year).

For everyone saying goodbye, make sure you keep the 12th of July open for the Official Hyogo AJET Farewell Party for 2014! This will be held at 19:00 at the Sogo Beer Garden in Sannomiya. If you don't know where it is, just meet at Tits Park at 18:45. It will cost 3,600\ for men and 3,200 for women. Please RSVP by July 5th on the [Hyogo AJET Facebook event](#) and write on the wall for plus ones.

Coming soon on the [website](#) will be your Hyogo AJET Rep Team for 2014-2015. Feel free to holla at them! ☺

Well that's all for me. Peace out Hyogo!

Matt Lim



## cold somen noodles

### kicchiri kitchen



### Ingredients

Cook time: 2 minutes

Prep time: 10 minutes

Serves 2

Ingredients:

100g dry somen noodles

Quarter lettuce shredded

Cucumber thinly sliced

Handful of cherry tomatoes

Hardboiled egg- quartered

Dipping sauce:

100ml dashi stock in cold water

4 tsp soy sauce

1 tsp mirin

½ tsp sugar

Thumb sized ginger cut up into matchsticks

"Atsui" needn't be the only word you use this summer to make small talk in the staff room. Make this easy peasy Japanesey somen lunch and you'll be bantering about bentos till school's out. Somen noodles are made of wheat flour and are usually served cold. With an easy dipping sauce, they can be a great addition to your leafy salad.

Step One

In a pan of boiling water, cook somen for 2 minutes.

Step Two

Drain somen noodles and cool under running cold water.

Step Three

Mix together all dipping sauce ingredients

Step Four

Toss salad ingredients together

Step Five

Bundle somen on top of salad

Step Six

Dip noodles into sauce or drizzle it over everything.

This will be my sayonara recipe as I'll be departing this food haven we call Japan (read more on [Where Are They Now](#)). But you're in for an upgrade: my dear, foodie friend Helen Yuan will be kindly inviting you into her kitchen to share all her favourite recipes from August. That's all folks.

Cherie Pham



# The Art of Bento

A bento requires three things: a box, tasty food, and visual appeal. The goal of bento is not just to take some food somewhere for later consumption. The goal is that when lunch time arrives the eater finds something visually appealing as well as edible inside that little box. Think of the bento box as an artistic medium. You can take that medium and create an intricately detailed masterpiece like this kyaraben, more practically, construct a simple arrangement of food that draws the eater into the lunch experience, more like arranging flowers in a vase than painting a picture. The road to even the simplest visual aesthetic still seems complicated, but all it takes are a few tools available in any grocery store.



First, the knife. Every cook needs a good knife and the bentoist is no different. Packing a bento requires food in small pieces that fit together in the box. Cutting your food prettily makes packing your box that much easier. My blade of choice is a 15cm ceramic chef's knife. This size is big enough for chopping most fruits and vegetables but also small enough for precision work. Ceramic keeps an edge longer than steel and the chef style is versatile.



## Some cutting methods:

>> The Julienne – Cutting veggies like cucumber and carrots into small, thin sticks adds clean lines to plain salads.

>> The Diagonal – Good for adding an interesting shape to any long thin foods, like hotdogs.

>> The Rolling Diagonal – Same as the diagonal except the food is rolled 90 degrees after each cut. The resulting uneven shape makes slippery food easier to pick up with chopsticks.



Another handy cutting tool is the shaped cutter. These mini cookie cutters are used to make cute shapes from carrot slices, cheese, ham and other flat foods. Cutting a few shapes to spread across the top of the bento instantly makes a plain meal adorable.



## Chopsticks

While I have been known to dump my lunch in the box with spoons and fingers, placing each piece for optimal artistry and hygiene requires the precision of chopsticks. When planning the meal use colorful foods, then, arrange the box to set off the colors. For example, the cherry tomatoes and yellow bell peppers in this bento make bright blocks of color, and the black olives contrast



nicely with the white potato cakes. I needed the chopsticks to keep those peppers straight and to place the chicken sideways. It may seem simple, but taking the time to place the food carefully makes all the difference to an attractive bento.

## Keep it Separated!

One key to a beautiful and delicious bento is to split up the parts of the meal within the box. Our eyes are drawn to lines and differences in color. Plus, separating the food keeps potentially incompatible flavors from mixing. A quick look at the bento aisle of the grocery store will show a plethora of separating accessories.

Silicone cups work well to keep wet or small foods from the rest of the bento. For example, in this plain bento of potato cakes, fish croquet, and salad, I used a yellow silicone cup to keep the salad dressing from making the rest soggy. Dividers are also versatile separation tools. Many bento boxes include hard plastic types that match the box's design, but there are many cute disposable kinds available as well. When packing the bento work from one end to the other, placing the dividers as you progress. Tiny bottles and containers are perfect for sauces and condiments that might make a food mushy or ugly. Using one or more separation tool is an easy way to make a beautiful bento.



## Finally, some sweet food tricks.

Like the shaped cutters, there are several quick tricks that add instant cute to a bento. While there are infinite kinds of food art, here are some of the simplest that I enjoy. Adding just one of them can change a bland lunch into something magical.

>> The Quintessential Octo-wiener – Slice a hotdog or wiener in half then cut the 'legs'. Though octopuses have 8, bentoists often settle for 4 or 6. Cut the legs halfway

along the octowiener, and heat in a greased pan or microwave. The legs will curl up wonderfully.



>> Apple Bunny – Slice an apple into wedges and remove the core. With one wedge, cut a 'V' in one half of the apple skin. Carefully peel back the bunny ears by partially slicing the skin on the sides of the 'V'. Cut off the triangle of skin that is left between the ears. Mix a small bowl of cold water with a teaspoon of lemon juice and dip the apple bunny in it to stop the apple from turning brown.



>> Nori Faces – Nori stamps are widely available and the resulting faces can be added to anything from onigiri, to boiled eggs, to a plain bed of rice, or even mashed potatoes.



>> Picks – These are not only useful when eating the food, they also add a touch of whimsy to any bento. Simply stick them into any firm item such as grapes or meatballs.

And there you have it. Bento is more than just food in a box. With a little preparation it can be a sumptuous feast for the eyes and the stomach.

Did you miss last month's 'The Science of Bento'? Find it [here](#).

Dana Warren



## Perspective Above Mount Fuji

I am not a sport's person. I'm a dog person, occasionally a cat person, but I definitely do not like sports. There's an exception to every rule, and I finally a sport that I like. Love. Want to do over and over again, maybe even multiple times in one day. It involves harnesses, and strapping someone to your back... if you're into that kind of thing.

Skydiving.

Skydiving is my new chocolate (and when I say chocolate I mean...). It's incredible. It's exhilarating. It's exactly what you'd expect when you imagine jumping out of a plane: lots of air, adrenaline, and "holy sh@ts!"

The idea of skydiving was planted by my Japanese professor in college. Shortly after arriving in America, she decided to go skydiving. She thought it was the next step after leaving her life in Japan and permanently moving abroad by herself. She had already taken a metaphorical leap, so why not go for the real deal? Apparently her English wasn't "good" when she went, but the fear of misunderstanding an instruction made it that much more thrilling. "Did he say left or right?" literally became a life or death question.



The experience made her feel more confident, not just with her language skills, but in every facet of her life. Also, she said that it was freaking awesome. Boom. Inception. Skydiving was now lingering in the space of my mind that rarely gets visited, waiting for inspiration.

In January, I got my failure notice for the JLPT 2. I didn't study, but if I'm honest, I didn't feel like I needed to. I was living in Japan! I studied Japanese throughout university and did a study abroad. My grandmother was Japanese!

Surely if I could navigate the metro system and order things off a menu, then I could pass a test. It really sucks to be wrong. It really sucks to have a piece of paper that verifies that you don't know how to read all the things that get passed around the office. That verifies that you didn't get the joke sensei told at the enkai. That sometimes you don't know what your cousins are talking about in their emails.

