

What's happening?

The differences and similarities between Lao and Japan.

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I have lived in Japan from the Lao People Democratic Republic (Lao) since July 2003. Lao is located in the heart of the Indo-Chinese peninsular, in the Southeast Asia. The climate of Lao is tropical and the weather is influenced by monsoons.

One of the things I miss in Japan is Lao's food. It is hard to find out the ingredients to cook it in Japan, especially in Tokushima.

Traditional food of Lao is dry, spicy and very delicious. One of the traditional foods is sticky rice. We eat it with the fingers.

Laap is also traditional food. It is made from chopped meat, chicken or duck. The finely chop-

ped meat is spiced up and mixed with dried and crushed rice grains. We eat Laap with a plate made of raw vegetables and sticky rice.

As the traditional way of eating, we sit on the floor around Phaka Tok, that is a big oval or a round shaped plate made from bamboo, in which contains the dishes in utensils and boxes of sticky rice.

One of the differences between Lao and Japan is the population. Lao is the lowest population density in Asia. Most of the people are rural dwellers reliant on subsistence crop. The population consists of more than forty ethnic groups, in four main linguistic families. The different ethnic groups have substantially different residential patterns, agricultural practices, forms of village governance, and religions.

It is generally important to adapt to new life and to overcome culture shock. It is not hard

for me to adapt to the Japanese life. I feel so comfortable here. I can't speak the Japanese language well. I think the pronunciation of the Japanese language is not a problem, but "kanji" is very difficult to learn. The Lao language is also complicated. It is completely different from other languages.

I have seen many similarities between Lao and Japan especially in the personality, hospitality, and warmth of the people. Parents have a strong relationship with their children, and there is male dominance in partnership.

The Japanese are very polite compared with other countries. I think there must be very strong discipline in the Japanese society.

I have good advisers and a lot of good Japanese friends. I feel like I fit in Japan, even though I am a "gaijin".

