



TRAVEL GUIDE



Overview

Japan is an island nation in East Asia known for mixing centuries-old tradition with some of the most advanced cities in the world. Ancient temples and shrines sit close to neon-lit shopping streets, and both are treated with equal care. The population is highly homogeneous and the culture places a strong value on order, cleanliness, and politeness, which visitors notice from the moment they arrive.

Most first-time visitors build a trip around **Tokyo**, the capital, adding on [Kyoto](#), [Osaka](#), and [Nara](#) for temples, castles, and historic streets, often connected by the famous Shinkansen bullet trains. Hokkaido in the north suits travelers drawn to mountains, skiing, and cooler summers, while Okinawa's subtropical islands in the far south offer beaches and a distinct local culture. Japan works well for a first city-focused trip and rewards return visits that go deeper into a single region.

Money & payments

Currency

 CURRENCY

¥

JPY

 1 JPY

0.005629 EUR

1 EUR = 177.64 JPY

 1 JPY

0.006335 USD

1 USD = 157.86 JPY

 Cards accepted in major venues

Japan is more cash-reliant than its high-tech reputation suggests: many small restaurants, older shops, and rural areas still expect cash, and some places have a minimum card amount. Convenience stores and train stations have reliable ATMs that accept foreign cards. IC cards like Suica or Pasmo double as prepaid cards for transit, vending machines, and many shops.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

 Hotel (double room, per night) mid-range hotel, room for two per night, JPY	12,000 – 25,000 ¥ €68 – €141
 Dinner (mid-range restaurant) mid-range restaurant, one person, no drinks, JPY	2,500 – 5,000 ¥ €14 – €28
 Inexpensive meal ramen or donburi shop, one person, JPY	800 – 1,200 ¥ €5 – €7
 Local beer 0.5L, izakaya, JPY	500 – 700 ¥ €3 – €4
 Coffee cafe, JPY	400 – 600 ¥ €2 – €3
 Water 0.5L, convenience store, JPY	100 – 150 ¥ €1 – €1
 Transit ticket single subway/bus fare, distance-based, JPY	170 – 320 ¥ €1 – €2
 Taxi (per km) per km, JPY	300 – 400 ¥ €2 – €2

Tipping

Tipping is not practiced in Japan and can cause confusion if offered - good service is simply expected, and prices already reflect it. Leaving money on a table or handing cash directly to staff is generally not accepted; at most restaurants and taxis, this is simply not done. A few upscale ryokan (traditional inns) may accept a gift in an envelope for exceptional service, but this is the exception.

Restaurant none — prices already reflect service	Not customary
Bar none	Not customary
Taxi none	Not customary
Hotel none, except a gift envelope at some ryokan for exceptional service	Not customary
Tour guide none	Not customary

Electricity

Japan uses Type A and Type B plugs at 100 V - a lower voltage than most of the world, and some high-power appliances (like hairdryers) from other countries may run weaker or need a voltage converter, not just a plug adapter. Unusually, the frequency differs by region: eastern Japan, including Tokyo, runs at 50 Hz, while western Japan, including Osaka and Kyoto, runs at 60 Hz - rarely an issue for modern electronics, but worth knowing for older or sensitive equipment.

⚡ ELECTRICITY


Type A

⚡ ELECTRICITY


Type B

⚡ 100 V · 60 Hz

Language

Japanese is the official language, and while English signage is common in major stations and tourist areas, spoken English is limited outside big cities. Japanese uses three scripts together - kanji, hiragana, and katakana - with no Latin alternative, so reading menus or signs independently is genuinely difficult; translation apps are widely used by visitors for this reason.

Useful phrases

Hello	こんにちは Konnichiwa
Thank you	ありがとうございます Arigatou gozaimasu
Please	お願いします Onegaishimasu
Excuse me	すみません Sumimasen
Yes	はい Hai
No	いいえ Iie
How much?	いくらですか？ Ikura desu ka?
Cheers	乾杯 Kanpai
Help	助けて！ Tasukete!
Goodbye	さようなら Sayounara
Do you speak English?	英語を話せますか？ Eigo o hanasemasu ka?
Sorry	ごめんなさい Gomen nasai
Where is...?	...はどこですか？ ...wa doko desu ka?
I don't understand	わかりません Wakarimasen
The menu, please	メニューをください Menyuu o kudasai
The bill, please	お会計をお願いします Okaikei o onegaishimasu

Staying connected

Prepaid tourist SIM cards and eSIMs are sold at airports and electronics stores, and pocket Wi-Fi routers can be rented on arrival or reserved online in advance - a popular option for groups sharing one connection. As of 2026, buying a SIM or eSIM, including tourist and data-only plans, requires showing a passport for registration.

Safety & emergencies

Japan is one of the safest countries for travelers, with very low rates of violent crime and theft. The main practical risk is natural disasters - the country is earthquake-prone, and typhoons affect the south and

coastal areas mainly between June and October. Follow local alerts and hotel guidance if either occurs during a visit. Police and ambulance/fire use different numbers.

Emergency numbers

* GENERAL EMERGENCY

118

★ POLICE

110

🚑 AMBULANCE

119

🔥 FIRE BRIGADE

119

Health

Tap water is safe to drink throughout the country. Pharmacies are widespread, though staff may have limited English and many common Western medications (including some cold and allergy remedies) are restricted, so travelers who rely on specific prescriptions should bring enough for the trip along with a copy of the prescription.

Visas & entry

Many nationalities, including the EU, the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia, can enter visa-free for stays of up to 90 days for tourism. Travelers from other countries typically need to apply for a visa in advance through a Japanese embassy or consulate.

Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

- Remove shoes when entering homes, temples, ryokan, and some restaurants with tatami flooring; indoor slippers are usually provided.
- Bowing is the standard greeting; a slight nod is fine for visitors, and handshakes are also accepted in business settings.
- Eating or drinking while walking on the street is uncommon and can draw attention; most people eat standing at a stall or find a seat.
- Keep phone calls off public transport and set phones to silent mode; trains are generally quiet.
- If visiting an onsen (hot spring bath), know that many still refuse entry to visitors with tattoos - check policies in advance if this applies.
- Business cards, gifts, and money are exchanged and received with both hands as a sign of respect.

Holidays & opening hours

Golden Week (late April to early May) and Obon (mid-August) are the two busiest domestic travel periods, when trains, flights, and hotels fill up and prices rise nationwide - avoid traveling long distances during these weeks if possible.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Feb 11	Foundation Day
Feb 23	The Emperor's Birthday
Apr 29	Shōwa Day
May 4	Greenery Day
May 5	Children's Day
Aug 11	Mountain Day
Sep 23	Autumnal Equinox Day
Nov 3	Culture Day
Nov 23	Labour Thanksgiving Day
movable — Jan	Coming of Age Day
movable — May	Constitution Memorial Day
movable — Jul	Marine Day
movable — Sep	Respect for the Aged Day
movable — Oct	Sports Day
movable — Mar	Vernal Equinox Day

Most shops and restaurants open daily, including Sundays, though some smaller family-run restaurants close one weekday. Convenience stores are open 24 hours in most cities, though a growing number, especially in rural areas, now close overnight due to staff shortages.

Getting around

- **By train:** An extensive, highly punctual rail network connects the whole country, led by the Shinkansen bullet trains between major cities, run by several regional JR companies rather than one national operator. Japan Rail Pass options can offer savings for multi-city itineraries; buy IC cards like Suica for local trains, subways, and buses.
- **By air:** Domestic flights are worth considering for reaching [Hokkaido](#) or [Okinawa](#) from Tokyo, since both are a long way from the rest of the country by train.
- **By bus:** Overnight and inter-city coaches are a cheaper, slower alternative to the Shinkansen on longer routes.
- **Driving is on the left** - most travelers skip renting a car entirely given how reliable the trains are, though a car can be useful in rural areas like [Shimane](#) with limited rail service.

Driving

- **Key rules:** Driving is on the left. Japan has strict zero-tolerance laws for driving after any alcohol, and using a handheld phone while driving is fined.
- **Tolls:** Most expressways charge tolls; an ETC card fitted in the rental car allows automatic payment at gates without stopping, and is worth requesting when renting.
- **Congestion:** Central Tokyo and Osaka have heavy traffic at rush hour; there is no congestion charge, but parking is scarce and expensive in city centers.
- **Parking:** Paid parking is standard in cities, usually at coin-operated lots; street parking is rare and often restricted.
- **Fuel:** Stations offer both self-service and full-service; petrol is sold as regular ("レギュラー") and high-octane ("ハイオク"), and diesel as "軽油".
- **Electric vehicles:** Charging points are common in cities and along expressways but less common in rural areas; most chargers accept major charging network cards or apps.

📍 URBAN

50 km/h

📍 RURAL

60 km/h

📍 MOTORWAY

100 km/h

🛢 PETROL

**レギュラー (Regular),
ハイオク (High-
octane)**

🛢 DIESEL

軽油 (Keiyu)

🚗 Drive on the left

🅞 No motorway vignette needed

🅞 No nationwide vignette. Most expressways charge distance-based tolls at toll gates; an ETC card fitted in the car, often included with rental cars, allows automatic payment without stopping. Tolls can add up significantly on long-distance trips.

Food & drink

Meals in Japan follow a rhythm of small, balanced dishes rather than one large plate - rice, miso soup, and pickles accompany most meals, including breakfast in many traditional settings. Sushi and sashimi are internationally famous, but everyday eating out is more likely to mean ramen, a bowl of rice with toppings (donburi), or grilled skewers (yakitori) at an izakaya, a casual pub-style restaurant.

Convenience stores sell surprisingly good, freshly made food, from rice balls (onigiri) to sandwiches, and are a normal lunch option for locals, not just a last resort. Tempura, udon and soba noodles, and okonomiyaki (a savory pancake) are all worth trying regionally. Green tea is the everyday drink, while sake (rice wine) and Japanese whisky are the notable alcoholic options; beer is also widely drunk, especially at izakaya.

What to eat & drink

🍱 DINNER

Sushi · 寿司 (Sushi)

Vinegared rice paired with raw fish, seafood, or vegetables; ranges from casual conveyor-belt shops to high-end counters.

Ramen · ラーメン (Ramen)

Wheat noodles in a meat or fish-based broth, with countless regional styles.

Tempura · 天ぷら (Tempura)

Lightly battered, deep-fried seafood and vegetables.

Okonomiyaki · お好み焼き (Okonomiyaki)

A savory grilled pancake with cabbage and a choice of fillings, popular in Osaka and Hiroshima.

🍷 SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Onigiri · おにぎり (Onigiri)

Rice balls wrapped in seaweed, often with a savory filling; a everyday convenience-store staple.

Yakitori · 焼き鳥 (Yakitori)

Grilled skewers of chicken, popular at izakaya alongside beer or sake.

🍷 DRINKS

Green Tea · 緑茶 (Ryokucha)

The everyday non-alcoholic drink, served hot or cold.

Sake · 日本酒 (Nihonshu)

Rice wine served warm or chilled, a traditional accompaniment to a meal.

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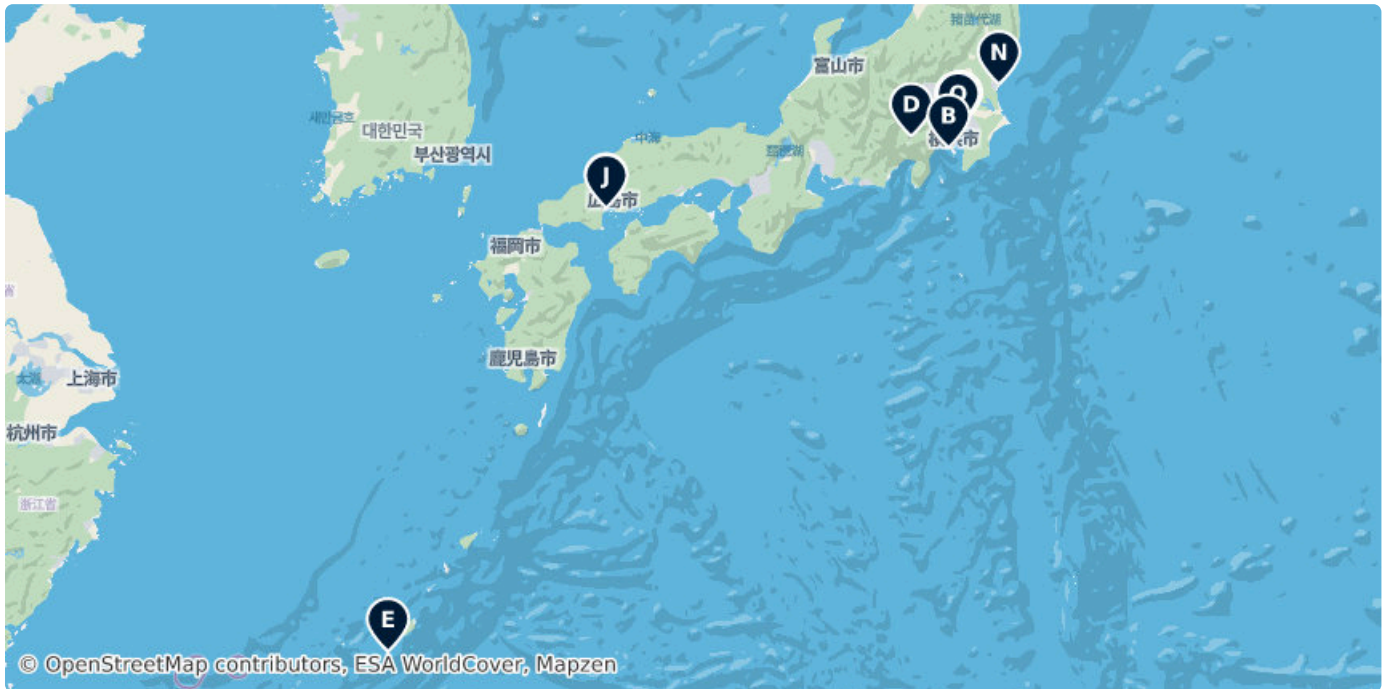
Where to explore

Tokyo, the capital, is most travelers' starting point, mixing historic temples with futuristic districts. **Kyoto** and **Nara**, a short Shinkansen ride away, hold the country's greatest concentration of temples, shrines, and traditional streets, and **Osaka** nearby is known for street food and a livelier, informal atmosphere. **Hiroshima**, further west, draws visitors for its Peace Memorial Park and nearby Miyajima island.

[Hokkaido](#), in the north, offers mountains, skiing, and cooler summers, a different pace from the rest of the country. [Okinawa](#), far to the south, is a subtropical island chain with beaches and a culture distinct from the mainland. The southern main island of [Kyushu](#) has hot springs and [Fukuoka](#)'s food scene, while [Shikoku](#) is known for its 88-temple pilgrimage route. [Chiba](#) and [Ibaraki](#), near Tokyo, and [Shimane](#), on the western coast, reward travelers who venture beyond the main circuit.

Japan's Absolute Essentials

This collection spans Japan's diverse landscape, from the UNESCO-listed Shuri Castle in Okinawa to the 13-meter bronze Great Buddha in Kamakura. In Tokyo, Ueno Park houses the Le Corbusier-designed National Museum of Western Art and the historic Toshogu Shrine. Natural landmarks include the sacred Mt. Misen and Lake Kawaguchi at the base of Mount Fuji. The list also features cultural hubs like the traditional Namiki Yabusoba restaurant, the vibrant Kabukicho district, and the seasonal floral displays of Hitachi Seaside Park.



A Ueno Park

Large urban park featuring seasonal natural scenery, museums, and a zoo. Known for its gardens and cultural facilities.

Tokyo, Japan (35.71500, 139.77295)

Mo-Su

09:30-17:00

kensetsu.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/jimusho/tou... , +810338285644



B Great Buddha of Kamakura (Daibutsu)

Known as the Great Buddha of Kamakura, this huge bronze statue of Amida Buddha is the second highest in the country (13,35 meters).

Japan (35.31685, 139.53572)

Apr-Sep Mo-Su

08:00-17:30

Oct-Feb Mo-Su

08:00-17:00

kotoku-in.jp/en/, +81 467 22 0703





C 大鳥居

Part of the Itsukushima Shrine complex, the gate attracts plenty of tourists every year.

Japan (34.29730, 132.31813)

Mo-Su

06:30-05:00



D Lake Kawaguchi

The second largest lake of the five lakes in the Mount Fuji region. It is popular for its natural beauty and splendid scenery - an...

Japan (35.51304, 138.74834)



E Shurijo Castle

Shuri Castle was a Ryukyuan gusuku castle in Shuri, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan.

903-0815 那覇市, JP (26.21700, 127.71937)

Dec-Mar Mo-Su

Apr-Jun Mo-Su

Jul-Sep Mo-Su

Oct-Nov Mo-Su

oki-park.jp/shurijo/, +81 98 886 2020

08:30-18:00

08:30-19:00

08:30-20:00

08:30-19:00



F National Museum of Western Art

A stunning collection of Western artworks housed in an equally stunning building by Le Corbusier, inscribed as a cultural heritage on the...

110-0007 (35.71538, 139.77576)

Mo

Tu-Th

Fr-Sa

Su

nmwa.go.jp



Closed

09:30-17:30

09:30-20:00

09:30-17:30



G Yasukuni Shrine

Founded in 1869, this Shinto shrine is devoted to those who died in wars in the 19th and 20th century.

3 Chome-1-1 Kudankita, Chiyoda, Tokyo 102-8246, Japan (35.69428, 139.74299)

Mo-Su

06:00-18:00

yasukuni.or.jp, 03-3261-8326



H Ueno Tōshō-gū Shrine

Built in 1627, this Shinto shrine is dedicated to the most famous shogun of the Tokugawa clan and one of Japan's most prominent...

〒321-1431 山内2301, Tokyo, Japan (35.71539, 139.77064)

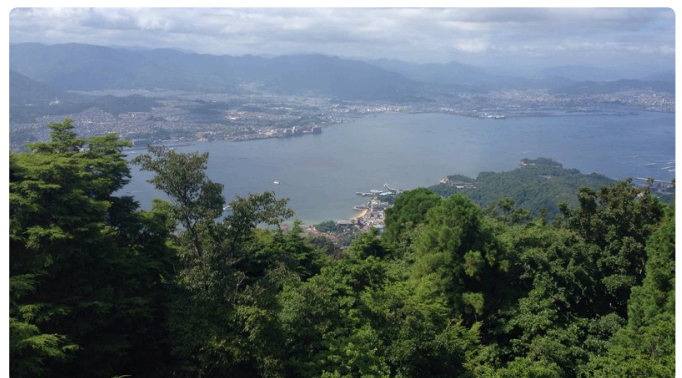
toshogu.jp/english/index.html, +81 3 3822 3455



I Asakusa Culture and Tourism Center

Designed by architect Kengo Kuma, this multi-story wood and glass building serves as a visitor center. The eighth-floor observation deck provides free panoramic views of the Senso-ji temple complex and the Tokyo Skytree.

Tokyo, Japan (35.71065, 139.79652)



J Mt. Misen

Rising 535 meters above sea level, this sacred mountain is surrounded by magnificent forest and offers gorgeous views from the observation...

Japan (34.27959, 132.31961)

+81 829 44 2011





K Robot Restaurant

This unique restaurant in the capital city of Japan is the embodiment of Japanese way of having fun.



Japan, 〒160-0021 Tokyo, 新宿区Kabukicho, 1-7-1 新宿ロボットビル (35.69436, 139.70283)

Mo-Su

16:00-23:00

shinjuku-robot.com/pc/, +81 3 3200 5500



L Kabukichō

Kabukichō is an entertainment district in Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan. Kabukichō is the location of many host and hostess clubs, love hotels,...



Tokyo, Japan (35.69388, 139.70342)



M Namiki Yabusoba

Soba - popular Japanese noodles made from buckwheat flour, that can served both hot and cold, with every side dish imaginable - are one of...



Japan, 〒111-0034 Tokyo, 台東区Kaminarimon, 2-11-9 (35.70965, 139.79597)

+81 3 3841 1340



N Hitachi Seaside Park

Hitachi Seaside Park is a public park in Hitachinaka, Ibaraki, Japan.



