

よいお年を！ Happy (almost) New Year!

2015 is quickly coming to an end. In the International and Domestic Relations Section, we have 4 Coordinators for International Relations (CIR) from 4 very different countries. We asked them about what they do to celebrate 正月 or, New Year, in their home country:

Elaine (America): Happy New Year! New Year's Eve (Dec. 31st) is a huge party that lasts until New Year's Day (Jan. 1st). I usually think of drinking champagne and watching firework shows at some beaches. Especially back in Hawaii, we pop firecrackers and have large family gatherings on New Year's Eve, which I think is originally from China. Many people in Hawaii are ethnically Asian and still practice the same traditions. On New Year's day morning, there are many parades and college (American) football game. The most famous game is the Rose Bowl, which takes place in Pasadena,



California. All of the floats shown in the parade are decorated completely in REAL flowers (pictured above)! If Jan. 1st is a Sunday, the parade and game takes place on the 2nd instead.

Yan (China): Xin Nian Hao! China's major event is the Lunar New Year, which is in late January or early February. Particularly during this festive time of the year, people wear or decorate with the color red (for luck) and avoid

the color white, which is associated with death in China. The next Lunar New Year is on February 8th, 2016. It will be the year of the monkey.

Similar to Japan, there are many preparations



that go into celebrating the Lunar New Year such as, cleaning, cooking, and decorating the entire house. Most people also buy new clothes for the new year. In the northern region, where I'm from, most people eat *jiaozi*, or boiled dumplings, at midnight. Some homes put a candy in one (or just a few) *jiaozi*. Those who find and eat a *jiaozi* containing a candy is considered to have good luck for the next year! We also eat *Nian Gao*, a rice cake containing dried dates, especially for the New Year celebration.

Bongkoch (Thailand): Sawasdee Pi mai! In Thailand, we celebrate "Songkran," which is the Buddhist/Hindu Solar New Year on April 13–15 (pictured below). **Continued on pg 4**



Potluck Night: Taiwanese Stir-Fried Shrimp



Looking for a reason to leave your house this month? Come over to the **Tokachi International Relations Center** for our bi-monthly Potluck Night! December's theme dish is 「Taiwanese stir-fried shrimp」. Bring a dish (or drinks) to share with others and try your hand at making a new dish, taught by a native of Taiwan! No registration or fee is required to attend the event.

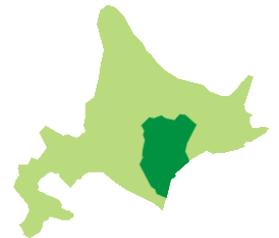
Saturday, December 19th

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Events at TIRC and in Tokachi and Obihiro

When	What	Where/Contact
12/5 (Sat) 18:00-20:00	Wine Party 2015 ワインパーティー2015 Come and mingle with local and international residents while enjoying an evening of wine, food, and performances. Fee: Adults 2,500 yen University students: 1,500 yen Elementary, Junior and Senior High School students: 500 yen Children pre-school and under: Free	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
12/9 (Wed) 19:00-21:00	International Mini-Volley Night 国際ミニバレーナイト Meet friends from all over the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport! Free of charge!	
12/12 (Sat) 16:00-18:00	Japanese Conversation and Learning Table Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment. Japanese volunteers will be there to help you.	
12/19 (Sat) 19:00-21:00	International Potluck Night ポットラック・ナイト Bring a dish or drink to share with everyone and meet new friends while enjoying food from all over the world. This time, you can enjoy cooking "Stir-Fried Shrimp" from Taiwan!	
11/1-3/31 (Sun-Thu)	Winter Fest in Ecopark ウインタフェスinエコパ Enjoy snowshoe walking, snow raft tours, a foot spa, and other fun winter activities.	Tokachi Ecology Park 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp
12/1(Tue) - 2/14 (Sun)	Santa Land Tree Illumination サンタランドツリー・イルミネーション Recognized by Santa's hometown of Oslo, Norway, Memero's Santa Land tree will be lit from 17:00 to 21:30. In commemoration of Memero's 100th anniversary of its opening, Friendship City Hiroo Town has donated trees that will be lit by 3000 lights.	JR Memuro JR芽室駅前
12/6 (Sun) 12/20 (Sun)	Fish Day 魚の日 Every 4th Sunday is "fish day." To celebrate, fish and other ingredients taken from the sea are used to make healthy dishes native to the north. A variety of products are on sale for the event. December will have 2 "fish days" for the 1st and 3rd Sunday.	Hiroo Town Fisheries Cooperative Food Division 広尾漁協食品部(広尾郡広尾町会前2丁目79番地先)
12/6 (Sun)	Ikeda Town Produce Exhibition 池田町大物産展 Various produce and products will be gathered and available for sale.	West Ikeda Community Center 西部コミュニティセンター
12/7 (Mon) - 1/31 (Sun)	6th Village Scenery Photo Contest 第6回むらの風景フォトコンテスト展示会 Pictures taken of Nakasatsunai will be on display from 9:00 to 17:00	Michi no Eki Nakasatsunai Country Plaza 道の駅なかさつない内 カントリープラザ
12/13 (Sun) 9:00-14:00	46th Hiroo Crab Festival 第46回広尾毛がにまつり Enjoy the fresh seafood of Hiroo Town. There will be a hairy crab eating contest, a prize raffle, and more.	Seaside Park Hiroo シーサイドパーク広尾 01558-2-0177 (Mon~Fri) 01558-2-2111 (Sat・Sun・Holiday) http://www.town.hiroo.lg.jp/

