

Prime Minister Koizumi at the Asian-African Summit

Leaders of 46 Asian and African countries gathered at a summit in Jakarta, Indonesia from April 22 to 23 to discuss and chart their future cooperation. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi participated in an exchange of views about what the countries of Asia and Africa must do to enhance global peace and prosperity in the 21st century. He also launched new initiatives relating to Japan's assistance to African nations.



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education, as well as humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in conflict areas. Mr Koizumi announced that Japan would hold TICAD IV in 2008, and that in the three years to come Japan would double its ODA to Africa, with grant aid continuing to be its central feature.

To strengthen cooperation between Asia and Africa, Japan proposes creating an Asia-Africa Young Volunteers programme, whereby young Asians would meet, interact with and promote human resource development among the youth of Africa.

Japan considers peace-building in Africa to be of great importance and will provide a US \$100 million package of ODA assistance in the short term, following the conclusion in January of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

With regard to debt relief, Japan will work actively towards the promotion of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, to which it is the largest contributor among all creditor countries.

In his keynote speech at the Asia-Africa Business Summit, Mr Koizumi proposed promoting in Africa 'the productivity movement', which was one of the driving forces behind growth in Asia, in line with his policy of supporting Africa's own efforts for establishing an industrial foundation and developing human resources to facilitate trade and investment. He then announced that Japan would host the fourth Africa-Asia Business Forum (AABF IV) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide an opportunity for private companies in Asia and Africa to hold discussions and negotiations. A total of 190 memoranda, worth US \$140 million, were concluded in the previous forums held in Japan. In conclusion, Mr Koizumi stated that Japan would provide further support for the 'entrepreneurial spirit' upon which Asia-Africa cooperation was based. ■

The development assistance which Japan has extended to Asian and African regions to date has focused on human resource development, infrastructure building, and health and sanitation measures. Japan's bilateral official development assistance (ODA) to Africa has reached a cumulative total of approximately US \$24 billion since 1960.

Stating that Japan places great emphasis on the strengthening of partnerships in the areas of poverty reduction and development, Prime Minister Koizumi declared, "The most critical thing is each nation's determination to bring about development through its own will and efforts." He added that Japan would continue to work towards the goal of providing 0.7% of its gross national income in ODA to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

Japan has advanced cooperation towards Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process. Initiated in 1993, TICAD is one of the world's largest forums for African development, co-organised by Japan, the United Nations and others. Through the TICAD process, Japan has provided support for a wide range of sectors such as agriculture, water supply and



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Minister Koike attends Energy and Environment Ministerial Roundtable

On March 15 and 16, Energy and Environment Ministers from 20 countries gathered in London to discuss further international cooperation on creating lower carbon energy systems to combat

climate change over the next 50 years. This Roundtable was the very first of its kind.

Japan's Minister of the Environment, Yuriko Koike, stated that the Japanese Diet had unanimously passed a resolution to make the utmost effort not only to ensure that Japan's commitments under the

Kyoto Protocol are met, but also to realise a low-carbon economy ahead of other countries.

With regard to climate change, Minister Koike called for concrete action on a global scale and stressed the importance of information sharing, saying, "The ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has not been quantified, although it advocates long-term aspects. I believe that by sending explicit and long-term policy signals we need to make further efforts towards fostering our common understanding as well as sharing and compiling scientific knowledge."

She also talked about the '3R Initiative' (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), which was launched through the advocacy of Prime Minister Koizumi, "Japan has been promoting the 3R Initiative through international cooperation. We believe the 3R Initiative will also contribute to the establishment of a low-carbon economy." ■

Minister Koike delivers a speech ©TERRY MOORE

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister Koike with Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP ©TERRY MOORE



Delegates of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group

UK-Japan 21st Century Group 21st Annual Meeting

The UK-Japan 21st Century Group held its 21st meeting from 11 to 13 March in Tokyo and Nagoya under the joint chairmanship of Hon. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Member of the House of Representatives and the Rt Hon Dr Jack Cunningham MP. The Group was established in 1985 in order to study Japan-UK cooperation, based on an agreement between the then Prime Ministers, Yasuhiro Nakasone and Margaret Thatcher. Members include MPs, former diplomats, business executives, academics and journalists. The annual meetings are held alternately in Japan and the UK.

The meeting itself covered topics such as the role of Japan in East Asia. It was pointed out that there were several challenges to be met, such as how to engage the United States, and the place of China in the proposed regional integration. There is, nonetheless, a growing feeling among Japanese that Japan's future is closely linked to East Asian regional development.

On the topic of 'UK-Japan Cooperation in responding to Global Challenges', it was recommended that the two governments should develop a mechanism for regular consultation and information exchange on these challenges, with a view to encouraging closer cooperation.

Other topics discussed in this year's forum included 'The UK in the European Union', 'New Challenges of International Energy Security: Potential for UK-Japan Cooperation', 'How to Balance Economic Development with Protection of the Environment' and 'Economic and Security Implications in the Rise of China'. ■

Note: The discussions of this forum are independent from the views and policies of both governments.

Japan-UK Dialogue on Afghan Reconstruction



Ambassador Komano with Vice-Chancellor Alison Richard of Cambridge University

The Japan-UK Conference on Human Security: The Case of Afghan Reconstruction was held in Cambridge on March 23. The meeting was organised by Cambridge University's Department of Politics and sponsored by the Embassy of Japan.

The 100 participants included representatives of Japanese and British reconstruction assistance and aid organisations, academics from Cambridge University and representatives of Afghan communities in the UK. The conference was chaired by Professor Geoffrey Hawthorn and Dr Marissa Quie of the University's

Department of Politics. Mr Kinichi Komano,

Japan's Ambassador in charge of NGO, Afghanistan Assistance Coordination and Human Security, delivered the keynote speech in which he mentioned the success of joint efforts by Afghanistan and the international community towards peace and prosperity.

Ambassador Komano also talked about the Japanese aid programme, the 'Ogata Initiative', which supports returnees (refugees and IDPs) settling back in their places of origin, as an instrument for improving human security in Afghanistan.

"As the people have especially demonstrated their will and aspirations for peace and prosperity for their own country, we should nurture them and encourage them to undertake more roles in overall community and nation-building efforts."

Among the other speakers, Mr Kazuo Tase, representative of the UN Security Unit, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, introduced the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which is solely provided by the Government of Japan. ■



Japan at the International Food & Drink Exhibition

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Koizumi launched an initiative to double Japan's exports of agricultural products over five years. Last year Japan exported £1.5 billion worth of food products in response to the ever-increasing demand from countries that are currently enjoying a boom in Japanese cuisine.

At the International Food & Drink Exhibition (IFE) held in London in mid-March, around twelve wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers of Japanese products exhibited an array of unique, high quality items selected from all over Japan. These included sake, exclusive wines, green tea, fish, rice, soba (buckwheat) noodles, processed and frozen foods such as croquettes and condiments like rice vinegar. The Japanese booth, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), was officially opened at a reception attended by Minister Kishino of the Embassy who explained why Japanese food is so popular, "The key elements of Japanese food and dishes are: firstly, their health-giving properties; secondly, their delicacy of taste;

and thirdly, the exquisite beauty of their presentation."

Mr Hiroyuki Kinoshita, Vice-Minister for International Affairs at MAFF added, "Japan, with four distinct seasons and surrounded by glorious seas and mountains, produces safe foodstuffs to an extremely high standard."

Visitors to the Japanese booth at the IFE enjoy samples of food and drink



Japan reaffirms commitment to reconciliation

The Government of Japan has reflected sincerely on the events of World War II and has expressed deep remorse for the hardship and suffering caused to many British former prisoners of war. It has also initiated a number of projects aimed at fostering reconciliation between former combatants from the two countries and their descendants.

These initiatives reflect the Government's conviction that, as well as instructing the younger generation about the horrors of war so that such things are never repeated, it is indispensable to build and strengthen relations with the countries concerned on the basis of mutual understanding and trust. For this reason, Japan set up the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Programme in 1995, to which approximately ¥12 million has been allocated to date.

Japan has thereby assisted Japan-British organisations in fostering exchange visits to and from Japan in which 844 people, mainly former POWs and their families, have taken part so far. Japan has also sponsored pilgrimages

by both Japanese and British war veterans to former battlegrounds in South East Asia.

In another initiative focused on young people, the standard-bearers of Japan-UK relations in the future, British secondary school students, including the grandchildren of former POWs, are invited to visit Japan where they attend school and live with Japanese families.

This year, Ambassador Nogami and Minister Kishino will attend services of reconciliation organised by Japanese and British war veterans in Canterbury and Coventry Cathedrals.



