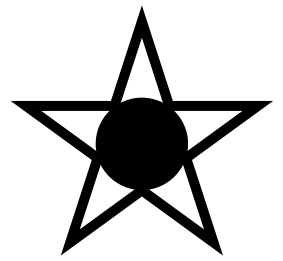


# ASAHIKAWA INFO



December 2024 , Volume 337



Discussion on the Future of Asahikawa 2030 : International Residents' Roundtable (November 2024)

## Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido

### Events at the Asahikawa International Center

#### FALL Fun Fridays : (LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS)



Meet and connect with interesting English speaking locals and international residents of Asahikawa, all in English! relax and relate on Fun Friday!

**Free for volunteer leaders fluent in English!**

To volunteer for Fun Friday, please contact our center and request for John or Ishibe: **0166-25-7491**

**Dates:** Oct. 11th & 25th, Nov. 8th & 22nd, Dec. 13th & 27th

**Times:** 13:00pm-14:00pm ~Afternoon~ 2nd and 4th Friday of the month  
18:30-20:30pm ~Evening~ 2nd Friday of the month

**Location:** Asahikawa International Center, Common Meeting Room (1)  
(Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome)

**Charge:** ¥1,500 for 3 months (**Free for volunteer leaders**)



## Guide



Events in Asahikawa



Events by Asahikawa International Center

## Inside this issue...

- 01 ..... Upcoming Events
- 04 ..... AIC Project Report
- 06..... Life in Asahikawa
- 08..... A Baby Boomer Learns English
- 12..... AIC Bulletin Board

**Check out our website and social media for information regarding the center or any upcoming events!**



**For further information or to register for events, contact:**

Asahikawa International Committee (AIC)(ISHIBE Satoko)  
or Coordinator for International Relations (CIR)  
(MABILANGAN John)

**Address:** Asahikawa International Center Feeeal 7F,  
1-jo-dori 8-chome, Asahikawa 070-0031

**Tel:** (0166) 25-7491

**Fax:** (0166) 23-4924

**Email:** cir\_kokusai@city.asahikawa.lg.jp

**Website:**<http://asahikawaic.jp/en/>



# Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido

**Asahikawa City Illumination Light Up 2024**  
**街あかりイルミネーション2024年**



Check out the christmas lights all throughout  
 Heiwa-dori Shopping Street

**Event Details**

**Date:** 2024/11/30 (Sat)-2025/3/9 (Sun)

**Time:** 16:30-23:00

**Location:** Heiwa-dori Shopping Street



**Chanoyu**  
**ちやのゆ**



Learn about authentic Japanese traditional culture and  
 art form through tea ceremony "sado"

**Event Details**

**Date:** Third Saturday of every month

**Location:** Kagura Community Center  
 (2 F Tatami Room) (Kagura 3-jo 6-chome)

**Contact:** 0166-54-3885 (Sato)

**Participation Fee:** ¥1,500



## Community Center Events

### Nagayama Public Hall 永山公民館

**Location:** Nagayama Public Hall | Large Hall( Nagayama 3-Jo 19-chome)

**Parking:** Available

**Participation Fee:** FREE

The following listings are by the Nagayama Public Hall. Participate according to the provided dates.



**Afterschool Study Space**

**Date:** 12/2, 12/9, 12/16, 12/23 (Mondays)

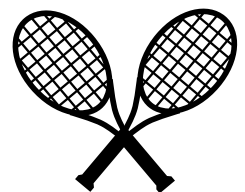
**Time:** 13:00 PM-17:00 PM



**Mini Volley and Sponge Ball Tennis**

**Date:** Every Thursday of Dec. (12/5, 12/12, 12/19, 12/26)

**Time:** 9:00 AM-12:00 PM



**Badminton and Table Tennis**

**Date:** Saturdays of the Dec. (12/7, 12/21, 12/28)

**Time:** 9:00 AM-12:00 PM



**Note that the above events are in Japanese.**  
**All questions regarding them will be answered in Japanese**

## December 2024 Calendar **EVENTS IN ASAHIKAWA**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Afterschool Study Space Opens at Nagayama	3	4	5 Community Mini Volley and Spongebball Tennis at Nagayama	6	7 Community Badminton & Table Tennis at Nagayama
8	9 Afterschool Study Space Opens at Nagayama	10	11	12 Community Mini Volley and Spongebball Tennis at Nagayama	13 <b>FUN FRIDAY</b> Afternoon & Evening	14
15	16 Afterschool Study Space Opens at Nagayama	17	18	19 Flights to Incheon, Korea Open Community Mini Volley and Spongebball Tennis at Nagayama	20	21 Community Badminton & Table Tennis at Nagayama
22	23 Afterschool Study Space Opens at Nagayama	24	25 Flights to Nagoya Open	26 Community Mini Volley and Spongebball Tennis at Nagayama	27 <b>FUN FRIDAY</b> Afternoon	28 Community Badminton & Table Tennis at Nagayama
29	30 AIC Closed Until 1/4	31 AIC Closed Until 1/4				



