

Japan Travel News

Japan National Tourist Organization

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Howl's Moving Castle Special - 5 night package in Tokyo

'Howl's Moving Castle', the new animation from Tokyo's Ghibli Studios is out now in cinemas. The film is directed by the legendary animator Hayao Miyazaki best known for Academy Award winning 'Spirited Away', 'Nausicaa' and many more. His latest work, 'Howl's Moving Castle', is an adaptation of the childrens fantasy novel by British author Diana Wynne Jones. Hayao Miyazaki has created a fantastic mix of fantasy, action and romance, which Ghibli Studio's is renowned for.



Celebrating the release of 'Howl's Moving Castle' JAL have teamed up with eTours-Japan to offer a new tour to visit the famous Ghibli Museum in Tokyo. The tour includes return flights from London to Tokyo on Japan Airlines, 5 nights accommodation and a tour of the Ghibli Museum. Prices start from £929 per person for travel between January - March 2006. The package is

subject to availability, exchange rates, flight price changes and is valid up to November 2006. For more information and bookings please contact eTours-Japan on tel: +44 (0)20 7312 1708 or visit www.eTours-Japan.com.

JAL Seeks Membership to oneworld alliance

On 25th October, Japan Airlines (JAL) announced it is to seek membership of oneworld alliance. JAL is the biggest carrier in the Asia-Pacific region. In terms of group revenues, it would become the largest member of oneworld. Using virtually all other measures, it would be in the alliance's biggest three, alongside American Airlines and British Airways.



Launched in February 1999, oneworld offers a global network provided by eight major airlines, namely American Airlines, British Airways, Qantas, Cathay Pacific, Iberia, LAN, Finnair and Aer Lingus, plus their 12 affiliates. Until now JAL was the only one of the 20 biggest international airlines that has not applied or joined one of the three key airline groupings.

The oneworld alliance has a network linking around 600 cities in around 130 countries, by joining JAL could further expand their network. Oneworld alliance is the first multilateral alliance in the world with interline e-ticketing in place between all of its members, making it far more convenient for passengers to transfer between flights of different member airlines. By joining an alliance that pursues such leading-edge services as this, JAL feels that its customer's convenience would be further improved.

Oneworld Managing Partner John McCulloch commented: "Japan Airlines would be an ideal fit with oneworld, as we have said often in the past. It is a high class carrier, with an excellent reputation for its customer service and management and an enviable network that complements those of our existing members."

For further information please visit www.jal-europe.com

Hotel News

New ANA Hotel in Okayama

A new ANA hotel opened in Okayama in August. Okayama is a popular spot for garden enthusiasts as it is home to Korakuen, one of Japan's three most beautiful landscape gardens - the other two being Kanazawa's Kenrokuen and Mito's Kairakuen. Korakuen, built in the 17th century by a local feudal lord, contains ponds, teahouses, pavilions, woods, an artificial hill and several small shrines. Another popular attraction in Okayama is Okayama Castle, which is conveniently close to the garden.

The new ANA Hotel Okayama is in the city centre just a one minute walk from JR Okayama Station, the hub of the Chugoku region. Room prices start from 13,860 yen (approx. £68 / 100 euro).



For bookings please visit www.anahotels.com or call the hotel direct on +81 (0)86 898 1111.

Premium Rooms Promotion at ANA Hotels

Until the end of 2005 ANA Hotels are offering up to 50% off rack rates for their Premium Floor rooms, ANA Hotels business class product. Premium and Executive rooms are larger, often with Japanese style bathrooms, more amenities and additional services such as free high-speed internet access.

Travel agents can book via GDS under promotional code "Premium Floor Special". Chain code "AN"

For further information please visit www.anahotels.com or contact the London sales office on +44 (0)20 8574 2873.

Keio Plaza Hotel Refurbishment

The Keio Plaza is conveniently located in Shinjuku, one of Tokyo's best nightlife and shopping areas. The hotel was completed in 1971 gaining the distinction of being Japan's first skyscraper. At 47 stories high it is still today one of Tokyo's tallest and largest hotels.

The hotel has recently undergone a refurbishment and introduced Plaza Premier, a new style of room to meet all the needs of a contemporary urban hotel. Plaza Premier rooms combine innovative design, cutting edge technology and enhanced comfort for a luxurious escape in the heart of the capital. Each room is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including MD player and 26-inch LCD screen TV and free high-speed internet. Plaza Premier rooms are fully soundproofed and mattresses and linen are supplied by luxury bedmaker Simmons to ensure guests are guaranteed peace and comfort in the centre of the metropolis.

