

# RISE

MONTHLY JOURNAL FROM JAPAN



## LETTER FROM EDITORS DESK

Dear Reader,

Ohayo Gozaimasu!!

Finally, the much awaited news for Japan's border opening was announced by Kishida San early this month. With the Japanese government considering doubling the cap to 20,000 in June, Japan will also start to accept small-scale tours for vaccinated tourists from the United States, Australia, Thailand, and Singapore as a trial later this month toward the full-scale reception of foreign visitors planned for June.

Japan has been constantly changing and revamping itself. Recently, Bicqlo—a mashup of Bic Camera and Uniqlo—has been shut down in Shinjuku.

At the same time, there have been many new attractions opening that have been announced, like The Making of Harry Potter, which will be opening in Toshimaen, Tokyo in 2023. This is only the second attraction of its kind in the world after London.

Japan Airlines announced its partnership with Lexus India. Guests travelling on JAL's Business Class from now till May 18, 2023, will be able to enjoy a complimentary airport transfer after arriving at Bengaluru Airport.

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

Stay Safe. Arigato Gozaimasu.



## OTARU – HARBOUR CITY OF HOKKAIDO

BY TOMOKO NAGAOKA, OTARU TOURISM ASSOCIATION

Located on the Ishikari Bay of the Sea of Japan, is the port city of Otaru, about 30 minutes north of Sapporo. Hokkaido is home to many historical Hokkaido buildings, many of which have been restored and converted into quaint cafes and shops. For several decades, Otaru has rapidly transformed from an enclave of the indigenous Ainu to a bustling merchant city that for several decades became one of the richest in all of Japan. The city is well connected by train as well as by road. This city, along with many other popular spots, can be visited on a day tour. The tour can be planned for

eight hours or you can even plan for a one-night stay here.

### Otaru Canal

One of the most popular and well-known sightseeing spots in all of Hokkaido and its pride is the Otaru Canal. Completed in 1923, the canal was used as a maritime transport route for the city. After it fell into disuse, it was revamped as a tourist spot. More than 60 gas lanterns line the walkway and are lit at dusk, creating a romantic atmosphere unique to Otaru. The canal also houses Meiji Era stone warehouses that border the canal, which have now

been transformed into cafes and restaurants for the visitors to enjoy.

### Yoichi Distillery has been producing Nikka Whisky since 1934.

Masataka Taketsuru, the first Japanese who mastered whisky making in Scotland, valued the climate and natural features of the north. Yoichi, the place chosen by Masataka, was close to the sea, surrounded by mountains on three sides and was in many ways similar to Highland in Scotland. A cold climate with

Continued to page 03



appropriate humidity, crisp clean air and fresh water; everything necessary for his ideal whisky was available. The proximity to the sea is one of the distinctive features of Yoichi. The sea breeze gives a briny hint to the whisky during the maturation.

Masataka set a pot still using direct coal-fire. This still was similar to pot stills at Longmorn Distillery, where Masataka had the first practical training in Scotland. This traditional coal-fired distillation is hardly seen today as it is difficult to control the temperature and requires highly skilled craftsmen. However, the distillation

process at Yoichi has remained very traditional to this day. The characteristics of Yoichi Single Malt, such as boldness and toasty burnt flavors, are unique features of this distillation.

#### Music Box Museum

"Otaru Orgel Doh" is Japan's largest music box specialty store. The main building of the Orgel Doh is located in Otaru, Hokkaido. In a classical building, we display and sell various music boxes, including original music boxes. That number is more than 5,000 types, 80,000 items or more. The inside of the store is divided into 5 floors. Each

theme is lined with beautiful decorations and a musical music box. Since there is a wide range of products, ranging from affordable items to those that are perfect for decorating a little luxurious interior, you will surely find something you like.

The Museum's Hall No. 2 is an antique museum in which performances on an Aeolian Pipe Organ are given six times a day.

And don't miss out on the museum shop workshop at "You-kobo." You can choose from a wide selection of cases, decorations, and melodies to create your

**Continued to page 04**



own unique music box. It would make a great memory of your trip to Hokkaido, Otaru.

### Kitaichi Glass

Asahara Glass, the former company of Kitaichi Glass, was founded in 1901. By the next year, the railway construction work between Otaru and Hakodate had begun. The first president, Hisakichi Asahara, began to produce kerosene lamps in Otaru. Kerosene lamps were life's necessities because electricity supply was unfamiliar at that time. In 1910, he also began to produce floating glass balls for fishing. According to

lifestyle changes, their products have shifted to tableware to enrich people's lives. They always try to supply products that enhance the quality of life.

