

GOLDEN WEEK



“Golden Week” in Japan refers to the week from the end of April to early May, which includes four national holidays: April 29 - Showa Day, May 3 - Constitution Memorial Day, May 4 - Greenery Day, and May 5 - Children’s Day. If a national holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday becomes a holiday. It is possible to get between three and five days off, depending on the calendar. Some large companies are also closed for May Day, and some companies, mainly manufacturing, give seven or more days off in a row to increase

productive efficiency.

The term “Golden Week” was born in the film industry in the early 1950’s. It was found that box office performances were good during this period, as well as the other long holidays in Japan, around the New Year and “Obon” (not national holidays but Buddhism-related holidays). The term was copied from “Golden Hour”, which means prime-time, preferred by broadcasters. There is a formal term used by the media for this type of holiday. Translated literally, it is “long consecutive holidays”.

During these long consecutive holidays, some go on trips around the country or abroad, some visit home for family reunions, and some just relax at home. Various events are held in different areas as many holidaymakers are expected to participate. The Flower Festival is one of the largest annual events held in Hiroshima from May 3 to 5. In 2013, about 1.8 million people participated in the festival.



It is the spring or early summer temperatures in Golden Week, comfortable for going out. One often has to pay more to travel in this holiday than ordinary weekdays; about 1.3 times for hotels, for example. There is even a package tour that costs 3.5 times as high as the off-season rate. Imagine what happens when so many people move around the country. Flights and shinkansen trains are fully booked up early on; public transportation with non-reserved seats, arteries and express highways are crowded. Golden Week begins with congestion toward local areas from cities, which is called “homecoming rush” and ends with the reverse congestion, so-called “U-turn rush”.



To decrease heavy congestion, express highway companies announce congestion predictions one month in advance. Drivers can look for light-traffic dates and times to make plans for easier driving. Even so, in 2013 there were 327 tailbacks of 10 kilometers or more and 35 of over 30 kilometers. The longest was 56.3 kilos at around 10:30am on May 3 near the Kurume exit in the southern island of Kyushu. (from Apr. 26 to May 6, reported by express highway companies)

The government looked into measures to decentralize long holidays in order to reduce congestion and increase demand for domestic travel as one of the ways to overcome deflation but has not realized this so far.



Reference: Japan Tourism Agency Official Sites