



In This Issue

[Class Information](#)

[Brenda's View](#)

[Things You May Not Know About Japan](#)

July, 2011

Dear Guest,

We are pleased to deliver our July electronic newsletter! This month we are focusing on Japan and some of the unique elements of their culture that have helped them endure and overcome the difficulties they have faced in recent months.

A Letter From Our President

I wanted to discuss Japan in this quarter's newsletter because of the horrible on-going tragedy resulting from the April 11th earthquake and subsequent tsunami. We send our heartfelt condolences to all who lost their lives or were injured, as well as to the heartbroken surviving families and friends. I have watched, almost in awe, as thousands of Japanese have worked tirelessly to help everyone they could and to share what little they had. In many ways, I think this could only happen on this kind of scale, in Japan.

The earthquake quickly exposed the world to some of the intricacies of Japanese culture. Japanese are known for a heightened sense of individual responsibility, and at the same time a keen sense of solidarity and community. It is this combination that has allowed them to deal so quickly and effectively with a disaster that was almost unimaginable.

Within the Japanese language there is a word for quietly enduring difficult situations: *Gaman*. I do think, however, that they are not simply enduring, but making progress in overcoming their plight, each and every day.

I have always been fascinated by other elements of Japanese culture and how they impact language. For example, prior to the arrival of Portuguese Jesuit priests, there was no precise word for "thank you" in the Japanese language. Gratitude was simply built into every part of Japanese culture and communication. The word used today, *Arigatoo*, is actually an adaptation of the Portuguese word for "thank you", *obrigado*.

It is still possible for people to make donations to help those victims who are homeless and to help rebuild key infrastructure. The Red Cross has a special site set up for online donations to help the Japanese nation recover. You can click [here](#) to join us in supporting these vital recovery efforts.

Does your company do business in Japan? When businesses move across international borders, the business advantage goes to the organizations that know how to build effective relationships with people of different cultures. Clear communication is the key to developing understanding. If you are not speaking your customers' language, how can your business compete with companies who do?

Be sure to "Like" our [Facebook page](#) so that you can get updates, news stories and interesting cultural facts on a regular basis.



Brenda Arbeláiz

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Japan: Did you know?

- Raised floors help indicate when to take off shoes or slippers. At the entrance to a home in Japan, the floor will usually be raised about 6 inches indicating you should take off your shoes and put on slippers. If the house has a tatami room, its floor may be raised 1-2 inches indicating you should take off your slippers. When you use the restroom in some one's home, you may need to put on special bathroom slippers so as not to contaminate the rest of the home.
- For many Japanese couples Christmas is celebrated like Valentine's Day in the western world.
- More than 70% of Japan consists of mountains, including more than 200 volcanoes.
- A nice muskmelon, similar to a cantaloupe, may sell for over \$300US.
- Coffee is very popular and Japan imports approximately 85% of Jamaica's annual coffee production.
- When moving into an apartment one is often required to give the landlord a "gift" of money equal to two months' rent.
- There are four different writing systems in Japan, romaji, katakana, hiragana, and kanji.
- Japan's literacy rate is almost 100%.
- The Japanese language has thousands of foreign loan words, known as *gairaigo*. These words are often truncated, e.g. personal computer becomes *pasokon*. The number of foreign loan words is steadily increasing.
- The term *karaoke* means "empty orchestra" in Japanese.
- *Geisha* means "person of the arts" and the first *geisha* were actually men.



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