

awa life

Strawberry Picking in
Tokushima: A Sweet Memory
in 2026

February 2026

423

Yokai of Japan:
Konaki-Jiji

Slideshow Night

Nihongo Know-it-All:
Yep, There's a Kanji
for That



Ōji Shrine, Tokushima City

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

Welcome to February! While the weather outside may still be colder than some of us (certainly myself included) prefer, there's still plenty to look forward to in February. Personally, this is my favorite time of year to knock some books off of my "to read" list, as well as the ideal time for visiting an onsen. February is also an excellent time to enjoy delicious strawberries, which you can read more about on page 4.

Additionally, there are quite a few official and unofficial holidays in February! Grab some ehomaki sushi on the 2nd for Setsubun, celebrate Foundation Day on the 11th, have some chocolate on the 14th for Valentine's day, and take it easy for the Emperor's Birthday on the 23rd. We hope you have a great month!

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 ~400-700 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

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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ONE WORLD Event Impressions

By: Yoshiko Bando

The ONE WORLD Children's Support project is an initiative aimed at fostering international understanding and awareness of international cooperation among children who will shape the future through international exchange. As part of the ONE WORLD project initiatives, TOPIA participated in a career experience event organized by Tokushima City and the Myodo District PTA late last year. Over 40 companies and organizations from within the prefecture gathered, and elementary and junior high school students enjoyed career experiences at their respective booths.

At the TOPIA booth, 36 elementary and junior high school students challenged themselves to take on a consultation role for foreign residents in Tokushima. Foreign instructors from the United States, China, Kenya, Vietnam, and Mexico posed simple consultations to the children in Japanese, such as, "Please teach me how to write my name in katakana,"



"What are some foods you recommend from Tokushima?" "I don't understand the Japanese instructions I received from the hospital. Could you please explain them to me?" While some children were shy and struggled to speak out, they answered the questions by writing explanations on paper or using simple Japanese. Accompanying parents also shared feedback, saying, "This is

my first time hearing about TOPIA," "I have foreign employees at my company. I'd like to introduce them to TOPIA's Japanese classes," and "I didn't know Vietnamese people are the largest foreign group in Tokushima—this was very informative." We hope this experience

interacting with foreigners will inspire children and help them discover their dreams for the future.

Here is what some of the instructors had to say about the event:

- "I think this event gave the kids the opportunity to see that many diverse people live in Tokushima."

ONE WORLD Event Impressions

I hope this experience becomes a good memory for all participants and sparks their curiosity to explore the world."

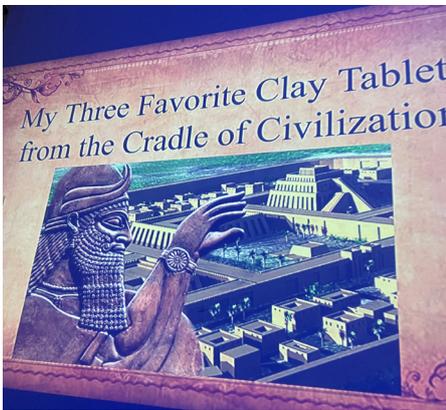
- "The first pair of children I interacted with were a first-grade girl and a kindergarten boy. The boy was very shy, avoiding eye contact and reluctant to speak. However, when I gave him a few panda stickers, he finally opened up and started talking. The girl affectionately called me "○○-chan,"

which warmed my heart. The stickers proved to be a wonderful icebreaker, closing the distance between us."

- "Since it was my first time participating, I was a little nervous at first. But the children reached out and made an effort to talk to me, explaining things carefully in simple Japanese. I was really surprised and moved by their kindness."

Slideshow Night

By: Riley Henke

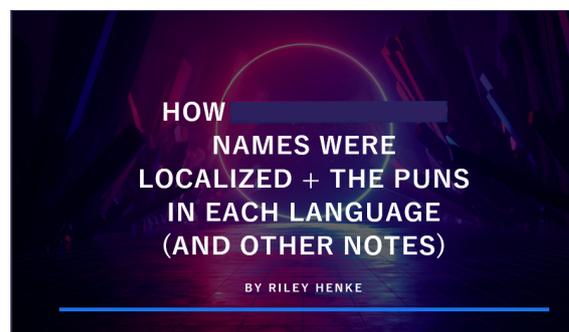


If you had 30 minutes to talk about anything you wanted to a willing audience, what would you talk about? Recently

I participated in a "slideshow night" with some friends where we did just that. I had a blast and learned a lot of new things, so I wanted to share the idea with you readers so you can gather some friends and try it yourself if you'd like!

