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## Mental Notes with Hilary Valdez

# Christmas in Japan

BY HILARY VALDEZ,  
STRIPES JAPAN

Only about 1 percent of the whole population in Japan is Christian. In 1552, the small city of Yamaguchi was host to Japan's first Christmas celebrations initiated by a visiting Jesuit missionary. Each year, the city is gorgeously lit up with illuminations, decorated with Christmas trees making it one of the best places to attend Christmas services.

When I was a kid growing up in New York City, in an apartment, we didn't have a fireplace to roast chestnuts. Instead, I roasted marshmallows on the gas stove. Christmas carolers did not come to the neighborhood singing Joy to the World, not a good idea. My mother used to take me to Rockefeller Center to watch the ice skaters.

One Christmas Eve when I was in the Marine Corps, I was a Brig Chaser on duty in a Red Line Brig. So, here I was, away from my family, quietly locked-up with a dozen of hard-to-handle, hard-core Marines. "Be Here Be Now" ran through my mind as I tried to reconcile my loneliness while feeling sorry for myself. One of the prisoners interrupted the silence as I silently stewed in my thoughts of

self-pity. Then another prisoner started talking, then another, and another. The humanity in each prisoner began to reveal itself in the hours that followed, revealing the common emotional fundamentals that connect all humans.

The Christmas season brings out the universal human goodness in people, but we have to be open and receptive to the positive life forces surrounding us. Our thoughts control our feelings and our feelings control our behavior.

Don't despair if you are alone at Christmas. Hunt for the good stuff! Stay resilient! Volunteer to help yourself. Do something you enjoy, don't stew in your tomatoes. Have fun with friends or be your own best friend and go out and be adventurous. Get on Skype with friends and family. Make some calls, stay connected.

In Japan, Christmas is a time to spread happiness, it isn't a religious celebration. There are plenty of ways to take in some of this happiness — Illuminations are just one of Japan's favorite ways to celebrate the season. Even Tokyo Disneyland hosts its annual Christmas parades with an appearance from Santa. Put on your walking shoes and stroll around The Starlight Garden at Tokyo Midtown in Roppongi; The Caretta illuminations in Shiodome; or

Shinjuku Terrace City illuminations. Illuminations line the streets of Ginza and the Decks Odaiba - known for its massive Christmas tree.

Your base International Tours and Travel office has plenty of fun activities to fill your days off with. Try the Osaka Train and Travel tours, Tokyo Sightseeing Bus Tours, make plans for the upcoming Sapporo Snow Festival, or check out the Snow Monkey and Onsen trips. Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo and Tokyo Disney Resort offer military discounts.

Reach out! Don't act like a turtle and pull back your emotions and behavior. Grab a friend and get out there — there's plenty to do for free or at low cost.

Don't be lonely. Connect with your fellow humans. Stay positive and resilient. Go for it! Have a safe and blessed Christmas.

*Hilary Valdez is a retiree living in Japan. He is an experienced Mental Health professional and Resiliency Trainer. Valdez is a former Marine and has worked with the military most of his career and most recently worked at Camp Zama as a Master Resiliency Trainer. Valdez now has a private practice and publishes books on social and psychological issues. His books are available on Amazon and for Kindle. Learn more about Valdez and contact him at [www.hilaryvaldez.com](http://www.hilaryvaldez.com) or at [InstantInsights@hotmail.com](mailto:InstantInsights@hotmail.com)*



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# Are you sad or are you SAD?

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS  
JENNIFER GONZALES,  
U.S. AIR FORCE

It's that time of year again, when the warm summer fades into autumn chills and frosty winters. The skies become grayer and the sun barely shines. For some, autumn and winter are welcome breaks from the summer heat; but for others, the change in seasons may cause dread.

Some individuals suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), also referred to as Depressive Disorder, with the seasonal pattern. As the name suggests, it's a form of depression that occurs during the seasonal change, particularly after summer until spring.

SAD occurs more often in northern regions, such as Europe and Canada.

"People living in locations close to the equator experience very low rates of seasonal depression due to their exposure to consistent sunlight year-round," said Air Force Capt. Abigail Wolfe, 86th Medical Group licensed clinical psychologist. "In Germany, daylight hours become significantly shorter in the winter

months and SAD appears to be linked to diminishing daylight."

Melatonin, a sleep-related hormone, and circadian rhythm can be disrupted by the sudden change in sunlight exposure. Serotonin, a chemical in the brain that affects mood, is thought to play a role in SAD. Lack of sunlight can cause a drop in this chemical, which may trigger depression.

"The decrease in sunlight may disrupt the body's internal clock, reduce the levels of feel-good neurochemicals – such as serotonin – and disrupt

-----  
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the hormones that regulate sleep patterns and overall mood states," Wolfe said.

Symptoms may be similar to other types of depression such as feelings of hopelessness, despair, apathy, lack of motivation, wanting to oversleep, anxiety, and lethargy. Similar

to a physical injury, the disorder should be treated and cared for properly, but it's important to note the symptoms can be on a spectrum.

"For those mildly impacted, basic interventions such as maintaining a regular sleep and exercise schedule may prove effective," Wolfe said. "The use of light therapy employing a SAD lamp that emits at least 10,000 lux has proven to be an effective way to deal with this condition, and symptoms that come with it."

People on a mild level of seasonal pattern depression

may benefit from taking Vitamin D supplements, exercising regularly, maintaining a good sleep schedule, and eating nutritious foods.

For severe symptoms such as suicidal thoughts or behavior, anxiety, eating disorders, alcohol dependency, or substance abuse, it's a good idea to seek professional help. Various options available are the mental health clinic, Military Family Life Counseling and Chaplains.

"People with more severe symptoms of depression may require a higher level of care including talk therapy and medication," Wolfe said.

No one is ever alone in their internal battles, even if it might feel like it. SAD is common and there's no shame in experiencing it. In the U.S. alone, SAD is estimated to affect 10 million people, which means 1 in 30 people suffer from it. Just because it's not visible doesn't mean it's not real.

"The important takeaway point is: resources are available to help people struggling with symptoms of seasonal depression through the dreary winter months," Wolfe said.

File photo



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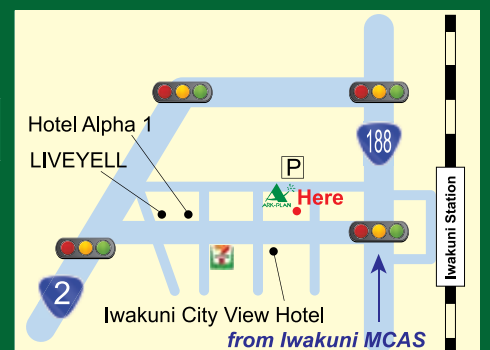
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# Zama junior leads team to crown

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ORNAUER,  
STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: November 21, 2019

**T**alent and desire were never issues with Zama volleyball, coaches and players say; they had plenty of both over the years.

It was finishing, team leader Grace Bryant said, that always seemed to hang up the Trojans when it counted.

No longer. Not since Nov. 9, when Zama captured its first Far East Division II Tournament crown and ended a 22-year drought, winning its first Far East title of any kind since 1997.

Bryant, named the tournament's best hitter and All-Tournament for the third time, finished with 20 kills as the Trojans swept Robert D. Edgren – making its first finals appearance in school history – 25-22, 25-17, 25-15 at Camp Humphreys.

It was how she and her veteran teammates would rally the younger players, spurring them on to bigger things as the Trojans got one point after another.

"That made us stronger as a team," she said. "We trusted each other. In the (team) huddles we would say how



Zama junior outside hitter Grace Bryant stood tall, getting 20 kills as the Trojans won their first Far East Division II volleyball tournament title and snapped a 22-year drought overall, bagging their first Far East title since winning the tournament in 1997, when schools of all levels played in one tournament.

we loved each other, believed in each other, kept reminding ourselves we were capable of doing anything."

