



MIA news

Miyakonojo International Association

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Finding Home - Matthew Gumabon (Miyakonojo ALT)

“Where are you from?” This is a question that we may have heard many times in our lives. It seems like such a simple question, however, sometimes the answer may not be so straightforward! To begin answering this question, we can ask ourselves, “Where is home?” For some people, finding the answer can take a lifetime, but it’s that journey to find “home” that can lead to incredible adventures and important discoveries! My name is Matthew Gumabon. I’m an ALT at Miyakonojo Technical High School, and I would like to share with you a bit of my journey to find home!

Maybe, home is where you were born? I was born in New York City in the United States. So maybe that makes me a “New Yorker”? But how did I even get to be born in such a place? Maybe, home is really where our family comes from? My mom and dad both immigrated to America from the Philippines in the 1980s and found careers as nurses in New York City. There, they met and later had me. So maybe that makes me a Filipino? But my family may not have come from just a single place! My mom’s family tree is mostly in the Philippines, but it includes a branch in Japan that carries the family name



Matthew with his parents

“Yamashita” 山下. This branch, however, seems to have been separated from our main family branch long ago. It’s a bit of family mystery, but it seems that I have roots here in Japan as well! So with that, I ask myself,

“Where is home?”

People of mixed ethnicity and multiple origins are very common in the United States! In my case, Americans born from Asian immigrant parents are often called “Asian Americans”. Having this “split-identity” between East and West, we often experience a bit of an identity crisis. Do we belong with our countrymen in America, or do we belong with our roots in Asia? We want to belong to both, but in order to “fit in” with either side we feel that we must choose one. Unfortunately, sometimes we fear that no matter which we choose, neither



side may fully accept us because of the way we look or speak. For many years I struggled with these feelings, and I felt lost.

But as I grew up, things began to change, and my journey to find “home” began! In 2020, I graduated from university, and I began working for the United States government as an engineer for Navy ships. The US Navy operates all around the world, so I travelled to many places for my job. During that period of my life, more than ever, I was able to travel, meet new people, and learn about new cultures. An eye-opening experience I had during this time was my first homestay in Japan. I stayed with an amazing Japanese family in Tokyo. This family was a friend of my Japanese teacher at the time. They also did not speak much English, and I could only manage very simple Japanese at that time. Despite this, they showed a level of acceptance and kindness towards me that I had never experienced before. Almost instantly, I felt like I was part of their family! I still look back at that as one of the most important experiences of my life.

I have since left my engineering work with the Navy and returned to Japan as an English teacher with the JET Program. I was again amazed by the amount of support and care that has been shown to me not only by Japanese teachers and staff, but from other JET Program participants also in search of “home”! I came to realize the first big clue as to where “home” was. “Home” can be wherever you want! It does not matter where you were born, where your parents come from, what you look like, or what labels other people might have given you. With some time, your best efforts, and the kindness of others along the way, your “home” can be anywhere and you just have to find it! I am forever thankful to every person and place that has been a part of my journey so far! My journey continues, but here in places like Miyakonojo I feel closer to home than ever!



Matthew and the USS Abraham Lincoln



Matthew with his host family



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Aussie Bites! (Cradle Mountain by George Goonan, Australian CIR)



While it takes a little longer to get there compared to the mainland, Tasmania is home to picturesque landscapes, great seafood, and welcoming people. If I was to recommend one place in particular, it would have to be Cradle Mountain, just north-west of the heart of Tasmania, and a 1.5hr drive from Devonport (4.5hrs from Hobart). The Cradle Mountain-Lake Saint Clair National

Park is a little over 1,600km², and has a number of walking trails and hikes to take on. If you want to get amongst the nature and away from the big city hustle and bustle, this is the place!

(Both of the above photos were taken on location at Cradle Mountain-Lake Saint Clair. Also, George's father is on the left hand side of the right photo!)

Information & Notices

◇ Miyakonojo City Hall has created a Disaster Prevention Guide for Foreign Residents

Available on the Miyakonojo City Hall website, this guide contains information on disasters common to the Miyakonojo City & Miyazaki Prefecture areas, as well as information on how to better prepare yourself for their arrival, and what actions to take should a disaster strike. These guides are available in English, as well as Easy Japanese, Chinese, Mongolian, and Vietnamese. You can find them at:

<https://www.city.miyakonojo.miyazaki.jp/site/easy/44716.html>

Inquiries: Miyakonojo City Internationalisation Promotion Office

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members (international residents) and student members), we ask for your cooperation in returning your vote on agenda items to us by mail by the end of May where possible.

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◇ Articles For MIA News

Are you interested in writing a short article about international exchange or cooperation for MIA News? Some possible topics include travel journals, introductions to your home country, 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.

We are also looking for people interested in sharing their Australian experiences. Whether it's a rare location you found or some fascinating people you interacted with, we want to share your story with all of our MIA members! Please contact us if you are interested!

◇ Regarding the 2022-23 FY MIA AGM

Due to the continued spread of the novel coronavirus, MIA's Annual General Meeting for the 2022-23 Financial Year has been cancelled, with our yearly agenda to be resolved in writing.

For group & Individual members (excluding special

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

- Doctor Strange: Multiverse of Madness (Japanese Sub)
- Meitantei Conan: Halloween no Hanayome (Japanese)
- Fantastic Beasts: Dumbledore's Secret (Japanese Sub/Dub)
- Sing: Next Stage (Japanese Dub)
- Yomei 10 Nen (Japanese)
- Jujutsu Kaisen 0: The Movie (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)