

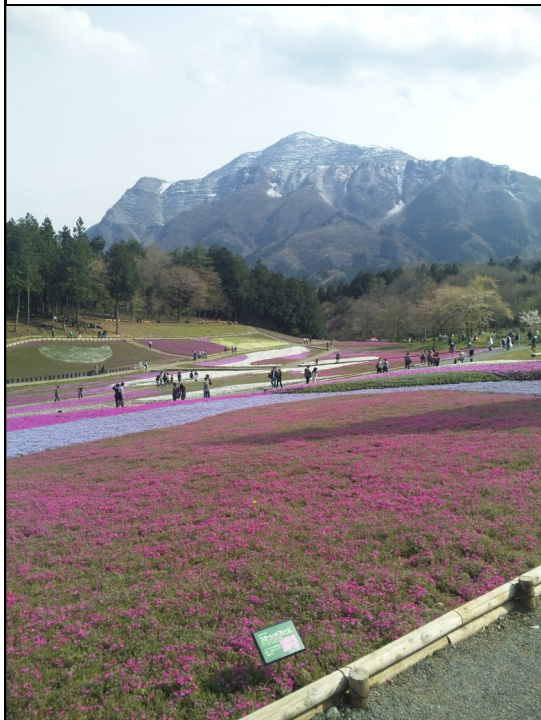
Chichibu: The Land That Saitama Forgot

Anthony Markley

When I was told I was being placed in Saitama, I – like most of you, probably – looked the place up on Google, Wikipedia, and assorted other websites. The picture each painted was similar: an urban prefecture, basically an extension of Tokyo. Oh, and there's a green bit with mountains at the western end, but it's not very important.

Of course, when I got my placement details, I found I was going to be living in the green bit with the mountains.

What I have discovered in my time here is that the websites were correct: Nothing that goes on here is very important...to the big city. And the people living here wouldn't have it any other way.



More than one person has told me that Chichibu is closer to Kansai than Kanto. Despite the early hour at which I have to wake up in order to get to the mid-year conference, they're referring to the way of life. Having had little experience of Kansai, I don't know whether that's an accurate statement, but I do know that living in Chichibu feels more like living in a village than a city of almost seventy thousand people. Everybody knows everybody, or at least one of everybody's friends.

Part of this is no doubt due to being surrounded by mountains: it's easier to get to know people

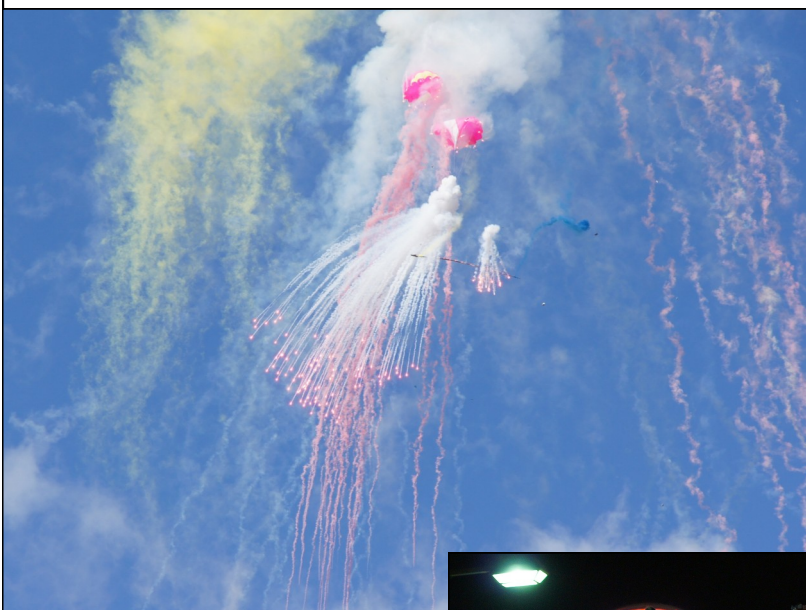
Shibazakura flowers with a view of Mt. Buko: the quintessential Chichibu landscape. To find out more about seeing it for yourself, read further in Destination: Saitama on page 8.

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when the next major town is about an hour away. The mountains also contribute to the more laid-back attitude. Waking up each morning to see trees and mountains from your window creates a much different atmosphere to seeing pachinko parlours, train lines or the back of the apartment next door.

That's not to say nothing happens around here. Festivals are common: the Chichibu area has around five hundred a year, though most are fairly small. One of my favourites so far is the rocket festival, where various towns, villages, and organisations attach fireworks to five-meter-long bamboo poles and attempt (sometimes successfully) to launch them into the air. Some of you managed to make it here in December for the Chichibu Night Festival, known as a two-day extravaganza of beer, two-storey hand-pulled floats, sake, fireworks, and beer. It's one of the biggest festivals in Japan, and one of the few times the rest of Saitama remembers that Chichibu exists, as everyone floods to the west to attend.



Left: There's no meiwaku when the neighbors are on the other side of the mountains! More fun than a shuttle launch and easier to try than rocket science, the rocket festival celebrates, among other things, just how fun it is to shoot things up in the air and watch them explode. **Right:** The massive wooden floats at the Chichibu Yomatsuri slowly make their way through the streets impossibly packed with people from not only non-Chichibu parts of Saitama, but from the rest of Japan as well. (Photos courtesy of the author)

Festivals aren't the only thing to be found in the area, either. There's also white-water rafting, river cruises, a motorcycle museum, steam trains, flower carpets in the spring... Chichibu saké is well regarded; its wine, too, though with less justification. There are rumours of a whisky distillery somewhere in the area, though I have yet to find it or its products.



None of which is of any concern to the typical Saitaman or Tokyo-ite. Chichibu is at least two hours away from what they regard as civilization; why would they bother coming here,

when anything important can be seen on the TV, or bought in their local stores? Besides, the trains only run every half-hour or so, which is shockingly inconvenient! The occasional visit for something big might be worth the trip, but otherwise they're more than happy to ignore Chichibu's presence in their back yard, and the people of Chichibu are quite content to have the big city stay on the other side of the mountains.

I find myself agreeing with them. While I may make the occasional trip to Tokyo for sight-seeing or shopping, I'm happy living in this city-sized village. I've ended up with what I consider to be the best placement I could have hoped for.



Tucked behind the mountains and quite good at doing its own thing, the city of Chichibu gives a taste of what Saitama was like before it became overlooked as simply a suburb of Tokyo.

The Real Problems of Municipal Jets

Denton Clark

At this point in our JET lives, we're all well-versed in the art of complaining.

"My JTE treats me like a tape recorder."

"WHY IS IT SO COLD EVERYWHERE???"

"There's this one kid in my class who will stand up in the middle of the lesson, calmly walk over to me, and proceed to punch me in the crotch repeatedly as I strain to form the words 'I can' through my reflexively pursed lips."