Mr Leonard Harrop MBE, Mr Masao Hirakubo OBE and Colonel Benz K Jacob at a memorial service in Northeast India (April 2004)

Conservative Future Reception

On March 10 the Embassy hosted a joint panel discussion and reception with over 100 members of Conservative Future, the youth wing of the British Conservative Party. The theme of the evening was, 'Japan-UK, Common culture? Common freedom? Common trade?'

After introductory remarks by Minister Hiroyuki Kishino and Paul Bristow (Conservative Future Chairman), Minister Kenji Hiramatsu (Consul General) and Minister Shigeyuki Hiroki (Minister in charge of Economic Affairs) explained the economic and political challenges facing Japan. The discussion was chaired by Minister Masafumi Ishii (Minister in charge of Political Affairs).

Conservative Future members then asked the panel about the common issues facing Japan and the UK including the situation in North Korea, United Nations reform and Chinese economic expansion. Participants were also interested in how Japan was tackling domestic issues, ranging from public transport to education and the health service.

Nigel Evans MP, Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party, emphasised the importance of strong Japan-UK relations. The common feeling was that Japan and the UK could better achieve their goals by working together.



Conservative Future members engaged in discussion

Japan Society Awards 2005



At the Japan Society Annual Dinner on April 12, the Society's Patron, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, presented Yushin

Toda and Louis Turner with this year's Japan Society Awards for significant contributions to Japan-UK relations.

Yushin Toda, Administrator of Glasgow University's Europe-Japan Social Science Research Centre, was honoured for his commitment to fostering academic dialogue between Japan and Europe in the social science field as well as introducing numerous British audiences to Japanese culture, the economy and politics.

Louis Turner was recognised for his long-term efforts to promote science and technology links between Japan and the UK through his role as co-founder and Chief Executive of the Asia-Pacific Technology Network (APTNet), in which he has organised the UK-Japan-High Technology Industries Forum for 20 years.



HRH The Duke of Gloucester presents Yushin Toda (above) and Louis Turner (right) with their awards

NEWS IN BRIEF



SENEGAL

Project on Safe Water and the Support of Community Activities



Over the past 20 years, Japan has extended ¥10.9 billion in grant assistance to Senegal to improve the water supply infrastructure in rural areas (109 constructions and 12 rehabilitations). Thanks to this support, many women and children in those villages have been freed from water carrying chores. The local communities now benefit from more hygienic lifestyles, greatly contributing to an improvement in their living standards.

From 2003, the Japanese Government decided to carry out a new project called 'Safe Water and the Support of Community Activities' (PEPTAC - *Projet de l'Eau Potable pour Tous et de l'Appui aux Activités Communautaires*). This project is being carried out by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) with the aim of assisting the reform of the water management systems both in government administrations and local community associations, in order to ensure sustainable development and further improvement in the quality of life of the local inhabitants. A total of 25 villages in the Louga, Matam, Saint Louis, Thies and Tambacounda regions have been selected.

JICA technical experts are working actively for the local communities, the existing administration and private local businesses to strengthen their capacity for carrying out water management, as well as providing methods of maintenance, organising seminars and inviting Senegalese counterparts to train in Japan.

Thaiba Ndiaye and Moukh Moukh are model sites demonstrating the successful production of a diverse range of vegetable crops together with poultry farming as part of the project, which has further improved the living standards of the local residents.



Overview of Japan's Policy on Cooperation with Africa

1. Continued Commitment to Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process – Japan's leadership role for African development through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)

- (1) Concerned about the decline in international interest in Africa as a result of the end of the Cold War, Japan has taken the initiative in leading international efforts to support African development since the commencement of the TICAD process in 1993. As the host country of the G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in 2000, Japan invited African countries for the first time in the history of the G8 Summit and contributed towards putting African issues on the summit agenda.
- (2) The key concepts promoted by TICAD include the principles of ownership and partnership, the promotion of South-South cooperation (especially Asia-Africa cooperation), the enhancement of human security and respect for the diversity of Africa.
- (3) Japan has contributed more than US \$12.7 billion in fields such as basic human needs, infrastructure and agriculture through bilateral ODA since 1993. In debt relief, Japan will cancel ODA yen-loan debts amounting to approximately US \$3 billion for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in Africa.

2. Support for Africa – For the implementation of the TICAD process and the G8 Africa Action Plan, Japan has been extending assistance to Africa based on the following three pillars:

(1) Consolidation of peace:

Introducing a comprehensive approach ranging from the promotion of peace in conflict areas to seamless reconstruction efforts for the purpose of building the basis for development.

(a) Contribution to peacekeeping operations (PKOs):

Japan's contribution in the seven UN-PKO missions currently operating in Africa will be US \$550 million for FY 2004/2005.

(b) Support for the consolidation of peace:

To advance the process of the consolidation of peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola and other countries, Japan has extended assistance to DDRR (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation of ex-combatants), de-mining and other programmes.

(c) Humanitarian assistance / Support for Darfur:

Japan provided more than US \$40 million to the UNHCR for its assistance to refugees and displaced persons as well as around US \$4.72 million through ICRC in Africa (2004).

(d) Reconstruction of communities and enhancement of human security:

By utilising the Trust Fund for Human Security that Japan took the initiative in establishing in the UN, Japan has provided approximately US \$35.7 million to support 31 projects in Africa since March 1999.

(2) Poverty reduction through economic growth:

- Promoting trade and investment in Africa based on the development experience of Asia

- (a) Promoting trade and investment between Asia and Africa through the TICAD process: Japan has contributed to facilitating business matching between Asia and Africa through three Africa-Asia Business Forums (AABFs).
- (b) Enhancing trade ties: Since 2003, approximately 93% of all imports from LDCs to Japan in value terms have enjoyed duty-free and quota-free treatment.
- (c) Building a base for economic activities: Since TICAD I (1993), Japan has contributed approximately US \$5 billion towards infrastructure development in Africa.

- Improving agricultural productivity and rural development

- (a) Comprehensive approach: Japan has implemented comprehensive measures including the improvement of agricultural and rural infrastructure, the provision of technical assistance, and capacity building to enhance agricultural productivity and rural development in Africa.
- (b) Assistance for Irrigation: Japan has expanded irrigated areas by approximately 58,000 ha by improving irrigation facilities since TICAD II (1998).

(3) Human resources development for the sustainable development of Africa

- (a) Cooperation for BHNs: At TICAD III (2003), Japan pledged a total of US \$1 billion in grant aid over five years for health and medical care, water, education, food and other fields.
- (b) Fighting HIV/AIDS and Polio: Japan pledged up to US \$265 million in 2002-2004 to the 'Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria'. Japan has also pledged US \$80 million to eradicate polio between 2003 and 2005.
- (c) Infectious disease control: Japan provided approximately US \$4.4 million for the control of infectious disease in Africa from 2000 to 2002.
- (d) For improved water supply and sanitation: Japan took the initiative in providing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to serve approximately 4.6 million people from the period of TICAD II (1998) to TICAD III (2003).



African Development

we would like to introduce some examples of Japan's support of the Japanese Embassies in the respective countries.

GHANA

Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research

The Noguchi Memorial Institute of the University of Ghana at Legon was set up in 1979 through grant cooperation extended by Japan to raise the level of medical research and education in Ghana. The Institute was named in memory of Dr Hideyo Noguchi, who after visiting Ghana in 1927 to conduct research into yellow fever, fell victim to the disease in the following year.

As the facility has expanded, it has been the focus of a number of technical cooperation projects through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Through exchanges with Japanese researchers of infectious diseases and specialists in health and hygiene, dispatched as JICA medical experts, the Institute has sought to raise its research capabilities in such fields as HIV/AIDS, malaria, dysentery and nutrition. Being the most advanced medical research establishment in Ghana, the Institute has long provided the Ghanaian Government with technical support for its health and medical policies. As one of the leading medical institutes in West Africa, the Institute is also recognised by the World Health Organization as a reference laboratory and is engaged in various exchange activities with overseas universities and research organisations.

The Institute's Parasite Control Department, as the hub of the West African Centre for International Parasite Control (WACIPAC), currently plays a vital role in an integrated approach to soil transmitted helminthiasis (STH) control. Furthermore, the Institute's researchers are currently engaged in investigating conditions in the field and providing instruction to local communities.



TANZANIA

Dar es Salaam Fish Market

The total annual harvest of fish in Tanzania is 340,000 tons, the fifth largest amount in Africa after Senegal, Namibia, Nigeria and Ghana. Dar es Salaam is a metropolis of three million people, and is the centre of the country's sea fishing industry, yet the city's demand for fish used to be met entirely by dated equipment and traditional methods practised there for centuries. This inefficiency meant that the fish market fulfilled only a fraction of its potential.

In 2000-2001, the Government of Japan extended ¥1.6 billion in grant assistance for the construction of the Dar Es Salaam Fish Market. This involved designating a separate fish processing area and the installation of a clean water supply and drainage facilities, as well as the provision of ice-making machines and ice storage facilities. In addition, a new auction house and wholesale building have been constructed and small retail businesses such as groceries and restaurants have been set up in new buildings.

New unloading facilities have increased the efficiency and amount of fish distribution and the quality of fish has improved thanks to new sanitation facilities, which have reduced the amount of loss due to deterioration as well as prevented diseases like cholera and dysentery. The amount of fresher fish now consumed by the people in the surrounding areas of Dar es Salaam has increased, thereby contributing to a rise in protein intake, which is beneficial to their general health.



ZAMBIA

The Urgent Water Supply Project in Satellite Area of Lusaka

With less than 40% of Zambia's population having access to a safe water supply, unsanitary conditions have led to the spread of infectious water-borne diseases, which have been a major factor in the high mortality rate among infants. In order to address this problem, Japan established a water supply system for the Lusaka suburb of George Compound through grant assistance of ¥2.64 billion extended in 1993, 1994, 1997 and 1998.

George Compound is a densely-populated residential area inhabited by around 130,000 people. The area was divided into eight sections in terms of its water supply needs and a project was set up to install an independent water supply system serving each section. This involved digging deep wells of an average depth of 80 metres and installing pumps, overhead tanks, sterilisation equipment, distribution facilities, communal taps, and laundry facilities.

In this project, a community programme that seeks to educate the residents on the benefits of ownership and the importance of paying for the services has been implemented in cooperation with Care International. The cost of maintaining the equipment is met by the beneficiaries, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the water supply system.



SENEGAL

GHANA

TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

Nihongo Cup Finals held at Embassy



Ambassador Nogami, event organisers and the top speaker in each category

Young learners of Japanese from around the UK gathered at the Embassy on April 23 to compete in the Finals of the JLC Japanese Speech Contest for Secondary Schools (Nihongo Cup).

The event was co-organised by the Japanese Language Committee (JLC) of the Association for Language Learning, the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation London with the aim of supporting the study of Japanese at school level in the UK, which has increased dramatically in the last decade.

Eighteen finalists selected from more than 100 entries delivered speeches on the theme of 'Friends' in front of an audience of 120 friends, parents, teachers and key figures from the language and Japan-related fields.

Winner of the Key Stage 3 category was Stephanie Tress from Kingston Grammar School, while the best speaker in Key Stage 4 was Miriam Starling from Hendon School. The Key Stage 5 category, added for the

first time this year, was won by Lee Anderson from Harris City Technology College, who was delighted to receive an invitation to visit Japan.

Ambassador Nogami congratulated the finalists on their achievement and said he hoped that they would keep up their Japanese skills so that demand for the subject would remain strong at tertiary level. "I am sure that the increasing number of people studying Japanese in this country will strengthen the relationship between Japan and the UK," he concluded.



Japan 21 volunteers teaching British schoolchildren about Japan

Taking Japan into the Classroom

On April 15, Ambassador Nogami hosted a reception at the Embassy to thank the many volunteers who have helped to foster and deepen the understanding and awareness of Japan and its culture among young people in the UK through the Japan in Your Classroom programme, organised by Japan 21.

Through their visits to around 100 schools this year, the volunteers have worked with over 8,000 students, providing them with first-hand experience of Japanese culture including calligraphy, origami and cooking.

In his speech, Ambassador Nogami expressed his appreciation for the volunteers' invaluable contribution, which has resulted in a greater number of young British schoolchildren having a positive image of Japan.



Ambassador Nogami expresses his appreciation for the volunteers' efforts

CULTURE

Nihon Buyo delights UK Audiences



© NIHON BUYO FOUNDATION

In mid-March, audiences in London and Edinburgh were delighted by Japan's oldest surviving traditional dance form, Nihon Buyo, which made its British debut on an unprecedented scale

with the support of the Japan Foundation.

Nishikawa Senzo, Grand Master of the Nihon Buyo Foundation, has been designated a 'living national treasure' by the Japanese government. He led a company of elaborately dressed dancers and traditional musicians in various performances of dance and drama where the characters in each story are defined by emphatic facial expressions and tiny, stylised movements. Props such as *sensu* (Japanese fans) along with changes in music, choreography, costume, and make-up are used to express emotions as well as to represent scenery.

Nihon Buyo is recorded in the *Kojiki*, Japan's oldest history book (completed in AD712), and represents a synthesis of different traditions that gradually came together in the 18th and 19th centuries. Modern Nihon Buyo has preserved many of the 'classical' dances of that period, while at the same time adding newly created pieces to the repertoire.



Shiokumi performed by Nishikawa Yuko
© NIHON BUYO FOUNDATION

BOOKS

A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK

by GREGORY IRVINE

Over 150 collections of Japanese art open to the public in the UK are presented in this guide – a valuable resource for all those with a keen interest in



this field. The collections were formed from about 1870 onwards and include examples of Japanese art that are no longer found in Japan. The author Gregory Irvine is curator of the Asian Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum. The publication of this book was made possible by the support of the UK-Japan Joint History Promotion Fund, allocated by the Japanese Government, while the initial research was supported by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

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ISBN 90-74822-74-6



VISIT JAPAN! INTERVIEW TOM WESTON

Ex-JET Programme participant Tom Weston, North and Central Asia Programme Manager of Audley Travel, has used his personal knowledge and experience of living in Japan to promote Japan as an attractive, affordable and accessible holiday destination in the UK travel market. He spoke to *On Japan* about what he feels Japan has to offer British visitors.



What are the unique advantages of a holiday in Japan and what attracts British people in particular?

Japan is a modern country with a lot that is familiar to European visitors, and yet many aspects such as the culture and infrastructure are completely foreign. It is this contrast between the familiar and unfamiliar that people find to be the most fascinating and appealing thing about a trip to Japan.

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of British tourists visiting Japan compared with just a few years ago. Japanese pop culture, and the success of the FIFA World Cup hosted by Japan and South Korea in 2002, along with films like *Lost in Translation*, *The Last Samurai* and *Spirited Away* have all added to interest in Japan, its people and its culture.

Can you recommend any good places to visit that are relatively unknown or off the beaten track?



Most people don't consider exploring religious Japan. Therefore, I would recommend a visit to the monastic complex of Mount Koya-san, the secluded home of the esoteric Shingon Buddhist sect.

Recently included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the village consists of more than a hundred different temples, where you can get a taste of traditional Japan by staying at a *shukubo* (temple lodging). You are allowed to join the monks in their daily routines and share their delicious *shojin* (vegetarian) cuisine. The surrounding scenery is breathtaking and it is a good way to get away from the hustle and bustle of the cities.

I also recommend a visit to the Kiso Valley where you can retrace the steps of Edo period envoys along the Nakasendo highway, which linked the major political and cultural centres of Tokyo and Kyoto. The beautifully preserved post towns of Magome and Tsumago demonstrate the area's rural charm and sense of history with its Edo period architecture and atmosphere.

For the independent traveller, I suggest purchasing a JR Japan Rail Pass, which will give you the freedom of using Japan's excellent rail network to explore the country at a bargain rate.



Enjoy the unique experience of staying at a *shukubo* (temple lodging) in the mountains of Koya-san



Kushiro Marsh in Hokkaido is a spectacular example of Japan's diverse natural landscape



© TORO NATURE CENTRE

Can you provide some examples of special interest tours to Japan currently available in the UK?

Hiking tours to the Kumano Shrines in the Kii Peninsula are quite popular, as are tours to more rural areas like Hokkaido, where you can fully appreciate Japan's abundance of flora and fauna. For those with an interest in bird watching, winter brings an influx of rare and spectacular visitors such as the red crested crane, which spends its winters at Kushiro Wetland National Park and Akan.



Shisendo, Kyoto

British people are particularly fond of Japanese garden tours, and those with an interest in Japanese martial arts may like to combine a general holiday to Japan with visits to areas related to karate, judo and so on.

TRAVEL

Is Japan an affordable destination nowadays?

A lot of people still have an image of Japan in the late 1980s when its economic boom meant that prices were high. However, costs are now pretty much the same as in European countries, and in some instances they are actually cheaper! In general a holiday in Japan is affordable and presents good value for money.

What kind of unexpected impressions of Japan do British tourists return with?

