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Hello Hiroshima JETs!

At last! Finally! As promised! Nikki, Kristin, and I are proud to publish and present to you **Issue Number 01** of **The Wide Island View**. We hope you enjoy this first edition of our bi-monthly newsletter, and are impressed by our premier writers. This newsletter is to keep you informed about the Hiroshima JET community, upcoming events, and life in Japan. It is also a chance for you guys to showcase your talents, whether they are Shakespearean prose, a knack for drawing, memorable

photos, Bill Bryson-esque travelogues, or a special topic you want to tell everyone about. Articles are constantly changing, and writers are always wanted! We would love to hear from you! If you have any suggestions for us, send them in. Currently this is a web document. In the future we hope to be able to send this out to all of you by post. Speak out and get involved! Contact us at this address: wideislandview@gmail.com.

Happy Reading!

Nikki, Kristin, & Casey

falling for fall

by **NIKKI MCMULLAN**

Looking outside during a Japanese autumn, nobody can fail to be impressed by the exceptionally beautiful rainbow of colours seeping from the trees as the countryside prepares itself for the onset of winter. Japanese people, resident foreigners and tourists alike all look forward to this annual display of nature at its very best and many people travel great distances to see the leaves at their various stages of transformation.

So where should you head to see the autumn foliage at its best? The former head of Kinki University's hiking club, Professor Okumoto, told me that Hiroshima has a wealth of great spots from which to witness the autumn leaves. His personal favourite is Sandankyo Gorge up in the north west of Hiroshima ken: 'Easily accessible by bus, it's a great spot for walkers all year round but at this time of year it's exceptionally beautiful. The maples, which are the main source of colour throughout Japan in this season, are not to be missed.'

If you are keen to venture further afield, Professor Okumoto recommends Daisen (the highest peak in the

Chugoku area, situated to the north of Hiroshima in Tottori-ken, particularly famous for its beeches) and Jakuchikyo (a mountainous area in the north east of Yamaguchi, only around two hours' drive from Hiroshima city).

For those of you less inclined towards the outdoors but still keen to see what Japan's autumn has to offer, Miyajima is an easily accessible weekend trip,



Autumn colors at Sandankyo (photo by Kristin Licitis)

recipe!

WASABI HONEY GLAZED SALMON

INGREDIENTS:

FOR SALMON:

- 1/4 cup mirin (Japanese sweet rice wine)*
- 1 tbs soy sauce
- 1/8 cup rice vinegar
- 1/2 tbs finely grated peeled fresh ginger
- 2 (6 oz.) pieces salmon fillet

FOR SAUCE:

- 2 tbs soy sauce
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice
- 2 tsp wasabi
- 1 tbs water

DIRECTIONS:

Marinate salmon: combine mirin, soy sauce, vinegar and ginger in a shallow dish. Add fish (skin sides up) and marinate covered at room temperature for 10 minutes.

Preheat frying pan.

Make sauce: boil soy sauce, honey, and lime juice in a small saucepan, stirring frequently until thickened (about 4 minutes). Stir in wasabi and add water. The sauce thickens quickly so make sure your pan isn't too hot.

Pan fry salmon for about 5-6 minutes per side.

Serve salmon drizzled with sauces. Makes 2 servings.

NOTES:

*Mirin and rice vinegar are in every Japanese grocery. Both are inexpensive and show up in many Japanese recipes. Lemon juice works just as well as lime.

This dish pairs well with pumpkin, asparagus or rice.

by JANE PUCHNIAK

and Kyoto is also a viable and worthwhile option: 'The north of Kyoto is particularly worth a trip,' recommends Professor Okumoto. 'Walk down the Philosopher's Path. It's very memorable.'

Mr. Okumoto couldn't help but add that his own university's grounds, near Saijo, are also blessed with an abundance of fine maples, all of which will, he said, turn red this Sunday. When I gave him a quizzical expression at this very exact date, he told me that the

AJET bulletin

by CASEY LARY

It has been three months since many of you came to Japan or began your second or third years here. We hope that everyone has settled down and Japan is feeling like home. Fall is amazing in Japan! Make sure to go view the beautiful leaves! While everyone has been settling in, Hiroshima AJET has been planning new trips and events. Our first trip to Mt. Fuji in September was a huge success.

