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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, photos, 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

School's starting, the heat is still blaring on, and the second month of the JET year has begun. Welcome to September!

As those of us in attendance to the Hyogo Welcome Party this past Saturday were reminded, things don't always go according to plan. Less than an hour and a half until our designated meeting time, we received the worst call imaginable: the beer garden would be closing due to inclement weather and we were S.O.L. Though panicked, we were able to pull together a last minute plan. IZNT isn't an ideal place for talking and seeing new faces (I did manage to meet a few of you!), but I for one am glad we were able to all hang out together. Long lines and the necessity to shout much of the time did not deter our festivities!

On a smaller scale, welcome parties seem to be a harbinger of mistakes for yours truly. The morning after the party my first year was my opening ceremony (thanks Ono). So naturally, I missed both my last bus and train. I learned that taxis were prohibitively expensive and that stairwells induce paranoia. Eventually, I discovered an internet cafe very near my bus station and spent the rest of the night there. I arrived just in time to give my introduction speech and jumpstart a few cardiac arrests for the JTEs.

This month to drown out your sorrows from plans gone awry, we hear from some first years [why they joined](#) our noble program, and our newest contributor, Rory, shares his reason for [choosing Japan](#) in depth, as well as a short [fiction piece](#) to join the second chapter of [Sometime Last Week](#). Our alumni column, "[Where Are They Now?](#)" has been resurrected, with our first contributor [Dusty Wittman of Shiga](#). In Kicchiri Kitchen, Mandy brings us a recipe for [egg salad sandwiches](#). If you missed

[Summer Sonic](#), you can read Rackle's article, which may inspire you to attend future music festivals in Japan! Want to have a more intimate musical experience? Read about your many [karaoke options](#) and make a slightly more informed decision on your next outing. If your next outing happens to be farther afield and takes you into Kanto, you can read up on [Yokohama](#).



Photo courtesy of Ryan Hertel

Missteps, meltdowns, and mayhem are inevitable. You'll miss a bus, the kids will be uncontrollable, you'll fall in a gaijin trap, venues will cancel on you at the last minute, you'll have to speak on the phone. The sooner we can accept and embrace this, the easier our lives will be. Truly, one of the most valuable skills for anybody to have is the ability to adapt quickly. When you run into trouble or unruly classes, take a deep breath; as frustrating as they are, they are some of life's most valuable teaching tools. You'll learn and grow and soon no group of students will be able to resist your sweet English speaking ways. Don't let bumps in the road deter you from your chosen route.

Brittany Teodorski

Hello my doves!

Congratulations: You've survived your first month! It only gets easier and colder from here (small mercies). If you've read earlier issues, you'd know that my name is Rackle and I am one of your Hyogo AJET members as well as an all-around rambunctious cannonball of affection and defender of those who sleep too much.

Now of course your real work starts as classes are back in session. I hope you like self-introductions because you're going to get to do a lot of them. Truly though, this is when the fun really starts. You are going to just love your students and co-workers. All those club meetings and in class games are going to be some of the best times you have and believe me when I say your students will already love you.

For those of you who are nervous about teaching for the first time, don't worry. Yes, there may be times where you worry about how good your classes are or if your activity will bomb, but believe me when I say that happens to all teachers, good and bad. Just remember that at the end of the day, your students adore you and nearly all of them just want to get to know you. They are all pretty excited to learn about you and yours. For everything else, just wing it.

September is when most of the welcome parties start, for example the [Block 6 party](#) on the 6th of September. These parties are a great opportunity to meet people in your block, prefecture and

local area. It's thanks to a welcome party that I came to bond with one of my now closest friends here in Japan, so I speak from experience. Also, don't worry if you don't drink or you aren't a big party person; there're a lot of us that are either teetotalers or prefer the quieter corners of the beer garden, so you will have many chances to find your kind of people.

Other events coming up in the calendar are of course the mid-September public holiday called Silver Week, which is a great opportunity for you to travel either in Japan or to one of the many nearby countries. Additionally, keep an eye out for the Block 6 Shikoku rafting trip around October 10th as places are limited. As a person who has gone before, I highly recommend it as a fantastic way to spend your weekend and also see some of the more remote places this region has to offer.

Good luck with your new classes and adventures and I hope you all enjoy yourselves. That's all for this month! See you next issue.



Rackle Beaman

Living in Japan is accompanied by many exciting adventures, including those of the culinary world. From conbini food to tabehoudai to fine dining, there's a wealth of delectable delights just waiting to be explored, and trying to make the food you encounter is another adventure in itself.

Thus, I present to you the "tamago sando." It's a classic that can be found in your local conbini and supermarkets' prepared food sections, but it's definitely much cheaper and super simple to make it yourself. This sandwich makes for a simple and scrumptious addition to any bento and can be whipped up pretty quick.

Yield: A Few Sandwiches

Ingredients:

- 1 Boiled Egg (check out [this article](#) for the perfect boiled eggs)
- 1 Tbsp Japanese Mayonnaise (like Kewpie brand)
- Salt to taste
- A pinch (or two) of Sugar (optional)
- Your Choice of Bread (pre-cut) *triangles or little rectangles are fun! X>*

Instructions:

1. Using a fork, mash the **boiled egg** into small crumbly pieces.
2. Add the **mayonnaise** and mix well.
3. Season with **salt** and **sugar** to taste.
4. Spread mixture onto your **pre-cut slices of bread**. And you're done! Yay!!!



どうぞめしあがれ!

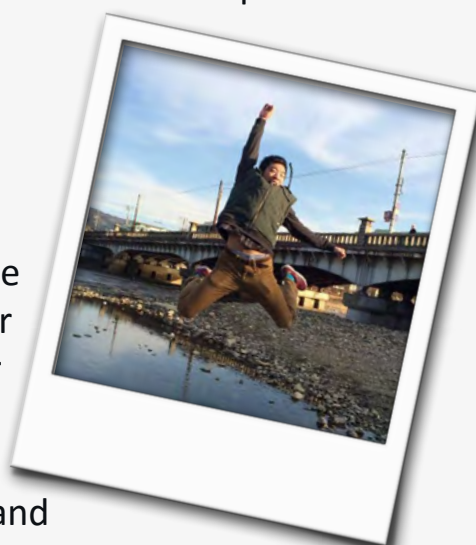
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irst years: Want to know why your fellows also chose to join JET? Returners: Lost touch with your roots and want a reminder of why you packed up your life to come to Japan? Below are the responses of six first year JETs.

Justin Chao
Boston, MA
Ono

- Why Japan: I love Japanese film history, and after spending a semester abroad in Kyoto, I felt as if there was still so much left for me to experience and explore throughout Japan.
- Goals: Improve my Japanese proficiency, plug myself into the local skateboarding scene (Kobe especially), find some way to involve myself in the local community, and go into a hot spring with monkeys.
- Most excited for: Eating food I haven't yet tried, like fugu.
- Wish I'd known: That no matter how much money I spent trying to win a Yoshi plushie at the game center, in the end I was going to give up.
- Favorite memory: A water show in Kobe's Harborland called Splash Fantasia. Had no idea what to expect, and what I got was a crowd of people screaming for their lives as cold water sprayed all over them with Star Wars music blasting in the background.



Angelica Chavez
Fresno, CA

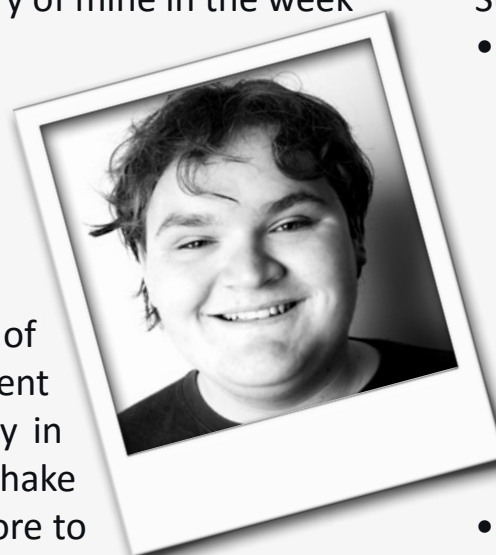
I am currently placed in a smaller, older, and quaint town called Nishiwaki located in the middle of the Hyogo Prefecture. It is constructed with mostly traditional Japanese housing, along with its scenic mountains and rivers to complete this small town's beauty.



- Why Japan: I find Japan to be culturally fascinating, especially when it comes to their delicious food. Working at an American-Japanese restaurant for 7 years of my life while pursuing a degree in English brought me to consider Japan as a work environment.
- Goals: Learning the Japanese language and way of daily life is a huge goal of mine.
- Most excited for: I will be working at Nishiwaki High School and I am excited to enrich the lives of Japanese students who attend this highly successful and academic school with the cross-cultural knowledge that I have of America and the English language.
- Wish I'd known: Japanese
- Favorite memory: While I don't speak the Japanese language, sharing Japanese food with other teachers I have met so far has brought us common ground, and it has become a favorite memory of mine in the week that I have been here.

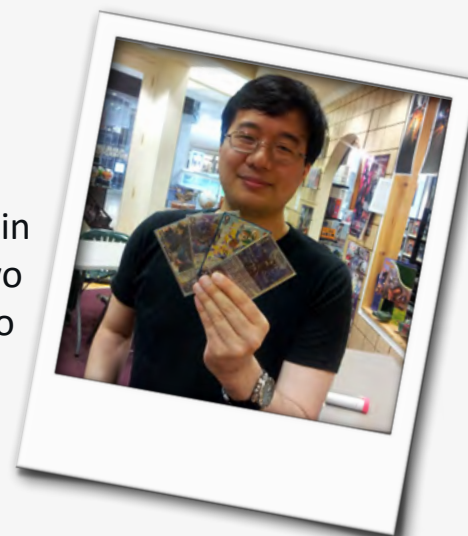
Rory Kelly
UK
Himeji

- Why Japan: [See why here!](#)
- Goal: I'd like to explore more of Asia: before now, I've only spent one very stuffy, confused day in Seoul airport once but I can't shake the feeling there might be more to the continent than that.
- Most excited for?: There are bars with penguins in them. 'Nuff said.
- Wish I'd known: That three different Japanese people would give me the nickname "Lollipop," because they think my name is "Lolly;" I might have come up with an easier-to-pronounce pseudonym.
- Favorite memory: Absolutely killing it at karaoke performing "I Will Survive." I didn't know I had it in me.



Michael Kalvaranon
Vernon Hills, IL
Ono

- Why Japan: I studied abroad in Kobe at Konan University two years ago, and have wanted to come back ever since.
- Goals: To pass the N2 JLPT, and record all my experiences

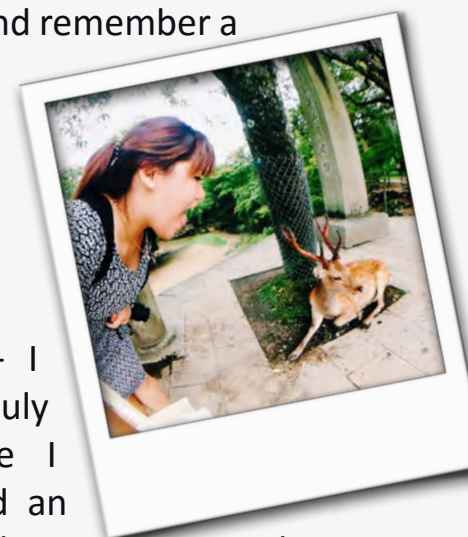


in Japan as a teacher

- Most excited for: Teaching junior high, as it's my first classroom experience. There're bound to be problems, but that's what makes it interesting.
- Wish I'd known: I knew it was hot during Japan's summer, but I wasn't prepared for the humidity. I should have brought more shirts.
- Favorite memory: When I studied abroad in Kobe, I used to go to Sannomiya all the time with friends. There is a bus to Sannomiya from Ono, so I went there to revisit all the places I used to go to, and remember a lot of the memories I made there.

Jappy Molina
Philippines
Suma (Kobe)

- Why Japan: It is simple— I fell in love with Japan! July 2014 was the first time I came to Japan. I attended an international conference about education. The moment I got here, I fell in love with everything about it— the people, places, culture, and the discipline. On the last day of the educational trip, I promised myself to come back and stay in Japan. And that was when I came across the JET Programme.
- Goals: Japan is a country where culture is preserved very much, which has made them one of the most successful countries in the world. Coming from a third world country, I want to experience Japan's unique culture. I want to learn a lot about Japan's education, mentality, discipline, and language, which I could share back in my home country. During my stay here, I want to take part in strengthening openness and internationalization through English language teaching and cultural exchange.
- Most excited for: A lot of things are in store for me. Living alone in a foreign country with a very unique language and culture is not a piece of cake. Going home after a day's work with nobody else there is another thing. I am excited to learn and discover myself more. I am excited to absorb and learn from lots of ups and down which I know will help me become a more real adult.
- Wish I'd known: Seriously, Nihongo! I wish I had enough time to take up a Japanese Language course before



moving here. I found myself totally lost in translation until now. Nande—yanen?! Dealing with everyday life would have been much faster and easier if I could understand and speak their language.

