

// YOUR GUIDE  
TO

**JAPAN //**

**REDISCOVER TOURS**



PRIVATE TOURS TO JAPAN THAT FIT YOUR TRAVEL STYLE







# WHO ARE WE?

Rediscover Tours is a travel company focused on cultural and authentic experiences for travelers to Japan. Jeff and Yoshimi Aasgaard started their first travel business in Japan in October 2000 with Japanese Guest Houses, a ryokan inn reservation service for travelers wishing to experience a ryokan (Japanese inn). They found that travelers want to experience Japan but did not always have the time or expertise to design, organize and make all the arrangements for their trip so Rediscover Tours was formed to take care of these details. Rediscover Tours now has offices in the US and Japan and works with travelers from all over the world. The company's vision is to show the world the Japan that we love.

Rediscover Tours offers visitors a rare chance to truly get to know the Japanese people and to intimately experience the Japanese culture.



## THE PERFECT JAPANESE EXPERIENCE

### JAPAN EXPERTS //

We know the hidden treasures of Japan. Our Japan travel experts are here to answer all your questions and to make your tour just as you want it.



### TRIPS MADE FOR YOU //

This is your trip and will be designed just for you. We will keep perfecting your itinerary until you're completely happy and ready to book.

## // YOUR TRIP



### FINEST GUIDES //

Our hand-picked local guides will add a whole new depth to your Japanese holiday. Your guide will listen to you, give you suggestions and show you sights you want.

### SLOW-PACED AND IN-DEPTH //

Our tours offer the chance and time to get to know the Japanese people and to experience the Japanese culture in-depth.



## **MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

My first experience in Japan was in the late 1980s when my dad's company assigned him to a project in Hiroshima. I fell in love with the country, the people, the food, and the culture. In college, I studied international business which included Japanese language and history classes. After graduation, I moved to Osaka to increase my first-hand knowledge of Japan and to find ways to show the world this amazing country.

A few years after moving to Japan I saw a group of tourists exiting a bus. They all looked exhausted and disengaged which surprised me as they were in one of the most beautiful cities in Japan, Kyoto. I knew there was a better way to travel in Japan so my wife and I started Japanese Guest Houses which makes reservations at ryokan inns all over Japan. This service opens the world of traditional ryokan inns and kaiseki dinners to international travelers. We are helping tourists rediscover what travel should be.

In 2006 we decided to expand our offering and created Rediscover Tours which is a full-service tour company that designs, organizes, and arranges your private tour to Japan. Our Japan travel experts listen and work with you to create your ideal trip and then our arrangement crew takes care of all the details. We make traveling in Japan easy so you can simply enjoy it.

*Jeff Aasgaard*

## **HOW IT WORKS**

### **Discover**

Your Japan travel expert will take the time to learn about you, the kind of trips you enjoy and will make suggestions based on these discussions. Your trip is important and they will take the time to understand you so we can create your ideal trip just for you.

### **Create**

Once your trip is set, our expert arrangement team in Japan will take care of all the details so your trip is perfect.

### **Prepare**

About 2 weeks before you depart for Japan we will prepare and send you your tour organizer. This detailed document will contain everything you need for your trip.

### **Experience**

You will arrive in Japan feeling safe and comfortable knowing that all the details have been taken care of and that our Japan office is just a phone call away.

## **THIS BROCHURE**

Reading this brochure, you'll find suggested itineraries and some of our favorite sights to visit, but these are for your inspiration only as your trip will be created for you and there are many more options available.

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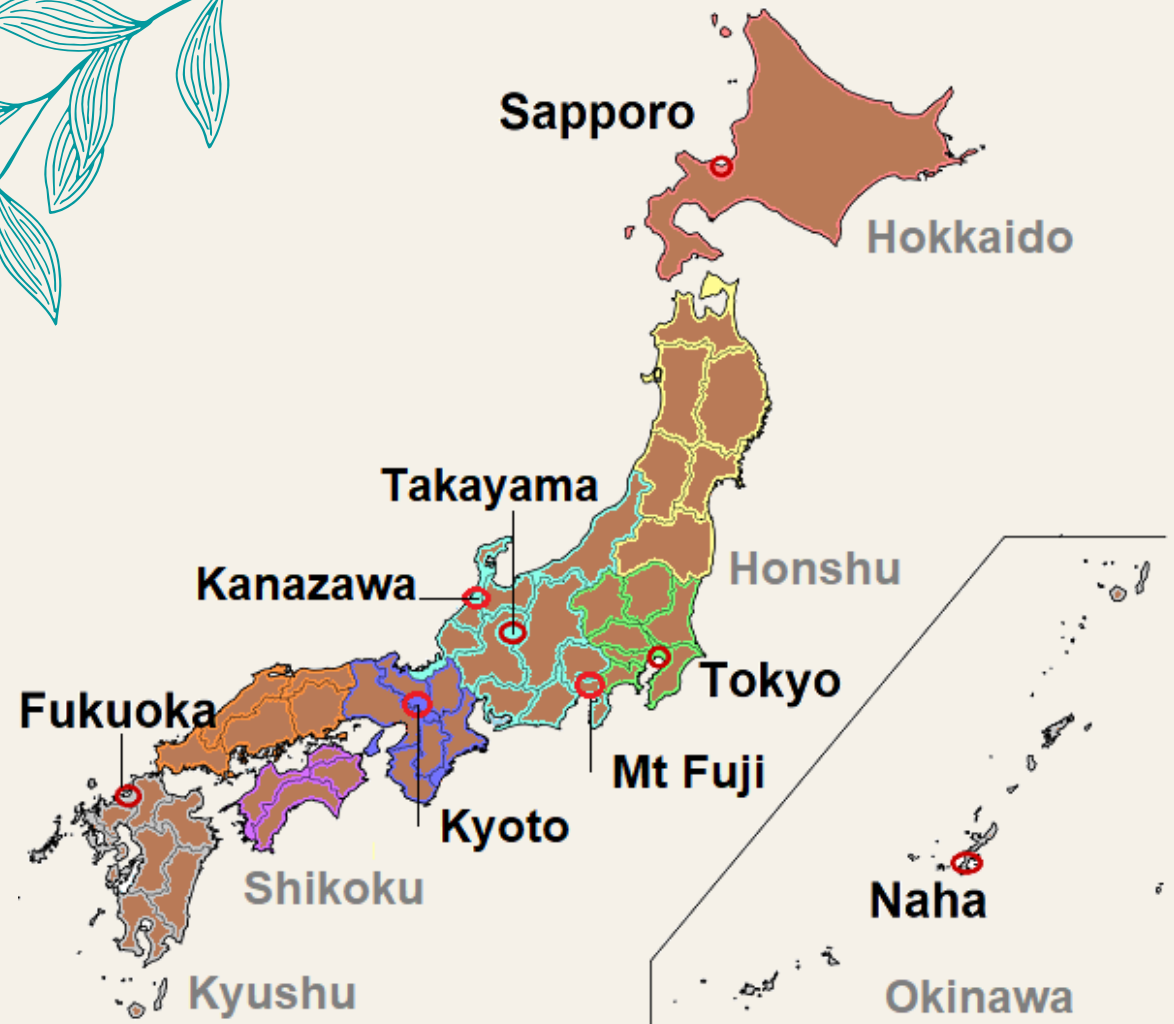
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# REGIONS OF JAPAN

To make things easy for you we have divided Japan into three regions:

- Central Japan:
  - Kanto, Kansai, Chubu, & Chugoku
- Southern Japan:
  - Shikoku, Kyushu, & Okinawa
- Northern Japan:
  - Tohoku, & Hokkaido







Magomechaya Inn on the Nakasendo Trail in Magome



# Trains in Japan

Running at speeds of up to 320 km/h (200 mph), the Shinkansen is known for punctuality (most trains depart on time to the second), comfort (silent cars), safety (no fatal accidents in its history), and efficiency.

Japan's high-speed trains (bullet trains) are called Shinkansen and are operated by Japan Railways (JR).

Rediscover Tours will provide all information to help you on your travels. Prior to your departure, we will send you Your Personal Tour Organizer. Your tour organizer will include all of the details you will need to take your tour. It will have directions to your hotels and ryokan inns, train or other transportation details from destination to destination, meeting locations to tours, suggested sightseeing, and all the other details that you require. It will also include the phone number of our Japan office to support you while you are in Japan

## Bullet Train Lines

**TOKAIDO SHINKANSEN**

**SANYO SHINKANSEN**

**TOHOKU SHINKANSEN**

**HOKKAIDO SHINKANSEN**

**JOETSU SHINKANSEN**

**HOKURIKU SHINKANSEN**

**KYUSHU SHINKANSEN**





# CENTRAL JAPAN

Most Japanese landmarks are located in central Honshu. Highlighting contrasts between modern and ancient Japan. With convenient train lines, you will be able to smoothly travel from one place to the other. Every day will bring you a new experience. From the ultra-modern Tokyo to the traditional Kyoto passing long Mt Fuji or hiking in the Japanese Alps or greeting a Japanese monkey bathing in a hot spring bath or even contemplating the magnificent torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima.

## Tokyo

Whatever you are into, Tokyo's many sights, events, shops, and museums will make a visit to this city interesting for each traveler.

## Kyoto

Formerly the imperial capital of Japan, it is in this city that the traditional Japanese 'high arts' flourished.

## Osaka

Osaka's regional cuisine is thought to be the best in Japan.

## Miyajima

The red torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine is set in front of Itsukushima Shrine and appears to be floating in the water.

## Koyasan - Mt Koya

Koyasan is a holy temple complex located on a mountain top, surrounded by cedar trees and mountain peaks. It is the center of Shingon Buddhism.

## Kanazawa

Most famous for Kenrokuen Garden which was the private garden of the daimyo who lived in the castle during the Edo Period (1603 – 1868).

