

SynthesAizu

January 2025
Volume 5 Issue 1

Association News

Thanks to all of our members and those who participated in our events last year. We couldn't do it without you.

We look forward to seeing you all in the new year! Yoroshiku onegaishimasu!

New Year's Holiday: The AWIA office is **closed Dec 29(Sun) - Jan 3(Fri)**. We open as usual from Jan 4th (Sat), 9:00-17:45.

New Year's Potluck Party

Welcome the New Year!

Join us for our New Year's Potluck Party! Bring a dish to share and enjoy the casual atmosphere with other members! We'll also have some New Year's activities like Fuku-warai (face making), and kakizome (new year's calligraphy).



Date: January 19th (Sun) - 11:30-13:30

Place: AWIA Office (Sakaemachi 2-14)

Cost: Members: ¥100 / Non-members: ¥200
(Children under 15: free) (drink fee)

Limit: 50 people

Sign-Up: contact AWIA (mail@awia.jp)
Before Jan 18th (Sat)



※(Bring a dish or something to share! (around 2-3 servings))

AtsuHana Japanese Convo. Club.



Speak Japanese in a casual way with many people and have fun with Japanese culture.

Join us this time for a special chance to talk

and learn about Disaster Response and interact with goods you'd see at Evacuation Centers, including cardboard beds, temporary toilets etc. Share your worries about disasters, try some emergency food and talk to others about preparations! (Organized with the City Disaster Response Division)



When	Saturday, January 11th 10:00-11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 2+3
Sign-up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, January 10th

FIND English Convo. Club

Why not come and speak English with people from all walks of life? Everyone is welcome, no matter your English level. Enjoy an activity then free talk in this casual event.



When	Saturday, January 18th 10:00~11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, Jan 17th

ChAT吧 (ChAT-ba) Chinese Convo. Club.

ChAT-ba : 'Ch': Chinese, 'A': Aizu, 'T': Together, and '吧/-ba': 'Let's!' in Chinese.

Interested in speaking Chinese with other learners, and interacting with Chinese people? Join our Chinese Conversation Circle ChAT-ba! Beginners welcome! This is a popular event where you can speak and even learn some Chinese while chatting!

This time is a special event! The theme is: 'New Year's'!

February 8th (Sat)

More Info in the February Newsletter



This Month in Aizu

New Year's at Tsuruga-jo Castle

Ring the Castle Bell!

Ring the bell at Tsuruga-jo Castle for good luck in the new year! In Japan, it is tradition to ring a Temple Bell 108 times at midnight. Head over to Tsuruga-jo and try it yourself!



Details: New Years (23:30 Dec 31st) - First 108 People
Place: Tsuruga-jo Castle Park - Castle Bell near the Tourist Information Centre

Meshi-bera!

If you're heading to the Tsuruga-jo for the new year, why not head inside and see the beautiful view of the city from the top of the tower! The first 5000 people who go into the Castle Tower will receive a meshi-bera (a wooden spatula for good luck in the new year. Each meshi-bera is branded with the zodiac kanji for 'snake' and 'Tsuruga-jo'. They're great keepsakes!

Open: 0:00am - 2:30am, Jan 1st 2024
(Final entry at 2:00am)

Entrance fee: Adult ¥410 Child: ¥150

Contact: Aizuwakamatsu Tourism Bureau (0242-23-8000)



Yanaizu Enzoji

Jan 7th (Tue)

Time: 20:30 (climbing starts)

Ring in the New Year at the Temple from the Akabeko legend. The Yanaizu Nanokado Hadakamairi happens every year on Jan. 7th at the Enzoji Temple.

It is said by showing off their strength and muscles, they scare off the Dragon-god who lives in the Tadami River that plagued the town. Watch men participate in this old tradition of warding off bad luck and illness by climbing up the Temple bell rope wearing only a loincloth!

Place: Yanaizu's Enzoji Temple
(Jikemachiko-176 Yanaizu)

Access: Free Shuttle Bus
(55 seats, first come first served)
18:00 - Departs Wakamatsu Station
22:00 - Departs Yanaizu Tourist Centre



More info:

<https://aizu-yanaizu.com/information/information-2613/>

Castle Market

Dec - Feb 11:00-19:00 (Last Order)

Enjoy food stalls on the Tsuruga-jo Castle Grounds all winter! Find local food and drink to keep you warm while you take in the snow-covered castle! Find foods like oden, yakitori, and korokke, perfect pairings to Aizu sake, beer, wine, or juice!

