



Kimono Nation

By Esther Dacanay
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You see them all over town. They're at the Japanese supermarkets, malls, restaurants, bars, and even at the city halls!

A colorful array of kimono-clad 20-year-olds take Japan by storm shortly after a special annual ceremony honoring the nation's young adults, typically observed on the second Monday each January.

For Japan's youngest adults of 2008, Jan. 14 will represent a day to celebrate the rite of passage, their *seijin shiki*, or coming of age. With it, comes responsibility, a newfound confidence in their own identities and of course, the right to party!

The legal age to drink, smoke and vote here is 20. Surprisingly, 16 is the legal age for females to get married with parental consent, 18 for males, but these cases are rare here.

The Japanese tradition of *Seijin shiki* originated in 1948, covering all those who will reach the age of 20 during the traditional Japanese school year, which runs between the months of April and March of the following year.

Local city offices throughout Japan generally hold ceremonies in the morning, with government officials delivering speeches and offering gifts to the new adults.

The honorees typically participate in the ceremonies in their home towns where they attended high school.

Young women wear *furisode*, a special kind of kimono, typically inherited, or rented due to its high cost. Some young men may also choose to wear *hakama*, or dark kimono. However, many of them simply wear dark business suits to celebrate the occasion.

If you happen to be out and about in large metropolitan shopping areas around Japan during *seijin shiki*, you're likely to find quite a few kimono-clad young adults eating and drinking among friends. In fact, many of them reunite with old friends from high school and even junior high, after years of living separate lives.

A few local hot spots for *Seijin shiki* kimono sightings include: Sagami Ono, Machida, Ebina, Enoshima and Fujisawa, which are all train stations located along the Odakyu Line. Take some time out to enjoy a day of lunch and shopping around town - particularly this Monday. You just might capture a few great photos for your Japan album.

The *Seijin shiki* tradition not only offers Japan's young leaders a celebration of their rite of passage - it affords them the opportunity to forge lifelong friendships and perhaps later in life, strong business alliances, enforcing the country's strong economy.

To learn more about *seijin shiki*, visit <http://vinnk.taeliacstudio.com/?p=32>.



Photos by Esther Dacanay

