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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

The down jackets are out, fingers are frozen, and stores have been decorated for the holidays for too long already. Yes, that's right: it's December! Wherever you find yourself and whatever you may or may not celebrate, I hope this month leaves you with fond memories.

For my third year, I'm finally visiting home during the winter and I couldn't be more excited. While my first year in Thailand was great, being stuck in an airport last year was less than stellar. When I return home, I can finally experience firsthand one of my half-joking, half-deadly serious nightmares of my youngest brother driving. This fear first visited me after it became obvious he is a disaster magnet: before he'd turned 4, he'd already visited the ER three times. Compounding this is the fact that he recently went the wrong way down a one-way street. Fortunately, this transgression did not result in anything more damaging than panicking our mother, though that is no small thing.



This month, Mandy gives us the [classic winter dish nabe](#) in our food section, which is perfect for parties and eating while snuggled under a

kotatsu. Rory shares with us a fiction piece about [a pessimist](#), as well as his reasons for [not visiting England](#) while on JET. For those of you that will be going home or traveling during the winter, there is a guide on ways to spend your time during [layovers in five airports](#). Or, you may have [visitors](#) come to Japan and want a few tips on how to make that happen. Before all this traveling, you may want to visit [Kobe's Luminarie](#), which Rackle has written a preview of. Our alumni this month is [Justin Pool](#) of (you guessed it) Shiga.

Much like my brother will soon be free to wreak havoc on the roads all on his own, our students will be out of our hands before we know it. Elementary school students become pubescent teenagers (often) become high schoolers taking studies either too seriously or as a joke (sometimes) become university students (hopefully) become productive members of society. While English classes may be arbitrary as they currently stand, becoming proficient opens the world in ways few other languages can. Guiding and gently correcting mistakes now, while the stakes are relatively low, will help students build confidence and avoid crashing into poles. 頑張りましょう。

Brittany Teodorski

Seaason's Greetings JETs! (Whoa it feels odd to say that)

I saw the Christmas trees go up in my local department store on November 1st and then my body tensed up and my head started shaking as I realized BUM BUM BUM... the Christmas carols are coming! I know anyone who has worked in retail in the past knows EXACTLY what I mean. The good news is that this Christmas season does not have to be full of dread and avoiding your local shopping malls. AJET has many great events to keep you amused and in the holiday spirit.

First up is Kobe city's oh so famous Luminarie light display. Luminarie is a memorial event (held from December 4-13) for the victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. Hyogo AJET will [meet](#) on December 10th outside Motomachi station to battle the crowds and view the sparkling lights and illuminated streets of Kobe together. Also this month, the Hyogo AJET [Book Club](#) is reading *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman. Book Club will meet on the 13th of December in Sannomiya or Motomachi at another cool little café (TBA). Keep an eye out on the Hyogo AJET Facebook for more information or contact us through the below email.

As Christmas is the season for giving, be sure to keep your eyes out for the many ways to get involved with charities and within your communities. One example of this is Kobe's 3rd Annual Christmas Charity Bake Sale. This event

will be held on December 19th and December 20th from 9am-4pm. Kobe AJET is asking for volunteers to join them by singing Christmas Carols, making baked goods and selling the delicious foods on the days. If you are interested in helping, please contact the lovely Joy Sung and Mark Whitley or visit the event's Facebook [page](#).



Well that's all from me. I hope you all have a wonderful winter vacation and stay safe wherever in the world you may be heading (or not heading if you are staying in Japan). As always, if you have any question or ideas for Hyogo AJET, please contact us at hyogo.pr@hyogo.ajet.net.

Stay Awesome,

Ash

Winter is near/here and you're already running behind if you haven't pulled out your nabe pot.

A favorite winter food to cook up at the kotatsu and keep you warm, nabe is both simple and versatile. Simply stock up on your favorite meat and vegetables, stir together some yummy stock, and you're all set to dive under the kotatsu and stay there til winter's end.

Good for sharing with friends and family, nabe (Japanese hot pot) also makes for fun and interactive eating as you throw things into a pot, watch it cook, and eat as you go. Once you have a few stock options in your cooking arsenal, the variations and flavor possibilities are endless.

Tips:

Prepare all your ingredients beforehand by cutting vegetables and meat and arranging them nicely on a plate. Also, be sure to defrost and precook your udon by bringing the noodles to a boil and soaking them in an icewater bath to stop the cooking. Once this is set, all you need is your stock, and you can sit back, relax, and eat!

#1 Sesame Stock

Ingredients:

- 6 Cups Water
- 4 Chicken or Beef Bouillon Cubes

- 2 tsp Salt
- 4 Tbsp Ground Sesame Seeds
- 1 Tbsp Grated Garlic
- 1 ½ Tbsp Grated Ginger
- 2 Tbsp Sesame Oil

Instructions:

1. Mix together all the ingredients except for the ground sesame seeds in a nabe pot and bring to a boil.
2. Add the nabe ingredients and cook til desired and top with the ground sesame before eating.