First of all, what is a "slideshow night"? Each person makes a slideshow presentation on any topic they want (this is done ahead of time), and on the night of the event they will have around 30 minutes to present it. The topic can be educational, personal, niche, comedic—as long as the presenter is passionate and wants to talk about it, anything is fair game. There is a mutual understanding that you will listen enthusiastically to every presentation, even if it's something you wouldn't normally be interested in, and in turn, everyone will listen enthusiastically to yours. One of my friends suggested that we do this and offered to host it at their apartment since they had a projector that could project the presentations onto the wall. We also made it a sort of "potluck" where everyone brought snacks or drinks to share while we listened.

On the day of, we gathered early in the evening because we had 11(!) presentations to get through that night. Putting everyone's name into a roulette wheel, we spun to decide the order in which we would present. After that was decided, we were off to the races, starting strong with a presentation about ancient cuneiform tablets. Other presentation topics included how different cultures celebrate the dead, a trivia quiz with audience participation, a personal history of the presenter's participation in various fandoms over the years, the life and times of a little-known historical figure, and an in-depth analysis of the themes in a children's movie series. My own presentation was about the Japanese to English localization of a popular video game series, explaining how the humor is carried over in the English translation.



By watching everyone's presentations, not only was I able to learn more about topics I wouldn't have researched (or even known about) otherwise, I also got to learn more about my friends as people and what they're passionate about. If you've got a group of friends you'd like to try this out with, I highly recommend it!

Strawberry Picking in Tokushima: A Sweet Memory in 2026

By: Junko Kimura

In Tokushima, there are many activities to enjoy during the warmer seasons, such as mountain hiking, cycling, Awa Odori festivals, and surfing. However, when the colder season arrives, as it has now, the number of available activities tends to decrease.

Many of you may be eager to explore more of Tokushima even during the winter months. Can you guess a perfect activity for this season? Believe it or not, strawberry picking is a great winter experience. The strawberry picking season usually runs from January to May, with the best time to visit often being between January and March, when strawberries are at their sweetest.



I believe strawberries are one of the most popular fruits (technically, they are vegetables, but I still call them fruit!). When I was a child, I always got excited about eating strawberries and felt very elegant spreading rich condensed milk over them. I have always liked fruits with “berry” in their names. My grandmother planted a blueberry tree over 35 years ago, and it still bears fruit every year. I also planted blackberries myself a few years ago. I enjoy picking berries from my garden, but there is one problem: I have to deal with mosquitoes, bees, and other insects, especially during the very hot summer.

That is why strawberry picking in winter feels so special to me. It allows me to enjoy fresh berries in a comfortable environment without worrying about heat or insects, making it a perfect seasonal activity in Tokushima. Most strawberry picking takes place in greenhouses, so it can be enjoyed even during cold or rainy weather. Several varieties of strawberries are grown in Tokushima, and you may be able to taste and compare different types during a single visit.

Some farms provide condensed milk, but many strawberries are sweet enough to enjoy on their

own. However, you may get a little bored if you eat plain strawberries the entire time, so it can be fun to change the flavor. Some farms allow visitors to bring their own items. When I went, I brought condensed milk, fresh milk, pancakes, whipped cream, and a masher so I could make fresh strawberry milk. I also heard about a group that brought sponge cake and whipped cream to make a birthday cake topped with lots of strawberries. However, each farm has its own rules, so please be sure to check them on their website in advance, as well as opening days, prices, and reservation requirements.

To find a strawberry farm near you, you can search online for “strawberry picking in Tokushima” or “いちご狩り 徳島” (*ichigo-gari Tokushima*). Many places offer all-you-can-eat strawberry picking for a fixed time. I highly recommend making a reservation before you go, especially on weekends.



Strawberry picking in Tokushima is a sweet and memorable way to experience the region’s seasonal charm. Whether you are a local resident or an international visitor, spending time at a strawberry farm offers a chance to enjoy fresh fruit, connect with local agriculture, and appreciate the slower pace of rural life. During the strawberry season, a visit to a Tokushima strawberry farm is sure to leave you with a smile—and a sweet memory.

Yokai of Japan: Konaki-Jiji

By: Riley Henke

In this Yokai of Japan feature, we're going to talk about a yokai that has close ties with the Tokushima Prefecture—the Konaki-Jiji. Literally meaning “crybaby old man,” the konaki-jiji is said to take on the appearance of an elderly man dressed in baby clothes. These yokai dwell in remote, mountainous areas.

Legend has it that konaki-jiji hide in the mountains near roads and trails, and when a human passes within earshot, it begins to scream and cry just like a human baby. When someone pityingly picks it up, it suddenly becomes unbearably heavy and clings on so tightly that it is impossible to release. Even if one tries to put it down, the konaki-jiji clings on and refuses to let go, until the person is ultimately crushed to death under its weight.



The legend of the konaki-jiji spread during the Showa and Heisei eras and has since continued to gain popularity, in some part due to being featured in various media. Particularly, after being portrayed as a supporting character in Shigeru Mizuki's manga and anime series “GeGeGe no Kitaro,” the

konaki-jiji gained sudden fame and familiarity.

In 2001, Miyoshi City, Tokushima Prefecture, was officially recognized as the birthplace of the legend. A statue of the konaki-jiji and monument were erected, which have since become a tourist destination for yokai fans around the country. In 2010, the “Konaki Jiji no Sato: Yokai Yashiki” yokai museum opened at the Oboke Roadside Station within Miyoshi City, attracting many visitors. The area is home to many yokai legends aside from just the konaki-jiji, which you can read about at the museum. Overall, the area is a must visit for yokai lovers!

The legend of the konaki-jiji yokai actually originates right here in the Tokushima Prefecture. It is thought to be a

combination of what were once two separate yokai entries in the book *Kiyadaira no Mukashi Banashi*, which recorded Tokushima legends. This collection tells of one yokai crying with an eerie infant's voice in the mountains, and another that becomes heavy and refuses to be put down when picked up by humans. Popular theory is that these two tales may have merged to create the konaki-jiji.

Furthermore, it is said that in the Yamashiro area (currently Miyoshi city), where the legend originated, a real elderly man once roamed the streets, making strange cries that mimicked a baby's wail. He was apparently a deeply unsettling presence for children, leading parents



Signs introducing various Yokai near the "Yokai Yashiki" museum in Miyoshi, Tokushima

Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 魚釣り

By: Junko Kimura

徳島は、海と川が近くにあり、釣りを楽しめる場所がたくさんあります。初めて、釣りを
する人にも、とてもやさしい環境です。釣りにはいろいろな種類があります。初心者
は、海でのサビキ釣りやチョイ投げがおすすめです。

徳島の海でよく釣れる魚は、鱈、鯖、鰯などです。これらの魚は一年中釣ることが
できます。えさをつけて糸をたらずだけでも釣れることがあります。鱈や鯖は小さくても
元気で、初心者でも「釣れた!」と感じられる魚です。

川釣りでは、季節によって鮎や鰻を見ることができます。川で
釣りをするときは、場所や魚によって、許可やお金がある場合
があります。海の釣りは、ふつうは許可はいりませんが、探っては
いけない魚介類もいます。また、魚の中には毒がある魚もい
ます。釣りを始める前に必ず確認してください。

徳島では、釣りを楽しんでいる人がたくさんいます。もしかする
と、あなたの会社の人や友だちも釣りをしているかもしれません。魚で、季節の変わり
目を感じながら、徳島の食文化を知るよいきっかけになります。



Vocabulary List

環境 environment	おすすめ recommend	鮎 sweetfish	変わり目 transition;
初心者 beginner	鱈 horse mackerel	鰻 eel	turning point
サビキ釣り sabiki fishing	鯖 mackerel	許可 permission	きっかけ impetus;
チョイ投げ light casting	鰯 sardine	毒 poison	chance