## Tsumago / Magome

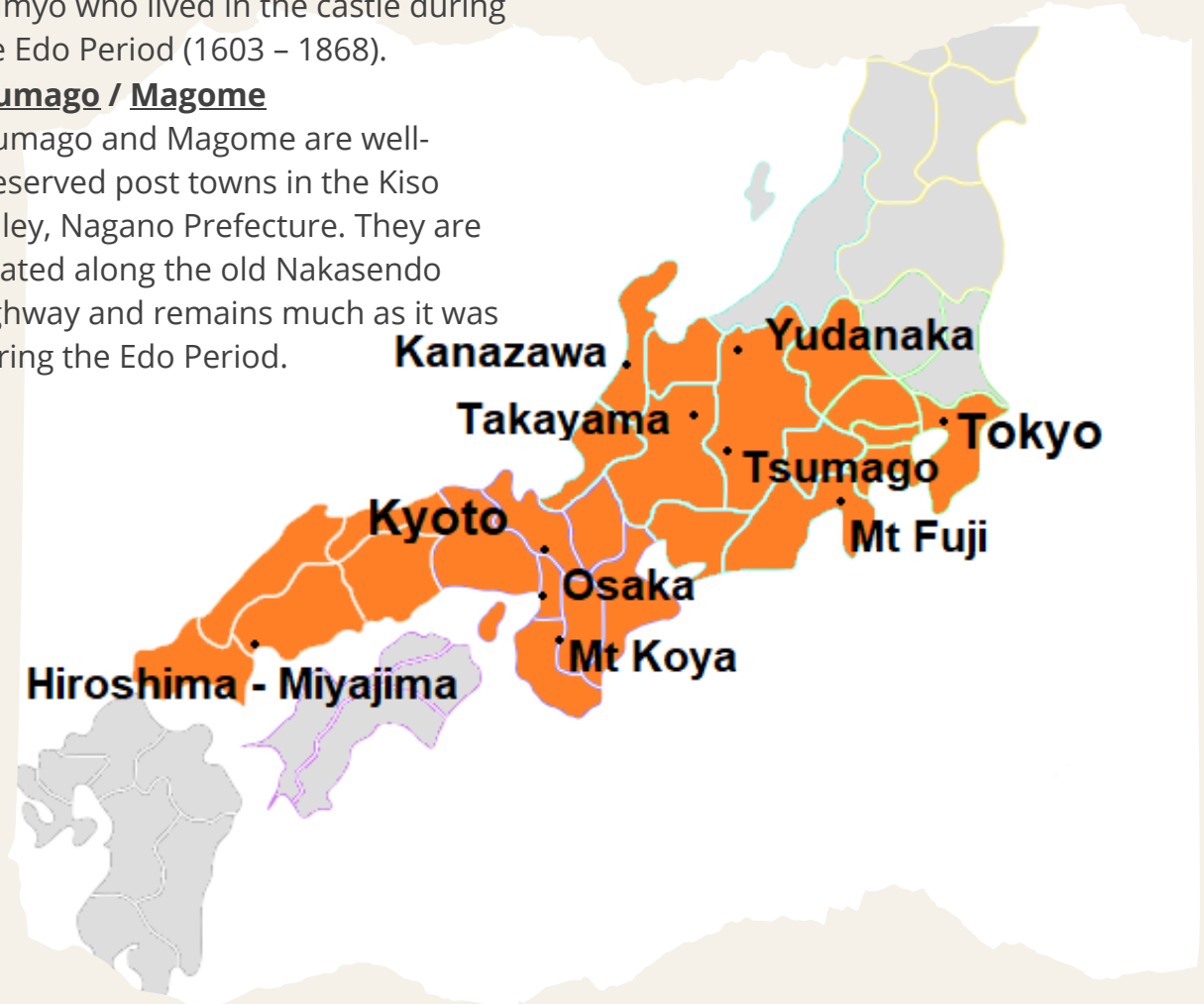
Tsumago and Magome are well-preserved post towns in the Kiso Valley, Nagano Prefecture. They are located along the old Nakasendo highway and remains much as it was during the Edo Period.

## Yudanaka Onsen

The town is known for its 'snow monkeys', who come to the town to enjoy the warm hot spring water in winter.

## Shirakawa-go

This quiet village, surrounded by mountains and rice-fields is best known for its gassho-zukuri houses.











## Tokyo

One of the most densely populated places in the world, Tokyo counts about 11 million inhabitants. Although most of the city was destroyed during the great earthquake in 1923 and WWII, it managed to restore itself rapidly and is now the largest city in Japan, speaking to the imagination of people all over the world. Tokyo is divided into a number of large scale downtown areas, each offering a number of interesting things to see and do. Shinjuku is widely known for its neon lights and high-rise buildings and Harajuku as a cultural haven for Tokyo's youth. There is Ginza where shops of all the famous international brands stand side by side and Akihabara, where electronic gadget aficionados can find all the latest products on the market. For a glimpse of Tokyo's past, head down to Asakusa, the site for many traditional events and the famous Sensoji Temple.

## Tsukiji Outer Market

Tsukiji Outer Market is located near the former Tsukiji Wholesale Market and consists of a few blocks of wholesale and retail shops, as well as restaurants crowded along narrow lanes. Here you can find some of Japan's best street food and freshest seafood. This is a great market to find that Japanese knife that you've always wanted.



## Asakusa

Asakusa is one of Tokyo's oldest districts, where the atmosphere of old Tokyo survives. Asakusa's main attraction is Sensoji, a very popular Buddhist temple, built in the 7th century. You will approach the temple via the Nakamise shopping street. Some of the shops in this area are hundreds of years old.





## **Tokyo Sky Tree**

The Tokyo Skytree is a television broadcasting tower and landmark of Tokyo. It is the centerpiece of the Tokyo Skytree Town in Sumida Ward, not far away from Asakusa. With a height of 634 meters (2080 feet), it is the tallest structure in Japan and offers amazing views of the vastness of Tokyo. There is a large shopping complex with an aquarium at its base.



## **Shibuya**

Shibuya is the fashion and culture center for younger generations. It is the birthplace of many Japan's fashion and entertainment trends. Over a dozen major department store branches can be found around the area catering to all types of shoppers.



## **Tokyo Disneyland & DisneySea**

Tokyo DisneySea is a fantasy theme park in Tokyo Disney Resort that is unique to Japan. Tokyo Disneyland was opened in 1983 as the first Disney theme park outside of the United States. Modeled after Disneyland in California and the Magic Kingdom in Florida, Tokyo Disneyland is made up of seven themed lands and features seasonal decorations and parades.



## **Shinjuku**

Welcome to the world's busiest railway station. Handling more than two million passengers every day. Shinjuku is best known for its flashing neon, overwhelming crowds, and all the excitement you can imagine in Tokyo.

## **Ginza**

The Ginza is Tokyo's most famous upmarket shopping, dining and entertainment district with numerous department stores, boutiques, art galleries, restaurants, night clubs, cafes. It is one of the most expensive real estate in Japan.



## Geisha Show at Asada

Looking for an exclusive experience to highlight your trip?  
How about a private geisha show during dinner at Akasaka Asada?

Asada serves Kaga-style Japanese cuisine from the Kanazawa region that is based on nearly 150 years of tradition. The owners of Asada are so devoted to their goal of providing nothing but the finest cuisine available that only the best seasonal ingredients are used in the preparation of each dish, with the chef insisting on using only water, seafood, vegetables, and buckwheat flour that has come from Kanazawa. Incomparable hospitality is provided and the cuisine is out of this world.



## Modern Art

Are you a Modern Art Enthusiast?  
We have selected the best in Tokyo for you.

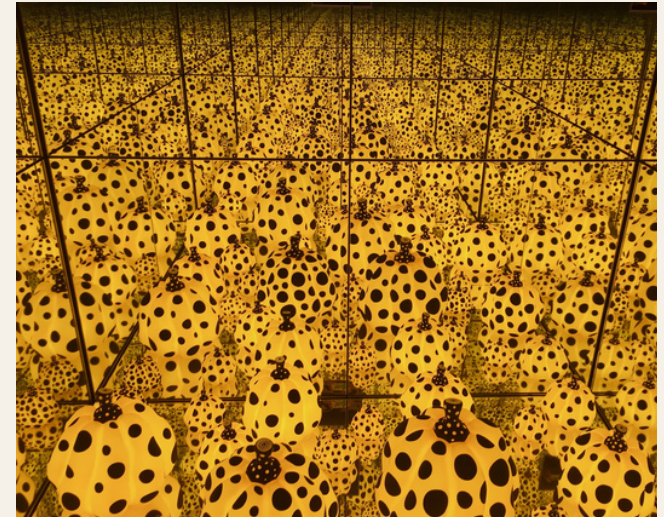
### **teamLab Borderless Museum**

This is one of the most unique museums in the world and words cannot describe it. It is truly one of those things that you have to experience first hand to appreciate.



### **Yayoi Kusama Museum**

This is a contemporary art museum in Tokyo, dedicated to the work of Yayoi Kusama. The Museum is located in the Shinjuku Ward. The five-floor building was designed by the Japanese architecture firm Kume Sekkei



### **The Mori Art Museum**

This contemporary art museum was founded by the real estate developer Minoru Mori in the Roppongi Hills Mori Tower in the Roppongi Hills complex both of which he built in Tokyo, Japan.





## Marunouchi Hotel

Marunouchi Hotel is just a minute's walk from Tokyo Station Marunouchi North Exit and a 10-minute taxi ride from Tsukiji Fish Market. All of the hotel's rooms are well-furnished and equipped with modern conveniences. It features 4 dining options, a massage service and rooms with free WiFi. Pomme d'aDam Restaurant serves French cuisine and an American breakfast, while Teppanyaki dishes can be enjoyed at the Daian Club. Marunouchi Hotel takes pride in delivering "omotenashi" to world travelers.



## Park Hyatt Tokyo



An elegant oasis of space and calm, Park Hyatt Tokyo hotel is the ideal luxury destination in Tokyo where guests can enjoy a 360 degree view of the bustling city and Mount Fuji. Occupying the top 14 floors of the 52-story tower, the hotel offers guests an unparalleled level of comfort and personalized service as well as top class gourmet dining options at the heart of the vibrant city.

## Shangri-La

Located adjacent to Tokyo Station, Shangri-La's acclaimed Asian hospitality creates this sanctuary in the heart of Japan's capital. The Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo, a 2020 Forbes Five Star hotel, offers a convenient location adjacent to Tokyo Station, allowing easy access to Ginza, Nihonbashi, and other main districts of Tokyo as well as Shinkansen bullet train terminal to other cities.

Step into the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo, and discover its refined beauty and serenity.



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# Kyoto

Formerly the imperial capital of Japan, it is in this city that the traditional Japanese 'high arts' flourished. Tea ceremony, calligraphy, poetry, philosophy or religion, Kyoto is the number one place to visit. Numerous temples and shrines are located throughout the city and walking along canals, next to traditional wooden houses and through the small streets really gives you an idea of the ancient Japanese imperial culture.

Kyoto is not just about the high arts however. The city is also famous for its crafts: textile, kimono and pottery. Although there is a lot to see and do in Kyoto, even a short-time visitor can soon get an appreciation of what this ancient capital has to offer.



## Kiyomizudera Temple

One of Kyoto's many landmarks. Kiyomizudera is best known for its wooden stage, 13 meters above the hillside below. The stage affords visitors a nice view of the numerous cherry and maple trees below that erupt in a sea of color in spring and fall, as well as of the city of Kyoto in the distance.

The main hall, which together with the stage was built without the use of nails, houses the temple's primary object of worship, a small statue of the eleven faced, thousand-armed Kannon.



## Kinkakuji - Golden Pavilion

Kinkakuji - Golden Pavilion is a Zen temple in northern Kyoto whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Formally known as Rokuonji, the temple was the retirement villa of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, and according to his will, it became a Zen temple of the Rinzaï sect after his death in 1408. Kinkakuji was the inspiration for the similarly named Ginkakuji - Silver Pavilion, built on the other side of the city a few decades later.





