

THE HISTORY

Countryside Stay Japan

with *imagination*



Welcome to Japan's glorious countryside!



Try making cuisine using natural freeze-dried ingredients, known as *shimo*, in Chino City, Nagano (p.15)

In Japan, a country surrounded by sea and covered in mountains across three-quarters of its surface, you are never very far away from lush natural areas that vary from region to region. Influenced by variations in local climate, these regions have also developed their own unique cultures.

Enjoy a leisurely stay at a farm, mountain, or fishing village, take in spectacular views while immersing yourself in each of the four seasons, and get closer to local people through their traditional lifestyles and regional cuisine. These one-of-a-kind experiences far from the urban jungle will move you in ways you never thought possible.

Take a trip to Japan's countryside and feel right at home.

Countryside Stay Japan Contents

Hokkaido ————— p.7

Take a walk around Kushirochitosen National Park

■ Tsurui Village, Hokkaido ————— p.8

Taste unique Japanese Wines

■ Yoichi Town, Hokkaido ————— p.16

A Midy town with gorgeous seasonal scenery

■ Biei Town, Hokkaido ————— p.17

Tohoku ————— p.18

Try on a kimono in a flower country

■ Shirataka Town, Yamagata ————— p.19

Immense beauty in the nature of Towada-Hachimantai National Park

■ Hachimantai City, Iwate ————— p.20

Escape to understand the power of the ocean at one of Tohoku's leading port towns

■ Kesennuma City, Miyagi ————— p.11

Kanto ————— p.12

Visit a *hoko* in a rural village

■ Nakagawa Town & Ohtawara City, Tochigi ————— p.13

Stay at a 200-year-old farmhouse

■ Chichibu City, Saitama ————— p.14

Try *shimo*, a method of naturally freeze-drying food

■ Chino City, Nagano ————— p.15



Settlement of Goshokyo Tenmei in Goshokyo, Tsurumi (p.18)

Kansai ————— p.18

A forest in Kyoto where the quiet atmosphere of a traditional farm village is preserved

■ Miyama Town, Kyoto ————— p.19

A nature-rich town with a deeply rooted medicinal herb culture

■ Uda City, Nara ————— p.20

Taste delicacies from food paradise Tamba in an old mansion

■ Tambaasayama City, Hyogo ————— p.21

Chugoku & Shikoku ————— p.22

Visit a settlement in the secluded bay district

■ Miyoshi City, Tokushima ————— p.23

Observe the atmosphere of a hot spring resort town that takes visitors back in time

■ Yunotsu Town, Shimane ————— p.24

A mountain village from Japanese mythology

■ Okuizumo Town, Shimane ————— p.25

Kyushu & Okinawa ————— p.26

Learn about *karuma* (karu) traditions and other crafts

■ Yame City, Fukuoka ————— p.27

Experience blue waters and unique island traditions and cultures

■ Amami City, Kagoshima ————— p.28

Throw yourself into a dynamic adventure at a National World Heritage site

■ Higashi Village, Okinawa ————— p.29



Japanese made papermaking experience in Arita City, Saga (p.20)

Hokuriku ————— p.19

Enjoy the beautiful seafood and coastal scenery of the Sea of Japan

■ Obama City, Fukui ————— p.17

Try special cuisine unique to places with heavy industry

■ Joetsu City, Niigata ————— p.18

Forest of traditional Gassho-style houses

■ Nanto City, Toyama ————— p.19

Tokai ————— p.20

Experience the culture of washi paper and *ayu* (sweetfish) cuisine

■ Mino City, Gifu ————— p.21

Taste wild game meat in a verdant hot spring area

■ Inabu, Toyota City, Aichi ————— p.22

Chat with active *ama* divers

■ Toba City, Mie ————— p.23



(Walk and relax on a tour in Cape Kiritappu)

1 Walk around Kushiroshitsugen National Park and enjoy cheese and wild game in a dairy farming village

● Tsurui Village, Hokkaido

Tsurui Village is a peaceful spot in eastern Hokkaido (the area along the Kushiroshitsugen National Park). The park is home to the largest marsh in Japan, Kushiro Marsh, which makes up around 60 percent of Japan's total marshlands. The rich green grass, which in our part was thought to be common in Japan, was collected deep inside the park at Cape Kiritappu. This area has been designated a special protection zone and is only accessible with permission from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, therefore it is recommended that you visit with a guided tour. A guide can also provide precise insight into the surrounding area and plant life.

Tsurui Village is also one of Hokkaido's most notable dairy farming villages, and it offers a variety of farm stays where you can experience life as a dairy farmer and stay at the farm overnight. Cheeses made from fresh cow milk and cheese are a must-try in Tsurui. You can also take part in an authentic cheese-making experience. Heart's Tree Guest House & Cottage, a local guesthouse, proudly supports local dairy farmers, serving a range of dishes that use plenty of local milk. The guesthouse is also well-known for its wild game dishes featuring Yezo-like deer, which are hunted to protect local forests, plants, and crops. Walk through the marshlands and feel one with nature, then get your fill of delicious cuisine. Take time to delight in the beauty of natural scenery and the rural landscape.

Hearts Nature Club

〒075-0031, Tsurui-mura, Akai-gun, Hokkaido

<https://heart-nature.com/nature/touring/>

Heart's Tree Guest House & Cottage

〒075-0031, Tsurui-mura, Akai-gun, Hokkaido

<https://heartstree.guest.com/language/english/>

Hokkaido

Hokkaido is located north of Japan's main island of Honshu and covers over 20 percent of the country's total area. Temperatures in the region rarely rise above 30°C even in summer, and tropical nights of 25°C and above are uncommon. The low humidity and pleasant temperatures make summer the perfect season to explore Hokkaido. Winters, on the other hand, are extremely cold. Sapporo gets an average snowfall of over 100 meters, and visitors to mountainous areas can enjoy high-quality powder snow. With six national parks, the untouched natural landscapes preserved across the region are yet another draw. You can also find a wide variety of flora and fauna here that is unique to Hokkaido. Taking advantage of the region's vast tracts of land, dairy farming has become a thriving industry that produces delicious and highly regarded milk and cheese.



(Dishes at Heart's Tree are packed full of local ingredients)



(The red-crowned crane, designated a Special Natural Monument of Japan)



Town's also a bar where you can enjoy wine with apple pie during the afternoon.

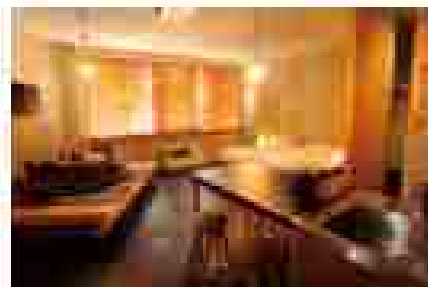
2 Savor unique Japanese wines at a small Hokkaido port town overlooking the Sea of Japan

Yoichi Town, Hokkaido

Yoichi is a small port town in western Hokkaido that looks out onto the Sea of Japan. Drive up to Yoichi around the mountains and you will soon begin to see beautiful hills covered in vineyards. This area was designated a Special District for Wine in 2011, and it attracts considerable attention both locally and internationally as one of Japan's hottest regions for winemaking. Widely cultivated in Yoichi are grape varieties for white wine characterized by their refreshing acidity and rich fruitiness, as well as those used for pink wine, which are considered difficult to cultivate in Japan. There is also a bar where you can enjoy a glass of wine in the middle of a splendid vineyard.

Yoichi LOOP is a hotel in town of Yoichi Station that has been designed specifically for the enjoyment of wine. On the first floor is a restaurant that serves Yoichi wine paired with "Wacha cuisine," which features dishes prepared by cooking seafood caught from the pier nearby, homemade wines, locally harvested vegetables, and other delicacies using French, Spanish, and Japanese cooking techniques. The wine theme continues throughout the main building, with rooms and other wine-themed accommodations on the second and third floors.

The town is also dotted with restaurants where you can try a variety of delicious wines. Going out to Yoichi's vineyards while enjoying local cuisine paired with a glass or two of wine will allow you to appreciate Yoichi's wine with all five senses.



