

THE PEACH



COBBLER

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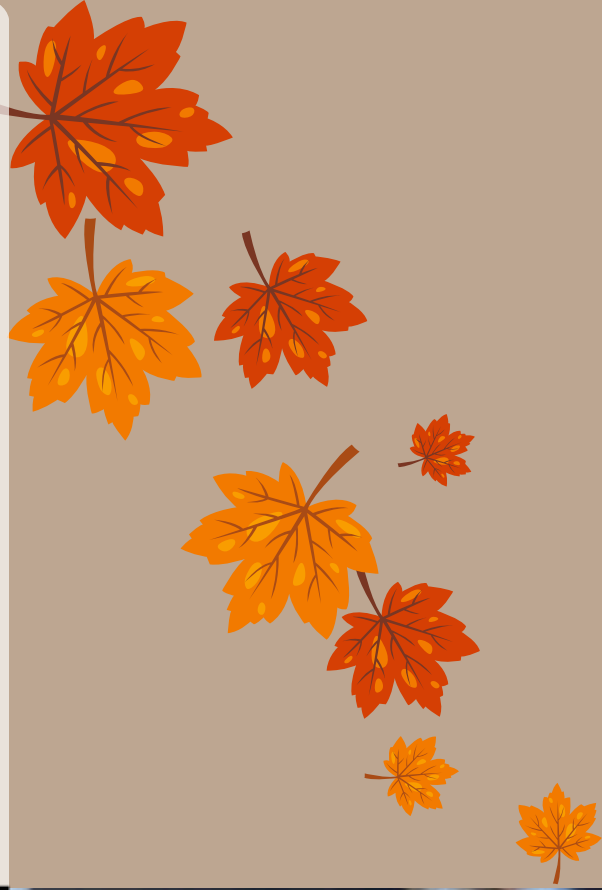


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It was great to see everybody's faces at SDC!
Thank you to those who also came out to bowling!

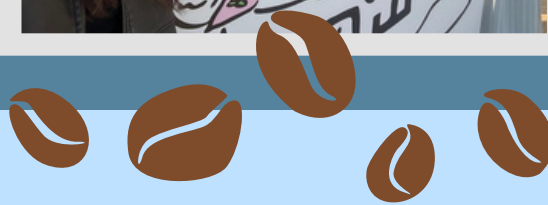




Kinojo Castle Ruins Hike



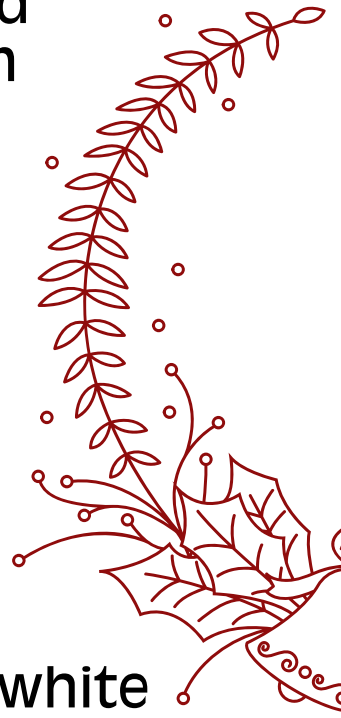
Okayama Coffee Festival



JAPAN'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS



To start things off, here's a wholesome picture of me and my grandad from last Christmas...



KFC

Okay, I know I'm a generic white man but the astute among you can probably figure out that's not my grandad at all. It's very clearly Ronald McDonald...

