

# Japan Travel News

## Japan National Tourist Organization

5th Floor, Heathcoat House, 20 Savile Row, London W1S 3PR  
Tel: +44-(0)20-7734-6870 Fax: +44(0)20-7734-4290  
E mail: info@jnto.co.uk URL: www.seejapan.co.uk



October - November 2004

PR Manager: Kylie Clark

## Japan is yours to discover in Kansai!



*Konpon Daito Pagoda, Koya-san*

On Thursday, 21 October a seminar and reception will be held at the Japanese Embassy in London to promote Japan's Kansai region. The Kansai region lies in the middle of Japan's main island, Honshu. It includes the prefectures of Nara, Wakayama, Mie, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, and Shiga. The Kansai region is the birthplace of Japanese history and culture. Here visitors will find two of Japan's ancient capitals – Kyoto and Nara – and many national treasures, important cultural assets, and world cultural and natural heritage sites. No where else in Japan can you find so much of historical interest in such a compact area.

The seminar will give information about the nature, religion, pop and traditional culture of the Kansai region as well as practical information about visiting the region. There will also be a presentation about the Kansai region's five World Heritage listed sites, including Koya-san - a mountain in the Koya-Ryujin Quasi-National Park on which more than 120 temples are scattered, thus forming a great religious city. Guest will be able to hear a Swiss Buddhist monk, Kurt Genso, talk about life in Japan. Kurt entered Muryoko-in Temple in Koyasan in 1997 and is currently working on activities that fuse Buddhism and art, including pictures, drawings and sculpture.

After the seminar there will be a reception where guests can enjoy Japanese sake and food and be entertained by musicians playing *koto* and *shakuhachi*, traditional Japanese instruments. There will also be traditional kagami-biraki ceremony, which is the breaking open of a sake barrel to mark auspicious occasions and for wishing for future happiness and success.

Throughout the duration of the seminar and reception there will be a tabletop exhibition where guests can chat to and obtain information from representatives from Kansai International Tourism Promotion Centre, West Japan Railway Company, Kansai International Airport, Japan Airlines, JTB and tourist information centres from throughout the region. This event is sponsored by the KANSAI International Tourism Promotion Centre and will be a fantastic opportunity for guests to get to know this dynamic region of Japan better.

Date: Thursday, 21st October

Proceedings:

4:00pm - 8:30pm Tabletop exhibition

5:00pm -7:00pm Seminar

7:00pm - 8:30pm Reception

\* Please note that this is an invitation only event. Inquiries regarding this event can be sent to [reception@jnto.co.uk](mailto:reception@jnto.co.uk)



*Kinkakuji , Kyoto*

# New Tokyo Hotels

## Marunouchi Hotel

Founded in 1924, the Marunouchi Hotel has undergone major refurbishment to give it a fresh modern Japanese look and feel. The 205 room hotel has an impressive eleven-level atrium space in its centre and offers a wide variety of dining options with a French restaurant, an a la carte Japanese restaurant, a teppanyaki restaurant and a cafe bar. The hotel is very conveniently located just 1 minute walk from JR Tokyo station's Marunouchi north exit.

Tel: +81 (0)3 3215 2151  
[www.marunouchi-hotel.co.jp](http://www.marunouchi-hotel.co.jp)



## Mercure Hotel Ginza Tokyo

On October 1st, the new 209-room Mercure Hotel Ginza opened in the heart of Tokyo's Ginza retail and commercial district. The hotel is just a short walk from the Tokyo International Forum, the largest conference centre in the Tokyo CBD. The hotel has a subway station underneath, providing guests with direct and easy access to all of Tokyo's best attractions.

In the first development of its kind, Mercure Hotel Ginza has been created from an existing office building has been completely transformed to provide a French oasis in the middle of the city. The hotel's restaurant, *L'Echanson Bistrot*, is a stylish dining venue with great wine selection giving guests a taste of France in the heart of Japan. Until the end of November, the hotel is offering a special introductory rate of Y16,000 for two people.

Tel. +81 (0)3 4335 1111  
[www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com)



## Hotel Sunroute Shinagawa Seaside

The latest addition to the Sunroute Hotel group opened on 27 September in the Shinagawa Forest area of Tokyo's Shinagawa district. The hotel is easily accessible from Shinagawa Seaside station. The interior is a very modern style and boasts facilities such as TV-computers with free high-speed internet access and massage chairs in the "relax single" rooms. The lobby lounge on the 16th floor offers spectacular views of Tokyo Bay as does the hotel's restaurant, J-slow Food Cuisine.

Tel: +81 (0)3 6716 0011  
[www.sunroute-shinagawa-seaside.com](http://www.sunroute-shinagawa-seaside.com)



## Villa Fontaine Shiodome



This 497-room hotel opened on 9 August right in the middle of the popular Shiodome area of Tokyo. All rooms are large (at least 30m<sup>2</sup>) and internet connection is available in all rooms free of charge. The hotel also has 8 rooms set aside as conference facilities, these range from a 30m<sup>2</sup> meeting room suitable for up to 25 people to a large 180m<sup>2</sup> conference room suitable for gatherings of up to 142 people.

