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SPOTLIGHT ON
YOKOSUKA EATS
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Hokuriku

Natural beauty, traditional cultures meet



Pages 8-13

Yokota airmen depart for Operation Christmas Drop

BY SETH ROBSON
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: November 27, 2023

YOKOTA AIR BASE — The Defense Department's longest-running humanitarian aid mission is a novelty — Canadian airlifters in Santa hats.

The Nov. 28 kickoff marked the first time Canada participated in Operation Christmas Drop,

an annual, two-week mission to airdrop essential supplies to far-flung and isolated islands in the Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau, Capt. Miranda Bapty said Nov. 27 at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

The C-130J Super Hercules pilot from Yokota's 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron

was preparing to take off for Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, home base of the massive operation, which runs through Dec. 13.

Three C-130Js from Yokota will help with this year's mission. The other two airlifters are slated to link up with Bapty's crew at Andersen later this week.

"We do these (airdrop

missions) all the time," she said. "But this is the one time we get to see the impact of all that training coming to a head."

Now in its 72nd year, the tradition began during the Christmas season of 1952, when the crew of a B-29 Superfortress saw islanders waving at them from Kapingamarangi, Micronesia, according

SEE DROP ON PAGE 3

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When strangers decide to get married

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



Thirty years ago, I promised to love, honor and cherish a man I really didn't know all that well at the time.

Before we committed ourselves to each other until death, Francis and I were pretty much clueless. We had no idea what kind of husband or wife we might turn out to be. As long as we were in love, we thought, nothing else mattered.

Francis grew up as the son of a neurologist in the affluent Washington, DC, suburb of Chevy Chase, Md. At weekend cocktail parties and crew regattas, his parents chatted with their friends over canapés about politics, world events and their children's prep schools. They drank bottled water before it was trendy and bought their food from overpriced grocery stores. They kept things like capers and pate in their refrigerators, and they drove imported cars.

I was brought up in a town with only one high school, where we thought everyone in the world had two days off for hunting season. To the people of my Western Pennsylvania town, Chevy Chase was a comedian on "Saturday Night Live," and it was perfectly normal to get your water from a well and your meat from the woods. Our refrigerators contained bricks of Velveeta, cans of Hershey's syrup and in the spring, trout with the heads still on. My parents' vehicles were pre-owned, and other than one Volkswagen Beetle, none were imported.

Francis grew up believing that all women throw sophisticated dinner parties at the drop of a hat, while being charming and looking fabulous in the latest styles from Lord & Taylor. He didn't realize that he'd made a lifetime commitment to someone who shops at TJ Maxx and whose idea of a party is opening a bag of Fritos and watching a Steelers game. My poor husband has had to redefine "woman" to include those who, like me, would prefer a hot poker in the eye to the obligatory social events of a Navy wife.

Similarly, I've had to adjust my definition of "man" to include those who don't own anything fluorescent orange. I've had to realize there are men who actually prefer white wine to beer, and that not all men demand space in the garage for a workbench. I've had

to come to terms with the fact that although Francis was in the Navy, he's afraid of tools, guns and knives, and shudders at the mere thought of hooking a worm, much less eating a fish with the head still on it.

I'll admit — I've felt somewhat guilty that I've never fulfilled Francis' expectations of what his wife might be. I've often wished I were more sophisticated.

I've seen self-consciousness in his eyes, too, like the time I had to assemble the barbecue grill because he couldn't understand the instructions, or the time I snorkeled on a beach vacation for four hours alone while he sipped mojitos and read an Oprah's Book Club selection under an umbrella.

If we'd known back then what we know now, would we have eternally promised ourselves to each other before the altar of Graystone Presbyterian Church 30 years ago?

Without a doubt, I say "Yes."

We met while I was sitting on my family's vacation cottage deck, shucking corn. "Lisa, this is Francis," my Navy pilot brother said, "He was our intel guy in VAQ-139 out in Whidby Island." Three nights later, Francis made me laugh at dinner. A spark was lit. We danced to Guns N' Roses' "Knocking on Heaven's Door" which was strangely romantic, then walked to the beach to look at the stars.

When we started dating, the only thing we knew for certain was that neither of us was perfect, but we offered each other something that had been missing in our lives. Unconditional love and approval — intangibles that are psychological, ethereal yet powerful enough to transcend unknown personality quirks and personal histories.

Along the way, I discovered that Francis is fiercely loyal, his love for our family is deep and sincere, and even though he sometimes leaves his underwear on the floor and I contemplate escaping to Mexico to sell coconuts on the beach, he'll always make me laugh.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*
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A C-130J Super Hercules crew prepares to take off from Yokota Air Base for Operation Christmas Drop on Nov. 27. Photos by Akifumi Ishikawa, Stars and Stripes



DROP: Treasured holiday tradition continues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to a writeup on Andersen's website.

"In the spirit of Christmas the aircrew dropped a bundle of

supplies attached to a parachute to the islanders below, giving the operation its name," the writeup said. "Today, airdrop operations include more than 50 islands throughout the Pacific."

This year's mission will serve 20,000 people, 374th Airlift Wing spokesman Lt. Danny Rangel said.

Each dropped bundle contains myriad provisions and amenities, including food, water, medical supplies, fishing gear, clothing and toys. Last year, crews from Japan, South Korea, Australia, India and New Zealand flew alongside Air Force crews from Yokota, Andersen and Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

C-130H Hercules from Japan and South Korea, which participated in past Christmas Drop operations, are flying again this year, Bapty said shortly before taking off with an advance party of 40 airmen and cargo for the flight to Guam. Ground support will be provided by Australian and Filipino troops.

News of Canada's participation comes as the country ramps up its activity in the region. Ottawa has pledged to spend \$360 million through 2027 to enhance its Indo-Pacific presence.

"Canada will reinforce its Indo-Pacific naval presence and increase Canadian Armed Forces participation in regional military exercises," the government states on its website.

That activity has made headlines in recent weeks. On Oct. 29, a pair of Chinese twin-engine, air



Capt. Miranda Bapty and Master Sgt. Justin Magno prepare to depart Yokota Air Base on Nov. 27 for their first Operation Christmas Drop.

superiority J-11 fighters buzzed a multirole Canadian CH-148 Cyclone helicopter over the South China Sea. The Cyclone was operating from the frigate HMCS Ottawa.

Four days later, the Ottawa and the guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta made a trip together through the Taiwan Strait, drawing protests from Beijing. China considers the 110-mile-wide waterway its territorial waters.

This will also be the first Christmas Drop for Bapty and her loadmaster, Master Sgt. Justin Magno, the pair said ahead of

liftoff. The Super Hercules' crew wore Santa hats and Operation Christmas Drop patches on their shoulders.

However, the two do have experience dropping cargo to small islands in southern Japanese and Palau, Bapty said.

Magno, who has been flying for 17 years, said he's done airdrops for forward-operating bases in the Middle East but hasn't helped a humanitarian mission on the scale of Christmas Drop.

"Most of my experience has been passengers and cargo movements or just combat movements," he said. "An airdrop is an airdrop, but working with our partner nations is a good challenge."

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@SethRobson1

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
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Operation Christmas Drop supplies are loaded onto a C-130J Super Hercules at Yokota Air Base on Nov. 27.


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Holiday talk in Japan

During the holiday season in Japan, you will see KFCs filled on Christmas Day, while on New Year's Eve, you will hear bells from temples heralding the arrival of the new year. Here are some useful Japanese words and phrases you can use during the holiday season.

"How are you planning to spend Christmas day?"
= **Kurisumasu wa doo sugoshimasu ka?**

- Kurisumasu = Christmas day
- doo = hows
- sugoshimasu = spendw



"I will go to Kentucky Fried Chicken with my girlfriend."
= **Kanojo to Kentakkii ni ikimasu.**

- kanojo = girlfriend
- kareshi = boyfriend
- kentakkii = KFC
- ikimasu = will go

FULL
LESSON



Pizza, pizza!

Pizza is a universal treat that's loved the world around; but you still have to use the local language to place an order. Next time, try using some of these words and phrases.

