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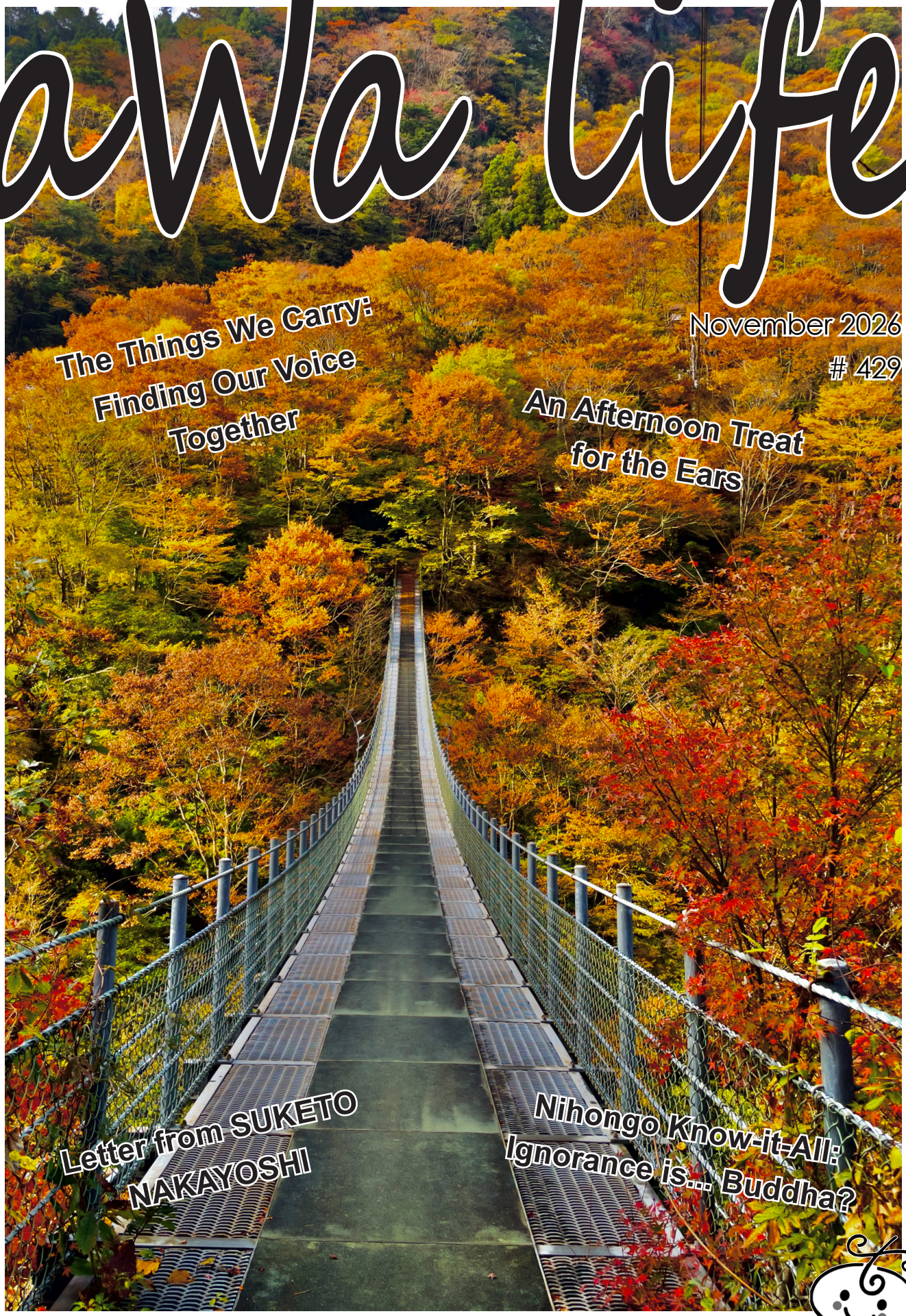
November 2026
429

The Things We Carry: Finding Our Voice Together

An Afternoon Treat for the Ears

Letter from SUKETO NAKAYOSHI

Nihongo Know-it-All: Ignorance is... Buddha?



