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# Japan

## BY RAIL

RAMSEY ZARIFEH  
& ANNA UDAGAWA



**RAMSEY ZARIFEH** (right, by the line-testing and diagnostic shin-kansen known as Dr Yellow) was born in the UK but has spent most of his working life abroad. Graduating from Magdalene College, Cambridge, he worked in Japan on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) scheme, before writing the first edition of this book. He is an international news journalist, and returns to Japan as often as possible.



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**JAMES HODGSON** (right) read geography at Cambridge and studied Japanese for a year in Kyoto where he rapidly fell in love with the diversity of Kansai's culture, food and trains. He now works in the UK in long-term railway planning.




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## Japan by Rail

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**Updated information** will be available on:  [japanbyrail.com](http://japanbyrail.com)

**Photos – Front cover:** O-torii gate marking the entrance to Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha, a shinto shrine in Fujinomiya (see p177), with Mt Fuji in the background (© AU)

**This page:** Mt Fuji seen from a shinkansen (© RU)

**Overleaf:** Arashiyama bamboo forest (© DJ-H)

**Back cover:** Hayabusa shinkansen (maximum speed 320km/h, © AU)

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## A request

The author and publisher have tried to ensure that this guide is as accurate and up to date as possible. Nevertheless things change. If you notice any changes or omissions that should be included in the next edition of this book, please write to Ramsey Zarifeh at Trailblazer (address on p2) or email him at [ramseyzarifeh@trailblazer-guides.com](mailto:ramseyzarifeh@trailblazer-guides.com). A free copy of the next edition will be sent to those making a significant contribution.

### COVID-19

As we go to press Japan is only just starting to open up after the pandemic. For some time it is likely that all visitors will have to have a Covid vaccination certificate; show a negative pre-departure test and be tested on arrival; have a smartphone and have downloaded a health management app. You'll probably have to wear a face mask and expect temperature checks particularly at major museums and sights. For the latest visit: [www.japan.travel/en/coronavirus](http://www.japan.travel/en/coronavirus).

Research for this edition was partly carried out before the pandemic but has been re-checked. However, some businesses may no longer be operating, rail services reduced and costs increased.

# INTRODUCTION

## Why take the train?



**Above:** Ready to depart. Trains run not just to the minute but to the second (©AU).

**Below:** Information (AI) robots are starting to be seen at major stations (©AU).



Think of Japan and one of the first images you're likely to conjure up is that of a bullet train (*shinkansen*) speeding past snow-capped Mt Fuji. For many, what lies beyond this image is a mystery. But hop on board that train and you'll quickly discover what the country has to offer.

The fascination of Japan lies in its diversity: remote mountain villages contrast with huge neon-lit cities that never sleep; the vast natural landscape of unspoiled forests, volcanoes and hot springs more than compensates for the occasional man-made eyesore; the silent oasis of a Shinto shrine or a Buddhist temple is not far from the deafening noise of a virtual-reality games arcade. Nowhere else in the world do past and present co-exist in such close proximity as in this relatively small country.

The ideal way of seeing it all is by rail, whether on one of the famous shinkansen, on the wide network of local trains, or even on one of the many restored steam trains. An early 20th-century guidebook advised visitors to 'make travel plans as simple as possible. The conditions of travel in this country do not lend themselves to intricate arrangements'. Today, however, nothing could be further from the truth. Trains run not just to the minute but to the second, so





**Above:** Futons laid out for the night in Hoshi Ryokan in Tsuwano. (© AU)

eating out is very good value and you can minimise costs by staying in hostels, *minshuku* (Japanese-style B&Bs), or business hotels (mostly Western style). For those with a larger budget, staying in *ryokan* (upmarket *minshuku*) can be an amazing experience, but if you prefer there are world-class five-star hotels

**The real secret to touring the country is the Japan Rail Pass, deservedly recognised as the ‘bargain of the century’.**

throughout the country. Unexpected pleasures also await the traveller: where else can you buy cans of hot coffee from a vending machine at the top of a mountain, or ‘bathe’ covered by naturally hot sand. And where else do railway staff bow to you as they enter the carriage and also look as smart as they do in Japan? It’s said that no *gaijin* (outsider) can ever fully know Japan but only by visiting and seeing for yourself can you discover what the country is really like: somewhere between the images of traditional past and hi-tech future which flicker worldwide on the small screen.

This guide shows you how travelling around Japan by rail is the best way of seeing the country close up and in full colour. And there are few places in the world where it really can be as much fun to travel as it is to arrive. Welcome to Japan by rail.

## When to go

In general, Japan has a mild climate, though it’s difficult to talk at all generally about a country which stretches for some 3000km north to south. It can be

**April/May and late October to early December are generally considered the best months to visit ...**

itineraries can be as complicated or precisely timetabled as you wish. Or you can simply turn up at the station and plan your journey as you go.

The real secret to touring the country is the Japan Rail Pass, deservedly recognised as the ‘bargain of the century’. Rail-pass holders can travel easily almost anywhere on the four main islands.

Japan need not be too expensive as, apart from your rail pass, eating out is very good value and you can minimise costs by staying in hostels, *minshuku* (Japanese-style B&Bs), or business hotels (mostly Western style). For those with a larger budget, staying in *ryokan* (upmarket *minshuku*) can be an amazing experience, but if you prefer there are world-class five-star hotels throughout the country.

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below freezing and snowing in Hokkaido while southern Kyushu is enjoying sunshine and mild temperatures. There are reasons

to go to Japan at any time of the year but April/May and late October to early December are generally considered the best months to visit.

also makes it one of the busiest. The school holiday season in August is another busy time, particularly around mid August during the **Obon festival** when people head back to their home towns to commemorate their ancestors; their ancestors' spirits are believed to come back to this world then.

The high temperatures and – particularly in the south – blistering heat can last well into September and often there is a lot of rain then. **Typhoons** strike coastal regions, particularly in Kyushu, Shikoku and Kansai in late summer. Fortunately these are usually predicted a day or two before they hit so it's unlikely you will be taken unawares.

By the beginning of October things usually cool down and dry up. Late October to early December are the months for viewing the **autumn leaves** (*koyo*); this can be a spectacular time to visit. The sky is often clear so you have more chance of seeing Mt Fuji and other wonderful landscapes. The autumn colours begin their magnificent display in Hokkaido and gradually move south through the islands, in the opposite direction to the cherry-blossom wave.

**Below:** Hikone Castle, dating from 1603 and located by Lake Biwa, is one of the few original castles in Japan (AU; see p234).




## 12 When to go

If you don't mind the cold, December and January are also good times to visit as the days can be sunny and clear, though **New Year** is another major holiday period and many places get crowded. December to March/April is a great time to visit for winter sports such as skiing.

## FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Japan is truly a land of festivals (*matsuri*); hardly a day goes by when there is not a celebration taking place somewhere. These can be huge, lively, atmospheric events attracting thousands of visitors – such as Sapporo's Snow Festival, Aomori's Nebuta, Tokushima's Awa Odori, or Kyoto's Gion Festival – or local festivals in towns and villages which are little known outside the area.

Parades of large floats, street processions to the tune of *taiko* drummers, firework displays, and colourful costumes are all part of the festival experience. Eating and drinking while walking around in public is generally frowned upon in Japan but this doesn't apply at festival time; street stalls serve foods such as *yakisoba*, *takoyaki*, and *ekonomiyaki* (see Food glossary pp495-7).

Listed here is a selection of the many festivals and events that are worth including in your itinerary if you are in Japan when they are on. For more details see the relevant city guides. JNTO also publishes a comprehensive list ( [www.japan.travel/en/things-to-do/festivals-and-events](http://www.japan.travel/en/things-to-do/festivals-and-events)).



**Above:** Skiing at Gala Yuzawa (see box p354) in Honshu. This is the only ski resort directly connected to a shinkansen station. The main ski areas are in north-eastern Honshu and Hokkaido; the season usually lasts from November/December to April/May. (© AU)







**Above:** The main sumo tournaments are in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka but there are also exhibition tournaments in smaller places (see p61); this one was held in Izumisano. (© RW)

Festival, **Tsuwano**; Hi-watarishiki (fire-walking), Daisho-in Temple, **Miyajima**.

● **May** Hakata Dontaku Festival, **Fukuoka**; Sanja Matsuri, **Asakusa, Tokyo**; Aoi Matsuri, **Kyoto**.

● **June** Hyakumangoku Festival, **Kanazawa**; Yosakoi Soran Festival, **Sapporo**.

**Below:** During Sanja Matsuri (see p132) in late May three *mikoshi* (portable shrines) are paraded around Asakusa. (© AU)



● **March-May** The **cherry blossom season** is a highlight of the year. Popular spots for *hanami* (cherry-blossom-viewing) parties, include Ueno Park and Shinjuku-gyoen, **Tokyo**; **Kamakura**; Tetsugaka-no-michi (The Philosopher's Way), Heian Jingu, and Maruyama Park in **Kyoto**; **Yoshino-yama**; **Nagoya** Castle area; **Kakunodate**; and **Hirosaki**.

● **April** **Takayama** Spring Festival; Yayoi Festival, **Nikko**; **Kamakura** Matsuri; Yabusame

● **July** Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival, **Fukuoka**; Gion Matsuri, **Kyoto**; Tenjin Matsuri, **Osaka**.

● **Late July and August** **Fireworks (hanabi) festivals** Spectacular firework displays are a feature of most summer festivals. The largest in **Tokyo** is the Sumida River Fireworks Display.

● **August** Nebuta Matsuri, **Aomori**; Neputa Matsuri, **Hirosaki**; Kanto Matsuri, **Akita**; Tanabata Matsuri, **Sendai**; Yosakoi Festival, **Kochi**; Awa Odori Festival, **Tokushima**; Asakusa Samba Carnival, **Tokyo**. **Obon** (p11; around 11th-16th Aug, actual dates depend on region).

● **September** Yabusame, **Kamakura**.

● **October** **Takayama** Autumn Festival; Toshogu Shrine Autumn Festival, **Nikko**; Jidai Matsuri, Heian Jingu, **Kyoto**.

## Route options

Japan Rail (JR) boasts that its network covers every corner of Japan's four main islands. If you look at the maps in the Japanese railway timetable you'll see what appears to be something like a bowl of spaghetti. The maps include both the JR lines and the lines operated by private railway companies. In some places the private railways provide the only service available and in others their stations are in more convenient places for sightseeing. The choice of routes is, if not infinite, at the very least overwhelming.

**For some suggested itineraries see pp41-6**

### Using this guide

To simplify travel planning and to reassure the first-time visitor that a qualification in orienteering is not needed, this guide splits the largest island, Honshu, into regions – **Central Honshu, Kansai, Western Honshu** and **Tohoku** (North-eastern Honshu) – and suggests (connecting) routes for each of these as well as for the other three main islands: **Hokkaido, Kyushu** and **Shikoku**. For example, if you are following the route round Western Honshu you will pass through Okayama, the starting point for the route guide around Shikoku.

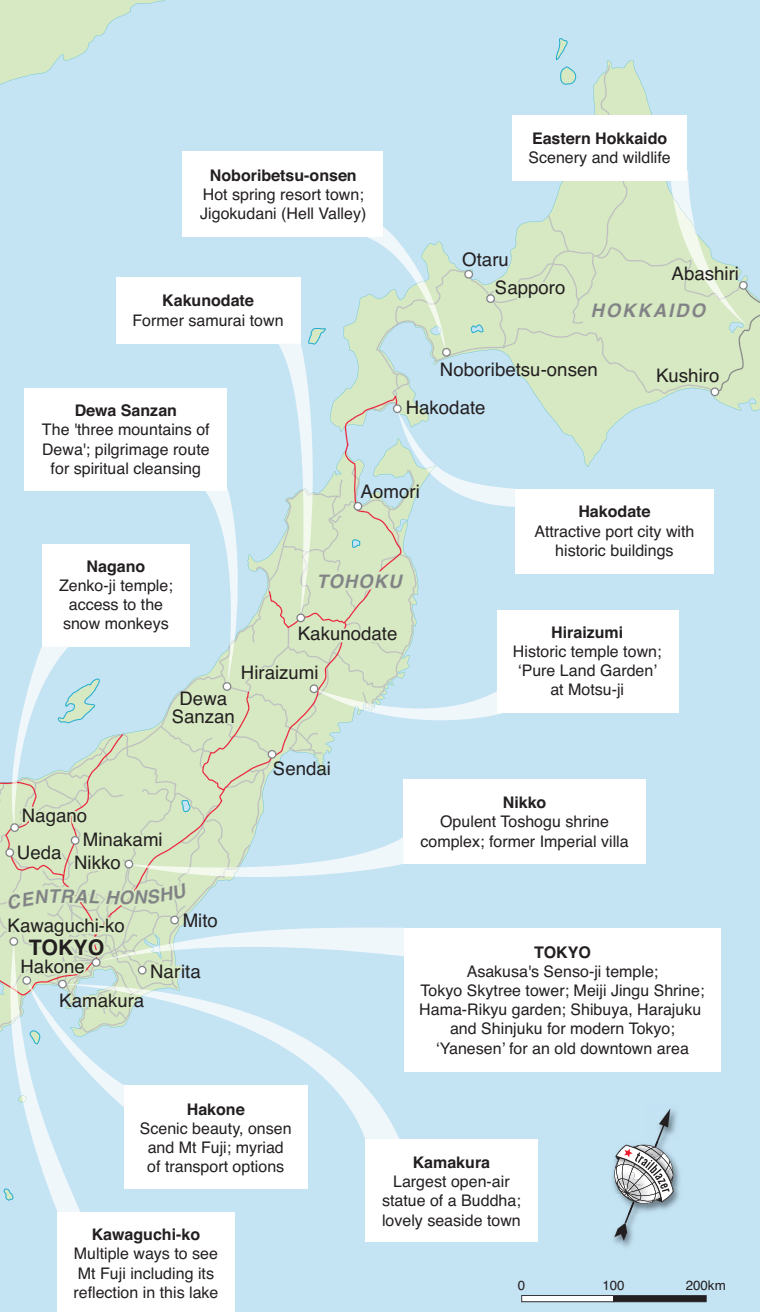
Each section begins with an introduction to the area, with information on regional highlights and suggested stopping-off points. Routes can be followed in reverse but in this case all points of interest from the train will be on the opposite side.

Though it's possible to travel every route by local train, it's assumed that most travellers will have a rail pass so will use the shinkansen and/or limited express (LEX) services. It is not possible to mention every station so, as a rule of thumb, only stops served by LEX services (or by shinkansen if the route follows a shinkansen line) are included. Stations served solely by local or rapid trains are listed only if they, or the area around them, are of particular interest. Note that for a place served only by local trains it generally saves time to take an express (or rapid) train to the closest station to your destination and then change to a local train there. The fastest point-to-point journey times are provided for each section of the route.

Even though each route has been divided into different sections it may not be necessary to change train as you go from one section to the next. Occasionally, however, it is essential to change train in order to complete the route described. Such instances are denoted by the symbol ▲. Places which are served by local trains only are marked ♦.

Sample itineraries are provided on pp41-6.

For information about the main JR services see pp502-11.



# Japan by rail – the best



### Best gardens

- **Adachi Museum of Art, Yasugi, near Matsue** (pictured here, © AU, see p316) Unusual because it is also an art gallery; should be on everyone's itinerary
- **Kenrokuen, Kanazawa** (p227) Rated one of the top three landscape gardens in Japan, the others being Korakuen (below) and Kairakuen (p145)
- **Korakuen, Okayama** (p297) Okayama Castle forms the perfect backdrop
- **Ritsurin-koen, Takamatsu** (p478) Landscape garden set below wooded Mt Shiun
- **Sankeien, Yokohama** (p168) Known for its plum blossom and historic buildings





### Best temples

- **Kinkaku-ji, Kyoto** (left, © GOMD, p252) The Golden Temple
- **Ryoan-ji, Kyoto** Famous for its 16th-century rock garden (p252)
- **Nandaimon Gate at Todai-ji, Nara** (top right, © AU, p267) Tame deer beg for food at the entrance to Todai-ji, a historic temple housing a 16m-high Buddha
- **Senso-ji, Asakusa** (p119) Tokyo's most popular temple
- **Kotoku-in, Kamakura** (see p137) Home to the largest outdoor Buddha in Japan
- **Naritasan Shinsho-ji, Narita** (top left, © AU, p144) Pagoda at this temple, which is known for its daily fire ceremony
- **Byodo-in, Uji** (p265) A temple since the 11th century; like many it was originally built as a villa.





### Best castles

- **Himeji** (top, © LJ-H, p274)

Also known as Hakuro-jo (White Heron Castle) as from certain angles it resembles a heron with wings outstretched

- **Matsumoto** (middle, © AU p214)

One of Japan's finest castles;

- **Hikone** (bottom left, © AU p236)

Located by Lake Biwa, this is one of the few original castles in Japan

- **Matsue** (p312)

Surrounded by a moat and also with an original (albeit restored) keep

- **Inuyama** (p207)

The oldest standing castle in Japan though not fully original

- **Matsuyama** (p489)

Another of the few remaining original castles in Japan; you can reach it on a chair-lift

- **Karamon Gate, an entrance to Nijo-jo** (below right, © AU p253)

This magnificent castle was originally built as a residence for Ieyasu Tokugawa, the first Tokugawa shogun





# PLANNING YOUR TRIP

1

## Rail passes

The original and still the best-value pass available to visitors is the Japan Rail Pass; this covers all four main islands and permits travel on most shinkansen services; for more details see below. See the box on p32 for details of the only other JR pass valid for the whole country.

Apart from JR Central all companies in the Japan Rail (JR) Group offer their own selection of passes. These are useful if you're intending to focus on a specific area; for details of these regional passes see pp30-7.

Several of the private rail companies also have passes but these are all for regional areas; details are given where relevant in the text.

### THE JAPAN RAIL PASS

The Japan Rail Pass is truly the bargain of the century, assuming you plan to use several *shinkansen* (bullet train) services. It entitles the pass-holder to travel freely on: all JR train services other than the Nozomi (Tokyo to Hakata) and Mizuho (Hakata to Kagoshima-chuo) shinkansen; the ferry service to Miyajima operated by JR; and some of JR's bus services, though not their highway bus services. JR has a dedicated website (<http://japanrailpass.net>) which provides up-to-date information about the Japan Rail Pass and the other JR passes.

#### Who can use the pass?

The pass can be used by any non-Japanese passport-holders visiting Japan under 'temporary visitor' status but not by anybody arriving in Japan for employment. Japanese nationals who have lived out of Japan for 10 years or more can get a pass but only through an agent (see pp37-9) and possibly only up till 31st December 2023.

#### Buying the pass

● **Before you go, or in Japan?** The cheapest way to get a pass (sold in the form of an exchange voucher; see p39) is to buy one through an authorised agent (see pp37-9) no earlier than three months before you plan to go.


A more expensive option is to buy one when you arrive in Japan. However, for the same price (see box on p30), it is now possible to order a pass through a

*Kyoh! screaming aloud  
this train runs into  
the fresh green midnight*  
(TOHTA KANEKO)

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**JR Shikoku rail pass****[see box on p31]**

The **All Shikoku Rail Pass** permits unlimited travel (for 3, 4, 5 or 7 consecutive days) on all JR Shikoku services (up to Kojima station on Honshu) as well as those provided by private rail companies (Kotoden, Iyotetsu, Tosaden, Tosa Kuroshio and Asato). The pass can be bought in Japan.


See also  shikoku-railwaytrip.com and for itinerary suggestions see p46.

**GETTING A RAIL PASS**









If you decide to buy a Japan Rail Pass through an authorised agent (see below) before you go to Japan you will receive an Exchange voucher (see pp39-40). See the box on p39 for details about picking up a JR online-bought Japan Rail Pass.

The travel agencies listed are some of the many worldwide **authorised to sell the Japan Rail Pass** (many also sell some regional JR passes, but only a few sell the whole range, and some private line passes); most also book flights and accommodation, operate tours to Japan and can organise tailor-made holidays as well as experiences such as the tea ceremony, or wearing a kimono. If flying with either ANA or JAL you can get a rail pass through the airline.

The price you pay will depend on the exchange rate used by the agent – it is worth contacting a few to check their rates and also their postal charges; if you can collect your voucher direct from an agent you may be able to save money.

The full list of authorised agents is available at  japanrailpass.net. Some online agencies, such as JR Pass (see below) can send passes worldwide.

**In the UK and Republic of Ireland**

- **AWL Travel** (Euro-Japan Holidays;  awlt.com,  www.euro-japan.co.uk)
- **Ffestiniog Travel** ( www.ffestiniogtravel.com) Also sell some regional rail passes. Occasionally operate escorted rail-based tours.
- **JTB** (Japan Travel Bureau;  japanspecialist.com) The office in Denmark (see p38) now deals with rail passes for people in the UK/Ireland.
- **Japan Experience** ( japan-rail-pass.com) Agent for most regional JR passes. In addition Japan Experience ( japan-experience.com) offers a house-rental service (see p73) and can provide IC cards, pocket wi-fi and pre-paid data SIM cards. They also offer tours and experiences in 14 cities/areas and by the end of 2022 plan to offer excursions and hotel booking.
- **JRPass** ( jrpass.com) An online agency with a forum, a blog posts' page, and a responsive social media team. Also offer most regional rail passes, pocket wi-fi rental, a meet & greet service and from late 2022 a hotel-booking platform.
- **H.I.S. Europe** ( www.his-europe.com) Is part of the H.I.S. Group, a travel agency with branches all over Japan. H.I.S. also sells the regional JR rail passes and offers hotel booking, transfer services and tours.

**In continental Europe**

- **Belgium Fuji Travel** ( fujitravel.be); **Japan Experience** ( japan-experience.com; see above); **Japan P.I. Travel** ( japanpittravel.be).

- **Japan Experience** ( japan-experience.com), see p37 for details.
- **Japan Package** ( japanpackage.com.au), packages for every interest/budget
- **JTB Australia** ( japantravel.com.au) and **JTB New Zealand** ( jtboi.co.nz), see JTB opposite.
- **Kintetsu International Express** ( kintetsu.com.au), see Kintetsu opposite.

## EXCHANGE ORDERS

**Note:** this section is only relevant if you buy a Japan Rail Pass (or any regional pass), through any of the agents listed; see the box below for details about collecting a JR website-bought pass. Exchange orders (now also called e-tickets) are valid for three months from the date of issue, so only purchase one less than three months before you plan to start travelling by rail.

### How and where to turn in the exchange order

Once in Japan, take your exchange order to any **JR Travel Service Center** authorised to handle the Japan Rail Pass; when you purchase the exchange order you will receive a guide to using the pass including the full list (as on the website) of JR stations where you can get your actual pass.

It's generally easiest to sort your pass out at the JR station at the airport, even if you're not going to start travelling immediately. Be aware that there may be a long queue at busy times, particularly at peak holiday periods (March/April and November). Even though the staff are efficient at processing passes if you are not travelling on a long journey immediately it may be easier to buy an ordinary train ticket and then exchange your pass at another JR station.


At the time of exchange you will need to provide the date you want to start the pass (this can be any day within a month of the day you turn in the exchange order). Once the pass is issued the date cannot be changed so the staff will check you understand the dates it will be valid. They will also ask to see your passport to check that you have 'temporary visitor' status; Japanese passport-holders must bring proof of their residence abroad from the relevant embassy.

Staff at the office will be happy to make seat reservations for journeys for that day and if they are not busy possibly also for other days.

## HOW TO USE THE RAIL PASS

If you have bought a Japan Rail Pass through JR's online website (see p30 and box below) you will be able to use it at the automatic **ticket barriers**. However, at the time of writing, if yours was bought through an agent, or in person in

### COLLECTING A JR WEBSITE-BOUGHT RAIL PASS

A Japan Rail Pass ordered through the JR website (see p30) can be collected anywhere that handles the pass; see  japanrailpass.net/en/exchange.html. You will need to show your reservation number and passport. Some regional rail passes can also be picked up from reserved seat ticket-vending machines that can recognise passports; hopefully this will also happen for the Japan Rail Pass.

## Itinerary planning

The first decisions for most people, when planning a trip to Japan, are deciding **when to go** (see pp8-12 for general information) and **how long to go for**: **one week** is really too short to attempt anything more than a quick shuttle between Tokyo and Kyoto/Osaka, and/or Kanazawa. To get anything like a sense of what the country is really about, and to give yourself time to get over jet lag and/or culture shock, plan to be in Japan for at least **two**, but preferably **three**, weeks. The purpose of the suggested itineraries (pp42-6) is to give a flavour of what can be accomplished in a particular period of time.

When planning your itinerary also look at the **Selected highlights map** (pp18-19) but if you want to focus on seeing a particular category, such as gardens, castles, or temples and shrines, the **Best lists** (pp20-8) provide guidance. For additional ideas see **Activities and experiences** (pp47-8).

See pp29-32 for details of the main **JR rail passes** so you can work out which would be best for your plans. Note that some areas, such as Hakone and Koya-san, are only covered by a private operator's pass.

It is also worth checking what **festivals and events** will be on when you are in Japan; for details see pp12-15.

### SUGGESTED ITINERARIES WITH A JAPAN RAIL PASS

[see also map pp18-19 and Best lists]

The following itineraries are for anyone planning to get a **7-, 14- or 21-day Japan Rail Pass**. Where relevant they also include suggestions for how to save money using a Japan Rail Pass in combination with other passes.

The itineraries start from and end in Tokyo as most people arrive there, but they include Kyoto and/or Osaka so could be adapted if you are arriving at/ departing from Kansai International Airport.

#### TOP TIPS

- **Get a Japan Rail Pass and/or regional rail pass** Not only do these generally provide excellent value for money, they also mean you can be spontaneous – if the weather is bad just hop on a train and see Japan from the window.

If you don't plan to travel on shinkansen services it would be best to get a regional rail pass.

- **Choose a few places as bases** and do day trips; this means you will get excellent value from your pass and won't need to keep moving to a new hotel. Other than Tokyo, Kyoto and/or Osaka which most people visit, places to consider as bases are: Nagoya, Okayama, Matsue, Takasaki, Sendai, Sapporo, Kumamoto and Beppu/Oita.

- **Get out of the cities** to avoid the crowds, but also to discover this scenic country.

- **Don't plan to do too much in a day**; allow time just to walk around – you never know what you may discover.



town of Kamakura where you can see the large open-air statue of a Buddha.

### JR East-South Hokkaido Rail Pass: 6 consecutive days' travel

- **Days 1-4** Same as for Tohoku area pass (see opposite)
- **Day 5 (Hakodate)** Travel from Aomori/Shin-Aomori to Hakodate and visit its **morning market** and **Motomachi**, the city's old quarter with Western-style buildings.
- **Day 6 (Tokyo)** Return to Tokyo but if you have the time stop off in **Utsunomiya** and visit the bonsai village.

### JR West All Area Pass: 7 consecutive days' travel

- **Day 1 (Kanazawa)** From Kansai International Airport/Osaka travel to Kanazawa where one of the many highlights is the stroll garden, **Kenrokuen**.
- **Days 2-3 (Kyoto)** Take a train to this former capital city and discover some of the famous temples.
- **Day 4 (Hiroshima)** Take a westbound shinkansen to **Himeji** and visit the picture-postcard castle; continue on to **Hiroshima** and visit the Peace Park. The next morning visit **Miyajima**.
- **Day 5 (Okayama)** Travel to Okayama, known for its castle and garden, and/or visit the nearby atmospheric canal town, **Kurashiki**.
- **Day 6 (Matsue)** Take a train across Honshu to **Matsue** and see one of the 12 original castles in Japan.
- **Day 7 (Osaka)** Travel on to **Kinosaki-onsen** and make time for a hot spring bath there and then return to Osaka.

### JR West Sanyo Sanin Area Pass: 7 consecutive days' travel

- **Days 1-5 (Osaka)** Follow the Days 2-6 itinerary outlined in the JR West All Area Pass above.
- **Day 6 (Tottori)** From Matsue take a train to **Tottori** for the sand museum and sand dunes, but stop en route to visit **Adachi Museum of Art** (Yonago).
- **Day 7 (Osaka)** From Tottori follow Day 7 as described above.

### JR West Kansai Hokuriku Area Pass: 7 consecutive days' travel

- **Days 1-2 (Osaka)** Spend time in Osaka (see p42).
- **Days 2-4 (Kanazawa)** Travel to Kanazawa (see p42); there is plenty to see in Kanazawa but consider a day trip to **Gokayama** (see p233).

#### ❑ JR EAST PASS COST SAVING

If planning just to travel in the JR East region, buying a Tohoku Area or Nagano & Niigata pass and a Tokyo Wide Pass (see p33) would enable you to have 8 days of travel for less than a 7-day Japan Rail Pass.

