

# HOKKAIDO NEWCOMERS GUIDE



2018



HOA



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# 2018 HOKKAIDO NEWCOMER'S GUIDE

## CONTENTS

HAJET	5
Events	12
Life in Japan	15
A Day in the Life of a CIR	20
Queer Hokkaido	24
Transport	26
In the Home	30
Japanese Language Study	32
Health and Well-Being	34
Food	36
Teaching	40
Festivals	45
Outdoors	48
Travel	52
Communication	55
Money	56
The Japanese Office	58
Alphabet Soup	59
Credits	62

### Editor's Message

A big warm welcome to Hokkaido! This time last year, I started off my own adventure with this guide. I soon discovered that ALTs/CIRs have a knack for finding the most interesting places and rewarding sights. The HNG is our way of recording and passing down all the best of what we have experienced and want others to experience too. We asked the ALT and CIR community to contribute to the creation of this book and they came up with tips on where to find the most breath-taking views, jaw-dropping festivals and the freshest sushi this side of Shakotan. It also includes lots of handy tips to help you in the coming days and months. As an organisation, we are always here for you and will do our best to support you through your JET experience. Now, get out there and have a blast!

**HAJET Publications Coordinator**  
**Sonia Chand**

Welcome to Hokkaido! I'm T.J. Wissick, and I have the pleasure of being your Prefectural Advisor this year. I began my time here in 2016 as an ALT in Naie. 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. I'm incredibly excited to join you all in this new capacity, and I can't wait to see what amazing things we'll get up to in the coming year. Japan, specifically Hokkaido, is an incredible place with tons to do and see. I hope you all find ways to make the most out of your time here, and ways to make this experience uniquely yours. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you have. I'm never more than a LINE message, email, or extradimensional subspace SOS beacon transmission away!



**Terrence Wissick**  
**Coordinator for International Relations & Prefectural Advisor, Hokkaido Government**  
**terrence.wissick@pref.hokkaido.lg.jp**  
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**Rachel Grant**  
**Coordinator for International Relations & Sapporo City Advisor**  
**rachel.grant@fel.city.sapporo.jp**

I'm excited to be taking on the role as one of the PAs in Sapporo. My first two years were spent as a senior high school ALT. I fell in love with Sapporo during an exchange trip in high school. The delicious food, relaxed people, and abundant nature reminded me so much of my hometown, Portland, Oregon. During that trip, we attended school, stayed with host families, and even helped carve one of the ice sculptures in the snow festival. I always knew I wanted to come back to this amazing city. In college, I had three-month long internship in Tokyo. I graduated with a degree in both Economics and Japanese and a minor in Asian Studies from the University of Oregon. My favorite things to do in Hokkaido are eating curry, studying kanji, hiking mountains, and checking out new coffee shops. よろしくお願ひします!

Hello, Hokkaido! My name is Matthew Trojic (pronounced tro-YEECH) and I am a second year JET based in Daisen City, Akita Prefecture. I ran for this position because I want to encourage JETs in northern Japan to socialize across prefectural lines. I live in a small town called Omagari that is famous for its seasonal firework displays. I am excited to organize as many events as I can to encourage JETs from block 1 to meet, and hope to meet some of you during the AJET enkai in Sapporo that is planned for next year's snow festival. With my Japanese adventure just beginning, I hope to meet as many of you as I can. Given my obsession for all things dairy, I have a feeling that I will like Hokkaido when I do come and visit, though fair warning: I am generally inept when it comes to (winter) sports but enjoy trying!



**Matthew Trojic**  
**National AJET Block 1 Rep**  
**matthew.trojic@ajet.net**



# HAJET

## WHO WE ARE

**H**AJET 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*.

### The 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 HNG 2018

the grand prize winner receives a fully funded home stay in an English-speaking country of their choice. HAJET is HEC's parent organisation.

### 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

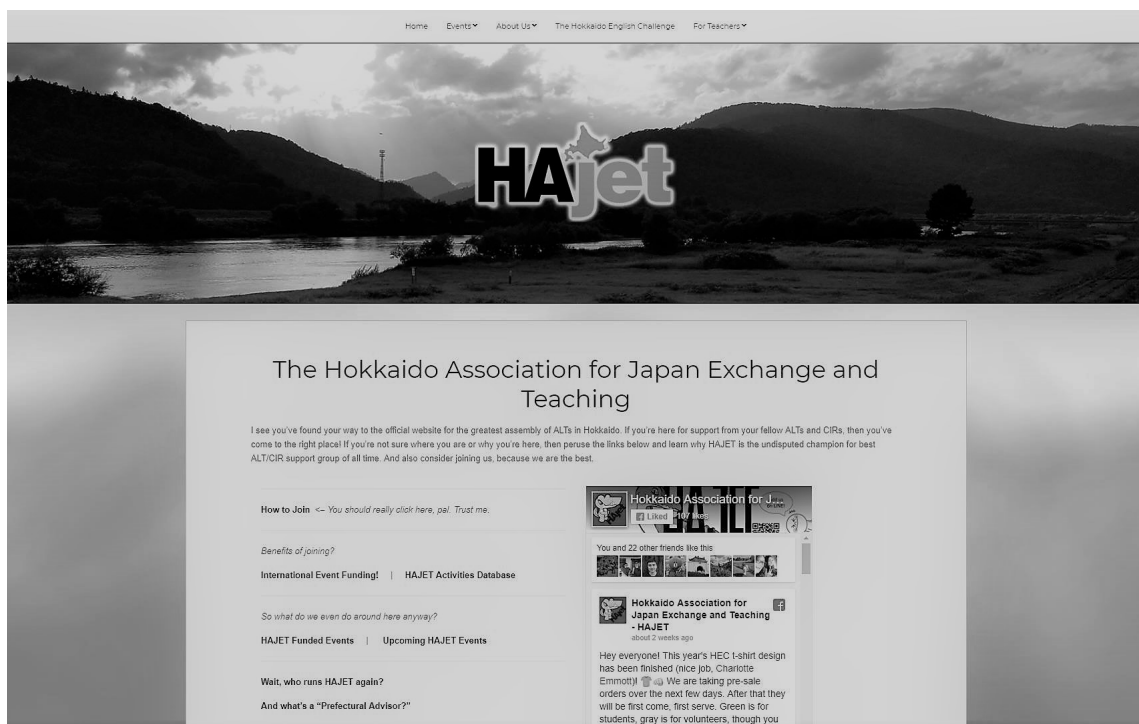
With many ALTs from around Japan visiting the famous Sapporo Snow Festival, HAJET helps them experience Hokkaido's winter wonderland.

### 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 - [www.hajet.org](http://www.hajet.org)

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 Group

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. It's also great for getting an immediate response if you have a pressing question. 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 as you and are faced with the same challenges. 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 enkai (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



Hello there! Welcome to the world of HOKKAIDO! This prefecture is inhabited by both Japanese people and other FOREIGNERS like yourself. Japanese people and foreigners live together in peace. Some work together, some hang out together as friends. But we don't know everything there is to know about each other yet. There are still many differences for us to learn. That's why I've chosen to live here and promote cultural exchange with them every day.

New JET, are you ready? Your very own JAPAN story is about to unfold. You'll face fun times and tough challenges. A world of dreams and adventure in Japan awaits! I hope you enjoyed that little homage to Pokemon. Gold version was actually the first game I ever owned. My hobbies aside, I'm Devan Hawkins, a 2nd year ALT in the western countryside of Hokkaido. When I was a child, I dreamed of setting out on my own adventure, seeing a new part of the world with nothing but dreams and an open mind. After being here for a year, let me tell you that I got my wish and more.

All of you come from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds, each of you with your own story to tell. With that said though, as much as every situation is different, there'll be a few Hokkaido and Japanese things that apply to just about everyone here on the island. There will be times of elation during the first few summer months at festivals, hardship with dealing with certain aspects of the culture, stress or downright HNG 2018

fear of the long winters here and triumph when getting your point across despite language

barriers. These will be a part of everyone's story here, and I'm here to tell you to that it's going to be a wild ride with a little something for everyone if they can handle the lows and sudden twists and turns. These feelings are usually amplified when living alone away from home, so keep doing what you know works for yourself, but be prepared to be taken by surprise every now and again. Sometimes you'll be tired of the constant Japanese or be worn out by your students or feel neglected by your coworkers. And that's where we come in. HAJET is a support network whose goal is to help strengthen the bonds between JETs and their communities and to promote internationalism, but we're also here to help you adjust to your new life. From problems with getting used to how things run here, to suggestions on the best places to go, stay, and eat, to how to survive the long Hokkaido winters, we're here to help. We do these things by having JET meetings and events in the various regions of Hokkaido. These meetings are a chance to go to a new place and reconnect with that one friend you've just made at orientation, and we'd love to have you too! Take care, and welcome to your new home.

