



Japan Travel News

AUTUMN 2008

MAY-JULY

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

H.I.S.	2
Experience Japan	
Useful websites	2
Takayama + Shirakawago	3
What's on in Japan	4

From the editor

Changes, changes

There have been some changes at the JNTO Sydney office, the first one being the arrival of new Deputy Director, Ms Yuki Ogawa, last month. Ms Ogawa takes over from Hiroshi Yamashita and comes to Sydney from the JNTO head office in Tokyo.

Another change is the relocation of the JNTO Sydney office. The office remains in the Sydney CBD has moved to new premises in Clarence Street. The office is still only a one minute walk from Wynyard Station. New address and contact details can be found on the back page of this newsletter.



Yuki Ogawa

Promotional activities

The JNTO hosted a Japan Seminar for meeting and incentive professionals on Feb 21, 2008 at the Shangri-La Hotel in Sydney. More than 50 travel and MICE industry professionals attended the seminar which was designed to introduce participants to and provide information about the opportunities Japan offers as a MICE destination.

Representatives from the Japan National Tourist Organization and Japan Airlines gave presentations. In his opening address, JNTO Sydney executive director, Jotaro Horiuchi said "I believe Japan is an unexplored but promising MICE destination...Japanese culture is



quite different from South East Asian culture, and we can arrange special exotic activities such as sushi making, geisha or sumo wrestlers visits, and onsen hot spring bathing. Of course, shopping in Tokyo is a big feature."

"And Japan is more affordable than Australia now," Horiuchi said. "The Australian dollar can go much further in Japan now than it could five years ago."

Travel + Leisure Australia Editor, Anthony Dennis was guest speaker. Dennis held a captive audience as he spoke of his own Japan experiences and some of the common misconceptions people have about the country.

The seminar was followed by a networking session in which travel businesses from Japan, including Grand Hyatt Tokyo, Hankyu International Express, Hilton Tokyo, JTB Global Marketing, Sapporo Convention Bureau and Solare Hotels and Resorts had the opportunity to showcase their products.

The JNTO will continue promotional activities with a presence at the upcoming Snow Travel Expos in Brisbane, Sydney and Mel-

bourne, and with seminars for tourism business professionals and media scheduled for later in the year.

The Australian market is playing an important part in the growth of Japan's inbound tourism. JNTO statistics indicate that 222,500 Australians visited Japan in 2007 - a 14 per cent increase on previous year's figures. The Australian ski market continues to contribute to winter tourism in Japan, with as many as 20,000 Australians skiers traveling to Japan during the 2006-07 (Dec 06 - March 07) ski season - a 30 to 40 per cent increase on the previous season. It is estimated that even more Australians have traveled during the ski season just finished.

Rebecca Honda

HIS Experience Japan launches online bookings

H.I.S. Experience Japan (H.E.J.), a Tokyo based experiential travel company specializing in cultural experiences and tour packages for international visitors, launched an online booking system on March 3.

By accessing the website <http://hisexperience.jp>, visitors can book authentic Japan experiences from H.E.J.'s Cultural Activities program, tours and package holidays. All visitors need do is select a program and date, enter their personal details and method of payment, and show up on the day.

H.E.J.'s Cultural Activities include "A Day in the Life of a Sumo Wrestler," "Ninja," "Samurai Sword Action" and "Traditional Japanese Cooking" classes. Tours and package holidays offer destinations including Mt Fuji, the hot spring resorts of Hakone and Atami, and the snow fields.

H.E.J. has also recently introduced four new programs to their already impressive line up - the Akihabara Otaku Experience, one-night home stay in Kamakura, Mt Fuji climb, and trekking in Yakushima, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Kyushu.



Mt Fuji with new summer greenery



Yakushima's Mt Miyanoura ©Kagoshima Prefectural Tourist Federation

Useful websites

JR East shinkansen reservation service

East Japan Railway Company (JR East) launched an English online reservation service for bookings from overseas at 2pm (JST) on March 25, 2008. Dubbed the "JR East Shinkansen Reservation", the service allows travellers to reserve seats on the five shinkansen (bullet train) and four limited express routes in the JR East area which extends from just south of Tokyo to the top of Japan's main island, Honshu. Users are required to register once with a credit card to use the service (free of charge). Reservations can be made from one month up until 5pm (JST) three days prior to the day of travel. Japan Rail Pass and JR East Pass holders can also utilize the service.