### Fushimi Inari Shrine

Fushimi Inari Shrine is impressive with its thousands of vermillion torii gates, which straddle a network of trails behind its main buildings. The trails, mostly stairs, will lead you into the wooded forest of the sacred Mount Inari, which stands at 233 meters and belongs to the shrine grounds. Fushimi Inari is the most important of several thousands of shrines dedicated to Inari, the Shinto god of rice. Supposedly Inari's messengers, foxes are represented with many statues around the main building. Fushimi Inari Shrine has ancient origins, predating the capital's move to Kyoto in 794. This is a popular site so we recommend visiting in the early morning or evening.



### Ginkakuji - Silver Pavilion

Ginkakuji is a Zen temple along Kyoto's eastern mountains. In 1482, shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa built his retirement villa on the grounds of today's temple, modeling it after Kinkakuji - Golden Pavilion, his grandfather's retirement villa at the base of Kyoto's northern mountains. The villa was converted into a Zen temple after Yoshimasa's death in 1490.



### Philosopher's Path

The Philosopher's Path (Tetsugaku no michi in Japanese) is a pleasant stone path through the northern part of Kyoto's Higashiyama district. The path follows a canal which is lined by hundreds of cherry trees. These trees usually bloom in early April making this one of the city's most popular cherry blossom viewing spots.

Approximately two kilometers long, the path begins around Ginkakuji - Silver Pavilion and ends in the neighborhood of Nanzenji.





## Cycling in Japan

What better way to explore our wonderful country than by bike! Explore Japan at your own pace; in the cities, back-road cycling or road bike tours and holidays in Japan, guided and self-guided.

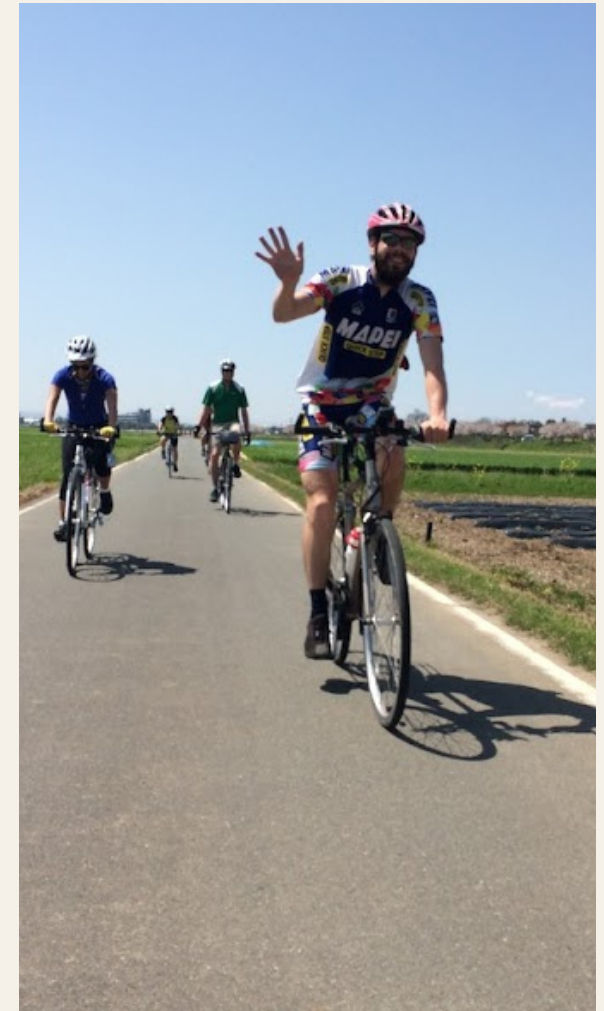
Cycling in Japan is for everyone, from families to cycling aficionados. From a single day ride to a full cycling tour all around the country we will design the best cycling tour for you.

### Shimanami Kaido

The Shimanami Kaido is the most famous cycling road in Japan. It's about 60 kilometers long (37 miles). It begins on Honshu main island in Onomichi and leads across six islands including Mukaishima, Innoshima, Ikuchijima, Omishima, Hakatajima, and Oshima, before ending on Shikoku in Imabari.

### Custom Cycling Tours

If you enjoy cycling in your home country why don't you join one of our cycling tours? We can arrange a full cycling tour all around Japan or combine some cycling rides with sightseeing days for you.





### Higashiyama District

The Higashiyama District along the lower slopes of Kyoto's eastern mountains is one of the city's best preserved historic districts. It is a great place to experience traditional old Kyoto, especially between Kiyomizudera and Yasaka Shrine, where the narrow lanes, wooden buildings and traditional merchant shops invoke a feeling of the old capital city.



### Ryoanji Temple

A Zen Temple famous for its rock garden. Ryoanji Temple probably presents the most popular rock garden in Japan. Originally an aristocrat's villa during the Heian Period, the site was converted into a Zen temple in 1450 and belongs to the Myoshinji school of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, whose head temple stands just a kilometer to the south.



### Arashiyama

Arashiyama is a pleasant district in the western outskirts of Kyoto. The area has been a popular destination since the Heian Period (794-1185) when nobles would enjoy its natural setting. Arashiyama is particularly popular for cherry blossom, fall color seasons, and its famous bamboo groves. It can be very crowded so we invite you to visit the area early morning.





### Tea Ceremony

The Japanese tea ceremony is a Japanese tradition steeped in history. Formal tea ceremonies are prepared and performed by tea masters after years of training. Tea, water, utensils, and sweets are carefully selected based on the time of year and occasion. We recommend you pay attention to your tea master and watch as she delicately and precisely prepares your tea.

One of the main purposes of the tea ceremony is for the guests to enjoy the hospitality of the host in an atmosphere distinct from the fast pace of everyday life. You will slow down and pay attention to the small details.



### Maiko Makeover

Become a Maiko for the day! To obtain the status of Geisha women have to practice full time for about 3 years, so you will not dress as a Geisha but as a Maiko which is a Geisha apprentice.

Your expert will dress you in a kimono and accessories that you pick out. They will then take a few photos of you in their 100-year-old machiya townhouse before you head out for a walk around the Gion area. The whole experience will take about 3 hours. We will need to know your height and shoe size before accepting a reservation so please let us know.



### Kyoto City Cycling Tour

Discover the ancient capital stress free. Kyoto has so much to offer! But its public transportation is not that great; so we recommend you to discover the ancient capital with a cycling tour. During your guided tour possible sights include:

- Toji Temple, a Shingon Buddhist temple.
- Honganji Temple, a large temple compound located north west of Kyoto Station with many beautiful buildings of historical and architectural significance.
- Fushimi Inari Shrine and its 1,000 torii gates.
- Tofukuji Temple and its Zen Rock Garden
- Gion: the Geisha district.





## **Ryokan Stay**

Staying in a Japanese Ryokan Inn is an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life. There are thousands of ryokan all over Japan ranging from simple inns to luxurious establishments. Ryokans are for travelers who wish to experience Japanese culture first hand.

Ryokans serve some of the best food in Japan and they are a great place to try the local cuisine or a full course kaiseki dinner. Ask your Japan travel expert what ryokan they recommend for you.

### **Gōra Kadan**

Gora Kadan is one of the most luxurious ryokans in Hakone, Japan. There are 38 Japanese-style rooms, and several of the guest rooms at Gora Kadan have their own private outdoor hot spring bath. Gora Kadan has indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men. The outdoor hot spring baths hold up to 20 bathers. A swimming pool and sauna are also available to guests. Gora Kadan serves Japanese-style meals and the chef changes the menu every month based on what is fresh in the market.

### **Arashiyama Benkei**

Arashiyama Benkei is a Traditional Ryokan in Arashiyama, Kyoto. It was built during the Heian Period (794 to 1185) as a country estate used by vacationing court nobles. Kyoto ryokan Arashiyama Benkei is located at the foot of Mt Arashiyama in Kyoto allows our visitors to experience the beauty of the changing seasons. Arashiyama Benkei has hosted a number of famous people including the King of Denmark, who planted a yellow pine tree in the Japanese garden in 1930. Arashiyama Benkei has long been associated with the famous Tenryu-ji Temple located nearby.





## Nara

Less than 1 hour away from Kyoto stands Nara. Formerly known as Heijo-kyo, this city occupies an important position in the history of Japan as the first capital from 710 until 784. During this period, a large number of shrines and temples were erected under the protection of the imperial family and aristocrats. However, when the monks in the surrounding hills started gaining too much influence and eventually tried to seize power, it was decided to move the capital to Heian-kyo, nowadays known as Kyoto. Many of the temples built at the height of Heijo-kyo, like the Todai-ji and Horyuji temples, are currently registered as World Heritage Sites. Both Japanese and foreign tourists visit the city to see these temples, to walk among the free-roaming deer of Nara Park, and to visit some of the beautiful scenic mountains surrounding the city. Nara can easily be visited as a day trip from Kyoto.



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## Osaka

Osaka is the second-largest city in Japan and the largest city in the Kansai area. It is one of Japan's major industrial centers and ports, and it has a long history as a trading port and commercial center. In addition, it is the home of such cultural traditions as bunraku (traditional puppet theater) and kabuki (traditional theater).

The city is most famous for its inhabitants and local cuisine. The people of Osaka are widely known for their outgoing spirit and friendliness and the local dialect has been adopted as the standard for stand-up comedians and actors. Osaka's regional cuisine is thought to be the best in Japan. Dishes include okonomiyaki (a pancake-based dish containing vegetables, meat, and/or seafood), takoyaki (octopus dumplings) and udon (a noodle dish).





## **Kanazawa**

Kanazawa, a castle town on the coast of the Sea of Japan, is the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture and the largest city in the Hokuriku district. It is most famous for Kenrokuen Garden which was the private garden of the daimyo who lived in the castle during the Edo Period (1603 – 1868).

Kanazawa is a hub of culture and artistic creativity. Skilled tradesmen employ methods hundreds of years old to make Kaga Yuzen, Kutaniyaki, and Shikki products. Kaga Yuzen is the art of painting on silk, used for kimonos as well as smaller items such as scarves and handkerchiefs. Kutaniyaki is colorful ceramic, and Shikki is lacquerware. Kanazawa produces 99% of the gold leaf used in Japan.



## **Shirakawa-go - Ainokura**

High in the mountains of Toyama and Gifu Prefectures, you will discover the villages of Ainokura and Shirakawago. Well known for their Japanese thatched-roof farmhouses. The buildings are called "Gassho-Zukuri" or "hands-in-prayer". There are about 20 Gassho-Zukuri in Ainokura and about 180 in Shirakawa-go. Most of these houses were built between the end of the Edo Period and the end of the Meiji period but the oldest dates back to the 17th century. These unique buildings were used for the production of silk, once one of Japan's major exports. The villages are now listed as World Heritage Sites.





