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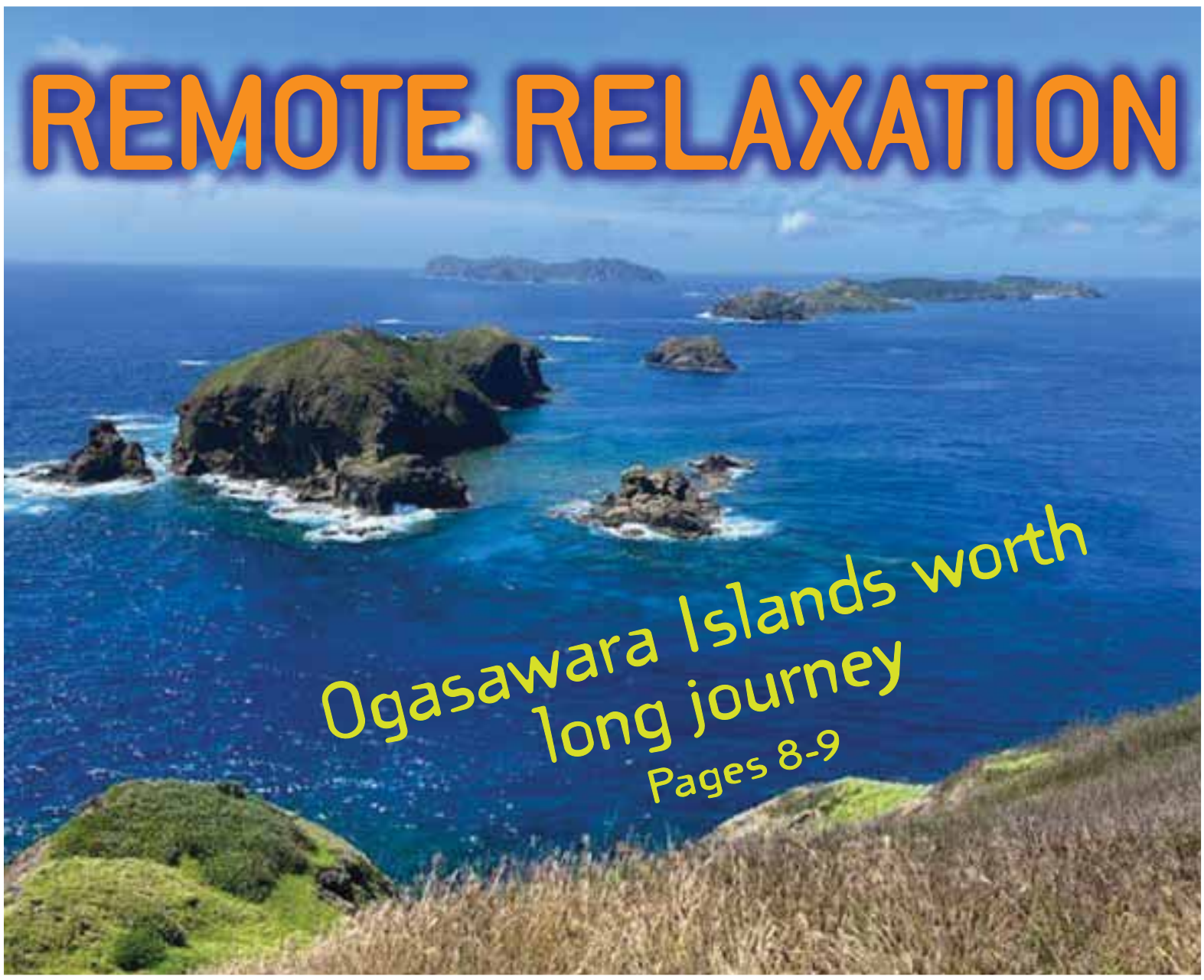

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KIMODAMESHI

A bone-chilling Japanese summer

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

Much like Halloween in October in the West, mid-summer is a season to intersect with the dead in Japan, as deceased ancestors are believed to visit and spend few days with us during traditional Obon period (August 13-15).

Also similar to the U.S., temporary haunted houses are built in amusement parks or shopping malls as seasonal attractions. Horror movies and reports of haunted locations are televised, while popular kimodameshi (literally, to test your courage through scared route) games are enjoyed in schools and local communities throughout summertime.

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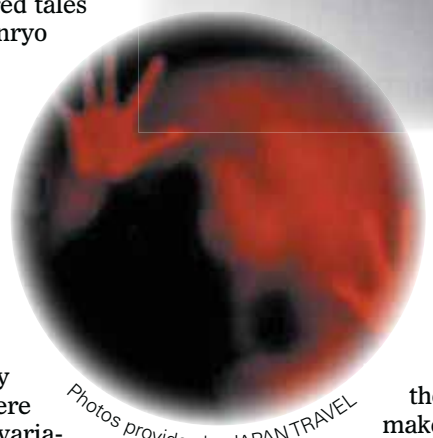
JAPANESE URBAN LEGENDS

Are you brave enough to make it to the end?

BY VERONICA CARNEVALE, JAPAN TRAVEL

Whether you are seeking scary stories for the Halloween season or simply looking for hair-raising tales, Japan's urban legends have you covered.

These modern stories have vague origins and are often told as truth, since they cannot be confirmed or disproved, heightening their believability and horror. Japan's breadth of culture has conjured tales of vengeful onryo (malevolent spirits), yurei (modern ghosts), and yokai (spirits in Japanese folklore) that continue to terrify generations. As with any oral story, there are multiple variations of these tales. Listed below are popular iterations of Japan's most chilling urban legends. Be sure to take notes should you be unlucky enough to encounter one of these unpleasant characters.



Photos provides by JAPAN TRAVEL

Turn off the lights and make sure no one is watching you from the dark. Let's begin.

As some of these tales can be gruesome and disturbing, reader discretion is advised!

Aka Manto (Red Cloak)

We begin our first story in the bathroom, a seemingly popular place for Japanese urban legends. Aka Manto is a male spirit who dons a red cloak and mask and is said to haunt school and public restrooms with a particular fondness for the last stall in the women's bathroom. Once you are seated in the stall, you will hear a male voice ask if you want red or blue paper. Choose your words carefully. If you say red paper, you will meet a bloody end, and if you say blue paper, you will be suffocated to death until you are blue. If you try to confuse the spirit by asking for a different color paper, you will be dragged into hell. To avoid a brutal end at Aka Manto's hand, simply refuse his offer and run.

Kuchisake-onna (Slit-Mouthed Woman)

Anyone who is familiar with Japanese urban legends, knows of the infamous, yet popular, Kuchisake-onna. This vengeful ghost appears as a seemingly beautiful woman who roams the streets at night. She wears a face mask and carries a concealed pair

↗

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of scissors.

If you are unlucky enough to meet Kuchisake-onna during a solitary stroll, she will ask you if you think she is beautiful. As with Aka Manto, consider your answer like your life depends on it (since it does). If you say no, she will immediately murder you with her scissors. If you say yes, she will remove her face covering to reveal a gaping mouth that has been slit from ear to ear in a haunting smile. Then, she will ask again: say 'no' and you die, but stick with 'yes' and she will slit your mouth like hers. The only way to escape Kuchisake-onna, is to tell her that she looks average.

If you are concerned about possible encounters with Kuchisake-onna or any of the other ghouls, why not try testing your survival skills at Tokyo's top haunted house attractions. If you fail, at least it is only a game.

Teke Teke

Teke Teke is said to be the ghost of a woman or schoolgirl who fell on a railway line and was cut in half by an oncoming train. The vengeful spirit—outraged by her untimely death—now haunts urban areas and train stations at night. Since she no longer has legs, she drags herself on her hands and elbows, which produces a chilling "teke-teke" sound. Should you encounter Teke Teke, run!

If the malicious spirit catches you, she will slice you in half with a scythe. Although she lacks legs, she is extremely fast, and has been known to keep up with cars. In some renditions of the story, she will ask you where her legs are, in which case you must reply "Meishin Expressway" in order to survive. In less hopeful iterations, your only chance of survival is to outrun her, which is completely impossible.

Toire no Hanako-san (Hanako-san of the Toilet)

For our next story, we return to the bathroom with a legend some compare to Bloody Mary. Hanako is the spirit of a young schoolgirl who met her end in an elementary school bathroom as a result of suicide due to bullying or WWII bombings and is now said to haunt them. Many children test their wits by summoning the child spirit. In order to summon her, you must go to a third floor bathroom and knock on the third stall three times, after which you say, "Are you there, Hanako-san?" If you hear even the faintest reply, make a hasty exit. If you are too slow or choose to enter the stall, Hanako will drag you into the toilet, and you will never be seen again.

Okiku Doll

The legend of the Okiku Doll differs from our previous stories as the doll physically exists and resides in Mannen-ji Temple in Hokkaido. The tale dates back to 1918 when a boy purchased the doll for his younger sister, noting that they both had bob haircuts. The little girl was infatuated with the doll, and they were inseparable. Tragically, a short time later, the girl passed away from an illness. Her family displayed the doll, named Okiku, on an altar in remembrance of their daughter and noticed that the doll's hair was growing. They concluded that their daughter's restless spirit was inhabiting the doll and eventually provided it to Mannen-ji Temple where it remains today and is viewable to guests. Okiku's hair continues to grow to this day despite haircuts from the temple's priests.

If you are in Hokkaido, why not stop by and observe the eerie phenomenon yourself?

Hokkaido's not the only place in Japan with terrifying real-life legends. Hidden among Tokyo's advanced skyscrapers and quaint temples are some truly horrifying spots. Check out Tokyo's most haunted locations, and decide for yourself if the shadows of the night live up to their reputations.

The Red Room Curse

For those reading these tales on your computer, this story is for you. The Red Room Curse is an internet-focused story that starts with an ominous pop-up. The pop-up features a red screen with black text that reads, "Do you like the red room?," which is accompanied by a sinister pre-recorded voice asking the same question. No matter how many times you close the pop-up, it will continue to appear until the voice has finished its question. Afterward, your entire screen will turn red and become flooded with past victims' names. No one knows what happens next, but the receivers of the pop-up are always found dead with their blood painting the walls red, creating the titular red room. Once you receive the pop-up, it is impossible to escape your fate.

If you are interested in experiencing this horror without putting your life on the line, check out Escape the RED ROOM, which is a themed escape room offered by The Real Escape Room in Asakusa. Also, check out the location's other terrifying attraction, Survive the Urban Legend.

Are you scared?

Of course, you can tell yourself that these stories are fictional, but are they? Sweet dreams.

KIMODAMESHI: Like Halloween in the Summer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Just like horror films and scary stories give you goose bumps, kimodameshi and haunted houses make the Japanese cool with fear and terror - another reason they are considered summer attractions. On a hot summer evening, students will often explore cemeteries or haunted locations and enjoy exchanging horror stories with friends

Kimodameshi is a must-play for students away at summer camp. It can be seen as a rite of passage for teenagers as they show their courage in public, and is a great chance for them to cling to someone they might have a crush on.

In kimodameshi, challengers, usually paired as boys and girls (sometimes alone or in a small group), walk along a spooky path in dark forests, grave yards, shrines, temples, abandoned buildings or any other haunted and mysterious spaces. In order to maximize fear, the location is scouted and scary objects, such as skulls and horror-props, are planted in advance. Sometimes, audio and visual effects are used to create an unusual atmosphere.

A good story teller, usually a teacher, provides a horror story before sending them out to the spooky path. To prove that they had walked through the designated course, challengers need to bring something back from the haunted location or leave some sort of token (often a card or stones written with challenger's number or name) at the location, which can be recovered later.

Teachers, volunteering parents or senior colleagues hide along the path in ghost costumes, and jump out at challengers walking along the course.

During the event, students witness a strong-looking boy unable to move in his terror at haunted location while a gentle graceful girl shows her courage to take him out on the course. Some bust into crying and others leave their partner and run away from the course, and that makes some of great memories of school days that cannot easily be forgotten.

The tradition of kimodameshi goes back to the reign of Emperor Hanayama, about 1000 years ago. An official history book in the era "Ookagami" describes that Emperor sent three young aristocrats to an old house known as home of evils around 2 a.m. to test their courage. Only one of them was brave enough to accomplish his order, and he brought back a chip from the haunted house to show the emperor. The brave young aristocrat, Fujiwara Michinaga, later became prime minister and wielded his power over the nation.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Asakusa Hanayashiki
Haunted House – Sakura no Onryo (Ghost of Cherry Tree)

Opened as a flower garden 165 years ago, Asakusa Hanayashiki is known as Japan's oldest amusement park. It's long been a popular attraction filled with various mysterious and spooky legends. One of the legends says when a cherry tree in the garden was chopped down, the site was haunted and cursed. This attraction reenacts the legend of the cursed cherry tree in a set of traditional houses of Edo period.

Location: 2-28-1 Asakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo
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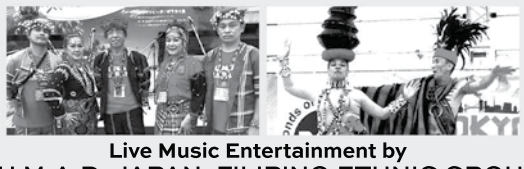

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Speakin' Japanese

Kimodameshi Talk

In Japan, summer isn't complete without visiting a haunted house or enjoying Kimodameshi to test your courage. You may see locals flocked to a temporary haunted houses in shopping malls or amusement parks, while teens enjoy Kimodameshi games in a nearby shrine, temple or graveyard.

Sound like fun? Why not join these summer attractions and enjoy the summer like the Japanese do. The following words and phrases are sure to help you enjoy Kimodameshi with locals.

"Kimodameshi wo shimasen ka?" = Let's play Kimodameshi, shall we?
("... wo shimasen ka?" = let's do ..., shall we?)

"Ohaka ni ikimashoo." = Let's go to the graveyard.
("ohaka" = grave (yard))

"Kowai hanashi wa nigate desu." = I can't stand ghost stories.
("kowai" = frightening, "hanashi" = story, "nigate desu" = can't stand)

"Kowakute ugoke masen." = I am so scared I can't move.
("ugoke masen" = can't move)

"Furue ga tomarimasen." = (I am so scared) I can't stop trembling.
("furue" = trembling, "tomari masen" = can't stop)

"Obake ga dete kita." = Here comes a ghost.
("obake" = ghost, "dete kita" = come out)

"Watashi ga irukara daijoobu." = Because I am here, everything will be all right.
("watashi" = I / me, "irukara" = because I am here, "daijoobu" = all right)

"Te wo nigitte ite kudasai." = Please keep holding my hand.
("te" = hand, "nigitte" = hold/shake, "ite" = stay/keep, "kudasai" = please)

"Taskuteee!" = Help!

"Mou taeraremasen." = I can't take it anymore.
("taeru" = tolerate)

"Ano obakeyashiki wa sugoku kowai rashii." = I hear that the haunted house is really scary.
("obakesyashiki" = haunted house, "rashii" = I hear that)

"Sono hanashi wa zotto shimasu." = That story creeps me out.
("zotto suru" = creep out)

"Kono toshidensetsu wo shittemasuka?" = Do you know this urban legend?
("toshidensetsu" = urban legend, "shittemasuka?" = Do you know?)

"Sono kowai hanashi wa jitsuwa desu." = That scary tale is based on a true story.
("jitsuwa" = true story)

"Hitoride wa sokoni ikitakunai desu." = I don't want to go there alone.
("hitoride" = alone, "ikitakunai" = don't want to go)

- Shoji Kudaka and 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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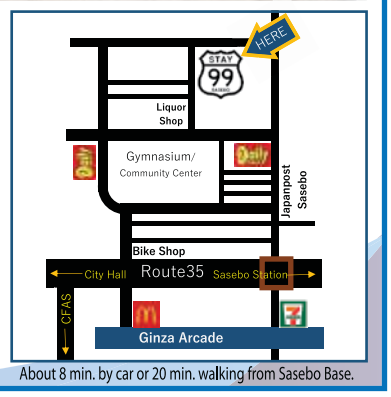

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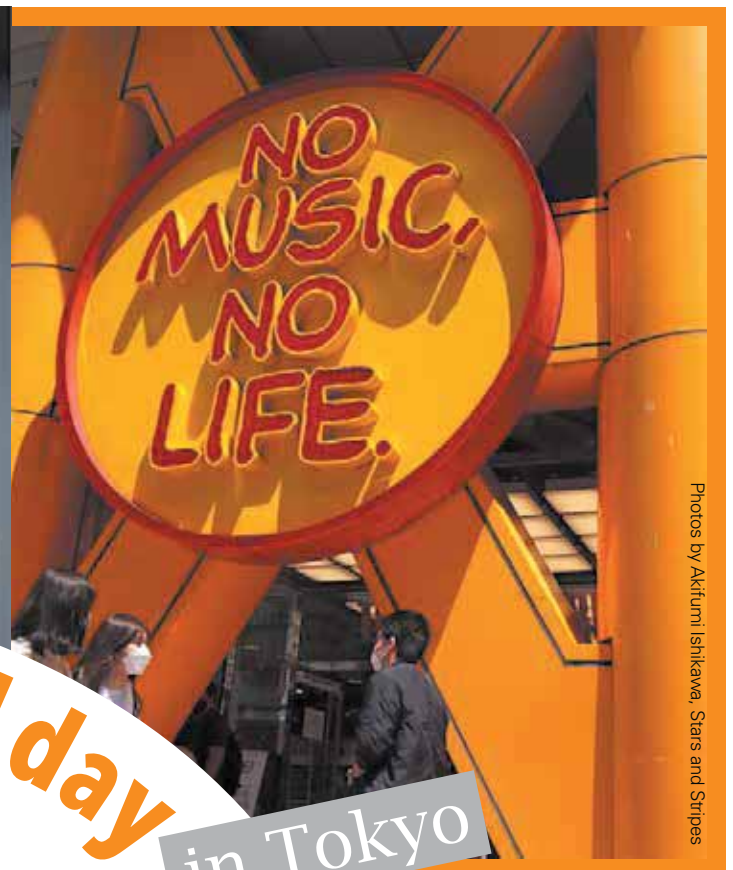

Photos by Akifumi Ishikawa, Stars and Stripes

Music lovers may spend all day exploring Tower Records in Tokyo

BY KELLY AGEE,
STARS AND STRIPES

Tower Records is a store, an experience, and sadly, something Generation Z in America will never experience. Unless they make a pilgrimage to Japan.

Once an international powerhouse in retail music, Tower Records, founded in the United States in 1960, reached its zenith in the 1990s just as Gen Z was being born. Burdened with debt and besieged by competitors, Tower filed for bankruptcy in the U.S. in 2006.

However, the Japan operation became independent in 2002 and today the landmark store in Tokyo is the flagship for more than 80 retail outlets. Its nine floors are worth any music lover spending an hour, an afternoon, or a day exploring.

The store is just a short walk from Shibuya Stavtion, across the famed Shibuya Scramble crossing. Step off the street past the "No Music, No Life" sign and into the first floor and you'll find the newest music by the trendiest artists.

A busy weekend will find a long, winding line of eager customers at the sales counter clutching their CD purchases. Nearby, elevators carry shoppers higher into this music nirvana, but the escalator is the preferred mode of travel.

A café on the second floor serves food and drinks in a space to relax, along with some reading material – books and magazines – in English and Japanese. Coffee sells for 550 to 680 yen. The menu lists pasta, along with waffles or French toast a la mode. Reservations are recommended.

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
STARS AND STRIPES

J-pop, rap, anime

Music has the power to transcend language and cultural barriers. Japanese rap, pop and indie music live on the third floor, and that's where I discovered Reol, a Japanese rapper, singer and songwriter, whose CDs were on display along with a screen that played the video for her song, "Boy."

Continuing upward, I found that signs for the fourth floor are only in hiragana, unlike those in English above and below. This section is where pre-teen pop and anime soundtracks are found.

On the fifth floor, I swooned over some of my favorite artists. Here you'll find the latest in K-pop, Korean popular music that is sweeping the globe. Tower has the music, but also magazines, posters and photos of fans' favorite K-pop groups.

Stacks of wax

The sixth floor is a retail repository of rock 'n' roll and its black platter of sound, the vinyl record. I admit more than a little bias – I collect vinyl and have a deep, abiding love for classic rock.

Exiting the escalator, the section to the right is devoted to vinyl. To the left are CDs.

Avid vinyl collectors will be at home flipping through the bins. Up front, headphones at listening stations allow customers to sample music before they make their selections.

The inventory covers myriad categories, including classic rock, soundtracks, New Wave, classical and all kinds of music from Japanese artists. Browsers will find new and used records, 7-inch singles and 12-inch LPs.

The used singles bin yielded some gems: Paul McCartney's "Simply Having a Wonderful Christmas Time," John Lennon's "Imagine," and singles by his son Julian Lennon, Huey Lewis and the News, Santana, the Carpenters, Adam Ant and The Doors.

The assortment of 12-inch records is more extensive and includes all music types, from classic rock to J-pop. I found the soundtracks to the movies "Cabaret" and "The Sound of Music." The insert for "Sound of Music" was absorbing. The Japanese version includes the lyrics to all the songs in hiragana as well as English.

Prince and the King of Pop

The seventh floor holds a mix of genres. Soul, hip-hop, club and J-club, reggae and J-reggae, jazz, blues and country, among others, live here. While sampling tracks at the listening stations, I discovered Yo-yo the Piano Man, a Japanese classical and jazz musician.

