



JAPANESE GUEST HOUSES



// GUIDE
TO YOUR

RYOKANS //



YOUR RYOKAN EXPERTS



YOUR RYOKAN EXPERTS

Staying at a Japanese Ryokan is an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life. Each ryokan is unique so you need a ryokan expert that you can trust to guide you on your selection and to ensure that your reservation is made just the way you want it.

Japanese Guest Houses carefully curates and maintains a personal relationship with each of our ryokans. We do this so we know the personality of the ryokan, what they offer, and how to match your ideal ryokan to your personal travel style.

This approach may seem old fashion but we believe personal service is important and that your trip deserves this attention to detail. This might be your only trip to Japan so we will do all we can to ensure you are in the ryokan of your dreams.

Contact [Japanese Guest Houses](#) to reserve your perfect ryokan today!



THE PERFECT JAPANESE EXPERIENCE

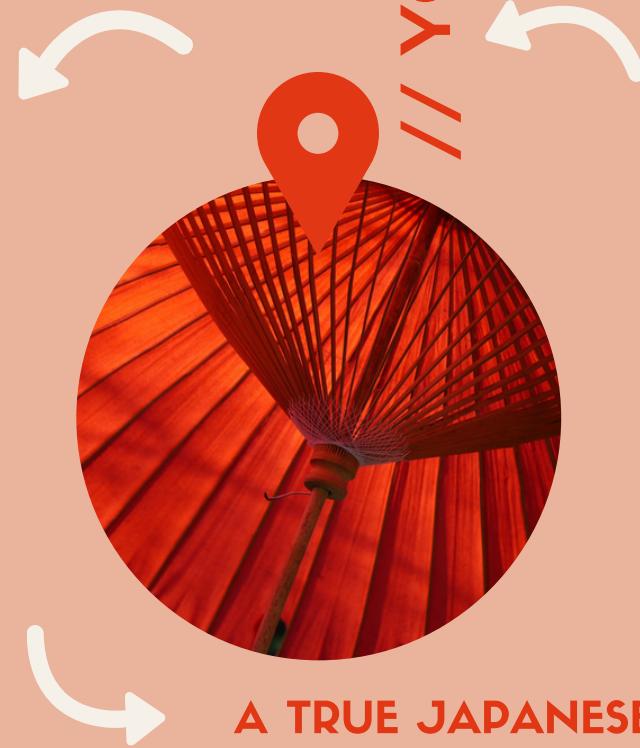
RYOKAN & TEMPLE EXPERTS //

We only work with the best ryokans and temples. Our ryokan experts are here to answer all your questions and to make your stay just as you want it.



PERSONALIZED SERVICE //

Staying at a ryokan is not like spending the night at a hotel. It's a unique experience. Let us know if you have something to celebrate, food allergies, wish for a specific room... we will do our best to fulfil your requests.



// YOUR STAY

FINEST RYOKANS //

Staying in a Japanese ryokan is an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life. Year after year we have selected the best ryokan all around Japan.



A TRUE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE //

Staying at a ryokan will bring you back to the true senses of life. Fine dining, hot springs bathing, sleeping in Japanese futons, wearing a Japanese yukata are some of the elements that will make your stay memorable.

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 tour 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, so my wife and I started Japanese Guest Houses, a ryokan reservation service that focuses on a curated selection of the best ryokans in Japan and personal service. We wanted to show international travelers Japanese hospitality by opening the world of ryokans to them. A big part of Japanese hospitality is personal service and attention to detail so we decided to personally respond to each request.

Today Japanese Guest Houses works with over 500 ryokans all over Japan that meet our high standards and we maintain a personal relationship with each of them. This might seem old fashion but your trip is important and staying at any ryokan that you randomly found online is too risky. You deserve an amazing ryokan experience that was personally reserved by your ryokan expert.



WHY USE JGH?

Personal Reservation Service

Ryokan Reservation Experts

Curated Ryokan Selection

Staying at a Japanese Ryokan is an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life

HOW IT WORKS

- Choose Ryokan
- Request Availability and Price
- Receive Availability and Price Email
- Confirm Reservation
- Receive Your Confirmation Email
- Enjoy Your Stay



THIS BROCHURE

Reading this brochure, you'll find suggested destinations, travel tips, and some of our favorite ryokans to visit, but these are for your inspiration only as there are many more options available.

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WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE SAY?



I wanted to thank Japanese Guest Houses for helping me reserve the enchanting, famous Tawaraya Ryokan for my birthday. As you may know, Tawaraya Ryokan does not have a website, and it typically only accepts reservations by fax. What's more, there are only eight rooms on the first floor! I had thought it was impossible.
Thanks to Japanese Guest Houses



Highly recommended!!
This was my second time dealing with the folks at Japanese Guest Houses.
Thanks to them, I had a very fuss free experience for my recent stay in Shirakawago.
Definitely will engage them again for my next ryokan trip!



Great service if you want to experience a proper ryokan but don't speak Japanese.
JGH take care of everything for you. All you have to do is decide where you want to go and they will make all the arrangements.



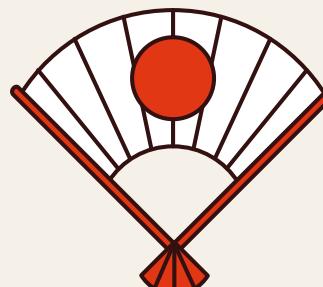
Booking our ryokan in Tsumago was easy through this site. Information and reviews on their listing were accurate. Great stay at Matsushiroya in Tsumago!



I do not travel to Japan without consulting their ryokan (traditional inn) listings. I've used them half a dozen times in the last 10 years. They are friendly and 100% reliable.



Thank you very much for booking and give us a lot of information about trip to Shirakawago. Fast reply and very kindness. We will go to Shirakawago again.



RYOKAN STYLES

No two ryokans are the same, and the quality of ryokan varies dramatically. On the low end of the scale is what we call a “Simple Ryokan” and at the upper end of the scale is our “Luxurious Ryokan.” In general, you get what you pay for. If you are only paying 8,000 yen per guest then expect the basic, no-frills, ryokan experience. On the other hand, if you are paying 40,000 yen or more per guest then you will probably have an exceptional ryokan experience with wonderful food, a gorgeous room, a Japanese cypress bath, a view of a Japanese garden, first-class service, and so on. We have created a list of ryokan styles to help you better understand the different types of ryokans and what to expect if you stay at one of them:

SIMPLE RYOKAN

A simple ryokan offers guests a basic, “no-frills” version of a Japanese ryokan. The building is usually plain and looks more like a small inn or hotel than a Japanese ryokan. Inside a simple ryokan, there is a little traditional atmosphere but nothing like what you would see in a traditional or modern ryokan. The rooms will be Japanese-style but the attention detail will be lacking and it might be in need of some repair. A simple ryokan is a ryokan experience “on the cheap,” a ryokan experience without the usually higher ryokan prices found in other traditional or modern ryokans. A simple ryokan is perfect for you if you are on a budget but still want to stay at a ryokan.

Ex: [Heianbo](#)



MODERN RYOKAN

A modern ryokan gives travelers a wonderful balance between traditional Japanese styling and modern comfort. Most are renovated traditional buildings that maintain traditional Japanese aesthetics yet offer modern conveniences like modern insulation, sound damping technology, central heating, modern bedding, and ensuite baths. The innkeepers at modern ryokan pay careful attention to details whether the building is new or renovated. Many modern ryokans serve dinner but others do not. A modern ryokan is right for you if you want an authentic Japanese experience but also want to be comfortable.

Ex: Nazuna Kyoto Gosho



TRADITIONAL RYOKAN

A traditional ryokan is a Japanese inn in the truest sense of the term. The owners take great pride in preserving the building's traditional atmosphere and history. Indeed, the preservation of the ryokan in its original form is deemed more important than catering to the comfort of the guests. Staying in a traditional ryokan would be like staying in a European castle – a wonderful atmosphere but at the expense of hotel-style comfort. The Japanese-style rooms and baths are comfortable but they can be dark and drafty. Most traditional ryokans serve kaiseki meals in guests' rooms which is a highlight for most travelers. A traditional ryokan is ideal for travelers wishing to experience old and traditional Japan.

Ex: Hoshi Onsen Chojukan



LUXURIOUS RYOKAN

A luxurious ryokan puts the guests' experience above all else. The owners and staff go out of their way to make sure the guests are treated like royalty; in other words, Japanese hospitality at its finest. The Japanese-style rooms and baths are very comfortable, and the traditional, "kaiseki-style" meals are outstanding. Luxurious ryokans are expensive but are well worth it for the seasoned traveler.