First of all we would like to thank everyone for coming and we hope you enjoyed thae trip. Hiking Mt. Fuji is definitely not something to miss - even if many of you say you'll never go again! For those that did not come, here is a brief rundown of some of the highlights of our trip. We all have our personal glory stories to tell from the trip!

- Arriving at the 5th station just as the sun went down with beautiful clear skies.
- The purchase of about 30 walking sticks each costing 1200 yen. Later to be decorated by the stamps offered at the mountain huts.
- Arriving at another mountain hut, thinking you have made it to the next station, only to find out you are still on station 6, mountain hut #5.
- Numerous overpriced cup-o-noodles, coffees, and cocoas purchased in attempt to retain body warmth hiking up the mountain.

students' matchmaking carnival takes place this Sunday and the trees are well known for turning red on this day out of embarrassment at the students' antics!

So whether this is your first autumn in Japan or your twenty-first, make sure that you take some time out to relax and take in the breath-taking array of colours that Japan is so famous for. But be quick - *leave* it for too long and you'll miss it! §



AJET conquers Fuji: (Back from left) Lisa Van Muyen, Jody Beeching, John Albertson, Laura Gallagher, Hannah Feerick (Front from left) Casey Lary, Andy Lam

- From the 8th station up, lines that would only be rivaled by Splash Mountain at Disneyland.
- At around 4:45am the sun peeking over the edge of the horizon as hundreds of Japanese people pop open their beers and yell BANZAI!
- Falling/sliding the whole way down, battling sleep deprivation and long lines at the lone bathroom.
- A 2man taxi ride by two lost hikers.
- Sitting in that sento and soaking your mangled bodies.
- Driving away, and looking at the outline of Mt. Fuji looming in the distance, knowing you made it to the top!

So, anyone ready to do it again next year?

Upcoming events: Our next big trip is coming up November 18-19. We are headed down to Fukuoka to

watch sumo! Currently the trip is full, but please email us if you are interested, because there is a chance someone might cancel. If you have more inquiries, please contact us.

In addition, we are finishing up last year's very successful clothes drive, having collected over 250 kg of clothes. (No more clothes, please!) We are also planning a JET

'bonenkai' (end-of-the-year party)! So keep the night of December 9th open to head into Hiroshima for our first bonenkai. Come to mingle and catch up with JETs and friends from all over the prefecture before we depart for the winter holidays. More info coming soon!

Still not getting emails or want to start getting them? Join our Yahoo

Group at www.groups.yahoo.com (search for "hiroshimaajet" using the Yahoo Groups search function). You can still join AJET to receive discounts on all AJET-run events. Membership fee is 2500¥ for first years, 1500¥ for second and third years. Email us at hiroshimaajet@hotmail.com. §

NOVEMBER • DECEMBER CALENDAR

• NOVEMBER 3

Hiroshima City Peace Marathon

Runners and spectators invited! Running starts at noon.

Where: Hiroshima Sougou Stadium
Hiroshima-shi, Nishi-ku

More Info: <http://www.gethiroshima.com/en/Events/details?eventid=530>

Bunka no Hi (Culture Day)

No school!!!!

This is a National Holiday where many awards are distributed by the emperor to individuals who have devoted their lives to spreading Japanese culture or for higher achievements in various academic fields. In addition to giving out awards, it is tradition for people to do a cultural activity, like go to a museum or traditional Japanese garden.

• NOVEMBER 4

Matcha Tea Salon

Free Japanese Culture Salon offered by Hiroshima International Center.

Held the 1st Saturday of each month.

Where: HIC Time: 4-6 pm.

• NOVEMBER 5

Hot Coal Walking on Miyajima

Walk across red hot coals "to pray for protection from illness and disaster."

You can join the other participants who go through physical pain in the hope of future comfort.