Suspension Bridge of Higashi-Iya (Ryugugake Park), Miyoshi City

TOPIA

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

Happy November! It's finally that time of year that we get to appreciate the fall foliage, or *momiji*, in all its glory. In fact, we've included the Tokushima fall foliage map for 2026 in the events section of this edition so you can plan your fall outings! I always enjoy this time of year because it feels like one of the best times to pick up a new hobby, or return to an old one. For me, it's often reading or checking out my local coffee shops. Even the little things feel more special when there's that autumn chill in the air.

In other news, as hard as it is to believe, this is the last Awa Life edition of 2026! Our next edition will be coming to you in January 2027. I don't know about you all, but to me, it feels like the years just keep passing by faster and faster. Although its still a while off, we hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and start the new year feeling refreshed both mentally and physically.

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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An Afternoon Treat for the Ears

By: Qian Xiaonan

On August 9, I went with a colleague from TOPIA to see a concert by the University of Tokyo Faculty of Music Orchestra, held at Murasaki Hall at Tokushima Bunri University. I still remember how, when my colleague first invited me, I felt a mix of curiosity and nervousness. As I pendulated between those two emotions, the day of the concert had snuck on me before I knew it.



That day, after meeting up with my colleague, we soon made for the concert venue. As soon as we set foot on the Tokushima Bunri University campus, we saw large crowds of people coming from all directions heading toward the same destination as us. It was then that we realized for the first time just how much excitement and popularity this concert had gathered. When we arrived at the venue, a large stone monument bearing the words “Murasaki Hall” immediately caught our eye. While waiting for the performance to begin, I looked around and noticed that some audience members had even come wearing *yukata* and other formal attire.

Upon entering the concert hall, the first thing that caught my eye was the massive stage. The room itself was a three-story structure, but nearly all the attendees were gathered on the first floor, with the rare exception scattered about on the second and third floors. On the stage, chairs and music stands were set up for the performers. A large, circular lighting rig completely encompassed the stage, and the moment I saw it, I thought, “I bet the view when the lights come on during the actual performance is going to be amazing.” (Sure enough, during the subsequent performance, the magnificent scene that unfolded before my eyes did not disappoint.) Seeing this only made me that much more excited to hear the performance that was to follow.

When the time came for the show to start, the

An Afternoon Treat for the Ears



musicians took to the stage one after another, each with their instrument in tow. The conductor was the renowned Toshifumi Tashiro, and a total of three pieces were performed during the concert: Nicolai's Overture to "The Merry Wives of Windsor", Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique". I can practically still hear the sounds from that day—beginning with just the violins, the trumpets and trombones soon joined in, and finally, all the instruments played in symphony. From start to finish, I listened, so moved that I actually got goosebumps. Needless to say, the impact was profound.

At first, I was nervous that I would feel out of place in the formal concert atmosphere or that I would stick out, but thanks to the orchestra's skilled playing, I forgot about where I was and simply became immersed in a sea of music. Several times during the performance, I found myself surprised to remember that the performers were college students still in their early twenties. As the concert neared its conclusion, I felt reluctant to see it end. Finally, however, the concert drew to a close, as Toshifumi Tashiro waved his baton one final time. The audience responded with a resounding round of applause that seemed to go on forever. Even after leaving the venue, we were still basking in the afterglow of the incredible and evocative performance.



Standing at the entrance to the venue and looking once more at the stone monument engraved with the words "Murasaki Hall," I felt completely different from when I first stood here earlier that day. If my initial feelings were a mix of curiosity and nerves, my feelings in that moment were nothing but bright and cheerful. Through this experience, I gained new insights into the world of concerts, something that had previously felt out of reach. And thanks to this concert, I feel even more excited about the possibility of participating in similar events and having even more new experiences in the future.



ONE WORLD: Try Children's Games from Around the World!
ONE WORLD 子ども支援事業：外国の子ども遊びに挑戦！

TOPIA will be participating in the "Living Together in Tokushima Festival 2026" and introducing fun games from around the world! For more information, visit TOPIA's homepage.

Date & Time: Sunday Nov. 22, 10:00-16:00
Venue: Tokushima 21st Century Cultural Information Center, Sudachi-kun Theatre

TOPIAは「とくしま共に生きるフェスタ2026」に参加し、外国の子ども遊びを紹介します！一緒に遊んでみませんか？詳細については、TOPIAのホームページにてご覧ください。

日時：11月22日（日）10:00～16:00
会場：徳島県立二十一世紀館 すだちくん森のシアター

The Things We Carry: Finding Our Voice Together

By: Hena Zarrin

When a woman moves away from her home country and begins a new life in Japan, people often notice the positive side first. They may see the safety, the culture, the opportunities, or the excitement of living somewhere new. What is less visible are the small difficulties that can slowly become part of everyday life.