Ex: [Asaba Ryokan, Gora Kadan](#)



RYOKAN HOTEL

From the outside, a ryokan hotel looks like a normal hotel and when a guest enters the building the lobby looks like a hotel lobby. A ryokan hotel is large and often has amenities like a karaoke room, bar, gift shop, coffee shop, and the like. The only real difference between a hotel and a ryokan hotel is the ryokan hotel has Japanese-style rooms and baths but there may also be Western-style rooms. Meals are often served in the guests' rooms though some are served in dining rooms. Ryokan hotels are ideal for families or for travelers staying in colder areas.

Ex: [Hiranoya, Konanso](#)



MINSHUKU – FAMILY RUN INN

A minshuku is usually a small family-run inn with a homey atmosphere and a welcoming innkeeper. Guest rooms are Japanese-style but not as large as the rooms in Japanese ryokans and often do not have ensuite baths or toilets. While the building and rooms are usually clean and comfortable, the rooms and hallways can sometimes be 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. Minshuku are perfect for travelers looking to engage with Japanese people on a personal level and are not focused on modern comforts.

Ex: Minshuku Shimada



SHUKUBO – BUDDHIST TEMPLE

A shukubo or Buddhist temple accommodation is a great way to experience traditional Japanese culture. Shukubo can be found all over Japan but the best place to stay in one is in Koyasan (Mt Koya), just south of Osaka. Shukubo are often housed in older traditional buildings that can be drafty like a traditional ryokan. Rooms rarely have private baths or toilets. The best part of a shukubo is the shojin ryori or monks' cuisine which are vegetarian meals prepared by the monks. In the morning travelers will have a chance to observe the monks' morning prayers before breakfast. A night at a shukubo is perfect for travelers wishing to understand the spiritual side of Japan while also having an amazing dinner.

Ex: Shojoshin-in



GASSHO-ZUKURI MINSHUKU

A gassho-zukuri minshuku is a type of family-run inn found primarily in [Shirakawa-go](#) and [Ainokura](#). The thatched roof of these inns is very steep due to the heavy snowfall in this area, if the roofs were flat then the farmhouses would have been crushed by the weight of the snow. At the center, travelers will find a sunken hearth known as an irori and is where a home-cooked dinner is served. The smoke from the irori is filtered through the roof as a way of waterproofing and insect repellent. The downside is the inns will smell like a campfire and soot may be found on the walls. All bathing and toilet facilities are shared as adding private baths would destroy the aesthetics of the inn. If you want to see how farmers lived during the Edo period then a gassho-zukuri minshuku is a great place to stay.

Ex: [Yomoshiro](#)



HOME-STAY

The perfect option if you want to have contact with a Japanese family. Learn more about the culture, customs, and lifestyle in Japan. 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.

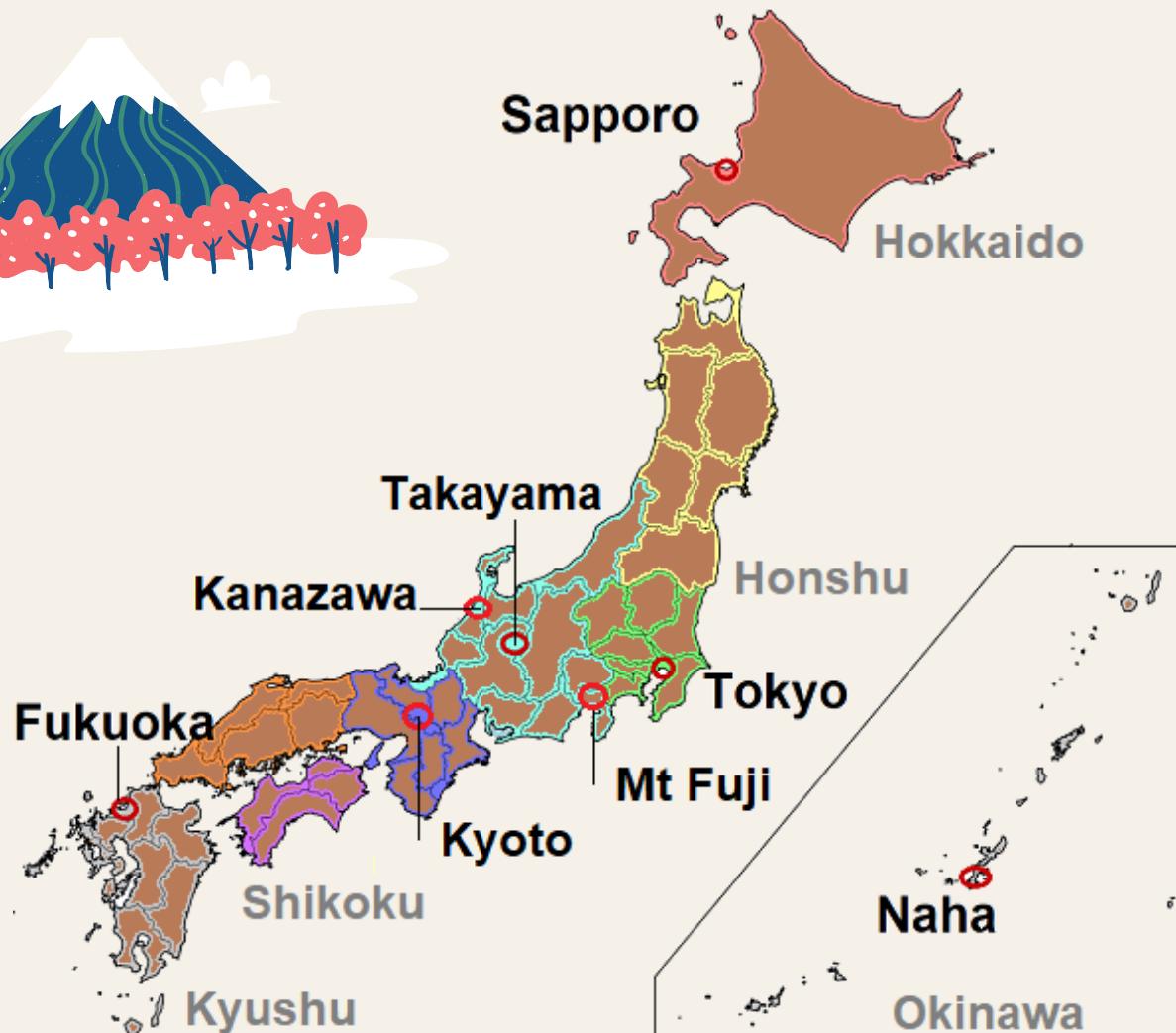
Ex: [Rural Kyoto Homestays](#)



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 on the Nakasendo Trail in Magome

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. 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 the magnificent torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima.

Tokyo

Tokyo is the best of modern Japan. From fashion, anime to Michelin starred restaurants

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.

Tsumago / Magome

Tsumago/Magome is a well-preserved post town in the Kiso Valley, Nagano Prefecture. It is located along the old Nakasendo trail and remains much as it was during the Edo Period.

www.JapaneseGuestHouses.com

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).

Miyajima

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

Mt Fuji

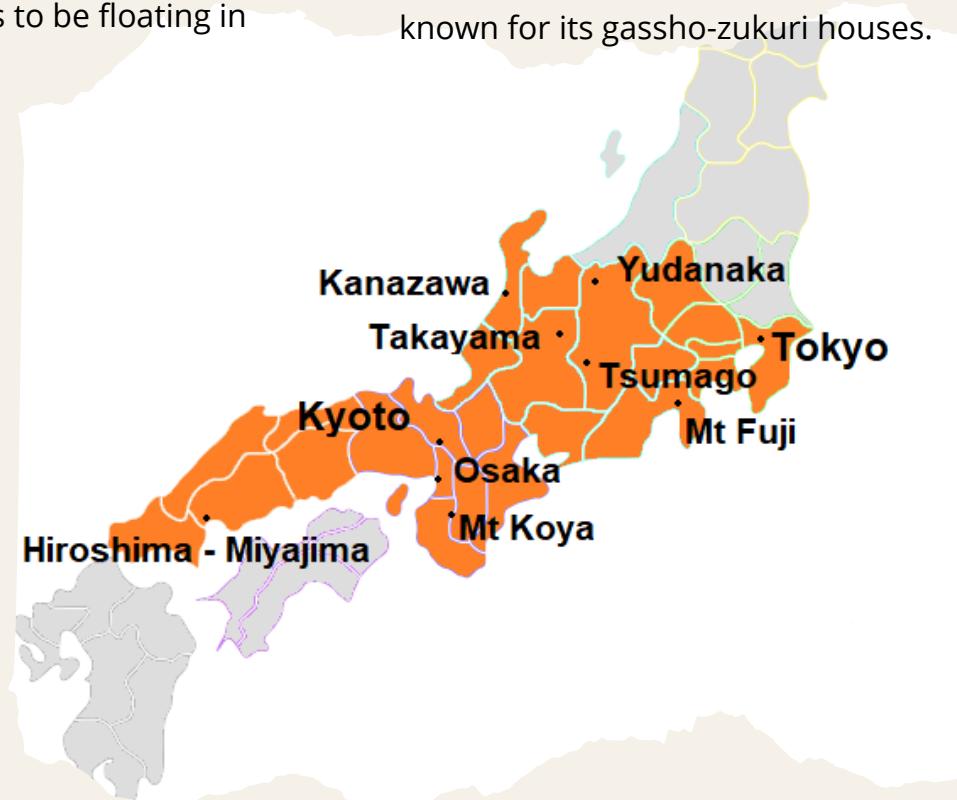
Long worshiped as sacred, Mt Fuji is one of Japan's "Three Holy Mountains." Its almost perfectly symmetrical shape attracts artists and photographers.

