

# HNG 2019



H o k k a i d o N e w c o m e r ' s G u i d e

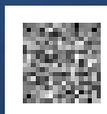




Translating the actual you get to experience the thrill of skydiving followed by a highly experienced flight instructor. This one is for those who want to experience the thrill of skydiving. This instructor gives you the opportunity to experience the thrill of skydiving. This instructor gives you the opportunity to experience the thrill of skydiving. This instructor gives you the opportunity to experience the thrill of skydiving.

# LET'S SKYDIVE!

For more information, please contact us at 011-81-11-3511-1111. We are a professional skydiving school. We are a professional skydiving school.



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QR Code

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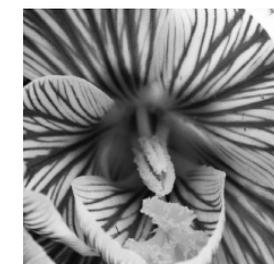


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Welcome to Hokkaido! I'm Marlania McElheny (Mar-lay-na, like the doctor on "Days of Our Lives" or the German singer). I am so excited to be your Prefectural Advisor this year! I began my time on JET in 2016 as an ALT in Date, meandering the halls of the elementary and junior high schools, saying 'hello' in as many ways as I could possibly think of. And while I've been here a while, there is still so much to do and see. So let's explore together! I am also a huge fan of delicious food and the puniest of puns, overwhelming nature, and fascinating company, so I'm looking forward to meeting y'all! As Prefectural Advisor, it's my responsibility to ensure that you all transition smoothly into your new positions, while also helping to address any concerns that you might have along the way. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you have.



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Marla Uribe  
Coordinator for International Relations & Sapporo City Advisor  
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I'm excited to be a PA in Sapporo! My first year I was an ALT at three different junior high schools then I moved to a senior high school. I absolutely love my job and Sapporo! I want to help people love Sapporo as much as I do. When I first moved to Sapporo, I had never been to Japan before and I didn't know a lot of Japanese so I struggled. Now, my goal is to make sure I can help others through that struggle. My two favorite things in Hokkaido are onsen and ramen. My favorite place in Sapporo is the top of JR Tower because you can see all of Sapporo. I love teaching and I would like to continue teaching, but my dream job is to be a tour guide in and around Sapporo and Hokkaido. If you ever need anything, please reach out to me! I'd love to help you out!

The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) is a volunteer organisation of JET Programme participants that has existed since the inception of the programme. AJET serves the JET community by building support networks, organising useful information, and offering resources to enhance the lives of JET participants in Japan and abroad. It maintains a counselling service and an online magazine, and voices the opinions and concerns of JETs to CLAIR and the Japanese government ministries that manage the JET Programme. Each year, a member of the Hokkaido community is elected as a Block Representative for AJET. As of the 2019 HNG's printing, there has not been an elected representative.



Congratulations on being accepted into the JET Programme and arriving here in Japan, your new home. You are most likely tired and JET-lagged, pun-intended, but hopefully this letter can convince you to listen to one more introduction. I'm Sonia, a 3rd year JET, originally hailing from Glasgow, Scotland. These days you can find me in the lovely little fishing town of Yoichi on the west coast of Hokkaido, and I am the president of the Hokkaido AJET chapter.

How is your new home? Having lived here for two years, I can honestly say that Hokkaido is a world unto itself. You've probably heard about the fantastic seafood, world class skiing, and the annual Yuki Matsuri but do you know about the cursed Ainu Capes, where to find long sandy beaches, or where to try some mean curry ramen? Look no further than your senpai JETs! We often congregate together at HAJET events and meetings and use these opportunities to explore the island and connect with one another.

HAJET is an independent volunteer-run organisation. There's something for everyone--whether you're a teacher-in-training, a traveller, a bookworm, a partygoer, or anywhere in between, HAJET has a place for you. At our heart, we're a community composed of people from all over the world, all coming together to grow as individuals, expand our horizons, and enjoy our lives in this little corner of Japan.

In addition to this, there are a variety of resources available too. HAJET runs and stocks its own English-language bookstore with almost 1000 titles available in our directory. The activities database includes lesson plans and games from elementary school all the way to senior high. If your JTE ever turns to you just before class for

a quick vocab game or last-minute lesson plan, then hit up our website.

Additionally, Polestar Magazine offers opportunities for budding writers and photographers to publish their work. Our Project Outreach programme is another meaningful resource which allows you to get involved in your local community and keep up to date with volunteering opportunities from around Hokkaido. These are just some of the ways in which HAJET works to connect JETs around Hokkaido.

For those of you who don't speak much Japanese, connecting with people in your towns can be daunting. However, HAJET representatives create events throughout the year in their own regions allowing plenty of opportunities for people to mingle and get to know one another. Get in touch with your local reps to find out more about their timetable of events.

Although the distance between us can seem overwhelming at times, you'll soon discover that a drive of 4-5 hours is a mere blip when it comes to road tripping to HAJET events and meetings. These are opportunities to get out during the long winter months and meet up with your new friends from orientation as well as veteran JETs who have been around since time began.

For now, I wish you the best of luck as you head off to your new towns and cities. Make the most of your time here and remember to say YES to every opportunity that comes your way! You are guaranteed to make some wonderful memories here and I hope HAJET can help you along the way.

Sonia Chand  
HAJET President  
Yoichi BOE ALT

## WHO WE ARE

HAJET is the Hokkaido chapter of AJET (National Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching). HAJET is a professional and social organisation designed to connect and serve its membership, and to promote internationalisation and cultural exchange in the Hokkaido community. HAJET is an organisation through which JETs and ALTs across Hokkaido can connect to form friendships and support networks.

## WHAT WE DO

### Fund International Events

HAJET helps to fund, run and promote international events in communities in Hokkaido. Want to put on an event in your town? HAJET is a great resource to obtain funding, and you can count on your fellow HAJET members to volunteer and help you run the event.

### Organise Welcome Parties

Do you want to meet the people in your area, but are unsure how to find them? HAJET's welcome parties are a wonderful way to meet new friends and start exploring all that Hokkaido has to offer. Held in various locations across Hokkaido, the events are attended by both newcomers and ongoing JETs and ALTs, giving people a chance to make friends, share stories and build networks.

### Coordinate HAJET Meetings

As Japan's largest prefecture, HAJET members find themselves spread across Hokkaido. HAJET meetings provide an opportunity to catch up with friends and to travel to various locations across the island. Meetings include helpful presentations about life in the workplace and in Hokkaido. Past presentation topics include: *Teaching Tips*, *Travel in Hokkaido and Overseas*, *Driving in Winter*, *Using Keigo in the Workplace* and *Using Technology in the Classroom*.

### Hokkaido English Challenge

Every year, the Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) offers an English speaking contest that encourages students to practice and improve their English. Prize winners get to attend a five-day English camp run by HAJET volunteers, and the grand prize winner receives a fully funded home stay in an English-speaking country of their choice. HAJET is HEC's parent organisation.

Designed by Andrew Kaz



### Publish the Polestar Magazine

The monthly Polestar contains numerous articles and photos, plus information about upcoming local events, interviews with interesting people, travel, writing and more! All content is created by HAJET members, so, if you have information to share, a story to tell or some stunning photos, consider submitting!

### Host the Yuki Matsuri Tour

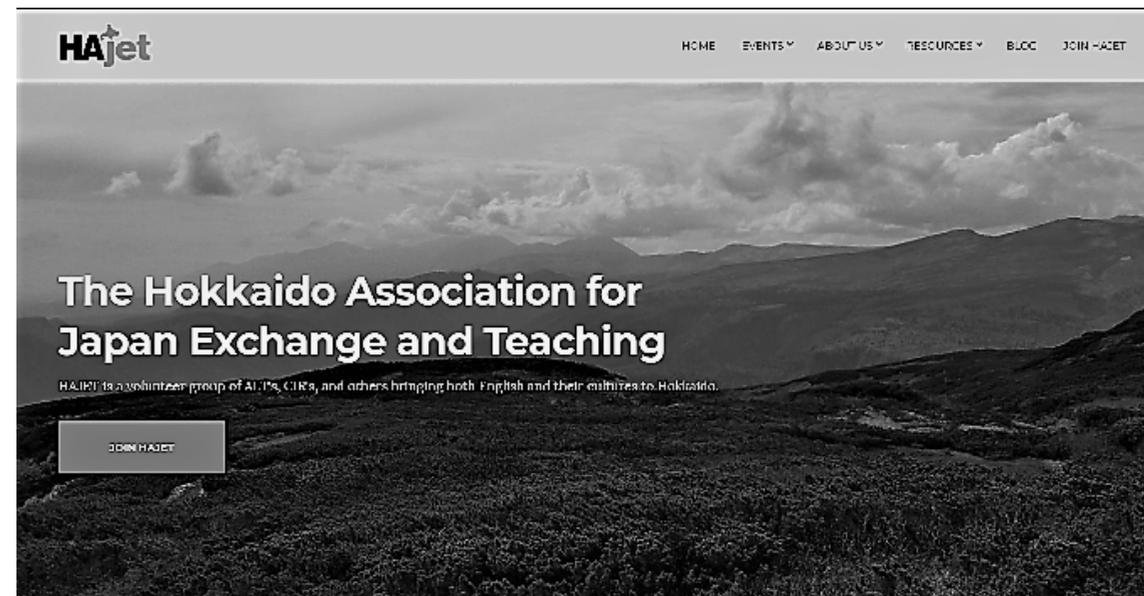
With many ALTs from around Japan visiting the famous Sapporo Snow Festival, HAJET helps them experience Hokkaido's winter wonderland.

### Maintain the HAJET Bookstore

Are you a bookworm? Comprised of anywhere between 900 to 1000 books at any given time, the HAJET library is a wonderful resource for those wanting a good read. All books in the HAJET bookstore are affordable and all the funds raised through sales are put back into support HAJET members and fund events.

### Sponsor Project Outreach

Project Outreach helps to find and organize volunteering opportunities in an effort to keep ALTs involved with the community. Past projects have included collecting proceeds for Tohoku relief efforts, typhoon clean-up in Furano, and visits to an orphanage in Hokkaido. Recently Project Outreach has been working to find and create more opportunities throughout Hokkaido's regions – including activities such as beach clean ups, and activities at children's lunch centers.



### HAJET Website

The HAJET site contains information about HAJET and living in Hokkaido. It includes up-to-date information on events happening throughout

Hokkaido, along with restaurant reviews, day trips, advice and teaching ideas. HAJET will be focused on bringing updated information to [hajet.org](http://hajet.org) throughout the year.



### HAJET Facebook

Keep in touch with all members of HAJET through the Facebook group. This is the best way to get up-to-date information on welcome parties and HAJET events. The Facebook group can help you to meet other ALTs in your area and get advice when you need it. You must join HAJET to be a member.

## HOW TO JOIN

In addition to our many projects and dedication to fostering a link with the local community, HAJET is an amazing way to create lasting friendships and stay connected to your peers. We've all left our home countries to come to Japan, and it can be great to meet people who share many of the same experiences and challenges as you. So what are you waiting for? Join HAJET today! Visit the website [www.hajet.org](http://www.hajet.org) to become a member.

Join HAJET for these benefits!

- Sponsorship and support for international events.\*See page 44
- Personal development opportunities through meetings, orientations,

presentations, seminars, and conferences.

- Access to HAJET's Member's Only Activities Database.
- Access to the members-only Facebook group.
- Discounts at various parties and meetings including the orientation enkaï (dinner party).
- Invitations to get involved in HEC, and HEC Camp.
- Voting rights in all HAJET member polls.
- Opportunity to run for HAJET Prefectural Council.
- Access to the Polestar online magazine.
- Access to the HAJET bookstore.
- Access to HAJET merchandise - quote this page for a free HAJET sticker! \*Until supplies run out

# Meet the HAJET Prefectural Council



Meet the HAJET Prefectural Council ("PC" for short). We are a hardworking team of volunteers who are passionate about making life here in Hokkaido enjoyable and unforgettable. We work to organize social events across the island, maintain social networks on and offline, and help ALTs improve in their jobs by hosting panels at quarterly meetings and funding international events. Most importantly, we love our community! Make sure to say hello and find out how to get involved by volunteering. Join us on our mission and become a member of HAJET!



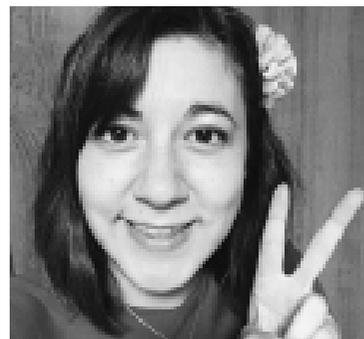
**Treasurer**  
Meghana Brandl

Hi! I'm Meghana. I'm originally from Austin, Texas, USA, but I now live in the teeny tiny potato farming town of Assabu in Southwest Hokkaido. I love history and politics, so come find me at an enkaï for super nerdy drunken conversations, or any other time for super nerdy sober ones. I look forward to meeting y'all if I haven't already!



**Sapporo Representative**  
Emily Lynn Schuster

I'm a California girl who fell in love with snowy Hokkaido and never left. This is my 6th year living on the island, and my 3rd in Sapporo City. My favorite things in Hokkaido are nature (hiking, rock climbing, hot springs), food, and beer. If you ever need to know anything about Sapporo, or just wanna hangout, get in touch!



**Northern Representative**  
Kaylynn Noriega

Welcome! I am originally from America (Go Ohio!) and now a resident of Bifuka! We are best known for our pumpkins and squash, so if you ever have that dire need to fulfil your pumpkin cravings/carvings, Bifuka is the place. I never say no to an opportunity to try something new. If you want to go do something adventurous, hit me up!



**President**  
Sonia Chand

Hello! My name is Sonia and I'm HAJET Prez. I'm a 3rd year JET from Glasgow, Scotland. These days you can find me in the lovely coastal town of Yoichi where I find myself reading more poetry, snowshoeing, looking at pictures of elephants, and watching horror movies with a wonderful lady from my BOE. Hokkaido has stolen my heart. Looking forward to meeting you all!



**Central Representative**  
Jacob Prusak

Hello! I am originally from Chicago, but have been living in Portland, Oregon prior to JET. I am passionate about spending time outside, and can be found skiing, hiking or fishing in the mountains of Hokkaido most weekends. I live in the quite town of Takikawa, but I'm always ready to pack my car with friends and go on an adventure.



**Vice President**  
Oda May Ranes

I'm a second year ALT based in Higashikawa, the town of photography. I like travelling and exploring new places, but chilling at home isn't too bad either. I'm looking forward to making lots of new memories with everyone in HAJET this year!



**Eastern Representative**  
Kristin Grandolfo

Hey there! I'm from the Midwest where Indiana and Chicago are places I call home. In Hokkaido, you can find me looking for local coffee shops and reading. My hubs and I live in Nakashibetsu where the milk is good and the views from Kaiyodai are breathtaking. Let me know when I can offer tips, lend an ear, or offer good foodie spots!



**Secretary**  
Annabel Baker-Sullivan

I am Annabel and am a first year JET in Nemuro, the most eastern part of Japan! My hobbies include Netflix, reading, anime, and cello. As your secretary, I would like to make the members of HAJET a strong community with a sense of belonging. I really look forward to working for you this year and would love to get to know you.



**Southwestern Representative**  
Heather Ann Rand

Hello, I'm Heather. I was born and raised in Alaska, so living in Hokkaido is basically a milder version of that. As the worst Alaskan transplant ever, I hate being cold, so I spend the winter eating around the island, and the summer doing... pretty much the same thing, but outside. (Incase we ever get other Hokkaido people with kids, heeeeeeey!)



**Social Coordinator**  
Arin Mitchell

Hello! I'm originally from Spokane, Washington (USA), but now I live in a coastal village called Tomari. We've got the only nuclear plant in Hokkaido and amazing squid. In my free time I love camping, playing board games, visiting shrines, reading, and listening to podcasts. I can't wait to get to know y'all at the awesome events we'll have this year!



**Publications Coordinator**  
Rachel Bartholomew

Greetings! I live (almost) conveniently outside of Sapporo. I'm mostly a shut-in, but can be bribed to venture out with anything curry. I can't say I'm a resident here without mentioning my love for Hokkaido's nature and onsen, although you may be more likely to find me hiking through Sapporo's snowy streets and photographing the nightlife.



**Bookseller**  
Max Turner

I'm a fun loving 3rd year ALT living in the northern city of Nayoro, famous for its Observatory, Sunflower fields and Mochi Rice Paddies. I spend most of my time frequenting Hokkaido's eateries, convincing myself ramen is healthy, being in the great outdoors, playing a spot of rugby or sitting in an onsen with friends chatting about life.



**Project Outreach Coordinator**  
Duncan Wood

I'm from the great state of New Jersey in the U.S. I now live in the seaside town of Yakumo, the only municipality in Japan to touch both the Pacific and the Sea of Japan. I used to have hobbies, but I mostly just work or chill now. Keep an eye on Facebook for future volunteering information. Feel free to say hi, and send me a message.



**Elections Coordinator**  
Kyle Poleman-Biittner

Hello! I'm a twenty nine year old ALT in tiny Kaminokuni. I'm originally from a very small town in Minnesota, USA. I majored in English (literature, not actual teaching) at the University of Minnesota. Since graduating I've taught English in Korea and tutored immigrants in Minneapolis. I like hiking, reading books, and meeting new people. I look forward to getting to know all of you!



**Webmaster**  
Kyle Willits

Hello and welcome! My name is Kyle Willits. I live in the smallest city in Japan, Utashinai. Before JET I was a web developer for about five years. I was bored with programming, so I went back to school, changed careers, and here I am! In my free time I practice Kyudo and photography. If you want to learn either, let me know!



**Social Media Coordinator**  
Kay Linnea

Hi, everyone! I came to Hokkaido in July 2017. I live in the Hidaka subprefecture, so let me know whenever you're in the area! I'm originally from Florida, so moving to Hokkaido was a big change for me. This year, I want to spend more time in nature and go to more events across the island. If you or your CO ever host an event, let me know and I'll try to spread the word!



**Polestar Editor-In-Chief**  
Dayna Andreous

Hi folks, I'm originally from London – the south side of the Thames, so I've never had posh afternoon tea– but I now reside in little Yoichi. My passions are languages, poetry and doggos! When I'm not tucked in my apartment plotting world domination, I can be found causing trouble in Sapporo's nightclubs or traveling to Japan's shrines.



**Polestar Designer**  
Andrew Gerber

Irankarapte! Originally from California, I desperately wanted to see snow my whole life. After three years living in a yurt in Mongolia, I applied to JET, but left my placement request blank, and got sent to Nakashibetsu. I enjoy my eremitical existence in the Wild Wild East, a land that invokes in me ceaseless wonder. That's all.