It wasn't that same day, but around that time I looked up skydiving in Japan. Being the master of independent research as I am, I googled: skydive Japan. I found two drop-zones, one in Tajima and one in Saitama. Although Tajima is by far closer than the Saitama location, posts from people who have been to both said they preferred the Saitama drop for the scenery and experience. I went to the [Tokyo Skydiving Club](#) website, found the tandem jump schedule, picked a date and signed up.

I really lucked out for the dates. As far as weather goes March is really a hit or miss in Japan, but that weekend was glorious. It was perfectly spring, sunny, and lovely. I've been to Tokyo many times and never seen Mount Fuji so clearly.

The Skydiving Club is situated in two caravans set up next to the drop site. Most of the crew understand and speak English pretty well, and were very friendly. The training was super-fast. I got into a suit, the kind that gas station workers wear, and met my sky-diving teacher, Keizo. After pleasantries, the first question was, "Do you understand Japanese?" I answered yes, and from there on, English was out. He strapped me into the chute-suit, made sure it was on right, then taught me the basic skills of the jump. He taught me the "banana bend," a jump position which prevents neck injuries, then led me to his truck and had me sit on the back and dangle my legs over. "This is



what you'll do before we jump." That terrified me. I imagined the world beneath the truck, beneath my dangling feet, ant-like and small.

Five minutes later we were in a van being driven to the plane, a teeny, tiny box of metal. They packed twelve of us -literally butt to butt-onto the plane and took off. The flight up was only a few moments-moments I spent trying to avoid eye contact with the cameraman who was filming what could have been the end. Keizo firmly squeezed my arm from behind me and told me to put my goggles on. It was go time. I watched in horrified fascination as the others jumped before me, feeling the airplane dip and lift every time one left. When it was our turn we crab-crawled to the edge of the plane. I swung my legs out and saw Mount Fuji, so beautiful, so small. I could see my neon sneakers hovering over Saitama. It was so clear. Keizo asked if I was ready.

For one whole minute we fell at full force. It was very uncomfortable. The air pressure made my eyes water and my cheeks puff apart like a dog sticking its head out the car window. I kept trying to touch my face, to adjust my goggles, to hold it together, but I couldn't move my arms out of a flying squirrel position.

Once the parachute was pulled it was a graceful and wonderful float of about ten minutes to the landing zone. It was amazing. It changed nothing. It changed everything. Do it. Do it. DO IT. When I was finally back on the ground I couldn't stop looking up.

Skydiving didn't change the way I feel about life, aside from opening my mind to extreme sporting, but it did put things into perspective. Thousands-kind of, and that's nice. It's what I needed. The JLPT doesn't test what I want to achieve by learning Japanese, not like solo travel, meeting and talking/listening to new people, and, yes, skydiving do.

Being in Japan as a JET, we've all taken a leap of faith into the unexplored, and we've all had moments when we're unsure whether we're "doing it right." From this experience I realized it doesn't matter much if I miss a few kanji, or if I don't understand everything. I can still enjoy the ride. I'd much rather test my understanding 1,000 miles above earth than stuck at a desk for a few hours anyway.

Allison Stanfield

All photos courtesy of the Tokyo Skydiving Club





# Beat the Heat: Fuji Rock Festival Preview

With rainy season all but over, it is now time to enjoy summer's sunshine whether that is by heading to the beach or having a barbecue with friends. Of course, nothing quite says summer like an outdoor musical festival in the foothills of Mount Naeba in Niigata, Japan. Fuji Rock Festival, presented by Smash Corporation, is your opportunity to catch three days of sun, smiles, and satisfaction. Think Coachella at a serene Japanese ski resort without (for better or worse) the copious drug use.

This year's festival will be held from Friday, July 25 to Sunday, July 27. However, if three days seem a bit excessive, or maybe just too expensive, one and two day options are available also. As for accommodation, it is hard to beat piling into a car with your closest friends, pitching a tent, and camping on the festival grounds (although special tickets are required). If you have never camped at a music festival before, it is recommended to try at least

once. In three days you create a communal atmosphere with the neighboring tents and cars and happily share what seems to be an infinite supply of alcohol and good vibes. You also stop caring about how you look and smell and become entirely focused on enjoying the music. Unfortunately, that nice bronze tan you work hard for disappears as soon as you shower, as you come to realize that dust and dirt caked your body and optimistically applied sunscreen further ensures tan prevention. Needless to say, if you are not the outdoorsy type there are plenty of hostels and hotels in the area, though you will need to take a bus or train to reach the venue. Information for first timers can be found [here](#).

Although Fuji Rock provides a wonderful natural setting and attractions for all ages, ("Hey Mom, can we go to [Kids Land](#)?"), the only thing that really counts is the music. A wave of disappointment spread over potential festival-goers when earlier this year headliner Kanye

West canceled. However, there are still more than enough great and arguably better musicians to keep excitement high. The festival is unique for Japan in that artists come from a variety of genres and nationalities with some being more recognizable than others. Headliners for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are Franz Ferdinand, Arcade Fire, and Jack Johnson, respectively and with over thirteen other stages there are destined to be more than enough bands to maintain your interest. A few of the other bigger names to grace Japan with their presence include The Flaming Lips, Foster the People, Outkast, Disclosure, First Aid Kit, Bombay Bicycle Club, Lorde, MOE., St. Vincent, The Lumineers, and the one and only Yoko Ono with her Plastic Ono band. Of course music festivals are also the perfect time to find new artists or DJs while enjoying some of your favorites.

Given the limited time in Japan of most of us on JET, it comes down to one question: what is the likelihood of

experiencing this event again? If you are like me and unsure of how long you will be in Japan, the sooner you go to Fuji Rock, the better. Or maybe you simply want to be able to spit out a ridiculous number of concert events you have been to – which is why Sasquatch, Bonnaroo, Austin City Limits, and Burning Man are still on my list. That too is a valid reason to check it off your list as soon as possible. If, however, Fuji Rock Festival is unlikely to be a part of your summer plans, keep an eye out for our August issue for a preview of Osaka's Summer Sonic lineup. Summer is a time to take advantage of the numerous unique opportunities Japan has to offer – how many matusris and music festivals can you see in one season?

Sean Mulvihill





Hello Hyogonians!

We have come to the end of the temples with which I have any direct experience; I'd like to leave you with an overview of those temples that remain. All ten of these temples were out of my reach either for timing or travel reasons, one of them beckon spectacularly, and I hope to get back to Japan to visit them one day, especially temples 1 and 33, although each one appears to have its own unique charm.

Seiganto-ji 青岸渡寺 - Temple 1

Location: , Higashimuro District, Wakayama

Main Image: Nyoirin (Wish-fulfilling) Kannon

Special information: Although it is one of the farthest from Hyogo, this temple is a spectacular one. It is joined with the Nachi Taisha, one of the grand three shrines of Kumano. The famous Nachi waterfall is one of the main features of this shrine. There is also a sub-temple, Fudarakusan-ji, from which 60-year-old abbots once sacrificed themselves by being put to sea. Between the glorious Nachi waterfall, the imperially protected virgin forests, the ancient mountain paths, and the coastline dotted with fishing hamlets and hot springs, Seigantoji is a destination in and of itself.

Important Dates: The main Kannon image goes on display yearly on August 17th. Nachi Taisha (grand shrine) has a fire festival on July 14th.

Find out more: [here](#) and [here](#).

Sefukuji 施福寺 - Temple 4

Location: Makiosanchō, Izumi-shi, Ōsaka-fu

Main Image: Senjū Kannon - This is the only temple on the route where Kannon is not the central figure of veneration (the main figure being Miroku (Maitreya), the Buddha of the Future).

Special information: Sefuku-ji can only be reached by a steep climb up a set of stone stairs; this hike is one of its main features, and is the path along which you will see many of its

other enchantments, including statues and thatch-roof shrines. Sefukuji's formal name is Makinodera 模尾寺, which means "Temple at the End of the Sutra". It is said that when the mountain ascetic Gyōja was wandering through the area chanting the Lotus Sutra, this was the place he rested at the end of his long recitation.

Important Dates: The Kannon image is displayed yearly on May 15th.

Find out more: [here](#) and [here](#)

Iwama-dera 岩間寺 - Temple 12

Location: Ishiyamauchihatacho, Ōtsu, Shiga

Main Image: Senjū (Thousand-armed) Kannon

Special information: Iwamadera is difficult to reach by public transportation, but a local bus does run on the 17th of each month for the temple's famous ceremony for the prevention of senile dementia. The temple has a female abbot, and is connected to the ascetic mountain practices of shugendo. On the grounds are a few sacred aktsuura trees, as well as an image of Bokefuji (prevention of senile dementia) Kannon. It is a peaceful and sacred space.

Important Dates: The main Kannon image goes on display every 33 years.

Find out more: [here](#)

Yoshiminedera 善峯寺 - Temple 20

Location: Oharano Oshiocho, Nishikyo Ward, Kyoto

Main Image: Senjū Kannon has 42 arms which represent the one thousand arms: each hand holds an implement symbolic of Kannon's power to heal, and each one of these arms is also represented as a figure of Kannon.

Special information: Yoshimine-dera is one of those large mountainside complexes with a lovely view over Kyoto. The temple is also home to Japan's #1 pine tree, the Yuryū no Matsu (Playing Dragon Pine). The gardens blend into the natural mountain landscape, where wild herbs are collected by temple priests for the traditional herbal baths

offered by the temple between May and October when the Kannon image is open to viewing (thus the pilgrim is healed in body as well as spirit). The temple is famous for miracles of healing.

Important Dates: The Kannon image is opened on the second Sunday of each month for pilgrims to see, at which time, the temple also offers a curative herbal bath for pilgrims in a special bath house for that purpose.

Find out more: [here](#) and [here](#)

Anaōji 穴太寺 - Temple 21

Location: Higashinotsuji-46 Sogabecho, Anao, Kameoka, Kyoto Prefecture

Main Image: Shō Kannon (sacred Kannon), a secret image shown once every 33 years. This image is also known as Migawari Kannon - Self-sacrificing Kannon - which relates to the founding story of the temple. She is also called Anzan Kannon, who is believed to grant easy childbirth.

Special information: This is a quiet little temple sitting peacefully amid the rice fields in a village that seems barely touched by modern times. There is an exquisite wooden image of the Nehan Buddha inside the old temple, slumbering under his quilt, waiting for pilgrims who come to touch his body in the hope of being healed. Self-Sacrificing Kannon is so called for taking an arrow in the place of the statue's sculptor priest, who was targeted after finishing the work.

Important Dates: Kannon image is opened once every 33 years.

Find out more [here](#)

Matsuno-dera 松尾寺 - Temple 22

Location: Matsunoo, Maizuru, Kyoto Prefecture

Main Image: This is the only temple on the pilgrimage whose principal image is Bato Kannon, which has a wrathful face; and instead of a small image of Amida Buddha at the front of the head-dress Bato Kannon has a horse. This Kannon takes care of the spirits of the dead who are trapped in the Realm of the Animals, and has been revered here for over a thousand years as a protector for farming husbandry, as well as horses for transport, and even for ensuring success at horse racing!

Special information: Matsunō-dera is a quiet rural temple set high on Mt Aoba overlooking the wild and rugged northern coastline. The temple has a faded elegance that is very charming. There is no public transport going to the temple, and the long walk from the train station up through the primeval forests of Mt Aoba can really feel like a pilgrimage from days gone by.

There is a two-kilometer pathway to the mountain top,

where the Okunoin (Inner Sanctum) is located. It starts behind the Hondo and rises straight up, culminating a rope-haul to mount the summit. The view and the satisfaction of climbing such should be well worth the effort.

Important Dates: The main Kannon image is never shown (image is of the maedachi, which sits outside the zushi)

Find out more: [here](#) and [here](#)



Chikubushima 竹生島 - Temple 30

Location: Chikubu Island in Lake Biwa, Japan [[Access](#)] by ferry either from Omi Imazu (west side) or Nagahama or Hikone (east side)

Main Image: Senjū Kannon, open once every 50 years.

Special information: Chikubushima is a tiny island in the middle of the vast Lake Biwa. The temples and shrines on the island are sacred to a number of syncretic Buddhist and Shinto feminine deities: Kannon, Benzaiten, Asaihime and Ichikishima. This mystical island is steeped in legends and folklore, and its caves were home to many hermits, shamans and wandering monks dating back into the mists of time. Although the goddesses who are venerated here have individual names, their identities seem to merge and the island's main energy seems to be the Divine Feminine itself. Pilgrims come here especially to ask the Muse for inspiration for their arts in the areas of literature, music, painting, poetry, dance, and calligraphy.

Important Dates: Kannon image shown on the 18th of each month.

Find out more [here](#)

Chōmeiji 長命寺 - Temple 31

Location: Chomeijicho, Ōmihachiman, Shiga

Main Image: Senjū Kannon

Special information: Climbing up the steep 808 stone steps to the temple you can feel a deep connection to the multitude of pilgrims who have passed here before you. The steps go through an ancient bamboo grove, and the bamboo poles clack together as if accompanying the pilgrims' chanting, encouraging you on. Chōmeiji is dedicated to longevity, and you might feel as though the merit gained by climbing up the mountain will extend your life anyway! The mountain comes straight up from the east side of Lake Biwa and the view over the lake from the temple is worth





the climb. The few temple buildings are arranged along a narrow strip of land, and there is a lovely peaceful atmosphere here.  
Important Dates: The Kannon image is never shown.  
Find out more: [here](#)

### Kannonshōji 観音正寺 - Temple 32

Location: Ishidera, Adzuchi-cho, Gamou-gun, Shiga

Main Image: Senjū Kannon

Special information:

Nestled in a narrow strip of land on Mt Kinugasa, Kannonshōji has always been an important destination for mountain ascetics who practiced their austerities amid the strange massive boulders that cover the mountain. There is a profound mystical energy here, and many of the rocks are carved with ancient Buddha figures that are now faded and worn from the weather and covered in lichen and moss. You really feel as though you might be spirited away by mountain sprites as you wander any one of the eight approach pathways up the mountain. The temple complex was struck by lightning in 1990, completely destroying the temple and its sacred image of Kannon. The new temple, with its new magnificent thousand-armed Kannon, was only opened in 2007.



### Kegonji 華嚴寺 - Temple 33

Location: Ibigawa-chō, Ibi-gun, Gifu-ken

Main Image: Jūichimen Kannon

Special information: The final temple of the pilgrimage is far up in the mountains in Tanigumi. Here many pilgrims place their jackets and books and staffs as an offering to Kannon in thanks for their successful journey. There is a sense of weariness here that echoes the fatigue one feels at the end of this long journey. There is a passageway within the temple that goes deep underneath the inner sanctum that contains the secret image of Kannon. This pitch-black chamber is called the "womb," and once you enter the darkness of the passage and come out the other side, you are said to have been reborn and are ready to return to the mundane world, carrying Kannon's sacred power and blessings with you. (from sacredjapan.com)  
Important Dates: The Lily Garden opened on June 8th, and will remain so until July 20th.

Find out more: [here](#)

Get out there and explore, and if you get a chance to visit any or all of them, be sure to tell me (and Hyogo Times) about your adventures!  
Been a pleasure hitting the pilgrim trail with you,

Sammon

let's eat!

# Nomadika Cafe & Bistro, Kobe

A boozy lunch experience, let's blunch!

Our beloved Kobe is not only famous for its drunk cows but also has a decent café scene. The fool proof place for a savvy lunch or kitsch coffee is definitely (in my opinion) Motomachi, those of you who have ever attended a [Hyogo AJET Book Club](#) will be aware of my obsession with this area. A ten minute walk south-west from Sannomiya station will land you in café central. Vintage shops, boutiques, burger joints and veggie cafes make up the majority of businesses in Motomachi. When there is this much choice in a quieter end of town, one can get overwhelmed. But I'm here to help: I've singled out one particularly delightful café & bistro that only opened its doors in April 2014.