The Kitaichi Glass Sangokan building had been built as a timber-frame and stone exterior warehouse in 1891 by the president of Kimura Warehouse, Enkichi Kimura.

At first, this warehouse stored fish products, including "Migaki Nishin" (dried herring), and, along with the decline of fishing here, it began to store various other things. It still has a

part of the tramroad that once reached to the seashore. There used to be 9 storages from No.1 to No.9 inside the former warehouse.

Because of the road expansion on the south side, it lost several storages and now only No. 1, No. 8 and No. 9 remain.

In 1983, they renovated this building and began to use it as Kitaichi Glass Sangokan. The remaining 3 storages are now a glass shop and two cafes.

Kitaichi glass products are designed and produced with ideas from the

**Continued to page 05**



environment of Otaru; its culture, history, nature, buildings, etc. They are proud of the attractive city, Otaru. Their shops are only in Otaru with their strong wish to make this city's attractions well known among our customers. They hope every customer spends a wonderful time in Otaru.

**Kitakaro-Sweets spot in the port town of Otaru.**

Inside the stone warehouse on Sakaimachi-dori Street is a sweet-smelling space where modernity and tradition are blended together.

Kitakaro Otaru Honkan is an old stone warehouse on Sakaimachi-dori Street, a historical walkway that reminds us of Otaru as it used to be.

Kitakaro's well-known product, "Yosei no Mori (Fairy Forest) Baumkuchen," was developed as a commemorative product for the opening of the Kitakaro Otaru Honkan. The apple fruit cake "Kajuen no Rokugatsu (June in the Orchard)", which is available only at Kitakaro Otaru Honkan, is also popular. The famous Japanese confection "Hokkaido Kaitaku Okaki rice crackers" is also popular as a Hokkaido souvenir among Japanese. Takeout soft-serve

ice-cream and cream puffs are also popular, and many other Japanese and Western confections are available.

Visitors to the area should take a relaxing cruise during the day time to appreciate the city's iconic architecture and learn about its history from the cruise captains.

Images © Otaru Tourism Association





IMAGES © CHINZANSO TOKYO HOTEL



## HOTEL CHINZANSO TOKYO “HOTEL IN THE CLOUDS”

BY MING SHENG FOO- HOTEL CHINZANSO TOKYO, FUJITA KANKO INC.

Is this Tokyo? You will be surprised to find such a green and tranquil environment in the middle of busy city of Tokyo? Not just a hotel but also a unique venue in Tokyo, the authentic Japanese Garden welcomes to a memorable your stay with her nature and historical background.

Opened to public as garden restaurant in 1952, with a vision to provide a place to heal the emotional wounds after the war. It was then developed into wedding place and hotel, and as we will be celebrating our 70th anniversary in business this year, today Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo strive hard to “forever being the Oasis needed by each and every generation”. As a celebration, we have started the Tokyo Sea of Clouds and 1,000 Lights since 2020, a mystical experience you can enjoy during your stay.

Find different stay plans and stop by Yu, the Spa for the indoor pool or natural hot spring brought all the way from Izu. The 9 restaurants and bar offer culinary experiences in Western and Japanese Cuisine. Mokushundo, the stone-grilled restaurant in the garden serves grilled cuisines on lava rocks of Mt Fuji. With 38 banquet/meeting venues, Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo welcomes not just leisure guests but also MICE groups.

Since the opening as a Garden Restaurant, Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo has welcomed guests from not just domestic Japan but also guests from all over the worlds. Today, there are 38 multi-function banquet/meeting venues, which can fit from small Executive Meetings to Product Presentations, Business Meetings, and even large Gala Dinners up to 770 guests

on round tables.

Ryotei Kinsui, the Japanese Restaurant inside the garden consists of 12 private tatami-floored rooms. The biggest room 117 sqm Yachiyo is equipped with projector and screen, gives you a different ambience of MICE. Try out cultural activities like Japanese Tea Ceremony, craft makings or even Sake tasting.

Being outdoor would probably be the next trend for post COVID-19 MICE. Serenity Garden and the terraces are the spaces outside suitable for Cocktail Parties or Photo Shootings. Every summer, the Champagne Garden and Beer Terrace are the popular events held.

Visit any time of the year and enjoy each of our Seven Seasons; Camellia, Cherry Blossom Fresh Green, Fireflies, Cooling Summer, Autumn and Winter.



## DISCOVER FUN SIDE OF OSAKA WITH MOXY OSAKA SHIN UMEDA

BY NOBUKO KOTANI, MOXY OSAKA SHIN UMEDA

Umeda is one of the most glamorous, interesting, and flamboyant sides of the city in Osaka. From high-end fashion shops to classy roof-top restaurants, beer gardens to underground shopping arcades, it makes it convenient to try gourmet cuisine and shopping.

