

V. 53 – December/February 2010

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## EDITOR'S NEWS

Winter is upon us once again. The short days and the cold are enough to make anyone feel a little blue. If only a little snow would come to turn the usual city landscape in something a little more magical! Unfortunately, snow is rare in Tokyo. But that does not mean you cannot enjoy a white winter. Japan is a large country. You can go skiing in the “snow country” just a few hours away from Chiyoda City, or even go to the snow paradise that is Hokkaido and enjoy the world-famous Snow Festival held in Sapporo at the beginning of February.

This issue of Chiyoda International is marked by the New Year. It is a very important time in Japan and you should take some time to decide how you will spend yours. Will you stay at home curled up inside your *kotatsu* 炬燵 (Japan distinctive warming table), enjoying the New Year Japanese-style, with your family? First a thorough cleaning of your house, called *Osouji* 大掃除, is in order to start the New Year with a fresh start. Then share a delicious meal including *toshikoshi soba* (年越しそば year-crossing noodles) while watching the traditional *Kouhaku Uta Gassen* 紅白歌合戦 on NHK (a singing contest gathering the most popular singers of the year between the red female-only team and the white male-only team). Finally, when the bells start ringing around the

country, it is time for the first visit to a shrine of the New Year (初詣 *hatsumoude*). You can choose to do it in the middle of the night or to wait for the morning but the result will be the same: a very lively atmosphere with plenty of shops and a lot of people! You can also go see the first sunrise of the year. Popular spots include over the ocean or from the top of a mountain. Some trains offer direct services especially scheduled from stations inside Chiyoda City to the famous mount Takao for instance.

Traditional New Year food (おせち料理 *Osechi ryouri*) has the particularity to be long-lasting because most shops were closed for the first 3 days of the year and to allow everyone, including housewives, to enjoy the celebrations. Nowadays, most shops close only on the 1<sup>st</sup> or not at all so you don't have to worry about food. Nevertheless, many businesses will be closed for the New Year so please make advance preparations. The Chiyoda city office will also be closed from December 29<sup>th</sup> to January 3<sup>rd</sup> (included).



I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Fabien Chouvet, the new international advisor at the Chiyoda City Office. I hope to make the stay of every foreign visitor and resident in Chiyoda City easier and more enjoyable.

Chiyoda City wishes you and all your family the best for this new year 2010



# NEW YEAR EVENTS

## Appearance of the Emperor

One of the most unique events of the New Year is the opportunity to see the imperial family first hand. Traditionally, the emperor never appears in public except in 2 occasions during the year: on his birthday and on the New Year. But the current emperor birthday happens to be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, just one week apart from the New Year.

Both Events follow the same general outline: the imperial family will appear several times at their balcony to greet the crowd. A greeting book will then be available for those wishing to leave a message. Those events will take place in a normally inaccessible part of the imperial palace.

**Where:** Imperial Palace main gate (二重橋 *nijubashi*)

**Access:** Tokyo metro Chiyoda line Nijubashimae station

**When:** December, 23, 2009 9:30AM~11:20AM and January, 2, 2010  
9:30AM~3:10PM

**Fees:** Free

**For more information:** Imperial Household Agency (宮内庁 *kunaicho*)  
(English): <http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/eindex.html>

## New Year's celebrations in the shrines



The custom is to go pray at a shrine for the first time of the year between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. A lot of people actually go as soon as it turns midnight on the night of the 31! A real Japanese-style New Year includes the experience of a crowd joyfully trying to fight the cold of the first hours of the year. Popular activities in addition to prayer are to get your fortune told and to buy a good-luck charm (お守り *omamori*), both valid for the year. Some trains run deep into the night especially for the occasion, so you have no excuse to miss out on it.

## Setsubun ("seasonal division")



Like other Asian countries still do, Japan used to follow the lunar calendar. The New Year thus occurred at the beginning of spring. Even today, a number of traditions related to the beginning of spring are still observed. Every year, on the day before the first day of spring (usually February, 3), it is customary to throw roasted soybeans to protect one's house against bad luck for the year to come. Shrines also organize huge and very lively *mamemaki* (bean-throwing) gatherings. In major shrines, celebrities even participate in those popular events.

**Where:** Various shrines, famous shrines in Chiyoda City includes Kanda Myoujin 神田明神, Hie Jinja 日枝神社, Yasukuni Jinja 靖国神社 and Tokyo Daijingu 東京大神宮

**When:** First prayer of the year: from midnight on January, 1<sup>st</sup> (for most shrines)  
Setsubun: February, 3 (time varies)

**Fees:** Free entrance; fortune-readings, good-luck charms and Setsubun celebrations price varies, please see individual shrine for detail

**For more information:**

Kanda Myoujin

<http://www.kandamyoujin.or.jp/index.html>

Hie Jinja

<http://www.hiejinja.net/jinja/index.html>

Yasukuni Jinja

<http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/index.html>

Tokyo Daijingu

<http://www.tokyodaijingu.or.jp/index.html>

All have English pages but detailed information is usually in Japanese

# DISASTER PREVENTION

Earthquakes are a common occurrence in Japan. If most of them are harmless, big and devastating ones have occurred in the past and will occur again. Even modern technology cannot predict or prevent them. That is why preparedness and information are essential to minimize damage when an earthquake occurs.

