

THE PEACH COBBLER



Vol 1 Issue 8 | December 2024



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Note from the Editor~



Greetings, peaches!

To my fellow current ALTs was nice to meeting many of you at SDC this year. Anyone I haven't yet been acquainted to I hope we have ample chances in the future!

The weather finally has seemed to make up its mind and stay cool. In the city here we don't get any snowfall but for those of you who do hopefully you get a nice blanket of snow for the holiday season. This season is simultaneously one of my favourites and one of my least favourites.

In this issue we talk about the first shrine visit of the year as well as tips for staying warm in the winter.

Going forward the newsletter will be posted on the first Friday of each month. Apologies for the delay of this month's issue

As always, we'd like to remind you that we are looking for contributors. Whether you have photos of unique spots you've explored, events you've attended within the prefecture, stories from your time on the JET Programme, or even book and movie recommendations, we'd love to feature you.

*For those who came up to me interested in helping out monthly more info will be coming soon please look forward to it .

.If you're interested in contributing, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at

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or

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Mind Your Manners!

Etiquette when visiting shrines and temples for the New Year

2024 is quickly coming to a close, and as we make way for the new year, we may be inclined to celebrate New Year's Day as the locals do. How is that? Via *hatsu-moude*, of course!

In Japan, it's tradition to visit a shrine and/or temple with family and friends to celebrate the New Year. This is given a special name, *hatsu-moude*, literally "first time to visit a shrine," and typically lasts the first few days of January. When visiting a Buddhist temple or a Shinto shrine in Japan, it's important to be respectful in such sacred areas. Here's a simple guide to help you experience Japan's biggest holiday, *Oshogatsu*, or as we know it, New Year's Day!

When visiting a shrine

Bow slightly before you enter the *torii* gates. Avoid walking in the center of the path, which is reserved for the gods.

As you make your way to the shrine, there will be a small fountain or stone basin filled with water. This is a *temizuya* or *chozuya*, and it's where visitors can purify themselves before prayer. Fill the ladle with some water and pour some on your left hand, then follow with your right hand. Typically, prayers at a shrine will be done in front of the *honden*, or main hall, where the gods reside. It is customary to throw a coin into the offering box.

Five-yen coins are considered lucky because its pronunciation, *go-en*, sounds similar to the word for luck. If there is a bell or gong hanging over the offering box, be sure to give it a tug to alert the gods of your presence. Bow twice, clap your hands twice, and give a prayer. When you finish praying, bow once more to complete the ritual.

Visitors can also write their wishes on *ema*, a small wooden tablet that is typically hung on a tree or some kind of board near the main hall.



When visiting a temple

The same rules typically go hand in hand with those of shrine visits; bow slightly before you enter, avoid walking in the center, and cleanse impurities at the *chozuya*. However, the method in paying respects changes.

There is usually incense provided at temples. Burn the incense; the scent of the incense is food offering for the Buddha. **Don't light your own incense stick from another's burning stick.** This is seen as taking the burden of sin from another. Bow slightly.

Toss a coin in the box offering. If there is a bell, ring it two or three times. Then, bow slightly and pay your respects.

Put your hands together, but do not clap.

Give thanks to the Buddha.



Souvenirs

You can find special souvenirs such as *omamori*, or amulets, and commemorative stamps known as *goshuin* at both shrines and temples.

For about 100 yen, you can also purchase *omikuji*, a small piece of paper with fortunes on it. If you get good luck, you can keep your fortune. If you get bad luck, you can tie the fortune to a tree or board near the main hall. If you're curious here's a list of *omikuji* fortunes from best to worst luck:

- *dai-kichi* (大吉) - great blessing
- *chuu-kichi* (中吉) - middle blessing
- *sho-kichi* (小吉) - small blessing
- *kichi* (吉) - blessing
- *sue-kichi* (末吉) - ending blessing
- *kyo* (凶) - curse
- *dai-kyo* (大凶) - great curse



All in all, be sure to have fun while being respectful, and keep warm in the cool weather with a piping hot cup of *amazake* this New Year's!