#2 Kimchi Chige Stock (Spicing things up Korean style)

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp Sesame Oil
- 2 cloves minced Garlic
- 1 tsp minced Ginger
- 1 ½ cup loosely packed Kimchi cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 Tbsp Korean chili paste (gochujang)
- 1 Tbsp Sake (or cooking wine)
- 1 Tbsp Miso
- 1 Tbsp Dashi
- 1 tsp Soy Sauce



Photo courtesy of adaenn via flickr commons.

- 1 tsp Korean Red Chili Pepper Flakes (gochugaru) (optional)
- ½ cup juice from Kimchi (squeezed from the kimchi)
- 2 cups Water

Instructions:

1. Heat up your nabe pot and drizzle in the sesame oil. Once hot, add in the minced garlic and ginger and stir for about 30 seconds.
2. Toss in the kimchi and stir fry it for about 2 minutes.
3. Add the sake, miso, dashi, soy sauce, and pepper flakes and stir well to combine.
4. Finally, add the water and kimchi juice and bring to a boil.
5. Use this stock to cook your nabe ingredients and enjoy.

#3 Sukiyaki Sauce/Stock

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Sake
- 1 cup Mirin

- 1 cup Soy Sauce
- ¼ cup Sugar
- Dashi or Water

If you want to precook your meat (optional):

- 1 Tbsp your favorite Cooking oil (vegetable, sesame, olive)
- 1 Tbsp Brown Sugar
- 1 lb (450 g) Sukiyaki Beef



"Sukiyaki" courtesy of hiroto t via flickr commons.

Instructions:

1. Bring the sake, mirin, soy sauce, and sugar to a boil in a small pan. Set aside.
2. Heat up your nabe pot and drizzle in the cooking oil. Mix the sukiyaki beef, brown sugar, and a bit of the sukiyaki sauce and sear it in the pot until caramelized. *At this point, if you're

going Osaka style, you can eat some of the beef before beginning the nabe fun.

3. Pour ⅓ cup dashi or water and 1 cup of the sukiyaki sauce into your nabe pot along with the meat and add in your favorite nabe ingredients. Cook and eat, refilling your nabe pot with dashi or water and sukiyaki sauce as needed.

In Japan, since eggs are safe to consume raw, sukiyaki is traditionally dipped in raw egg before consuming. If you're feeling adventurous, give it a try! ;)

For another take on Sukiyaki, check out the December 2011 edition of Kicchiri Kitchen [here](#).

For Chicken Nabe, check out Cherie's [recipe](#).

On a final note, once you've finished eating your nabe, you can save the leftover stock infused with all that nabe goodness and use it to make Zōsui 雑炊 by adding pre-cooked rice and boiling it to a porridge-like consistency. This is especially good to eat when you have a cold.

Stay Warm & Be Well,

mandy

For any travelers out there (of which I suspect there will be many this month), layovers are often a necessary and incredibly cost-effective evil. Below you will find my experiences (or how I imagine my imminent experience will be) with five airports. These airports often serve as gateways to SE Asia, Europe, and North America.

Amsterdam

The Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (how fun to say!) has a wealth of activities both within its terminals, and a short train ride away in the heart of the city. However, shopping and gambling are not of interest to me, and the city has more museums, so I have admittedly not spent a length of time in the airport. Amsterdam itself has so much to offer. The tram, all of the bikes ever, the Red Light district, and for those looking to sober up before continuing on their way, the [Anne Frank Huis](#). Famous artist enthusiasts also have the opportunity to visit the [Van Gogh Museum](#) and rub it in my face as it was closed when I was last there. Go ahead. Do it.



Photo courtesy of David Monger.

Guangzhou

China Southern's main hub, travelers to SE Asia for the winter break may find themselves in the Guangzhou airport. If you have a significant layover here, there are free 72-hour visas and you can take the approximately one hour journey into the center of the city for sites, shopping, and sweets (or food in general; I don't discriminate). If your allotted time can't accommodate the traveling though, you will be sentenced to the hell that is Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport. The few restaurants here are far from acceptable, Wi-Fi is sparse to non-existent, and if you haven't come prepared with yuan, the currency exchange gouges you. There is a rather large fee for each bill, so if you were hoping to get only 1000¥ worth, you're simply lining their pockets. On my first layover here, my two companions and I opted to exchange a 万 instead. With this money, we spent our time eating terrible food, drinking, and irreverently playing the card game Mao. For five hours. The return trip alone was a lost cause to boredom. Skip Guangzhou if your budget can afford it.