Yudanaka

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.



TRAIN IN JAPAN

Little did I know that I was going to train heaven when I moved to Japan. This country has an extensive train system and it is super-efficient. The trains run on time and leave frequently. The main passenger rail company, Japan Railways (JR), operates 26,000 trains daily on average. Although you sometimes have to change trains several times on a voyage, you can get almost everywhere in Japan by train, even from one main island to another, whether by the world's longest tunnel or an oversized bridge. The country's investment in its passenger train infrastructure is staggering.

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).

BULLET TRAIN LINES

TOKAIDO SHINKANSEN

SANYO SHINKANSEN

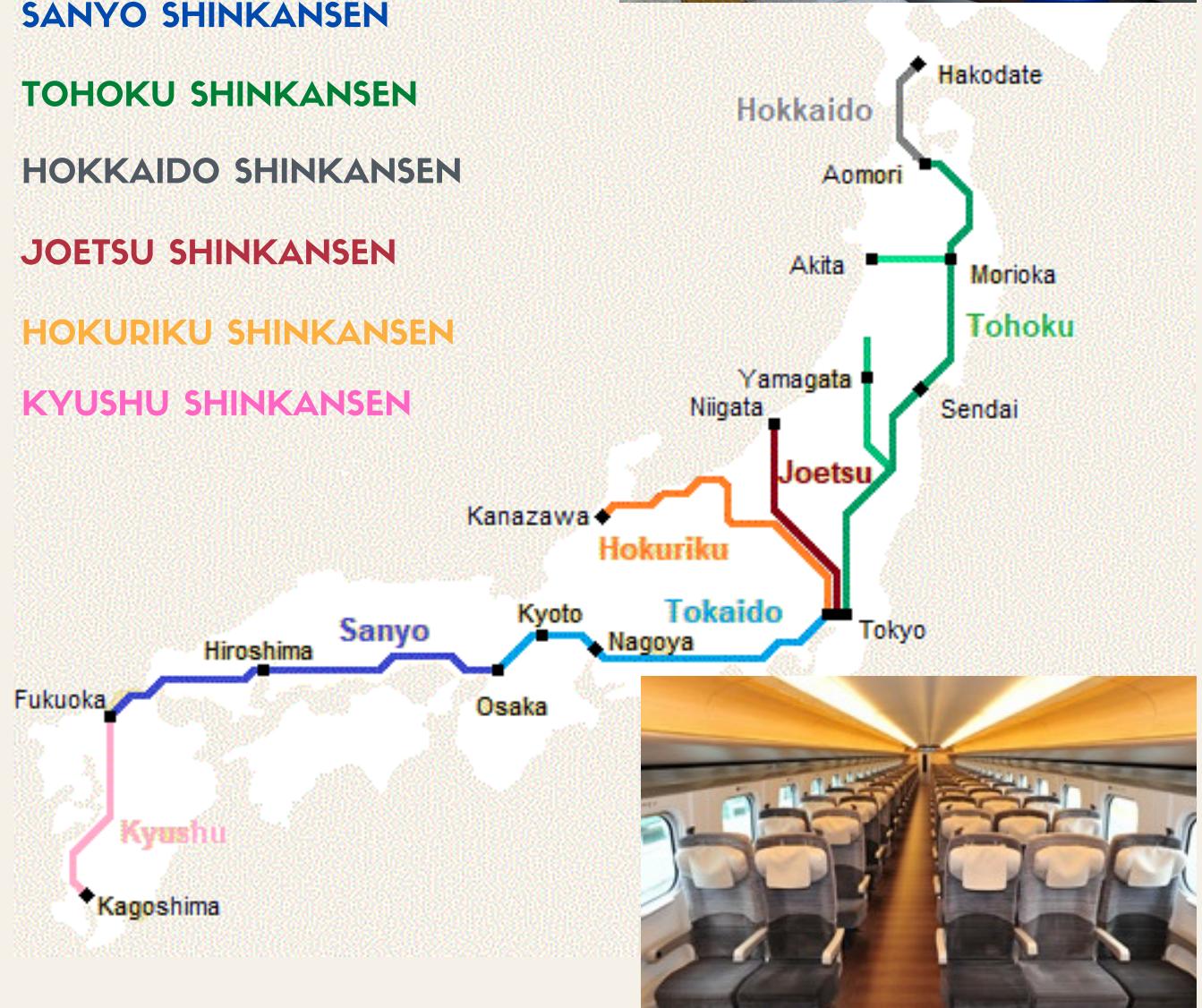
TOHOKU SHINKANSEN

HOKKAIDO SHINKANSEN

JOETSU SHINKANSEN

HOKURIKU SHINKANSEN

KYUSHU SHINKANSEN





KYOTO

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. [Contact us](#) to arrange your stay at a ryokan in 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.



Hiiragiya Ryokan

Hiiragiya Ryokan is a Traditional Ryokan which opened for business in 1818 and is one of the finest ryokans in Kyoto. It has been operated by the same family for 6 generations. This 2-story wooden ryokan has Japanese-style guest rooms. From some of the rooms, guests can enjoy the view of Hiiiragiya Ryokan's Japanese garden. This ryokan has "family baths" where you can reserve some private time in the public bath (not a hot spring bath). These baths are open from 15:00 to 23:00 and from 7:00 am to 10:00 (please ask at the front desk for details).

Hiiragiya Ryokan serves the finest Kyoto-style Japanese "kaiseki" (formal, traditional Japanese cuisine) on traditional ceramic pottery and lacquerware. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am. Parking is available. Attention: The staff will take all luggage to and from the guest rooms - the interior of this building is very valuable.

Sowaka

Sowaka is a luxurious ryokan located in the heart of Gion (Traditional district in Kyoto). Sowaka is a Sanskrit word meaning happiness or well-being. It is a word of blessing, often spoken at the end of the Buddhist sutras that echo through the innumerable temples of Kyoto. Once across the stone threshold, you are instantly transported to an oasis of calm. Relax in one of Sowaka's 23 individually designed rooms, listening to gentle breezes blow through the green and tranquil courtyard. All rooms are Japanese-Western style. Situated in the charming neighborhood of Gion and Yasaka, the hotel effuses ethereal elegance in its luxurious space combining nostalgia with modernity. Its building is about 100 years old.



Kikokuso

Kikokuso is a 2 story wooden Traditional Ryokan with a genuine family atmosphere and is conveniently located in central Kyoto. Kikokuso has 5 Japanese-style guest rooms and a very pretty Japanese garden. This is an old-fashioned traditional ryokan and only one guest room with a private bath and toilet - the other 4 guest rooms do not have private baths or toilets. There is also a shared rock bath for the guests, and traditional Kyoto style cuisine is served as well. Check-in time is after 16:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am. There is limited paid parking available.



Arashiyama Benkei

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

Kawashima Ryokan

Kawashima Ryokan is a Traditional Ryokan conveniently located near many of the best places to go sightseeing in Kyoto, including the historic Gion district and a number of old temples. This traditional ryokan has been in business since 1901, and it is currently in its third generation of family ownership. Traditional Japanese meals are served to guests at Kawashima Ryokan. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am. English and French are spoken. There are 5 rooms at Kawashima Ryokan. They have a bath "Family Bath" that guests use one (or small group) at a time.



Ryokan Motonago

Ryokan Motonago is a Traditional Ryokan that opened over 30 years ago and the building is over 100 years old. Originally, the building was a private house so each room is unique and has its own different style and design. Ryokan Motonago is a cozy and friendly Traditional Ryokan with 11 traditional Japanese-style rooms, and Kyoto-style meals are served in the guest rooms. There are also shared baths (same gender only) for both women and men. Situated near the Gion district, the Motonago Ryokan provides guests with easy access to such historical landmarks as Kodaiji Temple, Kiyomizu Temple, and Yasaka Shrine.



Izuyasu Ryokan

Izuyasu Ryokan is a Traditional Ryokan (opened in 1839 and remodeled in 2013) perfectly located in the center of Kyoto, it takes only a few minutes by walk from the JR Kyoto train station to the ryokan. This ryokan is a real illustration of the historical ryokans in Kyoto. The ryokan staff will welcome you and make you feel comfortable in their hotel, they do speak basic English. In this ryokan, guests have a chance to experience the Kyoto Kaiseki. If you want to stay in a traditional place very convenient for sight-seeing it is a very good choice.



