



Community Connections

Hanami

By **BENJAMIN SWALLOW** March 2017

Spring in Japan will soon be upon us and here, more than anything, it means that it's almost time for the flowers of the cherry blossom (*sakura*) tree to bloom. With that, of course, is the ancient Japanese custom of having parties under the trees while viewing the flowers, known in Japanese as *hanami*. In this post, I want to talk briefly about the history of hanami in Japan before letting you know when and where the best places to go in Hiroshima are!

Hanami has a long history in Japan, with many thinking that it dates back to at least the Nara period (710-794). It was originally a custom, marking the beginning of the rice planting season, of the nobility and the Imperial family but over time spread to the samurai and then to ordinary people.

Some of the best places to have hanami parties in Hiroshima are also some of the most famous places. For example, Peace Memorial Park is a very popular spot amongst Japanese along the banks of the Motoyasu River. Another great place is in the grounds of Hiroshima Castle, a very scenic



location. If you're looking for somewhere a bit quieter however, then you should certainly go to the *Shukkeien*, although it's recommended to avoid going at the weekend as it can be crowded!

The first blossoms are expected in Hiroshima from the 30th of March onwards, but make sure you go quickly as the flowers only bloom for a few weeks!

