

SynthesAizu

June 2025
Volume 5 Issue 6

Association News

Office Closed The AizuWakamatsu International Association Office will be closed from 11:00am on June 7th (Sat) to prepare for the General Members' meeting. In an emergency, please call (070)-6492-3262 (June 7th only)

Chit-Chat with Heng Cambodia



Come learn about Cambodia! SOEUNG Chanchhayheng, also known as Heng, is in Japan as part of a JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) International Student program. He'll introduce his country, his life in AizuWakamatsu, and also talk about his experience as a JICA International Student. The presentation will be done in English (with Japanese interpretation) so come check it out!



Heng (front, in hat)

Date: June 14th (Sat) 13:30~15:00
Place: AWIA Office (Sakaemachi 2-14)
Presentation by:
SOEUNG Chanchhayheng (Heng)
Cost: FREE
Limit: 15 people
Sign-up: By June 13th (Fri)
Contact: mail@awia.jp

MEET English Convo. Club

Come and speak English with people from all walks of life and maybe make some new friends! Everyone is welcome, no matter your English level. Join us for games and conversation!

When	Saturday, <u>June 21st</u> 10:00~11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by <u>Friday, June 20th</u>



Special Lecture!

On June 7th, after our General Assembly, there will be a Special Lecture by the New Office Manager, NIWA Emi! We know everyone must be curious about her, so come hear about her background and experience.

NIWA-san studied abroad in Maine, USA during her university years. After that, she joined JICA, and spent years in various Francophone African countries. Senegal is like her second home. Join us to learn more!



PARKING: Parking will be limited because the parking lot at the Culture Centre is very small, and there is a sports tournament at the Gym. Use the PAID PARKING LOT near Tsuruga-jo Castle and the Fukushima Pref. Museum.

Park at: Tsurugajo Kouen Higashiguchi Kanko Parking Lot

Bring your parking ticket to the Cultural Centre to get 2 hours free parking.

Contact AWIA to sign up! mail@awia.jp

(Check out May's Newsletter for details on the General Meeting and After-Party (Sign-up deadline was May 30th))

Place: Aizu Culture Centre (Jotomachi 14-52)

Special Lecture: 16:00-17:00

(Title: America, Africa, and now Aizu)

Speaker: NIWA Emi

(non-members welcome! Sign-up deadline: June 6th)

****No Interpretation for Special Speaker****

June 7th

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!

The theme will be: 'tanabata!'

Write a wish or 'tanzaku' in Chinese!!

Date: July 5th (Sat) 10:00-11:30

Place: AWIA Office (Sakae-machi 2-14)

Limit: 15 people

Sign-up by July 4th - mail@awia.jp



会津若松市国際交流協会

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: mail@awia.jp

This Month in Aizu

Mishima Town Artisan Craft Festival

CIR Erika's
top pick!

6/7 (Sat) + 6/8 (Sun)
9:00 - 16:00 (Sunday until 15:00)

Started in 1985, the Mishima Town Artisan Craft Festival brings in over 150 artists from all over the country to show off and sell their handmade goods. You will find a wonderful assortment of things from trinkets to jewelry, pottery, bags, and more! All made from all kinds of materials. Buy wares! Try hands-on workshops! Eat Delicious Food!



Details:

Place: In front of the Mishima Town Folk Craft Museum, Narabayashi Area (Mishima-machi, Nairi Suwanoue-395)
Access: Train, public parking available (shuttle busses to the venues from station and parking lots)

More Info: <https://www.okuaizu-amikumi.jp/info/kojinmatsuri2025/>

Aizu Firefly Festival

Summer is starting and this local festival is happening again! Enjoy unique stage events, and once the sun sets, you can see some of the cute fireflies come out to visit.



Date: June 21st (Sat)

Place: KitaAizu Hotaru no Mori Park (KitaAizu-machi, shimoarai, miyanohigashi)

Stage Events: 10:00-21:00

(Yosakoi, local performers, and more!)

Other: Enjoy local foods, and festival vibes~

Access: Shuttle Bus from the Aizuwakamatsu City KitaAizu Branch Office Parking Lot (KitaAizu-machi, nakaarai, suwamae-11)

More info: <https://www.city.aizuwakamatsu.fukushima.jp/docs/2019052800016/>



Isasumi Jinja: Tanabata Windchimes

6/1 (Sun) - 8/24 (Sun)

Check out a huge windchime display at the Isasumi Jinja shrine. This celebration is based around celebrating Tanabata in August, and the main event is on the original date from the old calendar. See more than 3000 windchimes! Buy some made by local craftsmen! Light-up of the chimes starts on July 15th (Tue).

