

# Obihiro Pioneer

## Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section Newsletter

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## Holidays in March

## 3月の祝日

How is your winter faring, pioneers? The Hokkaido winter is notoriously long with a relatively short spring, however, that doesn't mean we can't look forward to the changing weather this month! While March is not particularly known in Japan for its abundance of holidays, it does have a number of celebrations that are traditional in nature.

### Hina Matsuri

Thursday, March 3 is Hina Matsuri (ひな祭り), also known as Doll Festival. This festival has its origins in a very old custom called *hinaokuri* (ひな送り), in which paper dolls made to represent people were floated down the river in order to carry away all the illness and misfortune that might have befallen that person. This custom is still practiced in some parts of the country today. The custom of setting up elaborate doll displays began in the Edo Period (1603-1868), and only became popularized throughout the country after the Meiji era (1868-1912) when the dolls were commercialized and sold in stores.



Today, this day is celebrated especially by families with younger daughters. Families set up a display of dolls wearing the costumes of the Heian imperial court. The most common display consists of 15 dolls placed on a 7-tier platform which is covered with red felt. The set includes the emperor and the empress, three ladies-in-waiting, five male court musicians who represent an ensemble for a Noh play, the Ministers of Right and Left, and three servants who carry the emperor's shoes, wrapped hat, and a wrapped parasol. The display is made complete with various items of miniature furniture, a golden folding screen behind the royal couple, a peach tree and a cherry tree flanking the servants, the food offerings placed between the two ministers.



The food offering is usually a pair of *hishimochi* (菱餅), diamond-shaped rice cakes usually in three or five layers colored pink, yellow, green, white, and/or orange. Speaking of food, there are a number of food items that are eaten during this day, including multi-colored crackers called *hinaarare* (ひなあられ).

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One of my favorite dishes is *chirashizushi* (ちらし寿司), which is essentially a bowl of sushi, containing shrimp, salmon, roe, mushrooms, and eggs. The shrimp is said to represent longevity. It's simple to make, so it is eaten throughout the year as well.

On the day of Hina Matsuri, friends and relatives are invited over to celebrate by drinking *shirozake* (白酒), or sweet white sake, and wishing for the health and happiness of the girls. The doll display is usually set up around mid-February and put away as soon as Hina Matsuri is over. This is done because of an old superstition that families that are slow in putting the dolls away have trouble marrying off their daughters.



## White Day

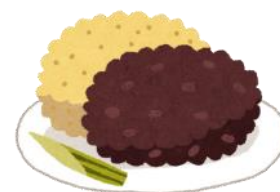
In Japan, Valentine's Day is celebrated by women giving men various types of chocolates, whether they be for friendship or for expressing their feelings. If a man receives chocolate from a woman directly, he can return her feelings by giving her chocolate on White Day! White Day is exactly one month after Valentine's Day (March 14). While clearly a commercial holiday, advertising campaigns are strong, so you will see a number of cakes, chocolates and sweets being sold specifically for this day. If you received a chocolate from a special person on Valentine's Day, now's your chance to return the favor with delicious sweets!

## Shunbun no Hi (春分の日)- Spring Equinox

This day, which falls upon March 21 this year, is astrologically one of the two days in which, due to the earth's tilt and position relative to the sun, the length of daytime is exactly equal to the length of nighttime and winter officially becomes spring. You may then be wondering why the spring equinox is an official Japanese holiday, while the summer and winter solstices aren't. The reasoning for this is that historically, the Japanese imperial court held a ritual celebrating their ancestors on the days of both spring and autumn equinoxes. Due to this, the government made it an official holiday, and calls this day a day to "give thanks to nature and love all living things."



There is also a religious reason why this day is special. In Japanese Buddhism, there is a 7-day-long celebration called *Higan* (彼岸) which covers the 3 days before and after the spring equinox. Religiously, due to the equivalence of the day and night, Buddha appears to help guide souls across the river between the earthly realm and Nirvana. Thus, religious families visit their family tomb and offer food, such as botamochi (ぼたもち) to help guide their ancestors across the river.



## Living in Tokachi Bus Tour

Do you live in Tokachi? (of course you do) Do you like busses? (of course you do!) Do you want to learn more about life in Tokachi and how to be able to get around without a car? (most definitely!) Well, then listen up!

On Monday, March 21 (holiday), the Tokachi International Association will be holding a bus tour meant to help foreign residents learn about life in Tokachi. This time, the bus tour will take you to different facilities in Tokachi, including the bus terminal at Obihiro Station where you can learn how to get tickets to Sapporo, Tokachi Bus where you will learn how to ride a local bus, the Obihiro Centennial Museum where you can learn about the history of Obihiro, and more! These tours are planned to continue this year and will showcase facilities throughout different towns and cities in Tokachi.

## 十勝生活バスツアー



**Living in Tokachi Bus Tour**

**DISCOVER** Useful facilities in Tokachi

**LEARN** About living in Tokachi

- ✓ Experience and learn how to ride a local bus  
まちを走っているバスの乗り方を教えてください！
- ✓ Learn how to ride a highway bus and buy a ticket  
さっぽろに行くバスのチケットの買い方・乗り方を学ぼう！
- ✓ Visit the Obihiro Centennial Museum and the TIRC  
帯広百年きねんかんと森のこうりゅうかんを見に行こう！

Date 日にち	March 21 (Monday, holiday) 3月21日 (月、休みの日)	Application/Details 申し込み・詳しい情報
Meeting Spot 集合場所	Obihiro University International House 1 帯広大学国際交流館1号館 or Tokachi Plaza 1st Floor 十勝プラザ1階	March 1 - March 16 3月1日 - 3月16日
Participants 人数	12 (Min 4) Tokachi Foreign Residents 12人 (最少4人) の十勝に在住している外国人	SCAN HERE
Fee 料金	Free (bring your own lunch) 無料 (各自ランチを持参してください)	

Q&A Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section 帯広市観光交流課  
Contact: Chris Andrade E-mail: international@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp  
Tel: 0155-65-4133 Sponsored by the Tokachi International Association

Date: March 21 (Mon) 9:30-16:00

Meeting Location: Chikusan University Kaikan 1 or Tokachi Plaza 1st Floor

Participants: Max 12 (Min 4)

Fee: Free (bring your own lunch)

Application: 3/1-3/16, scan the QR code

Notes: The event may be cancelled due to the weather and/or COVID-19 restrictions



## Movies @ Cinema Taiyo, Obihiro

Not all movies are listed. Times and movies are subject to change. To confirm, call or check online at: <a href="http://www.taiyogroup.jp/movie/obihiro">www.taiyogroup.jp/movie/obihiro</a>			
Title	Genre	Lang	Dates
<b>Ghostbusters: Afterlife</b> <i>Gōsutobasutāzu/Afutāraifu</i>	fantasy/ comedy	EN	Until 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>The 355</b> <i>355</i>	action/ thriller	EN	Until 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>West Side Story</b> <i>Uesuto Saido Sutōrī</i>	musical/ romance	EN	Until 24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Death on the Nile</b> <i>Nairu Satsujin Jiken</i>	mystery/ crime	EN	All month
<b>Sing 2</b> <i>SING/Shingu Nekusuto •Sutēji</i>	anime/ comedy	EN	From 18 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Osomatsu San: The Movie</b> <i>Eiga Osomatsu San</i>	comedy	JP	From 25 <sup>th</sup>

Obihiro Nishi 3 Minami 11  
Tel: (0155) 20-1525



West Side Story

KEY: JP = Japanese voice EN = English voice with Japanese subtitles

## Events in Tokachi

Please be aware that these and other events may be affected by COVID-19. To find out if these events are still running, please contact the respective organizers or check out their webpages online.

When	What	Where/Contact
3/12 3/26 (Sat) 16:00-17:30	<b>Japanese Conversation and Learning Table</b> <b>森の日本語レッスン</b> Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment.  Fee: Free of charge	Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro <b>森の交流館・十勝</b> 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp
3/12 (Sat) 18:30-20:00	<b>International Talk (Pakistan)</b> <b>インターナショナル・トーク: パキスタン</b> Learn more about the countries of the world. This month's theme is "Pakistan". This time our guest is Zalar Iqra, an international student at Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine. She will introduce her country and share facts and interesting information about Pakistani culture, lifestyle and more. Participants can interact with the guest through a presentation and Q&A session.  Location: TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) Participants: Junior high school students and older	
3/19 (Sat) 10:30-12:00	<b>Kids' Playground (Easter)</b> <b>キッズ・プレイグラウンド: イースター</b> Come with your children to learn and play while meeting local families. This month's theme is "Easter". This time our guest, Chris from America, will interact with the children through song, dance and arts and craft.  Fee: Free of charge Participants: Children 0-6 years old and their parents/guardians. Limited to 40 participants (decided by raffle) Notes: Register by contacting the TIRC or through the QR code on the right. The registration period is from 2/25 (Fri) to 3/11 (Fri)  Target: Students Max Visitors: First 20 children (guardians excluded) Fee: 500 yen / adult, 600 yen / elementary school student and guardian Registration: 2/7 deadline by phone, fax or website	
3/31 (Thu) 17:00-19:30	<b>39th Obihiro Kita High School Spring Concert</b> <b>帯広北高等学校吹奏楽部スプリングコンサート</b> Go enjoy Kita High School Orchestra's annual spring concert! The lineup features a varied program with a performance by the Drama Club and a calligraphy display.  Fee: Free (registration required, please contact the school for details)	Obihiro Shimin Bunka Hall @ Obihiro <b>帯広市北高等学校</b> 0155-47-0121



Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Tokachi Plaza, Cinema Taiyo, Joy English Academy and online at [www.city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp](http://www.city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp) (search for "Obihiro Pioneer").

Obihiro Pioneer is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Contact the Editing Team at:  
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