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 Okunooin 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 Dinner

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 chawanmushi. 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.



Shojoshin-in

Shojoshin-in is a large traditional Buddhist Temple and one of the oldest temples on Mount Koya (Koyasan) - built 3 years before Kongobuji Temple. Shojoshin-in has Japanese style guest rooms as well as a "Hanare" (private guest residence which has a private bath and toilet), Japanese style gardens, and a pond. Shojoshin-in provides shared baths for both women and men, and "shojin-ryori" or Buddhist Monk vegetarian meals without meat or fish of any kind are served to the guests. The early morning service is followed by a short tour of the temple's treasures (in Japanese). Shojoshin-in usually performs a fire ceremony at 13:00. It's not every day so please ask for it during check-in. This temple has a great location at the beginning of the tomb-lined pathway to Okunoin, making it convenient for your late-night stroll to the mausoleum. Originating as a thatched hut built by Kukai more than 1,150 years ago and once the second-largest temple in Koyasan after Kongobuji, today it boasts attractive 150-year-old buildings, including a large wooden structure with rooms overlooking a small garden and pond. In total there are 21 rooms at Shojoshin-in.

Eko-in

A 1000-year-old Buddhist temple, Eko-in offers Japanese style guest rooms and one of them has a private bath and toilet. All of the guest rooms have a garden view. Guests are free to attend morning services and the Goma fire ritual. Guests can participate in meditation sessions from 16:30. Sessions can be translated into English and English brochures are available if there is no interpreter. WiFi is available in public areas and is free of charge. Rooms feature tatami-mat flooring, comfortable futon bedding, and paper sliding screens. Eko-in provides shared baths (same gender only) for both women and men, and the public baths are open from 16:00-22:00 and 06:00-09:00 daily. Eko-in is close to other ancient Buddhist buildings such as Kongobu-ji Temple, which is a 10-minute walk. The Ichinohashi entrance to the ancient Okunoin cemetery is a 3-minute walk away. Meals are served at the guest room at 17:30 basically and feature Buddhist vegetarian cuisine. Groups of 4 or more persons dine in the Japanese style dining room.



Rengejo-in

Rengejo-in is a traditional Buddhist Temple, or Shukubo in Japanese, located near the Mount Koya cable car station. Rengejo-in has interesting temple architecture, a traditional Japanese garden, and 46 Japanese-style guest rooms. Rengejo-in provides shared baths for both women and men, and “shojin ryori” or Buddhist Monk vegetarian meals are served to the guests. Check-in time is after 3:00 pm and check-out time is before 9:00 am. Parking is available and some English is spoken.





TOKYO

Even a modern city like Tokyo features ryokans. Although there are not many traditional ryokan because most of the city was destroyed during the great earthquake in 1923, 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 23 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, attracting a constant flow of visitors.

Homeikan

Homeikan is a traditional ryokan located near Tokyo University and Tokyo Dome in a quiet part of the city, this Traditional Ryokan has two buildings: a "Honkan" and a "Bekkan". Originally a private residence, Homeikan has a history of 100 years and, as a result, it is a little run down; however, it has a lot of character and atmosphere and there is also a beautiful Japanese garden at the "Bekkan." Homeikan is a traditional ryokan and none of the Japanese-style guest rooms have private baths or toilets. There are 3 shared baths here and the baths are open 24 hours a day. Homeikan does not have a curfew so guests are free to enjoy the Tokyo nightlife.

Ryokan Asakusa Shigetsu

Ryokan Asakusa Shigetsu is a Ryokan Hotel located in the most traditional part of urban Tokyo. This six-story Ryokan Hotel has 28 Japanese and Western-style guest rooms. Ryokan Asakusa Shigetsu is centrally located near Nakamise-dori, which is the main street in Asakusa. On the 6th floor, there are shared Japanese "hinoki" (cypress) baths for both women and men (same gender only) with views of the Asakusa district. On the 1st floor of the ryokan, there is a restaurant called Hozuki which serves traditional Japanese cuisine. Guests can connect to the Internet in the hotel lobby, and there is also Internet connectivity in the guest rooms. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am.

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.

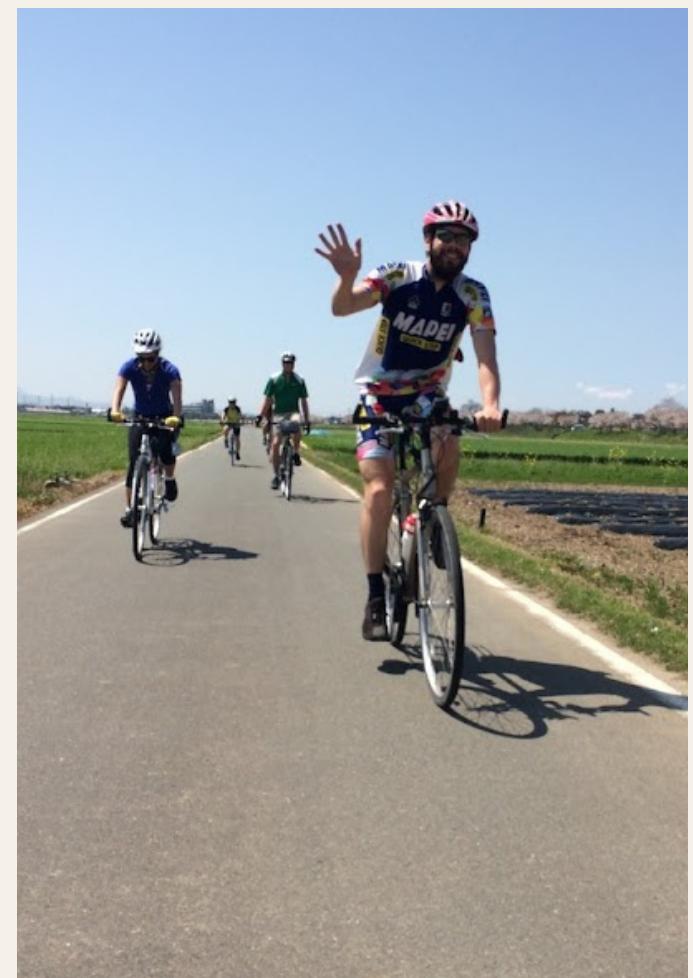
Shimanami Kaido

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? Our sister company, [Rediscover Tours](#) can arrange a full cycling tour all around Japan or combine some cycling rides with sightseeing days for you.



NARA

Less than 1 hour away from Kyoto stands Nara, an earlier capital. 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 or to visit some of the beautiful scenic mountains surrounding the city. Nara can easily be visited as a day trip from Kyoto.



Shikitei

Shikitei is a beautiful Traditional Ryokan conveniently located, close to Nara's world-famous Todaiji Temple and Nara Park. It's garden and kaiseki dinner are going to be the highlight of your stay. Shikitei was first established more than 100 years ago though it has been renewed several times, the last renovation was in 2000.



Senju-in Temple

Senju-in is a Buddhist Temple Shukubo located on the eastern side of Mt Ikoma, between Osaka and Nara, and has welcomed guests since the Edo period (1603 to 1868). There are 14 guest rooms available and none of the guest rooms have private baths or toilets. Senju-in is made up of two buildings, the Honkan which is a 2 story building, and the Shinkan which is a 4 story building. From the Honkan guests will enjoy a garden view while from the Shinkan guest rooms have a mountain view. In this shukubo temple, guests are served "Shojin-Ryori" (vegetarian kaiseki) in the dining room. There is a morning prayer that starts at 6:00 am. As guests of the Senju-in, you are invited to attend the prayer services. The prayer service is about 40 minutes long and is something you will remember for the rest of your life.



Gyokuzo-in Temple

Gyokuzo-in is a Buddhist Temple Shukubo which was established about 1400 years ago. It is located on the east side of Mt Ikoma, between Osaka and Nara. There is a morning prayer that starts around 6:00 am. As guests of Gyokuzo-in, you are invited to attend the prayer services. The prayer service is about 40 minutes long. There are 50 rooms at Gyokuzo-in. Only one of them has a private bath and toilet.



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).

Osaka is a modern city, so don't expect to stay at a traditional ryokan in the city center. But if you would like to stay at a Ryokan Hotel with a Japanese style room contact and we will arrange it for you.
www.JapaneseGuestHouses.com



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.



Chaya Ryokan

Chaya Ryokan is a Modern Ryokan conveniently located near JR Kanazawa train station. There are 22 Japanese-style rooms at Chaya Ryokan. Chaya Ryokan serves its guests fresh and delicious 10 course Japanese-style dinners. After a long day of sightseeing, guests can relax in the ryokan's wonderful baths (same gender only). Guests can leave their luggage at the ryokan prior to check-in and after checking out. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am. English is spoken at Chaya Ryokan.

