

# Junichiro Koizumi re-elected as Japan's Prime Minister

On September 21, Junichiro Koizumi was re-elected as Japan's Prime Minister on the first day of a special session of the Diet, ten days after his party's landslide victory in the election for the House of Representatives.



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The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) captured a total of 296 seats, the second largest figure in its 50-year history, and up from 212 held before the election. Combining this number with the seats gained by the New Komeito Party gives the ruling coalition a total of 327 seats - more than two-thirds of the 480 seats in the Lower House.

On the same day, Mr Koizumi reappointed all 17 members of his second Cabinet, including Nobutaka Machimura as Foreign Minister. This third Cabinet line-up will be maintained until the 42-day special Diet session ends on November 1, after which the Cabinet and the LDP leadership are expected to be reshuffled.

At a press conference held after his re-election, Mr Koizumi said that he would consolidate the process of economic revitalisation without resorting to fiscal outlays in the last budget under his administration. He also cited fiscal decentralisation, reining in government personnel costs and Japan's humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Iraq as issues that he would address during his remaining one-year term after postal privatisation - the centrepiece of his policy agenda.

Prime Minister Tony Blair was one of the foreign leaders who called Prime Minister Koizumi on September 12 to congratulate him on his party's big victory. Mr Blair said that he wished to join efforts to tackle the common problems that face the international community.

In the week following the general election, Prime Minister Koizumi visited New York to attend the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of

the General Assembly of the United Nations and to meet the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

In his address, which followed the signing of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, Prime Minister Koizumi called for the early conclusion of negotiations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. He declared that Japan was ready to play a larger role as a permanent member in a reformed Security Council whose composition must reflect some fundamental changes of the past sixty years, saying, "Asia and Africa, once under the shackles of colonialism, are now significant players in our global community. For the last sixty years Japan has pursued a course of development as a peace-loving nation, making a unique and significant contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world."

During his meeting with Kofi Annan, Mr Koizumi told the UN Chief that Japan would continue its efforts to reform the UN Security Council. Mr Annan expressed his hope that Japan would apply its past experience of assisting Asian development towards helping Africa. 




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## Arrival of new JICC Director: Mami Mizutori



In mid-September, Ms Mami Mizutori arrived in London to take up her new post as JICC Director and Counsellor at the Embassy. She had previously held a variety of positions both in Japan

and abroad. In Tokyo, Ms Mizutori served as Director of the Status of US Forces Agreement Division, the United Nations Policy Division and the National Security Policy Division. She was also assigned to the Embassy of Japan in Mexico and, most recently, in the US. Ms Mizutori is very much looking forward to the challenge of her new role in London. 

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## Young Fabians at the Embassy



On July 12 the Embassy hosted a joint panel discussion and reception with over 100 members of the Young Fabians - the under-31 section of the Fabian Society, Britain's senior think tank affiliated to the Labour party.

On the panel were Ambassador Nogami, Minister Masafumi Ishii (Minister in charge of Political Affairs), Dr Chris Hughes from the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at Warwick University and Mr Sunder Katwala, General Secretary of the Fabian Society. The debate on 'No more Samurai; Where is Japan heading?' was chaired by Kevin Bonavia of the Young Fabians.

Ambassador Nogami commented on the need for the international system to reflect changes in Asia and the wider world, adding that systematic changes were required, in particular reform of the United Nations and the UN Security Council. 

## Japan Training Squadron visits Portsmouth

The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force Training Squadron docked in Portsmouth from June 24 to 29. The Squadron is composed of three vessels - JDS Kashima (TV-3508), JDS Murasame (DD-101) and JDS Yuugiri (DD-153) - and is headed by Rear Admiral Masahiro Shibata, who leads 750 officers and crew, including 180 newly commissioned officers.

As part of its 55,000km overseas training cruise, the Squadron visited 14 countries in five months to develop the trainee officers' skills and broaden their international outlook, while enhancing international maritime friendship and cooperation.

During the visit, the Japan Training Squadron joined naval fleets from over 40 countries for the International Fleet Review, held in Spithead, off Portsmouth, on June 28, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. 



