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## Hyogo Times Staff

**Editor:** Sean Mulvihill  
**Online:** Dana Warren  
**Designer:** Erika Horwege  
**PR:** Peter Hein-Hartmann  
**Cover:** Louis Bertenshaw  
**Backpage:** Erika Horwege

**Contributors:** Louis Bertenshaw, Peter Hein-Hartmann, Ryan Hertel, Larisa Kile, Julia Mace, Sean Mulvihill, Scott Patterson, Brittany Teodorski, Helen Yuan

All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose, and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community. Submit by the 15th of each month to [hyogotimespublications@gmail.com](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com)

## Message from the Editor: hello!

A month into the new school year and it's already almost time to bid farewell to your students. 3 nensei have their graduation ceremony in late February and most ALTs will wrap up their lessons before the month's end. Similar to your students making it through their elementary, junior, and high school careers, you too will have made it through the Japanese school year (and winter) alive. And what awaits you at the end of this accomplishment? The answer is one of the most pleasant and beautiful seasons Japan has to offer. Yet, before we get too far ahead of ourselves and start planning our hanami trips, let's soak up the last of the winter activities before they disappear for another nine months.

Looking to hit the slopes one last time before all the snow melts away? Join the **HAJET Ski Trip** as we head to northern Hyogo's Ojiro village, known for being one of Japan's most beautiful, on Feb 28 - Mar 1, with an optional day on Mar 2. If those dates don't work for you there is always the **WhyNot!? Ski/Board Trip** in Nagano from Mar 6 - Mar 8 (you can often get a discount when signing up if you let them know you are a JET). If you've had enough of snow sports perhaps you can find a last minute spot for Hokkaido's famous Yuki Matsuri, where I definitely recommend stopping by the Sapporo Brewery and Genghis Khan to devour all the beer and lamb you want for 90 minutes.

If snow is not your thing maybe an abundance of flesh wrapped in thin loin clothes fits your style. The festival known as Hadaka Matsuri, or, more familiar to foreigners as the Naked Man Festival, is held in a number of locations throughout Japan with the most famous being at Saidaiji Temple in Okayama. Luckily Okayama AJET has created an event that consistently receives the National AJET award

for "Best Inter-prefectural Event" to provide an amazing experience for anyone wanting to attend this wild night. This year, **Okayama AJET's event** will run from Feb 21 - Feb 22.

If you'd rather skip the cold all together, cuddle up under the kotatsu and read this short month's short issue. Ryan gives us a preview of what to expect from Kobe's daylong rock event, **Punkspring**. Brittany and Louie share their escape from the cold with their respective travel reviews on **Malaysia** and **Thailand** and a JET alum tells us what's great about living in **Kagawa Prefecture**. Of course there are our normal sections with tons of new information, and Scott, well, **being Scott**. Since we're stuck with the winter weather we might as well make the most of the season.

Back to the classroom, I hope you can find ways to have your last lessons of the school year leave a strong impression for your students (check out **Pete's PR message** for some ideas). Even if most of our lessons have completely flopped or we've convinced ourselves that our students will never learn English, keep in mind that as long as you were diligent in teaching the importance of knowing another language you've most likely had an impact on a handful of students. It's easy to think that you'll simply be another ALT lost in the continuous revolving door of JET, but what's harder is to believe that as you did your best you influenced the students and people around you to discover and engage themselves in the world around them. As a friend once said, "Know there was something that, and something that I left behind... Leave something to remember, so they won't forget."

Sean



hello!

## message from the Prefectural Representative

*"Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour." - John Boswell*

As we enter February, the month of my birth, we endure the slowly lengthening and sometimes bitterly cold days. It can feel like the warmth will never come back. However, a few days ago I was treated to the most wonderful and warm afternoon. I stepped out from school and felt a light breeze on my face. It whispered, "Spring is coming."

For many of us living in Japan, this time of year can be a time of "stage 2," or general depression and homesickness, which can grow stronger with rainy and overcast days (I come from the UK so, I'm a little used to this). In the words of Robert Byrne, "Winter is nature's way of saying, 'Up yours.'" Though, as to my first quotation, there are sparks to be found if we look for them: through our friends, family and our work.

This term I endeavored upon a new challenge for myself. Each term my students have had to do a presentation project. In the first term they had to do a show and tell and in the second term they did an international city presentation project. And for this term... I decided to push their limits and set up a drama presentation. I wanted

them to experience (and hopefully enjoy) using their English in a creative and fun way.

In the span of 4 classes they had to write the script for and present a drama. I did say I was going to push their limits... my students are mid-level 1st year high schoolers.

In preparation for this I introduced them to the idea of storytelling and characters in a story. We broke down the classic Super Mario into a beginning, middle and end, as our example. Then they were given a choice of 6 basic story templates to use for their script. Then had 1 class to develop the story in any way they wished, including changing the characters and template substantially.

The students have totally excelled and my co-workers have been very surprised at how well the students have coped with working to a strict deadline. Their creativity has shined through and given me one of my many sparks that keeps me going through the winter.

I hope you too can gather some golden moments this winter and enjoy the remaining time you have in Japan, whether re-contracting or saying sayonara later this year.

Peter Hein-Hartmann



## Gomoku Ankake Udon

kicchiri  
kitchen

If you're like me, you probably overindulged a bit over the holiday season and are trying to be healthier. With the cold weather though, this is easier said than done, and I inevitably find myself stuck under my kotatsu eating copious amounts of chocolate.

The good news is that February is the last month of winter; the bad news is it's also the coldest month in Japan. While hearty winter dishes in the West are often quite rich, Japanese dishes tend to be lighter - think nabe - but I think they are just as warming and delicious.

This month's recipe is a popular winter dish in Japan - hearty udon noodles in a light soup topped with lots of veggies. It's super simple to make so you'll be back under the kotatsu in no time. Enjoy!