Yoichi LOOP, a modern hotel renovated from an old building. Rooms with balconies are also available.



A glass of local wine paired alongside a variety with lots of fresh fruiting and seasonal vegetables.

Taste the Vineyards Tour

☎ Not included
<https://www.experiencehokkaido.com/tour/1.html>

Yoichi LOOP

☎ 4-123 KURUKAWA 1-chō, Yoichi-cho, Wadai-gun, Hokkaido
<https://yoichi-hotel.com/ja/loop/loop/yoichi.html>

3 Gaze across a vast landscape that spreads as far as the eye can see in a hilly town with gorgeous seasonal scenery

Biei Town, Hokkaido

Biei Town stretches out from the foot of the Tokachi mountain range in Daisetsuzan National Park. Rolling hills form an idyllic landscape of undulating views that constantly change. Also known as the "town of hills," Biei offers various observation points around town with views of the patchwork-like hills and flower fields from spring to autumn, and pure white snowscapes in winter. A drive along Patchwork Road will take you past all the beautiful scenery that Biei has to offer.

The vast and varied farmland is what makes this landscape so beautiful. Vegetables such as asparagus are harvested in spring, while wheat, sweetcorn, tomatoes, and radishes emerge in summer, followed by potatoes, onions, and pumpkins in autumn. If you join the walking tour that takes you along a loop path through the patchwork hills of Biei, you can get special permission to walk atop a normally inaccessible hilltop from the former Mainichi Cottage SPOONVALLEY, a small cottage that looks like something straight from a fairytale, also has its own farm where you can enjoy typical Biei cuisine served with plenty of vegetables. Let yourself fully immerse in the midst of this magnificent scenery.

Loop Path Walking Tour along the Patchwork Hills of Biei

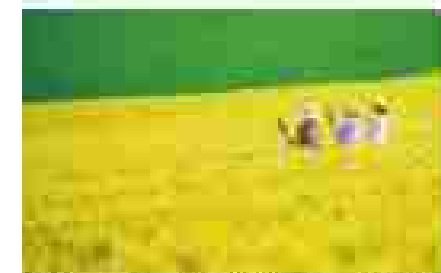
☎ Biei Tourism Association (Biei no Ito) (phone), 1-2-18 Motomachi, Biei-cho, Kamikawa-gun, Hokkaido (eventup location)
<https://biei-tourism.jp/eventup/447/>

Cottage SPOONVALLEY

☎ Chikita Kuniaki, Omura, Biei-cho, Kamikawa-gun, Hokkaido
<https://www.spoonvalley.com/>



Cottage SPOONVALLEY, which looks like stepping into a fairytale.



Experience harvesting wheat from a wheat field.

Walk along a loop path and lift up a walking tour through farmland.





The on a screen of an historical photograph showing the main house and residence of a house that has been in existence for 11 generations

4 Try on a kimono in safflower country and enjoy local fine dining dishes

Shirataka Town, Yamagata

Nestled between mountains to the east and west and right by a large river flowing through its center, Shirataka is a town blessed with nature. In this once thriving base for safflower raising and silk rearing, a style of woven textile with intricate patterns called Shirataka Tsumugi has been preserved and passed down as an important traditional craft of the town. Shirataka is also known for growing safflower, which is used as an ingredient in dyes and has been recognized as a Japanese Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Species. Moreover, NIPPONIA Shirataka Gennai House is a hotel and "kimono resort" dedicated to sharing the joy of kimono and the natural features of the town. Here, guests can experience getting dressed up in kimono. After being dressed by a local kimono professional, guests can walk around freely in full kimono, strolling around the countryside in kimono. While enjoying the unique scenery of the season, such as cherry blossoms in spring and golden foliage in autumn, will certainly become an unforgettable memory. Shirataka Town is also popular thanks to its rich food culture. A wide variety of ingredients can be harvested throughout the year, including traditional vegetables cultivated in the region for centuries, wild mountain vegetables, fruits, and more. Local townspeople follow a long-standing tradition of eating *shabu shabu* (sashimi) during festivals and other celebratory occasions, and popular *shabu shabu* spots can be found all across town. This area is one where you can get a taste of the local climate and nature from its food.

NIPPONIA Shirataka Gennai House

183-1 Asanagi, Shirataka-machi, Nishikata-gun, Yamagata

<http://nipponia-shirataka.com/>

Hana no Yakata

102-1-1 Asanagi, Shirataka-machi, Nishikata-gun, Yamagata

<http://hanayakata.jp/>

Tohoku

Across the north part of Japan's main island of Honshu lies the Tohoku region, which is made up of the six prefectures of Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Akita, Yamagata, and Fukushima. The area is surrounded by urban and mountainous landscapes, and undergoes distinct changes from season to season. It is particularly during the winter months, when snow lies deep on the ground, that the unique lifestyle and customs of local people can be witnessed. Tohoku is home to thriving agriculture and fishing industries that take advantage of the area's rich natural environment, while tranquil countryside sceneries spreading here and there lend the area a simple and rustic atmosphere. The unique food culture and local cuisine, which reflect the local ingredients and climate, form yet another part of Tohoku's charm.



Enjoy the charm of the high quality meat and seasonal vegetables



A field of safflowers in Shirataka Town. The flowers bloom between late June and early August.

5 Immerse yourself in the sublime and mystical nature of Towada-Hachimantai National Park

● Hachimantai City, Iwate

Located in the Tohoku region, Iwate Prefecture is known for its beautiful coastline, panoramic nature, and lush green mountains. Hachimantai City, tucked away in the mountains, is the perfect place to relax in the stunning nature and tranquillity of Iwate. From walking routes to forest exploration, a plethora of activities for nature lovers, whether solo or with friends or family, await.

Sitting on the edge of Towada-Hachimantai National Park is Hachimantai Mountain Hotel. This accommodation is highly rated by travelers who love its natural splendor, featuring a special sense of the Commemorative Awards jointly held by Japan Ministry of the Environment and the Japan Kanto-Iwate Iwate. The rustic and cozy hotel features warm wood paneling and comfortable European-style sofas, creating the atmosphere of a luxurious mountain cabin. Dinner is a buffet-style selection of seasonal local dishes along with Tohoku-grown vegetables, fish, and meat, you can also try the three great specialties of Morioka, such as Morioka Ramen (cold ramen), Morioka Jazmen (ramen with a soup of meat stock), and Morioka Udon (thick-chicken ramen). Meanwhile, Iwate Kenkyu Bus offers guided walking and hiking tours that take participants in and around the Hachimantai area in a safe and efficient manner. Tour information is available at local information desks and Iwate Kenkyu Bus's official website, and The Hachimantai Flower Town around Kigami Park at the summit of Mt. Hachimantai, held biennial spring and summer popular Knowledgeable guides will help you discover around 30 rare species of flowers in bloom, particularly harder to find varieties.

Hachimantai Mountain Hotel

☎ 01928-1-1111 (Matsuyama), Hachimantai-shi, Iwate

<https://hachimantai-mountainhotel.com/en/>

Iwate Kenkyu Bus

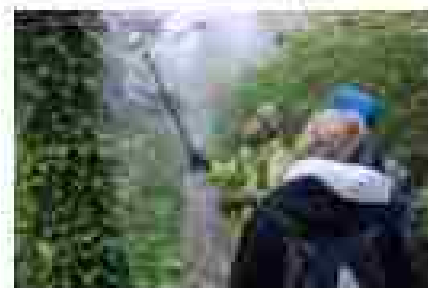
☎ 019-82-89 0000, Hachimantai-shi, Iwate

(Hachimantai sales office)

<http://www.iwate-kenkyubus.co.jp/>



The hotel is topped with an impressive mountain peak. You can also enjoy the hot springs that take their water from Mutsukawa Onsen.



Take a tour with an experienced guide to learn about the highlights of Hachimantai.

The Dragon Eye is a natural phenomenon that appears on Kagami Pond at the summit of Mt. Hachimantai between late May and early June each year.



View of Kanmuri Bay from Mt. Aoba, located north of Kanmuri Bay, Kanmuri Bay.