The Tokyo Wide Pass also includes places such as Kawaguchiko and Izukyu-Shimoda which can be visited as day trips from Tokyo.

#### ❑ JR WEST PASS COST SAVING

If flying in and out of Kansai International Airport and happy just to see Western Honshu, buying two of the 7-day JR West passes would cost less than a 14-day Japan Rail Pass.

Alternatively buying one of the 7-day passes and up to seven days' worth of Kansai Thru Pass (box p35) or Kansai Area Pass would also cost less than a 14-day Japan Rail Pass.

- **Days 5-7 (Kyoto)** Return to Kyoto (see p42).
- **Day 7 (Kyoto or Osaka)** Stay in Kyoto or return to Osaka.

### JR Hokkaido Pass (5- and 7-day options)

It would be hard to see Hokkaido properly in fewer than 10 days (at least 14 would be preferable) so ideally have at least two passes. Highlights include: **Hakodate** for its morning market; **Noboribetsu-onsen**, an onsen town known also for its *jigokudani* (hell valley); **Otaru**, a port town with a canal area; **Sapporo**, known for its snow festival and clock tower.

Travel to eastern Hokkaido to see its scenic beauty – two of the many highlights are **Mashu-ko**, a mysterious lake, and **Shirogane Blue Pond** – and its amazing wildlife. Also visit **Asahidake**, the highest mountain in Hokkaido.

See the Hokkaido route and city guides (pp363-404) for full details.

### JR Kyushu Pass (3- to 7-day options)

As for Hokkaido it would be hard to see Kyushu properly in fewer than 10 days so getting at least two passes is recommended. Highlights on this island include: Kyushu's capital, **Fukuoka (Hakata)**; the historic and scenic city of **Nagasaki**; **Kagoshima**, access point for both **Sakurajima**, with its active volcano, and **Ibusuki** for its naturally **hot sand-bath**; **Beppu** to see the 'burning hells', though you can also have a sand bath there; and **Yufuin**, a kitsch town with some lovely onsen. Also consider walking back to the island of Honshu through the pedestrian **Kanmon Tunnel**. For a 5-day itinerary in style consider the 36+3 D&S sightseeing train (see  [www.jrkyushu.co.jp/english/train](http://www.jrkyushu.co.jp/english/train) for details).

See the Kyushu route and city guides (pp405-59) for full details.

### All Shikoku Pass (3- to 7-day options)


Shikoku also has plenty to see so, to do it justice, get at least two passes.

Highlights include: **Takamatsu** for both the magnificent garden at Ritsurin-koen and the art island of **Naoshima**; **Oboke Gorge**, for its scenery and also to see a *kazurabashi* (bridge made from mountain vines) in Iya Valley; **Kochi**, for its castle – and manga fans will want to head to Yokoyama Ruichi Memorial Manga Museum; the bull-fighting city of **Uwajima**; **Uchiko**, both for its well-preserved old quarter and Noh theatre; and **Matsuyama** for its castle and also nearby **Dogo-onsen** an historic hot spring town.

See the Shikoku route and city guides (pp460-93) for full details.

## ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES

### Activities

● **Hiking** The mountainous terrain provides spectacular hiking; paths are nearly always well signposted and well trodden. A few of the many options are: Tsumago to Magome (see p192), Mt Fuji (see box on p175), or Mt Takao (box on p125), and Daisetsuzan National Park (p374). For pilgrimage paths consider Kumano Kodo (see box on p242 and p245), Dewa Sanzan (p349), or Shikoku (see box on p462). See  [hikinginjapan.com](http://hikinginjapan.com) for more details.

● **Winter sports** Japan's landscape also offers many **skiing and snowboarding** opportunities and where else in the world can you get bowled off a chair-lift?

## Before you go

### PASSPORTS AND VISAS

All visitors to Japan must have a passport that's valid for the duration of their stay in Japan.

If visiting for the purposes of tourism, pre-Covid citizens of the following countries did not need to apply for a visa and could stay in Japan for up to 90 days under the 'reciprocal visa exemption' scheme: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA. Many other countries came under the same scheme but exceptions included citizens of Hong Kong (though SAR and BNO passports were OK). However, it is not certain if this will be the same when Japan opens up to tourists so it will be essential to check.

Citizens of some countries could also apply for a further 90-day extension while in Japan; see the MOFA website, below, for details.

Details about visa requirements as well as a complete list of Japanese embassies and consulates can be found at [mofa.go.jp](https://mofa.go.jp) (click on Consular services). See pp64-5 for details of arrival procedures.

Note that in Japan you must **carry your passport** with you at all times.

### HEALTH AND INSURANCE

Pre-Covid no vaccination or health certificate was required to enter the country (except for those arriving from a yellow fever zone) but this will almost definitely not be the case when Japan opens up and it will be essential to check requirements through JNTO or your embassy. It is likely that entry requirements will be easier for those who have been fully vaccinated.

#### AIRPORTS IN JAPAN WITH INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

The three major airports in Japan are: **Narita** (Tokyo; NRT; see pp130-1), **Haneda** (Tokyo; HND; see p131), and **Kansai** (Osaka; KIX; see p151). All have flights from a large number of places worldwide.

**Nagoya** (Central Japan International Airport; [centrair.jp/en](https://centrair.jp/en); p205), **Fukuoka** ([fukuoka-airport.jp](https://fukuoka-airport.jp); p435) and **Kagoshima** ([koj-ab.co.jp](https://koj-ab.co.jp); p456) have flights from Asia, but Nagoya also has a few from North America and Europe. However, note that Nagoya Airport is the only major airport that doesn't have a JR station so if you have a JR pass you won't be able to exchange it at the airport.

**Sapporo** (New Chitose Airport; [new-chitose-airport.jp](https://new-chitose-airport.jp); p398) and Fukuoka have winter/summer flights from Helsinki.

The many **code-sharing flights** enable you to fly into one airport in Japan and leave from another; this means you don't have to retrace a route to return to your arrival airport so you can maximise your time seeing new places.

## WHAT TO TAKE

The best advice is to **pack as little as possible**. Many accommodation options have laundry facilities so it is easy to wash your clothes. However, travelling light makes life much simpler when you are getting on and off lots of trains; a **small suitcase** should mean it is easy to lift onto a luggage rack and will fit into cheaper lockers (see p101). Also note that there are now restrictions on luggage size (see box on p96) on Tokaido/Sanyo/Kyushu shinkansen.

It's really worth bringing **slip-on shoes** as you're expected to take your shoes off in the entrance hall at Japanese-style accommodation and also often when going around castles and temples. Guests walk around either in the slippers provided or, if these are too small, just in **socks** (pack a few pairs without holes!).

A **lanyard** is useful to hold your rail pass and/or IC card and make them easy to access. If you want an unusual souvenir of your trip, take a **notebook** (see box on p87). For information about **money** see pp79-80.

**Pack according to the season** (see pp8-12) and the region in which you're likely to be travelling. As a general rule, shorts and T-shirts are fine in the summer, though you'll probably need a sweater or two in the spring and autumn. Take warm clothes for the winter. At any time of the year, it's worth packing **one smart outfit** in case you decide to eat at an upmarket restaurant or go to a show such as *kabuki*. If you forget anything, clothes and shoes are relatively cheap as long as you avoid the designer-label boutiques, but it's not always easy to find large sizes.

**Nightwear is not essential** as guests in most forms of accommodation, apart from hostels, are provided with a *yukata* (a cotton robe tied with a belt) – in onsen towns/resorts it is also acceptable to walk around in the streets wearing a yukata. **Don't bother packing an umbrella** as disposable ones are cheaply available in convenience stores. Outdoor tourist attractions, as well as minshuku and ryokan, usually have a supply of umbrellas for visitors to borrow.

## SUGGESTED READING

The books listed are a sample of the many available about Japan. Several of the below are available in printed format (paperback and/or hardback) as well as Kindle/ebook versions.

### History

- *A History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* Kenneth Henshall (Macmillan, 2012) Scholarly but very readable.
- *A Brief History of Japan* Jonathan Clements (Tuttle, 2017) Aimed at the general reader and a useful introduction to Japan before you arrive.

### Travel narratives

- *The Japanese Chronicles* Nicholas Bouvier (Eland, 2008) The chronicles are based on three decades (1950s-70s) of living and travelling in Japan.
- *Hokkaido Highway Blues* Will Ferguson (Canongate, 2003) Ferguson travels from southern Kyushu north to Hokkaido following the path of the cherry blossom; an irreverent account of life on the open road.



## Facts about the country

### GEOGRAPHY

Japan is made up of over 3000 islands, a total land mass almost as large as the state of California. The four main islands are: **Honshu**, the largest; **Hokkaido**, the most northern and also the least populated; **Kyushu**, the southernmost; and **Shikoku**, the smallest. Stretching 3000km from north to south, the northernmost regions of Japan are subarctic, while the extreme south is subtropical.

Four-fifths of the land surface is mountainous and rural; most of the 127 million people who live on the four main islands are packed into the coastal plains. This has led to the development of so-called 'urban corridors', of which the longest, and perhaps the most densely inhabited in the world, is the Tokaido belt between Tokyo and Osaka.

Japan is a hotbed of **volcanic activity**. Even though world-famous Mt Fuji last erupted in 1707, and many don't think it will erupt again, it is actively monitored as if it did there could be massive damage. Hokkaido, in particular, has several active volcanoes but there's no need to panic as the island's hiking routes and paths are always closed at the first sign of smoke. Both Sakurajima, off the coast of Kagoshima, and Mt Aso, in Kyushu, are active.

### Earthquakes

Japan is located where the Eurasian and Pacific plates meet so is prone to earthquakes. These are, of course, not seasonal, nor can they be accurately predicted. They are, however, a fact of life in Japan and Japanese get used to practice drills so they know what to do. Monitors along the shinkansen tracks enable trains to stop within 70 seconds if signs of an earthquake are detected. Minor quakes/tremors are very common in Japan but unless you're particularly sensitive you'll probably only hear about them the next day. Major quakes are extremely rare and not worth becoming paranoid about. Since records began the most powerful quake (8.9 on the Richter scale) happened on 11th March 2011 off the north-east coast of Honshu and caused a devastating tsunami (see box on p329). On April 16th 2016 a series of earthquakes caused considerable damage in

*To the butterfly in the sky  
all buildings on the temple ground  
are upside down*  
(BOSHA KAWABATA)

蝶の空七堂伽藍さかしまに

Kumamoto (Kyushu), but fortunately not too many fatalities. In the very unlikely event you find yourself waking up to a sizeable quake, the best thing to do is to **get under something solid, such as a table.**

## HISTORY

Space permits only a condensed ‘bullet points’ history of Japan.

For recommended books on the history of Japan, see p57.

### □ JAPANESE NAMES

The Japanese put the surname (family name) before the given (Christian) name, but for this guide the Western style is followed.

### Birth of a nation: myth and reality

Nobody knows exactly when Japan was first inhabited by humans but estimates range from between 500,000 and 100,000 years ago. The **Jomon period**, named after a rope pattern found on the oldest form of pottery in the world, began around 10,000BC but the country was not unified until the 4th century AD, when the **Yamato dynasty** was established and the title of emperor first used.

### A capital is established: 710-794

Up until the 7th century, tradition dictated that the capital was changed every time a new emperor ascended the throne. But in 710, the Imperial Court decided to settle in Nara, a city still proud that it was the capital of Japan and the home of seven emperors in just 74 years before the court was moved to Nagaoka (in Niigata prefecture) in 784 and then to Kyoto in 794.

The **Nara period** was marked by influences from China and the growing popularity of its imported religion, Buddhism. The main Chinese influence is visible today in Todai-ji: this temple also contains Japan’s biggest Buddha statue, a bronze image cast in 752. Religious riches and treasure aside, hunger and poverty were commonplace outside the Imperial Court, though there was worse to come in later centuries.

### Flourishing of the arts but rivalry outside the court: 794-1185

Nara was soon overrun with temples and Shinto shrines, and Emperor Kammu could no longer bear being closeted there. So a new capital was established, in 794, in Heian (present-day Kyoto), where it remained until 1868. A symbolic fresh start was assured by a complete reconstruction of the city on a grid layout.

Japan’s most famous literary work, *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, was written during the **Heian period**, as was *The Pillow Book*, a revealing account of life at the Imperial Court by a woman very much on the inside, lady-in-waiting Shonagon Sei. It was not just literature that flourished, but painting, sculpture and poetry; the emperor hosted outdoor parties at which guests would be invited to compose haiku over cups of sake.

Outside the walls of the Imperial Court, far from the parties and poetry gatherings, a new warrior class was emerging: the **samurai**. The bloodiest military campaign of all for national supremacy raged between two rival clans: the Minamoto (also known as Genji), and the Taira (or Heike). The epic war, now steeped in legend as much as historical fact, climaxed in a sea battle in 1185, and the Tairas were routed. But peace was short lived and the feudal era had begun.

## RELIGION

The two main religions in Japan are **Shinto** (literally, ‘the way of the gods’), Japan’s indigenous religion, and **Buddhism**, imported from China.

Shinto’s origins extend as far back as Japanese mythology, to the belief that all aspects of the natural world (water, rocks, trees and wind, for example) have their own spirit/deity (*kami*). Shinto was the official state religion until 1945, up to which time the emperor himself was considered to be a divine being. There is no founder nor are there any scriptures. Buddhist places of worship are temples, the names of which in Japanese mostly end with the suffix ‘-ji’ but some end ‘-in’ and ‘-dera’. In Shinto, places of worship are shrines and are much plainer in design than the often brightly coloured temples. Shrines are most obviously distinguished from temples by the *torii* (gate) which marks the entrance to the shrine precinct. The names of shinto shrines end with a variety of suffixes but the most common are *-jinja*, *-gu* and *-taisha*. The harmonious relationship between Shinto and Buddhism means it is not unusual to see a shrine and a temple on the same site.

Despite numerous attempts by foreign missionaries, **Christianity** has made few inroads into Japan, though the Western white wedding is popular. Some of the churches and chapels you might see in Japan have been built solely for white weddings and are not consecrated for religious services.

## THE PEOPLE

Of the over **126 million** people living in Japan, the vast majority are Japanese by birth. Commentators liken Japan to an exclusive club; only rarely is anyone from outside the circle given the much sought-after membership card – a Japanese passport. History disputes the much-touted fact that the Japanese are an entirely homogenous people since the country is said to have been first settled by migrants from various parts of mainland Asia. The Ainu, an ethnic

### ❑ OMOTENASHI

The concept of *omotenashi* (at its simplest meaning ‘hospitality’) has been part of Japanese life for hundreds of years but came to the fore for foreigners when it was mentioned by Christel Takigawa (a Japanese/French television news journalist) as part of the presentation for Tokyo’s bid to host the 2020 Olympics.

Hospitality is not unique to Japan but once you have been there you know there is something different about it. The word *omotenashi* stems from the verb *motenasu*; this means to welcome, to entertain and to offer hospitality. In general the host should look after their guest(s) selflessly, attentively and unobtrusively. Examples of *omotenashi* in Japan can be seen through many simple things: when you enter a restaurant, staff will call out *irasshaimase* (welcome); many hotels and tourist attractions provide umbrellas that can be borrowed; in shops even the simplest of things are wrapped up beautifully; retail and train staff bow to show respect; if you ask for directions whoever you ask is likely either to accompany you to where you want to go, or at least go overboard to make sure you find what you want. This is one of the many things that make a stay in Japan a wonderful experience.

drum. Bare-chested taiko drummers beating a furious rhythm while drenching themselves and their instruments in sweat are a staple sight and sound at most Japanese festivals. Shaped like a cylinder, the body of the taiko drum is hollow and covered at both ends with leather. The best-known taiko drummers are the Kodo drummers based on Sado Island (see pp182-3 and p352).

Smaller hand drums, known as *tsuzumi*, are often used in Noh and kabuki.

## Popular culture

**Manga and anime** Manga (comic books) are big business in Japan, with an annual turnover of about ¥400 billion; they cover every theme and genre so appeal to all sections of the population. *Manga kissa* (manga cafés) are popular places for people to read manga but these days manga are also available online as ‘webmanga’. One of the best-known manga is *Tetsuwan Atomu* (called Astro Boy outside Japan) by Osamu Tezuka; he is also credited as the father of anime as he adapted this manga for the television screen. *Doraemon*, a blue robot from the 21st century, is another manga character that was developed into anime. The genre was then expanded by Miyazaki Hayao; his company, Studio Ghibli (see p124), has created some of the most successful anime movies.

For more information, visit [animetourism88.com/en](http://animetourism88.com/en).

**Pachinko parlours** Another popular form of entertainment is a trip to the pachinko parlour. Players sit in front of upright pinball machines and feed them with tiny silver ball bearings. The machines then rattle a lot and, with luck (little skill seems to be involved), more silver balls pour out through the slot into a tray; these can be exchanged for prizes such as washing powder and tins of ham. It’s illegal to play for cash in the pachinko parlours so owners get around the law by allowing customers to exchange the unglamorous prizes for money off the premises, usually at a semi-hidden booth outside. The noise coming from the parlours mean they are not hard to find.

## Practical information for visitors

### ARRIVING IN JAPAN

Japan has three major international gateways: Narita Airport (see box on pp130-1), east of Tokyo; Haneda Airport (see box on p131), south of central Tokyo; and Kansai International Airport (see p151), near Osaka. Don’t confuse Osaka (Itami) Airport with Kansai Airport; the latter is the one you are likely to arrive at even though the former has some international flights from destinations in Asia. See box on p49 for details of other airports with international flights.

Immigration and Customs are efficient at all the airports but as with most countries if lots of flights arrive at the same time there can be long queues. Tourists will have a ‘Landing Permission’ stamp confirming their ‘Temporary Visitor’ status put in their passport.



### ❏ CABLE CARS AND ROPEWAYS

An important point to note is that in Japan a **cable car** is called a funicular/mountain railway and a **ropeway** is what many others consider a cable car (ie carriages suspended from a cable).

### By taxi

Taxis are usually available outside most stations but it's also fine to flag one down in the street if the red light in the lower right-hand corner of the windscreen is on. The starting fare is about ¥530-730 for the first 2km plus around ¥100 for each additional 500m; a surcharge (up to 30%) is added between 11pm and 5am. Though taxis are not cheap if you are on your own, they can be very good value if there are three or four of you, especially in rural areas where bus services are limited. Most drivers wear white gloves and peaked caps, and you don't even have to open the door yourself because the driver operates the rear passenger doors. In fact they will be upset if you do try to open or close the door! If you expect to use taxis it would be worth downloading the JapanTaxi **app**.

**Uber** (📱 [uber.com/jp/en](https://uber.com/jp/en)) is available in some cities in Japan.

### By bicycle

It is possible to rent a bike at many stations; details are given where relevant. If you rent a bicycle in an urban area, note that there are strict rules about parking, so always check for signs saying parked bikes may be removed and impounded.

## ACCOMMODATION

There is a wide range of possibilities and accommodation is almost always of a high standard.

**Rates** quoted throughout this guide are generally the lowest you should expect to pay. However, many places now use flexible pricing so it is always worth checking, even if the rates quoted in this guide seem more than you'd like to pay. Not surprisingly, in holiday periods rates increase considerably.

Both ryokan and minshuku usually charge on a per person (pp) basis; rates quoted in the text are per person based on two sharing. Solo travellers are likely to have to pay a higher rate, if not the rate for two people; per person rates for more than two sharing a room, and also for children, are often lower.

It's wise, though not essential, to **book accommodation**, at least for the first few nights, before you arrive in Japan as it means when you are there you can focus on sightseeing. If planning to visit places such as Kyoto in March/April (cherry blossom time) or October/November (autumn leaves) it is worth booking well in advance. Whenever you book it's best to do so either through the relevant hotel/ryokan's website or by email, clearly stating dates and room requests. Telephoning may be complicated and anyhow hoteliers much prefer to have your requirements in writing. Another option is to use an online booking agency (see box on p69) but booking direct is always best. Always make sure you receive written confirmation and take that with you to show at check-in.

suite facilities; instead there will be common single-sex baths (see box on p72) and separate toilets/basins. Meals are eaten at set times (usually 6 or 6.30pm for supper and about 7.30am for breakfast). Invariably the food is Japanese, so be prepared for (raw) egg, fish and miso soup at breakfast! However, many minshuku in touristy areas also offer a Western breakfast. Urban minshuku are usually fine but are often less personal and characterful than rural ones, which might be in old farmhouses so offer a great experience of being in a traditional Japanese home. The rate usually includes half board (an evening meal & breakfast); expect to pay ¥7000-9000 per person (pp), see also p67. However, room only, or bed & breakfast, rates are also usually available.

**Pensions** are the Western-style equivalent of minshuku and are popular with Japanese. Like minshuku, they are usually small, family-run affairs but they offer beds rather than futons. Rates also start from around ¥7000pp including (a Western) breakfast, but not an evening meal.


## Hotels


Often conveniently located near railway stations (if a hotel's name includes 'ekimae' it may literally be opposite, or less than a 10-minute walk from, the station), **business hotels** have plenty of single rooms in addition to twins and doubles, and occasionally triples/quads. They should not be confused with Japan's infamous capsule hotels (see p73), since you get a proper room.


Most rooms are Western style, en suite, and are clean and tidy, but, as they cater for business travellers, they rarely have much space to move about in or hang your clothes. A yukata, TV, internet access/wi-fi and coffee/tea-making facilities are almost always provided. The (compact) toilet/bath units generally include towels, toiletries and a hairdryer; shaver sockets are less common. Some hotels also have single-sex onsen/onsen-type baths for all guests to use.

Hotels almost always have a selection of vending machines (soft drinks, beer, sake, and perhaps pot noodles and ice-cream). Guests may also be able to


### ❏ ONLINE ACCOMMODATION AGENCIES

The agencies listed below specialise in Japan; there are of course international agencies, such as  booking.com, which also can book accommodation in Japan.

● **Japan iCan** ( japanican.com) Part of the JTB group (see p38) and the site lists over 4000 hotels and ryokan.


● **Rakuten** ( travel.rakuten.com) One of the biggest online accommodation reservation companies in Japan.

● **Japanese Guest Houses** ( japaneseguesthouses.com) Focuses on ryokan but also lists some of the temple lodgings on Koya-san.

● **Japanese Inn Group** ( japaneseginnngroup.com) A nationwide directory of ryokan and minshuku (not a chain of inns) that are used to dealing with foreign guests.

● **Japan Ryokan and Hotel Association** ( ryokan.or.jp/english) Lists independently owned places.

● **Japan Hotel Association** ( j-hotel.or.jp) A wide range of upmarket hotels offering Western-style accommodation.

● **Jalan** ( jalan.net) The listings on the English page are not as comprehensive as on the Japanese but it is still a useful resource.

and/or Japanese tea. Some ryokan offer a choice of Japanese- or Western-style breakfast; the latter is now often a buffet meal.

### Other accommodation options

**Renting an apartment/house** is a brilliant way to get an idea what living in Japan would really be like. Japan Experience (📄 [japan-experience.com](http://japan-experience.com)) has over 50 properties (in Tokyo, Kyoto, Takayama, Kanazawa and from 2022 Okayama); the properties sleep 2-6 people (¥10,000-49,500 per night). A major benefit is their Travel Angel service; you will be met at the property by an 'angel' and they will help you settle into your accommodation and will be happy to answer queries throughout your stay. If booked in advance many can also act as a tour guide. Machiya Residence Inn (📄 [kyoto-machiya-inn.com](http://kyoto-machiya-inn.com)) has *machiya* (traditional Japanese town houses) in both Kyoto and Kanazawa.

**Airbnb** (📄 [airbnb.com/s/Japan](http://airbnb.com/s/Japan)) has become very popular in Japan but, as in many other parts of the world, the hotel industry was unhappy about the loss of custom and some residents complained as they felt their local area was becoming overwhelmed with foreigners. As a result legislation was introduced requiring all places to be registered and hosts have to display their registration number on their listing and also take a copy of the information page in your passport. Tomareru (📄 [en.stayjapan.com](http://en.stayjapan.com)) is a Japanese equivalent to Airbnb.

If all else fails and you're stuck for accommodation in a city, find out the location of the nearest **capsule hotel** (¥3000-4000pp), good for a one-off novelty but not recommended for claustrophobics and the majority are for men only. However, in places such as Kyoto and Tokyo, capsule hotels for tourists (such as 📄 [ninehours.co.jp](http://ninehours.co.jp)) have opened, but the floors are usually single sex. First Cabin (📄 [first-cabin.jp/en](http://first-cabin.jp/en)) offers a more de luxe version.

Alternatively, consider a **manga kissa** (manga café) – these are meant for people who want to play computer games so aren't necessarily the quietest place, and you will need to 'sleep' in a chair, but they are cheap (¥1000-2000pp) and often soft drinks and light snacks are provided for free.

A night in a Japanese **love hotel** is just as much an experience of Japan as is a stay in a traditional ryokan. During the day, rooms are rented by the hour, but from around 10pm they can be booked for an overnight stay (¥6000-12,000). Like capsule hotels, you'll find love hotels in big cities and sometimes around mainline stations. They're easy to spot because the exteriors are usually bright and garish. The over-the-top design continues inside with a variety of themed rooms, which may contain bizarre extras such as rotating beds, tropical plants and waterfalls. The service in these places, by contrast, tends to be very discreet and you are unlikely ever to see a staff member – the check-in and check-out process is designed to protect customers' anonymity. A display board at the entrance informs guests what rooms are available; choose one that



Sleeping compartments in a capsule hotel

another app giving free access to thousands of wi-fi hotspots; the full list can be accessed if you get the premium code from a partner store or city in Japan – look for the Travel Japan sign in the shop window.

If coming from North America your cellphone provider may include roaming in Japan. If not, and for anyone else without free roaming in Japan, **pocket wi-fi rental** is available from: Softbank (🌐 [www.softbank-rental.jp/en](http://www.softbank-rental.jp/en)), PuPuRu (🌐 [pupuruwifi.com](http://pupuruwifi.com)), eConnect (🌐 [econnectjapan.com](http://econnectjapan.com)) and Rental wifi (🌐 [rentalwifi.com](http://rentalwifi.com)). Some rail pass agents (see pp37-9) also offer this so you can arrange wi-fi access in advance of travel to Japan.

Wi-Fi is available in major JR stations and Western-style accommodation but not always in Japanese-style accommodation. Access is generally free for guests (except in some upmarket hotels). Many Western-style hotels also have a computer with internet access that guests can use. *Manga kissa* マンガ喫茶 (comic-book cafés) are good places to access the internet or wi-fi. They are often near railway stations and usually open 24 hours a day.

## Phone

**Mobile (cell) phones** 携帯電話 (*keitai denwa*) are the ultimate everyday accessory in Japan as around the world. Most smartphones with at least 3G (and assuming any contract you have includes roaming) are now compatible with the Japanese network, but you won't be able to use your own phone if it relies on GSM because there is no GSM network in Japan. It is definitely worth using a service which will allow you to use mobile data as the ability to look at online maps or tourist information is invaluable on the move, and Japan is safe enough that there is little risk of your phone being snatched from you.

If you have a compatible phone (it also must not be locked to your mobile network) you can **rent a SIM card** from a Japanese provider: SoftBank has counters at the main airports but the best way to do this is to reserve online (🌐 [www.softbank-rental.jp/en](http://www.softbank-rental.jp/en)). You can rent a SIM card (from ¥110/day but min three days, phone calls from ¥110/min, texts ¥15 in Japan, ¥150 if international; unlimited data capped at ¥990/day; admin fee ¥330). If you have one of the newest smartphones with **eSim** capability check whether your network provider includes Japan.

You can also **rent a mobile phone** (from ¥260/day) without reserving online in advance, but for both if you book at least three days before you arrive, you can be informed of the number for your rented SIM card/phone and you can then give that to family and friends before you leave for Japan. You'll need to provide proof of identity (such as your passport) when you pick up any SIM card/phone you rent and you will need a credit/debit card.

If you are more interested in data and don't mind not having the ability to make calls or send regular texts you can also purchase a prepaid data SIM card. Sakura Mobile (🌐 [sakuramobile.jp](http://sakuramobile.jp)) offers SIM cards for collection from major

### 📴 SILENT MODE

Note that on almost every railway/subway line or bus service in Japan mobile phones must be on silent mode; on a train if you really need to make or receive a call you should go to the area between carriages.



airports from ¥4950/7150/9900 for 8/15/30 days for unlimited data; 31- to 90-day packages are also available. Softbank (☎ [www.softbank-rental.jp/en/prepaid](http://www.softbank-rental.jp/en/prepaid)) is cheaper at ¥6500 for 31 days but only offers 3GB of data (each additional 500MB is ¥1650); alternatively it costs ¥7150 for 10GB for up to 90 days.

