

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Aug 19 – Oct 4: France Encore. Collioure, Marseille, Verdon NP, Barolo, Geneva, Colmar, Dijon, Lyon. New+faves

Overview: The Japan Trip. On the main island of Honshu, with **Tokyo**, the **Hakone** area, **Kyoto**, **Hiroshima**, and regional cities and sights. We will focus on history, culture and food, with a little hiking. It will be a bit early for fall color, we may see some. Hopefully we will connect with Detlef and Dagmar Dohmen in Tokyo for a weekend!

Oct 04 – Oct 05: Flight to Tokyo 1N (Wed – Thurs). Drive to Lyon, drop car, and fly east!
Oct 05 – Oct 10: Tokyo 5N (Thursday – Tuesday). City, Detlef and Dagmar. Day trip to Mt. Fuji?
Oct 10 – Oct 12: Hakone 2N (Tuesday – Thursday). Hakone Loop exploration and Onset hot bath.
Oct 12 – Oct 17: Kyoto 5N (Thursday – Tuesday). Temples and Old Palace. Day trips to Kobe (jazz, beef) and Nara.
Oct 17 – Oct 19: Miyajima 2N (Tuesday – Thursday). Temples and easy hikes.
Oct 19 – Oct 20: Hiroshima 1N (Thursday – Friday). Peace Park and museum.
Oct 20 – Oct 20: Fly to Taipei (Friday). Run, then Shinkansen to Okayama, then limo-bus to airport.

Oct 20 – Nov 13: SE Asia. Taipei, Road Scholar "Best of Southeast Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia & Vietnam" (Bangkok and Chiang Mai in Thailand, Luang Prabang in Laos, Siem Reap in Cambodia, and Saigon, Halong Bay and Hanoi in Viet Nam), Singapore see Eisner and city

Routes: [Overall](#), [Kyoto to Miyajima](#), [Rihga hotel to Okayam Airport](#)

Japan Entry Requirements for US Citizens

Per [US Embassy site](#): Tourists with U.S. passports do not need a visa to stay up to three months. As April 29, 2023, travelers arriving in Japan will no longer need to present proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test certificate. Must have 1½ blank passport pages, and proof of onward flight. *I have printed flight itinerary to Taiwan.*

Prescriptions – Many common USA medications (e.g., Adderall) and over-the-counter drugs (e.g. CBD) are illegal in Japan, even with a valid U.S. prescription. To bring personal medicines, you may have to apply for a "Yunyu Kakunin-sho" (import certificate), and receive it prior to entry, and declare it to the officer at customs. This is required for non-prohibited prescriptions if carrying than a 1-month supply. Without, you risk arrest and detention [Policy](#), [FAQ](#)
Per Narita Int'l Airport authorities yakkan@mhlw.go.jp, I applied on June 17 to Kanto-Shinetsu Regional Bureau of Health and Welfare. Received approval and is printed and in PDF in trip folder.

Health – Standard vaccinations are recommended; none required per [CDC Site](#). Masks – do as locals do!

Weather – Japan temperate, SE Asia hot & humid. Temp H/L in F, Rain mm//days of rain. [Site here](#) and [Site here](#)

- **Tokyo:** Sept 79/68, 181//20; Oct 68/59, 158//17; Nov 59/48, 84//12
 - **Kyoto:** Sept 82/68, 220//15; Oct 72/55, 100//12; Nov 63/46, 80//12
 - **Hiroshima:** Sept 85/70, 165//10; Oct 74/59, 110//07; Nov 64/48, 70//07
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Resources: Moon Guidebook, [NeverEndingVoyage](#), [LonelyPlanet](#), [US News](#), [TwoWanderingSoles](#)

Currency: \$1 = 146 JPY / \$50 = 7,325 JPY / \$100 = 14,650 JPY / \$500 = 73,254 JPY
1 JPY = <\$0.01 / 100 JPY = \$0.68 / 10,000 JPY = \$68 / 100,000JPY = \$680

Carry cash – many places are cash only. Note: ATMs are hard to find in rural areas.

Most ATMs do not accept foreign cards. Use ATMs at konbinis (e.g. 7/11) or Post Office. Also, 7-Bank (owned by 7-Eleven) and at airports and train stations. Many ATMs close at 5-7pm.

Tipping is considered awkward and rude, generally do not tip. [Multi-Country Tipping Guide](#)

Diving: Current DL and IDL required for Japan. *I have a new IDL valid July 2023-June 2024, but no driving for us :)*

History

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Prehistory – the earliest humans arrived 35,000-40,000 BC, when Japan was connected by land bridge to the mainland both at the Korean peninsula and Siberia. Remains of this period are scarce; most are probably submerged, as inhabitants lived largely on coastal plains, and sea levels have risen since the end of the ice ages.

Around 300-200 BC, Yayugi people immigrated to the islands, bringing iron and agricultural technology, overwhelming the earlier hunter-gatherers. Between the 300s-800s AD, Japan's many kingdoms and tribes gradually came to be unified under a centralized government, nominally controlled by the Emperor of Japan. The imperial dynasty established at this time continues to this day.

Imperial Japan and the Shogun – In 794, a new imperial capital was established at Heian-kyō (modern Kyoto), marking the beginning of the Heian period, which lasted until 1185. The Heian period is considered a golden age of classical Japanese culture. Japanese religious life from this time was a mix of native Shinto practices and Buddhism.

Over the following centuries, the power of the imperial house decreased, passing first to great clans of civilian aristocrats, and then to the military clans and their armies of samurai. The Minamoto clan under *Minamoto no Yoritomo* emerged victorious from an internal power struggle in 1180–85. Yoritomo set up his capital in Kamakura and took the title of *shōgun*. In 1274 and 1281, the Kamakura shogunate withstood two Mongol invasions (Kublai Khan). But later, the country descended into civil war.

In the late 1500s, Japan was reunited, and from the victors the emperor appointed Tokugawa Ieyasu *shogun*; he ruled from *Edo* (Tokyo). This Edo Period was peaceful and lasted from 1600-1868. The shogunate enacted a strict class system, and cut off Japan from almost all contact with the outside world.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Japan, in 1543. They had a brief but significant impact, introducing firearms to Japanese warfare. The American Perry Expedition in 1853-54 ended Japan's seclusion, and contributed to the fall of the shogunate and return to power of the emperor in 1868.

Expansion – The Meiji dynasty changed Japan from a Feudal country to a western-style empire. They imported scientists, engineers, and educators; adopted western clothing; and abolished the class system. Japan's leaders believed they needed colonies to compete with western powers. They began with Taiwan and other islands. In 1894, they clashed with China in Korea, and defeated larger, well-equipped forces. In 1904-5, they defeated Russia for control over Korea. *Note, Teddy Roosevelt won a Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating an end to that war.*

World Power – Japan was now a world power, and *the* power in Asia. During the Meiji period, Japan adopted western industrialization. The population grew from 34m in 1872 to 52m by 1915, and those working in agriculture dropped from 75% to 50% as urbanization followed manufacturing. There was some socialist dissent, but it was harshly suppressed. Large family-owned conglomerates such as Mitsubishi and Sumitomo emerged.