"Please give me a pizza."
= **Pizza wo kudasai.**

"Would you please give me one large [one]?"
= **Eru saizu wo ichi-mai onegai shimasu.**

- Eru saizu = L size (large)
- Emu saizu = M size (medium)
- Esu saizu = L S size (small)



FULL
LESSON

Greet gods of the Land of Rising Sun!

In Japan, there are thousands of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples located throughout the nation, and we Japanese often visit them to purify ourselves on various occasions, such as birth, marriage, traditional 7-5-3 celebrations or during Oshogatsu New Year Days. Why not drop by a shrine, temple or other power spots on your one-day trip to somewhere and greet gods of the Land of Rising Sun? I'm sure that will make you feel something special!

Fuji Sengen Shrine is one of the most majestic Shinto shrines in the Mt. Fuji area, and a nice attraction to drop by when you take a trip around Fuji Five Lakes.

Today's Japanese phrase:

"I/We came here (this sacred place) to worship!"
= **Omairi ni kimashita!**

お詣りに来ました!

- omairi お詣り = visit for worship
- .. ni kimashita に来ました = came here to..

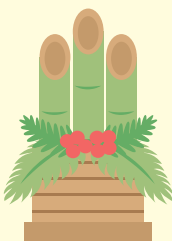
You can also say:

"We/I came here (a shrine/temple) for the 7-5-3 Celebration."
= **Shichigosan ni kimashita.**
七五三に来ました。

"We/I came here (a shrine/temple) for our near year's visit."
= **Hatsumode ni kimashita.**
初詣に来ました。



VIDEO
LESSON



Beware of hangover!

With the holiday season just around the corner, it's that time of the year where we have many opportunities to drink alcohol. There's nothing wrong with having fun, but taking it too far can cause problems on the following day.

To avoid drinking too much, let's keep in mind this phrase:

"Beware of getting a hangover."
= **Futsukayoi ni Goyoujin.**

- Futsukayoi = hangover
- ni = a particle to indicate an object
- goyoujin/youjin = precaution



VIDEO
LESSON



Could you repeat that?

To progress in learning a new language, asking a lot of questions is a good way to start. We may often feel embarrassed to do that, but we shouldn't hesitate because we're learning.

Like we say in Japan, "To ask a question is a shame for a moment. Not to ask a question is a lifetime shame."

To start, let's try this phrase:

"Could you repeat that?"
= **Mou ichido onegai shimasu.**

- Mou = an adverb to indicate that you are going to add something
- Ichido = once/one time
- Onegai shimasu = please do ~



VIDEO
LESSON

Check, please!

At many restaurants in Japan, once your food is brought to the table, you will likely receive a check even if you don't ask for one. However, at izakayas and bars, you may need to ask for one when you are ready to pay.

So, when you would like to receive a check, try this phrase:

"Check, please!"
= **Okaikei wo onegai shimasu.**

- Okaikei/kaikei = accounting
- wo = a particle to indicate an object



VIDEO
LESSON

Telephone talk

What would you say when you wrap up a telephone call or in-person conversation with your friend?

Be sure to say "Okiwo Tsukete," which means "take care of yourself" before you hang up your phone or leave your friends. This is a nice, heart-warming expression that shows your considerations to your friend's health and safety.

Today's Japanese phrase is:

"Take care of yourself."
= **Okiwo tsukete.**



VIDEO
LESSON

Have a wonderful holiday season!

Time flies! The end of the year is just around the corner. Towns and streets are decorated with wonderful winter illuminations.

It was a great year and we did a lot of things. Now let's take a rest and enjoy this pleasant holiday season with our family and friends.

Today's Japanese phrase:

"Have a wonderful holiday season!"
= **Sutekina holidee wo!**

素敵なホリデーを!



- sutekina .. woi!素敵な..を!
- = have a wonderful ..!

- horidee ホリデー = holiday season

You can also say:

"Have a wonderful journey!"
= **Sutekina goryoko wo!**

素敵なお旅行を!

"Have a wonderful weekend!"
= **Sutekina shumatsu wo!**

素敵な週末を!



VIDEO
LESSON

Do you accept credit card payments?

In Japan, some local stores and restaurants only accept cash. When you shop or eat out locally, it would be a good idea to check by asking,

"Can I use a credit card? / Do you accept credit cards?"

= **Kurejitto kaado wa tsukae masuka?**

- Kurejitto kaado = credit card
- wa = a particle to indicate a subject
- tsukae masuka?/ tsukaeru = can ~ be used?/ ~ can be used



VIDEO
LESSON

Let's eat

In Japan during mealtime, we often say "itadaki masu," which literally means: "I have this meal with gratitude." It's a phrase to thank those who cook the meal, and also a Japanese way of saying "let's eat."

"Thank you for the meal."
= **Gochiso sama deshita.**

So next time you have a meal with your Japanese families and friends, try these phrases:

Itadakimasu

Gochiso sama deshita

- Itadakimasu = the verbs "itadaku (receive)" + "shimasu (I do ~)"
- Gochiso = a fancy meal
- sama = a suffix to address a person with an honorific title or a polite way of referring to an object



VIDEO
LESSON

Where's the restroom?

Finding a restroom can be difficult when we go out. Although stores and malls and restaurants most likely have signs that will easily guide you to one, that may not necessarily be the case.

So, when you have trouble finding a restroom, try this phrase.

Where is the restroom?
= **Toire wa doko desuka?**

- toire = restroom
- wa = a postpositional particle to indicate a subject
- doko desuka? = where is ~?



VIDEO
LESSON

Stay safe and keep an eye out for the next Speakin' Japanese lesson!



Explore Miyagase Lakeside Park near Atsugi

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPE JAPAN

Nestled within the Tanazawa mountain range, you'll find Miyagase Lakeside Park, a popular spot for autumn leaf viewing near NAF Atsugi.

The man-made lake is only a 45-minute drive from the base and has a trail which makes for good walking or a fresh run. This lake serves as a reservoir which provides drinking water to Tokyo and Yokohama City. Dogs on leashes are allowed to visit this park as well, so don't forget to bring your furry friend.

I visited in early November and the mountain showed early signs of fall. My wife and I enjoyed a brisk walk around the spacious park with a 315-meter long and a 23-meter high suspension bridge with a nice view of the surrounding area.

So, if you're on Atsugi or Camp Zama, make plans to head out and enjoy one of Japan's most colorful season at Miyagase Lakeside Park. The peak autumn colors are projected for late November.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Things to know

LOCATION: 940-4 Miyagase, Kiyokawa Village, Aiko-gun, Kanagawa Prefecture

URL: <https://www.miyagase.or.jp>

TEL: 046-288-3600



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STORY AND PHOTOS BY
JOSHUA HARVEY,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Autumn is a great time of year for a lot of things – pumpkin spice lattes, horror films, chestnut-flavored snacks, but its also a great time to grab your favorite coat and head out with your special someone to enjoy the cooler weather. With the summer heat finally a thing of the past, we've rounded up some of our favorite Tokyo date spots for you to check out this season, without the need for air conditioning.

Hichijoji

As the cloying humidity of summer's height slips away and the city's leaves don their autumn bronzer, Inokashira Park transforms once more into an ideal date destination. Considered one of the most romantic spots in the city, couples have long flocked here to take a spin in the charming swan boats that dot Inokashira's central pond. But how does one make a date memorable? Might we recommend: a van down by the river. No, really. Garage 50 (less a garage and more just a vintage VW van) is a weird, wonderful joint that serves up delicious personal pizzas for just six hundred yen. The makeshift pizza oven is located right in the vehicle itself. It's also only a few blocks away from Inokashira, which makes it the perfect pitstop for grabbing take out before heading to the park for a picturesque picnic.

Garage 50

- PRICE RANGE: \$
- ADDRESS: 1-23-5 Kichijoji Honcho, Musashino City
4 min. walk from Kichijoji Station



Yoyogi

Three words: coffee, pastries, puppies. There are few things we expats crave more

than the love of our pets while we're away. DOG HEART, located next to Yoyogi Park, offers a grand solution to this perennial longing: rentable puppies! Yes, for a small fee, you can rent a pooch and take them for a stroll through Yoyogi. They even provide all necessary equipment like a leash, water, snacks, and a doggy bag, so all you have to do is focus on making memories. Of course, for all its cuteness, this date is not complete without a meal. Once you pick up your pup, head to 365 Days. The coffee and pastries at this cafe are delicious, elegant, and endlessly Instagram-able.

