

awa life

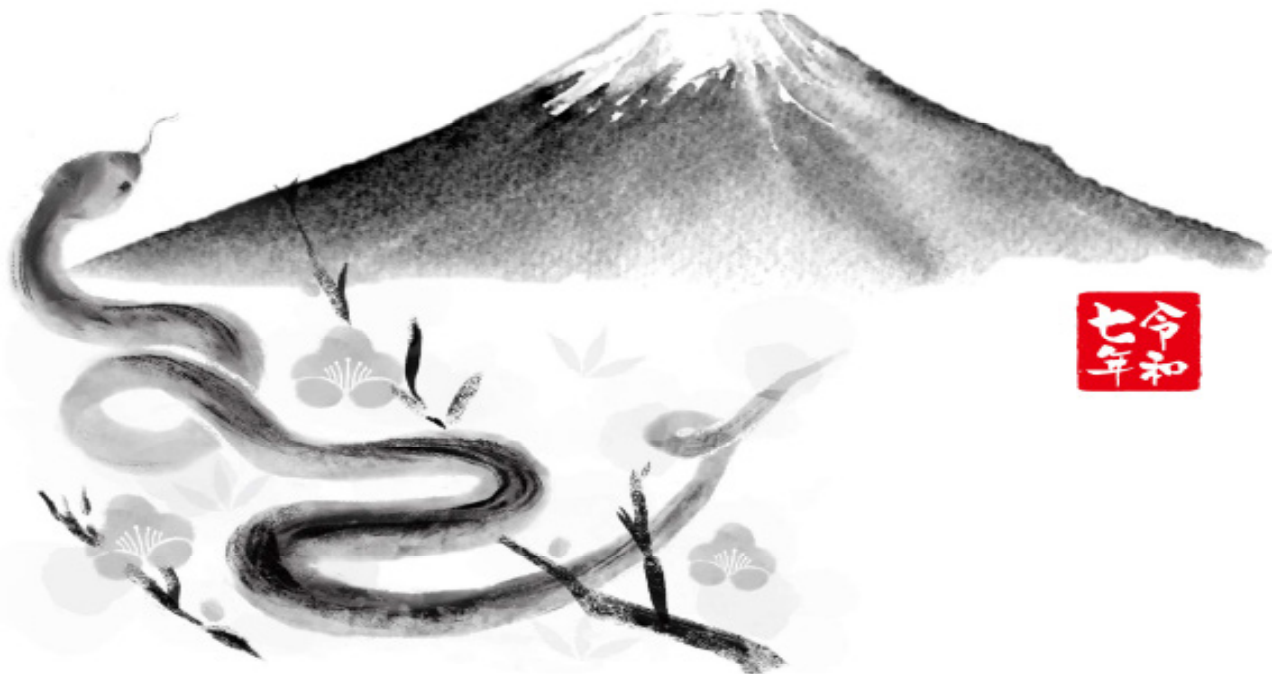
New Year's Greetings from
TOPIA

Jan. 2025

410

The Chinese New Year

謹賀新年



Prefectural Official
Training Held at TOPIA

Nihongo Know-it-all:
Buzzword of the Year
Competition



TOPIA

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

あけましておめでとうございます！ Happy New Year, everyone! We hope you had an excellent holiday and were able to rest and relax. Perhaps you even were able to get some cleaning in as part of ^{おおそうじ}大掃除？ If not, don't stress too much about it. We're just happy to be entering into another exciting year together here in Japan!

In the Chinese zodiac, 2025 is the year of the snake (^{へび とし}巳年 in Japanese). The snake is said to represent wisdom, charm, elegance, and transformation. Like how a snake sheds its skin, the snake constellation represents rebirth and encourages personal growth. Here's to hoping 2025 is the best year yet!



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. Additionally, please keep articles around ~300-500 words (if writing in English), or ~1000 characters (if writing in Japanese). If you have any questions or want to check if your topic will work, feel free to reach out to us before you start writing.

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 editors,
Riley and Lisa

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Download a PDF file of awa life or view the online version by going to TOPIA's website!



あけまして
おめでとう！



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New Years Greetings from TOPIA

By: Seiji Miyoshi, Chief Director

Happy New Year.

I hope that everyone is in good health as we welcome in the New Year.

Last year, we felt more than ever before the importance of preparation for earthquakes starting with the Noto Peninsula earthquake, followed by the first-ever “Nankai Trough Earthquake Extra Information” issued by the Japan Meteorological Agency in August to call attention to the next massive earthquake after an earthquake centered in the Hyūga Sea occurred.

Turning to foreign residents, it was announced in January that the number of foreign workers in Japan had exceeded 2 million as of the end of October of the previous year, and in October that the number of foreign residents in Japan had exceeded 3.5 million as of the end of June.

Of this number, 8,321 foreigners are residing in Tokushima prefecture. By nationality, the largest number of foreign residents are from Vietnam (2,288), followed by China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Korea.



By residency status, the highest number are technical intern trainees (2,892), followed by permanent residents, special skilled workers, students, and persons staying with their family.

Also, in June, the Revised Immigration Control Act was enacted to address the challenges of declining population and labor shortage we are facing, with a focus on establishing a new “training and employment system” in place of the technical internship system for foreign workers.

Under these circumstances, TOPIA has developed various programs such as the “Disaster Prevention Study Tour” and the “Disaster

Prevention Lecture” to make foreign residents aware of the importance of disaster prevention or the Japanese language classes that are being held both online and in person throughout the year. Every summer there is the Japanese Speech Contest for foreign residents in July and the exchange between foreign and local residents through the Awa Odori in August.

Additionally, against the backdrop of the increase in the number of foreign workers the “multilingual consultation on daily life” service, which is available at the consultation counter for foreign residents, saw an increase in labor and employment consultations.

It is said that this year technological innovation and social movements will accelerate, such as the holding of the EXPO 2025, and the environment surrounding foreigners is expected to change moment by moment. We at TOPIA will work to further increase the significance of our presence as a flag bearer for internationalization in Tokushima, and strive to work hand-in-hand with the prefecture, municipalities, and private organizations.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a prosperous New Year, and I ask for your continued support and understanding for TOPIA this year as well.

Thank you.

Training for Prefectural Officials Held at TOPIA

By: Mako Kobayashi

The Tokushima Prefecture International Exchange Association (TOPIA) held a training on regional exchange from October 23-24, 2024 for six Tokushima Prefectural government officials. Over the two days, the six officials participated in TOPIA's Japanese classes, learned about the concept of “plain Japanese,” as well as heard from TOPIA employees about their work as consultation counselors for foreign residents of Tokushima, coordinators, etc. They also heard from Tokushima Prefecture coordinators for international relations and the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Tokushima Desk. As they deepened their knowledge of international understanding and multicultural coexistence, participants were asked to think about how they might apply this knowledge to their work as prefectural officials.

Impressions from participants:

- “First, I felt that when I see a foreign person, I want to try to reach out and talk to them proactively, and learned that when doing so, it is important to be aware of using “plain Japanese.” I also realized once again the importance of not taking things for granted. The things that feel “obvious” or like common sense to you might

not be so for everyone, so it's important to get to know the person you're speaking with.”

- “I was glad to get the opportunity to speak with so many people from foreign countries. I tried to use “plain Japanese” in our conversations, but it was difficult to find alternative words at times. With the declining labor force, bringing in foreign technical intern trainees will be an unavoidable part of solving the problem in the future. This training gave me an opportunity to consider what would benefit the trainees themselves aside from things like money. Thank you for the training.”



- “In the Japanese class, the students were taking their studies seriously but at the same time they were enjoying them. I admired how they were not afraid of making mistakes, but were actively trying to learn and participate. I felt that the teaching materials used in class were very well designed and practical for real life.”

Training for Prefectural Officials Held at TOPIA

- "I felt that, with so many different cultures in the world, not only do I want others to understand Japanese culture, but that I would like to learn about their cultures as well. In order to do this, I'm going to do my best to use "plain Japanese" and communicate with others."



- "As opportunities to interact with people from foreign countries will surely only increase in the coming years, I felt that I want to increase my knowledge of cultural differences and become a person who can treat all people kindly, as a good neighbor would. I hope that Tokushima, with its

culture of hospitality and new opportunities to travel to/from various countries directly from the airport, will become a wonderful place with a rich international community."

- "As I continue my own language studies, I want to also make an effort to use and spread "easy Japanese" as well. I hope that the projects and PR activities of the prefectural government and those of TOPIA will be more interconnected moving forward so that we can provide more comprehensive support to foreign residents of Tokushima."

*"Plain Japanese" is the practice of using easy to understand Japanese when speaking with foreign residents in response to research that showed that there are far more foreign residents that can understand simple Japanese than those that can understand English.

The Chinese New Year

By: Qin Yao

The New Year has come and gone in the blink of an eye. How did you all spend your New Year's holidays? Did you make any New Year's resolutions? In China, the Chinese New Year (also called the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival) is the most important of all the traditional holidays. It doesn't just represent a new beginning, but also provides the opportunity to spend time with our families. Do you know when the Chinese New Year is?

