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# jStyle

issue 18 | 2020

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# Prologue

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics have finally hit the home stretch and are closing in fast. Efforts in Japan have picked up at an incredible pace to prepare for the wave of tourists from overseas with improvements such as multi-lingual services, overseas currency exchange, and the movement towards cashless transactions. Overseas visitors seem to be responding to these efforts as the surge has begun. In 2018, for the first time ever, the number of visitors to Japan exceeded 30-million people. This figure is astounding considering the fact that the number of inbound visitors 10 years ago, in 2009, was 6.79-million people.

Local governments in Japan are currently honing their sights to visitors from Australia in particular. Visitor numbers from nearby places such as China, South Korea, and Taiwan remain high, which is to be expected when considering their proximity to the country. However, when it comes to length of stay, Australians come out

on top, and on the financial side of the equation, Australians are also more likely to spend more on various experiences. These factors have led to Australians topping the rankings of nationalities who spend the most in the country. Japan not only welcomes Australians because they rank the highest in terms of statistics, but also because of their reputation for being friendly tourists.

First-time visitors to Japan have a tendency to take the model course and visit the cities of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, otherwise known as the “Golden Route”, however, returning visitors have their sights set on areas away from the Golden Route.

All of the places in Japan that do not fall on the Golden Route have their own unique culture, and I would hazard a guess to say that these different quirks would easily surpass the number of countries in the world.

Our goal here at *jStyle* is to step away from the stereotypical side of Japan, and

bring you more unique destinations, places many tourists are still yet to discover, and a kaleidoscope of cultures. We’re here to open up a world of Japan that even the most informed Japanophiles would find new and exciting.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of this publication, we’ll introduce you to: the best spots to visit if you happen to be in the country for the Tokyo Olympics, destinations slipping into the spotlight in recent years, great products, exciting programs to experience in Japan, and lots more! We’ve also included some Japanese experiences to be had in Sydney where the head office of Nichigo Press, a Japanese-language newspaper in its 43<sup>rd</sup> year of operation and publisher of *jStyle*, can be found.

We hope you enjoy this edition and discover a new side of Japan along the way.

Kazuya Baba







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# jStyle

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Rickshaw Cart

# Ukiyo-e Heroes

By David Bull & Jed Henry

A Canadian woodblock printer and American Ukiyo-e artist bringing Japanese gaming heroes to life with a traditional Japanese twist





Fox Moon





1



2



3



4

Ukiyo-e is a form of art originating in Japan during the Edo period. The striking designs of the bold compositions and absence of shadows are characteristic to this uniquely Japanese style of painting that has amassed fans from around the world. While perspective plays a role in the composition of a piece, what also makes this style unique is the tendency to draw background figures in a larger fashion in a way that almost goes against what one might expect. Ukiyo-e is often used as historical reference material for the scenes captured, depictions of

altered or no-longer existing famous locations, and the showcasing of lifestyles, jobs, and cultures of the past. In and amongst the historical connotations of this art form is an Ukiyo-e artist who decorates his canvases with characters from modern video games. He goes by the name of Jed Henry. As this Japanophile of an American began his project to depict Japanese video game characters (and other pop culture references) in the style of Ukiyo-e, a certain woodblock printer, named David Bull, made a proposal to him to join forces.

David Bull is a Canadian who was captivated by the Japanese-style of woodblock printing, and has since made a name for himself as a renowned

1. David Bull hard at work in the Mokuhankan
2. Truly delicate and precise skills required for these techniques
3. The varied textures are clear in the white portion
4. Right: printing block, left: printed composition

#### MOKUHANKAN

1-41-8 Asakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo 111-0032  
facebook.com/UkiyoEHeroes/

woodblock printer. He is also popular amongst overseas tourists for the business he operates in Asakusa that sells woodblock prints and also offers the chance to experience woodblock print-making as well.

Ukiyo-e were once creations painted by hand; however, they generally refer to woodblock-printed paintings. The Ukiyo-e compositions are drawn by Jed, and then finished as woodblock-prints by David. These compositions are part of a series known as "Ukiyo-e Heroes" and have taken the world by storm, garnering fans from far and wide.

Six pieces from Ukiyo-e Heroes have been chosen to feature in the Foreword Gallery. We hope you enjoy the works of art as much as we do! ■





Dragons Gift



“

Ukiyo-e is often used as historical reference material for the scenes captured, depictions of altered or no-longer existing famous locations, and the showcasing of lifestyles, jobs, and cultures of the past.



Faithful Lookout



I Choose You



Meteoric Power



# Travel News

For  
visitors  
to  
Japan

Tourist information you'll want to know before planning your trip to Japan, and news on handy services while you're there.

\*The information on these pages is current as of October 2019.

## Tokyo ranked the 'Safest City' for the third time running

Tokyo has taken out the top place in The Economist Intelligence Unit's Safe Cities Index 2019, with Osaka coming in at third place. The capital city of Japan has ranked first for three consecutive surveys in this index of 60 cities conducted once every two years since 2015. In the 2019 edition of this index, cities were given scores out of 100 across a range of indicators including digital, health, infrastructure, and personal security. Tokyo topped the ranks for low petty and violent crime levels, infrastructure to withstand natural disasters, and low risk of computer malware infection, with high scores in other categories.

### TOP 5 CITIES IN THE SAFE CITIES INDEX 2019

1. Tokyo	92.0
2. Singapore	91.5
3. Osaka	90.9
4. Amsterdam	88.0
5. Sydney	87.9





## More flights to and from Japan in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics

The Japanese government has announced an increase in international departures and arrivals to Haneda Airport from approximately 60,000 to 99,000 flights in preparation for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Approximately 50 extra slots per day will be allocated from March 29, 2020 as part of the new summer schedule. Of the 50 additional slots, Australia has been awarded four allocations amongst nine other countries including the United States and China. The new Australian flights to and from Haneda Airport will also include the first midday slot for the route.



## Large luggage to require reservations on the Shinkansen

Large suitcases and other bulky items will require luggage reservations to take onboard the Tokaido, Sanyo, and Kyushu Shinkansen lines starting May 2020. The planned changes are part of an effort to increase security measures for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

Large luggage is deemed to have a collective length, width, and depth between 160cm and 250cm with reservations required alongside other reserved seat options such as window seats, and internet services. No additional cost is required when reserved beforehand, however, a 1,000-yen fee must be paid if a reservation is not made. If a large luggage item is carried onto a non-reserved seat, then an extra 520 yen to upgrade to a reserved seat must also be paid alongside the additional luggage fee. The luggage will be kept locked up in spaces behind seats at the end of a carriage, or in the luggage space on the deck. There are no current plans to introduce these changes to the Tohoku or Hokuriku lines.





Discover a new side of Japan

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) spreads the word about the charms of Japan to residents of Australia and New Zealand. Their website provides information handy for travelling around Japan about topics such as Japanese culture, food, skiing, and shopping. Check out the website for the latest information about Japan before planning your next trip over to the land of the rising sun.

[jnto.org.au](http://jnto.org.au)



Be sure to also check out the official jStyle Facebook page for information about Japanese culture. The page is jam-packed with information about Japanese experiences including traditional Japanese sweets, history, castles, temples, and the beautiful outdoors. You can also find the latest news about events in Australia, such as the Japanese pop culture convention, SMASH!, and the Cherry Blossom Festival welcoming the start of spring. Head on over to the Facebook page and discover a new side of Japan.

[facebook.com/nichigojstyle](https://facebook.com/nichigojstyle)



Photos: Tokyo Customs

Electronic Customs Declaration Gate System at Narita Airport now in operation

The Electronic Customs Declaration Gate System (e-Gate) has been rolled out at Terminal 3 in Narita Airport. With this new system, the customs declaration form can now be filled out electronically on an app rather than on paper. The aim of this new system is to speed up the process and shorten waiting times for the ever-increasing number of inbound passengers. Progressing through customs has now been made simple by filling out the required details on the app, scanning the generated QR code and your passport at the electronic declaration terminal, and then having your face photo taken on the spot. The declaration process can be done whilst waiting to collect your luggage. Once you have completed the process, pick up

your luggage, head through the e-Gate, and then verify your identity through the facial recognition system, before proceeding through. The e-Gate is scheduled to be made available in Terminals 1 and 2 at Narita Airport, and other major airports from Spring 2020. For more details, visit the Japan Customs official website. Scan the QR codes found below to download the official app.

[customs.go.jp/english/passenger/egate.htm](https://customs.go.jp/english/passenger/egate.htm)  
[youtube.com/watch?v=-MkM0Aak8qo](https://youtube.com/watch?v=-MkM0Aak8qo)



For iOS devices



For Android devices



# jStyle Readers' Giveaway

We're giving away the following awesome prizes to 25 lucky winners drawn at random! Fill out the survey from the link included below to be in the draw to win.

[www.j-style.com/campaign](http://www.j-style.com/campaign)

Entries close: 30 September 2020  
One entry permitted per email address.  
Winners will be contacted via email.

## KEIO PLAZA HOTEL TOKYO CLUB FLOOR PREMIER GRAND ACCOMMODATION VOUCHER

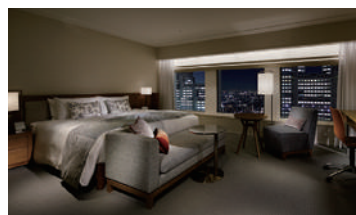
1  
PRIZE

Two nights in one room for two people with breakfast and Lounge access included

An accommodation voucher for a stay at the Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo Club Floor Premier Grand, a suite created for special guests. Check out p82 for more details about the hotel.

### KEIO PLAZA HOTEL TOKYO

Note: Reservations are subject to availability. Period of validity: 1 December 2019 - 29 February 2020. Ineligible dates: 24, 25, 31 December, 1 January, Saturdays, and days before holidays.



## TRIAD "OMOSHIROI BLOCK" MEMO PAD

10  
PRIZES

A stylish memo pad featuring famous Japanese tourist destinations such as Tokyo Tower, Asakusa, and Kiyomizudera, as well as characteristically Japanese designs. Check out p36 for more information about these memo pads that make perfect souvenirs.

TRIAD INC.



## SHIKAMARO-KUN MERCHANDISE

10  
PRIZES

Nara City Tourism Association mascot

A set containing items such as a handkerchief, pen, clear folder, and other goods featuring the cute and lovable Shikamaro-kun (the mascot of Nara City Tourism Association). Check out p47 for the feature article about Nara city.

NARA CITY TOURISM ASSOCIATION



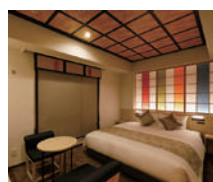
## DAIWA ROYAL HOTEL D-PREMIUM KANAZAWA ACCOMMODATION VOUCHER

1  
PRIZE

Accommodation only for two days and one night in one room for two people

An accommodation voucher for a stay at the Daiwa Royal Hotel D-Premium Kanazawa. This hotel features an interior design incorporating aspects of traditional Kanazawa culture, Kaga Yuzen-inspired baths, and other luxuries only found in Kanazawa. Check out p55 for more information about Kanazawa and the hotel.

### DAIWA ROYAL HOTEL D-PREMIUM KANAZAWA



Note: Reservations are subject to availability. Period of validity: Until 30 June 2020. Bookings over peak periods including the Christmas and New Year period, and Golden Week may be refused. Accommodation taxes to be paid by guests. Rooms cannot be specified and may differ from the promotional image.

## BACK ISSUE SET OF JSTYLE AND JSNOW

3  
PRIZES

A set featuring the last 6 issues of jStyle and last 3 issues of jSnow. Use the travel information about Japan found within the covers to plan your next trip over!

Note: 8 volume set featuring jStyle issues 13 - 17, and jSnow issues 1 - 3.







# TOKYO 2020

## Olympics and Paralympics

Japan will finally hold its first Olympics in 56 years when the world focuses on Tokyo in 2020. While I'm sure you are all very excited to see the athletes battle it out at various events, there are actually quite a few exciting places around the event venues where you can experience Japanese culture for yourself. Join me through this feature where I will introduce you to some recommended spots around venues of events popular amongst Australians and New Zealanders. Hopefully this will help you along on your travels outside of the Games themselves!



## OLYMPIC STADIUM

### OLYMPICS:

Opening and Closing Ceremonies  
Athletics, Football

### PARALYMPICS:

Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Athletics



The Olympic Stadium is where the opening and closing ceremonies will be held and serves as the face of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. This national stadium was used as an Olympic stadium when Tokyo hosted Japan's first Games in 1964; it will be reborn as a new venue come 2020.

No doubt all eyes will be on this venue, not only because it serves as the main Olympic stadium, but because of its striking design. The concept behind this design was to create a "stadium in forest". The overall height of the stadium has been kept as low as possible to help it blend in with the lush greenery of the Meiji Jingu Gaien around it, and eaves have been installed around the structure to direct comforting breezes to the seating areas.

Design Works and Construction Works of Taisei Corporation, Azusa Sekkei Co., Ltd. and Kengo Kuma and Associates JV/ Courtesy of JSC  
\*The renderings are intended to show conceptual image at completion and may subject to change. The greenery is a projection of approximately 10 years after completion.





These eaves are an important element of traditional Japanese architecture and draw from Japanese knowledge to build a construct with a reduced impact on the environment. Japanese-sourced timber and steel have been combined to form the roofs that are essential to Japanese architecture and give birth to a design emanating the warmth of trees. On the top floor of the stadium is an esplanade known as “the forest of the skies” spanning approximately 850 metres around and features an observation space offering great seasonal views of the city skyline. This stadium is sure to become a must-go sightseeing spot outside of the Olympic Games, so make sure you drop on by to visit this venue that holds a historical spot in the united heart of Japan.

## TOKYO STADIUM

### OLYMPICS:

Football

Modern Pentathlon (Swimming, Fencing, Riding, Laser-Run)

Rugby



©Tokyo 2020

Tokyo Stadium was a major venue for the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Perhaps the rugby fanatics out there are more familiar with this place as the venue for the Australia vs Wales match during the tournament. Football (of the round-ball variety) matches are also often played here.

There are plenty of things to see and do around the venue itself, such as: a visit to the Tokyo Racecourse, where famous horse races are held; a tour of the Suntory Musashino Brewery; or a stop by the 1,300-year-old Jindaiji Temple, for visitors all around to get a non-sports fix. Also found nearby is the “Olympic Marathon Turning Point Monument”, which marks the turning point for the 1964 Tokyo Olympic marathon. Take a stroll over to see a part of history while on your trip to see history in the making.

## ARIAKE TENNIS PARK

### OLYMPICS:

Tennis

### PARALYMPICS:

Wheelchair Tennis

This venue is said to be the Japanese sacred grounds for tennis since it serves as the venue for renowned pro tennis matches. It also known as a place brimming with lush nature as it features a promenade and jogging course in its surrounds covered by trees, amongst other greenery.

Nearby, you can find: the VenusFort, a theme-park styled shopping centre designed to replicate a medieval European town; the Fuji Television studios where you can have a sneak peek at the facilities; and DiverCity Tokyo Plaza, a large entertainment facility that offers virtual reality



Conceptual image following the Olympic Games as of January 2019 ©Tokyo 2020

and other fun experiences to keep you highly entertained outside of the Olympics. Not far from the AQUA CiTY ODAIBA shopping mall is a sightseeing spot where you can find a 1/7th-sized replica of the Statue of Liberty. There is also the Toyosu Fish Market nearby, which just happens to be one of the largest fish markets in the world.



## OI HOCKEY STADIUM

**OLYMPICS:**  
Hockey



Track and field, baseball, tennis, and other facilities are combined together in this large-scale sports park built in the Oi Pier Ocean Park. The venue has been built especially for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and will be used as a multi-purpose sports facility for sports, such as hockey, following them.

Within the park grounds where the venue can be found are places to fish, as well as areas where Aussies can scratch their BBQ itch by cranking up one of the grills there. BBQ facilities are available for rent and BBQ ingredients can be purchased on the spot, so there's no excuse to not strap on an apron and get those fires roaring. Nearby you can also find Sesaragi no Mori (Forest of Streams), where you can do a spot of bird



Conceptual image following the Olympic Games as of January 2019 ©Tokyo 2020

or insect watching amongst the ponds and creeks, or visit the Sakura Hiroba (Cherry Blossom Square) to enjoy the popular Japanese pastime of seeing the cherry blossoms in full bloom in the spring.

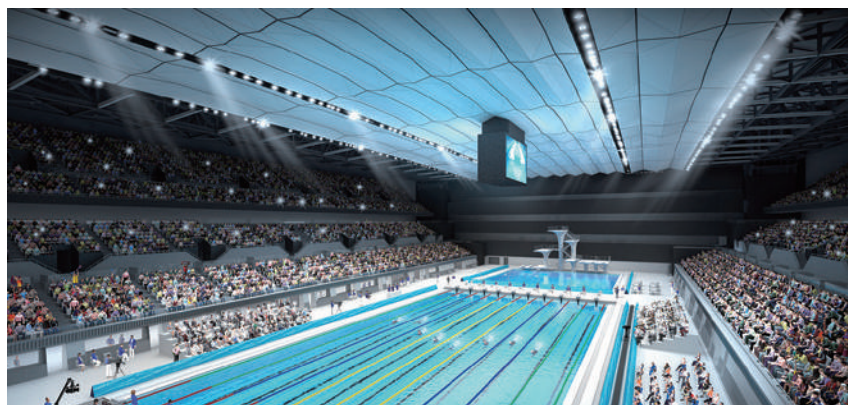
## TOKYO AQUATICS CENTRE

**OLYMPICS:**  
Aquatics (Swimming, Diving, Artistic Swimming)

**PARALYMPICS:**  
Aquatics (Swimming)

This venue will also be newly constructed for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and will be used to hold international swimming competitions as a national aquatics centre, as well as a swimming facility for citizens to use upon the conclusion of the Games. Also found nearby is the Tatsumi Water Polo Centre, which has served as the venue for many international events and is the official venue for water polo during the Olympics.

The Tokyo Aquatics Centre will be built in the Tatsumi-no-Mori Seaside Park – a place overflowing in greenery featuring facilities such as a rugby field, golf course, and a dog park. In the surrounds is the



Conceptual image following the Olympic Games as of January 2019 ©Tokyo 2020

Tatsumi-Sakura Bridge, which features a modern-design that harmonises with the environment. The view of the skyscrapers from the bridge is absolutely stunning and might not be as well known as it deserves to be. Next to the Tatsumi-no-Mori Seaside Park is the Tatsumi-no-Mori Green Park, which is known as another great cherry blossom spot during the spring, and also features a playground making it the perfect place for families.



©Tokyo 2020



## TSURIGASAKI SURFING BEACH

### OLYMPICS: Surfing

Surfers from all around the world flock to this beach in the pursuit of some of the world's best waves. Make sure to note that this venue is not in Tokyo, but in the neighbouring Chiba prefecture. This beach is known as the "*nami-nori dojo*" (training grounds for wave-riders) for the number of pro and advanced surfers who gather here, and has also produced a number of formidable surfers on the pro circuit.

Surfboards and wetsuits are available for rental at the local Ichinomiya Tourist Information Centre, and surfing experiences are offered here as well, making it a breeze for visitors to try their hand at surfing without lugging around any gear from home. You can also try some horse-riding here or visit a shrine if you are so inclined. Rent a bicycle from just outside the train station and ride along the seaside to enjoy the great sights on offer.

## LOST IN TOKYO? ASK A LOCAL!

Did you know that there are people around to help if you find yourself lost in Tokyo? Volunteer guides have been placed around Tokyo to help tourists on their travels. Please take note that these volunteer guides are dressed differently and go by different names depending on whether you visit during the Olympic Games or outside of that period. Rest assured that they'll be easy to spot in their bright, traditional Japanese blue *ichimatsu* (checkered) outfits as they stand around the city.

The volunteers can be spotted in famous tourist areas such as Asakusa and Ginza, regardless of when you happen to arrive in Tokyo. During the Olympic and Paralympic Games, there are also plans for them to be stationed around event venues, Haneda Airport, and main train stations such as Tokyo and Shinjuku. They will be ready to give you directions using pamphlets and other means, as well as recommend some sightseeing spots to you. Some of the guides also offer assistance in English, so don't be shy and approach one of them if you're in need of a little guidance.



Tokyo Tourism Volunteers – Before/  
After the Olympics

There are also a range of experiences to be had regardless of whether you happen to be visiting before, during, or after the Olympic and Paralympic period and separate to the services offered by the Tokyo Tourism Volunteer Guides. Thirteen tours are available such as visits to Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, a tour around Hamarikyu Gardens to see a traditional Japanese garden, or even experiences to make *washi* (Japanese paper). Participants will only need to pay for travel and entry fees (including those for the two guides), making these tours great value. In fact, some tours require no money whatsoever. Tours must be reserved between one month to three days in advance, so hop online and book your spot now!

[gotokyo.org/en/index.html](http://gotokyo.org/en/index.html)

City Cast  
(City Volunteers) –  
During the Olympics



©Tokyo 2020





# Give Japanese Rice a Go!





If you know a thing or two about Japan, then you must know that the Japanese absolutely love their rice. Japan is said to have started producing rice approximately 4,000 – 5,000 years ago. White rice has been an essential part of the Japanese diet ever since the methods to grow the grain were passed down from the Korean Peninsula. This feature will show you just how much love the Japanese have for this humble staple and hopefully turn you into a fellow Japanese-rice fan, too.

#### **A nutritionally well-balanced rice**

The carbohydrates that are part of the composition of rice are one of the three major nutrients essential to building a healthy body. Once the body breaks down these carbohydrates into glucose, it is then used by the body as a source of energy. This glucose is the source of energy that keeps the brain ticking over and rice is abundant in this particular nutrient. Along with carbohydrates, rice also contains protein – a nutrient essential for healthy blood and muscles, as well as various vitamins and minerals. In short, rice is an excellent, nutritionally well-balanced food source.

It has also been said that rice is the perfect food for those having issues losing weight. Unlike breads and noodles, which are made of wheat flour and other finely ground grains, rice is more slowly digested and absorbed since it is eaten as whole grains. This then helps to reduce snacking in between meals because it keeps you feeling fuller for longer, and as a result of this, your body releases the fat-storing hormones more slowly, which is then said to suppress fat storage. Perhaps the secret to the many slimmer Japanese people walking around the streets can be found in the rice?



### Unyielding research behind Japanese rice

There are many countries, other than Japan, that rely on rice as their main food source, however, none of these countries receive as much praise for their rice than the land of the rising sun. One of the reasons behind this reputation lies in the selective-breeding research that has taken place over the last 100 years. There are approximately 900 different varieties of rice registered in Japan. New varieties continue to pop up every year in order to produce rice that is suited to the Japanese climate. This is how Japan continues to maintain its high-quality rice production.

Of the many different varieties, the following list contains the most widely known amongst the Japanese and foreigners alike. Be sure to give them all a taste to experience all the different qualities they possess.



