

Series: **My Favorite Kyoto**

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## Kyoto, Never-ending Inspiring City

Hu Kan Xin (China)

I am a graphic designer by profession from China. Being fascinated with Japanese designs, I've visited Japan every year as a traveler. I've heard that a world viewed through the eyes of a traveler is different from that of a resident, and so, I was curious to know what the life in Kyoto was really like. So, from this year, I decided to experience the life in Kyoto I've visited many times, while learning the Japanese language.

Kyoto is a city I'm especially fond of. On a sunny day, when you look up, you could see the clear blue sky with large fluffy clouds slowly spreading out. Kyoto is a big city, but there are no skyscrapers, the three sides of it are surrounded by mountains filled with verdant greenery. There are many temples and shrines at various places, where some trees, several hundred years old, are towering over the surroundings. When you look around at your feet, people-friendly doves are freely walking around. It's the tranquil times and beautiful places like these that provide the best moments to take time to think over things and relax.

My most favorite place in Kyoto is the Kamo River. It's a long river, and rather than calling it a tourist sightseeing spot, it could be better to say that it's an unbounded idyllic garden. Kyoto is bustling in the area between Nijo and Shichijo streets, and when you ride a bicycle along the Kamo River, you can see lots of men and women, young and old enjoying whatever they like doing. Jogging, walking dogs, reading books, practicing guitar, chatting, all of them are absorbed in their own world without being disturbed by anyone else. Plants, animals, and people come together interacting closely at the Kamo River. People value Kamo River and Kamo River protectively watches them quietly in return. You don't get tired of watching these interacting sceneries no matter how often you see them.

There is a word in Japan, '*ichigo-ichie*' This word comes from the spirit of *Sado*, the traditional Japanese way of tea, meaning 'Only one opportunity in a life'. It encourages you to have an attitude that you should respect each other, each time you meet, because it might happen only one time in your life. For instance, Japanese cuisine is served on beautiful dishes tastefully arranged, whether at home, in a restaurant, whether light snacks or not. This reflects an expression of respect for food and a desire to make guests feel respected in the food that's cooked and served. Such culture as this connects people to be satisfied with even small things. Foods, served at *izakaya*, a casual Japanese pub fare, are neither much food nor are noteworthy, and many could even be cooked at home, and yet, it's overflowing with people's smiles and warmth. Every year when *sakura*, the cherry blossom season comes, many people



The author at home



Author's favorite place - the Kamo River



A cat taking a rest on a bicycle

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# Natural Disasters in Kyoto: let's be ready (and safe)

Kyoto is a beautiful, magical city where foreigners can live comfortably and conveniently. But because of its geographical location, there are more possibilities for natural disasters to occur, such as earthquakes, typhoons, landslides, and localized flooding. None of these can be prevented and some can be predicted, but it helps to know how to react in such situations.

The best and most helpful place for getting good information about natural disasters, and how we can protect ourselves, and perhaps help others is at the Kyoto International Community House, or "kokoka" \*1. This facility helps foreigners to adapt to living in Japan and can provide answers to a lot of daily life questions. The following four items are all available there for free, and should be part of your resources for living in Kyoto.

The handbook “Easy Living in Kyoto”, is produced in Japanese printed on the left side and foreign language (English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish) on the right side page, and is full of all kinds of helpful information. You can also download it from the website \*2.

The “Kyoto City Designated Refuge Areas & Regional Refuge Areas Map” shows the *Hinanjo* (safe places and shelters) in each Ward of Kyoto city. You can study this beforehand for locations near your house, job, or school, and how to get there safely. You can also download it from the website \*3.

A handy wallet-sized “Earthquake/Emergency Action Manual” (available in five languages) can go with you anywhere; you can fill in your personal information (in case of emergency) on the last page. The “Disaster Preparedness Handbook for International Residents” is produced in different languages by the Kyoto Prefectural International Center, is also available at kokoka and at the previously mentioned Center, or you can download it from their website \*4.

If you look around, there is much useful information at kokoka, but if you don't see something on the counters, or elsewhere in the lobby, just ask for help from one of the volunteer advisers at the Information Service Corner, or the staff.