DOG HEART from アクアマリン

- ADDRESS: 1-45-2 Tomigaya, Shibuya City
3 min. walk from Yoyogi Koen Station

365 Days

- PRICE RANGE: \$\$
- ADDRESS: 1-2-8 Tomigaya, Shibuya City
1 min. walk from Yoyogi Koen
- WEBSITE: Instagram: @ultrakitchen.ltd



Ebisu

With fantastic hole-in-the-wall restaurants and streetlights topped with glowing pints of beer, Ebisu is a district that begs for a boozy dinner date. GEM by moto, located in the northernmost outskirts of the neighborhood, is a whimsical dive that combines curious, world-class sake with imaginative tapas. While menu offerings can range from the mild mushroom risotto to the outrageous blue cheese and ham croquette, it is always a good idea to leave everything up to your server, who will expertly pair your sake of choice with its perfect snack partner.

Following dinner, no evening in Ebisu is complete without a stop at Wine Stand Waltz, a microscopic stand bar hidden behind a mess of vine and foliage. Cap the night sipping natural wines and hand selecting old vinyl records to play in-store.

Gem by moto

- PRICE RANGE: \$\$
- ADDRESS: 1-30-9 Ebisu, Shibuya City
10 min. walk from Ebisu Station
- WEBSITE: gembymoto.gorp.jp



Wine Stand Waltz

- PRICE RANGE: \$
- ADDRESS: 4-24-3 Ebisu, Shibuya City
9 min. walk from Ebisu Station
- WEBSITE: Instagram: @wine_stand_waltz



Shibuya

If the rigors of the modern world have made dating feel stale, try stepping back in time. In the heart of Shibuya, the busiest ward in the world's largest city, there is silence. Nonbei Yokochō is a cramped, creaking alleyway that has seen a lot and survived it all. Unsurprisingly, this Showa-era darling has become a famous photo spot for tourists and locals alike. The photos are nice, especially for a date night, but it's on peaceful evenings that Nonbei becomes a time machine. Walking the alley and poking your head into the various bars that line the street, it's suddenly the 1950s. It's a magical experience. For a true escape, head for Bar Piano, an indecipherable lounge painted red with the dim glow of colored bulbs. Have drinks upstairs, meet fellow bar tenants, and leave yourself truly wondering where and when you are.

Bar Piano

- PRICE RANGE: \$\$
- ADDRESS: 1-25-10 Shibuya, Shibuya City
3 min. walk from Shibuya Station
- WEBSITE: Instagram: @barpiano.tokyo



Kasai

One train stop away from Tokyo Disneyland, you'll find Kasai-Rinkai Koen, home to Tokyo Sea Life Park and Japan's tallest ferris wheel. Tokyo Sea Life Park is a cheap, fascinating, and relatively quiet aquarium, making it an optimal date excursion. Sharks, rays, schooling tuna, a kelp forest, and even a penguin exhibit can all be found underneath the dome of this exemplary marine museum. In addition to the sea life, Kasai-Rinkai boasts the Diamond and Flower Ferris Wheel which, on clear days, holds one of the best views of Mt. Fuji in all of Tokyo. After a day of exploring, hop a bus to Kasai and grab doner kebabs at New Aladdin, a low-profile hookah lounge with a big drink menu and even bigger personality.

Tokyo Sea Life Park

- ADDRESS: 6-2-3 Rinkaicho, Edogawa City
6 min. walk from Kasai-Rinkai-Koen Station
- WEBSITE: https://www.tokyo-zoo.net/



New Aladdin

- PRICE RANGE: \$
- ADDRESS: 3-30-13, Nakakasai, Edogawa City
5 min. walk from Kasai Station
- WEBSITE: new-aladdin.business.site



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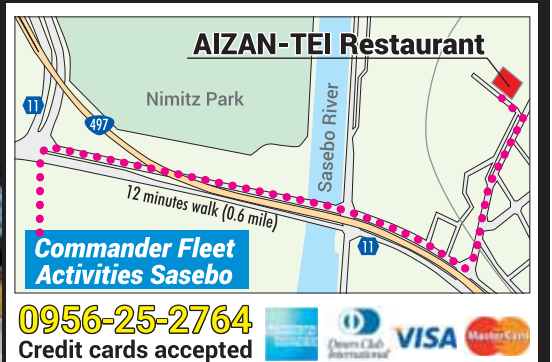
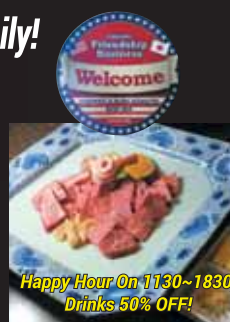


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MISAWA PHANTASIA(AOMORI): Until Jan. 8, 4 p.m. – midnight
Featuring a 16-meter tall 'big tree' with 10,000 LED lights and dozens of suspended balls illuminated in various colors in the Nakayoshi Park; 5-minute walk from Misawa AB main gate; 0176-53-2175

ARTS TOWADA WINTER ILLUMINATION 2023 (AOMORI):
Dec. 15 – Feb. 14, 4:30 – 9 p.m.
Blue 300,000 LED lights decorate with the snow covered in front of Towada Modern Arts Museum; 35-minute bus ride from JR Shichinohe Towada Station; 0176-51-6772

KOIWAI WINTER LIGHTS (IWATE): Until Jan. 8, 4 – 8 p.m., close on Dec. 31
Featuring illumination decorates with 1 mil. LED lights themed with "Galaxy Farm Night"; 1,000 yen for 12 or older; 15-minute drive from Morioka I.C. on Tohoku Express; 019 692-4321

TOKYO SKYTREE DREAM CHRISTMAS 2023 (TOKYO):
Until Dec. 25
Enjoy 460,000 lights around the Skytree Town. Collaborates with TV Tokyo event "TV Tokyo winter park in Tokyo Skytree Town" to provide special event and gourmet foods; Oshiage or Tokyo Skytree Station. 0570-55-0634

MARUNOUCHI ILLUMINATION 2023 (TOKYO):
Until Feb. 18, 3 – 11 p.m. (Dec. 1 – 31, 3-midnight)
Around 360 street trees can be decorated with 1 mil. Champagne gold LED lights around Otemachi and Yurakcho; JR Tokyo Station; 03-5218-5100

OMOTESANDO HILLS CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATION 2023 (TOKYO):
Until Dec. 25; 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Omotesando Hills Christmas illumination with the theme of "Re-Crystallized," decorated on a 23-ft tree with the LED lights on the center of open space at the venue along with "light curtain" consisting of 6,000 icicle appears on the upper part of stairway. JR Harajuku or Omote Sando Station; 03-3497-0310

SHIBUYA BLUE GROTT 2023 (TOKYO):
Until Dec. 25; 5 – 10 p.m.
Illumination of 770,000 LED lights with the theme of "Blue Grotto" through Shibuya Koen Street and Yoyogi Park; walking distance from Shibuya and Harajuku Station

SAGAMI LAKE ILLUMILLION (KANAGAWA):
Until May 12
About 6 mil. LED lights are decorated around the Sagamiko Resort Pleasure Forrest. Amusement Park, Hot Spring, Camping and BBQ area is also available. 2,000 yen for adults, 1,300 yen under 12.10-minute bus ride from JR Sagamiko or Hashimoto Station; 7-minute drive from Sagamiko Higashi I.C. on Chuo Express. 0570-037-353

MOTHER FARM ILLUMINATION (CHIBA):
Until Feb. 25 and Weekend only on Jan. 11 – Mar. 5; 4 – 7:30 p.m.
Annual theme is flower garden of light that is featuring the lighting flower garden, princess flower dress and rainbow tunnel; 1,500 yen for over 15, 800 yen for under 12. Shuttle bus service is available from Kimitsu Station. 0439-37-3211

