

Japan Travel News

March - May 2010

Japan National Tourism Organization, Sydney

Autumn 2010



Inside this issue:

- Tourism briefs 2
- On the web 2
- JR news 3
- Miho Museum 3
exhibition
- Okinawa Island 4
Pass
- Walking tours 4
in Nara & Kyoto
- Festivals & 5
Events



Japanese tea a favourite with visitors

Japanese tea was the item that most frequently appeared on the shopping lists of international visitors to Japan, according to recently released results of an annual survey conducted by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

JNTO's Tourist Information Centre in Tokyo surveyed 443 international tourists (of which 61.4% were from Europe and 15% from Australia), who visited the information centre between (northern) summer and autumn last year.

Survey participants were asked to list up to five items they wanted to buy while in Japan.

Japanese tea appeared most frequently, followed by digital cameras, and kimono/yukata (cotton summer kimono).

It is likely that each abovementioned item was chosen because of its health benefits, its technological features and compactness, and its overwhelming Japanese uniqueness, said JNTO.

When asked to narrow down the list to only one item, kimono/yukata came out on top.

According to results from the Australian respondents, the most popular item to buy in Japan was clothes, followed by Japanese confectionary (including sweets and cakes), and character goods/toys (Hello Kitty etc.).

Among the other questions in the survey, was one relating to the type of experiences participants were most interested in while traveling

in Japan. They were allowed to list up to five.

The experience that appeared most often on participants' 'to do' lists was (perhaps, not surprisingly) 'eating Japanese food'.

The Australian respondents were just as eager as their European counterparts to try genuine Japanese cuisine.

When asked to choose only one experience, the majority chose (visiting) traditional architectural styles, a result that highlights this element of Japanese culture was one of the appeals of visiting Japan.



Discover Japan during the Visit Japan Year 2010.



©Michelin/DPPI

The float ceremony of Kyoto's famous Gion Festival is to be inscribed on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.

Tourism briefs

Kyoto Osaka 2010 Michelin Guide debuts

Michelin has launched its first MICHELIN Guide Kyoto Osaka 2010, which offers a selection of the best restaurants and hotels in the two cities. For the first time, the guide covers Japan's traditional ryokan, 22 of which have been included. The guide introduces a total of 203 establishments, out of which 147 are starred restaurants and three are starred ryokan. The guide is available in Japanese and English.

Kabuki theatre renovations

Tokyo's Kabukiza (kabuki theatre) will close for major renovations following the April 2010 performances. The new theatre is scheduled to open in the northern spring of 2013.

Skyliner Airport Express to debut in July 2010

Keisei Electric Railway has announced its *Skyliner Airport Express* is scheduled to commence services in July 2010. The new train which can reach speeds of 160km/hour connecting Tokyo's Nippori and Narita Airport in just 36 minutes, will operate along a new route which has been called *Narita Sky Access*.

Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum renovations

The museum will close for two years of extensive renovations at the conclusion of the current exhibit - *Galleria Borghese* - which runs until April 4, 2010.

New All-Kyoto sightseeing information desk

A new tourist information desk is scheduled to open on the second floor of the Kyoto Station building in March. The information desk will provide tourist information on both Kyoto City and Kyoto Prefecture.

Seven Bank ATMs no longer accept MasterCard

Overseas issued MasterCard brand cash and credit cards (including Cirrus and Maestro) are no longer accepted at Seven Bank ATMs. Seven Bank discontinued the ATM services for MasterCard due to economic viability issues. Seven Banks says it intends to pursue dialogue with MasterCard with the aim of restoring services for affected cards as soon as possible.

Kyoto Festival Float Ceremony UNESCO cultural heritage

The float ceremony of Kyoto's famous Gion Festival is to be

inscribed on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list. The float ceremony - a parade of 32 floats around Kyoto streets - is the highlight of the month long festival which dates back to 869AD.