“

*Onigiri* are balls of rice gently pressed by hand and are a highly convenient food since they can be eaten almost anywhere.

#### KOSHIHIKARI:

This is the most widely produced and eaten variety in Japan. It has the perfect balance of stickiness and firmness.

#### YUMEPIRIKA:

A variety known for its chewy texture. Mostly grown in Hokkaido.

#### AKITAKOMACHI:

A variety known for its great chew and balanced sweetness. Mostly grown in Akita prefecture.

#### HITOMEBORE:

A variety known for its well-balanced stickiness and soft mouth feel. Grown all around Japan.

#### HAENUKI:

A variety of rice with the perfect balance of firmness and chew. Mostly grown in Yamagata prefecture.

#### SASANISHIKI:

A variety known for its great sheen when steamed, and perfect balance between stickiness and firmness.

#### NANATSUBOSHI:

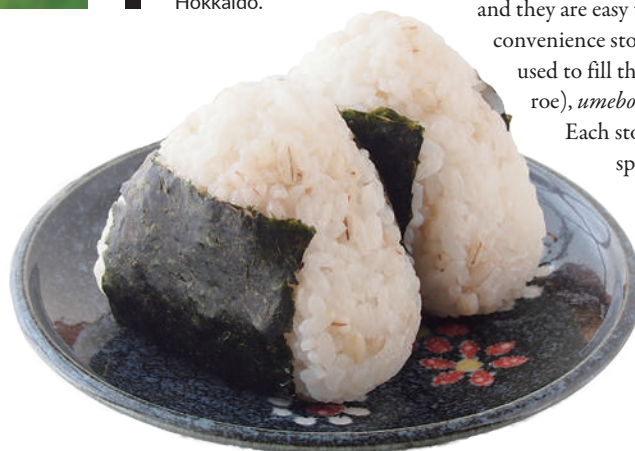
A variety known for its clean taste. Mostly grown in Hokkaido.



### Make an *onigiri* for a simple treat

An article about Japanese rice wouldn't be complete without at least mentioning the ubiquitous *onigiri*. No doubt many readers have already seen characters in movies or anime taking tasty bites out of these satisfying staples. *Onigiri* are balls of rice gently pressed by hand and are a highly convenient food since they can be eaten almost anywhere. Japanese people have always loved *onigiri* as a food on the go since they can be eaten with one hand and don't require any chopsticks to munch away at them. These days it is almost the go-to food for business people and they are easy to find since they are sold at all convenience stores in Japan. Various ingredients are used to fill these rice balls, such as *ikura* (salmon roe), *umeboshi* (salted plums), and even beef.

Each store and region has its own unique spin on these food items, so be sure to travel around the country to find the perfect *onigiri* to fill your belly. In fact, there has been a recent increase in the number of places that specialise in selling *onigiri*, so pack your bags for a rice-balling trip to Japan!







## Fill up on some Japanese rice in Australia

The following pages are filled with handy information for Japanese rice fans. Arm yourself with this knowledge to eat Japanese rice in Australia and enjoy various different types of the rice in your own home!

### Specialist rice ball purveyors with the Japanese tick of approval - MUSUBIYA

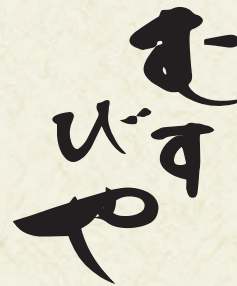
MUSUBIYA, a specialist purveyor of rice balls based in Sydney, has been recently making the rounds in the local Japanese community for its high-quality offerings. This establishment has a strong focus on using Japanese-grown rice, which they cook in clay pots (a technique even the average Japanese person finds difficult). Clay pots are traditional Japanese cooking vessels that allow rice to be cooked at a slower pace due to their low thermal conductivity. Rice cooked in clay pots is said to draw out

the true sweetness and savoury qualities of rice through this slower cooking method. While controlling the intensity of heat and levels of water is difficult and can be tedious, this is the secret to cooking delicious rice. As the clay pot continues to remain hot after the heat has been



turned off, the rice is given the opportunity to slowly steam and release any excess moisture, resulting in perfectly plump individual grains of rice. The amount of water used and level of heat applied to the clay pot is adjusted each day according to the temperature and humidity. MUSUBIYA also offers delivery services in their efforts to offer delicious morsels, without the hassle, to as many people as possible. While rice balls are generally said to be at their peak deliciousness when warm and freshly made, this establishment has gone through many processes to figure out the perfect level of firmness of the rice, and seasoning of the fillings to ensure their products are tasty even after they've cooled down. Plans are already in the making for rice balls using brown rice for the health conscious, *takikomi-gohan* (rice cooked with broth and various ingredients), *mazekomi-gohan* (rice mixed with different seasonings and ingredients), and other options. Does an *ebi-ten musubi* (tempura prawn rice ball), rice ball wrapped in grilled meat, or spam rice ball sound good to you? Then hop onto the MUSUBIYA website and try a tasty rice ball or two today!

Tel: 0422-472-488  
Email: [musubiyaau@gmail.com](mailto:musubiyaau@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.musubiya-au.com](http://www.musubiya-au.com)



### Rice-ball specialists **MUSUBIYA**

Complete focus on specially-chosen ingredients and Japanese-grown rice. Rice balls made with heart and soul for the satisfaction of all. These rice balls will fill you with joy and surprise.

[musubiyaau@gmail.com](mailto:musubiyaau@gmail.com)  
<https://www.musubiya-au.com/>

delivery only

8557MUSU





### Cook some SunRice Japanese rice at home

SunRice is the largest manufacturer and distributor of rice in Australia and has a major influence on the supply of rice within Australia. The company was founded in 1950 and in non-drought years, produces an average of 500,000 tonnes of rice every year. The company also specialises in growing a niche variety of rice only grown in a small number of countries.

The Riverina region of NSW is said to be an ideal location for rice growing because of its fertile soil, temperate climate and the perfect level of sunlight that shines over the area. SunRice conducts its own research and development in order to cultivate different varieties of rice. Seeds are carefully managed so they do not mix with other seeds during the cultivation process. Quality is also strictly controlled and SunRice's Australian-grown rice can be traced all the way from cultivation through to distribution. This quality assurance system is all part of the company's Pure Seed Program.

Picking up a bag of rice grown and manufactured by SunRice is simple since they are sold at major supermarkets. Rest assured that if you don't have a rice cooker, then a pot will do just the trick for cooking some delicious rice. Grab yourself a bag and cook up some delicious rice at home today! ■

Web: [sunrice.com.au](http://sunrice.com.au)



### JAPANESE STYLE SUSHI RICE

Rice developed especially for making sushi. This uniquely smooth rice is firmer than regular rice so that it does not become wet and soggy when mixed with sushi vinegar. It also has a characteristically fragrant aroma and natural sweetness.



### KOSHIHIKARI RICE

Rice produced for general Japanese cuisine. Highly versatile and can suit all Japanese dishes. Known for its stickiness, aroma, and natural sweetness.





# JAPANESE-STYLE FLUFFY OMELETTE RICE

WITH ROOTS IN AUSTRALIA'S  
FOOD BOWL, SUNRICE  
IS PROUD TO NOURISH  
DISCERNING CONSUMERS  
AROUND THE WORLD, WHO  
TRUST THE TRACEABILITY  
AND PROVENANCE OF  
OUR PREMIUM BRANDED  
PRODUCTS.



Recipe  
Author

## TAKUMI KAWANO

Born in Nagoya, Aichi prefecture. After graduating from the culinary arts course in Japanese cuisine at the Tsuji Culinary Institute in Abeno, Osaka, Takumi trained at the traditional Japanese restaurant, Koraibashi Kitcho. After settling in Australia, he is now the head chef of the oldest fine dining Japanese restaurant in Sydney – Shiki Japanese Restaurant.



### INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

180g (400g when cooked) Rice  
100g tomato paste  
Finely chopped spring onions (as preferred)  
Nori (seaweed) strips (to garnish)  
4 large eggs (well-beaten)  
40ml pure cream  
40g mayonnaise

20g unsalted butter  
20ml soy sauce  
50g smoked salmon  
Salt and pepper (to season)  
Toasted white sesame seeds (as preferred)  
★ "Koshihikari Rice" supplied by SunRice

### METHOD

1. To make the tomato rice, mix the cooked rice and tomato paste, season lightly with salt and pepper. Add the spring onions and white sesame seeds, mix well.
2. To make the omelette mixture, mix the eggs with pure cream, mayonnaise, salt, and pepper.
3. Scoop a serving of rice onto a plate.
4. Melt the butter in a well-heated fry pan and pour egg mixture into the middle (half of the mixture serves one person). Stir mixture when edges have set slightly.
5. While eggs are still runny, move the frying pan to shape omelette into an elongated, rectangle. Serve omelette on top of the tomato rice when the outer surface has set.
6. After making the omelette, pour soy sauce into the frying pan, and caramelize until fragrant. Pour caramelised soy sauce onto the omelette.
7. Scatter smoked salmon on top and garnish with nori strips.

### Tips:

- Ideally, Omelettes should be runny on the inside. Adding cream helps boost the fluffy texture.
- Since SunRice Koshihikari Rice has the characteristics of Japanese rice, it should not be stir-fried, but mixed with the tomato paste, much like when making sushi rice.
- Adding nori and sesame seeds brings the Japanese taste of the dish together.





## INTERVIEW

# Australian-grown Organic Green Tea



Green tea has been embedded in the lives of Japanese people throughout the ages. This humble tea has garnered plenty of attention for the beauty and health benefits owing to the high concentration of catechin, caffeine, vitamins and minerals found within it, and is very much loved all around the world. ITO EN, Japan's largest manufacturer of green tea, grows green tea in the fertile soil of the Victorian Alpine Region, so we decided to speak to the managing director of the Australian branch – Mr. Masashi Sato.

### — Why did ITO EN decide to grow green tea in Australia?

We began looking into the growing of green tea in Australia from the 1990s since it would allow us to have a supply of green tea all year round due to the opposite timing of seasons to Japan.

It may come as a surprise for readers to find out that the environmental factors ideal to growing tea are the same as those for growing wine grapes and tobacco leaves. Victoria is known for producing delicious wines thanks to difference in temperature between summer and winter, as well as the extreme temperature fluctuations between day and night. This is what also makes it the perfect place to grow green tea as these environmental factors are key. The 90s also provided the perfect time for us to enter the green tea growing market in Victoria with the federal government abolishing the production of tobacco leaves in Australia.

### — What is the difference between green tea and black tea leaves?

There are two different types of tea plants – “*camellia sinensis* var. *assamica*” for black tea, and “*camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis*” for Chinese and Japanese teas. The black tea plant prefers tropical climates, which is why it is produced in the region of Australia closer to Indonesia.

However, both black tea and green tea come from the same species of tea tree – the “*Camellia sinensis*”. Differences can be observed in the way the two different teas are produced. For black tea, the fresh leaves are left in a humid environment, after they have been picked, to ferment. As the leaves ferment, they take on their signature black colour. For green tea, the leaves are immediately steamed after they have been picked to stop any fermentation. Heating the leaves stops them from

oxidising, thus maintaining their freshly-picked green colour.

### — What has been difficult about producing green tea here?

The biggest obstacle we came across was how to get tea plant seedlings from Japan through the strict Australian quarantine process. Fumigation through steaming was the first step required to kill off any micro-organisms and harmful bacteria on the seedlings. Of the thousands of seedlings we brought over, only a few of them survived the fumigation process. From there was another arduous road of increasing the number of plants by carefully taking cuttings and planting them. Our harvest now spreads across 50 hectares of land.

### — What characteristics can be found in the green tea produced here?

There aren't any pests or bacteria targeting tea plants that exist here since these plants aren't native to the region. In other words, tea leaves can be produced here using little to no pesticides. This was one huge advantage we picked up on later down the track. The image of cleanliness, safety, and peace of mind brought about from the climate and landscape of Australia played an important role in the production of tea as well. I think that there is a very high possibility of Australian-made organic green tea making a name for itself as an international brand.

Another unique characteristic that comes to mind is that there are eucalyptus leaves floating around the tea plantations from the surrounding trees. It is almost impossible to avoid picking up eucalyptus leaves when machine-picking green tea buds. Perhaps there might be a faint hint of eucalyptus in the tea produced here. Has anyone noticed this in their freshly steeped cups of green tea? ■



# From Our Farms to Your Cup

ITO EN, Japan's foremost purveyor of green tea, is taking the next step in the vertical integration of its green tea industry in Australia.



## ITO EN's Tea Bagging Factory

ITO EN is building a brand new tea bagging facility next to its fresh leaf processing plant in Wangaratta, North East Victoria. From next year, with the introduction of the tea bagging facility, the tea leaf for Matcha Green Tea teabags will be refined and packaged in Australia. This is to satisfy the growing demand for locally crafted green tea by Australian consumers. The completion of this facility will put into place the final link in the vertically integrated production system, from the growing of the tea leaf to final tea bag product. This also marks ITO EN's first vertically integrated production line outside of Japan, another big step forward. ITO EN Australia has chosen as its first product to be the ITO EN Matcha Green Tea teabag.

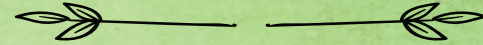


## 'Omotenashi'

We believe ITO EN's green tea is a versatile tea to be shared by all people from all cultures. Its biggest feature is the smooth taste that soothes your throat. It can be enjoyed at a formal dinner or with an Aussie breakfast. This tea complements any occasion. It can be drunk with your meal or with anything sweet. It is perfect as a morning refresher tea or a crisp purifier accompanies your meal. It is healthy, relaxing and a good for all people from all walks of life.

In the tradition of Chado, the host entertains the guests with deliciously prepared tea. This act of hospitality is called 'Omotenashi'. We hope you enjoy the Matcha Green Tea teabag proudly made by ITO EN with the same spirit of hospitality.

## What is Matcha Green Tea



Matcha is the famous powdered green tea traditionally used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony-Chado. The tea leaves used for Matcha powder are grown differently to ordinary green tea. In particular the tea is shaded for more than 20 days before harvest with 70 to 90% shade cloth. This results in the leaf being a deeper more vibrant green colour as well as increasing the constituents which give matcha its characteristic flavours, especially the distinctive 'umami' taste (the fifth sensory taste discovered in matcha) a savoury and subtly sweet flavour. These high quality leaves are then finely ground in stone mills. The use of the whole leaf results in a product that is rich in nutrients, in particular, vitamin C and catechin antioxidants.

The tea leaves used to produce sencha are 100% grown in the Alpine region in the north east of Victoria. Our growers have over 20 years experience in growing green tea. The tea is harvested in partnership with ITO EN and transported to our factory in climate controlled bins. ITO EN's Australian artisan tea makers process and refine Japanese style green tea from these fresh Australian tea leaves.

ITO EN's new teabags comprise Japanese matcha and Australian grown sencha. The unique blend creates a beautiful aroma and mellow yet vibrant green infusion.







**JAPANESE CHEF:  
HIDEO DEKURA**

Born into a family running a Japanese restaurant in Tokyo. Whilst learning about Japanese cuisine from his father, he also learned the *Iemoto-Shijo*-style of *hocho-shiki* to polish up his traditional cooking skills. In the 1970s, he settled in Australia. He has ventured into various industries such as catering, restaurants, and food consulting, and has also published a number of books. His contributions to Japanese cuisine have been recognised three times by the Japanese government: in 2007 with an award from the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries; in 2015 as a recipient of commendation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs; and his appointment in 2016 as the Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador.



A 400-year-old painting of knife masters — "Shachi-ju-ichi Shokumin Uta-awase, Hocho-shi"

# The history of Japanese knives and its influence

*Hocho-shiki* (knife ceremony) is a traditional Japanese ritual dating back to the ages. The mere existence of this ritual shows just how deep-rooted knives are in Japanese cooking and daily life. We spoke to Hideo Dekura, a Japanese chef based in Sydney and qualified *hocho-shiki* instructor, about the traditions behind the ritual and the influence knives have on cooking.





**Q: What exactly is the ritual of *hocho-shiki*?**

A: While various theories exist, *hocho-shiki* is a ritual that was performed 1,300 years ago during the Nara period as an imperial court event. It is said to have originated as a way to present fish, poultry, and other produce to Emperor Koko, the 58th emperor of Japan. Emperors at the time were considered to be *kami* (gods), and the act of humans touching food to be served to the emperor would contaminate it. As such, food was sliced up using only a knife and a pair of chopsticks to avoid touching it with human hands.

After 1,300 years of history, the ritual of *hocho-shiki* still continues to be performed to this day at Japanese shrines and temples to express gratitude to the gods for bountiful harvests. I have also performed this ritual myself a number of times in Australia. The modern iteration of the ritual still involves the wearing of an *eboshi* (headgear of court nobles), and *hitatare* (flowing dress of court nobles), and the act of filleting fish using only a pair of cooking chopsticks and a knife, without the hands ever touching the fish itself, remains intact.

**Q: Has the *hocho-shiki* ritual had any influence on current Japanese cooking?**

A: It certainly has. Appreciation of food forms the foundations of *hocho-shiki*. Each and every beautiful, meaningful motion of the ritual



shows respect towards food; and the detailed, thorough cuts of the knife are symbolic of the mentality to waste nothing. I believe this philosophy has been passed through the 1,300 years leading to the present and is reflected in the spirit behind modern Japanese cooking.

**Q: For the act of filleting meats to become a ritual, knives must play a significant role in cooking. Is this a correct assumption to make?**

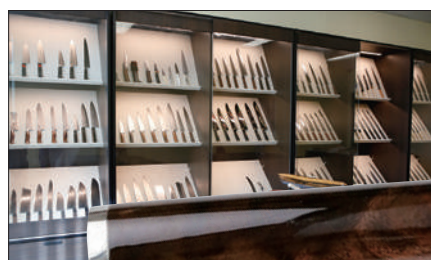
A: That's right. In fact, do you know what dish is a Japanese cuisine original? While it used to be served in vinegar, much like *namasu* (a dish of raw fish and vegetables seasoned with vinegar), it is none other than sashimi. The flavours of this well-known dish vary quite drastically depending on how the fish is sliced. If the sliced cross-section is uneven, then the fibres of the fish

collapse, leading to a drop in freshness; whereas if there is a sharp, clean cut, then the freshness is maintained, and the texture is pleasant, leading to an enhanced flavour. This knowledge of different cuts impacting flavours must have been

why skilled chefs were known as *hocho-nin* (knife wielders). I believe that knives greatly impact the quality of food, much in line with the way of thinking centuries ago.

**Q: What is the difference between Japanese knives and Western knives?**

A: Sharpness. Whilst Western knives are easy to maintain and have their own advantages, the sharpness of Japanese knives is phenomenal. Force is not needed to slice using a Japanese knife, and you are able to cut up food items without destroying the fibres. These knives are also produced with the wielder in mind, so it is well-balanced in the hand, and almost feels as if it is an extension of your own body. Japanese knives can be difficult to maintain, but there is significance behind putting in the effort for the upkeep of a treasured tool. The more you use it, the more it shows its true worth; the growing desire to cherish Japanese knives is what makes them so great. ■



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## KYOTO

# See All the Sights in Arashiyama

Spring brings in the cherry blossoms; summer, the fresh greenery; a kaleidoscope of leaves in autumn; and a wonderland of snow in winter when the four faces of each season come to life in the popular tourist destination of Arashiyama in Kyoto. Alongside the Togetsu-kyo Bridge, the bamboo grove, Okochi Sanso Villa, and a variety of temples and shrines as must-see tourist attractions in the area, there are also experiences for foodies, hot-spring lovers, and culture junkies. While you could easily spend days in the area, reserving a day for Arashiyama on your trip to Kyoto is highly recommended.

Words and Photography: Yuriko Ishii







L

located 30 minutes by foot from Arashiyama Station on the Hankyu line in southern Arashiyama is Nison-in Temple in north Sagano. There are a number of places to check out along the way, making it a whole day's worth of sight-seeing fun as you stroll and stop on by. For those so inclined, there are a number of shops around offering kimono rentals if you wish to try out the popular trend of donning the traditional garment to walk around the streets.



## Arashiyama's iconic Togetsu-kyo Bridge

The Togetsu-kyo Bridge stands proudly over the Katsura River flowing gently below it. This landmark is symbolic of Arashiyama and is the perfect place to start your walking tour of the area. The bridge (literally “moon-crossing bridge”) is said to have been named in the Kamakura period when the then Emperor Kameyama (who reigned between 1259 – 1274) noted that the moon appeared to cross the bridge as he sailed on the night of a full moon. The handrails on the bridge are made of wood to blend into the beautiful surrounds of Arashiyama, while the

piers and girders are made of reinforced concrete. For a great way to see the bridge, rent a boat and sail down from the upper area of Katsura River.





**Kyo-train special sightseeing train**

Kyo-train, a limited express tourist train with no reservations or express fare required.



Kyo-train GARAKU

**Special trains run between Osaka-umeda and Kyoto-kawaramachi of Hankyu Railway.**

Kyo-train GARAKU features seats facing the windows as well as Japanese garden decorations, this train will make you feel like you've already stepped into the world of Kyoto. Kyo-train also has seats made with Japanese traditional Tatami.

Operations : Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays

Stops at:

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Kyo-train GARAKU

Arashiyama

Osaka-umeda   Juso   Awaji   Katsura   Karasuma   Kyoto-kawaramachi



For more travel information!



For more ticket information!



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## Shrines and temples surrounded by nature

A tour of the many shrines and temples in the area is a must on any visit to Arashiyama. Tenryū-ji Temple was constructed in 1339 by Takauji Ashikaga to pray for the repose of Emperor Go-Daigo with Musō Soseki appointed as the temple's first chief priest, and is also a recognised World Heritage Site as part of the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto. The temple features Sogenchi Garden, the first location to be designated as a Special Place of Scenic Beauty of Japan. The elegance of period-style tradition intertwines in perfect harmony with the Zen culture in this garden and invokes different ambiances throughout the year through the seasonal changes from the cherry blossoms and azaleas, to the beautiful greenery and winter landscapes. Be sure to check out the impressive Cloud Dragon painting on the ceiling of the Zen Meditation Hall while you're there!

Nonomiya Shrine is also another spot to add to your list. The deity Nonomiya is enshrined in the main shrine, with the deity Atago (protector of fire and victory) in the right shrine, and the deities Shiramine Bezaiten (protector of arts), Shirafuku Inari (protector of childbirth and business), Oyama Bezaiten (protector of traffic safety and wealth), and Nonomiya Daikokuten (protector of marriage) in the left shrine. Located in the leftmost area is the Turtle Stone, which is said to grant your wish within a year if you rub it while you pray.



