Have you ever seen the steep rows of tea plantations on the side of the mountains of Tosa? The clumps of deep green leaves packed close together like caterpillars hugging the mountain? A lot of tea is produced in Kochi, and one of the main areas where tea plantations can be readily seen is Niyodogawa Town, some hour and a half up the mountain from Kochi City. Tosa Tea, or Tosa-cha, is one of the main produce of the town, and for this edition of the Tosa Wave, Steven Yuen and Lisa Yasutake went to investigate and report on the source of Tosa-cha in Niyodogawa and made a visit to a café in Kochi City that helps to promote the local tea.

Today, there are many varieties of green tea that come from all over the world. Different places produce different teas that can be distinguished by their growing conditions, harvesting time and processing techniques. In Kochi, all of the green tea that are grown and produced are called “Tosa-cha”. Tosa-cha (the “Yabukita” variety) are weak to disease but offer a high harvest. Approximately 60% of the production of green tea occurs in the Niyodogawa valley.

Different types of tea and flavours are achieved by different production processes. The types of tea produced in Kochi Prefecture are:

- Sencha - tea made from new leaves of the plant and steamed
- Bancha - made from new leaves and stalks that are picked late and have hardened
- Hōjicha - tea that have been roasted on high heat to produce the charred fragrance
- Goishicha - mainly produced in Ōtoyo Town, a medicinal-tasting tea that has been fully fermented and is good for loss of appetite in summer (natsubate)
- Tamaryokucha - mainly produced in Reiho, tea that has been roasted in a pot
- Kōcha - mainly produced in the Tōwa District, a black tea that has been fermented

In April, we went to visit the Ikegawa Tea Cooperative in Niyodogawa Town to talk to them about the tea industry in Kochi. Tosa-cha are cultivated on steep mountain sides in temperatures that differ greatly between day and night. The change in temperature causes a blanket of fog that covers the tea plantations to minimize direct sunlight which allows the plants to grow slowly and acquire a stronger flavour. The sloping landscape allows good water flow that assists in the growth of tea. The tea plants are watered by sprinklers not only on very hot days but it is also used in the cold winter months to get rid of frost that damage the leaves. In addition, electric fans on high poles of over 6m over the tea plants are also used to protect from the frost by passing warmer air from above ground to the plantations.

During harvest, only the top 1-2 inches of the tea plant are plucked. Currently a tea reaper is the most efficient way to harvest the leaves. A team of three people work together, two people hold each side of the reaper to crop, and the other person stays...
 Kumamoto Prefecture is known for its tea production, particularly its unique Tosa Wave variety. The tea is grown in the hilly terrain of the Tosa district, which provides ideal conditions for the tea leaves to develop their distinctive flavor.

The tea is harvested during the spring season, typically between late May and early June. It is harvested by hand, with each leaf being picked individually to ensure the highest quality. The freshly picked leaves are then subjected to a process of drying and fermentation, which is critical in determining the tea's final flavor and aroma.

After harvesting, the tea leaves are processed in a traditional method known as "umake," which involves steaming and drying the leaves to stop fermentation and preserve their unique characteristics. Finally, the processed tea leaves are packaged and sent to tea shops and retailers for consumption.

This tea is highly valued for its sweet and mellow taste, and is often served as a side dish to accompany meals. It is also popular for its health benefits, including its antioxidant properties.

Sprinklers are used to prevent frost build-up in winter, and the lines over the plantations are used to run a black tarp along that protects the new leaves before a harvest.
behind the reaper and catches the cropped tea leaves into bags.

In consideration for environmental and health concerns, slow-release fertilizers are used.

Tea processing takes about 4 hours. First, after tea leaves are harvested they are steamed and then cooled. Steaming tea retains its color and makes the tea richer and sweeter. The moisture is allowed to evaporate gradually, and the leaves are then rolled, shaped, and dried. At the end of this process “aracha” is produced, which is a raw product mostly exported to Shizuoka for further processing and blending and eventually sold as Shizuoka tea. 80% of the tea produced here at the Ikekawa Cooperative is sent to Shizuoka, Japan’s biggest producer of tea, while 20% remain for other purposes like local consumption as Tosa-cha. To increase consumption, apart from the usual packages of tea for brewing, Tosa-cha is also made into teabags, or powdered to be used in confectionery.

