SAYA FESTIVALS

**Megan:** So I’m thinking about going to Japan in August. [*Uhuh.*]Um, I was wondering, is that a good time, sort of weather wise and …?

**Saya:** Well, weather wise, you might know not but in— on August is kind of— my opinion, is not a good— good season because there’s so much … um … you know, high heats and then it’s very, very hot summer in Japan and very humidity, so it’s quite … um … different from the … um … summer in Europe. So, because Europe is quite dry and then even if you go to, like, under the shade you can be kind of, you know, much cooler, but in Japan in the summers, everywhere is so, so hot with humid it’s—

**M:** That sounds nice!

**S:** Oh yeah, but then it— it will be really annoying later on, you very sweating and very sticky, your skins. I not really keen on— I not really recommend you to go.

**M:** Oh, okay. Is there— is there anything good on in— in August, or …?

**S:** Um, August we have one festival … um … then is called Obon. And … um … and that is very … um … traditional or … um … especially if you are go to rural area, they are kind of celebrating like a really … um … huge. And— but same time … um … all the Obon season we have three days, the all three days most of the shops were in close. [*Oh.*] So— well— some point, if you want really … um … enjoy the festival it will be good time to go but at same time, you kind of want to enjoy more shopping wise, it’s not the, you know, best season to go.

**M:** So does everything shut down, or …?

**S:** Well, most likely. Like … um … I’m from really rural area so most of the shop and supermarket will be close— or actually, it’s one or two days. Then if you go to, like, Tokyo, probably it’s not closed all the shops, you can even buy anything to eat. And b— restaurant could be closed but— yeah…

**M:** Oh, okay. So does it— so it’s celebrated more in rural areas then, but does it happen everywhere, or …?

**S:** Uh, well it’s meant to be happen everywhere, but in— you know, people who … uh … live in— in Tokyo, or some like a big place, they’re kind of, you know, just working and they don’t really follow the kind traditional festivals. But if you go to rural area, you know, people more … um … thinking ‘oh, we have to do this f— … um … festival and we have to celebrate this … um … properly’. So, like, my parents … um … especially … um … they never live out of side of their hometown, so on the August they kind of, you know, prepare, ‘oh, Obon is coming a week’s time’ and then they kind of, you know, preparing everything, so ... [*Oh, okay.*] But someone who from Tokyo— or someone who live in Tokyo, they kind of less care [*Oh, okay.*] compared to—

**M:** So— so round you, people take days off work and— and really build up to it?

**S:** Um, they try to be but in— as you may know, Japan is very, you know, busy worker everyday, [Yeah.] is quite hard to take a day off, but in— yeah, Obon time, could be … um … more— like … uh … reasonable to get— take—get … um … days off and annual leave. Yeah.

**M:** So how do they prepare for it then? How do your parents prepare?

**S:** Uh, well basically— and so … um … thirteenth of August, that is the first day of the festival, so we normally go to the … um … shrine—shr— shrine. And then— and then we just kind of pray and then kind of ‘welcome to my … um … ancestor’, then we literally— well, they already— … um … pa— … uh … passed away but usually we go to the shrine then … um … we kind of receive their — like a soul, ish, and then we bring to our house and they welcome to ancestor and then kind of celebrate. And then fourteenth, we have … um … a kind of … um … traditional dancing in the … uh … garden, [*Oh.*] if you have, like, a— much space. And then we bring some— … um … and cousins, all the relatives and then we having like a traditional meal and then just, you know, [*Oh, wow.*] normal celebration. And then the last day is f— gonna be fifteenth of August so we are going to shrine again and it kind of reascending their kind of soul to the shrine— is— do you understand? [*Yeah.*] Yeah. [*Yeah.*] Something like that. [*Okay.*] So it more like a religious thing to me, so yeah…

**M:** So is to sort of … um … celebrate your ancestors [*Yeah.*] or pay respects to them [*Exactly.*] or look after them? [*Yeah, yeah.*] All of them? [*Yeah.*] Yeah. Wow. So is that something that tourists, if they’re there, can join in with or …?