But can we please stop skirting around the issues here? What are the Real Problems that Jets face? What can we do to solve them?

Too Many Omiyage

Many of us visit more than one school. This means that after any major vacation, and sometimes on no occasion at all, we'll be inundated with a deluge of candy/crackers/pastries in frankly unmanageable amounts. In addition, most of us live alone. Who are we supposed to share this bounty with? My haphazard solution to this problem is placing all the treats and sundries in a wide, shallow dish on my coffee table, hoping that guests, food displayed right in front of their noses, will eat them for me. There are two problems inherent to this solution however: (1) I am a miserly curmudgeon with no friends, and thus, no guests to feed, and (2) It looks tacky as hell. One time when I did actually have someone over, they casually asked me if my apartment was, in fact, a hotel. The nerve! You can bet that I promptly had my bellboy escort them off the premises.

Look, I know that my co-workers mean well, but they are killing me with kindness.

Being Made to Sing *The Carpenters*

Karen Carpenter, I like to imagine your shining head crested with a halo, looking down on creation, smiling angelically while I give my 110%-effort rendition of *Top of the World* to a classroom of nonplussed students. I wonder what you think of this spectacle, the children interpreting your art as if it were a Gregorian chant. Admittedly, it's days like this when I can't help but feel that I've failed you somewhat. You see, I'm not a carefree faun of the 1970s, a testament to overpowering, upbeat sincerity like you were. No, I'm an increasingly cynical twenty-something, and when I have to sing these songs, your gilded, dulcet tones mixing in equal parts with the students' apathy and the sound of my own heart dying, I can't help but think *whywhywhywhywhywhy*.

I've managed to negotiate a few successes this year (e.g. *20th Century Boy*), but as long as the song catalog keeps drawing from the Adult Contemporary charts, it'll be a constant fight between me and the forces of sentimentality. I can come to terms with Japan as a land devoid of irony. I cannot come to terms with *The Greatest Hits of the Carpenters*.

Settling For Sukiya or, Dare I Say It, Yoshinoya When Matsuya is Clearly the Best

Every morning, at exactly two minutes and thirty-seven seconds after waking, I take a moment to thank the universe for placing me in Saitama, in a nice town where my situation is not total crap. I have a working bicycle. I have students that I find generally agreeable. I live just across the street from the Nepalese taste explosion that is Sambandha. What more could I ask for? How about a freakin' *Matsuya* within reasonable biking distance! Sometimes I get this craving, this unmitigated longing for the 530 yen *bibindon*, and I can do NOTHING. It's the place in the center of my back that I can't reach. It's a hangnail, a bunion, and a cavity all rolled into one. It's listening to "Mmmmbop" and being unable to hum along with those plucky Hansons. No Matsuya, no life.

In a pinch, I can get by with a *tamatoridon* at Sukiya, but there's no tricking my mind. Somewhere deep inside me knows that it's just a cheap fix until my next hit of Matsuya.

Being a Text Messaging Novice

Will someone please explain to me what emotion the winking smiley with its tongue sticking out is supposed to convey? If that is a genuine human emotion, then I've never felt it. Or maybe I'm a robot. If I was a robot though, I think I'd at least have an easier time figuring out what do with the multitude of picture icons at my disposal. When exactly would it be most appropriate to use the inchworm picture? Does it commonly function as a signifier for one's diligent efforts, moving inch-by-inch towards some sort of goal, or does it simply represent a trip to the bug museum? Perhaps the whole emoticon business is less a matter of calculated one-to-one translation, and more of a subtle art. I feel that I hardly need to mention the subtly layered meanings of the "cactus" emoticon.


At the very least, I hope that I can someday discern how to use those rising and falling arrows at the end of a clause—a process that can seemingly only be divined through tea leaves and oracle bones.

Shouldering the Responsibility of Being The Coolest Person in the World


Complete strangers often question him, just because they find him interesting.
His hair alone can generate more worthless conversation than an episode of LOST.
His sweat actually smells.

He is the most foreign man in his town.


"I don't always try to impress, but when I do, I prefer to do the moonwalk—stay needlessly popular, my friends."



Oprah, Lady Gaga, Brad Pitt—they may be famous, but they aren't The Coolest Person in the World. You, dear readers, are The Coolest Person in the World, and with great power comes great responsibility. I understand that sometimes the expectation to excite, elucidate, and exhibit your talents to the populace at large can seem like a bit of a burden. After your upteenth melodramatic rendition of "The Green Cap Chant," the hoots and cheers can seem a little flat, forced, maybe even a little heartbreaking. HOWEVER: Remember the ways in which you can use your powers for good. Befriend nerds to increase their status. Use your large foreign stomach to finish off the school lunch leftovers—no reason they should go to waste. "Intentionally" suck at sports to increase your students' athletic confidence. Look at the good you do!



There are many other potential problems in our line of work (no less important, but a great deal less hilarious to me) than the ones mentioned above, but I draw the line here, and instead offer you a simple, one-size-fits-all fix for your ALT woes. Hear this. In the darkest night, when hope feels like a long forgotten memory, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, radiant and waiting to ease what ill you: the *izakaya*.



(Note: I wrote about 3/4ths of this piece before the Tohoku earthquake/tsunami and finished the rest after I made sure the ground wasn't going to open up and swallow me whole. I started to think that maybe submitting this would prove insensitive considering the crisis, but now, on the contrary, I think that's doubly apropos. After the devastation that Japan has seen since the earthquake, how can a single one of us feel anything other than gratitude towards our situation? Who of you now dares feel unsatisfied with your job/your apartment/your commute/your food/your shelter/your life? Some of us Jets, not to mention the thousands of non-Jets out there, may now be facing REAL PROBLEMS [the all caps kind]. I ask that we all may band together to put our thoughts, prayers, donations, time, and money where our griping mouths are.)



Tourism, Inaka Style

Jack Brooks

During Spring Break, my family came to Japan from England to experience how my life was unfolding in Japan. I had been planning their arrival for quite some time and had settled on a trip to Kyoto before exploring Tokyo. For tourists, these places tick most of the boxes of what one wants to see in Japan. A bustling, modern city, soaring skyscrapers, neon-soaked side streets, temples and rice fields are just a few of the images that come to many peoples minds. Connecting the two cities with a ride on the shinkansen seemed like a perfect way to show the country to my family, who were coming from the English countryside.

Because we had a relatively long time to spend in Kyoto, I eventually opted on a visit to Kōya-san (高野山, Mt. Kōya) in Wakayama-ken. Not far from the hustle and bustle of sprawling Osaka, but decidedly *inaka* in atmosphere, Kōya-san was a surprising discovery for me. The Osaka suburbs vanish into rolling, wooded mountains as the train rumbles past stations that look as if they see no more than a handful of customers a day. Connecting the terminus with Kōya-san is a cable car hugging the steep mountain side, climbing slowly through the dense forest.