The hotel is 6 minutes walk from JR/Subway Shimbashi Station and also accessible through the station from subway Yurikamome Shiodome Station.

Tel: +81 (0)3 5339 1200  
[www.villa-fontaine.co.jp/shiodome/main\\_shio.html](http://www.villa-fontaine.co.jp/shiodome/main_shio.html)

# T our Operator News

## Walking & Trekking in Japan with **exodus**



In 2005 Exodus will be offering two tours to Japan. Japan's blend of old and new is given a unique twist by Exodus's superb new trekking itinerary, the 14-day *Mt. Fuji and the Japanese Alps*. The trip incorporates a day in Kyoto, one of Japan's ancient capitals with its peaceful Zen gardens and Shinto temples, a day in ultra modern Tokyo, and a short walk on the Nakasendo Way - an ancient trading route. The trip concentrates on two of Japan's most famous peaks - Mt. Yurigatake and Mt Fuji. Exodus use excellent mountain huts when trekking both peaks, taking time to acclimatise and enjoy spectacular scenery and hospitality, before returning to base to relax in a local 'onsen' (hot spring).  
Prices: £2,299 package inc. flights;  
or £1,675 land only.  
2005 departure dates: 7 Aug, 21 Aug.

Also on offer for 2005 is *Japan: Ancient & Modern*. This itinerary begins in Kyoto where participants can enjoy the serenity of its countless temples and relax in the contemplative surroundings of its superb Zen gardens. From Kyoto there are day trips to Nara and the Peace Memorial Park in the ill-fated city of Hiroshima; the beautiful island of Miyajima is nearby. Using the highly efficient train system, the trip explores Japan's rarely-visited scenic heartland of mountains, spas and temples, ending in the extraordinary city of Tokyo, where there is time to visit all the sights and do some shopping.  
Prices: March/April departures £2,345 package inc. flights; or £1,880 land only.  
Sep departures £2,435 package inc. flights; or £1,880 land only.  
2005 departure dates: 31 Mar, 14 Apr, 15 Sep, 29 Sep.

General enquiries: 0870 240 5550  
[www.exodus.co.uk](http://www.exodus.co.uk)

## InsideJapan Tours

InsideJapan Tours have updated their website to include full details of their range of small group tours and tailored services for 2005. Please see:

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

New for 2005 is the *Hidden Japan* Tour which covers the must-sees of Kyoto, the newly recognised World Heritage sights of Mt. Koya, Shikoku's beautiful Iya valley, Hiroshima city and Himeji castle.

The ever popular *Tokaido Trail* and *Alpine Highway* tours now include an excursion day from Kyoto allowing for a no-extra-cost visit to Nara, Hiroshima, Himeji or the World Expo 2005 near Nagoya.

For summer, the *Essential Honshu* tour offers the chance of a lifetime to climb Mt. Fuji, whilst for those looking to see the Cherry Blossom, the *Spring Elegance* tour covers the shrines and gardens of Japan in style!

A great success in 2004, the *Northern Soul* tour will once again be following in Basho's footsteps as we explore historic old towns north of Tokyo and try a temple lodging's stay.

Small group tour prices start at £950 for 9 nights (land only) and typically include breakfast each morning, a number of evening meals, airport meet and greet, transport between destinations and accommodation at hotels and Japanese style ryokan.

As well as group tours, InsideJapan Tours also offer a customised packages service with both off-the-shelf self-guided packages and fully tailored programmes available. These can be designed for any itinerary and to suit any budget whether that be backpacker or 5 star luxury.

For further information, copies of their new brochure and travel advice please contact InsideJapan Tours as follows:

Telephone: 0870 746 1044

E-mail: [info@insidejapantours.com](mailto:info@insidejapantours.com)



# December/January 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 proceeds along the city's main streets.

### **14th 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.

### **23rd The Emperor's Birthday, national holiday**

The Emperor of Japan does not rule but is a symbol of the nation. This national holiday is always celebrated on the birthday of the current Emperor. So the date changes whenever there is a new Emperor with the previous Emperor's birthday often becoming a new special holiday.



### **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 shrines 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 restaurants in nearby Harajuku stay open all night to serve the revellers. Other popular sites are Kanda Myojin Shrine, Sensoji Temple, and Sanno Hie Shrine. Some underground and train lines are open throughout the night.

## January

### **1st New Year's Day, nationwide**

The most important national holiday in Japan, like Christmas in Europe, this is a time of family reunions and gatherings 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 visitors. However, trains and bus do still run a Sunday service. Best bets for sightseeing are shrines and temples, where Japanese come in their best kimono or dress to pray for good health and happiness in the coming year.

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

Agile firemen in traditional attire perform acrobatic stunts on top of tall bamboo ladders.

### **8th-10th Antique Jamboree, Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo**

Over 500 antique dealers gather at this biggest antique event held in Japan. [www.kottoh-jamboree.com](http://www.kottoh-jamboree.com)

### **10th 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.

