

Series: **My Favorite Kyoto**

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## One of Kyōto's Treasures

Yudina Anastasia  
(Russia)

Whenever we are talking about Japan or even the whole world, Kyōto\* is a very special place in it. Surrounded by mountains, it doesn't give the impression of a big city or of the countryside. Kyōto has its own unique atmosphere that cannot be found anywhere else. It feels like the soul of Japan is hidden here, and you can sense its presence wandering around the numerous shrines and temples. Are there any other cities that have as many beautiful places as Kyōto has? I have been living here for a year, but have still seen only a small number of them. Even so, I have fallen in love with a lot of places; one of those places is Takaragaike Park. It is not a tourist spot, so you probably won't find it in a travel guidebook or on a sightseeing list. It is just a beautiful park built around a small lake in the northern part of Kyōto. The Japanese name for the park, *takaragaike*, can be translated as "Treasure Pond", and it describes perfectly the feeling that this place gives me. When I get tired or depressed, just one look at the sparkling water reflecting serene skies and majestic mountains makes me feel better. The water is so clean that you can see to the bottom, and watch the big *koi* (carp fish) in their vivid red and white "outfits", bustling about. If you go close to the water, they will



Anastasia in the park



Koi looking for food

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\* Pronunciation tip: any vowel with a macron over it (ā, ī, ū, ē, ō) has a "long" vowel sound, 1.5 to 2 times longer than the regular vowel sound

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## Enjoying Uji-cha in Kyōto

Have you had any Japanese tea since you came to Japan? From May to July is the season for freshly picked tea, and a time when Japanese tea is at its best. In Kyōto, there is a famous tea called *Uji-cha* (a prized Japanese green tea from the Uji area of Kyōto). *Uji-cha* is primarily cultivated in Kyoto Prefecture, but also grown in Nara, Shiga and Mie Prefectures\*; after the tea leaves are picked, they are processed by tea companies in Kyōto. *Uji-cha* is called one of the three best tasting teas of Japan, along with *Shizuoka-cha* (tea grown in Shizuoka Prefecture) and *Sayama-cha* (tea cultivated in Saitama Prefecture and western Tōkyō). In Kyōto, the main growing districts are Uji, Ujitawara, Wazuka, and Yamashiro. By the way, at the elementary schools in the Uji and Shizuoka districts, there are faucets for hot Japanese brown tea, to get the children familiar with Japanese tea. In addition, they offer classes to learn about Japanese tea.



*Hōjicha* (Japanese brown tea) and sweets



Dispensing *Hōjicha* at an elementary school

Uji City has many teashops where you can enjoy *Uji-cha*, but even if you cannot afford to come to Uji, you can still enjoy *Uji-cha* in Kyōto. For example, at the Ippodo Main Store in Kyōto on Teramachi Street, you can have Japanese tea and sweets at reasonable prices. In addition, there are some teashops where you can eat sweets made from Japanese tea, such as *matcha* (finely ground green tea) parfait, *matcha* ice cream, and *matcha* or brown tea jelly.

It is nice to be able to buy Japanese tea in PET bottles, and snacks made from Japanese green tea at convenience stores and supermarkets. Also, how about enjoying some quality Japanese teas and sweets at a teashop sometime?

\* According to the Chamber of Kyoto Prefecture Tea Public Interest Incorporated Association.

Website: <http://www.ujicha.or.jp/about-us> (English)

KANAYA Chinami

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### Information from Kyoto City Hall Temporary Welfare Benefits (Economic Measure)

In April of 2014, the consumption (sales) tax rate was raised. The City of Kyoto will provide “Temporary Welfare Benefits” to low-income earners (persons not subject to the municipal inhabitant’s tax in 2016).

- There are conditions that must be met in order to receive these payments. Please contact the Call Center (see below) for a detailed explanation of the requirements.
- Kyoto City will send application forms to those who are eligible.
- The Application Form will be sent in a light blue envelope. Fill in the form and send it back in the enclosed envelope by August 28, 2017. Postage is not necessary.
- Kyoto City will review the application, and if approved, benefits will then be deposited to the applicant’s bank account.

**Contact Information:**

Kyoto City Temporary Welfare Benefits Call Center Tel: 075-251-2360

Fax: 075-251-2361

# Organic vegetables – delicious and eco-friendly!

Organic vegetables, those farmed without chemical fertilizers or agricultural chemicals, are especially delicious, in my opinion.

However, in order to solve the food shortages caused by modern-day rapid population increases, man-made chemicals in fertilizers and pesticides, and genetic engineering are being utilized. This has made many foods abundant, but the taste of the food and the environmental impact must also be considered.

In answer to those issues, organic farming, which features the traditional practice of using only natural resources, could lead to a recycling society which can sustain itself ecologically.

Kyōto has a number of organic farms that use compost as fertilizer, and some of the compost comes from animal manure. The composting process is based on biologically decomposing nitrogen compounds into their basic elements. Application of the compost fertilizes the soil, and returns it to better condition in terms of wetting ability and drainage.

The harvest of organic vegetables draws attention for their exceptional taste. Although the percentage of organic crops is very small compared to ordinary farming, you can still buy them through the Internet, by mail order, at greengrocers, and at most supermarkets. Additionally, since some rental farms are dedicated to organic farming, why not try growing some organic vegetables yourself and enjoy the difference in taste?

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

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**kokoka news \* \* \* Kyoto International Community House news \* \* \***

## **kokoka Daytime Stay Evacuation Shelter Program 2017**

When a serious disaster occurs, such as a big earthquake, what would you do? How about having the experience yourself of doing a disaster drill with the Fire Department, and participating in a disaster preparation workshop, so that you have a better idea of what to do when a major disaster strikes?

### **Program Content**

- Earthquake simulator – experience a big earthquake
- Life-saving training – resuscitation (CPR) practice
- Primary fire-fighting training – use a fire extinguisher
- Survival food tasting – try some yourself
- Disaster Workshop – training for various disasters
- Other valuable information

**When:** June 17 (Sat.) 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Where:** kokoka Kyoto International Community House, Event Hall (1F)

**Apply online:** <http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/jigyosai/saigai/en/kunren/index2017.html>

or by phone: 075-752-3511

## **kokoka is inviting you to our Tea Ceremony!**

At kokoka, we are teaching a course called “First Time Tea Ceremony”, which is meant to explain everything from the basics. Students who are taking this course will present a tea ceremony and invite foreign residents free of charge. How about experiencing some Japanese culture with *matcha* (green tea) and sweets?

**When:** June 27 (Tue.) First round: 2 p.m., Second round: 3 p.m.

**Where:** kokoka Kyoto International Community House, Japanese-style annex

Reservations required – seats limited to 10 people per round

**Apply by phone:** 075-752-3511



# “Pop Princess of Kyoto”

## Japanese style singer, Yanase Yo

In the past, Kyoto was the capital of Japan and it was the epicenter of culture; it can be said that much of Japanese traditional culture was developed in Kyoto. Using the concept of that Japanese Kyoto style, a female idol singer is expanding the musical world by incorporating traditional Japanese culture into it. Here I will introduce this idol singer.

Ms. Yanase Yo was born and raised here in Kyoto. Originally, she worked as a member of an idol group, but she began her solo career in 2012. Currently, she is involved in various activities such as live concerts and appearances at special events, mainly in Kyoto.



Yanase Yo

Recently, I went to one of Yanase’s live concerts and interviewed her before the show. When I asked her why she is so actively focusing her efforts on Kyoto, Yanase said, “When I was in the idol group, there were not many idols in Kyoto and I performed many times in Osaka. I somewhat regret that, so I thought I would like to liven up Kyoto on my own”. Yanase also said, “I want to express the image of Kyoto and Japanese style in a way that is easy to understand simply by seeing it.

As for the live concert, there were many people came to the venue that day. When the concert began, Yanase appeared dressed in a vivid yellow costume made from a *kimono*. When she began to sing, with her powerful voice, the audience clapped their hands and shouted along with the songs, and the place was filled with excitement. Yanase writes most of her songs by herself. She sang the lyrics in delicate Japanese words, putting them with pop music that incorporates Japanese instruments. The appearance she creates is exactly that of a “Pop Princess of Kyoto”, elegant and lively.

In between songs, and at the break, she talked to the audience in a friendly manner. And often with laughter, the first-time visitors, frequent fans, and the rest of the audience enjoyed the chat with her and the feeling of closeness.



Yanase Yo in a recent concert

Toward the end of the concert, the audience was dancing and jumping around along with Yanase, and it really livened up the performance. In our interview before the concert, Yanase said that live concerts were the most enjoyable part of her activities. The audience also said, “When she sings, she is cool. When she talks, it’s interesting. Because the live concerts are so enjoyable, it makes me want to come again”. When I was there, watching the live concert, I too understood what they felt.

Yanase put on a fantastic and enjoyable live concert, but usually, she is simply a cheerful and frank lady, one who likes *anime* a lot, especially Pokémon. The trigger that started her activity in the field of entertainment happened to be having an audition for some kind of Pokémon production. Yanase also said she hopes to work in *anime* in the future.

How about going to see one of Yanase’s live concerts sometime? To see the schedule for her live concerts and activities, please check her website, shown below.

- Official Website for Yanase Yo: <http://ysp0513.com/>
- SHOWROOM website: <http://www.showroom-live.com/yanaseyou>

SUZUKI Hidetoshi

# Take a look at the Rissei Cinema Project

The Rissei Cinema Project is located in the former Rissei Shōgakkō (Rissei Primary School) off of Kiyamachi Street in Kyōto, and shows various movies in the old classrooms there.

The original building of this elementary school was built in 1928. There is a stone bridge across the Takase River at the entrance; the old style of architecture goes well with the white interior walls, and it has a nice atmosphere. Also, on one side of the entry steps after the bridge, there is a monument, and an information sign board on the other side. It describes this location as “The Origin of Japanese Cinema”, which celebrates the first successful showing of movies in Japan. On the third floor of the building, one of the classrooms is used as a reception lobby for the Project. There, the blackboard and the wall clock still retain their original appearance, and you can see many wall posters, and movie flyers on the counters.

Movies are usually playing in the classroom next to the reception area. Mr. Seiichi Tanaka, a staff member of the project, told me that the building has never been renovated, unlike ordinary movie theatres, and that the original classrooms are used to show movies. He also said that since this place is quieter than you would expect, many people come here to watch movies, despite the location next to Kiyamachi Street, where many tourists go by.

They show not only Japanese movies, but also movies from various countries, and sometimes they will feature famous actors and regions of the world.

How about enjoying this old Japanese school building and seeing some movies at the same time? Perhaps you will find a movie there from your own country.

For hours of operation and other information, check the official website: <http://risseicinema.com/>



Entrance to the Rissei Cinema



Reception desk and lobby area

MARUYAMA Toru, Translated by FUJITA Risa

kokoka Kyoto International Community House Library

2017/6 - 7

## Library Letter

 kokoka recommends this book

### Customer Service Japanese (Conversational) - Intensive Training for Immediate Use (English Version)

**Supervisor & Author:**

MIZUTANI Nobuko

**Publisher:**

J Research Shuppan, 2016



For every foreign student who has a part-time job, are you able to use Japanese language easily when you are dealing with customers? For example, do you know when and how to use the expressions for “Certainly”, or “Yes, of course”, “What would you like to do?”, “I am so sorry”, and so on? If you read this book, you can expect to learn a lot of words and phrases for customer service that you can use right away. So now, why don't we go to the kokoka library and do some intensive reading of this book for improving our Japanese customer service conversations?

How about trying to write with an ink brush? The book “SHODO—The Quiet Art of Japanese Zen Calligraphy” (Author: SATŌ Shōzō, Publisher: TUTTLE, 2014) is an ideal introduction to calligraphy. When you are using a brush, the indescribable feeling of tension is one of the charms of calligraphy. And the ink has a delightful scent to it. There are many places where you can get some calligraphy experience in Kyōto. After reading this book, if you are interested in calligraphy, why not try getting a taste of it?

### The following items are also available:

Books for foreigners to help their daily life in Japanese, study Japanese, learn about Japanese law, visas, Japanese culture and sightseeing in Kyoto.

Books for Japanese to learn about foreign countries, overseas travel, extended stays, studying abroad, working holidays and volunteering.

Newspapers and magazines from all around the world.

### Books are not available for check-out.

[Hours] 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Closed on Mondays & last day of every month

[Tel.] 075-752-1187 [Fax.] 075-752-3510

[URL] <http://www.kcif.or.jp/en>



come toward you, waving their tails as if they are happy to see you, but don't be fooled - they are just waiting for some food. If you don't have any, they will probably hate you, and the same is true for the deer. Yes, there are deer in the park, but you will rarely see them. They are not that confident or open to making new friendships, unlike their comrades in Nara. In fact, I encountered a herd of deer only once, when I was going home late, and it was not a great experience; it was dark and they were as frightened by me as I was by them. Last year, there was one "bully" kind of deer who tried to socialize with me, but I haven't seen him anymore. Maybe he got married and doesn't have any time to hang around, or perhaps he just gave up on people. If you have given up on people too, you have a great opportunity to take a solo trip into the mountains that surround the park. There are a lot of routes and they are very easy, since the mountains are not high or steep. A trip like this is not really for hiking, but just to relax and feel some unity with nature. Alternatively, if you like to do silly stuff like I do, you can chase the setting sun and say one last goodbye to it from the top of a mountain. Certainly, there are more than just natural things in the park. You can find different attractions such as tennis courts or the children's playground; the Kyoto International Conference Center and the Grand Prince Hotel are also nearby. However, for me the most impressive things here are the beautiful, heart-stirring scenery and a peaceful atmosphere. That is why whenever I have some free time, I get on my bicycle and ride to Takaragaike Park. Of course, that only happens during the warm part of the year, since all I can think about during the cold times is how to survive. The winter coldness is another unique thing about Kyōto, but that is a very different story for a different article.



Cherry blossoms over Takaragaike Pond



Takaragaike Pond at sunset

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