

## 6th Column (2017. 1. 15)

### 「The drinking situation in Australia」

Happy new year everyone! 2016 flew by and before I knew it, we're in 2017. It is that time of the year where the winter cold makes it extremely difficult to get out of bed every morning.

Australia on the other hand is in the prime beer drinking season. Last column was about how I miss coffee, but this time I would like to talk about alcoholic beverages in Australia.

One of the first things that made me happy in Japan was how cheap alcohol was. In Australia, a six pack of 375ml beer bottles (stubbies, as they call it) is typically around \$18AUD (roughly 1500 yen). Cheap 750ml bottles of whiskey and vodka can cost around ¥3500, and that's the low end stuff.

Average price of goods in Australia is high in general, but since beer is our every day companion along with BBQs, this can be hard on our wallet. Especially if you're into spirits like vodka and gin, which sells for around 3-4 times the price available in Japan. Contrary to popular belief, Australia is not the kindest environment for a poor university student who likes drinking.

One of the reasons why alcoholic beverages are expensive in Australia is our high cost of living. To give you an example, a 500ml bottle of coke from a vending machine will require you to pay \$4 (¥350). The other main reason would be taxes. The main three being GST, volumetric tax, and wine equalisation tax. GST is 10%, volumetric tax increases based on the concentration of alcohol (slightly complicated, but basically spirits get taxed a lot here), and wine equalisation tax, which is 29% of the cost of the product. On top of all this, if the alcohol is imported, you have to pay tariffs. If you want to contribute to the Australian tax system, alcohol is my recommendation to you.

However, what are the poor university students to do? The most long term economical option is to brew your own beers. This is illegal in Japan, but in Australia you can pick up a beer brewing kit for a little over ¥10,000 yen. Ingredients you need for brewing beer is water, malt, yeast, and hops. Our family owned brewing kit can make around 70 stubbies worth of beer in one cycle, using around ¥2000 worth of ingredients each time. Although there is extra work involved, you can tailor the beer to your tastes and make it worth it (it is illegal to sell these beers – they are for drinking privately).

The other option is wine. Australia is famous for its wine production, with an annual production of 1.2 billion litres of wine. Thanks to this, wines are affordable and the reviews have been positive.

During this cold season, I would love to be drinking a pint of stout in front of a fireplace, but since this is not possible in my apartment here, I think I'll enjoy a nice mulled wine in my kotatsu instead.