Trainee officers in Portsmouth



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Ambassador Nogami delivers a speech at Canterbury Cathedral

## Reconciliation services promote peace




Ceremonial shaking of hands to represent friendship and reconciliation

Several events dedicated to the cause of reconciliation held recently were of particular significance due to the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

On July 20, the Embassy hosted the ninth Summer Reunion of Peace and Friendship, attended by many former prisoners of war, Civilian Internees and their families, and those who have fostered reconciliation through projects inspired by Japanese

Government initiatives. On August 21, Ambassador Nogami took part in a special service of friendship and reconciliation in Canterbury, while Minister Plenipotentiary Hiroyuki Kishino attended a similar service at Coventry Cathedral. Both events were co-ordinated by the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust and attended by local dignitaries, representatives of the German Embassy, and members of the Burma Campaign Society, including British and Japanese veterans, former POWs and their families.

Speaking after the service, Ambassador Nogami said, "The dreadful events of the Second World War gave solemn lessons to us all. We should not forget the past, and we must pass on the lessons learnt from the war to future generations. Japan, reflecting deeply on the past, has been doing its utmost to contribute to world peace and prosperity for 60 years." 

## Japanese companies win Queen's Award for Enterprise



Ambassador Nogami with Fujitsu staff and local dignitaries  
© FUJITSU TELECOMMUNICATIONS EUROPE LTD



Toyota's Burnaston plant, Derbyshire  
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Her Majesty the Queen conferred the Queen's Award for Enterprise on four Japanese companies in the UK on her birthday this year.


On July 15 Fujitsu Telecommunications Europe Ltd was recognised in the Innovation category for designing, developing and manufacturing the Geostream Access Gateway, a broadband platform which has captured more than half of the UK domestic market.

Managing Director Shigeyuki Unagami commented, "The Queen's Award acknowledges the benefits of rapid broadband rollout to UK homes and businesses and the trade and employment advantages that our company brings to the local community in the West Midlands region."

Air Bearings Ltd received an award in the same category for its development of a robust technology for driving small drill bits at ultra-high speeds.

On September 13 Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd received the Queen's Award for International Trade, which recognises the company's outstanding contribution to British exports between 2002 and 2004. Toyota employs 5,500 staff and exports two car models to 80 markets worldwide, typically contributing over £400 million a year to the UK's balance of payments.

Managing Director Hein Van Gerwen said, "This most prestigious award recognises our members' continued focus on superior quality and our company's commitment to delivering customer satisfaction across the globe."

Perkins Shibaura Engines Ltd received the same award for the outstanding export success of its design-winning 400 Series engines to the US, Europe and the Middle East. 

# Community-building in East Asia

## Japan seeks openness, transparency and inclusiveness

In late July, the Foreign Ministers of the countries of the Association of South East Asian Countries (ASEAN), together with those of Japan, China and the Republic of Korea, gathered in Vientiane, Laos, where they exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest. In particular, the ministers discussed the East Asia Summit (EAS) to be held in Malaysia this December. They noted that Australia, New Zealand and India would attend the first EAS as well as the ASEAN countries, Japan, China and South Korea. They welcomed ASEAN's commitment to keeping the EAS open, outward-looking and inclusive.

For the past ten years, the concept of 'community-building' has been widely discussed among government officials and members of the business community, academia and think-tanks at various levels as a shared goal for the future in the East Asian region. The importance attached to this vision stems from the traditional weakness of ties among the countries in the region. This situation was exacerbated during the Cold War, when political and ideological barriers hindered closer regional cooperation.

Over the last decade two major events became catalysts for drastic change. One was the financial crisis of 1997, which awakened people of the region to the need for a regional approach to secure their prosperity. The other comprised the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which underscored the importance of regional cooperation in addressing terrorism and other transnational issues. Especially after these events, regional networks to promote functional cooperation covering a wide range of issues swiftly developed. For instance, they addressed finance (the Chiang Mai Initiative and the Asian Bond Market Initiative) as well as transnational issues including terrorism, drug-trafficking, maritime piracy, trafficking in people and non-proliferation.

ASEAN, which has played a leading role in regional cooperation in East Asia, has hosted a number of key forums, including ASEAN+3 (Japan, China and the Republic of Korea). These forums have led the way in community-building in East Asia.

In 1999, the leaders of ASEAN+3 at their summit in Manila issued the 'Joint Statement on East Asian Cooperation', which stressed the importance of promoting regional cooperation over a wide range of issues at various levels.

