

'Travel' to Japan at the Sciencenter

By Hester Vermaak

This September children and their families can "travel" to Japan without buying a plane ticket to Asia. A new exhibition, "Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons," opens on Saturday, Sept. 29.

This exhibition introduces visitors of all ages to how nature is celebrated in Japanese children's lives through hands-on activities, dramatic play, and multi-media experiences.

"For the Sciencenter, a museum known for its own interactive exhibits, this exhibition takes interactivity to a whole new level," says Lara Kimber, acting executive director. "With authentic Japanese artifacts, art supplies, costumes, and other interactive materials, this exhibition invites families to explore Japan's geography and to discover how people's lives are shaped by where they live."

"Japan and Nature" features four main interactive areas, each representing a different season and regional setting in Japan. Fall in the mountainside city of Kyoto means a visit to one of Japan's most celebrated shrines. Discover how children learn to respect nature; create a fall collage of leaves

and nuts; dance and drum in the annual rice harvest festival; and scan the horizon for the special harvest moon.

Slip out of your shoes and step into a winter home in Sapporo, a city on the northernmost island of Japan. Safe inside the warmth of a living room, help a

family prepare for the chilly weeks ahead by decorating the home for the season; ordering and serving special winter foods; making a New Year's card; playing a traditional New Year's



Photo provided by Ken Brown.

Using chopsticks is one of the many fun activities visitors can try at the "Japan and Nature" exhibition at the Sciencenter.

game; and watching videos of winter-time activities.

Celebrate the arrival of spring in Fukuoka, the largest city on the island of Kyushu. Picnic under bright pink

cherry blossoms; raise carp windsocks and try on a kimono for Children's Day; visit a classroom and practice calligraphy, feed the school's pet animals, and more.

Summer vacation is a time for family camping near Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake. At the campsite, go on a bug hunt and collect Japanese kids' bug favorites, try fishing in Lake Biwa and snap a family portrait in front of one of the Lake's scenic views.

"Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons" was developed by the Brooklyn Children's Museum as part of the Go East Asian Exhibit Initiative. Funded by the Freeman Foundation, this exhibition's tour is administered by the Association of Children's Museums.

The Sciencenter was selected through a competitive process by the Association of Children's Museums, to serve as one of a limited number of host venues for this exhibition. "Japan and Nature" will be in Ithaca as its last stop on its initial national museum tour. This exhibition will be on display at the Sciencenter through the end of the year.

For information visit www.sciencenter.org.