- Favorite memory: One memory I surely won't forget was the time I arrived at my apartment. Everything seemed to be surreal. But, this is it. I'm gonna be far away from home and I'm gonna be on my own. I am now about to start the 6th year of my teaching career in a totally different place. I am here and it's now the time to say YES to all the new adventures ahead.

Jessica Record
Bothell, WA
Sanda

Why Japan: I grew up surrounded by Japanese culture and products without being aware of it. It wasn't until I got older that my best friend made me realize most of the food, television shows and games I loved were from Japan. I studied Japanese culture in college, and realized I loved to teach while in school. So, JET is perfect because I can practice teaching and live in the culture I studied.

Goals: My goals are to have a deep conversation about Japanese history with a Japanese history teacher and create a foundation for my future career.

Most excited for: Everything. Before I arrived I looked forward to seeing the historical sights, but I found out my city is full of history and plenty of things to do, so I will not have to go far to find adventure.

Wish I'd known: Everything in my house is mine. Inheriting an apartment is a weird concept and only recently have I accepted that I can change things in my apartment.

Favorite memory: Accidentally joining the Kendo club! I was speaking to another teacher about how I did Kendo at community college and the next thing I know we're in the dojo practicing.

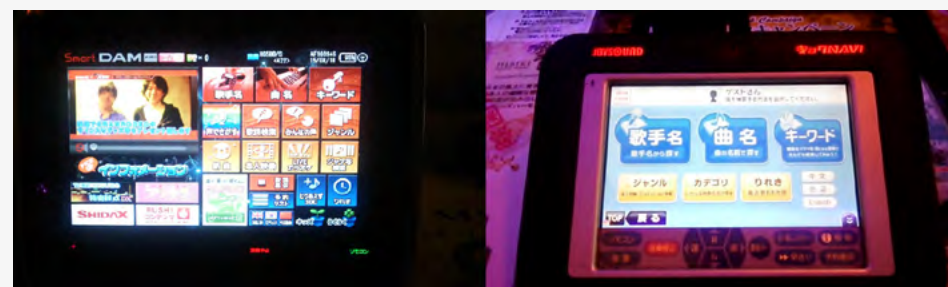


Compiled by **Brittany Teodorski**

Before arriving in Japan, I passionately hated singing. Even the mere mention of karaoke in front of a large number of people (especially strangers) filled me with dread. Fortunately (or so I thought), the first time I came to Japan as part of a study abroad class, my fellow students were uninterested in karaoke. My first experience was not to come until the last night of Tokyo orientation. Though still shy as I was surrounded by people I did not yet know well, I had an enjoyable time. Gradually, as I went with my Ono crew more and more, karaoke came to be my favorite pastime.

The sheer number of options for karaoke, especially in large cities like Kobe and Osaka, can be dizzying. Usually the only option in rural karaoke shops is whether you use the Dam or Joysound system. Sometimes not even that is an option. For the next time you feel like belting out tunes with your buds, read on to find out more about your choices.

The Systems



While there is a lot of overlap between Dam and Joysound, there are many unique songs in each system. Less popular bands tend to have different song selections between the two. I'd recommend trying both out to get a feel for which song library you prefer. I haven't noticed significant differences within each system's offerings (Dam has Stadium, Premier, Live, and Livegold; Joysound has f1, Wave, and Crosso), though my note-taking (started

recently without any karaoke sessions since) has been substandard.

Live Dam's device on which you select songs is pretty fun. It plays little videos (which you can thankfully mute) and is easy to use. Searching through different genres is intuitive. It also has "I'll make a Man out of You," which is a huge plus in its favor.

Joysound's videos tend to be of a higher quality. You can also become part of their videos by allowing them to record your performance! These can then be accessed by anyone for duets. While some of the advertised videos are adorable (such as a pair of sisters dancing together), in practice, they can be hilariously cringe-worthy. A song I like on here that I haven't been able to find on Dam's system is 「カゼノネ」

If you want to know what self-proclaimed experts think, a survey was given to the staff of a [karaoke blog](#). While many had no preference, most preferred Dam (57.7%) and only 7.7% of the staff preferred Joysound. Make sure to translate the website if you want some laughs at the pros and cons lists.

The Places

Walking around Sannomiya looking for karaoke options is often overwhelming.

Below, I will share small facts about each company. The prices listed are for one hour Saturday night in Sannomiya, with the exception of Rainbow, for which I will list the prices at two locations in Osaka.

Big Echo

1100円 (includes drink bar)

Most times I've gone to Big Echo have been rather

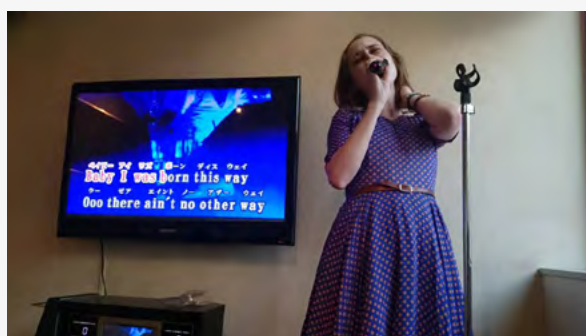


Photo courtesy of Joy Sung

short, the shortest being a 30 minute blitz to kill time. At some locations, they have "concept rooms," such as elegant, kids, and restaurant. The drink bar includes slushies. I like to mix the orange one with Calpis. They often have you use Live Dam.



Jankara

1000円

The potato platter is well-liked. Though cheaper than most other places without food or drink, consumables are an enjoyable addition to any karaoke session. I rarely choose Jankara as a result.

Karaoke Kan (カラオケ館)

800円 (must buy a drink)

The red on blue is eye-catching and at least at the Sannomiya location, you can cosplay while you sing! The rooms are outfitted with lights that flash in rhythm to your chosen song. Generally, they will give you Joysound.

Rainbow

1st hour free, every hour after 600円 (must buy a drink) (Shinsaibashi side of Dotonbori location)

500円 (must buy a drink) or 800円 with 飲み放題 (Namba side of Dotonbori location)

The cheapest option by far, Rainbow is a great karaoke option for those with a budget, or anyone that doesn't want to pay more than necessary but still wants to avoid a dry time. Soft cream is included with their drink bar and you can drizzle various toppings onto your bowl. I'm also a fan of making

floats. Rainbow is my store of choice and I'm quite sad there isn't a Sannomiya location.

Round 1

980円

In addition to karaoke, Round 1 also offers bowling, UFO catchers, darts, billiards, arcade games, and purikura. It is a great place for your various entertainment needs. They also have a point card which can earn you some coupons and prizes, though it does cost to get one. The Namba location is my favorite, with a Spocha pack. You can karaoke, bowl, play basketball, shoot a bow and arrow, roll around in a giant plastic bubble, play arcade games, and more to your heart's content.

Shidax

840円 (must buy a drink)

I quite like the shoestring fries you can get here.

Shidax tends to be one of the cheaper options in any given area. Their drink ordering system is on a screen and doesn't involve talking to people. This a great attribute for introverts and those uncomfortable speaking in Japanese.



Photo courtesy of Deb Curran

A word of warning: Be wary of karaoke shops other than these, especially if they make you pay upfront. Often, their systems are lacking in the English song department and they will refuse to return your money mere minutes after paying. Sit-ins accomplish nothing here.

Look around your town for non-snack bar karaoke facilities. Some of my favorite memories are of journeying to Sky in Ono with our contraband snacks and singing, dancing, and nearly avoiding spilling a drink for hours at time. Grab a friend or five, choose your time and place, and get to belting out those notes. Happy singing!

Brittany Teodorski

Every year between July and August is Japan's music festival season. One of the crown jewels of this time is the two day Osaka and Tokyo music event Summer Sonic. This year, your author attempted this perilous quest in her first ever Japanese music festival experience and what a way to enter the scene it was.

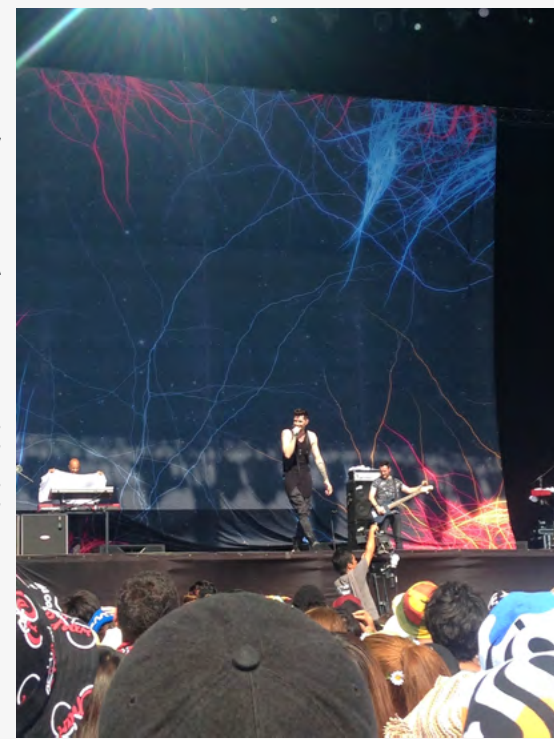
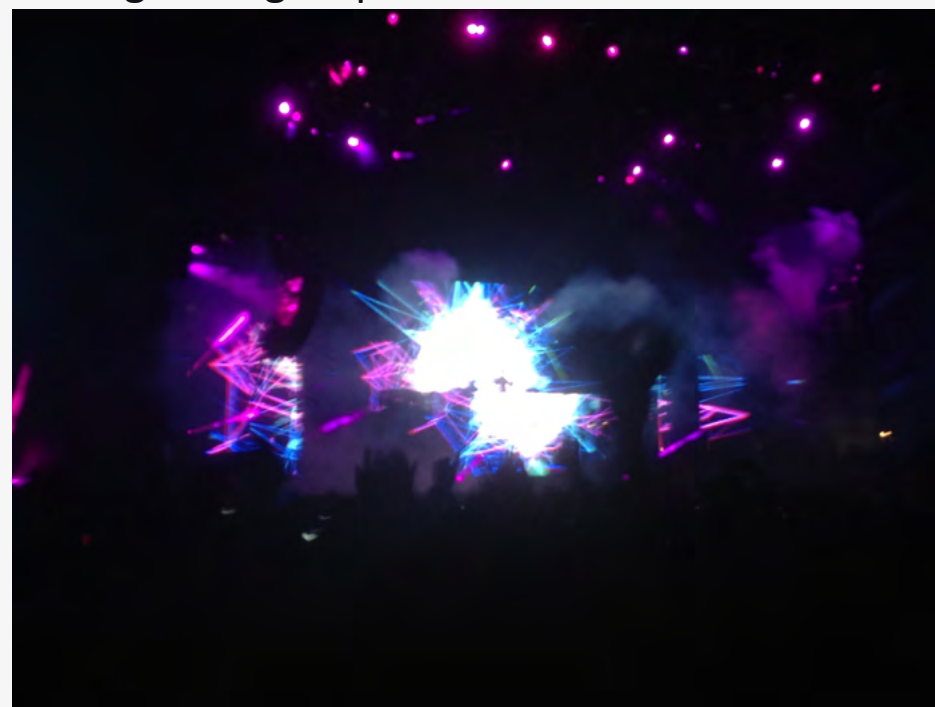


Tickets are easily purchased through the conbini, but if this option is unavailable then purchasing online or at the entrance is also an option. Costing around 15000 yen for a single or 23000 for a two day pass, this festival is moderately priced (at least to my Australian perspective) and this year fell just after pay day, so it was convenient all round.

Accommodation over this weekend was a little

difficult to find as so many places were already booked out well in advance. A few others and I were able to secure a neat little apartment in Kujo for the night after some serious hunting on AirBnB. With this in mind, I recommend that anyone planning to go to any major event in Osaka should look into accommodation around a month or so in advance in order to get the best value for money and selection.

Getting to and from the event, while not necessarily inconvenient, is time consuming. Shuttle buses to the arena left from Cosmo Square and Sakurajima with virtually no waiting time. Unfortunately, getting to these two stations from Umeda involved a bit of train line hopping and backtracking. This was especially true in the case of your author who managed to get quite lost more than once.



Entering the arena is easy: just hand over your ticket, get your armband and head in. There were four stages to choose from in Osaka. Ocean stage was the largest and held most of the headlining acts including ZEDD, Macklemore, Ariana Grande, Pharrell Williams, Imagine Dragons and The Script. Mountain stage was the second largest and held what would be best described as the alternative headliners such as Marilyn Manson, The Prodigy, Modestep and Carly Rae Jepsen. Sonic Stage boasted air conditioning and hosted some of the lesser known artists in the industry like Kodakone, The Manic Street Preachers, MEW, Char, and Sheppard. Finally, Flower stage hosted primarily Japanese artists and some of the more eclectic music to be found at the festival such as Epik High, Monkey Majik, Totalfat, chay, and Silent Siren. In addition, the Flower Stage had the nicest hang out spots for the more relaxed parts of the day.



Having been to a variety of festivals in Australia, your author was pleasantly surprised by Japan's take on music festivals. Most acts were on either at their scheduled time or only shortly after, queues for food and drinks were efficient, crowds were pumped but not at all

aggressive or uncomfortable, the grounds were kept clean and the bathrooms were only just a tiniest bit scary as opposed to the full on horror experienced at many Australian festivals.



The crowds were a riot with enthusiasm. The lead singer of Imagine Dragons fell on your author and she will never wash her hands again because that man was a god. ZEDD had light and sound that left the crowds screaming for more. The Script, despite mostly singing songs about heartbreak, had people laughing. Macklemore whipped crowds into a frenzy and Ariana Grande really is tiny but my gosh, does she have a set of lungs on her. It was a magnificent weekend; nearly every act seen went above and beyond expectations. If ever you have the chance, try out a Japanese music festival, especially one like Summer Sonic, I guarantee it's an experience you will always treasure.

Rackle Beaman

I honestly, genuinely didn't expect to be accepted onto this programme: I applied mainly because my mum was pressuring me, and she was mainly pressuring me because her friend's daughter was applying, and her friend's daughter was mainly applying because...well, that's her business. Maybe she'll write one of these herself.

Obviously, if you'd said to me in November, "Do you want to move to Japan for a year?" I would have said yes, but I also would have said yes to a trip in the TARDIS, and honestly they both seemed about as likely. But, under my parents' supervision (and with a generous portion of their aid), I filled in the forms, sent them away and then forgot all about it. I doubted that they would even take me seriously enough to send a rejection letter; I thought they'd probably regard my application as a joke.



"TARDIS Mk VI" courtesy of Rooners Toy Photography via flickr commons

When I was offered the interview in January, I was working in France and there was some controversy about whether I could get the day off to go to London and if I could even afford the ticket (here my parents stepped in again— my mum really wanted to show up her friend). But I secured the time off and the transport and luckily flew into Luton— the Channel Tunnel literally caught fire that day. Obviously, I'd been flying and was in no state to interview (I changed my clothes, naturally— and even showered in King's Cross— but there is something ineluctable about an airplane journey that stays with one for many hours after the fact) and so thought that once again my chances were sunk. The interview went very poorly, I thought, and quite quickly became but an afterthought of the first weekend I'd spent in London in over three years (I passed it in the best fashion— Hamley's, theatre, and getting drunk in the Science Museum).

Once again, I sort of forgot that JET was even a possibility, and started searching for other means of employment. When the acceptance letter came through three months later, I still wasn't home and my dad read it to me over the phone: I thought it was an April Fools. The next day, I got an offer for a job in China and another in Edinburgh— suddenly, I was sought after.

Edinburgh was my Uni town, where most of my favourite memories were formed, most of my friends still live and I can more or less understand the locals. I was sorely tempted to return to what I knew; to what was easy and familiar. But a little voice in my head was adamant to try something new (it was the same voice that led to me eating raw octopus

on my first night here), and I thought about my parents.

My parents met in Peru, when my father was helping to build a road and my mother was teaching English— possibly the most colonial pursuits imaginable in the seventies. It's a card that I play in a lot of interviews for jobs abroad— "my parents met while travelling; I feel it's in my blood," "I'm a second generation TEFL teacher"— and I normally say it in a fairly hokey manner, but I do feel there's a grain of truth to be found in there. There is wanderlust in my family: last year we were all only in the same country for about a month.



"Perú Flag" courtesy of Joseph Villanueva via flickr commons

When I said I was going to Japan, I had a lot of friends say "Oh, I could never do that," and I didn't really understand: they were all as qualified for the job as me (some of them much more so) and they are all as hardy as I am (pretty much all of them much more so), so I didn't know what they felt was stopping them.

And then I realised it was temperament.

Not to say that my disposition is better than theirs, but it leads me to eat raw octopus or

to crash a party under an assumed name. That desire to just suddenly not be where I am and doing what I'm doing— that conviction that the grass really is greener on the other side. It makes me apply for jobs that I really doubt I will get and then take them even when there's a much less risky alternative sitting in my inbox. One of my friends said she would smack me if I picked the Edinburgh job over the chance to go to Japan and consequently, I now imagine her as the physical embodiment of that persistent little noise which is currently nagging me to shut down my laptop and step out into the boiling midday sun to go and find a robot cafe or an owl hotel or a toilet that's smarter than I am. Often in the short term, I regret the choices that this voice extracts from me, but they also often lead to the best stories and besides, sunburns fade, hangovers pass and octopus, eventually, digests.

Rory Kelly

Rory Kelly won the Maggie Wark Award when he was fourteen and, as far as you know, that's impressive (don't bother to Google it. Please.) He was also the last winner of that award, because he forgot to give the trophy back. He's currently waiting for there to be a Nobel Prize for "Choosing the Perfect Novel Title, Taking That Title on Wattpad and Then Never Doing Anything with It" at which point he will be in the money. He also stole rorywritesstuff.tumblr.com, and you should totally follow him there just to spite him.

Perhaps you've become over-stimulated by the massive spread of Tokyo and need a slightly smaller one. Perhaps ramen and Chinatown fare would really hit the spot. Perhaps you just want to see what Japan's second largest city has to offer you. No matter your reasoning, at only half an hour from Shinjuku Station, Yokohama makes for an excellent day trip during a long vacation to Tokyo.

Getting There and Around

First, you'll need to get to Kanto. You can fly with Peach into Narita, which is awfully far away and inconvenient, ANA or JAL into Haneda, or you can take the shinkansen. This is especially convenient if you decide your first stop should be Yokohama. You can just get off at Shin-Yokohama and shave off a couple yen from your ticket. Night buses can also get you there (though I try to avoid these as I cannot sleep on long-distance buses; Ono to Sannomiya knocks me out, but otherwise it's impossible; UGH!), straight to Yokohama, Shinjuku, or even Tokyo Disneyland!

Once in Yokohama, there are many trains throughout the city. You can take them to get to all of the interesting things to see and do. Yokohama station has coin lockers, though its layout can be confusing. Make sure you take a mental or paper note on where you've left your bags if need be.

Where to Stay

Tokyo has many, many options. Ace Inn Shinjuku is cheap and well-located, though the facilities are a little unkempt. Khaosan has several locations and is also affordable. Toyoko Inns are much more

expensive than their counterparts in other cities in Japan. I'm unsure of what's in Yokohama itself as I was fortunate enough to have a bit of floor at a friend's apartment to sleep on.

What to Do

A great first stop is the [Shin-Yokohama Raumen Museum](#) (yes "raumen;" I don't know why). A one day ticket will give you entry all day, so you can have all of your meals here and try all of the available varieties! Most or all of the shops have mini size. Though it was only offered in the regular size, my favorite ramen (and the most unusual I've ever had) was the pepperoncini one at the Italian ramen shop. Instead of broth, it had a spicy sauce. The atmosphere of the museum is also entertaining with its Edo period architecture and performances throughout the day.



[Cosmo World](#) is an amusement park and houses Cosmo Clock 21, a giant Ferris wheel. It was the tallest for eight years. Since then, the record has bounced from country to country in a spitting match of sorts. Now, it resides with Las Vegas' High Roller, which was opened in 2014 (nice to see my birth city can be known for things other than gambling). Currently, Cosmo Clock 21 has a couple Pikachu themed cars.

Nearby Cosmo World is the [Cup Noodle Museum](#).

They have collaborations from time to time with other museums in the area, so while we were there, they had a velociraptor in the entryway, because why not? (In actuality, they were advertising the Dinosaur Exhibition that was occurring during that time period). Get here early if you want to make your own Cup Noodle, otherwise they may sell out. Not knowing this was a possibility, we strolled in an hour and a half before closing and were unable to partake. As a result, I have little else to say. Fortunately, there is a location in Osaka, so I can go make my own if I really want to.



The last thing we did during our day trip was check out Yokohama's [Chinatown](#). It is much bigger than Kobe's (though both are located near stations named 元町), and is the largest in all of Asia. Sadly,

we were still too full from our ramen extravaganza to partake in some of the delicious smells wafting through the streets, but we had just a tiny bit of space for goma balls and egg custards, both of which were satisfyingly sweet without being cloyingly so.



Last Minute Points

- Until this trip, I didn't realize that Toyoko is a combination of the first two kanji from Tokyo and Yokohama (東横). Kanji is fun!
- There is a cat cafe near Chinatown that is heavily advertised. Its prices are ridiculously high. You're better off going to [Cafe Calough](#) in Asakusa or one in [Kansai](#) once you return home if you need a kitty fix.

Yokohama has plenty to offer for a day trip or more! Definitely consider visiting next time you venture out to Japan's capital.

Brittany Teodorski

Returning this month is our “Where Are They Now?” section. In it, we share the words of wisdom of those who have gone before us back into the real world.

Placement + years on JET

I was a prefectural high school ALT in Kusatsu-shi, Shiga-ken for 5 years.

Favorite JET memory

My favorite memory resulted from one of my worst memories. March 11, 2011 was a day that changed everything for Japan. After the earthquake, I spent a couple of weeks in Ishinomaki-shi, Miyagi-ken doing relief work. Words can't describe what I experienced but devastating and heart-breaking come close. I wish I could have spent the rest of my JET career helping those people. Since I couldn't leave my schools, I created the Biwa Bottle Boat Challenge with the help of a great friend. Our goal was to raise money for children who were orphaned by the tsunami. To do this, we proposed a difficult



and unique challenge – we would build a boat using only PET bottles and plastic cord and then paddle it across Japan's largest lake and Shiga's heart, Biwako. With support and donations from around the world, we successfully made our way across Lake Biwa on July 16, 2011. All the major Japanese newspapers, as well as NHK, reported on our success and by the end, we had raised \$8,500 for children in Tohoku.



Most valuable thing he learned

As JET participants, we are given a unique opportunity to interact with and influence children's lives. It may feel like just a really cool job, but, actually, it's much more than that. We have an amazing chance to make a true and lasting difference in our students' lives. Do whatever you can to share yourself because that is your best gift to them. I always did my best to share my culture and my numerous travels with my students. I was hoping to give them a view of the world that they wouldn't otherwise see. Throughout the years I was teaching, many of my students chose to study abroad or participate in summer language programs around the world. I've even had a couple students visit me after I moved back to the US. It was amazing to be able to reciprocate to my students the same gracious hospitality that was shown to me while living in

Japan. I can't say for sure, but I'd like to think that my class had some influence on their choice to reach out into the world. As teachers, we have a responsibility to facilitate our students in creating their futures and I am honored to have been a part of that.

Recommendation for current JETs

The best way to integrate yourself into a new culture is to get involved with your community. There are international organizations in almost every city. Find them, go there, talk with them, and offer any help you can. I spent a good portion of my spare time with my town's and the neighboring towns' international groups. These groups are usually run by retired Japanese men and woman and they absolutely love sharing their culture with foreigners. Before you know it, you'll be invited to dinners, attending birthday parties or even weddings, and perhaps even become the centerpiece of your community. The level of involvement is completely up to you and your schedule. Even helping out a little will go a long way to making you feel like Japan is your home.



Something he wishes he had done

I climbed Mt. Fuji, I ate blowfish, I visited almost every prefecture, I pulled a float in a parade, I

watched a sumo match, and numerous other bucket list items that we all have. However, the one thing that I didn't accomplish that I had set out to do was to become fluent in Japanese. I was never very good at sitting down and studying anything, so the things that brought me outside and kept me active took precedence. Of course I learned enough of the language to interact with my local community, to travel, to eat, to meet new people, and to carry on a productive life; but I do regret not being more disciplined in studying Japanese.

What he does now

For about four months now, I have been living in a small village in Thailand located along the Burmese border called Sangkhlaburi. I am working as a volunteer English teacher at Baan Unrak Primary School. It is a non-profit humanitarian school offering education for local children who may not otherwise be able to attend school due to their nationality or family status. Our students mainly come from children's homes and are of Mon or Karen (Burmese ethnic groups) or Thai ethnicity. I was first introduced to this school and organization while volunteering during my first year on JET. Every year since then, I volunteered over the winter break and now I'm here long-term. JET truly opens doors that we might have never seen otherwise.



Contact information

All questions are welcomed; I can be reached by sending an email to dusty.wittman@gmail.com.

Dusty Wittman

The house is silent. It's been so for years, but today I feel something in the silence. I can't tell if it's fear, or regret, or perhaps an ill intent, but something new is here. Lately, there've been too many new things. I'm hungry. I wonder if my sister brought home anything good last night. The only decent thing about her job is all the mistaken orders she gets to keep. There's nothing in the fridge. I wonder if she even came home. At least the milk is still good. I'll have some corn pops.

The birds are angry! I don't quite know why but it has something to do with the new thing in the house. I found it when I got the corn pops out of the cupboard. The dingy yellow box covered in brocade just sat there, behind the cereal box. I picked it up and bam, the birds were there. All four of the bird leaders. In the kitchen. In the two months they've been here, they haven't left the attic. Why is this box so important? Now, I think the birds have been waiting all this time for it.

My house is some kind of magnet for weird items. Last Christmas a huge tree stump of what I suspect was an old world oak appeared in the back yard. Several pieces of jewelry have shown up in cabinets and drawers. The kind with pictures or locks of hair inside them. There was even a lamp in the dining room last Spring. It was all brassy with a faded silk shade. It didn't work. All these things just exist. They suddenly are, adding a bit more sadness and tragedy to this house. When I find them, and I always seem to be the one to find them, I put them in the drawer of mother's antique wooden end table in the drawing room. Then, I mostly ignore them, but every once in a while I'll sit in the overstuffed chair, next to the dead lamp on that table, and handle all the bits that

don't belong here. They make my fingers tingle as I hold each one up to the light from the window and ask it where it came from. I never get through them all. I don't want to know where they came from, or why they are here. Their stories must remain mute in the darkness of this house and I'm afraid one day they'll answer me.

The birds have changed everything. They knew this box would come and they flew to my attic from who knows where to get it. That night they arrived, I couldn't sleep and so I saw from my window when they came flitting across the moon from the South. At first, I thought they were bats. I like when the bats stay in the attic. They did three years ago, and the nights were beautiful. But that night it was the birds. They are large and strangely colored but definitely birds. The day after they arrived, I went up to peek through the attic hatch, thinking that bats would be asleep and I wouldn't scare them too much in the daytime. But there were the birds, already in congress around an old trunk they had pulled to the middle of the floor. There, on the trunk sat, or rather roosted, five birds. A sooty raven with green eyes, a fiery orange secretary bird, a soft gray pigeon with an outrageous rainbow crest on its head, an elegant pink crane, and a purple finch with a strangely serrated yellow beak. And they were all staring straight at me.

Later, I figured out just how good the birds' hearing is, and now I can sneak up on them almost anytime I wish. But on that first day, they caught me by surprise. We stared for a full second and then the raven spoke.

"Greetings Keeper. I humbly apologise for the intruding of this, our esteemed flock. Our coming is with great haste and little preparation made, but the cause will manifest shortly."

At this I realized there were a great many birds throughout the attic, though most were sleeping. They all looked like one or the other of the five in the center. I'm not sure exactly how many there are, even now. There always seem to be more than I thought hiding in the shadows.

I could think of nothing intelligent to say, and so I asked, "Who are you?"

The pigeon replied as if I were stupid, "We are the Esteemed Flock."

"But, what are your names?" I persisted. Their answers were a series of whistles and clicks I couldn't possibly replicate. So I have given them names. The raven was obviously the leader. I called her Nevermore, as she proceeded to repeat how hasty they had had to be and how the great cause would soon make a magnificent appearance. The purple wren interrupted her with something like a grunt and an eye roll. I decided I might like her and called her Henwyn. The pigeon with the rainbow crest, which earned him the Mohawk moniker, glared at Henwyn and asked what news I had of the Cause. I'm sure I looked fairly confused by this point and before I could answer, the pink crane turned his back in a huff to whisper something frantically at Nevermore. I named him Sybil. Henwyn and Mohawk turned to Nevermore also, and the whispers flew for several minutes. Through all this the tallest and most brightly colored of the birds was silent and unmoving. Fireflight, the orange secretary bird just stood behind the others, staring into my face. Nothing happened so I left them to their whispers, and until today, they haven't mentioned The Cause again.

But now, now The Cause is here. Maybe it was waiting for the birds to change leaders, for it is obvious they have chosen Fireflight. Nevermore

didn't even appear in the kitchen when I found the box. In the flurry of feathers that brought them all down the moment I touched that yellow brocade, the black raven was missing. Did she stay to watch over the attic? Did they kill her? I still don't know, but Fireflight was the first in the kitchen. There was a crash and his great purple eye not two feet from my nose as I turned from the cabinet with the box in one hand and the cereal in my other. I dropped the cereal. Mohawk, Sybil, and Henwyn crowded in around Fireflight, their heads twitching from the box to my face and back again. Slowly I realized what they must have known all along. They couldn't take it from me.

I sat at the table, wondering briefly if my mother had heard the crash. Fireflight stood opposite me across the small kitchen table, and the others found roosts on the backs of chairs. They waited, silent. I gazed at the box in my hands, silent. Finally, I could stand it no more; I flipped the latch, and lifted the lid so swiftly I nearly dropped the box. Inside there was a shining heap of porcelain colored bones. I can't tell what kind of bones they are. Many are broken and there is much bone dust underneath. But that was all. A box of bones.

And the birds are angry...

Louise Warren

Madalini's shop always smelt of freshly baked cake; Madalini herself insisted that she never touched an oven and certainly she never made any offer of food to her customers, so where the smell came from, no one knew. The shop itself was right on the high-street, tucked between a chic outfitters and an even chicer antique bookshop— the kind where they're always discovering new Shakespeare manuscripts. The shopfront was not showy, but nor was it in disrepair; it was a smooth, pleasing burgundy with the name in clear white letters painted above the entrance. The door opened to a room with a single table with two chairs, a shelf full of white china cups in the left-hand corner and walls covered with art. Abstract, cubist, modern, classic, oil painting, chalk drawings, ink scribbles and pencil scratching: there was something from every genre on there somewhere and not an inch of wall showed. A door on the right, itself adorned with a stark white on black rendering of a cobra ready to strike, lead into the kitchen where, as Madalini put it, "the real magic happens."

Janine found it all a bit much. She considered leaving, but the bell above the door had already rung and a stirring started somewhere in the kitchen.

A woman with iron-grey locks reaching down to her shoulders and an ineffable air of no-nonsense leaned out of the door. "You're Eleanor's friend." It wasn't a question.

"Yes."

"That wasn't a question." The woman disappeared back into the kitchen, leaving Janine face to face with the cobra once more.

After a few seconds, Janine felt compelled to fill the deafening silence, "I was hoping you might help me with—"

The door burst open and Madalini marched out, thick black boots banging loudly on the stone floor. She held in her hands a bright silver handleless teapot, one hand resting on the bottom, the other on the spout. She plunked it down on the table and then went over

to the shelf of cups, selecting two with great care, even though they all looked identical to Janine. These too she placed on the table, and then sat herself down facing Janine. "Take a seat."

Janine pulled out the other chair, Madalini staring at her unblinkingly— at first, Janine tried to meet her gaze, but then she found this a bit too unsettling and instead decided to stare at the teapot.

"Financial trouble, is it?" Madalini asked, at last.

"Not as such, no."

"Well, then, what?" She sounded irritated at having guessed incorrectly.

"I— I'm having a bit of a crisis of conscience."

"Ah."

"You see, my aunt died recently and she left my brother this painting that I just love; it's absolutely beautiful, and he doesn't know that I have it. But he doesn't even want it. He just wants to sell it, so—"

Madalini held up her hand, out of either understanding or boredom. "So, what do you want me to do?"

"Eleanor said you could tell her future from her tea leaves."

"That is correct." Madalini inspected her nails.

"Well, I'd like you to tell my future."

"Why?" Here, she looked up at Janine.

"I'd like to know what I'll do."

"You'll do what you choose. That'll be twenty pounds."

"But I don't know what to do." Janine couldn't prevent a bit of a whiney tone entering her speech at this point.

"Well, that's a different question, isn't it? You don't need foresight for that one, just plain old common sense." Madalini reached over and flexed her fingers in the air above the tea pot, before reaching down, plucking the lid off the pot and letting the steam fill the room.

"Can you help me?" Janine was getting a little bit annoyed now— she was starting to suspect that Eleanor was full of it.

Madalini had produced a spoon and was stirring the tea inside the silver pot. She replaced the lid, and then poured herself a cup of tea. She held it up to her

lips, blew on it, and then took a sip and gasped at the heat. "Yes and no," she put the cup back down. "I can help you see what you should do, but you're not going to like my answer."

"So I should give him the painting?"

"Probably. Pour yourself a cup and we'll find out."

Janine felt a little thrill; she'd seen stage magic before, but had yet to witness anything that she would classify as "occult." She wasn't sure if she believed what Eleanor had told her, but still, she liked to entertain the idea that there was something more to the universe than just cells and atoms. She reached out for the pot and then a problem occurred to her. "There's no handle."

"I know."

This struck Janine as an incredibly unhelpful answer as well as an incredibly unhelpful design to the teapot. She stood up, placed one on the spout and then slid her other hand under the pot. She couldn't lift the teapot.

"Notice anything?" Madalini asked, a wry smile curling her lips.

"It's incredibly heavy." She tried again to shunt the teapot, but it wouldn't budge an inch. She strained her arms, creased her brow and exerted as much pressure as she could on both the spout and the bottom, but it was like trying to shift a boulder.

"Not that. What isn't happening?"

"It isn't moving." Janine's voice strained as she struggled with the pot.

"No, what else? What should be happening but isn't?"

Janine gave up on the pot, stepped away and thought for a second. "It isn't burning me."

"Exactly. No handle, metal pot, scaldingly hot tea," she lifted up the pot to reveal a brown ring burnt into the wood of the table, "but it's not even warm to the touch. Why do you think that might be?"

"Insulation?"

Madalini's look could have withered roses. "No. Have you heard of Excalibur?"

"Of course."

"Well, in some versions of the story, only the worthy and true could wield the mighty sword. Others

found it heavier than a mountain."

Janine looked down at the teapot, which suddenly seemed incredibly judgemental. "So, you're saying I'm not worthy?"

"No. If you were unworthy— if you were a bad person— then the pot would burn white hot at your touch. You'd leave here with a great big burn on your hand and I'd let you do whatever you want with that stupid painting." Madalini took another sip of tea and was yet again reviled by how hot it was. "But you're worthy; you're just not being true to yourself. You know you have to let your brother have it; you knew that before you walked in here, you just wanted me to tell you you'd take it anyway so you could justify being selfish. Now, come to terms with the fact that that painting isn't yours, and try to lift the pot."

Janine took a deep breath and closed her eyes; completely unbidden, she saw the painting before her— a lovely picture of two children on a fuchsia-pink horse— and then watched as it retreated off into the distance until she couldn't see it anymore. She reached down, picked up the pot— nearly spilt the tea since she was expecting it to be much heavier— and poured herself a cup. "There."

"Well done. You have your answer." Madalini stood up, picked up her tea and downed it in one gulp. She then looked up and seemed surprised that Janine was still there. "You can go now."

But Janine had one final question. "Are there some people who can never be worthy? Who could never lift the pot?"

Madalini laughed, "Of course not. Worthiness is earned, not inherited— rather like an aunt's approval, or a painting." She lifted up the pot, revealing at once the deep, ugly burn on the wood, "No one's perfect; everyone has shadows in their conscience and blanks where the north should be on their moral compass." She ran one finger over the dark black circle then waved a hand across it. "It's up to us to try and not let them mar our good judgement."

The table was pristine once more.

Rory Kelly

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5 <div>Block 6 Welcome Party</div> <div>Hassaku Matsuri (Kyoto)</div>	6 <div>Book Club: Oryx and Crake</div>
7	8	9 <div>Karasu Zumo Matsuri (Kyoto)</div>	10	11	12	13
14 <div>Seiryu-e Matsuri (Kyoto)</div>	15	16	17	18 <div>Kishiwada Danjiri Matsuri (Osaka)</div>	19 <div>Yumebutai Cultural Matsuri</div> <div>Kyoto International Manga Anime Fair</div>	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 <div>Tomomine Moon Viewing</div> <div>Mid-Autumn Festival</div>	27
28 <div>Mid-Autumn Festival</div>	29	30	All month:	<div>Awaji Flower & Water Tropical Garden (until 9/28)</div> <div>Rokko Meets Art– Art Walk 2015 (starts 9/12)</div> <div>British Museum Exhibition (starts 9/20)</div>		