6 Come to understand the beauty and power of the ocean at one of Tohoku's leading port towns

● Kesennuma City, Miyagi

Kesennuma, one along the Pacific coast in the northeastern tip of Miyagi Prefecture and is known for its incredible view of big mountains. Close to the Kanmuri Coast, one of three largest fishing grounds in the world, the city is also one of Japan's leading port towns with a thriving fishing industry. Particularly noted for its seafood and sturgeon tuna, the port of Kesennuma has the most landings countrywide. Sports and sturgeon are also famous here. The Kesennuma Fish Market is a great place to learn more about life and culture in Kesennuma. Tours of the bustling morning fish market are available, and guides offer guidance in English by request.

Kesennuma also suffered immense damage during the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Traces of the earthquake remain more than a decade later, and local people are still working hard to rebuild the city. Reminded from a town that once served as a base for disaster relief volunteers, Kesennuma is a great town to visit a stone's throw from the sea. Kesennuma not only offers abundant nature and a bounty of seafood, but also represents nature through the powerful spirit of the people and community that call the area home.

Morning Fish Market Walking Tour

☎ Kesennuma "Ishi no Uta," 1-13 Nishibatah, Kesennuma-shi, Miyagi (meeting location)

<https://kesennuma-fish.jp/en/about/002-fishmarket/>

Tsunaki

☎ 011-261-2111, Kesennuma-shi, Miyagi

<http://www.tsunaki.co.jp/english/>



You can observe fishermen and market vendors working hard at the Kesennuma Fish Market.



Tsunaki, a traditional building in an architectural style unique to the region.



7 Feel at home during a stay in a historic residence and tangible cultural property in a rural village

● Nakagawa Town & Ohtawara City, Tochigi

Nakagawa is a small town in Tochigi Prefecture with a population of about 17,000 people and accessible from central Tokyo in approximately 2.5 hours by car. With the clear Naka River, famed for forming the largest canyons of any mountain in Japan, flowing through the town, and surrounded by the Yama no Kaminariyama and Kinugawa Hills, Nakagawa is rich in natural beauty. The town also offers a variety of delicious cuisine thanks to the rice, vegetables, chicken, and other produce grown in surrounding areas. Nakagawa is also home to Hinkabe, a historical building turned hotel registered as a Cultural Property of Japan that is popular among travelers both from within Japan and overseas. The secret to this hotel's appeal is that it provides a comfortable stay in a historical space featuring outdoor activities and the latest facilities, while also maintaining the atmosphere of a traditional Japanese home. Another positive about the hotel is the ability to personalize your stay, including enjoying meals created by local restaurants and farm visiting hotel farms to meet the farmers and enjoy a farm-to-table meal, and other programs. In addition, Nakagawa's neighboring city of Ohtawara is one of the most well-known places for sake sake in Japan; the area boasts many famous sake breweries dotted throughout that offer the chance to meet local people and enjoy a stay in the countryside that will make you feel right at home.

Hinkabe-tel
 1100-1, Nakagawa-machi,
 Tochigi
<http://hinkabe-tel.com/en/ja/>

Ohtawara Tourism
 21, Ohtawara City Sogabunko Bldg., 1-3-3
 Mincho, Ohtawara-shi, Tochigi
Website: <http://www.ohtawara-tourism.jp/en/index.html>

Hinkabe, a historical building-turned hotel in Nakagawa Town

Kanto

The Kanto region, which includes the capital of Tokyo and the greater Tokyo area, along with the prefectures of Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama, Gunma, Tochigi, and Ibaraki, is the largest economic zone in Japan and home to one-third of the country's total population. At the same time, the region is also home to the Kanto Plain, which is the largest plain in Japan. Travel outside the urban areas and you will discover Kanto's tranquil rural landscapes blessed with abundant water, along with small fishing villages along the coast. Further, located in the mountainous and hilly areas spreading out around the plain are the prefectures of Fukushima and Nagano, which, while easily accessible from Kanto's urban centers, still retain the traditional ways of life and culture that allow people to live in harmony with the harsh natural environment of the mountains.



Riverhouses with restaurants are dotted throughout Ohtawara City, allowing visitors to enjoy river activities and experience local traditions.



Enjoy local flavors with a cultured dinner at Hinkabe-tel.



The old house has a variety of colorful plates at Miyazaki.

8 Stay at a 200-year-old farmhouse, savor a sumo's favorite dish, and enjoy the taste of freshly picked fruits

Chichibu City, Saitama

Chichibu City has excellent access to Tokyo, taking just 90 minutes via the limited express train. The area is popular with those seeking to experience nature in each of the four seasons: rare species appear in creeping jibbs in spring, water activities such as river rafting in a tributary of the Arakawa River in summer, golden foliage in autumn, and skiing in winter. The area is also dotted with exquisite temples and shrines, such as Minamata Shrine and Chichibu Shrine, which are among the top spiritual sites in Japan. The Chichibu Night Festival, held yearly in December, is one of the three largest bonfire festivals in Japan, and has been added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

While the area is not far from Tokyo, staying overnight is recommended. At the 200-year-old farmhouse *Miyazaki-ko*, you can try a *chanko* *suppe*,^{*} featuring rich local vegetables, including those grown on the Miyazaki family farm. As the head of the family is a former sumo wrestler, you are guaranteed a tasty and authentic pot of *chanko*. Be sure to enjoy it with some local Japanese sake. The accommodation also has a private *onsenichika*. You can also take part in harvesting seasonal fruits and vegetables at a nearby farm. Why not step out of Tokyo and let yourself unwind?

*The three largest bonfire festivals in Japan, all known as a kind of festival that started with bonfires and ended in bonfire festivals. The Great Festival in Kyoto, Yamanashi Festival in Gifu, and Utsunomiya Festival in Yamanashi are said to be the three largest bonfire festivals in Japan. *Chanko* was Chanko's favorite food in Japan, a *chanko* *suppe* is a hearty pot of stew made from various vegetables and meat of various kinds.



On the menu for dinner are *chanko* *suppe* and *chanko* *suppe* (left) and *chanko* *suppe* (right).



The best part of this picking is being able to eat freshly picked, perfectly ripe seasonal fruits.

Miyazaki-ko
(Reformed historic farmhouse of more than 200 years old)

1110 Nagai, Ogami-machi, Chichibu-gun, Saitama
<http://www.miyazaki-ko.jp/en/>

Kamatsumatai Linné Farm

1400 Yokoze, Yokozemachi, Chichibu-gun, Saitama
<http://www.kamatsumatai.jp/>

9 Try *shimi*, a unique method of naturally freeze-drying food, at an old folk house themed around a rural retreat

Chino City, Nagano

Chino is a highland town lying at the foot of the Yatsugatake Mountains. Deep in the mountains, the settlement is home to several 100-year-old Japanese houses spread out across an expanse of rural landscape almost unaffected by development. Tucked away in this hidden village is Yamura Stay, a complex featuring several traditional in the style of old folk houses that can be stayed over at their entirety. The restoration was overseen by East Asia researcher Alex Kerr. During your stay, you can relax in the farmhouse or take a walk around the historical village. The cool, unspoiled mountain air is a spectacle that many guests believe is one of the greatest benefits there is.

Chino is also known for its traditional way of preserving food called *shimi*. This technique involves heating vegetables and other ingredients, such as tofu and daikon radish, outside to dry out during the cold winter months, taking advantage of the area's freezing winter temperatures and dry climate. *Shimi* means 'dried' (incorporates) the ingredients prepared using this ancient method of freeze-drying. Chino is Yamura Stay can try making and eating *shimi* *suppe* with a local grandmother. Also on offer is a visit to a local facility to watch the process of making a regional specialty known as *agari* (*agar*), which takes advantage of the region's climate and abundant water. You can also try making *agari* yourself.

A stay at an old folk house in a secluded village and the taste of unique local cuisine—the alternative way of enjoying Japan, offers something different to the more well-known tourist spots.



Guests get to taste *shimi* *suppe* made using Yamura Stay ingredients with a grandmother from the village.



Try making *agari* known as *agar* with local ingredients that has long been made here.

Yamura Stay

100-100-100

<http://www.yamura-stay.jp/>

Learn to make *agari* sticks in Japan's top agar-producing region

1111 Yagawa, Kiyama, Chino-shi, Nagano
<http://chikamachi-gakko.com/>

Enjoying view of Yamura Stay's four traditional accommodations in Chino, is a 100-year-old folk house.





Take in the picturesque coastal view from a guestroom at Wakasa Kajiya.

10 Enjoy the bountiful seafood and coastal scenery of the Sea of Japan in a small port town at the start of the Saba Kaido

Obama City, Fukui

The city of Obama in Fukui Prefecture has long flourished as a *Mitsukurani*, a town used by samurai that has provided lodgings to the Imperial Court since ancient times. Abundant seafood and processed fish were transported to Kyoto along a network of trade routes in the Saba Kaido ("sawfish highway") to support the samurai capital's food culture.

Wakasa Kajiya is a hotel designed around the concept of *hachira*, or "important day," which offers a delightful stay and gastronomic delights from Obama. Particularly noteworthy is the hotel's morning design, which blends traditional and modern Japanese aesthetics in an exquisite balance. Guest rooms feature ambient lighting and a palette of calming earth tones, creating unique spaces in each room. Moreover, almost all areas in the hotel provide ocean views, with the vista at early morning and before dusk being particularly spectacular. Breakfast and dinner both offer a chance to try cuisine made only from locally grown ingredients and with a unique Obama twist. The evening menu includes sashimi, warm sashimi, and a rich and aromatic miso soup and a wide selection of local dishes, such as a regional specialty, Wakasa Gyo (red sashimi from Wakasa), and fresh mackerel marinated in soy sauce. Enjoy your meal while overlooking the view of Wakasa Bay stretching out in front of you.

After admiring the beautiful ocean scenery and savoring its many fish varieties, why not get even closer to the water on a sea kayak? The Aho Paddlers Club offers popular sea kayaking tours led by local guides. The Aho area lies on island sea, resulting in calm waves. Thus, you can enjoy the striking contrast between the high, rugged mountainside and the blue sea surroundings. During the three-hour (return) tour, you will first learn the basics of how to navigate a sea kayak, then paddle along the shoreline to a private beach where you can try sunbathing and swimming. The tour also takes participants past fish feeding grounds, so you may even witness schools of blue mackerel and yellowtail living here.

Wakasa Kajiya

Q15-4 Aho, Obama-shi, Fukui
<https://wakasa-kajiya.com/>

Aho Paddlers Club

Q3-4 Aho, Obama-shi, Fukui
<https://ahopaddlers.com/>

Hokuriku

The Hokuriku region, close to the corner of Japan's main island of Honshu, includes the prefectures of Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui, which lie in a row along the coast of the Sea of Japan. This region is supported by many thriving primary industries, such as fishing in the Sea of Japan and rice cultivation on the plains, and remains popular thanks to its rich local culture. The mountainous areas of Niigata Prefecture receive some of the heaviest snowfalls in Japan, offering a plethora of activities that can only be enjoyed in this so-called "snowy country." The Hokuriku region is also home to the World Heritage Site designated settlement of Sakebi-style homes at Sakayama Village, along with Noto's Sanyama and Saboru, which have been registered as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems. At Saboru House, you can experience a traditional Japanese way of life.



Mackerel with chili made with mackerel marinated in a miso.



The sea kayaking tour enjoys the scenery along the coastline accompanied by a guide.

11 Build a *kamakura* snow dome, a one-of-a-kind experience in “Snow Country,” and enjoy rice in one of Japan’s best rice-producing regions

Joetsu City, Niigata

Niigata Prefecture is one of Japan’s best producers of rice, which is a staple of Japanese cuisine. In the southwestern part of the prefecture is Joetsu City, a thriving rice-growing region. Facing the Sea of Japan and surrounded by mountains, the city is blessed with fresh produce from both the mountains and the sea. Indeed, the city is also known as being one of the best rice snowfalls in Japan. A special thing about this area is that rice and other crops receive an abundance of water from melting snow, which makes the delicious local sake that can be enjoyed together with local cuisine made from seasonal ingredients.

YUKISATO Lodge was created from the idea of wanting to give guests the chance to experience the wonders of snow. The lodge, built by renovating a traditional Japanese-style house, can be viewed up to its eaves. Surrounded by expansive forests and fields, guests can take part in activities perfect for places with deep snow, such as building a *kamakura*, a Japanese-style igloo made by packing snow tightly to form a dome shape then digging out the interior so that people can enter the inside, along with steamboats, snow action ball fields. There are also a variety of activities that offer a glimpse into life in the mountains, such as farming experiences.

YUKISATO LODGE

1073 Okazawa, Nakagyo-ku, Joetsu-shi, Niigata

<https://yukisato.jp/en/>

(This site is available in both Japanese and English.)

Build a Kamakura

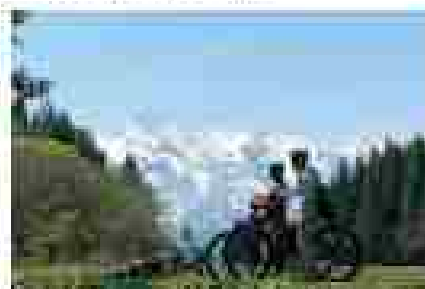
1073 Okazawa, Nakagyo-ku, Joetsu-shi, Niigata

<https://yukisato.jp/en/lodge/experience-snow/kamakura/>

(This site is available in both Japanese and English.)



Kamakura at YUKISATO Lodge. The thick, snowy beauty is striking. (YUKISATO)



You can enjoy snow-dome building and trekking when the ground turns green. (YUKISATO)

Here is a *kamakura* snow dome. (This unique experience is only possible in areas with heavy snowfall.)



The designated settlement in Gokayama of Gassho-style houses has been designated a World Heritage Site.

12 Experience life as it was lived in the past in a traditional Gassho-style home

Nanto City, Toyama

Nanto City, nestled between the mountains of northern Toyama Prefecture, is known for its UNESCO World Heritage list registered settlement of Gassho-style houses at Gokayama Village. Gassho is a traditional Japanese architectural style that is closely adapted to the harsh climate and natural features of this mountainous region, which receives heavy snowfall in winter. It is characterized by its steeply sloping thatched roofs that allow snow to easily slide off. While Gassho-style houses are scarce even across Japan, a cluster of them have been preserved in the Gokayama area. People even continue to call them home.

Near to the World Heritage settlement in Gokayama Gassho no Sato, a unique facility where visitors can stay in a Gassho-style home. While here, you can take an in-depth look at the architecture and learn about the traditional way of life that accompanies it. Also available are optional activities such as enjoying local cuisine and folk music. When you settle on the ground, there are trekking tours where participants can explore the surrounding area on foot, meeting traditional snowdancers, known as *yukinko*. These help the winter go well over snow-recess making in. Experience the local food, culture, and agricultural traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation while discovering the area's hidden natural beauty.

Gokayama Gassho no Sato

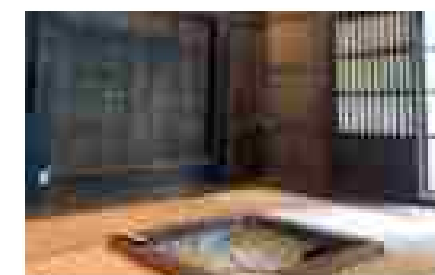
1655 Sugawara, Nanto-shi, Toyama

<https://www.gokayama.jp/en/>

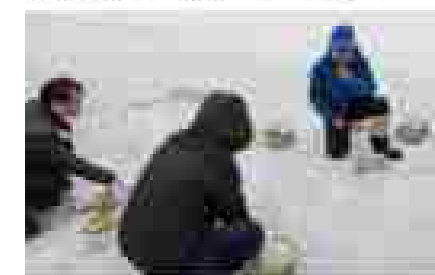
Kanji Trekking Tour

1655 Sugawara, Nanto-shi, Toyama

<https://www.gokayama.jp/en/kanji-trekking-tour/>



The houses at Gokayama Gassho no Sato are built off the open fields, known in Japanese as *irori*.



