



“All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!”
TONY WHEELER, COFOUNDER – LONELY PLANET

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

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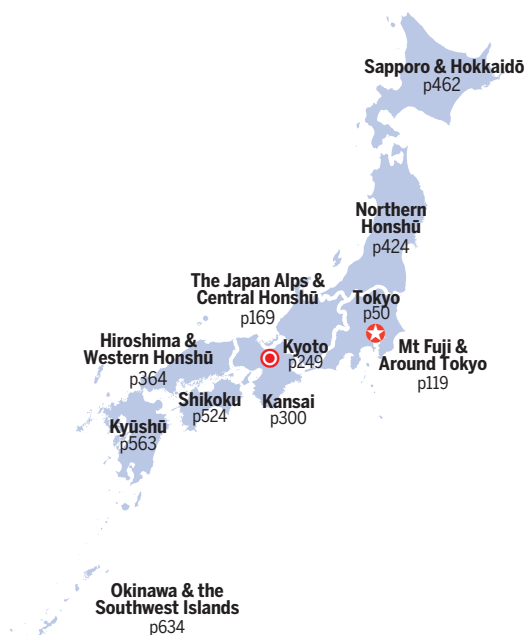
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Look out for these icons:



Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option



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Japan



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Ancient trees and steep mountains (p637)

Tropical Okinawa
Coral reefs and white-sand beaches (p649)

Kenroku-en, Kanazawa
Perhaps Japan's finest garden (p228)

Kyoto Temples & Gardens
Shintō and Buddhist architectural wonders (p252)

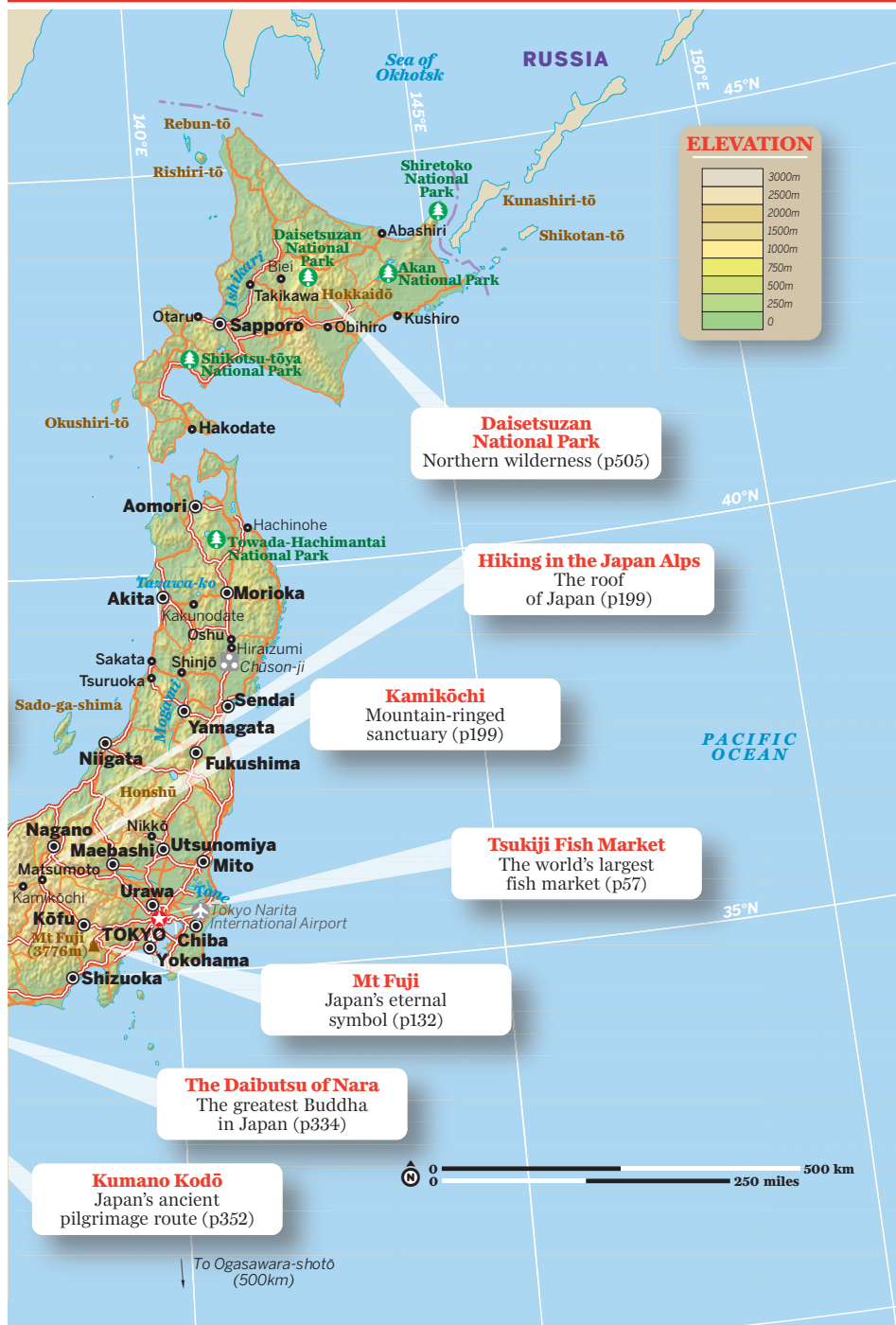
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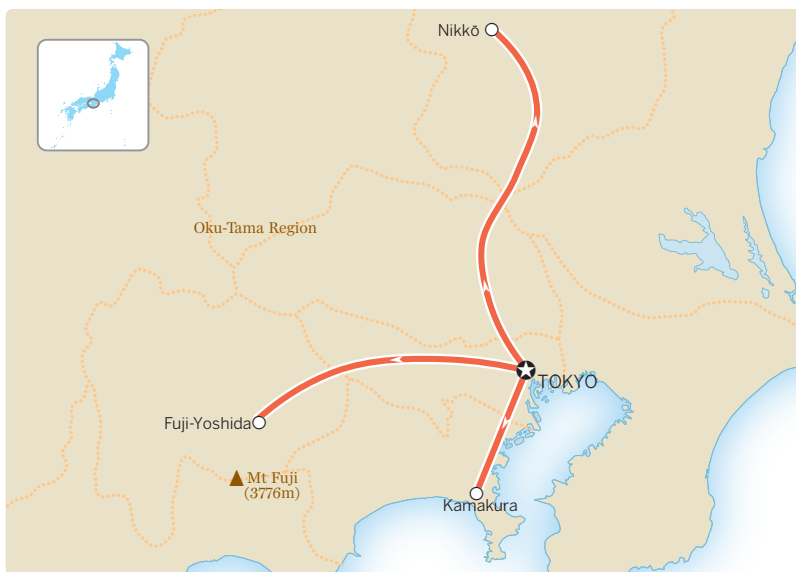
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Top Experiences >



itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One Week

Tokyo & Around

If your time in Japan is limited, don't try to do too much. Fly into Narita or Haneda (the latter is closer to the city). Stay in a convenient transport hub like **Shinjuku**, **Shibuya**, **Ginza** or the **Tokyo Station area**. Visit **Tsukiji fish market** your first morning (a good idea if you've got jetlag). Next, head up to **Asakusa** to visit the temple of **Sensō-ji**, then over to nearby **Ueno** for the **Tokyo National Museum**. The next day, take the loop line to **Harajuku** and walk to **Meiji-jingū**, the city's finest Shintō shrine, then take a stroll down chic **Omote-sandō**. From there, head up to **Shibuya** to soak up some of modern Tokyo. Make sure you spend an evening wandering east **Shinjuku**, since this is where you'll get the full experience of Tokyo's neon madness. Other urban areas to check out include **Ginza**, for high-end shopping; **Akihabara**, for electronics and geek culture; and **Roppongi**, for international nightlife.

Break up your time in Tokyo with day trips to nearby attractions like the fantastic shrines at **Nikkō** and the temples at **Kamakura**; if you're a hiker and it's summertime, you could even climb **Mt Fuji**.



10 Days to Two Weeks

Tokyo, the Japan Alps & Kyoto

The Tokyo–Japan Alps–Kyoto route is *the* classic Japan journey and the best way to get a quick taste of the country. You'll experience three faces of Japan: the modern wonders of **Tokyo**, the traditional culture of **Kyoto**, and the natural beauty of the **Japan Alps**. While you can do this itinerary in any season, keep in mind that the Japan Alps can be snow covered any time from early November to late March – this rules out hiking unless you're an experienced winter mountaineer – but you can visit the attractive cities of Takayama and Kanazawa any time of year.

Let's assume that you'll fly into **Tokyo**. Follow the preceding Tokyo & Around itinerary, which will give you a taste of things in the capital. Don't worry about skipping some of the traditional sights in that itinerary, because you'll be heading to **Kyoto**, and you'll get your fill of shrines and temples there.

