

What's Happening in Obihiro?

English Newsletter



Well Cultured

One of the main goals of this publication is to introduce Japanese culture to its foreign residents. Since November 3rd is Culture Day here in Japan, I thought it fitting to go quickly explain some Japanese holidays; especially ones that involve visits to Shinto shrines. (Shinto is a very nature centered religion that has been a major religion in Japan for hundreds of years.)

Shichigosan literally means seven-five-three. Shichigosan is on November 15th, and it is a Shinto holiday that many Japanese celebrate. On this holiday, people take their children (if they are 7, 5, or 3 years old) to shrines to give prayers of thanks for their kid's current growth and to pray for their future health and good luck.

This holiday most likely originated from three separate ceremonies that used to be performed in Japan's past. When a child was three years old, parents would take their child to the shrine to celebrate the child's growing hair. When a child became five years old, parents take their child to the shrine to put on their first pair of hakama (traditional Japanese pants). And, when a child became seven years old, parents would take their child to the temple one more time to exchange the string (that held their kimono on) for a real obi (the traditional Japanese belt that holds up kimono).

Normally, parents dress the child in traditional dress and take them to the shrine to receive certain rites performed by a priest. However, as with many traditional celebrations, the true meaning has dimmed and some people go simply to get a cute commemorative picture of their kid at the shrine in traditional garb. The 15th is the actual day of Shichigosan, but you will see people going to the shrines all dressed up in traditional clothing all throughout this season; from Sept. to Nov.

The shrine is a place that many Japanese visit multiple times throughout their lives. Starting with Shichigosan, when they are children, and continuing all the way to their deaths, Japanese participate in shrine ceremonies at certain important times in their lives.



When a child enters school, be it a kindergarten or a university, the family takes the child to the temple to report their happy news and to pray for continuing health and academic accomplishments.

When a Japanese child becomes an adult, they may go to the shrine to declare that they are going to take responsibility for their own life and that they will participate in their society and their country. Then there are of course wedding ceremonies that take place at shrines. The drawing above shows what a typical wedding dress for a Shinto wedding looks like.

There are special celebrations at a shrine for when a Japanese turns 60, 70, 77, 80, 88, 90, and 99. The name of the 88th celebration has the kanji*** for rice in it because the kanji for rice is made up of the kanji for 80 and 8. Hint: you flip one of the 8s upside down (米 = 八十八). The name of the 99th celebration is also interesting. Since the person is one year away from being 100, they use a kanji that is one line away from being the kanji for 100; white (白 plus a line = 百).

So, as you can see, the Shinto shrine plays a large part in a Japanese's life, from start to end.



***kanji = Chinese characters used in the Japanese language. Here are some examples for your reference:

Rice	米
White	白
8	八
10	十
100	百





Already!?



Tokachi Events

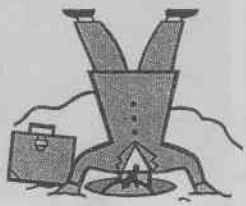
November 2006



When	What	Where/Contact #
10/31 – 11/5 (Tue – Sun) 9:00-17:00	Obihiro Chrysanthemum Gala: There's going to be a flower bed made up of over 3000 chrysanthemums alongside flowers from our sister cities Tokushima and Oita. There's also going to be stage performances	中央公園 Obihiro Central Park (two blocks East of City Hall) 0155-22-8600
11/1 – 3/16 every (Wed)3pm-5pm (Fri)5:30pm-7pm	One-Point Lesson from Olympic Speed Skater: A former speed skater will personally teach you how to speed skate for 5 minutes for free! The target audience is anyone older than elementary school age who is a beginner at speed skating. First come first serve!	帯広の森スポーツセンター Obihiro no Mori Sports Center 0155-48-2401
11/1 – 11/7 (Wed-Tue) 14:00~	Art Week: 11/1 - UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Poland and the Czech Republic 11/2 - Kid's Seminar "Mr. Noppo's Puppet Show Challenge" 11/3 and 11/4 - Children's book reading 11/7 – The woodblock prints of Munakata Shiko	北海道立帯広美術館 Obihiro Museum of Art 0155-22-6963
11/11 (Sat) 15:00 – 18:00	Santa Land Tree Lighting Ceremony: Hiroh (sometimes written Hiroo) is lighting up their Christmas tree again this year! There will be warm food and drink for sale and Christmas goods as well. The ceremony itself will be at 17:00. Also at 17:00 there will be a hand bell concert, and then just before 18:00 there will be fireworks to close the ceremony!	大丸山森林公園 Daimaruyama Shinrin Park in Hiroh (head south on highway 336 and you should see a big sign for Santa Land) 01558-2-0177
11/12 (Sun) 9:30 – 12:00	Flea Market: There's going to be all kinds of goods on sale from local people. The things on sale differ depending on what people decide to sell. Clothing, bikes, coffee, tea, and toys are just some examples.	とかちプラザ Tokachi Plaza 0155-36-3430
11/15	7 5 3 (Shichi-go-san)	帯広神社 Obihiro Shrine (and other shrines)
11/23 - 28 (Thu - Tue) 10:00 - 19:00 (10am – 4pm on 28 th)	All Tokachi - Great Harvest Market: Farmers from all around Tokachi will be selling the foodstuffs they have freshly harvested this year on the 7 th floor of the Fujimaru department store downtown.	藤丸デパート Fujimaru Department Store (large white building 3 blocks east of City Hall) 0155-24-2101
11/17-1/8 (ongoing exhibit)	Invitation to the world of Print Art: Come see exhibits of beautiful "Ukiyoe" (or "floating world") wood block prints from the Meiji era to the Taisho era, from the present day and even some prints made right in here in Hokkaido.	北海道立帯広美術館 Obihiro Museum of Art 0155-22-6963
11/22-26 (Thu-Sun) Varying times	Tokachi Arts and Culture Festival: These days are going to be full of things to do and see! Starting on the 23 rd and continuing until the 26 th there will be a wall mural that residents of Obihiro can participate in. On the 25 th , starting at 9:30AM, there will giant calligraphy on a 2-meter-squared sheet of paper! On the 26 th , starting at 10AM, there will be many types of musical performances and dances from Japan and other countries.	とかちプラザ Tokachi Plaza 0155-22-7555
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11/23 (Thu) 9:40 ~	Memuro Harvest Thanksgiving Festival: There will be lots of fresh foods for sale, yatai-booth style restaurants, children's tug o' war, and other attractions.	芽室町健康プラザ Memuro Wellness Plaza 0155-62-2311

Obihiro Survival Guide!

Navigating the Manners Minefield



Is he ok?

I think he's
trying to be
polite...



Sometimes there seem to be so many rules about manners in Japan that you might get overwhelmed and stressed out. There's no need to bend over backwards (or do a handstand) to be polite in Japan. This month's guide will help you become a well refined manner machine!

National Culture Day is almost here! This national holiday was begun in 1937, and they had award ceremonies for people who made significant contributions to the Japanese culture. Of course, back in the day, this was all celebrated on Hirohito's (the emperor's) birthday, but now the holiday has been moved to November 3rd and is not connected to the emperor's birthday anymore.

In honor of this unique Japanese holiday, this month's Guide will be featuring a quick explanation of parts of the Japanese culture that may come in handy to foreigners living in Japan.

Chopsticks: Don't stick 'em in your food vertically, and never ever pass food from your chopsticks to someone else's. These are things that are done at Japanese funerals and are considered rude if done anywhere else.

Drinking: Don't drink even a sip before someone says "KANPAI!" at any group drinking party; this is rude. Also, try your best to refill others' drinks, and let other people refill your own; this is considered polite and thoughtful.

Feet: Everyone knows to take off their shoes when entering someone's house and other places, but did you know that it's good manners to arrange your shoes nicely after you take them off? Also, it's rude to show the soles of your feet to someone (while sitting down, for example). Back in the days of the shogun and the samurai, the samurai of Satsuma and Choshu slept with their feet facing Tokyo because they wanted to show disrespect to the shogun.

Musical Chairs: Did you know that there are "ranks" for seats in a car and spots in an elevator? The seat directly behind the driver in a car, and the spot farthest from the elevator doors are places that should be given to the highest ranking/oldest person in your group. The lowest ranking or youngest person in the group should locate him or herself in the passenger seat next to the driver and make sure to be the person nearest to the elevator doors.

Timing: Japanese very much value timeliness. If someone tells you to be somewhere at 6:10, it is considered polite (and common sense) to show up at least ten minutes early (at 6:00).

Also, it is rude to open a present immediately. If you do want to open a present, you should always ask permission before opening it.

Now I'd like to speak directly to what I personally consider an epidemic spreading through the ranks of foreigners here in Obihiro. It's a type of cultural paranoia that most likely stems from constantly being stared at, getting "Haro!" shouted at you at every turn, and generally being ostracized as a foreigner in Japan.

Why do the Japanese constantly try to speak to you in English (no matter how terrible their English is, and no matter how good your Japanese is)? Why do restaurants immediately bring out forks, spoons, and English menus the moment you sit down to try to eat something? Are they treating you like a baby or an idiot? Are they trying to insinuate that they are superior to you?

I would say no. I believe that people do these things simply because they are trying to give you the best service they can, the only way they know how. Think about it; here you are, in their country, and the average foreigner isn't fluent in Japanese, and many can not for the life of them get food into their mouth using those two tiny sticks. So, the average Japanese person takes all of this into consideration, and probably thinks that the best way to make you comfortable is by giving you familiar things; a spoon, a fork, the English language, etc. Of course, not all Japanese people are just being kind. There are more than a few Japanese who think foreigners are stupid, or who just simply don't like foreigners.

However, my point is, most Japanese people are not trying to insult your Japanese ability, or your awe-inspiring chopstick-skills. They are also not trying to make you feel inferior, or anything like that. Rather, they are probably trying their best to be kind to you and make you feel at home; though many times their actions have the opposite effect.

So, the next time someone gives you "the special treatment" simply because you're a foreigner, try to accept their actions as kindness, and try not to immediately assume that they are being patronizing, racist, nationalistic, etc.

I apologize that this article is a one-sided conversation. If you feel that my viewpoint is off, feel free to send in your comments and opinions, and I promise to read them all and maybe even post some of them in a future issue of WHIO.

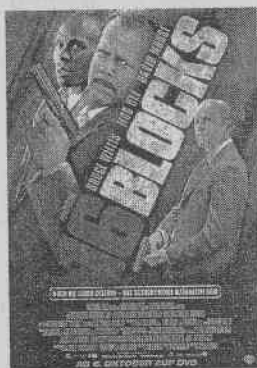
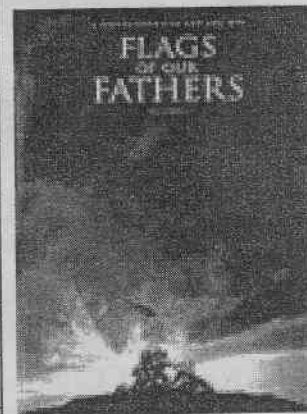


Times are subject to change. To confirm, call or check online at: <http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/index.html>

This October At Cinema Taiyo Obihiro

(Nishi 3, Minami 7) Tel: (0155) 20-1525

Title	Language	Starts - Ends
Flags of Our Fathers	English	Nov 1 - Dec
Christmas like August 24th	Japanese	Nov 3 - Dec
Death Note: Sequel	Japanese	Nov 3 - Dec
Ultraman Mebius	Japanese	Nov 11 - Nov 30
The Devil Wears Prada	English	Nov 18 - Dec
Children of Men ("Tomorrow World" in Japanese)	English	Nov 18 - Dec
Toki wo Kakeru Shojo	Japanese	Nov 11 - Nov 24
Tsubakiyama Kacho no Nanokakan	Japanese	Nov 18 - Dec



Get on the Subway (Chikatetsu ni Notte)	Japanese	Oct 21 - Nov 30
Rainbow Song (Niji no Megami)	Japanese	Oct 28 - Dec
World Trade Center	English	Oct 7 - Nov 17
Tada kimi wo aishiteru (I Just Love You)	Japanese	Oct 28 - Nov 24
Nada So So	Japanese	Oct 1 - Nov 17
il Mare	English	Sep 23 - Nov 2
Black Dahlia	English	Oct 14 - Nov 17
16 Blocks (16 Burokku)	English	Oct 14 - Nov 10
Lady in the Water	English	Oct 1 - Nov 2

Below are some movies at the CineTokachi movie theater. It is located at West 1 South 9 in downtown Obihiro. It is a 1 minute walk south from the middle of the Hirokoji covered arcade. Walking south, you should pass a restaurant with a giant silver fish on it; the cinema is 2 or 3 doors down from there. They are not open on Mondays.

Hula Girl	Japanese	Nov 4 - Nov 17
Yureru (Fall Apart)	Japanese	Nov 18 - Dec 1



Introduction to Japanese Food Culture (Free Food!)

The "Harunire Club", a volunteer group, is going to be making Japanese Veggie Soup, Mochi, Sushi among many other tasty Japanese foods and introducing them to foreigners who live in Tokachi. You will be able to learn some ancient traditions of Japan such as Mochitsuki and Bonodori, so why don't you join the members of the Harunire Club for some fun and culture! This is a perfect opportunity to experience some truly traditional Japanese food, so please come.

The details of the event are as follows:

Participation is FREE!!!

Date/Time : 11-26-2006 (Sunday) 11:00AM - 1:30PM

Location : Tokachi International Relations Center: Multipurpose Gym

Address: Nishi 20 jo Minami 6 chome Obihiro

TEL: 34-0122 FAX : 34-0165 Email: tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp

Apply By : 11-22 (Wednesday) Email, TEL, or FAX is OK



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online at www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp

"WHIO?" Is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro International Relations 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 International Relations Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Tel (0155) 24-4111 (ext. 1173) or send e-mail to WHIO Editing Team at international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp.