
THE TOMBO

Oita's English Newsletter

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Life in Japan:

A Lesson in Saying Yes

Sarah Skaluba is a JET Programme Participant working as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japanese Schools. She is from the USA and arrived in Oita in August. Here she talks about some of her initial impressions of life in Oita as a JET.



My first night in Oita I spent sitting in an *onsen* with my colleague — pretending I felt totally comfortable sharing a naked bath with a colleague I had only met hours prior. Mind you, this was after dining on *natto* and frantically trying to clean the sticky, fermented strings of soybean off my face.

But to be honest, I wouldn't have it any other way. This memory will forever be ingrained in my mind as my first experience with Japanese culture and truly embracing JETs unofficial motto. *Say yes to everything*. These words are hammered into our heads at pre-departure meetings, Tokyo orientation, and again by every JET who's finished their first year — or four — on the program. We're told that turning down an invitation of any kind, no matter how eccentric, is essentially social suicide. Say goodbye to future invites from colleagues and friends, and prepare yourself for a life of social isolation.

As cliché as it sounds, this nugget of wisdom has been life-changing: in the span of two months, I've met more amazing people and experienced far more firsts than I ever thought possible. Sure, a large part of this is simply the nature of living in a new place. But at the same time, my experience here would be a totally different one had I swapped that imposing three letter word with its more comfortable two letter counterpart.

In May 2012, Google's executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, told graduates of the University of California at Berkeley just how powerful that three letter word is. "Find a way to say Yes to things," he urged. "Say yes to invitations to a new country, say yes to meet new friends, say yes to learning a new language, picking up a new sport. Even if it's a bit edgy, a bit out of your comfort zone, saying yes means that you will do something new, meet someone new and make a difference in your life -- and likely in others' lives as well. Yes lets you stand out in a crowd, to be the optimist, to stay positive, to be the one everyone comes to for help, for advice or just for fun. Yes is what keeps us all young. It's a tiny word that can do big things. Say it often."

This three letter word has practically become the mantra of the JET Program. And from chatting with many fellow JET

participants, I reckon they feel the same. It propels us out of our comfort zone and straight into uncharted territory — towards adventure, new friendships, and the most memorable, if not absurd, experiences. Without a willingness to say yes, we become stuck — unwilling to put ourselves out there or embrace the uncomfortable. I know for myself, fully adopting the “just say yes” mentality is a work in progress. Of course it’s important to take time for yourself and to think before acting, but there’s no time like the present to stretch the limits of your comfort zone either.

So here’s to saying yes — embracing the unknown, making mistakes, and fully experiencing that beautiful world around us.

- **Article by Sarah Skaluba**

A night in the Usa countryside



When I was an exchange student staying in Nishinomiya City back in 2009, I loved to watch television. My favourite programme was about celebrities experiencing the Japanese countryside. Every week a celebrity would be whisked away to the Japanese countryside to rely on the kindness of strangers and rural hospitality. They would stay the night at the house of a bona fide *inaka* citizen and try to get to know a little bit about them and their everyday life. In each episode, tears were shed, emotional music played, and important life lessons learned – everything a good reality television show needs.

So naturally, when I was invited to spend the night in rural Usa as part of the *Oita Miryoku Taiken Tour* (Wonderful Oita Tour), I jumped at the chance. When me and my group met our host family on a chilly October evening and piled into the car, I wondered what I had let myself in for. We rapidly drove away from the scattered shops and supermarkets of Usa and further into the mountains. “Where I live is relatively close by,” explained our host, “the other groups are going really far out.” “So there will be cafes and *izakaya* up there?” asked my co-guest. To that, our host’s response was laughter. Apparently “relatively close by” was still fairly remote!

Although lacking in hustle and bustle, our host’s home was beautiful. Nestled in a small nook in the mountains, the sprawling farmhouse was surrounded by nature with mountain cats nestled in the doorways. From the glowing kitchen we could hear and smell dinner being prepared. After settling in, we were able to get to know our hosts over a delicious home-cooked meal and a bottle of local wine. I was astounded by the hospitality of our hosts: although slightly shy, they wanted to get to know us just as much as they wanted to teach us about their way of life. The next day, after a big breakfast, we huddled outside in the chilly morning air, making dango sweet dumplings, which we ate hot and fresh. (Continued on page 4)