Kōya-san is regarded as one of Japan's holiest mountains after a monk founded a temple there in the 9th Century. Eight hundred meters above sea level, the mountain town is home to a collection of monasteries and temples run by monks and nuns. Many Japanese people make a pilgrimage of sorts to Kōya-san each year to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere far above the cities and towns of the Osaka area. Accommodation options are almost exclusively that of temple lodgings (called *shukubō* in Japanese) where the guest pays a certain amount to stay (approximately 10,000 yen per person, per night. At one end of the town is a vast cemetery called Okunoin (奥之院). Shrouded in old woodland, it is mysterious in atmosphere, with its moss-covered graves and scattered *jizō* statues.

I would never claim to have traveled Japan extensively, so for me, Kōya-san was really offering something different. I had been growing tired of crowded cities, shopping malls and depressing subways. On Kōya-san, on the other hand, the 'main' street was flanked by temples hiding secret gardens, all in the midst of the raw countryside. There was hardly a need for the buses that ferried people from one side of town to the other.

We stayed alongside monks in temple lodgings. The temple we stayed at was called Henjōson-in and we were, perhaps, the only guests there. It was comfortable and peaceful, so much quieter than staying in normal hotel accommodation. Typically, one is provided with *ryōkan*-style accommodation, that is, a tidy tatami room overlooking a peaceful zen garden. The bathroom was a luxurious shared *ofuro* and we ate *shōjin ryōri* (精進料理) food served to us by a monk in a quiet room. *Shōjin ryōri* is a kind of Buddhist vegetarian cuisine which is prepared with no meat or fish and uses seasonal ingredients in an effort to let natural fla-

vors, as compared to strong-flavored sauces, determine the taste. Whilst the food was interesting and delicious, I could not live on a diet like it everyday!

Another point of interest was being invited to attend the early morning prayer service inside the temple. There is definitely something to be said for listening to the haunting prayers of the monks, bleary-eyed at 6:30 am. Walking around the town, there is little else to do than soak up the religious atmosphere and stumble upon another of the wealth of temples. After almost a week in Kyoto catching cramped buses and being jostled from one packed temple to the next, it was nice to have the feeling of solitude on Kōya-san.

While Kyoto and Tokyo will always remain the jewels in Japan's tourism crown, Kōya-san is perhaps overlooked by most foreign tourists. In my opinion, it was worth the train journey, and in a time when Japan's tourism industry looks uncertain, I think it's even better to seek out those roads less traveled.



Staying Prepared After the March 11th Earthquake

Denise Schlickbernd

Over a month and a half since the March 11th earthquake and enough time has passed that it can now be described with an official name, the Great East Japan Earthquake. Many Jets probably remember the initial hours and days after the earthquake for many reasons: fright (or at least frustration) at the constant aftershocks even in Saitama, transportation frozen, coworkers or perhaps the Jets themselves spending the night at school or (if lucky) a friend's house, cleaning up fallen and broken belongings, and underlying it all, uncertainty at what would happen next. It wasn't until later that we began to realize just what the earthquake had caused in Tohoku, and we have been slow to grasp how far the effects of the March 11th earthquake and tsunami will extend.

The word *sōteigai* (想定外) means “beyond expectations,” and this word describes many aspects of this disaster. Seismologists had expected an earthquake measuring “only” up to M8.0 along the fault line off the northeastern coast of Japan; planners in ill-fated towns and cities along the coasts of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima had expected that their city halls and community centers designated as evacuation centers would all withstand the tsunami; and much to the concern of residents across Japan, TEPCO officials at the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima expected that protection against tsunami up to 5.7 meters (19 feet) would be enough to keep the reactors from being damaged. And ordinary residents throughout eastern Japan expected that the most serious of the aftershocks would be done by a month after the earthquake. Instead, we got an unwelcome one month anniversary present in the form of a M7.1 aftershock on April 7th and a M6.6 on the 11th.

As a Saitama Jet, perhaps the first thing to say when starting any conversation about the March 11th earthquake is to note how fortunate our prefecture has been in the aftermath of everything. None of the earthquakes have been pleasant, to be sure, but damage is nothing compared to areas further north. Some roads were affected, and soil liquefaction has damaged homes and buildings in the northeastern area of the prefecture. Trying to find rice, milk, and yogurt while shopping around power outage time slots were difficult, and some of us experienced our first gas lines, but in the end, for most Jets it amounted primarily to a real warning about the importance of being prepared while still allowing a relatively forgiving cushion for those who weren't.

Although the scale of the disaster faced here in Saitama and the rest of the Kanto region hasn't been as large as it is to the north, and we have needed to respond to it these last weeks. One aspect has been the continuing aftershocks; as of April 18, there have been 423 measuring M5 and higher since March 11th. Of these, 72 have been M6 or higher, and five were M7 or higher. No doubt this figure for aftershocks would about double if it included all the 3s and 4s that have regularly either rattled our nerves as it has our bookshelves or, alternately, desensitized us to anything less than a five. The massive earthquake also changed the balance of stress placed along other faults in Japan, meaning that earthquakes have become more likely along some faults and less likely along others.

Typically, aftershocks decrease in strength and frequency as time goes on, but as we've seen and felt ourselves, those following the Great East Japan Earthquake haven't strictly followed this pattern. The forces that moved the sea floor near the epicenter an amazing 24 meters (79 feet) to the east are expected to bring aftershocks for up to a year, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. How strong the largest aftershocks may be isn't certain; while the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake had an 8.7 aftershock three months after the initial 9.1, the strongest aftershock (or triggered earthquake, depending on the argument) of the 8.8 February 2010 earthquake in Chile measured 7.2, though it occurred in January of this year.

At any rate, it can be expected with certainty that the ground will continue to shake for a while yet, and it's important to be prepared for it wherever we are: at work, out grocery shopping, on the train, at home, or anywhere else. If the past month and a half hasn't already reminded you to review how to respond to and prepare for an earthquake, then now would be a good time to do so. What follows is an overview of prevention and response strategies compiled with the intent of providing the most important information in one easy-to-read location. However, lengthy as it is, it is not exhaustive and does not cover all scenarios, so please continue to inform yourself and seek further information.

Things to Prepare Before an Earthquake

- Secure furniture and electronics that can fall over in an earthquake (a 4 on the Japanese intensity scale can knock objects over). This can be done by using brackets and latches to secure large objects like bookcases or cupboards or by using special sheets or even using plastic or rubber ties to secure belongings such as televisions and computer monitors. For bookcases, packing the heaviest books tight on the lower shelves keeps the center of gravity low and prevents them from being shaken out as quickly.

