

# awa life

Welcome Greetings

May 2025

# 414

The Shikoku 88 Temple  
Pilgrimage



International Understanding  
Support Forum 2025

Ode to Mount Bizan

Mount Bizan Ropeway (new gondolas, 2025)



TOPIA

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

Happy May, everyone! I hope you are all able to make the most out of the holidays and good weather this month. We'll be gearing up for the rainy season before you know it, so I know I'm going to try and get outside as much as possible this May.

It has officially been a month since the start of the school year (and the new fiscal year). Are you all getting used to any new routines and changes that may have happened? I hope the holidays at the beginning of May are (or were) a good refresher for everyone. If you went anywhere neat in the prefecture for Golden Week, we'd love to hear about it!

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:

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

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!*



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# Contents

Pg. 2-3: Welcome Messages

Pg. 3-4: Ode to Mount Bizan

Pg. 4-5: International Understanding Support Forum 2025

Pg. 5: The Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage

Pg. 6: Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 徳島県の花・木・鳥 とくしまけん はな き とり

Pg. 6: Nihongo Know-It-All: 阿波弁 あ わ べん

Pg. 7: Japanese Lesson: 「形容詞②」 けいようし

Pg. 8-9: Events and Memoranda



## Welcome Messages

As of April, we have had two new members join our team here at TOPIA! Here are their greeting messages to our wonderful Awa Life readers.

**Chen Sizhe** (陳 思哲)

**Coordinator for International Relations**

**H**ello everyone! My name is Sizhe Chen. I am from Hunan, China. It is a pleasure to meet you! I am a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Tokushima Prefecture as of this April. Thank you all in advance for your support in the coming year.

My first name is 思哲 (in Chinese read Sizhe, in Japanese read Shitetsu). The funny thing is, the Japanese pronunciation is the same as for the word 私鉄 (shitetsu, private railway) and sometimes when people first hear my name, they assume I'm a man, haha.

Since my middle school days, I have had quite a lot of contact with Japanese anime and music. I've seen almost every of Hayao Miyazaki's movies, of which Howl's Moving Castle is my favorite (I've rewatched it no less than six times!). I also like many other anime, for example Inuyasha and BLEACH. When it comes to music, at the time I often listened to singers like Hikaru Utada and Ayumi Hamasaki. Also, I love Japanese sushi! As I have been fascinated by Japanese culture and food for many years now, I am very happy and honored to be able to work as a CIR here in

Japan with all of you.

As for my role in Tokushima Prefecture, I will be responsible for

a wide range of duties like tasks related to the friendly relationship between Hunan Province and Tokushima Prefecture, attending visiting foreign delegations, translation tasks, interpreting at meetings, events, or presentations, and editing TOPIA's monthly Chinese newsletter 阿波生活 (Awa seikatsu). Since I have just started, there are still many things I am unfamiliar with and sometimes I am nervous, but thanks to everyone's kind guidance I am slowly gaining confidence in my work.

Here at TOPIA, I will be working not only with the Japanese staff but also other CIRs and staff from various countries like China, Vietnam, the US, Germany etc. I am looking forward to the many occasions for intercultural exchange I will have here in Tokushima. Thank you for your guidance and encouragement in the coming year.



## Welcome Greetings

**Yoshiko Bando**

**Long-term Work Experience Trainee**

Hello everyone! My name is Yoshiko Bando. This April I started working at TOPIA as a long-term work experience trainee.

Until March of 2025, I was working as a junior high school English educator in the prefecture. As an English teacher, I worked alongside ALTs to teach classes and shared about my own study abroad experience with the hope that my students would take up an interest in multiculturalism. However, in recent years, the number of children in Japan with roots not only in English-speaking countries but other foreign countries, as well as the number of foreign children and their parents who have transferred to Japan without having studied Japanese has been increasing. Under these circumstances, I am keenly aware that international understanding and multicultural coexistence have become pressing issues in school settings. I realized that my previous mindset of “as long as you can speak English, that’s enough” was mistaken.

