PlanJapan
THE JAPAN ESIM SPECIALIST

Free with your PlanJapan eSIM

THE COMPLETE GUIDE · 2026–2027 EDITION

JAPAN

Plan, book and enjoy your trip,
from the flight to the last onsen.



TRAINS AND PASSES

NOZOMI
Tokyo - - - → Kyoto
PRICE
14,170 ¥
2 hr 12

WHERE TO STAY, WHAT TO BOOK

K's House Kyoto
Kyoto Station · $
See prices

Fushimi Inari at dawn
guided tour
Book

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARIES

7 days, the essentials

Tokyo
3 nights

Kyoto
3 nights

D7

ITINERARY MAPS



USEFUL PHRASES

Thank you very much

Arigato gozaimasu



4 itineraries, 7 to 21 days

10 cities and regions in detail

112 places on our Google Maps list

JAPAN, THE COMPLETE GUIDE

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JAPAN, THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Welcome to Japan

This guide takes you from planning to the flight home: when to go, what to book, where to stay, what to see and the right habits once you're there. It comes free with your PlanJapan eSIM.





4
itineraries, from 7 to 21 days



10
cities and regions in detail



41
chapters, from packing to the onsen



10/2026
prices checked in October 2026

How to read this guide

The tabs, on the page edge

The number of the part you're in: 1 Plan, 2 Getting around… 7 Appendix.

1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7

The train tickets

Route, travel time and price at a glance.

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI
Tokyo ---------→ **Kyoto**
PRICE **14,170 ¥**
2 h 12

The "Book ahead" boxes

Our picks in each city, each with its own button. They're all gathered in the booking list, in the appendix.

BOOK AHEAD
Where to stay in Tokyo

Hotel Gracery Shinjuku
Shinjuku · $$
Booking.com →

The prices

In yen, for one adult, checked in October 2026: confirm them before you book. For hotels, a range rather than a rate:

$ budget $$ mid-range $$$ comfort

Ad: buttons marked "affiliate link" earn us a commission if you book through them. Your price doesn't change.



YOUR PLANJAPAN ESIM

Before you leave: install your eSIM on Wi-Fi, but wait until you land to turn it on. The steps are in the chapter "Internet: your eSIM".

How to install →

1 PART 1

Plan your trip

When to go, paperwork, budget, money and internet: everything to sort out before you zip up your suitcase.

5 When to go
7 Entry requirements
8 Flights
9 Budget
11 Book in the right order
12 Money and payment
14 Travel insurance
15 Internet: your eSIM
17 Must-have apps
18 Packing



PLAN · WHEN TO GO

When to go, each season has its Japan



Cherry blossoms in late March, red maples in late November, a hot and humid summer, snow in the north in winter. Japan works all year: pick your season, then dodge the crowds.

Jan.
10 °C · 50 °F
Dry skies in Tokyo, snow up north. Many shops close on the 1st to the 3rd.

Feb.
11 °C · 52 °F
Sapporo Snow Festival, from the 4th to the 11th.

Mar.
14 °C · 57 °F
First cherry blossoms around the 24th in Tokyo.

Apr.
19 °C · 66 °F
Full bloom in early April in Kyoto. Golden Week from the 29th.

May
24 °C · 75 °F
Golden Week until the 5th. Rains in Okinawa from the 10th.

June
26 °C · 79 °F
Rainy season from the 7th in Tokyo. Not in Hokkaido.

July
30 °C · 86 °F
Rains end around the 19th. Hot and humid.

Aug.
31 °C · 88 °F
34 °C (93 °F) in Kyoto.
Obon: trains and hotels full from the 7th to the 16th.

Sept.
28 °C · 82 °F
Typhoons, as in August. Very rainy.

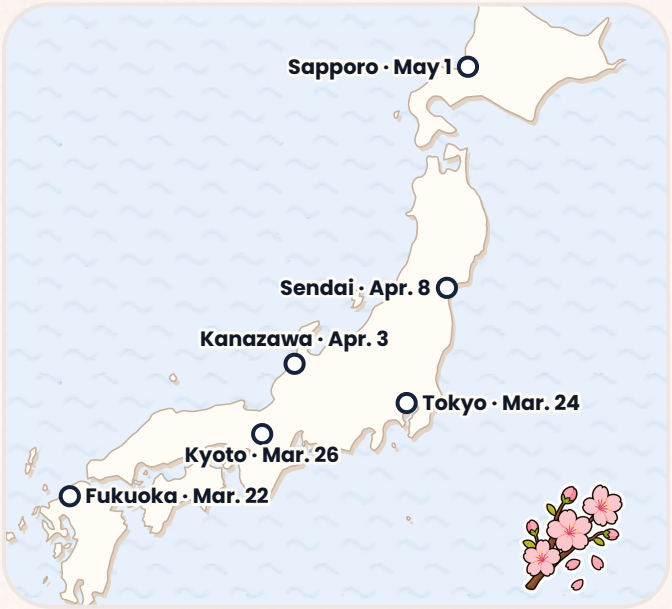
Oct.
22 °C · 72 °F
Tokyo's rainiest month. Red maples in Hokkaido.

Nov.
17 °C · 63 °F
Red maples around the 28th in Tokyo.

Dec.
12 °C · 54 °F
Maples in Kyoto around the 5th. New Year getaways from the 29th.

Temperatures: Tokyo's average daily high (1991–2020 normals, Japan Meteorological Agency). On average, three typhoons make landfall each year, mostly in August and September.

The cherry blossom wave



The red maple wave



Average dates (Japan Meteorological Agency): first blossoms, then full bloom about a week later; red maples on the reference tree. They shift from year to year: in 2026, the cherry trees were 3 to 13 days early. Aim for a window, not a day.

THREE CLIMATES OF THEIR OWN

Hokkaido has no rainy season. Okinawa is never cold: 15 °C (59 °F) at night in January in Naha. On the Sea of Japan coast, winter is grey and snowy: 256 mm of rain in January in Kanazawa, against 59 in Tokyo.

PLAN · WHEN TO GO

Festivals and crowds, the 2027 calendar

Nine big festivals, season by season, then the three periods when all of Japan goes on holiday.

1 Winter

February

- Feb. **Snow Festival**, Sapporo, from the 4th to the 11th: snow and ice sculptures.

2 Spring

April and May

- Apr. **Takayama Festival**, the 14th and 15th: decorated floats under the cherry trees.
- May **Sanja Matsuri**, Tokyo (Asakusa), May 14 to 16, 2027: about a hundred mikoshi through the streets.
- May **Aoi Matsuri**, Kyoto, the 15th: a procession in court costume over about 8 km (5 miles).

3 Summer

July and August

- July **Gion Matsuri**, Kyoto, all month: parades of the 34 floats on the 17th and 24th.
- July **Tenjin Matsuri**, Osaka, the 24th and 25th: boats and fireworks on the evening of the 25th.
- Aug. **Nebuta Matsuri**, Aomori, from the 2nd to the 7th: giant illuminated lanterns.
- Aug. **Awa Odori**, Tokushima, from the 11th to the 15th: street dancing, over a million visitors.

4 Autumn

October

- Oct. **Takayama Festival**, the 9th and 10th: floats and mechanical puppets.
- Oct. **Jidai Matsuri**, Kyoto, the 22nd: about 2,000 participants, a thousand years of history in 2 hours.

⚠ Three periods to avoid if you can



Golden Week

April 29, then five public holidays in a row, May 1 to 5.



Obon

The summer travel peak, August 7 to 16.



New Year

Getaways December 29 to 31, return trips until January 4.



TRAINS AND HOTELS FULL

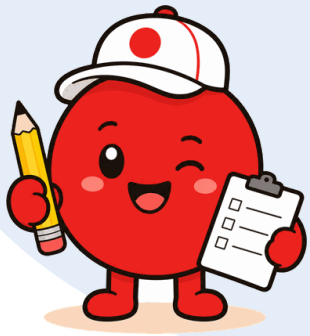
During these three periods, every Nozomi, the fastest Shinkansen, is reserved seats only. And at festival time, hotels go early: in Takayama, the central ones are sold out more than six months before the spring festival.

NO "SILVER WEEK" IN 2027

In 2026, five days off in a row fell in late September. In 2027, the September 20 and 23 holidays are split by two working days. What to book when: see "Book in the right order".

PLAN · ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The paperwork, in five minutes



No visa for a tourist stay of up to 90 days: a passport valid for your whole trip and a free online form are all you need.



Entering Japan
US, UK, Canada, Australia

90 days, no visa
beyond that, a visa is required; UK citizens can extend on site to 6 months

A passport
valid for your whole stay, kept on you; no other ID will do

Visit Japan Web
free, to fill in online before your flight

Fingerprints and photo
on arrival, from age 16; you may be asked for your return ticket

3,000 ¥ departure tax
since July 2026, usually already in your ticket price

JESTA, not before 2028
an online travel authorization to come: nothing to do in 2026 and 2027



HINOMARU'S TIP

Visit Japan Web is an official website, not an app. It combines immigration and customs into a single QR code you show on your phone. Recommended, not mandatory: the paper form still exists. Beware of apps using its name and of sites that charge a fee.

CUSTOMS: LEAVE THESE AT HOME

Ham, sausage, any meat, even vacuum-packed: up to 3 years in prison. **Fruit and plants**: quarantine inspection. **Over 1 million yen** in cash: must be declared.

YOUR MEDICATION

Prescription drugs: up to a 1-month supply with no paperwork, in the original packaging. Codeine above 1 %, pseudoephedrine above 10 %, Vyvanse: permit **14 days ahead**. Adderall and methadone: banned.



LOST, THEN FOUND?

A passport reported lost or stolen is refused at the Japanese border, even if you found it afterwards: Japan checks Interpol's records.

Your embassy's emergency number in Tokyo is in the chapter “Health, safety, emergencies”.

Fill in Visit Japan Web →

Medication: the official rules →

PLAN · FLIGHTS

Nonstop, 10 to 15 hours



Over a dozen US cities, London, Vancouver, Toronto, Sydney and Melbourne fly nonstop to Tokyo. Most flights land at Haneda, the airport closest to the city.

ANA, JAL, AMERICAN, DELTA, UNITED

Los Angeles ---→ Haneda

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈12 h 10	+ 4 a day to Narita

FLIGHTS A DAY **7**

JAL, ANA, AMERICAN

New York ---→ Haneda

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈14 h 35	from JFK

FLIGHTS A DAY **5**

ANA, JAL, UNITED

San Francisco ---→ Tokyo

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈11 h 30	Haneda 3, Narita 3

FLIGHTS A DAY **6**

BRITISH AIRWAYS, JAL, ANA

London ---→ Haneda

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈13 h 45	from Heathrow

FLIGHTS A DAY **4 to 5**

AIR CANADA, JAL, ANA

Vancouver ---→ Tokyo

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈10 h 20	Narita 2, Haneda 1

FLIGHTS A DAY **3**

QANTAS, JAL, ANA

Sydney ---→ Haneda

DURATION	FREQUENCY
≈9 h 50	every day

FLIGHTS A DAY **5**

November 2026 schedules, from the airports. Times: published schedules for the outbound flight, approximate; check the return with your airline. Also nonstop to Haneda: Chicago, Washington, Seattle, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis, Newark, Honolulu, Toronto. No fares: they change too often.

Haneda

The closest to the center: 11 to 13 min by train to the Yamanote line.

Narita

About 1 hour to Tokyo Station on the Narita Express, 3,140 ¥.

Kansai

To start with Kyoto or Osaka. Last train to Kyoto around 11 p.m.



THE SMART MOVE: OPEN-JAW

Fly into Tokyo and out of Osaka-Kansai, without backtracking, on a single "multi-city" ticket. Los Angeles (JAL), San Francisco (United), Vancouver (Air Canada) and Honolulu (JAL) also fly nonstop to Kansai.



YOUR PLANJAPAN ESIM

As soon as you land, turn on roaming for your PlanJapan eSIM: you can look up your train before you even reach customs.

How to install it →



PLAN · BUDGET

The budget, line by line

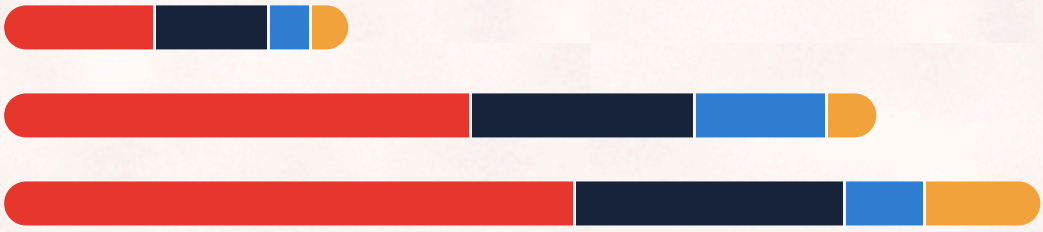
A visitor from the United States stays 12 nights in Japan on average and spends about $180 a night there, shopping included. That's what the 2025 official survey measures.

12 nights
the average US stay, against 9.5 for all visitors

≈$180
spent per night on the ground, shopping included

$6.36
for 1,000 ¥, and $64 for 10,000 ¥: easy mental math

Per day and per person, three ways to travel



Flights and shopping excluded. "Average": what a US visitor actually spends per night, intercity trains included (Japan Tourism Agency, 2025). "Budget": dorm bed, konbini, metro pass. "Comfort": half of a room at about 30,000 ¥, restaurants, a few taxis. These two are our estimates, for two sharing a room.

One night in Japan, for real

Lodging	12,290 ¥ · ≈ $78
Food and drink	5,801 ¥ · ≈ $37
Transport, trains included	3,351 ¥ · ≈ $21
Entertainment and sights	1,258 ¥ · ≈ $8
Shopping	5,603 ¥ · ≈ $36
Total per night	**28,309 ¥ · ≈ $180**

A US visitor, flights excluded: average spending per trip divided by 12 nights. Lodging is 43 % of the total. Average stay: 14.4 nights for the UK, 14.6 for Canada, 13.5 for Australia.



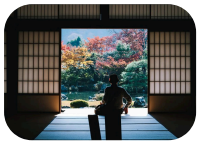
Sushi on a wooden board

PLAN · BUDGET

Everyday prices

The four main costs of the trip, from heaviest to lightest, with prices for one adult, taxes included, checked in October 2026. Lodging is detailed in "Where and how to stay", budgets from 7 to 21 days in the appendix.

01



Sleeping

The biggest cost: 43 % of a US visitor's spending. Rough ranges from the japan-guide website (March 2025).

- **dorm 2,000 to 5,000 ¥**
- **capsule 3,000 to 5,000 ¥**
- **business hotel 7,000 to 20,000 ¥ per room**
- **ryokan 6,000 to 60,000 ¥ per person, meals included**

02



Eating

For takeout, sales tax drops from 10 to 8 %: the same bowl costs less.

- **onigiri at 7-Eleven 196 ¥**
- **gyudon 498 ¥ to eat in**
- **489 ¥ to take out**
- **ramen in Tokyo 620 ¥ on average**

03



Getting around

In town, a few hundred yen a ride.

- **Tokyo metro from 180 ¥**
- **24-hour metro pass 1,000 ¥**
- **Kyoto bus 230 ¥**
- **Tokyo taxi 500 ¥ for the first km**

04



Sightseeing

Fushimi Inari and Senso-ji are free.

- **Golden Pavilion 500 ¥**
- **Ghibli Museum 1,000 ¥ + 110 ¥ fee**
- **Tokyo Tower 1,500 ¥**

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI

Tokyo ----------→ Kyoto

DURATION	SEAT
2 h 12	**reserved, at the counter**

Online, on smart EX: 200 ¥ less. Pass or single tickets: see "JR Pass and regional passes".

PRICE
14,170 ¥

ROOM PRICES FOLLOW THE SEASONS

Rooms cost far more during cherry blossom and maple season and Golden Week. Checked in October 2026 at the same Kyoto hotel, for two with breakfast: about 58,000 ¥ on Saturday, November 21, about 10,600 ¥ on Wednesday, January 20, 2027.

ACCOMMODATION TAX, ON TOP

In Tokyo: 100 ¥ per person per night if the night costs 10,000 to 14,999 ¥ per person, 200 ¥ above that; from April 1, 2027, **3 % of the room rate excluding meals**, from 13,000 ¥ per person per night. In Kyoto: 200 to 10,000 ¥ per person per night depending on the room rate, since March 2026.

PLAN · BOOK AHEAD

Book in the right order



Some sights release tickets weeks ahead, at a set time; others sell nothing on the spot. Here is the calendar, earliest first, with a button for each.

THE CALENDAR

What to book, and when

Times are Japan time: 13 hours ahead of New York (14 in winter), 16 ahead of Los Angeles (17 in winter), 8 ahead of London (9 in winter).

1 Once your dates are set

the flight, then hotels and the ryokan

- **Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** — Kyoto Station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** — ryokan in Hakone · $$ — Booking.com →

2 2 to 3 months ahead

Tokyo's big sights

- **Tokyo Skytree** — on sale 3 months ahead — GetYourGuide →
- **Tokyo Disneyland and DisneySea** — 2 months ahead, at 2 p.m. — Official site →

3 One month ahead, 10 a.m.

trains with reserved seats

- **Shinkansen** — on smart EX, online — Official site →
- **Romancecar** — Shinjuku → Hakone — Official site →
- **Hakone Freepass** — at the station, from a month ahead — Klook →
- **Ghibli Museum** — the 10th of the month before, 10 a.m. — Official site →

4 2 weeks ahead

at midnight

- **SHIBUYA SKY** — sells out online and on site — GetYourGuide →

5 Before you leave

at home, with travel insurance

- **teamLab Planets** — nothing sold on site — GetYourGuide →
- **Your eSIM** — installed on Wi-Fi — PlanJapan →
- **Visit Japan Web** — free, before your flight — Official site →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



1,740 ¥ SAVED

On smart EX, a Tokyo-Kyoto Nozomi booked between one month and 21 days ahead costs 12,430 ¥, instead of 14,170 ¥ at the counter. That's the EX Hayatoku 21 fare: limited seats, none at Golden Week, Obon or New Year.

PLAN · MONEY AND PAYMENT

Cash and card, bring both



Cards work almost everywhere in the cities, but four purchases in ten are still paid in cash. You withdraw at the konbini, and you never leave a tip.

How people pay in Japan

Purchases in 2025
58 % cashless



Cash, 42 % · Credit card, 48 % · QR code, 6 % · E-money, 2 % · Debit card, 2 %

GOOD HABITS

- Carry cash every day, especially outside the big cities.
- Withdraw at 7-Eleven: the screen and receipt are in English.
- Bring two cards: some may be declined.
- Read the currency choice screen before confirming a withdrawal.
- Ask your bank about its foreign fees and withdrawal limit.
- Note your card's emergency number to block it.

MISTAKES

- Leaving a tip: not at restaurants, not in taxis, not at hotels.
- Counting on your card at a ramen shop's ticket machine.
- Handing a big bill on the bus: it may be refused.
- Tapping your bank card at a JR gate: it only opens the metro and some private lines in Tokyo.
- Landing without a single yen in your pocket.

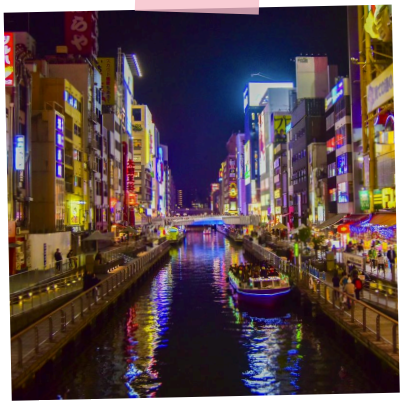
DID YOU KNOW?
In the alleys of Omoide Yokocho, in Shinjuku, 14 of the 16 izakayas take cash only.



A Shinjuku alley at night



A yatai in Fukuoka at night



Dotonbori, Osaka, at night

PLAN · MONEY AND PAYMENT

Withdrawing and paying, the how-to

ATMs in convenience stores, a sales tax with two rates, a small dish billed at izakayas: what surprises you at the first withdrawal and the first bill.

Getting cash

at Seven Bank ATMs, inside 7-Eleven stores

24/7
with a Visa or Mastercard

In English
the screen and the receipt

Fees
depending on the card brand, plus your own bank's

100,000 ¥ max
per withdrawal; 30,000 ¥ with a magnetic-stripe card; 50,000 ¥ at Lawson, AEON and post offices

The debit currency
in your currency, the ATM sets the amount; in yen, your bank converts

Elsewhere
post offices and their ATMs in FamilyMart, Lawson, AEON, airports

At the checkout

10 % or 8 % sales tax
8 % on food and soft drinks to take out: the same gyudon costs 498 ¥ to eat in, 489 ¥ to go.

The izakaya otoshi
A small dish served automatically, billed per person: it's the table charge.

Your card at the gate
A contactless bank card opens the Tokyo metro since March 2026, not JR. See “Suica, PASMO, ICOCA”.

Tax-free is changing
For purchases from November 1, 2026: tax paid in store, refunded when you leave. See “Shopping and tax-free”.

CARD REFUSED AT THE ATM?
Japan still runs largely on cash, and many ATMs don't accept foreign debit cards, warns the Canadian government. Head for a 7-Eleven, and keep a second card as backup.



A 7-Eleven konbini at night

HINOMARU'S TIP
Bring a coin purse: 100 and 500 yen coins pile up fast, and some lockers take nothing else.



