

TOKACHI BEAR TO EXPLORE THE MOON? 十勝の熊、月へ?

Local bear Mr. Kumada was selected as the first bear to explore the moon and test out top secret bear extravehicular activity spacesuit technology, paving the way for future bear colonies on the moon. When asked about this exciting pioneering voyage, Kumada responded, “Rrroarr, growowwllll rrrawror”. We wish Kumada all the best in this travels!



April fools! Did I get you? While this wacky holiday in which practical jokes are played on friends, family, schoolmates, and coworkers is celebrated around the world, there is no holiday quite like April Fools' Day in Japan (unless you count the annual personnel transfer, which sometimes feels like a pretty big prank).

Prevailing theories place its origins in medieval France when Pope Gregory modified the Julian Calendar around 1563-64. At that time, the Christian world celebrated April 1st as the traditional New Year to coincide with Easter. The Gregorian Calendar reaffirmed January 1st as the official and traditional new year. After the new calendar took effect, change was gradual, albeit outright denied by some. Thus, people that celebrated New Year's on April 1st were considered “April fools”! People played tricks on them, like inviting

them to non-existent New Year parties.

Its popularity spread throughout Europe and the Americas in the 18th century. In Latin America, the tradition of tricking people is celebrated on a different day. December 28th is “*Día de los Santos Inocentes*” which is a Christian day of remembrance for innocent children slaughtered by King Herod. However, over time the day took on a much lighter tone and people started to play practical jokes on each other, calling those who are pranked *inocentes* (innocents).

In modern France, the day is referred to as “*Poisson d’Avril*” and is often celebrated by children who run around taping paper fish to their friends’ backs. When they discover that there is a fish there, the prankster yells “*posson d’Avril*” (April fish)! Fish are said to be used because of how easy they are to catch when newly hatched, or possibly because of their connection to Christian Lent food traditions.

Some popular jokes include placing a water bucket over a door, changing the time on the clocks, putting wrap in doorways, and setting up whoopee cushions. Stores like Don Quixote and 100 yen shops sell joke props if you'd like to try playing some jokes on friends and family here in Japan!



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Cherry Blossom Viewing in Tokachi (pg 2,3)



Movies (pg 4)

Events at TIRC and in Tokachi and Obihiro

Please be aware that these events may be cancelled to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

To find out if these events are still running, please contact the respective organizers.

When	What	Where/Contact
4/10, 4/24 (Sat) 16:00-17:30	Japanese Conversation and Learning Table 森の日本語レッスン Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment. TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) Organized by Tokachi International Association	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp
4/14 (Wed) 19:00-21:00	International Mini-Volleyball Night 国際ミニバレー・ナイト Meet new friends from around the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport. TIRC Multi-purpose Hall Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) Organized by Tokachi International Association	

Cherry Blossom Viewing in Tokachi

Last month we touched on *sakura*, (cherry blossoms) as a strong Japanese symbol of transience and *mono no aware*. *Sakura* is such a powerful symbol in Japan that it is considered the national flower (and national tree) alongside the emperor's symbol, the chrysanthemum. Nigh on every Japanese singer has a song either titled or with a direct reference to *sakura*. *Sakura* imagery can be found EVERYWHERE in Japan, including money, company logos, origami paper, dessert names and flavors, manhole covers, people's names, you name it!

Cherry blossoms are a direct reference to Japan across the world as well. Post cards, international postage stamps, and gift shop items often contain cherry blossom imagery. Japan has also given cherry blossom trees as gifts of friendship to other countries as well. Truly, the *sakura* is the de facto symbol of Japan.

十勝の花見スポット

Due to climate differences, Hokkaido's cherry blossoms bloom at a later date than the rest of Japan. If you want to enjoy the cherry blossoms this year, here are some useful terms related to *sakura* and information on where and when you can view them in Tokachi.

花見 はなみ *hanami*

Cherry Blossom Viewing. Families and coworkers often have picnics together and enjoy the flowers while having food and drink together.

夜桜 よざくら *yozakura*

Nighttime cherry blossom viewing. Parks will often set up lanterns so people can enjoy the blossoms at night.

The light gives them a different color than in sunlight.