Place: Isasumi Jinja Shrine (Ko 4377 Miyabayashi, Aizumisato, Onuma District)

More info: <https://misatono.jp/blog/event/74549>



Isasumi Jinja: Iris Festival

6/14 (Sat) - 6/30 (Mon)

With over 200 varieties of irises, the Isasumi Jinja gardens are a beautiful sight in June. Every year, around 300,000 people come to see the pretty purple flowers.

Enjoy events throughout the festival, including an appearance by famous comedian KOJIMA Yoshio on June 22nd (Sun) from 13:00!!

More Info: https://misatono.jp/ayame_2025
<https://misatono.jp/blog/event/74507>



Tsuruga-jo Castle Moat Boats

Saturdays + Sundays

Enjoy a historical boat ride in Tsuruga-jo Castle's moat! Riding the same boats used in the Misty Crossing in Mishima Town in Oku-Aizu, hear all about Aizu history and Tsuruga-jo from the boatman. Great for History lovers! (May be cancelled in bad weather)



In Japanese only

Dates: June 1st (Sun), 7th(Sat), 8th (Sun), 14th(Sat), 15th(Sun), 21st(Sat), 22nd(Sun)

Cost: Adults ¥2000, Children ¥1000

Place/Sign-up: Tsuruga-jo Castle West Parking Lot

Sign-up: Ride Times: ①10:00-10:30, ②11:15-11:45, ③13:15-13:45, ④14:30-15:00, ⑤15:45-16:15

Contact: Tourism Bureau (0242-27-4005)

More Details: <https://www.aizukanko.com/event/953>

Mt. Bandai-san OPEN

6/15 (Sun)

After a long, snow-filled winter, Mt. Bandai-san will finally open for hiking! Usually open from the end of May, this year's opening was delayed due to leftover snow. If you go on opening day, and you can receive a commemorative gift, like a pendant or postcard!



Place: Trailheads of hiking routes up Mt. Bandai-san (Inawashiro, Happoudai, Urabandai)

Commemorative Gifts: (first come, first served)

Penant: from 7:30am at trailheads (2000 avail.)

Postcard: from 10:00 at the Kobushimizu-goya resthouse - where 5 of 6 trails meet (1000 avail.)

More Info:

<https://www.tif.ne.jp/ip/entry/article.html?event=7033>

Member Spotlight

Lauren LAPORTE



Lauren LAPORTE is a Canadian who has lived in Fukushima for more than 9 years. She became a member of the International Association in October 2022, but she fell in love with Aizu long before that. She is very involved in AWIA events, and is even the main volunteer for the renewed English Conversation Circle, MEET. Lauren has told us her story of falling in love with Aizu, and how she got involved at AWIA.



All Roads Lead Back to Aizu



Hello, everyone! My name is Lauren and I have been a member of AWIA since 2022. But that's not all! Over the past few years, I have become a lot more involved in this wonderful community and it all started with an English village on top of a mountain, right here in Fukushima.

For those who don't know, I did a working holiday for one year at British Hills, in Tenei-mura Fukushima. Only 20 years old at the time, this was my first time living abroad. It was while working there that I met a friend from AizuWakamatsu and they would take me here on our days off. This friend



Lauren's pic of Tsurugajo Castle

proudly showed off their favourite places around town; from restaurants, to their old home, even to their old school! They always talked about

AizuWakamatsu with such warmth and pride that I found

myself thinking what a wonderful place it was and how I hoped I could live there in the future. It was from here that my love affair with Aizu would begin.

When my working holiday finished, I was devastated. I had to leave the place that felt like my home away from home! I decided to stay abroad, choosing to move to Ireland for another working holiday, but I knew I wanted to move back to Japan. After living in Ireland for 2 years, I was able to finally come back to Japan and begin my life anew. I luckily ended up back in Fukushima, but this time, on the OTHER side of Lake Inawashiro!

I worked hard, and after a few more years, I was able to purchase a car and was finally able to travel around freely. Then, the pandemic hit. The isolation was extremely difficult for me, and days felt longer and darker. Until a bright light in the form of a mountain "hike" event came across my social media. It was the AWIA 'Hike with Us at Hakuoizan' event in September, 2021. Little did I know, that this event would change my life.