### Ingredients

Prep time: 15-20 minutes  
Cook time: 10 minutes  
Serves 1

- >> ½ tsp. salt
- >> ½ tsp. sesame oil
- >> 2-3 thin slices of ginger, peeled & finely diced
- >> 50 g thinly sliced pork
- >> ¼ of an onion
- >> 3 cm piece of carrot
- >> 2 shiitake mushrooms
- >> 2 napa cabbage leaves (from a ¼ of a napa cabbage)
- >> 50 ml water
- >> 1 tsp. katakuriko (potato starch) mixed with 1 tbsp. water
- >> 1 packet frozen udon noodles

### Soup Base

- >> 200 ml water
- >> ½ tsp. dashi powder
- >> 1 tsp. soy sauce
- >> 1 tsp. sake (cooking rice wine)
- >> 1 tsp. mirin (sweet rice wine for cooking)

**One** Rinse and cut the napa cabbage into 3x3 cm pieces. Cut the onion into thin slices (around ½ cm). Rinse the shiitake mushrooms, trim the stems and cut into thin slices. Peel and cut the carrot in half lengthwise, then cut lengthwise into thin slices. Cut the pork into bite-sized pieces.

**Two** Mix all the ingredients for the soup base in a small pot and cook over medium heat. When it starts to boil, add the frozen udon and cook until the soup starts to bubble.

**Three** In the meantime heat the sesame oil and ginger in a frypan. Add the pork and fry on medium heat for around ½ a minute.

**Four** Add the onion, shiitake mushrooms and carrot and fry for a further 2-3 minutes.

**Five** Add the stems of the napa cabbage and the salt. Fry for another ½ a minute or so then add the leaves.

**Six** Add the water and cook until it starts to bubble. Add the katakuriko and water mixture and turn down the heat. Simmer until it starts to thicken.

**Seven** Place the udon noodles and soup from step 2 in a large bowl and pour the meat and vegetable mixture over them.



>> To peel ginger, gently scrape off the skin using the back of a knife. Only peel as much as you need to keep the ginger fresher for longer.

>> Katakuriko (片栗粉) is potato starch and is often used in Japanese cooking. Always mix it with cold water before adding to dishes. You can use corn starch (aka cornflour in Australia) instead to thicken the topping or even omit it altogether if you prefer. A thicker consistency helps to retain the heat though and is how it's traditionally made.

>> Feel free to experiment - this is a great way to use up leftover vegetables. Just throw it all in (veggies that take longer to cook in first of course).

>> Chicken would also work well, or you can substitute the pork with non-meat alternatives such as sausage.

>> If you don't have sesame oil you can substitute it with other vegetable oils but it adds a bit of extra flavour.

>> You can get udon noodles in all kinds of forms: fresh and cooked, fresh and uncooked, dried etc. I like the texture of the frozen ones the best and they are really easy to use. If the noodles you're using are un-cooked, cook them in a separate pot in water and not the soup. Feel free to substitute the udon noodles with other types of noodles.

Helen Yuan

# "Jimmy Jilickers, Radioactive Man!" – Punk Spring 2015

Every year since 2006, Osaka/Kobe and Tokyo have been host to the PunkSpring festival, headlined by punk legends such as Bad Religion, NoFX, The Offspring, and Pennywise and punk-inspired acts such as Weezer and The Hives. This year, the reasonably priced festival returns to Kobe World Hall on March 28. A ticket for standing room only, which I recommend, will set you back only 8,500¥. A reserved-seat ticket is available for 10,800¥, but most people will find it unnecessary at this venue. Tickets went on sale on 31 and are currently available for purchase online or at any Lawson or Family Mart ticket machine.

The 2015 lineup features many great punk rock bands and Fall Out Boy, so if you are a fan of punk rock music or Fall Out Boy, this will be a can't miss event! Starting at 12:00pm, bands will play 30 minute to 1 hour sets all day, with longer set times reserved for the headlining punk bands and Fall Out Boy. You'll find that, unlike festival events in many other countries, you should have no problem walking right up to the front when your favorite awesome band or Fall Out Boy is performing, as the PunkSpring audience tends to be quite reserved. Don't expect raucous applause, even when you have just witnessed a mind-blowing, supersonic punk tune or Fall Out Boy's actions. The American bands tend to be baffled by the stifling silence, but they quickly realize the crowd just thinks they are being "polite" and are waiting for the next song. I will highlight some of the punk bands and Fall Out Boy below.

## Rancid

Rancid was formed in 1991 from the remains of ska-punk legends Operation Ivy. Throughout the '90s, Rancid led the punk mainstream revival along with contemporary acts such as NoFX, Green Day, and Social Distortion. The band achieved their peak popularity with 1995's *...And Out Come the Wolves*, which featured their most well-known singles: "Ruby Soho," "Roots Radicals," and "Time Bomb." The first two singles were famously performed on Saturday Night Live.

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For newcomers to Rancid, that album will be the best route for pre-PunkSpring sing-along practice. Rancid will be the top act to see at PunkSpring, closely followed by Rise Against.

## Rise Against

Rise Against formed in 1999 and was a Fat Wreck Chords staple in the early 2000s, touring with contemporaries such as No Use For a Name, Against Me!, and AFI. They have since gained immense mainstream appeal with a string of gold certified records starting with 2004's *Siren Song of the Counter Culture*. They have received massive exposure through repeated radio play of their singles, including "Swing Life Away," "Ready to Fall," "Hero of War," and "Help Is on the Way." Noted for their intense stage presence, which has caused the band to stop and just watch the singer go wild a few times, Rise Against will likely take part in a friendly "who can go buck wilder?" competition with Rancid.

## Zebrahead

Formed in California in 1996, Zebrahead's Japanese following is crazy. Like, really crazy. Like, their popularity here

in a country of 127 million probably easily rivals or beats their popularity in their homeland of the USA with its population of 316 million. This may have something to do with their machismo Orange County vibe, which most Americans have since found tiring, and their pandering to the Japanese audience by releasing exclusive albums and EPs, such as *Stupid Fat Americans* in 2001. The band's blend of funk, punk, rap, ska, and metal is sure to ensure that you'll find something to enjoy in their performance at PunkSpring. Also, expect this to be possibly the rowdiest crowd for one of the foreign acts.

## Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

Kobe-locals Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas are going to blow your minds, twice. That's once for each, a screamerator and a sing singer, that front this post-hardcore act. These guys have been blowing up over the last several years and seem to be unstoppable. This is the

Japanese act to see at PunkSpring, as they're going to do their best to steal the show. Check out their singles "Virtue and Vice" and "Rave-up," the former known as the opening theme for the anime *"Gokukoku no Brynhildr."* Get your dancing shoes worn in for these guys!

Fun Fact: Their song "Evolution (Entering the New World)" was used as the entrance music for former NXT wrestling champion Adrianne Neville when he wrestled as Pac in Dragon Gate Wrestling in Japan.

## SiM

SiM are intense, pounding reggae punk (self-described). Get ready for some guitar upstroke, some easily repeated English lyrics, and some throbble jumping. They've only gotten more intense since forming in 2004 in Kanagawa, and MAH (vocals), SHOW-HATE (guitar), SIN (bass), and GOKU (drums) are going to try to blow the lid off the place. Listen to singles "Anthem" and "Riot" to get a good idea of what to expect.

## Opening Act: MY FIRST STORY

Newcomers MY FIRST STORY have only been together since 2011, but the show openers have big things ahead of them. Their perfect blend of American punk stylings and Japanese sensibilities makes for some awesome jams. The pedigree is there too, with Hiro, the singer, being the younger brother of J-Punk heavyweights ONE OK ROCK's vocalist. Please hope with me that they play their atmospheric rendition of Taylor Swift's "We Are Never Getting Back Together" at the show. Also, check out "Fukagaku," which was used as the end theme to the anime "Nobunaga Concert."

## Early acts: New Politics, Knock Out Monkey, and possibly more

The early bill is rounded out by New Politics from Denmark and Knock Out Monkey from Kobe. Knock Out Monkey is sure to please fans of Zebrahead with their dude-oriented approach to pop punk (watch the videos to "Greed" and "Wonderful Life"), and New Politics, with their vaguely indie, alt-garage neo-Euro sound, will be

the most different sounding act of the show (check out "Yeah Yeah Yeah" and "Harlem"). Don't be surprised if one or two more acts added to further fill the line up as well.

## Fall Out Boy

Known for their bassist marrying Ashley Simpson and having impeccable taste in eyeliner, Fall Out Boy have been writing and recording their sounds since 2001. They have played on the same shows as punk bands countless times throughout their career. Some of their singles, such as "Vance, Vance" and "Sugar, We're Going Down," even landed them on the, now defunct, countdown show TRL, known as a bastion of original and highly inspirational music that was once hosted by TV's Carson Daly. Fall Out Boy is sure to wow the PunkSpring audience members who were brought there by their significant others or friends that have never heard a punk song. It will be a glorious event for all, as Rancid will play directly before or after them.

>> **Ticket Information:** << Punk Spring 2015 Osaka/Kobe >> << March 28, Kobe World Hall >> << 12:00pm Doors – 1:00pm Start >> << Standing Room Only - 8,500¥ >> << Reserved Seat - 10,800¥ >> << T-Shirt combos also available >> << On Sale January 31st online and at all Lawson, Family Mart, and other ticket retailers >>

Ryan Hertel

>> All photos from Flickr Commons. Rise Against concert by Alex Meagher (background).



Zebrahead by Alexander Ruoff



New Politics by Jeana Lindo

# Thailand: Go Away, Tuk Tuk Drivers, I Hate You All!

Oy gevalt! Feckless Tuk Tuk drivers, much like people who invite you to play Candy Crush, are out of control and must be stopped. Oh, if only these ancient cultures and civilizations could just crumble already and adopt the metered taxi. I mean, 200 baht to take three people across town? Dream on, my dude! Unless your Tuk Tuk can turn into a pumpkin, I'm only prepared to offer (cash!) 80 baht. Take it or leave it. Money talks; bull\$!t walks! My chief negotiation strategy is this: you can leave here with 80 baht in cash right now, or leave with nothing. Take notes, mon frère: you shouldn't bite the hand that feeds you. It's just heinous to extort your customer base. But, these Pavlovian drivers just don't get it. For every driver we shook down, two shook us down... finally we realized we're either going to end up stranded or starving. Welcome to Thailand! Where you will hear more German than Thai and the extortionist Tuk Tuk drivers will take you for a ride (literally and figuratively).



Rather than provide a comprehensive (or helpful) trip review, I will offer a few "lessons learned" that can give you a tiny insight into Thailand and how to make your next sojourn abroad a little more entspannend.



**Lesson 1:** Thailand is **NOT** Japan – there **WILL** be affordable accommodation.

Thailand, despite its mega tourist numbers, has got its bases covered (take note, Japan!) and there are literally hostels and hotels stacked on each other. The sheer glut means prices are generally reasonable and there is almost always a bed. But, as a pseudo-Type 'A' personality, waiting until arrival to figure out where I'm staying is going to get my lateral septum in an uproar. So, I prefer not waiting and seeing what's "available." But, if that's your shtick, then go for it! I could have waited and maybe saved a little money and not booked everything before arriving, but I also saved a few hours wandering around with heavy backpacks asking if there's room at the inn. I would say if you're in Thailand for the long haul (at least three weeks), then ditch the itinerary and take it day by day.

**Lesson 2:** How late you go to bed is directly correlated to how early someone in your hostel will get up at 5am and rustle plastic bags for no fewer than 30 minutes.

Staying in hostels is an exercise in tolerance of all these wandering schmegeges. People have uncanny knack for waking up at the crack of dawn and rustling plastic bags, unzipping things, and slamming doors as

loudly as possible. You have two solutions, deal with it and carry on with your life or promptly tell them to go to hell. But, you are more than likely going to meet some interesting people and the next thing you know, you're having a secret Santa with them. So, forgive and forget... and make sure your secret Santa item doesn't come in a plastic bag. And save your "go to hell" for that insufferable Tuk Tuk driver preying on your desperation at 2am.

**Lesson 3:** International exchange on a budget

Thailand is a fascinating place and the people have been known for their hospitality. Granted, service is nowhere near Japan-level (well, nobody's is), but walk up to any random food cart or street market and someone will be there to serve you, if not slightly goad you into buying everything on the menu. So, find a market, waltz in, start pointing, sit on the benches with local Thai people, take in the delicious smells and sights and remember that



you can find places off the beaten path – and you should if you want to save your budget.



Anyway, this was probably not really helpful to you. That's because you can never do justice to a destination on someone's behalf. If you want to know what it's like in Thailand, then you should go! Don't take my second-hand experience as expertise... just go, get lost, eat a little, drink a little, and make it your own experience. It has a ton to offer. What I can say is that Thailand was surprisingly developed in many ways, but still had that air of chaos; a real sense of "to each their own." That means there is plenty of jaywalking, provocative sexuality, and street-side urination. Oh, and the obnoxious Tuk Tuk drivers. I'd put them in the same class as the umbrella peddlers in Rome: not to be trusted and avoid unless necessary. Take the bus. That aside, it's a place that seems comfortable with its traditions, yet open to letting visitors take a peek! It's definitely on my "best of" destinations list.