WWI – Japan's entry on the allied side sparked continued growth, and new colonies seized from Germany. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, and by 1937 this escalated into a prolonged war with China. In July 1941, the US and its allies imposed economic sanctions to starve off the war in China. Meanwhile, Japan conquered French Indochina.

WWII – In 1941, Japan decided to break the economic blockade by force. They bombed Pearl Harbor, and American entered the war. The Japanese military was soon over-extended, and their expansion was halted at the Battles of Midway and Guadalcanal in June 1942. When the US took Saipan, they created airfields and could regularly launch bombers to the Japanese homeland. Japan held out despite devastating allied air attacks on population centers. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9) ended the war. Japan surrendered on August 14. The allies occupied Japan until 1952.

Post-WWII – During this period, Supreme Allied Commander Douglas MacArthur guided Japan's political redevelopment. A new constitution was enacted, the emperor renounced his divinity, and Japan became a democratic constitutional monarchy, with voting rights for women. After 1955, Japan had very high economic growth until the 1990s; it has been sluggish since.

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Government and Politics – good articles [wikipedia](#). Japan is a unitary (strong central government, with all authority) parliamentary constitutional democracy. The emperor is the symbolic head of state, and three branches of government. Overall, somewhat similar to the UK. The prime minister is by tradition the head of the ruling political party (liberal LDP almost exclusively since WWII). The legislative branch is the Diet, with the lower House of Representatives and the upper House of Chancellors, all directly elected in semi-proportional representation. Judiciary is a separate branch, headed by the Supreme Court.

There are multiple political parties, but the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) has dominated since WWII.

Economy and Current Events

General – Japan is the world's third-largest economy, and the largest creditor by far. That means that its economic performance reverberates across the globe. Japan has long suffered from sluggish economic growth. Corporate profits and wages have been depressed for decades, and the problems have seemed likely to worsen as Japan's population shrinks and ages at a rapid clip, meaning fewer workers and consumers alike.

Post-Covid growth – There is currently strong post-covid economic growth. Covid didn't hit Japan's economy as hard as it did other countries. But the damage has lasted longer, partly because of supply chain woes in its export-heavy economy, and because the country was slower to roll back virus precautions than many of its peer nations. Much of the recent growth is from tourism and exports, with domestic growth weak.

Inflation – Japan is highly dependent on imports for food and energy, and the Japanese currency's decades-long lows against the dollar have pushed up costs, causing the highest inflation in a generation. The currency's depreciation has largely been driven by Japanese monetary policy, which has kept the country's interest rates at rock bottom even as the United States and other countries have ratcheted them up. This has helped exports, but has hampered demand at home ironically.

Radioactive Water - Japan has begun releasing treated wastewater from the ruined Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean. The move has triggered a backlash in the region, especially in South Korea and in China, which has banned import of fish from Japan.

Assassination – Shinzo Abe (LDP), the longest service prime minister at 9 years total, stepped aside for health reasons in 2020. He was assassinated at a rally in 2022, shocking Japan.

Defense – Japan is a NATO Pacific partner, along with AU, NZ, and SK. The US has a mutual defense treaty. Japan changed its policy in 2022 and began increasing its military to more actively participate in self-defense with the US, countering North Korean and China aggression. By 2027, it is to be 2% of GDP, the 3rd highest amount in the world.

Religion

Primarily Shinto (~70-80%) and Buddhism (also ~70-80%). Syncretic combinations (shinbutsu-shūgō) are common.

Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion. It is a polytheistic and animistic religion. Shinto revolves around supernatural entities called the kami (神). The *kami* are believed to inhabit all things, including forces of nature and prominent landscape locations. The kami are worshipped at *kamidana* household shrines, family shrines, and jinja public shrines. The latter are staffed by priests (*kannushi*), who oversee offerings of food and drink to the specific kami enshrined at that location so as to cultivate harmony between humans and kami and to solicit the latter's blessing. There is no central authority in control of Shinto, with much diversity of belief and practice among practitioners.

Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha (5th century BC). The Buddha's central teachings emphasize the aim of attaining liberation from hindrances which cause attachment and mental unease (*dukkha*). He endorsed the *Middle Way*, a path of mental development that avoids both extreme asceticism and hedonism.

Zen Buddhism differs from traditional Buddhism in several ways. First, Zen Buddhists do not believe in reincarnation. Second, they do not worship the Buddha or other deities. Third, they do not believe in karma or moral causality. Fourth, they emphasize direct experience over the authority of the scriptures. Finally, Zen Buddhists try to live in the present moment and focus on the here and now.

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Language

Finding English speakers is difficult, but locals and police are legendarily helpful. Just find a koban (police box), and someone will help us find what we need. Key phrases below; Don't be discouraged if you don't get an immediate response...most will be expecting English!

1. **Good morning** – Ohayo (oh-high-yo)
2. **Hello** – Konnichiwa (cone-nee-chi-wa)
3. **Good evening** – Konbanwa (cone-bahn-wa)
4. **Yes / No** – Hai (hi) / Īe (eee-yeh)
5. **Thank you (very much)** – Arigatou (Gozaimasu) (a-ree-ga-toe go-zeye-mus)
6. **Excuse Me** – Sumimasen (su-me-mah-sen)
7. **Do you understand English?** – Eigo ga hanasemasu ka? (ay-go gah ha-nah-say-mas kah)
8. **Sorry, I don't understand** – Sumimasen, wakarimasen (sue-me-mah-sen, wah-kah-ree-mah-sen)
9. **(I'd like) this, please** – Kore o kudasai (koh-reh oh koo-dah-sigh)
10. **Can I have the bill, please?** – Okanjo o onegaishimasu (oh-kahn-jo oh oh-neh-guy-she-mas)
11. **I humbly receive** (when served food, like “Bon appétit” but prayerful) – Itadakimasu (ee-tada-key-ma-sue)
12. **Madam, mademoiselle, sir** – Madamu, Nogasu, Okyakusama
13. **Convenience Store** – konbinis. 7-eleven, Lawsons, etc. Have ATMs, change machines
14. **Ukiyo-e** – Japanese woodblock prints that flourished during the Edo Period from the 17th to 19th centuries.
15. **Omikuji** – fortune-telling strips that can be bought at temples and shrines. If a bad fortune, leave it at the temple to avert the bad luck—there are dedicated areas to tie them. If it's a good fortune, carry it with you.
16. **Ichi-go ichi-e** – a concept which means cherishing the moment as it will never happen again.
17. **Yokocho** – means “culinary alley,” with hole-in-the-wall diners and great meals
18. **Izakaya** – Japanese pub, boisterous with generally very good food
19. ...

