



Japan Travel Updates

Season's Greetings



Launch of Japan Travel Specialist (JTS) e-learning Program 2006.4

JNTO has launched an e-learning program to train Japan Travel Specialists (JTS).

Visit www.travelagentacademy.com/japan to view a Japanese promotional video and take lessons via the website. After passing a 3-session test, you will be entitled to JTS privileges, including:

- Free searchable agency listing on JNTO's website, www.japantravelinfo.com, to increase your leads from customers looking for Japan Travel Specialists.
- Priority Invitation to familiarization trips, seminars hosted by JNTO, and Japan tourism events hosted by JNTO's supporting suppliers.

If you have any questions, please contact the JTS Desk at JNTO's New York Office at **212-757-5641**, ext. 31 or email jts@japantravelinfo.com

* Each current JTS member will receive an email with an ID and a password and instructions on how to enroll in the new JTS program online. When you enroll in the program, please do not forget to update your profile. You are exempted from the tests, but you are encouraged to take seminars and the tests to enhance your knowledge as a Japan Travel Specialist.

Cherry Blossom Viewing

Viewing sakura, or cherry blossoms, is one of the major events in the Japanese calendar. Blooming dates vary by latitude; in Tokyo and Kyoto, sakura trees bloom for about two weeks from the end of March through the first week of April, but dates will vary based on the weather each year. At more popular locations many people will arrive early in the morning to lay out a picnic tarp and get the best spots. Once their friends, family, or coworkers arrive, they will eat and drink together, watching the petals from the cherry blossom trees fall like pink snowflakes. The most beautiful spots tend to be around castles, shrines, or temples.

● Kyoto ●

Kyoto is one of the most famous places for watching cherry blossoms in Japan. There are countless places to view them throughout the city and in Arashiyama (northwestern suburbs). The most popular place is Maruyama Park, which is especially beautiful when lit up at night. During the day, try Kiyomizu Temple.

Best Viewing Spots: Arashiyama, Okazaki Canal, Maruyama Park, Kiyomizu Temple

Access: 90 min. by train from Kansai Airport, or 2 hr. 20 min. from Tokyo by shinkansen

When to Go: Late March - Early April



● Yoshino (Nara Prefecture) ●

With over 30,000 trees, Yoshino is the most famous place for cherry blossom viewing in Japan. Most of the trees are on Yoshino Mountain, and they bloom from bottom to top as the weather gradually gets warmer.

Best Viewing Spot: Hanayagura Viewpoint.

Access: Ropeway or shuttle bus (sakura season only) from Yoshino Station (Nara Pref.)

When to Go: Early - Mid April



●Tokyo ●

Ueno Park is the most famous and most crowded of Tokyo's hanami spots. Chidori-ga-fuchi, a moat around former Edo Castle provides a more serene viewing experience - no picnic tarps or alcoholic beverages are allowed. Nearby is Yasukuni Shrine with 1000 more sakura trees.

Best Viewing Spots: Chidori-ga-fuchi, Shinjuku Gyoen, Ueno Park, Sumida Park

Access to Chidori-ga-fuchi: 5 min. walk from Subway Kudanshita Station

When to Go: Late March - Early April

●Hirosaki Castle (Aomori Prefecture) ●

Those who think they missed cherry blossom season may still have time to see them in northern Japan, where they bloom toward the end of April and sometimes as late as mid-May. Hirosaki Castle Park is surrounded by 2000 trees and is beautiful when lit up at night.



Best Viewing Spots: Kajo Bridge, West Moat

Access to Hirosaki City: About 5 hr. north of Tokyo by shinkansen and train

When to Go: Late April - Early May

Spring Events

Japanese Doll Festival: (March 3)

Houses with daughters all over Japan display Hina Ningyo dolls on Girls Day (the third day of the third month) in order to ensure the daughters' future happiness. The dolls are arranged in tiers, representing the hierarchy of the Imperial Court.

■ URL: en.wikipedia.org



Sagicho Festival: (Weekend in mid-March)

Towns surrounding Omi-Hachiman, Shiga Prefecture all compete to make the most lavish floats. The floats are paraded around town, then toward the end of the two-day festival each float is burned to cinders to bring luck for the new year

■ URL: info.biwako-visitors.jp

Aso Fire Festival: (Early to late March)

Not satisfied with merely setting floats on fire, the residents of Aso Village, Kumamoto Prefecture spend the entire month of March swinging fire torches (hifuri jinji), burning fields and eventually lighting a 350 meter Chinese Character on Mt. Aso

■ URL: www.pref.kumamoto.jp/english



Takayama Festival (April 14 - 15)

Over 1000 people march through the city of Takayama, Gifu Prefecture, bringing back the mood of 15th Century Japan through the costumes, music and intricate floats. There is even a museum devoted to the floats. Considered one of Japan's best festivals.

■ URL: www.hidanet.ne.jp



Tokyo Anime Fair

The largest anime (Japanese animation) event in the world will be held at Tokyo's Big Sight on March 22-25, 2007. Fair-goers should note, though, that the first two days (Thursday and Friday, March 2 -23) are for business professionals only, and that the last two days (Saturday and Sunday, March 24- 5) is for the general public. Events include stage performances, movie showings, and an anime awards ceremony.