Devan Hawkins  
HAJET President



**Devan Hawkins - President**

**G**reetings! My name's Devan, proud Canadian and humble President of HAJET this year. I like onsen, video games, Japanese curry and driving around Hokkaido in my 14-year-old Kei Car. Feel free to contact me anytime at [president@hajet.org](mailto:president@hajet.org) or just knock on my door if you're ever in Furubira-cho in the west. Stay warm, my friends.



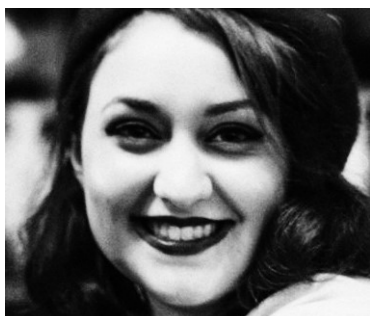
**Derek Moore - Vice President**

**D**ia dhaoibh agus fáilte Dromhaibh go Hokkaido! Derek here, a 3rd year CIR currently living in Niseko, originally from that most Emerald of Isles in the Atlantic, Ireland. As VP for this year I'm looking forward to being involved more with HAJET and hearing from you all at HAJET meetings. An eternal nerd, if you ever need a book recommendation, or gaming partner, or just want to chat, let me know. I'd be more than happy to oblige.



**Nivedh Sreejit - Secretary**

**H**ey gang! I'm Nivedh and I'm your friendly neighbourhood HAJET secretary! I'm writing to you from the smelly and charming city of Monbetsu in the northern (Okhotsk) region of Hokkaido. Apart from HAJET events and the like, you will find me taking pictures, at kendo class or exploring various eats and drinks with other ALT's like you! I'm excited to meet you all at our next event!



**Claire Bate-Roullin - Treasurer**

**H**i everyone! My name is Claire (or Kiki) and I'm the 2018-2019 treasurer for HAJET. I'm from London originally but you'll currently find me living in the south western town of Yoichi, known for its whiskey, apples and wine. In the day you can find me running after small kids and doing high speed renditions of head shoulders knees and toes whilst in the evenings you can find me running to catch the last train and badly singing Britpop songs at karaoke. Looking forward to meeting you all!



**Charlotte Emmott - Eastern Rep**

**S**UP YALL! I'm your Eastern Rep this year - the name's Charlie. I LIKE CATS AND I YELL A LOT!! I'm a 3rd year JET living in Tokoro, Kitami but I originally hail from the vast land of Canada. You can hear my booming laugh anywhere on the island, and I speak fluent sailor (sorry, Mom). I've never been much for sports or outdoorsy stuff, so if you're looking for an art buddy, I'm your gal! LET'S BE FRIENDS YO.



**Adriana Garcia - Sapporo Rep**

**G**reetings! My name is Adriana Garcia (Nana-sensei to the students) and I am the Sapporo Rep. Hailing from snowy deserts and mountains of Northern Nevada I have come to Sapporo to teach high school! I started my journey in Japan as an exchange student in the Kansai area where I developed a reputation for traveling every weekend. I've slowed down since then, but you can still catch me going on a one-day trip to literally anywhere or just downtown for karaoke or an arcade.



# MEET THE HAJET PREFECTURAL COUNCIL



**Max Turner -**

**Northern Rep**

**H**ello hello! 2017-18 Northern Rep, Max, here. I'm a British JET living in Nayoro. Last August, I moved to Hokkaido from a county called Essex, known for fields, farms and a fake tan fuelled TV program. Nowadays, you'll find me keen to join in any gatherings where beer or rugby is concerned, bubbling away in an onsen like a sexy fat slab of pork in a ramen bowl or bumming a lift around our beaut of an island to go skiing, camping or having a good old time.



**Hillary Robinson-**

**Social Coordinator**

**H**ey everyone! My name is Hillary and I'm your new 2018-2019 social coordinator! I'm a first year ALT in Abashiri, a small town in Eastern Hokkaido known for their Prison museum and the drift ice. While some may find the town small it's much bigger than what I'm used to! I'm originally from Kentucky, a state with an abundance of farms and horses. While Abashiri and Kentucky have many similarities, they are still rather different. So, I love exploring all that the area has to offer!

HNG 2018



**Brad Breiten - Central Rep**

**H**ello all! My name is Brad. Please call me Brad. I am a third year ALT based in Iwamizawa-shi, and I am also your HAJET Central Region representative. I believe that community involvement is the key to building a home for ourselves here in Hokkaido. If you need anything, please ask!



**Sonia Chand -**

**Publications Coordinator**

**H**ey! I'm Sonia, a first year JET from the bustling city of Glasgow. Now, I live in the town of Yoichi which I call 'little Scotland', being the home of Japanese whiskey and Soran Bushi. My hobbies include, salsa dancing, volunteering and watching horror movies with a wonderful lady from my BOE. This winter, I tried snowshoeing for the first time and I'm keen to keep it up! I also love meeting up with my new Hokkaido friends and getting up to all sorts of shenanigans.



**Koji Umezawa -**

**Southwestern Rep**

**H**ello First-Years! My name is Koji Umezawa and I am this year's South-Western Representative for HAJET. I'm originally from Toronto and have been in Noboribetsu for the past year. Noboribetsu is famous across Japan for its hot springs, as well as its Hell Festival in August. I always try to get some Karaoke in at any HAJET event I go to and am always looking for people to play board games with! I'm looking forward to seeing you throughout the year and hope you can make it up for Jigoku-matsuri!



**Andrew Kaz -**

**Social Media Coordinator**

**H**iiiiiii, everyone, my name's Andrew Kaz! While I've come to Hokkaido by way of Boston, I'm originally from West Virginia in the US, and am currently an ALT out east in the foggy city of Kushiro! I'm looking forward to meeting you all at any of our events, so feel free to drop me a line if you have any questions or just want to chat (especially about Utada Hikaru). See youuuuu!



Adam Gentle - Bookseller



Kyle Willits - Webmaster



Kristofer Hammer - Translator

Hey, folks! I'm Adam, and I live in the crabby Northern city of Monbetsu. I'm from Idaho in the US, and this is my fifth year on JET. I really dig hiking, fishing, snowboarding, reading, and getting super nerdy about punk and metal records. I'm down for nearly any adventure Hokkaido has to offer, so let me know if you need a buddy, or just somebody to English at. I've also got an entire wall filled with over 1000 English books for sale, so hit me up at [bookseller@hajet.org](mailto:bookseller@hajet.org) and head to the HAJET website for the full list.

Hello everyone! My name is Kyle Willits, HAJET's new webmaster. I live in the smallest city in Japan, Utashinai. Prior to JET I was a web developer for about five years. However, I wanted to escape the corporate world and do something I could look back on and be proud of. I returned to school, changed careers, and here I am! In my free time I practice Kyuudo or I wander the Hokkaido countryside and take photos. If you have suggestions or complaints about the site, please

Hello and welcome to デッカイドウ~!!! I am Kris your official HAJET translator for 2018-2019. I live in Takikawa, the center of the Sorachi area, and am entering my 4th year this summer. From Seattle so I know of snow but not what to do with it. I love traveling Japan and am generally gone every break when able. I am big into Showa era music (and am crap at finding what I like) and doing ceramics and a bit of Shamisen. If you have any questions on anything please hit me up.



### MEET WANI!

Wani is the lovable HAJET mascot. Wani started as a tough but lovable creature (see page 62), before becoming the more realistic Wani you see above. You can find Wani on a range of merchandise at HAJET events.



Alex Reyes-  
Polestar Editor

Hi, I'm Alex. I am the Polestar Editor and to be 2nd year JET. I spend my off-time taking photos. If you're interested in writing for the Polestar feel free to contact me!



# 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 HNG 2018



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).

### Testimonial

"HEC is a blast. I can say without hesitation that it's been the most rewarding experience I've had as an ALT. It has allowed me to work closely with my own students throughout the school year, as well as build great relationships with them in the process. At HEC camp, I got to know the most enthusiastic and talented English students on the whole island of Hokkaido! What's special about HEC is that it's run 100% by ALTs -- which is what gives us the latitude to make camp so awesome for our students...and for ourselves!"

