

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

# SynthesAizu

September 2021  
Volume 1 Issue 9

## Association News

### Come Hike with Us at Hakuhouzan!

Come join us for an early fall hiking trip at Hakuhouzan! This short hiking course is beginner-friendly, so guests of all fitness levels are welcome to join. Hakuhouzan park also features a unique all-ages jungle gym for adventurous visitors to test out their ninja skills. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the top of the mountain with us while gazing out at the lovely view of Aizu!



(The AWIA office will be closed during this event.)

**Date:** Sunday, September 26th, 11:15 - 14:15

**Fee:** There will be a 200JPY insurance fee for non-members.

**Meeting Point:** Aizu Misatomachi Hongo Information Center  
(3161-1 Setomachi, Aizumisato, Onuma District, 969-6116)

**What to Bring:** Water, comfortable shoes and clothes (long pants recommended), lunch box, umbrella, and a tarp or towel to sit on.

**\*(In case of rain):** In the case of cancellation due to rain, we will post an announcement on Facebook by 9am on the day of the event.

### Postponement Notice: “Summer Sky Festival”



Due to the recent increase in Covid cases, the Aizu Summer Sky Festival has been **postponed**. The new dates are as follows:

**Saturday, Oct. 9th, 10:00 -18:30**

**Sunday, Oct. 10th, 10:00 - 15:00**

For more information, please visit the Gokujo no Aizu homepage (Japanese)

<https://gokujo-aizu.com/18161>

### Now recruiting volunteers!

Interested in joining the AWIA festival staff? Volunteers are needed to help staff the International Zone and assist with henna painting. If you're interested in volunteering on one or both days of the festival, please contact the AWIA by phone or email by: **Saturday, September 11th.**

### “Little Trip” Seminar Series : Bolivia



Our “Little Trip” seminar series will be returning this month for a “trip” to Bolivia! This seminar was originally scheduled for May, but was postponed due to Covid. Come learn about the diverse country of Bolivia from our guest speaker, Mr. Kazunori Sasao. Mr. Sasao lived in Bolivia for 2 years as a JICA ambassador, and will share some of the interesting and surprising things he experienced during his time in Bolivia.

**Date:** Saturday, Sep. 11th 10:00~11:30

**Place:** Aizu City Learning Center, 3F

**Price:** Free!

**Sign-Up:** Please contact the AWIA by phone or email by Friday, Sep. 10th.



\*Limited to 15 participants. (This seminar will be held in Japanese.)



会津若松市国際交流協会

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EMAIL: mail@awia.jp

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



# This Month in Aizu-Wakamatsu



## 2021 Aizu Matsuri

It's almost time for the annual Aizu Matsuri! This 3-day festival celebrates Aizu's history through a series of parades and other events. Due to the recent rise in coronavirus cases, the festival will be downsized compared to previous years. Sadly, the AWIA will not be hosting our usual English castle tours booth, but we look forward to joining the festival again in the future.

The Aizu Festival Association has released the following tentative schedule for the festival, but events are subject to change depending on the coronavirus situation in Aizu.

### Lantern Parade

Saturday, September 18th  
18:00 - 19:00  
Aizu Athletic Field to Shinmei-dori

### Aizu Clan Procession

Sunday, September 19th  
10:00 - 11:30  
Aizu Athletic Field to Chuo-dori

### Nisshinkan Children's Parade

Monday, September 20th  
10:10 - 11:00  
Aizu Athletic Field to Tsuruga Castle



## Limited-Time Hotel Discount in Aizu

**Get 3,000JPY off per night for reservations of 5,000JPY or more!**  
**(From now until September 30th)**

In another effort by the local government to encourage people to spend money at local tourism destinations, 30 different hotels and ryokans in the Aizu area are offering discounts of 3,000JPY per night when the value of the reservation is 5,000JPY per night or more. Of course, there is a catch. The discount is only applicable for certain days, and doesn't apply on nights when the following day is on the weekend or a national holiday. Still, if you're looking for a local getaway, this is your chance!



Check out the campaign homepage for a full list of participating hotels and a schedule of applicable nights.  
[www.aizukanko.com/event/886](http://www.aizukanko.com/event/886)



## How to Apply for Japan's Vaccine Passport

There's been buzz in the news lately about the recent rollout of Japan's Coronavirus vaccine passport, which allows vaccinated travelers to bypass quarantine procedures in a number of countries.



As of mid-August, vaccine passport holders traveling from Japan could avoid quarantine procedures in 16 countries including Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria among others.

Japan is working to add more countries to the list, but only time will tell if Japan intends to reciprocate by relaxing its own strict quarantine procedures for passport holders in the future.

If you are planning an international trip in the near future, here is how to apply for the vaccine passport.