Some clients admit to feeling nervous beforehand, but all of them come back from Japan having had an enjoyable, positive experience. Independent travellers are mostly surprised at how smoothly their trip went as everything in Japan runs according to schedule. Satisfied customers tell us of their sense of personal achievement gained by successfully navigating their way around Japan despite the language barrier. This is down to the friendly local people who will do their best to make foreigners feel welcome. One example of Japanese hospitality at its best is the story of a couple that walked into a shop, ordered two cups of coffee and were served by a bemused-looking old lady only to discover later that they had in fact gone into someone's house! 



Tokyo bay cruise

© JNTO

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.jnto.co.uk (general travel information)

www.hyperdia.com (JR timetable)



© THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Colour woodblock of Shikan performing a Lion Dance, by Yoshikuni, 1816.

KABUKI HEROES ON THE OSAKA STAGE, 1780 – 1830


30 June – 11 September
The British Museum, London
www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

Through a wonderful mix of prints, paintings and books, as well as a digital display, *Kabuki Heroes* reveals the passionate public devotion and hero worship fuelled by Japanese urban theatre

in Osaka in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was during that time that the city produced superstar Kabuki actors and there was an outpouring of creativity in the popular theatre, visual arts and poetry.

The core of the exhibition will cover the

period 1800 – 1821 and present the intense rivalry between the two Kabuki actors Rikan (Arashi Kichisaburo II, 1769 – 1821) and Shikan (Nakamura Utaemon III, 1778 – 1838). The promotion of these stars was a collective process, uniting the actors with their patrons and supporters. With a particular focus on the personalities themselves *Kabuki Heroes* brings together works from several institutions and private collections in the UK, Europe and Japan.


From September 8 to 10, leading Osaka Kabuki actor Nakamura Ganjiro III will visit the UK to deliver a lecture at SOAS and give two performances at the British Museum. Designated a Living National Treasure, his artistic descent is traced directly from Shikan, one of the rival actors featured in the exhibition. 

SHOGUN THE LIFE OF LORD TOKUGAWA IEYASU

6 June – 30 August
Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds
www.shogun.org.uk

For four centuries Japan has guarded the treasures belonging to its greatest statesman and Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who ruled over a single nation forged from hundreds of rival factions. He made a series of audacious alliances and fought one of the most extraordinary battles in history. His life heralded a period of peace that lasted more than two centuries. Shogun Tokugawa created modern Japan, founding its capital and political culture, influencing its literature and art.

In an unprecedented partnership with the Japanese World Heritage Site, the Nikko Toshogu Shrine, eighty breathtaking objects – screens, costumes, weapons, armour, art, scrolls, furniture – are leaving their sacred shrines for the first time. Their destination is the award-winning Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds. The exhibition will rank as one of the most important displays of Japanese heritage and culture ever to be seen in the UK.

The exhibition will be supported by a schedule of events and activities which will bring to life Japan, its art, culture and traditions, including a dedicated outreach and education programme, as well as diverse activities such as Yabusame (Japanese archery on horseback), Kobudo and Kendo (martial arts), Japanese tea ceremonies, calligraphy, swordsmanship, origami and Tanka poetry workshops. 



Oda armour

© ROYAL ARMOURIES



Noh costume
© HIKONE CASTLE MUSEUM/ROYAL ARMOURIES


NOROSHI BEATS FROM THE EAST

24 June, ICA London
noroshi.studio-rarekwai.com




DJ Tatsuki

© KIYASU

NOROSHI is a pioneering showcase of the most revered and cutting edge Hip Hop talents from Japan. Contemporary Japanese music culture will be introduced to a large European audience, kicking off at the Sonar Festival in Barcelona before expanding into a two-week European tour. DJs, beat boxers, turntablists and other performers will present a two and a half hour set to audiences following a screening of Studio Rarekwai's documentary film about the Japanese hip hop scene *Scratching the Surface: Japan*, which was well received at several contemporary film festivals across Europe last year. 

JAPAN SOCIETY OF PETERBOROUGH SUMMER FESTIVAL

25 – 26 June, Peterborough City
www.peterboroughevents.co.uk/festival

The Japan Society of Peterborough presents two days of Japanese culture at the Peterborough Festival 2005, which this year is themed 'Flags of All Nations'. Enjoy performances of Taiko drumming, watch demonstrations of Japanese martial arts, cookery and the tea ceremony, take part in the traditional bon-odori dance or try your hand at Mino paper-making, calligraphy, sumi-e ink painting, origami and ikebana. 

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For the latest news and information on Japan-UK relations, please visit the Embassy's website www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp

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