

# awa life

**Impressions from  
the Shikoku Pilgrimage**

May 2024

# 402

**Goodbye Message**



**Nihongo Know-it-all:**  
お疲れ様

**Running for International  
Friendship**



**TOPIA**

## Awa Life is a Monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

Have you ever experienced the so called “Gogatsubyou” (lit. May sickness)? The blues experienced by college freshmen or workplays recruits in the beginning of May.

The excitement of starting into the world of academics or settling into a new position has faded and the golden week has just reminded you of the sweet taste of freedom, only to then be thrust back into the tedious reality of your everyday work life. I know I am feeling it, coming back to work after all those holidays. But I also know it's going to pass, so if you are like me...hang in there!

For all of those who like writing, please feel free to submit an article to us at any point in time about basically anything. There are a few limitations though, such as you can't write about religion, politics, commercial activities or businesses or anything that we deem inappropriate. But, other than that, we would be more than happy to receive articles about anything and everything including but not limited to concerts, lectures, other events, culture, sports, community group information or anything cool that's happening in your local community.

We highly appreciate all of your articles and we love reading them. So if that writing bug of yours is buzzing about, grab a pen or a computer and write and send away! Please send all submissions to our email:

Your editor,  
Rasmus

**[awalife@gmail.com](mailto:awalife@gmail.com)**

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## ***Impressions from the Shikoku Pilgrimage***

*The longest, most beautiful and sacred hike of my life*

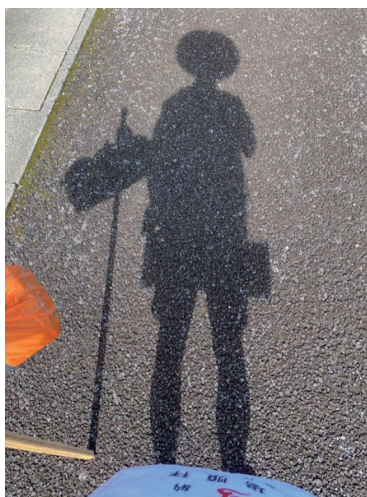
By: Guo Wei

I planned to travel from Shanghai to Shikoku in Japan on September 13th, 2023.

Before departing I gathered information on what to do and see on Shikoku and discovered the Shikoku-Pilgrimage,

which immediately enthralled me. By doing the pilgrimage I would not just simply be traveling, but rather embark on a cultural trip to nurture my heart and elevate my soul.

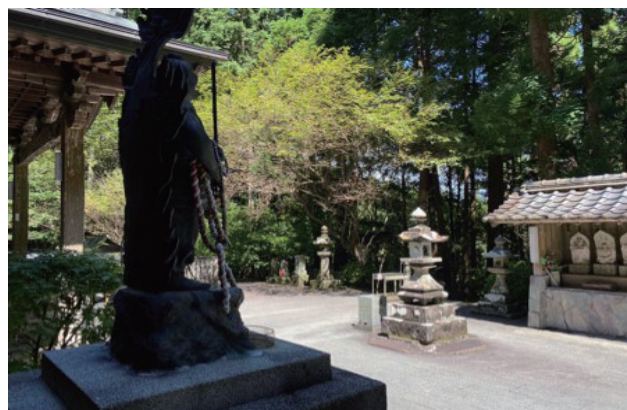
In order to be able to fully immerse myself in the regional culture of Shikoku I decided to travel by hiking and camping, so in preparation I thought of all possible scenarios I might encounter beforehand. What would I do if it is raining? Or If I had to walk during the night? How would I wash and dry my clothes? I also needed to meticulously plan out the stuff I would take with me. It is all about finding the right balance, because too much weight on your back would negatively affect your hiking speed.



As I stepped out of the plane in Osaka without any access to navigation or translation apps on my phone, I struggled to find out how to get to where I wanted. But I was determined to reach my goal and get to the first temple of the pilgrimage in Naruto City, Tokushima. Not knowing any Japanese, it took me a while to gather the courage to ask Japanese people for the right way. We somehow managed to communicate using hand gestures and they eventually guided me all the way to the bus stop.