**Translator**  
Guannan Mei

Hey, guys. I'm Guannan Mei, a Chinese girl. You can call me Guannan, but few people know it. You can just call me "Mei," which sounds like "May". I came to Hokkaido as a CIR last April, now live in Niseko. I'm so honored to be a member of HAJET family and can't wait to see you all.



**Meet Wani!**

Wani is the loveable HAJET mascot. Wani started as the tough, but loveable, creature to the left before becoming the more realistic Wani you see above.

You can find Wani on a range of merchandise at HAJET events

# HEC

## Hokkaido English Challenge

Since 1994, the Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) has provided an awesome opportunity for Hokkaido first-year junior and senior high school students interested in English. This unique contest has grown over the years into an amazing annual event in which students have the opportunity to be creative with and interact in English outside the traditional classroom setting.

### What Is HEC?

The Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) is a Hokkaido-wide English speaking contest that offers first-year junior and senior high school students the chance to improve their English. Why do students participate? Well, to win amazing prizes, including a paid for homestay in an English-speaking country, and a place at the annual HEC Camp—five days of fun English interaction!

The HEC contest emphasises communicative ability rather than written grammatical accuracy, unlike the standard examinations students will write in school.

HEC is run entirely by ALTs and funded by HEC fundraising events held throughout the year. ALTs regularly laud it as one of the most rewarding experiences as an English teacher, and many choose to participate year after year.

## HEC AND YOU!

There are many reasons why you should get involved with HEC, but let's focus on just two:

### Benefits for Your Students

Many of you will quickly realise that English education in Hokkaido has a huge emphasis on grammar and not much else. Not much phonics, interaction, or practical use of English in the classroom. HEC provides you a unique opportunity to expose your students to these important aspects through contest preparation.

Every year some students earn a unique experience that can be life changing. HEC prizes, whether it be the homestay or an experience at English camp, provide the chance to explore new cultures and use English far beyond the confines of a classroom. In past years, we have seen students progress from standing shyly in a corner

to screaming at the tops of their lungs—in English! We notice that every student who participates in HEC, regardless of their ability, becomes comfortable using English with his or her ALT and develop a sense of pride in having risen to the challenge.

### Benefits to You

Getting involved in the HEC contest not only helps your student but also helps you to get to know your student(s) better through prep and the actual contest.

Year after year, volunteers laud the great time they had at HEC Camp. Get to know students, who have a strong interest in English, from all over Hokkaido. You can also meet some very interesting ALTs! Getting involved at the administration level can help you develop skills that can help you as a JET and beyond. The administrative level at HEC gives you opportunities to gain leadership experience; personal relations experience; fundraising experience; accounting experience; test writing experience; event planning experience; and much more!

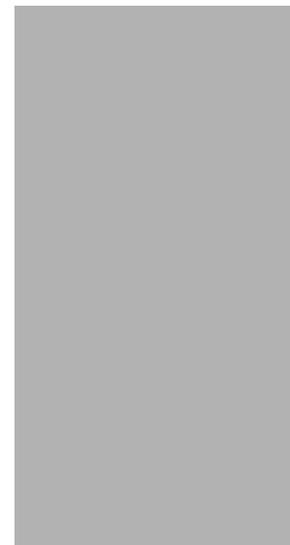
### How Do I Get Involved?

More information will be available at Sapporo Orientation, throughout the year, and on the HEC website: [hec.hajet.org](http://hec.hajet.org). You can also contact the HEC Coordinator directly at [hec@hajet.org](mailto:hec@hajet.org) or follow us on the HEC Facebook page.

### Testimonial

*\*NO HEC NO LIFE- a fitting catchphrase. Scouting, practicing, and administering the HEC test has become my favorite part of my job. Meeting with the students in small groups gave them personalized English practice, and gave the group a chance to bond with other motivated English students (and their friendly neighborhood ALT). Whether they made it to the camp or not, my HEC students are unafraid of English, foreigners, and new, exciting experiences; and the improvements to their language abilities and confidence are undeniable. Also, camp was a blast! Everyone involved benefits from HEC... That's why we love it.*

**-Crystal Hartsough, 2019 HEC Coordinator**



Photos provided by  
Crystal Hartsough



# Events.

## August 八月 hachi-gatsu

Sapporo Summer Festival  
July 19 - August 16, Sapporo

Fukushi-kyosan Sapporo Odori Beer Garden  
Sapporo's Odori Park becomes filled with beer!  
July 19 - August 14, Odori Park

Mori Natsu Matsuri  
Beginning of August, Morimachi

Soukyo Fire Festival  
If you miss the one on Asahidake this one also happens  
on August 1-13, Soukyo

Hakodate Minato Festival  
August 1-5, (The Squid Dance Parade is August 2-3)

Hakodate Aomori Nebuta Festival  
A hugely famous Tanabata festival in Aomori prefecture.  
August 2 - 7, Aomori Town Hall, Aomori

Niseko Tanabata Fireworks Festival  
August 3

Kutchan Jaga Festival  
The biggest summer event in Kutchan, celebrating the  
area's specialty - the potato.  
August 3 - 4, Kutchan

Setana Isabiri Matsuri  
Over 2000 fireworks, live music, squid fishing, food  
booths featuring fresh-caught local seafood, and shops.  
August 3 - 4, Sentana

Otobe Marine Festival  
Events and games taking place at a "sea pool", includ-  
ing raft racing and tsubu catching.  
August 4, Otobe

Nemuro Kotohira Jinja Festival  
Third largest town festival in Hokkaido  
August 9-11, Nemuro City

Esashi Ubagami Festival  
August 9-11, Esashi

Ezo Matsuri Fire Festival  
August 14, Kaminokuni Town

Otobe Summer Festival  
August 14, Otobe

Shin-hidaka Summer Festival  
Residents perform an "awa-dori" dance along the  
streets.  
Mid-August, Shin-hidaka

Mountain Day Climbing Event  
Stay at the onsen and hike the trail together.  
On Mountain Day (mid-August), Setana

Hirafu Festival  
August 24, Kutchan

Noboribetsu Hell Festival  
August 30-September 1, Noboribetsu

Nemuro Kani Matsuri (Crab Festival)  
August 31-Septemer 1, Nemuro Port

Shimokawa Udon and "Golden Penis" Matsuri  
A fertility and harvest festival where locals carry a giant  
golden penis shrine around the town square.  
Last weekend in August, Shimokawa.

Obon Matsuri Festivals.  
Second term of the school year begins.

TO-DO:  
Get to know everyone's names and work titles, meet

your team teachers, learn your duties  
Get your inkan/hanko (personal seal) made – you will  
need this for anything official  
Sign up for a JET Programme Japanese Course (offered  
for free through CLAIR).

## September 九月 ku-gatsu

Sangyou Matsuri,  
Featuring mochi making, karaoke, and food  
September 1, Otobe

Ota Shrine Sunset Climb.  
Meet in the afternoon and climb together to the most  
dangerous shrine in Japan and view sunset.  
September 1st, Setana

Furano Wine Festival  
September 1, Furano Ekimae Park

Sapporo Autumn Fest  
Open-Air Beer Garden and Food Stalls  
September 6 - 29, Odori Park

Hokkaido HAJET Northern Welcome Party  
September 7-8, Location: Ottoineppu  
Contact: Kaylynn Noriega, northern.rep@hajet.org

TOBIU Camp Outdoor Art and Music Festival.  
Camp: September 8 - 9; Art Festival: September 7-15  
Tobiu Art Community (飛生アートコミュニティー)

2nd Niseko Autumn Food Festival  
September 12 - 15, Niseko

HAJET Southwestern Welcome Party  
September 14-15, Location: Lake Toya  
Contact: Heather Rand, southwestern.rep@hajet.org

Annual Makomanai Shrine Festival  
September 14th-15th, Setana

Tabe Marche The North Hokkaido Food Festival  
September 14-16, Asahikawa

Rally Hokkaido Races  
September 20-22, various stages throughout Tokachi.  
Contact: www. Rally-hokkaido.com

HAJET Eastern Welcome Party  
September 21-22, Location: Lake Akan  
Contact: Kristin Grandolof, eastern.rep@hajet.org

Nemuro Sanma Matsuri (Saury Festival)  
September 21-22, Nemuro Port

HAJET Central Welcome Party  
September 28, Location: Shimukappu  
Contact: Jacob Prusak, central.rep@hajet.org

Kiraway Fun Trail Run 71.4km  
Late September, Kiraway Trail (Nemuro area-Lake  
Mashu area). Contact: www.kiraway.net

Biei Century Ride Cycling 25km, 30km, 60km, 100km;  
HNG 2019

registration required.  
Late September, Biei-cho Sports Centre.

Junior High school festivals – go out and meet your  
students!

TO-DO:  
Apply online for the Japanese Language Proficiency  
Test (JLPT). Application period: approximately Septem-  
ber 1 – October 1

## October 十月 juu-gatsu

HAJET Sapporo Welcome Party  
October 5, Location: Sapporo  
Contact: Emily Schuster, sapporo.rep@hajet.org

Kushiro Lake Akan Marimo Matsuri  
October 8-10, Kushiro

Ota Shrine Sunset Climb  
October 13th, Setana

Niseko Halloween Costume Party  
October 26th, Niseko

TO-DO:  
Last chance for snow-free activities!  
Start making winter holiday plans.  
Visit the Hoheikyo Dam in Jozankei to see beautiful  
autumn leaves.  
Take a specially-decorated steam locomotive train from  
Sapporo down to Niseko. A kitschy but fun way to view  
the autumn foliage.  
Look for a Halloween event near you, or hold your own,  
and get HAJET to help pay for it!

## November 十一月 juuichi-gatsu

HAJET Fall/Autumn Meeting  
November 22-24, Kushiro.  
Contact: HAJET Vice President, vp@hajet.org

White Illumination and German Christmas Market Late  
November - late December, Sapporo, Odori Park

Shiroi Koibito Park Illumination  
Illumination in the courtyard of a famous chocolate  
factory. Free entry.  
November - end of March, Sapporo

Skills Development Conference. Where: Sapporo. Your  
office must pay for you to attend this CLAIR-sponsored  
meeting of all JETs and ALTs in Hokkaido.

TO-DO:  
Snow starts!  
Get your skiing/snowboarding gear. Ski slopes open  
around mid-month in western and central Hokkaido.  
Winter-proof your house. Change to winter tires.

## December 十二月 juuni-gatsu

Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) Sunday

December 1

Hakodate Christmas Fantasy  
December 1 - 25, Hakodate, Red Brick Warehouses

Tomamu Ice Village  
Ice village featuring a bookstore and cafe, hotel, chapel, and other fully-functional ice buildings. Illuminated at night.  
Mid December - Mid March, Hoshino Resorts Grounds

Nominations for HAJET Council positions  
End of Year Parties (bounenkai – literally, “forget the year party”)  
End of the school term

TO-DO:  
Write and send New Year’s cards (nengajou)  
Winter holidays! Escape Hokkaido winter in the tropics, head home, or hit the slopes.  
Applications for type change (i.e. from ALT to CIR) due  
Spend New Year’s with a Japanese family  
The renewal process begins: Mutual decision of JET and Contracting Organization  
Prepare for HEC

## January 一月 ichi-gatsu

Memanbetsu Smelt Ice Fishing  
January until mid-March

Bird Land Festival  
Nature lovers don’t miss this chance to see Steller’s Sea Eagles and other impressive birds in the wild  
Late January, Nemuro Peninsula

Sanbonbiki Tournament  
Tug-of-war tournament on the snow and ice  
Date TBC around January 21, Atsuma

Furano Kan Kan Mura Snow Festival  
January to mid-March, Furano

Obihiro Ice Festival  
Late January - early February, Midorigaoka Park Area, Obihiro.

Third and final school term starts  
January 13 - Coming of Age Day - A ceremony for people turning 20 years old (becoming an adult)  
Mochitsuki parties (usually at least one held in every town hall or community centre)  
New Year’s Parties (shinnenkai)

TO-DO:  
Make your final decision on re-contracting.  
Plan spring holiday HAJET elections for new council.  
Vote online!

## February 二月 ni-gatsu

Rikubetsu Shibare Festival  
Date TBC around the first weekend of February, Rikubetsu Event Centre.

Kitami Mid-Winter BBQ Festival

Early February, Kitami Art & Cultural Hall

Noboribetsu Onsen Festival  
Barely-clothed people splash buckets of hot water on each other. There’s also a mochi pounding.  
Beginning of February, Noboribetsu

Sapporo Yuki Matsuri, www.welcome.city.sapporo.jp  
Odori Site, Susukino Site: February 4–11. Tsudome Site: January 31-February 11.

Asahikawa Winter Festival  
Hokkaido’s second largest winter festival  
February 6 to 11, 2019, Asahikawa

Drift Ice Festivals  
February, Abashiri and Monbetsu

Sounkyo Ice Waterfall Festival  
Roughly two months until the end of March, Sounkyo.

Lake Akan Ice Festival  
Ice fishing and banana boat rides over the frozen lake, performances from the Ainu and fireworks  
Until late February, Lake Akan

Shikotsuko Ice Festival  
Ice village beside the lake. Until late February, Lake Shikotsu, near Chitose (take a bus from Chitose station).

Otaru Snow Light Path Festival  
February, Otaru

HAJET Winter Meeting  
February 22-23, Furano  
Contact: HAJET Vice President, vp@hajet.org

Conference for Returning JETs – you have to pay your own way, but this conference is actually useful for those going home.  
February 11 - National Foundation Day  
“First day of spring”  
February 14 - Valentine’s Day - girls give chocolates to boys.

TO-DO: Make plans for Golden Week.  
Go skiing!  
Go see the drift ice on the Okhotsk Coast.

## March 三月 san-gatsu

March 3 - Hina Matsuri, Dolls Day

March 14 - White Day - boys give chocolates to girls

High school entrance exams  
Graduation Ceremonies (sotsugyoushiki): be prepared for long ceremonies and lots of tears.  
Teacher and office transfers  
Farewell parties for departing staff (soubetsukai)

TO-DO:  
Income taxes in your home country. Don’t forget!  
Spring Break: Take a holiday, convince your office to give you kenshuu to go study Japanese.

## April 四月 shi-gatsu

Shiretoko Snow Wall Walk (Yuki-Kabe Walk)  
Mid April, Different courses from Rausu and Utoro.

New School Year, New Financial Year. Be prepared to have your picture taken your first day back.  
Entrance Ceremonies (nyuugakushiki).  
New teachers and office members arrive.  
Welcome Parties for new staff (kangeikai)

TO-DO:  
Apply for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) – the test is on the first Sunday of July  
Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) Sponsored by HA-JET: the competition begins! Good luck!

## May 五月 go-gatsu

Women’s Sumo Tournament  
If you apply early, you might even be able to participate!  
Early May, Fukushima

Morimachi Cherry Blossom Festival  
Late April - Mid-May, Morimachi, Aobagaoka Park

Tamagawa Park Narcissus Festival and Road Race  
Mid-May, Setana

Hakodate Goryokaku Festival  
Major feature is a parade of people in period costumes.  
Mid-May, Hakodate, Goryokaku Park.

Lake Toya Marathon 5K, 10K and full marathon races.  
On a Sunday in mid-May, Toyako Onsen.

Esan Azalea Festival (Esan Tsutsuji Matsuri),  
Mid-May - Early June, Hakodate, Mt. Esan

May 5 - Kodomonohi, Children’s Day  
Golden Week! Get out of town.  
Hanami (Blossom viewing drinking parties). Cherryblossom front finally comes to Hokkaido.

TO-DO:  
Road Taxes due  
Plan your summer holidays

## June 六月 roku-gatsu

Rishiri 55k Ultra-marathon; road race around the entire island.  
Date TBC around June 3, Rishiri Island.

Yosakoi Festival in Sapporo  
Days of colourful dancing  
First or second week of June

Hokkaido Shrine Festival  
Mikoshi, performances, good stalls. Locations across the city, plus Maruyama and Nakajima Koen

Asahidake Mountain Festival (Ainu Fire Festival)  
End of June (Saturday), Asahidake, Higashikawa.  
HNG 2019

Sea to Summit (kayak, cycling, mountain climbing, triathlon)  
Late June, Higashikawa.

HAJET Summer Meeting  
Late June, Location TBC.  
Contact: vp@hajet.org.

School Sports Festivals (undoukai or taiikutaikai)

TO-DO:  
Returning JETs send out letters to new JETs  
Start thinking about sending things home if you are leaving

## July 七月 shichi-gatsu

Sapporo Beer Festival  
Late July to mid-August, drink beer in Odori Park!

Yoichi Soran Matsuri  
Birthplace of “soran,” parade, performances, stalls  
First weekend of July every year, Yoichi town, at Nikka Whisky and in front of the JR station

Furubira Tengu Matsuri  
Fire festival held in the small coastal village of Furubira  
Second weekend of July every year, Furubira

Kamifurano Lavender and Fireworks Festival  
One of the biggest festivals of the year in Kamifurano  
Date TBC around July 17, Kamifurano.

Kamikawa Shrine Festival  
Mid-July (2-3 days), Kamikawa, Dai-Kamikawa Jinja

Nemuro Port Festival  
The weekend of Umi-no-Hi, Nemuro city port area

Furano Bellybutton Festival  
The Hokkai Heso Matsuri in Furano includes the rather curious tradition of the Hokkaido Bellybutton Dance (Heso Odori) begun in 1969.  
Date TBC around July 27-28, Furano

Nachi Biei Fire Festival  
Large torches are carried in a relay from Mt. Tokachi-dake Bogakudai to the town, where they are lit with sacred flames, which are then placed in Biei Shrine.  
July 24, Biei

Flavors from the Sea Festival  
Flat-fish catching (people trying to catch small flat fish by hand). Assorted fresh seafood, including abalone, live music, and games.  
Last Saturday of July, Setana, Taisei District

Summer Holidays at the end of the month  
HEC CAMP – Volunteers always needed. Have fun with kids. Usually the last weekend of July for five days  
JLPT (nihongo nouryoku shiken)

STAY UPDATED: Keep an eye on www.hajet.org and the facebook group.

Photo by Rehan Nel



# Life in Japan.

## ETIQUETTE

### Unwritten Rules of Engagement

**E**tiquette in Japan is complex and, at times, confusing. You'll soon discover that each holiday has its own conduct and that certain actions that are okay at home aren't in Japan and vice versa. An easy way to adapt is to keep an eye on those around you and follow their example.

### Communicating

Bowing will be an every day part of life in Japan. It can be difficult to know when to bow and just how deep your bow should be. To be safe, keep an eye on those around you. If someone offers you a bow, you should bow in turn. Bowing is also about hierarchy, so if your boss or someone superior to you bows to you, be sure to bow a little deeper than they have. Don't over think it too much, bowing will become second nature in no time.

