

## May-time sports in Tokachi

*It's May! The snow has melted, the flowers are springing up, and the temperature is rising, all of which means it's time to wake up, get up and get out there!*

*Of course the best way to do this is to get a group of friends together and get moving, so this month we'll introduce some sports you can take part in around Tokachi, that everyone of all levels of fitness can enjoy.*

With temperatures rising across Tokachi, it's safe to say that the ski and snowboarding season is well and truly over by now. As disappointing as it may be to some that snow sports aren't possible all year round, for others it's a blessing as fields and outdoor courts become accessible, giving way for various sports, including some endemic to Tokachi, such as park golf and gateball.

Park golf fields are ubiquitous around Tokachi, found in towns from Shikaoi to Taiki, Honbetsu, and all the towns between! A sport native to Tokachi, park golf was invented in Makubetsu town in 1983 with the intention of creating a sport for everyone of all ages and levels of fitness to enjoy. Taking place in a relatively level and moderately-sized playing area, park golf is kind of like a mix between golf and croquet. You only need one club (so no need for a caddy or expensive equipment), you can walk from



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hole to hole easily (so no need for a golf cart), and games tend to be very low-stakes and low tension (so no need to practice your swing all the time.....unless you want to!). In fact, part of the founding ideology behind park golf is for all the players to play in harmony with one another and the nature around the course, making for a very relaxing sport. It's also very easy to learn and inexpensive to play. It's ideal for getting outside in the sunshine and having a good time with friends, whether you're 5 or 85!



Another sport native to Tokachi, gateball was invented in 1947 in Memuro town by Suzuki Kazunobu.

Compared to park golf, gateball is a fast-paced tactical team sport, played by two teams of 5 players. It's played on a 20m x 15m rectangular short grass or sand court. Similar to croquet, the game is played by hitting a ball through a series of numbered gates with a mallet before attempting to strike a pole in the center of the court with your ball. Points are earned for getting your ball through a gate and for striking the goal pole. Each match lasts 30 minutes, and the winner is the team with the most points by the end of that time, making for very fast-paced gameplay as players attempt to guide their ball through the course as quickly and accurately as possible.

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# Events at TIRC

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
5/8, 5/22 (Sat) 16:00-17:30	<b>Japanese Conversation and Learning Table</b> <b>森の日本語レッスン</b> Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment. Open to all levels of Japanese language learners  TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) Organized by the Tokachi International Association	Tokachi International Relations Center <b>森の交流館・十勝</b> 0155-34-0122 <a href="mailto:tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp">tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</a>
5/12 (Wed) 19:00-21:00	<b>International Mini-Volleyball Night</b> <b>国際ミニバレー・ナイト</b> Meet new friends from around the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport.  TIRC Multipurpose Hall Fee: Free of charge Organized by the Tokachi International Association	
5/15 (Sat) 18:30-20:00	<b>International Talk (The Gambia)</b> <b>インターナショナル・トーク(ガンビア)</b> Learn more about the countries of the world. This month's theme is "The Gambia". Our guest is Edie, an exchange student from The Gambia. He will introduce his country and share facts and interesting information about Gambian culture, lifestyle and more. Participants can interact with the guest through a presentation, quiz and Q&A session.  TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) For junior high school students and older. Organized by the City of Obihiro	
5/22 (Sat) 10:30-12:00	<b>Kids Playground (Kenya)</b> <b>キッズ・プレイグラウンド(ケニア)</b> Come with your children to learn and play while meeting local families. This month's theme is "Kenya". This time, our guest, James from Kenya, will interact with the children through song, dance and arts and crafts.  TIRC Multi-purpose Hall Fee: Free of charge (registration required) Limited to the first 40 people to apply Application period: Apr 28 (Wed) - May 19 (Wed), 9:00—17:00 To register, contact TIRC by phone or at reception For children 0-6 years old and their parents/guardians. Organized by the City of Obihiro	

## May-time sports in Tokachi

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Outdoor sports not really your thing? Well, no worries, Tokachi has a solution for that too! Invented in the southern Tokachi town of Taiki, mini-volley is another sport adapted to be more accessible to players of all ages and levels of fitness. Similar to volleyball, mini-volley is a team game played in teams of 4 by hitting a ball over a net into the opposing team's court. However, a key difference between the two is that mini-volley is played with an inflatable ball, making it easier to strike regardless of physical fitness. This makes the game accessible to players of all ages, and also introduces an exciting aspect to the gameplay as air resistance will often cause the ball to travel in unexpected ways. There's nothing quite like the desperate scramble to hit the ball up in time when a ball that looked like it was flying completely straight suddenly loses speed and drops to the floor! The rules are also slightly different, making it easier to score points and also giving all players a chance to play in every position on the court. If you're interested in giving this sport a try, the Tokachi International Relations Center hosts an International Mini-Volley Night on the second Wednesday of every month. It's free to join, so why not come give it a shot? You might even make some new friends at the same time!



