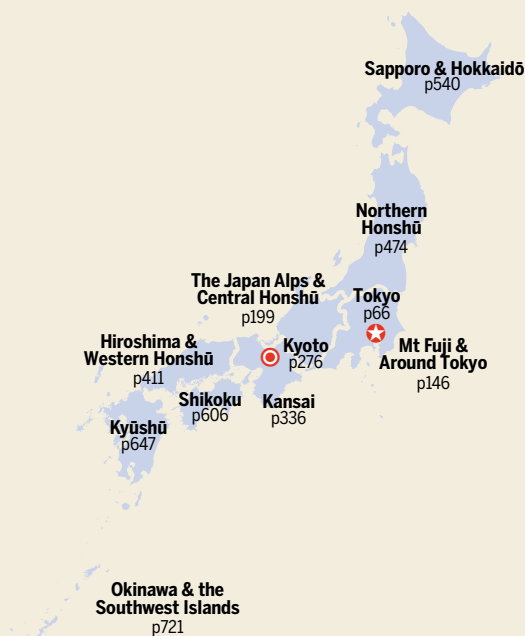




# Japan



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Chris Rowthorn,**

**Andrew Bender, Laura Crawford, Trent Holden, Craig McLachlan,  
Rebecca Milner, Kate Morgan, Benedict Walker, Wendy Yanagihara**

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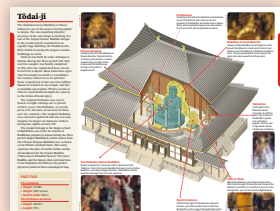
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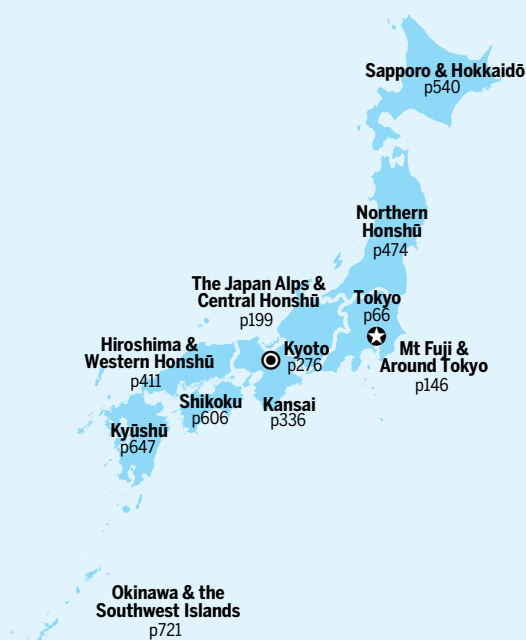
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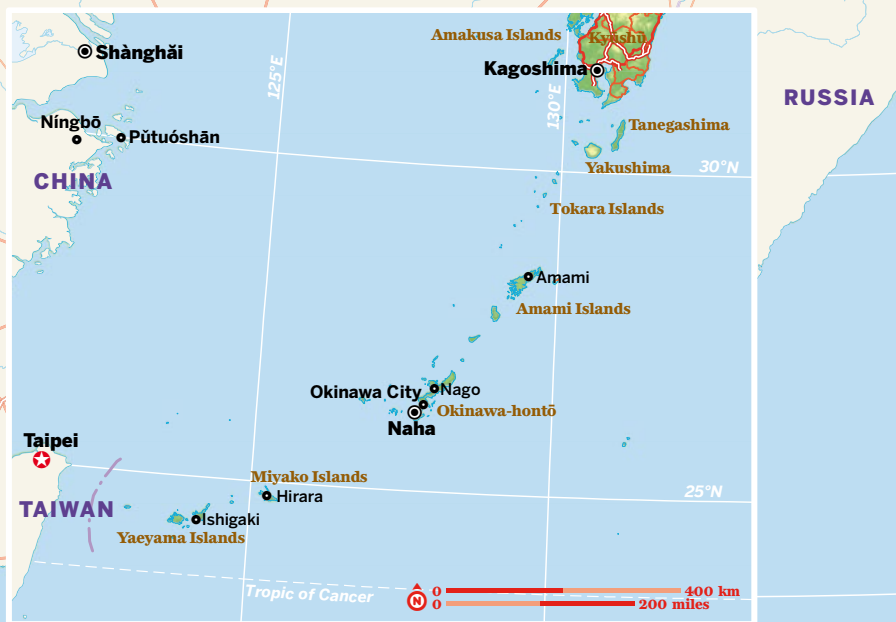
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# On the Road



