



The Exchange

FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE CARIBBEAN SEA

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN BARBADOS



THE JAPANESE ART OF AGEING WELL

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In this issue of our newsletter, we explore how Japan is navigating the challenges of an ageing population and share the latest news from the Embassy. On page 12, we also catch up with Allan, a Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme participant teaching in Japan.



Greetings

GREETINGS FROM AMBASSADOR MIYASAKA



It has been my sincere pleasure to serve as the Ambassador of Japan over the past year. The year 2025 has been a truly momentous one for our Embassy in Barbados, marked by the expansion of our accreditation to Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica.

Over the course of this year, our Embassy has continued to grow, and our cooperation with the region has deepened. Enhanced collaboration in strengthening disaster risk reduction, along with the bridging of cultural gaps through exchanges and historic visits, has made 2025 a year rich in meaningful milestones. I was particularly delighted to witness the outstanding participation of Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Antigua and Barbuda at EXPO 2025 in Osaka, Japan. Their presence underscored the growing engagement between our nations and opened new opportunities for deeper cooperation.

This year, Barbados also welcomed a special delegation from Okinawa, marking a significant exchange between two island communities that share many commonalities and challenges, particularly with respect to ageing populations. As Okinawans are renowned for their exceptional longevity, this exchange provided a valuable opportunity to highlight Okinawan cuisine, which is closely associated with healthy living and long life.

I hope that the pages of this newsletter will provide you with an opportunity to revisit many of these special milestones, and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the ministries, organizations, and members of the public whose support and cooperation made these achievements possible.

I look forward strengthening our ties and deepening our cooperation in the years ahead.

宮坂祐介

H.E. Mr. Yusuke MIYASAKA



Ageing Populations



Source: www.visitokinawajapan.com

THE JAPAN APPROACH

Japan has long been recognized for the longevity of its citizens, with life expectancy in Japan being one of the highest in the world. However, the combination of longer life expectancy and declining birthrates has led to a significant demographic shift. In Japan, almost one in three people is over the age of 65, resulting in what is known as an aging population.

This demographic shift is not unique to Japan; countries around the world, especially island nations like Barbados, are also facing similar trends. Estimates suggest that a quarter of the population in Barbados is already over 60 years old,¹ and by 2050, it is projected that half of the population will be over 65.² This shift presents major challenges, such as labor shortages and increased strain on social welfare and healthcare systems.

Despite these challenges, Japan has made it a priority to create a society where older citizens are fully included. The country has introduced healthcare innovations, policy reforms, and community programs designed to empower seniors and encourage their active participation in society, helping to address the difficulties posed by an aging population.

As many nations navigate these changing dynamics, Japan's approach offers valuable lessons. Through cutting-edge healthcare technology, progressive policy changes, and a

focus on inclusivity, Japan is creating a blueprint for how societies can empower senior citizens and ensure that people of all ages can thrive.



Leveraging Technology

Japan has invested in developing smart homes that support independent living, telemedicine and remote monitoring to meet healthcare needs. In addition, Japanese companies have created therapeutic robots to offer seniors companionship and emotional support.



Research

Japan has been a global leader in researching diseases affecting older people. Its scientists have also made groundbreaking advances in regenerative medicine, most notably Nobel Laureate Shinya Yamanaka.



Workplace Reforms

Japan has implemented measures to promote flexible work arrangements and reemployment opportunities, enabling interested older people to remain active in the workforce.



Health Care

Japan's Long-Term Care Insurance system complements universal health coverage by supporting adults 65+ and those 40–64 with age-related conditions, covering expenses for caregivers and long-term care facilities.



OKINAWA, JAPAN

MORE ALIKE THAN WE ARE DIFFERENT

Okinawa shares many surprising similarities with islands across the Caribbean. Both are known for their stunning coastal landscapes, warm tropical climates, and long histories of sugar cane cultivation. One can even find the beloved Bajan cherry tree in northern Okinawa, highlighting yet another tie between these distant islands.

But the similarities don't end there. Okinawa faces many of the same challenges confronting islands across the Caribbean, such as the accelerating impacts of climate change, rapidly aging populations, ecological degradation, and the ongoing struggle to balance thriving tourism industries with the protection of fragile environments and the preservation of cultural heritage.