Here at TOPIA, as I train and learn, I am inspired daily by not only the Japanese staff, but by my Chinese, Vietnamese, and American coworkers, the CIRs, the students who attend Japanese classes,



and the foreign technical intern trainees I meet. I hope to find an answer to the question of what must be done for all people to live in harmony with each other, regardless of nationality or language. As someone who only has experience in the school setting, I am very much looking forward to gaining plenty of international exchange experience at TOPIA. I hope for a lot of personal growth during this year so I can return to the classroom a “leveled up” version of my current self. I’m looking forward to working with you all!

## Ode to Mount Bizan

*By: Lisa Knitter*

The famous Mount Bizan standing in the heart of Tokushima City has been popular with tourists and locals for its breathtaking view of the city as well as its seasonal beauty (kōyō in autumn and sakura in spring).



However, since the beginning of the year the ropeway connecting the Awaodori Kaikan and Mount Bizan Park had been suspended due to the renewal of the gondolas. But at last, on Sunday, 30 March, the ropeway opened its doors again and an event in celebration of the new gondolas was held in Mount Bizan Park with food trucks, Awaodori performances (of course) and more.

My husband and I went there to see the new gondolas, have fun at the event and enjoy the cherry blossoms. So, here is my impression of the gondolas: When they arrived, we were surprised to find that their form was changed from the round, cylindrical version to a box-shaped one. In addition to the whole gondola being bigger, the windows also stretch lower which makes it easier for children to have a look at the scenery below as well. There are also more seats available.

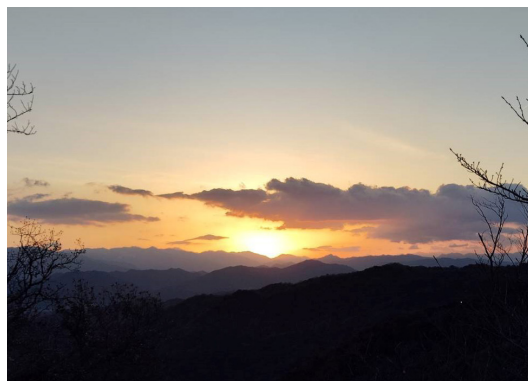


*View from inside the new gondolas*

## Ode to Mount Bizan

In the nine months since coming to Tokushima I have been to Mount Bizan multiple times and have made some fond memories like seeing the first sunrise of the year (known as hatsu-hinode in Japan) together with my husband and a friend who has since gone back to her home country. Or the autumn afternoon when the sun began to set bathing the beautiful red leaves and everything else in this magnificent, golden light. The period shortly before sunset (and shortly after sunrise, too) is called “Golden hour” and is said to be one of the best times to take pictures. I can only agree with this. Although I almost never like pictures of myself, my husband managed to take several photos I actually find pretty. Other ways to enjoy Mount Bizan would also be hiking along the various trails or (the only thing I have not done yet) enjoying the night view of Tokushima City which is said to be amazing, too.

I hope you too will get the chance to visit Mount Bizan, maybe take a ride in the new gondolas, and make some precious memories. I especially recommend everyone to experience the magical hours around sunset or sunrise on top of Mount Bizan for yourselves. It is truly remarkable!



Sunset from Mount Bizan

## International Understanding Support Forum 2025

By: Miyui Okamoto

On March 16th, 2025, TOPIA held the annual International Understanding Support Forum at the Shikoku University Exchange Plaza. This year's theme was “Foreign Residents Working in Tokushima.” In this forum, four foreign lecturers working in Tokushima (two technical intern trainees, a certified care worker, and a self-employed worker) shared about a wide range of topics including their jobs, daily lives, problems they've encountered since coming to Japan, as well as their dreams for the future.



After the lecture, a casual chat exchange session was held between the lecturers, other foreign residents, and Japanese people in attendance. Participants curiously asked questions about things mentioned during the lectures, as well as foreign residents' lives in Tokushima, Japanese



studies, etc. The atmosphere was light and friendly, and connections were deepened through the exchanges.

Feedback from participants of the forum included statements such as, “I was glad to be able to hear the real voices of foreign residents,” “By talking to them (foreign residents) face-to-face, I was able to hear about their attitudes and thoughts towards work,” and, “I hope TOPIA holds more events like this.” We also received comments from those looking proactively to the future and considering what they, themselves, can do. “I want to teach Japanese to foreign residents,” said one. Another even commented, “I want to host my own international exchange event.”

Personally, I hope that this year's forum



provided an opportunity for participants to consider intercultural cohesion. As for TOPIA, we will continue to move forward with promoting

international understanding and fostering a multicultural society by connecting foreign residents to the communities around them.

## The Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage

By: Junko Kimura

The Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage, commonly known as *Ohenro*, is a traditional pilgrimage route that connects 88 temples associated with the Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi (Kukai). The full route stretches ~1,200 km and takes around 40 to 50 days to complete on foot. Pilgrims, known as *ohenro-san*, typically wear white garments and sedge-woven bamboo hats (*suge-gasa*), and carry a pilgrim's staff (*kongōzue*) as they walk. If you live in Shikoku, you've likely seen these pilgrims on their journey.

The *Ohenro* is not just a form of sightseeing or physical activity—it is considered a spiritual journey. Along the way, pilgrims encounter the beauty of nature, warm interactions with local people, and opportunities for deep reflection. In recent years, the number of foreign pilgrims has increased, and compared to the past, multilingual information is now widely available through social media and other platforms.

While many people choose to walk the route, others complete the pilgrimage by car or public transportation. There are also many *shukubō* (temple lodgings) and rest stops available along the way. Taking enough time off to visit all 88 temples in one go can be difficult, but for those living in Tokushima, it's possible to visit them little by little on weekends or holidays.

Visitors from overseas who are interested in experiencing the *Ohenro* often visit TOPIA to get information about it. Here, I would like to introduce the route we recommend for those visitors.

### Temples 1-5

JR Bando Station (JR 板 東 駅) is the nearest station to Temple 1, located ~700 m away. The total walking distance from Temple 1 to Temple 5 is ~16.5 km.

### Temples 6-10

You can take a bus from Tokushima Station to Temple 6. The total walking distance from Temple

6 to Temple 10 is ~12.5 km. The closest JR station to Temple 10 is Awa-Kawashima Station (阿波川島駅), which is located ~7 km away.

### Temples 11-12

You can walk to Temple 11 from JR Kamojima Station (JR 鴨 島 駅). From Temple 11 to 12, it's ~13 km on foot. This route includes mountain trails, and Temple 12 is located at an altitude of 938 meters. It is considered one of the more challenging sections of the pilgrimage. To return, you can take a bus to Tokushima Station, but please note that buses are infrequent, so it's important to check the schedule in advance.

### Temples 13-17

You can take a bus to Temple 13 from JR Tokushima Station. The total walking distance from Temple 13 to Temple 17 is ~8 km. To return, you can take a train from JR Kou Station (JR 府 中 駅) back to Tokushima Station.

The best seasons for the *Ohenro* pilgrimage are spring (March to June) and autumn (late September to November). While you are in Tokushima, I highly encourage you to experience this unique pilgrimage for yourself. If you have any questions about the *Ohenro* routes, please feel free to contact TOPIA at any time.



# Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 徳島県の花・木・鳥

By: Shoko Nomizu

みなさんは、徳島県のシンボルの花・木・鳥を知っていますか？

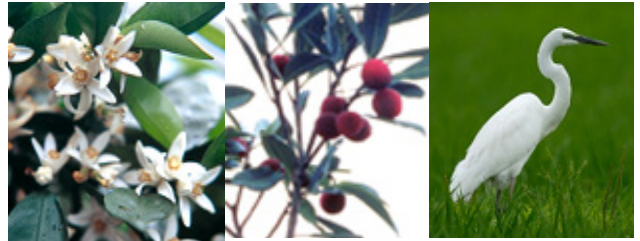
まず徳島県の花は「すだちの花」です。皆さんもすだちの果汁をさしみや焼き魚などにかけて食べたことがあると思います。

その徳島の特産物「すだち」の木の小さくて白い花が、県花です。

次に、徳島県の木は「やまもも」です。徳島藩時代（約450年前）には「御禁木」として保護されていました。6月中旬から7月にかけて、甘酸っぱい赤い小さな実をつけます。果実の生産量は全国1位で、そのまま食べたり、ジャムやお酒などにすることもできます。

最後に、県の鳥は「しらさぎ」です。しらさぎは、田んぼや吉野川の川辺などで見かけることができます。徳島市にある「しらさぎ大橋」や「しらさぎ中学校」など建物の名前などにも使われて親しまれています。

これからの季節にすだちの花ややまももそしてしらさぎを気にかけてみてください。いろいろな所で見つけることができます。



## Vocabulary List

シンボル	Symbol	果汁	Fruit juice	特産物	Specialty product
徳島藩時代	Era of the Tokushima Domain (1601–1871)	甘酸っぱい	Bittersweet	御禁木	Protected species of tree
保護	Protection	川辺	Riverbank	収穫する	To harvest
生産量	Production output	親しまれる	Is familiar to		

あわべん  
阿波弁

By: Riley Henke

## Nihongo Know-it-all

Alright, Nihongo Know-it-all readers, it's time to tackle Awa-ben. Buckle up!

Throughout Japan, many different dialects are spoken and they can have varying vocabulary, inflection, pitch accent, particle usage, and/or pronunciation of some vowels and consonants. Awa-ben is the dialect of the Tokushima Prefecture (Awa is the former name for Tokushima). It is classified as one of the Shikoku dialects, and while it is influenced by the Kinki dialect, it is characterized by its own vocabulary, intonation, and even grammar. Today, we'll go over some Awa-ben words/phrases you may hear, and the equivalent word/phrase in standard Japanese. Awa-ben words are underlined. Note that some of these words may be used in different dialects as well.

いける：大丈夫、問題ない    せこい：苦しい、しんどい    ほう：そう（例：ほうなん＝そうなの）

えっとぶり：久しぶり    ほなけん：だから    おる：いる（例：そこにおる＝そこにいる）

ごっつい：すごい/すごく    ～しょん：している（例：なんしょん？＝何しているの？）

These are just a few examples out of hundreds, so if you'd like to learn more, check out the videos that TOPIA has created and posted educational on their [website](#) teaching common Awa-ben phrases. These videos can be found near the bottom of the "Japanese Classes at TOPIA" page.



けいようし  
「形容詞②」

## (Conversation)

Teacher: 休みは何をしましたか。

A: 眉山に登りました。

Teacher: どうでしたか。

A: たいへんでした。でも、景色がとてもきれいでした。



Teacher: Bさんは? 何をしましたか。

B: わたしは、鳴門へ行きました。

船に乗って、渦潮を見ました。

少しこわかったです。



Last lesson we learned about the two different types of adjectives and their non-past forms. This month, we will learn how to use adjectives when you are speaking about the past. Take a look at the table below.

Adjective type/ past form	けいようし い形容詞	けいようし な形容詞
Affirmative	こわかった です	たいへん でした
Negative	こわく なかった です こわく ありません でした	たいへん じゃ (では) なかった です たいへん じゃ (では) ありません でした

Let's practice! Insert the correct form of the adjective into the blanks below.

- ① きノウ「すきやき」を食べました。とても ( おいしい→ )。
- ② 日曜日に映画を見に行きました。でも、あまり ( おもしろい→ )。
- ③ 去年の夏、阿波踊りを見ました。たくさんの人が来しました。( にぎやか→ )。
- ④ 先週のテストは ( かんたん→ )。でも、わたしは合格しました。

Answers: ①おいしいかったです ②おもしろくなくかったです / おもしろくありませんでした ③にぎやかでした ④かんた



# Events & Memoranda

## Shikoku Yokai Festival Presents: Konaki Jiji Matsuri 四国妖怪フェスティバル特別番外編！児啼爺祭り

A yokai festival will be held in Yamashiro-cho, Miyoshi City, the birthplace of the Konaki Jiji legend! Yokai-lovers from all around the country will gather and boast about their yokai! The festival will have a variety of events for both children and adults. You'll surely be possessed by old man Konaki! Participants are welcome to come in yokai cosplay. Admission is free.