In November 2001, the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG), which had been formed at the Manila summit and which comprised intellectuals of the ASEAN+3 countries, submitted to the ASEAN+3 leaders a report which envisioned an East Asian community and suggested ideas to promote community-building. The EAVG report identified four core functions for an East Asian community: (1) to collaborate to promote a stable and cooperative security environment based on mutual trust and respect; (2) to promote trade, investment and financial cooperation so as to foster common prosperity; (3) to be mindful of disparities in socio-economic development, educational attainment and technological advances in the region; and (4) to improve governance, strengthen basic rights and boost the quality of life for all.

In November 2002, the East Asia Study Group (EASG), consisting

of senior government officials of the ASEAN+3 countries, submitted to the ASEAN+3 leaders a final report which recommended 17 short-term measures and 9 medium- and long-term measures to

achieve the goal of community-building. These developments within the ASEAN+3 framework have provided a solid foundation and the political momentum for future efforts.

In order to achieve the creation of an East Asian community, Japan considers a functional approach to be appropriate. It is worth recalling that the unification of Europe commenced with functional cooperation in such fields as atomic energy, coal, iron and steel. On this basis, it is important that the formation of an East Asian community take place in line with universal values and global rules.

As for the demarcation between EAS and ASEAN, Japan regards EAS as the forum for discussing in general and strategic terms the fundamentals of regional cooperation and approaches to it. On the other hand, at the ASEAN+3 leaders' meetings, discussions should focus on the practicalities of cooperation. Japan also considers that, in order to promote open, regional cooperation, it is important to involve Australia, New Zealand and India.

Japan thinks that, based on the values of open regionalism (openness, transparency and inclusiveness), the EAS leaders should affirm the importance of certain core principles. These principles include the following: firstly, the EAS should adopt a functional approach; secondly, it should embrace respect for the universal values of freedom, democracy and human rights, as well as conformity to global rules such as those of the World Trade Organisation; and thirdly, it should promote human and academic exchanges with a view to nurturing a deeper sense of community. Finally, Japan expects that the first EAS in Malaysia in December will provide an historic opportunity for the leaders to reaffirm their political commitment to promoting regional cooperation with a view to building an East Asian community in the future and for them to identify the basic principles of community-building and approaches to achieving it. ■

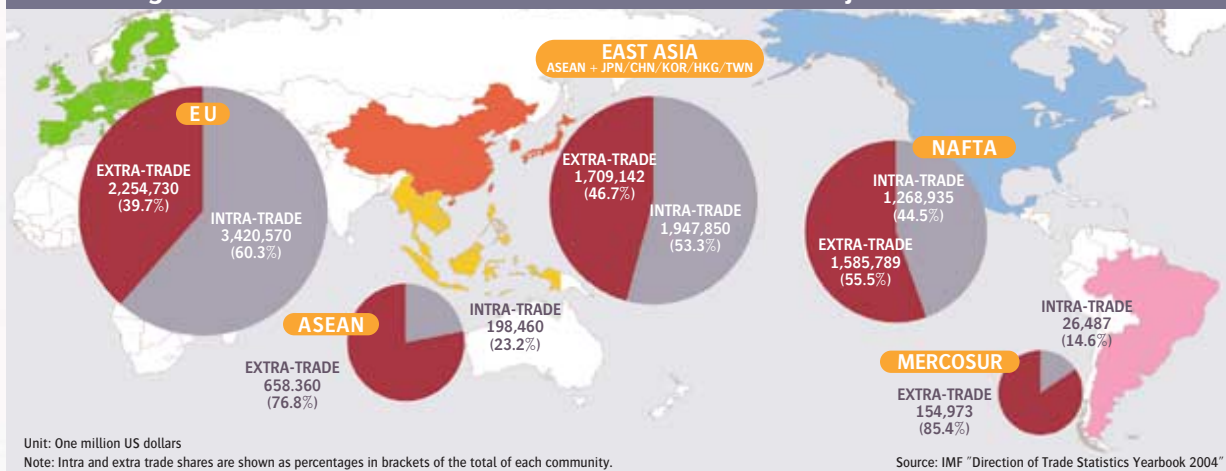


ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Informal Meeting, Kyoto, May 2005

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### JAPAN IN ASIA

#### Shares and grand totals for intra and extra trade of East Asia and the major economic communities 2003





This year the **EAT JAPAN 2005 festival** ([www.eat-japan.com](http://www.eat-japan.com)), supported by the Embassy, will drink and culture in the UK. Four expert "foodies" provide *On Japan* readers with the keys to



## CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

Christopher Dawson is Chairman of Clearspring Ltd, a natural foods import and distribution company. He spent 18 years living in Japan, and his ambition is to unite the best of East and West by bringing together the highest quality foods and culinary traditions of Japan, Europe and North America.

