



*Summer in Japan is hot and extremely humid.  
To beat the heat, Japanese people use various ways to  
“feel cool” in summer using all five senses.  
This is the topic of the next article.  
Please take a look and hopefully you’ll feel  
a degree or two cooler yourself.*

## Japan Now: July 2024

*Japan Now* is the email newsletter of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

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## The traditional Way to Feel Cool in Summer in Japan

## 簾 "Sudare" – Feeling cool by sight

Sudare, traditional Japanese bamboo blinds or screens, are deeply rooted in Japanese life as a summer tradition. Since sudare are usually made of natural resources, they can be hung outdoors, such as on balconies, as well as inside the house.



They have the advantages of blocking sunlight and people outside from looking in to your house, while also allowing the cool breeze to come through the gaps between each slit of bamboo. Not only because of this functionality, but also because of its sophisticated, Asian-inspired appearance, it has grown in popularity among all generations both in Japan and overseas.



## 風鈴 "Furin" – Feeling cool by hearing

A Japanese wind chime, known as a Furin in Japanese, is a small bell usually found hanging from the balconies and windows of Japanese houses. One of the parts of furin, the bowl, is made from copper, bronze, glass, or iron. Different materials make different sounds when they catch the breeze.

Although it doesn't make you as cool as air conditioning might, the sound of a furin and the gentle way it flutters in the wind give us a relaxing feeling.

## 素麺 "Somen" – Feeling cool by taste

Japan is famous for ramen noodles, but if you are visiting Japan especially in the hot summer, you may want to try this lesser known noodle dish--Somen. It is most often served cold sometimes in iced water. To eat somen, you first pick up a bundle of the chilled noodles and dip them into a sauce in a separate bowl before eating them.



It also has an entertaining variant called Nagashi Somen. It is a fun way to eat somen where you have to catch the noodles flowing down a bamboo half-pipe, as if the noodles were on a water park ride. The cold, simple taste of somen can be a great way to relieve your summer fatigue and lack of appetite caused by the heat.

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## Consular Office of Japan Attended Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Richardson National Cemetery

On May 27, 2024, Head Consul Hamada together with the staff of Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage attended the Memorial Day ceremony held at Fort Richardson National Cemetery. Michele Kwok, Executive Director of the National Cemetery Administration, Pacific District, spoke about how the cemetery not only has graves to commemorate the service

and sacrifice of Americans, but also a Memorial for the Japanese soldiers lost at the Battle of Attu.

Duane Mendenhall, Director of the Fort Richardson and Sitka National Cemeteries, read the Presidential Proclamation from US President Joe Biden.

After the ceremony the Consular Office staff visited the Japanese cenotaph to pay their respects. The Consular Office would like to thank Director Mendenhall, his staff, and volunteers for all of their work in putting together the Memorial Day ceremony.



## School Program

On June 11, members of our staff visited the Pacific Northern Academy and gave presentations about Japanese elementary schools and the Japanese Language.

We also had an origami session and made samurai helmets and jumping frogs.

It was a pleasure for us seeing the students actively answering questions during the presentations and smiling at the origami they had completed!



The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage conducts in-person school visits by sending members of our staff to local schools.

Some of our past events have promoted cultural exchange through PowerPoint presentations about Japanese culture, origami and calligraphy events, and even traditional Japanese games like Kendama (known to many Americans as Cup-and-ball).

Our office performs visits to schools from elementary to high school level. If you would like to contact us about conducting a visit, please reach out to us.

Email: [inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp](mailto:inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp)

# Interview with a Former JET Participant

Every year, the Consular Office helps hire Alaskan residents to go work abroad in Japan as teachers, translators, or even sports coaches. This job opportunity, known as the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program is highly competitive but life-changing for those who are selected! We had an opportunity to catch up with one of our former Alaskan JET participants, Maria Labatos, on how the program went.

Q: Hello! Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed! I understand you were on the JET Program for the maximum 5 years; is it safe to say you enjoyed living in Japan



A: Yes, I LOVED my time in the JET Program. I was placed in a port town that was famous for its Aquarium, Acerola fruit, & Soba noodles! Motobu, Okinawa! It was a tourist destination and had it's busy days, but it was quaint, and I loved going around and about getting to know the townsfolk!

Q: What was your job like? Did you have any opportunities to teach your students about Alaska?

A: Yes! I was given many opportunities to teach my schools and students about life in Alaska! My Homeroom teachers at the Junior High Schools & Elementary Schools would let me create and run lesson plans, PowerPoints, worksheets, and even games that related to the current chapter of the textbooks. In my experience, my job was very steady. I assisted with grading tests, reading and writing practices, listening recordings and quizzes, speaking activities – those are just some of the things I did regularly with my schools.

Q: What have you been doing since you came back to the US? Is JET still a part of your life here?

A: I took a few months off to recoup to life here in the States, but then I was given the opportunity to get a job with the Department of Education and Early Development! Yes, I have joined AKJETAA as their Secretary~!

AKJETAA (The Alaska Chapter of the JET program Alumni Association) is a volunteer run group of former JETs that support past and current Alaskan JETs, spread Japanese culture with events and workshops, and promotes the JET program to anyone who might be interested in applying! You can learn about upcoming events from their Facebook group!

Q: Next month, this year's batch of JETs will make their way to Japan! Do you have any words of wisdom for them?

A: It's said entirely way too much, but Every Situation is Different~! Really! So, just try to





enjoy what you have, and make memories. It won't start to feel like 'home' till after a year at least~

Q: Thank you for all your wonderful answers! I saved the hardest question for last. What's the one thing you took for granted the most living in Japan? Something you can't get easily here, but was a staple of your life in Okinawa

A: The sea , the color – Okinawa blue really is a special color. I miss it. -- Not that I really took anything for granted. I do feel like I lived the most in my lifetime in Okinawa. Living there taught me to slow down and appreciate life and to finally take time for myself. Before I moved to Okinawa, most of my twenties was spent working seven days a week, thirteen-hour workdays, for seven years. I can honestly say that I don't remember much, nor was there anything really in that time that made me feel like I was 'living.' I miss the people – The café family that took me in when I first got there - treated me like one of their own. My schools – the students~ the teachers, and my friends. I built a life there and I miss it. But I will definitely go back there. It might not be that exact same, but it will always be home.



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