

1. Information on Cherry Blossom Festivals and Viewing Spots

Cherry blossom season is finally here. Here are some of the festivals and famous viewing spots in the city.

First is the Ohirasan Cherry Blossom Festival, where about 4,000 cherry trees bloom. It will be held from March 20 to April 12. Mount Ohira is selected as one of the Top 100 Cherry Blossom Spots in Japan. Visitors can also enjoy the three local specialties: dango, yakitori, and tamagoyaki. Traffic restrictions will be implemented depending on the blooming conditions. The sightseeing road will become one-way, and a parking cooperation fee will be required when using parking during the period.

The Ohira Cherry Blossom Festival is scheduled from March 27 to April 12, although this may change depending on blooming conditions. It takes place along Sakura Street in front of Ohira Sports Park and in the Sakura Forest inside the park. During the festival, the cherry blossoms will be illuminated from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

From March 30 to April 5, the Fujioka Sakura Festival will be held at Fujioka Watarase Sports Park. During the period, the cherry tree-lined paths will be illuminated from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

From March 28 to April 5, the Tsuganosato Flower Festival 2026 will be held at Tsuganosato in Tsuga Town. Starting with the 180-year-old Tsuganosato Sakura, different varieties bloom one after another, allowing visitors to enjoy them over a long period. Various events are scheduled on weekends during the festival. While the Tsuganosato Sakura is in bloom, it will be illuminated from evening until 9:00 p.m.

Near Miyano Bridge in Miyamachi, about 500 cherry trees line the Nagano River and are known as the Miya no Sakura. On March 28 and 29, the Ibuki no Sato Sakura Festival will be held, with stage events and product sales planned.

Along the embankment of the Omoigawa River in Nishikata Town, about 200 cherry trees form the well-known Kanasaki no Sakura. The Nishikata Kanasaki Sakura Festival will be held from April 4 to April 12. During the period, the trees will be illuminated from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and on April 5, food stalls and various events are planned.

Finally, on March 29 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the Iwafune Sakura Festival will be held at Iwafune Sports Park, featuring stage events and food stalls.

Please visit Tochigi City's cherry blossom spots and enjoy hanami.

2. National Pension Premium Notice

In Japan, people aged 20 to under 60 who live in Japan must enroll in the National Pension system. This applies equally to both Japanese and foreign residents. Premiums must be paid every month. People working at companies enroll in Employees' Pension, and premiums are automatically deducted from their salary. Those not working for a company enroll in National Pension and pay premiums themselves.

National Pension premiums change every fiscal year. For fiscal year Reiwa 8, the monthly premium is 17,920 yen. For those paying by payment slip, the slips will be sent by the Japan Pension Service in early April. Monthly premiums must be paid by the end of the following month. If premiums are not paid, you will not be able to receive a pension. If you pay for at least 10 years, you can receive a pension starting at age 65. When foreign residents leave Japan, they may receive a lump-sum withdrawal payment that returns part of the pension contributions.

Students with low income can use the Student Payment Special Exception system, which allows payments to be postponed. Please consult the Insurance and Pension Division at City Hall or your local branch office.

There is also an exemption system for those who have difficulty paying. Please consult City Hall.

3. Extended Service Hours at City Hall

To make services more convenient, Tochigi City Hall has extended the hours of frequently used service counters.

At the main City Hall building, the Citizen Services Division and the Insurance and Pension Division are open every Wednesday from 5:15 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

At the branch offices in Ohira, Fujioka, Tsuga, Nishikata, and Iwafune, the Regional Development Promotion Division counters are open late on the second Wednesday of each month.

In addition, people who have a My Number Card can obtain certificates using multi-copy machines at convenience stores. These services are available from 6:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.