



Japan National Tourism Organization

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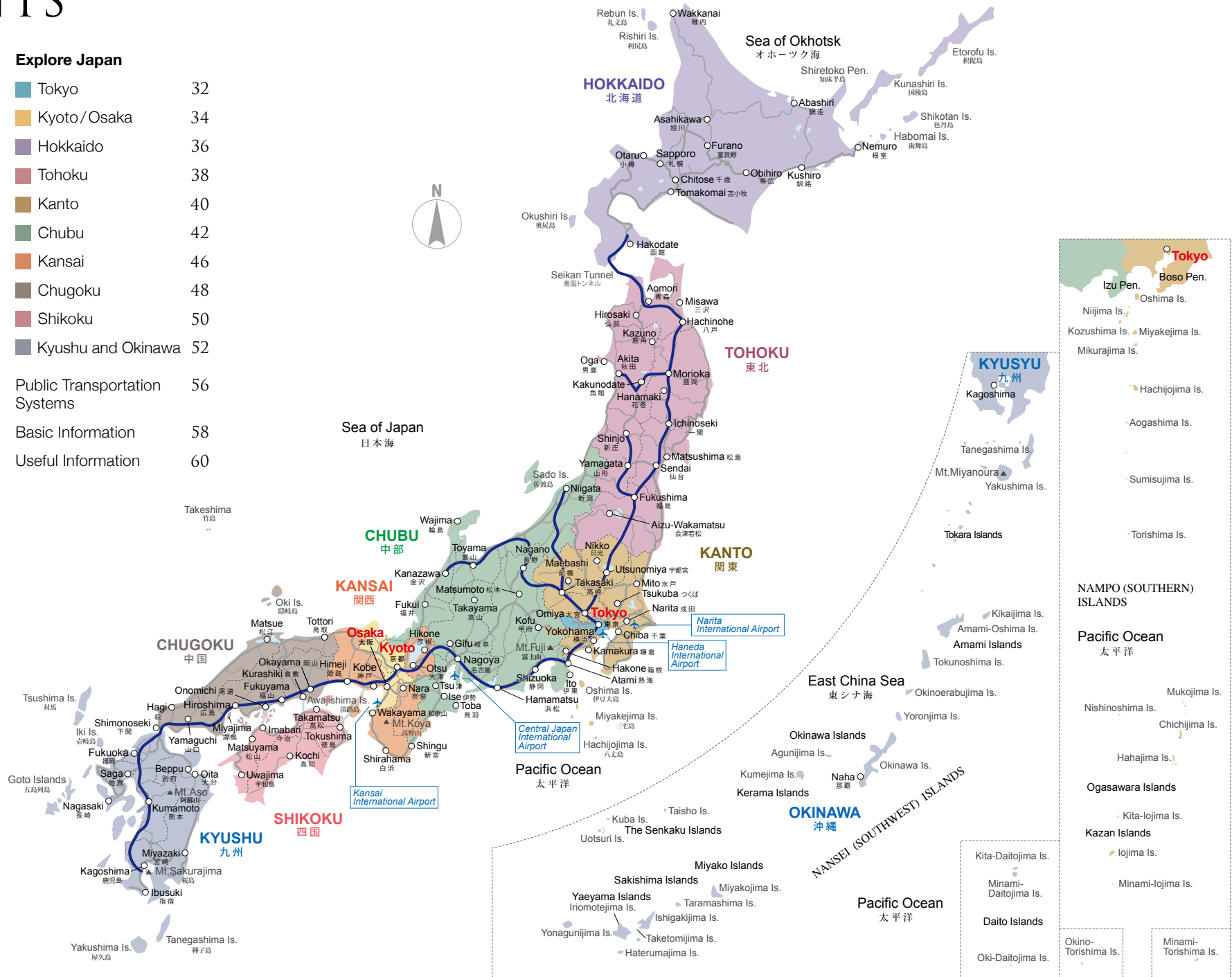
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JAPAN
OFFICIAL VISITOR'S GUIDE

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Japanese Cooking Classes

Classes for cooking Japanese cuisine, which has been designated as an intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), include courses for making sushi. Experience the depth of Japan's sushi culture known for its many different styles, such as *nigiri-zushi* (sushi shaped by hand) and *maki-zushi* (rolled sushi), and its wide selection of ingredients.



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Experiencing Traditional Japanese Culture

Shodo (Japanese Calligraphy) Experience

Shodo is a form of art that intertwines the spirit of the body with martial arts-infused technique. *Kanji* (Chinese characters) look complex and have deep meaning, but the way in which they are written allows you to add your own expressive touch.

Samurai and Ninja Experience

Ninjas are spies who were active in Japan from the Kamakura period (1185-1333) to the Edo period (1603-1868), the time in which samurai ruled the land. Today you can enjoy a hands-on ninja experience, dress like a ninja or samurai, take a martial arts lesson, view clothing and weapons displays, and watch shows in which people show off the skills from the days of old.



Maiko (Apprentice Geisha) Experience

Maiko are apprentice geisha who perform classical Japanese dances and other forms of entertainment at Japanese-style banquets called *ozashiki*. Their culture is colorful and deep, characterized by artistic costumes and makeup, the performance of art skills, and a unique style of speech and language. Experience what it's like to dress up as a maiko for a day and take some glamor shots.

Pottery Experience

Enjoy the picturesque combination of bowls and food that are a part of Japanese culinary culture. There are many ceramic workshops across Japan where you can make an original bowl of your own.



There are unique forms of traditional culture in Japan that have been handed down for many generations, with each influenced by neighboring countries and the West and evolving in their original way. Enjoying precious experiences only available in Japan and deepening your exchange with Japanese people will enable you to get a better understanding of the allure of Japan. Experience-oriented programs are offered not only in Tokyo and Kyoto, but also in other cities around Japan. There are tourist information centers and reservation websites that provide information about experience-oriented programs in this country. Check out these sources and find a program you would be interested in experiencing.



Champon

Nagasaki

Gunkanjima Island is a world heritage site that retains the atmosphere of the heyday of coal mining in modern Japan. After a tour of the island, have a bowl of *Champon*, which is a healthy noodle soup rich in vegetables and seafood.

Enjoying Good Food and Great Places

Japan is home to a number of charming cities in addition to Tokyo. Visit Japan's regional prefectures and discover the flavors and vistas that make them unique.

Hyogo

The elegant houses of resident foreigners from the days of old, represented by Western-style residences called *Ijinkan*, line the streets in the Kitano area of Kobe, the leading trade port in Western Japan. Experience a chance encounter between East and the West while enjoying a steak made from Kobe beef, the most famous beef in Japan.



Kobe Beef



Kitano Ijinkan

Akita

Kiritanpo Nabe (*Kiritanpo* is processed rice) is a specialty of Akita, which is one of Japan's most prominent rice producing prefectures. After enjoying every savory bit of this hot pot dish, we recommend going on a tour of the seven Nyuto Hot Springs in the prefecture. Old legends say that the turbid hot spring water which spouts forth from the ground of Akita is blessed with natural healing power that cures all kinds of diseases.



Kiritanpo Nabe



Nyuto Hot Springs

Aichi

Tokoname is a major area for producing the ceramic ware indispensable for food and the everyday life culture unique to Japan. The views along the city streets are a rich testament to the unique ceramic culture of the area. We recommend visitors to Tokoname also try the rich flavor of *Miso-katsu* (breaded pork cutlets served with a miso-based sauce), a special local dish for which the large neighboring city of Nagoya is famous.



Miso-katsu



Pottery Footpath of Tokoname

Hiroshima Style Okonomiyaki



Hiroshima

Hiroshima style *Okonomiyaki* is prepared by putting vegetables, meat, and other ingredients on a flour-based crepe, and then roasting the entire mix on a hot iron plate. Hiroshima style *Okonomiyaki* is known for using large portions of chopped cabbage and noodles. Hiroshima also has many *Sakagura* (Japanese sake breweries), such as Kamotsuru, whose brew was served to President Barack Obama of the United States when he visited Japan. *Sakagura* tours are very popular among foreign visitors to Hiroshima.



Sakagura tours

© Hiroshima Prefecture / © JNTO

SPRING



Ashikaga Flower Park / Tochigi Prefecture

A park where people can view flowers of each season. Its symbol is the huge *fuji* (Japanese wisteria) trees. Many tourists visit for an annual event called *fuji matsuri* (wisteria festival), which is held from the middle of April to the middle of May.



Mt. Yoshino / Nara Prefecture

Considered to be one of the best places in Japan for viewing cherry blossoms. The cherry trees on this mountain begin blooming around late March, starting with those at the base of the mountain. Little by little, the cherry blossoms move from the base to the top of the mountain.



Sumatakyo Ravine / Shizuoka Prefecture

A place of natural beauty famous for the bridge known as the *yumeno-tsurihashi* (dream suspension bridge) that spans the fantastic emerald green river that runs underneath. The nearby Sumatakyo Onsen (Sumatakyo Hot Springs) is another popular spot.



Kabira Bay and Ishigaki Island / Okinawa Prefecture

Little islets lie scattered around Kabira-wan Bay, which boasts some of the clearest and most transparent seawater in the world. People are not allowed to swim here because the tide runs too strong, but it is possible to appreciate the beautiful submarine scenery from sightseeing boats.

SUMMER

FOUR SEASONS



The land of Japan is long and narrow, running north to south. The difference in temperatures between Hokkaido in the north and Okinawa in the south can be as much as 40 degrees (centigrade) in winter. The distinct differences in climatic conditions from season to season allow people to enjoy beautiful natural vistas all throughout the year. The changing of the four seasons has fostered a unique sensibility among Japanese people that has been the foundation of the nation's original culture since ancient times. They have passed down the tradition of reflecting the taste of each season within their food and daily life, and enjoy the seasonal accents through events such as *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) in spring and *momiji-gari* (scarlet maple leaves viewing) in fall.



Kurobe Gorge / Toyama Prefecture

A grand canyon that forms a deep, V-shaped valley carved out by the Kurobe River. It stretches for 86 kilometers (53 miles) and descends nearly 3,000 meters (9,843 feet). The sightseeing tramcar that travels through the ravine is extremely popular.