### Asahikawa Airport Winter Holidays Exclusive Flight

*Referenced from Asahikawa Airport website and local news outlets*



### Asahikawa ↔ Nagoya

**Operating Dates:** 2024/12/25-2025/1/6

**Destination:** Chubu Centrair International Airport



### Asahikawa ↔ South Korea

**Operating Dates:** 2024/12/19~2025/3/29

**Location:** Incheon International Airport

**Note:** On Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday



**NOTICE:** Unless specified otherwise, most events will be conducted in Japanese.





By John Mabilangan



In collaboration with the Asahikawa International/City Relations Division, Public Information Division, Asahikawa International Center, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the "Discussion on the Future of Asahikawa 2030: International Residents' Roundtable" was held on November 16, 2024.

International Residents of diverse nationalities and backgrounds connected and shared their experiences and opinions regarding their lives in the city; concluding with an opinion exchange with the mayor.

During the roundtable, many international residents expressed their appreciation for the city's balance of urban amenities and natural surroundings. While some noted certain inconveniences, such as limited public transportation options, many participants emphasized that they found Asahikawa to be a comfortable and pleasant place to live.

Many of the international residents concluded that one of their biggest concerns were the flow of information. With many of them reliant on verbal news, there is a need to improve the flow and access of information especially to more digital platforms. In doing so, their quality of life in Asahikawa could be improved.







### Remarks Regarding Asahikawa

- Nice and quiet
- Reasonable-sized city
- Abundance of nature to enjoy
- Delicious food
- Kind residents
- Car is needed to enjoy the city
- Public transport could be better



### What They Do in Their Spare Time

- Camping
- Winter sports
- Driving around Hokkaido
- Hiking
- Trying restaurants and bars
- Going out with friends

### Sources of Information

- Listening to coworkers and friends
- Social Media (Instagram, Tiktok, etc)
- Google
- Flyers
- Asatan
- Liner

### What International Residents Seek from the City

- More accessible information.
- Guide on living and working in Japan
- A service to help guide foreigners when they face trouble at work or with personal affairs in Japan.
- More events for foreigners and international residents to connect.
- Guide regarding visas in Japan.
- Improved transportation services.
- Language exchange opportunities
- Networking events for young people



# Life in Asahikawa

## Facilities for You!

By John Mabilangan



In Asahikawa, several public facilities, particularly public halls, community centers and gymnasiums, which provide spaces for learning, recreation, and relaxation for people of all ages. These venues not only allow individuals to pursue their hobbies or learn something new, but they also foster connections within the local community. Visiting these facilities is a great way to enjoy leisure activities while engaging with others residents from Asahikawa.

### What Are Public Halls?

Public halls, commonly known as 公民館 (kouminkan) are facilities that were established based on the law in order to promote lifestyle and social welfare through workshops and lectures; as well as allow local residents to rent out the facilities for community activities and clubs. Public hall are spaces where residents of all ages can gather to socialize, learn, and do all sorts of activities. Public halls can host several community circles (clubs) and events with many diverse themes from cooking and chorus to calligraphy and language exchange. Each public hall has their own unique clubs and circles so try to find one that suits your interests! If you have trouble finding something you are interested in, making your own circle is also possible.

### Where to Find Them?

Currently, there are about 20 public halls spread throughout the city all varying in size, rooms, and activities. Simply a quick google search will help you find the nearest public hall near you. One aspect that makes public halls great is that because they are located in or within reasonable distance from residential areas, the majority of them are accessible through public transportation or are of walking distance. Currently the largest public halls near downtown Asahikawa are as follows from largest to smallest:

Facility	Address
Nagayama Public Hall 永山公民館	Nagayama 3-jo 19-chome 4-ban 15-go
Kagura Public Hall 神楽公民館	Kagura 3-jo 6-chome 1-ban 12-go
Central Public Hall 中央公民館	Kamui 2-jo 9-chome 1-ban 19-go





## Kagura Public Hall

The closest public hall the Asahikawa Station is Kagura Public Hall (神楽公民館・かぐらこうみんか) . Located right at the heart of Kagura, from Asahikawa Station, this public hall is 14 minutes away by walk, 5 minutes by bike, or 3 minutes by car.

The facility has 3 classrooms, 1 auditorium, 1 meeting room, 1 crafts room, 1 kitchen, 1 Japanese-style tatami room as well as rental equipment such chairs, tables, pianos, tvs, and many more. These rooms can be rented for either club activities or resident-sponsored events at fixed price set by the facility.

Kagura Public Hall hosts several events for its participants such as “Cooking With Leftovers!” cooking class where participants try to tackle food loss by creating dishes with typical leftover cooking ingredients or “Snow Shoe Winter Hike” where residents of all ages put on their snow shoes to hike around Asahikawa’s Mihonrin (forest of foreign species) during the winter. The public hall offers these events in order to create opportunities for city residents to learn and socialize with the community. This would surely be a great chance to meet and connect with all sorts of new people!

## Clubs at Kagura Public Hall

Like many public halls in Asahikawa, Kagura Public Hall is home to several community circles and clubs that are open to the public to join. There are all sorts of community circles available from musical/instrument-related clubs and martial arts, to English language exchange and Information Technology. Each community circle and/or club is not just a good opportunity to pass the time or learn about hobbies, but also a chance to connect with the local community!

Club Genres
Biwa (Japanese Lute)
Gospel
Soba Uchi (Soba-making circle)
Shorinji Kenpo Based Kickboxing
Karate
Accordion
Horn



### Fun Christmas Piano Concert Play Date (おやこで たのしむ クリスマスコンサート)

Connect with families in Asahikawa! Come join Kagura Public Hall for a morning of music, reading, relaxation for parents and their young children to enjoy!

#### Event Details:

**Date:** 12/17 (Tues)

**Time:** 10:00~

**1st Half** Piano & Picture Book Reading 10:30~11:00

**2nd Half** Relaxation with Classical Music 11:10~11:40

**Location:** Kagura Public Hall Kirarin (Kagura 3-jo 6-chome 1-12)

**Participation Fee:** FREE

**Target Audience:** Babies, preschool children, and their guardians

## Asahikawa Board of Education Community Education Department Public Hall Projects Division

Kagura Civic Exchange Center 2F, Kagura 3-jo 6-chome, 1-12,  
Asahikawa 070-8003

Phone Number: 0166-61-6194 (Japanese Language Only)



# A Baby Boomer Learns English

Episode 7: Christmas Holidays in Bavaria (1993)

Written by Noriaki Gentsu



**Dinner at Dorint:** Akihiko (left), me, Mami, Rumiko;  
**Traditional Bavarian wall paintings:** Mami (left), Rumiko; **Dorint Sporthotel**

(Continued from Episode 6)

## Introduction

A family gathering during the Christmas holidays in 1993 in Germany changed many things: it tightened our family ties, helped us develop and deepen friendships with German families, and shifted my focus beyond business to European history and culture. Here is how it happened.

## A Family Reunion

During the Christmas holidays of 1993, my family got together in Lehrte for the first time since 1990, when my life and business started in Germany. Until then, my family had been pursuing their own paths: my daughter, Mami, as a university student; my son, Akihiko, as a baseball player striving for the high school national championship, known as Koshien; and my wife, Rumiko, managing all the family matters from which I had distanced myself. When my son's efforts ultimately ended in vain, we all needed some time to lift our spirits; and so, a two-week family reunion was in order.

They arrived at Hannover Airport via London Heathrow on the day my company began its Christmas holidays. That evening went by quickly as we had a lot to catch up on in such a short amount of time. Without social media like we have today, every small topic felt new and enjoyable. Eventually, they got sleepy due to jet lag, and we ended the day.

## Tracing My Paths in Germany

The next morning, after quickly introducing my family to my neighbors, I drove them to places they should know from my life in Germany. My office at Peine was closed for the Christmas holidays at the time, so it was just us when we visited.

We drove to Celle, where my golf club was, and rambled through the old town. We savored our time together, watching people stroll along the street illuminated with various warm lights, which were a little different from the cool blue colors of LED today.

