

CONTENTS

- 01 **FEATURE:**
Trial by Ice: Yuki Gassen
by Jonathan Barker
- 02 **RECIPE:**
Wide Island Bruschetta
by Jane Puchniak
- 03 **EVENTS CALENDAR:**
March - April
- 04 **JAPANESE CULTURE:**
- 05 **Dating in Japan: What's Rabu Got To Do With It?**
by Carolina Dulcey
- 06 **AJET Bulletin**
by Lisa, Casey, and Hans
NIHONGO NO BENKYOU:
Japanese Proverb
by Alexis Franks
- 07 **TRAVEL:**
India: A Never-Ending Adventure
by Nikki Swift
- 08 **SPECIAL:**
Fukuyama's "Let's Film Festival"
by Natasha Mekhail
- 09 **SPECIAL:**
Live Music in Hiroshima City: Sumatra Tiger
by Jason Rosenholtz-Witt
J-LAND FACT
- 10 **PICTURE PERFECT:**
featuring Beck Moloney and Kate Vigna
COMIC:
Gaijin Gaffs
by Grahaeme Cowie

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Wide Island Update

Hello Wide Islanders! Welcome to the latest edition of your local newsletter, The Wide Island View.

Spring is on its way and the cherry blossoms are temptingly close to blooming. Relaxing under a *sakura*-laden tree is undoubtedly one of the most perfect ways to banish from mind all memories of the harsh Hiroshima winter. For those of you experiencing a Japanese spring for the first time, you're in for a treat.

In this March-April edition of the Wide Island View some of our highlights include a gaijin guide to dating in Japan,

some top tips on getting the most out of a trip to India, information on how to get involved in the upcoming 'Let's Film Festival', and a recommendation for a Hiroshima hotspot from one of the area's biggest live music aficionados.

As always, we would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in contributing to a future edition, be it on a regular basis or just as a once off. The Wide Island View is *your* publication - it is what you make of it. Email us at wideislandview@gmail.com with any suggestions, questions or comments. We'll always be delighted to hear from you.

Happy Reading!

Nikki, Kristin & Casey

trial by ice

by JONATHAN BARKER

What was it? A crazy Japanese festival that takes a childhood pastime and turns it into a competitive international sport. What were we doing? Training for weeks on end (well, does walking to school count?) with the Hokkaido-based national championships within our sights... or you know, just trying to survive and have a laugh.

Let's begin by painting a brief picture of the contest. The *Yuki Gassen* is basically a 2-day hardcore snowball fight, the winners of which go on to compete in the national championships in Hokkaido where teams from all around the world come to participate. The pitch is similar in length to a basketball court, and half the width. Within those confines are seven free-standing walls, behind which crouch two 7-person teams, each equipped with an arsenal of 90 snowballs ready to be frantically hurled at the opposition within the 3-minute game. Each match consists of 3 games. A game is won when a team manages to grab their opponents' flag. Failing that, the team with the most players unscathed by snowballs at the end of



Team *Henna Gaijin* showing off their war dance

the 3-minute match is crowned victorious.

Our team consisted of Tyler Reed (Canada), Marshall Higa (US), Dennis Horton (Australia) and Isaac Reichenbach (US) in attack, with Cybil Litwiller (Canada), Martyn Reynolds (NZ) and me (UK) in defence. Nick Bradley (UK) and Nikki Swift (US) stood in reserve. A big thank you also to the dozen or so others who very kindly turned up in support.

The contest was held in Takano-cho, a small village north of Shobara. We were scheduled to compete on Sunday morning, so we spent Saturday trying to pick



Henna Gaijin Team at Yuki Gassen

up any hints and tips from the seasoned Japanese teams at work, and sampling the food stalls.

Sunday morning kicked off at 8:45 with an opening ceremony introducing the teams (we are in Japan, after all – what’s an event without an opening ceremony?). Our team name was *Henna Gaijin* (which translates as ‘weird foreigner’), and we did our best to live up to the title, with lots of screaming, and a particularly boisterous pre-match war dance. In the first round we were to compete in two matches; two victories would move us into a knockout

tournament. Our first match was a relatively civilised affair, and we won without too much difficulty. Having entered with the modest hope of not disgracing ourselves, we were over the moon with this unprecedented success.

Our second match, however, proved much more of a challenge. Seconds after the whistle sounded, one of our opponents rushed forward and swiped our flag, handing us an embarrassingly rapid defeat. Our mistake lay in our immediate quick-fire release of the two snowballs that each team is provided with at the beginning of each

match: before we’d been able to restock they had made their move and we had no defence. It was a shock, but, with fervent crowd support, we were determined to bounce back in the second game.

In Game 2, they tried the same thing again, but we held them off, and eventually pinned them down. We won that game, and then the following one too, with a brilliant move from Isaac to take their flag just at the end. With the sweet smell of victory wafting all around us, we got somewhat carried away after that, and I ended up throwing my gloves into a very appreciative crowd!

I won’t dwell too long on the third match as, quite simply, we got hammered. We were disappointed to lose, but still overjoyed to have done as well as we did. We had a great time, and I think the crowd enjoyed our unique team spirit. There will be another contest next year, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who likes... extreme entertainment! Think “paintball on ice” and you’re half way there; think “Japanese game show with snowballs” and you’re somewhat nearer the mark.

Fellow *Henna Gaijin* team-members, *otsukaresama* – same time next year? §

recipe

Wide Island BRUSCHETTA

by JANE PUCHNIAK



Wide Island Bruschetta

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 large tomatoes
- 3-4 large cloves garlic
- 1½ teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ⅓ large block of firm tofu (*momen* tofu)
- French bread sliced into 4 x 1½" - thick pieces OR 2 slices bread, each cut in half
- ¾ tsp salt
- Pepper to taste
- Optional: 2 tbsp parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS:

- Wash and dice the tomatoes.
- Place tomatoes in a medium-sized mixing bowl.
- Mince the garlic cloves.
- Add the garlic and the Italian seasoning to the bowl and mix.
- Crumble the firm tofu into the mixture.
- Add ½ teaspoon of salt and combine the ingredients.
- Toast the bread until golden brown.
- Drizzle ½ tbsp of olive oil on each individual piece of toast.
- Use a fork and put ¼ of the mixture on each toast. Sprinkle on remaining

salt and pepper to taste.

- *If using parmesan cheese, sprinkle ½ tbsp over each toast.*
- Enjoy!

NOTES:

- Using a fork to put the mixture on the toasts will prevent excess liquid from making the toasts soggy.
- Italian seasoning is usually available, but if you can’t find it use 1 tsp oregano, ½ tsp basil and ½ tsp thyme. All available at most 100¥ stores and supermarkets.
- I add tofu to have some protein in the mix, but if you aren’t a fan, you can decrease the amount of spice by ⅓ and just use tomatoes to have a lighter appetizer.
- Sometimes adding a pinch of sugar can really bring out the flavour of the tomatoes if tomatoes are not in their peak season.

SUMMARY:

- Prep time: 20 minutes
- Makes: 1 serving

MARCH • APRIL CALENDAR

- **March / April**

Baseball and Soccer Seasons Begin

During March and April the local sports teams - the Hiroshima Carp and San Frece - begin their seasons. Check out www.gethiroshima.com for more information on prices and schedules.

- **March 1-10**

National AJET Elections

Take part in selecting the representatives of AJET for the 2007-2008 JET year. These people will be representing you at CLAIR, so make sure your opinions are heard. To read candidates' platforms and to vote go to www.ajet.net



Hina Matsuri Dolls

- **March 3**

Hina Matsuri

The *Hina Matsuri* (or Dolls Festival) is celebrated by families to honor their daughters. It is also known as the Girls' Festival. On this day (and in the weeks leading up to it) households with daughters display dolls in their windows with peach blossoms. The doll festival is a modified version of a Chinese tradition. The Chinese tradition was to transfer bad fortunes to dolls and throw them in the river. It is a Japanese tradition to drink sweet sake. But beware: if you leave your dolls on display even for a single day after the festival, Japanese superstition states that you will never marry.

- **March 8**

Let's Film Festival Entry Deadline

Creative? Want to try something new? Are you the next Steven Spielberg? Today is the last day to enter your film in the second annual Let's Film Festival. Don't miss out on this fun opportunity (see article on page 8). For more information email Grahaeme and Natasha at letsfilmfestival@gmail.com.

- **March 13**

Japan-American Society Meeting

Come and meet non-JET foreigners and English-speaking Japanese people at this month's meeting titled 'Business Relations at Dinner.' After the lecture there will be a fellowship party which is open to members and non-members alike. Other nationalities welcome.

