



JAPAN-CARICOM FRIENDSHIP YEAR 2024

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN BARBADOS



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In this edition, we take a look at some of Japan's remarkable green innovations, Japan and CARICOM's enhanced cooperation over the decades and the numerous events taking place in Barbados to celebrate Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024. Check out page 9 for our special feature on a Barbadian who now lives and works in Japan through the JET program.

JAPAN OVERVIEW

GDP : 4,212 Billion USD (2023)



Japan is 4th largest economy in the world and has a GDP per capita of \$33,834.4 USD

Population: ~ 125 Million



Japan is 12th largest country by population.

Size: ~ 377,975 km² (Land area) ~ 430,000 km² (Sea area)



Japan is one of the largest island nations, ranking 61st in land area. Japan's territorial sea combined with its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is the 6th largest in the world.

Government: Parliamentary government with a constitutional monarchy



Japan is a democratic state with a Prime Minister as its head of government.

Nobel Laureates : 29



Japan's Nobel Prize Winners have made significant contributions to science and technology and the country ranks 7th in world for the most Nobel Laureates.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites: 25



Japan is home to 5 natural and 20 cultural UNESCO World heritage sites. ¹



JAPANESE GREEN INNOVATIONS

Committed to combating climate change, many Japanese companies are leading in the development of several green innovations including:



Biodegradable Plastic From Seaweed

Japan's GS Alliance developed a biodegradable plastic using sargassum seaweed, the accumulation of which has been a common plight for many Caribbean nations.²



Bendable Solar Cells

Toshiba Corporation's Bendable Solar Cells have expanded the potential of solar power. This perovskite solar cell is lightweight and flexible which increases the number of surfaces where solar cells can be installed.³

Japan's renewable energy transition

Domestically, Japan has made tremendous strides towards cultivating a low-carbon society. Japan has one of the highest solar power capacities per land area in the world and ranks third in solar power generation. Notably, the first floating photovoltaic (FPV) project was built in Japan in 2007.⁴

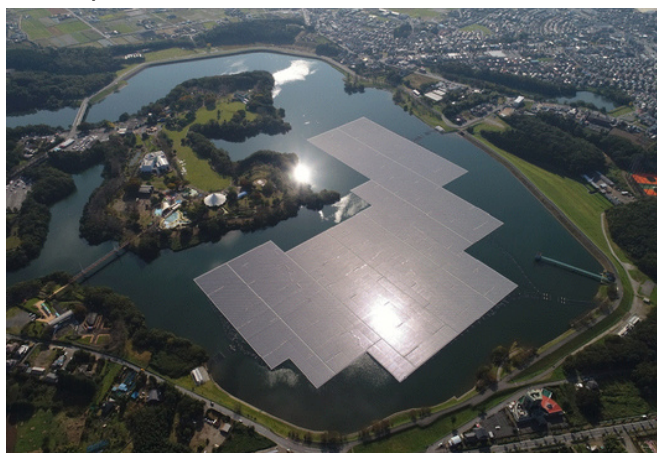


Figure 1 shows the Floating Solar Plant located in Chiba Prefecture in Japan, one of the largest FPVs in the world. Source: Kyocera

Japan employs a diverse energy mix, utilizing solar, wind, bioenergy, geothermal and hydropower, in its electricity production. At present, over 20% of Japan's electricity is derived from renewable sources.⁵

70 years of ODA

Japan has remained an ardent champion for global sustainable development. Over the last 70 years, Japan has become one of highest ODA donors; in 2019 Japan's ODA had already grossed \$550.5 billion.⁶

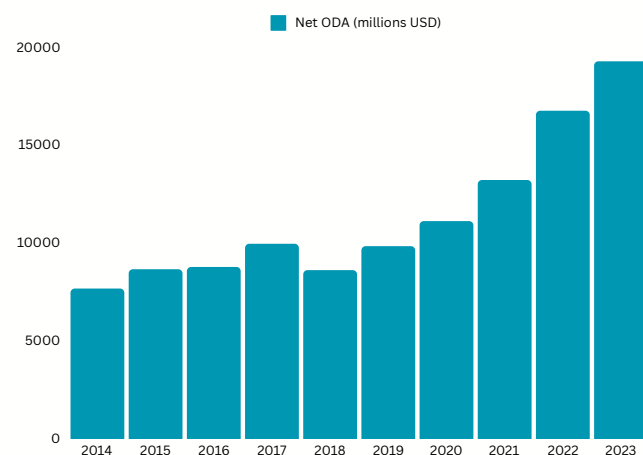


Figure 2 shows the Japan's Net ODA from 2014-2023. Data Source: OECD (2024), "Japan"