KOBE LUMINARIE (HYOGO): From Jan. 19 to Jan. 28, sunset – 9:30 p.m.
Held since Dec. 1995, entrusted with the requisition of the victims of the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake and the reconstruction and regeneration of the city. 7 minute walk from JR Motomachi Station. 078-230-1001

BIHOKU PARK ILLUMINATION (HIROSHIMA):
Until Jan. 8; 5:30 – 9 p.m., close on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1
Various illumination decorated with over 700,000 LED lights throughout the park, live performance and fireworks are scheduled on the weekends.450 yen for over 15, 210 yen for over 65; 0824-72-7000

KIRAKIRA FESTIVAL IN SASEBO (NAGASAKI):
Festival opens until Dec. 25 (Illumination opens until Jan. 8), 5 – 11 p.m.
Decorate around the shopping street in Sasebo city and the illumination selected by annual Sasebo news on the Shimanose Art Center wall is remarkable; Live performance and dance battle are scheduled through the event; 15-minute walk from JR Sasebo Station; 0956-21-4411

SOUTHEAST BOTANICAL GARDEN ILLUMINATION (OKINAWA):
Until May 26, 5 – 10 p.m.
Decorates the light tunnels, tree house and light carpets with 1.8 mil. LED lights to illuminate trees and the promenade fantastically. 2,150 yen for adult, 1,250 yen for ages 13 – 17; 750 yen for ages 4 – 12; 5-minute drive from Okinawa Kita I.C.; 098-939-2555

Christmas market time!

TOKYO CHRISTMAS MARKET:
Until Dec. 25, 11 a.m. – 9:30 p.m., Hibiya Park

ROPPONGI HILLS CHRISTMAS MARKET 2023:
Until Dec. 25, 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. everyday, free, Roppongi Hills

TAMAARI TOWN CHRISTMAS MARKET:
Until Dec. 25; noon – 9 p.m., free, Tamaari Town Keyaki Hiroba 2F

YOKOHAMA RED BRICK WAREHOUSE CHRISTMAS MARKET:
Until Dec. 8, 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.; ages 18 and older, 500 yen, Dec. 9 – 25, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.; ages 12 and older, 500 yen. Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse near Bashamichi Station (Minatomirai line)

Speakin' Japanese

Pronunciation key: "A" is short (like "ah"); "E" is short (like "get"); "I" is short (like "it"); "O" is long (like "old"); "U" is long (like "tube"); and "Al" is a long "I" (like "hike"). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but "OU" is a long "O" with emphasis on that syllable.

Winter travel

As you travel this winter season, here are some useful Japanese phrases to help you along the way.

"Samui desu, ne?" = It is cold, isn't it?
"Atataakai desu, ne?" = It is warm, isn't it?
"Atsui desu, ne?" = It is hot, isn't it?

These expressions are often used with **"Ohayo Gozaimasu"** (good morning), **"Konnichiwa"** (good afternoon) or **"Konbanwa"** (good evening). **"Desu, ne?"** = it is, isn't it?

"Yuki ga furisou desu." = It looks like it is going to snow.
"... sou desu" = looks like going to be ...

These phrases are also used in daily conversations:
"Ame ga furisou desu." = It looks like it is going to rain.
"Hare sou desu." = It looks like going to be fine.
"Yoi otenki desu." = It is a beautiful day.
"Atama ga itai desu." = I have a headache.
"... ga itai desu" = "I have an ache/pain in ..."

When you have to see a doctor, you can use some of the following phrases:
"Nodo ga itai desu." = My throat hurts.
"Onaka ga itai desu." = I have a stomachache.
"Netsu ga arimasu." = I have a fever.

"Seki ga demasu." = I have a cough.
"Kaze wo hikimashita." = I caught a cold.
Tokyo eki **wa doko desuka?** (Where is Tokyo Station?)
"... wa doko desuka?" = Where is ...

- Byouin **wa dokodesuka?** (Where is a hospital?)
- Koban **wa dokodesuka?** (Where is a police station?)
- Toire **wa dokodsuka?** (Where is a bathroom?)

Eki made donokurai kakarimasuka? (How long does it take to the station?)
"made donokurai kakarimasuka?" = How long does it take to ...

- Kyanpu Foster **made donokurai kakarimasuka?** (How long does it take to Foster military base?)
- Kuuko **made donokurai kakarimasuka?** (How long does it take to an airport?)

• **Mayoimashita.** (I am lost.)
• **Michi ga wakarimasen.** (I don't know the way.)
• **Basho ga wakarimasen.** (I don't know where it is.)

- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

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Hokuriku

Natural beauty, traditional cultures meet

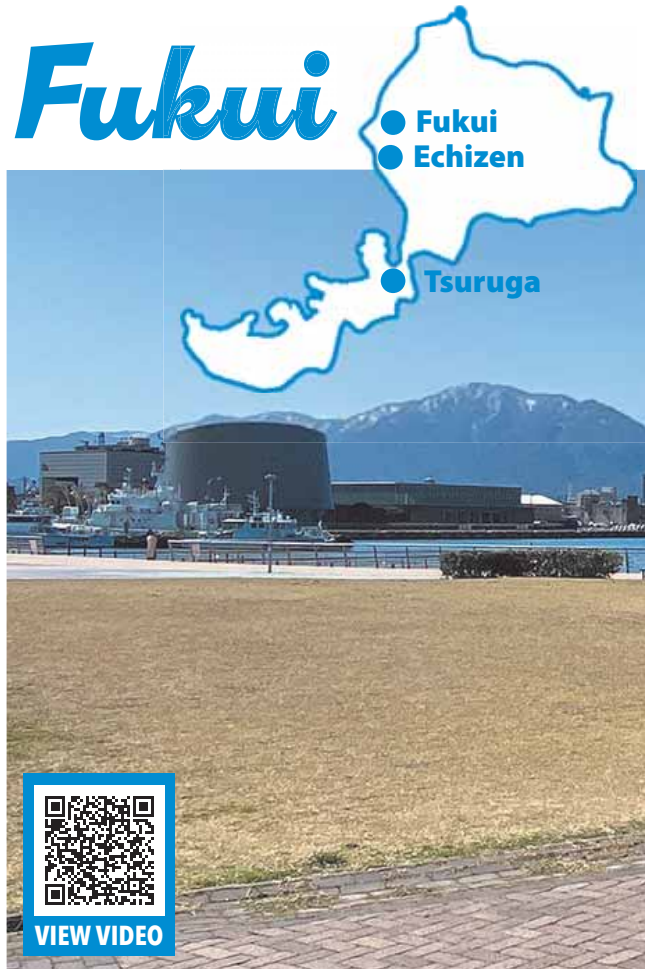
STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Hokuriku Sanken, or the three prefectures of Hokuriku region, sit in the central northern area of Japan's mainland facing the Sea of Japan. Fukui, Ishikawa and Toyama are the prefectures that form this picturesque region bursting with notable sites, traditional castles, high-quality crafts and delectable gastronomy.

I've visited this attractive region several times and whenever I think of Hokuriku, I'm reminded of the vast grounds of the Kenrokuen gardens, Noto Peninsula's pristine outdoor onsen, the bustling market at Wajima Port in Ishikawa, and Tojinbo's rugged cliffs. You may recognize this region for the famous Gokayama farmhouses and the snow-capped Tateyama Mountain range in Toyama.

There's no denying that Hokuriku has a lot to offer visitors and locals alike. Each of the three prefectures has a unique personality but share natural and cultural climates and foods, like their famous crabs, according to Takahiro Inami, an employee of the Fukui Shimbun newspaper.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



Port city was 'Path to life'

Tsuruga City

Tsuruga is an impressive port city and thriving international transportation hub facing the Sea of Japan with an interesting connection to European history.

In the 1920s, 763 Polish orphans were rescued by the Japan Red Cross and welcomed via Tsuruga Port. The port became a "path to life" for orphans and refugees fleeing post-revolutionary Russia and Nazi German-occupied Europe.

Later in the 1940s, Tsuruga would be the setting for welcoming 6,000 Jewish refugees with visas for life issued by Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara in Lithuania.

In 2008, to commemorate its history of welcoming refugees, the Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum opened. To celebrate the 100th and 80th anniversaries of these important events, the museum was expanded and relocated to nearly-100-year-old port buildings after they were renovated.

In the museum, the history of the port and the turbulent period, along with heartwarming interactions between the refugees and Tsuruga locals, is documented through photos, documents and videos.

"The displayed items and exhibitions at this museum are simply telling us how important life and peace are," museum director Akinori Nishikawa said.



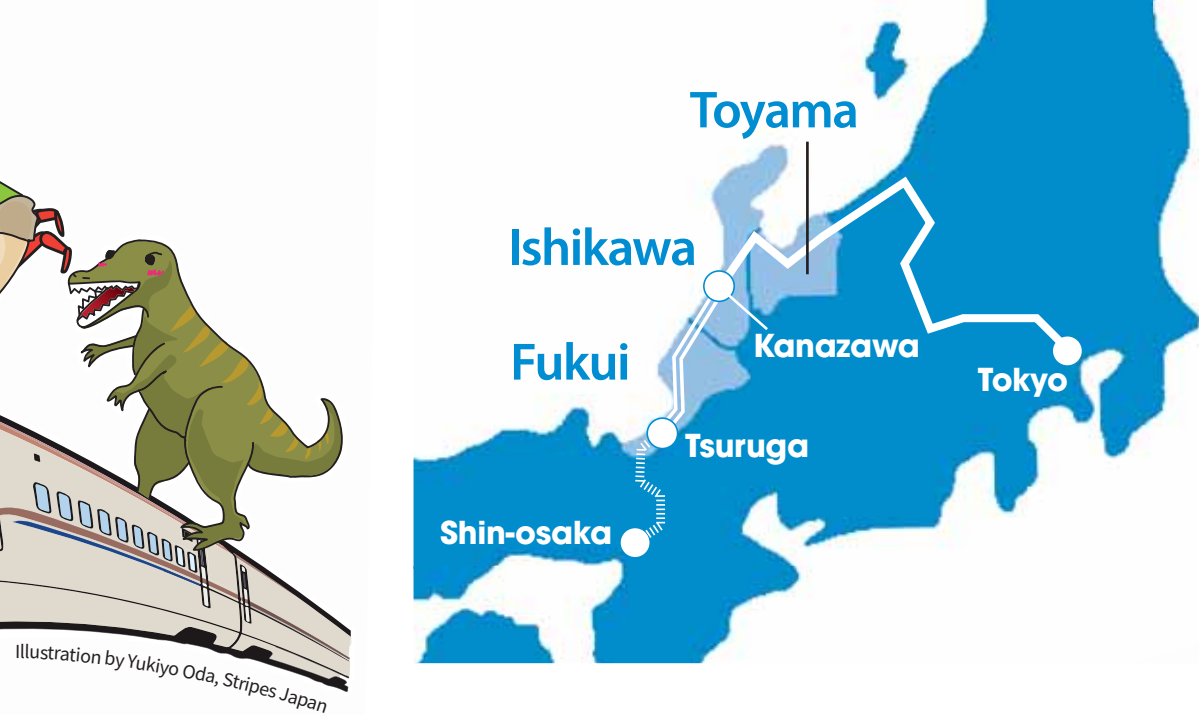
Port of
Humanity
Tsuruga
Museum



Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum



Shinkansen extending to Tsuruga in Mar. 2024



Taking the Hokuriku Shinkansen bullet train between Tokyo and Kanazawa (Ishikawa Prefecture) connects Toyama and Ishikawa Prefectures within two to two-and-a-half hours. Currently, it is not possible to get to Fukui Prefecture via Shinkansen, but in March 2024, the route will extend to Tsuruga within an easy, 3-hour train ride from Tokyo.

“Fukui will be discovered in the Hokuriku region at last, thanks to the extended service of Shinkansen,” Takahiro Inami, an employee of the Fukui Shimbun newspaper said. “Fukui seemed to stand in the shade of other two Hokuriku prefectures, but the extension will make it more accessible.”

I was able to experience this and more during a recent 3-day trip to the region along the Hokuriku Shinkansen line. Plan your trip now and get ready to enjoy the beauty Hokuriku has to offer you and your family!





Crafting centuries-old washi paper

Echizen City

Washi is traditional Japanese paper known for its beauty, extremely smooth touch and excellent durability. In addition to its use as stationery and for other paper products, washi paper has been used to adorn shoji screens, fusuma sliding doors, umbrellas and lantern shades throughout history.

In Fukui Prefecture, Echizen Washi has been produced in Echizen City for over 1,500 years. This historic washi paper is considered one of the best in quality.

A visit to Echizen City is only a 3.5-hour train ride from Tokyo and offers a close look at the meticulous, tedious and demanding process to make the paper. Craftsmen peel bark from mulberry trees, air dry it, clean and boil the bark, soften it, then shape the pulp with glue and water into sheets.

These days, washi is becoming less and less common in modern society. Echizen Washi makers are adapting to modern needs and add new value to the craft.

Igarashi Seishi, a leading washi maker in Iwamoto Town, which was founded in 1919, customizes washi paper for wallpaper, interior decoration and drawing paper. Ryozo in Otaki Town is another washi maker using a unique technique to create pressed-patterned paper for packaging sweets, fans and notebooks. Ryozo also has a hands-on workshop for visitors to try.

The area is so devoted to washi paper that even the local Shinto shrine is dedicated to Kawakami Gozen, the goddess of paper. Check out Okamoto-Otaki Jinja and its beautiful grounds in honor of the goddess who, according to shrine legend, originally showed Echizen locals how to make washi for their livelihoods.



Igarashi Seishi
(washi maker)



RYOZO
(Yanase Ryozo Seishijo)
(washi maker)



Okamoto-Otaki Jinja
(Shinto shrine)





Enter dinosaur kingdom

Fukui City

Fukui Prefecture is known as dinosaur kingdom as 80 percent of Japan’s dinosaur fossils are found in the prefecture. Dinosaurs are a symbol of Fukui, according to a Fukui local I spoke with.

During a visit to the Fukui Station and other attractions nearby, you’ll see many nods to the prehistoric giants.

At the station square, murals and trick art make for great photo ops. In the evening, the dinosaur murals and sculptures are illuminated so you can enjoy the area no matter the time of day.

Nearby, the Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum displays 44 dinosaur skeletons and many other exhibits. The museum is considered one of the world’s greatest dinosaur museums and a must-see attraction.

For a non-dinosaur-related spot to visit, head to Fukui Central Park, built on the ruins of Fukui Castle. The grounds including the remnants of a moat, bridge and fountains are fantastically illuminated in the evening hours.

In Fukui, walk amongst replicas and artwork of the historic former inhabitants and the remains of the feudal history in one trip!



Fukui Station
Dinosaur
Square



Fukui
Prefectural
Dinosaur
Museum



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9



Must-visit eatery in Fukui

Slurp some radish soba at Urushiya

Echizen City

As you peruse Echizen's traditional townhomes, shrines and temples on Teramachi Street, stop in for a bowl of soba steeped in over 600 years of history.

Urushiya, nestled among the traditional buildings and has been in business since 1861. The restaurant serves up Echizen Soba Noodles, which unlike standard noodles, are made using the whole buckwheat fruit. These special noodles are paired with ground radish, sliced negi onion and katsuobushi bonito flakes. This local specialty has enamored local foodies and tourists alike for decades!

Even the emperor of Showa had a tasty bowl when he visited Urushiya in 1947.

During my visit, it was easy to see why this humble soba joint has endured the test of time. The wooden exterior leads into an elegant wooden interior with urushi lacquered beams and pillars. The antique furniture and craft art displays create the perfect atmosphere to enjoy a meal with years of history behind it. From the dining hall on the first floor, diners can also enjoy a view of the beautiful courtyard.

My party, however, dined on the second floor in a room with fusuma sliding doors. Our set meals were a sample of a matcha version of the famous Echizen soba and many local delicacies, including shrimp tempura, vegetable tempura, and broiled mackerel sushi.

The dishes were cooked to perfection. The tempura was crisp, flavorful and went well with the soba miso roasted buckwheat, miso and seasoning sauce.

The broiled mackerel was refreshingly sweet and tangy. Then, the star of the meal arrived: the matcha Echizen soba, glistening green with a hint of green tea emanating from the bowl.

You know, at Urushiya, soba is enjoyed by dipping it into a broth of spicy radish juice and soy sauce, instead of sprinkling them over the noodles. According to our server, the medley of flavors of the noodles and broth are better appreciated if you dip the noodles into the broth instead of serving all the ingredients together in one bowl. Following her advice, I sampled a noodle with the radish broth by dipping. The buckwheat aroma and punchy radish flavor burst in my mouth with every bite. It was delicious! I never thought that soba noodles can match that well with grounded radish.

To kick up the umami factor, you can change up the toppings as you enjoy the noodles. First, sample the noodles as served, then with negi onion and bonito flakes, and finally, with all the toppings and radish broth. With each addition (or subtraction) of ingredients, you can experience the changes in the mouthfeel and taste of the beloved Echizen Soba Noodle.

Dining at Urushiya added a nice, new food experience to our tour in the Hokuriku region. So, don't miss this wonderful soba joint when you enjoy Fukui's sights and great eats.

As Urushiya has private rooms for groups of 2 to 24 people, you can also use the tasty soba joint for any occasion of celebrations.



Getting there

Location: 1-4-26 Kyomachi, Echizen City, Fukui Prefecture

Hours: Thu - Tue, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., 5:30 - 9 p.m.

Tel: 0778-21-0105

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Elegant castle city

Kanazawa City

Kanazawa City in the region’s northern-central area is only a 2.5-hour Shinkansen ride from Tokyo. The beautiful, large castle city is where history and elegance meet.

In 1583, the Maeda Clan, the second-most powerful feudal clan after the Tokugawa Shogun, started governing Kanazawa City. Under the clan, Kanazawa grew to become the largest castle town in the region during the Edo Era (1603-1867).

Today, Kanazawa is the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture and boasts various historical tourist attractions, both traditional and modern.

Kenrokuen, a scenic traditional Japanese garden, features spacious grounds with ponds, moss-covered green hills and classic teahouses. It is considered one of Japan’s three most beautiful gardens and was built around 1673-81. Take your time and explore the garden to enjoy the magnificent landscapes.

While you’re enjoying Kenrokuen, drop by Shiguretei Teahouse for a cup of matcha, wagashi sweets and a photogenic view.

Next, take a 10-minute walk to Higashi Chaya, a traditional entertainment district filled with a fascinating atmosphere. Higashi Chaya’s elegant streets are lined with geisha houses with lattice “kimusuko” features. This architectural element on the lattice doors allows the outside to be seen from inside but not the inside from the outside. Like the geisha houses in Kyoto, the unique buildings of Higashi Chaya are also designated National Important Cultural Properties.

Another Kanazawa point of interest is Nagamachi, a samurai district west of Kanazawa Castle and Kenrokuen garden. High-ranking samurai resided in impressive wooden homes in Nagamachi during the Edo Era. Transport back to this time with a walk down the narrow streets and look at the elaborate original water supply and drainage system still retained from the era.

Wrap up your visit with a shopping break at Omicho Market. Here you can peruse many fresh, local products and even fresh catches from the nearby Sea of Japan.



Kanazawa City



Kenrokuen garden



Shiguretei teahouse



Higashi Chaya geisha district



Nagamachi samurai district



Omicho market



Must-visit eatery in Ishikawa

Sample Omicho Market’s fresh catch at Ichinokura

Kanazawa City

Tucked away in Kanazawa, a beautiful, large castle city where history and elegance meet, Omicho Market has been at the center of the town’s food culture for over 300 years. The vast market spans over 170 food stalls where locals and tourists can savor the fresh, local produce and catches from the Sea of Japan.

As you stroll the impressive market, make sure to save room for a meal at Ichinokura, a casual izakaya known for its unbelievable seafood rice bowls and high-end sake selection.

During my visit, I went with the popular Kaisendon, or seafood bowl, for 1,800 yen (\$12) that in-

cludes a side of miso soup.

The generous bowl of vinegar rice was topped with sashimi slices of raw octopus, salmon, sea bream, yellowtail, fresh shrimp, broiled conger eel and shredded crab meat. It was a real ocean party, almost too delectable to dig into. But I did, and it was even more delicious than it looked.

I was impressed with the fresh, extremely chewy texture of each piece of sashimi and the burst of flavors when paired with the tangy rice and kick of wasabi. The kaisendon bowl was the perfect sampling of the exceptional, fresh fish brought to the market daily.

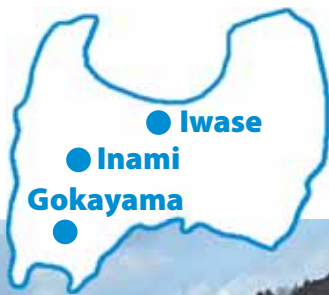


Getting there

Note: The restaurant has private rooms and can accommodate large parties.
Location: Omichoichibakan 2F, 88 Aokusamachi, Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture
Hours: 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Tel: 076-224-3371

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Toyama



VIEW VIDEO



Yusuke



Kokiriko dance

Gokayama's traditional farmhouses

Nanto City

See the landscape transform as you take a trip into Japan's agricultural past, deep in the hills of the Hokuriku region.

Gokayama in Hokuriku is a World Heritage Site and home to traditional farmhouses with steep-angled thatched straw roofs nestled in the stunning countryside.

The unique farmhouses are called "gassho-zukuri" because their shape looks like hands in prayer. The inter-generational homes have existed for hundreds of years. You'll find many of these buildings along the Sho River running through Toyama and Gifu Prefectures, and millions of domestic and international tourists flock to see the pristine rural landscape every year.

In Gokayama's Ainokura Village, which was established in the 11th century, there are 24 farmhouses, including Yusuke, a 150-year-old farmhouse converted to a guesthouse and museum.

At the museum, I had a chance to take a closer look inside, outside and at the architectural structure of the buildings. Surprisingly, the farmhouses were built without nails. The flexible joints of many pillars and beams are very resilient and able to withstand the large amounts of snowfall during the wintertime. The structure gives the building a large attic space, which was used for cultivating silkworms.

The museum also displayed farming tools and utensils used for cultivating mulberry trees to make traditional Gokayama washi paper and rear silkworms. The tools and utensils are very sophisticated and highly evolved to help cope with heavy snows and the severe mountainous climate. The inside of the museum showcases farming tools and utensils used for rearing silkworms.

According to the museum, the roofs on the farmhouses are replaced every 30 to 40 years, while reinforcement work is needed once or twice a year.

While I was in the museum, I was able to enjoy a traditional Kokiriko dance performance accompanied by bamboo percussion instrument called a "sasara." The bamboo whisk-shaped instrument was used by a dancer in a braided hat and orange-yellow kimono to play traditional folk music "Kokiriko-bushi," which dates back 1,400 years.

This taste of the simple life, customs and music of the region was a wonderful way to experience Japan's regional agricultural and cultural history. The impressive farmhouses and nostalgic landscape are something I won't soon forget.



Ainokura Village



Museum and Guest House Yusuke



Kokiriko



VIEW VIDEO

Yokamachi St.



Stroll the scenic streets

Nanto and Toyama City

Toyama Prefecture is a treasure box of impressive traditional townscapes.

Exploring along the stone-paved Yokamachi Street of Inami District in Nanto City, which is filled with dozens of woodcarving workshops, various wood-carved signboards, monuments and cute figures of cats, dogs and rabbits, will make you feel as though you stumbled into an open-air museum.

Let the sights and sounds transport you to a different time. The atmosphere of the district and the distinct sound of woodcarving heard here was even recognized for being one of the 100 best soundscapes by the Japanese government in 1996.

Take a walk along the uphill street towards Zuisenji, a majestic Buddhist temple, often referred to as the San Pietro Cathedral of the Hokuriku region. Zuisenji's breathtaking woodcarvings have been compared to the likes of masterpieces by Rafael and Michaelangelo.

The temple was constructed in 1390 but was destroyed in a fire in 1763. Highly skilled carvers from Kyoto arrived to aid local carvers in the restoration of the beloved place of worship and according to temple legend, shared their skills with local carvers.

In 2018, Zuisenji was recognized as a Japan Heritage site for the woodcarving tradition spanning over 200 years.

Nearby, the award-winning Wakatsuru Saburomaru Distillery produces fine whiskey with a rich, smoky aroma. The 160-year-old distillery started producing Sunshine Whiskey in 1952. The spirit was sold to stimulate the local economy as Japan recovered from World War II and has won awards at the World Whiskies Awards 2023.

Another beautiful townscape to visit in the region is Iwase Town in Toyama City, a stunning port town with impressive architecture. Throughout the Edo and Meiji Eras (1603-1912), Toyama was a thriving hub for cargo ships running from Osaka to Hokkaido.

For a blast of the past, take a stroll along Omachi Niikawamachi, the city's main street. Here, there are no power cables or utility poles to obstruct the views, just traditional buildings to transport you back to old Japan. Grab a bite to eat in one of the many restaurants housed inside the traditional townhouses or check out the local craft shops and art galleries.

Masuda Shuzo, a sake brewery on Omachi Niikawamachi, crafts high-end sake that pairs well with the local produce and fresh seafood.



Zuisenji Temple



Inami



Zuisenji (Buddhist temple)



Wakatsuru Saburomaru Distillery



Wakatsuru Saburomaru Distillery



Masuda Shuzo Brewery



Masuda Brewery




Iwase



Iwase





Must-visit eatery in Toyama

Enjoy traditional Tonami dishes inside a farmhouse

Okado

At Okado, diners can take the phrase “from farm to table” up a notch by enjoying a fresh meal inside a 100-year-old farmhouse.

Okado sits on the Tonami Plain of Toyama Prefecture surrounded by large trees and the snow-capped Tateyama Mountain Range in the distance.

The large wooden farmhouse has wide glass windows, allowing diners sweeping views of the pastoral landscape while they enjoy delicious meals made with local produce.

I ordered koi-akane, the restaurant’s signature lunch set for 2,900 yen (\$20). Though my perception of what a local farm meal was something similar to what a grandma might serve at home, what I received was not what I expected.

The large lunch set was a gorgeous sight of tri-colored kuzukiri starch noodles, yubesu ginger-flavored egg jelly, yogoshi miso-dipped vegetables, maruyama deep-fried bean cured, tempura vegetables and somen noodles. The volume of dishes would easily be com-


parable to a full-course French dinner, but healthier!

The delicate flavors of the dishes are something I won’t soon forget. My favorite, however, was the Okado somen noodles. According to the server, the noodles have a unique shape called “mage,” meaning married woman’s coiffure, and have been handmade in the Tonami area for over 160 years. What makes these noodles special is the use of water from the Sho River and cold-wind drying for 10 days. The traditional method gives the Okado somen an extremely refreshing, chewy texture.

The somen noodles come served in a cold soy-sauce based broth with ground ginger and steamed fish paste. The flavors paired well with the chewy noodles and were a taste of the surrounding landscape and its severe weather which make the noodles possible.

Dining at Okado gives a great chance to enjoy time-tested local delicacies in a unique pastoral environment with a celestial landscape.






Getting there

Location: 165 Okado, Tonami City, Toyama Prefecture

Hours: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., 5 – 10 p.m.

Tel: 076-333-0088

Traditional arts and crafts in Hokuriku region



VIEW VIDEO

Besides its beautiful landscapes, profound history and various delicacies, Japan’s Hokuriku region is known for its traditional arts and crafts like fine porcelainware, knives and metal-casted products. Encounter the Hokuriku’s excellent craftsmanship centuries in the making.

Fukui

Ryusen Hamono, a leading maker of table knives, has been creating incredible hammer-forged knives since 1953. Knifemaking has existed in the region for over 700 years and Ryusen Hamono continues the tradition.

Visit the factory in Echizen City to see how skilled craftsmen apply time-tested techniques to produce knives with amazing sharpness and beautiful shape using “Ryusenrin” edge patterns. Ryusenrin is an otherworldly effect created on the blade through the hardening process.



Ryusen Hamono



Ishikawa

At Kutaniyaki Art Museum in Kaga City, encounter the vivid colors and designs of the local porcelain, considered a signature craft in Japan with over 360 years of history.


The museum displays a variety of archival works, a digital library and other displays in its gallery.

Throughout history, Kutaniyaki porcelainware was mostly used for ceremonies. In more recent times, local artisans have been working to create pieces for daily use. Wear Kutani is a collective of 18 women producing handmade Kutaniyaki accessories using traditional techniques that is available for purchase at several shops and museums in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Another traditional craft out of Ishikawa is gold leaf encrusting. Gold leaf was first produced in the region over 400 years ago and since then has grown to become the leading producer nationally.


Hakuichi in Higashi Chaya District offers visitors hands-on workshops to make a unique gold leaf souvenir. The shop also offers many gold leaf crafts for purchase.





Kutani Art Museum

Wear Kutani





Hakuichi



Toyama

Takaoka City in Toyama Prefecture has nearly 400 years of history in metal casting and is Japan’s leader in cast metal production. One of the top factories, Nousaku, began manufacturing casts in 1916 and produces various tin products, such as Buddhist altar ware, tea ceremony utensils and flower vases. Nousaku still uses the original metal-casting techniques, but also applies them to produce wider-ranged modern tableware, stationery and decorative objects and figures. Visitors can check out the factory for a hands-on experience of making a paperweight or tin cup in the traditional way.

Hokuriku’s local crafts are enduring symbols of the region’s history. Don’t miss the amazing knives, porcelainware and metal-casted crafts when you visit!



Nousaku





STORY AND PHOTO BY JENNESSA DAVEY,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: November 23, 2023

In the land of noodles and sushi, finding satisfying Mexican cuisine can be a treasure hunt like no other. That's why Gran Aztecas in Yokosuka is a real gem if you're craving those flavors.

Satisfy your south-of-the-border cravings at Gran Aztecas

Step inside this eatery near Yokosuka Naval Base and you'll find a little piece of Mexico in the heart of Japan. The decor, from sombreros to colorful murals, may make you feel like you're south of the Rio Grande.

What makes Gran Aztecas really stand out is its menu, packed with all your Mexican favorites. Tacos and enchilada plates served with rice and beans are their go-to entrees. The special menu has burritos, chilaquiles and sizzling fajitas.

If you're in the mood for some delectable street tacos, Gran Aztecas has got you covered. Each taco is a small, flavor-packed explosion in your mouth; options include tender al pastor, juicy carnitas and zesty barbacoa. Pair them with one of the restaurant's handcrafted margaritas for a taste of true indulgence.

I tried the Quesabirria De Res (1,500 yen or about \$10) on a recent visit. This cheesy item features shredded beef and your choice of dipping sauce. I went with the spicier option.

But a visit to Gran Aztecas isn't just about the food. It's a lively place that's often buzzing with folks from all over who come together to enjoy good music and the Mexican vibe.

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@JenDav_Stripes



The Quesabirria De Res from Gran Aztecas in Yokosuka is cheesy and beefy and comes with a spicy dipping sauce.

Things to know

LOCATION: 2-22 Odakicho, Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture
HOURS: Open 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.
PRICES: Between 600 yen and 1,200 yen for appetizers; 1,200 yen and 1,400 yen for taco plates; and 1,200 yen to 2,500 yen for special menu items.
DRESS: Casual
DIRECTIONS: A short walk from the naval base in Mikasa Shopping Plaza. Google Plus code: 7MJ9+7H Yokosuka, Kanagawa
INFORMATION: 046-874-6566

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Tasting nirvana: Flavor meets hospitality at Indian curry house

STORY AND PHOTO BY JENNESSA DAVEY,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: November 23, 2023

A hidden gem nestled in the heart of Yokosuka city beckons the adventurous foodie.

Nirvana Indian Restaurant & Curry House, an enchanting blend of Indian and Nepali cuisine, serves arguably the best-tasting dishes of their variety in town with service that makes every visit feel like a warm embrace from afar.

The moment you step into Nirvana, your senses are in for a treat. Spices dance on your palate, and each bite tells a story of tradition. The flavors are not just good; they're an unforgettable journey that will make you come back for more.

The menu is a treasure chest of Indian classics. The tomato-based chicken tikka masala is a creamy dish with succulent chicken; and other classics will set your taste buds on fire. Nirvana crafts these dishes with precision and authenticity that you can taste in every bite.

But what sets Nirvana apart is its tantalizing Nepali cuisine. Your first bite of momos — tender dumplings filled with savory goodness — will be a flavor explosion you won't forget. The lamb sekuwa, marinated in a blend of herbs and spices before hitting the grill, is a mouthwatering masterpiece.

In a world that can sometimes feel rushed and impersonal, Nirvana's service is a breath of fresh



At Nirvana Indian Restaurant & Curry House in Yokosuka, Japan, the flavors are not just good; they're an unforgettable journey that will make you come back for more.

Things to know

LOCATION: 2-23 B1 Odaki-cho, Yokosuka city, Kanagawa Prefecture
HOURS: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
PRICES: Most dishes cost between 1,000 yen and 1,600 yen, about \$7 to \$11.
DRESS: Casual
DIRECTIONS: A short walk from Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, or Yokosuka-chuo Station.
INFORMATION: 046-821-5227

air. The staff here doesn't just take your order; they ensure you are well taken care of, are ready to answer questions and offer recommendations with genuine enthusiasm. The team's warmth and hospitality make you feel like an honored guest in their home.

To make your dinner even better, Nirvana offers a selection of cocktails that perfectly complement the bold flavors of its cuisine. The

mango lassi martini fuses the traditional Indian yogurt drink with a modern twist.

Nirvana Indian Restaurant & Curry House isn't just a place to fill your belly, it's a tasty adventure that comes alive after hours. Foodie expert or newbie, Nirvana guarantees amazing flavors and service that'll make you feel all warm and fuzzy.

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GSA Global Supply® is now storing and delivering approximately 750 high-demand National Stock Number (NSN) items formerly stored in and shipped from the continental United States. The change reduces delivery time to a few days from weeks or months.

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Sid Frazier

The program does not replace existing retail stores managed by GSA in Japan. For more information, please contact your local Customer Service Director Sid Frazier at sidney.frazier@gsa.gov.

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Stripes Sports Trivia

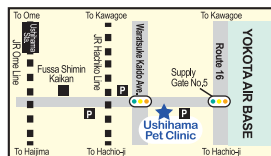
The Kentucky Derby is famous for the main attraction, big hats and more. A lasting tradition is that the winning horse is led to the winner's circle draped in a garland of what flowers?

Answer

Red Roses

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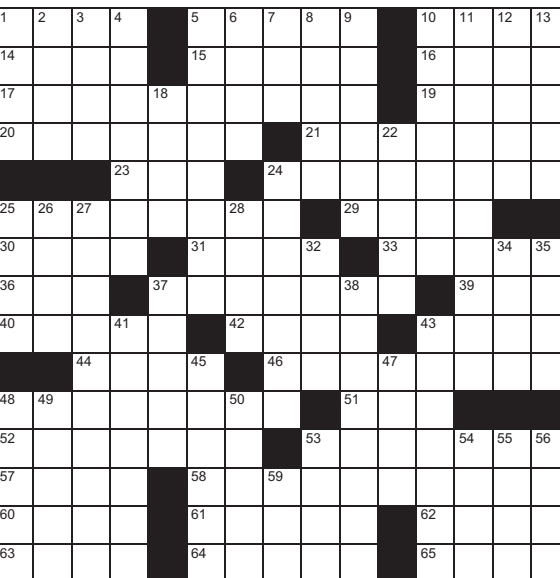
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The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- Pasta shape
- Social stratum
- Asian housemaid
- Rainbow goddess
- Bagel choice
- Pampered one?
- Self-absorbed
- Become unhinged
- Medical setback
- Produce milk
- Domino dot
- Alleviated
- Grammatical slip
- Cleveland's lake
- Hotel worker
- Barbecue fare
- Growl viciously
- Resistor unit
- Dependent
- Fluffy scarf
- Cunning
- Building toy
- Cole ____
- Turn's partner
- Type of lights
- Dinner accessory
- Ms. West of films
- Machine gun sound
- Rodeo props
- "Tide" anagram
- Chinese porcelain color
- Astringent fruit
- Mournful chime
- Actress Stone
- Put in the mail
- Disreputable
- Very best



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- High school subj.
- Pulled a Houdini
- Plot together
- Start the pot
- Knight's title
- Labors long
- Protect, in a way
- Refrain from
- Controllable
- Subside
- Made too much of
- Grand in scale
- Swore, old-style
- Natural, as lighting
- Skyline obscurer
- Waikiki's island
- Constraint
- Window ledge
- Type of palm
- MGM mascot sound
- Ground cover

- Stopwatch button
- As a rule
- Found
- Ice cream alter-native
- Hints at, with "of"
- Small pie
- News media
- Gravy server
- Make amends
- Tread-bare
- "Tickle me" doll
- Coal unit
- Arabian and Caspian
- Quilting party

Answers to Previous Crossword:

F	A	I	L	E	P	I	C	W	H	I	S	H
E	U	R	O	R	U	T	H	H	O	R	N	E
A	R	R	O	G	A	N	C	E	A	M	O	U
R	A	I	T	A	C	H	A	L	L	E	N	G
T	E	M	P	T	T	I	E	S				
F	L	A	R	E	O	U	T	R	I	P	O	D
R	E	T	S	T	A	R	V	E	C	H	I	A
O	T	I	S	S	T	E	E	R	K	I	L	N
Z	O	N	E	H	E	E	H	A	W	L	E	T
E	N	G	A	G	E	S	E	T	A	S	I	D
F	A	R	M	M	E	L	T	S				
C	E	L	A	N	D	I	N	E	L	A	T	I
A	L	E	R	T	L	A	N	D	S	L	I	D
S	A	F	E	R	L	I	C	E	K	N	E	W
E	N	T	R	Y	S	L	E	W	S	E	A	S

DID YOU KNOW?



In Japan, there is a unique year system based on the imperial era. Reiwa 5 means fifth year since Reiwa Emperor (Emperor Naruhito) was enthroned (in May 2019). In fact, although Japan has adopted the Western calendar for many things, this unique Japanese system is still in very commonly used, especially with government-issued documents, such as a driver's license or family registration. So, let's remember, 2023 is Reiwa 5 and 2024 will be Reiwa 6. Got it?

Kanji of the week

坂

saka/ham (slope)

Language Lesson

I'm leaving home

Ittekimasu!
(when you leave your home)

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

4	9	7	2	6	1	5	8	3
5	6	2	9	8	3	7	1	4
1	8	3	7	4	5	6	9	2
9	3	5	4	1	2	8	6	7
6	7	4	8	3	9	2	5	1
2	1	8	5	7	6	4	3	9
7	4	6	3	9	8	1	2	5
3	2	1	6	5	4	9	7	8
8	5	9	1	2	7	3	4	6

		9	4				7	
	8			6				
2						1	3	6
5	7					3	4	
		1			7			5
			3		1		6	
4				9			1	
							2	7
	5		6		3			9

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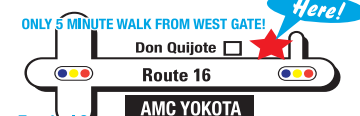


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Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
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2nd Place \$400.00	2nd Place \$400.00		2nd Place \$300.00	2nd Place \$300.00		2nd Place \$200.00	2nd Place \$200.00	
3rd Place \$300.00	3rd Place \$300.00		3rd Place \$200.00	3rd Place \$200.00		3rd Place \$100.00	3rd Place \$100.00	

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Marathon Course Map
Full, Half & 5K

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LEGEND

- Full Course
- Half Course
- 5K Course
- Aid Station
- Toilet