At Ikekawa, the first harvest, or “ichiban-cha” is taken from the end of April to the beginning of May. All of their Tosa-cha are made from ichiban-cha. Niban-cha, or second harvest, is often not used or are mixed with ichibancha and sold cheaply, as the taste greatly diminishes with a second harvest.

A really high quality tea that is only produced in small amounts each year is kabuse-cha. To produce this tea, a black tarp (kabuse) is drawn over the new leaves a week before the first harvest. This cover reduces the intake of sunlight and in turn the tannins that are produced in the tea. The tea produced from this (kabuse-cha) has a sweeter taste and aroma.

Tea in Kochi

What do you think of when you hear “Japanese tea”? Matcha, or powdered green tea, will probably come to mind first, though regular green tea is more commonly consumed in Japan. Yet, with the availability of a wide range of good bottled teas and tea bags, fewer and fewer people — especially those of the younger generation — are making green tea in kyusu, or Japanese teapots. In particular, Kochi’s green tea consumption is relatively low compared to other prefectures, and many Kochi natives are unaware of the award-winning teas being produced in their own prefecture.

To change this situation, the prefectural government has been making efforts to inform the public about Tosa-cha and promote it as one of Kochi’s fine local products. One project grabbing attention is the Tosa-Cha Café.

Kochi-Made

What better way to attract people than a chic café with a great atmosphere that serves healthy dishes and delectable desserts? If you take a stroll along the Obiyamachi shopping arcade in Kochi City, your eyes will undoubtedly be drawn to the café’s modern, yet somehow traditional looking exterior. Much of the café is built using beautiful Yanase cedar, another Kochi product worth boasting, and is decorated with paintings of Japanese goldfish by a local up-and-coming artist. There are table seats, zashiki (Japanese style tatami mat room), and outdoor seating available on the first floor. The second floor has the feel of an old Japanese home with old wooden beams and romba, or carved transoms.

One of the Tosa Tea Advisors of Tosa-Cha Café, Ms Kyoko Nakano explains that Tosa-cha’s strong flavour (flavour,
How to drink Tosa-cha

It takes more than simply pouring hot water on tea leaves to make delicious tea. Tea Advisors at Tosa-Cha Café teach customers how to brew Tosa tea for optimum scent and flavour. It is required to pass a certification course with the Nihoncha (Japanese tea) Instructor Association to gain the title of Tea Advisor. The Association also offers certification courses to become a tea instructor, a step above an advisor and something like the sommelier of tea. Unlike wine, however, Tosa-cha is not served with your meal. You will get simpler teas with your meal as the more sophisticated ones are to be savoured on its own or with dessert.

To my surprise, the café also serves black Tosa tea called “Kaooru-cha”. It is said to be similar in taste to Darjeeling, though there is a distinctive difference in that the tea leaves come from the same trees as green tea; the tea leaves are simply processed differently. According to Ms Nakano, most customers drink it straight to enjoy the flavour, but milk, lemon, and sugar are available upon request.

Finally, do not be fooled by their name. There is absolutely no coffee served in this “café”! This is to protect the delicate aroma of the teas from the overpowering aroma of coffee.

With the concept “New discoveries for visitors. Rediscovery for residents. Dedication to local ingredients and Tosa Tea”, the hope of the Tosa-Cha Cafe is for the people of Kochi, as well as people all over Japan, to realise all that Kochi has to offer. As Ms Nakano puts it, “It would be wonderful for people to enjoy Tosa-cha, and from there, learn more about the culture that surrounds it.” Wouldn’t you like to try a kyeau-poured cuppa?

