

Okayama Insider

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FREE

DEC

The twelfth month of the 20th
year of the Heisei period.

2008

師走 (Shiwasu)
平成 20 年

Shiwasu means "teachers run around."
This month was so named because
teacher-monks were busy at year-end.

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Goodbye Tivoli

Text by Noriko Ehara

One of Okayama's most recognised tourist attractions, Kurashiki Tivoli Park, will close forever on December 31st.

Modeled on Tivoli Park in Copenhagen, and costing 47.4 billion yen, Kurashiki Tivoli Park was opened in July 1997 by joint public-private corporation, Tivoli Japan, on land rented from Kurabo Industries.

As Okayama's first ever theme park, it initially flourished with more than 970,000 visitors in the first 40 days. During that summer holiday, the numbers of visitors to Kurashiki Tivoli Park was second only to Tokyo Disneyland. By the end of the first year, 2.98 million had visited the park, but this was the most it was ever going to see. The number of visitors began to drop and last year only 752,538 people walked through the turnstiles. The park never recorded an operating profit.

In 2006, after the first 10-year-contract expired, Tivoli International began to push directors to invest in upgrading the rides and other attractions to increase the parks visitor appeal and thus increase revenue, but negotiations fell through and the Danish side announced its withdrawal. Tivoli Japan was permitted to use the Tivoli logo and brand name for another year, after which the park would have to change its name. Neither Okayama Prefecture nor Kurashiki City wanted to take over the park and it was therefore decided to close it down after one final New Years countdown event.

All 18 of the parks big attractions, including the Tivoli Balloon Ferris Wheel, are expected to be sold to a company in Tokyo that will send them on to other theme parks, mainly in China and Korea.

There is a possibility that Kurashiki City may buy or rent part of the land from Kurabo to preserve some of the landscape as a public park. Okayama Prefecture supports this proposal and has



officially requested Kurabo Industries to consider it.

The financial plight of the park and its effect on public coffers has faced increased criticism recently, but it is also a fact that many people are feeling somewhat melancholy as the life of the park comes to a close. 104,453 people visited the park last month, which is a 90.9% improvement on figures for the same month last year. Clearly a lot of people have decided to make the most of Kurashiki Tivoli Park before it closes altogether. Why don't you?

Kurashiki Tivoli Park Events in December:

★Last Present from Tivoli

Until Dec 31st

A 31-meter-high (101-foot) Christmas Tree has been set up. You can buy a heart shaped ornament (¥700) and

hang it on the tree to make a wish. Santa Claus appears at 17:10 every day

★Tivoli Entertainment Special Xmas Party Dec 13th~25th

Tivoli's special Xmas show combines music, laser-lights and the Tivoli Entertainers dance troupe. Starts at 20:00.

★Star Square Dec 13th~31st

The fountain is lit up with blue and white lights after dark.

★Wishing Candle Tree Dec 20th~25th

Light a candle and make a wish.

★Night Fantasy Special Dec 28th~30th

Tivoli's end-of-year stage show fuses music, dance, laser lights and fireworks. Starts at 19:00.

★Tivoli Final Countdown & Grand Finale Dec 31st

The Tivoli Entertainers do one last show with climactic fireworks and a count-down to the end of the park and the start of the New Year.