“  
Worshippers  
come from far  
and wide to pray  
at this temple  
for the variety of  
deities enshrined  
within



## A mystical bamboo grove path and Okochi Sanso Villa

The symbolic path stretching through the bamboo grove from Nonomiya Shrine to Okochi Sanso Villa offers a 200-metre-long leisurely stroll to soak up the mystical atmosphere of the surrounds. Bamboo plants reach straight up towards the sky on either side of this path, creating a breathtaking air of sheer beauty and wonder.

Okochi Sanso Villa was originally the holiday home of famous period-film actor, Denjiro Okochi (1898 – 1962). He spent the last 30 years of his life searching for eternal beauty, gradually building his classical Japanese-style circuit garden. Beautiful seasonal trees, such as pines, cherry blossoms, and maple trees are found around the Daijokaku (main house) where the old-capital atmosphere can be enjoyed, before hiking over to the tea house to be greeted with a view of the Hozu River's gentle current stretching across below.





## Enjoy delectable delights, shopping, and art

The western exit at the front of Arashiyama Station is lined with famous Kyoto establishments. Within the free-flowing station, free of ticket gates, are two-metre-tall poles wrapped in Kyoto-printed silk, covered in acrylic, and lit up with LED lights. There are 600 of these poles placed around the station to create this “Kimono Forest” of mystery that has become a popular hot spot. With the number of restaurants and stores around, the area is always bustling with people.

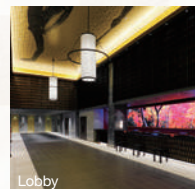
The Arashiyama area puts on a show of eye-catching wonders throughout the year, the pink, spring views of the cherry blossoms in full bloom (late March to early April), and the gorgeous autumnal leaves (mid-November to early December) are the best of the best. Try dropping by popular sightseeing destinations during the morning to beat the rush of fellow tourists when you’re in the surrounds. ■



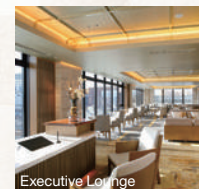
Hotel Exterior

## ELEGANCE AND LUXURY OF TRADITIONAL JAPANESE STYLES AND MOTIFS

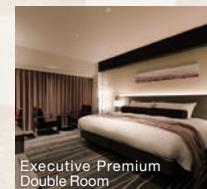
ENJOY YOUR STAY AT THE FLAGSHIP HOTEL OF DAIWA ROYAL HOTEL CITY WITH THE FAMOUS JAPANESE HOSPITALITY SPIRIT!



Lobby



Executive Lounge



Executive Premium Double Room

DAIWA ROYAL HOTEL GRANDE

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# Campton

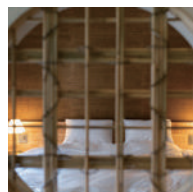
## CAMPTON

A new style of accommodation  
harmonising history and modernity



CAMPTON offers ultimate levels of comfort through “*machiya*” (townhouses) located in the historical city of Kyoto that have been renovated and had new life breathed into them as accommodation establishments. Make your stay a stylish and relaxing one in the *machiya* sharing their history with the surrounding buildings and temples of the former capital city of Japan – Kyoto.

Words: Yuriko Ishii



Kyoto is not only known for its traditional, historic sites, but also for the old *machiya* lining the streets. Both local and international tourists come flocking to the city to see these beautiful buildings. The increase in restaurants utilising these *machiya* also comes as a welcome movement. Spearheading this *machiya* craze are the particularly popular buildings found in Kyoto.

### RENOVATING THE MACHIYA AND PRESERVING THE TRADITIONAL TOWN FEEL

The vision of Masao Ono, CEO of CAMPTON, was to renovate

and protect the *machiya* with his policy to preserve the Kyoto townscape. He has always loved old architecture, and his attention was drawn to the method of preserving old architectural structures in order to build modern establishments and maintain ageing buildings. CAMPTON is a modern example of preserving the charming township of the old capital through the renovation of traditional structures to create lodging facilities.

Within the walls of these historical buildings are establishments with new life breathed into them





as parts of CAMPTON. This accommodation facility provides an atmosphere, facilities, service, and comfort at a price point to offer luxury. *Machiya*, while charming, tend to have a reputation of lacking comfort or functionality, with sometimes cold floors or draughty rooms. This is not the case at CAMPTON with all potential defects addressed to create a hotel-like establishment at the peak of comfort. In fact, of the many *machiya* accommodation facilities found all over Kyoto, it would not be an exaggeration to say that CAMPTON has created the perfect combination of a *machiya* and hotel to suit all of the needs of potential guests. This establishment is also unique in that it offers a number of rooms on the premises, whereas many other *machiya* only offer the whole building to be booked for one or a number of guests.

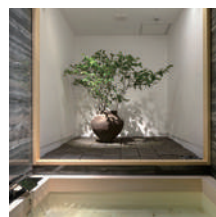
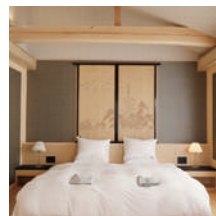
#### EXPERIENCE THE CHARMS OF KYOTO IN THIS LUXURIOUS AND CALMING SPACE

CAMPTON is spread out amongst the popular locations in Kyoto with a total of 11 rooms in and around Kiyomizu, Kyoto station, and Nishijin for guests to choose according to where they wish to visit. One of the many drawcards of this

establishment is the spacious rooms constructed using high-quality solid wood selected from the best Japanese timber available. All suites have sitting rooms with *tatami* floors for guests to stretch their legs and relax, with baths made of umbrella pines to soak in and soothe the tired and weary. Rooms are also fitted with kitchens stocked with not only dining ware, but also a fridge, microwave, coffee machine, kettle, and other utensils for those who wish to cook. The addition of a washing machine also makes longer stays a breeze. A TV, air conditioner, heated floors, and Wi-Fi also comes standard so that guests with families or friends can feel at home all throughout the year.

Meals are not generally included, but breakfast or dinner services or restaurant bookings can be arranged for. A number of restaurants utilising seasonal produce can also be found in the surrounds with a wide variety to suit all cravings and add to the joy of travelling. CAMPTON also works in collaboration with various specialist facilities to provide guests with Japanese cultural experiences such as tea ceremonies, flower arrangement, kimono fitting, Zen meditation, origami, and cooking classes.

Many large-scale hotels and hot spring inns provide guests with rooms topped with facilities such as restaurants, gift shops, and other places to undertake activities. While this provides guests with comfort and convenience, it also adds to the growing number of travellers spending less time exploring the streets and more time indoors. CAMPTON's policy is to focus on providing



comfortable accommodation, whilst also helping to spur on the revitalisation of the city through collaborating with other businesses and encouraging guests to visit local restaurants and shops, and participate in cultural activities.

The number of international visitors flocking to Japan continues to increase over the years, as do the number of returning visitors to Kyoto and other locations across the country. For returning guests, there is nothing more comforting or freeing than staying at an establishment that combines the best aspects of long-term accommodation options and hotels. CAMPTON gives returning visitors the opportunity to take a step further into the charms Japan has to offer, and provides first-time visitors and their families a space with superior comfort. ■



*Campton*

kyoto-campton.com





# OMOSHIROI BLOCK

Flip through to reveal the beautiful creations

Garnering attention around the world as a top ten trending topic in the United States, given coverage on the Euro News, and various other outlets, is a piece of Japanese stationery that received the Grand Award with Special Mention at the 2018 DFA Design for Asia Awards – the OMOSHIROI BLOCK memo pad.

TRIAD Inc. is the Japanese design company behind these memo pads created under the premise of “building on moments to carve out memories” and “continuing your journeys from on top of your desk”. This “memory x moment x sculpture” concept is brought to life by making memo pads with delicate craftsmanship using pieces of high-quality paper. What makes these memo pads so unique is the sight of a detailed piece of art being uncovered every time you take a piece of paper from the block. Once you have completely used the block, the

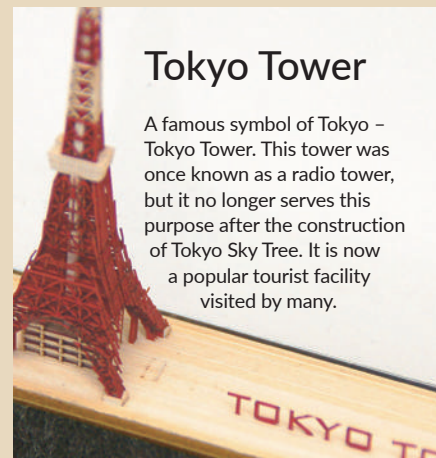
masterpiece revealed will either be a beautiful piece of architecture or a typically Japanese design as selected by the company’s designers.

As we walk you through the various OMOSHIROI BLOCK designs, you will see that they can be customised to suit your needs, much like the pieces created in collaboration with local governments. The company is looking forward to working with various international companies and governments, so if you’re thinking about getting some regional branding or tourism promotion done then feel free to drop them a line. For those curious, the word “OMOSHIROI” in Japanese means “interesting” or “fun”, which makes it the perfect name for a memo pad that offers endless fun for everyone.

Have a look at the following creations to get a sense of the types of OMOSHIROI BLOCKS available.

## Tokyo Tower

A famous symbol of Tokyo – Tokyo Tower. This tower was once known as a radio tower, but it no longer serves this purpose after the construction of Tokyo Sky Tree. It is now a popular tourist facility visited by many.



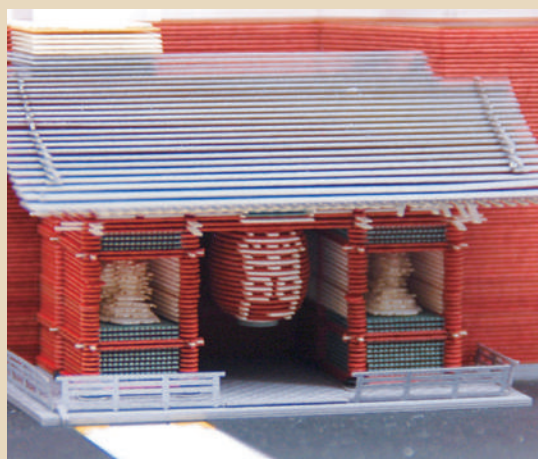
## Takoyaki

*Takoyaki*, octopus balls that can be eaten at food stalls and are quite popular in Australia, happen to be the soul food of Osaka. There are many famous and well-known *takoyaki* establishments in Osaka, so make sure you drop by one if you find yourself there.



## Asakusa

Asakusa is a local town of Tokyo that is considered a must-go by international visitors. The Kaminarimon serves as the entry to Asakusa temple and is a symbolic landmark of the locale. A closer look at the final product will reveal just how detailed the creation is.



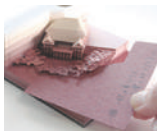




## Kyoto -HANA-



One of OMOSHIROI BLOCKS' most iconic creations. This piece is based on the most renowned and visited temple in Kyoto – Kiyomizudera. You can tell just how accurate and detailed this BLOCK is when compared to the actual temple.



The work of art is uncovered as you flip through



Kyoto's Kiyomizudera decorated in lights

## Clay figurine with clasp hands

This new creation is a particularly unique one made in collaboration with Aomori prefecture in the northern-most region of Honshu (the main island of Japan). The clay figurine was found in the city of Hachinohe, Aomori and is estimated to be 3,500 years old (late Jomon period). It was recognised as a national treasure in 2009. It appears to be sitting down with its hands clasped in its lap in prayer, hence the name "praying clay figurine". Other than the ruins where the clay figurine was found, Hachinohe is also home to various other places

such as the Sanriku Fukko National Park, where visitors can spot approximately 600 different species of plants (spring to autumn), as well as the beautiful sight of the grass in the park in collaboration with the Tanesashi coast. Drop by Hachinohe for a visit and have a profound moment with the ancient ruins.



The collaboration between the grass and the Tanesashi coast in Hachinohe is unforgettable.



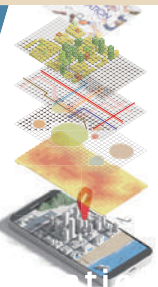
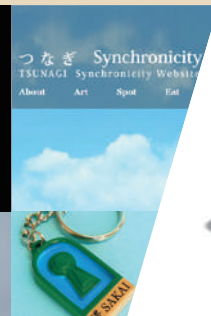
## Original Products



## Model



## Design



## Architecture

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# 伊勢志摩 Ise-Shima

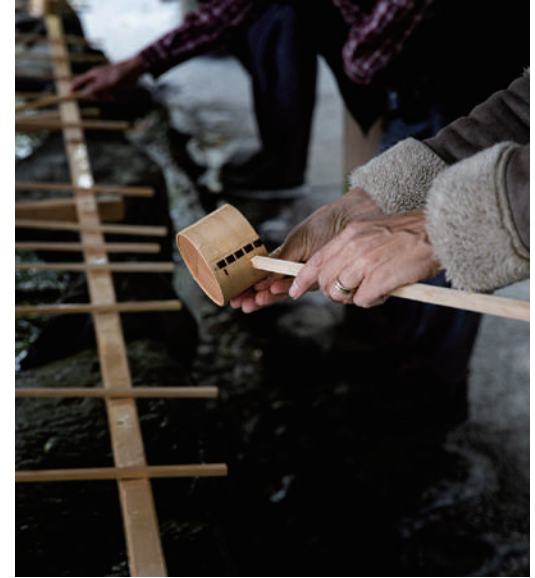
Ise Jingu and the scenic  
coastline-city of Shima

Known as the sacred land of Japanese history and culture, and home to one of Japan's most impressive Shinto shrines is none other than Ise Jingu, located in Mie Prefecture.

Words and Photography: Naoto Ijichi







### Visiting Ise Jingu

Eight million people visit Ise Jingu every year. The *jinja* (Shinto shrine) has become even more of a talking point lately as this year saw it host a number of special ceremonies related to the changing of the Chrysanthemum throne from the former Emperor Akihito, to his son Emperor Naruhito.

Ise Jingu, built over 2,000 years ago, refers to a *jinja* in the Ise-Shima region comprised of 125 smaller *jinja*. Of these many *jinja*, the most famous are the Naiku (Kotaijingu) and Geku (Toyo'uke-daijingu), which are dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami and Toyo'uke-Omikami respectively. It is the deity Amaterasu-Omikami that the emperors of Japan are said to be direct descendants of.

A visit to Ise Jingu can be as short as an hour or span over days depending on which *jinja* you choose to visit and how you plan out your course. Stopping by the Naiku alone can take up to two hours as you cross the 100-metre-long, wooden Uji-bashi Bridge and wander around the atmospheric grounds to soak up the sacred air within.

“  
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### What is Shinto?

Shinto literally translates to “the way of the *kami*” (the word *kami* refers to gods or deities in Shinto) and has no clear origins owing to the fact that it developed naturally with the country from ancient times. It is practiced in some form by the majority of Japanese people. The number of *kami* in Shinto is immense and they are said to take on various forms, from the elements that make up earth, to embodiments of nature, and even important concepts. Amaterasu-Omikami is considered to be the highest of them all.

### The construction of Ise Jingu

The Naiku, Geku, and 14 other related *jinja* are a select few of the 125 *jinja* that are built in the exact same dimensions on adjacent sites every 20 years for sacred enshrining in a ritual known as Shikinen Sengu. A series of rituals takes eight years to complete, and was done so most recently in 2013. Drop by the nearby Sengu Museum to learn more about this ceremonial practice.

Ise Jingu, known as “the most sacred construction in Japan”, may be a familiar journey into Shintoism for the average Japanese person, however, it continues to fascinate international tourists with its mystery upon every visit.





### A stay on the Shima Peninsula

Staying a night or two in the area during your travels to Ise Jingu from Osaka, Kyoto, or Nagoya is highly recommended – and not because of the distance involved. A stay on the Shima Peninsula is justified by the great experience the Shima Kanko Hotel offers. It served as the venue for the Ise-Shima G7 Summit on May 2017 (an international meeting of world leaders

from the G7 and EU). Ise-Shima was chosen to host the prestigious international gathering for its great location, the view of the islands, calm inlets, peaceful atmosphere, and the food served by the hotel utilising the abundant and fresh local seafood.

### Shima Kanko Hotel

The hotel features 3 different buildings, “the Classic” featuring







rooms with a cultural air; “the Baysuites” featuring suites in every room; and “the Club” which maintains remnants of the hotel’s early past. Over in “the Club” is a café and wine bar by the name of “Lien” with an interior design featuring Togo Murano’s (the hotel’s architect) take on a traditional Japanese house. Grab a seat in this bar to enjoy a drop of some rare Japanese-distilled whisky. Guests of the hotel can then enjoy the fine French cuisine



that was served to the world leaders in attendance to the summit at the restaurant, La Mer, within the hotel grounds.

Shima Kanko Hotel also has a variety of facilities, such as a gym, spa, Japanese tea room (for tea ceremony experiences), and an observation deck. Gazing at the incredible Ago-Bay sunset on this deck is sure to give your mind the calm respite it deserves during your busy travels around Japan. Additionally, there are a range of activities on offer at the hotel, including: sea kayaking and cruises on Ago Bay; guided cycling tours; and traditional craft experiences.

Ise-Shima has been an area for worshippers, sightseers, and people looking to escape the daily grind, to relax and enjoy themselves throughout the ages. For visitors from overseas, Ise Jingu and the Shima Peninsula offers travellers the opportunity to get up close and personal with the magical world of Shinto on their journey to Ago Bay. Discover the ancient traditions of Japan and have a unique experience at this resort locale surrounded by glorious nature. ■

## GETTING TO ISE-SHIMA

### By Train

Ise City is a two-hour train ride from Osaka, a one-hour 30-minute train ride from Nagoya, and two hours and ten minutes from Kyoto on the Kintetsu Railway. Hop off at Ise-shi or Uji-Yamada stations for easy access.

For a more luxurious journey, take the Kintetsu Railway Shimakaze Premium Express operating to Kashikojima Station from Kintetsu Osaka Namba Station, Kyoto Station, and Nagoya Station, one round trip daily.



## ACCESSING ISE JINGU

### Ise Jingu Geku

This shrine is a five-minute walk from Ise-shi Station.

### Ise Jingu Naiku

From Ise Jingu Geku, this shrine is ten-minute bus or taxi ride. To get to Ise Jingu Naiku from Ujiyamada Station you can hop onto a bus or taxi for a 25-minute ride over.

## ACCOMMODATION

### Shima Kanko Hotel

The hotel is easily accessible from Kashikojima Station. A two-minute long Shuttle Bus ride will take you straight to Shima Kanko Hotel the Classic, the Club, and the Baysuites.

+81 -599-43-1211





Over 1,200 years have passed since Kobo-Daishi Kukai opened up his Shingon Buddhism practicing hall, yet Koyasan is still known as a mysterious land of devotion. Koyasan is found on a mountaintop basin at an altitude of 900 metres and draped in thick natural surrounds. It maintains an austere atmosphere not found in the big cities, and is an attention-grabbing spot for the beautiful natural views, temple and shrine culture, and a range of other experiences.

# Koyasan

The sacred grounds for Shingon Buddhism  
as preached by Kobo-Daishi Kukai

Words: Yuriko Ishii



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ocated in Wakayama prefecture, Koyasan is 85 kilometres south of Osaka (the second biggest city after Tokyo), making it easily accessible by train or car. Hopping onto a train at Namba Station (in central Osaka) on the Nankai line to Hashimoto Station in Wakayama will take approximately 50 minutes. You can then take the “Tenku” sightseeing train from Hashimoto to the base of Koyasan – Gokurakubashi, which is connected to a cable-car platform. The next 40 minutes can be spent enjoying the beautiful mountains, rivers, and other natural sights through the large carriage windows as the train carves through the steep and sharply-curving tracks of the precarious mountain trail. Then, once you see the distinctive vermillion-colour of the bridge at Gokurakubashi Station, transfer over to the cable-car there for a ride that takes you 328 metres straight up to Koyasan Station. There is also a handy limousine bus that can take you directly to Koyasan (travel time approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes) from Kansai International Airport.



## Monk training grounds

Koyasan is a popular sightseeing destination due to its listing as a World Heritage Site, and is known as a religious mountaintop city with a concentration of temples and historic landmarks within its 1.5-kilometre radius. Kobo-Daishi Kukai picked the perfect spot to open his esoteric Buddhism *dojo* (practicing hall), well away from the hustle and bustle of the city, and surrounded by vast nature.

Kukai was born in 774 in Sanuki, which is now a part of Kagawa prefecture. In 804, he travelled to China for study, and met the top authority on the Shingon School of Buddhism, Keika-Ajari (Master Huiguo), before becoming his official successor. Upon returning to Japan in 806, he continued to pray for the happiness of all living things as a practitioner of Buddhism; became an elite literary scholar known for his beautiful prose with elegant pen strokes; and a social worker who dug out springs to create a pond for the people, amongst a range of other activities. He carved his name into the annals of history as the best philosopher Japan has ever produced. In 816, Kukai then established Kongobu-ji as a temple for the discipline of Zen, and fell into a deep meditation in Koyasan in 835. He entered into a deep meditation in the shrine of Okuno-in

**How to ride Tenku**

Tenku runs from Hashimoto to Gokurakubashi. An additional ticket is needed to ride Tenku. Adult: 510yen

From **NAMBA** 90min → **HASHIMOTO**  
Ltd. Exp. KOYA/RINKAN

From **Kansai Airport** 30min → **TENGACHAYA**  
Ltd. Exp. Rapid → 70min → **HASHIMOTO**  
Ltd. Exp. KOYA/RINKAN

**Nankai Railway is the only train going to Koyasan!!**

KOYA HOT NET

Koyasan Travel guide

NANKAI





in order to eternally pray for those lost or in pain by acting on his desire to raise people to help others, and pray for the peace and safety of both Japan and all of society. This is how Kukai lives on in Okuno-in, and gave birth to worshippers who pray for world peace and the happiness of others.

An overwhelming amount of time and intense training is involved to reach enlightenment in the common teachings of Buddhism. The Shingon School of Buddhism teaches of attaining Buddhahood during life (*sokushinjobutsu*). One is said to be able to reach enlightenment by sealing their hands, preaching the words of Shingon, and



completely giving themselves to the principal image of Buddha. Doing so will reveal one's Buddha-nature and lead to enlightenment.

Koyasan continues to be a place where many monks currently train, with Danjo Garan (with its Konpon Daito Pagoda at the centre) serving as the headquarters for the "Dojo of Learning" (*gakumon no dojo*), and the Kobo-Daishi Mausoleum in Okuno-in as the heart of the sacred place for worshippers.

A record left by Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, on his visit to Japan in the 16th century mentioned that "Koyasan is one of the six major schools of medieval Japan". In the same period,

missionary Luis Frois referred to Koyasan as "the most visited place of pilgrimage in all of Japan".

#### Two major sacred sites – Okuno-in and Danjo Garan

Okuno-in and Danjo Garan are the two major sacred sites found on the mountain. They continue to be the learning grounds for monks to train, and where many worshippers frequently gather.

