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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](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com)

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he weather may stay warmer, my school will have Taco Rice Tuesdays, and Golden Week insanity is upon us! May also brings a more settled schedule for many of us following the holidays at its start.

My first year, Golden Week was split into two, with the first half devoted to a solo trip to Kyoto, and the second to random hangouts in Osaka and Kobe. Last year, I rented a house in northern Kyoto with this pretty jerk I know, and we had a good time watching a giraffe drink another's urine and the drunk in Kawaramachi. Both were at zoos, obviously. This year still involves a trip to Kyoto, but joining it is a deluge of other people and places. One of my friends is visiting from America (my aunt and her friend may visit too), and there are at least four other people we'll be traveling to Tokyo with. I anticipate a hemorrhaging wallet and hijinks.

Once again, this month is full of articles for your reading pleasure. Resident Hanshin Tigers 大ファン Larisa shares her [tips](#) on getting the most out of a game. If you want to go a little farther afield, there are reviews of Shikoku's [Setouchi Triennale](#) and [Taiwan](#). Rory shares his experiences of remaining [uninformed in the staffroom](#) and a story about a father's [fear of flying](#). Mandy has another [poem](#) for us, as well as a recipe on a [pineapple dessert](#), the deliciousness of which I can personally vouch for. You can also read about the most recent [book club](#), and [HAJET's](#) reasons for volunteering (and why you should too!). Finally, our alumni for this month is [Alex Barrett](#).

Golden Week (together with my Sailor Moon addiction) may be the death of my bank account,

but in these circumstances, I remind myself that I'll remember the experiences much more than my balance. Add in those extra stops on your road trip, stop off at that nice restaurant you've been dying to try, go see that concert, come to the [Biwa Boat Ball](#). Have fun!

Brittany Teodorski



Photo courtesy of Tiffany Ly.



**S**pring is a season for new beginnings. As we end our hibernation and climb out from underneath our kotatsu, we are greeted by birds singing, flowers blooming, and (thankfully!) rising temperatures. Our excitement can hardly be contained as we start making plans to enjoy the weather. Don't know where to start? Check out the [events calendar](#) for interesting things happening nearby.



While Japan hosts numerous festivals all year round, there does seem to be a noticeable increase as the temperature goes up. This means

that there is no shortage of things to do in May!

If you are looking for a bit of international fun, head to Osaka. The city is always hosting a myriad of different events and activities, and May is no exception. Festivals like the "Aloha Summer Festival" and the "Thai Festival Osaka", which celebrate Hawaiian and Thai culture respectively are sure to be a blast! For fans of German beer and food, check out the "Osaka Oktoberfest" from May 13 to 29.

For something a bit more traditional, head to Kyoto for the Aoi Matsuri. Considered one of the oldest festivals in the world, it hosts numerous events during the first two weeks of May. The main event (May 15) consists of approximately 500 people dressed in Heian Period costumes making their way from the Imperial Palace to Kamigama Shrine (with a stop or two in between). As with all the big festivals, it is quite popular and crowded. So be sure to get there early and secure a good spot!

Whatever your plans for the summer, remember to enjoy yourselves and make the most of your time in Japan. Until next time!

*Sylvette*

**T**his past month, a group of us ventured out to Brasiliano, an all you can eat Brazilian Meat restaurant in Kobe's Harborland Mall (definitely give it a try if you're a meat lover.) Toward the end of the meal, we ordered a giant dish of a pineapple dessert that was pretty delicious and an interesting melding of flavors. So for this month's recipe and in the spirit of experimentation with cooking methods and dish recreation, here's a recipe for Brazilian pineapple dessert. Feel free to cook up some meat to go along with it. The sweet and savory flavors pair well together. ;)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 Pineapple
- 1/2 Cup Brown Sugar
- 1½ tsp Ground Cinnamon
- Condensed Milk to taste\*

\*you can find this in the supermarket sold in a red and white tube with a cow on it.

#### Instructions:

1. Cut **pineapple** into long strips.
2. Mix together the **brown sugar** and **cinnamon** in a bowl or Ziploc bag.
3. Combine with a squeeze or two of **condensed milk**, and coat the **pineapple strips** with the mixture.

4. Grill, bake (200°C/400°F) for about an hour, or pan-fry the **pineapple strips** on medium heat until caramelized.
5. Transfer **pineapple strips** to a cutting board, and cut into bite sized pieces.
6. Transfer the **pineapple** back into the pan or to a mixing bowl, add any leftover **cinnamon brown sugar**, and **condensed milk** to taste. Toss together in a final mix, and serve.

Enjoy the coolness of Spring!

*\*mandy\**





With the application deadline fast approaching, we of HAJET thought you may enjoy reading some of our reasons for volunteering our services. Read on for more.

*Ashlie O'Neill*



I first joined Hyogo AJET in 2014 when I began my 2nd year. I joined because I wanted to help out the JET community but also because I like organizing things. I have had a great time because it has enabled me to develop event ideas along a group of awesome people and develop my people, event planning and leadership skills, especially this year as a senior member of our team.

My favorite memory as a member of Hyogo AJET was my very first event organizing an outing for 46 people to a Hanshin Tigers baseball game. I will never forget the look on the lady in the ticket shop's face when I asked for so many tickets. She

checked that I had not made a Japanese mistake about 10 times before proceeding with the purchase. Then everyone arrived and we headed into the stadium together, cheered, drank and launched questionably shaped balloons into the air. It was a really great feeling to organize an event to something that I enjoy in my personal time because it meant I could share that experience with others.

Being a member of AJET also gives me something to do when I am bored at work.

*Chris Goodman*

Hi everyone!

Being a senior member (5th year JET... that's right: Unicorn bitches!)

You are not me and I am not you so our motivations for doing things may well be different, but I would like to share with you some of the reasons why I decided to throw my hat into the ring as a Hyogo AJET volunteer committee member dude guy. Despite my cruel and foreboding exterior;

1) I like to help people.

I saw a chance to do this through HAJET as it allowed me to reach out and connect more easily with other members of the JET community not only in Hyogo but around other areas of Japan. We have shared advice on all manners of life in Japan from the ups to the downs and all around the middles! (filthy Hobbitses!!! Gollum!! Gollum!)

2) I like to have fun!

HAJET get their noggins together and try to find events, places and people, and bring them

together in the name of super happy fun time experiences!!! In some cases these may be large scale events that everyone will have heard of, or in some cases, a rare event that one would only find if they were to stray from the beaten path, trip, fall down into an unforgiving and steep gorge of "Gah! Wtf?!?" only to be rescued by crashing into the soft waters of the river "Wow!!!" and then carried downstream to "OMG that's Awesome-land!!!" HAJET members can also plan their own events and collaborate with other JET councils (Shiga, Okayama, Nara, Osaka, Kyoto etc.).

In some areas my 1 and 2 blend together and they may not seem like good reasons to you, but to each their own!

If you feel you want to join HAJET as a step toward block rep or even National chair, do it (and then making everyone lament at your wicked ways with your cruel iron fist ruling techniques! Mu-ha-ha-ha!!!). If you want to join because you feel you could create or concept plan really awesome, experience creating events, go for it! Even if you feel like "I could do a better job than the current buffoons!" just do it!!! (Nike said it first but this is read in the voice of the national treasure that is Mr. Shia Lebouf.)



*Jillian MacKenzie*



Third year departing book-crazy Jillian here! For the past year, I've been running/supreme-leading the Hyogo book club. Every two months, members meet up to discuss a book most people have mostly read! My HAJET duties are simple: solicit book recommendations, reserve a café for 10 to 15 people, and print discussion questions. I also take on the extra task of shamelessly pressuring people to come. Book club means a lot to me; I met most of my friends there during my first year. However, this July I (and a good chunk of regular attendees) will be exiting stage left.

So step right up! In order to keep the HAJET Book Club running and providing regular book-bonding experiences, we need a new HAJET member. Gain valuable event planning experience and make new friends :)

*Cody Christensen*

Joining AJET was a way to continue providing for the community I am currently a part of. During my



university days, I enjoyed gathering community members together and creating events that would shake things up a bit in our routine-based lives. I took pride in what I did, but there was always room to grow. My college bubble was rather limited, so creating interesting things to do for people from all sorts of backgrounds seemed like a natural way to progress.



We create events, and people show up. Sometimes it's amazing, sometimes it's not. The beautiful part of this, however, is that we can learn and create new ways for those joining us in the future. This is a group who chooses to be where they are. We want to make good things

happen using our individual strengths. Although Japan has a lot to offer, coming here after being in a more comfortable setting can be rather shocking. "Where do I even start??" I recall using the AJET events to get acquainted in the community. The beer garden welcome events spoke to me.... Perhaps it was mostly the beer, but also because of the welcoming attitude the members had. This paved the way to other good times, in AJET or not, because I felt myself being more integrated in my setting.

Overall, AJET is just fun. Even the business style meetings are enjoyable, because it is (hopefully) several friends gathering to brainstorm cool things to do in the coming months. You work with others, and you can learn a lot from them. Don't need to learn anything new? 1) Lies 2) If you really think so, I am sure the others would value your presence! Can you top the [Pub Quiz](#) in Tajima?

### *Rackle Beaman*

Have you enjoyed the HAJET events hosted throughout the year? Do you have some new ideas and activities you'd like to share? Want to be part of the greater process in JET life?

Join HAJET.

Hyogo has one of the top 3 largest JET populations in all of Japan. As a result, we need all hands on deck lest we make like satanic picnic ware and everything goes to hell in a handbasket. This is where HAJET steps in.

HAJET is a volunteer organization made up of JETs from all around Hyogo who organize events, scope out sweet discounts at your favourite local

businesses, promote workshops and activities around Hyogo and keep you up to date on all the latest coming and goings within the prefecture. Additionally, we run the superb publication Hyogo Times.



Between us all, we collaborate on a broad variety of events, such as the welcome party, rafting trip, hanami outings and also more open projects like the WhyNot parties and disaster prep workshops. In addition, we maintain the HAJET facebook page and website and also work as a main point of contact for outside opportunities and activities be they JET, foreign or simply public interest related.

Having been part of HAJET now for a year, I can safely say it's been well worth the opportunity.

