

# awa life

**Ask Your CIRs:  
Cold Remedies Edition**

May 2026

# 426

**Making Japanese Friends:  
An Ongoing Endeavor**

**Welcome Greetings  
from TOPIA Staff**

**Nihongo Know-it-All:  
So Close!**



View from the top of Mt. Bizan

**TOPIA**

## Awa Life is a Bi-monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

Welcome to May! Have you all got your Golden Week plans in order? While some prefer to use the long holiday to travel, many prefer to stay near home and simply enjoy the nice weather. However you choose to spend Golden Week this year, we hope you have a great time!

On another note, as you may have read on the notice included with this month's edition, Awa Life will be transitioning to a bi-monthly publication schedule starting in FY2026, publishing in odd-numbered months. That means that the next edition released after this one will be the July 2026 edition. There may be additional changes along the way, but we promise to do our very best to continue to make Awa Life jam-packed with fun, informative, interesting, funny, and thought-provoking content! We hope you'll stick along for the ride.

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](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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Xiaonan Qian, Huong Nguyen Thi, Ai Ohashi, Maasa Morita,  
Kaeyla Malloy, Tokushima CIRs, Miyui Okamoto, Takako Yamada

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## *Welcome Messages from TOPIA Staff*

### **Xiaonan Qian, Coordinator for International Relations**

**H**ello, everyone! I'm so happy to meet all of you here in beautiful prefecture of Tokushima. My name is Xiaonan Qian, and I'm from Jiangsu Province in China. Starting this April, I'll be working in Tokushima as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR). I'll also be taking charge of editing the Chinese language publication "Awa Seikatsu."

My hometown is an inland city in southern China, far from the sea. So, when I heard that my new assignment would be near the ocean, I was thrilled! I absolutely love seafood, and was already thinking about what dishes I would try even before arriving in Tokushima (lol). In any case, I'm both nervous and excited about the life awaiting me here in Tokushima.

I've loved anime since I was a child, and that's perhaps the reason that I ultimately chose to work and live in Japan. Besides that, I love searching for delicious food and fun places to visit. That's why traveling around, tasting local cuisine, and experiencing the local culture are some of my hobbies.

My work here in Tokushima is diverse, ranging from welcoming and assisting international visitors, interpreting and translation, coordinating

events that promote international understanding, to editing the "Awa Seikatsu" newsletter. Since this is my first job, there's a lot I don't know yet, and when I first arrived, I worried about whether I could



handle all these tasks. However, thanks to the warm support of my colleagues, I've gradually gained confidence in my abilities. Moving forward, I'll continue to work hard and strive to deliver excellent results in every task.

Finally, I feel truly honored to have come to Tokushima and become a part of this community. From now on, while enjoying Tokushima's delicious food and beautiful scenery, I'll continue to grow, chasing my dreams and doing my best to serve as a bridge between Japan and China.

Hello, Tokushima! I look forward to getting to know you from here on out.

## Welcome Messages from TOPIA Staff

**Ai Ohashi, Long-term Work Experience Trainee**

Hi everyone, it's nice to meet you. My name is Ai Ohashi, and I've joined TOPIA as a Long-Term Work Experience Trainee as of April. At TOPIA, I'll be responsible for the International Understanding Support Instructor program, organizing work experiences, and coordinating with schools. Born and raised in Tokushima, I started dancing the Awa Odori in junior high school, and I continue to participate to this day. Along with the main festival during Obon, I also perform at night shows at the Awa Odori Kaikan. At both, I'm always amazed by the number of visitors that come from not only other parts of Japan, but from all around



the world. I often find myself thinking "It's amazing that, out of the whole wide world, these people chose to visit Japan." And not only that, but out of all of Japan, the fact that they took up an interest in Tokushima Prefecture feels like a miracle to me. When I ask visitors where they are from, their answers span the whole globe, and I often wish I could communicate more with them in their various languages. During my time at TOPIA, I hope to learn more about multicultural understanding and coexistence, while continuing to spread the charm of Tokushima to people from all around the world. I'm looking forward to my time with all of you!

**Huong Nguyen Thi, Multilingual Consultation Staff - Vietnamese**

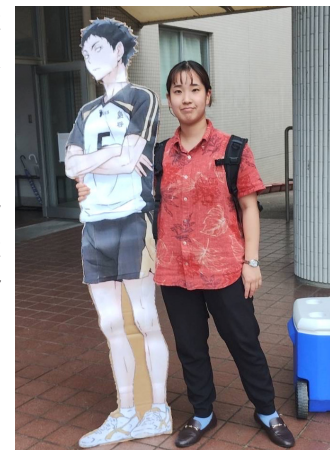
Hello! My name is Huong Nguyen Thi, and I've joined TOPIA as a Vietnamese Consultation Staff member as of this April. Born in Vietnam, I am now studying media here in Japan. I enjoy taking on the challenge of a new environment, and I'm always striving for personal growth through having various new experiences.

Throughout my time in Japan, I've come to take an interest in the different cultures and ways of thinking found in each region. In particular, I've found that Tokushima is not only rich in nature, but people as well; I feel that the people of Tokushima are full of warmth and value their ties to one another. During my time at TOPIA, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of Tokushima's culture and people while continuing to broaden my horizons. There are still many things I'm not yet familiar with, and I may need some help at first, but I'm going to do my best to get up to speed as quickly as possible and contribute to the best of my ability. I hope we can all get along!

**Maasa Morita, Tokushima JICA Desk**

Hello everyone! My name is Maasa Morita, and I have recently taken on the position as Coordinator for International Cooperation, or the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Tokushima Desk, at TOPIA. After serving as a JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteer in Uganda, Africa, I worked as a health and physical education teacher at a combined girls' junior and senior high school for four years, until this March. Moving forward, I hope to use my experiences so far to contribute to international cooperation and understanding in Tokushima. In particular, I'd love to draw on my experience as a P.E. teacher and create fun opportunities for everyone to enjoy exercising together!

Originally from Kochi Prefecture, I'm still new to living in Tokushima, but I love the Awa Odori and can't wait for this summer! I also enjoy hiking, and I can't wait to get out there and check out Tokushima's mountains. Please come visit TOPIA and tell me about all your favorite things about Tokushima—whether it's the food, nature, or specific places you recommend. I'm excited to get to know you all!



## Making Japanese Friends: An Ongoing Endeavor

By: Kaeyla Malloy

When I first envisioned moving to Japan, a large part of that vision was a brand new Japanese friend group who would instantly click with me and we would ride off into the Naruto Whirlpool sunset together. That may have been naive.

Now that I've settled in, I'm beginning to understand what that actually looks like. Moving to any country will mean taking time to settle and develop relationships, but that can be amplified in Japan. The first thing I didn't consider was the language barrier. It is much easier to be funny, get to know people and relate to them when you speak the same language.

Coming from zero Japanese ability to toddler conversational Japanese has definitely helped my endeavor to make Japanese friends, however there are only so many times you can say *寒い* ですね before it becomes a dead-end. A good example of where language can go wrong: I once told my co-workers that my father was moving to Tokushima permanently, rather than just visiting. The excitement in the room was instant — people were already planning welcome parties in their heads — and I had to very sheepishly correct myself. Embarrassing, yes, but that moment of shared laughter did more for those relationships than a dozen perfectly constructed sentences would have. Learning more Japanese has opened the world up exponentially, and even showing that you are trying will help — people will open up more, even if the conversation is broken or shallow.

The second flaw in my Japanese friend group plan was that there can be a real hesitancy to making new friends as an adult — as is true anywhere,

many people already have their circle and aren't necessarily looking to expand it. The way I have found to remedy this is that showing up consistently is what matters. I have joined some local clubs which don't necessarily rely on language, such as volleyball and boxing. I already did these in New Zealand so there was a sense of familiarity, and I could hit the ground running without needing the basics explained. At first, going to the classes was insanely scary — think the first day of school, but over and over again. Every time is the first day of school. However, slowly but surely, I started to see familiar faces and こんにちは is turned into お久しぶりです and 今日は良い天気ですね's. It's not perfect and I am still only at the "volleyball friends" or "boxing friends" level, but time has a way of breaking down the walls needed for the elusive new adult friendship, and I'm trusting the process.

Lastly, my biggest help has been initiating — being the one to make the first move. It's scary to be bold and start a conversation, especially if you are unsure whether the person is busy or wants to talk. However, the only way to find out is to make the first move and read the air, as they say. Most people will try and engage with you if you start the conversation, but please do read the air in case they seem busy or uncomfortable — people here tend to be too polite to say so. More often than not, when I started the conversation, especially in Japanese, some kind of rapport was built, and that has made all the difference.

I won't pretend any of this is groundbreaking, and I am still a long way from having close Japanese friends. But if you are struggling to make new friends here, you are certainly not alone. I believe that with a bit of effort, patience, and a willingness to embarrass ourselves along the way, we could all be heading to the Naruto Whirlpools before we know it — and that journey, however messy, is worth every awkward moment.



Kaeyla (left) and friends

こんにちは is turned into お久しぶりです and 今日は良い天気ですね's.



## Ask Your CIRs: Cold Remedies Edition

In this edition of Awa Life, we are continuing the "Ask Your CIRs" segment! In Tokushima Prefecture, we have nine Coordinators for International Relations (or CIRs for short) representing six different countries. This time, as we attempt to kick the last of hay fever to the curb, we asked CIRs to answer:

### In your country, what are some classic go-to foods or drinks for when you are sick? Is there anything special you do to cure a cold?

#### Le from China:

In China, there are several staple foods and drinks for when one is feeling unwell or has caught a cold. For example, some of the go-to foods include porridges and ramen. Other common dishes include chicken and carrot soup, ginger water made by boiling ginger and sugar together, and more. Overall, the philosophy is to try to eat foods that are easy to digest and warm the body from the inside out. For what to drink when one isn't feeling well, honey lemon tea, tea with loquat syrup dissolved in it, ginger cola made by simmering ginger and cola, and warm water are some of the basic options. As for cold remedies, getting plenty of sleep is viewed as absolutely essential. Also common practice are taking traditional Chinese medicine and immersing oneself in a warm bath to warm the body.

#### Riley from the U.S.A:

In the U.S., I think it's safe to say that chicken noodle soup has been deemed THE classic "sickness" food (although I don't actually have it all that often in real life). Aside from that, any food that is bland enough to not be upsetting or too heavy on the stomach is good. For example, some will eat saltine crackers, plain toast, or just soup broth. On the drinks side of things, in my household we normally drank sports drinks when we didn't feel well to "replenish electrolytes." Or, for an upset stomach, we drank clear sodas like Sprite or Seven-Up to help. I'm not sure what the scientific basis of this is (or if there even is one) but looking it up online it seems to be fairly common, so maybe there is something to it! If the issue was a sore throat specifically, we may drink hot tea with honey as well. Overall, the general attitude was to stay well hydrated and get lots of rest to get over a cold.

#### Miki from the Philippines:

In the Philippines, when someone is unwell, they usually eat a porridge dish called 'Lugaw', also known as 'Okayu' in Japan. While the concept is the same, Lugaw has more toppings compared to Okayu. Aside from it being delicious, it contains nutrients similar to a full meal so it can act as a substitute without actually forcing yourself to eat heavy meals when you lack appetite. In addition, homemade remedies like Oregano Juice and Honey Ginger Tea are increasingly becoming more popular. Boil some Oregano leaves or ginger then add calamansi juice (for oregano juice only) and honey to taste.

#### Lisa from Germany:

In Germany, a classic food for when you have a cold is chicken soup. Most people will also probably drink some sort of herbal tea like chamomile or sage tea. But tea is actually not only used for drinking. Oftentimes the sick person will hold their head covered with a towel above a bowl of hot tea as it is believed that inhaling the steam is very beneficial for a quick recovery. Another way herbs are used for curing the cold or at least alleviating the symptoms are cough drops which come in all shapes, sizes and flavors.

#### Rishmita from India:

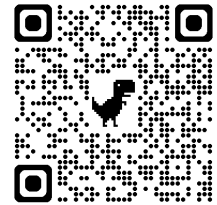
As we all know, India is known as the land of spices. But, "Spices" are not just meant to be 'spicy'. In India, we use crushed cardamom for sweetness, cloves for toothache, saffron for glow and our favourite antioxidant: Turmeric, for...too many things. Not only when we are sick, most of us have "Haldi ka doodh" (Turmeric milk, a mom's favourite), in our day to day lives as turmeric is a natural antioxidant and has anti-inflammatory properties. We also have "Kadha", an ayurvedic drink made by boiling various spices like ginger, cloves, cinnamon etc. and maybe some jaggery for sweetness. It boosts your immunity and is said to cure a cold faster. Food wise, like most countries, we have porridge as well. "Khichdi", is a porridge made with lentils and rice, which even though it is associated with being sick, can be pretty delicious. ^^



Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: とくしまマルシェ

By: Miyui Okamoto

毎月 最後の 日曜日に 行われる 「とくしまマルシェ」。徳島駅から 歩いて 約6~8分の しんまちボードウォークで 開かれています。マルシェでは、徳島で 育った 新鮮な 野菜や 果物、肉や 魚も 売っています。飲食店も 出店しているので、おいしい料理や コーヒーなどを 楽しめます。また、月ごとに 異なる テーマで フェアが 開催されるので、毎月 行っても おもしろいです。とくしまマルシェで 素敵な 日曜日を 過ごしてみても いかがでしょうか？



とくしまマルシェのウェブサイト

Vocabulary List

まいつき 毎月 every month	しゅってん 出店 to set up a booth/stall	フェア fair (event)
しんせん 新鮮 fresh	つき 月ごと each month	
いんしょくてん 飲食店 restaurant(s)	こと 異なる to vary/differ	

So Close!

By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all

Sometimes in Japanese you will come across two words that seem very similar, but have slightly different meanings or nuances. In some cases, they may even share the same kanji, or have different kanji but the same pronunciation, making it even harder to distinguish between them. In this Nihongo Know-it-all, let's take a look at similar word pairs and explore the differences between them.



ねる vs 眠る – While sometimes interchangeable, these two words have slightly different meanings. If you look them up in a dictionary, it will tell you both mean “to sleep,” but in terms of nuance, 寝る can be understood as “to go to bed” or “to go to sleep (on purpose)”, whereas 眠る can be thought of as meaning “to fall asleep,” with no indication of intent or willingness. Furthermore, while 寝る often refers to the quantity or duration of sleep, 眠る often refers to the quality. For example, よく寝た means “I got so much sleep,” whereas よく眠れた means “I slept so well (deeply).”

とじる vs 閉める – These words share the same kanji, and both mean “to close.” So, what's the difference? Mostly, these two words indicate different movements, and are therefore used with different nouns. For example, 閉じる is ① “to close” by taking something that is expanded and return it to its original state, or ② to bring something ongoing to an end. For example, you can 閉じる a book, your eyelids, an umbrella, a webpage, a meeting, or even your heart (in a psychological sense). On the other hand, 閉める is often used when ① closing something along a flat plane by sliding it, etc., such as a window, a sliding door, drawers, curtains, or ② when physically shutting off passage to somewhere or preventing movement of something, like a valve, a lock, or a faucet.

## 助詞「に」、「まで」、「までに」

## ① 時を示す言葉 + 「に」

◎ When a specific time, date, or year is referred to, 「に」 is necessary.

- ・わたしは2020年に大学に入学しました。
- ・3月20日に、日本へ来ました。
- ・6時に起きます。
- ・クリスマスに、パーティをします。(Christmas is December 25<sup>th</sup>)
- ・今年の誕生日に、どんなプレゼントがほしいですか。
- ・何時に帰ってきますか。



◎ For words that show a relative time (a time that changes depending on when it is mentioned), such as 「今日」「明日」「今朝」「今週」「今月」「今年」 or 「いつ」, 「に」 is not necessary.

- ・今朝に、東京から帰ってきました。
- ・きのうに、会社を休みました。
- ・去年に、日本へ来ました。



◎ For days of the week, such as 日曜日, and other words such as あさ、ひる and よる, the use of 「に」 is optional.

- ・土曜日に、北海道へ行きます。
- ・土曜日に、北海道へ行きます。

◎ For questions, 「何時」「何日」「何月」 and 「何年」 need 「に」. However, 「いつ」 doesn't.

- ・何時に帰ってきますか
- ・いつに帰ってきますか

Let's Practice! ① Fill in the blanks with 「に」 when it is necessary, or 「×」 when it is not.

1. 来年 ( )、国へ帰ります。
2. 2022年 ( )、日本へ来ました。
3. 日曜日 ( )、コンサートに行きます。
4. ゴールデンウィーク ( )、旅行します。
5. 午後9時 ( )、ニュースが始まります。



## ② 時を示す言葉 + 「まで」 / 「までに」

◎ 「まで」 is used to indicate the ending time. 「〇〇まで」 means "until 〇〇".

- ・毎日、6時まで働きます。
- ・1学期は、7月20日までです。

◎ 「までに」 is used to indicate a deadline. 「〇〇までに」 means "by/before 〇〇".

- ・15日までに、書類を出してください。
- ・寮には、午後10時までに帰ってきてください。

Let's Practice! ② Fill in the blanks with 「まで」 or 「までに」.

1. この図書館の本は、5月21日 ( ) 借りられますから、21日 ( ) 返してください。
2. 65歳 ( ) 会社をやめたいです。
3. 65歳 ( ) 働きます。

Answers: ① 1. × 2. に 3. に / × 4. に 5. に ② 1. まで、までに 2. までに 3. まで

# Events & Memoranda

## Machi ★ Asobi vol. 30 マチ★アソビ vol. 30

On May 16 and 17, 2026, Machi Asobi will return to Tokushima for its 30th year! With over 100 events planned, including stages for the anime "Demon Slayer" and the visual-novel-soon-to-be-animated-film "Witch on the Holy Night," this year's festival will be the largest in history.

2026年5月16日(土)・17日(日)、マチアソビ vol. 30 の開催が決定しました。アニメ「鬼滅の刃」ステージ、「魔法使いの夜」等、過去最大規模の100を超えるイベントが実施されます。

For the latest information, visit the website →



←最新情報はホームページにて

Date: Saturday, May 16, 2026 – Sunday, May 17, 2026

開催期間：2026年5月16日(土)～  
2026年5月17日(日)

Location: Tokushima City, Tokushima Prefecture

開催場所：徳島県徳島市

Organizer: Machi ★ Asobi (NPO)

主催：特定非営利活動法人マチ★アソビ

## TOKUSHIMA COFFEE CULTIVATE

An event that coffee lovers won't be able to resist, held under the theme "A Cup to Warm the Heart." Now in its second year, this event will once again feature carefully selected coffee shops from all over the country. Special tickets offering the chance to sample different coffees will be available on the day, so why not explore and find your favorite flavor? Of course, there will also be plenty of food booths serving sweets and other treats, so even family members, partners, and friends who don't drink coffee can enjoy the event.

「心うずめく一杯を」をテーマに開催される、コーヒー好きになたまらないイベント。昨年に引き続き2度目となる今回も、全国各地から選りすぐりのコーヒー自慢のお店が出店します。当日は飲み比べができるお得なチケットも販売されるので、好みの味を探してみるのもいいかもしれません。もちろん、スイーツなどフードブースも充実しているので、コーヒーが飲めない家族や恋人、友だち同士でも楽しめますよ。

Date: Sat. May 23, 2026 - Sun., May 24, 2026  
@10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

開催期間：2026年5月23日(土)～  
2026年5月24日(日) 10:00～16:00

Location: Shinmachi Boardwalk and surroundings, Tokushima City

開催場所：しんまちボードウォーク周辺、徳島市

Admission: Free

料金：入場無料

Inquiries: Instagram DM (@tokushima\_coffee\_fes)

問い合わせ：InstagramのDM (@tokushima\_coffee\_fes)



# Events & Memoranda

## Dogaku-ji Temple 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 name, “*makemake*,” 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.

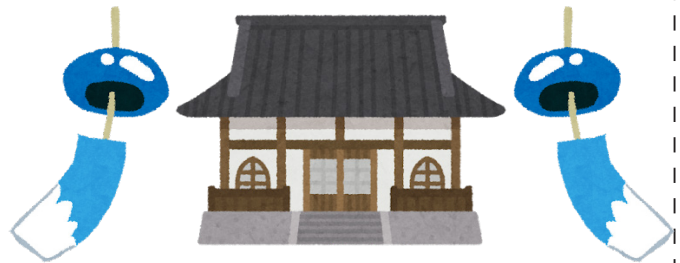
Festival Period: From April 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026

Location: Dogaku-ji Temple, Ishii-cho, Myozaigun, Tokushima Prefecture

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を訪れます。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。

開催期間: 2025年4月1日(火)～8月31日(日)

開催場所: 名西郡石井町石井字城ノ内605 童学寺



### Important Notice:

There was an error in the application deadline for the Japanese Speech Contest published in the April edition of Awa Life. The correct date is **May 24**, not May 21. We apologize for the mistake.

## 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)