During the Kanji Trekking Tour, you can explore the surrounding area on foot for two to three hours.



Create your own washi paper under the guidance of a craftsman

IB Experience the culture of *washi* paper and *ayu* sweetfish cuisine in Mino, a city cultivated by abundant sources of water

Mino City, Gifu

Situated in central Gifu and blessed with the clear flowing waters of the Nagara and Takeda rivers, Mino City has been well known for washi papermaking since ancient times. Mino washi, whose traditional papermaking techniques have been passed on for over 1,200 years, was registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2014, solidifying its position as an important traditional craft in Japan. The area bristled with splendid buildings that local merchants fought with one another to build is known as the Utsunomori Historical District. It still retains an atmosphere imbued with the abundant prosperity from those days.

SHIPPONIA Mino Merchant Town Hotel is recommended for overnight stays. The hotel was built out of a 100-year-old residence, formerly owned by a washi merchant, and its facilities, constructed using traditional Japanese wood joinery techniques, give off a pleasant washi fragrance.

A 10-minute car ride from the center of Mino City takes you to the Warabe Land Workshop, where you can see making Shin washi paper from scratch. Here, participants make their own unique washi paper under the guidance of a craftsman by scooping up the paper material with a special hand-co mold for papermaking called a *ayumi*, then adding colors with dried flowers and pigments.

In summer, the Nagara River, one of the cleanest rivers in Japan, bubbles in the mouth of *ayu* sweetfish. *Ayu* is a seasonal part of summer in Mino, and at Mino Karika Yana, a long-established restaurant located along the river, you can savor dishes made from fresh *ayu* swimming in a tank within the restaurant. The restaurant's popular *ayu* full-course set includes several dishes incorporating *ayu* prepared in different ways, such as *tsukunagi* (in vinegar), prepared as *sakana*, grilled with soy, and deep fried.

SHIPPONIA Mino Merchant Town

© 512-1 Motomurocho, Mino-shi, Gifu

Reservation <https://shipponia-mino.jp/>

Mino Karika Yana

© 15-1 Maeno, Mino-shi, Gifu

(only open between April and October)

Reservation <https://minokarika-yana.jp/>

Warabe Land

© 728 Watanai, Mino-shi, Gifu

Reservation <https://warabeland.com/>

Tokai

Aichi, Gifu, Shizuoka, and Mie prefectures—collectively referred to as the Tokai area—are almost at the center of the Japanese archipelago. Gently undulating plateaus extend inland, while mandarin oranges and tea plantations thrive along the plains of the Pacific coast, taking advantage of the area's mild climate. At two of the largest rivers in Japan, the Nagara River in Gifu and Kiso River in Aichi, traditional river fishing techniques are still being employed, and visitors can observe and try out this masterful art. The Tokai area also formed not many of Japan's leading figures from the feudal period, not least Iida Mitsunaga (1534–1582, from Aichi Prefecture), a powerful daimyo who worked to unify Japan. With its castles, old temples and shrines, traditional merchant houses, townhouses, and other historic sites remaining here and there across the region, Tokai is a great place to experience Japan's history and traditional culture.



Grilled *ayu* sweetfish served at Mino Karika Yana. We'd like you to try *ayu*



at SHIPPONIA Mino Merchant Town Hotel, washi paper is not only used as wall paper, floor screens, and lampshades, but is also woven into belt cords. The pillowcase using a special technique



Swamp fishing, where fishing for fish to appear from deep underwater fishing weir (part of the weir)

14 Enjoy the summer tradition of catching *ayu* sweetfish from a fishing weir and taste wild game meat in a secluded hot spring area

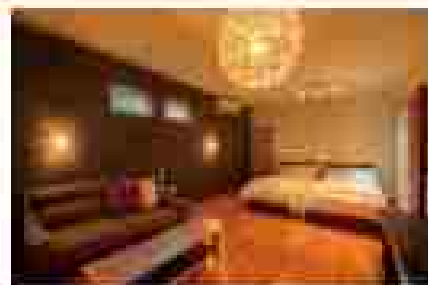
● Inaba, Toyota City, Aichi

The Inaba district in the northeastern part of Toyota City is full of natural beauty, with Tetsu-Gomatsukawa Quasi-Natural Park sprawling out to the east and Aichi-Kogen Quasi-Natural Park extending out to the west. Within the former is the virgin forest of Shizumaki, home to dense thickets of large hemlock and maple trees. The forest also features a popular forest road offering spectacular views across the seasons, such as fresh greenery, autumn foliage, and barren branches covered in snow ice. As a way of making nature exploration in Inaba more more enjoyable, a framework has been put in place for visitors to explore the area mountain and rivers while learning skills and knowledge from the past, with the entire district considered part of a "way-and-experience facility." The base for this is the facility on the highway (Tengoku Kobo at Rastudy Station "Machi-no-Eki" Dongitai-ko) where visitors can enjoy a variety of activities including a mountain hiking tour, seasonal forest trails and solitary experiences that offer the chance to taste local dishes. You can also try catching fish by hand on the Yatsugawa River using a type of fishing weir called a *tsurui*, which have been handmade by local residents. Another place to visit in Inaba is Natsunaka Onsen, a hot spring surrounded by a river and mountains. At the hot spring inn *Seiryu-tai*, you can enjoy a peaceful hot spring full of medicinal herbs, such as chrysanthemum, a hot pot made with wild boar meat, rice (sautéed fish and rice), and soft-boiled eggs (sautéed).

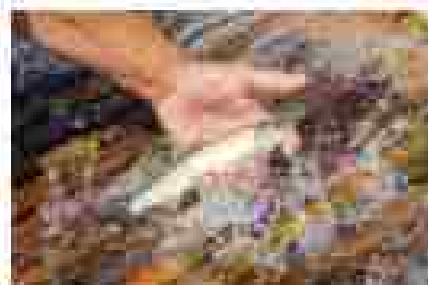
*From the hot spring, you can enjoy a view of the surrounding area, and you can also enjoy the view of the river.

Seiryu-tai (Natsunaka Onsen)
 4-1-1 Katsunaka, Natsunaka-cho, Toyota-shi, Aichi
 0565-8511111 <https://seiryu-tai.com/>

(Tendon Yama Fishing Weir)
 6-1-1 Chubu, Toyota-shi, Aichi
 0565-8511111 <https://tendon-yama.com/>



A great view of Inaba, Aichi, is a hot spring area. You can enjoy hot spring water flowing from Shizumaki and delicious food from the mountain and river.



Catching fish with your hands is so simple that even children are able to have a shot.

15 Chat with active *ama* divers, and enjoy local seafood dishes and hot springs

● Toba City, Mie

Toba City is found in the southeastern part of Mie Prefecture, located on the Shima Peninsula separating the Ina from the Pacific Ocean. The entire city has been designated part of the Ise Shima National Park, where beautiful scenery and a variety of products are of the world's first place to be successful in producing cultured pearls. The main topography of a city coastline with complex island surroundings is rich economy to divers, and local food from shellfish, such as abalone, scallop shells, and other seafood. This practice, known as *ama* diving, is a local cultural tradition that has been passed down over the generations; since it goes back as far as 1,000 years to five centuries. At the Ama Hut, you can chat with active *ama* divers while enjoying freshly caught seafood.

A variety of seafood lands at Toba Port in addition to the abalone and scallop shells caught by *ama* divers, most notably the local spring lobster. Each inn in the area provides some of these local delicacies from the sea. There are also accommodations where you can enjoy hot spring water required to give visitors beautiful skin.

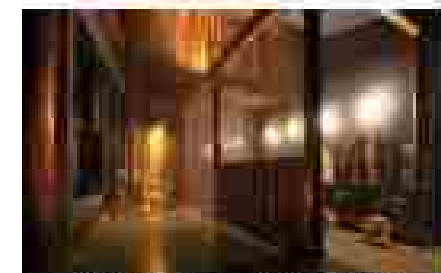
Another must-visit place is the Shima Shrine, where local *ama* divers have long come to pray for safety and bountiful catches. Also called "Shima Shrine," the shrine is known as a spiritual spot that grants wishes for safety.

Ama Hut Experience Otsu-kamado
 1-1-1 Otsu Fishing Port, Otsu-shi, Mie
 Toba City, Mie
<https://seiryu-tai.com/>

Hama-no-koyado Ju-bei
 1-1-1 Otsu-shi, Toba-shi, Mie
<https://hama-no-koyado.jp/>
 *This area is available in both Japanese and English.



One of the highlights is getting to try the freshly caught seafood.



Look up the hot spring water of Shima Shrine, which is given to the sea.

You can meet active *ama* divers and learn to their stories.





View of Miyama in Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto, where 20 thatched-roof houses (2014) were built

- 16** A forest in Kyoto where the quaint atmosphere of a traditional farm village is preserved
Enjoy local delicacies in a Japanese *satoyama* mountain village lined with thatched-roof houses

● Miyama Town, Kyoto

Miyama is a mountain town located at the center of Kyoto Prefecture. The town has been designated a national Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings due to the preservation of its thatched-roof buildings and the poverty zone of older Japanese customs. Moreover, in 2021, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) selected this town as a Best Tourism Village where visitors can get up close with the local culture and lifestyle of a traditional farming village. Formerly a pharmacy selling Western medicines, the town had a restaurant and inn KIGUSURUYA comprises a spacious main building and a 140-year-old annex that can accommodate one group per day. One of the most memorable experiences here is trying a *sake* festival meal cooked over a traditional Japanese charcoal-fired *andon* hearth. These hearths were once commonly used for heating and cooking in rural parts of Japan, but are incredibly rare today. Enjoy your meal around the hearth for a genuine experience that will bring you in contact with Japan's history. The *sake* festival includes organic vegetables grown on the property, along with *kyo* *yak*, a local kind of Kyoto chicken that is juicy and has a strong texture. Each household is packed with delicious local flavors.

In Miyama Town, visitors can also participate in one-hour guided tours that introduce the thatched-roof houses and lifestyles of local people, bringing their experience to a modern audience. These one-hour guided walking tours of *Kiyomizu no Sato* are available in the morning or afternoon. During the tour, you can visit the Miyama Folklore Museum and learn in detail about the techniques used for thatching, which are registered as a UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as see how the buildings are built inside, including the roof space, *andon* hearth, and more.

KIGUSURUYA

● 1 Miyama, Higashiyama-ku, Miyama-cho
Nantan-shi, Kyoto
<http://www.kigusuruya.com/en/>

Kyoto Miyama Tourism Association

● 21 Agate Street, Miyama-cho
Nantan-shi, Kyoto
<https://miyamaturism.org/en/>

Kansai

The Kansai region sits at the heart of Japan's main island of Honshu. Formed of five prefectures that include Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Nara, and Wakayama, the region has played a central role in Japan's history. Nara was the country's first capital, before the seat of power shifted to Kyoto in 794; consequently, various aspects of Japan's history, traditions, and culture spread to the rest of the country from this region. While most historical sites are concentrated in more central areas, a large part of Kansai's charm is its many tranquil natural landscapes waiting to be enjoyed just a short distance away from the city. The northern part of the region overlooks the Sea of Japan, while the southern part borders the Pacific Ocean; these varied climates have given rise to a rich and diverse food culture.



Osaka temple of KIGUSURUYA built with vegetable grown locally and local chicken



You can hear details about the structure of thatched-roof houses from a guide

17 Energize your body and mind in a nature-rich town with a deeply rooted medicinal herb culture

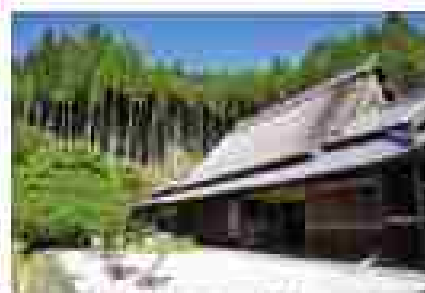
● Uda City, Nara

Uda City is a castle town in the eastern part of Nara Prefecture that has been selected as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings. Blessed with an abundance of nature, Uda also flourished as a town of medicinal herbs for many centuries, as evidenced by an entry in the *Shin Shiki*¹⁾ that mentions that Japanese first discovered “medicinal bathing”²⁾ around here.

Yataiya is a hotel in Uda that has been operating from a 300-year-old traditional Japanese house. Staff at Yataiya certifies health-conscious people to see their trip as an opportunity to maintain healthy practices and enrich their lives. Guests can also take part in guided walking tours in nearby cultural properties and enjoy dishes made from locally grown vegetables at the on-site restaurant. Even the bath salts provided in each guest bathroom are made at Yataiya. This creates a compound of Yamanashi *Shiroyuri* (wildflower), a medicinal herb used to relieve fatigue and improve circulation.

Momoi Medicinal Herb Garden is another treasure in Uda. You can find about 200 varieties of seasonal medicinal herbs and flowers growing at this approximately 600 square-meter medicinal herb garden, including some that are seldom seen elsewhere. The walking paths in the garden are well-maintained for ease of accessibility. This is an ideal place for a walk-in-mountain to soothe your body and mind.

¹⁾Shin Shiki: Medical Journal, Journal 207, 178, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.



See a beautiful thatched roof building at Yataiya.



Lunch at Yataiya is prepared with plenty of vegetables, many of which are grown on the premises.

Yataiya

● 6375 Maeda-cho, Uda-shi, Nara
<https://yataiya.jp/>

Momoi Medicinal Herb Garden

● 1502 Oshikawabaru, Uda-shi, Nara
<https://momoi-medicinal-herb-garden.com/> (English site)

Pretty Asian Sweet Peas, a type of medicinal herb that symbolizes spring



18 Go on a food tour of marine and mountain delicacies that flourish in the climate of the Tamba Basin

● Tambaasagayama City, Hyogo

Tambaasagayama City in Hyogo Prefecture was once a thriving castle town. Back then, the city's Fukusumi district, a 20-minute or so drive from the former castle town area, served as a busy port town on the route to Kyoto. A rare example of a port town (sea-faring settlement) area in Japan, the townscape has been selected as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings in Japan. Nestled in the heart of this district is the NIPPONIA Fukusumi Port Town Hotel, an accommodation that was built by renovating a 100-year-old mansion. The hotel's appeal lies in its relaxing interior, which has been completely updated to house guests' comfort while still retaining the building's original character along with its innovative cuisine that makes generous use of ingredients from the mountains and rivers of the former Tamba Province (present-day Hyogo Prefecture).

Thanks to the climate and fertile soil unique to the basin, a variety of agricultural products can be grown here with exceptional levels of quality. Tambaasagayama City is particularly known for its Tamba chinquap and black soybeans. The local practice of cultivating black soybeans has been designated as part of Japan's Intangible Heritage. During a trip to this well-known food paradise, many people buy Tachaji Puri to take home as a souvenir. These puri are packed with some of the best ingredients from Tamba. Especially popular is the Konnara Puri, a two-layered dessert of skin topped with a jelly filled with gently simmered large black soybeans grown in Tambaasagayama.

The view: A view that developed around its walled area stands tall among the Toba plain (left) view.



This hotel in the port town was renovated from a former merchant residence.



Three varieties of Tachaji Puri are available, including black bean, white soybean, and konnara.

NIPPONIA Fukusumi Port Town Hotel

● 278 Fukusumi, Tambaasagayama-shi, Hyogo
<https://www.nipponia-hotel.com/>

Tachaji Puri

● 227 Hiki, Tambaasagayama-shi, Hyogo
<https://www.tachaji-puri.com/>



The village of Otsu in the Iya region of Tokushima Prefecture, which was designated an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings

Chugoku/ Shikoku



Both the Chugoku region in the western part of Honshu, Japan's main island, and the Shikoku region to the south have beautiful mountain ranges that appear to circle the calm waters of the Seto Inland Sea. The Chugoku region is steeped in Japanese history—and has been! Its prefectures of Tottori and Shimane preserve some of the most important legends in Japan's mythology, while on the other, Yamaguchi Prefecture was the headquarters of leading figures in the country's path to modernization during the Meiji Restoration (1868). Home to the Seto Inland Sea are Hiroshima Prefecture, home to the UN World Heritage site of Atomic Bomb Site on the island of Miyako and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), and Okayama Prefecture, where you can find the elegant white-walled buildings of the Bizenware (Bizen Imperial Quarter Museum), the Shikoku region, which is separated from Honshu by the Seto Inland Sea, is formed of the four prefectures of Kagawa, Ehime, Tokushima, and Kochi. Shikoku has a strong Shinto culture, with pilgrims who travel in worship of each of the many temples scattered across the region referred to as *shikoku-ken*.