Eye-contact in Japan can be interpreted differently to what you are used to. In western culture, eye contact is seen as a sign of honesty. In Japan it can be seen as a challenge to authority. Be polite, look at the person you are talking to but if you feel uncomfortable, respectfully lower your eyes.

You will find that Japanese people seem to prefer softer voices, especially if they're in a debate or talking to someone of authority. In class, teachers are less likely to raise their voices when children are misbehaving.

Exchanging information can be difficult in Japan. People of the opposite sex don't give each other any info unless they are business acquaintances and then it's just their business contact info. Don't be shocked if people are very nervous in giving you their phone numbers or email addresses.

### Food Etiquette

There are some easy rules when it comes to eating and drinking:

- Don't eat/drink before the kanpai (toast).
- Don't put soy sauce on your rice in public.
- When drinking with co-workers and friends, don't fill your own glass, and be sure to fill the glasses of others when they're empty. Women tend to fill glasses for men, and subordinates tend to fill glasses for superiors.
- Try to eat everything that is offered to you, but if you have religious or dietary restrictions

you may politely decline.

### Money

Keep your money in a wallet and don't take it out casually. If you notice, people tend to hide it in their hands here before they give it to the cashier.

### Meishi

When you receive anything in Japan you should hold it with two hands. When it's a business card (meishi) you should examine it and place it in front of you if you're sitting at a desk or table. When you put it away, do not put it in your back pocket. It's best to put it in a meishi holder or your breast pocket.

### Omiyage

When you travel in Japan, it is customary to bring back small gifts, called omiyage, for your co-workers. Omiyage is a must if the office pays for a trip. At other times, it is up to you to decide if you will give omiyage. The favoured omiyage is a small, individually wrapped food. When giving omiyage, have enough for everyone to eat it. If you work at a big office then have enough for people in your section.

## ONSENS

**H**ot springs, or onsen, are big business in Japan with one in almost every town. When using an onsen, there are some rules to follow to be courteous.

- When you enter the dressing room, find a locker for your valuables then pick a clothes bin. Lay your coat/shirt in the bottom of the clothes bin and stretch the arms out so that they go outside the bin. Then take off your clothes, neatly fold them and place them on top of your shirt, with your towel placed neatly on top.
- If you feel self-conscious, use a modesty towel to cover yourself then grab any toiletries you wish to use and enter the onsen. First, go to the sit down shower and sit on a stool. Clean yourself thoroughly, but don't worry if you finish before other people. Many people take their time washing. Be sure to rinse your body of soap.

- Enter the pool of your choice. Once you enter a bath, place your modesty towel folded on the side, or fold it into a square and put it on top of your head. Use as many baths as you want. You don't need to rinse between baths, but you should rinse off if you go to the sauna and re-enter the bath. After you finish, rinse off in the shower. Before re-entering the dressing room, wipe yourself off with your towel.

Note for ladies: Blood is considered unclean in Japan. It's best to avoid onsens during your period even with the use of a tampon.

## Tattoos

Traditionally, only members of the Yakuza (Japanese mafia) had irezumi (Japanese style tattoos). Nowadays you'll see younger Japanese people with western-style tattoos. Some onsens won't allow anyone with tattoos in. However, tattoo bandages can be bought on Amazon to cover smaller tattoos.

## DRESS TO IMPRESS

**Y**ou've arrived in Japan. You've made it through orientation in Tokyo. You've moved in to your new home. Your new job is about to start. Now the question is, what do you wear?

To get started on the right foot, dress to impress. You'll be meeting many new people over the first weeks in your role as an ALT, often including the town's movers and shakers like the town mayor, and you want to leave a good impression. This means professional business attire. For women, a suit, or smart skirt, blouse and blazer, while men should opt for a suit, shirt and tie. At this stage of your career in Japan, you'll want to keep it conservative. Classic is key here. Look for outfits that say 'smart, simple and stylish'.

## Day to Day Dressing

After the first whirlwind weeks have flown by, you'll be able to adapt your daily attire to your new environments. The different schools and offices you work from will set your style for work. High schools and Board of Education offices tend to be more formal, with most teachers and staff dressing in business style each day. Junior high schools will be more relaxed, leaning towards

business casual, while elementary school and kindergartens will be much more casual in style. The easiest way to adapt your outfits to your new role is to let yourself be guided by the other staff at your schools or office. Take note of what they wear and dress in a similar tone.

No matter what you decide to wear in the morning, be prepared to change. Japanese schools hold regular special events and these events will often mean a different outfit is needed. Generally staff will dress in formal business wear for special assemblies, meetings and open days while sports days and outdoor events will call for tracksuits, snow-gear or athletic attire depending on the activity and the time of year.

While you can do your best to try and stay up to date with all the events taking place at your schools, a safe and easy bet is to carry or keep a change of clothes with you. When you dress casually, carry a suit, when you are dressed more formally, throw a tracksuit in your bag. That way you won't be caught out when you arrive at school in more casual clothing only to find the staff all suited up for school picture day or stuck building a snowman in a three-piece suit.

## Right Foot Forward

One of the things that will be very different from any job you have held in the past will be the rules on shoes in Japanese schools. Each time you enter one of your schools, you will need to wear indoor shoes. What shoes you wear is up to you. You can have one pair which you carry with you and change into when you arrive at school, or you can choose to keep a pair at each school you visit. You will generally be given a shoe locker, or shelf space, to store your shoes in at each school you attend.

When choosing shoes, remember you will be wearing them while working all day, so consider your own comfort. You may also need to change shoes multiple times in a day as you go inside and out, so shoes that are time-consuming to fasten may be frustrating. Your indoor shoes will also be what you pair with your business attire, so something comfortable, yet smart, is a good choice. People in Japan wear socks with their indoor shoes, so sandals may not work well. Tights/pantyhose are also acceptable.

## You Look Hot

When planning your work wear for the weeks ahead, don't forget to factor in the seasons. Summer in Hokkaido is hot. Winter in Hokkaido is cold. Air-conditioning inside schools in Hokkaido can have you going from a sauna outside to a freezer inside, or a freezer outside to a sauna within. Thankfully there are a range of affordable clothing stores in Hokkaido, like Uniqlo, that make it easy to buy lighter weight shirts and suits for summer and heavier clothing for winter. And remember, layers will be your friend. Dress in light layers that can be removed or added as needed. In summer this can include light cotton shirts and sheer fabric blouses that will allow you to remain conservative and professional, yet keep cool.

## LIVING IN RURAL JAPAN

**Y**our predecessor told you, but even Google Maps shows only a small, blurry blob. Now you're here and you can't believe it. Your town is tiny and in the middle of nowhere. Welcome to the 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 realise that you actually got lucky. You are not alone here. There are definite advantages and disadvantages to living in rural Japan.

Your town is a tight-knit community, which you have every chance to become a part of. You will meet almost everyone in town, and people will likely know who you are, even if you haven't met them before. Being the only foreigner for miles will add to your superstar status at school and around town. Friendships with your co-workers are almost a guarantee. Your Japanese language skills should improve faster than your city-slicker friends. Sometimes it's sink-or-swim, but you will also learn some of the more colourful expressions living in rural areas.

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.

You should have a pretty good financial statement at the end of your stint. With less around to spend money on, you end up saving it. Rent and taxes are usually cheaper than in the city. You may find your neighbours and acquaintances offer you fresh produce and the vegetables in the summer. Small town kids can be friendlier and easier than city kids.



While the positives will make life in the inaka a wonderful experience, be prepared for the negatives too. Toilets can be long drops (exactly what you think). 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.

Isolation is a common affliction in the rural JET community. Get to know the other ALTs around you. Use the phone, LINE, Facebook, and other social media to stay in touch. 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: swap books, CDs, movies with other friends or even your students. You may feel like you have no privacy, as people in town will know who you are and take notice of what you are doing. Specialised health services can be a long way away.

Getting your friends out to visit can be a bit of a hassle if your town has limited public transport. 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 become involved in community life. The friendships you will develop will ultimately be what make your stay worthwhile.

Remember that there are others out there in the same boat. Pick up the phone and talk to someone. Keep in touch, get out there, and make the most of your new home in the inaka.

## THE GHOSTS OF PREDECESSORS PAST

Predecessors come in all colours, sizes, shapes and descriptions. This may be good, indifferent, bad, or your worst nightmare.

The overwhelming majority of JETs are nice, fair-minded, decent people. Some people are naturals at the job and earn a reputation as super ALTs. Most do their best in the role and leave town with a good reputation. But, every now and then you will hear a horror story about a JET that was unprofessional, behaved badly or even broke the law.

Whatever your predecessor was like, you will hear a great deal about them. This is only natural. For many small towns the only foreigners they have ever encountered are those that live in the ALT house.

Similarly, you can expect huge generalisations about foreigners based on your predecessors.

It may be a few months or longer until you start to hear less about them and feel like you have established your own identity.

While you are waiting for when you are not being told how similar/different you are to the last ALT, what are you to do? All you can do is be yourself.

If you don't want to be friends with someone you don't have to be just because your predecessor was.

If flower arranging is not your thing then say so. Tell them what you would actually like to do. It may be something different to what any foreigner has done before.

That said, don't be a stick in the mud about it. Your predecessor's links could help you, especially in the beginning. It is likely they were friends with people who were interested in the world outside Japan, maybe speak a little English and are nice to meet. On your own it can take a long time to find these people, so give them a go.

If your predecessor did leave with a bad reputation, there may be bridges to be built. In the beginning, you may find it difficult to attain peoples' trust, or that you teach very little. Again, it just takes a little time for people to see that not all foreigners are the same and that you have a lot to offer. If

nothing else, having a dud for a predecessor will soon make you look fantastic. Just be yourself and do your best.

If you had an amazing predecessor, you may find people have high expectations of you. Just do your best, take on only what you feel you can manage and remember that you are being compared to your predecessor at the end of their contract, when they have had months, or years, to learn how to be an ALT.

Some JETs may find they are in a different boat. Rather than a wonderful predecessor or a predecessor from hell, they have no predecessor. Starting with a clean slate has its own pros and cons.

You will not have any base built up by other ALTs on which to build. Your office may not know how to deal with you at first.

You may be the first foreigner to have lived in your town, which may lead to stares wherever you go until they get accustomed to seeing you.

On the plus side, you have no legacy to take over. There are no expectations built on what others have done and, above all, no prejudices based in someone whose shoes you have to step into.

Being a new JET position will take time and patience, for both you and your contracting organisation.

## Help is Out There

If you need help, there are a variety of avenues to turn to. Talk to your supervisor. Many supervisors have been helping ALTs for a number of years and will understand the problems you face. They will also know the ins and outs of living in your town and of life in Japan in general.

You can contact your local HAJET Regional Representative for assistance. They can offer you advice or steer you towards resources you need.

If you are after some online resources, you can try [www.debito.org/whattodoif.html](http://www.debito.org/whattodoif.html) It offers solutions to problems faced by foreigners living in Japan.

## GETTING INVOLVED

You've moved to a new town, started a new job and a new life in Japan. The next step for many people in getting settled is to get involved. Some ALTs find it easy to get involved with their local communities; others find it enormously difficult. Whether in your own town, or within the ALT

community, it is important to create a network for yourself here in Hokkaido. The winters can be long, and lonely. Getting involved with a local club or activity, making friends in neighbouring towns, or volunteering your time through HAJET, finding a hobby and interest outside of work will help you to adjust and build a support system.

While some ALTs complain about their offices never telling them anything, don't wait for things to happen, or invitations to be made. Take initiative and ask about the after-school clubs and evening or weekend hobbies. There are a huge variety of options for getting involved.

## Arts

Most traditional Japanese arts are offered in towns all over Hokkaido. Ask around at your offices and schools for information. Traditional arts include many things like tea ceremony, taiko (traditional drumming), ikebana (flower arrangement) and shoudo (Japanese calligraphy).

Other arts you can explore include pottery, which is very popular in Hokkaido, art or drama clubs at your local school or community centre, yosakoi dance troupes, who perform at festivals across Hokkaido or music ensembles with many towns having choirs or ensembles you can join.

## Sports

If the arts aren't your style, you can get involved in local sports. Many towns will have martial arts clubs for aikido, judo, kempo, karate, kendo, and kyuudo. Baseball, softball, soccer, golf and basketball are all very popular in Hokkaido as well. Outside of this, you can do everything from rock climbing to snow trekking, snowboarding, hiking, scuba diving, and more.

## ALT Community

If you're looking for a way to meet other ALTs in Hokkaido and share interests with them, then



joining HAJET is a must.

HAJET has a large and friendly membership and a range of events held throughout the year.

After joining HAJET and seeing the hard work of the committee, you may be keen to contribute to the ALT community yourself. There are many ways to get involved with HAJET.

You can volunteer with the Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC), a great way to get involved with your students and improve English in your schools. You can help out by judging, being a camp counsellor, fund-raising, or entering your own students.

You could also join the HAJET Prefectural Council. Elections for the PC are held every February. Getting involved is a good way to see the inner workings of what HAJET does for you and for internationalisation in Hokkaido. For more information see [www.hajet.org](http://www.hajet.org)

## Other Activities

Of course, there are a lot of other things you can do to get involved. You might enjoy joining a cooking class and learning Japanese cooking, or you could start your own.

You may be asked to run an eikaiwa, an English conversation class, or you could do a language exchange with someone to improve your Japanese. Many towns have local gyms or health centres where you can join fitness classes, like aerobics or yoga. Always popular in Japan is karaoke. If you enjoy singing, head to your local karaoke joint and make friends. The options really are endless, so get involved.

# In the Home.



Most things in your new Japanese home may be pretty much the same as what you are used to back home. But, there are likely a few differences.

## Winter

It snows a lot, it gets cold, and houses generally have inadequate heating and insulation. Keep heating costs down by bundling up at home, but don't go crazy. Most have a heater in one corner of the house that takes kerosene. Check with your office to see if someone is checking the big tank outside of your house regularly. If you run out, you will end up paying a lot of money to get air out of the lines and kerosene goodness flowing into your house once more. Keep a kettle or a pan of water on top of the heater to keep the air from drying out. Be prepared to shovel snow regularly.

## Shower/Sink

Most manual showers come with two dials – one for shower/bath, and one for temperature. The temperature one should have Celsius readings on it. There is usually a small red button around the 50 mark – you can push this to turn the dial past 50 degrees if you like your water extremely hot.

## Gas (Heater) ストーブ

It's probably a good idea to leave your heater on at a low setting (around 10 degrees) if you leave the house during winter overnight or for longer. This

helps prevent the pipes from freezing.

## Plumbing

Hokkaido's cold winters, combined with a lack of decent insulation, can wreak havoc on your pipes. To avoid coming home to burst plumbing, learn how to drain the pipes in late September or early October. A patient person from the office, or even a house call by the local plumber, is the best source of information about your plumbing, but there is some general information that you should be aware of:

- There is at least one main valve, and sometimes more, in the house or apartment.
- Switch it to "off" while the water is running
- Open all of the faucets that branch off that line.
- Don't forget the washing machine, toilet, sinks and bathtub.

Some faucets will have a little knob that allows air into the pipe; some knobs are only loosened while others should be taken off completely. Most people have hand-held showers. In this case, to drain the hose, put the head down on a lower level, like in the tub.

The water heater (boiler) requires special care:

If possible, leave it on a warm setting at all times during the winter so the inside doesn't freeze.

The pipes to and from the heater need draining.

In some cases, the boiler can be turned off and on. There may be a little knob that needs to be

pressed a few times each month to avoid clogging and water back up.

When you return home, just reverse the above process.

In winter, even if you are home during the evenings, take some precautions. Turn off the main valve during the day, and do the whole draining process during the coldest weeks. Ask your supervisor or the person responsible for your accommodations to explain these procedures to you. Be sure to winterise your house well:

- Tape plastic or bubble wrap on the windows.
- Look for places where TV and telephone cables come into the house; sometimes these are just holes punched in the wall. Pack paper or steel wool around the hole.
- If you are in an apartment, ask the landlord if there is anything else you should be doing.

Despite all measures, sometimes the pipes do freeze. If they burst, call a plumber or your boss right away. If they are simply frozen, and the water doesn't flow, you can try turning the heat on high for the night. Put a fan next to the main valve blowing away from the pipe. Hot air will be drawn from the ceiling across the pipes and onto the floor. With luck, the water will be flowing in the morning. Good luck, and remember - spring comes in April!

## Futon and Tatami

If you have a futon, you should air it out occasionally. On a sunny day hang it outside and let it air out.

Beat it to make it fluffy again.

If you are lucky, your new house has a tatami room. It looks good, smells nice, and is easy to take care of. Vacuum it like a carpet, and wipe it down with a dry cloth. Wipe any spills immediately.

## Appliances

When you first set eyes on your new microwave or washing machine, you may feel a little intimidated. Covered in buttons and marked in Japanese, they can look daunting. But knowing some basic words will have you feeling comfortable in no time.

## Recycling Tips

Ask for a pictograph of your rubbish system. Every town almost certainly has one. Even if you just say "Gomi wa...dou sureba ii desu ka?" then your townsfolk will more than likely furnish you with a thorough explanation.

Many towns do not like it if you put your rubbish out early. It is best to do it on collection day. If you are going on holidays, you can ask a neighbour or friend to put it out for you.

Keep any eye on the rubbish collection area. If you have made a mistake with your rubbish, the bag will be left there with a large notice stuck to it.

Retrieve it and re-sort the garbage into new bags. Separate all of your stuff before rubbish day. You really do need to sort properly if you want to get along with your neighbours.

Hide questionable things in opaque bags within your gomi bags.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CIR

Written by Derek Moore

Dia dhaoibh! JETへようこそ。As a CIR you are in a very unique position to widen horizons and introduce new cultures to Japan. Though the job is very broad and at times vague, that only gives you more scope to make it your own. Of course, everyone may have a different experience and do different things, but hopefully this little guide will help get you started. 皆様、頑張つてね。

## THE JAPANESE OFFICE

The Japanese office is like any other in the world. However, there are few unique things to keep in mind when dealing with it that may surprise you when you first arrive. Below are some of the things I have experienced that may take some time to get used to. Though, as always, this may vary wildly depending on your placement so don't take everything here as law.

Japanese offices are more than often in an open plan style. The reasoning behind this is to give a more open and team-oriented feeling. In many ways, this works; co-workers can freely speak to each other and exchange information as they need to without walls getting in the way and one can feel closer to their colleagues. However, there are a few issues that may appear. A certain feeling of loss of privacy and noise may be rather disrupting at the start, but you'll find that it will just become background noise. Keep in mind that with such an open plan others can see if you try and skive off.

### Greetings

Greetings may vary amongst offices but in general there is always a start of the day greeting in each division led by the head and another at the end of the day. At this, each member will outline what they have on that day as well as any time off they intend to take for everyone, if nothing in particular just saying 内勤 (ないきん). This is actually considered quite important and all members are expected, if they can, to attend as it is basically the way to inform the division and keep everyone informed. This kind of information exchange is considered extremely important and, in some ways, a basic common courtesy, so I suggest, even if it feels strange to announce to your plans for the day to

your co-workers, to partake in this activity.

### Hierarchy

This is probably one of the most quoted thing about Japanese culture, but it is so for a reason. Japan puts great emphasis on politeness and correct reverence for social position. While it may be clear where you stand in relation to some members of staff it can sometimes be a bit trickier to figure out where you fit into the office ladder. I would suggest consulting with your supervisor and figuring out where you stand in your division and the office as a whole so as to avoid accidentally offending someone.

### Office events

Your office may hold various parties and events either in your division or through the entire office. These are considered quite important as bonding and team building allowing people to more freely and openly get to know each other. As you can imagine there is a certain expectation, and even pressure, for all in the division to attend. Try to attend a few of these events as a refusal to do so can give a cold and aloof feeling. Of course, if you do feel uncomfortable or forced into something, do tell someone like your supervisor. Try and explain why you feel the way you do, and it may help alleviate the situation.

## TELEPHONE GUIDE

One of the most terrifying things about being in a Japanese office is when you are quietly working away on your own and then suddenly the phone rings. Do you answer it? Do you leave it? Will you even understand the person on the other end? All these questions race through your head. Though it may be a scary thought you'll find after a while you actually start getting used to it (somewhat anyway). If it helps, your co-workers are not any more overjoyed by the prospect as you.

One of the most daunting things about answering the phone is the concept of Keigo, or polite speech. A dreaded thing that sends shivers up even Japanese people's spines. However, as complicated as it might seem, the way keigo is structured actually allows you to get away with a rather scripted piece. Tips:

## Telephone Manners: Useful Phrases

Japanese	English
(大変)お待たせしました。	Apologies for keeping you waiting.
____課/ ____役場/市役所でございます。	This is ____ Division/ _____ Town Hall/ City Hall.
失礼ですが、どちら様ですか。	I'm sorry, but may I ask who is calling?
すみません、もう一度お名前/ メール/ 電話番号を教えてくださいませんか。	I'm sorry, can I get your name/ email/ phone number again.
かしこまりました/ 了解しました。	I understand.
少々お待ちください。	Please wait a moment.
____におつなぎ致します。	I'll connect you.
申し訳ございません、ただいま____ しております。	I'm sorry they are currently _____.
了解しました。お伝え致します。	I understand, I'll let them know.

- Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to ask for confirmation, if not overdone confirming with the other person is actually considered polite. Also best to get it right now rather than trying to correct later
- Take particular care with names, titles, dates and times. Also, make sure you take down who is meant to contact who.

It may seem scary at first, but after a while you'll get used to the patterns and will have no trouble. And if you really don't understand what is being said, do not feel bad for asking a co-worker for help.

## EVENTS

One of the main jobs you will have as a CIR may well be planning and carrying out international events and classes. At first this can seem a bit overwhelming, but in many ways this can be one of more enjoyable parts of the job. One where you can really let your personality and interests out. The exact process for planning an event varies between place to place but in general you will be requested to make a 企画書 detailing the event you intend to hold including timetables, budgets, posters and PR etc. which will be passed along for everyone to check. Check with your supervisor to see exactly what is required of you first.

Here are a few tips and tricks to get you started though:

Scope out the area and see what kind of events people are interested in. Also speak with your

supervisor and see what kind of events have gone well and what events it might be best to avoid.

Build on the past. If there is a precedent for CIRs from your country then build on what they have done. People will feel far more comfortable when they feel they know what is coming.

If introducing something new, start small and work from there. This especially applies to people who are the first CIR in an area or in areas where their country and culture are less known. Going full on into things may actually alienate people and cause more harm than good. As they say, slow and steady wins the race.

Play to your strengths. If you're good at cooking maybe do a cooking class or pot-luck part. Good at art, maybe do a crafting class. There are hundreds of options and it is up to you how you want to do things. Of course check with your supervisor to see what is possible or not, but don't be afraid to make your event your own. Also, a great source of inspiration is local or national events from your country.

Work with international exchange groups or associations. These are filled with people already interested in these events and will often have advice and be will to help out. Also, reach out to your embassy or connected consulates if they are holding any special events or just for general information. And if your area has a link to your home country or area that can really help as well.

Make it feel local. Try and make your events really feel like a part of the town. You can do this by

taking part of local events like local festivals or Christmas or Halloween events. This can really help people feel like both you and your culture are more a part of the town than just separate.

The most important thing to remember here is to try and have fun with the events. You are basically a gate way to a different culture and country that some people may never have known about before. At times this can be very daunting and frustrating, but the rewards of opening someone's world view even just a little can more than make up for it.

## TRANSLATION & INTERPRETING

Translation, the transferring of written texts from one language to another, and interpreting, the translation of the spoken word from one language to another. Though probably one of the most common jobs you'll be doing, your translation and interpreting assignments may vary greatly in terms of difficulty and frequency. Although it may appear easy from the outside, you'll find it can be trickier than you anticipate. However, over time you'll find that it will almost come second nature to you. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you go about things.

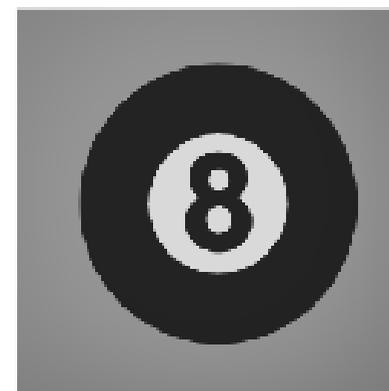
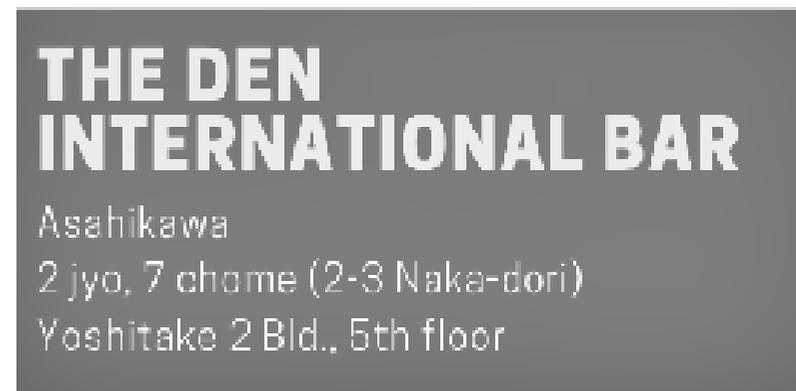
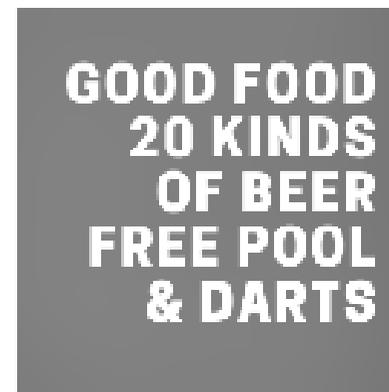
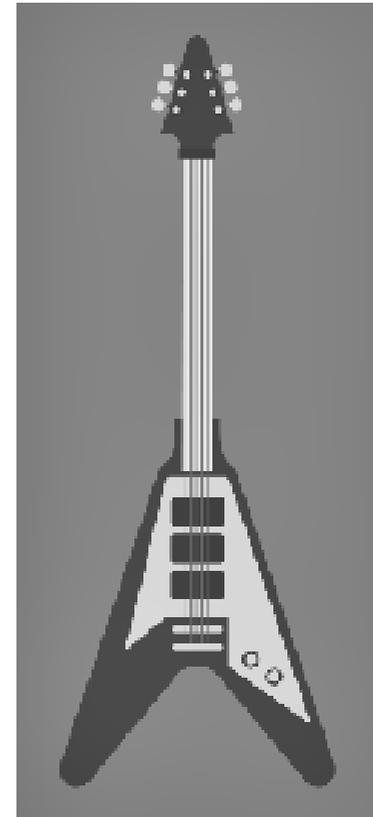
1. Make sure you have read and fully understand the text in front of you. This might sound obvious, but you would be surprised how many professional translators still do not do this very basic step. The better you understand what you are translating the better your translation will be. Also, do not be afraid to refer back to the person who gave you the document if there is anything you don't understand or that you find difficult. You may even help find errors in the original text that were overlooked.
2. Consistency is key. This particularly applies to official texts. Always try and keep your terms consistent among your translations as not doing so can cause a lot of confusion down the road. I find keep databases of common terms a really handy way to keep things consistent. Also, use official or government term banks if you can. The EU and Japanese government websites are a great resource for this.
3. Professionalism. This point features more prominently in interpreting. Always try and look professional and presentable and make sure to keep and calm and affable air about yourself. In business meetings and conferences, this is important as you may

be assisting in important business or cross-cultural affairs.

4. Think of your audience. In terms of your translations, always think of the person that will be reading it. Will they understand this? Do I need to make it simpler? Will they understand this kind of terminology? These are all questions you need to ask yourself as you translate the text. Official and legal texts will need far more technical and no-nonsense language than a notice for a local festival. Always weigh the function and target of your translation. In terms of interpreting, speak clearly and in an appropriate manner. A conference or meeting will require more formal language, but if you are trying to help someone with their taxes, or a health problem this may seem very cold. My best advice would be to try and think of yourself in that situation. How would you like to be treated? This can be especially important with medical translation where there may be an element of fear, embarrassment, and perhaps even frustration.
5. Be patient with yourself and don't stress too much. Contrary to popular belief, simply knowing two languages well does not a translator or interpreter make. Both are highly technical jobs with their own specialisations that can take years of practise and training to perfect. Do don't panic if you aren't perfect at it from the start. You'll get there. Just keep practising and it'll all work out.
6. For translations I suggest just reading anything you can to get more familiar with the kind of language you'll be using. Also, have others check your work and take their feedback on where you can improve.

For interpreting, it can be a bit harder. I suggest listening to news reports and radio and trying to speak along. Try and develop a short hand for yourself while taking notes that will help jog your memory.

Hopefully this gives you something of an idea of what to keep in mind when taking on these types of assignments. Also, one final thing to remember, you are giving a very valuable service here. Your translations and interpretations effectively allow people to understand each other where they wouldn't have before. That's something to be proud of.



# Queer Hokkaido

Updated by Andy Loosil

Whether you find yourself somewhere under the rainbow umbrella or you're an ally, welcome to Hokkaido! Below is a list of some LGBTQ+ friendly places in Hokkaido. You can look here for local information or check out the Stonewall website as things might be changed/added over the course of the year! In addition, you can sign up for the newsletter to get monthly updates on local and national LGBTQ+ events and news.

## Health Resources

Need someone to talk to? TELL (Tokyo English Life Line) 03-5774-0992 and the QWRC (Queer and Women's Resource Centre) 06-6585-0751 are both anonymous call centres that support English speakers with their concerns. Staff are to have completed LGBTQ sensitivity training. TELL is a more broad spectrum support centre that specializes in suicide prevention while QWRC focuses more on queer and female support.

## HIV Testing and Consultation

If you want to be tested for HIV, keep in mind that to obtain an accurate result you should wait at least two months after what you think may have caused an HIV infection before getting tested.

Circle Sapporo

Circle Sapporo offers free and confidential HIV testing with English support (only HIV testing). You can make an appointment online and you get your results one week after your appointment. Open 4pm to 7pm on Saturdays. More information:<http://www.circle-sapporo.com/english/about-en.html> Address: 7F, Asahikawa Shinyo Kinko Bld., Minami 1-jo Nishi 6-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo. (It is the building next to Tokyu Hands) Hours: From 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturdays

Red Ribbon Sapporo

Red Ribbon Sapporo is your best bet if you need quicker results. Monthly HIV Testing on the second Tuesday of every month. Takes about 40 minutes from test to results. (Some Japanese suggested)

Sign up: 011-222-4894. Address: 札幌市中央保健センター(札幌市中央区南3条西11丁目). More information: <http://redribbon.or.jp/>. They also host HIV Peer support meetings. Bi-monthly (Conversational Japanese suggested). More information: <http://redribbon.or.jp/peer/>

Other STD testing?

Iwazawa Urology Clinic

Iwazawa Urology Clinic is an LGBTQ friendly clinic with English speaking staff! Walk-ins on Saturday morning. Address: 〒060-0061 Hokkaido Prefecture, Sapporo, Chuo Ward, Minami 1 Jonishi, 16 Chome (in the Reibun Building 2F). Web: [iwazawa-clinic.jp](http://iwazawa-clinic.jp). Tel:(011) 613-6000

Currently looking for more information, however, word on the frozen streets is that you have to claim to be symptomatic in order get insurance coverage for a broad spectrum test.

## Trans/Queer Resources

Transitioning in Japan

The Stonewall website has created a guide with a lot of information about the legal and medical needs to transition. Find it here: <http://stonewalljapan.org/transgender-life/>

Where do I fit in?

Japan is a very gender binary world and that can even carry over into LGBT spaces. This guide attempts to find out how inclusive bars etc. are, but these topics are not often addressed openly. I personally recommend WING events and Bar Orb for non-binary folk (or as Japan likes to say, FtX or MtX) as well as MtF. Places that are openly Trans friendly will be listed as such. There are also a few LGBT bars around town that do not have gender restrictions.

## Social Resources

Stonewall Japan

Join the Stonewall Hokkaido mailing list and facebook groups to find out about events all over Japan and in Hokkaido. Plus meet a bunch of friendly folks! Thanks to the hardworking local leadership, if you sign up to the newsletter/local FB group you should be availed of what's going on with the following social resource sites.

This group is: Fully welcoming and supportive of bi/pan individuals with no concern to their partner's gender identity. Fully welcoming and supportive of asexual individuals. Fully welcoming and supportive of all trans identities, fluid, non-binary, etc. Fully welcoming and supportive of polyromantic individuals.

Email newsletter: [stonewallHokkaido@gmail.com](mailto:stonewallHokkaido@gmail.com).

Facebook: "Stonewall Japan" and "Stonewall HNG 2019

Hokkaido."

Qwe're

Qwe're organizes different events which are open to varying segments of the LGBTQ community. Each event will clearly state their intended audience in the event info. Follow them on Twitter for event discounts and wear the event specific dress-code for even deeper discounts!

Tel: 011-552-0054. Web:[www.webqwere.com/](http://www.webqwere.com/) Twitter:@Qwere\_2011

SNOW

University student meetings that are student exclusive to Jr.High-Graduate school students. Web:<http://ameblo.jp/lgbt-snow/>

Twitter:@lgbt\_snow

NIJINOTSUDO!

An unofficial Hokkudai University LGBT group, possibly student exclusive. Twitter:@nijinotsudo! Sapporo/Hakodate Jibun Cafe

Casual conversation meet-ups for all LGBTQ+ folks. These meetings are very popular and pack the tiny venues they are held in! Web:<http://sapporojibuncafe.blogspot.jp/> Twitter:@sapporojibunc

"FREE!" Sexual Minority Information Site

This site does everything from hosting events, to fundraising, and spreading knowledge about local/national groups and current issues. Web:<http://www.free-lgbt.com/> Twitter:@free\_lgbt WING

A bi-monthly, women-only(All trans are welcomed!) meetup run by the local LGBT activist Yumi! The event changes every time. Some examples of past events are pizza making, LGBT movie night, picnics, etc. Event capacity usually is around 25-30 people so you need to RSVP! Email [wing.sapporo247@gmail.com](mailto:wing.sapporo247@gmail.com) or give her a direct message on Twitter. Web:<http://wingsapporo247.wix.com/wing> Twitter:@WING\_sapporo.

GPS

For the younger crowd in town this is a teenager exclusive LGBTQ group that holds meetings in Sapporo. Twitter:@GPS\_sapporo

## Activism Resources

Domestic Partnership in Sapporo

Local activist group dedicated to achieving partnership certificates in Sapporo. FB: <https://www.facebook.com/dpinsapporo1/> Twitter:@dpinsapporo1

## LGBT Run Businesses

Wakamusha 若武者

A yakitori/izakaiya well known for the cheery HNG 2019

owner and the delicious food! A common hangout for local LGBT groups and events! Location: 北海道札幌市中央区南7条西4-2-14 ススキノ会館 1F. Days/Hours: Mon-Thurs: 18:00~28:00, Fri/Sat: 18:00~30:00, Holidays: Sundays Tel: 011-206-6687. FB Page:<https://www.facebook.com/wakamushya/>

Luminaire ルミエール- Sapporo Branch

Is a "gay shop", mostly gay male porn, but some non-porn books and mags and assorted rainbow stuff. Japanese guy magazines 'Attitude' and 'Fabulous!' are sold here, as well as 'Happy Swing', a local Sapporo zine. 'Anise' is one of the few Japanese publications for lesbians and bisexual women. (For magazines like 'Out' and 'Curve' go to Tower Records in Pivot.) Luminaire is an excellent place to go to and check out the posters and fliers to find out what's going in Sapporo and the rest of Japan. Hours/Days: Weekday: 13:00~24:00, Weekends/Holidays: 12:00~24:00. Address: 北海道札幌市中央区南5条西7丁目 第1ファミリービル2階. Tel: 011-531-1168.

## Sapporo Mix Gender LGBTQ+ Bars

おまかせキッチン (Omakase Kitchen)

(Omakase Kitchen) 7 chome no Mama is Sapporo's newly famous drag bar! (Weekdays are also staffed by cis/not-in-drag gay guys.) These ladies are active in the community via club events around town as well as activism events! Super fun! Follow them on Twitter to see who will in the bar, along with specials and other information! Weekdays: 19:00~, Weekends: 21:00~. Twitter@7\_nanamama.

### Get Started on Social Media



Stonewall Japan Website



Stonewall Hokkaido Facebook



# Transportation.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Whether or not you have access to a car, sometimes the best way to get around in Japan is to use public transport. Public transport in Japan is reliable, efficient and clean. But be sure to be on time, the listed time is the time the train will leave the station.

### The Train

Check out hyperdia.com, a comprehensive train timetable site for everything from local trains to the Shinkansens. For when the luxury of an online timetable is not available, knowing how to read Japanese timetables is a must. If you don't read kanji, the first thing you need to do is ask someone to write down the kanji for your departure and destination stations. Then you can look at the map in the front of the larger train timetable to find out what pages you need to look at for information. If you have the smaller version, you'll need to flick through the pages until you find the appropriate kanji. Once you have the kanji and the right page, reading the timetable itself is pretty easy. Find the departure station, which will be followed by a time, and then follow along the column until you come to the arrival station. If there is no time listed, then the train doesn't stop there during that service.

Many stations have schedules for both trains and local buses available next to the ticket window. Be aware that train timetables are generally written in 24 hour time, so a 6pm train will be listed as 18:00.

#### Buying a Ticket

To buy a ticket, either go to the JR office in your station or to a ticket machine. If you use a ticket machine find your destination, often in kanji and romaji, on the map above the machines and take note of the fare listed. Put in money to cover the fare and the buttons with available fares will light up. Choose the correct fare for your destination. The ticket will allow you to travel on any futsuu, or regular, train. If you want to take an express or limited express train, you'll have to purchase an extra "supplement" ticket on the train or through the JR office.

If you use the trains regularly, you can buy a yonkippu booklet of four tickets, which allows you to ride the express train for the price of a slow train and is valid for three months.

Many smaller stations don't have machines or ticket windows. In this case, take a numbered

ticket from the dispensing machine just inside the train and pay at the end of your ride, either directly to the conductor or at the station when you get off the train.

The Hokkaido Free Pass, "北海道フリーパス", is a rail pass providing unlimited usage of JR trains (including limited express trains) and most JR buses in Hokkaido for seven consecutive days.

### The Bus

If you can read train timetables, you can read bus schedules. Bus timetables are usually displayed at individual bus stops and at the terminal. Often fares are listed down the side of the timetable or along the top. In some cities there is a set fare for within the city. If you look at a bus timetable you may see two sets of times, workday times in blue and Sunday and public holiday times in red.

#### Buying a Ticket

Some buses companies offer books of ten tickets called kaisuken. Instead of using coins to pay, you use vouchers. If you use the bus often, these are a good deal. You can also buy yonkippu between major destinations on buses. Yonkippu tickets for buses don't expire.

#### On the Bus

At a bus stop, get on in the middle of the bus, and take a ticket from the machine dispensing numbered tickets. Note that tickets are not always

## Useful Words

English	Japanese
By express train	Tokkyuu 特急
By slow/local train	Futsuu 普通
Change (trains)	Nori kae 乗り換え
Express	Kyuukou 急行
Fare adjustment	Seisan jo 精算所
Fare box	Ryoukin bako 料金箱
Full	Mannin 満人
	Manseki 満席
Information	Annai 案内
Platform	Noriba 乗り場
Railway station	Eki 駅
One-way	Katamichi 片道
Sleeper	Shindaisha 寝台車
Subway	Chikatetsu 地下鉄
Ticket	Kippu 切符
Ticket - Reserved	Shitei seki 指定席
Ticket - Return	Oufuku 往復
Ticket - Unreserved	Jiyuu seki 自由席
Train	Densha 電車
	Kisha 汽車
What platform?	Nan-bansen 何番線

## Useful Phrases

English	Japanese
A return ticket to (...) please.	(...) made oufuku de ichimai kudasai. (...)まで往復で一枚ください。
Could you change my ticket?	Kippu o kaite moraemasu ka? 切符を改訂もらえますか?
Does this train stop in (...)?	Kono densha wa (...) ni tomarimasu ka? この電車は(...)にとまりますか?
I'd like to reserve a seat.	Seki o hitotsu yoyaku shitai desu. 席を一つ予約したいです。
Is this the right platform for (...)?	Koko wa (...) yuki no hoomu desu ka? ここは(...)行きのホームですか?
Is this the train going to (...)?	Kono densha wa (...) yuki desu ka? この電車は(...)行きですか?
What platform do I use for the (...) train?	(...) yuki no densha wa nan ban noriba desu ka? (...)行きの電車は番乗り場ですか?
When does the train for (...) leave? (...)	(...) yuki no kisha wa nanji ni shuppatsu shimasu ka? (...)行きの電車は何番乗り場ですか?
Where is the bus station?	Basu taaminaru wa doko desu ka? バスターミナルはどこですか?

given at the first stop.

When you hear the name of your stop, push the とまります button. Look at the number on your ticket to determine the fare as listed on the board at the front of the bus. Put the ticket and fare into the box next to the driver when you get off. If you need change, there is a change machine next to the driver.

## The Subway

The Sapporo subway operates in much the same way as the train. The only difference is that you can buy cards for unlimited one-day travel from ticket offices and ticket machines.

- 1 Day | Weekday Chikatetsusenyuu 地下鉄専用1 dayカード ¥800

- 1 Day | Weekend Donichika kippu ドニチカキップ ¥520

- With You Card Uizuyuu kaado ウィズユーカード ¥1000

Uizuyuu kaado tickets can be purchased at any station and used until you've taken enough subway rides to spend the value of the card. You do not add money to these cards, simply buy a new one.

These ¥1000 cards have ¥1100 worth of subway rides on them. If you have money left, you can use this yen towards a regular ticket at a machine.

www.urbanrail.net has an excellent English language map of the subway network and general

information about the Sapporo subway.

## DRIVING

Hokkaido is a big, sparsely populated place, and as such, towns can be quite far apart. If you weren't lucky to be placed somewhere along the main thoroughfare between Sapporo and Asahikawa, it's possible that you don't even have a train station in your town. Buses are reliable, but sparse, especially in the countryside. For these reasons, it can be very useful to own a car.

## Roads and Rules

Before hitting the road, keep in mind that all signs are in kilometres and kilometres per hour (kph). If you've driven a car in other parts of the world, the speed limits in Hokkaido might seem unnecessarily low. Generally, in towns, the speed limit will be between 40-50 kph. There will be signs indicating this every 500 meters or so. If you don't see a sign, the speed limit defaults to 60 kph. And on the highways, the speed limit varies between 70-80 kph. That being said, roads in Hokkaido are less crowded than elsewhere in Japan, and it's not uncommon to see drivers 20 kph over the speed limit. The police will generally be lenient within 10 kph of the speed limit, but it's better to not push your luck in the first place.

Talking on the phone or texting is also illegal while driving. Many drivers simply pull onto the shoulder and turn on their hazard lights if they get a call, but you'll be sure to see some -- often drivers of big-rig trucks -- who don't bother.

Police cars often drive around with their flashing lights on -- this doesn't mean you're being pulled over. If they do pull you over, they'll say so over a loudspeaker. Keep in mind that the police often set up speed traps on the fringes of towns where the speed limit decreases dramatically.

You'll also encounter speed cameras at various places along the road. They look like large white boxes on over-road structures. They're generally placed in 60 kph zones, and won't take a picture of you so long as you're under 70. Speed cameras are marked several kilometres ahead by bright yellow signs above the road, so you know they're coming.

## Getting in Trouble

If you do get caught by a police speed trap or texting while driving, the police will let you know with their megaphone. Stay in your car until the policeman comes to your window. The policeman will ask you to get out of your car and get into the patrol car, and this is totally normal. From here, the same beats as in your home country will play out: an exchange of identification and the writing of a ticket (or a warning, if you're lucky). When they're done with you, you'll get out of the patrol car and back into your car and drive away, probably not a little rattled.

If you're given a ticket while you're not present -- e.g. a parking ticket -- you may be required to visit the local police station. You'll have to wait at the police station for the issuing officer to come around and explain to you what was wrong and issue you the ticket in person.

If you're in an accident, the first things you need to do is call an ambulance at 119 if anyone is injured, administer first aid as you can, and get people and vehicles out of the road and out of danger. Then, you must call the police to report the accident. While waiting for the police to arrive, it's a good idea to take note of any other drivers' information, as well as the scene of the accident. Make notes. Use this opportunity as well to contact your supervisor, Board of Education, your boss, or your Japanese mom. Then call your insurance agency (they usually have an accident report hotline), or

have someone you trust call them for you. After giving your insurance agency the information, they should contact the police and negotiate liability with the other person's insurance (if necessary).

If your trouble is of a less legal nature (e.g. you locked your keys in the car, you ran out of gas, you are stuck in a snow bank, your battery is dead), you can generally call the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) and they'll get you out of it. However, their baseline fee for just about everything is 12,500 yen. If you can, call upon a friend, your supervisor, or a person driving by, before calling JAF. Keep in mind as well that JAF only operates in Japanese, so you might need someone to call for you.

## Owning a Car

In Japan there are several major classes of road vehicle, but the main ones that concern everyday drivers are yellow-plate (kei) cars and white-plate (regular) cars. Kei cars are small, cheap cars with engines under 660 cc. They're allowed to do everything that white plate cars do, but they usually have great gas mileage (at the expense of poor emissions). Generally speaking, taxes and road tolls are also cheaper for kei cars. The downside is that they can't go very fast and often wouldn't pass safety regulations in Western countries -- they often don't even have air bags.

White-plate cars are regular cars -- the same kinds that we get in our home countries.

It's said that buying a car in Japan is quite cheap, but owning a car is quite expensive. This is true. Here's a short list of the expenses you may face, owning a car:

- Shaken vehicle inspection: This occurs every two years and generally costs upwards of 100,000 yen for a white plate and between 50-70,000 yen for a kei.
- Vehicle tax: Occurs in May according to whoever owns the vehicle on April 1. Compact white plate cars (e.g. Toyota Vitz, Honda Fit) are looking at about 35,000 yen -- the bigger the car, the higher it goes from there. Kei cars cost about 7,000 yen.
- Parking: If you live in a city, you may have to pay for your parking space -- this can be anywhere between 3,000-9,000 yen per month.
- Insurance: Under Japanese law, all registered vehicles must be covered by Compulsory Automobile Liability Insurance. This compulsory insurance is designed primarily to



Photo by Dave Dilling

protect third parties from injury by any vehicle in an accident. For a mid-size car it can cost about 45,000 yen per year if you pay it all at once; depending on your car and history it can go up or down from there. Additional insurance is available, including collision coverage and additional liability cover.

Buying a car is a great option for most ALTs, but be sure you don't get ripped off. Get any car you're interested in buying checked by a mechanic before you hand over your money.

## Winter

The speed limits make more sense in the wintertime. The biggest difference between Japan and foreign countries is that they don't salt the roads, so black ice is a daily concern. Outside of the bigger towns, it's likely as well that the roads will only be ploughed once a day -- this means that late at night it's possible that up to 20cm of snow or so can have accumulated on the road.

It might be a good idea for drivers at the beginning of the winter to find an empty, iced-over parking lot to practice losing control of your car on ice. It's almost certain that this is going to happen at one point or another, and it's good to be able to handle it without losing your head.

Here's things you can do to winterize your car:

- Put on winter tires and wipers
- Refill your windshield wiper fluid

- Stock your car with a shovel, snow brush, and optionally some sand or kitty litter, to put under the wheels for extra grip
- Stock your car with water, some food, and a blanket in case you get really stuck
- Consider getting some rubber mats so snowy, gravelly boots don't ruin your cloth mats

## Licenses

If you hold a license from any of the following countries, life is pretty easy for you vis-a-vis getting a Japanese license: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Korea Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom.

All you need to do is get an official translation of your driver's license from the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF), and bring it, along with your driver's license, a juminhyo (document certifying you're a legal resident), a passport photo, your passport, and 4,150 yen for the fee, to your jurisdiction's main licensing office. You'll also have to prove that you were in the country for at least three months after the issuing date on your home country's license but if you can do this, they'll issue you a Japanese license.

If you're not from one of the above countries, getting a license is a little tougher - on top of the steps above, you have to take the Japanese driving



test. The test consists of two parts: a written exam, and a driving exam. The written exam is straightforward and English copies are available. It consists of 10 true or false questions, the answers to which are common sense.

The driving exam, on the other hand, is more akin to a dance than a test. There are a certain number of moves that you must make around a driving course - signalling, looking, accelerating, braking, navigating in tight quarters. For example, many ALTs fail the test on the first try due to "dangerous breaking," which means using the break while driving through a curve. It would benefit you to take a couple hours (or more, depending on your confidence) of lessons beforehand. This can get expensive, upward of 10,000 yen, but is worth it. Other ALTs are a great resource for finding out more about the test.

The amount of paperwork you will need will depend on your testing location. Check with other ALTs in your area to learn more about a particular testing facility and their requirements. You can also reach out online in various Facebook groups.

You may hear the argument that the test doesn't have to do much with your actual skill on the road as it does with how much money you paid the lesson office. Admittedly the driving test doesn't simulate actual road conditions. It's everyone's personal decision whether this is true or not, but it could be something to keep in the back of your mind as you proceed through this ordeal.

Although situations vary, here is some advice from a previous American JET: "[Driving offices] may ask if you want a beginner's "license." This is not actually different from the other license, but you'll have to have beginner's magnets on your car. You will have to do this if you can't easily prove you have been driving in your home country for 12 consecutive months. You can easily get a license as long as you have been driving at least 3 months and been in the country of that license for those 3 months. To prove you were in the country with your license you can use pay stubs, rent, or a letter from your school stating when you were enrolled. You can also have your boss write a letter stating when you were employed. If you somehow managed to luck out and have your passport stamped when you left your home country then you will have no issues with proving where you were."

If you still have questions about driving in Hokkaido, peruse the following sources recommended at kumanomazoku.wordpress.com and follow the QR code above to the main blog post. The blog in a two part series that follows "Mama Bear" and "Papa Bear" as they go through the process of obtaining a license in Samani. It covers important documents you may need when applying for a license, the process, and tips for passing. Important links:

- <https://www.city.sapporo.jp/city/english/living/drivers-licenses.html>
- <https://japandriverslicense.com/en/>

# Japanese Language Study

## 日本語の勉強

Welcome to Japan! You are now in the best possible place you could be to improve your Japanese skills. Whether or not you plan to enter the Japanese workforce or use the Japanese language in your future career, working on the JET Programme gives you an incredible opportunity to learn Japanese in an immersion setting. From complete beginners to advanced learners, your time on JET is the perfect time to improve your Japanese language skills. Also, the more Japanese language you learn, the easier it will become to interact with your co-workers, make friends, and navigate Japan in your daily life. What do you have to lose?

## STUDYING JAPANESE

### Japanese Classes

Attending a Japanese class will give structure to your studying. If you live in a big city, like Sapporo, it is more than likely there will be classes available for foreigners. For those that live in smaller towns, finding a Japanese class can be a little more difficult, but not impossible. If you teach an adult English conversation class, try approaching one of your students and offer a one-on-one language exchange. Another option is to ask your contracting organization for help in locating a tutor. If you learn Japanese, it makes their life easier, so they will most likely be willing to help. If your CO is unsupportive or unable to find a tutor, contact your Block Leader and ask for their assistance.

### Self Study

For those who don't have time or money for a tutor, or simply prefer it, self-study is completely feasible for JETs. Many JETs find they have a lot of free time at work – bring your textbook to school and study in your off time. Most schools will encourage you to improve your Japanese, and some of your co-workers may even take interest in your studies and want to help. Recommended textbooks: Genki, Japanese for Busy People, and Minna no Nihongo.

### Communication

If your focus in Japanese study is on communication, you are in luck! Living in Japan has already given



you an edge! Japanese people surround you, and most are excited and willing to speak to a foreigner. In addition, there are a number of language exchange events and groups (e.g. Nomikaiwa at the Sapporo Guest House). Speak to your block leader or HAJET regional representative to learn about those in your region.

## USEFUL STUDY TOOLS

### Websites

- Tae Kim's Guide to Learning Japanese – An extremely useful website that focuses on grammar explanations. There is also the Complete Guide to Japanese, which avoids long, complicated explanations and cuts to the essential, need-to-know information. [www.guidetojapanese.org](http://www.guidetojapanese.org)
- Jim Breen's Japanese Page – Although not updated recently, the website is full of links to other resources, Japanese language explanations, and useful information. <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/japanese.html>
- Kanji Challenge – Quiz-based study method for grammar, kanji, and Japanese prefectures. May not be compatible with Mac's system.

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[www.kanjichallenge.com](http://www.kanjichallenge.com)

- JLPT Study Page – An online resource of study materials for JLPT levels N5-N2. Affiliated with the JLPT Study Forum, where you can ask questions and discuss the test with other JLPT takers. [www.jlptstudy.net](http://www.jlptstudy.net)
- Rikaichan/Rikaikun – Rikaichan is a popup Japanese-English dictionary tool for Firefox, Thunderbird, and Seamonkey. Rikaikun is the version available for Chrome users. Rikaichan: [www.polarcloud.com/rikaichan](http://www.polarcloud.com/rikaichan). Rikaikun available as a Chrome add-on.

## Phone Applications

- Kanji Study – Free iOS and Android. The Kanji are ordered very well. The best feature of this app is that it tests your writing skill.
- Kanji Pictographix – \$12.99 iOS (no Android capable app) – A unique way to study kanji, similar to Heiseig's Remembering the Kanji. Each kanji is assigned a visual mnemonic that conveys the meaning.
- Japanese – \$6.99 iOS, Free Android – One of the most comprehensive Japanese dictionary apps available with over 170,000 entries. Search goes both ways, kanji meanings, stroke order, radicals also included. No internet connection necessary.

## JLPT AND OTHER TESTS

For those planning to study Japanese while on JET, you may wish to gain certification. Or maybe you simply need a test to motivate you to study, as many of us do. There are various Japanese language ability tests that might just be

the motivation you're looking for.

## The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)

The JLPT test is the most well known proficiency exam which many JETs take each year. The test consists of 5 levels, with Level N5 being the easiest and N1 the most difficult. The test is offered in Sapporo and Asahikawa twice a year, in December and July. Applications cost ¥5,500 and are accepted both online and via snail mail. For more information on the application, test sites, and the different level requirements, visit <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/index.html>.

## The BJT Business Japanese Proficiency Test

The BJT is a test to measure your proficiency in communicating in the Japanese language required in business settings. It is a 3-part test consisting of listening and reading comprehension, and is not rated by "pass/fail" criteria, but by scores ranging from 0 to 800.

For more information visit: <http://www.kanken.or.jp/bjt/english/about/index.html>

## Kanji Kentei

There are 10 levels, Level 10 being the easiest (usually taken by 1st grade elementary school students), and Level 1 the most difficult. This is an exam for Japanese people, so its a real challenge at the higher levels and a great resume builder for those hoping to use Japanese in their future careers. For more information (all in Japanese) visit <http://www.kanken.or.jp/kanken/>.



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# Health and Well-Being

Maintaining your health and well-being while living in Japan is important to making the most of your time here.

## Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency Dial 119 (110 for police). Unfortunately operators handling emergency calls usually only speak Japanese.