[Nomadika](#) (the choice for June's Hyogo AJET Book Club venue) is a bright, spacious place with the added touch of pastel coloured bikes as décor and hipster merchandise in one. The wide, wooden tables, fresh look and floods of natural sunlight plead for summer get-togethers and long lunches.

The lunch menu is simple with only four dishes to choose from; two pasta dishes, grilled pork loin and (always managing to make an appearance)



Wagyu beef steak-frites. After sampling the spicy tomato, octopus and squid pasta and the tender pork pasta I can conclude that both are satisfactory lunch meals. The ingredients were fresh and the sauces well seasoned, but don't expect to be transported to Italy in one mouthful.

The lunch set ranges from 1280 ¥ to 2000¥ which includes salad, bread, homemade gazpacho and all-you-can-drink wine. YES you heard right, until 3pm, you can indulge in all the sparkling wine from the bar and all the wine from the wine cellar to your liver's content. We can give those Wagyu cattle a run for their money! Nomadika operates a self service drinks bar with a variety of exciting soft drinks too, including rooibos iced tea (also known as red bush tea) and balsamic vinegar juice for the more daring.

With places like Nomadika, Kobe has reinvented brunch by a subtle change in lettering, blunch. Ready to be entered into the Oxford English Dictionary:

Blunch. (noun) a boozy lunch  
(verb) to blunch: we regularly blunch at the weekend but rarely remember doing so...

Begin with a tipple, follow with tiramisu (+200¥ to the lunch set), cure the midday hangover with a latte, stumble into the evening, or stay for a Eurasian dinner. All doable at Nomadika café & bistro.

Join the blunch revolution.

Cherie Pham

More Information:

のまでいか

[Website](#) (Japanese only)

Every day 11:30-23:00

Irregular holidays

050-5887-6834

兵庫県神戸市中央区北長狭通  
3-9-10 青柳ビル1F





# You, Your Feet, and Yakushima

If April's article "[The Do's and Don'ts of Yakushima Hiking](#)" by Paige intrigued you, read on for details about the most popular hikes on Yakushima and getting around the island without a car!

First things first: don't expect your typical walk in the woods! The many forces of nature combine to make Yakushima unique experience. In addition to the beautiful vistas and natural scenery, Yakushima is home to several ancient cedar trees, than 1,000 years in age, reverently referred to as Yaku Sugi. The island's natural landscape was also the inspiration for the famous Miyazaki film, "Princess Mononoke". After hiking for a few hours in San's original stomping grounds, you might even see a kodamo!

Exploring Yakushima without a car is possible!

Public buses can take you from the major port towns (Miyanoura and Anbo) to the most popular hiking trailheads. The difficult part is the scheduling: most buses only run a few times per day. However, if you're willing to commit a few extra minutes to logistics, you'll see that the bus schedules are intentionally planned to align with the estimated time it takes to complete the major hikes. Additionally, you'll find many taxis on the island along with clear, pre-set prices for popular routes.



## >> Shiratani Unsuikyo Gorge

Estimated time from trailhead to Taikoiwa Rock = 220 minutes / 150 minutes (~6 hours)

Distance (roundtrip): 11.6 kilometers, 7.2 miles

Starting Point: Kusugawa Trailhead

Access: By taxi from Miyanoura 2,750¥, ~30 minutes

Return: Take a bus back to Miyanoura or Anbo, ~500¥

Terrain: Dirt & rocks, wooden boardwalks, wooden stairs

Cost: 300¥ entrance fee at the trailhead

The Shiratani Unsuikyo Gorge is accessible via the Kusugawa Trail. Kusugawa boasts patches of dense forest remnants of the old "sidewalk" built by loggers' wives who carried chopped cedar shingles out of the woods. There is a section of the trail that runs the Princess Mononoke Forest. Several sources state that this patch of forest was landscaped to resemble scenes from the movie. Regardless, the entire trail is stunning with plenty of places to rest and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you.

Most people to Mononoke Forest and turn back, but for those with extra time, the true visual feast is at Taikoiwa Rock. To reach the rock, continue past the Mononoke strip and brace yourself for a very steep twenty-minute climb up the mountain. You'll break through the bushes and suddenly find yourself on top of a large rock, jutting out over the valley. The view is incredible with a horizon eerily obscured by shifting clouds. The density of the tree tops below you makes the forest canopy look like gently rolling hills. The wind can be a bit strong up here, so pack a thin, warm layer.

## >> Jomon Sugi

Estimated time from Arakawa trail > Okabu trail > Jomon Sugi and return = 290 minutes / 270 minutes (~9.5 hours)

Distance (roundtrip): 24.2 km, 15 miles

Starting Point: Arakawa trailhead

Access: By bus from Miyanoura, 1,380¥

Return: By bus from Arakawa trailhead, 1,380¥

Terrain: Old wooden railroad tracks, dirt & rocks, lots of wooden stairs

Cost: Suggested donation upon return to trailhead 400¥

You'll need to devote an entire day to Yakushima's most famous and most challenging hike: the ten-hour roundtrip trek to Jomon Sugi, the oldest cedar tree in the forest. The trail begins the small town of Anbo at the Arakawa trailhead. first glance, the bus schedule seems hideous because of the early and infrequent times. However, considering the length of the hike, Yakushima's public transportation service has actually done quite a good job of setting you up for an adventure. From Miyanoura, you'll catch the first bus at 4:30 am, switch buses at the Yakusugi Shizenkan Museum, and arrive at the Arakawa trailhead around 6:00 am., you have ten hours to complete the loop before the last bus departs from the trailhead at 4:00 pm. We returned a little before 3:00 pm and there was an unscheduled bus waiting for hikers.

If, like me, you're not a morning person, try to mitigate your pre-dawn grumpiness by enjoying the camaraderie of the hiking community. It's motivating to see other hikers and backpackers slowly wandering towards the bus stop. the bus switch, you'll purchase a second ticket and line up

with the crowd. Multiple buses are in service to assist all the hikers - so don't worry if several full buses depart without you. Once at the trail head, in as groups the morning with stretches, yoga and motivational.

The first two and a half hours of the hike follow the tracks of the old railroad. In the early 1900s when the forest was heavily harvested, the railways were used to giant cedar trunks. part of the trail is a mixture of eerie and boring. The tracks around the sides of the mountain, crossing powerful rivers and gorges. Like most nature hikes in Japan, there no barriers, no railings, nothing to stop you from falling off the countless bridges and suspended tracks. Every so often 'll see scraps of metal ripped up from old or forgotten pieces of new tracks never built, hidden among the foundations of abandoned towns.

About halfway the trail, railroad disappears and you will enter a dense forest area, beginning ascent up into the mountains. The path here rougher, with lots of stones and climbing as well as a series of tall wooden staircases. The vegetation thicker and previously forgotten paths and sunken bridges visible in places.

Less than two hours before the trail's end, 'll come across Wilson's Stump. 191, English botanist Ernest Henry Wilson explored Yakushima and "discovered" a giant cedar tree stump. He estimated that when the tree was cut down, sometime in the 1500s, it was over 3,000 years old. The stump has a diameter of 4.3 meters (14 feet). least twenty visitors can enter through an arch in the wooden walls at the same time.

After another long series of stairs, lined with small wooden platforms perfect for picnicking, you will finally crest the hill and see Jomon Sugi. This wooden king of the forest is named after the Jomon Period. Scientific tests place Jomon's age at about 2,170 years while natural judgments based on the tree's height and girth suggest an age of 7,000 years. Due to conservation efforts, an ugly chain link fence protects Jomon. Visitors can stand on a platform about thirty feet away from the tree. f I'm being honest, I thought Taikoiwa Rock was more impressive. Still, seeing Jomon after our intense, five hour hike deep into the forest was a rewarding experience and a worthy accomplishment to reflect



on as we made the return journey.