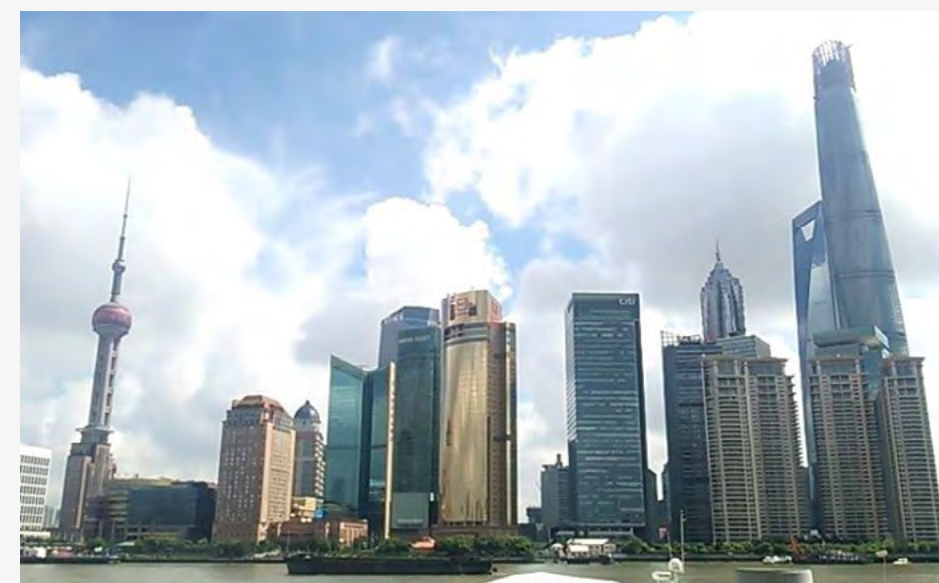
Incheon

Ah Incheon. If ever a city wants to look at how to treat in-transit travelers well, they need look no further than here. There are various Korean cultural activities and performances on both sides of security, lots of expensive food, two movie theaters, and much more besides.



The amenities are astounding. By and away, though, my favorite aspect of Incheon is its [free transit tours](#). Depending on when you first arrive, you can go on a variety of tours for various lengths. The bright side of arriving painfully early is that you'll then have the opportunity to go on the Seoul City or Cultural Tours. And I will be super jealous. My tour guide on the Incheon City Tour was amicable and I was pretty disappointed the time had to be cut short because of tensions with North Korea. The cherry on top of all this is that the transit tours are completely free. Sign up at the tourism desk before going through immigration, then check in and let them copy your passport and you're all set. Another great thing about Incheon is that it is the major hub of Asiana Airlines. You can pay for tickets with them at a conbini, avoiding the transfer fees if you use money you've had to send home.

Shanghai



Along with Beijing, Guangzhou, and [several other cities](#), Shanghai offers the 72-hour visa on arrival for those with a confirmed connection. I was only able to take advantage of this during one of my brief stays in the city. My other visit was soul-crushingly boring and I'll not dwell on it. If you've the time, I highly recommend venturing out into the city. Taking the maglev is cool and rather inexpensive, especially considering how quickly it travels. The Bund is probably my favorite place in Shanghai, though

beware of scammers and the high percentage of people that will stop you and ask for your picture. There is so much else to see as well. A day spent in Shanghai is a good day indeed.

Vancouver



Photo courtesy of David Monger.

This is also for my benefit as I'll be spending six hours here in just a few short weeks. Full disclosure. There are many services in addition to shopping and dining at the airport, but if you have a longer time to kill, you can take the Skytrain into the city center. It takes about 25 minutes. Once there, you can find many cultures melding together, with French, English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean influences easily found in various places throughout the city. My only trip to Vancouver thus far left me feeling very nostalgic for Japan when I wandered through the Book Off (which my very thorough Google search tells me is now closed; sorry guys). Fill up on Tim Horton's before venturing out of the Great White North.

Don't let the layover get you down, man.

Brittany Teodoriski

The Hanshin Earthquake of 1995 has widely been regarded as one of the worst natural disasters in Japan's recent history. Over six thousand lives were lost and there were billions of dollars in damages. However, in all the chaos and pain something beautiful and bright began. The Italian government donated over 200,000 painted lights for a fundraising exhibition in Kobe city. What started as a one off display of light and hope has now become a permanent fixture of the holiday season— the Kobe Luminarie, a reminder that there is always light in the darkest of times.



The experience is a magical one. A few minutes before the lights go on, a hush falls over the crowd. While anticipation begins to rise, voices drop to whispers. A countdown begins in the dark, a collective breath is held, and then, like a wave, the lights bloom along the street. The whole world seems to glow in a myriad of colors as intricate patterns light up the street. The entrance itself is a work of art, but the truly remarkable display lies at the center of the park at the end of the illumination: an all-encompassing ring of endless color and light.

Groups of friends, families and couples wander the maze of lights. The holiday season allows otherwise dissuaded acts of affection, such as holding hands, hugging and kissing, especially at Luminarie. Perhaps it's the memory of loss, but during this time the normal stoic nature of the Japanese people fades and something gentler takes its place. There's a shrine for those who were

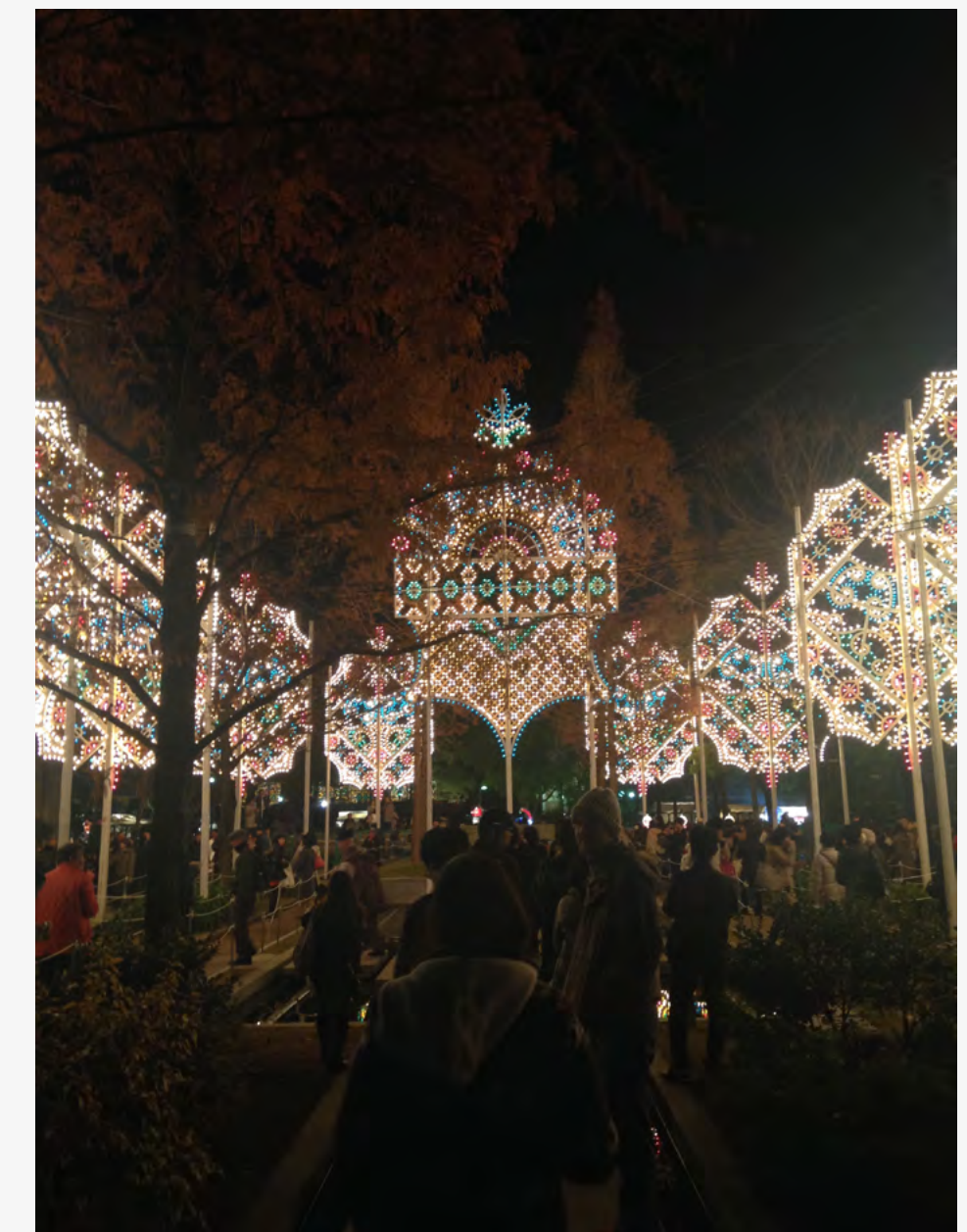
lost, so under the laughter and excited chatter silent prayers can be found. Despite it being a joyous occasion, everyone knows this event commemorates those lost in the earthquake. A night at the Kobe Luminarie can feel like a moment stopped in time, an experience outside of normal Japanese life. There's something magical in this event that can only be experienced if you've been there.



Annually, the Kobe Luminarie begins in the first week of December and runs for two weeks. This year, the Luminarie will be open from the 4th to the 13th of December and while admission is free, there are opportunities to make a small donation if you like. The display runs from the Daimaru department store a short walk from Motomachi station, to Higashi Yuenchi Park next to Kobe city hall which is about a 600m walk. It begins at 6pm weekdays and 5pm weekends, running till 10pm on Friday and Saturday and 9:30pm every other night. It is best to arrive about half an hour to an hour early in order to get a good spot when the lights turn on. Along with the lights, there are festival type food stores and souvenirs of the event, but be warned: it gets very crowded.

Finally, be sure to either leave early or late as the trains once the lights go off tend to be packed to bursting. For those of you who are interested, do join the Hyogo AJET [Luminarie event](#) on the group page. Be it with your friends, alone or otherwise, Luminarie is an unmissable event.

Rackle Beaman



A friend recently told me that I was “so like Byron.” I tried to puzzle out what she meant: A prolific poet? A notorious bisexual? A major theme in a work by Tom Stoppard? All are applicable to me, but I imagine, given the context of the conversation in which we were engaged, she was referring to the “self-imposed exile” thing.

You see, I’ve decided to not return to my mother country until the end of my contract; This may seem like a pretty commonplace choice for JETs, but it’s proven controversial with the folks back home. It doesn’t help that I don’t know when I’ll be returning yet— it might be as early as next summer, or as late as September 2020. I’m currently on the horns of re-appointment anxiety, but that’s an article for another day.

None of my friends back home accept my motivation for this uninterrupted separation, which is odd because I’ve given each of them a different explanation: I want to explore more of Asia in my time off; it’s too expensive; I don’t have time; it’s against my contract (I am not, and never have been, above lying to get out of awkward conversations). I’ve told everyone something different because the real reason is difficult to articulate.