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Etiquette – good articles at [Etiquette](#) and [The Portable Wife - Japan To Avoid](#)

1. **Food to go:** No Walking and eating/drinking. Even 7/11 and Lawson have seating areas.
 2. **Chopsticks** (aka “hashi”): do not place upright in rice bowl, as this ritual is done at funerals and is considered disrespectful outside of that, and a reminder of death or bad luck. Do not cross the sticks. Use the back end (part that has not been near your mouth) to pass food. Don’t rub the chopsticks together (implies they are of poor quality and need to be sanded). Don’t stab food. Rest them on the chopstick rest, not on the edge of a bowl (unless you are done, then say “gochisousama-deshita” (Thank you for the meal)!
 3. **Geisha:** Don’t approach geisha or maiko (apprentice) for a selfie. Look for fakes – they are happy to do so!
 4. **Noodles:** Slurping is considered a compliment to the chef. *Really.*
 5. **Money:** Don’t leave a tip or count change, both are rude. Pay placing cash on the little tray, not in the hand. Try to use exact change, or small bills.
 6. **Bowing:** Do so when meeting/greeting, thanking, saying sorry. Bend at the waist, hands at your sides, without curving your neck or back. It is good to nod when saying thank you. If someone bows, bow back!
 7. **Trains:** Line up to board as you would a plane. Quiet please on both metro and shinkansen.
 8. **Cards:** Receive and present business cards respectfully with two hands; they are an extension of the person. Use the same approach with important docs – passports, credit cards, etc. Locals will do the same.
 9. **Before drinking:** say “kanpai” before drinking (“empty/dry glass”, aka “bottoms-up”); but sip, don’t do a shot of sake (locally “Nihonshu”). Do not pour your own drink; ask someone, and return the favor!
 10. **Before eating:** Say “itadakimasu” (“I humbly receive”) when served food.
 11. **Ordering food:** No substitutions or customizations of your meal,
 12. **Nose:** Don’t blow loudly. Turn away and wipe with a tissue or sniffle if needed. If you need to blow, go to the restroom please. Note - vendors hand out free tissues on the street as advertising. Don’t use a handkerchief – these are for mopping sweat off the brow or for hand drying.
 13. **Jaywalking:** Don’t!
 14. **Clothing:** Smart casual. Women cover shoulders and chests... but short-shorts are ok (yes, *really*).
 15. **Shoes:** Wear socks, as shoes should come off indoors, especially at temples, and bare feet are frowned-upon. This is also true in retail changing rooms, restaurants with traditional *tatami* mats, and hotel bathrooms. Note that slippers are often provided.
 16. **Phones:** Silent mode at temples and shrines please, just as in a church.
 17. **Sushi:** No perfume, aftershave, or strong deodorants when eating sushi.
 18. **Restrooms:** Carry a handkerchief and sanitary wipes. Some are super-high-tech, others missing basics.
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Food in Japan – great list from [The Portable Wife – Japanese Food](#)

1. **Ramen** – these are ubiquitous, and excellent most everywhere, even Tokyo station’s Ramen Street (8 of the cities best). *Shio* is a salt-based broth. *Shoyu* is soy-sauce-based. *Tonkotsu* is pork bone broth. Miso is soybean paste based broth. Tsukemen have a side of broth for dipping.
2. **Japanese (Katsu) Curry** – big, uneven hunks of carrot and potato in a thick yellow-brown sauce. Always w/sticky rice, and add-ons of fried shrimp, chicken, or pork. Most places have pictures or plastic models!
3. **Unagi-no-Kabayaki** – sweet, savory, smokey boneless filet of eel, with a soy-sauce, grilled over charcoal. Always with rice, and if unagi is served on the rice, it is called *unadon*. Note – grilled only, not steamed!
4. **Tsukemono** – pickles! A rainbow of textures and flavors. Often served with other dishes.
5. **Matcha** – green tea powder in lattes, kit-kats, and ice cream – with chocolate
6. **Taiyaki** – fish-shaped pastries with sweet bean paste inside. Some have savory filling like pork.
7. **Soba** – thin noodles of buckwheat flour, served hot or cold, with mineral water in the dough.
8. **Okonomiyaki** – savory griddle cakes filled with cabbage and more, brushed with sweet-salty sauce. Most have protein (octopus, pork belly, cheese, etc), veg, topped with bonito flakes and a bit of mayo.
9. **Takoyaki** – battered octopus dough balls, deep fried. One of Dane’s favorites!
10. **Tofu** – silky and creamy. Fried (agedashi, inari) or cubes to dip. “*Yuba*” is tofu skin, and is also prized.
11. **Dango** – glutenous rice flour balls, boiled, skewered, often grilled; *Mitarashi* dango w/sticky-sweet soy sauce
12. **Sushi** – of course. In Tokyo, Tsukiji Fish Market is the place to go. There are multiple places serving melt-in-your-mouth morsels, but *Sushi Dai* and *Daiwa Sushi* are regarded as the best of the best. The inner market sushi stalls open for business at 5:30am and close around 1pm, so plan to eat your sushi for breakfast. And if you want to try Sushi Dai or Daiwa Sushi, you’ll need to arrive around 5am or risk waiting in line for hours.
13. **Fugu** – pufferfish. Served as super-thin sashimi, regulated for safety, but really at your own risk! Thx, pass :)
14. **Natto** – fermented soybean dish for breakfast; very pungent, slimy, sticky.
15. **Kuro-Tamago** – famous black eggs, hard-boiled in hot springs. Said to lengthen your life by 5-7 years!
16. **Kaiseki** – this means “haut cuisine” in Japan. Every aspect of the meal, from the ingredients to the plating to the order in which dishes are served, is governed by Japanese principles of nature, balance, and order. Expect \$100pp, perhaps cheaper at lunch. Perhaps Yuzuya Ryokan in Gion, Kyoto (reserve)

Japan Books

- Amy’s Guide to Best Behavior in Japan: Do It Right and Be Polite!
- Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata
- Strange Weather in Tokyo by Hiromi Kawakami
- Bending Adversity by David Pilling
- How Kyoto Breaks Your Heart by Florentyna Leow
- Fear and Trembling by Amélie Nothomb
- The Emissary by Yoko Tawada
- A Brief History of Japan: Samurai, Shogun and Zen

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Japan Transport – we will want a *JR Pass*, *Hakone Freepass*, and an *IC card* for local public transport in cities.

Japan Rail Pass: Enables free travel on all JR lines, including shinkansen, as well as local buses in the JR network nationwide and the JR-West ferry that runs to Miyajima. Good info at [TwoWanderingSoles](#)

The PASS itself does not guarantee you a seat. If you want to use a reserved seat, be sure to book a reserved seat (no additional payment needed). You can obtain a reserved-seat ticket at a reserved-seat ticket machine, at any JR station ticket office (Midori-no-madoguchi), or at any Travel Service Center, etc. before boarding.

The JR Pass is valid on all Shinkansen services in all the Shinkansen lines, *except for the Nozomi and Mizuho services on the Tokaido and Sanyo Shinkansen lines*. You will not have access to the trains with the fewest stops on the Tokaido and Sanyo lines. However, you do have access to the Hikari or Sakura services that cover the same routes. The Hikari and Sakura bullet trains reach the same top speed as the Nozomi and Mizuho trains but have more stops along each route. For example, from Tokyo to Kyoto, the Hikari takes 15mins more than the equivalent Nozomi.