*-Benjamin Lee, 2018 HEC Coordinator*

# EVENTS CALENDAR

## August 八月 hachi-gatsu

Sapporo Summer Festival  
July 20 - August 17, Sapporo.

Fukushi-kyosan Sapporo Odori Beer Garden  
Sapporo's Odori Park becomes filled with beer! July 20 - August 17, Odori Park.

Sounkyo Fire Festival  
If you miss the one on Asahidake this one also happens, July 29 to August 15, Sounkyo.

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

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

Niseko Tanabata Fireworks Festival  
August 4th

Setana Isabiri Matsuri  
August 4-5th, Setana, Hokkaido

Otobe Marine Festival  
Takes place at a sea pool. Literally a pool in the sea. August 5th

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

Esashi Ubagami Festival  
August 9-11, Esashi, Hokkaido.

Mori Natsu Matsuri  
August 8, Morimachi, Hokkaido.

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

Erimo Todai Festival  
A summer festival with a huge fireworks display. August 14- 16, Erimo, Hidaka.

Shikabe Matsuri and Hanabi  
August 18, Shikabe, Hokkaido

**HAJET Northern Welcome Party**  
**August 25-26, Location: Ottoineppu**  
**Contact: Max Turner, email: [northern.rep@hajat.org](mailto:northern.rep@hajat.org)**

Noboribetsu Hell Festival  
August 25-26, Noboribetsu

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 inkari/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

**HAJET Eastern Welcome Party**  
**September 1-2, Location: Lake Akan**  
**Contact: Charlotte Emmott, email: [eastern.rep@hajat.org](mailto:eastern.rep@hajat.org)**

Nemuro Kani Matsuri (Crab Festival)  
September 2-3, Nemuro Port

Furano Wine Festival  
September 2, Furano Ekimae Park.

**HAJET Central Welcome Party**  
**September 8-9, Location: Shimukappu**  
**Contact: Brad Breiten, email: [central.rep@hajat.org](mailto:central.rep@hajat.org)**

TOBIU Camp  
Outdoor Art and Music Festival. September 8 and 9, Tobiu Art Community (飛生アートコミュニティー). Info: <http://tobiucamp.com>

Tabi Marche  
The North Hokkaido Food Festival in Asahikawa. September 15-17

Sapporo Autumn Fest  
What: Open-Air Beer Garden and Food Stalls  
September 7 - 30. , Odori Park.

Biei Century Ride  
Cycling 25km, 30km, 60km, 100km; registration required. September 22-23, Biei-cho Sports Centre.

Rally Hokkaido Races  
September 14-16, various stages throughout Tokachi. Contact: [www.rally-hokkaido.com](http://www.rally-hokkaido.com)

Kiraway Fun Trail Run 71.4km  
September 28-30, Kiraway Trail (Nemuro area-Lake Mashu area).  
Contact: [www.kiraway.net](http://www.kiraway.net)

Nemuro Sanma Matsuri (Saury Festival)  
September 22-23, Nemuro Port

Furano Cheese Festival  
September 16, Furano Cheese Factory, Furano.

**HAJET Southwestern Welcome Party**  
**September 15-16, Location: TBC**  
**Contact: Koji Umezawa, email: [southwestern.rep@hajat.org](mailto:southwestern.rep@hajat.org)**

Nakagawa Fall Festival  
A festival with a maruta-hoshi contest. It's like tug-of-war, but played with a log instead of a rope. Late September, Nakagawa.

**HAJET Sapporo Welcome Party**  
**September 22, Location: Sapporo**  
**Contact: Adriana Garcia, email: [sapporo.rep@hajat.org](mailto:sapporo.rep@hajat.org)**

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

### TO-DO:

Apply online for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) – the test is on Sunday, December 2, 2018. Application period: approximately September 1 – October 1, 2018.

## October 十月 juu-gatsu

**HAJET Fall/Autumn Meeting**  
**October 20-21, Obihiro.**  
**Contact: HAJET Vice President, Email: [vp@hajat.org](mailto:vp@hajat.org)**

### TO-DO:

Last chance for snow-free activities!  
Start making winter holiday plans.



# EVENTS CALENDAR

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

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

### 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

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

Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)  
Sunday December 2 2018, Asahikawa, Sapporo

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

Memambetsu 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  
Three ropes Tug-of-War Tournament on the snow and ice.  
Date TBC around January 21, Atsuma-cho

Furano Kan Kan Mura  
Snow Festival in Furano. January to mid-March

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

Third and final school term starts  
January 12 - 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)

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## 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

Sapporo Yuki Matsuri  
Odori Site, Susukino Site: February 4–11. Tsudome Site: January 31-February 11.  
Web: [www.welcome.city.sapporo.jp](http://www.welcome.city.sapporo.jp)

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 (various locations including the canal and old train tracks).

**HAJET Winter Meeting**  
**February 23-24, Asahikawa. Contact: HAJET Vice President, Email: [vp@hajet.org](mailto: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)

# EVENTS CALENDAR

## 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 HAJET: the competition begins! Good luck!

## May 五月 go-gatsu

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

May 5 - Kodomonohi, Children's Day - carp streamers Golden Week! Get out of town.  
Hanami (Blossom viewing drinking parties). Cherry-blossom 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.

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

## HAJET Summer Meeting

Late June, Location TBC. Contact: [vp@hajet.org](mailto: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

A fire festival held in the small coastal village of Furubira. Second weekend of July every year, Furubira.

Kamifurano Lavender and Fireworks Festival

This is 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 (O-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.

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](http://www.hajet.org) and the facebook group.



Photo credits: Nivedh Sreejit

# 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 one of the stools. Clean yourself thoroughly, but don't worry if you finish before the other people. Many people take their





Photo credits: Colette English

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.

## 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 will 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 so well with socks on underneath. 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

Your 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.

There are many positives to life 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. People will be likely to know who you are, even if you haven't met them before. You are likely to be the only foreigner for miles, which will add to your superstar status at school and around town. Friendships with your co-workers are almost a 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.

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Photo credits: Catrina Caira

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. This is 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. Western products are likely to be unheard of. Online shopping is your friend.

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

**P**redecessors 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)



Photo credits: Adam Gentle

### 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.

# 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. Ádh mór oraibh! 皆様、頑張ってくださいね。

## 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 I think may be the most different and 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. And 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, a very important thing here. 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. Also, keep in mind that with such an open plan others can see if you try and skive off.

### Greetings

Now this might vary amongst offices but in general there is always a start of the day greeting headed by the head of each division to their respective divisions at the start of the day and the end. 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 (ないぎん). This is actually considered quite important and all members are expected, if they can, to attend as it is basically the way in which everyone informs the division and keeps everyone in the loop. 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 not only in your division but also 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 for all in the division to attend and sometimes a bit of pressure as well. There is no real advice I can give, besides trying 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 that you are being 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 SURVIVAL 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). And 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

## Telephone Manner: Useful phrases

### Japanese

お待たせしました

\_\_\_\_課/\_\_\_\_役場/市役所でございます

失礼しますが、どちら様ですか

すみません、もういちど名前/メール/  
電話番号を教えてくださいませんか

かしこまりました/ 了解します

少々お待ちください

電話を変えます

申し訳ございません、ただいま\_\_\_\_

しております

了解します、お伝い致します

### English

Apologies for keeping you waiting.

This is \_\_\_\_ Division/ \_\_\_\_ Town Hall/ City Hall.

I'm sorry, but may I ask who is calling?

I'm sorry, can I get your name/ email/ phone number again.

I understand.

Please wait a moment.

I'll connect you.

I'm sorry they are currently \_\_\_\_.

I understand, I'll let them know.

complicated as it might seem, the way keigo is structured actually allows you to get away with a rather scripted piece.

### Tips:

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.

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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. And though from the outside it may appear easy, you'll find it can be far 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 painfully 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. Never be afraid to ask!

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 a calm and affable air about yourself.

In business meetings and conferences, this is particularly 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 and what is important will change with each text. Official and legal texts will need far more technical and no-nonsense language than a notice for a local festival which would seem strange with stiff and formal language. Always weigh up the function and target of your translation.

In terms of interpreting, this means speaking clearly and in an appropriate manner. For example, at a conference or meeting more formal language may be needed. 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 not panic if you aren't perfect at it from the start. You'll get there. Just keep practising and it'll all work out.

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.