### What are the characteristics of traditional Japanese cuisine and its ingredients?

In Japanese cuisine there is more emphasis on vegetable quality foods than animal foods. The huge variety of seasonal foods results in an appreciation of when the different foods are in season and their suitability for providing satisfaction at the time of year when their quality is at its best. Also, there is less emphasis on main courses and sweet desserts.

### What are the main differences between Japanese and Western foods and what do you think has led to these differences?

Japanese food places emphasis on subtle tastes and flavours. Appearance is almost as important as the actual taste and the quality of each dish is more important than the quantity. Care is taken to make the dishes very digestible.

These differences could be explained by the relative scarcity of arable land in Japan, which has created the need to gain the maximum nutrition value from the available grains, vegetables, fresh fruits and limited animal products. Culturally,

Buddhist traditions have emphasised vegetarianism, and Japan's distinct four season climate has also had an impact on the cuisine.

### What kinds of seasonings are used to flavour and enrich Japanese cuisine?

A sweet seasoning, especially *mirin*\*, is used in many Japanese dishes, creating a good balance of savoury and sweet tastes throughout the meal,



which satisfies the palate and does not lead to a craving for a sweet dessert. Soya sauces are used to flavour savoury dishes, rather than just salt. Also, the use of 'umami'\* flavour, naturally found in *kombu* (kelp) and shiitake mushroom stock, gives more substance and depth to many dishes.

Fermentation using *koji* culture\* increases the bio-availability of the nutrients in foods. Certain vegetable condiments and garnishes such as grated daikon radish, *wasabi* or ginger are used to aid digestion and also avoid parasite development. Pickles made from seasonal vegetables and salt are often eaten during and/or at the end of the meal, to promote digestion. 🍱

\**mirin*: a low-alcohol, sweet, golden wine made from glutinous rice  
\**umami*: "the fifth taste"

\**koji* culture: the catalyst and most important ingredient in the traditional manufacture of Japanese fermented foods



## ANNICA WAINWRIGHT

Annica Wainwright is events editor and restaurant critic for the Square Meal Guide, Magazine and website. Based on ten years' experience of eating out in London, she describes the current trends in Japanese dining.

### What elements of Japanese food do you like best?

I like the clean, fresh tastes and the fact that most dishes are based on just a few good-quality ingredients. The food is usually very beautifully presented but it doesn't just look good - it makes you feel good, too. Light flavours and a comparatively low fat content means you can eat a lot and still feel great afterwards. It's indulgent in a guilt-free kind of way.

### What do you think of the current boom in Japanese foods and restaurants in London? Why do you think Japanese cuisine is so popular?

I find the increased accessibility of Japanese food in this country really exciting. Not only have Japanese restaurants themselves evolved but many

British chefs are now also experimenting with Japanese techniques and ingredients. I think the recent rise in the popularity of the cuisine went hand in hand with the past few years' craze for diets and healthy eating.

### What kinds of Japanese restaurants can be found in the UK?

These days, the options are almost endless, particularly in London, where you can find anything from tiny sushi bars to glitzy power diners. A nice recent development is that it is now possible to enjoy traditional Japanese food in a modern setting.

### What is the common trend of Japanese restaurants in the UK?

I think the success of the modern Japanese restaurant concept has created a trend for evolved Japanese food and the fusion of its recipes with ingredients from many different cuisines. Most Japanese restaurants will now offer at least one or two dishes with a modern twist.



I've also noticed Japanese ingredients popping up on non-Japanese menus, for example wasabi mayonnaise with steak and chips.

### Do you have any advice on how to fully enjoy the dining experience at a Japanese restaurant?

I'd say always ask staff for recommendations and avoid going straight for 'safe bets' like salmon sushi or chicken teriyaki. There's always something new to discover. The fact that meals aren't usually your typical three-course affair means that there's plenty of scope to experiment and it's often possible to order several small dishes for the table to share. 🍱

highlight and celebrate Japanese food, enjoying Japanese food in the UK.



## SAYAKA WATANABE

Sake (Japanese rice wine) is enjoying increasing popularity in the UK. Sayaka Watanabe, Zuma's sake sommelier, introduces the qualities of sake and explains how it is synonymous with Japanese culture.

### What are the main differences between sake and wine?

Wine is made from grapes whereas sake is made from rice. The sake-brewing process is unique and more complex. Rice does not contain pure sugar like grapes, so the starch in the grains has to be converted into sugar. This is done by cultivating it with *koji* moulds, which break down rice starch into glucose. After yeast is added fermentation begins and alcohol is produced.



### What tips would you give people who want to try sake?

I think *ginjo* or *junmai ginjo*\* are the easiest varieties to start with as they are light, fruity and very smooth. Sake can be enjoyed hot (*atsukan*), chilled (*reishu*) or at room temperature (*jouon*). Generally



*daiginjo*\* and *ginjo*\* (premium) grades are better drunk neat and chilled, which allows you to enjoy the full flavour and fragrance, while normal grade *junmai-shu* and *honjozo-shu*\* can be served warm since the

taste will become sweeter when heated. In winter, good hot sake will warm you to the core of your bones! Simply place a small decanter of sake into a pan of hot water and warm gently, taking care not to boil as this spoils the flavour.

### Does sake complement western foods? What kinds of dishes go well with sake in particular?

Sake is a very versatile drink. It makes a great aperitif, dinner accompaniment or dessert wine. Clean and smooth *daiginjo* works well with roast chicken and vegetables. Strong, pungent sake goes well with egg or dairy dishes like creamy pasta. Mild and less acidic fruity *ginjo* goes with white fish, while crisp, dry sake is good with smoked salmon or duck. Rich *honjozo-shu*\* is delicious with spicy curries.



FOOD PHOTOS © CROSS MEDIA



### What do you think makes sake such a special drink?

I personally think sake reflects much of Japanese culture. It represents and describes the beauty of Japan. Rice is a symbol of Japanese food culture and sake is the essence of this precious crop, carefully brewed by highly skilled people. We treasure and respect rice, water and human warmth. A sip of sake will be absorbed by your body slowly and will bring out a really happy smile. Please give it a try! 🍷

#### The four basic types of sake:

\**junmai-shu* (rice only; no adding of distilled alcohol)

\**honjozo-shu* (a touch of distilled alcohol is added)

\**ginjo* (highly milled rice, with or without alcohol added)

\**daiginjo* (even more highly milled rice, with/without added alcohol)



## FIONA BECKETT

Food journalist Fiona Beckett speaks about the appeal of Japanese cuisine for British people and how it can be incorporated into our regular diet.

### What do you like best about Japanese food?

If I had to pick out one element it would be its purity by which I mean the cleanness and intensity of its flavours. I love the visual impact of a Japanese meal - the arrangement of colour and shape on the plate, the conscious use of plates and bowls as part of the presentation of the food and how they relate to the seasons. I love its healthiness and the balance between different components of the meal. It's a cuisine that satisfies all the senses.



### What is the appeal of the Japanese cuisine for British people?

I think Japanese is seen as one of the hipper cuisines. Also, people perceive it as healthy and the flavours are very addictive. Although people are only starting to be conscious of *umami* as a taste I think it appeals to them and they are beginning to associate it with Japanese food.

#### What is umami?

*Umami* is the so-called fifth taste. It is best described as the intense savouriness you find in ingredients such as dried mushrooms, shellfish, ripe tomatoes and Parmesan cheese. *Umami* features strongly in Japanese cuisine and is naturally found in ingredients like miso and *kombu* (kelp).

### What does Japanese cuisine mean for you and what makes it stand out from other foreign food?

I was extremely impressed by the wonderful *kaiseki* (haute cuisine) meal I had when I visited Japan. The flavours and textures of Japanese food are



quite distinctive and very pure. It's light but intense with the aim of achieving overall balance and harmony. Also, quite simply, I think Japanese-style is one of the very best ways to eat fish!