Not only have I been able to be part of the bigger picture but I've gotten to meet a lot of really interesting people along the way, that, had I not been part of HAJET I never would have met. Being in HAJET puts you right in the thick of things; for me that's been what I love. I love developing and seeing things come to fruition, especially events where all the planning pulls off to be a great day out that's memorable in the right kind of way. One of my personal proud moments was the HAJET rafting trip. On paper it seems like a logistical nightmare, but thanks to some very helpful individuals and intense googling, it became hands down one of my favourite experiences in Japan ever.

So if you think you would like to be part of all of this and take part in the behind the scenes of JET life or perhaps add your own events, activities or flair, or simply want to help out, join HAJET for the 2016 year. All are welcome to apply through the HAJET Facebook page [document](#).



This year's JETs have the opportunity to go to a truly special event: the Setouchi Triennale. Every three years this festival ignites the sleepy islands scattered between Kagawa and Okayama prefectures with a blaze of modern art. Many of these islands would have almost nothing to offer outside the festival season, but this spring, summer (July 18th to September 4th), and fall (October 8th to November 6th) they come alive with special performances, restaurants highlighting regional cuisine, and of course vibrant art pieces.



I took a weekend trip out to see three islands for the spring season— Oshima, Ogijima, and Megijima. After certain disasters, I would like to impart the wisdom of experience to those planning to go here for the summer season! The most affordable (and memorable) way to access the festival is Jumbo Ferry. Departing Kobe port Friday night (or is it Saturday morning?) at 12:45 AM, it gets to Takamatsu at the unholy hour of

5 AM. Jumbo Ferry is the most unpleasant of ferries, as after a scant 4 hours of sleep, they play the most obnoxiously cheery jingle at 4:30 AM. I have ridden this beast 7 times and am now thoroughly corrupted. I bought the t-shirt with the lyrics printed on it and am happy to sing it for you anytime.



### Oshima

Due to its history, Oshima is the most unusual of the festival islands. From 1909 until 1996, it was a forced colony for people with Hansen's disease, commonly known as leprosy. Oshima joined the festival, less to attract tourism, more to educate people about their history. In keeping with this, the boat to the island was free (but necessitated lining up for a numbered ticket an hour in advance) and a guided tour (Japanese only) is required. The main art piece is Blue Sky Aquarium, the rooms of an old sanitarium transformed into a mermaid's cave. But the strangest of all was the tinny jingle blasting from speakers at every corner of the otherwise silent village.

### Ogijima and Megijima

THIS IS A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT. GO TO MEGIJIMA THEN OGIJIMA. OTHERWISE YOU CANNOT BOARD THE RETURN FERRY.

Ogijima is a veritable cat island. I saw no less than 30 felines lounging around letting people

take their photos. They also had some fantastic art houses, nestled around corners and up hills in the adorable fishing village. My personal favorite was the "Akinorium," ten minutes of sound and shadow playing out on a wall.



Megijima is the Ogre Island from Momotaro the Peach Boy. Take the bus right from the port to see the caves bursting with the creatures. I loved the "Island Theatre Megi." The inside is decorated all over with portraits of classic Hollywood stars and the theater plays Felix the Cat, Charlie Chaplin, and some weird video of New York. "The Presence of Absence" made me think that I was a vampire for a moment, and as a bonus has the best sushi lunch.

Unfortunately, the best laid plans of mice and men and all that. When I tried to leave the island, I found that the ferry that services Megijima and Ogijima is NOT prepared for the crowds that visit on festival weekends. After picking people up at



Ogijima, only a small fraction of those waiting at Megijima were able to board. This left a long line of alternately angry and stoic people with some stressed out staff. This also left me standing in line two hours for the next (and last) ferry to Takamatsu, and missing my intended ferry back to Kobe, and having to wait eight hours for the 1 AM Jumbo Ferry. So please, please, please, please, make sure that you are returning from Ogijima, because there won't be any room when the ferry stops at Megijima.

Please contact me [jillgracem@gmail.com](mailto:jillgracem@gmail.com) if you want a more detailed itinerary and advice on Setouchi sightseeing.



Jillian MacKenzie



**H**ello baseball fans! Have you ever wanted to watch a Hanshin Tigers game in Japan? Here are my tips to get the most out of your experience:



## 1. Arrive early; Check out the Museum & the Shrine

Koshien Stadium is located on the Hanshin Line, between Nishinomiya and Amagasaki. Don't get confused by the JR stop Koshien-guchi. You'll know you're heading the right way when everyone on your train is decked in yellow & black.

I recommend arriving at least an hour before the game begins. If it's an evening game, arriving in the early afternoon is great, because you can check out the Koshien History Museum. Not only is it a great museum, with history about the team and the summer high school tournament, but you can also arrange to sit behind first base and watch the players practice. Don't forget to visit

the Shinto shrine nearby and pick up a Koshien-themed charm for good luck.

## 2. Hit up the Daiei

There are many food stalls set up outside the grounds and inside the stadium, but if you want to be a real "Kansai-jin," do what the locals do: Stop at the large Daiei supermarket just to the right of the west exit. On the basement floor you can buy a bento, snacks, beer, and even balloons (we'll get to those in a second!) for a fraction of the stadium price. Once loaded up on goodies, head to your seat. Cans and plastic bottles are not allowed inside, but fret not— that 6-pack of beer you bought with your friends? Helpful Koshien staff are more than willing to assist you in pouring it into provided paper cups. They'll even give you a cup holder.

## 3. Sit in Right Outfield



For the best experience, I recommend choosing seats in the right outfield (ライト外野) which is known as the cheering section, and has the added benefit of being the cheapest seats available. The left outfield is traditionally the visitor's

section, but Hanshin fans always outnumber the opposition at Koshien. If you want a more chill baseball experience, the 1st and 3rd base Alps seats are also very nice seats, with great views of the action.

## 4. Buy Bats



If you want to purchase some gear, the best thing you can get are bats. Trust me on this one: You will feel like you are missing out without them. The cheapest are around 800JPY and are well-worth it. Bonus Tip: If you never attend another Tigers game ever again, it makes a fun souvenir and you can even use it in the classroom. I bring in a set to tap the desks of my sleeping students.

For the truly devoted, there is an incredible assortment of jerseys, caps, towels, tails, ears, and other memorabilia. Many Hanshin fans customize their jerseys with decorative patches and logos.

## 5. Learn a Cheer & Don't Forget Your Balloons

On your way to your seats, pick up a Player Cheer booklet so you can cheer and clap along with the fans. Remember those balloons you picked up at Daiei? Shortly before the 7th inning, you will see everyone in the stands begin to blow up these long balloons. The seventh inning stretch is known as "Lucky Seven" and after a quick rendition of the Tigers theme song, everyone lets fly their balloons all over the stadium. It is

quite a sight to see! The balloons come in packs of 4, but be sure to save one in case the Tigers win!



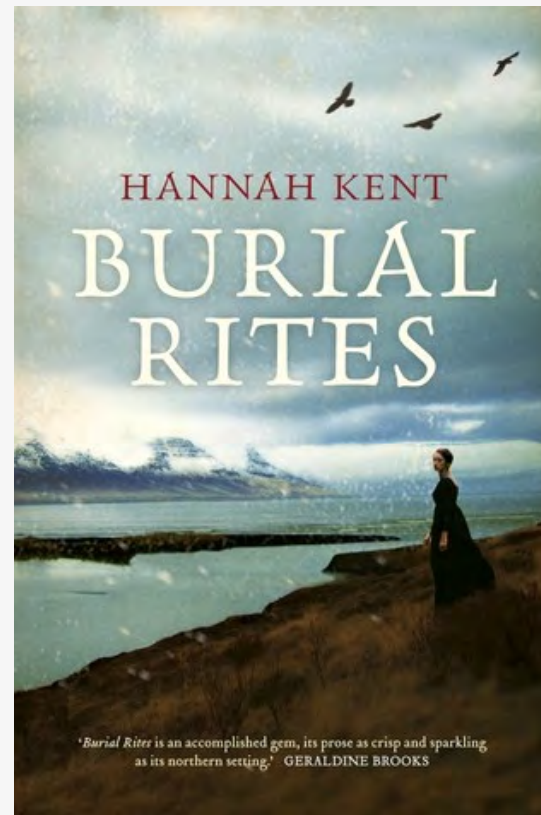
Follow these tips and you'll be a Hanshin pro in no time. I hope to see you at a game! If you missed the HAJET event sign-up, we do have a wait-list going, so check out the Facebook [event page](#).

*Larisa Kile*





**@**n April the 17th, of 2016, the book club met at Rough Rare (its second time hosting) to discuss Hannah Kent's *Burial Rites*. It is a fictional imagining of the final months of Iceland's last citizen to face the death penalty. Agnes Magnúsdóttir begins the book nearly inhuman and covered in her own filth before being sent to a new sort of prison at the home of an officer/farmer.



In the early morning, at my friend's slightly less prison-like apartment, the sky graced the floor with a puddle. But by the time book club came around, the weather had turned into a stifling, grossly hot cage. So hot that I switched out my jeans for a skirt I luckily had with me. Following my wardrobe change, we ventured out to the rather swanky cafe with a million dollar slogan. There, we talked about the book amidst many different foods. Seriously, their menu is extensive. At our table



were sandwiches, curry, grilled Cajun chicken, coffee, tea, juice, and a parfait in a tree. This doesn't even begin to cover the other options. If you go at lunch time, the sets are a fairly good deal and include access to the drink bar. The food was generally well-received, though the parfait could've used fewer corn flakes and the fries could've used less salt. All in all, it was enjoyable and I would go back (particularly for that parfait).



As for the book itself, we found it a worthwhile read. It garnered at average of 4 stars (or 4.0625 if you want to be precise). The tone was very effective at immersing readers into the harsh and miserable lifestyle of Icelanders in the 1800s. It's based on historical events, so the ending is a foregone conclusion. Despite this, Kent manages to make readers care about Agnes's story. Though none of us realized it until the author's notes, each chapter actually begins with a translation of historical documents related to Agnes's execution. I personally feel these would have been more interesting had that fact been made clearer from the beginning. Another pitfall was the lack of complexity for most of the characters. Few had discernable motivations for their actions or beliefs. Even considering these criticisms, the

book is, while perhaps not enjoyable exactly, fascinating and really makes you feel for Agnes.

For our next selection, we have decided upon *The Windup Girl*, which, if Goodreads is to be believed, inspires pretty strong feelings one way or another. We are tentatively meeting at [nomadika](#), which has become something of a tradition for the final book club of the year. Hope to see you there!



*Anderson Lake is a company man, AgriGen's Calorie Man in Thailand. Under cover as a factory manager, Anderson combs Bangkok's street markets in search of foodstuffs thought to be extinct, hoping to reap the bounty of history's lost calories. There, he encounters Emiko. Emiko is the Windup Girl, a strange and beautiful creature.*

*One of the New People, Emiko is not human; instead, she is an engineered being, creche-grown and programmed to satisfy the decadent whims of a Kyoto businessman, but now abandoned to the streets of Bangkok. Regarded as soulless beings by some, devils by others, New People are slaves, soldiers, and toys of the rich in a chilling near future in which calorie companies rule the world, the oil age has passed, and the side effects of bio-engineered plagues run rampant across the globe.*

*What Happens when calories become currency? What happens when bio-terrorism becomes a tool for corporate profits, when said bio-terrorism's genetic drift forces mankind to the cusp of post-human evolution? In *The Windup Girl*, award-winning author Paolo Bacigalupi returns to the world of "The Calorie Man" (Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award-winner, Hugo Award nominee, 2006) and "Yellow Card Man" (Hugo Award nominee, 2007) in order to address these poignant questions.*

(From [Amazon](#))

*Brittany Teodorski*





I'm not a student, that much is certain; but I'm also not really a teacher. I'm like Gollum— technically not part of either side, useful to both if controlled correctly, but too unpleasant to keep on long-term and liable to dance weirdly when he gets his way.



The No-Man's-Land nature of my job became startlingly apparent at the beginning of this term for whatever reason. Every day for a week, there was an event happening in which I was expected to participate but about which

I was given no prior indication.

On the first day, there was an assembly where I was expected to come up and be showcased (with the second-year teachers, for reasons that mere mortals such as us are not privy to). No one told me this— not my JTE, not my Kyoto-Sensei who was running the assembly, not any one of the teachers who walked past me on their way to the stage because naturally I'd chosen a spot to stand which created a huge bottleneck. I only realised what was happening and had to run up, pushing numerous other teachers out of the way and generally making a fool of myself, after Kyoto-Sensei said my name and turned to the stage expectantly.

Second day, there was another, entirely different assembly. I got no prior warning about this at all and only caught wind that something was up when I looked around and found the staff room was deserted. However, on the bright side, this did give me a legitimate reason to mutter to myself "It's quiet...*too* quiet."

Third day, there were not one but two assemblies (I think Honcho-Sensei has a problem)— this time they decided to split the difference and personally escort me to one but completely neglect to mention the other like it was a classified operation to try and kill Hitler or make Crème eggs a year round treat.

This culminated in Unexpected School Photo Day: I turned up to school to find everyone in suits while I look like a Scarecrow with its pole

pulled out. One of my JTEs glanced up at me as I walked in, gasped, and whispered, confused, "Kelly-Sensei, didn't you know...?"

No, I didn't know. I don't speak Japanese and I've never worked at a Japanese school— am I meant to use my spidey sense to magically divine when and where these events that I've never heard of before are taking place?

This is especially aggravating as at the end of the school day I ask the English teachers if there's anything I need to prepare and they almost always say "no." This would be a perfect opportunity for them to give me a quick heads-up about something important the next day but apparently that's not to be. Of course, I could just start asking very explicitly "Is there anything happening tomorrow that it would be super-embarrassing for me to miss out on or not be properly dressed for?" and then, if they forget to forewarn me of anything, I

could sue them for criminal negligence, but I would hope that such brutish precision isn't necessary among colleagues.

The thing I find odd about this is that I somewhat suspect that they suffer more from this than I do. So far, my ignorance has lead me to miss a few boring assemblies and pose in a sub-par photo. So what? Those assemblies weren't for my benefit and I will never see that photo. I'm certainly not going to hang it up in my place of work to look at every day from now on. I can't help but feel that they would benefit more if the teachers fully embraced me as one of their own, rather than stringing me on with the occasional gift of a fish head as I lead them to Mount Doom.

But I don't know, maybe I'm just being precious.

Rory Kelly



"Mount Doom" courtesy of I am I.A.M. via flickr commons.



Despite being internationally recognized as merely a territory or province of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan has many traits which distinguish its culture and people. Having heard nothing but good things from friends who have traveled and/or lived there, it easily earned a spot on my must-visit list. Thus, with two companions, I set out for a short and jam-packed adventure.

### Getting There and Around

Peach has a flight departing from KIX at 20:50, which is fairly convenient (and at least in my case, required no 年休). Once you arrive, there are buses that will take you to central Taipei and which cost something around \$100NTD (approximately 400円; how dreadful). For your return flight, MAKE SURE YOU GO TO TAOYUAN AND NOT SONGSHAN!!! Somehow (I blame the metro for having the airport on the line), I got it into my head that the nearby airport was what we needed and didn't bother to check until we were already there. Had our taxi driver been ever so slightly less insane, we probably would've been locked out of check-in.