Advice Corner

Tips for staying warm in Japan



Hope most of you survived the brunt of cold and flu season unscathed however it's not over yet! Next comes the actual cold winter days, mind you as a Canadian when I first rolled up I was rocking shorts and a tea, I have since acclimatized to the weather here and would even argue that I get colder than my cohort now!

Perhaps all of you also come from the land of bitter cold but on the off chance that one person doesn't know how to handle this weather let's get into some tips for staying warm. Let's also be great full we aren't in Hokkaido~

If you didn't prepare for winter in Japan and now the cold is starting to kick your butt, don't worry, we're here to help! Winter can feel like it sneaks up on you, especially with how unpredictable the seasons here. One day, you're dealing with the hot, humid summer, and before you know it, you're basking in a brief, glorious week of autumn weather (yay!). Just when you think you've settled into the crisp, cool air, the temperature suddenly spikes again for a few days of leftover heat only to drop sharply into that bone-chilling, finger-numbing cold that makes you wish you had prepared better.

This quick transition from warm to cold catches a lot of people off guard, and it's no wonder November kicks off the cold and flu season. The sudden chill, combined with dry air and an overworked immune system, leaves many people battling seasonal sniffles or worse. But don't fret, we've put together a mix of practical tips, both affordable and splurge-worthy, to help you stay warm, cozy, and healthy this winter. Whether you're looking to save a few yen or invest in long-term comfort, these ideas will help you fend off the winter blues, no matter how unprepared you feel right now!

Big Purchases (over ¥5000)



Heated Blanket

These honestly could of fit in the under ¥5000 category as well as there is quite a big price range. Heated blankets are great for warming beds or seating areas. Look for them at stores like *Nitori* or *Zag Zag*. You can also find them on Amazon of course. I recommend getting one the choose either to lay on top of or under, just be careful they may make you not want to leave for work in the morning.

Kotatsu

A kotatsu (heated table with a blanket) is a Japanese winter essential. It keeps you cozy without heating the entire room.

You can find these starting around ¥4000 all the way up and over ¥16000. Think heated blanket except you aren't stuck as a burrito in bed all day and can share the warmth with company without it getting too weird.



Space Heater

Depending on your apartment maybe you don't have an aircon in all your rooms or maybe the aircon just isn't doing it for you, if that's the case look into getting a space heater. Electric or kerosene heaters work well for small spaces. Personally I don't use a space heater but that's because I'm afraid of not turning it off or starting a fire so please keep safety precautions in mind, especially with kerosene heaters.

THE CHEAP BUT EFFECTIVE (Under ¥5000)



Hand Warmers

I bet you have seen some of your students using these. Grab reusable or disposable *kairo* from convenience stores to slip into your pockets or shoes. No seriously they even have some you can stick to your socks.

Hot Water Bottles

Now believe it or not hot water bottles can be a little harder to find in Japan than back home at least that's what I've found. They are called *湯たんぽ* (*yutanpo*) and some stores will only sell them in the winter.

They generally range in price from ¥1000 to ¥5000 yen. Make sure to never have them touch your skin without being wrapped in a towel or covering as you can burn yourself on them! An alternative to these are fabric filled with beans or rice, just heat those up in the microwave and they work just as good as a hot water bottle.



Hot Beverages

Keep a thermos with tea, coffee, or some kind of hot beverage. Also keep a cup or mug at your desk, or in your bag if you don't have a regular school. I tend to stick up with tea and hot chocolate packs especially during the winter time. If need be the convenience stores also sell hot drinks in cans.

Bonus tip! If you are walking and forgot your gloves check the closest vending machine, they've already started selling hot drinks (look for the red button) use the can as a makeshift hand warmer. I recommend the corn soup because it's not only in a can so it stays hot longer, it also warms you up and fills your stomach too.





Heattech

Of course there are other thermal brands you can get but arguably one of the most popular is Uniqlo's Heattech. Starting at just a few thousand yen, these lightweight thermals are perfect for layering under your clothes. They use your body's moisture to generate heat, keeping you cozy without adding bulk. With options like **Extra Warm** and **Ultra Warm**, you can find the right level of warmth for any day. Plus, Heattech items like socks and tights are affordable and widely available at Uniqlo stores across Japan!

Humidifier

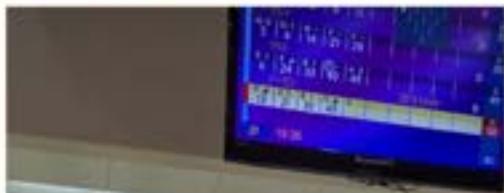
You know one of the reasons the summer is so freaking hot? It's the humidity, you may want to consider grabbing a humidifier to help keep your room warm. Adding moisture to the air helps retain warmth and prevents dryness from heaters, which you most likely are cranking cause we all know as soon as it's turned off that air escapes through the cracks.



Bubble wrap/Sealants

Now that your room is warm we want to keep all that heat in! We all know that insulation here is basically non-existent and as soon as the heater is turned off all that warm air escapes through the cracks in the windows/doors. In order to preserve that warmth you've worked hard to get consider getting a spray foam to close any cracks that may be letting that air out, bubble wrap also works good for insulation. If you don't want to buy any of these roll up a towel and place it against the door or window.

STAY WARM THIS WINTER PEACHES!



Thank you to everyone who came to bowl with us or even those who just came for the vibes and to chill and watch, it was a great time! We are hoping to have more informal events like this soon~



EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN THE NEAR FUTURE...

You can expect a group shrine/temple visit at one of the main sites in Okayama city in mid-January, if you're wanting to celebrate the new year with a group of people!

SAVE THE DATE

Okayama's ever-famous Naked Man Festival will be held on Saturday, **February 15th**, and we're planning to go! Further details will be given in next month's newsletter. Hope to see you there, or better yet, if you're interested in joining in the event, it's not too late to sign up!

Events in Okayama

DECEMBER 2024

鍋と日本酒の宴 - Hotpot and Sake Festival



Date: December 14th and 15th

Location: Kurashiki Mirai Park

Time: 10:00 - 16:00

Admission: Free (food and sake not included)

[More Info: 日本語](#)

ハレマ (Harema) FARMERS MARKET (12月)

Date: Sunday December 15th

[More Info: 日本語](#)

Location: Shimoishii Park (in Okayama city along the Nishigawa river)

Time: 10:00 - 15:00

Admission: Free



Jホールでクリスマス 聖なるゴスペルコンサート - Christmas at J Hall: Sacred Gospel Concert



Date: Wednesday December 18th

[More Info: 日本語](#)

Location: Junko Fukutake Hall

Time: 19:00 - 20:00

Admission: ¥500 (Payment at door no credit or cashless)

露天風呂砂湯 ゆず湯 - Open-air hot spring sand bath, yuzu bath



Date: Saturday December 21st

[More Info: 日本語](#)

Location: Open Air Sand Bath - Yubara Onsen (Manila city)

Time: 11:25 - 21:00

Admission: Free

お正月をはなやかに～和モダンしちめ縄づくり～

Brighten Your New Year: Create a Modern Japanese-Style Shimenawa



Date: December 21st and 22nd

More info: [日本語](#)

Location: Miraikan Saipan of Okayama Prefecture Lifelong Learning People and Science 1st Floor Science Experience and Learning Square

Time: 10:30 - 15:30

Admission: Simple style: ¥1600

Gorgeous style: ¥2300

*Reception ends when sold out recommended to get there early

西川緑道公園筋歩行者天国ホコテン！ -

Nisigawa Christmas 2024

Date: Sunday December 22nd

More info: [日本語](#)

Location: Nishigawa Canal Walk Ave, Okayama City

Time: 11:00～16:00

Admission: Free



OTHER

International Meet Up Party 「せかつく」



Date: Saturday December 7th

More info: [Instagram](#)

Location: Matador (Bar in Okayama City)

Time: 20:00 - 22:00

Admission:

Men ~ ¥4000

All you can drink and buffet style food included

Women ~ ¥3500

More events and info available on our website

<https://okayama-ajet.com/upcoming-events>

November ANSWER KEY

べ	い	ら	ぐ	ぬ	た	あ	か	ぼ	も	み	じ
ば	く	ひ	り	ゆ	ふ	ぬ	こ	ね	を	し	ゅ
ほ	か	も	お	っ	に	や	ち	き	た	ゆ	む
り	う	や	の	い	し	じ	お	せ	ご	さ	を
け	め	わ	な	ぜ	ら	ゆ	へ	せ	か	び	し
く	ち	く	ず	ろ	け	う	う	み	わ	く	ら
も	と	り	ね	こ	や	い	か	ほ	つ	ほ	し
の	よ	は	よ	て	し	ち	し	た	ゆ	む	ゅ
す	な	り	り	っ	の	き	が	ん	が	う	き
う	ろ	そ	べ	に	ら	つ	し	ぎ	も	わ	き
は	ま	し	ょ	う	く	ゆ	っ	せ	い	り	あ
ち	つ	ぶ	ん	か	の	ひ	り	あ	く	あ	よ
つ	お	ぱ	ち	ひ	う	む	き	む	め	い	つ

November, we are in the peak of Autumn! I hope you have had a chance to see the fall leaves change colour. Below are more words relating to the season.

Write the English translation (and/or kanji) of the words below and find them in the wordsearch above.

① ぶんかのひ → Culture Day 文化の日

② はっぱ → leaf 葉っぱ

③ べに → deep red 紅

④ もみじ → Japanese maple 紅葉

⑤ じゅういちがつ → November 十一月

⑥ くり → chestnut 栗

⑦ くものす → spiderweb ケモノの糸

⑧ りっしゅう → first day of autumn 立秋

⑨ しゅうき → fall season 秋季

⑩ もり → forest 森



ANSWER KEY

Difficulty: Medium

Monthly Sudoku

NOVEMBER 2024

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

Fill in the puzzle so that every row across, every column down and every 9 by 9 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

December Word Search

こやいかほじあそりもみか
てしちじたふぬこねをりう
のきへゆがにやちみあひゆ
さらくうぎしせおせごろき
むめわにそほうきょくびば
いちくがしけむんたわるな
もとりつるのたふいんぽし
のよはずしせゆせゆきゆ
すなりあならけしろかぼう
つぼうねんかいゆらもわを
はましょうくむつよかりあ
ちつぶゆきばひりくざよ
つおぱちひうむきべめしる

Let the season of illuminations commence! It's December so sit down get cozy and enjoy this winter themed wordsearch.

Write the English translation (and/or kanji) of the words below and find them in the wordsearch above.

①じゅうにがつ →

⑥ほっきょく →

②せきたい →

⑦ゆきばな →

③ゆき →

⑧そい →

④さむい →

⑨ぼうねんかい →

⑤ふゆ →

⑩かざる →

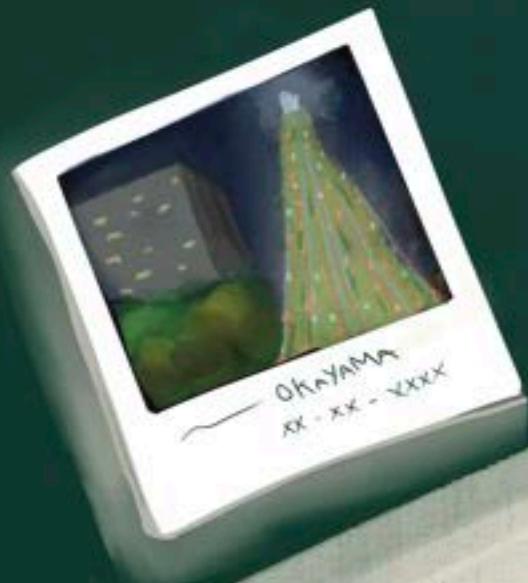
Difficulty: Medium

Monthly Sudoku

DECEMBER 2024

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

Fill in the puzzle so that every row across, every column down and every 9 by 9 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.



Want to be part of
The Peach Cobbler!!?!



If you want to contribute photos or stories please contact us at
newsletter@okayama-ajet.com
OR
okayama.rose@gmail.com



more info available on www.okayama-ajet.com