From Tokyo, take the *shinkansen* (bullet train) to Nagoya, then an express to **Takayama**. Spend a day here checking out the restored **Sanmachi-suji** district, then head into the **Japan Alps** via **Shinhotaka Onsen** or nearby **Kamikōchi**.

Return to Takayama and rent a car so you can visit the nearby thatched-roof villages of **Shirakawa-go** and **Gokayama**. From there, if you feel like some more alpine scenery, drive northeast and head back into the Japan Alps via the **Tateyama–Kurobe Alpine Route** (the route is open from late spring to early fall). Next, drive to **Kanazawa** (some rental agencies will allow you to drop the car in Kanazawa). Note that you can also go from Takayama to Kanazawa by bus, with a stop in Shirakawa-go en route. In Kanazawa, check out the famous garden of **Kenroku-en**, the **21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art** and the **Nagamachi** district.

From Kanazawa, there are several daily express trains that will get you to **Kyoto** in a little over two hours. In Kyoto, follow the Kansai in Depth itinerary, then jump on the *shinkansen* and get yourself back to Tokyo in time for your flight home.



- » (above) A young *maiko* (apprentice geisha) is pretty as a picture on a Kyoto street (p249).
- » (left) Tokyo's Shinjuku district (p71) is pulsing with life.



Three Weeks

The Wilds of Hokkaidō

Whether you're on a JR Pass or flying directly, **Sapporo** makes a good hub for Hokkaidō excursions. If you're here in February, your prize for enduring the arctic cold is a front-row seat at the **Sapporo Snow Festival**, highlighted by life-size carvings of everything from European cityscapes to elaborate ice mazes. But any time of year is perfect for a visit to the **Sapporo Biru-en**, birthplace of Hokkaidō's golden lager.

On a day trip from Sapporo, see romantic **Otaru**, with its Victorian brick warehouses and unbelievably fresh sushi spreads. If you have a little more time to spare, a couple of nights in **Hakodate** transports you back to the era of European colonisation. On the way back to Sapporo, hot-springs fans can take a healing dip in the famed waters of **Noboribetsu Onsen**.

In the winter months, **Niseko** is an absolute must for powder fiends. Whether you're partial to parabolic skis or a waxed-up snowboard, this alpine village is nothing short of a carver's paradise. The burgeoning expat population also ensures fine cosmopolitan eating and a boisterous nightlife.

In the summer months, make a brief stop in **Asahikawa** for a few rounds of Otokoyama sake before pressing on to the northern outpost of **Wakkanai**. From here, take the ferry to the islands of **Rishiri-tō** and **Rebun-tō** in search of the annual wildflower blooms. On the return, see **Sōya-misaki**, Japan's northernmost point.

From there, jump to **Asahidake Onsen**, and hike around **Daisetsuzan National Park**. As a complement to burning shoe leather, jump behind the wheel of a rental car and explore the lavender fields and gourmet attractions in the countryside around **Furano** and **Biei**. Although smaller than Niseko, Furano is an impressive skiing and snowboarding destination in its own right.

If you really want to leave it all behind, head east to **Shari**, the jumping-off point for **Shiretoko National Park**. But don't forget your bear bell, as humans aren't the only creatures that call this remote peninsula home. For more passive encounters, you can watch cranes and deer in **Kushiro Shitsugen National Park**. And don't forget about *marimo*, the anthropogenic balls of algae that inhabit **Akan National Park**. This is also a top spot to learn more about the island's traditional **Ainu culture**.



Two Weeks Kansai in Depth

Kansai contains the thickest concentration of must-sees in all of Japan. If you want to see a lot of traditional Japanese sights without spending a lot of time in transit, then spending your entire trip in Kansai is a great idea.

Kyoto is the obvious place to base yourself: it's central and it's got a wide range of excellent accommodation, not to mention the nation's finest temples, gardens and shrines. Spend a day exploring the **Higashiyama area** (both southern and northern), followed by another day strolling through the bamboo groves of **Arashiyama**. Then, hop on a train for a day trip to **Nara** to see the sights of **Nara-kōen**, including **Tōdai-ji**, with its enormous Buddha figure. Another day trip to see **Ise-jingū**, in the town of **Ise**, is highly recommended – the ride is scenic and the shrine is awe-inspiring.

If you've got the urge to see the modern side of Japan, **Osaka** is only about 30 minutes by train from Kyoto. And if you really want to wind down and relax, an overnight trip up to the onsen town of **Kinosaki** will be the perfect way to round off your Kansai experience.

