

Gunmania

In this issue...

Eigo Jouzu

*Promoting better understanding
between JETs*

The Joys of Being a Fag Hag

A look behind the Orange curtain

Maci's Musings

*The Prez talks about the JLPT and
the glorious season of winter*

Claim to Fame

Six degrees of desperation

Touched Up in High Touch Town

New Year in Roppongi

"Burning Ass" Onsen

Men and women. Naked. Together.

Top Ten: The Chinese Brothel

With genuine reconstruction snaps

Connecting The Dots

Vietnam travel

Please send contributions to:
jenny_royle@hotmail.com

Another season, another rip-roaring edition of Gunmania. We've got lots more great articles for your perusal. With spring break not too far away, *Connecting the Dots* is a report from "kick ass" Vietnam. Our travel experts also reveal the top ten identifying traits of a Chinese brothel, with real-life reconstruction photographs to aid the explanations.

Bahia warns us about celebrating New Year in Roppongi, James reveals all in a mixed-sex onsen, Maci writes about how to tell if you've failed the JLPT, and mystery Gunmanians tell us why they are secret stars in a new feature, *Claim to Fame*.

I'd like to say thank you everyone who has sent me an article, photographs, or anything for Gunmania. It's great to have so many people contribute to making the magazine what it is.

Contributors: Joslyn Shigematsu, Bahia Simons-Morton, James McKnight, Maci Edwards, Darin McAnelly, Skye Brumby, Daniel Simmons, Isaac Arnquist, Megan Ryan, Bobak Rostampour, Pete Richardson, Andrea Coulter and Anna Bishop.

Lock up your granny: articles may contain swearing.

Jenny Royle

The Blog Spot

These people feel your pain. They know how bored an ALT can get during the testing period, so they have generously offered up their blogs in the name of public service.

Tall Foreigner Works in Short Country

www.isaacarnquist.blogspot.com

"It chronicles my experiences in Japan."

Isaac Arnquist

Still Round the Corner

www.stillroundthecorner.blogspot.com

"Lots of other bloggers and Japan links in the sidebar too."

Megan Ryan

Portrait of a Gaijin

www.portraitofagaijin.blogspot.com

"It's the best one in Gunma because it's all about me."

Bobak Rostampour

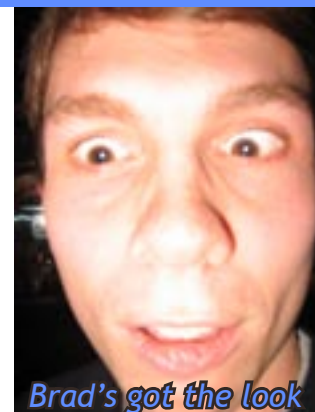


Eigo Jouzu

Promoting better understanding between JETs

We're halfway through the JET year, and you've probably had a bit of practice decoding your friends' speech while partaking in some "grassroots internationalisation."

But this is no time to be complacent; "the look" still abounds. May I direct your gaze to young Brad here on the right. He didn't read his *Eigo Jouzu* in the last issue, and look where it's got him; he has no idea what you're talking about. Read on, Gunmates, lest you give someone "the look."



fair dinkum

C'mon, we had to include it at some point. "Fair dinkum" usually means genuine or true. It can also be used to express extreme emotion, such as the exasperation felt when your students can't answer the question "What's your name?" "Fair dinkum!"



Molson muscle: beer belly

e.g. "I'm sitting in a Canuck bar working on my Molson muscle."

Texas mickey: 130oz. bottle of liquor

Says our Canadian: "I'm almost certain this is of strictly Canadian origin because we had a Texan living on our floor first year who had never even heard of a bottle this big and loved the expression."



munted: completely destroyed, totalled.

e.g. "Yeah, the woman who ran into me totally munted my car." or "God, she really munted her hair."



howzit: common greeting; the abbreviation of "how is it going?"

robots: traffic lights

No, really.



bit of alright: very attractive

fancy the pants off (someone): find (someone) very attractive

e.g. "That Hidetoshi Nakata is a bit of alright. I fancy the pants off him." (Note: "pants", meaning underwear, can be replaced with "arse" if you so please.)



crunk: (supposedly) the mix of crazy and drunk

Rumor has it that the word was born on the Conan O'Brien Show when Conan and Andy were trying to come up with a word that could represent the conglomerate power of the seven swear words that can't be said on network television. Crunk usage reached platinum levels with the rising of rapper Lil John, who never goes out without his crunk juice or crunk cup.

