

# RISE

MONTHLY JOURNAL FROM JAPAN



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## LETTER FROM EDITORS DESK

Dear Reader,

Ohayo Gozaimasu!!

It has not been a great month in the history of Japan with the sudden demise of Shinzo Abe (Former Prime Minister of Japan). The world mourned and Japan came to a standstill, as no one believed the news. Abe San has done a lot to put Japan back on the global tourism map and during his tenure, tourism reached new heights. Hopefully Japan will shine and grow by working towards achieving the goals set by Abe San.

Now that elections are also over in Japan, it is expected that new government shall provide some relaxed measures

for the growth of tourism. Japan is yet to witness “revenge tourism”, as there have been less number of tourist arrivals, since the opening of tourist visas. Still the cap on per day arrival is restricted to 20,000 people. India is still in the Yellow category. Hopefully in months to come it should be in Blue category.

There have been reports of rise in COVID cases in Japan and local authorities are requesting residents to follow norms to prevent the spread of virus.

We hope that Japan opens its doors to Indian travelers soon!

Arigato Gozaimasu!



# REMEMBERING SHINZO ABE'S LEGACY

BY SHARAD SHARMA

Shinzo Abe was a true global leader who rose through Japan's political scene and realised the dream of putting Japan on the world map as a prominent travel destination for global travellers. Under his able leadership, the Japan revitalization strategy was named "Japan is back." His vision was to triple the number of tourist arrivals in the years to come.

One of the reasons for his special attention to tourism was that it is a global growth industry and has a multiplier effect right from enhancing of lifestyles and enriching the economy. The tourism industry is one of the most responsive to the government policies. Under Abe's leadership, Japan relaxed its visa requirements, developed tourism infrastructure, and overseas promotional campaigns were launched.

The vision that Abe's government saw in 2013 was of 30 million visitors by 2030. We are just 7 years short of 2030 and lot of work has to be done to achieve the dream target. In 2014, a new ministerial council was setup with a vision to promote tourism by relaxing visa requirements, expanding inbound tourism, developing world-class tourist regions, creating a foreigner-friendly environment, and promoting MICE.

From 2013 to 2014, 11 countries were offered relaxed visa norms and India benefited from it. Multiple entry visas were introduced in order to improve the travel environment for both business and leisure travellers.

Multilingual sign boards were introduced at public places, along with

an enhanced transportation system and the building of more hotels with western facilities. The reach of free public WIFI was enhanced, and the network of tax-free shopping was increased.

From 2012 to 2020, Shinzo Abe visited India three times, and each year Japan has witnessed an increase in Indian visitors. Many Japanese companies established their offices and plants to increase business after the declaration of investments by Shinzo Abe. India has also seen the opening of Japanese restaurants, and more and more Indians are now trying Japanese food than ever.

It is Abe San's who has been solely responsible for turning around India-Japan ties. We hope the Prime ministers after him also follow his lead.



ABE Masashi



Winter Olympic Gold Medalist



# SAPPORO OKURAYAMA SKI JUMP STADIUM

BY SAPPORO CONVENTION BUREAU

Okurayama, the stage of the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics is only 30 minutes drive from central Sapporo. Take the lift to the top of the ski jump hill 307 meters above sea level, and experience the same spectacular panoramic view of the city as that of a ski jumper about to take the plunge. In 2020, a restaurant 'Nouvelle Pousse' that uses the finest ingredients from Hokkaido opened within the stadium.

The guests can enjoy Hokkaido-French cuisine that opens new doors both culinary and visual, only available here while looking up the magnificent jump hill which is the symbol of Sapporo as a winter Olympic city. On days when there are no competitions or practice sessions, the entire stadium is available for exclusive use, and memorable and unique parties can be held there against the backdrop of the glittering nighttime cityscape, hailed as

