

Series **My Favorite Kyoto**

## Kyoto, our new home

Arnidis Vacilis (Greece)



### Hi! I am Vacilis!

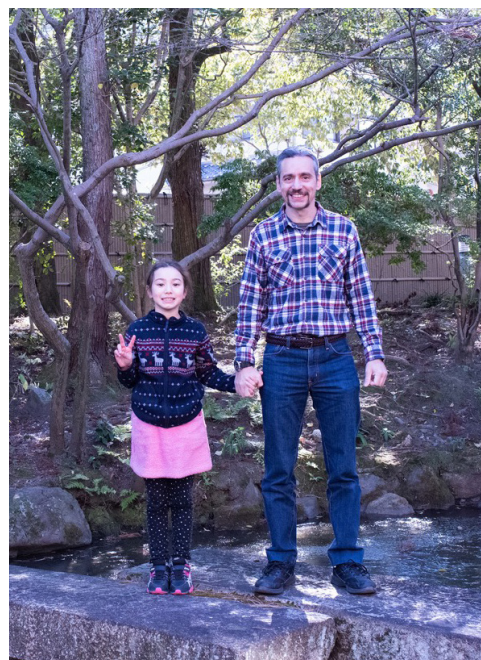
I am a 40-year old man and I originally come from Greece. I lived in U.K. for a long time. Six and a half years ago, I moved to Kyoto to live with my Japanese wife and our daughter.

I work in a guesthouse and I am also an assistant electrician. Sometimes, I organise outdoor activities like hiking and camping for tourists. I am now a member of Kyoto guide club because I want to help other foreigners in Kyoto to discover interesting places and activities.

### Why I like Kyoto?

I like Kyoto because its touristic atmosphere is combined beautifully with a mixture of traditional Japanese urban and out-of-town features. And it provides a special experience for tourists, much like in Venice (Italy), Athens (Greece), etc.

In Kyoto, it's so easy to switch your mind from work to relax mode, and with so many tourist spots worth visiting, there is always one nearby.



Author and his daughter

### Recommended places in Kyoto

In Kyoto, most places are easily accessible. Even from the city centre, it only takes 15 minutes by bus to get to the mountains and villages. However, when I was in U.K., it usually took several hours of driving to the mountains. I especially recommend Mt. Hiei because you can see the view of Lake Biwa at the peak.

### Recommendation from our daughter

Our daughter would also like to share her favourite spot in Kyoto. She thinks that the illumination event "Digitized Forest" at Shimogamo Shrine was most interesting and memorable. She also likes kokoka's Open Day events.

Interviewed by MACHINO Yoichi, Jimmy (Hui Chun Wai)

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# "Life in Kyoto" 30th Anniversary Interview

"Life in Kyoto" (referred to as LIK), a lifestyle & cultural information newsletter, was started in 1991, and marks its 30th anniversary this year. It is produced by volunteers, and published 4 times a year. We interviewed Mr. Okamoto Masanari, a founder of LIK, and a staff member of kokoka.



Mr. OKAMOTO Masanari

## 1. How did you get started making LIK?

There is an information magazine called "Shimin Shinbun," which is currently published by the City of Kyoto. In 1991, I was assigned to create the English version, in order to provide useful information for foreigners living in Kyoto. In the beginning, volunteers were assigned to do translating, and later, they started taking charge of doing interviews, writing articles, and editing.

## 2. What do you think are the good points of LIK?

It has a hand-made feel. It is print media which provides first-hand information about the experiences of local volunteers. On the other hand, it takes more time to reach readers compared to the internet, and is constantly tested as to the contents engaging the readers. Also, it is challenging to retain enough volunteers, and to write articles in Japanese that are easy for foreigners to read.

## 3. What has been most impressive in the long history of LIK?

It is unbelievable that it used to be published twice a month, 22 times a year, except for August and December. It started as 4 pages, in black and white. We used to write the articles on word processors, and we designed the page layouts by hand with paper, scissors, and glue. It is also memorable that we published a book of English columns written by international coordinators\* who worked at kokoka.

## 4. What message would you like to give to our readers?

Thank you for reading. It is our challenge for the future to improve the value of our articles in this print medium. Your valuable comments will improve our contents. We highly appreciate your continued support.