Cherry Blossom Viewing in Tokachi

満開予想 まんかいよそう *mankai yosō*

Full bloom predictions. Weather stations use data to predict when the cherry blossoms will be in full bloom in each given area in Japan. By searching this term online, you can find info for your specific town. Fairly accurate.

蕾 つぼみ *tsubomi*

Flower bud. The Japanese cherry blossom forecast predicts the first stage of cherry blossoms (*tsubomi*) until they all fall off (*hazakura*). Some people enjoy viewing the growth of *sakura* from this early stage.

Tokachi Hanami Spots and Etiquette

Below you can find some locations within Tokachi known for their *hanami* spots. Here are some tips on manners to keep in mind when having a *hanami* party so that everyone can have a great experience!

十勝の花見スポット

- Do not sit on or climb the trees
- Check the rules on barbecues and picnics beforehand if the location has a homepage
- Don't break off branches of the trees or pick the cherry blossoms off
- Take ALL your garbage home with you! The larger spots may have garbage locations on site
- Alcohol is usually permitted for drinking, but be careful not to get too rowdy or disruptive

While all cherry blossom viewing spots are open, parks around Japan request that viewers practice safety precautions when visiting due to COVID-19. Here are some sample guidelines from Maruyama Park, Sapporo:

- Use a mask and wash your hands
- Keep distance from others
- Reduce your time spent in the park
- Avoid crowded hours



Expected Bloom Date: 5/2 (Obihiro City, according to <http://tenki.jp>)

City/Town	Location	City/Town	Location
Hiro'o Town	Tokachi Shrine	Shihoro Town	Route 241
Honbetsu Town	Honbetsu Park	Shimizu Town	Shimizu Park
Ikeda Town	Kiyomigaoka Park	Shintoku Town	Shintoku Shrine
Nakasatsunai Town	Sakura Rokka Park	Taiki Town	Hakurin Park
Obihiro City	Midorigaoka Park	...And there are plenty of other places all over Tokachi - Check them out too! Please note that the expected date can change by up to a few days or weeks depending on the location, weather and climate. You can find the most up-to-date information from local weather news stations. Happy viewing!	
Obihiro City	Obihiroga Park		
Otofuke Town	Otofuke Shrine		
Otofuke Town	Suzuran Park		

Due to COVID-19, release dates for new films may be postponed.
Please contact Cinema Taiyo directly for more details.

Times and movies are subject to change! (for space reasons not all movies are listed)
To confirm, call or check online at: http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/_obihiro/movie.shtml



Title	Language	Dates
Raya and the Last Dragon (<i>Rāya to Ryū no Ōkoku</i>)	JP Dub	Until 8 th
Monster Hunter (<i>Monsutā Hantā</i>)	JP Sub/Dub	Thru April
21 Bridges (<i>21 Burijji</i>)	JP Sub	From 9 th
Detective Conan: The Scarlet Bullet (<i>Meitantei Konan Hiroy no Dangan</i>)	JP Dub	From 16 th
Ruroni Kenshin: The Final (<i>Rurōni Kenshin Saishūshō The Final</i>)	JP Dub	From 23 rd

Events Continued

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When	What	Where/Contact
4/29–5/18 Every day during opening hours	40th Obihiro Citizen's Art Festival 第40回おびひろ市民芸術祭 Obihiro is holding a festival to display citizen' works of art by cultural activity organizations in Obihiro/Tokachi and individuals who want to show off the results of their work. There will be a stage component, an exhibition, and a tea party experience. Contents subject to change. Fee: Free (Tea Party experience has a fee)	Obihiro City Community Hall Obihiro Citizen's Gallery Tokachi Plaza 帯広市民文化ホール 帯広市民ギャラリー とかちプラザ 0155-23-8111
4/29 (Thu) 10:00-11:30	Ecology Park Explorers 「Fun at Oike Pond」 エコパ探検隊「大池で遊ぼう」 Come make a fishing rod out of willow branches and watch fish being fished out of Oike Pond. Fee: 400 yen Limit: 15 people Ages: Preschool and older Requirements: Please bring a mask and a hat	Tokachi Ecology Park 十勝エコロジーパーク財団 0155326780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp

Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Tokachi Plaza, Cinema Taiyo, Joy English Academy and online at www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp (click on "Information for Foreigners")

"Obihiro Pioneer" is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Tel (0155) 65-4133 or send e-mail to the Editing Team at international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp.