

The Japan Pavilion at Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea



Expo 2012 is taking place in the South Korean city of Yeosu from May 12 to August 12 this year, based on the theme “The Living Ocean and Coast: Diversity of Resources and Sustainable Activities.”

Of the 104 countries and 10 international organizations taking part, Japan boasts one of the largest overseas pavilions at the event, with an exhibition space extending over approximately 1,000m². June 2 was designated “Japan Day” and saw a whole host of events linked to Japan taking place around the Expo venue, including a special concert featuring artists from Japan and South Korea, a fireworks display, and examples of traditional festivities and dances from all over Japan.

The Japan Pavilion itself is based around the theme “our future is a tapestry of forest, village and sea.” In spite of the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, the exhibition inside the Japan Pavilion draws on those experiences to emphasize the relationship between Japan’s forests, villages and seas, and the way in which mankind coexists with the sea. The big screen on the pavilion’s facade meanwhile is showing messages from people in the affected area, thanking everyone around the world for all the support they have given Japan.



The exhibition is divided into three zones. Visitors enter the pavilion via Zone 1, which features images of the

richness and beauty of Japan’s coastal regions and footage of the tsunami in March last year, before moving on to the main part of the exhibition in Zone 2. The centerpiece of Zone 2 is “The Sea: Storybook Theater,” which is screening a film called “The White Bicycle.” The main character is a young boy called Kai, named after the Japanese character for “sea,” who has lost his family in the earthquake and ensuing tsunami. As his story unfolds, Kai, riding on his mysterious white bicycle, experiences the life force of the forest and the sea, which motivates him to start reconstruction. The film is based in part on true stories that actually occurred following the earthquake.



The Sea: Storybook Theater in Zone 2. The film combines real images with animation to bring the story to life.

Some visitors have been moved to tears, with comments like “it was tragic to see what happened after the earthquake, but the story of Kai getting back on his feet was really inspiring.” Others have given a round of applause at the end of the film.

Zone 3 revolves around a “village” of knowledge and technology. It features a relief diorama exhibit and films depicting Japan’s lush forests, seas and the beautiful rivers that connect them, as well as Japanese people’s efforts to protect their forests and seas. 

From forests lush with trees to villages bustling with people, Japan is intricately connected with the sea. In the Japan Pavilion, we pay tribute to the gifts given to us by the sea and its symbiosis with the Japanese people. As the symbol of our pavilion, this image recalls the sea’s biodiversity, in addition to the images of a school of fish, ears of rice in a village, leaves in a forest, and even the earth itself.