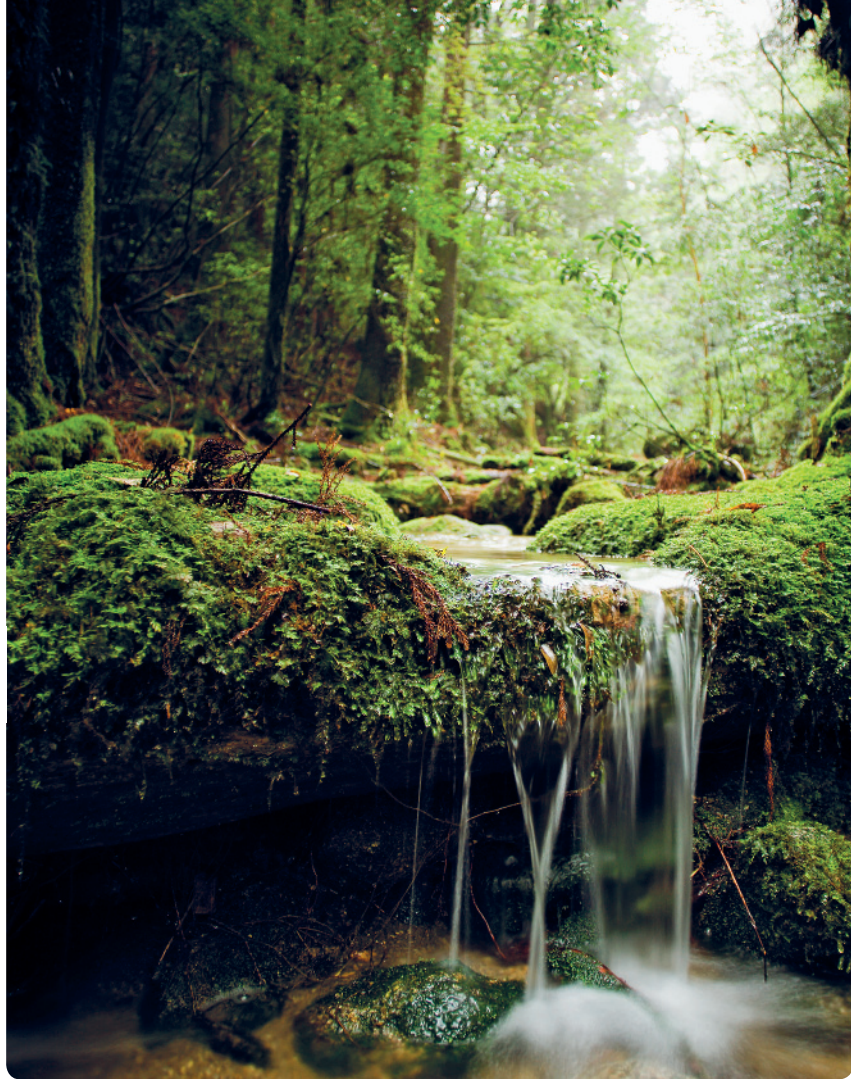
Two to Three Weeks West from the Old Capital

This route can be done with a start in **Tokyo** (Haneda or Narita Airports), **Nagoya** (Centrair), or **Kansai** (KIX). If you fly into Tokyo or Nagoya, check out those cities, then jump on the *shinkansen* for the quick trip to **Kyoto**, which is worth as many days as you can give it – see the Kansai in Depth itinerary for some ideas of what to see there.

After soaking up Kyoto's traditional culture, consider a day and night in **Osaka** (especially if you won't be visiting Tokyo). This will give you a dose of the modern urban Japanese phenomenon, with all that it entails.

From Osaka, head west to **Himeji**. The famous castle here, Himeji-jō, is presently 'under wraps' while it's being restored, but you can see enough to make it interesting. Then, travel to the island of **Naoshima**, in the Inland Sea, near the city of Okayama. The entire island has been converted into a giant art museum and it's a must for culture vultures.

Return to the mainland and travel west to visit **Hiroshima** and learn about its tragic history (consider spending the night on **Miyajima**), then head east to catch your return flight.



- » (above) A tranquil tableau on the trail to Jōmon Sugi (p639), Yakushima.
- » (left) Beckoned by an inviting sea on Miyako-Jima (p660).



