



Japan Now: January 2025

Japan Now is the email newsletter of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

Table of Contents

- New Year Greeting from Head Consul Hamada
 - Japanese New Year
 - Announcing the Online Arctic Symposium
-

New Year Greeting from Head Consul Hamada



Happy New Year.

Since my appointment in Anchorage in December 2023, I have met many people through our office's various activities and taken part in various exchanges, and I wanted to extend my most sincere thanks to you all. Thanks to your support, I have been able to fully enjoy Alaska, a place that is blessed with diverse culture and vast, beautiful nature.

2024 was a special year for both Japan and the United States. In April, then Prime Minister Kishida came to the United States to conduct bilateral talks with President Biden. Their talks reaffirmed the importance of the alliance between Japan and the United States, issuing the Japan-US Joint Leaders' Statement entitled "Global Partners for the Future." The statement emphasizes the importance of maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Last year was also a meaningful year for the relations between Japan and Alaska.

In August, as a part of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's efforts regarding memorial services and recovery of the remains of war dead abroad, a field survey team visited Attu Island. Over the course of their expedition,

two sets of human remains were recovered. There are currently plans to continue this survey again this coming year, and we are hopeful for their continued success.

In Alaska, there are eight cities which have a sister city relationship with cities in Japan, with each city responsible for organizing exchanges for their citizens. In August 2024, Chitose and Anchorage celebrated the 55th anniversary of their sister city relationship with Chitose City's mayor leading a delegation to visit Anchorage, an event that reaffirmed and deepened the bond between the two cities through exchange and various commemorative services. Palmer and Saroma each sent high school students on a visit to each other's city. In November, our office, the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage, held an online forum bringing together the sister city coordinators from each of the sister cities to exchange information and opinions. In addition, I took the opportunity to visit each of Alaska's sister cities over the past year, meeting with city mayors and others involved with sister city relations to discuss ways to strengthen their ties moving forward.

Last year, there was a House of Representatives general election in Japan. In the United States, there was a presidential election. In January of this year, President-elect Donald Trump will begin his second term; so the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage is determined to use this moment as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Japan and Alaska, and to this end, we are planning a number of activities.

Lastly, I pray that this year will be the best for you all, and I ask for your continued encouragement and support.



Happy New Year



2025 has finally begun!

**The New Year is a special time in both Japan and the U.S.,
but there are many traditional aspects of the Japanese New Year
that we would like to share with you today!**

Japanese New Year

The First Three Days of the Year

The New Year in Japan is deeply connected to the Toshigami-sama (the God of the New Year). During the first three days of the year, called sanganichi, which are from January 1st to 3rd, many companies and government offices are closed, and many traditional New Year's events are held during this period.

How to Spend the Sanganichi in Japan

1. Seeing the First Sunrise of the Year – 初日の出

If you stayed up late on New Year's Eve for the countdown, you'll probably want to spend the morning of January 1st relaxing. However, mornings in Japan start early! It is believed that the Toshigami-sama appears with the first sunrise of the year, hatsu-hinode, and many people go to places with good views to see this auspicious hatsu-hinode.

Memo from Our Staff

I was in Anchorage on January 1st, 2024
and was surprised when finding out the
sunrise was at 10am! I couldn't see the
hatsu-hinode from where I was, but the

clouds that were dyed orange by the sunrise were fantastic.



2. Visiting Shrines and Temples - 初詣

Hatsumode is an important Japanese custom in which people visit shrines and temples to pray for good health and safety in the new year. After praying, many people draw omikuji (fortune slips) or get omamori (good luck charms).

Memo from Our Staff

For hatsumode in 2022, I went to a local shrine. Some shrines and temples have food stands during special occasions like hatsumode.



In 2023, I went to visit Senso-ji Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo on January 2nd. I was overwhelmed by the number of people, but that was also a good memory.

3. A Traditional New Year's Food - おせち料理

Another important way to spend the sanganichi is to get together with your family and enjoy osechi ryori (a traditional New Year's food) . Osechi ryori is served in multi-tiered boxes, and each component of the dish has a special meaning.

For example, black soybeans symbolize “health,” while shrimp are said to symbolize “longevity” because of their bent backs.



Memo from Our Staff

In our family, there were years when we enjoyed BBQ as well as osechi ryori.

We hope that everyone in Japan and Alaska enjoys the New Year, and we wish that 2025 will be even better!

Announcing the Online Arctic Symposium

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage invites you to our Online Arctic Symposium on **January 14th and 15th, 2025, from 3:00–6:30 PM (AKST)** each day. This virtual event is open to the public and will feature expert discussions on Arctic research and energy development with a focus on international efforts between Alaska and Japan.

We invite you to register via Eventbrite to receive the updates as other speakers are announced and to view the agenda for the event.

Register Now

Stay tuned in the coming weeks as we highlight the distinguished speakers who will be joining us and fill in the agenda. Don't miss this opportunity to deepen your understanding of the Arctic region and its global significance.

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