These shared experiences remind us that our islands, while oceans apart, are linked by their beauty, challenges and resilience.

Scan the QR code below to watch a quick video on Okinawa.



SCAN HERE

THE ISLAND OF CENTENARIANS

Okinawa is famous for more than just its stunning landscapes; it's also renowned for the extraordinary longevity of its residents. Often referred to as the "Island of Centenarians", Okinawa has been designated as one of the world's Blue Zones—regions where people consistently live much longer than the global average.

In fact, even within Japan, where life expectancy is already high, Okinawans stand out. Remarkably, they have a 40% greater chance of living to 100 than other Japanese citizens. Okinawans' ability to live long, healthy lives serves as both an inspiration and a model for other nations grappling with the challenges of aging populations.



DID YOU KNOW?

Okinawa is the birthplace of karate! The popular martial art traces its origins to Okinawa.



Source: www.visitokinawajapan.com

OKINAWAN SECRETS TO A LONG LIFE

Moai

Having a close-knit group of friends or a "moai" is a key part of Okinawan life.

Ikigai

Okinawans believe in having a purpose in life, or "ikigai". This sense of purpose keeps them engaged, motivated, and ready to face each day with energy and passion.

Food

The Okinawan diet is centered around whole, plant-based foods like sweet potatoes, rice, vegetables, and legumes.

Move

Whether it's walking, gardening, or other forms of light exercise, Okinawans stay active well into their later years.



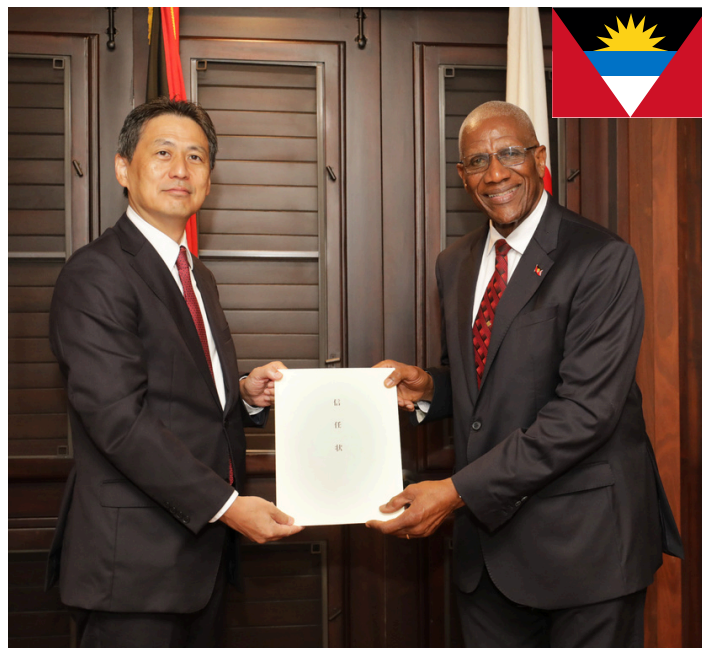
NEWS

THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN BARBADOS IS CONCURRENTLY ACCREDITED TO ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS & DOMINICA.

Ambassador Miyasaka visited each island and formally presented his credentials to their respective Heads of State. On each occasion, he reaffirmed Japan's unwavering commitment to strengthening cooperation with their governments and shared his desire to deepen their longstanding friendship through his tenure as Ambassador.



Ambassador Miyasaka with Her Excellency Marcella A. Liburd GCMG, JP, Governor General of St. Kitts and Nevis, on August 13, 2025.



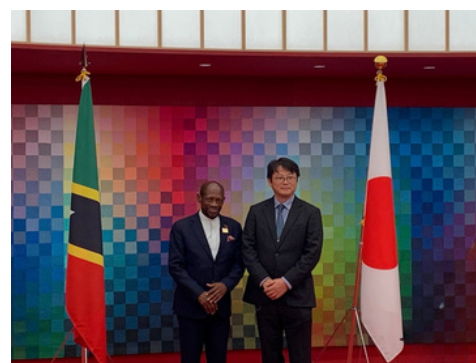
Ambassador Miyasaka presenting credentials to His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams GCMG, KGN, Kst J, DSc, DMSc, PHD(h.c), MBBS, FCAMA, Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, on Friday, September 12, 2025.



