

THE PEACH COBBLER

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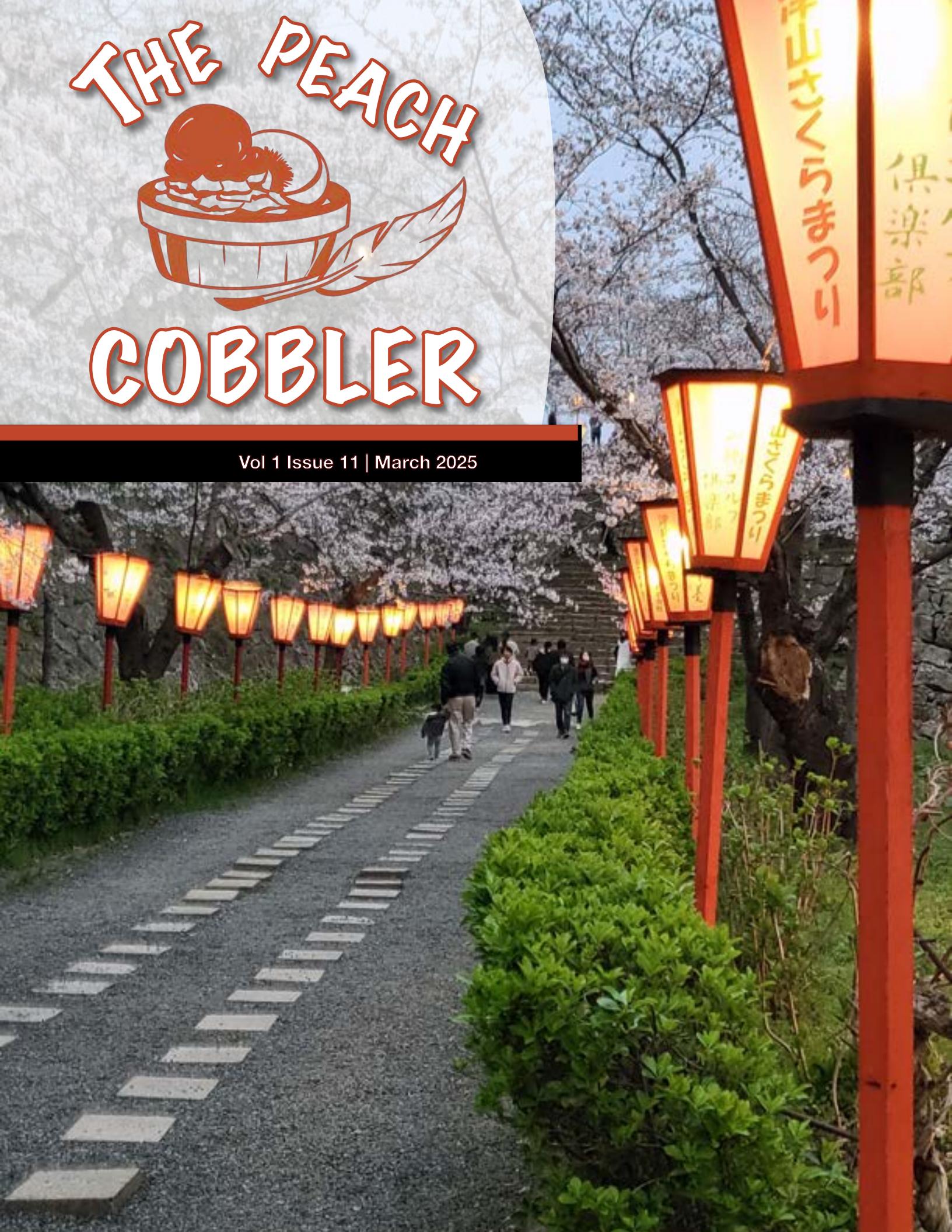


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Note from the Editor~



Greetings, peaches!

Seems like the cold days are finally behind us, with the plum trees in bloom and cherry blossoms on the way—spring is finally upon us!

Now onto this month's newsletter. We have a lovely piece on Kabuki in Japan from Nagi CIR, highlighting misconceptions about Kabuki and extending an open invitation to see a live performance. We also have two articles written by AJET members, Ryan and Nolan, covering a recent hike some JETs went on and what it's like to experience hanami for the first time.

We've also got some photos from the "Naked Man Festival" in February, where our very own city JET, Elliot, took part. Our next planned group event is hanami (cherry blossom viewing) at the Sakura Carnival—stay tuned for more info!