**Step 1)** Get vaccinated. This goes without saying, but you will need to receive both doses of the Pfizer, Moderna, or AstraZeneca vaccine before applying.

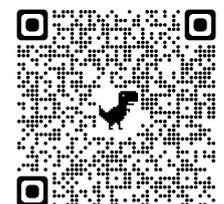
**Step 2)** Download and fill out the application form from the city homepage. (See the QR code below.)

**Step 3)** Prepare your vaccine ticket. Tickets were sent out by mail from the city in July and are needed to receive the vaccine. Your ticket should have a stamp from your distributing clinic(s) and two stickers, one for each dose of the vaccine, stating which vaccine you received and when.

**Step 4)** Bring your vaccine ticket, passport, application form, and a return envelope to your local Health Department. For Aizu-Wakamatsu city residents, please go to the City Hall Second Annex (5-17 Sakaemachi, Aizuwakamatsu 965-0871)

**Step 5)** Wait about 5-10 days to receive your vaccine passport in the mail or pick it up in person from the Health Department.

That's all, travel safe!



<https://www.city.aizuwakamatsu.fukushima.jp/docs/2021020500019/files/seshu-shoumeisho.pdf>

## Coronavirus and Vaccine Updates

### Vaccine Reservations Open for All Age Groups

On August 5th, vaccine reservations in Aizu Wakamatsu city were opened to all residents over the age of 12. Reservations were briefly closed due to a rush of calls, but were re-opened again on August 7th. Reservations can be made online or by phone, but there have been several reported issues with the online system. Foreign language support is available by phone.

### Aizu Plans to Finish Vaccinations by November

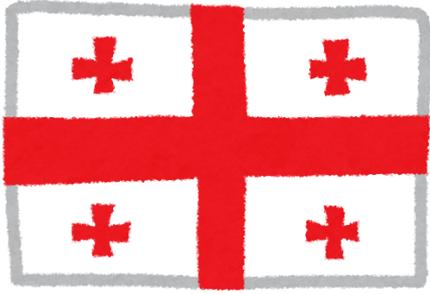
As of August 17th, nearly 54% of Aizu residents between the ages of 12 and 64 had made a reservation to receive their vaccine, and nearly 90% of residents over the age of 65 had received at least one dose. In the most recent version of Aizu's vaccine plan, the city has stated that they hope to finish vaccinations for all willing residents by the end of November.

### List of Clinic Openings Posted to the City Homepage

The city is keeping an updated list of all clinics that have openings to distribute the vaccine. As of August 17th, the earliest possible opening was October 11th. If you haven't already made a reservation, we highly encourage you to make one as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact the AWIA if you need help making a reservation.



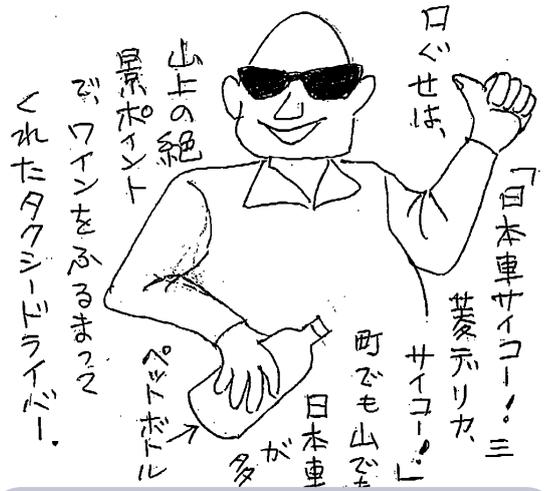
# Member Spotlight: Miyo Wakabayashi



This month's member spotlight features Mrs. Miyo Wakabayashi, who currently serves as a publication volunteer at the AWIA. Mrs. Wakabayashi, a frequent explorer of lesser-known travel locations, shares with us fond memories from her trip to the country of Georgia in 2019. Georgia is located in the Caucasus region, wedged above Turkey and Armenia. In recent months, Georgia has gained attention in the media following a world record-breaking Olympic win in weightlifting.

It seems that Georgia has become more well known in the last year or two, but when I traveled there in the fall of 2019, it still wasn't that popular among Japanese travelers. Most of the Japanese people I met during my 2-weeks in Georgia were carefree couples who had retired early to enjoy traveling. However, Georgia is a very popular travel destination for Europeans thanks to its abundant nature, unique culture, relatively low cost of living, and calm society. Not to mention, it's an absolute paradise for wine lovers! In Georgia you can enjoy delicious wine from breweries nearly 8,000 years old at a very low price. When visiting a wine restaurant, the staff will ask if you prefer white, red, or amber wine, and inquire about your particular tastes. They will then select 3 or 4 different bottles for you to taste, and fill your glass to the brim each time! I felt as if I'd already drunk my fill before I had even selected my favorite one. Of course, everything on the menu is also designed to pair well with wine. Stews, salads, cheese, and breads are popular, and just like the wine, they are all equally delicious.