# Japan

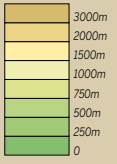




Sea of Okhotsk

RUSSIA

**ELEVATION**



45°N

40°N

35°N

PACIFIC OCEAN





### **Craig McLachlan**

**Sapporo & Hokkaidō** Craig has walked the length of Japan (3200km in 99 days!), climbed Japan's 100 Famous Mountains, hiked the 88 Temples of Shikoku, cycled the 33 Temples of Saigoku, and walked from the Sea of Japan to the Pacific scaling all of Japan's 3000m peaks! Books on these adventures have been published in English and Japanese. A 'freelance anything'. Craig has an MBA from the University of Hawaii and is also a pilot, hiking guide, karate instructor and Japanese interpreter. See [www.craigmclachlan.com](http://www.craigmclachlan.com). Craig also wrote the Skiing in Japan chapter of this guide.



### **Rebecca Milner**

**Tokyo; Northern Honshū (Tōhoku)** Rebecca moved to Tokyo from California in 2002 for 'one year' that turned into 10. She's since lived west of Shinjuku, east of the Sumida-gawa and now calls Meguro home. Even when not on assignment, you can find her cycling around the city in search of new cafes or tracking down obscure onsen in the countryside. She also writes a dining column for the *Japan Times* and has written about travel in Japan for the *Guardian* and *CNN Travel*.



### **Kate Morgan**

**Mt Fuji & Around Tokyo** Kate's first encounter with Japan was back in 2005 when she moved to Osaka to teach English to kindergarten kids. Since returning to Australia, she manages to find her way back to her 'second home' every couple of years to eat *tako-yaki*, soak in onsen and watch punk bands in basement live houses. Kate lives in Melbourne, Australia, as a freelance writer and editor and has worked on other Lonely Planet books such as Phuket and Southern Africa.



### **Benedict Walker**

**The Japan Alps & Central Honshū** Inspired by a primary school teacher, or the memory of a past life, Ben's love of Japan blossomed early. At 17 he was runner-up in the Australian finals of the Japan Foundation Japanese Speech Contest, and had made two solo trips to Japan. In 1998, with a degree in communications under his belt, Ben hit the road in earnest. After long stints in Canada and Europe, he found himself teaching English in Osaka until his tattered Lonely Planet guide

led him to the mountains of Matsumoto, where he found work as a translator and lived like a local. Dividing his time between Canada, Australia and Japan, Ben has also been known to manage the travel for rockstars and dabble in the arts. For the latest, check out: [www.wordsandjourneys.com](http://www.wordsandjourneys.com).



### **Wendy Yanagihara**

**Shikoku; Okinawa & the Southwestern Islands** As the daughter of an *Issei* (first-generation Japanese-American) in California, Wendy grew up summering in Japan with her mother. It wasn't until this book, however, that she had the pleasure of exploring the 88-temple pilgrimage, the diversity of Ryukyuan dialects and an affinity for *jiimami-dōfu*. Previously, she has worked on several editions of the Japan, Tokyo and Tokyo Encounter guidebooks for Lonely Planet.



## 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. Chris also conducts walking tours of Kyoto, Nara and Tokyo. For more on Chris, check out his website at [www.chrisrowthorn.com](http://www.chrisrowthorn.com).



### Andrew Bender

**Kyūshū** France was closed, so after college Andy left his native New England

for Japan. It was a life-changing journey, as visits to Japan often are. He's since mastered chopsticks, the language, karaoke and shoe etiquette. Now based in Los Angeles, Andy writes about Japan for the *Los Angeles Times*, in-flight magazines and about a dozen Lonely Planet titles, as well as the *Seat 1A* travel blog for Forbes. He also does cross-cultural consulting for Japanese businesses and

escorts visitors around Japan. Check out his website: [www.wheres-andy-now.com](http://www.wheres-andy-now.com).



