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HP: <http://www.city.tsukuba.ibaraki.jp/005511.html>, <http://www.tsukubainfo.jp/> ✍ Editors: Prakash Ronit, Yeow Li Sa

The 40th Mount Tsukuba Ume Matsuri (Plum Blossom Festival) One of the best views in Kanto, enjoy the scenery of Spring seen nowhere else!

February 16 (Sat)~ March 24 (Sun)

The 40th Mount Tsukuba Ume Matsuri will be held at the Tsukuba-san Bairin on the slope of Mount Tsukuba. At an altitude of 250m, the 4.5 hectare park features about 1000 red and white ume (plum) trees. You can also enjoy the panorama of Kenkyugakuentoshi and the beautiful contrast between the Mount Tsukuba rocks and the flowers.

Main events:

- Every day: Ume Tea Service, stamp rally, Mount Tsukuba's famous Gama no Abura Uri Kojyo demonstration, famous products of Tsukuba on sale, and more.
- Every weekend: Performance by Asakusa Ohgeido.
- Every Sunday: Outdoor tea ceremony
- Stage Event (every weekend)

March 10: 40th Anniversary Event

- *Gama no Abura Uri Kojyo demonstration from 10:30.
- * Traditional Japanese Song Festival: shamisen performance by Isaka Toshiyuki and group.

- * Photograph Session: "Yuru kyara, Tsukuba Tourism Ambassador and Ibaraki Sky Guide" from 12:45
- * "The Ume King: Ume seed-spitting competition from 13:00
- * Wadaiko: Sai from 13:30

Transportation Guide

1. By Bus: Take Tsukuba-san Shuttle Bus departing from Tsukuba Center (40mins), get off at "Tsukuba-san Jinja entrance" and walk for 5 minutes to Tsukuba-san Bairin.

Fare: Adult 700 yen. Children 350 yen.

2. By Car: Parking Fee: car 500 yen, 2-wheeled vehicle 250 yen, large vehicle 2000 yen per entrance.

*Large vehicles are prohibited in Parking lot #4.

3. By Ume Matsuri Free Tour Bus: Sat, Sun and Public Holidays 10:00– 15:30. Bus Route: Bairin → Jinja → Tsutsujigaoka.

Contact:

- Tsukuba City Hall, Tourism Division (ext. 4531)
- Tsukuba Sightseeing Association, Tel: 029-869-8333,
- *Homepage: Search "Mount Tsukuba Ume Matsuri"

Useful Information on Insurance System in Japan

Marufuku: Medical Welfare System

Marufuku is a subsidy system which assists part of the medical cost paid at a medical institution using a health insurance. An application is necessary to receive this subsidy. However, vaccinations, medical checkups, hospital meal bills, medicine containers, diapers and any other charges which are not covered by the insurance are exempted from this system. Apart from children who have yet to enter school, this system is not applicable to those who are above the income limit. **Eligibility:**

1. Infants and small children: From new-born babies to 3rd year elementary school students.
2. Expectant and nursing mothers: From the 1st day of the month the maternity passbook was issued to the last day of next month of childbirth.
3. Single parent: Single mothers and fathers and their children

until they become 18 years old.

4. People with severe mental or physical disabilities;
 - *Determined as class 1-2 on the physical disability handbook or class 3 on the internal impediment handbook.
 - * Determined as *maru A* and/or *A* on the medical handbook
 - * Determined as class 3 on the physical disability handbook and determined as B on the treatment and education handbook
 - * Receiver of class 1 disability pension
 - * Qualified for special childcare allowance class 1

For documents regarding income standard and application contact:

Tsukuba City Hall, Health Insurance and Pension Division,
National Health Insurance Benefits Section (ext. 1411)

Tax Declaration Consultation (2013) for 2012

Declaration period: February 18 – March 15. * Except for weekends. However will be open on February 24.

Reception time: 9:00-16:00 (Reception may finish early in case of overcrowding) * 9:00-11:00 and 13:30-15:00 on February 24.

Location: Tsukuba City Hall 2nd floor Declaration Consultation Venue.

National Health Insurance Members

*The National Health Insurance Tax calculation is based on the income and the number of subscription in the previous year. Therefore, irrespective of the income situation, households subscribing to the National Health Insurance must declare for the head of the household and the subscribing members.