Ambassador Miyasaka with Her Excellency Sylvanie Burton, D.A.H., President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, during his presentation of credentials ceremony on October 08, 2025.



NEWS



EXPO 2025

The world came together in Osaka, Japan, for Expo 2025. Held every five years, the World Expo serves as a global platform for addressing pressing challenges and shaping a brighter future. Expo 2025 brought together people, innovations, cultures, and ideas from across the globe in a single space. Having first hosted the World Expo in 1970, this event was particularly meaningful as it marked the second time Osaka has hosted the Expo. From April 13 to October 13, 2025, Japan once again welcomed the global community under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." Several Caribbean countries participated including Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda.

More than 20 million visitors attended Expo 2025, providing both Japanese and international attendees the chance to immerse themselves in the islands'

culture, while also exploring its challenges and innovative solutions for building a better future for all.



The Hon. Everly Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Barbuda Affairs, delivering remarks during Antigua and Barbuda's National Day on September 28, 2025.



The Hon. Kay McConney, Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment, delivering remarks during Barbados' National Day celebration on September 17, 2025.



The Right Honourable Dr. Denzil Douglas, Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Industry, Commerce and Investment, delivering remarks during St. Kitts and Nevis' National Day on August 20, 2025.



NEWS

CREATING RESILIENT SOLUTIONS

Water related disasters and water scarcity are issues that plague many caribbean countries, and Japan has been engaging the region to better address these pressing issues.

Ambassador Miyasaka meets with Minister Duguid in Barbados



L-R: Ms. Gabrielle Springer, Director General of Infrastructure, Dr. The Hon. William F. Duguid, J.P., M.P., Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office with responsibility for coordinating Infrastructural Projects, Ambassador Miyasaka and Mr. NAKAE Arata, Deputy Chief of Mission.

On August 25, 2025, Ambassador Miyasaka met with Dr. The Hon. William F. Duguid, J.P., M.P., who serves as the Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office with responsibility for coordinating infrastructural projects. The discussion centered on identifying potential areas for collaboration, especially in water-related disaster risk reduction and public-private sector partnerships.

MOC with CDEMA Signed

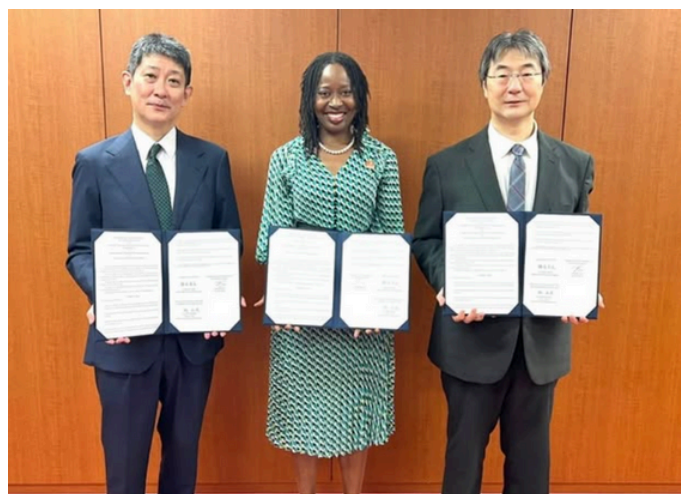
On September 18, a signing ceremony was held for a Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of water-related disaster risk reduction and water management. The agreement was signed between the Cabinet Office of Japan and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

Meeting on Water Scarcity in Antigua and Barbuda

On October 14, 2025, Ambassador Miyasaka met with the Honourable Gaston A. Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and the Honourable Sir Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness, Environment and the Civil Service, to explore potential public-private partnerships to address the issue of water scarcity in Antigua and Barbuda.



Ambassador Miyasaka in discussion with the Honourable Gaston A. Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives from a Japanese firm specializing in water recycling systems, WOTA CORP.



L-R Mr. HAYASHI Masamichi, Director General, Water and Disaster Management Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Ms. Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director of CDEMA and Mr. KAMBARA Norifumi, Deputy Minister for Disaster Management



NEWS

JAPAN'S PARLIAMENTARY VICE-MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS VISITS BARBADOS

From July 23 to July 24, Ms. ERI Arfiya, Japan's Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, made her first official visit to Barbados.