All of these sports sound fun, but for some maybe there's just no beating winter sports. It's such a shame you can't do them all year round.....or can you? While the skiers and snowboarders are out of luck,



Tokachi is an ice skater's paradise. Home to the 帯広の森運動公園 (Obihiro no mori undō kōen), a collection of sports facilities of all types on the outskirts of Obihiro city and Memuro town, Tokachi is home to not one, not two, but three ice-skating facilities, including the Olympic-class speed skating rink, the Meiji Hokkaido-Tokachi Oval! Tokachi is actually home to some of the best speed-skating athletes in the world, and you can see replica medals of Olympic medalists who hail from Tokachi in the Meiji Hokkaido-Tokachi Oval.

While the Meiji Hokkaido-Tokachi Oval and the Obihiro no Mori Ice Arena will have their rinks closed for maintenance until the start of July, the Obihiro no Mori Second Ice Arena starts operation in May, so strap on your skates and get to gliding across the ice if that's your thing!

*Of course, the range of activities you can do in Tokachi isn't limited to just these sports! You can go hiking, camping, fishing, you name it! So whatever your preference, make the most of the good weather and get moving!*

## Events in Tokachi

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When	What	Where/Contact
5/8 (Sat) 10:00 - 11:30	<b>Ecopark Expedition - Let's Explore the Springtime Forest!</b> エコパ探検隊「春の森を探検しよう」 See rare spring plants as you walk through the forest. Please come wearing a hat and mask. Limited to 10 participants Fee: 300 Yen per person For elementary school students and older (children under elementary school age must be accompanied by an adult).	Tokachi Ecology Park 十勝エコロジーパーク財団 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp

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](http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/_obihiro/movie.shtml)

Title	Language	Dates
Evangelion: 3.0+1.0 Thrice Upon a Time (シン・エヴァンゲリオン 劇場版, <i>Shin Evangelion Gekijou-ban</i> )	Jpn Dub	Until 24 <sup>th</sup>
Earwig and the Witch ( <i>Aaya to majo</i> )	Jpn Dub	Until 24 <sup>th</sup>
Godzilla Vs. Kong ( <i>Gojira baasasu Kongu</i> )	Jpn Sub/Dub	All Month
Cruella ( <i>Kuruera</i> )	TBD	From 1 <sup>st</sup> Until 24 <sup>th</sup>
Character ( <i>Kyarakutaa</i> )	Jpn Dub	From 11 <sup>th</sup>

## Events In Tokachi (continued)

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When	What	Where/Contact
5/15 (Sat)	<b>Flowers and Greenery Festa 2021</b> みどりと花のフェスタ2021 Take part in various events where you can get in touch with nature. A panel exhibition on various green initiatives will also be held from 5/15 (Sat) - 5/23 (Sun).	<i>Midori to hana no sentā</i> Midorigaoka Park みどりと花のセンター 0155-21-3172 <a href="http://green-flower.digick.jp/">http://green-flower.digick.jp/</a>
5/22-5/23 (Sat-Sun) Sat 10:00- Sun 11:00	<b>Boy Scout Experience: Spring Camp</b> ボーイスカウト体験隊「春のキャンプ」 Work together with your peers during this overnight camp. Limited to 15 participants. Fee: ¥2000	Tokachi Ecology Park Visitor Center 十勝エコロジーパーク財団 0155-32-6780 <a href="http://www.tokachi-ecopark.jp">www.tokachi-ecopark.jp</a>
Mid May - Mid June	<b>Hiroo Rhododendron Festival</b> 広尾つつじまつり See the blooming of approximately 12,000 rhododendron trees in Daimaruyama Forest Park in Hiroo town online!	Hosted online 広尾つつじまつり実行委員会 01558-2-0177 <a href="http://www.town.hiroo.lg.jp">www.town.hiroo.lg.jp</a>

**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](http://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](mailto:international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp).