



our mascot Akabeko

Fukushima Prefecture

MY HOME: NIHONMATSU, FUKUSHIMA

Hello! My name is Ellen. I am currently living and working in Japan as a teacher on the JET programme. I moved to Japan in August 2023, so I've been here for 5 months now. I grew up in Orkney, but have always had a passion and interest in Japan and Japanese culture, so it really is a dream to be living here. I am excited to share what my life is like in Japan and some of the amazing experiences I've had so far!



I danced in Naganuma festival 長沼まつり



Sukagawa fire festival



Aizuwakamatsu Castle

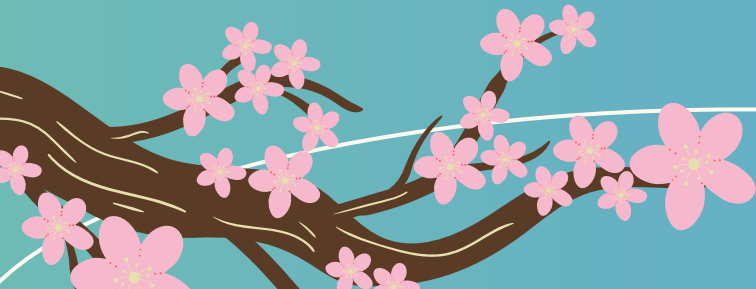
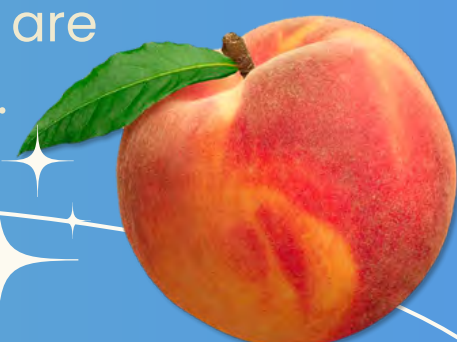
I live in Nihonmatsu, a small city in Fukushima Prefecture. Sadly there is prejudice around Fukushima due to the nuclear disaster. However, it is completely safe! This is a fantastic (and underrated) prefecture with exciting festivals, beautiful onsens, Temples, mountain hikes and waterfalls, Ski resorts, beaches, cities, famous Kitakata ramen and the best peaches in the country!



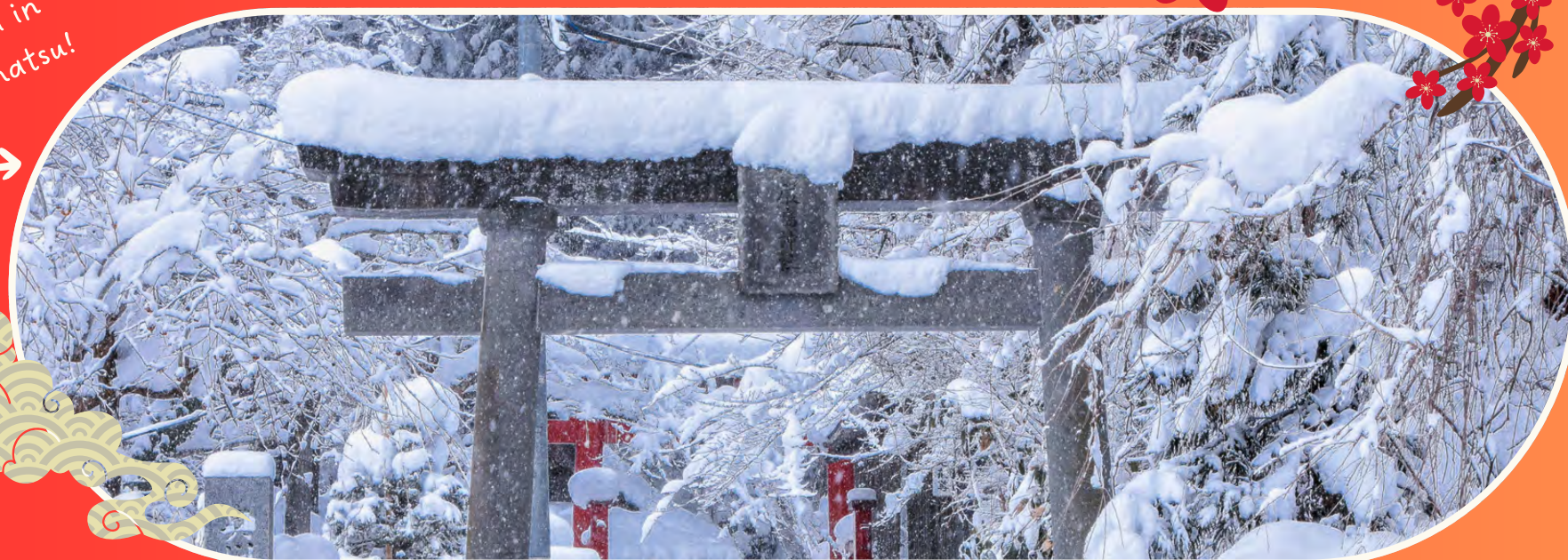
Nihonmatsu

LIVING IN THE INAKA

Nihonmatsu has a population of around 54,000 ~ coming from Orkney, I think this is big! However, it is considered 'inaka' (countryside). I do literally live next to rice fields. 😊 It has delicious local sweet shops, ramen and sushi, soba and sake. I also love being 10 minutes from mountains and forests. It has a lovely temple in the centre of town, and a castle. Nihonmatsu also has one of the best festivals in Fukushima; the Chochin Matsuri (top picture), those are all flaming lanterns.



snowy torii in
Aizuwakamatsu!



Celebrating Christmas and New Year in Japan!

A FUKUSHIMA CHRISTMAS

This was my first year celebrating Christmas away from home. It is true, in Japan people eat KFC on Christmas! You even have to pre-order weeks in advance. I was also surprised to find that it is customary for 'Christmas cakes' here to be strawberry cream cakes. → To my shock, there were also no advent calendars! Christmas day itself felt very much like a normal day here, I was scheduled to work on Christmas day too but I took it off to celebrate with my friends. I also had my 'bonenkai' (end of year party) with my School teachers and staff, which was very fun. Lot's of eating, drinking and games.



Year of the dragon

AN OSAKA NEW YEAR

I decided to go to Osaka for Shōgatsu, or New Year. Shōgatsu is an important celebration here, it is customary to visit a shrine or temple to pay respects and get a fortune for the new year. We ate toshikoshisoba and the best ramen I've had in my life! Osaka has a cool, vibrant energy, especially in Shinsaibashisuji and Namba, which is where I stayed. Of course we did karaoke too. Osaka also has a big party scene, so it was the perfect place to go to celebrate the New Year. 🎉



THANKS FOR READING!