



FT Nikkei UK Ekiden: Iconic Japanese relay race comes to the UK

Relay will see 19 teams take part in race from Oxford to Windsor

LONDON (May 28th, 2024) - This June, the Thames Valley will play host to the first UK Ekiden, a popular Japanese relay race that champions teamwork, endurance and camaraderie.

The inaugural FT Nikkei UK Ekiden race will take place on Monday 24th June and will follow an iconic, 76-mile route from Oxford to Windsor along the Thames Path. 19 teams of 10 runners will compete in the long-distance relay wearing the traditional tasuki sash instead of using a baton.

The first group of runners will set off at 8am from Oxford, a city close to the hearts of the Japanese Emperor and Empress who studied there in the 90's. The route will continue largely along the Thames Path (with no road closures required) through towns including Abingdon, Wallingford, Goring, Purley, Sonning, Henley-on-Thames, Marlow and Maidenhead. The race will finish near Windsor Castle, home to the British Royal Family.

Sponsored by The FT and Nikkei, the race is aimed at providing long lasting people-to-people links between Japan and the UK, as well as an opportunity for British people to enjoy aspects of Japanese running culture. The route is particularly appropriate because the Japanese Emperor studied at Oxford, wrote a book entitled "The Thames and I" and his research was into the UK waterways.

The participating teams will be composed of runners from corporations, universities, and UK Japan-related organisations, each reflecting different aspects of the UK-Japan relationship. Current confirmed teams include University teams from Oxford, Cambridge, Loughborough and Birmingham, as well as corporate teams from The FT, Nikkei, Arcus, Mizuno and Daiwa Capital. Other teams announced to participate include Momiji Charity, Team Paris Marathon, Namban Rengo, British Government - Building the Future, Jet Programme Alumni, RAF with Runner's World and Henley Rowing Club.

The UK Ekiden is a Community Interest Company and in the spirit of connecting the 2 nations, a portion of profits from the 2024 race will be split between 1 UK charity and 1 Japanese charity. This year, we will be supporting the Noto Peninsula reconstruction efforts in Japan alongside a sports-related charity in the UK.

Anna Dingley, founder of the UK Ekiden, said: *"This event not only introduces the iconic ekiden race to the UK, but also represents a unique opportunity to bring together a wide spectrum of people, companies, universities and charities involved in UK-Japan communities to showcase the spirit of teamwork in an exciting format. We are excited to launch our UK Ekiden year one, in celebration and admiration of the Hakone Ekiden in Japan, which held its 100th race this January."*

John Ridding, FT CEO, said: *"The FT has been part of Nikkei Inc since 2015. In the spirit of cooperation and the success of our global alliance, we're delighted to support this uniquely Japanese event as it debuts in the UK. It's a wonderful opportunity to cement ties between our countries and cultures."*

Tsuyoshi Hasebe, President & CEO of Nikkei Inc., said: *“The FT Nikkei UK Ekiden embodies the spirit of unity and shared success that characterises the close cooperation between Nikkei and the FT, and between Japan and the UK. It’s an honour for Nikkei to be a part of an historic event that will bridge distances through the universal language of sport.”*

For more information please visit www.ukekiden.com / For press enquiries, please contact: press@ukekiden.com.

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About the ekiden: The ekiden tradition traces its roots back hundreds of years to a time when runners relayed important messages and goods between stations along predetermined routes. The word “ekiden” means “station” and “convey or to tell.” Today, ekiden has evolved into a popular relay race format in Japan. The UK Ekiden takes place in the same year that Japan’s Hakone Ekiden, the most prominent ekiden on the sport’s calendar, celebrated its centenary in January.

About the Financial Times: The Financial Times is one of the world’s leading business news organisations, recognised internationally for its authority, integrity and accuracy. The FT has a record paying readership of 1.4 million, more than one million of which are digital subscriptions. It is part of Nikkei Inc., which provides a broad range of information, news and services for the global business community.

About Nikkei: Nikkei Inc. is a world-renowned media brand for Asian news, respected for quality journalism and for being a trusted provider of business news and information. Founded as a market news provider in Japan in 1876, Nikkei has grown into one of the world’s largest media corporations, with 37 foreign editorial bureaus and approximately 1,500 journalists worldwide. Nikkei acquired the UK-based Financial Times in 2015. Our combined digital and print circulation totals about 2.3 million, and we are continually deploying new technologies to increase our readership.