The Chinese or Lunar New Year is on January 1 of the lunar calendar. What date this falls on in the Western calendar (the one commonly used worldwide) varies year to year, but it is always around late January - early February. This year, it will be on January 29 of the Western calendar. In present-day China, the lunar calendar is still used for farming, and many Chinese people's birthdays are also on the lunar calendar.



Leading up to the Chinese New Year, the streets in China come alive with a festive atmosphere and vibrant decorations, such as red lanterns hanging everywhere the eye can see. And it's not just decorations, either – the sight of people out and about shopping has also become a classic picture of the New Year. In order to celebrate family reunions and invite friends and relatives as part of the festivities, people prepare a full spread of vegetables, meat, candy, sweets, and other items. In fact, it is not uncommon for people to overeat during the holiday season and start a diet in the New Year.

Much like the Western calendar's New Year holiday, New Year's Eve on the lunar calendar is an important part of the celebrations as well. However, did you know that not every year has a "New Year's Eve"? For example, in 2021, the lunar calendar's 12th month was a short month, having only 29 days instead of the usual 30.

The Chinese New Year

Therefore, there was no “30th day of the 12th month,” like there normally is, and many families were caught off guard to realize that the day after the 29th was already the new year!

Called “除夕” in Chinese, on New Year’s Eve, people make various preparations for the New Year. For example, red lanterns are hung at the entrances to houses, and red scrolls are pasted on them. The Chinese character for “blessing” is deliberately turned upside down, because the word for this upside-down character is pronounced the same as the verb for “to arrive,” so it is said to be a good omen that “good fortune will arrive in the new year.” The red color adds



to the festive and exciting atmosphere of the holiday. Additionally, the house is meticulously cleaned in a process called 除旧迎新. Similarly to Japan, this is done so that the New Year can be welcomed with fresh spirits.

In the evening, the family gathers around a table lined with delicious food to eat the New Year’s Eve meal called 年夜饭. This meal consists of a variety of dishes, with Chinese dumplings and fish being the most standard. The word for fish, “鱼”(yu) is pronounced the same as the Chinese character “余”(yu) which means “a surplus” or “excess,” so it is said to represent the wish to be able to live a comfortable life. Another lucky food that is eaten are “年糕”(nian gao) rice cakes. This is because it is pronounced the same as “年高”, which means “increasing year by year,” and therefore represents the wish that happiness and good fortune will increase in the new year. The whole family eats this delicious meal together and watches the Chinese New Year’s Gala on the TV to celebrate the year end.

Firecrackers are also an essential part of the Chinese New Year. Firecrackers and fireworks are set off to ward off evil or to welcome the gods. Although firecrackers have now been banned in cities to protect the environment, fireworks are still an important part of Chinese New Year celebrations. In my hometown, houses still ring in the New Year by setting off fireworks at midnight. On New Year’s Day, it is customary for adults and children alike to put on new clothes and exchange New Year’s greetings with neighbors, friends, and relatives, especially young people who extend New Year’s greetings and best wishes to their elders. In response, elderly people will give children 压岁钱 or a small gift of money to wish for their healthy growth. From the lunar January 1 to January 6, people visit relatives almost every day, returning to work on January 7 to begin a new year of work. On January 15 the Lantern Festival is held, and people eat white, round dumplings - 汤圆 (tāng yuán). This is the last event of the Chinese New Year festivities and marks the end of the holiday season.

With the pace of modern life ever-increasing, many people no longer feel the joy of the holidays they once felt during childhood. But I believe that the Chinese New Year reminds us to value time and friends. It allows one to forget the busyness of life and enjoy the warmth of family. Unknowingly, the Spring Festival has become a foundational support in the hearts of the Chinese people.



Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: たらいうどん

By: Miyui Okamoto



うどんといえば、香川の讃岐うどんが有名ですが、徳島にも独自のうどん文化があることを知っていますか？大きなたらいが特徴的な、阿波市土成町の郷土料理「たらいうどん」です。

たらいうどんの歴史は、江戸時代末期から始まったといわれています。昔、林業が盛んだった土成では、木こりにうどんを振る舞う習慣がありました。茹でたてのうどんを、茹で汁ごと大きなたらいに入れ、にぎやかに数人で囲みます。かつては、土成の川で獲れる「じんぞく」という魚の出汁に、うどんを付けて食べていたそうです。

うどんを取るときは、つけ汁が薄まらないように、たらいの縁で湯切りをしましょう。熱々のうどんを、つけ汁に付けて、いただきます！土成には、たらいうどんのお店が沢山あります。自然豊かな土成で食べるたらいうどん、ぜひ試してみてください。

