

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

SynthesAizu

November 2025
Volume 5 Issue 11

Association News

Memberships: AWIA memberships are valid for the fiscal year (April to March the following year). Why not join us?

Memberships: ¥2000 (Students: ¥1000)

All that we do is thanks to our wonderful members.
If you are already a member and haven't paid this year's membership, or are not sure, contact us!

AtsuHana Japanese Convo. Club.

AtsuHana: Atsumatte, Hanasou! Come together and chat!
Speak Japanese casually with a variety of people.
This month, we're going back to the basics with a game and free talk!

Date	Saturday, November 8th 10:00-11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign-up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by November 7th (Fri)



MEET English Convo. Club

Come MEET and speak English with people from all walks of life! Everyone is welcome, no matter your English level.
Join us for activities and free talk!

Date	Saturday, Nov 15th 10:00~11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by Nov 14th (Fri)

ChAT吧 (ChAT-ba) Chinese Convo. Club. Season 2

Have a fun time using Chinese. Talk about Shopping!

Nov 1st! 10:00-11:30 ****Conversational level Chinese is recommended****

ChAT-ba will also be held in December!
(No ChAT-ba in January)



Date	Saturday, Dec 6th 10:00-11:30
Place	AWIA Office (Sakaemachi 2-14)
Topic	Christmas!
Sign Up	Contact aizukokusai@awia.jp by Dec 5th (Fri)

Nihongo-de-Hanasou!

Join us for our Japanese Speech event! Come and support others in the community that have been working hard and studying Japanese with us at AWIA. It's not a competition, just a good chance to try giving a speech in Japanese. There will be activities after the speeches, so come have fun!



Date: Nov 22nd (Sat) 10:00-12:00

Place: City Learning Centre (Keikodo) Rm 1

Interested in giving a speech yourself?

Contact us for more info! aizukokusai@awia.jp

Speech: about 5mins (less is okay, speaking only event. No presentation/slides etc.)

Parents' Salon: Christmas

Raising children in Aizu? Join our Parents' Salon for an opportunity to meet others also raising children here! At this Christmas event, create little reindeer decorations with your children and chat with other parents. Take the opportunity to connect with others from around the world!



Date: Dec 7th (Sun) 10:00-11:30

Place: City Learning Centre (Keikodo) Rm 1

Limit: Up to 15 families with children aged 0 - 12

Cost: Members: Free! Non-members: ¥500

Sign-up Deadline: **Dec 5th (Fri)**

Sign-up: tell us your name, and # of participants at:
aizukokusai@awia.jp



会津若松市国際交流協会

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: aizukokusai@awia.jp



This Month in Fukushima



Beware of Bears

This year has already had an unprecedented amount of bear encounters, and experts expect this to continue into December. With the lack of beech nuts and other wild fruits, bears are already heading into town looking for food. Please keep yourself safe and take care when going out.



How to avoid bear encounters:

- Be known: Make noise! Never go alone.
- Avoid dawn/dusk: Bears are most active at these times.
- Don't feed the bears: Clean up potential food sources like fallen fruit or trash.

Scan the QR code for a map of bear and other wild animal activity.



Animal Sightings Map



Autumn Leaves: Nagatoko

Around mid November

Rich yellow leaves of a 30 meter tall ginkgo tree cover the grounds of Shingu Kumano Shrine and the Nagatoko (long floor) worship hall, a beautiful large open air wooden structure of 44 thick wooden pillars built in ancient Heian Era style. The grounds and tree are lit up in the evenings too! Experience the fall colours alongside ancient Japan.



Place: 2258 Kumano Shrine, Shingu, Kitakata 966-0923

Time: 8:30-17:00 (later during light-up) **Entry fee:** ¥300

Kitakata Fall Nagatoko Walk

Nov 15 (Sat) from 9:00

Enjoy the fall colours of Kitakata on this 8-12km walk with the highlight: Shingu Kumano Shrine's Nagatoko worship hall. You'll get a special pin-badge for participating, and some ton-jiru (pork) soup as a reward at the end.

Date: Nov 15th (Sat)

Time: Sign-in: 8:00-9:00, Walk Start: 9:00

Cost: Adult: ¥1000 Junior High and under: ¥300

More info and sign-up link:

<https://www.city.kitakata.fukushima.jp/soshiki/tyuou-kouminkan/1980.html>



Enichiji Temple Fall Light-up

Oct 25 (Sat) - Nov 9th (Sun)
16:30 - 20:30

Come see the beautiful trees around the Enichiji Temple lit up for the season! Enjoy the leaves, and see the temple lit up at night.