- Keep dishes in closed cupboards and cover any glass doors with a film sheet to prevent them from shattering; secure the doors with latches if possible. The way you stack dishes can also prevent them from being shaken onto the floor. For example, plates stacked with the largest on bottom and smallest on top will be shaken fairly quickly onto the floor in earthquakes with side-to-side tremors. However, when stacked bottom to top in order of medium, large, and then small on top, the stack of dishes will move much less and will be less likely to fall and shatter.

- Leave your gas turned off when not in use. Although many valves are designed to automatically switch off if earthquakes with an intensity of 5 or higher are felt, a little extra precaution goes a long way. (“*Sōteigai*,” etc.) Don’t put flammable objects near your stove.

- Decide in advance what you will do if (read: when) there is an Emergency Earthquake Alert (*Kinkyū Jishin Sokuhō*, 緊急地震速報), especially if you are here with family. In the case of an actual alert, you will not have adequate time to contemplate what to do.

- Make sure you have enough food and water in case of an emergency. It’s a good idea to have three days’ worth of instant, dried, or canned food and a three days’ supply of water (approx. three liters per person per day). You can get *Alpha-mai* (emergency rice) and *kanpan* (dried bread), but don’t overlook trail mix; a mixture of peanuts, dried fruit, and pieces of chocolate can keep for a long time, is nutritious, lightweight, and doesn’t need a can opener. Try to use foods that are high in calories, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals; avoid salty foods and foods that require water to prepare. Keep expiration dates in mind.

- Know the way to your evacuation center (避難所, *hinanjo*). This will probably be a local public building such as a school or community center. If you aren’t sure where this is, ask your landlord or your school. You can also check at your *shiyakusho*/city hall (most should be able to accommodate foreign residents with limited Japanese) or at a police station or *kōban*/police box. (You may also find it at <http://www.sia1.jp/evacuation/indexen.html>.) Once you know where it is, make the walk from your apartment to your *hinanjo*; chances are if you need to evacuate your home, you will be under a lot of stress and might not remember a route that was simply written on a map, especially if it’s nighttime.

- If you’re here with your family, know what you will do in case you get separated and decide on how will you confirm each others’ whereabouts and where you will meet.

- Purchase a battery-powered radio in case the power goes out. Not only is it an important source of information, but as many of us found out in the days after the earthquake, having no electricity, no Internet, and no phone can increase feelings of isolation and uncertainty. Don’t wait until after an earthquake to buy them, either; the electronics store will be sold out.

- Keep a flashlight, radio, and slippers near your bed; the slippers protect your feet from broken objects. Keep large furniture and objects that could fall on you and injure you away from your bed.

- Prepare an emergency bag, i.e. a bag that you can pick up and take with you in case you have to leave your house with little or no notice. It’s easy to think that you can “pick things up on the way out,” but when time is of the essence, the five minutes you spend looking for your passport or flashlight could possibly cost you your life. The purpose is to allow you to survive, not live in comfort, so it should be light enough for you to be able to run with or carry for several days. It should include the following:

Passports and passport copies (color preferable)	Cash cards, bank books, pension booklet
Hanko and ID (Alien Registration, insurance card, etc.)	Cash (ATMs may be out of service)
Thermal blanket (can find at camping stores)	Medications (prescription and OTC)

Water and sports drink mix	Can opener, knife
Flashlight	Batteries
Underwear and socks	Sanitary pads/tampons
Toilet paper/tissues	Eating utensils (if you have room)
Lighter/matches (be careful of gas leaks)	Gloves
3-day supply of food and water (see above)	Plastic bags (small and large)
First aid supplies (ibuprofen, bandages, disinfectant, cold meds, vitamins, etc.), glasses/contacts	
Water purification tablets (<i>jōsui jōzai</i> , 浄水錠剤, also sold as baby bottle cleaning tablets)	
Writing supplies (paper and pencil/pen)	String, rubber bands
Wipes and diapers for small children	Baby formula/powdered milk
Emergency/solar cell phone charger	Mask (if you have room)
Whistle	Rain gear

Pack all of these into your backpack and take it outside and walk around with it to see how much it weighs. Do not skimp on water, especially in the summer; you can survive much longer without food or gloves than you can without water. Do not worry about changes of clothing beyond underwear and socks; what it comes down to is what you need to survive, and if you're living with your neighbors in an evacuation center, no one will mind that you smell a bit because chances are they will too.

Things to prepare away from home in your work place:

Comfortable, thick-soled shoes	Map of the area/to your home
Emergency snacks/food/drinks	Spare clothing
Whistle	

Things to prepare in your car:

Water	Emergency food
Copies of ID and documents	List of essential phone numbers
Map	First aid kit
Duct tape	Emergency blanket
Whistle	

Additional items to prepare at home:

Additional drinking water	7-day supply of food
Gas cooking stove and containers	Rope
Duct tape	Plastic tarp
Tent	Sleeping bag
Wet wipes	Small portable toilet (can be made from a shoe box)
Hand warmers (<i>kairo</i>)	Masks
Candles	Soap
Tissues	Hat/helmet
Toys (for families with children)	Print off of evacuation dialogue sheets (links below)
List of phone important phone numbers (work people, utility companies, family/friends, city hall, embassy, PAs, etc.). Note that you won't be able to access your <i>keitai's</i> address book if your battery runs out.	

For families with babies/young children: baby bottles and baby food, diapers, blanket, gauze/sterile cotton, towel, baby carrier.

During an Earthquake

The most important thing in an earthquake or other disaster (as difficult as it may be) is to **stay calm**. All the preparation and planning in the world won't help if you panic and can't remember what to do.

• Emergency Earthquake Alert (*Kinkyū Jishin Sokuhō*, 緊急地震速報) may come for earthquakes expected to cause tremors of a low 5 or higher on the Japanese intensity scale. If the sound of the alerts hasn't already been indelibly seared into your memory, you can hear the sound used by NHK at <http://www.nhk.or.jp/bousai/chime/index.html>. The sound used by other TV stations and mobile phones can vary. If your phone has not received any alerts, check with the manual or your local *keitai* store to see if it is enabled or available on your model.

When an alert comes, *keep calm* and act first to secure your own safety. Turning off stoves and gas pipes and opening a window or door to secure an exit is important, but depending on your distance from the epicenter, you may have only a few seconds, 20-30 seconds at most, between the warning

and the actual tremors (the areas in Tohoku that received tremors in the 6 and 7 range had only 10 seconds' warning.) If you are in a train or bus, hold on to a hand strap or bar, and sit down if you are able. Exit elevators immediately. Keep in mind however that while the alerts can protect life and limb, they are not perfect and do not always accurately predict how strong an earthquake will be. Take extra precautions in case it is 想定外 (*sōteigai*), beyond expectations.