Three Weeks

Island-Hopping Through the Southwest Islands

If you fancy beaches, jungles and coral reefs, island-hopping through the Southwest Islands is a unique adventure. Start in the city of **Kagoshima**, on the southern island of Kyūshū, and catch a ferry to **Yakushima**, a wild island of eons-old Japanese cedar trees including **Jōmon Sugi**, hikable in a day. Return to Kagoshima and board an overnight ferry to the island of **Amami-Ōshima**, which has some great beaches and subtropical jungles. From there, board another ferry and head south to tiny **Yoron-tō**. This little gem is fringed by beaches on all sides, and has some great snorkelling and windsurfing spots. After a few days kicking back on Yoron's sands, hop on another ferry for the short ride to **Naha**, on the island of Okinawa-hontō. Check out the city for a day or two, and then take the short ferry trip out to **Kerama Archipelago**. Here, the tiny island of **Aka-jima** has some of the best beaches in the entire archipelago.

If you're out of time, you can fly back to the mainland from Naha; otherwise, take a flight from Naha to **Miyako-jima** and spend a couple of days experiencing its long, golden beaches and outlying islets.

A short flight will then take you to **Ishigaki-jima**. If you've got scuba certification and you're there between June and October, you'll want to dive amid swarms of manta rays offshore. If not, just chill out along the fabulous bay beaches around Ishigaki's **Kabira-wan**.

Next, grab a short-haul ferry to neighbouring, jungle-covered **Iriomote-jima**, which has some incredible coral reefs around its shores, as well as river cruises along mangrove forests and some very wild hikes through the interior.

Back on Ishigaki-jima, a variety of ferries can whisk you to some minor but fascinating outlying islands: pancake-flat **Taketomi-jima** hosts a small community of wonderfully preserved Okinawan houses with heavy tile roofs and *shīsā* (protective lion statues); laid-back and covered with sugarcane fields, **Hateruma-jima** is Japan's southernmost inhabited island and has beaches with pristine turquoise waters; **Yonaguni-jima**, Japan's westernmost island and some 100km from Taiwan, is a hot spot for hammerhead sharks in winter. At all times of the year, visitors come to see a collection of bizarre undersea blocks that some say are the ruins of a lost civilisation. Return to Ishigaki-jima for the flight back to the mainland.



10 Days Kyūshū & Yakushima

Sunny **Kagoshima** offers an instant change of pace from the rest of Japan. **Sengan-en** garden and **Sakurajima** volcano are must-sees before going south for a sand bath in the seaside town of **Ibusuki** or testing your chopstick skills fishing noodles from a tank near **Ikeda-ko**. Then catch the *shinkansen* north to plunge into samurai history at the fabulous **Kumamoto-jō**, and head inland to **Aso-san**, the world's largest volcanic caldera.

If you have time and enjoy hiking, take a ferry south from Kagoshima to the island of **Yakushima** for some hiking and onsens.

Nagasaki is known for tragedy, and visiting the atomic-bombing sights offers a lesson that can never be learned too often, but this welcoming city also bubbles with colourful East-West history and unique fusion cuisine. From here, train it to **Arita** for immersion in Japan's heralded ceramics history at **Kyūshū Ceramic Museum** (and nearby galleries!).

Crowning the island is worldly, river-crossed **Fukuoka**, Kyūshū's largest city, crammed with spirited dining and nightlife in the lanes of **Tenjin** and **Daimyō**. Shoot across the island's northeast to finish your adventure with a relaxing soak in one of the eight hot-spring enclaves of seaside **Beppu**.

One Week Inland Sea

Start day one in the city of **Okayama**, allowing enough time to stroll the fenced garden **Kōraku-en** before finding lodgings. On day two it's a morning train and ferry ride to **Naoshima**, artsy star of the Inland Sea, where you can lose yourself among installations and subterranean museums. Take your time and spend two nights here. On day four, head back to the mainland and onwards to Kasaoka to catch the afternoon boat for **Manabe-shima**. A seafood dinner and a soak in the open-air tub at **Santora**, on the island, should see you feeling refreshed on day five – go for a morning wander around this quiet, feline-friendly island. If you haven't decided to throw it all in and move here, return to Kasaoka and catch a train down the coast to **Onomichi**. Squeeze in a temple walk or learn about Onomichi's literary history, but eat plenty of the local *rāmen* to prepare for day six – cycling the **Shimananami Kaidō**. You could go flat out to Shikoku, but it's better to stop at **Ikuchi-jima**, see colourful **Kōsan-ji**, and rest up for the night. Day seven, get back on the bike, or turn in your wheels and take the ferry back to port.



Skiing in Japan

What to Bring

Almost everything you need is available in Japan. However, due to prices or difficulty in finding some items, it's best to bring the following things from abroad:

Lift pass chip case Look for the 'around the arm'-type case to hold your pass. You will be scanning this at every lift, and the case attached to your arm is easily the best place to keep it.