Merchandise

# Shuntz Adventure

Hokkaido, Japan

Gaukhar Ryshmanova



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

# 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! (<http://stonewalljapan.org/Hokkaido/>) In addition, you can sign up for the newsletter to get monthly updates on local and national LGBTQ+ events and news by emailing [stonewallHokkaido@gmail.com](mailto:stonewallHokkaido@gmail.com)

## 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 Rebun 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. I am unsure of how accepting many of the gay bars are to FtMs. 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! (But they are also listed below for you to check out yourself!).

Note that 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

HNG 2018



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: Search: “Stonewall Japan” and “Stonewall Hokkaido&Tohoku”.

### **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://](https://www.facebook.com/dpinsapporo1/)

[www.facebook.com/dpinsapporo1/](https://www.facebook.com/dpinsapporo1/) Twitter:@dpinsapporo1

## **LGBT Run Businesses**

### **Wakamusha 若武者**

A yakitori/izakaiya well known for the cheery 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/wakamusha/>

### **Daisy's**

An Australian influenced cafe. Great for light meals and desserts. Hours/Days: Sun, Tu, W, Thu: 11:00-17:00, Fri/Sat: 11:00-23:00. Address: 28 Chome-2-6 Ōdōrinishi, Chūō-ku, Sapporo-shi, 064-0820.

### **Cloud9.Hokkaido**

A Queer friendly Bar Restaurant. Hours/Days: 17:00-2:00, Fri-Sat. Su, Mon, W, Thu: 17:00-1:00. They have vegetarian options. Address: Chuo-ku, Minami 3-jo Nishi 7 Chome, 3-2 | F Dress 7 Bldg, 3F, Sapporo 060-0062.

### **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.

# TRANSPORT

## 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](http://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

### Useful Words

#### English

By express train  
By slow/local train  
Change (trains)  
Express  
Fare adjustment  
Fare box  
Full  
  
Information  
Platform  
Railway station  
One-way  
Sleeper  
Subway  
Ticket  
Ticket – Reserved  
Ticket – Return  
Ticket – Unreserved  
Train

#### Japanese

Tokkyuu 特急  
Futsuu 普通  
Nori kae 乗り換え  
Kyuukou 急行  
Seisan jo 精算所  
Ryoukin bako 料金箱  
Mannin 満人  
Manseki 満席  
Annai 案内  
Noriba 乗り場  
Eki 駅  
Katamichi 片道  
Shindaisha 寝台車  
Chikatetsu 地下鉄  
Kippu 切符  
Shitei seki 指定席  
Oufuku 往復  
Jiyuu seki 自由席  
Densha 電車  
Kisha 汽車  
Nan-bansen 何番線

What platform?

## Useful Phrases

### English

A return ticket to (...) please.

Could you change my ticket?

Does this train stop in (...)?

I'd like to reserve a seat.

Is this the right platform for (...)?

Is this the train going to (...)?

What platform do I use for the (...) train?

When does the train for (...) leave?

Where is the bus station?

### Japanese

(...) made oufuku de ichimai kudasai.

(...)まで往復で一枚ください。

Kippu o kaite moraemasu ka? 切符を改訂もらえますか?

Kono densha wa (...) ni tomarimasu ka?

この電車は(...)にとまりますか?

Seki o hitotsu yoyaku shitai desu.

席を一つ予約したいです。

Koko wa (...) yuki no hoomu desu ka?

ここは(...)行きのホームですか?

Kono densha wa (...) yuki desu ka?

この電車は(...)行きですか?

(...) yuki no densha wa nan ban noriba desu ka?

(...)行きの電車は番乗り場ですか?

(...) yuki no kisha wa nanji ni shuppatsu shimasu ka?

(...)行きの電車は何番乗り場ですか?

Basu taaminaru wa doko desu ka?

バスターミナルはどこですか?

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 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 Chikatetsusenyō 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 HNG 2018

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.





Photo credits: Ryan Gilbride

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 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. 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.

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

# 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. Use it if you like your water extremely hot.

## Gas ストーブ (Heater)

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 a water fountain behind the water heater, 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 but remember: before you turn on the main valve, remember to shut off all the valves and faucets you opened.

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 on the windows. If you have double-paned windows, and storm windows, this is not necessary.

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 up. 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

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.



## Tatami

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 already 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. Best to do it on collection day rather than two days before. 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.



Photo credits: Ryan Gilbride

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 vibrant, multi-colored poster for 'THE NORTH HOKKAIDO FOOD FESTIVAL TABE MARCHE 2018'. The text is in a playful, hand-drawn style. The festival dates are '15TH &amp; 16TH SEPTEMBER 10AM - 6PM' and '17TH SEPTEMBER 10AM - 5PM'. The poster features several circular inset images: a woman in a blue uniform, a tray of small round pastries, a tray of fried food, a group of people in traditional Japanese attire playing taiko drums, and a close-up of a piece of fried food. The background is a collage of various food items and festival scenes.

Tabé Marche is the largest food festival in Northern Hokkaido.

Every year, food lovers travel to Asahikawa to sample dishes from around 300 vendors, many of whom source their produce locally.

Be amazed as vendors serve up culinary surprises, some of which are offered at affordable prices of only 200 yen!

Visitors can also enjoy live music throughout the day.

Featuring a variety of performances by taiko drum bands and local folk artists.

ASAHIKAWA EKIMAE PLAZA, KAIMONO KOEN, TOKIWA PARK (close to the JR station)

E-mail: [marche@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp](mailto:marche@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp)

# 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** – A quiz based study method for grammar, kanji, and also Japanese prefectures. May not be compatible with Mac operating system.



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.

## THE 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/>.



# Come and visit the den!

The best place to meet people in Asahikawa for more than a decade! No charge, good food, 20 kinds of beer, free pool and darts.

We need to enjoy!

## the den

International Bar in Asahikawa and den conversation.

**Asahikawa**  
2 Jyo, 7 Chome,  
(2-3 Naka-dori),  
Yoshitake 2 Bld,  
5th floor.  
Ph: 0166-27-0899



# HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**M**aintaining 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 a local doctor through your supervisor, or visit your local hospital. 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 when seeing the doctor. You should always take your health insurance card (seifu kansho kenko hoken or hokensho) with you when you visit the doctor. 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.

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 specific problem, 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 Sekijuji 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, HNG 2018

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/qq01fnlngsp.asp](http://www.qq.pref.hokkaido.jp/qq/qq01fnlngsp.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 doesn'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 HNG 2018

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

**F**ood 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.

## Buying 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** - Located in the basement of the Esta building in Sapporo Eki, in Shin-Sapporo Eki, and now in Aeon near Asahikawa Eki, Jupiter offers coffee and treats from many different lands. If you're yearning for some Tim Tams, Haribo or jalapenos, Jupiter is a good bet. They stock a good selection of ingredients for cooking and baking, such as coconut milk, oatmeal, lasagna sheets, and flour.

**Kaldi Farm** - Kaldi Farm stores are in several locations in Hokkaido, 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 cheese, salami, sausages and antipasto.

**Costco** - Founded in America, but now found around the world, Costco gives you warehouse style shopping for a membership fee of ¥4200 a year. They stock both foreign and Japanese food. Most goods come in larger quantities than you would see at your local supermarket, so remember

how big your fridge and freezer are before you get carried away. You can buy furniture, computers, clothes, and cleaning stuff there too. As a member, you can take up to two guests in with you, but all items must be purchased together. Get together a posse, an empty car, and stock up on your favourites. It also has a food outlet which sells pizza, bulgogi bake and hot dogs.

**Carrot** - Located in Shin-Sapporo and Chitose, Carrot is a restaurant supply store that has lots of foods that will bring a smile to a homesick dial. As Carrot is aimed at restaurants, many of the items are in larger quantities.

**Department Stores** - Most of the big depato (department stores) such as Tokyu, Mitsukoshi, Seibu, and Robinsons, just to name a few, will have a basement floor of food shops that may include foreign foods.

**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.

**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.

## Online Shopping

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

The Foreign Buyers Club was set up by two Americans who moved to Kobe in Japan and missed the comforts of home. They offer a huge array of foreign foods complete with home delivery. Along with their regular range, they offer seasonal items and often have foods on sale.







# SHINMA SUSHI



## SEASONAL MENU (SUSHI)

¥ 3 7 8 0 (TAX INCLUSIVE)

INCLUDES FREE SOUP

A JAPANESE-STYLE SOUP MADE WITH THE STOCK DRAWN FROM  
PRAWNS AND BONITO

THIS SEASONAL MENU USES CAREFULLY SELECTED INGREDIENTS  
THAT CAN ONLY BE SOURCED IN FURUBIRA.  
WE HOPE TO PUT SMILES ON OUR CUSTOMERS FACES  
AND LET THEM KNOW THE APPEAL OF LOCAL INGREDIENTS WITH THIS UNIQUE MENU.