The Joys of Being a Fag Hag

Article originally published in BRIX, Winter 2006.

by Joslyn Shigematsu

I grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Orange County is a great place to live because, as my cousin and his gaggle of fags say, "Nothing ever happens behind the Orange Curtain!" After 12 years of Catholic school, I was ready to see the world. If you think that's crazy, 4 of those years were at an all girls Catholic high school. Needless to say, my perspective was a bit rosy from those damn glasses I had on. It wasn't until I started hanging out in gay bars that my mind was opened just a crack. The atmosphere was cool, the people cracked me up, and it's just plain humbling to walk through a bar and not turn a single head! A few years later, I was always in Los Angeles with my cousin, Jansen, and his boyfriend, Keith. Thus began the real training into the top 3 lessons of being an official Fag Hag.



My first lesson came when I was at the Mhouse before going out to We Ho (West Hollywood) and/or Silverlake. (Those areas are the Mecca of all that is gay in La La Land. I bought my first vibrator in Silverlake, but that's a whole other story!) I was getting ready for about 30 minutes. They took about 2 hours. Lesson 1: you will be waiting around for gay boys. Jesse had to iron his jeans. As I was reveling in the vanity of this, he tried them on, looked in the mirror, and decided his ass was "just too fuckin' fat" in them. He took out another pair of jeans that, frankly, looked identical, and began to iron those. I asked Dan if he did this, too. He said, "Oh, honey, I'm gay, but not THAT gay!" as he put on his make-up to be "Crystal Chandelier" for his night gig as a cross dresser.

We were out the door, when I was bombarded with wallets, keys and condoms. Lesson 2: always carry a big purse. I was in charge of holding all that stuff because they were just not man enough, err... gay enough, wait... um... smart enough to have a Murse. You also gotta know where everyone's stuff is really quickly because there's not a second to be wasted when boys, gay or straight, are cruisin'. "Oh, Jesus Christ! Where the hell is that pack of condoms I gave you?! Mr. Right now is heading toward the port-a-potty and I NEED to be with him!"

I enjoyed my nights out with them. They were so complimentary. "Hey, Sexy, you're absolutely fuckin' gorgeous!" The words were the same as the boys in straight bars, but the tone is more sincere when they're not looking for some action from me! Lesson 3: don't be offended by the wandering eyes. It's a pet peeve of most women to be talking to a man and his eyes are constantly darting around the room mid conversation. Turns out, it's gender

specific! There have been many a time when I was talking to a gay guy and it sounded something like this:

**"Hellooo,
Fire Crotch!"**

“Sweetie! What are you doing here with all these queers? You're just... hellooo, Fire Crotch! I'm the fire department at your service!! ...cute as a button! Any guy would... Weelll, I'll be right behind THAT behind! ...be a dildo to pass you up! I am having... UM! rrrroooowwww! I'll be King of your jungle ...such a good time just talking with you!”

Being a fag hag is not an easy job. Worse yet, there are no friends with benefits in this line of work! On the other hand, there are plenty of perks. You do get to have a great time without all the sexual tension, they listen when you talk AND respond appropriately, and will probably go shopping with you the next day. I love my fags!

Maci's Musings

Maci "the Prez" Edwards on the JLPT and the glorious season of winter

Reasons why you know you failed the JLPT



Maci and Darin celebrate the end of the test with everyone's favorite

Not too long ago quite a few foreigners in Gunma and its neighboring prefectures woke up way too early and traveled down to Saitama to participate in the infamous Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Many of you studied... many of us did not.

Like talking at a speed of twenty words a minute, this test is something that many people just find themselves doing while they are here in Japan. Maybe you are bored. Maybe watching all the

Japanese students study endlessly for God-knows-what test has inspired you. Maybe you want to mention in your resume that you at least attempted a test in Japanese. Or maybe you actually study Japanese and want to use it in the future...

Whatever the reason, you did it! You sat the test and anxiously awaited the results, every day taking that perilous walk to the mailbox to see if your results had arrived. And, after opening the results, every day either cursing *nomihodai* for keeping you from studying or praising your own providence.

Almost everyone I spoke to after the test said the same thing: "I failed." But how did you really do on the test? How do you know you passed? How do you know you failed?

Here are a few clues that you failed the JLPT:

- * your neighbor asks you "How did you do on the Japanese test?" in Japanese and you don't understand
- * you studied kanji for the level below the level you actually sat. Oops.
- * you thought level 1 was the easiest
- * you thought going to an *enkai* the night before with your Japanese teachers would be a good cram session
- * at the end of the test your scantron sheet looked like an abstract of the Mona Lisa

And, perhaps the biggest clue of all:

- * you just received your scores and you failed.

Now the test results have been opened:

- * your friends that passed seem more annoying
- * your chocolate intake has risen dramatically
- * your beer intake has risen dramatically.



Well, whatever you are or aren't doing now that the test is over and the results are out, have fun! As we all decided on that fateful day..... Passers buy Failures drinks!

And if you are like me you are already preparing to not prepare for next year's test.

Maci's Top 10: Gunma Winter

The Good

- 1 Snowboarding
- 2 Snuggling
- 3 No armpit sweat rings
- 4 Long Christmas Break
- 5 You can leave your clothes in the washer for three days without them going bad
- 6 End of the year enkai and Gunma Ski Trip
- 7 Unlimited onsen trips
- 8 **Clear skies**
- 9 Electric blankets
- 10 You can leave beer out and it stays cold.

The Bad

- 1 Dry nose and crusty boogers
- 2 **Toyu smell**
- 3 Frozen hands every time you wash them
- 4 Cold cold cold outside
- 5 Cold cold cold inside!
- 6 Taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test
- 7 Frozen windshield in the morning
- 8 Freezing in class
- 9 Getting the flu
- 10 Finding out you failed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Claim to Fame

Six degrees of desperation

Gunma may be smalltown Japan, but some of us have stood mighty close the burning flame that is celebrity in our time. Others have stuffed dead squirrels. Read on and guess the identity of your Gunmates. (Answers after the Vietnam article, page 11.)

A "I have two claims to fame. My great grandfather was friends with Ernest Hemingway and would go fishing with him whenever he visited Australia. If that wasn't enough, thirteen years ago I stood behind Irene from *Home and Away* in the supermarket while I was in Sydney. Perhaps a life-defining moment."

B "I have a stuffed squirrel. I took a taxidermy class at my small-town high school (it was either that or home-ec). Everyday we would retrieve our dead animals (most of them squirrels we shot ourselves) from the freezer and start working on them. We bought the eyes and forms which we thought gave our squirrels the most personality and, after many stinky days in that classroom, we finished. Yeah, you know your life sucks when your "Claim to Fame" is stuffing a squirrel - a boy squirrel nonetheless. I miss you, Chester."

Touched up in High Touch Town

by Bahia Simons-Morton

Ah, New Years Eve! As people like me understand, this is a day for celebration, champagne, and above all, getting completely trashed. So, what's a person to do when they live in a small town where everything shuts down around New Years Day? Go to Tokyo, of course!

However, I must warn you of an insidious, foul place that above all costs you must avoid. This place is like a snake nest infested with grabbing, slovenly hands, and foul smelling mouths puckering up for sickening kisses. This place is like an evil stench slowly spreading through and around your heart. This place is none other than the Roppongi Crossing area of Roppongi: "The High Touch Town."

Now, some of you guys may be thinking, "I like Roppongi. I like the way Japanese girls throw themselves at me!" (either like prey or like a hunter...) And that's fine. But let me say that being a woman in Roppongi on New Years Eve was an Unpleasant Experience, to say the least. And by Unpleasant Experience I mean I would rather have my eyes gouged out by wild hyenas than ever go there again.

Now, let me relate to you the events of the night...

We started the evening in Harajuku, at a classy Mexican restaurant with a live, authentically Mexican mariachi band, good food, and great champagne. We started the evening with a plan to avoid central Roppongi at all costs. But you know what they say about "the best laid plans of mice and men." At dinner, some very new friends suggested a bar in Roppongi. We said that, no, we didn't want to go to Roppongi. We hate the kind of bars there. They assured us that, no, it isn't that kind of bar. We go there all the time. Well, their word was good enough for us.