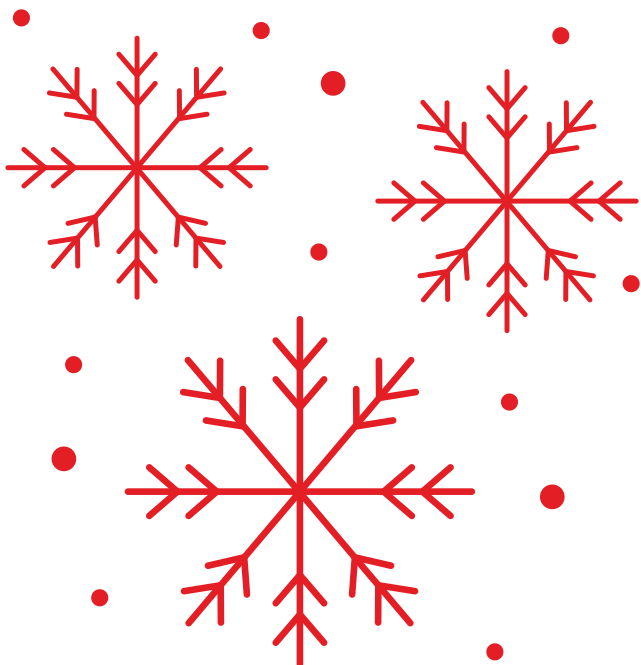
KFC is, for some reason, a massive hit specifically at Christmas. Don't get me wrong, the quality of the food there all year round is far better than its UK counterpart, but I certainly wouldn't plan my Christmas dinner with the Colonel in mind.



JAPAN'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

So why does Japan? Well, if you're a viewer of *Abroad In Japan* you might know, but if not, allow another dry British man to explain.

The story goes that in the mid 70s, a manager of a KFC restaurant overheard foreign people talking about how they missed eating turkey for Christmas. There's just one glaring problem, there are no turkeys in Japan, at least not in a mass production sense. So what's the closest thing to turkey? Chicken, naturally. So, one massively successful advertisement campaign later, and people now queue at their local KFC as far back as September to secure their Christmas sets.



ABROAD IN JAPAN

It's a fairly watered down version of events, but nowadays the nostalgia from those campaigns and the universal tradition of uniting with family is probably the real driving force behind why people still do it. If I wasn't returning to England for an actual Christmas Dinner this year, I'd certainly have been tempted myself.

Before KFC secured their spot in the culinary vices of Japanese Christmas, the Fujiya confectionary company launched their own attempts with their signature strawberry sponge cake. It took place during Japan's post war boom, where appliances became more readily available and every household had a brand new refrigerator to put all their fancy new fruits and cream. Convenient, eh?

Chicken, spongecake, what's not to love?



STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE



Well, let's be honest. Christmas is basically a hive of commercialism, with everything having tinsel and snowflakes plastered over it. Couples are the target audience, with restaurant reservations like gold dust and romantic vibes woven throughout all Christmas media. It's more akin to Valentine's Day than the more 'traditional' western celebrations. It certainly has its place, but the first Christmas I was in Japan, I just wanted to be out of work and back home.

JAPAN'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

So as ALTs, if you aren't headed back this year, my advice would be to reach out to one another and gorge on some great food until you have a typically pochari Christmas belly, walk under the illuminated streets, or get absolutely wasted in a Jankara until we're all wheelbarrowed back into work on January 5th.



Genuinely, I hope you all have a lovely festive period. I look forward to seeing everyone again soon!

Merry Christmas and
Happy Holidays!



Winter Solstice in Japan

The Return of the Sun

The winter solstice, known as Toji (冬至) in Japan, is the first official day of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. It's also known as the shortest day of the year, typically falling between December 20th and December 22nd worldwide.

This year, the day falls on Monday, December 22nd in Japan. Although the winter solstice gets a bad rep as the “darkest day of the year” in western cultures, Japanese culture recognizes the solstice as a shift to brighter days ahead—literally and figuratively.

In Japan, the winter solstice is also known as — 陽来復 (ichiyō raifuku), meaning the “return of spring” or a “favorable turn of fortune.” This signifies the turning point from Yin to Yang; as Yin energy reaches its zenith, Yang energy is born again, and the two transform.

Japanese Winter Solstice Traditions

Bonfires



Bonfires occur during this holiday, with many lit on Mt. Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain. The bonfires are lit as a way to symbolize the return of the rising sun, which is also the national symbol of Japan. They also symbolize good luck for farmers in the upcoming agricultural year.