Beyond the "Gobyō no hashi" (Gobyō Bridge) is considered to be a sacred region; across this bridge and atop the stone steps is where the magnificent "Toro-do" (lantern





hall) can be found. In this place is the cave where Kobo-Daishi Kukai continues his deep meditation, and also the location of the “Kobo-Daishi Mausoleum”, which is the closest place to the cave where worshippers can go and pay their respects. Japanese cedars that have been standing for 700 years line the approximately two-kilometre-long approach from the Kobo-Daishi Mausoleum to the Ichi no hashi (bridge) along with gravestones, cenotaphs, and memorial towers of people from all walks of life – from royalty and feudal lords, to accomplished writers and commoners. The open-mindedness to accept all people, regardless of their differences, comes from the



Koyasan mentality that has been passed down for over 1,200 years and also what makes the place so captivating.

Nineteen structures, including the Konpon Daito Pagoda, the Kon-do, the Mie-do, and Rokkaku Kyuzo, stand proudly within the Danjo Garan area, which was the first place Kukai prepared for the establishment of Shingon Buddhism. The Konpon Daito Pagoda was built to be synonymous with the Konpon Dojo and stands at 48.5-metres tall. It is the first two-storied pagoda ever built in Japan. Inside of this beautifully eye-catching, scarlet pagoda is the “Dainichi Gyorai Mandala”, whilst the outside features four Buddha statues in its surrounds.



Depicted on the 16 pillars of the pagoda are the “16 Bodhisattvas” and the “8 Patriarchs” on the four corners, while the pagoda itself is a three-dimensional mandala. Witnessing the intricate detail on this beautiful pagoda is sure to leave everyone speechless. Another unique structure is the beautiful hexagonal-shaped Rokkaku Kyuzo or “hexagonal depository of the scriptures” that is fitted with handles on the podium and can be rotated. One rotation of the building is said to have the same virtue of one read through the complete Buddhist scriptures. This unique opportunity to rotate such a historic structure is definitely an experience worth having.



Finally, the Kongobu-ji (the main temple of Shingon Buddhism) is located near the centre of the mountain sanctuary. When Kobo-Daishi Kukai founded Koyasan, the whole area itself was known as the Kongobu-ji Head Temple and was a complete mountain precinct, however, from the Meiji period to the present the name only refers to the one temple. This area is bursting with sights to see from Japanese architecture, to beautiful *fusuma* paintings and sculptures filled with history.

### A pilgrim experience

Amongst the austere atmosphere and absolutely breathtaking natural surrounds of Koyasan were formally 2,000 different temples. Currently, there are 117 temples with half of them offering temple lodging. One experience that absolutely must be had during a trip to Koyasan is a stay in a temple

– a *shukubo* experience. *Shukubo* refers to lodging for pilgrims or visitors to a temple. These guesthouses were originally provided for monks, or pilgrims looking to cleanse their minds and bodies, however, the number of facilities welcoming tourists have increased in recent years, and many of them offer facilities and services on par with regular Japanese inns.

Many temples also offer a range of experiences such as *ajikan* – a form of meditation taught in Shingon Buddhism that was spread through Japan during the Heian period by Kobo-Daishi Kukai; Zen meditation, and sutra copying. Guests are allocated *tatami* rooms on their stay at a *shukubo* and will be treated to some *shojin ryori* (vegetarian Buddhist monk cuisine), which is made using grains, beans, vegetables and other non-meat ingredients. There is also the opportunity to get a peek into the life of a monk by participating in

experiences such as the morning service of the chief priest reading the sutra. The rare chance to experience the history of Koyasan and be immersed in the sacred atmosphere continues to garner the attention of both domestic and international visitors.

Joining up on a monk-guided tour leading to the Okuno-in mausoleum is a great chance to see the area during a *shukubo* stay. A trainee monk will give their insights about topics including, legendary Koyasan Kobo-Daishi Kukai tales; moral Buddhist teachings; and what it's like to be a monk in training, over the two kilometres from Ichi no hashi to the old approach. This tour, also offered in English, exposes participants to a mysterious and solemn atmosphere that cannot be had during the daytime (Awesome Tours: [awesome-tours.jp/en](http://awesome-tours.jp/en)).

Hone in your five senses by getting closer to the history and temple culture of Koyasan. ■



Web: [en.visitwakayama.jp](http://en.visitwakayama.jp) Facebook: Visit Wakayama Instagram: [@visitwakayama](https://www.instagram.com/visitwakayama)





# Nara

Shrines and temples, animals, and food – dive deep into the wonderful depths of Nara with these three aspects

Words and Photography: Kazuya Baba





N

ara – the former capital of Japan and central hub for politics, economics, and culture predating Kyoto. This ancient locale's history as the heart of Japan spans throughout history with it also being home to the ancient capitals of Asuka, Fujiwara, and Heijō-kyō between the 600s and 800s. The prefecture of Nara boasts the most national treasures, important cultural properties, historical structures, and historic cultural resources in all of Japan.

Tokyo is now the central hub of Japan, however, it only became the country's hub for politics and economics relatively recently in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to Tokyo becoming Japan's modern capital, Nara and Kyoto formed the heart of Japan and was home to the Emperor himself. Furthermore, the largest city in western Japan, Osaka, also has its own unique culture built through centuries. In fact, western Japan houses vastly more ancient and Middle Age historical sites than what can be found in eastern Japan.

While Nara is home to such historical prestige, it is often not the first city that comes to mind as a major

sightseeing spot in Japan. Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and perhaps Sapporo, owing to the recent skiing boom, are the cities tourists tend to flock to. For those looking for a deep dive into Japan's history, Nara should be the top destination to visit. One of the reasons why Nara is not more mainstream is possibly because it is sandwiched between the big names of Osaka and Kyoto. It also finds itself off the *shinkansen* (bullet train) line, making it less accessible than the aforementioned cities. With the city less than an hour away from both Osaka and Kyoto, many tourists are inclined to drop by for a daytrip, but it is far more recommended to spend more time soaking up all of the temples and other ancient Japanese offerings to be found. Keep reading for a collection of must-see spots that can be reached by foot from Nara city. Drop by these places between October and November, if possible, to see all of the sights draped in beautiful autumnal leaves.

This feature will take a deeper look at the wonders found in Nara by focusing on three aspects – shrines and temples, food, and animals.

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Japanese  
national  
treasures framed  
by beautiful  
autumnal leaves

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Drop by these places between October and November, if possible, to see all of the sights draped in beautiful autumnal leaves

Kasuga Grand Shrine was built in 768 to protect Heijo-kyo (the capital at the time) and bring prosperity to the people. According to legend, a *kami* (Japanese god) rode on the back of a white deer to the Kasuga Grand Shrine, which is why the deer are now regarded as sacred animals and can be found happily living in the surrounds.

The beautifully red-coloured shrine sits proudly at the base of Mikasa-yama (Mount Kasuga) and offers plenty to see, including long-stretching *torii* gates.

A particular sight to see are the lanterns lining the approximately 52-metre-long eastern corridor, and 81-metre-long western corridor. About 1,000 lanterns that have been offered by visitors over the span of 800 years can be found here. Each of the lanterns are unique in shape and design, with brand-new gold ones also found in the mix. In fact, all of the lanterns start off looking gold and gradually change colour over time.

This shrine was registered part of the “Historic Monuments of Nara” in 1998, with the shrine and the surrounding ancient forest of Mikasa-yama (Mount Kasuga) also recognised as a world heritage site. The ancient forest found here is also a location that should be on the list of all visitors.

For those with a leisurely itinerary planned for Nara, a walk around the Kasuga Primeval Forest is highly recommended. Located 498 metres above sea level and spanning across an area of approximately 250 hectares, the primeval forest carves a beautiful sight across the eastern mountainous backdrop of Nara. The rare primeval vegetation on this mountain has been left relatively untouched as it was a sacred site of Kasuga Grand Shrine and was actively protected in the 9<sup>th</sup> century through an order to prohibit the felling of trees. The official trail is approximately 10 kilometres long and would take about four and a half hours to leisurely conquer.

**Pray to the massive Buddha statue and bask in the Nigatsu-do sunset at Todai-ji**

Emperor Shomu used his power to build this temple in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 1998 as part of the “Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara”. The area spanning from the centre of Nara Park reaching towards the north is home to a large number of Important Cultural Properties.

Standing at a towering 14.98 metres tall is the “Great Buddha of Nara” (*nara no daibutsu*) which is housed in the almost 50-metre-tall Great Buddha Hall. Coming to terms with the idea that these structures were built many centuries ago is sure to leave many mouths gaping. Drop by to be awestruck by the sheer size of the Great Buddha whilst also allowing time to admire the smaller statues of Buddha inside the building.

The Great South Gate found at the entrance of Todai-ji is also a national treasure that is sure to impress. On either side of the gate are two 8.4-metre-tall wooden Nio statues standing guard with their menacing looks.

A visit to Nigatsu-do around sunset will treat visitors with a wonderful view of the city sprawling below. The gradually fading sunlight painting the city of Nara in its warming glow as the night begins to fall will leave a lasting impression on visitors who make the trip.

**Strolling around the famous Isui-en Garden**

The Isui-en Garden is made up of two gardens worth a stroll around to soak in the surrounding scenery of Mount Wakakusa, the Great South Gate of Todai-ji, and Mount Kasuga.

Both gardens feature centrally located ponds and span across 13,500 metres square with the first garden built in the Edo period, and the second built during the Meiji period. The gardens are absolutely stunning during the autumn when the leaves are at their most colourful. Visitors can also stop by museum featuring bronze wares and pottery, or enjoy a leisurely cup of tea at the tea house within the grounds.

Nara is absolutely teeming with various other historical sites, but for those visiting the city for the first time a walk around these hot spots should be your first port of call.



## Places to hit up in Nara – first stop Tomio, the battlegrounds for ramen-lovers

Many tourists tend to take daytrips to Nara given its accessibility from Osaka and Kyoto as well as its relatively compact size compared to the aforementioned cities. These tourists often spend the day frolicking with the sacred deer in Nara Park, and visiting the various shrines and temples, rarely ever spending the night Nara.

While Nara is a great spot to visit to see historical buildings and other structures, it is actually also full of a variety of other wonderful restaurants and sights that cannot all be visited in one short day. Keep reading to get the inside info on where to go in the heart of Nara city, as well as the buzz about the ramen battlegrounds making the rounds across Japan.

### Be gobsmacked by the *mochi* making frenzy at Nakatanidou

There are a vast number of great places to visit from the heart of Nara city that are accessible from the JR Nara station or the Kintetsu Nara station. One of the most popular attractions in the area can be found at Nakatanidou, located at the entrance of the shopping district. It is well known as a traditional Japanese sweets store and for its high-speed *mochi* (rice cake) pounding demonstration.

Making *mochi* is an ancient Japanese custom that is carried out all across Japan to ring in the new year. It involves pounding cooked sticky rice in a wooden mortar using a giant hammer. The pounded mass is constantly turned and folded onto itself until it forms

a soft, smooth, stretchy rice cake. Nakatanidou is known for demonstrating this act of pounding *mochi* at an extremely high speed, significantly faster than the average *mochi*-making artisans. Pounding the mass while the sticky rice is hot ensures that the finished product is soft and very stretchy, which is why the *mochi* masters go to lengths to create their *mochi* at such a high speed.

There are few places where freshly made *mochi* can be eaten on the spot outside of New Years in Japan, so this store is great for gourmands looking for a delicious treat, or those itching to see the impressive demonstration in the heart of Nara (Nakatanidou URL: [nakatanidou.jp](http://nakatanidou.jp)).

### Take a break from your adventure at Rokumei Coffee

The city area of Nara is highly convenient for visiting temples, shrines, and other spots, but sometimes it's nice to give the feet a rest by stopping by a nice café. One such café that deserves a visit is ROKUMEI COFFEE CO. (URL: <http://www.rococo-coffee.co.jp>), known for its own-roasted coffee beans. Founded in 1974, it is a long-standing establishment with its own special spin on coffee that it has maintained throughout the years whilst also offering a stylish interior to stay up to date with the times.







This coffee shop is much loved by locals as well as international tourists, including those from Australia where the coffee culture is alive and kicking.

According to one of the café staff, the biggest differences between ROKUMEI's coffee and the average drop, are its "fragrance and flavour". "Coffee beans are fruits. They should be fragrant like flowers and have sweetness and acidity like fruits. We aim to bring out these qualities as well as the true flavours of the coffee beans," the same staff member commented.

While dark roasting coffee increases its bitterness, the café goes to efforts to ensure that the beans do not lose their fruity notes and maintain their unique character profile during the roasting process so as to serve delicious coffee to customers. The café itself is spacious with many tourists opting to drop by more than once a day. This place is a must visit for those looking for a truly delicious cup of coffee during a stay in Nara.

#### **"Mitsuba" – a superstar restaurant in the new ramen battlegrounds of Tomio**

Just five stations away from Kintetsu Nara station by local train is Tomio, a town that has garnered much attention across Japan of late as a feeding grounds for ramen. Ramen is currently experiencing a renaissance around the world in not only large markets such as the United States and Europe, but also in humble Sydney, Australia as well. A trip over to the ramen battlegrounds in Nara should be on the list of those seeking to taste the truly popular ramen bowls found in Japan.

The ramen restaurants found in the surrounds of Nara are currently the focus of many across Japan, with the town of Tomio at the heart of the popularity boom. Despite this, visitors hopping off the train at Tomio station will not be flooded by the sight of ramen restaurants as far as the eye can see. This is why a certain amount of research is required to taste all of extremely delicious, high quality ramen the town has to offer.

There is one particular popular restaurant that I would personally like to introduce to readers in this article. Located in Tomio Honmachi, a six-minute walk away from Tomio station, is Ramen-ya Mitsuba (URL: <http://www.ramenya-mitsuba.com/>). It has been featured on the Top 100 Ramen Restaurants of Western Japan published by Japanese foodie site, Tabelog, for multiple years running. In fact, to not know this restaurant is to not be a genuine ramen lover.

The foamy broth of the Pork CHIKI (pork and chicken) Soy Sauce Ramen is the restaurant's base dish. This ramen is known for its pork bone and chicken-based broth, which is surprisingly clean on the palate, and features an innovatively foamy consistency. Since long queues often form outside of the restaurant, Mitsuba has its own procedure to ensure the lines move efficiently by asking customers to form two lines. One line is specifically for buying meal tickets and the other line is for those with tickets waiting to be seated inside. It is advised that all customers abide by these simple rules to ensure a hassle-free experience on the way to delicious ramen.

While there are many popular ramen restaurants in the area, Mitsuba is definitely worth dropping by first to taste their unique and tasty creations.







動物

## Spend time with animals in Nara – from the iconic deer, to cats and owls

Nara is home to the most sculptures and buildings designated as national treasures in all of Japan. This is partially owing to the fact that the city itself is older than that of even Kyoto. These historic structures are naturally the focus of many tourists who come to the city to sightsee, but there is one particular symbol of Nara that must not be forgotten – the deer.

Some 1,300 odd deer make Nara Park, and the surrounding mountainous areas, their cosy home. Nara Park can be found in Nara city in the heart of the prefecture bearing the same name. It is not merely the sheer amount of deer living in the area that makes

them interesting, but the fact that they strut around the town with a poised confidence about them. While this is a sight you might expect to find somewhere deep in the mountains out in the wild, to see so many deer out and about in town is surely a phenomenon that cannot be experienced in very many places around the world.

So why are there so many deer found wandering about in Nara? The answer to this question can be found in the long and vast history of Japan. Wild deer have always inhabited Nara, however, it has been said that when the Kasuga Grand Shrine was built





approximately 1,300 years ago in the year 768, a *kami* (Japanese god) rode on the back of a white deer to welcome and commemorate the birth of the shrine. The deer of Nara have long been regarded as the helpers of gods ever since the beginnings of this legend. Having knowledge of this deep history adds to the reason why the deer are so beloved, especially so when they approach visitors and bow to them so ever politely.

The adorable sight of deer roaming around the place is rather common if you take a trip over to Nara Park and its surrounds. Deer crackers (*shika senbei*) can be purchased in the area to feed the deer if you wish to get up close and personal with them. The deer in Nara will bow by swaying their heads and down when they see these crackers, as if to politely request a piece or two to chew on. Many people often purchase these crackers to witness the adorable sight of them bowing, however, it is advised that you give the deer a cracker once they have bowed as they have been known to get violent when teased for a bit too long.

Trying your hand at deer herding (*shika-yose*) is highly recommended if you plan on visiting Nara. This Nara tradition dates back 127 years ago to 1892 where deer were herded into one location by the sound of a French horn being blown into. Trumpets were originally used for this activity before French horns became the norm. The deer come flocking in from all directions upon hearing the sound of it. It is an impressive sight to behold, whilst also being rather cute as the deer quickly bound on in to gather with their fellow companions.

This experience can be had within the grounds of Kasuga Grand Shrine between 8am and 11am (8am to 10am during the summer months of July to September) for 20,000 yen per herding and can be booked a year in advance. Splitting the cost between a large group makes the experience rather reasonable and worthwhile. Experiences are also conducted free of charge on certain days in summer and winter, so it is worth looking into these dates by contacting the Nara City Tourism Association for more information.

## Dropping by the cat cafés and owl cafés

Deer are usually the first animal that come to mind when the city of Nara is mentioned, but there are also a variety of other animal experiences to be had within the city. Cat cafés, while still uncommon in many countries overseas, are popular mainstays of Japan and can be experienced on a visit to Nara. “Cat café Cocone” (<http://catcafe-cocone.com>) is one such example that is easy to visit and has garnered great reviews. It is situated close to the city centre and is highly recommended.

Approximately 20 cats can be found lazing about in the stylish Japanese-styled rooms with *tatami* mat floors and bamboo interior fixings. You can sit back and watch the cats as you read a few comics (only in Japanese, unfortunately) and sip on a drink, or you can pet and play with the cats with various toys if you so please. Prices start from 600 yen for 30 minutes, making this a fun experience, which is light on the pocket, worth checking out.

If you are looking to nestle up to animals of the non-feline variety, then the “Animal Shelter Zoo” (<http://fukurou-naramachi.com>) is a must-visit spot that offers a more unique experience. The Animal Shelter Zoo is a quick walk within Nara city and is easy to drop by on a whim if you happen to find yourself with some spare time. While it may be known as a “zoo” it is closer to an owl café in practice. Rare owls can be found all around the establishment and the more timid residents can also be touched. It is also home to an impressive hawk that flies around inside. Don’t forget to mosey over to the rabbits, squirrels, porcupines, and other small animals for an overload of cuteness. The entry fee of 1,000 yen comes with a drink and grants you a fun experience with all of the different animals without any time constraints.

Nara, although known for its deer, also offers other fun animal experiences for you to spend your day in the city. The ability to enjoy a day filled with deer, cats, owls, hawks, and other animals is just one of the many reasons to visit Nara. ■



# Kanazawa

From a Japanese garden  
built by a famous  
general, to modern art

The opening of the Hokuriku *shinkansen* line in March 2015 has turned a trip to Kanazawa from the popular ski area of Nagano to a quick one-hour ride. Kanazawa is a city popular for its historical atmosphere filled with culture from the halcyon days.

Kanazawa began to prosper approximately 400 years ago when Toshiie Maeda, a famous general with an enormous fortune, constructed a castle. The town sprawling from the grounds of the castle was of a scale to rival the big cities of Edo (now Tokyo), Osaka, and Kyoto at the time. There are three different faces to this historical settlement: a samurai town constructed around the castle, a merchant town full of life, and a temple town built to protect the area around the castle. It is a beautiful place known for its plentiful culture from the good old-fashioned days.







Visitors to Kanazawa should definitely stop by the three historical townscapes known as the “Chaya Districts”. The tea-house buildings lining these streets with their delicate latticework are both stylish and gorgeous. Don’t forget to also drop by at night to see the beautiful sight of them lit up.

Over in the Nomura Clan Samurai Home you can get a glimpse of how the middle-class samurai of the Kaga domain once lived in these stretches of stone pavements and mud walls.

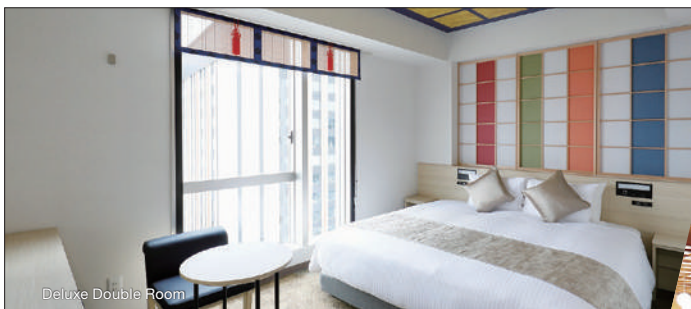
An absolute must-go spot is the Kenroku-en, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan. Kenroku-en has taken shape over many long years as a prominent garden of the Edo period. Visitors from all around the world flock to this garden at the heart of Kanazawa to see the magnificent views on offer all seasons of the year.

The increase of tourists to the city has led to the offering of a variety of programs to experience old Japanese culture, from kimono-

dressings, and chopstick-making using gold foil, to the viewing of Noh, a traditional form of Japanese entertainment.

A trip to Kanazawa wouldn’t be complete without filling up your belly with the vast seafood options in the area. If I had to pick one food to recommended, it would be the *nodoguro* fish (doederleinia berycoides). The deliciously

fatty white flesh of this fish is hard to match, so make sure you have a taste while you’re there! ■



Deluxe Double Room

**BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE OF KANAZAWA - WALKING AROUND THE HOTEL, YOU WILL SEE TRADITIONAL DESIGNS AND CONCEPTS THAT BRING KANAZAWA TO LIFE.**



Ladies' Bathhouse



Lobby

DAIWA ROYAL HOTEL  
**D-PREMIUM**  
KANAZAWA



8558DAIW



Delving  
Into the Allure of

# Fukushima and Aizu

A tapestry of history, culture,  
and nature-filled mountains

Words and Photography: Ryoji Yamauchi



FUKUSHIMA ■  
KITAKATA ■ → ■ GOSHIKI-NUMA  
AIZUWAKAMATSU ■ → ■ LAKE INAWASHIRO  
■ KORIYAMA





The Tohoku region – host to a number of 2019 Rugby World Cup matches, part of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic torch relay, and showing renewed signs of life following the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. It goes without saying that this

huge region, comprised of six prefectures and making up approximately 30% of the total area of Honshu (the main island of Japan), is known domestically as one of the top skiing destinations, but it is also diverse in the many charms to be found when the snow has melted to reveal the lush greenery.