Asadaya

Asadaya is more than 140 years old and the most famous ryokan, or traditional Japanese inn in Kanazawa. It has only 4 elaborate guest rooms in order to provide perfect services in accordance with the "sukiya" style of simplicity. It is an unforgettable dining experience combining traditional local cuisine, seasonal fish with refined dinner-ware.

SHIRAKAWA-GO

Shirakawa-go is widely known as one of the most scenic places in Japan. It is surrounded by pine tree-covered mountains, and it is located along the picturesque Shokawa River. Besides the beautiful scenery, the unique Japanese thatched-roof farmhouses are the center of attraction.

There are approximately 180 thatched farmhouses, sheds, and barns, and most of them were built about 200-300 years ago. The residents of Shirakawago still live in several small villages. The most popular village for travelers is Ogimachi which was declared a World Cultural and Heritage Site in 1995. Although it is off the beaten track, Shirakawa-go is well worth the visit.

An alternative destination to Shirakawa-go is Ainokura which also offers gassho-zukuri thatched roof farmhouse accommodations.



Shirakawago-Shimizu

Shirakawago-Shimizu is a Gassho-Zukuri thatched roof farmhouse inn with a 200-year-old history. There are 3 traditional Japanese-style guest rooms. There are shared bath and toilet facilities for the guests. Homemade Japanese-style cuisine is served to the guests at Shirakawago-Shimizu. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 9:00 am. Some English is spoken.



AINOKURA

High in the mountains of western Toyama Prefecture lies the village of Ainokura. Like Shirakawa-go in Gifu Prefecture, Ainokura is known for its Japanese thatched-roof farmhouses. The buildings are called "Gassho-Zukuri" or "hands-in-prayer," and there are about 20 Gassho-Zukuri in this village. 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. In 1995 Ainokura was listed as a World Heritage Site, and it has attracted many visitors from all over the country. Tourists can visit the Ainokura Minzoku-kan (Ainokura Folklore Museum), a Gassho-Zukuri that has been converted into an exhibition of local folklore items.



Yomoshiro

Yomoshiro is a Gasho-Zukuri minshuku and part of a world heritage site. This area gets an incredible amount of snow in the wintertime. Here you will have an authentic Japanese experience. Yomoshiro has four guest rooms and it is run by a warm welcoming family. Dinner there features vegetables that are collected by the father from the surrounding mountains and is prepared in the style of a traditional Japanese family.



BATHING in JAPAN

Taking a bath, rather than taking a shower, is very popular in Japan and public bathing (separated by gender) is an important part of the Japanese culture. In Japan, there are two purposes for 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 bathtub. 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 bathtub for a nice, relaxing soak. The bathtub 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. It is a wonderful feeling to soak in a nice hot bath and relax your muscles at the end of the day.



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, [contact us](#) to reserve your ideal ryokan.



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 (modern-day 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.



Tajimaya

Tajimaya is a Minshuku located in Magome along the Nakasendo road which was used extensively by travelers during the Edo Period. All the rooms at Tajimaya are Japanese-style, and all bathing and toilet facilities are shared among the guests. The Japanese "irori" (hearth) is over 100 years old and it is still in use. The owners of Tajimaya serve fresh, local cuisine in the ryokan's dining area and guests can relax in the wooden tubs after a long day's hike.



Minshuku Shimada

Minshuku Shimada is a minshuku located in a small traditional town on the Nakasendo trail. It is located close to the train station so you will be able to find it easily, and even if you can't the locals are more than willing to help. This minshuku has a very traditional look and the whole town looks like it is still in the Edo period. It has 10 rooms none of which includes a private bathroom. Your stay comes with a delicious dinner and breakfast featuring fish from the river vegetables from the mountains that surround the town.



Matsushiroya

This is a very cozy Minshuku and it first opened for business in 1804. With 8 Japanese-style rooms, Matsushiroya can accommodate up to 25 guests. All washroom and bathing facilities are shared among the guests. Traditional Japanese cuisine such as carp sashimi, grilled river fish, Japanese Koya-dofu, (freeze-dried tofu), and Japanese tora soba (soba noodles with yam topping) are served. Attention: Matsushiroya is closed for business on Wednesdays.



Kiso-Fukushima

Kiso-Fukushima is a beautiful little town in Nagano Prefecture, central Honshu, on the railway line between Nagoya and Matsumoto. Kiso-Fukushima is located on the historic Edo Period Nakasendo highway linking Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo).

Kiso-Fukushima was an important check-point on the Nakasendo and its historic sekisho, or barrier station, is one of only two on the route. Kiso-Fukushima is located about half-way between Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto.



HOME STAY

This is a unique opportunity to discover the rural side of Japan, in Kameoka just west of 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, or an antique shop
- Relax at the Hiyoshi Hot Springs, treat yourself to a Shiatsu massage
- Take a Bonsai workshop
- Visit the world's best whetstone excavation site
- Journey through rice paddies and farmlands to the historic mountain village of Miyama



HAKONE

Hakone is 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 to 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. Parts of the historical Tokaido highway, which used to be the main route connecting the Shogun's capital of Edo and the imperial city of Kyoto, are still intact. A checkpoint used during the Edo Period (1600-1868), has been rebuilt. Its buildings and a small museum are open to visitors.

Hakone is ideally located between Tokyo and Kyoto which makes idea for your hot spring ryokan experience.



Gora Kadan

Gora Kadan is a Luxurious Ryokan and perhaps one of the most luxurious ryokans in 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 indoor and outdoor hot spring baths are open from 3:00 pm to 10:00 am. A swimming pool and sauna are also available to guests. Gora Kadan prepares Japanese meals and the menu changes each month. Check-in time is after 3:00 pm and check-in time is before 11:00am. English is spoken.

Kijitei Hoeiso

This Traditional Ryokan was constructed over 300 years ago and was moved from Hida Takayama 50 years ago where it was given a new life as a ryokan. The location of the ryokan was carefully selected due to its surrounding nature and river views. Kijitei Hoeiso has 18 rooms with private indoor hot spring baths and a hanare (private guest residence) without a private bath though you can bathe in one of the ryokan's open-air hot spring baths and enjoy the views of the river as it flows on by. The rooms have either garden, mountain, or river views, and meals are served in your room. The ryokan is about a 10-minute bus ride from Hakone-Yumoto Station.



SHUZENJI

Shuzenji is one of the Izu Peninsula's oldest hot springs and is revered all over Japan. It is located in the hilly center of the peninsula on the Katsuragawa River and is filled with history.

Shuzenji Temple is said to be founded by Kobo Daishi, one of Japan's most famous Buddhist priests, about 1200 years ago when he discovered a natural hot spring with an iron rod. Today this hot spring is called Tokko no Yu or iron rod hot spring and is used as a foot bath in the center of town.

During the Kamakura Period (1185 to 1333) Minamoto Yoriie, the second Shogun of the era, was imprisoned here in the Shigetsuden compound. Known for his brilliance from birth he was the subject of much jealousy from his family as was executed at the age of 23. Makes you feel that your own family issues are minor in comparison.

This is truly a hot spring town without a lot of touristy attractions. Here you can just sit back, relax, and enjoy a uniquely Japanese experience.

Arai Ryokan

This Luxurious Ryokan was built in 1872, and it embodies traditional Japanese style with its Japanese gardens, tatami mat rooms, and fine woodwork. There are 25 Japanese style guest rooms located in various private cottages at Arai Ryokan. A wooden bridge leads to the guest rooms, and the rooms themselves overlook either the Katsuragawa River or the courtyard with its large pond full of carp. Arai Ryokan's cavelike bathhouse was built in 1933, and thick cypress pillars together with massive rocks surround its many hot spring pools. There are both indoor and outdoor shared hot spring baths as well as private hot spring baths in some of the guest rooms. Furthermore, there are saunas and a "Family Bath" that can be reserved for private use. Arai Ryokan has a teahouse set in an orchard of 3,000 plum trees, and from there a wonderful view of Mount Fuji is available. Arai Ryokan serves traditional, formal Japanese cuisine in the privacy of each of the guest rooms.



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.

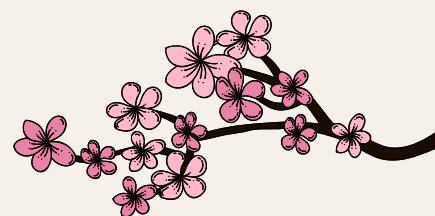


Iwaso

This wonderful luxurious ryokan, opened in 1893 was the first ryokan opened for business on Miyajima. Iwaso is situated in a very beautiful part of Momijidani Park and when it was first constructed the owner built a tea shop and planted the area with maple trees. Iwaso was constructed in the "miya-daiku" style, by the same craftsmen who built Japanese shrines. Previous guests have included famous authors, artists, and members of the Japanese royal family. There are 42 Japanese-style rooms located in 3 different buildings - the Shinkan, the Honkan, and the Hanare. The Honkan (original building) at Iwaso is the oldest one and it is more ornate and traditional than the Shinkan (annex). However, the rooms in the Honkan do not have private baths while the rooms in the Shinkan have private baths.