SELECTIVELY CHOSEN FISH CAUGHT IN THE EASTERN SHAKOTAN  
THE FRESHEST SEAFOOD IN JAPAN.

MENU PACKED FULL OF SEASONAL LOCAL FLAVOUR

13 SHINCHICHO, FURUBIRA-CHO, FURUBIRA-GUN 046-0112, HOKKAIDO.

### **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!

### **Brits buy – [www.britsbuy.com](http://www.britsbuy.com)**

If you're desperate for some PG tips or have a hankering for some Quavers, then this site may have what you're after.

### **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, tasty and inexpensive vegetarian ingredients available in Japan, Japanese vegetarians are few and far between. Vegetarians can expect to get a lot of questions from their Japanese dining companions. It can be hard to find vegetarian and vegan options at restaurants, as most Japanese dishes include some type of meat or seafood. Even those that seem vegetarian friendly have often been made with a fish or meat stock. This means that being a vegetarian or vegan in Japan can be challenging.

### **Eating In**

When you are cooking for yourself, you can enjoy delicious vegetarian food. Vegetables and tofu are easy to buy and come in a vast array of different varieties. Unfortunately, it can be hard to get some vegetarian staples that you may be used to from home. Stocking up through foreign food stores will help keep you happy. But while you might have to skip the nut-loaf, there are a variety of new things to try that are vegetarian friendly.

Natto is a great addition to a vegetarian diet, for those who acquire a taste for it.

Tofu comes in a wide range of styles including kinugoshidofu (soft), momendofu (firm), (dried), aburaage (fried), gomadofu (sesame-flavoured), tamagodofu (made with egg) and tonyu (soy milk).

Tsukemono, or pickled vegetables, are also a good way to add some extra vegetables and added flavour to your meals.

### **Eating Out**

School lunch is an area that will be difficult for vegetarians. Most school lunches contain meat in at least one of the dishes and the 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.

Eating out with friends and co-workers when food is being shared will also be difficult. If you are comfortable stretching your dietary restrictions and eating some seafood, you will find it much easier to eat out.

While eating out can be difficult, it is also fun. There are lots of meat-free foods in Japanese restaurants, but lots of things to watch out for, too. Remember, meats like ham, sausage, bacon, and seafoods, are often not considered meat, so be specific when asking if something contains niku (meat). Also, you may find restaurants are not in the habit of catering to their customers' dietary demands, so requests for no meat may be seen as strange.

If you are eating out, some safe menu and combini items include:

Ume onigiri - rice balls with sour plums, wrapped in seaweed.

Nattomaki - fermented soybean sushi rolls

Inarizushi - rice in fried tofu pockets

Agedashidofu - fried tofu

Hiyayako - chilled tofu

Yuudofu - tofu boiled with kombu

Edamame - boiled and salted soybeans

Koroke - fried potato patties

Kappamaki - cucumber and wasabi sushi

Nattomaki - fermented soybean sushi

Yamago - egg, rice and a band of seaweed

Noodles like soba - thin buckwheat noodles, udon - thick wheat noodles and somen - thin wheat noodles, are vegetarian friendly on their own, but 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, takikomigohan - rice made with vegetables and stock.



Photo credits above and opposite: Max Turner

## Guide to Japanese Ingredients

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	あずき	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	Ginko 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	こんにゃく	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



# TEACHING

## GETTING STARTED

Your first few days, weeks and months as an ALT will quickly pass by in a blur. But, it is important to do your best to get off to a good start.

On your first days, be prepared for highs and lows. Make sure to bring a short introductory speech in Japanese, meishi (business cards), pictures and scrapbooks for your self introduction lesson, something to do when you don't have assemblies or classes, lunch if it has not been organised for you, indoor shoes and, to make a good impression, omiyage for each staff member. Expect your teachers to be nervous. Their English may be less than fluent, and they often find the prospect of speaking to a native speaker terrifying. Remember to speak slowly.

Expect to be asked to give an introductory speech in Japanese for the teachers and for the students. Be ready to meet with the principal (Kocho-sensei), the vice-principal (Kyoto-sensei) and the other teachers. These meetings may seem very stiff and formal. Expect to answer many questions, and be ready for questions that may seem invasive. You can also expect your new students to be shy at first.

While some may find they have a desk, computer and access to internet ready for them when they arrive, these things are not guaranteed. Be patient and polite while everyone settles in.

## Settling In

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. 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.

The first step to settling in to your new schools is to build friendships where you can. Learn people's names. Although their conversational ability in English may be poor, most of the teachers have studied English for many years and will understand simple English. Talk to them and get to know them.

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". When you get the chance, set up meetings with your teachers. Make a habit of meeting with your JTE frequently to plan, give feedback and get constructive feedback on your work. If you can see areas where your JTE may need assistance, be tactful, but proactive and offer to help.

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. Your schools may not realise you are interested, so be proactive and ask what is happening so you don't miss out.

Despite probing the staff and participating, you are still going to be sitting at your desk a lot. Keep work on hand to keep your mind occupied and busy. Use your time to study 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.

## One ALT, Many Schools

You may arrive to your contracting organisation to find you will be spending your time teaching between many schools, from kindergarten through to high school. Being a one-shot teacher can be daunting at first, but the steps to settling in will be the same. The main skill you will need is to be adaptable.

One-shots are a rare breed. Due to your many schools and the need to make a meaningful impression on each one, you have found yourself in an untenable position. Come up with a trademark. Give your students something easy and clear to remember you by. Play an instrument, share your hobby or talk about your home country.

For one-shots starting out, the most important thing you need is an awesome Self Introduction Lesson Plan. You will use this often, so make it question and activity based to keep it fresh. Make your introduction a good chance for the students



to introduce themselves to you. Get them up out of their seats and speaking English.

## One ALT, Several Schools

Teaching between several regular schools is the most common position for ALTs to find themselves in. As a semi-regular ALT you will teach each class more frequently. Many ALTs find they have a fairly regular weekly or biweekly schedule of junior high school visits and may have a few elementary or high school visits thrown in as well.

Working between a few schools may give you several advantages. A variety of schools means you don't have to worry about being saddled with one difficult JTE or school. Your regular travel will provide exciting opportunities to see wildlife and snow. With proper planning, you can end up with multiple Christmas or Halloween parties to enjoy. You'll form tight relationships with a lot of your students, without necessarily being expected to remember all of their names. You might be able to use some of your lesson plans at multiple schools.

Multiple schools means multiple enkais, multiple school festivals and repeated lessons. However, not being at your base school means you will probably be somewhat out of the loop. Don't be too offended if you show up and the school is closed. Not being a regular teacher, you may have to ask about fun activities like swimming. Keep in touch with the JTEs if you are interested in participating in extra events like cultural festivals and field days.

## One ALT, One School

Some ALTs will find themselves based at only one school. While this means they can build strong relationships with teachers and students at the school, it also has its own disadvantages. Working at one school means you will be expected to attend every school event. You may also be encouraged to get involved in after school activities, which can take up a lot of your work hours and take up your own time as well. The other disadvantage of working at one school is that you are less likely to be able to shuffle your hours to allow for early finishes on Fridays. When you take a day off, or even an hour, your school will know you are not teaching and the time will need to be recorded as leave. 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.

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## 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. Two teachers in the classroom means four eyes monitoring the students. 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.

## 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 lesson 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. Shiritori, Category Game, Pictionary and Hangman are all great emergency games and hundreds more can be found online.

## Getting to Know Your Students

There are many different ways to start building a rapport with your students. Some simple and fun ideas, like pretending to steal their things, 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.

A sneaky and funny thing to do while you are walking around and checking work is to quietly steal a student's things. Just walk past their desk and grab an eraser, pen, or ruler from a couple of them. The ones that will notice will find it funny and when you redistribute the things you took, you can make them use English to get their things back.

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. Of course it's out of synch, 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.

## Elementary and Kindergarten Classes

Teaching at elementary schools (shougakko) and kindergartens (youchien and hoikusho) is daunting at first, but will be some of the most fun you will have as an ALT. Little kids are most receptive to learning new languages at younger ages. 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 their students English. What you teach and which grades you work with depends on what the school wants or how your schedule works.