Haneda's runway expansion and world first planetarium

A fourth runway at Tokyo's Haneda Airport is due for completion in October 2010 increasing annual flight departures and arrivals from 300,000 to 410,000. Furthermore, a new terminal building housing the world's first airport planetarium, is due for completion in October 2010, also. Haneda Airport currently serves domestic and selected short haul international flights, though the new expansion will see an increase in international flights. Haneda Airport is currently the second busiest airport in Asia.

Pierre Gagnaire restaurant for Tokyo

Three Michelin-starred Chef Pierre Gagnaire will open a restaurant on the 36th floor of the ANA InterContinental Tokyo in the prestigious Akasaka district on March 19, 2010.

Skyliner Airport Express
Seven Bank
ANA InterContinental Tokyo

www.new-skyliner.jp (Japanese)
www.sevenbank.co.jp/intlcard/index2.html
www.anaintercontinental-tokyo.jp/e/

On the web

Mie Prefecture tourist info

Mie Prefectural Tourism have recently re-launched their foreign language website in a new easy to navigate format with new graphics, videos and a list of the prefecture's recommended spots. Located in eastern Kansai, Mie is home to several of Japan's

well known cultural and historical treasures including Ise Shrine, ninja, women divers (*ama*) and Mikimoto pearls. The website is available in five languages.
<http://welcome.kankomie.or.jp>

Sapporo Shopping Guide

Located within JTB Hokkaido's BFH Tours site, the

Sapporo Shopping Guide introduces the city's department stores and includes a downloadable shopping guide map.

www.bfh.jp/tour/en

(Click on 'Welcome! Enjoy Shopping with Us banner)



Koichi Mikimoto statue and women divers ©MIKIMOTO Pearl Island.

Japan Rail news

New style Narita Express

Travel between Narita Airport and the Tokyo and Greater Tokyo areas just got more convenient and comfortable with the introduction of new Series E259 carriages on JR East's *Narita Express (N'EX)* airport service and the planned introduction of more services.

The new carriages are currently being used at selected times, however, at the end of June 2010, all *N'EX* services will operate with the

new carriages.

Furthermore, from March 2010, there will be increased *N'EX* services running from areas including Yokohama, Shibuya and Shinagawa.

The *Narita Express* connects Narita Airport and Tokyo in 53 minutes, Shinjuku in 76 minutes and Yokohama in 86 minutes. The limited express service can be used by JR Pass holders.

New Shinkansen Tours

Already an affordable and

convenient travel package, JR Central's *Shinkansen Tours* are even better in 2010.

JR Central have added four new tours to their already impressive line-up, increased hotel choice in Kyoto, Hiroshima and Takayama, introduced one-way tours and improved the Kyoto 2-Day Tour.

Shinkansen Tours are packages which include accommodation and bullet train travel.



East Japan Railway Company (JR East)
Central Japan Railway Company (JR Central)

www.jreast.co.jp/e/
<http://english.jr-central.co.jp/>

Celebrating John & Yoko

The John Lennon Museum in Saitama City just outside of Tokyo, is offering special admission prices for couples for the three days March 20 - 22, inclusive to commemorate John and Yoko's 41st wedding anniversary on March 20.

During the special *Wedding Days* period, the museum will give couples (married or otherwise) a two for the price

of one deal on admission.

Furthermore, couples who make a purchase at the Museum Shop will receive a small commemorative gift.

John and Yoko registered their marriage in British Gibraltar on March 20, 1969.

On another note, the John Lennon Museum has announced that it will close its doors on September 30,

2010 upon the expiration of the 10 year term agreement with Yoko Ono.

As the world's only official museum dedicated to the music legend, Saitama's John Lennon Museum has showcased the 40 years of John's life in music, images and precious memorabilia on loan from Yoko Ono, handing his messages down to the 21st century.

John Lennon Museum www.taisei.co.jp/museum

Miho Museum spring exhibit

Japan's renowned Miho Museum will hold its special spring exhibition from March 13 through June 6, 2010 in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of its founder, the late Mihoko Koyama.

Titled, *MIHO Grandama*, the exhibition will showcase major Eastern and Western works from the museum's collection as well as masterpieces from East and

West. Among the pieces on display will be *Standing Jikokuten* (Important Cultural Property), *Landscape Screens* by Yosa Buson, *Elephant and Whale Screens* by Ito Jakuchu, and others that have been newly collected in accordance with Koyama's ideas on art and art appreciation.

The core philosophy from which the Miho Museum evolved can be found in the museum's North Wing

galleries. Mihoko Koyama was very fond of the tea ceremony and items that were once part of her original collection are in the North Wing. Visitors are encouraged to view these tea ceremony items to gain an understanding of the spirit that engendered the Miho Museum.

The Miho Museum is nestled in the mountains of Shiga Prefecture near Kyoto. www.miho.or.jp/



Standing Jigokuten, from the late Heian to early Kamakura periods (12th century).



A hina doll display ©JNTO/
Yasufumi Nishi

Okinawa is the group of 160 sub-tropical islands, known as the Ryukyu Islands, which lies between Kyushu and Taiwan.



Traditional Japanese dolls on show

Kyoto Japanese Folk Dolls Museum is holding an *Edobina and Kyotobina Dolls* exhibition from February 20 through April 5, 2010. The exhibition is a collection of Japanese *hina* dolls (ornamental dolls representing the Emperor, Empress, and court attendants in traditional Heian period dress), of various types and names, and from different eras. The exhibition includes *hina* dolls once loved by court nobles, *Jirozaemon* dolls (round faced dolls from the middle Edo period designed by Kyoto doll maker Jirozaemon) of past warriors, and *Kyoho* dolls (noble faced dolls from the middle Edo period) bought and treasured by ordinary citizens.

Nagoya's **Tokugawa Art**

Museum is holding a special exhibition titled *Hina Matsuri: the Dolls Festival in the Owari Tokugawa Family* from February 6 through April 4, 2010. As part of the exhibition, the museum is displaying dolls and doll accessories once lovingly owned by generations of the Owari Tokugawa Family.

Kyoto Japanese Folk Dolls Museum
Tokugawa Art Museum

<http://sagano.lovepop.jp/index-e.html>
www.tokugawa-art-museum.jp/english

New OKINAWA Island Pass

Japan Transocean Air (JTA), a subsidiary of JAL Group, has recently launched an air pass for overseas visitors for flights within Okinawa. The *OKINAWA Island Pass* can be used on any of JTA's five domestic routes within Okinawa for the low price of 9000 yen + 5% GST per sector. The pass is available for a minimum of two sectors and maximum of five sectors of travel. **Applicable routes:** Naha to Ishigaki, Miyako or Kumejima. Ishigaki to Miyako or Yonaguni.

Departures: April 1, 2010 - Mar 31, 2011 excluding July 16 - Aug 31, 2010; Dec 10, 2010 - Jan 4, 2011; Mar 4 - 31, 2011.

The *OKINAWA Island Pass* is available to passengers flying to/via Japan on any carrier and must be purchased before arrival in Japan.

The new pass is an inexpensive and convenient option for visitors wishing to travel around Japan's beautiful sub tropical islands. Furthermore, JAL's newly launched daily return flights

between Narita International Airport and Okinawa's Naha Airport make traveling to the southern islands from outside Japan even easier. Before the new flights, passengers arriving at Narita had to transfer to Haneda Airport - some 75 minutes away - for the domestic connection.

For more information on the *OKINAWA Island Pass* please contact Japan Airlines www.au.jal.com/en

Walking tours in ancient capitals

Nippon Travel Agency (NTA) has launched a line of English guided walking tours for overseas visitors, in Kyoto and Nara, under the *Japan Holiday Tours* brand.

NTA is offering a line up of three tours: *Nara morning tour on foot*, *Kyoto afternoon tour on foot*, and *Nara & Kyoto full day tour on foot*.

The Nara tour takes in the city's two most famous temples - Todaiji (home to the Great Buddha image) and

Kofukuji - and the popular Nara Park, home to Nara's 1000 deer.

In Kyoto the tour visits the magnificent temples - Kiyomizudera and Kodaiji - and Yasaka Shrine, the central site of the city's famous Gion Festival.

These small group walking tours give visitors the opportunity to visit the iconic sightseeing spots in Japan's ancient capitals and to explore the cities' small lanes

and alleyways at a leisurely pace.

Another advantage of getting around on foot is not being held up by traffic jams during the peak spring and autumn seasons!

Image: The Great Buddha at Nara's Todai Temple (Todaiji).
©Yasufumi Nishi/JNTO.

* This year Nara celebrates the 1300th year since its establishment as capital.

Japan National Tourism Organization, Sydney

From March 15, our new will be:

Level 4, 56 Clarence Street,
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Tel: 02-9279-2177

(2:00-5:00pm Tuesday &
Thursday)

Fax: 02-9279-3166

Web: www.jnto.org.au



Visit Japan Year 2010 Campaign

An initiative of the Japanese government, the Visit Japan Campaign (VJC) aims to attract ten million visitors per year to Japan by 2010. With this year being the final year, the Japanese government has designated it the *Visit Japan Year*. Why not make 2010 the year you visit Japan and experience all this beautiful country has to offer.



National holidays in Japan March - May

March 22 (Mon)	Substitute holiday for Spring Equinox
April 29 (Thurs)	Showa Day
May 3 (Mon)	National Constitution Day
May 4 (Tues)	Greenery Day
May 5 (Wed)	Children's Day

* In the last newsletter, February 11 was incorrectly called National Constitution Day. Its correct title is National Foundation Day.

Golden Week

Golden Week is the group of the four abovementioned national holidays in April and May which fall within in a seven day period. It is one of Japan's three busiest holiday seasons with trains and planes, and accommodation in tourist areas getting booked out well in advance.

Eastern Japan

March 25-28 Tokyo International Anime Fair, Tokyo Big Sight

More than 250 anime businesses and organizations are scheduled to be at this year's event. Stage events include performances by anime theatre groups and anime artists panel discussion. The Fair is open to trade only on March 25-26 and the general public on March 27-28. www.tokyoanime.jp/en

May 14-16 Asakusa Sanja Festival, Asakusa Shrine, Tokyo

One of Tokyo's three great traditional events, Asakusa Sanja Festival is one of the country's largest portable shrine (mikoshi) festivals. Mikoshi of all sizes carried by men, women and children are paraded through the streets of Asakusa. Other festivities include a float parade of musicians playing flutes and drums, traditional street dancing, and the *Binzasara Mai* - a dance praying for prosperity and abundant harvest performed at the shrine.

www.jnto.go.jp/eng/indepth/history/traditionalevents/a26_fes_sanja.html

Central Japan

June 5 Atsuta Festival, Atsuta Shrine, Nagoya

Martial arts demonstrations and traditional entertainment performances are part of the festivities of the shrine's annual main festival. In the evening 365 lanterns are lit at the main, east and west gates of the shrine creating a beautiful and mystical illumination. Between 745pm and 900pm more than 1000 fireworks are set off into the night sky from a nearby park.

www.atsutajingu.or.jp/en/

Western Japan

July 19 - Oct 3 Setouchi International Art Festival, Seto Inland Sea islands

This inaugural festival will showcase the unique traditions, lifestyles and cultures, and beautiful scenery of the Seto Inland Sea's seven islands and the port of Takamatsu, through contemporary art. The festival will run for 100 days beginning on Japan's Marine Day, a national holiday held as a day of gratitude for the blessings of the sea and the prosperity of Japan as a maritime nation.

<http://setouchi-artfest.jp/en/>

More festivals and events at <http://jnto.org.au/location/festivals/index.html>

Festivals & events



Atsuta Festival; and View across the Seto Inland Sea from Shikoku. Festival image courtesy of Nagoya Convention & Visitors Bureau.