Through my work as a mental health supporter in Tokushima, I have spoken with many foreign women about their experiences of living in Japan. Some conversations have been light, while others have been quite emotional. Over time, I began to understand that adjusting to a new country is not only about learning the language or becoming familiar with a different culture. It can also affect a person's confidence, independence, relationships, and sense of belonging.

For mothers, their children's school life can become one of the biggest concerns. A child may need time to make friends, understand classroom routines, and feel comfortable in a new environment. At the same time, the mother is also trying to understand a school system that may be completely unfamiliar to her. Things such as school notices, parent meetings, communication with teachers, homework instructions, and school events can become stressful when everything is written or explained in Japanese. A mother may genuinely want to support her child, but sometimes she is not fully sure what the school is asking her to do. That can leave her feeling worried or even helpless.



Yellow Lady Banks Rose - Symbolizes New Beginnings

Even ordinary daily tasks can become surprisingly difficult. I have heard women talk about struggling to buy a train or bus ticket, finding the correct platform, or understanding announcements at a station. These may sound like small problems, but when you do not speak the language confidently, getting lost can feel frightening. Asking someone for help is not always easy when you are unsure how to explain what you need.



Cosmos - Symbolizes Harmony

Healthcare can also be challenging. Some women have told me that they found it difficult to look for a gynecologist because they were worried about communicating in Japanese. Medical situations are already stressful, and this can become even harder when the issue is personal, sensitive, or related to pregnancy. Being able to explain symptoms clearly and understand what a doctor is saying is very important, yet not every woman feels confident doing this in another language.

Another issue that comes up often is loneliness. Many foreign women are living far away from their parents, siblings, and old friends. Their husbands may spend long hours at work, and building new friendships can take time. When language becomes a barrier, even simple conversations can feel difficult. Some women may spend many hours at home without having someone nearby with whom they can speak openly. This kind of loneliness is not always obvious from the outside.

I have also met women who are highly educated and experienced, but still find it difficult to continue their careers in Japan. Some hold master's degrees or have years of professional experience in their home countries. However, limited Japanese language ability can reduce the number of jobs available to them. For someone who was independent and professionally active before moving to Japan, this change can be difficult to accept.

The Things We Carry: Finding Our Voice Together

What I have learned from these women is that their experiences are not about blaming Japan, Japanese society, or any particular person. Moving to another country naturally brings challenges. Learning a new language, understanding unfamiliar social rules, and building a new support network all take time.

Sometimes, what helps most is not a complicated solution. It may simply be someone explaining something patiently, listening without judgment, offering help when a person looks confused, or making an effort to include someone in a conversation.



Pink Rose - Symbolizes Gratitude

Small acts like these can have a much bigger effect than we realise. When foreign women feel that they are being listened to, respected, and welcomed, they gradually become more confident in their daily lives. More importantly, they begin to feel that they are not just living in Japan as outsiders, but that they are becoming part of the community they now call home.

This is exactly why we created SORA Women Tokushima (Supportive, Open, Resilient Alliance for Women in Tokushima). We are an independent organization co-founded and run collectively by a team of women. Our mission is to create a safe community where women with international roots can support one another. Together, we host listening circles, offer multilingual guidance, and help members navigate local resources to ensure no one has to face these challenges alone. If you're interested in getting involved, reach us at sora.women.tokushima@gmail.com!

Letter from SUKETO NAKAYOSHI

By: Taeko Sanda (Center for Early Childhood Education and Care SUKETO NAKAYOSHI)

The heat has subsided, and the chill of the early mornings and evenings has started to creep in. I don't know about you, but for me, this is the time of year when I start wanting to go outside. And it's not just me—Children love to be active and move their bodies, too. While it's also important for them to play quietly indoors at times, taking full advantage of the nice weather to play outside and get plenty of exercise is crucial for a child's physical development. Why not take a walk with your children here in nature-rich Tokushima and enjoy the autumn atmosphere?





In autumn, you can find plenty of fallen leaves, nuts, and insects at your local park. Just step outside your door and you'll find yourself saying, "Look, I found a little bit of fall!" By the way, my favorite place in Tokushima City to go for a walk, play, and experience the fall atmosphere is Tokushima Central Park. It's the perfect spot to enjoy the season to the fullest. The autumn foliage on Mt. Shiroyama and Mt. Bizan, both visible from the park, is absolutely stunning. If you'd like, you can even challenge yourself to take a short hike up one of them. However, the sun is still strong and the lingering summer heat can be intense, so don't forget to wear a hat and stay hydrated. I hope you enjoy Tokushima's autumn to the fullest!

Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 徳島の伝統工芸「阿波正藍しじら織」

By: Junko Kimura



Photo provided by Phuong Thinh

徳島には、昔から 作られているものが ありま す。その一つが「阿波正藍しじら織」です。一般には「しじら織」と 呼ばれています。

「阿波」は、昔の 徳島県の 名前です。「正藍」は、藍の 葉から作った 染料を 使って、昔からの 方法で 布を 染めることです。

しじら織は、明治時代の 初めごろに 織られるように なったと 言われています。あるとき、濡れた 布を そのまま 太陽の 光で 乾かしたところ、布の 表面に 細かい 凸凹ができました。これが、しじら織が できる きっかけに なったと 言われています。この凸凹を「しぼ」と呼びます。

昔は、着物や 浴衣などに 使われていました。今は、シャツや バッグ、財布など、いろいろな 物に使われています。色や 模様も たくさんあります。

みなさんも、徳島で「阿波正藍しじら織」の 商品を 探してみませんか？シャツや バッグなど、身近なところで 徳島の 伝統を 感じることができます。

Vocabulary List

伝統工芸 traditional craft	染める to dye	きっかけ impetus; start
一般 in general; commonly	織る to weave	
染料 dye	凸凹 bumps; roughness	

Ignorance is...Buddha?
By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all



If you're a long-time Awa Life reader, you may remember back to when we featured the phrase 一石二鳥 (two birds with one stone) and discussed how it originates from the English phrase. Well, this month I thought we could delve further into that idea and look at other phrases that have a direct translation in Japanese that mean the same thing as the English. Let's get to it!

隣の芝生は青く見える - "The grass is always greener on the other side." Okay, so technically the Japanese phrase translates to "the lawn of your neighbor looks blue(r than your own)." However, if you've spent enough time studying Japanese, you'll know that this whole "blue" vs. "green" business is nothing new. In fact, it's not uncommon for 青い (blue) to be used to describe natural green colors, like grass or leaves. This Japanese idiom originated as a translation of the popular English phrase.

ローマは一日にして成らず - "Rome wasn't built in a day." It's unknown exactly how this translated phrase made it to Japan from the West, but it's said that it has been in use here since before the 1900's.

恋は盲目 - "Love is blind." This is a quote from Shakespeare that was translated directly into Japanese.

知らぬが仏 - "Ignorance is Buddha." In English, we say "ignorance is bliss," but in Japanese, it's Buddha. Alright, so I admit this one is an outlier, not only because is it not strictly a word-for-word match, also because it doesn't actually originate from the similar English phrase. The idiomatic meaning and usage are the same across both languages, however.

TOPIA

Japanese Lesson

By: Yoko Aoki

「受身文① 私は 先生に ほめられました」

This month, we will begin our studies on 受身文, or passive sentences.

1. How to form the passive voice (受身形) using passive verbs (受身動詞)

1 ＜1グループ動詞（五段動詞、u-verb）＞

書く→書**か**＋**れる**、 話す→話さ＋れる、 読む→読ま＋れる

2 ＜2グループ動詞（一段動詞、ru-verb＞

食べる→食べ＋**られる**、 開ける→開けられる 見る→見＋られる

3 ＜3グループ動詞「する」「来る」＞

する→**される**、 発明する→発明される

来る→**来られる**、 連れて来る→連れて来られる

☆ Passive verbs (受身動詞) are conjugated the same as 一段動詞, or ru-verbs.

例：書かれます、書かれる、書かれて、書かれた、書かれない、

2. Passive sentences ①

1 Sentences where the person who experiences the action or effect of the action is the subject

*The doer of the action is indicated by a subsequent「に」.

私は 先生に ほめられました。I was complimented by my teacher.

（Non-passive version → 先生は 私を ほめました。My teacher complimented me.）

私は 先生に ほめられて、うれしかったです。I felt happy when I was complimented by my teacher.

山田さんは 部長に しかられました。Yamada was scolded by the manager.

（Non-passive version → 部長は 山田さんを しかりました。The manager scolded Yamada.）

山田さんは 部長に しかられたことがありません。Yamada has never been scolded by the manager.

2 Sentences where an action done to someone's property causes that person inconvenience or confusion.

*The item (i.e. wallet, camera, foot, etc.) belonging to the person is indicated by a subsequent「を」.

旅行中 私は 財布を とられてしまいました。I had my wallet stolen during my travels.

私は 弟に 大切なカメラを こわされました。I had my beloved camera broken by my little brother.

電車の中で、私は 足を 踏まれました。（○）I had my foot stepped on in the train.

私の足は 踏まれました。（×）

Let's Practice! Choose the correct word from the word bank and use its passive form to fill in the blanks ( ) below.

例）電車の中で、隣の人に メールを（ 見られ ）ました。

1. 部長に レポートの書き方について（ ）ました。
2. 子どもに 大切なドレスを（ ）ました。
3. アンさんに パーティーに（ ）ました。
4. 私は いつも 母に 買い物を（ ）ます。
5. 誰かに 傘を（ ）ました。
6. 外国人に 英語で 道を（ ）、びっくりしました。



見る、	頼む、	誘う、	聞く、	汚す、	まちがえる、	注意する

Answers: ① 注意され ②汚され ③誘われ ④頼まれ ⑤まちがえられ ⑥聞かれて

Events & Memoranda

Misato Plum Wine Festival
美郷梅酒まつり

Boasting the title of the first nationally designated "plum wine zone," the Misato plum wine festival continues this year. At this event you can sample a variety of plum wines and foods at four different venues, where sets of five drink tickets are available for 1,500 yen. Why not unwind and enjoy the flavors of autumn in Misato, a place brimming with rich natural beauty.

Dates: November 28 (Sat) – November 29 (Sun)
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Venues: Misato Bussankan, Tanenoya, Higashino Liqueur Distillery, Fuji Agricultural Cooperative
Note: Free shuttle bus service will be available.

For Inquiries: 0883-43-2574 (Misato Umeshu Festival Executive Committee Secretariat)

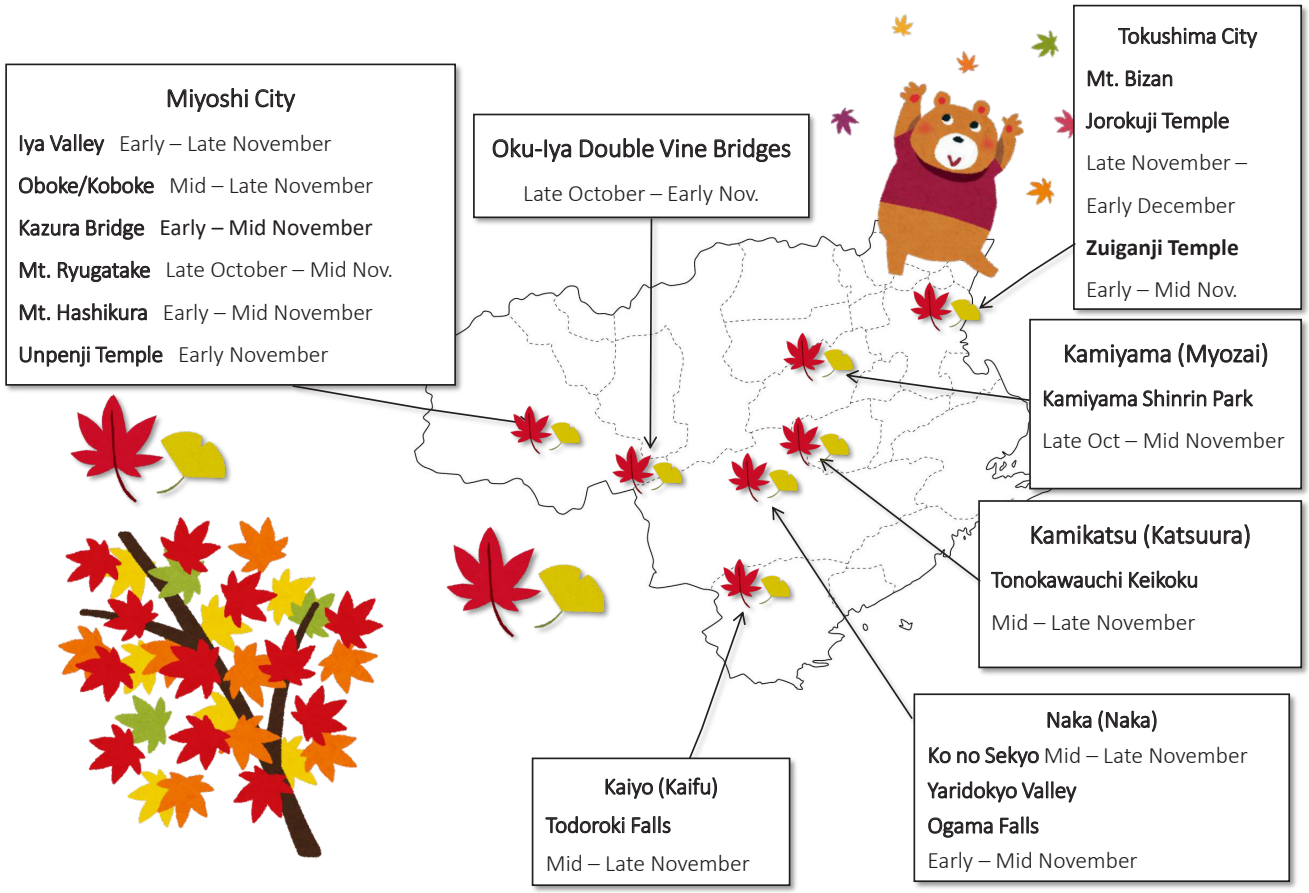
全国初の「梅酒特区」徳島県吉野川市美郷地区で、今年も梅酒まつりを開催されます。開催期間中は、4ヶ所の会場で、色々な種類の梅酒や食事が味わえます。お得な梅酒クーポン券は5枚綴り1,500円で、当日各会場で購入できます。秋の味覚を楽しみながら、のんびりゆったりしませんか？豊かな自然あふれる美郷へ行ってみてはいかがでしょう。