And that was our fatal mistake. We should have known just by the name of the bar that it would be a cesspool of human filth. Motown 2. Motown. 2. What was wrong with the first Motown that they had to make another one? And why couldn't they come up with a more creative name? A place with a name so uninspired could no doubt be filled with people who are excessively unoriginal. And don't worry. They were.

At the Harajuku train station, we split up, some of us going ahead to the bar and a few of us waiting for P to retrieve the bag he'd forgotten at the restaurant. By this time, we were all a bit drunk. When P returned to the station we rushed like insane gaijin towards Roppongi. It was almost midnight and we wanted to ring in the new year with our friends. We reached the bar just before midnight. Two of us bought the overpriced entrance tickets and then the night exploded.

It was midnight in Roppongi and the chaos that had been building all night began to roil through the streets! We kissed our significant others (as per tradition) and when we looked back around us we realized that this was a place that we really didn't want to be. It was like a fucking war zone.

Pre-touching (Photo by Pete Richardson)



Unfortunately, some of us were already in the bar and others of us had just paid, so we swallowed our apprehensions, coughed up way too much money for tickets, and went inside. The bar was chaos. Light fixtures swung with the vibrations of hardcore partying. Bon Jovi blared on the stereo and people “danced” close to each other in the dark, uber-packed bar. We elbowed our way to our friends, who somehow seemed to be enjoying themselves in spite of the crowded, insipid atmosphere. I knew bars like this. Oh yes. I’ve been to bars like this in the USA, in Italy, and in Spain. They’re all essentially the same. And they all suck.

C and I glanced at each other, unhappy and unsurprised. We knew that as soon as we got the drinks from our drink tickets we’d get out of there as fast as possible. Next, I courageously made a break for the restroom. I got three feet before being accosted by an ugly gentleman puckering up and coming in for a kiss. “Leave me alone!” I said, pushing him away roughly. Another few feet and the same thing again. “Fuck off!” I growled, pushing my way through the crowd. Again and again the same thing, and I was getting angry. Did I come to this bar to let people attempt to grope me? Did they think that just because it’s New Years Eve that I want to kiss some horny toad of a guy? No fucking way.

By the time I finally made it to the toilet, my resolve to leave this terrible bar had strengthened tenfold. At the toilet I ran into my friend D and The Girl who had suggested the bar in the first place. “Sorry,” said The Girl, but she didn’t seem to mind the obnoxious guys in the bar. D asked me to wait for her. When she finished we set out across the floor struggling through the crowd towards our friends. A short, beady-eyed man grabbed D around the waist, hugging her. She froze in shock as he grasped her thin torso as if it were a life raft. I pushed him away from her, physically prying off his meaty, little hands and told him to “leave us the fuck alone.” He melted back into the crowd, but D was traumatized, and I was an instant away from picking a fist fight with the next guy who dared to even look in my direction. D stood with her back to the wall scanning the crowd, anxious, waiting for the next person to attempt grab her. I knew she needed to get out of that nest of skeeze. And she wasn’t the only one. C, P, and I chugged our drinks and gathered our people, pushing our way outside to the fresh air.

Outside was just as bad. Drunk, riotous foreigners were everywhere. All around you could hear the sound of things breaking; screams drifting through the night air, and loud bellows echoing from building to building. In the distance sirens started to wail. I gathered my posse and off we strode, away from Roppongi Crossing and toward a club called Yellow, in the much more pleasant Roppongi Hills area. Much as a tour guide would, I held up my hand and kept close watch on the group. We were all, without a doubt, inebriated, and at this point disheveled. Keeping the group together was difficult, but we managed. We passed an overpass that read: “Roppongi, The High Touch Town”. ‘Oh yes, it is,’ we thought.

We marched our way through the battlefield, passing Ferrari after Ferrari. Sirens wailed, but not in the distance this time. Police car after police car passed us, and so did a few ambulances, as well as extremely rare riot trucks. They passed into the night, towards Roppongi Crossing. We were relieved to be heading away from the chaos and into the night, to a saner and more enjoyable destination. As the bulk of Roppongi faded into the night, we were overcome with a sense of joy and relief. We reached Yellow, which while a bit pricey, was worth every penny. It was our safe haven, filled with great DJs, cool people, and most importantly: Red Bull and Vodka.

So a word of warning to any woman who thinks spending New Years Eve in Roppongi is a good idea: unless you actually like to be grabbed, groped, or harassed by strangers, at all costs avoid the High Touch Town.

“Burning Ass” Onsen

by James McKnight

Last month I had a great Japanese cultural experience. Feeling sluggish in the cold winter weather, I drove with some friends about two hours northwest of Maebashi to recharge my batteries at Shiriyaki Onsen (*shiriyaki* means “burning ass”). Bashful, we went there at night as Shiriyaki Onsen is a *konyoku rotenburo*, or mixed-sex outdoor bath.



(Ass out of shot)

We drove through tons of snow to get there due to a big snowfall the day before. Despite careful driving of our 4-wheel drive Nissan X-trail (with snow tires), we slipped a few times on the icy road. Since the drive was so long, my friends and I had time to fret about going to a mixed sex onsen for the first time. I wasn't too worried about it, but my friends, some of whom were female, kept bringing up the subject until I began to feel a little anxiety.

There are two baths at Shiriyaki. The main bath is open air and the other is covered by a little wooden shack where you can disrobe and leave your clothes. We found the place with little difficulty, but the temperature outside was -7 degrees Celsius!

I was freezing when we hiked down a narrow trail through waist-high snow to get to the onsen. We disrobed and braced ourselves for the blast of cold, but since the small bath was right there, we quickly jumped in and warmed up.

After about 10 minutes or so, we gathered our courage and moved over to the main rotenburo. The onsen is like a warm creek with big rocks in it. It is knee high at its deepest point and about 15 meters wide and 10 meters long. There were some people in there even though it was 9 p.m., but we couldn't really tell if they were old or young, men or women because of all the steam rising up from the hot water. Even so, we were a little hesitant to enter at first. I kept my towel in front of my privates until I got in, but it was difficult to walk using only one hand to balance with, as there were a lot of slippery rocks. I finally found a place that was comfortable and sat down. The bath was not as hot as the first one, but very comfortable.

I heard the voice of an old man in the bath by himself who told us to come closer to him because the water was warmer there, but we said “no thanks”. Later a young couple arrived. The woman had a towel on even though wearing towels or bathing suits is against the rules due to sanitary concerns.

There I was, buck naked in a winter wonderland, but completely warm and relaxed. It was something I had never experienced before. The view of the stars was phenomenal since it was a crystal clear night. I moved around the bath to find a more comfortable place and decided to ditch my towel this time. Nobody stared at me or even seemed to notice. After about thirty minutes in the bath we had had enough. When I put my clothes back on, my body was so warm that I only needed half of the sweaters and jackets I wore when I arrived.

Initially, the trip was the most anxiety-filled onsen visit since my first Japanese bathing experience nearly 6 years ago, but now I realize it was a fun little adventure and very exhilarating. Although it is a long drive, there are some good places to stop on the way and a lot of beautiful scenery, so it really doesn't seem that long. Even if you are not keen on onsen, it is worth it for the country driving and the challenge of trying *konyoku*. Best of all, the onsen is free.

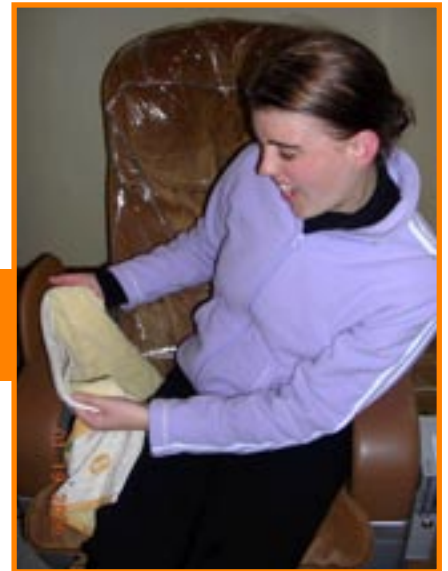
Directions: Take Route 17 north through Shibukawa then follow Route 145 through Nakanojo and Agatsuma to Route 292. After a few kilometers turn onto Route 405 which will take you to Kuni Village and follow the signs to Lake Nozoriko and Hanashiki Onsen which is very close to Shiriyaki. The signs are all in Japanese, so you should study your Kanji before you go. You can park on the side of the road or there is a ryokan close by that has a parking lot. Walk down the river bank about 25 meters and you will see a wooden shack where you leave your clothes.

Top 10: How you know you're in a Chinese Brothel

by Joslyn Shigematsu, Skye Brumby and Darin McAnelly

- 1** The “massage parlor” is down an unlit alley where three men greet you outside the door and, as they look you over from head to toe, laughingly say, “Massage oh-kaaaay!”
- 2** As you walk up the rickety narrow staircase, you pass ten dodgy-looking Chinese men on their way out, avoiding eye contact.
- 3** They are all tucking in their shirts, even though the massages are fully clothed.
- 4** Instead of relaxing music and aroma therapy, you are sitting in a dingy room with overflowing ashtrays and sitting in old recliners that don't work.

5 You notice the recliners you are sitting on have towels on the seats only.



6 After a while, you realize that they don't have much experience giving real massages as the massage becomes limply one-handed with yawning (they probably aren't used to working for more than ten minutes at a time).

7 The three masseuses were laughing (probably at you) and talking loudly throughout.

8 When you asked a local the night before about the place they laughed and said, “Good massage for youuu!”

9 You have bruises the next day from the “massage.”

And the number 10 way you know you've stumbled into a Chinese brothel is...



10 If you are male, the leg massage includes the testicles. If you are female, the arm massage includes the breasts.



Connecting The Dots

by Joslyn Shigematsu and Darin McAnelly

If you know nothing else about Vietnam, know this: it's a kick ass country! Problem is, it's long and filled with things to do, people to see, and tons of different kinds of spring rolls to eat. We recommend picking one end and working your way to the other.

We connected the dots north to south from Hanoi to the central city of Nha Trang, ending up in the southern city of Ho Chi Minh. In that time we saw some beautiful islands and gorgeous reefs, played in a mud bath, watched traditional puppet theater, bought whores, biked through rural villages, came to a better understanding of the war, and sailed through the Mekong River Delta.



First off, things to know before you go: the currency is the Dong (HA HA!), but with the exchange rate prepare to be a millionaire with every man you exchange. After the war, they have just kept American dollars in use and they're accepted easily everywhere. With roosters freely running around the smaller villages, you can try our favorite catch phrase, "How many Dong for your cock?" Of course bird flu was a concern, so we didn't eat or drink anything involving chicken, and its a good idea to avoid the foul fowl.

Getting around is easy enough. In town, there are taxis (maniacs) and motorcycles (even crazier, but tons of fun!). Between cities, there are flights for less than 80 USD, and if that doesn't work out, the night train was a great ride and saved on a hotel (though at \$10 to \$20 a night for rooms, that's not saying much). Two warnings about the train: number one, book asap or be prepared to sit on hard benches, upright, for 13 hours. Number two, get there a half hour before the departure time - if the train comes early, it leaves early. On the train there are sheets, but weather they are cleaned or merely refolded is hard to say. A good thing to pick up in Hanoi is a silk sleeping bag. Bargain them down to two or three dollars and rest easy.



A must-see place is Ha Long Bay (left), three hours from Hanoi. It's name means "descending dragon" because it's said to have over 1,000 limestone islands poking up out of the water. We cruised around and kayaked through them on an overnight trip, sleeping onboard the boat. Sunset experienced on the water is definitely living the postcard!

Vietnam also has some famous SCUBA diving spots and Nha Trang has some of the best. A word of warning: when choosing companies, try not to go too cheap when it's a

question of your safety out on the ocean. It was our first experience, and it was amazing. There were fish of every color swimming in and out of all this coral, some looking like bunches of flowers and others were weird and spiky. We absolutely loved it.



After a night on the train, we zoomed over to the Mekong Delta for a river ride. It was cool to see floating villages and markets (left). This river is central to the lives of 16 million people and they do just about everything in that water: bath, bathroom, laundry, and then drink it too. At the river's floating markets, you can even see them open up shop on it. At the market, they don't sell just one pineapple. You have to buy everything in bulk, like a boat bound Costco. Want to know what's for sale today? Well, look for the long poles with fruit and veggies strung up. Those are the days offerings on that particular boat. Clever little system. It

was utter chaos trying to get around all the large and small boats bobbing in the water.