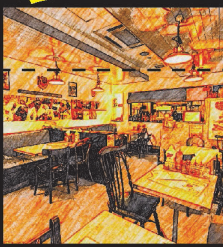
Many schools will have a basic English curriculum they work from. If not, they may ask you to create one. This seems like a daunting task, but there are textbooks available to help you plan. How much you can plan depends on how often you see your classes. If you see the students only once a month, be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

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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 conversation classes 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 daikyu (time in lieu) or volunteer your time.

When starting an eikaiwa, or agreeing to continue an existing class, you should consider class size, class length and English ability.

You should ask also about compensation for your time as this will differ from office to office. Some people receive extra wages, others get daikyu.

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

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Photo credits: Catrina Caira

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.

## Teaching Resources

The internet has a huge range of resources available. While some are ready to use, most will need to be adapted to suit your classes and your kids. Some websites that can help include:

### **Genki English ([genkienglish.net](http://genkienglish.net))**

This website has a selection of fun and lively game ideas, mostly for Elementary and Junior High classes.

### **Englipedia ([englipedia.net](http://englipedia.net))**

Englipedia is an excellent resource for topic-related games and teaching ideas. The site is

very easy to navigate as all game and worksheet material is linked to specific categories out of the English textbooks presently used in Japan. Explanations of materials for elementary school have also been translated into Japanese.

### **WikiJET: Teaching Resources ([jet.wikia.com](http://jet.wikia.com))**

Here you will find various teaching resources and flashcard sets for vocabulary practice.

### **Teaching Activities Wikpage ([teachingactivities.pbworks.com](http://teachingactivities.pbworks.com))**

You can find ideas for elementary school, junior high, senior high, and special needs.

### **British Council ([teachingenglish.org.uk](http://teachingenglish.org.uk))**

The British Council's "Teaching English" website offers lots of resources, tools, articles and information.

### **Egio Ganbare ([eigoganbare.com](http://eigoganbare.com))**

A website designed and frequently updated by ALTs and JTEs. You can find worksheets and activities for every unit in the New Horizon Textbook (1st to 3rd grade JHS).

## **International Events**

Another way to teach people in your community more about yourself and your home country is through an international event. HAJET can help with funding for locally run, international events.

If you want to run an event, first ask about any events that have been run in the area in the past. It is easier to build on a previous event than to start one from scratch.

If your town doesn't already have an international event and you want to start one, begin planning at least six months ahead. Before presenting your idea to your boss, create a projected budget and a schedule.

Once the BoE has approved the event, start talking it up to your teachers and see if you can get them to announce it in class. Have your office send out information and permission slips to all your area schools. Start an event page on Facebook and call on your friends to get volunteers. See if anyone in your eikawas and the local community wants to help as well. If your BoE will not fully fund the event themselves, you can apply for funding from HAJET. Once all the planning work is done, enjoy the event, take plenty of photos of participants and start thinking about next year's event.



## **Example Event - Samani Easter**

"My town is very small, so there are a lot of opportunities to foster cultural appreciation and exchange. Being funded by HAJET, I was able to continue a yearly Easter event for children that began in 2014. Japan has embraced other foreign holidays, but fellow JETs in my town and I realized that Easter has yet to be grasped by the culture; our event would be perfect to develop an interest in the holiday. Over 40 children registered for the event, thanks to my BoE to promoting it not only in my town, but surrounding towns as well. We started the event off with a small play that explained the significance of Easter and different ways people celebrated it. We then divided the kids into different stations, where they could decorate an Easter-egg cookie, make a bunny mask, and of course, go on an egg hunt. Kids, parents, and volunteers were full of smiles and American Easter candy, and the next day, the event was featured in the Hokkaido prefectural newspaper, all thanks to the generosity of HAJET."

*-Haleigh Chasteen, 2018 event funding applicant*

## **How Do I apply?**

Current HAJET members may apply up to 8 weeks prior to the event and 30 days after the event takes place. You will be asked to submit an application, detailed budget, and after the event has taken place, a report. Up to 15,000 yen is available for reimbursement for a single event. Events can range from seasonal holiday events such as Halloween, Christmas and Easter events, to anything that encourages international relations with the local Japanese community.

**Contact the HAJET President at  
[president@hajet.org](mailto:president@hajet.org) for full details.**



# FESTIVALS

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 can be large and bring in big crowds, many festivals remain local or only celebrated within the town. 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 all the more tempting to see them all. Some of the larger festivals you can enjoy 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 Yuki Matsuri (or 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 in Japan. Come mid-January, you may notice colourful ogre masks and bags of beans being sold in large quantities at your local supermarkets. That is because Setsubun is associated with a cleansing ritual called Mame-maki. Mame-maki is a bean throwing ritual where a parent dons an ogre mask and the children perform oni harai or 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.



Photo credits: Colette English

## Okhotsk Drift Ice Festivals 流氷祭り

If crowded cities aren't your thing, 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. If you do head east, make sure to pop down to 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 Dairi-bina or court dolls (usually a set of 15 dolls, which can easily run upwards of 100,000 yen) in the household and eating traditional foods. With

any luck, a kind family will adopt you and invite you to their Hina Matsuri celebration. There, you could see first-hand all the fun that is this modern tradition.

## 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, erected. These huge cloth carps symbolize courage and power to achieve goals. The koinobori are a symbol for all children, and fly before and on May 5th.

## Golden Week ゴールデンウィーク

Although not technically a festival or even a full week, Golden Week is a period containing 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 the crowd 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.

## Akanko Ainu Matsuri 阿寒湖アイヌ祭り

The Ainu (indigenous people of Hokkaido) hold many small festivals every night in the warmer months, where traditional dances and songs are performed by the light of huge fires. The Lake Akan Fire Festival and Marimo Festivals are held in late August to early September. The fire festival involves a procession of people carrying lit torches from the lake to the centre of the town. Spectators and participants are both welcomed!

## Shichi-go-san 七五三

On November 15th, Shichigosan is a celebration of children aged 3, 5 and 7. Children of that age are taken to the shrine dressed in their finest traditional attire, and the parents thank the gods for their child's growth and good health. Long, richly-decorated bags of ame (sweet wheat gluten) are purchased by parents and distributed to friends and neighbours to ensure their children's continuing good luck.

Most towns hold a number of small, local festivals worth attending. So, be sure to ask around. For more information, please visit the JNTO([www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp)) for details and brief explanations of most of Japan's national and region-specific festivals.



Photo credits: Nivedh Sreejit

Departing Kushiro:	5.35	8.18	11.12	13.25	16.17	18.56
Arriving Nemuro:	8.01	10.51	13.22	15.59	18.49	21.42

On the **Hanasaki Train Line** passengers can see the wild coastline faced with the Pacific Ocean and the internationally commended marsh through the window as they ride the Hanasaki train from Kushiro to Nemuro. From June 2018 the Hanasaki train line will run slowly through sightseeing spots and passengers will be able to use a "Voice Guided GPS Application" to hear about specific spots along the way. From June to November the stopping time at Higashi-Nemuro Station, the easternmost station in Japan, will be extended on the **8:18 from Kushiro** and the **8:22 from Nemuro** services to allow passengers to take photos at the station.

While in Nemuro why not visit **Nemuro Kotohira Shrine**, one of the easternmost manned shrines in Japan with more than 200 years of history.

You should also try some local food such as **Hanasaki Crab**, Nemuro's famous small yet delightful crab with its rich and full flavour, or **Escalope**, a signature dish of Nemuro, made of buttered rice topped with slices of pork cutlets in a sauce, accompanied by fresh vegetables and potato salad, escalope is a delicacy that satisfies anyone who tries it!



**VISIT**  
**Nemuro**



[nemuro-hokkaido.com](http://nemuro-hokkaido.com)

# OUTDOORS

## DOING IT OUTDOORS

If forests, mountains, rivers, and lakes are your thing, then Hokkaido is arguably the best place in Japan for you to be. If these aren't your thing, then read on, and they shortly will become your thing.

### Orienting Yourself

Hokkaido can be divided into five main regions, when it comes to getting out into nature: 1) Daisetsuzan National Park, 2) Shikotsu-Toya National Park, 3) Akan National Park, 4) Shiretoko, and 5) Rishiri and Rebun. That being said, there is generally something exciting to do within half an hour of you, no matter where you are. If you ask around, you're bound to be put in touch with someone who can stick you on the right track.

The heart of the Hokkaido outdoors experience lies at the geographical centre of Hokkaido itself: the Daisetsuzan National Park. The largest national park in Japan boasts Hokkaido's tallest peak, Asahidake, at 2291 meters, among a host of smaller but by no means lesser peaks. Besides the hiking trails that lace the park, there are a number of onsens (hot springs) at which you can rest and re energize. Among the more popular are Asahidake Onsen, Kurodake Onsen, Tokachi-dake Onsen, Fukiage Onsen, and Aizankei Onsen. Keep an eye out for these and you won't be disappointed.