Thanks to that victory and Bryant's performance in the

match, and a regular season in which the Trojans even won a regular-season match over Division I champion Seisen I, Bryant has been named Stars and Stripes Pacific volleyball

Athlete of the Year.

Bryant edged out a crowded field including libero and Division I tournament Most Valuable Player Momoka Umemiya and setter Grace

Starr of Seisen, D-I runner-up Kubasaki's Abigail Robinson and D-II MVP Emiry Ichijo of Edgren, among others.

Bryant earned D-II MVP honors on

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second-place Zama last year, but the Trojans lost in five sets, 21-25, 25-15, 25-18, 23-25, 15-10, to Christian Academy Japan.

Through this year's championship, Bryant said she and the returners from 2018 reminded the newer players of what came before and what needed to happen then.

"We told them our stories about last year and how we couldn't finish as we wanted to," said Bryant, a junior outside hitter. "This season ... there were a lot of situations where we had to have each other's backs. We would stay humble, never getting too cocky. One point at a time."

Every player on the Trojans played a crucial role in getting them to the championship, coach Veronica Jones said. Bryant, on the other hand, was vital in every sense.

"Grace never leaves the court," Jones said of her hitting, receiving, serving and "especially leadership. We cannot win without her physical presence or leadership on the court."

Now that the banner has been tacked onto the wall of Trojans Gym, next to the D-I banner won by Zama in 1997, Bryant says she'll start conditioning for track and field season beginning in March.

Her father Chuck is a civilian assigned to Naval Air Facility Atsugi and Bryant is slated to graduate in June 2021, after her senior season of volleyball – by which time, Bryant said, maybe the idea that the Trojans won will have settled in.

"It doesn't feel real at all," Bryant said.

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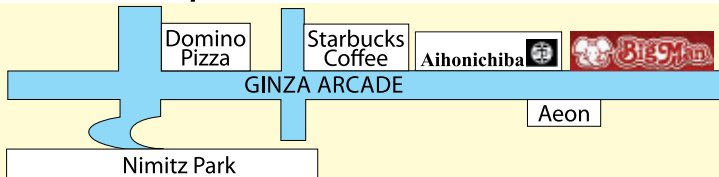
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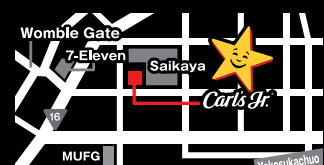
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# MONEY OUT OF POCKET

## Forever GI Bill change hits student veterans

BY NIKKI WENTLING,  
STARS AND STRIPES

Published: November 19, 2019

WASHINGTON — About 21,000 student veterans will see lower living stipends next semester after the Department of Veterans Affairs finally implements a law that alters how students are paid when they attend satellite campuses.

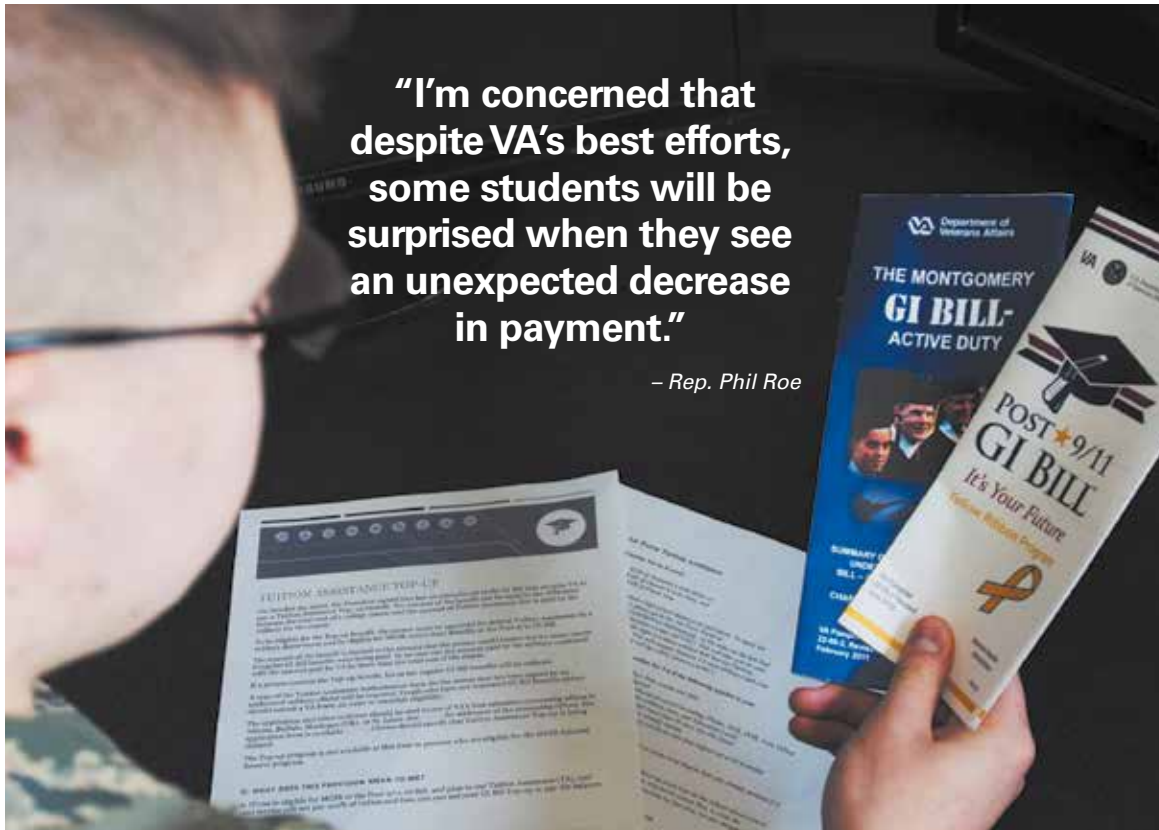
For veterans who take classes at satellite or branch campus, their monthly allowances — which they use for housing, utilities and food — will be based on the cost of living in the city where they're taking classes, rather than defaulting to their school's main campus.

About 59,000 veterans are expected to receive increased payments because of the change, but about 21,000 will get less money, the VA estimated Nov. 19. GI Bill benefits go to about 500,000 students each semester.

"These changes have the potential to impact thousands," said Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., the ranking Republican on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "I'm concerned that despite VA's best efforts, some students will be surprised when they see an unexpected decrease in payment."

The change was part of the Forever GI Bill, a major overhaul of veterans' education benefits that Congress passed in 2017. The new calculation was supposed to go into effect in August 2018, but technology failures resulted in the VA sending out incorrect monthly housing stipends to thousands of veterans. Some veterans received no monthly payments at all.

After outcry from veterans



An airman reads pamphlets on the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Photo by Airman 1st Class Alyssa Akers

and lawmakers last year, the agency halted the rollout. Now, it's trying again.

The VA is expected to meet the Dec. 1 deadline to put the change into effect.

The Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, part of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, held a hearing to determine whether the VA was ready.

"We are on track to meet the target date," said Paul Lawrence, VA Undersecretary for Benefits. "We are ready to roll."

In addition to using the new calculation in the spring semester, the VA will start sending out retroactive payments to students who received

lower housing payments since August 2018 than they should have under the new law.

For those students who received higher living stipends over the past year than what's called for under the law, the VA plans to distribute notifications that the overpayments will be waived. Congress passed a law in December that prevents the VA from trying to collect money from those students.

The VA is hiring 500 temporary employees to help with the extra work, said Charmain Bogue, executive director of Education Services at the VA. The agency will also require employees to work mandatory overtime before January,

which is when the first payments are expected to go out, Bogue said.

Lawmakers expressed concerns that some of the 21,000 students who are set to receive lower payments would be unaware of the changes until they received their checks next semester.

"Our phones are going to ring off the wall," Roe said. "Students don't have too much money, so when you reduce the amount they have, that's going to be a real impact. The quicker they get that information, the better."

The VA sent emails about the changes, as well as posted

on social media, Lawrence said. The agency also identified the satellite schools where students are expected to receive smaller checks and asked them to notify veterans at those campuses.