Yuzu fruit, an East Asian fruit with a taste similar to grapefruit and bright yellow like a lemon, is added to warm baths during the winter solstice. This aromatic fruit is believed to give healing and protection from sickness, specifically colds, during this time of year, by dispelling bad air.

Yuzu filled baths



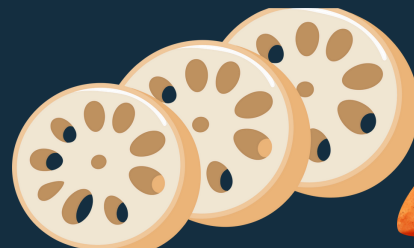
Kabocha/The Seven Herbs of Winter

Meals containing kabocha (Japanese pumpkins) are a common tradition during winter solstice for a few reasons. Kabocha is rich in vitamins A and C, as well as antioxidants, which help boost the immune system. This can help ward off colds during the brutal winter season.



Eating food that has an “n,” 「ん」 in the word is also said to bring good luck, particularly the following vegetables that contain two 「ん」 s in their names:

Nankin/kabocha 「なんきん/南京」 (pumpkin),
Udon 「うどん」, Kanten 「かんてん」 (agar),
Ginnan 「ぎんなん」 (ginkgo), Kinkan 「きんかん」
(kumquat), Renkon 「れんこん」 (lotus roots), and
Ninjin 「にんじん」 (carrot).