Jan Dates (Sat/Sun): 4th/5th, 11th/12th, 18th/19th, 25th/26th

Bange Barrel Tug-o'-War

Jan 14th (Tue) 12:50 - ~15:30



See 400 years of history continuing to this day in the traditional New Year's Tug-o'-War to predict the harvest for the year. East vs. West! Will the price of rice increase or will we see a bumper crop?

Schedule:

- 12:50 - Taiko performance
- 13:20 - Children's Tug-o'-War
- 14:00 - MAIN EVENT: Big Tug-o'-War
- 14:45 - Barrel Breaking + Mochi
- 15:00 - Lucky Beans

Place: In front of Bange Town Hall (3662 Ichinaka3-banko Aizubange-machi)

More info:

<https://aizubange-kanbutsu.jp/event/pg5638802.html>

Tokaichi Market

Jan 10th 8:00-20:00

Check out AizuWakamatsu's New Year's Market on Shinmei Dori St.! Pick up your new year's items like daruma, okiagari-koboshi and more including food stalls! Brave the cold and enjoy a traditional Aizu market!



Place: Shinmei Dori St. (in front of the AWIA building, with the covered arcade.)
(AWIA will not be holding a booth this year.)



Aizu in Winter

In Aizu, about half of the region's annual precipitation comes from snow. The Oku-Aizu area has some of the heaviest snowfall in Japan, sometimes getting more than 1m of snow in one night. AizuWakamatsu City gets ~90 days of snowfall in a year, with the deepest snowfall reaching up to 115cm.



Winter Tips:

- Wear tall boots to keep your feet dry.
- Walk like a penguin to prevent from falling.
- Watch out for injury or becoming trapped from falling snow and for open sewer grates in sidewalks during snow removal.

Stay Safe!

Interview with **MUROTA Ayaka**



MUROTA Ayaka is from Chiba Prefecture and she came to Aizu to study at the University of Aizu. She is affectionately called 'Mumu-chan' by many members. This is the part 2 of the interview with her who was the 2024 International Festival Committee Head. We asked her about her experience on exchange overseas. For her, it was a life changing experience that not only improved her English, led to greater understanding of other cultures, and personal growth. We got the details!

Cebu Island Challenge! Gaining English Skills and Confidence on Exchange

We've heard that you went on exchange to the Philippines, but could you tell us why you decided to go?

I went to Cebu for a language exchange for one month. A big reason I went was to see how well I could do in an English only environment. I also wanted to challenge myself to see if I could live by myself overseas.

How was living on Cebu?

I lived in a 3 person room at my language school's dorm with two people from Taiwan. During the first orientation, we were organized by country so I spent some time with other Japanese people, but I made sure to take advantage of the time with the other people who were doing their best to converse in English.

Though it was an English-main environment, there were times when I couldn't communicate well. For instance, when I was with a group of Korean speakers, I was the only who couldn't following the conversation, and I felt horrible. At that time, I felt it was especially important for me to do my best to be proactive about speaking to people in English. I felt the language barrier, but asking about what they were talking about, going to hangout at game centers; I felt the barrier start to come down.



It seems you worked hard to overcome the language and cultural barriers! That must have been a great opportunity for you to understand more about multiculturalism, don't you think?

Yes, I really think so. I was really able to enjoy myself and get to know the people around me much better by being proactive in speaking English. I was really lucky to be able to speak to so many people from different countries, and I think I made a lot of friends, especially from Korea and Taiwan. Even with different nationalities or cultures, just by proactively speaking to each other with open hearts, I really felt how we were able to bridge the gaps between us.



How was the language school?

I lived life in English everyday. Classes were separated by level, and there were one-on-one classes as well as group discussion classes. The discussion classes were especially difficult for me. We would have to speak on topics of current issues like 'Single Mothers' and 'Climate Issues' where not only do you have to properly convey your opinion, but have the teacher dig deeper by asking 'and why do you think that?' At first, I had a tough time explaining my thoughts clearly.