Some students could receive hundreds of dollars less each month because of the change. Citing one example, Bogue said San Francisco has a housing allowance of \$4,300 each month, while Sacramento has \$2,500. Under the new calculation, a student attending a Sacramento branch of a San Francisco-based school would receive the lower rate.

Bogue said the VA would offer a one-time relief payment for students who unexpectedly receive less money at the start of the spring semester. Those payments typically take three months to process, but the agency is working to turn those around within two weeks, she said.

As the VA implements the new calculation, Lawrence asked lawmakers for their help explaining that the smaller payments were because of a law change, not a VA mistake.

"Our student veterans live on modest incomes, and the housing allowance will go down in certain situations," Lawrence said. "We'd like your help to communicate this is not a VA failure — this is how the law and the rules work. We want to make sure that's understood."

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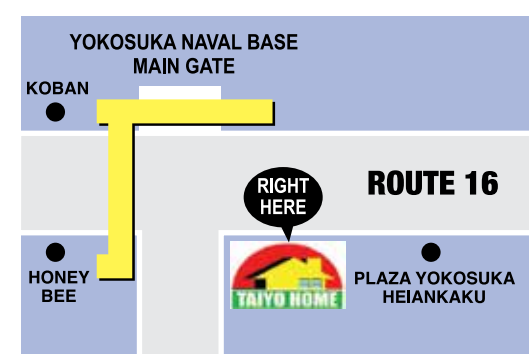


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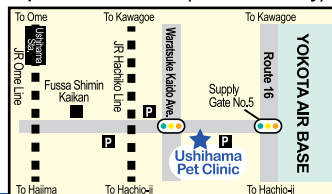
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# A bridge floating in the cobalt blue Sea of Japan

Shimonoseki is the biggest city in Yamaguchi Prefecture. It is at the southwestern tip of Honshu, facing the Tsushima Strait and Kitakyushu across the Kanmon Straits. Nicknamed the "Fugu Capital," it is known for the locally caught pufferfish and is the largest harvester of the pufferfish in Japan.

## Akama Shrine



It is dedicated to Antoku, a Japanese emperor who died as a child in the Battle of Dan-no-ura, which occurred nearby in 1185 and is situated on the waterfront of the Kanmon Strait, between the center of Shimonoseki and the tourist restaurants of Karato, Kanmon Wharf. The bright red main gate makes it a very visible sight.

## Tsunoshima Ohashi Bridge

## National Treasure, Kozanji Temple



The Buddhist sanctum is the oldest Zen Buddhism style architecture in Japan. A national treasure – It was built during the Kamakura Period (in 1320) and is a representative building of the wooden Zen Buddhist architecture. It has a significant meaning in the history of the Religious architecture. The Kozanji Temple also witnessed many historical events.

## Karato Fish Market



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## Castle Town, Chofu



The townscape nowadays is the remains of various samurai residences built after Mori's settlement.

## Mount Hinoyama



Mount Hinoyama is a view point within Setonaikai National Park. From there, you can enjoy the soothing movement of the various ships in the background of Kanmon Bridge during the day. At night, you can enjoy a beautiful night view sometimes called "the night view worth 10 million dollars".



<https://shimonoseki.travel/english/index.html>





## Happo-One

Photos courtesy of Hakuba.com



BY JOHN BLAGYS,  
HAKUBA.COM

**I**nterested in hitting the slopes in Japan this season? Before you do, check out this guide which has everything you need to know for planning your ski trip to the Hakuba Valley this winter.

### The Hakuba Valley

The Hakuba Valley hosted the 1998 Winter Olympics and has since become an international destination for ski enthusiasts. Thanks to an incredible variety of terrain, 33 feet of annual powder snow, and the allure of Japan's unique culture, Hakuba has exploded in popularity. In fact, this year the Valley was added to the prestigious Epic Pass, a collection of 55 amazing resorts from around the world. Epic Pass holders can now ski the Hakuba Valley for five days for free.

### How to access Hakuba

■ **CAR:** Hakuba sits 170 miles west of downtown Tokyo and can be reached within four hours by car. Many accommodations have car parking for guests and the resorts have accessible parking lots.

■ **SHINKANSEN & BUS:** From Tokyo Station take the Shinkansen to Nagano Station then take a bus to Hakuba Station. The journey takes about three hours and costs ¥9,800.

■ **JR AZUSA:** Departing from Shinjuku Station and

Tachikawa Station, this train runs directly to Hakuba Station and is slightly cheaper than the Shinkansen option at ¥7,900. The total journey takes about four hours.

### Mountain overview

There are 11 resorts in the Hakuba Valley providing incredible variety of terrain, runs, and experiences. Here are our suggestions for newbies, intermediates, families, and advanced skiers.

#### ■ FIRST TIMER'S AND INTERMEDIATES: Happo-One

The largest resort in the Valley, Happo-One hosted several different events during the 1998 Olympics including the alpine skiing downhill, the super giant slalom, and the ski jumping. While the mountain is quite steep, 50% of the runs are suitable for intermediate riders and the views from Happo-One may be the best in the entire Valley. Beginners can find their balance on one of the more mellow green runs, such as Sakka. Many of the international ski schools operate out of this resort making it a good option for first timers. The main village also sits at the foot of Happo-One which opens your options nicely for drinks and dinner after skiing.

#### Iwatake

■ **INSIDER TIPS:** On a clear sky day, take the train to the Corona Terrace at the top of the mountain. Just 10 minutes from Hakuba Station, it is easily accessible from Happo Village. Once beginners build confidence, the top of the mountain all the way to the Corona Terrace is a challenging intermediate route. Advanced skiers can stay busy as well with powder skiing and a terrain park.

#### ■ FAMILIES: Iwatake

A great option for families or groups, Iwatake has terrain for all abilities. Just 10 minutes from Hakuba Station, it is easily accessible from Happo Village.

Once beginners build confidence, the top of the mountain all the way to the Corona Terrace is a challenging intermediate route. Advanced skiers can stay busy as well with powder skiing and a terrain park. ■ **INSIDER TIPS:** After you're done skiing, stop for a delicious ramen at one of the best spots. Head out from the gondola entrance and look for a small shack with skis and snowboards on display. If you're disappointed,

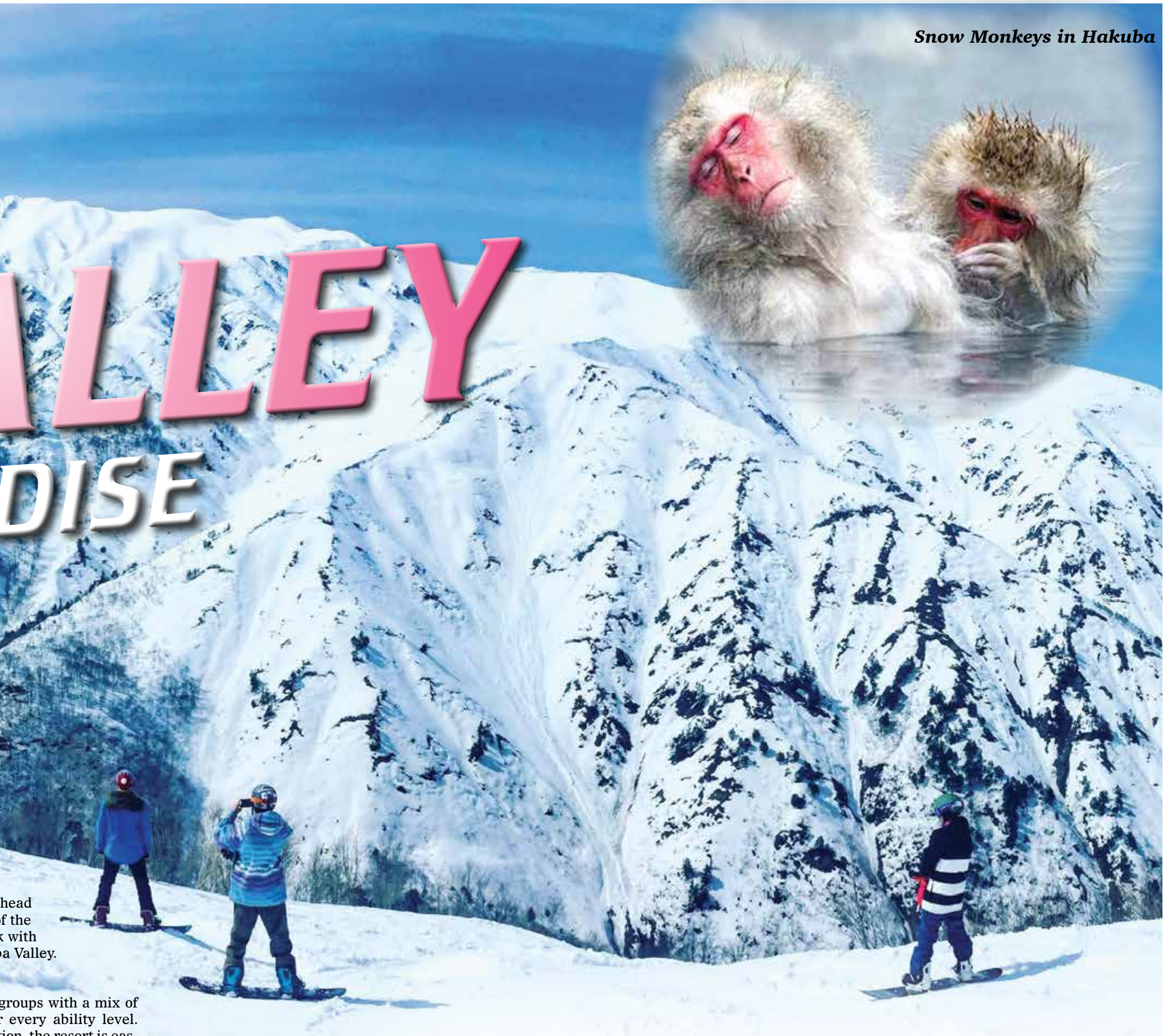
#### ■ ADVANCED: Cortina

Cortina receives the highest snowfall in the Valley, getting twice as much snow as the other resorts. The backcountry is a great option for those looking for a challenge.

#### Cortina







Snow Monkeys in Hakuba

head  
of the  
x with  
a Valley.

groups with a mix of  
every ability level.  
ion, the resort is eas-  
.  
ce, they can take an easy run from  
y to the base; there are also more  
hat branch off from this run. Ad-  
well as there are high speed runs,

skiing, relax with a beer and some  
restaurants in the Valley. Come  
l cross the road to a wooden  
ut the front. You will not be

now fall in the valley and typical-  
neighboring resorts. If you love  
country skiing, perfectly placed  
ree runs, and unmatched side-  
country skiing then visit Corti-  
na! There are only 13 on-piste  
runs at Cortina, but the  
resort is interlinked with  
neighboring Norikura  
Resort and the Cortina  
lift pass gets you access  
to all 25 combined runs.  
The iconic Green Plaza  
hotel sits at the base of  
Cortina and is a great

place for drinks and dinner after skiing Cortina.  
**INSIDER TIPS:** Go here on a powder day! You'll be able to ski waste  
deep in fresh powder snow. Make sure to arrive early as other  
powder enthusiasts will certainly be visiting Cortina as well.

Lift tickets / gear

RESORT	FULL-DAY	HALF-DAY	NIGHT
Cortina	¥4,200	¥3,200	¥1,500
Norikura	¥4,100	¥3,200	N/A
Tsugaike Kogen	¥5,400	¥4,300	¥2,400
Iwatake	¥4,600	¥3,600	N/A
Happo-One	¥5,500	¥4,600	¥2,100
Hakuba 47	¥5,500	¥4,500	N/A
Hakuba Goryu	¥5,500	¥4,500	¥2,500

You can also purchase an “All Valley Pass” which allows pass  
holders access to every resort within the Valley. These passes cost  
¥6,101 per day and can be purchased at [hakuba.com/plan-your-trip/  
lift-passes/](http://hakuba.com/plan-your-trip/lift-passes/).  
**RENTALS:** There are a handful of English-speaking rental  
shops in Hakuba. Prices will vary slightly between shops, but the

following prices are approximately what you will pay for rentals  
per day.  
■ **ADULT STANDARD SKI OR SNOWBOARD SET:** ¥4,350  
■ **BOOTS:** ¥2,600  
■ **JACKET & PANTS:** ¥1,600  
■ **HELMET:** ¥1,100

Where to stay

The best places to stay are Happo-Village, Echoland, or Wadano  
as these areas boast plenty of nightlife options and are centrally  
located making every resort easily accessible. Hakuba has accom-  
modations at every price point - from youth hostels to jaw dropping  
luxury. One great midrange hotel is the Hakuba Springs Hotel. Lo-  
cated five minutes from the gondola, the hotel houses probably the  
best sushi in all of Hakuba Valley as well as a great late-night sports  
bar.

Day trips

There are loads of great day trips and off-mountain activities in  
the area, but the world-famous snow monkeys are by far the most  
popular option among visitors. You can access them by car in two  
hours, by public transit in three, or on a full day guided tour. Which-  
ever option you choose, the monkeys are worth a visit!



# Indoor ski resorts near Tokyo

STORY AND PHOTO BY MUBITA MAMBWE,  
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Indoor skiing in Japan has seen better days: once thriving in Japan with slopes set up within driving distance of downtown Tokyo, the number of resorts has dwindled to a mere handful in the last decade.

But with the surviving indoor ski joints, there's still plenty of fun to be had for those that crave a quick getaway to the slopes without worrying about shinkansen and accommodation fees, or having taking a few days off from work.

## Sayama ski resort

The Sayama Ski Resort is conveniently tucked away in Saitama Prefecture—a mere 40-minute train ride from Ikebukuro, 60 from Shinjuku—and houses a very lengthy indoor ski slope that measures at 300 meters long. While the slopes are generally open from 10am to 9pm, the resort has days where it's available for all-nighters, open from 10pm to 6am—just in time to make it back for breakfast in Tokyo. Check with the resort or their website for schedules.

Ski and snowboarding gear and wear

available for rent. Lessons available (in English). Lessons start at ¥3,500 for adults.

One-day tickets: adults ¥4,100; high school and up, and senior citizens ¥3,300; elementary and under free.

**LOCATION:** 2167 Kami-Yamaguchi, Tokorozawa-shi, Saitama Prefecture.

Rentals starts at ¥3,200

**NEAREST STATION:** Seibu-Kyūjō-mae.

**URL:** [https://www.seibu-leisure.co.jp/ski\\_web/](https://www.seibu-leisure.co.jp/ski_web/)

## Snova Shin-Yokohama

One of the most accessible indoor slopes for Tokyoites, Snova Shin-Yokohama is frequented in the summer by those looking to practice their ski or snowboard game off-season. Its 60-meter-long, 10-14-degree incline slopes are smooth, with one area outfitted with bumps and moguls; there's also a half pipe slope for more advanced skiers and snowboarders.

Ski and snowboarding gear and wear available for rent. Lessons available. 120-minute pass: Adults ¥3,000-¥3,500; children ¥2,500-¥3,500. 240-minute pass: adults ¥3,700-¥4,200; children



¥3,000-¥3,700.

**HOURS:** 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. weekdays, 9:30 a.m. – 9 p.m. weekends.

**LOCATION:** 1-2-43 Kajiyama, Tsurumi, Yokohama.

**URL:** <http://snovashinyoko.co.jp>

## Snova Mizonokuchi 246

Snova's location in nearby Kawasaki caters well to skiers and snowboarders of all levels. Its 60-meter, 11-14-degree

incline slope is decked out with walls, boxes, rails, and jumps—and of course a plain section for those that just want to experience the thrill of blazing through snow.

