

Series: My Favorite Kyoto

Discovering *Jidokans* (Children's Houses)

Ashley Clayton (Canada)

Moving to a new country can be exciting and challenging; moving with a child or children can often multiply the challenges.

Two years ago, I moved to Kyoto with my husband and our son, who was one-and-a-half years old at the time. Before that, we lived in other countries, including Japan; ten years ago, we lived in Kyushu. So, we were familiar both with living in Japan, and moving and adjusting to a new place. Even so, we had no idea what it would be like to raise a child in a country far from home.



**My eldest son pretending to be a mailman.
Taken at a *jidokan***

When we arrived in Kyoto on a cold February night, one of our concerns was how to ensure a smooth transition for our energetic and curious son. And we started looking for local family-friendly activities and events.

When I searched online, I came across a website* that listed, in English, events being held at various *jidokan*. These are community centers where children can read and play, offering both unstructured (free) play, and structured (directed) activities and programs. At some *jidokan*, parents and children can join a weekly playgroup and attend special events, like rhythm (music) classes.

When my son and I entered a *jidokan* for the first time, we were warmly welcomed by a teacher who gave us a tour of the center, handed us some information about activities and events for children, and advised us about other public services for families in Kyoto. She made us feel at home, and since that day, the *jidokan* became our second home.

Although Kyoto has many great family-friendly places, some are located far away, or are expensive, and/or crowded.

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**My eldest son and I at the
Kyoto Botanical Gardens.**

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Let's See the Stars at Astronomical Observatories

The Astronomical Observatory in Kyoto “Koyama Astronomical Observatory”

Have you ever been to an astronomical observatory? You may think that observatories are just where astronomers and researchers from institutions look into outer space, but many of them are open to the general public. The Koyama Astronomical Observatory at Kyoto Sangyo University is one of these, and it is very easy to visit. Here I will provide a simple introduction to this observatory.



the Araki Telescope

The Koyama Astronomical Observatory was established in April 2010, and next year is its 10th anniversary. Because the founder of the university, Dr. Araki Toshima, who was a researcher of astronomy, Kyoto Sangyo University has put much effort into education, and the study of astronomy and the universe. This observatory was built as the symbol of the 50th anniversary of the university.

The Koyama Astronomical Observatory has the largest reflecting telescopes at Japanese private universities. The reflecting telescope here is named “The Araki telescope” after Dr. Araki Toshima. The observatory staff and the students, in cooperation with outside research institutions and others, are further developing all of the observation instrument here. Some of these instruments are the highest quality in the world, and their capabilities are highly regarded.



Koyama Astronomical Observatory

At the same time, the observatory considers their relationship with the local community to be very important, so they hold various events for anyone who is interested. One of these is regular stargazing parties for public, which are put on every Saturday (except during the rainy season and winter). At these parties, one by one, visitors can actually see the stars through the Araki and smaller telescopes. When I visited, I looked at the planet Jupiter, the star Vega in the constellation Lyra, and some others. As for Jupiter, I was able to see its striped patterns and its satellites.



First Floor Lobby

Another event at the stargazing parties, held in the basement hall, is the screening of a 3D visualization of the universe, by the simulation software “Mitaka”. In this presentation, you can enjoy the feeling of actual space travel, starting from Earth, and going beyond the Moon, out of our solar system, from the Milky Way Galaxy, to a place 13.8 billion light years away, all in 20 minutes!

On the day I went there, there were about one hundred visitors. When I asked one family about their

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Enjoy Kyoto Vegetables at *Kyoyasai Izakaya*!

“Good evening!”

Drawn by the energetic greetings, when you enter the restaurant, the first thing that jumps at you, is many heaping bowls of colorful vegetables on the counters. As its name suggests “Yakiyasai (grilled vegetables) ISOYA” is a popular *Izakaya*, where seasonal vegetables are grilled on the hotplate, served with sauces to bring out the natural flavors of the ingredients. At this time, let me introduce to you my favorite *Izakaya*.

The owner, who grew up as a son of farmers, with the concept of designing cuisine from farms, manages six restaurants including this restaurant in Kyoto city. The vegetables are delivered every day, freshly picked from self-owned farms in Mukou city. Working together with these farm cooperatives, many *Kyoyasai* (Kyoto Vegetables) line the restaurant counters. The restaurant manager creates each recipe himself. For example, because salad kale has bitter taste, he mixes it with a thick Caesar sauce. Its texture is uniquely crisp with a mellow cream, and the taste is sweet and gentle.

In addition, the popularity of this restaurant is not only for the food. The courteous service of the staff is also a reason why this restaurant is always crowded with customers. One time, when I was waiting for my friend inside the restaurant, one staff person served me a cup of green tea and showed me today's recommended menu in order not to let me get bored. Such kind full service relaxes you completely.

What the staff especially value is to be sensitive to customers, ascertain what the customer wants and offer the desired service. Therefore, the staff always keep an eye on customer's wishes in the restaurant.

Luna, one of the staff, answered my question with a beaming smile, “I feel the most joy working here when my service offering makes a customer smile.”

In autumn, the restaurant manager recommends autumn eggplants and mushrooms such as Tanba Shimeji mushroom. He says, “Autumn eggplants stuffed with meat miso, and Shimeji mushrooms mixed with sea urchin butter are recipes I'm planning, ” Of course, bowls of traditional autumn vegetables such as, pumpkins and sweet potatoes will line the counters.

This restaurant is always filled with healthy vegetables and voices of energetic staff. Why not spend a long autumn night at “Yakiyasai ISOYA”?