Yep, There's a Kanji for That
By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all

You may be surprised to learn that most words in Japanese, even those that are typically written only in hiragana, actually have kanji, even though you may not see it written that way often, if ever. This month's Nihongo Know-it-all is all about words that you may not have realized had kanji! Here are some examples:

- おはようございます - お早う御座います (Good morning)
- ありがとうございます - 有難う御座います (Thank you)
- ごちそうさまでした - 御馳走様でした (Thank you for the meal)
- こんにちは - 今日は (Hello)
- あなた - 貴方 (You)
- する - 為る (To do)
- ちよっと - 一寸 (A little)
- それ - 其れ (That)
- たくさん - 沢山 (A lot)
- これ - 此れ (This)
- なるほど - 成程 (I see; indeed)



- にんじん - 人参 (Carrot)
- にんにく - 大蒜 (Garlic)
- りんご - 林檎 (Apple)
- ハサミ - 鋏 (Scissors)

Most Japanese people would be able to recognize these kanji, even if they're not used very often. However, there are some kanji that are so obscure, even Japanese people may not recognize them. Once, I used the kanji form of "kotatsu" (炬燵) when messaging a Japanese friend after reading it in a book. She had to look it up in a dictionary to know what I was talking about!

「^{どうしじしよけい}動詞辞書形／^{どうし}動詞ない形^{けい}＋よくなる」

This month we will study the phrase 「・・・よくなる」.

1 [^{どうしじしよけい}動詞辞書形＋よくなる]

Represents a change from something impossible to possible, or something not in practice being put into practice. It is used when referring to changes in ability, circumstances, or habits.

2 [^{どうし}動詞ない形^{けい}＋よくなる]

Conversely, when used with ^{けい}ない形, represents a change in something from possible to impossible, or from a state where an action is in practice to a state where it is no longer in practice. It is used to indicate that a previous situation is no longer the case.

1 [^{どうしじしよけい}動詞辞書形＋よくなります／よくなりました／よくなります*]

例: めがねをかければ、ホワイトボードの字が^じ見える^みようになります。If I put on glasses, I can (/become able to) read what's written on the whiteboard.

- 1) 今はインターネットで何でも^い調べられる^しようになりました。
- 2) コンビニでいろいろなことが^いできるようになりました。
- 3) 日本語の新聞が^よ読める^よようになります。
- 4) 来月からこの駅にも^と急行が^と止まる^とようになります。
- 5) このごろ野菜をたくさん^た食べる^たようになりました。



2 [^{どうし}動詞ない形^{けい}＋よくなります／よくなりました]

* [^{どうし}動詞なくなり^{どうし}ました] のほうがよく^{つか}使われます。

(^よ読める⇒^よ読めない⇒^よ読めなく、^い行ける⇒^い行けない⇒^い行けなく)

例: ①最近あまり肉を^た食べない^たようになりました。I haven't been eating much meat lately.

②1か月学校を休んだので、授業が^わわからなくなり^わました。Because I missed a month of school, I've fallen behind (/become unable to understand the materials) in class.

- 6) 注意したら、彼はここに^お自転車^おを置かない^おようになりました。
- 7) 病気になってから、お酒を^の飲まない^のようになりました。
- 8) 熱が出て、会議に^し出席でき^しなくなり^しました。
- 9) 年をとると、小さい字が^よ読め^よなくなり^よます。



Let's Practice! Fill in the () using the word bank below.

- 1) 日本の食べ物に慣れて、このごろさしみが() よくなりました。
- 2) けがをして、() よくなりました。／() になりました。
- 3) 妹はよくマンガを^よ読んで^よいましたが、このごろ小説を() よくなりました。
- 4) 急用ができて、約束の時間() になりました。すみません。
- 5) 大阪から東京まで新幹線に乗ると、今は2時間半で() よくなりました。

よ 読む、い 行ける、ある 歩けなく、た 食べられる、い 行けなく、し 試合に出られない

Answers: ①食べられる ②試合に出られない ③読む ④行けなく ⑤行ける

Events & Memoranda

Shikoku Sake Festival 2026 四国酒まつり 2026

The Shikoku Sake Festival is the premier New Year event representing Miyoshi City, the town of local sake. Join in Shikoku's largest sake festival where you can enjoy renowned sake creations from across Shikoku, with a focus on new products! ♪ Held every February, the biggest draw of this tasting event is the freedom to sample and compare different sake to find your perfect match! Featuring a battle royale of creative cocktails based on local sake from Shikoku's four prefectures, each garnished with regional specialties!