Vocabulary List

讃岐 Sanuki (a city in Kagawa) たらい tub, basin 特徴的 characteristic
郷土料理 local cuisine 末期 the last stages 林業 forestry 盛ん flourishing
木こり lumberjack 振る舞う to treat someone to food or drink 茹でたて freshly
boiled 茹で汁 broth, stock にぎやか lively 囲む to surround 出汁 Japanese stock
つけ汁 dipping sauce 薄まる to become weak, to thin (i.e. a flavor) 縁 rim 湯切り
draining hot water 熱々 piping hot 沢山 many, lots 自然豊か has beautiful nature

Buzzword of the Year Contest

By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all

Did you know that in Japan there is an annual event in which the best/most relevant buzzwords or phrases to come out of that year are nominated? In the end, one is even crowned the “Buzzword of the Year.” The competition is called “新語・流行語大賞,” and to celebrate the 2024 nominee list being released, we’re going to take a look at some of the buzzwords to come out of the past few years.



Last year, the phrase that was crowned the victor was popularized by the baseball team Hanshin Tigers’ manager. It’s said that in order to resist jinxing the team’s chance at victory, the team manager began to refuse to speak the word “win” or “victory” out loud, and instead began referring to it as simply “あれ” or “that thing” instead. He must have been on to something, because not only did the Hanshin Tigers win the Japan Series last year, the term “あれ” won buzzword of the year as well. Another honorable mention from the 2023 list is “蛙化現象,” which literally means “the phenomenon of turning into a frog,” or “frogification,” but is the Japanese equivalent of the concept of “getting the ick.” In other words, it’s when you suddenly dislike or feel disgust towards someone you were once attracted to because of something they do.

Nominees for Buzzword of the Year 2024 include “アサイーボウル” which means “Acai Bowl” (apparently they’re a popular food this year), and “猫ミーム” or “cat meme”, a popular genre of videos this year.

「～そうです」②

A さん and B さん are discussing the upcoming weekend.

A: スマートフォンで見たんですが、京都は紅葉がきれいだそうです。

B: あ、それなら、土曜日に行きたいですね。

A: でも、天気予報によると土曜日は雨だそうですよ。

B: そうですか。でも、雨の京都はきっといいですよ。



A rainy Kyoto with autumn leaves surely must be a wonderful sight. When A さん says 「きれいだそうです」「雨だそうです」, they are using the 〈普通形+そうです〉 form. This is a way of conveying information that you have heard from others or obtained from TV, newspapers, etc. to another person. You will often see it used paired together with words such as (Source) ～で読みました (～で読んだんですが)、～聞きました (～聞いたんですが)、～よると。

* Be careful not to confuse this with the 〈ます形+そうです〉 form we learned in December's lesson which describes when something appears to be a certain way, or when something is just about to occur.

Let's Practice! Turn the word in the parenthesis () into its 普通形 form and rewrite it above the blank ____.

- ① 天気予報によると、明日は雨が _____ そうです。(降ります)
- ② テレビで見たんですが、大きな地震が _____ そうですよ。(ありました)
- ③ 部長に聞いたんですがミラーさんは国に _____ そうです。(帰りません)
- ④ 友達の 話 によると電子辞書は _____ そうですよ。(便利です)
- ⑤ うわさでは、あの二人は _____ そうです。(別れました)
- ⑥ 友達の電話によると、山田さんは来週 _____ そうです。(来ます)



①降る ②あった ③帰らない ④便利だ ⑤別れた ⑥来る

Events & Memoranda

Ebisu Festival at Jurobe Yashiki 阿波十郎兵衛屋敷えびす祭り

The Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jurobe Yashiki is ringing in the new year with the Ebisu Festival! Join in the festivities and watch one of the many puppet theater performances, or enjoy the special goods being sold. Additionally, there will be a video screening showing an inside look at the life of the local people and the puppets that support their faith. Please enjoy the gorgeous, festive, and auspicious traditional culture of Tokushima, and bring home plenty of good luck for the New Year.