It is ~20% cheaper to purchase outside of Japan, and can only be done 1 month in advance. It will arrive via snail-mail; you may want to end it to your arrival hotel. Exchange the voucher for the actual ticket (must show tourist visa) at [JR Exchange offices](#). If that is unwieldy, tickets can be purchased at NRT or main train stations (costs more).

For us, buy the two-week Japan Rail Pass (www.japanrailpass.net or <https://www.jrpass.com/> or in person) to **activate Tuesday, Oct 9**. This start misses the transport from HRT into Tokyo (cheap), but gets us final shinkansen from Hiroshima to Okayama. At pickup, reserve seats for our train(s) at the same counter (see above).

IC Cards: Debit cards for local bus and train (easier than using individual tickets). **Pasmo Passport** or **Welcome Suica** cards are available to tourists; valid for 4 weeks, no deposit, but no balance refunds. Purchase one at a kiosk or counter at the airport or transit station.

Getting Around: *HyperDia* (www.hyperdia.com) provides step-by-step route information. *Jorudan* is similar, or use Google Maps. Also the [Japan Travel App](#) for activities, points of interest, directions, etc.

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Oct 04 – Oct 05: Flight to Tokyo 1N (Wed – Thurs). Drive to Lyon, drop car, and fly east!

Morning – run, breakfast and final pack for Japan. Depart by 10:30am for ~3hr early check-in for flight

Drive – ~2hrs [drive to car drop](#). Drop Jean and bags prior to rental return?

Car – noon drop-off.

Transit – airport shuttle

Fly Info Qatar Airways Lyon-Doha, Doha-Tokyo (LSY-DOH, DOH-NRT)

Flight 1 QR 0052 LYS-DOH | Dpt Wed Oct 04 16:35pm | Arr 23:35pm | 6 hr |

Layover 3 hour layover in Doha airport.

Priority Pass - [Al Maha lounge](#) - Airside - Level 2 of Duty Free South. From the Teddy Bear, walk straight and take the lift or escalator on the left. The lounge is near Gates A, B and C. Bag lockers.

Wifi is fast and free on 'HIAQatar Complimentary WiFi' using Qatar e-ticket # (on boarding pass).

*If we have time, [sightsee in the airport](#). Visit *Orchard*, a tropical garden inside the terminal. If energetic, *Vitality Pool/Gym*. Or see art installations: *Lamp-Bear, A Message of Peace, Cosmos*, and *Small Lie, Artic Nurseries, The Playground, Desert Horse, Flying Man, 8 Oryxes*. Or eat and shop!*

Prep Prep for Japan by: downloading google maps, google translate, Papago app (translations),

Flight 2 QR 0806 DOH-NRT | Dpt Wed Oct 05 02:25am | Arr 18:55pm | 10hr

IC Card Get a **Pasmo Passport** or **Welcome Suica** card at a kiosk or counter

Cash Get \$ worth now; we will need it for the sushi markets in the morning (that's all they take)

Note Always carry passport, JR Pass, IC Card, cash, phone with download maps/apps/translators

Transit NRT T2 to Higashi-ginza station via [Keisei Narita Sky Access/Asakusa Line](#) (**NOT Keisei Skyliner**).

Direct train, buy at Keisei ticket counter in NRT T2. Every 40 min

Tokyu Stay Ginza is a 3-min walk from Higashi-Ginza Train Station's Exit A7

Alternate - JR Tokyo Station is a 15-minute walk from hotel. See also [Rome2Rio](#)

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Oct 05 – Oct 10: Tokyo 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Tokyo: See Dohmans! Highlights of the largest metro area in the world - 39 million people, more than 2x New York! The city started as a small fishing village called “Edo.” In 1603, the Tokugawa shogunate chose Edo Castle as its capital. By the mid 1700s, it had a population of 1m, the largest city in the world. The city was renamed Tokyo (“Eastern Capital”) in 1868 with the fall of the shogunate and start of the Meiji Restoration (emperor), as Japan opened to the west after 250 years.

Transit: Trains and subways should get us where we need. Our JR Pass covers the *Yamanote* and *Chūō* trains (below). An IC Card (Suica or Pasma) covers most any other transit, or buy paper tickets. Both trains and subways run from ~5am to ~midnight.

Trains: JR runs two key lines. Tokyo station is 13 min on foot/11 min ride on Ginza-Yonchōme line

- *Yamanote line*, a very irregularly shaped oval circling the city core. Key stops are *Tokyo*, *Shinagawa*, *Shibuya* (world’s busiest pedestrian intersection is a sight to behold), *Shinjuku*, and *Ikebukuro*. I have starred these on GM.
- *Chūō line* bisecting Yamanote east-west. Key stops are *Tokyo* and *Shinjuku* stations (shared with *Yamanote line*), and *Mitaka* station, far to the west. All are starred on GM.

Subway: There are 13 color-coded subways operated by Tokyo Metro and Toei (both government run) cross the city. Ginza station exit 4 is 5min from our hotel.

Stay: Tokyu Stay Ginza via booking
3-min walk to Ginza Train Station's Exit A7. JR Tokyo Station is a 15-minute walk
104-0061, Tokyo, Chuo Ward, Chuo-ku Ginza 4-10-5 104-0061 Phone +81 3-3541-0109
東京都, 中央区, 中央区銀座4-10-5

Note: ask hotel to arrange a taxi to the fishmarket for 4:30 am.

Alternate preferred stays: [Section L Hamamatsucho](#) and [The Blossom Hibiya](#). See also Detlef’s note

Tokyo Ideas: [The Poor Traveler](#), [Japan Starts Here](#), [GoWithGuide](#)

Day – Friday Oct 6 ---Fish Market and Ginza -----

- [Ginza: Toyosu Fish Market](#); [Ginza: Tsukiji Market](#); Nap time; [Ginza: Shops](#); Dinner

Day – Saturday Oct 7 --- select vignettes from following pages -----

- Explore with Detlef and Dagmar

Day – Sunday Oct 8 --- select vignettes from following pages -----

- **Run Tokyo** Best: [GR Imperial Palace](#) loop ~9k [from Tokyu Stay Ginza](#) (past Detlef’s office)
Alternate 1 is [Tsukiji Fish Market](#) and [GR Olympic park](#) ~10k [route from hotel](#)
Alternate 2 is [GR Akasaka Palace](#) loop ~11k [from hotel](#) (past Detlef’s office)
- [Chiyoda: Imperial Palace](#) then [Ameyoko and Akihabara](#) - or - [Kappabashi Kitchenware Festival](#) ([alt](#))

Day – Monday Oct 9 --- select vignettes -- *Note: National Holiday - “Health and Sports Day”* -----

- [Harajuku and Shibuya](#) then [Ginza: Kabuki-za Theater](#) - or - [Shinjuku](#) - or - [Rappongi](#) - or - REST

Next: Shinkansen (bullet train) to Hakone, for mountains and a soak in an onsen

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Oct 05 – Oct 10: Tokyo 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Ginza: Toyosu Fish Market

1. Up early for Tuna auction at Toyosu Fish Wholesale Market ([good guide](#)) followed by sushi! Closed Sun

- **Timing:** Up at 4am so we can depart by 4:30. The **auction** is 5:45-7:00am. Doors open at 5am, and you can see the setup as they lay out the tuna
- **Transit:** have the hotel arrange a taxi for 4:30am so we can arrive before 5am. Or [GM Route](#) via foot/train, which gets us there at 5:30. Trains don't really run before 5am.
- **Observation Windows** - do not require any booking or queues. Once the building opens to the public, walk in, cross the bridge, and there's a top down view of the tuna auction. Good photo angle (through glass), and complimentary guides to answer questions (in English).