Declaration form can be posted or delivered by proxy

The declaration consultation venue is usually crowded. Those who can fill the declaration form by themselves at home may download the declaration form from the National Tax Agency homepage or pick it up from the Tsuchiura Tax Office, fill it in and send it with the required documents to the following address:

Income Tax Returns Declaration: Tsuchiura Tax Office
(〒300-8601 Tsuchiura City, Jouhoku-machi 4-15)

City Tax or Prefectural Tax Declaration: Tsukuba City Hall,
Municipal Tax Division.

* In case you are unable to go to the declaration consultation venue, you may send a proxy who has knowledge about your declaration.

Free Consultation from Public Tax Accountants Association

The Public Tax Accountants Association Tsuchiura branch will provide free consultation on February 18 from 13:00 to 15:00 (~40mins per person). Reservation is needed. Feel free to make a reservation by phone and make use of this service.

Location: Kanto-Shinetsu Certified Public Tax Accountants Association Tsuchiura Branch Tax Consultation (Tsuchiura City, Higashi Shimanabe-machi 2-5, beside Tsuchiura Civic Hall)

Application and Contact: Kanto-Shinetsu Certified Public Tax Accountants Association, Tsuchiura Branch Tel: 029-824-5055 (Consultation reservation time: Weekday 10:00-14:00)

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Municipal Tax Division

Event

The 90th Tsukuba Human Studies Course Kabuki is the Japanese Operetta!!!

~The Noh Theatre is the Japanese Opera! The way to enjoy it Part 10~

Date & time: February 23, 2013. The theatre opens at 13:30 and show is from 14:00-16:00. Place: Tsukuba Science and Information Centre, 3rd floor Large meeting room.

Capacity: 100 people, free participation, first come first serve basis. Lecturer: Hashioka Nobuaki (Noh artist)

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Lifelong Learning Division (ext. 2331)

Early Spring Walking Event in Tsukuba

This walking event is an 8km course, from the base of Mount Tsukuba to the Mount Tsukuba Shrine and the Mount Tsukuba bairin where the Ume Matsuri is held. There are also special privileges arranged for participants, so do not miss out!

Date: March 9, 2013.

Start time: 1) 9:00~ 2) 10:00~ 3) 11:00~

Goal time: 12:00-16:00

Course: Mount Tsukuba entrance (Numata) → Hiragaike → Iina Shrine (Usui) → Tsukuba-san Shrine → bairin → Tsukuba Michi → Mount Tsukuba entrance (Numata)

Capacity: 300 participants (100 people per starting time)

Application: Apply by February 28, via the homepage of Tsukuba Tourist and Convention Association or through the Tsukuba City Hall Tourism Division

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall Tourism Division (ext. 4541)

Tsukuba City Environment Beautification Forum: A new Step~

Date & time: March 3, 2013. from 14:30~17:00.

Location: Tsukuba International Congress Center, Main Convention Hall.

Content: 1) Tsukuba City Environment Beautification Activity Commendation. 2) Activity report by the Tsukuba City Beautification Executive Committee. 3) A lecture presentation by Ishihara Yoshizumi (a famous T.V personality). 4) Message performance by Robotto Nozomi (a street performer)

Capacity: 1000 people who applied first. (Apply in advance)

Ticket: Free of charge.

Application: Write your address, name, phone number, apply through fax or email.

Contact: 305-8555, Tsukuba City Karima 2530-2 (Kenkyugakuen D32-2). Tsukuba City Hall, Environmental Department, Environmental Management Division (ext. 3710) Fax:029-868-7591.

Email: evm010@info.tsukuba.ibaraki.jp

Library Information

Tsukuba Public Library

TEL: 029-856-4311. Open : Sat & Sun : 9:30-17:00, Tue - Fri 9:30-19:00. There are library rooms at Yatabe, Tsukuba, Onogawa and Kukizaki Community Centers as well. (Tue - Sun: 10:00 - 18:00).

Library closed on: Feb 18-22,25, Mar 4,11,18,20,25

Tsukuba Public Library : Story Telling

“Ohanashi matsubokkuri” Feb 16, 15:00-15:30

“Ohanashi no mori” Feb 23, 15:00-15:30,
15:30-16:00

Tsukuba University Story Telling Group: Feb 24, 15:00-15:30

Place: ARS Hall, Tsukuba Public Library, 2nd Floor

Free Library Book Recycle

The Tsukuba Public Library will distribute unneeded books to the citizens for free.

* When stock finishes recycling ends.

*The recycling of general books and magazines on 22nd and 23rd will be 40 minute shifts with 60 people/shift.