The first edition of LIK  
& The book of English columns

\* assigned through the JET program, to assist local government offices in international exchange activities at community level.

## Kyoto Nama Chocolat Organic Tea House

When wandering in Kyoto, I sometimes experience unexpected encounters. I happened on a tea house which used an old Japanese house facing a small street, within ten-minute walk east of Heian Jingu Shrine. Passing under a red colored Japanese maple tree by a gate, I entered the tea house, and taking my shoes off at the entrance, I was taken to a serene old fashioned Japanese room with a view of its garden and was seated on a *tatami*.

I ordered a set of chocolate, organic coffee, and wild grass tea. I had a bite of *matcha* (powdered green tea) flavored chocolate from four kinds of chocolate served on a tray with cut flowers. An instance of soft texture mixed with the taste of chocolate and *matcha* filled my whole mouth. It was really fantastic! Then, I tasted the coffee, refreshing my mouth, and tried another flavor of chocolate. The set cost me one thousand and one hundred yen which I appreciated!

Mr. Nakanishi, the chef, mastered his cooking skills in French cuisine at the Okura Tokyo (Hotel). He also worked as a chef at the Consulate General of Japan in New York. His wife, Sherry, is from Canada. She wrote an audio book, *The Magical Butterfly*, for kids and gifted it to kokoka Kyoto City International Community House. You can read the book on the second floor of kokoka at kokoPlaza.



**4 kinds of chocolat (powdered green tea, berry, cocoa, milk)**

\* <https://www.kyoto-namachocolat.com/>

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

## Finding International Communities through Study Kyoto

Study Kyoto (the International Student Study Kyoto Network) is a multilingual supportive website for international students in Kyoto. It is full of useful information about school searches, finding an apartment, job opportunities and scholarships.

Not only does the Study Kyoto Network have information about universities and schools in Kyoto City and Kyoto Prefecture, but there are many other kinds of organizations within the Network. Through this website, newcomers can easily find communities of interest, and interact with other international students. Each university has various international communities, which are made up of people from the same country, such as China, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. If you cannot find a community suitable for you, we suggest you join the community called KyoTomorrow Academy (KTA), so that you can start meeting and making friends with people from your own country. Moreover, in KTA, you can interact with Japanese students as well as international students from different countries. Foreign students from various universities can come together, helping each other, organizing events and deepening friendships. How about starting out by joining KTA?

◆ Study Kyoto: <https://www.studykyoto.jp/en/>

◆ KyoTomorrow Academy: <https://www.studykyoto.jp/kyotomorrowacademy/en/>

Jimmy (Hui Chun Wai)



# The Firefly in Kyoto

Fireflies, or hotaru in Japanese, belong to a very familiar kind of insects in Kyoto. They were known historically, mentioned in Nihon-Shoki (*ca.* 720 CE) and Man'yōshū (*ca.* 800 CE). These insects also appeared in other ancient literary works, such as the Tale of Genji (*ca.* 1008 CE) and the Tales of Ise from the Heian period (794 - 1185), where fireflies are cited in about 200 poems.

Japan has 54 species of fireflies. While most of them are terrestrial, three are aquatic (larval stage consisting of aquatic life). As two most famous species, *genji-botaru* and *heike-botaru*, are aquatic, most Japanese people believe fireflies are found only by the rivers and ponds, but in fact the terrestrial species are found even far from the waters. In the Japanese language, we use a special term "*hotaru gari*" (literally translated "firefly hunting") to mean "firefly watching" especially of *genji-botaru*. Their lifespan is one year. During all the stages from egg to adult, they emit light, though rather dimly till the pupal stage. The adults emit stronger and visible light allowing them to meet and reproduce. The adult stage lasts merely one week and then, they die.



"Genji-botaru" (*Luciola cruciata*)

In Kyoto, fireflies are often observed by small rivers or rice fields an hour after sunset. Among firefly-observation points, generally in early summer, the following rivers are famous: Shirakawa (Sanjo-Street), Misosogi (Nijo-Street), Lake Biwa Canal (Philosopher's Walk), and Myojin (Kamigamo Shrine). This year, you can enjoy one of the most marvelously beautiful and romantic spectacles of early summer.