During her visit, Ms. Eri met with the Hon. Kirk Humphrey, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados. The two discussed the ongoing collaboration between Japan and Barbados, with Minister Humphrey expressing his gratitude for Japan's support and emphasizing the importance of deepening collaboration, particularly in addressing shared challenges such as ageing populations. Ms. Eri also met with the Hon. Sandra Husbands, Minister of Training and Tertiary Education, to discuss enhanced cooperation on global and regional matters and Barbados' participation in Expo 2025 in Osaka.

Her visit also included a tour of the Bridgetown Fisheries Complex, which was severely affected by Hurricane Beryl in 2024 and will benefit from support under the Japan-funded Barbados Coastal Fisheries Resilience Project. Additionally, she visited the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness, a homeless shelter which is currently undergoing upgrades through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects.

Ms. Eri also met with former participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme and congratulated them on the establishment of the JET Alumni Association in Barbados.



L-R: Ms. Eri with Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados



L-R: Ms. Eri in discussions with the Hon. Sandra Husbands, Minister of Training and Tertiary Education



L-R: Ms. Eri visiting the facilities at the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness.



L-R: Ms. Eri with Hon. Kirk Humphrey, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados, officials from his ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Barbados.
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan



L-R: Ms. Eri touring the Bridgetown Port with Dr. Shelly-Ann Cox, Chief Fisheries Officer of Barbados



NEWS

FISHERIES RESILIENCE PROJECT UNDERWAY IN BARBADOS



Source: www.undp.org/barbados

L-R Dr. Shelly-Ann Cox, Chief Fisheries Officer of Barbados, Mr. NAKAE Arata, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Limya Eltayeb, UNDP Resident Representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

On 28 August, the UNDP, in partnership with the Government of Japan, hosted a boatbuilding workshop under the Barbados Coastal Fisheries Resilience Project. The project reached another milestone on World Fisheries Day, 21 November, with the handover of office furniture and equipment to the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations, strengthening its capacity to support local fishing communities.

JET AA BARBADOS CHAPTER TAKES OFF



Ambassador Miyasaka (center) with JET Programme alumni and outbound 2025 cohort.

The Launch of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) Alumni Association was celebrated with a special reception hosted by Ambassador Miyasaka.

[Click here to learn more about the JET Programme](#)

ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN BARBADOS

On October 24, Mr. NAKAE Arata, Deputy Chief of Mission, held a meeting with Mr. Mark Franklin, the Permanent Secretary (ag) of the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs. During this meeting, he officially presented a sample of braille floor tiles designed for visually impaired individuals, with the goal of enhancing accessibility in Barbados.



L-R Mr. Shitau Miura, then First Secretary, Mr. NAKAE Arata, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Mr. Mark Franklin, then Permanent Secretary (ag) of the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs

OUR LIBRARY IS OPEN



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Special Feature

FROM OKINAWA TO BARBADOS



Mr. SAWADA Hayato
Director of Culture, Tourism and Sports Department,
Okinawa Prefectural Government

JUST LIKE HOME

My name is Sawada, and I serve as Director of the Exchange Promotion Division within the Department of Culture, Tourism, and Sports of Okinawa Prefecture. Okinawa Prefecture lies in the southwestern region of Japan and consists of a chain of islands surrounded by the sea and blessed with a warm climate, characteristics similar to those of Barbados. During my visit, I was struck by a strong sense of familiarity, from the landscapes to the climate.

On November 8, in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Barbados, our cultural delegation conducted exchange activities at both Hayman's Market and the official residence of the Ambassador of Japan.



Okinawan Karate demonstration during Matsuri 2025

At Hayman's Market, we took part in "Matsuri – Japan Festival" hosted by the Embassy. We invited an Okinawan karate master, who demonstrated kata during the event. Karate originated in Okinawa, and its roots are believed to lie in the evolution and systemization of the ancient Okinawan martial art "Ti," through exchanges with neighboring regions. Today, karate has spread across the world, with an estimated 130 million practitioners worldwide.



Traditional Okinawan Food Served at "A Taste of Okinawa – Food & Longevity."

That evening the cultural delegation also participated in a special reception titled "A Taste of Okinawa – Food & Longevity." held at the Ambassador's residence. For this event, we brought a certified Ryukyuan culinary expert who prepared signature dishes of Ryukyuan cuisine. This traditional cuisine reflects the philosophy of "food as medicine," a concept deeply embedded in Okinawan culture. Even now, expressions such as Kusuimun (food as medicine) and Nuchigusui (medicine for life) remain integral to daily life in Okinawa.