Louis Bertenshaw

>> Article images courtesy of the author.  
Background image by Erika Horwege.

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* written by Sherman Alexie and illustrated by Ellen Forney: 4 out of 5

On January 18, ten ALTs gathered for the first HAJET Book Club meeting of the new year. We met outside the JR Motomachi Station, and after requisite "Akemashite Omedetou-s" and complaints about the cold weather, headed to our destination: Loco's Kitchen Olulu.

This Hawaiian-themed cafe is small, but with enough space for our large group to sit comfortably and see and hear everyone. The walls are sparsely decorated with an assortment of Hawaiian knick-knacks, including a large collection of plastic leis for patrons desiring a more



'authentic' Hawaiian experience. The lunch menu, available in both Japanese and English, offers the standard fare of salads, soups, and curry rice, with prices ranging from 800-1000 yen. The portion sizes were decent and the Hawaiian rice and teriyaki burger dish, Loco Moco, kept me full until late evening.

After ordering our food and catching up on everyone's winter vacation stories and decisions regarding re-contracting, we began the discussion of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. This young adult novel, written by Sherman Alexie and illustrated by Ellen Forney, was a different literary choice for many club members. This welcome change of pace seemed to please everyone, with

many members rating the book a 4 out of 5. We discussed how Forney's illustrations added to the story, and marveled at Alexie's ability to tell a narrative so hilarious but also heart-breaking. Many of us wished we had read the book as teenagers.

For our next meeting, we will be discussing *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell. *Cloud Atlas* has received multiple recommendations from book club members in the past. This uniquely written novel consists of six separate stories told through time, each with its own characters and plot. The stories vary wildly in genre, from historical fiction, to a murder mystery, to post-apocalyptic dystopian



science fiction. As the book progresses, these chronological stories jump mid-way from one to the next. The fun (and at times, challenge) for the reader is noting where and how the stories connect to one another and keeping track of all the different plots, characters, and subplots.

Due to the complexity of the book and its lofty page count, the next book club meeting isn't until April. If you are interested in attending, please join the [Facebook page](#). We will be meeting on Sunday, April 5 at 2:00pm, in Kobe

Larisa Kile

## current affairs

# Guilty by Association: ISIS Targets Japan

"As a final word of caution on Mr. Abe's attempts to expand Japan's diplomatic and economic role in world affairs, specifically in allowing the SDF more freedoms to act and assist other countries; any growth in power may further open Japan up to similar threats witnessed last year in Algeria. Instances like the **In Amenas** hostage crisis and the mid-December stabbing of a **Japanese diplomat** in Yemen are part of the inherent dangers of a broad global presence. A consequence many Japanese would probably rather do without." - Hyogo Times, Feb 2014

Soon after the video release showing two Japanese nationals kneeling in orange jumpsuits while a member of the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL) stood behind them demanding the Japanese government pay a ransom for their release, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe canceled the rest of his tour throughout the Middle East to deal with the crisis. Abe had previously arrived in the region - visiting Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority before ending the trip - to offer continued support for peace process efforts as well as those efforts

directed toward combating terrorism. During his trip, he specifically offered \$200 million in nonmilitary aid to those countries dealing with the Islamic State's ongoing presence and threat, hoping also to help those countries dealing with the growing number of refugees in the region. Claiming that the aid is simply a way to indirectly kill its own members, ISIS set the same amount as the ransom to free the two Japanese hostages.

Kenji Goto, 47, and Haruna Yukawa, 42, were initially shown together, but as of Jan 26 (Japan time) after the 72 hour deadline ISIS had originally set, another video was released showing Goto pleading for his freedom while holding a photo of Yukawa's severed head and decapitated body. Although the two men seemed to have developed a relationship, the reasons both were in Syria were quite different. Goto was passionate journalist for a small news agency, Independent Press, and according to *The New York Times* was accustomed to conflict zones in his attempts to expose the hazardous and violent environments, specifically for refugee children. On the other hand, Yukawa had set out to the Middle East more as an experience that would teach him the necessary skills to create a new life back in Japan. Dealing with the loss of his wife and attempted suicide, it seems the man sought

out redemption in the desert. Unfortunately, when the more moderate forces he had joined were overrun by the Islamic State he was taken hostage. In an attempt to gain his freedom by working out a deal with the terrorist organization, Goto found himself abducted as well.

After Yukawa was heinously murdered, the Islamic State changed their demands making things more complicated for Goto's release. From his Jan 26 video, Goto remarked that ISIS demanded the release of prisoner **Sajida al-Rishawi**, an Iraqi woman who was apprehended by Jordanian officials for taking part in a 2005 bombing in Amman (her own suicide vest failing to detonate), for his freedom and the well-being of captured First Lieutenant and pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh. However, in working with the Japanese government to end Goto's captivity, the Jordanian government came under increasing public criticism for doing more to negotiate the release of a foreigner than one of their own citizens. Lt. al-Kasasbeh was captured after an airstrike over ISIS-held territory on Dec 24 and his ongoing imprisonment by the Islamic State has led to protests especially from his family and those from his hometown. As of now the Jordanian government has stated it is willing to release Rishawi if Kasasbeh is also released "and his life intact." However,

nothing was mentioned concerning Goto's fate. Sadly most Japanese woke Sunday, Feb 1 to the news that Goto had been killed by his captors with the fate of al-Kasasbeh still unknown.

There are many ramifications for this hostage situation and its potential outcomes, but two stand out. First, public outrage in Japan may deter the Abe government from pursuing a more aggressive foreign policy especially one that includes expanding the capabilities of the Special Defense Force (SDF). This is especially true for those who may view Goto's death as a result of both Japan's alliance with America and Abe's ongoing desire to increase Japan's global role; a situation that inadvertently puts Japanese nationals abroad in harm's way. On the other hand, the exact opposite can happen. Believing that Goto's death was the result of the SDF's limited capabilities, for example the inability to carry out rescue operations, might give Abe the support he needs to alter SDF's role. We also know that after a tragic event, calls for justice (in many ways simply revenge and retaliation) are raised rather than muted and resolve strengthened rather than weakened. It may just be the event Abe needed to both garner support for constitutional changes and move the public's attention away from the weakened economy.