## Takayama

Beautifully situated in the mountainous Hida region in Gifu prefecture, Takayama has often been called little Kyoto. The town's many temples, shrines and bridges are indeed reminiscent of the ancient capital and in fact, Takayama's skillful carpenters are said to have built the Imperial Palace and a number of temples in Kyoto.

To explore the rural side of this region, we invite you to join a cycling tour in Hida Furukawa. Talk to you Japan Travel Expert for more details.



## Tsumago - Magome

Tsumago is a well-preserved town in the Kiso Valley, Nagano Prefecture. It is located along the old Nakasendo highway which connected Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto during the Edo Period (1603-1868). The post-town was a place where travelers could rest, get a bite to eat, and purchase supplies. These highways were very important during this period as daimyo (warlords) were required to travel frequently between Edo and their home domain.

The current residents decided to protect their town and agreed to not allow any modern construction. This area remains much as it did during the Edo Period and is a great way to see Old Japan.

The hike between Tsumago and Magome takes a couple of hours and is well worth the time.



## Hakone

Part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, this scenic area offers pristine natural beauty and hot spring baths. The Hakone area has been a popular hot spring resort for hundreds of years, and to this day people travel there to get away from the cities and relax. The various hot springs in Hakone are believed to have healing properties, and the most popular is Yumoto. While the emphasis in Hakone is to enjoy nature and relax in its natural hot spring baths, there are interesting sights to see: Lake Ashinoki, The Hakone, Art Museum, Owakudani,...





# Home Stay

This is a unique opportunity to discover the rural side of Japan, in Kameoka (near Kyoto). Owners will provide you with a variety of experiences that only they can give. They will cook traditional Japanese dishes for you using fresh local ingredients. A home stay will introduce you to the Japanese traditions, the strength of the Japanese people, the dedication to excellence... but you will also learn about yourself and how to enjoy life in a traditional Japanese way.

During your stay there is plenty of activities to enjoy, here are some examples:

- Learn to cook traditional Japanese dishes
- Explore the village by bicycle or on foot, visit Izumo Daijingu Shrine and the Anao Temple which usually do not welcome tourists
- Experience a traditional tea ceremony, try Japanese ikebana (flower arrangement), write Japanese calligraphy, and try to play the Koto (traditional Japanese stringed instrument) with our local cultural experts and artisans
- Enjoy a hands-on experience with Fukiko in her organic garden
- Ride riverboats through the Honzu River Gorge, an ancient trade route to Kyoto
- Tour a local sake brewery, a tofu maker, a pottery studio, an antique shop
- Relax at the Hiyoshi Hot Springs, treat yourself to a Shiatsu massage
- Bonsai workshop
- Visit the world's best whetstone excavation site
- Journey through rice paddies and farmlands to the historic mountain village of Miyama





## Miyajima

Miyajima, which literally means "shrine island", is located in the Seto Inland Sea (Seto Naikai) near Hiroshima. It is considered to be a sacred place and it provides a stunning example of the ability of the Japanese people to seamlessly blend architecture with natural beauty. Deer and monkeys wander freely around Miyajima, especially on Mt. Misen, the tallest mountain on the island, where a good view of the Seto Inland Sea can be had. The red torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine is set in front of Itsukushima Shrine and appears to be floating in the water - along with Matsushima and Amanohashidate, this breathtaking view is considered to be one of the three most scenic in Japan. There are many ryokan inns on Miyajima.



## Naoshima

Naoshima is a small island in the Seto Inland Sea with a population of only 3,400 people. It was never considered tourist attractions until Benesse House and Chichu Museum were constructed and the island become a must see for art lovers. Today it is an island of modern art. Good to know: most exhibits are closed on Mondays.





## Nikko

Nikko is situated in Tochigi, less than two hours away from Tokyo. A former sacred spot for the Edo (Tokyo) Shogunate, this area is known for its glorious shrines and temples set in a beautiful surrounding with waterfalls and lakes.

In 1999, the buildings on Mount Nikko and the forest areas in the surrounding area were registered as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site.

## Kamakura

Kamakura is a coastal town, less than an hour from Tokyo Station. Kamakura was established as the location of a shogunate government in 1192. The area was selected because it was surrounded by wooded hills and the sea making it easy to defend against attacks. Today Kamakura is a busy seaside resort, and its old wooden homes, temples, and shrines make it a wonderful place to visit and escape from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo.





# Japanese Cuisine

For Japanese people, food is a very serious matter. So many times, after a regional trip, the first question I was asked was: "So what did you eat?" Talking about Japanese cuisine could be an endless story since it offers so many delicious dishes. Japanese food is both regional and seasonal. Like with Japanese architecture, Japanese cuisine is a perfect combination of tradition and modern styles. Restaurants in Japan range from street food stands to centuries-old traditional ones. Many restaurants are specialized in a single type of dish, while others offer a variety of dishes.



## Kaiseki Dinner at a Ryokan

"Kaiseki" is a traditional, multi-course dinner. Indeed, many Japanese think of a ryokan as a place to dine on "kaiseki" rather than as a type of accommodation. One Kyoto ryokan owner told me that over 70% of his income was from his dinners while the rest came from overnight guests. What exactly is kaiseki? The term "kaiseki" means hot stone in a kimono fold, and it is believed that Zen priests would tuck hot stones wrapped in towels next to their stomach to cure their hunger pangs during their morning and afternoon prayers (the term "kai" means a fold in a kimono and "seki" means stone). In this way it was believed that only a small amount of kaiseki would be enough to take away your hunger. Originally, kaiseki was a simple, vegetarian meal served during the traditional tea ceremony. It was thought the tea would taste better if the guests were not so hungry. Today kaiseki is no longer a strictly vegetarian meal but may also include both meat and fish. One kaiseki dinner can consist of anywhere from 6 to 15 different kinds of food.



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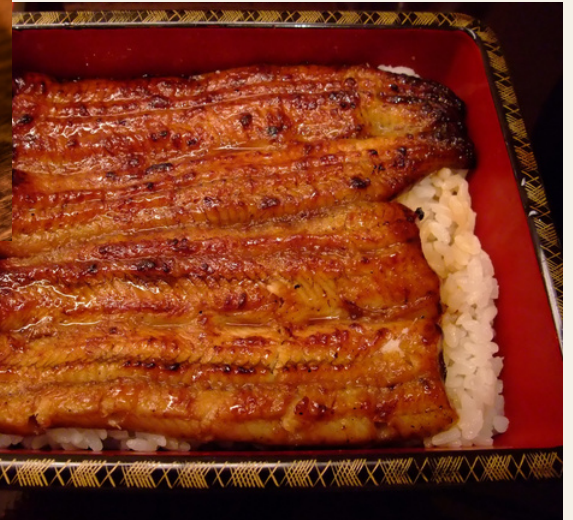
## **Ramen**

Ramen is a Japanese noodle soup. It consists of wheat noodles served in a meat or occasionally fish-based broth. Often flavored with soy sauce or miso, it uses toppings such as sliced pork (chāshū), nori (dried seaweed), menma (bamboo shoot), and scallions. Nearly every region in Japan has its own variation of ramen, such as the tonkotsu ramen (pork bone broth) of Fukuoka or Kyushu and the miso ramen of Hokkaido.



## **Kobe Beef**

Though you will find gorgeous beef all around Japan. Kobe Beef is the most famous one. Kobe beef is Wagyu beef from the Tajima strain of Japanese Black cattle, raised in Japan's Hyōgo Prefecture according to rules set out by the Kobe Beef Marketing and Distribution Promotion Association. The meat is a delicacy, valued for its flavor, tenderness, and fatty, well-marbled texture.



## **Unagi**

Freshwater eel is popular nationwide. But in Nagoya they have a very local dish called Hitsumabushi. Nagoya specialty consists of bite-sized pieces of grilled unagi served over rice. Hitsumabushi is eaten in four steps: the first portion is eaten straight with rice, the second with rice and condiments, the third with broth or tea to make ochazuke, and the fourth as you like it the best.



## Koyasan - Mt Koya

Koyasan is a holy temple complex located on a mountain top, surrounded by cedar trees and mountain peaks. It is the center of Shingon Buddhism and one of the most important spiritual centers in Japan, with over one hundred temples.

One of the highlights of visiting Koyasan is walking through the Okunoin Cemetery. This cemetery lies in the middle of a forest of majestic cedar trees, and the roughly 200,000 graves contain some of the most famous figures in Japanese history. At night the roughly one mile path through the cemetery is lit by overhead lights and stone lanterns, and it makes for a wonderful evening stroll.



### Shojin-Ryori

While staying at a Shukubo (Buddhist Temple Lodging) you will dine on Shojin-Ryori which is vegetarian food that the monks eat. The menu generally consists of vegetables, tofu, miso soup, pickles and a savory custard known as chanwanushi. You will be amazed at how delicious the food is even without meat. Dessert is usually fruit or a local specialty. Fortunately, beer is considered vegetarian and you are allowed to order it with your meal. This is greatly appreciated after a busy day of sightseeing.





## **Yudanaka**

Yudanaka is a hot spring town located in northern Nagano. The town is known for its 'snow monkeys', who come to the town to enjoy the warm hot spring water, especially during the cold winter months. Of course, the town also offers a number of beautiful hot spring locations for use by humans as well. Shigakogen heights, close to Yudanaka, is a wonderful place for nature walks amidst the alpine plants, ponds, and marshes. This area offers some great facilities for skiing and other winter sports as well.

### **How to get around Japan**

Your custom tour organizer will include all of the details you will need to take your tour. It will have directions to your hotels and ryokan inns, train or other transportation details from destination to destination, meeting locations to tours, suggested sightseeing, and all the other details that you require. It will also include the phone number of our Japan office to support you while you are in Japan.



### **When to go**

Spring (March and April) and Autumn (October and September) are clearly the best. In Summer it will be very hot and humid while in winter you might get rain or snow. But of course, in winter or summer, you will have smaller crowds around you.

### **Prices**

Your private tour will be custom build just for you and will be built to stay within your stated budget. Contact us for more details.

### **Customize Your Trip**

In this brochure and on our website you can find suggested itineraries. If none of our tours match exactly what you have in mind that is OK. Just let us know what destinations you like or what kinds of sights or activities you enjoy. We will create a custom tour for you.

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## Suggested Itineraries

The suggested itineraries are for your inspiration only as your trip will be created for you and there are many more options available.

Contact us to start planning your itinerary.