Another option is getting a **prepaid SIM card** (nano & micro ¥3000/4000 1.0G/2.0G 30/90 days) from a vending machine at the airport, or around the country in convenience stores, such as Newdays. Even if you do rent a SIM card it is likely to be cheaper to make calls from a public phone.

The proliferation of mobile phones has led to a decrease in the number of **public telephones**, though some are being converted to offer mobile-phone charging. National and international calls are possible from some green phones and all the grey ones; both types accept ¥10 and ¥100 coins and/or telephone cards. It's best to use only ¥10 coins for local calls since change is not given. Local calls cost ¥10 per minute. **Prepaid telephone cards** (¥1000) are sold at some shops, kiosks, and from vending machines inside some phone boxes.

**Making a call** When calling **city-to-city** in Japan dial the area code first (all phone numbers in this guide include the area code). The area code can be omitted if calling a local number from a landline; for example, if you call a Tokyo number from within Tokyo omit the 03. Numbers starting 0120 or 0088 are toll free. To make an **international call**, dial 010 followed by the country code, area code (minus the initial '0') and telephone number.

## LANGUAGE

Japanese is one of the most difficult languages to learn to read and write, mixing as it does Chinese characters, known as *kanji*, with two different syllabaries, *hiragana* (used for words that have no easy kanji and to help non-kanji readers read Japanese) and *katakana* (used for writing words which the Japanese have borrowed from other languages); see p498 & p499 for a guide to these scripts. That said, basic greetings and phrases are not difficult to remember (see p498) and any efforts to speak Japanese will be appreciated. The Japanese always seem amazed and impressed that foreigners can speak their language, especially given the various levels and subtle nuances that need to be used in certain situations.

### ❑ HI-TECH ATTENTION TO THE CALL OF NATURE

There are free, clean **toilets (restrooms)**, generally now with toilet paper, virtually everywhere you go in Japan. Most are Western style, though on some local service trains and occasionally in public toilets you'll still find Asian squat toilets.

Most Western-style toilets in Japan have a control panel as there are usually several functions: on even the most basic models the seats are heated and in addition to the flush there is likely to be a button that activates a warm-water spray and another to adjust the pressure of the spray and move its position/angle. Other functions you may find are: a power deodoriser; nozzle-cleaning; a choice of background music, or a flushing sound, to hide your own natural noises; and a built-in bidet. For a chance to learn more about toilets in Japan visit the Toto Museum in Kokura, see p408.

## ❑ JAPANESE GARDENS: A POTTED HISTORY

Japanese gardens (*teien*) were first developed during the 8th century, in what is now Nara Prefecture. Inspired by Buddhists from China and Korea they were designed to imitate **natural scenes**, in particular the seashore, and often featured ponds large enough to go boating on, with rocks for islands and stones representing sand.

In the Heian era (794-1185), when the capital moved to Kyoto, gardens became simpler though the boating ponds remained and waterfalls were added; gardens in this period were not intended for walking around. Background, or **'borrowed' scenery** became an important design feature and one which pertains to this day; Korakuen (see p297) is an example of this, making fine use of Okayama Castle for its backdrop.

The **dry garden** (*kare-sansui*) came to the fore in the Muromachi period (1333-1568). In these gardens sand and fine gravel were used to represent water, and rocks and stones symbolised islands. Dry gardens were common in Zen temples, the idea being that they should be viewed from a particular place and used for contemplation. Probably the best-known example is Ryoan-ji (see p252) in Kyoto.

The **tea-ceremony garden** developed in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1603). It was only then that gardens were designed to be walked through – on the way to a tea house. Konchi-in in Nanzen-ji (see p254), Kyoto, is a well-known example.

The concept of the **stroll garden** evolved further in the Edo period (1603-1868), this time incorporating a variety of areas, each with a different view, for *daimyo* (feudal lords) and their guests to wander around. Many gardens also had a tea house and ponds but the latter were by now too small for boating. These were 'secular' gardens in that they were not associated with temples. The main feature of the Meiji era (from 1868) was the spread of Western influences throughout every aspect of Japanese life. In gardens this was seen through the introduction of lawns and parks; good examples of a stroll garden are Rikugien (see p114) in Tokyo, Fujita Memorial Japanese Garden (see p343) in Hirosaki, and Ritsurin-koen (pp478-9) in Takamatsu.

In general in Japanese gardens, trees are trained and pruned to show their best qualities and natural landscapes are reproduced in miniature.

Another option is to go to a **public bath-house** (*o-sento*). Here the water is not naturally hot but in other respects the experience is the same. Unlike onsen most people in a sento are likely to know each other and thus they can have a very communal feel. For further information visit [sentoguide.info](http://sentoguide.info).

## ❑ MANHOLE-COVER SIGHTSEEING

As you walk around look down for the colourful and entertaining manhole covers. These generally provide a functional service, but in Japan local governments use them as a way to promote the attractions in their area. One place with a wonderful range is Yuda-onsen (see pp282-3). Pokémon fans should keep an eye out for Poké Lids ([local.pokemon.jp/en/manhole](http://local.pokemon.jp/en/manhole)).

The manhole cover in this photo was spotted in Kinosaki-onsen (see p162).



## Railway history

When **Commodore Perry** appeared off the coast of Japan in 1853 with the US Navy's 'Black Ships' (see p56), the country, like many others, had no railway. But in the years since Japan ended its policy of self-isolation, its rail network has become the envy of the world. This transformation, given the country's topography and history of devastating earthquakes, is nothing short of extraordinary.

### PIONEERING EARLY DAYS

One of Perry's gifts on his second trip to Japan in 1854 was a quarter-size steam locomotive and accompanying track. However astonishing the sight of this miniature railway set up on the beach must have been, it would be a mistake to believe that the Tokugawa shogunate was entirely ignorant of technological developments outside Japan.

From the tiny Dutch enclave in Nagasaki, the only point of contact with the outside world in 265 years of self-imposed isolation, the Shogun had received an annual report on developments in the rest of the world. In 1865 **Thomas Glover** (see box on p442) brought the first steam railway locomotive to Nagasaki and tested it on a line he built there. But it was not until the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (see pp56-7) that the idea of constructing a proper railway in Japan began to take root. The Japanese government employed a number of British engineers and pioneering railwaymen to assist in the development of the country's rail network, notably **Edmund Morel** (1841-71); Morel (see p167) was appointed chief engineer but died a year before the opening of Japan's first railway line.

In October 1872, 92 years before the inauguration of the Tokaido shinkansen between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka, **Emperor Meiji** and his entourage set off on the country's first official train ride, a 30km journey from Shimbashi, in Tokyo, to Yokohama, though services from the then Shinagawa station had been operating for a month. The driver for this historic journey was British and the coach the Emperor rode in was made in Birmingham (UK).

Some Japanese guests, it is reported, upheld tradition by taking off their shoes before boarding so travelled to Yokohama in their socks.

*The steaming locomotive passing across the field full of marigold at night*  
(KAZUKO KONAGAI)

money for 20 years. Its liabilities on that April Fool's Day stood at ¥37 trillion (£160 billion), more than the combined debts of Brazil and Mexico, and £12 billion more than the US budget deficit of the previous year.

**Privatisation** of the railway was achieved by carving up the network into six regional passenger railway companies and one nationwide freight company, to be known collectively as the JR Group. In a bid to reduce some of the debt, unprofitable lines were closed, railway land was sold and staffing levels reduced. No longer constricted by the rules governing a nationalised company, the JR companies have diversified into everything from department stores and shopping centres to hotels, restaurants, hospitals, travel agencies and car rental.

### Future expansion and technology

In the 21st century, expansion of the shinkansen continues apace. In Kyushu, the first section (Takeo-osen to Nagasaki) of the West (Nishi) Kyushu shinkansen line from Shin-Tosu to Nagasaki will open on 23rd September 2022, but it is not certain when construction of the Shin-Tosu to Takeo-osen line will start. The Hokuriku shinkansen extension from Kanazawa to Tsuruga (via Fukui) is under construction and services should start in 2024 but the line may then be extended to Kyoto (via Obama) to link with the Tokaido shinkansen. In Hokkaido work has started extending the shinkansen line from Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto as far as Sapporo and the line should be completed by 2030. And in 2021 JR East started test runs of autonomously operated shinkansen.

New technology is not the preserve of the shinkansen – JR East started to test its first **hydrogen fuel-cell train** in March 2022; the hope is that they can one day replace diesel services on lines not yet electrified. And JR Central (JR Tokai) is already looking towards the next generation of high-speed travel. It's hoped that the driverless **Maglev**, or 'superconducting magnetically levitated linear motor car', will one day travel at over 500kph – in 2015 on a test run it created a new record going at 603kph – along an as yet only partially constructed line, hypothetically bringing Shinagawa (Tokyo) and Nagoya to within 40 minutes of each other. Construction of the line began in 2015 and deep underground for Shinagawa station in 2016 – in fact most of the line will be underground – but arguments persist over funding for the project (the total construction cost is estimated at ¥10.5 trillion) and Shizuoka prefecture is not happy with the planned route and lack of station in its prefecture. The Chuo shinkansen, as it is called, to Nagoya is scheduled to open in 2027 (with an extension from there to Osaka to be completed by 2045), but it's already predicted to be delayed and also to become the most expensive transport project in the world.

As room to expand at home reaches saturation point, some of the JR companies, particularly JR East and JR Central, are promoting their technology and expertise abroad.

### STEAM RAILWAYS

In 1936 around 8700 steam locomotives were in operation across Japan. Complaints about the emission of black smoke, along with technological



## The railway today

### JAPAN RAIL GROUP (JR)

The railway in Japan is one of the most efficient in the world and it reaches nearly all parts of the four main islands. The bulk of the rail network is operated by six regional companies known collectively as the **JR Group** (referred to as JR). For the holder of a Japan Rail Pass, the six companies can be considered one national company because the pass is valid on virtually all trains across the JR network. Every day, about 26,000 JR trains travel on the network which covers about 20,000 kilometres; these range from some of the fastest trains in the world to one-carriage diesel trains on remote rural lines.


Additional lines are operated by **private** and **third-sector railways**; third-sector lines are generally owned by local or central government, and they may be former JR lines, but they are usually operated by private companies.


Japan well deserves its reputation for train **punctuality**; trains are officially late if they are more than one minute off the published schedule. On some lines they are meant to stay within 15 seconds and drivers assiduously check the time and any deviation from the schedule as they pass each station. Most services have a window built into their schedule so that any lost time can be made up along the way and railway operators take precautions where possible, such as spraying warm water onto the tracks on the Tohoku shinkansen to ensure that snow does not affect service. However, over the last few years the number of cancellations and service disruptions has increased. Most problems – such as extreme weather conditions, serious earthquakes, and ‘human damage accidents’ (personal injuries) – are out of the rail companies’ control. If there is a delay, staff will make frequent apologies but usually in Japanese only.

Japan’s track record for **safety** is also notable, particularly for the shinkansen where there has not been a single fatality due to derailment, or an accident, since services began in 1964. In all these years shinkansen have only derailed three times. Special shinkansen, nicknamed the ‘Dr Yellow’ for

#### THE JAPANESE RAILWAY SOCIETY



The Japanese Railway Society ( [japaneserailwaysociety.com](http://japaneserailwaysociety.com)) was founded in 1992 and now has members all over the world. The society takes an interest not just in the old steam days, but in the state of Japan’s railway today as well as how it might look in the future. Members receive a quarterly journal, *Bullet-In*, and a variety of events are held throughout the year; if interested in joining visit the website for details.

The society organises occasional **rail trips** to Japan generally through either Festiniog (see p37), or Railway Touring Co ( [www.railwaytouring.net](http://www.railwaytouring.net)).

## THE TRAINS

### Shinkansen

Japan's flagship trains are the shinkansen, better known as the bullet train because the front of the first such train looked like a bullet, but also of course because it travelled very fast. The fastest now, the N700S (introduced in July 2020), used on Nozomi services between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka, can go up to 360kph (223mph); this version also has battery power so trains can continue in the event of an earthquake.

The front of the first shinkansen may have resembled a bullet but since then they have become much more stylish, particularly the Hayabusa and Komachi with their approximately 15m-long nose; the Komachi was designed by Ken (Kiyoyuki) Okuyama, who designs Ferraris.

Shinkansen offer what is almost certainly the smoothest train ride in the world as the train appears to glide effortlessly along the line; this is largely because, apart from the Akita and Yamagata shinkansen, the trains run on dedicated tracks and the lines were built with as few bends as possible.

Ordinary Class **seating configuration** is 3 x 2 or 2 x 2 and, as with most trains in Japan, seats can be turned round so that a group travelling together can face each other. Seats can also be reclined and some have foot rests. Green Class seating is either 2 x 2, or 2 x 1. JR East also offers Gran Class (see box on p318) where the seating is 2 x 1.

**Facilities** on board include: both Japanese- and Western-style toilets; a nappy-changing room which can be used as a sick bay by anyone who is not feeling well – the key is available from the train conductor; booths where you can make a phone call from your mobile/cell phone; and a few trains have booths for smokers. Since there are no dining/buffet cars and trolley services are now either non-existent or at best rare, it's best to stock up with **food and drink** before you travel (see box on p102).

### Limited express services

Next step down are limited express services (**LEX**; called *tokkyu*), which run on the same tracks as the ordinary trains but stop only at major stations.

Most LEX services are modern and offer almost as smooth a ride as the shinkansen but a few (mainly diesel-powered ones) are not quite as glamorous or hi-tech. Both JR and the private companies constantly try to outdo each other

#### RAIL MUSEUMS

Rail museums of varying size and interest are spread throughout Japan; space does not permit a nationwide listing but some worth visiting are:

- **Honshu:** Railway Museum, Omiya (see p321); Linear Railway Hall (also known as SCMAGLEV and Railway Park), Nagoya (see p204); Kyoto Railway Museum, Kyoto (see p256); Usui Pass Railway Heritage Park, Yokokawa (see p181).
- **Hokkaido:** Otaru Transportation Museum, Otaru (see p369).
- **Kyushu:** Kyushu Railway History Museum, Moji (see p409).
- **Shikoku:** Shikoku Railway History Park (see p476).

## ❑ WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Japan is one of the safest countries in the world and it's unlikely women travelling alone will have any problems. However, in crowded commuter trains women might find themselves being groped. The best thing to do is shout out – the offender will be embarrassed – or try to move away. For this reason some trains (both overground and subway) have dedicated women-only carriages during peak periods.

The best advice for safe travel is the same as for anywhere else in the world: don't take unnecessary risks, know where you're going if someone invites you out, and always arrange to meet in a public place.

the Japanese rail network is so efficient. Wearing a suit, cap and regulation white gloves, the driver of the smallest local train seems just as meticulous as the driver of a 16-carriage shinkansen. Before the train pulls away from each stop the driver points at the clock as if to confirm the train is indeed leaving on time, then points ahead to check the signals have given the all clear to go.

## Sleeper trains

The opening of the Hokkaido shinkansen and therefore the end of conventional line services through the Seikan Tunnel means there are now very few regular sleeper services but there are some luxury ones; see box below for further details.

## ❑ SLEEPER SERVICES

### Conventional services

- The **Sunrise-Izumo** (Tokyo to/from Izumoshi; 12 hours; see box on p288) and **Sunrise-Seto** (Tokyo to/from Takamatsu; 10 hours) operate once daily and are coupled together to Okayama.
- **West Express Ginga** This service operates between Kyoto and Izumoshi (May-Sep; 2/week) as a sleeper service – the train has *nobi nobi* 'seating' (capsules where you lie on the carpeted floor) – and between Kyoto and Shingu (Oct-Mar); it travels overnight to Shingu and during the day back to Kyoto. Reservations are essential.

### Luxury 'cruise' trains

JR Kyushu's **Seven Stars in Kyushu** (📄 [cruisetrain-sevenstars.jp/english](http://cruisetrain-sevenstars.jp/english)) was the first truly luxurious sleeper train in Japan. The aim was to provide the most prestigious train journey in Japan, similar to the Venice-Simplon Orient Express and the Blue Train, and also to promote Kyushu to the world. The 7-car train has a lounge car, a dining car and 14 en suite guest rooms (2-3 suites per car). There are two itineraries: 1 night/2 days (from ¥402,000pp), or 3 nights/4 days (from ¥830,000pp); the costs depends on the level of accommodation and type of occupancy (single, twin or triple).

Hot on JR Kyushu's heels were JR East with their **Train Suite Shiki-shima** (📄 [jreast.co.jp/shiki-shima](http://jreast.co.jp/shiki-shima)) and JR West with **Twilight Express Mizukaze** (📄 [twilighexpress-mizukaze.jp/en](http://twilighexpress-mizukaze.jp/en); no special English-language service). The latest is Tokyo's **Royal Express** (📄 [the-royalexpress.jp](http://the-royalexpress.jp)) which operates seasonally in Hokkaido.

These services are so popular that tickets are generally only available through a lottery (see the respective websites for details).

If booking **in person**, thanks to JR's computerised system, you can reserve seats up to the very last minute. Only at peak travel times (see pp8-12) are seats booked weeks in advance. Pass-holders are not penalised for not using a reservation made at a ticket office but if you change your plans hand in your reservation ticket (before the departure time) so it can be cancelled. At any JR station, find the **reservations office** ('**Midori-no-madoguchi**', but in the JR Central/Tokai area look for '**Shinkansen and JR line tickets**'). If the queue is very long and you have a JR pass and want to make a shinkansen seat reservation for that day, go through the ticket gate and find the ticket window in the shinkansen area – it is usually near the ticket gates – as the queues are generally shorter.

Another option is to book at a **Travel Service Center (TSC)**; these are JR-run travel agencies which also handle seat reservations; they are found in larger stations. The regional JR companies call their TSCs by different names but they all offer the same service. Look out for: JR Tokai Tours (in the JR Central area), View Plaza (JR East), Travel Information Satellite (TiS; JR West), Warp (JR Shikoku), Joyroad (JR Kyushu), and Twinkle Plaza (JR Hokkaido).

With a Japan Rail Pass you can make a seat reservation at any JR station so at busy periods it may also be worth going to a smaller station and/or out of peak hours. If you are planning to book a lot of journeys it helps staff if you can show them a typed itinerary detailing dates, times and departure & arrival stations. Most rail companies have **codes for each station** so these can be used instead of the name; these are not included in this guide as we feel showing the actual kanji for where you want to go is safer and this book includes the kanji for all stations.

Say if you have any special requests regarding window or aisle seats and which side of the train you want to sit; for the classic view of Mt Fuji from the shinkansen, ask for a seat on the right side coming from Tokyo, and on the left side from Kyoto. Ticket office staff usually print seat-reservation tickets for foreigners in English (as well as Japanese). For details of how to read your seat-reservation ticket if it is just in Japanese, see the sample on p500.

If you sit in a reserved carriage without a seat reservation the conductor will charge you the appropriate supplement, even if you have a rail pass.

## RAILWAY STAFF

Staff are always impeccably dressed in company uniforms which differ slightly in design from one region to another. Don't expect all staff to speak English, though basic questions concerning platform and destination are usually no problem. Ticket desk staff in major stations (such as Tokyo, Shin-Osaka, Osaka and Kyoto) generally understand and speak English as do some train conductors.

All staff have access to timetables (many now have tablets such as iPads) so they can advise on connection times and even tell you from which platform your next train will be departing.



**Midori-no-madoguchi**  
(Green window reservations office)

### □ STATION MELODIES

Several stations around the world play a melody when trains arrive and depart but possibly Japan is the place where this is most popular, particularly for stations on JR East and private railway lines as well as some subways. In 1971 Keihan Railway, in the Kansai area, was the first rail operator in Japan to introduce melodies at their stations but since JR was privatised, and station managers have had more freedom to do what they want, it has become a common feature – especially as passengers complained about the buzzers and bells that were being used.


In many cases the tunes have some association with the area. For example, you will hear *The Third Man* at Ebisu (Tokyo) because the tune was used for an Ebisu beer advert. Kochi station in Shikoku has the Anpanman theme because Takashi Yanase, its creator, was born there. Railway companies also often have individual melodies for up and down trains; Keihan has taken this to a new level (see box on p249).

Listen out as you arrive at and depart from a station!

● **Waiting rooms** All shinkansen stations have waiting rooms, most with wi-fi available. Other stations generally have areas where you can sit but not necessarily an actual waiting room. There are also waiting areas on some platforms.

### Facilities for the disabled

In the majority of stations there are lifts/elevators, or stair-lifts, from platform to concourse level as well as accessible toilets. However, if travelling on rural lines it is worth checking in advance what facilities there are, especially as some stations are unmanned. At manned stations enquire at the ticket office at least 30 minutes before the departure of your train and staff will assist with boarding. They will also ring ahead to your destination station and arrange for staff there to help you leave the train. On all shinkansen and some LEX services there is at least one car with space for a wheelchair (reservations are recommended) as well as an accessible toilet. However, on some trains, the aisles are too narrow for wheelchair use and thus it may be necessary to be lifted into a seat; the wheelchair will be left in the luggage area. Unless facilities are specifically referred to in the route and city guides, seek assistance from station staff.

For further information visit  [accessible-japan.com](http://accessible-japan.com).

### □ EKIBEN (STATION LUNCH BOX)

'Bento' is a generic term for a packed lunch, but the ekiben is a cut above the rest. The boxes feature local ingredients, so the contents vary around the country, and they are all freshly made – some even state by what time of the day they should be eaten. Most ekiben are rice based but it is also possible to get sandwiches and noodles at ekiben stands. A recent development is that some come with a string which, when pulled, heats the food up. Crucial to the success of an ekiben is the shape of the box and whether the contents are pleasing to the eye as the lid is removed.

There are few trolley services on trains now so it is best to buy an ekiben (most cost ¥800-2000) before you get on a train: there's an ekiben stall (often several) in every station, or you can go to a convenience store, so choosing may be hard.



# TOKYO AND OSAKA

# 4

## Tokyo 東京

It will come as no surprise to first-time visitors that Tokyo is one of the most populous cities in the world; over 13 million people are packed within its perimeters. There's no denying this makes Tokyo seriously overcrowded; rumours that staff are employed at some stations to push passengers on to trains are true, at least during peak times. But if you avoid the morning and evening rush hours, you can travel around Tokyo in comfort. And whatever the time of day, there is a frequent and reliable service on both the trains and the subways.

More surprising than the mass of people is the fact that Tokyo became Japan's official capital only in 1868, when Emperor Meiji was restored to the throne (see pp56-7). For centuries before it was an undiscovered back-water and might have remained so but, in 1603, Ieyasu Tokugawa chose Edo (which was renamed Tokyo in 1868) as the seat of government for the Tokugawa shogunate. Right up until the collapse of the shogunate in 1867, Japan's official capital remained Kyoto but the Emperor who resided there exercised no real power.

In the years since Edo was renamed Tokyo and snatched the capital prize from Kyoto, that small town has become a thriving city of commerce, industry and entertainment and has hosted the summer Olympics twice: in 1964 and in 2021 (though referred to as 2020).

Little of the old Tokyo remains but two areas worth seeking out for their atmosphere are **Asakusa**, home to Senso-ji one of Japan's most vibrant temples, and '**Yanesen**', an old downtown area. Both are a world away from the skyscrapers and neon lights of **Shinjuku** and **Shibuya** – at the latter there is now a vast open-air observation deck which is a must visit. For an even-higher view of Tokyo go to **Tokyo Skytree®**.

The latest hi-tech highlight is at Teamlab's **digital art museums**. Other recommended museums are: **Samurai Museum** (Shinjuku); and **Miraikan** (on Odaiba) where you can meet some robots. Many will still want to visit **Tsukiji**, for the freshest of sushi, even though the main fish market has moved to Shijo-mae.

For some peace and quiet there are gardens such as **Rikugien** (in Koma-gome) and **Hama-Rikyu** (Shimbashi).

*Ah! what memories!  
Myriad thoughts evoked  
by those cherry trees!*  
(MATSUO BASHO)

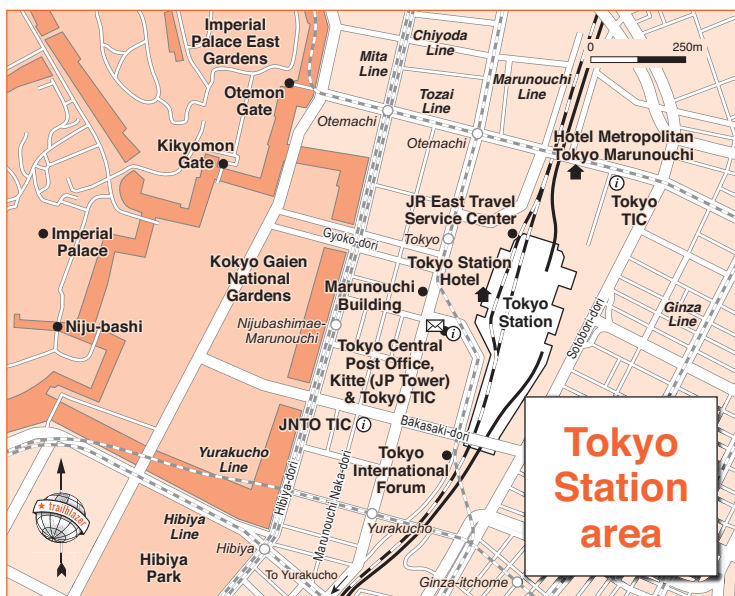
さまざまの事おもひ出す櫻かな

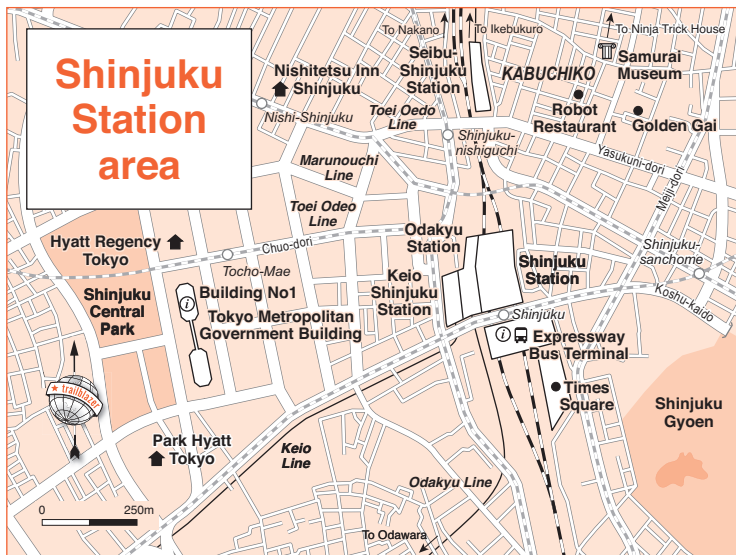
### ❑ MOMIJIYAMA IMPERIAL COCOONERY

Silk production used to be an important industry in Japan but perhaps what is less well known is that since the Meiji era Japanese empresses have been very active in sericulture; there is even a cocoonery at the Imperial Palace as well as three mulberry groves. Empress Masako (see p58) is continuing this tradition and fed mulberry leaves to the silkworms for the first time in May 2020.

Kokyo Gaien, the outer area of the **Imperial Palace** 皇居 (Kokyo) is a 10- to 15-minute walk west from the Marunouchi Exit. Home to the Emperor and his family since 1868, this is a quiet oasis but is off-limits to the public except if on a guided tour (see below), or on two days of the year (2nd Jan and 23rd Feb), when the Emperor, his wife, and other family members wave from a balcony to thousands of enthusiastic flag-waving patriots and tourists.

The guided tour (📄 [sankan.kunaicho.go.jp](http://sankan.kunaicho.go.jp); generally Mon-Fri 10am & 1.30pm; 75 mins; free) takes you past the main buildings, including the Imperial Palace itself, to Niju-bashi and back again. You can either book online or pick up a numbered ticket outside the palace's Kikyomon Gate from an hour before the tour starts. If you book in advance you can turn up later but even so it is likely you will have to hang around for a while. The palace is surrounded by a stone-wall moat: **Niju-bashi** 二重橋 is the nickname for the two bridges that cross the moat and form the official entrance to the Imperial Palace itself. The





**Robot Restaurant** ロボットレストラン ([shinjuku-robot.com](http://shinjuku-robot.com); daily from 4pm, up to four sittings a day; 90 mins; ¥8500, ¥7500 if booked online; bento box meal from ¥1000) is not really a restaurant but a show with both humans and robots. Be aware: it is noisy and there are lots of flashing lights but it is fun to watch. Despite the name, food is not obligatory; many eat beforehand. However, at the time of writing it was closed due to Covid so check before going.

The streets around **Kabukicho** 歌舞伎町, a few minutes' walk north of the East Exit, fill up as the sun sets and the neon is switched on. Cinemas, clubs, restaurants, pubs and hostess bars compete for business and cater for all tastes. **Golden Gai** 新宿ゴールデン街 is a particularly atmospheric area of Kabukicho; it comprises six alleyways with about 200 tiny bars. Some bars only welcome people who have been introduced but others are happy to have tourists.

● **South Exit area** If you were to follow any of the mass of commuters from Shinjuku station between 6am and 8.30am, you would probably end up heading for **Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building** 東京都庁, the workplace of around 13,000 bureaucrats. For tourists the attraction here is the free bird's eye view of Tokyo and even as far as Mt Fuji (Dec-Feb is best for this). To get to the top, take the elevator inside Main Building No 1 (go down the steps outside so that you enter the building at basement level) up to one of two 202m-high observatories (9.30am-11pm; closed 1st & 3rd Tue of the month) on the 45th floor; the South Observatory is generally open during the day and the North at night. On weekdays (10am-3pm) volunteers give **free guided tours** of the observation deck (20 mins; enquire at South Observation Deck Volunteer Desk).



#### SKYTREE'S DESIGN INSPIRATION

Tokyo Skytree® (see pp122-3) is very much a 21st-century structure but its design is heavily influenced by traditional Japanese architecture.

Skytree shares an unlikely affinity with the pagoda at Horyu-ji (see pp270-1), which was built in the 7th century. Both have a central column, but the main feature is that this is not attached to the frame of the building. It is believed that if both parts can move independently it protects the structure as a whole.

No pagoda in Japan has been destroyed as a result of an earthquake, though plenty have by fire; Skytree's ability to withstand an earthquake was tested far sooner than anyone might have imagined. Tests showed it suffered no damage in the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011.

#### Hanayashiki 花やしき

(☎ hanayashiki.net; daily approx 10am-6pm; entry ¥1000, ride tickets ¥100, book of 11 ¥1000, Free Ride Pass ¥2300), just behind Senso-ji, is an amusement/theme park that has operated since 1853 and claims to be the oldest theme park in Japan. Go for the atmosphere rather than thrills.

**Note: if travelling east** the line divides here: Sobu Line services go to Akihabara (pp116-17), Ryogoku (p122), and Kinshicho (p123), and Chuo Line services go to Tokyo station, so make sure you are on the correct train.

**Suidobashi** 水道橋 **Koishikawa Korakuen** 小石川後樂園 (📄 www.tokyo-park.or.jp/teien/en/koishikawa; daily 9am-5pm; ¥300) dates from the Edo period and is one of the oldest landscape gardens in Tokyo; it features weeping cherry trees as well as Japanese and Chinese landscaping. Unfortunately, however, the peace can be shattered every now and then by the screams from people on the rollercoaster in **Tokyo Dome City** 東京ドームシティ (📄 tokyo-dome.co.jp); if that is likely to be your preference see the website for details of the many attractions there. Both are about a 5- to 10-minute walk from the station's West Exit.

**Iidabashi** 飯田橋 Koishikawa Korakuen (see above) is also about a 5- to 10-minute walk from this station but take the East Exit.

**Ichigaya** 市ヶ谷 **Tokyo Anime Center** 東京アニメセンター (📄 animecenter.jp/en; Wed-Mon 11am-8pm; free) has a permanent exhibition space – exhibitions change regularly – as well as an events area, Fun Project Park, where you can draw manga, a café and of course merchandise to buy. It is in DNP Plaza (Ichigayatamachi Building), a 5-minute walk from the station but on the opposite side of the river.

Services then stop at **Yotsuya** 四ツ谷 (CLR); **Shinanomachi** 信濃町, **Sendagaya** 千駄ヶ谷, **Yoyogi** (see p112; CLR), and **Shinjuku** (see pp112-14; CLR). (Only local trains stop at Okubo 大久 and Higashi-Nakano 東中野).

**Nakano** 中野 (CLR) **Nakano Broadway** 中野ブロードウェイ (📄 nbw.jp; daily 10am-8pm, but some shops open at noon) is the go-to shopping mall – particularly Floors 2-4 – for any ‘otaku’ (geeks) but more specifically for anyone into pop culture, such as anime, manga, and/or cosplay. It is also a good place for retro/nostalgic items. For food, including some gigantic soft-cream ice-creams (¥280-600), go to the basement. Take the North Exit and walk through Nakano SunMall shopping street to reach the ‘Broadway’.

**Ogikubo** 荻窪 (CLR) The tiny **Tokyo Polytechnic University Suginami Animation Museum** 東京工芸大学 杉並アニメーションミュージアム (📄 sam.or.jp; Tue-Sun 10am-6pm but check website; free and English audio guide available) has displays on every aspect of animation as well as a theatre showing some anime classics. It is about a 20-minute walk along Omi-Kaido Avenue; alternatively take bus No 0 or 1 from Kanto bus stop (by the North Exit) and get off at Ogikubo Keisatsusho-mae (Ogikubo Police station), a 5-minute journey.

**Mitaka** 三鷹 (CLR; Sobu Line terminates here) Mitaka is the closest station to what is undoubtedly the best-known animation museum in Japan: **Ghibli Museum** ジブリ美術館 (📄 ghibli-museum.jp; Wed-Mon 10am-6pm; ¥1000) is a celebration of the work of Studio Ghibli, in particular leading Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. Explanations are only in Japanese, but it's primarily a visual museum, with many of Miyazaki's original drawings on display and a



up/drop off at certain hotels; see the website for further details.

For a group of up to 4/5 people **taxis** can be a cost efficient way of getting around; fares in central Tokyo cost from ¥420 for 1.052km and ¥80 for every 233 metres then ¥80 for each additional 85 seconds. Taxi companies with English-speaking drivers include Tokyo Taxi Center (☎ tokyo-tc.or.jp).

● **By bicycle** Forget the railway, if only for a day, and take to the streets of the capital on two wheels. Companies such as Tokyo Great Cycling Tour Company (☎ tokyocycling.jp), Tokyo Bike Tour (☎ biketourtokyo.com) and Cycling Holiday Tokyo (☎ cyclingholiday.tokyo) offer tours with English-speaking guides.

## Festivals and events

Senso-ji (see p119) has one of the busiest festival calendars in Japan. One of its more unusual events is the **Asakusa Samba Carnival** (late Aug/early Sep), which combines the Japanese tradition of carrying *mikoshi* (portable shrines) with the rhythm of samba. Dancers from Brazil join in the street party.

Other festivals here include **Setsubun** (Feb 3rd; see p13), and **Kiku Kuyo** (Oct), when the temple area is filled with displays of chrysanthemums. **Sanja Matsuri** happens in the Asakusa area in mid May; this is one of the biggest festivals in Tokyo and it features *mikoshi* processions.

**Kanda Matsuri** is another of the most famous festivals in Tokyo. It is held annually at, and around, Kanda Shrine (see p123) on the Saturday and Sunday closest to May 15th, but on a larger scale in years ending with odd numbers.

**Sumo tournaments** are held at Ryogoku Kokugikan (Jan, May & Sep; see p61 & p122).

The Sumida River is the location for Tokyo's biggest **fireworks display** (Hanabi Taikai; ☎ sumidagawa-hanabi.com); it is held on the last Saturday in July.

For a list of the many other festivals and events happening in Tokyo see ☎ www.gotokyo.org/eventlist/en/list.

## Where to stay

Accommodation is available all over Tokyo, and new options are opening all the time, but this guide focuses on places to stay near stations on the JR Yamanote and Chuo/Sobu lines, the Asakusa district, and at the airports.

Rates quoted are for single or double/twin rooms though most hotels have triple/quad rooms as well, or can add a bed to a room. Unless specified the **rates quoted include (a buffet) breakfast**. See box on p71 for details about accommodation taxes and the box on p70 for information about rates for JR's hotels. For general information about accommodation see pp67-74.

**On the Yamanote Line** A selection of the many hotels near the Yamanote Line stations is listed below.

● **Tokyo Station** (see map p105) For both history and luxury **Tokyo Station Hotel** 東京ステーションホテル (☎ 03-5220 1111, ☎ tokyostationhotel.jp; from ¥48,840/S, ¥59,320/D or Tw) is the place to go but you need a healthy budget. The hotel first opened in 1915 and has been restored to its original European Classical design but with modern features. There is direct access to the hotel from Marunouchi South Gate Exit on the 1st/ground floor. Also at the station is JR's **Hotel Metropolitan Tokyo Marunouchi** ホテルメトロポリタン東京丸の内 (☎ 03-3211 2233, ☎ marunouchi.metropolitan.jp; from ¥19,300/S, ¥22,600/D or Tw). Reception is on the 27th floor and the well-equipped rooms are above that. The cheapest have no view but rail fans in particular should ask for a room overlooking the tracks – you won't want to leave the room. You can even book railway tickets at the reception desk. The hotel is in Sapia Tower and is closest to the Marunouchi Nihombashi Exit.

● **Yurakucho The Peninsula Tokyo** ザ・ペニンシュラ東京 (☎ 03-6270 2888, ☎ tokyo.peninsula.com; from ¥62,480/S, D or Tw), opposite the Imperial Palace, is an elegant hotel with all the facilities and services you would expect at a hotel of this calibre. Take Exit C4 from JR Yurakucho station.

● **Shimbashi Mitsui Garden Hotel Ginza Premier** 三井ガーデンホテル銀座プレミア

Shiinamachi 椎名町 station (approx 8/hr; 2 mins; ¥150). The Inn is a 10-minute walk away (see the map on the website). Alternatively take a taxi from the West Exit of Ikebukuro station (approx ¥1000).

Renting a **Japan Experience** property (see p37) in Ikebukuro also provides a chance to feel as if you're living here.

● **Komagome Hotel Mets Komagome** ホテルメッツ駒込 (☎ 03-5319 0011, 🌐 www.hotelmets.jp/komagome; from ¥16,200/S, ¥25,000/D or Tw) is another JR hotel that offers clean and comfortable accommodation. Follow the signs for the South Exit; turn left at the exit and then left again.

● **Nippori Hotel Sunny** ホテルサニー (☎ 03-3807 3200, 🌐 hotelsunny.co.jp; from ¥7260/S, ¥12,270/D, ¥13,370/Tw) backs onto the railway tracks and is on the East Exit side between the North and South exits. It offers reasonable accommodation and has a restaurant/café (7am-11pm).

**Annex Katsutaro Ryokan** アネックス 勝太郎旅館 (☎ 03-3828 2500, 🌐 annex.katsutaro.com; from ¥7200/S, ¥12,600/D or Tw; up to four people can share a room; breakfast from ¥870), in **Yanesen** (see p115 & map p127) is recommended for its friendly staff, location and facilities. Nearby there are plenty of places to eat as well as a traditional shopping street. It is a 7-minute walk from the West Exit of Nippori station, though it is only a 2-minute walk from Sendagi station (Chiyoda subway line). The website gives clear details.

**In Asakusa** (see map p120) Apart from being a very atmospheric area to stay, Asakusa has places to suit all budgets. Take the Ginza subway line from Ueno (on the Yamanote Line) to Asakusa (the last stop).

**Nui: Hostel, Bar & Lounge Tokyo** (🌐 backpackersjapan.co.jp/nuihostel/english; dorm bed from ¥3000, ¥7600/T with bunk beds, ¥8000/D) is a good budget option. Accommodation options include a female-only dorm and some rooms look over the river. There are also laundry facilities, a shared kitchen as well as a restaurant, bar and lounge. It is a 2-minute walk from Kuramae 蔵前 subway station (Toei Asakusa Line).

**Ryokan Asakusa Shigetsu** 旅館浅草指月 (☎ 03-3843 2345, 🌐 shigetsu.com; from ¥8000/S, Japanese-style rooms from ¥11,000/S, ¥17,000/Tw; Japanese/Western breakfast from ¥1100 if booked in advance) is a great place just off the arcade which leads up to Senso-ji. The top-floor public bath has a view of the temple's pagoda.

At the luxury end of the market, and highly recommended, is **Asakusa View Hotel** 浅草ビューホテル (☎ 03-3847 1111, 🌐 viewhotels.co.jp/asakusa; from ¥14,500/S, ¥26,600/D). The easiest way to get here is to take a Tsukuba Express Line train from Akihabara to Asakusa station as the station is directly connected to the hotel. Alternatively it is a 7-minute walk from Tawaramachi station on the Ginza subway line.

**On the JR Sobu Line** (see map pp126-7) **Tokyo Central Youth Hostel** 東京セントラルユースホステル (☎ 03-3235 1107, 🌐 www.jyh.gr.jp/tcyh/e/top.html; member/non member ¥3530/4130pp; breakfast ¥700) has mostly bunk-bed dorms (4-10 beds) but also two Japanese-style rooms sleeping 4-6 people. It's on the 18th and 19th floors of Iidabashi Central Plaza so expect impressive views; it is a short walk from either the West or East exits at **Iidabashi** station (see p114).

The berths from the former Hokutosei sleeper train provide the dorm accommodation in **Train Hostel HOKUTOSEI** トレインホステル北斗星 (☎ 03-6661 1068, 🌐 trainhostelhokutosei.com; dorm bed from ¥3500, ¥5600/Tw in semi-private room). This JR East hostel has both mixed and single-sex dorms and laundry, kitchen and shower facilities. It is at **Bakurocho** 馬喰町 station – on the left outside Exit 4 (Exit 4 is on the walkway between the station's west and east exits).

**Narita Airport** There are only two accommodation options in the actual airport but no shortage of hotels in the vicinity; for details see 🌐 narita-airport.jp/en/fun/hotel. See also Narita Town, p144.

**Narita Airport Rest House** 成田エアポートレストハウス (☎ 0476-32 1212, 🌐

www.apo-resthouse.com; from ¥9200/S, ¥14,600D or Tw), a somewhat down-at-heel establishment but staying here is convenient, especially if you arrive late at night or are leaving early. Evening meals are available, but you may prefer the wider choice in the airport. A shuttle bus (1-3/hr) operates from bus stand No 16 (Terminal 1) and No 32 (Terminal 2).

The other option is **9Hours** (☎ 0476-33 5109, 🌐 ninehours.co.jp/narita; from ¥6000, day rate ¥1500 first hour then ¥500 per hour; shower ¥1000), a capsule hotel in Terminal 2: the hotel is on the first basement level of Car Park No 2. You can either stay the night or just come here for a short break and/or shower. Men's and women's facilities are separate.

**Haneda Airport The Royal Park Hotel Haneda Airport** ザ ロイヤルパークホテル 東京羽田 (☎ 03-6830 1111, 🌐 the-royal-park.jp/the/tokyohaneda; from ¥18,300/S, ¥22,500/D or Tw) is directly connected to Terminal 3 (3F, departure floor) at Haneda Airport. The rooms are a good size and the staff are friendly.

There are two **Keikyu EX Inn** (🌐 www.keikyu-exinn.co.jp) hotels near the airport: **Haneda Innovation City** 羽田イノベーションシティ (☎ 03-3451 3910; from ¥25,000/S, ¥27,000/D, ¥32,000/Tw), in the shopping/dining/cultural complex called Haneda Innovation City which opened in 2020, and the slightly older **Haneda** 羽田 (☎ 03-3742 3910; from ¥21,300/S, ¥23,800/D, ¥31,300/Tw). There is a free shuttle from the airport or take the monorail to Tenkubashi 天空橋 station, the first stop.

## Where to eat and drink

Tokyo has so many good options – for several years it has had more Michelin-starred restaurants than any other city in the world – that it is hard to recommend anywhere in particular.

Tokyo, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro stations have attached department stores with restaurant floors, which are usually open until 10pm. Ginza, Harajuku and Shibuya are good areas to wander around in search of cafés and restaurants. And if you're staying in Asakusa, there are plenty of small, atmospheric restaurants that serve all kinds of Japanese food. Some of the best but most expensive restaurants are in the top hotels.

Useful resources include: Gurunavi (🌐 r.gnavi.co.jp/en/tokyo), as you can search according to location, type of food and whether there is a menu in English; and 🌐 menu-tokyo.jp.

Also worth looking at, especially for vegetarians/vegans is: 🌐 happycow.net/asia/japan/tokyo.

## Nightlife

Tokyo is very much a 24-hour city, though there are certain areas which really only come alive after dark. You'll never be far from a foreigner-friendly **bar or club** in downtown Roppongi (see box on p118). Shinjuku's Kabukicho (see p113) and Nishime areas are LGBT friendly and Shibuya appeals to the young.


In the summer many hotels and department stores open rooftop **beer gardens** (see p78) which offer 2-hour all-you-can-eat-and-drink deals from ¥3500.

# Around Tokyo

## SIDE TRIPS FROM TOKYO

[See map inside back cover]

The incredible rail network around Tokyo means many places can be reached easily for a day trip. Private line services are more convenient for some – and provide the only option for the Hakone region and the latter part of the journey to Kawaguchi-ko – but overall, with a Japan Rail Pass, or a JR East Pass/Tokyo

Wide Pass, you can make Tokyo your base and maximise use of your pass. Also this saves taking your luggage, though staying a night (or more) – particularly in Hakone, Kawaguchi-ko and Nikko – is recommended. For Mt Takao see box p125 and for more options near Tokyo (mostly north/east)  nearbytokyo.com.

## Yokohama 横浜

The port city of Yokohama (see pp166-8) makes for an interesting day trip. The JR Tokaido Line, from either Tokyo or Shinagawa station (31/18 mins), provides the quickest service but the JR Keihin-Tohoku Line also goes to Yokohama. From either Shinjuku or Shibuya (34/29 mins) take the JR Shonan-Shinjuku Line. There are frequent services whichever line you take.


## Kamakura 鎌倉

[see map p139]


Kamakura, a small town by the sea one hour south of Tokyo, is packed with temples and shrines and makes for a relaxed escape for a day or longer. Kamakura became the seat of feudal government in the 12th century after the struggle for power between the rival Taira and Minamoto clans was won by Yoritomo Minamoto (see p55). To get there by JR take the Yokosuka Line from either Tokyo or Shinagawa (4-5/hr; 60/53 mins); alternatively, if you are based in Shinjuku and don't have a JR pass consider getting Odakyu's Enoshima-Kamakura Freepass (see p140).

### An alternative rail experience

An interesting way to make a round trip to Kamakura involves getting off the Yokosuka Line at **Ofuna** 大船 and transferring to the 6.6km long **Shonan Monorail** 湘南モノレール (4-8/hr; 14 mins; ¥320; IC cards OK); this is unusual in that the track is 10-15 metres above ground level and the carriages are suspended below it so you get a wonderful bird's eye view of life. The line ends at **Shonan-Enoshima** 湘南江の島; turn left out of the station and walk straight down to **Enoshima** 江ノ島 station (Enoshima Dentetsu line) – for Kamakura stay on this side of the tracks.

**Enoshima Dentetsu** 江ノ島電鉄 ( enoden.co.jp; fare from ¥200, Noriorikun 1-day pass ¥650), generally called '**Enoden**', is a single-track railway which runs between Fujisawa and Kamakura (about 10km). The line opened in 1910 and even though most of the train-sets are modern they are still characterful. At times the track runs right by the sea but there is also a short section along a street. If planning to visit the Daibutsu (see opposite) it is best to get off at Hase 長谷 (Enoshima to Hase: 3-5/hr; 17 mins; ¥260), from where it is a 10-minute walk, otherwise stay on till Kamakura (25 mins from Enoshima). Enoden Kamakura station is adjacent to JR Kamakura station.

If you stay on the Yokosuka line it is worth getting off at **Kita-Kamakura** 北鎌倉, the stop before Kamakura station, to see some of the temples there.

Turn right out of the station and walk along till you see some steps leading up to **Engaku-ji** 円覚寺 ( engakuji.or.jp; daily 8am-4.30pm, Nov-Mar to 4pm; ¥300); this is a quiet Zen temple with a 700-year history, set on the wooded hills above Kamakura. The original buildings were either burnt down or destroyed in an earthquake but they have all been replaced. Zen courses are held here in the summer months and are open to the public.

For JR rail-pass holders the best route to Nikko is by shinkansen to Utsunomiya (see p323). If you don't have a JR Pass consider Tobu Railway's (📄 [tobu.co.jp](http://tobu.co.jp)) 2-day World Heritage Area **Nikko Pass** (¥2040); this includes the round trip from Tobu-Asakusa Station to Shimo-Imaichi and unlimited journeys on the train from there to Tobu-Nikko (as well as Tobu's buses in Nikko) and the train to Tobu World Square and/or Kinugawa-Onsen. The 4-day All Area **Nikko Pass** (¥4600, ¥4230 Dec to mid Apr) is valid for a far wider area. The passes also give some discounts on attractions and permit the holder to get off at Tokyo Skytree and Tochigi stations. The passes can only be bought by foreign visitors and they are sold at Tobu-Asakusa and Tobu-Ikebukuro stations.

Tobu Railway has LEX services from Tobu-Asakusa to both Nikko (12/day; approx 110 mins; ¥1390, reserved seat ¥1360-1470) and Kinugawa-onsen (also 12/day; approx 120 mins; ¥1580, reserved seat ¥1470) but you need to change at Shimo-Imaichi to go from one to the other. See box on p92 for details of the steam locomotive services that operate on the line to Kinugawa-onsen.

### **Kawagoe** 川越

To step back in time and discover what life was like in Tokyo more than a century ago, make a side trip by rail to the small town of Kawagoe (see p322). It can be accessed in various ways; the JR Saikyo line (rapid train 3-4/hr; free with JR pass) operates from Osaki, Ebisu, Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro (all on the JR Yamanote line). If you don't have a JR pass consider the Seibu Shinjuku line (frequent service; 45-65 mins; ¥510, LEX reserved seat ¥500) from Seibu-Shinjuku to Hon-Kawagoe, or from Ikebukuro take a Tobu Tojo Line train (📄 [tobu.co.jp/foreign/en](http://tobu.co.jp/foreign/en); frequent service; approx 30 mins; ¥480) to Kawagoe. If you don't have a Japanese passport and plan a day trip get a **Kawagoe Discount Pass** (¥710) or the Premium option (¥970); see the Tobu website for details.

### **Gala Yuzawa** ガーラ湯沢

A fantastic day trip in the winter months is to Gala Yuzawa (see box on p364), the only shinkansen station directly connected to a ski resort. You don't even need to have any ski-wear as it can all be rented in the station. If the weather is good it is a beautiful place to go, even if you don't plan to ski/snowboard.

## **Osaka** 大阪

Tokyo may dazzle with size, Kyoto will awe with history, but the centre of Japan's second largest city-region boasts Japan's funniest dialect, gaudiest shop signs and the culture of *kuidaore*: 'eat till you drop'. Culturally, Osakans are friendly, down to earth, and if the stereotype is to be believed, greet each other with *mokarimakka* (are you making money?). From the eccentricity of Dotombori to the breakdancing teens outside JR Namba station, Osaka offers the chance to experience the 'other' side of Japan: a thriving, living cityscape far removed from the museums, temples and shrines of its more historic neighbours.



at the wheel in the evening: red means sunny, green means cloudy and blue heralds rain. Follow the signs to the hugely popular **Kaiyukan (Osaka Aquarium)** 海遊館 (☐ kaiyukan.com; generally daily 10am-8pm but extended hours at weekends and holiday periods, closed two days a month; ¥2400), which before Covid-19 got more than 2.5 million visitors a year and possibly will do again. Start on the 8th floor and begin your journey down to the ocean depths, encountering sharks, seals, sea lions, dolphins, penguins and many more along the way. A particular highlight is the Pacific Ocean tank, which extends down several floors; the fluorescent floating jellyfish at the end are fabulous too.

Directly behind the aquarium, and accessed via a waterfront walkway, is the berth from which *Santa Maria* サンタマリア (☐ suiyo-bus.osaka/english/santa-maria) departs on tours of the bay area, weather permitting. It's apparently modelled on the ship on which Columbus journeyed to the Americas but is twice as large. A day cruise (daily 11am-5pm; hourly; 45 mins; ¥1600) operates all year but in the peak season there is also a 60-minute Twilight cruise (Apr-Jun & Sep 6.30pm, July & Aug 7pm, Oct 5.30pm; ¥2100); either, but not both, of these can be free with an OAP.

**Solaniwa Onsen** 空庭温泉 (☐ solaniwa.com; Thur-Tue 11am through to 9am; ¥1320-3080, inc yukata rental, depending on the day and time) in Osaka Bay Tower North (Floors 2-5) is spread over 16,500 sq metres – making it the biggest onsen theme park in Japan. Its design theme is Osaka in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1575-1603). There is a good variety of (single-sex) baths but also some private baths for which there is an additional charge. Communal areas include a garden with footbaths as well as plenty of eating and shopping options. It is accessed by a walkway from Bentencho station; take the North Exit from the Osaka Loop Line and Exit 2A from Osaka Metro Chuo Line.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Arrival and departure

International flights land at **Kansai International Airport** (KIX; ☐ kansai-airport.or.jp), built on a man-made island in the middle of Osaka Bay. The efficient Wing Shuttle train (every 3 mins) will take you to the main airport building to collect your luggage and complete the formalities.

Staff at **Kansai TIC** (daily 7am-10pm), in the Arrivals lobby, can advise on travel throughout the Kansai region and sell the Kansai Thru Pass (see box on p35). There are **ATMs** in the Arrivals lobby that accept foreign-issued debit/credit cards.

**Rail-pass exchange orders** can be converted at Kansai Airport station in the JR ticket office (daily 5.30am-11pm). If you are just buying a ticket it may be quicker to use the machines – English is available – especially if you have cash.

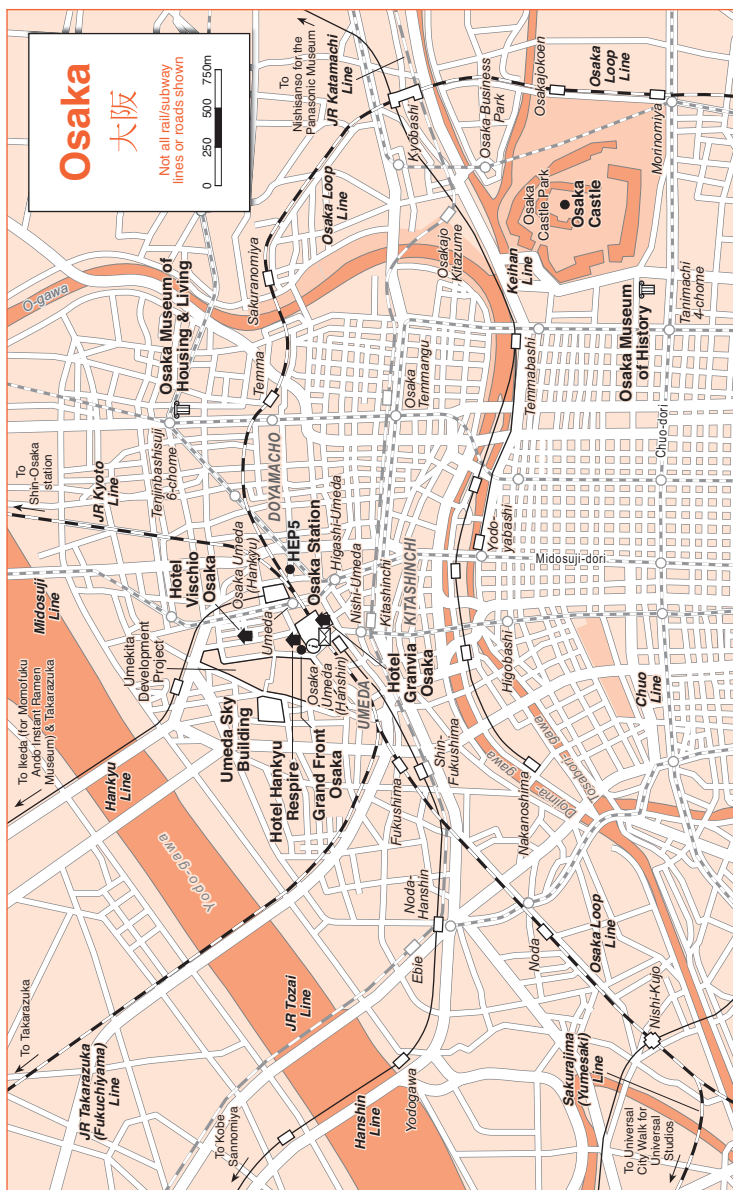
### Getting to and from Kansai Airport

The fastest way of accessing Osaka (and Kyoto) is **by rail**; Kansai Airport station is connected to the terminal building. The blue half of the station is run by JR West, the orange half by Nankai Railway (see below).

See Table 2, p503, for details of JR's Haruka LEX and the 'Airport Rapid' service for Osaka station via Tennoji.