Note: the Observation Deck, below, requires a lottery. We will pass on that.

- Enter per the diagrams below. There are two buildings. The initial building (see photo below) is the **Management Facilities Building**. After we walk in, we will pass restaurants and cross a bridge to the second building (Fish Wholesale Market Building). Follow the rush of tourists :)



2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 05 – Oct 10: Tokyo 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Ginza: Toyosu Fish Markets (continued)

2. Sushi for breakfast! Stop by *Daiwa Sushi* or *Sushi Dai* and share a chef's recommended plate.

- *Sushi Dai* - next door (via skybridge) is the *Fisheries Intermediate Market Wholesale Building*.
- *Daiwa Sushi* is outside on the ground floor of the Fruit and Vegetable Market building.

3. The Rest of Toyosu market.

- The Intermediate Market for fishmongers and restaurants. Toyosu Gourmet is there, with *Sushi Dai* and other restaurants. Nice rooftop garden with Tokyo views. Also, Uogashi Yokocho Market (souvenirs, etc) – watch out for trucks zipping through.
- Fruit and Vegetable Market is adjacent and also accessed via skybridge.

Ginza: Tsukiji Outer Market

Tsukiji Market, original site of the tuna auctions; local and authentic. [Route from Toyosu](#): Shijō-Mae Station to Tsukiji-Rokuchōme (Tsukiji 6) via 市 O 1 Shimbashi Station (4th stop). Closes early afternoon. There are over 400 food stalls to choose from. Some [suggestions](#), but really follow your eyes and nose:

- *Tadokoro Shokuhin* for onigiri. Can get it cold, or ask for fresh. Get extra roe on side!
- *Tsukiji Teppanyaki Juju* for skewers of fish & A5 wagyu (try with sea urchin and wagyu paste).
- *Donburi Ichiba* for seafood rice bowls
- *Sushizanmai* for sushi
- *Marutoyo* – for onigiri (rice balls with fish), like a taco in seaweed, some with little faces
- *Kakigoya* – grilled scallops and steamed oysters
- *Tsukiji Koromo* for Kaisendon (recommended: uogashidon)
- *Higashi Indo Maguro Shokai* for grilled tuna skewers
- TBD for grilled eel and eel liver...

Ginza: High-end Shops and Restaurants

Ginza District, from “silver guild” – in 1612 the government transferred its mint here. Ginza is the most famous shopping area in Tokyo, with many fine restaurants. At its south end, the fish markets (old and new)

- *Hamarikyu Garden*, Edo-style on the bay, a 15 minute walk from our hotel.
- Walk high street [Chuo Dori](#) (Central Avenue”) and *Harumi-dori*, the other main shopping avenue. This intersection is marked by the Wako and Mitsukoshi department stores (GM pins).
- Head to *Ginza 6 Department Store* roof (free, GM) for a view of Tokyo Tower (looks like Eiffel)

Ginza: Kabuki-za Theater

Kabuki-za theater, Originally built in 1899 and renovated between 2010 and 2013 for *Kabuki* plays (genre from the 17th century). Plays are now accessible to non-Japanese with a subtitling system and voice guide.

Shinbashi Enbujo Theatre nearby has traditional Azuma-odori dances and Bunraku performances.

[Japanese theater](#) includes *Noh-Kyogen* (spiritual with comic interludes), *Kabuki* (dance and music), and *bunraku* (puppetry), as well as *yose* (spoken drama)

- Book a show (TBD), enjoy the open garden on the fifth floor.
- Visit the gallery where costumes are exhibited, have your photo taken wearing a stage costume.
- Guided tours are also possible which will inform you about the history of the place and this art.

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Chiyoda: The Imperial Palace

Chiyoda (“field of a thousand generations”) district contains the Imperial Palace and its vast park. South is *Marunouchi* (meaning “inside the circle”, aka castle moat) commercial district, between *Chiyoda* and *Tokyo station*. Here is Kabuki-za theater, where most of the [Kubuki](#) plays (dramatic, stylized performances with traditional dance) are staged. High-end shops and restaurants start here and flow south into *Ginza*.

- *Imperial Palace East Gardens* (free, open 9am – 4:30pm in Oct, closed **Monday, Friday, holidays**). [Route](#) is Marunouchi Line (Local Ikebukuro) from Ginza Station to Otemachi Station (2nd stop). Access via the Otomon Gate, then walk the East Gardens. ([free audioguide](#) on app stores)
- Tokyo's most famous landmark, the Imperial Palace with its beautiful 17th-century parks surrounded by walls and moats. Much is closed to the public (it's still in use by the Imperial family), but there plenty to see simply by strolling the grounds. See the ruins of *Edo Castle*, *Ninomaru Garden*, walking path along the *Chidorigafuchi Moat*, *Teahouse*, *Nijubashi Bridge*, and parks. See [Google Maps pins](#).

Harajuku and Shibuya – [walking route here](#) (transit for some of it, see notes below)

Harajuku has youth fashion in hip boutiques on leafy, broad *Omotesando* (“the Champs Elysees of Tokyo”), and in pedestrian friendly back-streets. Nearby, *Meiji Jingu*, is Tokyo's grandest shrine.

Shibuya, as recently as the 1800s, was known for growing excellent tea. Today Shibuya Crossing is the busiest pedestrian crossing in the world.

- *Meiji Jingu Shinto shrine* interior and grounds (calm temple surrounded by forest near Harajuku. Slight bow as you enter the Torii Gate. At the 2nd gate you will find the Gyoen (garden). At the 3rd gate, purify yourself at the fountain and enter the courtyard. Here bad fortunes are tied with wire.
- After *Meiji Jingu Gyoen* and courtyard, stroll *Yoyogi* park to the main street - *Omotesandro*
- Walk *Omotesandro* and nearby backstreets for architecture and fashion to *Nezu Museum*. Notable architecture includes buildings housing: Dior, Louis Vuitton, Omotesando Hills, Tod's, and Prada.
- Visit *Nezu Art Museum* (pre-modern) if schedule and mood are fitting
- Back north to *Sakurai Tea Experience* for a 3-course set or tasting flight, enroute to
- *Shibuya* crossing, to watch the “Shibuya Scramble” when the crossing lights turn green. To fully grasp the scale of Shibuya Crossing's foot traffic, get a vantage from above. All on Google Maps
 - *View 1: Shibuya Mark City*. Head to the hallway linking the JR station to the Keio-Inokashira line on the 2nd floor of the *Shibuya Mark City* complex. Hallway windows have frenzy views.
 - *View 2: Shibuya Hikarie* (2-21-1 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku; tel. 03/5468-5892; www.hikarie.jp; 10am-9pm daily; free), a complex of boutiques, eateries, and artistic offerings accessible from Shibuya Station's east exit; from the 11th floor, you'll have a view of the spectacle of the fabled Shibuya Scramble, set within a wider view of Shibuya as a whole.
 - *View 3: Mag's Park*. There's also a plexiglass-enclosed viewing platform in Mag's Park (1-23-10 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; https://magnetbyshibuya109.jp/en/mags-park; 11am-11pm daily, last entry 10:30pm; ¥1,000), a rooftop space that opened in 2018 atop the Shibuya 109 department store. Its location on one corner of the scramble gives unimpeded views
 - *View 4: Shibuya Sky*. highest of is an open-air, 360-degree rooftop viewing platform.
- Walk the *Center Gai* area and do a photobooth selfie at *Purikura no Mecca*
- Transit Yamanote line to *Ebisu Yokochō*, a boisterous covered alley of no-frills eateries (opens 5pm). *Ebisu* is named after the jolly god of prosperity (like Bacchus).

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 05 – Oct 10: Tokyo 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Roppongi

Roppongi was used, during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1905), a military training ground. After World War II, Occupation forces moved into newly empty barracks, leading to the sort of nightlife associated with overseas GIs—hence the neighborhood’s slightly seedy reputation.

- *Mori Art Museum* (contemporary) and the *Tokyo City View and Sky Deck* at dusk; one admission applies to both, museum takes ~1hr. Nearby, *Tokyo Tower* (look at vs. from the tower is best)

Shinjuku – [walking route here](#). Look for transit to get there and back.

Shinjuku is the most eclectic nightlife zone. The rail station is the busiest in the world. Nightlife includes *Omoide Yokochō* (“Memory Lane”), smokey and crowded with small bars; *Kabukicho* is the largest nightlife area in the city with the *Golden Gai*, filled with tumble-downs; and the gay quarter *Shinjuku Ni-chōme*. Pretty *Shinjuku Gyoen* (park) is nearby.

- *Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building* in Shinjuku has a free observation platform from its two towers. Open 10am-8pm, closed alternate M/T. Designed after Paris’s Notre Dame... huh?
- Stroll *Shinjuku Gyoen Park*. Tokyo’s largest garden with Japanese, French, and English styles.
- Dinner at a hole-in-the-wall in *Omoide Yokochō* (culinary alley, open ~dusk).
- Nightcap in *Golden Gai*; the description reminds me of Budapest’s Ruin Pubs.

Ameyoko and Akihabara – [walking route here](#) (after transit to temple, total 3mi if walk). Maybe Monday?

Ameyoko is a more traditional area, with temples and wood and stone houses.

Akihabara is geek-town, with electronics, anime, cosplay, and includes Radio Kaikan with 10 stories of toys, trading cards, video games and collectibles. Maids and butlers serve in nearby maid cafes.

- *Senso-ji temple* is our starting point. Walk to Higashi-ginza Station, take [Asakusa Line](#) (Local Keisei-Takasago) to Asakusa Station (7th stop). *Senso-Ji* (aka *Asakusa Kannon*) is Tokyo’s oldest temple, built in 645 to honor the Buddhist goddess of mercy, Kannon, after two fishermen found a golden statue of her when casting their nets in the nearby river. Rebuilt after WWII. Buy incense and place in the cauldron. Always crowded, try to avoid weekends, or go early.
- *Tokyo National Museum* holds worlds largest collection of Japanese art. Expect a 2-3 hours here. Walk 2km, or from *Senso-ji*, start *Asakusa-Koen-Rokku* stn and take [草4 1 Adachi-Umedachō](#) to *Shitaya-Nichōme* (*Shitaya 2*) (5th stop). Walk south over Ryouin bridge to the museum.
- *Ameyoko Street Market*. Walk south 15 min through *Ueno Park* to *Ameya Yokochō*, a jumble of streets beside and under the elevated train tracks a few minutes’ walk south of Ueno Station. It is known as “*Ameyoko*” by locals, named for the abundance of candy (*ame*) that was sold here in the postwar years. *Ame* also denotes “America,” as black-market American goods were hawked in the area after the war. The outdoor market has ~500 stalls and eateries; at the indoor mall, you’ll find all manner of cheap clothing and souvenirs. Opens ~10am. Lunch!
- *Maid Café*. Walk 15 min south to Maidcafe Maidreamin Akihabara idol-dori Store, a cos-play café sets the mood for the *Akihabara* district. Coffee and dessert here to fuel us through.
- *Anime/Cosplay shopping*. Wander geekdom starting at *Mandarake* and *Radio Kaikan*, gifts.

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 10 – Oct 12: Hakone 2N (Tuesday – Thursday)

Hakone: Hakone has been known for its wealth of natural beauty, from verdant mountains to a plethora of onsen, since the 16th century. Plan on visiting multiple onsen and staying in a traditional *ryokan*. This is where Tokyoites escape for a long weekend to relax from the bustle of the city.

Ideas: Moon guidebook,

Transit: [Route here](#). From *Tokyu Stay Ginza* to *Odawara Station*. Walk to Ginza-Yonchōme (Ginza 4) Rail to Tokyo Sta. Marunouchi-Minamiguchi (Marunouchi South Exit, 8min, 3rd stop). Walk 6 min to Tokyo Station. Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen to Odawara Station (33min, 3rd stop)

Buy Hakone Freepass: Get a 3-day pass at Odawara Station Kiosk after arrival. [Freepass Info is here](#), cost is ~¥5400 (\$40) per person to cover all area transport – rail, ropeway, lake cruise, bus, cable car, etc.

Transit: *Hakone-Tozan* rail line from Odawara to Gore hotel via [Hakone Yutowa](#). We can get off/on enroute as we please; perhaps at Miyanoshita for lunch. Check-in and drop drop bags (we should arrive at about noon, call ahead for bag drop).