The longstanding Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) provides a glowing example of how Japan's collaborative approach to development aid has been transforming lives and communities across the Africa.⁷ With the aim of promoting sustainable development, Japan has focused on strengthening supply chains, promoting economic security and aiding decarbonization in developing countries. In 2023, Japan announced plans to invest 2 trillion yen (approx. 13 billion USD) in the "Global South" over the next five years, highlighting its commitment to building strong and lasting partnerships.⁸



JAPAN-CARICOM FRIENDSHIP YEAR 2024



Celebrating 30 Years

Japan and the region share common values of freedom and democracy as well as common vulnerabilities to natural disasters and climate change. Such commonalities have made for an enduring friendship that spans decades of cooperation. This year marks 30 years since the first Japan-CARICOM Consultation in 1993 and fittingly, it has been designated as the **"Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024"**.

Since 1993, there have been 15 Japan-CARICOM consultations and 7 Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conferences aimed at advancing the states' mutual interest in human security and sustainable development. Notably, 2006 saw the appointment of the first Ambassador of Japan to CARICOM to further foster closer collaboration between Japan and CARICOM members.

Such comprehensive collaboration has been realized through the concerted effort of various Japanese organisations and initiatives. Through the deployment of experts, the training of policy makers and the provision of funding, the **CARICOM-Japan Friendship and Co-operation Fund**,

the Japan Foundation, the Grassroots Human Security Grant Aid, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Association of Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC), have contributed tremendously to the promotion of good governance, poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction, environmental preservation and economic diversification in the region.

During the Japan-Caricom Friendship Year 2014, the late Prime Minister Shinzo ABE emphasized Japan's commitment to the region summarizing Japan's policy towards the region in three key pillars.⁹

First Pillar

Cooperation towards sustainable development including overcoming vulnerabilities particular to small island states.

Second Pillar

Deepening and expanding bonds founded on exchanges and friendship.

Third Pillar

Cooperation in addressing challenges of the international community.

Deepening Friendship

Despite Japan and CARICOM's geographical distance, the nations' friendship has only deepened. The wealth of people-to-people exchanges facilitated by the **Japanese Exchange Teaching (JET)** programme and **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)** scholarship have served to foster a mutual affinity. Such ties have been further strengthened by the growing popularity of Japanese culture among the youth of the region and the increased awareness of Caribbean culture in Japan, in particular that of Caribbean music which continues to captivate crowds in Japan.

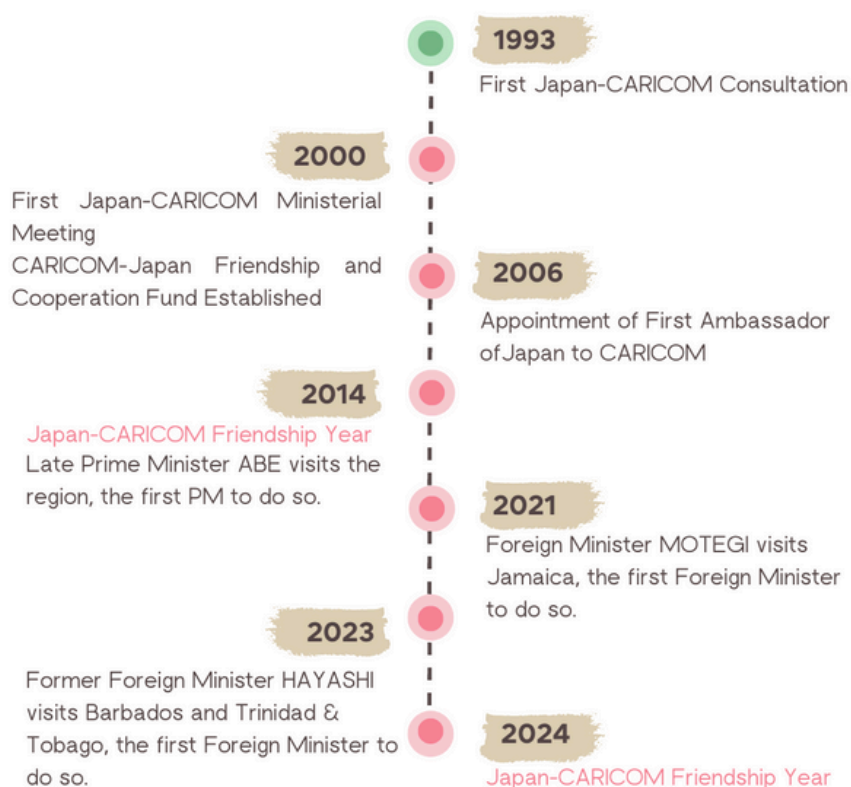


Figure 3 depicts Japan-CARICOM Friendship Milestones (1993- 2024)

Expanding Cooperation

High-level ministerial visits to the region have also been on the rise, highlighted by notable visits from the late ABE Shinzo, former Prime Minister of Japan, and Yoshimasa HAYASHI, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, in 2014 and 2023 respectively. In a similar trend, there have been frequent visits by CARICOM ministers to Japan. In February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, KAMIKAWA Yoko, held a bilateral meeting with Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, with both reiterating their desire to continue to strengthen and expand cooperation between their island nations.¹⁰ Following this visit, on March 26, Minister KAMIKAWA received a courtesy call from Dr. Carla Natalie Barnett, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Kamikawa once again reaffirmed Japan's desire to deepen

cooperation with CARICOM countries in a range of areas, including maritime issues and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) initiative which underscores the pivotal role women play in achieving peace and security.¹¹

Over the years, Japan and the CARICOM region have been forming strong economic, political and cultural ties. Built on shared values and aspirations, the friendship has continued to flourish. "Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024" therefore serves to commemorate the deepening of this friendship by celebrating the many milestones achieved thus far and fostering further collaboration between Japan and region.



Partners in the Regions' Sustainable Development

Japan and CARICOM's long-standing friendship has blossomed into a stellar partnership, with decades of cooperation across various sectors. Over the years, Japan has stood with the region in its most challenging times, partnering with CARICOM states in post-disaster recovery, disaster risk management, economic development and combating the effects of climate change. Through several initiatives, Japan has become a key partner in the region's sustainable development.



Peace and Security

The present crisis in the Republic of Haiti has become a pressing humanitarian and security concern in the region. Japan has responded with tremendous support in these challenging times. Since October 2023, Japan has mobilized an additional **14.32 million USD** to assist Haiti, supporting initiatives to strengthen the nation's security, education, food security and public sector.¹²



Longstanding Trade Partnerships

Large shipments of Jamaica's Blue Mountain Coffee have been Tokyo-bound since 1953. Till present, Japan remains a major export destination for Jamaica's signature coffee. However, much more than just a trade partner, Japan has contributed significantly to the development of Jamaica's coffee industry. Employing a mixture of concessional funding, grants and public-private partnerships, Japan has worked to enhance the Blue Mountain coffee industry in Jamaica including the recent building of the Blue Mountain Coffee Nursery. In honor of this long-standing relationship, January 9th is designated as **Blue Mountain Coffee Day** to commemorate the first shipment of coffee to Japan on January 9, 1953.¹³



Post-Disaster Recovery

When Hurricane Maria touched down in Dominica, the category 5 hurricane left a trail of devastation, including significant damage to two fishery complexes, Roseau and Marigot. In response to this pressing need, Japan provided a grant of approximately 10 million USD for the **Project for the Rehabilitation of Fishery Buildings and Equipment in Roseau and Marigot**. In November 2022, the newly restored fishery complexes were completed, playing a key role in revitalizing the fishing industry and boosting employment in the country.¹⁴



Disaster Risk Management

The onslaught of sargassum seaweed that routinely covers the coast of many Caribbean islands has posed a challenge for states due to its negative impact on tourism sector, fishery industry and marine life. To aid in combating these challenges Japan funded **"The Project for Improving National Sargassum Management Capacities in the Caribbean"** in collaboration with UNDP. Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago are beneficiaries of this three-year project valued at **US\$12.3 million**.¹⁵



Diplomatic Initiative toward Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Forging a Brighter Future Together

Japan's Diplomatic Initiative toward Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

places considerable importance on the region and its role in realizing economic prosperity, peace, rule of law and sustainable development globally.

In the presence of social challenges such as inequality and poverty, Japan affirmed its commitment to work with the LAC region to realize *Human Dignity* and confront pressing global challenges. To do so, Japan will strategically promote cooperation with regional partners across a wide array of issues. Such an approach is a complementary one to bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Through this approach, Japan seeks to promote triangular cooperation thus, developing "diplomacy with diverse networking".¹⁶

Additionally, the initiative outlines areas of further collaboration with LAC in key areas

including free trade, disaster prevention, gender equality, marine affairs and realizing "a world without nuclear weapons."

Japan is striving to enhance economic cooperation by strengthening supply chains, supporting start-ups, and developing regional sectors. As part of these efforts, on February 07, a grant aid of 1.2 billion yen was provided to Jamaica for "**The Economic and Social Development Programme**". This grant includes a fisheries and marine research vessel to monitor climate change effects on Jamaica's marine ecosystems, promoting sustainable resource management and advancing the fisheries sector.¹⁷

Japan-CARICOM relations have become a global testament of the benefits of cooperation and multilateralism in shaping a sustainable and equitable future. With new projects being implemented in the region and a deepened commitment to tackle pressing international issues, there is much to look forward to in 2024 and beyond.

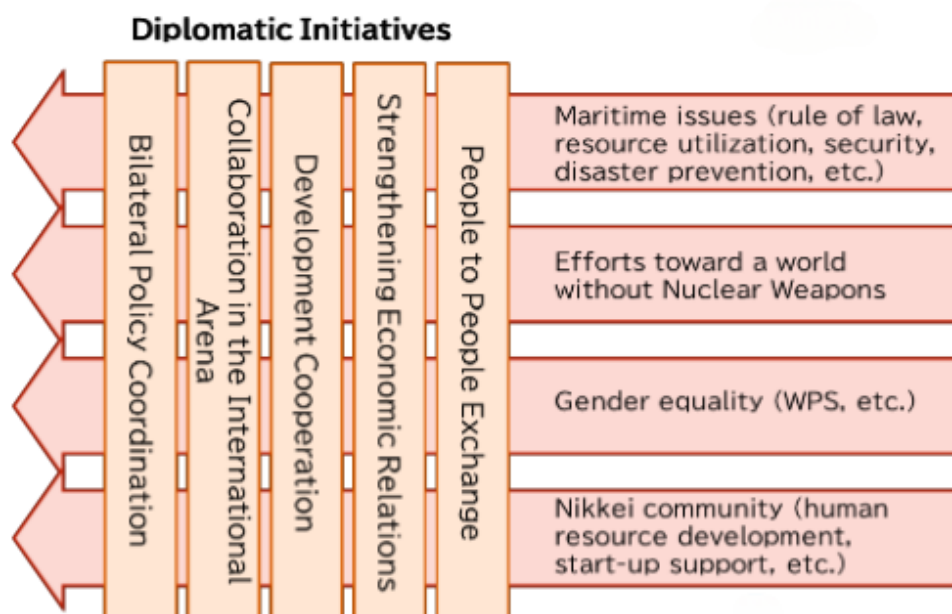


Figure 4 shows the Diplomatic initiatives toward Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (May, 2024)



PRIME MINISTER KISHIDA OUTLINES PATHWAY TO HUMAN DIGNITY

"Paving a Pathway to 'Human Dignity' with Latin America and the Caribbean"

In a recent speech at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, Prime Minister Fumio KISHIDA elaborated on his vision for Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Prime Minister KISHIDA clearly set out three critical areas in which Japan and LAC could leverage their longstanding cooperation to achieve a world that cares for "human dignity".



Ensuring a free and open international order based on the rule of law



Overcoming common challenges that humanity faces such as the environment and climate change



Pursuing prosperity that can be shared by all people in the world and does not come at others' expense

Prime Minister KISHIDA reflected on the enduring JAPAN-LAC partnership on global matters, in particular peace and security. With LAC being the first region in the world to be a nuclear weapon free zone and Japan being the only wartime victim of nuclear bombs, they have become unwavering allies in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Further, Prime Minister KISHIDA highlighted the significance of embracing diverse approaches and fostering mutual learning to forge a brighter future. Prime Minister KISHIDA stressed that respect for different "paths" and country ownership were crucial to fruitful cooperation and realizing a future of peace and prosperity.

"The basic premise for Japan's "path" to resolving issues is diversity and inclusiveness. Through dialogue with our partners, Latin America and the Caribbean, we intend to prove that such an approach is indeed possible. Our cooperation will illuminate the "pathway" to a bright future for the world. Toward cooperation, not division and confrontation. Let us demonstrate this model to the world together."

- Fumio KISHIDA, Prime Minister of Japan

Read Prime Minister KISHIDA's full speech: www.mofa.go.jp/files/100665019.pdf



CELEBRATING JAPAN-CARICOM FRIENDSHIP YEAR 2024

International Language Fair

The Embassy of Japan's calendar of events for Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024 started off with an educational booth at the Barbados Community College (BCC) on February 1.



L-R Mr. Paul Blackman, Director of Barbados Language Centre, Ambassador Ms. Kayoko Fukushima, the then First Secretary Dr. Sakai leading a traditional folk dance called Bon-odori.

An Interactive, Inclusive and International Exchange



Patrons browsing calendars on display at the Japanese Calendar Exhibition 2024

From February 6 to 10, 2024, hundreds of Barbadians attended the exhibition which detailed the long history of Japanese calendar preparation and displayed a wide array of Japanese calendars. In keeping with this year's theme "An Interactive, Inclusive and International Exchange", the calendar exhibition also featured a series of interactive activities for attendees to enjoy including an origami and kimono workshop.

Emperor's Naruhito's 64th Birthday



L-R H.E. The Most Honourable Dame Sandra Mason, President of Barbados and Ms. Kayoko Fukushima, Ambassador of Japan to Barbados

In honour of the 64th birthday of the Emperor of Japan, Emperor Naruhito, the Embassy of Japan held a grand reception on February 23, 2024. Friends of Japan from across the island, gathered to commemorate this momentous occasion.

Anime Lecture



Professor Mitsuteru TAKAHASHI presenting a lecture to attendees in Barbados.

On March 1, 2024, the Embassy of Japan held a public Animation Lecture on "Japanese Animation and the Content Industry" by guest lecturer, Professor Mitsuteru TAKAHASHI, Dean of the Faculty of Digital Communication at Digital Hollywood University in Japan, at the Daphne Joseph Hackett Theatre in Queen's Park.



Ambassador Fukushima and Professor Mitsuteru TAKAHASHI (centre) with BCC students who attended the special lecture.

The deep interest in Japanese anime by the Barbadian public was further highlighted by the engaging Q&A session, with many keen to learn more about studying in Japan and developing careers in the field of animation.

Culture, Literature for our future!



L-R The Hon. Kirk Humphrey, Minister of People Empowerment & Elder Affairs, Ms. Kayoko FUKUSHIMA, Ambassador of Japan to Barbados, Alissandra Cummins, Director of BMHS and Ms. Harriet Pierce, Librarian of the Shilstone Memorial Library, BMHS

On March 25, 2024, the Embassy of Japan, in partnership with the Barbados Museum & Historical Society (BMHS), held a handover ceremony for donated books from the Read Japan Project at the Walled Garden Theatre. The donated books provide Barbadian readers invaluable insights into the culture and history of Japan, promoting mutual understanding and dismantling cultural barriers.

Music, Dance & Friendship



L-R Japanese performer, Shogo Hiyoshi; Director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, Alissandra Cummins; performer, Kaname Hanasaki; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Kerrie Symmonds; President of Barbados, The Most Honourable Dame Sandra Mason; Japan's Ambassador to Barbados, Kayoko Fukushima and performer, Tokijyo Hanasaki at the performance on April 27.

In April, the Embassy of Japan organized a traditional dance and music performance and an interactive workshop led by three visiting Japanese artistes. On the evening of April 27, 2024, over 200 patrons gathered in the Walled Garden Theatre at the BMHS for a night of captivating traditional Japanese dance and musical performances. The event featured three performances by Tokijyo Hanasaki, Kaname HANASAKI and Shogo HIYOSHI.