## >> Yakusugi Cedar Land

Estimated time to circuit the park = 150 minutes

Distance: 3.2 km, 1.9 miles

Starting Point: Park entrance

Access: By bus from Miyanoura, 1,310¥

Return: By bus from park entrance, 1,310¥

Terrain: Wooden stairs, earthen trails

Cost: 300¥ entrance fee

The Yakuugi LandPark is home to about dozen yakusugi trees. Here, the paths are well maintained and the hiking is reduced to a "walking trail". This is where people come to see yakusugi without trekking for hours. We were expecting a calm pleasant morning and afternoon in the park but the weather not allow it. What started as steady rain quickly became a torrential downpour. We only spent a few hours inside the park, navigating a simple trail that quickly turned into a flood course. The hikes around the park are well labeled with names and estimated times. There are small covered shelters along the way. The visitor's center has a rest area on the second floor but does not offer food or drinks, save for the vending machine. We took the earliest bus to the park, lumbered through the pouring rain for a few hours, and then sat in the visitor's center for several more hours until the next bus arrived.

When returning to Hyogo, consider pausing at Kagoshima Port to hop on the ten-minute ferry to Sakurajima, the volcanic island in the middle of Kagoshima Bay. The volcanic activity on the island creates interesting attractions including volcanic foot baths. is a bus system that circles the main attractions on the bay side of the island. The bus will pause at all the observation points for five to ten minutes, so you can plan to make one loop on the same bus, finishing at the ferry port.

To have the most unique Yakushima experience possible, tailor your itinerary to fit your needs. Don't forget to consider buses before renting a car and know that the taxis services are friendly, trustworthy, and dependable.



Claire Bronchuk

>> Trek map

>> Taxi/ bus prices

>> Hiking Map of

Yakusugi

Cedar Land



# Once You're a JET, You're a JET All The Way

## Hello Hyogo-ites!

Just as I did last year in these very pages, I would like to encourage prospective returnees to join their local JET alumni chapter upon going home.

Through local chapter activities, former JETs are able to promote a broader and deeper understanding between Japan and their home country at the grassroots level by being engaged in various cultural and social activities. Each chapter offers different social, cultural and professional events.

As the Membership Development Chair of the New York chapter, I would like to extend an invitation to any JETs who are coming or returning to New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania. Visit [our website](#), and [like us on Facebook](#) to see photos from our past events and information about upcoming events. You can also sign up for our newsletter by clicking "Join JETAANY" at the top of our homepage to keep abreast of any news, job postings, and upcoming events.

Aside from the many events we have, the JET alumni community is also a great support group. One of the ways to lessen the blow of reverse culture shock on your return home is by joining your local JET alumni chapter. We are told "Every Situation Is Different," but we all have a shared experience

that may be hard to explain to our friends and family back home. Being a part of the alumni network allows you a smoother transition back into your post-JET life whether or not you have clear goals of where you'd like to be professionally. Staying connected to JET through your local chapter helps to build the program for generations to come. With your involvement, the JET Alumni network will only continue to grow stronger.

Stay connected through the following websites!

>> [JETAA International](#)

>> [JETAA USA](#)

>> NY Chapter: [website](#) and [Facebook](#)

Ann Chow (Hyogo ALT, 2007-2009)

>> Ann Chow is the Membership Development Chair of JETAANY (JET Alumni Association of New York) and served as the Editor of the Hyogo Times in 2008-2009.

## Awaji Camping Trip May 31st-June 1st

A group of 20 individuals, mostly made up of Hyogo JET ALTs, is rumored to have taken part in a camping and entertainment experience on the southern shores of Awaji Island over the period of Saturday, May 31st to Sunday, June 1st. According to witness reports, fun and festivities were had. It is believed that a short cruise on a tour boat to the Naruto whirlpools and a visit to Awaji's famous puppet theatre occurred in the early afternoon on Saturday. These enriching and darned-fun activities were purportedly followed by a stop for fresh Awaji pizza made from local ingredients.

A visibly frazzled clerk from the Minamiawaji location of the popular chain of AEON shopping facilities witnessed the group of "definitely not from here" people purchasing what he could only assume was enough food to last the winter in some kind of foreigner enclosure or cave. He was furthermore quoted as saying, "Well gee, I just ain't never seen a something quite like that group of strange-folk. If they visible emotions is the same as mine though, I'd have to tell ya that they was havin' fun!"

Three glorious wooden cabins, one more than even expected, in the Janohire Auto-Camp Park were observed being occupied by the mysterious group throughout the night.

One source has stated that he witnessed burgers and meats being places on an impressive set-up of two charcoal BBQ grills. A large,

fresh salad is also rumored to have made an appearance. Multiple reports of a birthday and subsequent cake were also received. Neighboring campers were in various states of bewilderment and awe upon laying their eyes on a game played with the local children that may have been called "Furizbee." The pleasant sounds of guitars and anecdotal conversations wafted throughout the park, laying a cozy atmosphere upon the area, so several observers have claimed.

Before the group mysteriously vanished into the ether, many Awaji beef burgers appeared to have been consumed the top of one of Awaji's picturesque mountain peaks. The smell of the beefonion combination is said to have titillated the friendly, yet enchanting population of Awaji monkeys, which may have then gorged themselves on potatoes and peanuts in celebration. As a show of good faith, the smallest monkey was seen to attempt to take his first solo steps in front of the crowd of visitors to his native land.

A city official who has asked to remain anonymous has stated that the island's collective governments are preparing for May 23, 2015, when it is rumored that similar events may occur again.

Ryan Hertel



# Going for Gold: Kansai Beer Olympics

Earlier last month some of Kansai's finest beer enthusiasts came together to show off their drinking prowess in the 5th edition of the Kansai Beer Olympics. Keeping their glory days alive, over 60 competitors met on June 15 at Naniwanomiya Park, across the street from the Osaka Castle complex.

After initial greetings, applying sunscreen and choosing between beer and chuhai, contestants prepared themselves for six events, some already having a head-start due to the Japan v. Côte d'Ivoire match earlier that day. After each team's name was introduced, including Team Kermit, Team Tough, and Team High Five, they began in earnest to think of the best team chant and "yo mama" joke. Although striving to bring out their inner cheerleader, most teams went with a loud and in-your-face approach, and many of the jokes garnered laughs thanks to teenage obscenity.

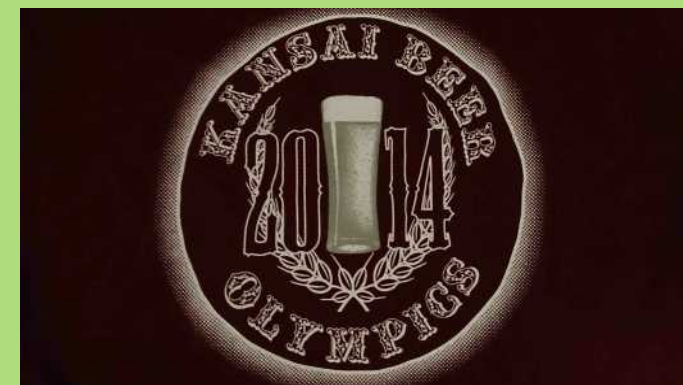
Creativity, however, was soon left behind as the five events went on to challenge both one's drinking speed and motor skills. Teams paired off to play one another for one

round of flip-cup, then individuals were given the opportunity to earn points for their team in limbo (yours truly coming in at a close third). Filling their glasses before each activity, contestants impressed the judges with their speed and endurance as they ran in a dizzy bat sprint, which involves running to a bat, spinning around it ten times, and running back so the next teammate can start. An uncoordinated five-legged race followed shortly after. Finally, as the sun sank lower in the sky and the afternoon cooled, players lined up in a no-hands relay for the last event where they quickly filled a bucket with beer, only to consume it even faster.