Date and time: Sat. January 11 - Sun. January 12
Morning show: 11:00-12:00
Afternoon show: 14:00-15:00

Location: Tokushima Pref. Awa Jurobe Yashiki

Inquiries: Tokushima Pref. Awa Jurobe Yashiki
Phone: 088-665-2202

新しい年を祝うとともに、皆様の豊かな1年を願う「阿波十郎兵衛屋敷えびす祭り」を開催します。阿波人形浄瑠璃の演目を上演する他に、えびす祭り当日には、和田島のちりめんや、勝浦町産のみかんといった物販も行います。また、映像の放映もあり、舞台だけでは見ることのできない地域の人々の暮らしと信仰を支える人形の姿をお楽しみいただけます。華やかで、めでたく、縁起の良い徳島の伝統文化で、1年の福をお持ち帰りください。

開催日時: 2025年1月11日(土)・12日(日)
午前の部 11:00～12:00、
午後の部 14:00～15:00

開催場所: 徳島県立阿波十郎兵衛屋敷

お問い合わせ: 徳島県立阿波十郎兵衛屋敷
TEL: 088-665-2202

“ONE WORLD” Children’s Support Event [ONE WORLD 子ども支援事業]

TOPIA and the JICA Tokushima Desk will participate in the work experience event “Oshigoto Tankentai Career Challenge: Let’s Grow Seeds of the Future” (hosted by Tokushima City and Myodo District PTA Association)! Try out a job that connects you to the world!

Date: Saturday February 1, 2025 13:00-15:00

Location: Asty Tokushima, Tokushima City

Activities will include:

- TOPIA: Experience working as a consultation counselor for foreign residents/tourists and talk with people from various countries such as America, China, Germany, Korea, and India!
- JICA Tokushima: Try out working for the Japan International Cooperation Agency! Study various languages and challenge yourself to live overseas.

Who can participate: Elementary, Junior High, and High school students of Tokushima City or Myodo District.

To apply: Scan the QR code on the flyer distributed by your school at the end of December

お仕事体験イベント「おしごと探検隊キャリアチャレンジ 未来の種を育てよう」(主催:徳島市・名東郡PTA連合会)に、TOPIAとJICA徳島デスクが参加します!世界とつながるお仕事、体験してみませんか?

日程:2025年2月1日(土) 13:00～15:00(予定)

場所:アスティとくしま(徳島市山城町東浜傍1番地1)

内容:

- TOPIA: 徳島での観光や生活で困っている外国人への相談の仕事を体験。アメリカ、中国、ドイツ、韓国、インドなど、色んな国の人と実際に話してみよう!
- JICA 徳島: JICA 海外協力隊プチ体験をしよう。いろんな国の言葉を勉強して、海外での活動にチャレンジ!

対象: 徳島市と名東郡の学校に通う小中学生

申し込み: 12月末に学校から配布されるチラシのQRコードから

Events & Memoranda

Udatsu Flower Festival with Shogo Kariyazaki 華道家 假屋崎省吾 うだつをいける ～花のひなまつり～

In the 17th annual "Udatsu wo Ikeru" festival, flower arrangement artist Shogo Kariyazaki weaves beauty in the form of flowers throughout the historic Udatsu townscape. Enjoy the beauty of Tokushima's famous cymbidium flowers and Otani ceramics.

Opening Event: A special opening day event will be held Jan. 19, 2025 at the famous Yoshida house in Udatsu. Will include an autograph signing, shamisen performances, and a live calligraphy performance.

Special Event: A special event will be held Feb. 23 and 24, 2025 at the Wakimachi Theater, Odeonza. Will include a live flower arrangement demonstration by Shogo Kariyazaki, an aftertalk, and an autograph session.

Weekly Event: There will be a flower arrangement workshop every Thursday during the event period. Participation fee is 500 yen per person.

Location: Udatsu Townscape, Wakimachi, Mima City
Yoshida House, Anmitsu Kan, Odeonza Theater

Festival Period: Sun. Jan. 19 - Sun. March 9, 2025
9:00-17:00

Inquiries: Mima Tourism Bureau
Phone: 0883-53-8599
Mima City Tourism Exchange Division
Phone: 0883-52-5610

「うだつをいける」は、今回で17回目の開催。歴史ある景観が残るうだつの町並みを舞台に、華道家・假屋崎省吾が美を紡ぐ美しく華やかな華道展「うだつをいける」。シンビジウムや大谷焼など、徳島が誇る美の競演をご堪能ください。

☆オープニング特別イベント
2025年1月19日（日）藍商佐直 吉田家住宅
假屋崎省吾サイン会、元祖井内組三味線もちつき、
四国大学生による書道パフォーマンス

☆特別イベント
2025年2月23日（土）・24日（日）脇町劇場 オ
デオン座
假屋崎省吾デモンストレーション トークイベン
ト&サイン会

☆期間中イベント
毎週木曜日 フラワーアレンジメント体験
1人500円

開催場所: 美馬市脇町 うだつの町並み
吉田家住宅・あんみつ館・オデオン座

開催期間: 2025年1月19日（日）～3月9日（日）
9時00分～17時00分

お問い合わせ: 美馬観光ビューロー
Tel: 0883-53-8599
美馬市観光交流課
Tel: 0883-52-5610



Counseling 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)