However, the thing on the seventh floor that shocked me the most was the display of CDs and vinyl albums dedicated to Prince, the singer-songwriter, guitarist, producer and actor who died in 2016 of a drug overdose at his home in Minnesota.

Right next to that, behind glass, is a chunk of cement with the handprints of the King of Pop, Michael Jackson. Jackson left the prints, which he also signed, during a visit to the store in 1996.

Behind the display is a section dedicated to Jackson that includes a neat, remastered edition of my favorite album, "Thriller." They also have Jackson T-shirts, magazines, and CDs.

Tower Records the global behemoth may have vanished, but its surviving outpost in Japan is worth a trip.

agee.kelly@stripes.com
Twitter: @KellyA_Stripes

Vinyl lovers browse on the sixth floor.

Try a record player on the sixth floor.

Tower Records
Location: 1-22-14 Jinnan, Shibuya City, Tokyo
Directions: A short walk from Shibuya Station
Hours: Open daily 10 a.m. to 11 p.m
Website

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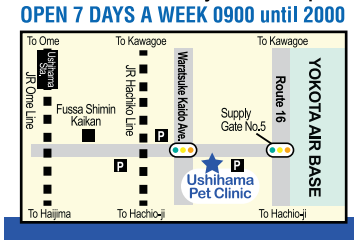

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Relax on sunset ferry cruise near Yokosuka

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

As many escape Japan's scorching summer heat by heading to the beach or mountains, why not make your escape aboard a ferry boat for a cool breeze, cold drink and some hula dancing?

Tokyowan Ferry connects Kurihama (Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.) and Kanaya (Futtsu City, Chiba Pref.) ports with a 40-minute cruise. If you are in Yokosuka, using the ferry is a great way to explore Chiba because it gets you there quickly.

Through August 31, the Tokyowan Ferry ovffers a "Sunset Cruise" in the evenings departing from Kurihama at 6:15 p.m. Passengers can enjoy a beautiful sunset over the Tokyo Gulf with a view of Mt. Fuji, Cape Kannonzaki and Mt. Nokogoriyama with a refreshing beverage. On the weekends, hula dancers entertain passengers.

Although we didn't actually participate in the Sunset Cruise, my family and I was lucky enough to come across the summertime campaign when we got on the 7:20 p.m. ferry at Kanaya Port after our one-day trip around Chiba Prefecture. The 40-minute cruise was a nice surprise to cool off from the summer heat.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Tokyowan Ferry Sunset Cruise 2022

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REMOTE RE

Ogasawara Islands

STORY AND PHOTOS BY YASUHIRO MUNENO, STRIPES JAPAN

Japan is an archipelago and as such, is home to countless beautiful islands worthy of spending a vacation exploring. Some islands are just off the coast from the mainland, and others can take up to 24 hours by ferry to reach.

The Ogasawara Islands are a remote set of volcanic islands about 1,000 kilometers away from Tokyo. Despite the distance and difficulty to reach them, these islands are still a part of Tokyo Prefecture.

Since they are designated as UNESCO world heritage site, I really wanted to see the islands once in my life. While the Ogasawara islands are comprised of many islands, only Chichijima and Hahajima islands are accessible to visitors.

In April, my wife and I set out to explore these remote islands via ferry from the Tokyo Takeshiba Terminal. Our first stop was Chichijima Island, which would take a 24-hour journey on the 11,000-ton boat with a capacity of up to 892 passengers.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the ferry is only accepting half of its usual passengers to ensure proper social distancing. In addition, passengers are required to submit a negative COVID test up to 24 hours prior to departure.

From Takeshiba, our ferry departed at 11 a.m. on a clear sunny day. In the evening, we enjoyed the gorgeous view of the sunset out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

As expected, and without any issue, we arrived the Chichijima Futami Port at 11 a.m. the following day. We had a quick lunch, purchased tickets at the port, and transferred to another ferry that would take us on a 2-hour journey to Hahajima.

Hahajima

To shake off our sea legs, we decided to walk to our hotel when we reached Hahajima. For this part of the trip we stayed at Island Resort Nanpu in Okumura Village, a small town with three stores, three restaurants and about 460 residents.

We spent our first afternoon on Hahajima strolling the village and were able to catch white-tip sharks resting on the beach. Our visit coincided with the sharks' breeding season. We also spotted horse mackerel and loggerhead turtles near the pier and, of course, another beautiful sunset.

Mount Kofuji

The following morning, my wife and I set out to climb Mount Kofuji, also known as Small Fuji, on the south end of the island. We had originally

planned to climb the 463-meter-high Mount busa peak but decided against it because it covered in thick clouds. Instead, Mt. Ko though only 83 meters high, its location on a offers amazing views of the deep blue ocean even humpback whales swimming below.

Nature preservation

When visiting environmentally protected a like those on Hahajima, visitors are require disinfect the soles of their shoes. When we ent preserved areas, we were given vinegar spra the bottoms of our shoes, a small but impo act to protect nature!

Return to Chichijima island

After three nights of relaxing in the quiet b ty of Hahajima, we hopped back on a ferry t turn to Chichijima.

Unfortunately, a typhoon was heading tow Ogasawara, so we had to grab emergency like instant noodles and bottled water to pre when we docked at Chichijima. Heavy rains strong winds picked up, so we spent two sheltering in place at our hotel. We also ha hours of electricity outages— it was definite rare experience for us!

Exploring by bike

After the typhoon passed, we continued

ELAXATION

worth long journey

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vacation by heading to the south beaches on rented bicycles. Due to the typhoon, the normally-crystal clear waters were murky at the beach, so we decided to wait to scuba dive.

The next day, I set out to scuba dive, but since it was still a bit early in the season, I wore a 5-millimeter-thick wetsuit to keep me warm in the 20-degree Celsius seawater. It was a little cold, but I enjoyed exploring underwater wreckage and getting a close look at the creatures lurking in the coral.

Whale watching in Minamijima

Though our timing to the islands wasn't the best in terms of the typhoon, it was, however, perfect for whale watching near Minamijima island. On Chichijima, there are many tour companies which offer a visit to the island and some whale watching by boat. So, we reserved a tour and the day after I went scuba diving, our guide started cruising toward Minamijima under light, early morning rain.

Soon, we spotted mother and child whales coming up in front of our small boat. The boat captain tried to get closer while keeping a safe distance from the whales. After surfacing several times, they raised their tails high to dive into the deep sea.

Next, we made our way toward the island of Minamijima, which only allows 100 tourists per day allowing for the preservation of its superb scenery. A nature guide is also required to visit this island, but it is worth it. On a walk, we spotted a limestone arch and fossilized snail shells on the sandy beaches. We also saw a school of dolphins jumping in and out of the waters off the coast on our way back to Chichijima.