MT FUJI

In the southern part of Yamanashi Prefecture bordering Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan's tallest mountain, Mount Fuji, rises 3,776 meters (12,380 ft) above sea level. The mountain is most beautiful from October to May when the top of the mountain is covered with snow, and for the more adventurous the climbing season runs from July to September. Near Mount Fuji lies the Fuji Five Lakes district. During the summertime, this area is popular with tourists from nearby Tokyo. Lake Kawaguchi is a good starting point to climb Mount Fuji, and it also provides access to Mount Tenjo which has some wonderful views of Mount Fuji and the surrounding lakes.



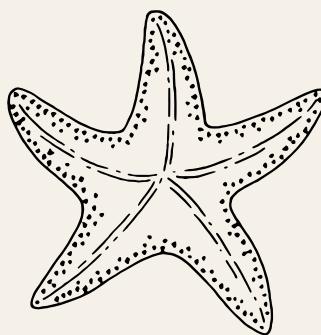
Hotel Konanso

This is an 8-story Ryokan Hotel with an amazing backdrop - Mount Fuji in all its splendor! There are 44 Japanese-style rooms and 7 Japanese-Western style rooms at the Hotel Konanso, and each guest room has its own private bath and toilet. On the 4th floor, there are indoor and outdoor shared hot spring baths for men as well as relaxation and sauna rooms. On the 5th floor, there are also indoor and outdoor shared hot spring baths for women as well as relaxation and sauna rooms. On the 6th floor, there is a "family bath" which families can privately reserve (ask at the front desk for details). Traditional Japanese-style cuisine is served to the guests at the Hotel Konanso.

INE

Welcome to Ine which is a town located around the Ine Bay in northern Kyoto Prefecture, about 15 KM (9 miles) north of Amanohashidate. This working town has a long and rich history as a fishing village and is regarded as one of the most beautiful villages in Japan.

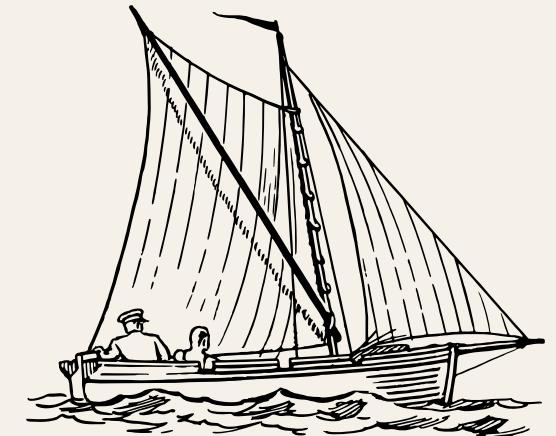
The unique aspect of Ine area is its funaya. Literally meaning "boat houses", these traditional waterfront buildings contain garages for boats on their first floors and residential space on the upper floors. Today there over 200 funaya remaining along the bay. A small number of them now serve as guest houses where visitors can stay the night and experience the funaya first-hand.



Fuga Funaya

Welcome to Fuga Funaya which is a traditional waterfront building inn with a garage for boats on the first floor and residential space on the upper floors. Fuga Funaya has 2 rooms.

Important: usually there is no staff at a Funaya. Only during check-in or check-out someone will assist you.



KURASHIKI

The name "Kurashiki" means "warehouse village," and during the 17 century, Kurashiki became a prosperous market where rice, cotton, and Japanese sake were collected from the surrounding area and shipped off to other parts of Japan. The warehouses of Kurashiki are still there, and this architecture gives this town its special appeal. Full of traditional Japanese-style buildings and canals, Kurashiki is one of the most picturesque towns in Japan and a great place to take some wonderful photos.



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Ryokan Kurashiki

This Traditional Ryokan was originally a merchants' storehouse for rice and sugar, and later it was converted into a ryokan. There are 5 combined Japanese and Western-style rooms at Ryokan Kurashiki. Guests are served seafood cuisine meals which comes from the nearby Seto Inland Sea.



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 specialize in a single type of food, while others offer a wide variety of food.



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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.

Ramen

Ramen is a Japanese noodle dish. 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 tonkatsu 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.



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.



Yudanaka Onsen Seifuso

This Traditional Ryokan was built in 1890. You can find very eccentric sculptures throughout the ryokan. Guests can relax in different styles of hot spring baths. Yamanaka Onsen Seifuso serves fresh, seasonal Japanese cuisine to their guests. In the winter please check-in to Yudanaka Onsen Seifuso early as there is a lot of snow on the road leading up to the ryokan.



SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Contact us to reserve the perfect ryokan along your itinerary and get some precious tips.



12 Day Route

- **Day 1** - First night in Tokyo
- **Day 2** - Full day in Tokyo
- **Day 3** - Tokyo,
Whatever you are into, Tokyo will surprise you
- **Day 4** - Travel to Hakone & Stay at Ryokan
Taste the Japanese Hospitality
- **Day 5** - Travel to Hiroshima
Visit the impressive Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum.
- **Day 6** - Travel to Miyajima & Stay at Ryokan
Admire the famous Torii gate
- **Day 7** - Bullet Train to Kyoto
- **Day 8** - Explore the ancient capital
- **Day 9** - Day Trip to 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

14 Day Route

- **Day 1** - First night in Tokyo
- **Day 2** - Full day in Tokyo
- **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 & Stay at Ryokan
Artisans and craftsmen town
- **Day 7** - Free Time in Takayama or Rural Cycling Tour
- **Day 8** - Bus to Shirakawa-go
Stay at a Thatched roof house
- **Day 9** - Travel to Kanazawa
Visit Kenrokuen Garden
- **Day 10** - Kyoto, Stay at a Traditional Ryokan
- **Day 11** - Full day in Kyoto
Explore the ancient capital
- **Day 12** - Day Trip to Nara
Its 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,...

Yufuin

To the west of Beppu is another famous hot spring resort - Yufuin Onsen. Known as the "town of morning mist," Yufuin is a mountain village home to a hot spring whose source is found at the foot of Mt. Yufu.

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.

Beppu

Beppu is located on the east coast of Kyushu island, sandwiched between the Seto Inland Sea and its steep mountains and hills.

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.

Yakushima

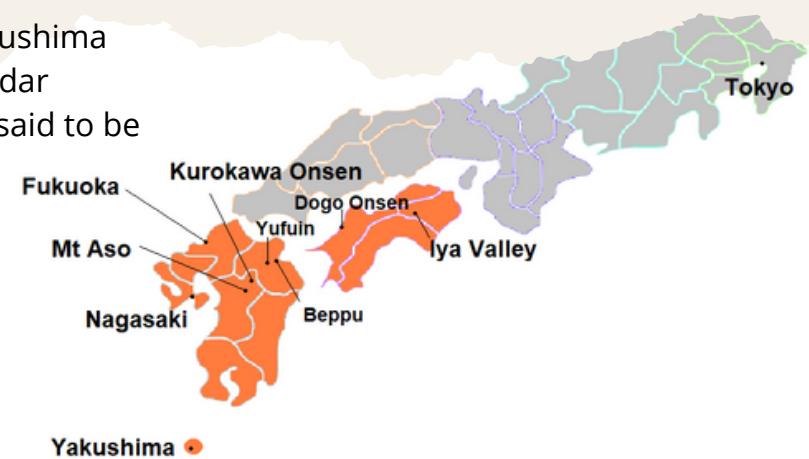
The subtropical island of Yakushima famous for its wildlife and cedar forests. The oldest trees are said to be over 7000 years old.

Dogo Onsen

This is one of the oldest hot spring areas in Japan, frequented by famous Japanese artists and the nobility since the 6th Century.

Iya Valley

Iya Valley on Shikoku 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.



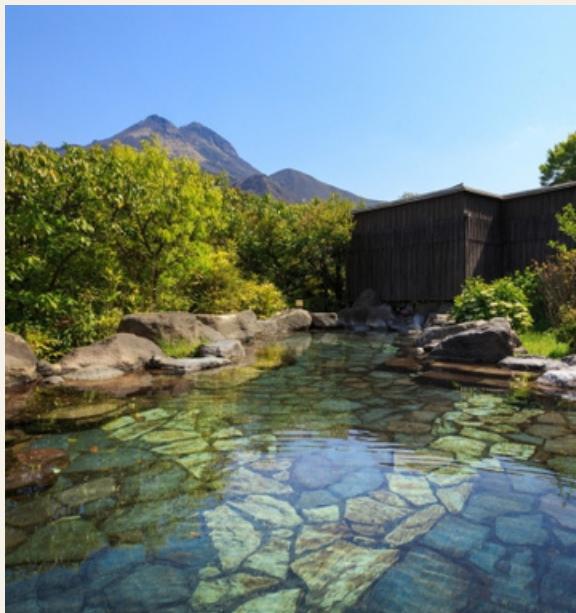


KYUSHU

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.

