



August Newsletter Highlights in this Edition:

1). National Holidays in Japan for the next three months:

August: * 13th -15th OBON (Festival of the Souls). Although this is not An Official Holiday offices are closed. (Most of the country Celebrates in August)

September: *20th (Mon) Respect for the Aged Day (keiro no hi)
*23rd (Thur)Autumn Equinox

October: *11th (Mon) Sports Day (taiku no hi)



2). Festivals in the coming months:

August 2-7 Aomori Nebuta Festival held in Aomori City is the most popular nebuta festival in Japan and attracts millions of visitors. During this Festival, over 20 large nebuta floats parade through the street near the JR Aomori Station. To make a nebuta float wooden bases are built at first and frames are made with wires. Then Japanese papers (washi) are glued on the frames. Finally Japanese or historical figures or Kabuki characters are painted on the paper. It takes almost a year to complete a nebuta float from commencement of design.

Not only Aomori citizens but also visitors can participate in the festival as dancers called haneto.

August 16th Bonfire Festival in Kyoto (Gozan Okuribi). The Gozan Okuribi Bonfire Festival is a well-known summer event in Kyoto. Five large bonfires are lit on the slopes of five mountains which surround Kyoto-city. It is believed that the spirits of ancestors come back to their homes during obon in Japan. Okuribi are fires lit to send the ancestors' spirits back at the end of obon. Gozan Okuribi takes place around 8:00pm on August 16th every year.

Gozan Okuribi originated hundreds of years ago. The bonfires depict kanji characters (Chinese characters) in three locations and certain designs in two locations. The most famous fire is Daimonji which portrays the kanji 一 (one) meaning large. The length of the horizontal line of the kanji is about 88 yards.

1st – 3rd September : Owara Kaze-noBon Festival Toyama City. Toyama Prefecture. This is a traditional folk event to appease the wind and pray for a bountiful crop. It is generally believed that the Bon ritual of paying homage to ancestors merged with a festival praying for a rich harvest. All the men and women of the town stop working during the days of the festival. They light small lamstands covered with paper and dance all night whilst singing the "Eccu Owawa Bushi" which is a folk song handed in the Yatsuo-machi town.

14th – 16th September : Reitatsai Kamakura City. It consists of numerous events such as offerings of Kamakura kagura music performed when paying homage to deities, a tea-offering ceremony to the gods and classical Japanese music. Yet the greatest attraction of all is, no doubt, the gallant Yabusame (held on the 16th) which passes down the ancient traditions of the Kamakura Period.

Yabusame is a contest combining equestrian skills and Japanese-style archery which was popular among the samurai warriors from the end of the Heian Period (794-1192) to the Kamakura Period (1192-1333). Along a straight riding ground which extends over approximately 250 metres, targets 1,2 and 3 are set up and archers on horseback shoot at these one after the other. The archers are dressed in samurai hunting wear called age shozoku just like in the Kamakura Period and use turnip-head arrows which make a whistling sound as they fly through the air.

7th – 9th October: Nagasaki Kunchi Festival. This is an autumn festival held at Suwa Shrine which has a history of 370 years. The greatest highlight is the Hono-Odori in which the towns in charge, called Odori-cho, take turns every year to perform dances. Moreover, the attractions prepared by the Odori-cho include dazzling floats shaped like river barges or Chinese boats on wheels.



9th – 10th October : Takayama Matsuri Autumn Festival. The Takayama Festival is cited as one of the three most beautiful festivals in Japan. The greatest attractions are the eleven yatai floats which are designated as significant intangible folk cultural assets. The yatai floats are lined up before dusk and once the town becomes veiled in the evening darkness, as many as 10 chochin lanterns are lit on each of the floats. The unique ornaments of the yatai floats look even more resplendent in the darkness of the night.

17th October : Nikko Toshogu Shrine Shuki Taisai Grand Autumn Festival. This is the autumn festival of Nikko Toshogu a registered World Heritage Site. This procession consists of one mikoshi (a portable shrine) and a train of about 800 people. Led by the portable shrine, the samurai procession made up of cavalry, warriors carrying guns and other with spears, archers with bows and arrows and so on, depart from the Futarasan-jinja Shrine of Sannai and head for the Otabisho which is a temporary resting place for the portable shrine during the festival. Here the archers shoot at three targets one after the other whilst galloping on horseback.

3) Feature Property:

A HOTEL in Tokyo has created a special model railway room for train-obsessed guests. The room at the AKIHABARA WASHINGTON Hotel offers dual controls for the layout, and enthusiasts are able to bring their own rolling stock or use carriages provided by the Hotel.

The tracks run around a scale model of the Akihabara area in central Tokyo, with the special room created during a recent renovation of the Hotel.

For additional information, contact Japan Holidays.

4) Free Maiko dancing and demonstration of traditional Kyoto crafts.

These are available at the Kyoot Museum of Traditional Crafts “Fureaikan” with the following schedule. Further no admission is necessary for this museum itself.

- (1) Takumi (Demonstration of traditional Kyoto crafts) 10:00 am – 4:30pm except Monday
- (2) Mai (Maiko Dancing) 2:00pm – 3:30pm on Sunday. Note: Each show starts from 2:00pm, 2:30pm and 3:00pm.

5) Dai Onki (Special Buddhist memorial services).

Dai Onki (special Buddhist memorial services) to commemorate the 750th anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s death and the 800th anniversary of Honen Shonin’s death will be held between 2010 and 2013. Memorial services held at three temples in Kyoto in 2011 will be especially large therefore during these periods it is expected that related facilities such as accommodations and restaurants will be very crowded.

March 19th – March 28th

April 19th – April 28th

May 19th – May 28th

April 9th – April 16th

May 9th – May 16th

Contact Japan Holidays for additional information.

6) Tokyo with kids. Parks and Play-grounds.

Asukayama Park : 1 – 9 years old Entrance is free and D51 steam locomotive and Toden trains are exhibited in the park.

Toyosu Park: 1-9 years old. Entrance is free

Ueno Zoological Gardens: Entrance Yen600 aged 16-64 years. Yen 200 12-15 years old. Over 2600 animals including lions, gorillas and elephants.

Tokyo Toy Museum Entrance fee Yen500 aged 3-11 years. Yen700 Adult and children over 11 years old. Y1000 for 1 Adult with 1 child.

For further information, contact Japan Holidays.