Sean Mulvihill

# "Welcome to George Town:" Kuala Lumpur & Penang

Upon their discovery of Malaysia in 1511, Portugal took control of the region for about a century before relinquishing control to the Dutch. Another century later, Britain began gaining control, starting with George Town, and spread their influence thereafter. As with most countries in Southeast Asia, Japan invaded during World War II. Following its conclusion, Malaysia fought for its independence from Britain and finally accomplished this in 1963. After some turmoil, Malaysia emerged as an up-and-coming and diverse nation.

## Getting There and Around

Our cheapest option was to fly through several connections using China Eastern. Between Osaka and Kuala Lumpur (KL), we were in Shanghai. The Shanghai airport serenaded us with Brahms' lullaby for the duration of our layover.

Between cities, we used inexpensive highway buses. From KL to Penang cost about 45 RM (1500円) and the seats were quite cushioned and spacious. It was one of the best buses I've ever traveled on.

In KL, the trains are easy to use and seem to run fairly regularly. They are also well connected to the major tourist destinations. Trains and buses stop running around 11, however, so if your flight arrives past that time you will need to take a taxi. Make sure you don't use a tout: taxi drivers aren't allowed to solicit you for a ride. Instead, you should get a ticket from taxi stands.

Penang's bus system was less navigable. The lines we took seemed to only run about once an hour and stop names are not called out. You just have to know what your stop looks like if it's not the end of the line (which, as tourists, is pretty impractical). On the plus side, public transportation throughout Malaysia is extremely affordable.



## Where to Stay

Travel Hub, in KL's Chinatown, is inexpensive, conveniently located near three different train stations, and serves complimentary toast with jam and butter for breakfast. They also have a 24 hour reception, which was great given that we arrived our first night around 3 in the morning. The only mild annoyance is that you have to be buzzed into the building all hours of the day.

In George Town, we stayed at Wassup Youth Hostel. It was the most expensive of our accommodations, but the rooms are quite classy. We had our own bathroom and towels were included. It's a fifteen minute walk to the Street of Harmony (one of the main attractions in George Town) and is close to the Komtar bus terminal. They also have a rainbow staircase which I enjoyed.

## What to Do

Malaysia's most iconic building is the Petronas twin towers in KL. There is an observation deck from which you can look out over the city, but being the cheapskates that we are, we elected to just look upon the building from the nearby fountains. Chinatown's Petaling Street is a little overwhelming to walk down whereas Little India is mostly shops with some Indian flair. The Central Market is near Chinatown. It seems pretty similar to other markets found throughout Southeast Asia, so it wasn't especially exciting for me.

My favorite spot in KL is the Batu Caves. These were used as a Hindu site of worship, so there are several statues depicting Hindu deities. They also offer a tour of the dark caves for 35 RM, which I highly recommend. Our tour guide was lovely (though a little soft-spoken) and the information was fascinating, especially to a science aficionado like myself.



George Town is a UNESCO World Heritage city, which perhaps heightened our expectations to unrealistic levels. The street art is rather interesting, but I found that to be one of the only unique features of the city. There are several jetties overlooking the ocean. We only went down one (the longest as far as we could tell), but the experience was slightly spoiled by dogs kept in cages by someone I assumed was a breeder.

The Street of Harmony has a couple cool shops along the way, and houses a beautiful mosque near Little India. As in KL, Little India was predominantly occupied by shops (many of seamstresses'), but there seemed to be more food in George Town. One food cart had incredible samosas. Near the end of the street is a large park (that seemed to have been setting up for a concert while we were there), and Fort Cornwallis, which gives an overview of the history of George Town, especially as a British colony.

Penang Hill is another tourist destination in the area. The tram ride was a little more expensive than I'd have liked paying, especially since there wasn't too much to see. The view of the city was nice, but didn't warrant the cost in my opinion. We attempted going down path D of their walking trails, but found ourselves blocked by fallen trees after walking for about ten minutes. There were also terrifyingly large ants scurrying along the same path.

Truly, the highlight of George Town is its street food.

There are many, many options, especially along Penang Road. My favorites included mee goreng, char kway teow, and samosas. I wish my appetite had been large enough to sample all of the delectable choices.

## Last Minute Points

- >> Crossing streets is a free-for-all in Malaysia. If in doubt, just follow the locals.
- >> McDonald's carries chocotops, an extremely cheap yet satisfyingly delicious dessert.
- >> George Town seems to have many more mosquitoes than KL. Our welcome in our hostel was finding one feasting upon my arm. I promptly killed it, though I managed to smear all of its consumed blood on Sarah's side of the bed. Sorry!

Malaysia is a vibrant multi-cultural nation.

Its food is delicious and its people a great example to the world on how to coexist peacefully with those of different backgrounds. I would love to go back and visit more places, such as the Cameroon Highlands and Borneo.

Brittany Teodorski



>> Images (L-R): The Petrona Towers, outside the Batu caves, the Batu caves, street art

no zen,  
no life

## Never Cut the Wool

The Virgo male is cautious; bound by the astrological sign of earth, his rationality and steadfastness of spirit are undercut by often debilitating neuroses. His analytical nature and ability to determine the underlying motives of those he meets make him an ideal policeman or detective, but his inability to see past minor details and focus on the bigger picture inhibit his progress.

Take this scene for example: two men, sanguine with the type of confidence only a bristling mustache can provide, stand taut in front of a gold depository, their clenched fists slid into the meager pockets of identical chestnut colored felt waistcoats.

Large smoldering craters are visible near the entrance and ingots lie strewn across the asphalt like gassed locusts, the glinting flaxen spectrum culminating in an unmistakable pile at the feet of one of the men.

Detective Virgo, hunched double in the rear end of his police issue cruiser, cautiously studies the scene, seemingly motionless, caught in a marmoreal gaze.

He examines their beards from safe distance, using steel rimmed binoculars to scan for the unmistakable remnant of breakfast: stray matted barbs of congealed egg. His eyes

move purposely as he searches for coffee stains on their starched cuffs and checks the tips of their shoes for wayward yoghurt. With a tentative ingress he arrives at the scene.

Fully ensconced, he attempts to deduce the type of weave used in their flocculent rib sheaths, using the back of a wooden spoon or palette knife (I haven't decided yet) to tease the fibers, occasionally stopping to mold the wet felt in his hands, creating frilly edges and complex patterns. He uses a 40 triangle needle to meticulously weave the fine wispy layers together and ultimately produces simple but striking shapes that are tight enough to hold but loose enough to wear comfortably.

