

December 2018 Newsletter  
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

[www.goju.com](http://www.goju.com)



Season's Greetings

From Motoo Yamakura

I wish all of our members and their families a happy holiday season. Please continue to keep the GKK strong by participating in our organization's events and developing new students.

Christmas in Japan  
Illuminations, Mariah Carey and... Colonel Sanders?

By Donny Kimball - Dec 15, 2017



Ah Christmas... cue the traditional festivities, costly shopping, Christmas melodies, glittering lights, and...KFC?!?! What the hell? Yes you read that right! Christmas in Japan is definitely a different beast when compared to Western countries. From good gone bad to straight-up quirky, the yuletide season in Japan just isn't what Westerners envision back home. Let's take a look at what you can expect from Christmas in the land of the rising sun. First off, Christmas in Japan is not founded on any religious undertones like in Western countries. Indeed for many, it is just another workday. Historically, Japan has been rather antagonistic toward Christian teachings and thus has a very small congregation. If you are interested, you can reference this article for more information on the bloody history of Christianity in Japan.

Despite this troubled history, Japan's modern incarnation of Christmas has adopted traditions from America while conveniently overlooking the holiday's origin (you know, like Jesus's birthday and all that). While Christmas was imported over many years, the holiday now manifests itself in strange ways thanks to marketers' unique spin. What follows is a smorgasbord of peculiarity that you can expect from the season in Japan...



## Christmas Lights

Most Japanese families do not deck out their homes with Christmas lights nor do they buy evergreen trees. With shoebox sized apartments, these holiday staples are just not a possibility. Instead, Japanese people opt for public light displays that are called “illuminations.” All major cities will typically have at least one big site dedicated solely to illuminations. Tokyo, of course, has many.

These magical picturesque light displays are up throughout most of December and the more popular ones draw huge crowds. Illuminations are also popular date spots and especially so since Christmas is celebrated mainly among couples rather than families. Don't even ask! The reasons why Christmas

evolved into a romantic holiday remains a mystery. Just chalk it up to another one of Japan's unique joyous takes on the holiday.

Anyway, popular “illumination” sites include Tokyo Midtown (Roppongi), Shinjuku Southern Terrace, and Kobe's Illuminarie. No doubt, Kobe's Illuminarie is by far the most exquisite but it is technically not a Christmas display. Instead, the installation actually commemorates Kobe's recovery from the Great Hanshin Earthquake. However, since this illumination debuts during the month of December it certainly contributes to the Christmas spirit.



If you can't catch Kobe's Illuminarie (pictured above), fear not. Neighboring Osaka also boasts a number of impressive illumination displays. The most noteworthy of these is OSAKA Hikari-Renaissance 2017, located near Osaka City Hall. This stunning light exhibit runs from December 14th thru December 25th. This handy map on their website also lists other illuminations to check out around Osaka.

Tokyo Midtown hosts the most popular Christmas light display in Tokyo. But, in addition to being the most impressive, it is also the most crowded. You might find yourself waiting in line to enter this display. On the other hand, Shinjuku Southern Terrace allows visitors to walk through freely. Although the display is crowded, there will be no wait to enter the area as it is entirely public.

For a uniquely Japanese twist on light displays, check out the Japanese garden at Hotel New Otani. This 400-year-old garden lights up with its gorgeous illumination display every night through February. Alternatively, Yokohama's "Smart Illumination" is a more artistic and eco-friendly take on light displays. The display is crafted using the latest energy-efficient technology and designs from a dozen artists, both Japanese and international.

This year, Shibuya is hosting the brand new Ao no Dokutsu illumination. This stunning walk of blue lights extends from just north of Shibuya station towards the direction of Yoyogi Park. In 2018, this display will expand to six other cities nationwide. You can check out the Shibuya walk from now until December 31st.



All of the above listings are free entry. For those willing to fork out a few hundred yen though, even more impressive illuminations await. Sagamiko Illumillion near Lake Sagami in Kanagawa is one of the largest. As can be seen above, six million lights, a musical fountain show, a ferris wheel, and more await visitors. Ready for more? The Ashikaga Flower park in Tochigi hosts another gigantic scene. Four million LEDs and music and light shows transform the park into a magical winter wonderland. Entrance is 900 yen.

Are lights just not quite enough for you? Rainbow Bridge in Tokyo beefs up the festive frenzy with firework displays. A 10-minute firework show is held every Saturday throughout December. Finally, if you are longing to see a gigantic Christmas tree, head to Yebisu Garden Place. This classy display makes use of a 5 meter chandelier, a towering Christmas tree, and over 100,000 lights.

## Dining:

This is where things start to get tricky. Finding a traditional Christmas meal in Japan is not an easy task. As hinted at before, the most popular Christmas dinner in Japan is actually KFC! That's right, KFC outlets get unbelievably busy during Christmas time. As holiday traditions from America began filtering into Japan, folks associated the holiday with images of deliciously roasted turkey.

Hold up! There's one problem though! Japan doesn't have turkeys! But, chickens look similar enough. Realizing a potential opportunity, KFC rolled out an aggressive Christmas marketing campaign some decades ago. And, the notion just stuck. And so, KFC became the default Christmas dinner in Japan. You can even pre-order whole chickens to pick up from your local KFC branch.



If KFC and queues aren't your thing though, there are a few other options for Christmas dinners. British and Irish pubs around the major cities often have Christmas dinners available. While they are not cheap, they will satisfy cravings for a more traditional taste of Christmas.