Afterwards, we drove to Osterode am Harz, where I first started my life in Germany in

1990. After stopping by the flat where I had once lived, we drove to a steak restaurant on a small hilltop, which my Japanese colleagues often referred to as “Let’s go eat at ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP” instead of its correct German name. Both my son and I took on the pound steak challenge. He finished it quickly while I was still struggling. We smiled at each other as my son felt proud of eating faster than me.

As the day grew shorter and the air got chilly, we spent time chatting over warm drinks in a café at the old town. We drove further to the Christmas market in Hannover, where I tasted Glühwein (hot wine) for the first time. I would develop a craving for it later at Christmas markets back in Osaka and Sapporo.

### **Meeting Lola on our 700km Drive to Bavaria**

Two days later, we headed for a resort hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The Winter Olympics of 1936 took place in two villages, Garmisch and Partenkirchen, which were then combined for the occasion. We left Lehrte quite early because I had to challenge myself with a drive of over 700 km in 8 hours. I drove at a comfortable speed on the efficient German highway network, which especially thrilled my son, as is often the case for a young speedster. Driving with my family’s chatter in the background felt so comfortable, too.

We eventually passed Munich (München) and switched to the highway A95 (A for Autobahn), making a detour to Oberammergau to meet Lola. She was a long-time friend of Jutta (my friend in Lehrte). Jutta would tell me about her boarding school days with Lola in Rosenheim. During their summer vacation, they would take a train to Oberammergau to stay together at Lola’s home for some days before Jutta went back by train to her hometown Leipzig. Jutta repeatedly recommended me to visit Lola and see Bavaria (Bayern) for our holidays that year.

When we met Lola, it felt as though we had already known each other, as each of us had heard a lot from Jutta. Though our time together was short, we had an intimate chat

over coffee and cinnamon cookies, Lola’s specialty, which has since become my wife Rumiko’s favorite recipe.

Lola briefly gave us an overview about Oberammergau's religious history, the story of King Ludwig II, and the tumultuous years of the US occupation army coming through the Italian front. Among these, we most enjoyed the story of the Passion Play, a world-famous theatrical event. The play originated as a villager’s vow to perform it every ten years if they were protected from the plague. The village remained untouched with the plague stopping just at the neighboring village. Since then, they have kept their promise for nearly 400 years. Following this visit to Oberammergau, Lola would become one of the most unforgettable people from my life in Germany.

### **Dorint Hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen**

We switched back to the A95 and headed for our hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. We drove through high snowy mountains on both sides, entering the northern edge of the Alps. When we finally arrived at the hotel at dusk, although there was no snow around, there were numerous authentic German Christmas decorations. Though our children had their own room, they joined us in ours. They were fascinated by the gorgeous and comfortable facilities of our room. The excitement felt like our family had gone back in time and our children were kids again, looking at their surroundings with a sense of thrill and adventure.

### **Castles of King Ludwig II**

On December 23, we explored two castles built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria. At Linderhof Palace, we enjoyed two features:

The first was the Mirror Room which created a stunning visual effect with its extensive use of mirrors, which covered almost every part of the walls. When you stand between two opposing mirrors, your image reflects itself back and forth infinitely, creating a magical and surreal experience of endless reflections.

The second feature, the Magical Table, was designed to be lowered through the floor to the kitchen below, where the meal would be set by the servants below and then raised back up to the dining room. This allowed King Ludwig II to enjoy his meals without the presence of servants, giving him a sense of solitude and privacy.

Next, as we headed to Neuschwanstein Castle, we crossed the border into Austria, passed by lakes and then re-entered Germany. Unlike my first visit in 1984, there were no border control gates anymore within EU countries. As the day was coming to an end, we mainly enjoyed taking photos outside the beautiful castle before heading back to our hotel.

### **Zugspitze- Highest Mountain in Germany**

On December 24, we were looking forward to a white Christmas, yet there still wasn't any snow around the hotel during breakfast. We wondered and decided to ask our waitress, who was clad in an authentic Bavarian local costume, busily but pleasantly moving from table to table. I asked her, "We've been wondering if there will be a White Christmas here." "Sure! We'll have it," she replied. "Why?" I asked. "It's always been so. We believe it will snow on Christmas," she responded, smiling reassuringly.

Later that morning, we took a cogwheel train from the town to the Zugspitze plateau (2,600 meters above sea level), where we enjoyed stunning views of the surrounding Alps. Nobody expected how this would have affected our Christmas Eve. Whenever my family chats about our travels during the 1993 Christmas holidays, we cannot help but touch upon a bittersweet memory about my wife Rumiko's missed Christmas Eve dinner.

