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Read Your Way around the World in Itabashi Bologna Children's Book Hall!

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Ever thought about traveling around the world right from the comfort of an armchair? A visit to the Itabashi Bologna Children's Book Hall provides such an opportunity to both kids and adults alike!



Located just a five-minute walk from Itabashi-honcho Station on the Toei Mita Line, the library puts more than 27,000 books at your fingertips.



Library Director Mr. Murakami greets visitors at the entrance to the Itabashi Bologna Children's Book Hall.



Most of the books in this library are from the Bologna Children's Book Fair, held annually in the northern Italy city of Bologna, which has been a friendship city of Itabashi since 2005.

Since 1993, Bologna has donated part of the books exhibited at the fair to Itabashi. Every summer, the Itabashi Art Museum holds Bologna Illustrators Exhibition which introduces the selected

works of one of the most important competitions on picture book illustration held in Bologna and, concurrently, the library organizes "Bologna Book Fair in Itabashi" to exhibit each year's newly donated books.



Books from more than 100 countries, written in over 70 languages, are displayed throughout the library. One of the initiatives is to collect the same picture books in different languages, as shown in the photo above.



Turn the pages to discover new world perspectives and cultures!



Books are organized by their country of origin.



The top three languages available in the library are English (8,000 books), Japanese (3,700 books), and French (3,500 books). However, Mr. Murakami emphasizes that many of the books are actually picture books--and some do not even have any words--such as the Brazilian book I am holding up in the picture above.



Mr. Murakami shows me a rare book that features a unique reading method. It is certainly fun to unravel a book like a puzzle!



Many children aged 0-3 visit the library, but the Book Hall is open to all ages and nationalities!

Every Saturday, the library organizes Storytelling with World's Picture Books in the reading room. The event starts at 11:00 a.m. and lasts about 30 minutes.

Volunteer staff read books in Japanese and other languages, and recommend picture books from abroad. The storytelling event also includes songs and hand games, and people of all ages can take part and enjoy learning about foreign languages and countries!

Another major project of the library includes organizing the annual Itabashi International Picture Book Translation Award, a competition in which people from around the world can submit their Japanese translations of an English or Italian picture book. Now in its 26th year, the contest sees about 1,300 submissions annually.



The Itabashi Bologna Children's Book Hall also features a dedicated Grimm and Andersen section, where readers can find familiar childhood stories in picture books from various countries!



The library's warm wooden tables are reused from classrooms of the former Itabashi Daisan Elementary School.

Although individuals are only able to read books in the library for now, copying services are available upon request--just ask the friendly staff! (Additional charges and relevant copyright laws

apply.)

The library has plans to move to a new location by spring 2021 and to start a lending service for individuals. For now, only schools and other libraries can borrow books for special events or exhibitions.

Explore new worlds today with a visit to the Itabashi Bologna Children's Hall! The diversity of international books makes it a great place for adults and children alike to gain insight into languages and cultures from across the globe.

Itabashi Bologna Children's Hall

Website: www.city.itabashi.tokyo.jp/c_kurashi/002/002177.html

Facebook: www.facebook.com/itabashi.ehonkan/

Location: 24-1 Honcho, Itabashi-ku, Tokyo 173-0001

Access: five-minute walk from Itabashi-honcho Station (Exit A1)

Telephone: 03-3579-2665

Email: ehon@city.itabashi.tokyo.jp

Hours: 10:00-17:00 (Closed, Mondays, last day of the month, and during the year-end holidays)

Other Children's Libraries that Adults Can Enjoy in the Tokyo Area

International Library of Children's Literature, National Diet Library

Website: <https://www.kodomo.go.jp/english/index.html>

Location: 12-49 Ueno Park, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0007

Access: 10-minute walk from JR Ueno Station (Park Exit)

Telephone: 03-3827-2053

Hours: 09:30-17:00 ((Closed Mondays, every 3rd Wednesday, public holidays (except Children's Day on May 5), and during the year-end holidays))

Tachikawa Manga Park



Website: <https://mangapark.jp>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/tachikawamangapark

Location: 2F Kodomo Mirai Center, 3-2-26 Nishikicho, Tachikawa City, Tokyo 190-0022

Access: 7-minute walk from JR Nishi-Kunitachi Station

Telephone: 042-529-8682

Hours: 10:00-19:00 (weekdays); 10:00-20:00 (weekends and public holidays)

Entrance Fee: ¥400 for adults; ¥200 for children

This article was written by Rachel Leng.

*This article was posted on the Life in Tokyo website operated by the Tokyo International Communication Committee on December 9, 2019.

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