West of Sapporo, you'll find Shikotsu-Toya National Park, named after the two large lakes there. But that's not all you'll find there -- if hiking is your bag, you can climb at any of the three peaks at Shikotsu-ko: Eniwa-dake, Tarumae-san, or Fuppushi-dake -- all easy day hikes. Or if you're up for a challenge, climb the Mt. Fuji of Hokkaido: Yotei-zan. If you're visiting in winter, you might visit Niseko, the skiing/snowboarding mecca of North Japan. Or if onsen is more your style, you'll find more than your fill at the spas of Noboribetsu and Jozankei.

If you're living out east, most of the outdoors scene revolves around Akan National Park -- one of the few places where the Ainu history can still be felt. Besides the eponymous lake, there are the twin mountains of Meakan-dake and Oakan-dake -- one of many examples of Ainu male-female mountain pairs (trivia: the female mountain is



Photo credits: Peter Lennox

always bigger -- just ask Yotei-zan). You'll also find the twin lakes of Kussharo-ko and Mashu-ko -- both known for their outstanding clarity. Mashu-ko is sacred, however -- which means no swimming. You'll have to content yourself with the view from the adjacent Kamuinupuri -- an Ainu word meaning 'Mountain of the Gods' -- over its huge crater.

Shiretoko is a naturalist's paradise -- it's seen limited development and is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site -- which means that it won't see any in the foreseeable future. A mountainous peninsula splitting the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean, Shiretoko is home to whales, dolphins, seals, eagles, foxes, deer, and perhaps most famously the Hokkaido brown bear, or higuma. You might come upon any of these animals while visiting the nature walk at the Goko Five Lakes District or tackling one of Shiretoko's numerous peaks.

Rishiri and Rebun are a couple of islands off the coast of Hokkaido's deep north. Rebun is known for its wide fields of flowers and grasses and hosts a couple of great nature walks and bike rides. Rishiri, on the other hand, whose name comes from the Ainu for 'the high land,' is a jagged, 1721-meter extinct stratovolcano that juts right up from the ocean. Rishiri hosts an annual run around its circumference, as well as numerous events on the flanks of the mountain. And for true purists, there's always the hike from the beach to the summit.



## Shopping

When it comes to shopping for serious outdoor goods, the general consensus is that you want to find the store called 'Shugakuso.' The name of the store literally means 'mountain-excellence lodge' - and that's exactly what it is. From rock climbing to ice climbing, hiking, camping, skiing, and trail running, Shugakuso has you covered.

If you're looking for something less intense and more recreational, you can find most of what you need at stores like Super Sports Xebio or Sports Depo. These stores can be found in most bigger cities and stock pretty much everything you might want as far as outdoors gear goes.

If you're in the neighbourhood, you might check out Sapporo Factory shopping mall as well - it hosts a big sporting goods outlet where you'll find brands like Columbia, Haglofs, and Japan's own Montbell.

## Hiking

Lonely Planet's Hiking in Japan is a great place to start. If you're new to hiking, consider peaks like Kuro-dake, Asahi-dake, or Meakan-dake, which offer incredible views without a huge investment in time, effort, or gear. If you're looking for a tougher climb while still remaining on conventional trails, check out the mountains Yotei-zan, Rishiri-fuji, Shari-dake, or Tokachi-dake. There are also a number of overnight treks in the Daisetsuzan National Park and elsewhere.

If you're looking for more technical mountaineering, a proficiency at Japanese will help tremendously: many Japanese mountaineers write up exhaustive reports about their hikes for personal blogs. Outdoor equipment stores also stock countless books detailing hikes, maps, flora and fauna.

If you can't speak Japanese, consider contacting Leon, the Hokkaido Bush Pig. He's a genial and laid-back New Zealander with more experience in Hokkaido's back country than almost any other foreigner you're bound to meet. Blog: <https://www.blogger.com/profile/02351165248133207092>

## River Sports

River kayaking and canoeing are very popular in Hokkaido, and 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.

HNG 2018

## Rock Climbing

Rock climbing is quite popular in Hokkaido, but here too you'll likely need to be able to read the Japanese guidebooks if you're looking to get out there on your own. The gold standard for guides is called 日本100岩場 - make sure you get the Hokkaido/Tohoku edition. A couple of the more popular outdoor climbing areas are at Kamui Kotan (near Asahikawa), Miharashi (near Nayoro), Hakodate-yama, and Akaiwa (near Shimukappu).

If you're not confident in your outdoor or kanji skills, indoor climbing gyms are a great place to learn about climbing and the places to do it. In Sapporo you'll have your choice of the bouldering gyms at Shugakuso and Whippersnapper, as well as bigger walls at Rainbow Cliff and NAC. In Asahikawa, you'll find bouldering at Shugakuso and Wall of Early Morning Light (previously Gut's Wall). Talking to the locals at these gyms is an awesome way to make friends and climbing partners.



Photo credits: Nivedh Sreejit

## Cycling

Hokkaido is hugely popular for long-distance cycle touring, road biking, and mountain biking. The best way to join, though, is probably just to get out there. Hokkaido has more than its fair share of empty roads and mountain passes; old logging trails and firebreaks are also awesome for mountain biking. Keep an eye out for cycling event posters around your town or at your outdoors equipment store of choice - in summer you'll be hard-pressed to find a weekend during which some cycling event isn't going on.



Photo credits: Peter Lennox

## Running

In the same way as cycling events, you're never more than four or five days out from a running event somewhere in Hokkaido. If you're looking to participate, you'll want to check out the website RUNNET - you'll find a list of events there. For most events you can sign up through RUNNET as well - and your post-race stats will show up on your RUNNET account.

Outside of events, running through your town is sure to make you a couple of friends. Word will get around that the local ALT has been running, and before you'll know it you'll have more invites to go running together than you know what to do with.

## Sky Sports

If sweating it out on foot is not your thing, maybe you prefer sky sports. Hang-gliding, paragliding, skydiving 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. Here too, you will want some proficiency in Japanese.

Hot air ballooning is also popular in Hokkaido, and flights are 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.

## 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.

Some notable ski fields are: Niseko, Kiroro, Kokusai, Teine Highland, Tomamu, Sahoro, Furano, and Kamui Ski Links. Off-piste skiing within the bounds of a ski field is a bit of a gray area - most places post signs indicating that off-piste skiers are not the responsibility of the ski field; some places are a bit more strict and will confiscate your lift pass. If you're going off-piste, always ski with a buddy.

## Cross-Country Skiing

The same fire trails that make trail-running or mountain biking so good in the summer make for great cross-country skiing in the winter. In addition, there are cross-country ski events almost every weekend. You can find information about them on RUNNET.

## Ice Climbing

Rock climbers frustrated by the weather might like to give ice climbing a try. There are a number of magnificent waterfalls scattered around Hokkaido which freeze up and can be climbed. The season tends to be short, February to March, but the climbs are all in beautiful areas. Souunkyo Gorge, Oketo, Maruseppu and Abashiri are good places to head for. Equipment outlay for this sport can be expensive, so you might want to try one of the mountain climbing clubs or 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.

## On the Ice

Ice fishing is extremely popular amongst the Japanese, and it is not uncommon to see tent villages magically appear on top of frozen lakes every weekend all over Hokkaido. Some lakes around Hokkaido boast another kind of village: ice kotans. 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. You can drink hot buttered rum out of an ice glass while you listen to live bands play on the ice stage in the ice concert hall. Dress warmly, and take kairo (pocket warmers) for your feet.

## Educate Yourself

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. Visit local second hand stores for gear. 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 in a town of 4,000 you can manage to find the '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.

## Safety

Conditions out of our control happen, the following is within your control.

**These are the common essentials to bring with you on outdoor adventures:**

- Bear spray – even in winter bears have been spotted passing through town
  - Sun protection – sun reflects off snow and may cause eye damage
  - Map/compass/cell phone – maps at local Ranger stations, as backup use the GPS on your cell when you need it and carry extra an battery
- HNG 2018

pack

- Extra water/food – leave no trace, hang onto any trash and avoid feeding animals
- Extra layers and emergency blanket – layers do the trick to keep you warm. Ideally invest in a solid down jacket as well and you'll understand why.
- First aid kit – plus a knife, super glue, duct tape
- Headlamp
- Fire starter – waterproof matches (preferred) or a lighter
- ID and Insurance Card – your health insurance covers up to 70 percent of all medical costs
- Good hiking boots.