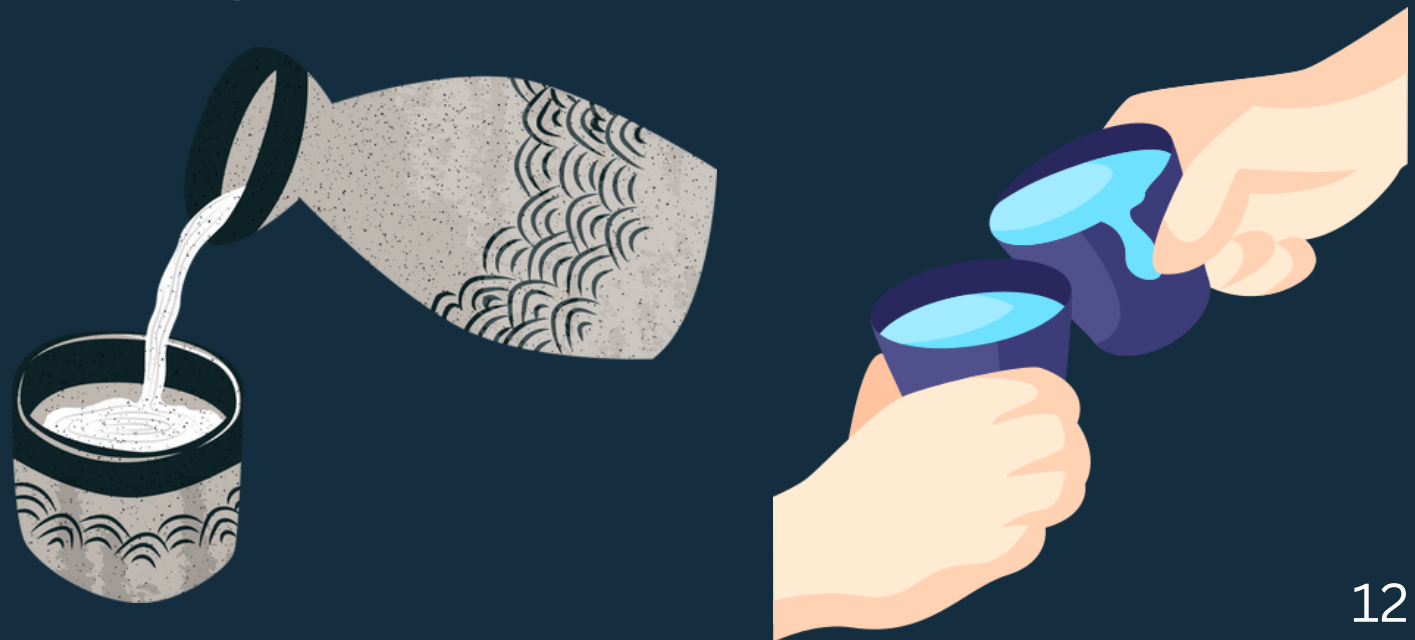


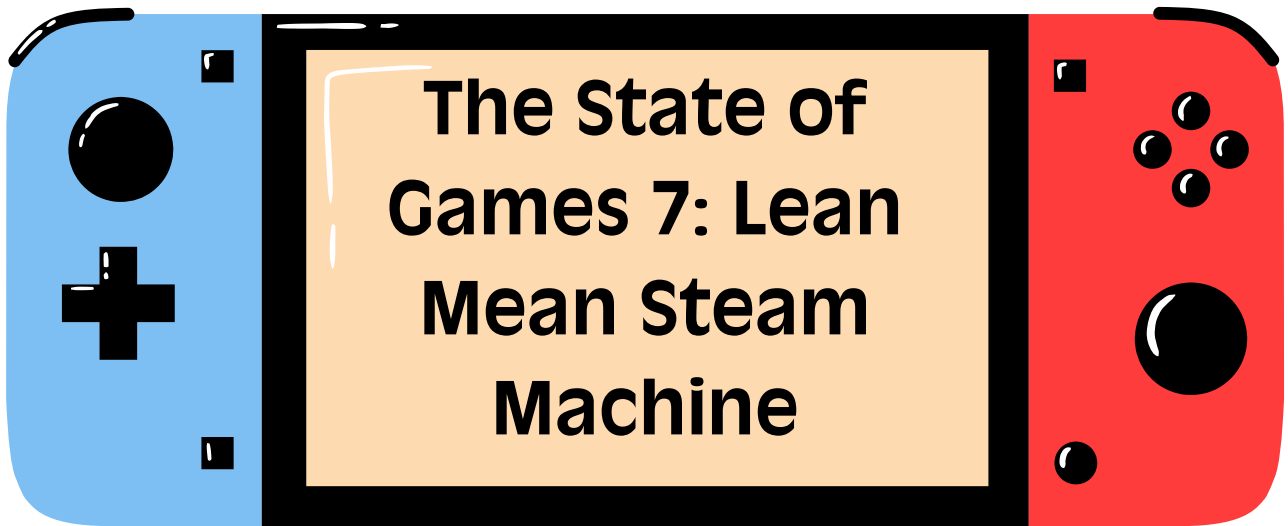


Kabocha is the most customary, as it has a long shelf life and, in old times, was easiest to come by during the winter months.



By the way, the word “nihon-shu,” Japanese sake, also has an 「ん」 as in 「にほんしゅ」. Let’s heat up a bottle of sake to keep warm and wish for good luck in 2026. Kanpai!





Where better to start than with the GabeCube? Valve has retained its place at the forefront of gaming and as the people's champion for some time now. It seems no matter what competitors may do, they can never knock Steam from the podium. Our lord and saviour Gabe Newell thrives as always.



So it truly is no surprise that when Steam announced their new hybrid system, it sent a tsunami across the gaming world. The Steam Deck already has its diehard fans, and as a man who spent the majority of my adulthood draining my wallet on PC gaming, I really do get the appeal.



Now they're coming for the home console market too, with the addition of some typical PC components i.e, the ability to mod games fairly easily. I'd say this truly is something to look out for, but with them being very quiet on pricing, expect it to be quite far north of \$500.



You can truly get kitted out with their VR headset, brand new controller, as well as being able to take it all on the go with the Deck. It just might make you have to cough up four months of rent for the privilege.

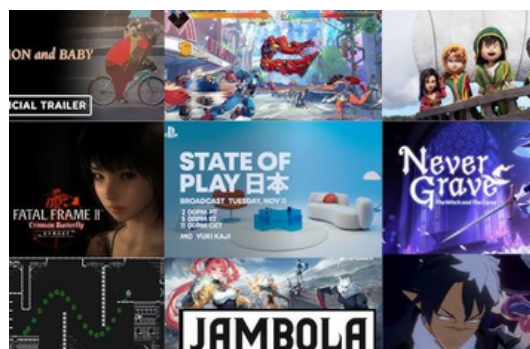
PlayStation did what they always do. Sprinkle us with some remasters and hope that people continue to forget what a disappointment the PS5 generation has truly been thus far.