He agonizes over the finished product, but, dissatisfied, returns to the teasing process, ultimately overworking the fabric until it becomes tangled and dense.

His head, filled wide and heavy with the peat of a thousand stagnant investigations wheezes, and whilst his pale sinewy fingers, gummed together with black glutinous blobs of overly felted wool fumble, the two men, their midriffs long and bare, steal away into the night.

Scott Patterson

photo  
spread

GET Block 7  
Scavenger Hunt +  
Nara Wakakusa  
Yamayaki



>> Scavenger hunt photos  
by Beatrice Dann



>> Yamayaki  
photos by Emma  
Cuthbertson



# Five Books to Read this Month

*American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History by Chris Kyle with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice*

Choosing between 50 Shades of Grey and American Sniper as the book to read before its movie adaptation is released in Japan wasn't too hard of a decision this month. Although I'm sure there are some beneficial lifestyle tips from the former (like live a double life, find a dark and secretive hobby, and only share that lifestyle with those who drop subtle hints revealing their own similar interest), the benefits of reading the latter intuitively seemed better and have all the same lifestyle tips. American Sniper is the autobiography of Chris Kyle (1974-2013) a former Navy Seal who holds the title of most lethal sniper in American history. The movie adaptation directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Bradley Cooper as Kyle will be released in Japan on Feb 21. Read it before you watch it.

*Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell*

Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell, the next book chosen for Hyogo AJET's ninth book club scheduled for April 5, is

one to get started sooner, rather than later. Actually six stories that span across different times and places, Mitchell boldly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the world and how our actions and the actions of others are products of the past. Praised for its unique narrative style and a variety of elements from different genres, Cloud Atlas was also a finalist for the Man Booker Prize. It was also adapted into a film in 2012, making it a piece of fiction with plenty of supplemental material to further discussion. Interested? Join us in Kobe on April 5 at 2pm for our next meeting!

*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage by Haruki Murakami*

The most recent book for Osaka AJET's second book club and the newest novel by the popular Japanese author Haruki Murakami, Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage follows the story of Tsukuru Tazaki as he tries to understand why he was forced out of a harmonious group of high school friends. The five friends, whose dynamic was as colorful as everyone's name - other than Tsukuru's - balanced one another perfectly with each friend filling a specific role. In fact, the group

was perfect, that is until Tsukuru is unexpectedly kicked out. Although many years pass, Tsukuru realizes he must better understand why he was removed from the group if he has any hope of moving on. With Murakami's reality slightly skewed as usual, he gives us another novel that delves into the power, sometimes destructive, of love and friendship.

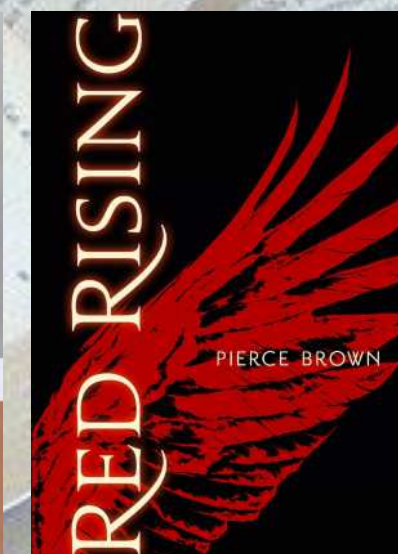
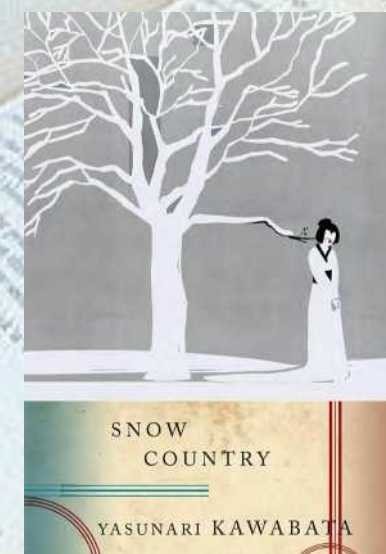
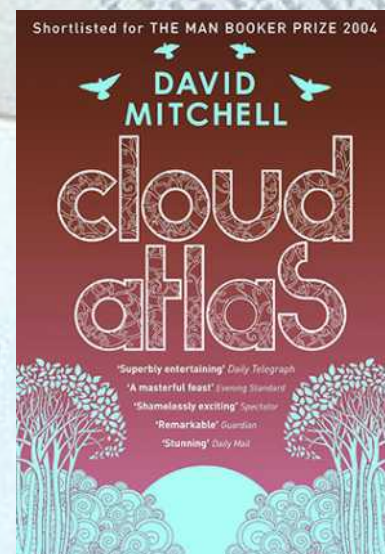
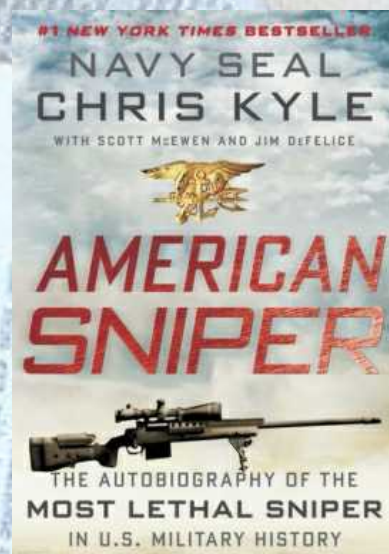
*Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata (80th anniversary)*

The 80th anniversary of Snow Country written by Yasunari Kawabata should not be taken lightly by fans of Japanese authors. First appearing as a serial piece in 1935 before being turned into and finished as a full-length book in 1948, Snow Country is a story about a wealthy married man's affair with a geisha in a remote onsen town. Similar to most plots defined by an affair, this one does not have a happy resolution, especially with the introduction of a third woman, Yoko. Considered by many to be Kawabata's masterpiece, he continued to produce great works of literature winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968, the first Japanese to do so.

*Red Rising (Red Rising Trilogy Book #1) by Pierce Brown*

Need something to hold you over until the movie release of The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2? No problem, author Pierce Brown is there for you. Releasing his first novel in Jan 2014, he transports his readers to Mars in The Red Rising where we meet Varrow, a laborer known as a Red. After finding the truth about Mar's habitability and the social hierarchy he is trapped in, Varrow along with a group of rebels decide to infiltrate the upper echelons of Martian society and bring the system down from within. Last month Brown released the second book of the series, Golden Son, and it has received critical acclaim similar to his first release. If you've been looking for the next series to fall prey to, this one is for you.