Hotaru

This is a Traditional Ryokan is located in the natural beauty that is Yufuin. The hot spring baths are known to help your skin and are the best way to relax after a long day of sightseeing. For dinner, you will enjoy fresh seafood, fish, Higo beef, and locally grown organic vegetables.



YUFUIN

To the west of Beppu is another famous hot spring resort - Yufuin Onsen. Known as the "town of morning mist," Yufuin is a mountain village home to a hot spring whose source is found at the foot of Mt. Yufu. There are 12 public hot spring baths as well as the famous Shitanyu hot spring which is located on the shore of Lake Kinrinko.

Kamenoi Besso

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.



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 Unsukyo 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.

Sanga Ryokan

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 you 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 Kurokawa Onsen Bus stop.



BEPPU

Beppu is located on the east coast of Kyushu island, sandwiched between the Seto Inland Sea and its steep mountains and hills. It has long been known as Japan's premier hot spring resort city. In fact, there is more hot spring water in Beppu than anywhere else in Japan. Over 100 hot spring resorts are located in this city of 125,000, and visitors from all over Japan flock to Beppu to relax in the hot spring pools, hot mud baths, and hot sand baths.

Seikai-Beppu

Welcome to Seikai-Beppu. This Ryokan Hotel has 24 Japanese-style guest rooms, and 12 of the guest rooms have their own private outdoor hot spring bath. There are indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only). Traditional Japanese-style seafood cuisine is served to the guests at Seikai-Beppu. Check-in time is after 3:00 pm and check-out time is before 10:00 am. Parking is available.

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.



SHIKOKU

Shikoku Island is the smallest of Japan's four main islands, and if you are looking for a quiet, relaxing escape then Shikoku Island is the perfect place to visit. The island offers beautiful scenery, a slow-paced lifestyle, and a number of interesting sights such as castles, an ancient Buddhist pilgrimage, and arts and crafts.

IYA VALLEY

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's main attractions are its natural beauty and the vine bridges that span some of the gorges.

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Hotel Iyaonsen

Hotel Iyaonsen is a modern ryokan with 23 Japanese guest rooms. There are indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only), and the indoor baths are open 24 hours a day. From the ryokan, guests board the cable car and go down to the river where the outdoor hot spring baths are located. Traditional Japanese-style cuisine is served to the guests at the Hotel Iyaonsen.



Hotel Hikyonoyu

Hotel Hikyonoyu is a very large 8-story hot spring Ryokan Hotel located in the lovely Iya Valley in Tokushima Prefecture. There are 2 buildings here a "Honkan" and a "Bekkan". Most of the guest rooms at the Hotel Hikyonoyu are traditional Japanese-style, and each guest room has its own private bath and toilet. There are 4 shared indoor hot spring baths for women, and 4 shared indoor hot spring baths for men. The indoor hot spring baths are open from 15:00 to 23:00 and 6:00 to 8:00. There are also 2 outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only) as well as saunas.



KOTOHIRA, KAGAWA

The main attraction of Kotohira is Kotohira-gu Shinto Shrine, colloquially known as Konpirasan, a mountain-top shrine that is one of the most popular shrines in Shikoku. Formerly a Buddhist Temple, Konpirasan was turned into a Shinto Shrine after the Meiji Restoration. It became a popular pilgrimage site in the 14th century as has remained so ever since. While it may take a fair bit of climbing to ascend the approximately 800 steps to the main shrine, it is well worth the effort. The climb offers stunning views of the surrounding plain.



Kotosankaku

Kotosankaku is a very large Ryokan Hotel with 2 buildings - a "honkan" (original building) called "Sansui" and a "shinkan" (annex) called "Hiten". There are 188 guest rooms in the Sansui building: 125 Japanese-style guest rooms, 60 Western-style guest rooms, and 3 combined Japanese and Western-style guest rooms. In the Hiten building, there are 37 Japanese-style guest rooms. There are 2 indoor and 2 outdoor shared hot spring baths for women, and 2 indoor and 2 outdoor shared hot spring baths for men. There are also saunas for women and men.

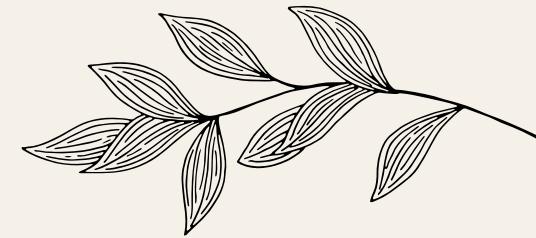


Matsuyama & Dogo Onsen

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), a famous Japanese novelist enjoyed going to Dogo Onsen, and his novel Botchan was based on his experiences in Matsuyama. 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.

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).



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.

Nakasendo Trail

The Nakasendo Trail linked Kyoto to Tokyo during Japan's feudal Edo Period. You will walk along the ancient route as it passes through the beautifully-preserved villages of Tsumago and Magome. In the evening you will stay in one of the traditional minshuku 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!



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Shikoku Pilgrimage

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. You can find ryokans near the pilgrimage temples at Dogo Onsen, Kotohira, Kochi, Naruto, and Tamamatsu.

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 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 increases 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 is 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.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Contact us to reserve the perfect ryokan along your itinerary and get some precious tips.



13 Days in Kyushu

- **Day 1** - First night in Fukuoka
- **Day 2** - Rental car and head to Kurokawa Onsen & stay at a Ryokan
- **Day 3** - Explore 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** - Free Time in Amami Oshima
- **Day 13** - Final day
Fly home with fantastic memories





NORTHERN JAPAN

Just north of 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 Samurais.

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

Sapporo

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

Furano

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

Ginzan Onsen

Ginzan Onsen is a well-known hot spring town in the mountains of Yamagata Prefecture.

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.

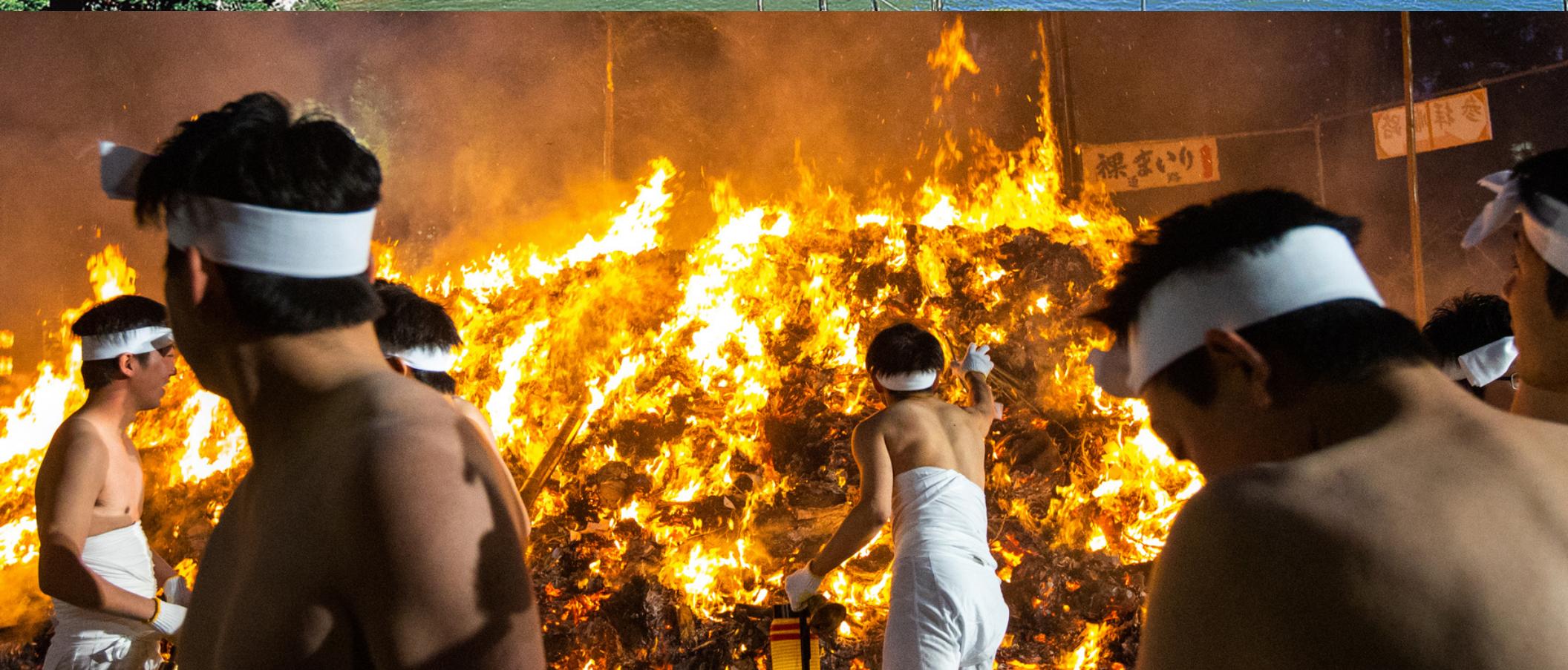


Dewa Sanzan/Haguroyama

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.

