

# HIGHLIGHTING *Japan*

VOL.  
**124**  
SEPTEMBER  
2018



A SOCIETY OF HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

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**A SOCIETY OF HEALTH  
AND LONGEVITY**

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*A joint project is using Learning Therapy to forestall Japan's 2025 projection of seven million dementia sufferers*

The world knows that Japan is a place where people live long and generally prosper, and the country is working hard to secure its legacy of health and longevity. Japan's seniors are determined to stay active and seek a continuing purpose in life, pass on their knowledge, stay fit, and even reinvent themselves by taking on challenging new careers.



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**ON THE COVER**  
A Society of Health and Longevity

# PRIME MINISTER ABE MEETS WITH UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL GUTERRES

On August 8, 2018, Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, held a meeting with H.E. Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Prime Minister Abe welcomed Secretary-General Guterres on his visit to Japan since last December, and thanked the Secretary-General for his heart warming message and for offering support for the loss and damage caused by the heavy rain in western Japan.

Prime Minister Abe welcomed Secretary-General Guterres as the first Secretary-General of the UN to attend the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony. Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan, the only nation in the world to be bombed with atomic weapons, stood ready to play a bridge building role between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States in realizing “a world free of nuclear weapons” in cooperation with the United Nations. Secretary-General Guterres shared the Prime Minister’s view, and explained his recent comprehensive disarmament agenda.

With regard to North Korea, Prime Minister Abe stated his expectation that the agreement between the United States and North Korea including North Korea’s commitment towards complete denuclearization of Korean Peninsula, will be fully and expeditiously implemented.

Prime Minister Abe and Secretary-General Guterres shared the view that the international community

needs to firmly maintain the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions in order to urge North Korea to take concrete actions.

In addition, Prime Minister Abe again sought understanding and cooperation on the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and Secretary-General Guterres expressed his support to the matter.

With regard to UN reform, Prime Minister Abe stated that he supported Secretary-General Guterres' efforts to reform for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN, and would continue to closely cooperate with the UN.

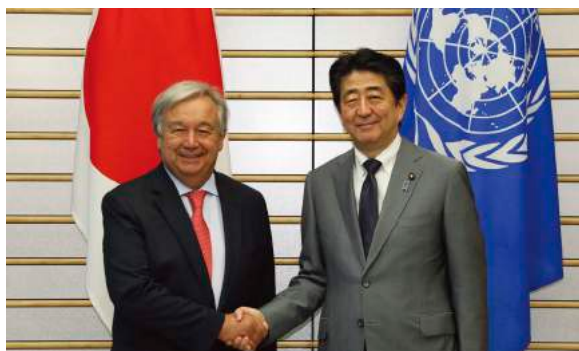
Prime Minister Abe further stated that, along with UN reform, the reform of the UN Security Council was a matter of urgency, and expressed his expectation that the Secretary-General would exercise strong leadership on this matter.

Prime Minister Abe and Secretary-General Guterres exchanged views on a wide range of other global issues.

Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan would address various issues in the international community, such as the promotion of SDGs including in the areas of education and health, in cooperation with the UN which was the core of multilateralism.



The meeting with the UN Secretary-General



The Prime Minister shaking hands with the UN Secretary-General



# *A Society of Health and Longevity*

Japan's seniors comprise a significant segment of the country's population, and keeping them energetic, independent, happy and focused is a mammoth task. While the government pursues far-reaching strategies on lifestyle-related diseases and work habits, new learning methods that enliven the minds of seniors, a record-breaking octogenarian triathlete, and a prefecture that in just two decades has boosted the life expectancy of its male citizens to the top of Japan's rankings are making news. In this issue, we introduce those aspects and some of the super seniors that are inspiring the rest of Japan.



# Making a Society of Health and Longevity a Reality

*Japan is one of the rare countries where extended human longevity is a widespread reality. We asked Vice-Minister for Health, Chief Medical & Global Health Officer of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Yasuhiro Suzuki to describe the global value, methods and goals of Japan's society of health and longevity.*


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**TAMAKI KAWASAKI**

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## **How does the world assess Japan as a society of health and longevity?**

Japan boasts a combined average life and health expectancy that is the highest in the world, made possible by the Japanese dietary habits, exercise and high levels of medical care. Many countries are therefore focusing on Japanese food and lifestyle that makes this a possibility. Despite Japan having the most elderly population



Yasuhiro Suzuki, Vice-Minister for Health, Chief Medical & Global Health Officer of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare





Suzuki posing with Kemuimon, the anti-passive smoking campaign's mascot

the main lifestyle-related diseases: hyperlipidemia, diabetes, and high blood pressure. We are warning people to be more aware of lifestyle-related diseases and get regular checkups. Rest is also important to hard-working Japanese. We would like people to be aware of both the length and the quality of sleep they are getting.

**What kind of society of health and longevity do you hope to create, and what should individuals do to reach that goal?**

Self-direction is the key. While wearable devices that can easily measure and display a person's health status are gradually becoming popular and have increased awareness, we need businesses and society to support self-control. An ideal society has places where exercising is easy, and you can see calorie counts at every restaurant. Companies need to encourage employees to raise their awareness of health, promote healthy working hours and changes in work habits, and find ways to increase employee motivation that will inspire seniors to continue working after retirement. As medical technology advances, even patients with incurable diseases may be treated as outpatients, working without being hospitalized. We will have a lifestyle where people can be treated in the morning and go to work in the afternoon. To make this a reality, the support of companies will be indispensable. In this way, people will become more conscious about their health, and society will achieve a state of healthy longevity. **7**

among OECD countries, our social security expenditures are low. Another international point of value is that Japan's social security system performs well despite those limited expenditures.

Twenty-five years after World War Two, the speed at which Japan was aging had accelerated, and the number of elderly doubled. This occurred in a quarter of the time it took Europe to do the same. Such a drastic change has its pros and cons, which is why Japan has been serving as a great example for other nations through its knowledge and lessons learned about aging populations.

**Japan has become an aging society at an unbelievable speed. Does that present any specific challenges?**

We have to acknowledge the westernization of the Japanese people's diet, the increase of salt in Japanese cuisine, stress, and the unhealthy habits of modern society. And unlike before, households changed from multiple generations living under one roof to nuclear families living apart. Having locals or private

companies watching and caring for the elderly living alone is also a challenge. These are other lessons learned from our fast-aging society.