I visited Fukushima, the southern-most prefecture of Tohoku at the end of September 2019 after receiving an invitation from a local government, leading to the writing of this article. Some readers are probably concerned

about the effects of the nuclear incident following the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, upon the mere mention of the place, "Fukushima". However, the prefecture is working hard to deliver accurate information based on comparisons of radiation levels with other major cities, as well as efforts towards changing their tourism campaign to "Hope Tourism", which is aimed at not only recovering from the reputational damage of misinformation, but also to educate about natural disasters and disaster prevention.

My trip covered hope tourism locations, as well as the mountainous region of Aizu in the prefecture's west. The history and culture of the Aizu region forms a large pillar of Fukushima tourism alongside the hope tourism efforts. I will detail the beautiful aspects of Aizu I came across in much the same fashion as my trip to introduce you to what the area has to offer.

Getting to the Aizu region is simple – just grab a *shinkansen* (bullet train) from Tokyo station to Koriyama station and you're there. Use the one hour and 45-minute trip to unwind from your long flight over to Japan before charting a course to Aizu.





## Get up close and personal with Aizu history and the warrior's spirit in Aizuwakamatsu

My trip started in the heart of the Aizu region – the city of Aizuwakamatsu. This city was once one of the battlegrounds of the Boshin War, a civil war that broke out in Japan from 1868 to 1869 between the revolutionary army, formed through an alliance centered around the domains of Satsuma, Choshu, and Tosa, and the former Edo *bakufu* army led by the likes of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Aizu domain. During this war, the Battle of Aizu was said to be where the most resistance was met. It is these brave and proud warrior stories that have earned Aizuwakamatsu the moniker of “the Samurai Town”.

Upon reaching Aizuwakamatsu, I decided to visit the iconic Tsuruga Castle, however, before making my way over I dropped by the Tsurugajo Kaikan, a tourism facility next to the castle, for a kimono-wearing experience. Time flew by in almost the blink of an eye as I became engrossed in finding the perfect kimono combination amongst the facility's 20 kimono and 30 *obi* (kimono belts) for men, and 80 kimono and 80 *obi* for women. It takes approximately 10 minutes for men and 15 minutes for women to complete the kimono



dressings process. With the *obi* tightened around my waist, I felt the upper half of my body become secured, but I was also overcome by a strange sense of calm and invigoration. Give kimono dressing a shot for a unique experience when you drop by Tsuruga Castle.

Fitted and proper in my kimono, I headed inside the castle. I immediately noticed the castle tower with its white walls and red roofing tiles upon stepping inside. Entry is permitted into this tower, and climbing to the top of this 36-metre-high structure will give you a sweeping view of Aizuwakamatsu that just has to be seen for full effect. Panels and educational videos about the Boshin War are also found

within the tower, and the English explanations and subtitles allow visitors from overseas to learn about this fascinating history on their visits.

After a fulfilling trip to Tsuruga Castle, I set off for another location to learn about the history of Aizu – Nisshinkan, an Edo period school in the Aizu domain. Built in 1803, the aim of this school was to promote education in the Aizu domain and foster people of talent. The Nisshinkan was said to be the largest and possess the highest standard of education of the 300 domain schools during the Edo period. What makes this school so intriguing were its various unique features, from the teaching system with no class grades amongst the 1,300 students in attendance and the option for talented students to skip ahead, to the avant-garde subjects such as astronomy.

While you're at Nisshinkan to learn about Japan's latest education institution of the Edo period, make sure you try out the Zen meditation, tea ceremony, archery, and other experience programs catered to tourists. Having a shot at archery is particularly interesting since the bows and arrows are made of bamboo as they were during the period, and you can picture exactly how the children back in the day used to train.







Traditional culture,  
and delicious food –  
skip and stroll around  
the town of Kitakata

I travelled further north from Aizuwakamatsu to visit Kitakata. The trip from Aizuwakamatsu to Kitakata only takes a short 30 minutes, so it would be a breeze to take a day trip to this city if you happen to be centering your travels around Aizuwakamatsu.

Kitakata is blessed with an abundance of water from sources such as the underground flow from the nearby Mount Iide to the north. These sources of water helped the town flourish throughout the ages through the production of soy sauce, miso, sake, and other fermented products. The fermentation industry has led to the construction of many brewing storehouses and it is these buildings that have made the city famous across Japan as the “town of storehouses” due to the photo exhibitions held showcasing shots of these views. Traditional crafts such as *kirizaiku* (woodwork using paulownia wood), Kitakata lacquerware, and Oguniyama bamboo craftwork are also popular in the area. I highly recommend a walk around the town to see all of the different traditional aspects of Japan from yesteryear on display around the place. If you’re coming in from Kitakata station



then you won’t need to waste any time to see the sights.

The first sight that can be seen on your walking tour is the Kitakata Urushi Ginza Street, approximately five minutes from the station. Kitakata used to be home to many lacquer workers, and was a prominent lacquer district within the Aizu region. The “Tenman Area” is the beating heart of this street still filled with many workshops and doll museums to this day. Here you can try your hand at some *makie* (a traditional method of applying designs to lacquerware using powdered gold or silver), or make some *kirinoko* dolls (Aizu-region dolls made by hand-twisting packed paulownia wood chips) to make some memorable gifts of your travels.

A trip to a place renowned for fermented goods wouldn’t be complete without a visit

to a sake brewery. In the 2018 National Sake Fair, 22 brands from Fukushima received gold awards (the highest number of awards nationwide for seven years running), which just goes to show how successful the industry is in the prefecture. Kitakata has been shown to produce high quality sake with two gold-winning brands, and three brands qualifying for awards. There is an endless variety of unique sake brewed in Kitakata alone, so it would be wise to visit a brewery for yourself to try them all out and find your perfect drop.

Foodies absolutely must try some Kitakata ramen on any trip to the locale. Kitakata ramen stands alongside Sapporo (Hokkaido), and Hakata (Fukuoka) as one of the three major ramen in Japan. A quick stroll around the town will give you a taste of just how passionate the area is about ramen. The slick texture of the moderately thick, curly noodles is characteristic of Kitakata ramen, but it is the soup that defines each restaurant. If you want to traverse the rabbit hole of this ramen then you’ll just have to try out all of the different restaurants in the area.

You can also give hand-roasting rice crackers a try at a storehouse as well as a variety of other experiences – so make sure you leave plenty of time to make the most out of your trip to Kitakata.





## The multi-faceted, gorgeous ponds of Goshiki-numa

My tour also included a trek to Goshiki-numa, one of the most famous tourist destinations outside of the Aizu region within Fukushima prefecture. In 2016, Goshiki-numa was awarded a star in the Michelin Green Guide. This tourist destination is internationally renowned and the allure of this place is found squarely in the mysterious beauty of Mother Nature here.

Goshiki-numa literally translates to “ponds of five colours”, which might be a little confusing. In 1888, a volcanic eruption on the northern peak of Mount Bandai caused a collapse of the volcanic edifice, with the avalanche of rocks and snow damming up the rivers, creating hundreds of ponds and lakes in the area. Goshiki-numa refers to 30 or so of these ponds. The ponds deviate between emerald green, cobalt blue, turquoise blue, emerald blue, and pastel blue, thus the fitting name “ponds of five colours”.

Goshiki-numa features an approximately four-kilometre-long trekking course known as the “Goshiki-numa Natural Sightseeing Path”. This course is part of a special protection area within the national park, which means any collection of plants or animals is strictly prohibited, and visitors must stay within the confines of the course. Please make sure you abide by these rules if you happen to drop by for this trek.



Despite a few undulating spots, I found the course to be fairly easy to walk. Sunlight streamed through the foliage and the breeze rushing through the trees felt great on the sunny, fresh autumn day I happened to take the trek. The sound of the rivers flowing into the ponds soothed my soul and enveloped me with a sense of calm.

I'm convinced that the mysterious powers behind the natural wonders found at Goshiki-numa are what took my mind off any fatigue I must've felt. While the ponds come in different shades of blue and green, as mentioned earlier, what makes them really interesting is that the colours appear to change depending on where or what angle you view the same pond. This phenomenon is caused by the difference in angle of the light reflecting off the matter in the water. The ponds are said to display different colours depending on the weather or season, so it might be a good idea to drop by when the cherry blossoms are in bloom or the autumn leaves are on show to see the different variations of these ponds.

There was one other place I visited on my trek during this trip. A quick thirty-minute walk from the Urabandai Grandeco Tokyo Hotel (popular amongst many ski visitors during winter) are the Fudo Falls. It goes without saying that these falls offer impressive views. Despite a few hilly areas on the way to Fudo Falls, I highly recommend the walk over if you happen to be staying at the nearby hotel during the green season for a quick and fun trek into nature.

To cap off my trip, I visited Fukushima Ouse Winery, a winery newly-built in October 2015 located between Lake Inawashiro and Koriyama station. The inspiration behind this winery comes from the motivation to create a new industry in Fukushima following the aftermath of the disaster. Fukushima Ouse Winery is not only garnering attention for its wines, but also for the cider brewed on the premises using local apples. In fact, the cider was awarded a bronze medal in the 2018 International Cider Challenge, an impressive feat for a newcomer to the industry. If your interests lie outside of sake, then drop by this winery for a taste of what Fukushima can produce.

Make some space in your itinerary for your next trip to Japan to visit and experience the fascinating history, culture, and beautiful nature on offer in Aizu. ■





# Fukushima

## Riding the wave of recovery

Even before the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdowns of March 2011, Fukushima Prefecture in northeastern Japan wasn't the first place you'd choose to go on a surf trip. While the coast has plentiful surf, its distance from the seething metropolis of Tokyo kept Fukushima off the radar for most weekend surfers, leaving uncrowded spoils for those lucky few in the know.

Words: K. Rhodes with support from THE SURF NEWS Japan

### FUKUSHIMA

With an area of 13,800m<sup>2</sup>, Fukushima is the third-largest prefecture in Japan, stretching from the snowy mountains in the west to the Pacific coast in the east. Fertile plains feed an agricultural industry lead by peaches, pears and rice. The Pacific coast is rich in sea life, spawning thriving fishing and seafood industries. The area also has a rich history and culture that thrives alongside abundant natural resources and beautiful scenery.



In the eight plus years since the triple catastrophe (\*See Data box 1), the slow and tedious cleanup, recovery, and rebuilding process has long since stopped making news headlines. However, as Japan steps up preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, some of which will be held in the disaster-affected Tohoku area, Fukushima has once again been thrust into the spotlight. When I caught wind that the Japan Pro Surfing Association was holding their first ever national professional surfing competition in Fukushima, I decided to pack my bags and find out first-hand what was really going on in this often-misunderstood region.

Fukushima is just over an hour north of Tokyo by Shinkansen (bullet train). I was met at the station by Fukushima resident Ishiuchi Kei, a keen snowboarder and surfer who was to be my guide for the trip. It was a gloomy Sunday morning as we left the station behind and began the hour-long drive to the beach. With the city behind, evidence of the nuclear disaster soon became apparent. Monitoring posts located every few kilometers along the main road displayed real-time radiation readings. Driving through Iitate, an area heavily irradiated despite being mostly outside the nominal 30km exclusion zone, the readings showed 0.124  $\mu\text{Sv/h}$  (\*See Data Box 2), several times higher than pre-disaster levels, though still low on a global scale.

Piles of radioactively contaminated soil serve as a stark reminder of the nuclear disaster (©THE SURF NEWS)



Another reminder of the disaster came in the form of huge piles of radioactive soil packed into bags and covered with large waterproof sheets, the result of ongoing government funded 'decontamination' work which aims to reduce annual exposure to under 20 mSv, the government limit for allowing evacuees to return to their homes. Fukushima was once known as the bread-basket of Japan, and the area of Iitate was especially famous for its cattle farming. Now there was little to be seen on the farmland but piles of contaminated soil. I asked Kei if many of the estimated 160,000 evacuees from the nuclear disaster had chosen to return.

"Some elderly people have returned, but the population has shrunk dramatically. Schools have closed and a lot of shops remain shut. Many evacuees have settled down elsewhere during the years since the disaster."



Eight years after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdowns, many shops and schools throughout Fukushima remain shut (© THE SURF NEWS)

"How about the people who returned? Are they worried about the radiation?" I asked.

"They try not to think about it. Once they've made the choice to come back, it's better to just get on with their lives. This is the new reality for Fukushima. Worrying only makes it worse."

We arrived at the surfing contest site of Kitaizumi just in time for emerging surf star Inoue Taka's heat. 18-year-old Taka was on a competitive tear, notching two wins and a second from three contests on the Japanese pro tour so far this year. Another win here would see him claim the national title before the season finale in September.

The waves were chest-high with a light onshore sea breeze and intermittent rain. Conditions were by no means ideal, but Taka took to the waves with a vengeance, mixing high performance maneuvers with classic longboard style including a long and stylish hang-10 for a heat score that more than doubled that of his nearest opponent. After his heat, I approached him to ask his impressions of Fukushima.



## DATA BOX 1

### NUCLEAR RADIATION

Radioactive material is found throughout nature in soil, rocks, water, air, and vegetation, alongside cosmic radiation from space. The worldwide average natural dose to humans is around 2.4 mSv (milli-Sieverts, see below) per year. Alongside this 'background radiation,' exposure to artificial ionising radiation, such as from nuclear sites and medical use averages 0.6 mSv/year worldwide and between 2.3 - 3.1 mSv/year in technologically advanced countries such as Japan and the USA.

### UNITS OF RADIATION

**Sievert (Sv):** A derived unit of ionising radiation dose used to measure of the health effect on the human body. 1 Sv = 1 joule/kg and carries with it a 5.5% chance of eventually developing cancer.

**Milli-Sievert (mSv):** 1/1000 of a Sievert

**Micro-Sievert (µSv):** 1/1000 of a milli-Sievert, or 1-millionth of a Sievert

**Becquerel (Bq):** A unit of radioactive decay. 1 Bq is defined as one decay or disintegration per second.

Rising surf star Inoue Taka on his way to securing the 2019 national longboarding title  
(© Japan Pro Surfing Association)



"This is my first time here, but the waves have been great. It was so good on Friday, I surfed for 10 hours – both longboarding and shortboarding."

Taka is one of a rare breed of surfer who competes professionally in three disciplines; shortboard, longboard and SUP (Standup Paddle Board).

"Do you have any concerns about the radiation?"

"No. If they decided to have a contest here, I'm sure it's fine. If anything, I hope I can help bring some joy to Fukushima."

His sentiments seem to be shared with many of the other surfers in the competition. Rather than being worried about surfing in Fukushima, they are happy to support the recovery effort in any way they can.

JPSA management were also happy to hold their first professional competition in Fukushima.

"The beaches are closely monitored, and if they are safe enough for swimming, then I believe they are safe for surfing too. The local council has been very cooperative and we're excited to have a professional longboarding competition in such great waves," an official commented.

I went in search of Taka's mother, who accompanies him on most of their surf trips around the country chasing contests. I wondered if she had any more concerns, as mothers always seem to do.

"The radiation is definitely on my mind, but I can see all the work they've done to rebuild after the disaster. The local council and prefectural government check the

water regularly, and if JPSA management decides to have an event here, that's good enough for me. I was a little worried about my daughter at first, as young women are more susceptible to the effects of radiation, but the waves have just been so good the last few days, I couldn't keep her out of the water!" she laughed.



2019 professional longboarding champion Inoue Taka with his sister Kaede, who has also represented Japan in stand-up paddleboarding. Their first trip to Fukushima was blessed with good surf and good memories  
(© THE SURF NEWS)

"I think it's sad that so many people stay away from Fukushima just because of bad rumours," his mother continued.

"I'm glad we came. I hope that Taka can do well and contribute to the recovery efforts in some way. You don't hear much positive news from Fukushima these days, so I hope that changes in the future. The waves are great, and all the facilities have been rebuilt so nicely after the tsunami."





Yes, the tsunami.

While the nuclear disaster has received the lion's share of coverage in the world media, it was the tsunami that left the deepest scars up and down the coast, killing 16,000 people and leaving 2,500 still missing. Here at the competition venue of Kitaizumi, the tsunami washed away the hugely popular campground along with the pine forest planted to protect it. Cars and debris were strewn upside-down in the fields. The neighbouring coal-fired power plant was severely damaged, and sand washed everywhere, leaving virtually none left on the beach.

"It was complete chaos," said Kei, who drove down to the beach through the debris just weeks after the tsunami.

"But you know what? Three months after the tsunami, the beach itself had returned to normal. Mother Nature has an immense power to cleanse and heal herself."

Searching for more first-hand accounts, I ventured down to the lifeguard tower and sought out the person

Nagasawa Fumiaki (left) returned to Fukushima to ensure the safety of his beloved Kitaizumi beach (© THE SURF NEWS)

## DATA BOX 2

### TRIPLE CATASTROPHES OF 2011

At 2:46pm on 11 March 2011 a M9.0 Earthquake struck around 70km off the Tohoku coast of northeastern Japan. The earthquake triggered a tsunami that is estimated to have reached 40m in height and travelled up to 10km inland, killing nearly 16,000 people and leaving 2,500 still unaccounted for. The tsunami brought about a level 7 nuclear disaster at Fukushima-Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the most severe nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986.

in charge. Nagasawa Fumiaki, burly and tanned, grew up on these beaches and has watched over them as a lifeguard for nearly 20 years.

"My father used to work at the nuclear power plant, cleaning inside the reactors. He'd work for 5 minutes before his maximum dose limit was reached and spend the rest of the day playing *shogi* (Japanese chess). He ended up dying from cancer. These days, one in two people get some form of cancer, so it's hard to say for sure, but ever since he died, I have been suspicious of radiation. He took the job to put me through school but ended up paying for it with his life."

It was a heavy story to process on a Sunday morning at the beach. He continued, regardless.

"So, when the nuclear accident happened, I immediately took my wife and young child and fled. When I saw the explosion at reactor three, I thought it was over for Japan. I grabbed our passports and started looking for options to escape overseas. In the end, someone in Okinawa (southern Japan, almost 2,000km from Fukushima) agreed to take us in so we bought one-way tickets on the first boat."

Life in tropical Okinawa, with no distinct seasons, didn't suit them though and they ended up moving to Miyazaki, around half-way back to Fukushima.

"My child is going to school there now and we're pretty settled, but when I heard they were going to re-open the beach here for swimming, I had to come back and help."

"Is the water safe now?" I asked.

"If you're talking about radiation, it pretty much always has been [safe]. There was a spike right after the explosions, but it's amazing how quickly the readings went down. In seawater, much of the radioactive Cesium sinks and mixes with sediment, washing out to deeper water. The only reason it has taken this long to re-open the beaches is because people had to re-build their lives before they could even think about leisure. Most people refrained from surfing here for three years after the disaster, but that was out of respect for those who were taken by the tsunami, not because of radiation."

His claims can be backed up with a search online for radiation monitoring post-disaster. Seawater samples, even close to the stricken nuclear power plant, went down to pre-disaster levels relatively quickly, while radiation in sediment has remained high. A 2016 Greenpeace Report showed contamination in seabed samples near the nuclear plant up to 120 Bq/kg compared to pre-2011 levels of 0.3 Bq/kg.

“  
If you're talking about radiation, it pretty much always has been [safe].



“The sheer size of the Pacific Ocean combined with powerful complex currents has led to the widespread dispersal of contamination,” notes Kendra Ulrich, Senior Global Energy Campaigner at Greenpeace Japan.

I placed my hand-held Geiger-counter on the sand to check for myself. It read 0.036  $\mu\text{Sv/h}$ , no discernable increase on natural background radiation.



A handheld Geiger counter reading confirms no increase in regular background radiation  
(© THE SURF NEWS)

Meanwhile, back at the competition venue the surf action was heating up, with Inoue Taka facing off against Horii Satoshi, the only man left in the field who could thwart Taka from sealing his national title today. Excitement was at fever-pitch as Satoshi held the lead mid-way through the final heat, however Taka scraped into a nice wave in the dying minutes and rode it to the sand, clinching the win by one-tenth of a point and his maiden national title.

With the competition dusted and champion crowned, we decided to scope some of the other surf breaks nearby. Kitaizumi is one of the most consistent spots for surf on the east coast of Japan, the artificial breakwater built to protect the neighbouring power plant catching any swell and reflecting it into the beach. A quick check both north and south revealed numerous other beaches with decent waves and only a handful of surfers out. Granted, they weren't the kind of waves you'd expect to find in Hawaii or Indonesia, but if these same waves were breaking in Chiba or Shonan, popular surf areas closer to the metropolis of Tokyo, there would be 40-50 people jostling for position on each peak. Here, you had to search for someone to surf with.

We tore ourselves from the sight of empty waves and pulled onto Route 6, back towards Tokyo. The road took us within a couple of kilometres from the centre of the nuclear catastrophe, Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As we passed the turnoff to the nuclear power plant, currently restricted to authorised personnel, the roadside Geiger counter showed 1.96  $\mu\text{Sv/h}$ . While this is

“  
The reality  
is that our  
daily lives  
are full  
of risks,  
whether  
you are  
aware of  
them or not.

The Fukushima coastline boasts great surf, often with only the birds to admire  
(©Kiyomi Igari)



still within the new Japanese limit of 20 mSv/year, I was happy to drive past with the windows up.

The thing with radiation exposure is that there is no well-defined 'safe' limit. As witnessed after the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, some survivors lived into their 80s and 90s, while people with little exposure to artificial radiation die of cancer every day.

For many people around the world, just the mention of radiation is enough to induce a shudder, however here in Fukushima, nuclear radiation has become another fact of life. While not totally accurate, a comparison to air quality might help put things in perspective. Anyone who lives in a big city is subjecting themselves to the negative effects of air pollution, whether they are aware of it or not. And while air quality may be one reason you choose not to live in Beijing or Delhi, it won't stop most people from an occasional trip to Sydney for shopping or a nice café lunch. By this logic, a trip to most parts of Fukushima will have no discernable negative effects on your health, while you might be wise to avoid known hot-spots with higher levels of radiation.

The reality is that our daily lives are full of risks, whether you are aware of them or not. These days a myriad of dangerous chemicals including known carcinogens can be found emanating from the walls, carpets, and detergents in many homes. Government checks may pick up any radiation in fish and agricultural products, but residual pesticides and post-harvest chemicals pass through undetected. Radiation is now a well-known risk, however that alone does not make it any more dangerous than the other risks we take in life. Despite this, Fukushima and the surrounding areas have



received so much bad press that it has blown the risks, at least for short term visits, way out of proportion. My guide Kei attests to this with his story of visiting Australia for business soon after the nuclear meltdowns. Upon discovering he lives in Fukushima, people immediately shrank back and didn't want anything to do with him, as if he was emitting radiation himself. That's the kind of reaction that comes from lack of knowledge and bad rumours as opposed to informed decision-making. The effects of the nuclear disaster are far from over, with thousands of people as yet unable to return to their homes. The government has faced widespread criticism over its response to the disaster and has a long way to go to regain the trust of the local population. However, a lot of money and effort has gone into rebuilding the devastated areas, and those who have chosen to return deserve what help they can get, not to be shunned. For many people here, it is still going to take wave after wave of goodwill for life to return to normal.