Living Tokachi: Winter is Coming (Surviving a Tokachi Winter)

Here in Tokachi we are blessed with warm(er than the rest of Hokkaido) afternoons and blue skies even into the depths of winter. But we are also cursed with freezing nights once the sun goes down. In this month's "Living Tokachi" we will talk about how to stay warm and safe this and every winter here in Tokachi.

After a long day of work, you crawl your way back home through freezing winds and the occasional snow. You come home to an apartment barely a degree warmer than outside and hurry to turn on the heater. At the end of the month your heating bill ends up more than your food budget! Staying warm is essential, but so is having enough money to have dinner when you come home! Here are some tips to keeping warm this winter:

Keep the cold out! Tape shut any openings from which cold air can enter your living space. This would usually be from doors and windows. But don't completely shut yourself in! Keep at least one window untaped that could be open occasionally to air out your space to avoid having excessive moisture or just getting some fresh air in. But, don't use regular tape! Normal packaging tape will leave residue on your apartment or even take paint off of your wall! Use すきま風防止テープ (*sukima kaze boshi teepu*) which is a thicker tape made specifically for sealing off those openings and for easy and clean removal in spring. Of course, you still need to use your doors even in winter. Get foam inserts for the spaces between your door and its frame. The foam



compresses when the door is closed, keeping cold air from entering the room. There are even adhesive tapes with foam that are made for clean removal in the spring (pictured).

Keep the warm in! You're spending your hard-earned money on

heating your apartment. Don't let that heat out! Compared to Honshu, buildings in Hokkaido are made to retain heat better, but they're still relatively colder than what you may be used to in your home countries. One cheap solution is to tape bubble-wrap onto your windows. This adds an extra layer of insulation while still allowing sunlight to enter. Many home-improvement stores ホームセンター sell special plastic sheets that adhere to glass with just water.

Stay moist. When using your heater your room can get extremely dry. Because moisture holds heat, keeping the humidity at around 50% will help keep your skin happy and your heating bill down. Some ways to increase your room's humidity is with a humidifier, cooking, and hang-drying laundry. Be sure to use a humidity meter to make sure you aren't keeping your

room too moist or too dry. Too much moisture could result in mold or カビ, which is difficult to remove.

Heat ONLY the area(s) you need to use. Many of us in Hokkaido have larger rooms compared to our Honshu counterparts. Heating the entire space will end up in a lot of wasted yen in your heating bill. If possible, close off the spaces you will not be using on a daily basis. For example, if you live in an 1LDK apartment alone, try to combine your living and sleeping space into one.

Staying at home may be the easiest and most comfortable option, but like it or not, you will probably need to go outside at some point this winter. Here are some tips for surviving outside:

Check the weather and dress appropriately. This seems obvious, but many of us have probably just left home without thinking, expecting the weather to be the same as the day before. Hokkaido is known to have drastic and sudden changes in weather, especially Tokachi.

Bring an extra jacket if you know you will be out all day.

Keep the wind out! Just like your home, it is important to keep the warm in and the cold out. Even wearing a thin wind breaker as your last layer could make the difference in your comfort level.

When in Rome, act as the Romans (*walk like the locals). Unlike many places in the west, Japan tends not to use road salt, especially on sidewalks. Because of the ice, Locals tend to walk using their entire foot to step on the snow/ice, rather than stepping down with their heel. This evenly distributes the pressure of the step and prevents slipping on any hidden ice under the snow.

On ice, you should NOT pick up your foot. Having your weight move drastically will end up in a big slip. Carefully slide over ice. The best and easiest solution to walking on ice is purchasing ice cleats attachments. They're

relatively cheap and easy to use. Just take them off before walking indoors!

Stay dry. While you should keep your skin nice and moisturized, when out in the elements wet feet and skin can ruin your day. Be sure to wear water-resistant shoes and gloves if you will be in contact with snow. If you work up a sweat from snow-shoveling or other outdoor activities, be sure to wipe that sweat off before it cools. Last, but not least, **Don't rush.** Even in the best conditions, a frantic dash to work and one wrong move could end up with you covered in snow and bruises, or worse. Plan ahead to take longer than you did in summer. If you are running late, it'll be better to take a bit of reprimanding at work than end up with worse.

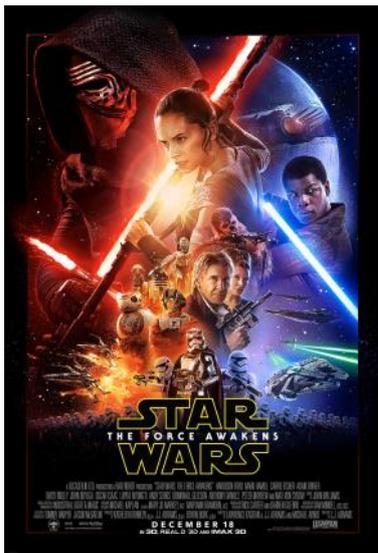
Please continue to read 「Living Tokachi」 every month for more tips and tricks for making the best out of your time in Tokachi!



Movies At Cinema Taiyo, in Obihiro

(Nishi 3, Minami 11)
Tel: (0155) 20-1525

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
007 Spectre	English	From 4th
Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens	2D EN/3D JP	From 18th
The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (Code Name UNCLE)	English	Until 25th
John Wick (R15+)	English	Until 18th
Yokai Watch: The 5 Tales of King Enma	Japanese	From 19th
Chibi-Maruko Chan The Movie	Japanese	From 23rd
Kamen Rider x Kamen Rider: Ghost & Drive	Japanese	From 12th

Events Continued

When	What	Where/Contact
12/12 (Sat)	Illumination Ceremony イルミネーション点灯式 A Christmas Tree over 3 meters in height will be lit until the last day of January. Come see the beautiful winter lights in front of Makubetsu Station.	Makubetsu Park Plaza 幕別パークプラザ
12/13 (Sun)	Urahoru Produce Fair うらほろ物産フェア Local produce and other products will be on sale.	Urahoru Chuo Kouminkan 浦幌町中央公民館 015-576-2181
Early December to Late February	Shintoku Welcome Illumination いらっしやいしんとくイルミネーション JR Shintoku Station, the gateway to Tokachi and Eastern Hokkaido, will be lit up in various colors.	JR Shintoku Station JR新得駅前 0156-64-0522

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We throw water to wash away the sins of the past year. Recently, there have been many department stores that set up a stage in front and begin throwing water from the morning. At night, there is usually a concert as well. Because Songkran is a Buddhist event, most people go to visit temples in the morning. In Thai there is the word, "Tham Bun," which means to do good things according to religious beliefs. Many donate money, food, and other necessities to the temple. By doing good things for others, good things will come your way. Originally, it was believed that the goods that were donated during one's lifetime will appear again in their afterlife.



Karen (Brazil): Feliz Ano Novo! Actually, in Brazil everyone wears white for New Year celebrations! Many people go to the beach to watch fireworks and toast with champagne, much like America. It's similar to an outdoor concert at the beach with fireworks that go off at midnight! Those who celebrate at home also play with fireworks or watch the firework show on television. The most popular spot for New Year celebrations is Copacabana Beach in Rio De Janeiro (pictured left). We here in the International and Domestic Relations section of Obihiro City, would like to thank all of our readers for a great 2015. We hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday season. We're looking forward to the next year!

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")

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