If you don't have a JR Pass consider getting an **ICOCA & HARUKA**; an IC card (see box on p66) with discounted travel on the Haruka (from ¥1200). Available for either a one-way trip, or a round trip valid for 14 days. For details see ☐ westjr.co.jp.

For a slightly more eccentric experience (see box on p249), **Nankai** (☐ howto-osaka.com) operates the 'rapid' LEX to Namba (2/hr; approx 39 mins; ¥1450; reserved seats only) in Osaka. (Cont'd on p154)



## Central Honshu – route guides

Culturally rich and geographically diverse, central Honshu is a vast area stretching from the Pacific Ocean in the south to the Sea of Japan in the north. If this region is Japan's beating heart, the Tokaido Line which runs along the southern coast is the country's transportation artery. It is above all a functional rail line – perhaps the most functional in the world, transporting thousands of people every day between the business and industrial hubs of Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka.

But it would be a great shame to restrict your travel only to the Tokaido shinkansen. Much of the area along the Tokaido Line is heavily built up so, in its own way, a journey along this line offers a real taste of Japan. But just a short distance from the industrialised southern coast lie the majestic Japanese Alps and many opportunities to get away from the urban sprawl.

Highlights of a tour around this region include: **Hakone**, with its wonderful scenery and (in good weather!) views of **Mt Fuji**; **Takayama**, set deep in the mountains and with streets of old houses; the preserved Edo-period 'post towns' of **Narai-juku** and **Tsumago-juku**; the **snow monkeys** of Jigokudani Yaen-koen, near Nagano; **Matsumoto**, one of the few places in Japan with an original castle; and **Kanazawa** which has one of Japan's most celebrated gardens, a 'Ninja' Temple, and a former geisha quarter. There are also some fantastic **onsen** such as those at Takaragawa and Bessho.

Between mid April and early November **Tateyama-Kurobe Alpine Route** offers an opportunity to appreciate the region's astonishing beauty in a day-long journey, on a variety of forms of transport, from Toyama across the Japanese Alps to Shinano-Omachi.

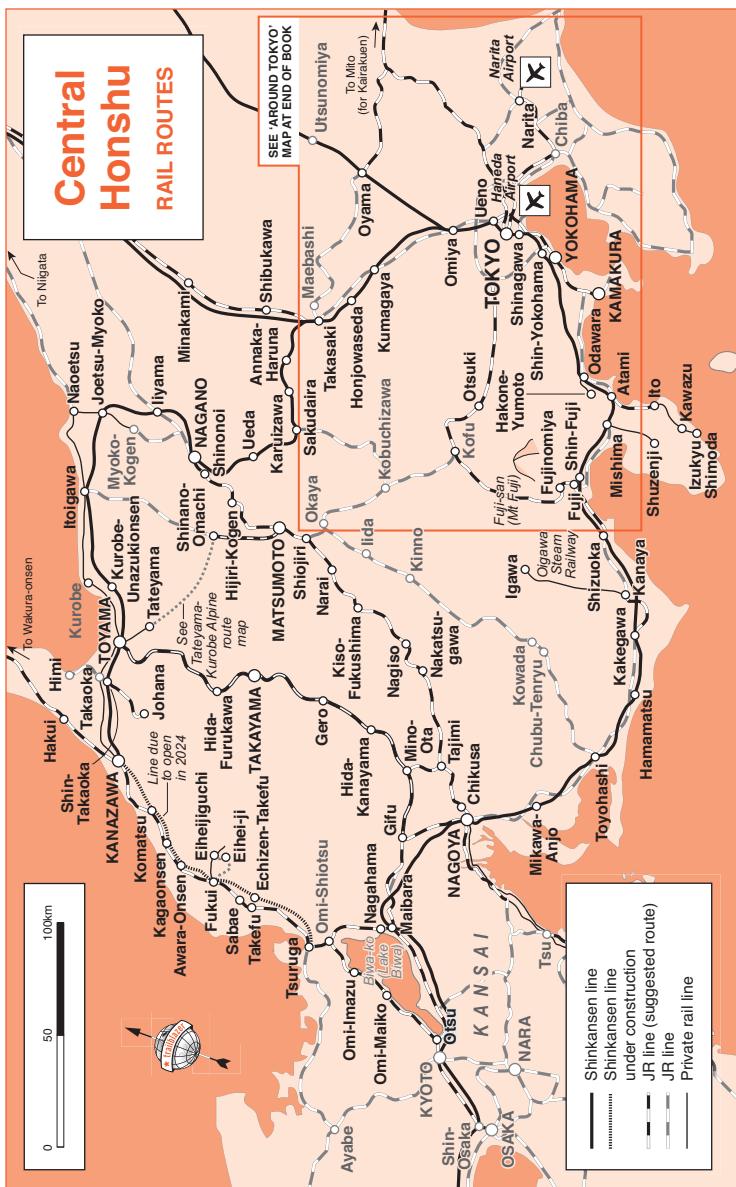
For details about using this rail route guide see p17.

**❑ TOKAIDO/SANYO SHINKANSEN**

Only Nozomi services, for which the Japan Rail Pass is not valid, run from Tokyo to Hakata, in Kyushu. Thus, if you have a Japan Rail Pass, wherever you are going, you will need to take a Hikari or Kodama. Kodama stop at every station – often for about six minutes to let faster trains pass – so are best for short journeys. If you are going further west than Shin-Osaka you will need to change trains there, or at Okayama.

*Foggy drizzle!  
Intriguing is the day  
we can't see Mt Fuji*  
(MATSUO BASHO)

霧雨や富士を見ぬ日ぞ面白き



## TOKYO TO NAGOYA BY SHINKANSEN

[Table 3, p503]

Distances from Tokyo. Fastest journey time (on a Hikari shinkansen): 104 mins.

**Tokyo (Station) to Kakegawa** [Map 1]  
**Tokyo 東京** [see pp103-35]

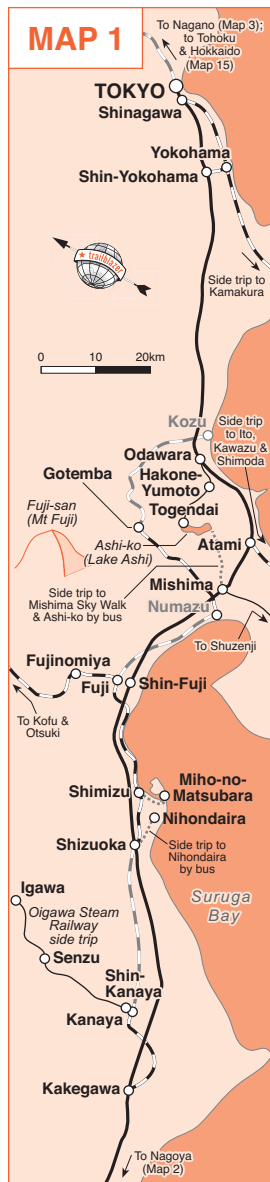
**Shinagawa 品川 (7km)** All shinkansen services call here. If you are transferring to/from the JR Yamanote Line (see p109), or the JR Yokosuka Line for the Narita Express (N'EX; see box on p130), it makes sense to change here as the station is much smaller and easier to navigate than Tokyo station.

The shinkansen tracks are on the Konan 港南口 (East) Exit side of the station; also on this side are several places to eat. A passageway connects the Konan side with the Takanawa 高輪口 (West) Exit where the mainline platforms are, as well as the private Keikyū Line. Most hotels (see p133) are on this side.

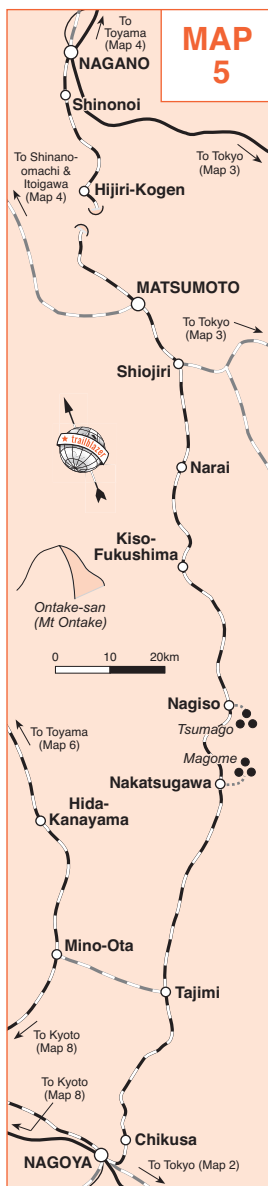
**Shin-Yokohama 新横浜 (29km)** All shinkansen services call here. The **tourist information office** (daily 9am-9pm) is by the station's North Exit, opposite the East Exit for the shinkansen tracks; an additional service at this office is luggage storage (¥800 per item). JR's Yokohama Line and the Yokohama subway connect Shin-Yokohama with Yokohama for the port and areas around there (see pp166-8).

Attached to the station is the JR-run **Hotel Associa Shin-Yokohama** ホテルアソシア新横浜 (☎ 045-475 0011, 🌐 [www.associa.com/syh](http://www.associa.com/syh); from ¥17,000/S, ¥23,000/D or Tw, inc breakfast; small discount on rack rate for JR rail-pass holders), with smart rooms and compact but stylish bathrooms.

On the North Exit side of the station, **Cubic Plaza** キュービックプラザ (🌐 [cubicplaza.com](http://cubicplaza.com)) has various restaurants on the 10th floor; options include yakitori & sushi but there is also a branch of Royal Host, a family restaurant chain. Some are open all day but others only about 11am-2pm & 5-10pm). Expect to pay about ¥1000 for lunch, more in the evening.







stones on the journey to Edo (Tokyo). In the days before the railway, 69 post stations lined the **Nakasendo** ('middle mountain way'), a route connecting Edo with Kyoto; Narai-juku was 34th overall. Not all have survived but a handful, including the one here in Narai, have been preserved. Here you'll find a 1km stretch of road lined with Edo-period houses. Narai-juku was the most prosperous post town in the Kiso Valley; steep slopes and thick forest made this section challenging (it took three days to cross the valley), so it became an important stop for weary travellers to rest and stock up on supplies.

The old wooden station sets the tone for what to expect; more unusually, the station is run not by JR staff but by a local senior citizens' club – members take it in turns to meet trains. There are no lockers but you can leave your luggage with whoever is on duty until 4pm (¥400).

Turn left out of the station and walk along. Look out for the odd sake shop (a hangover from the drinking houses that provided Edo-era travellers with some liquid relief) and craft shops, many of which sell locally made *nurigushi* (lacquered combs). Two former residences are open to the public; both are on the right as you walk along from the station. First is **Kamidonya Shiryokan** 上間屋資料館 (daily Apr-Nov 9am-5pm, Dec to 4pm; ¥300) and then **Nakamura Residence** 中村邸 (same details).

Several of the old buildings contain small restaurants serving soba. At the far end of the street on the right is **Kokorone** こころ音 (daily 11am-2.30pm), which does hearty portions of delicious *toji soba* (noodles with vegetables and chicken; ¥1500) that will fill you up for the rest of the day; you will be brought all you need to cook the noodles yourself. There are also cafés, including **Matsuya Sabo** 松屋茶房 (daily 9am-5pm; English menu), where the friendly owners offer delicious items including green tea roll and local apple pie (both ¥450).

To rejoin the main route take a train to Kiso-Fukushima (5-8/day; 20 mins); there is one very long tunnel just after leaving Narai.

**Chikusa** 千種 (244km), just a few minutes before Nagoya station, is the final stop for some LEX services.

### **Nagoya 名古屋 (251km)**

[see pp199-206]

From Nagoya, connect up with the Kansai route guide beginning on p234.

## **TOYAMA TO NAGOYA VIA TAKAYAMA [Map 6, p194; Table 6, pp504-5]**

Distances quoted are from Toyama. Fastest journey time to Nagoya: 3hrs 50 mins.

**Toyama 富山 (0km)** Take the Wide-View Hida LEX (4/day); local services to Takayama are more frequent but require a change at Inotani. The panoramic windows of the LEX are great but tunnels frequently block out the mountain scenery. All the same, the line to Takayama (and then on to Nagoya) remains one of the great rail journeys in Japan, as the train runs from the coast deep into the Hida mountain range following the Jinzu river most of the way; it doesn't really matter which side you sit as the track crosses the river frequently.

The train calls at **Hayahoshi** 速星 (8km), **Echu-Yatsuo** 越中八尾 (17km) and **Inotani** 猪谷 (37km).

**Hida-Furukawa 飛騨古川 (75km)** All Hida LEX call here. Hida-Furukawa is a smaller version of Takayama and is generally less crowded, though since starring as a location in the 2016 anime film *Your Name* it has become much more popular. This is a lovely place just to stroll around, but if you want to see more of the surrounding area consider a cycling tour (see box below).

Pick up a map (or a 'pilgrimage map' if you are here because of *Your Name*) from **Hida-Furukawa Tourist Information Center** (TIC; ㊟ hida-kankou.jp; daily 9am-5pm) to the right of the station exit.

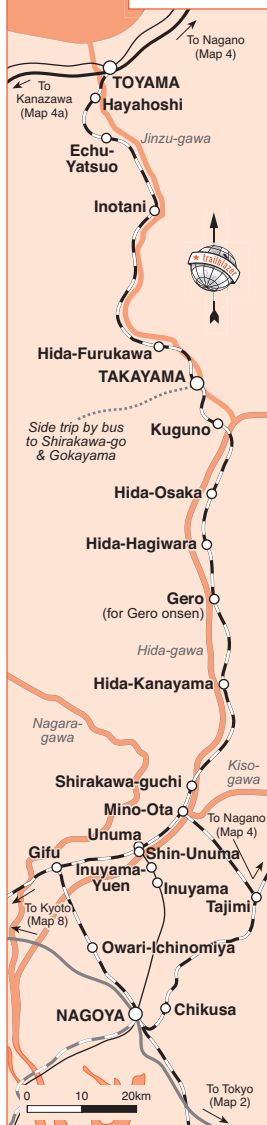
Every April (19th-20th) the peace of Hida-Furukawa is shattered by the town's annual festival, the highlight of which is a parade of floats and a big *okoshi daiko* drum, carried by a team of men wearing white loincloths. Throughout the year, a few of the floats are on display at **Hida-Furukawa Matsuri Kaikan** 飛騨古川まつり会館 (daily Mar-Nov 9am-5pm, Dec-Feb to 4.30pm; ¥500), a 10-minute walk from the station. In addition to seeing the floats as well as displays showing how the marionettes on the floats work, you can watch an amazing 4D film of the festival parade; it really brings the event to life.

Across the street is **Hida Crafts Museum** 飛騨の匠文化館 (Hida-no-Takumi Bunkakan; daily Mar-Nov 9am-5pm, Dec-Feb to 4.30pm; ¥300), a heritage centre which displays techniques and tools used by local craftsmen, particularly carpenters. From there it is a short walk to the **canal area** lined with

### **㊟ CYCLING TOUR**

**Satoyama Experience** (㊟ satoyama-experience.com) offer cycling and walking tours around Hida-Furukawa and out into the countryside – you might even see some cows, though not in the open air. These tours provide a great way to see another side of Japan. For more details visit the website or call in at the office in Hida-Furukawa (a 7-minute walk from the station), or in Takayama (see map p222).

## MAP 6



old houses, sake breweries (you can taste sake at **Watanabe Brewery**; daily 8.30am-5pm) and storehouses. Between early April and November every year about 100 *koi* are released in the canals to help keep the water clean.

### Takayama 高山 (89km) [see pp220-6]

All Hida LEX call here and more services start.

From Takayama, the line continues to roughly follow the course of Hida-gawa. The journey to Gero has stunning river and mountain scenery on both sides of the track.

Some of the Hida LEX services that start in Takayama also stop at **Kuguno** 久々野 (103km), **Hida-Osaka** 飛騨小坂 (117km), and **Hida-Hagiwara** 飛騨萩原 (129km).

### Gero 下呂 (138km) All Hida LEX call here.

**Gero-onsen** 下呂温泉 (☎ gero-spa.or.jp) dates back over 1000 years and is one of the best-known spa towns in Japan.

Turn right out of the station for the **tourist information centre** (daily 8.30am-5.30pm); the staff there can give you a map of the town. Then take the passage under the railway tracks and cross the bridge to the main part of town. There is a **rotemburo** (swimming costumes required) by the river and around town you'll find several *ashi-yu* (foot-baths). **Charlie Chaplin** fans will be pleased to see the statue of him by Shirasagi Bridge; see also box on p196.

**Suimeikan** 水明館 (☎ 0576-25 2801, ☐ sui meikan.co.jp; from ¥12,000pp inc half board), a vast onsen hotel that has everything you could possibly want – and some things you might not want: indoor/outdoor onsen (one panorama bath on the 9th floor, one rotemburo – the men's is definitely the best – and one with a wood bath), a swimming pool, gym, disco, karaoke, dining/banquet rooms, souvenir shops, a slot machine area and a café in the lobby. Despite its size it is a great place to stay. Staff wait at the station for LEX trains and will take guests to the hotel (and back the next day), even though it is only a few minutes' walk away. See the Gero-onsen website for other accommodation options.

## Tohoku (North-eastern Honshu) route guides

This region came to the world's attention on 11th March 2011 as a result of the devastating Great East Japan Earthquake and ensuing tsunami (see box on p329). Undoubtedly there are parts of Tohoku where life will never be the same again (as attested by the many signs placed in impacted areas showing the height the tsunami water reached), but it is still possible to visit almost everywhere and you will get a warm welcome and have an extremely rewarding visit.

A trip around the Tohoku region offers a rare chance in an overcrowded island to go off the beaten track. Volcanoes, lakes, mountains and rivers predominate, a geography which explains why north-eastern Honshu lagged behind in the industrial race of the late 20th century. But, the region is not without its attractions: **Kakunodate** and **Aizu Wakamatsu** are former samurai towns; **Matsushima** is deemed one of the three top scenic spots in Japan, **Hiraizumi** has some World Heritage temples; **Hirosaki** is known for its castle but also the cherry blossoms in spring and its summer festival; **Aomori** also hosts a must-go-to summer festival; **Nyuto-onsen** is a great place to relax – and **Nikko** is an absolute must whenever you visit.

### ❑ A GRAN(D) EXPERIENCE

Whatever shinkansen journey you take you are almost guaranteed a smooth, comfortable ride. However, JR East's **Gran Class** ([jreast.co.jp/granclass/en](http://jreast.co.jp/granclass/en)) has taken shinkansen travel into a new league, especially the services with an attendant.



There are only 18 seats (2 x 1) so you immediately feel special. Assuming you are in a Gran Class with on-board service (see below) the attendant will show you through the space-age carriage – done out in a tastefully understated livery – to your leather seat. Slip off your shoes (slippers are provided) and use the various buttons to shape the seat to whatever suits you best. You will be given an *oshibori* (hot towel) and served a light meal (a *bento* lunch box or sandwiches, both of which will include local products) and a drink of your choice including regional sake selections. Then it's time to relax and enjoy the feeling of being cocooned from the world – with the attendant only a button's press away.

Gran Class carriages are available on most JR East shinkansen services. However, the service described is only provided on: Hayabusa, Hayate and Yamabiko services from Tokyo to beyond Sendai and on some services beyond Sendai/Morioka/Shin-Aomori; and the Kagayaki (Tokyo to Kanazawa) service. Even if you have a JR Pass, for Gran Class you must pay the full express supplement as well as the reserved seat ticket cost. However, if you decide to start your Gran Class experience in Tokyo you can go to the View Gold Lounge on the 1st/ground floor of the Yaezu Central Exit (Granroof) to relax before you start your journey. See the website for further details.



### ❑ JR EAST INFOLINE

For information in English on all JR East's services call the JR East Infoline (☎ 050-2016 1603; daily except year-end/new-year holiday period 10am-6pm). Operators can provide information on ticket types, fares, timetables, station facilities and routes. However, the staff can't make seat reservations.

Rail access to this region is fast and efficient, thanks in particular to the number of shinkansen routes. Beyond these is a network of ordinary lines served by both LEX (limited express), rapid and local trains; these are the best means of seeing Tohoku close up – the shinkansen is fast but due to the proliferation of tunnels the views are nearly always fleeting. The following route loops around the region, starting with the journey north along the eastern side of Tohoku, to Shin-Aomori (Aomori) at the northern tip of Honshu, then back down the less-travelled western side. Several side trips either to the coast, or inland from either coast, are suggested; the latter make it possible to crisscross the region easily and ensure you never need to double back on yourself.

## TOKYO TO SHIN-AOMORI BY SHINKANSEN

[Table 11, p506]

The fastest **shinkansen service** to Shin-Aomori is the **Hayabusa**; after Omiya services don't stop till Sendai. (Some Hayabusa continue to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto in Hokkaido, see p364.) **Komachi** (often coupled with the Hayabusa) operate to Morioka but then head west to Akita. **Hayate** operate to Morioka/Shin-Aomori but mostly only in holiday periods. **Yamabiko** stop at most stations between Tokyo and Sendai and some continue to Morioka; they are generally linked to **Tsubasa** which go to Fukushima and then west to Shinjo. **Nasuno** services call at all stations to Koriyama and terminate there.

Seat reservations are essential for Hayabusa, Komachi and Hayate services.

### Tokyo to Sendai

[Map 15; Map 16, p329]

Distances from Tokyo. Fastest journey time by Hayabusa: 91 minutes.

### Tokyo 東京 (0km)

[see pp103-35]

**Ueno 上野 (4km)** Most services call here and a few start here. If joining the train here rather than at Tokyo, it's worth reserving seats because at certain times the non-reserved cars are full by the time the train leaves Tokyo. The shinkansen tracks start underground so allow at least 10 minutes if transferring from the Yamanote Line.

Until they reach Omiya, shinkansen don't go at full speed because there are noise restrictions due to the residential neighbourhoods; the bonus is that it is easier to see what you are passing – there are good views of Tokyo and, if you are lucky, Mt Fuji (ensure you are sitting on the left-hand side).

**Omiya 大宮 (30km)** Every service stops here. Omiya is a ward in Saitama city, which is part of Saitama prefecture, but it is so close to Tokyo it's impossible to see where one ends and the other begins.

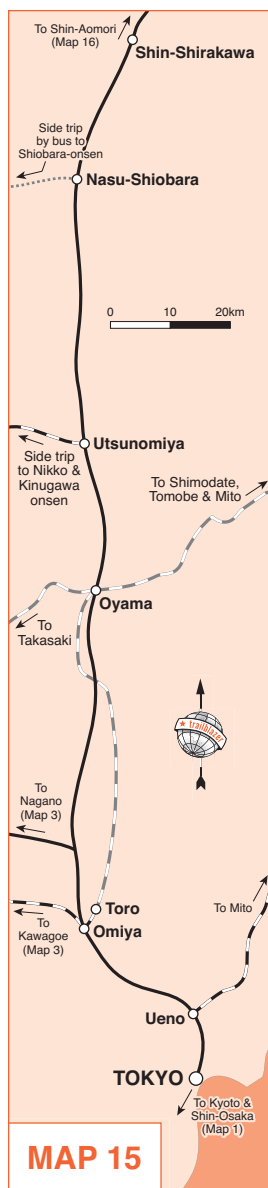


Even though some of the exhibits are geared to children, a visit to the **Railway Museum 鉄道博物館** (Tetsudo Hakubutsukan; 鉄道博物館 [www.railway-museum.jp/e](http://www.railway-museum.jp/e); Wed-Mon 10am-6pm; ¥1330) is recommended. The museum, operated by JR East, focuses in particular on the history of Japanese railways. The history zone has 37 real train cars including two of the first shinkansen from 1964 – even these had seats that could be changed to face the direction of travel, a chilled water dispenser and a bottle opener – as well as royal cars used by former emperors. Some labels have QR barcodes that can be scanned with smartphones for English translations; you can also download the museum's app. Don't miss the diorama on the upper floor, with 80 sets of trains, 1002 cars, and plenty of seating. There are also two train-driving options: if the overcrowded Tokyo rail network hasn't put you off, you can drive a mini variant of your favourite unit around a 300-metre network (¥210) – complete with signals and stations. For a more full-size experience there are mocked-up driving simulators including an E5 shinkansen (10.30am-5.30pm; first come first served but all require reservation; ¥510).

There is a **restaurant** on the 1st/ground floor but it is much more interesting to have a picnic in the **View Deck** on the 3rd floor; here you can watch real shinkansen speed past – there is a special timetable showing which train will pass by and when. Alternatively you can eat a bento from the kiosk in the museum in the '455 Lunch Train' on the 1st/ground floor; this looks onto the passing JR local (Shonan-Shinjuku, Takasaki and others) trains.

To get to the museum take a **New Shuttle ニューシャトル** (6/hr; 2 mins; ¥190; JR passes other than the Tokyo Wide Pass not valid) train to Tetsudo-Hakubutsukan 鉄道博物館 station.

If railways are getting a bit much, consider visiting **Omiya Bonsai Art Museum 大宮盆栽美術館** ([bonsai-art-museum.jp](http://bonsai-art-museum.jp); Fri-Wed Mar-Oct 9am-4.30pm, Nov-Feb to 4pm; ¥310), an excellent place that explains how bonsai are sculpted, displayed, and how to view and



## Hokkaido – route guides

The northernmost of the major islands in the Japanese archipelago, Hokkaido represents one-fifth of the country's land mass, but is inhabited by only one-twentieth of the total population.

The island is the largest of Japan's 47 prefectures and is bordered by the Sea of Japan to the west, the Sea of Okhotsk to the north-east and the Pacific Ocean to the south. Hokkaido was colonised by the Japanese only in the middle of the 18th century; prior to that it was known as Ezo and was inhabited almost exclusively by the Ainu (see the box on p402), an indigenous people who all but disappeared as more and more Japanese moved north from Honshu.

Hokkaido is an island of stunning natural beauty, vast national parks with mountain ranges, volcanoes, forests, rivers, crashing waterfalls, hot springs, wildlife – and tourists. In the summer months, bikers and cyclists descend on the island to feel what it is like to be on the open road, unclogged by pollution, noise and urban development. Others come to escape the oppressive heat and humidity found elsewhere in Japan, to see cows, taste fresh Hokkaido milk, yoghurt and even 'Camembert-style' cheese. In winter, when snow falls for months on end, skiers and snowboarders pour on to the slopes.

The good news for the rail traveller is that the shinkansen network reaches Hokkaido (but see box opposite if you have a JR Seishun Juhachi Kippu); the bad news is that services on parts of the rest of the island have been reduced and also some lines have closed. This is due to spiralling costs, the difficulty of track maintenance in areas particularly exposed to the elements, and the relatively few passengers. But enough of the network remains to provide more than a glimpse of the spectacular natural environment. Don't expect frequent, lightning-fast services, particularly away from the major cities, but few other places in Japan offer such breathtaking scenery from the train window.

The route in this chapter follows a loop around Hokkaido, starting from Shin-Aomori. Two weeks would be enough to do a speedy circuit of the island including a visit to **Hakodate**, known for its morning market, Western-style houses and scenic location, the port town of **Otaru**, hell valley in **Noboribetsu-onsen**, and a journey on the line between **Abashiri**

*Through fragrant fields  
of early rice we went  
beside the wild Ariso Sea  
(MATSUO BASHO)*

早稲の香や分け入る右は荒磯海

**and Kushiro** which has some of the most impressive scenery and wildlife. Since Hokkaido is away from the major tourist areas, most visitors never make it this far but the views, if nothing else, more than repay the distance and effort.

For further information about Hokkaido visit: [en.visit-hokkaido.jp](http://en.visit-hokkaido.jp); [uu-hokkaido.com](http://uu-hokkaido.com); and [best.visit-hokkaido.jp](http://best.visit-hokkaido.jp).

For details about using the rail route guide see p17.

## SHIN-AOMORI TO SHIN-HAKODATE-HOKUTO / HAKODATE

[Map 21, p366; Table 11, p506]

Distances from Shin-Aomori. Fastest journey time to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto 61 minutes; to Hakodate 88 minutes.

### Shin-Aomori 新青森 (0km)

[Aomori; see pp359-62]

Some Hayabusa services stop at **Okutsugaru-Imabetsu** 津軽いまべつ (38km), the only shinkansen stop on Honshu after Shin-Aomori.

Soon after leaving Okutsugaru-Imabetsu the train enters the Seikan Tunnel (see box below) and emerges from it about 15km before Kikonai, the first stop on Hokkaido.

### Kikonai 木古内 (75km)

Some Hayabusa services stop here.

The majority of the journey from here to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto is in tunnels though there are some stretches on viaducts.

### Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto 新函館北斗 (148km)

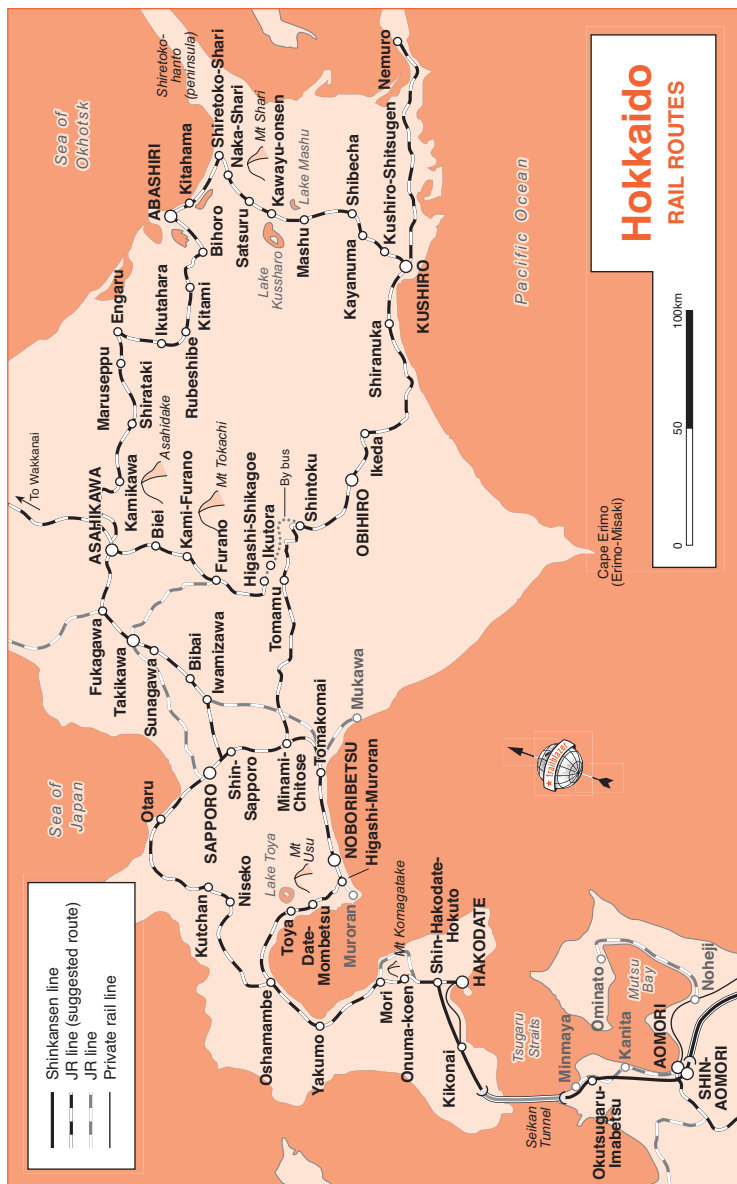
This is the terminus for the Hokkaido shinkansen until the extension to Sapporo opens in 2030 or 2031. In honour of becoming a stop for the shinkansen the station was rebuilt using locally sourced cedar trees and Hokkaido bricks.

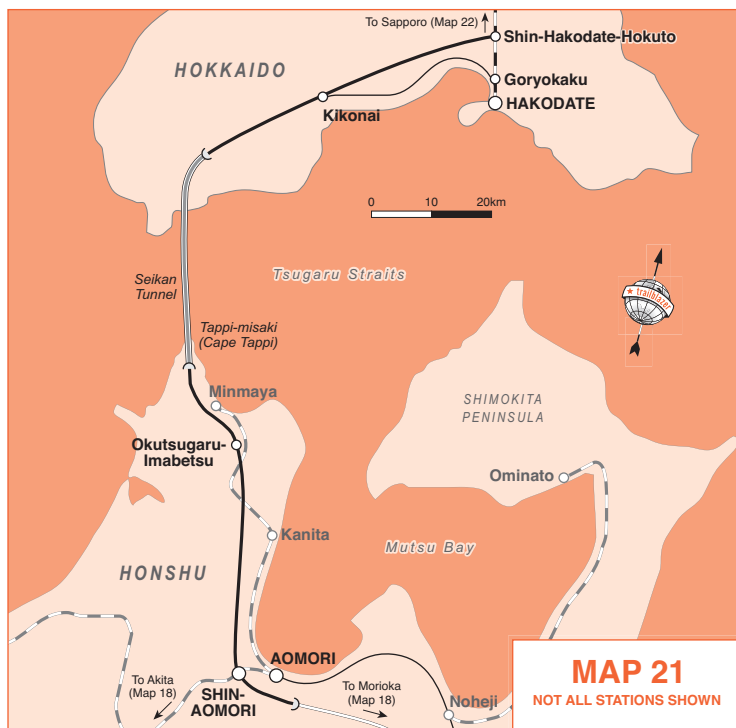
**Hokuto City Tourist Information Center** ([hokutoinfo.com/en](http://hokutoinfo.com/en); daily 9am-7pm) is on the 2nd floor of the station building. The main exit is the South Gate. The ekiben available at **Bento Café 41° Garden** ベントーカフェ・ヨンイチガーデン ([41garden.com](http://41garden.com); daily 8am-7pm) feature local ingredients but there are also baked goods as well as drinks. The ‘41°’ refers to the latitude.

If going to **Sapporo** change to a Hokuto LEX service and pick up the route on p366.

## SEIKAN TUNNEL – A HAPPY TRAIN PARTNERSHIP?

The 53.8km-long Seikan Tunnel, under the Tsugaru Straits between Honshu and Hokkaido, is the longest underwater tunnel in the world; it is also the deepest at 140 metres below the sea bed. On top of that it was built as straight as possible and in a way that shinkansen tracks could be added; this long-term planning is now a reality, and the Seikan Tunnel is the only place in Japan with dual-gauge tracks so both shinkansen and freight trains can share the tunnel. For this reason generally shinkansen trains go at no more than 160kph through the tunnel so that any freight train passing in the opposite direction isn't derailed by a speeding shinkansen, but at times the shinkansen can go up to 210kph.





For **Hakodate** (see pp388-94) transfer to a local/rapid Hakodate-Liner ‘relay’ service – a very straightforward process.

For both Sapporo and Hakodate connecting services depart about 10 minutes after shinkansen services arrive.

## HAKODATE / SHIN-HAKODATE-HOKUTO TO SAPPORO

[Map 22, p371; Table 14, p507]

Distances by JR from Hakodate. Fastest journey time: 3 hours 43 minutes.

**Hakodate 函館 (0km)** Pick up a Hokuto Limited Express (LEX).

All trains stop at **Goryokaku** 五稜郭 (3km), see p394.

**Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto 新函館北斗 (18km)** All LEX services stop here. (If returning to Shin-Aomori transfer to a shinkansen here.)

**Onuma-koen 大沼公園 (28km)** All LEX services stop here. To the right as you exit the small station is Onuma International Communication Plaza, a

Mt Fuji, to the left. It's a long-extinct volcano and the reason for the many hot springs in the area.

Even if you aren't listening to the train announcements, if you are looking out of the window you'll know when you've reached **Niseko** ニセコ (67.3km) because of the bright yellow bridge arching over its railway track. A year-round activity resort, Niseko has well-developed winter sport facilities with lots of ski runs and in summer offers white-water rafting, mountain-biking, rock-climbing, canyoning and trekking. Contact Niseko Adventure Centre (☎ nacadventures.jp/en), Niseko Hanazono Resort (☎ hanazononiseko.com/en), or Niseko Outdoor Adventure Sports Club (☎ noasc.com) for details.

Soon after leaving **Hirafu** 比羅夫 (74.3km; ☎ grand-hirafu.jp), another major ski resort, the urban spread of **Kutchan** 倶知安 (81km; ☎ www.town.kutchan.hokkaido.jp) starts to appear but you also get compensatory views of Mt Yotei 羊蹄山. Note that you are likely to need to change train at Kutchan. By the time you reach **Shikaribetsu** 然別 (111.8km) the hills are behind you.

**Yoichi** 余市 (120.3km) is an increasingly popular tourist spot mainly due to its whisky distillery. **Nikka Whisky Yoichi Distillery** 余市蒸溜所 (☎ nikka.com/eng/distilleries/yoichi; daily 9am-5pm; free) was built in 1934 by Masataka Taketsuru and his Scottish wife, Rita. He chose this site because the environment seemed as similar as possible to Glasgow, in Scotland, where he had studied whisky-making. The distillery offers a variety of samples of its malt whisky products as part of self-guided tours. Guided tours (Japanese only; 2/hr 9am-noon & 1-3.30pm) are also available.

The distillery is on the left-hand side as you walk down the main road heading from the station; en route you will find **Yoichi Tourist Association office** (Tue-Sun 9am-6pm), across from the plaza on the left-hand side; it has a good variety of pamphlets on local attractions. Continue straight on and you can't miss the imposing distillery building ahead.

A little further beyond the distillery, and on the same road, is **Yoichi Space Memorial Museum (Yoichi Dome)** 余市宇宙記念館 (スペースス童夢) (☎ spacedome.jp; late Apr-Nov Tue-Sun 9am-6pm; ¥500); it is here because Mamoru Mohri, the first Japanese scientist who became a NASA astronaut, was born here. Attractions include a digital planetarium, models of the Hubble Space Telescope and the International Space Station as well as a life-size model of the Space Station's Kibo laboratory where two Japanese astronauts stayed. You can also learn about life for astronauts in space and can buy space food at the shop – all signage is in Japanese though. As you walk around you are likely to spot the town's apple mascot everywhere.

After **Ranshima** 蘭島 (125.6km) the line runs near the coast.

**Otaru** 小樽 Otaru (140.2km) is a laid-back, compact port town squeezed between mountains and the sea. It is known for its many stone buildings (former warehouses and banks) as well as its canals and seafood. Herring fishing used to be a big industry here but when that declined the producers of the glass buoys changed to making general glassware and Venetian art. Along with the 'romantic slopes' leading the walker down to the shoreline, its literature and art museums all serve to project a cultivated image for its mainly domestic visitors.

To the right as you exit the ticket gates is a Midori-no-madoguchi ticket counter (daily 6.30am-7pm) and **tourist information desk** (☎ otaru.gr.jp;



**Otaru to Sapporo** Even if you aren't stopping in Otaru you will need to change train here. There are both local and semi-rapid services to Sapporo (at least 3/hr); some of the latter continue to Shin-Chitose Airport (2/hr).

Try to sit on the left for the best views of the sea and the coastline, until **Zenibako** 銭函 (155.8km). After Zenibako the line turns inland and the scenery becomes more industrial and urban.

At **Teine** 手稲 (163.4km) there are views to the hills on the right if you look over the buildings but otherwise there is little of interest until you reach **Sapporo** (174km), see pp394-400.

There is a long section of tunnels between Oshamambe and Toya, the next major stop.

**Toya 洞爺 (154km)** All LEX services stop here. The attraction hereabouts is **Toya-ko** 洞爺湖 (📄 [laketoya.com/en](http://laketoya.com/en)), a caldera lake formed by the collapse of a mountain following volcanic activity thousands of years ago. However, it lacks the charm of Onuma-koen (see p366) as huge lakeside hotels spoil the scenery and the atmosphere. That said, the lake itself is worth a look and onsen fans might enjoy an afternoon wallowing in a hot spring or two in some of the larger resort hotels.

Turn right out of the station for buses to the lake (daily approx 1/hr; 17 mins; ¥320). **Toya-ko Visitor Center** 洞爺湖ビジターセンター (📄 [toyako-vc.jp](http://toyako-vc.jp); daily 9am-5pm) is near Toya-ko-onsen Bus Terminal and in the same place as **Volcano Science Museum** 洞爺湖町立火山科学館 (daily 9am-5pm; ¥600).

All LEX services stop at **Date-Mombetsu** 伊達紋別 (167km), after which it's coast, tunnels, industrial blot, and then **Higashi-Muroran** 東室蘭 (190km); the Suzuran LEX (Muroran–Sapporo 6/day) provides additional services.

**Noboribetsu 登別 (207km)** All LEX services stop here. Noboribetsu comes from the Ainu word 'Nupurupetsu', meaning 'a cloudy river tinged with white'. As the name would suggest, this is the access station for **Noboribetsu-onsen** 登別温泉 (a hot-spring resort) that draws water from **Jigokudani** 地獄谷 (**Hell Valley**), the centre of which is a volcanic crater where steam rises from the earth. It was only in 1858, when a businessman who was mining sulphur realised there was money to be made from tourism, that the first public bath house was opened using hot water from the crater. Since then, tourism has taken off and the resort is now full of hotel blocks and tourist attractions. Despite this, Jigokudani is well worth seeing close up. A visit here would not be complete, however, without a trip to at least one of the hot springs in the resort – many have different types of thermal water so it is worth trying several.

From Noboribetsu station, Donan buses run up to the terminal in Noboribetsu-onsen (daily approx 1/hr; 15 mins; ¥340). There is a small tourist office here and a couple more on the road to Jigokudani. All can provide a useful English map and guide to the area and advise on accommodation but cannot book it. The first you reach after the bus terminal is **Noboribetsu Tourist Association** 登別観光協会 (📄 [noboribetsu-spa.jp](http://noboribetsu-spa.jp); daily 9am-6pm); it's a couple of minutes up the main road on the left-hand side.

In 1924 the area was designated 'Noboribetsu Primeval Forest', a fitting description for the haunting landscape. Though you aren't allowed to walk around Jigokudani (not that you'd want to with the bubbling and smoke rising from the ground), there is a short promenade offering a close-up view.

From early June to early August on Thursdays and Fridays, the '**Demon's fireworks displays**' allow you to 'enjoy experiencing the fable of Hell Valley as the demons carry spark-throwing columns of fire along the Demon footpath, hoping for happiness and taking away misfortunes'. Every night until 9.30pm, the Jigokudani pathway is illuminated as a 'Demon's fire trail' so it is worth exploring even if you have limited daylight hours in the resort.

A far more satisfying walk takes you up into the hills above Hell Valley and down to the volcanic swamp that is the percolating **Oyunuma Pond** 大湯沼,



**Jazz Spot Leaf** ジャズ スポット リーフ (☎ [hakodatejazzleaf.wixsite.com/leaf-hp](http://hakodatejazzleaf.wixsite.com/leaf-hp); Tue-Sun 11.30am-3pm & 5-11.30pm), a little further down off the main strip, is a typical example of Japan's obsession with traditional jazz. The cosy but dark café is adorned with '60s memorabilia, images of American jazz greats, instruments and concert ticket stubs in a dark atmosphere with Miles Davis's seductive trumpet playing in your ears. Sit out or in to enjoy a great cocktail menu (¥600-800), pasta, ramen and curry dishes (¥500-900) as well as decent coffee (¥400-500) brewed at the bar.

There are several branches of the **Lucky Pierrot** ラッキーピエロ (☎ [lucky.pierrot.jp/en](http://lucky.pierrot.jp/en)) hamburger-&-curry fast-food

chain around town. Each branch has a different theme but the one most worth visiting (**Jujigai Ginza**), if only for the bizarre year-round Christmas décor, lies close to the Jujigai tram stop. It's easy to spot as it's the only building covered in Christmas trees and Santa Claus faces although you may not want to stay here long as the looped Christmas tracks begin to jar after several minutes. Both the **Bay Area Head Shop** and **Marina Suehiro** branches are near Kanemori Red Brick Warehouse. All are open daily (10am to midnight, Sat to 1am) and the menu at all includes hamburgers (¥380-1100), fries (¥350), curry rice (from ¥780) and some highly recommended flavoured milkshakes (from ¥350).

### Side trip by rail to Goryokaku

About 4km north-east of Hakodate station is Goryokaku 五稜郭, the first Western-style fort in Japan. Built between 1857 and 1864 as a strategic stronghold from which Hokkaido could be ruled, the fort is a pentagonal star shape (called 'the most beautiful star carved on earth'). Warriors from the fallen Tokugawa shogunate escaped from Honshu to Hakodate and occupied the fort in October 1868. Seven months later they gave themselves up to the Imperial Army, bringing both the Battle of Hakodate and Japan's feudal era to a dramatic end.

At the main entrance is the 60m-high **Goryokaku Tower** 五稜郭タワー (☎ [goryokaku-tower.co.jp](http://goryokaku-tower.co.jp); daily late Apr to late Oct 8am-7pm, late Oct to late Apr 9am-6pm; ¥900). It's a modern-day eyesore but does have an observation platform affording views over the remains of the fort and the city beyond. It is the site of a festival in May (see p392), but is also worth visiting in spring to see the blossom on the 1600 cherry trees planted here in the Taisho era.

To reach Goryokaku take the tram/streetcar to Goryokaku-koen-mae 五稜郭公園前 and then walk north along the main road for about 10 minutes. Look for signs to the fort; you'll soon see the concrete tower in front of you. Alternatively take a train from Hakodate to JR Goryokaku but the walk from the JR station is longer.

### SAPPORO 札幌 [see map p397]

The biggest city in Hokkaido and venue for the 1972 Winter Olympics, Sapporo is frequently voted the city where most Japanese would like to live. It certainly feels relaxed and cosmopolitan, with green parks, 19th- and 20th-century red-brick buildings and a thriving entertainment district in Susukino. It's also one of the easiest cities to get around, thanks to the grid layout (see box on p398) and subway (metro) network.

If you need a further incentive to spend a couple of days here, time your visit to coincide with one of the many festivals, the most famous of which is the annual Snow Festival in February. Like the rest of Hokkaido, Sapporo receives a thick blanket of snow in the winter but summer is mild and provides the perfect opportunity for relaxing at one of the many beer gardens or concerts in the city's central Odori Park.

# KYUSHU

7


## Kyushu – route guides

Despite its modern-day reputation as something of a backwater, Kyushu's history has been more linked with the West than any of the other main islands. The port of **Nagasaki** in particular was the only place in the country where trading with the outside world was permitted during Japan's nearly 300 years of self-imposed isolation under the Tokugawa shogunate. It is now best known as the second city in Japan to be hit with an atomic bomb (in 1945).

Today, the majority of visitors to Kyushu pause briefly in **Fukuoka (Hakata)**, the island's capital and home to many shopping, eating and entertainment facilities, before making a beeline for Nagasaki. But if you're prepared to devote more time to seeing the island, it really is worth making a journey 'around the Kyushu', the motto branded onto all Limited Express trains. Perhaps because of its relatively mild climate, Kyushu feels more relaxed and the people more laid-back than on Honshu. This may also have something to do with the popularity of *shochu*, a strong spirit found in every bar that becomes even stronger and more popular the further south you go.

A trip down the west coast takes you to the shochu capital, **Kagoshima**, sometimes described as the 'Naples of the East' because of its bay and neighbouring volcano, **Sakurajima**; unlike Naples though the city is virtually crime-free. Also near Kagoshima is **Ibusuki**, which offers the chance for both a sand bath and an onsen experience. Kyushu has lots of onsen but kitsch **Yufuin** provides possibly the most appealing. Other onsen-related highlights are the 'burning hells' in the towns of **Beppu** and **Unzen-onsen**.

And right in the centre of Kyushu lies formidable **Mt Aso**, where visitors can peer over the top of an active volcanic crater as long as there isn't too much volcanic activity.

For general information about what to see and do in Kyushu visit  [welcomekyushu.com](http://welcomekyushu.com).

Kyushu can be reached easily by rail from Honshu via either the Sanyo shinkansen line (see box on p406), or on the Sanyo main line (see p410). Other than the shinkansen line to Kagoshima-chuo (and from 23rd September 2022 between Takeo-onsen and Nagasaki) it is the Limited Express (LEX) that reigns supreme on most of the

*Hot spring in the mountains:  
high above the naked bathers  
the River of Heaven*  
(SHIKI MASAOKA)

山の温泉や裸の  
上の天の川

island. But what is lost in speed is more than offset by the chance to appreciate the scenery at a leisurely pace. Many JR lines boast **D&S (Design and Story) sightseeing services** making the journey as enjoyable as the destination itself. Themes include: sweets & cakes (p421), mythology (p428), steam as well as jazz & whisky (both p452). And with panoramic windows, wooden flooring, and bespoke interiors ranging from European Victorian (Yufuin no Mori), calligraphy (White Kamome), to Darth Vader (Kirishima) these trains deliver an altogether different experience. Two private lines offer food-themed journeys: Hisatsu Orange Railway (p417) and Rail Kitchen Chikugo (see box p434).

For details of JR Kyushu's rail passes see p36, for suggested itineraries p46 and for information about using the rail route guide see p17.

## SHIN-YAMAGUCHI TO HAKATA (FUKUOKA) BY SHINKANSEN

[Map 27, p409; Table 3, p503]

Distances from Tokyo by shinkansen. Fastest journey time from Shin-Yamaguchi: 45 minutes. See also box below.

**Shin-Yamaguchi 新山口 (1027km)** All Kodama, some Nozomi and a few Sakura/Hikari stop here. Shin-Yamaguchi is the point of connection with the route guide around Western Honshu.

All Kodama stop at **Asa 厚狭 (1062km)**. Kodama and a few Sakura/Hikari stop at **Shin-Shimonoseki 新下関 (1089km)** before heading into the tunnel for the journey through the narrow Kanmon Straits to Kyushu. Anyone interested in walking to Kyushu (see pp409-10, but in reverse) should change here and take a train to Shimonoseki (Sanyo Line; 1-4/hr; 10 mins). To save money anyone without a valid JR pass and about to start a JR Kyushu pass should also go to Shimonoseki and take a train to Kokura (2-4/hr; full journey 24-31 mins (¥370)).

**Kokura 小倉 (1108km)** All services stop at Kokura's sleek station, serving **Kitakyushu**, the second largest city on the island after Fukuoka. Kokura made

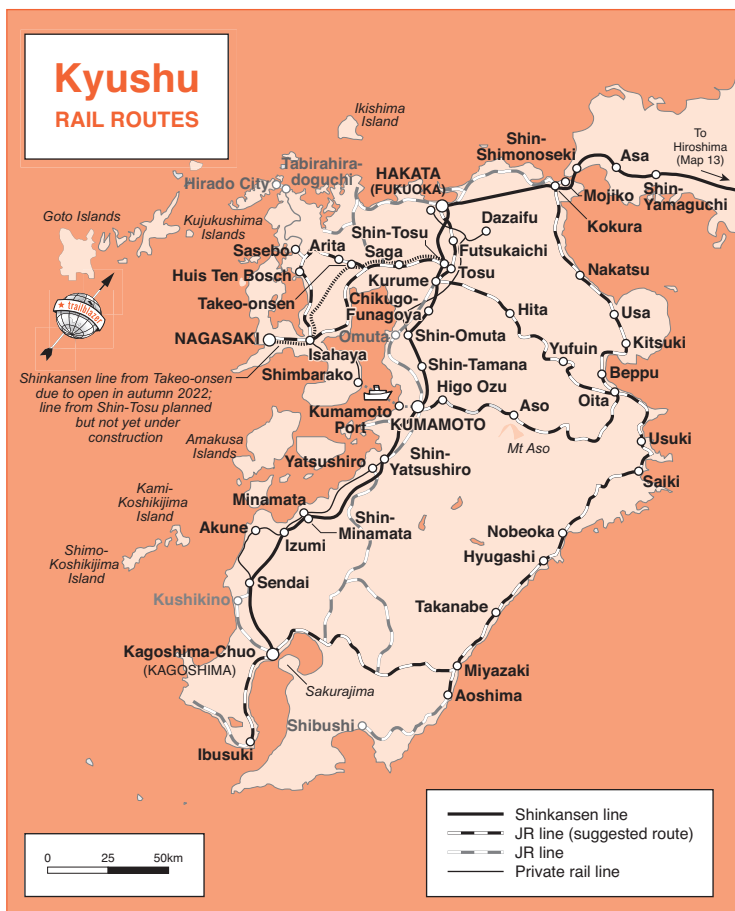
### ❑ SHINKANSEN SERVICES TO, AND WITHIN, KYUSHU

The only shinkansen service which runs all the way from Tokyo to Hakata is the Nozomi. Mizuho, Sakura and Kodama services to Hakata start from Shin-Osaka and the Mizuho and Sakura continue to Kagoshima-chuo. (The first part of the Nagasaki shinkansen, between Takeo-Onsen and Nagasaki will open on 23rd September 2022.)

JR Kyushu's Tsubame (without Green class) only operates between Hakata and Kumamoto, with a few services a day extended to Kagoshima.

As on Honshu, the Japan Rail Pass is not valid on the Nozomi or Mizuho services; however, the JR Kyushu pass is valid on Mizuho services south of Hakata.

**Note for JR West and JR Kyushu pass-holders:** since the shinkansen line south of Hakata is operated by JR Kyushu, JR Kyushu passes are not valid on the shinkansen service between Kokura and Hakata; you would have to take the parallel Sonic, or Kirameki, LEX (2/hr; approx 45 mins), or a local/rapid train (2/hr; 66-80 mins) on the JR Kagoshima Line. The reverse also applies; JR West passes are valid as far as Hakata on the JR-West-operated shinkansen but not on local trains!



the American military's shortlist as the next A-Bomb target following the attack on Hiroshima, but cloud cover over the city on the morning of 9th August 1945 meant the plane carrying the bomb was forced to change direction and headed instead towards Nagasaki.

● **Station guide** As the shinkansen and local lines here are operated by different companies (JR Kyushu and JR West), Kokura station is split but with some duplication. The JR Kyushu side is larger and grander, featuring a central plaza on the 2nd floor. There is a ticket office (daily 4.50am-11pm) where you can get JR Kyushu passes and make Limited Express (LEX) bookings and a





Kokura's speciality is *yaki-udon* 焼うどん. The best place to try it as a full meal is **Ishin** いしん (☐ [okonomiyaki-ishin.com](http://okonomiyaki-ishin.com); daily 11.30am-9.45pm, closed Mon-Fri 3.45-5pm) downstairs behind a red *noren* (curtain), with 13 varieties of *yaki-udon* (¥680-950) alongside *okonomiyaki*, *teppanyaki* and of course beer.

### Side trip by rail to Moji – and a walk back to Honshu

The **Kanmon Straits** 関門海峡 between Kyushu and Honshu are so narrow you can walk between them (see Kanmon Tunnel below). Naturally, a port sprung up around this strategic waterway and many of the early 20th-century Japanese-Western buildings remain today at **Moji** 門司港, a short ride from Kokura on the Kagoshima Line (3-5/hr; 13 mins). The station was beautifully restored in 2019 and is an attraction in its own right.

While the exterior of the **Former Moji Mitsui Club** 旧門司三井倶楽部 (daily 9am-5pm; ¥100) is a hybrid of Japanese and Western, the interior is distinctly European. In 1921, Albert Einstein stayed here for a week as part of a lecturing tour, and half of the 2nd floor has exhibits about his visit and participation in Japanese cultural activities in the region. Next door, the **Former O.S.K. Lines Building** 旧大阪商船 (daily 9am-5pm; ¥100) with its octagonal-roofed spire houses an exhibition by manga artist Seizo Watase.

**At Kyushu Railway History Museum** 九州鉄道記念館 (Kyushu Tetsudo Kinenkan; ☐ [k-rhm.jp](http://k-rhm.jp); daily 9am-5pm except 2nd Wed of month & 2nd Wed & Thur in July; ¥300, ¥240 with a Sugomon card, see box on p66) there are three display areas: the main building which exhibits the history of Kyushu's railways; the outdoor carriage exhibition featuring steam, sleepers, and expresses; and the mini-train park with toddler-friendly rideable versions of the island's named trains.

If you wish to get off the beaten track and enjoy some great scenery, consider crossing the Kanmon Straits and walking out of Kyushu altogether: the **Kitakyushu Bank Retro Line** 北九州銀行レトロライン (☐ [retro-line.net](http://retro-line.net); mid Mar to mid Nov Sat, Sun & public holidays 10am-5.10pm; 1-2/hr; 10 mins; ¥300) runs from the museum to Kanmonkaikyo Mekari 関門海峡めかり station; alternatively, take a 30-minute stroll following the track.

From the end of the line, you can descend into the 780m pedestrian **Kanmon Tunnel** 関門トンネル (24hrs; ¥0 pedestrians, ¥20 bicycles into an honesty box), which links Honshu and Kyushu at its narrowest point; a prominent (and well-photographed) sign halfway marks the official boundary between Fukuoka and Yamaguchi prefectures.

Several decisive sea battles took place in the straits including in 1863-4 when the combined forces of the British, French, Dutch and American navies defeated the Choshu domain; for a partial re-enactment in **Mimosusogawa Park** みもすそ川公園 across the road next to the sea, insert ¥100 into one of the replica cannons for 20 seconds of explosions and smoke (daily 9am-5pm).

