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DISCOVER YOUR JAPAN SNOW STORY



WHY JAPAN IN WINTER ?

If you are a ski or snowboard enthusiast, mountains covered in high-quality snow will be high on your winter wish list. Many snow-seekers prioritize comfortable winter resorts. The quality of both snow and accommodation makes Japan the ideal destination for winter sports fans. Even if you don't ski or snowboard, Japan offers winter adventures full of culture, outdoor activity and superb cuisine.

Japan celebrates the season with its snowy landscapes, outdoor hot springs and seasonal food.

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For details, please check the Snow Website. <https://www.japan.travel/snow/en/>



Japan experiences huge amounts of snowfall during the winter. The top snowiest cities globally with populations of over 100,000 are in Japan: Aomori, Sapporo and Toyama. Snow quality is top notch. The country's powder snow is a product of conditions that result in snow with low moisture content which piles in the northern areas of Japan.

Dry powder snow is thought of as ideal by skiers and snowboarders, and falls only in certain regions. However, travelers can easily access it by heading to the country's northern climes.

Pairing powder snow with snow resorts makes Japan an ideal destination. Gondolas and lifts connect mountain peaks at some resorts and many offer a variety of courses. There are resorts that cater to both people new to snow travel or experts.

Even if you are not an skier or snowboarder, there are many other activities. Snowshoe, sled, snowmobile or play with snow. Accommodation spans all budgets. Luxury hotels, wallet-friendly inns, and ryokan ideal for family vacations are some options.



SKI AND SNOWBOARD

FEATURES OF AREA /JAPAN

Each area has distinctive snow, and gets heavier moving north and toward the Sea of Japan; it rarely falls on the Pacific coast. The quality changes from area to area based on water content and the time of year. Certain regions have resorts that are ideal for extended stays, while resorts closer to urban centers are popular with daytrippers. Learn more about the traits of Japan's snowy areas, and the skiing and snowboarding experiences special to each region.



HOKKAIDO

Fifteen meters of powder fall annually in the mountains of Japan's winter sports paradise.



TOKAI HOKURIKU

Snow on the Roof of Japan, along the coast of the Sea of Japan, and among the remnants of Japan's past.



WESTERN JAPAN

Split your time between the chilly mountains and the comfort of the warmer cities in Western Japan.



KANTO KOSHINETSU

Easy access to the snowy slopes that surround the entranceway to Japan.

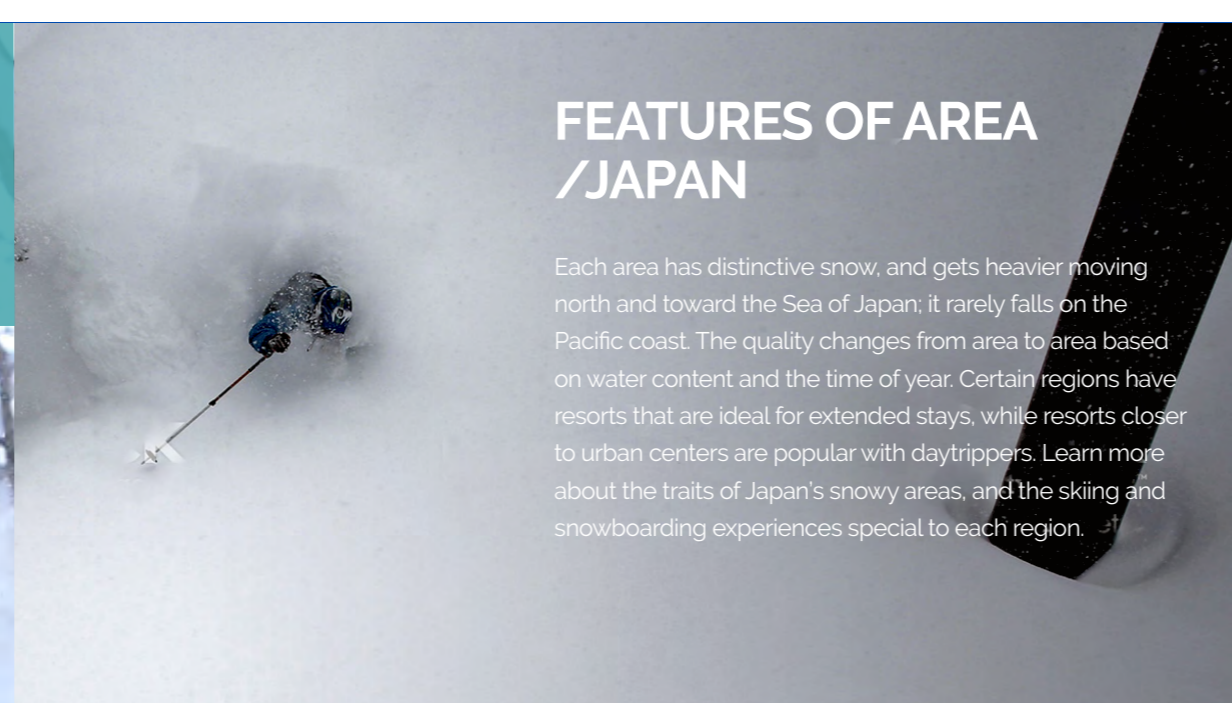


TOHOKU

Slopes and adventure await you in the snowy expanses of this lesser-explored region.

Japan has become the destination for ski and snowboard enthusiasts from all over the world looking for ultimate snow conditions. Japan's snow has a stellar reputation that those in the know call it "Japow," short for "Japan powder snow." The famed powder is a product of ideal humidity and temperature. Layers of snow carpet the mountains, offering an unrivaled experience on groomed slopes, in the trees or deep in the backcountry.

You can access the country's slopes easily as many of the resorts are at low altitudes. The country has many ski resorts with excellent snow, around Hokkaido and the north and north-central parts of Honshu, the largest island. The resorts have a different feel from destinations in the European Alps or the US and Canada. The hospitality culture of omotenashi, hot springs, gourmet cuisine, transport infrastructure, and a variety of ski and snowboard courses make Japan the ultimate winter destination.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

HOKKAIDO

How to get there

Hokkaido is accessible via plane to Shin-Chitose (Sapporo) or Asahikawa airports from Tokyo and other cities. Rail in rural Hokkaido is not as frequent or extensive as the rest of Japan. While JR connects major cities, outlying areas are best accessed by bus or rental car.

From Shin-Chitose Airport

You can reach ski resorts in western Hokkaido from the Shin-Chitose Airport via the New Chitose Airport Limousine Bus. Trips take two to three hours. The resorts closer to Sapporo are best accessed by car.

From Asahikawa Airport

Hokkaido's Asahikawa Airport is an hour drive or a Airport Limousine Bus ride from a variety of resorts.

By shinkansen

While air travel is the most convenient way to reach the resorts, JR operates the Hokkaido Shinkansen between Tokyo and Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto in the south. Travelers who have more time (or a Japan Rail Pass) should consider this method.



Fresh powder in Japan's northern frontier

Hokkaido is the northernmost of the main islands and is a paradise for winter sports. Winds from Siberia sweep over the island resulting in a lot of snowfall. With 15 meters of snow a year, Niseko, Furano and Rusutsu regions offer perfect conditions for skiing alongside hot springs and Japanese hospitality.

Hokkaido's climate results in quality powder and a long ski season, with resorts open from November to May. Snow still falls here while cherry blossoms signal the arrival of spring on the southern islands, allowing travelers extra time on the slopes.

Each area has its own character. From built-up Niseko to rustic Asahidake, there is a resort for everybody. The larger resorts are ideal for families as they have slopes for all levels. Hokkaido's size and diversity lend itself to plenty of exploration over a longer trip.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Niseko United

Skiers and snowboarders from around the world rate Niseko highly for its snow conditions, and remains a popular resort. Niseko United is located on Niseko Annupuri — a 1,308-meter-high mountain — and consists of four resorts: Niseko Annupuri International Ski Area, Niseko Village Ski Resort, Niseko Grand Hirafu Ski Resort, and Niseko Hanazono Ski Resort. Travelers can glide down a variety of courses at the four ski resorts, and each resort offers lessons and rental equipment. The area is also a great place for beginners hitting the slopes for the first time. There are other ways to get active in the snow including riding on snowmobiles, snowshoeing, and relaxing in hot springs.

How to get there

By train From New Chitose Airport, the express train to Otaru takes 72 minutes. From there, it takes a further 90 minutes to Niseko. Few trains run from Otaru to Niseko. Take a taxi from Niseko Station to the ski resorts.

By bus Chuo buses run to Niseko Annupuri, Niseko Village, and Niseko Hirafu from Sapporo Station Bus Terminal and New Chitose Airport.

By car From Sapporo, take National Road 230 via Kimobetsu to reach Niseko.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Hoshino Resorts TOMAMU

Hoshino Resorts TOMAMU is famous for its hotel and activities. Its location has ideal conditions for dry powder snow. The trails, which are balanced for skiers and snowboarders of all levels, are served by one gondola and five lifts. Take your time as you head down runs as long as 4,200 meters. Family-friendly facilities include an Ice Village and the scenery of the Terrace of Frost Tree for children. If you don't ski, there is plenty for first-time snow travelers. For experienced skiers, there are the experts only powder area, snowcat and backcountry tours that give chances to enjoy perfect snow.

How to get there

By train From New Chitose Airport, take the JR Rapid Airport train to Minami-Chitose. There, change to a Limited Express train to Tomamu. From Sapporo, take the Limited Express train all the way to Tomamu. Shuttle buses run from Tomamu to the resort.

By bus Use the paid Resort Liner bus from New Chitose Airport.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Sahoro Resort

The Sahoro Resort Ski area is an 80-minute drive from Obihiro Airport. The slopes work for beginners and advanced-level travelers — there is a 2,700m slope that runs along the entire mountain, ideal for first-timers, while the northern slopes have quality snowfall for pro-level travelers. Head to the top of the 1000-meter-high slope for 360 degree panoramic views of the Tokachi Plains, the Tokachidake mountain range, and the Hidaka Mountains.

How to get there

By train From New Chitose Airport Station, board the train to Minami Chitose, transfer, ride until Shintoku. There, take a shuttle bus to the Tokachi Sahoro Resort — takes around 15 minutes.