Togetsukyo Bridge / Kyoto Prefecture

Located in Arashiyama, a place of scenic beauty in the western part of Kyoto City, this bridge spans the Katsura River. Many people from across Japan and other countries visit this bridge to admire the cherry blossoms in spring and vividly colored leaves in fall.



Ouchi-juku / Fukushima Prefecture

A state-designated area in which important traditional buildings are preserved, such as traditional houses with thatched roofs that have been kept in their original form. These old homes have been put to practical use as restaurants and souvenir shops.

Jigokudani Onsen (Jigokudani Hot Springs) / Nagano Prefecture

Located in the Yudanaka Shibu Hot Springs Village, this hot spring is known for visits from Japanese monkeys who come to bathe in the winter. These wild Japanese monkeys can also be seen at Jigokudani Yaen-Koen Park.

FALL

WINTER



Sumida River Fireworks Festival / Tokyo

Held annually on the last Saturday of July, this is one of the three major fireworks festivals in Tokyo. The origin of the festival is said to be a fireworks display that began in 1733. About 20,000 fireworks are let off along the Sumida River during the festival.



Gion Matsuri (Gion Festival) / Kyoto Prefecture

Shinto rituals and associated events for this festival continue for one month every year in July. The main events are *yotama* (a festival held on the eve of the main festival) on July 16 and *yamaboko junko* (a circling of city blocks by festival floats) on July 17 and 24. The Gion Matsuri is registered on the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list.

祭

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The word *matsuri* (festival) is said to have come from the expression *matsuru* (to worship something as a god). In Japan, where the cultivation of rice has been widely practiced since ancient times, people hold festivals to pray for bumper crops when rice planting begins in the spring, pray for protection from crop epidemics and typhoons in the summer, and thank the gods in the fall when rice is harvested. There are also ceremonies of Buddhist origin, such as *bon odori* (bon festival dance) and *okuribi* (ceremonial fires lit to speed the spirits of the dead on their way), that are held in the *Bon* (Lantern Festival) period in the middle of August when the dead and ancestors are said to visit this world. About 600,000 festivals reportedly take place in Japan every year.



Sapporo Snow Festival / Hokkaido

Every year in early February in the heart of Sapporo, gigantic snow statues, a skating rink, playground slides made of ice, and other snow sculptures appear in the Odori Koen Park and two other festival venues in the city.



Aomori Nebuta Festival / Aomori Prefecture

Held every year from August 2 to August 7, this festival is a state-designated important intangible folk-culture asset. Festival floats carrying huge papier-mache human figures and dancers ride around city streets during the festival.



Akita Kanto Festival / Akita Prefecture

Held every year from August 3 to August 6, this is a festival in which people pray for good health in the middle of summer. It is a state-designated important intangible folk-culture asset. Participants in this festival balance paper lanterns made to look like straw rice bags on their forehead, lower back, and shoulders and dance to pray for a rich harvest.



Sendai Tanabata Festival / Miyagi Prefecture

Derived from a star festival in China, this festival is an annual event held for three days from August 6 to celebrate the occasion of *tanabata* (the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar). A large number of gigantic bamboo decorations adorn the overhead section of the shopping arcade during this festival.



Owara Kaze-no Bon / Toyama Prefecture

An annual event held from September 1 to September 3 in Yatsuo Town, which is located near the border of Toyama and Gifu. Men and women with their faces hidden from view begin dancing to folk songs from dusk on the eve of the main festival. The streets of the town and dancers bathed in the light of paper lanterns create a truly wonderful atmosphere to behold.



Takayama Festival / Gifu Prefecture

The Takayama Festival is the collective name given to the Sanno Festival held every spring on April 14 and 15 and the Hachiman Festival held every fall on October 9 and 10. These two festivals are said to date back to the second half of the 16th century. The main highlights are the magnificent festival floats called *matsuri yatai* and the accompanying procession.



Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival / Fukuoka Prefecture

Held annually from July 1 to July 15 in Fukuoka City, this festival is more than 700 years old. The highlight is an event called *oiyama* (chasing floats) in which participants shoulder festival floats in a competitive manner.



Kishiwada Danjiri Festival / Osaka Prefecture

The soul-stirring sight of men boldly pulling festival floats called *danjiri* all over town is the defining feature of the Kishiwada Danjiri Festival. This festival is held every year in September in Kishiwada, a city located in the southern part of Osaka Prefecture.



Awa Odori Dance Festival / Tokushima Prefecture

Held annually during the *Bon* Festival period in the middle of August, this festival in Tokushima Prefecture is about 400 years old. Approximately 100,000 dancers are said to take part in this festival, which is ranked as one of the three major *Bon* Festival dances in Japan.



Karatsu Kunchi Festival / Saga Prefecture

Held from November 2 to November 4, this is an annual autumnal festival of the Karatsu Jinja Shrine in Karatsu City, Saga Prefecture. Participants pull huge dry-lacquer festival floats around town to musical accompaniment during the festival.



Nyuto Hot Springs Village / Akita Prefecture

This village consists of seven hot springs scattered around the foot of Mt. Nyuto located in the Towada-Hachimantai National Park. Each of these seven hot springs has its own source. The qualities of the water vary widely among the springs.



Kusatsu Hot Springs / Gunma Prefecture

Known as one of the leading hot spring areas in Japan, the spring water in Kusatsu is very hot. For that reason, there is a performance there called *yumomi* (hot water tossing) in which the hot water is stirred with paddles to cool it and soften the effects on the body.



Kinosaki Hot Springs / Hyogo Prefecture

A hot spring area in Toyoka City located in northern Hyogo Prefecture, characterized by the elegant sight of riverside willow trees. In addition to staying at a Japanese-style inn, visitors can also enjoy a tour of seven public bathhouses called *soto-yu*.

祭

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

温泉

ONSEN (HOT SPRINGS)

Japan is a country with many volcanos and volcanic *onsen* (hot springs). Numerous myths and legends associated with hot springs abound, including those about the content of hot springs that cure certain wounds or illnesses and others about the healing of injured animals. These tales are proof that the people of Japan have long known the medicinal benefits of hot springs. Today there are hot springs throughout Japan that offer accommodation. Many people visit hot spring areas for long stays to partake in balneotherapy called *toji*. Hot springs are also popular destinations for recreational day trips and overnight stays.

COLUMN Japanese bathing practices

There are many hot spring facilities in Japan. Cities are dotted with public bathhouses. Japanese people take a bath to not only wash away the dirt, but also to relax in the bathtub and relieve the exhaustion of the day.



Beppu Hot Springs / Oita Prefecture

Beppu Hot Springs is a hot spring area that boasts the largest number of spring sources and the greatest hot spring flow in Japan. There are hundreds of hot springs in Beppu, with the main group being a collection of eight hot spring villages known as *Beppu Hatto*. The area is also popular for tourist spots where the hot water gushes out in interesting ways or in different colors said to resemble the fires of hell.

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Shukubo (Temple Lodging Facilities)

Accommodation facilities at Buddhist temples originally established for monks and worshippers. These facilities are also open to the general public. Some Buddhist temples offer visitors a chance to try traditional vegetarian meals and experience Zen meditation.

ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

Distinctive Lodging Facilities

The Shirakawago area, which has been designated as a world cultural heritage site, is home to lodging facilities built in a traditional Japanese architectural style called *gassho zukuri*. People who come to this place can interact with the local inhabitants and enjoy regional cuisine, while at the same time experience how people lived in the past.

© shirakawa village office



High-class Ryokan (High-class Japanese-style Inns)

Among the large accommodation options available in Japan, high-class *ryokan* with a long history are recommended for those who wish to enjoy some elegance. There are those that are hundreds of years old, as well as those which offer a hot spring, magnificent view, or exceptional food. Visitors are sure to find something that suits their tastes.

Ryokan that make the most of their surroundings are scattered throughout Japan. Each of these inns offer *omotenashi*, a form of hospitality based on Japanese-style service.

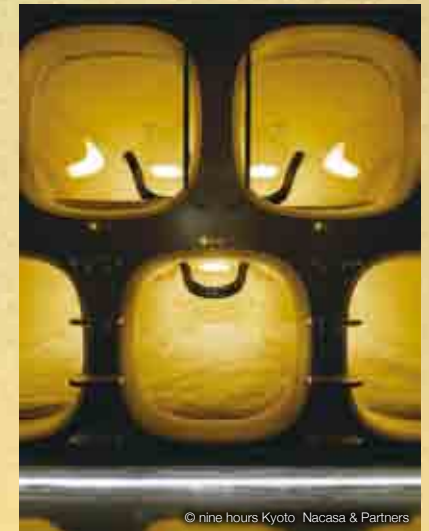
© HOSHINOYA Kyoto

Ryokan are accommodation facilities that provide visitors with a unique Japanese experience. These inns offer tatami-floored Japanese rooms in a traditional Japanese building. Some *ryokan* in hot spring areas are furnished with *roten buro* (an open-air bath) for private use. Dinner and breakfast are included in a regular plan. Visitors can experience Japanese culture, wear *yukata* (an informal cotton kimono) when walking around the inn, and sleep on a *futon* (a thick bed quilt) spread on the tatami floor. The small-scale Japanese-style inns run by families are called *minshuku* (tourist homes). There is also a wide variety of other accommodations, such as Western-style hotels and capsule hotels, which fit different budget needs and preferences.

宿

Capsule Hotels

Relatively inexpensive accommodation facilities where space for one person is secured in capsule units. Most of these facilities used to only accommodate men, but an ever increasing number are beginning to accept female guests.



