

Series: My Favorite Kyoto

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Magic of Japanese Nature

Long before I arrived in Japan, I was amazed by the beauty of Japanese nature from cartoons of the Studio Ghibli, like “Princess Mononoke”, “My Neighbor Totoro”, “Spirited Away” and many others. Thick fairy forests with their own spirits, quiet gardens and parks seemed to me as something unreachably magical. At that time, I already knew that nature was a great part of the Japanese culture and played a big role in the daily life of the Japanese people.

When I and my family came to Japan, I confirmed that Japanese nature was carefully nurtured by the Japanese people, and it was really such as I had imagined in my mind from animated movies. Also, I was lucky that I came directly to Kyoto, the old capital and soul of Japan. Kyoto is an ancient bridge between past and present, between wild nature and human activity.

We came to Kyoto at end of July, the beginning of the hottest season. Now, at the time writing of this article, I managed to experience almost all seasons of the year. In Kyoto, there are a lot of places where you can see, listen and scent nature, but I would like to write briefly about my most memorable nature’s events for each season and places which impressed me the most.

I would like to start by describing autumn, as it is the most bright and colorful season. In autumn, Kyoto wears the colors from the yellow of the ginkgo tree leaves to the purple and dark red of the small maple leaves. The middle of autumn is the beginning of maturing of *kaki*, delicious orange-colored Japanese persimmons. You can see *kaki* fruits on tree branches for a long time, even after *kaki* trees have already lost all their leaves. This is a time when they look most attractive.

The end of October is the beginning of very famous *momiji* time, time for admiring small leaves on Japanese maple trees becoming

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Kateryna Chornohvostenko
(Ukraine)



The author



Kaki, Japanese persimmons

Advertise your activities in the “Life in Kyoto” newsletter!

Why not advertise your event, restaurant, language school, workshop, services and so on in our life and culture information publication, “Life in Kyoto”? Please contact us now, and let us introduce you to our readers in the next issue!

Tel: 075-752-3511 (“Life in Kyoto” staff)
E-mail : office@kcif.or.jp



We are looking for new members like you !

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A New Law for Bicycle Insurance in Kyoto City

Bicycles are very convenient to have in Kyoto and many people, especially students, are using them to get around every day. By making laws, Kyoto city has implemented countermeasures to many bicycle related problems such as bicycles being abandoned and a lack of bicycle parking.

Additionally, as of this April, Kyoto City has required every cyclist to get bicycle insurance.

This new law was made due to the number of bicycle accidents in the city. The total number of bicycle accidents has decreased, but those involving pedestrians and properties have not changed. In the year of 2016, there were as much as 69 reported injuries.

In one such case, it is reported that a cyclist had to pay as high as one hundred million yen, which was likely for medical fees. All cyclists, even kids and tourists, are required to have bicycle insurance while they ride a bicycle in Kyoto. Since there are many types of insurance available with varying costs and benefits, cyclists should get the right one which suits their individual situation.

Please visit this website* with loads of information for cyclists in Kyoto City, it is very useful.

There are no penalties involved with this law, but once a cyclist gets into an accident, they might have to pay a lot of money for any damages or medical fees. In order to protect cyclists against such unexpected burdens, it is advised that they get bicycle insurance.

*Kyoto-bicycle.com

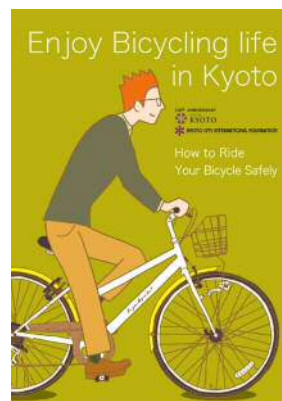
FURUTA Tomiyoshi

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

‘Enjoy Bicycling Life in Kyoto’

kokoka has collaborated with Kyoto City to publish booklets in English and Chinese about rules and etiquette relating to riding your bicycle on the road. Please check these booklets out. They are now available at kokoka Kyoto International Community House.

Bicycle liability insurance has been obligatory since April 2018. Please make sure you know how to safely ride your bicycle according to the rules of the road.



English edition



Chinese edition

Kyoto City Comprehensive Disaster Drill 2018

We would like to invite you to the Kyoto City Comprehensive Disaster Drill on September 1st, to prepare for disasters. Please check the website below and apply now!

<http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/jigyosai/en/bousai/top/bousai.htm>



Earthquake simulation vehicle



Rescue training

What's the Point of Cooking in Japan?

Japan is full of delicious restaurants and Kyoto is no different with its many specialty shops. It may seem wasteful, but if you are living in Kyoto I think it is better to cook most of your meals yourself. Personally, I have gained a lot from cooking at home while living in Kyoto. In addition to saving a lot of money, I have learned how to properly cook with classic Japanese ingredients and experienced another side of Japanese culture.

While cooking in Japan, I have discovered some hidden treasures. At first glance, they aren't too attractive; however, once you know how to cook with them, they are just like any other vegetable. In this article, I will introduce *konnyaku* (Devil's tongue), *daikon* (Japanese radish), and *renkon* (lotus root). Despite their odd appearances, they are very healthy. *Konnyaku** is especially healthy with almost zero calories and a plethora of vitamins and minerals. When cooking *konnyaku*, I rinse it with water and boil for 2 minutes to remove its fishy flavor. For *daikon* and *renkon*, I soak them in a water and *mirin* (sweet rice cooking wine) mixture for five minutes to remove its bitter flavor.

While I usually cook by myself at home, some of my fondest memories are from cooking with friends and my Japanese relatives. It is a special feeling to cook with someone from a different culture as you can learn so much. I have grilled meat with coworkers, cooked with friends and even taught my relatives how to make *yatsushashi*—a traditional Kyoto dessert. These are experiences I will surely cherish for the rest of my life.

I hope I have inspired you to take up cooking in Kyoto. Take advantage of these wonderful ingredients and unforgettable experiences. There are many more Japanese ingredients and delicious dishes waiting to be discovered. To get you started on your culinary journey, I leave you with a simple yet traditional Japanese recipe: *miso* soup.

Miso Soup

Ingredients (Makes 4 Metric cups)

<i>Kombu</i> -----	1 or 2 10 cm pieces
<i>Katsuobushi</i> (Bonito fish flakes)-	20 to 30g
Water-----	4 ½ cups
<i>Miso</i> paste (red or white)-----	2 T
<i>Wakame</i> -----	100 g
<i>Abura-age</i> (Fried Tofu)-----	120 g cut into 1 cm x 2 cm pieces



The featured ingredients:
konnyaku(left), *renkon* (right),
daikon (top)



Making *yatsushashi* sweets
with my relatives



The finished product

Cooking directions

Dashi stock

1. Add the water to a soup pot. After wiping kombu with a wet paper towel, add to the water. Bring water to a simmer over medium heat. When it begins to simmer, remove the *kombu* and turn off the heat.
2. Add 1/4 cup of water to the pot and add bonito flakes. (* 1)
3. After the flakes sink to the bottom of the pot, slowly strain through a fine mesh sieve or paper towel into a separate container. (* 2)

Miso Soup

1. Bring *dashi* to a simmer over medium heat. Combine 1/3 cup of the stock and *miso* paste in a separate bowl. Add this mixture to the soup while stirring.
2. Add *abura-age* (* 3) and *wakame* (* 4), and simmer for an additional 8 minutes.
3. Enjoy your *miso* soup!

Notes:

- * 1 If the water is too hot, the bonito flakes will give a strong fishy flavor to the stock.
- * 2 At this point, you can store the stock for three days in the refrigerator. *Dashi* stock is the life blood of many Japanese dishes.
- * 3 In order to remove excess oil from *abura-age*, pour boiling water over it before use.
- * 4 If *kombu* or *wakame* comes to a boil, they will add off flavors to the soup.



International Exchange by Baseball Nepal Baseball Club Laligurans

Have you ever played baseball? In Japan, baseball is very popular with many adults and children playing, and there is professional baseball as well. However, when you look around the world, there are many countries where baseball is not well known. Nepal is one such country, and so, I like to introduce a NPO that is running baseball exchange programs in Nepal.



“NPO of Nepalese Laligurans Baseball Club” (Laligurans) began its activities in 1999. All its staff members are volunteers with no salary. What triggered the exchange activities was the overseas study tour from a Japanese university. One day, when the study tour students who came to Nepal were playing catch ball (*1), people gathered around and were watching them as if they've never seen catch balls before. The students, who thought this strange, researched and found that baseball is not known in Nepal. For these students who grew up in Japan where baseball was so familiar, the fact that there is a country where baseball is not known was a very big surprise. Then and there, they thought they wanted to interact with Nepalese people through baseball and so, began the activities to introduce baseball in Nepal.



Nepal national team

At first, they started with introducing baseball to children in schools, there, starting from explanation of baseball equipment “This is a ball”. From then on, over a period of many years, they continued with various activities such as, collecting and sending donations of baseball equipment to Nepal, holding baseball clinics and baseball tournaments in Nepal. As a result, even in Nepal, people who play baseball increased little by little. And in 2010, the first Nepalese professional baseball player joined a team in a Japanese independent professional league (*2). Then, in 2011, the national team of Nepal participated in an international tournament for the first time. Baseball in Nepal had developed to such a level. However, this is not to say that environment for playing baseball in Nepal was good. In Nepal, there are no baseball diamonds so, players are playing baseball in empty fields where people and cows normally pass through.

By the way, the philosophy of Laligurans is “collaboration”. It is not one-sided support activities, but aims for having activities which support learning together with people in Nepal. Already, many Japanese people have traveled to Nepal to play baseball with Nepalese people, and in 2014, there were occasions Nepalese children came to Japan to play baseball. Although there are various ways to have international exchange, I think having international exchange through sports such as Laligurans is also an interesting initiative.

Now, Laligurans is recruiting people who are interested in supporting Nepalese baseball together. If you would like to know more about Laligurans, please visit the following website.



◆ Laligurans official website: <http://www.nepalbaseball.net/>

*1 play catch ball: practice throwing and catching baseball

*2 independent league: professional baseball league for players aiming for top level league such as NPB (Major League Baseball in Japan)

SUZUKI Hidetoshi

The Wonder That is Used Book

A while after I started living in Kyoto, I realized just how many books were around me.

There are many used bookshops and libraries here in Kyoto, so I have many opportunities to find good books. Kyoto has many new and old secondhand bookstores. The new ones were opened by young owners. The books available are selected based on the owners' tastes which gets book worms like me excited.

We can see secondhand book festivals everywhere in Kyoto!

The most famous one is *Furuhon Matsuri* (Secondhand Book Festa) which is held several times a year.

This year, the Shimogamo Summer Secondhand Book Festival is going to be held at Tadasu no Mori in Shimogamo Shrine from August 11th to 16th. The Autumn Secondhand Book Festival will be held at Chionji in Hyakumanben from October 31st to November 4th.

Not only can we find novels there, but there are also magazines, photo books, old postcards and maps, which are very popular among tourists from overseas.

They also have a section for children's books, so you can find picture books and books in large print.

I visited The Spring Secondhand Book Festa and noticed there were a lot of books in other languages such as English and Chinese. So, you can find books from your country as well as experience the local culture by reading Japanese books.

The festivals are held at historical places like Tadasu no Mori and Chionji, so you can enjoy their amazing book selection while admiring the beauty all around you. Don't miss out on your chance!!

A secondhand book festival



KOSONO Miki

kokoka Kyoto International
Community House Library

Library Letter

2018/8・9

 kokoka recommends this book

Story of Crafts in Kyoto KYOTO ARTISANS

Author:
Sawada Mieko
Publisher:
Rironsha, 2015



This book introduces craft goods, such as Kyoto lacquerwares, delicate Japanese flower-decorated hairpins, aromatic wood sticks, and Nishijin brocades. It also depicts the stories of artisans who are safeguarding the artistry of these craftworks. I hope the tradition of making these craft goods carefully one by one are passed on from generation to generation forever.

By the way, it takes about three to six months to complete a single flower-decorated hairpin. Amazing! I bow humbly impressed.

“Japan's World Heritage Sites”

(Author : John Dougill, Publisher : Tuttle, 2014)

This book is a photographic collection which introduces seventeen world heritage sites in Japan. It exhibits many breathtakingly beautiful photographs. I was infatuated with this book. Also, it has good detailed information and history of each sites. It is a perfect book to understand each of Japan's world heritage sites. I really recommend you to read it at the kokoka reading room. (English version only)

 **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.

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deeply red. This is the time when Kyoto looks as if, it's drowning in a purple river of leaves. My most memorable impressions of that time were the late evening trip on Eizan train to Kurama area, where we could see lighted-up *momiji* trees along the railway road and another trip by the ropeway to the top of Mount Hiei, from where we could see Lake Biwako. Occasionally, on the top of a mountain in the parking lot, I saw a car with a Ukrainian flag inside. I was so much surprised!

Winter in Kyoto is very mild and warm compared to my native country, Ukraine, where temperature may reach -15 degrees Celsius, sometimes even -25, and there may be up to a 2 meters of snow. So, for me, winter in Kyoto feels like late autumn in Ukraine.

The best memory of winter was the trip from Arashiyama to Kameoka by old Sagano Romantic Train (*Sagano Torokko Ressha*). It passed along the Hozugawa River, which has deep bright turquoise color, especially, while it's seen with the background of completely bald trees. Also, I liked winter evenings in the Takaragaike Park when the sky becomes light pink, and where deer are walking around freely, not afraid of people.

With the coming of spring, all the people are looking forward to one more significant event which is called *hanami*, the viewing of *sakura* cherry blossom. This is truly a beautiful sight, as Kyoto is covered with thick cherry blossoms, as if a heavy snow fell along the rivers, in the parks and on the temples. But, *hanami* time lasts a very short duration, only a couple of weeks after starting. Five centimeters per second is the average speed of falling *sakura* petals in a calm weather. I have learned about this fact from the famous animated movie of the same name produced by CoMix Wave Inc. This is a time of little melancholy and nostalgia, a time for thinking about the transience of life.

The end of spring and the beginning of summer is the time for one more interesting natural phenomena, the appearance of the unique water fireflies, *hotaru*. Green splashing lights of these insects could be seen along the small clean rivers after 8 pm, when it gets dark. I would like to thank the volunteers of kokoka Kyoto Guide Club for introducing the best places where *hotaru* could be seen, such as the Philosopher's Path (Tetsugaku no Michi) and others.

Thereby, there are a lot of natural events with their own special characteristics and phenomena throughout the year in Kyoto. All you need to do is to stop in the turmoil of life, take a closer look and think about the ancient city telling you a lot of secrets which can only be known between Kyoto and you.



A car with a Ukrainian flag



Hanami season

■ Writers, Editors and Contributors

HU Kan Xin/ FURUTA Tomiyoshi /FUJITA Risa/ IKUTA Minoru /
Nicholas IWAI / KANAYA Chinami / Karl JANSMA /
KOSONO Miki/ LIN Hsiu Feng/ OKAYAMA Kazuki /
SUZUKI Shoichiro / SUZUKI Hidetoshi /TANIGUCHI Chisato /
YAGI Toshiyuki / YUZAWA Kimio/



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TEL: 075-752-3511 FAX: 075-752-3510

E-mail: office@kcif.or.jp Website: <http://www.kcif.or.jp/en/>

Torii-cho 2-1, Awataguchi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan 〒 606-8536

6 min. walk North from [T09] Keage Station, Tozai Subway Line