Tosa-Cha Café Information
Place: Obiyamachi 2-1-31, Kochi City
Phone: 088-855-7753
Open: 11am - 10pm (Last order: 9:30pm)
Close: Wednesday (Thursday if Wednesday is a national holiday)
Seats available: 60

There is also a location for Tosa-cha Café in Obiyamachi, where you can enjoy the same delicious tea in a different setting. The café offers a variety of local ingredients and provides a unique experience for both visitors and residents. It is a perfect spot for anyone looking to delve deeper into the rich culture of Kochi.
Preparing for the Nankai Earthquake

Be aware of how safe the places you spend a lot of time in are, such as your home and your workplace.

If you live or stay long in areas predicted to be vulnerable to a tsunami, you should be fully aware of the predicted tsunami inundation depth and time until arrival. Moreover, be sure to check the predicted seismic intensity of the places. Accurate information about them is available from the Prefectural Office or the disaster prevention divisions of local governments. KIA’s English website below provides you with detailed explanations about seismic intensity.

→ http://www.kochi-kia.or.jp/earthquake/english/?ss=004

Be sure to check the nearest evacuation point and shelter and try to walk there on foot. It might also be useful to walk there when it’s dark at night rather than during daylight because the power may go out during a large earthquake. Ask your neighbors or local governments for the whereabouts of the evacuation points. If you want to know what living in a shelter is like, see the following KIA’s English webpage.

→ http://www.kochi-kia.or.jp/earthquake/english/?ss=002

Lifestyle Information

Lifestyle Information ① - Lifestyle Consultations for Foreigners Living in Kochi

KIA has set up regular lifestyle consultations in English and Chinese for foreigners living in Kochi.

Dates: Every Thursday 3~5pm until 2 February 2012 (except August 3, November 29, December 5 & 12 January)
Place: kenshishitsu (study room) in KIA

This is available free of charge and confidential. No reservations are needed.

Examples of common consultations are matters related to job finding, labor troubles such as dismissal, domestic problems like divorce, and welfare issues. Please pass this information on to any foreigners who may be concerned.

Expat column No.15—My introduction to Kochi

BY Mark Johnson, Hidaka village, ALT from USA

When I first got to Kochi in August of 2009 I was dazed in a state of constant wonderment. I had lived in Tokyo before, but this was something entirely different. The roads here were windy and narrow with no sidewalks, the mountains were visible over the building tops wherever you went, people spoke with a dialect I hadn’t studied. It was like coming to Japan for the first time all over again, except this time I liked it.

My first weekend here I was brought along to another ALT’s birthday party in the mountains of Ino town. I rode north along the Niyodogawa, marveling at how pristine the water was. When we arrived I met other ALTs, foreign exchange students, as well as some of their Japanese friends who had all gathered for the celebration. We drank, played music, cooked, ate, chatted, stargazed and fell asleep, half a dozen of us sprawled out on the tatami floor tired enough to sleep despite the heat.

When I woke up, I was guided down to the river for a swim while we waited for the others to wake up. On that 30-degree Kochi summer morning, dipping into the Niyodo river felt amazing. After that our watery adventure did not end as we made our way to the Yasui gorge. We hiked up a questionable dirt trail and found an emerald green pool fed by a strong but narrow waterfall. The birthday boy dove in! So the rest of us followed. Once the horseshies came a-biting we decided to leave for the next waterfall, a much wider, shallower pool where we picnicked, sunbathed, swam, showered in the high pressure splash of the falls, and then left to the coast, to Usa, for the fireworks show that evening.

My first festival in Kochi was a blast, the people I shared it with remain good friends even now, and the adventure leading up to it gave me the best first impression of a new place that I’ve ever had.

また、最寄りの避難場所と避難所を確認し、そこで歩いて行ってみてください。大地震が起こると停電になりま Pros.