Where: Miyajima Daiganji temple

Time: 11:00

More Info: <http://www.gethiroshima.com/en/Events/details?eventid=366>

• NOVEMBER 11

Sencha Tea Salon

Free Japanese Culture Salon offered by Hiroshima International Center

Held every 2nd Saturday of each month.
Where: HIC Time: 4-6 pm

• NOVEMBER 15

Shichi-Go-San (7-5-3)

Shichi-Go-San is the traditional custom of taking boys aged 3 and 5 and girls aged 3 and 7 to be blessed at the local Shinto shrine to thank for their good health and pray for future blessings. Children are dressed up in colorful kimonos. This festival is said to have its origin in various customs of initiation observed in many parts of the country at certain prescribed points in the lives of children. The traditional way of counting age in Japan was different from what we do now. When a baby was born, his age was counted as one year old. People did not celebrate on their actual birthday; instead, everyone added one year on New Year's day. In an extreme case, when a baby was born on December 31st, he was considered two years old on New Year's day when he was only two days old! Just like how birthdays were assigned the same day for everyone, Shichi-Go-San represents a common day and age for children to mature.

Hot Coal Walking on Miyajima

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Where: Miyajima Daiganji temple

Time: 11:00

More Info: <http://www.gethiroshima.com/en/Events/details?eventid=366>

• NOVEMBER 18-19

Hiroshima AJET Sumo Trip

Watch sumo in Fukuoka and check out the Japanese theme park Space World.

More info: hiroshimaajet@hotmail.com

• NOVEMBER 18-20

Ebisuko Festival

Ebisu Shrine's November festival marks the arrival of winter in Hiroshima.

More Info: <http://www.gethiroshima.com>

Where: Near Ebisu Shrine behind Hiroshima City's Tenmaya Department Store.

• NOVEMBER 23

Kinro Kansha no Hi

(Labor Thanksgiving Day)

No School!!!

This was originally a Shinto celebration, Niinamesai, when the Emperor gave thanks to a Shinto god for the year's rice harvest. Now it is a day dedicated to thanking laborers for their hard work during the year.

• DECEMBER 3-7

Starship Hiroshima Art Party

Come check out and buy pictures drawn by children from around the world. The money goes to the charities who support the children who drew the pictures.

Where: Aster Plaza, Hiroshima City

• DECEMBER 9

Hiroshima AJET Bonenkai

Details TBA, so keep this night open!

Get together with friends before we part ways for the winter holidays!

• DECEMBER 23

Emperor's Birthday

No school!!!

It is the Heisei Emperor's (current Emperor's) birthday. Tanjobi omedeto!



“SUMO”

With the AJET sumo trip coming up soon, we asked two avid sumo fans, Amy and Russ, to give us a taste of what to expect at the Grand Sumo Tournament...

MAKING SENSE OF SUMO

by **RUSS TYLER**

So, I came to Japan last year, and the first joke I got from an old rugby teammate on MSN went like this:

Russ: *Hey you fat #\$\$%! Long time, eh?*

Matt: *Yeah, so how's the sumo going?*

Russ: *Oh, I haven't been yet.*

Matt: *No, I mean, are you doing any?*

Russ: *No.*

Matt: *Yeah, I heard you weren't allowed to enter because it would be unfair.*

Russ: *How come?*

Matt: *Because you're too fat!*

Joking aside, sumo does look like two fat guys trying to push each other out of a ring while dressed in diapers. That's half-way right, but it's a lot more fun to watch than it sounds. Let's fill in the gaps:

PROFESSIONAL SUMO

Pro sumo can be traced back to the Edo period. At this point, the entertainers were *Samurai* or *Ronin* (samurai with no master) who were keen to make some extra cash.

Sumo is based around a very strict hierarchy with very strong traditions:

OYAKATA: Former wrestlers, the only guys entitled to train new wrestlers.

They also run the Japan Sumo Association – the governing body for the sport.

MAKUUCHI: These are the 42 big guns. They get paid a lot.

JURYO: 28 guys are in the second division, and they are also pro.

MAKUSHITA: 120 wrestlers

SANDANME: 200 wrestlers

JONIDAN: 230 wrestlers

JONOKUCHI: 80 wrestlers

All the boys in the bottom four ranks are regarded as being 'in training' and receive a subsistence allowance, in return for which they must perform

various chores in their training stable. They're not really very important.

All wrestlers can be referred to simply as *rikishi* (wrestler) regardless of their ranking.

Let's break down the top two divisions – they're the ones you see competing.

The guys who reach these divisions become *sekitori*, and are salaried. On top of that, they get performance-related bonuses and other benefits too. Just to name a few, they can have a supporter's club, wear high quality men's kimono and other items of attire, have a private room in the training stable, get married and live away from the training stable, and (my personal favourite) have junior *rikishi* as their personal servants.

The top division, *makuuchi*, is broken down further into sub-ranks: At the top of the division are the *sanyaku* (the champions or title holders) comprised of: *yokozuna*, *ozeki*, *sekiwake* and *komusubi*.

There are typically 8-12 wrestlers in these ranks, with the rest, called *maegashira*, ranked in order from 1 downward. Furthermore, these *rikishi* are separated into East and West divisions. According to tradition, an East *maegashira* is slightly higher in rank than his West counterpart.

GETTING A HIGHER RANK

The promotion and relegation process between divisions is complicated, but boils down to how many bouts you win. Unlike other eastern martial arts (for example, karate), it is possible to be relegated to a lower rank and, also unlike other martial arts, a wrestler's position is based solely on his performance in

NIHONGO no BENKYOU

by ALEXIS FRANKS

TODAY'S TOPIC:

KANJI: 日本の諺

KANA: にほんのことわざ

ROMAJI: nihon no kotowaza

ENGLISH: Japanese Proverb

JAPANESE:

ほれてしまえば痘痕もえくぼ

ROMAJI:

horeteshimaeba abata mo ekubo

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

When you fall in love completely, even pockmarks are dimples.

ENGLISH EQUIVALENT:

Love is blind.

VOCABULARY BUILDER:

ほれる · horeru · to fall in love

~しまう · shimau · to do something completely

痘痕 · あばた · abata · pockmark

えくぼ · ekubo · dimple

competition, not by performing *kata* (forms).

There is one exception, though – a wrestler elevated to *yokozuna* (the top division) cannot be relegated. If his performance is not good enough, he is expected to retire from the sport – hence, promotion to this rank is very strict. There is no limit to the number of *yokozuna* or *ozeki*.

TOURNAMENT

There are six Grand Sumo tournaments (*honbasho*) each year: three at the Sumo Hall in Tokyo (January, May, and September), and one each in Osaka (March), Nagoya (July) and Fukuoka (November).

A *banzuke*, which lists the current rank-



Watching a sumo match

ings, is published two weeks prior to each sumo tournament. Wrestlers fight on the *dohyo* (the ring), which is made of clay. A new one is made for every tournament.

Tournaments begin on a Sunday and run for 15 days, ending also on a Sunday. On a tournament day, the higher ranked wrestlers compete at the end of

the day, so even though your ticket allows you access all day, it's not common for the stadium to begin filling up until well after lunch.

The wrestler who wins the most matches over the fifteen days wins the tournament championship. If two *rikishi* are tied for the top spot, they wrestle each other in a single bout and the winner

takes the title. All *sekitori* have a single bout each day.

WHO TO LOOK FOR

These ones are easy to spot because they're foreign:

Asashoryu: *Yokozuna* since March 2003, Mongolian, 148 kg. Known for his fiery temper. Not hugely popular.

Kotooshu: *Ozeki* since January 2006, Bulgarian, 150 kg. Very popular. Loves J-Pop and smiles far more than most wrestlers. Although never during a tournament. Obviously.

Hakuho: *Ozeki* since May 2006, Mongolian, 154 kg

Baruto: *Maegashira* since May 2006, Estonian, 174 kg. Expect big things from this big kid, who has shot up the rankings at record pace.

That's all I'm going to say on the subject – there's so much to learn about sumo, but hopefully this brief explanation will lessen confusion on the day. Take some beers and food, find your seat, and watch top quality sport with top quality friends. §



S U M O

by AMY GIBBONS

Sumo. What I knew about this sport you could have printed on the head of a pin. So naturally I got on the net and researched this quintessentially Japanese sport. With names like *Yokozuna* Asashoryu (the highest ranked sumo wrestler) and all the official terms such as *mawashi* (the cute little nappy or loin cloth-like uniform they wear) *dohyo* (the name of the arena) and *shiomaki* (the action of throwing salt) floating through my head, I was ready for my first real sumo experience. Or so I thought.

Distracted by the other enthused patrons and all the cute little *omiyage* stalls selling everything

from food to key ring facsimiles of the sumo wrestlers, we managed to make a wrong turn. With only a few comments on the idiocy of *gaijin*, having inadvertently stumbled into a changing room, we were politely shown to our seats by a man the size of a small mountain. Despite his intimidating size he was surprisingly kind and gentle as he firmly steered us in the correct direction. This was definitely one of those times when being a foreigner paid off.

