

Community Connections

Community Connections is a quarterly column from Mark, our resident Coordinator for International Relations, to help you get more involved in the local community in Hiroshima City.

See Hiroshima in a new light: Tour the Peace Park

As residents of Hiroshima, we inevitably see frequent reminders of the recent history of this city. The atomic bombing has shaped the development of Hiroshima and informed the lives and identities of its people.



Sometimes, however, I do think we think of the bombing too much as “history.” In fact, survivors of this

calamity are still with us today, and are still at risk of developing radiation-related illnesses. In 2020, the 75th year since the bomb, why not see Hiroshima in a new light?

Guided tours can be a great way to learn more about an area, and they’re not only for tourists! For this installment of Community Connections, I have summarized the long-running tours provided by the **Hiroshima Peace Volunteers**, and highlighted the brand-new **PEACE PARK TOUR @ REST HOUSE** by Peace Culture Village.

Peace Volunteers

A common sight around Peace Memorial Park, the hardworking Hiroshima Peace Volunteers offer free guided tours of both the Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Memorial Park.

Many of these passionate volunteers have given up their time for many years to tell visitors about the atomic bombings, and are profoundly knowledgeable. Some may even be personally close with a *hibakusha* (survivor).

Be aware that **Peace Volunteer tours will**


not run in July, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. See the museum’s website for the latest schedule updates.

📅 January 1 – December 29
Tour availability depends on the availability of volunteers and other factors.

🕒 60 – 90 minutes between 10:30 and 15:30

🆓 Free (Museum entry fee separate)

For full, up-to-date details, including on how to reserve, see the museum website.




PEACE PARK TOUR @ REST HOUSE

This brand-new tour has been launched just this month by local non-profit Peace Culture Village (PCV), to coincide with the long-awaited reopening of the Rest House.

While working their way around Peace Memorial Park, guides invite guests to see Hiroshima not only in terms of facts and figures, but also in terms of the human beings and communities that were lost.

Who are PCV?
(From peaceculturevillage.org)

“We facilitate encounters and create spaces for people to hone their own visions of a peaceful world. Our educational and experiential programs promote open exploration and personal discovery, creating opportunities for peace culture to emerge from each one of us.”



3 defining features

The following is what, in the words of PCV, separates their tour from others, and my thoughts when I took a trial tour in June.

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1. Personal touch

"We focus rather heavily on the experiences of local people who were living in Nakajima District of Hiroshima before the bombing.

Our intention is to familiarize you with what was lost and help you make a personal connection to what happened in this city."



Photo courtesy of Andrew Gibler

Given the horrifying scale of the atomic bombing, it can be easy to get caught up in the bigger picture—the toppled buildings, the fatality rate, and so on—and forget about the individuals under the mushroom cloud. It is, after all, far more emotionally taxing to learn and think about each human life that was taken or changed forever. However, I believe that it is only by stepping out of our comfort zone in this way that we can fully understand the impact of the atomic bomb.

2. Use of technology

"You will see CG renderings of what Hiroshima looked like before the bombing, and black and white photos from the time colorized using AI technology.

We hope these and other materials we provide will convey that what happened in Hiroshima isn't old history; it's relevant to all of our lives today."

We were presented with 1945's Motoyasu Bridge and, over the river, the old Hondori and Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall, all brought to life with CG technology. Looking up, seeing the ruins of the latter (the A-Bomb Dome), I was hit with both chills and warmth.

Warmth for the sense that the people who died here were real human beings who lived as I do, going about their daily routine. Chills for the renewed understanding of how that was all ripped away, leaving ruins, monuments, and memories.

3. Over to you

"Our tour emphasizes reflection and output. At a few stops on our tour, we will invite you to participate in activities that we hope will aid your digestion of this experience.

After the tour is over, we will return to the Rest House for an output session."

In the output session, participants are invited to reflect on this one simple question: "What is precious to you?"

To me, this aspect is what truly makes the tour special. On how many tours will your guide stop speaking and ask for the whole group to pause in contemplation? To reflect and share their thoughts with other participants?

The purpose is to think on this: the things we truly hold dear now may well have been held dear by the people of 1945's Hiroshima.



Photo courtesy of Andrew Gibler

	Every day
	English: 11:00 – 12:20 Japanese: 14:00 – 15:20
	60-minute tour followed by 20-minute output session
	Adults (12 and above): 3,000 yen Children (6 – 11): 2,000 yen
	Bookings available at:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rest House information desk • (Coming soon) The Rest House website: hiroshima-resthouse.jp • Third-party websites (prices may be higher)

If a guided tour is not for you, the City of Hiroshima's **peace-tourism.com** provides self-guided walking tours and detailed information in English on dozens of spots connected to the atomic bombing, from surviving buildings and trees to the city's many memorials and museums.

In whatever way works for you, please consider learning more about the atomic bombing in 2020.

Mark McPhillips, July 2020

*This column is available on the **International Relations and Cooperation Division website.***