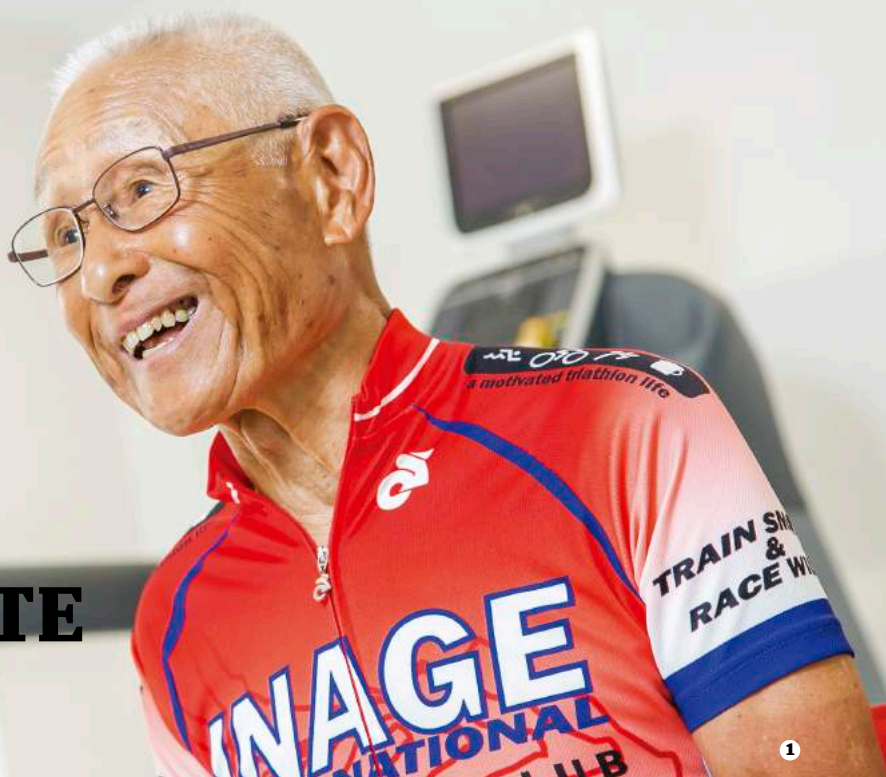
One of the biggest challenges was to secure the financial resources for the increasing social security budget. Japan's policies have proven successful in controlling this budget—which could easily become expensive—with the help of many sectors.

**Are there any specific measures being taken to foster a society of health and longevity?**

As the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, we have presented several ideas. First is exercise. For instance, we suggest that people get off one station before their own and walk home from there, or at least walk ten minutes a day. Next are meals. We suggest people eat more vegetables and cut down on the consumption of salt and fatty foods. Lastly, the Health Promotion Law has helped strengthen measures against passive smoking.

Japanese people are said to be healthy, but we also have three of

# SUPER SENIOR TRIATHLETE RACES ON



## KATSUYA YAMADA

*Hiromu Inada is an 85-year-old triathlete who continues to test himself in one of the world's toughest endurance challenges—the Ironman Triathlon. The super senior describes how and why he keeps going, and what his goals are.*

**R**EQUIRING competitors to run a full marathon of 42.195 kilometers after swimming 3.8 kilometers and cycling 180 more, the Ironman Triathlon's 226 kilometers have been called the toughest race in the world.

An 85-year-old competitor from Japan, Hiromu Inada, holds the record as the oldest person to complete an Ironman. He finished his first one in 2011 at the age of seventy-eight, fell in love with the race and has continued to qualify every year since. When the world championship takes place in Hawaii this year, he intends to be there.

Inada retired at age sixty, and began swimming at a gym near his house to maintain his health. Starting at age sixty-five, he has competed in four aquathlons, an event that combines swimming and running. He says he got started on triathlons after seeing triathletes riding on road bikes while he was cheering at aquathlon events. Inada bought a road bike at age 69, and at 70 completed a triathlon. He began entering longer and longer competitions until he worked his way up to the Ironman, completely absorbed in the pursuit.

He first attracted worldwide attention in 2015 at the Ironman World Championship. Just shy of

the 16 hour and 50 minute time limit, Inada collapsed several hundred meters short of the finish. Although he managed to get to his feet and cross the finish line, he was five seconds too late, and consequently was not recognized as having completed the race.

However, the previously unknown senior's grit captured the attention of people through news articles and social media, and Inada received interview requests and messages of support from all over the world. His supporters included countless people, one of whom he inspired to begin doing triathlons at age sixty.





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- 1 Triathlete Hiromu Inada
- 2 Inada crossing the finish line at the Ironman World Championship
- 3 The cycling section of the Ironman covers 180 kilometers
- 4 Inada tackling the full marathon portion of the race

Photos 2-4 by Hiromu Inada

“I was very happy, and I felt like I must live up to their hopes,” Inada says, and his motivation grew. And so at the following world championship in 2016, after solid preparation, he finished the race with a time of 16 hours, 49 minutes and 13 seconds, making up for what happened the previous year in the most fantastic way.

“My goal is to continue participating in races and completing them within the time limit,” Inada says. “My body is weakening with age, but that moment when I can feel all my training paying off is real. I try out things I see on TV and advice

I receive immediately. By doing so, my times get better. And then I try something new again. It’s that repetition. I see the tricks I try out turn into real results, and it’s extremely fun.”

After sensing the limitations of being self-taught when he couldn’t complete his first Ironman Japan race at seventy-six, Inada joined a triathlon club that has turned out Olympic athletes. After that, he adopted a hard schedule of resting only one or two days a week, and on every other day rising at six a.m., practicing hard until four p.m., and going to bed by nine p.m. at the latest.

“To continue, I have to keep all my thoughts focused on the triathlon—what I should eat, what my daily rhythm should be. I’ve lived to my eighties and I’ve never felt so fulfilled. I’m too busy to have time to take it easy, but I think of now as my youth.”

Imbued with a boyish innocence and boundless enthusiasm, Inada continues to face his current tasks with a surprising amount of level-headedness and willpower. As long as he can keep moving forward and progressing, he’ll go on enjoying his newfound youth and his Ironman challenges. **7**



Motoyo Yamane

# A Lovely and Compelling Voice for Life

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## TAMAKI KAWASAKI

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*Based on her long experience as a broadcast announcer, Motoyo Yamane focuses on developing the speaking abilities of children at study sessions all over Japan. Her drive, flexibility and positive outlook provide a valuable model for how to live a long, useful and satisfying life.*

“I learned about what is important in life during my thirty-six years at NHK,” says Motoyo Yamane, who entered Japan’s public broadcasting organization NHK in 1971 as a new announcer and went on to become the first woman to serve as the head of the announcers department.

“When you join a TV station, even if you don’t have any skills yet, you get saddled with a title. I was always reminded of how much I didn’t know, and the first ten years were really tough,” recalls Yamane.

When I was just starting out, I couldn’t even read a three-line script properly, and was disparaged as being ‘incompetent.’” Despite her frustration and humiliation, she continued to polish her reading, listening and speaking skills every day, wanting to become an announcer capable of reading the manuscript for the news properly, hosting programs and doing live broadcasts.

During her many years working for NHK, the project that had the greatest influence on Yamane’s



Yamane during her time as a broadcast announcer at NHK





Yamane reading aloud to a group of children

life was an art documentary series. She encountered the creations and daily lives of over four hundred outstanding Japanese artists, and saw firsthand their determination not to rest on their laurels, and the endeavors that the average person could not begin to equal. “Their mindset of not being afraid of reinventing themselves, and their attitude of beginning anew each day and continuing to diligently improve themselves, even after growing older, has a huge impact on how I think,” she says.

After retiring from NHK, Yamane, along with other retired NHK announcers, founded the “Kotoba no Mori” group and began touring the country to work with children on their speaking skills. In her travels around Japan to see firsthand how speech was taught, she found that the spoken language skills of many children who grew up in nuclear families were weak.

“The reason children have trouble with relationships with other people is because they don’t have the words to connect with them,” she explains. “I strongly felt that for them to avoid conforming to what others say and create their own happiness in life, they must be able to express themselves in their own words, not words borrowed from someone else.”

To develop the speaking abilities of children and to help them thrive, four years ago Yamane set up a training course for instructors on how to read aloud. This brought people together to create groups around Japan dedicated to reading aloud. She has already sent out 210 graduates, but maintaining the course and updating the texts takes a lot of



Yamane's training courses for instructors on how to read aloud attract many interested students

work, both mentally and physically. Moreover, she has continued her well-received narration work. Because of the amount of focus and stress that these projects involve, however, she loses weight with each program she does. She believes that “to be active and do good work, a healthy body is essential,” and has begun to take better care of herself.

Yamane says the experience she gained during her years as an announcer taught her more than a library worth of books ever could, allowing her to sharpen her skills in reading, listening and speaking in Japanese—a priceless asset.

Even after having made a living by her voice for many years, Yamane notes that “it is really odd, but you can’t completely control your voice.” Learning more about how the voice is used in kabuki, Noh, opera and language acquisition, she finds new aspects of the subject she had missed. Each new discovery shines light onto more things to learn, and continues to spark her curiosity.

This year Yamane started a new course about the power of the voice, and is busily engaged in inviting lecturers. “There are some who say out of kindness that I should stop because I have become too old,” she remarks with a laugh, “but I don’t believe in stopping just because you are seventy.” Her latest interest, she adds, is multilingual education.

Feelings turn into voices, and voices become words. “Voices are what create the language of a people, so I want to keep learning more and more,” is Yamane’s parting phrase—delivered, of course, in her beautiful and refined voice. ▮



Asako Yamaoka, editor-in-chief of Halmek

# THE NEW SENIORS WHO ARE CHANGING JAPAN

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## TAKAYOSHI YAMABE

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*Healthy and proactive about everything? Asako Yamaoka, the editor-in-chief of the senior women's lifestyle magazine Halmek, says such a simple categorization overlooks the diversity of Japan's seniors. She describes the new possibilities that can come from seniors with a wide range of personal values.*

ACCORDING to Asako Yamaoka, businesses in Japan that focus on active seniors such as gyms offering exercise programs geared for them, and game arcades where even seniors can enjoy themselves are readily noticeable. Yamaoka is the editor-in-chief of *Halmek*, a lifestyle magazine for senior women with a readership of about 160,000. Her magazine's readers are a diverse in age, from the late fifties to nineties, with most in their sixties and seventies.

"The vast majority of our readers do not consider themselves seniors," she relates. "They're surprised when people treat them like seniors by doing things

like giving up seats to them on the train."

On the other hand, Yamaoka clarifies that it isn't accurate to think of seniors today as uniformly active. "Actually, while there are outgoing types who have a strong desire to improve themselves, others place a high value on being conservative and traditional," she says. "Among seniors, there is a wide range of ways of thinking and standards for conduct. We strive to avoid generalizing by age, and instead divide our target audience into seven groups based on in-company think tank research, and write our articles primarily for the 'outgoing and pursue self-improvement' and 'prize dignity



and learning' groups." Yamaoka also indicates that many new types of businesses aimed at seniors are likely to emerge as other industries learn more about the values and intentions of seniors.

Yamaoka adds that those in their sixties and seventies are still changing and growing. "If we run a feature on the basics of using a smartphone, we'll get a ton of letters saying 'I learned how to use one,'" she explains. "Based on this, it's clear that even though many seniors really can't handle new challenges, they do have the flexibility to grasp something if they get past the initial hurdle. And when we announced that we were seeking models for the magazine, we received so many applications from people saying 'I wanted to try this out once,' and we realized all over again how many people care about fashion and beauty. The nature of people's interests naturally varies, but if the impetus is there, there are countless ways seniors can take action."

In another decade, those in their sixties will already be using the Internet and smartphones to look up information. "Right now most seniors still use travel agencies to book their trips, but the next generation will be able to research transportation and accommodations on their own and travel freely wherever they want," Yamaoka observes. "I think we'll see a completely new type of senior emerge."

Seniors already represent close to a third of Japan's population, and their ranks are growing, so who can say how their influence



Targeting active seniors, the magazine includes articles about how to use smartphones and make the most of your pension



Yamaoka discussing the future of Japanese society

will change Japanese society? "I hope that the knowledge and experience seniors have cultivated can be used to support the younger generations and make society mutually beneficial," Yamaoka says. "In terms of raising children, family support center projects in several municipalities are matching seniors with families raising children in the same area. Seniors feel that they're useful and have a sense of purpose, while the younger generation can have an easier life thanks to their help. I think this will enrich society."

In Japan, the country with the world's largest percentage of aging citizens, a shift is beginning toward a society where seniors can enjoy different lifestyles and use their abilities no matter their age. This will bring about an era in which all generations can have easier lives, and perhaps set an example of longevity—a "100-year life society"—for the world. **7**



# LONG LIVE SHIGA

THE SECRETS TO JAPAN'S LONGEST LIFESPAN FOR MEN

A school festival at Shiga Lacadia University

## TOMOKO NISHIKAWA

*Just two decades ago, Shiga Prefecture ranked in the middle in terms of average lifespan for men in Japan. By tackling health issues at an early stage through better diet, lifestyle and other initiatives, however, the prefecture now boasts a male population having Japan's longest average lifespan. Here are Shiga's secrets to longevity.*



Residents can take advantage of free healthy cooking classes

**W**ITH men living an average of 81.09 years and women up to 87.26 years, Japan is recognized as a long-lived nation. According to the latest statistics for human lifespan per prefecture, the average age of men in Shiga Prefecture—situated east of Kyoto in the Kansai region—was 81.78 years old, number one in the nation. Shiga's women came in at 87.57 years old, ranking fourth. Along with the average age of Shiga residents rising drastically in recent years, their healthy life expectancy has also improved and is currently second in Japan for men at 80.39 years, and third for women at 84.44 years.

Shiga has been working endlessly to create a healthier society for the past twenty years. “After researching the health and eating habits of Shiga residents, we found that many people do not smoke or consume high volumes of alcohol, and exercise on a regular basis,” says Eiji Inoshita, chairman of promoting healthy life expectancy and the director of the Shiga Prefectural Institute of Public Health. “We understood the strong connection between





Community health advocates during a training session

daily lifestyle and the healthy life expectancy and average lifespan of people. According to recent government research, unemployment and the number of elderly living alone are low here, which creates a good environment for people wanting to live a healthy lifestyle.”