Date & Time: Saturday, February 21, 2026
Session 1: 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Session 2: 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Location: Miyoshi City Ikeda General Gymnasium
(2551-1 Machi, Ikeda-cho, Miyoshi City)

Inquiries: Awa Ikeda Chamber of Commerce and Industry
TEL: 0883-72-0143

『四国酒まつり』は地酒の町・三好市を代表する新春のイベントで、新酒を中心に四国各地の銘酒が楽しめる四国最大の酒の祭りです♪毎年2月に開催されるこの地酒試飲会では、自由に飲み比べて自分好みのお酒を探せるのが最大の魅力です！四国4県の地酒をベースに、各県の特産品をあしらった創作カクテルのバトルロイヤルもあり！

開催日時：2026年2月21日（土）
1部 10:00～12:30
2部 13:30～16:00

開催場所：三好市 池田総合体育館
(徳島県三好市池田町マチ 2551-1)

お問い合わせ：阿波池田商工会議所
Tel：0883-72-0143

For more
information and
ticket pricing scan
here →



38th Big Hina Matsuri 第38回ビッグひな祭り・阿波勝浦

The first Big Hina Matsuri was held in the spring of 1988 and will now be celebrated for the 38th time. Hina dolls that are no longer used are gathered from families all around the country, given a memorial service, and then displayed at this festival. At the center of the festival, you can find an 8-meter-high, 100-step podium decorated with approximately 30,000 hina dolls beautifully displayed.

Date & Time: Feb. 21(Sat.) – April 5 (Sun.), 2026
9:00 - 16:00

Location: Katsuura Doll Cultural Exchange Center

Fee: Adult 400 yen, Child (grade school) 100 yen

Inquiries: Big Hina Matsuri Executive Committee
TEL: 0885-42-4334



昭和63年の春に始まったビッグひな祭りは、今年で38回目を迎えます。本祭では、全国より、家庭で飾られなくなった雛人形を集め、供養し、展示させていただいております。場内には、中央にそびえ立つ高さ約8m「百段のひな壇」をはじめ、約3万体的雛人形が豪華絢爛に飾られています。

開催日時：2026年2月21日（土）～4月5日（日）
9:00～16:00

開催場所：勝浦町 人形文化交流館
勝浦郡勝浦町大字生名字月ノ瀬 35-1

料金：大人 400円
小学生 100円

お問い合わせ：ビッグひな祭り実行委員会
Tel：0885-42-4334



Events & Memoranda

AJET Musical 2026
AJET ミュージカル 2026

TOKUSHIMA AJET PRESENTS THE 30TH ANNUAL ENGLISH MUSICAL

WIZARD of OZ

オズの魔法使い

3月8日 15:00 石井町中央公民館 Ishii Central Community Center	3月14日 14:00 東みよし町役場 Higashimiyoshi Town Hall	3月21日 15:00 四国大学音楽ホール Shikoku University Music Hall
3月22日 15:00 脇町劇場 オデオン座 Wakimachi Theater Odeonza	3月28日 15:00 北島町創世ホール Kitajima Town Sousei Hall	 入場無料 先着順

中級英語のミュージカル

Tokushima AJET @sudachikun9090
facebook.com/AJETMusical

主催：AJET徳島
お問い合わせ：ラーフ・フリーダ
tokushimajetmusical@gmail.com

後 石井町国際交流協会、北島町国際交流協会、
様 TOPIA(公益財団法人徳島県国際交流協会)

SHIKOKU UNIVERSITY 四国大学
Corgi English

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 as well as 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)

Tel: 088-656-3312 or 088-656-3313 (allows for three-way conversations with an interpreter)