DragonQuest VII and Fatal Frame II are among those I imagine people are tentatively looking forward to.



It truly says something about the state of Sony when inKONBINI, an indie title about running a convenience store, looks to be the most interesting experience coming to the platform,

and that's not even an exclusive. Ghost of Yotei continues to thrive, with New Game+ out now and the multiplayer mode expected next year, but it's crickets from them for a while now I'd imagine. Wolverine can't come soon enough...



Two absolute disasters came and went with the campaign mode of Black Ops VII being one of the most unintentionally funny things of all time. So laughably bad until you remember the actual state of Activision for the past decade or so now.

ACTIVISION®

CALL OF DUTY

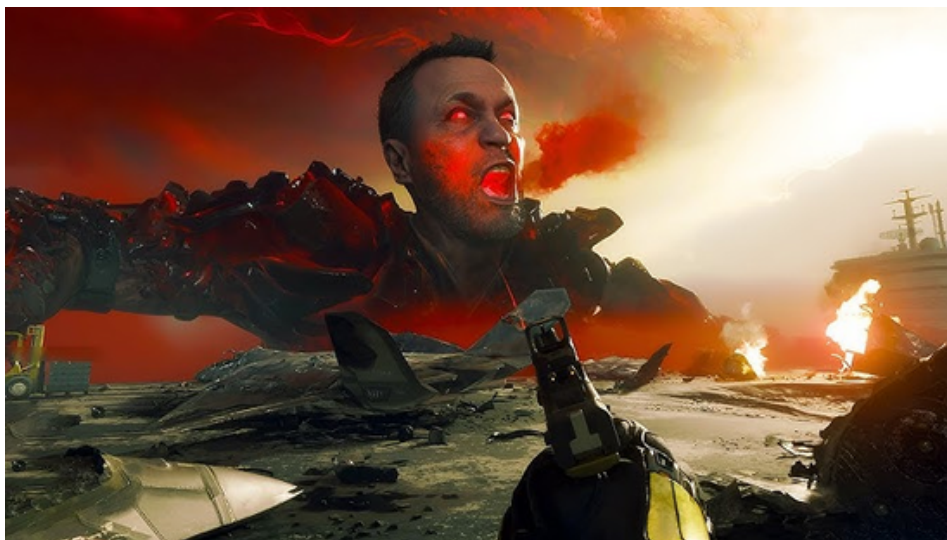
And Ubisoft? My word, Ubisoft. Did you whip up the latest Assassin's Creed Shadows DLC on a calculator? The visuals seemed like they were made via a braille keyboard and mouse. One of the only games I've seen that I wish I could play LITERALLY blind.



UBISOFT

I have no idea who signed off on the game set in semi-realistic feudal Japan to crossover with Attack on Titan, but I hope it serves as a lesson to stop hiring absolute morons so out of touch with what people actually want that it ends up with turgid sludge like this. I don't even care for Assassin's Creed that much but even I know it deserves far more respect as a franchise.

The best thing about the pictures I'll show of them is that if you didn't know the context, you could barely tell which is which.



Finally, you didn't think I'd go yet another issue without bringing up Nintendo, right? I will never be beating the fanboy allegations I fear, but how could I not mention Kirby Air Riders. Masahiro Sakurai has the midas touch depending on who you ask.



Best known for his work on Smash Bros, but a living legend in the Nintendo sphere, and his ever unique style is plastered all over Kirby Air Riders. By that of course,

I mean the gameplay is frantic and somewhat mental, but brimming with polish and charm.

With Mario Kart World and Sonic Crossworlds already flying off store shelves, Kirby Air Riders has



the monumental task of justifying the price tag, but ask Sakurai himself and you somewhat feel the truth that this game exists out of love, not for sheer profit.