PLAN · TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance, not an option



In Japan, a tourist pays the price the hospital sets, often upfront. The UK government says to expect to pay the whole cost of treatment; Canada's urges insurance that covers hospital stays and medical evacuation.



1 in 20
travelers who fall ill or get hurt abroad



×2
more than double the base rate, at half the hospitals certified for foreign patients



100 %
of the bill: what to expect to pay yourself, says the UK government

⚠ Treated in Japan, without insurance

1. **At the hospital, full price**
   Without Japanese health insurance, the hospital sets its own rate: more than one in ten charges above the national scale. Some clinics don't take bank cards.
2. **At discharge, pay upfront**
   Foreign patients are often asked to pay before leaving, or to prove they will.
3. **Back home, little or nothing back**
   Medicare usually doesn't cover care outside the US; Quebec's plan pays at most CA$100 per day in hospital. Check what your own plan covers.
4. **An unpaid bill follows you**
   Since 2021, hospitals report unpaid bills to Immigration: from 10,000 ¥ since April 2026, with stricter checks when you next enter Japan, or even refusal of entry.

✓ Before you leave: get travel insurance

Take it out before departure, and make sure it covers medical care, hospital stays and evacuation. Your credit card may include some: ask your bank what it covers in Japan.

Travel insurance in Japan: the official advice →

PLAN · INTERNET

Your eSIM, in 4 steps



Install it at home, on Wi-Fi, and switch it on when you land: you're online before you even reach customs. The PlanJapan eSIM is data only: your calls, texts and WhatsApp stay on your usual number.

1 Install it, on Wi-Fi — at home

Open the delivery email on the phone that's going to Japan and tap the install button. The QR code in the email is your backup.

2 Set it for data — at home

Your phone suggests a label, often “Travel” on iPhone: keep it or pick your own. Your usual SIM keeps calls and texts.

3 Don't turn anything on before landing — during the flight

Switched on at home, the line searches in vain for a Japanese network and doesn't always search again on arrival. Your plan only starts in Japan.

4 Turn on roaming — when you land

Switch on your eSIM line, then turn on **“Data Roaming”** for it, on iPhone as on Android. A signal bar appears: you're set.

Which plan for which trip?

10 GB
5 days or less: maps, transit, messages

20 GB
a week, social media included

50 GB
10 days or more, or a week with video

Unlimited
for as long as you choose, no counting

On Japanese networks, 4G or 5G depending on coverage. Data plans last 30 days from your first connection in Japan.



ACTIVATE IT IN TIME

A data plan must be activated within **180 days** of purchase, the unlimited plan within **60 days**. After that, the eSIM can no longer be used: it doesn't activate on its own.

PLAN · INTERNET

The right menus, for your phone

PHONE	INSTALL	ON ARRIVAL
iPhone	Settings → Cellular (or Mobile Data) → Add Cellular Plan → Use QR Code	Turn on "Data Roaming" on the eSIM line
Samsung	Settings → Connections → SIM manager → Add eSIM	Mobile networks → Data roaming
Google Pixel	Settings → Network & internet → SIMs → Download a new eSIM	Mobile data and Roaming
Xiaomi, Redmi	Settings → Mobile networks → Manage eSIM → Add eSIM	Set it as Data SIM, then Data roaming

⚠ No signal? Five fixes

1. **Line and data**
   The eSIM is on and set for data.
2. **Roaming**
   Turned on for the eSIM line.
3. **Off for 30 seconds**
   Turn the line off, then on again.
4. **Restart**
   The whole phone.
5. **Reinstall**
   As a last resort: the eSIM installs up to 10 times, on one phone at a time.

Share your connection

With unlimited, up to 10 GB a day at full speed, then reduced speed until midnight, Japan time.

Top up

A data plan running low can be topped up online, without changing eSIM.

Keep the QR code handy

Printed, or on another device: you'll need it if you reinstall.



REFER A FRIEND

They get **10 % off** their eSIM, and you get **$5** to spend on your next order.

Refer a friend →

HINOMARU'S TIP

A problem on the ground? PlanJapan support answers in English, 7 days a week, on WhatsApp and by email.

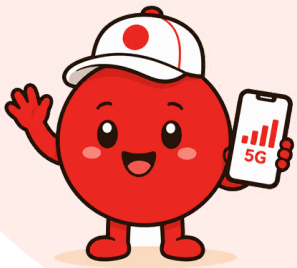


How to install →

Top up my eSIM →

PLAN · APPS

Eight apps, to install before you go



All free. Install them at home, on Wi-Fi, and download the offline map and translation, just in case.

Google Maps
Routes by train, metro and on foot, with the right platform and the right exit.

Japan Travel by NAVITIME
Routes, an offline map with free Wi-Fi spots and currency exchange offices. In English.

Google Translate
Point your camera at a menu or a sign: the translation appears on screen.

GO
A taxi in all 47 prefectures, with a foreign phone number and bank card.

Safety tips
Earthquake, tsunami, volcano, weather and heatstroke alerts, from the Japan National Tourism Organization.

Tabelog
Restaurant reviews and bookings. Booking costs 440 ¥ per person.

TableCheck
Restaurant bookings in English; paid "FastPass" slots for some ramen shops.

Apple Wallet
A Suica or PASMO on iPhone 8 or later. Android phone bought outside Japan: get a physical card.

NOT IN THE UK APP STORE
The Shinkansen **smartEX** app isn't offered in the UK. Book the Shinkansen on the smart EX website instead.

SUICA AND PASMO: GO THROUGH WALLET
Their "regular" apps are only in Japanese. On iPhone, add the card directly in Apple Wallet.

HINOMARU'S TIP
In the US, Canada and Australia, the App Store has both **Welcome Suica Mobile** and the smartEX app. In the UK, Welcome Suica Mobile only.



The smart EX website →
Safety tips →
The GO app →

PLAN · PACKING

Packing, light and surprise-free



The right plug, shoes that slip off easily, no knife at all, and two power banks at most, in your carry-on.

- ☐ **Your passport** — valid for your whole stay
- ☐ **Type A plug** — two flat pins as in the US, 100 V; UK, Australia: adapter
- ☐ **Shoes** — easy to slip off: temples, traditional restaurants
- ☐ **A light umbrella** — rains from June to mid-July
- ☐ **Winter: a coat** — 10 °C (50 °F) by day in Tokyo in January, 0 °C (32 °F) in Sapporo
- ☐ **Spring, fall: a jacket** — 19 to 23 °C (66 to 73 °F) by day in April and October
- ☐ **Summer: linen, a bottle** — 31 to 34 °C (88 to 93 °F) in August, very humid
- ☐ **Some yen** — see "Money and payment"

POWER BANKS IN THE CABIN, KNIVES NOWHERE

Power banks: 2 at most, 160 Wh max each, terminals protected; don't charge them or charge a device with them during the flight. That's the rule on JAL and ANA; on other airlines, their own rule applies: check yours. And **no knife**, not even a pocket knife tucked in a bag: you can be arrested for it.

A big suitcase? Two solutions

SUITCASE 161 TO 250 CM

Tokyo ------→ Hakata

SEAT

with luggage space

Booked ahead, the seat with luggage space costs nothing extra. Over 250 cm (98 in): refused.

WITHOUT A RESERVATION
1,000 ¥

YAMATO, HOTEL TO HOTEL

Tokyo ------→ Kansai

DURATION

1 or 2 days

Size 160 suitcase, cash price. Send it at least 2 days before you arrive; delivered on the day you choose, within 7 days.

PRICE
3,160 ¥

Shinkansen from Tokyo to Kagoshima, via Osaka and Hakata (JR Central); size = length + width + height, 161 to 250 cm is 63 to 98 in. On JR East lines (Tohoku, Hokuriku, Joetsu…), nothing to book up to 250 cm and 30 kg (66 lb). Full checklist: appendix "Checklists".

TWO CURRENTS IN JAPAN

100 V everywhere, but 50 Hz in the east (Tokyo) and 60 Hz in the west (Kyoto, Osaka). Chargers marked 100-240 V work with a simple adapter; other devices need a converter.

JR Central's rules → Ship your suitcase →

2 PART 2

Getting around

Trains, the Shinkansen, passes and transit cards: a dense network, explained simply.

20 Understanding the network

21 The Shinkansen

23 JR Pass and regional passes

25 Suica, PASMO, ICOCA

26 Bus, plane, car, taxi



GETTING AROUND · THE NETWORK

Many networks, one logic

Six JR companies, private railways, subways: each has its own gates and fares. An IC card works on all of them; the JR Pass, only on JR lines.



The Shinkansen lines



- Tokaido · JR Central
- Sanyo · JR West
- Kyushu · JR Kyushu
- Tohoku · JR East
- Hokkaido · JR Hokkaido
- Hokuriku · JR East and JR West

Four trains, two tickets

1. **Local**
   Stops at every station. Regular ticket or IC card.
2. **Rapid**
   Skips stations: check that it stops at yours. Regular ticket or IC card.
3. **Limited Express**
   Major stations only, like the HARUKA or the Romancecar: ticket + surcharge.
4. **Shinkansen**
   High speed, from one big city to the next: ticket + surcharge.



DID YOU KNOW?

At Shinjuku, JR, Odakyu, Keio and the subway share the station, each with its own gates. With an IC card, you get through all of them.

GOOD HABITS

- **Read the platform screen**: the train type, the destination (the last stop, not yours) and the platform number.
- Line up on either side of the doors, and let people off first.
- Give priority seats to elderly, pregnant or disabled passengers.
- Head back before midnight: in Tokyo, the last Yamanote trains leave around 12:40 am.

AVOID

- Phone calls on board: switch to silent; on the Shinkansen, call from the vestibule.
- Tokyo's morning rush, until about 9:30 am on weekdays.
- “Women Only” cars, reserved for women on weekday mornings in Tokyo.
- Leaving your suitcase in front of the doors.

GETTING AROUND · THE SHINKANSEN

The Shinkansen, straight ahead



From Tokyo, it races to Kyoto and Osaka, Hiroshima and Fukuoka, Kanazawa, Sendai and Hakodate. No need to fly to cross the country.

NOZOMI · TOKAIDO
Tokyo ------→ Kyoto
DURATION 2 hr 12
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 14,170 ¥

NOZOMI · TOKAIDO
Tokyo ------→ Osaka
DURATION 2 hr 27
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 14,720 ¥

NOZOMI · TOKAIDO, SANYO
Tokyo ----→ Hiroshima
DURATION 3 hr 54
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 19,760 ¥

NOZOMI · TOKAIDO, SANYO
Tokyo ------→ Hakata
DURATION 5 hr 00
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 23,810 ¥

NOZOMI · SANYO
Osaka ----→ Hiroshima
DURATION 1 hr 21 to 1 hr 25
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 10,950 ¥

NOZOMI · SANYO
Osaka ------→ Hakata
DURATION 2 hr 31
JR PASS + special ticket
PRICE 16,020 ¥

Ticket-office fares, reserved seat, adult, regular season (October 2026). Osaka: Shin-Osaka station. Hakata: Fukuoka's station.

Three trains on the same line

Nozomi
The fastest, major stations only. With the JR Pass, you need an extra special ticket.
Tokyo – Kyoto in 2 hr 12

Hikari
A few more stops. Included in the JR Pass.
Tokyo – Kyoto in about 2 hr 37

Kodama
Every station. Included in the JR Pass.
Tokyo – Kyoto in about 3 hr 37

RESERVED OR NOT?

- Hayabusa and Kagayaki, heading north: all seats are reserved. Sendai in 1 hr 33, Kanazawa in 2 hr 31, Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto in 4 hr 13.
- New Year, Golden Week, Obon and some long weekends: the Nozomi too.
- Missed your train? Take a non-reserved seat on a later train, the same day.



An N700 Shinkansen at Tokyo station

THE SHINKANSEN · BOOKING

Your seat, one month ahead

Reserved seats open at 10 am, Japan time, one month before departure. Tokyo → Kyoto by Nozomi, adult, regular season, from cheapest to most expensive:

1. **EX Hayatoku 21 · 12,430 ¥**
   On smart EX, from one month to 21 days before. Limited seats, no changes, not at peak times. Tokyo – Hiroshima: 15,390 ¥.
2. **Non-reserved seat · 13,320 ¥**
   On the day, no booking. At peak times, Nozomi trains have no non-reserved cars.
3. **Reserved seat on smart EX · 13,970 ¥**
   Online, with a credit card; QR-code ticket, free changes before departure. The smartEX app is on the US, Canadian and Australian App Stores; from the UK, use the website.
4. **Reserved seat at the ticket office · 14,170 ¥**
   Or at the machines, with an English menu. In high season, 200 ¥ more; in peak season, 400 ¥.

Mount Fuji, on the right

sea side	A	B	C		D	E	Fuji side, heading to Kyoto

Ordinary car: seat E. In the Green Car, four seats per row: seat D. You need a clear sky.



Mount Fuji from the train window

BIG SUITCASE: BOOK ITS SPACE

Between Tokyo, Osaka, Hakata and Kagoshima, a suitcase over **160 cm** (63 in, length + width + height) needs a seat with an oversized baggage area: same price, but a **1,000 ¥** fee without a booking. Over 250 cm (98 in), it is refused. JR East lines: nothing to book up to 250 cm.

BUY BEFORE JULY 2027

For tickets bought from July 1, 2027, a reserved Nozomi seat between Tokyo and Kyoto will cost 700 ¥ more.

Book on smart EX → | JR West online → | JR East online →

GETTING AROUND · PASSES

The JR Pass, worth it or not?



Seven days of unlimited JR trains for 50,000 ¥: a good deal only if you cross the country several times that week.

Is your week of trains worth 50,000 ¥?

ROUND TRIP
Tokyo ⇢ Kyoto
JR PASS
not worth it
Returning from Osaka: 21,110 ¥ less than the pass.
IN TICKETS **28,890 ¥**

A LOOP
Tokyo ⇢ Hiroshima
JR PASS
not worth it, just
Via Kyoto, then back to Tokyo. You are 4,130 ¥ of JR trips short (Nara, Miyajima…).
IN TICKETS **45,870 ¥**

ROUND TRIP
Tokyo ⇢ Hakata
JR PASS
not worth it
Fukuoka and back, by Nozomi.
IN TICKETS **47,620 ¥**

TWO ROUND TRIPS
Tokyo ⇢ Hakodate
JR PASS
worth it
To Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto, plus Tokyo ⇄ Kyoto by Hikari: 26,100 ¥ saved.
IN TICKETS **76,100 ¥**

Ticket-office fares, reserved Nozomi seats, October 2026. Each itinerary in this guide has its own calculation in its chapter.

✗ ~~From a travel agent abroad~~
53,000 ¥ for 7 days; seats reserved only once in Japan

✓ **On the official website**
50,000 ¥ for 7 days, 80,000 ¥ for 14, 100,000 ¥ for 21; seats bookable before you leave

INCLUDED
- JR trains: Shinkansen (except Nozomi and Mizuho), express and local trains.
- Seat reservations, free of charge.
- The Haneda monorail and the JR ferry to Miyajima (plus a 100 ¥ visitor tax).

NOT INCLUDED
- **Nozomi and Mizuho**: a special ticket for each trip, 4,960 ¥ Tokyo – Kyoto, 6,500 ¥ Tokyo – Hiroshima. Or take the Hikari.
- Private railways and subways.
- Highway buses.



FIRST THINGS FIRST: THE RIGHT STAMP
The pass requires “Temporary Visitor” status in your passport. The airport's automated gates don't stamp it: go to a counter staffed by an officer.

The JR Pass on the official website →

PASSES · BY REGION

A regional pass, often smarter

Cheaper and targeted, they cover one region, some with the Shinkansen. For foreign visitors only. Adult prices, October 2026, from north to south.

1 Hokkaido Rail Pass
All of Hokkaido, except the Shinkansen.
5, 7 or 10 days: from **22,000 ¥**

2 JR EAST PASS
Tohoku, Nagano, Niigata, Nikko. Narita → Aomori in tickets: 52,000 ¥.
5 days: **35,000 ¥** · 10 days: **50,000 ¥**

3 JR TOKYO Wide Pass
Around Tokyo: Nikko, Karuizawa, Kawaguchiko.
3 days: **16,000 ¥**

4 Hokuriku Arch Pass
Tokyo → Kanazawa → Kyoto, Osaka. Buy it before you leave.
7 days: **35,000 ¥**

5 Takayama-Hokuriku
From Osaka or Nagoya: Takayama, Shirakawa-go, Kanazawa.
5 days: **19,800 ¥**

6 Kansai WIDE
Kansai, Okayama, Kinosaki, HARUKA included.
5 days: **12,000 ¥**

7 Kansai-Hiroshima
Kansai ⇄ Hiroshima, Miyajima ferry included.
5 days: **17,000 ¥**

8 JR-WEST All Area
From Kansai to Hakata, Nozomi included.
7 days: **26,000 ¥**

9 ALL SHIKOKU Rail Pass
Shikoku's trains and trams.
3 days: **12,000 ¥** · 7 days: **20,000 ¥**

10 JR Kyushu Rail Pass
All of Kyushu, with its Shinkansen.
3, 5 or 7 days: **22,000 to 26,000 ¥**, 1,000 ¥ less online

THE PAPER PASS ENDED ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

The paper **Kansai Area Pass** is no longer sold; its **WEST QR** version (on your phone, 2,700 ¥ a day, Haruka included) is still sold by travel agents outside Japan. Otherwise: Kansai Mini Pass (3,000 ¥) or an IC card.

In the city

Tokyo
Tokyo Subway Ticket: 1,000 ¥ for 24 hours, 2,000 ¥ for 72 hours, subway only.
See the Tokyo chapter

Osaka
OSAKA AMAZING PASS: 3,500 ¥ a day, transit and about forty attractions. Subway and bus: 820 ¥ (620 ¥ on weekends).
On your phone

Kyoto
Subway and bus day pass: 1,100 ¥. The bus-only pass no longer exists.
See the Kyoto chapter

JR East → | JR West → | JR Central → | JR Kyushu → | Osaka Amazing Pass →

GETTING AROUND · IC CARDS

One IC card, all of Japan

Tap the card on the gate and the fare is worked out for you. Suica, PASMO, ICOCA: ten cards work alike on trains, subways, buses and in konbini.



Which one to get?

Welcome Suica
No deposit, valid 28 days; balance never refunded. Tokyo airports, big JR East stations.

TOURIST PASMO
No deposit, valid 28 days. Haneda and Narita airports, since May 2026.

Suica, PASMO, ICOCA
At station machines: 500 ¥ deposit, refunded when you leave. ICOCA: 2,000 ¥, deposit included.

On your iPhone
Suica, PASMO or ICOCA in the Wallet app, iPhone 8 or later. Android bought outside Japan: get a physical card.

In four steps

Buy it
at the airport or a station machine

Top it up
at the machines, in cash, 500 to 10,000 ¥

Tap it
on the reader, going in and coming out

Return it
Suica, when you leave: the balance minus 220 ¥, plus the deposit

ITS LIMITS, AND WHAT TO DO

- From one IC area to another, like Tokyo → Nagoya, buy a ticket: the card won't work.
- For an express or the Green Car, add a ticket.
- For the Shinkansen, register it on smart EX or link it to a JR East e-ticket.
- On highway buses, pay separately. The balance tops out at 20,000 ¥.

YOUR BANK CARD AT THE GATE

Your contactless card also opens the gates of the Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo and Fukuoka subways, Osaka buses, Odakyu, Keio, Keikyu, Tokyu, Kintetsu, Hankyu and Nankai. Not JR (except JR Kyushu around Fukuoka), Keisei, the Haneda monorail or Kyoto. One card per person.

HINOMARU'S TIP

Keep a 1,000 ¥ bill for top-ups: station machines take cash. A tourist card expires after 28 days: the gate then refuses it.



GETTING AROUND · OTHER TRANSPORT

Bus, plane, car, taxi

Trains do almost everything. The rest: the night bus to save, the plane for the islands, the car for the countryside, the taxi for the last mile.



Renting a car: the right license

~~**Your license alone**~~
a US, UK, Canadian or Australian license is not valid in Japan on its own

International permit + your license
the International Driving Permit (1949 Geneva Convention), with your own license

- Get the permit **at home, before you leave**: in the US, from AAA; in the UK, it can't be bought abroad.
- Only the paper booklet counts: card or phone versions aren't valid. It works for one year from your arrival.
- Drive on the left, zero alcohol. The ETC card is rented with the car: tolls are settled when you return it.
- Expressway pass for foreign visitors in Kyushu: from 6,200 ¥ for 2 days.


A country house by the rice fields

Bus, plane, taxi

Night bus
Cheaper than the train, and one less hotel night. Ticket before boarding; at the terminal 30 min early.

No JR Pass, no IC card

Domestic flights
Peach, Jetstar Japan: 7 kg (15 lb) carry-on, checked bags extra. Skymark: 20 kg (44 lb) checked bag included.

JAL Japan Explorer Pass: with an international ticket

Taxi
Tokyo: 500 ¥ for the first kilometer, more from 10 pm to 5 am. Automatic doors, no tipping.

GO app: foreign cards accepted

BY BIKE, SINCE APRIL 2026

Fines from age 16: **12,000 ¥** for a phone in hand, **6,000 ¥** for a red light or a banned sidewalk. Ride on the left, on the road. E-scooters: from age 16, no license, 20 km/h (12 mph) max.