Stay: Hakone Yutowa via booking
250-0408, Hakone, Gora 1300-27 (250-0408, 箱根町, 強羅 1300-27) Phone: +81 460-82-0321

Alternate preferred stays: [Hakone Tent](#) and [Emblem Hotel](#). *Remote:* [Gora room](#), [Odakyu Hotel de Yama](#)

Day 1 (arrival) -----

- Cable car to hiking above Gora at Sōun-zan. Options:
 - [Chisuji Falls](#) – 8mi o/b 700', [¾ mile](#) to start/end, rates 4.7
 - [Mt Myojogatake](#) – 10mi o/b 2200', [1 mile](#) to start/end, rates 4.4
 - [Mt Miyagino](#) – 7mi o/b 3000', [¾ mile](#) to start/end, rates 4.8
- Return to Gora and visit the onsen at our hotel
- Dinner gorging on haute cuisine wearing only a robe and slippers

Day 2 (full day) -----

- [Hakone Loop](#). The traditional (ok, touristy) approach to exploring Hakone is to make a loop, completed via a succession of quirky transportation options. From Gora, a *cable car* links Gōra to Sōun-zan. From here, hiking trails begin (day 2?). Today we will take the *Hakone Ropeway*, which descends at Hakone's southwestern edge, hovering above the dramatically volcanic landscape of Ōwakudani ("Valley of Hell") below. We are now at Lake Ashi (Ashi-no-ko), which occupies a caldera and offers stunning views of Mount Fuji looming in the backdrop. Next, we *cruise* the lake, and then *bus* back to Gōra
- Hakone Open Air Museum
- Return to Gora and visit the onsen at our hotel
- Dinner gorging on haute cuisine wearing only a robe and slippers

Day 3 (depart) -----

- Run if there is a good route, not too hilly! Perhaps the Chisuji Falls trail (see hikes above)

Next: Kyoto, the capital for a millennia

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 12 – Oct 17: Kyoto 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Kyoto: Kyoto was Japan's capital for almost a millennia. Culturally rich, it is the vision many hold of Japan: geisha, tea ceremony, and more than 1,400 temples and shrines. In many ways, it is traditional Japan boiled down to its essence, where its history, spiritual life, aesthetics, ambience, and culinary genius coalesce. Thankfully, it was not bombed in WWII due to its cultural heritage.

Busses: Busses are the best way to get around, [all we need to know here](#). Taxis are also affordable.

Transit: [Route here](#). From Hakone Yutowa to Airbnb. Depart about 10-11am, arrive about 2-3pm
Walk to Chokokunomori Station (Hakone Tozan line)
Rail to Odwara Station (9th stop, 50 min).
Then Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen to Kyoto Station (33min, 4th stop).
Buy local ticket (use IC Card?), and ride Karasuma local north to Oike Station (3rd stop, 5 min).
Walk 5 min to Belle *Fleur Kyoto Sanjo, 324-2, Sanjocho, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto* (see GM).

Festivals: [see here](#)

Ideas: [Portable Wife Kyoto 2 Days](#), [Kyoto ideas](#)

Stay: #4 spacious apartment via Airbnb Phone +81-90-6492-8453
Room 401, Belle Fleur Kyoto Sanjo, 324-2, Sanjocho, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto, Kyoto 604-8205, Japan
5 min walk from Karasuma Oike subway station which is only 3 stops (5min) from Kyoto station.

Alternate preferred stays: [Gion Suite](#)

Day - Thursday (arrival) Oct 12 -----

- Check-in and settle
- Wander Gion district – [route here](#). Looking for Geisha. From hotel, go first for early dinner at Nishiki Market. Then cross Shijo-Ohashi Bridge. At the east end of the bridge, cross Kawabata-dori and walk north on the east side of Kawabata for about 100 meters. You will soon see the end of tree-lined pedestrian **Shirakawa-dori**. Follow it east and you'll get to the **Shimbashi District** (also known as Shirakawa), which is the most beautiful street in Kyoto. After checking it out, go through the alleys south to **Shijo-dori** and walk east to Shijo and cross over into **Hanami-koji**, another picturesque lane. This is geisha territory, so keep your eyes peeled. Finally, south-east via **Ninen-zaka path** to **Sannenzaka** and **Kiyomizu-dera** before turning home.

Day – Friday Oct 13 -----

- [Guided walk of West Kyoto](#) with [Meiko](#) Tabata (ToursByLocals). Start 8:30 at our Airbnb. Bring cash for transit, entry, etc.
- We will visit **Kinkaku-ji Temple** (the Golden Pavilion), **Ryoan-ji Temple**, **Arashiyama Togetsu Bridge** over the Oi river, **Tenryu-ji Temple** (built for the spirit of a betrayed emperor), the Bamboo forest, and via taxi **Nijo castle** or **Fushimi-Inari shrine**.
Note: Nijo is close to our stay, and Fushimi is a pleasant 3-hour walk up through vermillion gates, so I think we savor these on our own excursions.

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 12 – Oct 17: Kyoto 5N (Thursday – Tuesday)

Day – Saturday Oct 14 -----

- [Temples North and East](#) – [Transit](#) ~40min via Karasuma line and 204 bus, or taxi 20min
- [7-mile walking route](#) via **Higashiyama Jisho-ji (Ginkakuji), Honen-in, Philosopher's Path, Eikando, Nanzen-ji, Oku-no**. Then take the **Keage incline** past the zoo and Okazaki park to **Heian**. Down to **Maruyama Park** for **Shore-in, Chion-in,, Yasaka-jinja**.
- If we have not yet been south-east via **Ninen-zaka path** to **Sannenzaka** and **Kiyomizu-dera**, we can do that, else stroll through **Gion** (the Geisha district) enroute to our stay.
- Look at [buses](#) to see if better transit option

Day -Sunday Oct 15 -----

- **Fushimin Inari Taisha**, the most iconic in Kyoto. [Take the rail](#), then walk the vermilion gates that line the path up Mount Inari (~3 hrs). The place can be crowded; go early. Look for fox status (symbol of the god Inari, protector of rice growing).
- **Rengeoin Sanjusangendo** [via rail](#). Massive hall with 1001 gold statues of the goddess Kannon (mercy), and beautiful grounds
- [Transit](#) to **Arashiyama Bamboo Grove** and surrounding sites including **Tenryugi** and **Giō-ji Temples**, the beautiful **Togetsukyo Bridge** and wooden boats, Arashiyama Monkey Park, and possibly **Okochi Sanso Garden**
- Look at [buses](#) to see if better transit option
- Modify based on guided tour