For one thing, I need to prove to myself that I can stay away from home comforts for so long. Much like Bilbo, I need to know for certain that I am not a creature of habit, unable to go without his kettle, his armchair or his prissy little mantel. I

also want the world to know these things— I want to metaphorically march back into Hobbiton, head held high, the smell of adventure clinging to me, all the locals agog at how worldly I am. I have stayed away from home for exactly a year before, which at the time seemed like a major accomplishment but now feels like it might as well have just been a long weekend in Brighton. I want everyone— including myself— to know that I am an independent person, one who needs no native land or base of operations, just a point of origin. A citizen of the world. I’ve been told that your twenties are the time to become who you want to be, and the person I want to be has been everywhere and is so comfortable in his own skin that pretty much anywhere is home.

A year or two may seem long in the moment, but when you look back, it was often rather ephemeral. The time I’ve spent abroad until now amounts to very little when compared to the literal decades I passed in Britain— I want to redress that balance and punch my life with even more of that most evasive spice, variety. At the moment, I have lived in four different countries, but that’s only two percent of the countries in the world, and really that kind of scares me. Even if I travel every minute of every day for the rest of my life, I’m never going to see even half of the planet I call home. There’s just too much of it. I need to have a good stab at at least seeing the parts to which I was given a free plane ticket.

Plus, going back home will make it more difficult to come back: when I was in France, I travelled during every half-term, religious holiday and long weekend and, while those experiences were great, it made returning exceptionally hard. Returning to Edinburgh, even for just three days,

made the next fortnight in Picardy feel like a year. Now, my life in France was awful compared to my life in Japan, but I’m well aware that seeing the people you miss only to leave them again after a week is not a panacea for homesickness. As Joanna Gleason sang, “To get what you wish only just for a moment, these are dangerous woods” (she might have been talking about something else). I’ve heard stories of JETs who went back during their first Christmas holiday and never returned to Japan, kind of like the reverse of what all my neighbours said would happen to me coming here. I don’t want to be one of those people— for one thing, they have to pay for their own flight home, but, more urgently, I want to make the most of the short time I’ve been gifted here. I want to cram it so full of adventures and misdemeanours that I can’t tell some of the stories because people simply won’t believe me. I want my time in Japan to be an entire chapter in my autobiography, not a footnote.

And, on top of all of that, I want to be different when I finally come home. You don’t look at a caterpillar when it’s still in the cocoon— you don’t see the awkward stage when its wings are no more than back stubble and it’s still got its baby antennae. You just see the beautiful butterfly afterward. Japan has already changed me somewhat— for example, I’m much more aware of the dangers of cross-shoe-contamination— but I know there’s more on the way and I don’t want to spoil the surprise for the folks at home. When I was in France, I popped back so often that my newfound love of wine and my now-deep-ingrained disdain for cooking steak correctly barely registered with my cohorts. I want my post-Japan identity to land with all the force of Godzilla’s foot, frightening villages with its

power and fascinating generations to come with its hokey strangeness.

Byron left because of scandal, bankruptcy and incest. None of those happened to me and, unlike Byron, I do plan to return at some point. But there are some notable similarities between us: we both gained an interest in our new lands from reading stories when we were younger; we both have no idea of our adopted home’s tongue, except how to swear; we both tried to buy children and were widely rebuffed. And, it would seem, we both left noticeable absences when we absconded to the East, so much that people have felt the need to write actual handwritten letters to us (this might have been a bigger deal for me than Byron). I know it will hurt me and my friends, but this exile is necessary for all the reasons I said above, even the one I admitted was fake. We will have to learn to be apart so that when we are together, we are all the best people we can be.

Unlike my counterpart, I plan to come back and live past thirty-six. I’d like to leave you all with a quote from Byron’s *When We Two Parted* which I have subtly altered:

*If I should meet thee,
After long years,
How should I greet thee?
With hugging and beers
BRB*

Rory Kelly

It may not happen for everyone, but eventually you may receive long-distance visitors. In as many months, I had two friends from America make the long trek to the land of the rising sun. Naturally, I was expected to serve as guide, translator, and planner for bringing their dreams into reality. Having done this twice now, here are some of my experiences and tips on how to bring your trip into fruition.

How to Plan

First off, your traveling companion needs to actually get here. There's not much to do for those of us on the Japan side, but suggesting they avoid peak travel seasons, like Golden Week, can't hurt. After their tickets are purchased, you can start getting into the nitty gritty aspects.



Insist they make a list of their top things to see. At a couple points, my friends said we could do whatever I thought was best. While this worked out highly in our favor during our trip to Matsushima, JETs have so many more opportunities to see whatever we want. Your friend may only visit once or twice.

After their list is made, you can break things down into region and start deciding which cities

to visit and in which order. With this, you can start making a skeleton. I've found using a Google doc is extremely helpful, especially since your companion probably lives in a wildly different time zone. You can also use it to keep track of any hotel/hostel reservations you make. Having a well-fleshed out plan will also help you avoid the dreaded indecision that often visits when you have time to kill. At the same time, don't be afraid to deviate or completely disregard your plans for the day if something more interesting comes up.

Food can play a huge part in making a vacation great rather than merely good. If you end up in one of the cities you know well, definitely suggest where to eat. Also keep in mind any food issues your companion may have. As delicious as sushi is, some may hate the mere mention of seafood. It will be a disappointing venture if they hate or refuse to eat what you proffer.



Getting Around

Should your itinerary have you ride the shinkansen more than twice, it would be worthwhile for your companion to purchase a 7-day JR Pass. JETs will have to weep for their wallets, though, as they are only available to tourists. Keep in mind that the only shinkansen line you can ride from Shin-Kobe to Tokyo with the pass only comes through once every hour. I was furious to find this out, my hour of 年休 now pointless. If you're on a tight schedule, it's good to buy/acquire your



other people can certainly figure it out. Grumble grumble.

If your companions are young and/or don't mind night buses, they are a very frugal way to see the country. You save time by traveling while sleeping and money by not needing to pay for another night at a hotel. Do keep in mind that if you're unable to sleep on them (like me), you may find yourself unable to keep up with the demands of your schedule. Use at your own risk.



Photo courtesy of Caitlin Ellerbe.

Though they cost 500円, IC cards are extremely

tickets ahead of time. For reasons I could not fathom, a great number of people were in line for the ticket counter. It seemed to me that many could have easily purchased theirs from the ticket machines. If I can do it in Japanese,

convenient for getting around cities. Our very own ICOCA seems to have one of the widest ranges of usability, so if your companion is not arriving in Kansai, you could consider buying one for them ahead of time. My second visitor got a PASMO in Tokyo, and was unable to use it in Hiroshima. This, together with the lack of Ike, made him sorely regret not getting ICOCA.

Where to Stay

For younger visitors (or those young at heart), hostels or capsule hotels are inexpensive. Capsule hotels have the added benefit of being one of those weird things most people are interested in trying. If your entire travel group is female and staying in a hostel, female-only dorms have a lower likelihood of being filled with snoring, generally leading to a better night's rest.

Those older or less comfortable with hostels would probably find business hotels like Toyoko Inn acceptable. They are significantly cheaper than hotels of the other varieties. If you stay in the same chain, all of their rooms tend to be of the same layout, making it seem more familiar and therefore more comfortable.

Ultimately, you should book rooms as soon as you've decided on your plan of attack. It is particularly imperative if you will be in a popular tourist destination, such as Tokyo or Kyoto, on a weekend. Internet cafes are always an option, but dragging around your companion in addition to their baggage all day will lead to a less than stellar day.

Happy travels.

Brittany Teodorski

Hello everyone, I am Justin Parker Pool I, another in a long line of Shiga JETs gracing the pages of this illustrious publication's pixelated pages. I spent my formative Japanese years in beautiful Omihachiman just east of the Mother Lake, Biwako. My base school was Hachiman Technical High School for the duration of my five years on JET (2005-2010). This was the perfect school for me as they allowed me the opportunity to create my own curriculum. Oh, the PowerPoints I made! While the students were not English juggernauts per se, they tried hard and the classes were fun—what more could you ask for?



JET camaraderie. Japanese culture. Community. Nihon-Shu. Things engulfed in flames. These are some of my favorite things and on one majestic night each and every year, they would come together to form a slice of Heaven on Earth called Sagicho Matsuri. In fact, I've found remnants of

the ancient block guide that I scrawled upon an online tablet years ago describing this most holy of nights:

Simply put, Sagicho is the most badass festival in all of Shiga. The main components are alcohol, transvestism, alcohol, fire, alcohol, Chinese Zodiac, alcohol, and sacrificing to the Gods. Got it? Each year, each neighborhood in Omihachiman creates a float (don't be fooled, it's heavy enough to destroy your shoulders) made out of foodstuffs. The theme of the float is whatever year it is in the Chinese calendar. For example, 2006 was the dog, 2007 the boar, and 2008 will be the rat. On Saturday, they march their floats around town. The action happens on Sunday. They bash their floats against each other to see which is the sturdiest. Then at night, they take them to the temple at the foot of the mountain and set them all ablaze. Throughout this process, everyone from middle school on up is getting hammered.



If I die and end up in a place surrounded by fire, my first thought will be I made it to Heaven! If you have the opportunity, do go to this wonderful festival.

The most valuable thing I learned during my time on JET is that we construct our own realities. Both at work and in my social life, I learned to become an active designer of my own life. I reassembled the curriculum at my school to fit my own quirky sensibilities while also giving students the best English education I could. I also created and continued events in our prefecture that I wanted to be a part of, helping to lead the community in a positive direction. If you build a vision for yourself, a pathway will open.

One other lesson I learned as a teacher is that we sow seeds in this life without ever watching them bloom. As a teacher, you become a part of the lives of thousands of kids. You will affect each and every one of them with each interaction you have with them. The results of those interactions will probably never make themselves known to you, but it doesn't matter. Just sow positive seeds and move on.