**In case of an earthquake, please follow those simple advices:**

- The immediate danger comes from falling objects. Hide under a desk or table; if it is not possible, protect your head with your bag or clothes. Get away from any object that may fall or break. This includes high pieces of furniture, lights and windows in your home and unstable walls, glass panels, signboards, vending machines and power lines outside.
- The second danger comes from fire. Extinguish all flame and heat sources as soon as possible. For added safety, also switch off the main electrical breaker and close your gas main. If a fire breaks out, alert others as soon as possible by shouting “*kaji da*”.

**In the moments following an earthquake**, numerous different situations may prevail but **keep in mind those general rules:**

- Chiyoda City is a designated “shelter in the city” area with low risks of large-scale fire. A general evacuation should therefore not be ordered.
- The building you are in may be damaged and unsafe. In that case, you may have to evacuate to a temporary gathering location near your home/workplace. You should make sure you know the direction to those locations beforehand.
- If you are in a public place like a train or a department store, always follow the orders of the staff.
- If you are near the sea or a cliff, there may be risks of tsunami or landslide. Evacuate immediately to safer grounds.

For more information and detailed advice on how to prepare yourself and your home, please consult this guide edited by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (English/Japanese):

<http://www.seikatubunka.metro.tokyo.jp/index3files/survivalmanual.pdf>

## Emergency commuter evacuation drill

Chiyoda City is mainly an office area with many working but not living here. It is estimated that in the event of a major earthquake that stops trains and buses, more than 500 000 commuters will have to go home on foot. Be prepared by participating in the emergency commuter evacuation drill that takes place every year. There you can take disaster prevention classes and exercises (some in English) and participate in a 11km “walk home” training.

**Where:** Tokyo, Akihabara, Iidabashi and Yotsuya

stations and surroundings, English events will be held at Akihabara station.

**When:** January, 15, 2010. From 9AM to 1PM.

**Fees:** Free; classes and exercises are open to everyone, application by fax or mail necessary for the “walk home” before January, 8, 2010 (see below)

**For more information:** (Japanese)

<http://www.bousai.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/disaster/>

For information regarding the H1N1 flu epidemic (*shingata influenza*) in foreign language, please consult the Chiyoda City English site: <http://www.city.chiyoda.tokyo.jp/english/e-guide/index.html>



## Lightopia 2009

# Events Schedule

To celebrate the holiday season, numerous illuminations are once again installed around Chiyoda City. Under the theme of “Earth, environment and peace”, they offer visitors with a new view of the urban landscape. Both the historic ruins of the Edo castle and the modern shopping district of Marunouchi will have their beauty magnified by the lights dancing in the wind and over the water.



**Where:** Imperial Palace outer garden Hibiya moat (日比谷濠 *hibiyagou*), Babasaki moat (馬場先濠 *babasakigou*), Wadakura fountain square (和田倉噴水公園 *wadakurafunsuikouen*) and Marunouchi central street (丸の内仲通り *marunouchinakadoori*)

**Access:** Tokyo Metro Chiyoda line Nijubashimae station  
JR lines, Tokyo Metro Marunouchi line Tokyo station

**When:** December, 21 to December, 29, 2009 (to December, 26 inside Wadakura fountain park), 5PM~9PM (~10PM in Marunouchi central street).

**Fees:** Free

**For more information:** <http://www.kanko-chiyoda.jp/tabid/1551/Default.aspx> (Japanese).

## Friendship Chiyoda: experience Japanese cultural traditions

Friendship Chiyoda is an organization whose purpose is to help foreigners enjoy their stay in Chiyoda City. They regularly organize cultural and international exchange events so be sure to check their website often!

January event is a unique opportunity to wear a traditional Japanese kimono and get your photo taken as a souvenir. February event is an introductory course to the *shamisen*. Learn some Japanese songs played on this traditional instrument resembling a guitar.

**Where:** tokyoto chiyodaku kojimachi 2-8 (inside Kojimachi School building)

**Access:** Tokyo Metro Hanzomon line Hanzomon station, 5mins walk from exit 5  
Tokyo Metro Yurakucho line Kojimachi station, 5mins walk from exit 5 or 6  
JR Chuo line Yotsuya station, 10mins walk from exit 1  
JR Chuo-Sobu line Ichigaya station, 10 mins walk from exit 3

**When:** January, 23, 2010, from 1pm and February, 20, 2010, 12:30PM~4PM

**Fees:** 500 yens (reservation necessary, possible from the next day of previous event, see site)

**For more information:** <http://fchiyoda.org/> (Japanese, English, French, Portuguese).

## Cosmos Club Japanese lessons

Cosmos Club is a group of volunteers who offer foreigners basic lessons of Japanese. Do not hesitate to join them if you want to improve your Japanese ability.

**Where:** Tokyoto Chiyodaku Kudan Minami 1-5-10 Kudan Shougai Gakushuukan 九段生涯学習館

**Access:** Tokyo Metro Tozai and Hanzomon lines, Toei Shinjuku line Kudanshita station, in front of exit 6

**When:** every Wednesday from 10am to 12am

**Fees:** 2000 yens/month

**For more information:** Tel: 048-761-1788(Cosmos Club)