John Beach

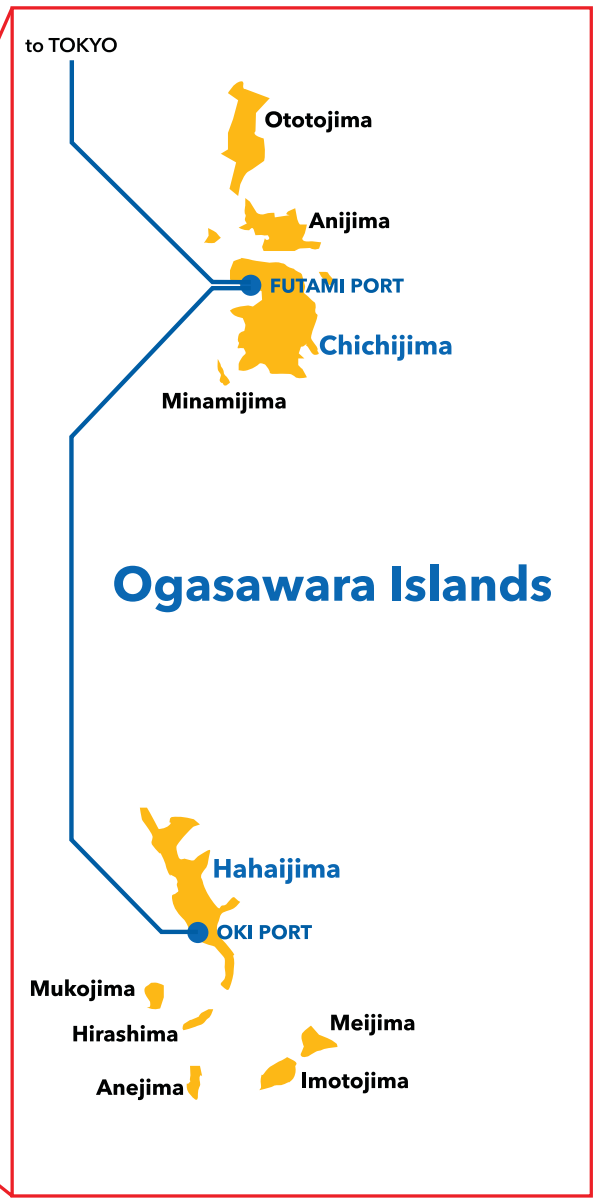
On our last day of this amazing trip, we went for a hike to John Beach. First, we took a local bus from our hotel to Kominato-kaigan, then started our hike across a small river and up to the 228-meter-high peak of Mount Takayama. We then hiked back down and enjoyed a bento lunch on the beach overlooking the perfect turquoise waters.

Back to Tokyo

Though there were a few days where the weather forced us to stay in our hotel, the trip to Ogasawara was worth the time it took to get there.

There are many activities on the island for everyone in your family, including history tours, tours of a sea turtle preserve, an aquarium, cafes and more. The islands also have an interesting history and some of the residents are sixth and seventh-generation Hawaiian.

My wife and I enjoyed our time and made many memories. Though we did not have enough time to do all that we had planned, I hope we can come back there again someday!



Hopping on a ferry ticket to Ogasawara maru

COST: Varies by reservation class. For a tatami floor spot with futon - 33,390 yen/ per person for roundtrip. When I made reservations, higher and standard classes were fully booked.

There are package tours which is little cheaper Ferry + hotel

WEBSITE: www.ogasawarakaiun.co.jp/english/ Hahajima maru – you can buy tickets at the pier. 5,310 yen/one way. No reservation required.

Hotel information

NAME: Island Resort Nanpu
WEBSITE: https://hahajima.com/stay/hotel/?postid=352
Not many choices, but this is the best place in the island.

NAME: West Annex
WEBSITE: www.ogasawara-west.tokyo/annex.html

NAME: Pat Inn
WEBSITE: https://patinn.com

Whale watching

We used Take Nature Academy, but there are plenty of tour companies to choose from on the island.
NAME: Take Nature Academy
WEBSITE: www.take-na.com/academy
COST: 1 day 13,000 yen / half day 8,000 yen
RENTAL SNORKEL: 1,000 yen
RENTAL WET SUIT: 1,000 yen

LIVE JAPAN

As an island nation, Japan harvests numerous types of seaweed from all around the country, such as hijiki from the crevices of rocks by the sea, and kombu from the shallow waters off the coastline. Seaweeds—and seaweed-derived products—have been central ingredients of Japanese cuisine for thousands of years and are still widely enjoyed today. Healthy, low-calorie, and packed with fiber, minerals, and flavor, Japanese seaweeds are used in everything from preparing dashi broth, to salads, soups and wrapping sushi rolls. Here is a guide to the seaweeds that are commonplace in both Japanese restaurants and homemade Japanese meals, so that you can enjoy these delicious and nutritious alternatives to land-based green vegetables!

Dive into flavor, umami with Japanese seaweed

Holy nori

Photos courtesy of LIVEJAPAN

What is Nori? 1

Nori, or dried laver, is perhaps the most familiar seaweed to those outside of Japan, as it is the variety used to make sushi rolls. With a savory, salty taste, nori is almost always eaten dried, and is sold in sheets or strips for making sushi, wrapping onigiri (rice balls), and for eating plain as a snack.

Nori not only adds flavor variety to each meal, it also often serves a rather practical purpose such as keeping the rice together in sushi rolls or as a place to hold without getting your hands sticky eating onigiri (though some people prefer to use the plastic in store-bought onigiri nowadays).

Dried nori sheets are produced by pressing shredded edible red algae into thin sheets and drying it, similar to the process of papermaking. Other forms of nori include kizami nori (shredded nori), for garnishing dishes such as donburi (rice bowls), and aonori (powdered nori), used as a condiment on foods such as okonomiyaki and yakisoba. More than adding texture and flavor to the meals, it's aesthetically pleasing as well.

Flavored nori (ajitsuke) is also available, with common flavorings including soy sauce, salt, and sesame oil. If you're a little intimidated by the sound of the word "seaweed" as a food product, nori is the place to start as it is a taste that's virtually loved by everyone!

What is Kombu? 2

Kombu is a variety of bull kelp gathered mostly off the coast of Hokkaido in northern Japan. It has a tough, leathery texture and must be rehydrated before use. Packed with calcium and iron and a savory umami flavor, kombu is one of the main components of dashi broth, an essential ingredient in almost all Japanese dishes.

In addition to being used for stock, kombu can be cooked in "tsukudani" style, where it is caramelized in soy sauce, sake, and sugar until the color darkens and the texture becomes soft and chewy. This type of kombu is a popular filling for onigiri, a topping on rice, and addition to salads and vegetables.

Kombu can also be used to prepare as a type of tea—kombu-cha—in which dried kombu pieces are steeped in water. While its namesake is identical to the healthy fermented beverage that's all the rage in many Western countries, Japanese kombu-cha has different properties than the other Asian variety. Since it also has a lot of health benefits, many Japanese drink it regularly to take good care of their bodies.

What is Wakame? 3

Wakame is one of the most commonly consumed types of seaweed in Japan and has a mild, sweet flavor. You may have seen this if you've had miso soup at your favorite local Japanese restaurant before. Fresh wakame is harvested from the Sea of Japan from February to June, but dried wakame is available year-round, and can be easily reconstituted by soaking in water or another liquid.

Wakame is a common addition to salads, sunomono (vinegar-pickled vegetables), and possibly most importantly, miso soup. Easy to make and containing many health benefits, miso soup is a staple food in most households as it quite commonly eaten with every meal which means this is another type of seaweed that is consumed quite frequently. It can also be lightly stir-fried to make yaki-wakame for a tasty treat.

