
MLI Gazette

The Spring Issue

Spring in LA

In March, spring is coming to Los Angeles. The weather is getting warmer, the sunshine is getting longer, and the flowers that bloom on the street color the city beautifully.

Flowers have different shapes and colors, such as pink and yellow, but they are so harmonious that they stop people passing by. When a soft wind blows, a pleasant scent spreads, and at that moment, it brings small happiness in the city.

Why don't you stop your busy lives for a while and go out to look at flowers with your loved ones? Feeling the scent of spring, smiling and talking together, the day becomes full of happy smiles. That's how we warmly cheer each other up for the days to come. —*Jisun*



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It's Lunar New Year – But not in Japan

Lunar New Year is the first day of the lunar calendar. Many Asian countries celebrate New Year and each country's version has its own character. For example, in China, firecrackers, dragon dances and red decorations are characteristic features. In Vietnam, they decorate with peach blossoms and eat bánh chưng, a savory rice cake made from glutinous rice, mung beans, and pork, wrapped in banana leaves and boiled for hours.

I realized through this work that Americans celebrate Lunar New Year more than Japanese people. In Japan, the Lunar New Year is not a big thing, so we don't do anything special. I think it is interesting that there are such small differences even within Asian countries. —*Mitsuteru*



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THE OSCARS

a.k.a. the Academy Awards

The Academy Awards are one of the most famous film award ceremonies in the world, celebrating the best achievements in movies each year.

One movie, *Sinners*, received a record 16 nominations this year. This is the highest number of nominations in Oscar history. Also, a new award category for casting was introduced.

This year's Oscars (broadcast live on Sunday March 15th at 4pm on ABC, Hulu and FuboTV) will include many interesting films. Some are very artistic and meaningful. It shows that movies can inspire people everywhere. A lot of people are looking forward to the Academy Awards. —*Rin*

MY FAVORITE ACADEMY AWARDED MOVIE

The Academy Awards is a symbol of the year's film achievements. I want to introduce my favorite Academy Awarded movie, *Everything, Everywhere, All At Once*. This movie was nominated for 11 Oscars in 2023 and won 7. However, this is not the only reason I love this movie.

This movie shows us that we have the ability to define our success. Evelyn, the main character in this movie, could choose any life she wants in the multiverse. She may feel like she is trivial at first. Dwelling on "what ifs," wondering what might happen if we made different choices, destroys us. We cannot be everything, everywhere, all at once, but you can change your perspective on your life.

If you are dissatisfied or regretting your past, I strongly recommend this movie. If you watch this, you will realize the power of seeing things through eyes of laughter and kindness. —*Juyeon*



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THE WINTER OLYMPICS

The Winter Olympics are held every 4 years in February. Athletes from all over the world compete in sports such as skiing, snowboarding, and skating. This year, the Games are being held in Milan, Italy, from February 6 to February 22.

According to the news on February 23, Japan won 24 medals, the highest number in its Winter Olympic history.

Japan won 5 gold medals, 7 silver medals, and 12 bronze medals in different events. Snowboarding was especially successful, and Japan won 9 medals in these sports. This was the highest number of gold medals among all countries. The number of gold medals was also the same as the record in Nagano Olympic in 1998. Many Japanese athletes showed great skill and strong spirit during the Games.

The Winter Olympics bring people from all over the world together through sports. The athletes' performances are very exciting and inspiring. They show us the importance of hard work and never giving up. I feel proud as a Japanese person when I see their success. The Winter Olympics give hope and dreams to many people. —Karen

Japanese Figure Skaters Win Olympic Gold

In February 2026, the Winter Olympics were held in Milan, Italy, and Japanese figure skaters Rikuryu Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara won the gold medal in pairs figure skating, achieving the highest score in the history of this event.

