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## There and Back Again: On Traveling Alone and Coming Home

Alan Aquino  
(USA)

For as much time as I've spent here in Kyoto as an exchange student, I've also spent quite a bit of time on the roads, rails, and airways of Japan. With Kyoto as my base of operations, right in the middle of the country, the eight months that I have been here presented a rare opportunity to travel extensively without having jet lag and with less of a language barrier than most visitors. The city is centrally located, making it an excellent starting point for most any trip within Japan. For any journey, however, within Kyoto or to the corners of the country, I think the best way to experience it all is to travel on your own.

My mother was the one who gave me the bug for adventure. Even before she found work as a travel agent, she was living abroad all over the globe during her younger years. When I became old enough to start taking care of myself, she would leave home more than a few times a year on trips of her own, going to visit our extended family or just to step foot in a country she had never been to before. I got used to tagging along with her once or twice a year, and it wasn't until I was much older that I realized how unusual it was, to the average American, for me to be packing my bags and going somewhere new.

Wandering alone is the best way to discover new places, and it is something I did a lot of last September when I first moved to Kyoto. On my own, peering into shops, window-shopping the store displays, or following the scent of something delicious helped to map the countless roads, bus stops, and train stations into my mind. The more I wandered, having long since seen many of the major attractions in the city, I began finding even more fun in taking back roads and side streets, discovering so many interesting little sights hidden by the urban jungle and sprawl.

There is a certain amount of impulsiveness and the satisfaction of acting on these impulses that goes into these kinds of trips too, not only just in Kyoto, but far away from it too. Last fall, thinking over my plans for a week off from school, I stumbled across Hayashi Gaho's "Three Great Views of Japan", and knew immediately what I wanted to do. Two day trips out of Kyoto to see Itsukushima Shrine and Amanohashidate, coupled with a layover in Tokyo, a quick stop in Matsushima on my way to Tashirojima,



Alan at Nagasaki Bio Park

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# Go to Kyoto Aquarium during Summer Vacation



Dolphin performance

The Kyoto Aquarium, whose concept is “Life Connected by Water”, is located in Umekōji Park. The aquarium has 12 separate areas, where we can see many kinds of living creatures such as seals, a Japanese giant salamander, and penguins. In particular, at the Dolphin Stadium, we can enjoy a show called “Dolphin Live - Please Listen to the Sound,” and the performance involves not only the trainers, human performers, and dolphins, but also includes the audience.

If you go to the aquarium now, you can enjoy playing with dolphins in an event called “Splash with Dolphins.” In addition, the aquarium operating hours are extended during this time, and an evening performance called “Dolphin

Night Live - Please Listen to the Sound” will be presented. The lighting for this performance is beautiful and you can enjoy an atmosphere very different from the day performances. As for the timing and more information on each event, please visit their website.

<http://www.kyoto-aquarium.com/news/2016/05/irukatosplash.html> (Japanese)

A set of discount tickets for the Kyoto Aquarium and Kyoto Railway Museum can be purchased at Seven-Eleven convenience stores in Japan. With these tickets, we can enter Kyoto Aquarium within one month from the date which was chosen for entry to the Kyoto Railway Museum. I recommend buying these tickets if you want to go to both facilities, because these tickets are more reasonable than the usual entrance fees.

Why not take a look around the Umekōji Park area this summer?

KANAYA Chinami

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## Information from Kyoto City Hall

### "Temporary Welfare Benefits" and

### "Temporary Welfare Benefits for Recipients of Disability Pension and Survivors Pension"

Since April of 2014, the consumption tax rate was raised. The City of Kyoto will provide “Temporary Welfare Benefits” to low-income earners (persons not subject to municipal inhabitant's tax in 2016). Also, to support people living on pensions who do not receive the benefit of a wage increase, “Temporary Welfare Benefits for Recipients of Disability Pension and Survivors Pension” will be provided to qualified low-income earners.