### Laura Crawford

**Osaka; Hiroshima & Western Honshū** English born and Australian raised, Laura first arrived in Japan as an undergraduate studying Japanese at a 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 task: touring the Kuniga coast and seeing incredibly old trees on the Oki Islands.



### Trent Holden

**Mt Fuji & Around Tokyo** After several trips to Japan, Trent jumped at the opportunity to head back to discover its coastal beaches and conquer Fuji. A champion of budget travel, he's a connoisseur of combini store *bentō* and vending-machine booze, and a lover of Japanese punk and *okononiyaki*. Trent has co-authored more than a dozen books for Lonely Planet including guides to India, Nepal and the Philippines.

OVER MORE  
PAGE WRITERS

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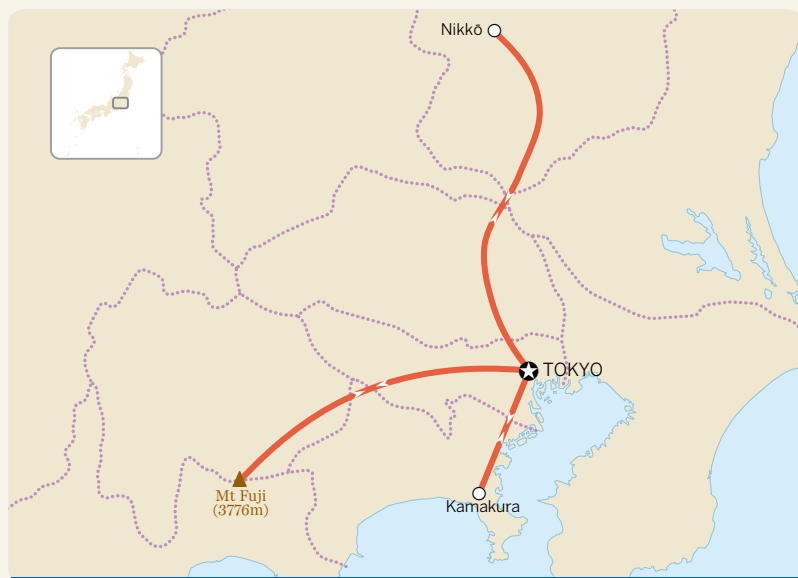
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## Plan Your Trip

# Itineraries



**1**  
WEEK

### Tokyo, Mt Fuji & Around

With air connections to most of the world, as well as some of the world's best restaurants, shops and nightlife, Tokyo makes a great introduction to Japan. And you don't have to travel far outside the city to see some of Japan's great natural and traditional wonders.

To make the most of your stay in **Tokyo**, try to base yourself in an area that's interesting and also well served by transport connections, such as Shinjuku, Shibuya, Ginza, Roppongi or Marunouchi (Tokyo Station area). In any of these places, you

can walk to a huge variety of restaurants and shops, and train/subway stations are always nearby. Of course, it's also perfectly possible to stay in slightly less convenient but cheaper areas like Asakusa or Ueno.

On your first morning in town, visit Tsukiji Fish Market - if you're jetlagged and up early anyway, make the best of it with a market tour. After the obligatory sushi breakfast, 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





View over Tokyo from the Sky Deck (p77)

Omote-sandō. From there, head to Shibuya to soak up some of modern Tokyo. Make sure you spend an evening wandering east Shinjuku, 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. The temples and shrines at **Nikkō** are among the most spectacular in Japan. For a taste of old Japan, a day poking among the Zen temples at **Kamakura** is a brilliant way to

escape the crowds of the capital. Finally, it would be a shame to come all the way to Japan and not see **Mt Fuji**. You can get to the base of the mountain and back in a day from Tokyo, but climbing it will involve spending the night on the mountain. Either way, we recommend checking the weather first – the mountain is socked in by clouds much of the year, so try to wait for a break in the weather to make the trip.