YOUR PLANJAPAN ESIM

Taxis, buses, trains: the GO app and route planners need data. Your eSIM connects you as soon as you land.

Install my eSIM →

Driving in Japan (JAF) →
The GO taxi app →

3 PART 3

Sleep and eat

Ryokan, capsule or business hotel; ramen, konbini or izakaya: how to pick your bed and your table.

28 Where and how to stay

30 Eating well in Japan



SLEEPING AND EATING · WHERE TO STAY

Where to stay, and how

Business hotel, ryokan, capsule or temple: the type of stay changes everything, from the price to dinner. All our addresses are in the city chapters; here is how to choose.



From manga café to palace

Manga café · a booth for the night, often open 24/7	**1,500 to 3,000 ¥**
Hostel · dorms and a shared kitchen	**2,000 to 5,000 ¥**
Capsule · a bed, shared bathroom and lockers	**3,000 to 5,000 ¥**
Apartment · a whole place; in Kyoto, an apartment hotel	**from 5,000 ¥ per unit**
Minshuku · the family guesthouse, one or two meals	**5,000 to 14,000 ¥**
Ryokan · tatami, futons, bath, dinner and breakfast	**6,000 to 60,000 ¥**
Temple stay · on Koyasan, about fifty temples (book)	**15,000 to 25,000 ¥ with meals**
Business hotel · small Western-style room, well located	**7,000 to 20,000 ¥ per room**
Large hotel · international and Japanese chains	**8,000 to 200,000 ¥ per room**

Per person per night, unless stated; typical prices recorded in 2025, higher in Tokyo and Kyoto in high season.

BOOK AHEAD

Our favorite hotels

Taken from the city chapters, where you'll find all our addresses. $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

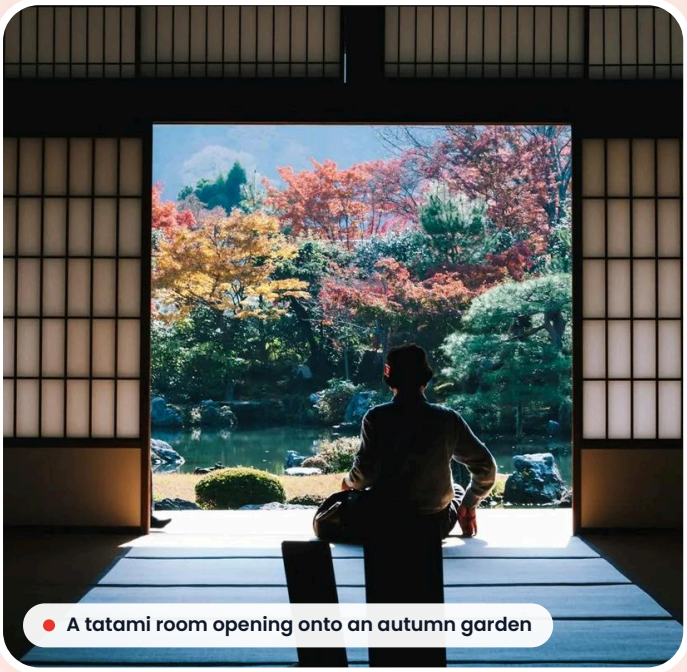
1	**Tokyo** Tokyo chapter	**UNPLAN Shinjuku** hostel · Shinjuku · $	Booking.com →	**Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** Shinjuku · $$	Booking.com →
2	**Hakone** a night in a ryokan	**Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** founded in 1630 · $$	Booking.com →	**Fuji-Hakone Guest House** hot spring · Sengokuhara · $	Booking.com →
3	**Kyoto** Kyoto chapter	**Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** hot-spring bath · station · $$	Booking.com →	**K's House Kyoto** hostel · near the station · $	Booking.com →
4	**Osaka** Osaka chapter	**Cross Hotel Osaka** Shinsaibashi · $$	Booking.com →	**Swissôtel Nankai Osaka** Namba station · $$$	Booking.com →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

WHERE TO STAY · RYOKAN AND TAXES

A night in a ryokan, how it works

The traditional inn is priced per person, dinner and breakfast included: about 15,000 ¥ a night on average, according to the tourism office.



A tatami room opening onto an autumn garden

1 Check-in around 3–4 pm
Luggage accepted earlier. You'll be asked your meal times: let them know if you'll arrive late.

2 Shoes off at the entrance
No slippers on the tatami; another pair for the toilet.

3 The yukata and the bath
The yukata is provided. The large bath needs no booking, often open late at night and early in the morning.

4 The kaiseki dinner
Several seasonal courses, in your room or a dining room. The door often locks at night; check-out between 10 am and noon.

Accommodation taxes, per person per night

Tokyo	**0 to 200 ¥**
Kyoto	**200 to 10,000 ¥**
Osaka	**0 to 500 ¥**
Hiroshima	**0 or 200 ¥**
Hokkaido (Sapporo: 300 to 1,000 ¥)	**100 to 500 ¥**
Fukuoka	**200 or 500 ¥**

Kanazawa	**0 to 500 ¥**
Takayama	**100 to 300 ¥**
Nagano	**0 or 200 ¥**
Tokyo, April 2027 (none under 13,000 ¥)	**3%**
Okinawa, from February 2027	**2%**
Fuji Five Lakes, April 2027 (planned)	**200 ¥**

The amount depends on the nightly rate per person: nothing under 5,000 to 6,000 ¥ in several cities, up to 10,000 ¥ in Kyoto above 100,000 ¥. Miyajima: 100 ¥ per visit, paid with the ferry.

KYOTO IN AUTUMN: BOOK EARLY
In Kyoto, the average room cost a record 21,286 ¥ in 2025. Hotels expected to be about 90% full from October to late November 2026.

HINOMARU'S TIP
Allergies, vegetarian or gluten-free? Tell the ryokan several days ahead: dinner is prepared in advance.



SLEEPING AND EATING · EATING

Eating well in Japan

A bowl of ramen at the counter, an onigiri at midnight, a kaiseki dinner at the ryokan: you eat well at every price. Here are the dishes to know.



Four classics to tick off



Ramen
Wheat noodles in broth, soy-sauce based in Tokyo. You slurp them loudly.



Sushi
Vinegared rice and a topping: raw fish, seafood, egg or vegetables. Nigiri was born in Tokyo; you can eat it with your fingers.



Onigiri
A filled rice ball, often with fish, sometimes salted plum. The queen of the konbini.



Bento
The boxed meal. At stations, the ekiben is made to eat on the train.

And six more to try

Tempura
Light fritters of fish and vegetables, from street counters to fine dining.

Soba and udon
Soba: buckwheat, Tokyo's fast food since the Edo period. Udon: thick wheat noodles, hot or cold.

Yakitori
Grilled chicken skewers, with salt or sauce.

Okonomiyaki
A savory pancake cooked on a griddle, the pride of Osaka and Hiroshima.

Takoyaki
Batter balls with octopus, Osaka's favorite street snack.

Gyudon
A bowl of rice with simmered beef: one of the cheapest full meals.



A bowl of ramen, marinated eggs and chashu



Nigiri and maki



A ramen yatai in Fukuoka

EATING · WHERE AND HOW MUCH

Where to eat, and for how much

From the all-night konbini to the neighborhood counter: you eat fast, well and cheaply. In 2025, American visitors spent about 5,800 ¥ a day on food and drink.



The konbini

Most are open 24/7: onigiri, hot meals, a microwave, and a trash can when the street has none.

24/7 · IC card accepted

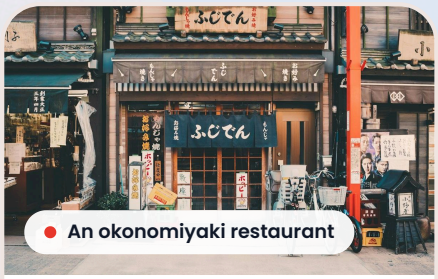


An alley of small bars at night

The izakaya

The pub where you share small plates. A welcome dish, the otoshi, is charged per person.

otoshi charged · beer ≈ 658 ¥ in Tokyo



An okonomiyaki restaurant

The neighborhood restaurant

Many display their dishes in the window as life-size replicas: just point.

dish display · cash helps

Depachika

The food halls in department store basements: bentos and sweets to take away.

Gyudon chains

The beef bowl: 498 ¥ to eat in at Yoshinoya, 489 ¥ to take out (10% or 8% tax).

Ramen shops

You choose and pay in advance at a ticket machine, often in cash.

Conveyor-belt sushi

At kaitenzushi, plates roll past you; table manners are more relaxed there.

BOOK AHEAD

Taste with a guide

The food tours from our city chapters, to book before you go.

1 Kansai — Osaka and Kyoto	Street food in Shinsekai — Osaka · 15 tastings	GetYourGuide →	Tea ceremony — Kyoto · Kiyomizu-dera	GetYourGuide →
2 West — Hiroshima and Fukuoka	Food walk — Hiroshima · with dinner	GetYourGuide →	The yatai — Fukuoka · in the evening	GetYourGuide →
3 Hokkaido — Sapporo and Hakodate	Food tour — Sapporo · 10+ dishes	GetYourGuide →	Morning market — Hakodate · seafood	GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

EATING · ETIQUETTE AND DIETS

At the table, the right moves



DO

- Wait until everyone is served before starting.
- Slurp your noodles loudly: it's normal.
- Pour drinks for others, not for yourself.
- Ask for water: most restaurants serve tap water for free.
- Finish your plate.

AVOID

- Stick your chopsticks upright in rice, or pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks.
- Leave a tip: service is included, everywhere.
- Refuse the otoshi at an izakaya: it's the table charge.
- Eat while walking, or on the subway; the Shinkansen is fine.
- Drink alcohol under 20.

Words for the table

Before eating	After the meal
Itadakimasu	**Gochisosama deshita**
Excuse me	The check, please
Sumimasen	**Okaikei onegaishimasu**

Booking a table

Google Maps
The "Reserve" button goes through TableCheck and other sites, not Tabelog.

Tabelog
The big restaurant guide, in English. Account required, 440 ¥ fee per person.

TableCheck
In English, card payment. Also sells skip-the-line passes for some ramen shops.

Google Translate
Menu in Japanese? The camera translates it.

ALLERGIES

Packaging must list 9 allergens: shrimp, crab, walnut, cashew (since April 2026), wheat, buckwheat, egg, milk, peanut. In restaurants, nothing is required: show a card written in Japanese, and say so when you book.

VEGETARIAN, VEGAN, HALAL

Dashi, a fish broth, hides everywhere, even in vegetable dishes. Look for shojin ryori, the vegan temple cuisine. Halal: no single certification; mirin and sake flavor many sauces.

Tabelog → TableCheck →

4 PART 4

Itineraries

One week, ten days, two or three weeks: four routes ready to follow, with trains, prices and nights.

34 7 days
37 10 days
41 14 days
45 21 days
49 Extensions



ITINERARIES · 7 DAYS

7 days in Japan, the essentials

Tokyo, then Kyoto and Nara: two hotels, two long rides, and your flight home from Kansai, with no backtracking to Tokyo.





Tokyo	Kyoto	
3 nights	3 nights	D7
D1 → D3	D4 → D6	Departure

2 hr 11 to 2 hr 15
Tokyo → Kyoto on the Nozomi

≈18,000 ¥
in train fares, versus 50,000 ¥ for the JR Pass

1 hr 24
from Kyoto Station to Kansai Airport, no change



HINOMARU'S TIP

Book a multi-city ticket: into Tokyo, home from Kansai. Check whether a nonstop leaves Kansai for your city; if not, compare with a one-stop flight. Going back to Tokyo on the last day costs about 11,000 ¥.

7 DAYS · DAY BY DAY

Two cities, day by day

Three nights in Tokyo, three in Kyoto. Adult fares, unreserved seats, checked in October 2026.

1 Tokyo — 3 nights — Days 1–3

- **D1** **Arrive** at Haneda or Narita. In the evening, Asakusa and Senso-ji lit up.
- **D2** **Shibuya and Harajuku**: Meiji-jingu shrine, then the city from above at SHIBUYA SKY.
- **D3** **Shinjuku**: Shinjuku Gyoen garden (closed Mondays), the free view from the Government Building, Omoide Yokocho at night.

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI
Tokyo ----------→ Kyoto
PRICE **13,320 ¥** ≈ 2 hr 12

2 Kyoto — 3 nights — Days 4–7

- **D4** **The Shinkansen** in the morning, Fuji on your right on a clear day. Gion and the Kamo River in the evening.
- **D5** **Fushimi Inari** early, 5 min away by JR train, then Kiyomizu-dera and Higashiyama on foot.
- **D6** **Day trip to Nara**: the deer in the park, the Great Buddha of Todai-ji, Kasuga Taisha. Back to Kyoto at night.
- **D7** **Departure**: Arashiyama or the Golden Pavilion if your flight leaves in the afternoon, then the Haruka straight to Kansai Airport.

HARUKA, DIRECT
Kyoto ----------→ Kansai (KIX)
PRICE **3,060 ¥** 1 hr 24

~~**7-day JR Pass**~~
50,000 ¥ online, 53,000 ¥ from an agency

Single tickets
18,120 ¥ in all, Inari and Nara included: 31,880 ¥ less

See Fuji from the Shinkansen

sea side	A	B	C		D	E	Fuji side, heading to Kyoto

Ordinary car: seat E. In the Green Car, four seats per row: seat D.



A BIG SUITCASE?
Over 160 cm (length, width and height added up), book a seat with an oversized baggage area, or pay a 1,000 ¥ fee. For a one-week trip, keep it with you: Yamato needs two days.

7 DAYS · BOOK

Book this trip, stop by stop



BOOK AHEAD

One hotel per city, and the timed visits

Our picks from the Tokyo and Kyoto chapters. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Tokyo

3 nights · days 1–3

- **UNPLAN Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $ — Booking.com →
- **Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo** — Nishi-Shinjuku · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **SHIBUYA SKY** — on sale 2 weeks ahead — GetYourGuide →

2 Kyoto

3 nights · days 4–6

- **K's House Kyoto** — Kyoto Station · $ — Booking.com →
- **Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** — Kyoto Station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Hotel The Celestine Kyoto Gion** — Higashiyama · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Fushimi Inari at dawn** — before the crowds, day 5 — GetYourGuide →
- **Gion after dark** — the evening of day 4 — GetYourGuide →
- **Kimono rental** — hair styling included — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

When to book what

1. **As soon as your dates are set**
   The multi-city flight, then the Kyoto hotel: it sells out fast in cherry blossom and fall foliage season.
2. **One month ahead, at 10 a.m. Japan time**
   Your Tokyo → Kyoto Shinkansen seat, on the E side. On smart EX, up to a year ahead.
3. **Between one month and 21 days ahead**
   EX Hayatoku 21 on smart EX: a reserved Nozomi seat for 12,430 ¥ instead of 14,170 ¥. Limited seats, not during Golden Week, Obon or New Year.
4. **Two weeks ahead**
   SHIBUYA SKY: sales open at midnight, Japan time.
5. **Before you leave**
   The HARUKA One-way Ticket, 2,200 ¥ instead of 3,060 ¥: you can't buy it in Japan.

Book the Shinkansen → | HARUKA One-way Ticket →

ITINERARIES · 10 DAYS

10 days in Japan, without rushing



The classic first trip: Tokyo, a night in a ryokan in Hakone, Kyoto and Nara, then Osaka. You cross the country from east to west, with no backtracking.



Tokyo	Hakone	Kyoto	Osaka	D10
4 nights	1 night	3 nights	1 night	
D1 → D4	D5	D6 → D8	D9	Departure

4 stops
9 nights, never doubling back

≈24,000 ¥
in train fares, with single tickets

No JR Pass
the 7-day pass costs 50,000 ¥

HINOMARU'S TIP

Book a multi-city ticket: into Tokyo, home from Kansai Airport. No need to go back to Tokyo to fly out.



10 DAYS · DAY BY DAY

The route, stop by stop

1 Tokyo — 4 nights — Days 1–4

- **D1** **Arrive** at Haneda or Narita. In the evening, Asakusa and Senso-ji lit up.
- **D2** **Shibuya and Harajuku**: Meiji-jingu shrine, then the city from above at SHIBUYA SKY.
- **D3** **Shinjuku**: Shinjuku Gyoen garden (closed Mondays), the free view from the Government Building, Omoide Yokocho at night.
- **D4** **teamLab Planets and Ginza**, or a day in Kamakura. In the morning, send your suitcase ahead to Kyoto.

ROMANCECAR AND HAKONE FREEPASS
Shinjuku ----------→ Hakone-Yumoto
PRICE **8,300 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 20

2 Hakone — 1 night — Day 5

- **D5** **The Hakone loop**: mountain train, ropeway, boat on Lake Ashi. A night in a ryokan, hot spring bath included.

SHINKANSEN HIKARI
Odawara ----------→ Kyoto
PRICE **11,770 ¥** ≈ 2 hr

3 Kyoto — 3 nights — Days 6–8

- **D6** **Gion and the Kamo River** late in the day, after the Shinkansen.
- **D7** **Fushimi Inari** early, then Kiyomizu-dera and Higashiyama on foot.
- **D8** **Day trip to Nara**: the deer in the park, the Great Buddha of Todai-ji, Kasuga Taisha.

KEIHAN, KYOTO TO OSAKA
Gion-Shijo ----------→ Yodoyabashi
PRICE **490 ¥**

4 Osaka — 1 night — Days 9–10

- **D9** **Arashiyama or the Golden Pavilion** in the morning, in Kyoto. Train to Osaka in the afternoon, Dotonbori at night.
- **D10** **Departure**: Osaka Castle or Kuromon Market if your flight leaves in the afternoon, then the Nankai Rapi:t to Kansai Airport (34 min, 1,670 ¥).

10 DAYS · THE TRAINS

Pass or no pass? Single tickets



On this route, the JR Pass costs far more than buying tickets one by one. Adult fares, unreserved seats, checked in October 2026.

ROMANCECAR

Shinjuku ---→ Hakone

DURATION
≈1 hr 20

With the 2-day Hakone Freepass: the loop, then down to Odawara.

WITH THE FREEPASS
8,300 ¥

SHINKANSEN HIKARI

Odawara ---→ Kyoto

DURATION
≈2 hr

Nozomi trains don't stop at Odawara: a Hikari runs about every two hours.

PRICE
11,770 ¥

JR MIYAKOJI RAPID

Kyoto --------→ Nara

DURATION
47 min

ROUND TRIP
1,440 ¥

NANKAI RAPI:T

Namba ---→ Kansai (KIX)

DURATION
34 min

PRICE
1,670 ¥

~~**7-day JR Pass**~~
50,000 ¥ online, 53,000 ¥ from an agency

Single tickets
JR rides on this route: 19,750 ¥

See Fuji from the Shinkansen

sea side	A	B	C	D	E	Fuji side, heading to Kyoto

Ordinary car: seat E. In the Green Car, four seats per row: seat D.

THE PAPER KANSAI AREA PASS IS NO LONGER SOLD

JR West stopped selling it on September 30, 2026; passes bought before then remain valid. Its WEST QR version, on your phone, is still sold by agencies outside Japan (2,700 ¥ for one day).



TRAVEL LIGHT

On the morning of day 4, hand your suitcase to Yamato: it will be waiting at your Kyoto hotel, for about 3,160 ¥.

Hakone Freepass → | Book the Romancecar → | Ship your suitcase →

AFFILIATE LINKS

10 DAYS · BOOK

Book this trip, stop by stop



BOOK AHEAD

One hotel per stop, and the timed visits

Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Tokyo

4 nights · days 1–4

- **Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $$ — Booking.com →
- **UNPLAN Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $ — Booking.com →
- **SHIBUYA SKY** — on sale 2 weeks ahead — GetYourGuide →
- **teamLab Planets** — no tickets sold on site — GetYourGuide →

2 Hakone

1 night · day 5

- **Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** — ryokan in Tonosawa · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Fuji-Hakone Guest House** — Sengokuhara · $ — Booking.com →
- **Hakone Freepass** — 2 days, from Shinjuku — Klook →

3 Kyoto

3 nights · days 6–8

- **Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** — Kyoto Station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **K's House Kyoto** — Kyoto Station · $ — Booking.com →
- **Fushimi Inari at dawn** — before the crowds — GetYourGuide →
- **Kimono rental** — hair styling included — GetYourGuide →

4 Osaka

1 night · day 9

- **Cross Hotel Osaka** — Namba · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Swissôtel Nankai Osaka** — Nankai Namba Station · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Food tour in Shinsekai** — in the evening — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

When to book what

1. **As soon as your dates are set**
   The flight, then the hotels and the ryokan, which sell out fast in high season.
2. **One month ahead**
   The Romancecar to Hakone: sales open at 10 a.m., Japan time.
3. **Two weeks ahead**
   SHIBUYA SKY: sales open at midnight, Japan time.

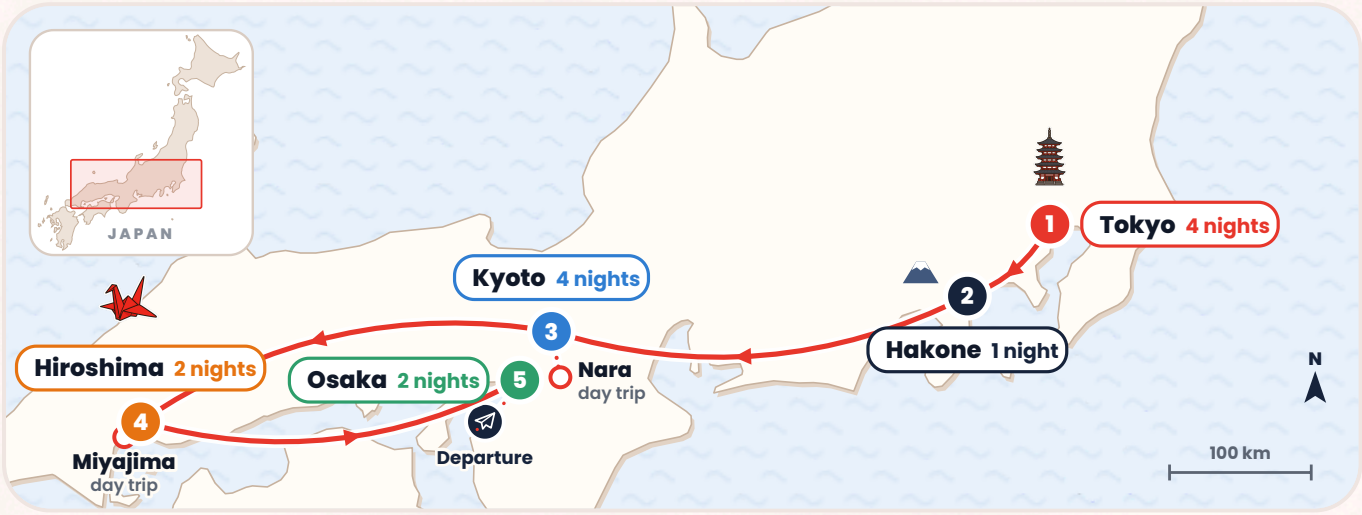
ITINERARIES · 14 DAYS

14 days in Japan, two routes



The first five days of the 10-day trip, then a detour of your choice: Hiroshima and Miyajima, or the Japanese Alps.

Route A · Hiroshima and Miyajima



Tokyo	Hakone	Kyoto	Hiroshima	Osaka	D14
4 nights	1 night	4 nights	2 nights	2 nights	
D1 → D4	D5	D6 → D9	D10 → D11	D12 → D13	Departure

Route B · The Japanese Alps



Tokyo	Hakone	Takayama	Kanazawa	Kyoto	Osaka	D14
4 nights		2 nights	2 nights	3 nights	1 night	
D1 → D4	D5	D6 → D7	D8 → D9	D10 → D12	D13	Departure

14 DAYS · DAY BY DAY

Both routes, day by day

Route A · Hiroshima

1 Tokyo — 4 nights — Days 1–4

- D1–4 **As in the 10-day trip**: Asakusa, Shibuya, Shinjuku. On the morning of day 4, your suitcase leaves for Kyoto.

2 Hakone — 1 night — Day 5

- D5 **Romancecar**, the Hakone loop, a night in a ryokan.

3 Kyoto — 4 nights — Days 6–9

- D6 **Hikari** from Odawara; Gion in the evening.
- D7 **Fushimi Inari**, Kiyomizu-dera, Higashiyama.
- D8 **Nara** as a day trip.
- D9 **Arashiyama** or the Golden Pavilion; Nishiki, Pontocho.

4 Hiroshima — 2 nights — Days 10–11

- D10 **Shinkansen**, ≈ 1 hr 40; the Peace Memorial Park and Museum.
- D11 **Miyajima**: JR train and ferry, timed with the tide.

5 Osaka — 2 nights — Days 12–14

- D12 **Shinkansen**, ≈ 1 hr 25; the castle, Dotonbori at night.
- D13 **Kuromon**, Shinsekai or Universal Studios.
- D14 **Departure**: train to Kansai Airport.

Route B · The Alps

1 Tokyo — 4 nights — Days 1–4

- D1–4 **As in the 10-day trip**. On the morning of day 4, the big suitcase leaves for your Kyoto hotel.

2 Hakone — 1 night — Day 5

- D5 **Romancecar**, the Hakone loop, a night in a ryokan.

3 Takayama — 2 nights — Days 6–7

- D6 **Hikari** to Nagoya, then the Hida train: ≈ 4 hr.
- D7 **The morning market** along the Miya River, the old town.

4 Kanazawa — 2 nights — Days 8–9

- D8 **Bus to Shirakawa-go**, 3 hr in the village, then a bus to Kanazawa.
- D9 **Kenroku-en**, Higashi Chaya, Omicho Market.

5 Kyoto — 3 nights — Days 10–12

- D10 **Change at Tsuruga**, 1 hr 43 to 2 hr 07; Fushimi Inari.
- D11 **Kiyomizu-dera**, Higashiyama and Gion.
- D12 **Nara** as a day trip.

6 Osaka — 1 night — Days 13–14

- D13 **Arashiyama** in the morning, then Osaka; Dotonbori.
- D14 **Departure**: train to Kansai Airport.

Route A: with the pass

Reach Shin-Osaka on a JR rapid train: the pass doesn't cover the Shinkansen between Kyoto and Shin-Osaka. At Miyajima, a 100 ¥ visitor tax when you board the ferry.

Route B: in the mountains

Buses sometimes run 2 hours late or more, with little room for big suitcases. The Thunderbird is reserved seats only; at Odawara, one Hikari to Nagoya every two hours.

14 DAYS · THE TRAINS

Tickets, passes and buses



Both routes start with the Romancecar (8,300 ¥ with the Hakone Freepass) and end with the Rapi:t to the airport (1,670 ¥). Adult fares, unreserved seats, checked in October 2026.

ROUTE A · HIROSHIMA

D6 · SHINKANSEN HIKARI	Odawara ----------→ Kyoto	PRICE 11,770 ¥ ≈ 2 hr
D10 · SHINKANSEN NOZOMI	Kyoto ----------→ Hiroshima	PRICE 10,770 ¥ ≈ 1 hr 40
D11 · JR AND JR FERRY	Hiroshima ------→ Miyajima	ROUND TRIP 1,340 ¥ tax included
D12 · SHINKANSEN	Hiroshima ----→ Shin-Osaka	PRICE 9,890 ¥ 1 hr 21 to 1 hr 25

ROUTE B · THE ALPS

D6 · SHINKANSEN HIKARI	Odawara ---------→ Nagoya	PRICE 8,570 ¥ 1 hr 08
D6 · HIDA LIMITED EXPRESS	Nagoya -------→ Takayama	PRICE 5,610 ¥ 2 hr 15 to 2 hr 42
D8 · BUS VIA SHIRAKAWA-GO	Takayama ----→ Kanazawa	PRICE 5,600 ¥ ≈ 2 hr 10
D10 · TSURUGI, THEN THUNDERBIRD	Kanazawa ----------→ Kyoto	RESERVED SEAT 7,720 ¥ 1 hr 43 to 2 hr 07

✗ ~~14-day JR Pass~~

80,000 ¥ online, 84,000 ¥ from an agency

✗ ~~7-day JR Pass~~

50,000 ¥: its best week covers only 25,480 ¥ of rides

✓ **Route A · Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass**

17,000 ¥ from day 10 to day 14: 38,910 ¥ of trains in all, versus 45,480 ¥ in single tickets

✓ **Route B · single tickets**

39,700 ¥ in all; 38,480 ¥ with the HOKURIKU One-way Ticket

What to book, and when

ROUTE A

- [ ] **One month ahead, at 10 a.m. Japan time**: the Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass online, then your seats, included.
- [ ] **Peace Memorial Museum**: the 7:30 a.m. slot or the last hour, online.
- [ ] **Miyajima Ropeway**: booking required on busy days, including November weekends.
- [ ] **The day before**: the tide times at Miyajima, on the tourist office website.

ROUTE B

- [ ] **As soon as your dates are set**: the Takayama hotels, fully booked during its festivals (April 14–15, October 9–10).
- [ ] **One month ahead, same date**: the buses to Shirakawa-go and Kanazawa. From Shirakawa-go to Kanazawa, all require a reservation.
- [ ] **Before you leave**: the HOKURIKU One-way Ticket, 6,500 ¥, sold by agencies abroad; ask them to confirm it's valid from Kanazawa to Kyoto.

Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass → | Shirakawa-go buses → | HOKURIKU One-way Ticket →

14 DAYS · BOOK

Book this trip, stop by stop



BOOK AHEAD

One hotel per stop, and the timed visits

Our picks from the city chapters. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

Tokyo 4 nights · days 1–4	**UNPLAN Shinjuku** Shinjuku · $ Booking.com →	**Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** Shinjuku · $$ Booking.com →
	SHIBUYA SKY on sale 2 weeks ahead GetYourGuide →	**teamLab Planets** no tickets sold on site GetYourGuide →
Hakone 1 night · day 5	**Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** ryokan in Tonosawa · $$ Booking.com →	**Hakone Freepass** 2 days, from Shinjuku Klook →
Kyoto Route A: 4 nights · Route B: 3 nights	**K's House Kyoto** Kyoto Station · $ Booking.com →	**Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** Kyoto Station · $$ Booking.com →
	Fushimi Inari at dawn before the crowds GetYourGuide →	**Kimono rental** hair styling included GetYourGuide →
Hiroshima and Miyajima Route A · 2 nights · days 10–11	**J-Hoppers Hiroshima Guesthouse** Dobashi · $ Booking.com →	**Dormy Inn Hiroshima "Aki no yu"** Peace Boulevard · $$ Booking.com →
	Peace Memorial Museum official ticket, timed slot Klook →	**Miyajima with a guide** the island and the shrine GetYourGuide →
Takayama Route B · 2 nights · days 6–7	**Spa Hotel Alpina Hida Takayama** near the station · $$ Booking.com →	**Sake tasting** historic brewery GetYourGuide →
Kanazawa Route B · 2 nights · days 8–9	**Dormy Inn Kanazawa** near the station · $$ Booking.com →	**Tea ceremony** at Kenroku-en GetYourGuide →
Osaka Route A: 2 nights · Route B: 1 night	**Cross Hotel Osaka** Namba · $$ Booking.com →	**Hotel Hankyu RESPIRE OSAKA** Umeda · $$ Booking.com →
	Food tour in Shinsekai in the evening GetYourGuide →	**Universal Studios Japan** dated ticket GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

ITINERARIES · 21 DAYS

21 days in Japan, the grand tour



Tokyo, Hakone, the Alps, Kyoto, Hiroshima, then Kyushu: eight stops from east to west, and back through Osaka for your flight.



Tokyo	Hakone	Takayama	Kanazawa	Kyoto	Hiroshima	Fukuoka	Osaka	D21
4 nights				4 nights		3 nights	2 nights	
D1 → D4	D5	D6 → D7	D8 → D9	D10 → D13	D14 → D15	D16 → D18	D19 → D20	Departure

8 stops
20 nights, east to west, no domestic flight

≈83,000 ¥
in trains and buses, with the JR-WEST All Area Pass

2 hr 31
from Hakata to Osaka on the Nozomi

HINOMARU'S TIP

Why Kyushu rather than Hokkaido? Hakata is 1 hr 05 from Hiroshima, on the same Shinkansen line, with the same pass. Hokkaido needs a flight: save it for February and the Sapporo Snow Festival.



21 DAYS · DAY BY DAY

The grand tour, stop by stop

1 Tokyo — 4 nights — Days 1–4

- D1 **Arrive** at Haneda or Narita; Asakusa and Senso-ji in the evening.
- D2 **Shibuya and Harajuku**, Meiji-jingu shrine, SHIBUYA SKY.
- D3 **Shinjuku**: Shinjuku Gyoen, the view from the Government Building, Omoide Yokocho at night.
- D4 **Day trip to Nikko** on the Tobu train (+ 200 ¥ on busy days) or Kamakura; your suitcase leaves for Kyoto.

2 Hakone — 1 night — Day 5

- D5 **Romancecar** and the Hakone loop; a night in a ryokan, with a small bag.

3 Takayama — 2 nights — Days 6–7

- D6 **Hikari** from Odawara to Nagoya, then the Hida train: about 4 hr in all.
- D7 **The morning market** along the Miya River, the old Sanmachi district.

4 Kanazawa — 2 nights — Days 8–9

- D8 **Bus to Shirakawa-go**, 3 hr in the village, then a bus to Kanazawa.
- D9 **Kenroku-en garden**, the Higashi Chaya district, Omicho Market.

5 Kyoto — 4 nights — Days 10–13

- D10 **Change at Tsuruga**, 1 hr 43 to 2 hr 07; Fushimi Inari in the afternoon.
- D11 **Kiyomizu-dera**, Higashiyama and Gion.
- D12 **Day trip to Nara**: the deer, the Great Buddha of Todai-ji.
- D13 **Arashiyama** and the Golden Pavilion.

6 Hiroshima — 2 nights — Days 14–15

- D14 **Shinkansen**, about 1 hr 40; the Peace Memorial Park and Museum.
- D15 **Miyajima**, by JR train and ferry, timed with the tide.

7 Fukuoka — 3 nights — Days 16–18

- D16 **Shinkansen**, about 1 hr 05; the Nakasu yatai stalls at night.
- D17 **Dazaifu**, half an hour away on the Nishitetsu train, then Fukuoka.
- D18 **Kumamoto** (38 min by Shinkansen) or **Nagasaki** (1 hr 25 to 1 hr 51, one change).

8 Osaka — 2 nights — Days 19–21

- D19 **Nozomi** from Hakata, 2 hr 31; Dotonbori at night.
- D20 **The castle**, Kuromon Market or Universal Studios Japan.
- D21 **Departure**: train to Kansai Airport.

21 DAYS · THE TRAINS

The grand tour, without a JR Pass



The long rides, in order. With Inari, Nara, Dazaifu and the Rapi:t to the airport: 92,320 ¥ in single tickets. Adult fares, unreserved seats, checked in October 2026.

D4 · TOBU KEGON OR REVATY
Asakusa ----------→ Nikko
ROUND TRIP **6,100 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 50

D5 · ROMANCECAR
Shinjuku ----------→ Hakone
WITH THE FREEPASS **8,300 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 20

D6 · HIKARI, THEN HIDA
Odawara -------→ Takayama
PRICE **14,180 ¥** ≈ 4 hr

D8 · BUS VIA SHIRAKAWA-GO
Takayama -----→ Kanazawa
PRICE **5,600 ¥** ≈ 2 hr 10

D10 · TSURUGI, THEN THUNDERBIRD
Kanazawa ----------→ Kyoto
RESERVED SEAT **7,720 ¥** 1 hr 43 to 2 hr 07

D14 · SHINKANSEN NOZOMI
Kyoto ----------→ Hiroshima
PRICE **10,770 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 40

D15 · JR AND JR FERRY
Hiroshima -------→ Miyajima
ROUND TRIP **1,340 ¥** tax included

D16 · SHINKANSEN
Hiroshima --------→ Hakata
PRICE **8,570 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 05

D18 · KYUSHU SHINKANSEN
Hakata --------→ Kumamoto
ROUND TRIP **10,620 ¥** 38 min

D19 · SHINKANSEN NOZOMI
Hakata -------→ Shin-Osaka
PRICE **14,750 ¥** 2 hr 31

~~21-day JR Pass~~
100,000 ¥ online, 105,000 ¥ from an agency, for about 88,900 ¥ of JR rides

JR-WEST All Area Pass
26,000 ¥ from day 14 to day 20: 82,990 ¥ of trains in all, versus 92,320 ¥ in single tickets

The JR West pass
The Shinkansen from Shin-Osaka to Hakata, Nozomi and reserved seats included, and the Miyajima ferry. Online, one month ahead.

What it doesn't cover
The Shinkansen from Kyoto to Shin-Osaka (take the JR rapid train) and the Kyushu Shinkansen to Kumamoto.

What to book, and when

- [ ] **One month ahead, at 10 a.m. Japan time**: the JR-WEST All Area Pass online, then your seats, included.
- [ ] **Before you leave**: the HOKURIKU One-way Ticket (Kanazawa–Kyoto, 6,500 ¥; ask the agency to confirm the direction) and the HARUKA One-way Ticket, sold outside Japan.
- [ ] **One month ahead, same date**: the buses to Shirakawa-go and Kanazawa. From Shirakawa-go to Kanazawa, all require a reservation.
- [ ] **Hiroshima and Miyajima**: as in route A of the 14-day trip (Peace Museum, ropeway, tide).

JR-WEST All Area Pass → | HOKURIKU One-way Ticket → | Shirakawa-go buses →

21 DAYS · BOOK

Book this trip, stop by stop



BOOK AHEAD

One hotel per stop, and the timed visits

Our picks from the city chapters. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Tokyo

4 nights · days 1–4

- **UNPLAN Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $ — Booking.com →
- **Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** — Shinjuku · $$ — Booking.com →
- **SHIBUYA SKY** — on sale 2 weeks ahead — GetYourGuide →
- **Nikko with a guide** — private tour, day 4 — GetYourGuide →

2 Hakone

1 night · day 5

- **Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** — ryokan in Tonosawa · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Hakone Freepass** — 2 days, from Shinjuku — Klook →

3 Takayama

2 nights · days 6–7

- **Spa Hotel Alpina Hida Takayama** — near the station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Sake tasting** — historic brewery — GetYourGuide →

4 Kanazawa

2 nights · days 8–9

- **Dormy Inn Kanazawa** — near the station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Tea ceremony** — at Kenroku-en — GetYourGuide →

5 Kyoto

4 nights · days 10–13

- **K's House Kyoto** — Kyoto Station · $ — Booking.com →
- **Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae** — Kyoto Station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Fushimi Inari at dawn** — before the crowds — GetYourGuide →
- **Kimono rental** — hair styling included — GetYourGuide →

6 Hiroshima

2 nights · days 14–15

- **Dormy Inn Hiroshima "Aki no yu"** — Peace Boulevard · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Peace Memorial Museum** — official ticket, timed slot — Klook →

7 Fukuoka

3 nights · days 16–18

- **Dormy Inn PREMIUM Hakata Canal City Mae** — Hakata · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Yatai stalls with a guide** — in the evening, 3 hr — GetYourGuide →

8 Osaka

2 nights · days 19–20

- **Cross Hotel Osaka** — Namba · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Food tour in Shinsekai** — in the evening — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

ITINERARIES · EXTENSIONS

Extensions, one more day

Five getaways to add to any itinerary.





01



Fuji, from Kawaguchiko

Chureito Pagoda and its 398 steps, facing the volcano. See the Hakone and Mount Fuji chapter.

≈ 1 hr 45 from Shinjuku · bus 2,200 ¥

02



Nikko

Toshogu in its cedar forest, Kegon Falls (97 m). In the fall, buses sometimes run over 2 hours late.

≈ 1 hr 50 from Asakusa · Toshogu 1,600 ¥

03



Kamakura

The bronze Great Buddha of Kotoku-in, then Hase-dera temple.

≈ 1 hr from Tokyo · Buddha 300 ¥

04



Himeji Castle

The white keep, capped at 1,000 visitors an hour: arrive at 9 a.m.

≈ 23 min from Shin-Osaka at best · 2,500 ¥

05



Kinosaki Onsen

From one public bath to the next in a yukata: all of them accept tattoos.

2 hr 20 to 2 hr 35 from Kyoto · bath pass 1,500 ¥

EXTENSIONS · GETTING THERE, BOOKING

Getting there, and booking



Adult one-way fares, unreserved seats unless stated, checked in October 2026.

DIRECT BUS, BOOK AHEAD **Shinjuku ----→ Kawaguchiko**	PRICE **2,200 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 45	
FUJI EXCURSION, DATED TICKET **Shinjuku ----→ Kawaguchiko**	PRICE **4,200 ¥** 1 hr 53	
TOBU KEGON OR REVATY **Asakusa ----------→ Nikko**	PRICE **3,050 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 50	
JR YOKOSUKA LINE **Tokyo ----------→ Kamakura**	PRICE **1,040 ¥** ≈ 1 hr	
SHINKANSEN **Shin-Osaka --------→ Himeji**	PRICE **3,220 ¥** from ≈ 23 min	
KINOSAKI LIMITED EXPRESS **Kyoto ----------→ Kinosaki**	RESERVED SEAT **5,370 ¥** 2 hr 20 to 2 hr 35	

HIMEJI: 2,500 ¥ SINCE MARCH 2026

The price rose from 1,000 to 2,500 ¥ on March 1, 2026 for every adult who doesn't live in Himeji, Japanese visitors included. The dated "Shirasagi Ticket" skips the ticket-window line, not the line for the keep.

HINOMARU'S TIP

In Kinosaki, stay the night: the ryokan often includes the bath pass. And book your seat on the express: it's required.



BOOK AHEAD

Tours to book

With a guide, or a workshop: our tours from the city chapters.

Fuji from Kawaguchiko	**Fuji with a local guide** private tour — GetYourGuide →	**Lake Kawaguchi by canoe** without getting wet — GetYourGuide →
Nikko and Kamakura from Tokyo	**Nikko with a guide** private, made to measure — GetYourGuide →	**Kintsugi in Kamakura** in a small workshop — GetYourGuide →
Himeji from Kyoto or Osaka	**The castle with a guide** licensed guide, 3 hr — GetYourGuide →	**Castle and garden** and Koko-en garden, 3 hr 30 — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

Kawaguchiko bus → | NIKKO PASS → | Himeji tickets → | Kinosaki baths →

5 PART 5

Cities and regions

Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and seven more stops: where to stay, what to see, what to book, with checked prices.

