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TEACHING TUESDAY

SHIROI JUKU YAEZAKURA MATSURI

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Undoubtedly the most famous Japanese pastime activity in the spring season is hanami. But did you know that the prefectures of Japan celebrate the occasion differently? In late April, Gunma Prefecture's Shibukawa City celebrates the occasion by hosting the popular Shiroi Juku Yaezakura Matsuri (白井宿八重ざくら祭り, Double Cherry Blossoms Festival).

This festival's main attraction are the yaezakura cherry blossoms, which usually bloom later than most other types of cherry blossom flowers and contain more than five petals. The city itself is historic post town that once connected travellers from all-over the country. Residents celebrate the town's history with the Shiroi Juku Yaezakura Matsuri, dressing as samurai warriors from the Sengoku era and parading along the yaezakura trees that are planted near the city's waterways and alongside historic buildings.

The festival also features a Rokusai-ichi fair where local produce and crafts are sold, and the Yayoi no Kukai, where improvised Haiku poetry is written to praise the springtime of Shiroi Juku, as well as Gunma's famous konnyaku, a jelly-like food made from konnyaku potatoes, matcha green tea, and so music, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, similar to the koto.