The annual event is the brainchild of Josh "Mojo" Gautreau from Little Long Beach bar in Shinsaibashi, whose leadership throughout the day is to be commended given the competition's nature. As more and more alcohol was consumed, getting everyone to comply with the rules was a little like herding cats, but Josh and his team of judges did a wonderful job. However, the event's success was also due to the number of gracious Kansai sponsors, many also found in the Shinsaibaishi area. The various

businesses including Slices, Café Absinthe, The Little Clover, and Cinquecento, helped by providing sleek t-shirts for competitors and prizes for the winning team. Finishing around six in the evening after a full six hours, everyone made their way over to Little Long Beach bar for free appetizers and the announcement of the Olympic winners. However, by this point most people were happy enough to have participated in the day's games and have something else in their stomachs other than alcohol. Alas, though sharing the top prizes with my team - 5000円 to enjoy on pizza and another 15000円 to cover the expenses at a number of Osaka's fine nightlife establishments - felt great, I cannot say the same for the following day. Although Josh Gautreau will be leaving Japan this year, he will pass on the torch to keep the festivities going. Make sure to keep an eye out for the next Kansai Beer Olympics in May 2015.

Sean Mulvihill





let's eat!

# Kobe's Best Secret: Fusazushi

Sushi is probably Japan's most well-known cuisine and in the country you are spoilt for choice, with such a huge variety of price, quality and venue. For the freshest fish it makes sense to eat sushi straight off the boat, and Japan's incredible wholesale markets are ideal for this. For many, Tokyo's Tsukiji market is top of the list and, in search of a Kansai equivalent I visited Endo Sushi at Osaka's market with high hopes. It was good, but didn't blow my mind. I love me some raw fish and am on a bit of a sushi and sashimi pilgrimage. So far, I've scraped the raw flesh out of a crab's leg in Hokkaido, caught my own fish in an amusing place in downtown Osaka, got up at 3:30am to visit Tsukiji (even then we didn't get into the tuna auction!), returned to Tsukiji at a more reasonable hour for breakfast, ventured overseas to compare Korean sushi to the original (let's just say classic is best)...with this experience I am pretty confident in claiming to have found a better option: Fusazushi at Kobe City Central Wholesale Market.

I went to this hidden gem on the recommendation of a foodie teacher. This is the same woman who took me to a shed of a restaurant filled to the rafters with precariously stacked cardboard boxes - you would not want to be there during even the tiniest of earthquakes - and taught me to get the most of sake by accompanying it with tiny purple squid - weird but pretty wonderful. She seriously knows her stuff. And so, with handwritten directions and high expectations I dragged four friends and fellow sushi fiends to Fusazushi.



It was a typical rainy season Sunday and thanks to the ten minute walk from Fukae station (Hanshin) our feet were soaked from puddles when we arrived at the deserted market at 10:30am, long after any auctions or produce sales had wrapped up. A boarded-up market is quite an eerie place when each raindrop echoes along the cardboard box-strewn alleys. It feels desolate; the exact opposite to a bustling market and like the beginning of a good apocalypse film. Nevertheless we soldiered on - investigative journalism is not for the faint of heart.

With not a soul in sight to ask for directions it took a few wrong turns before we finally arrived at our destination. Tucked away from the main market, Fusazushi was literally the light at the end of the tunnel, its sign glowing in welcome and the menu outside causing our tummies to grumble in anticipation.



Inside is cosy and welcoming with about ten seats at the counter and one table for two - romantic date anyone? We had no wait (perhaps thanks to the World Cup matches at the time) but I have been warned that, though they officially open 9am till 2pm, they close when they run out of stock.

Sushi breakfast/brunch is something everyone in Japan should experience. Being in the market means Fusazushi has the freshest stock and they deliver fantastic platters to hungry diners. The fish is so fresh it might as well still be wriggling - don't worry squeamish diners, it's not!

Particularly impressive was the size of each nigiri. Even though it is my favourite, I was almost intimidated by my scallop! The portions are so generous that they

helpfully slice each in two to make it easier to eat. This is ideal for trying a little of everything and then choosing your favourite to finish on - salmon, scallop and squid were our top contenders. The staff is very accommodating and if you don't like something on the platter they will switch it for an alternative.

Recommended mixed platters range from 1050円 to 2800円, and are all served with green tea and a salty but delicious clam miso soup. You can also order individual plates of your favourites and, by the looks of the people sat next to us, these are equally as generous - I would liken the ikura (salmon roe) nigiri to an exploding volcano, never have I seen so many fish eggs piled onto a mouthful of rice!

By the time my tasting party had finished sighing in ecstasy and lamenting the lack of such sushi in our respective countries, our feet had dried and the sun come out: a sushi miracle. Fusazushi is my number one sushi experience thus far, and completely worth the wet and eerie journey there.

Charlotte Griffiths

This is an extended version of the review originally posted on [JapanTravel.com](http://JapanTravel.com) 23rd June 2014.



21 << Hyogo Times >> July





Do you have a burning question or cultural conundrum? The Hyogo Times is proud to introduce the scintillating and savvy Ava Hart, here to answer all your questions and concerns in her column Just Ask Ava.

Dear Hysterical Hyogo,

If the stacks of letters are anything to go by, many of you are worrying about returning from Japan to your respective home countries. I barely got through the first panicked paragraph before I found my eyes drooping with boredom. However, following incessant nagging from my editor, this month I shall offer you all a few words of advice for how to manage the run up to an international relocation.

1) Packing. A manservant packs, a lady (or gentleman) watches, G&T in hand. If you do not have a manservant (more fool you) commission your ESS club to help; a sure fire way to further encourage them to travel abroad themselves - who doesn't love trying to pack a bag with double what it arrived with?

2) Alternative to suggestion one: befriend Mary Poppins and borrow her bag. It's all about who you know.

3) Presents. Don't be ridiculous; you are the gift.

4) Number three does not apply to presents to yourself. These you should buy in abundance - but only items that can be displayed in a future home to induce envy and wonder at your glamorous, jet-setting past.

5) Thank you cards. Strictly optional. You should be receiving these rather than writing them.

6) With regards to five: any thank you cards you do write must be pristine. Good paper, perfect penmanship and a spritz of perfume are timeless signs of class.

# A

7) Last suppers. Never arrange your own soirée, it smacks of desperation. Do, however, drop hints to the organiser about venue preferences - somewhere with an extensive wine list of course.

8) Further to seven, your farewell bash is one of the few times in Japan when you should arrive a touch late to make an entrance, and the only time you can truly speak your mind without fear of office exclusion - not applicable if the party falls before your last day.

9) Bills. One never discussed something as base as money in polite company.

10) Speeches. Keep these short and sweet so there is more time for encore applause. Expect at least three full school bows. If these do not come, wait - you deserve one more. And for pity's sake, take a spare pair of outfit-coordinated, indoor shoes for the gym - there is nothing worse than the sound of school slippers slapping on the steps up to the stage.

As a woman with multiple international relocations under my designer belt, I am confident in giving you this advice to make your final weeks in Japan unforgettable, both to you and those you must bid farewell to. You will be remembered as the god(dess) you are for years to come and upon your return the red carpet will be rolled out with spectacular ceremony. Trust me, I speak from experience.

Sayonara children,

Ava Hart





## HJET Book Club: 1Q84 (books 1&2) by Haruki Murakami

Another book has been added to the Hyogo AJET Book Club's Goodreads bookshelf: 1Q84. On a surprisingly sunny Sunday in June, some 17 book clubbers gathered, eager to share thoughts on one of many Murakami worlds.

We took centre stage at Nomadika Café (read my review [here!](#)) in Motomachi and delved into deep discussions almost immediately. Regular book club member, Jennifer Saunders of Kakogawa, spoke about her experience in Murakami's world of two moons:

"Nomadika provided a bright, refreshing atmosphere in hip Motomachi to discuss Murakami's lengthy, surrealist work 1Q84 for the 5th Hyogo AJET Book Club meeting. Sipping on my decadent caramel macchiato (hot, regardless of the warm weather), I was eager to get to know the opinions of my peers on a book that I hungrily zipped through yet left me with a feeling of, well, 'I'm not so sure what I thought about that.'"

Opinions differed, but one common sentiment I picked up on was that the book was enjoyable, until the surrealism got a little too surreal (however, there were a couple of people who also said they enjoyed this aspect). 1Q84 is a world of "Little People" that emerge from the mouths of dead goats and little girls, of two moons that not everyone can see (or at least not everyone thinks it's out of the ordinary), of disturbing sex rituals, astral-projecting NHK collectors, and of Cat Towns you don't want to stick around in. Needless to say, it has some rather interesting elements.



What drew me in the most, however, were the characters. While I didn't feel completely satisfied with the book, I must say that it stuck with me. Spotting two little girls the other day at the station trussed up in flowered frocks, gloves, and wide-brimmed hats like their mothers next to them handing out pamphlets, I couldn't help but feel a pang of sympathy for them and think of Aomame and Tengo, the two protagonists of 1Q84 who suffered play-free weekends being dragged around town to help their parents fulfill their missions – whether it be gaining one more convert or another NHK subscription fee paid. The romantic connection between these two characters was something I enjoyed, and for me provided the main reason I wanted to keep reading the book. This sentiment, however, was not shared by many of the people I talked to. Regardless of our viewpoints, however, it seems as though most of us got at least something out of the book, even if it was just a sense of perplexity. For those of you who take the time to read all off the 1000 plus pages in the three books, you will be rewarded with some closure, yet also 'a pool of questions marks.'"

As is Book Club fashion, we voted for the next read. It seems we are set for another surreal read. Dana Warren from Sasayama who had suggested "All the Lights We Cannot See," had come across the book in an unexpected way:

"I actually came across the book rather suddenly. There's this little pizza place near my school in Sasayama. Some of the other teachers and I go for lunch regularly and so I got to know the owner a little bit. One happy lunchtime during midterms the owner randomly handed me a hard

cover copy of "All the Light We Cannot See". He said he loved the author but it was just too much English so I could have it and pass it on to all my English speaking friends. Of course, I took it with a smile and many an *ありがとう* but I was dubious. Really, what are the chances that someone whose only interest in common with me is a healthy love of pizza, could recommend good reading material? Pizza, however, is apparently all we need! When I finally swallowed my sighs and actually read the thing, I found a wonderfully well written and engaging novel about first love, war, and radios.



"All the Light We Cannot See" is set in France and Germany during World War Two. It's about a blind girl in Paris whose father builds tiny models of the city so she can learn her way around the streets, and an orphan boy from a mining town in Germany who hopes to escape a life in the mines through his technical genius. The intricacies of how the two finally come together during such a terrible time are fascinating, while maintaining the truly horrific realities of war. It's a big book full of deep and often dark themes but there's still room for sea snails and a cursed diamond, funny old women and cake."

The JET year has flown by, pushing me sadly closer to my departure date. Alas, this means I must leave the Book Club. Thank you to everyone who has come and joined in the literary fun! I'll keep an eye out for the current Hyogo

AJET Book Club books via Goodreads and will read along with you back in Blighty.

And for all you new Hyogo JETs, welcome to the best prefecture! Get to know folks from all over Hyogo by joining the next Book Club meet up on September 21st 2014. I am leaving Book Club in the more than capable hands of bookworm Sean Mulvihill.



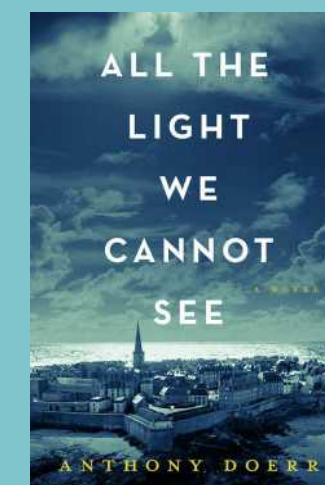
Thanks again! Keep that nose in a book!

*Cherie Pham*

From the new organizer:

"As an avid reader and participant in this year's Hyogo AJET Book Club, I am looking forward to continuing the great work Cherie started this past year. It is not going to be easy following those footsteps, especially since Cherie has found so many incredible places in the Sannomiya-Motomachi area to eat, drink, and enjoy lively discussions, but with continued support from Hyogo JETs I know we can build off this success."

*Sean Mulvihill*



**Info**  
Book: All the Light We Cannot See  
by Anthony Doerr  
Date: 21st September 2014  
Meeting Place: Sannomiya  
Venue: TBC



# Special Edition: Where Are They Going?

For the last year, with the help of various contacts, I have been reaching out to Hyogo JET alumni, pestering them about what they have been doing since finishing up on the JET programme. For me, it has been inspiring to learn about the career and life paths of our ALT contemporaries. [Alumni – if you are reading and willing to answer a few questions to inspire your successors, please email [hyogotimespublications@gmail.com](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com) ]

This month I decided it would be interesting to find out what the 2014 leavers would be up to next. Some of us aren't yet sure – and when it comes to the big scary future, it's nice to know you're not alone.

This feels a little like group therapy, and it's all of my own making, so I'll begin...

**Charlotte Griffiths**, UK, Ashiya 2012-2014

>> **Stand out memory from time on JET:** Getting traumatically lost driving to Kochi for the AJET rafting trip – evil SatNav, treacherous roads, misunderstood road signs, horror stories and scarecrows in fancy dress were a lot scarier than white-water rapids. I couldn't have done it alone. As with everything else these past two years; memories shared are memories doubled.

Oh, and Kobe steak for dad's 60th birthday – won me daughter of the year.

>> **How do you feel about leaving?** Two weeks ago I was fine. This week I am a mess. Today a class of students reworded and sang a Taylor Swift song to me as a surprise. I cried. They cried. It was so cute my heart hurt. I still have 4 weeks left at school...help!

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** For now I will be returning to the UK and becoming my parents' house pet. Whilst preying on their generosity I am looking



for work in international organisations, preferably in communications and/or cross-cultural promotion. I'd love to find a job I can apply my love for different cultures with my love of words, spoken and written.

Various back up plans include a ski-season, inter-railing around Europe, housesitting in France as 'study'... why am I job hunting again?

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Smile.

Make friends with your students. It makes leaving so much harder, but the experience so much better.

If you are even vaguely above average height and live in a traditional Japanese apartment, do not wriggle-jump into your jeans whilst walking through a doorway. Trust me. Concussion is no fun.



**Andrew McCallum**, USA, Ashiya, 2011-2014

>> **Stand out memory from time on JET:** Getting people together and going out for food all around Kansai (and starting an eating group: Another Empty Dish)

>> **How do you feel about leaving?**

It is time to move on and settle down to start a family at home, closer to family. The feeling is bittersweet because of the memories that can/will be shared.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** Hopefully I will be going back to Canada and back to teaching French in elementary school

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Work with what you have, what you are given, and then build from there. Incremental change will help overcome many barriers without stomping on people's toes.

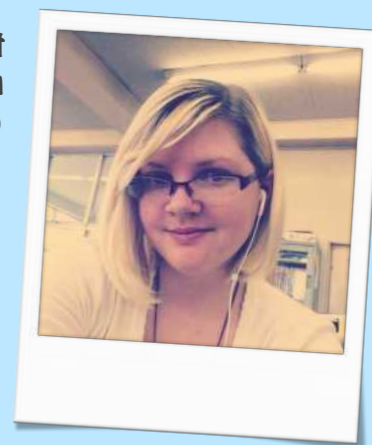
**Vikki Coulson**, UK, Miki City, 2013-2014.

>> **Stand out memory from time on JET:** Miki Kanamono Festival

>> **How do you feel about leaving?** I feel sad about leaving, but happy to be moving on to the next part of my life. I'll miss the Miki ALTs.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** I'm going to be teaching English at A2Z Manchester in the UK.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Venture out and explore Hyogo. It's a huge prefecture with so many different sights all on your doorstep.



