

hokkaido *Life*

INAKA

The links in these documents contain information to make your life in Hokkaido easier and more enjoyable. Access each link and add it to your favourites list.

Your predecessor told you. You looked on the map and it just wasn't there. But, for some reason you wouldn't believe it. Now you're here and you can't believe it. Your town is tiny and in the middle of nowhere. Welcome to *inaka*.

But don't panic just yet. The initial shock will wear off and as you get to know people in your town you will realize that you actually got lucky. That is not to say that the first few months won't leave you wondering if you made the right decision to come to Japan. You are not alone here. There are definite advantages – and disadvantages – to living in rural Japan.

FOR

- Your town is a tight-knit community, which you have every chance to become a part of. You will have the opportunity to meet almost everyone in town.
- You are likely to be the only foreigner for miles, which will add to your superstar status at school and around town.
- Friendships with your co-workers are almost a foregone conclusion. This also means that you will be kept informed of what's going on in town.
- Your Japanese language skills should improve faster than your city-slicker friends. Sometimes it's sink-or-swim in this respect but you will also learn some of the more colourful expressions out here – especially in true fishing towns.
- Everyone in the community will know your name, who you are and where you live. You won't just be some other *gaijin*.

- You will get to do things people living in the city never do. You will more than likely get a better insight into Japanese culture, customs and daily life here.
- You should have a pretty good financial statement at the end of your stint. With nothing to append your money on, you end up saving it. Rent and taxes should be cheaper than in the city.
- Fresh air baby YEAH!! And loads of it!!
- You probably live close to a skifield!! Wahooooo!!
- Fresh produce.
- Kids are generally friendlier and easier than city kids.
- Your town might supply you with a car!! Waahoooo!!
- You don't have to memorise train routes and the subway systems, (especially the ones in Tokyo).

AGAINST

- Toilets are usually long drops. Say no more.
- Your local grocery store is probably very small with little selection. The nearest supermarket may be an hour away. Stock up when you can and enjoy the scenery of the drive.
- Western products are likely to be unheard of (good excuse for a trip to the city).
- Isolation is a common affliction in the rural JET community. Get to know the other JETs around you. Use the phone (you can afford the bill now). If you feel you must get out of town, do so.
- During the winter you may be virtually cut off from the outside world. Make plans to meet people over the weekends. Plan a trip during the winter holidays.
- A lack of entertainment (perhaps you have a long drive to the video store?). Swap books, CDs, videos with other JETs/your students. Join a local club!
- Being the only foreigner in town will mean that for the most part everyone knows where you are and what you are doing at any given time. If you don't want people to know what you are doing, do it in a town at least an hour away.
- Specialised health services can be a long way away. If you have any special needs in this area I suggest you check it out early on.

All told, you are in a good position. You will not only have the opportunity to visit the big cities but you have the opportunity to get away from it and become involved in community life. The friendships you will develop will ultimately be what make your stay worthwhile. Sure, things will get lonely, but don't let it get you down. Remember that there are others out there in the same boat. Pick up the phone and talk to someone. Keep in touch and get out there and make the most of your new home in *inaka*.

As always, the official [hajat|forum](#) is where you will find all the answers to any questions you may have regarding life in Hokkaido.

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