4. 職場や学校、病院は、避難所の位置を確認してください。避難所がどこにあるかを知りたい人は、当協会英語版HPをご覧ください。

→ http://www.kochi-kia.or.jp/earthquake/english/?ss=002

生活情報 ① - 在住外国人のための定期生活相談会

KIAでは、在住外国人のために英語と中国語で定期相談会を開催することになりました。日時は、2012年2月2日までの毎月木曜日（1月12日、1月19日、1月26日）12時から14時までの1時間です。場所はKIA研修室です。利用は無料、予約不要。相談者は諸先生です。

相談内容は就職、解雇など労働トラブル、離婚など家庭内トラブル、生活保障制度等がございます。一日を含めて困っている外国人さんがいましたら当協会相談をお知らせください。

外国人コラム⑥ - 高知との出会い

マーク・ジョンソン、日高村、ALT、米国出身

2009年に私が高知に来えてからは、見知らぬ物語が全てが始まり、驚きの連鎖だった。以前、東京で住んでいた経験が有るが、それとは全く違っていた。高知県の道路は歩道がなく狭い、曲がった道が多く、県内どこへ行っても建物の上に山が見えて、人々は私が勉強したことのない方言で喋っていた。まるで、初めて日本に来た様な気がしたが、東京の時は遠い、今は好感を持って！

高知へ来えて初めての週末、いの町の山の中のあるALTの誕生会に連れて行ってもらった。仁淀川に沿って北の方向へ向かった時、川の端っこを過ぎた。着ていたから昼顔を掲げていたALTや留学生、そしてその日の人々の日本人と友達に会った。一緒に飲みながら、楽器を弾いたり、料理したり、食べたり、話ししたり、星を見たしたりして、その後寝た。真夏で、暑かったが疲れ切っていたのでみんなで畳の上で寝魚しました。

次の日の朝、川へ泳ぎに連れて行ってもらった、その人が起きるのを待っている間休んでいた。二十度もある高知の真夏日、に、仁淀川に入った時には最高気温が70℃、その後もアドベンチャーを止まることなく、安芸浜近くへ向かった。怪しい土のトレッキングを行って行くとそこには見えてはメラメラとした満月とその上に輝きが流れ込む満月を見つかった。誕生会の主役が満月に飛び込んだ！びっくりしたけど、私達も彼のように飛び込んだ。アサが喰い付いてきたり、他の満月へ移動することになったりでした。その満月はとても輝くに広く、満月が満月でした。

満月はそこで、ピクニックや日光浴、泳いで、満月の後ろに水を流しながら、その後去る一日を町へ花火大会を見に行った。私は初めての高知の祭りの経験がとても楽しかった、一緒にいった友達は今でもとても仲良くしている。私は今まで色々な新しい場所を訪れたことがあるが、高知県が一番印象のいい場所だった。
Recommendations for avoiding the heat of summer
Here are three summer retreats in Kochi to survive the hot summer.

Up above the sky – Highland Resort:
Tengu Kōgen①

Let’s get out of the scorching town and up to the highland resort in the sky! Tengu Kōgen is located to the east of the Shikoku Karst (altitude 1,400m), where it can be as much as 6 to 8 degrees centigrade cooler than it is in Kochi city. There you can see vast meadows and cattle in green pastures. You can enjoy the panoramic view of the Ishizuchi mountain range, and when the weather is fine, you can even see the Pacific Ocean.

Driving up there, it is as if you are soaring above the clouds - it’s fantastic! It is also nice to take a stroll along the walking trail comprised of wood chips from Japanese cypresses. This trail is called the “Therapy Road”, and strolling along it you can take in views of the alpine plants and fresh aromas, as you forget about the stresses in your daily lives.

At night, you’ll see a wonderful starry sky and you may even spot a falling star or two.

It takes just 2 hours to drive from Kochi city. Get the coolest summer up at Tengu Kōgen!

Ryūga Caves②

Ryūga-dō (Ryūga Caves) is a natural work of art that has been created over 175 million years. When you visit the limestone cave, it takes you to an unknown world. You might feel as if another space has spread over the cave. When entering the place and touching its cool surface, one can’t help but be struck with awe and respect for nature. Others may think that it’s a good place for self-contemplation. There are narrow paths in Ryūga-dō. I get excited when I think that ancient inhabitants may have walked this very path.