Date and time: Sat. May 24 - Sun. May 25, 2025  
Pre-event (Saturday): 12:00-16:00  
Main Event (Sunday): 10:00-16:30

Location: Michi no Eki Oboke (1553-1 Kamina, Yamashiro-cho, Miyoshi City, Tokushima Prefecture)

Inquiries: Shikoku Yokai Festival Executive Committee Office  
Phone: 0883-84-1489  
Email: lapis@yamashiro-info.jp

児啼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！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。きっと児啼爺に取り憑かれることでしょう！妖怪コスプレでの参加も大歓迎。入場は無料です！

日時：2025年5月24日（土）～25日（日）  
土曜日（プレイベント）：12:00～16:00  
日曜日（メインイベント）：10:00～16:30

会場：道の駅 大歩危（徳島県三好市山城町上名 1553-1）

お問い合わせ：四国妖怪フェスティバル実行委員会事務局（道の駅 大歩危）  
TEL：0883-84-1489  
Email：lapis@yamashiro-info.jp

## Tokushima Marche: Ice Cream Grand Prix とくしまマルシェ・アイス GP

Join us for the annual Ice Cream Grand Prix where you can compare and vote for the best ice cream! Who will be crowned the Ice Cream Champion? We can't wait to find out! With the pleasant breeze from the Shinmachi river, this is the perfect time of year to go for a stroll and enjoy some ice cream.

Date and Time: Sunday, May 25, 2025  
9:00-14:00

Location: Shinmachi Boardwalk/Shinmachi Riverside Park

Inquiries: Tokushima Marche Office  
Phone: 088-678-2117  
Email: tokushima-marche@neovient.co.jp

Website: <https://tokushima-marche.jp/>

アイス頂上決戦！毎年恒例となったアイス GP。美味しいアイスクリームを食べ比べて投票に参加しましょう！今年は、どのお店がグランプリに輝くのか！？とても楽しみです。新町川の風が気持ちいい季節です。アイスクリームの食べ歩きをするのもよいですね。

日時：2025年5月25日（日）  
9:00～14:00

会場：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  
Email：tokushima-marche@neovient.co.jp

ホームページ： <https://tokushima-marche.jp/>

# Events & Memoranda

## Dogaku-ji Wind Chime Festival 童学寺 まけまけ風鈴祭り

Dogaku-ji Temple, the second temple of the Shikoku Bekkaku 20 temples pilgrimage, is known for its wisteria (which is designated as the Ishii Town flower) and is visited by many people throughout the year. Every year from spring to summer, the temple holds the まけまけ風鈴祭り, or “makemake wind chime festival” where approximately 1,500 wind chimes with wishes written on them decorate a corridor in the precincts of the temple. The festival is named “makemake,” which means “full to the point of overflowing” in the Tokushima dialect. It also sounds similar to “maken maken,” which means “we won’t lose!” The wind chimes are hung from a wind bell, which is believed to be a tool to ward off evil spirits, and put together, the name of the festival represents the idea that “with so many wind chimes (to the point of overflowing), we won’t lose to hardships.” The spectacle of the wind chimes ringing in the wind is truly magnificent.

Location: Dogaku-ji Temple, Ishii-cho, Myozai-gun, Tokushima Prefecture

Festival Period: From April 1, 2025 - August 31, 2025



四国別格二十霊場 第2番札所 童学寺は、石井町の花に指定されている藤の名所として知られており、お遍路さんをはじめ多くの人々が訪れます。春から夏にかけては毎年、願い事を書いた約1500個の風鈴が境内の回廊を彩る「まけまけ風鈴祭り」を開催しています。阿波弁で“あふれるほどの”を意味する「まけまけ」と「負けん負けん」をかけて名付けられ、魔よけの道具とされる風鐸（ふうたく）が由来の風鈴をつるし、「あふれるほどの風鈴で困難に負けない」という意味が込められています。風に揺られて風鈴が鳴り響く光景は見事です。

開催地：名西郡石井町石井字城ノ内 605  
童学寺

開催期間：2025年4月1日（火）～8月31日（日）



Photos by Rishmita Siyal

## Consultation 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. Consultation 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)