For further information and reservations please tel: +81 (0)3 5322 8000 or visit www.keioplaza.com

New Aqua Stadium at Shinagawa Prince Hotel

One of Tokyo's newest attractions is an aquarium in the Shinagawa Prince Hotel. The Epon Aqua Stadium opened in April at the Shinagawa Prince Hotel, one of Tokyo's largest hotels. The aquarium tanks at the 9.2 billion yen facility (approx. £44.9m / 66.2m euros) hold a total of 4,130 tons of water and are home to about 20,000 sea creatures of 300 different species. Two of the central attractions at the new aquarium are a dolphin pool and a sea lion pool. Epon Aqua Stadium projects that it will receive a whopping 2 million visitors in its first year.

Besides the aquarium, Aqua Stadium boasts a variety of other facilities. One is an indoor roller coaster based on Galaxy Express 999, a popular anime by Matsumoto Reiji. There is also a concert hall, restaurant, and cafe, some of which are themed on a port town to keep with the marine theme of the Aqua Stadium. For example, Aqua Dining Tropics, a restaurant offering unique meals in view of twelve tanks of vividly coloured, beautiful tropical fish. Exactly like a restaurant in the sea.

Shinagawa Prince Hotel is composed of four gleaming white buildings added at various stages. Rooms sizes and prices vary widely depending on which building you select, so the hotel has something to fit all budgets. In addition to the facilities in Aqua Stadium the hotel also boasts more than a dozen food and beverage outlets, a 10-screen cinema complex, a large sportscenter with nine indoor tennis courts, an 80-lane bowling center, an indoor golf practice center, a SEGA amusement/arcade-game center, indoor and outdoor pools and a fitness center.

Room price start at 11,400 yen (approx. £56 / 82 euros).

Admission prices for Aqua Stadium are 1,800 yen for adults, 1,000 yen for 12-18 year olds, 600 yen for 4-11 year olds and children under 4 are free.

For hotel bookings please call:

+81 3 3449 9844 or visit

www.princehotelsjapan.com/shinagawaprincehotel



Please note all currency exchanges are correct as at 25 October 2005 and are based on the following rates:
1GB= 205 yen 1 Euro = 139 yen.
Reference www.xe.com

New Tours

Experience Samurai Spirit in Japan

Akemi Solloway, lecturer of traditional Japanese culture, has put together two unique Japan tours to enable people to learn about and experience Japan's historical samurai heritage. The tours visit martial arts centres, Shinto shrines and esoteric Buddhist temples to experience how samurai lived in the past. Accommodation on the tour includes some nights spent with Japanese host families to allow participants to fully immerse themselves in Japanese culture. The tour price includes air tickets (return ticket from London Heathrow to Japan), transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, activities and some meals.

Tour 1 - 8th - 15th December 2005

Participants on this tour will have the unique opportunity to see the Ako Gishi-sai samurai parade in central Tokyo. This takes place every year in Tokyo on 14th December as an annual memorial to 47 loyal samurai who died for their lord in 1702. Cost: £1,390

Tour 2 - 31st March - 10th April 2006

This tour takes in a martial arts festival at an ancient temple over 1,000 years old in Kumamoto, on the Japanese island of Kyushu. At the festival eight different styles of martial arts will be demonstrated, as well as taiko drumming. Cost: £1,490

For more information or bookings please contact Akemi Solloway on tel +44 (0)20 8854 0505
e-mail : akemi@solloway.demon.co.uk
website: www.solloway.demon.co.uk

New Lonely Planet Guide

Pick your own way through sophisticated mega-cities packed with world class museums. Then meet the wild snow monkeys of Chubu. How could one country offer so much? The new Lonely Planet Japan Guide explains it all.

GET MORE FOR YOUR YEN - Insider budget tips and smart accommodation options mean that you can do what you want, whatever your budget.

KNOW THE ROUTE - Packed with over 150 maps, more than any other guide to Japan.
FEAST LIKE AN EMPEROR - A Food & Drink chapter and restaurant listings.
ESCAPE THE CROWDS - Coverage of Mt Fuji, Okinawa and the Southwest Islands and more.
POINT IT OUT - Japanese script throughout means that you will always find what you want .



The new 9th edition of the Lonely Planet Japan guide is available now in all major book shops.

Magical Japan and China Tour

Brand new from Collette Worldwide for 2006 is MAGICAL JAPAN AND CHINA, a sixteen day itinerary designed to offer the opportunity to engage in local life, taste regional cuisine and visit magnificent temples, palaces and castles designated as World Heritage sites. Starting with three nights in Kyoto, Japan's artistic and cultural centre, guests will visit the famous Nishiki market, Nijo Castle a fortified castle with decorated doors and floorboards that sing like nightingales when someone walks on them, and Kinkakuji, where the Temple of the Golden Pavilion sits above the Mirror Pond. Also included are trips to Kiyomizu Temple and a tour of the historic district of Gion, known for its geisha. More shrines and temples are on offer at Nara the following day and after this, travellers will board the famous bullet train to Tokyo, with a chance to view the dormant volcano Mt Fuji on the way. While visiting the capital, guests will see the Meiji Shrine, the Imperial Palace and Asakusa Kannon, a Buddhist temple surrounded by narrow streets filled with restaurants, shops, galleries and gardens.

The tour also includes an overnight stay in Hong Kong, before continuing to Guilin, Xian to see the terracotta warriors and ending with three nights in Beijing where guests can walk the Great Wall of China among other attractions. This sixteen day tour costs from £3,269 per person based on two sharing and includes return flights and thirty meals.

For reservations call Collette Worldwide on
Tel: +44 (0)800 -804- 8701

Seven Sushi Samurai & Sushi Awards



On 7th November, Chino Latino Restaurant is hosting the fourth annual Original Sushi Competition Grand Final. The Original Sushi Competition is an amateur sushi contest which is judged by celebrity chef Jean-Christopher Novelli and the Seven Sushi Samurai.

The Seven Sushi Samurai are the top seven professional sushi chefs from around the UK, who will also be demonstrating their sushi preparation skills on the night. The evening will include a sushi buffet including sake and beer. An exciting goody bags containing Japanese food and goods will be given to all guests.

Date & Time: 17:30-20:30, 7th November 2005
Venue: Chino Latino Restaurant & Bar at
Riverbank Park Plaza Hotel, 18 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7JT

Tickets for the Seven Sushi Samurai and Sushi Awards 2005 cost £48 per person. Tickets can be purchased by phone on +44 (0)20 7436 1930 or online at www.eat-japan.com.

Events Calendar

December

2nd & 3rd Chichibu Yo-Matsuri or All-Night Festival, Chichibu City, Saitama Prefecture

This festival is considered to be one of the grandest float festivals in Japan. The highlight is on the evening of the 3rd, when a parade of lantern-lit floats weighing more than 10-tons each begins from Chichibu Shrine and preceeds along the city's main streets.



14th Ako Gishi-sai, Sengakuji Temple, Tokyo

Traditional dances and warrior parades as an annual memorial to the legendary 47 ronin who avenged their master's death by killing his rival and parading his head; for their act, all were ordered to commit suicide.

31st New Year's Eve, celebrated nationwide

At midnight many temples ring huge bells 108 times to signal the end of the old year and the beginning of the new (each peal represents a sin). Many families visit temples and shines to pray for good luck and prosperity and to usher in the coming year. In Tokyo, Meiji Jingu Shrine is the place to be for this popular family celebration; many coffee shops and resturants in nearby Harajuku stay open all night to serve the revellers. Other popular sites in Tokyo are Kanda Myojin Shrine, Sensoji Temple, and Sanno Hie Shrine. Some underground and train lines are open throughout the night. Please be aware that many tourist attractions, stores and restaurants are closed on one or more days between 29th December and 3rd January, limiting your activity, shopping and dining choices.

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January

1st New Years Day, nationwide

The most important holiday in Japan, like Christmas in Europe, this is a time of family reunions and gathering with friends to drink sake and eat special New Year's dishes. Because the Japanese spend this day with families, and because almost all businesses, restaurants, shops and museums close down, it's not a particularly rewarding time of the year for foreign vistors. However, trains and buses do still run a Sunday service. Best bets for sightseeing are shrines and temples, where many Japanese come in their kimono to pray for good health and happiness in the coming year. You will be able to experience a festival atmosphere with various food stands and thousands of people making wishes and purchasing lucky charms for a fortunate new year.

2nd Kokkyo Ippan Sanga, Imperial Palce, Tokyo

Each year on 2nd January the public is allowed inside the grounds of the Imperial Palace to offer New Year greetings to the Imperial Family. Thousands of people gather to see and hear a live New Year's greeting given by the Emperor and Empress of Japan in a part of the Imperial Palace not usually open to members of the public.

6th Dezome-shiki - The New Year's Firemen Parade Tokyo Big Sight, Odaiba, Tokyo

Agile firemen in traditional attire perform acrobatic stunts on top of tall bamboo ladders. The parade is a tradition from the Edo Period, 1603-1867.



9th Coming of Age Day, national holiday

In Japan, children are considered adults on their 20th birthday. Local governments host special coming-of-age ceremonies for 20-year-olds and the participants dress up in their finest clothes for this ceremony. It is still custom for girls to wear kimonos on this day.