10  
DAYS

## Tokyo, the Japan Alps & Kyoto

The Tokyo–Japan Alps–Kyoto route is the classic Japan itinerary 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**, where you can spend a few days experiencing the best that the capital has to offer. 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, then head into the Japan Alps via **Kamikōchi** or nearby **Shin-Hotaka Onsen**. Return to Takayama and rent a car so you can visit the thatched-roof villages of **Shirakawa-gō** 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 autumn). Next, travel to **Kanazawa** (some rental agencies will allow you to drop the car in Kanazawa). Otherwise, you can also go from Takayama to Kanazawa by bus with a stop in Shirakawa-gō 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, take some time to visit the sights, then jump on the *shinkansen* and get yourself back to **Tokyo** in time for your flight home.



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FRANK GARTNER / GETTY IMAGES ©

2  
WEEKS

## Kansai &amp; Points West

PLAN YOUR TRIP ITINERARIES

While many people fly into Tokyo and base themselves there, Kansai, which is home to the ancient capital of Kyoto, is an equally appealing place to stay, especially if you're a fan of traditional culture. And with a Japan Rail Pass, you can easily head west to see Hiroshima, Miyajima and Naoshima.

Served by Kansai International Airport, which has connections to many parts of the world, **Kyoto** is the obvious place to stay: it's roughly in the middle of Kansai 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.

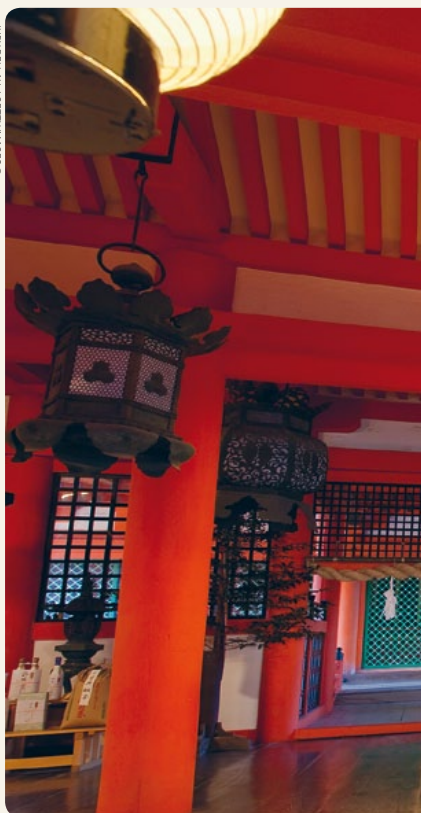
If you want to see a modern Japanese metropolis in high gear, then **Osaka** is only about 30 minutes by train from Kyoto. You can easily explore the city, grab some dinner and a drink and make it back to Kyoto before the trains stop running.

For those with a spiritual bent, a trip to the mountaintop Buddhist retreat of **Kōya-san** is highly recommended. Spend the night on one of the many temple lodgings there before returning to Kyoto. More adventurous travellers will also want to check out Japan's ancient pilgrimage route, the **Kumano Kodō**, in southern Kansai.

Kyoto also makes a good base for exploring some of the important sights in Western Honshū and the Inland Sea, especially if you've got a Japan Rail Pass. **Hiroshima** can be visited as a day trip from Kyoto if you use the *shinkansen* (bullet train) and get an early start. However, it's more relaxing to spend the night in nearby **Miyajima**, home of the iconic 'floating torii' (Shintō shrine gate) of Itsukushima-jinja. Art lovers might also consider stopping for a night or two at **Naoshima**, the island-turned-art museum in the Inland Sea.

Finally, if all this bouncing around makes you tired, finish off your adventure with an overnight trip up to **Kinosaki**, where you can soak away your cares in some of Japan's best hot springs.