<http://jreast-shinkansen-reservation.eki-net.com>

Tokyo Metro

Tokyo Metro launched its 'Welcome to Tokyo Metro' on February 27, 2008. The website is especially designed for overseas visitors planning a trip to Japan, with information on the Tokyo Metro system as well as Tokyo sightseeing tips, available in English, Korean, and Chinese. The website also has downloadable Tokyo subway maps and Tokyo Metro Guides.

www.tokyometro.jp/global

Classic Resorts Japan

Created by the Nagano-Niigata (Japan) Snow Resort Alliance, the website provides a wealth of information on the ski resorts of Hakuba, Shiga Kogen, Nozawa Onsen and Myoko Kogen.

www.snowlove.net/japan/



Japan's second golden route, part I : Takayama & Shirakawago

Japan's second golden route runs from Nagoya up to Takayama and across to Kanazawa via Shirakawago. A trip into Japan's countryside and through the mountains is well worth including on an itinerary. These areas offer many historically and culturally significant sights and experiences - too many to list here - so we have chosen a few to get you started. Kanazawa will feature in the next issue of Japan Travel News.

TAKAYAMA

Takayama is a beautiful old castle town nestled in the mountains of northern Gifu Prefecture. The city can be accessed from Nagoya by JR limited express in around two and a half hours and by bus in two hours and forty five minutes. It is recommended to take the train during the peak travel seasons - cherry blossom and autumn foliage season - as the road up to Takayama can get quite congested with tour buses and cars. Takayama is a very manageable city to walk around. Bicycles are available for hire at a reasonable price.

Places to visit

Below are just a few of the many excellent places to visit in Takayama.

Sanmachi-suji: This 'old town' of Takayama is still very much a living part of the city. The streets in this area are lined with preserved merchant houses, sake breweries, restaurants and inns.

Takayama Jinya - Used as an office by prefectural and local governors to govern Hida (the area in which Takayama is located), this historical government house is the only remaining building of its kind in Japan. Open daily except Dec 29 & 31, Jan 1. Free guided tours in English are available on request.

Morning markets - The Miyagawa and Jinya-mae Morning Markets operate daily from 6:00am (7:00am in winter). Locally grown fruit, vegetables and flowers, as well as local food (tsukemono pickles etc) and handicrafts are sold here. It is a great way to meet the locals.

Higashiyama Temple District - Home to 13 temples and five shrines. There is a 3.5 km walking course from the temple district to Shiroyama Park (formerly the site of Takayama Castle).

Festival Floats Exhibition Hall - Four of the eleven floats used in the Takayama Autumn Festival procession are on display here. A must-visit place for those who can't make it to the city during the spring and autumn festivals.

Natural hot spring foot bath - Perfect to soothe weary feet after a day of sightseeing. The city's only foot bath is located in front of the Takayama Green Hotel complex. It is free to use.

Takayama Festival

Known as one of the three most beautiful festivals in Japan, the Takayama Festival takes place twice a year. Gorgeously decorated floats are paraded through the city - twelve floats in the Spring Festival and eleven in the Autumn Festival.

Spring Festival: April 14-15 Autumn Festival: October 9-10

SHIRAKAWAGO

Accessed by bus from Takayama, Shirakawago is a secluded mountain village which was designated as a World Heritage site in 1995. The village is famous for its historical farmhouses made in the gassho-zukuri style. The observatory at the site of the Ogimachi Castle ruins gives the best view of the farmhouses in the valley. If visiting in the warmer months, spend a few hours strolling around the village. Visitors can also stay overnight in the old farmhouses, with many offering minshuku (Japanese B&B) style accommodation.

Takayama City
www.hida.jp/

Shirakawago
www.vill.shirakawa.gifu.jp/e/



From top: Higashiyama Temple district, Takayama Spring Festival Float, Shirakawago Farmhouse ©Takayama City

the warmer months, spend a few hours strolling around the village. Visitors can also stay overnight in the old farmhouses, with many offering minshuku (Japanese B&B) style accommodation.