## Bear Safety

There is an estimated population of about 2,000-3,000 Hokkaido Brown Bear, AKA the "Higuma." According to Hifumi Tsuruga, a bear researcher with the Southern Hokkaido Wildlife Research Station, there are several things you can do to avoid encounters.

Hike in groups - if you hike solo, the level of danger increases. Invest in a Bear Bell, as many locals will tell you. Bear spray is highly recommended: they cost about ¥10,000 at an outdoor shop. If all else fails with the Higuma and you do find yourself in an attack situation, they share a common characteristic with sharks, a very sensitive nose. Therefore hit it on the nose. Be aware of your surroundings and pay careful attention.

Lastly, Higuma encounters are not an everyday thing and are still considered very rare; your confidence in your safety will grow with your outdoor experience.



Photo credits: Claire Bate-Roullin

# TRAVEL

## TRAVELLING 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. (Construction is currently under way to extend the service to Sapporo by the futuristic-sounding year of 2030...) Instead of bullet trains, Hokkaido has Limited Express trains in addition to the Rapid and Local services, which are slower but noticeably 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 be increased in frequency for certain selected 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 English-language information. 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, depending on the operator. Be advised that the purchasing process will almost certainly be in Japanese, though, so we



recommend asking a friend or convenience store 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 during the Welcome Parties, 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, so the thought may have crossed your mind. 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. You do not want to become the exception to the maxim of "Japan is a safe country". Please don't hitch-hike.

## 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

HNG 2018



meet like-minded people from around the world doing the same thing as you in Japan.

## Business Hotels

Originally created for businessmen to stay on the cheap during one- or two-day 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 that often have parking available for customers.

The best way to search for hotels and other accommodations is [Jalan.net](#), which is searchable by location. As of a few years ago, there is now an English Jalan site, but be advised that it is known to provide less comprehensive search results 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 the 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, if you don't feel like shelling out for your own at first.

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 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

HNG 2018



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 (or further abroad if you plan on travelling somewhere distant). New cultures and locales will inevitably provide you with wonderful new experiences. However, they will also present you with equally new challenges, depending on where you travel. They could be such things 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 both informative and regularly updated. Another excellent resource is, of course, 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. Wherever you choose to put them, make sure you do not forget them when you leave.

Remember that, as a foreigner, you will likely draw

attention from the local population. 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 infrastructure that are as well-developed as you're accustomed to, or they do not have institutions that recognize your bank card. Find out before you enter a country. 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 while here in Hokkaido, this is one habit to leave at home when you go abroad. 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, for whatever reason, 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

## Long Distance Savers

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. It handles domestic and international calls. [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 economical 24-hour flat rates. The rechargeable prepaid card Brastel Smart Phonecard offers low rates and additional services such as SMS, call forwarding and frequent caller plans. [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. If you need to get a phone line installed, your best bet is to talk to your supervisor.

## Broadband

While 'always on' ADSL services and ultra-high fast fibre optic cable are available in most areas, they haven't made it to every nook and cranny just quite yet. However, you may be surprised. Not only do broadband connections allow for blazing speed, you only pay a flat monthly fee and don't need to worry about how much time you spend online.

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> to help set up your service. It's in English and recommended; they'll walk you through everything.

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/> can help you with this too.

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 get 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. Usually, the paperwork is done in under an hour, and you should be talking very quickly.

For NTT Docomo, you can phone 0120-005-250 for their English help line..

For AU, phone 0077-7-111 for help in English.

For SoftBank, it's 0088-21-2000 and then press '8' for English support.

You can check out their websites first to review the cell phones and service plans so you know what you want ahead of time and, even if you don't speak Japanese, Google translate can help you get a rough idea of what's out there.

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.

# 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 regular bank savings account. To set up an account, an inkan (personal stamp) is needed. Your office should have one ready for you upon your arrival, or will help you to get make one. Post office accounts have the benefit of being available nationwide and the ATMs have English capability for a few basic banking functions. Traditional bank accounts enable you to set up automatic bill payments for utilities, which is a highly recommended form of payment and one that your BoE will most likely encourage or set up for you.

ATMs in Japan are NOT available 24 hours. Most usually are open at 9:00am and close somewhere between 6:00pm and 9:00pm. ATMs are often closed on National Holidays and weekends, so be sure to get out plenty of cash should you be traveling over a holiday. The New Year's holiday in Japan is especially bad, because ATMs are closed pretty much the whole week. Most 7-11s, some Lawsons, and other convenience stores boast 24-hour ATMs.

It is now 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. You can then deposit all, or some, of your pay into your account.

Credit cards are not the most common form of payment. However, credit cards are accepted at most places, and credit card usage is becoming more common. You will have little or no difficulty using a foreign card as long as it is an international company (i.e. Mastercard, Visa, etc.). However, do check with your provider to be sure that your card of choice can be used in Japan. There have been cases where certain credit cards didn't work because the provider had previously had substantial trouble with identity theft with that particular card type. 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 when one

uses a credit card outside of the country of the card's origin.

## International Transfers

There are several ways to send money home.

<https://www.goremit.jp/index/en> is a great way to send money home. It costs ¥2000, and is free to set up. Your money is transferred into your account the same day if done before 3pm and within 24 hours if done after 3pm. This is an excellent service if you plan to send home money on a regular basis.

The second 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 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.

## Domestic Transfers

Sending money 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.

## YENNY PINCHING

### Life in Japan 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 and make the most of your time in Japan.



## Make a Budget

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, monthly bills for your phone, internet, water, electricity and gas, food expenses 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 to pay for.

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. If you want to spend time with friends and travel here in Hokkaido, you can allocate money each month for this. How much you save will depend on your lifestyle.

## Travel

To maximise your salary and still see Hokkaido, try and carpool with other ALTs. Driving in Japan is pricey, but expensive petrol prices and road tolls can be offset by carpooling with other JETs who live in your area. The bus is generally cheaper than the train, though both options can be pricey if you are travelling longer distances. When flying, try to travel in the Japanese tourist off-season. Also, flights are cheaper when bought in advance. Both Jetstar and Peach Airlines offer discount flights to most destinations and it is cheaper if you only take carry-on baggage. 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).

## Get Involved

Participating in activities in your town is often an affordable way to have some fun. You can also volunteer to take part in activities with your school and will find these are often free and will help you look good to colleagues and build relationships with your students.

## Shopping

If you decide that you need some new household things, whether to replace older items or increase comfort, then ask around. Your BoE may be willing to replace certain things. If not, check recycle or second-hand shops like Hard Off and Don Don. They often have lightly used items for a fraction of the cost of new goods. In March, during transfer time, some schools even hold sale events, which is a great time to pick up household odds and ends, HNG 2018

sporting equipment, or camping gear.

When it comes to sporting equipment a good rule of thumb is buying out of season. You can also find sports equipment at some recycle shops.

Recycle stores are also an option for clothing, footwear and accessories with many stocking a huge range of near new items at much cheaper prices than when new.

## Eating

There are a few ways to make your food budget stretch. You can buy perishable food discounted in the evenings, as stores will mark down food that will spoil if not sold. If you want to buy some prepared meals (bento), they begin to discount them at about 6pm. Supermarkets will often have a discount day for fruits and vegetables and meats, so keep an eye on prices and try to shop on discount days. You will also find a discount counter or bin at most supermarkets, so keep an eye on this to grab a bargain. You can also buy some food at the ¥100 shops. It will most likely be limited to cookies, crackers, and snacks, but the larger ¥100 stores have many nonperishable as well.

When you are cooking, make bulk serves and freeze them. This also helps on days that you just can't be bothered cooking. If you like to cook, host a weekly or monthly potluck dinner at your house and have the guests bring a dish to share.

To get a taste of those things you miss from home, take advantage of the many foreign food stores and online shopping options, as featured in the Food section of this guide.

When dining out, lean towards cheaper options. Avoid hitting up the expensive snack bars too often. They will almost always have a cover charge making your drink twice as expensive as it would be otherwise. If you are after a bigger night out or a big feed, look out for tabehodai – all you can eat, and nomihodai – all you can drink, options at restaurants and bars.



Photo credits: Claire Bate-Roullin

# 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 unprofessional to be 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 lost tempers will cause you to lose face and will not help you 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 creds: 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.

# 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 "kyouikuinkai".

## **CO - Contracting Organisation**

The people who hire 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.



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# CREDITS

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