Additionally, kokoka organizes events such as the Disaster Drill “2 Days in a Shelter” for foreigners to prepare for natural disasters; you can learn how to use a fire extinguisher, and give first aid, or experience a strong earthquake on a simulator. You can check the upcoming events at kokoka every month on their Event Calendar \*5.

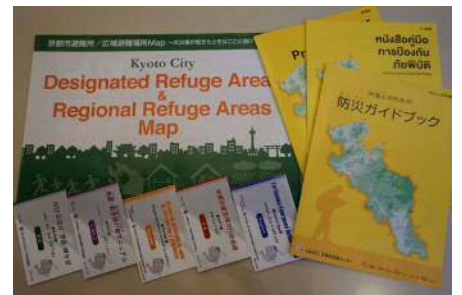
To get current disaster information in English, Japanese, or Chinese by e-mail through your cell phone, you can register your e-mail address through its special service website \*6.

Also, unusual weather and dynamic weather changes can be seen on a very good web site of the Japan Meteorological Agency \*7.

I hope that everyone who reads this article can find some time to learn about preparing for natural disasters, and being ready and able to protect yourself and your family when it matters most.



Easy Living in Kyoto handbook



Materials regarding disaster preparation information available at kokoka

- \* 1: (<http://www.kcif.or.jp/en>)
- \* 2: ([http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/guide/pdf\\_ver/en/pdf.html](http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/guide/pdf_ver/en/pdf.html))
- \* 3: (<http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/jigyosai/eng/hinanjo-map/index.html>)
- \* 4: (<https://www.kpic.or.jp/english/information/disasterhandbook.html>)
- \* 5: (<http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/event/top/en/index.html>)
- \* 6: ([http://www.kcif.or.jp/MMD/accept\\_mails](http://www.kcif.or.jp/MMD/accept_mails))
- \* 7: (<https://www.jma.go.jp/jma/index.html>)



# Life in Kyoto Volunteers present: “Let’s Play Karuta!” at the kokoka Open Day Event

Among Japanese *karuta* (card) games, the one called *Hyakunin Isshu* is one of the most popular. FUJIWARA Teika originally created *Hyakunin Isshu* in the early Kamakura period; he chose one hundred magnificent *waka* (poems consisting of thirty-one letters), and ink-brushed them on colored paper squares that were then attached to a number of *byobu* (folding screens) at a mansion (large, fine house) on Mt.Ogura. Later, these one hundred *waka* were made up into cards, and became the *Hyakunin Isshu* card game of today. It consisted of *yomifuda* (reading) cards with the whole poem written on them, and *torifuda* (grabbing) cards with only the last two lines of a poem written on them in *kana* characters. The game became popular not only among the nobles and *samurai*, but also with the ordinary people. Through the middle ages, the early modern era and up to today, it became a family game that is most often seen in the New Year season. And nowadays, as you may know, there exist professional *karuta* competitions, and also *manga* and movies that feature the *Hyakunin Isshu* poems; after all, they have 1000 years of history behind them!

This year will be the fifth time that we enjoy the “Let’s Play Karuta!” game. For this event, we have made a set of *torifuda* cards written in *romaji*, and translated some *waka* from the *Hyakunin Isshu* compilation and made cards out of them, and also prepared a *bozu mekuri* card game, so that foreigners, kids, and those who are not familiar with *Hyakunin Isshu* can play together. There will also be a demonstration of a competitive *karuta* game performed by the Kyoto University *Karuta* Club members.

If you want to participate in these games, feel free to come to our reception desk, and tell the staff which games you want to play. We welcome everyone, whether it’s one person or a group. We will do our best to help you enjoy playing the games. We will be waiting for you at the Let’s Play Karuta event area!



Karuta in romaji



Karuta in English



Competitive *karuta* game in progress

**Date:** November 3 (Saturday/Holiday), 2018

**Time:** From 10 a.m. through 4 p.m.  
(last admission: 3 p.m.)

**Place:** kokoka International Community House,  
3rd Floor Conference Room

**Contact us on:**

**E-mail:** office@kcif.or.jp

**Tel:** 075-752-3511

**Website:** <http://www.kcif.or.jp/en>

KASHIMURA Naoki, Translated by Sho

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

**kokoka Open Day 2018 " LOOK • LISTEN • EAT "**



Information in Japanese



Information in English

## Yuru-chara in Kyoto

Do you know *yuru-chara*? *Yuru-chara* is a mascot who is used by local governments, companies, organizations and so on in order to make people feel more familiar with them. Because the characters have gentle (*yuruyaka* or *yurui* in Japanese) shapes and their appearance can melt one's heart, people started calling them *yurui* characters or *yuru-chara* for short.

There are many *yuru-chara* all over Japan. For example, kokoka Kyoto International Community House has kokoka mascot. Also, Kumamon from Kumamoto Prefecture and Funassyi from Funabashi City of Chiba Prefecture are very famous, so I think you may have already seen them. Moreover, a *yuru-chara* popularity contest called “Yuru-chara Grand Prix” is held every year where everyone can vote for *yuru-chara* from all over the country. Some *yuru-chara* from Kyoto are also participating in Yuru-chara Grand Prix. In this article I would like to introduce Kamigyu-kun from Kamigyo Ward which is one among those who are participating.

Kamigyu-kun was born in 2009; the image was chosen from the ones submitted by the public commemorating the 130th anniversary of Kamigyo Ward. In Kamigyo Ward, there is the famous Kitano Tenmangu Shrine. The God of this shrine is called Tenjin-san and he is familiar among the residents of Kamigyo Ward. I also heard that because the person who created him thought Tenjin-san had so many anecdotes related to bulls, the bull became a motif for his design of the image of Kamigyu-kun.

Kamigyu-kun is doing activities for making many people get to know about the attractiveness of Kamigyo Ward by participating in various events organized by Kamigyo Ward. So far, Kamigyu-kun participated in festivals such as, “Kamigyo Ward Citizen Friendship Festival”, enlightening events for traffic safety by Kamigyo Police Station, and events of Doshisha University. Kamigyu-kun livens up these events by his participation. Additionally, the free notebook for traffic safety awareness with the illustration of Kamigyu-kun are sent to new students of primary schools in Kamigyo Ward.

Nine years have passed since Kamigyu-kun was born and now he is well-known among the people in Kamigyo Ward. I have heard that in the venue of events, when the children are asked the name of Kamigyu-kun, many



Kamigyu-kun in action

children answer “I know, I know!”. For your information, the 2018 Kamigyo Ward Citizen Friendship Festival will be held on October 28th at Nijojo Kita Primary School, and Kamigyu-kun will also be there.

Now, the vote for Yuru-chara Grand Prix this year, which Kamigyu-kun is also participating is to be submitted by November 9th. Aside from Kamigyu-kun, many *yuru-chara* are participating from all over the country. Please look them over using the following link. You may find your own favorite *yuru-chara*.

“Yuru-chara Grand Prix” official website  
<http://www.yurugp.jp/>



Kamigyu-kun

SUZUKI Hidetoshi

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

**Get vital disaster information from the e-mail magazine  
“Multilingual Useful Information”**

The Kyoto City International Foundation sends out this e-mail magazine in Japanese, English, and Chinese. We recommend signing up for it now at:  
[http://www.kcif.or.jp/MMD/accept\\_mails/](http://www.kcif.or.jp/MMD/accept_mails/)





# One of my favorite routes to enjoy the autumn leaves

Since I started living in Kyoto, I have visited many places to look at autumn leaves. I like living in Kyoto because I can go anywhere on my bicycle. Temples that are lit up at night, such as Shoren-in, Eikando, and places in Arashiyama are good viewing spots, but I'd like to introduce you to a nice maple tree area where you can avoid the crowds and enjoy the scenery.

Suiro-kaku is an ancient aqueduct that goes through Nanzenji temple, and can be reached on foot from kokoka Kyoto International Community House. This canal was built in the Meiji era and its surrounding autumn leaves provide some very gorgeous scenery. First, you go under the canal, and then go up to the left. Then, when you pass by Saishoin Kotoku-an, you will see vivid red leaves from the inside of the garden. I love visiting here at the end of the season, because so many red leaves cover the road and every step I take makes nice crispy, crunching sounds. After walking for a while, you will come to an open space. It is rare to see many people here, so you can enjoy the scenery. The air is clean and it will make you feel very good!!

Next, go further, and you will get to Okuno-in. To my surprise, there is a place there for *takigyo*, a religious practice of standing under a waterfall, which I have only seen on TV shows! The other day, when I passed by that place, I saw a man who was trying meditation under the waterfall. I wanted to take a picture of him, but I dared not because it's a sacred place!!

Then, you can go back to Kotoku-an to enjoy the leaves again.

You don't need to pay an entrance fee. Most of the people leave Nanzenji after viewing the Suiro-kaku, so the rest of us can stay and enjoy the autumn leaves as much as we want.



A maple leaf in the stream



Walking on the carpet of autumn leaves

KOSONO Miki

kokoka Kyoto International  
Community House Library

## Library Letter

2018/10 · 11

 kokoka recommends this book

### **In-flight Meals for Everyone** Welcome To The Sky Restaurant!

**Author:** Kinaishoku.com  
**Publisher:** Shoeisha, 2018



“In-flight meals”; you have definitely enjoyed them, right? We are now introducing this book, which features only in-flight meals. Many pictures of in-flight meals are in the book, and each meal looks really tasty. You can feel the strong passion for good food of airlines of Japan and around the world. I'm getting hungry just looking at them.

Someday I'd love to enjoy the meals in first-class section!

### “Panorama World Trip”

(Author/Painter: TEZUKA Akemi, Publisher: Kokuyo, 2017)

This book can be extended up to 2 meters by means of its fold-out pages. The story is about twins, Tete and Kuku, who are traveling the world. There are special gimmick doors and windows throughout the book, so please try to find and open them.

We are glad if adults (and children, of course), can get familiar with picture books.

### 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>



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Enjoying the serenity of the temple



Springtime at the temple



Garbage in a square wire container



A meal set on beautiful plates

view cherry blossoms sitting together under branches of *sakura* trees, nibbling on tasty tidbits from lunch boxes. The foods are simple and the life of cherry blossoms are short, but the atmosphere from the midst of it makes you feel happy. Kyoto residents are very courteous. Wherever you go, you can hear two words, '*suimasen*' which means 'sorry' and '*ookini*' which means 'thank you'. Everyone can live everyday comfortably, feeling good because everyone is yielding and humbly gives way to each other. Also, everyone gives careful considerations to even small things. To ensure the safety of elementary school children going to school, teachers and neighbourhood volunteers stand at the cross walks, directing children every morning. Along roads near construction sites, construction staff gives directions to pedestrians to ensure their safety. Additionally, even at the entrance of a parking lot specially assigned staff are placed to look out for the safety of pedestrians and moving vehicles without a frown on their faces.

It's often said that the department stores in Kyoto are more oriented for older people than the ones in Osaka, and indeed, the ratio of older people in Kyoto is much higher than in Osaka. Yet, elderly people in Kyoto are very self-reliant and you often see senior citizens walking the carry-cart around the city. Of course, the city itself is ingeniously designed kindly for the elderly, for example, when city buses stop at bus stops, the body of the bus leans lower so that elderly people with leg and waist problems can get on and off easily. I think these noticeable concerns for the elderly are not found in some countries overseas.

Looking at my daily life, apart from Japanese people's love of cleanliness in living, I especially feel fondness for their organized and neat way of living. In the morning and evening, they can be seen trimming plants in front of their homes. In addition, storage boxes for a variety of usage are for sale at shops. Chinese people would put stuff directly into a cabinet or desk drawers, whereas, Japanese people would put stuff in storage boxes appropriate for the shape and purpose first and then, put the boxes into the drawers. When going to school, I often see waste bags put inside a square garbage wire containers every day. This practice of neatness probably comes from the Japanese culture. They thoughtfully organize where things are to be laid out and what storage to put things in. These are reasons of organization why there are numerous designs even for toilet paper stands.

Lastly, residents in Kyoto seem to be shy. Likewise, shops in Kyoto are modest and not showy. Unless you look for the shop carefully, you won't find it. You can't know from the outside what the shop is, because *noren* (shop curtain) is hung at the shop's entrance and you can't look into the shop. However, if you courageously go through the *noren* and enter the shop, you can see a wonderful world filled with shopkeeper's specialized merchandise open up and spread out before you. Perhaps, these are the attractive points and charms of Kyoto.

Elegant, composed, and never-ending inspiring city – That is Kyoto.

Translated by FURUTA Tomiyoshi

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On the WEB you can read LIK in English,  
Japanese and Chinese

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