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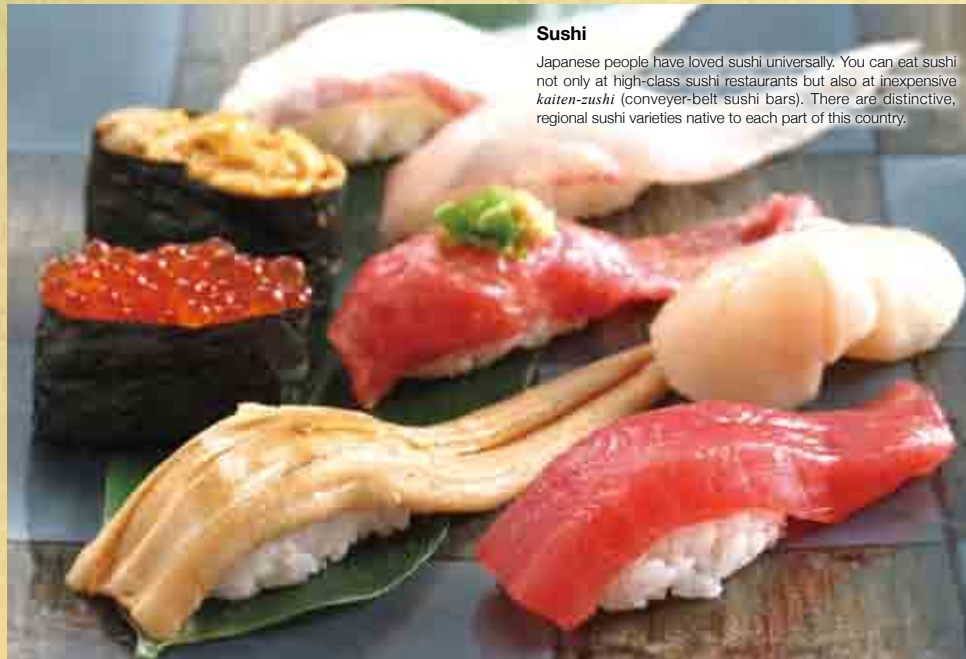
FOOD

High-class Japanese food is a work of art created by chefs who have undergone many years of training. Chefs pick out fresh, seasonal ingredients and use their refined skill to produce complete dishes. In addition to Japanese restaurants, there are many dining spots where people can enjoy food from countries all around the world. Japan also offers you a large variety of relatively inexpensive but tasty dishes that ordinary people eat on a daily basis. One particular dish that is especially popular is *ramen* (Chinese noodles in soup). There are some Japanese people who regularly go to *ramen* shops in their spare time.



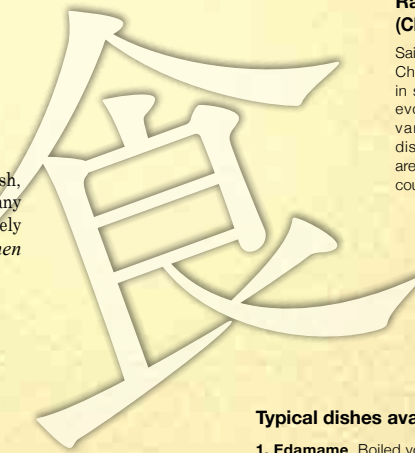
Kaiseki Ryori

Kaiseki Ryori consists of full-course meals based on the traditionally valued concept of one soup and three vegetable dishes with each meal. Using ingredients in season, these meals express a seasonal atmosphere through the dishes used and the manner in which the food is arranged.



Sushi

Japanese people have loved sushi universally. You can eat sushi not only at high-class sushi restaurants but also at inexpensive *kaiten-zushi* (conveyor-belt sushi bars). There are distinctive, regional sushi varieties native to each part of this country.



Ramen (Chinese Noodles in Soup)

Said to have originally come from China, *ramen* (Chinese noodles in soup) has undergone its own evolution in Japan. There are various types of ramen and distinctive soups and noodles are used in different parts of the country.



Typical dishes available at izakaya

1. **Edamame** Boiled young soybeans. 2. **Kara-age** Pieces of seasoned deep-fried chicken. 3. **Yakitori** Skewers of grilled chicken. 4. **Tamagoyaki** Japanese-style omelets flavored with a broth. 5. **Agedashi-dofu** Pieces of deep-fried tofu covered with a broth.



Izakaya (Japanese-style Pubs)

Groups of friends and company employees on their way home often gather at *izakaya* (Japanese-style pubs), where they can enjoy food with alcoholic beverages. They offer a large variety of choices on their menu.



Sweets / Wagashi (Japanese-style Confectionery)

Wagashi are Japanese-style confectionery sweets prepared from traditional recipes. Many of these sweets express seasonal themes. Their beautiful appearance is truly delightful.

© Kanazawa City / © JNTO

食

FOOD

The foods that Japanese people normally eat can be found at markets, supermarkets, food sections on the basement floors of department stores, and convenience stores that are open 24 hours a day. Precooked foods and *bento* (box lunches) prepared in Japanese, Western, Chinese, and other styles are also popular. Tasty food is available at these places for less money than at restaurants. Cafes offering opportunities to interact with animals such as cats and birds are popular, too.



Animal Cafes

Cafes where people can enjoy a meal and a cup of tea while playing with animals such as cats and owls. The relaxing environment of these cafes makes them quite popular.



Fruit Picking

There are farms where people can enjoy picking fruits in season, such as strawberries, grapes, and *nashi* (Japanese pears). People are free to eat the fruit they pick on the spot.



Markets

There are permanent markets in major Japanese cities that are considered to be the kitchen of the average person. The charm of these markets lies in the complete lineup of fresh foods sold there, such as vegetables, meat, fish, and shellfish.

Depachika (Basement Floors of Department Stores)

Many department stores in Japan have a food section on their basement floor. The food shops in this section, including branches operated by famous stores, sell precooked foods, *bento*, and sweets.



© Mitsukoshi Nihombashi Main Store



Noh

An ancient performing art that is said to stretch back hundreds of years. Singing and dancing to ordinary people and dances dedicated to gods underwent a dramatic evolution in the 14th century, transforming into the masked musical theater performed today.



Sumo (Japanese-style Wrestling)

A martial art form in which a pair of wrestlers called *rikishi* grapple with each other and fight in a ring called a *dohyo*. It is considered to be the national sport of Japan. An association called the Nihon Sumo Kyokai stages six professional tournaments held in the odd-numbered months each year.

TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS

Japan boasts numerous art forms—such as theater, music, and dance—that have been handed down for generations. These performing arts encompass many different genres, and each possesses a unique history that has continued to the present. In addition to ancient home-grown arts, there are also many forms of culture introduced from China and other countries that have evolved in their own unique way in Japan. Performing arts such as Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku have all been designated by UNESCO as forms of intangible cultural heritage.



Kabuki

Its origin is said to be a dance called *kabuki odori* created by a woman named Izumono Okuni in the 16th century. Today Kabuki is performed by an all-male cast.



Bunraku

A traditional puppet theater consisting of puppeteers, musicians, and puppets. Started in the 15th century, its present form was fully established by the 18th century.



Budo (Kendo)

Budo (martial arts) have evolved from traditional Japanese martial arts. The purpose is to train the body and mind and build a character through practice. Kendo is a form in which students train their bodies and minds through swordsmanship.



Kado (the Art of Flower Arrangement)

Also known as *ikebana*, kado is the art of cutting seasonal flowers and plants, putting them in flower bases, and expressing and appreciating the precious value of their life and beauty. There are many schools of *kado*, each with its own style.



Sado (Tea Ceremony)

Green tea is made and served in accordance with traditional etiquette for receiving guests. It places great importance on the sentiments of the seasons. It is a composite art that brings together works of art and tea utensils displayed in tea houses.



Ceramics / Mashiko-yaki (Tochigi Prefecture)



Ceramics / Arita-yaki (Saga Prefecture)



Washi (Japanese Paper) / Sekishu Washi (Shimane Prefecture)



Dolls / Daruma Dolls (Gunma Prefecture)



Ironware / Nanbu-tekki Ironware (Iwate Prefecture)



Ironware / Osaka Suzuki Tinware (Osaka Prefecture)



Textiles / Nishijin-ori (Kyoto Prefecture)



Textiles / Arimatsu-shibori Tie-dyeing (Aichi Prefecture)

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

There are traditional craftworks made in various parts of Japan that are based on regional specialties. They are manufactured using skills and techniques that have been handed down since ancient times. Nearly all of these craftworks are used for everyday life. They have reached a high degree of perfection after generations of use by many people. Craftsmen are also making improvements to better adapt them to contemporary living and make them easier to use while retaining their distinctive qualities.



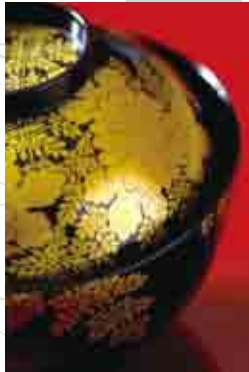
Dolls / Hakata Dolls (Fukuoka Prefecture)



Woodworks / Hakone Yosegi Zaiku Parquetry (Kanagawa Prefecture)



Washi (Japanese Paper) / Mino Washi (Gifu Prefecture)



Lacquerware / Wajima-nuri Lacquerware (Ishikawa Prefecture)



Woodworks / Kaba Zaiku Handiwork (Akita Prefecture)



Lacquerware / Aizu-nuri Lacquerware (Fukushima Prefecture)



Other Crafts / Ukiyo-e (Tokyo)



Other Crafts / Satsuma Kiriko Cut Glass (Kagoshima Prefecture)

SHINTO SHRINES



Izumo Taisha Shrine / Shimane Prefecture

The region of Izumo is known as the land of the gods. There is a legend that says the gods from all the different regions of Japan gather here during the lunar month of October. Izumo Taisha Shrine is said to answer the prayers people seeking to find their match.



Meiji Jingu Shrine / Tokyo

Located right next to Harajuku Station. Adjoining Yoyogi Koen Park, the green-shrouded shrine is a place where the residents of metropolitan Tokyo come to relax.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES

There are Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in various parts of the country. While Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines look similar because they are both Japanese-style buildings, they are very different in nature. Shrines are facilities dedicated to the practice of Shinto, a religion native to Japan. They enshrine a huge variety of gods referred to as *yaoyorozu* (literally "countless"), including those derived from nature, other phenomena, and myths. Temples are religious service facilities for Buddhism, which is said to have reached these shores in 538.

Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine / Kanagawa Prefecture

Located in Kamakura, a city that is a popular tourist destination. There are several annual rituals performed at this shrine, including *yabusame* (the art of shooting arrows on horseback). In spring visitors can fully appreciate the splendor of the cherry blossoms that line its approach.



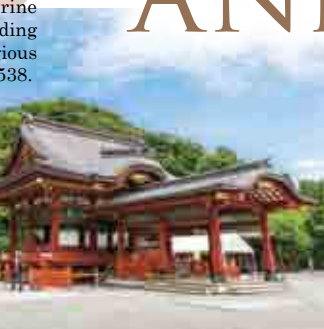
Motonosumi Inari Shrine / Yamaguchi Prefecture

This shrine has 123 toriigates standing on its approach. The U.S. television station CNN selected it as one of the 31 most beautiful spots in Japan.



Usa Shrine / Oita Prefecture

The head shrine for more than 40,000 shrines nationwide dedicated to *hachiman daijin* (the great god of war), which was worshipped by samurai families and the Imperial Court.



Arakura Sengen Shrine / Yamanashi Prefecture

Located in Fuji Yoshida City, this shrine was built in 705. In spring, 300 cherry trees bloom in full glory here. Some people say it offers the most beautiful view of Mt. Fuji in Japan.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES



Phoenix Hall at Byodo-in Temple / Kyoto Prefecture

The construction of the Phoenix Hall was completed in 1053. It houses Buddhist statues made about 1,000 years ago that are considered to be national treasures. This hall has also been registered as a world cultural heritage site.



© Myohouin

Sanjusangen-do Temple / Kyoto Prefecture

In addition to a seated image of the Thousand-armed Kannon, a national treasure, this temple houses 1,001 statues of the Thousand-armed Kannon that are truly a sight to see. Visitors are encouraged to find the Kannon statue that resembles them.



Yama-dera Temple / Yamagata Prefecture

Jikaku Daishi of the Tendai sect of Buddhism is said to have founded Yama-dera Temple in 860. It is built in a way that fits the natural contours of the mountain, so visitors must go up a flight of more than 800 stone steps to reach the inner temple grounds.



Zenkoji Temple / Nagano Prefecture

The statues of the Amitabha triad sharing a single halo, the main objects of worship at Zenkoji Temple, are a national treasure. Visitors have a chance to view these statues through a ritual known as the *gokaicho*, which is held once every seven years. It has been widely cherished for more than 1,400 years, and today worshippers from all parts of Japan continue to visit this temple.

AND SHINTO SHRINES



The National Art Center, Tokyo / Tokyo

One of the largest museums in Japan, which opened in the Roppongi district in 2007. The building was designed by Kisho Kurokawa, a world-famous Japanese architect.



© Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum

Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum / Fukui Prefecture

A natural history museum in Katsuyama City dedicated to dinosaurs. The complete skeletons of more than 40 dinosaurs are on display here. This museum is considered to be one of the three major dinosaur museums in the world.



© Kanazawa City / © JNTO

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa / Ishikawa Prefecture

The basic concept for this museum, which is located in the heart of Kanazawa City, is to create a park-like art museum that is open to the public. Designed by a group of Japanese architects that calls itself SANAA.



© Towada Art Center

Towada Art Center / Aomori Prefecture

This center has an art square and street furniture set up across its grounds. The basic concept is to turn the entire street on which it stands into an art museum.

MUSEUMS

There are many original museums dedicated to art and other themes all over Japan. They hold scheduled exhibitions all throughout the year, as well as permanent exhibitions. They are known for their distinctive buildings designed by famous architects as well as their exhibitions. People who wish to better know the history and culture of this country are encouraged to visit the national museums.



National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation / Tokyo

In addition to introducing the latest achievements in science and technology, this museum offers exhibitions that show how the earth and the universe are structured. It offers an enchanting experience for people of all ages.



Kyushu National Museum

National Museums

National museums are located in four places – Tokyo, Nara, Kyoto, and Kyushu (in Dazaifu City, Fukuoka Prefecture). A wide range of items and artifacts, including Japanese art works and historical materials, are displayed.

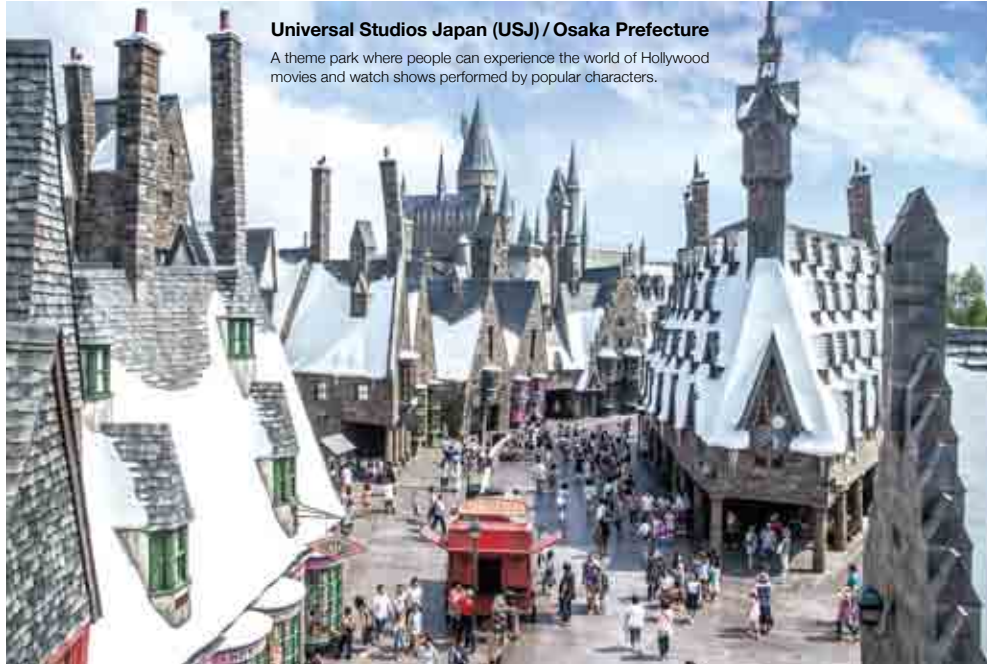


The Hakone Open-Air Museum / Kanagawa Prefecture

The first outdoor museum in Japan, opened in 1969. Visitors can enjoy the opportunity to appreciate sculpture within the grand natural splendor of Hakone.

Amusement Facilities

Theme parks make you feel as if you have strayed into another world. They are extremely popular spots that enable people of all ages to forget everyday life and have fun. There are distinctive amusement parks, zoos, and aquariums scattered all across Japan. Here we introduce recommended facilities for those who wish to enjoy this country in a way that is different from mere sightseeing.



Universal Studios Japan (USJ) / Osaka Prefecture

A theme park where people can experience the world of Hollywood movies and watch shows performed by popular characters.



Huis Ten Bosch / Nagasaki Prefecture

A theme park where seasonal flowers and illumination add beautifully colored accents to the streets of a reconstructed Dutch city. The park also offers a number of games and unique attractions for visitors to enjoy. There is also a hotel where robots serve guests here.



Fuji-Q Highland / Yamanashi Prefecture

An amusement park at the foot of Mt. Fuji located in Fuji Yoshida City. This park offers many original attractions that make people scream, including its famous roller coasters. Many people visit here eager to ride these incredible attractions.



Ocean Expo Park / Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium

Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium / Okinawa Prefecture

This aquarium is in Ocean Expo Park located in Motobutown, a town in the northwestern part of the main island of Okinawa. Visitors can see ocean life such as whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, and Alfred mantas swimming in the gigantic water tank here.



Edo Wonderland / Tochigi Prefecture

A historical theme park where the Edo Period is brought back to life. Visitors can wear costumes unique to Japan such as the attire worn by ninjas and young ladies from samurai families, as well as experience the life of a samurai.



Osaka Aquarium Kaiyukan / Osaka Prefecture

One of the largest aquariums in the world, possessing 14 huge water tanks. It has devised many ways to make people feel closer to the animals. Visitors can observe animals acting as they would in the wild such as seals eating their food.



Asahiyama Zoo / Hokkaido

A zoo in Asahikawa City that became famous for its exhibits known as kodo tenji that allow animals to behave as they would in the wild. In winter, penguins roam about amusing visitors and making up for a lack of exercise.

Your Guide to JAPAN Subculture

Manga (comics) and anime (animation) are forms of popular culture that Japan has proudly exported abroad. People from all over the world gather in Akihabara, an area of Tokyo with a large number of anime character retail shops that is considered to be a mecca for manga and anime aficionados. Many young people who love fashion and closely follow trends also gather in Harajuku, another place where original culture in Tokyo is born.



Harajuku Fashion / Tokyo

The Takeshita Street area of Harajuku has been home to many Western clothing stores for decades, and is the reason why many young people visit this area. This place is known as a center for fashion and a place where trends are born.

Ghibli Museum, Mitaka / Tokyo

Located in Mitaka City, Tokyo, this museum offers visitors a chance to experience the animation production process as they walk through exhibits set up in a labyrinth-like interior. Admission tickets are sold through a reservation-only system, so those who wish to visit must purchase them in advance at Lawson convenience stores or a local JTB Group agency.



Kyoto International Manga Museum / Kyoto Prefecture

The first comprehensive *manga* museum in Japan that collects precious materials related to *manga* in Japan and overseas. Valuable materials such as Japanese magazines from the Meiji period are preserved.



Akihabara / Tokyo

It was originally known for being a district crowded with electric appliance stores. Today, subculture enthusiasts from all over the world come to shop at its many specialist *manga* and anime stores. The area is also famous for its *meido kissa* (maid cafes).



Nakano Broadway / Tokyo

A shopping mall in the Nakano area of Tokyo with many specialist shops that sell products such as old *manga* books, anime, and toys. It is considered to be one of the "holy places" in Tokyo for subculture enthusiasts.



KAWAII MONSTER CAFÉ / Tokyo

A café in the Harajuku district of Tokyo produced by a popular art director. It serves original drinks and food in a unique atmosphere characterized by its unusual interior decor.

Your Guide to JAPAN Shopping

Foreign visitors who stay in Japan for less than six months can take advantage of a tax exemption system. Under this system, visitors from overseas are exempt from paying Japanese consumption tax, which is equal to 8% of the amount paid for purchases made in Japan (as of 2016) for personal consumption. Eligible goods are general commodities (such as home electronics, decorations, watches, clothing, shoes, bags, and sundries) and consumables (such as foods, drinks, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics).

Visit the following website for more information about the tax exemption system in Japan. URL <http://tax-freeshop.jnto.go.jp/eng/index.php>

Department Stores



Shopping in Japan

(Department Stores, Mass Merchandise Electrical Appliance Stores, and Drugstores)

Department stores stock all types of merchandise including clothing, undergarments, cosmetics, and food. There are also electric appliance stores that sell home electronics, and drugstores offering an abundant selection of products such as medicine and cosmetics. In addition, there are 100-yen stores selling goods at 100 yen a piece, making them a great place to pick up souvenirs.

Convenience Stores



Tickets Available at Convenience Stores

Convenience stores sell tickets for a variety of events such as sumo tournaments, concerts, and sports events. There are also convenience stores with automatic teller machines (ATMs) that allow people to use their credit cards to withdraw cash in Japanese yen.

Activities

Mountains cover nearly 70% of Japan, a country surrounded by the sea and dotted with many rivers, lakes, and swamps. Because it runs long and narrow north to south, the climate varies widely by region. People can enjoy marine sports all across the country in the summer months of July and August, and hit the slopes for skiing and snowboarding in areas that receive lots of snow from December to March. A variety of sports can be played throughout the country year round, taking advantage of its geographical features and natural environment.



Cycling

Shimanami Kaido Expressway / Hiroshima and Ehime prefectures

The first cycle road across an inland sea channel was established on this 70-kilometer expressway that connects Hiroshima Prefecture with Ehime Prefecture.

© Imabari District Sightseeing Association

Surfing



Miyazaki Prefecture

Beaches in various parts of Japan are known for their great surfing. One especially popular area for surfing is the eastern coast of Miyazaki, a prefecture on Kyushu Island blessed with a warm and mild climate.



Rafting



Snorkeling

Kerama Islands / Okinawa Prefecture

Located in the westernmost prefecture of Okinawa, the waters off these islands contain some of the most transparent ocean in the world. This area is perfect for snorkeling and scuba diving.

Nagatoro Town / Saitama Prefecture

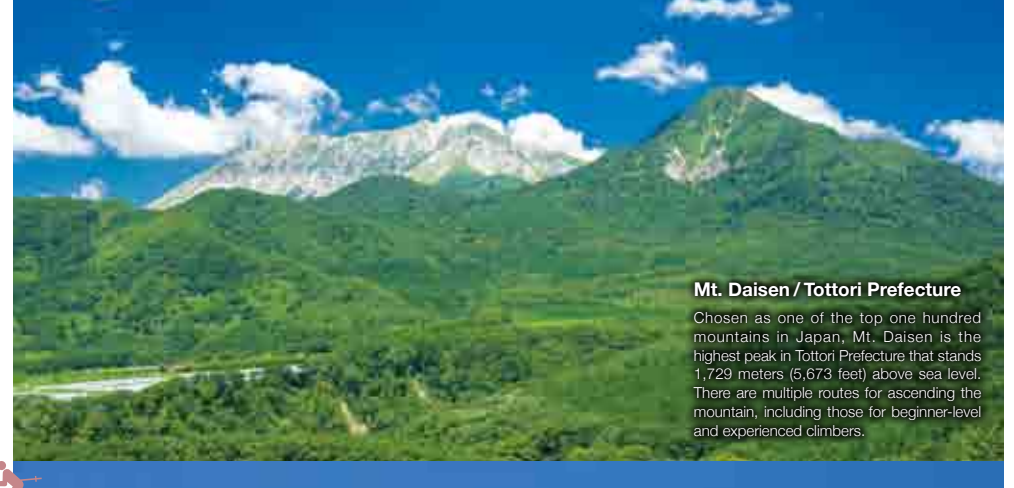
A great place to go river rafting from May, when the temperature begins to rise, to around the month of September. The mountain stream of the Arakawa River that flows through Nagatoro Town, creates a perfect natural setting which contributes to this area's popularity.



Mountains all over Japan offer a wide variety of hiking routes. There are trails for serious mountain hikes, as well as for relaxed walks.



Hiking



Mt. Daisen / Tottori Prefecture

Chosen as one of the top one hundred mountains in Japan, Mt. Daisen is the highest peak in Tottori Prefecture that stands 1,729 meters (5,673 feet) above sea level. There are multiple routes for ascending the mountain, including those for beginner-level and experienced climbers.



Skiing

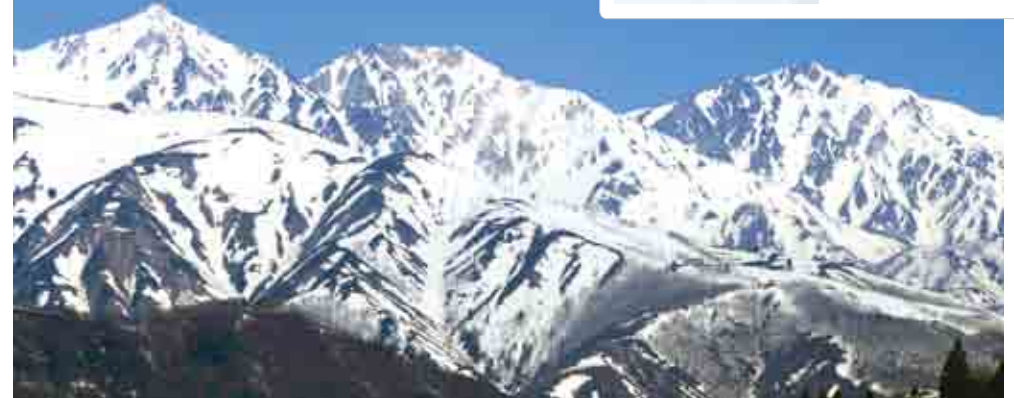
Hakuba Village / Nagano Prefecture

Blessed with heavy snowfall, Hakuba Village in Nagano Prefecture is one of the most spacious ski areas in Japan. It served as one of the venues for the Winter Olympics in 1998. A range of accommodations are available.



Zao Mountain Range / Yamagata Prefecture and Miyagi Prefecture

Located on the border between Yamagata and Miyagi. This mountain range also has a ski area where people can see *jūhyō* (silver trees completely covered with frost). There are sightseeing tours offering beautiful views.





TOKYO

Tokyo is the capital of Japan, and is also the city with the nation's largest concentration of people. It is a center for economic, political, and cultural activities. Tokyo is the source of the latest fashion and cutting-edge technologies, while at the same time is a place where you can enjoy the time-honored, traditional culture of Japan. A steady stream of new talked-about spots are emerging, while the city continues to turn out new trends. In 2020, the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are scheduled to be held here. People around the world look at Tokyo and see a place where all kinds of activities and preparations are in progress.



Shinjuku

You'll find an entertainment district to the east and a high-rise office block to the west of Shinjuku Station, the busiest in Japan. One popular spot is the Omoide Yokochō Side Street, an alley filled with small, old-fashioned bars.



Ginza

A street for shopping lined with department stores and luxury brand stores from all over the world. Many first-class restaurants offering a selection of global cuisine can be found here.



Shibuya

The home of Japan's youth culture. Look for shops selling *kawaii* (cute) items unique to Japan after experiencing the famous intersection with the diagonal crosswalk right outside Shibuya Station.



Asakusa / Ueno

This neighborhood is a place where people can enjoy the traditional atmosphere of Japan. One of the famous landmarks is the gigantic lantern hanging from the Kaminarimon Gate. Many tourists visit this area.

Imperial Palace

The Imperial Palace is located in the heart of Tokyo, and serves as the residence of the Imperial Family of Japan. The Imperial Palace is surrounded by moats and castle walls, and a portion of the palace grounds are open to the public as a park space. The East Gardens of the Imperial Palace are open to the general public five days a week. In addition, people are allowed to enter the Inui-dori Street area to view the beautiful cherry blossoms in spring and colored leaves in fall.

© Yasutumi Nishi / © JNTO



Tokyo Station



Mt. Takao



Illumination in Roppongi



Tokyo Skytree



Odaiba



KYOTO · OSAKA

One of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, Kyoto offers traditional Japanese food, in addition to examples of traditional architecture such as ancient shrines and temples, as well as many landscape gardens. Osaka is an economic center in western Japan, and just like Tokyo, most of the state-of-the-art buildings line the streets of the downtown area. However, Osaka is also a city where ordinary people have developed their own distinct food culture, with people supposedly quite prepared to splurge regularly on extravagant dining. You can enjoy all the dishes unique to the Kansai area in Osaka.



Kiyomizu-dera Temple

Built in the 8th century and destroyed by fire later, this temple was reconstructed in the 17th century to represent traditional structures in Kyoto. Its distinguishing feature is the huge stage, as tall as a modern four-story building. The stage offers brilliant views of Kyoto's wonderful streets.



Gion

A neighborhood to the east of the Kamogawa River that runs north and south along the Shijo Street. Gion is an entertainment district lined with traditional townhouses. There are many sightseeing spots close by, such as Yasaka Jinja Shrine, Kenninji Temple, and Maruyama Koen Park.



Sagano / Arashiyama



Ryoanji Temple



Amanohashidate



Kuchu-Teien (Hanging Gardens)



NIFREL in EXPOCITY



Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine

The magnificent sight of about 10,000 vermillion-colored torii (Shinto gateways) standing side by side on a mountain trail that leads from the main shrine to the top of Mt. Inariyama is extremely popular with tourists.



Osaka Castle

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who once ruled Japan, built this castle in 1585 as a symbol of a unified nation. The original castle was later destroyed by fire. In spring, you can enjoy viewing plum and cherry blossoms in Osaka Castle Park, which is situated around the reconstructed castle tower.



Dotonbori

An entertainment district in Osaka. You can enjoy the unorganized atmosphere unique to the city and its original forms of fast food, such as *takoyaki* (octopus balls). This neighborhood is close to the Kuromon Ichiba Market, which is popularly known as the kitchen of the people who live in Osaka.



HOKKAIDO

Located at the northern end of Japan, Hokkaido is an island blessed with cool and comfortable summer weather but heavy snowfall in winter. It is a place outdoor enthusiasts feel compelled to visit because of its beautiful natural landscapes. In winter, ski resorts attract ski lovers from all over the world with their splendid powder snow. There are many restaurants in cities such as Sapporo and Hakodate where you can enjoy food and sweets made with abundant, fresh ingredients that can only be found here.



Sapporo

The site for the Snow Festival every February, Sapporo is also a center for sightseeing in Hokkaido and home to many large hotels and restaurants. There are a number of *izakaya* (Japanese-style pubs), and restaurants such as *Genghis Khan* (Mongolian mutton barbecue), and *ramen* (Chinese noodle) in Susukino, Sapporo's entertainment district.