■ URL: www.tokyoanime.jp/en

Package tours for Tokyo Anime Fair:

JALPAK Intl. - 1-800-2JALPAK

■ URL: www.jalpak.com

Tokyo Anime Culture Tour 2007 (7 Days/5 Nights)

IACE Travel - 1-866-735-4223

■ URL: www.iace-usa.com/us

Cruise to Japan

Do you know that many cruise ships make calls to Japan! And some cruises go around Japan.

Cruises Around Japan:

■ URL: Clipper Cruise Line (Intrav) 1-800-456-8100

■ URL: Cruise West 1-888-851-8133

■ URL: High Country Passage 1-800-395-3288

■ URL: Smithsonian Journey 1-877-338-8687

■ URL: Zegrahm Expeditions 1-800-628-8747



Cruises around Asia/ the Far East with ports of call in Japan:

■ URL: Holland America Lines 1-877-724-5425

■ URL: Princess Cruise 1-800-PRINCESS

■ URL: Crystal Cruise 1-800-804-1500

■ URL: Royal Caribbean Cruise 1-866-562-7625

World Cruises with ports of call in Japan:

■ URL: Cunard Cruise 1-800-7-CUNARD

■ URL: Regent Seven Seas 1-877-505-5370

Access between Cruise Passenger Terminals and City Centers

- Port of Tokyo (Harumi Passenger Terminal) -

From Tokyo train station:

● TOEI BUS: Get off at Harumi Futo, approx. 30 min., 200 yen

● TAXI: Approx. 10 min., 1500 yen.

- Yokohama Passenger Terminal -

From JR Yokohama train station:

● RAIL: Take the JR Minato-mirai line to JR Nihon-odori Station. Take exit #3 and the ferry terminal is a 5 minute walk away. Approx 6 min., 200 yen.

● TAXI: 10 min. 1300 yen.

- Port of Osaka (Tempozan Passenger Terminal) -

From Osaka train station in downtown Osaka:

● TAXI: Approx. 16 min., 3,140 yen

● Osaka city bus: Get off at Tempozan bus stop, then take a short (couple of minutes) taxi ride, total approx. 47 min., 890 yen

● RAIL: JR Loop line to Bentenjo Station, then take Osaka city subway to Osaka Port Station. Approx. 20 min., 390 yen



- Port of Kobe (Naka Pier Cruise Terminal) -

From Sannomiya train station in Kobe city:

TAXI: approx. 15 min., 2,000 yen.

For port information in Japan, please log onto:

■ URL: www.japantravelinfo.com

Tours



"War in the Pacific" Tour Visits Iwo Jima for 62nd Anniversary

Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours, in conjunction with Military Historical Tours, runs a military history tour led by an expert historian. They invite veterans, their families, friends and history enthusiasts. The tour visits Hawaii, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Iwo Jima (with optional post tour to Peleliu and Koror).

TOUR DATE: March 5 - 16, 2007 from LAX

COST: Double occupancy \$6900 / Single \$7800 (10% commissionable)

■ URL: www.stephenambrosetours.com

Hotel Updates



Oakwood Opens New Serviced Apartments in Shinjuku

Studios can be booked from as low as 13,500JPY a day. Oakwood Apartments Shinjuku (www.oakwood.com), a new tower with trend-setting style from the world's leader in serviced corporate residences. Oakwood Apartments Shinjuku is located at 7-5-9 Nishi- Shinjuku, on Otakibashi-dori adjacent to famous Shinjuku Station. Leased on a monthly basis, serviced apartments provide an ideal alternative to hotels for long stay business, government and leisure travelers. Oakwood Apartments Shinjuku offers 143 fully-furnished serviced apartments, plus amenities including a spectacular

Fitness Center and Sky Lounge. Send your requests via www.oakwoodtokyo.com or GDS code IP. 10% commission available on GDS loaded.



Hotel New Otani Tokyo

The Main Building is in the midst of a \$100M renovation project to turn it into a "hybrid hotel". One-third of the remodeled rooms are **NOW AVAILABLE!!** Special rates for renovated Standard King at JPY25,000 & Deluxe Room King or Twins at JPY44,000 are available in the various GDS's. Contact New Otani Hotels' N. American Sales Office at **1-800-421-8795** or FAX **213-620-9808**.



Prince Hotel

BONUS OFFERS for "PJ" code GDS bookings for the Winter Delight promotional rates for Takanawa Prince Hotel, New Takanawa Prince Hotel & Takanawa Prince Hotel SAKURA TOWER. Earn an extra 5% commission, valid from December 1, 2006 to February 28, 2007. Travel must be completed by March 31, 2007.

Contact Prince Hotel & Resorts at **1-877-783-8787** or visit www.princejapan.com for details.

Tokyu Hotels Japan

4 properties in downtown Tokyo are offering a special "Winter Promotion" rates (up to 42% off the rack rate) until early spring 2007.

- * Shinbashi Atagoyama Tokyu Inn (12/01/06 - 03/31/07)
- * Shibuya Tokyu Inn (12/01/06 - 04/30/07 except Feb.)
- * Omori Tokyu Inn (12/01/06 - 04/30/07)
- * Kichijoji Tokyu Inn (12/01/06 - 04/30/07)

For details & reservations, contact Tokyu Hotels Reservation Center N. America at: **1-800-42-TOKYU**(86598), E-MAIL at reservation@tokyuhotelsjapan.com or visit www.tokyuhotelsjapan.com



Details on the above 3 specials can also be found here:

- URL: [New Otani](#)
- URL: [Prince Hotel](#)
- URL: [Shinbashi Atagoyama Tokyu Hotel](#)



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