- Turn off the fire on your gas stove *if* you can do so safely, but be careful that you aren't injured by the contents of your pots spilling onto you if the shaking is strong. Take cover under a sturdy desk or table and use a cushion or thick blanket to shield your head. If you do not have a table large enough to go under (I'm looking at you, Kotatsu-san), then the corner of a room not near a window is safer than the middle of the room. Doorways will provide protection only if they are sturdy and load-bearing.

※Note: There's an email floating around the Internet authored by a Doug Copp called "The Triangle of Life" saying it's safer to lay down beside objects like beds, desks, and cars instead of the "duck and cover" practice used in countries like Japan. This has been refuted by the likes of the American Red Cross and is not recommended as a way to stay safe in earthquakes. Its effectiveness is merely debatable in places where buildings are not made to withstand even moderate earthquakes, and meanwhile Japanese buildings easily withstand tremors that would topple buildings elsewhere. In addition, furniture and cars can move or fall over in strong earthquakes, and a person would still be exposed to other objects flying off of shelves and walls. In other words, ignore this email.

- Do not panic and rush outside. In a strong earthquake, things may fall from the walls or ceilings; if you try to run out of the building, you will be exposed to flying and falling debris. Additionally, brick walls, glass, and signs outside may fall and topple. (Besides, considering how Japanese buildings are designed, if the shaking was strong enough to cause parts of it to collapse, it will likely also be strong enough to make it hard for people to stand up and move.) If you leave a building to go to a safe open area (a park, field, etc.), do so after the tremors have stopped and be careful of aftershocks; bring something to protect your head.

- If you are in bed and there is not a table immediately nearby, remain where you are and cover your head with your blanket or pillow. If you could be hit by falling furniture or lighting fixtures, move to a safe place. Stay away from windows in case they break.

- If you are at school, follow your co-workers' instructions and ensure the safety of your students while securing your safety. Keep calm so that you can help your students stay calm as well.

- If you are in an elevator, hit all the buttons for the floors and get out as soon as possible. Even after the shaking stops, do not use elevators to evacuate a building.

- If you are outside, move away from vending machines, walls, and telephone poles, and be careful of falling glass and signs. If you can't get to a safe open area, or the roads are narrow, it may be safer to go inside a building (note that falling glass can reach several meters outward from a building, especially if the building is tall). If you are in a mountainous area, be careful of falling rocks and landslides.

- If you're in a car, turn on your hazard lights, *slowly* come to a safe stop, and remain inside. However, avoid stopping near or under buildings, bridges, and utility poles if possible.

- If you are on a bus or train, hold on to hand straps or bars and try to sit down. People around you may panic, but do your absolute best to stay calm.

- If you're shopping or otherwise in a large building, get away from shelves to avoid being injured by falling merchandise (especially if it's glass). Protect your head; your plastic shopping basket is actually quite strong and can be used for this. Follow the instructions of staff and don't panic, particularly if there is someone around you who is, and get out from under lighting fixtures. Do not run for the exit, as this can incite panic and cause injuries.

After an Earthquake

- Check around you and with your neighbors to extinguish any fires immediately. Fires are a major secondary disaster; more deaths were caused by fires resulting from the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake than by the earthquake itself.

- If you are near a coastal area and the earthquake was strong, or weaker but continued for a long

time, **do not wait for advice and head to higher ground immediately**. Tsunami can reach the coast in a matter of minutes, and not all are preceded by the extreme receding of water from the coastal line. There can be many waves or surges over a period of hours, and the first may not be the largest, so keep away from the coast. If you cannot reach higher ground in time, go to the nearest tall concrete building and go as high as possible. If you cannot escape from the area closest to the coast, take refuge in buildings that are at least several rows back from those closest to the ocean. Buildings perpendicular to the coast instead of facing it broadside, and those with many windows to allow the water to flow through, have a higher chance of withstanding a strong tsunami.

- If you are in an area that could be hit by tsunami, evacuate on foot or bicycle and do not stop to collect your belongings. Roads can be damaged or jammed with cars that can make movement by automobile impossible.

- Even if you are not near the coast, stay away from rivers that lead to the ocean. The tsunami on March 11th traveled 48 km upstream of one river in Iwate, and even in Saitama, the level of the Arakawa River fluctuated nearly a meter due to the effects of the tsunami.

- As we've seen, tsunami can travel the Pacific quickly. If there has been a major earthquake elsewhere in the Pacific Rim, keep your eye on the news; because of the power of the currents and the way they are formed, even 50cm tsunami can still be life-threatening, so stay away from the Japanese coasts (don't be the one who gets killed because you wanted pictures to show your Facebook friends).

- Be prepared for aftershocks, especially in the first 24-78 hours after the initial earthquake (as everyone remembers, I'm sure). If you are in a mountainous or hilly area, be extremely careful of landslides, particularly after periods of rain. Stay prepared and take precautions.

- If you need to evacuate your home, prevent fires by turning off the gas, unplugging your electronics, and switching off the breaker. Put up a sign to let people know where you're going.

- If damage in your area has been serious, help neighbors and those around you with relief and first-aid efforts while taking care to ensure your own safety.

- Register your whereabouts through the Disaster Message Boards (*Saigai-yō Dengonban*, 災害用伝言板) via land line and mobile phone. Lines will quickly get jammed. Even in Saitama, on the weekend of the earthquake it sometimes took upwards of five hours for emails to get through, and phone calls were not possible. The Disaster Message Boards allow users to register a message, and others looking to confirm the person's safety can check by using the other person's telephone number. **If you do not know how to use this, learn now.** Instructions are at the following websites:

Land lines (NTT): http://www.ntt-east.co.jp/saigai_e/voice171/

AU: http://www.au.kddi.com/english/notice/saigai_dengon/riyo/index.html

Docomo: <http://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/info/disaster/index.html>

Softbank: http://mb.softbank.jp/scripts/english/disaster_message/index.jsp

※※※iPhone users will need to get a special app to use this service. Please go to <http://itunes.apple.com/jp/app/id425650996?mt=8>.

Willcom: <http://www.willcom-inc.com/ja/info/dengon/process/index.html> (Japanese only)

How to use: http://dengon.willcom-inc.com/dengon/HowToUse_E.html

To confirm the numbers of others, the Disaster Message Boards of the top five mobile service providers are connected so that you should be able to use your own provider to access the others. You can go to <http://dengon.emnet.ne.jp/en/service.do> via PC or mobile phone to check numbers (not register) from all companies (regular usage charges apply).

NTT also has practice disaster message boards on the 1st of every month, and mobile service providers offer practice days as well according to their schedule (check the links listed above). They are also still in use now for both land lines and mobile phones, so if you haven't already, take a moment to practice using the boards and leaving message.

