

General Information

Using the Japanese Phone System

To call the Yokota operator from off-base, dial 552-2511 (or dial 552-2510 to bypass the operator message). If you're outside the local area, dial 042-552-2511.

Toll-free numbers begin with 0120 or 0088.

Public Telephones

The green and digital telephones accept both coins and prepaid telephone cards sold at train station kiosks and convenience stores.

Local, long distance and international calls can be made from the green phones.

For directory information in English, dial the NTT Information Service at 03-5295-1010 (0900-1700 Mon-Fri, 0900- 1200 Sat; 3 minutes cost ¥10). For an operator-assisted overseas call, dial 0051.

Another source for business listings is Tokyo Doko at <http://www.tokyodoko.com>.

Itching to get a cell phone?

The major carriers are Softbank and DoCoMo (plus AU). They offer comparable two-year contract plans, with per-minute charges in addition to the monthly fee.

Softbank is in the Yokota Community Center, down the hall from the Commissary. It is the official iPhone carrier and unlike its competitor, Softbank has a pre-pay plan. That means you can buy a cheap Softbank phone and then purchase minutes as you need them, with no monthly payment. This is an inexpensive route for people who don't talk much – or who answer but rarely dial. (In Japan, only the caller pays. Receiving calls is always free.)

Softbank doesn't, as of 2010, have a pre-pay data plan, so no mobile web surfing without a contract. On pre-pay, though, you can send texts for a flat ¥300 a month. This is more valuable than it seems, because you're not limited to texting other cell phones. You can also send texts to email addresses, and people can send emails to your phone. Now you're in smartphone country – for just ¥300 a month!

Because there's no contract, you can pass on your pre-paid phone when you leave. In fact, if you don't require the latest model, buy one used. You can often find them on <http://www.YokotaAds.com>.

The major drawback to Softbank is reception. It is generally believed that DoCoMo has a stronger, more reliable signal.

The people at the Softbank store in the YCC can explain all their plans to you in English, of course. On the web:

<http://mb.softbank.jp/mb/military>.

For DoCoMo, you can pick up an English services guide at one of its shops. There's one in central Fussa with designated English-speakers on staff. WALKING DIRECTIONS: Go out the Fussa Gate, cross one set of tracks and stay left at the "Y". Keep going straight as you cross another set of tracks. Turn left at the next light, onto Rt. 29. (Beware: Several streets in the area are labeled 29.) The DoCoMo shop is about a block and a half from the light, on the corner at a "T" intersection. GPS 35.738310, 139.327307

On the web:

<http://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/service>.

DoCoMo's English line: 0120-005-250.

One other company worth mentioning is AU: <http://www.au.kddi.com/english/seihin/index.html>

. It has ardent supporters on base who swear they get better reception at lower cost.

Already own an iPhone? Wouldn't it be great if you could get your U.S. model working as a local Japanese phone? Softbank discourages it, but it is possible to convert your iPhone to either a Softbank or a DoCoMo phone. This is no job for a technophobe. You have to unlock your phone from the AT&T network, mess around with SIM cards, change secret iPhone settings ... It'll be your part-time job for a few weeks, but if you're successful you could save a bundle.

Off-Base Emergencies

Ambulance 119
Fire 119
Police 110

◆ **Medical Treatment Service:** 03-5285-8181

9am - 8pm (weekdays only:)

To find out which hospitals have foreign language translators

◆ **First Aid Translation Service:** 03-5285-8185

9 - 8 pm every day (including weekends).

If you have a language problem in the hospital, they can assist you.

For counseling on suicide, domestic abuse, etc.,
Tokyo English Life Line: 9am-4pm & 7-11pm
03-5721-4347

Japan Helpline (24 hrs): 0120-46-1997

Other U.S. Bases in Japan

Camp Fuji (0550) 89-1062
Camp Courtney (098) 972-6700
Iwakuni MCAS (0827) 21-4171
Kadena AB (098) 938-1111
Misawa AB (0176) 53-5181
New Sanno (03) 440-7871
Sasebo NB (0956) 24-6111
Yokosuka NB (0468) 26-1911
Camp Zama (0462) 51-1520

American Embassy

DIRECTIONS: Take the Ome Line to Tachikawa and change to the Chuo Line for Tokyo. Get off at Kanda Station and exit by the middle staircase. Find the orange Ginza Subway Line. Take it toward Ginza and Shibuya. Get off at Toranomom, 3 stops after Ginza. Take Exit #3 out of Toranomom Station. Look for the Mitsui Building. To the left of the Mitsui Building is a wonderful temple and garden in the midst of all the skyscrapers. You will see Alitalia and Lufthansa offices on your left. When you see the NCR sign, turn left and cross the street. You will see the U.S. Embassy straight ahead with its flag outside a bronze building (opposite the Hotel Okura). *Carol Davis*

Embassy Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 – 5:30; closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.
Embassy Operator (off-base) 03-3224-5000 (DSN) 224-5000
Passports 224-5170 Visas 224-5125

The Japanese Postal Service 〒

The red, double-crossed capital T is the symbol of the postal service. It is used on maps to indicate the location of post offices. It is also displayed at places where stamps are sold. If you live off-base, you can pay your electric and telephone bills at any Japanese post office or convenience store.

If you send mail through the Japanese postal system, the post office on base requests you use your Japanese address, not the APO address.

Your Japanese address looks like this:

Your Name
PSC Box Number Here
Yokota AB, Fussa Shi
Tokyo 197-0001

If you have the correct postage you can mail postcards and letters through the orange Japanese mailbox outside the post office

Postal Dimensions

The sizes of Japanese cards and envelopes are different from American standards. If you send something the wrong size, you may get your posted item back with a note showing the amount of insufficient postage. For delivery at the standard rate, postcard dimensions must be between 14-23.5 cm long and 9-12 cm wide. Envelopes should be 14-23.5 cm long and between 9-12 cm wide and not more than 1cm thick. The ends of American business envelopes can be folded over and taped.

For the rules in full, see
www.postjapanpost.jp/english/fee/domestic/letter.html

Post Offices Near Yokota

Main Fussa Post Office

DIRECTIONS: Go straight out the Fussa gate, cross the tracks and veer left at the "Y". Cross the next set of tracks and on down to Okutama Kaido. The post office is on the far right corner. The post office has a tiny parking lot inside the walls, to the right of the building on Okutama Kaido.

Higashi Fussa

DIRECTIONS: Make a right out the Fussa gate onto Rt. 16 and then a left at the signal for Higashi Fussa station. Cross the tracks. At the traffic light, go straight ahead you'll see the post office on the left, just before the next set of traffic lights. There is parking available in a dirt lot on the left just before the Post Office. Since there are only two designated spaces, it's sometimes easier to park on the side street near the intersection before the post office.

Tachikawa Nishi-Suna

DIRECTIONS: Turn right out the East Gate, go through 3 lights, turn right onto Rt. 7 Itsukaichi Kaido. The post office is on the right at the next light (at the Y intersection).

Matsunaka-Danchi

DIRECTIONS: Turn right out the East Gate, left at the light, then hard right at the five-way intersection. Go several blocks down the tree-lined avenue with apartment buildings on either side. There's a tiny post office on the far right corner of the second large intersection. No parking.

Akiruno Post Office

This one is a little further but it is where you may have to go if someone sends you registered mail through the Japanese post and you get a Non-Deliverable Notice in your PSC box. Address: 3-2-1 Akigawa, Akiruno-shi. GPS: 35.665527,139.456636. DIRECTIONS: Turn left out the Fussa Gate and right at the first light. Stay on this road across the Tama River. When you reach Akigawa Station, turn right onto the divided road in front of Tokyu Department Store. Turn left at the light near the end of the block. The post office will be on your right.

For more information on deciphering Japanese addresses, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_addressing_system

Local Tours and Maps

Tours are conducted by Services/ITT Travel, Outdoor Recreation, the Airman and Family Readiness Center, various sports clubs, etc. Some are overnight trips; most are day trips. Stop by the Yujo Community Center and pick up the latest brochures on its trips, plus driving and/or train maps for other adventures. Check the Horizons magazine for outings. Need more information? Visit www.yokotasupport.com and/or contact the Airmen and Family Readiness Center at 225-8725.

About Yokota

www.374th-services.org,

www.yokota.af.mil

www.yokotasupport.com

<http://yokotalibrary.ad.umuc.edu>

The library's webpage, with an online catalog and the ability to reserve and renew books via the internet.

<http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil>

www.facebook.com/pages/Yokota-Air-Base-Japan/131001683600206

More Tourist Information and Websites

Free maps and information on Tokyo and Japan can be found in several locations including the arrival lobby at Narita Airport, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building in Shinjuku, and the Tourist Information Center (03-3201-3331) on the 10th Floor of the Kotsu Kaikan building opposite Yurakucho Station on the Yamanote Line one stop south of Tokyo Station. As hours for specific locations vary, check www.discover-japan.info/generalinfo_tourist.htm

www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp

Japan National Tourist Organization: www.jnto.go.jp.

www.japantimes.co.jp - an online version of the Japan Times newspaper

www.metropolis.co.jp - Metropolis Magazine showing events, cultural news, restaurant reviews, etc.

www.udo.co.jp/english/ - calendar of concerts coming to Tokyo, listed by artist.

Holidays

Japanese National Holidays

January 1 – New Year’s Day

Second Monday of January –

Coming of Age Day

Feb 11 – National Founding Day

March 20 (or 21) – Vernal Equinox

April 29 – Showa Day

May 3 – Constitution Memorial Day

May 4 – Greenery Day

May 5 – Children’s Day

Third Monday of July – Marine Day

Third Monday of September –

Respect for the Aged Day

September 22 (or 23) – Autumnal Equinox

October 10 – Health and Sports Day

November 3 – Culture Day

November 23 – Labor Thanksgiving Day

December 23 – The Emperor’s Birthday

Japan has several seasonal vacations when children are out of school and companies close down. These are periods of heavy travel. Prices increase and hotel rooms are in short supply. On the other hand, these are great times for sightseeing around Tokyo since everyone else is out of town!

New Year’s break: Many merchants and companies close around December 28 and reopen about January 5. Governments and banks take a shorter vacation, from about the 31st to the 3rd.

Summer vacation: School vacations run from about July 19 to around September 1. Watch out for O Bon, usually the week of August 15 but held some places in mid-July, when Japanese often travel to their hometowns to be with family and friends.

April and “Golden Week”: Japanese schools break for two to three weeks in April, when their academic year ends. This often coincides with the American spring break. Then, from the end of April to the beginning of May, there is a period known as “Golden Week.” It incorporates three national holidays: April 29 (Green Day), May 3 (Constitution Memorial Day), and May 5 (Children’s Day). Companies often give employees the days between the holidays off. Since the weather tends to be good, many Japanese visit resorts, or travel abroad. During the summer and winter holidays, especially at the beginning and end of the mass exodus to the beach or ski resorts, stay home! Check the news to find out when the outgoing and return traffic rushes are expected and avoid travel during those times.

Teresa K. Negley

Festivals

(Dates vary year to year. Check online or at the Yujo Center for current information.)

January

1-3 New Year’s ceremonies at shrines and temples

2 The public pays respect to the Imperial Family; palace grounds are open

3 Daruma Fair in Kawagoe

6 Dezome-Shiki Edo Fire Brigade near Harumi Pier

February

2 Setsubun Bean-Throwing at Kawasaki-Daishi, and Kamakura Hachimangu Plum Blossom Festival, Odawara Castle Park

March

3 Girls Day

3-4 Daruma Fair, Jindaiji
3 Rice Planting, Chichibu
Second Sunday in March, fire-walking ceremony, Mt Takao

27 Lion Dance in Hakone

April
Cherry blossom festivals,
almost everywhere
17 Yayoi Festival, Nikko

May
3 Yokohama Port Festival
3-5 Odawara Castle Festival
11-12 Azalea Festival at
Hakone
16-18 Asakusa Sanja Matsuri
17-18 Toshogu Spring
Festival, Nikko

June: the rainy season

July
1 Opening of Fuji-san
7-12 Tanabata in Hiratsuka,
near Atsugi
13-15 Kawagoe Lantern
Festival

July (cont)
14 Black Ship Festival
(Kujirihama in Yokosuka)
20-22 Fan Festival in
Kumagaya, Saitama
23-24 Chichibu River Festival

August
1 Summer Festival, Omiya
Ayu
Sweetfish Festival, Atsugi
6-7 Tanabata in Fussa

September
16-17 Yabusame and Feudal
Procession in Kamakura
17 Yokohama Carnival

October
1 Grape Festival in
Katsunuma, Yamanashi

Oct (cont)
14-15 Kawagoe River
Festival
17 Autumn Festival, Nikko

November
3 Daimyo Procession,
Hakone
First two weeks,
Chrysanthemum Exhibits in
areas such as Meiji Shrine in
Harajuku, Shinjuku National
Gyoen, and Kitain Temple in
Kawagoe.

December
3 Chichibu Night Festival
14 Gishi-sai for 47 Ronin,
Sengakuji Temple
17-19 Hagoita Ichi, Asakusa
Kannon

New Year's Festivities

The New Year celebrations consist of a series of traditional family and religious observances, which last for days. Preparations for New Year's Day, begin in late December. After thoroughly cleaning the house and garden, New Year's decorations are put up, such as:

Shimenawa: A twisted straw rope with white paper strips representing cloth offerings, hung over doorways or at the entrances of shrines. It announces the presence of the gods and keeps evil spirits out.

Kadomatsu: A decoration made of pine branches, straw, bamboo stalks and sometimes plum branches. It is placed at the front gate or doorway and symbolizes prosperity, good health, vigor and longevity. Its size indicates how prosperous the year was for that household.

Shimekazari: A representation of crops, offered in appreciation for past good harvests and for bountiful ones in the coming year.

The toshidana: A special altar. It is placed in the tokonoma or alcove of the main room of the house. It consists of two kagami-mochi (large round rice cakes), set one on top of the other, that are decorated with dried persimmons, a tangerine, dried seaweed, or other fruits or vegetables.

New Year's is a time to clear debts and obligations. Gifts are sent to superiors, friends and relatives to express gratitude. Personally

designed New Year's cards are addressed and taken to the post office before the end of December. These cards are delivered during the first three days of January. Children get otoshidama envelopes, containing cash gifts. There are many traditional dishes that are prepared for the New Year's holiday, and the first meal is a great event. Mochi, a thick, chewy rice cake, is made on the 30th day of December by pounding cooked rice into a gooey paste, then forming it into balls. It is pounded in a large wooden mortar, outdoors, by two or three men using long-handled mallets. Nowadays, mochi can be purchased in stores, or made at home by machine, so the traditional way is less often practiced.

New Year's Eve is traditionally spent at home watching end-of-the-year television shows and spending time with family. Families eat toshikoshi soba, "passing year:" noodle soup. At midnight, every temple bell in Japan is rung 108 times. Some good places to observe the New Year's activities are the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, Yamaguchi Kannon, near Seibu-en and Takahata Fudo Temple in Hino.

On January 2, a daruma doll ceremony is held at Haijima Daishi Temple, just off Rt. 16. Many people bring their old darumas and burn them at a fire at the shrine. New darumas and hamaya arrows (to ward of evil) can be purchased. When

you buy a daruma, make a wish and color in one of the eyes. If the wish comes true, color in the other eye.

Traditional games are often played during New Year's, including tako-age (kite flying), hanetsuki (a Japanese form of badminton, with no net), karuta (card games), and koma (tops). A game known as Fukuwari is played when a blindfolded player attempts to draw the eyes, nose, and mouth on a piece of paper which has the outline of a face drawn on it. The greeting, "Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu" continues to be exchanged through the 6th of January. On the 7th, the holidays officially conclude. Decorations are taken down, and nanakusa-gaya, "seventh-day porridge" containing 7 herbal greens, is served. During the second or third week of January, giant teepees made of pine branches and New Year's decorations are burned on the banks of the Tama River after a ceremony. Since there is no set date, have a Japanese-speaking friend call the Fussa or Hamura City Hall. You can see the teepees about a week before the burning ceremony. **DIRECTIONS:** Turn right out the Fussa Gate onto Rt. 16 then turn left at George's Auto Sales, 2nd light Shorin Dori Ent. Go 1.6 km and turn left onto Okutama Kaido, which runs along the Tama River. Go for 1.7 km (5 lights) and turn left across the canal. Turn right at the Tama River, drive past the walking bridge on your left, and park at the dam at the bottom of the hill. The best place to stand is on the walking bridge, unless the wind is blowing in that direction. *Barbara Kirkwood, Christine Thomas, Karen Ozment, Melody Hostetler, Rita Mayer*

Bean Throwing Ceremony

The Japanese celebrate Setsubun, also known as Onioishiki, on Feb. 3. Americans refer to this ceremony as the bean-throwing ceremony. This ceremony is practiced in Japanese homes to drive away evil demons. Each family places a small holly branch and the head of a dried sardine at the entrance of the house. In the evening, the windows of the house are opened to allow devils to escape, and each member of the family throws a few

roasted soybeans into each room and out the open windows of the house while chanting "Oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi" or "out with the demons, in with good luck!" It is customary to eat one bean for each year of your life, plus one for the coming year. The ceremony is called mamemaki. The next day the beans are swept up and thrown away. If you wish to perform your own mamemaki, you can purchase the cooked soybeans from many locations at the time of the

Seijin-no-Hi Coming of Age Day

The second Monday of January, also known as the Coming of Age Day or Adult Day, is the day when 20 year-old Japanese men and women celebrate their official coming of age by participating in a ceremony at their local ward office or city hall (Seijin-Shiki). They also visit shrines to pray for good lives, careers and marriages.

You will notice many young women in traditional Japanese dress walking around the town. The long flowing sleeves of their kimonos (nearly calf-length vs. thigh length for married women) signify that they are young and single as do the different and more elaborate knots of the obi. Colored collars, in contrast to the white most often seen, add a touch of gaiety. The kimonos are extremely expensive as are the matching accessories.

Getting ready takes a long time, often involving a visit to the hairdresser for an updo and assistance putting on the kimono and obi. Many young people also visit the photographer this day for an official portrait, and they are often teased that the photos will later be used by a matchmaker.

year, including Seiyu. Say, "daizu o kudasai", or "please give me setsubun beans". Today this ceremony is also performed at some Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, where large crowds gather to watch Japanese celebrities throw the beans. If you are lucky enough to catch one of the beans, you gain good fortune for the year. One of the best nearby places to observe setsubun is Takahata Fudo in Hino City. *Barbara Kirkwood*

Feb/March - Walk in Clouds of Color at Yoshino Baigo

Even with the Kanto Plain's mild winters, spring is a welcome sight. Plum blossoms, unlike short-lived cherry blossoms, are in bloom for several weeks and are a must-see while in Japan. Their delicate pink, white and lavender hues give a dainty loveliness to the surroundings from the end of February through March. One famous spot for seeing Japan's plum blossoms is right near Yokota Air Base, in Ome City. Trees in almost everyone's yard are part of the beauty of the area. About 25,000 trees, spanning a collection of 100 different varieties, blossom in the town of Yoshino Baigo in Ome City, located on the Tama River. Yoshino Baigo has a small park named Ume-no-Koen, or Plum Park, which is especially lovely during plum-viewing time.

"Baigo" means "plum garden." Also, Yoshino Baigo has a festival to celebrate this season with a number of booths selling the usual festival foods and souvenirs. This festival runs throughout the month of March. There's a special day of celebration on a mid-March Sunday, with performances of traditional dancing.

March - April Sakura

When cherry trees bloom, all of Japan celebrates. Time itself seems to honor the brief but beautiful life of the fragile sakura. Under canopies of soft pink, blankets are spread, families and friends gather to eat, drink, sing, and often just contemplate the beauty and peace. There are many places well known for cherry blossom viewing – Kyoto, Kamakura, Ueno. But some of the prettiest and most accessible are just outside the Yokota gates. Fussa and Hamura annually greet the cherry blossoms with festivals.

The Tama River has walkways winding through woodland, past playgrounds, residences, and small shrines. The walks are lined on both sides with mature cherry trees. Normally quiet and fairly deserted, during the Cherry Blossom Festivals, these become the "place to be." For several days, small booths sell traditional Japanese food, toys and flowers under the protection of the blooming trees. There is occasionally a tea ceremony demonstration, or you might discover a Noh theatre in the grassy areas along the path. The way becomes crowded with many who wish to share in the spirit, but the view is never blocked. The

TRAIN DIRECTIONS: The easiest way to get to Yoshino is to take the Ome Line JR train to Hinatawada; then walk north to the bridge that crosses the Tama River (on your left). You are in Yoshino as soon as you cross the bridge. This main street is where the festival is held. To get to Plum Park, continue on the street until you reach a T-intersection. Turn left and look across the street for a tiny paved street on the right-hand side of the road.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: Parking is scarce on the main festival day and are also limited at other times. Turn right out the Fussa or Terminal Gates and go north on Route 16. Seven lights after the Terminal Gate, turn left on Ome Kaido and continue on Ome Kaido until you reach Hinatawada, in about 20 to 30 minutes. Watch for the Hinatawada train station on your right. It is above the road level and is painted yellow. Turn left across the first bridge over the Tama River after the train station. You are now in Yoshino.

Sondra Halweg

celebrations begin in the morning and continue until about 10 p.m. The walkway originates near the dam on the Tama River and follows a canal along Okutama Kaido. The most popular area is near the dam where the merchant stalls draw crowds for food and drink. But the entire walkway is worthwhile for its beauty.

The dates of the festival vary according to the blooming of the trees. Normally, it last for four days over the weekend nearest the height of the cherry blossoms.

Parking is tough.. It is an easy 15-minute bike ride from the base. Driving should take about 20 minutes, depending on traffic.

DIRECTIONS: Turn left out the Terminal Gate. Go to the first stop light and turn right. Follow this street across two sets of train tracks until you come to a "T" intersection. Turn right. You should be on Okutama Kaido with the canal on your left. Continue to the second stoplight. You'll see a bridge with yellow pavement here across the canal. Turn left over the bridge and follow the road around and down the hill. You may find parking along this street. You will be able to see the cherry trees and the path now. Follow the the canal to the main festival area. *Donna Alexander*

More Places to Enjoy Cherry Blossoms

Sayama Ko

This ordinary dam becomes a promenade during sakura (cherry blossom) season. While many Japanese crowd the area on weekends, fewer people visit during the week. It's a nice place to take children for a picnic. On weekends, food booths appear around the lake, selling corn-on-the-cob, grilled squid, snack foods and soft drinks.

DIRECTIONS: Turn left out the East Gate. At the first signal light, turn right. At the next light, turn left. Continue on this road to the "T" intersection. At the "T", turn right onto Ome Kaido. After you pass the third light, you will see a 7-11 store on the right and the fourth light just ahead. Turn left onto a very small street just before the fourth light. Continue on this road. It will widen soon and you will enter a large park area. After about 6 or 7 km, you will pass the Tamako Jinja Shrine on your right. You will come to a fork in the road, a major intersection. Turn left. Going straight would take you around to Seibu-En and Seibu Stadium. Yamaguchi Kannon will be on your right. Just after this you will see a restaurant on your right and parking down a hill to your left. Park and walk to the dam. Cross over to the other side and there is another large park.

Mutsumibashi-Dori

A special viewing place, especially at night.
DIRECTIONS: Go straight out the Supply Gate and cross two sets of railroad tracks. After 1.3 km, turn left onto

Denen-dori, where you see a

school on your right and four-way crosswalk overhead. Pass a Marufuji Store on the left. At the "T", turn right. Just before the bridge, enter the park on the left. Park your car and walk along the river to your right to find the cherry blossoms.

Yanagi Yama Park

Fifteen minutes from Yokota, this park on the Tama River offers paths for strolling or biking, and swings and slides for children. **DIRECTIONS:** Turn left out of the Main Gate and first right at Tamabashidori Ent. Continue down this road through one set of lights, over a train track, then through another set of lights, over another set of train tracks and on through two more sets of lights. At the fifth set of lights (at the bottom of a hill/bridge) turn right. You will see a white building with blue, glass frontage (the Fussa gym) on the left. Yanagi Yama is behind the gym. Parking is limited.

Chidori Ga Fuchi

A little further away, but easy to get to, this park has a science and art museum. It is across the street from a huge torii gate and shrine dedicated to those who died during World War II. On a small lake, you can row a boat under the blossoms. Rental boats are available Tuesday-Sunday, 9:30am-4pm. Cost is ¥200 for 30 minutes, or ¥400 for one hour.

TRAIN DIRECTIONS: Take the Ome Line to Tachikawa and change to the Chuo Line toward Tokyo. At Nakano, change to Tozai Subway (track 4). Get off at the sixth stop, Kudanshita. Go out Exit 2. The park will be in front of you at the top of the stairs. Turn right and walk a short distance. You will see a sign in English saying "Chidori Ga Fuchi" pointing left. This is the prettiest walk with the trees forming an arch over the walkway. On the right you will see a large black torii.

Takao Rinyakyoku

This Forest Test Center offers the view of thousands of trees, which until recent years were enjoyed only by the Emperor. For a little exercise, hike to the picnic area at the top of a hill for a bird's eye view. Since there are no food stands, bring lunch. A map of the area is ¥50 or free of charge with the purchase of cherry blossom photographs (six for ¥500). Takao Rinyakyoku is open 9:30am-3:30pm Monday-Saturday during April. **TRAIN DIRECTIONS:** Take the Ome Line to Tachikawa and change to the Chuo Line toward Takao. Ride the train five stops. After you exit the train, look for the north exit near Tracks 1 and 2. Go out the north exit and walk to the street straight out the station, Takao Kaido. Walk up a hill. Bear left. Takao Rinyakyoku is about 15 minutes from the train station.

*Pat Nolan, Lori St. Laurent,
Sondra Halweg, Barbara
Kirkwood, Christine Thomas*

Girls' Festival

Hinamatsuri, known as the Doll Festival, or Girls' Day, is celebrated March 3. It is part of a seasonal festival called momo-no-sekku or peach festival, for the abundant peach blossoms. Families, especially those with young girls, will display a group of beautiful dolls, usually inherited, on tiers. Each doll represents a member of the ancient imperial court. On the top shelf are the Emperor and Empress (dairi-bina), below them are two eminent lords (udaijin and sadaijin), three ladies-in-waiting (sannin-kanjo), five musicians (gonin-bayashi), and lastly their three servants. At the bottom of the display on the lower shelves are miniature replicas of furniture, foods, and palanquins. Although Hinamatsuri is a festival from medieval times, the custom of displaying dolls only dates to the 18th century. In the beginning, the dolls were handmade and thrown into the river along with other offerings on March 3. Nowadays, commercially made dolls are very expensive so they are taken down and stored carefully away for the next year. It is said that the dolls should be taken down as soon after the festival as possible, preferably on the night of March 3. The story goes: if you leave the dolls out too long, your daughters will have bad luck in getting married. One friend, whose mother used to leave her dolls up for over a month after the holiday, strongly believes in this superstition, as she is 30 years old and still single.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Fertility Festival

Fertility festivals are held throughout Japan in March. The most popular is the Honen Matsuri, known as the Nagoya Fertility Festival. The purpose of the festival is, well, to promote fertility, complete with pomp, ceremony, and ah ... unusual paraphernalia. On March 15, the festival peaks with a grand procession from one shrine to another along the banks of rice paddies to ensure a good harvest. Priests offer prayers for abundant crops while

presenting sake to the crowd. Farmers do their part by contributing donations to the Shinto gods. Crop fertility, however, isn't the only fertility being honored. The priest also sprinkles rice on the spectators to ensure their fertility. Meanwhile, parade participants carry symbols of a different nature. Any lingering doubts about the festival's purpose disappear after one look at the parade's centerpiece: a male fertility symbol 12 feet long. Candy replicas of this, and its female

counter part, can be purchased to take home. Two shrines, the Tagata (male) and the Gakuden (female), sponsor this celebration. Not surprisingly, the Tagata Shrine is the more important. Its large and varied collection of unusually shaped rocks, stones, and branches is on display on the grounds of the shrine. Held March 14-15, this festival is a splendid way to spend some time off. ITT runs a tour to this festival.
Norma Jean Myrick

Fire-walking Festival (Hiwatari Matsuri)

Mount Takao has one of the few local fire-walking festivals and it's not to be missed. Yamabushi Hiwatari is held at the Yakuoin Temple, near the summit of Mount Takao, on the second Sunday of March. Buddhist priests walking over red-hot embers lead the ceremony. To reach the summit you can take a 10-minute cable car ride to the top. The cable car costs about ¥800 round-trip for adults. Children's fare is about ¥410 round-trip. Follow the path up the hill to the Yakuoin Temple, about a fifteen-minute walk. You'll find souvenir shops and benches all along this trail. No equipment required, only energy and comfortable shoes. Festivities begin at 1 p.m. with a drum beating chorus. Next, a procession of Buddhist priests in ornate robes slowly makes its way to the altar for a purification ceremony. The priests gather around a very

large wooden frame, which is covered with wood and pine boughs. There will be about 45 minutes of prayers, chants and rituals. Then the priests light the fire. As the fire grows larger they feed it with old prayer sticks for good wishes. The flames leap higher and higher, throwing ash into the air. Beware to those of you at the front: it will become an ash shower and can get smoky downwind. After about 20 minutes, the priests poke through the embers, creating two pathways. The priests walk across the embers and after their ceremony is over, they invite the spectators to try. The line will be very long, so if you want to participate in the fire-walking itself you should try to gather at the gate during the ceremony, not after. There will be four salt piles: one at the beginning and end of each of the two procession lines. Before walking across the

coals, step into the salt and then again when you finish. Be sure to carry a washcloth or small towel to clean your feet when you are finished! Don't be afraid. On my visit, I watched a little girl of three or four try it with her mom, and she looked as though it was a breeze.

TRAIN DIRECTIONS: Leave from the Higashi Fussa station and take the train to Hachioji. Change to the Chuo Line on track four to Takao. The trains are very frequent, about one every ten minutes. Be careful not to get on an express train

Children's Day (Kodomo-no-Hi)

This national holiday on May 5 marks the end of Golden Week, a week of intermittent holidays and workdays during which many companies take vacations. This day was originally celebrated as the Boys' Festival. May 5 is also celebrated as tango-no-sekku or the Iris Festival and according to the old lunar calendar, this is the beginning of summer. To drive away evil spirits and to celebrate the

future of their sons, each family will hang one or more koi-no-bari, carp streamers made of cloth, similar to our windsocks, from flagpoles and balconies. These koi-no-bori can range in size from two feet to 60 feet. They can be simple or ornamental. Indoors, gogatsuningyo (samurai dolls) are displayed. Boys take a bath with floating iris leaves called shobuiyu.

They eat kashiwa-mochi (rice cakes in oak leaves) and chimaki (dumplings in bamboo leaves). These decorations and foods are prepared by parents with the hope that their children will grow up healthy and strong. Samurai, carp, irises, oak trees and bamboo are known in Japan as symbols of strength.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

August - Fussa's Tanabata Festival

Yokotans join their Fussa neighbors in the city streets to celebrate the yearly rendezvous of the lovers, Vega and Altair. This festival grew from Chinese folklore brought to Emperor Koken's Imperial Court in 775 AD. The love story is about a talented weaver, Vega, who met Altair, a herdsman, through Vega's father. The young couple fell in love and Vega subsequently neglected her weaving. Vega's father was angered so he demanded the lovers separate, allowing them to meet only once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar.

Originally, girls wrote their wishes on paper strips hung on bamboo branches. Later, colorful streamers were used. There are three shrines carried, which are different from other festivals: one by adult Japanese males, one by adult Japanese females, and one by Americans. The festival includes dashi (a wagon with drums and music), dancers (about 130 groups), festival foods and fun. This is truly a Japanese-American festival and a Yokota-Fussa friendship event. If you want to be a "shrine carrier" and part of it all, just contact the Wing Public Affairs Office.

Thora Davidson-White

August - Yokota Friendship Festival

The Yokota Friendship Festival features fly-bys, static aircraft displays, music and dancing. The Japanese will wait in long lines to have their photos taken with airmen in front of their plane.

There are many booths selling food, t-shirts, and other souvenirs. Some 200,000 people attend the annual 2-day summer event. A fireworks show wraps up the festival on Sunday

evening. Watch the base bulletin and Fuji Flyer for specific dates. Invite your Japanese friends for a great day of entertainment!

Christine Thomas

August - Ome Fireworks

On the first Saturday night in August, Ome City has a magnificent display of fireworks. It lasts over an hour! To get to the viewing

area, follow the crowds walking up the hill behind the Ome train station. Take a mat to sit on as hundreds of people sit on the ground of

the athletic field. Go early so you'll have room to spread out your mat or blanket. Bring a picnic and enjoy the night!
Christine Thomas

August - The Festival of Lanterns

August is the month of Bon, when the spirits of the dead revisit their families and are entertained for a few days and then return to the other shore. Bon Matsuri, or Festival of Lanterns, is a time to show respect for and to acknowledge gratitude to ancestors. It is also a joyous time when those who have passed away return to visit with the living. Bon Matsuri is not a national holiday and is therefore not celebrated at the same time throughout Japan. It is celebrated from July 13-15 in Tokyo. In most other parts of Japan, the three-day event is celebrated in August during the summer break so that people can return to their hometowns. In preparation for O-bon, homes and graveyards are cleaned.

