AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO KYOTO

Diving in OKINAWA

HOKKAIDO
A WINTER PLAYGROUND

Trend meets tradition in TOKYO

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From the bright lights and bustling streets of Tokyo to the snow capped mountain peaks of Hokkaido, Japan is a land of amazing contrasts. Ancient temples, high-tech gadgets, karaoke bars, cherry blossom-littered pathways – this is the dichotomy of ‘the land of the rising sun’. One can spend weeks in Japan and only scratch its (remarkably clean) surface.

With four distinct seasons, any time is a good time to visit Japan. The best time is now.

Sleeping on the floor is the ‘inn’ thing

Accommodation in Japan varies widely in price and style. Take your pick from luxury hotels, business hotels, hostels or temple lodgings.

For a traditional experience, trade the carpets of the modern, western-style hotel rooms for the futons, tatami mats and shoji screens of a ryokan (Japanese inn).

Sleeping on futons, bathing before breakfast, and eating a traditional breakfast in your room are all part of the ryokan experience.

DID YOU KNOW? Capsule hotels offer an alternative to conventional lodging and can accommodate the very undiscerning guest. Best avoided by claustrophobics.

Where old meets new (and bows politely)

Japanese culture juxtaposes the modern with the ancient, the sophisticated with the simple, the frantic with the serene.

Here, you can be shaken by sumo wrestling or stirred by kabuki (theatre). You can create a world of harmony with ikebana (traditional flower arranging) or enter a universe of discord in manga (Japanese comics).

Made up of a thousand clichés but still surprising, Japanese culture is everything you never expected.

DID YOU KNOW? Old meets new even in Japanese bathrooms. Neighbouring the traditional Japanese toilet is probably an electronic one, where (almost) everything is done for you. Be serenaded, washed and dried, all at the push of a button.
It can be exhilarating or strange. It can be surprising. But one thing Tokyo never is, is boring. In this metropolis, traditions from centuries past co-exist with contemporary urban culture.

Contrary to popular belief, Tokyo is not all hustle and bustle. Yes, you can stand in the middle of Shibuya or Shinjuku and completely lose yourself in the surrounding frenzy. But remarkably, one can almost as easily escape to one of the city’s many serene green spots.

Take the time to explore this great city, because while Tokyo may move quickly, you don’t have to.

**Our top Tokyo tips**

- **Asakusa** – Shops and shrines. Depart by boat down the Sumida River.
- **Shinjuku** – Neon signs turn night into day, as Tokyotimes comes out to play.
- **Ueno** – Home of famed Ueno Park, museums and Ameyoko street markets.
- **Shibuya** – Where the youth fashions are as loud as the noise.
- **Harajuku** – Famed for Harajuku teens and Yoyo Park’s Dancing Elvises.
- **Meiji Shrine** – Tokyo’s finest shrine.
- **Akihabara** – Get your gadgets here in Tokyo’s Electric Town.
- **Tsukiji** – The world’s largest fish markets. Set your alarm for early.

**SHOPPING: More zen for your yen**

Department stores are aplenty in Japan: Daimaru, Mitsukoshi, Takashimaya.

But if you’re after a more traditional shopping experience, spend your way to street-markets like Ameya-Yokocho (Ameyoko) in Tokyo’s north.

Impossible to miss are the ubiquitous **100-yen shops**. Here, you’ll find more souvenir ideas than you can poke a chopstick at.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Giving a new definition to window shopping or street stalls are the more than six million vending machines scattered throughout Japan.

**Getting around Tokyo**

Getting about in Tokyo is simple. Signs are nearly always in English and their trains are clean and safe with a rail system that is extremely punctual.

Just don’t talk on your mobile phone while you are commuting: it is frowned upon. For the really adventurous, try catching a train during peak hour!

**The Japan rail pass is the best way to travel around Japan. 7, 14 & 21 consecutive day passes available from just $361.**

Please note: Point to point tickets can be expensive when purchased in Japan.

For example the average cost of a one way ticket from Tokyo to Kyoto is $170.

Kyoto offers a choice of many hotels and ryokan. ‘Machiya’ rentals have become more popular. Machiya are genuine historical houses, renovated for tourists. There are many dining choices such as sophisticated kaiseki cuisine, shojin ryori (Buddhist vegetarian meals) and obanzai (daily meals). Enjoy these cuisines with Maiko hospitality. A Maiko is an apprentice geisha, found mainly in Kyoto.

The most popular temples in Kyoto are Kinkaku-ji (The Golden Pavilion), Kiyomizu-dera and Sanju-san-gen-do. However, there are many other choices. For example, if you are interested in Wabi Sabi culture, head to Ginkaku-ji (The Silver Pavilion) and Ryoan-ji. Come for the culture, stay for the beauty!

Hi Australia!

Katsuji here. Allow me to share my knowledge and love of Kyoto with you.

Kyoto was the capital of Japan for over 1,000 years and it offers more than 2,000 shrines and temples, including seventeen UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Its true charms lie in its nature and traditions, features that are often related and overlapping.

Because of its long history, Kyoto is the best place for tourists to experience activities such as the tea ceremony, flower arranging and kimono wearing.

Katsuji

Katsuji’s Kyoto guide

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As Japan’s third largest city, Osaka offers all of the excitement and energy of a vibrant metropolis and is
the birthplace of the famed export takoyaki (pictured above). Excellent shopping, diverse culinary delights,
convenient public transport, and a wealth of attractions all combine to provide an outstanding tourism
experience.

With Kansai International Airport at its doorstep, and some of Japan’s biggest draw cards close by, you will see
why more and more travellers are choosing Osaka as their first port of call in Japan.