Hakodate

A city served by the Hokkaido Shinkansen Line that opened for business in March 2016, Hakodate is renowned for the beautiful night views that can be seen from the top of Mt. Hakodate. You can enjoy fresh seafood and other local delicacies together with picturesque sights peculiar to this port city.



The Concrete Arch Bridge of the Shihoro Line



Kushiro City Red-crowned Crane Nature Park



Floating Ice in the Sea of Okhotsk



Poroto Kotan



Ao no Ike (Blue Color Pond)



Furano

The view of rainbow-like, colorful flowers in full glory found in Furano City is a symbol of summer in Hokkaido. This view is one of the major reasons to visit the island in the summertime.

© Farm Tomita / © JTA / © JNTO



Niseko

Located about three hours away from Sapporo by bus, Niseko is known for its powder snow. The vast ski slopes delight skiers from all over the world.



Otaru

Located to the northwest of Sapporo, Otaru is a city of canals where old warehouses stand side by side. You can savor fresh seafood and sushi to your heart's content in a city renowned for its glasswork.



TOHOKU

A region consisting of six prefectures that occupy the northernmost part of Honshu Island (Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi, and Fukushima). The Shirakami Sanchi Mountains that span Aomori and Akita Prefectures have been registered as a UNESCO world natural heritage site while Hiraizumi, a town in Iwate Prefecture, is a UNESCO world cultural heritage site. There are many historic sites and places of scenic beauty in Tohoku, a region blessed with magnificent nature. There are also many hot spring areas as well. The colors, smells, and medicinal benefits of hot spring water vary by hot spring area because the minerals in the water are different. The distinctive local dishes unique to each community are an additional attraction Tohoku has to offer.



Hirosaki

The area around Hirosaki Castle is widely known for its beautiful cherry blossoms. More than 2,500 cherry trees come together to form a tunnel of flowers. Some of the most famous vistas are the views of moats covered in cherry petals.

Kakunodate

Many old samurai houses remain in Kakunodate, a castle town in Akita Prefecture. It is known as a little Kyoto because its streets and atmosphere resembles those of Kyoto. Many tourists visit during the cherry viewing season to see the beautiful blossoms that elegantly color the samurai houses.



Lake Towada



Sendai



Matsushima

A picturesque bay in Miyagi Prefecture that contains 260 islets of various sizes. Matsushima is considered one of the three most scenic spots in Japan.



Tsurugajo Castle

Built in 1384, Tsurugajo Castle is renowned for being impregnable, withstanding attacks for one month during the civil war of 1868. The red roof tiles and a pair of splendid silver *shachihoko* (fish decorations set on the top of the castle roof) are the distinguishing features of this castle, which was reconstructed in 1965. Facilities such as a tea house and a Japanese landscape garden are located around the castle.



Chusonji Temple

The symbol of Hiraizumi, Chusonji Temple is a registered UNESCO world cultural heritage site in Iwate Prefecture. The temple is famous for Konjikido (Golden Hall), a building entirely covered with a dazzling gold leaf where the three generations of the Fujiwara family, the clan which once ruled this area, are enshrined.



Ginzan Hot Springs



Wanko Soba (Japanese Noodles in Small Bowls) in Morioka City



Dewa Sanzan (Three Dewa Mountains)



KANTO

A region consisting of Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures of Chiba, Kanagawa, Saitama, Gunma, Ibaraki, and Tochigi. The central location of Tokyo provides for great access, making it easy for people to visit old temples and shrines, admire images of Buddha, stroll around a port town with an exotic atmosphere, and have fun on the beach while enjoying fresh seafood. There are also mountains and ravines for appreciating natural beauty and many hot springs. Kanto offers many different faces to enjoy.



Nikko Toshogu Shrine

This shrine is dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the feudal Edo government. Top craftsmen from all over Japan built it in 1617, bringing together the highest architectural skills of that time. The Yomeimon Gate and other structures in the shrine grounds have been registered on the world cultural heritage list.



Kawagoe

A district of streets lined with old houses from the Edo period have earned Kawagoe the nickname "little Edo." You can visit buildings styled like *kura* (traditional warehouses) and enjoy shopping on a street filled with sweet shops.

Yokohama

The second largest city in the Kanto region after Tokyo. There are many tourist spots here, including Chukagai (China Town), the Motomachi district with many boutiques, and *Aka Renga Sokogai* (red brick warehouses). Visited by large cruise ships, the port of Yokohama offers beautiful sights.



Oze

The largest marshland located on a plateau in Japan. Created in the Ice Age, it is widely known as a place for observing rare and precious plants. Oze is a perfect place for hiking in the spring and summer months.

Kamakura

The first samurai government in Japan was established in Kamakura in the 12th century. It has many scenic spots worth visiting, including the *Daibutsu* (great statue of Buddha), Hase-dera Temple, and Meigetsuin Temple, as well as other places of great historical interest. The Enoshima Electric Railway, popularly known by its nickname, Enoden, is also popular for traveling down the coast.



Hitachi Seaside Park



Kairakuen Park



Naritasan Shinshoji Temple



Mt. Fuji and Hakone



Tomioka Silk Mill



CHUBU

A vast area located in the center of Honshu Island between the Kanto and Kansai regions. Chubu is made up of a wide variety of smaller regions, such as Yamanashi and Shizuoka Prefectures with Mt. Fuji and Nagano and Gifu Prefectures with highlands and mountains. It is also home to Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui Prefectures, which all face the Sea of Japan, Aichi Prefecture, home to the large city of Nagoya, and Mie prefecture with its long coastline.



Matsumoto Castle

Located in Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture, Matsumoto Castle boasts one of the oldest castle towers in all Japan. The view of the tower reflected in the moat with the Hida Mountains in the background is a beautiful sight.



Mt. Fuji

Rising 3,776 meters (12,388 feet) above sea level, this is the highest mountain in Japan, and is regarded as the nation's symbol. This mountain and the surrounding area were collectively registered on the world cultural heritage list in 2013. You can access Mt. Fuji from Shizuoka and Yamanashi Prefectures. People are also allowed to climb to the summit of the mountain in the months of July and August.



© Yasufumi Nishi / © JNTO



Katsunuma Winery

Wine is produced in many parts of Japan. There are a particularly large number of wineries in Katsunuma City in Yamanashi Prefecture. You can taste free samples at many of these wineries.



Kawazu Zakura (Cherry Blossoms of Kawazu)

Kawazu Town in Shizuoka Prefecture is home to a variety of cherry blossoms that flower into bloom in early February, ahead of the blossoms in other parts of Honshu Island. The town celebrates the occasion with a cherry blossom festival each year.



Miho no Matsubara



Karuizawa



Echigo Yuzawa

Mt. Tateyama and Kurobe

The plateau 2,500 meters above sea level in this area can be accessed by cable car and then bus in all seasons other than winter. On the plateau you can see alpine plants, rare animals such as snow grouse, and a snow gorge in summer.



Terraced Rice Fields on Sado Island



Tulips in Tonami City



CHUBU



Shirakawa-go and Gokayama

Shirakawa-go and Gokayama have been registered on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. These villages feature houses built in a traditional style peculiar to this area called *gassho zukuri*.

Hida Takayama

A city in a mountainous part of Gifu Prefecture. Beautiful pieces of traditional architecture have been preserved in this city famous for woodwork. A morning market and local food, such as Hida beef, offer additional delights.



Nagoya

© Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology

The Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology in Nagoya is a place where people can see the textile machines developed by a group of companies led by global automaker Toyota, as well as learn about changes in industrial technologies, particularly those for automobiles.



Ise Jingu Shrine

Located in the mid-eastern part of Mie Prefecture, this is the most sacred shrine in Japan. It consists of 125 smaller shrines, including Naiku and Geku. Eight million people visit the shrine every year.



Ago-wan (Ago Bay)

Ago-wan is a beautiful bay containing islets of various sizes. The bay is widely known for its saw-tooth coastline. It is also famous as a nursery for cultured pearls.



Kenrokuen Garden

Located in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, Kenrokuen Garden is one of the three most notable landscape gardens in Japan. Ishikawa Prefecture is famous for pottery, such as *Kutani-yaki* (Kutani Porcelain), and traditional handicrafts, such as gold leaf and *Kaga Yuzen* (Kaga-style printed silk).



Eihei-ji Temple



Higashi Chaya-machi (Higashi Teahouse District)



Tojinbo Cliffs



Seto-yaki (Seto Porcelain)



KANSAI

The Kansai region consists of the central prefectures of Osaka and Kyoto and the surrounding prefectures of Shiga, Wakayama, Nara, and Hyogo. There are ancient temples and shrines housing many national treasures in Kyoto, Nara, and other parts of the Kansai region. There are cultural patterns and food culture peculiar to this region, once home to the capital of Japan and a center of economic and cultural activities. The region is also known for its distinctive fashion and other trends as well.



Hieizan Enryakuji Temple

Located on Mt. Hiei in Shiga Prefecture, Enryakuji Temple is the head temple of the Tendai sect of Buddhism that was introduced from China. The temple is registered on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. The temple can be reached by bus and cable car.

Mt. Koya

A sacred ground for the Shingon sect of esoteric Japanese Buddhism, which Kobo Daishi (also known as Kukai) started about 1,200 years ago. Mt. Koya has won the faith of many people as a place where Buddhist monks train themselves. There are many temples here that offer room and accommodation to visitors.

© JTA / © JNTO



Nara Park

Nara served as the capital of Japan for 84 years in the 8th century, and at that time was called Heijokyo. The area around Nara Park is loaded with places to see, including Todaiji Temple, Kofukuji Temple, and Kasuga Taisha Shrine. In this park you can enjoy meeting deer, which are considered to be servants of the gods of Kasuga Taisha Shrine.



© Toshihisa Yoshida / © JNTO

Takeda Castle

Takeda Castle is a rare example of a fully preserved mountaintop castle in Japan. In certain conditions, the castle remains seem to be floating in a sea of clouds.



© Himeji Convention & Visitors Bureau / © JNTO

Himeji Castle

Japan's first world cultural heritage site. Distinguished by its pure white walls, Himeji Castle has been designated as a national treasure. The other name for this castle is the White Heron Castle because it resembles a white heron spreading its wings.