Moxy is a playful, affordable, and stylish hotel brand designed to give guests everything they want and nothing they don't. Moxy celebrates nonconformity, open-mindedness, and

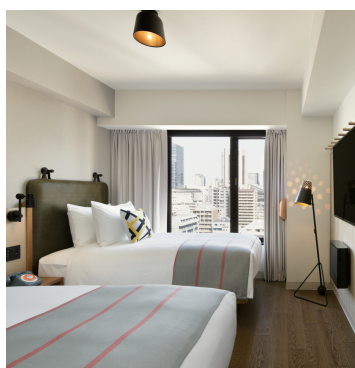
originality above all. In September 2020, Marriott Hotels opened its 3rd Moxy hotel, Moxy Osaka Shin Umeda, in the Umeda District of Osaka.

A 5-minute walk from JR Fukushima Station and a 10-minute walk to Nishi-Umeda Tube Station. The hotel's well-designed spaces and cutting-edge technology make it easy for travellers to mix work and play at an affordable price point. The hotel is based on the fashionable art of Umeda and the unique expressions of Fukushima,

which was once home to the "mechanical arcade," which helped Japan's electronic industry grow.

The hotel offers 288 chic, edgy, and cosy guest rooms with the latest Moxy brand standards. There are 108 Standard Queen Rooms and 168 Standard Twin Rooms with a room size of 20 sqm and 12 Superior Queen Rooms with a room size of 25 sqm. All rooms are stylishly designed with smart and functional living spaces,

Continued to page 08



high-thread-count bedding and bath amenities to create a relaxing hotel retreat in Osaka, Japan, and a 55-inch flat-screen HD television with a high-quality sound system. With an exclusive 24-hour fitness centre and furiously fast and free Wi-Fi for ultimate connectivity, don't forget the hotel's smoke-free policy. The hotel is accessible and offers toilets for the disabled and wheelchair access.

When staying in Moxy Hotels, you cannot miss the signature Bar Moxy, which is on the outdoor terrace and has a bustling atmosphere. This casual, convivial cocktail bar is where guests

gather for exciting and upbeat experiences over a chilled local or crafted beer. This bar remains open 24x7. It doubles as the hotel's check-in counter, where guests are greeted upon arrival with a complimentary 'Moxy Slime' cocktail.

Buzzing with high-energy is The Terrace, an outdoor area where 'Fun . Hunters' can eat, drink and socialize. The Lounge calls its charms through its graffiti art walls, modern furniture and ambient lighting, ideal for gatherings, special events or crafted cocktails, while Grab and Go allows guests to satisfy their cravings day or night with

menus starting at JPY 1500 per person. The hotel also has a meeting space of 6 sqm that is comfortable for a quick meeting of 4 guests.

From the hotel, guests have easy access to key attractions such as the Osaka Science Museum, Jizoji Temple, Grand Front Mall, Osaka Castle, Universal Studios, and more. At Moxy Osaka Shin Umeda, the stylish common areas will make you feel creative, energized, and free when you're relaxing at the hotel while you're there.





## TRADITIONAL LOG RAFTING, WAKAYAMA

BY EMI ITO

If you are on the Golden Route and plan to enjoy water sports adventures, then you may think of taking a detour to the Kii Mountains in Kitayama Village, Wakayama Prefecture. The Kii Mountain range is said to be home to some of Japan's most significant shrines and pilgrimage routes. Their importance was recognised in July of 2004, when UNESCO designated the sites of Koyasan and Kumano (Kumano Sanzan—Three Grand Shrines Kumano), along with the connecting trails (Koyasan Choishimichi and Kumano Kodo pilgrimage routes) as World Heritage Sites.

Log rafting is a 600-year-old tradition on the Kitayama River in Wakayama. This is the only place in Japan where this kind of experience is unique to Kitayama Village.

Logging used to be a big business in this area. After the trees were cut down, the lumber was put together into long log rafts and pushed down the river to Shingu on the coast.

Rafts are piloted by three or four oarsmen, with two in the front and one at the rear, who use narrow-bladed oars to prevent logs from hitting the rocks while staying on the track. Log rafts are used to transport thrill-seekers through the scenic Dorokyo Gorge, part of the Yoshino-Kumano National Park.

Due to limited public transport to Kitayama Village, it is best to take a bus from JR Kumanoshi station. The meeting point is at Michi-no-Eki Okutoro Tourist Center in

Kitayama Village. Guests are provided with life jackets and, during rafting, guests can hold onto the railing on the rafts. The rafting season lasts from May to September, with reservations accepted from April 1. Days of operation vary depending on month.