Foreigners: 1000yen

Japanese: 3000yen

- **March 14**

White Day

This is the opposite of Valentine's Day. On White Day men return the women's Valentine's Day favors by giving them chocolates – and traditionally they should be bigger than those given by the women! White Day was introduced by a marshmallow manufacturer in the 1960s, in an attempt to marshmallow sales in Japan. Men were supposed to give marshmallow sweets to their sweethearts, hence the 'white' title. Marshmallows did not catch on, and evolved to the customary chocolate exchange, but the terminology 'White Day' stuck.

- **March 16 / 17**

St Patrick's Day at Molly Malone's

Come and celebrate the biggest St Paddy's Day celebration in Hiroshima. There will be live music and a free prize draw for those wearing green. For more information go to www.mollymalones.jp Entrance fee is 1000yen.

- **March 18**

Momo-mi Tea Ceremony

Enjoy the peach blossoms at Hiroshima's Shukkein Garden. The fee to enter the garden is 250yen, and there is a small fee for participating in the tea ceremony.

- **March 21**

Shunbun No Hi, National Holiday

Spring Equinox Day. On this day Japanese people visit the graves of their ancestors.

- **Early to mid-April**

Hanami, cherry blossom viewing parties

Spring is quite possibly the most beautiful time of year in Japan. The Japanese take full advantage of the blooming *sakura* (cherry blossoms) and good weather by

participating in *hanami*. People gather under the cherry trees to picnic and drink sake. Participating in *hanami* is a definite must-do while in Japan.

- **April 8**

Hana Matsuri

The *Hana Matsuri* (also called *Kanbutsue*) is the flower festival to celebrate Buddha's birthday. It is tradition on this day for children to drink *ama-cha*, a sweet drink made from hydrangea, and also to pour this sweet drink on statues of Buddha.

- **April 22**

Let's Film Festival

Come and watch the short films that your friends have produced at the Let's Film Festival. Family, friends, and co-workers are highly encouraged to come and watch as these potential future Oscar winners present their film debuts. Definitely a night full of talent, laughs and fun. The location is in Fukuyama at Otagai-sama Yokochō, 1-11-20 Minami Miyoshi-cho (Near Ito Yokado/Happy Town). All proceeds raised on the door will go to charity. For more information contact Grahaeme and Natasha at letsfilmfestival@gmail.com

- **April 29**

Showa Day (Substitute holiday on April 30)

This is the birthday of the former emperor Showa. Before 2007, this used to be called Green Day (*Midori-no-Hi*) because the emperor had a fascination with plants and nature. This is the first time in history that April 29th will be known as Showa Day. Now Green Day is celebrated on May 4th. This is also the first day of Golden Week, one of Japan's busiest travel times.

For more local events check out: www.gethiroshima.com

References:

<http://www.tanutech.com/japan/valentine.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Holidays
<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2062.html>
www.gethiroshima.com

japaneseculture: “DATING”

Have you yet to see the inside of a love hotel? Does the idea of dating a Japanese guy or girl fill you with just as much fear as it does excitement? Did you spend Valentine's Day catching up with friends? If so, you need Carolina's help to put you on the express train to *rabu-rabu-rando!*

WHAT'S **RABU** GOT TO DO WITH IT?

by **CAROLINA DULCEY**

Dating is something everyone is curious about and, by the end of college, thanks to movies, friends or first-hand trial and error experiences, we all have a pretty good idea of the rules for how it's done “back home.” But how does dating work in a different country? How do people date in Japan?

The first thing the *gaijin* about town must get to grips with is that Japan is a group society. What that means for your dating prospects is that, realistically, if you don't belong to a group, getting started on the dating scene can be a little difficult. Most Japanese people meet new people through introductions by friends, family members or colleagues, or sometimes by hiring a middle man to find someone for them as is the case in お見合い (*omi-ai* = arranged marriages).

Omi-ai are strictly for people in the market for marriage, and since they are conducted through special agencies, the procedure is actually very business-like. People tell the agency what they are looking for in a partner and they pay a fee for the service. The representative finds the most suitable choice and sends the pair on an introductory date. This ‘date’ is very formal (think business meeting) and usually takes place with the match-maker present. If all goes well, families will be introduced to one another and a wedding will take place soon after that.

