

A Platter of Challenges

Recipe 1: Combating Homesickness.

You will need:

A loving family and/or a close friendship group.

1 needy rescue hound who bays with such rampant enthusiasm whenever she sees you she nearly shatters the glass on the windows (dog breeds may vary).

Method.

1) Find a group of people who are also going where you are and meet up with them beforehand. You can arrange to travel together, and can share your excitement and fears. You'll be reminded you can make friends with new people, and that will remain true even when you're thousands of miles away. And maybe, if you're lucky, they'll have similar dog based worries and you can all share pictures of your four legged reasons-for-living.

2) Arrange times to speak with your loved ones. Work out when it will be possible to video call, taking into account time zones and schedules. It might feel like it's all your responsibility to sort, but people want to help, so let them.

Recipe 2: The potential horror of being vegan abroad.

You will need:

1 vegan.

1 country with animal products heavily featuring in the cuisine.

Method.

1) Write a list of things you can't eat, in the relevant language, and carry it around with you, so you can hand it over to people in restaurants in case your broken language skills don't get the message across.

2) There are many websites and apps that can help with being vegan. Happycow is an app that finds vegan places to eat in the city you're in, and a Japanese specific website is "isitveganjapan", which helps you navigate your way around supermarkets.

Recipe 3: Preparing for natural disasters.

You will need:

1 country where natural disasters are almost non-existent.

1 country where natural disasters are very common.

Method.

The way to overcome this is twofold, and is a technique I have utilised extensively throughout my adult life: Planning and Breathing.

Planning: It is a good idea to make a safety document that contains all the important information you may need, such as numbers for emergency services, the emergency number for your embassy, and some emergency based phrases in the relevant language. It may also be useful to include details of evacuation routes for the city you are in.

There are apps available which are designed for the purpose of alerting people to natural disasters, or giving practical and useful information on how to respond to them. Japanese specific ones include: JNTO Safety Tips, Pocket Shelter, and Yurekuru Call.

Breathing: If you google "horror stories about tsunami's Japan", you're going to feel terrible. And it's easy to do because sometimes our brains want to make us feel terrible. But if you're well prepared, and aware, then you will be in the best position possible to keep yourself safe.

There is a difference between Helpful Googling To Be Prepared, and Unhelpful Googling to Be Scared, and learning the difference between the two is an integral part of the preparation process.