Happily, the metro is great for traveling around the city. It's intuitive and inexpensive. If you want to leave Taipei, bus is the best way to get to Jiufen, the city *Spirited Away* is modeled after, while train is great for Houtong, the cat village (and possibly my future home).



### Where to Stay

Taipei CT Home was well-located and Chunky, the owner, is awesome. As long as you notify him in advance, you can check-in practically anytime (even if your flight is delayed to even further past midnight). Additionally, beverages and toast are provided to kick-start your days, and sometimes Chunky will bring in other snacks to be had by all. Be wary of the 2nd floor shower, though: None of us could figure out how to make the water come out the shower head. Being stubborn, naked, and committed, this resulted in my taking one of the jankiest "showers" of my life.

### What to Do

Originally, we were going to head out to Houtong and Jiufen the first day we were in Taiwan. However, the weather had other plans. Upon waking to thunder, one of my companions queried "Is that what I think it is?" to which the sky answered with a crack of lightning. Sufficiently deterred, we instead scrambled to find things to do around the city.

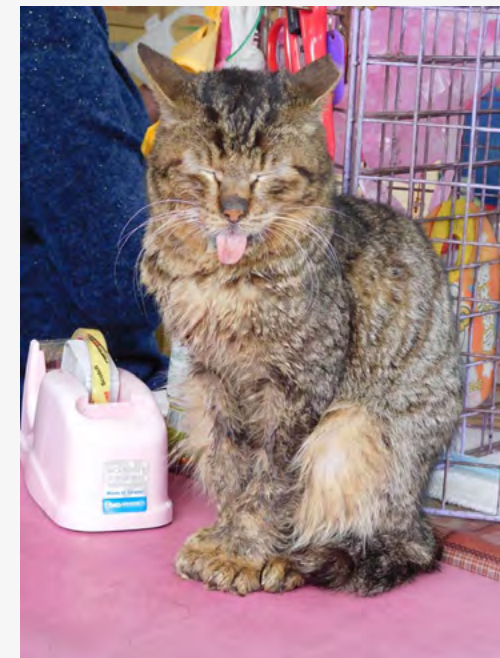
First, we stopped by a nearby gyoza restaurant called [Bafang Yunji](#), which was cheap, filling, and delicious. After acquiring bubble tea, we then waited in line for

a while for the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#). Their featured exhibit at the time was the photography of a Japanese woman named Mika Ninagawa. The tickets were very cool! Following this, we went to [Huashan 1914 Creative Park](#), where we waited even longer for entry into the upside-down house. To save our sanity, we resorted to crude humor and Charades (sometimes at the same time!).

Once the sun goes down, there are so many things to do. Taipei 101 is an option to look at the city (and ride the fastest elevator in the world!), but we found it a little too expensive, especially after we'd climbed Elephant Hill. Located at the end of the red line, the aforementioned hill has a steep hike of stairs, but you are well-rewarded with a breath-taking view of the cityscape. I felt like I'd died, but I'm glad I went. To revive ourselves, we ventured to the [Shinlin Night Market](#) and ate, arguably, too much food. Other nights, we ventured to the Raohe and Ningxia Night Markets. Of these, I found Shinlin the most entertaining.



The morning after, we ventured out to Houtong, which is where I've decided to retire. The cat village has taken their unofficial moniker rather seriously and have plastered the train station, shops, and stamps with feline faces. Many of the kitties were so friendly that it was nearly emotionally traumatizing to leave them behind. Should you for some reason need a break from the



cats (or just want consumables), there is a noodle shop on the ground floor of the station with delicious food. We didn't try it, but they even have beef noodle soup with no beef! On the north side of the station is 旭町COFFEE, which has Wi-Fi and an evidently amazing tiramisu latte.

Jiufen has been covered by nearly every Taiwan travel review ever, so I'll not say much of it. There are some incredible stamps for those of you with a growing collection. Also, keep in mind that Jishan Street is overwhelmingly packed. So packed, in fact, that I lost my umbrella and was forced to buy perhaps the gaudiest, most entertaining replacement ever.



### Last Minute Points

- Nearly everything is dirt-cheap. I was concerned about not having enough money, but it was more than enough, even with the frantic taxi ride to the proper airport we had to take.
- You will not escape the Japanese. From food, to special art exhibits, to hearing snatches of conversation walking down the street, it's everywhere.
- Should you have more time, Takoro Gorge is evidently incredible. A friend recommends [Tiffany](#) as your guide. Be forewarned this will drive up your budget.

Go to Taiwan. With the delicious food, beautiful sites, and low cost, it's a perfect getaway. You'll not regret it.

*Brittany Teodorski*

Want a second or third opinion? Check out [Erika](#) and [Cherie's](#) articles from years past!



## W here it went down

If you're like me, when you applied to JET you put Tokyo as your preferred placement city, but ended up on an island called Awaji, in a town called Sumoto. I gave that town two years of my life (2013-2015) and would gladly give it 20. Good fishing there.

### Precious moments

"I like English because I meet you [sic]" was one out of many sentiments I received from my students, and they (the students) are foremost in my mind when I think about Japan. Because isn't that why we came to Japan, for the children? Helping the children, teaching them the English, taking the selfies with them. That's what I liked best.



Outside of school, many brilliant things happened. In no particular order: Biking the Shimanami Kaido trail, pub crawling Osaka's craft brew scene, hideously burning my hand during an attempt to retrieve a sake bottle from the bottom of a pool of boiling onsen water in Wakayama, meeting Stationmaster Nitama in person and asking her questions about Japanese efficiency, reenacting scenes from my favorite anime on location in Kanazawa, and soooo many Carp games.

### Words of wisdom

Most valuable lesson learned: if you drop your One Cup of sake into a pool of boiling water, just leave it there. Certainly don't try to fish it out with your hand. Just go to the conbini that's literally 5 steps away and pay the 500 yen for another one.



Another lesson: Get an ICOCA Card for the trains. Seriously, it saves so much time.



Yet another lesson: Just because you speak English doesn't mean you know how to teach it. Take your job seriously. Get some training or a certification. Or at the very least read the Wikipedia entry for teaching English as a second or foreign language.

### Recommendations

I went to Japan to become a black belt in Kung Fu, but my colleagues in Sumoto all swore up and down that I was in the wrong country for Kung Fu, that I needed to continue westward, to China. Well I said to heck with China, and instead I became a black belt in cultural appropriation. BAM! Anime. BAM! Arranging flowers in a way that subtly awakens your appreciation for the beauty of nature. BAM! Carp fan. BAM! Alcoholism. BAM! Melancholy. It's

## Alex Barrett

a matter of opinion of course, but Japan's culture is one of the richest and most fascinating on earth, and you should soak as much of it in as you possibly can while you're there.

I'm not a planner. If left to my own devices I sit on my arse, alone, and drink heavily. Luckily the other JETs were all active, go-getter types and were keen on involving me in their plans; or I was keen on involving myself in their plans, and they were constantly peeved at my presence. In any event I went along with them on many adventures. And boy was I glad I did! You don't make awesome memories playing Final Fantasy 7 in your apartment every weekend. I could tell you more about how you should shape your JET experience, but it's more fun to figure it out yourself. #everyituationisdifferent

So here's my recommendation: When you go to the big golden Buddha, don't eat the leaf with the virus on it.

### Repentances

The more you do in Japan, the more you realize there is to do. I don't think 5 years would be enough time; 2 years certainly wasn't. In a way I'm happy that I didn't "do it all" because now I have reasons to go back.

I guess my biggest regret is eating whale meat. I'm against whaling, and it's an aspect of Japanese culture/tradition that I don't agree with, but for some reason I still ate whale meat. It wasn't even very delicious. I think I added too much soy sauce to it. The soy sauce dominated the whale flavor. I indirectly supported the whaling industry and I can't

even tell you clearly what a whale tastes like. If you need me you can find me swimming the oceans, looking for whales to lick and then apologize to.

### The eponymous where am I now

Did Japan happen? Was I there? After two years of having a higher concentration of sake in my veins than blood, my liver was sore to the touch and probably on the verge of exploding. I grabbed the nearest JTE I could find by the arm, "OUT!" I shouted. And after a few months States-side the haze began to lift and hindsight came embarrassingly into focus: it was a bad idea to drink a bottle of sake with every meal.

So instead I switched to vodka and moved to Uzbekistan. It sounds like a joke, but it's true. I'm currently teaching English at Namangan State University as part of a U.S. Department of State funded program called the English Language Fellow Program. It's weird, people keep paying me to go to different countries and teach them English, and I'm like, "sure, ok."

### Contact info

Do you want to have a heart-to-heart? You can email me at [Alex.James.Barrett@gmail.com](mailto:Alex.James.Barrett@gmail.com)

Also, feel free to add me on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexbarrett/).



Alex Barrett



There was a change to the morning routine when Henry suddenly looked up from his porridge one day and said to his husband Frank, "Your mother still hasn't seen Sam."

Frank didn't look back from trying to aim mashed banana into his son's mouth, "She sees him all the time. *Here comes the aeroplane,*" He furrowed his brow as Sam shook his head violently, obscuring the runway and sending the aircraft into a spin dive, "He Skyped her yesterday. He's very technological, *aren't you?*" He ruffled the tentative hairs on the baby's head and then managed to shove the spoon in.

"I mean in person."

"She'll see him at Christmas," Frank answered, trying not to sound defensive. He had a horrible idea he knew where this was going.

"He'll be twice the size he is now by then," Henry responded.

"Babies change. She knows that, she'll understand."

"We could take him next month."

"It's a four-hour flight!" Frank could hear the shrillness of panic in his voice. He wasn't afraid of flying, not in the technical sense, but he suffered from horrible, debilitating travel sickness. Every second of every journey, from the moment he sat in a vehicle was sheer torture. If he could have walked to his mother in Luxembourg, he would have.

"That's not that long," Henry said, as though discussing a trip to the shops.

'Easy for you to say,' Frank thought. He said "It's not fair on other passengers, bringing a screaming baby for four hours."

Henry ruffled Sam's hair, "Maybe he won't scream. Maybe he'll be just like his daddy," Henry had been in the RAF.

"Well, one of his daddies flies like a brick," Frank reminded him.

"Let's hope there's not too much of that daddy in him, then," Henry said without thinking. Shortly after, he kissed Frank and Sam on the cheek and went off to work, not realising what he'd just said.

Henry got his way. A flight was booked and the plans made. Frank sat in his seat, Sam sat on his lap. Frank fidgeted and gripped his son like the handrail on an ice skating rink.

"Do you want me to take him?" Henry asked, ever the font of charity once he'd gotten what he wanted.

"I'm fine." Frank responded, his breath short.

"You're squeezing him like a stress toy."

"I'm fine."

The engines began to drone and Frank grimaced, his stomach turning to mud in anticipation of what was to come.

"You're going to pop his head off," Henry said, concerned.

"I'm--"

The plane began to move. Frank unceremoniously foisted Sam onto Henry and then dived for the sick bag.

Henry turned his infant son to face out the window, dandling him happily and saying "*Isn't daddy being silly? Isn't daddy silly?*"

Over the sound of the engines and his own vomiting, Frank could hear Sam laughing merrily. It broke his heart.

Molly was pleased as punch with her

grandson, especially, as she kept repeating to Frank's displeasure, as she'd thought she'd never be a grandmother.

"He's like a bowling pin with a face!" She commented, bouncing Sam in her arms.

"Don't say that," Frank pled.

"It's okay, he can't understand me," she looked up from her grandson, "Can he?"

"Don't mind him, Molly, he's just grumpy from the flight." Henry smarmed. Sometimes, Frank really loathed his husband.

"Oh, let me guess, he vomited the entire time."

"It was like Niagara."

They both laughed. Frank tried not to scowl. It wasn't just the flight that had upset him— but he couldn't tell Henry what was worrying him. He needed to speak to his mother alone.

A stroke of luck: "Just popping to the loo," Henry announced.

Once he'd left, Frank turned desperately to his mother. "Sam's not mine," he said.

Molly's brow furrowed. "What?"

"He's not my son, he's Henry's."

"I thought you didn't know whose...material they used?" She wrinkled her nose at the thought.

"No, but now I do." Frank was trying not to sound whiny, he really was.

"How?"

"Sam didn't get travel sick."

"...So?"

Frank sighed, exasperated, "So I always do!"

"I don't. Does that mean you're not my son?"

"That's not the same, we know you're my mother." Frank needed her to see, he needed someone else to share his anguish.

"You're making a fuss over nothing." She chided, "So, he didn't get sick— I mean, do you

want him to?"

"Of course not--"

"Babies change. Maybe next time he'll throw up like a champion. And you can be so proud as you mop up the sick." Frank rolled his eyes and Molly added matter-of-factly, "He's your son no matter what. You know that. I know you know that."

"Yes, but..." Frank looked down at his son, still too young to show any real signs of his parentage. Maybe there was a hint around the eyes of Henry, but then maybe he was imagining it. He smiled.

At that moment, Henry returned, "Feeling a bit better, love?" He asked Frank.

Molly answered, "Oh yes, he was just telling me how well Sammy flew."

"Well, thank God, right? I was scared he was going to be a sickie just like his daddy. I mean, they look so much alike, I thought he hadn't got anything from me."

Henry busied himself rubbing Sam's head, so he wouldn't see Frank's triumphant smile.

Rory Kelly



magic sleeps between the lines

look within to find the signs

where aura and dream keepers rest

reality becomes the test

unicorns & speaking trees

breathe to feed the moments need

for the forgetting & for the stuck

intention & courage determine luck

on a quest to find where living begins

go forth!

awaken the dragons



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*\*mandy wong\**

"dragon wing" courtesy of khomesclip via DeviantArt.



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
All month: Spring Carnival (ends 5/15) Suma Rikyu Park Rose Festival (starts 5/7)						
2	3 Rhododentron Park Festival	4 Monster Jam Festival (Ossaka) Esaka World Festival (Osaka)	5 Himeji Jazz Festival	6	7	8 1 Ichinomiya Kirishima Matsuri Carp Streamer Festa (Osaka) Infiorata Kobe Kobe German Festival
Carp Streamer Festa (Osaka) Kobe German Festival Kobe Shinkaichi Music Festival						
9	10	11	12	13	14 Tamba Happiness Market Tajima Pub Quiz XIV	15 Aoi Matsuri (Kyoto) Kobe Matsuri
Osaka Oktober Fest						
16	17	18	19	20	21 HAJET 阪神 Tigers Game Soumen Summit 2016 Thai Festival Osaka Flower Festival in Nishinomiya Himeji Castle Matsuri	22
Osaka Oktober Fest						
23 Thai Festival Osaka	24	25	26	27	28 Minatogawa Mart Block 6 Biwa Boat Ball 2016	29 Osaka Shion Wind Orchestra
Aloha Summer Festival (Osaka) Osaka Oktober Fest						
30	31					



