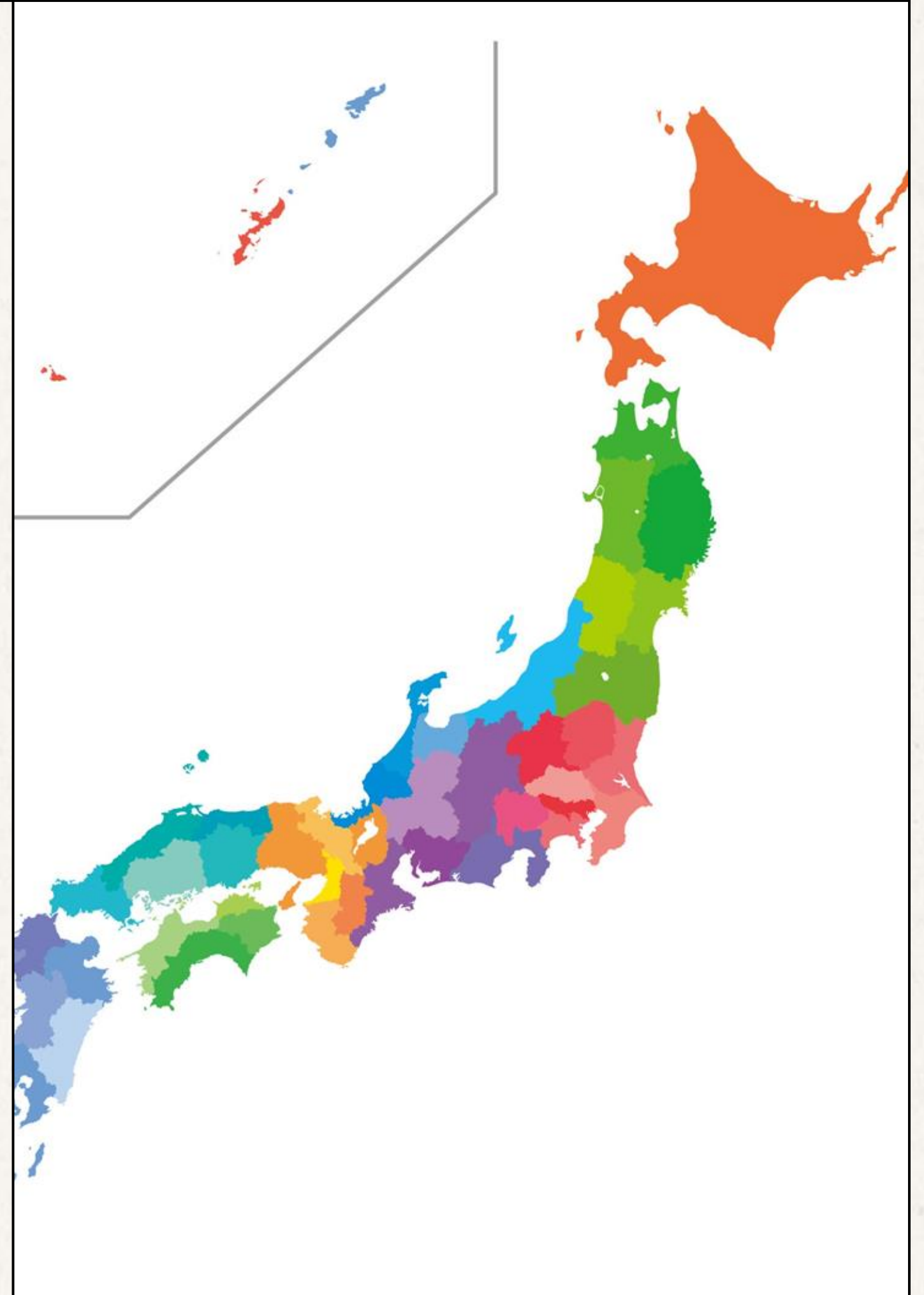


Increase Your Quality of Life in Japan



Hi! I'm Mel.

I was a JET in Nagahama-shi, Shiga-ken from 2010–2013. For context, Nagahama was the “big city,” but I was in an annexed town to the north that only had a population of about 3,500 people. I taught at two of the three elementary schools in the town. Only one person at either of my schools spoke some English. I was tossed into the inaka. And I loved it!



AGENDA

1 Finding your place

2 Creating community

3 Embracing exploration



Finding your place

After the initial hype, you have to learn to live in your new community. It can be great! And difficult at times. Something that helped me was getting to know where I lived a bit better. Doing this opened the door to everything else that helped!

- visit local shrines and temples—and learn the history!
- learn about local food specialities—and try them!
- find out about local festivals and traditions
- go to your local city hall—they can share info about
 - garbage and recycling rules
 - upcoming events
 - community classes
 - and more!



Creating community

Whether it's connecting with fellow JETs or getting to know your neighbors, creating community is essential to increasing your quality of life in Japan. Living abroad can feel isolating at times. It's important to build a network in your area so you feel supported—and so you can meet people that may become forever friends!

- Bring something from your home country to share with your coworkers and neighbors (conversation starter!)
- Go to local JET events and meetups
- Attend events in your community
- Take a community class
- Become a regular at a local restaurant
- Schedule time to hang out with other JETs and your Japanese friends—you'll get busy! So maintaining those relationships is key.



Embracing exploration

One of the best things you can do in your new home is explore. Some of the best things I found were by getting a little purposefully lost on a bike ride. Try a new food at the grocery store! Embrace the unexpected! Go explore!

- Go for a long, aimless bike ride in your town
- Get off the train at a nearby station and go for a walk
- Try new ingredients from the grocery store
- Pop into that shop you've been wondering about
- Learn how to cook seasonally
- Take a day trip to another town
- Buy tickets to a local game
- Ask your neighbors/coworkers/friends about recommendations, and give it a try





Finding Home

Moving to Japan is exciting! But also it sometimes feels like getting emotional whiplash whenever you stop and think about it for too long. Consider the ways you can find home, whatever that means to you, in your new community. It will be what keeps you going and, perhaps just as importantly, will lead to memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.