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The Red Brick Bulletin

Feature: Ashibetsu Canadian World Park
JET Spotlight: Chris Santos

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A Trip to Canadian World

In a small town nestled in the heart of Hokkaido, there lies another even smaller town that doesn't quite fit the usual rural Japan mold. In fact, it doesn't look like Japan at all! This summer, a few of my friends and I decided to pay a visit to this town, the almost abandoned Canadian World Park in Ashibetsu City.

Canadian World Park, originally a for-profit theme park, was built in July of 1990, inspired by the scenery of Prince Edward Island and the popular show at the time, Anne of Green Gables. Unfortunately, the park was unable to draw enough visitors to stay in the green, and in 1997 the park was closed. However, in 1999, Canadian World was reopened as a public park green space managed by Ashibetsu City, allowing free entrance to the park.

Although many of the original shops and attractions are shut down, my friends and I were surprised to find that

Canadian World still has a lot to offer! The first thing that took me aback was the sheer size of the park. I had expected a small area with maybe a few buildings scattered around in walking distance, but boy was I wrong. The park is massive, and it actually made more sense for us to drive from each area of the park to the next. It really felt like we were driving through a small town in North America!

I also was not expecting there to be any shops, but in the downtown area there are still a few volunteer run shops to visit. It was swelteringly hot that day, so we happily took refuge in every open door we could find. There were Anne of Green Gable's souvenir shops, photo galleries, craft and hobby stores, and even a small art museum. Everyone there was friendly and happy to tell us about the park and show off their wares.

The most impressive thing about the park, though, was



the Anne of Green Gables section of town, especially Anne's house. My friend, a big fan of the show, was oohing and aahing over everything, exclaiming that it was just like how she remembered watching it. I have never seen the show, but it was still fun to dress up as Anne and get a peek at her "life." In a few buildings down, they also had large puppets for each of the main characters in the show. I expected them to be behind glass or propped up carefully behind "do not touch" signs, but the volunteer working there actually encouraged us to pick them up and play!

Unfortunately, not everything in the Green Gables was open completely to the public. Each of the rooms in the house was open, but a small glass gate keeps visitors from actually walking through. In past years, the park has begun

to receive more and more visitors, and the volunteers found that some small things were being taken! Despite the bad news of thefts, however, it is exciting that visitor numbers are on the rise. With the Netflix reboot, Anne with an E, just coming out, perhaps nostalgia will send more people their way again.

We finished off our tour of the park at the clock tower situated in the center field. The view from the top was beautiful, and again I felt like I had been swept away back to North America (albeit also swept back in time.) Anne of Green Gables fan or not, if you find yourself in Ashibetsu, you should definitely make a trip through the rabbit hole to Canadian World - it's worth it!



Green Gables, nestled in the trees.



Dressing up as Anne, red braids and all!



Anne's room in the house. According to my friend, it looks just like it does in the show!



You're never too old to have fun playing with puppets.