The only age restriction on *omi-ai* is the



Suggestive wording on a Love Hotel sign.

legal age for marriage (16 for women and 18 for men) so young people can certainly go to the agency if they so desire. However, most young people today want to have a 恋愛結婚 (*ren-ai kekkon* = marriage for love) instead of an arranged one. There are times when parents will seek an *omi-ai* for their unmarried child but, in the end, it is up to the individual if they choose to marry or not.

While *omi-ai* are not as common as they once were, they still happen and it seems to me that there is more shame connected to it for women than for men; especially as the majority of the women who sign up for it are definitely past their Christmas cake date*. As an example of this, a part-time teacher at my school had a sister who was 29. It was a secret within the family that she was going to have an *omi-ai*, and everyone was hoping that the couple would get along. The teacher told me that if they both liked each other her sister might be able to get married before she hit 30, which at that time was about 6 months from the first scheduled meeting date.

However, for those who would rather find love for themselves, one of the most common and popular ways for Japanese people to meet others is through a 合コ

コ (*gokon* = group blind date). So how does one go about procuring an invite to a *gokon*? Or better yet, how can a *gaijin* make one happen? To be invited to a *gokon*, you have to know someone who either knows something about them and perhaps goes to them him/herself since *gokon* are all about networking. If you have a friend who goes on *gokon* a lot, just let them know you're interested and the next time they plan one you might be invited to join in.

The way a *gokon* works is very simple: you have one girl and one boy who know each other and work as the organizers of the party. The boy invites three of his guy friends and the girl invites three of her girl friends, then everyone meets at a restaurant for dinner where they get to know each other better.

Often foreigners will be invited to an intercultural *gokon* (half foreigners / half Japanese). These *gokon* are very different from the ones with only Japanese people. The foreigners mix *gokon* has the usual “everyone meeting for dinner and drinks” air about it while the Japanese *gokon* has the feeling of people meeting with the honest purpose of finding someone to go out with. At a Japanese *gokon*, as the evening progresses the group members will usually slowly start to form unspoken pairs (if they find

someone they like, that is) and may go on to a 二次会 (*ni-ji-kai* = after party) when they leave the restaurant, perhaps involving some *karaoke* or another bar. If not, they will simply exchange phone numbers and bid their friends good-night while going on their merry way – even if love wasn't in the cards, new friendships have been made.

Where might they go after the *ni-ji-kai*? They could walk around the city, go to a bar, go to a club or, if a girl and a guy really hit it off, they might decide to take their relationship to the next level, in which case they will often head to a ラブホ (*rabu-ho* = love hotel). Love hotels are easy to spot as they



Take a 'rest' for the bargain price of 4,500yen

usually have strange names and even stranger façades. They have no reception desk as they want to offer their clients as much anonymity as possible. On a wall there will be a light-up board with pictures of available rooms, prices, and a little panel with vending machine-like buttons. The modern day love hotel boasts of being more than just a place with a bed: some rooms have karaoke, small swimming pools, massage chairs, and themes like Hello Kitty or baseball. You select what type of room you want from the machine, which will then issue you with a ticket, then you pre-pay for your privileges at a small window with stained glass (to retain anonymity).

The prices for love hotels vary depending on where you go and what room you choose. Prices quoted outside don't

include extra, like costumes or toys, all of which are sold separately from vending machines within the hotel. There are also 3 different types of prices offered. The first possibility is the "rest" option which is usually for 2 or 3 hours and start at around 3,000yen. The second one is the "over-night" option which usually is from 10pm to 10am. The time schedule for this, though, varies from hotel to hotel. You can probably stay the night at some love hotels for about 5-8,000yen. The last possibility there is, is the "No-Time" option which is offered at SOME hotels from 10am to 4pm (when hotels are not so busy). Prices for this choice start at around 4,000yen.

But Japanese people are shy. Very few Japanese girls will walk through the main entrance of a love hotel and risk being spotted by someone they know, so love hotels have one main entrance and two very discreet entrances, usually on the side or at the back of the building, where couples can come in without being noticed. Once you are in the room... well, what you do is up to you.

If you're thinking about staying over-night, be aware that if you leave the room, you often can't go back in. Some more modern love hotels have replaced keys with automatic locks; when guests pay, the door is unlocked until they enter the room, at which point the door locks automatically behind them. There are also love hotels where you don't pay on arrival, but when you leave – there is a chute in which to send the money down to reception. Until you do this the door stays locked, leaving you trapped inside.



A glimpse into the heart of a Love Hotel

What if you want to go on a date with a Japanese person? If *gokons* aren't your thing and instead you want to ask a Japanese person out on a conventional



The romantic façade of a Love Hotel

date, the same rules as "back home" apply - if you're creepy or smell of desperation, a date just isn't going to happen. Picking someone up is called *nanpa* (軟派) and it has rather negative connotations in Japan, but you might get lucky - some Japanese people might be so flattered or shocked by the fact that a foreigner asked them out that you could end up with a phone number and a date. Japanese people are as curious about dating foreigners as foreigners are about dating them, so they may come up and talk to you but that is very unlikely if they're not confident in their English skills (or, alternatively, completely drunk). Unless you have "I speak Japanese" stamped on your forehead, Japanese people will have no clue that you do, and speaking Japanese to some extent is almost essential (probably more so for girls than boys) if you want to get a date. Once you speak some Japanese, you may be able to try out *nanpa* or, better yet, find yourself a part of a group of Japanese friends that might lead you to your first *gokon* - thus jumpstarting your *rabu* scene in Japan. Time to take that at-home study course just a little more seriously.

So with all of this insider information safely stored away, head forth and mingle, *gaijin* guys and gals! Be sure to let me know how you 'get on'. §

**The Christmas cake date refers to the fact that people are only interested in Christmas cakes until December 24th – after that they lose all of their appeal and will rarely leave the shop shelves. The same is traditionally said of a Japanese woman – once she turns 25, she is like an unwanted Christmas cake. Many Japanese people will assure you, however, that this belief is antiquated and that modern Japanese women are perfectly happy to be single well beyond the age of 25.*

by LISA, CASEY and HANS

Hello JETs! Here at Hiroshima AJET headquarters we have been busy working on some exciting upcoming events:

Early April we are planning a quiz night. Come see if last year's winners (Jeff Niemetschek, Berin McKenzie, and Russ Tyler) can retain their title! All the money raised that night will go towards the Bangladesh Habitat for Humanity trip, which is being led by Hiroshima JETs, Shannon and Peter Coelho. During Golden Week their team is going to Bangladesh to help build houses for needy families. The quiz night fundraiser will be a guaranteed fun night where you can see if you truly have lost all of your capacity for intelligent thought while in Japan – plus you'll be helping out a good cause.

Other events to look forward to include a Carp game in May, an outdoor activity in June, and the Leaver's Party in July. Keep your eyes peeled for AJET emails with more information about all these events. Lucky for us, the cherry blossoms are out a bit early this year. That means that *hanami* season is just around the corner. Look for either of us happily stationed under a cherry tree, or you can reach us by email at Hiroshimaajet@hotmail.com.

National AJET

A word from out-going Block 9 rep, Hans

*Why is National AJET important?
What do they do?
Who are they?*

I hear these questions all the time. Here in this article are the answers to those questions, serving, I hope, as a brief explanation as to why, between March 1st to March 10th, we would greatly appreciate it if you could go online – www.ajet.net - and vote for the next National AJET (NAJET) Council. Choose your favourite candidate for the positions of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Block 9 Representative (which is the person who is responsible for representing Hiroshima,

Yamaguchi, Tottori, Shimane and Okayama prefectures).

In order to answer the above questions, let's take a look at the things that would NOT exist if it were not for the hard work over the years of the 21 annual JET volunteers who together make up the National AJET Council:

- Regular contact with, and an exchange of opinions and suggestions between, the JET community and CLAIR; meaning that very little would change and any change that could happen would occur extremely seldom.
- The Peer Support Group – this is the JET advice helpline which runs every night of the year. It is not run by CLAIR.
- Practical workshops and training given by professionals at Tokyo Orientations.
- Books, guides, plans, ideas and a whole host of other resources that help us to do the best job we can in our role as JETs. These supplies are made by a combination of JETs, and professionals and are offered at discounted rates.
- Corporate special offers and links, as well as support networks, job opportunities and so forth both for those who leave JET and stay in Japan, and for those who go home at the end of their contract.
- Teaching and Internationalization photo, essay, and poetry awards.

As if these projects were not enough, AJET also facilitates the running of these great additional perks for JETs: Tatami Timeshare; Nihon Now (AJET portion); new publications; advice, support and networking between JET groups; Special Interest Groups (SIGs); support networks for Non-Native English Speaking JETs; General Information Handbook resources; help with sick leave, paternity leave and bereavement leave; and professional development opportunities. The list just goes on and on.

Every vote counts! Please go online between March 1st and 10th

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:

藪をつついて蛇を出す。

ROMAJI:

Yabu wo tsutsuite hebi wo dasu.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

Poke around in a bush and a snake will come out.

ENGLISH EQUIVALENT:

Let sleeping dogs lie.

VOCABULARY BUILDER:

藪 · やぶ · yabu · bush

つづく · tsutsuku · to poke

蛇 · へび · hebi · snake

出す · だす · dasu · to come out

(www.ajet.net) to vote for your National AJET representatives. Your vote ensures that NAJET is able to continue to positively develop the JET programme in order to help its participants have the best experience possible in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support and help throughout my year in National AJET. I will miss my time on the council greatly.

Hans Svennevig
Block 9 Representative
Education Liaison
National AJET 2006-2007
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INDIA

a never-ending adventure

by NIKKI SWIFT



Beach and boats in India.

The first line of Imogen Heap's song *Hide and Seek* perfectly describes my initial thoughts of India: "Where are we? What the hell is going on?" Immediately after arriving in New Delhi, culture shock dealt me a nice punch in the stomach. Taking a taxi to my hotel, I discovered that Indian "highways" are multi-purpose areas where literally anything goes - in addition to cars and motorbikes, main roads are also utilized for social gatherings and cow herding. Turning onto the street where my hotel was situated, I was welcomed by two drunken homeless men partaking in a friendly fistfight. I then experienced what it would feel like to sleep outside during rush hour in New York City — just by staying a night *inside* my hotel.

Despite my early misgivings, I discovered that traveling in India is a wild, unforgettable experience. At first, I only saw the overwhelming crowds, the heart-breaking images of poverty, and the general filth of the country. Especially in contrast to Japan, I felt like I had just entered the armpit of humanity. However, it didn't take me long to begin to appreciate India specifically for all of its imperfections and to recognize its masked beauty. The country is alive with a cornucopia

of sounds and vibrant colors. So many adventures await you, whether in the northern Himalayas, on the southern beaches, or in the bustling cities. I only caught a glimpse of the massive subcontinent as I traveled around New Delhi, Kolkata, Berhampore, and Goa. A retrospective word of advice: wherever you are in India, don't underestimate the power of toilet paper. Especially if you want to venture out of the big cities, T.P. is a scarce commodity and you may have to wipe Indian-style (i.e. with your left hand) if caught without.

Here are a few suggestions to jumpstart your own expedition in India:

1. Go Make A Difference!

Volunteering was honestly the best thing I did in India, and it provided me with a much more favorable and, in my opinion, real cultural experience than my time spent in touristy areas. Through Go M.A.D., I taught at the Ananda Marga Primary School in Berhampore, West Bengal (about 6 hours outside of Kolkata) with 11 other volunteers. On Christmas Day, we organized parties for 150 students and 18 orphans. There was no snow, no Christmas ham and there were no stockings hung by the fire, but it

TRAVELTIPS:

GETTING THERE

There are many airlines that fly to India, so you can definitely find some good deals. If coming from Japan, I suggest booking early with No.1 Travel to get a discounted fare.

GETTING AROUND

Although transportation is relatively inexpensive in India, you will most assuredly be ripped off unless you negotiate a price before entering any vehicle. When coming from the airport, buy a pre-paid taxi voucher. Be prepared to physically shove your way to the counter to obtain this ticket. Within cities, I would suggest using auto rickshaws (tuk-tuks) or rickshaws to get around. Trains are by far the cheapest mode of transportation across long distances, but you get what you pay for. Take a train for the experience, but they are regularly late, in addition to being very crowded and dirty (unless you ride 2nd or 3rd class). I would recommend flying, especially if you're on a tight schedule. With the introduction of many new airlines in the past few years, domestic flights have become much cheaper.