52 Tokyo
58 Kyoto
62 Osaka
64 Nara
65 Hiroshima and Miyajima
67 Hakone and Mount Fuji
69 The Japanese Alps
71 Kyushu
73 Hokkaido
75 Okinawa





Tokyo Tower and Mount Fuji at sunrise

CITIES AND REGIONS · TOKYO

Tokyo, a city of a thousand neighborhoods

Centuries-old temples and glass towers, izakaya alleys and giant crossings: you don't see Tokyo all at once, you explore it neighborhood by neighborhood.



Tokyo at a glance

the capital, where most trips begin

3 to 5 days
for the essentials

≈ 30 min from Haneda
≈ 1 hr from Narita, by train

Late March, early April
cherry blossoms, from Nakameguro to Ueno

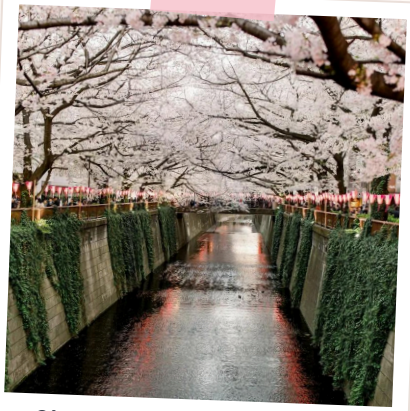
Shinjuku or Asakusa
the most convenient, or old Tokyo

1,000 ¥ for 24 hrs
of unlimited subway rides

Ghibli, SHIBUYA SKY
tickets sold in advance



Akihabara at nightfall



Cherry trees along the Meguro River



The Shinkansen at Tokyo Station

TOKYO · ARRIVING

From the airport, the right train

Haneda is close to the center, Narita an hour away. The train is the easiest and cheapest option: the Keikyu line and the monorail both connect to the Yamanote line. Adult fares, October 2026.

From Haneda

KEIKYU
Haneda ------> Shinagawa
PRICE 330 ¥ · 11 min

TOKYO MONORAIL
Haneda ----> Hamamatsucho
PRICE 520 ¥ · 13 min

LIMOUSINE BUS
Haneda ---------> Shinjuku
PRICE 1,400 ¥ · 40 to 55 min

TAXI, OFFICIAL FLAT FARE
Haneda ----------> Center
Depends on the area; tolls extra.
FROM 7,600 ¥

From Narita

KEISEI SKYLINER
Narita ----------> Ueno
Stops at Nippori.
PRICE 2,580 ¥ · 36 to 45 min

NARITA EXPRESS
Narita ----------> Tokyo
Shinjuku, Shibuya: ≈ 1 hr 25, 3,330 ¥.
PRICE 3,140 ¥ · ≈ 1 hr

TYO-NRT BUS
Narita ----------> Tokyo
Tokyo Station, then Ginza.
PRICE 1,500 ¥ · ≈ 1 hr 10

LIMOUSINE BUS
Narita ----------> Shinjuku
PRICE 3,600 ¥ · 80 to 105 min

BOOK AHEAD

Cheaper for foreign visitors

Two tickets reserved for foreign passport holders. The Skyliner e-ticket is sold online only.

From Narita
show your passport

Skyliner e-ticket
2,310 ¥ one way, instead of 2,580 ¥
GetYourGuide →

Narita Express round trip
5,200 ¥, return within 14 days
Klook →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



DID YOU KNOW?

From Haneda, on weekends, public holidays and some school breaks, a monorail and Yamanote line ticket costs 590 ¥ to any station on the loop, valid the same day. On sale until March 31, 2027.



YOUR PLANJAPAN ESIM

As soon as you land: turn on data roaming for your PlanJapan eSIM, even before customs. You're online to find your train.

TOKYO · GETTING AROUND

One card, and the whole city opens up

JR trains, subways, buses: you pay for everything by tapping an IC card on the gate. The cards are covered in detail in the chapter “Suica, PASMO, ICOCA”.

On iPhone

A Suica or PASMO in the Wallet app, topped up with a credit card. Test it before you leave.

Tourist card

Welcome Suica or TOURIST PASMO: no deposit, 28 days, balance not refunded.

Regular card

Back on sale since March 2025, with a 500 ¥ deposit refunded when you leave.

On Android

A phone bought outside Japan usually accepts neither Suica nor PASMO: get a physical card.

TAP YOUR BANK CARD AT THE GATE, BUT NOT EVERYWHERE

Since March 25, 2026, a contactless card opens the gates of the **subway (Tokyo Metro and Toei)** and nine other companies. **Not JR gates**, including the Yamanote line.

~~**Subway 1-day pass**~~

1,100 ¥, Tokyo Metro and Toei

Tokyo Subway Ticket

1,000 ¥ for 24 hrs, 1,500 ¥ for 48 hrs, 2,000 ¥ for 72 hrs

For foreign visitors only: the whole subway, but neither JR nor buses.

The Tokyo Subway Ticket →

DO

- Keep Google Maps open: right platform, right car, right exit. You get signal in the subway too.
- Stand still on escalators: the rail companies have asked for it since July 2026.
- Leave your suitcase in a locker (300 to 1,000 ¥ a day) or ship it to Kyoto with Yamato, for about 3,160 ¥.

AVOID

- The morning rush, before 9:30 am, especially with a suitcase.
- Phone calls on the train: switch to silent mode.
- Missing the last train, around 12:30 am: nothing runs at night.



HINOMARU'S TIP

The Yamanote line circles the center in about an hour, with a train every 3 to 5 minutes: Tokyo, Ueno, Shinjuku, Shibuya. The Tokyo Subway Ticket doesn't cover it.

TOKYO · NEIGHBORHOODS

Twelve neighborhoods, and where to stay



Shinjuku
Kabukicho's neon, skyscrapers and a free view.

Shibuya
Tokyo's most photographed crossing, fashion, SHIBUYA SKY.

Harajuku
Takeshita Street, Omotesando and Meiji-jingu shrine.

Asakusa
Senso-ji, the Kaminarimon gate, Nakamise street, the Sumida River.

Ueno
Museums, Ameyoko market. No more pandas since 2026.

Ginza
Department stores; the avenue is car-free on weekends.

Akihabara
Electronics, manga, video games and figures.

Odaiba
An island in the bay: malls and fountains.

Toyosu
The fish market (closed Sun., holidays, some Wed.) and teamLab Planets.

Shimokitazawa
Thrift stores, record shops, alley bars. It wakes up around noon.

Nakameguro
Riverside cafés, under the cherry trees in late March.

Ikebukuro
Sunshine City, its aquarium and the Pokémon Center.

WHERE TO STAY

Pick the area before the hotel

Rooms are small: 18 m² (190 sq ft) is already comfortable. $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

Shinjuku — a first trip

- **UNPLAN Shinjuku** — $ · hostel, women-only floor — Booking.com →
- **Hotel Gracery Shinjuku** — $$ · Godzilla on the terrace — Booking.com →
- **Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo** — $$$ · West Shinjuku towers — Booking.com →

Shibuya — for nightlife

- **sequence MIYASHITA PARK** — $$ · 2 pm check-out — Booking.com →
- **SHIBUYA STREAM HOTEL** — $$$ · connected to the station — Booking.com →

Asakusa, Ueno — old Tokyo

- **Nui. Hostel & Bar Lounge** — $ · rooftop, Skytree view — Booking.com →
- **Ryokan Sawanoya** — $ · family ryokan since 1949 — Official site →

Ginza, Otemachi — comfort, Shinkansen

- **MUJI HOTEL GINZA** — $$$ · above the MUJI store — Booking.com →
- **HOSHINOYA Tokyo** — $$$ · a ryokan in a tower — Official site →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

TOKYO · EATING

Eating in Tokyo, from counter to market

To book: TableCheck, Tabelog or the "Reserve" button in Google Maps. Ticket machines, otoshi, tipping: see "Eating well in Japan".



An izakaya alley

Omoide Yokocho

In Shinjuku, an alley of skewer bars: five or six seats per counter.

often cash only



A bowl of ramen

Tokyo Ramen Street

Ten ramen shops inside Tokyo Station. The local style: a dark soy-based broth.

Tokyo Station



Nigiri sushi

Tsukiji Market

Sushi, sashimi bowls, omelet on a stick. Eat at the shop, not while walking.

public 9 am to 2 pm



Golden Gai
nearly 300 tiny bars, around 8 pm



Ameyoko
400 shops along the railway



Depachika
the food halls in department store basements



The konbini
onigiri and hot meals, day and night

AT NIGHT, DON'T FOLLOW TOUTS

In Tokyo's nightlife districts, Kabukicho above all, as well as Shibuya and Roppongi, the UK and Australian governments report drink spiking and credit card fraud. Never follow a street tout into a bar.



DID YOU KNOW?

Nigiri, sushi set on a ball of rice, was born in Edo, Tokyo's old name. Another specialty: monjayaki, a savory pancake you cook yourself, served in more than 80 restaurants in Tsukishima.



TOKYO · SIGHTS

The must-sees, and what to book

01



Senso-ji, in Asakusa

The Kaminarimon gate, Nakamise street, then the temple, lit up until 11 pm.

free · from 6 am, 6:30 am in winter

02



Shibuya Crossing

Free from street level. From above: SHIBUYA SKY, the open-air rooftop, 229 m (750 ft) up.

SKY: 2,700 ¥ before 3 pm · 3,400 ¥ after

03



Meiji-jingu shrine

In Harajuku, open from sunrise to sunset.

free · inner garden 500 ¥

04



Shinjuku Gyoen, then the free view

The garden (closed Mondays, no alcohol), then the observatories of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building.

garden 500 ¥ · observatories free

05



Tokyo Tower

The Main Deck at 150 m; the Top Deck, at 250 m, 3,300 ¥ online.

1,500 ¥ · until 11 pm

BOOK AHEAD

Timed tickets: what sells out

Adult prices checked in October 2026; they vary by date and time.

1 The views time slots	SHIBUYA SKY 2 weeks ahead, at midnight (Japan time)	GetYourGuide →	Tokyo Skytree 350 m: 1,800 to 3,600 ¥	GetYourGuide →
2 Art and museum nothing at the door	teamLab Planets from 3,800 ¥, in Toyosu	GetYourGuide →	Ghibli Museum 1,000 ¥ + 110 ¥ fee; on sale the 10th, 10 am (Japan)	Ghibli Museum →
3 Theme parks dated tickets	Disneyland, DisneySea from 8,900 ¥, two months ahead	Tokyo Disney Resort →	Harry Potter Studio Tour 6,600 to 7,300 ¥	GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



Yasaka Pagoda, in Higashiyama

CITIES AND REGIONS · KYOTO

Kyoto, temples at dawn

The old capital keeps its temples, gardens and wooden lanes. The big sights get crowded during the day: the secret is to start early.



Kyoto at a glance
the old capital

3 nights
plus a day trip to Nara

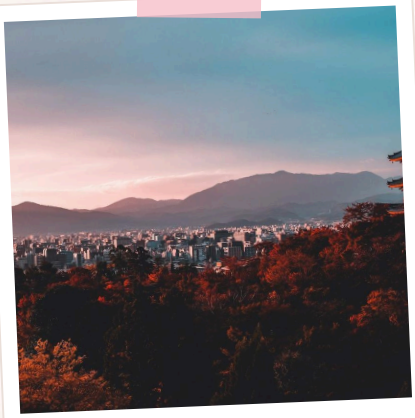
2 hr 12 from Tokyo
on the Shinkansen Nozomi

Late November
red maples, into early December

The station or Gion
for the trains, or for evenings on foot

1,100 ¥
the one-day subway and bus pass

Tea, kimono, Inari
tours to book online



Kyoto at sunset



A temple garden in autumn

KYOTO · SIGHTS

Six visits, best started early

Adult prices, checked in October 2026. Opening hours change with the seasons: check the day before.

01



Fushimi Inari Taisha

Thousands of vermilion torii up the hill. JR Inari Station, 5 min from Kyoto Station.

free · day and night

02



Kiyomizu-dera

The great wooden terrace on stilts. Open until 9:30 pm from November 21 to 30, 2026.

500 ¥ · 6 am – 6 pm

03



The Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji)

The gold-covered pavilion and its reflection in the pond, in the northwest of the city.

500 ¥ · 9 am – 5 pm

04



Arashiyama

The bamboo grove and the garden of Tenryu-ji, whose north gate opens onto the bamboo.

garden 500 ¥ · 8:30 am – 5 pm

05



Higashiyama and Gion

The wooden lanes up to Kiyomizu-dera, then Gion at dusk, with Yasaka Shrine lit up.

free · in the evening

06



Autumn maples

Peak color around November 20. At Tofuku-ji, the autumn season runs November 14 to December 6, 2026.

mid-November to early December

Also: the Silver Pavilion (Ginkaku-ji, 1,000 ¥) and the free Philosopher's Path, which leads down to Nanzen-ji.



HINOMARU'S TIP

Fushimi Inari never closes and Kiyomizu-dera opens at 6 am: go before 8 am and you'll have them almost to yourself. Save the gardens for the afternoon and Gion for dusk.

KYOTO · PRACTICAL

Getting around, eating, respecting Gion

~~The bus-only pass~~
no longer sold since September 2023

Subway and bus pass: 1,100 ¥
valid until the end of the day of use, not 24 hrs

EXPRESS BUS EX100 AND EX101

Kyoto Station ----------→ Kiyomizu-dera

DURATION
10 to 12 min

FREQUENCY
every 7 to 8 min, mornings

Weekends and public holidays; free with the pass. The regular bus costs 230 ¥, paid when you get off, but it's often packed.

PRICE
500 ¥

DO

- Follow Gion's signs: the district asks you not to enter its private lanes without permission, and not to photograph a geiko or maiko without her consent.
- If you pass a geiko or maiko, don't follow her or block her way.
- Eat at the stall, at Nishiki Market as at the temples.

AVOID

- Blocking Fushimi Inari's narrow paths for a photo.
- Tripods, monopods or drones at Kiyomizu-dera.
- The bus with a big suitcase: take the subway or the train.

Six places to eat

Okutan Kiyomizu
The hot tofu set, yudofu, at 4,400 ¥, on the way up to Kiyomizu-dera. Cash.
Closed Thursdays

Honke Daiichi Asahi
Soy ramen near the station, open from 6 am: perfect before Fushimi Inari.
Closed Thursdays

Omen Ginkakuji
House udon, dipped in a hot broth, at the foot of Ginkaku-ji.
Closed Thursdays

Kagizen Yoshifusa
Gion's confectioner and its kuzukiri, noodles made from kuzu starch.
Closed Mondays

Nishiki Market
390 m of covered stalls, roughly 10 am to 6 pm. Eat at the stall, not while walking.
In the morning

Demachi Futaba
Mame-mochi, rice cakes with red beans. Under 1,000 ¥, cash.
Closed Tuesdays



KYOTO · WHERE TO STAY AND BOOK

Near the station, or in the heart of Gion

BUDGET $ budget $$ mid-range $$$ comfort

Around the station For the trains

The Shinkansen, the JR line to Inari and Nara, the Haruka to the airport and the express buses all leave from here.

K's House Kyoto $
A hostel 9 min on foot from the station, with a rooftop terrace.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae $$
A natural hot spring bath inside the hotel.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

The Thousand Kyoto $$$
2 min from the JR station's central exit.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Kawaramachi, Gion and Higashiyama For evening strolls

The center and the old districts on foot, the Keihan and Hankyu lines to Osaka.

Len Kyoto Kawaramachi $
Hostel and café-bar, near the Kamo River.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Hotel Gracery Kyoto Sanjo $$
5 min on foot from the Tozai subway line, in the Sanjo area.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Hotel The Celestine Kyoto Gion $$$
On Yasaka-dori street; free shuttle from the station.
See prices → AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

BOOK AHEAD

Kyoto tours

Fushimi Inari before the crowds, tea in the afternoon, Gion in the evening.

1 Morning — before the crowds

- **Fushimi Inari at dawn** — guided tour, under the torii — GetYourGuide →
- **Kimono rental** — hairstyling and accessories included — GetYourGuide →

2 Afternoon — then evening

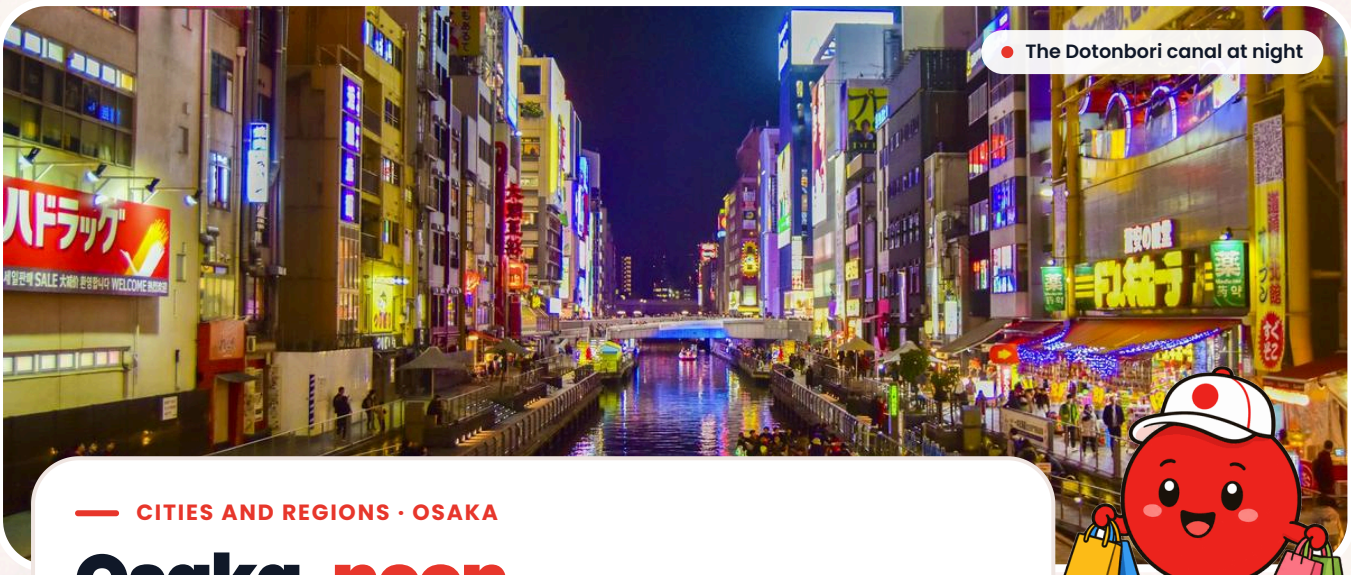
- **Tea ceremony** — tea house and garden, near Kiyomizu-dera — GetYourGuide →
- **Gion after dark** — geiko culture, with a guide — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



DID YOU KNOW?

Since March 1, 2026, Kyoto charges an accommodation tax of 200 to 10,000 ¥ per person per night, depending on the room rate.


The Dotonbori canal at night

CITIES AND REGIONS · OSAKA

Osaka, neon and street food

A city that comes alive at night: the Dotonbori signs, takoyaki eaten standing up, the lanes of Shinsekai. And Kansai Airport just half an hour away.



Osaka at a glance

the city that comes alive at night

1 or 2 nights
one more for Universal Studios

28 to 29 min from Kyoto
by JR, 580 ¥

Under 1,000 ¥
takoyaki, eaten standing up

Namba
for a morning flight

34 min from the airport
Rapi:t from Namba, 1,670 ¥

From 8,400 ¥
Universal Studios, dated ticket

01



Dotonbori at night

Giant signs above the canal. One street back, the two quiet lanes of Hozenji Yokocho.

free · after dark

02



Osaka Castle

The keep and its museum; the stone wall museum is included. Closed December 28 to January 1.

1,200 ¥ · 9 am – 6 pm

03



Shinsekai

The retro district, its deep-fried skewers and Tsutenkaku tower.

observatory 1,500 ¥ · 9 am – 9:45 pm

Expo 2025 closed its doors on October 13, 2025.

OSAKA · EAT AND STAY

Eat standing up, sleep in Namba



Osaka Castle in spring



A lantern-lit lane in the evening

Takoyaki Wanaka

Octopus balls in Sennichimae, eaten standing up. Cash.

Under 1,000 ¥

Fukutaro

Okonomiyaki and negiyaki, behind Dotonbori. From 5 pm on weekdays.

Cards accepted

Kuromon Market

A covered arcade of fish and small stalls, usually 8 am to 6 pm.

In the morning

WHERE TO STAY, WHAT TO BOOK

Stay in Namba, book your evenings

Universal Studios: dated ticket, Express Pass extra; Super Nintendo World requires an entry time slot.