HOKKAIDO JET SPOTLIGHT

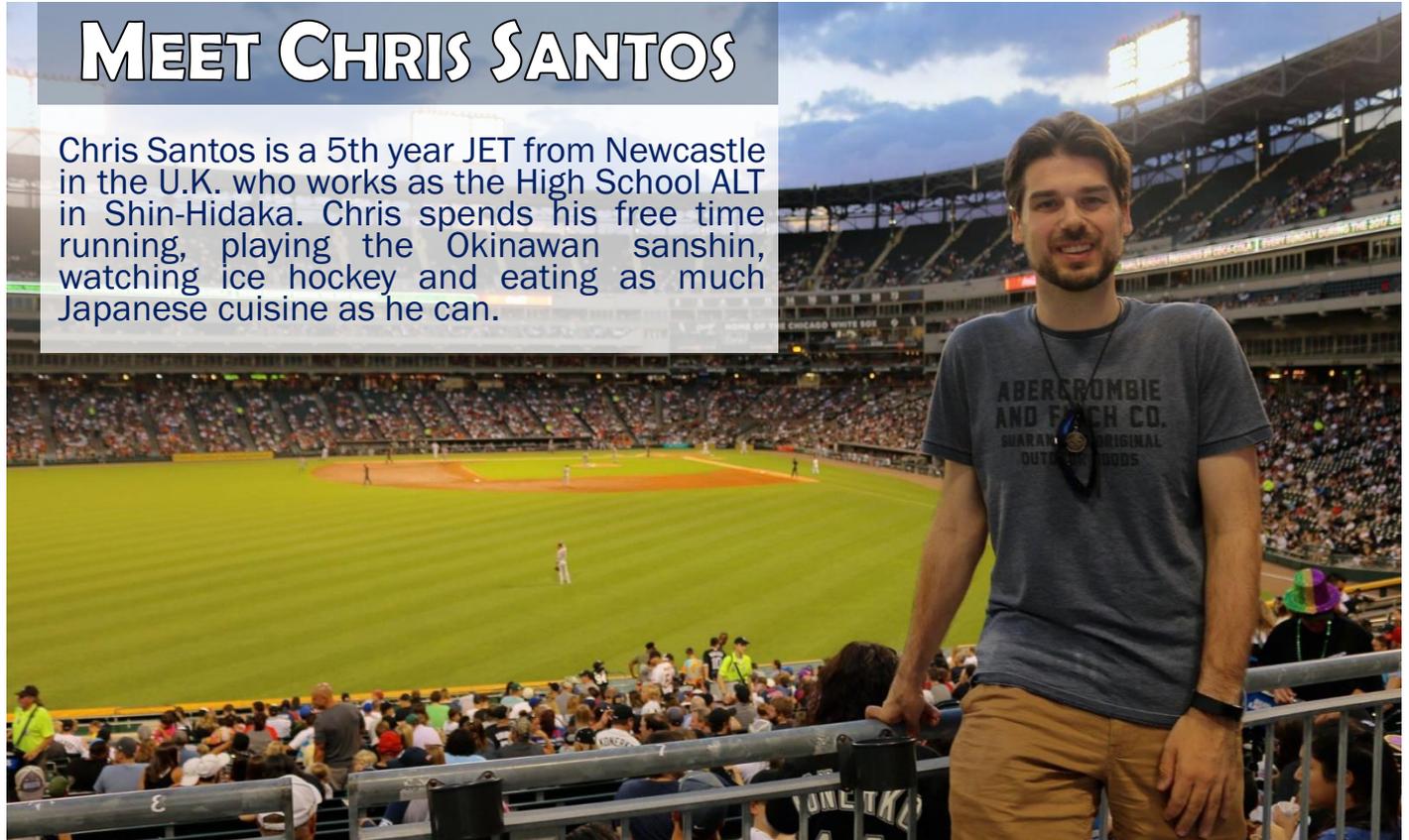


There are over 200 participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme who call Hokkaido home. We come from all over the world and we all have a very unique experience with the island. In each edition of the Red Brick Bulletin, I will introduce a current JET living in Hokkaido. Each has their own story to tell – let's get to know them!



MEET CHRIS SANTOS

Chris Santos is a 5th year JET from Newcastle in the U.K. who works as the High School ALT in Shin-Hidaka. Chris spends his free time running, playing the Okinawan sanshin, watching ice hockey and eating as much Japanese cuisine as he can.



What brought you to Hokkaido?

A A conspiracy of fates I think! While at university studying film I began to become interested in Asian movies. After graduation I embarked on a three week whirlwind trip of Japan (Tokyo to Nagasaki and everywhere in between) and after that I was in love with the country. When I applied for the JET Programme I didn't specify any desired area, but as I opened my acceptance letter and saw Hokkaido I'll admit that I was initially nervous; I knew nothing about the region except that it snowed. As it turns out though this meant that everything in Hokkaido was all new and wonderful to me...the snow I'm still not in love with however!

How has your experience been so far?

A I know that when I'm older and looking back on what I did in my life, these five wonderful years in Hokkaido on JET will be my most treasured memory. It's quite simply the best decision I've ever made to come here. Hokkaido has given me everything, a new set of skills, amazing friends from all over the world, a new career direction, a new sense of myself & who I really am and not to mention a wonderful fiancée & a new family who have taken me in with open arms.

This is a very difficult question, but what has been your most memorable moment in Hokkaido?

A I'm going to have to go with two moments from this year. Firstly singing and playing guitar in a band with some students at the school festival; which was a great experience as I really connected with some of my rock music loving students. Secondly proposing to my girlfriend up in the beautiful town of Mashike, which has become my home away from home. Luckily she said yes so it's a very good memory!

What's your favorite thing about your region?

A How easy it is to live here. Shizunai (or Shin-Hidaka officially) is one of the best places to live in Hokkaido in my opinion, we get just enough snowfall for it to be pretty but I have never once, in 4 years, ever shovelled snow! In summer it's so beautiful with the Hidaka mountains contrasting against the gorgeous Pacific ocean. Not to mention everywhere you look there are horses galloping and the region is rich in Ainu history. Oh and we also have the longest stretch of sakura trees in Japan, which is kind of a big deal!

All issues of The Red Brick Bulletin can be accessed at http://pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/tsk/akarenga_eng.htm

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