Georgia surprised me with all manner of delights, like the café nestled beneath grape trellises, the restaurants with trained sommelier on staff, and the taxi driver who chatted and entertained us all the way up to a scenic spot in the mountain meadows. The rich red wine he gave us "from a friend's winery," the homemade wine served on tap at our guesthouse, and the wine we shared with the other travelers at our lodgings were all incredibly tasty. For souvenirs, I chose one slightly expensive wine and grabbed a few cheap bottles of wines being sold in little plastic bottles at a winery shop. To my surprise, the PET bottle wine lacked nothing in flavor, and I now regret that I didn't fill my entire suitcase full of them on the way home.



*Text:* "The taxi driver who took us to the mountain lookout. His catchphrase: 'Japanese cars are the greatest! The Mitsubishi Delica is the best!' Japanese cars were abundant in both the city and the mountains of Georgia. In his hand, he holds a PET bottle."



*Text:* "The guesthouse owner's wife, who kept the cheers running throughout the night. Ever-flowing wine is the Georgian style!"

In Georgia, there is a traditional "etiquette" at drinking parties whenever someone asks for a refill. The host (at an inn, the host is typically the owner's wife) will refill everyone's drinks at the same time. With each top-up, our host declared cheers again and again with wishes like "cheers to your parent's health!," "to our hometown!," "to Japan!," "to children and grandchildren!" and the like. Before I knew it, I found myself wondering, "oh goodness, how many glasses have I drank?"

Afterwards, when I took another look at the guidebook, I noticed that it warned foreigners against trying to match pace with Georgians at a drinking party. Locals are accustomed to drinking lots of wine, but for the uninitiated it can actually be a bit dangerous. This was certainly the case for me, and I believe I made the right decision to leave early and pass out in my bed after I became drowsy halfway through.

# Events in September

1	WE	
2	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
3	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
4	SA	13:30 Hello World Club
5	SU	Closed
6	MO	Closed
7	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
8	WE	
9	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
10	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
11	SA	10:00 "Little Trip" to Bolivia Seminar
12	SU	
13	MO	Closed
14	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
15	WE	
16	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
17	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
18	SA	13:30 Hello World Club
19	SU	Closed
20	MO	Closed
21	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
22	WE	
23	TH	Closed
24	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
25	SA	13:30 Newsletter Release Preparation
26	SU	11:15 Hakuhouzan Hiking (AWIA Closed)
27	MO	Closed
28	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
29	WE	
30	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)

## Other Information

### "Art Meets Cookie" Special Event at Fukushima Prefecture Art Museum

Monday, Sep. 20th (Natl. Holiday)  
9:30 -14:30

Fukushima Prefectural Art Museum Garden

Enjoy a unique hands-on experience at the Fukushima Prefectural Museum! For this one-day only event, museum guests will have a chance to work with professional illustrators in a *delicious* collaboration to create their own work of art - in the form of a cookie!

Of course, visitors can take their tasty creation home with them as a souvenir. Adults and museum first-timers are also highly encouraged to join!

(No pre-registration necessary)



### Message from the Editor

As the vaccine rollout starts to pick up speed in Japan, I've encountered a number of people who want to get vaccinated but are nervous about the side effects. Many of them have read rumors online, or seen horror stories of rare adverse reactions in the news. I completed my vaccination at the beginning of this month without incident, so I thought I'd share my experience for anyone who is still feeling nervous about getting the vaccine.

If you are nervous, don't worry, I was nervous too! On the day of my first shot, I was so nervous that when I got to the clinic, my temperature rose to a near fever, and I had to explain to the doctor that no, I wasn't sick, it was just nerves! After that, the shot was over so quickly I almost didn't feel them put it in. Then, I was told to wait at the clinic for about 30 minutes, and after that I was on my way home. That night, I felt a bit restless, which I chalk up to my own nervousness as I waited for "side effects" that never came. I was a bit tired and fatigued the next day, but after 24 hours I was completely fine. My sore arm lingered for a bit longer, but even that went away after about 2 days.

My second injection passed in exactly the same way. A little bit of fatigue, a sore arm, a bit of restlessness at night, and then back to normal about 24 hours later. Since then, I haven't grown any extra limbs, had any unusual side effects, or heard Bill Gates whispering orders into my brain. But what I have gained is a huge sense of security and peace of mind knowing that now, even if I get infected, I won't become dangerously ill. I highly encourage everyone to get the vaccine. Trust me, it is well worth the "risk."



**We're on Instagram!**

Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



**AWIA\_PHOTO**

<http://facebook.com/awiajp>



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