This months puzzles include a grade 4 kanji quiz instead of the regular word search. Quiz provided from <https://happylilac.net/>

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.

If you're interested in contributing, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at newsletter@okayama-ajet.com or okayama.rose@gmail.com



Discover Kabuki in Nagi



Kabuki isn't cryptic—it's fun!

Registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008, Kabuki is one of Japan's most unique traditional arts. While many may picture white-painted faces, extravagant costumes, and dramatic movements, Kabuki is much more than that.



In rural areas like Nagi, Jige Shibai (rural Kabuki) continues to thrive, thanks to passionate locals. However, Kabuki faces declining interest among younger generations and misconceptions about its accessibility. Let's bust some myths!

Common Misconceptions about Kabuki:

FALSE

1. Kabuki is for the elite.

False! Kabuki originated from the dances of common villagers and was created for everyday people.

2. Only men can perform in Kabuki.

Not in rural Kabuki! Here, performances are mixed-gender. Imagine a teenage girl playing a seasoned warrior, facing off against a widow played by the local forest ranger.

3. Kabuki is stuck in the past.

Wrong! Kabuki constantly evolves—there's even a Kabuki version of One Piece!

4. The audience is silent and serious.

Nope! Rural Kabuki audiences are lively and vocal. Expect cheers, laughs, and even playful heckling like shouting “Daikon!” (bad actor).

5. It's impossible to understand the dialogue.

Don't worry—most Japanese spectators rely on knowing the basic plot rather than catching every word. Think of it like watching Little Red Riding Hood—you already know the story, so you can focus on the fun performances and visuals.

Why You'll Love Kabuki:



Kabuki is extremely visual. Costumes, props, and gestures convey so much information.

For example:

Shoes: the scene is outdoors.

Lantern: It's nighttime.

Blue lines on face: he's the villain! (blue = bad blood)



In Nagi, Kabuki performances are crafted with local ingenuity. Sets, props, and costumes are handmade by volunteers, often from simple materials like papier-mâché.



The JETs of Nagi invite you to discover Kabuki in its most proletarian form, on the stage of the *Matsugami temple*.

The stage has been lovingly preserved through time. It can pivot 360 degrees by a mechanism on rolls manually pushed in the basement, allowing to reveal sets entirely painted by hand. We are preparing a small guide in English to understand kabuki in 5 minutes, as well as a compact summary that will allow you to appreciate each scene in detail.

The Yokozen Kabuki Spring Performance will be held on Tuesday, April 29 (public holiday) at the historic Matsugami Temple!

Admission: Free (no reservation required)

Special bentos: Available by reservation

Details: nagi.or.jp/event

Location: Matsugami Shrine: (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/tziCvotV2BTMrKVGA>)



We hope you'll join us to experience Kabuki in its most lively, down-to-earth form –and maybe even spot a character that became the inspiration for Jiraiya in *Naruto*!

2/11 王子が岳の報告

On February 11th, a handful of ALTs from around Okayama Prefecture gathered informally to enjoy a brief and beautiful, and *steep*, trek through nature -or should we say *up* and *down* nature- to take in some of the breathtaking, *literally for some of us*, nearby sights. Venturing out the southern edge of the prefecture, nestled in between the coastal town of Tamano and the City of Kojima, is Mount Oujigatake, a summit which overlooks the beautiful Seto Inland Sea.



Getting to the trail head is simple enough and, fortunately for the many of us who do not have the divine default authorization, and mandate tbh, to drive in Japan, is accessible by a combination of a train and bus ride. A quick sprint down the JR Seto-Ohashi Line to Kojima Station; for a faster and enjoyable experience, you're local JR West savant, i.e. 来安, recommends catching the Rapid Service Marine Liner (快速マリンライナー) from Okayama Station to Kojima for the 30-ish minute train ride through the countryside, skipping several stations; where you can link up with the Shimoden Oujigatake Line (王子が岳線) at Bus Stop 4. From there, you'd then ride the bus all the way to the end of the line.



The bus will eject you by a quaint observation point at the base of the mountain's steep cliff face, beside a nice rest area along the road connecting Kojima and Tamano - *this is also your last opportunity for a restroom consultation before you reach the top of the summit.* The rest area provides a great sea level view of the Seto Inland Sea as well as the Seto Ohashi Bridge, the Guiness World Record holder for the

longest suspension bridge supporting *both* rail and road traffic.

From here, there are 4 total trails nearby that can take you up to the summit. Do research where these trailheads are, and determine which is best for you. In the two times I have personally



hiked this mountain, I have only used the steepest, and shortest, trail which takes just about 40 minutes one way; 30 minutes is achievable with steady and swift pacing. The trail can be narrow at certain points as well as slippery on account of all the loose soil, pebbles, and particularly leaves that cover the path. Wear sturdy shoes.

Personally, I recommend a good pair of lace-up boots, as they are my go to for any activity or outing that involves a lot of walking; and my perpetual belief that, “if it’s good enough for the infantry, then it’s good enough to *walk straight up the side of a mountain.*” The hike is far from *chasing after a bus at a 90-degree angle out of Rock Bottom*, but there are times where the trail can slant up quite a bit.





There are several points along the switch-backing trail that give you breathtaking views of the Inland Sea as you ascend the grade, be sure to take in the sights, sounds, and scents of the sea and mountain air on your trek - or at points of pause for gasps for air.

The cliff faces and the mountain, while bringing good views, also bring about a point of caution. This particularly is directed at those, like myself, that have a crippling fear of heights, *as well* as those of us that somehow don't fear a *really* long drop and a sudden fraction-of-a-fraction-of-a-second stop *enough*. There are many breathtaking views, particularly at the peak of the summit, however each view brings with it some kind of iteration of a sudden drop off of a cliff face or ledge - *certain death*, as I caution. Please exercise extreme caution when taking pictures or admiring just how freakishly high you are.

Additionally, on a side note, there is wildlife in the area. Two out of three times being on this mountain, I have come up close and very personal with 猪, イノシシ, wild boar; our favorite breakfast-sausage shaped (particularly a longanisa for all our pinoy readers), diesel powered, leaf munchers that roam the hillsides and mountains.



The trail terminates near the Oujigatake Summit. Here there are several points of interest that are easily accessible. Nearby is a small cafe, at which you can grab a soothing and relaxing beverage as well as enjoy toast and other confectionery. The honey used in their toast and beverage is locally sourced from neighboring Kojima. There are often paragliders which launch from the grass strip adjacent to the cafe. With nerves of steel, and a small loan of about 8000円, you can experience the thrill, if you'd

call it that, of being aloft in the wind, high above the very much indeed rock hard earth surface, in...*not an airplane*. I'm sure it's a wonderful experience for those, unlike me, who are not terrified of heights.

Nearby is, in my opinion, the highlight of the location apart from the view. You can come up close and personal to ニコニコ岩, the Smiling Rock. When viewed in profile, the rock and its erosions show what is easily discernible as a somewhat stoic smiling face.



Next to and around it, are also several other boulders that you can clamber on for a great view and many photo opportunities; keeping in mind the aforementioned advisories of extreme cliff drops and “certain death”.

Overall, a great and painless hike for those that want something active and outdoorsy to do, which at the same time does not take up your entire day. It's definitely a "leave in the mid-morning, forge the mountain, and return to Okayama in the late afternoon to make the 10,614th window shopping and chatting lap of AEON Mall Okayama to date" -kind of activity. If you want an escape from the city, a refreshing and serene view, or simply an unscratched itch to look at water (the sea) as opposed to the daily rocks and rice (mountains - yes, you Niimi/Tsuyama JETs), then why not venture out to the coast of Okayama, to the mountains of Kojima and Tamano, and admire the mystique and serenity of the Seto Inland Sea with the company of your fellow JETs, and a particularly, perpetually, happy boulder.



Hanami in Japan – A Dream Come True

By: Nolan Espiritu

One of the greatest joys about living in Japan is the ability to see the country's world-famous cherry blossoms first hand. Since the beginning, when I first became interested in Japanese culture, I have always wanted to see the cherry blossoms bloom in-person. I arrived in Japan for my first year of JET back in May 2022. There were so many of the country's culture I wanted to experience but it felt like it would be forever till Spring would arrive and I would get to experience the famous "Hanami" for myself. However, my first year went by in a flash. It was filled with so many experiences such as the numerous local festivals and firework displays along with the outrageous heat and humidity in the summer. The beautiful views during the changing of the leaves in fall. The abnormal 60cm snowfall for winter where I still asked to go to work..., and then Spring finally came.

My first "Hanami" experience was in Maniwa, in the northern parts of Okayama. Here lied a Sakura tree believed to be over 1000 years old. It was a surreal experience to be under the leaves of this massive 18 meter tall tree. While the buds hadn't quite opened up yet it was still a beautiful sight to see. One thing you'll quickly learn here is wherever there is anything big that deals with cherry blossoms, there will also be a large group of people gathering for it. I was fortunate enough that since I went a few days earlier, the crowd and the traffic wasn't that bad.



I am also fortunate enough to live by one of the best places to see the cherry blossoms bloom in Okayama. Every year, at Tsuyama Castle there is a big festival during this time. The view from the top of the hill where you could see all the Sakura trees with the city lights and the mountains in the background leaves you truly breath-taken and the lanterns they add around the castle makes the place feel magical.

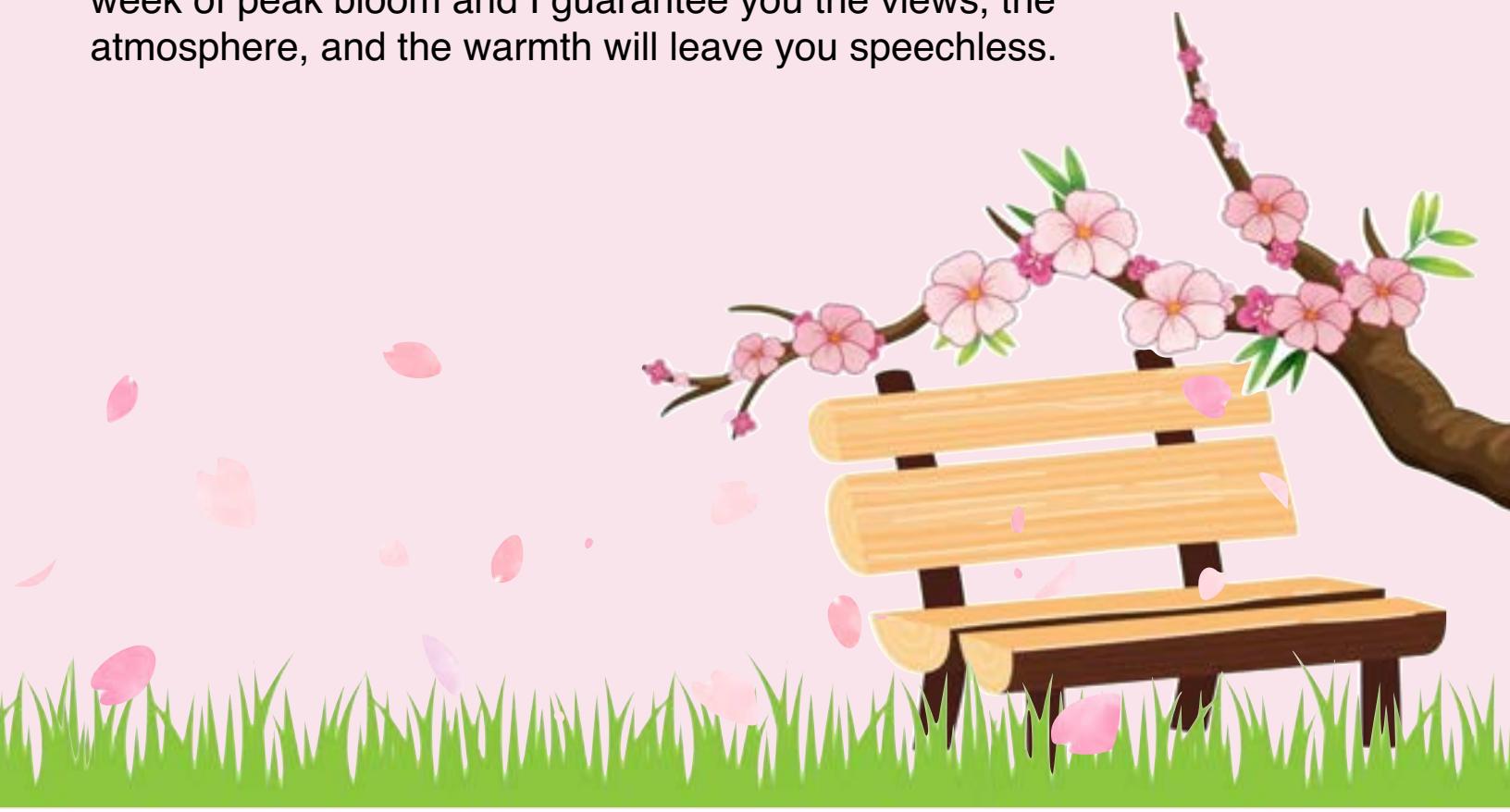




I think one of the greatest joys during this time of year is being able to share the experience with others. The JET community has always been amazing here in Okayama and every year I get the opportunity to enjoy the cherry blossoms with some amazing people.



Now, for the truly magical part about this season. As a foreigner, you hear so much about the cherry blossoms. People fly from all around the world to see the cherry blossoms bloom in Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara, and many other famous places in Japan. But for us, we get to experience this marvelous experience in our daily lives, in our own backyard, and wherever we get to call home. Cherry blossoms trees are all over Japan and we get to enjoy that experience of seeing the cherry blossoms each and every day. I encourage you now, if you don't do it already. Go out for a walk during the week of peak bloom and I guarantee you the views, the atmosphere, and the warmth will leave you speechless.



So, I hope you all get to enjoy the beautiful and amazing cherry blossom viewing experience for yourself, I hope you get to share it with friends, and I hope the memories you make become some of the unforgettable moments you have while living in Japan. Soon enough, most of us will all be headed back home and we'll no longer be able to see views like this anymore. But remember, just like cherry blossoms are famous in Japan. Wherever your home is, there is something unique for you to enjoy as well so don't take that for granted.

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

花見



OKAJET

Cherry Blossom Viewing 2025

Time | TBD

Place | Sakura Carnival by the Asahi River

4/5 (Sat)

More info coming soon...



Naked Man Festival 2025



Events in Okayama

MARCH - EARLY APRIL 2025

きび美ナイトミュージアム -

Kibibi Night Museum



Date: Every Saturday starting March 8th until the 29th

More info: [日本語](#)

Location: Kibibi Museum (Kurashiki)

Time: 18:00 - 20:00

Admission: ¥700

湯郷温泉 おひな祭り - Yunogo Onsen's Doll Festival

Date: March 15th - April 3rd

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Yunogo Onsen Town

Time: 09:00 - 17:00

Admission: Free



舞劇Dance Drama 「朱鷺」 (岡山公演)

Toki Dance Drama (Okayama Performance)



Date: Thursday March 27th

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Okayama Performing Arts Theatre, Harenowa

Time: Performances at 14:00 and 18:30

Admission: B-Seat - ¥9000

A-Seat - ¥10000

ワインに恋してときめいて in Okayama 2025

Fall for Wine, Feel the Spark in Okayama 2025



Date: Friday March 28th - 30th

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Mamakari Forum (Okayama Convention Centre)

Time: March 28: 17:00 - 21:00

March 29: 11:00 - 20:00

March 30: 11:00 - 16:00

Admission: Tickets prices vary please check [here](#) for details

2025岡山さくらカーニバル

Okayama Sakura Carnival 2025



Date: Friday March 28th - April 6th

More info: [日本語](#) and [English](#)

Location: Asahi River's riverbed

Time: 10:00~21:00

Admission: Free ~

*bring money for food stalls

10th Anniversary柿内美緒オカリナリサイタル2025 Mio Kakiuchi 10th Anniversary Ocarina Recital 2025



Date: Saturday April 19

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art

Time: 13:30 - 15:30

Admission: ¥3000 All seats are unreserved

Studio Ghibli Park Exhibition

Date: February 28th - May 11th

*Closed Mondays

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Okayama City Museum

Time: 10:00 - 18:00

Admission: General admission ¥1800 (advance timed ticket)

¥1900 (day of)



OTHER

International Meet Up Party 「せかつく」



Date: Saturday April 5th

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>



OKAYAMA
KX-XX-XXXX

Mamakari Forum (Okayama Convention Centre)

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

ANSWER KEY

Difficulty: Evil

Monthly Sudoku

FEBRUARY 2025

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

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

Difficulty: Medium

Monthly Sudoku

MARCH 2025

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

漢字クイズ 金魚すくい

小学4年生の漢字
ねらい：漢字の複数の読みを確かめる

名前

同じ読みをする漢字で四方を囲まれた、金魚だけがすくえるよ。

何びき取れたかな？

このように、
四つの漢字が同じ読みを
するものを見つこう！

<れい>

衣い

位い
委い
意い

想
送
走
争

加
角
貨
果

害
街
外
岩

海
回
階
改

新
臣
深
信

漢
寒
感
觀

選
戦
静
千

希
季
機
氣

岩
顔
願
岸

終
習
集
周

案
安
惡
暗

駅
英
栄
泳

答え