By bus From New Chitose Airport, take the Sahoro Express Bus to the resort (2 hours 15 minutes). From Tokachi-Obihiro Airport, the Sahoro Express Bus takes around 1 hour 20 minutes.

By car Reach Sahoro from Obihiro Airport via the Obihiro-Hiroo Expressway and National Road 274. It takes 1 hour 20 minutes.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Rusutsu Resort

Rusutsu Resort houses a hotel and ski slopes and is one of largest resorts in Hokkaido. Thirty-seven courses extend over the West, East, and Isola Mountains, offering snow activities that cater to all levels. The dry powder snow that falls on the resort's slopes is top class and the beautiful views of Mt. Yotei and Lake Toya, make the resort a popular destination. Rusutsu Resort Hotel & Convention is at the base, where you will find a variety of facilities here, including the Rusutsu Onsen (opened in July 2019), making it an excellent choice for an extended stay.

How to get there

By bus Reach the resort by the Rusutsu Go — a free shuttle bus service from Sapporo. Staying guests can pay to take a Bigruns shuttle from New Chitose Airport. Both take two hours and require reservations. A Resort Liner bus to Rusutsu and Niseko also departs from the airport.

By car The resort is 90 minutes from New Chitose Airport. Follow National Road 36 and Prefectural Road 16, onto Route 453 and National Road 276 then onto Route 230.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Kiroro Snow World

Kiroro is a luxurious winter resort nestled in Hokkaido. There are two resort hotels at the foot of the mountain aimed at travelers looking for style and comfort.

With 22 courses that stretch over Mt. Asari and Mt. Nagamine, the longest course is 4,050-meters. Popular with families because of the Annie Kids Ski Academy — run in cooperation with France's popular childrens' ski school — and the quantities of high-quality snow is a draw for skiers and snowboarders.

How to get there

By car The resort is 90 minutes by car from New Chitose Airport. 60 minutes from Sapporo and 40 minutes from Otaru. During the winter, Kiroro buses run to the resort (reservations required).

By train Take the train from Sapporo Station to Otaru, or from New Chitose Airport Station to Otaru Chikko. Then, rent a car or a take a taxi.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Furano

Furano's location blesses the resort with high quality snow. The slopes are divided into two: the Furano Zone at the New Furano Prince Hotel and the Kitanomine Zone at the Furano Prince Hotel. Both have a variety of courses with beginner and intermediate trails each making up 40% of the resort. First-timers will enjoy the cruising course to the slopes' foot. From the Furano Zone base, get whisked to 900-meter elevation in a high-speed ropeway. Downtown Furano is nearby, with restaurants, bars and izakaya for relaxation.

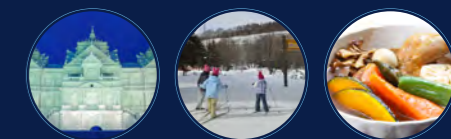
How to get there

By train Furano Station is two hours from Sapporo. The resort is 10-minutes by taxi from the station.

By car Furano is two hours from Sapporo, 1 hour 25 minutes from Asahikawa and 2 hours 25 minutes from Obihiro. There is a free shuttle bus between Sapporo and Furano for guests staying at the Prince Hotel.

By plane Furano is an hour drive or 1 hour and 20 minutes by bus from Asahikawa Airport, and 2 hours 10 minutes drive from New Chitose Airport.

Feature
HOKKAIDO SAPPORO, EASTERN HOKKAIDO



SAPPORO

Hokkaido's sprawling city of snow, food and culture

Sapporo, Hokkaido's largest city, has a population of 2 million and averages 6 meters of snow yearly. This is unusual worldwide; cities elsewhere known for heavy snowfall have smaller populations and get only around 3 meters.

Fly into New Chitose Airport from major airports in Japan and be in the center in 40 minutes. If it is your first visit, consider staying in Sapporo. Its central location and transportation network make it perfect for exploring the island. Enjoy unparalleled snow, a distinctive culture and fantastic food.

A city stay with easy access to world-class snow

There are a large number of slopes and resorts within 60 minutes of Sapporo. These range from small ones, to a large one that staged the Olympics. Easy access to resorts is a distinctive Hokkaido feature. Major hotels in Sapporo offer direct bus or taxi services to resorts, meaning you can be on the slopes in the morning, then shop and sightsee downtown in the afternoon.



THE MASSIVE, CITY-WIDE SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL

For 10 days in early February, the city comes alive with the Sapporo Snow Festival. The annual festival of 200 snow and ice sculptures draw millions — 2.7 million visitors attended in 2019 — who come to see intricate works of ice. The largest venue is the 1.5 kilometer Odori site in the center where there are 100 sculptures. The fun reaches its peak at the weekends as many play in the snow and eat some of Hokkaido's best street food. The festival began in the 1950s when high school students created snow sculptures in Odori Park and has grown into one of the main events of the winter season.

THE CITY'S FABULOUS FOOD CULTURE

Hokkaido is known for game meat, particularly the Ezo-shika deer which is hunted only in fall. It is low in calories, fat and high in protein, making it popular with health-conscious foodies. The city's French, Chinese and Japanese restaurants have their own take on Ezo-shika, so order a dish for a taste of Hokkaido winter.



THE CITY'S VIBRANT NIGHTLIFE

Susukino is the entertainment and nightlife district of Sapporo. After nightfall, around 80,000 people come around Susukino Station to warm up with bowls of ramen, crab cuisine, mutton and other specialties — all washed down with Sapporo-brand beers. There are many izakaya (Japanese-style casual restaurants), bars, and clubs to entertain you until the early hours.



EASTERN HOKKAIDO

NATURAL MARVELS OF SNOW AND ICE

Eastern Hokkaido spreads from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north, to the Pacific Ocean in the south and includes Abashiri, Obihiro, Kushiro, and Nemuro. Travelers can visit spectacular sights like Shiretoko Peninsula, Kushiro Marsh, Lake Akan with its marimo algae balls, and Lake Mashu. Like many areas in Hokkaido, local produce is tasty and fresh, so try some — especially the seafood in Kushiro, one of Japan's leading fishing ports.



KUSHIRO'S RED-CROWNED CRANES AND DELICIOUS SEAFOOD

Kushiro is the largest city in eastern Hokkaido. Kushiro Marsh, a Ramsar Convention-registered wetland, is one of the best places to view the rare red-crested crane. Many flock to see the cranes' unison dance on the wetlands.

Location on the Pacific Ocean means Kushiro has one of the biggest seafood catches in Hokkaido. A signature dish is katte-don — katte means "help yourself, as you like." Head to Washo Market to try the delicacy.



TAKE IN THE SPARKLING BLUE OF LAKE MASHU

Lake Mashu is a deep caldera lake known for clear, blue waters. Its 20 kilometer circumference is ringed with dramatic cliff faces. When covered with pure white snow, they create a striking contrast with the sapphire hue.

To the north, Kaminoko Pond is fed with runoff from Lake Mashu and takes on the same blue color. To explore the area around the pond, join a snowshoe tour that takes place in February.



DRIFT ICE ON THE OKHOTSK COAST

150 kilometers north of Kushiro is the Sea of Okhotsk, famous for its drift ice. The ice floes form when chunks of ice from the Amur River, on the border of Russia and China, drift toward Japan, appearing in late January. The best way to see the ice is on an icebreaker cruise — the Aurora from Abashiri or the Garinko 2 from Monbetsu.

FEATURES OF AREA

TOHOKU

How to get there

The region is vast, so departure points and connections will differ depending on the destination. Convenient options are air or rail. There are direct flights from Tokyo and Osaka, and each regional city has a shinkansen station.

Ski resorts in northern Tohoku

There are ski resorts across the prefectures of Aomori and Iwate, and both are easily accessible from Tokyo. It takes 90 minutes to reach Aomori Airport from the capital. The Tohoku Shinkansen takes three hours to Shin-Aomori Station and around two and a half hours to Morioka Station.

Ski resorts in southern Tohoku

Journeys to the centrally located ski resorts in Fukushima and Yamagata prefectures are shorter. It is a one-hour flight from Tokyo to Yamagata Airport or 90 minutes to Fukushima's Koriyama Station by shinkansen.

Renting a car

Renting a car is recommended for remote areas, or for those who don't want to rely on public transport. Check license restrictions as they differ by issuing country.



"Tohoku stretches 400 kilometers north to south from Aomori to Fukushima. Winds from the north-west blow through the western and central areas, covering it in snow from November to early May. As most snow tourists head to Nagano and Hokkaido, this region is generally less crowded.

Hakkoda in Aomori is known for backcountry skiing and snowboarding, ideal for tourists looking for an adrenaline rush. The Hachimantai area is famous for its quality snow, while the Appi Kogen resort is the largest in the region and has a variety of trails. The FIS World Alpine Ski Championships were held at Shizukuishi in Iwate, where one course is now left ungroomed and is reserved for snowcat tours."

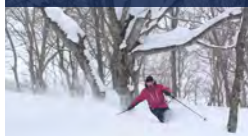
TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Appi Kogen

Appi Kogen is the largest ski resort in the Tohoku region. Powder snow falls on the slopes, and is compacted to form pistes for smooth and stress-free rides. 11 of the total 21 ski runs are over 2,000 meters in length, giving intermediate and experienced skiers and snowboarders plenty of satisfaction. For beginners, glide down the longest run of 5,500 meters. Whatever level, Appi Kogen has something to offer.

How to get there

By train Take the Tohoku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Morioka Station, change to the JR Hanawa Line for Appi Kogen Station. During the ski season, there is a shuttle bus from Appi Kogen Station to the resort area. A bus to Appi Kogen from Morioka takes one hour.

By plane Board the Appi Airport Liner bus from Iwate Hanamaki Airport and reach Appi Kogen in one hour and twenty minutes. There are shuttle bus services for guests staying at one of the hotels.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Hachimantai Resort
Panorama & Shimokura

The Hachimantai area is located at the foot of Mt. Iwate in the Towada-Hachimantai National Park, and is known for its excellent powder snow and lush nature. There are two main resorts here — Panorama and Shimokura.