Ski and snowboarding gear and wear available for rent. Lessons available (in Japanese only). Two-hour pass: adults ¥3,000-¥3,500; children ¥2,500-¥3,000. Four-hour pass: adults ¥3,700-¥4,200; children ¥3,000-¥3,700.

**HOURS:** 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. weekdays, 9:30 a.m. – 9 p.m. weekends.

**LOCATION:** 5-28-1 Shimosakunobe, Takatsu-ku, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa Prefecture.

**NEAREST STATION:** Tsudayama.

**URL:** [www.snova246.com](http://www.snova246.com)

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# Speakin' Japanese

## Winter travel

As you travel this winter season, here are some useful Japanese phrases to help you along the way.

**"Samui desu, ne?"** = It is cold, isn't it?

**"Atatakaï desu, ne?"** = It is warm, isn't it?

**"Atsui desu, ne?"** = It is hot, isn't it?

These expressions are often used with **"Ohayo Gozaimasu"** (good morning), **"Konnichiwa"** (good afternoon) or **"Konbanwa"** (good evening). **"Desu, ne?"** = it is, isn't it?

**"Yuki ga furisou desu."** = It looks like it is going to snow.

**"... sou desu"** = looks like going to be ...

These phrases are also used in daily conversations:

**"Ame ga furisou desu."** = It looks like it is going to rain.

**"Hare sou desu."** = It looks like going to be fine.

**"Yoi otenki desu."** = It is a beautiful day.

**"Atama ga itai desu."** = I have a headache.

**"... ga itai desu"** = "I have an ache/pain in ..."

When you have to see a doctor, you can use some of the following phrases:

**"Nodo ga itai desu."** = My throat hurts.

**"Onaka ga itai desu."** = I have a

stomachache.

**"Netsu ga arimasu."** = I have a fever.

**"Seki ga demasu."** = I have a cough.

**"Kaze wo hikimashita."** = I caught a cold.

Tokyo eki **"wa doko desuka?"** (Where is Tokyo Station?)

**"... wa doko desuka?"** = Where is ...

• Byouin **"wa dokodesuka?"** (Where is a hospital?)

• Koban **"wa dokodesuka?"** (Where is a police station?)

• Toire **"wa dokodsuka?"** (Where is a bathroom?)

**Eki made donokurai kakarimasuka?** (How long does it take to the station?)

**"made donokurai kakarimasuka?"** = How long does it take to ...

• Kyanpu Foster **"made donokurai kakarimasuka?"** (How long does it take to Foster military base?)

• Kuuuko **"made donokurai kakarimasuka?"** (How long does it take to an airport?)

**Mayoimashita.**

(I am lost.)

• Michi ga wakarimasen.

(I don't know the way.)

• Basho ga wakarimasen.

(I don't know where it is.)

-Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

Pronunciation key: "A" is short (like "ah"); "E" is short (like "get"); "I" is short (like "it"); "O" is long (like "old"); "U" is long (like "tube"); and "AI" is a long "I" (like "hike"). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but "OU" is a long "O" with emphasis on that syllable.

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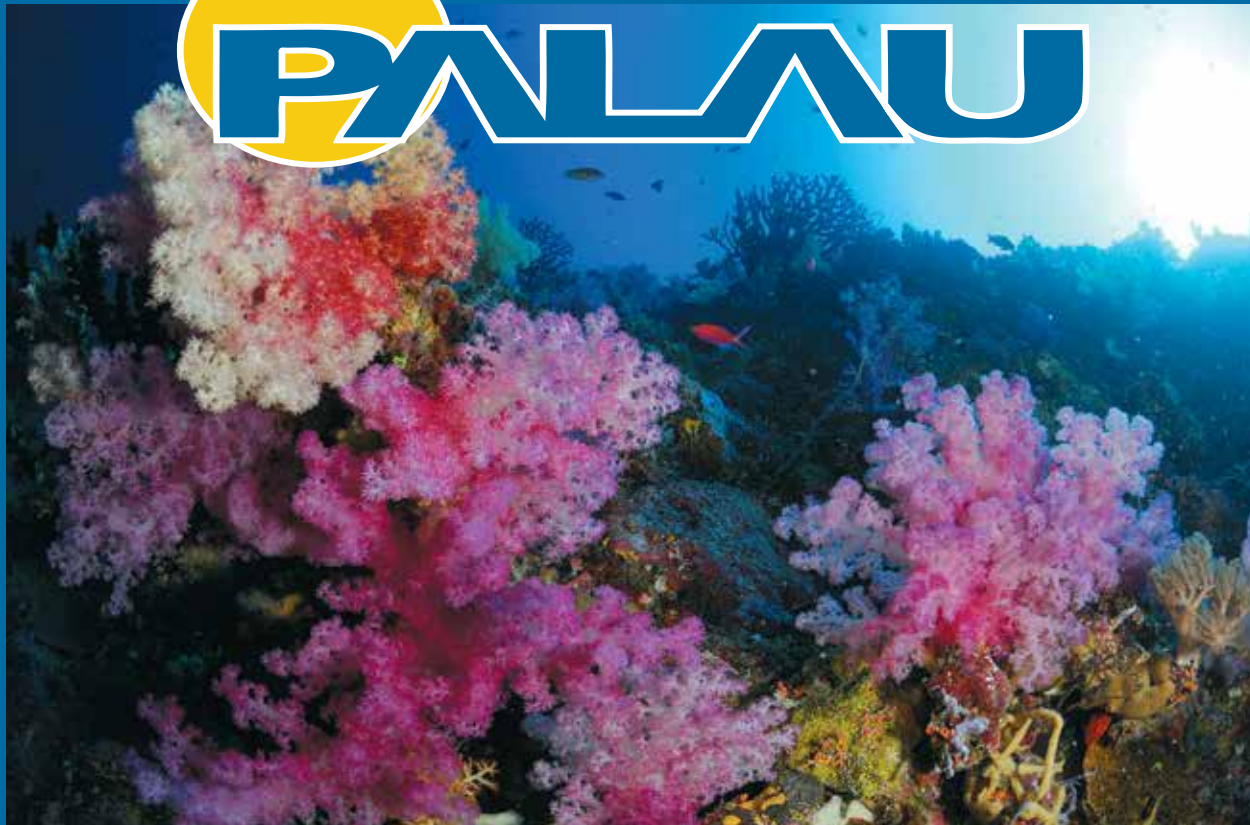


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-Dr. Enric Sala, Explorer-in-Residence, National Geographic

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Odaiba made from Lego—night time view

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
SARAH MATHEWS, JAPAN TRAVEL

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1-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo

#### PRICE:

- 2,500 yen children (ages 3+) and adult if purchased online on the day of.
- 1,800 yen if purchased up to 24 hours in advance online.

**URL:** [tokyo.legolanddiscoverycenter.jp/en/](http://tokyo.legolanddiscoverycenter.jp/en/)

**TEL:** 03-3599-5168

Everyone has a soft spot for Lego, right? Well I certainly do! When I heard that a Legoland had opened in Odaiba, I was very keen to check it out. I was even keener to go when I found out that they have something called Miniland. Miniland is basically all of Tokyo's famous places/buildings made out of Lego. It is truly amazing and has to be seen with your own eyes to be fully appreciated.

From Tokyo Tower to the Skytree, to Rainbow Bridge, the Sumo Stadium and the famous Shibuya crossing, plus so many more—and no detail is spared. And as if the structures themselves aren't amazing enough, the lighting changes from daytime to night time periodically, and there is even a fireworks display that is let off during the night time phase. I spent ages looking at the creations—they truly fascinated me! I highly recommend Legoland to everyone purely for seeing Miniland, even if you see nothing else in the complex.

When I entered I was expecting to just see Miniland and leave; however, in addition to Miniland, there are so many more attractions at Legoland to keep you entertained. There is a 4D cinema that screens a short (about 15 minutes) movie. I won't spoil the details, but it was very entertaining and has

lots of special features (heed the warnings of putting away anything you don't want to end up wet!). There is also a ride ('Kingdom Quest') where you use laser guns to fight off the baddies and rescue the princess! According to the website, a new ride, called 'Merlin's Apprentice' is opening in October also.

