

# 2019 YEAR OF THE BOAR

Don't be a *boar*, start your year right with

## The Shiga Situation

Mother of all Newsletters

### AJET Events:

- 1月26日: Yogo Ski Trip
- Round 1 Game Night
- Hokkaido Snow Festival
- Dodgeball Competition

### Mini Yet Meaningful Art Contest Topic:

**Snow Country**

## Holidays



Artwork by Christian Fusco (Higashimi).

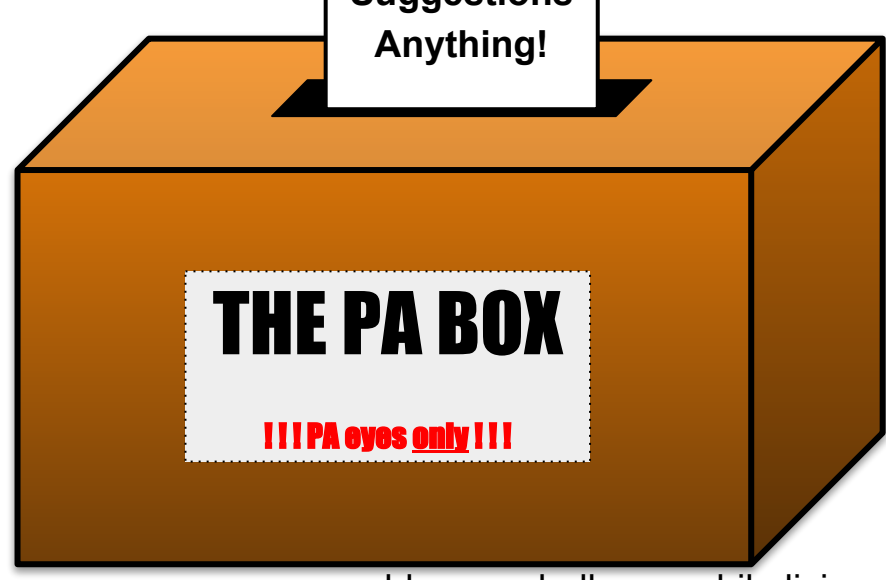
In a snow cushion of quiet, tales are spun. Ambiance comes from a decorated tree. A miser is visited by unearthly spirits, a land is cursed to winter and someone whispers of a spirit with large horns who carries a snapping switch. Children snuggle on an old sleeping bag. The stories have just taken a dark turn. The spirit of death has visited the old miser. The lion has been slain. An ominous bell rattles. How does it end? The miser awakes, changed. The lion returns. Santa arrives. On Christmas morning, the darkness of winter fades and hope arises anew.

**Congratulations** to Christian Fusco and Lorin Davis for the excellent submissions. We hope you enjoyed their work. You can find more of the submissions [HERE!](#)

Remember, submissions for the next contest, "Snow Country", will be accepted at any time. [Why not give it a try!?](#)

## New PA Contact Form

Questions  
Concerns  
Problems  
Suggestions  
Anything!



Have you ever come across a problem or challenge while living and working in Shiga but didn't know where to turn? Have you ever wanted to voice your opinion but lacked an audience? Have you ever felt unsafe or uncomfortable going to someone for advice? Well, hopefully we have the solution you've been waiting for. Starting this month, we are beginning an anonymous PA contact system through [Google Forms](#). All you need to do is click the link and [start typing](#) your questions and concerns. There is no need to leave your name or email address—of course, if you wish for a direct response, please leave [at least one!](#) We want to hear from you about any problems you face personally or see arising within the JET-ALT community and workplace. You can find the contact form [HERE](#).

## AND NOW... WINTER!

### Season's Greetings from AJET

Hey there Shiga, thanks to everyone who came out to the Christmas Party earlier this month (big shout out to Sam for hosting the event at his humble abode). It was great to see everyone together before the holidays and New Year, and whatever it is that you ended up doing this winter break, I hope you had a chance to relax and unwind after a busy year. 2019 is now underway and the days are getting (depressingly) colder, but have no fear because AJET is gonna keep the events coming to fight off those [winter blues!](#)

The [Yogo Ski Trip](#) (January 26th, deadline for sign up is Jan. 7th) is a great way to embrace the cold and experience the best of winter sports that Shiga has to offer; absolute beginners are more than welcome! Also, look out for a Round 1 games night that'll happen early on in the year. Finally, AJET is introducing [a new event](#) this February: a friendly and fun competition of dodgeball! [Keep your eyes peeled](#) for more info in the coming weeks.

Happy Holidays Shiga!