On a clear day consider riding **Hinoyama Ropeway** 火の山ロープウェイ (mid Mar to mid Nov daily 10am-5pm; 3/hr; ¥310, return ¥520) to the hills above for a great view over the straits and Kanmon Bridge.

To return to Kyushu, instead of backtracking through the tunnel, consider taking any Sanden Kotsu (📄 sandenkotsu.co.jp/bus; 12 mins; ¥260) bus numbered between 10 and 26 (inc with letter suffixes), 121 or 127, from the sea side of the main road outside the tunnel entrance to Shimonoseki 下関 station, and then any westbound train back to Kokura (JR Sanyo Line; 2-4/hr; 13-15 mins).

From Kokura it's one more stop by shinkansen to Hakata. If heading down the east coast (on the route starting on p419), change trains at Kokura rather than at Hakata.

## **Hakata (Fukuoka) 博多 (福岡) (1175km)** [see pp430-6]

It's mostly tunnels on the short journey between Kokura and Hakata; in the brief snatches of daylight it's surprising to see how lush and green the countryside is.

Hakata is the terminus for JR West's Sanyo shinkansen and the starting point for JR Kyushu's shinkansen service south to Kumamoto and Kagoshima. It is also the name of the JR station for the city of Fukuoka.

## **HAKATA TO NAGASAKI**

[Map 28; Table 20, p509]

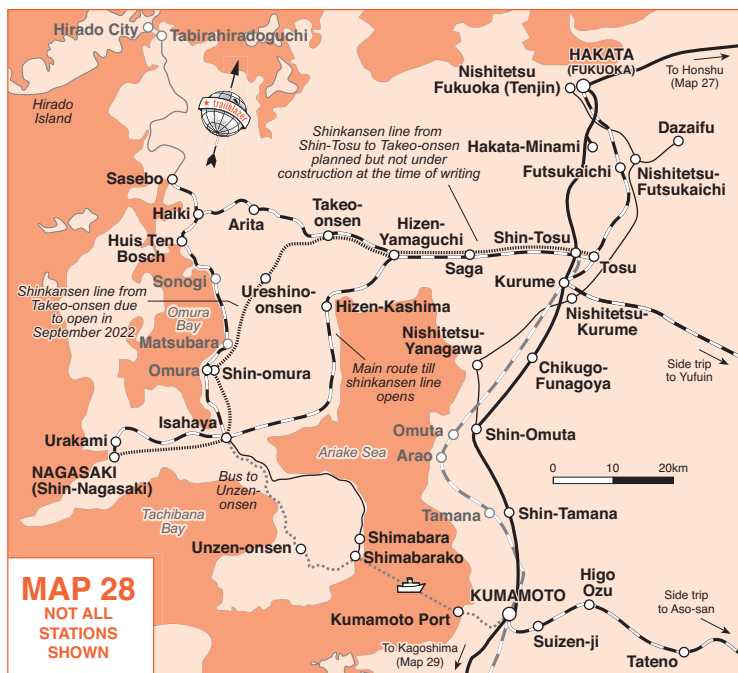
**Note:** Until 23rd September 2022 the Kamome LEX provides a direct service to Nagasaki (see box p412) but when the Nishi Kyushu shinkansen opens it will terminate at Takeo-onsen (see p412). Passengers will then transfer to a shinkansen for the rest of the route; the fastest journey will take about 80 minutes. (The line from Hizen-Yamaguchi to Isahaya will then mostly be third sector but will still be operated by JR Kyushu; the Japan Rail Pass and relevant JR Kyushu passes may be valid on the line but rail-pass holders may have to pay an additional charge.)

At the time of writing dates for the construction of the Shin-Tosu to Takeo-onsen section of this shinkansen line were yet to be announced.

**Hakata 博多 (0km)** For Nagasaki pick up a Kamome LEX, but if going to Huis Ten Bosch (see pp413-14) you should get the Huis Ten Bosch (HTB) LEX (5/day) and for Arita (pp412-13) either the Midori (1/hr) or HTB LEX services.

### ❏ 'SECRET' SHINKANSEN

At Hakata station you may spot the 'secret' shinkansen service on platforms 15 and 16 operating to Hakata-Minami 博多南 (1-2/hr). Even though it is operated by shinkansen trains on shinkansen tracks, it is officially classified as a LEX. When the suburbs around Hakata's shinkansen depot developed in the 1990s, JR Kyushu decided to use the otherwise empty train (being moved to the depot) to serve the growing population also. At ¥300 for the 8-minute ride it undercuts the local bus!



**Futsukaichi 二日市 (14km)** Some LEX services stop at this hot spring resort. Of far more interest is neighbouring **Dazaifu**, home to Tenmangu Shrine and the impressive Kyushu National Museum; for details see p437.

**Tosu 鳥栖 (29km)** All LEX services stop here. There are few facilities apart from a bakery, convenience store and an udon & soba stand.

From Tosu the line (now the Nagasaki Line) heads west towards Nagasaki.

**Shin-Tosu 新鳥栖 (32km)** All LEX services stop here. The station has a **tourist information center** (daily 9am-6pm), a convenience store (daily 6am-10pm) and an udon & soba stand (daily 7am-6pm). Transfer here for the shinkansen services south to Kumamoto and Kagoshima; see p416.

**Saga 佐賀 (54km)** All LEX services stop here and in November many people get off the train as Saga is the venue for **Saga International Balloon Fiesta** 佐賀国際バルーンフェスタ ([sibf.jp](http://sibf.jp)).

The **tourist information centre** (Mon-Fri 8.30am-6pm, Sat & Sun to 5pm) is by the South Exit. The most convenient place to stay is **Route Inn Saga Ekimae** ホテルルートイン佐賀駅前 (☎ 0952-25-7115, [route-inn.co.jp](http://route-inn.co.jp); from ¥6700/S, ¥10,000/Tw, inc breakfast), which is on the right from the South Exit.

### ❑ PRE-SHINKANSEN ROUTE – HAKATA TO NAGASAKI [Map 28, p411]

(Distances by JR from Hakata. Kamome LEX journey time: approx 2hrs.)

From Hakata (Fukuoka) the route to Saga is as described on pp410-11. The first stop after Saga is **Hizen-Yamaguchi** 肥前山口 (68km). All LEX services stop here and this is the junction for the branch line to Arita, Huis Ten Bosch and Sasebo; if on a Kamome LEX change here to take the alternative route to Nagasaki (see below).

After **Hizen-Kashima** 肥前鹿島 (83km) the line follows the coast, affording great views of the Ariake Sea on the left side. The view is occasionally blotted out by the odd tunnel and gradually the line moves more inland. All LEX services then stop at **Isahaya** 諫早 (129km; see p414); change here for the Seaside Liner (approx 1/hr), which operates on the Omura Line, to Huis Ten Bosch and/or Sasebo (see opposite for both). For the last 10 minutes of the journey to Nagasaki the train goes at full speed and there's one long tunnel about five minutes before arrival.

All LEX services stop at **Urakami** 浦上天 (152km), the nearest JR stop to the A-Bomb Museum and Peace Park (see p438). When it first opened in 1897, Urakami was Nagasaki station. But the growth of the downtown port area and land reclamation meant traffic shifted further away so a decision was made to construct a new Nagasaki station; in 1905 the station's name was changed to Urakami.

In a few minutes you will arrive at **Nagasaki** 長崎 (154km), see pp438-45.

However, the tourist information staff have an accommodation list and can help book somewhere to stay if necessary, but if coming for the balloon fiesta you should book well in advance.

**Hizen-Yamaguchi** 肥前山口 (68km) All LEX services stop here.

**Takeo-onsen** 武雄温泉 (82km) All LEX will terminate here and for the rest of the journey to Nagasaki you will need to transfer to the new shinkansen services; there will be a cross-platform interchange. See p414 for the route from here.

Takeo-onsen (☎ takeo-kk.net) is an old hot spring town with several public baths; the arrival of the shinkansen will no doubt bring more visitors. There is a **tourist information centre** (daily 9am-6pm) in the station.

JR Kyushu is planning to operate a new tourist train from autumn 2022 called 'Futatsuboshi 4047' (Two Stars). It will be an all-reserved LEX which will operate at weekends and holidays from Takeo-Onsen to Nagasaki via Hizen-Kashima in the morning and back via Omura and Haiki.

### Alternative route to Nagasaki from Takeo-onsen

If you have the time this route includes a scenic coastal journey and a chance to see the wonderful pottery in Arita and/or go to the theme park at Huis Ten Bosch. The Huis Ten Bosch LEX (to Huis Ten Bosch; 5/day) runs coupled with the Midori LEX (1/hr) from Hakata to Haiki via Arita. At Haiki the Midori LEX heads north-west to the lovely port town of Sasebo (see opposite),

● **Arita** 有田 The Arita area is known for hand-made pottery, **Arita-yaki** 有田焼, which was first produced in and around Arita (☎ arita.jp), though it is also known as Imari-yaki 伊万里焼 as it was exported from Imari port which is to the north of Arita. Porcelain manufacture in Japan started because a Korean potter, who went there in 1616, discovered kaolin (an essential clay for

## Shikoku – route guides


Shikoku ('Four Provinces') takes its name from the provinces into which the island was once divided. The old provinces of Sanuki, Tosa, Iyo and Awa are known today as the prefectures of Kagawa, Kochi, Ehime and Tokushima, though you'll still come across the original names.

Predominantly rural, Shikoku has everything that the current image of Japan does not: wide open spaces, forests, country villages and a dramatic natural landscape. However, the island is not just a provincial backwater. There's plenty to see and it's worth devoting at least a week to completing the loop route described. Though a number of road bridges link Shikoku with Honshu, the only entry/exit point by rail is via the Seto-Ohashi Bridge (see p462).

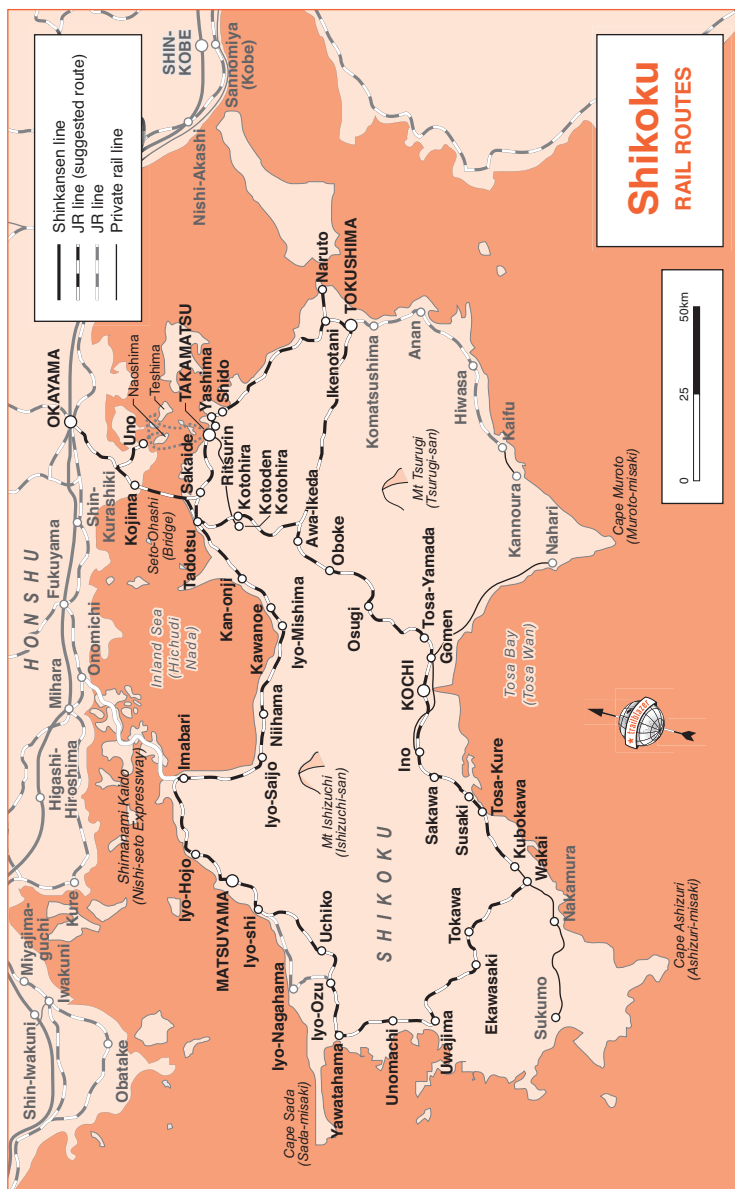
This route starts in Okayama, taking a train across the bridge to **Takamatsu** where you can savour a trip to **Ritsurin-koen**, one of the largest landscape gardens in Japan; also recommended is a day trip to **Naoshima**, an island known for its open-air art and art museums. From Takamatsu either head west to **Kotohira**, for its hilltop shrine, Kompira-san, or east to **Tokushima**, home to the famous Awa-odori summer dance festival. Back on the main loop **Oboke** is worth a stop for its gorge and the Iya Valley.

**Kochi** is known for its manga museum and castle as well as for its Yosakoi summer dance festival. The route continues in a clockwise direction to **Uwajima**, with its bullfights and fertility shrine, then on to **Matsuyama**, the largest city on the island and the access point for a visit to **Dogo-onsen**, Japan's oldest spa town. The last part of the journey covers the route from Matsuyama back towards Okayama on Honshu.

See p37 for details of the passes available in Shikoku. It's worth noting that though plenty can be accomplished on a rail tour of Shikoku, the more isolated parts of the island can be reached only by bus (often infrequent), or by taking a taxi or hiring a car. See also p17 for details about using this guide.

A useful resource for planning a trip is  [tourismshikoku.org](http://tourismshikoku.org).

Note that apart from on the main routes, limited express (LEX) services on Shikoku may only have a few





concourse from the ticket gates; there are several restaurants (daily 11am-9.30pm) on the 5th floor and on the basement level.

**Tourist information** The tourist information office (☎ [www.city.tokushima.tokushima.jp](http://www.city.tokushima.tokushima.jp); daily 10am-6pm) is on the 6th floor; take one of the lifts/elevators on the right-hand side by the station exit. The staff speak English and have information about Tokushima Prefecture. The tourist information office by the bus station, as you come out of the station, has information about Tokushima City in English, but at the time of research was staffed only by Japanese speakers.

**Getting around** Tokushima is easy to navigate on foot – or boat (see p485).

**Festivals** The city's fame lies squarely with its over 400-year-old **Awa-Odori dance festival**, staged during the O-bon celebrations (Aug 12th-15th; be sure to book accommodation well in advance if arriving in this period). The festival encapsulates the city's cultural identity and has a relaxed vibe.

Anime fans come here in the autumn for **Machi-Asobi** (☎ [pref.tokushima.lg.jp/en/japanese/tourism/events/machi-asobi](http://pref.tokushima.lg.jp/en/japanese/tourism/events/machi-asobi)); many of the events are held on Mt Bizan (see p485).

**Where to stay** For accommodation with style, **Hotel Clement Tokushima** ホテルクレメント徳島 (☎ 088-656 3131, ☎ [hotel.clement.co.jp](http://hotel.clement.co.jp); from ¥15,444/S, ¥19,000/D, ¥26,136/Tw; breakfast ¥2300) is a convenient choice as it is located just to the right of the station exit. As with many hotels rates for online reservations can be much less than quoted above and packages may include breakfast. The rooms (7th-17th floors) are a good size but the ones facing the tracks can be noisy if you like having the window open.

To the left of the station is **Daiwa Roynet Hotel Tokushima-ekimae** ダイワロイネットホテル徳島駅前 (☎ 088-611 8455, ☎ [daiwaroynet.jp](http://daiwaroynet.jp); from ¥8380/S, ¥10,460/D, ¥15,460/Tw, inc breakfast); it

has a variety of rooms, including some 'Ladies' rooms', and provides all the facilities you would expect.

**Hotel Sunroute Tokushima** ホテルサンルート徳島 (☎ 088-653 8111, ☎ [sunroute-tokushima.com](http://sunroute-tokushima.com); ¥10,000/S, ¥15,960/D or Tw, inc breakfast) offers stylish and comfortable accommodation; the rooms are on the 4th-10th floor. A particular feature is the tranquil 11th-floor **Bizan no yu** びざんの湯 hot spring bath, which is free for guests (non-residents 7am-noon ¥530, noon-8pm ¥730). The hotel entrance is to the right of the branch of Tully's Coffee on the 1st/ground floor. Take a lift to the reception desk on the 3rd floor.

Another decent option is **Agnes Hotel** アグネスホテル (☎ 088-626 2222, ☎ [www.agneshotel.jp](http://www.agneshotel.jp); from ¥6018/S, ¥12,037/Tw, inc good breakfast); it is quite a small hotel but it is stylish and minimalist in design. See also Where to eat.

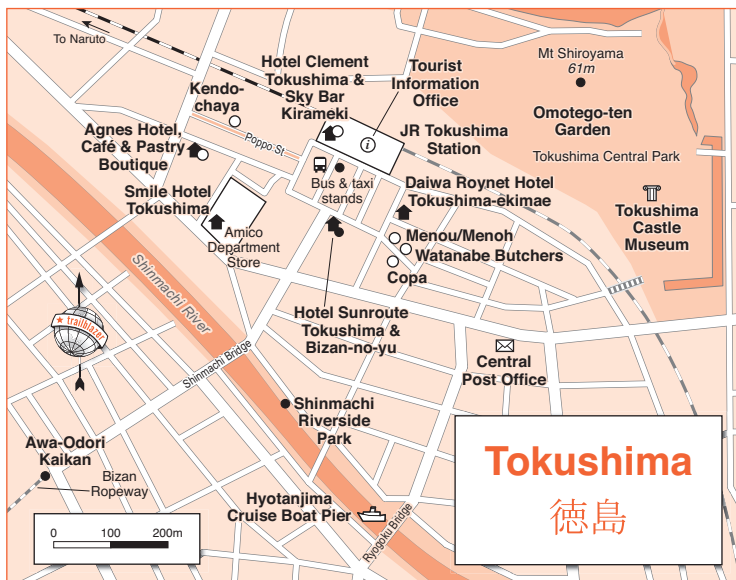
The rooms at **Smile Hotel Tokushima** スマイルホテル徳島 (☎ 088-626 0889, ☎ [smile-hotels.com/hotels/show/tokushima](http://smile-hotels.com/hotels/show/tokushima); from ¥6100/S, ¥7100/D or ¥8100/Tw, inc breakfast), a business hotel, are on the 9th-11th floors (above Amico department store) so some have good views.

See also pp67-74.

**Where to eat and drink** The broth for Tokushima's ramen is made from a sweet/salty pork belly stock with soy sauce; traditionally the ramen is served with a raw egg on top.

A good place to try some Tokushima ramen is **Menou/Menoh (Tokushima Ekimae)** 麺王 (徳島駅前本店) (☎ 7-men.com; daily 11am to midnight); purchase a ticket from the machine outside (ramen from ¥500). Such is its reputation for delicious ramen that locals feel it is always worth the wait if there is a queue. However, there are a few branches in Tokushima so you could try one of those if you don't feel like queuing; see the website for details.

But, if you get tired of waiting (and don't want to go anywhere else) there are several other options on this road including **Watanabe Butchers** わたなべ精肉店 (5pm-1am), which describes itself as a



'Station Front Wine Bistro'. The menu includes *yakiniku* and *teppanyaki* (around ¥3500); cheaper options are burgers (¥980) and a colourful salad (¥680). There is a wide selection of wines.

Other possibilities along or near this road are a trattoria, a yakitori place, an izaya and another ramen restaurant.

Agnes Hotel (see Where to stay) has a **pastry boutique** ペストリーブティック ([www.agnespastry.jp](http://www.agnespastry.jp); daily 11am-9pm; cakes and pastries around ¥500) as well as a **café** カフェ (daily, lunch 11.30am-2pm, café 2-5.30pm, dinner 5.30-9pm); the latter offers set lunches with pasta, pizza, salad or curry (all from ¥1540) as well as pasta or a sandwich (from ¥990). Set meals in the evening are from ¥2750.

For a quiet drink, try the friendly **Copa** コパ bar (daily 6.30pm-1am), which has interesting photo pastiches of arty/Euro-culture on the walls and serves a decent choice of beer (¥600) and spirits as well as unusual cocktails such as beer and tomato

juice (¥600). The atmosphere is intimate and conducive to conversation. Go past Menou/Menoh (see opposite) and keep walking until you see the English sign on the right-hand side of the road.

Another option for a drink is **Sky Bar Kirameki** スカイバー 煌 (daily 6pm to midnight), on the 18th floor of Hotel Clement Tokushima (see Where to stay). It offers great views across the city, but do sit at the bar if you want to avoid the ¥750 table fee on top of your cocktail (around ¥1000-1500). The hotel also has several upmarket restaurant options.

There are a few options along **Poppo-machi** ポーポー町, the covered shopping street to the right of the station: at **Kendo-chaya** けんど茶屋 (Thur-Tue 10am-8pm, to 10pm during the Awa-Odori) Tokushima ramen costs ¥650 and a Tokushima *donburi* (rice bowl) is ¥700. It's on the right-hand side as you walk from the station; look for the straw dolls outside.

## Practical information

**Station guide** The **ticket office** (daily 4.50am-11.05pm) at JR Matsuyama station is combined with the travel agency. There's an **udon and soba** stand (daily 11am-6pm; from ¥300) by the ticket barrier. There are lockers to the right of the station and around the corner at the far end of the building and also a luggage-storage service (Mon-Fri & holidays 9am-5.30pm; ¥410).

Do not confuse JR Matsuyama station with **Matsuyama-shi** 松山空 station; the latter is the main station in Matsuyama for services operated by Iyotetsu. The station is connected to Iyotetsu Takashimaya department store.

## Tourist information Matsuyama

**Tourist Information Center** (TIC; ㊦ en .matsuyama-sightseeing.com; daily 8.30am-8.30pm) is in the kiosk to the left as you face the station exit. A quirk of this place is that up to 5pm it functions only as a tourist information office and cannot help with accommodation reservations. However, from 5pm hotel reservation staff take over. If you time your arrival for around 4.30pm you may get the best of both worlds. **Dogo Tourist Office** (daily 8.30am-7pm) is across the street from the tram terminus at Dogo-onsen (see pp492-3).

In both places you can pick up leaflets about Matsuyama as well as Dogo-onsen and also buy a tram pass (see below). You should be also able to get a copy of *What's Going On?* (㊦ home.e-catv.ne.jp/wgo), a monthly guide to events in Matsuyama; it's also available in some hotels.

**Getting around** The easiest way of travelling around Matsuyama is on one of the Iyotetsu **tram/streetcar** lines (daily 6am-10pm; 3-12/hr; ¥170 flat fare, ¥800/¥1100/1400/1700 1-/2-/3-/4-day pass). There are five routes (Nos 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6); there is no No 4 because, as in Hiroshima, the pronunciation of 'shi' (4) can also mean 'death'. Enter at the back and pay as you leave at the front. Passes can be bought on board the tram or from the TIC at JR Matsuyama station, or at Iyotetsu Ticket Center at Matsuyama-shi station.

An additional ticket is required to ride on the Botchan train (see p489). Note that for some places the tram announcements in English are the translation of the Japanese name, not the name you actually see on the signs or on some maps.

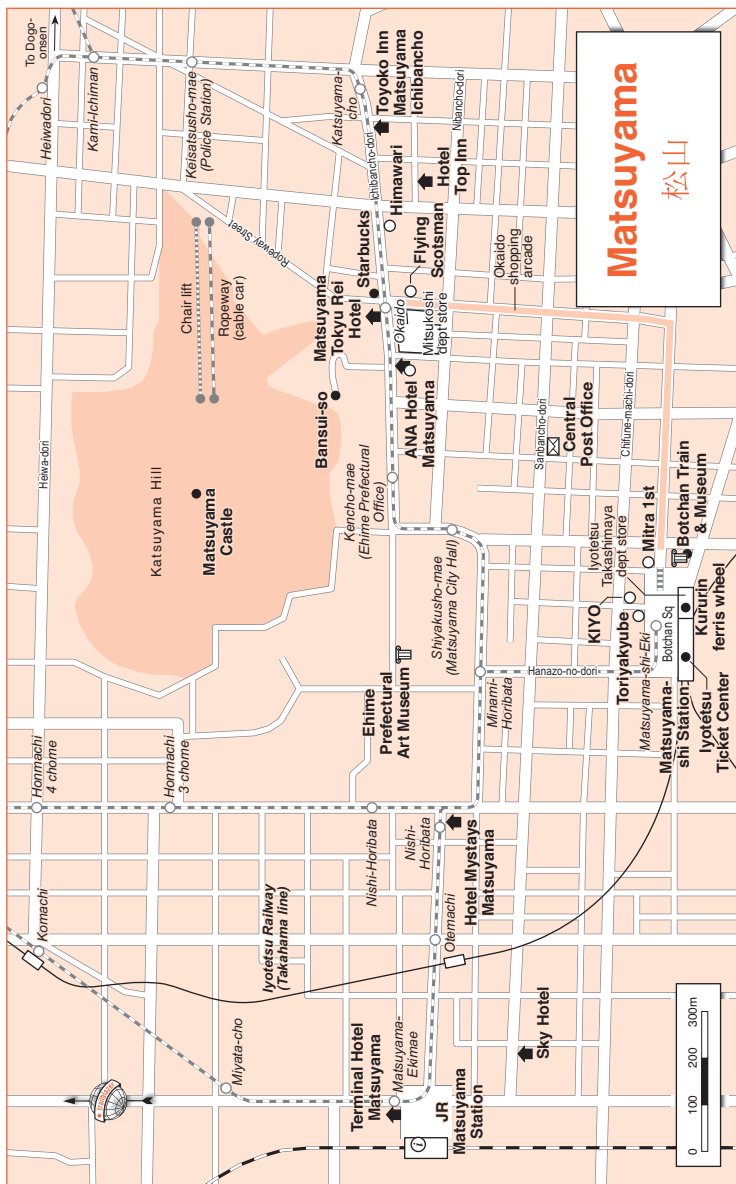
**Festivals** The highlight of **Matsuyama Festival** (10th-13th Aug) is a night-time parade of samba dancers but there is also a fireworks display on 10th August.

**Where to stay** **Terminal Hotel Matsuyama** ターミナルホテル松山 (㊦ 089-947 5388, ㊦ www.th-matsuyama.jp; from ¥6000/S, ¥8500/D or Tw; breakfast ¥650) is a JR hotel (see box on p70); its rooms are functional but it is convenient as it is near the JR station and right by the tram stop.

Also near the JR station is **Sky Hotel** スカイホテル (㊦ 089-947 7776, ㊦ www.shikoku-sky.com; from ¥6800/S, ¥11,000/D, ¥12,000/T; breakfast ¥1100), with comfortably sized, though slightly tired, rooms. **Hotel Mystays Matsuyama** ホテルマイステイズ松山 (㊦ 089-913 2580, ㊦ mystays.com; from ¥10,630/S, D or Tw; breakfast ¥1800) is within walking distance of the JR station and is a cut above the standard business hotel, though there are no dedicated single rooms. Reception staff are friendly and pro-active.

As Shikoku's biggest city, Matsuyama is not short of top-class hotels. **ANA Hotel Matsuyama** 全日航ホテル松山 (㊦ 089-933 5511, ㊦ www.anacpmatsuyama.com; from ¥10,450/S, ¥14,000/D or Tw, inc breakfast) is both opposite the castle and in the centre of town. The spacious rooms have wide-screen TVs, mini bars and room service. Across the street is **Matsuyama Tokyu REI Hotel** 松山東急REIホテル (㊦ 089-941 0109, ㊦ www.matsuyama.rei.tokyuhotels.co.jp; from ¥8200/S, ¥12,400/D, ¥14,400/Tw, inc breakfast), with a bright interior and smartly decorated rooms.

A good budget option, a short way from Okaido shopping arcade, is **Hotel Top Inn** ホテルトップイン (㊦ 089-933 3333, ㊦ top-inn.jp; from ¥4100/S, ¥5830/D). It is a basic business hotel with simple rooms;



Japanese-style rooms (sleeping up to three people) are also available. A bonus is that it is near the sights and tram stops.

**Toyoko Inn Matsuyama Ichibancho** 東横イン 松山一番町 (☎ 089-941 1045, [www.toyoko-inn.com](http://www.toyoko-inn.com); ¥5724/S, ¥7884/D, ¥8640/Tw, inc breakfast), a branch of the reliable chain hotel, is nearby and is close to Katsuyama-cho tram stop.

For details about accommodation at Dogo-onsen see opposite; for general accommodation information see pp67-74.