Kobe



Hikone Castle



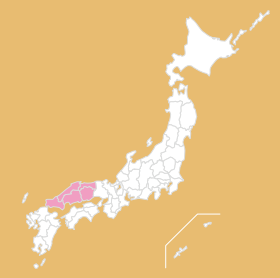
Kumano Kodo (Ancient Roads in Kumano)



Horyuji Temple



One Thousand Cherry Trees on Mt. Yoshino



CHUGOKU

Located in the westernmost part of Honshu Island, the Chugoku region consists of the five prefectures of Tottori, Shimane, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi. There are wide climate differences between the warm and mild Seto Inland Sea side and the Sea of Japan side with snowfalls and ski resorts on Mt. Daisen and in other districts. The region is home to many important shrines that attract tourists from all over Japan, including Itsukushima Jinja Shrine (also called Miyajima), a world cultural heritage site in Miyajima, Hiroshima prefecture. Another important shrine in the region is Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine in Shimane Prefecture.



Miyajima

Itsukushima Jinja Shrine is the most famous tourist spot in the Chugoku region. With its large torii standing in the shallow ocean waters off the shore, this shrine is considered to be the Japanese equivalent of Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey. You can also walk under the torii at low tide.

Tottori Sand Dunes

The sand dunes in Tottori Prefecture are the largest in Japan, and offer beautiful sights of wind-wrought patterns in the sand. This area is also home to Mt. Daisen, the highest peak in the Chugoku region which rises 1,729 meters (5,672 feet) above sea level. Many skiers visit this mountain in winter.



Atomic Bomb Dome

An atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima City near the end of World War II. This building exhibiting the damage wrought by the A-bomb was registered on the UNESCO cultural heritage list as a symbol of peace.



Matsue Castle

Located in Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture, Matsue Castle is a designated national treasure. It is also known as the Plover Castle because it resembles a plover spreading its wings. There are pleasure boats that travel the castle moats, while the area around the castle is a noted place for viewing cherry blossoms.



Hagi and Tsuruoka

Hagi was once a castle town, while Tsuruoka is a city on the water that has many waterways and canals. *Nishikigoi* (fancy carps) of various colors swim in waterways set in front of samurai houses in Tsuruoka.



Korakuen Garden



Kurashiki



Kintaikyo Bridge



Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine



Adachi Museum of Art



SHIKOKU

Located in southwestern Japan, this island consists of the four prefectures of Kagawa, Tokushima, Ehime, and Kochi. This region is blessed with abundant nature, along with a warm and mild climate. This wonderful environment is the secret behind the delicious food from the land and sea that delights the palates of visitors. Every year Shikoku is also host to large festivals that mainly consist of dancing in the streets, such as *Awa Odori* in Tokushima City and *Yosakoi Matsuri* in Kochi City.



Matsuyama Castle

The main keep of Matsuyama Castle is located on top of the 132-meter (433-feet) Mt. Katsuyama in Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture. The keep can be reached by an aerial tramway. Twenty-one existing structures of the castle, including the castle tower, are designated as nationally important cultural assets.



Iyakei Ravine

A steep V-shaped valley in Tokushima Prefecture that extends for 10 kilometers (6.2 miles). The valley is studded with houses that look as if they are clinging to the base of mountains. There are suspension bridges made from *kazura* (a type of vine) in the area built to straddle the valley and connect villages.

Islands in the Seto Inland Sea

The Seto Inland Sea is surrounded by the major Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. There are a large number of smaller islands in this inland sea that vary in size, such as Shodoshima Island, Naoshima Island, and Ohmishima Island, and each has its own distinct attractions and atmosphere. These islands can be reached from Kansai, Chugoku, and Shikoku by ship or by bus.



A Pilgrimage around Shikoku Island (Ohenro)

Some 1200 years ago, Kobo Daishi established 88 holy places (temples) scattered around Shikoku Island to free people from their suffering. Going on a pilgrimage to these temples is said to remove earthly desires and answer prayers, which is why many pilgrims visit these sacred locations.



Eddying Tides



Shimanto River

The longest river in Shikoku, running through the western section of Kochi Prefecture. Shimanto River has been called the last clear stream in Japan because no large dams or other similar facilities have been built on its main course, enabling the river to preserve its pristine water quality.



Dogo Hot Springs



Ritsurin Koen Park

© JNTO



Ozu City



Konpirasan (Kotohiragu Shrine)



KYUSHU・ OKINAWA

Kyushu is the third largest island in Japan, and is located to the southwest of Honshu Island. It consists of the seven prefectures of Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Oita, Miyazaki, Kumamoto, and Kagoshima. In addition to a warm and mild climate, Kyushu is characterized by its hilly terrain. There are many famous hot spring areas on the island, which is blessed with bountiful sea and mountains.

The westernmost Japanese prefecture of Okinawa once prospered as the Ryukyu Kingdom. An original culture evolved in this area under the historical influences of Southeast Asia, China, and later the United States. Located in a subtropical zone, Okinawa is known as one of the finest resort places in the world. Its clear, emerald green sea boasts an outstanding degree of transparency.



Fukuoka City (Hakata)

© Fukuoka City

The largest city in Kyushu, and renowned as a gateway to Asia. Fukuoka offers a variety of local delicacies, such as fresh seafood and *tonkotsu* ramen (Chinese noodles in a pork bone soup), all year round.



Moji Port



Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine



Shimabara Castle



Stone Images of Buddha in Usuki City



Yamanami Highway



Tsujunkyo Bridge



Yufuin

A popular hot spring area that sprawls at the foot of beautiful Mt. Yufu-dake, which local people call Bungo Fuji (Mt. Fuji of the Bungo area). Yufuin boasts the second largest supply of hot spring water in Japan. From fall to winter, Yufuin offers fantastic views of mountains enshrouded in morning mist.



Mt. Aso

Mt. Aso offers distinctive views of the vast grassy plain and volcanic group in the surrounding area, as well as one of the largest calderas in the world. The spring water known for its great taste and the hot springs are other popular attractions this area offers.



Nagasaki City

Nagasaki has a man-made little island called Dejima where Japan traded with Portugal and the Netherlands during the period of national seclusion. Here you can find the oldest wooden Western-style building in Japan, once owned by Thomas Glover, the man who laid a foundation for the Japanese shipbuilding industry.

© JNTO



KYUSHU· OKINAWA



© JNTO



Yakushima Island

Many climbers visit this island to see Japanese cedar trees called *Jomon sugi* that are said to be more than 4,000 years old. The moss-covered primeval forests of this island have been used as the setting for animated films.

Takachiho Ravine

A gorge formed by eroded lava from Mt. Aso. Cliffs 80 meters (260 feet) to 100 meters (328 feet) high continue for 7 kilometers (4.4 miles) in this valley. Many waterfalls flow into this ravine, where people can enjoy the particularly beautiful sights of fresh leaves in spring and autumnal foliage in the fall.



Ibusuki

A hot spring area located on Satsuma Peninsula in Kagoshima Prefecture. Ibusuki is popular for an original bathing method called *sunamushi* in which the whole body is buried in sand warmed by terrestrial heat.



Kirishima



Saga International Balloon Fiesta



Imari



Manzamo



Aoshima Island

Shurijo Castle

It exhibits an original architectural style featuring masonry from the 15th century to the 19th century, the period in which Okinawa developed a culture of its own as the Ryukyu Kingdom. This castle was registered on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list.

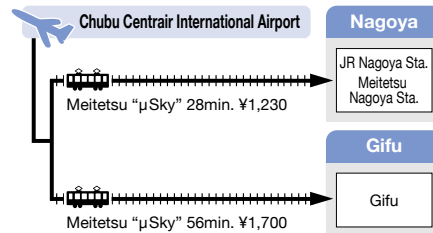
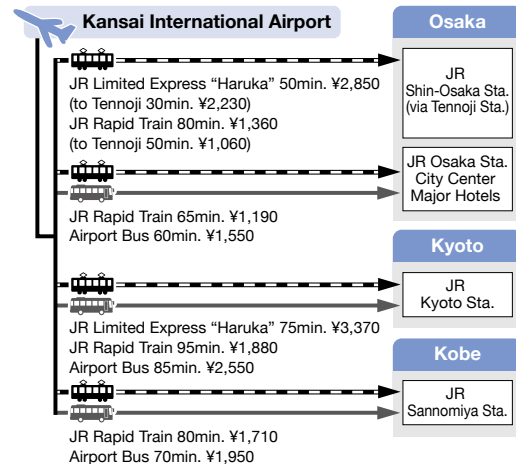
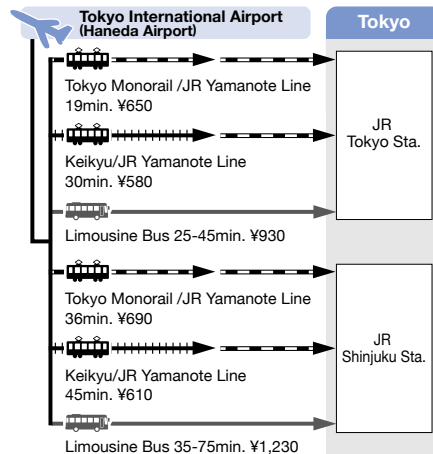
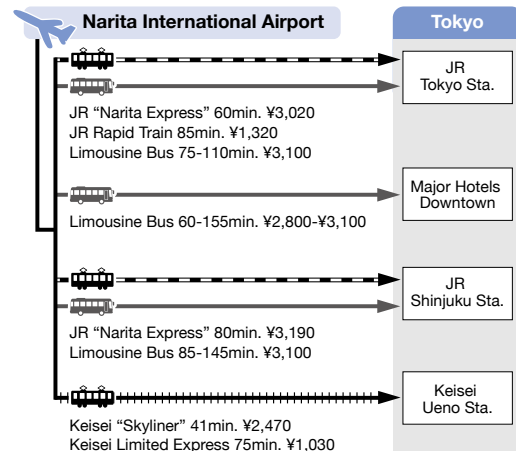


Ishigaki-jima Island and Iriomote-jima Island

Beautiful beaches spread along the coastlines of Ishigaki-jima Island and Iriomote-jima Island in Okinawa Prefecture, which is located in a subtropical zone. Visitors can enjoy different kinds of tours, such as boat and kayak trips through a mangrove forest on Iriomote-jima Island.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Access from Airports



Train Tickets

You can buy train tickets from ticket machines at train stations. Both small change and paper money can be used to purchase train tickets. The ticket machines allow you to switch the on-screen displays for guidance in English. (The accepted denominations of bills vary by ticket machine.)

