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EDITOR'S NEWS

Spring has come again and if you are in Japan this time of the year, you cannot escape it. It doesn't matter if you are here just for a short trip or if you have been living in Japan for years, if it's your first time or if you cannot count the number of times you gazed at the falling petals. You must go to a *hanami* (花見).

Watching the cherry tree (*Sakura* 桜) petals slowly dancing in the air of a spring evening is one the most iconic pictures of Japanese popular culture. It is a chance for friends, family and coworkers to gather and have a good time together. It is also a symbol of a fresh start, both for nature that awakens from the winter and for men with the school year and most jobs starting in April.

If you changed to a new workplace or school located in Chiyoda City and you just started to know our fine city, welcome! We hope you will enjoy it and will do our best to support you. If you also took the opportunity to move to a place in Chiyoda City, do not forget to get your new address registered at the city office. It will help us provide you with all the services you are entitled to.

Look page 2 for an introduction to the events related to *hanami* held in Chiyoda City. In this issue, we will also introduce the Grutt Pass that allows entrance to numerous museums (page 3) and information about new fire alarm regulations and events of interest (page 4).



SAKURA MATSURI

To celebrate this special time of the year, there are many events held in Chiyoda City under the name of 千代田のさくらまつり (*Chiyoda no sakura matsuri* cherry tree festival of Chiyoda). The current schedule for all the events is a 10 days period from March 26 to April 4 but it is subject to change according to the blooming of the cherry trees. Here is a short guide.

Chidorigafuchi Moat (千鳥ヶ淵) Boat rental and night illuminations

Completely renovated last year, the Chidorigafuchi moat area is Chiyoda City main spot for *sakura* viewing. The more than 260 trees that line this quiet street will be light up every evening during the festival. In addition, a boat rental service will allow you to enjoy a beautiful and relaxing panorama while gliding on the moat that surrounds the imperial palace. The service will be exceptionally open everyday until late evening so you can enjoy the illuminations.

Chidorigafuchi Moat: 5mins walk from Kudanshita or Hanzomon stations

Illuminations: everyday from 6:30PM to 10PM

Boat rental service: everyday from 9:30AM to 8PM, 800Yens/30mins during the illuminations (otherwise closed on Mondays and close at 5:30PM, 500Yens/30mins)

Please be advised that the boat rental service and the whole area can get very crowded at the peak of the season.



Information booths and guides

The Chiyoda City tourism association will set up booths to inform the visitors during the Sakura Matsuri. One will be inside the *Kudansaka Kouen* (九段坂公園) (take the uphill street from Kudanshita station towards *Kitanomaru Kouen* 北の丸公園, open 9~22), another one will be inside the grounds of Yasukuni shrine (on the central square between the 2 gates at the entrance of the shrine, open 9~17) and the last one will be near the boat renting service of Chidorigafuchi moat (open 9:30~22).

The official guide map of the Chiyoda Sakura Matsuri will be available at the booths. It contains maps, event schedule and informations/discounts on the places of interest nearby. Lastly, the Edo-Tokyo guide's association offers guided tours, some in foreign language (English, German and French).

Chiyoda Sakura Matsuri official site:

<http://kanko-chiyoda.jp/tabid/1116/Default.aspx> (Japanese)

Edo-Tokyo guides association: Edo.Tokyo.Guide@gmail.com

The official guide map is available on site or at the City Office and branches, inside the Marunouchi shuttle and at the Toei metro stations inside Chiyoda City.

Sakura festival at Yasukuni shrine

More than 400 cherry trees stand inside the grounds of the famous Yasukuni shrine. To entertain the visitors even more, a festival including live shows and music as well as various traditional stands is scheduled on the week-end from March 26 to 28 from 10AM to 5PM (subject to be 1 week early/late depending on the blooming of the trees). Entrance is free.

More information: <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/index.html> (English, Japanese)

GRUTT PASS AND MUSEUMS INFORMATION

Tokyo offers a number and variety of museums that places it among the top cities in the world for cultural tourism. If you want to enjoy a sizeable portion of it, you will be happy to know that a special pass offering a much discounted price exists.

For a fixed price of 2,000 Yens, the Grutt pass allows a free or discounted entrance to 70 museums, zoos and aquarium throughout Tokyo (once per facility). Chiyoda City is represented by no less than 6 museums: the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, the Mitsuo Aida Museum, the Showa-kan, the National Museum of Modern Art, the Science Museum and the New Otani Art Museum.

The pass can be used for 2 months starting from the first use. However it does not carry over Japanese fiscal years which end on March, 31. That is why the 2009 edition is not sold anymore, please wait for the 2010 edition which should be sold from April 1st.

It is even possible to buy a special discount bundle with metro/bus pass. There are 2 versions, for a mere 2,800 Yens, they offer a Grutt pass and two 1-day unlimited rides tickets on the Tokyo Metro network (most metro lines) or on the Toei network (a few metro lines and most bus lines inside Tokyo). Unfortunately, they cannot be mixed and neither can be used on the JR lines. Please plan your travels accordingly. It is an excellent way to enjoy a cultural week-end to its fullest. I take this opportunity to remember you that April 18 is the international museum day. Check what events your favorite museum is organizing.

Grutt pass: 2,000 Yens

Available at every participating facility, the Tokyo Tourist Information Center (Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office 1F) and most convenience stores ticket-selling terminals.

For more information: <http://www.museum.or.jp/grutto/index.html>

(English)

Grutt pass+metro/bus pass: 2,800 Yens

Available at the counter of every major metro station (on respective networks)

For more information: <http://www.tokyometro.jp/global/> (Tokyo Metro) and <http://www.kotsu.metro.tokyo.jp/index.html> (Toei)



Chiyoda City Museums information:

<http://www.idemitsu.co.jp/museum/> (Idemitsu Museum of Arts)

<http://www.mitsuo.co.jp/museum/index.html> (Mitsuo Aida Museum)

<http://www.showakan.go.jp/> (Showa-kan)

<http://www.momat.go.jp/> (National Museum of Modern Arts)

<http://www.jsf.or.jp/> (Science Museum)

<http://www.newotani.co.jp/group/museum/index.html> (New Otani Art Museum)

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

New regulation about fire alarms

Does your home comply with the new law regarding fire alarms?

80% of deaths by fire come from fires that originated in a private house. Most of those deaths could be avoided if the fire was noticed earlier, thus giving more time to act and saving lives and property.

That is why from the 1st of April, 2010, fire alarms become obligatory in all private housing in Tokyo Metropolis (some rural municipalities are not included). Two different types of devices can be installed: devices that are sensitive to smoke and devices that are sensitive to heat. Advanced devices that combine those functions with the ability to detect gas leakage for instance are also available.

If you are the owner of your housing, it is your responsibility to buy and install those devices. Some municipalities offer help with the installation. If you need help, please consult your city/ward office. If you are renting your housing, it is the responsibility of your owner to install the devices (at no cost to you). If he has yet to do it, you should contact him (or, more commonly, the renting agency) as soon as possible.

Be advised that neither the fire department nor any kind of “authorized” vendor will do door-to-door sale.

Rooms to be equipped: living room, sleeping room, stairs and kitchen

Rooms where equipment is not mandatory: bathroom, toilets and storage rooms

Price range: from 2,000 Yens to about 15,000 Yens

Deadline: March, 31, 2010



Japanese Language Proficiency Test 2010

If you have ever tried to learn Japanese, you surely have heard of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT. For more than 20 years, it has offered non-native speakers of Japanese with the opportunity to test their level. Its wide distribution has granted it with a large recognition in both the academic and professional world in Japan.

This year, the whole test undertook an update, changing from 4 levels to 5 with the aim of better evaluating what the candidates can do in Japanese rather than how much they studied for the test.

The July test will only offer the upper 3 levels, if you want to take one of the lower 2 levels, you will have to wait for the December test.

Good luck!

Next test date: July, 4, 2010

Application material: sold in bookstores from mid-march

Application deadline: April, 30, 2010

For more information: <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/>