If you're forgoing tradition for Christmas dinner, also keep in mind that you will need to secure reservations at many restaurants around this time regardless. Christmas Eve is a popular date night for Japanese couples, much akin to Valentine's Day. It also falls during the year-end party season for companies and some these celebrations inevitably fall around Christmas. Given these happenings, reservations are highly recommended.

## Disneyland:

Tokyo Disneyland and Disneysea are massively popular destinations during most major holidays. Both parks go all-out with the decor and festivities. The Christmas parades have been known to be particularly vibrant. Travelers are delighted to discover that Tokyo's Disney parks are noticeably cheaper to enter than other Disney parks around the world. Choosing this option does not need to bust your bank account. Groups with children may want to choose the more family-friendly Disneyland.

Couples and young adults, on the other hand, will likely prefer Disneysea as it is geared more so towards adults. You can even buy and drink alcohol on the premises! Be forewarned though—this is an incredibly crowded time of year at the Disney attractions. Visiting on a weekday is your best bet. Reserving a room at the hotel can be difficult and pricey but don't let this deter you. The parks are an easy commute from central Tokyo. Trains and highway buses provide easy return transport back into the city at night.





## Churches

Whether you are a regular or occasional churchgoer, indeed Christmas is an important time of year to attend. Although Japan's Christian population is small, several churches continue to exist. Catholics have the longest history among Christians in Japan and hence have the largest number of cathedrals. A smaller number of Anglican and Eastern Orthodox cathedrals are also scattered about. You can view a list of all of these cathedrals here. A larger number of smaller churches also exist, serving a wider variety of denominations. A selection of such church listings can be found here.

Certain major churches celebrate multilingual masses. St. Ignatius Church in Yotsuya is one of the most popular locations for international worshippers. This Catholic church holds services in English, Spanish, and Indonesian every Sunday; once a month, services are said in Vietnamese, Polish, and Portuguese. St. Mary's Cathedral in Bunkyo-ku holds Korean-language masses as well.

## Christmas Music

Love it or hate it, it's next to impossible to avoid. Brace yourselves for an endless loop of "Last Christmas," "Happy Xmas (War is Over)" and "All I want for Christmas is You." Those looking for a classier way to enjoy Christmas music should head over to Opera City near Shinjuku. Catch the Ukraine National Opera Orchestra and a whole range of classical vocalists performing traditional Christmas classics on December 25th. Details are on the calendar here.



## Shopping

Shopping in Japan during the Christmas season is distinctly less hectic than it is elsewhere in the world. Japan does not have a strong tradition exchanging Christmas presents. This means you will not encounter aggressive crowds or endless queues while shopping during the holiday season. Get this... you can purchase a video game console or a favored doll without the likely risk of being crushed in a stampede or punched in the face. You may discover a few sales but keep in mind, if you're looking for a real bargain deal, it's best to wait until the New Year's discounts on January 2. Just remember, long-awaited sale seasons and throngs of shoppers typically go hand-in-hand.



## Partying

Most nightclubs and bars are open on Christmas Eve. At larger venues, the format varies from the regularly scheduled hours and theme. The music will generally be more commercial and the crowd consists primarily of singles looking for a Christmas hookup. If this is not your thing, it might be best to avoid partying at the big clubs on Christmas Eve. If you are looking for a special someone for the night, this is your best chance of the year!

*We thank Mister Donny Kimball for allowing us to share his article with our members.*



## Newsletter Thanks

By Bill Handren

Thanks to all who submitted articles and photos in 2018. I appreciate your help.

I notice many members are using Facebook rather than the Newsletter to post pictures of GKK events. Please realize several of our members do not have Facebook accounts and others, like myself, prefer to not post on Facebook. A lot of the behavior is inappropriate for what we stress in traditional karatedo.

If you insist on Facebook rather than our Newsletter, please add a list of who was promoted, a bit about the event, etc. That way I can cobble together an article.

<b>M. Yamakura</b>	Chairman	3763 Old Creek Road, Troy, MI 48084	<a href="mailto:chairman@goju.com">chairman@goju.com</a>
<b>Ed Myers</b>	CEO	11568 Reed Road, Whitehouse, OH 43571	<a href="mailto:myerse@tmdinc.com">myerse@tmdinc.com</a>
<b>Dwight Scales</b>	USA Director	1940 Bobolink Lane, Toledo, OH 43615	<a href="mailto:1940dscales@gmail.com">1940dscales@gmail.com</a>
<b>Eric Naujock</b>	Webmaster	2146 Queensdale Ct., Maumee, OH 43537	<a href="mailto:webmaster@goju.com">webmaster@goju.com</a>
<b>Bill Kane</b>	Program Development	7 Shalimar Lane, Maple Glen, PA 19002	<a href="mailto:wmkane@comcast.net">wmkane@comcast.net</a>
<b>Deb Crawford</b>	USA Business Manager	5705 Northlake Road, Springfield, IL 62711	<a href="mailto:sharpda71@msn.com">sharpda71@msn.com</a>
<b>Angie Monday</b>	Merchandise Administrator	6030 Davida, Toledo, OH 43612	<a href="mailto:angie.monday@yahoo.com">angie.monday@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Bill Handren</b>	Newsletter Editor	115 West North Street, Dwight, IL 60420	<a href="mailto:yokagawa2002@yahoo.com">yokagawa2002@yahoo.com</a>

All articles and photographs are the copyright property of the authors / photographers and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Goju-Ryu Karate- Do Kyokai. Consult your physician before beginning any exercise program and always train under the direct supervision of a qualified instructor. Neither the authors nor the Goju -Ryu Karate- Do Kyokai assume any liability for information contained in this Newsletter.