Tokijyo HANASAKI performing a Jiutamai dance entitled "Yamauba"



Follow us on Instagram and visit our website to stay updated on our future events!



Bajans in Japan

A NEW ADVENTURE

Meet Christina



Christina Fontenelle, JET Cohort 2023, with a mascot from the Yokkaichi Food Festival

I'm Christina and I'm a Barbadian Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) located in Mie Prefecture, Japan. I've been living in Japan for about 7 months now and my life has been characterized by one word: adventure! My experiences here have been very exciting and I'm always eager to try new things, go to new events and experience the local culture.

From Oistins to Mie Prefecture

Mie Prefecture is most famous for Ise Jingu. Ise Jingu is the most religiously significant shrine for Shinto practitioners in Japan. It is known as the "Soul of Japan" and is located in Ise city. Mie Prefecture is also home to the Ama (海女); divers famous for collecting pearls and seafood all without using oxygen tanks! It is a role traditionally filled by women.

A dream come true

I've been interested in Japan for a while, and I was first introduced to Japanese culture, folklore, and history when I decided to take Japanese language classes on a whim in my second year of university. I couldn't help but be intrigued by the rich history behind many of the colorful festivals and traditions and I was interested in one day coming to Japan to experience these things for myself. It was also at university that I was introduced to the JET program.



Mie Prefecture

Surprises in Japan

I was actually surprised by the amount of English used here! At major train stations and in large chain supermarkets like AEON, there may be English signs and directions provided. But don't rely on it too much though. Practice your hiragana and katakana!

Another surprise was the weather. During Japanese summer, the temperature is similar to Barbados, with one notable difference - the humidity. This will cause you to feel wet and



uncomfortable, even when it's not too hot. Additionally, Japan experiences winter. I was able to see snow for the very first-time during January! It was a bit difficult to adjust to the cold weather, but I'm used to it now, even though my students giggle when they see me bundled up tightly.



Snow along the streets of Japan (Christina's first snow)

A day in the life

My typical day as an ALT is fairly simple. I wake up, have breakfast and sprint for the 7:50 train to school. Work starts at 8:30 am, and I have an average of 3 English conversation classes a day. So far, I've been able to integrate word games and charades into my classes. Between classes I try to engage the students by asking about their plans for the day or the weekend. Work ends at 4:15 pm and I take the train home. I think interacting with the students is the best part of my job. They often have really interesting goals, and they love all kinds of sports. It's fun to talk to them and I often get to practice my Japanese if they don't understand what I've said in English.

Favorite Memories

Some of my favourite memories so far are attending my first fireworks festival and seeing snow for the first time.

Language Barrier

I knew a fair amount of Japanese before coming to Japan. Before university I had begun to teach myself because I thought it was an interesting language. After I began to take Japanese language classes at university, they were so much fun that I ended up completing a minor in Japanese almost without realizing it. This was definitely advantageous when I came to Japan.

Advice for those interested in JET

My advice for anyone who wants to participate in the JET programme is to have some knowledge of Japanese. It will make daily life and communication much easier for you. We often take simple things for granted like being able to read the labels on food or being able to ask the cashier at Chefette to upsize your chips to a large. Sometimes when the simplest things feel impossible it can become very overwhelming. Knowing some Japanese will help you to overcome these feelings.

Finally, be ready to engage your students and co-workers! For many people this will be the very first-time hearing about Barbados. Be patient and consider this as a valuable learning experience for everyone. Teachers may ask about our customs and climate, and many will be very shocked to know that we do not experience winter in Barbados! A great way to encourage the students to speak English is to ask about upcoming festivals and tell them about Bajan festivals and holidays and how we celebrate them.

*The JET Program provides eligible Barbadians the opportunity to work in Japan as an assistant language teacher. Visit www.bb.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/jet.html to learn more.



"I've been living in Japan for about 7 months now and my life has been characterized by one word: adventure!"



Nara Deer Park

The Deers swarmed me right after this photo was taken. I had a tangerine in my bag. Big Mistake!



Yokkaichi City, Mie prefecture

My home away from home



Nagoya Castle
Nagoya, Japan



Learn more

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