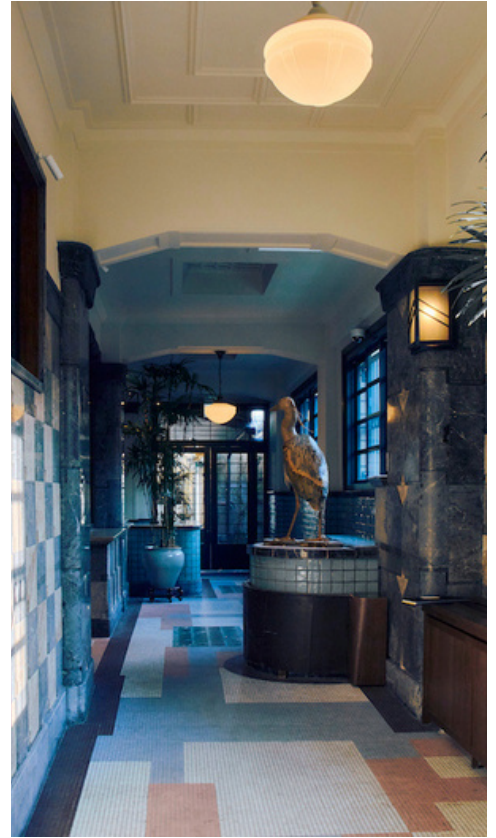
one of 'Japan's new three most spectacular night views.'

If you want to watch a genuine ski jump competition, it's also possible at Okurayama. A summer jump game performed by professional athletes can be arranged to accompany your reception as a special attraction. Image the ski jumpers take off the kante at 90km/h and fly into the sky in front of your eyes, it will overwhelm every guest for sure. You can also attend a special tour guided by a winter Olympic gold medalist to explore the restricted zone only for the athletes during the competition.

Sapporo Olympic Museum is another spot that you can not miss in the ski jump stadium. Renewed in 2017, this museum conveys the legacy of the

Sapporo Winter Olympic Games and features a dynamic panorama theatre that provides a taste of the vibes and emotions of the Olympics, and the countless stories engraved in the ice and snow. As well as displays of the achievements of the Olympic athletes, the museum also features 6 different simulators including ski jumping, bobsleigh, ice hockey, cross-country skiing to allow visitors to experience the winter sports from the viewpoint of the athletes.

Panoramic cityscape, premium dining, special attraction and guided tour, Olympic history and hands-on experiences, Okurayama Ski Jump Stadium is such a unique venue that can make your events successful and impressive.



## MARUFUKURO HOTEL, KYOTO

BY ITO IKEDA

As we all know, Nintendo is famous for its incredible Mario Game and this company has never failed to entertain us. The Nintendo legacy dates back to 1889, when it had a humble start as a company that designed and produced traditional Japanese playing cards in the Japanese city of Kyoto and made its way as a leader in digital gaming. These playing cards were marketed and distributed under the brand name of Marufuku Nintendo Co.

It might be confusing, what connection the Marufukuro Hotel in Kyoto has with Nintendo. Well, the hotel which opened its doors in 2022 was formerly the headquarters of Nintendo and also the residence for the then president of the organization. It is an upscale boutique property that showcases the highest level of detailing in the restoration

project. It opened on 01 April 2022, with eleven guest rooms, and seven suite rooms along with a library, lounge, and restaurant. The hotel's name, in itself, is an ode to Marufuku.

The Marufukuro Hotel, is a cluster of four buildings, three of which served as headquarter buildings. They all feature different interiors, from ornate art-deco to minimalism, and are named after the four playing card suits: spades, diamonds, hearts, and clubs—an homage to Nintendo's beginnings as a playing card manufacturer.

The library is the highlight of the hotel, as it is a reminder of Nintendo's history. It displays about 100 company-related items, including Japanese hanafuda playing cards—the company's initial product—and a Family Computer,

or Famicom, one of Nintendo's first video game consoles.

Guests can choose to stay either in the old building or the new part of the hotel, the extension. Rooms range between 33 sqm and 79 sqm and feature a mix of different furnishings. The room rate is about 100,000 yen per night and includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as light meals and drinks, including alcohol, in the lounge. The on-site restaurant, called Carta, is overseen by chef Ai Hosokawa and serves deliciously balanced seasonal meals. The hotel is an all-inclusive hotel, so guests can enjoy snacks and drinks round the clock.

Marufukuro Hotel is about a 15-minute walk from Kyoto Station and close to the Kamo River, making it a great place to stay and discover the old world charm of Kyoto in style.



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## HANDWOVEN EMOTIONS—JAPANESE POTTERY

BY YOKO TORII

Japanese art and culture, never cease to amaze, and pottery making stands out amongst them. While visiting Japan, one can appreciate the beauty of classic ceramic ware in museums and shrines. The pottery-making culture can be traced back to the Jomon Period which is approximately 10,000 years ago. Early Japanese ceramics were either earthenware or stoneware. There has been constant evolution in the art form of pottery making since then.

The clay required for making porcelain, “the kaolin,” was discovered in the town of Arita in 1600s. This allowed artisans to make more durable, thinner, and stronger tableware. There are more than 50 towns in Japan that still practise the art of making ceramics.

Some of the most famous styles of pottery are:

**Arita-yaki** the small town of Arita, evolved around pottery. One can visit museums, and take part in workshops, and take home a unique article made by oneself. Imari town is located close to Arita and by the sea. It was used to ship out ceramics from Arita across Japan and to the world.

**Kutani-yaki** pottery started in the beginning of the Edo Period in Ishikawa Prefecture and their design style uses bold colours like red, yellow, blue, and green. The Kutani-yaki Museum in the Kaga Onsen area displays a collection that was developed during the Edo period.

Shigaraki-yaki is made in southern Shiga Prefecture and is one of the oldest potteries in Japan, alongside Bizen in Okayama. The region is the

largest producer of ceramic tanuki in the country. Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, closed on Monday and New Year holidays is located at a about 20-minute walk from Shigaraki station.

**Raku-yaki**, style is from Kyoto and is amongst the most famous and highly sought after. It was started by the Raku family in collaboration with tea master Sen no Rikyu. Raku Museum in Kyoto is the best place to experience the craft.

Toki city in Gifu prefecture is famous for its Toki Mino-yaki style, and one of the biggest ceramic festivals is organised in Toki city from May 03rd to May 05th each year. There are approximately 60 ceramic makers that put their stalls and offer their stuff at a discounted price. This is one of the best places to experience and buy souvenirs in Japan.



## KYOTO'S KITCHEN – NISHIKI MARKET

BY SONIA SINGH

If you are a culinary enthusiast, the Nishiki market is a paradise. Spread along a five-block long shopping street, serving finest seasonal produce, Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood, sushi, tofu, and soya milk doughnuts. Everything sold in the market is sourced and produced locally.

The market has been around for centuries, and the majority of the stores have been run by the same families for generations. It was established around 1310 as a wholesale fish market, and with changing times, different food establishments joined the market, and it moved from a wholesale market to a retail market. For Kyoto residents, it is, till date, the most important market, as most of the kitchen supplies come from this market.

Some of the must-try foods at Nishiki Market:

**Soy Milk Doughnuts**, sold by Konna Monja's shop, are available in three flavours: brown sugar, caramel, and chocolate. They are crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. made with the highest quality of soybeans and other ingredients.

**Green Tea Ice Cream** is an absolute must-try. As one enters the market, one of the first stores sells amazing maccha ice cream, which is a thick green tea ice cream. It's perfect for those sweet tooth cravings.

**Pickled vegetables** are also known as tsukemono in Japanese. It is an essential part of Japanese cuisine and bento boxes. They act as palate cleansers between different courses of meals.

**Kushikatsu**, or deep-fried food, is one of the comforting foods available on

the market. It is small pieces of meat or vegetables, deep fried and served on a small bamboo stick. Available with different spices and condiments.

**Black-sesame ice cream**, This is a unique flavour of Kyoto. A smooth ice cream, served with sprinkled black sesame seeds.

**Soft rice crackers**, available in sweet or spicy flavours, are baked or deep-fired to perfection. Some of the flavours are seaweed served with wasabi.

If you are pure vegetarian, you can also try Buddhist devotional cuisine called **Shojin Ryori**, prepared from plant-based products only and also excluding the use of meat, onion, and garlic. Located three minutes' walk from Karasuma station on the Hankyu line, it is a must-visit place if you wish to understand Kyoto's food culture.



Riding through Japan on your favourite motorcycle, explore all the fascinating places in the country. It is like a dream come true!



MOTO TOUR

JAPAN







## SANJO SPICE LAB, NIIGATA

BY EMI ITO

Japan is a land with beautiful nature, water and abundance of food from mountains, land and sea. Niigata is one of the best places. Many meal that you take in Niigata is made from locally sourced food markets or area.

It was Mr Kazuichi Yamazaki who introduced turmeric from Okinawa to the land of Shimoda, it took him many years to cultivate turmeric and understand the importance of Indian Ayurveda. With introduction of turmeric, the region was able to add a new spice and modify the meals and present a new taste.

Sanjo Spice Research Institute is a shop located in the facility of "Machinaka Exchange Square Stage Engawa", a public facility in Sanjo City. "Engawa" is a

Japanese style sunroom that wrapped around house. An eye-catching building with a distinctive design. The facility includes an indoor and outdoor "stage" for various event, a piano room and a restaurant.

The Menu of Sanjo Spice Lab, is supervised by Kazushiro Ito, the owner and chef of Spice Café in Tokyo's Oshiage district. This beautiful restaurant has seating capacity for 40 people and offers amazing dishes offered in beautiful Tsubamesanjo made metalware. There are two types of curry set menus: the Thali Set and the Biryani Set. Each set consists of a vegetable side dish and a curry. The "spice side dish" on the rice is seasoned with seasonal vegetables such as carrots, shiitake mushrooms and cauliflower. A sweet thali set would contain are "coconut chicken"

and "beans and dried vegetables".

Though their speciality is Chicken biryani set, they are ready to customize the thali as per the vegan palette. A basic vegan meal consists of one curry and five side dishes. Sambal with Uchimame (Beans mashed, flattened and dried), a local ingredient of Niigata, and Dried Vegetables. Local Vegetables are combined in spices in a subzi, or other dishes. They also provide Cashew nuts and Papadam.

At the Spice Research Institute their aim is to rediscover the "Japanese way of life (Nihon no Kurashi)" through their stores to the people in the neighbourhood and to visitors to their stores remembering "Onko-chishin(Study the old to understand the new)" and "Ranko-koshin (Reclamation)".



## MIKOSHI— A RELIGIOUS PALANQUIN

BY SONIA SINGH

In Japan, Shintoism is an indigenous religion, and there are beliefs associated with it. One of the core beliefs is that there are 8 million gods (a number in ancient Japan that was synonymous with infinity), which explains why there seems to be a god for everything and every town. Every local shrine, therefore, celebrates its own deity and holds matsuri, or festivals. The main purpose of matsuri is to honour Shinto gods and to pray for good harvests, prosperity, and protection from misfortunes. One of the most important elements of a matsuri is the procession in which Japanese deities or kami of the shrine are carried through the town in a

mikoshi.

A mikoshi is a portable Shinto shrine. The first symbol, "mi" (神) means "god" or "spirit", and the second, "koshi" (輿), means palanquin or portable. A Mikoshi, also called a shin'yo, is an ornate miniature replica of a shrine that rests on two or more horizontal poles or beams depending upon the weight. The shape could be hexagonal, octagonal, or square. The roof is carved with a Phoenix.

### History

Before the introduction of the mikoshi, a mirror with a branch of Sakaki Tree

(*Cleyera japonica*) or some other object symbolic of a divine presence was carried around, sometimes on horseback. The use of a palanquin-like structure began in the 8th century. The first recorded occurrence was the transfer of Hachiman from the Usa Hachiman Shrine in Kyushu by palanquin to Nara, where the deity was to safeguard the construction of the Great Buddha image at Todai-ji in 749. It became popular in the Heian period to carry the mikoshi to purify the land around the temple during the annual festival.

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By the 10th century, it had become a common practise in Kyoto to carry the deity from a shrine through the community in a mikoshi on the occasion of the ekijinsai, a festival aimed at pacifying malevolent spirits that were believed to cause epidemics. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the mikoshi from the Hie and Kasuga shrines were often brought to Kyoto by monks from the nearby Enryaku-ji and Kofuku-ji, two powerful Buddhist temples, in an effort to intimidate the secular authorities into accepting the demands of the clergy.

**What to wear**

Carrying a Mikoshi is a time-honored tradition, and there are strict rules to follow, including what one needs to

wear. Each clan or team has their own uniform. Modern clothing is not permitted. The outfit generally includes: Tabi Socks (two toed socks), Jika Boots (two toed boots), Fundoshi (a traditional Japanese undergarment, similar to what sumo wrestlers wear in the ring), Hachimaki (head band), Hanten/Happi (Yukata-like overcoat), and towel (to be placed on one's shoulders to help cushion against the hard poles).

**How to Carry a Mikoshi**

Taking part in any religious or cultural event is considered a privilege in Japan. However, it could be tiring too. Depending on the mikoshi, there are restrictions based on age and gender. In some festivals, children also carry

mikoshi, to make them feel part of the celebration.

The mikoshi's role in the festival varies greatly; in some cases, the mikoshi is simply carried through town, visiting one Otabisho or Miki-sho (meaning a station where the sacred sake and food are dedicated to god); in others, the mikoshi is violently shaken or two mikoshi clash against one another. Violent shaking of the mikoshi intends to shake and energise the divine spirit (Tamafuri).

The most common method of shouldering is hira-katsugi, or flat carry. The bearers chant wasshoi and sometimes toss and shake the mikoshi.

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There are other methods of carrying mikoshi.

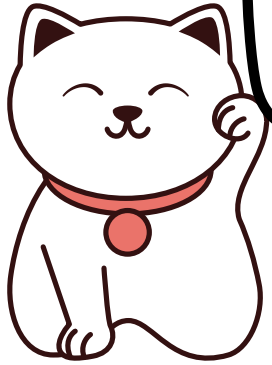
- Edomae ("Edo style") is a common way of shouldering, often seen at the Asakusa Sanja Festival. The chant "say ya, soi ya, sah, sorya, etc." The mikoshi is swayed rapidly up and down and a little to the right and left. This year, the Asakusa Sanja Festival was held for the first time after three years since the pandemic, which also marked the reopening of tourism.
- "Dokkoi" is seen in Shonan in Kanagawa Prefecture. This shouldering style usually encompasses two poles. The mikoshi is moved up and down rhythmically and more slowly than

in the "Edomae style". The chant is "dokkoi dokkoi dokkoi sorya".

- "Odawara style" can be observed in Odawara. This is a peculiar way of shouldering in which multiple mikoshi meet and run. The chant is "oisah, korasah/koryasah"; there is a song called "Kiyari", a chant traditionally sung by workmen while pulling a heavy load and also by firemen. The bearers do not sway the mikoshi.
- In the Kansai Area, including Kyoto Prefecture, the mikoshi is moved forward while wildly shaking the mikoshi in a seesaw fashion and chant "hoitto, hoitto," as represented by the Gion-matsuri Festival organised by Yasaka-jinja Shrine.

As the shrine is carried along a set route, there are several planned stops, such as the police station, city offices, and lunch breaks. The Sanno Matsuri, which happens in Tokyo, has the immense privilege of entering the Imperial Palace grounds to bless the Japanese Royal Family.

Once the festival celebrations have ended, the deity is returned to the shrine, and the priest holds a ceremony to welcome them back. And there they will remain until the next celebration.



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Japanese

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**MATSURI – FESTIVAL**

**NATSU MATSURI – SUMMER FESTIVAL**

**HANABI TAIKAI – FIRE WORK FESTIVAL**

**CHOCHIN – LANTERN**

**WADAIKO – JAPANESE DRUM**

**HACHIMAKI – HEADBAND**

**YUKATA – TRADITIONAL JAPANESE CLOTHING**

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