**S:** Yeah. [*Yeah?*] Especially on the Obon season, when I say … um … we are doing like a traditional dance with … um … *yukata* which is kind of— it’s not a kimono, but quite similar looks … uh … so this a very traditional outfit— Japanese outfit [*Yeah.*] so looks like kimono but much, like, lighter because we are wearing in the summer— [*Yeah.*] the sticky summer. So it’s much lighter and the— more … um … casual way, but very traditional so. And because, especially once you are wearing a nice … uh … *yukata* so you can really enjoy it to wear— then you can, you know— even you don’t know how to dance but … um … yeah, it’s very easy anyway!

**M:** So would people buy this outfit just for Obon then?

**S:** Yeah, yeah. Good— like— well, if— if someone who’s got, like, a sister, they can kind of swap over then can wear again— every year different *yukata*. [*Yeah.*] So I got a one sister so [*Oh, you’re lucky then!*] we normally do it.

**M:** So— so if tourists and other people can join in with all the dancing and stuff [*Yes.*] … um … the— the first day, is that more private or family-orientated or …?

**S:** Um, normally, like, you know, we kind of doing always not only family. Like … uh … if my— if we got, like— like close neighbour, we can ask them to join so [*Okay.*] Yeah. It’s not really your family, more like … uh … public-wise, [*Yeah.*] yeah.

**M:** So do things take place sort of in town centres and stuff?

**S:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly.

**M:** Wow. It sounds really nice, I think it would be good to go!

**S:** When I was a kid, I really, you know, looking forward to going to the — … uh … and all the Obon festival. I really loved to dance in this so … um … I’m always asking my mum to … um … wearing my yu— *yukata*. So I can’t— I can’t really wear on my own so I always ask my mum and ‘I really wanna go to dancing at Obon because very traditional and my favourite’ and so…

**M**: So, do you live in London now?

**S:** Yeah I do, yes.

**M:** And do you find— to you still celebrate it here or …?

**S:** Uh, Obon? [*Yeah.*] Apparently not!

**M:** Oh! So not a lot of Japanese people do it here?

**S:** No. Yeah, I wish I could really wear a kimono. I actually bought the— my kimono in London but … um … feel a little bit weird I’m wearing kimono in the middle— in London, like ... Someone maybe, you know, fascinated, but [*Yeah.*] … uh … my mum always send me email at— around the time, ‘oh, we have this Obon time’ and— and yeah …

**M:** Do you really miss Japan around then?

**S:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. In summer, in— at— … um … otherwise … um … uh … the other sum— … um … in Japan in summer is— personally, not really keen on. But then the other way to say, you know, we have, like, Obon festival and some … um … fireworks festival [*Mmm.*] like at each different place and so that case you can wear a *yukata* wherever you want so that case I really miss it. Mmm.

**M:** Is that the biggest festival in Japan do you think?

**S:** Um … uh … it— it’s not the biggest. I think … um … like a new year’s, we have *shogatsu* in new year’s, this is I think the biggest. Probably the second biggest or third biggest. [*Yeah.*] Yeah, so …

**M:** Still— still quite big!

**S:** Yeah, still quite big! Yeah, exactly.

**M:** I bet. How long has it been a tradition for, is it really longstanding?

**S:** Yeah I think so, I don’t know exactly but … um … quite a long time, my— even parents— before my parents born it kind of really traditional so I don’t know how many years ago but quite—

**M:** Probably loads!

**S:** Yeah, yeah, a lots of time, yeah.

**M:** As far back as people can remember. Maybe it’s better if I go in September! [*Could be, or…*] Less busy! But it sounds nice to sort of take a few days off [*Exactly.*] from the shopping and sightseeing [*Yeah.*] and— and go to a festival, [*Yeah.*] so…

**S:** Just like, climate has been changed like, either year, so like, you know, all—Japanese summer will be kind of longer than used to be, so I personally recommend you to go about spring time, [*Oh, okay.*] or the autumn which is, like, at beginning of October. Cos September still really hot. [*Oh, really?*] Less hot tha— than August but still quite—

**M:** So does your summer begin in August?

**S:** And September, oh sorry, sorry, and July.

**M:** So it’s those sort of three months?

**S:** So June is rainy season, is gonna come in very soon and then it will last, like, couple weeks, it’s— like, most of the day it’s been raining. And afterwards it’s gonna be … uh … starting really hot summer until probably mid of September of maybe end of September. October will be much cooler then you could really enjoy as well.

**M:** Not sure I could withstand the heat being used to England!

**S:** Exactly, yeah, yeah.