### 2-Plankers and Tray Sliders

If slip-sliding down the slopes is [your thing](#), then Shiga is a great place to be. Home to [more than a handful](#) of quality mountain slides, Shiga can keep ya content and happy throughout the season. [Oku-Ibuki](#) is the biggest resort with [Hakodate](#) and [Biwako Valley](#) on the north-west side coming in close second. While none of these offer the gnar pow that [Susano-o-shredded](#) in Japanese lore, they have great atmospheres and public transport access. If it's your first winter in Shiga, ask your sempai JETs for the low down on [your closest hills](#). If you are looking to powwow with the [pow-pow](#), grab your [snorkeling mask](#) and head north! [Nozawa Onsen](#), [Hakuba Cortina](#), and [Myoko Kogen](#) are all doable in a weekend—albeit with almost no proper sleep. Most major resorts in the Japanese Alps have night buses that run from Kyoto and Osaka station with options to include lift tickets at a discounted price (look for discounts and included lift tickets when booking hotels too!). Check their websites to find links to bus services (in the [アケテス](#) page). If you need help finding the right mountain and transport, send a message to Nick and [he'll sort ya out](#).

### Clothes

[Layering is key](#) and [Heattech](#) is your friend. Don't hesitate to just [wear your winter coat inside](#) when you come in. That might not be possible at school, so have jumpers, sweaters, scarves, blankets, capes, shawls or whatever else you can to keep yourself warm. They say [you lose heat from your head](#), so keep your neck and head [covered](#).

Cold feet are often a problem and there's only so much you can do to keep them warm. Get slippers and kairo inlays for your shoes, carry a change of warm socks or "room socks", keep a foot-heating pad under your desk. Work on improving your circulation by moving and doing sports.

[On kairo](#), you can get them for cheap and keep them around for hours of warmth. In addition to the inlays, they come in adhesive and non-adhesive forms. Just don't stick them directly to your skin or use them around heat sources.

If you're cold in the morning and don't want to get out of your futon to change, you might consider [sleeping with your clothes](#) and changing under your blanket.

### Sleeping, Bathing, Eating and Other Needs

You will probably end up only using a few of your rooms to save on energy. [Compartmentalizing](#) is an important part of surviving winter, even if some [parts of your house turn into a winter wonderland](#).

Much like the kotatsu, electric blankets and carpets are your friends. They can keep you warm if you don't want to have your heater on all night (and are not as drying). You can also keep a hot-water bottle under your covers, or at your feet if you sit down a lot. You can also find heated cushions.

Tatami rooms tend to be a tad warmer and are great for sleeping, but you can't really cook or bathe there. Take a portable heater with you in the kitchen or when coming out of the shower ([please not in the shower!](#)). On that note, try drying yourself and putting on clothes ASAP after [ablutions](#) to retain most of the heat. If [your bathroom is too cold for you](#), you can visit the nearest onsen or [public bath](#) for a price.

If your floor is cold, you can install rugs in spot where you know you'll be standing, even if you already have slippers. To warm yourself up, keep tea, coffee and soup around and learn how to make comfort food like curry rice. Have friends over for nabe and learn [their body warm](#). Get Hot Yozu or other, inferior, drinks from the combini. Many of these can be reheated later, after transferring them to a microwaveable cup.

If you aren't lucky enough to have a [heated toilet seat](#), you can get [a cover](#) or buy [removable stickers with different designs](#) at 100-yen stores.

### Heating Spaces

While not all apartments are made (or furnished) equal, start with a heater. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but your main ones are electric and gas. The former is more expensive, but may seem safer; the latter is cheaper, but comes with a distinct smell and ventilation requirements, lest you get a headache. Tip: [refill it outside](#). When using your AC/heater unit, make sure you [turn it off when you leave](#). If you want to save money, you can turn it off while you sleep and use the timer setting to turn it back on about an hour [before you wake up](#) (you can also set it to start before you get home after work).

Finally, let's not forget the [kotatsu](#), king of winter furnishings, great with some mandarins! [Enter at your own risk](#); you will never want to leave... And don't sleep underneath it for too long (seriously, this time!)

When using any type of heating, remember to [moisturize](#) and keep hydrated.

### This Little Piggy Stayed in Its Futon

A guide for the forgetful and those who have never [known the cold](#). You may have noticed that [winter is upon us](#) and that, despite its palm trees, [Shiga is cold](#) (and humid!). *How do I deal with this misery?* you may ask. [Just ask a Canadian!](#) (Canadians' Japanese winter preparedness not guaranteed. Results may vary.)



### Insulation

Now that your room is warm, how do you make sure that sweet heat doesn't escape? It's never too late to install [plastic](#) or [bubble wrap](#) over your windows. You can also get strips at 100-yen shops [to fill in cracks](#) and to [collect condensation](#). Use thick curtains on outside windows ([hopefully your only windows?](#)) to keep the cold out, and [pore](#) on your inside doors.

### Enjoying yourself

There is a variety of winter activities, including the [AJET ski/snowboard trip](#), that allow you to stay active. Exercise will help keep you fit, warm, and happy. If that's not your jam, but you don't want to go home to a frigid apartment after being at [school](#) all day, you can just spend time at [malls](#), theatres, karaoke places and other venues where you can warm up. You can take a train ride and sit on heated seats. Or of course, hang out with friends!