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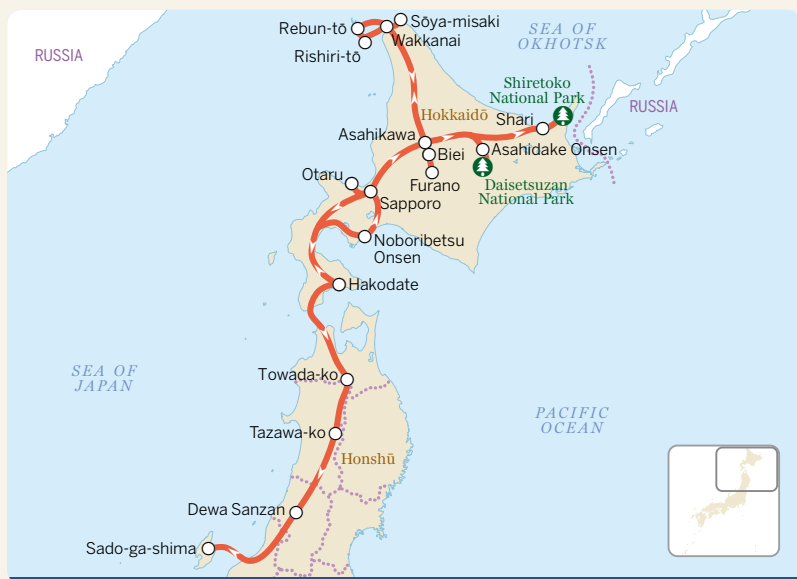
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Top: Itsukushima-jinja (p422), Miyajima  
Bottom: Geisha, Kyoto (p328)







3  
WEEKS

## The Wilds of Hokkaidō & Tōhoku

PLAN YOUR TRIP ITINERARIES



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If you want to step off the main Tokyo–Kyoto tourist trail, head to Hokkaidō, Japan's northernmost major island, and Northern Honshū, the northern tip of Japan's main island. In summer these areas are usually relatively cool, while in winter you can expect cold and snowy weather.

Whether you're on a Japan Rail 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.

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

Head out again, making a brief stop in **Asahikawa** for a few rounds of Otokoyama sake, before pressing on to **Wakkanai**. From here, take the ferry to **Rishiri-tō** and **Rebun-tō** in search of annual wildflower blooms. On the return, see **Sōya-misaki**, Hokkaidō's northernmost point, from which you might catch a glance of Russia's Sakhalin Island on a clear day.

Travel back to Asahikawa to plan your next move. Make your way to **Asahidake Onsen**, and hike **Daisetsuzan National Park**. Get behind the wheel of a rental car and explore the lavender fields and gourmet attractions around **Furano** and **Biei**. If you really want to leave it all behind, head east to **Shari**, the jumping-off point for **Shiretoko National Park**. Don't forget your bear bells; humans aren't the only creatures that call this remote peninsula home.

If you haven't yet had your fill of natural wonders, take the train south through the Seikan Tunnel (the world's longest underwater tunnel) to Northern Honshū. Visit **Towada-ko**, a crater lake that's home to the Nyūtō Onsen. Then continue south to lovely **Tazawa-ko**, Japan's deepest lake. If you're a hiker, you'll want to make the famed pilgrimage across the three sacred peaks of **Dewa Sanzan**. Finally, if you really want to get off the beaten track, take the ferry to **Sadoga-shima** and rent a car to explore this beguiling island (home of the Kodo Drummers).



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Top: Otaru (p562)

Bottom: View of Rishiri-zan from Rebun-tō (p588)

## Kyūshū &amp; Shikoku

Relatively few tourists make the journey southwest to the islands of Shikoku and Kyūshū, which is a shame, since these two islands are home to some of the country's most beautiful scenery, welcoming people and great food. They're also good options for escaping the bitter cold of winter, particularly southern Kyūshū.

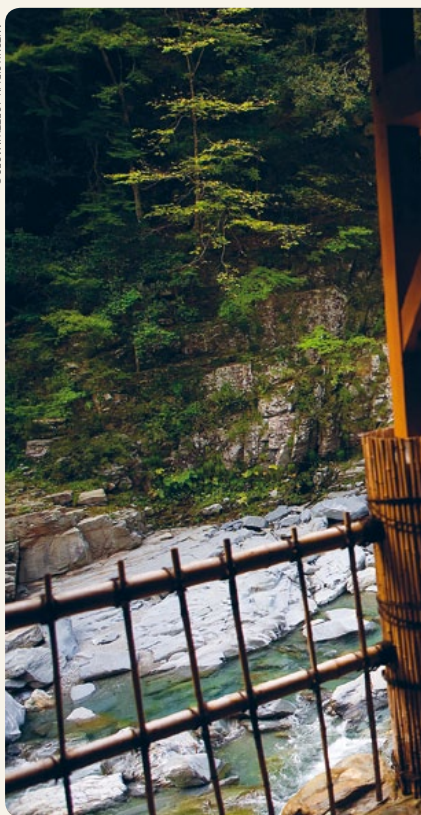
While there are some international flights to Fukuoka in Kyūshū, it's likely that you'll approach this area from Kansai or Tokyo. Take a *shinkansen* to the city of Okayama in Western Honshū. Here, catch a special *Nampū* express train across the Inland Sea right down into the mountainous heart of Shikoku and spend a night or two in one of the Chiiori Trust's thatched-roof cottages in **Iya Valley** (note that it's also possible to drive here and this gives you more freedom to explore the area). From here, you can head south to do some surfing at **Ohkiham**, or head west to climb **Ishizuchi-san**. Finally, take a dip in the wonderful **Dōgo Onsen** in the castle town of **Matsuyama**.

From Matsuyama you can recross the Inland Sea and join the Sanyō Shinkansen line that will take you southwest to the island of **Kyūshū** (consider a stop at Hiroshima en route). Your first stop in Kyūshū should be **Fukuoka**, Kyūshū's largest city, which is crammed with spirited dining and nightlife in the lanes of Tenjin and Daimyō. From here, you can head southeast to the hot spring resort of **Beppu**, or southwest to **Nagasaki**. While Nagasaki is best known to Westerners for its tragic history, most visitors are surprised to find a vibrant city with great food and lots of opportunities to learn about Japan's early contacts with the West.

From either Beppu or Nagasaki, head south, possibly stopping en route at the semiactive volcano of **Aso-san**, which offers superb hiking, then make your way to **Kagoshima**, a city with a laid-back almost tropical vibe which contrasts sharply with 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**.

Finally, if you have time and enjoy hiking, take a ferry south from Kagoshima to the island of **Yakushima** for some hiking and onsens before making your way north and homeward.

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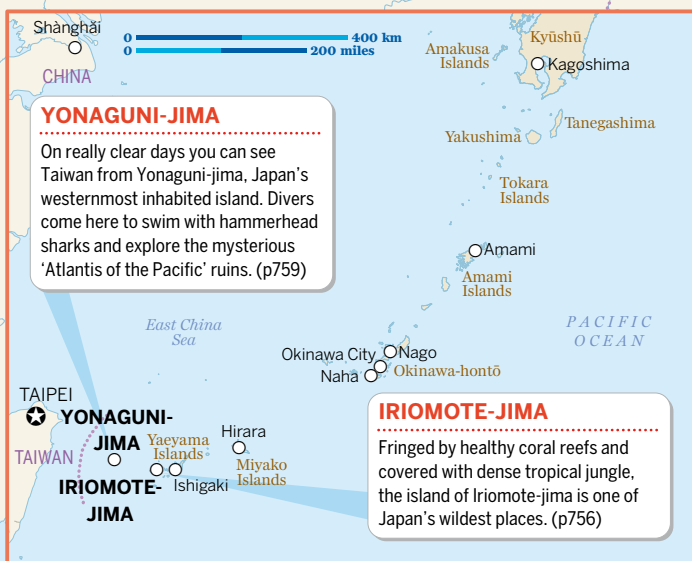
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Top: Rotemburo (outdoor bath), Iya Valley (p16)  
Bottom: Takachiho-kyō (p11)