So there we were, finally in our seats peering down past the crowd to the *dohyo*, the raised ring with a suspended roof. The *tsuriyane* (raised roof) is reminis-

cent of the old temples and serves as a reminder that the origin of sumo wrestling is actually rooted in spiritual rituals. Despite its holy beginnings, the crowd, many portions of which look like they are camped out for the duration with an astonishing amount of sake, are a rowdy bunch. Watching the crowd with its picnicking families and the staff wandering along the rows selling ice cream and beer, I was reminded of a swarm of bees, colourful and chaotic but with an underlying sense of purpose. The queen bees are of course the sumo wrestlers and their entourage who eventually come out and parade around the *dohyo* looking very

proud and sombre all dressed up in their *kesho mawashi* (the long, colourful embroidered apron-like things that attach to the front of their *mawashi*). The more colourful and intricately embroidered these are, the higher the ranking of the sumo wrestler.

For those of you who have watched sumo on TV and been bored to tears due to the length of time it takes for each match to actually start, take heart. It is far more interesting when you watch it live. The act of *shiomaki* and each wrestler's attempt to psyche out his opponent results in much glaring and many trips

to the salt holder to throw more ceremonial salt, and is actually quite enthralling. The crowd's anticipation, cheering and collective breath-holding makes the entire experience exciting, and time actually flies by.

So there we were watching the matches and the crowd, which I found equally entertaining, when some smart cookie decided we should bet on the outcome of the matches. The added incentive of free beer causes one to watch the matches very intently and it is amazing how quickly you come to recognise desirable qualities in a sumo wrestler. If, like me, you

don't know your champs from your trainees, a surprisingly effective way of choosing a wrestler to cheer for is by deciding who has the prettiest coloured *mawashi* and backing him.

I can honestly say watching sumo live and learning a little more about the sport was a lot more exciting and interesting than I had thought possible. Even now I watch sumo on TV and enjoy it. The exacting precision with which a sumo match is played is both intriguing and entertaining for all. §

event review:

西条酒祭り!

SAIJO SAKE MATSURI
by ALEX KAY

Alex Kay summarizes the high points of the **Sake Festival** in Saijo this October.

October is, in my opinion, the best month here in Japan. The weather is perfect, there are four whole days off work (!!), and of course, there are two days every October when people from all over the country come to the town of Saijo to drink copious amounts of alcohol. In fact, when attending the famous Saijo Sake Festival, you are expected – encouraged, even – to drink lots and lots of sake (I even saw kiddies who would have been at least ten years under the age limit taste-testing some of Saijo's finest with their parents!) and everyone looks the other way if you end up acting like a complete fool.

Like all years, there were a decent number of JETs at the festival. For those of you who



Miren James and Alex Kay in front of sake barrels in Saijo

missed it, mark it in your diaries for next year; it's usually held on the Saturday and Sunday of the long weekend in October. This year's festival saw a record 250,000 people –double the amount of people expected! Little Saijo was definitely the place to be.

There are a number of old family breweries in one section of the town which were opened to the public and offering free samples. There was also a section of town fenced off where you could pay 1,500 yen to drink all you could drink! This

was where visitors could sample over 700 types of Japanese sake (some much more potent than others), which meant a lot - and I mean A LOT - of drunk people!

On top of all that, there were parades, street vendors and plenty of stalls selling all sorts of goodies, usually meat on a stick... yummo! All in all, there was fun had by everyone. If you are around next year – give it a go! §

THAILAND

from the inside

by **DOBROMIR HARRISON**

Dob Harrison, a former resident of Thailand, tells us why he still goes back for more:



Traditional Thai long-boats

It's certainly a popular destination for JETs and everyone else! So what does Thailand have to offer? Well, for a start, its reputation as a cultural highlight is well-deserved. It's also a great introduction to South-East Asia, offering both a well-travelled backpacker trail and other destinations that are well off the beaten path. Besides, where else can you stay in a 4-star hotel for less than the cost of a mid-range here in Japan?