### Driving

If this is your first time driving in snow, read up about things to do and drive carefully. You will want to get a shovel for your parking, but also one to carry in a pinch. If you drive a kei car, you may want to [add extra weight](#) to it in case you end up driving in strong winds. To [defog your windows](#), warm them up; however, don't do it too fast or you may get condensation instead.

Additional things you'll want to carry with you: a long broom to remove snow from the top of your car, an ice scraper, an emergency blanket, etc. Always remove snow from your car before driving off.

If you choose to [bike in snow](#), be prepared to take extra safety measures, like changing your tires.

## AND NOW... BUSINESS!



### 'Tis the season for Recontracting!

All of you should be receiving the paperwork for recontracting from your BoEs very soon (if you haven't gotten it already). Whenever you get your documents, please [check with your BoE](#) about the due dates. Recontracting is a very important and [difficult decision](#). Please take some time to think about what recontracting will mean, not only for you, but for those [you care about](#) as well. Remember that recontracting commits you to ALTing until August 2020 (psst! That's like [a long time away](#)). Don't take the decision lightly.

If you decide not to recontract, remember to sign up for the [After Jet Career Fairs](#) in Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka. Many JETs have found their [futures](#) at these events. The deadline for applying is January 18<sup>th</sup>.

And regardless of whether or not you recontract, please fill out [this survey](#) from Mashiko Sato about a Shiga prefecture job fair! If there is enough interest, Shiga could hold its own career fair for Shiga ALTs in the future—because who doesn't wanna keep chillin in this awesome prefecture!?

### Shiga English Camp 2019!

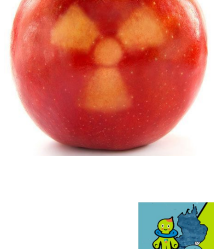
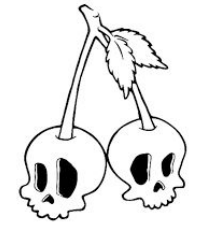
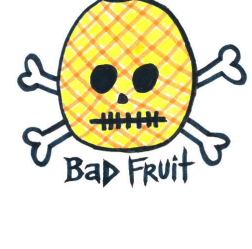
- This year, the Shiga Board of Education is hosting an English camp for 20 elementary, junior high, and senior high schoolers (60 students total). For two days, students will have the opportunity to learn and practice their [pirate](#) English
- ability with fun games, activities, and lessons. The entire school will be held aboard [Uminoko](#), the school ship on Lake Biwa. Participants and volunteers will
- have the unique experience of an overnight English camp [ON A BOAT!](#)
- To accommodate the 60 students, the Shiga BOE is calling for all ALTs that wish to [participate as volunteers](#). While each ALT will receive shuchou and daikyu for these days, you will have to pay 2000yen to volunteer—but fear not! This money goes to your three meals aboard the ship (omi beef, veggies, rice, and fish!).
- If you are interested in participating, please [stay tuned for more details!](#) Don't miss the chance to be a trailblazer aboard the first-ever Shiga English Cruise!

**Details:**  
Date: August 23-24  
Cost: 2000yen



### Continued Concerns for Fukushima

The Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent leaks at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant made [headlines across the globe](#), calling into question the health and safety risks of nuclear energy in the modern age. For many, the thought of nuclear power and radioactivity stir up images and memories of bombs, [catastrophic meltdowns](#), grotesque deformations, and horribly named [hot sauce](#), and death. Though there are constant efforts to [clean and restore](#) the area, Fukushima remains a radioactive place, and citizens throughout the country worry about the safety of the [meats](#), produce, and water coming from Japan. In response to these concerns, the Consumer Affairs Agency of Japan has put out a brochure to help dispel overreactions and [better educate](#) the public about the dangers of radioactivity and the procedures in place to inspect and guarantee quality and safety of products in Japan. You can read more [here](#).



It has come to our attention that writing isn't the only form of art out there. In order to better incorporate all of the artistic folks in Shiga, we are expanding the 100-word story to [include visual art draw on a business card](#) (or 91x55mm piece of paper). Now, even if writing isn't your thing, you have [no excuse not to participate!](#) If you look at the stunningly beautiful rectangle well at 100%-zoom (so not zoomed?) on PDF, that's the size you'll be allowed in the contest. You can submit visual art by sending a picture of your business card to the kencho email. If you make your image digitally, please be sure that the size of the final image is the correct dimensions. 100 word stories and business card art will be accepted until [February 25th](#).

January/February theme:  
**Snow Country**  
Snow has a different meaning to everyone. Maybe you grew up [shredding mountains](#). Maybe you got frostbite shovelling snow for hours. Maybe you still remember seeing your first snowflake. Maybe that seasonal dandruff makes your shoulders a veritable winter wonderland! Anything goes as long as it's about snow!