

BROADCASTING THE UNKNOWN JAPAN TO THE WORLD

Ordinary scenes and culture in Japan have kindled a fire in the creative spirit of an Englishman, Chris Broad. A YouTuber who arguably knows the country more deeply than most Japanese people, Broad regularly broadcasts videos of his real-life experiences.

The YouTube channel “Abroad in Japan” is operated by Chris Broad. After moving to Japan in 2012 as a high school English teacher, he fell in love with the beautiful scenery and peaceful lifestyle of Sakata City, in rural Yamagata Prefecture. Having long dreamed of becoming a filmmaker, Broad began regularly posting YouTube videos from this land. “At the time, not many foreigners were introducing videos on Japan, so it was a great chance for me.” Sharing what it feels like to be “A-Broad” in Japan, his channel quickly gained subscribers—now numbering 2.1 million—jumping to the top spot of channels introducing the country.

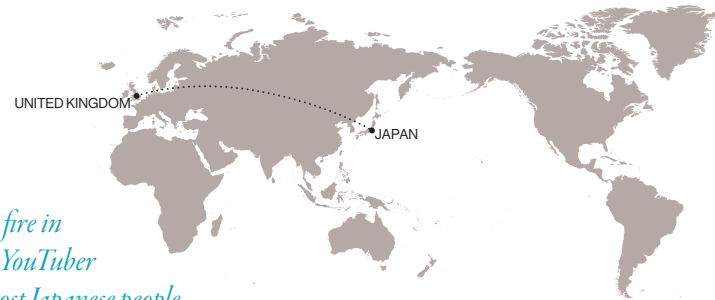
The setting for most of his

CHRIS BROAD

Originally from the United Kingdom, Broad has lived in Japan since first arriving in 2012 as a high school English teacher on the JET Programme. He has produced more than 200 videos introducing the attractions of Japan. His YouTube channel “Abroad in Japan” boasts 2.1 million registered subscribers, with 267 million views as of March 2021.



At one of Japan's three most scenic spots, Matsushima in Miyagi Prefecture. “It’s because of scenery like this that I live in Tohoku.”



Top: A guided tour of Tsurugajo Castle in Fukushima Prefecture, wearing *yukata*. Upper Right: Broad traveled across the Shimanami Kaido, which links small islands in the Seto Inland Sea, by bicycle. Right: Broad enjoying *yakitori*, his favorite Japanese food, at a morning market in Aomori Prefecture.



videos is not Tokyo, Kyoto, or other major cities, but those places that can be best described as “provincial.” Beginning with the rice-paddy landscape of Sakata City, where he first lived, he then moved on to the vast northern island of Hokkaido Prefecture, which can appear as if an entirely different world each season. He has also introduced Aomori Prefecture, home to Japan’s biggest morning market and boasting deep local colors, as well as Miyagi Prefecture, where he now resides in the city of Sendai. Taking a trip by bicycle, he has also presented the Shimanami Kaido route that runs through the islands of the azure Seto Inland Sea in western Japan. All in all, Broad has filmed across the country, especially focusing on the Tohoku region of northeastern

Japan. Introducing local attractions through features such as scenery, people, and food, with a style that ranges anywhere from sober documentaries to comedies filled with British sarcasm, Broad’s videos abound in variety. True to his aspiration to become a filmmaker, his reputation for accomplished video techniques improves year by year. His viewers especially appreciate the way that he introduces genuine aspects of Japan not featured in guidebooks, from a unique, admiring point of view.

Particularly garnering praise are Broad’s documentaries on the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, including Fukushima Prefecture, which suffered greatly from a nuclear reactor accident, as well

as the tsunami-ravaged Miyagi coastline. The videos that he made on location, capturing both the heartbreaking sorrow of the disaster victims and the hopeful steps being taken towards recovery, have resonated profoundly with his viewers. “Although there are lots of misconceptions about Fukushima, I found almost everywhere in the prefecture to be safe, with people energetically rebuilding their lives. When I reviewed the footage I took in Miyagi, I was struck by the powerful, unbreakable bonds that people have formed with their hometowns. Even having suffered tremendous losses, they all love their hometowns, and strive to build their future there. I wanted to tell the real stories of the cheerfulness of the people in the disaster-affected areas, their forward-looking attitude, and the way they have encouraged each other.”

There is more to Japan than just Tokyo. Shedding light on the stories of people living in other corners of the country is what Broad is all about. An unknown Japan, witnessed through the medium of YouTube and presented through Broad’s powerful communication skills, is now attracting new interest from viewers worldwide. ●



From a documentary showing the disaster-affected areas, Broad visited a flower grower (left) in Fukushima Prefecture, who is reviving the soil to make flowers bloom again. In Miyagi Prefecture, he rode a fishing boat at dawn (center) and visited a guesthouse owner (right) who reopened her business despite losing her family. Conducting direct, in-depth interviews, Broad conveys people’s true feelings, thus drawing viewers from all over the world.