Coastal areas destroyed by the tsunami have been rebuilt with the hope of attracting more beachgoers  
(©THE SURF NEWS)

My head was buzzing with all these thoughts as we sped down the highway towards Tokyo. Looking out the window, we passed beach after empty beach with tempting surf. It was too much to resist. Unsure of what to expect, I had left my surfboard at home, so we stopped by a local surf shop to rent a board and wetsuit. I couldn't wait to jump in the water and clear my head. The shop we pulled up to happened to be run by Watanabe Hiroki, head of the Fukushima Surfing Association.

Hiroki was in his shop when the 2011 earthquake struck. He escaped to a nearby evacuation centre and watched from the hilltop as his shop was flooded by the tsunami. While the national surfing community rallied together to send water, clothes and other support, it took several months of hard work to reopen his shop, and most people wouldn't dare go near the sea for years afterwards. In the years following the tsunami Hiroki faced an uphill battle to promote surfing in the area. Thankfully, things



Plentiful surf with no crowds.  
Welcome to Fukushima.  
(©Kiyomi Igari)



Watanabe Hiroki, head of the Fukushima Surfing Association, in front of his shop that was flooded by the 2011 tsunami  
(© THE SURF NEWS)

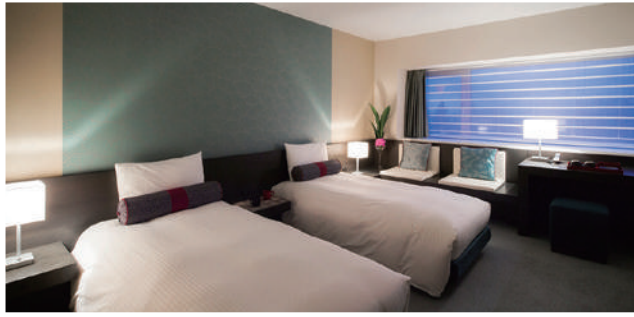
are beginning to return to normal with big national surfing competitions the last two years attracting hundreds of amateur surfers from all over Japan.

"Some people still don't feel safe coming to Fukushima, and that's Ok," says Hiroki.

"All we can do is welcome those that choose to come. By holding these competitions, I hope to bring more positive coverage of Fukushima. Slowly people will realise that it is safe and start coming back. These large events are an important contribution to the local economy. The sea is safe, and the local government has rebuilt the foreshore with spacious parking and clean toilets. All that's left is for the people to come back."

With the interview finished I grabbed a board and ran to the water's edge, paddling straight out to an empty peak. Over the next two hours I caught wave after wave, never once crossing paths with another surfer. Uncrowded surf is a rare commodity in Japan, or almost anywhere in the world for that matter. You'd have to search pretty hard in any country with surfers to find easily accessible waves of this quality with no crowds. While the triple catastrophe of 2011 has scared many people from Fukushima, as things return to normal, maybe surfing can help bring people back. As the wave of government support subsides, the Pacific Ocean continues to provide unlimited waves of her own. Uncrowded surf is plentiful in Fukushima, but once people realise the high potential and minimal risks, it may not stay that way for long! ■





# AWESOME POWDER PARADISE

Aizu area is located inland of Japan Sea coastline in Tohoku area. With 22 ski resorts you can choose, and Samurai Culture oriented traditional town, you will be making the most out of your trip with amazing skiing and snowboarding, and experiencing the "Real Japan."

[aizuski.jp](http://aizuski.jp)



**L**otte Arai is a new resort that opened its doors in 2017 in the Myoko Area, one of the most snow-abundant areas in the world. Its biggest drawcard is none other than the fact that it is home to the largest non-compacted snow slope in all of Japan.

Rather than spending hours explaining all of the features of the slope, it would be much simpler, and more impressive, to have a look at a map of it. All of the purple areas on the included map are open for skiing. Generally speaking, recognised off-course areas can be skied on and since these areas are non-compacted, there is the potential to ski on

freshly-fallen powder snow all around the place. Please take note that a certain level of skill is required to tackle these slopes as there is a chance of getting lost in these huge areas.

Looking for a break from shredding the slopes? How about a ride on the longest zip-line in Japan? This gigantic zip-line was constructed to coincide with the opening of the resort, boasting an approximately 240-metre total elevation distance and spanning 1,501 metres in length from the mountain-top gondola.

Another great reason to visit Arai is for a stay in the luxurious resort hotel. The hotel is comprised of 257 rooms in total that are divided into three classes: Superior, Deluxe, and Suite. Marketed as an upper-class establishment, even

the Superior rooms are furnished with their specially-branded bedding designed for optimal sleeping comfort, as well as a range of other perks that place the hotel on a level above the rest.

There is no end to the joys to be had within the resort grounds with a large public *onsen* bath, as well as a number of sumptuous restaurants. Mosey over to the library café filled to the brim with books, and get your fitness fix with a range of facilities including bouldering walls, a pool, gym, and spa. Experience the ultimate resort stay at Lotte Arai Resort.

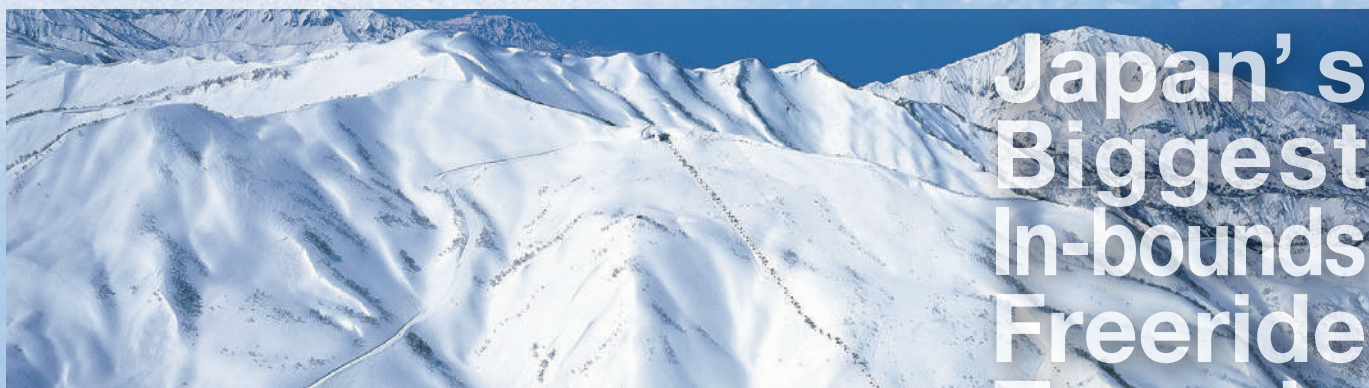
Direct access from Tokyo and other locations is a breeze thanks to the free shuttle bus service offered from the recently built Joetsumyoko station on the *shinkansen* line. ■

# Lotte Arai Resort

Marvel at the largest non-compacted snow slope in Japan







# Japan's Biggest In-bounds Freeride Terrain

**LOTTE** ARAI RESORT

1966 Ryozenji, Myoko-shi, Niigata, Japan 944-0062  
Tel +81-255-75-1100 <http://lottearairesort.com>









# Shibu Onsen

The closest long-established hot spring area to the snow monkeys



One of the most sought-after experiences by international visitors to Japanese ski areas is, without question, the sight of snow monkeys bathing in the *onsen*. While some skiers and snowboarders book tours to see these snow monkeys during their stays in popular ski areas like Hakuba and Nozawa Onsen, it can actually be a trying day-long experience to see them this way since it takes quite a bit of time to get there from these places, despite them all being located in Nagano prefecture.

If you're planning a ski trip to Nagano prefecture and would also like to see the snow monkeys and have a dip in the hot springs without the hassle of extended travel times, then I highly recommend a stay in Shibu Onsen at the base of one of the mountains in Shiga Kogen (the largest ski area in Japan). Get up close and personal with the snow monkeys or go for a quick ski during your stay in this *onsen* town located near Jigokudani Hot Spring where the bathing monkeys can be found. The area's location at the base of the mountain

makes it far more convenient than trying to travel to other ski areas outside of Shiga Kogen to get your snow-slope fix.

Shibu Onsen is so rich in hot spring sources that simply digging up the ground in the area will expose a source of thermal waters. It boasts hot springs of quantity and quality not commonly found in the hot spring kingdom of Nagano prefecture. Each hot spring source produces waters with different qualities, from the brown-coloured waters filled with iron, to cloudy, green, and even crystal clear waters amongst many others. With the different colours comes a range of benefits including relief from nerve pain and healthier-looking skin.

There is no shortage of inns with private hot spring sources and individual baths in this town filled with thermal waters. Take a stroll in this long-standing hot spring town and try out the nine different outdoor public baths for a typical *onsen*-town experience. If you're set on seeing the snow monkeys on your next trip, perhaps pencil Shibu Onsen in to your itinerary. ■

Traditional and historical Japanese hotel.

Spa water drawn straight from the source.    Other spas also within short distances.    Very close to Snow Monkey park!

渋温泉 御宿 炭乃湯  
ONYADO SUMINOYU

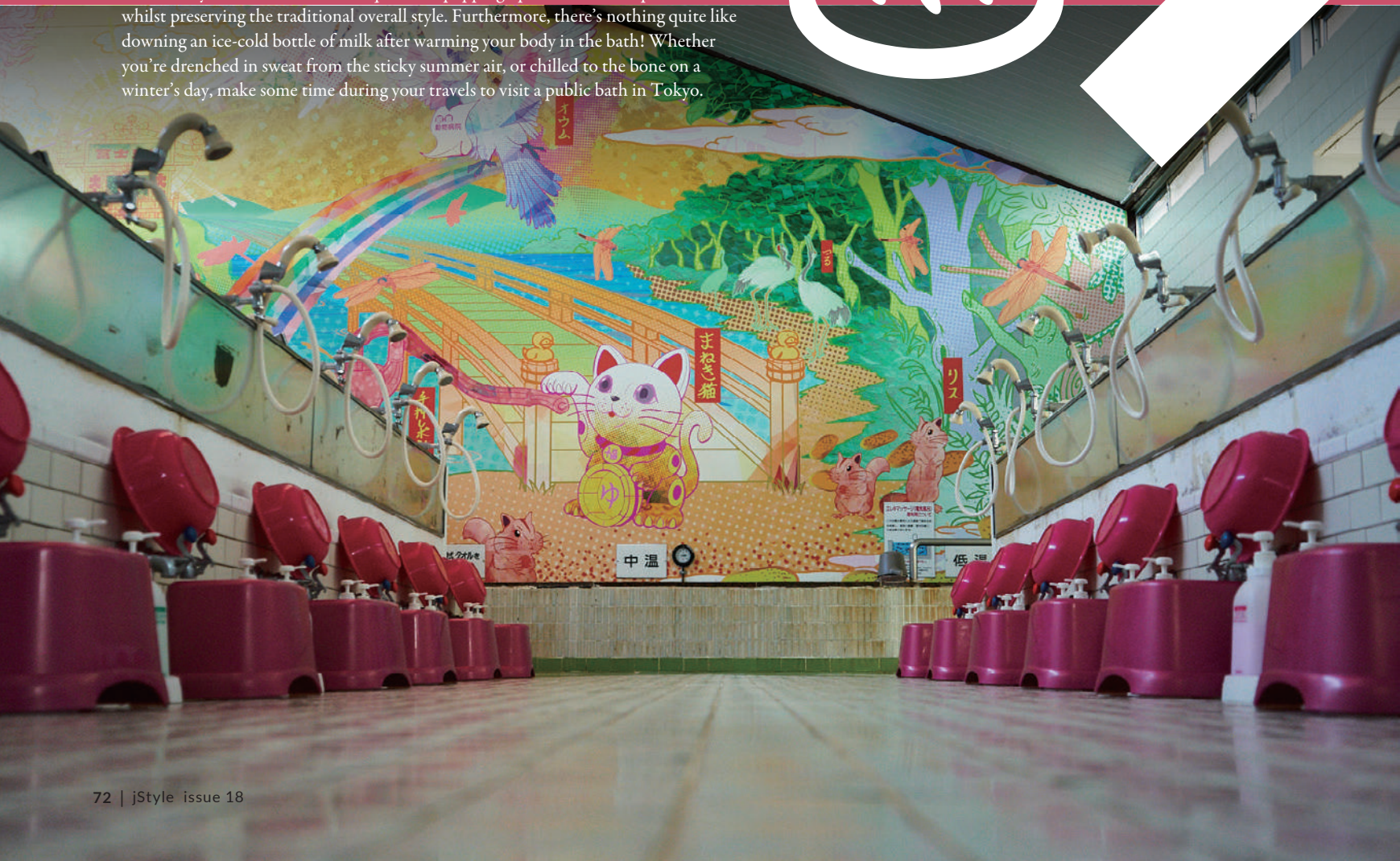
[www.suminoyu.com](http://www.suminoyu.com)  
[info@suminoyu.com](mailto:info@suminoyu.com)  
Shibu Onsen, Yamanouchimachi, Shimotakai-gun,  
Nagano-ken, Japan 381-0401  
TEL. +81 269-33-3128

SHIBU ONSEN NAGANO  
7072SUMI



# ART MEETS SENTO

*Sento* refers to “public baths”, facilities much adored around Japan since the 17th century. These public baths are not merely places to go to wash your body, but rather places where locals and travellers gather socially to soak away their exhaustion. Many people have undoubtedly seen the familiar sight of Mount Fuji painted near one of these baths. A *sento* craze has been slowly taking hold of people young and old recently, with a number of unique baths popping up that have incorporated art, whilst preserving the traditional overall style. Furthermore, there’s nothing quite like downing an ice-cold bottle of milk after warming your body in the bath! Whether you’re drenched in sweat from the sticky summer air, or chilled to the bone on a winter’s day, make some time during your travels to visit a public bath in Tokyo.





# 銭湯



## 富士見湯

### FUJIMI-YU

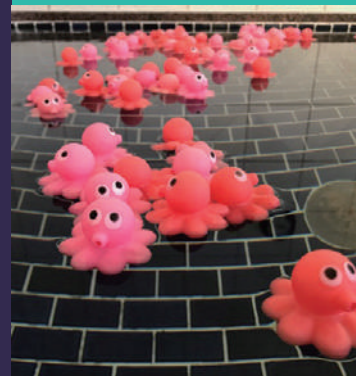
Address: 1260, Nakagami-cho, Akishima-shi, Tokyo (an eight-minute walk from either Higashi-Nakagami station or Nakagami station on the Ome Line)

Web: [www.fujimiyu.co](http://www.fujimiyu.co)

Trading hours: 12 PM – 10 AM, closed on Mondays

### HOW TO CORRECTLY NAVIGATE A SENTO

1. Take your shoes off at the entrance and place them in the shoe cupboard.
2. Pay the entrance fee at the *bandai* (reception).
3. Soap, towels, and other bathing amenities can also be purchased at the *bandai*.
4. Baths are divided into separate male and female bathing areas. Generally, the red curtain leads to the female area and the blue curtain leads to the male area.
5. Take off all of your clothes, including your underwear, before entering the bath.
6. You must wash your body before entering the bath. Sit on the provided stools to scrub your body.
7. Pour hot water on your body before entering the bath. This is known as "*kake-yu*".
8. Sit back and relax in the heated waters.



## FUJIMI-YU

Seven thousand different manga (Japanese comics) are available for you to read to your heart's content at this *sento* featuring the longest trading hours in the city at 22 hours every day! Make sure you check out the walls in the baths covered in bright and colourful paintings of Japanese lucky charms.

Lofts and individual rooms can be found in the lounge for you to flop down and relax after a good soak in the baths. You can also take advantage of the sauna to relax in at no additional charge. This *sento* has become the talk of the town with the fun experience offered with different toys such as sushi and octopuses floating about. All the soaking got your tummy rumbling? Snack on some ice cream, beer, instant noodles, *takoyaki* (octopus balls), and other tasty treats. Feel free to also park your bicycle inside the facility if needed.

The bath waters are tapped from 100% high-quality well waters. This public bath lets you laze about in your home away from home.





## ふくの湯

### FUKU-NO-YU

The idea behind Fuku-no-yu is to provide patrons with an experience to bring happiness to the body and soul, as well as impart some measure of good fortune by soaking in the spacious baths. This is what paved the way for the “*sento* of good fortune” concept.

Feng shui aspects have inspired the interior colour scheme, with the Seven Lucky Gods forming the theme of the bathing rooms. The baths featuring strong jets streaming high-quality well water, and those steeped with natural herbal medicines are particularly popular.



### FUKU-NO-YU

Address: 5-41-5, Sendagi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo (a five-minute walk from Hon-komagome station on the Tokyo Metro Namboku Line)

Web: [www.sentou-bunkyo.com/pg65.html](http://www.sentou-bunkyo.com/pg65.html)

Trading hours: Weekdays 11 AM – 12 AM; Sat, Sun, and public holidays 8 AM – 12 AM (open all year round)





### SAKAE-YU

Address: 2-6-2, Nishiochiai, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo (an eight-minute walk from Ochiai-minami-nagasaki station on the Toei Oedo Line)

Web: [https://twitter.com/skey\\_tgd1010](https://twitter.com/skey_tgd1010)

Trading hours: 3 PM – 12 AM, closed on Mondays and Fridays



## 栄湯



## SAKAE-YU

This *sentō* was newly renovated on November 1st, 2017 and is located near Tetsugaku-do Park (park of philosophy), which is the inspiration behind the facility's concept of being a "public bath of philosophy". The baths here are lit up in four beautiful colours, each corresponding to a different philosophy-related figure – the yellow Buddha sauna; the blue Kant bath, the purple Socrates bath, and the orange Confucius bath (semi-outdoor).

Escape the distractions and mainstream concepts of city-life by resetting your mind, and find yourself again in this space away from the daily grind.



## OTSUKA KINEN-YU

A cosmic wonderland graces the ceiling of this relaxing oasis. This particular *sentō* is a retro retreat deeply-rooted in its local surrounds. It was built during the Taisho period (1912 – 1926) and was bestowed the new name "Kinen-yu" (commemorative bath) to commemorate the changes over the Taisho period to the Showa period. The *sentō* was renovated into a building-style bath and is now run by the bath madame and mistress.

Travellers, and public-bath amateurs are welcome with arms wide open! Rock up without any gear required. Tattoos are also a non-issue here and the free Wi-Fi is a welcome addition. There are also baths with the temperature dialled down for people of all ages and genders to enjoy!

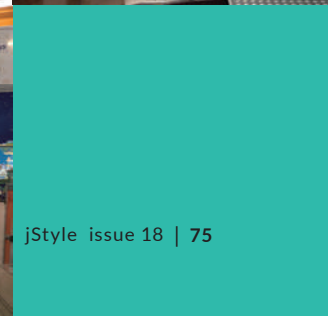
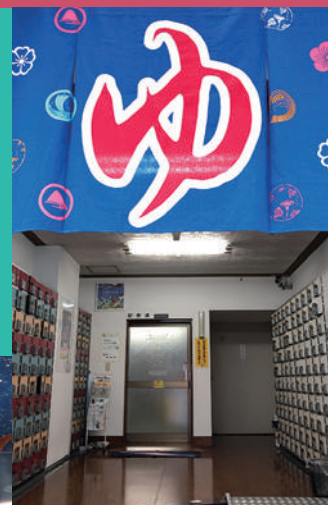
## 大塚記念湯

### OTSUKA KINEN-YU

Address: 3-38-15, Minami Otsuka, Toshima-ku, Tokyo (a three-minute walk from the southern exit of Otsuka station on the Yamanote Line)

Web: [www.toshima1010.org/sentozyoho/324.html](http://www.toshima1010.org/sentozyoho/324.html)

Trading hours: (Ground floor) Kinen-yu 2 PM – 1 AM, (1st floor) sauna 12 PM – 12 AM, closed on Fridays (\*Same entrance)





# Arita Porcelain

One of Japanese representative traditional arts

## HISTORY OF ARITA PORCELAIN

The history of Arita porcelain dates back about 400 years, when Yi Sam-pyeong discovered the white clay kaolin and then fired Japan's first porcelain.

In the late 19th century, the 18th-century vogue for *Chinoiserie* (European translations of Asian decorative arts) that established new roles for East Asian furnishings in European interiors, was followed by a wave of Japonism, and ceramics became an important and increasingly celebrated trade good for the newly industrialising Meiji Era (1868-1912) Japan.

## HIGHLY PRIZED IN JAPAN FOR THE HIGH QUALITY OF THEIR ARTISTRY

Located in western Saga prefecture, Izumiyama Quarry Arita is the original home of Japanese porcelain. In the early 17th century, the Korean potter Kanagae Sanbee I (also known as Yi Sam-pyeong) discovered a source of kaolin clay underneath the Izumiyama mountain in Arita, and began firing the nation's first porcelain. This became known as Arita porcelain, or Arita-yaki. Consequently, Arita became the first place in Japan to produce porcelain.

From the mid-17th century, the Dutch East India Company exported large quantities of porcelain ware from Arita to buyers throughout the world, mainly in Europe. Solid and durable, Arita porcelain became known for its finely painted, vivid decorations in indigo blue, red, yellow, and gold. Arita's techniques and traditions have been carried on over 400 years, and even today it is beloved by pottery fans the world over.

## SEIKO Presage Arita Porcelain

Japan's Timeless Traditions: Arita Porcelain

### INSPIRED BY ART, FIRED BY PASSION

In the early 1600s, clay suitable for porcelain was discovered in Arita, a small Japanese town in northwest Kyushu, and a new Japanese tradition was born. By the end of the century, Arita porcelain — sometimes known as Imari ware because of the port from which it was shipped — was not only popular in Japan, it had also become a highly coveted status symbol in royal palaces throughout Europe. Enchanted by its delicate beauty, exquisite texture, and

intricate, hand-painted designs, European aristocrats competed to learn the secrets of the Arita production process. Consequently, Arita porcelain greatly influenced the development of porcelain making in Europe.

For over 400 years, Arita has remained the spiritual center of porcelain crafting in Japan — the oldest kiln goes back to the Edo period — honoring a heritage of artistic mastery that excites collectors and fires the imagination of craftsmen throughout the world. Now Seiko







Presage pays tribute to this elegant Japanese tradition with two exceptional timepieces featuring dials of Arita porcelain.

#### ONLY IN JAPAN: THRICE BAKED TO PERFECTION

Blending two of Japan's most notable characteristics — tradition and technology — the Seiko Presage Arita Porcelain is a tribute to the spirit of craftsmanship. Overseen by master craftsman Hiroyuki Hashiguchi, the project involved years of experimentation, for it required a heretofore unknown level of precision; each dial has a slightly different dial colour and shape after firing, this is very unique.

