

Japan National Tourist Organization London Office
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New Clint Eastwood Film Set to
Spark Interest in Japan's WWII History

Letters From Iwo Jima is the second film that Clint Eastwood has directed to reveal the historic battle of Iwo Jima through both American and Japanese eyes. The first, released in December, *Flags of Our Fathers* reveals the battle through American eyes; *Letters From Iwo Jima* takes on the perspective of the Japanese. *Letters From Iwo Jima* is released in the UK on 23 February and has received four Oscar nominations for Best Motion Picture of the Year, Achievement in Directing (Clint Eastwood), Achievement in Sound Editing and Original Screenplay and won a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film.

The film focuses on Saigo (Kazunari Ninomiya), a young soldier desperate to return home to his wife and newborn child, and General Tadamichi Kuribayashi (Ken Watanabe - familiar to Western audiences from his starring roles in *Batman Returns* and *Memoirs of a Geisha*), the American-educated officer whose strategies transform the battle from a projected quick defeat to nearly 40 days of heroic combat. During the Battle of Iwo Jima almost 7,000 American soldiers were killed on Iwo Jima and more than 20,000 Japanese troops perished. The two films, taken together, are Eastwood's attempt to honor those who lost their lives on Iwo Jima from both sides of the conflict and reveal the battle as not only as a clash of arms but of cultures.

For more information about the film please visit www.lettersfromiwojimamovie.co.uk

The film is likely to spark an interest in visiting Iwo Jima and other parts of Japan linked to World War II.

Iwo Jima

Iwo Jima is part of the Volcano Islands (the southern part of the Ogasawara Islands), approximately 1200 km south of Tokyo. It is famous as the site of the Battle of Iwo Jima in February and March 1945 between the United States and Japan during WWII.

It has an approximate area of just 21 km². The most prominent feature of the island is Mount Suribachi, a vent which is thought to be dormant and is 166 m in height. The island is a part of the prefecture of Tokyo but the island has no civilian inhabitants and access requires special permission. In general, ex-islanders, the bereaved, and the survivors of the war-dead may go to Iwo Jima only when memorial services are held for the war dead.

As Iwo Jima is not open to visitors those interested in Japan's World War II history may instead like to consider visiting the following places:

Okinawa

The Battle of Okinawa, fought on the Japanese Island of Okinawa was the largest amphibious assault during the Pacific campaigns of WWII. It lasted from late March through June 1945.

The battle has been referred to as the "Typhoon of Steel". The nicknames refer to the ferocity of the fighting, the intensity of gunfire involved, and sheer numbers of Allied ships and armoured vehicles that assaulted the island. An estimated 200,000 people, including more than 100,000 civilians and 12,500 Americans were killed in the battle. Neither side expected Okinawa to be the last major battle of the war, which it was. The Allies were planning Operation Downfall, the invasion of Kyushu and Honshu, which never happened due to the Japanese surrender, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. After the war was over Okinawa remained under US administration until 1972.

Numerous sites and memorials related to the "Battle of Okinawa" are concentrated mainly in the south of Okinawa's main island, where the worst fighting took place:

The spacious **Peace Memorial Park** is located near the southern tip of the island. Its main attraction is the **Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum**, which gives a sobering overview of the road to the battle, the battle itself and the reconstruction of Okinawa.

Other monuments in the park include the "Cornerstone of Peace", a collection of large stone plates with the names of all fallen soldiers and civilians, including Koreans, Taiwanese, Americans and Britons.

A few kilometers west of the Peace Park stands the **Himeyuri Monument** with an adjacent museum. It commemorates the fate of female high school students, who worked in army field hospitals in caves under horrendous conditions. Most of them did not survive the war.

Another thought provoking, war related site are the **Former Navy Underground Headquarters**, several hundred meters of underground corridors and rooms, which served as the Japanese navy's headquarters during the war. Many sailors committed suicide in these tunnels, after their situation had grown hopeless towards the end of the battle.

For more information please visit the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau website www.ocvb.or.jp

Hiroshima

On 6 August 1945, Hiroshima was chosen by US armed forces as the first ever target of an atomic bomb employed over a populated area. As a result, 200,000 civilians lost their lives, and Hiroshima became a city vehemently engaged in the promotion of peace.

The **Peace Memorial Park** was built to commemorate the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and to promote a peaceful world. It is located in the area around the atomic explosion's epicenter, and houses the Peace Memorial Museum and many other a-bomb related monuments.

The **Peace Memorial Museum** graphically displays the atomic bomb's horrible effects on the city and its inhabitants. A visit is naturally depressing. In the museum's east building, Hiroshima's militarist past and the process leading to the dropping of the bomb are documented. Audio guides are available in more than a dozen languages.

The **Atomic Bomb Dome** is one of the few buildings around the explosion's epicenter that partially survived the blast, and the city's only remaining bomb damaged building. The former Industrial Promotion Hall is now an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Between the museum and the Atomic Bomb Dome stands the **Memorial Cenotaph for**

Atomic Bomb Victims. It contains a list of all the people who were killed by the explosion or died due to the bombing's long-term effects such as cancer caused by radiation. The **Statue of the A-Bomb Children** and the **Cenotaph for Korean Victims** are some of many more monuments found in the park.

For more information please visit www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/hiroshima/

Nagasaki

Nagasaki became the second city after Hiroshima to be destroyed by an atomic bomb towards the end of WWII. Nagasaki Peace Park commemorates the city's destruction by the atomic bomb dropped on August 9, 1945. In the park stand the massive Peace Statue as well as various other statues. A monument with a black pillar marks the atomic explosion's epicenter in the nearby Hypocenter Park and stores the name list of bomb victims. Above the park stands the sobering Nagasaki A-Bomb Museum.

For more information please visit www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/nagasaki/

How to visit Nagasaki, Hiroshima & Okinawa

Emerald Travel's Explore Tokaido tour visits Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as Tokyo, Hakone, Takayama, Kyoto, Mt. Koya and Fukuoka. This independent tour is priced from £1,899 per person including flights, ground transport in Japan and all accommodation. For more information please contact Emerald Travel on 0871 222 2168 or visit their website www.etoursjapan.com

Jaltour's 9-day City & Sea package includes time in Tokyo and four nights in Okinawa. Prices start from £1,609 including flights, all accommodation and ground transport in Japan. For more information please contact Jaltour on 0870 111 8830 or visit their website www.jaltour.co.uk.

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For more information or images, please contact Kylie Clark at the Japan National Tourist Organization on email: kylie@jnto.co.uk or telephone 020 7734 6870.