- There are conditions that must to be met in order to receive these payments. Please inquire to 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 sent it back in the enclosed envelope by February 2, 2017. Postage is not necessary.
- Kyoto City will review the application, and for those who are 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

# Grand opening of the Kyoto Railway Museum

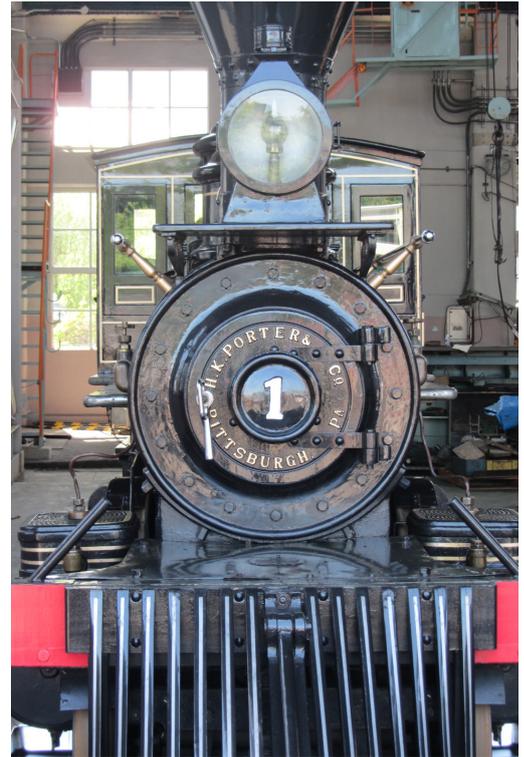
The Kyoto Railway Museum, the largest in Japan, had its grand opening at the start of Golden Week this year. If you walk 20 minutes straight west from Kyoto Station, you will find the museum. Its exhibits have a variety of trains, ranging from steam locomotives to *shinkansen* (bullet trains). The Nihonkai, a special sleeper train, which ran between Osaka and Aomori, brings sentimental feelings to many people in the Kansai area. A small steam locomotive, imported from America, which served to develop the Hokkaido area, is also on exhibit.

Many displays are exhibits which show the technological support coming from England at the start. Children would probably like to be train conductors, using the simulators, and see the model trains running in the giant diorama. Real steam locomotives, railways, shock absorber systems, and maintenance equipment are on exhibit, with explanations for easy understanding. From the start of *shinkansen* service, no accidental deaths have occurred, due to use of the ATS (Automatic Train Stop) and CTC (Computer-aided Train Control) systems; both of these have contributed to safety, and are also on exhibit.

From the sky terrace, you can look out over the city of Kyoto and see the *shinkansen* and regional train lines in operation. In the museum, you can have meals in the restaurant or the dining car, or you can buy an *ekiben* (lunch box). If you make an advance reservation, you will be able to see any information in the railway library archive.

I think people from children to seniors will really enjoy this museum.

(HP: <http://www.kyotorailwaymuseum.jp/en/>)



Steam locomotive



Train simulator



City of Kyoto seen from the sky terrace

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

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

## Counseling Day for Foreign Residents

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding legal issues, visa problems, taxes, insurance, your pension, etc.? Are you worried about something? Professionals in those areas can discuss any of these with you. Interpreters will be available on request. Advanced reservations are required. We will protect your confidentiality.

When: Sunday, September 25, 13:00 – 17:00

Where: kokoka Kyoto International Community House, 3F, Conference Room and Counseling Room

Reservations: phone 075-752-3511

# Region Cooperates with Universities to Create New FM Radio Station in Kyoto “Radio Mix Kyoto”

On May 22 of this year, a new community FM radio station was born in Kyoto. This station is called “Radio Mix Kyoto” and its broadcast service area is the northern part of Kyoto, including Kita and Kamigyo Wards, operating at a frequency of 87.0 MHz. They named it “Radio Mix” because they hoped to mix different generations, occupations, various cultures and people through their broadcasts, in order to create something new and to promote activity in the community.



**Mr. Alan**

The distinctive feature of Radio Mix Kyoto is their theme of “cooperation between the region and its universities”.

There are four universities in Kita Ward, and Radio Mix was established through the cooperation of those universities, the Kita Ward Office, and local companies and citizens. Incidentally, Radio Mix Kyoto has about 10 on-air radio personalities and half of them are university students.

Their program runs 24 hours a day, with four hours of live broadcasting. They have an English language program called “GLOCAL KYOTO”, which runs from 15:00 to 15:30. The content of this program is regional news, other topics, and music; it also has an English lesson segment. It is fairly relaxed, and you can listen to it quite easily.

I interviewed Mr. Alan, who is the emcee of this program. He was born in Ohio, USA, and came to Japan four years ago. He told me he liked radio since childhood, and when he was about 4 or 5 years old, he pretended to put on his own radio program. He always wanted to emcee a radio program someday, and this dream came true in Japan.

I asked him about the difficulties in creating this program. He said “I am studying Japanese, but it is still difficult. Except for that, everything is a lot of fun. With all the talking and playing music, time really does fly”.

According to Mr. Tokioka Koji, secretary general, radio broadcasting through the cooperation of universities and regions is a new concept, and it is somewhat of a challenge. He also said “Though Kyoto is said to be an international city, I think circulation of information for foreigners is still limited. In particular, there are not many immediate information sources like radio broadcasts. In the future, I would like to circulate more information for foreigners”.

In addition to radio, Radio Mix Kyoto can be heard on the internet; please go to their website shown below. You can also make requests or send messages to the programs. I hope many people will get to know Radio Mix Kyoto and listen to their broadcasts.

Radio Mix Kyoto - Website: <http://radiomix.kyoto/> E-mail: [fm870@radiomix.kyoto](mailto:fm870@radiomix.kyoto)

SUZUKI Hidetoshi



**Kiyomizudera Temple**



**Winter day at Katsura station**

the island in Miyagi Prefecture where stray cats outnumber residents, finishing with a quick jaunt up to Sapporo, and I had a trip with arrangements that most any person would call crazy. You get to see so much on your own, with the freedom to linger or move on, and the decisions are always just up to you.

For as much as I think about how well travel and solitude go hand-in-hand, something peculiar happened on my way back to Japan from my winter break in America. I had just stepped off the train at my station, beginning the ten-minute walk back to my homestay, when I realized how fast my feet seemed to be carrying me there. It certainly was not the cold — I was warmly clothed — but I quickly realized that it was the thought of being home again.

Home. The people that I was hurrying home to see, they certainly weren't my biological family. This city, on the other side of the planet from where I was born and raised, certainly was not where I was from originally. The potential for something new, the thought of escaping everything for just a little while, or deciding that the best way to return from Nagasaki is through Sapporo because of the Snow Festival, are the things that make me want to travel so often. But what is familiar — the sights, the smells, the people — is what makes a place "home". I never realized that being away so much from Kyoto would make me want to stay here all the more.

kokoka Kyoto International Community House Library

August - September 2016

## Library Letter

 kokoka recommends this book

### “Madlenka”

**Author:** Peter Sis

**Japanese Translation:**

MATSUDA Motoko

**Publisher:** BL Shuppan, 2001



The kokoka Library will host a World Picture Book Exhibition (from August 3 through 7), which is now a yearly event. This year, the exhibition's theme is “Colorful World Picture Book Exhibit”, so we will introduce a book from the collection exhibited at the event.

Madlenka is a young girl living in New York. One day, she found that her tooth was loose, and went out to tell her friends about it. This picture book describes the enjoyable atmosphere of a city where many races of people live. By all means, please come to our exhibition. We will be waiting for you!

Everyone has been waiting for this! Held every four years, two sports competitions, the Olympics (from August 5 through 21) and the Paralympics (from September 7 through 18) will be presented in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil this year. For this occasion, you can learn more about Brazil, a country rich in diversity, by reading the book “56 Chapters to learn about Brazil” (Angelo Ishi, 2nd ed. Akashi Shoten, 2010). You may be fascinated by the charms of Brazil.

### 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.

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## Using *Sudare* for Summer Living

In the hot summer, extremely strong sunlight streams into houses through the windows. To cut off this hot sunlight, how about using *sudare*? These are blinds or shades made of woven reeds or thin strips of bamboo. They block off the sunlight, but allow the breezes to pass through the spaces. You have probably seen many scenes of *sudare* hanging outside the windows of *machiya*, traditional wooden houses.

*Sudare* have a long history; their origins are from *misu*, a decorated type of bamboo blind. *Misu* were used in special places, such as the Imperial Court, shrines, and temples; there they were used as room partitions and for separating religious areas. It is said that the use of *misu* spread to the ordinary people later as *sudare*, but *misu* can still be seen in shrines, temples, and the *gosho* (old Imperial Palace).

Artisans still make *sudare* the traditional way, and you can buy them at specialty shops. In addition, there are cheap



*Sudare on machiya in Kyoto*



*Misu in Kitano Tenmangu Shrine*

ones, priced at only hundreds of yen, sold in supermarkets and DIY stores (home centers). Get some *sudare* and hang them outside your windows. Besides reducing the heat and increasing your comfort, *sudare* will also add a nice Japanese-style atmosphere to your home.

One other thought: we often see *sudare* hanging outside homes all year long, not just in summertime. Why is this? The reason for using *sudare* is not just to cut off the sunlight, but also to shut off the view from outside eyes.

FUJITA Risa

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