19 Visit a settlement where people live in harmony with nature deep in the mountains of Shikoku's secluded Iya region

● Miyoshi City, Tokushima

Miyoshi City lies roughly at the center of the Shikoku region and is surrounded by rugged wilderness on all sides. Here you can find Mt. Tsurugi, the second highest mountain in western Japan at 1,955 meters above sea level, along with the majestic Yoshino River.

At the eastern part of the city is the area of Haka-dou. It was here that traders once used the Yoshino River as a means for transporting goods, and even today, the rivers are lined with traditional wooden houses built between one to two centuries ago. Meanwhile, the steep, mountainous area to the south features some spectacular valleys, including the gorges of Otsu and Katsuki, which were carved out by the rapid currents of the Yoshino River and the Iya Valley, which is crossed by traditional suspension bridges. Riddled off by steep mountains, the Iya region is sometimes referred to as an "island region," and legend has it that the Haka, a samurai clan of great power and influence, fled here to defeat after a political move in the 12th century. The people of the Iya region have come to live in close harmony with the natural world, building settlements on steep slopes and cultivating crops using methods adapted to the sloping land. You can experience this unique way of life at Tengenkyo-ya, which offers accommodation in *senryu* and traditional mountain village homes. If you make a reservation, you can enjoy local delicacies prepared by the villagers, such as grilled red-spotted trout, *wasabi* (wasabi) and *shimada* (shimada).

Tengenkyo-ya

● 403 Higashiyama-cho,
Miyoshi City, Tokushima
<http://www.tengenkyo-ya.jp/>

Iya-no-Kanurabashi Vine Bridge

● 113-2 Zentoku, Nishiyamamachi,
Miyoshi City, Tokushima
<http://www.iya-no-kanurabashi.jp/>



Visit a village with plantations and pick tea under the guidance of local residents.



Traditional dishes are specially prepared for you at Tengenkyo-ya.



HUJOM has transformed its premises into a ryokan, retaining the atmosphere of an old Japanese residence.

20 Observe the atmosphere of a hot spring resort town that takes visitors back in time and traditional dances passed down for generations

Yunotsu Town, Shimane

Yunotsu in Shimane Prefecture is a quiet town facing the Sea of Japan known for its hot springs and ponds. The Yunotsu Onsen hot spring facility at the center of town is part of the cultural assets of the Iiyama (Iiyama) Shrine, which was awarded a World Heritage Site in 2007. For your stay, we recommend HJCOM, a villa available to book for groups of one group at a time. Built from a former residence in the small village of Hase, HJCOM has been renovated into a cozy and warm accommodation incorporating the Wabi-sabi concept of using natural and recycled materials in the home while still preserving the unique features of Japanese homes where possible. The two spacious and comfortable bedrooms include European-style beds and desks for reading. In the back garden overlooked by the fence are a charcoal grill, fishing table, and space for guests to enjoy a private barbecue outside. Bays have beds can be added in order to accommodate up to 30 people in each room.

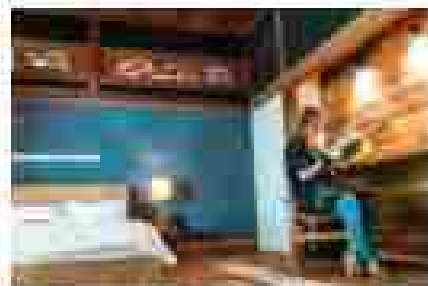
A ceremony room in Yunotsu is a place where traditional Shinto dances performed every Sunday from 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the shrine hall of Tatsu no Gosen Shrine (entrance required). Originally a ritual involving tales about gods and demons set to high tempo music and dramatic dances, *dogura* has evolved into a form of folk entertainment that still exists today. Through the actual practice of *dogura* has largely dwindled across Japan, but in Yunotsu, local residents take pride in this tradition that has been passed down for hundreds of years, with some residents learning the dances from as early as 10 years ago. Particularly impressive are the elaborate masks worn by the performers. Made of Japanese maple paper and hand-painted by local artists, these masks play an important role in *dogura*, bringing the performances to life.

HJCOM

☎(0851) Yunotsu 1, Yunotsu-cho, Oda-shi, Shimane
<https://hijom.jp/>

Tatsu no Gosen Shrine

☎235 Yunotsu 1, Yunotsu-cho, Oda-shi, Shimane
<https://yunotsu-magari.jp/tatsunogosen/dogura/>



A bedroom at HJCOM decorated in a Wabi-sabi style while preserving a historical aesthetic.



Dogura, performed every Sunday on the stage at Tatsu no Gosen Shrine (entrance required by the Yunotsu Onsen Ryokan Association).

21 Encounter scenes of steel production and terraced rice paddies in a village tucked away between mountains from Japanese mythology

Omuzumoto Town, Shimane

Omuzumoto Town lies at the southwestern tip of Shimane Prefecture and borders Tama and Hachimama prefectures at the edge of the Chugoku Mountains. This historical area is considered as the birthplace of Japanese steelmaking and one of the cradles of Miyazaki's mythical domain. In fact, you can find many special spots in the area associated with the legend. In the past, the town was also an excavation site for high-quality iron sand, leading to a boom in iron manufacturing using the traditional sand ironmaking process. Mountain slopes are steep so that the iron sand here later tended to be used in growing buckwheat. Today's *dogura*, the most famous variety of indigenous buckwheat grown on these slopes, is known as "phantom rice (dark brown rice)", a variety that can only be eaten in and around Omuzumoto. The slopes, along with water channels carved into the mountainside for mining, have also been transformed into terraced rice paddies that reflect the beautiful natural scenery. This unique use of this land for agriculture has been recognized as a Japanese National Important Agricultural Heritage Site. *Mita rice*, the name of the rice grown in these terraced rice paddies, is regarded as one of the finest varieties in western Japan for its delicious taste.

You can learn more about the region by participating in hands-on activities, including knife making under the guidance of a master craftsman from a blacksmith's workshop, and knife-making taught by a former chef at Mitsuhara Garden, a log house tucked away in the highlands, and (price) a relaxing stay while discovering nature and getting to know the local people.

"Discover the Mystery of Steel that governs Japanese civilization" is a special activity that Omuzumoto offers to guests. Various events, such as night view of the town, are also available.

Mitsuhara Garden

☎2945-2 Nakawa, Omuzumoto-cho, Mima-gun, Shimane
<https://mitsuhara-garden.jp/price/0404/0404/>
 (entrance fee)

Knife-Making Experience

☎Omuzumoto Onsen (Hachimama, 772-7 Mima), Omuzumoto-cho, Mima-gun, Shimane
<http://omuzumoto-onsen.jp/price/0404/0404/>
 (entrance fee)

The scenic landscape of terraced rice paddies built on steep mountain slopes.





A street full of traditional buildings that line the banks of Fukuoka's Ohori-ka, Yame City

22 Learn crafts through factory tours and *washi* papermaking in an area that has protected its traditional crafts, such as *kurume kasuri* textiles

● Yame City, Fukuoka

Yame City is a place rich in nature in the southern part of Fukuoka Prefecture, surrounded by the clear waters of the Yabe River that flow into the Ariake Sea, along with several mountain ranges. The city has a thriving agriculture industry, producing rice, wheat, a variety of fruits, and Yame tea, which is renowned for its superb quality. The region has long been a center for traditional craft making, such as handmade *washi* paper and *kurume kasuri* (handmade paper lanterns), Buddhist altar, handwoven crafts, and *Kurume Kasuri* (cloth), and the craft making techniques are still being passed down today. Craft Inn T'feel is an accommodation that places Yame's traditional craftsmanship at front and center. Once you are decorated with furnishings showcasing the brilliance of local handwoven crafts, with each room designed around the different themes of bamboo, *washi* paper, and the waterfalls. The inn also organizes a selection of hands-on craft tours (along with a site for a *kurume kasuri* textile-making factory and *washi* paper-making workshop) in the town. Once you see for yourself the work that goes into these traditional crafts, you will come to realize the true depth of their artistry.

