



# Japan Travel News

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Hokkaido, Japan's year-round nature paradise: rafting in summer, the Furano flower fields, and Hokkaido delicacies. Images courtesy of Furano Tourist Association and Hokkaido Tourist Association.

## Hokkaido – Japan's all season holiday destination

As part of efforts to promote Hokkaido as a year-round holiday destination, Hokkaido Tourist Association and Sapporo Tourist Association held a tourism seminar for Sydney travel agents and media on December 7 at The Grace Hotel.

Ms. Shizue Ishibashi from Hokkaido Tourist Association gave the main presentation of the evening, touching on Hokkaido's ski areas and also covering what Hokkaido has to offer aside from skiing. Ms. Ishibashi spoke about Hokkaido in every season – the natural attractions as well as the varied cuisine across the months. Focusing on several regions in Hokkaido, the attendees were told about various outdoor activities like canoeing and ice fishing. Ms. Ishibashi also spoke about activities like potato farming, soba making and various traditional arts and crafts which can be experienced in Hokkaido. She tried to show the natural and

cultural beauty of each region (like lakes, mountains and flowers, as well as attractions like an Ainu museum) and tied it to different types of food and drink – like seafood, beer and other fresh produce.

After the presentation the Yosakoi Soran - one of Hokkaido's most famous dances - group entered the room. The group, made up of about 30 university students, and dressed in long dark blue happi coats, performed a dance called 'samurai' which was slow and powerful, and ended in loud shouts and lots of energetic arm and body thrusting! The dancers explained that this was an important dance because it helps younger people and inexperienced dancers learn the various techniques of Yosakoi Soran.

The seminar attendees were then invited to dance with the group. Those keen to try out this lively activity were given

'naruko' (castanets) and happi coats and the whole room erupted into Yosakoi Soran. It was a sight of great excitement and enjoyment with the enthusiastic travel agents and media jumping and flinging themselves around the room, shouting and laughing. The music was really uplifting and the dancers were just so enthusiastic - it was infectious for everyone there. One dance wasn't enough and after calls of 'encore' from the audience they launched into another dance.

At the conclusion of the group dances, the attendees were treated to another performance of the 'samurai' dance. The dancers were so proud and devoted to the dance and it was evident how much they wanted to impress the group and share their culture.

The Yosakoi Soran performance was arranged by Japan's Centre for Promotion of Folk Performing Arts.



## JNTO Tourism seminars

The past few months have seen a full calendar of events for the JNTO Sydney office. As part of the Visit Japan Campaign (VJC) in Australia the JNTO held a 'Destination Japan for Travel Professionals' seminar for travel agents and media on September 26 at Sydney's Shangri-La Hotel. The seminar was designed to give a general overview of Japan as a holiday destination, including tips on how to get around, where to stay and recommended things to do and see. Presentations were

given by Japan Airlines, JNTO and Qantas Airways.

On October 12, the JNTO hosted the 'Discover a New Japan: Tohoku - Gifu - Ishikawa - Takayama - Kyoto - Furano' seminar at the Shangri-La Hotel. Presentations from the Tohoku region, Gifu Prefecture, Takayama City, Ishikawa Prefecture, Kyoto Prefecture and Furano Tourist Association representatives highlighted the unique and unspoilt charms, such as World Heritage listed sites, volcanic hot springs, and world class ski fields, that these emerging regions have to offer visitors.

## More about Hokkaido...

Hokkaido is Japan's northernmost island. One of the island's signature festivals is the Yosakoi Soran festival. Every year in June, more than 350 dancing teams and two million spectators gather in Hokkaido for this huge event.

Access: 1.5 hour flight from Tokyo's Haneda Airport to Shin-Chitose Airport; 17 hours by overnight train from Tokyo to Sapporo.

**Hokkaido Tourist Association**  
[www.visit-hokkaido.jp/en/](http://www.visit-hokkaido.jp/en/)

**Yosakoi Soran**  
[www.yosanet.com/yosakoi/](http://www.yosanet.com/yosakoi/)



## Yokoso! Japan Weeks 2007

日本へようこそ

The Japanese government have designated the 40 days from January 20 to February 28, 2007, Yokoso! Japan Weeks. Now in its third year, Yokoso! Japan Weeks is a campaign conducted in Japan and overseas to improve recognition of Japan as an attractive and affordable tourist destination, and to raise the profile of the Visit Japan Campaign – a Japanese government initiative aiming to attract 10 million visitors per year to Japan by 2010. During Yokoso! Japan Weeks, visitors to Japan can enjoy a wide range of special offers and events to make their Japanese winter holiday extra special.

The three major features of the 2007 campaign are:

**Enjoyable events** – more than 60

special events, including snow festivals, hot spring festivals, winter illuminations, and exhibitions will be held during the campaign.

**Affordable Japan** – 180 tourist facilities, accommodations, ski resorts, restaurants and shopping malls throughout Japan will be offering special discounts or special gifts to visitors.

**Language support services** – tourist information will be provided in several languages at more than 150 tourist information centres, and Yokoso! Japan information desks will be set up at 450 locations across Japan.

JNTO Sydney office Executive Director, Jotaro Horiuchi, says “I hope that many Australians will be encouraged to travel to Japan during Yokoso! Japan Weeks.

Japan's ski fields are already enjoying popularity among Australians, however winter in Japan is not only about skiing. Japan has many other attractions including snow and ice festivals, hot springs and sake brewery tours, as well as flower festivals in the warmer climes of the country”.

Coupon books for Yokoso! Japan Weeks will be available from the JNTO Sydney office from early January. Coupon books are also available in Japan at major airports, hotels and “i” tourist information centres.

For more information, please visit [www.jnto.go.jp/yjw/eng](http://www.jnto.go.jp/yjw/eng)



### Useful websites

#### Tokyo street style

For a glimpse at the latest garb the fashion conscious youth of Tokyo are wearing take a look at this great Japanese street fashion site. Features weekly street snapshots of the Harajuku, Shibuya, Omotesando, Daikanyama and Ginza areas.

[www.style-arena.jp/index\\_e.htm](http://www.style-arena.jp/index_e.htm)

#### Snow Japan

The one stop site for all you need to know to plan a ski/snowboard trip to Japan.

[www.snowjapan.com/](http://www.snowjapan.com/)

#### Traditional Crafts of Japan

This site has a wealth of information on Japanese crafts, as well as a directory of craft centres in Japan.

[www.kougei.or.jp/english](http://www.kougei.or.jp/english)

### The National Art Centre, Tokyo opens January 2007

The National Art Centre, Tokyo will open to the public on January 21, 2007. Located in Tokyo's Roppongi district, the Centre is the first national art institution in Japan without a permanent collection. With 14,000 square metres of exhibition space - the largest in Japan - The National Art Centre will focus on serving as a venue for various art exhibitions. The Centre will also be offering educational programs, and is equipped with an Art Library which is open to the public. The Centre's inaugural exhibition is Living in the Material World – 'Things' in Art of the 20th Century and Beyond and will run January 21 - March 19, 2007.

Open: Daily, except Tuesday - when Tuesday is a national holiday, it is closed Wednesday

Closed: December 29 – January 3

Access: Direct access from Exit 6 of Nogizaka station on the Chiyoda Line

Five minute walk from Exit 4A of Roppongi station on the Hibiya Line

Four minute walk from Exit 7 of Roppongi station on the subway Oedo Line

Web: [www.nact.jp/english/](http://www.nact.jp/english/)



Japan's powder snowfields  
©Furano Tourist Association

## Out and about in Tokyo

If you are planning to visit Tokyo and want an exciting alternative to shopping, shrines and regular sightseeing here are two suggestions for your itinerary. Why not explore the city by bike, and then relax in a natural hot spring?

### Tokyo great cycling tour - explore Tokyo by bike -

The Asahi Times Co. Ltd, one of Japan's leading newspapers and Tokyo based adventure company, Alive and Kicking Co. Ltd have launched a guided cycling tour in Tokyo. The first tour of its kind for overseas visitors in Japan, the 'Tokyo Great Cycling Tour', includes major tourist spots in Tokyo such as Tsukiji Fish Market, Odaiba, Zojo temple, Tokyo Tower and Imperial Palace. The tour runs on Saturdays (except public holidays), costs 5000 yen and includes bike rental, helmet, lunch (Japanese bento box) and insurance.

More information at [www.tokyocycling.jp](http://www.tokyocycling.jp)



TokyoTower ©John Pond



### Onsen - natural hot springs in Tokyo

#### Azabu-Juban Onsen \*

Address: 3rd Fl., 1-5-22, Azabu-Juban, Minato-ku

Tel: 03-3404-2610 (in Japanese)

Access: Ten minute walk from Roppongi station on the subway Hibiya Line, or three minute walk from Azabu-Juban station on the subway Oedo Line

Admission: 1260 yen (sauna included) Hours: 11:00am - 9:00 pm

Closed: Tuesday - when Tuesday is a national holiday, it is closed Wednesday.

#### Asakusa-Kannon Onsen \*

Address: 2-7-26, Asakusa, Taito-ku

Tel: 03-3844-4141 (in Japanese)

Access: Eight minute walk from Asakusa subway station

Admission: 700 yen Hours: 6:30 am - 6:00 pm Closed: Wednesday

#### Oedo-Onsen Monogatari

Address: 2-57, Aomi, Koto-ku

Tel: 03-5500-1126 (in Japanese)

Access: 2 minute walk from Telecom Center station on the Yurikamome Line

Admission: 2827 yen (including use of yukata, towels and facilities) ; 1987 yen after 6:00pm

Late-night surcharge: 1575 yen (required after midnight) Hours: 11:00am - 9:00am (the next morning) Open: Daily

\*Visitors can enjoy the atmosphere of the old Edo era at this natural hot spring complex.

#### La Qua - large scale natural hot spring with attractions

Address: 1-3, Koraku, Bunkyo-ku

Tel: 03-5800-9999 (in Japanese)

Access: Five minute walk from Suidobashi station on JR & subway Toei Mita Lines, or one minute walk from Korakuen station on subway Marunouchi Line and Namboku Line

Admission: 2565 yen; 315 yen surcharge required on Saturday, Sunday and national holidays

Hours: 11:00am - 9:00 am (the next morning) Late-night surcharge: 1890 yen (midnight - 6:00am)

#### Toshimaen Niwanoyu

Address: 3-25-1, Koyama, Toshima-ku

Tel: 03-3990-4126 (in Japanese)

Access: One minute walk from Toshimaen station on the subway Oedo Line or Seibu Ikebukuro Line

Admission: 2,250 yen

Hours: 10:00 am - 11:00 pm

Open: Daily

\*Visitors can view the beautiful gardens from the indoor and outdoor baths.

#### Heiwajima Onsen \*

Address: Big-Fun-Heiwajima, 1-1-1, Heiwajima, Ota-ku

Tel: 03-3768-9121 (in Japanese)

Access: Ten minute walk from Heiwajima station on the Keihinkyuko Line, or five minutes by bus from JR Omori station

Admission: 1700 yen (Saturday, Sunday and national holidays: 1900 yen)

Long-stay surcharge (more than 6 hours): 600 yen

Late-night surcharge (after midnight): 500 yen

Hours: 10:00am - 8:00 am (the next morning)

Open: Daily

#### Shinjuku-Juniso Onsen \*

Address: B floor, 4-31-3, Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku

Tel: 03-3376-4423 (in Japanese)

Access: 15 minute walk from the West Exit of JR Shinjuku station

Admission: 1900 yen

Rental towel: 200 yen

Hours: 11:00am - 10:00 pm Closed: Thursday

Notes: \* Please take your own towel.

For information on how to bathe at an onsen, please visit [www.japan-guide.com/e/e2292\\_how.html](http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2292_how.html)



## JAPAN NATIONAL TOURIST ORGANIZATION

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264 George St, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
Tel: 02-9251-3024 Fax: 02-9251-3031  
E-mail: jnto@tokyonet.com.au Web: www.jnto.go.jp/syd  
For general information, maps and brochures for travel to Japan contact JNTO. Visit the new look, easy to navigate JNTO Sydney website.

### 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. At present Japan receives more than 6 million visitors. 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 recently been incorporated into the JapanTravelInfo.com website.

[www.japantravelinfo.com](http://www.japantravelinfo.com)



### Japan's national holidays for 2007

Japan has 15 national holidays throughout the year.

January 1	New Years Day
January 8	Coming of Age Day
February 12	National Foundation Day
March 21	Spring Equinox Day
April 30	Showa Day
May 3	Constitution Memorial Day
May 4	Greenery Day
May 5	Children's Day
July 16	Marine Day
September 17	Respect for the Aged Day
September 24	Autumnal Equinox Day

October 8	Health and Sports Day
November 3	Culture Day
November 23	Labour Thanksgiving Day
December 23	Emperor's Birthday

Peak travel times in Japan are the year end and New Year holiday season – December 27 to January 4 and adjacent weekends; 'Golden Week' - April 29 to May 5 and adjacent weekends; and the Bon festival season - a week around August 15. During these times there is a mass movement of people first from the city to the country and then in the opposite direction. If traveling during these times it is advisable to book well in advance.

## - WHAT'S ON IN JAPAN -

### TOKYO

- January 2** **New Year Greeting at the Imperial Palace (Kokyo Ippan Sanga), Tokyo**  
Catch a glimpse of the Emperor and Empress when Japan's Imperial family appears throughout the day to greet the public in the grounds of the Imperial Palace. Tens of thousands of people attend this event, which is one of only two occasions a year that the inner grounds of the Imperial Palace are open to the public.
- March 22-25** **Tokyo International Anime Fair, Tokyo Big Sight**  
The world's largest anime exhibition. Open to the public March 24-25. More at [www.tokyoanime.jp/en/](http://www.tokyoanime.jp/en/)

### KANSAI AREA

- January 9-11** **Toka Ebisu Festival of Imamiya Ebisu Shrine, Osaka City**  
This lively festival draws thousands of people who come to the shrine to pray for a year of successful business. People commonly buy new good fortune bamboo branches called "fukusasa". The festival features a procession of women in colourful kimono carried in palanquins through the main streets.
- March 1-14** **Omizutori, Todai Temple, Nara City**  
Dating back 1200 years this popular event features a pine torch waving rite from the gallery of the Nigatsudo on the evening of March 12.



Omizutori, Todai Temple

### NATIONWIDE

- January 1** **New Years Day (national holiday)**
- January 8** **Coming of Age Day (national holiday)**
- January 7-21** **Grand Sumo Tournament, Kokugikan Sumo Hall, Tokyo**
- February 3** **Setsubun**  
Setsubun marks the end of winter according to the lunar calendar. On this day people across Japan join in the traditional ritual of throwing beans to drive away imaginary devils. After the bean throwing is over, everyone eats the same number of beans as their own age. It is believed that by doing so, people will be free of sickness during that year.
- February 6 -12** **Sapporo Snow Festival, Hokkaido**



- February 15-16** **Kamakura Festival, Yokote City, Akita Prefecture**  
Inside igloo-like snow huts, children toast rice cakes and warm up sweet rice brew which they offer to passersby as well as enjoy themselves. At night the snow huts are illuminated with candles.
- February 15-25** **Hirayu Frozen Waterfall Festival, Hirayu Onsen, Gifu Prefecture**  
Sub zero temperatures cause the 64 metre high and 6 metre wide grand waterfall at Hirayu to freeze during winter. The frozen waterfall is illuminated for eleven nights each February from 6:00pm-9:00pm.

Kamakura festival