If you cannot find someone who speaks Japanese, say “please send an ambulance” in Japanese: “kyukyusha onegai-shimasu”. Next give your name and address. You may also be asked to give your: date of birth, nationality, blood type, occupation and the type of insurance. Please speak as slowly and clearly as you can.

Ambulances are available free of charge, but they can be used only in emergencies.

## Doctors

If you need to visit the doctor, you can organise to visit your local doctor or hospital through your supervisor. Many doctors will have some English ability, especially medical English. If you do not speak any Japanese, it is a good idea to take along someone you trust to help you communicate.

It is always a good idea to book an appointment in advance. You should always take your health insurance card (seifu kansho kenko hoken or hokensho) with you. Go to the counter and state your name and appointment. At some places you may not need an appointment. In this case phone ahead to check their hours and arrive at the clinic early.

Next, you will be asked if you have a card (shinsatsu ken) for the clinic. If you don't, you will be given one. Next you will fill out a questionnaire detailing your symptoms, allergies and medical history. Take the form to the desk and then wait. The waiting time can be anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. Once your name is called it's time for your consultation. After the doctor is finished, go to the cashier to pay.

If you need specialist treatment, you may find the help you need at the Medical Plaza Sapporo. The Medical Plaza Sapporo includes a Women's Maternity Clinic, Cardiology and Circulation Clinic, Surgery and Hernia Clinic, Eye Clinic, Urology and Dialysis Clinic, General Health Clinic, Neurology

and Brain Clinic, Internal Medicine and Digestion Clinic, and a Dental Clinic. The doctors are very professional and some forms are available in English.

## Dentists

Many people have an irrational fear of dentists, and adding difficulty communicating to the mix can only make the process more stressful. However, dentists in Japan are trained professionals who offer high quality dental services at an affordable price. In fact, compared to many countries, dental care in Japan is downright cheap. To find a dentist, ask for advice from other teachers, friends and the staff at the Board of Education. As with a doctor, if you speak little Japanese, you may want to take a friend along with you to help you to communicate.

## Women's Health

Finding the right doctor to help with women's health issues can feel challenging enough at home, let alone here in Japan. The hospitals and clinics listed here have English-speaking doctors.

Sapporo

Sapporo Breast Surgical Clinic: North 6, West 19, chuo-ku, Sapporo, 0116-40-2626.

Hayashi Ladies Clinic: Sankyo Bldg, 3F, Minami 2-jo, Nishi 3-chome, Chuo-ku, 0112-06-3050.

Hokkaido Shakai Hoken Chuo Hospital: 1-jo 8-chome, Nakanoshima, Toyohira-ku, 0118-31-5151.

Shin-Sapporo Women's Clinic: Higashi 4-jo 2-chome, Atsubestu, Atsubetsu-ku, 0118-98-1511

Sapporo Toho Byoin: Higashi, Kita 17 Higashi 15, 0117-04-3911

Sapporo Kosei Byoin: Nishi 7, Kita 4, Chuo-ku, 0112-61-5331

Sapporo Maternity Hospital: 0117-46-5505

Asahikawa

Asahikawa Kosei Byoin: 24-111-3, 1-jo dori, Asahikawa, 0166-33-7171

Asahikawa Sekijuuji Byoin: Akebono 1-1, Asahikawa, 0166-22-8111

Fukugawa

Fukugawa Shiritsu Byoin: 5-6-10, Fukugawa 074, 0164-22-1101

Bibai

Bibai Rosai Byoin: Minami 2 Higashi 5, Bibai 072,

0126-63-2151

Shiritsu Bibai Byoin: 1-1, Kita 1, Nishi 2, Bibai 072, 0126-63-4171

Iwamizawa

Higashimachi Famirii Kurinikku: 8-932-74, 1-jo, Higashimachi, 0126-24-5771

Nayoro

Nayoro Shiritsu Sogo Byoin: Minami 7, Nishi 7, Nayoro: 0165-43-3101

Shibetsu

Shiritsu Shibetsu Sogo Byoin: Higashiyamacho, 0165-23-2166

Obihiro

Keiai Hospital: Higashi 3-jo, Minami 9 chome, 0155-22-4188

Tomakomai

Tomakomai Shiritsu Sogo Byoin: Honkocho 1-2-21, 0144-33-3131

Abashiri

Abashiri Kosei Byoin: 1-9 Kita 6 Jonishi, 0152-43-3157

## Medical Words of Advice

Visit [www.qq.pref.hokkaido.jp/qq/qq01fngsp.asp](http://www.qq.pref.hokkaido.jp/qq/qq01fngsp.asp) for a listing of medical institutions where foreign languages are spoken. Try and get a Japanese friend to refer you to a decent practice.

Don't put treatment off for any condition, especially if it is a cavity, it will only get worse. Japanese toothpaste and tap water don't contain fluoride so if needed, get some toothpaste sent from home. You can also buy some foreign brands in the larger cities.

When visiting the doctor or dentist, you will need money. Take around ¥10,000 with you to make sure you are covered for any up front costs for the consultation or to purchase needed medications.

Don't forget to take your health insurance card along when you visit any medical professional, including your doctor, dentist and optometrist.

## DEALING WITH STRESS

Teaching English in Japan is both fun and rewarding. But it can also be very stressful, especially when you are first starting out. The stress of a new job and culture shock can combine to make your first year on JET a stressful one. But, by doing your best to recognise and combat your stress, you can make the most of your time here.

Your role as an ALT will be different to other ALTs. Whether you are busy each and every day, or trying

to find work to fill your hours, every position will offer its own stresses. The pressure to be the best ALT you can be may leave you feeling frazzled, and this coupled with culture shock, can be tough to combat. Culture shock is part of a normal coping process that everyone who lives abroad goes through to some degree.

Common symptoms of stress and culture shock include sleeping all the time, sleeping very little, sadness or loneliness, anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others, extreme mood swings, feeling vulnerable or powerless, constantly looking back to the home country, feeling inadequate or insecure, loss of identity, inability to solve simple problems, developing stereotypes about the host culture, obsessions such as cleanliness, feeling lost, feeling overlooked, feeling exploited or abused, excessive eating or drinking, eating very little and spending all free time on mindless activities that bring little joy.

## Stress Remedies

If you think you are suffering the effects of job stress or culture shock, there are many steps you can take to start getting back to your best. To combat stress get plenty of physical exercise, get plenty of fresh air and spend time in nature. Allow yourself to feel all emotions that arise, while keeping perspective: they are temporary, they will pass. Clarify what it is that is bothering you to help maintain a healthy objectivity. Stay active with both local and foreign friends. Take advantage of local stress reducing opportunities, like onsens, ski hills, and traditional arts. Give yourself something to do: many ALTs survive the winter by taking up a new hobby or volunteering their time within their community or through HAJET. When you are feeling stressed, take time to remember your goals - remember why you came to Japan in the first place, and set goals for yourself during your stay here.

If you find yourself doing all you can to combat the effects of stress, yet still feel like you're sinking, reach out for help. The JET program has English-language counselling available. Contact CLAIR or your Prefectural Advisor for details.

You can also call the AJET Peer Support Group. The AJET-PSG is an anonymous and confidential listening and referral service for the JET Programme, and can be contacted every night of the year from 8pm to 7am at 050-5534-5566 or voice call (not IM) via Skype at AJETPSG.

# FOOD.



Food in Japan is generally cheap, high quality and delicious. While it can be daunting to be faced with a world of new ingredients when you first arrive, you can manage to make or buy almost anything you crave here in Hokkaido, or have it sent to you by shopping online.

## Foreign Food

If you're craving a taste of home, you can get foreign foods here in Hokkaido. While many supermarkets will stock some basic foreign based ingredients, like pasta, more specialised foods can be hard to come by. When you come across one of these speciality food stores, you might want to stock up.

### Jupiter

If you're in need of Tim Tams, Haribo, or jalapenos, Jupiter is a good bet. They offer coffee, a variety of treats, and a selection of ingredients for cooking and baking. Locations: Esta building (Sapporo), Shin-Sapporo, Aeon near Asahikawa

### Don Quixote

A large discount chain in Japan, Don Quixote often has foreign foods available. Don Quixote also has a huge array of goods for sale, everything from souvenirs to appliances, costumes to exercise equipment.

### Costco

Costco is warehouse-style shopping. Most goods come in larger quantities than local supermarkets, so remember how big your fridge and freezer are before you get carried away. You can buy furniture, computers, clothes,

### Kaldi Farm

Kaldi Farm stores are often in larger Aeon malls. Like Jupiter, they have coffee and tea, and a selection of imported foods. Kaldi also sells beer and wine from around the world along with a good variety of small goods like salami, sausages and cheese.

### Anew

If you're looking for health foods, then Anew is for you! They stock the usual health store supply such as organic and free-range foods. There are several Anew's found in Hokkaido.

and cleaning stuff there too. There is a membership fee of ¥4200 a year. As a member, you can take up to two guests in with you, but items must be purchased together. Get together a posse, an empty car, and stock up. It also has a food outlet which sells pizza, bulgogi bake and hot dogs.

## Online Shopping

Foreign Buyer's Club  
[www.fbcusa.com](http://www.fbcusa.com)

This site was set up by two Americans who moved to Japan and missed the comforts of home. They offer an array of foreign foods complete with home delivery. In addition to their regular stock, they also offer seasonal and discounted items.

Flying Pig  
[www.theflyingpig.com](http://www.theflyingpig.com)  
Online store that apparently gets its stuff from Costco, but it's delivered to your door!

Indojin  
[www.indojin.com](http://www.indojin.com)  
Indian goods for your entire subcontinent needs and wants. Stock a range of ready to cook, eat and Indian groceries.

## VEGETARIAN'S GUIDE

While there are many fresh vegetarian ingredients available, Japanese vegetarians are few and far between. One can expect to get a lot of questions from Japanese dining companions, and it can be hard to find vegetarian and vegan options at restaurants. Even those that seem vegetarian friendly have often been made with a fish or meat stock. This means being a vegetarian or vegan in Japan can be challenging.

### Eating in

In Japan, it is easy to buy a variety of vegetables, but it can be difficult to get some vegetarian staples that you may use from home. Here are some new foods to try. Nato is a great addition, for those who acquire a taste for it. Next, tofu comes in many styles including kinugoshidofu (soft), momendofu (firm), dried, aburaage (fried), gomadofu

(sesame), tamagodofu (egg), and tonyu (soy milk). Finally, tsukemono, or pickled veggies add extra flavors to meals.

### Eating Out

While eating out can be difficult, it is also fun. There are lots of meat-free foods in Japanese restaurants, but meats like ham, sausage, bacon, and seafoods, are often not considered meat, so be specific when asking if something contains niku (meat). If you are eating out, some safe menu and combini items include:

- Ume onigiri - rice balls with sour plums
- Nattomaki - fermented soybean sushi rolls
- Inarizushi - fried tofu pockets
- Agedashidofu - fried tofu
- Hiyayako - chilled tofu
- Yuudofu - tofu boiled with kombu
- Edamame - boiled soybeans
- Koroke - fried potato

# GUIDE TO JAPANESE INGREDIENTS

- patties
  - Kappamaki - cucumber and wasabi sushi
  - Nattomaki - natto sushi
  - Yamago - egg, rice, seaweed
  - Noodles like soba or udon
- Take note of how they are served as the broth may contain stock.

Dishes to be wary of include salads, pasta, noodle soups and fried noodle or vegetable dishes as small amounts of meat are often added. Dishes that seem vegetarian but are generally made with meat include most soups including miso, ramen – made with pork broth, okonomiyaki – usually has meat

or seafood, takikomigohanrice made with vegetables and stock. Note on school lunches: This will be difficult for vegetarians. Most school lunches contain meat in at least one dish and soup will generally be made from a meat or fish stock base. The easiest option here is to opt out of school lunches and bring your own.



Romaji	Japanese	What is it?
Age	あげ	Deep Fried Tofu
Aji No Moto	味の素	Japanese MSG
Ajishio	味塩	Salt and MSG Mixture
Azuki	あづき	Red Beans - often found in desserts
Beni Shouga	紅しょうが	Red Pickled Ginger Root
Daikon	だいこん	Japanese White Radish
Dashi Konbu	だし昆布	Kelp used for soup stock
Dashi No Moto	だしのもと	Instant Dashi
Ginnan	銀杏	Ginkgo Nuts
Gobou	ごぼう	Burdock Root
Goma	ごま	Sesame Seeds
Goma-abura	ごま油	Sesame Seed Oil
Harusame	春雨	Cellophane Noodles
Kaiware	かいわれ	Young Daikon Shoots
Komatsuna	小松菜	Leafy Green Vegetables
Katsuobushi	鰹節	Dried Bonito
Konbu	昆布	Dried Kelp
Konnyaku	こんにやく	Devil's Tongue Jelly (small, dark potato jelly)
Mirin	みりん	Sweet Sake - used only for cooking
Miso	味噌	Soybean Paste - used frequently in soups
Naganegi	長ネギ	Long Green Onions
Nerimono	練り物	Fish Paste
Nira	にら	Asian Garlic Chives
Nori	のり	Dried Seaweed
Renkon	レンコン	Lotus Root
Sake	酒	Rice Wine
Shichimi Tougarashi	七味唐辛子	Seven Pepper Spice
Shiitake	しいたけ	Japanese Mushrooms
Shirataki	白滝	Shredded Konnyaku Noodles
Shouga	しょうが	Fresh Ginger Root
Shungiku	春菊	Spring Chrysanthemums
Soba	そば	Thin Buckwheat Noodles
Soumen	そうめん	Fine, White Wheat Flour Noodles
Su	酢	Vinegar
Takenoko	竹の子	Young Bamboo Shoots
Tofu	豆腐	Custard of Soybean Curd
Tsukemono	漬物	Japanese Pickles
Udon	うどん	Thick Wheat Flour Noodles
Umeboshi	梅干	Pickled Plums
Wakame	わかめ	Long Dried Seaweed

**KITA 24**  
Sapporo Kita-ku  
Kita 24 Jyo Nishi 3  
Ph: 011-728-1001

**ODORI**  
Sapporo Chou-ku  
Kita 1 Jyo Nishi 8  
Ph: 011-281-1355

## JACKSONVILLE

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www.jvburger.com Instagram: jacksonville\_burgers

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# Teaching.

Most ALTs will have a base school. Like a long term relationship, you have the chance to get to know this school and become a close part of it. The first step to settling in to your new schools is to build friendships where you can. To get off on the right foot, try to build strong relationships with your teachers of English. One of the challenges of ALTs is to adapt to each classroom environment. This environment includes the students, AND the teacher. The quicker you understand each others' style of instruction and discipline the quicker you will get the "team" in "team teaching." Finally, get involved where you can. The school will constantly be planning for upcoming events: sports festivals, music festivals, culture festivals. Find out what the extra-curricular events are and ask to participate. Your presence will be valued by your teachers and your students. Be proactive and ask what is happening so you don't miss out.

## One ALT, Many Schools

You may arrive to your contracting organisation to find you will be teaching between many schools, from kindergarten through high school. Being a one-shot teacher can be daunting, but the steps to settling in will be the same. The main skill you will need is to be adaptable. One-shots are rare and you need to leave meaningful impressions on each one. Come up with a trademark that your students can easily remember you by. For one-shots, the most important thing you need is an awesome self-introduction lesson plan. You will use this often, so make it activity-based to keep it fresh. Make your introduction a good chance for the students to introduce themselves to you too. Get them up out of their seats and speaking English.

## One ALT, Several Schools

Teaching between several regular schools is common for ALTs, and find they have a fairly regular schedule of school visits at different levels. Working between a few schools may give you several advantages. A variety of schools means you don't have to worry about being with one difficult JTE or school. Your regular travel will provide opportunities to see wildlife. You'll form relationships with a lot of your students, without necessarily being expected to remember all of their names. Multiple schools means multiple enkais, school festivals, and lessons. However, not being at your base school means you will probably be somewhat out of the loop. Keep in touch with the JTEs if you are interested in participating in extra events.

## One ALT, One School

Some ALTs will find themselves based at only one school. While this means they can build strong relationships at school, it also has its own disadvantages. Most likely you will be expected to attend every school event or encouraged to get involved in after school activities, which can take up a lot of your personal and work time. Another disadvantage is that you are less likely to be able to shuffle your hours to allow for early finishes on Fridays. Through working at one school though, you will find you get to know not only your students, but their families as well. You will be a key part of the staff at the school and will be treated with respect. You will get the chance to join in on fun activities and have opportunities to attend excursions.

When you first arrive at your base school, or any school you will visit, get a staff room or office map of all the staff and get it translated so you can read it. This will help you to get to know your colleagues. The people in your office can be a great source of helpful information.

## Getting to Know Your Students

There are many different ways to start building a rapport with your students. Some simple and fun ideas, like joining games in the playground and after class, paying attention and pointing out changes and new things like haircuts and new shoes, giving high fives, and being dramatic, will have the kids laughing. The more the kids laugh and relax around you, the better your relationship with the students will be.

To have some fun with the kids, play tag with them outside of class. Kids get excited when their ALT isn't afraid to be boisterous and noisy.

Make a big deal about it whenever you notice they get a haircut. Tell them it's cool, or cute, and they will give you smiles in return. Any observation you can make and point out will show the kids you are paying attention, you care and that you know them. Point out new shoes, bags and pencil cases. Make comments on injuries and ask what happened. You can do this with the staff too – everyone likes to be noticed.

The key to building relationships with your kids is to be yourself. If that means laughing loudly, clapping your hands and bouncing every once in a while - go for it! We're here to expose students to differences in culture and attitudes, and ALTs are known for being particularly genki and expressive. Don't worry that it's out of synch with the rest of your staff room, that's why it's so good. Your use of expression in the classroom with dramatic gestures, faces and comments, really brightens the classroom for the kids.

## Japanese in the Classroom

Even if you speak fluent Japanese, your job is to teach English, so the vast majority of your interactions with your students should be in English. You can use your understanding of Japanese to help students with questions, such as in the case of an unknown word. Remember, the students already have a teacher that speaks Japanese and English - the JTE.

## Lesson Plans

Working with your JTEs to help plan lessons can be difficult. The teachers at each school will be very busy and may find it hard to schedule time to meet with the ALT. If you find your teachers are too busy to have you help with planning, or you teach at too many schools to make this viable, request a copy of the teacher's lessons plans for each week. If they cannot give you a day to day plan, ask for an overview of the term and copies of textbooks and materials the kids will be working from. Having these resources will help you to adapt to each class, even with little discussion beforehand. You may find you are requested to run games and activities at the last minute. Having a few easy and adaptable games up your sleeve will make life much easier. Emergency games and hundreds more can be found online.