## Off the Beaten Track: Japan



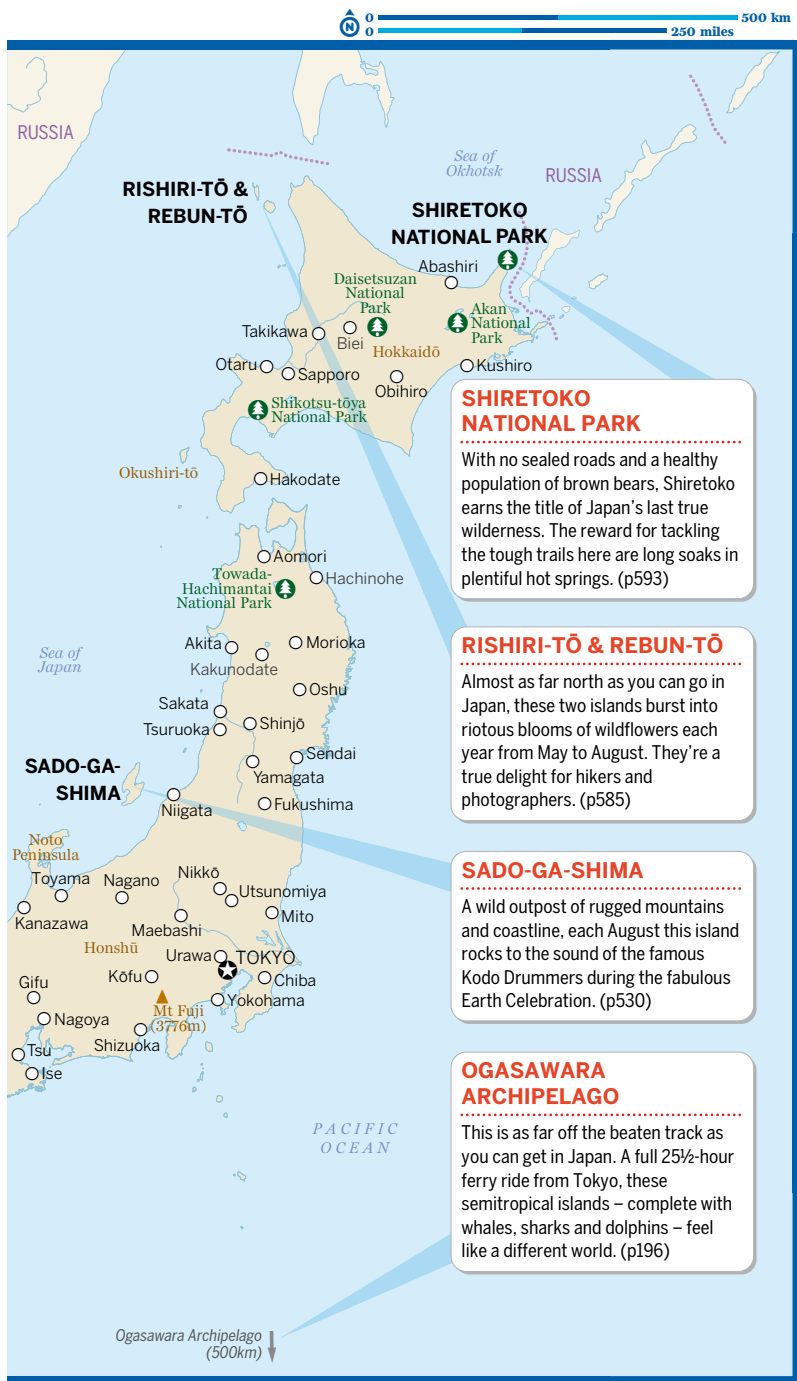
### KUMANO KODŌ

Trek through the mountains of southern Kansai to reach three of the country's most sacred Shintō shrines on this ancient pilgrimage route. (p398)

### IYA VALLEY

A few hours and a world away from the big cities of Kansai, Iya Valley has been called the 'Shangri La of Japan'. Stay in a restored thatched-roof farmhouse and get a taste of traditional village life. (p616)





### SHIRETOKO NATIONAL PARK

With no sealed roads and a healthy population of brown bears, Shiretoko earns the title of Japan's last true wilderness. The reward for tackling the tough trails here are long soaks in plentiful hot springs. (p593)

### RISHIRI-TŌ & REBUN-TŌ

Almost as far north as you can go in Japan, these two islands burst into riotous blooms of wildflowers each year from May to August. They're a true delight for hikers and photographers. (p585)

### SADO-GA-SHIMA

A wild outpost of rugged mountains and coastline, each August this island rocks to the sound of the famous Kodo Drummers during the fabulous Earth Celebration. (p530)

### OGASAWARA ARCHIPELAGO

This is as far off the beaten track as you can get in Japan. A full 25½-hour ferry ride from Tokyo, these semitropical islands – complete with whales, sharks and dolphins – feel like a different world. (p196)

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