### Can you recommend any lesser-known Japanese foods which might appeal to the British palate?

The British are quite into noodles so would be receptive to more authentic Japanese noodle dishes like *soba* (buckwheat) and *udon* (wholewheat). Japanese ways of cooking steak would also appeal to them. Few people get to taste Japanese food at its best. Fridge-chilled supermarket sushi is not a patch on freshly made sushi. I think people need more information about Japanese food and cooking and access to good Japanese ingredients so that they can try cooking recipes at home. 🍷



## Japanese pupils participate in J8 Summit

Three pupils and one teacher from Tokyo Metropolitan Kokusai (International) Senior High School attended the inaugural J8 Edinburgh 2005 Summit - a youth forum modelled on the actual G8, organised by the UK's Department for Education and Skills, from July 3 to 6.

Ninety-two pupils aged 13 to 16 from the UK and 21 pupils from the seven other G8 countries participated in workshops, listened to

eminent guest speakers, debated topical issues and discussed their joint message to the G8 leaders. A written communiqué was presented to

Prime Minister Tony Blair at the beginning of the G8 Summit. The J8 Communiqué includes a call for strengthened relations between G8 and African



Japanese participants Takuma Nakamori, Chika Tabata and Natsuki Kuwahara at the Scottish Parliament

countries and, on the issue of climate change, states 'We believe that globally responsible governments must promote a greater understanding of how personal actions affect the whole environment.'

Takuma Nakamori commented, "I think the initiative to gather students from around the world is wonderful and should be continued." Natsuki Kuwahara added, "Working together and exchanging ideas with peers from other countries has raised our awareness and has broadened our perspective on global issues." And Chika Tabata said, "This once in a lifetime experience has deepened our mutual understanding and boosted our existing friendship." ■



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Scene from *Howl's Moving Castle*

## Premiere Japan '05 Film Festival

Movie fans enjoyed special screenings of popular Japanese films at the Premiere Japan '05 Film Festival organised by the Embassy at BAFTA from September 2 to 4. Titles selected by the world-renowned East Asian film critic Tony Rayns included: *Howl's Moving Castle*, master animator Hayao Miyazaki's adaptation of the novel by Diana Wynne Jones, *Hidden Blade* by Yoji Yamada, *Hinokio* by new director Takahiko Akiyama and the musical fantasia *Princess Raccoon*. ■



Ambassador Nogami with Diana Wynne Jones and Tony Rayns

## New JETs leave for Japan

The latest group of UK participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme attended a farewell reception



Ambassador Nogami wishes the new JETs well

at the Embassy on July 22 before departing for Japan the following week. This year 390 UK graduates and young professionals will work in Japan for one year or more (up to three years), either as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in state schools or as Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) for local governments. Their role is to foster mutual understanding between Japan and other countries through grassroots exchange.

Ambassador Nogami wished the new JETs well by saying, "My hope is that you will not only get to know Japan, but that you will also come to understand different cultures and different ways of thinking at a much deeper level."

Now in its 19th year, the JET programme has recruited approximately 8,500 UK participants to date. ■



An ALT at a Japanese elementary school

## CULTURE

## Award-winning Ikebana at the Chelsea Flower Show

Ikebana - the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging - was recognised again at this year's Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show, held in London from May 24 to 28. Ikebana of Kensington & Chelsea, headed by Angela Sawano of the Ohara School in London, won a Gold Medal in the Great Pavilion category for the third consecutive year.

Entitled *Shibumi* ('quiet taste'), the exhibit consisted of arrangements made in beautiful baskets from Mrs Sawano's own collection, using only yellow and orange coloured flowers to express the Japanese ideal of *shibumi*.

Mrs Sawano commented, "I am delighted that the judges can appreciate the simplicity and beauty of Ikebana. I am very happy that my students and I are able to introduce this beautiful Japanese art to the visitors to Chelsea."



Award-winning Ikebana arrangement 'Shibumi'

Angela Sawano studied Ikebana in Japan and has been devoted to its promotion in the UK for the past 25 years.

In addition, the Ichiyo School of Ikebana UK Chapter won a Silver Gilt Medal for their exhibit *Hanamichi* ('Flower Path'), inspired by the idea of a kabuki actor entering the stage. ■



Ikebana Kensington & Chelsea members

© ANGELA SAWANO

© ANGELA SAWANO



## VISIT JAPAN! INTERVIEW CATH PHILLIPS

Cath Phillips, Editor of the latest edition of the *Time Out Tokyo* city guide, now available in bookshops, spoke to *On Japan* about how to get the best out of a trip to Tokyo.



