

Japan's Latest Blooming Cherry Blossom Viewing Spots

In Nemuro City, the easternmost city on the Japanese mainland, the Chishima-zakura, Japan's latest blooming cherry blossoms, come into full bloom in May. We spoke with an official from Nemuro City to learn about the characteristics and charms of these cherry blossoms.

(Text: Tanaka Nozomi)

Nemuro City faces both the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Okhotsk. It boasts tourist attractions such as the Nemuro Strait, where one can view drift ice during winter, and Cape Nosappu, known for being the easternmost site on the Japanese mainland. The seafood processing industry is also thriving, attracting many visitors for delicious seafood. Among the various attractions of Nemuro tourism, one highlight is the Chishima-zakura, which blooms later than any other cherry blossom in Japan. Shimizu Yudai from Nemuro City's Commerce, Industry, Labor and Tourism Division shares the following: "The Chishima-zakura, blossoming on the site of Seiryu-ji Temple¹ in Nemuro City, was initially transported from Kunashiri Island² in 1869 and then

transplanted to the temple grounds in 1903. These majestic trees, aged over 150 years, typically reach full bloom from early to late May each year. Compared to Somei-yoshino and other varieties, Chishima-zakura tends to grow to a shorter height of 1 to 5 meters, with branches spreading horizontally. As a result, visitors can leisurely enjoy observing the cherry blossoms at eye level."

The flowers of the Chishima-zakura bloom in clusters, appearing to nestle closely together, with each flower ranging from 2 to 4 cm in diameter. The tips of the petals slightly cave in. The flowers begin as a light pinkish-red when they start to bloom and gradually transition to white as they reach full bloom before returning to their original light pinkish-red color,



Photo: Nemuro City

Chishima-zakura blossoms in full bloom at Seiryu-ji Temple



Chishima-zakura produces light pinkish-red flowers as its leaves unfold.

Photo: PIXTA

allowing for enjoyment of their changing colors. They are also characterized by their strong fragrance.

“Each year, we prepare various events to ensure enjoyment for many people, such as lighting up the Chishima-zakura trees blooming in Meiji Park³ in Nemuro City for a limited period,” says Shimizu. The Chishima-zakura trees in Meiji Park, along with old brick silos⁴ designated as a tangible cultural property, make for a popular photo spot due to their picturesque appeal.

Perhaps due to global warming, Japan’s cherry blossom front⁵ advances earlier each year. However, if you missed cherry blossom viewing in late March and April in other parts of Japan, it is often the case that they are yet to bloom in Hokkaido, the northernmost region of Japan, where Nemuro City is located. “Why not come and enjoy the gentle spring of Nemuro City in May, and view Japan’s latest blooming Chishima-zakura?” suggests Shimizu. “It’s sure to give you unforgettable memories of your trip.” 🍷



The Sapporo Clock Tower, a popular tourist spot in Sapporo city, also features Chishima-zakura trees.

Photo: PIXTA

1. A Buddhist temple of the Shingon sect near Nemuro Station in Nemuro City, Hokkaido.
2. An island located east of the Nemuro Strait, seen from the Shiretoko Peninsula in Hokkaido. Until the end of World War II in 1945, it was inhabited by Japanese residents but they were forced to evacuate. Currently, it is under the de facto control of the Russian Federation, and the Japanese government is demanding its return.
3. Meiji Park was established by developing the site of a ranch established in 1875.
4. Warehouses for storing grasses used as livestock feed during the winter in a state close to their natural form. The brick silos in Meiji Park are cylindrical tower silos constructed between 1932 and 1936.
5. The gradual northward progression of cherry blossoms blooming across the Japanese archipelago as spring arrives, resembling a weather front on meteorological maps. It typically begins its northward journey from Kyushu and southern Shikoku in mid-March, reaching Hokkaido by early May.



Chishima-zakura in Meiji Park

Photo: PIXTA