*Sean Mulvihill*



# The Durants

Miss something? This is the 7th installment of The Durants. Catch up on [part 6](#) and the others on the [Hyogo Times website](#).

## VII.

Shivering, the sleeping woman pulled a ratty sheet tighter around her shrinking frame. She moaned out in fear, visions of a talking throat fueling her dreams. Red stained her eyes as the throat rasped “Be strong,” and she shrunk back. She couldn’t be strong. Had instead felt weak and helpless ever since she watched her first friend callously murdered.

She was roughly shaken awake. “Up, you old maid,” the roadswoman whispered into Bionca’s ear maliciously. A smirk settled onto her delicate features. “It’s time to see what the border officers make of you lot.”

For weeks, the three roadsmen had shoved their prisoners through the snowy landscape. Their chains chafed their ankles, blood often dripping alongside their path.

Once he had awoken, Oscar had gruffly accepted their captors’ deal to earn his freedom through making the others keep in line. Drake refused to look at his son, even now that they were about to enter Taesh. The roadswoman was whispering jabs at him in her girlish voice.

“That’s enough, Paget,” the leader scolded. “We don’t want the officers arresting us now, do we?”

Her smirk only deepening, Paget responded “As my lord commands,” while bowing theatrically. The man scoffed and pushed his cargo toward the border gates.

“Sir, please state your party’s identities and business in Taesh,” a red cloaked officer said, holding up an eye-

scanning device to corroborate his answer.

“My name is Edzard Orsin. My partners are Katie Paget and T.J. Rakowsky.” Upon a glower from the man, he added “And Oscar Sullivan. The rest are runaways we found on the road. We are here to sell them into the guilds.”

“I see.” The officer relaxed his arm and peered at the chained prisoners. “Tell me your names.”

Gaia squared her jaw, then answered fiercely, “I am Gaia Durant. This is my husband Brion and daughter Bionca. My friend is Drake Sullivan.”

The scanner beeped as it surveyed Brion’s eyes. “Excuse me. Please wait here,” he said to the roadsmen. They waited nervously; crossing into the city had always been a quick and simple task in the past. This script change was unfamiliar and unwelcome.

“Did they figure out who we are?” Rakowsky hissed.

“How could they have? We’ve been careful, and it was that blondie that set it off.”

“Enough, both of you,” Orsin reprimanded the pair. “Don’t raise their suspicions.”

The officer returned wearing a smug expression. “Mr. Orsin, you may take Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Durant to the guilds. The other two have an audience with the Volarch.” With a nod from Orsin, Rakowsky unlinked mother and daughter. Confusion clouded Bionca’s aquamarine eyes. Gaia looked sadly back at her and her husband, silently saying goodbye, steeling herself for an extended--and perhaps permanent--separation.

Bionca and her father shuffled behind the officer as he led them through a labyrinth under the city. At one point, they were shoved into separate rooms after removing their shackles and groomed. Their weeks of travel had left

its odoriferous mark. Their hands were then cuffed behind their backs.

What seemed to be hours later, they began ascending to the surface. A well-armed and -guarded gate greeted them and let the small party pass without incident. Soon, they found themselves in an elaborate building and facing a large door. The red-cloaked man murmured into a device on the wall. The door swung open before them and the man ushered them inside before retreating.

Next to her, she felt Brion tense. He inhaled sharply before taking a cautious step forward. In the center of the room stood a man in an ornate gown and headdress. His hair was even lighter than Brion’s, and wrinkles stood in stark relief as he smiled warmly at the pair.

“My son. You’ve finally come back to me, though I admit under different circumstances than I expected!” He beamed.

“Father.” Brion inclined his head stiffly. His daughter peered at him expectantly. “Bionca, this is your grandfather.”

The side of the Volarch’s mouth twitched. “Ah, I see you and the Durant girl did stay together after all.” He looked his granddaughter over. “I feared the skin affliction would come to pass from the union of our families.”

“My skin is not a problem, thank you very much,” the woman spat, glaring.

“Oho, and what pluck she has! Just as her grandmother did. A pity she had to die.”

“You had them killed!” Brion shouted, rage pulsating through his scar.

A forlorn frown smoothed the rest of the Volarch’s features. “They lied about the number of their children, and their daughter refused to cooperate. It was a regrettable, though necessary, choice. They had to be made an example, else anarchy would descend upon this city.”

The door slammed open. “Volarch Taesh,” a different

red-cloaked officer began. “There are reports a bright object heading for the city as we speak. What would you have us do?”

Taesh’s brow furrowed and he sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Evacuate the citizens from high-risk areas. Make sure our food stocks can last.” He dismissed the officer, though he stood still, swallowing nervously. “What else?”

“Sir, the object is heading for the center of the city. We don’t have much time.”

Brion grabbed his daughter and shouldered through the doorway. Behind her, Bionca could hear her grandfather shouting “Make sure my son is safe!” Panic spread through everyone in the building and she began coughing. They had nearly reached the labyrinth when the impact occurred. Bionca felt herself tossed around like a child’s toy. Sounds of collapsing structures filled her ears and the skies became visible. Tremors crawled up her spine. She looked to the maze’s doorway and her breath caught in her throat.

“Daddy?” She took a couple steps toward the body trapped under the fallen tunnels. A dark liquid was slithering across the floor. She fell beside her father and shook him. “Daddy, get up!” She began to cry, the tears splashing onto his face. His eyes stared back at her, their fire forever extinguished. “Daddy, please!” she begged through the coughs wracking her.

Get up, girl.” A woman’s harsh voice grated against her ears. She felt her arm grabbed. “He’s gone. We have to find your mother.” Bionca’s head swiveled, dazed, to lock eyes with her aunt for the first time in over a decade. Mina pulled her niece up and closed Brion’s eyes. “The Volarch’s men will be here soon. Gaia needs us now.” She dragged the shell-shocked Bionca away from her father’s corpse.