Visit Japan Campaign in the UK



Tokyo City View observation deck, Roppongi Hills

### As a travel editor, you have been to many big cities around the world. What are the unique charms of Tokyo in comparison with other cities?

Tokyo feels like the ultimate modern metropolis - all gleaming skyscrapers, giant video screens, glowing neon, vending machines, space-age gadgetry, bullet trains etc. It seems blazingly brand-new and dynamic in comparison with fusty old Europe, and is an incredibly thrilling city to explore. The traditional side of Japan - temples, shrines, kabuki, ryokan - is fascinating, especially set against such relentless modernity. British visitors will be pleasantly surprised by Tokyo's affordability - and the many and varied shopping opportunities! Compared with other big cities, Tokyo is also remarkably safe and unthreatening.

### Can you recommend any good places to visit to enjoy traditional and contemporary Tokyo, including those off the beaten track?

Harajuku at the weekend is a must-see for a fascinating mix of old and new. Take a stroll down Omotesando (lined with top-end designer shops and some astonishing contemporary architecture), then a detour down Takeshita-dori (ground zero for teen hipsters) and cross the bridge over the railway tracks to the Meiji Shrine, Tokyo's largest and most important Shinto shrine. Quiet, tree-lined paths lead to the remarkably serene shrine complex. Asakusa Kannon Temple (aka Senso-ji) also hums with tradition and is wonderfully atmospheric; the stalls along Nakamise-dori leading up to the main entrance sell old-fashioned souvenirs and snacks.

Obvious spots for a taste of modern Tokyo are the Hachiko pedestrian crossing outside Shibuya station, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building to the west of Shinjuku station and the neon-lined streets to the east and the Roppongi Hills complex. Asakura Choso Museum in Yanaka, once the home/studio of a leading Japanese sculptor, is also a low-key delight and has a beautiful enclosed water garden.



Omotesando, main approach to the Meiji Shrine



Meiji Jingu Shrine

### Is language a problem for the average British traveller in Tokyo?

Language is not the barrier you might expect. Although many signs in shops and on the street are in Japanese only, excellent English signage on trains and subways makes a big difference. Many young Tokyoites speak English, and shop and restaurant workers are increasingly geared up for foreign customers. If you can, learn some katakana (a Japanese syllabary); it will significantly improve your understanding and appreciation.

### Is there a range of accommodation available to suit all budgets? How do you rate the service given by hotel staff?



Bustling Shibuya

Accommodation can certainly be pricey - there are some super-luxurious and super-expensive hotels in Tokyo, among the best in the world - but there are plenty of mid-range and budget hotels too. Ryokan (with futons, tatami mats and

communal baths) are usually cheaper than western-style hotels. Service is very good; staff are ultra-polite and helpful in sorting out any problem.

### Could you describe the range of eating establishments available in Tokyo?

There is - unsurprisingly - an unparalleled range of Japanese eating establishments, from expensive, high-end restaurants to wallet-friendly noodle bars. Super-sleek fashionista hangouts rub shoulders with homely izakayas. If you want to explore the vast variety of Japanese cuisine, there is no better place. It's not always obvious to the first-timer what a restaurant offers, but the best approach is to just dive in.

### Is it easy to get around Tokyo? Are there any difficulties in using public transport?

Tokyo's train and subway system is one of the marvels of the modern world - comprehensive, fast, reliable, clean, safe - and a constant source of amazement to visitors accustomed to the dirt, delays and irritations of urban public transport elsewhere. Signage is well laid out and in English. To make life easier, buy a prepaid travel pass rather than individual tickets, and avoid morning and evening rush hours.

### Do you think a trip to Tokyo is relatively costly in comparison with other major cities in the world?

Tokyo (and Japan, in general) still has a reputation for being expensive, but that's simply no longer true. It's not cheap, but prices are certainly comparable to other major cities - and Londoners will be pleasantly surprised by how little things can cost. Eating out, for example, can be very good value, especially if you take advantage of lunchtime set meals. Admission to sights and museums is often free or only a few hundred yen. Public transport is not expensive, but avoid taxis. As for shopping, designer brands are big business but so too are 100-yen (approximately 50 pence) shops and second-hand outlets, so bargain-hunters will get their fix!



