



Iwate International Exchange

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岩手県国際交流協会機関誌「いわて国際交流」

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Is Your Country REALLY Like That ?

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when someone mentions Iwate? Maybe the wildly-popular recent NHK drama, "Ama-chan," or its contribution to the cultural lexicon in "Je je je!" (an exclamation of surprise).

In the same way, we all have images that come to mind when we talk about certain countries. But are those images really true? In this issue's special feature, we gathered questions from Iwateans about other countries, and then asked nine foreign residents what they thought.

Alright – how many countries play true to the image they are famous for?

When did soccer start in Argentina?

Answer: Junko Kudo (from Argentina)



Soccer started in Argentina in 1893 when it was brought over by English immigrants and became our national sport. It is so popular that I'm pretty sure that at least one person in every family plays the sport. And if the father plays soccer, the kids will too.

In our second year of elementary school, there is a whole unit on soccer in our social studies textbook. We use soccer as a way to study manners, culture, and teamwork. Soccer also shows up in arithmetic studies. We compare graphs of goals scored by a team of dads versus a team of their kids.

There is no physical education class in Argentinean elementary schools, so soccer is played during recess or after school. We use a ball of wrapped newspaper during recess so that we don't break any windows.

Private schools study other sports as well. But when we're talking about a sport that gets the entire country excited, it's really only soccer.

I remember I was once talking with a soccer instructor from Argentina. He said that in Japan, the coach must give every child an equal opportunity for growth or they'll get complaints from parents and guardians. In Argentina, coaches concentrate their focus on children who have innate talent. Other children see the talented kid, think about what they lack, and then work harder to be better. If parents complain, the coach just tells them to join another team.

Adults will often gather together to play soccer after work. They get a good workout with their friends and have

a beer afterwards to top it off. It's a good way to release stress.

Is there a matryoshka doll in every home in Russia?

Answer: Aleksandra Yoshida (from Russia)



There are matryoshka dolls in every home in Russia. It's a protection charm for the family. It is said that it actually originated when a Russian man visited Japan and saw a cute doll representing a Japanese god. He made a similar-looking doll for his daughter

Matryona, so that is why it's called "Matryoshka." Names sound cuter when you add the "shka" at the end. Perhaps he was inspired by Japanese *kokeshi* and *daruma* dolls, since they look pretty similar.

Matryoshka are nesting dolls with smaller dolls placed one inside the other. Originally they were made in the image of an entire family, but now the largest doll is the mother, and the smaller dolls are the daughters. Normally there are only around five to six dolls in a set, but some companies make dolls with around 300 nesting figures, or dolls that a person can fit inside.

Incidentally, there is an egg festival in Russia from April to May. We paint colorful flowers and animals onto the shells of hard-boiled eggs, and you see many that look like matryoshka. We bring the eggs to the church where we present them in prayer. We give the eggs to children to play a game afterwards – they hit two eggs together and whoever is the last one without a cracked egg wins!



Matryoshka dolls

Does everyone in Mexico have a sombrero? How much do they cost?

Answer: Varela Miguel (from Mexico)



In Spanish, sombrero means to “make a shadow,” and it is a hat that is indispensable to farmers who work long days under the hot sun.

In the Yucatan Peninsula in the south of Mexico, we use a sombrero weaved from palm leaves that is similar to the

Japanese straw hat. This type of sombrero is best for cooling down the wearer. In central Mexico where the capitol Mexico City lies, we often layer thick material (like felt) to make sombreros. These sombreros are thick enough to keep the wearer’s face dry during a rainstorm.

In the north of Mexico near the U.S. border, we wear sombreros that resemble cowboy hats. I’m originally from Chihuahua in the north of Mexico, right next to Texas. Incidentally, that’s the city where the dog also originated.

So you can see there are a lot of types of sombreros, with different materials or shapes depending on the region. Stalls at festivals also sell cheap sombreros. They might go for the equivalent of around 500-700 yen. A well-made sombrero is more expensive at about 10,300-70,000 yen. A farmer will use a sombrero that costs around 1,000-3,000 yen. Since they use them every day, they replace them about once a year.

People from neighboring towns gather in one place during festivals, where they wear fashionable sombreros. Everyone has a dress sombrero along with the everyday sombrero they use while farming.