The ride takes about 70 minutes and costs around 6600 JPY for adults (12 y/o and older) and 3300 JPY for children (10 - 11 y/o), including taxes. The departure time for the ride is 1040 hrs. and 1300 hrs. for this tour. It is compulsory for guests to report 30 minutes in advance.

Images© Wakayama Department of Commerce, Industry, Tourism and Labor  
The Tourist Bureau Tourism Exchange Division.



Images © Echigo Tokimeki Railway Company

## ECHIGO TOKIMEKI TRAIN SETSUGEKKA, NIIGATA

BY SONIA SINGH

Setsugekka is a luxury train that runs in Niigata Prefecture, an area known for its heavy snowfall, mountain ranges, and majestic views of the Japan Sea. The Setsugekka is an award-winning sightseeing train that was launched by Echigo Tokimeki Railways in 2016 and follows a scenic route along the mountains from Mt. Myoko to the coast, and along the blue Sea of Japan coast to Itoigawa.

The train operates between Joetsu, Myoko, and Itoigawa mainly on weekends and on holidays. Setsugekka operates two times a day, in the morning and in the afternoon, only on weekends. This train has only two carriages and 38 seats and has the largest,

windows of any train in Japan. Surprisingly Setsugekka is extremely slow and it takes 3 hours to get to the terminal, despite the fact that the Hokuriku Shinkansen takes 13 minutes on the same route. Passengers on board can travel at a leisurely pace through the Niigata countryside. The name Setsugekka, combining Chinese characters for "Snow", "Moon" and "Flowers", means good views throughout all the seasons. Depending on the season, the passengers can get views of cherry blossoms in spring and colourful leaves in autumn. The ride also gives passengers a view of the rice paddies, mountains, ocean, and rural life of the locals in Niigata. Also, the word "Tokimeki" describes something so exciting

that it makes eyes sparkle and hearts dance.

Niigata has been known for its world-class technology. Everything on this train is made in Niigata, from the car interiors to the cuisine and cutlery served on board.

When you board the train, you will be welcomed with sparkling wine if you are an alcoholic, and if you are not, then you will be served cider and apple juice. The wine served on board is by Fermier, a winery in Niigata. Setsugekka has two cars. Car No. 1 has interiors made from Echigo Sugi—a Japanese cedar tree produced in Niigata Prefecture featuring a golden motif and

**Continued to page 11**



Images © Echigo TOKImeki Railway Company



appointments in the colours of the autumn harvest. All the seats face the Myoko Mountains and the Sea of Japan. The windows are heat shielding and cut 99.99% of ultraviolet rays. At the far end of the car is an observation deck, which is open to all passengers. It gives a different perspective on the spectacular scenery along the route.

Car No.2 features large tables and spacious seats, offering a comfortable dining environment. The windows are large and open here. There is a high deck at the end of this, and the views are spectacular to the sides, as well as over the engineer's head forward along the tracks – a truly unique

view. At the other end of the car is the Sakura Lounge, a sophisticated area floored in beautiful Yasuda tiling.

The menus for all the trains of Setsugekka were devised by local chefs with a deep knowledge of the regional ingredients of Niigata. They went directly to the producers to source the materials for these delicious meals. Setsugekka offers two types of meals on board. The morning train serves French cuisine created by a Michelin Guide recognised chef rewarded with two stars. While the afternoon train serves dishes prepared by a Japanese-style restaurant in Niigata with 200 years of

history. Depending on the season, the menus also change. Normally, a full-course menu is served on board. However the menu cannot be modified, if you have any allergies (Contact us).

Prior reservations need to be made online, as this train gets booked months in advance. The cost per adult is JPY 19800 and for infant (no meal) is JPY 6000. Online reservation is for maximum 6 people so please contact us for group reservation.



## JAPAN'S DENIM CAPITAL – KOJIMA, OKAYAMA

BY SHARAD SHARMA

Japan is synonymous with perfection, an art or a tradition that was born in the United States but perfected in Japan, the art of making denim. Kojima City adopted the art of making denim and now it is called the denim capital of Japan and it is so for all the great reasons.

### History

Kojima has long been a thriving textile center. This low-lying area of reclaimed land was initially used for cotton cultivation. Then, in the Edo period (1603–1868), it became a center for production of sanada-himo, the cloth cords used to wrap sword handles. During the Meiji period (1868–1912) Kojima was a center for the manufacturing of tabi socks. And after World War II, it was bustling to fill orders for school uniforms. It was in the early 1960s that Japan's production of jeans began in Kojima. The first Japanese denim company chose the most American-sounding name it could come up with: Big

John. And then it did the same for its women's brand: Betty Smith. Initially, Big John used denim fabric and sewing machines imported from the US, but in the 1970s it started to produce its own denim using old shuttle looms and traditional indigo-dyeing techniques. This is how Japanese jeans were born.

Betty Smith has also setup Japan's only jeans museum. It not only introduces visitors to the jeans-manufacturing process but also allows visitors to work in the museum's workshop customizing their own pair of jeans by attaching their choice of parts (buttons, rivets, etc.) as well as to try their hand at making mobile phone straps.

### Jean Street of Kojima

Denim fans from across the globe visit Kojima for their very own custom-made jeans. The street is renowned for shops, cafes, and general stores by jeans brands known around the world for high quality.

It is located a 5-minute distance from JR Kojima Station. You may walk or rent a bicycle to explore the denim culture.

### Quality

The exceptional quality of Kojima jeans today is the result of outstanding techniques related to textiles, sewing, and processing, as well as the fine-tuned sensibilities and enthusiasm of the denim craftsmen. The prestige of the made-in-Kojima label as a sign of the genuine article has been established over the years by this synergy between technology and the efforts of countless craftsmen. Momotaro Jeans is one name that has taken the world by surprise. They offer hand-dyed, custom-made denims with a 10-year guarantee and it may take approximately two to three months for the final product to be delivered to your doorstep.

On your next trip to Japan, do not forget to visit Denim capital of Japan, Kojima city.



# TANUKI TRAIL IN SHIGA

BY KUSHAGRA KUSHWAHA - METASKY

Walking around in Japanese Izakayas, I couldn't help but notice a strange looking statue of a creature, usually kept on the front doors - waiting to welcome the customers and greet them with a grinning smile. A sake flask tugged in one hand and a hand scribbled ledger tugged in another, flaunting its big rounded belly and two gigantic testicular balls. Along with the goofy characteristic traits, it dons a kasa straw hat - one usually found on zen monks - and a leaf placed on the head. Never have I ever seen this creature anywhere before!, I asked ? "It's a TANUKI" the kind and humble Japanese people would tell me of it. "The mischievous raccoon dogs are indigenous to Japan"

Fascinated by the appearance of them, I found myself delving deeper into their world. After inquiring about where to find these statues, I got to know of a small pottery town in the Shiga prefecture, known as Shigaraki village. This is where almost all of the Tanuki statues are made. Early this February, I decided to take a good visit to Shiga. As soon as you get into the train, you find the entire train painted and designed with Tanuki serving as mascots. Every station that I walked around in this town had big Tanuki statues placed on the platforms. In fact, Tanuki statues were found everywhere! Below street lamps, on the sides of houses, on the entrance of seven eleven, on the windows

of post boxes, in front of cafes and restaurants, and even out on display at the police stations. The town felt more like a big Tanuki amusement park in itself!

Mesmerized by the vivid Tanuki folklore all around Shiga, I paid a visit to the statue making factory too, where I was lucky enough to get my hands on the materials to design a tanuki statue myself. Much of a delightful experience, I believe the entire visit to Shiga for anyone who is a Tanuki fan would mean breathing as a Tanuki himself.

If you want to experience this magical world of Tanuki, scan the Qr code on the side and hop onto Tanukiverse.



Useful  
Expressions in  
Japanese

Let us  
learn



**WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ABOUT TRAINS IN JAPAN?–**

**NIHON NO DENSHA JYOHOU WA DOKO KARA MORAIMASUKA?**

**YOU CAN CHECK JAPAN RAIL PASS WEBSITE– JAPAN RAIL PASS**

**NO WEBSITE WO GO KAKUNIN ITADAKE MASU.**

**CAN I BUY JAPAN RAIL PASS IN JAPAN? – NIHON DE JAPAN**

**RAIL PASS WO KOUNYU DEKI MASU KA?**

**YES YOU CAN PURCHASE BEFORE AND AFTER ARRIVING IN**

**JAPAN – HAI,GO TOCHAKU ZENGO NI GO KOUNYU ITADAKE MASU**

PUBLISHED BY NIPPON TAIYO HOSPITALITY, MEDIA DIVISION.

OPINIONS EXPRESSED WITHIN THE CONTENT ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHOR AND DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS AND BELIEFS OF NIPPON TAIYO HOSPITALITY OR ITS AFFILIATES.

FOR FEEDBACK WRITE AT SHARAD@NTH-INDIA.COM OR SONIA@NTH-INDIA.COM