Decorations, offerings and food are purchased at bon-ichi (Bon market) or kusa-ichi (grass market). Buddhist graveyards are elaborately decorated. Branches from Japanese umbrella pine, koyamaki, and sakaki trees can be found along with mochi, fruit and incense. On the first night, families flock to cemeteries with white lanterns to light the way for returning ancestors. In the main room of the house, the butsudan, or family altar, is displayed along with the ihai, record of ancestry. The house is carefully

decorated and appropriate foods prepared to make the returning spirits feel welcome. Presents are exchanged between friends, and merchants give gifts to valued customers. Workers are often given a day off and a gift. Vendors offer all types of souvenirs, including crickets in wooden cages, red fish, bonsai trees and ferns. Fortunetellers promise a look into the future, and zodiac charms are available to insure good luck. At the end of the three-day visit, Dango, farewell rice balls, are offered to the spirits for their journey. People flock to rivers to flat small boats with lighted lanterns aboard. A lively and important part of the Bon season is the Bon-odori, a rhythmic dance in which participants sing, clap hands and stamp feet in unison to folk songs, accompanied by beating drums that go faster and faster. The dances performed in Kosi in Nagano Prefecture, and Tokushima in Tokushima Prefecture, August 14-16 are among the most distinctive and very popular with visitors. Another noteworthy celebration takes place on Shiraishi-jima, an island in the Inland Sea, on August 13-16.

Tina Isaacson, Rita Mayer

September Chouyo

Chouyo, the Chrysanthemum Festival, on the ninth day of the ninth month, was adopted by the Japanese from a Chinese festival during the Tokugawa period. The chrysanthemum signifies fall and winter and the wheel-like form of its shape is a symbol of the radiating sun (it is also

the emblem of the present imperial family). Like Ground Hog Day, the weather on this day is said to forecast the weather of the coming winter. Good weather promises an easy winter, rainy weather means cold and snow, while a northeasterly wind predicts an abundance of fruit

September Juugoya

A pale moonlit night in autumn has a special appeal to the poetic temperament of the Japanese people. Juugoya, the 15th night or night of the full moon late in September, is an occasion for moon-viewing parties. Although the practice of greeting the moon is no longer observed as widely as in the past, it still delights many people. Just before twilight, a small table is set out where the rays of the harvest moon will

fall. Fifteen dango (rice dumplings) are placed on the table with fruit and vegetables as an offering to the Moon Goddess. A vase with the Seven Grasses of Autumn (susuki: including cattails & pampas grass) will also be set on the table. When the moon rises, family and friends will admire the beauty of the moon while enjoying refreshments.

September Keiro-no-Hi

September 15, Keiro-no-Hi or Respect for the Aged Day, is a national holiday for showing reverence to the elderly. (Be especially careful not to sit in the Silver Seat at the end of a railway car this day if an older person is present. These seats are reserved for handicapped and elderly persons at all times. They are usually marked by a different color and dark blue sign on the

September Ginger Festival

The Ginger Festival is to be found at the Ninomiya Shrine on September 9. About 100 years ago, the people of the area began celebrating an annual festival at the Ninomiya Shrine believing the eating of ginger would bring good health and well-being for the coming year. Ginger plants and craft items, can be purchased from a several vendors. You'll find popcorn, cotton candy and honey-roasted chestnuts for sale. Try the squid cooked on skewers - surprisingly tasty. Throughout the day, there are many different types of traditional entertainment. The puppet show is a favorite of young and old alike. The stage is set up high to give everyone a good view.

November - Shichi-Go-San

The "7-5-3" festival was traditionally held on November 15, but is now celebrated throughout the month of November. It is a festival for 3- and 7-year old girls, and 5-year-old boys. Girls are dressed in their finest kimonos and boys are dressed in their finest haregi. Parents and grandparents, also dressed in their finest, take their children to Shinto shrines to give thanks for their good health and pray for happiness and future blessings. The younger girls are usually dolled up at home, by mom or grandma. The older girls, however, may get to make a special trip to the beauty parlor where they get their hair styled, their faces made up and their kimonos perfect. The next stop is a professional photographer, who will

capture the moment of the special day. Here the girls are given a stick of candy called chitose-ame (literally 1,000 years of age candy). The girls display these long candy sticks in festive bags for their pictures. Upon arrival, we were overwhelmed by the number of beautiful young girls and handsome young boys! We made our way to the registration area where our friends' daughters waited their turn to go into the shrine. After more pictures and some squirming by young people, the girls were finally called. There were approximately eight families in the room, with boys and girls. I tried not to look like a 'tourist' as I looked over each of these young boys and girls to see their kimonos and haregi. We knelt before a Shinto priest and he began the ceremony,

window above the seat.) Shuubun-no-Hi, or the Autumn Equinox, is another national holiday. Some Japanese make pilgrimages to the graves of their ancestors at this time. Housewives also make and distribute delicacies to friends and neighbors as tokens of kindness and regard for life.

Carol Ingmanson, Teresa K. Negley

The puppets are about two-thirds the size of a human and magnificently crafted. The puppeteers can be seen, but they are shrouded in black to blend in with the background. Drums and other traditional instruments accompany the performance. Events at the festival continue all day. Between 4-8pm a smaller portable shrine is carried through the streets and up the 46 steps to the permanent shrine.

DIRECTIONS: From Fussa go to Haijima Station, then change to the Itsukaichi Line. Take this train to Kumagawa, then to Higashiakiru Station. The Ninomiya Shrine is only a four-minute walk from the station.

Debbie Reed

which I never understood but will truly remember for the rest of my life. He blessed the children as a whole and prayed for their health and happiness in a ceremony that lasted only fifteen minutes. Within the first five minutes, my feet had gone to sleep and as I looked around thinking I might shift to a more comfortable position, I realized quickly this was a place where this should not be done. I wondered how I might walk when it was over! After the group blessing, the priest called each of the children by name to the front and gave them a blessing. Then, when all the children were done, we left the room. Next, we took a walk around the grounds and looked at some of the old original buildings within the Shrine grounds. After some more

photos, we headed home, where everyone changed out of their kimonos into some 'Sunday' clothes could go out to celebrate with a traditional Japanese feast. This festival is quite an experience, and even if you cannot participate yourself, going to local and more famous shrines on Sundays in November (or a Japanese holiday in November) to see the boys and girls is a real treat. Some of the most popular areas in Tokyo are Meiji Jingu (Meiji Shrine) near Harajuku Station, Kanda Myojin near Ochanomizu Station, and Asakusa Jinja near Asakusa Station.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

December - Emperor's Birthday

In Japan, although Christmas is not a national holiday, some western traditions are being adopted. Confectioners have started a "tradition" that

a Christmas cake is to be eaten by the family on Christmas Eve. Santa Claus brings one gift per child. The only national holiday this month is the Emperor's Birthday on December 23. On this day, the castle gates are opened and the Emperor gives a speech to the public. This is quite an experience. He repeats the speech several times throughout the day to accommodate the masses of people lined up to view him and his family.

December - Chichibu Yo-Matsuri

An all-night festival is held on the 2nd and 3rd of December, highlighted by a parade of six huge lantern-lit floats. On the 3rd all the floats assemble at the Chichibu Shrine around 7pm, and proceed along the city's main streets. There is a fireworks display from

8:20-10pm in Hitsujiyama Park. From 2-3pm, kabuki is performed on a temporary stage in front of the Musashino Bank.

December - Gishi-Sai

A festival is held at Sengakuji Temple in Tokyo on December 14 celebrating the famous vendetta carried out by the 47 Ronin "masterless samurai" of Aiko in 1702. The parade, reenacting the event, starts from Nihombashi Memmo Co., near Higashi-Nihombashi Station on the Toei Asakusa Line at 6pm. They cross the Ryogoku Bridge and arrive at Matsuzakacho Park around 6:20. After a reception they ride the subway to Sengakuji Station and arrive at Sengakuji Temple, the burial place of these masterless samurai, at around 7:30pm. A memorial service is then held.

Shrine and Temple Etiquette

Shrines (Shinto) usually have torii gates (two pillars with two cross bars) at the entrances to their grounds, and jagged paper emblems or symbolic ropes in front of the altars. Temples (Buddhist) are often marked on maps with a symbol resembling a backward 'swastika'. Sometimes, both are present on the same grounds. Please remember these are places of worship, dress appropriately (no bare shoulders or short shorts), and act respectfully. When entering certain locations, visitors may be asked to take off their shoes (look for signs requesting this

and/or areas or shelves where shoes may be left). Some temples/shrines allow photography, others do not. Check for signs; if unsure, be courteous and ask before taking pictures (especially of interior areas).

Louise McCormack

Worshippers at a Shrine do the following: Pass under the torii gate and walk through the 'sando' or approach to the shrine. At the hand-washing (or purification) stone basin, the hands are cleansed thoroughly. With a dipper, pour water into the cupped hand and then bring

the water to the mouth, gargle but do not swallow. Do not bring the dipper directly to the mouth. Advance before the god enshrined. Money (either paper currency or coins) is thrown into the offering box; (the phrase go-en also means 'for luck' in addition to ¥5). The worshipper then bows deeply two times. After that, they clap their hands twice and then make a deep bow once more.

Worshippers at a Temple will often burn incense (osenko) in large incense burners. They are purchased in bundles, then lit, allowed to

burn for a few seconds and then the flame is extinguished by waving the hand rather than by blowing them out. Finally, the incense is put into

the incense burner and some of the smoke is fanned towards the worshipper as the smoke is believed to have healing power. For example,

fan some smoke towards your shoulder if you have an injured shoulder.

Area Churches with Services in English

Check at the base chapel for more services and points of contact.

Kanto Plains Baptist Church	042-551-1915	
New Light Fellowship	042-553-8040	
Tokyo Baptist Church	03-3461-8425	
Yokota Baptist Church	042-553-2577	
Apostolic United Pentecostal Church	042-553-1159	
St. Alban's Anglican/Episcopal Church	03-3431-8534	
Yokota Christian Center	042-551-4772	
Yokota Church of Christ	227-6028	
Calvary Conservative Baptist Church	042-557-0654	
Saint Anselm's Benedictine Priory (Roman Catholic)		03-3491-6966
St. Paul International Lutheran Church, Tokyo		03-3261-3740
Independent Church of Deliverance		042-552-9679
Franciscan Chapel Center (Roman Catholic)		03-3401-2141/2142
Tokyo Union Church		03-3400-0047
Tokyo International Church of Seventh-day Adventists		03-3402-1517
Holy Resurrection Cathedral (Nicolai-Do)	Holy Autonomous Orthodox Church in Japan	03-3295-6879 www.orthodoxjapan.jp/