## Discipline

While it's not your job to discipline the kids, some discipline tactics are essential to keep the lessons running smoothly. Talk to your JTE and ask what their discipline strategy is. Supporting your JTE in their disciplining strategy may be all it takes for classroom harmony. A stern look is often all you need to get kids in line. Follow the lead of your JTEs and use methods that you can adapt to create your own teaching and discipline style.

## Elementary and Kindergarten Classes

Teaching at elementary schools (shougakko) and kindergartens (youchien and hoikusho) can be some of the most fun you will have as an ALT. Little kids are most receptive to learning new languages, and these students will be enthusiastic and energetic about English. Many elementary school teachers are unable to speak English, but most of them are excited about teaching English. What you teach and which grades you work with depends on the school.

Many schools will have a basic English curriculum they work from. If not, they may ask you to create one. There are textbooks available to help you plan. How much you can plan depends on how often you see your classes. If you see the students only once a month, be sure to include review time in each session.

Your curriculum doesn't have to be fancy, a list

of topics to cover like numbers, alphabet, basic phonics, animals, foods, classroom objects, places, is a good foundation. Elementary schools are also a good place to teach basic phonics.

When planning your curriculum and your lessons, remember that you are teaching kids. Kids have shorter attention spans and like to have fun. Lessons can include an English warm up game, a review of old stuff, introduction and practice of new content, a vocabulary game, introduction of new grammar, another game, a final review of the day and a farewell.

For little kids, games should be simple with the focus on learning English, not on learning new games. Songs are also great, especially repetitive ones with actions.

When planning for kindergartens, you need to remember, the younger the kids, the shorter the attention spans. Kindergarten kids like repetition, songs, activity, and easy games.

At the end of the day, have fun teaching your elementary and kindergarten students and they will have fun in turn.

## Eikaiwa

Many ALTs will be asked to run a regular eikaiwa, or English conversation class. Eikaiwa classes are generally geared towards adults and are a great way of meeting people interested in learning and speaking English in your area. If you don't already have an eikaiwa class set up in your town, you might want to start one. Eikaiwa classes may take up some of your free time but are worth the effort. You'll make friends, and get to know helpful people in your town who can provide excellent support for you, and who may also help you to improve your Japanese.

If you want to start an eikaiwa in your town, start by talking it up to the people in your Board of Education office. If your town has limited funds to pay you for your time, you can ask for daikyuu (time in lieu) or volunteer your time. Compensation will vary from office to office

When starting an eikaiwa, or agreeing to continue an existing class, you should consider class size, class length and English ability. If you have large classes of differing abilities, you may want to split the group into smaller beginner and advanced classes. Smaller classes sizes will give you more time to get each person speaking English and create a closer group.

With less advanced classes, focus on useful, spoken English. Keep it student centred – the students are there to practice speaking. With more advanced classes you have more freedom to cover a wide variety of topics, but be sure to keep it interesting for your students. Ask them their own interests and see if you can make these topics for weekly classes. Food and travel will be popular topics and discussion can be spread over many weeks.

To make sure your eikaiwa students enjoy the classes, relax and enjoy yourself. These students will be the most enthusiastic you meet, and many will become good friends.

## Deskwarming

Despite probing the staff and participating, you are still going to be sitting at your desk a lot. In the ALT community this downtime is called "deskwarming." Keep work on hand to keep your mind occupied and busy. A good use of your time would be studying Japanese. Your teaching ability will improve once you've learned more of the Japanese language, and your relationships with other people will improve once you can communicate.

Some other ALTs opt to do other activities on their downtime like reading, improving on another skill, designing an English board, so on and so forth. Once you find something to keep you occupied during deskwarming season, known to your students as exam time, it will be a lot easier to manage.



Photo credits: Catrina Caira

# THE JAPANESE OFFICE

Japanese office culture is often very different from what most ALTs have experienced in their home countries. In Japanese office environments, image is important. You may notice everyone in your offices bustling about and keeping busy, even if they don't have much work to do. This is an area where you should follow the example of your colleagues and keep busy. Whether that's by volunteering to help out, or by keeping busy on your own projects when you are finished with school work. The important thing is to ensure you are using your time and keeping up appearances. Punctuality is important in Japan. Always be early or on time to school. It's frowned upon to be unprepared and late. If you're going to be late, even if only a few minutes, call ahead and use leave (nenkyuu or daikyuu).

If you are finding it tough to fill your day, volunteer to write an article for your town's paper, host an international event, join a club in town, join a school club, or study Japanese.

## Dealing with Problems

If you notice a real problem occurring in your school or office, you should be thoughtful in how you deal with it. The direct route is generally not the best option. Japan works on a seniority system so if it's a problem with a teacher or co-worker, you will need to have documented proof to guarantee your complaint be taken seriously.

When dealing with problems, be sure to always keep your temper and be polite. Raised voices and tempers will cause you to lose face and will not help resolve your problem. Document your complaints and translate them into Japanese, or have someone you trust translate them for you.

To lodge a complaint, request a meeting with your supervisor and BoE boss. Hand your complaint to them. They will take it through the proper channels for you. If your supervisor or boss is the problem, hand it to the kacho (vice superintendent of schools). Wait for an official response. Remind them of the problem if they haven't replied within a month.

If nothing happens to improve the situation, petition your PA for help. This is a very serious step, though, that will cause a lot of conflict, so beware of what you're doing before you go into it.



Photo credit: Derek Moore

## The Big April Shuffle

At the beginning of the new school term and fiscal year in April, there is a big office shuffle. You may come to work at the end of March to be informed that your favourite teacher, JTE or supervisor is leaving. The April shuffle will impact not only you, but the entire office. Often, first-year ALTs aren't informed of this process and come in to find the office completely switched around with teachers missing and new staff appointed.

The April shuffle has long been part of the Japanese office culture. It dates back to the shogun who would make his feudal lords switch posts every six years, so that none of them would ever gain too much power. Nowadays, people say it's the best way to distribute power and balance amongst an office and to give staff experience across a range of roles.

Be aware, the positions that are changing are generally a secret. You are welcome to ask, but may find other staff reluctant to pass on the secret information, even when it is widely known. The best thing you can do is to be patient. Do your best to work with the new staff and build up new relationships.

The hierarchy in Japanese schools, in order, runs: kyouikuchou - superintendent of schools, kocho sensei - principal, kacho - vice superintendent - kyoto sensei - vice principal. The kyouikuchou and kocho sensei are often more figureheads, but if anything bad happens it's them who must retire.



With many festivals held during each season, Japan has a way of keeping things exciting. These festivals (or matsuri 祭り) come in many varieties. While some festivals are large and bring in big crowds, many festivals remain local. These festivals can celebrate the local harvest, the guardian deity at the shrine, or simply the arrival of spring. Many unique festivals are specific to certain regions, making it tempting to see them all. Some of the larger festivals in Hokkaido are featured below.

#### Sapporo Yuki Matsuri 札幌雪祭り

Held in early February, this festival draws crowds from all over the world. With its local and international snow and ice sculpture contests, the Sapporo Snow Festival is definitely worth checking out.

#### Otaru Yuki Akari no Michi 小樽雪あかりの路

Held around the same time as the Sapporo Yuki Matsuri and only a short train ride away, the Otaru Lantern Festival makes a nice addition to round up a festival weekend. After a day in the bustling crowd of Sapporo, take a romantic stroll down the illuminated canal and enjoy the charm of Otaru.

#### Setsubun 節分

In most Japanese households, Setsubun (Change of Season) is celebrated on February 3rd, which is said to be the day before the start of spring. Come mid-January, colourful ogre masks and bags of beans are sold in large quantities at local supermarkets. Setsubun is associated with a cleansing ritual called Mame-maki, a bean throwing ritual where a parent dons an ogre mask and the children perform demon chasing by throwing daizu beans at the ogre while shouting. When the theatrics are over and the demons have been chased, each member of the household eats as many beans as their age with one extra for the New Year. This ensures good health and fortune for the coming year.

#### Okhotsk Drift Ice Festivals 流水祭り

If crowded cities aren't for you, head up to the north-east coast for some spectacular sights. Every year from February to early March, large

plates of ice drift from Alaska to the north-east coast of Japan. Festivals are held in Mombetsu and Abashiri. You can ride a boat to the ice and even board it for a few commemorative pictures. Make sure to pop into nearby Utoro and watch the Shiretoko Fantasia Show, held at the town dockyard every night.

#### Hina Matsuri ひな祭り

Every March 3rd, the Hina Matsuri, also called Doll's Festival or Girls' Day, is celebrated in most households in Japan. On this day, parents celebrate the growth and well-being of their daughters. The original Hina Matsuri involved making straw dolls. It was thought that all ill-will and sickness would be transferred from the daughter to the doll. Nowadays, the Hina Matsuri is celebrated by displaying extravagant and expensive Dairibina or court dolls (usually a set of 15 dolls) in the household and eating traditional foods.

#### Hanami 花見

From late April to mid-May the cherry blossoms are finally in bloom in Hokkaido. It is time for flower-viewing or hanami. In this period, large parks like the Maruyama Park in Sapporo, Goryokaku Park in Hakodate and Asahiyama Park in Asahikawa, take on a festive atmosphere. A large number of people gather under the cherry trees to drink and barbecue. It is a great opportunity to make some friends as Japanese people are always friendly after a beer or ten.

#### Kodomo no Hi 子どもの日

Kodomo no Hi or Children's Day is a Japanese national holiday held on May 5th. Despite its name, it is often referred to as 'Boy's Day' as it is an occasion to give thanks to the good health and growth of young boys. For this day, households commonly display Kintaro dolls, and eat traditional food. In the weeks before, you will see striking displays of koinobori, or carp streamers. These huge cloth carps symbolize courage and power to achieve goals. The koinobori are a symbol for all children.

#### Golden Week ゴールデンウィーク

Although not technically a festival or even a full week, Golden Week contains four public holidays (April 29th, May 4th-6th). This period is the prime

travel period in Japan and is marked by a sharp hike in flight and hotel prices. To avoid crowds and save some yen, travel outside of Japan.

#### Yosakoi Soran Matsuri よさこいそらん祭り

The Yosakoi Soran Festival is a five day dance festival/competition typically held from Wed to Sun in early to mid-June. Hundreds of dance teams from all over Japan descend upon Sapporo and don colourful costumes and parade around Odori dancing all day long, rain or shine. The festival draws in an enormous crowd and turns Sapporo into a very big, vibrant and loud party.

#### Sapporo Natsu Matsuri 札幌夏祭り

The Sapporo summer and beer festival is a good way to kick back and enjoy the summer heat with some good friends and some good beer. For the occasion, much of Odori Park and part of the Sapporo station front are converted into outdoor beer gardens. So grab yourself a table at the garden of your choice, order a beer or a famous beer tower and enjoy the moment.

And if beer is not your thing, grab your yukata and enjoy the Sapporo Bon Odori festival in Odori Park for obon dancing and delicious festival food.

#### Furano Lavender and Fireworks Matsuri

##### 富良野ラベンダー祭りと花火大会

In July, when Furano's lavender are at their peak, come down to Kami and Naka-Furano. Walk around Tomita Farm and enjoy the view of fields of fragrant lavender as well as the Hokkaido famous lavender flavoured ice cream. If you stick around until nightfall, you may even catch the fireworks display.

#### Obon Matsuri お盆祭り

Celebrated on July 15th in the Kanto region, but August 15th here in Hokkaido, the Obon Festival is a Buddhist service in honour of deceased relatives. No longer a solemn religious ceremony, the festival is a joyous occasion. It is believed that during obon, the spirits of the dead return to their homes and are reunited with their loved ones. All over Japan, obon is a time for family and celebration. Many return to their hometowns to spend time with their family. Towns gather for festivities that

include fireworks, traditional bon odori dancing and the Toro Nagashi. On the last night, tradition is to release illuminated lanterns down a river. As they float, the lanterns mark the close of obon and symbolize the spirits returning to the realm of the dead.

#### Noboribetsu Jigoku Matsuri 登別地獄祭り

Come late August, the gates of hell open in the onsen town of Noboribetsu and its streets get taken over by floats and demons for the Noboribetsu Hell Festival. One of the most spectacular festivals in Hokkaido, the Noboribetsu Hell Festival is one that simply cannot be missed.

#### Hakodate Minato Matsuri 函館港祭り

The Hakodate Port Festival in August is a week long and includes a street parade of 10,000 dancers—a perfectly good excuse to head down, have some street food and check out the famous Hakodate mountain night view.



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# OUTDOORS.

If forests, mountains, rivers, and lakes are your thing, then Hokkaido is arguably the best place in Japan for you to be. Hokkaido can be divided into five main regions, when it comes to getting out into nature-- Daisetsuzan National Park, Shikotsu-Toya National Park, Akan National Park, Shiretoko, and Rishiri and Rebun. That being said, nature is hardly out of reach; there is generally something exciting to do within half an hour in any direction, no matter where you are. Whether it be hiking, sailing through the skies, hitting the slopes, or even just relaxing in an onsen, there is always something new to enjoy. The heart of the Hokkaido is in its nature.



Photo by Rehan Nel

## Cycling and Running

Hokkaido is hugely popular for long-distance cycle touring, road, and mountain biking. The best way to join is to get out on one of Hokkaido's many empty roads. Keep an eye out for cycling event posters around your town. With running, as with cycling, you're never more than a week out from an event somewhere in Hokkaido. Check out the website RUNNET for information. Outside of events, running through your town is sure to make you a couple of friends.



## River Sports

River kayaking and canoeing are very popular in Hokkaido. A large number of companies exist to rent equipment and provide guide services, especially near national parks. The Niseko Adventure Centre (NAC) is a good place to start, but consider that outside of Niseko, you'll likely need a passable proficiency at Japanese. There are also several places that offer river sports such as Lake Toya and Tomakomai. To branch out, head towards Yoichi to experience ocean surfing.



## Sky Sports

Hang-gliding, paragliding, sky-diving and gliding are available all over the island. To get yourself started, try checking out JMB Rusutsu paragliding school southwest of Sapporo or the Tokachigawa Nature Centre in Otofuke. Hot air ballooning is also readily available. Kamishihoro, at the south end of Daisetsuzan National Park, holds a Hot-Air Balloon Festival in August. At night, the gas burners light up the balloons – it's spectacular.



## Rock Climbing

This pastime may require some reading. Japanese guidebooks like the 日本100岩場 are solid rock climbing guides, and you can find outdoor climbing areas in Kamui Kotan, Miharashi, Hakodate-yama, and Akaiwa. Indoor climbing gyms are a great place to start climbing. In Sapporo you'll have your choice of gyms at Shugakuso and Whippersnapper, Rainbow Cliff, and NAC. In Asahikawa, you'll find bouldering at Shugakuso and Wall of Early Morning Light.



Photo by Rehan Nel

## Snowsports

The snow sports in Hokkaido are world-class - just ask the droves of Australians that can be found at Niseko every winter. Hokkaido's ski fields are great and generally not too busy, but what sets Hokkaido apart is its powder snow, found plentifully off-piste and in the back country. The season varies in length from year to year, but quality snow can usually be found from December through April. The list of winter activities is extensive. Look at the following page for more info.



## Hiking

If you're new to hiking, its not too late to start. Peaks like Kuro-dake, Asahi-dake, or Meakan-dake, which offer incredible views without tremendous effort. Tougher climbs include Yotei-zan, Rishirifuji, Shari-dake, or Tokachi-dake. If you're looking for more technical mountaineering, consider contacting blogger Leon Roode, the Hokkaido Bush Pig. He's a genial New Zealander with more experience in Hokkaido's back country than almost any other foreigner you're bound to meet.



Besides skiing, snowboarding, and cross-country skiing, there are a variety of snowsports awaiting you in Hokkaido.

### On the Ice

Ice fishing is extremely popular amongst the Japanese, and it is common to see tent villages appear on top of frozen lakes every weekend. Lake Shikaribetsu, in the southern Daisetsuzan foothills, has an elaborate ice bar, ice onsen and (somewhat rudimentary) ice hotel every year, from January to March.

### Ice Climbing

Rock climbers frustrated by the weather might like to give ice climbing a try. There are a number of waterfalls around Hokkaido which freeze in the winter and can be climbed. The season tends to be short, February to March, but the climbs are beautiful. Sounkyo Gorge, Oketo, Maruseppu and Abashiri are good places to head for. Equipment for this sport can be expensive, so you might want to try one of the rock climbing gyms.

### Yuki Gassen

For the slightly more aggressive amongst you, how about a snowball fight tournament? Your team wins by either stealing the other team's flag, or by eliminating other team members with well-aimed, regulation-sized snowballs. There are tournaments in Toya and Tokachi, as well as a smattering of smaller town events. Keep in mind that Japanese teams take these events very seriously, wear uniforms, and train all year.

### Safety and Gear

Plan out your trips ahead of time and prepare to run into some closed trails/roads, and old maps. Let a few friends know where you're headed. Research local websites and ask friends about destinations and trails. Many cities and towns have outdoor clubs and local recreation centre employees who are eager to share information. Even small towns have 'local experts.' There's a lifetime worth of outdoor experiences awaiting you from flowing rivers, rocks to climb, slopes to ski, and landscapes which inspire. Enjoy.

When it comes to shopping for serious outdoor goods, the general consensus is to find the store 'Shugakuso,' which has gear for rock and ice climbing, hiking, camping, skiing, and trail running in stock. More recreational goods can be found at stores like Super Sports Xebio or Sports Depo. These stores can be found in most bigger cities. If you're in the neighbourhood, check out Sapporo Factory-- it hosts a big sporting goods outlet where you'll find brands like Columbia, Haglofs, and Japan's own Montbell. Second-hand shops also have good options for gear.

### Safety and Bear Safety

There is an estimated population of about 2,000 - 3,000 Hokkaido Brown Bears or "Higuma." According to Hifumi Tsuruga, bear researcher at the Southern Hokkaido Wildlife Research Station, there are several things you can do to avoid encounters. Hike in groups. Invest in a bear bell or bear spray. If all else fails in an attack situation, the Higuma, like sharks, have a very sensitive nose, so strike it on the nose. Higuma encounters are still considered very rare; your confidence in your safety will grow with your outdoor experience.

Safety conditions out of our control happen, the following is within your control. Be aware of your surroundings and pay careful attention. These are the common essentials to bring with you on your adventures: Bear spray • Sun protection • Maps from ranger stations • Compass • Cell phone and an extra an battery pack • Water/food • Extra layers and emergency blanket • First aid kit – plus a knife, super glue, duct tape • Headlamp • Fire starter: waterproof matches (preferred) or a lighter • ID and Insurance Card • Good hiking boots.



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# Travel.



## AROUND HOKKAIDO

Hokkaido has a pretty tightly-knit community, but the island itself is deceptively large. Rest assured, whether you intend to or not, you will spend some time travelling around this island of ours. Here are some things to consider.