期間：11月28日（土）～11月29日（日）
10:00～15:00

施設名：美郷物産館、たねのや、東野リキュール製造場、農事組合法人フジ
備考：無料シャトルバス運行

お問い合せ：0883-43-2574（美郷梅酒まつり実行委員会事務局）

Tokushima Fall Foliage Map 2026
徳島県紅葉案内図 2026



Events & Memoranda

Vintage Fashion Market in Miyoshi
三好のヴィンテージ・ファッション・マーケット

A gathering of carefully selected vintage shops from across the country! Plus, there will be a raffle for coupons and special vintage items, the Awa Odori dance festival (Sunday only), and food vendors. Come find that one special piece—a unique item steeped in history and time—that you'll never find in mass-produced clothing.

Date & Time: Nov. 14 (Sat) – Nov. 15 (Sun)
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Venue: Yoshinogawa Highway Oasis
1650 Ashiro, Higashi-Miyoshi-cho, Miyoshi-gun

全国から厳選されたヴィンテージショップが大集合！さらに、クーポンやスペシャルヴィンテージアイテムが当たる抽選会や、阿波おどり（日曜のみ）、フード販売もあり。大量生産では出会えない、背景や時間をまとった、自分だけの特別な一着を探しに行こう。

開催期間：11 月 14 日（土）～ 11 月 15 日（日）
9:00 ～ 17:00

開催場所：吉野川ハイウェイオアシス
徳島県三好郡東みよし町足代 1650

A Nap at the Planetarium
熟睡プラ寝たリウム



Whether you're wide awake, dozing off, or fast asleep—all are welcome! Relax with a special show designed to help you sleep soundly♪

Date & Time: November 23, 2026 (Mon., Holiday)
3:40 PM – 4:30 PM

Venue: Asutamuland Planetarium

完徹、うとうと、熟睡大歓迎！快眠のための特別投映でリラックス♪満天の星があなたを眠りへと誘います。

開催日時：2026/11/23（月・祝）15:40 ～ 16:30

開催場所：あすたむらんど　プラネタリウム

TOPIA Holiday Closure Notice



Please note that TOPIA will be closed from Tuesday, December 29 - Sunday, January 3, 2027 for the New Years holidays. We wish you all a happy holiday and we will see you next year!



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 tourist information to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Consultation in English, Chinese, and Japanese is available in person, and in other languages via interpretation service and/or phone. 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)
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)