Having discussions in English is pretty high level. How did you overcome this challenge?

To be honest, at one point I struggled so much that I thought about changing my classes. Once, I was on the verge of tears, but I reminded myself that I'd come to the Philippines to challenge myself. I had only one month there, so I couldn't allow myself to run away. I told myself 'If I run away from this, then coming here will become pointless.' which helped me reframe and regroup. I knew giving up halfway would be unfulfilling, and I didn't want to lose to myself.



That's so amazing. Have you seen any results from that?



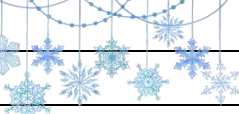
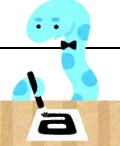
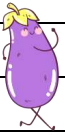
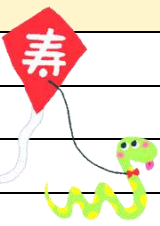
Yes! I was even surprised that I became able to translate for the newly arrived Japanese people. I also gained confidence in the discussion classes and could convey myself well. I was extremely happy when at the end, I even received applause from everyone. I did also see the biggest results in that my TOEIC speaking and listening scores went up 100 points.

Finally, can you tell us your next goal?

I plan on focusing on studying what I want to learn. I'm thinking about continuing with AtsuHana, and around July next year, take a break from school, and going to study overseas in America or Europe. Up until now I've tried to be a participant in a lot of things, but now I want to be the one to put information out there. I also want to put effort into my graduation thesis.



Events in January

1	WE	Closed
2	TH	Closed
3	FR	Closed 
4	SA	15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
5	SU	Closed
6	MO	Closed
7	TU	
8	WE	
9	TH	
10	FR	
11	SA	10:00 AtsuHana: Japanese Convo. Circle
12	SU	Closed
13	MO	Closed
14	TU	
15	WE	
16	TH	
17	FR	
18	SA	10:00 FIND: English Convo. Circle 10:00 JICA Desk 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
19	SU	11:30 New Year's Potluck
20	MO	Closed
21	TU	
22	WE	
23	TH	
24	FR	
25	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
26	SU	Closed
27	MO	Closed
28	TU	
29	WE	
30	TH	
31	FR	

Other Information

ON AIR Be a Guest on the Radio!

Want a chance to be on the radio? AWIA collaborates with FM Aizu (76.2) with a segment once a week: Chikyuu Marutto Tele-report (World-wide Tele-report). Guests can share their experience of living in Aizu or abroad. Guests can join live, or come and pre-record their interview. Interested? Contact us!

When: Wednesday Evenings ~17:40 (5-10min segment) (interview is in Japanese only) If you have time, why not listen in?
Want to be a guest? Contact us: mail@awia.jp

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Contact us at mail@awia.jp



'This is Fukushima' Calendar

In order to help show off to the world what Fukushima is really like another the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, some residents have been making a calendar to show off the beauty of this prefecture. Stop by and pick up a free copy to enjoy all year round!
(Feel free to contact us ahead of time to check how many we have left! [0242-27-3703](tel:0242-27-3703) or mail@awia.jp)



Japan-China Friendship Association

Jan 19th (Sun) 10:00 - ~15:20

Get together in the new year with the Japan-China Friendship Association! They'll be holding their annual new year's party this month. Join them for table tennis, 'curolling' (non-ice curling) and a good time! End the day with a 'Bandai-san odori' dance.

Place: Josai Community Centre
(Zaimokumachi, 1 chome-3-38 (Beside Nishiwakamatsu Station))

Cost: Adult - ¥1000, Students (children incl.) - ¥500, Toddlers - free!

Bring: (Wear loose clothes,) indoor shoes, small towel (for sweat)
Sign-up: by January 12th (Sun) Sanpei-san (090-5833-5821)



Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

Come help us fold, stamp, and pack our monthly publications for mailing! No need to sign up, just drop by if you can!

Date: January 25th, Saturday

Time: 13:30~

Place: Aizu Wakamatsu International Association Office



We're on Instagram!

Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



AWIA_PHOTO

<https://facebook.com/awiajp>



Visit our Facebook page for updates in multiple languages!



QR Code to access our email form to sign-up for events