More than fifteen years have passed since I last visited Ryūga-dō. I remember when my little daughter’s eyes sparkled with excitement and amazement. I wonder if Ryūga-dō has changed or not. However, it’s true that Ryūga-dō is one of the most memorable places for me. Why don’t you visit the pleasantly cool Ryūga-dō this summer?

Nakatsu Gorge③

It was a muggy day. Along with my family, we went to Yu-no-mori hot spring, about an hour’s ride from Ino Interchange. Its open-air bath made of maki timber from Niyodogawa was infused with the smell of wood.

Soon after we left Yu-no-mori, we found a sign on our right by chance. We decided to drop by. A narrow lane opened up along the ravine. If we had gone farther, we would’ve seen the statues of Ryūjin Shichi-Fukujin: the Dragon Kings and Seven Gods of Fortune. It would take about one hour to see all of them. However, unfortunately, we didn’t have enough time to see them, so we saw only three statues around the entrance.

They created a mysterious and religious atmosphere. Moreover, the strong current made pleasant splashing sounds. The water was emerald green and a cloud of spray was pure white. We soon forgot about the summer heat.

おススメのクールスポット
高知の暑い夏を乗り切るため、県内にある3つの避暑地を紹介します。

天空の避暑地 天狗高原へ行こう①

灼熱の街抜け出して高原リゾートへ！

天狗高原は四国カルストの東に位置し、標高は約1,400m。夏場は高知市内より6～8度も気温が低くとても涼しいところです。一面の草原には牛が放牧されていて、のんびり草食を楽しむ様子を間近で見ることができます。360度の大パノラマが広がり、風が強い日には雲が広がる太平洋を望むこともできます。

遠くはきれいな湖や山々、時には雲もきれいな湖を走っているのが見ものです。気分も変わり、まさに天空のドライビングウェーディング。

ハイキングコースも充実しています。中でもセラビューロードと呼ばれる遊歩道にはのんびりジョギングを楽しみながら森林浴へ、日常のストレスをすっかり解消されます。夜には満天の星空を楽しみつつも療癒もできるでしょう。

高知市から車で2時間、天空の避暑地、天狗高原に出かけてみませんか？

龍河洞 ②

龍河洞は約1億7500万年かけて造られた自然の芸術。その鍾乳洞は訪れることで、あるいは未知の世界を行きます。その洞窟の中には、もう一つの空間が広がっているように感じられるかもしれません。その場所には光を包み込み、ひょこりとした岩肌に触れると、自然に対する畏敬や尊敬心を打たれる人もいるでしょう。自分自身について考える絶好の機会だと思うようなでしょう。龍河洞には狭い道があります。私は古代の入道がこの道を歩いたかもしれないと思って、ゆっくりと。

私が最後に龍河洞を訪れて15年経ちます。私は、幼い娘がとても興味をもって、興奮しながら、とくとくと興奮させていたことを覚えています。龍河洞でちょっとしたかすかなかもしれませんが、ちょっと驚かれたのです。しかしながら、龍河洞が私たちにとって忘れられない場所であることは事実です。今年の夏は、心地よく涼しい龍河洞に行ってみませんか？

中津渓谷 ③

蒸し暑い日だった。私は家族と湧川の「ゆの森温泉」を行った。伊野インターチェンジから車で一度で着いた。伊野川の渓の木で

作られた露天風呂は、木の枠に満ちていた。

私たちはゆの森を出することで、偶然右に行った場所を見つける。私たちはそこで一日を過ごすことになった。狭い路が一本、渓谷に沿って続いていた。

私は、龍神七福神の像を見ながら渓谷に沿って歩くことができた。全ての像は見ぬか、約一時間かかった。しかし、不運なことに、私たちはそれを見ることができなかった。そこで、入

り口近くの像を眺めただけでした。

それらは神秘的で宗教的な雰囲気を醸し出していた。更に、急流

が心地よい水しぶきの音を創り出していた。水はエメラルドグリーン

で、水しぶきは綺麗な白だった。私たちは夏の暑さを忘れました。

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