### Golden Route Japan

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Tokyo
- **Day 2** - Private Local Guide Tokyo  
An itinerary in the city created just for you
- **Day 3** - Free Time in Tokyo  
Whatever you are into, Tokyo will surprise you
- **Day 4** - Travel to Hakone & Stay at Ryokan  
Taste Japanese Hospitality
- **Day 5** - Travel to Hiroshima  
Visit the impressive Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum.
- **Day 6** - Travel to Miyajima  
Admire the famous Torii gate
- **Day 7** - Bullet Train to Kyoto
- **Day 8** - Private Local Guide in Kyoto  
Explore the ancient capital
- **Day 9** - Visit Nara  
Its giant Buddha and deer
- **Day 10** - Head to Osaka
- **Day 11** - Free Time in Osaka  
Perfect for shopping and taste delicious street food
- **Day 12** - Final day  
Fly home with fantastic memories

### Classical Japan Tour

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Tokyo
- **Day 2** - Private Local Guide Tokyo  
An itinerary in the city created just for you
- **Day 3** - Day Trip to Kamakura  
The Great Buddha of Kamakura
- **Day 4** - Day Trip to Nikko  
Japan's most lavishly decorated shrine
- **Day 5** - Travel to Hakone & Stay at Ryokan  
Taste the Japanese Hospitality
- **Day 6** - Travel to Takayama  
Artisans and craftsmen town
- **Day 7** - Free Time in Takayama or Rural  
Cycling Tour
- **Day 8** - Bus to Shirakawa-go  
Thatched roofs houses village
- **Day 9** - Travel to Kanazawa  
Visit Kenrokuen Garden
- **Day 10** - Kyoto, Taste of Traditional Japan
- **Day 11** - Private Local Guide in Kyoto  
Explore the ancient capital
- **Day 12** - Day Trip to Nara  
Giant Buddha and deer
- **Day 13** - Tokyo - Free Time
- **Day 14** - Fly home







## **SOUTHERN JAPAN**

Japanese southern islands of Shikoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa offer more wild scenery than central Honshu. While you can explore these areas by public transportation we also invite you to rent a car for more freedom. In Kyushu, visit natural beauties such as Mt Aso, Kurokawa Onsen, the Takachiho Gorge. In Shikoku explore a beautiful Japanese garden or relax in a hot spring bath in the wild Iya Valley. In Yakushima, meet the oldest Japanese trees. In Amami Oshima and Okinawa, enjoy white sand beaches, mangroves, tropical climate,...

### **Iya Valley**

Iya Valley is one of Japan's most hidden valleys and is definitely off the beaten path. Iya Valley's main attractions are its natural beauty and the vine bridges that span some of the gorges.

### **Mt Aso**

Mount Aso, located in central Kyushu, has the world's largest volcanic caldera with a circumference of about 120 kilometers (about 75 miles), and is also the largest active volcano in Japan.

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### **Kurokawa Onsen**

Kurokawa Onsen is a must for hot spring aficionados. It is located near Mount Aso in Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu. Kurokawa Onsen is surrounded by the beautiful mountains and lush gorges of the Aso region.

### **Amami Oshima**

Located between Kyushu and Okinawa; Amami Oshima has preserved intact nature and culture.

### **Yakushima**

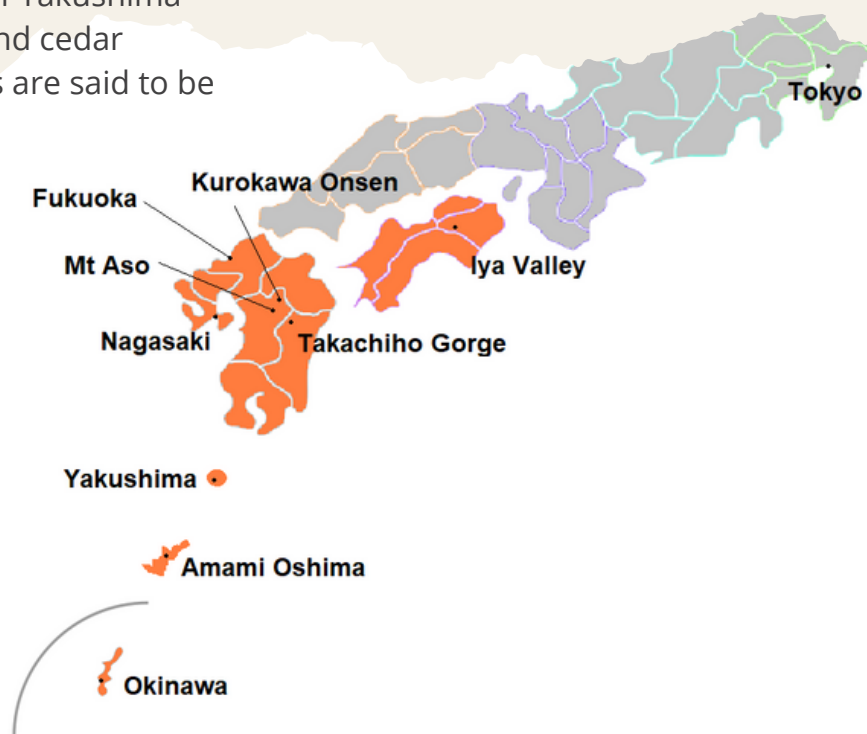
The subtropical island of Yakushima famous for its wildlife and cedar forests. The oldest trees are said to be over 7000 years old.

### **Nagasaki**

Since the city was one of Japan's closest port cities to the Asian mainland, Nagasaki has played a prominent role in foreign trade relations for many centuries.

### **Takachiho Gorge**

Takachiho Gorge is where the impressive waterfall contrasts with the basalt organ and in the background dense green foliage.









## Kyushu

From the beaches of Amami Oshima to the active volcano of Mt Aso, passing by Yakushima and its 7,000 years old cedar tree Kyushu has so much history and nature to offer.

## Mt Aso

Located in central Kyushu, Mt Aso has the world's largest volcanic caldera with a circumference of about 120 kilometers (about 75 miles) and is also the largest active volcano in Japan. Inside the caldera are five volcanic peaks, including Nakadake which is still active and regularly emits smoke and ash. Much of the landscape inside the caldera is grassy and green, and the highest point is just under 1,600 meters. Mt Aso is an easy day trip or overnight from Beppu.

## Amami Oshima

Located between Kyushu and Okinawa; Amami Oshima has preserved its intact culture. Most people do not take time to explore this island making it one of the most isolated places in Japan. With a subtropical climate and a small population, this island offers great beaches, mangrove forests, delicious cuisine, museums, and the like. For romantics, you can visit the "Heart Rock of Amami" which is sure to make your relationship much stronger. While staying in Amami we invite you to taste the Keihan (the island's most popular chicken rice dish). To explore the island we offer you two options: a rental car or guide and car. Speak to your Japan travel expert to arrange your stay in Amami Oshima.

- Exploring its Mangrove. This can be done with or without a guide. Amami Oshima has the second largest mangrove forest in Japan
- Oshima Tsumugi silk. Come and learn about Oshima Tsumugi produced from white silk thread.
- Tanaka Isson Museum; a Paul Gauguin or Henri Rousseau in Japan.
- Beaches for bathing and snorkeling (Tomori Beach, Kurasaki Beach, Sakibaru Beach,...)
- Kinsakubaru Primeval Forest



Photo used with permission of © K.P.V.B

## Kurokawa Onsen

Kurokawa Onsen is a must for hot spring aficionados. It is located near Mount Aso in Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu. Kurokawa Onsen is surrounded by the beautiful mountains and lush gorges of the Aso region. It is a typical hot spring town with the ryokans and shops lined up and down the river. Most of the ryokans are located in the center of the town, easy walking distance from one another. Many of the inns offer outdoor public hot spring baths, including special experiences like waterfalls and grottos. You can also purchase a Hot Springs Pass to enter three hot springs of your choice.



## Yakushima

The local joke that it rains 32 days a month! The subtropical island of Yakushima is famous for its wildlife and cedar forests. The oldest trees are said to be over 7000 years old. This particular tree, called Jomonsugi, was discovered only about 70 years ago as the island was not well explored due to its thick vegetation. The Shiratani Unsuikyo Ravine is a lush green forest that inspired the Studio Ghibli for Princess Mononoke. The island receives a lot of rain each year which created such a lush environment.





## Nagasaki

Nagasaki is a port city on the island of Kyushu and the capital of Nagasaki Prefecture. The city gained prominence as one of the few ports open to international trade during Japan's 214 years of isolation. A special island was built to house foreign traders called Deshima island. In more recent history, Nagasaki became the second city after Hiroshima to be destroyed by an atomic bomb and today is a city dedicated to international peace.



## Takachiho Gorge

Takachiho Gorge is cut through basalt columns by a beautiful waterfall and is surrounded by dense green foliage making one of Japan's most amazing natural sights. The best way to enjoy the gorge is to rent a rowboat and float through it. This area is also known for its legends. Amaterasu ( Shinto Sun Goddess) is said to have hidden herself in a cave in this area to escape the pranks of her brothers. Since then other gods and goddesses have tried to lure her into the open. Another legend is that god Ninigi no Mikoto (grandson of Amaterasu) who was sent from heaven to establish the lineage of the Japanese imperial family. Amano and Iwato Shrine are important spiritual locations for Japanese and the Shinto religion.





## Iya Valley on Shikoku

Iya Valley is one of Japan's most hidden valleys and is definitely off the beaten path. Until recently one would have to hike for days to reach the valley. This made it an ideal hide-out for criminals and samurai who lost favor with their masters. The remoteness has its advantages and disadvantages: its beauty is unspoiled, but the area has a poor transportation system. The valley was cut by the Yoshinogawa River which offers some of Japan's best rafting, and there's a rafting company with English speaking guides. Iya Valley is divided into two areas. West Iya is known locally as "Nishi Iya" and East Iya is known as "Higashi Iya" or "Oku Iya." There is also an area called Miyoshi. Iya Valley's main attractions are its natural beauty and the vine bridges that span some of the gorges. The most popular one is located in West Iya and is close to the main village. The bridge is open from sun up to sun down and costs 500 yen to cross. This might seem like a lot but the maintenance of these bridges is not cheap. This bridge has been reinforced with steel cables so there is no danger of breaking. East Iya has the more atmospheric Oku-Iya Vine Bridges. One bridge is called the husband bridge and another one is the wife bridge. They are reminiscent of what you might see in an Indian Jones movie, but are not easy to get to.





## Bathing in Japan

Taking a bath, rather than taking a shower, is very popular in Japan and public bathing is an important part of the Japanese culture. In Japan there are two purposes to taking a bath: cleaning your body and refreshing your mind.

The first step is cleaning your entire body and this is done outside of the bath tub. Bathers sit on stools and wash their bodies using an attached shower head and hose.

Once you have finished rinsing off all soap and shampoo, step into the bath tub for a nice, relaxing soak. The bath tub can be very hot so you may not want to stay in for long. You can go in and out of the bath as many times as you like. Although many people are used to taking showers in the morning, it is a wonderful feeling to soak in a nice hot bath and relax your muscles at the end of the day.