### Trains

Like everywhere else in Japan, JR is the primary operator of trains in Hokkaido. While the train lines aren't as extensive as they are in other parts of Japan, they will get you to most of the places you want to go. JR runs major hubs in all the big cities such as Sapporo, Asahikawa, Hakodate, and Kushiro. The easiest way to search for train schedules in English is via [HyperDia.com](http://HyperDia.com), or directly from the JR website.

Currently, the Shinkansen only runs from Honshu to Hakodate Station. Instead of bullet trains, Hokkaido has Limited Express trains in addition to the Rapid and Local services, which are slower but cheaper. If you're travelling to and from Sapporo often enough, consider the round-trip tickets that JR offers to save yourself some yen.

At certain times of year, train services will increase in frequency for certain areas in order to boost access for tourism. Examples of this are during the lavender season in Furano, or the crane mating season in Kushiro.

### Buses

There are several bus companies across Hokkaido,

but their websites tend to be confusing and rarely offer information in English. Municipalities and districts often run their own local bus services, as well.

Buses can also make for a good alternative to trains for long-distance travel. For particularly long routes, some overnight bus services are offered as well. Typically, long-distance bus tickets must be purchased in advance online or from the convenience store, which varies by operator. Be advised that the purchasing process will almost certainly be in Japanese, so we recommend asking a friend or staff to confirm that you're heading to the right place.

### Carpooling

Many of your fellow JETs will want to explore the island as well. Chances are good that someone is interested in going in to the same places you are, especially for HAJET meetings or other events. Just remember proper road trip etiquette and chip in for gas and toll fees!

A note about hitch-hiking:

Don't do it. There have been a few popular books about hitch-hiking across Japan which have made their way into regular readership. While hitch-hiking is not explicitly illegal in Japan, please note that HAJET does not condone hitch-hiking in any way. The fact is that, while Japan truly is a safe country compared to many, it is not perfect. Don't take that chance.

## ACCOMMODATION

There are plenty of options for accommodation in Hokkaido, including options that are (relatively) free.

### Tatami Timeshare

A JET-specific couch surfing service, Tatami Timeshare is a recently renewed system which creates a map of places where fellow JETs live and are willing to host travellers. It's a volunteer-run service organized by National AJET which is a great way to see the country on a budget but also meet JETs from around the world.

### Business Hotels

Originally created for businessmen to stay on the cheap during short business trips, there are plenty of hotel chains that offer simple but clean rooms for inexpensive rates. APA Hotel or Dormy Inn are reliable options in larger cities.

The best way to search for hotels and other accommodations is [Jalan.net](http://Jalan.net). As of a few years ago, there is now an English site, but it is known to provide less comprehensive search and somewhat higher prices than its Japanese-language original.

### Camping

Provided you have the right gear and access to a vehicle, camping is a great way to take advantage of Hokkaido's beautiful outdoors and save some coin. Many campgrounds cost less than ¥1,000 per night, and are quite prevalent outside major cities.

Of course, unless your car is big enough to sleep comfortably in, you'll need the minimum of a tent, a sleeping bag, a sleeping pad, and a flashlight. HAJET has tents that members can borrow.

Please remember to be careful with your garbage and keep all food in sealed containers so as to not attract wildlife. Hokkaido is bear-country after all.

## TRAVEL IN JAPAN

### Shinkansen

We have access to the Shinkansen from Hakodate down through Honshu. Prices for the bullet train are not cheap and, unfortunately, JR Rail Passes are not available to residents of Japan. However, the speed of the Shinkansen is certainly something you should experience at least once during your time here. To illustrate, a trip from Hiroshima to Kobe would only take 1.5 hours (compared to 8 hours by local trains) but it will set you back about ¥10,000. Tickets can be purchased at the ticket offices of stations that offer Shinkansen services.

### Ferry

Ferry ports in Tomakomai, Otaru and Hakodate offer services to various locations around Honshu from Aomori to Osaka. Hakodate to Aomori takes around 4 hours and costs about ¥2,000 for a one-way ticket, whereas Otaru to Kyoto would cost around ¥20,000 and take at least 24 hours. Reserve online tickets and pay at the ferry terminal.

## Airlines

Low cost carriers such as Vanilla Air, Peach and Jetstar offer one-way tickets from Sapporo to Tokyo for about ¥5,000 yen. Other airlines like ANA or JAL offer the same trip for ¥10,000 yen or more. Flights are typically booked online with a credit card, though some airlines, such as Peach, allow you to pay at the convenience store.

## TRAVEL ABROAD

Japan's proximity to so many different countries makes this an ideal time for you to explore this part of the world. For those who haven't travelled much or have yet to visit a developing country, here are some things to consider before you head abroad.

### Safety

There are no shortage of great places to visit in this part of the world. New cultures and locales will inevitably provide you with wonderful new experiences as well as with equally new challenges, such as a drastically different diet, a lack of clean drinking water, scams, pick pocketing, or greater potential problems like sexual harassment, political unrest, or uncommon ailments. The best way to mitigate these troubles and overcome any challenges is to arm yourself with knowledge. Research the sort of issues that previous travellers have faced in that region. Check out travel blogs, National Geographic, and make sure to ask any fellow JETs that have travelled abroad (look for the JET-Setters group on Facebook).

Governments regularly post travel advisories regarding outbreaks of illness and political instability on their websites. These advisories are informative and regularly updated. Another excellent resource is, the news. The BBC has information categorized by geographic location. WikiTravel.com is another great website that will provide you with information on safety, transportation, and things to do.

Make photocopies of all your travel documents. Copy your passport, your visa (if required by the nation you're visiting), your driver's license/ID card, boarding passes for all flights, your itinerary, and any other important papers pertaining to your trip. Keep these separate from the actual documents in case they get lost or stolen. Find out if your accommodations have a safe you can use

and do not forget them when you leave. Remember that, as a foreigner, you will likely draw attention. Beware of scams and trust your intuition. In many countries, if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. That's not to say that you should turn down every offer that comes your way, but do be cautious. If you're feeling unsafe at any given time, trust your instincts and go somewhere else.

Lastly, we realize that the above can sound a bit daunting, but don't worry too much. Thousands of JETs travel around the world every year and most don't encounter any serious problems. Enjoy your vacationing!

### Money

Another thing to consider is that some countries do not have financial infrastructures that are as well-developed as you're accustomed to, or they do not have institutions that recognize your bank card. While banking accessibility is improving and ATMs are generally available in large cities, if you plan to leave the beaten path, consider the following.

Here in Japan, being a cash-based society, people regularly carry amounts of cash that are unthinkable in most places around the world. While you may quickly become accustomed to this, it is one habit to leave at home. When travelling in an unfamiliar place, do not carry large quantities of cash if you can avoid it. Get a small, thin wallet to put the bare-essentials in, and carry it in your front pockets. Wallets in the back pocket are the easiest targets for pickpockets. Also consider splitting up your cash into different pockets, or keeping some tucked away inside your suitcase or rucksack as an emergency stash.

It's good practice to carry your back-up money in American travellers' cheques or American currency. American currency is the most widely recognized and easiest to convert to local currencies. Japanese Yen are another option, but you may find it more difficult to find institutions that will accept it. Also, some small-town exchange windows will not accept wrinkled, old, or folded bills, so keep that in mind.

There are other options for currency conversion in some developing nations, such as the local "money changers." Money changers are often sketchy at best and charge heavy interest. However, they are an alternative if you're struggling to find anything else.

# COMMUNICATION

Online services like Skype and Facebook have made talking to your loved ones at home easier than ever, but, for those without access to the internet, or family who have no internet access, international phone plans are a must. Japan has a few international options that will be cheaper than calls from your Japanese mobile service.

- World Link is a direct dial company with no sign-up fee or monthly minimum. Visit: [www.worldlink-tel.com/eintro.html](http://www.worldlink-tel.com/eintro.html)
- Brastel Telecom provides international and domestic calls in Japan and other countries at 24-hour flat rates. The rechargeable prepaid card Brastel Smart Phonecard offers low rates and additional services. See more at: [www.brastel.com/Pages/eng/Home/](http://www.brastel.com/Pages/eng/Home/)

### Internet and Home Phone

If you want to check email and use the internet from home, you'll need a computer with a Local Area Network (LAN) card or 56K modem and a CD drive to install software and a phone line installed in your home.

Internet services can be paid by credit card, auto bank withdraw or convenience store via an invoice. Bank withdraw will require an inkan (registered seal).

There are a few cable internet services, but it can be best to use a phone line. Most ALTs will find a phone line already installed and ready to use in their home.

### Broadband

While 'always on' ADSL services and ultra-high fast fibre optic cable are available in most areas. Broadband connections allow for blazing speed, while paying a flat monthly fee.

In addition to your computer, you'll need a Local Area Network (LAN) card in order to connect an ADSL modem, recent Windows or Mac software and your Resident Card and Passport

Fibre optic internet offers download speeds of up to 100Mbps. For Fibre Optic you can look at B Flet's and Flet's Hikari. On the other hand, between the service fee from NTT and the cost of your ISP, your fibre optic access can run upwards of ¥6,000 a month. Head to <http://bbapply.com/> to help set up your service. It's in English and recommended;

they'll walk you through everything. Here are some points to keep in mind:

- ADSL is gaining ground throughout Hokkaido. ADSL works by splitting your phone line into two separate channels—one for voice traffic and the other for data. You can get ADSL through Flet's ADSL and <http://bbapply.com/>
- ADSL in Hokkaido pretty much comes in three options - 1.5Mbps to 50Mbps. It's best to go with the fastest one available in your area as the cost isn't really that much between services.
- OCN, Yahoo BB, ODN and Plala seem to have the widest service areas. There are, of course, many other local ADSL ISPs as well, so ask around for the best deals.

### Mobile Phone

To purchase a mobile phone you'll need a hanko or official personal seal, your Residents Card, cash, your address and a contact phone number. You may need your Japan Health Insurance Card for ID purposes. A receipt with your address, such as a gas bill, should work too. The easiest way to organise a mobile phone is to ask your supervisor to help you and to explain the multitude of different plans available. The following are the major Japanese networks and their English help lines:

- NTT Docomo: 0120-005-250
- AU: 0077-7-111
- SoftBank: 0088-21-2000 and then press '8'

You can check out their websites first to review the cell phones and service plans so you know what you want ahead of time. As far as coverage in Hokkaido goes, NTT Docomo is considered the best followed by AU then SoftBank, but all three companies offer excellent coverage across most of the island.

Other ALTs may opt to use sim cards from a variety of different sources for unlocked phones brought from home or purchase a used Japanese phone and a sim card later. Another, sometimes, cheaper option is renting a pocket wifi or getting a sim card from one of the major electronics stores, such as Bic Camera or Yodobashi. Talk to other ALTs in your area to get a better idea of phone coverage and options that suit your placement.

# Money.

Japan is primarily a cash-based society, and people carry large amounts of cash on them at all times so you should expect to carry fairly large sums of money as well.

Banking in Japan is traditionally conducted through a post office or a regular bank account. To set up an account, an inkan (personal stamp) is needed. Your office should help you secure an inkan. Post office accounts have the benefit of being available nationwide and the ATMs have English capability for a few basic banking functions. Bank accounts enable you to set up automatic bill payments for utilities, which is a highly recommended. It is also the norm to have your salary directly deposited into your bank account in Japan. However some contracting organizations still distribute payroll via cash, so do not be surprised if you are given an envelope of cash on payday.

ATMs in Japan are NOT available 24 hours. Most open at 9:00am and close between 6:00pm and 9:00pm. ATMs are often closed on national holidays and weekends, so be sure to withdraw plenty of cash if you are traveling over a holiday. The New Year's holiday is especially bad because ATMs are closed most of the whole week. Most major convenience stores boast 24-hour ATMs.

Credit cards are not the most common form of payment. However, many places accept credit cards and their usage is becoming more common. You will have little difficulty using a foreign card as long as it is an international company (i.e. Mastercard, Visa, etc.). However, check with your provider to be sure that your card can be used in Japan. Also, be sure to let your provider know you will be living in Japan, as most credit card companies will flag and stop payment approval as a form of fraud protection.

## Life on a Budget

Japan can be expensive. Luckily, living in Hokkaido is affordable, especially when you live in a smaller town in a rural area. Following a few simple steps will allow you to stretch your income each month.

Making a rough budget for each month covering your monthly expenses will help you to keep track of your spending. Make sure to include rent, phone bills, internet, utilities, food, and travel expenses. Don't forget to factor in a few miscellaneous expenses as you may have an unexpected car expense, tax bills, or household emergencies along with work enkais and parties with friends.

Once you have determined what you need to spend, you can calculate what you can save. Decide what is most important to you. If travelling or paying off loans is your priority, put your money aside for this. How much you save will depend on your lifestyle.

## Transferring Money

### Domestic

Domestic transfers in Japan can be done through a direct bank transfer called furikomi. This service is also available through post office accounts. It usually costs ¥300-700 to transfer money within Japan. You do not need to hold an account with the receiving bank to transfer money into someone else's account, nor is it necessary to hold an account at the Post office to use the money sending services there. Post office personnel are usually very friendly and will not mind helping you with this process.

### International

For international transfers, there are several ways to send money home. The first option is to send money home through the Post Office. There is an English guide that illustrates how to fill out the form and it costs roughly ¥2500 each time you send money. If you

## Yenny Pinching Tips

- While traveling in Hokkaido, try and carpool with other ALTs to offset expensive petrol prices and tolls. The bus is generally cheaper than the train, though both can be pricey for longer distances.
- When flying, try to travel in the tourist off-season. Both Jetstar and Peach Airlines offer discount flights to most destinations. Check discounted websites like: [www.airdo21.com](http://www.airdo21.com), [www.skymark.co.jp](http://www.skymark.co.jp), and [www.airninja.com](http://www.airninja.com).
- Participating or volunteering in activities in your town or school is often an affordable way to have fun. These events are often free and will help you look good in the community.
- If you need some new household things, ask around. Your BoE may be willing to replace certain items. If not, check recycle or second-hand shops like Hard Off and Don Don. In March, during transfer time, some schools even hold sale events, which is a great time to pick up household items, sporting equipment, or camping gear.
- Recycle stores are also an option for sporting

- equipment, clothing, footwear, and accessories with many stocking a range of near new items.
- There are a few ways to make your food budget stretch. In the evenings, as stores will mark down perishable items. Prepared meals (bento) start to be discount around 6pm.
- Supermarkets will often have a discount day for fruits, vegetables, and meats, so plan accordingly. You will also find a discount counter or bin at most supermarkets.
- You can buy some food at the ¥100 shops. It will most likely be limited to snacks.
- When cooking, make bulk servings and freeze them. This also helps on days that you just can't be bothered cooking. Weekly or monthly potluck dinners are another option.
- When dining out, lean towards cheaper options. Avoid hitting up the expensive snack bars too often as they almost always have a cover charge.
- For a bigger night out, look out for tabehodai – all you can eat, and nomihodai – all you can drink, options at restaurants and bars.

save up several months of wages to send home at once or only plan to send money home sporadically this is an excellent option. However this mode of remittance can take anywhere from one to two weeks, so it is advisable to plan accordingly if you are sending money home to make payments on bills or loans.

The second option is using one of the many online services. Each site has its own policy and fees, so read reviews carefully. If you have further questions, ask people in your ALT community. Here are a few of the most popular services:

- GoRemit costs ¥2000, and is free to set up. Your money will be transferred into your account within 24 hours if done after 3pm.
- World Remit costs vary, depending on the amount you plan to send home and the account is free. It can be cheaper for larger transfer amounts.
- Transferwise costs vary and the account is free. They will mail a confirmation to your house. After, the easiest way to send money home is to set up furikomi then transfer through your account.

For more budgeting tips, visit the Sapporo Orientation Dropbox for presentation notes:



# Alphabet Soup

ALT - Assistant Language Teacher

This is probably you! But if you don't teach any classes and find yourself translating Japanese and planning international events, you might be a...

CIR - Coordinator for International Relations. These people are JETs but not ALTs...they have excellent Japanese skills and work really hard!

JET - Japan Exchange and Teaching.

Remember that the "E" isn't for English, and you'll feel lots better.

JTE - Japanese Teacher of English.

Will usually be the person you work most closely with at your school(s). They will plan the lessons and ask you for input and for activities to help learn grammar points, vocabulary, and more.

BoE - Board of Education.

This is often your contracting organisation (CO), but every situation is different. It is known in Japanese as the "kyouikuiinkai".

CO - Contracting Organisation

The people who hired you and pay you and expect things of you.

AJET - Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching

The national JET organisation. They do JET stuff on a national level, mostly through their participation at Tokyo Orientation, as well as their Opinion Exchanges. Check out their website, [www.ajet.net](http://www.ajet.net) for details.

HAJET - Hokkaido Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching

The Hokkaido chapter of AJET a nonprofit organisation that aims to support JETs in Hokkaido, and sponsors and organises various events for JETs and private ALTs. Check out our website for details [www.hajet.org](http://www.hajet.org)

HAJET PC - HAJET Prefectural Council

The volunteer governing body for HAJET. They organise events such as welcome parties, meetings, and manage the money, which is used to sponsor events like HEC.

HEC - Hokkaido English Challenge.

An English competition run by ALTs for their students.

Douchou - Hokkaido Prefectural Government. The big wigs and supporting essential staff that oversee the running of Hokkaido and help us out from time to time. This is where your PA spends most of his/her days.

PA - Prefectural Advisor

Works at the Douchou as a CIR and PA. The PA is a support contact for JETs. Get to know your PA!

PTA - Parent Teacher Association

These parents can wield a lot a power at your school, so here's another good place to make friends. It is a group of interested parents and teachers that meet and discuss things relevant to the students and school.

JLPT - Japanese Language Proficiency Test

Held twice a year in December and July. There are five levels, with level N5 being the lowest. An internationally recognised measure of Japanese language proficiency, hence the name.

CLAIR - Council for Local Authorities for International Relations.

They administer the JET Programme and operate the CLAIR JET Line, which fields questions from all over Japan about the programme. The CLAIR PCs (Program Coordinators) are all former JETs, so they can pretty much answer anything you ask!

MEXT - Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

As in a government ministry responsible for all these things. They also help administer the JET Programme.

MIC - Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication

These guys are the ones that give you your internal exam. Don't worry it won't hurt a bit.

MOFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

One of the three ministries that administers the JET Programme.



LOOKING FOR SOME INFO? VISIT...

## THE SAPPORO ORIENTATION DROPBOX



**FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE ALL RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE.**

Follow the QR code to access all materials and handouts from the Sapporo Orientation panels and workshops.

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# CREDITS

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## THANK YOU!

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