

**Series: My Favorite Kyoto**

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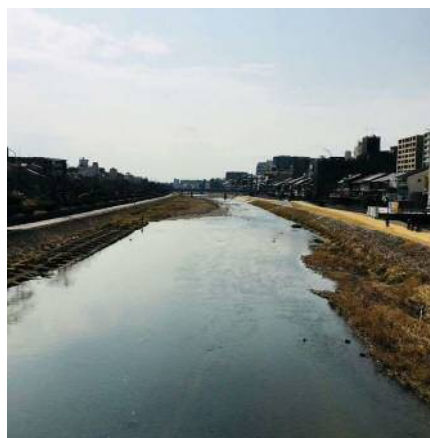
## New Beginnings in an Old Place

For me, Kyōto\* was a place of new beginnings. I first moved here around four years ago to start university. I had previously lived in essentially what can only be described as the middle of nowhere, and I still recall to this day, the feeling of awe I felt when I initially got off the highway coach\*1 for the first time at Kyōto Station. I vividly remember seeing a *shinkansen* shoot across the train-tracks from outside the station – the *shinkansen* passed through Kyōto! To me this symbolized one thing, and one thing only: Kyōto was definitely “*tokai*”, no question, and this for me, meant that many new big city-like experiences were waiting for me.

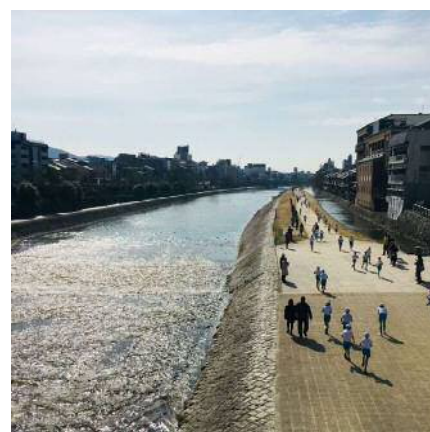
I’ve been to many cities in Japan, and one thing I can say – Kyōto has the *je ne sais quoi*\*2. As the phrase suggests, it’s difficult to pinpoint what gives Kyōto its “it” factor\*3, but if I were to try, I would say it’s the fusion between the past and the present, the ancient and the modern. You could be walking down a busy main road shopping at one of Kyōto’s many stores, but if you decide to explore the back roads, all of a sudden it feels like you’ve time slipped into a different era.

Over my four, long but short years in Kyōto, I’ve pretty much seen all there was to see. I’ve walked through the thousands of gates at Fushimi Inari Taisha, I’ve been hustled through Kinkaku-ji, I’ve felt the sense of historical significance at Nijō Castle ... But, the one place that stands out to me the most? Kamogawa River. It’s funny – whenever you take a look at Kamogawa River and there’s always couples, adolescent or mature, groups of friends, new or old, sat spaced out perfectly evenly. I have no idea what causes this strange phenomenon – maybe simply the want for personal space, or maybe people don’t want to mess up the carefully created “order”. Either way, Kamogawa has a certain allure, and I’m sure that’s what draws locals and tourists alike to it. A lot

**HASHIMOTO Sayuli**  
(The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)



Kamogawa (Kamo River)  
in the morning



A Bustling Kamogawa  
(Kamo River)

\*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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## The Secret Sakura of Kyōto

Japan is famous for delicious food, historical architecture and memorable TV shows and movies. However, one thing that strongly reminds people all round the world, including Japanese people, of Japan are cherry blossoms (*sakura*). Even though Japan is not the only place you can find *sakura*, *sakura* have been treasured by Japan for many centuries, so Japanese gardeners have had plenty of time to perfect the art of growing it. Being the capital of Japan for a thousand years, Kyōto has some very famous *sakura* spots, such as Kiyomizudera Temple and the Philosopher's Path. However, places with such fame are always full of crowds which can make it difficult to enjoy the *sakura*. In this article, I am introducing four of my friend's favorite, secret *sakura* sites in Kyōto city. Since these sites are not as famous as other spots, you can enjoy their beautiful *sakura* displays in peace and quiet.

Each of these secret *sakura* sites are in the Arashiyama area. The first site is the Hirosawa Pond, which is approximately 3 kilometers north-east of Arashiyama Park. This is a 1000-year-old reservoir with rice fields to the west and a beautiful *sakura* display on the west bank. Here you can see more *sakura* while taking in the pond's impressive view.

The second is Uetō Zōen (植藤造園) Garden, which is 300 meters east of Hirosawa Pond. It was made by the famous Japanese gardener, Sano Tōemon, who is considered the guardian of cherry blossom trees. He is also the gardener who grew the famous weeping *sakura* tree in Maruyama Park. This garden is only open to the public a few times throughout the spring season. Even though you cannot enter the garden, you will have a good view of the Guardian of *Sakura*'s garden from outside the walls.

If you walk ten minutes east from Uetō Zōen Garden, you will see Utano Youth Hostel. Then, if you walk for ten minutes north-east from the Hostel, you will see the Utano Hospital. The *sakura* displays surrounding each of these buildings are breathtakingly beautiful and you can even find the very rare green *sakura* at the Utano Hospital!

Whether it is a famous garden, ordinary public building or a very old pond, there is always beauty worth seeing. I hope you can visit and fully enjoy each of these secret *sakura* sites. Even though they do not hold much fame, I think they offer a worthwhile experience. Now, I will end with a challenge: Take the time during this *sakura* season to find more secret *sakura* sites. I wonder just how many there are in this ancient city?



"kanzashi" sakura blossom



green "gyōikō" sakura blossom

Nicholas IWAI

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

### 2018 Spring Omotenashi Festival @ kokoka

Let's enjoy world's food, music and *sakura* blossom!

kokoka inner Japanese garden special opening!

Date: March 31 (Sat.), April 1 (Sun.), 7(Sat.) and 8 (Sun.)

Time: 11:00 -16:00 (the stalls), 11:00-15:00 (performances), 10:00-17:00 (the garden\*)

Free admission to the garden and performances.

\* Japanese garden is open to public from March 24 (Sat.) to April 8 (Sun.) every day except Mondays

Inquiries : Kyoto City International Foundation

TEL : 075-752-3010 E-mail : office@kcif.or.jp



## Yūzenzome

*Yūzenzome*, or *Yūzen* dyeing, is a traditional Japanese method of dyeing cloth, that originated in 17th century Kyōto. Founded, and aptly named after by Yūzensai Miyazaki, *Yūzenzome* uses an array of colors to create beautiful motifs inspired by nature, and much more.

I visited Marumasu Nishimuraya, a *Kyō-yūzen* workshop, located nearby Nijō Castle, for a *Yūzenzome* experience. Marumasu Nishimuraya opened 18 years ago, and has been offering tourists and locals alike, an artistic amble in to old Japan. When you first arrive, you choose which product you would like to dye - there are so many options, so this alone may take quite some time! Next, you choose which motif you would like to dye onto it. There are a myriad of books holding templates ranging from flowers to monsters from folklore. According to the staff, Kyōto-esque designs, *maiko*, and cherry blossoms, are all popular designs amongst visitors. After you have selected your product of choice, and everything's been pinned in to place, then comes the fun part - the actual dyeing! What's interesting about *Yūzenzome*, and maybe different from Western style painting, is that everything is thinned and blended out. No harshness, nothing direct, and a whole lot of emphasis on subtleness – doesn't get more Japanese than this! The thinned down ink is then applied to the canvas in a circular motion, in the order the template selected dictates. The staff explained to me that as ordered stencils are used, it makes it easier, and pretty much guarantees an amazing result every time. There are various ways to paint, such as directly painting by hand and so on. You can mix the colors together, or make it gradient, mix and match the stencils... the options are endless!

As the staff shared with me, *Yūzenzome* is truly Japanese in all its delicateness and subtleness, and this is what gives it its allure. A lot of blurring, nothing defined. That kind of vagueness is difficult to find anywhere else – be it in art or culture.

### Kyō-yūzen Workshop Marumasu Nishimuraya

Open time: 9:00 - 19:00 (entry time: until 17:00)

<http://www.marumasu-nishimuraya.co.jp/en/>

Inquiry: [otoiawase@marumasu-nishimuraya.co.jp](mailto:otoiawase@marumasu-nishimuraya.co.jp)

TEL:075-211-3273



The Workshop



Sushi Templates!



Finished Product

HASHIMOTO Sayuli

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# Homestay experience in Japan

I am Miranda, currently studying abroad in Japan and living in a homestay in Kyōto. Originally from China and attending college in the United States, I found a lot of interesting things while enjoying the special homestay experience in Kyōto. In this article, I would like to introduce some basic aspects of Japanese homestay life.

## Clothing

A lot of Japanese houses and apartments don't have central heating. So, when winter arrives, out come the blankets and fluffy socks. Because I was used to the temperature in my dormitory back in America where I can simply lie in bed with only a T-shirt on during winter, which I was doing in Kyōto, I had a cold almost every day which lasted for weeks. However, when you think about wearing a T-shirt in a 26°C room like summer during wintertime, I came to realize that it was more like wasting energy. Now, I really feel the seriousness of the words "The earth cannot have another country like the United States, which only has 1/20 of the world population but consumes almost 1/4 of global energy." Maybe, Japan is actually a protector of the environment by their energy conservation.



The author and her host parents  
(*kotatsu* time)

## Eating

My host parents have a lovely home garden. Every time I see my host father's face after he brings in the harvested Chinese cabbages into the room, I can feel the pleasure of the idyllic life. My host mother often cooks *nabe*, or Japanese hot pot on a busy day. There is nothing easier or more delicious in winter than a big clay pot simmering with natural ingredients. After finish eating all the ingredients, adding a beaten egg and rice to the savory soup stock that's left, and then cooking them over very low heat with the lid closed, the result is the best finish to *zōsui* (雑炊), a mixture of soup, egg and rice sticking together very nicely, which, when eaten, powers-up your energy reserves after a whole day of tiredness, making you feel "now I can work hard again tomorrow." It was then I realized, the essence of Japanese food may be found in *nabe* to an extent.

## Housing

During the colder months of winter, *kotatsu* (炬燵), a low table, with a heater underneath covered over by a blanket, comes in handy. *Kotatsu* is used almost exclusively in Japan. My host father often watches TV under the *kotatsu*, and sometimes even falls asleep in it. Moreover, according to my host mother, after going back to the United States, an international student who stayed at this house got so nostalgic about *kotatsu*, that he DIYed a *kotatsu* in his dorm. *Kotatsu* tables are so enticing that once you get in it, you don't want to leave its comfort and warmth. It is indeed a luxurious moment when you savor a bit of cold while comfortably warming away the harsh winter.

## Commuting

My homestay is located near Daigoji Temple. In the morning, I usually say "good morning" to people I pass on the way to the school, especially to *Obaa-chan* and *Ojii-chan* working at the grocery store which always opens quite early in the morning, and to elementary school children full of energy. Upon reflection, I like Kyōto better than Tōkyō. Last month, after coming back to Kyōto from a school excursion, a kind of nostalgic familiarity was tugging at my heart when I heard the accustomed subway Tozai Line departure melody "The bush warbler of Daigoji (醍醐寺の鶯)". I felt the emotion of being "I'm home" for the first time in Japan. I realized 'normality' is the essence of life, during this special homestay experience in Kyōto.

Xiangyu (Miranda) ZHANG

## The New Law for Private House Hotels in Kyōto

I asked foreign tourists in and around the Shijo Kawaramachi area what kind of hotels they were staying in. They said it was a private house hotel (*minpaku*) and their rooms were shared with other people. This is actually the same response I got after asking tourists over the course of a few years. They also said it was only 4000 yen for one night, the stays were very comfortable, and the hotels were easily accessible.

Despite the good experiences of the tourists, on rare occasions, there were complaints by residents who live in neighboring houses. The tourists were noisy, did not properly dispose of their waste, and the neighboring residents found it difficult to find the *minpaku* supervisors. It is said that some of these *minpaku* are illegal and there are neither laws nor government officials to uphold the laws of these hotels.

In order to resolve these issues, a new law (*Minpakushinpo*) has been passed to strictly regulate the management of these *minpaku*. Following the passing of this law, the responsibility to pass a more city specific law was given to the Kyōto city government. Since the old law did not allow tourists to stay in the designated residential area hotels, it can presumably affect the life of neighboring residents. Consequently, Kyōto city, widely and openly, listened to opinions of citizens. The results collected were to answer the questions whether or not *minpaku* management is handled correctly, neighboring residents are well informed of *minpaku* activity, and the city government is managed properly. On February 23rd of 2018, the new *minpaku* law was passed. The important contents were that *minpaku* may be operated only from January 15th to March 15th in the season when there are less tourists and additionally *minpaku* management is required to reach an agreement with neighboring residents.

As one can see, a lot of foreign students living in Kyōto will likely welcome *minpaku* as a reasonable accommodation, especially for their family who will be visiting them in Kyōto and may need a place to stay. On such occasions, while they enjoy their time staying in Kyōto in their *minpaku*, it is important that they remember to live peacefully with Kyōto citizens by being respectful of the city's rules. While Kyōto citizens will naturally offer you hospitality during your stay in Kyōto city, if you make sure to respect them and their city's laws, you will find them to be even more welcoming.

Let us respect each other as we enjoy the tranquil life of Kyōto city together!

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

kokoka Kyoto International  
Community House Library

## Library Letter

2018/4 - 5

 kokoka recommends this book

### What's different? How is it different? Similar Japanese Words

**Author:**  
Sasaki Mizue  
**Publisher:**  
Tokyodo Shuppan, 2017



“*Utsukushi*” and “*kirei*”, “*katte*” and “*wagamama*”, “*shiru*” and “*wakaru*”, “*gisshiri*” and “*gyugyu*”, “*muchakucha*” and “*mechakucha*” ...

Japanese has many words which have similar meanings. Are you using those words properly?

By all means, please read this book and get mastery over the proper usage of those words.

This book has illustrations to make it easier for you to understand.

Comfortable spring has come! Many of you have just started a new life in Kyoto from April. Do you go out for a stroll in Kyoto? “Picture Book of Kyoto's Back Streets” (Editor: Rojiura Kenkyujo, Publisher: Kotokoto, 2013) introduces many back streets in Kyoto. It's a pity and may be a waste of time walking only on main streets. In the back streets as well you might find your favorite shop that you want to visit often.

### 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.

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of my best memories in Kyōto stem from nights sat on the riverbanks of Kamogawa, chatting with friends – enjoying a hot beverage or cold alcohol and discussing anything and everything. The glistening water has a strange calm to it, almost inviting you to share everything.

Sure, rivers exist pretty much everywhere, anywhere in the world. I suppose what makes Kamogawa special, is its location - Kyōto. Kyōto has offered me many “big city” opportunities I would never have had experienced in rural Japan. But in contrast to the flashy buildings and stores, and modern establishments I expected from the city, Kyōto has also allowed me to see the authentic “old” Japan, something only the 1000 year old capital of Japan could do. I’ll never forget the fascinating contradictions Kyōto has shown me, and the lesson it taught me: the past can peacefully coincide with the present. I’ll be leaving Kyōto soon, to have new beginnings elsewhere, but one thing is certain, I’ll be sure to make one last visit to Kamogawa River, and reflect on all my wonderful experiences I’ve had in Kyōto, the “it” city.

\*1 Highway coach (British English) - express bus (American English)

\*2 *Je ne sais quoi* (French) -something special, an appealing quality that cannot be put into words

\*3 "it" factor - a special quality that cannot be seen

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

### **COSMOS (Japanese • Foreign Culture Introduction Classes)**

At kokoka on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month we have classes, called COSMOS, where self-organized groups of citizens introduce Japanese and foreign cultures to the participants. From April we will start a Chinese conversation class for children, in addition to the present activities, such as Japanese traditional dances (*Nihon Buyō*), Tea Ceremony (*Chadō*), Flower Arrangement (*Kadō*), a board game *Shōgi* and Italian language and culture class. To attend these classes no reservation is needed.

For the detailed schedule and fees please visit our homepage:

<http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/jigyo/katsudo/jp/cosmos/index.html>

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