Sakura season is coming!
Enjoy an artistic spring in Nihonbashi

NIHONBASHI
SAKURA
FESTIVAL
2018.3.16 FRI - 4.15 SUN


Nihonbashi SAKURA Festival Executive Committee
For more than 400 years, the Nihonbashi area has been the mercantile center of Japan following the construction of a wooden bridge called Nihonbashi (literally Japan-bridge) in 1603. This was the same year that the new shogunate rulers moved the political and economic center to Edo – the name of Tokyo at the time. At the instruction of ruler Ieyasu Tokugawa, Nihonbashi was the first area in Edo to be developed in terms of infrastructure and facilities. It took advantage of its location, with waterways connected to the sea, and of its position east of Edo castle, now the Imperial Palace.

With the construction of the bridge, Nihonbashi became the location that connected the GoKaido, or the five main roads of Japan: those to Nikko in the north and those to Kyoto in the west. It was also where ships unloaded goods that were brought in from all over Japan. As such, all kinds of products and people found their way to this bustling area. Commerce and culture thrived and Nihonbashi became an area where the non-ruling class prospered, including craftsmen and merchants. From the 17th century onwards, various shops were established that remain in Nihonbashi until today. Numerous products and developments originate from Nihonbashi. Japan’s first department store was founded here; Edoame sushi, that is now beloved around the world, also finds its roots here in Nihonbashi. Art forms like kabuki or ukiyo-e wood printing began in the Nihonbashi area.

Even today, Nihonbashi remains a center of Japan in various ways. Moreover, with its rich history, it is still the best location in Tokyo to experience traditional foods or to explore stores selling handcrafted products at the outstanding quality that Japan is known for. There are many products that come from different parts of Japan, or were actually invented here in Nihonbashi. History has also created a strong bond among the people working and living in the area. This strong sense of community is unique in the heart of Japan’s metropolis and it is a driving force for activities and events held in the area such as the Sakura Festival.

As Nihonbashi developed during the Edo period (1603-1868) so did cherry blossom viewing. Originally, cherry blossom viewing — or hanami — was a privilege to nobility, but by the Edo period it also became part of the common people’s culture. Several sakura spots exist in the Nihonbashi area. The 2018 Nihonbashi SAKURA Festival is a splendid opportunity to join a unique and truly Japanese spring experience that you can only find here. Yokoso — or welcome to Nihonbashi.

**HISTORY**

Celebrating the sakura season in the center of Japan: Nihonbashi — a unique crossroad between past and present

View cherry blossoms in an historical perspective at the Currency Museum in the Bank of Japan. The museum displays woodblock prints depicting cherry blossom scenes covering the Meiji period (1868-1912). Admission is free. (Of money, they have plenty — after all, it is the Bank of Japan.) Visitors can also enjoy the sakura surrounding the bank, of course also for free.

**EXHIBITION**

Spring in full bloom!
Cherry blossoms prints: Welcome to Nihonbashi and Edo Sakura-dori

Date: Mar. 13 – April 15. Closed on Mar. 19.
Time: 9:30 – 16:30. Door closes at 16:00.
From March 23 to April 15 until 17:30 (doors close 17:00)

[www.imes.boj.or.jp/cm/english/](http://www.imes.boj.or.jp/cm/english/)
On the main roads of Nihonbashi you can already sense a Japanese atmosphere. The large buildings have a modern Japanese design, and many shops are decorated with noren, a half-curtain at the entrance of a building originally to indicate the name of a store or family crest (kamon). The noren are preserved together with the history of the establishments. If you head away from the main streets and go into the alleys, you will bump into another unique atmosphere with temples, shrines and shops here and there. Some may have a history that is centuries old. This is Nihonbashi and it is excellent to stroll around discovering the hidden treasures of this old and yet new area.

There is no better season to explore the area by foot than during the sakura season in spring. Why not do so while dressed in traditional kimono for a full Japanese experience? Kimono rental is one of the services arranged by the Nihonbashi Information Center. You can select your favorite kimono design and professional fitters will help you dress.

Rentals can be done every Saturday from 10:30am – 3:30pm. Fitting takes approximately 30 minutes and the kimono needs to be returned by 6:00pm. Adults 5,500 yen / Children (12 yrs and under) 3,500 yen. Reservations are recommended at least 3 days in advance. Online reservations are possible. For more information, please contact the Nihonbashi Information Center.

www.nihonbashi-tokyo.jp/en/information_center/
The Nihonbashi area is centered around the historical bridge, comprising of the Yaesu, Kyobashi, Muromachi, Ningyocho, and Hamacho neighbourhoods, among others. It covers a large area bordering Marunouchi (Tokyo Station, the Imperial Palace) to the west and stretching to the Sumida river and Asakusa to the east. Southwards, the area connects to Ginza, whereas to the north you will find Akihabara. Throughout the area you will find shops and restaurants, as well as a number of sakura spots.
DID YOU KNOW…? Nihonbashi Fun Facts

- The current Nihonbashi bridge dates back to 1911. It is decorated with 32 lions. Have your kids discover them with your partner, while you enjoy quiet shopping or a cool, relaxing restaurant in the area.

- The stones used on the road on Naka-dori street are the same ones as those that make up the current Nihonbashi bridge.

- In the Edo period, fishermen from Osaka followed Tokugawa Ieyasu to Edo, and provided fish to Edo castle. Tokugawa Ieyasu allowed them to sell any extra fish they caught, and from this a fish market developed near the original wooden Nihonbashi bridge (the Uogashi Riverside Fish Market). This fish market had to be moved after the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923 to Tsukiji. As such, it is the origin of the famous Tokyo fish market that attracts thousands of tourists year around.

- The Bank of Japan is located in Nihonbashi. The building is shaped in the form of the Japanese character for yen (円). However, this is considered likely to be coincidence, since at the time of construction a different character was used for the currency.

- In Nihonbashi you will find many shops decorating their entrance with a noren, a traditional half-curtain to mark a shop or house. As visitors used to wipe off their fingers on the noren when leaving, it is said that it was better to choose shops with dirty noren as a token of prosperous business: the Edo alternative to a Like before social media was invented. Nowadays, noren tend to be new to look more attractive.

Several train and subway lines connect Nihonbashi with other parts of Tokyo: Mitsukoshimae Station (Tokyo Metro Ginza Line and Hanzomon Line), Nihombashi Station (Tokyo Metro Ginza Line and Hanzomon Line, Toei Asakusa Line), Ningyocho Station (Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line, Toei Asakusa Line), and Shin-Nihombashi Station (JR Sobu Line [Rapid]).
Every year, Nihonbashi holds a festival called the Nihonbashi SAKURA Stalls, which will occur this year on March 31 and April 1. The organizing team is the so-called Nihonbashi Miyoshikai, a group of entrepreneurs and restaurant owners in the area. The organization members are looking forward to the SAKURA Stalls event as one way to express the attractiveness of foods from the Nihonbashi area.

“The SAKURA Stalls are unique,” explains Mr. Ichiro Sakuma, former chairman of the Nihonbashi Miyoshikai and master of the sushi restaurant Shigenozushi. His restaurant has its roots in the early Meiji period (around 1868) and is a purveyor to the Imperial Court. “Not only is the quality of the products high compared to regular festivals, it is also special because many restaurants collaborate to create an excellent festival feeling. For example, different sushi chefs work together for the sushi offered at the event. The SAKURA Stalls reflect the sense of community in Nihonbashi and connects the people who have been living and working here for a longer time and newcomers or those who come to explore the area. The shops owners and staff enjoy the event and help each other to make it successful. They are looking forward to sharing this joy with visitors at the event.”

Most of all, the SAKURA Stalls offer food at prices that are common for food stalls. It is an excellent opportunity to try the different tastes of Nihonbashi from the experts at extremely reasonable prices. And how about the sushi? You can expect outstanding quality and authentic Edomae sushi presented by the best chefs in Nihonbashi. “Sushi can take many forms and shapes, and all are in fact correct. At the SAKURA Stalls you can enjoy what we think is an original taste of Edomae sushi,” adds Sakuma and continues: “Preparing sushi is one important thing. Part of our work is also to communicate with the customers and to offer them an all-round, intrinsically Japanese experience.” Your chance to get a glimpse to this experience will be the Nihonbashi SAKURA Stalls. Do come to join the members from the Nihonbashi area.

Nihonbashi hosts many surprises and if you go into the alleys away from the main streets you are bound to find hidden gems. One of these gems is Muromachi Mihama, which serves seasonal Japanese foods with an extensive, continuously changing selection of Japanese sake. Although the restaurant opened in August 2017 and is a relative newcomer, it is part of a larger group of restaurants that has its base in Nihonbashi, including restaurant Hokkaido Yakumo-cho.

Mihama obtains its fresh ingredients daily from different parts of Japan. In this way it well matches the role that the Nihonbashi area has been playing for hundreds of years as a central point in Japan gathering goods from all over the country.

Fresh foods also mean that the menu is highly seasonal and changes year around. For spring, mountain vegetables are on the menu as well as fresh bamboo sprouts, seasonal scallops and clams. A typical menu for the season is so-called Sakura-dai or cherry sea bream, a kind of red snapper that is caught around the sakura season that has given it its name accordingly. To further celebrate the sakura season, Mihama presents non-sweet sakura rice cakes, wrapped in cherry tree leaves and prepared in Kansai style. Items are part of a course or can be ordered a-la-carte. Dishes are relatively small allowing guests to enjoy different tastes. Similarly, the sake menu changes with the seasons and you can ask the staff for the best match for your meal.

Private rooms are available on the second floor, where-as the first floor has a large counter. You can enjoy wonderful Japanese food as you mingle among the locals working or living in the area.
The town of Kanazawa in Ishikawa prefecture is known as a city of traditional Japanese crafts and has played a key role for various art forms for several centuries. Among others, it produces 99% of all gold leaf in Japan, often used to decorate traditional buildings, tableware, accessories, etc. However, to enjoy the various applications of gold leaf, it is not necessary to travel to Kanazawa. As a leading gold leaf company, HAKUZA decided to establish its only flagship store outside of its home-base Kanazawa on the first floor of COREDO Muromachi 1. The choice of the Nihonbashi area reflects the connection of the company to the area. During the Edo period, the government controlled gold production and sales and the institution responsible for this was located at what is now the Bank of Japan. The name of this institution was ‘Hakuza’, and this is actually where the brand name of HAKUZA came from.

In the HAKUZA NIHONBASHI shop you will find a wide variety of products: accessories, tableware, bags, cosmetics and food products. Some items are original products only available in Nihonbashi, such as confections developed in collaboration with local Eitaro Sohonpo, a traditional confectionery shop founded in Nihonbashi in 1857. Not only for shopping, the store is also worth a visit to enjoy the space of the so-called Ougon no Tenku or Golden Sky. Covered on the inside and outside with around 16,000 pieces of gold leaf, you can feel the energy as you enter this overwhelming experience of gold.

The shop hosts a Japanese designed, cosy six-seat counter where you can relax over traditionally prepared matcha green tea brought in from Ishikawa. During the Nihonbashi SAKURA Festival, HAKUZA offers a Japanese sweet in the shape of cherry blossoms. The small delicacy mixes white beans with sweet potato from Kaga, Ishigakawa, giving it a sakura-pink touch. To add to the charm, the pastry that is served as a set with matcha green tea is fabulously decorated with bits of gold leaf. It definitely is a golden opportunity to enjoy traditional Japanese sweets!

Emphasizing that the beauty of the sakura blossom is in a single flower, their sakura mousse is decorated with simple yet elegant flower buds on a branch of chocolate. Covered with matcha green tea powder and coated in chocolate, it reflects the sakura season as a truly Japanese experience and matches the hotel's sense of place.

Another treat is the cherry blossom panna cotta that also represents the sakura season in an authentic Japanese style. Have a taste of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo's original sweets during the sakura season!

On the first floor of the Mitsui Nihonbashi Tower building where the hotel is located, Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo runs its Gourmet Shop. You can have a sip of coffee and unwind at the terrace, while watching people walk by along the main Chuo-dori Street. The shop offers exclusive sweets year round, but for the Nihonbashi Sakura Menu Walk, the chef has created edible pieces of art that are a treat for both the eyes and the tastebuds.

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Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo is also participating in the SAKURA Stall event on March 31 and April 1, where it will offer warm vegetable minestrone soup and freshly baked sakura waffles. Do not miss this chance to enjoy service and products of the highest quality, which the hotel is renowned for, at prices that match those at a food festival.
3.16-4.15
SAKURA TUNNEL
A 25-meter-long art display decorates Naka-dori Street, which leads to Nihonbashi’s Fukutoku Shrine. Using cherry blossom motifs in traditional Edo kiriko-style paper cutout art, a magical sakura-pink experience is created in combination with artistic light-ups and 100 lanterns.
Daily from 11:00 – 23:00. Show time 17:30 – 20:00. Map A

3.16-4.15
SAKURA Light-up
Light-ups at landmark buildings provide a colorful dimension to the streets of the Nihonbashi Muromachi area. Bring your camera or have your smartphone fully charged to capture the sight of beautifully illuminated buildings such as the Mitsui Main Building, a unique neoclassical building along Edo Sakura-dori Street, and the modern Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower.
Daily from 17:00 – 24:00. Depending on location. Map B

3.16-4.15
Nihonbashi Sakura Menu Walk
Around 150 shops and restaurants across the Nihonbashi area offer seasonal special dishes, from traditional Japanese foods to skilfully designed sweet creations. You will cause envy among your Instagram followers with your pics, but the taste is only for you to enjoy.
Time: varies per shop.

3.31-4.1
Nihonbashi SAKURA Food Stalls
Nihonbashi is famous for its many historical restaurants. At this event, visitors can enjoy a variety of original dishes from famous chefs and high-end establishments at reasonable, food stall prices. For those coming on Sunday: this is not an April Fool’s day event. You won’t be disappointed.
Both days: 12:00 – 18:00  Finishes arlier if products are sold out. Map C.

3.19
Music festival in Nihonbashi
On top of the sakura sights and foods in Nihonbashi, this music event is another precursor signals the coming of spring. Being part of the Tokyo Spring Music festival, visitors can enjoy the spring sounds of numerous classical music artists performing on violin, piano, and saxophone to name a few.
First performance starts at 11:30, the last at 18:30. At different locations in the Nihonbashi area. Please check the Tourist Information Center for details.

4.14
Nihonbashi Sake-Tasting Circuit
Try different types of Japanese sake in shops and stalls around Nihonbashi. The original sake cup used in the event is not only a good souvenir, but also your own cup-ticket to explore the various tastes of sake from across Japan.
From 14:00 – 18:00 across the Nihonbashi area. www.sasas.jp (in Japanese).
For more information in English, check with the Nihonbashi Information Center.