



HELLO OKAYA

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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Exchange Association, with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have.

Hanami

Hanami is an age-old Japanese tradition of welcoming the spring season by enjoying the beauty of cherry blossoms (sakura) or ume blossoms outdoors. During the Nara Period, noble people preferred viewing the ume blossoms instead of the sakura, but by the Heian Period, the cherry blossoms came to attract more attention and it has, since then, become synonymous with hanami.

In recent times, hanami has become a major event during the spring season and most people usually have outdoor parties beneath the cherry blossom trees. Enjoying the beauty of the sakura in full bloom, while having drinks and food under the trees has become what is known to be O-hanami.

Sakura trees are very common in Japan and it blooms only for a very short period during spring time. In less than a week, the flowers fall and scatter all over, leaving a lasting impression in the hearts of many people every year.

Paper lanterns are hung for the purpose of illuminating cherry blossoms in the evening (yozakura) setting a different mood anyone can enjoy, in contrast with viewing the cherry blossoms during daytime.

The time period when sakura blooms slightly differs every year and can also vary depending on the location. But in this



area, sakura blooms around the middle of April. There are a lot of places and parks in Okaya and Suwa area where you can enjoy viewing the cherry blossoms.

This year, why don't you go with your family, friends or co-workers and enjoy hanami?



Cherry Blossom Viewing Spots

Within Okaya City: Yokokawa River, Hanaoka Park (Minato), Kamaguchi Park (Minato), Izuhaya Park (Osachi), Narita Park (Narita machi), Mashita Park (Yamashita-cho)

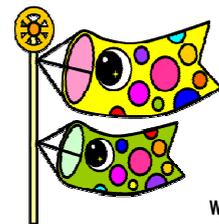
Outside Okaya City: Takato Joshi Park (Ina City), Suigetsu Park (Shimo-suwa Town), Takashima (Suwa City)

Be considerate enough not to reserve a very big area before the cherry-blossom viewing and refrain from causing inconvenience to others. Please practice the common courtesy of bringing home your own garbage so we can all have an enjoyable cherry-blossom viewing.



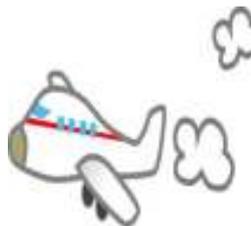
Japanese Traditions ~One point Japanese culture~

Boy's Day Festival

 Tango is a Japanese custom held every 5th of May celebrating and praying for the well-being of young boys. Tango is typically observed by displaying armors, helmets, swords, warrior dolls and other figurines inside the house and raising carp-shaped (koinobori) banners out in the garden. The armor and helmet symbolize physical protection for the boy, praying for his future success. May 5th eventually became a national holiday and is now called "Children's Day" and has become part of the Golden Week and is joyously celebrated as the baby boy's first annual festival after birth.

Golden Week

The long holidays from April 29th to May 5th every year is called the Golden Week. At present, many companies close down for the holidays i.e. April 29th (Showa Day), May 3rd (Constitution Day), May 5th (Children's Day) and many people take paid time off on intervening work days and May 1st (Labor Day) (if it falls on a weekday). During this time, airports become crowded and highways experience heavy traffic because many people travel out of Japan.



Tanabata

Tanabata is a Japanese star festival held every 7th day of July. It is said that during the tanabata, Orihime (weaving princess) and Hikoboshi (cow herder star) meet on a date at the Amanogawa (Milky Way) once every year. People celebrate this day by hanging small pieces of paper (tanzaku), paper kimono, casting nets (toami), waste baskets, purse (kinchaku), and folded paper cranes on bamboo. Each decoration symbolizes a meaning. Hanging small pieces of paper (tanzaku) meant someone wanted to be good in academics or be better at calligraphy. But the custom now is for people to write their own specific wishes on paper.



Earthquake Disaster Measures



A magnitude 9.0 earthquake with a depth of 24km struck Northern Miyagi-ken at 2:26 PM on March 11, 2011. This earthquake is considered to be the most powerful in the whole history of Japan and the fifth strongest earthquake in the world since the 1900s. Although recovery efforts are still on-going, the extent of the damage is very large and it has left a great number of people dead, missing or injured. Many people have come to realize again the terrible truth about earthquakes: that no one knows when and where such national disaster will occur.

No one really knows if and when it will strike again so we must be well-prepared at all times. Let's keep an emergency kit ready and discuss post-evacuation means of communication with our family members.

When an earthquake occurs

Inside the house...

-Ensure safety by protecting yourself first-

Your safety is your utmost priority. Quickly get under a desk or table or move to a room with little furniture. If there are no desks or tables available, protect your head by covering it with pillows or books or other cushions. It is dangerous to rush outdoors as roof tiles and glass shreds and other things can be falling debris.

-Secure an exit by opening the door-

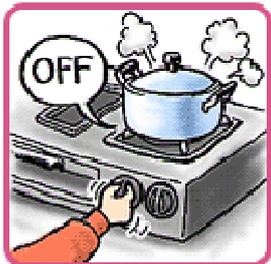
Strong tremors can cause damaged doors and windows that can't be opened and may trap you inside the room. When you have ensured your safety, secure an exit that you can use to escape by leaving the doors and windows slightly opened.

-Put out any fire-

Immediately turn off gas, stove and other fire-using equipment when you feel the slightest tremors, but make sure that you don't compromise your safety. Wait for strong tremors to subside, before putting out any fire. Be sure to switch off the main gas valve and turn off the circuit breaker to avoid fire that may result after the electricity has been restored.