- As we found out, it can be difficult to find reliable and timely information; rumor can run rampant. For the love of all that is sane and holy, **do not pass on information if it's not verifiably cited, and trust only information that clearly comes from a reputable source** ("Would my college prof accept this

as a citation in my paper?”). Misinformation and rumor can cause panic or make the situation worse. If you are asked for information and are not sure of the answer, say so; speculation can be misinterpreted and turn into yet another rumor.

- PAs will need to confirm the safety of every Jet in the case of a serious earthquake, even if Saitama is not near the worst of the damage. This is a standard JET Program emergency response and was carried out after the March 11th earthquake even in prefectures like Miyazaki and Okinawa that were far from the epicenter. Ergo, please keep an eye on your phones and PC email accounts after a serious earthquake and respond to any messages that they send.

Additionally

Earthquake insurance does not come standard with rental housing. If your school or CO is responsible for your lease and you are concerned, talk with them to check what the status is. Know in advance what you are covered for and what you are not.

September 1 is Disaster Prevention Day and on that day or throughout the week preceding it, many cities and communities hold drills and simulations so that ordinary citizens can get involved in disaster preparedness. Many localities are increasing their response for foreign residents, so even if you aren't fluent in Japanese, ask to get involved.

Read Up

- <http://www.city.yokohama.jp/me/shobo/kikikanri/jishinpanfu/pdf/jishinpanfu.pdf>.

Start by reading the Earthquake Emergency Procedures booklet. If you no longer have the hard copy distributed to new Jets at Tokyo Orientation, you can find the multilingual guide online at this link.

- http://www.e-quakes.pref.shizuoka.jp/center/guidebook/pdf/guidebook_english.pdf

Seismologists anticipate a major earthquake that they have named (in advance) the Tōkai Earthquake that can happen at any time in the area off the coast of Shizuoka prefecture, and they have made preparations in order to mitigate the expected damage. This pamphlet is written for that earthquake, but the information regarding preparedness and response is useful no matter where you are.

- <http://www.e-quakes.pref.shizuoka.jp/center/guidebook/english/index.html>

In addition to the pamphlet linked to above, Shizuoka has a wealth of other information regarding earthquake/disaster preparedness and response, all in English.

- <http://gifujets.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/disaster-prevention-pamphlet-for-foreigners.pdf>

The Jets in Gifu have uploaded this pamphlet originally produced in Miyazaki specifically for foreigners. It contains valuable information about how to prepare for earthquakes and other disasters, and has a dialogue sheet to use in emergencies and pages to write important memos and information. Print those off and put them in your emergency pack.

- <http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/378845.pdf>

This multilingual dialogue sheet can be used at evacuation centers (*hinanjo*). Print this off and put it in your emergency pack.

- <http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/378846.pdf>

This is a questionnaire for use by staff at *hinanjo* (evacuation center) in Saitama for foreign residents. It can be used to indicate if/how you are feeling unwell. Though *hinanjo* should have these, it's best to be prepared and also include this in your preparation kit.

- <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/c1187/>

This US Geological Survey page describes tsunami survival strategies and lessons learned after the tsunami that followed the M9.5 earthquake in Chile in 1960, the largest ever recorded.

- http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/kishou/books/sokuho_dvd/on_subtitles256ENG.wmv

This video from the Japan Meteorological Agency explains, in English, how the Emergency Earthquake Alert system works and how it can be used to protect people in case of a strong earthquake.

- <http://www.sia1.jp/multi/English/plaza.html>

The Saitama International Association's English page has relevant information about disaster preparedness as well as *hinanjo* (evacuation centers).



Tango Corner

The Tohoku earthquake and all the ensuing news has ensured that a number of previously little-used vocabulary (in Japanese and English both) are now in constant use. If the editor's bat senses are correct, these words will be in the news for a little while yet, so hopefully this will help you make a little more sense of the Japanese evening news and converse with your co-workers.

地震 (じしん)	Earthquake (～が発生する, an earthquake strikes)
大震災(だいしんさい)	“Great earthquake disaster,” i.e. a major disaster caused by an earthquake
余震 (よしん)	Aftershock (lit. “remaining shaking”)
震度 (しんど)	Intensity (cf. マグニチュード, magnitude)
揺れる (ゆれる)	To shake, to sway (the noun is 揺れ, yure, i.e. shaking)
災害 (さいがい)	Disaster
被災地 (ひさいち)	Disaster area; area affected by the disaster
被災者 (ひさいしゃ)	Victim (of a disaster. Lit. “person affected by disaster,” primarily used for those who survived a disaster)
避難する (ひなん)	To seek refuge, to evacuate
行方不明(ゆくえふめい)	missing, whereabouts unknown (～者, しゃ, missing person/s)
未曾有の(みぞう)	Unprecedented, unheard of
～災害	unprecedented disaster
影響(えいきょう)	Influence, effect
影響を与える(～あたえる)	To influence (something); have an effect/impact (on)
Frequently heard example sentence: 健康に影響を与えるレベルではない。 “Not a level that has an effect on health.”	
放射線 (ほうしゃせん)	radiation
放射線量(ほうしゃせんりょう)	radiation levels (lit. “radiation amount”)
検出する(けんしゅつ)	to detect (cf. 不検出, ふけんしゅつ, not detected)
放射性の(ほうしゃせい)	radioactive
放射性物質 (ほうしゃせいぶつ)	radioactive material
放射性ヨウ素 (～ようそ)	radioactive iodine (Iodine-131)
放射性セシウム(～せしうむ)	radioactive cesium (Cesium-137, -134)
漏れ(もれ)	a leak (verb: 漏れる)
汚染する(おせん)	to pollute, contaminate
原子力発電所(げんしりょくはつでんしょ)	nuclear power plant (abbrev. 原発, げんぱつ)
原子炉(げんしろ)	nuclear reactor
(counter: 1号機, 2号機, etc.)	Reactor 1, Reactor 2, etc.
燃料(ねんりょう)	fuel (～棒, ぼう, fuel rod)
圧力(あつりょく)	pressure
抑制(よくせい)	suppression, restraint
圧力抑制室(～しつ)	suppression chamber
自粛(じしゅく)	self-restraint (e.g. cancelling festivals and nomikais out of consideration of the victims)
計画する(けいかく)	to plan, schedule
停電(ていでん)	power outage, blackout (lit. “stopped electricity”)
救援(きゅうえん)	relief, rescue
復興(ふっこう)	restoration, revitalization, reconstruction



Destination: Saitama

Events In and Around the Prefecture

Note: A number of events have been cancelled due to the Tohoku earthquake. All of the events here were scheduled to be held as of printing time to the best of the editor's knowledge, but they may have been changed due to the earthquake and planned power outages. Relevant changes have been included and marked in the information provided as it may conflict with previous info/info available on English websites. Here is a key to known changes:

♯ - Admittance price waived

☹ - Some parts of the festivities cancelled/scaled back

- **Shibazakura Festival** (芝桜まつり, *Shiba-zakura Matsuri*) Now through May 8 at Hitsujiyama Park in Chichibu-shi. If you've been in Saitama for five minutes or longer, you've seen photos of the expansive hillsides covered in bright shades of mountain phlox. Grab your camera, take in the sights, and check out some of Chichibu's other locales as well. Some matsuri events will still take place. **Access:** 1.5 km from Chichibu (秩父) and Hanabatake (花畑) stations on the Chichibu Tetsudō (秩父鉄道) line. Open 8:00-17:00, admittance free (♯). **More Info** at <http://navi.city.chichibu.lg.jp/flower/shibazakura/index.html> (Japanese, but automatic translator button can be used at your own risk/amusement). (☹)



- **28th Annual Bonsai Festival** (第28回大盆栽まつり, *Dai 28-kai Dai-bonsai Matsuri*), May 3-5 (Tues.-Thurs.), 9:00-17:00 (16:00 on the 5th) in the Ōmiya Bonsai Village area (Saitama-shi). The seven gardens in this area of Saitama-shi bustle with activity as three main streets are lined with displays, stands, and countless bonsai by both professionals and amateurs from near and far. **Access:** 5 min. from Ōmiya Kōen (大宮公園) station on the Tōbu Noda (東武野田) line, or 10 min from Toro (土呂) station on the Utsunomiya (宇都宮) line. **More Info** at <http://japan.arukikata.co.jp/events/info/97975> (Japanese).
- **Great Kite Flying Festival** (大凧あげ祭り, *Ōdako Age Matsuri*) May 3 (Tues.) and 5 (Thurs.) in Kasukabe. 11:00-1700, Large kite flown at 13:00, smaller kites at 14:00. Every

year Kasukabe features a kite festival centered around the flying of an enormous 800kg kite some 15m by 11m—the size of 100 tatami mats. Plenty of other activities will be available as well. **Access:** From the east exit of Kasukabe (春日部) station on the Tōbu Noda (東武野田) and Tōbu Isesaki (東武伊勢崎) lines, take the Asahi (朝日) bus and get off at Ōdako Kaikan Iriguchi (大風会館入り口). There should also be shuttle buses available the day of the event. You can also take a taxi (15 min.) from the north exit of Minami Sakurai (南桜井) station on the Tōbu Noda line. Cancelled in case of rain. **More Info** at <http://www.city.kasukabe.lg.jp/public/info01.nsf/0/8f21e42c0515d56a492570660007fbef>. (📍)

- **Ina 2011 Rose Festival** (2011バラ祭り, 2011 Bara Matsuri) May 7 (Sat.) through June 5 (Sun.), 9:00-16:00. In light of everything that's happened since the earthquake, a little relaxation in a beautiful (and massive) garden can help to relieve some of the stress that you may have built up like so much unreleased seismic energy. And what better way to stop and smell one of 300 different kinds of roses than in a rose garden? Other events will be held on weekends with local produce and (of course) roses for sale. **Access:** 8-min. walk from Uchijuku (内宿) station on the New Shuttle. **More Info** at http://www.jalan.net/kankou/110000/110200/evt_0097978/ (Japanese); 048.724.1055. (📍)
- **Hanno Springtime Two-Day March** (飯能新緑ツーデーマーチ, Hannō Shinryoku Tsūdē Māchi) May 21-22 (Sat.-Sun.) in Hannō. This two-day march takes participants on courses of either 5, 10, or 20 km each day; typically it is a spring event, but in light of the earthquake and tsunami that have most affected the Tohoku region, this year it is being held as an event to help support recovery and rebuilding efforts, and a portion of the ¥1500 participation fee will be donated to relief efforts. This is a great way to get out and join your Saitama community while also supporting our neighbors in the north. Stage performances will also be held. **Access:** The course starts and finishes at the Hannō City Hall, which is a 15-min. walk from the north exit of Hannō (飯能) station on the Seibu Ikebukuro (西武池袋) line, or 5 min. from Higashi Hannō (東飯能) station on the Hachikō Line (八高). **More Info** on the event an registration is at <http://www.city.hanno.saitama.jp/taiikuka/2day.html> (Japanese), or 042.972.6028. Registration deadline May 17 (Tues.). It is not an English-language event, but all participants are welcome.
- **Saitama City Urawa Eel Festival** (さいたま市浦和うなぎまつり, Saitama-shi Urawa Unagi Matsuri) May 28 (Sat.), postponed to the 29th in case of rain. Eel has been a traditional dish in Urawa dating back to hundreds of years ago when Urawa was a post station along the Nakasendo Road to Edo (now Tokyo). Come to the city hall in Urawa and taste this delicacy for yourself at discounted prices; you can also find stalls selling other local crafts and foods in a festival atmosphere (but come early to avoid the longest lines) **Access:** 15 min. walk from the west exits of several stations: Urawa (浦和), Kita Urawa (北浦和), and Naka Urawa (中浦和). **More Info** at <http://www.city.saitama.jp/index.html> (cf. 「イベントカレンダー」) (Japanese).

Recipe Corner

Denise Schlickbernd, Saitama CIR/PA

Typically the Recipe Corner features menus that can be prepared in the easiest of ways using the most marvelous modern wonder, the microwave. However, in light (by candle, of course) of the power shortages facing Saitama and much of the rest of eastern Japan, this edition will feature recipes that utilize your no-electricity-needed natural gas range. Bon appétit!

Stir-Fried Spring Cabbage and Beef

(from <http://saitama-wassyoi.jp/modules/wordpress3/index.php?p=21>)

Beef isn't known for being the cheapest of meats in Japan, but you can either take advantage of imports from Australia or New Zealand (look for オーストラリア産 or ニュージーランド産 respectively) or treat yourself to a mere 100g. Japanese beef.

- 1/4 head cabbage
- 100g thinly sliced beef
- 1 chunk ginger
- 1 ea. red and green peppers (*piman*/ピーマン)
- pinch of sugar
- 1 T. Oyster sauce (オイスターソース)
- Oil, salt and pepper, ground sesame as needed

- 1) Julienne slice ginger. Cut cabbage, peppers, and beef into bite-size pieces/slices.
- 2) Add a small amount of oil to heated pan and sauté the ginger and beef. Once the beef is browned, add the vegetables and fry until the cabbage is tender. Add salt, pepper, sugar, and oyster sauce. Serve on a plate and garnish with ground sesame.

Non-Rice Cooker Rice (the proper way)

Rice is cheaper than bread and potatoes and easy to put in a bento, but rice cookers use electricity. Try this method of rice cooking to save a few kilowatt hours and (according to aficionados) experience even tastier rice. You can take shortcuts, but try all the steps for comparison.

