

Shichi-go-san

Seven, five and three years old Children's Day on November 15

The closest weekend to November 15, at Ootori shrine, Kumano shrine, and Himonya hachiman, you can see lots of children in traditional kimono accompanied by their parents and grandparents.

It is *Shichi-go-san*, which is literally seven five and three. It is a festival for children. It is a celebration for girls of seven, boys of five and boys or girls who are aged three.

You might wonder why the ages are seven five and three. In Japan, odd numbers such as 7, 5 and 3 have been considered as lucky numbers. So these ages have been symbolized as milestones to pray for vulnerable children to grow up safely.

Court nobles in the Heian Period (A.D.794-1185) began to celebrate the growth of their children. Then in the Edo period (A.D.1603-1868), common people adopted the practice and started visiting shrines to pray for their children. On the other hand, *samurai* went through various rites of passage. Boys and girls aged three started to let their hair grow long. Boys aged five started to put on *hakama*. Girls aged seven started to wear *obi*. Those practices are thought to be the origin of *Shichi-go-san*.

These days, children are all dressed up and are taken to, *Ujigami*, a local shrine god. Parents give thanks for their children's growing up in good health. And they pray for their children's good fortune.

Boys and girls are so adorable in their best costumes. Many girls put on colorful kimonos and beautiful hair accessories. Many boys wear *haori* and *hakama*. There are also lovely children in western style dresses or suits there. Parents are always busy with taking photos of their beloved children.



They all have long rectangle paper bags, which are decorated with Japanese traditional good luck pictures such as pine, bamboo, plum, crane, and turtle. There are long, thin, red and white stick type candies called *Chitose-ame* inside those bags. *Chitose* means a thousand years. *Ame* means candy. *Chitose-ame* is believed to have a special spiritual power for health and longevity. Parents give their children *Chitose-ame* in the hope that they would live a long and happy life.

Shichi-go-san is one of the most thanksgiving and memorable days for Japanese parents.



Famous Sights for the Ginkgo in Meguro City

What is the tree of Tokyo? It is ginkgo! Ginkgo at Meiji Jingu Gaien (Outer garden of Meiji shrine) in Minato city is very famous. In Meguro city, there are many sights for the ginkgo and among them, Higashiyama Park and Komaba campus of the University of Tokyo are the most famous locations and open to the public. The most beautiful season is from the end of November to mid of December. How about going there during late fall and enjoy beautiful ginkgo for a day?..

Higashiyama Park and its surrounding

Address: Higashiyama 2 chome

Lines of ginkgo trees can be viewed from Higashiyama Park and the street along Higashiyama elementary school to the Self-



Defense Force's camp. (Access: 10 minutes walk from Ikejiriohashi station of Tokyu Denentoshi line)

Komaba campus of University of Tokyo

Address: Komaba 3-chome



Lines of Ginkgo trees glitter at sunset on the main street of the campus. *Komaba sai* (campus festival promoted by the students) will be held on the Nov. 24(Fri)

through 26(Sun). You can enjoy numerous research exhibitions, food stalls, and performances by student clubs if you visit there at the right timing. The affordable *gakushoku* cafeteria and restaurant are available and they will be busy with many people coming from the neighborhood. (Access: 1minute walk from Komabatodaimae station of Keio Inokashira line.)

Rinshinomori Park

Address: Shimomeguro 5-chome

Besides ginkgo, beautiful maple trees and various types of giant trees of over 100 years old can be viewed at Rinshinomori Park (Access: 10 minutes walk from Musashikoyama



station of Tokyu Meguro line)