My recommendation for current JETs is to develop a plan for your post-JET game and take steps immediately at making your dreams come true. While I treasure all the time I spent on JET with friends, lazing days away, and studying Japanese, I realize now I had ample time to get that Master's Degree that's got me drowning in work and filling up all the cracks and crevices in my life not covered by work or family. Only now do I realize just how much time I had on JET and all I could have done with it. So that's my official advice, but my ACTUAL advice comes directly from Louis Prima: [Enjoy Yourself! \(It's Later Than You Think\)](#). You've only got so many magical moments during your tenure on the JET Programme. Make the most of them!

So Where Am I Now?

Closer than you think. Seriously, turn around. Alright, perhaps not THAT close, but I have joined you, my Hyogo Brethren and Sistren. I am currently teaching at Kwansei Gakuin High School atop Nishinomiya and I'm living in beautiful Takarazuka with my beautiful wife and daughter. As mentioned above, I am also working on my Master's Degree—I'm studying Applied Linguistics online through the University of Massachusetts (highly recommended if you're looking for a program). I have also recently started as a [humor writer for Detroit Bad Boys](#), a Detroit Pistons-themed basketball blog website. Humor writer for a basketball site? Like I said, construct your own reality.



Speaking of constructing your own reality, I had an ume-shu inspired dream to see all my Shiga friends together one more time and decided to act on it. Following the Tokyo Olympics in 2020, I am inviting all Shiga JETs/expats back for what I am hoping is one of the largest reunions to exist on this island. Always remember that what you're doing now is the fuel for that mystic nostalgia you'll feel for the rest of your life (and that counts quintuple for your time on JET). Enjoy yourself—It's later than you think.

Justin Pool

Adelaide stepped off the bus and into the rain. It barely registered to him, the water lashing against his face, the disgusting cloying of the damp collar against his skin. It rained so often where he lived, it was like political corruption or economic recession— it had just become part of the scenery. Bitchface was *de rigueur* in Adelaide's world— nature abhorred a smile.

He climbed the fifty seven steps up to his flat— the lift was broken (of course) and would probably never be fixed. Like the rain, it was just a fact. An immutable part of the universe, a law of physics: gravity, entropy and the broken lift.

He opened his fridge: he'd forgotten to go food shopping. Again. Oh well. He couldn't afford anything nice, anyway: bread and soup and soup and bread, that was all he ate. Not even nice soup. Not even brown bread.

He slammed the door shut to find a woman— elderly, but still rocking it, noted the small part of Adelaide's brain that paid attention to other people— beaming at him. He gasped and stumbled backwards, banging his funny bone against the tabletop. "Fuck!" He shouted and then felt strangely guilty for swearing in front of the stranger. He rubbed his elbow. 'Great,' he thought, 'Now it's going to feel weird for hours.'

"Let me help with that," cooed the old lady sympathetically and then from nowhere she produced a wand and, a little theatrically, waved it over the affected area. Instantly, the ache stopped. "You're welcome," she trilled.

"You're the one who caused me to bang it in the first place!" snapped Adelaide. "Who the fu— hell are you, anyway?"

The woman's smile didn't falter, but her brow furrowed just a little. "Oh, Adelaide, don't you recognise me? I guess it has been a while."

And then Adelaide realised. "You're my Fairy Godmother."

"Yes!" She beamed, twirling around and waving her wand so that little sparks flew about the kitchen; where they landed, tiny blue flowers sprouted. Adelaide couldn't help but feel that this was both unnecessary and unhygienic. He did not look forward to pulling forget-me-nots from out of the kettle.

His Fairy Godmother seemed to be expecting something from him so Adelaide responded, "Okay."

She waited a few seconds for something a bit more substantive but when she realised it wasn't coming, she launched into her spiel. "I know you've been dreadfully unhappy, Adelaide—"

"You can say that again," he interjected,

somewhat smugly.

"—but I'm here now, and I'll make everything right."

Adelaide, sensing a chance to act superior, leaned back against his kitchen counter and folded his arms. "So, what are you going to do?" He sneered, "Promotion? I hate my job. Win the lottery? I'd just have to pay it all in taxes. Invite to the ball? I hate everyone and I don't dance. You've met your match, lady." He was enjoying this.

"I know, I know," she nodded, somewhat patronisingly, "You've presented a very difficult case, Adelaide. It's my job to make you happy, but you're only happy when you're miserable." This had been said to Adelaide a lot— he even wrote it on some of his dating profiles, before he deleted them because he remembered that he loathed other people. "Obviously, I can't use my magic to make you miserable— that's against the rules— but nothing I can do will raise your spirits. It's just your nature."

Adelaide smirked broadly and then quickly hid it behind a snarl. "Well, then, I guess I've beaten your system, eh, lady?"

"Not at all," she countered, grinning like the Cheshire Cat on ketamine, "You see, this morning, I finally puzzled it out. I realised what I can do," and suddenly she was right up in his face, her smile taking up the entire lower half of her face, her eyes wide with manic glee. "I can change your *nature*."

The silence that followed was so pregnant, people kept offering it their seat on the bus. "What?" Adelaide asked, suddenly very worried and not afraid to show it.