STRENGTHENING TIES

Although Barbados is physically distant from Okinawa, I felt a surprising sense familiarity, and I am sincerely grateful to everyone who contributed to making this exchange program possible. We look forward to continuing and deepening our cultural ties with Barbados and exploring further opportunities for exchange



Events Recap



LANGUAGE DAY

Sharing Japanese culture and language

The Embassy participated in the Providence School Language Day, showcasing Japanese calligraphy and promoting Japanese language learning.

KARATE EXCHANGE

Barbados x Okinawa

On November 7, the Embassy of Japan, in collaboration with the Universal Shotokan Karate Club: ISKF Barbados, hosted a special karate exchange featuring a visiting cultural delegation from Okinawa, the birthplace of karate.



MATSURI

A Celebration of all things Japan

On November 8, the Embassy of Japan hosted the second Japan Festival "Matsuri", welcoming 351 attendees for an unforgettable celebration of Japanese culture, innovation, and products. Sponsored by Fujitsu Caribbean (Barbados) Limited, Haymans Market, and Wine World Inc., the event featured cultural workshops, info booths, Japanese liquor tastings, and an exciting live karate demonstration with participants from both Barbadian and Okinawa.

[Click here to revisit Matsuri 2025!](#) ❄️



Events Recap

A TASTE OF OKINAWA

Food & Longevity

The Embassy hosted a special reception entitled "A Taste of Okinawa: Food & Longevity" on November 08, 2025. Guests were treated to an authentic culinary experience curated by Chef ZUKEYAMA Yoshihito, an officially certified Successor of the Ryukyu Culinary Tradition, who showcased the rich flavors and traditions of Okinawan cuisine.



SHAKUHACHI

An afternoon of traditional Japanese bamboo flute music

On November 15, Master and Composer, Mr. Yosuke IRIE, wowed audiences with the enchanting sounds of the Shakuhachi - a traditional Japanese bamboo flute.



Bajans in Japan

Bajans in Japan

An Experience of a Lifetime

MEET ALLAN



Allan Franklin, JET Cohort 2025

My name is Allan and I am a Barbadian living in Fukuyama, Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan. I moved to Japan in August 2023, so it's literally been over two years since I have been here. To be honest, the time has really whizzed by.

Through the JET programme*, I work as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at four schools in the city, teaching at 3 elementary school and a Junior High School. The variety of levels is both interesting and rewarding as each day is different.

A LIFE CHANGING DECISION

My story is proof that just one decision can change your life. It was my sister who sent me the JET programme application. She had travelled to Japan before and had a great time. Knowing that I was keen to visit and had an interest in teaching English, she introduced me to the JET programme which offered me the opportunity to do both! I am very glad she thought of me because submitting that application was my first step on a journey that led me across the world and to my new home in Fukuyama, Japan.

MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Fukuyama is the second largest city in the Hiroshima Prefecture after Hiroshima City which is about 23 minutes away by high-speed train (Shinkansen). Tokyo is about three and a half hours away and other large cities such as Okayama, Kyoto and Osaka are within easy reach as well, so there is much to see and do in this area.

Like I always tell my students, the city of Fukuyama is a little bigger than Barbados, both in terms of population size and physical area. While Barbados is mostly flat, Fukuyama is surrounded by a series of hills going in several directions with wide slow-moving rivers. Fukuyama is also close to the Seto Inland Sea. Many of my favorite places are smaller sea-side cities like Onomichi and Tomonoura. These remind me of being back home in the Caribbean. There are also many other little reminders of home, especially the food. You can easily get vegetables like pumpkin, sweet potatoes, okras and mangoes here.



Bajans in Japan

JAPANESE FOOD

Speaking of food, Japanese cuisine has a wide variety of dishes. Most people think of sushi when they think of Japan, but my favorite food has to be okonomiyaki (a savory pancake). Quite a few locals will ask you which type of okonomiyaki you prefer, the Hiroshima style or the Osaka style, living in Hiroshima, there is only “one” response (similarly, if anyone asks about my favorite baseball team, it has to be the Toyo Carp). I also really like Japanese rice balls, ramen and the ever popular “curry and rice”. Expect to find eggs (soft-boiled, hard-boiled or raw) everywhere, on rice, in soups and even on pizza! I’m still coming around to natto (fermented soybeans).