*The recycling of children's books on 24th will be 25 minute shifts with 20 people/shift.

*Tickets necessary for entrance on all days (22nd-24th). Tickets will be distributed until the capacity is reached.

*Tickets will start being distributed 30 minutes before the opening time.

*No entry permitted at a time other than stated on the ticket.

*No joining the waiting line in the middle. Only participants are allowed to stand in the line.

Date	Time	Venue	For (people per shift)	Material	Limit/person
Feb 22	13:00 - 16:00	ARS Hall	First 180 Tsukuba citizens (60)	General, Magazines	General : 30 Magazines: 10
Feb 23	9:00 - 15:00	ARS Hall	First 360 Tsukuba citizens (60)	General, Magazines	General : 30 Magazines: 10
Feb 24	9:00 - 15:00	2F Meeting Room	First 240 Tsukuba citizens (20)	Children's books	Picture books : 5 Other : 5
Feb 26	9:00 - 15:00	2F Meeting Room	Everyone	General, Magazines	No limit

Contact: Tsukuba Public Library, TEL: 029-856- 4311

Things to consider when looking for apartments to rent in Japan

When renting apartments in Japan there may be procedures that are different from what you are familiar with. Usually, the apartments are handled by real estate companies “Fudousan不動産” and tenants almost never meet the apartment owners. When searching for apartments you can go to a Fudousan and ask for available apartments. Also, apartments may be listed online and you can put conditions such as price range, location, number of rooms and so on to narrow your search options. Some terms that may come in handy are L: living space, D: dining space, K: kitchen. For example if you are searching for 2 bedrooms with a kitchen, dining and living room you would need an apartment with 2LDK. If you wish to see the apartments, the Fudousan may take you there.

In Japan, there are some special conditions when renting apartments. For some apartments you may need to pay *reikin* “礼金”(key money), *shikikin* “敷金”(deposit) and the *tesuryou* “手数料”(commission) before entering the apartment. However conditions differ among apartments so it is advised to check for these before making a decision. Moreover, you may have to pay for an insurance and have a guarantor. Some Fudousans may allow you to have a personal guarantor, such as your professor, group leader or friends, however others may ask you to pay for a company which will act as your guarantor. There are also other conditions, so please be sure to understand the contract conditions before signing it. In most cases the contract will only be in Japanese so it may be useful to have it explained by someone who understands Japanese.

Housing Assistance Project

People who lost their jobs but have ability and will to work, and have lost or are in danger of losing their house may get housing assistance and support to enhance opportunities to get employment. **Eligibility:** Those who fall into all the following (1-7) conditions:

1. Have lost their job within 2 years at the time of application.
2. Are below age 65 at the time of application.
3. Have the ability and will to work and have applied to Job Centers (Hello Work) for job search.
4. Have lost or are in danger of losing their house (however, ineligible if the family members living together own a house)
5. As a rule, those who do not have any income (however, eligible if the monthly income from temporary basis or of the family members living together does not exceed 84000yen for single-person household, 172000 yen for multifamily household)
6. The savings of the family members living together is below 500,000 yen for a single-person household, 1000,000 yen for a multifamily household.
7. Do not have a loan from the government or regional institutions and not receiving any benefits.

Allowance Amount: The monthly amount paid for the allowance is 35,400yen for single-person household and 46,000yen for a multifamily household. (Examples of Ibaraki Prefecture)

Payment Method:

The money will be transferred into the account of the tenant or the consigned institution.

Note: 1) Implementation is planned between April 1, 2013 to march 31, 2014. 2) The payment will be made from the following month of the day the application was made, so apply as soon as possible. 3) When applying it is necessary to submit documentary evidence. 4) For more information on this project, contact the Division responsible.

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Social Welfare Division (ext. 2121)

Application has Begun for Mutual Aid Traffic Accident Insurance Plan

This system pays as a consolation payment for those who suffered from traffic accidents.

Starting Date of Reception: From February 1, 2013

Period for Mutual Aid: April 1, to March 31, 2014

Eligibility: People registered in the Resident Registration in Tsukuba City.

Membership fee: Adult per year: 900 yen. Junior High School students and younger: 500 yen. * Half price for those entering after September 30.

Application: Apply directly at service counters or Crisis Management Division of Tsukuba City Hall.

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Crisis Management Division (ext. 2510)

Cycle Sharing: Demonstration Experiment

Tsukuba City is promoting the use of bicycle as an environmentally friendly mode of transport. As a measure to promote bicycle usage and to improve traveling in the City, demonstration experiments are being carried out at registered cycle sharers. This cycle sharing has 5 registered places (Cycle Ports) where bicycles can be borrowed for free.

For more details contact the Tsukuba City Hall.

Period: February 1, 2013~February 28, 2013

Places: Near TX Kenkyugakuen Station

Cycle Ports: In front of Kenkyugaluen Station, IIAS Tsukuba, City Hall, inside the Seibu Industrial Complex and Kenkyugakuen C district.

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Transportation Policy Division (ext. 5310)

Clinics Open During Sundays and Holidays

Emergency medical institution check up times 9:00-17:00pm.

The dates below may change, in case of emergency call the fire department Tel: 029-851-0119. (Add 029 in the beginning of phone numbers)

Feb 17 Komatsu Naika Clinic, Kamiyokoba 1178, Tel: 838-2400

Watanabe Naika Clinic, Namiki 3-11-9, Tel: 851-5901

Feb 24 Shojisan Fujinka Shonika Iin, Yatabe 1562, Tel: 836-0405

Tsukuba Centre Clinic, Takezono 1-6-1 Tsukuba Mitsui Building 4th floor, Tel: 851-9001

Mar 3 Jinai Naika Iin, Onozaki 785-1, Tel: 855-4577

Namiki Naika Clinic, Namiki 4-4-2-203, Tel: 869-6969

Mar 10 Tsukuba Icho Byoin, Takamihara 1-2-39, Tel: 874-3321

Takezono SC Clinic, Takezono 3-18-2 Takezono Shopping Center, Tel: 851-4635

Mar 17 Tsukuba Soai Byoin, Takasaki 1008, Tel: 873-2511

Ichihara Byoin, Ozone 3681, Tel: 864-0303

Mar 20 Tsukuba Gakuen Byoin, Kamiyokoba 2573-1, Tel: 836-1355

Shibahara Iin, Yoshinuma 1151, Tel: 865-0511

Mar 24 Tsukuba Hakua Clinic, Mase 918-1, Tel: 837-0208

Terasaki Clinic, Yoshinuma 1437-1, TEL: 865-0034

Mar 31 Tougou Iin, Tateno 636, TEL: 837-1785

Nakagawa Iin, Shinozaki 2272-1, TEL: 864-7760

Hitokoto Nihongo

This section introduces useful and unique Japanese expressions.

This month we will introduce the word 「良い」 (よい/いい) “yoi”/ “ii”. The word *Yoi* can have many meanings and is widely used in daily conversation. In most cases when speaking, 「良い」 is pronounced “ii” (as *ea* in *eat*). The past tense of *Yoi* is “yokatta”. *Yoi* is the opposite of 「悪い」 “warui” which means bad.

Here are some examples:

A: 今度、いっしょに遊びに行きませんか? (Kondo isshoni asobi ni ikimasenka?): Lets hang out sometime!

B: 良いですね! (ii desune!): That's a good idea.

A: いつが都合良いですか? (itsu ga tsugo ii desuka?) When is a good time for you?

B: いつでも良いですよ。ただ、天気が良い日の方が良いですね。(itsu demo ii desuyo. Tada tenki ga ii hi no ho ga ii desune): Anytime is good for me but would be better if the weather is nice.

A: それなら、天気予報を見てから連絡して良いですか? (sore nara tenki yohou wo mite kara renraku shite ii desuka?) If so, then is it ok if I contact you after checking the weather forecast?

B: もちろん。連絡を待っています。(mochiron. renraku wo matte imasu): Of course. I'll wait for your call.

・・・(当日)・・・(toujitsu): On the day

A: 今日は天気が良くてなにより! (kyo wa tenki ga yokute nani yori!) The weather is great today above all!

B: あなたの日頃の行いが良いからです。(anata no higo no okonai ga ii kara desuyo): It is because of your great conduct.

A: 今日はとても楽しかったです。(kyo wa totemo tanoshikatta desu): I really had fun today

B: 私も楽しかったです。誘ってもらえて良かったです。(watashi mo tanoshikatta desu. sasotte moraete yokatta): I also enjoyed today. It was good of you to invite.

Free Consultation Service For Foreigners

Tsukuba City Consultation Centre for Foreigners

(Tsukuba City Hall Globalization Division, 2nd floor Counter No. 39)

Consultation in English and Japanese every Tuesdays, Chinese and Japanese every Wednesdays. (Except on national holidays) from 10:00-12:00, 13:00-16:45. Consult in person or by phone. Tel: 029-868-7700 * All consultation will be strictly confidential.

Revision of the Ibaraki Prefecture Minimum Wage and Ibaraki Prefecture Special Minimum Wage Rate

The minimum wage rate for people working in Ibaraki Prefecture has been revised as follows:

Minimum wage by Industry	Hourly rate	Effective Date
Ibaraki Prefecture minimum wage	699yen	6th October, 2012
Steel Industry	805yen	31st December, 2012
General machinery and appliance, Production machinery and appliance, Industrial machinery and appliance Industry	789yen	
Measuring equipment, analytical equipment, testing machines, Scientific equipment, medical equipment, mechanical equipment, medical products, optical machineries, lenses, electronic appliances, devices and circuits, electrical machineries, information technology machinery, watch (and its parts) industries	782	
All types of small goods industry	756	

Even with mutual consent from employee and employer, if the contract offers below the minimum wage rate, by law that wage rate will be invalid and minimum wage rate will be applied.

Contact:

* Ibaraki Labour Bureau, Labour Standards Department, Wages Office TEL: 029-224-6216

*Tsukuba City Hall Industry Promotion Division
TEL: 029-883-1111 (4580)

* Tsuchiura Labour Standards Inspection Office,
(Tsuchiura City, Chuo 2-14-11) TEL: 029-821-5127

Display Your Artwork!

You can display your artwork (pictures, paintings, calligraphy) for free at the "Plaza Performance" of Tsukuba Creo Square MOG 1st floor Plaza. For more details on conditions of usage contact the Tsukuba Urban Transportation Center.

Eligibility: People living, working or studying in Tsukuba, corporate bodies and organizations, however the display should not be for business purpose.

Contact & application: Tsukuba Urban Transportation Center "machi sodachi" Team. Tel: 029-861-0500

Design Mascot Characters for the Social Welfare Council

The Social Welfare Council (Shakyo) is collecting designs for mascot characters. Guidelines for the design are on the Shakyo homepage and at the Shakyo Headquarters (Oho Branch Office 1st floor). Please apply until March 22nd.

Application & Contact: Social Welfare Council, Tsukuba City, Tsukuho 1-10-4. Tel: 029-879-5500

Account Transfer Payment of Taxes

City Tax can be paid conveniently through the bank account transfer system. It is similar to automatic payment from the bank account, just like the payments for gas, electricity, water and so on. If you apply for this service once, the payments will be made automatically and you would not need to worry about the payment of taxes. Moreover, there is no fee for this service.

Application:

1. City Tax Account Transfer Request Form (Available at financial institutions within the city)
2. Bank account book
3. Registered seal

Bring the above documents and make an application at the counter of a financial institution. In case you can not find a City Tax Account Transfer Request Form at a financial institution near you, contact the city hall and it will be sent to you.

Financial Institutions that offer this service

Joyo Bank, Tsukuba Bank, Mitsui Sumitomo Bank, Ashikaga Bank, Higashi Nippon Bank, Mizuho Bank, Risona Bank, Siatama Risona Bank, Mitsubishi Tokyo UFJ Bank, Mito Shinkin Bank, Yuki Shinkin Bank, Ibaraki Kenshin bank, Tsukubashiyatabe Agricultural Cooperative, JA Tsukubashi, Japan Post Bank (Post office bank)

Automatic account transfers for 2013

If you apply after you get the tax notice it will be too late to pay for the 1st installment so it is advised to apply as soon as possible.

Tax Item	Application period to the financial Institutions		First installment deadline
	Other than Post office bank	Post Office Bank	
Fixed Asset Tax/ Urban Planning Tax	March 19	February 20	April 30
Light Vehicle Tax	April 19	March 19	May 31
City/Prefectural Tax	May 20	April 19	July 1

Change/ cancelling of Account Transfer

If you are already using the account transfer service for paying taxes, but would like to change to [full payment]/[periodic payment] or cancel the account transfer method, it is advised that you apply for this change as soon as possible.

Contact: Tsukuba City Hall, Tax Collection Division (ext. 2911)

★ City tax payment deadline

Deadline: February 28 (Thursday)

* Fixed Asset Tax and Urban Planning Tax: (4th Instalment)

Contact: Property Tax Division and Tax Collection Division, Tsukuba City Hall (ext. 2911)

* National Health Insurance Tax (8th Instalment)

Contact: Health Insurance and Pension Division, Tsukuba City Hall (ext. 1460)