Smoking has also been seen to have a great impact on health, Inoshita acknowledges. “The prefecture has been pushing initiatives to reduce the number of smokers by educating children from the elementary level to high school about the risks of smoking,” he notes. “Thanks to this movement, compared to ten years ago the number of smokers in their twenties and thirties has gone down. So have the number of deaths caused by lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.”

Unlike other prefectures, Shiga has a host of volunteer organizations and health advocates promoting healthy lifestyles and activities. Towns and cities have joined forces to train community health advocates who then inform people about the importance of a balanced diet, offer cooking classes and perform special medical check-ups. Community health advocates also take preventive measures against what’s known as “locomotive syndrome”—a condition in which mobility becomes limited and raises the risk of being bedridden. Summer and winter in Shiga offer mild weather, which allows people to enjoy sports and activities like walking or jogging in natural areas near Lake Biwa year round.

To extend healthy life expectancy and to keep the elderly energetic, they have joined forces with Shiga Lacadia University to help local communities. Residents over the age of sixty learn about gardening, regional culture and health promotion; after they graduate, many contribute to their community as town planners or volunteer guides. When the people of Shiga have a goal, they have a tendency to work together to achieve it, and take part in events related to health or work as volunteers. As Inoue says, “The people’s honest nature has been producing many positive effects.”

Since 2014, healthy life expectancy advocates in Shiga have been raising awareness on ways to make people healthier and live longer through the Healthy Life Expectancy Project. They’ve been awarding organizations taking action to build a healthy environment and publicizing them.

Shiga’s proactive and practical actions have not passed unnoticed, so representatives from other prefectures have come to observe Shiga’s tactics for extending the average lifespan and healthy life expectancy.

“We plan on cooperating with local businesses and universities to make a healthier environment for not only seniors and children, but also for the working generation,” says Inoue. “We can’t be satisfied with our current results. I’m also hoping to further disseminate the factors and secrets of healthy longevity, how to maintain it, and analyze it more thoroughly and spread it nationwide.”

# PREVENTING DEMENTIA WITH LEARNING THERAPY



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*According to Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the country's number of dementia patients is expected to reach around seven million by 2025—including one person out of five over the age of sixty-five. One increasingly popular measure considered effective in clearing the fog of dementia is learning therapy.*

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## KATSUMI YASUKURA

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**T**HE learning therapy method was created as a joint project between Professor Ryuta Kawashima of Tohoku University's Institute of Development, Aging and Cancer and the international Kumon Institute of Education tutoring school franchise.

The curriculum is simple. First, patients with dementia read aloud stories they enjoyed as

children. Next, they do simple calculations and check their answers. (The level of difficulty is decided through placement tests taken beforehand.) The questions are selected according to the individual's maximum learning ability and designed to be grasped quickly. After they complete the test, the patients are graded according to their reading ability and calculation results, discuss topics they have read about, and talk about recent incidents that have occurred around them. This is all accomplished in just thirty minutes.

Reading aloud, calculating and communication as a form of learning is based on fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and light topography studies. fMRI measures brain activity using layered images obtained through MRI scans, while light topography is a unique technology that measures blood flow to the brain and visualizes brain activity using near-infrared spectroscopy. When a person





- 1 Professor Ryuta Kawashima of Tohoku University's Institute of Development, Aging and Cancer
- 2 The learning materials contain content that patients will find familiar
- 3 Communicating with others helps stimulate the brain
- 4 Kawashima surrounded by his many books

reads aloud, calculates or communicates, the brain's prefrontal cortex, which serves as the body's command center, becomes active. The content the patient is learning is not difficult, and there is minimal pressure.

"However, the results were better than we expected," says Kawashima. "After incorporating learning therapy at a facility for the elderly in Fukuoka in 2001, there were some clear improvements over the following two months. For instance, residents began to look happier, studied willingly, and some even managed to stop wearing diapers."


The results made a positive impression on those surrounding the patients as well. The better the patients became, the more motivated facility staff became in their work. Families of the patients were also more at ease.

"We also saw positive results regarding medical expenses from a third-party organization," Kawashima notes. "Even after subtracting the textbook and labor fees, there was a savings of approximately 200,000 yen per patient for medical expenses annually." He adds that 1,400 facilities and 210 local governments in Japan are currently using learning therapy.

The method is also being used overseas. In America it has become known as SAIDO Learning, and has been spreading since 2011. Countries such as Germany and Italy that also have large elderly populations have shown interest in the method as well.

Given the growing number of elderly citizens, Professor Kawashima offers some advice to younger generations. "You need to be prepared and take preventive measures against dementia," he states. "For instance, exercising regularly has proven effective against the disease. Joining a study group, being careful of your nutritional balance and interacting with your surroundings can also help."

As the next step in learning therapy, Kawashima plans on starting a venture organization within Tohoku University to create a wearable device for near-infrared spectroscopy that can easily display how active the brain's prefrontal cortex is. By placing a small box (5 cm x 3 cm) on the patient's forehead, an observer will instantly be able to see how active the brain is on a smartphone or a specialized device when the patient begins to learn.

Kawashima remains intent on devising other new preventive measures against dementia through neuroscience. Hopefully he and Japan will find keys to preventing or at least lessening this debilitating disease all over the world. 

# MIDLIFE REINVENTION

## MASTERING WINEMAKING IN NAGANO

*Well-known essayist and painter Toyoo Tamamura and his wife live in Nagano Prefecture, where they run a winery and restaurant. He talks about his new life and work styles, the life lessons he's discovered during the second half of his life, and his plans.*

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### KATSUYA YAMADA

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**T**OYOO Tamamura is a noted 73-year-old essayist and painter who moved from Tokyo to Karuizawa when he was 38, and then to Tomi in Nagano Prefecture at the age of 45. He says the impulse behind the move to Tomi was a serious illness during a *yakudoshi*, or traditionally unlucky year. After this experience, his wife Saeko proposed that they “live in the countryside, leisurely, while growing vegetables.”

At Saeko's request they first grew vegetables and herbs on the three acres of land they'd bought, but they also planted five hundred grapevines on the slopes of the remaining land to make wine for themselves. The couple visited various wineries, got advice from experts, and kept learning through trial and error. Despite being almost completely self-taught and growing the grapes themselves, they bottled their first vintage after just six years, collaborating with a winery that took care of the actual winemaking and bottling. “The feeling when I first tasted it was beyond words,” Tamamura recalls.

After that, they participated in a winery construction project and brought the project to Tomi. They opened up their fields to winery technicians so they could gain experience at tasks such as preparing fields for growing grapes. The plan came to a standstill halfway through, but the fields and youthful, passionate winemakers remained.