Just like in Japan, we must take off our sombreros when entering a building. It’s also polite to remove your sombrero when talking to someone. You’ve seen ne’er-do-wells in those cowboy movies walking into some run-down saloon – they certainly don’t take their hats off.



Sombreros

I heard that Germans drink beer like water, starting in the morning. Is that true?

Answer: Markus Rosken (from Germany)



It’s true that Germans consume more beer than the Japanese, but I think Japan actually spends more money on beer. Japanese beer is probably 3-4 times more expensive than German beer, so the Japanese end up spending more money.

Germany has a lot of locally produced beer, similar to sake in Japan. Even tiny villages have a place like Baeren Beer (Morioka’s local brewery) where they produce craft beer. I personally like almost all beer, wherever it comes from. Beer from the southern regions has a stronger, concentrated flavor, and the northern beers are a bit lighter. But I’m not really a beer expert; it’s just the impression I have of the local differences (laughs).

I studied for a year at Hiroshima University, and I always heard, “You’re from Germany, so you must know all about beer and sausages, right?” For that year, I always replied, “No, that’s not true. I mean, we have those things, but that’s not all we have.” And then I went home to Germany. It was right around the time of a festival, and you know what I saw? Everyone was drinking beer and eating sausages... When I returned to Japan, I had to admit to everyone they were right (laughs). I mean, it was a festival, but it was still a little bit of a culture shock.

So we certainly have a culture of beer in Germany. Whenever I go home to visit family, there’s always beer set out. Beer over water. But it’s not true that we Germans start drinking once we get up in the morning. We’re not allowed to drink beer during work, just like Japan.

Also, the legal age for drinking beer and wine is 16 in Germany. While not everyone partakes, most people have their first alcoholic drink (and first hangover) at 16. So when you get your driver’s license at 18, you already know

what effect alcohol has on your body. Everyone knows that drinking and driving is dangerous. Sixteen may be a little young to be drinking, but I do think this is a big difference between Japan and Germany. Education in Germany is a lot about having us decide what’s best for ourselves, in a number of different areas, not just with alcohol.

The traditional Vietnamese ao dai dress is so beautiful, but is it something that people wear often?

Answer: Dao Tron Zun (from Vietnam)



The ao dai is worn often in the southern parts of Vietnam. A white ao dai is used as a uniform by female high school students. However, it is not worn very much in the north. I'm from the Hai Duong province, and our uniform is just a t-shirt and pants.

We only wear an ao dai for graduation.

On the day before a wedding, the bride wears an ao dai when she gathers with her relatives.

An ao dai is considered formal wear. In Japan, you have many opportunities to wear kimono to festivals and other events, but the Vietnamese do not often have an occasion to wear the ao dai. Some people don't even have an ao dai, and the people who do usually only have one.



Ao dai dress

How do you drink coffee in Columbia?

Answer: Maria Hashimoto (from Columbia)



Many people drink Colombian coffee, but many less people make it than consume it. Colombian coffee is very good quality, and is so important that Colombians say they cannot live in a place that has no coffee plantations. Columbians have a very can-do spirit. They are not rich but they are happy. They pray for good coffee beans and work their hardest every day to ensure that happens. That is why Colombian coffee is the best coffee in the world.

Coffee is the 3rd most consumed drink on the planet, after water and tea. The leaves of the coffee tree are a large, simple shape, and the tree itself is not very tall. The beans are red and look like grapes. They're a little smaller than grapes though.

Colombian coffees have a better aroma than other coffees. We usually drink it black, but some also put milk and sugar in. We also drink instant coffee, but most of the time we brew the beans ourselves. We fill a cup up half way with black coffee and call it "tinto," and we drink it every morning. It's a little stronger than normal coffee. We also have a cup around 3pm so we don't get sleepy during work. The drink is the same for urban and rural dwellers. I drink Colombian coffee every day, and I always buy brands that are marked as being produced in Colombia.

Blue Mountain Coffee is a famous Jamaican brand, but what are some other products Jamaica is known for?

Answer: Latoya Tulloch (from Jamaica)



Jamaica is well known for jerk chicken and jerk pork. It's a spicy dish of grilled meat marinated in herbs and spices. It's very spicy, but its smoky flavor balances out the heat. We marinate the meat for hours in the jerk spice mixture. The jerk marinade has so many types of spices, and everyone has their own recipe, but most include onions, pepper, scotch bonnets, ketchup, pimientos, and molasses. They also sell pre-made jerk spice mixes.

Jerk chicken is sold at outdoor food stalls, as well as served in restaurants and at home. When buying it at a food stall, you get a slice of hard dough bread as well. In restaurants, jerk chicken is served with rice and beans, and as well as Jamaican festival (fried dough).

It's always available, but traditionally we eat jerk chicken on Friday nights. Parties in Jamaica last until morning, so after parties we visit food stalls for jerk



Jerk chicken

chicken, and eat it at 5 or 6 in the morning. After parties, you always have to get jerk chicken (laughs).

Another famous dish is ackee and saltfish. Ackee is a Jamaican fruit, and saltfish is dried cod. It's popular among vegetarians, and people eat it for breakfast.

Just how big are American food portions?

Answer: Dean Holden Reutzler (from the U.S.A.)



Single portions in America are definitely bigger than what you find in Japan, but our meals at home are about the same size as Japan's. You get the big meals at restaurants. But it's also not true that Japanese people only eat small portions. You have buffet restaurants and huge burgers for cheap prices here. Japanese think they burn fewer calories than Americans do, but your stomachs are the same size as ours. I think this is just a stereotype, and there's a difference between actual American sizes and the Japanese perception of those sizes. I mean, the portions *are* bigger than Japanese portions, but Japanese people imagine portions to be 2-3 times bigger than they really are. We don't eat *that* much (laughs). It also depends on the area as well. Depending on the kind of food, the location – sometimes that stereotype does ring true. But I think it's a bit blown out of proportion (laughs).

My impression is that there are more competitive eating contests in Japan than America. We have apple pie eating contests during celebrations in the states, but it's the same in Japan as well. We all know about wanko soba (all-you-can-eat soba noodles), right?

There are many eating competitions airing on Japanese television. There are some in America as well but I feel like Japan has more. But for example, at my university back home, there was a building that had a lot of restaurants inside, and sometimes there were parties with

some eating contests there. There are jalapeno pepper eating contests, contests in Colorado where people eat their famous buffalo steaks, and milk-drinking competitions. There are many regional-specific contests.

I'm from Vermont, where we make the best (and tastiest) maple syrup in the world. There we have an event called "Sugar on Snow." We pour syrup on top of the snow, and eat it when it hardens. It's like taffy. We eat it along with donuts and apple cider. The "sugar" stands for maple syrup. It's our regional feast.

I've heard that English food is not very appetizing, but is that true?

Answer: Ann Priddy (from England)



After World War II, there was rationing in England so it was hard to get good food, and we were constantly being compared to French or Italian cuisine. The idea that English food was bad arose in the 1950s and 60s. Our traditional dishes are things like meat pies, roast meat, puddings – packed with animal fats. They're not very good for you, that's for certain.

In the 60s and 70s, we started seeing more cooking programs on TV, and more guides to good restaurants. The English started becoming more aware of good cuisine. In the 80s, a cook named Delia Smith started introducing many kinds of food on her TV program, which piqued people's curiosity. We were influenced by Italian and Indian cuisines, so we started serving things like lasagna at home, and started experimenting with ingredients not common in traditional dishes. After the 70s, a popular meal was a serving of shrimp cocktail, with roast beef and Yorkshire pudding as a main dish, followed by a dessert of apple pie. In the 90s, there was a huge cooking boom, and every time Delia Smith showcased a new ingredient, sales went off the charts. After recovering from the recession in the 2000s, people returned to restaurants, where the food had gotten tastier. Rural restaurants in particular had improved greatly. There were many more restaurants that took pride in local cheeses, meats, and vegetables, and used them all proactively in their meals.

For the past 20 years, English cuisine has been getting better and better. If you go to England, I recommend trying fish & chips in a seaside town, dining in restaurants where you can eat local ingredients, and visiting the local pubs.

Iwate and Mongolia, Tied Together by Yurts



The Mayor of Mongolia Village in Takizawa – Lkhagvajav Munkhbat

After experiencing the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Lkhagvajav Munkhbat knew he wanted to share a part of Mongolian culture with Iwate. As the mayor of Mongolia Village in Takizawa, a hotel establishment that opened in May 2013, Munkhbat spoke with us about how he had dedicated himself to Iwate and his village of Mongolian yurts (traditional Mongolian dwellings, also called *ger*).