No doubt his passion project was indulged so that the Nintendo executives could slowly twist his arm into directing another Smash Bros. title, but I can't wait to give this game a fair chance alongside the other kart racers we've got so far.



That's the final gaming article of this year, so I wish you all happy holidays! I hope your stockings are stuffed with everything you asked for, as well as merchandise no one ever needs. Take care!

**GAME
OVER**

Written by



@lewischissio



Pottery in Kurashiki

Living in Okayama, theres a good chance you've heard of Bizenyaki pottery. However, not only can you buy Bizenyaki in Okayama, you can make your own!

In September, some of us fellow ALTs joined a Bizen-yaki 「備前焼」 class.

We were each given 600g of clay to sculpt up to two pieces of pottery.



The staff were very helpful and walked us through the process of sculpting our very own pieces. For the first, piece 3 of us decided on a cup, while just Liam opted to do a plate. As for the second piece, we all decided that we would make a hand sculpted cat. The cats were fun to make, but since it was a personal choice the staff were unable to advise us. Needless to say they came out... questionable.



After arriving at the pottery studio, you and your group will be seated at a table and given an apron. A member of staff will explain, in Japanese, how to sculpt or decorate your pottery. The entire sculpting process took about two and a half hours, with a month and a half wait for the pieces to be fired and ready.



Bizen-yaki starts off as dark gray clay and gets its signature reddish-brown pattern 「緋襷 (ひだすき)」 from rice straw that is wrapped around the pottery during firing.

Depending on your class, you will be given anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours to complete your pottery. Once you are finished the staff will take your creations and keep them for about two months during the firing process. After you pay, you will fill out a postcard with your address (preferably in Japanese), that will be mailed to you later when your pieces are ready to collect.



We did this class at Aimi Kobo Pottery Studio in Kurashiki Ivy Square. They offer 5 unique pottery classes. If you want to sculpt your own pieces, you can try their Electric Wheel Pottery, Bizen-yaki, or Hand Sculpted Pottery classes. If building your own seems daunting, they also offer other varieties such as Sgraffito or Glaze Painting where you can decorate pre-made pieces.



AIMI KOBO POTTERY STUDIO

If you are interested in participating in any of their classes, see more at their website or call to make any reservations! (Reservation must be made in Japanese)

- Electric Wheel Potter
- Bizen-yaki
- Hand Sculpted Pottery
- Glaze Painting
- Glaze Scraping Experience



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Phone: 086-424-0517

www.ivysquare.co.jp/ceramics/

HOSTED BY OKAJET

SECOND SATURDAY SOCIAL

JANUARY 10TH, 2026

From 6pm~
Let's meet at Okayama Station!



If interested or for more
details, scan here!

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Events in Okayama

ブランチクリスマスホリデー Brunch Christmas Holiday

Date: Saturday, December 13th

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Kitanagase, Okayama (right near Kitanagase station)

Time: 13:00 - 18:00

Admission: Free



さと×まちフェスタ Sato x Machi Festa

Date: Sunday, December 14th

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: アムスメール上之町、Omotemachi Shopping street, Okayama city

Time: 10:00 - 15:00

Admission: Free

倉敷クリスマスマーケット2025 Kurashiki Christmas Market 2025

Date: Sat& Sun December 13th&14th

More Info: [日本語](#)

Location: Kurashiki Ivy Square Plaza

Time: Sat: 11:00 - 21:00, Sun: 11:00 - 19:00

Admission: Free





JAZZライブ Jazz Live

Date: Saturday, December 20th
Location: Sci-pia: Science and Humanity Museum, Okayama city
Time: 12:30 - 14:30
Admission: 2,200 per adult

More Info: [日本語](#)

嘉美心酒造 冬の蔵祭り Kamishin Brewery Winter Festival

Date: Sat&Sun, December 20th & 21st
Location: Kamishin Sake Brewery, Asakuchi City
Time: 9:00 - 14:00
Admission: Free (food and drink costs will apply)

More info: [日本語](#)