LINKS

Plane tickets to / within India:

- www.no1-travel.com
- www.kayak.com
- <http://india.makemytrip.com>

(This is the best way to buy the cheapest domestic airline tickets outside of India)

Train schedules:

- <http://www.indianrail.gov.in>
- <http://www.irctc.co.in>

(This is the only way to buy train tickets from outside India)

Volunteer opportunities:

- <http://www.go-mad.org>

Book Accommodation:

- <http://www.desiya.com>

If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at: nicole.m.swift@gmail.com

felt like Christmas in the most magical sense; it was incredible to watch the children open their presents. They were overwhelmed to not only see, but actually receive so many toys. We spent the rest of the week teaching English lessons and playing games with the bright-eyed tots who were smart and enthusiastic students. Although I will always be a foreigner there, I didn't feel like I was as much of an outsider by the time I left Berhampore.

2. Engage in a two-way anthropological study.

While in Berhampore, I spent an afternoon cruising along a nearby river on a long, wooden boat. Since we were so far away from any major city, most of the townspeople had never seen foreigners before. Consequently, there was a surprising amount of curious reciprocal staring going on between the locals bathing in the river and us.

3. Edge one step closer to nirvana in Goa

Yes, Goa is packed with tourists, but it's a beautiful contrast to the grime and noise of the cities. If you've seen the movie *The Bourne Supremacy*, you'll immediately recognize Palolem beach in

South Goa. After a taxing afternoon of sunbathing and sipping cocktails, find your inner peace with a session of yoga. Yoga is practiced on the sand in an area shaded by palm trees and surrounded by lush tropical greenery. Another way to unwind is with a Kervala Ayurveda massage: I experienced 90 minutes of pure ecstasy, having intoxicating oils rubbed all over my body in a very stimulating manner to say the least. Warning: Goa's tradeoff for relaxation and splendor is its high prices.

4. Let's go to Bollywood!

When you're tired of sightseeing, catch a Bollywood flick with the locals. Bollywood films are famous for their extravagant song and dance sequences and their melodramatic plots. Although in Hindi, it's not hard to understand what's going on. The audience is equally as entertaining as the movie itself, due to the active dialogue that exists between the actors in the film and the moviegoers. For example, when a pretty girl appears in the movie, the men in the audience will whistle and shout freely. When something funny happens, people will explode into laughter and shout back at the screen as if it could somehow respond.



Be-henna-ing the hand

5. Become a true Henna Gaijin

Like the Taj Mahal, visiting a market in New Delhi or Kolkata is an essential part of the Indian experience. However, when your shopping endorphins start to ebb, don't fret - your market experience is not over yet: for about 100yen, you can get traditional henna painted onto your body and literally become the *henna gaijin* we know and love to be. Warning: The henna will permanently leave its orangey-brown mark on anything you touch until it dries. Plan accordingly. Then, when you return to Japan, just stick out your arms and your kids will go nuts. Your teachers, however, will probably think you just joined the *yakuza*. A guaranteed "EEEEEEEE?" hit amongst kids and teachers alike. §

LET'S FILM FESTIVAL!

by NATASHA MEKHAIL



Top three things to do with the video camera you bought in Japan:

3. Leave it in the box and wait for obsolescence to increase its value as a kitsch item.

2. Make a sex tape just in case you become famous and need a PR smokescreen to wipe out the taint of your box-office failures.

1. Join the 2nd Annual "Let's Film Festival" in Fukuyama on April 22 and produce a movie you can refer to anecdotally for the rest of your life!

But let's say you've already been through the box and sex-tape options, and are ready to put some serious mileage on your camera by creating an original film, here's what you need to know:

CONTENT

A) A 30-second commercial for a product or service of your own creation OR
B) a five-minute film featuring three "ingredients": a line, a prop and a location. These elements will be common to all the movies entered and determined by way of a semi-democratic process. As for the rest of your film, the sky's the limit.

FORMAT

All films must be in digital format, burned to DVD and readable by common software programs (Windows Media Player or QuickTime).

ENTRANTS

ANYONE is eligible to enter the Let's Film Festival, be ye JET, NOVA, AEON, GEOS or otherwise acronym-enabled, and whether you're English or Japanese-speaking. Films in either language are welcome and make for a much more interesting playbill.

TIMEFRAME

1) The deadline to announce your intent to participate is March 8. Please write us at letsfilmfestival@gmail.com with a team name and contact information for at least one of the participants. Teams may be of any size and you may enter as many times as you wish in as many different incarnations as you wish. Once you've signed up, we'll send confirmation along with this year's three ingredients.
2) The deadline to submit your finished film (and the event itself) is April 22.

JUDGING

Let's Film Festival winners are determined by audience vote so it's in your best interest to stock the venue with friends, family and co-workers. Don't fancy making a film? Then just come and watch the screenings instead:

Date: April 28, 2007

Time: From 4 pm 'til it ends

Place: Otagai-sama Yokocho, 1-11-20 Minami Miyoshi-cho, Fukuyama.
福山市三吉町南1-11-20おたがいさま横丁 (Near Ito Yokado/Happy Town)

Contacts: Grahaeme Cowie or Natasha Mekhail at letsfilmfestival@gmail.com

Fee: Registration is free but there will be a small door fee to cover costs. All profits go to charity.

Inspiration: Check out last year's films at www.INSideOfAShopCanBeSmoked.com/blog/

Now fire up your camera and Let's Film Festival!

Live Music in Hiroshima City: **SUMATRA TIGER**

by **JASON ROSENHOLTZ-WITT**



Bar/Rock Club Sumatra Tiger

I was once like you. Wandering the streets of Hiroshima, gazing at row upon row of snack bars, pondering where to go to listen to some decent music. Desperately searching, in vain, for good live music venues. Painfully sitting through one bad song after another at Club Jamaica / Sacred Spirits / 'This is no longer a dancing establishment – please dance outside on the sidewalk'. Well don't worry, there actually are things going on here. Granted, the local music scene possesses nowhere near the same level of cool as Osaka and Tokyo, but hey, at least we don't live in Shimane. But before you buy that shink ticket to Kansai, listen up: my countless nights of wandering and bad music have paid off - I have uncovered a small yet enjoyable music scene in Hiroshima City.

If you're interested in checking out some good local rock, try starting off at a Hiroshima staple, El Barco. Most people know how to get there so ask a

friend or, failing that, check out the Get Hiroshima map or website - wandering blind through Nagarekawa in search of the venue will likely leave you lost.

Alternatively, instead of going upstairs to El Barco, stay grounded - on the first floor of that building is a charming bar/rock club called Sumatra Tiger. A wide array of music can be heard here, from indie rock to punk to avante-garde jazz. Recent artists have included: Sazusa Snows, led by former JET Liam Haggerty and containing current JET Travis Lewis; Eyescream; The Spins who are, in my opinion, the best band Hiroshima has to offer; and experimental jazz drummer extraordinaire, the renowned Shoji Hano. Seriously, Shoji Hano is a badass.

An upcoming Sumatra Tiger event that I would strongly urge you to attend is The Bass Ninja. He will make an appearance on Friday, March 23rd. Your mind will

be blown away by the sheer awesomeness that is The Bass Ninja (starting at 8:00pm). Plus, his name is The Bass Ninja. How could anyone not want to see that? §



Shoji Hano (left) at Sumatra Tiger, Feb. 7, 2007

For more information, see: www.sumatratiger.com

To read about Shoji Hano, see www.japanimprov.com/hano/index.html

For more on The Bass Ninja, see www.bassninja.com

JLAND • FACT

Ever wondered how MOS Burger got its bizarre name? Well, we have it from the top that MOS stands for 'Mountain Ocean Sun'. In the words of MOS Burger H.Q.'s Deputy Manager Akio Fukumitsu: "The founder of the company, Mr. Satoshi Sakurada, wished MOS Food Services to become a company whose people placed importance on human beings and nature, having dignity as high as a mountain, minds as broad as an ocean and passion as everlasting as the sun." That certainly puts a more philosophical spin on your next *teriyaki* burger and fries!

PICTURE PERFECT



We have enlisted the help of expert photographer Katie Vigna to be our official judge from now on. Katie, who is currently a JET up in Shiga-ken, gained a degree in photography at home in Florida before making the move to Japan.

If you would like to upload your own photos to the Hiroshima JET website, go to www.flickr.com/groups/esid. Membership is open to all. Alternatively, check out other contributors' photos. You might learn a thing or two!

FEATURED PHOTO:

'Kaita-cho at Night' by **Beck Moloney**

Katie says: "I couldn't stop looking at the image. The contrasting shades of blue along with the diagonal curves make it difficult to tell which end is up."

Think you can do better?

Go to www.flickr.com/groups/esid

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