Goggles They're very expensive in Japan, so it's best to bring your own.

Essential toiletries Sunblock, aspirin and other pharmacy items you're used to may be hard to track down, so it's best to bring your own favourites.

Large-sized ski boots Rental places at most resorts have boots of up to 30cm (which is equivalent to men's size 12 in the USA, UK or Australia). Resorts such as Niseko, which attract strong international followings, typically stock larger sizes. But if you have very large feet, play it safe and bring your own boots.

Mobile phones Many of Japan's ski areas are covered by one or more mobile-phone networks, and these are a great way to keep in touch with others in your party. Mobile phones are easy to rent in Japan (see p749).

Japan is home to more than 600 ski resorts, all of which offer regular snowfall, stunning mountain vistas, well-groomed runs, friendly locals, excellent food and an incredible variety of onsen (hot springs) for that all-important après-ski soak. Quite simply, Japan may be one of the skiing world's best-kept secrets. As an added bonus, skiing in Japan is remarkably reasonable: it generally costs less to ski here than in comparable areas in North America or Europe. Finally, if you plan your itinerary accordingly, it's possible to head from powdery slope to Zen garden with relative ease, allowing for one of the most exotic ski holidays imaginable.

The ski season officially starts in December, though conditions are highly variable. During this time, resorts will intermittently open runs depending on the quality and quantity of snowfall. January and February are peak months across the country. Things begin to warm up in March, heralding the close of the ski season before the start of April.

Costs

Many people unfamiliar with skiing in Japan often assume that it will cost an arm and a leg to ski here. But, even after factoring in the international air ticket, it might actually be cheaper to ski for a week in Japan than in your home country. Are we mad? Well, let's check the numbers.

» **Lift tickets and equipment rental** A full-day lift ticket at most ski areas in Japan costs between ¥4000 and ¥5500. This is significantly less than

DID YOU KNOW?

- » Hokkaidō's Niseko ski area receives a whopping 15m of snow every year.
- » More than two-thirds of foreign skiers at Niseko come from Australia.
- » The first Winter Olympics held outside Europe or North America was at Sapporo in 1972.
- » Snowboarding first debuted as an Olympic sport at the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics.
- » Naeba is home to the world's longest ski lift, the 'Dragonbola' (5.5km).

a full day at large resorts in North America or Europe. Many resorts also offer packages including lunch or even a dip in an onsen. Even if you don't have your own equipment, full equipment rental is typically no more than ¥5000 per day (both ski and snowboard sets are available). The Japanese tend to be connoisseurs of quality, which means that you need not worry about getting stuck with shabby and/or outdated gear.

» **Accommodation** You can find plenty of upmarket accommodation in the ¥6500 to ¥10,000 range at major ski areas in Japan, and this price will often include one or two meals. This is often less than half of what you'd expect to pay for similar accommodation in the USA or Europe. The budget traveller will find a variety of backpacker-type hostels near most resorts, and families will be glad to know that young children (under six years of age) can usually stay for free or at a significant discount.

» **Food** On-slope meals top out at around ¥1000, which is slightly less than what you'd pay in North America or Europe. The restaurant selection anywhere you go is also varied, including the likes of *rāmen* (egg noodles), *udon* (wheat noodles), curry-rice and beef bowls, as well as more familiar fast-food options including sandwiches, pizza, burgers and kebabs. Beer and snacks, however, can be quite expensive – better to bring your own rather than buy from one of the ubiquitous convenience stores.

» **Transport** Airport-to-resort transport in Japan costs no more than in other countries, and is usually faster and more efficient (and, unlike in North America, you don't need to rent a car).

Where to Ski

Japan's best ski resorts are found in the Japan Alps region of Central Honshū, and on the northern island of Hokkaidō. The former lays claim to the highest mountains, while the latter boasts the deepest and most regular snowfall in the country. Although

the ski resorts of Northern Honshū were not directly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, it remains to be seen whether or not they will open to full capacity during the life cycle of this edition.

If you're planning on doing a bit of sight-seeing in Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima, the ski resorts in the Japan Alps are a quick and convenient add-on. Niseko and Furano on the island of Hokkaidō might be the way to go if your main goal is Sapporo. To be fair, however, Japan's small size and excellent infrastructure means that the difference is really only one quick internal flight. What follows is our overview of the five best ski areas in Japan. This is just to whet your appetite, of course, as there are over 600 more that we don't mention here!

» **Happō-one** (p213) Happō-one (pronounced 'hah-poh-oh-nay') is the quintessential Japan Alps ski resort. With the sprawling Hakuba mountain range as a backdrop, it offers eye-popping views in addition to excellent and varied skiing. The layout is pretty straightforward here, with plenty of good wide burners heading straight down the fall line from the top of the area.