Likely due to the drastic change in air pressure at the top of the Zugspitze, she felt sick and had no appetite when seated at the dinner table. After the appetizer, she decided to go back and stay in the room, telling the three of us to go on without her. Unable to fully savor the dinner, we went back to our rooms and chatted rather quietly so as not to disturb Rumiko's sleep.

### **White Christmas**

The next morning, December 25, Rumiko felt right as rain, as though the bout of sickness from the evening before had never happened. We found ourselves in a winter wonderland, with snow falling gently around the hotel, proving that the waitress was right. She came to our table during breakfast to say, "Merry Christmas," proudly adding, "Here is the snow you wanted."

That day, we took our time to enjoy a long stroll around the quiet town. It helped us transform the bitter memory of the awkward dinner the night before into a sweet one. I wished that moment could last forever.

### **Changes Brought from This Travel**

The finale of the holidays that year included two family parties with Jutta, her daughter Sylvia, and her grandson Oliver. Jutta was eager to hear about our meeting with Lola. I played interpreter between my children and Jutta's family as their conversation carried on late into the night. My son Akihiko made them burst into laughter with pantomime. We have kept our family ties mainly through emails between Sylvia and me. Every time my family gathers, we feel united as we reminisce about those nights.

What started in 1991 as a short encounter with Jutta at the entrance hall of my apartment in Lehrte has developed into lasting ties and new connections, such as my friendship with Lola. Lola piqued our interest in the stories of King Ludwig II and other related historical anecdotes. In the following years, my wife and I have visited her three more times during summer vacations on our way to Italy. During our visits, she took us to see the museum for the Passion Play and to meet one of the village's former actors who had starred as Jesus Christ decades ago. What a great experience!

For me, these family ties I've built while living in Germany are important. They motivate my wife and me to support the foreign residents in this town by inviting them to our homeparties, which enriches our retired life in Biei. More importantly, the story of our



Christmas holidays in 1993 has been passed on from my children to their children, inspiring my daughter and my two grandchildren to take German as their second language in college. My hope is that this episode will motivate them to further brush up on their language skills and grasp the importance of enjoying foreign cultures-- something which took me decades to realize this.

**To be continued in the last episode.**



*Spring 1934, Oberammergau*

Lola (left) and Jutta in Oberammergau (1934)



Our paths in Bavaria (1993) (Source:Google Maps)



**At Lola's home:** (from left) Mami, Rumiko, Lola, me with Lola's cat (1993)



**At Sylvia's home:** (from left) Oliver, Akihiko, Mami, Rumiko, Sylvia, & Jutta (1993)

# AIC BULLETIN BOARD

Useful  
Websites for  
Living in  
Asahikawa

**asatan**

<https://asatan.com/>



**LINERWEB**  
旭川・道北エリアの実態が分かる

<https://www.liner.jp/>



**Genre:** Food,  
Lifestyle,  
Travel, Local  
News



## NOTICE

The Asahikawa International Center will be **closed** during the following dates:

**December 30th, 2024 - January 4th, 2025**

**Come to the Asahikawa International Lounge! We have...**

a free cultural exchange lounge and study space



library with book and DVD rentals



The Asahikawa International Center (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome) has free Wi-Fi available for public use. If you reside in Asahikawa, registration for a user card is required. Please feel free to come by anytime, as well as check out some of the other services and activities available at the Asahikawa International Center!

## Spread the Word!

Contribute to the AIC newsletter and share any interesting information you may have with other readers. You may write on any topic including: items to buy/shell, offers for culture/language exchange, or write an essay about your life in Asahikawa or your hometown. The article should not be profit-related! Please send your submissions to us at the AIC.

The AIC offers many services to make your life in Asahikawa more enjoyable. Here are just a few:

**Volunteer Guide:** Volunteers are registered to help translate and interpret.

**Event Volunteer:** The AIC plans many exciting events throughout the year, such as Friendship Parties.

**Homestay:** Families are registered to welcome you into their homes for an overnight stay or just an afternoon visit.

**Why not become a volunteer and help plan these events?**



Asahikawa International Committee

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TEL: (0166)25-7491 FAX: (0166)23-4924

E-mail: cir\_kokusai@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp

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upcoming events!

X (formerly twitter)



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**\*\*The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AIC or the City of Asahikawa.\*\***