

MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy y'all!

In Japan, this time of year marks both endings and new beginnings—along with a healthy dose of seasonal allergies. It's a season of school graduations, new jobs, and staff reassignments, all unfolding alongside the iconic bloom of the sakura trees. Until now, I had never seen cherry blossoms in person. As most people would probably guess, they're not exactly common back home in Texas, though I've since learned you can spot a few in cities like Dallas and Houston.

The whole idea of flower viewing feels pretty foreign to me, but in a fascinating way. In Texas, we do have our own iconic state flower, the Bluebonnet, but we don't really have a tradition of gathering together to celebrate its bloom. That said, when I think about it, our summer pool parties aren't all that different—food, drinks, friends, and a good time all around. Still, because hanami always seemed so distinctly “Japanese” to me, it's something I've been looking forward to experiencing for a long time.



Sakura at Rinkokaku

Beyond the sakura, I've also been busy working with my fellow JOMO JET members to organize a film event, which we're hoping to hold on May 16th. (JOMO JET is a Gunma-based organization that runs cultural exchange events.) I've been planning this for about five months now, and let me tell you—Japanese copyright laws are no joke! Working within a limited budget while trying to secure even just two films was quite the challenge, but we managed to secure a couple of award-winning titles.

That said, the whole process has been an incredible learning experience. From securing screening rights and scouting locations to thinking through logistics and audience experience, I've gotten a real behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to run an event. I even ended up subtitling the films myself!



Maebashi Park

Spring in Japan doesn't just bring flowers; it also brings a wave of seasonal snacks. This might be one of my favorite things about living here. Every year, companies and shops roll out their own limited-time creations, and in spring, that usually means everything turns sakura-flavored.

Compared to back home, where seasonal food trends exist but aren't nearly as widespread, Japan feels like a treasure trove of new and interesting snacks. It definitely makes saving money (and sticking to a diet) a bit harder, but it's something I've really come to appreciate, and it gives me another reason to look forward to each new season.



JO映会 Event Poster

Oddly enough, one of the biggest challenges was coming up with a name. I'm not exactly the most creative when it comes to naming things, but thankfully, a fellow member came up with the clever title “JO映会,” combining JOMO JET with 上映会 (pronounced “jo-eikai,” meaning film screening).

All in all, I think this event has the potential to be something just about anyone can enjoy. I'm hopeful it can become a yearly tradition for our organization, and that we can gradually grow the festival—budget included, hopefully. Please sign up if you're interested!

Thanks so much for reading, and please look forward to more Maebashi Focus posts coming your way!