Brittany Teodorski

## Kagawa-ken: A New & Different Land of Enchantment

Hey there! I'm Julia Mace from the Land of Enchantment (that's New Mexico in the United States). I was a JET for five years in Mitoyo, Kagawa and now I'm independently contracted with my BOE as a full-on instructor. I teach at one Junior High School, two Elementary Schools, several Kindergartens, and one intermediate level English Classroom for adults. I also work regularly with the Mitoyo International Exchange Association, one of the most active on Shikoku and one that I'm very proud to be a part of.

*Why did you apply for the JET program or come to teach in Japan?*

I applied to the JET Programme because I wasn't satisfied with my career path in the US. I could clearly see where my future was leading and I wasn't excited about it, so I decided to take a leap and join the JET Programme. I studied Japanese language and history in college and had some experience teaching, so it seemed like a good fit. I'd never been to Japan before, but I wasn't at all worried about moving to a foreign country. I knew that no matter what I encountered I would give it my best every day and figure out how to make it work for as long as possible. I've done just that and now I have a wonderful life here in my community.

*How did you end up in your prefecture? Was it a preference of yours?*

I originally requested Aomori or Hokkaido. I have never lived in a snowy place and I wanted to try it, but I was placed in Kagawa on the island of Shikoku instead. Even though it's pretty warm here and only snows once a year, it was still a big climate-shock. New Mexico is a desert and Kagawa's humidity was a big adjustment. It all started with walking off that plane in Tokyo into a wall of humidity and now after five years I think I might have the hang of surviving the Japanese summer... maybe.

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*What has been your favorite memory in your prefecture so far?*

I have so many good memories, but I will only tell you about the first time I attended the festival at Kotohira-gu (also known as Konpira-san), famous for its 1368 stone steps. Once a year in October, the goddess of the sea is carried down the mountain in her ornate mikoshi. My fellow JET and I and our respective Japanese moms went to the town for the festival. We climbed up

hundreds of stone steps past closed shops and dark stone lanterns to the highest point on the mountain where non-members of the procession were allowed to stand. It was almost completely dark with only a few small lights here and there. Most of the illumination came from torch-bearers in white costumes who were closely followed by water-bearers who quickly extinguished any stray embers. We chatted with fellow loiters and waited for what seemed like a long time. Slowly we became aware of a strange sound. It seemed to flow down the mountain like a breath of wind in the dark. The single beat of a drum somewhere above signaled the start of the festival.

We stood by in awed silence as line after line of people walked by in slow solemnity. Priests and priestesses carried blessed branches, attendants carried treasure boxes, umbrellas and weapons, all of them wearing amazing costumes. The ethereal sounds drew closer and we slowly became aware that what we were hearing was music. Lines of musicians playing flutes I'd never seen before were accompanied by drums in a slow, ghostly march with no discernable melody. Finally, the mikoshi appeared that carried the goddess. It was carried on the

backs of an undulating mass of yellow-robed men who were already staring under the weight as they carried the goddess down the 1368 steps. They flowed slowly and carefully down each flight of stairs, trailed by long ropes attended by more yellow-robed men.

My friend and I stared in wonder, only to be awoken by our Japanese moms who pulled us into the procession. We followed the rows of bearers and soon caught up with the mikoshi itself. We overtook it easily, dodging between the hard-working members of the procession, the narrow walls of the shop-lined mountain path, and the other onlookers. At one point I stopped on the edge of stairs and looked up. The full moon was hanging in the starless sky watching the parade with silent fascination. This festival remains my favorite in all of Japan and the memory of my first attendance is one of my most treasured memories.

*What are your "Must Do's" for visiting JETs?*

1. Naoshima. Naoshima is the famed art island that is only a short ferry ride from Takamatsu. It has amazing contemporary art installations, local galleries and more cats than you can hope to pet in a day. They even have a set of Monet's water lilies and whole houses that have been converted into works of art.

2. Zentsu-ji. Zentsu-ji is the birthplace of Kobo Daishi / Kukai, one of the most important figures in Japanese Buddhism. This temple is not only a great place to see and experience Buddhism, it also has an underground tunnel through perfect darkness to a small meditation chamber that symbolizes the journey to enlightenment.

3. Awashima. Awashima is a small island in my town, Mitoyo. In the summer-time the beaches are home to sea fireflies, small phosphorescent algae that glow blue when



they are moved by the waves or by your hands. When you swim with the fireflies you feel like you are swimming in an ocean of stars.



*What do you feel is unique to your prefecture, something JETs can't find anywhere else?*

It might sound obvious, but the thing that Kagawa has that just can't be duplicated is our udon. You may think that you've had udon before, but you are sadly mistaken. Was it Thai green curry udon made with noodles stomped fresh that morning? Was it anko-iri ozoni udon made with all locally grown ingredients? Udon is popular here not just because it's part of the culture, but because it is genuinely the best in the world.

*Anything else you want to add?*

Don't just stay in the city. Hop on a train, bus, bike or boat and get out into the real Kagawa. Make use of social connections and meet up with the JETs for inside information on where to go, how to get there and what to do when you're there. Kagawa's community is tightly knit and it's easy to discover unexpected adventures if you just ask. If you need a place to crash, I'm a host on Couchsurfing. Feel free to send me a request!

Julia Mace

>> Photo credits: Julia cooking by Hidenori Kondo, Udon by saitowitz via Flickr Commons, Konpira-san by Yoshikazu TAKADA via Flickr Commons, Naoshima by Scott Patterson,

calendar

# February

Outside Hyogo

Awaji

Hanshin

Kobe

AJET Events

Tajima

Tamba

Harima

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

sunday

2

3 節分 Setsubun

4

5

6

7

8

HAJET Yuki Matsuri Trip

9

10

11 建国記念の日  
National Foundation Day

12

13

14 Valentine's Day

15

Chion-ji Temple Market (Kyoto)

Ako Antique Market

Hatsuuma Great Festival (Osaka)

HAJET Yuki Matsuri Trip

Special exhibition of Hina Ningyo Dolls

16

17

18

19

20

21 AJET: Naked Man Festival

22

Expo Park Ume Festival (Osaka)

Nankinmachi Chinese New Year Spring Festival 2015

Special exhibition of Hina Ningyo Dolls

23

24

25

26

27

28 HAJET Ski Trip

Minatogawa Craft Market

Expo Park Ume Festival (Osaka)

Special exhibition of Hina Ningyo Dolls

all  
month

Suma Aqua Illuminage

Masterpieces from the Kunsthaus Zürich

Ferdinand Hodler Exhibition: Towards Rhythmic Images

22



signs of spring