"I'm going to change your nature," repeated the Fairy Godmother, barely able to suppress her pride at the thought. "There's nothing in the rule book that says I can't! Frankly, I don't know why we don't do it more often— it's a lot less economically disruptive than making everyone rich."

Adelaide stared at her, not listening. "You're going to give me brain damage?"

"No, I'm just going to drastically alter your personality."

"THAT IS THE NUMBER ONE SYMPTOM OF BRAIN DAMAGE!" She flinched at his volume; he used the momentary distraction to push past her and bolt for the door. He'd taken all of two steps when the lighting in the room changed. Everything was suddenly bathed in red. The front door disappeared into the wall, the windows bricked themselves up and the floor turned to liquid, sliding itself up his legs and suddenly snapping into position as two shackles around his ankles. The begonias in the sink all wilted in unison. An unseen force spun him around to face the Fairy Godmother, who hovered near the ceiling, bathed in red light, a strange halo of swirling energy circling her wand, her eyes a deep scarlet with no visible pupils.

“I know you don’t understand, Adelaide,” she said, her voice still sing-song and caring, even as her appearance grew more demonic. “And you probably think you don’t want this. But you’ll see, once I fix you—” Here he tried to interrupt, but a piece of gaffa tape unfurled across his mouth. “—that I’m right. My way is better. You’ll like being optimistic, I promise.”

Adelaide screamed through the tape and struggled against the chains but to no avail; he scratched and clawed at the gag but then suddenly his hands were tied behind his back and the Godmother was raising her wand dramatically.

“Serotonin, dopamine, eye of newt and lizard’s spleen,”

Adelaide began to rise into the air, chest first, as though an invisible harpoon had speared his heart.

“Oxytocin, booze, endorphins, hobo blood and tears of orphans,”

Adelaide climbed higher, closer to his would-be saviour; her aura was blinding.

“Stop!”

She yelled and her voice echoed around the room for far too long. Adelaide’s ascent finally halted, a few feet below her.

“Adelaide Brookes, are you ready to be

saved?”

Adelaide shouted muffled curse words through the gag, but it was no good— she wasn’t listening. He suddenly went limp with defeat.

“Then welcome to the world of the positive!”

She swished her wand, then the strange, whorling energy on top unfurled itself and shot straight at Adelaide’s head like a laser. It passed through his skull as though it was steam and embedded itself in his brain.

Everything flashed bright yellow and then Adelaide blacked out.

He awoke to find the rain had stopped. *Well good*, said a voice in his head that he had never heard before. It sounded not unlike the Fairy Godmother. Adelaide shook his head and looked around— he was seated at his table, which had been set, including fresh flowers and what looked like a pot of honey. Honey was neither bread nor soup, so he was pretty sure he hadn’t bought it. He got up, stretched and then glanced out of the window. Blue skies. *There’re probably puddles I could jump in!* The voice practically sang with glee, *Where are my wellies?* Adelaide dismissed it but then something quite unexpected happened: the corners of his mouth turned up. He was **smiling**.

Over the years he’d sneered, smirked and even grinned maliciously. But he’d never smiled. It just wasn’t him. But as much as he told his

mouth to resume bitchface, it wouldn’t obey. He was just too damn happy. There was a warmth inside him that bubbled and fizzed like sweet champagne; he wanted to dance though he could hear no music; his body pulsed with a strange giddy energy.

He tried listing all the many reasons to be miserable— ‘Taxes, war, Britain’s Got Talent’— but he could only get to three before the voice yelled *Who cares?!* and he found himself leaning over to smell the flowers on the table and mentally listing recipes that included honey. Except, he didn’t know any recipes. The voice in his head giggled, and Adelaide found himself chuckling, too. It just seemed so ridiculous— what kind of twenty-six year old didn’t know any recipes? *We could obviously try honey toast, we already have the bread. Or, I guess we could make porridge, if we go shopping—* and here the voice gasped— **SHOPPING!** He was positively giddy to go to the shops with his new attitude. It would be so much more fun! And he could find a whole new slew of items to add to his weekly shop. ‘But I can’t afford anything!’ moaned Adelaide’s old pessimism, although its voice was growing weaker by the second.

“Oh, I’ll find something new I’m sure!” beamed Adelaide, though he was bit disturbed to find himself talking to his own brain. He grabbed his keys off the table (taking a moment to appreciate the table cloth that the Godmother had laid out— where had he hidden that away? He’d have to look around and see what else he had stashed about the place) and marched

out the door. Then, a few seconds later, he popped back in, grabbed one of the flowers from the vase, and stuck it in his lapel; and with that, Bitchface melted like a snowman in a tanning booth.

Rory Kelly

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
					JLPT	
				Kobe Luminarie		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			Hyogo AJET Luminarie	Kyoto Arashiyama Hanatouro 2015		
Kobe Luminarie						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ako Gishi Sai				Star Wars VII!	Kobe AJET Bake Sale	
Kyoto Arashiyama Hanatouro 2015						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	All month:	Light and Flower Pagent Christmas Show	
					British Museum Exhibition	
					Kobe Illuminage	
					Ikuno Illumination Road 2015	
					Okukawachi Illuminage (Osaka) (starts 12/5)	