Tsukiji Fish Market

Tsukiji Fish Market should not be visited to observe auctions, as these auctions are held exclusively for professional traders. Visitors are allowed to visit Tsukiji Fish Market only after 9:00am to observe the Seafood Intermediate Wholesalers Area and the Vegetables and Fruits Intermediate Wholesalers Area, both which operate until around 11:00am, and the 'Uogashi Yokocho' Restaurant Area where sushi and fresh seafood dishes are served until around 1:00pm. The market is closed Sundays, national holidays (except May 6 and December 28) and the following days during the remainder of 2008:

May 3,5,14,28, June 4,11,18,25, July 9,21, August 15,16,27, September 10,15,23, October 8,13,22, November 3,12,24, December 10,23,31.

More at www.tsukiji-market.or.jp/tukiji_e.htm



**JAPAN NATIONAL TOURIST ORGANIZATION,
SYDNEY OFFICE**

WE HAVE MOVED. From April 16 our new office is at:
Level 7, 36-38 Clarence St, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Tel: 02-9279-2177 (2:00-5:00pm Tuesday & Thursday)
Fax: 02-9279-3166
E-mail: travelinfo@jnto.org.au Web: www.jnto.go.jp/syd
For general information, maps and brochures for travel to Japan contact the JNTO Sydney office.

The Visit Japan Campaign

An initiative of the Japanese government, the Visit Japan Campaign (VJC) aims to attract 10 million visitors per year to Japan by the year 2010. Japan received a record number of 8.4 million international visitors in 2007; 222,500 of these were Australians. In 2005, Australia became a target market for the VJC. JNTO supports this campaign and encourages you to visit the VJC's Japan Welcomes You website which has been incorporated into the JapanTravel Info.com website.

www.japantravelinfo.com



- WHAT'S ON IN JAPAN -

TOKYO and vicinity

- May 11-25** **May Grand Sumo Tournament, Kokugikan Sumo Hall, Tokyo**
www.sumo.or.jp/eng/
- May 16-18** **Sanja Festival, Asakusa Shrine**
One of Tokyo's three great festivals and the wildest of the city's festivals, the Sanja Festival celebrates the three guardian deities of Asakusa Shrine. Portable shrines (mikoshi) of all sizes are carried by men, women and children and are paraded through the streets of Asakusa.
- June 6-7** **Torigoe Shrine Night Festival, Tokyo**
This night festival is famous for its portable shrine said to be the heaviest of its kind in Tokyo, weighing in at 3.75 tonnes. The portable shrine is decorated with paper lanterns and carried to Torigoe Shrine.,

KANSAI AREA

- May 15** **Aoi Festival, Kyoto City**
One of Kyoto's three biggest festivals, this is also one of the city's oldest events, with origins dating back to the 6th century. Over 500 people dressed in Heian period costume join the parade from the Imperial Palace to Shimogamo Shrine, and then onto Kamigamo Shrine.
 - May 1-20** **Kamogawa Odori (Kamo River Dance), Pontocho Kaburenjo (theatre), Kyoto City**
Established in 1872, this annual event features dances by the maiko and geiko from the Pontocho Hanamachi district in Kyoto.
- Kyoto tourist information at <http://kyoto.travel/>

HOKKAIDO

- June 7** **Mt. Nishidake Hiking Season Opening Ceremony and Climb, Furano**
The Furano Ropeway, Japan's fastest moving cable car, commences its summer hiking and sightseeing season on this day. Following a traditional Shinto blessing of the mountain, participants ride the Furano Ropeway to the top of Furano's famous ski field. From here, climbers will ascend Mt. Nishidake through beautiful trails and stop at the peak for lunch before climbing back down to the base of the mountain by 2:00 p.m.
- Furano tourist information at www.furanotourism.com/

NATIONWIDE

- May 5** **Children's Day (national holiday)**



Aoi Festival ©Kyoto Convention Bureau



Sanja Festival

Koi nobori streamers