I used to live in Thailand and still like to head back there every so often. If you don't know my friends, though, what is there for you to see and do? Well, where



Escape from it all in north-western Koh Phangan

to go in Thailand depends entirely on the kind of holiday you want. Bangkok offers the shopping and big-Asian-city-with-smelly-markets experience, and I'd recommend you spend at least a couple of days there at the end of your trip. The southern islands like Koh Samui, Koh Phang Ngan and Koh Tao, as well as having their fair share of tourist-destroyed cultureless hell-holes, have numerous beautiful beaches and offer great scuba diving, especially for beginners. Finally, you can head up north to Chiang Mai, Sukhothai and Chiang Rai for a more 'cultural' experience gawking at Hill Tribe villagers or riding elephants.

Thailand undoubtedly offers something for everyone. Whether you're making your first tentative steps into mainland Asia or you could write a guidebook on your travels there up to now, I guarantee that any time spent in Thailand will be time well spent.

THAILAND'S TOP SPOTS

Any of the zillions of Thailand guide books out there will give you a good overview of what there is to see and do, but here are my own favourite ways to pass time in Thailand:

1. Make jewellery in Chiang Mai - I urge everyone to go to Chiang Mai as it's one of the best cities in the world, in my opinion. As well as providing

TRAVELTIPS:

GETTING THERE

Bangkok Airways now does direct flights from Hiroshima, but they can be a little pricey. It can be cheaper to fly from Fukuoka with China Air or Asiana. Expect to pay at least 70,000 yen in peak season.

GETTING AROUND

The buses are a great way to get around the country and first class can be very comfortable. Watch out for scams, though; only buy tickets from the actual bus stations or from travel agents you trust. The train is slow, so is probably best avoided. Flying is cheaper than you think and can save a lot of time on a short trip.

LINKS

www.asiarooms.com

A lot of great deals on hotels. I've never had any problems with them.

Casey's Recommendations:

www.sawadee.com

Probably the best link for information on Thailand out there.

For cheap flights in Thailand (shop around!):

www.thaiair.com

www.airasia.com

www.orient-thai.com

I also recommend using blogs. You can contact people and it's a great way to get a good perspective. I have used this method when travelling to the Philippines and South Korea.

www.travelblog.org

www.travelpod.com

great shopping, nightlife and food while still retaining its small size and charm, it's a big learning centre. For those not into crafts, try a cookery course, jungle trekking or rent a car and drive to the nearby elephant sanctuary (you can watch the baby ones paint pictures). The famous Night Market is touristy as hell, but there's no better place to buy souvenirs. Together with Chiang Rai (a miniature Chiang Mai offering the majority of the same activities and increasingly popular with tourists less inclined to the hustle and bustle of big cities), it's the main base for trekking into the jungle. It's just a really laid-back, internationally-minded city!

nowhere near as good. Sukhothai can be awkward to get to, but it really is amazing to see.



Temple ruins in Sukhothai (photo by Dob Harrison)



Chiang Mai Night Market (photo by Dob Harrison)

2. See the amazing ruined temples of Sukhothai - An 8 hour bus ride from Bangkok and en route to Chiang Mai, Sukhothai used to be the capital and has a historical park full of examples of spectacular Thai old world grandeur. Bring a camera, rent a bicycle and spend a few hours exploring them. Phitsnulok, the big city nearby, is a good place to stay as it offers more to do at night. Ayuthaya, near Bangkok, is easier to get to and offers a similar experience, but is

3. Go shopping in Bangkok - It's an awful introduction to the country, but you really have to experience it. The coup is over, though, so you won't see any tanks.

4. Kick back on a deserted beach on Koh Phangan - This is where they have the Full Moon rave party every month, the very idea of which makes me want to scratch my eyes out. So why am I recommending it? Well, just head up to the

north-west side of the island and stay in a bungalow on one of the little secluded beaches and you'll see why. If you've read 'The Beach', you'll know that the 'in' island is always changing, but you're above all that, right?

5. Go to the cinema - not something that immediately comes to mind but it's a cool experience (you have to stand up at the beginning to respect the king) and they actually have the latest films out! Shock! \$

Gaijin Gaffs

by grahaeme COWIE



Questions? Comments? Opinions? Something to contribute? This newsletter is written by and for JETs!
If there is something you'd like to say, please don't hesitate: wideislandview@gmail.com