

Sakura Picnic 2018



The Cherry Tree Grove at Banksia Park in Bulleen was transformed into a vibrant Hanami (花見 flower viewing) festival on Sunday 14th October 2018.

Clear blue skies and sunshine brought out an estimated 1,500 people to picnic under the magnificent 'Shirofugen' cherry blossom trees (*Prunus serrulata*) and shady oaks along the banks of the Yarra River.

The festivities were officially opened by the Deputy Consul-General, Mr Kawata, with AJSV's own D'Arcy Butler kindly acting as MC for the event.



Visitors were treated to Ikebana (生け花 flower arrangement) demonstrations in various styles from the skilled practitioners at Ikebana International Melbourne, and serenaded by the complex and sensual sounds of the Koto (箏 Japanese zither) played by local performer, Brandon Lee.



A highlight for many visitors was sitting on the red velvet mat, beneath the elegant wooden frame and participating in the Green Tea Ceremony sessions provided by Chado Urasenke Tankokai Melbourne. Participants were guided through the subtleties of the preparation, giving and receiving of the special matcha (抹茶 green tea), and enjoyed the combining of flavours of the Japanese sweet treats blended with the crisp bitterness of the green tea.



Children of all ages tested out their paper-folding skills with free Origami classes put on throughout the day by 'Cherry Friends', the dedicated group of volunteers who care for the cherry grove along with the team from Parks Victoria.

Another fun activity for the kids was potting up edible Green Feast Pea seeds facilitated by Kirsty from The Sage Garden. The budding green thumbs were able to decorate their own paper carry bag and take home their miniature garden.

Those who came along looking for the rhythmic beats of the Taiko (太鼓) drums and shrill tunes of the Shinobue flute (篠笛) were not disappointed when dynamic duo, Ayako Tsunazawa and Ayako Fujii, from A.Ya thrilled the crowd with their energetic performance.



For anyone who was feeling a bit peckish and hadn't brought along their own picnic, selection of food trucks kept the crowds well fed with delicious Japanese/Hawaiian, Korean & Japanese cuisine, crepes and of course great coffee.

The team of volunteers at the Information tent including Hiroko and Yuki from AJSV, Junko and Peter from Japan Society of Melbourne, Yasuko from Cherry Friends and many others who worked together with Clarissa and the team from Fruitbowl Productions to make sure that everything ran smoothly on the day. The volunteers from Rotary worked tirelessly to assist with parking and the shuttle bus was busy all day carrying visitors to and from their cars parked further afield.



The Sakura Picnic was a perfect blend of relaxing with family and friends amid the cherry blossoms, sharing great music and learning about some of Japan's great cultural art forms. A big THANK YOU to Manningham Council for supporting another great Sakura Picnic and thank you to all the AJSV members who joined us in sharing this special day!