At the winery's restaurant, visitors can enjoy Takamura's wine with dishes featuring local ingredients



The grapes and vines of the winery are lovingly nurtured

“I realized that the only way was for me to do it,” says Tamamura. He busied himself gathering capital, persuading his wife, and obtaining a liquor production license in 2003. He also opened the Villa d’Est Gardenfarm and Winery.

The myriad choices one can make during the winemaking process have a subtle effect on how the wine turns out. Tamamura says that what is fascinating is the depth of it. He was told it would be impossible to grow grapes unless the area had dry, drainable land as in France, but he thought outside the box and challenged fixed ideas. The winery’s third vintage, produced in 2005, was served at the 2008 G8 Summit in Toyako, and won the highest gold medal in a domestic wine competition with its fifth vintage (2007), The winery’s star was rising.

The winery’s restaurant, as well as Arc-en-Vigne, a winery management school Tamamura established in 2015, are also doing great.

“You can succeed in agriculture if you try,” Tamamura insists. “Even if you make some mistakes, plants are stronger than you think, so there’s a high possibility they will thrive in the end. Winemaking is the same. Everyone has their own tricks of the trade, and there’s surely a way of winemaking that works in all sorts of areas.”

According to Tamamura, he is not someone who makes a detailed plan and follows it. “When something happens, I first move and hit a wall,” Tamamura says with a laugh. “Even if



Toyoo Tamamura started Villa d’Est Gardenfarm and Winery in his 50s

it’s a wide path and you don’t know where you should go, you can find that out by hitting a wall. That’s how I live.

“Currently there is talk of creating lodging facilities in the village,” he continues. “If possible, we want to have vacation rentals, and have tourists come to the village and foster communication and exchange.”

“The number of vacant houses is also rising, so I’d be happy if the younger generation uses this to create something new.”

Tamamura drastically changed his way of life in middle age, and from the outside he appears to have faced many hurdles. However, in his mind the thought that “if today was fun, tomorrow will definitely be fun” was always present. His attitude of enjoying the moment is sure to continue generating ideas and inventions, and shaping his life. **▼**

# Sweet Work If You Can Get It: Spirited Seniors Making Great Confections in Hokkaido

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## KANAMI YANAGAWA

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*At renowned Hokkaido confectionery firm Hori, over ten percent of the employees are over sixty years old. An open corporate culture and automation that streamlines and simplifies their workload has stimulated the desire of employees to work longer, ensuring that the company stays fully staffed and improves performance.*



**H**ORI Co. Ltd.'s leading product, Yubari Melon Pure Jelly, has been Hokkaido's top-selling summer gift for thirteen consecutive years. Kitakaro, a Hori subsidiary founded in 1991, produces mochi crackers and confections like cream puffs using ingredients from Hokkaido. The Hori group boasts combined sales of approximately ten billion yen, and continues to grow.

While lifetime employment has been fading in the Japanese labor market, Hori has many employees who happily continue to work beyond retirement age. In fact, more than a tenth of their workforce is over the age of sixty.

"I truly believe that the reason we work is not because we are healthy, but that we are healthy as a result of working," says company president Akira Hori. "I am happy when I hear my employees say they want to continue working long after retirement age, because they clearly see what they do as their purpose in life."

Making work easier is essential to ensuring that senior employees retain this sense of purpose. The primary example of this is the company's adoption of robots, which Hori says "was done to

reduce the workload placed on our employees, which is something we consider vital."

The Hori way involves having robots handle manual labor and monotonous tasks, while humans handle important processes involving taste and final quality checks. This reduces the physical burden on employees. The robots only serve to support the human workers.

The secret to making work easier isn't limited to the physical work environment. The president visits the company's farms and factories, where he chats with every employee to see if they are doing well. He knows all his employees by name—which is amazing enough—and presents them with cakes on their birthdays. What's more, he personally writes replies to the employee suggestion forms collected every month.

In addition, the company schedules study meetings, cherry blossom-viewing parties and company trips





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- 1 Over ten percent of Hori's employees are enthusiastic seniors
- 2 In the factory, employees work in tandem with robots
- 3 Akira Hori, president of Hori Co. Ltd.
- 4 Seniors working at a farm that produces the natural ingredients for Hori's confections

to develop a sense of unity. Employees are on an equal footing at these events regardless of their age, gender or employment status. This approach, along with the initiatives that accompany it, is likely why Hori employees want to stay on the payroll.

Hori also operates agricultural businesses that produce the natural ingredients used in their confections. "I feel joy from working and I want to continue working for as long as I feel healthy enough to," says the firm's oldest employee, 80-year-old Masao Saito. Yuko Kubota, sixty-seven, who works in the jelly manufacturing plant, emphatically states that, "Although I work hard from morning to evening, I feel like it's worth it. I want to work here for as long as I can."

"Emotions are conveyed through confections," Hori says. "The desire to make something delicious results in a completely different product." The

company's employees are clearly motivated and enjoy their work, which is likely why so many people love Hori's confections.

"We want to continue investing in equipment to create an environment in which people can work longer," Hori adds. "We also want to produce confections that take nutrition into consideration. We want our company, employees and products to all be healthy."

When seniors work in an environment where they have a sense of purpose, having the opportunity to extend their careers deepens their affection for the company and its products. That inevitably leads to better products. Hori offers a lesson in how employing seniors and giving them a place to shine helps a company thrive. **U**

BIFUE USHIJIMA

*This summer the Ministry of Justice began granting special long-term visas to fourth-generation Nikkei Japanese. If they meet the requirements—including having adequate Japanese-language ability and a supporter—applicants can receive a visa of up to five years with no limits on the type of work they do.*

## JAPAN OPENS A DOOR TO FOURTH-GENERATION JAPANESE ABROAD



**A**CCORDING to The Association of Nikkei & Japanese Abroad, as of 2016 roughly 3.6 million descendants of Japanese citizens who emigrated from Japan, known as Nikkei Japanese, were living all over the world in places like South America, North America and Oceania. In each of those places, Nikkei create support networks.

First- to third-generation Nikkei who come to Japan are already entitled to residency and can work freely, and many Nikkei are living in Japan on permanent residency visas. In 2017, for example, that included 67,000 Nikkei Brazilians and Peruvians. Generally only fourth-generation Nikkei who were unmarried and dependent children of third-generation Nikkei could claim this visa status, however.

Regardless, a not-insignificant number of other fourth-generation Nikkei admire Japan and wish to live here. Taking this into account, the Ministry of Justice started a system in July 2018 aimed at fourth-generation Nikkei between the ages of eighteen and thirty. They can receive a work visa valid for up to five years, a status similar to first- to third-generation Nikkei. They must satisfy several requirements, however, including having no criminal record, being in good health, having medical insurance coverage, and having funds to cover the costs of returning home. To ensure that their life after coming to Japan goes smoothly, they must also understand basic Japanese at the time of entry, at least at the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test N4 level.

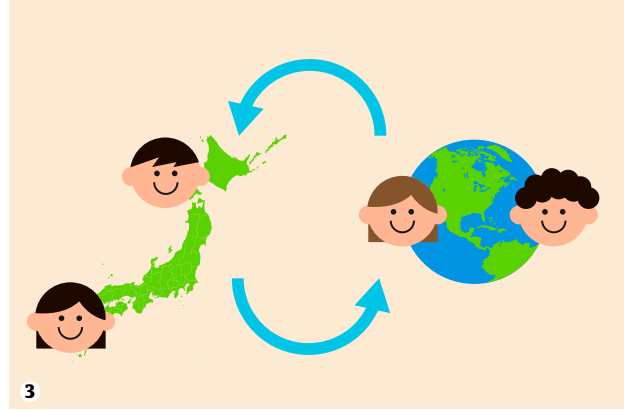




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- 1 Three generations posing for a family picture in Hawaii
- 2 Japanese emigrants departing for distant shores
- 3 Fourth-generation Nikkei with a supporter and Japanese language skills may be able to apply for a longer-term work visa
- 4 Photo of Nikkei in Latin America

Photos courtesy of JICA Yokohama International Centre  
Japanese Overseas Migration Museum

An essential aspect of this new system is having an “immigration supporter” that works free of charge to assist fourth-generation Nikkei in their lives, activities and work after arrival in Japan. Relatives living in Japan, employers—whether individuals or nonprofit organizations—and others can become supporters. The Ministry of Justice is also considering a backup system that would solicit supporters for those without any relatives or acquaintances in Japan.

According to Eiji Takasuga, the Ministry of Justice Immigration Office Entry and Status Division’s chief general examiner, the existence of supporters is vital to implementing this system.

“We referred to the working holiday program for this one and placed no restrictions on activities or work during their stay,” he says. “However, we heard that some third-generation Nikkei living in Japan do not understand Japanese and suffer because they do not fit into the community they are living in. By establishing the need for a certain level of Japanese ability and a supporter, we believe their lives can go smoothly in Japan.”

To ensure that unscrupulous employers do not take advantage of the system, he adds, care must be paid to who is selected as the supporter. “We’ve also created a framework to provide help to the supporter to ease their burden as much as possible.”

Yoshihiro Umehara, deputy director of the Entry and Status Division, has great hopes for these fourth-generation Nikkei. “We want them to experience Japanese culture and deepen their understanding of and interest in Japan,” he says. “We hope that when they return to their home countries, they will talk about Japan’s attractive aspects and help build a bridge between our country and theirs.”

Having young people with Japanese roots come to Japan and experience Japanese culture and society is of huge significance for Japan and Nikkei relations alike. The country hopes that many fourth-generation Nikkei come to live in Japan. **7**

More details are available here on the Ministry of Justice’s website:  
[http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri07\\_00166.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri07_00166.html)

# RIDEABLE ANDROIDS: CHANGING THE DEFINITION OF VEHICLES

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**BIFUE USHIJIMA**

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*A new type of robot called CanguRo is designed to serve as both a vehicle and a companion. Inside its simple frame, an AI and the world's latest and greatest technology combine to assist and make emotional connections with people.*



**TAKAYUKI  
FURUTA**  
General manager  
of fuRo

**D**EVELOPMENTS in driving technology such as autonomous operation promise to eliminate the need for human drivers to control vehicles, which are simply becoming tools to bring people from point A to point B. But Takayuki Furuta, general manager of fuRo—the Future Robotics Technology Center, part of the world-renowned robotics program at the Chiba Institute of Technology—wanted to create an innovative vehicle that would radically alter the concept of vehicles. That is why he created CanguRo.

CanguRo is what is known as a RidRoid—a term that combines the words “ride” and “(and)roid.” CanguRo has handles like the ears of an animal. In its “Roid” mode, CanguRo moves to match your walking pace, and even turns into a cart for shopping and assists your daily routines. When you put the robot into Ride mode, its front wheel

extends and the saddle rises so you can mount and ride it. The experience is less like driving and more like the robot and rider moving as one.

“The relationship we were trying to imagine was the ancient bond between humans and horses,” Furuta explains. “While horses can be ridden, they also form an emotional connection with and enjoy the trust of people. We’ve tried to develop a new type of connection between people and vehicles through CanguRo.”

Although CanguRo’s body looks simple, it incorporates many of the latest exclusive technologies fuRo has devised. One key technology is the in-wheel driving unit. While it looks like a normal wheel on the outside, the front wheel has a unique thin motor, gear and auto-driving system developed specifically for the robot.

In Ride mode, CanguRo becomes an extension of your body. Along with a bilateral control system





installed on the steering handle, it uses an active lean system that detects your body weight and physical force, allowing it to move naturally in the direction you prefer, like skiing. The areas that you touch—such as the seat and handles—send out heartbeat-like pulses that allow the rider to remain aware of how fast he or she is traveling.

CanguRo can be summoned from a distance, a feat made possible by real-time automated mapping and CanguRo’s ability to determine its location. fuRo has been developing SLAM (simultaneous localization and mapping) technology for many years that allows simultaneous mapping. While SLAM is being developed in various areas of the technology sector, the processing power of fuRo’s SLAM technology is one of the best in the world. CanguRo is therefore able to safely move around while avoiding obstacles in spaces full of people and their unpredictable movements.

One of the robot’s features is an AI that makes the key technology behind the connectivity between people and CanguRo possible. “If it isn’t able to acknowledge its surroundings, CanguRo will not be able to serve as the user’s companion,” Furuta says. “That is where the AI comes in.” The AI will learn from the situations and scenes it encounters. For instance, if there is someone holding heavy objects, it will carry them. If someone collapses, it will call for assistance.

“Creating an innovative robot-vehicle and making it part of society is my job,” Furuta says, looking into a companionable future. “I’m trying to allow more people to use and experience CanguRo by offering the technology to companies and eventually putting it out onto the market. I’d like to create a positive environment through CanguRo by helping the elderly and communities.” 

Mark Neukomm, general manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto



# WHAT IT TAKES TO LEAD JAPAN'S BEST HOTEL

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**TAMAKI KAWASAKI**

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*The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto has garnered many awards and has a glowing reputation among travelers both domestic and foreign as one of the best hotels in Japan. Mark Neukomm, the hotel's general manager, reveals what he has learned about Japan over his more than two decades in the country.*

**M**ARK Neukomm was born in Switzerland—a country famed for its apprentice system and the training of craftsmen—and began his professional life as a chef four decades ago at the age of fifteen. After completing a three-year apprenticeship, he moved on to a well-known hotelier school in Lausanne. There he studied service, management and foreign languages and earned his diploma. He went off to a hotel industry internship in Tokyo,

thinking it would be a good challenge for a European like himself, and has ended up spending a total of twenty-two years in Japan.