お正月をはなやかに～和モダンしめ縄づくり～ Japanese Shimenawa Rope Making

Date: December 20th - December 27th
Location: Sci-pia: Science and Humanity Museum, Okayama city
Time: Dec. 20th, 25th, 26th, 27th :10:30 - 15:30
Dec. 23rd, 24th : 12:00 - 15:30
Admission: Simple rope: 1,600 yen Gorgeous rope: 2,300 yen

More Info: [日本語](#)

トライフープ岡山 vs ヴィアティン三重 Tryhoop Okayama vs Mie Veertien Basketball Game



Date: Sat&Sun, December 20th and 21st

More info: [日本語](#)

Location: Tsuyama General Gym

Time: Doors open 12:00, game start 14:05

Admission: Tickets range from 1,500 - 3,000 yen

奥津温泉除夜の鐘・年越そば

Okutsu Onsen New Years Eve Bell and Soba

Date: Wednesday, December 31st

More info: [日本語](#)

Location: Okutsu Onsen Hojuji Temple, Kagamino town

Time: 23:00 - 23:55

Admission: Free



International Meetup Party 「せかつく」



Date: Saturdays, December 6th and January 3rd

More info: [Insta](#)

Location: Matador (Bar in Okayama City)

Time: 20:00 - 22:00

Admission: *Men ~ ¥ 4000

*Women ~ ¥ 3500

All you can drink and buffet
style food included

Monthly Sudoku

December 2025

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

名前

に入る漢字を下の の中から選んでね。四つの二字熟語^{じゅうく}が出来よ！



二つの漢字を
組み合わせただけで、
たくさんの
言葉が出来てくるね！

<例>

原
↓
時 → 価 → 値
↓
格

支
↓
保 → → 害
↓
子

頭
↓
腹 → → 切
↓
手

人
↓
実 → → 利
↓
化

単
↓
不 → → 情
↓
金

階
↓
石 → → 差
↓
落

口
↓
私 → → 源
↓
感

蒸
↓
保 → → 守
↓
学

差
↓
特 → → 常
↓
議

志
↓
念 → → 望
↓
書

誤
↓
正 → → 答
↓
散

痛 段 障 語 願 留 権 解 純 異

Answer Key

Monthly Sudoku

November 2025

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

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

漢字の読みでしりとりをして、スタートからゴールまで行けるかな？

スタート

約	草	芽	道	兆
包	察	祝	組	歌
欠	通	牛	熊	達
続	級	毎	今	対
題	漁	石	下	束

ゴール

スタート

給	笛	徳	組	店
上	泳	糸	養	整
静	南	鏡	駅	家
麦	松	馬	時	岸
沖	通	魚	音	食

ゴール

タテかヨコに進んでね。
ナナメには行けないよ。



スタート

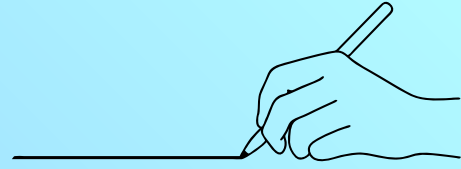
愛	題	候	参	量
色	老	倉	陸	銅
城	牛	課	板	玉
六	放	梅	名	毎
雲	物	農	浴	犬

ゴール

スタート

九	梅	明	息	笑
家	来	倉	極	勇
英	福	談	芽	失
一	父	楽	米	石
散	着	空	馬	州

32
ゴール



If you would like to write an article for the January newsletter, please email the newsletter at:

newsletter@okayama-ajet.com

Any submissions must be made by the 3rd Saturday of the month. Anything is welcome, but if looking for inspiration, themes may include:



**January's Themes:
New Years/Winter/Etc.**



Want to be part of the Newsletter?

We are always looking for new talent and help at the newsletter, so if you have a writers itch you want to scratch, or have some ideas for the newsletter look, please contact us at our email!

newsletter@okayama-ajet.com



Additionally, if you have any suggestions or feedback for our newsletter, please fill out the form below!

Newsletter Feedback/Suggestion Form



See you next issue!