**Where to eat and drink** By the entrance to the covered Okaido 大街道 arcade is **Flying Scotsman** フライングスコツマン (daily 8.30am-11pm) diner; the mock railway carriage here makes a fine location for a lunchtime sandwich. Hamburger sets (from ¥660) and toasted sandwich sets (¥860) complement the cold choices. Find a peaceful booth to munch away in and let the period interiors turn your thoughts back to the golden age of steam.

The menu at **Himawari** ひまわり (daily 11am-3am, lunch to 5pm) includes *takoyaki* (from ¥400) and *mitsuyamataki* (like okonomiyaki; from ¥820); lunch sets cost ¥720-950. You can eat in or take-away

and since it is open till the early hours it is a great place for a late-night snack.

On the eastern edge of Botchan Square lies **Mitra 1st** ミトラファーストファースト (Tue-Sat 6pm-midnight), a 2nd floor dining bar that tries to bring an edge of European sophistication to a young demographic. Its menu offers Italian fare such as creamy pasta (¥880) and pizza (¥800) as well as fried rice (¥900). Drinks are a standard ¥500 (¥380 if ordering food) and there is an excellent range of wines. The terrace is pleasant in the summer and offers a nice oasis in the city. On a small alley across from the station exit is **KIYO** きよ (daily 11.30am-midnight) serving a set meal for about ¥1000. There are several other options around the square.

Many hotels have restaurants: **ANA Hotel Matsuyama** (see Where to stay) has a good choice including a Japanese and a Chinese restaurant on the 6th floor and a teppanyaki restaurant on the 14th floor. Also on the 14th floor is a bar (6.30pm to midnight) which provides a panorama of the neon cityscape and is a good place to sit and reflect on the day's discoveries over a cocktail (from ¥1150).

## Side trip to Dogo-onsen 道後温泉

Twenty minutes by tram from Matsuyama is the ancient spa town of **Dogo** ([dogo.jp/en](http://dogo.jp/en)). Today, Dogo is geared up to the tourist trade but a trip to a bath-house is an excellent way to unwind after a day's sightseeing. The hot spring here dates back 1600 years and according to legend was discovered when a white egret's injured leg was healed by hot water flowing out of a crevice in some rocks.

**Dogo-onsen honkan** 道後温泉本館 was built in 1894 and is said to be the inspiration for the bath-house of the Gods in Miyazaki's animated classic *Spirited Away*. The hot spring is deemed one of the three most famous in Japan. However, the 2nd and 3rd floors of the the honkan are closed for renovation work until 2026; at the time of research only the no-frills 1st/ground-floor bath, called Kami-no-yu 神の湯 (Water of the Gods; daily 6am-11pm; ¥420 up to 60 mins) at the honkan is open; this is a great place to visit to experience going to a *senjo* (public bath; see p87) but there is no soap or shampoo, nor are you given a towel though one can be rented for ¥60.

The advantage of the new annex, **Asuka-no-Yu** 飛鳥乃湯泉 ([dogo.jp/en/asuka.php](http://dogo.jp/en/asuka.php); daily 6am-11pm), is that in addition to indoor baths it also has a rotemburo and private bathing rooms which can be booked (phone bookings ☎ 089-932 1126) up to three months in advance; one of these is a replica of the

Yushinden 又新殿, a special area in the Honkan constructed for any visiting Emperor, or male members of the Imperial family, and the other a modern room. In addition to these private rooms there are five more, use of which is included in the most expensive packages. The cheapest package costs ¥610 per adult and the most expensive (¥1690) includes a rental yukata and towels, use of one of the private bathing rooms on the 2nd floor as well as tea and Japanese sweets; families/groups can use the special bathing room (¥2040 + ¥1690 per adult). All packages are valid for up to 90 minutes; this is plenty of time for most people. Asuka-no-yu is a short walk to the left from the honkan.

Take a tram (No 5 from Matsuyama station, or No 3 from Matsuyama-shi) bound for Dogo-onsen. The old-fashioned terminal here is a 1986 reconstruction of the original (1911) European-style building. From here walk through the covered L-shaped **Dogo Haikara-dori** 道後ハイカラ通り shopping arcade to reach Dogo-onsen honkan; turn right when you reach the locally popular but less well known (and less crowded) **Tsubaki-no-yu** 温泉椿の湯 bath-house (☎ dogo.jp/en/tsubaki.php; daily 6.30am-11pm; ¥400 for up to 60 mins) on your left. Dogo bath-house itself is opposite the exit to the arcade.

Back near the tram/streetcar stop, be sure to stop and observe the exquisite workings of **Botchan Karakuri clock** 坊ちゃんからくり時計 (daily 8am-10pm). On the hour the roof rises to reveal traditionally clad figures (from a bath-house scene in Soseki's novel) gently spin accompanied by some playful music. You can also dip your feet into the adjoining **foot-bath**.

If you decide to stay in the area there are several options: **Yamatoya Honten** 大和屋本店 (☎ 089-935 8880, ☎ www.yamatoyahonten.com; from ¥20,000pp inc half board; room-only rates on request) is definitely the place to stay if you can afford it. It's all kimonos and shamisen music in this upmarket ryokan, which even stages performances at its own Noh theatre. The ryokan also has its own attractive outdoor hot spring. Most rooms are tatami style though there are some Western singles and two twins. Advance booking is highly recommended. **Old England Dogo Yamanote Hotel** オールドイングランド道後山の手ホテル (☎ 089-998 2111, ☎ www.dogo-yamanote.com; from ¥10,000/S, ¥14,000/D or Tw, inc breakfast, to around ¥42,000/D or Tw, inc half board) exudes luxury and impresses from the moment you approach it. This is a place which tries, and to some extent succeeds, to recreate the atmosphere and décor of an Edwardian English country house so don't come here for an authentic Japanese experience, other than for the chance to soak in the hotel's own spa; however, it's great for an unusual one-night escape. **Hotel Patio Dogo** ホテルパティオ・ドウゴ (☎ 089-941 4128, ☎ www.patio-dogo.co.jp; from ¥7665/S, ¥11,550/D, ¥14,700/Tw, see website for discounts; Japanese-style breakfast ¥880) also has Western-style accommodation and is right across from the far side of the bath-house if coming from the tram. This is a good place to go for a traditional atmosphere and reasonable rate.

A great place to eat is **Dogo Uotake** 道後 魚武 (☎ www.dogo-uotake.com; 11am-11pm); the menu includes several *teishoku* (set meals) some of which have *taimeshi* 鯛めし (sea-bream rice) a speciality of the area; a sashimi/tempura *teishoku* costs ¥1800. Also worth trying here is the delicious **Dogo beer** 道後ビール, brewed by Dogo Brewery (☎ www.dogobeer.co.jp) in Matsuyama and designed to be drunk after a bath. Dogo Uotake is on the left-hand side, near the top of the arcade, if returning to the tram.

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

### GENERAL

**Asa-ichi** 朝市 morning market

**Ashi-yu** 足湯 foot-bath

**-bashi** 橋 bridge

**-basho** 場所 place where a sumo tournament is held

**Bento** 弁当 lunch box (see also Ekiben)

**Bunraku** 文楽 puppetry

**Chugoku** 中国 literally ‘central country’ but it refers to Western Honshu

**Cosplay** コスプレ costume play ie dressing as a character from anime or manga

**Daimyo** 大名 feudal lord

**Depachika** デパチカ food hall in department store

**-dera** 院 temple (Buddhist)

**-dori/odori** -道り street

**Ekiben** 駅弁 station lunch box (see box on p102)

**Front** フロント reception desk in a hotel

**Gaijin** 外人 foreigner

**-gawa** 川 river

**Geisha** 芸者 person trained to entertain (see box on p62)

**Geta** 下駄 wooden clogs

**go-** ご honorific for non-native Japanese words (see *o*)

**-gu** 宮 shrine (Shinto)

**Haiku** 俳句 17-syllable poem focusing on nature

**Hanabi** 花火 fireworks

**Hanami** 花見 cherry-blossom viewing

**Hanten** 半纏 / はんでん a jacket worn over a yukata (see Yukata)

**Henro** 遍路 pilgrim

**Hibakusha** 被爆者 A-bomb survivor

**Hiragana** ひらがな syllabary for writing Japanese words (see pp82-3 & p498)

**Ikebana** 生け花 flower arranging

**-in** 院 temple (Buddhist)

**Izakaya** 居酒屋 Japanese-style pub/bar

**-ji** 寺 temple (Buddhist)

**Jidohan-baiki** 自動販売機 vending machine

**-jinja** 神社 shrine (Shinto)

**Jinrikisha** 人力車 pulled (cycle) rickshaw

**-jo** 城 castle

**Kaiseki-ryori** 懐石料理 a traditional multi-course meal; each course is small but aesthetically pleasing

**Kaisoku** 快速 rapid train

**Kaiten sushi-ya** 回転寿司 Sushi restaurant with the sushi on a conveyor belt

**Kami** 神 spirit/deity in Shinto religion

**Kanji** 漢字 Chinese characters used to write most Japanese words

**Kansai** 関西 literally ‘west of the border’; refers to the area around Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and Kobe.

**Kanto** 関東 literally ‘east of the border’ and it refers to the area around Tokyo

**Katakana** カタカナ syllabary for non-Japanese words (see pp82-3 & p499)

**Kinki** 近畿 another word for the Kansai area

**Kissaten** 喫茶店 a coffee shop/café.

**-ko** 湖 lake

**Koban** 交番 police box

**-koen** 公園 park

**Koi** 鯉 a carp (fish)

**Konbini** コンビニ convenience store (see box on p84)

**Kotatsu** 炬燵 low table with a heat source underneath

**Koto** 琴 Japanese harp

**Koyo** 紅葉 autumn leaves

**Kyuko** 急行 express train

**Maiko** 舞子 trainee geisha; called **geiko** 芸子 in Kyoto

**Manga** 漫画 / マンガ comic or graphic novel

**Manga kissa** 喫茶店 A café with manga/video games; see also Kissaten

**Matsuri** 祭 festival

**Meishi** 名刺 business card

**Mikoshi** 神輿 portable shrine particularly used in Shinto festivals

**Minshuku** 民宿 place to stay (see pp68-9)

**Morning set / service** モーニングセット / サービス a café’s breakfast (see p74)

**Noren** 暖簾 split curtain in front of Japanese-style restaurant or shop that shows it is open

**o-** お honorific for native Japanese words (see *go-*)

**Onsen** 温泉 hot spring bath with naturally heated water (see also pp85-6 and Rotemburo)

**Oshibori** おしぼり / お絞り wet towel (hot or cold) used to refresh yourself before/after a meal

**Otaku** オタク geek (see also *Tetsudo mania*)

**Robotayaki** 炉端焼き / ろばたやき a kind of *izakaya* (see p78)

**Rotemburo** 露天風呂 open-air hot-spring bath (see also Onsen)

**Ryokan** 旅館 Japanese-style hotel (see pp71-3)

**Sarariman** サラリーマン A salaried white-collar worker traditionally committed to his company

**Sento** 銭湯 public bath

**Shamisen** 三味線 wooden instrument (see p63)

**Shide** 紙垂, 四手 A paper streamer that is used in Shinto rituals and is often



## APPENDIX B: USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES

### General words and phrases

Good morning	<i>ohaiyoo gozaimasu</i>	Good evening	<i>kombanwa/konbanwa§</i>
Good night	<i>oyasumi nasai</i>	Hello	<i>konnichiwa</i>
Please*	<i>dozo, onegaishimasu</i> or <i>kudasai</i>	Goodbye	<i>sayonara</i>
Thank you	<i>domo arigato</i>	Yes (see p83)	<i>hai</i>
(very much)	<i>(gozaimashita)</i>	No	<i>iie</i>
No thanks	<i>kekko desu</i>	I don't understand	<i>wakarimasen</i>
Excuse me / I'm sorry	<i>shitsureishimasu / sumimasen</i> or <i>gomen nasai</i>		
What's your name?	<i>O-namae wa nan desu-ka</i>		
My name is .....	<i>Watashi wa ..... desu</i>		
Where do you live?	<i>Doko ni sunde imasu ka</i>		
I'm from Britain / America / Canada /	<i>Igirisujin / Amerikajin / Kanadajin /</i>		
Australia / New Zealand	<i>Australiajin / New Zealandjin desu</i>		
Do you speak English?	<i>Anata wa eigo ga hanasemasu ka</i>		
Please write it down for me	<i>Sore o kaite kudasai</i>		
Could you repeat that please?	<i>Mo ichido itte kudasai</i>		
How much does it cost?	<i>Ikura desu ka</i>		
Is it OK to take a photo?	<i>Shashin o totte mo ii desu ka</i>		

\* *onegaishimasu* and *kudasai* are used with a noun or when requesting/receiving something; *dozo* can be used without a noun and when giving something away.

§ Japanese words with an 'n' before a 'p' or 'b' are sometimes written as 'm' in English (Romaji). For example you may see both Dotonbori and Dotombori for the same place.

### Day/time

Monday	<i>getsuyobi</i>	月曜日	yesterday	<i>kino</i>	昨日
Tuesday	<i>kayobi</i>	火曜日	morning	<i>asa</i>	朝
Wednesday	<i>suiyobi</i>	水曜日	afternoon	<i>gogo</i>	午後
Thursday	<i>mokuyobi</i>	木曜日	evening	<i>yoru</i>	夜
Friday	<i>kinoyobi</i>	金曜日	day	<i>hi / nichii</i>	日
Saturday	<i>doyobi</i>	土曜日	month	<i>gatsu / tsuki</i>	月
Sunday	<i>nichiyobi</i>	日曜日	year	<i>nen / toshi</i>	年
today	<i>kyo</i>	今日	hour	<i>ji</i>	時
tomorrow	<i>ashita</i>	明日	minute	<i>fun / pun</i>	分

### Hiragana chart

a	ka (ga)	sa (za)	ta (da)	na	ha (ba/pa)	ma	ya	ra	wa
あ	か (が)	さ (ざ)	た (だ)	な	は (ば/ぱ)	ま	や	ら	わ
i	ki (gi)	shi (ji)	chi (ji)	ni	hi (bi/pi)	mi		ri	
い	き (ぎ)	し (じ)	ち (ぢ)	に	ひ (び/ぴ)	み		り	
u	ku (gu)	su (zu)	tsu (zu)	nu	hu (bu/pu)	mu	yu	ru	(w)o
う	く (ぐ)	す (ず)	つ (づ)	ぬ	ふ (ぶ/ふ)	む	ゆ	る	を
e	ke (ge)	se (ze)	te (de)	ne	he (be/pe)	me		re	
え	け (げ)	せ (ぜ)	て (で)	ね	へ (べ/ぺ)	め		れ	
o	ko (go)	so (zo)	to (do)	no	ho (bo/po)	mo	yo	ro	n
お	こ (ご)	そ (ぞ)	と (ど)	の	ほ (ぼ/ぽ)	も	よ	ろ	ん

**Railway vocabulary**

**adult / child** *otona / kodomo* 大人 / 子供  
**aisle (seat)** *tsuro (gawa no seki)* 通路 (側の席)

**arrival** *tochaku* 到着

**conductor** *shashosan* 車掌さん

**departure** *shupatsu* 出発

**entrance** *iriguchi* 入り口

**exit** *deguchi* 出口

**express train** *kyuko* 急行

**fare adjustment office** *ryokin seisanjo*  
 料金精算所

**Green car** *guriin-sha* グリーンカー

**disabled person** *karada no fujyu na hito*  
 身体の不自由

**limited express (LEX) service** *tokkyu*  
 特急

**local train** *futsu* 普通

**Lost property office (Lost and Found office)** *Ishitsubutsutoriatsukaijo*  
 遺失物取扱所

**luggage** *nimotsu* にもつ

**non-reserved seat** *jiyu-seki* 自由席

**ordinary class car** *futsu-sha* 普通車

**platform** *platthomu* プラットホーム

**railway line** *sen* 線

**railway lunchbox** *ekiben* 駅弁

**rapid train** *kaisoku* 快速

**refund** *haraimodoshi* 払い戻し

**reservation** *yoyaku* 予約

**reserved seat** *shitei-seki* 指定席

**sleeper train** *shindaisha* 寝台車

**station** *eki* 駅

**ticket / transfer ticket** *kippu / norikae-kippu*  
 きっぷ / 乗り換えきっぷ

**ticket gate** *kaisatsu-guchi* 改札口

**ticket machine** *kenbaiki* 券売機

**timetable** *jikoku hyo* 時刻表

**Travel Service Center** *ryoko senta*  
 旅行センター

**trolley wagon service** *ワゴンサービス*  
 (note: trolley services are rarer nowadays as most people have already bought food and drink)

**underground / subway / metro**

*chikatetsu* 地下鉄

**window seat** *madogawa no seki* 窓側の席

**JAPAN RAIL SEAT RESERVATION TICKET**

**From (Tokyo)** → Ticket name (Shinkansen seat reservation ticket) → **To (Mishima)**

**Departure time** → 3月25日 (9:03発) → **Arrival time** → (9:45着)

**Date (Month/day)** → 3月25日

**Train type (Hikari)** → 新幹線特急券

**Train number** → 505号

**Seat reservation charge** (no charge for Japan Rail pass-holders) → ¥2,490

**Date reservation made** (Year/month/day) → 2022.-3.21

**Car number** → 7号車

**Seat number: Row 5, Seat E** → 5番E席

**Non-smoking car** → C10

I have a lactose intolerance  
 Is this dish kosher / halal?  
 Do you take credit cards?  
 Smoking area / non-smoking area  
 Can I have a knife / spoon / fork

*Nyuto futaisei ga arimasu*  
*Kono ryori wa kosha/ hararu desu ka*  
*Kureditto kado de ii desu ka*  
*Kitsuen seki / kinen seki*  
*Naifu / supuun / forku arimasu ka*

## APPENDIX C: JR SERVICE SUMMARIES

The details in this appendix give an idea of the JR services available for the main routes covered but Covid has affected service frequency so **it is essential to check in advance of travel**. For actual **timetables** you need to look at online services such as Jorudan or Navitime (see box on p94) or, if you like the idea of a challenge, look at a copy of the Japanese Timetable (see below) in a ticket office, or travel service centre.

If using the Japanese railway timetable start by finding the kanji for the stations you want to travel from and to; these are included in this guidebook. Then look at the route maps on the colour pages at the front of the timetable and find the map which covers the area you want to travel in; this would be easiest to do if comparing with one of the maps in this book. Then find the relevant kanji and look for the number which appears immediately above or below it; this refers to the corresponding page in the timetable. For major services two numbers are given – one for each direction. Working your way around the Japanese timetable can take time but is rewarding.

### USING THE SERVICE SUMMARIES IN THIS GUIDE

Frequencies and approximate journey times for services on the main routes described in this book are provided below. Note that the actual journey length always depends on how many stops there are; **the times quoted are given as a guideline only**.

The text focuses on shinkansen and limited express (LEX) services; local/rapid trains operate on most routes but details are included only when there are few LEX services.

Most services listed operate daily year-round, but sometimes there are additional seasonal services and also services at weekends can differ – these variations are not noted.

Even though a service may seem to operate frequently often this is because there are lots of services in the morning and evening; during the day the services may be limited and for that reason it is not described as an hourly service.

For the majority of routes only the main stations are listed.

**Table 1: Narita Airport to/from Tokyo and around via Narita Express (N'EX)**

Terminal 1 成田空港ターミナル1 (Journey times quoted are to/from Terminal 1)			
Terminal 2 ターミナル2		1-2/hr; 3 mins	
Tokyo 東京		1-2/hr; 1hr	
Trains divide / join up at Tokyo			
Shinagawa 品川	1/hr; 69 mins	Shibuya 渋谷	1-2/hr; 80 mins
Musashi-Kosugi 武蔵小杉	1/hr; 82 mins	Shinjuku 新宿	1-2/hr; 86 mins
Yokohama 横浜	1/hr; 93 mins	Ikebukuro 池袋	1-2/hr*: 98 mins

\* This was the frequency pre Covid; at the time of writing there were 9/day

Services operate from Narita daily between about 7.30am and 9.45pm.

- From Yokohama most services continue to **Totsuka** and **Ofuna**
- From Ikebukuro 2/day (evening only) continue to **Omiya**.

**Table 12: Aomori to Akita on Tsugaru LEX<sup>1</sup>**

Aomori 青森 (Journey times are to/from Aomori)	
Shin-Aomori 新青森	3/day; 7 mins
Hirosaki 弘前	3/day; 33 mins
Owani 大鰐	3/day; 46 mins
Odate 大館	3/day; 1hr 13 mins
Higashi-Noshiro 東能代	3/day; 1hr 55 mins
Hachirogata 八郎潟	3/day; 2hrs 18 mins
Akita 秋田	3/day; 2¾hrs

<sup>1</sup> See pp344-5 for details of the Resort Shirakami sightseeing train service.

**Local/rapid services**

- Aomori to Hirosaki (Ou Line) 21/day
- Hirosaki to Akita (Ou Line) 1-2/day (rapid), 9-10/day (local), but may have to change train at Odate

**Table 13: Akita to Niigata on Inaho LEX**

Akita 秋田 (Journey times are to/from Akita)	
Kisakata 象潟	3/day; 54 mins
Sakata 酒田	7/day <sup>1</sup> ; 1hr 26 mins
Amarume 余目	7/day; 1hr 37 mins
Tsuruoka 鶴岡	7/day; 1hr 48 mins
Atsumi-onsen あつみ温泉	7/day; 2hrs 7 mins
Sakamachi 坂町	7/day; 2hrs 57 mins
Niigata 新潟	7/day; 3hrs 34 mins

<sup>1</sup> Additional Inaho LEX services start at Sakata.

**Local/rapid services**

- Akita to Sakata local (Uetsu Line) 9/day
- Sakata to Murakami (Uetsu Line) 7/day
- Murakami to Shibata (Uetsu line) 17/day
- Shibata to Niigata (Hakushin line) 29/day

**Table 14: Hakodate/Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto to Sapporo on Hokuto LEX**

Hakodate 函館 (Journey times to/from Hakodate)	
Goryokaku 五稜郭	11/day; 5 mins
Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto 新函館北斗	11/day; 19 mins
Onuma-koen 大沼公園	7/day; 29 mins
Mori 森	11/day; 47 mins
Oshamanbe 長万部	11/day; 1hr 27 mins
Toya 洞爺	11/day; 1hr 51 mins
Higashi-Muroran <sup>1</sup> 東室蘭	11/day; 2hrs 18 mins
Noboribetsu 登別	11/day; 2½hrs
Shiraoi 白老	10/day; 2hrs 43 mins
Tomakomai 苫小牧	11/day; 2hrs 54 mins
Minami-Chitose 南千歳	11/day; 3hrs 11 mins
Shin-Sapporo 新札幌	11/day; 3hrs 39 mins
Sapporo 札幌	11/day; 3hrs 48 mins

<sup>1</sup> From here Suzuran LEX (Muroran-Sapporo 6/day) provide additional services.

**Local/rapid services**

- Hakodate to Mori 10/day & Mori to Oshamambe 6/day (both Hakodate Line)
- Oshamambe to Higashi-Muroran (Muroran Line) 4/day
- Higashi-Muroran to Shiraoi & Tomakomai (Muroran Line) 13/day
- Tomakomai to Sapporo (Chitose Line) 1-2/hr
- Minami-Chitose to Sapporo 4-7/hr local/Rapid Airport Line (Airport Line service starts at Otaru)

**Table 15: Sapporo to/from Asahikawa (Lilac & Kamui LEX) & to Abashiri on Okhotsk LEX**

Sapporo 札幌 (Journey times quoted are to/from Sapporo)			
Iwamizawa 岩見沢	Lilac & Kamui 1-2/hr	Okhotsk 2/day	28 mins
Takikawa 滝川	Lilac & Kamui 1-2/hr	Okhotsk 2/day	59 mins
Fukagawa 深川	Lilac & Kamui 1-2/hr	Okhotsk 2/day	74 mins
Asahikawa 旭川	Lilac & Kamui 1-2/hr	Okhotsk 2/day	98 mins (Cont'd overleaf)

**Notes:** Journey times quoted for all services are approximate. Not all stops are listed.

**Table 27: Kubokawa to Uwajima (Yodo Line); local trains only**

Kubokawa 窪川 (Journey times quoted are to/from Kochi)

Tokawa 十川 4/day; 42 mins

Ekawasaki 江川崎 4/day; 1¼hrs

Uwajima 宇和島 4/day; 2hrs 35 mins

**Table 28: Uwajima to Matsuyama on Uwakai LEX**

Uwajima 宇和島 (Journey times quoted are to/from Uwajima)

Yawatahama 八幡浜 1/hr; 35 mins

Iyo-Ozu 伊予大洲 1/hr; 47 mins

Uchiko 内子 1/hr; 57 mins

Iyoshi 伊予市 1/hr; 73 mins

Matsuyama 松山 1/hr; 82 mins

**Local services**

● (Yosan/Uchiko Line)

Uwajima to Matsuyama 2/day

and Yawatahama to

Matsuyama 9/day

● Iyoshi to Matsuyama 1-2/hr

**Table 29: Matsuyama to Okayama on Shiohaze LEX**

Matsuyama 松山 (Journey times quoted are to/from Matsuyama)

Imabari 今治 14/day; 36 mins

Iyo-Saijo 伊予西条 14/day; 58 mins

Niihama 新居浜 14/day; 66 mins

Kan-onji 観音寺 14/day; 1hr 43 mins

Tadotsu 多度津 14/day; 2hrs

Marugame 丸亀 14/day; 2hrs 4 mins

Utazu 宇多津 14/day; 2hrs 17 mins

Kojima 児島 14/day; 2hrs 27 mins

Okayama 岡山 14/day; 2hrs 48 mins

**Local/rapid services**

● Matsuyama to Iyo-Saijo (Yosan Line) approx 1/hr


● Iyo-Saijo to Kan-onji approx 1/hr


● Kan-onji to Utazu approx 1/hr

● Utazu to Sakaide approx 1/hr (See Table 23 for Sakaide to Okayama services)


● The Shiohaze LEX divides at Utazu; part of it becomes the Ishizuchi LEX and goes to Takamatsu (17/day).


The Ishizuchi LEX from Takamatsu joins up with the Shiohaze LEX at Utazu.


**Map key**
 Where to stay


 Where to eat


 Post office


 Bank/money exchange

 Tourist information


 Bookstore


 Museum/Gallery

 Church/cathedral


 Buddhist Temple

 Shinto Shrine

 Bus station/stop


 Ferry/boat trip

 Airport

 Monument/memorial


 Other

 Shinkansen line


 JR line (suggested route)

 JR line

 Private (non-JR)

 Railway station

 Tram/metro/subway line

 Bus route

 Park

# INDEX

**Abbreviations:** **(Tyo)** Tokyo, **(ATyo)** Around Tokyo; **(Osa)** Osaka;  
**(CH)** Central Honshu; **(Kan)** Kansai; **(WH)** Western Honshu; **(Toh)** Tohoku;  
**(Hok)** Hokkaido; **(Kyu)** Kyushu; **(Shi)** Shikoku

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## Some typical Japanese dishes (clockwise from top left)

● **Okonomiyaki** お好み焼き (© AU) Savoury pancake (see p496); oysters are a common topping in Hiroshima (see p308)

● **Sashimi** 刺身 (© KU) Sushi is now common worldwide but sashimi (raw fish; see p496) served with a shiso leaf, shredded *daikon* (radish) and *wasabi* (hot mustard-like horseradish) is often part of a ryokan meal

● **Soba** そば (© KU) Noodles, here served cold with a separate sauce but can be hot (see p496)

● **Ekiben** 駅弁当 (© JH) Lunch box for a train journey (see box p102)

● **Wagyu beef** 松阪牛 (© AU) Several areas of Japan are known for their wagyu beef; the large amount of fat makes it a melt in the mouth experience

● **Tonkatsu** トンカツ (© KU) Deep-fried breaded pork cutlet with shredded cabbage (p497); plastic models like this are often displayed in a restaurant's window to show what is available

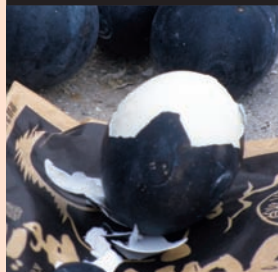
● **Katsu kare** カツカレー (© JH) Tonkatsu with *kare* (curry sauce); see curry rice (p495)

● **Tempura** 天ぷら (© KU) Prawns and vegetables deep fried in a batter (p496)

● **Ramen** ラーメン (© KU) Noodles in a shoyu (soy) or miso broth (p496)

● **Kuro tamago** 黒卵 (© AU) Eggs boiled at Hakone's Owakudani (p170)

● **Yakitori** 焼き鳥 (© KU) Food on a bamboo stick barbecued over a charcoal fire (p497)







**5**  
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