Nikko

Nikko 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.



NIKKO

Nikko is situated in Tochigi, about 2 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.

Senhime Monogatari

Senhime Monogatari is a Modern Ryokan that has 44 rooms (most are Japanese style). Each guest room faces the Otani River. Indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only) are available 24 hours a day. Senhime Monogatari takes special pride in its local, seasonal cuisine served to the guests, and in the morning guests have a choice of either a Japanese or Western style breakfast. Guests may dine in Senhime Monogatari's dining area or in the privacy of their own room.



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 Rishakuji. 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. There are a few hot spring resorts in this area including [Tendo Onsen](#), [Kaminoyama Onsen](#) and [Zao Onsen](#). Yamadera is also near Zao ski area.



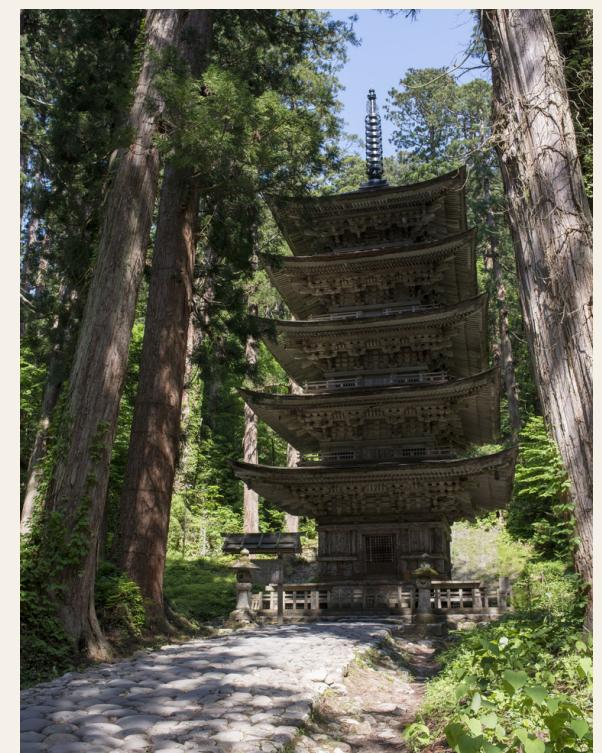
Hashimotoya

Hashimotoya offers some fantastic hot spring baths and is located just 7 minutes by taxi from Kaminoyama Onsen Station. There are 16 rooms wonderfully arranged rooms.



Dewa Sanzan/Haguroyama

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. The best time to visit is between July and mid-September.



NYUTO ONSEN

Nyuto Onsen is a rustic hot spring resort in a rural setting, surrounded by deep forests and mountains. The main features of Nyuto Onsen are to simply enjoy mountain and forest scenery, taste traditional Japanese foods, 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 snow falls 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 [Ginzan Fujiya Ryokan](#) 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.

There are not many ryokans within the city limits but if you travel just a bit you can reach the ryokan hotel of Jozankeidaiichi Hotel



FURANO

Furano is a small town famous for its flower fields, ski resorts, cheese factory, and wineries. 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 them during the "Belly Town Festival".



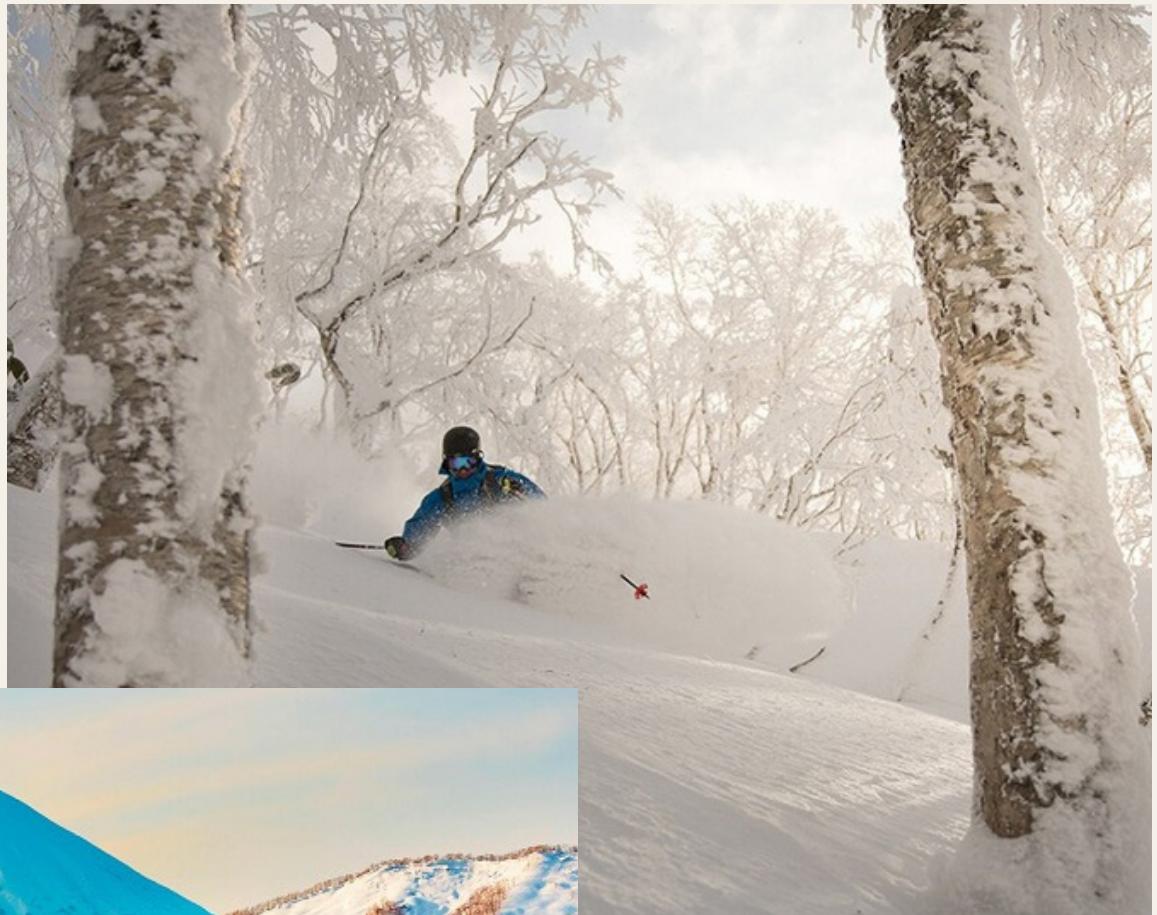
NOBORIBETSU

Noboribetsu is located in southwestern Hokkaido in Shikotsu-Toya National Park. Noboribetsu is a name from the local Ainu language which means "a cloudy river tinged with white." This name refers to the large sulfur deposits in the area. Noboribetsu is one of Hokkaido's best known (and most commercially developed) hot spring areas, and it is basically a one-street village with hot spring hotels on both sides. Visitors to Noboribetsu can experience the hot spring waters at the town's famous Daiichi Takimotokan Hotel which has 20 different hot spring baths. The source of the village's hot spring water is the "Jigoku-dani" (Hell) valley. Jigoku-dani is a steaming, lunar-like valley that produces 10,000 tons of hot spring water a day. From Jigoku-dani, visitors can walk to nearby Oyunuma which is a hot water lake producing large clouds of steam.



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). Some of the best with nearby ryokans are [Hakuba](#), [Nozawa Onsen](#), [Zao Onsen](#), and [Niseko](#).



Aoni Onsen Ryokan

Welcome to Aoni Onsen Ryokan. A ryokan without electricity at night making a great off the beaten path ryokan.

This Traditional Ryokan has 32 Japanese-style guest rooms. There are indoor and outdoor hot spring baths for both women and men (same gender only). There are also mixed hot spring baths (women and men bathing together). Traditional Japanese-style cuisine is served to the guests at Aoni Onsen Ryokan. Check-in time is after 15:00 and check-out time is before 10:00 am. Parking is available.



SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Contact us to reserve the perfect ryokan along your itinerary and get some precious tips.



Best of Northern Japan

- **Day 1** - 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
Bukeyashiki
- **Day 4** - Aizu Wakamatsu
Day Trip to 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 and stay at
Ryokan
- **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

Hokkaido Tour

- **Day 1** - 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 back home with memories you
will keep for the rest of your life

GREETING & 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 custom. You do not need to be fluent to open peoples' hearts.



- It's nice to meet you. My name is... – Hajimemashite ("ha-ji-may-ma-she-tay") (your name) Desu ("dess").
- Yes – Hai
- No – lie ("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

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www.JapaneseGuestHouses.com

Inside a House/Ryokan

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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