- 1) Measure the rice (use the cup that came with your rice cooker or rice bin, called a *gō*, 合, 180 cc.) into a bowl and then wash it. Stir by hand several times using plenty of water. Drain, rub the rice together by hand, and wash a few more times (the water will still be translucent). Drain in a colander for several minutes.
- 2) Add water 1.2 times the amount of rice (200 ml/1 cup water to 1 *gō* rice). Let sit to allow water to soak into the rice (guideline, 2 hours in winter, 1 hour in spring/fall, 30 min. in summer).
- 3) Cover and bring to a boil on high heat (this takes 5-8 min. depending on your pot type, etc.) Reduce to medium heat for 7 minutes, then low heat for 5. Cook on high heat for the last 10 seconds to cook off the last of the steam. Fluff with a wet rice paddle/*shamoji*; don't worry if the bottom's a little burnt. All finished/*deki-agari*!

Cooking Genmai (brown rice)

If you want rice with a little more flavor, bite, and nutritional value, try *genmai*. Prep is a little different from white rice and can also be adjusted for your own preferences.

- 1) When washing, water will not turn opaque or translucent. Wash only once or twice.
- 2) Put into pot of choice; add water 1.2-1.5 times the rice amt. (200cc-270cc per *gō*); use more water for older rice, or for softer texture.
- 3) Cover and bring to a high boil on high/med. heat, then reduce to low. Let simmer 15-20 min.
- 4) You can check it towards the end if you don't want the bottom to be burnt. When it sounds like its crackling, add cold water 0.8-1.2 times the rice amt. (140cc-200cc per *gō*) and stir well.
- 5) Cook 10-15 min. on low, then turn off heat and let stand covered 5 min. Stir and enjoy!

PA NOTES

Otsukaresama Deshita, Sonia!

Prefectural Board of Education CIR/PA Sonia Nishizono completed her time on the JET Programme this April and has headed to her home country of Brazil after spending four years here in Saitama. Working in the Compulsory Education Division, Sonia helped Brazilian students and their parents navigate the Japanese school system, providing advice, guidance, and interpretation and translation. She has been a senpai to many of the Jets here (ALT and CIR alike!), and though we wish her the best for her next adventure, she will definitely be missed.

Meanwhile, her successor Eden Aquino has come to Saitama from Brazil to take up the mantle of CIR/PA! We'll let him get a little more settled in before asking him for yet another *jiko shōkai* (self-introduction), but in the meantime, join us in welcoming Eden (In Portuguese, English, or Japanese) to Saitama!

Third-Year Jets: Don't Forget to Extend Your Visas!

If you're planning on staying for a fourth year (or alternately, working in Japan after JET), don't forget that your visa is only good for three years, and to stay for a fourth year, you'll need to apply to extend your period of stay. Immigration can begin processing your application up to two months before your current status of residence (visa) expires; processing usually takes two to four weeks. Applicants will need to visit the regional immigration bureau twice (special leave *may* be given at the discretion of schools or COs). It will cost ¥4000 and you will need to prepare documents in advance. For details, go to www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/kanri/shyorui/03.html. For directions to the immigration bureau (points to those who remember that it moved last November!), go to www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/keiziban/happyou/20100903_saitam_en.pdf.

4th Year Jets: Check your foreigner cards

If you're staying into your fifth year, remember that you'll need to renew your foreigner registration card at your local town/city office (*shiyakusho*). Double check your card for the expiration date and be sure to have it updated in time.

Being Prepared

You read that last article about being prepared for earthquakes—*right?* Seriously, if these last few weeks haven't convinced you of the need to keep some extra provisions on hand and to know in advance how to respond to an earthquake, I'm not sure what to say, but just go read it, please. As those who participated in the disaster training last summer will remember, Saitama has fault lines of its own that have produced earthquakes with magnitudes up to 6.9 (e.g. the 1931 Western Saitama Earthquake/西埼玉地震, *Nishi Saitama Jishin*). At the very least, being prepared will make it easier for you in case there's an earthquake that knocks out the power or gas and there's a run on rice, batteries, and bottled water.



Saitama AJET Announcements



To sign up for the SAJET emailing list, and for more information about participating in events, email

Bryan and Eiko at

SaitamaAJET@gmail.com

Check Out Saitama AJET on Facebook!

We'd like to remind all of you that we are now on Facebook! To get (unobtrusive) updates and information about events and volunteering information, please "like" us at www.facebook.com/SaitamaAJET. You can also access the page without logging in.

Mystery Tour with SIEN

Discover hidden mysterious spots in Tokyo! Walk with us starting from Tokyo Station for around 4 hours in total and you will find 5 mysterious but engrossing spots you've never seen. The spots are secret until we actually go there, (they are not haunted!) but the spring season should make it a pleasant walk! (Rescheduled in case of rain.)

Date: May 7 (Sat.)

Fee: FREE (bring your own lunch)

Meet: Outside the ticket gates of the Marunouchi North exit at JR Tokyo Station
11:00 am (finish around 5 pm)

RSVP: Send email to ryoji_sien@ybb.ne.jp by May 5.

Other Events

We have many fun events coming up. Due to the business of the past month and all of the personnel transfer fun, we don't have dates yet. However, please be on the lookout for invitations to the following:

- ☞ A day at Fujikyū Highland Amusement park
- ☞ A day on the beach near Yokohama
- ☞ Ice Bar in Tokyo (when it gets warmer)
- ☞ Aqua Bar in Tokyo (Sorry for the recurring theme, but these places look great)
- ☞ Sumo (once it's running again)
- ☞ Something in Chichibu (we're looking at combining nice food with rafting)

Language Courses

Summer is coming up and with it are plenty of opportunities to study Japanese. Please take a look at the Saitama AJET page on Facebook for information about language school opportunities (at the bottom of the "Notes" section).

Help Us Help New Jets!

We are collecting information for next year's 60-some odd new Jets. Please send any tips you have to SaitamaAJET@gmail.com under the heading of "Stuff I wish I'd known my first year in Japan".



Editor's Note

All of us knew when we signed up for the JET Program that we were willingly coming to a place known for its frequent natural disasters. We got booklets at Tokyo Orientation, had special *kenshū* (conferences) in Saitama, felt the minor tremors that rolled through the prefecture on (what now seems) rare occasion...and then probably didn't think much more of it. That has probably changed for everyone since March.

I'm sure those of us in Saitama have felt both tremendous relief that damage and injuries in Saitama were relatively few, as well as the stress that came with the uncertainty resulting from it all, especially the first few weeks after March 11. Many things have returned to normal, but there's no denying that we'll be feeling the effects (physical and psychological) for some time. Having emergency packs and fixing furniture down is important, but so is coming together and strengthening the bonds we have to each other. When the gas, electricity, and telephones go out, that is when we realize just how important our connections to each other are, both near and far.

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