So after many twists and turns, I finally arrived at "Ryozenji" the first temple of the pilgrimage.

The very first night I slept on an empty plot close to the temple, filled with fear and anxiety. Scared because I did not know whether the area was safe, if somebody here would take care of me or if I would cause a nuisance to others. Thus my very own Shikoku Pilgrimage has begun.



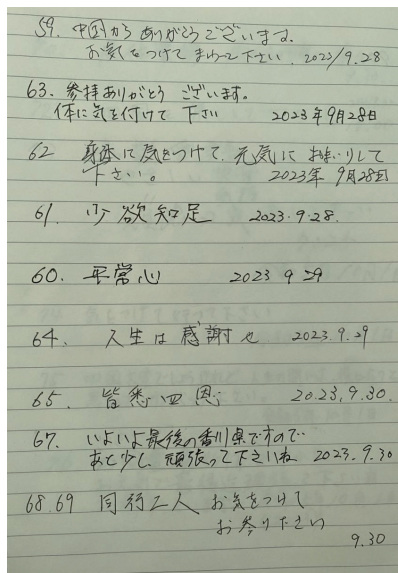
On my journey I did not only bring along the thick stamp book, but I went to the trouble of also taking a notebook with me. I thought that if I could get the high priest of each of the 88 temples to write down a sentence in there – a wish they gladly fulfilled - it could become an item of great personal importance. The short sentences they wrote are evidence of the care Japanese people have for their friends: some wrote words of blessing, others words of encouragement and even though I mostly did not comprehend the specific meaning, I certainly did understand their heartfelt expressions and focused writing.

I will always have these 88 precious writings with me and treasure them deeply.

Along the way I got to meet a lot of other pilgrims from all kinds of countries, but since everybody had a different pace, the time spent walking together was mostly rather short. During those short episodes however, it always felt like meeting an old friend and we would never run out of things to talk about. The language barrier we often encountered did not hinder us from communicating and becoming friends, as we used translation software and exaggerated body gestures, allowing us to decipher 70-80% of what the other said.

At times, while being exhausted from having a tent, sleeping bag, sleeping mat, water and food, piling up to about 20 kilos strapped on my back

and walking along routes with no access to public transportation I timidly stretch out my arm, only to immediately be invited by someone: “Get in our car, let us take you with us”.



*Writings from the temple priests*

Through the kindhearted help of those Japanese friends I made along the way, I was able to complete the whole Shikoku Pilgrimage in 20 days, having walked about 800 kilometers, hitchhiked for about 200 kilometers and taken public transportation for another 200 kilometers.

During the trip I managed to strengthen my will and rediscover a different side of me.

I set out on a journey to explore Japanese culture and was welcomed and accommodated by many people along that journey who gave me water, food, fruits, blessing money and showed me the right way.

I was also able to witness the small and intricate aspects of everyday life. For example, the fishermen starting their day at 4 in the morning,



the girl delivering the newspapers, the salarymen stopping his car to collect garbage from the street, the old women kneeling next to the roadside mending the lawn or the handcrafted toys being sold from unstaffed street stalls along the way.



I can easily say that I deeply fell in love with this place.



## Running for international Friendship

By: Rasmus Burgmer

Who thought watching a bunch of strangers run for 4 hours could be entertaining?

I certainly did not, but there I was, standing in the pouring rain, a German flag in both hands and cheering loudly at the runners of the 2024 Tokushima Marathon.

As I watched the participants cross the finish line and collapse to the ground from total exhaustion, I too was able to feel their joy and pride about having achieved their goal. The comradery between the runners, complete strangers just moments ago, now having gone through the same struggle and supporting each other until the very end, was actually quite moving.



*The guest runners flaunting their raincoats at the start*

But let us go back to the start. How did I end up right next to the finish line, the governor of Tokushima only an arm's length behind me? The Tokushima Marathon was first held in 2009 and quickly attracted more and more running enthusiasts each year, due to the course being relatively flat (not a given thing in Japan), while also stretching alongside the beautiful Yoshino-River. The German partner region Lower-Saxony, which I represent at the prefectural government, also hosts a popular marathon each year in the city of Hannover. Thus, the project of sending out runners from Tokushima to Germany and vice versa was established to deepen the friendship between the regions while also giving athletes the opportunity to experience competing in a foreign country.

This year I had the honor of accompanying 2 German runners not only at the marathon, but also through an extensive sightseeing program

and ceremonial visit to the government. Also with us, there were 2 guest runners from the partner region in China which made interpreting a little complicated, but led to many interesting conversations about comparing sports culture, cuisine and drinking habits.

On the day of run, we got up really early, so that there would be enough time to warm up properly. Now warm, the runners lined up at the start, listened to the opening ceremony and then the signal was given. Almost 7000 motivated athletes started their run of the Tokushima marathon.

Since me and my colleagues wanted to cheer on the guest runners as much as possible, we were constantly moving along the course and were therefore able to closely follow how the run unfolded. Even though the Tokushima weather gods were not



on our side that day, the streets were filled with supporters loudly shouting "Ganbare" to each and every competitor passing by. Furthermore, according to some runners, the cool temperatures paired with the occasional rain shower actually make for good long distance running conditions.

Combine that with the countless providing the sports drinks, on some even freshly harvested fruits season had just begun) this year's Tokushima Marathon was bound to be a big success.



And sure enough, one of the German runners was able to run her personal best time, despite having only arrived in Tokushima the day before and still suffering from heavy jetlag. The other members of our small international delegation also were very satisfied with their run and after they changed

into dry clothes the governor came to personally congratulate them.



As we still had a tight schedule planned for the rest of the day, we left the stadium pretty quickly and got some well-deserved rest. The day ended with a fancy celebratory meal accompanied by beer and umeshu as well as smiling faces all around.

Everybody tried to convince me to participate in next years marathon which I made clear will

probably never happen, but if I am in Tokushima, I will definitely be there to support again!



*A tired but happy German delegation at the finish line after the run*

## Goodbye Message

By: Nguyen Van Thanh

In my 2 years of working at Topia, I was able to gain a lot of experience and made unforgettable



memories. Through this work I was also able to meet many foreigners, broaden my horizon and acquire a ton of knowledge about all kinds of things. Now, after graduating, I am no longer able to work for Topia, but I will continue working in Tokushima and I am forever thankful to the staff for helping me find a new job.

Taking all the things I have learned with me, I will give my best going forward and hopefully be able to contribute to the growth of Tokushima through my new job as well.

## A new Beginning

By: Rasmus Burmger

So many goodbye messages in the last 2 Awa Life editions, you must be wondering who even is still left?

The end of the fiscal year always brings a lot of change with it and though I am very sad to see so many of my colleagues and friends leave, I am also excited to get to meet new people and start new ventures with them.

Or as my now ex-colleague used to say: "Every Goodbye is a new Beginning!"

This being my first year at Topia, I already learned so much and I cannot wait to see what the next year has in store for us.

Feel free to come by to say hi whenever you like!



*Topia Staff at the Goodbye-Party*

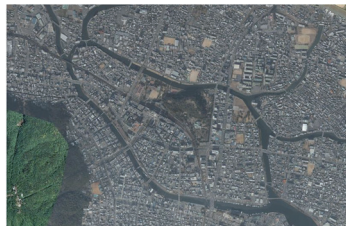


## Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: ひょうたん島クルーズ

By: Shoko Nomizu

とくしま し しんまちがわ すけとうがわ かこ ひょうたんの かに に  
 徳島市の 新町川と 助任川に 囲まれた ひょうたんの形に 似てい  
 る「ひょうたん島」を 知っていますか。この周囲 6 キロの島を 約  
 30 分かけて 小型のボートで 一周する クルーズが 人気です。