Anyone who has seen the iconic Japanese television programme ‘The Iron Chef’ will know that the Japanese take their eating very
seriously. Food in Japan is extraordinarily good – and healthy.

Being an archipelago nation, it is hard to go past the country’s
bountiful seafood. But with so many delicious offerings, you
definitely should (if you can pull yourself away from it).

For those travelling on a budget, head to the nearest noodle bar
– which is likely to be in any direction – and feed your hunger
for less than 800 yen. And if you can’t get yourself to one of the
country’s many ramen shops, they will come to you. Hot noodles
– served in ceramic bowls, no less – delivered.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Osaka has some of the longest shopping streets
in all of Japan. Namba Station, which the Swissotel Nankai Osaka
sits above, is the 6th busiest station in all of Japan.
The envy of alpine regions around the world, Hokkaido’s mountains boast some of the best and most consistent powder snow on the planet.

Ski resort towns **Niseko**, **Tomamu** and **Rusutsu** combine excellent facilities and services with long runs, outstanding back country skiing and stunning natural backdrops...and up to 15 metres of high quality powder snow every year.

**Hokkaido hot spots**

**Niseko** – Consistently ranked as one of the world’s top ten ski resorts. A favourite with Australian skiers.

**Sapporo** – Gateway to Hokkaido. Its annual snow festival (Yuki Matsuri) draws more than 2 million tourists from around the world.

**Kushiro Shitsugen National Park** – Admire wildlife as you canoe down the Kushiro River.

**Furano** – A kaleidoscope of colours makes way for a blanket of white in winter.

Great in summer

However, despite its global reputation as a wintertime paradise, Hokkaido is every bit as popular in summer. As Japan’s northernmost island, it provides an escape from the heat of the rest of the country.

Take a drive along its roads and you will experience splendid natural scenery in Japan’s widest open spaces.

Nature v Nurture: wax on, wax off

Lush mountains, terraced rice fields, ancient forests, stunning seaside - if you love nature, you’ll love Japan.

A great way to relax and a ‘must’ Japanese experience is a dip in one of Japan’s famous ‘**onsen**’ (hot springs) scattered throughout the country.

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OKINAWA

Home to the longest living people in the world, and birthplace of Karate (and its most famous exponent ‘Mr Miyagi’), the islands of Okinawa offer a side to Japan most foreign visitors never get to see: white sand beaches, coral reefs, emerald seas and sub-tropical rainforests, all nestled alongside beautiful shrines, temples and castles. Okinawan culture is unique. With its own language, arts and crafts, Okinawa will surprise most and delight all.

More and more Japanese are leaving ‘busier’ Japan behind for the sun-drenched islands of Okinawa. Follow them south.

Diving Hotspots

Okinawa’s Main Island - Be amongst magnificent underwater landscapes on Okinawa’s west coast. Dive through a hole in the reef in Manza Dream Hole, or swim through the caverns of Zampa Caves or Blue Cave. Areas of Sunabe resemble a lost city, now in ruins.

Kerama-jima - 35 kilometres west of Okinawa’s Main Island are the islands of Kerama-jima. Kerama-jima is home to 76 dive sites (suitable for snorkelling).

Yonaguni-jima - Explore the sister city of Atlantis where stone steps and terraces resemble the Mayan ruins of South America.

Miyako-jima - Emerald seas surround the white, sandy beaches of Miyako-jima. Famed for its rich nature, transparent waters and coral reefs, the island is well known for its many great diving spots.

Ishigaki-jima - Renowned for spectacular coral, sometimes emerging from transparent water, Ishigaki-jima offers visibility of 30 metres.

Getting there

From Tokyo:
Japan Airlines (JAL), All Nippon Airways (ANA), Japan Transocean Air (JTA) and Skymark Airlines (SKY) make the 2.5 hour journey from Haneda Airport to Naha Airport.

From Osaka:
JAL, ANA and JTA all fly from Kansai International Airport to Naha Airport. The journey takes 2 hours.

From Nagoya:
The 2 hour, 15 minute flight from Chubu International Airport to Naha Airport is serviced by JAL and ANA.

A monorail runs from Naha Airport to Shuri via Naha City (27 min).
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Japan is only a 7 to 10 hour flight from Australia and a number of direct and connecting flights are available between the two countries.

Getting to Japan has never been more affordable, with low-cost carriers now firmly established alongside already existing airlines flying to Japan, such as the nation’s flag carrier Japan Airlines (JAL).

Flights to TOKYO

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Flights to OSAKA

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Travel within Japan

Travelling around Japan is easy and first-time visitors are always pleased to discover that it is surprisingly affordable.

Famous ‘shinkansen’ (bullet trains) will whiz you around Honshu (Japan’s main island) at a rapid pace and local trains will ensure that you don’t miss anything nearby. Alternatively you can jump on a plane and in around 90 minutes land yourself nearly anywhere in Japan.

DID YOU KNOW? When travelling by taxi in Japan, don’t try to open their doors - they will open automatically.

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* Conditions apply. Price is per person based on twin share for tour departing 05/10/11 and is correct as of 07/02/11. Price is subject to availability. See the website for full terms and conditions. License 2TA000637.
Each visit to Japan provides a deeper glimpse into the unique beauty that lies behind the heritage, from the cherry blossoms in spring, exciting adventures in summer, the deep hues of autumn to the ski winter wonderland. Discover Japan today!
Japan offers a myriad of wonderful and appealing attractions: great cultural diversity, colourful and inspiring natural wonders beautifully interwoven by four distinctive seasonal changes, and the boundless hospitality of its people.

Your journey starts here....

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