



# MIA news

Miyakonojo International Association

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## Beware of Alligators! - Emma Thompson

Introducing foreign nationals living in Miyakonojo and Mimata, as well as residents engaged in international projects.



Emma enjoying alligator barbecue with her Ikebana friends

After 4 years of living here I don't feel sad to leave, instead I feel overwhelming positivity! To all the people in my life I am so thankful. The connections I've made here have not only given me memories I will always remember fondly, but will also lead to new connections and friendships in the future. This is how I see my life, but I want to tell you a cautionary tale about alligators.

Unfortunately, when dealing with some people before I came to Japan, as well as in preparation for leaving, there are people who believe I've fully wasted my life. I've ruined my career!! I'm a big dumb idiot!! I didn't follow the prescribed path in life.

While these people I imagine are a little closed minded, there are more than I expected who think this way. But as my dad, with all of his dad wisdom, likes to sometimes tell me "Emma, don't let the alligators get you down." The expression is from my grandmother. It comes from an idea that God made the animals, like cute cats and dogs, and also for some reason made the alligators who are ugly and mean. So while the alligators will always keep sitting in their swamps being angry, I like to live open to the possibilities.

My time here has certainly been a journey and not what I always expected, but I've found that sometimes things just have a funny way of working out. In my four years here, one story sticks out to me the most. After about seven months of living in Miyakonojo, my great aunt and my grandmother (who talked about the alligators) passed away. I felt very sad and overall stuck and decided to try something new, to learn Ikebana. It was then I met my teacher and my dear friend Izumi. I loved the flowers (though I wasn't very good at first) and was taking regular lessons when I met Izumi's husband the all other Ikebana students. They are all very interesting and wonderful people! We ended up doing

many things together. But two years in I had a problem with my eye. I had waited a while since to me it didn't seem so serious. Well Izumi's husband Ryohei is an eye doctor, so I felt more comfortable in asking for help. It turns out I needed eye surgery but after a year of appointments and a weeklong hospital stay, my eye is "looking" as good as new! I am grateful to both of them more than I think I can ever express. And now that I am a certified Ikebana instructor I can share the happiness I've received learning Ikebana to the people I meet in the future as well.

It depends if you believe in coincidence or fate, so I'll leave the decision up to you. Though sometimes when I reflect on my life I wonder, if I had lived my life the way the alligators expected, would I have only one eye? Would I have never done all the things I enjoy now? Who would I be? Maybe I would even be an alligator myself. The horror!

So to end my tale I'd like to say "Beware of alligators! Or perhaps you could grill them while you drink a non-alcoholic beer outside with your friends!"

So to everyone I've met in Miyakonojo, Thank you from the bottom of my heart!



The worthwhile reward for not letting the alligators get to you!

### ◆ Articles For MIA News

Are you interested in writing a short article about international exchange or cooperation for MIA News? Possible topics include travel journals, study abroad experiences, experiences staying with a host family, and activities with an international exchange or cooperation group. Articles should be about a page long and include a couple of relevant pictures. If you'd like to write more than that, please consult with MIA. If you'd like to write anonymously, that can be taken into consideration. Please contact MIA if you are interested!

## Wesak Lanterns in Miyakonojo! - Neshan

Introducing foreign nationals living in Miyakonojo and Mimata, as well as residents engaged in international projects.

Neshan from Sri Lanka, who wrote us an article for our November 2020 edition of MIA News, has come back with an update on making Wesak Lanterns!



What you see in the image above is called a Wesak Lantern (Japanese: ウェサクランタン, Sinhalese: වෙසක් කුඩුව). Each year, on the day of a full moon in May, the people of Sri Lanka customarily celebrate the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and transcension to Nirvana, which usually involves a visit to temples on the day. Additionally, adorning your household with various ornaments is another part of our culture. Because of this, the people of Sri Lanka make Wesak Lanterns during the month of May.

The Wesak Lantern you see here bears several meanings relating to aspects of Buddhism, each being associated with a part of its shape. The four squares on the four faces of the lantern represent the Four Noble Truths (these being Dukkha [which covers the many facets of suffering innate to living], Samudaya [which covers the origin or source of suffering], Nirodha [which covers the cessation of suffering] and Magga [which covers the path to cessation]).

Additionally, the 8 triangles denote the Noble Eightfold Path (comprised of right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right un-



Neshan showcasing some handmade Wesak Lanterns



ion/concentration, as understood through the teachings of Buddhism to be required in order to reach Nirvana).

As well as this, being hung from above represents Avarice, Hatred, and Moha (a Buddhist term used to indicate ignorance or folly).

Finally, the openings at the top and bottom of this lantern represent the cycle of life and death, parturition and mortality.



In order to make a Wesak Lantern, you will need 24 pieces of bamboo, each of the same length. Using 4 pieces of bamboo, form a square shaped patch and tie the bamboo together. To tie mine off, I used a piece of tubing from a bicycle, which I cut into long, thin strips. Finally, align the square patches and tie them together.

### Aussie Bites: A Trip to the Zoo!

Today's Bite comes from Iwamatsu-san (Thank you!)

I've only been to Australia once, but the best part was the zoo! It was a small zoo, but there was a whole bunch of wallabies that weren't worried about coming up to everyone, and it really gave me that "I'm in Australia" feeling! As soon as I went in, I spotted some pigeon-sized birds with long, pointed beaks, coming to rest on the arms the nearby children presented to them. Just the thought of the kids having to keep careful watch of those birds made my hair stand on end from worrying! There were a number of kids around that were letting these birds rest on their arms or shoulders, and I eventually, with great concern and precaution, had a bird grumpily rest on me! It wasn't until I was making my way home that I noticed the ice-cream cones that they were holding, all filled with bird feed! That explains why that bird was so grumpy with me! I also thought that part of its charm was that even for a small zoo, there was such a large and abundant display of stuffed animals for sale! It also surprised me that the large, dense forest wasn't filled with misty air, but rather with eucalyptus oil! Finally, I absolutely recommend that you try out the fresh seafood cuisine on offer at Sydney Harbour!

\*Once we receive photos for this article, an updated version will be uploaded to our home page. Please look forward to it!

**Movies info**

 C-Plaza Cine-port (Tel: 0986-24-2571)
 
 17-9 Nakamachi, Miyakonojo, Miyazaki
 
 Map-Code (GPS): 117 488 540\*55

- Mortal Kombat (Japanese Sub)
- Rurouni Kenshin Final Chapter: The Beginning (Japanese)
- HOKUSAI (Japanese)
- Inochi no Teishajo (Japanese)
- Jigoku no Hanazono (Japanese)

- Rurouni Kenshin Final Chapter: The Final (Japanese)
  - \*The 1st of every month is ¥1,100 for everyone.
  - \*Every Wednesday is 'Ladies' Day', all ladies ¥1,100.
  - \*The cinema is closed every Tuesday.
  - \*For session times visit: <http://movie.walkerplus.com/th286/schedule.html> (Japanese)