**Taylor Wettach**, USA, Kami-cho, 2013-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** The Tajima Scavenger Hunt! From falling in the water below one of northern Hyogo's best waterfalls, to drinking a beer from five different vending machines, to taking a photo arm-wrestling a Japanese man with a tattoo (always a good decision) – it was a true Tajima trial by fire.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** As someone who had been interested in JET since high school, it's certainly bittersweet. But it's also important to remember that JET's value transcends our time in the program, be it one year or five years. Our charge to promote cross cultural exchange continues, and I'm looking forward to the long haul.



>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** Keio University in Tokyo to study Japanese and continue my research on Japanese economics and politics; another step down the long and winding road to a career in US-Asia policy.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** In the words of (the recently arrested) Aska from Chage and Aska, "On your mark, yet we'll never stop. We look up at the hill of dreams, feeling like we must go." Every situation may be different, as JETs are fond of saying, but each provides its own challenges and opportunities. Think, "What would Aska do?", skip the amphetamines, then embrace all that JET offers you.

**Jessica McSavage**, Canada, Kobe, 2013-14

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** Seeing one of the students I coached for her university interview cry tears of joy after learning she got the highest score.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** I feel good. I enjoyed teaching my kids, exploring Japan and Asia, and getting to experience living in another culture. I will miss it but I am ready to move on to the next stage in my life.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** I will be attending the University of Toronto to get my Master's of Education, concentrating on Student Services and Student Development in Post-secondary

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Make the most of your time here. Experience new things and find new ways to do the things you already love.





**Cherie Pham**, UK, Kawanishi City, 2012-14

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** I could say the icy masterpieces at Sapporo's famous Yuki Matsuri or overdosing on Genghis Khan lamb and Sapporo beer. But my real stand out memory was the aftermath: a series of unfortunate events left us homeless in Hokkaido and the only choice was an all-you-can-karaoke room. My best memory is what happened next. We ventured to the picturesque hills of Hokkaido and bathed in an outdoor natural onsen, surrounded by settled and falling snow. We were in a delusional, giddy state, perfect for onsen gossiping. Turning what could have been a nightmare into

my favourite memory was only doable with the amazing life-long friends I met in Hyogo. Cheesy but true.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** Like I'm on a see-saw. Day to day varies from being high on life and thinking about Yorkshire puddings then fear and gloom

strike when I realize I won't see my students again or won't be living between Osaka and Kobe. The weirdest see-saw I've ever ridden, feeling a bit nauseous.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** I don't have a concrete next step but what I've realized from living here and experiencing so many crazy, unique things is that I want to do it again. I set myself a two year limit for Japan and made a long list of things to do, see and eat - I pretty much did them all. On my return to England I want to set that same limit and then move again, perhaps to Singapore or Canada. This way, I can properly see my home country as a tourist and even if I don't move again, I will have had two more years worth of awesome photos.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Take a photo everyday and post it on Facebook so everyone can see - this forces you to do more interesting things, say "yes" to midweek outings and travel to faraway lands. It certainly



did for my first year here; "Japan 365" is my favourite Facebook album.

And another thing...Sit in an onsen 'til you get prune. You will never be able to be so free and naked and hot in public. Maybe.

**Whitney Sitz**, USA, Kami-cho, 2011-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** So many come to mind, but I suppose it would be the time I stormed my elementary school in "oni" attire with my sixth graders in tow, shouting "I am strong! I am brave!" during recess. We started on the second floor, progressed down the hallway past the homerooms, through a game of dodgeball in the gym, and ended triumphantly in the teachers' room.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** I have learned so much about myself while on JET. I am incredibly grateful for my three years here.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Hyogo is wonderful in that it is a place of opportunity, even out in the countryside. Own this experience!

**Alex Hopkins**, UK, Himeji, 2012-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** It's difficult to choose just one. Camping on Awaji, skiing in Nagano and exploring Tokyo are all prominent. Standout memory though, if I had to choose would be exploring Kyoto during sakura season with my parents, the first time they had ever been to Japan.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** Mixed feelings. I feel like I've accomplished a great deal and learnt a huge amount on JET, and I have had two fantastic years here. Amongst the greatest memories I have, many of them belong to JET. However I do feel it's time to move on - let's just hope I'm right. In a word: conflicted!

>> **Where are you**



going/what will you be doing next? Moving back home to London to start my PGCE Primary and hopefully become a teacher.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Explore, laugh, wander around all wide-eyed as a JET - and do your utmost to bring some of that fun and wonderment to your classroom. Share it with your students.

**Catherine Lovett**, Ireland, Sanda, 2011-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** It's difficult to pick just one so I'll pick 3... Climbing Mt. Fuji, cycling the Shima-nami-kaido and going to Okinawa.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** I feel happy to move onto new challenges.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** I'll be working at the Japanese Embassy in Dublin coordinating the 2015 Jet Programme.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Be open-minded and flexible. Try new things and meet new people! Try to learn Japanese.



**Ramiro Castro**, USA, Himeji 2012-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** I will never forget the first time any group of new students and I share a hearty laugh because at that point both parties sense that the learning process for the upcoming year might actually be enjoyable.

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** Professionally, even though I have things lined up at home, I hate knowing I'm that much better now than I was 2 years ago. I wish I had a clone to stay and max out any potential I may have as an ALT. I feel like the kids deserve it.



>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** I will be going back to school to earn my teaching credential (most likely in secondary math). I learned on JET that I love seeing the students reach 'a-ha!' moments in class. In those moments you realize the communication process was a success. I look forward to chasing those moments through math.

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Take advantage of the geographically diverse prefecture you live in. Budget and explore it.

**Paige Ngo**, Canada, Amagasaki 2012-2014

>> **Standout memory from time on JET:** Maybe I'm just a woman of extremes, but I find it really hard to choose between the girls' nights in with wine and board games, and the wild adventures abroad with my best friends.

Here's a list of my number ones in Japan to make up for (or add to) my indecisiveness:

Most beautiful sight seen: View from Mt. Miyanoura on Yakushima

Best Japanese food eaten: Ramen from がふうあん near Itami Hankyu

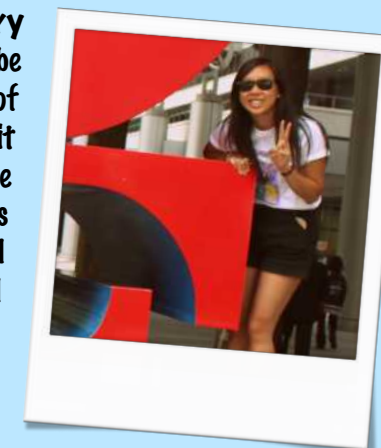
Craziest night: Mixed onsen and winning strip poker on that ski trip

>> **How do you feel about leaving JET?** Just terrible.

>> **Where are you going/what will you be doing next?** Going home to Canada for a while, but setting off onto my next life abroad hopefully within a month or two. France?

>> **Advice for new Hyogo JETs:** Don't let anything get in the way of experiencing Japan to the fullest. You will never have a better chance than now to meet the people, see the sights, and absorb the culture in and around Japan.

**Fly Peach** and **Japan Guide** are good travel catalysts.



Interviews compiled by Charlotte Griffiths



calendar

july

Osaka

Hanshin

Kobe

Kyoto

Tajima

Harima

sunday

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

		1 Akashi Sports Night	2	3	4	5 Osaka Cosplay Fest RSVP for AJET Farewell Party Toward the Modernity
6 Osaka Cosplay Fest	7	8	9 Akashi Sports Night	10	11	12 AJET Farewell Party Taj Ultimate Tournament
Toward the Modernity: Images of Self & Other in East Asian Art						
13 Taj Ultimate Tournament	14	15	16	17 Gion Matsuri (Kyoto)	18	19 Akashi Sports Night Kobe Cinema Street Festival
Toward the Modernity: Images of Self & Other in East Asian Art						
20 Kobe Port Festival Kobe Cinema Street Festival Toward the Modernity	21	22	23	24 Tenjin Matsuri	25	26
27	28	29	30 Takeno Fireworks Festival	31		





adventure awaits...