ボートは、新町川水際公園ボート乗り場から 出発します。徳島駅か  
 ら 歩いて 10 分くらいの ところです。いろいろな 建物や 町並み、  
 しんまちボードウォーク、徳島 中央公園、徳島県庁などを ながめる  
 ことができます。ボートで 19 本の橋を くぐりぬけるのも、スリリングです。季節に よっては、  
 さくらや イルミネーションを 楽しむことも できます。



出典：国土地理院ウェブサイト

このほかに、水上タクシーが 運行されたり、貸しボートも 始めたり  
 しています。くわしくは、「awa navi ひょうたん島」と検索して  
 みてください。

すがすがしい 徳島の町を ぜひ 水上から 楽しんでください。

## Vocabulary List

一周する	one lap	クルーズ	cruise	周囲	circumference
人気	popular	町並み	townscape	水際公園	waterside park
スリリング	thrilling	イルミネーション	illumination	運行する	operation

## お疲れ様 (Otsukaresama)

By: Rasmus

## Nihongo Know-it-all



While attending a shared practice session between German and Japanese canoeists in Tokushima last year, I got approached by a young athlete who wanted to learn the German phrase for “おつかれさま” to show his gratitude to the guests from overseas.

As you can probably imagine I found myself struggling to give an adequate translation and ended up lecturing the poor kid for well over 5 minutes about how the phrase and the culture surrounding it, are unique to Japan. His expression of complete disbelief made me wonder about the origin of the phrase and how it became such an indispensable part of Japanese everyday life.

Stemming from the word 疲れる, literally translated the phrase would mean something like “you are tired”, but as we all know it carries much more depth and depending on the situation it could mean “Thanks for your work”, “Hello / Bye”, “Cheers” and much more.

No matter the situation it always conveys an acknowledgement of the others effort, which shows how deeply rooted the expression is in Japan’s foundationally appreciative culture.

Although difficult to trace back, it is said that the phrase was originally almost exclusively used by stage actors of Kabuki Theatre to express thanks to their colleagues after a successful play. In the mid-20th Century, it spread to the general public probably through the term’s popularization by TV- Personalities and now you can’t even imagine a Japan without it.

So from now on, whenever somebody asks you to translate “お疲れ様”, you can tell them all this!

## 「います」「あります」

On the phone:

A: Bさん、<sup>いま</sup>どこにいますか。

B: 徳島<sup>とくしま</sup>駅<sup>えき</sup>から出<sup>で</sup>て、大<sup>おお</sup>きなビルの前<sup>まえ</sup>にいます。

A: 近<sup>ちか</sup>くに何<sup>なに</sup>がありますか。

B: コンビニがあります。

A: わかりました。今<sup>いま</sup>から行<sup>い</sup>きます。



Like in the above example, the verb 「います」 is used for living things such as humans/animals that can move by themselves. 「あります」 is used for inanimate things or living things that cannot move by themselves, such as flowers and trees. Fish that are swimming in water are written as: 池<sup>いけ</sup>に魚<sup>さかな</sup>がいます。」. Fish that can be found on the shelves of supermarkets are written as: 「〇〇スーパーに魚<sup>さかな</sup>があります。」.



Practice Problems:

Write 「います」 or 「あります」 in the parentheses (                      ).

- ① テーブルの下<sup>した</sup>にネコが (                      )。
- ② 王<sup>おう</sup>さんのとなりにリーさんが (                      )。
- ③ スーパーと銀行<sup>ぎんこう</sup>の間<sup>あいだ</sup>に花屋<sup>はなや</sup>が (                      )。
- ④ 冷蔵庫<sup>れいぞうこ</sup>の中<sup>なか</sup>に魚<sup>さかな</sup>が (                      )。



# Events & Memoranda

## Shikoku Yokai Festival 四国妖怪フェスティバル

The birthplace of the Konaki-Jijii-Legend, Yamashiro-cho in Miyoshi is holding the annual Yokai (mythical creatures) Festival!

Proudly displaying Yokai from all over Japan for 2 days under the theme of "Let's connect through Yokai."

The event includes an abundance of activities enjoyable for both children and adults.