Festivals and Events

Date	Event Description	Location	Contact #
~Nov. 9 th	Fall rose festival- a relatively new festival at the rose garden where 2000 roses (approximately 200 types of roses) will be in full bloom.	Hita City Amagase-Machi	☎ 0973-57-3147
Nov. 1 st ~30 th	Beppu Art Month- a variety of exhibitions, performances, workshops and more to be held throughout Beppu City.	Beppu City	☎ 0977-22-3560
Nov. 1 st	Beppu Sentoumyou- approximately 15,000 lamps will be lit in Beppu Park creating a magical atmosphere. There will be lamp-making and illumination throughout the park.	Beppu City Beppu Park	☎ 0977-76-5327
Nov. 1 st , 2 nd	Usuki Takeyoi festival- over this weekend, approximately 20,000 bamboo shoots are lit up with candles all over the city.	Usuki City Nioza	☎ 0972-63-1111
Nov. 2 nd	Human rights enlightenment festival 'Human Festa' - a series of events will be held at the iichiko Culture Center focusing on the theme of human rights, accepting one another and growing with one another	Oita City Gareria Takemachi	☎ 097-506-3177
Nov. 3 rd	25th Shonai Kagura Festival- in conjunction with the 33 rd Shonai Town 'Furusato' festival. There will be kagura performances from a number of groups, and specialty goods for sale.	Yufu City Shonai-Machi	☎ 097-582-1111
Nov. 3 rd	9th 'Tomato Heaven in Ogi' + The 35th Ogi Furusato festival- will feature main events such as tomato cooking contests and tomato picking tours, as well as tomato recipe suggestions, tomato quizzes and more.	Taketa City Ogi-machi Fukushi kenko area	☎ 0974-68-2211
Nov. 7 th ~9 th	Sennen Akari- Festival of lights in Hita City. Bamboo shoots will be lit up with candles throughout town, and there will be concerts, food stalls, and more!	Hita City Mameda-Machi	☎ 0973-23-3111
Nov. 8 th	Bird box making- experience making bird box homes for wild birds, and other crafts. Reservations required, participation costs ¥500.	Kokonoe-Machi Kuju Furusato Shizen Gakkou	☎ 0973-73-0001
Nov. 8 th ~9 th	Hita Tenryo Festival- This festival works to recreate Edo period Japan with a samurai parade and various acts of local performing arts around Tsukikuma Park.	Hita City Mameda-Machi	☎ 0973-23-3111
Nov. 8 th ~9 th	Ono River Battle Festival- is performed by cavalry, archers, and more with the theme of "Battle of Hetsugigawara" which happened 427 years ago between Otomo allied force and Shimazu army.	Oita City Dainan-Ohashi bridge Hetsugi-honmachi Takenaka Tenmenzan Mt.	☎ 097-597-1264
Nov. 9 th	Autumn leaves walk- take a stroll around the park to enjoy the scenic autumn leaves, and experience the beginning of aki (autumn).	Oita City Kenmin-no-mori	☎ 097-588-0656
Nov. 15 th	Kimono Appreciation Day- A monthly event where visitors can try on rental kimonos, have their photos taken, and receive discounts at nearby facilities if they are wearing kimono.	Kitsuki-City Jouka-machi	☎ 0978-63-0100
Nov. 21 st ~ 23 rd	Taketa Chikuraku bamboo light festival- over the three days 20,000 bamboo lanterns will be lit across Jyouka-Machi, and visitors can enjoy live music performances, and taste local delicacies at food stalls.	Taketa City Jyouka-Machi	☎ 0974-63-2638
Nov. 23 rd	The 26th Hiji produce festival- booths from Hiji businesses will be on display, and there will be a furusato restaurant, and you can also experience shiitake mushroom planting!	Hiji-Machi Chuo Kouminkan area	☎ 0977-73-3127
Nov. 2 nd	Human rights enlightenment festival 'Human Festa' - a series of events will be held at the iichiko Culture Center focusing on the theme of human rights, accepting one another and growing with one another	Oita City Gareria Takemachi	☎ 097-506-3177
Dec. 7 th	Hyoutan festival- A tradition that has lasted over 800 years, and one that has been designated as an intangible cultural property by Oita Prefecture, held at Shibayama Hachiman Shrine.	Bungo-Ono City Chitose-Machi	☎ 0974-37-2111
Dec. 6 th	Shimekazari and Kadomatsu making- experience making Japanese New Year's decorations. Reservations required, participation cost ¥500.	Kokonoe-Machi Kuju Furusato Shizen Gakkou	☎ 0973-73-0001
Dec. 6 th	Wadako kite making- experience Japanese kite making. Reservations required, participation cost ¥200.	Oita City History Museum	☎ 097-549-0880
Dec. 13 th	Uki Uki Flea Market- come take a look through the stalls of clothes, books and more. You might just find some bargains. 11:30~15:00	Oita City Oasis Tower 1st Floor	☎ 097-538-7411
Dec. 20 th	Kimono Appreciation Day- A monthly event where visitors can try on rental kimonos, have their photos taken, and receive discounts at nearby facilities if they are wearing kimono.	Kitsuki-City Jouka-machi	☎ 0978-63-0100
Dec. 23 rd ~24 th	Beppu Christmas hanabi fantasia- approximately 10,000 fireworks are to be fired into the clear winter sky to create huge original displays, accompanying a performance of Christmas songs sung by 1000 people.	Beppu City Spa Beach	☎ 0977-24-2828
Dec. 31 st	Usa Shrine New Years Eve festival- this is the final festival to round off the year. Visitors visit Usa Shrine to pray for things such as good health and good fortune.	Usa City Usa Shrine	☎ 0978-37-0001
Dec. 31 st	Ueno Kagura- a traditional Japanese kagura dance will be performed at Wakahata shrine.	Nakatsu City Ueno	☎ 0979-22-1111

EXHIBITIONS & SCREENINGS

Date	Description	Place	Admission	Contact #
Oct. 17 th – Nov. 24 th	'Warring States of Kyushu' special exhibition	Oita Prefectural Museum of History	¥310	☎ 0978-37-2100
Oct. 24 th – Nov. 24 th	"The Peak of the Ever-changing" Jomon and Yayoi Baskets and Woodwork	Oita Historical Materials Museum	¥200	☎ 097-549-0880

Oita Art Museum= Oita-Shi Bijutsukan 大分市美術館

Oita Prefectural Museum of History= 大分県立歴史博物館

Oita Historical Materials Museum= Oita-Shi Rekishi Shiryoukan 大分市歴史資料館

Most Museums and Centers are closed on Monday, or Tuesday if Monday is a public holiday. Student admissions vary, highest cost shown.



STAGE & MUSIC EVENTS

Nov.	Time	Artist/Event	Venue	Cost	Contact #
3 rd	19:00	Swing Echoes Jazz Orchestra Autumn Live	Brick Block	¥500	☎ 097-536-4852
8 th	14:00	Touch the Japanese Culture – Japanese Music Recommendations ~Joruri~	iichiko Grand Theatre	¥1,000	☎ 097-533-4004
9 th	14:00	Mandolin Joint Concert	iichiko Otonoizumi	¥500	☎ 090-1974-6427
16 th	15:00	Ichiko Presents Canadian Brass (Brass band performance)	iichiko Otonoizumi	¥4,000 – ¥4,000	☎ 097-533-4004
28 th	18:00	Patria Tea Time Concert: Kawabata Narimichi Violin Recital	Patria Hita	¥3,000	☎ 0973-25-5000
Dec.	Time	Artist/Event	Venue	Cost	Contact #
4 th	21:00	25 th Anniversary Japan Tour – Manhattan Jazz Orchestra Christmas Concert	Brick Block	¥7,500 (advance tickets) ¥8,000 (buy on the night)	☎ 097-536-4852
14 th	14:00	Street Dance Live vol 5	T.O.P.S BittsHall	¥1,500 (advance)+drink	☎ 097-533-0467
22 nd	19:30	Play the Christmas – Christmas Party	Cantaloop II	¥2,000	☎ 097-548-5363

**Ticket prices range from student to most expensive general admission. Prices shown otherwise indicate price for purchase on the day of the event, they may be cheaper if purchased in advance. "w/ drink" prices include a drink, "+drink" prices require the additional purchase of a drink. Times shown indicate start times, doors usually open 30 minutes beforehand.



VENUES

Brick Block= 5-7-5 Ikushi, Oita City

Cantaloop II=3-2-30 Miyako-Machi

Nakayama Dai 5 Building 6F Oita City

iichiko Grand Theatre= Oasis Tower 1F Oita City

iichiko Otonoizumi=Oasis Tower 1F Oita City

Kagura Kaikan= 810 Kiyokawa, Bungo Ono City

T.O.P.S BittsHall.= Ikushi 5-783, Oita City

Patria Hita= 1-8-11 Sanbonmatsu, Hita City



(Continued from page 2) Our host was a patient teacher and let us all have a go at cooking before we stuffed ourselves (not a single dumpling was left when we were through). Later that morning, we piled back in the car all too soon to go home. Eating and chatting with a friendly group around a cosy dining table, taking turns to use the sink before getting ready for bed, waking each other up early for breakfast and so on, I felt, for the first time since arriving in Japan two months ago, almost like I was back living with a family again, despite the fact that I had only met the people I would be staying with earlier that day!

When we left our hosts, there was no cheesy music or tears, like in the television programme I loved, but I did feel that I had gotten a small glimpse into the inaka life and that that glimpse had immense value. I was struck by the kindness of our

hosts, and how immediately at home I felt even among strangers. Furthermore, as someone who has lived exclusively in cities and experienced the Japanese countryside mainly through hotels and ryokan, it was an invaluable glimpse into the real lives of people living out in those areas. It was a unique experience and one I don't think I will ever forget.

What's Going On?

From the Plaza

Free Legal Consultations

The Oita International Plaza is holding free legal consultations on **Nov. 19th & Dec 17th** from **13:00-16:00**.

The Oita Emigration/Immigration Affairs Council also organizes free consultations where emigration/immigration specialists are available to offer advice on a variety of topics from Immigration Bureau paperwork and procedures, to daily life matters. English interpretation available, other languages may be available with reservation two days in advance.

Date/Time: **Nov. 2nd & Dec 7th / 13:00 - 16:00**

Venue: the Oita International Plaza

For more information contact the Oita International Plaza.

TEL: 097-533-4021

Free Tagalog Consultations

Date: Saturday **Nov. 1st** & Tuesday **Nov. 18th**
Saturday **Dec. 6th** & Tuesday **Dec. 16th**

Time: **13:00-16:00**

Venue: Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)

Consultant: Rhodora Yoshitake

Free Chinese Consultation

Date/Time: **Every Thursday 10:00-13:00**. Place: Oita International Plaza. Consultant: **Cui Wenyu** (*Dates and times are subject to change. Please contact the Oita International Plaza before coming.) TEL: 097-533-4021

Venue: Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)

Free Health Consultations

The Saiseikai Hita Hospital offers free health consultations and medical examinations at the Oita International Plaza to foreign nationals living in Oita Prefecture.

Date/Time: **Dec. 16th / 14:30 - 15:30**

Venue: Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)

For more information contact: Saiseikai Hita Hospital (*Dates and times are subject to change. Please call in advance to confirm times)

TEL: 0973-24-1100

Japanese Lessons

Himawari Japanese Volunteers

Support for people learning Japanese in order to help them enjoy their lives in Oita, now at three different locations.

Wasada Public Hall Wed. 10:00-11:30

Meiji Akeno Public Hall Wed. 14:00-15:30

Tsurusaki Public Hall Sat. 10:00-11:30

For more information contact Ms. Fukata TEL: 097-527-2614

E-MAIL: nihongo_himawari_oita@yahoo.co.jp

Nihongo Rakuraku-talk

Beppu City Hall offers free Japanese lessons every Monday from 14:00-15:30. For more information contact Mr. Kii in the Beppu International Affairs Division

TEL: 0977-21-6133 E-MAIL: int-ma@city.beppu.oita.jp

Sakura Japanese Class

Come study Japanese with friendly volunteers and teachers in a pleasant atmosphere. Sakura Japanese Class is held every Monday from 10:15-12:00 at the Oita University International House in Nishiki-Machi, Oita City. Classes are free of charge. For more information call Ms. Ohashi CELL: 090-7866-2486

AIUEO Japanese Lessons

Volunteers offer free Japanese lessons on Tuesday and Friday from 10:20-11:50 at I-NESS near Oasis Tower as well as Thursday nights at Compal Hall from 18:30-20:30. Lessons are also offered in Beppu at the Beppu Foreign Tourist Information Office on Tuesday mornings from 10:00-12:00. For more information contact:

Ms. Miyase CELL: 090-8353-2485 (day lessons)

Ms. Kato TEL: 097-532-5940 (night lessons)

Community Classes and Events

Happy Talk

Come practice speaking Japanese with other learners and native speakers. Reservations not required, just show up on the day. Held every 2nd Saturday of the month at the Oita International Plaza, the date of the next session are **Nov. 8th & Dec 13th**

Time: **13:00 - 14:30**

Please bring your own drink if you like. Participation is FREE.

For more details **contact Sunny: orixbluewaves@gmail.com**

or visit the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/HappyTalkOita>



Oita International Plaza Multilingual Library



As many English-speaking residents of Oita will be well aware, it is sometimes tough to get your hands on English-language novels. Luckily, the Oita International Plaza Multilingual Library has many books available to borrowers for free! Borrowers can take out up to 10 books for a period of 2 weeks, with English language fiction, non-fiction and children's books all available. There are also a number of books in other foreign languages such as Chinese, Korean and German. The library has a wide selection: from the old classics to modern thrillers to family favourites (such as a number of Harry Potter books!) meaning that there is something for every

bookworm out there. All you have to do is ask staff at the Plaza to sign up for your free library card and you're ready to start reading.

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THANK YOU !!

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HOURS: Monday-Friday 9:30am-7:00pm

(closed weekends and the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. We are open on the Saturdays before these Mondays)

Closed national holidays & Dec 29th - Jan 3rd

The International Plaza is located on the basement floor of OASIS Hiroba 21 (iichiko Culture Center).