Place: Enichiji Temple

(Motoderakami-4950 Bandai, Yama District)

Cancelled in the event of rain.

More info: https://www.town.bandai.fukushima.jp/site/enichiji/blog_20251002.html



Aizu Samurai Week

11/8 (Sat) - 11/16 (Sun)

Samurai Week is happening from Nov 8th (Sat) to Nov 16th (Sun) and you can experience samurai culture around town.

Just a small selection:

11/9 (Sun) 9:30-15:00: Bukeyashiki Samurai Residence
Samurai Marche Market, stage performances, quiz, etc.

11/15 (Sat) 13:00-16:00: Nisshinkan Samurai School
Zazen Meditation Workshop (¥1000/30mins)

& more! Check the Samurai Fes site below for more info.

Aizu Samurai Fes

11/16 (Sun) 10:00-15:00

The highlight of Samurai Week is the Samurai Fes at Tsuruga-jo Castle! See stage events, participate in workshops, and check out the Juraku market! Get up close and personal with samurai culture.

Performances: Samurai Artist: Kamui, taiko drums, Omotenashi Nihonmatsu Shonentai dance troupe, & more!

Workshops: tea ceremony, Aizu-kata design prints, armour wearing, calligraphy, cardboard armour, and martial arts (kendo etc.)

Check out the homepage for more info incl. schedule:

https://www.aizukanko.com/feature/SAMURAIWeek2025/SAMURAIWES2025_main



Nihonmatsu: Chrysanthemum Doll Festival

Oct 10th (Fri) - Nov 18th (Tue)

One of Nihonmatsu City's most famous festivals and the largest of its kind in Japan! The Chrysanthemum flower is the crest of the imperial family, and so it is well loved.

Nihonmatsu City has taken the Chrysanthemum festival to the next level: creating stunning, colourful displays by covering dolls/mannequins with hundreds of flowers! The ruins of Nihonmatsu Castle, Kasumiga-jo, are the stage of these wonderful displays. Enjoy the flowers, the history and a beautiful view of autumn scenery from the Castle.

Place: Kasumiga-jo Castle Park, Nihonmatsu

Time: 9:00-16:00

Entrance Fee: ¥900 (Junior High + under: free!)

More Info: <https://www.nihonmatsu-kanko.jp/?p=4879>



From CIR Erika The COP15 Conference



On July 15th 2025, Lake Inawashiro was designated as a protected wetland by the Ramsar Convention. From July 24th-30th, I had the opportunity to go to Zimbabwe as an interpreter for representatives from AizuWakamatsu in order to accept the designation. I spoke about COP15 and Zimbabwe in Part 1 in our September 2025 edition of the Newsletter. This time, I talk about what we did at the conference on July 26th.



On July 26th, we attended the COP15 at the Elephant Hills Resort in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Lake Inawashiro was to receive its designation as a Ramsar site from the Secretary General, Dr. Musonda Mumba in the afternoon. That ceremony was our whole reason for coming to Zimbabwe! Before then, we had the whole morning to see the conference.

We walked around and saw booths from different countries, and also volunteer organizations dedicated to protecting the environment. Many people from around the world were wearing traditional clothes like Indonesian Peci hats, or bright patterns from around Africa. We brought some traditional happi coats, and once we put them on, we stood out a lot. A Chinese man commented how the traditional



Aizu kanji(會津) on the back is also used in his language. A group of young people from Kenya wanted a happi themselves! So, we let them try the coats on and took some pictures together. Some people were interested in the 'Samurai City' pamphlets we had at the booth. I love Aizu, so I was very grateful for the opportunity to share information about AizuWakamatsu and Fukushima with many people from around the world.



The people from Kenya were interested in Aizu!

When we made our way to the main conference area, they handed us headsets connected to small radios. They had different channels; one for the conference audio and others with people doing simultaneous interpretation. We heard from delegates from places like Canada, China, and Indonesia give suggestions on revisions to the convention and offer their expertise. It was really interesting to listen to experts



The main conference tent at COP15

discuss the details of environmental protection policy. The language was specialized. I did my best to convey what was said in Japanese. It was an interesting experience for me. We were alongside environmental experts making adjustments to policies that will improve environmental protections of wetlands around the world. I felt really lucky; I was trusted to be a small bridge between Aizu and the world. I really felt the limitations of my Japanese skills, but the experience has also inspired me to work harder and be better.

After lunch, it was time for our main event! Our event provided a space Lake Inawashiro to be recognized, and for researchers from Japan and Korea to share information on the usefulness of rice paddies as environmentally protected areas.



There were many people at our event

It was MC'd in English by the Ministry of Environment of Japan who introduced the speakers, and main representatives from Fukushima. As the largest of the three cities representing Lake Inawashiro, Koriyama City gave the main speech. The leader, wearing a yukata, gave a small speech in English, thanking Ramsar for the designation, and everyone for coming. She did a wonderful job! Then they played a video message from the Mayor of Koriyama with English subtitles, and a PR video of Lake Inawashiro. A representative from AizuWakamatsu closed off our portion with a promise to protect the beauty of Lake Inawashiro, and a hearty 'Thank you!' I was very impressed with the effort everyone put into preparing for this moment. They had to speak in English, and all did really well! I felt really proud to be there to support them.



The video message from the Mayor of Koriyama


In the evening, we got to meet Dr. Musonda Mumba, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention. She has been involved in international environmental efforts for years, and even started the Network of African Women Environmentalists. We had only 15 minutes of her time, but she sat down with the main representatives and spoke with them a little. My role here was to interpret from Japanese into English. The other interpreter was very supportive in interpreting Dr. Mumba's words into Japanese for us. They introduced themselves, and showed her the video message from the Mayor of Koriyama. We had brought some gifts for her to highlight Fukushima. From AizuWakamatsu, we gave her an Aizu lacquerware coffee cup, and an Akabeko. Then, it was time for the photo. If you saw the newspaper article, that photo was from this moment! I'm standing outside of the camera view to support those I can.



Main representatives with Dr. Mumba (middle)

This was a day filled with environmental policy, research, and networking. Next time, I'll talk about the other things we got to see, and how I felt about the whole experience.

Events in November

1	SA	10:00 ChAT-ba: Chinese Convo. Club 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
2	SU	Closed
3	MO	Closed (Culture Day)
4	TU	
5	WE	
6	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
7	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
8	SA	10:00 AtsuHana: Japanese Convo. Club
9	SU	Closed
10	MO	Closed
11	TU	
12	WE	
13	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
14	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
15	SA	10:00 MEET: English Convo. Club 10:00 JICA Desk 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
16	SU	Children's Storybook Room (Library) Closed
17	MO	Closed
18	TU	
19	WE	
20	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
21	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
22	SA	10:00 Nihongo de Hanasou!
23	SU	Closed (Labour Thanksgiving Day)
24	MO	Closed (holiday in-lieu)
25	TU	
26	WE	
27	TH	
28	FR	
29	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
30	SU	Closed

Other Information

'MyRide' Dokodemo Bus

'MyRide – Dokodemo Bus' is an on-demand bus service. Download the app, input your stop and time, and the bus will come to you! For how to book, and things to know before use, please check out the Aizu Bus Homepage.

▼ Operation Time: 9:00-20:00 (Kanehori Area until 18:00)

▼ Cost: per ride (within the operating area)
Adult: ¥450 Child: ¥230

Stop points outside of the service area:

- MEGA Don Quijote UNY AizuWakamatsu Store
- Aizu Chuo Hospital • Aizu University

Cost: Adult: ¥550 Child: ¥280

Official website: (Check service map, etc.)

<https://www.aizubus.com/rosen/myride>



Google Play



App Store
Download the app!

Member's Experience:

H. A.-san used the 'MyRide' Dokodemo Bus service:

The app was very easy to navigate, and I was able to put it into English. It felt similar to using TaxiGo*, except it's even more convenient because you can schedule rides for the future! You can see where the bus is on a map, its route, and track how many pick-ups or drop-offs it has. The bus was on time, clean, and inexpensive. I highly recommend trying out どこでもバス!

*TaxiGO is a ride hailing app that connects you to a taxi near you and can be used nationwide.

Satellite JICA Fukushima Desk

As of September, KIDA Maki took over the JICA Fukushima Desk from Matsuyama-san. Why not stop by and talk with her about her experience on JICA?

Nov 15th 10:00-17:00

@ AWIA Office (Sakaemachi 2-14)

Presented by KIDA-san: Learn about Tunisia!

Kida-san spent some time in Tunisia on JICA, so come take the opportunity to learn about her experience in this North African country!

Date: 12/13 (Sat) - afternoon

Check the Dec newsletter for more info!



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: November 29th, 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!



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

965-0871 Fukushima-ken, Aizu Wakamatsu-shi, Sakae-machi 2-14, Lion D'or Garden 5th Floor

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