

H&R BLOCK®

GET YOUR TAXES  
DONE VIRTUALLY!

Contact us at  
[Japan@hrblock.com](mailto:Japan@hrblock.com)

## Flea market, beer fest coming up near MCAS Iwakuni

Sept. 23 & 24

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPE JAPAN

Grab your ecobags and head to Shunan City for a day at the flea market on Sept. 24.

Check out all the good deals, food and entertainment at the JR Tokuyama Station square, only an hour away from MCAS Iwakuni.

The Shunan Flea Market promises plenty of antiques, imported goods, clothing, records, books and more from over 40 vendors. Sample tasty pizza, baked goods and other good eats at the event in Shunan City. There were also be live musical performances to serenade you as you peruse the booths.

This biannual market draws a big crowd and this particular event assembles under the theme of "Spin out a story of life," according to the event organizers.

Still looking for fun? After the market, head to Aozora Park, about a 7-minute walk from the station to enjoy the Tokuyama Ekimae Beer Festival running on both Sept. 23 and 24 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The fest will have adult beverages and plenty of great food to enjoy.

DJ Hasunoyu Crew will provide trip-hop beats to accompany a fun day of shopping and great weather. Don't miss it!

[takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com](mailto:takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com)



### Tokuyama Ekimae Beer Festival

Location: Aozora Park

Date and hours:

Sept. 23-24, 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Admission: Free

Price: Adults 4,000 yen (on the site); 3,500 yen (reservation) all-you-can-drink. A beer ticket 600 yen and a food ticket 250 yen.

Tel: 090-8502-2894



Ticket  
reservation

### Tokuyama Ekimae Flea Market 2023

Location: Station Square of JR Tokuyama Station (north exit) (one-hour drive from MCAS Iwakuni)

Date and hours:

Sept. 24, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Admission: Free

Tel: 0834-34-0013



# STARS AND STRIPES®

Community Publication

VOLUME 10 NO. 17

SEPTEMBER 15 – SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

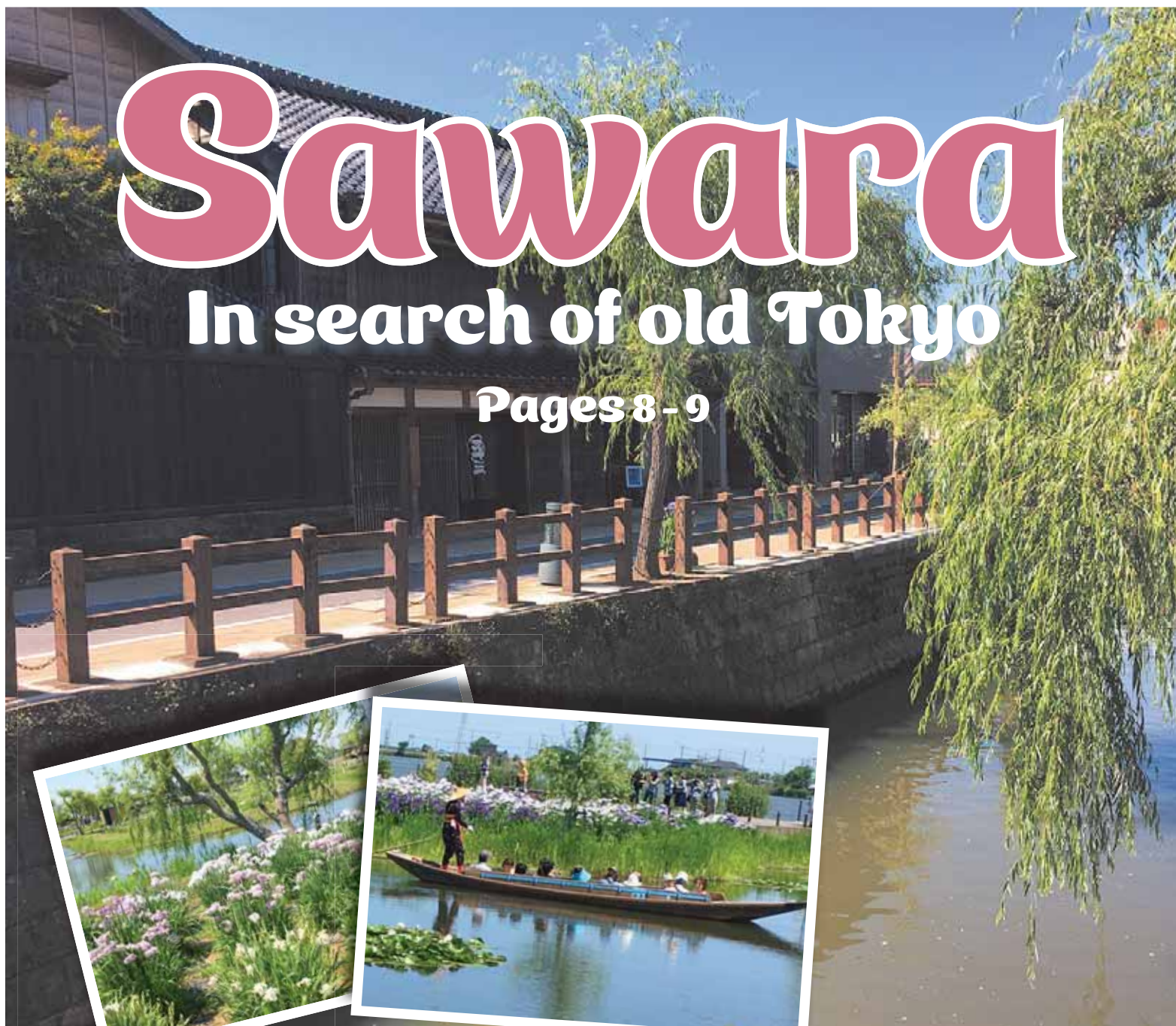
SUBMIT STORIES TO: [JAPAN@STRIPE.COM](mailto:JAPAN@STRIPE.COM) • [JAPAN.STRIPE.COM](http://JAPAN.STRIPE.COM) • [FACEBOOK.COM/STRIPEPACIFIC](https://www.facebook.com/stripespacific)

FREE

# Sawara

## In search of old Tokyo

Pages 8-9



## An officer and a DJ

### Yokota squadron commander keeps the beat on base

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE,  
STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: September 8, 2023

YOKOTA AIR BASE – When a party at this airlift hub in western Tokyo needs an experienced beatmatcher at the turntables, "DJ Darrick D" steps up.

Air Force Lt. Col. Darrick Duran, commander of the 374th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron, moonlights as a disc jockey, a sideline he picked up as a student at Fresno State University.

"He's our go-to for any of our major

morale events," the 36th Airlift Squadron's commander, Lt. Col. Kira Coffey, said. "Being a commander myself, I think it is impressive the amount of time and effort he puts into being a DJ on top of being a commander. It's a testament to his passion for doing that and just how phenomenal of a person he is to be able to balance his job and DJing so well."

"DJ Darrick D" said he started his music venture at age 6 with a drum set bought



SEE DJ ON PAGE 2

IT'S HERE, IT'S NOW **AFN | now**  
Streaming video service  
[afn-now.myafn.net](http://afn-now.myafn.net)



GET IT ON  
Google Play

GET IT ON  
App Store

Ready, Set, **AFN go**  
LISTEN NOW  
[afngo.net](http://afngo.net)



GET IT ON  
Google Play

GET IT ON  
App Store



## STARS AND STRIPES

www.stripes.com

Max D. Lederer Jr.  
PublisherLaura Law  
Chief Operating OfficerLt. Col. Marci Hoffman  
CommanderMichael Ryan  
Chief of StaffScott Foley  
Revenue DirectorChris Verigan  
Engagement DirectorMarie Woods  
Publishing and Media Design DirectorChris Carlson  
Publishing and Media Design ManagerEric Lee  
Advertising and Circulation ManagerMonte Dauphin  
Japan Area ManagerKentaro Shimura  
Production ManagerRie Miyoshi  
Engagement ManagerDenisse Rauda  
Publishing and Media Design EditorPublishing and Media Design Writers  
Shoji KudakaHyemin Lee  
Takahiro Takiguchi

## Layout Designers

Kazumi Hasegawa Mamoru Inoue  
Yuko Okazaki Kayoko Shimoda

## Multimedia Consultants

Max Genao Doug Johnson  
Hans Simpson Chae Pang Yi  
Benjamin Yoo Gianni Youn  
Robert Zuckerman

## Graphic Designers

Yukiyo Oda Kenichi Ogasawara  
Yosuke Tsuji

## Sales Support

Ji Young Chae Hiromi Isa  
Yoko Noro Toshinori Numano  
Yusuke Sato Kanna Suzuki  
Saori Tamanaha Toshie YoshimizuFor feedback and inquiries,  
contact MemberServices@Stripes.comTo place an ad, call DSN 227-7370  
japan.stripes.com/contact

## DJ: 'It's my way to connect people'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

by his father. Seven years later, he put his drumsticks aside in favor of competitive wrestling. But he couldn't resist the urge to spin vinyl. While at Fresno State in 2000, he bought turntables and records and learned to match beats.

Beatmatching is the foundation of DJing, Duran said. The DJ mixes songs with the same speed and time so the beat syncs up seamlessly while transitioning to the next track.

Duran noticed he had a knack for DJing, so to make extra money, he started working the turntables at Club Dance, a hip-hop and R&B nightclub in Fresno, under a mentor, DJ David Harris.

"He was a music lover, and it was easy because he learned fast," Harris said via Facebook Messenger on Sept. 1. "He had started slightly before I met, and he fit right in."

Duran was working at the Fresno County Health Department when his wife, Alena Duran, talked him into joining the Air Force as a public health officer. He commissioned in 2005.

Duran took command at Yokota on June 28, 2022. By day, he oversees the active-duty clinic at the 374th Medical Group, along with the mental health flight, public health, audiology, optometry and physical therapy.

"After I joined the military, I was under this impression that I had to leave the DJ scene," Duran told Stars and Stripes on Aug. 28. "My wife and I used to joke about 'You can't do both; you can't be an officer and a DJ.'"

How the tables have turned: Since 2009, Duran has been the DJ at squadron holiday parties, group holiday parties and promotion events on Air Forces bases. Most recently he worked the decks at the airlift squadron's combat dining-in and the first day of



DJ Darrick D plays "Lovely Day" on the first day of classes at Yokota High School on Aug. 21.

classes at Yokota High School on Aug. 21.

The most challenging part of being a DJ is programming an entire event, he said. The Air Force Ball, for example, unfolds in stages, like the social hour, dinner and dancing, which require changing music styles.

"At dinner you shouldn't be playing Metallica for a formal event, you would play some smooth jazz instrumentals, songs that people are familiar with so that they can kind of listen and be like 'Hey, I know that song,'" Duran said.

Also, the audience is composed of people of various ages and backgrounds, so the DJ must find music that everyone enjoys.

"We always call him up because we know that he gets the vibe of whatever we're trying to do," Coffey said. "And he goes and researches what kind of music he should be playing so that everyone is in the right mood to celebrate appropriately."

Duran said he is very influenced by '70s soul and R&B; some of his favorite songs are "Midas Touch" by Midnight Star, "Lovely Day" by Bill Withers and "La Vida Es un Carnaval" by Celia Cruz.

"I feel like even though it's extra work and time, it's something that I really like doing," Duran said. "And it's my way to connect people because music brings people together."

agee.kelly@stripes.com  
@KellyA\_Stripes

## EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:

STARS AND STRIPES

www.stripes.com

LEE MERCHANT  
MSGT (RET)

VETERAN OWNED

## COINS, PATCHES, MILITARY BALL GIFTS/SWAG

- APD / DPD / EMS SHIPMENT
- DUNS / USG APPROVED
- GPC CARDS / 988 COMPLIANT
- OFFICIAL/PERSONAL PURCHASE
- EXPEDITED PRODUCTION / SERVICE
- 15% DISCOUNT - MENTION STRIPES

## 24/7 CONTACT INFO

+1 916 220 2361 ☎ orders@lenaj.com ☎  
+1 916 941 1408 ☎ artwork@lenaj.com ☎  
+1 916 638 2341 ☎ lee@lenaj.com ☎

11285B Sunrise Gold Circle, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742 WWW.LENAJ.COM



Rental &amp; Real Estate Agent

ARK-PLAN

call: 0827-28-2100

E-mail: info@ark-plan.com

http://www.ark-plan.com

Open Daily 9:30-18:00

## ARK-PLAN

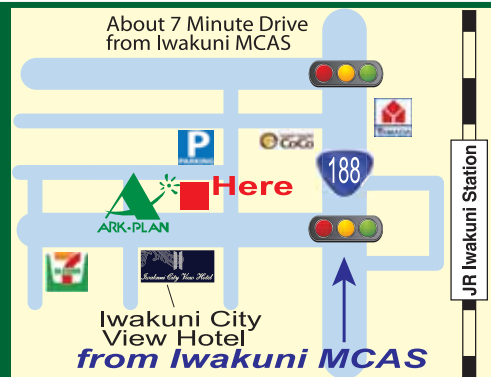
Our office is near Iwakuni Station!

Welcome to Iwakuni

English information available

Find us on facebook

@arkplan.english



Established in 1966, a local favorite for over 50 years.

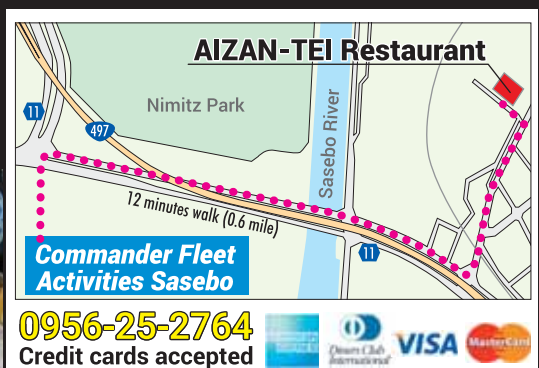


- Nagasaki WAGYU Designated Restaurant
- All you can Drink & Eat Menu Available
- Child Friendly
- English Menu
- Large Wine Selection

Affordable Prices! We buy our meat directly from the Sasebo Meat Market.  
Homemade "Shige's Sauce" Prepared Daily!



長崎和牛指定店  
牛味処 愛山亭  
AIZAN-TEI  
YAKINIKU & Buffet  
AIZAN-TEI Restaurant  
Open Hours: (Enter Restaurant by 21:00)  
Daily 11:30 - 21:00  
(Tuesday 17:00 - 21:00)  
We close at 24:00!

Happy Hour On 1130~1830,  
Drinks 50% OFF!

Commander Fleet  
Activities Sasebo  
0956-25-2764  
Credit cards accepted

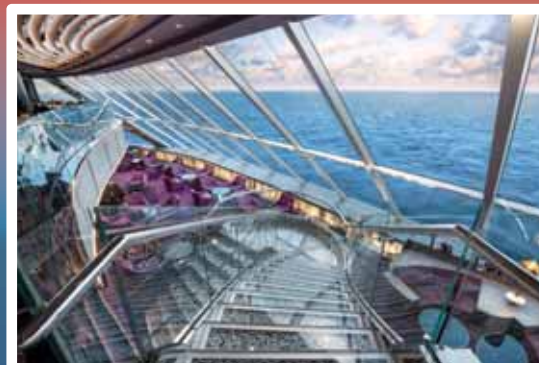


# COME CRUISE WITH US!

## Special rates for US military community in Japan!



We want to thank the US Military in Japan by offering **special discounts on luxurious cruises** aboard the MSC Bellissima, the largest, newest and most environmentally friendly ship sailing in Japan and homeported in lovely Yokohama Harbor.



### Let us take care of you!

- Crew speaks English
- Onboard currency is US dollar
- Family friendly

- **Special rates for CAC card holders, please contact us today for details!**

Japan Cruises (from 9 nights) and Okinawa Cruises (from 4 nights).  
Kids 17 and under are free when accompanied by 2 adults. Port charges excl.



### Christmas Cruise Itinerary



### Okinawa Cruise Itinerary



Upcoming Departure dates:  
Nov. 13th (Fall foliage cruise)  
Dec. 21st (Christmas cruise)

**Special Promotion with Drink Package and Onboard Credit included for Christmas Cruise.**

To book from Mainland Japan bases please contact:  
Nightflight Travel Off Base: 042-530-4891  
Yokota: 080-3364-4891 / DSN 5-6999  
IP Phone: 81-50-3550-6999  
reservations@nightflight.co.jp

To book from Okinawa and Iwakuni bases please contact:  
IACE TRAVEL Kadena office DSN: 966-7437  
from off base: 036-868-2266 email: okiaf@iace.co.jp  
IACE TRAVEL Camp Foster office DSN: 646-2941  
from off base: 098-971-2941 email: okimarine@iace.co.jp



<https://www.msccruises.jp/>



# Tricare prices to increase for young adults, reservists

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN,  
STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: September 7, 2023

**Y**oung adult military dependents enrolled in Tricare will see their health care costs rise starting next year, when monthly premiums go up by as much as 11.8%.

Tricare premiums are also going up Jan. 1 for reservists, retired reservists and separating service members and their families, according to new rates published Aug. 31.

Tricare Young Adult Prime for those between ages 21 and 26 will cost \$637 per month starting in January, compared with the current \$570 a month. The premium has skyrocketed by more than 250% since 2014, when it was \$180 a month.

Tricare Young Adult Select, meanwhile, will jump from \$291 per month this year to \$311 in 2024, an increase of 6.9%. The Select package has deductibles and more out-of-pocket costs.

Tricare Young Adult plans are available for purchase by unmarried adult children of service members between the ages of 21 and 26 after they age out of other Tricare plans. Coverage includes medical and pharmacy benefits but excludes dental and vision.

The latest round of premium hikes for military families with adult children is especially disconcerting, said Eileen Huck, the National Military Family Association's government relations senior deputy director.

"We are absolutely concerned that these rates are pricing military families with young adult dependents out of health care,"



Photo courtesy of Tricare

she said. "Our concern is that these young adults are going without health care coverage altogether, just because there's no affordable option."

The program is part of Tricare's premium-based plans, Peter Graves, a Defense Health Agency spokesman, said in a statement Sept. 6. The premiums reflect costs to the Defense Department, which by law cannot subsidize the program, he said.

"Based on past actual costs of the program, DHA actuaries calculate the future cost of health care for these type plans, and

premiums are established based on these cost projections," Graves said.

Higher usage and care costs for a health plan like Tricare Young Adult result in higher premiums, he said.

Huck is skeptical when she hears that rationale.

"I just have always felt that explanation is inadequate," she said. "If that were the case, you'd see some variability, and ... we've just seen the rates going up."

Tricare Prime is supposed to be the lowest-out-of-pocket plan to the beneficiary,

Huck said, since it's assumed that many young adults covered under Prime receive care at DOD facilities.

"It doesn't make any sense to me that those premiums would be so high," Huck said.

Young Adult Prime beneficiaries have access to care through their assigned military or civilian primary care manager.

All Tricare beneficiaries are eligible for care at military hospitals and clinics, but Tricare Young Adult Select beneficiaries have access only if space is available.

Other rate increases include Tricare Reserve Select. Those monthly premiums will go up to \$51.95 for the individual, from \$48.47 in 2023; and to \$256.87, from \$239.60, for the family option.

Retired reservists can expect to pay at least 6.5% more. Individuals will pay \$585.24, up from \$549.35 in 2023; and families will pay \$1,406.22, compared with the current \$1,320.76 per month.

For retired reservists with family Tricare coverage, costs in 2024 will be \$200 more a month than 2022's rates.

Service members transitioning out of the military also will pay higher costs if enrolled in Tricare's Continued Health Care Benefit Program, a plan that provides temporary health coverage for 18 to 36 months after the loss of Tricare eligibility.

Premiums are set to rise from \$1,654 per quarter to \$1,813 in 2024, an increase of 9.6% for individuals; and from \$4,134 per quarter in 2023 to \$4,539, a 9.8% increase.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com  
@stripesktown

**EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:**  
**STARS AND STRIPES**  
www.stripes.com



Jennifer Luera, a Family Advocacy Program specialist at Army Community Service, discusses training materials for the Emergency Placement Care program at Camp Zama. Photos by Sean Kimmons

## Volunteers needed for Zama program housing children in need

BY SEAN KIMMONS,  
U.S. ARMY GARRISON JAPAN

**CAMP ZAMA** – The Army Community Service here is currently looking for compassionate families to potentially provide a safe haven for children in need.

Volunteers in the Emergency Placement Care program, similar to foster care, are qualified to temporarily house a child for up to 90 days until a stable home with a parent or guardian is available.

"We want to make sure the children are going somewhere safe and secure," said Brittany Franklin, manager of the Family Advocacy Program at ACS.

While the EPC program is rarely used in this community, Franklin hopes to enlist more volunteers since providers can leave the country and the process to certify a new provider can take months to complete.

A team of volunteers will also bring continuity to help maintain the health and well-being of children who may be dealing with a family crisis, Franklin said.

"It takes a village to raise a child, and children are our future," she said. "And if they're going through something that may be traumatic or is different, there's an adjustment period."

Jennifer Luera, a FAP specialist who certifies providers, said the training takes eight hours and covers various topics such as positive parenting, loss and separation, and domestic violence and its effect on children. A home visit and a monthslong background check are also required.

A provider must be a Department of Defense identification cardholder and can be from either a single or married family home that has an extra bedroom.

Luera said those interested in the program

**"Knowing that the children will have somewhere safe to go to is my ultimate goal."**

– Lucinda Ward, ACS specialist

should also be willing to give up their time, since a child could stay in their home for a few months.

"They really have to understand that it is going to be all about the safety of these children that are placed in their home," she said.

Lucinda Ward, an ACS specialist with a background in child care, is currently one of two providers in the

community.

Ward, who encouraged others to volunteer, saw the position as an opportunity to give back to the community as well as support the Army's priority of placing people first.

"Knowing that the children will have somewhere safe to go to is my ultimate

goal," she said, "and I know that I can provide that for them."

Luera understands that for many community members it can be difficult to live overseas far away from their friends and family.

To get through the tough times, ACS offers several resources to ensure community members stay resilient.

"There are so many unique challenges with just being here and that is what we try to address," she said.

Luera hopes that with their resources and class offerings, which can range from stress management to conflict resolution and financial readiness, the EPC program will never need to be used.

"All of those are preventive measures, and ensuring they know these resources are out there for them," she said. "If you don't know where to turn, the stressors can build up at home."

For more information on the EPC program, contact ACS at DSN 263-4357 or 046-407-4357.





# Strolling through Tokyo's hip Shimokitazawa for curry, tunes, vintage shopping

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

Shoppers and foodies alike can spend countless hours in Tokyo's hipster hotspot Shimokitazawa.

The neighborhood, also known as "Shimokita," is home to hundreds of vintage clothing, book and music shops, as well as dozens of restaurants and cafés to keep your energy up as you shop.

Shimokita is a popular bohemian district that draws thousands of visitors of all ages thanks to its many dining and shopping options, restricted vehicular access, and busy squares with buskers, food trucks and periodic flea markets.

New York Joe Exchange, housed in a building that was once a sento bathhouse, offers a unique shopping experience with a touch of the neighborhood's history. Other vintage shops worth a browse are Antique Life Jin and Tokyo Retro a.m.

At the turn of every corner, you'll find cafés like Bear Espresso Café or Bookends Coffee Service. The area is also known for curry houses like Planet Curry and Nan Station. And, since the neighborhood is only a 10-minute train ride from major stations Shibuya and Shinjuku, getting there is quick and easy.

Keep in mind that many of the cafés and restaurants here are quite small, so you may have to wait to get a seat. If you're a larger group, check out the larger izakayas and restaurants in the area instead like Shimokita Rokkaku or Shirubee.

Besides being a center for shopping and dining, Shimokita draws a crowd in the evenings thanks to its thriving live theater and live music houses. The prestigious Honda Gekijo Theater, also inside an old sento bath since 1982, hosts many festivals with famous theatrical troupes throughout the year. For great tunes, check out Half Moon Hall Shimokitazawa, LIVEHOLIC and any of the many live-houses in the district.

The mix of old, new and vintage you'll find in Shimokitazawa is what keeps visitors coming back for more. There is always something new to discover here, so you won't want to miss out on the lively, laid-back scene.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

## GSA in Japan



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.

Customers can order using GSA websites (GSA Global Supply or GSA Advantage!®) or via existing customer logistics platforms (e.g., GCSS-Army). GSA's systems recognize the items stocked in Japan and fulfill orders locally. Other items will ship from the mainland. An electronic catalog is available.



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](mailto:sidney.frazier@gsa.gov).

Check Out GSA's Japan Catalog!



Scan this QR code to view GSA's Japan catalog.

**GSA** Global Supply®  
Your Reliable Government Source

# Exploring the Beauty of the Pacific



Available throughout the Pacific in the September 15th issue of Stars and Stripes.

STARS AND STRIPES



# My faves Japanese frozen food

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,  
STRIPES JAPAN

Last year was an important year for the frozen food industry in Japan. The year marked the 100th anniversary of the first time Hokkaido fish was commercially frozen, according to the Japan Frozen Food Association.

What started with frozen fish has evolved to include a wide variety of foods through the last 10 decades. In the 1930s, for instance, frozen mashed strawberries and frozen sliced fish arrived on department store shelves for general consumers.

In the 1940s, precooked food called “home meat” and “home stew” made it to store freezers.

In the 1950s, frozen fish and croquettes were introduced to school lunches and also adopted by an expedition team to Antarctica.

And the 1960s, frozen food reached Olympic heights when, at the 1964 games held in Tokyo, frozen food was used to prepare meals at the athletes’ village and the response was golden. Following this success, hotels and restaurants began using frozen food for dishes on their menus.

Given the historical context, the year 2020 was understandably expected to be very special. It not only marked the 100th anniversary of Japanese frozen food but was also the year when the Olympic Games were originally scheduled to take place for the second time in Tokyo.

Although the Olympic Games ended up being rescheduled, the year still turned out to be something special for the frozen food industry.

In 2020, the pandemic caused frozen food sales to soar, according to the Diamond Chain Store Online. While dining out was restricted, people resorted to stocking up with frozen food from their local markets and convenience stores. The variety and shelf life of frozen food makes it a hot commodity for those who prefer to stay at home.

Not only can you enjoy croquette, hamburger, fried shrimp, and dumplings at home, but you can also get frozen ramen noodles, yakitori (skewered grilled chicken), Takoyaki, baked onigiri and more. You can even find French dishes like croissants, red wine beef stew and Tarte aux fruits in stock in the freezer aisle.

Before the pandemic, I didn’t eat frozen food often, but the stay-home period changed my mind. I took a chance and gave some of the frozen food offerings at my local market a try.

Below are a few of my picks from the frozen section. Frozen meals and food items are a great way

to introduce variety and different flavors into your cooking at a reasonable price. Bon appetite!

## ■ Takoyaki

(Octopus dumpling by Lawson, 210 yen or approx. \$1.92)

Traveling to Osaka may still not be an option. And while nothing compares to enjoying steaming octopus balls near Dotonbori, this snack food from Lawson’s convenience store will take you there — gastronomically, at least.

## ■ Yaki onigiri

(Roasted Rice Ball by Nichirei, 278 yen)

This is a kind of food I would buy at festival food stalls or highway rest areas. Its crispy-on-the-outside-but-soft-on-the-inside texture is well-replicated in the pre-cooked versions as well.

## ■ Gyoza

(Dumpling by Ajinomoto, 198 yen)

If you haven’t noticed, pre-cooked dumplings are big in Japan. If you go to a local supermarket, you will find various labels of frozen dumplings there. Some bear the names of famous gyoza restaurants such as “Osaka Ohsho” and “Min Min,” allowing customers to enjoy the authentic taste of their favorite dumpling at home.

## ■ Ebi fry

(Fried Shrimp by Tolona, 138 yen)

This is arguably one of the most popular food among kids for bento meals along with hamburgers and croquettes. Most frozen ebi fry are meant to be fried in a pan, but you can find many are now conveniently microwaveable, too!

## ■ Karaage

(Fried Chicken by Ajinomoto, 398 yen)

Whether for an appetizer or for a bento meal, pre-cooked karaage can be a great choice. “ZaHKaraage,” a popular label pictured in the photo, is especially worth a taste since it’s been a hit since its release last September. The garlic, soy sauce, and spring onion oil seasoning on these juicy karaage can be addictive.

\*These prices listed above don’t include tax and are subject to change.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



## Earn your Stripes

Write on Japan Travel and earn rewards:  
500 bonus points for Stripes readers!

[japantravel.com/stripes](http://japantravel.com/stripes)



Your votes. Your favorites. Your Best of the Pacific.

# ANNOUNCING THE BEST OF 2023



Pick up the magazine  
or get it online



STARS AND STRIPES





VIEW VIDEO

# A stroke of luck with delicious imokinton

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,  
STRIPE JAPAN

With the return of fall, grocery stores stock up on sweet potatoes and seasonal snacks with satsuma-imo (sweet potato) flavors. These purple root vegetables are considered the aki no mikaku, or taste of autumn in Japan.

In Okinawa, the obsession with all things sweet potato is deeply intertwined with the history of the islands.

Prior to the crop's introduction to the mainland, sweet potatoes were first imported to the Ryukyu Kingdom from China in 1605 by Noguni Sōkan. Okinawa's soil, which drained well, was well-suited for the cultivation of the crop.

Today, you'll find sweet potatoes in many dishes and in Okinawa, including tempura and ice cream.

In particular, beniimo, or red potato, is especially popular. Its vibrant color makes it a great ingredient for many dishes. However, yellow satsuma-imo also proves to be a delicious ingredient you shouldn't overlook.

A recipe you might enjoy if you're a sweet potato fan is imokinton. Kinton is a kind of Japanese sweet that molds some paste of food such as satumaimo (sweet potato), ingenmame (kidney beans), and kuri (chestnuts) into a ball shape. As the name suggests, imokinton is rounded balls of sweet potato paste.

According to Shokuiku Daijiten, a website dedicated to health and food, the name "kinton" originally referred to some round sweets imported from China. Some say the original kinton was similar to wonton.

Now, kinton is spelled as "金団." The letter

"金" means gold, and "団" means a group or a block. Since balls in yellow can be associated with fortune, kinton is now recognized as food to be served up for New Year celebrations.

Wagashi Japanese sweets shops also stock imokinton and other varieties like chestnuts and bean-flavored kinton. You may even find kinton perfected by Japanese pastry cooks in the shape of beautiful flowers or fruit.

Although it is too early to celebrate a new year, I decided to try making one because I saw so many yellow sweet potatoes on the shelf at a supermarket in my neighborhood.

The recipe I followed looked simple and easy to understand on paper, but it turned out painstaking in some ways. Pureeing the paste until it gets smooth took a lot of effort. Plus shaping the paste into balls was very challenging as well. My "kinton" ended up having some creases and wrinkles, far from the smooth and beautiful ones you would find at Japanese sweetsshops. Nonetheless, the good flavor of my creation was surprising.

The texture felt soft like gelato and the potato's sweetness wasn't overwhelming and different from other sugary sweets. Although my presentation of the food was not satisfying, I was happy with my first try of kinton, at least in terms of how it tasted.

If you are an artistic type and confident in your dexterity, I would recommend that you try molding the paste into nice flowers and leaves. Even if not, this is still worth a try since the simple recipe will let you enjoy the nice sweetness and possibly bring good luck for fortune.

Imokinton pairs nicely with some green tea and other warm beverages, perfect for welcoming the fall season. Enjoy!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

## Ingredients

- ☐ Sweet potato (500g)
- ☐ Milk (100cc)
- ☐ Sugar (60g)
- ☐ Butter (80g)
- ☐ Dry Gardenia flower (one piece)
- ☐ Chestnuts to garnish (or sesame, dried fruits, etc.)



## Recipe

- 1  Peel skin off sweet potatoes and dice them.
- 2  Soften the diced sweet potatoes by microwaving or boiling them.
- 3  Boil gardenia in a pot of water. To enhance the yellow color, you can boil gardenia with sweet potatoes in a pot. (If you microwave sweet potatoes, you can boil them in a pot and add the colored liquid to the mixture of sweet potatoes, butter, and sugar.)
- 4  Mix sweet potatoes, butter and sugar, and then mash (You can also add salt or mirin/sweet cooking rice wine to fine tune the taste).
- 5  Add in milk and mix ingredients further. Mix in yellow liquid from the boiling gardenia (about two teaspoons or more).
- 6  Puree the mixture.
- 7  Pick up some dough and wrap it with saran wrap before forming a ball. Repeat the process until you have made several dough.
- 8  To finish, top each ball with a garnish. I chose pre-cooked chestnuts.

いただきます! (Itadakimasu) Bon appetite





# Sawara

## Little Edo has old

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

Old town  
of Sawara

VIEW VIDEO



Before arriving in Japan, you may have imagined the streets here to be scenes of a movie, with old cobblestone roads and wooden buildings found in the Edo Era (1603-1867). You may have imagined running into samurai or kabuki actors in old Tokyo or the former capital of the Shogunate Government.

Today, it may seem like those times are gone in Tokyo, a megapolis with huge skyscrapers, modern infrastructure and transportation, but you'll find old Tokyo if you know where to look.

In the area there are several towns known as "Koedo," or little Edo, that preserve the original townhouses and streets from the era, allowing for a glimpse at the former glory of the samurai capital.

In Chiba Prefecture, Sawara is one of those towns which can take visitors to the old-style Japan they seek. It is only a few hours' drive from most bases in the Kanto Plain via the Higashi Kanto Expressway.

Situated along the Tone River, Sawara accommodates various canals, ponds and waterways. The district is known for being a host to beautiful iris flowers, which draw many locals to enjoy them during the rainy season in early summer.

For the famous blooms, visit Sawara Iris Park, where there are over 400 different types of irises and over 1.5 million iris flowers in total between June and July. We visited the park in late June and were able to catch a park full of white, pink, violet and blue irises. The ponds, small rivers and bridges, along with traditional boats operated by ladies in blue kimonos, brought a touch of nostalgia. I suggest hopping on a boat to enjoy. No matter the season, a visit through the park will enchant you with seasonal blooms. Late September brings water lilies and sarusuberi (crape myrtle) blossoms along the pond and river. Water lilies are early risers, so you might want to schedule a morning visit to enjoy these beautiful blooms.

After, we stopped in at the park's souvenir shops and purchased iris flowers, local food and sweets. I even indulged and had a sweet potato ice cream.

Once we'd had enough irises, our next stop was Sawara's city center.

We parked our car at a parking lot near a

classic-looking wooden bridge and found our old town of Sawara. The city center was still full of storehouses and merchant buildings, still in remarkable condition, dating back to the late Edo period.

Willow trees lined the riverbank and the streets were lined with dark-brown wooden buildings and grey-tiled roofs. We were transported to old Tokyo, the setting of samurai movies.



### Sawara Iris Park

**LOCATION:** 1837-2, Ogishima, Katori City, Chiba Pref.

**HOURS:** 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**TEL:** 0478-56-0411



### Sawara Tourist Center

**LOCATION:** 74-31 Sawara I, Katori City, Chiba Pref.

**HOURS:** 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**TEL:** 0478-52-6675





VIEW VIDEO



Sawara  
Iris Park

# and traditional Tokyo feel

ourselves in the  
surrounded by  
standing and in  
te Edo period.  
the streets we  
den buildings  
o scenes of old

Even more impressive is that this area is not only preserving its old town look and feel, but It's still functioning as a modern town. We found a grocery store, vegetable stand, hardware shop, a barber shop, liquor store and various restaurants and sweetshops inside the old buildings on the same road.

Back in its heyday, Sawara's waterway was vital for the transport of soy sauce, miso and rice from the

countryside. Some of the wooden boats are still around and we saw a few of them, except now they carry tourists instead of food staples.

Unlike more well-known Edo Era districts like Kawagoe, located just north of Yokota Air Base, or any area in Kyoto, Sawara is the place to go if you want to enjoy freely without the crowds.

[takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com](mailto:takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com)

## Katori Jingu Shrine and Shinshoji Temple

**O**n leaving the old town of Sawara, we headed to a majestic Shinto shrine and power spot that boasts more than 2,600 years of history and carries the highest shrine status in the nation.

Katori Jingu Shrine has been known as one of the three most prestigious Shinto shrines in Japan, ranked with Ise Shrine in Mie Prefecture and Kashima Shrine in Ibaraki Prefecture.

The enshrined deity, Futsunushi-no-Ookami, is believed to mitigate natural disasters, provide protection, and is a guardian of martial arts.

The quiet and solemn shrine is surrounded by rich, green forest. Unlike the striking vermilion-colored buildings of other shrines, the buildings of Katori Jingu Shrine are covered in a unique black lacquer. The main shrine dates back to 1700 when it was built by the Shogun Tsunayoshi Tokugawa and is designated as an important cultural property.

After the shrine, we drove 20 minutes to Shinshoji Temple, another power spot nearby. This temple draws

about 3 million visitors annually for a traditional New Year's visit – the second largest in Japan, next to Meiji Shrine in Tokyo.

Since its foundation in 940, the temple has been known as a sanctuary to ward off evil.

According to Japanese tradition, ages 25, 42 and 60 for men, and ages 19, 33 and 60 for women are supposed to be unlucky years. When someone turns one of the unlucky ages, they visit Shinshoji in hopes of warding off evil fortune. Although I am not at an age of unluckiness, I visited the large main hall, put my hands together and wished for even better luck.

Whether you're at an unlucky age or not, Shinshoji's main hall, main gate, 3-story pagoda and elaborately-carved Shakado (hall for Buddha) are worth some time to admire and explore.

And, make sure to stop in one of the many shops and restaurants along the approach to the temple for a quick snack and some souvenirs.

Visit Sawara for the old-style charm and take a little detour for a little good luck at one or both of these interesting power spots.



**Katori Jingu Shrine**  
**LOCATION:** 1697 Katori,  
Katori City, Chiba Pref.  
**HOURS:** 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
**TEL:** 0478-57-3211



**Shinshoji Temple**  
**LOCATION:** 1 Narita, Narita  
City, Chiba Pref.  
**TEL:** 0476-22-2111







Photo courtesy of LIVE JAPAN

# 10 Tohoku hot spring getaways with spectacular views

BY SHOEPRESS,  
LIVE JAPAN

**T**he Tohoku region of northern Japan abounds with hot springs and natural beauty. Many of the hot springs have spectacular views, like a “secret” spring surrounded by a virgin beech forest or an open-air bath that seems to blend into the Sea of Japan. Verdant scenery and gentle winds will melt away the fatigue of the summer as you bathe in such hot springs.

Here are ten of our favorites, perfect for family trips and anyone who wants to relax and avoid crowds.



## 1 Koganezaki Furofushi Onsen (Fukaura Town, Aomori)



Photos courtesy of LIVE JAPAN

Koganezaki Furofushi Onsen is in Fukaura, on Aomori's Tsugaru Peninsula, at the northernmost reaches of Japan's main island of Honshu. The ryokan inn is built on a scenic cape called Koganezaki, known for its beautiful sunsets.

The name “Furofushi Onsen” originates from the legend that “If you cure here, you will not get old or weak.”

### ACCESS

■ **By Car:**  
Roughly an hour and 40 minutes from JR Hirosaki Station

■ **By Public Transit:**  
Around three hours from JR Shin-Aomori Station when taking the Resort Shiragami bound for “Akita” on JR's Gono Line. Once getting off at WeSPa-Tsubakiyama Station, the facility is located a five-minute taxi ride away (free shuttle bus services timed to the arrival/departure time of the trains are available. No reservation required)

The inn's distinguishing feature is the full, open bath on the beach. As you soak at the edge of the waves, the horizon is at about eye level and you'll feel as if you're actually in the Sea of Japan.

The bath's water has a brownish hue because it's an iron-rich chloride salt spring that contains sodium and magnesium.

It has high heat retention that will warm you to the core and is called a “beautiful skin bath” due to its effectiveness in treating skin problems from cuts to skin diseases.

Day trip visits are welcome, but staying overnight is

recommended for the best experience. Day-bathers (last reception 3:30 p.m.) must exit the bath by 4 p.m. before the sun sets and the whole area is dyed golden.

Sunset bathing is a privilege reserved for overnight guests only. The experience of soaking in the hot water while gazing at the glowing orange sunset and the magnificent view of the Sea of Japan will be an unforgettable memory.

*\*Those with tattoos are prohibited from bathing.*

In addition to the “seaside open-air bath,” the inn's “Furofushi no Yu” bath offers a panoramic view of the Sea of Japan, and a “Kogane no Yu” with two hot bathtubs.

These baths make it easy for small children, the elderly or anyone who doesn't want to bathe outdoors to enjoy an onsen experience.

After a relaxing bath, you'll have a spectacular seafood dinner. The seas around Fukaura, where plankton nourishes the fish, and mineral-rich groundwater pours into the sea, are some of the best fishing grounds in Japan.

Furofushi Onsen serves fresh seafood, including tuna and abalone purchased directly from local anglers.

Breakfast is all-you-can-eat with several types of sashimi and grilled fish prepared daily as well as rice and bread.

The inn has tablets to support several languages so you can rest assured that you will be able to communicate with staff members, even if they don't speak your language.



### Koganezaki Furofushi Onsen

黄金崎不老死温泉

**ADDRESS:** Henashi Shimokiyotaki 15-1, Fukaura, Aomori Pref.

### NEAREST STATION:

Henashi Station (Gono Line)  
14 minutes on foot



WEBSITE

◀ Top 10 things to do in Aomori,  
Japan's northern nature paradise!





## 2 Tsuru no Yu Onsen (Semboku City, Akita)

Nyuto Onsenkyo Hot Spring Village is located in the central part of eastern Akita prefecture, in Semboku City's Tazawako district. The village comprises seven hot springs in Towada Hachimantai National Park, which spans Aomori, Iwate, and Akita prefectures.

In the past, the area was often visited by tourists from both Japan and overseas, and classic Japanese scenery can still be seen in the moving thatched-roof buildings and old huts among the virgin beech forests.

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly 30 minutes from JR Tazawako Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Tazawako Station, take a 50-minute ride on the Ugo Kotsu Bus bound for "Nyuto Onsen." After getting off at the "Tsurunoyu Onsen Iriguchi" bus stop, it's a 40-minute walk to the facility (overnight guests can take the free shuttle bus from the "Arupa Komakusa" bus stop, reservations required).



Iconic Tsuru no Yu Onsen has a long history, having opened around 1688. The old wooden structures were used in the Edo period (1603-1867). Some rooms are equipped with a traditional Japanese fireplace and hearth.

While retaining a classic Japanese atmosphere, the washrooms, toilets, and heating are modern so guests can stay comfortably.

The atmosphere is perfect for forgetting hectic daily life by taking a walk through the spacious grounds with family or enjoying a quiet chat in your room.

Many of Tsuru no Yu Onsen's visitors come to soak in the mixed bathing, open-air "Tsuru no Yu" bath. Surrounded by beautiful beech trees, the large bath has milky bluish-white water.

It's a mixed bath, where men and women bathe alike, but the milky water provides some privacy, and the whole family can enter.

Meals feature a miso-seasoned hot pot, grilled fish, and seasonal wild vegetable dishes made with yams from Akita. After a delicious dinner, a return to the bath is in order. At night, it's lit only by lanterns, creating a serene atmosphere.

Tsuru no Yu has English-speaking staff members who will gladly explain the rules and policies of the inn and bath.



Photos courtesy of LIVE JAPAN

### Tsurunoyu Onsen

鶴の湯温泉

ADDRESS: 50, Sendatsuzawa Kokuyurin, Tazawakotazawa, Semboku-shi, Akita Pref.



WEBSITE

Nyuto Onsen : Famous baths with breathtaking winter sights in Akita's renowned hot spring village

## 3 Sansuikaku (Hanamaki City, Iwate)

Hanamaki Onsenkyo is a group of 12 hot springs along the Ou mountain range of southern Iwate Prefecture. One of them, Osawa Onsen Sansuikaku, is a Japanese-style inn built in the mountains overlooking the clear Toyosawa River.

Osawa Onsen has an affiliated inn called Tojiya, and as a guest of Sansuikaku, you can use both hot springs. There is a wide variety of open-air baths and bath rooms along the river, including a semi-open-air bath with a view of the mountains and a private family bath suitable even for small children.

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly 30 minutes from JR Hanamaki Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Hanamaki Station, take a 25-minute ride on Iwate Kotsu Bus's Yuguchi Line bound for "Hanamaki Onsen." Get off at the "Osawa Onsen" bus stop and take a short walk to the facility (free shuttle buses run from Osawa Onsen Station, Hanamaki Station, and Shin-Hanamaki Station).

The inn is surrounded by nature, and it's refreshing to soak in the hot water while gazing at the mountain scenery

of each season. The autumn leaves and the snowy winter scenery, in particular, are a must-see.

The semi-open-air, roofed "Toyosawa no Yu" overlooks trees dyed in red, yellow, and green, and the magnificent view of the autumn leaves bordered by the window frame looks just like a painting.

To see the snowy landscape, head to the mixed bathing, open-air "Osawa no Yu." From there, you can see the beautiful scenery of the bridge, the roof of the building, and the surrounding trees white with snow. Osawa no Yu is for women only from 8:00 to 9:00 at night, for women who would rather not participate in mixed bathing.

At Sansuikaku, you'll dine on a Japanese course that makes the best use of seasonal ingredients and a menu that changes monthly.

In addition to wild plants and seafood, Hanamaki's "Hakkinton" brand pork and Iwate's "Maesawa" beef and "Iwate beef" are also available (subject to change, depending on availability). There is also a children's set so the whole family can have a wonderful meal.



Photos courtesy of LIVE JAPAN

### Osawa Onsen Sansuikaku

大沢温泉 山水閣

ADDRESS: Osawa 181, Hanamaki, Iwate Pref.

## 4 Hotel Shion (Morioka City, Iwate)

Tsunagi Onsen is a hot spring resort situated in Iwate Prefecture's central city of Morioka. Here, Hotel Shion can be found facing Lake Goshu. This top-rated facility is known for its spectacular lake views!

What's more, it's a mere 25-minute drive from JR Morioka Station, the entryway into Iwate's tourist attractions. Free shuttle bus services are available to and from the station upon request during the reservation process.

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly 25 minutes from JR Morioka Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Morioka Station West Gate Bus Terminal Bus Stop No. 28 on the second floor, take the Tsunagi Onsen liner for around 25 minutes and get off at the "Hotel Shion" bus stop.

From JR Morioka Station East Gate Bus Terminal Bus Stop No. 10 on the first floor, take the Iwate Kotsu Bus bound for "Tsunagi Onsen" for 30 minutes and get off at the "Tsunagi Onsen" bus stop. It's a ten-minute walk from here to the facility.

Free shuttle bus services from JR Morioka Station (reservations required)availability). There is also a children's set so the whole family can have a wonderful meal.

All rooms offer a sweeping view of the lake, and you can choose from traditional Japanese-style rooms with futon mattresses or Western-style rooms with beds. Plus, you can enjoy the stunning landscape of Mount Iwate and the



Ou Mountains! Taking in such scenery from the comfort of your space is a luxurious experience!

The hot spring, "Hitorijime no Yu," boasts an all-encompassing view of Lake Goshu, whereas "Nambu Magariya no Yu" has water that flows freely from the spring source. Both facilities have a paper sliding door outside and in-between the baths for privacy. The surrounding scenery is reminiscent of a beautiful landscape painting-enabling you to rejuvenate both your body and soul.

We recommend the reservable open-air baths (2,000 yen for 45 minutes) for families who want to enjoy a completely private experience.

Another attractive feature of a stay here is the meals filled with Iwate Prefecture's local ingredients! Dinner is served either at the hotel's dining hall or Kaiseki-style in the guest rooms. Breakfast is a buffet style with an array of approximately 40 different dishes. Eat your fill of flavor-rich foods!

Because there are only Japanese-speaking staff, we recommend having an interpreter accompany you during your stay or using an interpretation app like Google Translate (foreign guests have stayed at the facility before).

Morioka Handcrafts Village, which produces traditional Japanese crafts such as Nambu ironware, is only a five-minute drive away! Additionally, Koiwai Farm, one of Japan's largest private farms, is a mere 15-minute drive. A stay at Hotel Shion enables you to easily access popular sightseeing spots.



Photos courtesy of Booking.com

### Hotel Shion

ホテル紫苑

ADDRESS: Tsunagi Yunodate 74-2, Morioka, Iwate Pref.

NEAREST STATION:

Koiwai Station (Tazawako Line)

20 Best things to do in Iwate Prefecture for tourists



WEBSITE



SEE ONSEN ON PAGE 12

— Booking.com



## 5 **ONSEN:** Soak and unwind Matsushima Ichinobo (Matsushima Town, Miyagi)



Photos courtesy of Booking.com



WEBSITE

**Matsushima 1-Day itinerary:**  
Day trip to Japan's magical pine islands



## 6 **Minamisanriku Hotel Kanyo** (Minamisanriku Town, Miyagi)



Photos courtesy of Booking.com

Matsushima Ichinobo is in Miyagi Prefecture's popular tourist destination of Matsushima Town. Around the facility are attractive sightseeing spots such as the national treasure-Zuiganji Temple, famous seafood shops, and excursion boats!

It can be accessed by walking roughly 20 minutes from JR Matsushima-Kaigan Station. As the walk to Matsushima Ichinobo is filled with many tourist sites, it's highly recommended to take your time and stop by! For those who are wary of walking, there are free shuttle buses running from the station that don't require any reservation.

### ACCESS

#### ■ By Car:

Roughly 50 minutes from JR Sendai Station

#### ■ By Public Transit:

From JR Sendai Station, take the JR Senseki Line bound for "Matsushima-Kaigan" for 40 minutes. Then, either take the free shuttle bus or walk 20 minutes to the facility.

All guest rooms have free Wi-Fi! You can choose from various room types, such as those that have a bath overlooking the garden or come with their own hammock!



In addition to this, there are complimentary toiletries such as toothbrushes and facewash available. The large communal outdoor bath even has toners, cleansers, and hairbrushes!

Matsushima Ichinobo entices with its incredible views of Matsushima Bay, one of Japan's top three scenic spots. Such scenery can be enjoyed at the open-air bath located on the facility's top floor. The slightly thick spring waters are said to have beautifying effects. Don't miss out on an opportunity to rejuvenate the skin while watching the stunning bay!

Meals consist of a made-to-order buffet prepared right in front of you by the chef! Thanks in part to these fresh meals, foreign guests have commented that this is an incredible experience they would recommend to friends.

In the area are attractive facilities, including the Kyohei Fujita Glass Museum, spas with rock salt bedrock baths, and water gardens! This allows you to enjoy a variety of attractions from the comforts of your accommodation! There are both Japanese English services available to welcome a wide range of guests.

— Booking.com

### Matsushima Ichinobo

松島一の坊

**ADDRESS:** Takagihama 1-4, Matsushima, Miyagi Pref.

#### NEAREST STATION:

Matsushima Station (Tohoku Main Line)  
13 minutes on foot

Minamisanriku Hotel Kanyo is nestled in Miyagi Prefecture's Northeastern town of Minamisanriku. As it's on elevated ground facing the Pacific Ocean, you can enjoy a view of seabirds flying overhead the Shizugawa Bay from guest rooms and the large communal bath. It's an attractive facility that offers private ocean views!

Free shuttle buses (reservations required) are available for guests from JR Sendai Station. As it's a 30-minute walk from Rikuzen-Togura Station to the hotel, taking this shuttle bus service is highly recommended (from the facility's official website).

### ACCESS

#### ■ By Car:

Roughly an hour and 40 minutes from JR Sendai Station.

#### ■ By Public Transit:

Take a 40-minute train ride from JR Sendai Station on the JR Tohoku Main Line bound for "Kogoto." After getting off at Kogoto Station, take a 15-minute train ride on the JR Ishinomaki Line bound for "Onagawa" and get off at Maeyachi Station. Then, take a 50-minute train ride on the JR Kesen-Numa Line BRT bound for "Kesennuma" and get off at Rikuzen-Togura Station. From here, the facility is a 30-minute walk away (pick-ups/drop-offs from Rikuzen-Togura Station are available when reserved in advance).

All guest rooms have Wi-Fi and various amenities.

Rooms facing the ocean even offer a close-up look at sea-birds!

Minamisanriku Hotel Kanyo is known for its open-air bath where the hot spring and ocean meet! Here you can enjoy a view of the ocean while bathing in natural spring waters that bubble from the Pacific Ocean's coast.

Though it's beautiful at any point in the day, views in the morning are draw-dropping! You'll be blown away as the sun slowly rises over the ocean. Be sure to wake up earlier than usual, so you don't miss it!

As this accommodation facility faces the Sanriku Coast, dinner consists of fresh seafood dishes! Enjoy cuisine made from carefully selected ingredients such as freshly grilled abalone and shark fin soup.

A perk for foreign guests is that there are English and Chinese-speaking staff. Feel free to ask them for anything during your stay!

— Booking.com

### Minami Sanriku Hotel kanyo

南三陸ホテル観洋

**ADDRESS:** Minamisanriku-cho Motoyoshi-gun Shizugawa Kurosaki 99-17, Shizugawa, Miyagi Pref.

#### NEAREST STATION:

Shizugawa Station (Kesen-numa Line)  
27 minutes on foot

## 7 **Onsen Sanso Daikon no Hana** (Zao Town, Miyagi)



Photos courtesy of LIVE JAPAN

Togatta Onsen, resting at the eastern foot of the Zao mountain range in southwestern Miyagi Prefecture, is a hot spring resort with a history that goes back about 400 years. The spring's hot brown waters include sodium, calcium, sulfate, and chloride springs.

Onsen Sanso Daikon no Hana is a ryokan inn recommended for those who want a quiet family-only visit to Togatta Onsen. The approximately 33,000 square meter site is divided into five areas, each with its own accommodations. There are a mere 18 rooms in 12 buildings scattered throughout the vast forest, offering plenty of private relaxation.

### ACCESS

#### ■ By Car:

Roughly an hour from Sendai Station

#### ■ By Public Transit:

From JR Sendai Station, transfer and take around a 15-minute ride on the Tohoku Shinkansen Line's "Yamabiko" train bound for Tokyo. After getting off at



Shiroishi-Zao Station, the facility is a 40-minute taxi ride away.

Each building has its own characteristic features, such as a view of a mountain stream or a pond where fireflies live. The "Eboshidake" maisonette in the "Mountain Play" area has separate living rooms and bedrooms and trees growing near the terrace and balcony are close enough to touch.

The maisonette has its own bath so you can use it at your leisure. Family bathing in the refreshing sunrise or under the starry sky is sure to spark memorable conversations.

In addition to the springs and accommodations, the food is another point of pride for the inn. There is a farm on the property, and homegrown vegetables play a leading role in the meals.

For breakfast, an all-you-can-eat salad buffet with freshly picked vegetables and homemade tomato juice is prepared so that you can enjoy fresh vegetables to your heart's content.

After a leisurely stay in the woods, you can even do some shopping. The main building's "Mikke" select shop sells traditional crafts and foods from the Tohoku region. Jams and juices made from Zao's local produce are long-lasting, so they make perfect souvenirs.

### Hot spring accommodation Daikon-no-Hana

温泉山荘 だいこんの花

**ADDRESS:** Toogattaonsen, Zao-machi, Katsuta-gun, Miyagi Togatta 21-7, Kitayama Pref.





## 8 Ginzanso (Obanazawa City, Yamagata)

A popular facility with both domestic and overseas visitors is Ginzan Onsen. This hot spring village rises from a gorge in northeastern Yamagata Prefecture's Obanazawa City. It was built at the end of the Taisho period (1912~1926) and towards the beginning of the Showa period (1926~1989). Illuminated by gas lamps, here you'll find a range of wooden inns and refined traditional Japanese restaurants-enveloping the area in a nostalgic atmosphere that's hard to find anywhere else.

Ginzanso is a popular choice for its fantastic location close to the hot springs! It only takes a five-minute walk to the hot spring village. What's more, you can add to this traditional Japanese experience by renting out a pair of geta, traditional Japanese wooden sandals with an elevated base, at the front desk.

A free shuttle bus for overnight guests runs from Oishida Station. Those who want to use this service must make a reservation by the day before their stay.

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly one hour and 15 minutes from JR Yamagata Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Yamagata Station, take a 50-minute ride on the Ou Main Line bound for "Shinjo." After getting off at JR Oishida Station, take the shuttle bus or a 35-minute ride on the Obanazawa City Bus bound for "Ginzan Onsen." When taking the city bus, get off at the "Ginzan Onsen" bus stop for easy access to the facility.

All guest rooms are traditional Japanese-style and give a view of the surrounding greenery. The spacious accommodation is also a hit among foreign guests! We recommend going for a slightly luxurious option and booking a room attached with a bath. As this inn is isolated from the other hot spring facilities, guests can enjoy a peaceful and quiet stay.

A refreshing breeze blows through the open-air baths! Surrounded by beautiful mountains, the hot springs offer cooling scenery in the hot summers. Since the indoor and outdoor baths are connected, guests can enjoy different atmospheres and views without getting out!

Dishes are made with an array of local ingredients, including Yamagata Japanese Black beef. Order some of the region's spirits to fully enjoy all that Yamagata has to offer!

There are only Japanese-speaking staff, but the official website has English and Chinese guidance.

— Booking.com



Photos courtesy of Booking.com

### Ginzanso

银山温泉・仙峡の宿 银山荘

ADDRESS: 85 Ginzan Shimbata, Obanazawa, Yamagata Pref.

TEL: 0237-28-2322

Ginzan Onsen: 10 Things to do & where to stay in one of Japan's most beautiful hot springs towns



WEBSITE

## 9 Urabandai Lake Resort (Kitashiobara Village, Fukushima)

Located in the Aizu region's northwest is Kitashiobara Village's Urabandai Lake Resort. This naturally abundant area has attractive sites such as the mysterious ponds of Goshikinuma and Lake Hibara, where you can enjoy cruise tours.

In addition to this, Urabandai Lake Resort is popular for its guided walking tours, canoe tours, and painting akabeko, Aizu's signature red bull toy.

Free shuttle buses that run from the nearby Inawashiro Station can be taken without a reservation if there are less than ten passengers. We recommend checking the official website for departure and arrival times before your trip!

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly an hour and 15 minutes from JR Koriyama Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Koriyama Station, take a 40-minute train ride on the JR Ban-Etsusai Line rapid express bound for "Aizu-Wakamatsu." After getting off at JR Inawashiro Station, take another 40-minute ride on either the free shuttle bus or the Bandai Toto Bus's Urabandai Kogen Line bound for "Urabandai Kogen Eki." The facility is right next to the "Urabandai Lake Resort" bus stop.

The resort has breathtaking views of the nearby lake,



while guest rooms offer scenery of the surrounding, nature-filled forest. With a choice of either Japanese or Western-style, all rooms have free wi-fi and amenities.

Furthermore, the resort has a cafe, a bar, a karaoke facility, dartboards, pool tables, and a golf simulator! Even if you check in slightly earlier than planned, you'll have more than enough to keep you entertained!

The open-air bath's waters flow freely from the hot spring source! What's more, here you can enjoy a view of Lake Hibara! This famous, reddish-brown turbid hot spring has been long known as Ogon-no-Yu - golden waters. Because it's gentle on the skin, this hot spring is said to be the perfect

first-time option for small children.

For meals, you can enjoy a buffet-style menu offering over 50 different dishes, a Kaiseki course with dishes made from local ingredients, or a French course that only serves a few groups per day.

Foreign guests can easily stay at this resort due to there being Japanese, English, and Chinese-speaking staff.

— Booking.com



Photos courtesy of Booking.com

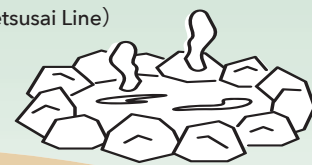
### Urabandai Lake Resort Goshiki no Mori

裏磐梯レイクリゾート 五色の森

ADDRESS: Hibara Yudairayama 1171-1, Kitashiobara, Fukushima Pref.

NEAREST STATION:

Okinashima Station (Ban-etsusai Line)



## 10 Aizu Higashiyama Onsen Mukaitaki (Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima)

Aizu Higashiyama Onsen is located in the center of western Fukushima Prefecture's Aizu region. It is said that the source of the hot spring was discovered 1300 years ago by the monk Gyoki. The hot spring town's river is lined with old inns as well as free footbaths and restaurants.

Aizu Higashiyama Onsen Mukaitaki is a traditional Japanese-style inn that stands out among its neighboring inns. Founded in 1873, it was once used as a recreational facility by the samurai of the Aizu clan.

Aizu Higashiyama Onsen has a luxurious Japanese-style wooden structure that surrounds a garden. Known for its view along with the Eikanbashi bridge in front of the inn, it is the first Japanese inn to be registered as a tangible cultural property.

### ACCESS

#### By Car:

Roughly an hour and 25 minutes from JR Koriyama Station

#### By Public Transit:

From JR Aizu-Wakamatsu Station, take a 15-minute ride on the "Akabe" sightseeing bus. The facility is nearby the "Higashiyama Onsen-eki" bus stop. If you are staying with your family, the spacious three-room, 32.4 square meter "Special Room Hanare no Ma" suite is recommended.

The Japanese royal family and Hideyo Noguchi (1876-1928), a prominent doctor and bacteriologist from Fukushima Prefecture, are among those who have stayed in this venerable Shoin-zukuri style guest room.

One of the VIP room's charms is its view of the garden with its ponds and waterfalls. In winter, "Yukimi Candles" placed in bamboo tubes light up the garden, making it possible to experience the luxurious lighting with your whole family from the warmth of your room.

Mukaitaki has three privately-sourced natural hot springs that flow directly from the source. They are colorless, transparent sulfate chloride springs rich in sodium and calcium.

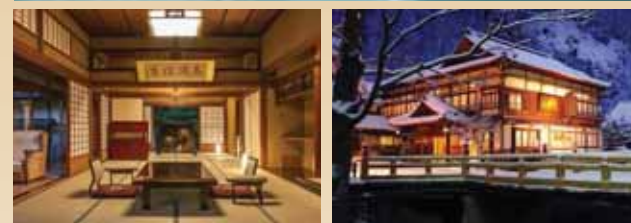
As you rest in the 45 degrees Celsius water, you'll feel the minerals refreshing your body. The bathroom is decorated with white granite and marble and has a nice retro atmosphere.

Another of the inn's pleasures is the enjoyment of local Aizuwakamatsu cuisine, such as sweetened carp and pickled herring in Japanese pepper. You can take your time relishing the simple, delicious dishes in the comfort of your room.

### Aizu Higashiyama Onsen Mukaitaki

会津東山温泉 向瀧

ADDRESS: 200, Kawamukai, Higashiyamamachiyumoto, Aizuwakamatsu-shi, Fukushima Pref.



Photos courtesy of Mukaitaki, Aizu Higashiyama Onsen

Discover Aizu, Japan's samurai region: sake, cuisine, and cultural heritage a day trip away from Tokyo



WEBSITE

For a relaxing, refreshing time of bathing and eating amazing meals while surrounded by breathtaking nature, you should definitely plan a family trip to one of Tohoku's exquisite hot spring inns!



EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:  
STARS AND STRIPES  
www.stripes.com

# Get behind-the-scenes look at 'Harry Potter' in Tokyo



STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENNESSA DAVEY,  
STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: September 7, 2023

## Tricare accepted English speaking US board-certified plastic surgery clinic just a short walk from The New Sanno Hotel



**Dr. Robert K Kure**

Albert Einstein College of Medicine, NY  
UCLA Plastic Surgery  
(Chief Resident)  
Certified by the American Board of  
Plastic Surgery  
Over 18 years of experience in the U.S.

Foreign insurance accepted



- Laser hair removal (Diode & YAG)
- Botox
- Botox for migraine headaches
- Restylane, Juvederm
- Retin-A, Obagi, Sun Spots treatment
- liposuction, eye, mole, scar, breast, facelift, tummy tuck
- Laser (Ultherapy, Genesis, IPL)
- Tatoo removal
- Men's (ED, AGA)
- Reconstructive surgery

**Laser Hair Removal**  
**50%off** ~one time offer~

(some restrictions apply. Ask for details)

A book  
"New You  
with Botox"  
is given to  
all new patients!



**Plaza** PLASTIC SURGERY  
プラザクリニック

**Tel. 03-5475-2345**  
English is spoken • Open on Saturday  
Hiroo 5-5-1 4F, Shibuya-ku  
**www.plazaclinic.net**

Stripes Japan is A Stars and Stripes Community Publication. This newspaper is authorized for publication by the Department of Defense for members of the military services overseas. However, the contents of Stripes Japan are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense or the U.S. Pacific Command. As a DOD newspaper, Stripes Japan may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote and isolated

locations where overseas DOD personnel are located. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement of those products by the Department of Defense or Stars and Stripes. Products or services advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.

**W**izards (and muggles) of all ages can visit the world of their bespectacled hero through The Making of Harry Potter at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour Tokyo.

The tour is filled with props and set designs from the actual films, from Diagon Alley to Hogwarts Castle. Visitors are briefed on everything they need to know before their behind-the-scenes look.

Plus, by using your phone to access a site via a QR code you may take part in a Quidditch match and make a moving portrait — just like in the movies.

The entire tour takes up to four hours, but the experience seems to fly by. A cafeteria halfway through the experience provides a convenient break for Hogwarts-themed meals.

Butterbeer is a special highlight and comes with a souvenir cup. The dining area is set around Harry Potter's original home and is surrounded by chess pieces, buses and cars seen in the movie.

The second part of the tour explains the CGI used in the movies. The "Fantastic Beast" films also have their moment.

This section takes visitors through re-created locations such as Diagon Alley, the Ministry of Magic and Platform 9 ¾, just like their favorite "Harry Potter" characters.

The tour ends, of course, at the gift shop, where you can load up on Hogwarts merchandise, including unique candies, T-shirts, pins and robes from every Hogwarts house. Some items can be personalized.

The magic doesn't end there. Harry Potter-themed foods and treats are available in the main hall.

davey.jennessa@stripes.com  
@JenDav\_Stripes

**Directions:** 1-1-7 Kasugacho, Nerima City, Tokyo 179-0074;  
a short walk from Toshimaen Station.

**Times:** Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

**Costs:** 6,300 yen for adults, 5,200 yen for ages 12-17 and 3,800 yen for 4-11. Free for 3 and younger.

**Food:** Cafes in the facility.

**Phone:** 050-6862-3676





# Stripes Sports Trivia

The first National Table Tennis Championship was held from Jan. 24 to Jan. 29, 1938 where the US men's team took the bronze and took the gold for Men's Doubles. Where was the event held?

## Answer

Royal Albert Hall and Wembley Empire Pool and Sports Arena, London

Calls accepted 7 days a week  
**042-553-0046**  
Credit Card or Cash Payments Accepted  
OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 0900 until 2000

**USHIHAMA PET CLINIC**  
English translation services provided!

Located outside Yokota AB, Ushihama Pet Clinic has been serving military community pets since 1977! Providing top care in all aspects of pet and exotic pet needs is our specialty! Our goal is to keep your pet Healthy & Happy during your stay here in Japan.

- Complete Vaccinations
- Health Checkups
- Full Dental
- Intensive Care Unit Surgery with Hospitalization
- Spay/Neuter
- Cesarean, & much more

ushihama.com/english/ **COME IN NOW for FREE PET REGISTRATION**

## Tire Mount Service

Near Yokota!

<https://tire-torikae.com>

Email: [info@tire-torikae.com](mailto:info@tire-torikae.com)

**TIRE EXPERT, QUICK, REASONABLE DEPENDABLE SERVICE!**

- MOUNTING
- REPAIR
- ORDERING
- OIL CHANGE
- ROTATION
- REPLACEMENT
- STORAGE
- TIRE SALES (All brand available)

**VISIT US FOR ALL YOUR TIRE NEEDS!**

Call: 042-513-0920  
Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Closed Tuesday)

Major Credit Cards Accepted

## DID YOU KNOW?

Japan is getting older very quickly! The population of Japan, 124,947,000 as of October 2022, declined by 556,000 from the previous year, while that of seniors (ages 65 or older) was 36,400,000 - up by 220,000. As a result, the elderly share 29.1 percent of the population. The rapidly increasing elderly and the decline of newborns is causing major concerns over how a shrinking workforce will continue to fund healthcare and social security.

## Kanji of the week

山  
Yama/san (mountain)

## Language Lesson

I'm full.  
Onaka ippai desu.

## NEAR Yokota Air Base!

Used Car Dealer  
**REAL SPEED AUTO**

**FEED THE NEED!**

- CLEAN AND RELIABLE
- PRE-OWNED VEHICLES
- AT AFFORDABLE PRICES!
- 90 DAY WARRANTY
- PAYMENT PLANS AVAILABLE
- DISPOSE & DE-REGISTER YOUR VEHICLE WITH US FOR CASH!

**GO TO OUR WEB SITE AT NOW!**  
[www.realspeed.jp](http://www.realspeed.jp)

**TEL: 042-513-3593**  
Open Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm  
Sat. & Holiday Close at 5pm (Closed Sun.)

## The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

- 1 Spinning sound
- 5 SWAT operation
- 9 Put to shame
- 14 Top of the line
- 15 Shooter's need
- 16 Particular occasion
- 17 University mil. group
- 18 Toy weapon
- 20 Grade of silver
- 22 Gas guzzler
- 23 Cupid, for one
- 25 Decorates a cake
- 26 Blazing
- 28 Superman from '78
- 30 Fighting mad
- 31 Its flag has two green stars
- 32 Equinox mo.
- 35 Pass on, formally
- 37 Slant
- 39 Meet with
- 40 Use a divining rod
- 42 Indianapolis team
- 43 Ruckus
- 44 NYPD descriptor
- 45 Legal rights org.
- 48 Artist's sketches
- 50 Monty Python member
- 52 Skillfully evade
- 55 "The Twilight Zone" host
- 57 Lifted and threw
- 58 Philly footballer
- 59 Barely beat
- 60 Change for a five
- 61 Knitter's purchase
- 62 Lab procedure
- 63 Cover at a KOA

### DOWN

- 1 The "W" in V.F.W.
- 2 Laugh-a-minute
- 3 Weave
- 4 Craft anew
- 5 Forcible seizure
- 6 Make changes to
- 7 Mental pictures
- 8 Old PC platform
- 9 Unknown author
- 10 Wahlberg film, "\_\_\_ Nights"
- 11 Prank
- 12 Film part
- 13 "\_\_\_ Johnny!"
- 19 Legalese word
- 21 Citrus drink
- 24 Chill-inducing
- 26 Helpers
- 27 Priceless?
- 29 Salk discovery
- 31 Waste conduit

- 32 Landmark event
- 33 Kitchen invaders
- 34 Sabbath activity
- 36 Welding alloy
- 38 It has a big payoff
- 41 Like many resorts
- 43 Swiss granola
- 44 Act antsy
- 45 60's sitcom, "Green \_\_\_"
- 46 Dagger's partner
- 47 Narrow shelf
- 49 Tim Daly series
- 51 Witnessed
- 53 Word before keel or break
- 54 Termite, e.g.
- 56 Say okay

**Answers to Previous Crossword:**

MYTH	AROSE	PUPA
EURO	CAPER	USAF
SLAT	UPPER	CRUST
SENSATION	LEASE	
SPEEDS	TELLER	
COLOR	SERIAL	
ORATOR	DERN	NUN
CATSPAW	DESPISE	
ALE	LIED	SLICES
DANDER	APART	
LEMONS	PESTER	
ONICE	DESPERATE	
ASSISTANCE	AGES	
DUEL	UNDUE	CUSP
SERE	BASED	KATY

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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:

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

## KELLY & KELLY

USED CAR DEALER

**ONE STOP SHOP**

- Registration Included in Price
- Wide Selection of Vehicles
- Payment Plans Available
- Auto Insurance Provider
- Warranty Included
- Cash Back for Car Junking!

**USED CAR EXPERTS**  
CELEBRATING 56 YEARS 1967-2023  
of Service to the Military Community!

[f @kellyandkelly1967](https://www.facebook.com/kellyandkelly1967) Car dealership

View our Vehicles Here!

<http://kellyandkellyjp.com/>

**Weekdays 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.**  
**Saturdays 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.**  
**Closed Sundays**

ONLY 5 MINUTE WALK FROM WEST GATE! Here!

Don Quijote  
Route 16  
Terminal Gate  
**AMC YOKOTA**

**BEST OF THE PACIFIC 2023 WINNER**

Thank You Yokota Air Base!

**042-551-0556**



To enjoy our wonderful tours all you need is  
a valid SOFA license  
OR a ACTIVE MILITARY ID and STATE  
SIDE DRIVERS LICENSE!!



We at Street Kart fully appreciates all US Armed Forces, and their presence in Japan. Street Kart thanks YOU for your services.

To show our appreciation to all of our US Armed Force personnel, please view our promotion video until the very end for a special PROMO CODE. Please use this special PROMO CODE when you are making a reservation and you will automatically receive a **FREE** Street Kart T-shirt for everyone !! (PROMO CODE will only be valid for one week. The PROMO CODE is only valid for US Armed Force personnel)



PV QR



# Japan like you've never experienced before!



TOKYO 12,000 yen/ 1 hour and 15,000 yen/ 2 hour

OKINAWA 6,500 yen/ 1 hour and 8,000 yen/2 hour

※Okinawa price is a special US Armed Forces pricing  
※full coverage insurance not included in prices above



For more details and available tour date and time, please contact our reservation center at **080-8899-8899**, Message us thru WhatsApp **+1-888-8877-123**, email us at **booking@streetkart.com**, or message us through our facebook page

Street Kart Facebook QR code