During the free program, Miura and Kihara performed an incredible lift and triple toe loop. Their performance fascinated the audience, and they got a high TES, or Total Element Score. In the background of victory, there was a lot of hardship which they overcame. Before they teamed up, both of them struggled to get a good score in the World Championships. Then they formed a pair in 2019 and have won one competition after another ever since. If they hadn't teamed up, they would never have won the gold medal at this event for the first time as a Japanese skater.

The victory of Rikuryu will affect almost all Japanese skaters. So far, Japan has had only one quota in pairs figure skating at the Olympics. However, it brought two new quotas based on the rule. So, a lot of skaters get chances to go to the Olympics, and it will contribute to the expansion of pair figure skaters. Also, we will be able to expect more development of not only pairs figure skating but also the entire Japanese figure skating community. —Wakana



KOREAN SUPERSTITIONS:

Things Only Koreans Are Afraid of



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Do you know everything about Korean culture? Think again! Beyond K-pop and K-dramas, there is a hidden culture of "K-superstitions" that indicates what Koreans do in their daily lives. Today, we're exploring the mysterious myths that still are a big part of our daily life.

Check them all out in the column to the right! Do you still follow any of these rules? Even if we don't believe them, they are a fun part of Korean culture. What are some well-known famous superstitions in your country? Do you have something common with Korean myths? Be careful tonight and don't forget to set a timer on your fan! –Minkyung

"The Red Pen Mystery"

If you're using a red pen in Korea, be careful! In Korean culture, writing someone's name in red is not recommended. This myth comes from the tradition of people who have passed away were written in red at funerals. Because of this, writing a living person's name in red means bringing bad luck or wishing death! Put the red pen away and take the blue or black pen out!

"Fan Death"

One of the most unique superstitions in Korea is the fear of electric fans at night. Many Koreans believe that sleeping in a closed room with a fan can be dangerous. They think it causes suffocation. Even though there is no scientific evidence, you can still notice that many fans in Korea come with timers to avoid "fan death"!

"Miyeok-guk (Seaweed soup)" – Don't slip on your Exam!

Seaweed soup is one of Koreans' favorite foods; we often eat it to celebrate our birthdays. However, it's a 'NO' on exam days. Because seaweed is a slippery ingredient, Koreans believe that eating seaweed will make your brain slip, leading to failing the exam. Instead, Koreans eat sticky foods like rice cakes or traditional candy to make all the answers stick to their brains! :)

"No Whistling After Dark"

Have you ever whistled at night? In Korea, it is a well-known superstition that whistling at night attracts snakes or even ghosts! If you do, parents might say "stop!". So, parents commonly used the snake or ghost story to keep their young children quiet at night. Even today, many Koreans feel awkward whistling in the dark.

VALENTINE'S DAY

in Japan



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Valentine's Day in Japan is different from many Western countries. In Japan, women usually give chocolates to men on February 14th. This tradition began as a marketing idea by chocolate companies, but it has become an important cultural event. There are different types of chocolates, such as *honmei-choco* for someone you love, and *giri-choco* for friends, classmates, or coworkers. However, these days, the number of people who give something different, such as cookies and cakes instead of chocolate, is increasing.

There are different types of chocolates, such as honmei-choco for someone you love, and giri-choco for friends, classmates, or coworkers.

One unique point is that Valentine's Day in Japan can sometimes feel like an obligation. Many women feel pressure to prepare chocolates for several people, especially at school or work. Because of this, the day is not only romantic but also social. Recently, *tomo-choco*, which is chocolate exchanged between friends, has also become popular.

Another special tradition is White Day on March 14th. On this day, men give gifts back to women who gave them chocolates. This shows the importance of returning kindness in Japanese culture. Overall, Valentine's Day in Japan reflects both romance and social relationships.