605-4 Onuma-aza, Mawatari, Hitachinaka, Ibaraki 312-0012, Japan (36.40218, 140.59965)

+81 029 265 9001



Tokyo Anime Center

Paradise for all the anime fans. This place holds both permanent and temporary exhibitions related to all the favourite anime series and...

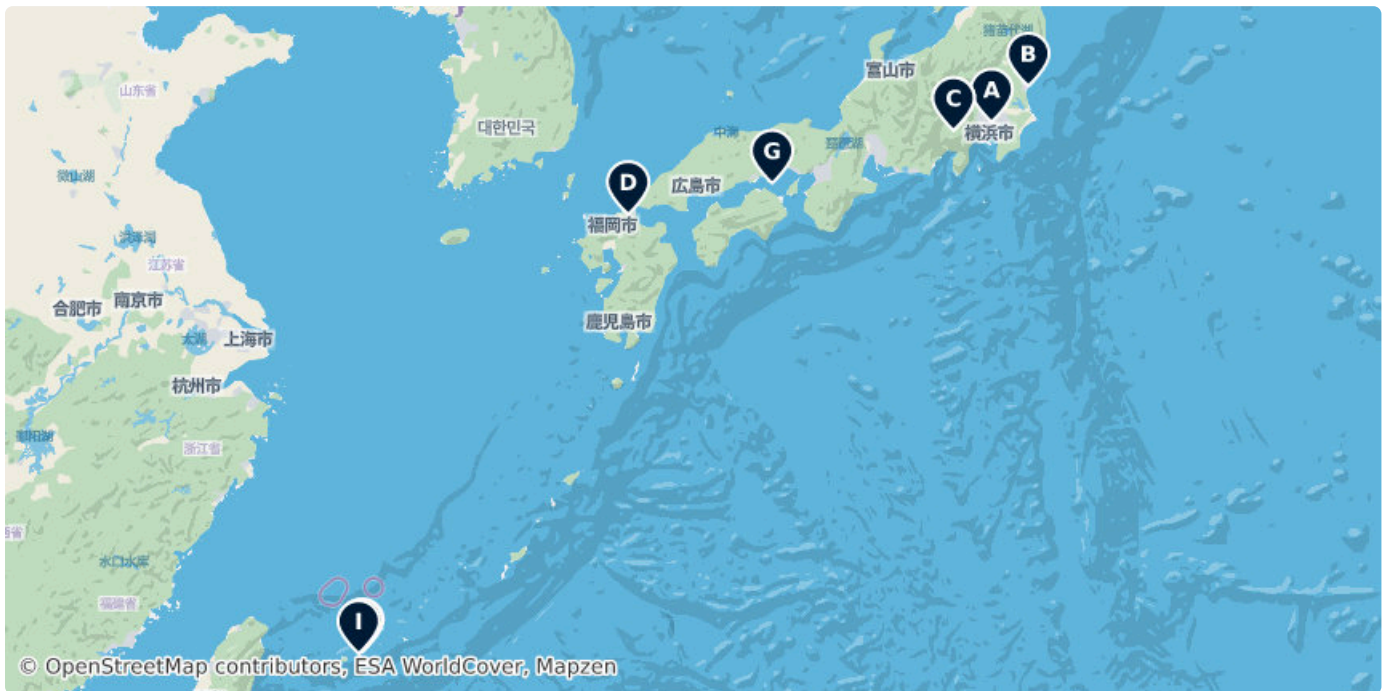


〒101-0021, 東京都千代田区外神田4-14-1 秋葉原UDX4F
(35.69351, 139.73645)

animecenter.jp, +81 50-3170-0903

Editor's Choice: Japan

This curated selection highlights diverse Japanese attractions, ranging from the futuristic cabaret of Tokyo's Robot Restaurant to the expansive floral displays of Hitachi Seaside Park. The list features unique cultural sites like the Marukin Soy Sauce Museum on Shodoshima and the automatic musical instrument collections at Kawaguchiko Music Forest. Natural highlights include the seasonal wisteria tunnels of Kitakyushu, panoramic vistas from Nosokodake and Tamatorizaki on Ishigaki Island, and the coral reefs of Yonehara Beach. Architectural interest is represented by Houtou Fudo's distinctive cloud-like design near Mount Fuji.



A Robot Restaurant

This unique restaurant in the capital city of Japan is the embodiment of Japanese way of having fun.

Japan, 〒160-0021 Tokyo, 新宿区Kabukicho, 1-7-1 新宿ロボットビル (35.69436, 139.70283)

Mo-Su

16:00-23:00

shinjuku-robot.com/pc/, +81 3 3200 5500



B Hitachi Seaside Park

Hitachi Seaside Park is a public park in Hitachinaka, Ibaraki, Japan.

605-4 Onuma-aza, Mawatari, Hitachinaka, Ibaraki 312-0012, Japan (36.40218, 140.59965)

+81 029 265 9001





C Kawaguchiko Music Forest

Though small in size, this amusement park is one of its kind. Focused on musical instruments, music will encompass you the second you enter.

Japan (35.52238, 138.76869)

Mo-Su

kawaguchikomusicforest.jp



09:00-17:30



D Kawachi Wisteria Garden

This private garden in Kitakyushu features two 100-meter-long wisteria tunnels with over 20 different species. It is open to the public during the spring wisteria season and the autumn maple leaf season.

Japan (33.83227, 130.79222)

Apr 21-May 06 Mo-Su

Dec 01-Dec 15 Mo-Su

kawachi-fujien.com, +81 93-652-0334



08:00-18:00

08:00-18:00



E Nosokodake

A challenging hike up these hills is rewarded by stunning views of the area.

Japan (24.48855, 124.25054)



F Tamatorizaki Observation Point

Located on the northeast coast of Ishigaki Island, this viewpoint offers panoramic vistas of Ibaruma Bay and the Emerald Coast. The surrounding path is lined with year-round blooming hibiscus flowers.

Japan (24.49054, 124.27887)



G Marukin Soy Sauce Museum

This slightly odd sounding museum shows its visitors the process of soy sauce making and it makes for an interesting peek into the process...

Japan (34.46710, 134.31939)

moritakk.com/know_enjoy/shoyukan/



H Houtou Fudo

This restaurant near Lake Kawaguchi is housed in a distinctive, white, cloud-shaped building designed by architect Takeshi Hosaka. It specializes in Houtou, a traditional Yamanashi noodle miso soup served in iron pots.

(Unnamed Road), Japan (35.52261, 138.77399)

0555767800



I Yonehara Beach

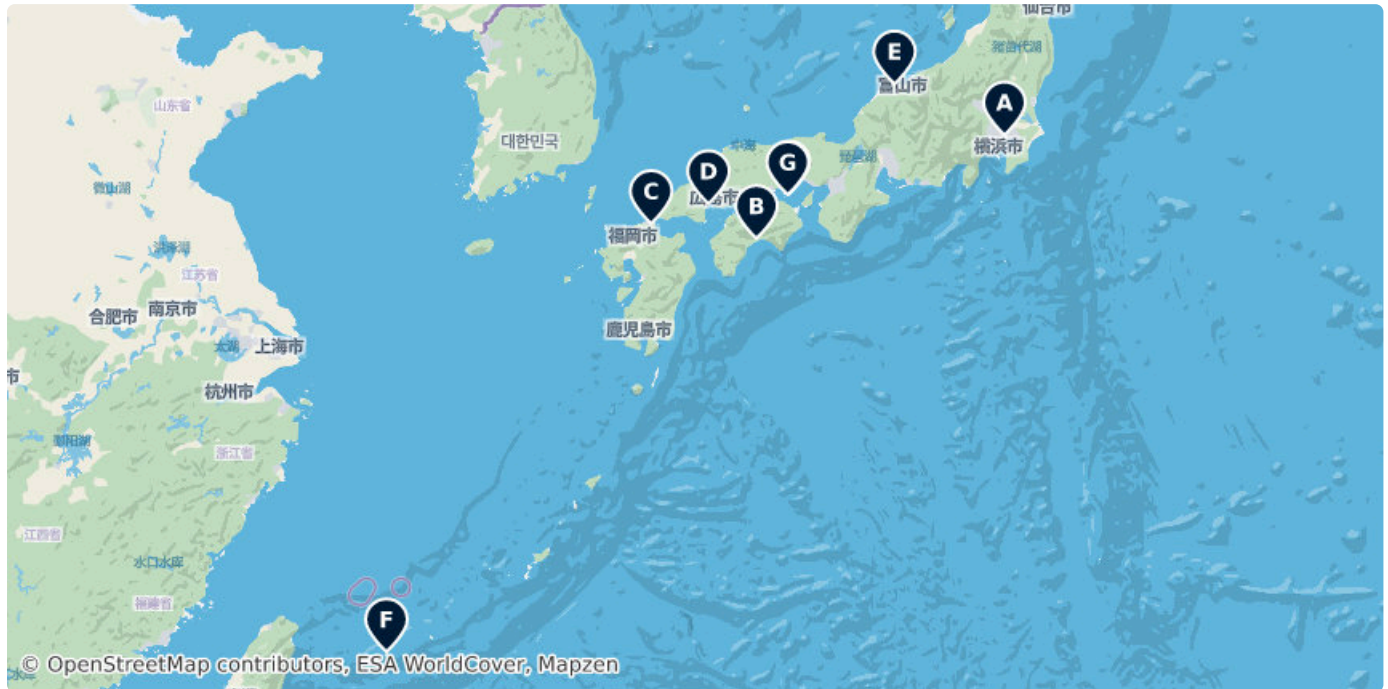
A white-sand beach on Ishigaki Island known for its extensive coral reef located close to the shore. It is a prime location for snorkeling, featuring a wide variety of colorful tropical fish.

Ishigaki, 907-8501, Japan (24.45462, 124.18762)



Japan's Hidden Gems

Explore Japan's offbeat destinations, from the Kengo Kuma-designed Asakusa Culture and Tourism Center to the historic Kōchi Castle, one of the country's few remaining original wooden fortresses. This collection includes the quirky TOTO Museum in Kitakyushu, the bronze Great Buddha of Takaoka, and artistic installations like the Regent in Olives on Shodoshima. Natural wonders like the low-tide sandbar of Kibou no Michi and the colorful shisha statues at Yoneko-yaki Pottery highlight the country's diverse regional culture and landscapes.



A Asakusa Culture and Tourism Center

Designed by architect Kengo Kuma, this building features a distinct stacked wooden aesthetic. The eighth-floor observation deck provides free views of Senso-ji Temple and the Tokyo Skytree.

Tokyo, Japan (35.71065, 139.79652)



B Kōchi Castle

Kōchi Castle is a castle located in Kōchi, Kōchi Prefecture, Japan.

1, 780-0850 高知市, JP (33.56070, 133.53142)

kochipark.jp/kochijyo/, +81 88 824 5701





C TOTO Museum

This unique museum displays toilets & tableware made by the Toto company, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2016.

Kita-Kyushu, Japan (33.87236, 130.87210)

Tu-Su

10:00-17:00

toto.co.jp/museum/, +81 93-951-2534



D Azumaya Observation Deck (Former Satomi Teahouse)

Located on Miyajima Island, this viewpoint is accessible via hiking trails. It offers panoramic views of the Seto Inland Sea and the surrounding forest.

(34.28876, 132.31891)



E The Great Buddha of Takaoka

A 16-meter-tall bronze statue completed in 1933. It showcases Takaoka's traditional copper-casting craftsmanship and is considered one of Japan's three great Buddha statues.

(Unnamed Road), Takaoka, Japan (36.74557, 137.01712)

Mo-Su

06:00-18:00

takaokadaibutsu.xyz



F Yoneko-yaki Pottery

A workshop and museum of some sorts which exhibits colorful statues of shishas - local guardians of half-dog and half-lion nature.

Japan (24.45325, 124.18712)

Mo-Su

09:00-17:45

yonekoyaki.com



G Regent in Olives

A white, olive-shaped sculpture with a black pompadour hairstyle created by Hisakazu Shimizu. This art installation is located in an olive grove on Shodoshima Island as part of the Setouchi Triennale.

(34.47588, 134.32183)



H 希望の道

Much like Angel Road, this sandy route appears also when the tide is low and people can pass from the land to the small Joga Island on foot.

Japan (34.49165, 134.35220)



DATA SOURCES

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