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SPOTLIGHT

Children's Day in Japan

One of the common holidays throughout the world is Children's Day. Children's well-being and happiness are celebrated on different days in Germany, India, Nepal, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey.

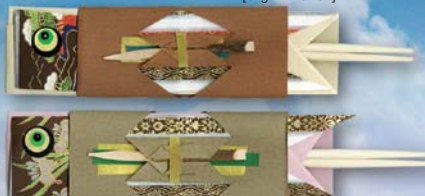
In Japan, May 5 is a national holiday called *Kodomo no Hi*, or Children's Day. Nowadays, it is considered a day to particularly wish for boys' happiness and health, in comparison to *Momo no Sekku*, or *Hina-Matsuri*, (seasonal festival of dolls) on March 3, which specifically celebrates girls. *Kodomo no Hi* has been set aside as a national holiday since 1948, but its origins lie in *Tango-no-Sekku*, which dates back to the Nara Period (710-794).

Around this time of the year, you may happen to see colorful banners in the shape of carp flying against the wind. *Koi-nobori* are used to decorate balconies and miniature versions are placed inside homes, shops and restaurants. Just like the Chinese legend of the carp climbing up the waterfall of the Dragon Gate and transforming into a dragon after its accomplishment, *Koi-nobori* represents parents' wishes for their children to grow up healthy and make a success of their lives. **J S**

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