The most sobering part of the trip was our visit to the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The original name, "Museum of Chinese and American War Crimes," was deemed offensive by some visitors, so it got changed a few years back. But it remains a effectively chilling collection of pictures and records of abuse against the Vietnamese people from the Vietnamese point of view. It included damage done to generations of people as a side effect of Agent Orange, and other tragedies of the war. Some people argue that the basic purpose was to destroy the country so it couldn't be seen as a prosperous, communist nation. That goal was more than accomplished since by the end of the "conflict," not a single bridge, road, or town was left undamaged in the North, and the South was equally ravaged.

Vietnam has a sad history of being ruled for around 2,000 years by China, Mongolia, France, Japan, US, Russia, and anyone else who could get their hands on it. There are some parts that are thriving, and others that are still primitive rice paddies. It makes a fascinating place that needs to be explored! The food and shopping were amazingly cheap, yet still some of the most unique things we've seen. The people were incredibly friendly and begging wasn't a problem as it can be in other countries. Traffic was utter chaos with the motorbikes, pedestrians, cars, and buses going every which way all at once, but it made the cities feel alive and exciting. It's funny to notice that crossing the street is like sticking your hand in a stream of running water, the bikes just slide around and past you and each other, never stopping the flow of it all! If you just don't flinch, they all go around smoothly. We had a great time. It's the only place we've visited on JET that we would want to go back to. There are so many adventures in Vietnam that we haven't had.

Claim to Fame: The Answers

Have you guessed who they are yet?

A Skye Brumby

B Isaac Arnquist

The land that time forgot...



“The greatest happiness is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters.”

- Genghis Khan

Um, yeah.

Our priority in Mongolia will be home building, rather than following in the raping-and-pillaging hoofsteps of Mongol armies past, but it won't be all work and no play. We plan to immerse ourselves in the history and culture of this fascinating country.

Though most travel brochures and books on Mongolia



are fond of calling it a land that time has forgotten (the Lonely Planet website argues

that outside of the capital “you may get the feeling you’ve stepped into another century rather than another country”), we should remember that once upon a time the Mongolians ruled over the largest empire that our planet has ever known, an empire that, for all the violence of its beginnings, was largely cosmopolitan in its treatment of ethnic and religious minorities.

Here are some tidbits about Mongolia today:

- Mongolia is also known as “The Land of Blue Sky” - 260 days out of each year are sunny. It is also the largest landlocked country in the world.
- In the Gobi desert the remains of more than 150 dinosaurs have been unearthed. The two-humped Bactrian camel is indigenous to Mongolia. Also, in this country, gerbils are wild animals!
- The local alcoholic drink is airag, fermented mare’s milk.
- In January the average temperature is -35°C . Electricity poles in Mongolia have a concrete base to which the wooden pole is attached; without it, the pole would simply snap from the pressure of the freezing ground.



For more information about the Gunma Habitat trip and how you can get involved personally, contact trip leader Justin at justin@jvitello.com. You can also check out the following website: <http://gunmajet.net/habitat>. We’d be honored if you decide to join us!

Mongolia

Habitat for
Humanity Trip
May 1-10, 2006



Move over, Marco Polo



On May 1, 2006, a group of Gunma JETs and friends will depart Japan for the windy steppe lands of Mongolia, in order to build a house for a disadvantaged family. Our destination: Darkhan, Mongolia's second-largest city and an important industrial outpost north of Ulan Bataar. The need for adequate housing is on the rise in this once-Communist country: though population density remains low (about 4 people per square mile), between 1989-2000 the number of households in Mongolia increased by 26.5%, and in this harsh environment every new roof counts.

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure-dome decree...”

Don't be misled: this is no sightseeing vacation. No Coleridge poem-inspired pleasure palaces await us, and volunteers cannot expect much in the way of creature comforts. But what they can expect is an exciting intercultural adventure, a unique and unforgettable opportunity to meet and work with local people, and the reward of making a large and lasting difference in the lives of a poor family.

This is travel with a difference.