Namba
Dotonbori on foot, direct Rapi:t

Cross Hotel Osaka
$$ · Dotonbori view
Booking.com →

Swissôtel Nankai Osaka
$$$ · Nankai Namba station
Booking.com →

Umeda
arriving from Kyoto by JR

Hotel Hankyu RESPIRE OSAKA
$$ · 3 min from the JR station
Booking.com →

Outings
an evening, or a full day

Food tour
15 tastings, Shinsekai
GetYourGuide →

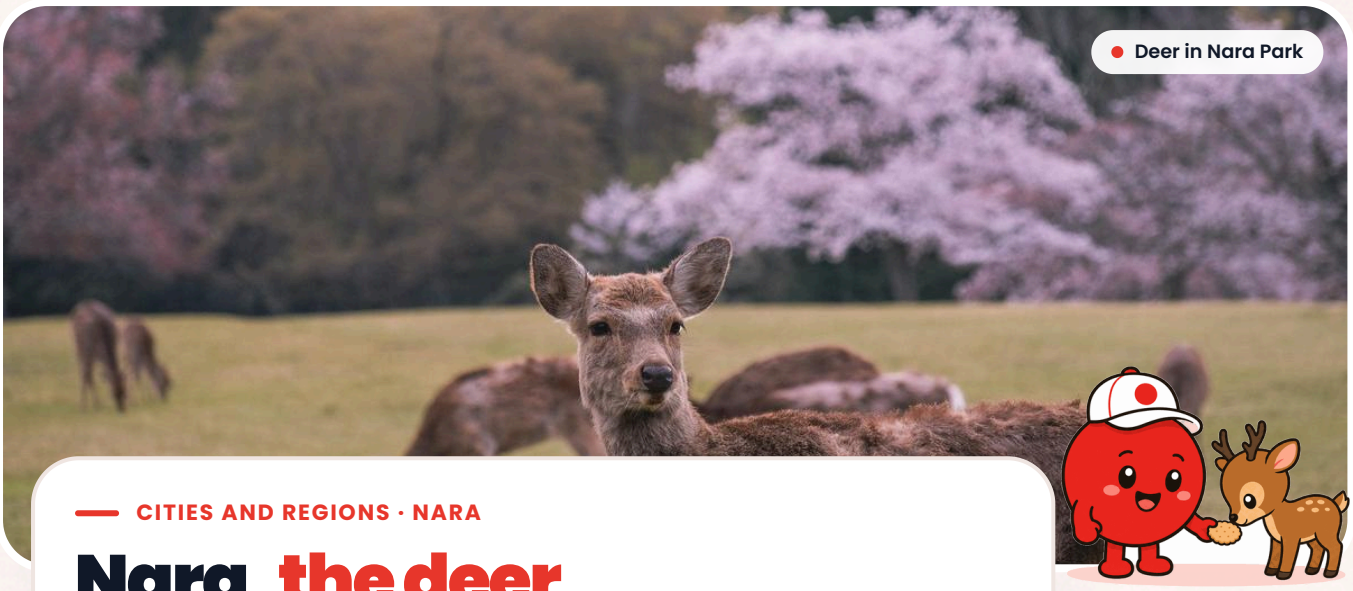
Universal Studios Japan
dated ticket, from 8,400 ¥
GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



DID YOU KNOW?

At Daruma, in Shinsekai, you dip your fried skewer, the kushikatsu, only once in the shared sauce.


Deer in Nara Park

CITIES AND REGIONS · NARA

Nara, the deer

Less than an hour from Kyoto or Osaka, the old capital fits into a day: the park and its deer, the Great Buddha of Todai-ji, Kasuga Taisha.



Nara at a glance
a day trip

One day
half a day for the essentials

5 min on foot
from Kintetsu-Nara to the park; 15 min from the JR station

47 min from Kyoto
JR, Miyakoji rapid, 720 ¥

38 min from Osaka
Kintetsu from Namba, express, 680 ¥

01



The Great Buddha of Todai-ji

The huge wooden hall and its Buddha. Audio guide in English: 500 ¥.

800 ¥ · 7:30 am – 5:30 pm, April to October

02



Kasuga Taisha

The grounds are free to enter; the main shrine is open 9 am to 4 pm.

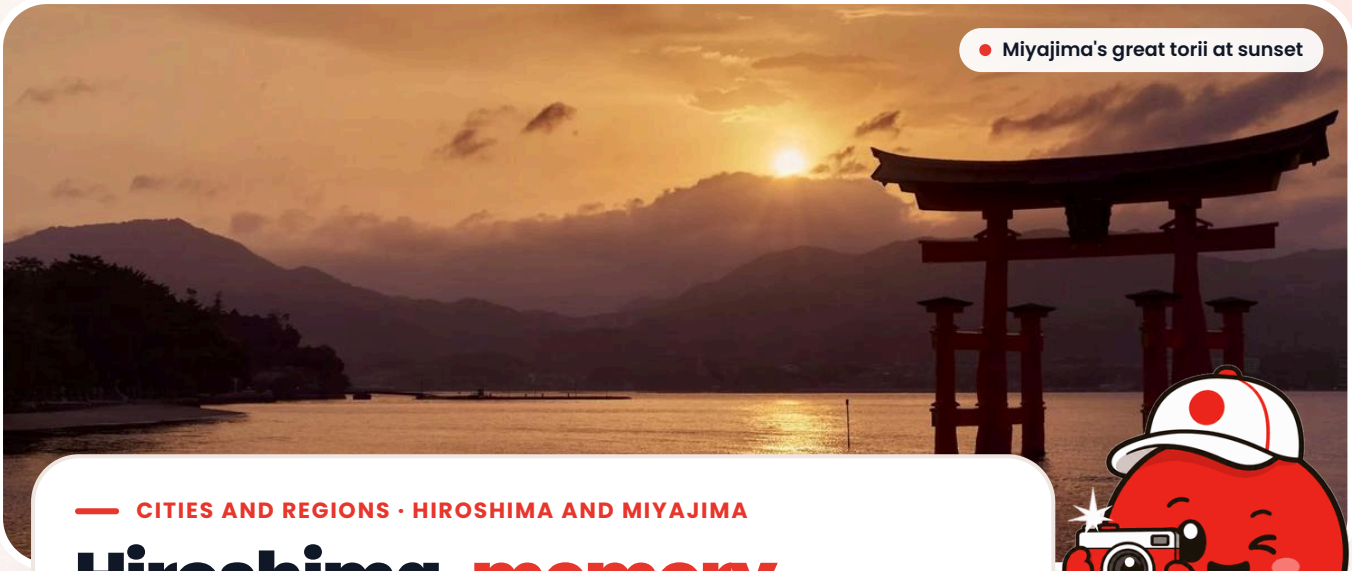
free · main shrine 700 ¥

WITH THE DEER

- Their crackers, shika senbei, sold in the park: whole, arm outstretched, without making them wait.
- Keep your wrappers: there are no trash cans in the park.

NEVER

- Touch them, or feed them bread or cookies.
- Approach the males from September to November: it's rutting season.



Miyajima's great torii at sunset

CITIES AND REGIONS · HIROSHIMA AND MIYAJIMA

Hiroshima, memory and the sea

A rebuilt city that remembers the bomb, and a sacred island.



Hiroshima at a glance

≈ 1 hr 40 from Kyoto

2 days
the city, then Miyajima island

10 min by ferry
to Miyajima: 200 ¥, covered by the JR Pass

200 ¥
the Peace Memorial Museum, from 7:30 am

+ 100 ¥
visitor tax to enter the island

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI

Kyoto ----> Hiroshima

DURATION: ≈ 1 hr 40
JR PASS: with supplement

Unreserved seat; Hikari: no supplement.

PRICE: 10,770 ¥

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI

Osaka ----> Hiroshima

DURATION: ≈ 1 hr 25
JR PASS: with supplement

Departs from Shin-Osaka.

PRICE: 9,890 ¥

Staying in Hiroshima

Near Peace Park or the station

J-Hoppers Hiroshima Guesthouse $
Dorms on futons and private rooms, 5 min on foot from Peace Park.
See prices →
AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Dormy Inn Hiroshima "Aki no yu" $$
Renovated in May 2026: bath and sauna on the 8th floor, free shuttle to the station.
See prices →
AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

Hotel Granvia Hiroshima $$$
Directly connected to JR Hiroshima Station.
See prices →
AFFILIATE LINK · BOOKING.COM

HIROSHIMA AND MIYAJIMA · SEE AND BOOK

The city, then the island

01



The Atomic Bomb Dome

The ruin can be seen from Peace Park, no ticket needed. 150 m away, the Aqua Net direct boat reaches Miyajima in 45 min (2,400 ¥).

no ticket · outdoors

02

The Peace Memorial Museum

Victims' belongings, survivors' testimonies. Avoid 11 am – 3 pm: book the 7:30 – 8:30 am slot online (300 places, on sale 90 days ahead).

200 ¥ · 30 min · no large bags

03

Itsukushima Shrine

Founded in 593, current buildings from 1168. Slatted floors: avoid heels.

300 ¥ · from 6:30 am

04

Mount Misen by ropeway

Two ropeways, then a 1-hr round-trip walk to the summit. Booking required on some autumn days.

2,000 ¥ round trip · up 9 am – 4 pm

TIME YOUR MIYAJIMA VISIT

At low tide, you can walk out to the torii; at high tide, the shrine seems to float. The tourist office publishes each day's tide times.

BOOK AHEAD

Stay on the island, book your tours

On the island, the torii without the daytime crowds. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Miyajima

island ryokan

Kikugawa
5 min from the pier · $$ — Booking.com →

Hotel Miyajima Villa
bath with a view · $$$ — Booking.com →

Iwaso
founded in 1854 · $$$ — Booking.com →

2 Tours

tickets and guides

Peace Memorial Museum
official ticket, timed slot — Klook →

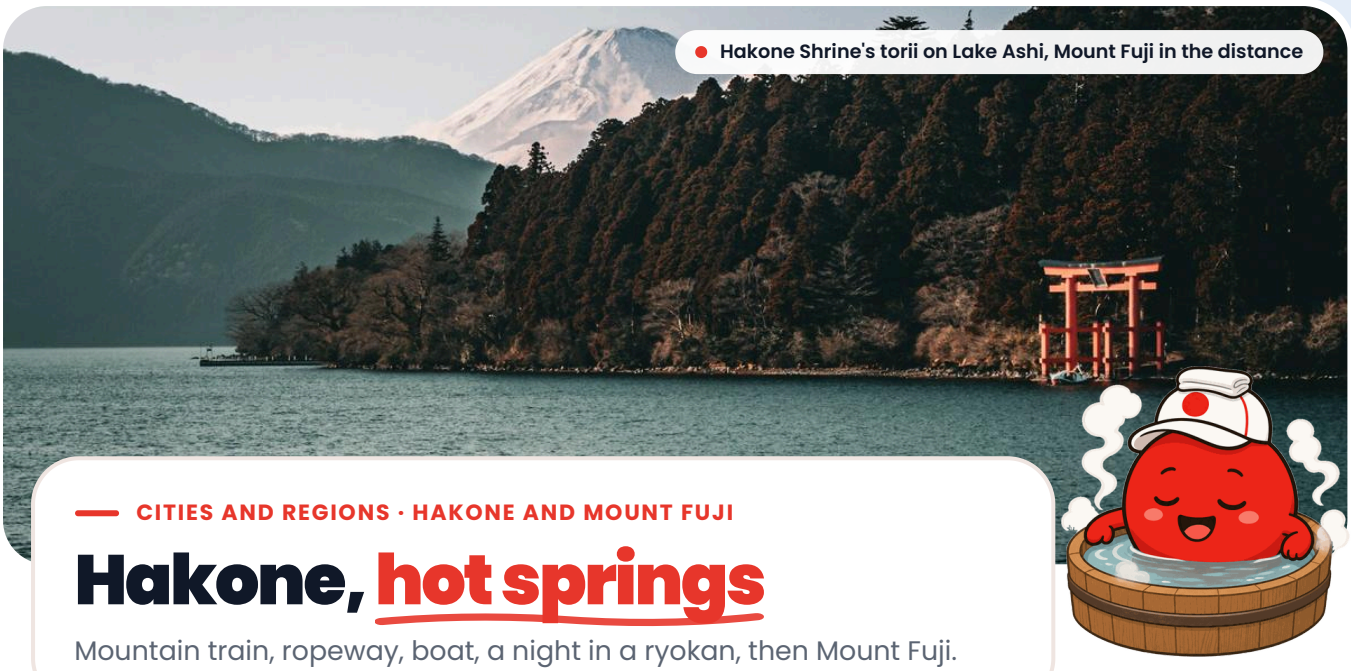
Guided Peace Park walk
on foot, in a group — GetYourGuide →

Miyajima with a guide
the island and the shrine — GetYourGuide →

Hiroshima food tour
evening, dinner included — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

Tide times → · Book the ropeway → · Aqua Net direct boat →



Hakone Shrine's torii on Lake Ashi, Mount Fuji in the distance

CITIES AND REGIONS · HAKONE AND MOUNT FUJI

Hakone, hot springs

Mountain train, ropeway, boat, a night in a ryokan, then Mount Fuji.



Hakone at a glance
≈ 1 hr 20 from Shinjuku

2 days, 1 night
ideally in a ryokan

1,500 ¥
suitcase delivered to your ryokan

9 am – 5 pm
the ropeway, February to November

7,100 ¥
the 2-day Freepass, from Shinjuku

Contactless
accepted by Odakyu and the mountain train

130 m
above the Owakudani valley

The loop, in six tickets

ROMANCECAR, RESERVED SEATS
Shinjuku ----------→ Hakone
Freepass and supplement included.
WITH PASS **8,300 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 20

MOUNTAIN TRAIN
Hakone-Yumoto ------→ Gora
Switchbacks up the slope.
FREEPASS **included** 35 min

CABLE CAR
Gora ----------→ Sounzan
Hydrangeas mid-June to mid-July.
FREEPASS **included** 10 min

ROPEWAY, VIA OWAKUDANI
Sounzan --------→ Togendai
Without a pass: 2,000 ¥ one way.
FREEPASS **included** ≈ 30 min

LAKE ASHI BOAT
Togendai ----→ Hakone-machi
Without a pass: 1,700 ¥ one way.
FREEPASS **included** 30 min

HAKONE TOZAN BUS
Moto-Hakone -----→ Yumoto
From Hakone-machi: 20 to 30 min on foot.
FREEPASS **included** 35 min

ROPEWAY WORKS THIS WINTER

Owakudani – Sounzan closed December 7 to 24, 2026, **Togendai – Owakudani** January 12 to February 26, 2027: replacement buses, Freepass accepted.

HAKONE AND MOUNT FUJI · STAY, SEE FUJI

A night in a ryokan, then Mount Fuji

BOOK AHEAD

Where to stay in Hakone

Ryokan and hotels with a hot spring bath. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Yumoto
and Tonosawa

- **K's House Hakone** — open-air bath · $ — Booking.com →
- **Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** — founded in 1630 · $$ — Booking.com →

2 Gora
and Miyanoshita

- **Hakone Tent** — hot spring and bar · $ — Booking.com →
- **Fujiya Hotel** — founded in 1878 · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Gora Kadan** — a prince's villa · $$$ — Official site →

3 Lake Ashi
and Sengokuhara

- **Fuji-Hakone Guest House** — private baths · $ — Booking.com →
- **Ryuguden** — Mount Fuji view · $$$ — Booking.com →

4 Passes, tours
Hakone, Fuji

- **Hakone Freepass** — 2 days, from Shinjuku — Klook →
- **Lake Kawaguchi by canoe** — without getting wet — GetYourGuide →
- **Mount Fuji with a local guide** — private tour — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

Kawaguchiko and Mount Fuji

DIRECT BUS, BUSTA SHINJUKU
Shinjuku - - - → Kawaguchiko
Book up to a month ahead.
PRICE **2,200 ¥** ≈1 hr 45

FUJI EXCURSION DIRECT TRAIN
Shinjuku - - - → Kawaguchiko
Dated tickets, no unreserved seats.
PRICE **4,200 ¥** 1 hr 53

01 Chureito Pagoda



398 steps up to the viewpoint, 25 min on foot from Shimoyoshida Station. Stay on the path: people live here.

open 24/7 · no cherry blossom festival in 2026

02 Climbing to the summit



2026 rules: early July to September 10. No climbing from 2 pm to 3 am without a hut booking; on the Yoshida trail, the gate closes once 4,000 climbers have entered that day (hut guests not counted) and turns away anyone without warm clothes, rain gear or hiking shoes. 2027 rules announced before the season.

4,000 ¥ entry fee · online registration

Buses from Shinjuku → · Fuji Excursion → · Climbing: official site →



The thatched farmhouses of Shirakawa-go under snow

CITIES AND REGIONS · THE JAPANESE ALPS

The Alps, the other Japan

Gardens, thatched farmhouses and a wooden castle keep.



The Alps at a glance
in central Honshu

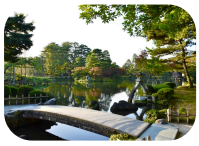
Takayama, Kanazawa
two bases, with hot spring baths

Nohi Bus
Takayama – Shirakawa-go – Kanazawa: book ahead

19,800 ¥
the Takayama-Hokuriku pass, 5 days

April → November
the Alpine Route and Kamikochi

01



Kanazawa

Kenroku-en garden, free early in the morning; the Kaikaro teahouse; Omicho market. The 21st Century Museum is set to close for works from May 6, 2027 to March 2028.

Kenroku-en 320 ¥ · Kaikaro 750 ¥

02



Shirakawa-go

114 thatched-roof houses, still lived in. Illuminations on January 11, 17, 24 and 31, 2027, by reservation only.

2 to 3 hr visit · Nohi Bus 2,800 ¥ · Minkaen museum 800 ¥

03



Takayama

Wooden merchant houses, a morning market every day along the Miya River. Festivals on April 14–15 and October 9–10.

market from 7 am · Jinya 500 ¥ · Hida no Sato 700 ¥

04



Matsumoto Castle

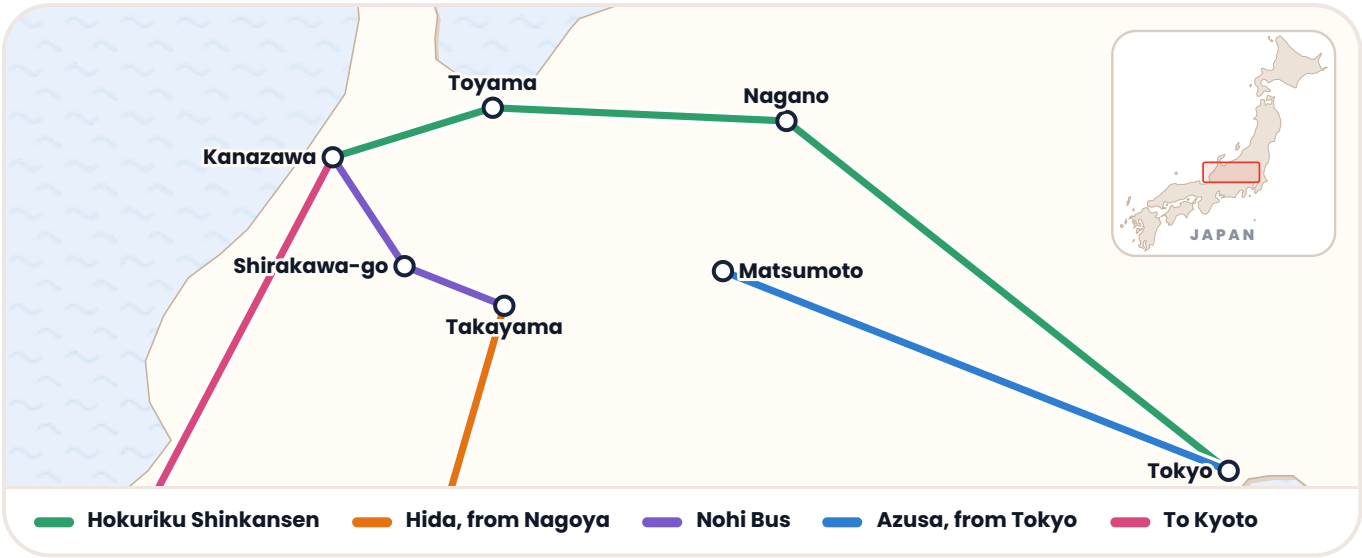
The oldest surviving five-tiered wooden keep: about 140 steep steps. About 2 hr 40 from Shinjuku on the Azusa express.

1,200 ¥ online · 1,300 ¥ at the gate · 8:30 am – 5 pm

THE JAPANESE ALPS · GETTING THERE, BOOKING

Getting there, staying there





SHINKANSEN KAGAYAKI
Tokyo ---------→ Kanazawa
PRICE **14,600 ¥** ≈ 2 hr 30

HIDA EXPRESS
Nagoya --------→ Takayama
RESERVED **6,140 ¥** 2 hr 15–2 hr 42

BOOK AHEAD

Where to stay, what to book

Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Kanazawa

hot springs

- **Dormy Inn Kanazawa** — hot spring · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Onyado Nono Kanazawa** — ryokan style · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Tea ceremony** — at Kenroku-en — GetYourGuide →
- **Guided Shirakawa-go** — from Kanazawa — GetYourGuide →

2 Takayama

and Kamikochi

- **Spa Hotel Alpina Hida Takayama** — 3 min from the station · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Takayama Green Hotel** — garden bath · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Sake tasting** — historic brewery — GetYourGuide →
- **Kamikochi day trip** — with the ropeway — GetYourGuide →

3 Shirakawa-go

gassho houses

- **Nodaniya** — 5 rooms · $$ — Official site →
- **Juemon** — about 300 years old · $$$ — Official site →

4 Transport

bus, mountains

- **Nohi Bus** — Takayama – Kanazawa — Official site →
- **The snow walls** — April to June — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



Umi Jigoku, the “sea hell”, in Beppu

CITIES AND REGIONS · KYUSHU

Kyushu, lava and ramen

The southern island: Fukuoka's street stalls, Nagasaki, Kumamoto Castle, the hot springs of Beppu and Kagoshima's volcano.



Kyushu at a glance

≈ 2 hr 30 from Osaka

Fukuoka (Hakata)
the base: trains and airport

100+ yatai
in Nakasu, Tenjin and Nagahama

June, July
the rainiest months

6 min
from the airport to Hakata, by subway

From 14,000 ¥
3-day North pass online (15,000 ¥ at stations)

August, September
typhoon season

SHINKANSEN NOZOMI
Osaka ----------→ Hakata
Departs from Shin-Osaka.
RESERVED, ≈ **16,000 ¥** ≈ 2 hr 30

SHINKANSEN HIKARI OR SAKURA
Hiroshima --------→ Hakata
Covered by the JR-West All Area Pass.
RESERVED, ≈ **9,100 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 05

AT A YATAI, DO

- Use the restroom beforehand
- Check **the menu, prices and payment** before sitting down
- Arrive around 6:30 pm; it's full by 8 pm
- Order **one dish or one drink** each

AT A YATAI, AVOID

- Ordering raw dishes
- Lingering once you've finished
- Noise and heavy drinking
- **Drinking standing** outside the stall

SAKURAJIMA: THE ISLAND, NOT THE SUMMIT

The volcano facing Kagoshima is at alert level 3: the summit is off-limits. 15-min ferry, 250 ¥; no departures from midnight to 4 am since October 2025.

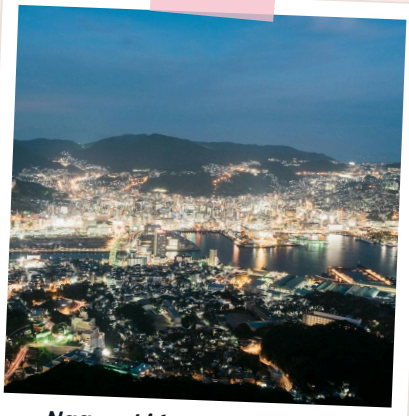
JR Kyushu Rail Pass → | Kumamoto Castle → | Gunkanjima: tour operators →

KYUSHU · DAY TRIPS, BOOKINGS

Fukuoka as a base, three day trips



A ramen yatai in the evening



Nagasaki from Mount Inasa



A bowl of ramen

Nagasaki

Peace Park and the Atomic Bomb Museum, about 15 min by tram from the station. Galleries under renovation until March 2027.

Museum: 200 ¥

Kumamoto Castle

Keep restored in 2021 after the 2016 earthquake; the rest under repair until 2052. About 40 min from Hakata by Shinkansen.

800 ¥ · 9 am – 5 pm, 7 pm in summer

Beppu and Yufuin

Seven "hells", springs at nearly 100 °C (212 °F), one combined ticket valid 2 days. Yufuin, the neighboring spa town.

2,400 ¥ · 8 am – 5 pm

BOOK AHEAD

Where to stay, what to book

Fukuoka as a base, a night or two elsewhere. Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Fukuoka

Hakata, near the yatai

Fukuoka Hana Hostel
near Hakata · $
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Hakata Canal City Mae
hot spring · $$
Booking.com →

2 Elsewhere

one or two nights

Dormy Inn Nagasaki Shinchi Chinatown
Nagasaki · $$
Booking.com →

Suginoi Hotel
Beppu · $$
Booking.com →

SHIROYAMA HOTEL kagoshima
Kagoshima · $$$
Booking.com →

3 Tours

from Fukuoka

Yatai with a guide
3 hrs, tastings
GetYourGuide →

Beppu and Yufuin
full day
GetYourGuide →

Nagasaki, a place of memory
6 hrs, small group
GetYourGuide →

Mount Aso volcano
10 hrs, boat optional
GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.



A lavender field in bloom in Furano, in summer

CITIES AND REGIONS · HOKKAIDO

Hokkaido, the snowy north

Sapporo's snow, Otaru's canal, Furano's lavender, Niseko's powder.



Hokkaido at a glance

≈ 1 hr 35 flight from Tokyo

33 min
from New Chitose Airport to Sapporo

Reserved seats
on all limited expresses since March 2026

300 ¥ and up
tax per person per night, in Sapporo

22,000 ¥
5-day Hokkaido Rail Pass, bought ahead

Suica
useless beyond Otaru: buy a ticket

Sapporo
the base, winter and summer

The year, month by month (2026-2027 season)

Jan.
-6 °C (21 °F) at night in Sapporo

Feb.
snow festival, February 4 to 11

Mar.
skiing in Niseko

Apr.
end of the Niseko season

May
Niseko closes on the 5th

June
first lavender, mid-June

July
lavender at its best, mid-July

Aug.
26 °C (79 °F) by day; lavender harvest

Sept.
typhoons are rare

Oct.
Hakodate ropeway closed from the 20th

Nov.
Niseko opens on the 28th

Dec.
peak ski season from the 24th



DID YOU KNOW?

In Odori Park, the snow festival displays five large sculptures. Sapporo gets nearly 5 m (16 ft) of snow per winter, on average.

NISEKO, THE POWDER

Four linked resorts, from November 28, 2026 to May 5, 2027; a one-day lift pass costs 13,500 ¥ in peak season. Accommodation tax: 3% of the room rate from November 1.

HOKKAIDO · GETTING THERE, STAYING, BOOKING

Sapporo as a base, the island on day trips

SHINKANSEN, THEN HOKUTO EXPRESS

Tokyo ----------→ Sapporo

DURATION

≈ 8 hrs

Shinkansen to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto, then the Hokuto express. Flying takes about 1 hr 35.

PRICE

≈ 30,000 ¥

BOOK AHEAD

Where to stay, what to book

Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort. The accommodation tax is paid at the hotel.

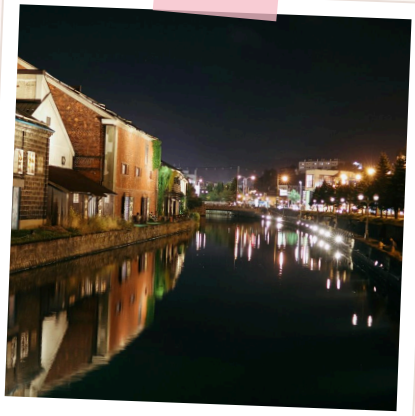
1 **Sapporo** festival in February	**GRAND HOSTEL LDK Sapporo** formerly THE STAY · $ — Booking.com →	**Dormy Inn PREMIUM Sapporo** Tanukikoji · $$ — Booking.com →	**Sapporo food tour** 10+ dishes, 4 hrs — GetYourGuide →
2 **Otaru** 73 min from the airport	**Dormy Inn PREMIUM Otaru** 1 min from the station · $$ — Booking.com →	**Otaru in a day** from Sapporo, 10 hrs — GetYourGuide →	
3 **Furano** lavender in July	**La Vista Furano Hills** 3 min from the station · $$ — Booking.com →	**Lavender in a day** summer, 10 hrs — GetYourGuide →	
4 **Hakodate** the mountain at night	**La Vista Hakodate Bay** night view · $$ — Booking.com →	**The morning market** seafood optional — GetYourGuide →	

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

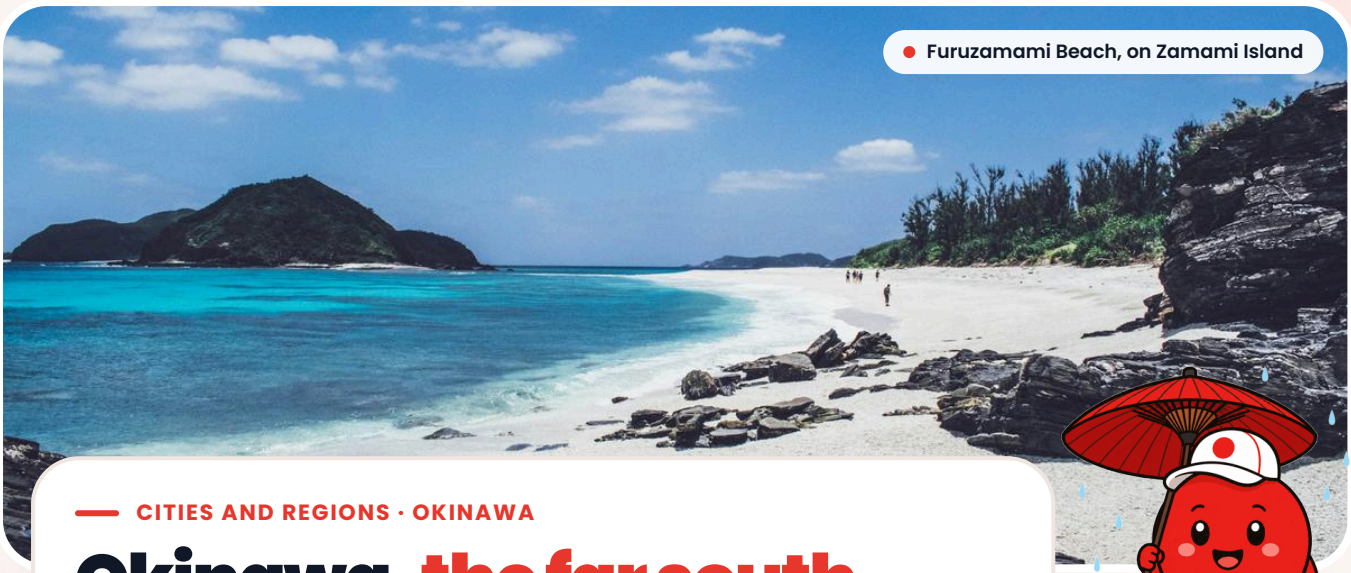
Hakodate ropeway → | Niseko lift passes → | Hokkaido Rail Pass →



Sapporo under snow



Otaru's canal at night


Furuzamami Beach, on Zamami Island

CITIES AND REGIONS · OKINAWA

Okinawa, the far south

The beaches of the Kerama Islands, the Churaumi Aquarium and Shuri Castle, which reopens on November 23, 2026.

Okinawa at a glance

2 hr 30 to 3 hr flight from Tokyo

A car
almost essential outside Naha

Suica accepted
and contactless cards, on the monorail

July → October
typhoons, peaking in August

27 min, 360 ¥
by monorail, from the airport to Shuri

20 °C (68 °F) in January
by day, in Naha

2% per night
accommodation tax from February 1, 2027

01



Shuri Castle

The main hall, destroyed by the 2019 fire, reopens on November 23, 2026 at noon. Its interior can be visited in 30-min time slots, at no extra cost.

400 ¥, then 1,000 ¥ from Nov. 23 · 8:30 am – 7 pm, April → November

02



Churaumi Aquarium

Whale sharks and manta rays in the main tank, in the north of the island. Open every day until March 31, 2027, except during typhoons.

2,180 ¥ · from 8:30 am

03



The Kerama Islands

Zamami and Aka, from Tomari port in Naha. Book the boat, especially during holidays. Box jellyfish from June to September: no nets at Aharen or Tokashiku.

+ 100 ¥ entry tax

04



Ishigaki and Miyako

Farther south, two islands for the sea: in Ishigaki, around the “phantom island”; in Miyako, among the sea turtles.

mask and snorkel

OKINAWA · GETTING THERE, BOOKING

Monorail, boat and car

YUI RAIL MONORAIL
Airport ----------→ Shuri
1-day pass: 1,000 ¥.
PRICE **360 ¥** 27 min

YUI RAIL MONORAIL
Airport ----------→ Miebashi
The Toyoko Inn is 1 min away.
PRICE **320 ¥** 14 min

QUEEN ZAMAMI FAST BOAT
Tomari ----------→ Zamami
Not running Oct. 20 – Dec. 3, 2026.
PRICE **3,950 ¥** ≈ 50 min

FERRY ZAMAMI
Tomari ----------→ Zamami
Online booking 55 days ahead.
PRICE **2,900 ¥** ≈ 1 hr 30

Before you leave for Okinawa



International Driving Permit
1949 Geneva type, paper booklet, with your license



Boat booked
for the Kerama Islands, in summer and on holidays



A spare day
before your flight home, in summer (typhoons)



Suica or a card
to pay for the monorail

BOOK AHEAD

Where to stay, what to book

Range: $ budget, $$ mid-range, $$$ comfort.

1 Naha
arrivals and monorail

- **Toyoko Inn Okinawa Naha Kokusai-dori Miebashi-eki** — 1 min from the monorail · $ — Booking.com →
- **Hotel Collective** — Kokusai-dori · $$ — Booking.com →

2 North and islands
for the sea

- **Hotel Orion Motobu Resort & Spa** — near Churaumi · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **ANA InterContinental Ishigaki Resort** — Ishigaki, beach · $$$ — Booking.com →

3 At sea
and up north

- **The Keramas by boat** — 7 hrs, from Naha — GetYourGuide →
- **The north without a car** — Churaumi, Kouri, Manzamo — GetYourGuide →
- **Ishigaki, the phantom island** — 3 hrs, mask and snorkel — GetYourGuide →
- **Miyako, the sea turtles** — 2 hrs, mask and snorkel — GetYourGuide →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

Shuri time slot → | Churaumi tickets → | Boats to Zamami → | Driving in Japan (JAF) →

6 PART 6

On the ground

The etiquette to know, the onsen, health, emergencies, tax-free shopping and the words that open doors.

78 Etiquette and onsen

80 Health, safety, emergencies

81 Shopping and tax-free

82 Useful phrases



ON THE GROUND · ETIQUETTE

The codes, without a misstep



Nobody expects a visitor to know everything. A few gestures are enough to be welcomed with a smile everywhere: on the train, at the temple, and all the way to the onsen bath.

DO

- **Take your shoes off** when entering homes, ryokan and many temples
- **Wait to the side** of the train doors, and let people off
- **Keep your trash** until the konbini: streets have very few bins
- **Leave priority seats** to elderly, pregnant or disabled people
- **Carry your passport** at all times
- **Greet** with a nod: nobody expects a deep bow

AVOID

- **Phone calls** on the train or bus: switch to silent
- **Keeping your slippers on** the tatami
- **Eating while walking**, or on the subway; on the Shinkansen, it's allowed
- **Smoking** on the street or platforms, outside designated areas
- **Carrying a knife**, even a pocketknife: you can be arrested
- **Tipping**: not at restaurants, not in taxis, not at hotels

At a Shinto shrine, four gestures

1. **Bow at the torii**
   One bow, before passing through the gate.
2. **Purify at the fountain**
   Ladle in your right hand, rinse your left hand, then your right. Rinse your mouth with water poured into your palm, never from the ladle.
3. **A coin in the box**
   Drop it in front of the altar.
4. **Two, two, one**
   Two bows, two claps, one final bow.



The torii gates of Fushimi Inari shrine, in Kyoto



AT A BUDDHIST TEMPLE

No clapping. Put out incense with a wave of the hand, never by blowing. Inside buildings, take your shoes off, and photos are often banned: follow the signs.

ETIQUETTE · THE ONSEN

The onsen, step by step

Separate baths for men and women, entered naked: swimsuits are not allowed. Six steps, in order.



Hot-spring water steaming in its wooden channels, in winter

1 Take everything off
In the changing room. The large towel, the one for drying off, stays there too.

2 Wash first
With soap, at the showers, before getting in the water. Without splashing.

3 Rinse with hot water
Pour water over your body, the kakeyu, to get used to the heat.

4 Tie up your hair
And the small towel never goes in the water.

5 Ease in slowly
The water is around 40 °C (104 °F), and the steam can make you dizzy: take breaks.

6 Stay calm
Talk quietly, no swimming, no photos. No bathing after drinking.



TATTOOED?
Tattoos are often refused in the baths. Book a private bath, the kashikiri, or a room with its own bath; some places accept a bandage covering them. Ask first.

⚠ Place by place, the recent rules

Shibuya, Tokyo
No drinking on the street from 6 pm to 5 am; 2,000 ¥ fine for littering.

Shinjuku at night
Omoide Yokocho and Golden Gai: street photos only with permission. In Golden Gai, no drinking on the street.

Kyoto temples
At Kiyomizu-dera and Fushimi Inari: no drones, no eating while walking, no blocking the path for a photo.

Gion, Mount Fuji, the deer of Nara and Miyajima have their own rules too: see their chapters.

ON THE GROUND · HEALTH AND EMERGENCIES

If something goes wrong, the right numbers



Japan is very safe, but a fever or a fall can happen. Write these numbers down before you leave.

110 **Police**
theft, loss, accident

119 **Ambulance, fire**
say "kyukyu desu" for a medical emergency, then the address

HELP 24/7, IN ENGLISH

JNTO, the Japan National Tourism Organization, answers day and night at **050-3816-2787**: emergencies, illness, disasters. From a foreign number: +81 50 3816 2787.



Your embassy
in Tokyo

United States · 03-3224-5000
after hours, an officer on duty; 24/7 from abroad: +1 202 501 4444

Canada · 03-5412-6200
Ottawa, 24/7: +1 613 996 8885

United Kingdom · online form
emergencies through the FCDO contact form; family in the UK, 24/7: 020 7008 5000

Australia · 03-5232-4111
after hours, the same number reaches the 24-hour centre in Canberra

Finding a doctor
JNTO's search tool filters by prefecture, language and specialty. Clinics usually ask for cash.

At the pharmacy
Over-the-counter medicine at pharmacies and drugstores; some only when the pharmacist is present.

Earthquake, typhoon
In an earthquake, protect yourself first; on the coast, head for high ground. The Safety tips app sends alerts.

Loss or theft
Go to the koban, the neighborhood police box. Lost passport: police station, then your embassy, on a weekday.

A HOSPITAL STAY IS EXPENSIVE

A heart attack treated in Japan can cost **10 million yen**, and foreigners are often asked to pay upfront. Get travel insurance before you go: see the "Travel insurance" chapter.

Find a doctor → | The Safety tips app → | UK embassy contact form →

ON THE GROUND · SHOPPING

Shopping, and the new tax refund



From November 1, 2026, you pay the tax at the register and get it back as you leave. Here's how in four steps, then where to shop.

1
2
3
4
5
6 ON THE GROUND
7

01



At the register, show your passport

You pay the tax (10%, 8% on food) and choose how you'll be refunded.

5,000 ¥ before tax minimum **per store, per day**

02



Keep it all in your carry-on

Every item on the same receipt goes in your hand luggage: if one is missing at the check, nothing on that receipt is refunded.

03



At the kiosk, before check-in

In the departure hall, passport scanned: green, you're done; red, show your purchases. Or online with Visit Japan Web, at 7 major airports.

within 90 days of purchase

04



The refund

Paid afterwards by the store: to your card, by bank transfer or in cash, depending on the store. No customs check, no refund.

Where to shop

Department stores

Mitsukoshi, Takashimaya, Isetan… and their basement food halls, the depachika.

Don Quijote

The discount store that sells everything, with its "Tax Free" counters.

BOOKOFF

Secondhand manga, books and games. Our map shows every store.

In Tokyo

Ginza for luxury brands, Akihabara for electronics, Nakano Broadway for manga.

In Kyoto

Shijo Avenue, Nishiki Market and its 100+ shops, the Toji flea market on the 21st of each month.

In Osaka

Grand Front and Osaka Station City, Dotonbori, Shinsaibashi.



CLASSIC SOUVENIRS

Ceramics, sake, a kimono from a flea market, anime goods, depachika sweets. A Japanese knife? In your checked bag: carrying one on you in town can land you at the police station.

The tax refund, in detail →
Our BOOKOFF map →

ON THE GROUND · USEFUL PHRASES

Twenty phrases that open doors



A word of Japanese, however clumsy, always goes down well. Start with “sumimasen”, end with “arigato gozaimasu”. And if you're not understood, point at the page.

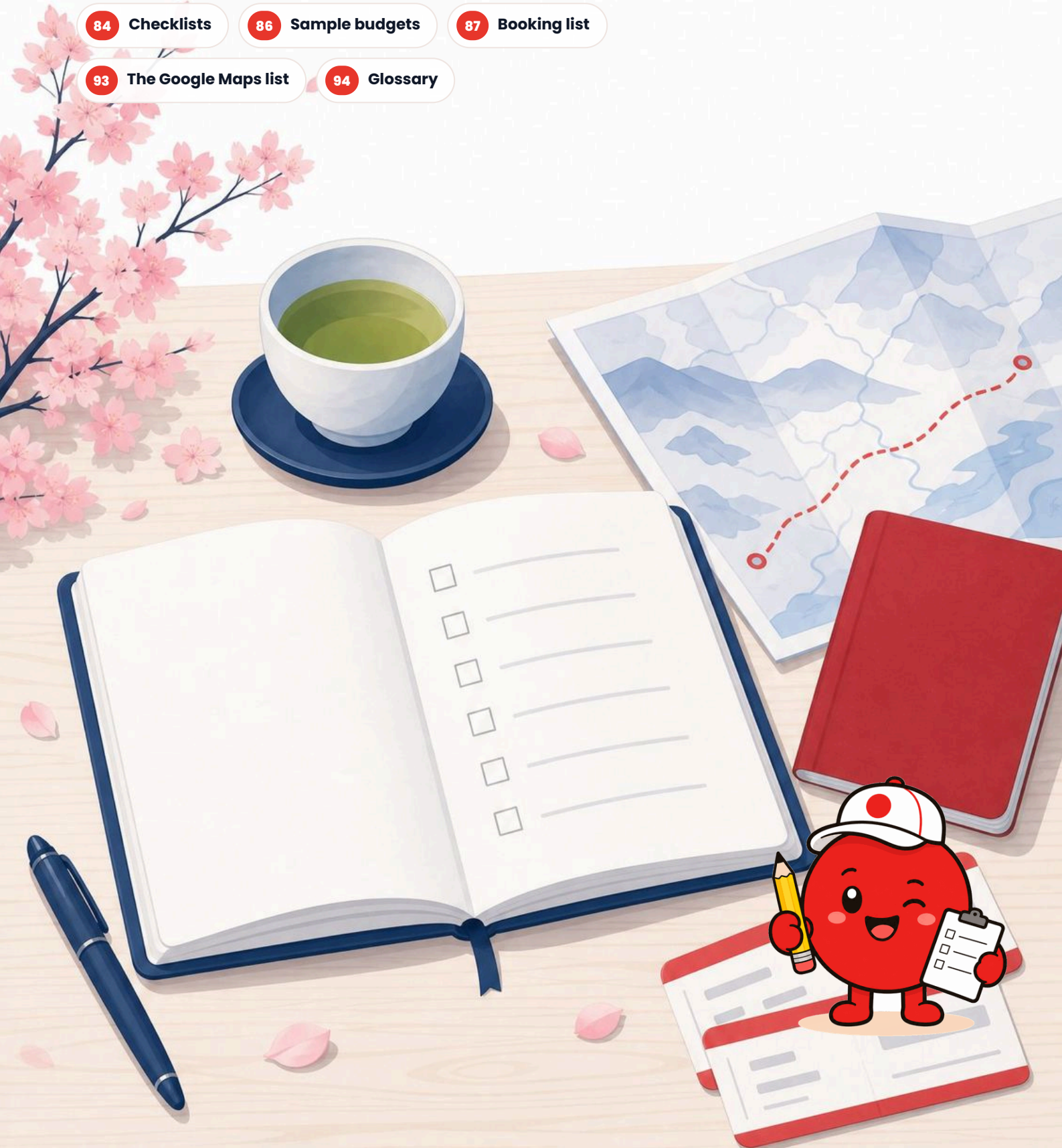
Hello	Konnichiwa
Good morning	Ohayo gozaimasu
Thank you	Arigato gozaimasu
Excuse me, sorry	Sumimasen
I'm sorry	Gomennasai
One moment, please	Chotto matte kudasai
Where is...?	... wa doko desu ka?
How much is this?	Kore wa ikura desu ka?
I'd like..., please	... o kudasai
..., please (a request)	... o onegaishimasu
Do you have...?	... wa arimasu ka?
Does anyone speak English?	Eigo o hanasu hito wa imasu ka?
I don't understand Japanese	Nihongo ga wakarimasen
More slowly, please	Yukkuri itte kudasai
Could you say that again?	Mo ichido itte kudasai
Could you write it here?	Sore o koko ni kaite kudasai
Before eating	Itadakimasu
After the meal, to say thanks	Gochisosama deshita
The check, please	Okaikei onegaishimasu
An ambulance, please	Kyukyusha o onegaishimasu

7 PART 7

Appendix

Checklists, sample budgets, every place to book, the Google Maps list and a small travel glossary.

84 Checklists
86 Sample budgets
87 Booking list
93 The Google Maps list
94 Glossary



APPENDIX · CHECKLISTS

Checklists, to tick off before you go



Print these two pages and tick them off day by day: what goes in your bag, your suitcase, your bookings, and your first hours in Japan.

- [ ] **Passport** — valid for your whole stay
- [ ] **Plane tickets** — outbound and return
- [ ] **Visit Japan Web** — filled in, the QR code on your phone
- [ ] **Travel insurance** — the policy and the assistance number
- [ ] **Two bank cards** — and the number to call to block them
- [ ] **Your first night** — booked, the address saved in Google Maps
- [ ] **Your embassy** — its emergency number, written down
- [ ] **Passport copy** — as a photo, and on paper

Depending on your trip

- [ ] Prescriptions, with the generic names of your medicines
- [ ] An import certificate (Yunyu Kakunin-sho) for a controlled medicine, requested at least 2 weeks ahead
- [ ] If you drive: your US, UK, Canadian or Australian license plus an International Driving Permit (1949 Geneva Convention), in its paper booklet; card and phone versions aren't valid

The suitcase

- [ ] Type A plug (two flat pins): an adapter from the UK or Australia; US and Canadian two-pin plugs fit
- [ ] Power banks: two at most, in your carry-on
- [ ] Shoes that slip off easily, socks without holes
- [ ] A light umbrella from June to September
- [ ] No knives, not even a pocketknife
- [ ] Chargers: "100-240 V" on the label
- [ ] Medicines in their original packaging
- [ ] A small bag for your trash
- [ ] A coin purse
- [ ] No meat products, even vacuum-packed



HINOMARU'S TIP

A suitcase over 160 cm (length + width + height)? Book the right seat on the Tokyo–Osaka–Hakata Shinkansen (nothing to book on JR East lines), or have it delivered from hotel to hotel.

APPENDIX · CHECKLISTS

The countdown, until you're home



1 One to three months before

D-90 → D-30

- [ ] Book your flights: into Tokyo, home from Osaka, on a single multi-city ticket
- [ ] Buy travel insurance
- [ ] Note the fixed-date sales, Japan time: Ghibli Museum on the 10th of the month at 10 a.m.; Shinkansen one month ahead, at 10 a.m.
- [ ] Book your hotels, very early for cherry blossoms, fall colors, Golden Week and festivals
- [ ] Check your medicines: the certificate is requested at least 2 weeks ahead
- [ ] Ask your bank about foreign transaction fees and your withdrawal limit

2 The week you leave

D-7

- [ ] Install the eSIM on Wi-Fi, without turning it on
- [ ] Install your apps, download offline maps
- [ ] Check holidays and festivals on your dates
- [ ] Fill in Visit Japan Web
- [ ] iPhone: add a Suica or PASMO card to Wallet
- [ ] Weigh your suitcase and note its size

3 Departure day

D0

- [ ] Passport and Visit Japan Web QR code close at hand
- [ ] On landing: turn on roaming for your eSIM
- [ ] Buy or top up your transit card
- [ ] Power banks in your carry-on
- [ ] Withdraw yen at a 7-Eleven ATM
- [ ] Check the last train if you land in the evening

4 Every day, on the ground

whole stay

- [ ] Your passport on you, at all times
- [ ] Your phone on silent on the train
- [ ] Some cash: small restaurants, temples
- [ ] Your phone charged: alerts and maps

5 The day you fly home

last day

- [ ] Tax-free purchases: the customs kiosk, before checking your bags
- [ ] Power banks, still in your carry-on
- [ ] Tax-free purchases in your carry-on, with their receipts
- [ ] Return a transit card with a deposit, if you have one



VISIT JAPAN WEB

It's a website, not an app, and it's free: fill it in on **the official website**, never on an app or a page that charges you.



YOUR PLANJAPAN ESIM

At home, on Wi-Fi: install it before you leave, turn it on when you land. It's all in the "Internet: your eSIM" chapter.

How to install →

APPENDIX · SAMPLE BUDGETS

Sample budgets, from 7 to 21 days



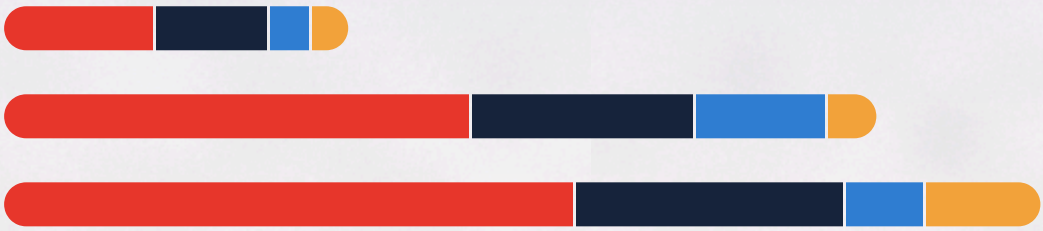
Per person, two to a room, not counting international flights or shopping. These are estimates: plan for more during cherry blossom season, fall foliage and Golden Week.

One day, item by item

Budget
≈ $57 a day

Mid-range
≈ $144 a day

Comfort
≈ $172 a day



Lodging · Meals · Transport · Sights and fun

Budget

9,000 ¥ a day: dorm bed or capsule, konbini and ramen, a 24-hour subway pass, one paid sight.

Mid-range

22,701 ¥ a day: what American visitors really spent in 2025, trains included.

Comfort

27,000 ¥ a day: a hotel room around 30,000 ¥ for two, restaurants, a few taxis.

The whole trip, trains included

PROFILE	7 DAYS	10 DAYS	14 DAYS	21 DAYS
Budget	**≈ $590**	**≈ $740**	**≈ $1,130**	**≈ $1,720**
Mid-range	**≈ $1,010**	**≈ $1,440**	**≈ $2,020**	**≈ $3,030**
Comfort	**≈ $1,410**	**≈ $1,900**	**≈ $2,750**	**≈ $4,150**

THE TRAINS WE COUNTED

7 days: Tokyo ⇄ Kyoto on the Nozomi. 10 days: the tickets of the 10-day itinerary, about 24,000 ¥. 14 days: the 7-day JR Pass; 21 days: the 14-day JR Pass. For 14 days (budget, mid-range, comfort): about £850, £1,520 and £2,070; CA$1,600, CA$2,860 and CA$3,900; or A$1,630, A$2,910 and A$3,970.



HINOMARU'S TIP

Add your shopping: an American visitor spends 67,236 ¥ on it per trip on average, about $427.

APPENDIX · BOOKING LIST

All our picks, ready to book



The hotels and tours in this guide, city by city, each with its button. Tick them off as you go: everything that sells out fast is here.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Trip essentials

Internet	**Installer votre eSIM** la marche à suivre — PlanJapon →	**Recharger votre eSIM** plus de data, même eSIM — PlanJapon →
Assurance	**Assurance voyage Chapka** à souscrire avant le départ — Chapka →	
Formalités	**Visit Japan Web** gratuit, avant l'arrivée — Digital Agency →	
Trains	**smart EX** réserver le Shinkansen — JR Central →	**JR Pass, site officiel** 50 000 ¥ les 7 jours — JAPAN RAIL PASS →
Sur place	**Envoyer sa valise** Yamato, de ville en ville — Yamato Transport →	**Notre carte Google Maps** 112 lieux — PlanJapon →

Ad · affiliate links: we earn a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you.

LES ITINÉRAIRES

21 jours

See and book 1 to book	**Nikko with a guide** private tour, day 4 — GetYourGuide →

LES ITINÉRAIRES

Les extensions

See and book

3 to book

Kintsugi in Kamakura
in a small workshop
GetYourGuide →

The castle with a guide
licensed guide, 3 hr
GetYourGuide →

Castle and garden
and Koko-en garden, 3 hr 30
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Tokyo

Stay

7 places

UNPLAN Shinjuku
$ · hostel, women-only floor
Booking.com →

Hotel Gracery Shinjuku
$$ · Godzilla on the terrace
Booking.com →

Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo
$$$ · West Shinjuku towers
Booking.com →

sequence MIYASHITA PARK
$$ · 2 pm check-out
Booking.com →

SHIBUYA STREAM HOTEL
$$$ · connected to the station
Booking.com →

Nui. Hostel & Bar Lounge
$ · rooftop, Skytree view
Booking.com →

MUJI HOTEL GINZA
$$$ · above the MUJI store
Booking.com →

See and book

6 to book

Skyliner e-ticket
2,310 ¥ one way, instead of 2,580 ¥
GetYourGuide →

Narita Express round trip
5,200 ¥, return within 14 days
Klook →

SHIBUYA SKY
2 weeks ahead, at midnight (Japan time)
GetYourGuide →

Tokyo Skytree
350 m: 1,800 to 3,600 ¥
GetYourGuide →

teamLab Planets
from 3,800 ¥, in Toyosu
GetYourGuide →

Harry Potter Studio Tour
6,600 to 7,300 ¥
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Kyoto

Stay

6 places

K's House Kyoto
Around the station · $
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Kyoto Ekimae
Around the station · $$
Booking.com →

The Thousand Kyoto
Around the station · $$$
Booking.com →

Len Kyoto Kawaramachi
Kawaramachi, Gion and Higashiyama · $
Booking.com →

Hotel Gracery Kyoto Sanjo
Kawaramachi, Gion and Higashiyama · $$
Booking.com →

Hotel The Celestine Kyoto Gion
Kawaramachi, Gion and Higashiyama · $$$
Booking.com →

See and book

4 to book

Fushimi Inari at dawn
guided tour, under the torii
GetYourGuide →

Kimono rental
hairstyling and accessories included
GetYourGuide →

Tea ceremony
tea house and garden, near Kiyomizu-dera
GetYourGuide →

Gion after dark
geiko culture, with a guide
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Osaka

Stay

3 places

Cross Hotel Osaka
$$ · Dotonbori view
Booking.com →

Swissôtel Nankai Osaka
$$$ · Nankai Namba station
Booking.com →

Hotel Hankyu RESPIRE OSAKA
$$ · 3 min from the JR station
Booking.com →

See and book

2 to book

Food tour
15 tastings, Shinsekai
GetYourGuide →

Universal Studios Japan
dated ticket, from 8,400 ¥
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Hiroshima et Miyajima

Stay

6 places

J-Hoppers Hiroshima Guesthouse
Peace Park · $
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn Hiroshima "Aki no yu"
8th-floor bath · $$
Booking.com →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Hiroshima et Miyajima (continued)

Stay

6 places

- **Hotel Granvia Hiroshima** — connected to the station · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Kikugawa** — 5 min from the pier · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Hotel Miyajima Villa** — bath with a view · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Iwaso** — founded in 1854 · $$$ — Booking.com →

See and book

4 to book

- **Peace Memorial Museum** — official ticket, timed slot — Klook →
- **Guided Peace Park walk** — on foot, in a group — GetYourGuide →
- **Miyajima with a guide** — the island and the shrine — GetYourGuide →
- **Hiroshima food tour** — evening, dinner included — GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Hakone et le Fuji

Stay

6 places

- **K's House Hakone** — open-air bath · $ — Booking.com →
- **Tonosawa Ichinoyu Honkan** — founded in 1630 · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Hakone Tent** — hot spring and bar · $ — Booking.com →
- **Fujiya Hotel** — founded in 1878 · $$$ — Booking.com →
- **Fuji-Hakone Guest House** — private baths · $ — Booking.com →
- **Ryuguden** — Mount Fuji view · $$$ — Booking.com →

See and book

3 to book

- **Hakone Freepass** — 2 days, from Shinjuku — Klook →
- **Lake Kawaguchi by canoe** — without getting wet — GetYourGuide →
- **Mount Fuji with a local guide** — private tour — GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Les Alpes japonaises

Stay

4 places

- **Dormy Inn Kanazawa** — hot spring · $$ — Booking.com →
- **Onyado Nono Kanazawa** — ryokan style · $$ — Booking.com →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Les Alpes japonaises (continued)

Stay

4 places

Spa Hotel Alpina Hida Takayama
3 min from the station · $$
Booking.com →

Takayama Green Hotel
garden bath · $$$
Booking.com →

See and book

5 to book

Tea ceremony
at Kenroku-en
GetYourGuide →

Guided Shirakawa-go
from Kanazawa
GetYourGuide →

Sake tasting
historic brewery
GetYourGuide →

Kamikochi day trip
with the ropeway
GetYourGuide →

The snow walls
April to June
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Kyushu

Stay

5 places

Fukuoka Hana Hostel
near Hakata · $
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Hakata Canal City Mae
hot spring · $$
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn Nagasaki Shinchi Chinatown
Nagasaki · $$
Booking.com →

Suginoi Hotel
Beppu · $$
Booking.com →

SHIROYAMA HOTEL kagoshima
Kagoshima · $$$
Booking.com →

See and book

4 to book

Yatai with a guide
3 hrs, tastings
GetYourGuide →

Beppu and Yufuin
full day
GetYourGuide →

Nagasaki, a place of memory
6 hrs, small group
GetYourGuide →

Mount Aso volcano
10 hrs, boat optional
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Hokkaido

Stay

5 places

GRAND HOSTEL LDK Sapporo
formerly THE STAY · $
Booking.com →

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Sapporo
Tanukikoji · $$
Booking.com →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Hokkaido (continued)

Stay

5 places

Dormy Inn PREMIUM Otaru
1 min from the station · $$
Booking.com →

La Vista Furano Hills
3 min from the station · $$
Booking.com →

La Vista Hakodate Bay
night view · $$
Booking.com →

See and book

4 to book

Sapporo food tour
10+ dishes, 4 hrs
GetYourGuide →

Otaru in a day
from Sapporo, 10 hrs
GetYourGuide →

Lavender in a day
summer, 10 hrs
GetYourGuide →

The morning market
seafood optional
GetYourGuide →

VILLES ET RÉGIONS

Okinawa

Stay

4 places

Toyoko Inn Okinawa Naha Kokusai-dori Miebashi-eki
1 min from the monorail · $
Booking.com →

Hotel Collective
Kokusai-dori · $$
Booking.com →

Hotel Orion Motobu Resort & Spa
near Churaumi · $$$
Booking.com →

ANA InterContinental Ishigaki Resort
Ishigaki, beach · $$$
Booking.com →

See and book

4 to book

The Keramas by boat
7 hrs, from Naha
GetYourGuide →

The north without a car
Churaumi, Kouri, Manzamo
GetYourGuide →

Ishigaki, the phantom island
3 hrs, mask and snorkel
GetYourGuide →

Miyako, the sea turtles
2 hrs, mask and snorkel
GetYourGuide →



APPENDIX · THE MAP

All our places on one map

Your free Google Maps list brings together 112 places: temples, viewpoints, restaurants, shops and nights out. Open it on your phone before you leave.







YOUR FREE MAP

"Map Japon by @PlanJapon": 48 places to see or do, 64 places to eat and drink. With your eSIM, it guides you everywhere: the right train, the right platform, the right exit.

Open the map →

In four steps

1. **Open the map**
   Tap the button on your phone: "Map Japon by @PlanJapon" opens in Google Maps.
2. **Find it again anytime**
   In the Google Maps app, go to the "Saved" tab, then "Maps".
3. **Download each city before you go**
   Tap your profile picture, then "Offline maps": if you lose signal, the map stays readable.
4. **On the ground, let it guide you**
   Tap a place, then "Directions": Google Maps gives you the train, the platform and the exit.



TWO COLORS

On the map, blue pins mark places to see or do, yellow pins the places to eat and drink.

APPENDIX · GLOSSARY

A short glossary for travelers



The thirty Japanese words in this guide, sorted by theme, from the bath to the temple, to help you find your way on the ground.



AT THE BATH

onsen a hot spring and its baths
sento the neighborhood public bath
kashikiri a private bath, often booked ahead
kakeyu the water you pour over yourself before bathing
yukata the light kimono lent by the ryokan



WHERE TO SLEEP

ryokan a traditional Japanese inn
minshuku a Japanese guesthouse
shukubo lodging in a temple
tatami the straw mat flooring
futon the mattress laid on the tatami



AT THE TABLE

bento a boxed meal
ekiben a boxed meal sold at train stations
teishoku a set meal: main dish, rice and soup
kaiseki a multi-course seasonal dinner
shojin ryori vegan temple cuisine
dashi Japanese fish stock



WHERE TO EAT

konbini a convenience store open day and night
depachika the food hall of a department store
izakaya a pub serving small plates
otoshi a small welcome dish, not free
kaitenzushi conveyor-belt sushi
shokken-ki a meal-ticket machine



TEMPLES AND SHRINES

jinja a Shinto shrine
tera, -ji a Buddhist temple
torii the gate of a shrine
temizuya the purification fountain
gongyo the morning service at a temple



IN TOWN

shinkansen the bullet train
koban the small neighborhood police box
maiko an apprentice geisha in Kyoto



A konbini at night



Kinkaku-ji, a temple



The torii of Miyajima

JAPAN, THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Have a great trip!

Itterasshai: “go, and come back to us”, the Japanese say to those who are leaving.

Before you close your suitcase

- **eSIM installed** — on Wi-Fi, before you leave
- **Visit Japan Web** — filled in before you arrive
- **Map downloaded** — to read it offline
- **Insurance** — bought before you leave

Install my eSIM → | Visit Japan Web → | Our map →



HINOMARU'S TIP

A problem on the ground? PlanJapan support answers in English, 7 days a week, on WhatsApp and by email. When you land, turn on roaming: your eSIM takes over.



PlanJapan

Thank you, and see you soon

This guide came free with your PlanJapan eSIM. We wrote it so your trip goes smoothly, from the first train to the last onsen.

A friend is going too?

With your referral link, they get 10% off their eSIM, and you get about $5.60 in credit toward your next order.

Refer a friend →

Tell us about your trip

We always love seeing your best photos of Japan: tag **@planjapon** on Instagram and TikTok.

Top up my eSIM →



Japan, the complete guide · 2026–2027 edition. Prices, timetables and conditions checked in October 2026: they change, so check them before you book. **Advertising**: buttons marked "affiliate link" earn us a commission if you book through them, at no extra cost to you; the other links lead to official websites. Photos: Unsplash. Illustrations and Hinomaru mascot: PlanJapan. © 2026 PlanJapan · esimjp.com