MACHINO Yoichi

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

## Visa Consultation and Legal Advice for Foreign Residents

Do you have any questions or concerns about legal or visa issues? Twice a month professionals will help you to find a solution. Interpreters will be available on request. All consultations are free of charge.

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◆ Yearly schedule : <https://www.kcif.or.jp/web/en/support/counselling/>

# A Diversity System

Do you know the meaning of “SDGs”? It is an acronym for Sustainable Development Goals. Several SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015, with the intent to achieve them by the year 2030. In doing so, they aimed to realize a society where “no one will be left behind.”

Now, I will introduce the diversity system started by Kyoto City, called “Kyoto City Partnership Pledge Services.” If partners in a civil relationship belong to any sexual minority, they can make a pledge of life partnership to each other, addressed to the Mayor of Kyoto. Once recorded, they will then receive official partnership pledge documents issued under the name of the Mayor. They can use these documents in the similar situations where perhaps a marriage register would be used to prove a family/partner relationship. For example, if you talk with your partner’s doctor, you would be able to ask the doctor about their medical condition and treatment, or when you apply for municipal housing or other family assistance/benefits, these documents will help you qualify.

Actually, as you can see, this system is indirectly related to SDGs, and there are many other themes and possibilities for sustainable development goals. There may also be some things that you can do yourself, so please think about where you can start!

For more information, please scan the QR code below to see the homepage.



NISHIKI Mie

kokoka Kyoto International  
Community House kokoPlaza 2F

## Library Letter

2021/Spring  
(April, May, June)



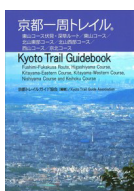
books recommended by kokoka

### “Kyoto Trail Guidebook”

(Author/Editor:  
Kyoto Trail Guide Association  
Publisher: Nakanishiya, 2020)



kokoka→



This book describes the various trekking trails in and around Kyoto City. The total course is about 135 km. The book is written in Japanese and English and contains detailed explanations about the trails along with plenty of photos and maps. Please drop by kokoPlaza (2F) to read the book and get some tips on how to make your trek enjoyable! kokoka wants to enjoy bathing in nature's negative ions!

\*kokoka is the Kyoto International Community House's mascot.

### “Women in Sports: 50 Fearless Athletes Who Played to Win”

(Author: Rachel Ignatofsky Translator: Momo Nonaka  
Publisher: Sogensha 2019)



This book uses colorful illustrations to present the amazing accomplishments of 50 female athletes from around the world and their outstanding lives. Please give it a read.

kokoka wants to accomplish something as great as what they have someday.



**These items are also available at kokoPlaza**

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.

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Translated by Kosono Miki

# Live House

Have you ever been to *live houses* in Japan? Because “*live house*” is a Japanese English expression, calling it a “live music club” may be easier to understand. I think there are *live houses* in your country. Basically, *live houses* are regarded as a kind of restaurants for both in Japan and in foreign countries, but there are some differences.



First of all, in *live houses* in foreign countries, the stage is in the same room as the cafe, the bar and so on. The audience watch the performances while eating seated at tables. In Japan, in many *live houses*, the stage is in a room exclusively used for performances, while the audience stand, watching the performance. Also, in Japan, drink fee, usually about 500 yen, is required beside the entrance ticket fee for the live concert. This is different from foreign countries.

There are many *live houses* in Kyoto. And because Kyoto has many foreign tourists, there are *live houses* which give discounts for admission to foreign tourists. Music is one of the pop culture, so I think *live houses* are good places for foreigners to take in the pop culture of Japan.

However, because of COVID-19, *live houses* are in a tough situation right now. Even so, they are trying desperately to continue live concerts while taking various preventative measures to not spread the virus. In the midst of this situation, some people have begun donating money to support the *live houses* in Kyoto. Kyoto City government is also subsidizing the *live houses* and the performers who are taking effective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. I hope COVID-19 disappears soon, and the day when we can enjoy live concerts safely, come back again.

SUZUKI Hidetoshi

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## ■ Publisher : Kyoto City International Foundation

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You can also read LIK online!



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