The Events Leading up to Mongolia Village

I was in my sophomore year at Iwate University in Morioka when the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck the region. I thought the survivors in the coastal areas could use yurts for shelter so I created a project with some friends that would showcase yurts throughout the prefecture. I received support from Iwate University and borrowed a yurt from Yamagata Prefecture. We held events at Ueda Elementary School and at Iwate University's school festival, showing off the yurt.

I wasn't able to go to the coast, but the elementary school students, their parents, and all the people who visited the school festival were really impressed by the yurt. They were amazed because the inside looks nothing like you would imagine from looking at it from the outside. I gained a lot of courage from that, so when I was a senior in university I attended a business school for people who want to start companies in Iwate. I received an assistance grant from the National Cabinet Office and was able to open Mongolia Village.

The Charm of Yurts

Customers who spend the night in the yurts of Mongolia Village always tell us they slept great and had a wonderful time. Yurts have been called "a celebration of the circle." We all gather in a circle around the heater in the middle, so we can all see each other's faces and strengthen our bonds of friendship. We treasure that sort of thing.

Throughout most of the world and Japan, the houses are getting bigger while families are getting smaller. I feel like families need ways to get closer together.

My Feelings about Yurts and Iwate

A lot of people have asked me about yurts since I've arrived in Iwate.

After the disaster, there were people who had to live in makeshift shelters in gymnasiums for a very long time. I wished that I could bring them a yurt to stay in. You can build a yurt in around two hours, and you can even keep it within the gymnasium itself. If I had owned the five yurts we have in Mongolia Village when the disaster struck, I would have brought them right away and built them for the survivors.

I have met so many wonderful people in Iwate. There were people who lent me the machines I needed to build this place, and people who volunteered to help clear the trees in the surrounding area. I am very blessed. I want to pay those people back for their kindness, as well as refine the yurts so that other people will

use them in a crisis. I want to build a yurt that fits in with Japanese climate and culture.



Mongolia Village in Takizawa

Address: (〒020-0172) Iwate-ken, Iwate-gun, Takizawa-mura, Ukai Aza-Adachi 114-3 (within the property of Ai-no-sawa Hot Springs "O-yama-no-yu")
TEL 019-680-2588
Homepage: <http://takimon.com/>

A facility where you can experience traditional Mongolian culture through a stay in a yurt, a Mongolian dwelling used by nomad tribes.

The People Who Connect Iwate with the World

“World Connections”

Emiko Kitayama

Country of Residence: Turkey

Emiko Kitayama lived in Istanbul for seven years, up until right before the 1999 Izmit earthquake.

After returning to Japan, she worked at the Turkish Embassy and foreign-affiliated companies, then returned to Turkey in spring 2013. She currently works at a Japanese iron and steel trading company in Istanbul.

From her experience with education, Ms. Kitayama believes that “education can change people and change countries,” and is looking for ways to help the still-suffering East Turkey area from an educational standpoint.

In Istanbul at the end of May, a group of environmentalists and citizens demonstrated against the urban development of Gezi Park in the newly developed Taksim district. They started by setting up tents in the park and staging sit-in demonstrations, but the protests grew so large that they were broadcast throughout the world. The clash with the riot police at Taksim Square was even shown on Japanese news programs.

They were protesting against plans to construct a shopping center in the area, which would cut down trees and destroy the last precious natural space in Istanbul. Even though the general public (as well as a few Turkish parliamentary members) demonstrated through peaceful sit-ins, the police used tear gas and violence against them. This earned the police the criticism of all of Turkey, developing into protests that called for democracy in the true sense of the word. Protesters included university students and other young people who will lead Turkey in the future: activists committed to pure democracy.



Before the government mobilized their riot squads to use tear gas and water cannon trucks on the gathering, Gezi Park was home to tents filled with various environmentalist and political activist groups made up of young people, all with their own individual activities. If foreign

tourists happened upon the scene, they would have thought it was some sort of festival: people making crepes with the heat of the sun, concerts and traditional folk dances, and simple yoga demonstrations in front of the stage. Free snacks and water were distributed throughout the park, some being donated by visitors. Dancing continued late into the night, with adults and families alike having the time of their lives.

However, after this, the riot squad lobbed tear gas bombs into the crowd, and the thousands of people who had gathered in the space were forced to leave.



The riots and subsequent clash with the police in Taksim Square were shown on television after this. Activists used the event to ignite their movements, and the situation developed enough to be broadcast around the world. What began as a peaceful environmental protest had devolved into a nightmare.

Development plans were changed after this turn of events, and as of October, Gezi Park has returned to its former glory as a quiet space for city residents. Turkey became a country in 1923, and with an average age of 29 years old, it is a young country in many senses of the word. Turkey will continue to grow, supported by its young people who follow their convictions and aren't afraid to speak out. As a Japanese person living in Turkey, I am happy to watch over my “second homeland” of Turkey as it matures as a world player.

| Supporting Member of the Association |

We are looking for new supporting members to support our mission and projects. The Supporting Member Dues will be used for public events that promote international exchange, cooperation, and multicultural society.

Your Privileges as a Supporting Member

- (1) We will send you publications by the Association:
 - International Exchange Newsletter “jien go”
 - Association biannual Organ “Iwate International Exchange”
- (2) We will send you information on Association events before the general public.
- (3) You receive a complimentary discount on Association events and seminars.
- (4) We will send you the “Ethnic Restaurant Map.” You can receive various services from the associated restaurants.

- (5) We will send you the “Complimentary Travel Map.” You can receive various services from the associated stores.
- (6) You can receive tax deductions.

Yearly Dues

- (1) Individual members... 3,000 yen
- (2) Organized groups... 10,000 yen
- (3) Student members... 1,000 yen

If you use the Association’s special formatted bank money transfer form, you will not be liable for any transfer fees if you transfer from our list of approved banks. Please feel free to inquire with us and we will send you the money transfer form. We also accept these forms at the Association.

▶ Japanese Language Class at the International Exchange Center

We hold an intermediate-level Japanese language class for foreign residents of Iwate at the International Exchange Center in Aiina, where foreign residents can learn some higher-level Japanese that they can use in their own lives and work situations. Our current session is from December to February, and you can join at any time.

December 4, 11, 19, 25, 2013 (Wed),
January 8, 16, 22, 29, 2014 (Wed),
February 5, 12, 19, 26, 2014 (Wed),
18:30~21:00

▶ 2013 Iwate Glocal College

Enjoy this seminar series based on the concept of “Think Globally, Act Locally.” (Venue: Aiina, Every seminar from 14:00-15:30, Admission free)

November 24, 2013 (Sun)

“Invigorating Rikuzentakata through Japanese Camellia Oil! –Fair Trade and the Reconstruction” by Mr. Haruyo Tsuchiya, representative director of Nepali Bazar (a limited private company)

December 7, 2014 (Sat)

“Remembering My Homeland Rwanda from Fukushima” by Ms. Marie-Louise Kambenga, director of NPO Think About Education in Rwanda

February 2, 2014 (Sun)

“The Reconstruction and the Power of the Japanese People” by Mr. Michihiro Kono, chief executive of Yagisawa Shoten, Ltd

February 16, 2014 (Sun)

“A Globalizing World and the Allure of Iwate” by Mr. Kenichi Hirayama, director of the Iwate International Association

▶ Chat Café in Otsuchi Town

We hold a Chat Café in Otsuchi Town where you can speak English with native speakers.

There will be meetings held on January 11 (Sat), February 1 (Sat), March 1 (Sat), all held from 14:00-15:30 at the Otsuchi Public Hall. (Otsuchi-cho Chuo kominkan)

▶ “Iwate International Exchange” on the website

We host Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean versions of our biannual organ, Iwate International Exchange, on our homepage. “2013 Iwate International Exchange, Autumn Vol. 75” is now available, so please take a look!

<http://iwate-ia.or.jp/?l=jp&p=4-3-publications-kikanshi>

Cover Photo
Japanese Language Class at the International Exchange Center
(October 9, 2013)

■ International Exchange Center

(5F Aiina Citizen’s Cultural Center)

- Open: Everyday
- Hours: 9:00-21:30
- Closed: During the year-end holidays

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