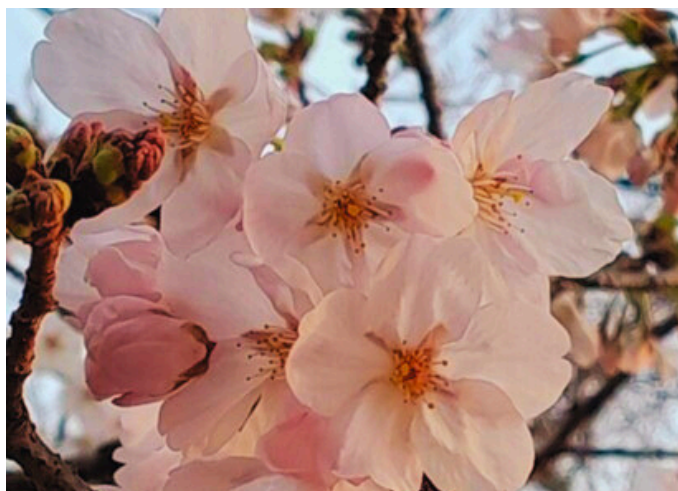
Ramen topped with fish, a popular dish in Hiroshima (Onomichi)

LEARNING JAPANESE

Apart from saying “Hello”, I had zero Japanese language skills when I first arrived in Japan. I didn’t let it stop me; it doesn’t stop many other ALTs and you shouldn’t let it deter you either!

My city offers “Japanese One-Pair Lessons”, a volunteer tutor system, which is a huge help. Additionally, there are several popular and effective online learning resources and being immersed in the language and navigating everyday transactions helps too. If you are ever in trouble, just ask ‘Google sensei’ (that’s how I manage with grocery shopping). That being said, the language is a beautiful one, and knowing it can only enhance your experience.

SEASONS IN JAPAN



Sakura in bloom during the Spring

Fukuyama has all four seasons but as a Barbadian, Spring and Fall, though short, are the best seasons temperature-wise. Winter is very cold although in this area, there is rarely any snow. Summer is also very warm, surprisingly it’s warmer, and more humid than Barbados. Between spring and summer, there is also a short but intense rainy season. The Sakura (cherry blossoms) blooming in Spring are truly spectacular, as is the local Rose Festival. The whole city is stunning and colourful with roses of every type and hue imaginable.

ADVICE FOR BARBADIANS INTERESTED IN VISITING JAPAN

To other Bajans interested in Japan, I would say “Just come!”. Japan is such an interesting, authentic and diverse destination that you would not be disappointed. From the culture, food, landscapes and people, the further you go into Japan, the more you will find to engage you. For JETs, this is even more true as you have so much more time to explore, experience and build meaningful relationships in your local community. Don’t limit yourself to the popular destinations; dare to explore less charted routes and you will discover many hidden gems.

*The JET Program provides eligible Barbadians the opportunity to work in Japan as assistant language teachers.

Visit https://www.bb.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/jet.html to learn more.



Bajans in Japan



Arashiyama Bamboo forest in Kyoto is simply other wordly. A definite must -see!



Onomichi city is famous for its temples, bridges and friendly cats. Sitting high on the side of a mountain, Senkoji Temple offers a perfect view of the city.



Fukuyama Castle on a lovely fall afternoon. The castle is at the heart of the city.



I would have been an awesome samurai back in the day. Just need to find armor that fits!



Learn more

Cover Image: Delegation from barbados led by the Hon. Kirk Humphrey (center), Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs, with locals in Okinawa during their visit in 2023.

1. Alleyne, Barry. "Homes for elderly \$7 million project approved for Sterling site". Nation News. December 16, 2024

2. Barbados Today (2025). "Planning for an older Barbados starts now". Available at: www.babadostoday.bb/2025/09/09/planning-for-an-older-barbados-starts-now/

3. Robson, D. (2022). "A high-carb diet may explain why okinawans live so long" BBC News. Available at: www.bbc.com/future/article/20190116-a-high-carb-diet-may-explain-why-okinawans-live-so-long



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