» **Shiga Kōgen** (p211) Also in the Japan Alps, Shiga Kōgen is one of the largest ski resorts in the world, with an incredible 21 different areas, all interconnected by trails and lifts and accessible with one lift ticket. With such a variety of terrain on offer, there is something for everyone here, including skier-only areas and family-fun runs.

» **Nozawa Onsen** (p212) This quaint little Swiss-style village is tucked high up in the Japan Alps. Despite its small size, it has a good variety of runs, including some challenging mogul courses. Snowboarders will enjoy the terrain park and half-pipe, and there's even a cross-country skiing course that traverses the peaks.

» **Niseko** (p485) As far as most foreign skiers are concerned, Niseko is how you say 'powder' in Japanese. This is understandable, as Niseko



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- » (above) A snowboarder enjoys the characteristic fresh powder of Niseko (p485).
- » (left) The ever-popular Hakuba offers Olympic-standard runs (p213).

SKIING LESSONS IN ENGLISH

The following outfits offer skiing lessons in English for both children and adults (usually with foreign instructors).

- » **Canyons Japan** (www.canyons.jp/index_E.html) With a base at Hakuba (p213), close to Happō-one, Canyons offers skiing, backcountry skiing and snowboarding lessons, as well as snowshoeing tours.
- » **Evergreen Outdoor Center** (www.evergreen-hakuba.com) Also in Hakuba, Evergreen offers skiing, snowboarding, powder skiing and telemark lessons.
- » **Myōkō Backcountry Ski School** (www.myokobackcountry.com/english/index.html) Headquartered in Myōkō Kōgen (p460), this outfit specialises in telemark tours through the backwoods.

receives an average snowfall of 15m annually. Located on Hokkaidō, Niseko is actually four interconnected ski areas: Hirafu, Higashiyama, Annupuri and Hanazono.

- » **Furano** (p503) Also located on the island of Hokkaidō, Furano shot to world fame after hosting 10 FIS World Ski Cup and two FIS World Snowboarding Cup events. Relatively undiscovered in comparison to Niseko, Furano rewards savvy powder fiends with polished runs through pristine birch forests.

Can You Say ‘Ski’ in Japanese?

That’s right: it’s ‘ski’ (all right, it’s pronounced more like ‘sukee’). But the point is that communication won’t be much of a problem on your Japan ski trip. Tackling the language barrier has never been easier: most resorts employ a number of English-speaking foreigners on working-holiday visas. They work the lifts and in the cafeterias, and often find employment in the hotels or guesthouses that are most popular with foreign guests. All major signs and maps are translated into English, and provided you have some experience at large resorts back home, you’ll find the layout and organisation of Japanese resorts to be pretty intuitive. The information counter at the base of the mountain always has helpful and polite staff available to answer questions.

The Japanese Way of Skiing

Snow is snow, skis are skis, right? How different can it be to ski in Japan? Not very much, but it’s the little differences that will keep reminding you that you’re not in, say, Colorado or the Swiss Alps. For example:

- » Lift-line management is surprisingly poor in Japan. Skiers are often left to jostle and fend for themselves, and even when it’s crowded, singles are allowed to ride triple and quad lifts alone.
- » Not all resorts use the green/blue/black coding system for difficulty. Some have red, purple, orange, dotted lines, or black-numbered runs on the map.
- » The majority of Japanese skiers start skiing at 9am, have lunch exactly at noon, and get off the hill by 3pm. If you work on a slightly different schedule, you will avoid a lot of the crowds.
- » The signposting is inconsistent and irregular, something you may not expect in Japan. It’s a good idea to study the map carefully and plan a central meeting point and/or time at the beginning of the day.
- » Off-piste and out-of-bounds skiing is often high quality but also highly illegal and potentially dangerous, resulting in the confiscation of your lift pass if you’re caught by the ski patrol. Cut the ropes at your own risk.
- » Pop music – often really annoying pop music – is played along ski lifts and in restaurants. Bring an MP3 player if you prefer real music to the latest girl/boy band.



Matthew D Firestone

Northern Honshū; Sapporo & Hokkaidō; Skiing in Japan Matt is a trained anthropologist and epidemiologist who has authored more than two dozen guidebooks for Lonely Planet, and covered far-flung destinations from the Darién Gap to the Dead Sea. When he's not living the Tokyo high life with his wonderful wife or out in the field on assignment, he likes to spend his free time exploring the American West with his parents, or catching up with the in-laws on the foothills of Mt Fuji.



