



## Spring in Japan and the UK

In both Japan and the UK, spring is a time of rebirth and new beginnings. But the reasons behind this and the way in which spring is celebrated is quite different in both countries. This time, I would like to talk about the differences and similarities of spring in Japan and the UK.

*Japan*

In Japan, some of the main signals that spring has begun is the blossoming of plum and cherry blossoms throughout the country, the growth of spring flowers and the sound of birds singing, in particular, the uguisu (bush warbler).

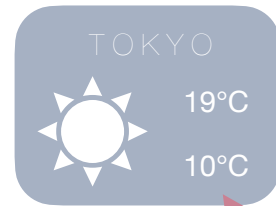
However, of these, the one which stands out is of course the blossoming of cherry blossoms and the increase in "hanami" picnics.

When I first moved to Japan, I was shocked to see that there was such a thing as "blossom forecasts" pinpointing the exact time in which the blossoms will be at their fullest, but since living here and experiencing a few springs, I have come to find these forecasts very useful.

I love spring for its beautiful and warmer days, but for me and many others, spring is known for another thing: the return of my hay fever! I think even if we weren't in a pandemic, I would be walking around in a mask.

As well as "new beginnings" and growth in nature, in Japan, April also marks the start of a new academic year, both at school and at work. It is a time that many people have a fresh start at work or school, where they must meet new people or undertake a new role.

It can also be quite a busy and stressful time, so please take care of yourself and don't over-do it!

Avg temp in April

Though, based on the lovely warm days we had in March, I have a feeling this year's spring will be a little warmer!

***"Mini English Lesson"***

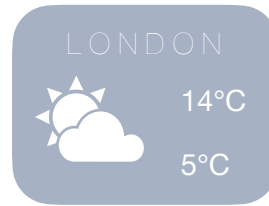
The onomatopoeia for when someone sneezes in Japanese is "hakushon", but in English, we say "achoo".

Also, when someone sneezes we often say "Bless you" to them.

## United Kingdom

Similar to Japan, spring in the UK is signalled by the growth of spring flowers, such as snowdrops, the presence of buds on trees, and the sound of birdsongs

Avg. temp in April



In the UK, unlike Japan, we start school and work in September. But for many other reasons, spring is still considered a time of regrowth and new beginnings

For starters, spring is most known in the UK for Easter. To put it simply, Easter celebrates the resurrection of Christ. The exact date of Easter changes every year. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon which is on or after March 21st. This means it is celebrated in March or April

Just like Christmas has Father Christmas, Easter has the Easter Bunny, who brings people chocolate Easter eggs. Schools are trying to retain traditions by teaching children the story of Jesus and the true meaning of Easter, however, much like Christmas, many of the celebrations during Easter have moved further away from the original meaning of Easter, making it more of a commercialised celebration, with many stores raking in the benefits by selling Easter related goods

Easter is celebrated in many ways. First, Easter marks the end of Lent, a time where people are meant to give up vices such as drinking alcohol or smoking or eating favourite foods such as meat or chocolate, to remember the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert. For this reason, many people have a feast or big dinner with family during Easter, where they are able to enjoy the foods they had given up.

As well as this, people exchange Easter cards and buy chocolate Easter eggs. Children also go on Easter egg hunts, where they have search for eggs which have been supposedly hidden around an area by the Easter Bunny.

During Easter, many schools begin a two-week spring holiday, which gives people time to refresh. It is also often a time for “spring cleaning”. Spring cleaning is the equivalent to “oosoji” in Japan before New Years

In the UK, not many people do big cleaning around the New Year, partly because the days are so short, so spring is the perfect time to clean and get rid of things you no longer need

Recently, the KonMari method had particularly been popular outside Japan, inspiring people to minimise their belongings, keeping only what “sparks joy”. It has become such a boom that people have started saying “KonMari-ing” or “Marie Kondo-ing” to refer to “tidying up”. I am sure many people will use her methods when doing their spring cleaning this year.



This time I wasn't able to go anywhere in Ota City that I could introduce, but I hope you enjoyed reading about spring and Easter. If you have any recommendations for places to visit in Ota City, please let me know!



Illustration and design by Bethany Cummings