When: May 25th (Sat) - May 26th (Sun)

Where: Oboke Roadside Station (Miyoshi)

Inquiries: Shikoku Yokai Festival Committee

TEL: 0883-84-1489

コナキ爺伝承発祥の地である三好市山城町で妖怪イベント開催！

妖怪で繋がる2日間をテーマに全国各地の妖怪自慢が集合。子供から大人まで楽しめる多彩な催しがいっぱいです。

日時 5月25日(土)・26日(日)

場所 道の駅 大歩危(三好市)

お問い合わせ

TEL: 0883-84-1489

E-mail: lapis@yamashiro-info.jp



## Tokushima Market: Ice Cream Grand Prix とくしまマルシェ「アイスグランプリ」

The Tokushima Market for this month is all about ice cream.

The most tasteful flavours of gelato all in one place!

Compare the "deliciousness" of each shop and participate in the voting.

Which shop will win this time?

Please join in and enjoy ice cream tasting while strolling alongside the beautiful Shinmachi River.

When: May 26th (Sun) 9:00-14:00

Where: Shinmachi Boardwalk

Shinmachi River Side Park

Inquiries

Tokushima Market Secretariat

TEL: 088-678-2117

5月開催のとくしまマルシェ注目のフェアは「アイスGP」

美味しいアイスやジェラートが一挙に集結！

各店それぞれの「おいしい」を食べ比べて投票に参加しませんか

今年グランプリに輝くのはどの店舗か！新町川を眺めながらアイスの食べ歩きをお楽しみください。

日時 5月26日(日) 9:00～14:00

場所 徳島市 しんまちボードウォーク  
新町川・阿波製紙水際公園

お問い合わせ

とくしまマルシェ事務局

TEL: 088-678-2117



# Events & Memoranda

## Hahagawa Firefly Festival 母川ほたるまつり

The Hahagawa Firefly Festival was once started by local volunteers with the goal to preserve the luciola of the area as well as to promote the region to visitors from inside and outside.

Enjoy a variety of nightstands, take a ride on a flatboat through beautiful nature and immerse yourself in the glowing of thousands of fireflies. The Festival provides activities for young and old. Please note: In case of bad weather or difficult river conditions the event might get canceled.

When: June 1st (Sat) - June 8th (Sat)  
Where: Hahagawa, Takazono, Kaiyo

### DETAILS

Night stalls: only June 1st (Sat)

Flatboat riding:

each day from 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm

500 yen for adults / 200 yen for children

The tickets will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis (100 a day)

Ticket sales start at 6:30 pm each day

Sasabune (leaf boat) & bamboo flute courses:

Each day from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Free of charge

Inquiries: Kaiyo Tourism Association

TEL: 0884-76-3050

母川ほたるまつりは母川のゲンジボタルの保存と町内外の方々にPRを目的として地元の方々のボランティア活動ではじまりました。

さまざまな夜店を楽しんだり、美しい自然の中を高瀬舟に乗ったり、何千匹ものほたるの光に浸ったり。この祭りでは、老若男女が楽しめるアクティビティが用意されています。

雨天および河川の水量などにより中止する場合があります。

日時 2024年6月1日(土)～6月8日(土)  
場所 海陽町高園 母川河川敷

### 詳細

夜店 6月1日(土)のみ

高瀬舟乗船 6月1日(土)～6月8日(土)  
20:00～21:30

大人 500円 / 小・中学生 200円

乗船定員の為、乗船券の販売は先着100枚となります。

※整理券は当日午後6時半より配布予定

笹舟教室・竹笛教室(無料)

6月1日(土)～6月8日(土)  
19:00～21:30

問い合わせ 海陽町観光協会

TEL: 0884-76-3050



## Counselling Service at TOPIA・トピアの相談窓口

TOPIA provides consultation on everyday life, education, labor, medical institutions, and disaster prevention; and information on sightseeing spots to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Counselling is available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Please note that although every effort will be made, we may not be able to deal with all cases.

**Japanese, English, Chinese:** Everyday, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)

**Vietnamese:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, 10:00 - 14:00

Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)