File photo

A seaweed with a bit more of a peculiar texture than the others, mekabu is the flowering part of the same sea plant as wakame, found just above the root. It's a briny, yet mildly sweet seaweed with a somewhat slimy texture that classifies it as one of Japan's "neba-neba" (slimy) foods (see natto or uni). Mekabu is available either whole or shredded, dried or fresh. Try not to let the sliminess put you off—the briny flavor of mekabu is highly refreshing when paired with citrus-based ponzu dressing or some vinegar and soy sauce. You can enjoy mekabu in soups, salads, as a dipping condiment for noodles, or as a topping over rice.

What is Mekabu? 4

What is Hijiki? 5

Hijiki is a type of seaweed collected from the rocky coastlines of Japan. This is yet another popular, healthy food as it's rich in essential minerals and dietary fiber. It has a thin and knobby, somewhat branch-like appearance, and a nutty, earthy, slightly oceany flavor - without being over the top.

It is commonly used in stews and soupy dishes such as ochazuke, and in salads, where it is combined with ingredients such as fried tofu, julienned carrots, shelled edamame, konnyaku, lotus root, and other vegetables, dressed with sweetened soy sauce, and mirin. Hijiki is purchased in dried form, and for use it in salads, hijiki is first rehydrated in water then drained.

What is Kanten? 6

Kanten, also called agar agar, is a gelifying agent extracted from seaweed. It's typically used in Japanese cuisine for making puddings, custards, and wagashi (traditional sweets) such as yokan and anmitsu.

Kanten is an excellent plant-based alternative to gelatin derived from animal products, as it vegetarian and vegan-friendly. It can be bought in powdered, stick, thread and flaked form, and is dissolved in water then boiled before use. Kanten is more potent and results in a firmer jelly than animal-based gelatin, so if you're using it as a gelatin substitute, the amount may need adjusting. This is a great alternative for vegetarians and vegans alike.

Outside of Japan, the different varieties of Japanese seaweed can be found at Asian supermarkets, specialty grocers, health food stores, online retailers, and are also increasingly available in the international section of regular supermarkets. Another great to find Japanese goods like seaweed is Chinatown (ironically) if you have one in your area. Supermarkets in Chinatown often have several products from other Asian countries as well. In general, darker-colored seaweeds indicates higher quality, while a bright green color can indicate that food coloring has been added.

To assist you in finding the seaweed you're looking for, Kombu is sold in thick, greenish-brown sheets with a leathery appearance whereas wakame is typically sold in big bags of leafy, dried seaweed that appear black when dried, but become green again when reconstituted with water. Mekabu may be difficult to buy outside of Japan, but can sometimes be found in health food stores and online retailers, most often in dried form, and can be either sold whole or shredded. Nori is quite common and can be found almost anywhere. Look for whole sheets for making sushi rolls, individually packaged strips for snacking, and shredded or powdered nori for decorating dishes. Hijiki is typically sold dried and packaged in bags and has an appearance like black tea. Kanten is sold in stick, powder, and flake form, and all forms are equally as effective for producing jellied dishes.

If you're interested in Japanese food or want to eat more healthily, then you should definitely try the wide variety of seaweeds available in Japanese cuisine. It's easy to start with something familiar like nori, which you may have already eaten in sushi rolls, and then move on to wakame in miso soup, before trying the slimy-textured mekabu or unique-looking hijiki. Don't be fooled by the sound of "seaweed" as a food product as these are all quite tasty. If you like salad, you'll be hooked on Japanese seaweed in no time. Itadakimasu!

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Sample local delicacies inside Yamaguchi museum eatery

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

Hagi, the old capital of Yamaguchi Prefecture, is a historical castle city from which Japan grew to become a modern society in the late 19th century. Today, the former center retains its traditional charm and architecture in its preserved samurai houses, shrines, and monuments.

The area is a great spot to explore on a daytrip or weekend trip. If you find yourself in Hagi, make sure to drop by Hagigoyomi, as the eatery offers great deals on lunch sets featuring tasty local foods.

You'll find the restaurant-café conveniently located inside the Meirinkan Museum, a former samurai school-turned-elementary school-turned-museum in the city center.

Despite being housed in a historical school building, I saw Hagigoyomi has a clean, cozy interior made up of a combination of Japanese and Western styles with a wooden ceiling, white walls, and wooden tables. The restaurant can accommodate up to 50 guests.

From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., diners can choose one of three lunch set options for 1,078 yen (about $8), featuring local cuts of meat. Options are Choshu chicken karaage, Mutsumi pork tonkatsu, and Choshu Wagyu beef yakiniku (barbecue).

Though the choices were all very attractive, I ended up picking the karaage. Each deep-fried morsel featured a perfectly crisp exterior and tender interior marinated in a flavorful soy sauce-based broth.

The set came with five pieces of chicken thigh, salad, deep fried tofu and soba soup, steamed rice and pickled bamboo shoots and cucumber.

While karaage is often enjoyed with a squeeze of lemon, soy sauce, salt or tartar sauce for dipping in Japan, I dared to use mayo. It made the very delicate, yet relatively less-flavored taste, a bit complicated to pair well with the steamed rice and soup of deep-fried tofu and soba noodles. But it was delicious. The well-flavored bamboo shoot and pickled cucumber in other small dishes were sophisticated tastes, enhancing my meal even more.

This meal was so satisfying, I can't wait to go back and try their local pork and beef lunch options!

If you're planning on trekking around Hagi City, Hagigoyomi is a great option to sample local delicacies in a cozy, relaxing atmosphere for a reasonable price.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Hagigoyomi

HOURS: (restaurant) Wed – Mon, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., 5 – 9 p.m. (café) 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
LOCATION: 602 Emukai, Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture (a 2-hour drive from MCAS Iwakuni)
TEL: 0838-25-8543

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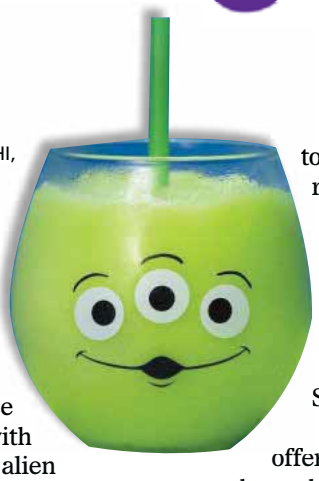
Toy Story Aliens take over Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya

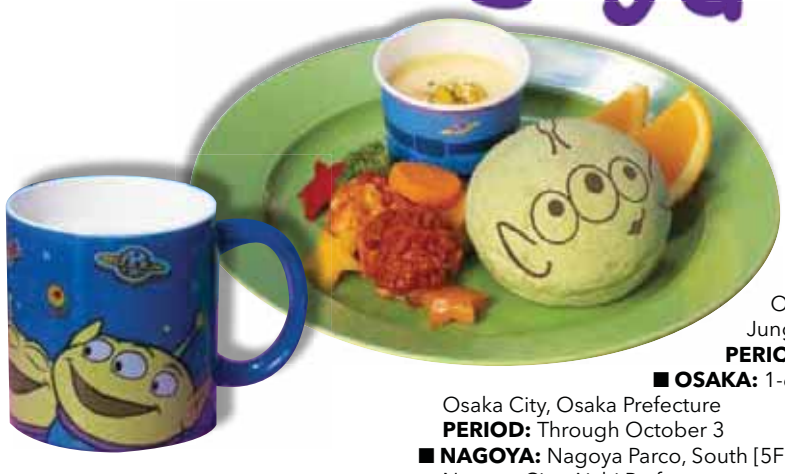
BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN



Toy Story's Little Green Men are now in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya!

Fans of the Disney/Pixar franchise are in for a treat with a café featuring the alien characters in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya now open for a two-month period.

The temporary Toy Story Aliens Oh My Café in the three cities immerses diners into the world of the Little Green Men with various themed menu items and décor. Offerings include photogenic meals and drinks like "Space Curry" (black curry topped with green rice) or Green Pasta (cream-sauce pasta filled with green vegetables) and "Aliens Smoothie" and "Space Soda."



The cafés also offer various Alien-themed goods, cookies and souvenirs available for purchase. Visit the café's website for reservations and more information.

You don't have to go to infinity and beyond if you want to enter the world of Toy Story in Japan!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Toy Story Alien Oh my Café

■ **TOKYO:** Tokyu Plaza Omotesando-Harajuku 3F, 4-30-3 Jungumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo
PERIOD: Through September 25
■ **OSAKA:** 1-6-1 [2F] Shinsaibashi-suji, Chuo-ku, Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture
PERIOD: Through October 3
■ **NAGOYA:** Nagoya Parco, South [5F], 3-29-1 Sakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture
PERIOD: Through October 10

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The beauty of the Japanese bagel

Where to find some of the best bagels in Japan

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERIC MARGOLIS, METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

The slightly sweet and oh-so holey bagel lies at the very center of who I am. My hometown, Philadelphia, is a Jewish bagel paradise second only to New York, and there is no doubt that one of the hardest parts of life in Japan is the lack of access to a proper bagel: warm and fresh out of the oven, dense and yet soft; hand-rolled, so a little lumpy.

I was raised in a city where the average bagel shop dishes out better rolls than you can find in 30 U.S. states, 42 Japanese prefectures and 167 countries. So my initial instinct is to decry the lack of bagels in Japan. But when you go to the right place, you'll find that the Japanese bagel, more pastry than bread, is a rare, unexpected treat.

> "It's also possible that Japanese bagels are a far more recent creation, part of a trendy demand for high-end, imported foods.?

Even at your local bakery, an elusive bagel is often worth it. A good Japanese bagel, made on premises with local flour, salt, yeast, malt and sometimes sugar, is a little bit lighter than the American bagel, a little sweeter and smaller. Less chewy, almost never mealy. Fluffier. Others, honed with dedicated craftsmanship forged abroad, are sound imitations of New York's finest: large, warm and lumpy, soft and chewy.

Japanese bagels are also served up in a surprising diversity of flavors, even daring combinations. Not too different from how sushi restaurants in the U.S. toss in mango and avocado, Japanese bagels aren't afraid to break tradition: they are versatile, anything-goes sandwiches. Copies of the canonical bagel sandwich—a jumbo everything bagel with lox and slathered-on cream cheese—can be found alongside something more closely resembling the Danish pastries in an upscale panya (bread shop)—a doughy banana bagel with a dusting of cinnamon sugar.

It feels like a miracle that good bagels exist in Japan at all. (Good Mexican food certainly doesn't.) No one knows when the first bagel came to Japan. Bagels have been widely consumed by Ashkenazi Jews since the 17th century and were a staple of London's Brick Lane district by the mid-19th century. In the United States, 70 bagel bakeries were established in New York City's Lower East Side by the year 1900. It's entirely possible that early Jewish settlers in Yokohama—which, according to cemetery evidence, had a community of around 50 families in 1895—were already serving up bagels on Kannai's historically international Sakura-dori. Or that there was a 19th century bagel bakery up on the Bluff, which is home to bagels at Bluff Bakery to this day.

It's also possible that Japanese bagels are a far more recent creation, part of a trendy demand for high-end, imported foods. Japan's major nationwide bagel chain, BAGEL & BAGEL, was launched just over two decades ago by Altego Ltd, which also runs shops for crepes and bubble tea.

It's only fitting that we'll never really know, since the bagel's origin is a fiction in the first place. According to legend, 17th century Polish King Jan Sobieski ended a decree limiting the production of bread to the Krakow baker's guild, allowing Jews to bake their own bread. Later, when Sobieski defeated the Turks at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, a baker made a roll in the shape of the king's stirrup, and called it beugel, the Austrian word for stirrup. Voila!—the bagel was born. (As the bagel historian Maria Balinska comments in her book, "The pairing of a Polish warrior king and a small Jewish bread roll is entirely fictitious.")

As more bagels pop up across Japan, perhaps one day the Japanese bagel will get its own legend. Maybe Emperor Showa enjoyed a bagel as a gift of gratitude from the Russian Jews who escaped via Siberia to Japan during the Holocaust. Regardless of how it happened, it's clear that a tradition of culinary craftsmanship and a growing love for bread has contributed to the unlikely existence of delicious Japanese bagels. So here's where you can get yourself one.

BAGELS ACROSS JAPAN

Kyoto

Bagel Café Piggy

One of the best bagels outside of Tokyo resides in a humble, rustic cafe with a Japanese interior near Chushojima Station in Kyoto. A little bit off the beaten track, to be sure, but the firm and yet soft, expansive bagels are well-worth the trek. Apple-cinnamon cheese and black sesame sweet potato make for especially unique flavor choices.

LOCATION: 532-2 Higashiyanagicho, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto, 612-8211
URL: www.piggybagel.com

Kobe

Marzi-Pan (Majipan)

With an old Jewish community dating back to the 19th century, Kobe would have to be the one city outside Tokyo to go on a bagel hunt. The best is Marzi-pan, which makes lumpy, fluffy bagels available to residents of Kobe on the cheap. Well-loved by locals, the bagels sell out fast, even on weekdays, and the variety of flavors runs the gauntlet of experimental Japanese bagel flavors: sweet potato, black sesame and red bean, chocolate and more.

LOCATION: 5-28 Tennoshitacho, Tarumi-ku, Kobe, Hyogo 655-0029 (Near Tarumi Station)

Kanto & more

BAGEL & BAGEL

On YouTube

With more than 50 locations all across Japan, BAGEL & BAGEL is your best bet for a representative Japanese bagel. Small, soft and tasty, and served in every imaginable flavor under the sun, these bagels are a solid choice that makes the difference between American and Japanese bagels as clear as day. Hokkaido Melon, Lemon Green Tea and Soy Milk and Edamame are just a few of the more outlandish flavors, and savory chicken teriyaki and shrimp avocado bagel sandwiches cap off a well-rounded sandwich menu. Not advised if the only thing that can satiate your craving is a traditional New York bagel but delicious nonetheless.

LOCATIONS: https://bagelbagel.jp/shop/#area_2

Tokyo

Maruichi Bagel

Arguably the best bagel in Japan, this hole-in-the-wall Shirokane stop is well-known among Hiroo and Azabu residents and across the city. The owner has experience making bagels in New York, so the NYC-style imitation is a smashing success: big, chewy, dense and slightly soft. The ten available flavors cover the standards like sesame, poppy, cinnamon raisin and blueberry and you can even make your own sandwich. Cream cheese portions as well, in true New York spirit, are absolutely gigantic.

On YouTube

LOCATION: 1-15-22 Shirokane, Minato-ku (Near Shirokane-Takanawa Station), Tokyo
URL: www.maruichibagel.com

Tokyo

Azabujuban's New New York Club

Another Minato-ku bagel joint goes a little overboard with the New York theme décor, but actually represents a nice fusion between Japanese and NYC-style bagels. The offering is a little sweeter, softer and fluffier than the bagels found at Maruichi or Bagel Standard. Traditional NYC flavors and toppings make for a distinctive fusion of the New York and Japanese bagel.

LOCATION: 3-8-5 Azabujuban, Minato-ku (Near Azabu-Juban Station), Tokyo
URL: newnewyorkclub.com/azabujyuban

Videos by Justice Edwards, Metropolis Magazine

Stripes Sports Trivia

SAY MY NAME! If you look at a list of individual career World Series records, you'll notice my name is there a couple of times. My 71 career Series hits are 12 more than the next closest - Mickey Mantle. Some say I've got a way with words, and I'm definitely not your average catcher. Who am I?

Answer Yogi Berra

Japan has hosted the Olympics four times in the history of the games – Tokyo (summer) in 1964, Sapporo (winter) in 1972, Nagano (winter) in 1998. And the 2nd summer games for Tokyo 2020 were held in 2021 after postponing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tokyo was also chosen as the site for the 1940 summer games, but those, along with the 1944 games, never happened because of World War II.

Kanji of the week

来

kuru/ki/rai (come)

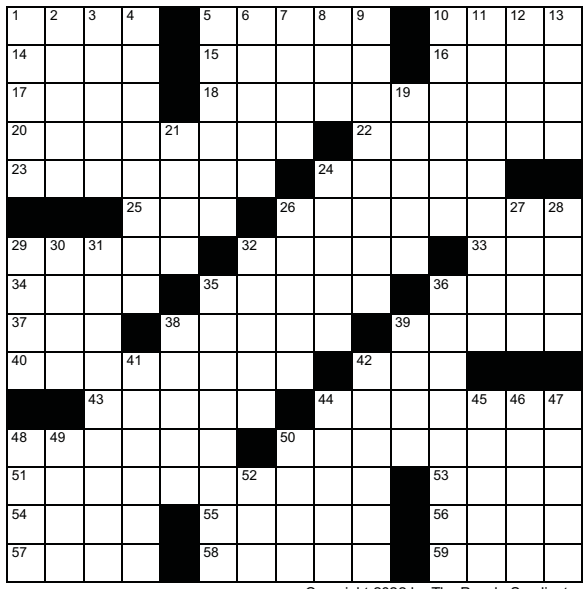
Language Lesson

Long time no see.

Hisashiburi desune.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke



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ACROSS

1 Conn. neighbor
5 Immunizations
10 Bona fide
14 Choral voice
15 Bit of an uproar
16 Green-eyed monster
17 Drug cop
18 Treehouse accessory, perhaps
20 Pacts between nations
22 Put up with
23 Make louder
24 Star of "Lou Grant"
25 Say okay
26 Roadside refreshment
29 Ne'er-do-well
32 Initial venture
33 "The Matrix" hero
34 Columnist's page
35 Often-pulled muscle
36 Glance over
37 Short snooze
38 Tapped out
39 Miller and Modelo
40 Fancy duds
42 Witty bit
43 Rider's handful
44 In pain
48 Finished second
50 Hallway
51 Place for a picnic
53 Island in Italy
54 Winter coaster
55 Positive terminal
56 "Little House on the Prairie" shopkeeper
57 "… or ___!"
58 Ward off
59 Spanish three

DOWN

1 Kind of ray
2 Eye-opener?
3 ___ throat
4 Claire Danes series, "My _____ Life"
5 Confession to a priest
6 Mumbo jumbo
7 Blunder follower
8 Beat-heat link
9 Car lot worker
10 Blush
11 Stamina
12 Declare firmly
13 Orpheus's instrument
19 Irritate
21 "Tire" anagram
24 Raptor's roost
26 Seems to be
27 Letter starter
28 A long, long time
29 Like Rip's beard
30 Translucent gem
31 Splits up
32 Pond hoppers
35 Pop's pop
36 Having feelings
38 Succinct
39 Jefferson's VP
41 Solve, as a cipher
42 Cruise ship officer
44 Mob
45 Lazy sort
46 Chivalrous
47 Ground cover
48 Model's mark
49 Downtime
50 Old fool
52 ___-stop shop

Answers to Previous Crossword:

A	C	D	C	■	S	C	A	B	■	A	R	G	O	T
M	A	R	E	■	P	A	R	A	■	L	E	I	G	H
I	R	O	N	■	I	N	S	A	T	I	A	B	L	E
S	E	N	T	E	N	C	E	■	R	E	D	E	E	M
S	T	E	A	M	■	E	N	G	I	N	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	V	I	T	R	I	O	L	■	R	A	N	T
I	P	H	O	N	E	■	C	O	L	E	S	L	A	W
D	Y	E	■	E	L	K	■	D	I	M	■	E	G	O
O	R	N	A	M	E	N	T	■	O	B	S	E	S	S
L	E	S	S	■	C	O	R	O	N	A	L	■	■	■
■	■	■	P	L	A	T	E	R	■	R	E	M	I	T
A	L	O	H	A	S	■	N	I	C	K	N	A	M	E
D	E	V	A	S	T	A	T	E	D	■	D	U	P	E
A	N	E	L	E	■	D	O	L	L	■	E	D	E	N
M	O	N	T	S	■	A	N	S	I	■	R	E	L	Y

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

			2	4				
				6		1		7
3		8	5					
						9		8
		9	8					
		1					6	3
9	7	6					4	
1					3	7		
		3	4					5

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.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

3	8	4	7	6	1	5	9	2
1	9	5	3	8	2	6	4	7
7	6	2	4	9	5	1	3	8
9	3	8	1	5	7	4	2	6
4	1	7	6	2	9	8	5	3
5	2	6	8	3	4	7	1	9
6	5	9	2	1	8	3	7	4
8	7	1	9	4	3	2	6	5
2	4	3	5	7	6	9	8	1

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COASKA, the Best Place for your Summer Holiday plans!!

Are you ready for the new school year? Fashion, accessories, household goods, home appliances and more are available.

GAP	H&M	ABC-MART
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SAC'S BAR	無印良品	Nojima
Bags	Apparel, Living accessories, Foods	Smartphones, Home electronics

We have 30 restaurants including Japanese, Western and Chinese cuisines. You can enjoy a variety of menus!

1F SUSHIRO

1F Gyu-kaku

3F BAQET

3F Marugen Ramen

Event runs through Sunday, Aug. 28

『Challenged Art Exhibition』

Enjoy the works of local handicapped artists who utilize projection mapping in their techniques to overcome handicaps around Yokosuka City.

Saturday, Aug. 27
① From 13:00
② From 15:00

『Piano Special LIVE on the town』

Kanonpu ♪
Acoustic unit with piano, vocals and guitar ukulele

Ensemble SIGNAL
Ensemble unit with piano + clarinet + flute

※ The above events may be canceled without notice.

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