

FUKUSHIMA'S ONLY NEWSLETTER FOR ALL FOREIGNERS

# あくしま LIFE

(財) 福島県国際交流協会

Fukushima International Association

Fukushima Life Spring, 2009



## A Guide to the new Highway Fees

Starting from late March, a new highway fee structure will be implemented throughout Japan. Under the new system, the toll for rural highways will be reduced to 1000 yen max per way. This means a return trip to Saitama from Fukushima which previously cost 8000 yen will now only cost 2000 yen.

This new toll system will only be in effect on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Tolls will however be reduced by 30~50% for weekdays as well. It is important to know that these fees will only be applicable to cars equipped with the **Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)** system. To install the ETC system in your vehicle, you must first apply to

have an ETC card. These cards are in essence credit cards, but can only be used for highway tolls. In order to receive an ETC card, you must also own a regular credit card.

In addition to the ETC card, you must also purchase and install an ETC card reader in your vehicle. Card readers are available at most automobile retailers, and prices range from 12,000~20,000 yen together with installation fees.

The government has announced that a subsidy of 5,250 yen will be granted to drivers who purchase an ETC card reader before March 30<sup>th</sup>. To be eligible for this subsidy, people must fill out an application form when purchasing their ETC card readers.

Word of the month:

### 春一番

### Haruichiban

Haru-ichiban, directly translated as number one in spring, is a strong southern wind that blows through Japan between February and March.

When the Haru-ichiban blows, temperatures rise for about a day then drastically drop for the next few days. Like groundhog day in the United States, many people in Japan relate the Haru-ichiban to the coming of spring.

### WELCOME TO FUKUSHIMA LIFE

This newsletter is created, written, and provided for by the Fukushima International Association (FIA). The FIA is located in Fukushima City, and provides free multilingual counseling and information in English, Chinese, Taglog, Portuguese, and Korean to all foreigners living in Fukushima. This newsletter can also be read on our website, [www.worldvillage.org/life\\_new/fukushimalife.html](http://www.worldvillage.org/life_new/fukushimalife.html)

### FIA TRIO-PHONE SERVICE

Do you ever have trouble communicating at venues that do not speak any English? At the FIA, we offer a free, 3-way interpretation service that can solve this problem. All you have to do is call [024-524-1316](tel:024-524-1316), and you will be connected to an interpreter who will then connect you, the interpreter, and the person you wish to speak to, all on the same line. English and Chinese are available Tuesdays to Saturdays, 8:30am to 5:00pm. Other languages are available Wednesdays, 1:00pm to 5:00pm. **THIS PAPER IS WRITTEN IN EASY ENGLISH FOR ALL READERS TO ENJOY**

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# Things You Should Know Fukushima!

## Supplementary Income Payments ていがかきゅうおきん

- Foreign nationals who have completed the alien registration procedure by the cut-off date of **February 1, 2009** will be eligible to receive a supplementary income payment this spring.
- Each individual eligible for payment will receive ¥12,000 per person. However, the payment amount for individuals 18 and under, as well as for those who are 65 and older, will be ¥20,000 per person.
- Supplementary income payments will be carried out via bank transfer. Once an application form arrives by mail, please go through with the application process to receive your payment. Each municipality will be sending out application forms at different times, with smaller cities/towns going first.
- The purpose of these supplementary income payments is to promote spending by consumers to help fight the current recession. Thus, it is advised by the government that recipients of these payments use the money to purchase merchandise they may not necessarily planned on purchasing before.



*Payments will begin in March, 2009*

## Hanami in Fukushima おはなみ



*Hanami Yama, Fukushima City*

- Spring time is here, which means it's once again the season for **Hanami**. Hanami, which literally means "Flower-watching," is a traditional Japanese custom of enjoying newly blossoming sakura and ume (cherry) trees.
- As the traditional proverb "Hanayori Dango (dumpling rather than flowers)" goes, the blossoming of flowers is usually enjoyed with drinking and eating at the root of the trees.
- People are known to travel large distances across Japan just to enjoy the blossoming of flowers, making Hanami season one of the busiest seasons for travel in Japan.
- Some of the most popular destinations for said travelers in Fukushima are Hanami Yama, located in Southern Fukushima City, Tsuruga Castle in Aizu Wakamatsu, and the Miharu Takizakura, a 1000 year old Cherry tree located near Koriyama.

**If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at:**

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