Sept 2021. Hiking!
Lauren's first AWIA event!

From this AWIA event, I met people who helped pull me out of the darkness and into the warmth of the people of Aizu. I began joining other events hosted by the International Association, such as sports events (dodgebee, volleyball, etc) and FIND, English Club. Despite not living in Aizu at the time, my circle began to grow and with that, so did my opportunities to be involved in this amazing community.



July 2024, fun at AtsuHana

Becoming more involved at AWIA, I was able to volunteer more, helping with the Children's Storybook Room, reading books and having fun in English with children, and more! I also got to participate in the International Festival in 2022 and 2024, doing hand painting and having a wonderful time meeting new people.

In October 2023, I was presented with the opportunity I had been waiting for, for so long: A job in Aizu! A friend reached out saying that her company was looking for new teachers and she asked if I would be interested in coming over to work for them. I could not agree fast enough. So, I moved to Kitakata in April 2024, feeling excited to be living in a place I had loved for so long. I'm so happy for the opportunity to live in Aizu, and become more and more involved with the community here.

From April 2025, I took over as the volunteer for the English Circle event and we re-branded as MEET: My English Exchange Time. MEET is a place to casually use the English you know and meet and communicate with new people. I am still new in this position, but I am excited about what we can create together!

I hope to be a part of this community for as long as I am able! I look forward to our time together!

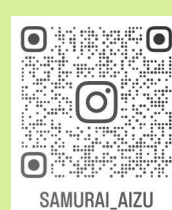


The first MEET,
English Convo. Circle



@samurai_aizu: Showing off Aizu to the World!

In 2023, my passion for this region inspired me to join the Samurai_Aizu Instagram team as an ambassador. Right now, I am one of two main contributors, and I truly believe that Aizu is a hidden gem in Japan that I want to share with the world. If you have instagram, why not drop us a follow? Maybe we will showcase something new, even for you!



Events in June

1	SU	Closed
2	MO	Closed
3	TU	
4	WE	
5	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
6	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
7	SA	14:30 General Members' Meeting (office closed from 11:00)
8	SU	Closed
9	MO	Closed
10	TU	
11	WE	
12	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
13	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
14	SA	13:30 Chit-Chat with Heng: Cambodia
15	SU	Closed
16	MO	Closed
17	TU	
18	WE	
19	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
20	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
21	SA	10:00 MEET English Convo. Circle 10:00 Satellite JICA Desk 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
22	SU	Closed
23	MO	Closed
24	TU	
25	WE	
26	TH	
27	FR	
28	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
29	SU	Closed
30	MO	Closed

Other Information

English Tour Guides! Looking someone to show you around Aizu in English? Check out the official English speaking Tour Guides of AizuWakamatsu! They are officially certified, having undergone training and participated in study tours organized by the Tourism Division and AWIA. Finally there is a website so anyone can hire them directly.

Check it out! Share it with your friends!

Average rate: 3500yen/hour

<https://gokujo-aizu.com/certified-tourguide/>



Muticultural Kids Camp: Fukushima 2025

Camp For Kids with Diverse Backgrounds

A multicultural summer camp experience with other people with diverse backgrounds! Stay overnight, study, and play! Aimed at kids who have roots outside of Japan to meet others with different backgrounds, living all over Fukushima Prefecture. Parents/Guardians are welcome to join in, and can take the opportunity to talk about raising children in Japan.



Date: July 5th (Sat) 11:45 - July 6th (Sun) 14:00 (2 days, 1 night)

Place: National Bandai Youth Friendship Centre (Kokuritsu Bandai Seishonen Kouryuu no ie) (7136-1 Gorinpara, Inawashiro, Yama District)

Participants: up to 30 people (kids aged 6-18)

- Children born and/or raised outside of Japan
- Children of Non-Japanese Nationals etc.
- Parents/Guardians of the above children



Looking for people who really want to participate in this program!!

(Children can participate without Parents/Guardians, and Parents/Guardians can participate individually as well. For children under 12 to participate without a guardian, please consult the organizer before sign-up.)

Cost: ¥3000 per person

Sign-Up: Deadline **June 5th (Thu)**, sign by TEL or e-mail

Contact: SASAKI Chikako

TEL: 090-7523-8132 horainihongo1998@gmail.com

Contact AWIA for a sign-up form (mail@awia.jp)

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: June 28th, 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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