Timothy Hornyak

The Japan Alps & Central Honshū; Okinawa & the Southwest Islands A native of Montreal, Tim Hornyak moved to Japan in 1999 after watching Kurosawa's *Ran* too many times. Since then, he has written on Japanese culture, technology and history for CNET News, *Scientific American* and *Far Eastern Economic Review*. He has played bass in a rock band in Tokyo, lectured on Japanese robots at the Kennedy Center in Washington, and travelled to the heart of Hokkaidō to find the

remains of a forgotten theme park called Canadian World. Tim is the author of *Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots* and his favourite robot is Astro Boy, but he firmly believes that the greatest Japanese invention of all time is the onsen.



Rebecca Milner

Mt Fuji & Around Tokyo Rebecca first travelled 'around Tokyo' when she moved to the Japanese capital in 2002 from California. Since then, and in between long trips around Asia, she paid her dues teaching English, waiting tables and studying Japanese. These days she works as a freelance writer, publishing regularly on CNN Go, Tokyo Art Beat and in Tokyo's local *Metropolis* magazine. She is also currently working with a Japanese media team on a project documenting little-

known regional cuisines, for which she has been travelling to villages from Hokkaidō to Okinawa. For this book, she found herself revisiting in almost uncanny chronological order the places that formed her first impression of Japan nine years ago. This is Rebecca's first Lonely Planet title.



Brandon Presser

Tokyo; Arts & Architecture Tokyo has held a special place in Brandon's heart for as long as he can remember. At Harvard University he wrote his thesis on the city's fascinating hybrid architecture and has since collaborated with many Japanese architects throughout his professional career. These days Brandon has joined the glamorous ranks of eternal nomadism – he travels the world, pen in hand – and has contributed to more than 20 Lonely Planet titles, from *Iceland to Thailand* and many lands in between.



Tom Spurling

Shikoku Tom Spurling has worked on Lonely Planet guides to Central America, Australia, Turkey and India. His first experience in Japan was a naked job interview in a sports club near Kōbe where his apartment overlooked the castle of the nationally televised TV series *The Samurai*. When not teaching English as a very foreign language, he's been humbled by plum wine–drunk kendo masters, explored the mossier side of Kansai's rock bars and gardens with a Zen Buddhist

techno DJ and ashamedly travelled from Hokkaidō to Okinawa on a forged Japan Rail pass. For this edition, Tom discovered world-class surf beaches and a super orange vitamin drink. Unfortunately, by following the great Buddhist saint Kōbō Daishi's pilgrimage in the wrong direction around the island, he may have unwittingly released a powerful demon force.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Chris Rowthorn

Coordinating Author; Kyoto; Kansai Born in England and raised in the USA, Chris has lived in Kyoto since 1992. Soon after his arrival in Kyoto, Chris started studying the Japanese language and culture. In 1995 he became a regional correspondent for the *Japan Times*. He joined Lonely Planet in 1996 and has worked on guides to Kyoto, Tokyo, Japan and hiking in Japan. When not on the road, he spends his time seeking out Kyoto's best restaurants, temples, hiking trails and gardens. Chris wrote a book in Japanese with professional guide Koko Ijuin, called *Pro ga Oshieru: Genba no Eigo Tsuyaku Gaido Skiru* (Pro English Guide Skills), for Japanese guides who want to explain the country to Western tourists. He conducts walking tours of Kyoto, Nara and Tokyo. For more on Chris, check out his website at www.chrisrowthorn.com.



Andrew Bender

Kyushū France was closed, so after college Andy left his native New England for Japan. It ended up being a life-changing journey, as visits to Japan often are. He's since mastered chopsticks, the language, karaoke and taking his shoes off at the door. Now, from his home base in Los Angeles, he writes about Japan for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, *Travel + Leisure* and inflight magazines, not to mention over a half-dozen Lonely Planet titles. In an effort towards ever greater trans-Pacific harmony, Andy also assists business with cross-cultural consulting and sometimes helps tour groups around Japan. Find out more at www.wheres-andy-now.com.



Laura Crawford

Hiroshima & Western Honshū English-born and Australian-raised, Laura first went to Japan after a last-minute undergraduate decision to major in Japanese led to university in Kansai. She later travelled up and down the country, set up home in Osaka for two years, returned to Oz to write a thesis on Japanese English, and eventually landed a job as an editor in Lonely Planet's Melbourne office. Her favourite on-the-road memory: walking through the predawn mist to take an onsen soak in Yunotsu.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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