Neukomm's first Asia posting after joining The Ritz-Carlton was Shanghai in 2000. Since then he and his family have lived in Osaka, Bahrain and Moscow, and he has now been general manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto for the past three years.

According to Neukomm, managing a hotel in settings featuring Asian and other non-Western





The lobby lounge is Neukomm's favorite spot in the hotel

He sometimes joins guests on the hotel's popular running courses



Neukomm speaking about his connection to Japan



culture and history—with his own original touches added—is the most fun he’s ever had. In Kyoto, the hotel’s calming interior design—done in the style of a traditional row house—is popular with guests, as is the original running course among local shrines and temples, where Neukomm sometimes joins the other runners.

“The Ritz-Carlton is a luxury urban resort, so staying at the hotel is a creative experience for guests, who can enjoy elements of the local culture as they prefer,” says Neukomm, ever the professional. “Involving the staff in creating inspiring experiences for our guests to enjoy is our mission. Seeing them create unforgettable memories is the greatest pleasure of hotel service.”

When asked about his long tenure in Japan, he laughs, saying he never expected to stay this long. He believes that the Japanese countryside and cities each offer their own cultures and characteristics, and finds the depth of Japanese cuisine, the beauty of nature—exemplified by cherry blossoms and autumn leaves—and the country’s long history and refined culture endlessly fascinating. Under the influence of those charms, Neukomm has advanced his career as an hotelier who knows Asia.

Japan’s heart resides in its culture of manners, cleanliness and discipline. Neukomm sees the natural hospitality of the Japanese in how Gion Festival attendees clean up their own litter and preserve the beauty of the city even amid the festival’s hustle and bustle. That is also a strength when running a hotel in Japan. The general manager sometimes struggles to balance the needs of both international and Japanese guests, but in Japan Neukomm has found his employees’ talent and hospitality suggestions are always a great help.

Neukomm loves his present home of Kyoto, and experiences it with his feet while he enjoys both the public and private delights of running. He has developed some popular running courses himself, and runs with the guests to guide them.

As an hotelier, he continues to pursue various approaches to please his guests. Neukomm’s goal is “to live a satisfying life,” as well as to maintain a strong will, achieve success for himself and his family, and support society as a whole. His philosophy of working patiently, day by day, to improve and delight is common to both Japanese and Swiss craftsmen, and may well be why Neukomm has found such success in Japan. **W**

# The Japanese Seasoning on Everyone's Table

HELEN LANGFORD-MATSUI



*The complex bouquet of simmering soy sauce is an aroma intimately familiar to Japanese, and one increasingly recognizable to those beyond Japan's borders as well. Known as shoyu in Japan, soy sauce is ubiquitous in Japanese cuisine, whether it's being drizzled on roasting corn or adding flavorful depths to vegetable, fish and meat dishes.*

**N**OT surprisingly for a condiment so integral to the diet of 127 million people, Japan has a lot of soy sauce manufacturers—over 1200, in fact.

Among them, Kikkoman Corporation boasts the largest market share. Even beyond the island nation's shores, Kikkoman's iconic red-capped *shoyu* dispenser is recognizable the world over.

Although incorporated in 1917 under the name Noda Shoyu Co. Ltd., Kikkoman has a history that stretches back centuries. "Kikkoman began with the merger of eight soy sauce breweries in the cities of Noda and Nagareyama in Chiba Prefecture," explains Hiroshi Ito of Kikkoman's Corporate Communications department.

Kikkoman still follows the traditional *honjozo* way of brewing soy sauce, in which microorganisms turn steamed soybeans, roasted wheat, salt and

water into *shoyu* over the course of several months. "All our standard soy sauce is brewed in this way, resulting in the same quality," Ito says. Each batch is checked for quality, including color, flavor and aroma.

"Because *shoyu* is made with microorganisms, it has more than three hundred aromatic components," Ito explains. "It's a very complex aroma. That's why it goes with virtually anything."

The jump from Japan to world markets took place in the post-WWII years. "After the war, quite a few Americans were in Japan, such as journalists and businessmen," he notes, "and people saw them consuming *shoyu*." It was a eureka moment: maybe there was a market for soy sauce beyond Japan. The timing was good, with the Japanese economy starting to take off and businesses expanding. The growth of the *shoyu* business, however, was tied





- 1 An in-store demonstration at an American supermarket
- 2 Soy sauce developed for the non-Japanese market, with Kikkoman's trademark "all-purpose seasoning" label
- 3 Excited customers enjoying a tasting event at a Chinese supermarket
- 4 Kikkoman offers lectures on Japanese cuisine at cooking schools in China
- 5 Making soy sauce at one of their factories in the United States

Photos courtesy of Kikkoman Corporation



to the Japanese population. "Even if you get an increase in salary, you don't double the amount you use when eating," Ito says. To grow, the company chose two paths: internationalization and diversification.

To begin with, Kikkoman developed recipes to encourage the coupling of *shoyu* and American cuisine in its first target market and then held in-store demonstrations. "Japanese food is quite popular abroad now, but at first we didn't intend to sell *shoyu* and Japanese food as a set," Ito states. "We intended it to be used with American home cooking."

Kikkoman's reasoning was sound: approximately 60 percent of American kitchens now stock soy sauce.

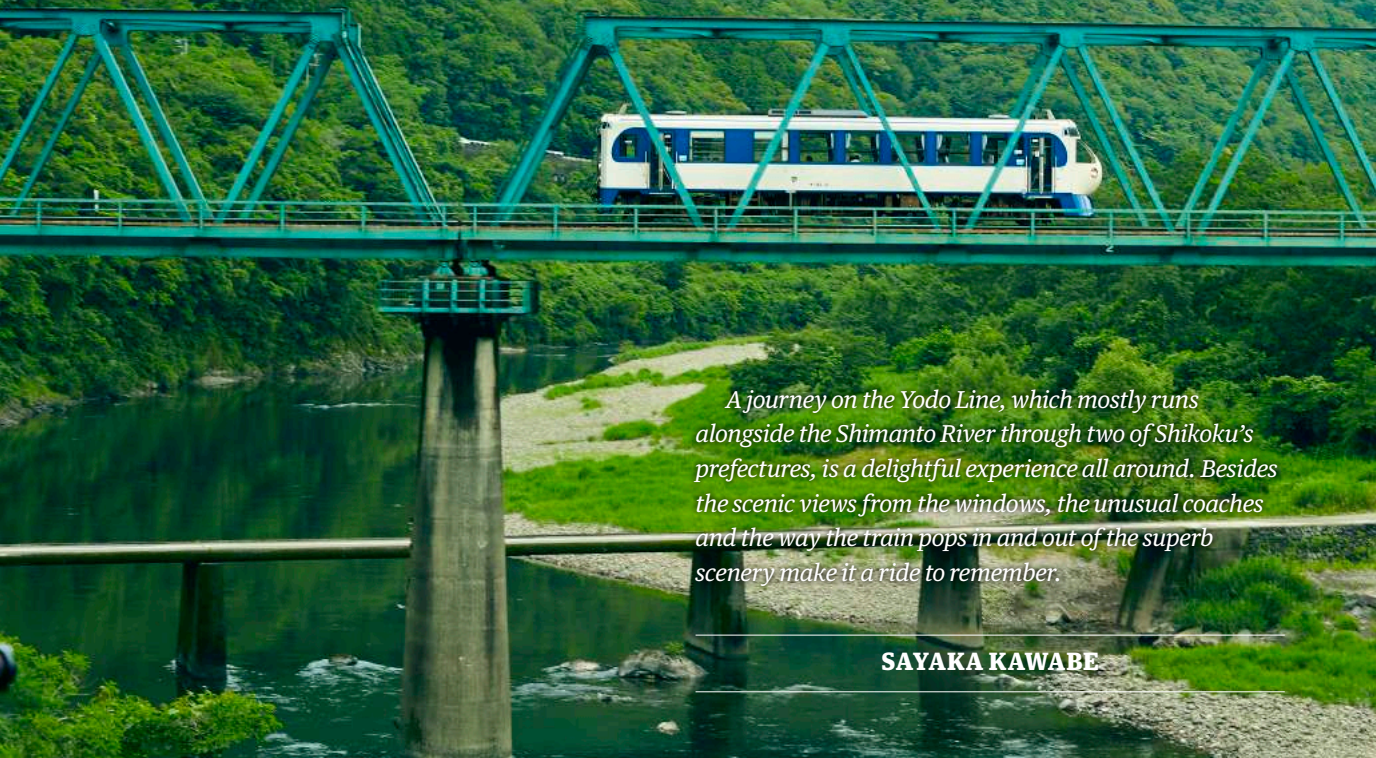
In 1957 Kikkoman opened a sales office in San Francisco, and in 1973 the company completed

its first overseas production plant in Wisconsin. Kikkoman also expanded to Europe in the 1970s, and Asia in the 1980s. Today, seven plants brew their famous soy sauce outside of Japan. Just like the first plant in Wisconsin, they depend on local labor, from management to the production floor. This helps cut costs and allows for a more "community-based" style of soy sauce production.

"The goal of making our *shoyu* a global seasoning hasn't changed," Ito says. "We want it to become a commonly used seasoning available in every house and every restaurant."

With forward-reaching, flexible thinking of the sort that saw it achieve success abroad in the first place, Kikkoman's vision of the future—in which the aroma of simmering soy sauce fills homes worldwide—is as bright as the flavor of their *honjozo shoyu*. **W**

# Riding the Rails Along a Clear-Running River



*A journey on the Yodo Line, which mostly runs alongside the Shimanto River through two of Shikoku's prefectures, is a delightful experience all around. Besides the scenic views from the windows, the unusual coaches and the way the train pops in and out of the superb scenery make it a ride to remember.*

**SAYAKA KAWABE**

**O** PENED in 1914, the Yodo Line connects the town of Shimanto in Kochi Prefecture and Uwajima City in Ehime Prefecture, and travels the 76.3-kilometer distance in about two hours and fifteen minutes. The line has a trio of unique trains: the local Railway Hobby train, modeled after first-generation bullet trains, the Kaiyodo<sup>1</sup> Hobby Train—which showcases displays of figurines<sup>2</sup> in the coaches—and the “Shiman-Torocco,” a trolley made from remodeled freight cars that started running in 1984. The latter was the first of its kind in Japan.

There are two ways to enjoy the Yodo Line. If you are heading there from Kochi Prefecture, take the JR Dosan Line express train from Kochi Station—which takes one hour—get off at Kubokawa Station and change platforms for the Yodo Line. If you are coming from Ehime Prefecture, take the JR Yosan Line limited express from Matsuyama Station—

which takes about one hour and twenty minutes—and then change at Uwajima to the local train bound for Kubokawa. You can start your Yodo Line journey from the next station, Kita-Uwajima.

The Yodo Line shadows the Shimanto River for almost its entire run through Kochi Prefecture. The train offers some of the best views of what is often called “the last clear stream in Japan.” The stretch between Tosa-Taisho and Ekawasaki stations is especially scenic, as the train appears to cut through the meandering river, and you can enjoy ever-changing views of the waters from both the right and left sides whenever you exit a tunnel. The landscapes from the train windows are so varied and dramatic that you hardly dare blink.

To feel even closer to the magnificent scenery and feel the wind in your hair, ride the Shiman Torocco trolley, which only runs on spring and autumn weekends and holidays, Golden Week<sup>3</sup>, and during



Sweeping views of the Shimanto River from a bridge



The popular Shiman Torocco trolley



Kaiyodo Hobby Train (left) and Railway Hobby Train (right)



Tosa-Taisho Station's building is delightfully retro

summer holidays. Since this little train can only hold forty people, it is best to book your spot in advance.

Many distinctive railway stations dot the route. In Kochi Prefecture, Tosa-Taisho Station's building, for example, resemble a wooden mountain lodge. Built in 1974, its retro appearance matches the peaceful mountain landscape around it perfectly.

At Ekawasaki Station in Kochi, local trains stop for five to twenty minutes to make time adjustments. During that interlude, the drivers are busy answering questions from passengers and snapping souvenir photos. Their warm customer service is considered another of the line's attractions.

If you're lucky, by the way, you might see two of the Yodo Line's three famous trains stopped at this station at the same time. About a ten-minute walk from Ekawasaki, you'll find "Yotte Nishi-Tosa," a

roadside station where you can buy local agricultural products. At the station there are bicycles for rent, so you can take a relaxing bike ride to enjoy nature around the Shimanto River.

In front of Matsumaru Station in Ehime Prefecture there is a footbath, which is free of charge and perfect for banishing any travel fatigue. For a small fee you can also enjoy the "Mori no Kuni Poppo Onsen" hot spring on the second floor of the station building.

A journey on the Yodo Line, chasing and crossing the clear stream of the Shimanto River and rolling through the pristine wilderness of Mother Nature, gets full marks both on and off board. **7**

- 1 [Kaiyodo is a figurine and garage kit manufacturer renowned worldwide for its advanced modeling technology.](#)
- 2 [Figurines: Three-dimensional models of characters from cartoons, movies, animations and games.](#)
- 3 [Golden Week: a period of national holidays which stretches from late April to early May](#)





# KISHIWADA DANJIRI FESTIVAL

The Kishiwada Danjiri Festival is a thrilling event held every September that boasts over three hundred years of tradition. The festival floats, called *danjiri*, are sturdy creations weighing over four tons, made entirely of zelkova wood and covered in intricate carvings. The sight of over five hundred men pulling these floats along is riveting.

The festival's highlight comes when the *danjiri* are hurtling through the curves at breakneck speed, cornering almost at right angles in what is known as *yarimawashi*. Paid seating is available along the route to ensure that you experience all the passion and excitement of this high-adrenaline festival.

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