-Be on alert even when tremors have abated-

Confirm the safety of your family members and housemates again. Big earthquakes can be followed by several aftershocks so stay away from fallen cabinets, bookshelves, refrigerators and other big objects. Aftershocks can also cause things to fall down. Obtain reliable information from the radio, TV and other media.



Outdoors...

-When out on the street-

When you feel the strong tremors, cover your head with your bag and escape to the nearest vacant land or sturdy structure. Window glass panes and billboards are hazardous as they can fall down.

-When inside a department store or supermarket-

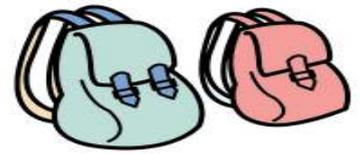
Cover your head with your bag or shopping basket and move away from stacked cases and display shelves. Lean over a post or wall and wait for the tremors to subside. When you are with a child, be sure to hold onto his/her hand. Follow the evacuation instructions of the store personnel and steer clear of stampedes by avoiding the stairs and escalators. Use the stairs when evacuating as you may be trapped in the elevator when the electricity is suddenly cut off.

-While driving a vehicle-

When you feel the tremors, avoid hitting the breaks abruptly as this may be very dangerous. Reduce your speed gradually, and stop on the left side of the road. If you must abandon your vehicle, leave the doors unlocked and leave the keys in the ignition.



Emergency Kit Items



Let's have a home emergency kit ready for use during earthquakes and disasters

Drinking Water (approx. 3L)



Food (Canned goods etc)



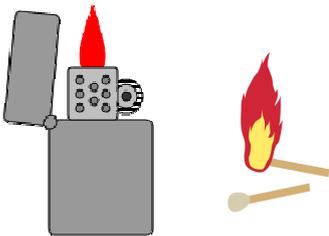
Flashlight



Cash



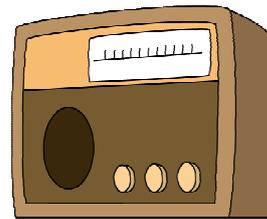
Lighter/Matches



Can Opener



Radio



Gloves



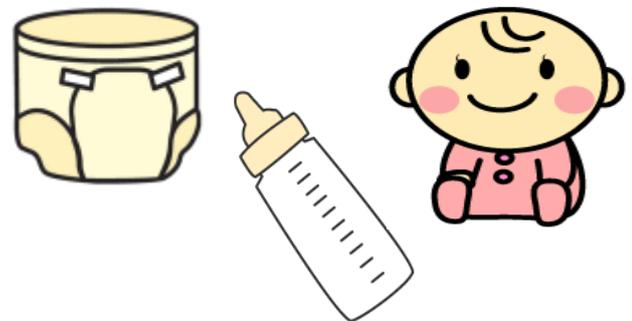
Clothes/Warm clothing



First-aid kit (medicine)



Baby items (diaper, milk, feeding bottle)



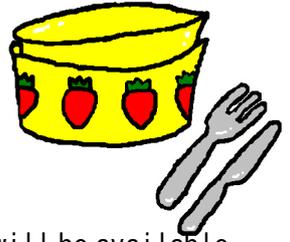
Bankbook, Seal (Hanko), Insurance card, Alien Registration Card



Prepare the minimum basic essential,
and try not to have something too heavy.
Approximately 15kg for men and 10kg for women
To evacuate easily, put everything in a backpack



Child Care Information



Newly opened Lactation Room at the Okaya City Hall

As part of Okaya City's child care support services, a lactation (breastfeeding) room will be available at the city hall ground floor starting April. During use, the room can be locked from the inside. Chairs and baby beds are also available for use. Feel free to have a worry-free visit at the city hall, even if you take your baby along with you.

New child care website and email publication

The City has recently unveiled a new "Child Care Support Portal Site and Email Publication." Now, everyone who is raising a child can have access to easy-to-understand information about related events, notices from the city and advices about child care. The city will send various information to moms and dads who need to "know where to get information about childcare," or "get the most up-to-date information," and "know how to enjoy parenthood."

Child Care Support Portal Site



There are a lot of information about raising up children from pregnancy & infancy up to their adolescence.

Please check this site for information about child-care:

Website URL: <http://www.city.okaya.lg.jp/kosodate>



Email Publication (Mail Magazine)

Notices, operation's guide, procedure & application, child care advice and other information are scheduled to be sent to your PC or Mobile email twice a month.

- ① **To register**, send a blank email to kosodate@eml.city.okaya.nagano.jp
- ② A registration guide will be emailed back to you.
- ③ Select (by clicking) the listed URL and follow the procedure to register.

Kodomo no Kuni

Kodomo no kuni is a play lot for children up to 3 years old and their parents. It is a venue not only for small kids to play safely, but a place where moms can make friends. The facility also offers various events, activities and seminars for everyone. So why don't you come and have a relaxing time playing with your children?

Location: 4F ILF Plaza

Entrance Fee: Free (Once a year fee for registration card: 200 yen)

Operating Hours: 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM

Closed: 2nd Tuesday of the month, Year-end and New Year (Dec. 29 to Jan. 3)

For children ages 0 to 3 (who are not yet enrolled in preschool) and their guardians. However if accompanied by a sibling, preschool children can be admitted.

Parking: Please use the ILF Plaza multilevel car parking building. Free for the first 5 hours.