Asakusa's Kaminari-mon and Nakamise-dori (street)

TRAVEL



## Art at the Embassy Embassy of Japan Foyer Gallery, London

### JAPANESE EMBROIDERY EXHIBITION

10 – 21 October

Selected works of Japanese embroidery by students and professional embroiderers from Kurenai-kai in Japan and the Japanese Embroidery Center in the US. The display includes examples of highly detailed and intricate kimono and *obi* (sash) which have been stitched by embroiderers from Japan, the US and UK. 


[www.kurenai-kai.jp](http://www.kurenai-kai.jp) [www.japaneseembroidery.com](http://www.japaneseembroidery.com)



'Torikabuto'

© JAPANESE EMBROIDERY CENTER

### YUGYO 31 October – 25 November

Isao Miura (painter), Midori Nishizawa (sculptor) and Nana Shiomi (printmaker) are three Japanese artists based in London who all graduated from the Royal College of Art in the early 1990s. Their wide-ranging and inspirational works are sharply contemporary yet often reference the past of their homeland. 



© ISAO MIURA



© MIDORI NISHIZAWA




© NANA SHIOMI

## Japanese collections at the V&A

13 October 2005 – 1 May 2006

Toshiba Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, London  
[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

### Fashioning Kimono: Dress in early 20th century Japan

The boldly patterned and brilliantly coloured kimono featured in this display reveal the dynamism of early 20th century Japanese textile design. The garments, for women, men and children, are borrowed from a major private collection and are being exhibited for the first time. The display will be rotated on December 12 and February 20. 




*Chrysanthemums*, Plain-weave handspun pongee silk (*tsumugi meisen*); stencil-printed warp and weft threads, Taisho period (1910s)

© MONTGOMERY COLLECTION



Covered vessel  
Patinated, gilt and inlaid iron  
Signed: 'Made by Kawaguchi of Tokyo City, Great Japan' c.1885-1910

### Cast and Chased: Japanese Bronzes of the Meiji Period


The Edwin and Susan Davies collection of Japanese bronzes of the late 19th century includes superb examples of the work of the craftsman metalworker and the objects illustrate a wide range of metalworking techniques. The pieces are chiefly figurative and include subjects from Japanese mythology as well as decorative animal studies. The display will be complemented by a few select examples of artworks of the Meiji period (1868-1912) in other materials. 

## Discover Japan at Tatton Park

19 – 30 October

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire  
[www.tattonpark.org.uk](http://www.tattonpark.org.uk)

Discover more about Japan, its gardens and its culture at Tatton Park, home of one of Europe's finest Japanese gardens, which will soon

be in spectacular Autumn colour. Take part in courses and workshops and enjoy illustrated talks by Professor Fukuhara of Osaka University of Arts, as well as exhibitions, flower displays and a Japanese archery (*kyudo*) demonstration. 



© TATTON PARK

Japanese garden in Autumn colour


## Speech Contest for University Students

28 January 2006

(apply by 20 November 2005)

Khalili Theatre, SOAS, London

[www.jpjpf.org.uk](http://www.jpjpf.org.uk); [www.batj.org.uk](http://www.batj.org.uk)


Undergraduates studying Japanese as a foreign language in the UK and Ireland are invited to take part in a new annual speech contest organised by the Japan Foundation London and the British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (BATJ). The aim of the event is to improve speaking skills in Japanese as well as to further promote Japanese language studies in Higher Education. 

## The Toshiba Lectures in Japanese Art

Towards a better tea bowl – Art, industry and ambition in 17th century Japan

[www.sainsbury-institute.org](http://www.sainsbury-institute.org)



A series of lectures by Louise A Cort, Curator for Ceramics at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. 

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### 11 November

#### Polishing a Potter's Skills: Kyuemon's Study Tour

BP Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, The British Museum, London

### 15 November

#### Competing Visions of Daimyo-Sponsored Ceramics

Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London

### 17 November

#### Screens, Pots and Dried Fish: Inventing Official Gifts

Blackfriar's Hall, St Andrew's Plain, Norwich

For the latest news and information on Japan-UK relations, please visit the Embassy's website [www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp)

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