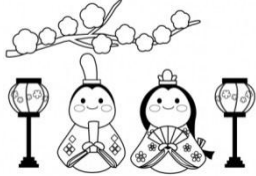




Hello Okaya

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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Center with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insights into Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or feedback you might have.



Doll Festival



While there are many different theories about the origin of the Doll Festival, or Hina Matsuri, one popular theory is that the tradition came from China. It was thought that it was particularly easy to meet disaster during the changing of the seasons, so people in ancient China would float bowls or cups in rivers and perform ritual exorcisms to protect themselves. This time of year was called the Shangsi Festival, or Double Third Festival, as it was held on the third day of the third month. The custom came to Heian Japan and combined with the already existing custom of creating dolls out of paper or other materials and floating them down rivers, which was meant to protect the maker from harm. Today, Doll's Festival is a time to pray for the health of girls. As the beginning of March is also around the time when peach blossoms start to bloom, the 3rd of March is also known as Peach Blossom Festival.

Doll Festival Food

On Doll's Festival, you can enjoy looking at the elaborate arrangement of dolls while eating an equally elaborate meal. The foods traditionally associated with Doll's Festival all have symbolic meaning.

Chirashi Sushi: Celebratory Food
Shrimp→long life, Lotus Root→clear future

Clear soup with clams: As clams have two shells that fit perfectly together, the soup represents the wish that the girls will meet good partners and be happy in marriage.

Hishi Mochi: Hishi Mochi is tri-colored mochi. The green layer represents a long and healthy life, the white layer represents purity, and the pink layer represents a protection against evil. The diamond, or *hishi* shape of the mochi represents the heart of the parents and their feelings towards their child.

Hina Arare: Hina Arare are tri-colored mini crackers, and hold the same meaning as the hishi mochi. As they are starchy and thought to be good for your health, they represent the hope for a long, healthy life for the children.

Festival Dolls

In Japan, there are many households that acquire dolls for the Doll Festival as soon as they have a baby girl. In the past, most households had a full set of 15 dolls that would be displayed on seven tiers, but nowadays many families just buy a few dolls to display on a single tier.

Types of Dolls (7-tier set)

First Tier: The emperor and princess

Second Tier: Three court ladies: They attend the imperial couple

Third Tier: Five musicians: taiko drummer, drummer with a large hand drum, drummer with a small hand drum, flute player, and singer

Fourth Tier: Attendants: The Minister of the Right and the Minister of the Left, who guard and protect the emperor

Fifth Tier: Servants: three people who take care of cleaning, etc.

Sixth and Seventh Tiers: Tools (Dresser • Carrying Case Chest • Mirror • Sewing Box • Clothing Case • Brazier • Tea Set)



Winter Sports !

Visit a local ski resort with your family!



● Kurumayama Kogen Skypark Ski Resort

Access : 391-0301 Nagano Chino Kitayama 3413 (55 minutes by car from Okaya Station, an hour by bus from Chino Station)

Course : 1 beginner run, 1 easy run, 3 intermediate runs, 3 advanced runs

Lift Tickets : 1 day : adults 4200 yen, seniors 3800yen, junior high students 3800 yen, elementary students 2600 yen

Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes

Special Feature : With the purchase of a family pack, elementary school students lift ticket is 2100 yen per child, and adults, seniors and junior high school students are 3100 yen per person.

★ Shirakabako Royal Hill Ski Resort

Access : 391-0301 Nagano Chino Kitayama 3419 (55 minutes by car from Okaya station, 45 minutes by bus from Chino Station)

Course : 4 beginner runs, 4 intermediate runs, 2 advanced runs, 4 park runs (includes 1 beginner park)

Lift Tickets : 1 day: (weekends and holidays) : adult 4800 yen, junior high • senior 3800yen, children 2200 yen

Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes

Special Feature : Enjoy a stay at the Royal Hill Hotel with their lift ticket/hotel stay package deal. Enjoy skiing, onsen, and fine dining!

♥ Fujimi Panorama

Access : 399-0211 Nagano Suwa-gun Fujimi-machi Fujimi 6666-703 (40 minutes by car from Okaya Station)

Course : 2 beginner runs, 5 intermediate runs, 1 advanced run

Lift Tickets : Adults 4700 yen, children 2000 yen, seniors 4200 yen

Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes

Special Feature : At the kid's park, you can go sledding and tubing!

◆ Echo Valley Ski Resort

Access : 386-0601 Nagano Chiisagata-gun Nagawa-machi Himekitaira (53 minutes by car from Okaya Station)

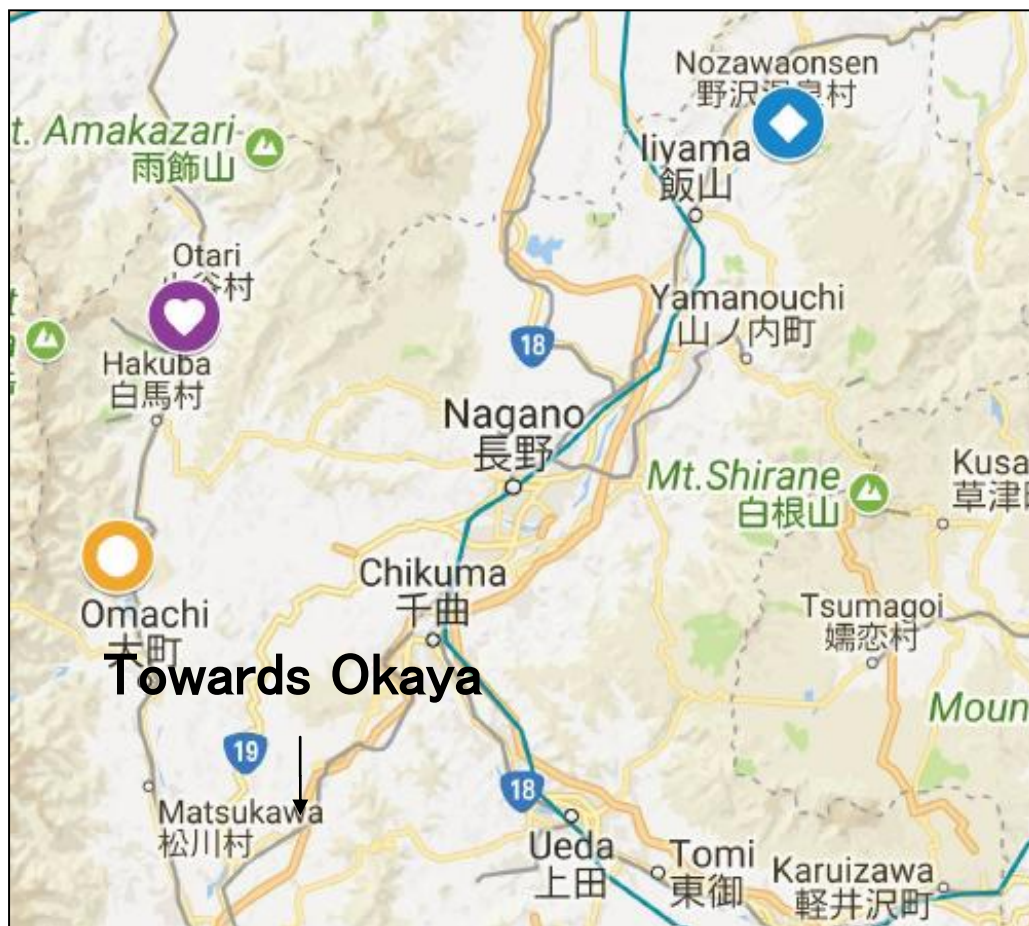
Course : 4 beginner runs, 5 intermediate runs, 4 advanced runs

Lift Tickets : adults 3600 yen, elementary school students 2000 yen, seniors 3200 yen, legends (70 and above) 2800 yen

Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes

Special Features : The third Sunday of every month is Kid's Day. Elementary school students and below get free lift tickets!

If you want to venture outside of Suwa...



- **HAKUBA VALLEY Kashimayari Ski Resort**
Access : 398-0001 Nagano Omachi Taira 20490-4 (An hour and 10 minutes from Okaya)
Course : 6 beginner runs, 7 intermediate runs, 2 advanced runs
Lift tickets : adults 3800 yen; junior high and below : 2000 yen; seniors, high school, and college students 3500 yen
Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes
Special Feature : The closest Hakuba Valley Resort to Okaya!

- ♥ **Hakuba Cortina Ski Resort**
Access : 399-9422 Nagano Kitaazumi-gun Otari-mura Chikuniotsu 12860-1 (2 hours from Okaya by car)
Course : 5 beginner runs, 4 beginner-intermediate runs, 3 intermediate runs, 3 advanced runs, 3 expert runs
Lift tickets : adults 3800 yen, junior high school and under 2000 yen, seniors, high school, and college students 3500 yen
Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes
Special Feature : Enjoy the buffet dinner at Cortina's Hotel Green Plaza

- ◆ **Nozawa Onsen Ski Resort**
Access : Nagano Shimotakai-gun Nozawa Onsen-mura Oozawa Toyosato 7653 (2 hours from Okaya by car)
Course : 6 beginner runs, 9 intermediate runs, 12 advanced r
Lift tickets : adults 4800 yen, children 2200 yen, seniors 3700 yen
Rentals : Yes **Ski Lessons** : Yes
Special Feature : After skiing, go and enjoy one of Nozawa's 14 free onsens!

Kirigamine Ski Resort

Kirigamine is a popular ski resort with local families and is easily accessible from the Suwa Area, taking only 30 minutes by car. There are courses specifically set aside for beginners, so you can enjoy learning to ski with your family without having to worry about safety. You can also enjoy the newly opened Kirigamine Kid's Snow Park! Children can enjoy trying snow racers and playing on jungle gyms in the snow. They can also easily ride to the top of the sledding hill on the *Rakuchinkun* magic carpet. There are also courses set up for air boards and cross country skiing! This is our recommended ski resort for families looking to spend a day (or half of a day!) playing in the snow.



Lift Tickets		
1 Day	Adult	¥ 2, 570
	Child/Senior	¥ 1, 540
4 Hours	Adult	¥ 1, 850
	Child/Senior	¥ 1, 020
12 Rides	--	¥ 2, 000
1 Ride	--	¥ 200
Magic Carpet	--	¥ 510
Entrance Fee		
Kid's Park	--	¥ 490
Rakuchinkun Gym	--	¥ 1, 000
※ Child: Junior High School and under ※ Senior: 55 and up ※ Children under elementary school age are free!		