

Mini Column

Today's Japan ～ Tokyo Sky Tree Poised To Become the World's Tallest Tower ～

Sumida Ward in Tokyo is well known for its many beautiful bridges across the first-class Sumida River, as well as for the Kokugikan sumo hall and numerous sumo stables. In this landscape where the Edo spirit still lingers, construction of the Tokyo Sky Tree broadcasting tower is currently underway. When the tower is completed as scheduled in spring 2012, it will be the world's tallest, rising to a height of 634 meters. There is a special reason for this specific height, and that is because the number "634" can also be read as "Musashi," an old name for the Tokyo region, and it is thought that this play on words would make it easier for people to remember the official height of the tower.

Construction of the Sky Tree began in 2008. By February 2010, it had grown to more than 300 meters. As the tower began to rise above the buildings in the vicinity and to stand out even from afar, people's interest in the tower also began to soar. An increasing number are going out of their way for a closer look at the construction site, or are taking photos of the Sky Tree from increasingly farther locations and posting them on the Web. Condominiums and hotels that offer a view of the Sky Tree are taking maximum advantage of this opportunity and their location to attract tenants and guests.

The first observation deck (350 meters) is slated for completion this summer. The steady progress and growing height of the tower are bound to continue stimulating public interest in the Sky Tree.

Communicating Feelings in Japanese ～ Words of Reunion ～

When meeting someone for the first time, Japanese people typically say, "Hajimemashite," which literally means, "we meet for the time." After this opening, they introduce themselves and start a conversation.

When meeting someone for the first time in a while, it is common to say, "Ohisashiburi desu (we haven't met in a while)." If you add to this greeting such phrases as "How are you?" or "How have you been?" and ask about the other person's welfare during the time you two hadn't met, you will probably receive all sorts of responses and find yourself deep in conversation in no time at all. You and your conversation partner will quickly share the joy of meeting each other again and catching up on each other's lives since the last time you met.

The most common word of parting is perhaps *sayonara*. However, using that term alone makes a parting seem too final. To express your hopes and wishes of meeting again, you might want to add a few words that include the word *mata* (again), such as "Matane (see you)," "Soredewa mata (please take care)," or "Mata oaishimashou (let's meet again)."

Soredewa mata, let's meet again in the August issue of this column!

ミニ情報

日本のいま ～ 高さ世界一を目指す「スカイツリー」～

美しい大橋がいくつも掛かる一級河川の隅田川が流れ、大相撲が行われる国技館と多くの相撲部屋がある東京都墨田区。江戸情緒を残すこの街に今、電波塔「東京スカイツリー」が建設中です。2012年春に開業予定で、完成するとその高さは世界一となる634メートル。高さ特に634メートルとした理由は、「634」という数字が語呂合わせで「ムサシ」と読め、東京の昔の地名「武蔵」にも通じ、人々に覚えてもらい易いからだそうです。

2008年に着工されたスカイツリーは今年2010年2月に高さ300メートルを超え、周りの建物を凌いで徐々に遠くからも目立つようになり、人々の関心度も急上昇。大勢の人が建設現場を近くまで見に行ったり、「こんな所からも見えました」と遠くから写真を撮ってネットで公開したりする人も増えました。「スカイツリーが窓から見える」というマンションやホテルの宣伝も花盛りです。

今年夏には第1展望台(350メートル)が出来上がる予定で、塔が伸びるとともに人々の注目も、更に高まりそうです。

心を伝える日本語 ～ 再会の日本語 ～

初めて会う人に対して挨拶をするとき、「はじめまして」といって、自己紹介や用件を話します。

しばらく会っていない人と再会したときの挨拶には、『お久しぶりです』がよく使われます。また、再会したとき、久しぶりのニュアンスを込めて『お元気ですか』、『お変わりありませんか』などと言うと、意外とたくさんの答えが返ってきて話がはずみます。再会できた喜びが伝わったり、会えなかった日々や時間が埋まっていきます。

ところで、別れの際に交わす最も一般的な言葉に「さようなら」がありますが、それだけでは、もうこれが最後だということちょっと寂しい感じがします。『またね』、『それではまた』、『またお会いしましょう』等の「また」をちょっと添えるだけで、再会への希望や喜びが込められます。

皆さん、このコーナー8月号で、またお会いしましょう。