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5 BEST EVENTS AT THE 2013 VANCOUVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL, APRIL 4-30

by **TARANEH** in **EVENTS** on March 21, 2013

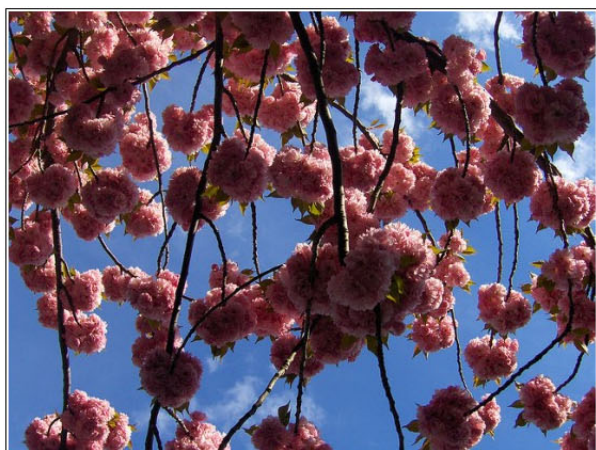


Photo credit: Joe Shlabotnik

In springtime, Vancouver makes like the 1986 Molly Ringwald film and gets **pretty in pink**. How? 40,000 cherry trees – many of which are gifts from Japan – burst into bloom. To mark the event, the city celebrates with the **Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival** which runs from April 4 to April 30.

The nearly month-long celebration is a prime opportunity to get out and explore beautiful patches of the city using the festival's handy blossom **map** that shows you what's blooming. You'll also learn more about Vancouver's Japanese cultural heritage including food, music and arts. All the events are family-friendly. Many are free.

The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival began in 2005 as the brainchild of one Vancouverite: the tireless Linda Poole. Poole missed seeing the blossoms during her work abroad as a cultural attache. When she returned to Vancouver, she was inspired by sakura (blossom) festivals in Japan and launched the event.

In 2013, the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival is an exciting multicultural collaboration by several groups, ranging from Japanese Canadian cultural associations to cyclists, artists, architects, naturalists, world-famous Bollywood choreographer **Shiamak Davar** and more.

Thanks to all the participants, the festival event line up is packed with fun. You don't want to miss the **Cherry Jam** party in downtown Vancouver, the haiku contest, **the World Umbrella Flash Mob**, biking the blossoms, **Sakura Days Japan Fair** and more.

Find details on the 5 best Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival events after the jump.

5 Best Events at the 2013 Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival

1) **Cherry Jam Downtown Concert, April 4**

This free massive party in the heart of downtown Vancouver includes taiko drumming, free Bollywood-style Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Umbrella Dance lessons, a ukelele band, Japanese cooking demos, and the hotly-anticipated Sakura Bento Box (preorder recommended) by Japanese masters including Tojo, Vancouver's legendary sushi chef credited with inventing the California roll.

2) **Sakura Days Japan Fair, April 6-7**

Head over to the lush **VanDusen Botanical Garden** and learn more about Vancouver's Japanese heritage. Participate in a tea ceremony; try about ikebana (flower arranging), do origami; watch a martial arts demo. As for the eats, from artisan sake tasting, to street food such as takoyaki – balls made with savoury pancake batter, diced octopus, tempura scraps, pickled ginger and green onion- it's best to go hungry. Of course the garden has groves of picnic-inducing cherry trees.

3) **World Umbrella Dance Flash Mob, April 13**

Ever dreamed of dancing in public in an amazing happening with hundreds of other dancers? You can. Shiamak Davar (beloved by Oprah and opener for Sting) has choreographed this pop-up dance which takes place at the grand setting of the Vancouver Art Gallery Plaza on April 13. Learn the dance with these **YouTube videos** and bounce to a Bollywood beat with live taiko drumming by Tetsu Taiko. Last year 550 people got out and did their thing.

4) **Velopalooza Bike the Blossoms, To Be Determined**

Velopalooza teams up with VCBF to organize a gorgeous scenic ride. Participants meet up in a park and get rolling.

5) **Haiku Invitational, through June 3**

The invitational invites everyone from around the world to submit up to two poems within 17 syllables on the beautiful pink and white cherry blossoms. Since 2006, the Invitational has attracted some 6,000 submissions from 39 countries. This year, VCBF also introduces Haiku Tracking by Bing Thom Architects. Hundreds of pink helium balloons with haikus tied onto them will be released in Burrard Skytrain Station on April 4. When you catch one, you're asked to email and say where you took it.

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