In addition, for kids there are multiple themed areas where they can build with Lego and Duplo to their hearts content. And, if you get tired from all the fun, there is a cafe and an area with tables and chairs to rest in.

If you plan your trip to Legoland in advance, don't forget to buy your tickets online, for a savings of up to 700 yen. They are available up until the day before your visit. Legoland is located within Decks Tokyo Beach Mall, which contains many attractions, so you can easily spend a day just in this mall!



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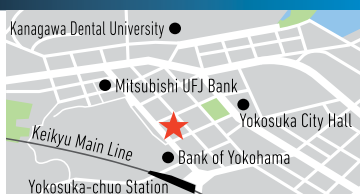
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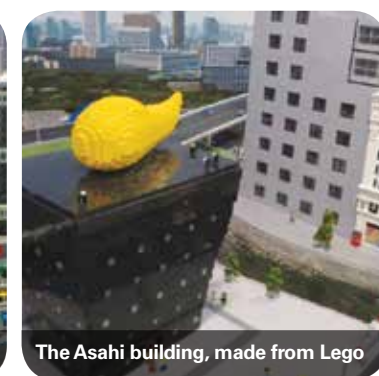
Note: The navigation menu is set to Japanese by default. Please press 2→1.  
If your phone is set to avoid displaying your number when making a call, dial 186 before dialing 0120.

\*1: Source: Cable and Satellite Fact Book 2019.  
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Odaiba made from Lego



The Asahi building, made from Lego



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**ILLUMINATION (HOKKAIDO):** Until Feb. 29; sunset - 8:30 p.m.; The rose garden, crock tower and Christmas tree will be illuminated with over 100,000 LED lights; 7-minute walk from Miyanosawa Station; exit Sapporo Nishi I.C. free parking; 011-666-1481; [www.shiroikoibitopark.jp/en/](http://www.shiroikoibitopark.jp/en/)

**MISAWA PHANTASIA(AOMORI):**  
Until Jan.14; 3:30 p.m.-midnight;  
featuring a 16-meter tall 'big tree'  
with 10,000 LED lights and dozens  
of suspended balls illuminated in  
various colors in the Nakayoshi Park;  
5-minute walk from Misawa AB main  
gate; 0176-53-2175; [https://misawa-](https://misawa-phantasia.com/)

phantasia.jimdo.com/  
ARTS TOWADA WINTER  
ILLUMINATION 2019 (AOMORI):  
Dec. 7-Feb. 24, 4:30-9 p.m.; blue  
300,000 LED lights decorate with  
the snow covered in front of Towada  
Modern Arts Museum; 35-minute  
bus ride from JR Shichinohe Towada  
Station; 0176-51-6772; [www.city.towada.lg.jp/docs/2015112700029/](http://www.city.towada.lg.jp/docs/2015112700029/)

**KOIWAI WINTER ILLUMINATION (IWATE):** Until Jan. 13, 3:30-8 p.m.; close on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1; featuring illumination decorates with 1 mil. LED lights themed with "Galaxy Farm Night"; 800 yen for adults, 300 yen for under 12; 15-minute drive from Morioka I.C. on Tohoku Express; 019-692-4321; [www.koiwai.co.jp/makiba/en/](http://www.koiwai.co.jp/makiba/en/)

**TOKYO SKYTREE DREAM CHRISTMAS 2019 (TOKYO):** Until Dec. 25; decorates over 500,000 lights around the Skytree Town. collaborates with TV Tokyo event "TV Tokyo winter park in Tokyo Skytree Town" to provide special event and gourmets; Oshiage or Tokyo Skytree Station. 0570-55-0634; [www.tokyo-skytree.jp/en/](http://www.tokyo-skytree.jp/en/)

**MARUNOUCHI ILLUMINATION 2019 (TOKYO):** Until Feb. 16; 5:30-11 p.m.; Over 220 street trees can be decorated with 1 mil. champagne gold LED lights around Otemachi and Yurakcho; JR Tokyo Station; 03-5218-5100; [www.marunouchi.com/event/detail/121293/](http://www.marunouchi.com/event/detail/121293/)

**OMOTE SANDO HILLS CHRISTMAS 2019 (TOKYO):** Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Omote Sando Hills Christmas illumination with the theme of "Aurora emerging in the city," decorated on a 23ft tree with the LED lights on the center of open space at the venue along with "light curtain" consisting of 6,000 icicle appears on the upper part of stairway. JR Harajuku or Omote Sando Station; 03-3497-0310; [www.omotesandohills.com/en/events/](http://www.omotesandohills.com/en/events/)

**SHIBUYA BLUE GROTT 2019 (TOKYO):** Until Dec. 31; 5-10 p.m.; illumination of 600,000 LED lights with the theme of "Blue Grotto" through Shibuya Koen Street and Yoyogi Park; walking distance from Shibuya and Harajuku Station; [shibuya-aonodokutsu.jp/](http://shibuya-aonodokutsu.jp/)

**CHRISTMAS MARKET IN YOKOHAMA RED BRICK WAREHOUSE (KANAGAWA):** Until Dec. 25; 4 - 9 p.m.; 32 ft. Christmas tree at the entrance and illumination roof is lighting up for the 10th event. Ice skate rink is also available. 15-minute walk from Sakuragicho or Kanai Station. 045-2272002; [www.yokohama-akarenga.jp/christmas/](http://www.yokohama-akarenga.jp/christmas/); [http://akarenga-atrink.yaf.jp/org/img/atrink\\_HP\\_en.pdf](http://akarenga-atrink.yaf.jp/org/img/atrink_HP_en.pdf)

**(KANAGAWA):** Until Apr. 5; about 6 mil. LED lights are decorated around the Sagamiko Resort Pleasure Forrest. Amusement Park, Hot Spring, Camping and BBQ area is also available. 1,000 yen for adults, 700 yen under 12.10-minute bus ride from JR Sagamiko or Hashimoto Station; 7-minute drive from Sagamiko Higashi I.C on Chuo Express. 0570-037-353; [www.sagamiko-resort.jp/illumillion/](http://www.sagamiko-resort.jp/illumillion/)

**MOTHER FARM ILLUMINATION**

**(CHIBA):** Until Jan. 6 and Weekend only on Jan.11- Mar. 29; 4-8 p.m. annual theme is flower garden of light that is featuring the lighting flower garden, princess flower dress and rainbow tunnel; 800 yen for over 15, 400 yen for under 12; night bungee jump is priced 2,200 yen. Shuttle bus service is available from Kimitsu Station. 0439-37-3211; [www.motherfarm.co.jp/e.acb.hp.transer.jp/information/illumination2019/](http://www.motherfarm.co.jp/e.acb.hp.transer.jp/information/illumination2019/)

**KOBE LUMINARIE (HYOGO):** Until Dec. 15, 6-9:30 p.m. Held since Dec 1995, entrusted with the requisition of the victims of the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake and the reconstruction and regeneration of the city. 7 minute walk from JR Motomachi Station. 078-230-1001. [kobe-luminarie.jp/index.html](http://kobe-luminarie.jp/index.html)

**BIHOKU PARK ILLUMINATION (HIROSHIMA):** Until Jan. 5; 5:30-9 p.m.; close on Dec. 31 and Jan.1; various illumination decorated with over 700,000 LED lights throughout the park, live performance and fireworks are scheduled on the weekends.450 yen for over 15, 210 yen for over 65; 0824-72-7000; [www.bihoku-park.go.jp/event/event\\_entry.php?goid=111018](http://www.bihoku-park.go.jp/event/event_entry.php?goid=111018)

**KIRAKIRA FESTIVAL IN SASEBO (NAGASAKI):** Festival opens until Dec.25 (Illumination opens until Jan. 13); 5-11 p.m.; Decorate around the shopping street in Sasebo city and the illumination selected by annual Sasebo news on the Shimanose Art Center wall is remarkable; Live performance, dance battle and LED balloon parade is schedule through the event; 15-minute walk from JR Sasebo Station; 0956-21-4411; [yonkacha.com/](http://yonkacha.com/)

