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7 Cool things for Japan in 2015

VOCABULARY

Well-maintained =
Kept in good condition

Handicrafts =
Hand-made objects

Tedious =
Uninteresting, boring

Maiden Voyage
=
First journey of a ship
or plane or other kind
of transportation

Discussion questions

1. Which one of the 7 things is most interesting for you? Why?
2. Which one of the 7 things is the least interesting for you? Why?
3. Are you interested in riding the new shinkansen line?
4. Japan is a strong manufacturing and technology company. Why do you think it hasn't produced an airliner for 40 years?
5. What other things are you excited about in 2015?

VOCABULARY

Straddle =
To sit or stand with one
leg on either side of
something

Revellers =
Someone who is
enjoying himself in a
lively and noisy way

Culmination =
Highest or climactic
point of something,
especially after a long
time.

Groundbreaking
=
Innovative, pioneering

While 2014 was a pretty good year, we're already looking to the year ahead, which is promising seven cool happenings for Japan.

1. Opening of the new Shinkansen line

Japan may have a reasonably priced overnight bus network and **well-maintained** highways, but the quickest and most convenient way to travel around the country is the Shinkansen. Currently, you can travel by bullet train from Tokyo to Nagano. The new Hokuriku Line will allow travelers to extend their Shinkansen trips from Nagano all the way to coastal Kanazawa. So starting March 14, you'll be able to travel to the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture in record time to enjoy its historic Kenrokuen Garden, delicious seafood, and golden **handicrafts**.

2. First flight of the Mitsubishi Regional Jet

If ground travel is too **tedious** for your tastes, there's also the **maiden voyage** of the MRJ coming up in 2015. Jointly developed by Mitsubishi, Toyota, and Fuji Heavy Industries, the MRJ is scheduled to take to the air for the first time this spring. Airlines won't be receiving their own until 2017, but, the upcoming test flight is a major step towards Japan's first domestically produced airliner since the financial failure of Nihon Aircraft Manufacturing's YS-11, which was discontinued over forty years ago.

3. Osaka's Dotonbori Canal becomes a pool

If you've spent much time looking at photos of Japanese cities, you've probably

seen Dotonbori, Osaka's neon-lit entertainment district that **straddles** the Dotonbori Canal. After years of **revelers** diving into the water after victories by the local Hanshin Tigers baseball team, someone decided they should make part of the canal into an outdoor pool. This is scheduled to happen to a one-kilometer section of it for four weeks in August of 2015.

4. The next, and possibly final, 'Evangelion' movie

Creator Hideaki Anno has never been decisive about ending his masterwork, as shown by how Eva's TV finale has already been followed by a half-dozen movies. Signs point to a late 2015 release another "Evangelion" theatrical feature which has been billed as the **culmination** of 20 years' of **groundbreaking** animation

5. So long, SIM locks!

Like topknots and the feudal system, SIM locks are set to become a thing of the past in Japan starting this May.

6. The 70th anniversary of the end of World War II

2015 is also a good time to stop and take a moment to appreciate that Japan can get excited about developments in consumer electronics because it's a country at peace, as it has been for the last 70 years.

7. Prince William visiting Japan

Another thing that wouldn't have been happening during open wartime, Prince William is scheduled to visit the country as part of a trip through Asia in late February.