Day - Monday Oct 16 -----

- [Run Kyoto!](#)
- **Nara, Holy City of Deer** ([Portable Wife Nara](#)). Guided Nara tour with [Tomoko H.](#) via ToursByLocals. Tomoko will propose Nara/Kobe itinerary (starting afternoon). She is a jazz singer, and says the Sone club has great performers on the 16th (she will reserve).
 - **Transit** – [direct](#) on the Express Kintetsu-Nara from Karasuma Oiki station (6min walk). Local train, not covered on JR pass, use IC Card. We could also take the JR Nara line from Kyoto Station to JR Nara station (~3x/hr, on JR pass).
 - **Kofukuji Temple** (UNESCO, moved from Kyoto), then **Isuien Garden** (¥ 900/\$6)
 - **Tōdai-ji** is the architectural highlight of this one day Nara itinerary. Housing the world's largest *Daibutsu* (bronze Buddha statue), the Great Buddha Hall is also the world's largest wooden structure and a must-visit place in Japan. Approaching Tōdai-ji is a surreal experience, as the sacred Nara deer freely roam the temple grounds. It's also hard to believe that a 1,300-year-old building could be so large and well-preserved!
 - **Nara Park** and **Mt Wakakusa** where you can feed the deer then walk 40 min to the peak for views of the holy city and early fall foliage.
 - **Kasuga Grand Shrine** (UNESCO) with thousands of stone and bronze lanterns
 - Wander the forest to **Higashimuki Shopping Arcade**, and back to the train.
- **Kobe for Jazz and Kobe beef**. If we are up for a long day, this is next.
 - [Transit](#) to Kobe is about 90 min on the Kintetsu-Nara Line Rapid-ExpressKobe-Sannomiya, then 10min walk or short connection. Depart Nara bout 5pm
 - Dinner (Kobe beef!) at **Tor Road Steak Aoyama**, then Jazz at **Jam-Jam** or **Sone**
 - [Transit](#) to Kyoto ~90 min. At 10pm, walk 10 min back to Sannomiya station, take Tokaido-Sanyo Line Special Rapid Yasu to Kyoto, and Karasuma to Oiki stn

Runs: Nijo Castle, Imperial Palace, and Kamo River 10k, [route here](#) (combines Great Runs routes below)
Greatruns: [Nijo](#), [Imperial](#), [Kamo](#)

Next: *The holy island of Miyajima, outside Hiroshima*

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 17 – Oct 19: Miyajima 2N (Tuesday – Thursday)

Miyajima Island: (Officially named Itsukushima) the scene of the vermilion torii gate rising directly from the sea is widely hailed as one of Japan's three best views. The island is defined by low-lying mountains dotted by temples and laced with good walking trails up Mount Misen, where you'll find a cluster of shrines.

Ideas: Moon guidebook

Transit: [Overall route here](#), 3hr. Depart ~10am, arrive ~1pm

From Airbnb to Miyajima-guchi Station

- Karasuma local south from Oike Station to Kyoto Station (3rd stop, 5 min).
- Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen to Hiroshima Station (97min, 4th stop).
- Buy local ticket (use IC Card?) for JR San'yō line if not covered by pass
- JR San'yō line from Hiroshima Station to Miyajimaguchi Station

Ferry to Miyajima

- JR (tel. 0829/56-2045; www.jr-miyajimaferry.co.jp; departures from Miyajima-guchi 6:25am-10:42pm daily). *Note: you can ride the JR ferry for free if you have a JR pass*
- Matsudai (tel. 0829/44-2171; www.miyajima-matsudai.co.jp; departures from Miyajima-guchi 7:15am-8:35pm daily). Fare (10 minutes; ¥180 one-way)

Stay: bHotel90 via booking.com Phone +81-90-9417-8219

Apartment, N/S, wifi, W/D, kitchen, fridge, tea, 3 min from ferry, walkable

Miyajimacho 1165-11, bhotel Kaniwasou, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima-ken 739-0588, Japan

Day -----

- Itsukushima Gate, Daisho-in temple, Miyajima Ropeway to the top
- Reserve Dinner ahead at Mikotoya, Miyajima Sushi Tensen, or Okonomiyaki Kishibe
- Stroll shore and enjoy sunset without the crowds

Day -----

- **Run Miyajima**
- Miyajima Ropeway up Mount Misen with shrines enroute (or hiked, 1½ mi up-up-up), Momijiandi Park
- Reserve Dinner ahead at Mikotoya, Miyajima Sushi Tensen, or Okonomiyaki Kishibe
- Stroll shore and enjoy sunset without the crowds

Next: Hiroshima

2023 Japan Trip Itinerary

Oct 19 – Oct 20: Hiroshima 1N (Thursday – Friday)

Hiroshima: Peace Memorial Park and Museum is top of the list. Downtown, also known as Naka-ku (“middle ward”), contains the central business district and most major sights.

Ideas: Moon guidebook

Transit: [Overall route here](#), ~1hr. Depart ~10am, arrive ~11am and drop bags

Ferry from Miyajima

- JR (tel. 0829/56-2045; www.ir-miyajimaferry.co.jp; Note: free with JR pass)
- Matsudai (tel. 0829/44-2171; www.miyajima-matsudai.co.jp)

Miyajima-guchi Station to Rihga Royal Hotel

- JR San'yō line from Miyajimaguchi Station to Shin-Hakushima Station
- Walk 20 min to hotel, or buy pass and take Astram Line to Kencho-Mae (3min, 2nd stop)

Stay: Rihga Royal Hotel Hiroshima via [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) Phone +81822285401
730-0011 Hiroshima, Hiroshima, Naka-ku Motomachi 6-78, Japan

Day --- (arrival) -----

- **Moon Guide Walk:** Peace Memorial Park (Atomic Bomb Dome, Peace Bell), Peace Memorial Museum. Then tram line (#3 or #7) to Kamiyachō-nishi tram stop and walk 10 minutes north to Hiroshima Castle. After, another 10 min walk east to Shukkei-en garden. Next, walk 6 min to Hiroshima station and take JR Kabe line to Mitaki Station, and walk uphill to the uncrowded Mitaki-dera Temple.
- **Moon Guide Dinner Ideas:** Lopez Okonomiyaki (for okonomiyaki and Latin American food by Guatemalan chef). To reach it from Mitaki-dera, take JR Kabe to Yokogawa (3min) and walk. Other options are Nikuchan (izakaya restaurant), or Koba (izakaya restaurant), or Okkundo (noodles)
- **Food:** If you aim to try one local dish in Hiroshima, make it *okonomiyaki*. It is a savory cross between a pancake and an omelet, loaded with cabbage, seafood, meat, soba noodles, bean sprouts, and a slathering of mayonnaise, bonito flakes, sweet sauces, and other condiments. Hiroshima is also known for its oysters hauled up from the local bay.

Day --- (depart) -----

- Morning [Run Hiroshima Peace Park](#) (or [Ota River](#) or [Kyobash River](#))
- Pack and to Hiroshima Shinkansen Station

Next: Fly on to Taipei, Taiwan!

Oct 20 – Oct 20: Fly to Taipei (Friday) tbd

Morning: Run Hiroshima Peace Park, then pack and to Hiroshima Shinkansen Station

Transit: Shinkansen to Okayama, then limo-bus to airport.

Transit: Route to [Okayama Station here](#), ~1¼ hr. Depart 9am (limo bus) or 10:30am (taxi)

- Hiroshima Dentetsu No.6 to Hiroshima Station (15 min, 8th stop)
- Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen (Sakura 544 / SakuraShin-Osaka) to Okayama
- Taxi (\$55) - or - Airport [Limousine Bus](#) / Airport Shuttle Bus / Okayama Momotaro Kuko

Flight: Tiger Air IT215 OKJ-TPE | Depart Friday Oct 20 19 15:55pm | Arrive Friday Oct 20 17:40pm

Baggage: carry-on one overhead bin, one under seat 10kg | 1 checked per 25kg (priority offload)