**SOUTHEAST BOTANICAL GARDEN ILLUMINATION (OKINAWA):** Until Apr. 5, 5-10 p.m.; decorates the light tunnels, tree house and light carpets with 1.8 mil. LED lights to illuminate trees and the promenade fantastically. 1,800 yen for adult, 1,100 yen for over 65; 600 yen for under 15; 5-minute drive from Okinawa Kita I.C; 098-939-2555; <http://www.southeast-botanical.jp/en/>

25; 3 p.m. – 8 p.m. weekdays; 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. weekends & holidays; free. Tamaari Town Keyaki Hiroba 2F; <https://www.saitama-arena.co.jp/event/illumination2019/market/>

**TOKYO MIDTOWN CHRISTMAS MARKET:** Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Dec.21-25, 11 a.m. –10 p.m.) everyday; free. Tokyo Midtown near Roppongi Station; <https://www.tokyo-midtown.com/jp/event/xmas/event/market.html>

**ROPPONGI HILLS CHRISTMAS MARKET:** Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. everyday; free. Roppongi Hills; <https://www.roppongihills.com/en/sp/christmas/2019/index.html>

**Christmas market time!**

**TOKYO CHRISTMAS MARKET:** Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Hiibiya Park; <https://tokyochristmas.net/>

**YOKOHAMA RED BRICK WAREHOUSE CHRISTMAS MARKET:** Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. until Dec. 13; 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. Dec. 14 - Dec. 25; free. Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse near Bashamichi Station (Minatomirai line); <https://www.yokohama-akarenga.jp/christmas/>

**YEBISU GARDEN PLACE CHRISTMAS MARCHÉ:** Until Dec. 25; 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. Yebisu Garden Place near Ebisu Station; free. <https://gardenplace.jp/special/2019christmas/marche/>

**SAITAMA NEW URBAN CENTRE CHRISTMAS MARKET :** Until Dec.

**萬屋 YOROZUYAMISAWA**

**Trading Cards:** Pokémon cards and figures.

**Toys:** Action figures like Sailor Moon, Godzilla, Dragon Ball Z, One Piece, and Gundam.

**GAMES:** Nintendo Switch, Sony PS4, Sega Genesis, and Super Famicom.

**Musical Instruments:** Martin & Co. acoustic guitar, Gibson electric guitar, Yamaha Takamine acoustic guitar, Epiphone electric guitar, and Morris bass guitar.

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QR code linking to the store's social media or website.

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\*\*\* Prices are in US dollar, per person, based on 2 per room, unless specified.

All Prices include Tax/Fuel/Fees

Based on rate 110. subject to exchange rate

### February Special Lantern Festival 2020 in Taiwan / 06 FEB Departure - 9 FEB Return



**Price ¥101,000 (\$919)**

**Price includes:**

- Round trip air fare between Haneda and Taipei
- Airport transfer in Taipei (IACE group vehicle)
- 3 nights stay at Sonnnen Hotel
- Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival Tour (seat-in-coach) on 7FEB with English-speaking guide
- Half Day Taipei City tour (seat-in-coach) on 8 FEB with English-speaking guide
- Breakfast x3

\*Non-Escorted Tour

\*Minimum six guests required \*Purchase by 23DEC

\*Single room price is ¥126,000 (\$1146)

~For more details, please feel free to contact us~

### SAPPORO Snow Festival Escorted Tour 3-Days / 8 FEB Departure - 10 FEB Return



Free Plan

Escorted  
Tour

**Price ¥103,000 (\$937)**

**Price includes:**

- Round trip air fare between Haneda and Chitose
- Airport transfer in Sapporo between Chitose Airport and hotel
- 2 nights stay at ANA Crowne Plaza Sapporo
- Breakfast x2

\*Escorted Tour

\*Single room price is ¥138,000 (\$1255)

~For more details, please feel free to contact us~

More information is available at... <https://www.iace.co.jp/en/>

**YOKOSUKA BRANCH**

ITT Office: **243-3498** Commercial line: **046-816-3498**

Email: [yokosuka@iace.co.jp](mailto:yokosuka@iace.co.jp)

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Holi: 10 am - 2 pm



Feel free to call,  
IACE YOKOSUKA office

**ATSUGI BRANCH**

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All Prices include Tax/Fuel/Fees  
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## 2020 IACE SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL TOUR

**Feb 02 dep / Feb 05 return (4 days 3 nights)** **Minimum Reached!**

Iwakuni departure (ANA flight via Haneda, Tokyo)

\*Price includes  
Round trip airfare, 3 nights hotel,  
Breakfast, Transfer, 1 dinner at Beer Garden,  
Tour (visit to "Otaru city", "Chocolate Factory",  
"Lake Shikotsu Ice Festival")  
Tax & Fuel charge, Tour escort

Adult: **\$1,218**  
Child (6-11 years old): **\$1,176**  
Child (3-5 years old): **\$1,139**  
Child (3-5 years old, without bed): **\$862**  
Infant (Under 3 years old): **Free**

### Itinerary

Feb 02 (Sun)	Feb 03 (Mon)	Feb 04 (Tue)	Feb 05 (Wed)
09:30 Leave Iwakuni by ANA 10:55 Arrive Haneda 12:00 Leave Haneda by ANA 13:35 Arrive Chitose Transfer to hotel for check-in then transfer to Sapporo Beer Garden ENJOY "ALL YOU CAN EAT & DRINK for 100 minutes"	Morning: transfer to Chocolate Factory ENJOY "JAPANESE FAMOUS SOUVENIRS" Afternoon: transfer to Otaru city ENJOY "DELICIOUS SEAFOOD in OTARU" Evening: transfer to Lake Shikotsu ENJOY "LAKE SHIKOTSU ICE FESTIVAL" transfer to hotel	SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL grand opening day! ENJOY "SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL" ALL DAY !!	Transfer to Chitose Airport 13:30 Leave Chitose by ANA 15:10 Arrive Haneda 16:55 Leave Haneda by ANA 18:40 Arrive Iwakuni

"LAKE SHIKOTSU ICE FESTIVAL"  
Beautiful Ice Sculptures & Fun Slides!

"CHOCOLATE FACTORY"  
Japanese famous souvenir shop!

"HOKKAIDO BEER GARDEN"  
All You Can Eat & Drink for 100 minutes!

**For Iwakuni & Sasebo customer, please call or email for any of your travel inquiry or booking.**

**IACE TRAVEL at IWAKUNI**

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2 offices in Tokyo ( Yokosuka, Atsugi )

BLDG 410 (Crossroads Mall)  
**iwakuni@iace.co.jp**  
DSN: 253-3942 or 3841  
From cell/off base: 0827-79-3942 or 3841  
9:30 - 18:00 Mon-Fri Website: <https://www.iace.co.jp/en/>

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File photo

## KEEP YOUR PET SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

BY CAPT. MELISSA A. DUGAN, DVM, OIC,  
WIESBADEN VTF

The holiday season is quickly approaching and with it comes cold weather, festive decorations, amazing food and large gatherings. To avoid the most wonderful time of the year becoming the most memorable time of the year for the wrong reasons, certain precautions should be taken to keep our furry family members safe.

It's always tempting to give in to those adorable, tear-shaped, pleading eyes when they are begging for human food, however, certain human foods can make animals very sick. Chocolate, turkey, sugar-free products containing xylitol, grapes, raisins, onions, garlic, macadamia nuts, bones and fat trimmings are just a few of the culprits we might be tempted to feed our pets. Each pet responds to the toxin a little differently so it's best to just avoid feeding people food and a potential expensive trip to the veterinary emergency center. Keep any treats left out for guests out of your pets reach and keep the trash cans covered.