Additionally, a new type of Arita porcelain was formulated to increase durability. A high-precision mold is used to ensure the consistency of size, depth and recesses. After drying, the dials are baked at 1300 °C, hand



glazed, and baked again. The second firing bonds the glaze to the dial and brings out the subtle blue tint. Finally, holes for the hands and date window are made, and a third baking smoothes the surfaces. The result is a dial that radiates perfection, a hallmark of Arita porcelain.

#### A PORCELAIN TRIBUTE

In the finest tradition of Japanese craftsmanship, two new members of the Seiko Presage series feature Arita porcelain dials. These are thicker than traditional dials, which makes possible a gentle curve, as well as the deep recesses that house the power-reserve and date indicator of one model. Both versions pay homage to Seiko's historic 1913 Laurel — Japan's first wristwatch — with a striking red XII. Additionally, the blue numerals are ideally complemented by the dial's subtle bluish tint, a pleasing shade that characterizes Arita Porcelain. ■



# Industrial Night Views

Beautiful Japanese sights in the darkness of night

Industrial night views, created by the lighting up of industrial complexes and factories using industrial night lights, has a deep-rooted popularity in Japan spanning over 10 years. I set off to cover these sights through various activities and track down the charms of these unconventional night views.

Words: Ryoji Yamauchi  
Photographs supplied by: KMC Corporation  
(Tel: +81-45-290-8377, Web: reservedcruise.com/e, Email: info@reservedcruise.com)

Toa Oil Keihin Refinery



## INDUSTRIAL NIGHT VIEWS TRENDING IN JAPAN

Are you familiar with the active efforts of fanatics in Japan who love industrial complexes, illuminated night-time factories, chimneys, and other beautiful structures? The view of the night sky from mountaintop observation platforms or towers differs from that of the industrial night views. In fact, this rather niche night sight has garnered attention for quite some time now. During the daytime, these industrial complexes and factories possess not much more than inorganic external appearances, but come nightfall the industrial lights illuminate them to create a beautiful,

fantastical sight akin to that of a science fiction movie scene. It is these industrial night views that have garnered much gushing and comments about how calming the sights are, and have turned them into popular, yet little-known night-time scenic hot spots.

The industrial night view boom started in the mid 2000s. The person who lit the fuse to the boom was Tetsu Ishii an illustrator who shared his blog about industrial night views on social media. He made appearances on Japanese variety shows in 2006 to profess his love for these factories, before releasing a photobook in March 2007, followed by the sale of industrial night-view-themed merchandise. In 2010, the first ever Japanese “industrial night view calendar”





was released with the official recognition and complete support of the city of Kawasaki in Kanagawa prefecture. After its release, the calendar gained increased exposure on TV, newspapers, radio and other media outlets, making it a staple calendar sold every year. The beauty and wonders of industrial night views continue to be spread to many to this day.

Local municipalities have also hopped aboard the factory night view train by organizing different activities. In 2011, the first “Industrial Night View Summit” was held in Kawasaki to get cities thinking about how to promote local growth through industrial night views. The first iteration of the summit only consisted of four cities – Kawasaki, Kanagawa prefecture; Muroran, Hokkaido prefecture; Yokkaichi, Mie prefecture; and Kitakyushu, Fukuoka prefecture. By the ninth summit in 2018, the number of cities had increased to 11. The increasing number of cities pushing their industrial night views just goes to show how important of a tourism resource these views are to Japan.

#### THE PIONEERING CITY AND THE CHANGING IMAGE

Admiring industrial night views all around Japan has now become a popular sightseeing option, however, as can be drawn from the previously mentioned first “Industrial Night View Summit”, it was the city of Kawasaki (Kanagawa prefecture) that spearheaded this movement. Kawasaki is

home to Japan’s largest industrial area – the Keihin Industrial Area.

This industrial area spreads from the west part of Tokyo Bay through to Kawasaki, with Yokohama in the centre and Saitama prefecture to the north, and consists of steel, oil-refining, petrochemistry factories and other heavy chemical industries. Factories have and continue to support the Japanese economy, however, the 1960s saw these industrial areas stamped with negative imagery due to the major environmental problems arising from the waste water and smoke produced by them. The industrial night view boom has helped to completely flip this negative image into a positive one, and there also happens to be a certain activity created in order to support this image change – sea cruises.

It may sound a little excessive to go cruising just to admire the night scenery, however, this actually serves as the most logical way to see the sights. This is because industrial complexes and factories are surrounded by confidential matters by nature, and are difficult to get close to on land due to counter-terrorism measures. The Keihin Industrial Area is particularly difficult to approach due to large number of factories in the area surrounded by clusters of trees or fences. Sailing by the factories lining the coastline offers an unobstructed view – the perfect way to enjoy the night scenery. The glow of the lights reflecting off the water is also a lovely sight that cannot be enjoyed on land, and another reason that makes admiring the sights on a cruise so enticing.



## A JAPAN-FIRST FACTORY NIGHT-VIEW CRUISE

I set out to cover the “Factory Night View Jungle Cruise” offered by KMC Corporation for this article. This is the original industrial night view cruise, and also happens to be the previously mentioned method of cruising around the Keihin Industrial Area.

The Night View Jungle Cruises started operating on 7 June 2008. A small boat with a capacity of 30 people was originally used to ferry industrial-night-view fanatics around the bay, before the boost in popularity saw a waiting time of up to four months the following year. Currently, the cruise operates on weekends from Friday to Sunday, on a 50-person capacity boat (with this number possibly increasing depending on the time of the year).

This cruise ship sets sail at sunset from the Red Brick Warehouse Pier near the “Minato Mirai 21” Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse. There are also other companies that offer the same service, but the fact that this particular cruise times its departure with the sunset is a plus. Who doesn’t appreciate the opportunity to watch the sun set, or the night sky fade from

Showa Denko (Okawa-cho)



deep blue to pitch black before admiring the night views?

The cruise runs for one and a half hours, and visits 13 night-view spots (or 14 on the special Friday course), with a sail through an almost maze-like canal part-way through. As you cruise through the forest of factories, you come to understand how the cruise tour got its name.

Immediately after departing, passengers will be greeted by the impressive sight of the iconic Yokohama Bay Bridge and Tsurumi Tsubasa Bridge. On a lucky day, there might also be the sight of a brightly lit-up luxury cruise liner anchored at the port for passengers to awe at.

Keep reading for my focus on a few of the

spots the Night Factory Jungle Cruise happens to sail by. It goes without saying that every one of the spots is unique in its own way owing to their different illuminations and patterns. There are different charms to discover along the way.

Let’s start with the Higashi Ogishima Oil Terminal at the very beginning. The giant oil tank found here is already impressive in itself, however, the sight of the numerous white lights reflecting brightly off it is simply incredible.

Prepare for the eye-catching sight of flare stacks (industrial chimneys) emitting flames towards the middle of the cruise. These structures are used to de-toxify excess gases produced by gas processing facilities and refineries by burning them off. The sight of these flare stacks on approach is remarkable, and even inspired movie director, Ridley Scott, who incorporated this sight into a scene of *Blade Runner*.

Be sure not to miss the Toa Oil Keihin Refinery and the Showa Denko power plant (there are two plants, one in Okawa-cho, the other in Ogimachi) at the very end of the cruise. Both of these spots are absolutely stunning for the brilliant concentration of lights on display. The ship used for the Night View Jungle Cruise

Higashi Ogishima Oil Terminal





Showa Denko (Ogimachi)



has two levels. The bottom level is completely enclosed, whereas the top deck is where I would recommend passengers set up base for this section and the previously mentioned flare stacks. This is because being out in the open allows you to see the billowing smoke, hear the mechanical sounds of the facilities in operation, and smell the wafting oil in the air, amongst other sensory experiences. Using your senses, other than sight, to experience these night views will make you almost feel as though these inorganic structures have some form of life within them. These mysterious experiences can only be had when gazing upon industrial night views.

After viewing all of the spots on the cruising course, the ship is greeted by the dazzling lights of Minato Mirai 21 as it returns to port.

Admiring the industrial night views on a sea cruise offers the unique experience of seeing the shining beauty of night lights illuminating industrial complexes and factories, and the opportunity to enjoy their industrial beauty. It also brings you up close to what makes Japan the great manufacturing nation. Make some time on a weekend during your stay in Japan to see the industrial night views and enjoy the mysterious beauty they have to offer. ■





## TRAVEL Hotel to Experience

The Club Floor Premier Grand is the most luxurious room offered by the KEIO PLAZA HOTEL TOKYO with the concept of providing a first-class accommodation experience in Tokyo. These rooms are located on a special floor reserved for certain guests. Found in the modern-Japanese guest rooms are top quality products from around the world. Beautiful sights can be seen from the spacious 535-metre<sup>2</sup> Club Lounge sitting at 160 metres above ground level in your own private oasis. The East meets West design features the indigo tones of a Japanese garden, whilst the traditional pieces of Japanese art showcasing Japanese ink, lacquer, and *washi* (Japanese paper) create a calm and relaxing atmosphere. Various experiences are on offer for guests, including tea ceremonies, flower arrangement, and *yukatas*. Of these various experiences, make sure to drop by the “Sho-fu-an” tea ceremony room to try your hand at the formal tradition of tea ceremony explained in English. Preparing tea in this way will get you in touch with the beautiful Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi* (beauty in transience and imperfection) as well as *omotenashi* (hospitality).

### KEIO PLAZA HOTEL TOKYO “Premier Grand”

Address: 2-2-1 Nishi-Shinjuku,  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo

Web: [www.keioplaza.com](http://www.keioplaza.com)

Contact via the enquiry  
section on the KEIO PLAZA  
HOTEL TOKYO website

Enter for your chance to  
win a reader's prize for  
two nights in one room  
for two people in the Club  
Floor Premier Grand with  
breakfast and Lounge  
access included. See page  
15 for entry details.



### Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo “Premier Grand”



# Unique Hotels Offering Wonderful Experiences

There are a number of “interesting” hotels to be found in Japan, ranging from the old-fashioned, traditional establishments to those plucked out from the not-too-distant future. Find the hotel of your dreams to create fond memories of your travels.

### remm Tokyo Kyobashi

#### remm Tokyo Kyobashi

Address: 2-6-21 Kyobashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Web: [www.hankyu-hotel.com/hotel/remm/tokyo-kyobashi](http://www.hankyu-hotel.com/hotel/remm/tokyo-kyobashi)

Contact via the enquiry section on the remm  
Tokyo Kyobashi website







## MOSHI MOSHI ROOMS

MOSHI MOSHI ROOMS is a home-sharing facility opened not long ago in December 2018. It is located in the fashion, food, and cultural hub of Harajuku and offers a highly original accommodation concept not found in other hotels. The glamorous and unique rooms inspired by themes such as “ORIGAMI” and “SAKURA” maintain their Harajuku-esque touch whilst also creating essentially Japanese spaces. Music events and other gatherings can also be held using the BBQ and DJ equipment found on the hotel rooftop. This hotel is located in a popular neighbourhood, with the cafes, *izakaya* (Japanese pubs), and bars in the area loved by Harajuku locals. Are you ready to experience life in Harajuku?

### MOSHI MOSHI ROOMS

Address: 2-18-7 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo  
Web: [rooms.moshimoshi-nippon.jp](http://rooms.moshimoshi-nippon.jp)  
Email: [info@rokuyon.co.jp](mailto:info@rokuyon.co.jp)



## BnA Hotel Koenji / BnA Studio Akihabara

A hotel where you can sleep in an artist's creation. The concept behind the BnA HOTEL Koenji is a hotel which incorporates the whole of Koenji with art rooms around the town” and the hotel is currently doing just that in a world first. The theme of the BnA STUDIO Akihabara is, “living with art, a next-generation Tokyo urban lifestyle”. Guests can stay in one of these rooms surrounded by the art of spirited artists.

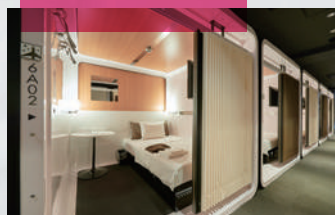
### BnA HOTEL KOENJI / BnA STUDIO AKIHABARA

Address: [Koenji] 2-4-7 Koenjikita, Suginami-ku, Tokyo  
[Akihabara] 6-3-3 Sotokanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
Web: [www.bna-hotel.com](http://www.bna-hotel.com)  
Email: [info@bna-hotel.com](mailto:info@bna-hotel.com)



The remm Tokyo Kyobashi opened its doors in April 2019 to offer guests “a good night’s sleep”. This establishment has collaborated with Nihon Bed (a famous Japanese bed manufacturer) to develop an original bed that is a perfect fit for the body, providing a gently wrapped-up sleeping experience. Rooms are furnished with two different pillows, with numerous others available for loan so guests can pick their own perfect pillow. The bathrooms feature gentle rain showers that release water from the ceiling, as well as original bath amenities for an enjoyable bath-time experience.

## First Cabin



### FIRST CABIN

Address: Various locations in Japan (Hokkaido, Chiba, Kyoto, Ishikawa, Aichi, Kyoto, Osaka, Wakayama, Fukuoka, and Nagasaki)  
Web: [www.first-cabin.jp](http://www.first-cabin.jp)  
Enquire via the Frequently Asked Questions section on the website





## SAKURA HOUSE/ SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL



### SAKURA HOUSE / SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL

Address: Various locations in Japan  
(Tokyo, Kyoto, and Izu)

Web: [www.sakurahotel.co.jp](http://www.sakurahotel.co.jp)

Contact via the enquiry section on the  
official website

SAKURA HOUSE / SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL has been offering accommodation services catered especially for overseas travellers for over 25 years, with SAKURA HOUSE providing weekly and monthly stay options for longer visits, and SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL accommodating short-term guests. Feel free to take your pick from the range of different stay options comprising of the hostel, guest house, monthly apartment, and vacation rental.

Group visitors from Australia staying at this facility continue to increase, and high praise has been received, especially from families with children. Parents are able to prepare food for children, who are not fond of Japanese food, in kitchens, reducing any stress during their travels. Group rooms at SAKURA HOTEL NIPPORI and SAKURA HOSTEL ASAKUSA are recommended for short-stay families or groups, whereas the monthly apartment or vacation rental at SAKURA HOUSE are great for stays of a week or more.

One of the top reasons to stay here is none other than the Japanese cultural experiences on offer for guests. Lucky guests can join in with locals to carry the *mikoshi* (portable shrine) at ceremonial events of traditional Japanese festivals, get special access to watch sumo wrestlers train, and enjoy other different experiences. These events are only made possible because the hotel has earned the trust of locals through their long years of trade, and travel agents could only ever dream of putting together such experiences at the great prices found here. Dive into a unique cultural experience at your accommodation of choice on your next long-awaited trip to Japan.

## SAKURA HOUSE

Apartments, share houses, guest houses in Tokyo, Kyoto & Izu

All rooms furnished, utility fees included, free Wi-Fi



[www.sakura-house.com](http://www.sakura-house.com)

## SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL

Affordable, friendly hotels and hostel in Tokyo

Perfect for families & backpackers, variety of rooms, open 24 hours

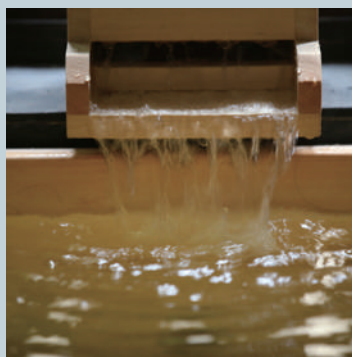


[www.sakura-hotel.co.jp](http://www.sakura-hotel.co.jp)



Tokyo, Kyoto and Izu (Kawazu) Accommodations in JAPAN





# Experience Japan in Sydney

You can learn about Japanese culture and language in Sydney and in the surrounding areas. There are many shops that stock an eye-boggling selection of Japanese goods, and Japanese-style hot spring *ryokans* to visit. Experience a taste of Japan in Australia.





Gojyuan was opened in August 2013 when Australian owner, Linda Evans, and her husband, Steve, undertook a complete renovation of their home to incorporate all of the inspiration they brought back with them from Japan.

This establishment is popular as it offers accommodation, the opportunity to take a day trip to experience their natural cypress baths, and also a variety of different workshops to learn and experience Japanese culture first hand.

Linda continues her efforts to provide even more workshops purely out of her own fascination and passion. She hopes that many people come to experience the “showcase of hospitality” and learn about Japan through their visits to Gojyuan.

This feature will focus on two workshops covering aspects of Japanese culture that should be passed down to all – kimono and *temari*.

#### TEMARI WORKSHOP

Instructor: Chihiro Kownacki from TEMARI Sydney

*Temari* (decorative Japanese balls, literally “hand ball”) is a traditional form of Japanese folk art. The balls are a highly artistic form of Japanese culture and are decorated with



## Gojyuan

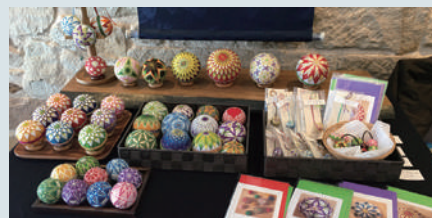
Workshops to experience and share all things Japan

gorgeous, intricate embroidery featuring seasonal flowers, plants, geometric and traditional Japanese patterns. One of the charms of these *temari* is that different colour combinations and stitching methods can make balls of the same pattern look completely different, resulting in one-of-a-kind creations.

The *temari* workshops only take place in Ryokan Gojyuan. They are held on the last Saturday of every month, and the second Friday of every other month.

*Temari*-making can be split into three main steps.

1. Make a base ball
2. Divide up the ball (ball may be divided into sixths, eighths, etc. depending on the pattern)







3. Stitch a pattern onto the surface  
Since the workshop only runs for a short two hours, instructor Chihiro has already done the hard work of making the base balls for participants. She will also demonstrate the first step during the workshop, before letting everyone get into the fun part of stitching the patterns.

There are approximately 10 different patterns taught at these workshops ranging from flowers such as chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms, and poinsettias, to geometric patterns such as diamonds, and spindles. Different patterns are taught on rotation every month.

At the end of each workshop, participants have their photos taken with their newly-made *temari*.

While different regions of Japan use different threads such as silk, plant-dyed cotton, and rayon, this workshop uses threads that can be easily obtained in Sydney so that participants can go home and make their own *temari* whenever they please.

A step-by-step manual with photos explaining the three steps for making *temari* is distributed to participants. Perhaps you can also become a master of Japanese traditional arts with the help of these trusty manuals.



## KIMONO SALON

**Instructor: Tae Gessner from the International Kimono Club Sydney**

The kimono is a traditional Japanese garment. Its beauty needs no explanation as it has become a piece of clothing recognised all around the world. Kimono are quite expensive and while they are no longer worn as frequently in Japan as they were in the past, they are still donned for special occasions such as weddings and other celebratory events. Despite the special nature of the garment, the sight of international visitors walking down the traditional streets of Japan dressed in kimono and *yukata* has become almost commonplace.

This workshop not only allows participants to learn about kimono and how to wear them,

but also gives them the opportunity to choose from close to 100 different kimono and *obi* (belt), style their own colour combinations, and then take photos of themselves in their chosen style to cherish the fun memories. Tae Gessner, the instructor of this workshop, has spent most of her life around kimono and was influenced by her mother who owned a kimono business. She was the recipient of the Japanese Consul-General's Commendation in 2018 for her contribution to promoting kimono and Japanese culture.

Workshops are held on the second Saturday of every month from 11 AM to 2 PM with small classes consisting of a maximum of three people. The workshop costs \$120, which includes kimono, *zori* (Japanese sandals), and hair accessory rental, as well as the fee to use the space provided by Gojyuan. Workshop participants will also receive a pair of *tabi* (traditional Japanese socks worn with kimono) as a welcome souvenir. Try your hand at learning how to wear a kimono and then strut your stuff on the streets of Sydney to show off your beautiful kimono when you've mastered the art of kimono dressing!

208 Darling St., Balmain NSW  
Web: [www.ryokangojyuan.com](http://www.ryokangojyuan.com)



Authentic Ryokan Experience

208 Darling Street Balmain NSW 2041 Tel: (02) 9810 3219

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



RYOKAN  
GOJYUAN

8254GOJY



## JAPAN IN SYDNEY

As a country home to 7% of the world's active volcanoes, Japan is also an *onsen* mecca. Many people spend much of their spare time traversing all of the *onsens* to be experienced in Japan due to the unique characteristics, locales, and water properties to be found all over the country. It would be safe to say that there are probably many jStyle readers who have experienced the joys of Japanese hot springs themselves first hand.

Conversely, there may be some Japanese fanatics out there who are deploring the fact that there are few hot springs here in Australia. To the disappointed *onsen* appreciators out there – are you aware that there is an establishment just outside of Sydney that replicates the Japanese *onsen ryokan* experience? This inn is none other than the Japanese Bath House in the Blue Mountains (formerly “Sparadise” and “竜神湯” in Japanese).

The Japanese Bath House is owned by a Japanese doctor who lives in Kyoto and was

originally built to privately entertain his guests during the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Following the Olympics, the owner opened up the hot spring inn to the public 3 days a week in order for Australians to learn more about the *onsen* culture. The bath house continues to operate in this fashion to this day.

There are a total of 7 baths with temperatures of 38 and 40 degrees Celsius to choose from, including the 3 open-air baths, a large indoor bath with a shower area, the cave bath, as well as a herbal steam bath filled with fragrant aromatics. The cave bath comes highly recommended for the unique and extremely relaxing experience on offer. There is nothing quite like a good soak in the thermal waters of a dimly lit cavern. The herbal steam bath is another luxurious experience of sitting back and taking in the calming fragrances wafting around in the moistened air. A dip in the hot springs dug out from 300 metres underground is said to be beneficial for arthritis

# Blue Mountains – Japanese Bath House

An authentic Japanese  
hot spring inn just west  
of Sydney







and gout due to the rich calcium and iron concentration of the waters.

The grounds of the establishment itself can be split up into 3 buildings – the main building housing the hot spring facilities, and the 2 accommodation facilities. Each of the accommodation buildings have their own unique style; the Cabin is, as the name suggests, a cabin-style building, whereas the Tudor House is a Tudor-style building with luxurious Japanese rooms nestled within it.

Bathing suits must be worn for dips in the mixed public baths, however, for those looking for a more authentic Japanese experience, there are private bath rooms on offer that

can be reserved for dips completely unrobed. The private bath rooms come complete with a beautifully woven bamboo sofa, 2 massage tables, and a cauldron-shaped bathtub. Wonderfully aromatic fragrances fill the air with the background melodies of healing music to soothe the soul as guests can be treated to a 1 hour massage after a dip in bath in their private room. For a truly luxurious experience, the private bath rooms simply cannot be passed up.

Within the bath house grounds is a restaurant serving Japanese cuisine with a gorgeous indoor stone garden inside of it. It is an absolute treat to feast upon the authentic Japanese cuisine dished up by the Japanese chef. The Japanese Bath House also dabbles in tea growing, so there are a variety of different teas available for purchase as well. Relaxing with a herbal tea after a long soak in the thermal waters sure does hit the spot.

The grounds of the Japanese Bath House are strictly alcohol free due to the risk of fainting after a soak in the hot springs. For those looking for a quick drink, the town of Lithgow is a short 10 to 15 minute drive away.

Expansion of the bath house is on the cards at the moment, with construction of a cavern-styled bath inside of a garden maze lined up for the near future. Check out the Japanese Bath House's official Facebook page to stay up to date with their latest posts.



## Japanese Bath House – Blue Mountains Sparadise

*Escape from your busy lifestyle  
... Come and indulge your senses*

[www.japanesebathhouse.com.au/bathhouse.asp](http://www.japanesebathhouse.com.au/bathhouse.asp)







# Sushi Kaido

Real sushi made by a Japanese sushi chef

Word about Sushi Kaido, located in Chatswood, is going around amongst locals in the know about all things Japanese. This restaurant is already a bustling neighbourhood hot spot for the variety of sushi offerings to be found at a reasonable price. While it may be a sushi-train restaurant, many customers come for the made-to-order selections to enjoy the flavours served by an experienced Japanese sushi chef.

Sushi Kaido strives for freshness and quality, with a policy to only offer the best. As such,

only fish in season are procured for raw items to ensure freshness and authentic Japanese flavours without straining the wallet. In fact, *toro* (tuna belly) is imported straight from Japan, and the *unagi* (eel) is lovingly marinated in the chef's secret sauce. A popular menu item amongst patrons is the *aburi*, which are sushi seared with a burner before being served.

Many customers keep coming back for the variety of sushi that cannot be had at other restaurants, from the less common white-flesh fish, to the different types of shellfish.

Ordering over the phone for takeaway is also an option for those who don't have the time to sit down to enjoy the fresh selections. Also be sure to take note of the impressive platters for your next party or gathering.

Make a bee-line for Sushi Kaido the next time your stomach rumbles for some authentic Japanese sushi in Sydney at a reasonable price.

Shop 7, 376 Victoria Ave., Chatswood NSW 2067  
Tel: (02) 9415-3011  
Web: [www.sushikaido.com.au](http://www.sushikaido.com.au)

Crossing the sushi-train rails  
Sushi made by a professional Japanese sushi chef  
Freshness and quality guaranteed



location : Shop 7, 376 Victoria Ave., Chatswood  
Web : [www.sushikaido.com.au](http://www.sushikaido.com.au)  
Operating Hours : TUE · WED · SUN 11AM-9PM,  
THU · FRI · SAT 11AM-9:30PM, MON :Close



8262KAID



# AZUMA

A well-established restaurant that has served the current emperor of Japan and has been driving the Japanese food scene in Sydney for over 20 years.

At the age of 16, Kimitaka Azuma made the decision to devote himself to the world of food and started training in Japan. At 18 Kimitaka moved to Tokyo where he spent two years followed by a year in Bangkok. After that he continued to hone his craft at an established Japanese hotel group before climbing to the position of Executive Chef at just 29 years of age. In 1990 Kimitaka, along with his team of four chefs, moved to Australia.

The allure of Sydney's fresh produce and ever-expanding restaurant culture was what attracted Kimitaka to the city he would call home.

In 1996 Kimitaka finally opened up his own Japanese restaurant, Azuma, in Crows Nest, which within a few years moved to a bigger location at Chifley Tower in the Sydney CBD.

Whilst Japanese food is now widely known, Kimitaka introduced true Japanese food to Sydneysiders, at a time when Japanese food in Australia only consisted of sushi, tempura and teriyaki chicken.

The Japanese dishes served by Kimitaka were not only appealing for their authenticity, but also their artful presentation.

Since its early days Azuma has become a go-to for business meals, special occasions, and other major events.

"*Omakase*" (chef's choice) meals at sushi bars have been the latest trend in Sydney, however Azuma has increased in popularity as it not only offers this option, but also a "personalised *omakase*" which is served much like a traditional Japanese kaiseki degustation menu.

Owner-chef Kimitaka creates a personalised multi-course meal for patrons

reflecting their requests and incorporating fresh, seasonal produce.

It is this special experience that makes it worthy of the \$150, \$200, or \$250 per person, depending on the customer request, price tag. It might even be considered plain robbery when taking into account the interior design and displays creating the ultimate space to dine.

Kimitaka uses seasonal Australian produce and serves diners items that cannot be had elsewhere, such as *karasumi* (dried mullet roe) and *yuzu kosho* (a spicy condiment using a Japanese citrus fruit).

Kimitaka has also had the honour of serving dinner to the current emperor of Japan when he visited Australia as the then crown prince (the cutlery used at the time can be found on display inside the restaurant). Azuma has received multiple awards and was also the winner of the Savour Australia Restaurant & Catering Hostplus Awards for Excellence NSW 2019 in the Japanese Restaurant category.

Make sure you pay this special restaurant a visit if you are a fan of Japanese cuisine.

Level 1, Chifley, 2 Chifley Square Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 9222-9960  
Web: [www.azuma.com.au](http://www.azuma.com.au)




## AZUMA

**Lunch**  
Mon-Fri 12PM - 2:30PM

**High Tea**  
Mon-Sat 2PM - 5PM (l.o. 4PM)

**Dinner**  
Mon-Sat 6PM - 10PM

Fully Licenced  
[www.azuma.com.au](http://www.azuma.com.au)

7970AZUM





# KUBOTA

Exquisite flavours that won't hurt the hip pocket

Located in Petersham (inner-western Sydney) is the Japanese restaurant, KUBOTA. The owner and head chef, Koji Kubota, sharpened his skills at the popular Japanese seafood restaurant SAKANA-YA for 16 years before venturing out to create his own signature flavour in February 2019 with the opening of this restaurant.

His vision was to bring the flavours of Japanese cuisine and spread its joy, in this area with few Japanese establishments, by offering up most of his exquisite-tasting creations for less than \$20 per dish.

There are approximately 10 daily specials of constantly changing fleeting flavours utilising

the best ingredients of the day and season. A variety of different sake can also be found to complement the different dishes. Feel free to ask the friendly owner or Japanese restaurant staff for some recommendations.

Kubota goes all the way to the markets to see the fish for himself to ensure that he has personally approved everything served in his restaurant – this is one aspect he will absolutely not compromise on. He also tastes all of his dishes and will not serve anything he finds sub-par. The restaurant itself is styled in a homely fashion and is very much a reflection of the owner's welcoming nature. Within the comforts of these confines also lies an almost samurai-like passion to serve great food to all those who visit. Drop by KUBOTA for a casual experience to taste the wonderful flavours of Japanese cuisine.

Shop 1 & 2, 98-106 Audley St., Petersham NSW 2049  
Tel: (02) 9569-7774  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/category/Restaurant/Kubota-japanese-cuisine-807103786289880](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Restaurant/Kubota-japanese-cuisine-807103786289880)



Kubota  
Japanese Cuisine

- Authentic Japanese cuisine
- Fresh fish straight from the market
- Reasonable dining delights

8549KUBO







For those who make Japanese food at home, knowing where to buy ingredients is crucial. While stores selling Japanese foodstuffs can be found across Australia, Tokyo Mart in Northbridge Plaza on the north side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge is a key spot to Japanese expatriates and Australians alike.

Known for having possibly the greatest range of any Japanese supermarket in Sydney, the sheer variation on offer is a sight for first-time visitors, ranging from high-quality Japanese rice to condiments, sweets, dried goods, fresh food, and a Japanese-operated bakery.

With over 20 types of *dashi* alone, a core ingredient in authentic Japanese cooking, you are sure to find what you need. Their Japanese staff are also on hand to answer questions.



## Tokyo Mart

For all your Japanese food and sake needs in Sydney



### EXPERIENCE THE TASTES OF JAPAN

In addition to its sale of goods, Tokyo Mart periodically holds events where you can try Japanese food and *sake*. The chance to experience and take home a taste of Japan is a true highlight of Tokyo Mart. Check out the Tokyo Mart Facebook page where information on events is advertised approximately one month in advance.

Tokyo Mart also holds monthly 20% discount sales on items of a given category, offering new bargains no matter how many times you visit. Fresh vegetables used in Japanese cooking are also stocked in-store.

Come to Tokyo Mart in Sydney for a Japanese food adventure today!

Shop 27, Northbridge Plaza, 79-113 Sailors Bay Rd., Northbridge, NSW 2063  
Tel: (02) 9958-6860  
Web: [www.junpacific.com/tokiomart](http://www.junpacific.com/tokiomart)



**TOKYO MART**

Great range of high quality Japanese groceries, all at a reasonable price

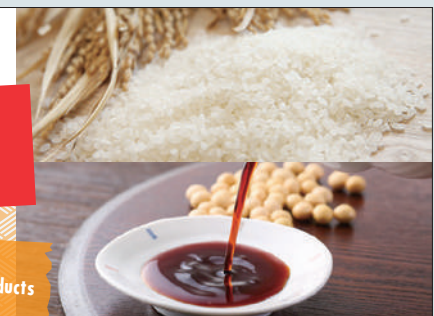
- One of the biggest Japanese supermarkets in Australia
- From Japanese sake and beers to seafoods, diverse variety of products
- Freshness, quality and value guaranteed on all products

**TOKYO MART**

Sydney: Shop 27, Northbridge Plaza, Northbridge  
(02)9958-6860

Mon-Wed, Fri 9AM-5PM  
Thu 9AM-6PM  
Sat 9AM-5:30PM  
Sun 10AM-4PM  
Public Holidays Closed

**FUJI MART**  
不二マート



**Gold Coast:** Southport Park Shopping Centre, Cnr Ferry & Benowa Rd, Southport / (07)5591-6211  
**Brisbane:** Shop 5, Buranda Village, 264 Ipswich Rd, Woolloongabba / (07)3172-7021  
**Melbourne:** 34A Elizabeth St, south Yarra / (03)9826-5839  
**Perth:** Shop 13-14, 29 Station St, Subiaco / (08)6162-8608

0221 TOKYO



# Getting around

## Travelling around Japan with ease

### JAPAN'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS



The flight schedule is correct as of November 1, 2019 and is subject to change.

- ANA: [ana.co.jp/en/jp/international](http://ana.co.jp/en/jp/international)
- JAL: [jal.com/index.html](http://jal.com/index.html)
- Jetstar: [jetstar.com/au/en/home](http://jetstar.com/au/en/home)
- Qantas Airways: [qantas.com/au/en.html](http://qantas.com/au/en.html)

### AUSTRALIA TO JAPAN

From	To	Airlines	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival
Cairns	Tokyo (Narita)	Jetstar	JQ25	12:15	18:45
		Qantas	QF249		
	Osaka (KIX)	Jetstar	JQ15	13:00	19:25
		Qantas	QF241		
Brisbane	Tokyo (Narita)	Qantas	QF61	9:25	17:30
Gold Coast	Tokyo (Narita)	Jetstar	JQ11	10:30	18:30
Sydney	Tokyo (Haneda)	ANA	NH880	21:30	5:05 (+1)
		Qantas	QF25	21:35	5:00 (+1)
	Tokyo (Narita)	JAL	JL772	9:15	17:00
	Osaka (KIX)	Qantas	QF33	9:35	17:30
Melbourne	Tokyo (Narita)	JAL	JL774	0:45	8:40
		Qantas	QF79	9:20	17:40

### JAPAN TO AUSTRALIA

From	To	Airlines	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival
Tokyo (Narita)	Cairns	JAL	JL5089	20:10	4:40 (+1)
		Jetstar	JQ26		
		Qantas	QF250		
Osaka (KIX)	Cairns	JAL	JL5083	20:55	5:15 (+1)
		Jetstar	JQ16		
		Qantas	QF242		
Tokyo (Narita)	Brisbane	Qantas	QF62	19:30	5:40 (+1)
	Gold Coast	JAL	JL5081	20:55	6:55 (+1)
		Jetstar	JQ12		
	Sydney	JAL	JL771	19:00	6:50 (+1)
Tokyo (Haneda)	Sydney	ANA	NH879	22:20	9:55 (+1)
		Qantas	QF26	22:00	9:35 (+1)
Osaka (KIX)	Sydney	Qantas	QF34	19:00	6:40 (+1)
Tokyo (Narita)	Melbourne	JAL	JL773	11:00	23:05
		Qantas	QF80	19:20	7:55 (+1)



DOMESTIC FLIGHTS FROM TOKYO  
(BY JAL OR ANA)

To	Duration
Shin-Chitose (Hokkaido)	1hr30min
Aomori	1hr15min
Komatsu (Ishikawa)	1hr
Osaka (KIX)	1hr15min
Nanki-Shirahama (Wakayama)	1hr20min
Hiroshima	1hr30min
Matsuyama (Ehime)	1hr35min
Fukuoka	1hr55min
Kagoshima	1hr55min
Naha (Okinawa)	2hr40min

TRAVELLING TO TOKYO FROM THE AIRPORTS  
(NARITA AND HANEDA)

FROM  
NARITA

TRAINS

Narita Airport has two key rail connections operating between Tokyo Station and Narita Airport Terminal 2 station. The Skyliner is the fastest option (53min / 2,680yen) for travel to Tokyo. JR EAST's Narita Express (N'EX) connects Narita Airport to Tokyo Station (58min / 3,020yen).

BUSES

The Tokyo Shuttle is one way to get to Tokyo by bus, connecting Narita Airport to Tokyo Station (approx. 60min / 1,000yen). THE ACCESS NARITA also connects Narita Airport to Tokyo Station (approx. 60min / 1,000yen).

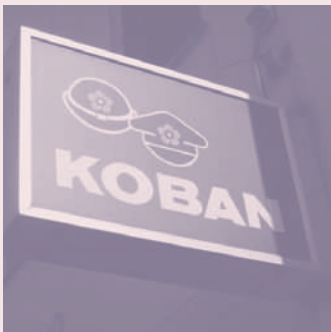
FROM  
HANEDA

TRAINS

There are two types of trains connecting Haneda Airport to central Tokyo. The first of which is the Tokyo Monorail, which connects Haneda Airport to Hamamatsucho Station (13min rapid service from the airport / 500yen per adult). The second involves taking a train on the Keikyu Line from Haneda Airport International Terminal Station to Shinagawa Station (approx. 20min / 300yen). Tokyo Station can be reached by a single trip on the JR Line from both Hamamatsucho and Shinagawa stations.

BUSES

There is also the Airport Limousine Bus connecting Haneda Airport directly to Tokyo Station (approx. 40min / 930yen per adult \*1,860yen early morning / late at night).



EMERGENCIES

For police assistance call 110 (free call from public phones if you press the red button) or look for the nearest *koban* (police box) marked with a red pentagonal light. For the fire department or an ambulance call 119.



## TRAVEL Tips

### VISAS

Visitors to Japan from Australia do not require a visa for stays of up to 90 days. Under Japan's New Immigration Procedures, all visitors must present their passport upon arrival and agree to be fingerprinted and photographed. Immigration may also ask a few quick questions. See [www.immi-moj.go.jp/english](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english) for more information.

### MONEY AND COSTS

The Japanese currency unit is the Yen (¥). Coins are available in units of 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 yen. Notes are available in 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000 yen.

From October 2020, consumption tax will increase from 8 percent to 10 percent.

### PUBLIC PHONES

Green or grey public phones can be found everywhere in Japan. They accept ¥10 and ¥100 coins, and telephone cards that can be purchased from kiosks and news agencies. You can make international calls from grey phones displaying the "International" sign.

### MOBILE PHONES

Currently, 3G models and 4G LTE work in Japan that use the 2100 MHz band. With some global roaming plans from Australian service providers you can use your own phone to send and receive calls and texts and to access broadband internet. Alternatively, you can rent a SIM card if it works in Japan to use with your own phone, or a pre-paid phone from such service providers as Softbank and Mobal Narita at Narita Airport Terminal 1. Renting a portable Wi-Fi router in Australia to use in Japan is also an option worth considering. Portable Wi-Fi is a device that allows multiple machines including laptops, tablets and smartphones to gain internet access wherever you are within the carrier service area.



### POSTAL SERVICE

International mail can be classified into letter post (letters, aerogrammes and postcards); parcel post; and EMS (Express Mail Service). EMS takes two to four days to reach Australia. Airmail or letter post and parcel post takes three to six days and sea mail takes one to three months. Parcels must be under 20 kg. Most post offices are open 9am to 5pm on weekdays. [post.japanpost.jp/index\\_en.html](http://post.japanpost.jp/index_en.html)



### TO CALL AUSTRALIA

Japan has three international call providers. Dial one of their access numbers (0033, 001, or 0061) + 010 + country code (61) + area code (without the zero) + personal number.

### TIPPING

Tipping and bartering are not customary in Japan.



# Travel Tips

Handy tips and useful information to know before travelling to Japan





POSTAGE

	Domestic Mail	Mail to Australia	EMS
Postcard	63 yen	70 yen	---
Standard Letter up to 25g	84 yen	110 yen	2,000 yen
Standard Letter up to 50g	94 yen	190 yen	2,000 yen
Number of delivery days	---	7	3

INTERNET

Internet cafes are readily accessible in Japan, especially in the cities. Although big-name chain stores like Global Gossip are prevalent, the most popular internet cafes in Japan are manga cafes, which also provide comics, magazines and video games. You pay time increments in either a private booth or a communal seating area. Special time-packages are available and there is even the option of an overnight stay on a reclining seat in a private booth.

INFORMATION CENTRES

The Visit Japan Information Network consists of 324 information services across the country. Usually located near major train stations and town centres, they will provide information on local tourist sites.



PEAK TRAVEL SEASONS

Train, bus and flight timetables may change during the following peak travel seasons: New Year (December 27 to January 3 and adjacent weekends), Golden Week (April 29 to May 6 and adjacent weekends), Bon Festival (the week surrounding August 15).

WATER

All tap water in Japan is safe to drink.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Consumption of alcohol in public places such as parks, beaches, and out on the streets in Japan is permitted. If you do happen to drink, please behave appropriately and do not cause any trouble to others.



AVERAGE TEMPERATURE

Source: Japan Meteorological Agency, [www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html](http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sapporo	Highs	-0.6	0.1	4.0	11.5	17.3	21.5	24.9	26.4	22.4	16.2	8.5	2.1
	Lows	-7.0	-6.6	-2.9	3.2	8.3	12.9	17.3	19.1	14.2	7.5	1.3	-4.1
Sendai	Highs	5.3	5.9	9.2	15.0	19.4	22.3	25.7	27.9	24.4	19.4	13.7	8.4
	Lows	-1.7	-1.5	0.9	6.1	11.1	15.5	19.5	21.4	17.6	11.2	5.2	0.9
Tokyo	Highs	9.6	10.4	13.6	19.0	22.9	25.5	29.2	30.8	26.9	21.5	16.3	11.9
	Lows	0.9	1.7	4.4	9.4	14.0	18.0	21.8	23.0	19.7	14.2	8.3	3.5
Yokkaichi	Highs	8.6	9.5	12.3	18.3	22.5	25.7	29.4	30.9	27.3	22.0	16.7	11.3
	Lows	-0.3	-0.3	2.6	7.7	12.8	17.6	21.7	22.8	19.2	12.3	6.8	1.8
Osaka	Highs	9.5	10.2	13.7	19.9	24.5	27.8	31.6	33.4	29.3	23.3	17.6	12.3
	Lows	2.8	2.9	5.6	10.7	15.6	20.0	24.3	25.4	21.7	15.5	9.9	5.1
Fukuoka	Highs	9.9	11.1	14.4	19.5	23.7	26.9	30.9	32.1	28.3	23.4	17.8	12.6
	Lows	3.5	4.1	6.7	11.2	15.6	19.9	24.3	25.0	21.3	15.4	10.2	5.6





# Workingholiday Connection

All eyes on this café in Harajuku – the birthplace of “*kawaii* culture”

Photography: Kazuya Baba

Omotesando in Shibuya is one of the most well-renowned shopping streets in all of Japan, famous for being the home of Omotesando Hills – a large shopping complex filled with a plethora of brands from all over the world, including the Australian brands “Ugg” and “Helen Kaminski”. While it is also known for its up-and-coming boutique stores, notable salons as well as its appeal from people of high society to trend-conscious youth of today, it also crosses through Harajuku – the birthplace of *kawaii* (cute) culture. Harajuku is where the trendy café, “Workingholiday Connection”, who borrows its name from a popular way holidaymakers make their way to the shores of Australia, has set up base.

## COFFEE BEANS ROASTED BY THE “BEST BARISTA” IN AUSTRALIA

The first thing which must be ordered at this café is the coffee. The coffee beans procured to brew this coffee are roasted by Japanese barista, Shoji Sasa, who was awarded as the Best Barista in the 2012 Sydney Morning Herald Good Café Guide Awards and later went on to become a Barista Association judge. The coffee beans are hand-picked from different countries depending on the season and the strict brewing

methods adhered to at the café to maximise both the flavour and characteristic notes of the coffee, making for a truly Australian cup of coffee. Drop by this café if you’re hankering for a little taste of home in Japan.

## DELIGHTFUL PANCAKES MADE BY A BILLS OLDBOY

The signature menu item at Workingholiday Connection is the pancakes. The “ORIGINAL MANLY PANCAKE” is a fluffy, creamy creation made using ricotta cheese imported from Australia. The Japanese chef who came up with this tasty treat upon returning home was trained in Japanese-style cuisine in Japan before jetting off to Australia on a working holiday and becoming the head chef at the famous pancake café – Bills, in Sydney. Free-range eggs are generously mixed into these pancakes to add a hint of egginess akin to French toast. The berry bombastic “VERY VERY BERRY PANCAKES” are also a popular choice amongst restaurant-goers.

## A PLACE TO CONNECT WITH THE WORLD

As the name of the café suggests, it is run by the Japanese Association for Working Holiday



Makers and all members of staff have working holiday experience. Staff members are either Japanese people who have returned from overseas experiences in Australia and other various countries, or foreigners who have come to Japan on a working holiday.

There are virtually no language barriers at the café thanks to this diverse makeup of staff. The café itself aims to help people realise how going overseas to study abroad or go a working holiday can help to broaden one’s horizons, which is the main purpose for employing youthful staff members with experience from all over the globe. It’s a great place for people to gather first-hand insights about working holidays.

For people out there looking for one of the best trendy café experiences in the country, drop by Workingholiday Connection the next time you’re in Tokyo. ■

## INFORMATION

Workingholiday Connection  
Harajuku/Omotesando,  
Level 2 YM Square  
4-31-10 Jingumae, Shibuya, Tokyo  
Tel: 03-6434-0359

Sun – Thurs: 11am – 8pm (last orders at 7pm)  
Fri – Sat: 11am – 9pm (last orders at 8pm)





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