“Yakiyasai ISOYA”

Address: 418, Shimomaruya-cho, Sanjo-agaru, Kawaramachi, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto City

TEL: 075-212-5039



Luna and seasonal vegetables



Inside the restaurant



MIKAWA Yurina

kokoka Open Day 2019

An event of cross-cultural experiences, where both adults and children can enjoy the entire day.

Featuring: tastes of world cuisine at food stalls, music and dance performances on stage, browsing the flea market, and appreciating ethnic people's costumes.

Date & Time: November 3rd (Sunday • Holiday) 10:00 ~ 16:00

Venue: kokoka Kyoto International Community House (6 min from Keage Station, Tozai Train Line)

Life in Kyoto's Storyboard Theater showing is on 3rd Floor.

For more details on Open Day, please go to the home page of the website below.

<http://www.kcif.or.jp/web/jp>



HomePage



Leaflet

A Multilingual Picture Storyboard Show – “Once upon a time...”

“Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived an old man and his wife.”

This is a standard sentence that begins many children's stories, ones I remember my mother reading to me often as a youngster. Reading picture books and doing picture-story shows for children has spread all over the world as a tool for developing their feelings, and to raise their emotional consciousness.

Around the 12th century, a monk was telling the story of Buddha's life to some children, illustrating it using paintings, called “*etoki*”. These became the prototypes for picture books and storyboard shows. We have always treasured the rich cultural associations from these, and their ability to expand the power of our imaginations, using just our eyes and ears.

Our Life in Kyoto Group will present a multilingual picture storyboard show at kokoka, for the Kyoto International Community House OPEN DAY event on Sunday, November 3. This kind of show can rarely be seen elsewhere. We have prepared unique plans for an audience participation style that adults and children can really enjoy. Come on over to our space on the 3rd floor and see for yourself!!

YAGI Takashi

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experience, they said, “We have been here two or three times. It is so enjoyable, because we can see some stars with its explanation by the staff and learn what we didn’t know before”.

At this stargazing party, except for the observatory staff, a team of students called the “Koyama Astronomical Observatory Support Team” provided explanations, and guided visitors. This is a group of students who like stars and the universe, and they are helping to liven up the observatory. They participate in various astronomy events, inside and outside the university. When I talked to members of the team, they told me that, “Looking at the stars through telescopes is enjoyable, and it’s pleased that visitors are happy to listen to our explanations”. They also said this about the attraction of astronomy: “As to the stars and universe, there are still many things we don’t know. It is very interesting, because as we do more research, more mysterious things will appear”.

I think that perhaps your everyday way of living is very busy. So how about taking some time to have a leisurely view of the starry sky? For more information about the Koyama Astronomical Observatory and the event schedule, please check their website.



the Araki Telescope in Observation

★ Koyama Astronomical Observatory

Address: Kamigamo Motoyama, Kita-ku, Kyoto (Kyoto Sangyo University)

Website: <https://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/english/research/observatory.html> (English)

SUZUKI Hidetoshi

kokoka Kyoto International
Community House Library

Library Letter

2019/10・11

kokoka recommends this book

“Tour of the world’s sheep”

Author: HONDE Masumi

Publisher: Graphicssha, 2016



In this issue, we will introduce what? Sheep, in a picture book! That’s unusual, isn’t it? You could say that the image of sheep is lots of puffy wool and curling horns. However, sheep all over the world have great variations in appearance. By all means, come and have a look at this picture book. You will see a lot of different-looking sheep.

And by the way, there are about 3,000 breeds of sheep in the world. That’s really a lot!

※kokoka is Kyoto International Community House mascot.

『“Nanduti Accessories” Paraguay’s traditional lace』

(Author: IWATANI Mie Elena, Publisher: Seibundoushinkousha, 2018)

This book introduce many colorful Nanduti (Paraguayan lace) accessories, and how to create them.

By all means, have a look at this book, and enjoy the Nanduti handicrafts. kokoka wants to try this, too.

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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My eldest son at a Halloween party hosted by a local *jidokan*.

In addition to going to *jidokan*, some of our favorite indoor places are *hiroba* (play areas) located within *hoikuen* (nursery school/day care), “Kodomo Miraikan” (a facility for child raising support, run by Kyoto City), and the children’s library “Piccoli”. Also, we have often found and enjoyed many interesting events for children at kokoka Kyoto International Community House and the Kyoto Municipal Science Center for Youth.

For outdoor play, some of our favorite spots have been Kodomo Rakuen Park near Takaragaike Park area, the Kyoto Botanical Gardens, and the Imperial Palace Park – all of which have playgrounds for children.**

These are all amazing places, but the *jidokan* has been particularly special for us. It allowed me to bond with my son and to gently introduce him to a new environment during his most critical development years. It also allowed us to meet other parents, have in-depth conversations, exchange stories, and share advice. Both my son and I have made friends who we still get together with today.

I am forever grateful for all the support we received at the *jidokan*. The staff and other families gave us the strength and courage to overcome the pressures of parenting in a foreign environment. I hope that other families can visit and participate in a *jidokan* program, and feel assured that there are people who are ready to help parents meet the challenges of child rearing in a foreign country.

* <http://kyoto-playground.blogspot.com/>

English website for child-rearing activities, and events for multicultural families newly living in the Kyoto Sakyo Ward

** <https://www.doyo-juku.com/>

Miyako Kodomo Doyo Juku (Japanese) website: child-friendly centers and events in Kyoto

kokoka news * * * Kyoto International Community House news * * * **kokoka Kids Play Area is Open!**

This year we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of kokoka Kyoto International Community House. We did some renovations, and now we have a new Kids Play Area on the 1st Floor. Preschool children (0 - 6 years) and their parents are welcome, and we have plenty of picture books and toys there. We hope to see you soon!

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■ On the WEB you can read LIK past issue



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