Decorations are beautiful, expressive ways to celebrate various holidays, however they can pose a serious hazard to pets. Most are made from materials that can be toxic if ingested by animals. Cats are notorious for ingesting tinsel and strings from gift wrap that can cause severe gastrointestinal problems that often require emergency surgery. Bright, shiny, blinking decorations are a huge hit, but are often plugged in. Dogs especially like to chew on electrical wires and risk being electrocuted. Some cats like to chew the individual light bulbs on the tree. This poses a double hazard ... electrocution and knocking over the unsecured tree. It's best to cover cords and unplug any non-essential electrical equipment every time you leave the house. Try to put

decorations out of your pet's reach and secure your Christmas tree so it won't fall over on passers-by.

Many holiday plants are toxic to pets. Most species of lilies are toxic to cats and can cause symptoms as mild as excessive drooling to those severe as acute kidney failure or death. Holly berries, mistletoe, and poinsettias are all toxic and again, symptoms can range from mild salivation, vomiting, and diarrhea to seizures, lethargy, renal failure or death. The ASPCA has a more inclusive list for toxic plants for animals at the following link: <http://www.aspcare.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>.

Traveling with pets can be challenging. Start planning early. Contact your local Veterinary Treatment Facility (VTF) if you are flying and/or crossing borders. Several countries have strict animal import requirements and you could potentially be facing an unexpected quarantine if you don't plan appropriately. If you are boarding your pets, ask the kennel what vaccinations and preventatives are required and contact the VTF to ensure you are current and can board your animals.

Large crowds can create undue stress for our pets. If you are having guests over, create a 'safe haven' for your pet either in a room by themselves or in a quiet place away from guests. This is especially useful if your guest list includes children and your pet isn't used to them.

These are just a few pointers for keeping your furry family members safe during the holiday season.

You can also find a complete listing of VTF locations, using the milPetED App (available for both Apple & Android) - here and at, <http://rhce.amedd.army.mil>.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Veterinary Treatment Facility.

# GUESS

## How Many Holiday Candies in the Jar!

**Exact Guess: \$50**  
**2 Closest Guesses: \$25**  
**Contest runs:**  
**Nov. 26th to Dec. 8th**  
(Pacific area only)

**Give your best "GUESS" and you could win a gift card!**

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# Stripes Sports Trivia

In Michael Lewis' "Moneyball", Oakland A's General Manager Billy Beane is praised for his modern take on the game of baseball and its statistics. The book and movie are often criticized for never focusing on the great starting pitching that team featured. The closer was pretty solid as well, saving 44 games that season. Who was he?

Answer

Billy Koch

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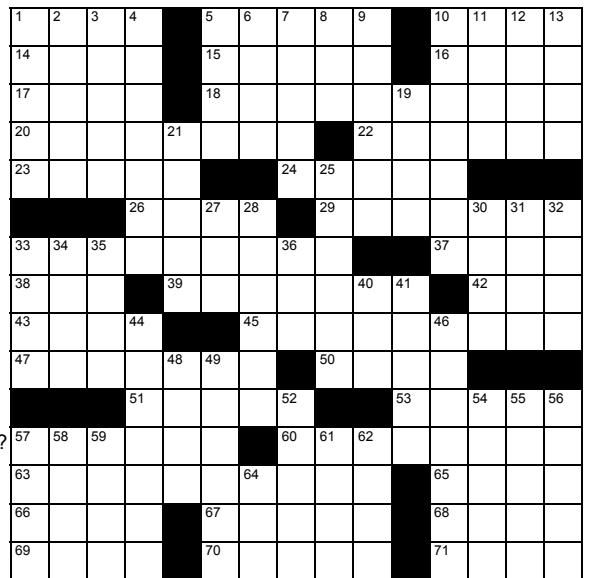
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## The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

- Type of bag
- Like some cheddar
- Ho-hum
- Throw, as dice
- Coke's bear
- Unsophisticated sort
- Not being used
- Wind instrument
- Trucker in a union
- Linen closet items
- Kind of boom
- Scouting group
- Remote location?
- Consumer
- Part of TKO
- Indonesian island
- "Without further ..."
- Boastful person
- Hightailed it
- Small stream
- Day of \_\_\_\_\_
- Armchair companion
- Pitchfork part
- Lightweight wood
- Gentle push
- Seward's state
- College age
- Cold season
- Smallest pup
- Hathaway of Hollywood
- Tablelands
- Something to build on
- Vintage designation
- Appears
- Salacious look



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- Haggard's hero
- Flaw
- Squabble
- Fine-tune
- Open-eyed
- Pro-footballer in L.A.
- Part of an atom
- It creates drafts
- Pear-shaped instrument
- Genesis brother
- His partner
- State of mind
- Biscuitlike pastry
- Surviving organism of old
- Pudding fruit
- Squirrel's cache
- Rani's wrap
- Enthusiasm
- Saturn feature
- Edible root
- Anagram for "tide"
- Stable youngster

- Absorbed, as a loss
- Enjoy Aspen
- Heavy metric weight
- Maine entree
- On the fence
- Put together
- Burglar deterrents
- Licorice-like flavor
- Tennis tie
- Horror or sci-fi, e.g.
- Sign above a door
- Not at home
- Pickup shtick
- Oscar winner Paquin
- Mosque leader
- Bitter end?
- Pipe fitting

### Answers to Last Week's Crossword:



**DID YOU KNOW?**

It is a no-no in Japan to pick up food with your chopsticks when it was already held by someone else's chopsticks. There are many dos and don'ts in Japan, and this one in particular seems innocent, but not so much to Japanese. This dining don't reminds Japanese of an old tradition – one that involves a dead relative, bones and a crematorium. Google it!

Kanji of the week

燕

Tsubame / En (Swallow)

## Language Lesson

Let's go.

Iki mashoo.

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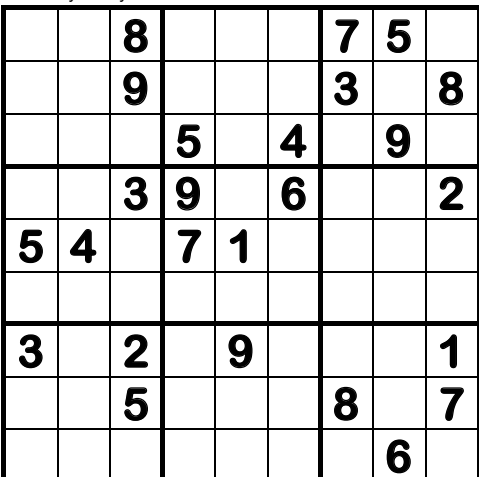


Mon – Fri: 9a.m. – 6p.m.  
Saturday Close at 5p.m.  
Closed Sundays



## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy



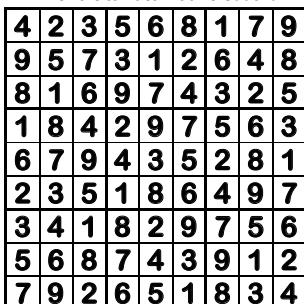
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Edited by Margie E. Burke

### HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

### Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:



## FESTIVAL BOOTH - CONCERT - SPORTING EVENT INSURANCE AVAILABLE!

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# Female Medical Volunteers!!

Clinical trials are an essential step in confirming the safety and effectiveness of new therapeutic candidates. All volunteers will be compensated for time and any inconvenience caused by participation in the clinical trial. Please check below!

## -Schedule-

Medical Check-Up/Screening:

January / February 2020

Hospitalization (3 nights):

Early February 2020

## Do you fit in the following important requirements?

- ✓ **White Female** aged 20 to 64 years old.
- ✓ **Are unable to bear children**  
i.e. post menopausal, surgically sterile or due to some other condition.
- ✓ Body mass index (BMI) less than 30
- ✓ Healthy with no history of severe allergies or serious medical conditions.

Interested in finding out more information, please contact:



[https://asbo.co.jp/asbo\\_eng/](https://asbo.co.jp/asbo_eng/)

There is also the possibility of other trials in the future for healthy males and females, if you are interested in participating, please do not hesitate to make contact using the above links.



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