Shirase visits Sydney

The Japanese icebreaker returns after two years.

On 18 March around 180 guests attended a reception on board the icebreaker Shirase and enjoyed the hospitality of the Shirase crew and the Japan Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE) members when Shirase called at Sydney. Captain Hiroki Matsuda and JARE expedition leader Dr Kentaro Watanabe hosted the event.

The Shirase is a state-of-the-art icebreaker built for Japan's Antarctic observation program. The current Shirase 5003 is the fourth generation icebreaker. Since 1957, Shirase and its predecessors have been visiting the Antarctic annually, taking JARE members and materials to and from Antarctica.

The 54th expedition was transported by the *Shirase* this southern summer and will remain to conduct research on biodiversity and environmental

The Shirase icebreaker is named after the early explorer Lieutenant Nobu Shirase. Today the name is redolent of early cooperation between our two countries.

Many people would have heard of the internationally famous Amundsen and Scott the explorers, who first reached the South Pole. However, few would know that right behind them was a third party. That expedition was from Japan and led by Lieutenant Shirase.

His party arrived in autumn, too late to make the attempt before winter set in, so the expedition came to Sydney. Sydney University professor of geology Tannatt Edgeworth David helped them to be able to stay in Sydney. Edgeworth David also shared with Shirase knowledge gained from Antarctic fieldwork with Douglas Mawson.

Before leaving Sydney again for the Antarctic, Shirase gave Edgeworth David his 17th century sword to express his thanks for his friendship.



JARE contributes to scientific knowledge about Antarctica. New technology means it can disseminate information straight from the icy continent. This year, a lecture

was held for primary and junior high school students, beamed live from Showa Station to Toyama University in Japan. The children got a penguin's-eye view of swimming and walking in the Antarctic from a camera attached to a penguin.

conservation mainly at the Japanese base, Showa Station.

Shirase's call at Sydney is its final stop on its way back to Tokyo.

A history of friendship

This sword is now in the Australian Museum (Sydney) where this story is told and the sword is described as the "sword of friendship".

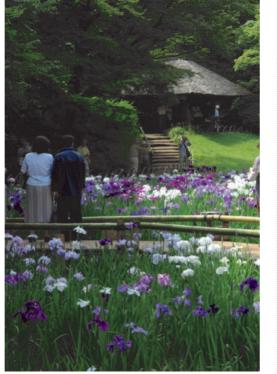
There is also a plaque in Parsley Bay (Woollahra) commemorating it as the site where Shirase's expedition spent the winter just over a century ago.

The icebreaker Shirase (third generation: 1983-2008) contributed to the history of mutual support between Australia and Japan when it rescued the Australian icebreakers Nella Dan and Aurora Australis when they were enclosed in ice in Antarctica in 1985 and 1998 respectively.

In recognition of the importance of this history, instead of going straight back to Japan, Shirase comes to Sydney to confirm the long-term friendship between Japan and Australia.

For more details of Shirase and Edgeworth David, see:

> http://australianmuseum.net.au/ Sword-of-Friendship



The iris garden at Meiji Shrine in June



Tokyo Tower is still an eye-catching landmark.





Tokyo is one of three final candidate cities bidding for the 2020 Summer Olympics and Paralympics. Tokyo played host to the Games in 1964 and would love to have the opportunity to do so again.

In 1964, Tokyo hosted the 18th Olympiad, the first ever Games to be held in Asia. It was a significant event for the city and for Japan. It can be said to mark the end of the post-war reconstruction period and the advent of high-tech Japan. On 1 October 1964, Japan's shinkansen (bullet train) went into service, connecting Tokyo with Osaka. The opening ceremony on 10 October had an 87.4% television viewer rating. Japan subsequently hosted the Sapporo Winter Olympics in 1972, and the Nagano Winter Olympics and Paralympics in 1998.

Tokyo 2020's theme is *Discover Tomorrow*. In brief, the bid committee envisages a Games which capitalises on Tokyo's creativity. It explains on its website: "Tokyo will use all the creativity of the world's most forward-thinking city to benefit sport and the Games. We will take the Games to the capital of the future - the city that continually sets global trends in everything from fashion to technology. Our Games will renew and reinforce the Olympic Values for a new generation, and so help maintain and grow their impact in a rapidly-changing world."

You can find details of Tokyo 2020 at www.tokyo2020.jp/en.

Travelling in Tokyo – If you haven't been to Tokyo before, don't be put off by its size. It is really easy to get around, thanks to its extensive and efficient transportation system which allows visitors to access all places of interest without too much of a walk. In fact, probably the best way to get a feel for the different areas of Tokyo is to walk. So much seems to happen on Tokyo streets, but take a side street off a busy road and you will often find yourself in a quiet corner. Oases of green calm such as Shinjuku Gyoen are also a train ride away.

The Official Tokyo Travel Guide website GO TOKYO has a list of 53 differently themed half-day and full-day walking tours just to get you started:

www.gotokyo.org/en/tourists/guideservice/routelist.htm





The Imperial Palace and neon-lit Akihabara One of the great attractions of Tokyo is the co-existence of old and new.

Tokyo Skytree [left], completed in 2012, is the latest landmark to dominate the city's ever changing skyline. Such is its scale that it will be a defining feature for years to come, just as Tokyo Tower has been since its completion in 1958. Tokyo Skytree is a broadcast tower. With higher skyscrapers being built, a new tower was needed to broadcast digital signal.

The tower is 634 metres tall-634 can be said MU-SA-SHI in Japanese. This means the height of the tower will be easy for Japanese people to remember because it refers to the Musashi Province which was once the name of the region that incorporates Tokyo, Saitama and part of Kanagawa.



The imposing office building of Tokyo Metropolitan Government proudly displays the Tokyo 2020 Candidate City Emblem.



Should you be lucky enough to visit Japan during cherry blossom time. you'll find there is no shortage of places to enjoy them even in busy Tokyo. This photo shows people relaxing in Shinjuku Gyoen Park.



Tokyo Station after renovationsin October 2012 an extensive five-and-ahalf year renewal of the historic 1914 Marunouchi Tokyo Station was completed, reinstating original features.

PHOTO CREDITS: all photos © Yasufumi Nishi / © JNTO



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