At the heart of the city is the Fukuoka-himeji district, a picturesque town square characterized by elegant, white-walled buildings. This area flourished as a merchant district from the 17th to the 19th, and in 2022, it was selected as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings in Japan. Historical buildings (some have been reconstructed in the *trading floor* style) are along the old highway, creating the atmosphere of the past.

Chawan, a Japanese word for pottery, is a term used to describe the traditional *washi* paper used in the past for making tea. The paper is made from the bark of the *gummi* tree, which is typically used to make *chawan*.

Kurume Kasuri cloth, a traditional textile developed in the Chikuzen region of Fukuoka Prefecture in around 18th, still carries the same legacy.

This culture is traditional Japanese craftsmanship, which is passed down from generation to generation. The crafts of *washi* paper, *kurume kasuri*, and other crafts are still being passed down in the Fukuoka district of Yame City, thus ensuring the tradition will flourish for generations to come.

Craft Inn T'feel

● 120-1 Motomachi, Yame-shi, Fukuoka
<https://tfeel.jp/en/>

Shimogaki's Drimoon

● 1111-2 Tenjo-cho, Yame-shi, Fukuoka
<https://shimogaki.com/en/>

Kyushu/ Okinawa



From its position at the southwestern part of the Japanese archipelago, Kyushu has been actively involved in trade with other Asian countries since ancient times. Blessed with a mild climate and plentiful nature, the region is home to a wide range of agricultural practices, including fishing, forestry, and crop and livestock farming. The chain of islands stretching from Tanegashima in Kagoshima Prefecture to Okinawa, collectively referred to as the Ryukyu Islands, has a warm and humid subtropical climate that supports a diverse variety of ecosystems. Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern part of Okinawa Main Island, and Iriomote Island in particular were listed as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site in 2021. The region's stunning blue sea and large coral reefs are a sight you will never forget.



A room at Craft Inn T'feel designed with the theme of *washi* paper



An employee touring the Shimogaki's Drimoon factory and making a *kurume kasuri* scarf

23 Encounter a rich ecosystem and magnificent scenery
The island's unique traditions and cultures will leave an imprint on your heart

●Amami City, Kagoshima

Amami-Oshima Island sits between Kyushu on the mainland of Japan and Okinawa Main Island. Millions of years ago, the island was connected to the mainland and Eurasian continent. As it underwent a transformation into the chains of islands that it is today, certain plants and animals that were native on the mainland managed to survive on the island, a haven for rare endemic species such as the Amami rabbit. Amami-Oshima Island features pristine, untouched nature, such as blue seas colored by coral and the second largest mangrove forest in Japan, which was registered as a Natural World Heritage site in 2011. As a melting pot of different cultures, including continental cultures from China, some Japanese (Yamato) cultures from Kagoshima, and native Okinawan (Bunaku) culture from the Ryukyu Islands, Amami-Oshima Island has developed its own distinct island culture that can be clearly seen from its unique language, customs, cuisine, traditional folk songs, and houses with shiku (spirits made from unrefined sugar cane).

In the northern part of Amami-Oshima Island is the DenPaku resort, which offers three different styles of accommodation to make you feel like an islander, including luxury villas, traditional folk houses, and hotel-style accommodation. DenPaku has the attractive ocean activities for guests, as well as excursions that offer the opportunity to experience local culture, such as the Tachigawa Chirori dance and the game of nanko-ushi. Interact with local people to learn more about the nature and culture in Amami.

Nanko-ushi An indigenous game of hidden markers in Japan and found only in Amami-Oshima and Okinawa Prefecture.

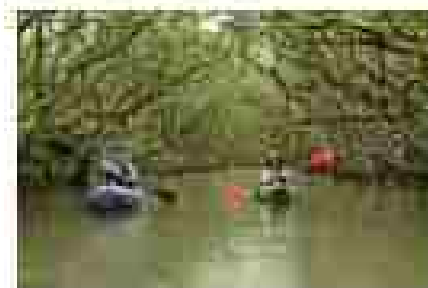
Shiku "shiku" is the 5th letter group in Amami-Oshima Island that is filled with many animals from surrounding islands. It is considered a place where the island will reach the summit of land. In Japan, it is considered a place where the great things will happen. The word "shiku" is also used in the names of many places in the island.

Tachigawa Chirori Dance The "Chirori of the Tachigawa" is a dance performed from year to year in the eighth month of the old lunar calendar to give the community a good harvest.

Nanko-ushi A traditional hidden game from the Amami area.



Nanko-ushi, a game where players have to guess the number of "shiku" (hidden markers) the other person is hiding in their hand.



Explore a mangrove forest by canoe with a local guide.

DenPaku The Beachfront MORA

Q266-1 Karasaka, Ichikawabaru, Katsurikawa, Amami-cho, Kagoshima

Website <https://www.denpaku.com/en/nao/nao/nao/>

Slow Guide Amami

QWatanabe, 555-15 Sakiguchi, Murayama, Amami-cho, Kagoshima

Info <https://www.slowguide.com/en/>

The sea, a view of the island of "Amami-Oshima" stretches out before you at DenPaku The Beachfront MORA.



"Waterfall in the rain," a popular activity with the Natural World Heritage site.

24 Witness the dynamism of nature in Higashi Village, part of a Natural World Heritage site

●Higashi Village, Okinawa

At the south of Okinawa Main Island is Higashi Village, an area of outstanding natural beauty covered with forest over 72 percent of its area and traversed by as many as 14 rivers. The Yabumizu area across north Okinawa Main Island is a vast expanse of mountains and wilderness and home to a large variety of animals and plants that have evolved in unique ways. The area was registered as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site due to its importance and natural diversity. This area is also notable for the Glacial Bay mangrove forest, where you still find mangrove trees (*Avicennia* in Japanese) designated a Natural Monument of Japan, as well as other beautiful mangrove colonies that grow in the wetlands near the sea. A recommended activity in this area includes canoeing through the mangrove forest and "Shower-climbing" on a natural canyon. You can relax along the river by canoe, then aim for the river source while walking through jungle-like areas, swimming in natural pools, and enjoying new views. During this popular tour, you can enjoy the view of a Natural World Heritage site in a more physically active way. After getting your fill of this dynamic natural environment, spend some time in quiet self-reflection at a peaceful guest house.

Shower Climbing Tour

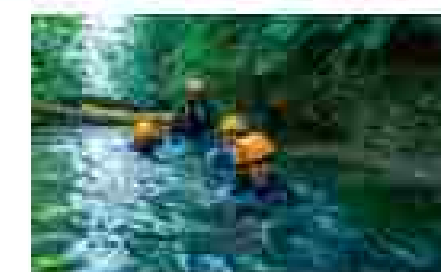
Q234 Kawaoka, Higashi-cho, Okinawa

Website <https://higashi-kawaoka.jp/nao/nao/nao/>

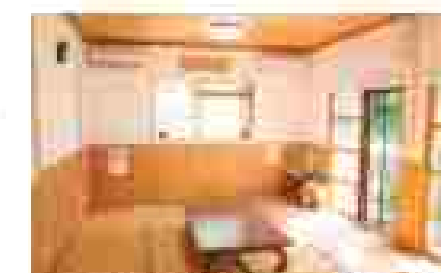
Yabumizu no Yaku Yaku

Q111 Gushiki, Higashi-cho, Nishigami-gun, Okinawa

Website <https://www.yabumizu-no-yaku-yaku.com/en/nao/nao/nao/>



The clear water, both great and well regulated, puts body and mind.



A warm and relaxing room in a traditional house that staff maintain supported by hand.