Ticket Offices at JR Stations (Midori-no-madoguchi)



© EAST JAPAN RAILWAY COMPANY

You can buy tickets for reserved train seats at offices called *Midori-no-madoguchi* (green window) that can be found at some JR stations. These tickets can also be purchased from ticket machines at train stations. The ticket offices accept credit cards. Look for the following sign to locate a JR Ticket Office (*Midori-no-madoguchi*).

JAPAN RAIL PASS



© JTB Communications Inc.

JAPAN RAIL PASS (generally known as the JR Pass) enables foreigners who come to Japan on a short visit for sightseeing purposes to use JR railway lines and other transportation systems repeatedly for a fixed period. Using this pass, they can save money on long-distance travel inside Japan. There are two types of JAPAN RAIL PASS – one for first-class coaches and the other for ordinary coaches. The available terms of validity for both types of passes are 7 days, 14 days, and 21 days. (To use JAPAN RAIL PASS, you must buy an exchange order known as an MCO at a travel agency in your country before entering Japan.) There are other types of economical tickets available for visiting several different parts of Japan, such as Hokkaido and the Hokuriku region.

<http://www.japanrailpass.net/en/index.html>

Long-Distance Buses



Long-distance buses are a convenient option if you want to travel economically. It takes more time to reach your destination than an airplane or *Shinkansen* (bullet train), but allows you to travel inexpensively. You can reach your

destination in the morning if you travel by a midnight bus, enabling you to make the most of your precious time in Japan. Limousine buses are also recommended for traveling from airports. They connect airports with places such as major train stations close-by and major hotels. You can buy tickets for these buses at airport arrival lounges or from ticket machines.

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/automobiles/bus.html>

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/international-airport/narita-airport-tokyo.html>

Car Rental



Car rental services are available at almost all airports and in virtually all metropolitan areas. However, an international driving license is necessary to rent a car and drive in Japan.

IC CARD



© EAST JAPAN RAILWAY COMPANY



© PASMO Co., Ltd.

(Example) IC cards available for use in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area

You can buy rechargeable IC cards at train stations or from ticket machines at the stations, and use them when you travel on the public transportation systems. These cards are extremely convenient because payment is automatically made when you place them on top of the sensor at the ticket gate. You can buy IC cards at almost all stations operated by railway companies. In most instances you can use an IC card from one railway company when traveling on the transportation systems of another company. A 500 yen deposit must be paid when an IC card is issued. In some cases, these cards can be used for payment at shops near train stations, beverage vending machines, and convenience stores.

http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/ic_card.html

Airline Tickets



Major airline companies now offer domestic air ticket discount plans to foreigners visiting Japan. These plans require advance reservation in some cases. We advise you to check the details of these

plans on the websites of airline companies.

To buy domestic airline tickets, visit one of the following sites:

JAL oneworld Yokoso/Visit Japan Fare
<https://www.jal.co.jp/yokosojapan/>

ANA Experience Fare
<https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/ej/>

International Driving License

To drive a car in Japan, you must obtain an international driving license before you leave your country, and carry this license with you while driving. This type of license is normally issued by the respective automobile association of each country. However, the license is not available in certain countries, such as Germany and Switzerland, because they have no agreement with Japan regarding international driving licenses. We advise you to check the availability of international driving licenses with the automobile association in your country in advance.

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/automobiles/car-rental.html>

BASIC INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

Foreigners wishing to come to Japan must have a valid passport. Foreigners from many countries require no visa for a temporary stay unless they have plans to work in Japan. However, we advise that you always check the official website of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs or with the Japanese embassy or consulate in your country to determine whether a visa is required before you visit Japan.

http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/



Temperatures in Celsius (F)

	SPRING (April)	SUMMER (July)	AUTUMN (October)	WINTER (January)
Sapporo	7.1 (44.8)	20.5 (68.9)	11.8 (53.2)	-3.6 (25.5)
Tokyo	14.6 (58.3)	25.8 (78.4)	18.5 (65.3)	6.1 (42.9)
Osaka	15.1 (59.2)	27.4 (81.5)	19.0 (66.2)	6.0 (42.8)
Naha	21.4 (70.5)	28.9 (84.0)	25.2 (77.4)	17.0 (62.6)

Average temperatures for the period of 1981 to 2010

Cash Dispenser (ATM)

There are not many places around town where you can exchange your money. However, post offices throughout Japan are equipped with Cash Dispensers (ATMs). You can withdraw cash in Japanese yen from your bank account via an ATM using a credit card issued in your country. All stores affiliated with the 7-Eleven chain of convenience stores and the AEON chain of supermarkets have ATMs as well. The International ATM Service sign and the logos of usable credit cards are displayed on the machines. The ATMs at 7-Eleven stores allow you to withdraw cash 24 hours a day, making them extremely convenient.

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/basic-info/basic-info/atms.html>



Money



The currency of Japan is yen. The symbols for yen are ¥ and 円. The currency is also stated as yen in other foreign languages. It is important to note that consumption tax in Japan is 8% (as of 2016). The prices displayed in Japan include tax in some cases, and are presented without tax in other instances. You must ask a salesperson whether the price includes tax if you want to know exactly how much you will spend before making a purchase.

Tipping

Generally speaking, there is no need to tip in Japan because a service charge of 10% to 15% is included in bills at hotels and first-class restaurants. This excludes cases where special services are provided.

Voltage

The electric current for household use is standardized at 100 volts across Japan. However, first-class hotels in Tokyo and other big cities are equipped with two types of sockets compatible with 110 volts and 220 volts, respectively. You can also borrow a converter plug at the front desk of many hotels.

Internet Services

Wireless LANs are becoming more and more accessible throughout Japan. You can use wireless LAN services at airports, large train stations, and hotels. Wireless LANs are installed in restaurants and commercial facilities as well. You can search for places where Wi-Fi spots are available at the following website.

<http://japanfreewifi.jnto.go.jp/>



Medical Services

We advise you to consult with the AMDA International Medical Information Center if you get hurt or sick while traveling in Japan. The AMDA International Medical Information Center offers information on medical services to foreigners in Japan and free telephone interpretation services when you undergo a medical examination. In addition, the following website offers information on nearby hospitals capable of providing services in foreign languages and medical insurance programs.

http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/emergency/mi_guide.html

AMDA International Medical Information Center

TEL Tokyo 050-3598-7574 (office)
03-5285-8088 (consultation)
Osaka 06-4395-0555
Machida 042-799-3759

URL http://amda-imic.com/lng_eng/

USEFUL INFORMATION

Japanese expressions you can use

Greetings		
Nice to meet you.	Hajime-mashite.	はじめまして
How are you?	O-genki-desu-ka?	元気ですか？
Good morning.	Ohayo gozai-masu.	おはようございます
Hello.	Kon-nichi-wa.	こんにちは
Good evening.	Komban-wa.	こんばんは
Good night.	Oyasumi-nasai.	おやすみなさい
Goodbye.	Sayo-nara.	さようなら
Phrases		
Thank you.	Arigato.	ありがとう
You're welcome.	Do-itashi-mashite.	どういたしまして
Excuse me.	Sumi-masen.	すみません
I'm sorry.	Gomen-nasai.	ごめんなさい
Here you are.	Do-zo. (when offering something)	どうぞ
Please.	Kudasai. (when requesting something)	ください
Do you understand?	Wakari-masu-ka?	わかりますか？
Yes, I understand.	Hai, wakari-masu.	はい、わかります
No, I don't understand.	Ii-e, wakari-masen.	いいえ、わかりません
Wait a minute.	Chotto matte kudasai.	ちょっと待ってください
What is this?	Kore-wa nan-desu-ka?	これは何ですか？
How much?	Ikura-desu-ka?	いくらですか？
I'll take this.	Kore-o kudasai.	これをください
That's expensive.	Takai.	高い
That's cheap.	Yasui.	安い
Where is the restroom?	Toire-wa doko-desu-ka?	トイレはどこですか？
Help me!	Tasukete!	助けて
Look out!	Abu-nai!	危ない

Services for Visitors

The following systems and services are provided to help foreign visitors unable to speak Japanese enjoy their travels in Japan with peace of mind and receive sincere hospitality from the staff at the locations they visit.



Goodwill Guide Program

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) supports the Goodwill Guide Program. Through this program, 50,000 bilingual volunteers support visitors from other countries. They wear a badge depicting the earth and a white pigeon. There are more than 80 Systematized Goodwill Guide (SGG) groups all over Japan. Consisting mainly of students, housewives, and retirees, they guide foreign visitors around and offer other services in foreign languages on a voluntary basis. There is no charge for using the program because SGG group members offer their services as volunteers.

http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/travel/guide/list_volunteerGuides.php

Professional Guide-Interpreter Services

You can use professional guide-interpreter services through the Japan Guide Association or the Japan Federation of Certified Guides. A total of 1,500 licensed guide-interpreters are registered with these organizations.

Japan Guide Association
(TEL +81-3-3863-2895)

Japan Federation of Certified Guides
(TEL +81-3-3380-6611)

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/travel/guide/guideservice.html>

Visit Japan's Information Network

We recommend that you make the most of Visit Japan's nationwide information network while traveling in Japan. Visit Japan information centers are located in places such as major tourist spots, cities, and train stations. You can check the details of each information center at the following website.



<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/travel/guide/tic.html>

General Business Hours

	weekdays	Sat.	Sun. & national holidays
Banks	9am-3pm	closed	closed
*Post Offices	9am-5pm	closed	closed
*Dept.Store	10am-8pm	10am-8pm	10am-8pm
Shops	10am-8pm	10am-8pm	10am-8pm
*Museums	10am-5pm	10am-5pm	10am-5pm
Offices	9am-5pm	closed	closed

*Some main post offices are open daily.

*Most department stores are closed 2 or 3 weekdays a month.

*Most museums are closed on Mondays.

JNTO Website

The official JNTO website can be a big help when looking for detailed information to help you prepare your itinerary before leaving for Japan. The JNTO offers a wide range of information online about transportation, accommodation facilities, shopping, and events to tourists in English and other languages. It updates the website frequently to ensure people have access to the latest information.

URL: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/tag/handbook/index.html>