In America, on the other hand, the people who give something are mostly men. They usually give women something special. The most common gifts are jewelry items and flowers, especially roses. Also in America, Valentine's Day is such an important event that it has even become a school event. Therefore, this day is not just a big event for couples but for friends and families to show love and gratitude. —*Kyoka and Yoshino*

Sweet Traditions and Sweeter Memories

In Japan, it is common for women to give chocolate to men on Valentine's Day. This custom became popular between the 1950s and 1970s through advertisements and campaigns by chocolate companies and department stores. Valentine's Day was promoted as a day when women express their love to the men they like. Chocolate, which is often associated with sweetness and love, became the perfect gift for this occasion. Recently, Valentine's Day in Japan is not only about romantic love. People also give chocolates to show friendship or to celebrate self-love.

Until high school, my sisters and I used to make chocolate sweets together and give them to my grandfather, father, and older brother. We also enjoyed exchanging chocolates with our friends. One of our favorite games was guessing how many chocolates my brother would receive each year.

In Japan, Valentine's chocolate is more than just a sweet gift. It often carries an unspoken message about relationships. Different types of chocolate can suggest different meanings. For example, Honmei chocolate is usually given to a person a woman has romantic feelings for, while Giri chocolate is meant for coworkers or acquaintances as a polite gesture. There are also friend-chocolates for friends and self-chocolates as a personal treat.

Because of this, both women and men tend to think carefully about what a chocolate might mean. Women often consider how their gift will be interpreted, such as whether it seems romantic or casual. Men, on the other hand, may briefly wonder if the chocolate represents special feelings or simply kindness. As a result, Valentine's Day in Japan can feel like a quiet communication game, where people try to read emotions through chocolate without directly saying them.

Another interesting topic related to Valentine's Day in Japan is whether homemade chocolate is truly appreciated. In my case, I only gave homemade chocolate to my family because of hygiene concerns. Even when friends gave me handmade chocolate, I sometimes hesitated to eat it. If I noticed fingerprints on the wrapping or packaging, I honestly couldn't bring myself to eat it. In Japan, people tend to be very sensitive about cleanliness and hygiene, especially when it comes to food. Because of this, homemade chocolate can feel risky unless there is a strong sense of trust between the giver and the receiver.

However, this idea changes when romantic feelings are involved. Many men seem to feel happy and special when they receive homemade chocolate from a woman they like, even if hygiene might otherwise be a concern. This contrast shows how Valentine's chocolate in Japan is not judged only by taste or cleanliness, but also by relationships and emotions. Depending on who gives the chocolate, the same handmade gift can feel either uncomfortable or deeply meaningful.

The best part of Valentine's Day for me was when my father came home with many chocolates from his workplace. Since he couldn't eat them all by himself, he always shared them with our family. As someone who loves chocolate, my being able to try many different kinds made Valentine's Day one of the happiest days of the year for me.

In March, we celebrate White Day, which is also a unique Japanese custom created through advertising. On March 14th, people return gifts they received on Valentine's Day, usually with cookies, marshmallows, or other sweets. This tradition has spread to other Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, and South Korea. My brother didn't always give me something in return, but that was okay. My father and grandfather usually gave me cookies or something I wanted. Every year on March 14th, my father gives my mother a bouquet of flowers. My mother says flowers are hard to take care of and that she doesn't need them, but my father gives them to her every year anyway. I have always thought that was very sweet, and just watching my parents on Valentine's day made me feel happy.

For me, Valentine's Day is not so much about spending time with a romantic partner, but about warm family memories. I hope that someday, I can have a happy relationship like my parents do. —Shiori



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BARRANQUILLA CARNIVAL IN COLOMBIA

Colombia celebrates one of the most important folklore celebrations, the Barranquilla carnival, which is considered one of the biggest in the world. The celebration lasts four days where people can enjoy street dances, music and parades. It was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on November 7, 2003 by UNESCO. –Danny



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Don't Run A-fowl of This Law!

Did you know that in some cities near LA, like Arcadia, peacocks have the right-of-way? There, if a peacock is slowly crossing the road, you cannot honk your horn or try to scare it. Why are there so many peacocks there?