### **Sanga Ryokan in Kurokawa Onsen**

Welcome to Sanga Ryokan. This gorgeous Traditional Ryokan has 15 Japanese-style rooms, and some of the guest rooms have their own private hot spring bath. Sanga Ryokan has wonderful indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only), and there is also a mixed outdoor bath for women and men (both genders). Sanga Ryokan has a hot spring “family bath” where a family can hang a sign outside and bathe privately. Please ask at the front desk for details. Traditional Japanese cuisine is served to the guests. Sanga Ryokan has a pick-up service from the Kurokawa Onsen Bus stop.



### **Kamenoi Besso in Yufuin**

This Traditional Ryokan was originally built as a ‘Besso’ (Country House) of great merchant Aburaya Kumahachi from Beppu in 1921 as his resort villa. Now, in a natural grove lies the main building with 6 Western rooms and 15 detached Japanese Guest Houses scattered within the forest-like surroundings. Each room has different tastes and all the rooms except one have a private bath. There is a big community hot spring bath which opens onto views of the garden and receives much sunshine.



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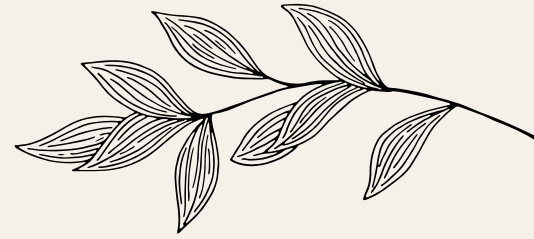


# Matsuyama & Dogo Onsen

Matsuyama is the capital of Ehime Prefecture, Shikoku. This lively city is most famous for its feudal era castle (a national treasure), one of the few well-preserved Japanese castles in existence, as well as Dogo Onsen, possibly the oldest hot spring area in Japan.

Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), one of the famous Japanese novelists in Japanese history, particularly enjoyed going to Dogo Onsen, and his novel *Botchan* was based on his experiences in Matsuyama and uses the city as one of the settings. Ishiteji Temple is located near Dogo Onsen and is part of the "88 Temple Pilgrimage", one of the most famous religious pilgrimage routes in Japan. Its Niomon gate is a designated cultural property, and the architectural style of the temple comes from the Kamakura Period (1192-1333).

Dogo Onsen is one of Matsuyama's main tourist attractions. Located on the northeastern outskirts of the city, Dogo Onsen is one of Japan's oldest hot spring resorts.





## Walking In Japan

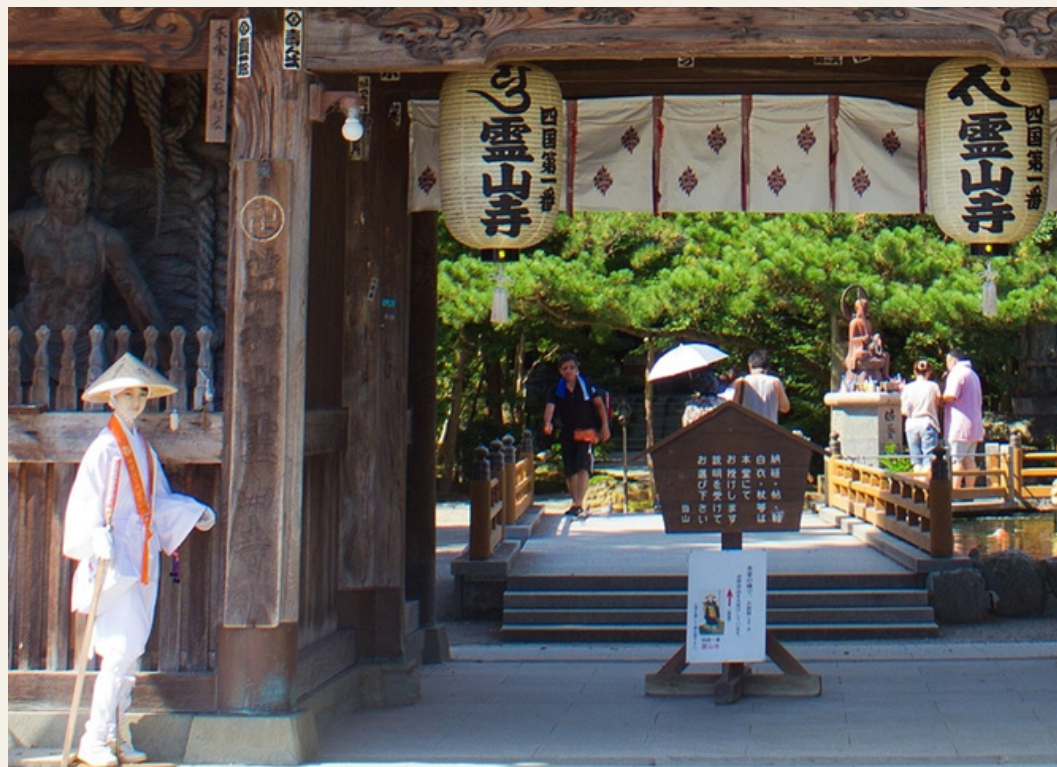
One of the best ways to experience old Japan is to take a walking tour along the ancient paths which connected the areas of Japan during the Edo Period and before. These tours are active but also give you an excellent opportunity to meet local Japanese and stay at smaller and more rustic accommodations. Your hiking tour can be with a small group or independent. We can also combine it with a culture tour which will give you the best of both worlds.

### Nakasendo Road

The Nakasendo Trail linked Kyoto to Tokyo during Japan's feudal period. You will walk along the ancient route as it passes through beautifully-preserved villages along an easy path. In the evening you will stay in one of the traditional country inns and enjoy exquisite regional dinner prepared from the freshest ingredients and appreciate the warm hospitality of your hosts after a day on the trails!

### Shikoku Trail Tours

Shikoku is home to the 88 Temple Pilgrimage Trail. Fascinating aspects of this deeply spiritual route include how little is known of its origins, and its mysterious connection with Kobo Daishi, founder of Shingon Buddhism. Pilgrims have walked the trails for 1200 years.



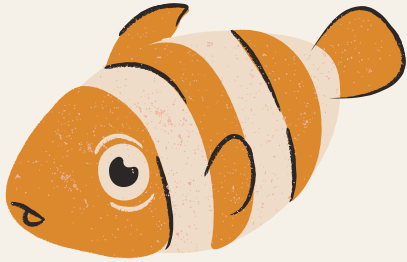
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## Okinawa

Okinawa Prefecture can be divided into three major island groups, Okinawa Islands, the Miyako Islands and Yaeyama Islands. Come and experience the tropical side of Japan!



## Ishigaki Island

Ishigaki Island offers several nice beaches and good snorkeling or diving in the surrounding coral reefs. Snorkeling can be enjoyed at nearly every beach on the island. Diving is also offered for all experience levels. Please let us know your preference between a diving tour or snorkeling so we can arrange it for you. If you are interested in diving the Manta Scramble near Kabira Bay then let your travel expert know. Please keep in mind that there is no guarantee that you will see any mantas.





## Miyakojima

Miyakojima is a small island but it leads the ranking of Japanese best beaches. Even during the Christmas holidays, you can swim there! Here are our 3 favorite beaches:

**Maehama Beach** is excellent for swimming and other water sports. It's a long white sand beach. It's good for families.

**Yoshino Beach** is a smaller beach perfect for Snorkeling Sunayama Beach for the picture! A great way to explore the island is to ride a bicycle. If you're fairly healthy you can go around most of the island in a day though most people visit the island by rental car.



## Taketomi

Quiet and beautiful Taketomi Island is a real heaven. As you walk along the white sand paths connecting the pavilions in this resort village, you will remember that Taketomi is one of few areas in Japan where the scenery itself has been preserved since ancient times. Today you will join a small group to cycle around Taketomi Island. Don't miss the Buffalo cart ride.





# Japan's Climate

We will not pretend to predict the exact weather in Japan but here are some guidelines that will help you select the best time of year to travel to Japan.



## Spring



Spring is a comfortable season. Although it can often come with strong winds, it is considered the best time to visit Japan because the cherry blossom season takes place in most regions of the country and the weather is pleasantly mild. Domestic travel activity is increased in early April due to spring school holidays, and in late April due to the Golden Week Holiday (from April 29 to May 5).

## Autumn



Autumn is one of the best times to visit Japan, as the weather is relatively dry and mild, and the autumn colors are spectacular in many parts of the country. Travel activity tends to be low except around popular autumn leaf spots. Among the highlights are the autumn colors in the temples gardens of Kyoto where they beautifully complement the buildings' elegant architecture. Almost surreal is the sight of the trees during evening illuminations, which are held at selected gardens and temples.

## Summer



Summer is hot and humid in most of Japan though conditions are more comfortable in higher elevations and in Hokkaido. There are many local festivals and firework displays in August. Travel activity is high during the entire season due to the summer holidays but is especially busy during the Obon week in mid August.

## Winter



Winter is a good time for visiting Japan if you don't mind the cold, as the weather is usually sunny and dry and sightseeing spots are not very crowded. Only in northern Japan and along the Sea of Japan coast, there is a lot of snowfall, and conditions are good for winter sports. The downside of a visit in winter are the relatively short days (sunset is around 5pm in Tokyo). Winter is clearly the best time to visit Mt Fuji with the mountain covered in snow. Winter is also a great time to visit a hot spring ryokan.



## **Iriomote**

Iriomote is the second largest island in Okinawa. It is mostly undeveloped, with nearly 90 percent of its land covered by dense jungle and mangrove forests. The Iriomote Ishigaki National Park covers most of the island. This island offers a number of different activities including:

- Kayaking in the mangroves
- River Cruise
- Pinaisara Falls (reached by riverboat and a 30-40 minute hike)
- Beaches like Hoshizuna no Hama or Tudumari no Hama
- Barasu Island

### **How to Get Around**

#### **Southern Japan**

Your custom tour organizer will include all of the details you will need to take your tour. It will have directions to your hotels and ryokan inns, train or other transportation details from destination to destination, meeting locations to tours, suggested sightseeing, and all the other details that you require. It will also include the phone number of our Japan office to support you while you are in Japan.



### **When to Go**

To explore Shikoku, Spring (March and April) and Autumn (October and September) are clearly the best. In Summer it will be very hot and humid while in winter you might get rain or snow. But of course, in winter or summer, you will have smaller crowds around you. Okinawa presents warm weather all year long. Don't be surprised to see someone swimming there around Christmas. However, you better avoid the typhoon season (September-October).

### **Customize Your Trip**

In this brochure and on our website you can find suggested itineraries. If none of our tours match exactly what you have in mind that is OK. Just let us know what destinations you like or what kinds of sights or activities you enjoy. We will create a custom tour for you.

#### **Prices**

Your private tour will be custom build just for you and will be built to stay within your stated budget. [Contact us](#) for more details.



## Suggested Itineraries

The suggested itineraries are for your inspiration only as your trip will be created for you and there are many more options available.

Contact us to start planning your itinerary.



### Best of Kyushu

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Fukuoka
- **Day 2** - Pick up rental car and head to Kurokawa Onsen, & stay at a Ryokan
- **Day 3** - Free Time near Mt Aso  
Witness the power of nature
- **Day 4** - Takachiho Gorge
- **Day 5** - Travel to Kumamoto  
Drop off your rental car
- **Day 6** - Travel to Kagoshima by train  
Admire the Sakurajima volcano
- **Day 7** - Ibusuki via Chiran Samurai District
- **Day 8** - Travel by ferry to Yakushima
- **Day 9** - Private Hiking Tour in Yakushima
- **Day 10** - Fly to Amami Oshima  
Visit the Tanaka Isson Museum
- **Day 11** - Free Time in Amami Oshima
- **Day 12** - Private Local Guide in Amami Oshima
- **Day 13** - Final day  
Fly home with fantastic memories

### Best of Okinawa

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Naha
- **Day 2** - Day Trip to Kerama  
Diving or snorkeling are both available for all levels
- **Day 3** - Private Local Guide in Naha
- **Day 4** - Fly to Miyakojima  
Free Time in Miyakojima
- **Day 5** - Free Time in Miyakojima  
Enjoy the best beaches in Japan
- **Day 6** - Fly to Ishigaki  
Private Local Guide in Ishigaki with a car
- **Day 7** - Phantom Island and Paddle Tour
- **Day 8** - Take a boat to Taketomi and relax
- **Day 9** - Travel to Iriomote  
Tropical Nature
- **Day 10** - Iriomote  
Mangroves and Jungle
- **Day 11** - Final day  
Fly back to Naha with memories you will keep for the rest of your life

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暫



## **NORTHERN JAPAN**

Our unique tours will lead you to the most beautiful spots of Tohoku and Hokkaido (Northern Japan).

Just above Tokyo, Tohoku offers some of the best rustic hot spring resorts in Japan. With a long history, this region will send you back to the time of the Samurai.

All the way north, Hokkaido is excellent for winter sports, fresh seafood and road trips in summer.

### **Yamadera**

A scenic temple located in the mountains northeast of Yamagata City.

### **Sapporo**

The biggest city in Hokkaido and the prefectural capital, Sapporo is famous for its Yuki Matsuri, or Snow Festival.

### **Furano**

Furano is a small town famous for its flower fields, ski resorts, cheese factory and wineries.

### **Kushiro Shitsugen National Park**

The largest marshland in Japan is a sanctuary for Japanese cranes.

### **Nyuto Onsen**

A rustic hot spring resort in the rural setting, surrounded by deep forest and mountains. The main features of Nyuto Onsen are simply to enjoy plenty of mountain and forest scenery, taste traditional Japanese meals, and appreciate their natural hot-springs.

### **Dewa Sanzan**

Dewa Sanzan ("three mountains of Dewa") are three sacred mountains in Yamagata Prefecture, each with a shrine on or near its peak. The mountains are named Haguro-san, Gas-san, and Yudono-san and remain centers of mountain worship. Representing birth (Haguro-san), death (Gas-san), and rebirth (Yudono-san), the mountains are usually visited in that order.



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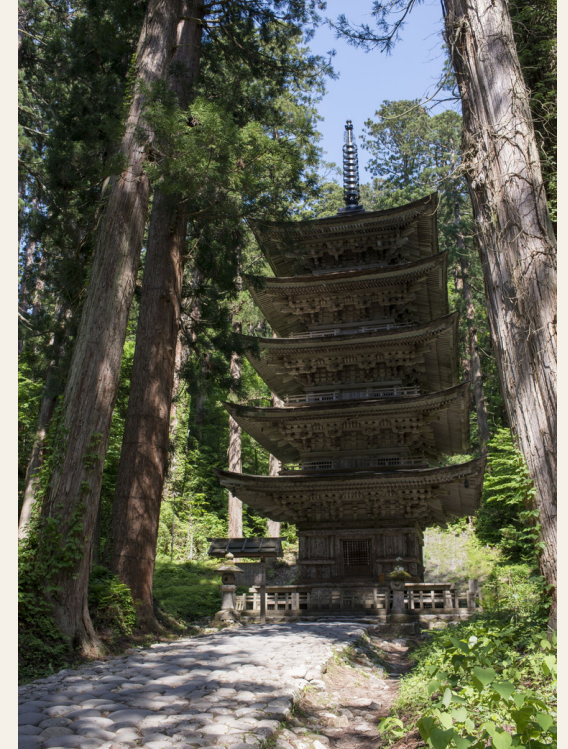
## Yamadera

Yamadera is well-known for its scenic temple located in the mountains northeast of Yamagata City. The temple grounds extend high up a steep mountainside, from where there are great views down onto the valley. The temple was founded over a thousand years ago in 860 as a temple of the Tendai sect under the official name Risshakuji. Its popular name, Yamadera, literally means "mountain temple" in Japanese. Today's highlight after climbing about 1000 steps will be the Godaido Hall. From there you will have a relaxing view of the valley. If time allows we invite you to hike in the surrounding forest where you will find stone lanterns and small Buddha statues.



## Dewa Sanzan

Dewa Sanzan ("three mountains of Dewa") are three sacred mountains in Yamagata Prefecture, each with a shrine on or near its peak. The mountains are named Haguro-san, Gas-san, and Yudono-san and remain centers of mountain worship. Representing birth (Haguro-san), death (Gas-san), and rebirth (Yudono-san), the mountains are usually visited in that order. Part of Dewa Sanzan's appeal is its remoteness. Yamagata's heavy snowfall makes travel in the mountains difficult during the winter months when only Haguro-san remains open. The best time to visit is between July and mid-September when all three shrines are open to pilgrims and tourists.





## Nyuto Onsen

Nyuto Onsen is a rustic hot spring resort in a rural setting, surrounded by deep forest and mountains. The main features of Nyuto Onsen are simply to enjoy plenty of mountain and forest scenery, taste traditional Japanese meals, and appreciate their natural hot-springs. In summer, thousands of flowers blossom and open up around you. While leaves on trees change to shiny golden colors in autumn which attract many season admirers, on the other hand, you may surprise the volume of snowfalls in winter.



## Ginzan Onsen

Ginzan Onsen is a well-known hot spring town in the mountains of Yamagata Prefecture. The area originally developed around a silver mine; however, these days it is better known as one of Japan's prettiest onsen towns with historic ryokan lined up along the river. Ginzan Onsen's traditionally styled ryokan occupy beautiful three and four story wooden buildings that, with their exposed woodwork and white plaster walls, evoke nostalgic feelings of a bygone era. There is one exception, however, in the Fujiya ryokan at the center of town, which was recently rebuilt by famous modern architect Kuma Kengo.





# Sapporo

Today the biggest city in Hokkaido is well known for its Snow Festival. Prior to the annexation of Hokkaido by the Japanese government in the 19th century, the area Sapporo now occupies was settled by the Ainu, the original peoples of Hokkaido.

Sapporo is a popular spot for those looking to enjoy a good beer or tasty food like Ramen, Seafood,... It also offers an escape from the sweltering summer heat because of its relatively moderate July and August temperatures compared with the rest of Japan. Sapporo was home to the original headquarters of the Sapporo Beer company, now located in Tokyo, and also hosted the Winter Olympics in 1972.



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## **Furano**

Furano is a small town famous for its flower fields, ski resorts, cheese factory, and wineries. The town's main industries are agriculture and tourism. About 25,000 people live in Furano making it one of the least densely populated areas in all of Japan. Summer is the best time to visit the area, especially July when lavender blooms. People are proud to live in the center of Hokkaido, so they like to remind it during the “Belly Town Festival”.



## **Kushiro**

Kushiro is the largest city in eastern Hokkaido with a population of about 200,000 residents. Kushiro is famous for its wildlife, especially in the Kushiro Shitsugen National Park. This nature preserve has the largest marshland in Japan at about 268.61 square kilometers (103.71 square miles). The park is a sanctuary for Japanese cranes. Every year hundreds of photographers visit the area to photograph these amazing birds. Visitors also visit Kushiro for its seafood which is known as some of the finest in the nation. The Washo market is the best place to enjoy all kinds of sushi and sashimi.

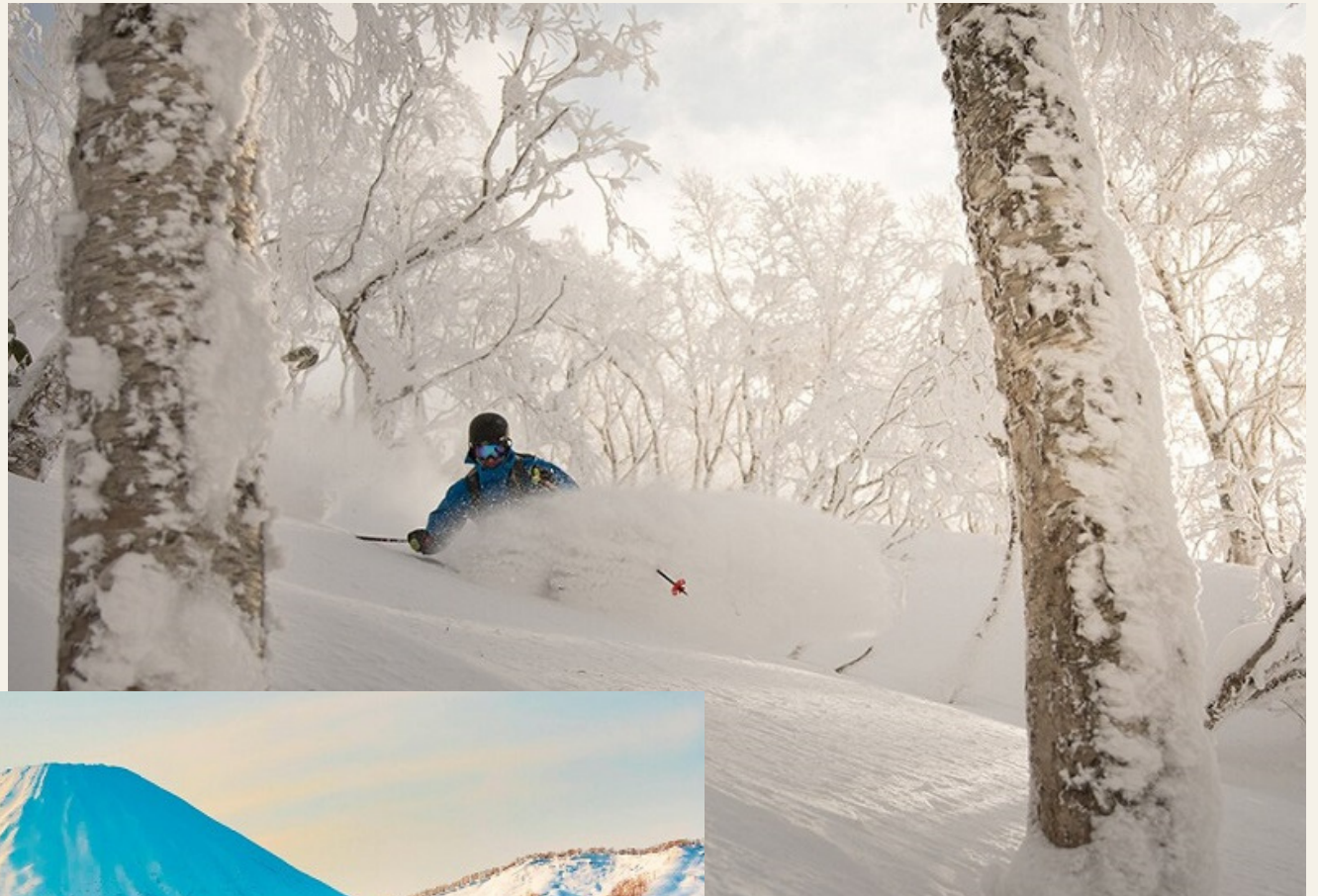




## Skiing in Japan

Japan is a world-class ski and snowboard destination with abundant, high-quality snow, beautiful scenery, and relaxing hot springs.