How to get there

By train Take the Tohoku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Morioka Station. Transfer to the bus for Hachimantai Mountain Hotel at Panorama. There is also a free shuttle bus from Morioka Station for guests.

By plane From Iwate Hanamaki Airport, take a bus to Morioka Station. Then take the bus to Panorama's Hachimantai Mountain Hotel.

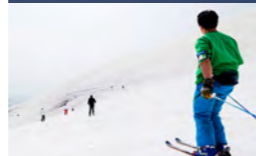
TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Zao Onsen

Zao Onsen is one of the largest hot spring and ski resorts in the region. The ski resort covers the area with 38 ski lifts, and three cable cars that serve 14 ski slopes and 12 ski courses. With high-quality snow and a selection of runs, beginners to advanced-level travelers can have fun here. The snow monsters — or Juhyo — that Zao is famous for spread out near the top of the slope; reach them by taking two connecting cable cars from the foot of the mountain.

How to get there

By train Take the Yamagata Shinkansen to Yamagata Station from Tokyo Station — it takes 2 hours 30 minutes. Transfer to a bus for the 40-minute ride to Zao Onsen Bus Terminal. The Zao Central Ropeway is a four-minute walk from the terminal.

By plane From Sendai Airport, take the express bus to Zao Onsen (reservations required), taking 1 hour 50 minutes.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Gassan

When other ski resorts in Japan start to close in April, Gassan opens. Its location is the key to its extra-long season — the resort is at an altitude of 1,600 meters in an area of Yamagata Prefecture with heavy snowfall.

How to get there

By train Take the Yamagata Shinkansen from Tokyo and get off at Sakuranbo-Higashine Station (3 hours). Take the Gassan Liner, a shared taxi, directly to Gassan-Shizu Onsen. The ski area is a 18-minute bus ride.

By plane Take the Gassan Liner shared taxi from Yamagata Airport to Gassan-Shizu Onsen. The ski area is 18 minutes by bus.

FEATURES OF AREA

KANTO
KOSHINETSU

How to get there

Accessing the slopes in the Kanto-Koshinetsu region is easy, they are within quick reach of Tokyo via the shinkansen. Highway buses connect the resorts without rail links and are a budget option.

By Joetsu Shinkansen

The Joetsu Shinkansen links Tokyo with Niigata on the Sea of Japan coast in two hours, taking 80 minutes to reach Echigo-Yuzawa Station, a gateway to Yuzawa-area resorts.

By Hokuriku Shinkansen

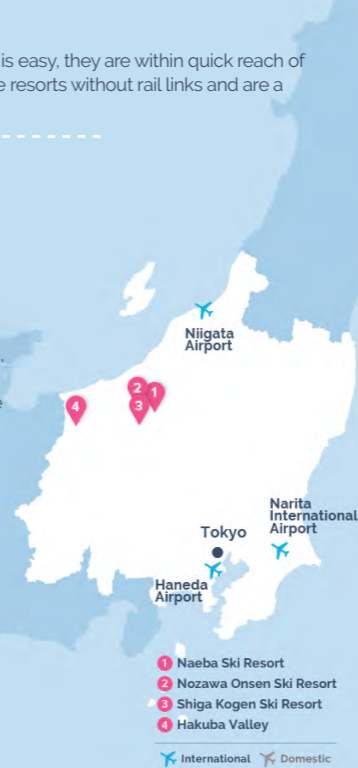
The Hokuriku Shinkansen links Tokyo to Kanazawa, stopping near resorts. Ski lifts are close to Karuizawa, a 70-minute ride. It takes 80 to 90 minutes to reach Nagano or Iiyama Station respectively, where shuttle buses depart for resorts.

By Tohoku Shinkansen

Heading northeast from Tokyo, the Tohoku Shinkansen reaches Hokkaido. It's a stress-free link to the resorts in northern Kanto. Nasushiobara Station is 75 minutes away.

By highway bus

The buses run from Tokyo to nearly every resort in the area. A lower-cost option to the shinkansen, they provide access not possible by rail.



As the country's main international gateway and the world's biggest city, Tokyo is a stop for most travelers at some point. The area isn't all concrete — the Kanto-Koshinetsu region has top-class snow getaways. Convenient transport make skiing near the capital easy, including daytrips. This area is famous for its winter sports.

The 1998 Nagano Olympics put the ski resorts of the Japan Alps on the world stage, while the 2020 Alpine Ski World Cup in Niigata will highlight the perfect snow that results from facing the Sea of Japan.

Japan's ski resorts are famous for the volume of powder snow, varied terrain and long ski season. Many of the country's well-regarded areas are in Kanto-Koshinetsu.

One such area is Mt. Naeba in Niigata, a resort with many ski courses and non-ski activities. Shiga Kogen is the largest resort, with 18 ski areas and lots of powder. Hakuba Valley's ski areas are the jewel of the Japan Alps, with alpine terrain and higher-quality snow.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Nozawa Onsen

Nozawa Onsen is a hot spring area located in the northern part of Nagano Prefecture and is one of Japan's longest-established resorts.

The resort sits on the side of Mt. Kenashi (1,650m), offering 36 ski slopes and courses, with a run 10-kilometers long. With powder snow covering the resort from the mountaintop to the base of the slopes, it's good for long runs. The hot springs are thought to have been discovered 1,300 years ago, and the center of the village, nestled at the foot of the mountain, retains the charm and ambience of an old spa town.

How to get there

By train The Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Iiyama Station takes 1 hour 39 minutes. There, take the Nozawaonsen Liner bus, arriving 25 minutes later. Alternatively, take the Nagaden Bus from Iiyama Station, or the bus that runs between Nozawa, Iiyama Station and Madarao.

By car From Tokyo, take the Kanetsu and Joshinestu Expressways to head for Toyota Iiyama Interchange, taking 2 hours 30 minutes. There, take National Road 117 and arrive in Nozawa Onsen in 25 minutes.

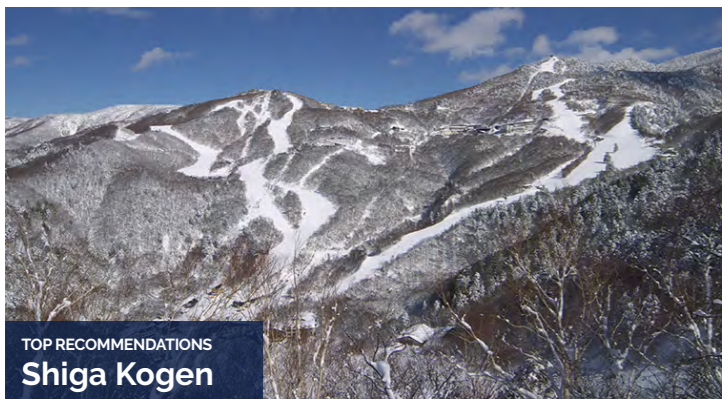
TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Hakuba Valley

Hakuba Valley consists of 10 ski resorts at the base of the Ushiro Tateyama Mountain Range in northern Nagano Prefecture. From south to north, the resorts are Jigatake, Kashimayari, Hakuba Sanosaka, Hakuba Goryu, Hakuba47 Winter Sports Park, Hakuba Happo-one, Hakuba Iwatake Snow Field, Tsugaikogon, Hakuba Norikura Onsen, and Hakuba Cortina. The center-piece is Hakuba Happo-one — the largest resort with 13 courses, a 1,071-meter altitude differential, and a course stretching to 8,000 meters.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Nagano. Transfer to an express bus bound for the Hakuba Happo Bus Terminal. The journey takes 2 hours 40 minutes. The Shinano express train from Nagoya Station to Hakuba Station takes 3 hours 34 minutes.

By plane Highway buses operate from Chubu Centrair International Airport in Nagoya. Or, catch a direct bus from Tokyo, Osaka, Haneda and Narita Airports.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Shiga Kogen

Shiga Kogen is a highland area with altitudes reaching more than 1,000 meters and is part of the Joshinetsukogen National Park in Nagano Prefecture. The area is one of Japan's leading destinations with 18 ski resorts — a total of 84 courses where the longest run stretches 5,000 meters. Buses run between each site and you can go back and forth between some of them.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Nagano Station. Transfer to the Nagano Electric Railway to head to Yudanaka — the last stop. There, take a bus to Shiga Kogen. There are also direct buses to Shiga Kogen from the east exit of Nagano Station.

By car Take the Kanetsu Expressway to Fujioka JCT, then Joshinetsu Expressway to the Shinshu Nagano interchange. Take the National Road 292 to Shiga Kogen. From Nerima Kanetsu Expressway it takes 3 hours 30 minutes.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Lotte Arai Resort

Lotte Arai Resort is a resort located in Myoko, Niigata Prefecture. 14 courses spread across the east side of 1,429-meter Mt. Okenashi with five lifts, and a gondola. The base hotel has many facilities, including restaurants, cafes, a spa, pool and playground offering the choice of an active or relaxing day.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Joetsu-Myoko Station (120 minutes). From the west exit, take the Lotte Arai Resort bus to the hotel (30 minutes, only for staying guests).

By car Take the Kanetsu Expressway from Tokyo to Fujioka JCT, then the Joshinetsu Expressway. Get off at Arai Smart IC (130 minutes). It's seven minutes using local roads.



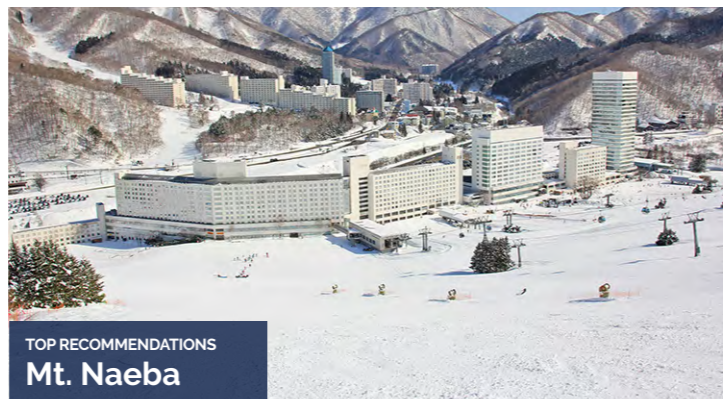
TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Charmant Hiuchi

Charmant Hiuchi is at the northern base of 2,462-meter-high Mt. Hiuchi in the Myoko region of Niigata. The top has a low altitude of 1,009 meters, but its location means it receives up to 5 meters of snow annually.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Itoigawa Station. A shuttle bus will take you to Charmant Hiuchi.

By plane Take the Kanetsu Expressway from Tokyo and the Joshinetsu Expressway at Fujioka ICT. Get off at the Nou IC. There, it's 30 minutes via Prefectural Route 246.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Mt. Naeba

Mt. Naeba consists of two resorts — Naeba Ski Resort and Kagura Ski Resort. The highest point of the Mt. Naeba Ski resort is 1,789-meter Mt. Takenoko with 13 lifts and 21 courses — the longest ski run is 4,000-meters long. Kagura Ski Resort has 21 lifts and 13 courses and the longest run stretches to 6,000 meters. The two resorts combined make up one of Japan's leading resorts for snow travel.

How to get there

By train From Tokyo Station, take the Joetsu Shinkansen to Echigo Yuzawa Station. For Naeba Prince Hotel guests, take the shuttle bus to arrive at the hotel in 40 minutes. Express buses from the station to Kagura and Naeba take 45 minutes and local buses take 50 minutes.

By car Take the Kanetsu Expressway to the Tsukiyono Interchange and then National Road 17, arriving in 50 minutes.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
Seki Onsen

Seki Onsen Ski Resort has only two lifts and a restaurant, but insiders come because of its plentiful powder. The onsen at the foot of the mountain is also a draw as the hot spring flows directly into the baths from the source. The reddish-brown mineral-rich water is great for rejuvenating after skiing.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Nagano Station (90 minutes), change to the JR Shinetsu Main Line for Sekiyama Station (50 minutes). Take a taxi (10 minutes) or a bus (15 minutes) from the station.

By car Take the Kanetsu Expressway in Tokyo and enter the Joshinetsu Expressway at Fujioka ICT, getting off at Myoko Kogen IC. It's 15 km (20 minutes) on the National Road 18.



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS
X-JAM Takai Fuji

X-JAM Takai Fuji isn't a typical ski resort — more of a terrain park turned into one. The four parks here have up to 50 features, including two half-pipes, banked slalom courses, unpatrolled tree run areas and hike-up powder zones.

How to get there

By train Take the Hokuriku Shinkansen from Tokyo to Nagano Station, then the Nagaden Nagano Line and get off at Yudanaka Station.

By plane Take the Kanetsu Expressway from Tokyo, then the Joshinetsu Expressway from Fujioka ICT, getting off at Shinshu Nakano IC.

FEATURES OF AREA

**TOKAI
HOKURIKU**

How to get there

Hokuriku and Tokai's mountains are centrally located - easy trips from Nagoya, Osaka or Tokyo. Nagoya's Chubu Centrair airport is the best entry point for Gifu and other Tokai resorts from overseas. Kanazawa is accessible from Tokyo and is the best gateway to Hokuriku's ski areas.

Skiing Around Kanazawa and Toyama

Kanazawa is two and a half hours Tokyo by Hokuriku Shinkansen, and the same distance from Nagoya and Osaka by limited express trains. From the city, you can access ski areas by bus or a short drive. Many resorts are nestled a 90-minute drive southwest from Toyama Station, also on the shinkansen.

Skiing Around Gifu, Takayama, Shirakawa-go

Many of the best ski resorts in Tokai are around Takayama in Gifu Prefecture. Gifu Station is a 20-minute train ride from Nagoya, while Takayama Station is two and a half hours away. Popular ski resorts are within a 45-minute drive of Takayama's central area. This is the location of Shirakawa-go, where you'll find well-preserved thatched-roof farmhouses nestled between the mountains.



FEATURES OF AREA

**WESTERN
JAPAN**

How to get there

Western Japan's ski areas are accessible compared to Hokkaido and Tohoku, being less than an hour away from major cities.

Skiing in Kansai

You can reach resorts along Lake Biwa, in Shiga Prefecture, from Kyoto and Osaka. Train rides are 40 minutes to an hour from Kyoto, and shuttle buses run from stations to the slopes.

Skiing around Hiroshima and Fukuoka

Snowy slopes are just a two-hour bus ride from Hiroshima Station. From Fukuoka or Kumamoto, rent a car to reach resorts in Oita and Miyazaki prefectures.



Heaps of snow in central Honshu

Tokai and Hokuriku's mountains, located in the center of Honshu, see a lot of snow between December and February. Resorts on the Sea of Japan coast and in the Hida area of Gifu are popular. This region's Northern Alps are known as "the roof of Japan," famous for hot springs, the World Heritage-designated Shirakawa-go village and ski fields. Ski on fresh snow, and explore towns like Takayama (Gifu Prefecture) and the cultural city of Kanazawa (Ishikawa Prefecture).

Many resorts in Shizuoka and Yamanashi have picturesque views of Japan's iconic Mt. Fuji. Snow Town Yeti allows visitors to ski on the southern face of the national symbol. There's a sledding slope and an Activity Park for children too.

Resorts in this region have slopes that extend each run. Fukui's Skijam Katsuyama has the longest course this side of the Japan Alps at 5,800 meters. It's open from mid-December to early April.

Convenient skiing in Western Japan

While the climate gets warmer further southwest, there are ski resorts in Kansai, Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu. These may not be comparable to the more famous powder hotspots, but cold winds from the Sea of Japan and East China sea bring plenty of snow to the area. Enjoy the moderate temperatures of the low-lying cities while taking advantage of the snowfall in higher-altitudes during the winter.

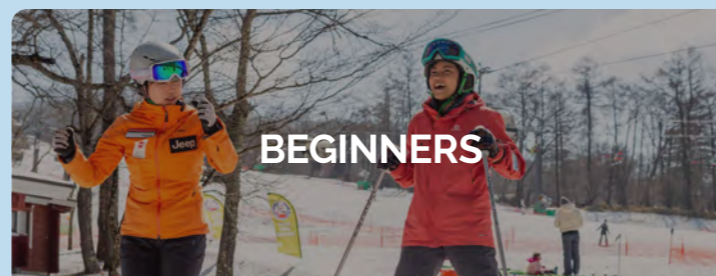
Lake Biwa, northeast of Kyoto and surrounded by mountains, is the perfect day trip. Biwako Valley Ski Resort is 40 minutes from Kyoto, so enjoy a day on the slopes and dinner in the city. Other resorts are Geihoku Kokusai in Hiroshima Prefecture, the largest resort in Western Japan, and Gokase Highland in Miyazaki Prefecture, the southernmost in Japan.



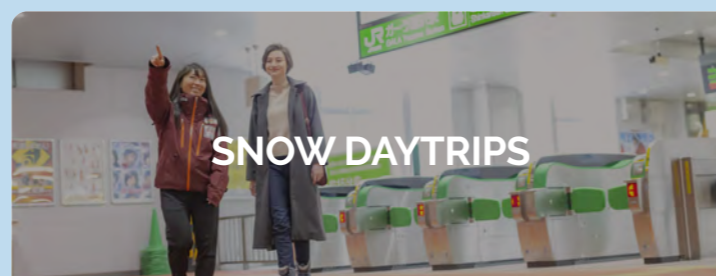
For details, please check the Snow Website.

INTRODUCTION

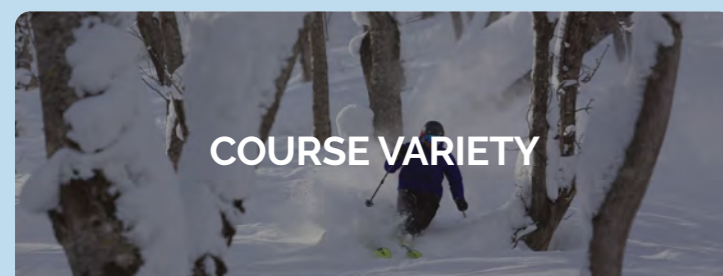
Ski resorts across Japan differ in size, variety of courses, facilities and access. It's important to plan your journey based on your priorities. Planning a daytrip or extended stay? Require instructions in English or Chinese? Prefer groomed or backcountry slopes? Or just want to go sightseeing and shopping? Research which one suits you best, remembering to familiarize yourself with each resort's rules and regulations for a pleasant stay.



Skiing or snowboarding for the first time can be daunting. For a safe and comfortable experience, take a lesson. Most ski resorts offer one-on-one, group and family plans from one or two hours to all day, and major resorts provide instructions in English and Chinese. Almost every ski area has rental shops so you're on the slopes in no time. What's available differs by resort, so check ahead of time.



Ski and snowboard daytrips are easy in Japan, with many resorts close to major cities. Sapporo hosted the Winter Olympics in 1972, and there are many world-class ski areas within an hour from the city. Visitors can spend the morning downtown and hit the slopes in the afternoon with a taxi or bus ride. From Tokyo, the shinkansen offers easy access to a range of mountains. A daytrip is also easy from Osaka or Kyoto.



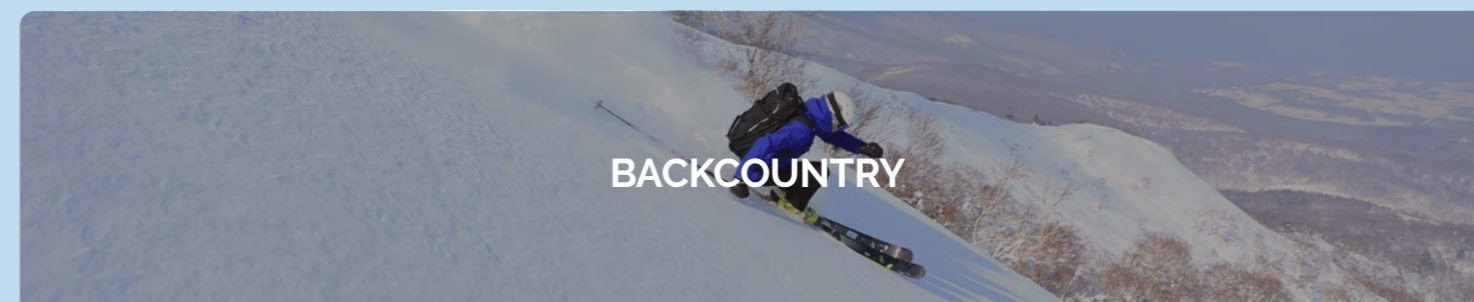
Resorts in Japan have slopes that cater to all levels. Most have trails ranging in length and skill levels, from beginner to expert. Beginner trails are gentle slopes for learning the basics, while advanced courses are steeper and include ungroomed snow and moguls. Japan's grooming capabilities are world-class, but ungroomed runs are the perfect way to experience powder snow.



Speeding down the slopes is half the fun of skiing and snowboarding. After a long day, enjoy some après-ski. While après-ski is less widespread in Japan, major resorts are developing their entertainment, dining, and nightlife options. The Niseko area, in Hokkaido, is famous for its clubs, live music, gastropubs, bars, and high-end restaurants. For a more traditional experience, try Japan's smaller resorts.



A child's first time skiing or snowboarding should be fun and safe. Ensure the kids are secure, book them a lesson. Nearly all ski areas offer instruction in the basics for children and families in private and in groups. Family-oriented resorts provide child-specific attractions like dedicated lodges, ski trails and "magic carpet" snow escalators up the beginner slope.



Backcountry skiing and snowboarding refers to riding outside the boundaries of patrolled ski areas. Backcountry allows experienced skiers and snowboarders the chance to get away from the crowds to enjoy powder snow and beautiful scenery.

Japan's climate, topography and location make snowfall consistent and highly sought after. The snow has a low moisture content making it particularly dry and fluffy. Enthusiasts all over the world call the country's light powder snow "Japow."



Backcountry adventures require specific skills, equipment, and high proficiency at skiing or snowboarding. Because backcountry skiing takes place in natural terrain, be aware of potential hazards including avalanches.

Skilled guides are certified in avalanche prevention and awareness, and know the areas. Those who choose to go without a guide should take an avalanche awareness class, have experience and be up-to-date on avalanche reports.

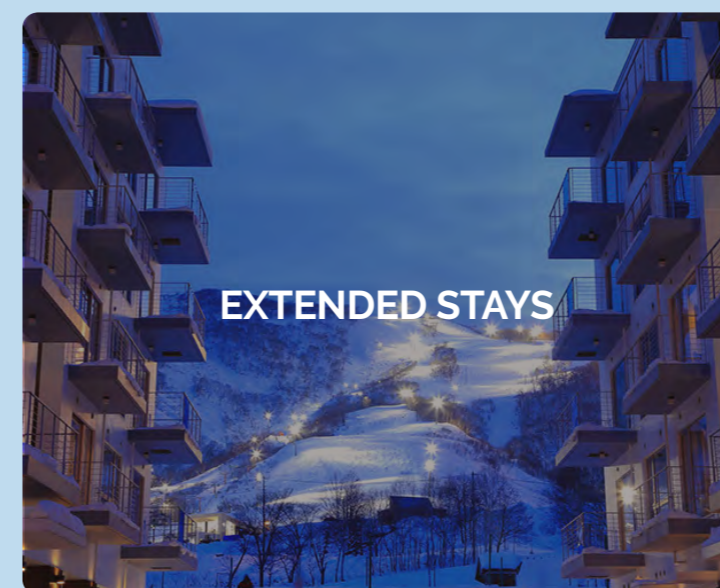
All backcountry skiers and snowboarders should carry a location beacon, shovel, extra clothes, GPS, extra food, water, and a first aid kit. Skiers heading up the mountain on two legs should use touring bindings (to walk up the grade with skis on) and climbing skins to stick to the bases. Snowboarders can use a splitboard setup or snowshoes, poles and a backpack for their board. Many tour companies and ski areas rent this specialized equipment.



Backcountry skiing is a draw around Japan, with each region differing. Niseko in Hokkaido is known for backcountry adventures. Plenty of snow falls in there from December until May, and the tour companies there can customize excursions.

Hakkoda and Hachimantai are the most visited mountains in Tohoku for backcountry. Hakkoda's icicle-covered summit can be reached by gondola for exploration. Hachimantai is famous for dry powder, and snowcat tours are available.

In Nagano's Northern Alps, Hakuba, Nozawa Onsen, and Shiga Kogen are for backcountry enthusiasts. Kagura, in Niigata, offers spring helicopter tours to explore the best of the late-season. Western Japan is known for having big mountains; but, snowfall is less consistent, so be aware of snow conditions before embarking.



Visitors to Japan's snowy regions have a wealth of accommodations. Nozawa Onsen, Hakuba, Niseko, Myoko Kogen, and Zao Onsen are some of the resorts offering comfortable, longer-stays. Nozawa Onsen has more than 80 lodgings at all price points.

To experience Japanese hospitality, stay at a ryokan. These traditional inns offer in-room dining and onsen baths. As ryokan tend to be on the higher end, consider a pension or minshuku for a budget-friendly option with shared bathrooms and dining areas. If traveling as a family or in a group, condominium rentals may be more appealing. Having a kitchen is a benefit, and they can end up being cheaper per person, as inns charge per person rather than per room.

SNOW ACTIVITIES

Snow blankets much of Japan during the winter. It doesn't just settle on the mountain peaks, but covers low-altitude mountains and plains too, offering ample opportunity for activities. Fun isn't just limited to skiing and snowboarding. Other options include snowshoeing, riding a snow buggy or snowmobile, and adventures on a snowcat or snow bike. Japan is a fantastic snow destination for families because many snow resorts here have a kids' park. These are designated areas where anyone unfamiliar with snow, like children, can play in the snow safely. Some snow resorts have escalators too, where you can enjoy sledging without walking uphill.



SNOWSHOEING

Thrill seekers tend to be attracted to skiing and snowboarding, but for a slower-paced experience, try snowshoeing. Japan's powder snow opens up inaccessible terrain for exploration, and it's your best choice for a journey through scenic and undisturbed landscapes. Modern snowshoes are more common at ski resorts,

but visitors can strap on a pair of traditional kanjiki snowshoes for a Japanese experience.



KIDS' PARKS

Traveling with children requires planning, but Japan has facilities and programs for children. Most major resorts have children's parks replete with playgrounds, sledding areas, igloos, snowman building and more.

You don't have to stay in the kids' park to enjoy these amusements. Sledding, snowshoeing, snow rafting, tubing and banana boats are fun for all. Rentals are generally available, so check if the resort has the amusement you're looking for.



CAT CRUISING

Snowcats are vehicles designed to move on snow. They are a fun and convenient way to travel over rugged terrain, exploring a variety of areas and taking in the scenery from heated comfort. Some vehicles can fit up to 16 people, and with no age or fitness restrictions, making for an ideal outdoor activity for groups.

Familiarize yourself with the landscape, access lesser-explored regions and spot local wildlife. It's ideal for experts to reach unreachable backcountry.



GONDOLA

Ski lifts aren't the only way to make your ascent of Japan's mountains; some resorts have cable cars that will take you up the peaks. Cable cars are a fun and hassle-free form of travel and great for everybody. Shinhotaka Ropeway is Japan's only two-story cable car and it ferries visitors to elevations above 2,000 meters. The top station of Komagatake Ropeway, the highest in Japan, provides views of Mt. Fuji and the surrounding Southern Alps.



SLEDDING

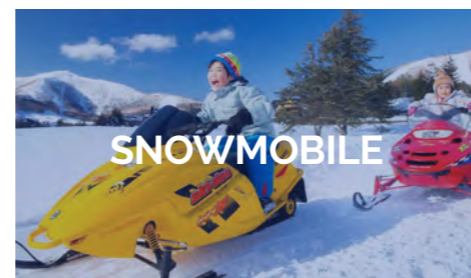
Sliding on a sled is a memory for many in countries with snow. Travelers can bring back those memories, or create new ones, by trying sledding and sleigh experiences. Sledding is a great first snow experience for young travelers, or anyone not confident to ski or snowboard. It can be dangerous when sharing the slopes with skiers and snowboarders, so some resorts in Japan have dedicated sledding hills.



SNOW RAFTING/ SNOW TUBING

Up the adrenaline with snow rafting or tubing. Sledding allows you to go as fast as gravity will allow and snow rafting has the thrill of being pulled by a snowmobile. Or ride in a slender, inflated tube called a snow banana for a similar experience.

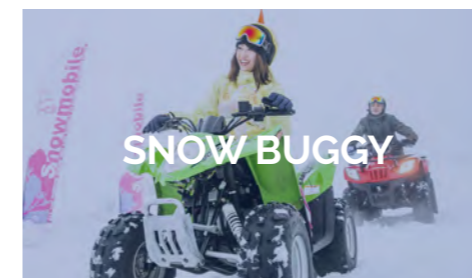
Try snow tubing or air boarding to go faster than normal sledding. Sit in a donut-shaped inner tube or ride head-first on the surfboard-like, air board and enjoy as you careen down the hill. Some mountains offer tubing pulled by snowmobiles too.



SNOWMOBILE

Try a snowmobile for a thrilling experience. It rides like a motorbike and is the perfect way to zoom through snowy terrains. It's a great choice because you don't need a driving license, and an instructor will run you through the basics.

You can snowmobile on trails through quiet woods, and into the backcountry. Experienced drivers can race around mini-circuits with sharp curves and undulating slopes. Some locations offer skiers the chance to get towed down the snow-covered slopes with a snowmobile.



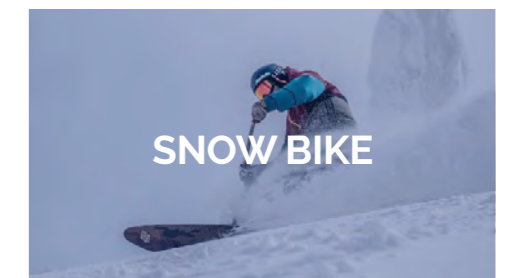
SNOW BUGGY

Snow adventurers looking to explore should consider renting a snow buggy. These three- or four-wheeled vehicles can travel over harsh terrains, making them the perfect companion for adventures. Plan to ride one early in the morning to catch the sunrise. Or, rent it for the whole day to cross forests and snowy plains. In some places, you can drive all the way to the summit under the night sky. Snow buggies are available for rent at many resorts.



ZIPLINE

Zip lining isn't just a summer activity. Some resorts have zip lines set up high above the landscape. Some high-altitude zip lines stretch to 1,500 meters in length, giving you a spectacular view of the mountainous terrain. Most zip lines allow speed control, so you can glide down at exhilarating speeds or slow down to take in the snowy views. Winter zip lining adventures are available in places such as Nozawa Onsen Ski Resort in Nagano, Lotte Arai Resort in Niigata, and Ikeda in Fukui.



SNOW BIKE

Skiing and snowboarding aren't the only ways to slide down the slopes. Snow scooting is an activity that's been gaining popularity among enthusiasts. Snow scooters and snow motos are the equipment of choice. These snowboard-skateboard hybrids look similar, but the snow moto has a seat attached. Try out this modern sport on the beginner's course. Some resorts offer guided snow scoot tours.

SNOW TRAVEL

There is plenty to experience during the winter months in Japan. Explore beautiful landscapes, take a dip in hot springs, and enjoy seasonal food and events. The UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawa-go and traditional Ginzan Onsen are magical places to visit when it snows. The landscape takes a dramatic turn during the winter as the jagged "snow monsters" descend upon some of the mountain slopes and a freeze turns the sea to drift ice.



SNOW SIGHTSEEING CULTURE & HISTORY

There are many examples of Japanese architecture that represent the country's long history and distinctive culture. These buildings are even more striking when blanketed in snow, and visitors to these sites can experience the true beauty of Japanese winter. Goryokaku Fort and the red bridges of Hirosaki Castle gleam in pure white surroundings, while thick snow piles up on the traditional buildings in Shirakawa-go and Ouchi-juku.



Otaru

The port town of Otaru had its heyday as one of Japan's chief trade, financial and business centers during the Meiji and Taisho eras (1868-1926).

With old-world charm, the scenery inspires romance, and the ocean produces great seafood. There are also onsen and sporting possibilities in all seasons.

How to get there

Otaru is easy to reach via train or bus from Sapporo Station. From Sapporo Station, it's 35-minute train ride or an hour and 10 minutes bus ride.



Kenrokuen Garden

Kenrokuen Garden is the focal point of Kanazawa. The garden was created over the span of several hundred years by the Maeda family, and is one of the best examples of a strolling-style Japanese landscape garden.

"Kenrokuen" means "garden that combines six characteristics." These are spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, water-courses and panoramas.

How to get there

Kenrokuen is easily accessed from Kanazawa Station via the Kanazawa Loop Bus and the Kenrokuen Shuttle Bus departing from the east exit. The ride takes 20 minutes.

SNOW SIGHTSEEING NATURE

Winter in Japan is a special season, as natural sites only reveal themselves once the temperature drops and snow starts to fall. The terrain and climate of each area lends itself to a range of phenomena like the towering "snow monsters" of Zao, the natural force of the drift ice on the Sea of Okhotsk, and the white walls of the snow corridors. Discover Japan's varied snowy landscapes for a unique winter adventure.



Ryuhyo Drift Ice

Stretching all the way to Siberia, the Ryuhyo drift ice of the Okhotsk Sea grips Hokkaido's northern coast in a deep freeze. See this extraordinary natural phenomenon along the Okhotsk Sea, and experience it up close.

How to get there

Monbetsu Airport, Memanbetsu Airport (for Abashiri) offer direct flights from Tokyo and Sapporo. To get to Abashiri, the bus from Memanbetsu Airport takes 40 minutes then a 10-minute walk to the icebreaking ship. For Monbetsu, take a 15-minute taxi from airport to the Garinko 2 icebreaker.

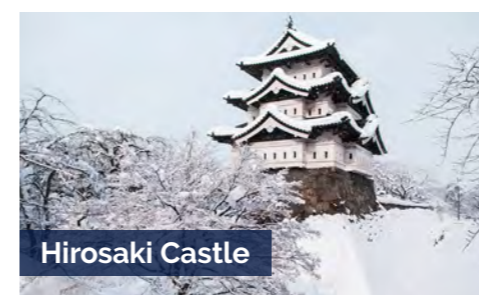


Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route (Toyama)

The Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route rises through to the heart of Japan's Northern Alps. The Kurobe Dam is well worth visiting.

How to get there

Get to the dam via Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route, from either the Toyama or Nagano. From Toyama, start at Densetsu Toyama Station and travel to Kurobe Dam via train, buses, cable car and ropeway. The journey takes three and a half hours. From the Nagano side, start at Ogizawa Station in Omachi and travel by buses. This takes an hour and a half.



Hirosaki Castle

Hirosaki Castle is famous for its cherry blossoms, but it is also beautiful in winter. Located in Hirosaki City in Aomori Prefecture and surrounded by the towering peaks of the Hakkoda Mountains, Lord Tsugaru originally built the castle in 1611. It was destroyed by lightning in 1627 and rebuilt in 1810 as a three-story tower. From December to February, it's illuminated at night.

How to get there

Hirosaki Station is 30 minutes from Aomori Station by express train. The castle is a short bus ride from the station.

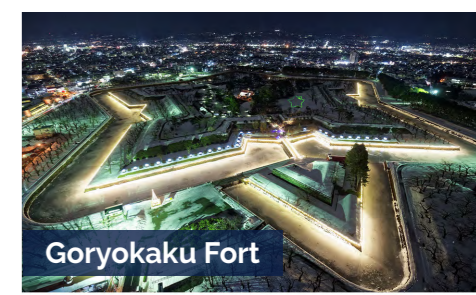


Dewa Sanzan

Dewa Sanzan in Yamagata consists of Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan and Mt. Yudono and is a subject of worship for a worship called Shugendo. Mountain monks called yamabushi commune with nature through meditation as part of their practices. They visualize the peaks as representative of death (Mt. Gassan), birth (Mt. Haguro) and rebirth (Mt. Yudono).

How to get there

Mt. Haguro is a one-hour bus ride from Tsuruoka Station in Yamagata. Tsuruoka Station is two hours by train from Niigata Station or by express bus from Yamagata Station.



Goryokaku Fort

Goryokaku Fort is a star-shaped fortification that was designed in 1855 and completed in 1864. It was the first fort in Japan to be built in the Western style. The Tokugawa Shogunate had its last stand against the pro-imperial forces of the Meiji Emperor here — a defeat in the Boshin War that led to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. In 1914, it was turned into a park. In the winter, it is lit up with Hoshi-no-Yume, an illumination of nearly 2,000 lights strung along the walls.

How to get there

Get to Goryokaku Fort by tram or bus from Hakodate Station to Goryokaku Koen-mae, and walk 10 minutes.

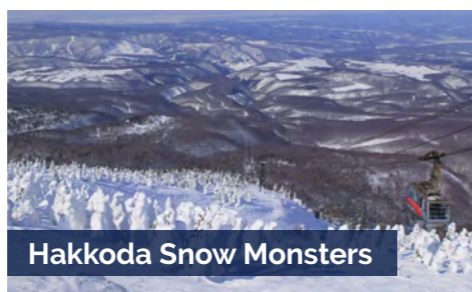


Tokachi River Jewelry Ice

Each winter, part of Hokkaido's coast is covered in a phenomenon called "jewelry ice," in which a beach is covered in blocks of ice shining like diamonds in the sun. Jewelry ice is created when ice floes from the Tokachi River break apart at the river's mouth and wash up onto the beach. The sand polishes them to a gem-like shine. Though visiting the jewelry ice is technically a day at the beach, make sure to wear cold weather gear when visiting, as temperatures during the season can fall as low as -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit).

How to get there

The JR Super Ozora express train connects Sapporo Station to Obihiro in under three hours. Obihiro also has an airport with service from Tokyo. In Obihiro, take a jewelry ice sightseeing bus or taxi for another hour to reach Toyokoro City's coastline.



Hakkoda Snow Monsters

During peak season, the Hakkoda Mountains are guarded by "snow monsters," pine trees covered in soft rime ice. Their otherworldly shapes are formed by strong winds blowing water droplets onto trees, where they freeze and accumulate. Local guides run snow trekking tours, allowing visitors to see the snow monsters up close.

How to get there

The Hakkoda Ropeway station is one hour by bus from Aomori Station.



No. 1 Tadami River Bridge

Take the JR Tadami Line for views of rustic alpine scenery and charming local towns in Okaizu. This train line runs west from Aizu-Wakamatsu Station, through the mountainous interior of Fukushima Prefecture. The most famous views are of and from the No. 1 Tadami River Bridge, which stretches across a river between Aizu-Nishikata and Aizu-Hinohara stations. Visitors can watch trains cross the bridge where it peeks out between the trees crowding each river bank. In February, the towns in the region host snow festivals that include spectacular snow sculptures.

How to get there

From Koriyama Station on the Tohoku Shinkansen, ride the Banetsu West Line to Aizu-Wakamatsu Station, where the Tadami Line begins. The No. 1 Tadami River Bridge viewpoint at Mishima-juku is a short bus ride from Aizu-Miyashita Station.

SNOW SIGHTSEEING SNOW ANIMALS

Visiting during the winter allows you to see the unique practices some animals have developed to cope with the chill. It is only during the winter that you will see monkeys clambering down from their forest homes to seek warmth in the hot springs of Jigokudani Monkey Park and elegant Japanese cranes gliding through Kushiro Marsh in Hokkaido. Many of Japan's zoos operate throughout winter too, allowing you a glimpse into the winter lifestyles of many animals.



Asahiyama Zoo

Asahiyama Zoo has enclosures that allow you to get closer than usual to the animals. See how animals like polar bears, wolves and foxes cope with the wintry weather.

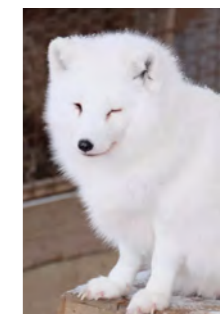
Asahikawa-shi, Hokkaido



Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park

Snow Monkey Park is home to Japanese macaques that come down from the mountains to warm up in the hot springs.

Shimotakai-gun, Nagano-ken



Zao Fox Village

Due to word-of-mouth and social media sites like YouTube, Zao Fox Village has become a must-visit for travelers. A forest with free-roaming miniature foxes, Zao Fox Village is one-of-a-kind.

Shiroishi-shi, Miyagi-ken



Shiretoko

Hokkaido's Shiretoko Peninsula offers some of Japan's most pristine and unspoiled nature. There is nowhere more "off-the-beaten-path," allowing visitors to connect with nature.

Shari-gun, Hokkaido

WINTER EXPERIENCE ONSEN

Spread around the country, including many areas famous for snow, Japan's many hot springs are the pinnacle of relaxation. The steaming hot water that fills the baths of onsen towns is rich in minerals and provides many health benefits. Hot spring towns often exude nostalgia and a chance for visitors to experience a Japan of a different era. A dip in a natural onsen can help relieve fatigue, many types of ailments, and they are the perfect way to warm up after an action-packed day.



Jozankei Onsen

The largest hot spring town in Hokkaido with 20 ryokan inns, Jozankei Onsen is a major tourist attraction. A monk named Mizumi Jozan discovered the healing waters in 1866 and opened a spa along the upper Toyohira River.

How to get there

Many hotels have a shuttle bus service from Sapporo Station or Makomanai Subway Station. The Kappa Liner bus departs from Sapporo, Odori, and Susukino stations, requiring reservations. By bus it takes 75 minutes, while by car it's 40 minutes.



Noboribetsu Onsen

The hot springs of Noboribetsu are famous for their bounty and their variety. Natural spring waters flow down from Hell Valley, resulting in naturally created baths and nine types of water.

How to get there

From Noboribetsu Station, take a bus or drive (15-20 minutes). Parking is available at the hot springs hotels or in public parking lots.

From Sapporo, Noboribetsu is 90 minutes to two hours by train.

WINTER EXPERIENCE FOOD & DRINK

Local winter cuisine has thrived in Japan with seafood from the cold seas and warming hot pot dishes paired with sake. World-famous ramen and wagyu beef round out the country's snow-season delicacies. Discover Japan's rich cultural heritage through food and drink.



SEAFOOD

Sample the freshest fish in midwinter

Fresh fish and shellfish caught during the winter months are said to have a concentrated umami flavor that you can only taste during this season.

Kaisen-don (Seafood Rice Bowl)

Feast on fresh seafood at ports around Japan; the harbor cities of Hakodate and Otaru in Hokkaido are especially renowned for their kaisen-don. Head to the Hakodate Asaichi morning market for freshly prepared kaisen-don and sushi.



Kani (Crab)

In Japan, crab is a delicacy synonymous with winter. Hokkaido, Tottori, Fukui, Ishikawa and Hyogo prefectures are especially well-known for their abundant crab catches.



Kaki (Oysters)

Oysters are common throughout Japan, but are most prevalent in Hiroshima, Miyagi and Okayama. You can recognize a famous oyster town by their oyster huts.



Ginzan Onsen

Founded on the site of a former silver mine in Yamagata, Ginzan Onsen Hot Spring caters to guests with a taste for old-world atmosphere.

Traditional inns line the river, creating picturesque scenes evocative of a Taisho Period (1912-26) novel. It's well worth the trip.

How to get there

From Tokyo, take the JR Yamagata Shinkansen to Oishida Station, then a bus to Ginzan Onsen.



Zao Onsen

Zao Onsen is a popular ski and hot spring resort area tucked between the mountains of Yamagata and Miyagi prefectures. Known for the healing and beautifying benefits of its mineral-rich waters, Zao is also a major draw during the snowy months as a ski resort. The healing waters here were discovered back in 110 A.D.

When the weather turns warm, get out and hike, cycle, or trek into the forests and climb.

How to get there

Zao Onsen is most easily accessed from the Yamagata Prefecture side via a 40-minute bus that departs hourly from Yamagata Station.



Kusatsu Onsen

Stroll down in your yukata and wooden sandals breathing in Kusatsu Onsen, an authentic onsen town in Gunma Prefecture.

How to get there

Although there is no train station in the town, Kusatsu is easily accessible.

The most convenient way is by car. From Tokyo, the journey takes three hours, or from the shinkansen station in Takasaki, it takes one and a half hours.

There are direct buses from Shinjuku Bus Terminal. Take the JR Joshu Yumeguri-go bus to Kusatsu.



RAMEN

Winter is the season for ramen

Ramen has become popular the world over. Nearly every part of Japan has its own local ramen style, and here are some specialty varieties in popular snow destinations.

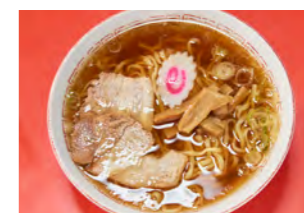
Hokkaido - Sapporo Ramen

Sapporo's ramen style is a miso-based soup with medium thick noodles. It is often topped with vegetables, sometimes with corn and butter.



Hokkaido - Asahikawa Ramen

Asahikawa ramen is rich in soy sauce flavor. Toppings include green onions, pork, bamboo shoots and egg. It takes longer to cook, as a thin layer of oil on top traps the heat within.



Tohoku - Kitakata Ramen

Kitakata ramen from Fukushima has a light, refreshing soy sauce base and crimped noodles. Ramen is so popular in Kitakata that many shops are open for breakfast.



Kanto - Sano Ramen

Tochigi's Sano ramen is exemplified by its noodles made with spring water and a nearly translucent soy sauce soup.



HOT POT

Warm up with bubbling hot pot

For those visiting Japan in the winter, nothing's better than delicious nabe hot pot. There are many kinds served throughout Japan.

Ishikari Nabe

A local specialty of Hokkaido, Ishikari nabe is a stew made with salmon, tofu and winter vegetables like cabbage and mushrooms cooked in miso.



Anko Nabe

Anko nabe, or monkfish hot pot, is a winter delicacy. Ibaraki, Fukushima and Chiba prefectures, the towns of Sakata in Yamagata and Itoigawa in Niigata, are well known for their abundant catches.



Kiritanpo Nabe

Kiritanpo are rice dumplings made in Odate, Akita Prefecture. These dumplings are tossed into a chicken hot pot, thus creating kiritanpo nabe.



Sukiyaki and Shabu-shabu

These beef-dipping hot pots are a great way to discover the many brands of Japanese wagyu beef such as Yonezawa Beef, Maesawa Beef, and Hida beef.

WINTER EXPERIENCE KAMAKURA

Kamakura snow domes are found in areas of Japan that see heavy snowfall. These snow structures act as shrines to a god, and offer Japanese hospitality to all those who visit them. Squeeze through the tiny entranceway and enjoy warming food, drinks and hospitality in flickering candlelight.



Yokote Snow Festival

People flock to Akita for the Yokote Snow Festival. This 400-year-old festival involves the creation of kamakura igloos of various sizes.

📍 Yokote-shi, Akita-ken



Yunishigawa Kamakura Festival

The Yunishigawa Kamakura Festival is held from late January to early March. Hundreds of kamakura fill the streets of this onsen town.

📍 Nikko-shi, Tochigi-ken



Iwate Snow Festival

The Iwate Snow Festival takes place at Koikai Farm in Shizukuishi in February, famous for snow sculptures, fireworks and traditional cuisine.

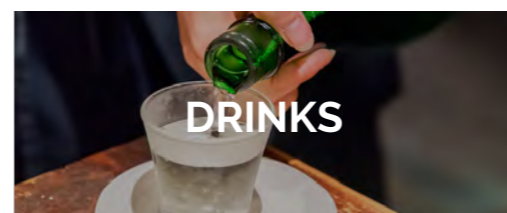
📍 Shizukuishi-cho, Iwate-gun, Iwate-ken



Iiyama Kamakura Village

Between late January and late February, a makeshift village of 15 to 20 kamakura is created north of Iiyama City.

📍 Iiyama-shi, Nagano-ken



DRINKS

Pair winter cuisine with a tipple

The right drink can complement the flavors of anything. Sake is a classic choice, but Japan also produces wine and beer to round out your meal.



Sake

Breweries in Japan produce a variety of sake depending on the climate, landscape and techniques of the region and producer. Aomori, Niigata, Yamagata and Akita are especially famous for delicious sake.



Wine

Japanese wine is gaining in popularity internationally. Wineries in climates as diverse as Yamanashi and Hokkaido make use of Japanese koshu and muscat bailey grapes.

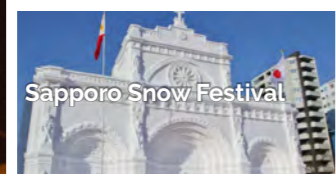


Beer

Beer is incredibly popular in Japan. As a result, there is a wealth of beers throughout the country. Craft beer is also booming as many regions have their own small-batch brew.

EVENTS WINTER FESTIVAL

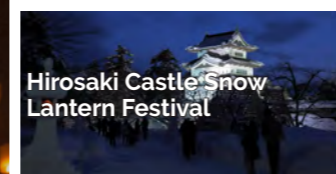
Japan's local festivals don't pause for snow. Winter festivals, many of which are hundreds of years old, enliven the season with spectacular fireworks displays and massive snow and ice sculptures. Sample regional delicacies from the food stalls and experience their customs.



Sapporo Snow Festival
Using one of Sapporo's abundant natural resources, a few students fashioned several snow sculptures in Odori Park back in 1950. The Sapporo Snow Festival draws millions every year now.
📍 Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido



Namahage Sedo Festival
The Namahage S Festival is a festival that welcomes demons for a good harvest. Held on New Year's Eve, it was designated a significant Intangible Folk Cultural Asset in 1978.
📍 Oga-shi, Akita-ken



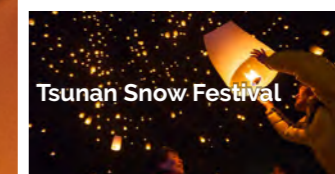
Hirosaki Castle Snow Lantern Festival
The Hirosaki Castle Snow Lantern Festival surrounds the castle with a few hundred snow lanterns, small igloos known as kamakura, and snow sculptures.
📍 Hirosaki-shi, Aomori-ken



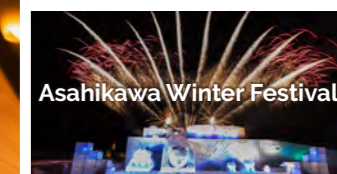
Tokamachi Snow Festival
The annual three-day Tokamachi Snow Festival is a festival in Niigata Prefecture that showcases snow sculptures created by local artists and school children.
📍 Tokamachi-shi, Niigata-ken



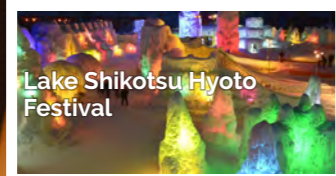
Nozawa Fire Festival
One of the wildest traditional Shinto celebrations in the Hokuriku Shinetsu region, Nozawa Onsen's famed fire festival takes place every winter.
📍 Shimotakai-gun, Nagano-ken



Tsunan Snow Festival
Tsunan receives some of the heaviest snowfall in the world, up to three meters in depth. To raise the spirits of the locals enduring these conditions, it has held this festival at the beginning of March since 1974.
📍 Nakauonuma-gun, Niigata-ken



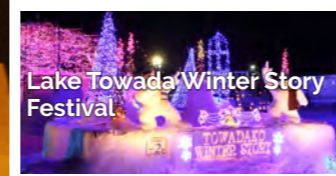
Asahikawa Winter Festival
The Asahikawa Winter Festival is Hokkaido's second largest snow festival, featuring impressive snow and ice sculptures, illuminations, fireworks, food stalls and family fun. It runs for a week in early February.
📍 Asahikawa-shi, Hokkaido



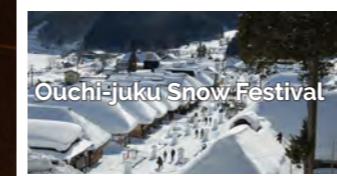
Lake Shikotsu Hyoto Festival
Hyoto, or ice pillars in Japanese, attract 200,000 visitors every year at the Hyoto Festival at Lake Shikotsu in Chitose.
📍 Chitose-shi, Hokkaido



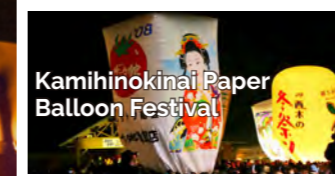
Abashiri Okhotsk Drift Ice Festival
The Abashiri Okhotsk Drift Ice Festival celebrates the arrival of the Siberian Okhotsk drift ice to the waters of the small port town with sculptures carved in snow and ice.
📍 Minato-cho, Hokkaido



Lake Towada Winter Story Festival
Lake Towada straddles the border of Akita and Aomori — Honshu's two northernmost prefectures — and this festival brings the two together every winter.
📍 Towada-shi, Aomori-ken



Ouchi-juku Snow Festival
The most popular seasonal festival here is the Ouchi-juku Snow Festival. Steeped in Edo period (1603-1867) character, it has an antique costume contest.
📍 Minamiaizu-gun, Fukushima-ken

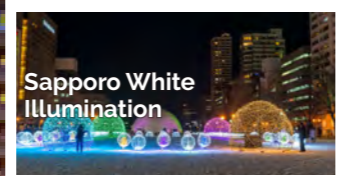


Kamihinokinai Paper Balloon Festival
The Paper Balloon Festival in Kamihinokinai dates back to the Edo period as a way to mark the Lunar New Year. The festival is one of the most colorful in Japan.
📍 Senboku-shi, Akita-ken

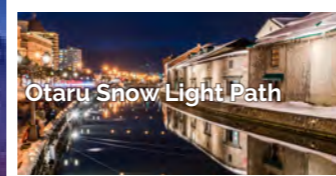


EVENTS ILLUMINATIONS

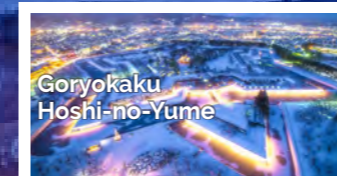
Light up displays around Japan brighten the dark winter evenings. Each display is themed, from illuminating historical monuments and townscapes to enhancing the natural landscape. Lights reflecting on the white snow create a magical scene to be enjoyed.



Sapporo White Illumination
Starting in late November, feel the excitement building as displays get switched on along Odori Park, Ekimaedori, and Minami-ichi-jo Dori for Sapporo's White Illumination.
📍 Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido



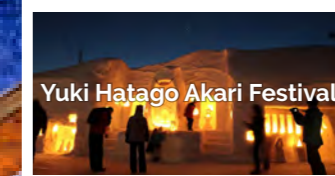
Otaru Snow Light Path
The Snow Light Path lights up the city of Otaru every winter. The flickering lights and glowing snow statues add warmth to the bitter temperatures.
📍 Otaru-shi, Hokkaido



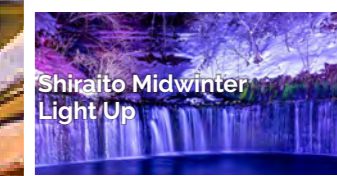
Goryokaku Hoshi-no-Yume
Goryokaku Fort in Hakodate was the first fortress in Japan to be built using Western-style techniques. Get a full view of the fort from the viewing deck of the adjacent Goryokaku Tower.
📍 Hakodate-shi, Hokkaido



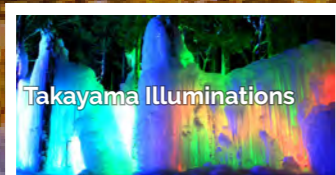
Zao Juhyo Festival
Mt. Zao is on the border of Yamagata and Miyagi prefectures and is renowned for the striking shapes of its snow monsters. These "monsters" are fir trees which have been engulfed in snow.
📍 Yamagata-shi, Yamagata



Yuki Hatago Akari Festival
The Yuki Hatago Akari Festival takes place from late February to early March in Gassan-Shizu. The event's name means "snow lodge light up."
📍 Nishikawa-cho, Yamagata-ken



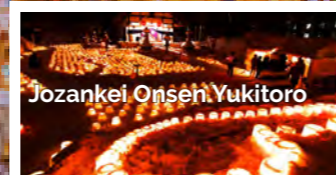
Shiraito Midwinter Light Up
Shiraito Falls is located north of the town of Karuizawa, popular for its greenery and cooler summer temperatures. In winter, the greenery is hidden under snow.
📍 Kitasaku-gun, Nagano-ken



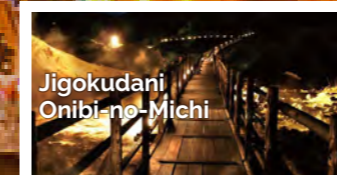
Takayama Illuminations
Takayama, in Gifu Prefecture, is a window into the life of rural Japan in the Edo period. Take advantage of the clear winter evenings to explore the area.
📍 Takayama-shi, Gifu-ken



Tokachigawa Onsen Hakucho Festival Sairinka
Tokachigawa Onsen hosts the Hakucho Festival, which is named after the swans that visit the area. The Sairinka light installation sees around 50,000 visitors every winter.
📍 Kato-gun, Hokkaido



Jozankei Onsen Yukitoro
Every winter, Hokkaido's Jozankei Shrine takes on a special atmosphere, with 2,000 candles of the Jozankei Onsen Yukitoro or "snow candle way."
📍 Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido



Jigokudani Onibi-no-Michi
Noboribetsu Hell Valley, or Jigokudani in Japanese, gets its name from its intense geothermal activity. In winter, lights eerily illuminate the boardwalks in an event called Onibi-no-Michi.
📍 Noboribetsu-shi, Hokkaido



Aomori Yuki Akari Festival
The Yuki Akari Festival is held close to Aomori Station, with lights illuminating the entrance to the city. Two-thousand handmade-by-locals snow lamps are on display.
📍 Aomori-shi, Aomori-ken



Jokamae Tsuruoka Light-Up
The Tsuruoka Winter Festival celebrates this time of year with events and an illuminated town.
📍 Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata-ken

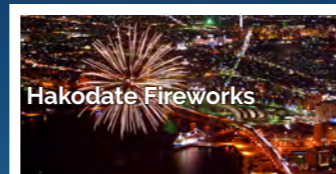


Karuizawa Winter Festival
Karuizawa is popular for escaping the summer heat, but its winter beauty is as compelling. The Karuizawa Winter Festival sees the town illuminated.
📍 Karuizawa-machi-cho, Nagano-ken

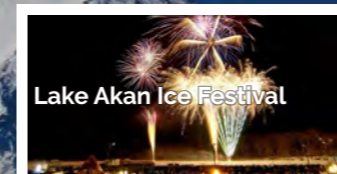
EVENTS FIREWORKS

Fireworks in the night sky are symbolic of Japanese summer, but these luminescent events are staples of winter, too. The colors are particularly vivid in the clear winter sky as they shimmer over snow-clad mountains and frozen waterways.

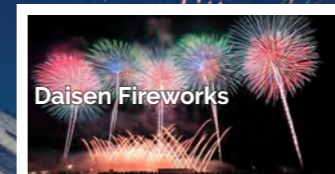
For details, please check the Snow Website.
<https://www.japan.travel/snow/en/>



Hakodate Fireworks
Hakodate Bay's arc makes it an ideal setting for this three-day fireworks festival, held in early February. The peak of Mt. Hakodate also offers a bird's-eye view of the display.
📍 Hakodate-shi, Hokkaido



Lake Akan Ice Festival
The fireworks of the Lake Akan Ice Festival in Hokkaido provide a twist on fireworks, taking place on the frozen surface of the lake itself. It runs annually from early February to early March.
📍 Kushiro-shi, Hokkaido



Daisen Fireworks
Daisen City in Akita Prefecture is known as the fireworks capital of Japan; summer's Omagari-no-Hanabi is one of the "big three" fireworks competitions.
📍 Daisen-shi, Akita-ken



Gero Onsen Fireworks
A world-class pyrotechnician orchestrates the fireworks displays in Gero Onsen. The shows run weekly from January to March, and no two performances are the same.
📍 Gero-shi, Gifu-ken



Lake Kawaguchi Winter Fireworks
The annual Lake Kawaguchi Winter Fireworks draw thousands to watch the displays in the clear winter skies above Mt. Fuji.
📍 Fujikawaguchiko-machi, Yamanashi-ken