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In 1879, Elias Jackson Baldwin, the founder and first mayor of Arcadia, visited India and he was attracted by their beauty and brought them back to Arcadia. At the time, having peacocks as pets was symbol of wealth among rich people. After he died, his property became the LA Arboretum. So, peacocks started roaming freely, multiplied and spread into neighboring cities. As for the law, in 2019, a man was arrested for intentionally running over two peacocks with his car. This was not just a traffic accident. He was sentenced to jail time and several years of prohibition against owning animals. It shows how much the community values their local history and animal rights.

So, if you go for a drive this weekend in one of those cities, keep an eye out for these colorful winged pedestrians. Because there, they are king of the road. –Mitsune

Weather Showdown: Korea vs. Los Angeles

I want to talk about the differences in weather between Korea and LA. Even though it's the same month, February, the weather is really different. That's why there are so many different activities for each winter. In this article, I want to talk about my winter experiences in the two cities.

Winter in Korea is really freezing. Sometimes, it snows a lot. You can make snowmen or go sledding and other fun activities. Especially when it snows a lot, the whole world changes into a white world. That's an amazing view. Also, you have to wear gloves, a muffler and a warm coat. These are necessary items in winter. Another fun activity is enjoying food. Eating warm street food like hotteok (a sweet, filled pancake) or bungeoppang (a fish-shaped pastry) is one of the greatest joys of winter.

On the other hand, LA's winter is relatively warm. You need a light jacket instead of a warm jacket. Mostly, the weather is clear and sunny. So, you can hike or take a walk along the beach in winter. Furthermore, you can have picnics or enjoy outdoor activities.

As you can see, the weather in LA and Korea is really different. In Korea, you can make a good memory with snow while it's cold. In LA, it's warm, so you can live a comfortable and active lifestyle. Both LA and Korea have their own winter charm. –Yujin

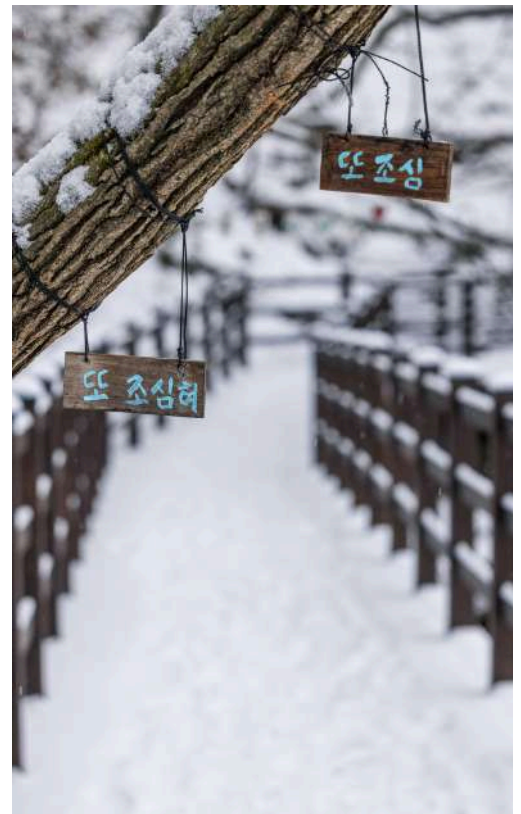
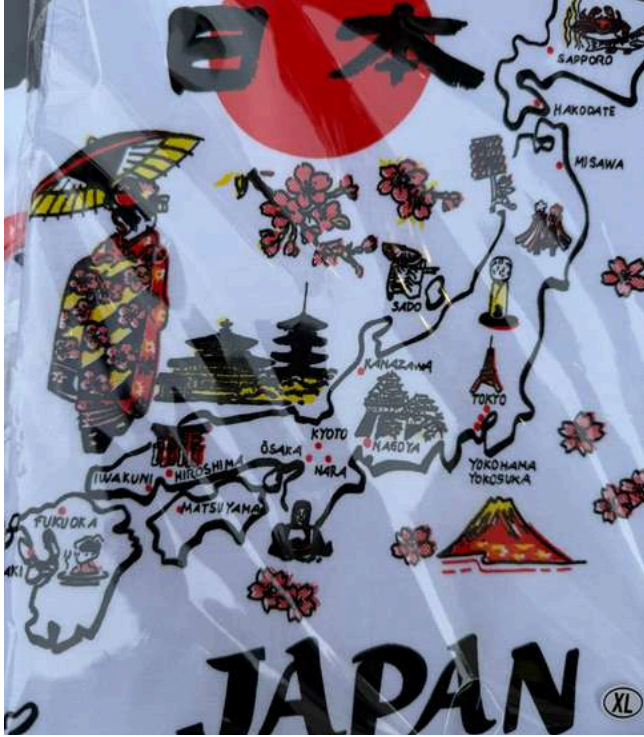


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VISITING JAPAN? BETTER BRING CASH

Japan is often seen as a technologically advanced country. However, one problem tourists face is that Japan still has a strong cash culture. In neighboring South Korea, the cashless payment adoption has reached around 90%, and in the United States the percentage now exceeds 55%. On the other hand, in Japan, the rate still stands at only about 40%. Most elderly people continue to use cash even though train station ticket gates, bus fares, and restaurant payments have become cashless. Moreover, many business establishments are anachronistic and refusing to adopt cashless payments, including my father's restaurant. This article explains three main reasons why Japan has been slow to shift toward cashless payments.

The first reason is the high trustworthiness of cash. Japan is known for having one of the highest quality minting technologies in the world. Because of this technology, compared to other countries, the circulation of fake money is relatively very small. That's why people feel comfortable using cash and do not feel the necessity of switching to cashless payments.

The second reason is the high transaction fees. In the case of credit card payments, merchant fees are typically around 3 to 5% in Japan, even though in some other countries, they are around 1%. This means that many small shops and restaurants hesitate to introduce cashless payment systems.

The third reason is the aging population and long-standing habits. Many elderly people are not familiar with digital technology. Additionally, Japanese society has long relied on cash payments, so it will take a lot of time to change these habits. In Japan, many people value safety over convenience!

—*Isshin*



MORE THAN A MARKETPLACE: A PIECE OF MODERN KOREAN CULTURE

In South Korea, we have a pretty unique app for the second-hand marketplace called “당근 [Dang Geun]”- Korean for “carrot.” As I’m writing about this app, I’m realizing it’s been a part of Korean culture quite distinct from other countries. And it has become such an integral part of Korean culture that its name, a noun, has been turned into a verb: to carrot means to buy or sell second-hand items.

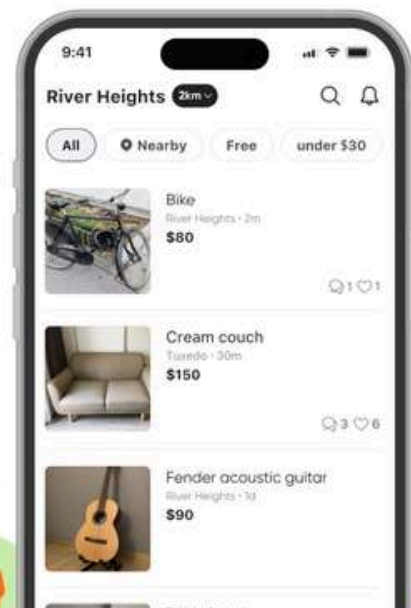
What is unique about this app (spelled Karrot with a ‘K’) is that you can make a post of your items, look for any items you want to get, and reach out to a person who wants to buy or sell items only within a 4 mile radius from your home by GPS. I’m guessing it’s because the company has the idea of activating locals. Via Karrot, you can physically meet your neighbors or chat with them.

Let’s say I want to buy something through Karrot. I can look for a listing locally using filters such as sorting (Recommended, Nearest, Newest, Price Range) and category etc. If I find any item I want to get, I can start a chat if I’m an eligible neighbor of the person who posted the item for sale. I can buy/sell the item physically or use a mailing service and it depends on my preference. And some sellers even ask buyers to come over to their apartment door and take the item that they will place outside the front door or hang from the doorknob. They’ll even share a password for the building’s front gate, which I’ve never done as I think it could be dangerous. Once the deal has been completed, I can rate my

neighbor bad, good or great, which is reflected in their user manners meter by temperature, allowing people to get an idea whether they’re a good or bad neighbor. And that temperature starts from the normal human body temperature, 36.5 degrees Celsius, and goes up when the user accumulates a great review and vice versa.

Furthermore, via Karrot, you can also find a person you want to hire—for any size job, from part-time/full time to just a one-time dog walker gig. The funniest thing about hiring a person through Karrot is that you can find someone to catch a cockroach in your house immediately! Some people post about hiring a person who can catch just one bug in their house at \$8 or more.

I think the reason why this app has become well-known is that it makes locals feel connected and it has fewer risks of schemes dealing with the second-hand market. So I hope you can try this app if you stay in Korea for a while in the future. If you ever have a chance to experience this fragment of modern society in Korea, Karrot shows how technology can turn simple transactions into community connections – a small but vivid piece of modern Korean life. –Yemin





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Did you know that there was a Korean Nobel prize winner in 2024?

She is Korea's second Nobel prize winner and the first Asian woman to receive the prize.

Isn't it surprising? Her name is Han Kang.

Interestingly, her name and the Han River (Hangang, a major river in Korea) are pronounced the same. She was born in 1970 in Gwangju, grew up in a literary family and became a writer known for exploring human emotions and social issues.

She also taught writing at university. In 2018, she quit her professorship and has worked as a full-time writer since then.

She won the Nobel Prize in Literature for her entire body of work, but *The Vegetarian* is her most famous book, about a woman who stops eating meat, and starts exploring individuality, rebellion, and human desire.

Another book that also helped make her a Nobel prize winner is *Human Acts*. It is a book that deals with the tragedy related to the Gwangju Democratization Movement. I haven't read it yet, but you should read her books! –Gyeong-min

Maslenitsa and the Celebration of Rebirth

Every culture has its own holidays that preserve traditions and reflect people's beliefs. Learning about a country's holiday celebrations is a great way to get to know its culture.

There is a holiday called Maslenitsa that takes place this month in Russia and other countries. The roots of this celebration go back to pre-Christian Slavic times, and it is probably the oldest surviving holiday from that period. The central idea of Maslenitsa is rebirth. A long, cold, and dark winter gives way to a light and warm spring. The annual cycle of birth-death-rebirth takes place, and in ancient times people asked the gods of the sun and the earth for a good harvest.

The main symbol of this holiday is blini – Russian-style pancakes or crêpes. They are round, hot, and golden, like the sun. Blini are typically eaten with melted butter or sour cream, but they can also be served with cottage cheese, honey, or jam. Savory fillings such as ground beef, mushrooms, or ham and cheese are also common nowadays.

Later, the holiday became connected with Eastern Orthodox traditions and turned into Cheese Week, which precedes Great Lent. This week serves as a gentle preparation for the strict rules of Lent. Meat is not allowed during this time, but dairy products and eggs - the main ingredients of bliny - are still permitted. The culmination of the week is Forgiveness Sunday, when people traditionally ask one another for forgiveness.

Maslenitsa is known for more than just blini. Over time the week developed into a festival, with each day dedicated to different activities - visiting parents-in-law, spending time with family, inviting single cousins and friends for dinner, or sharing food with those in need. Traditional amusements include sledding, horse sleigh rides, and outdoor games such as jumping over a bonfire.

Another important symbol is Lady Maslenitsa - a large straw doll. Burning the doll symbolizes a farewell to winter. It represents the "death" of winter and a way of letting go of the old to welcome the new.

During Soviet times, religious celebrations were restricted, and Maslenitsa became less popular. However, in recent years it has experienced a revival. Today, the holiday is associated with bright colors, joy, and bringing people together. –Evgeniya



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