Most Ski resorts are located in Hokkaido or in the Japanese Alps (Central Japan). Contact us to prepare your winter sports tour in Japan.



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## Tour Accommodations

Rediscover Tours only select the best accommodations for your tour. To provide you a unique experience we offer a large range of accommodation styles.

Over the years we have selected the best Hotels, Ryokans, Minshukus,... all around Japan. Based on your taste and the destinations you would like to visit we will give you the best options.

We created the following pages to help you better understand the different types of accommodations you can find in Japan.

### Ryokan Japanese Inns

Ryokan are Japanese inns offering Japanese-style rooms. There are many different types and styles of ryokans and their quality can vary greatly according to the price. Many offer full course traditional dinner and breakfast. Ryokan can be found in most areas in Japan, including in the heart of large cities as well as in the remote countryside.

### Western Hotel

There are two main kinds of Western Style hotels in Japan: business hotels and regular Western-style hotels. Regular Western-style hotels are similar to hotels found in most Western countries while business hotels cater to business people who are traveling and simply need basic accommodation.





### Minshuku

A minshuku is usually a small, wooden, Japanese-style building. The building is generally not very big, and the rooms are Japanese-style but not as large as the rooms in Japanese ryokans. While the building and rooms are usually clean and comfortable, the rooms and hallways are sometimes dark and a bit drafty. A minshuku tries to project a “homey” atmosphere and guests are served home-style Japanese cooking. Minshukus are generally inexpensive and the owners pride themselves on their friendly, personalized service.



### Shukubo

A great way to experience traditional Japanese culture is by staying at a shukubo, a Buddhist Temple lodging. While the style of accommodation can sometimes be very basic the cuisine is often very good. The temple monks serve vegetarian meals known as shojin ryori, and at most temples guests are welcome to attend the early morning prayer ceremonies.



### Rural Vacation House

For those who like to travel independently or simply would like to relax without staff around you, renting a Japanese house is a unique experience. We invite you to discover the beauty of Japanese architecture and you will have the entire house to yourself or your group.





### Machiya

Stay in a renovated Japanese home located in a neighborhood in Kyoto or Kanazawa and feel like a native. Your machiya townhouse is only rented out to one group at a time so you will have the entire house to yourself or your group. This is a great way to relax and feel Japanese culture.

### Home Stay

Staying at a Japanese home is probably the best way to meet and get to know the Japanese people and learn about the local culture. At a Japanese home, guests have the chance to eat home-cooked Japanese food, discover the local culture, and interact with the local people. Your room may be Japanese or Western Style

### Modern Japanese

A Modern Japanese inn will combine modern facilities with a unique Japanese architecture. Enjoy a comfortable stay in traditional Japanese atmosphere.





## **Kakunodate**

Kakunodate is a former castle and samurai town in Akita Prefecture. It's located in a remote area of northern Honshu, the main island of Japan. Its samurai and merchant districts are relatively unchanged from its founding in 1620. At one time about 80 families lived in Kakunodate's samurai district. Several well-preserved houses dating back to the town's early years provide a glimpse into the life of a samurai.

### **How to get around** **Northern Japan**

Trains are very convenient in Japan but in Hokkaido, a rental car will give many more options. Your custom tour organizer will include all of the details you will need to take your tour. It will have directions to your hotels and ryokan inns, train or other transportation details from destination to destination, meeting locations to tours, suggested sightseeing, and all the other details that you require. It will also include the phone number of our Japan office to support you while you are in Japan.



### **When to go**

In Tohoku, Spring (March and April) and Autumn (October and September) are clearly the best but summer is also pretty good (less hot than Tokyo or Kyoto). Hokkaido is the best in January or February. The list of possible activities is long: Powder snow, Sapporo Snow Festival, Ice breaker cruise,...

### **Customize Your Trip**

In this brochure and on our website you can find suggested itineraries. If none of our tours match exactly what you have in mind that is OK. Just let us know what destinations you like or what kinds of sights or activities you enjoy. We will create a private tour for you.

### **Prices**

Your private tour will be custom build just for you and will be built to stay within your stated budget. [Contact us](#) for more details.



## Suggested Itineraries

The suggested itineraries are for your inspiration only as your trip will be created for you and there are many more options available.

Contact us to start planning your itinerary.



### Best of Northern Japan

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Tokyo
- **Day 2** - Travel to Nikko - Stay at a Ryokan  
Nikko's colorful shrines and temples
- **Day 3** - Aizu Wakamatsu - Samurai Town  
Visit Tsuruga Castle or Aizu Bukeyashik
- **Day 4** - Aizu Wakamatsu  
Day Trip with Private Local Guide in Ouchijuku
- **Day 5** - Aizu Wakamatsu - Day Trip to Urabandai
- **Day 6** - Matsushima - Visit the Bay  
Free Time
- **Day 7** - Travel to Yamadera  
Scenic Temple
- **Day 8** - Travel to Ginzan Onsen  
Well-known hot spring town
- **Day 9** - Kakunodate  
Former castle and samurai town.
- **Day 10** - Travel to Nyuto Onsen  
Maybe the best hot spring in Japan
- **Day 11** - Free Time in Nyuto Onsen  
Enjoy several baths in town
- **Day 12** - Back to Tokyo
- **Day 13** - Final day  
Fly home with unique memories

### Discover Hokkaido Tour

- **Day 1** - Airport Pick Up, Orientation and first night in Sapporo
- **Day 2** - Day Trip to Otaru  
Quaint town with a lovely canal district
- **Day 3** - Travel to Furano:  
Summer or Winter Wonderland
- **Day 4** - Furano - Free Time  
Furano winery, Flower fields,...
- **Day 5** - Travel to Abashiri  
Stay at a Hot Spring Ryokan
- **Day 6** - Abashiri  
Frozen Sea in Winter, Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples,...
- **Day 7** - Head to Kawayu Onsen
- **Day 8** - Travel to Kushiro  
Delicious Seafood
- **Day 9** - Free Time in Kushiro  
Shitsugen National Park and its famous Japanese Cranes
- **Day 10** - Sapporo - Back to the City
- **Day 11** - Final day  
Fly home with memories you will keep for the rest of your life

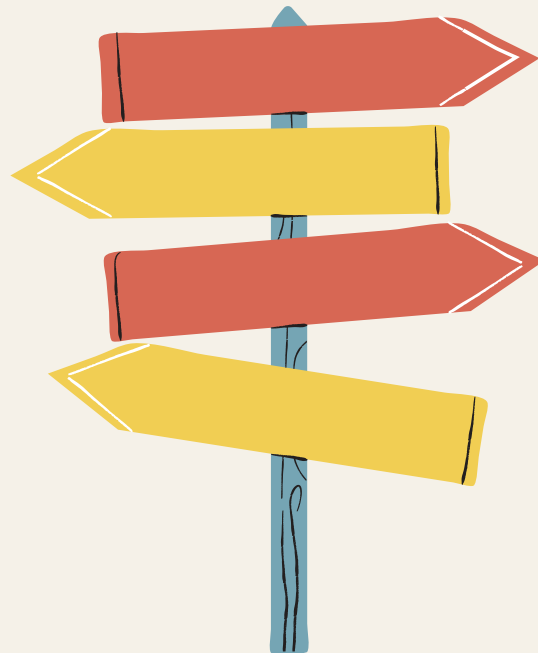


## Our Guides

They will make the difference between a good day and an experience that you will never forget. Rediscover Tours only hire the best guides for your tour.

Years after years we have selected the best specialists around Japan. Hiring a great guide will add a whole new depth to your time in Japan and the destination you are exploring.

All of our guides are extremely professional and knowledgeable. They will meet you at your hotel, listen to your travel style, and will suggest a sightseeing itinerary that is specifically designed for you.





## Greetings & Language

Like anything new, it takes some practice to communicate in Japanese but it is also a lot of fun, and as you meet and interact with the Japanese they will be thrilled you took the time and effort to learn their most basic social customs.



- It's nice to meet you. My name is... – Hajimemashite ("ha-ji-may-ma-she-tay") (your name) Desu ("dess").
- Yes – Hai
- No – Iie ("E-ay")
- Good Morning – Ohayo Gozaimasu ("O-hi-yo Go-zai-mass")
- Good Afternoon – Konnichiwa ("Kon-ni-chi-wa")
- Good Evening – Konbanwa ("Kon-ban-wa")
- Good Night (before going to bed) – Oyasuminasai ("Oya-su-me-na-sigh")
- Goodbye – Sayonara ("Sa-yo-na-ra")
- Excuse Me/ Pardon Me/ I'm Sorry – Sumimasen ("Su-me-ma-sen")
- Please (when offering something) – Dozo
- After You (when telling someone to go ahead of you) – Dozo
- Please (when requesting something) – Kudasai ("Ku-da-sigh")
- Thank You – Doumo Arigatou ("Dough-mo Areh-ga-toe")
- You're Welcome – Douitashimashite ("Dough-ita-shi-ma-she-tay")





## Contact Us

Give us a call at +1-248-747-4048

Or use our website:

[www.RediscoverTours.com](http://www.RediscoverTours.com)

## Inside a House/Ryokan

During your tour with Rediscover Tours, you may be staying at a Japanese house and/or a 'ryokan' (Japanese inn). When entering a house or ryokan, you may be asked to take off your shoes at the entrance. Either leave them on the floor facing out or put them in the shoebox or shoe shelf. After you take care of your shoes, change into a pair of house slippers. It is customary to wear these slippers throughout the building. The only time you should take them off is when you enter a tatami mat room, bathroom, or restroom. On tatami mats please wear your socks or your bare feet. In the restroom, change into the restroom slippers which you will find when you open the restroom door. Please do not forget to change back into your house slippers when you leave the restroom.







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