

**** PRESS RELEASE ****



April 23, 2008

**JTB's travel website for foreign visitors to
Japan, "JAPANiCAN.com"**

Delivering local information in Japan through the blog:

The first topic is Rice-Farming in Miyagi

— It aims to actively deliver attractive features of the local, to invite more foreign tourists, and to contribute to the local revitalization. It also includes arranging experience tours and trips, and the sale of products. —

JTB Group will distribute real-time information about the rice-farming process of one farmer in Tome-city (※1), Miyagi, from April 25 on the JTB operated site, "JAPANiCAN.com," which is the English travel website designed for foreigners visiting Japan.

URL: www.japanican.com ※It will be posted on the top page of JAPANiCAN.com

In JAPANiCAN.com, many activities have been conducted in cooperation with local governments to contribute to the revitalization of local communities. The establishment of partnership with Takayama City, Gifu, and the implementation of collaborative campaign with Kyoto City were realized in 2007. "JapanQuest", in which foreign travelers introduce Hokkaido / Tohoku Area and Kyushu, was also issued. This time, for the first time, the real-time information will be delivered through the blog of people living in the area. The aim of this blog is to broadly distribute the information of each area in Japan to the world and to facilitate a deeper understanding of Japan.

Tohoku Area, in particular Sendai, has actively worked on inviting international customers. The number of tourists to Tohoku Area in 2007 showed increase of 0.7% over last year. This project expects to expand the number of foreign travelers to Miyagi and Tohoku Area by enhancing interest toward Japanese rice-farming and the local life.

In Tome City, Miyagi, the site of this rice-farming blog, there are many sightseeing spots such as “*Izunuma* (Izu Marsh)” which is the designated wetland under the Ramsar Convention (※2) and where many migratory birds such as swans and ducks fly to, “Miyagi Meiji Village / Toyoma Area” in which there are precious buildings such as the old elementary school house and the police station building of Meiji era (1868-1912), “The Birth Place of Shotaro Ishinomori” who is a cartoonist, and the historic site of “Clandestine Christian” which arouses foreigners’ interest. The city is also the hometown of “Canada immigrants” who crossed the Pacific Ocean by the migrant smuggling boat during Meiji era (1868-1912).

This rice-farming blog tells the real-time story from rice planting to harvesting with the cooperation of one farmer living beside Masubuchi River (Towa-cho, Tome City) which is the limpid stream known as habitat of fireflies.

Sightseeing spots of the city described above, local events such as festivals, and other features of peoples’ lives involved in farmers will be included accordingly.

【Outline of the Project】

- During** : From April 2008 to September 2008
(Scheduled from the rice planting to harvesting season.)
- Contents** : With the cooperation of one farmer living in Tome-city, Miyagi, the former high school English teacher who is also living in the same city shows the rice-making process of Tome City in real time. The description of the process of growing rice and agricultural work, and photo images will constitute the main contents. This project can also enhance people’s interest in Japan by introducing products made from rice (for example, rice cake and sake).
- Next Step** : Tours to experience rice-harvesting, opportunities to communicate with the local through foods (food tasting events of local rice, etc.), and the mail-order sale of the harvested rice will also be organized. This project aims to encourage foreign travelers to visit the area. The information of accommodation facilities, events, and sightseeing facilities around Tome City (such as Sendai, Akiu, Matsushima, Naruko, Ishinomaki, and Kesenuma) will also be introduced.

【Writer Profile】

Mr. Seikoh Sasaki (Toyoma-machi, Tome City/ Tome Internationalization Promotion Supervisor)

Mr. Sasaki taught English in high schools around Iwate and Miyagi. After his retirement, as a Tome City Internationalization Promotion supervisor, he committed himself to translating Tome City homepage into English and hosting and assisting ALT (Assistant Language Teachers). He also works as a city

sightseeing volunteer guide.

【Famer Profile】

Mr. Kanichi Onodera (Towa-cho, Tome City / Farmer, Tome City Council Member)

Before merger of cities, Mr. Onodera worked at the former Towa town office. As an assistant manager of the sightseeing and specialty product section, he was committed to establishing a sister city relationship with Vernon City, Canada, with the connection of immigrants. After that, he has experienced prominent positions such as the head of the community hall, the assistant director of the education board, and the executive director of the National Athletic Committee.

Since 2005, he has been working as the Tome City Council Member. He is also engaged in agriculture such as rice farming, as he plays a big role in various other fields as the chair of Tome City International Exchange Association, the president of Miyagi Archery Association, and the board member of Miyagi Tome and Canada Friendship Association.

※1 Tome City

9 towns were merged into Tome City in April 2005. The city is located in the northeast of Miyagi Prefecture. The total area of Tome is 536.38 square km. The city is 70 km from Sendai City, and 30 km from Ishinomaki City. Kitakami River has made the vast flat land of bountiful soil and the Miyagi rice such as “Sasanishiki” and “Hitomebore” produced there receives a high evaluation.

※2 The Ramsar Convention

The “Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat” was signed on “the International Conference on the Protection of Wetlands and Waterfowls” in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. In Japan, Kushiro Marsh, Ose, and Yatsu *Higata* (Tideland) are listed as the registered wetlands under the Ramsar Convention.

<What is JAPANiCAN?>

“JAPANiCAN.Inc” is the website designed for foreigners. It aims to support people with love to the Japanese culture or people who are traveling on their own in Japan. We hope many people will find our country attractive, become interested in our culture, and visit our country through JAPANiCAN. Our such wishes turned into the site name, JAPANiCAN, which stands for JAPAN × (I + Eye + Information) × CAN (unlimited potential)



URL: www.japanican.com

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