

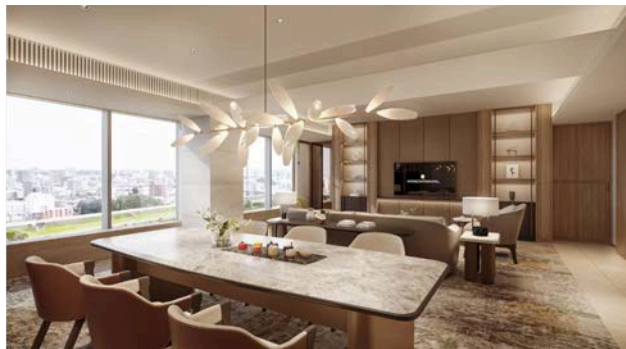
Japan Tourism Topics by JNTO

Japan National
Tourism Organization

August 7, 2025

New Open

1. InterContinental Sapporo opens Oct 1, the latest top luxury hotel in Hokkaido



InterContinental Sapporo, which opens on October 1, aims to provide a luxury stay for both leisure and business travelers, combining urban convenience with Hokkaido's beautiful landscape. Located in the Nakajima Park area, the hotel is only one subway stop from the city's popular Susukino entertainment district, and its upper floors offer beautiful views of the city, park, and Toyohira river. It has a total of 149 rooms and suites, ranging from 42 to 160 sq meters in space each. Along with the 24-seat Club InterContinental on the top floor, the hotel has multiple restaurants offering diners a chance to taste local delicacies in various styles. In addition to an in-house fitness center, the hotel features an indoor, 25-meter heated pool on the 9th floor with a view of the cityscape below, useful for exercise and relaxation. The new hotel — the 11th InterContinental brand hotel in Japan and the first in the nation's northernmost prefecture — should serve as a retreat offering serenity and sophistication in the Sapporo city center, complemented by the natural beauty of Hokkaido.

[InterContinental Sapporo](#)

Festival and Event

2. Aichi Triennale 2025 theme: "A Time Between Ashes and Roses," Sept 13-Nov 30



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Adrián Villar Rojas
"Mi familia muerta (My Dead Family)" 2009
Photo by Carla Barbero

Aichi Triennale, held every three years since 2010, covers a wide range of fields: contemporary art at its core, performing arts, and various learning programs. The sixth edition, which will run from September 13 to November 30, will feature more than 60 artists and groups with diverse backgrounds from Japan and abroad, highlighting those from non-Western regions. Their artworks and programs will be shown in museums, theaters, and street venues throughout Aichi Prefecture, including the Aichi Arts Center in Nagoya and the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum in Seto. One of the main sites, the city of Seto, has historically been a center of Japan's ceramic production. This year's theme — A Time Between Ashes and Roses — is taken from a verse by Adonis, a Syrian-born great poet of the Arab world. The "Ashes" represent the environmental destruction that the poet observed in his surroundings following the Six-Day War of 1967, while the "Roses" refer to the blossoming that is hoped to come after the destruction brought by violence and war.

[Aichi Triennale 2025: A Time Between Ashes and Roses](#)

Festival and Event

3. Take a trip through history at Aizu Festival Sept 19–21 in Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima.



Witness the legendary Japanese samurai history and celebrate the rich heritage of the people of Aizu Wakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. The Aizu Festival is one of Fukushima's biggest events of the year, reenacting the long-gone era of the Aizu Domain, the powerful clan that ruled the region until the dawn of the Meiji Restoration. Held every September, the festival is highlighted by a procession of people in full armor playing the roles of famous lords and soldiers. The main parade of the three-day Aizu Festival

will be held on September 20. Roughly 500 lords, nobles, soldiers, squires, court ladies, dancers, and more parade through downtown streets surrounding the Tsurugajo Castle. The festival is held in honor of the warriors who lost their lives fighting Imperial forces in 1868, during the fierce civil war that heralded the end of the samurai era. It also features swordsmanship demonstrations, a lantern parade, and traditional folk dancing.

Aizu Festival

Festival and Event

4. Historic merchant township transforms into art spaces at Biwako Biennale in Shiga Sept 20-Nov 16



Makoto Egashira, IV Blanket full of roses IV



Julien Signolet, ENKU

Every two years, historic houses and buildings in the old merchant districts of Omi-Hachiman and Hikone, Shiga Prefecture, are transformed into a huge art space for the international art festival Biwako Biennale. This 2025, the 11th edition of the event, which will run from September 20 to November 16, will include Chomeiji Temple (which provides an excellent view of Lake Biwa) and Okishima Island as exhibition sites. These sites will expand the usual main venues in Omi-Hachiman's Old Town area, the birthplace of the famed Omi merchants. The theme of this year's event is "Flux," exploring "impermanence, change, and regeneration" in a world where nothing ever remains the same — just like human cells that keep dying and regenerating each moment. More than 70 artists from Japan and abroad are invited, including Akamatsu Nelo (from Japan), Niura Bellavinha (Brazil), and Claudia Larcher (Austria). By making use of old traditional-style houses as exhibition space, the organizers hope to produce an intersection of art and community history, providing visitors with a memorable, immersive experience.

International Art Festival BIWAKO BIENNALE 2025

Festival and Event

5. Dive into a 400-year-old community tradition at the Great Tug-of-War in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima, Sept 22

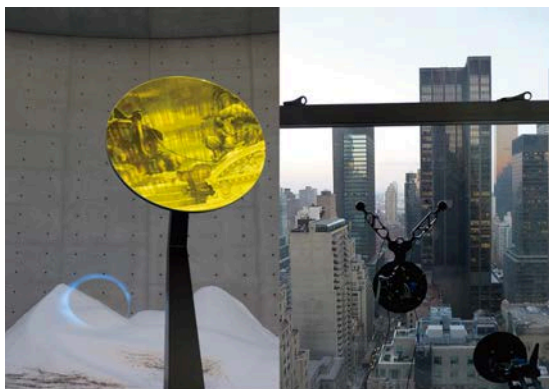


One of Japan's oldest and largest traditional tug-of-war events, the annual Sendai Otsunahiki Great Tug-of-War, is held on September 22 in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture. The event has 420 years of history and draws tourists for its dynamic display of community spirit and tradition. Designated as an important intangible folk cultural property, the event dates back to the Sengoku period as a warrior training ritual and a prayer for prosperity and bountiful harvests. Approximately 3,000 participants, primarily local men dressed in sarashi (white cloth) and work pants, pull a massive 365-meter, 7-ton rope crafted from rice straws by over 1,500 locals on the very morning of the event. The intense tug, held for about 90 minutes in the evening, is marked by strategic pushing and pulling until the battle ends. Visitors are certain to be captivated by the sheer scale, Shinto blessings, and the energetic atmosphere, offering a deep dive into the local community's cultural heritage. A piece of the rope — to be cut up after the tug — is thought of as a good-luck charm to take back home in addition to experiencing an unforgettable cultural experience.

[Sendai Great Tug-of-War](#)

Festival and Event

6. “The Parks of Aomame”: Tribute to Murakami Haruki’s “1Q84” at Okayama Art Summit Sept 26-Nov 24



©Okayama Art Summit 2025 Photo by Andrea Rossetti

©Okayama Art Summit 2025

An upcoming international exhibition of contemporary art in Okayama is inspired by Murakami Haruki's novel “1Q84” and its enigmatic main character, Aomame. Embark on this literary journey at the Okayama Art Summit 2025 from September 26 to November 24. This year's edition of the triennial contemporary art festival, with Paris-based contemporary artist Philippe Parreno as its artistic director, is

titled “The Parks of Aomame.” The artistic rendition of the “1Q84” world will run through the central part of Okayama City, where “interconnected parks, both real and imagined, will draw upon Aomame’s silent struggles and her complex existence within two parallel worlds.” Works of renowned guests from around the world will be displayed at various locations, including historical landmarks and cultural facilities around Okayama Castle and Okayama Korakuen Garden. Art appreciation and walking tours of the city can be enjoyed at the same time, as you can make a round of the venues on foot.

[Okayama Art Summit 2025: The Parks of Aomame](#)

Special Experience

7. Make your one-of-a-kind ceramicware in the Tochigi pottery town of Mashiko



Mashiko, a small town in the Tochigi countryside about a two-and-a-half-hour train ride from Tokyo, is famous worldwide for its pottery and art culture. Large numbers of international and domestic visitors travel to the town for its pottery fair every spring and fall, marveling at the works of Japanese and foreign artists who have settled here to create pottery works. Pottery-making experiences have also become a popular tourist attraction, as many local studios offer workshops that guide beginners through the fun of making their one-of-a-kind ceramic art. Some pottery studios, such as [Furuki Mashiko Tougei Club](#), have English-speaking instructors who teach visitors the basics, including clay wedging and the use of a potter’s wheel. Lessons offered at the workshops can range from 45- to 60-minute sessions to three-hour courses and even full-day experiences. Modern Mashiko pottery (Mashikoyaki) dates back to the mid-19th century. The locally sourced clay, to which no extra ingredients are added, is said to make for the plump look and rustic feel characteristic of the Mashiko-ware. There are several pottery museums in the town, including the [Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art](#) — don’t forget that [Mashiko Autumn Pottery Fair](#) is coming up November 1-4.

[Experience Mashiko Pottery](#)

Special Experience

8. Enjoy refreshing hike through Kochi forests to the source of Shimanto River



©VISIT KOCHI JAPAN

Shimanto River, which runs through the western parts of Kochi Prefecture, is known as Japan's last free-flowing pure river as it has no dams on its main stream. Originating from the slopes of Mt. Irazu, the river winds 196 km through densely forested mountains and fertile floodplains until it reaches the Pacific Ocean. It promises to delight visitors seeking pristine unspoiled nature and a variety of activities from biking to canoeing and photography. You can also hike to the river's source, deep in the forests of the town of Tsuno, which creates a perfect atmosphere for forest bathing. The walk from the trailhead — marked by a large "Shimanto River Headwaters" stone monument — to the source takes only about 25 minutes and can be enjoyed, with proper footwear and sufficient care, by people of all ages and fitness levels. The nearest hotel, Yuzan Shimanto Seiran no Sato, may be useful as a base for the hike to the Shimanto River source.

[The Source of the Shimanto River](#) | [Activities](#) | [VISIT KOCHI JAPAN](#)

Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai

9. Feel the powerful message about plastic pollution at Blue Ocean Pavilion



Have you already visited the Osaka-Kansai Expo? If not, try to find this! The ocean, the cradle of all life on Earth, is now being rapidly polluted by plastic. To understand just how dire the situation is, read on to the very end.

The Blue Ocean Pavilion consists of three hemispherical domes, designed by world-renowned architect Ban Shigeru. **Dome A** is made of bamboo, a material that addresses Japan's overgrown wild bamboo problem and, when used skillfully, demonstrates exceptional strength and versatility. The exhibits here use a special coating to beautifully illustrate the continuous cycle of water, rain, rivers, oceans, and back

again, in a mesmerizing display. **Dome B**, the largest, is built from CFRP (Carbon Fiber Reinforced Plastic), a futuristic material that is one-fourth the weight of steel but five times stronger. It's used in everything from cars and planes to medical devices and even envisioned for future space architecture. Inside, visitors are treated to the most stunning visual display at the Expo. Its beauty sharply contrasts with the disturbing environmental damage humans have inflicted on nature, leaving a deep emotional impact. **Dome C** is built using Ban's signature paper tubes, a humble material made durable and strong. These have been widely used in emergency shelters around the world, supporting disaster survivors. During the Expo, this dome hosts lectures and panel discussions by experts from around the globe. Special exhibits by sponsors, ocean-related organizations, and companies are also featured. In the shop, you can even taste "ultra-pure water of sea and mountain," produced by a famous culinary expert. At the end of the experience, visitors are left with a powerful message about the reality of plastic pollution:

We eat one credit card's worth of plastic every week
Plastic takes 400 years to decompose
Humans are changing the color of the planet
By 2050, the ocean will be home to more plastic than fish
[BLUE OCEAN DOME | Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Official Website](#)

Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai

10. ASEAN travelers explore Japan through the Expo theme



Fourteen travelers from ASEAN countries recently explored Japan on specially designed travel courses inspired by the theme of the ongoing Expo. These journeys highlighted how regions across Japan are embracing values such as sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation, all of which are core concepts that align with the Expo's vision for the future.

Each traveler followed a unique path shaped by local culture, community initiatives, and forward-thinking ideas. Along the way, they encountered a wide range of experiences, from traditional craftsmanship and regional cuisine to environmental efforts. These moments offered a deeper understanding of how Japan's diverse regions are already reflecting the ideals of the Expo in everyday life.

The travelers' reflections have been captured in a series of blog posts, which are now featured on the special page about the Expo. Through their eyes, readers can gain new insights into Japan's evolving identity and the connections between local experiences and global themes.

We invite you to explore the blog series below and be inspired by the stories of discovery, connection, and creativity that emerged from these journeys. It's a fresh look at Japan — one that brings the Expo's message to life through real-world encounters.

Sample Highlight

Hokkaido: A journey through Japan's northern landscapes

While many picture Hokkaido as a snowy wonderland, the travelers recently discovered a completely different side of Japan's northernmost island — one bursting with summer vitality and untamed natural beauty. Following the same itinerary, each traveler captured different stories shaped by their moments of discovery in Japan's northern frontier.



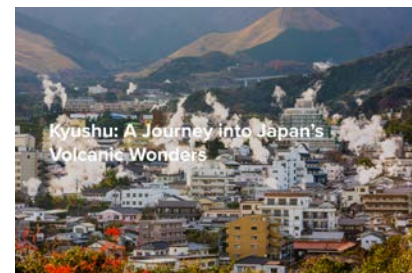
Hokuriku & Gifu: A journey into Japan's living traditions

The Hokuriku region and Gifu, located in the northwestern part of Honshu, Japan's main island, offer a captivating blend of natural beauty, time-honored traditions, and quiet charm. From the mossy paths of Kenrokuen Garden to the flowing crystal-clear waterways of Gujo Hachiman, and from hands-on workshops to sacred shrines, these stories reveal Hokuriku and Gifu not just as destinations, but as immersive cultural experiences.



Kyushu: A Journey into Japan's volcanic wonders

Kyushu, Japan's southwestern island, is a rich tapestry of volcanic wonders, peaceful hot spring towns, and enduring cultural heritage. From misty mountains and bubbling geothermal landscapes to tranquil onsen and everyday life with local families, this region invites travelers to connect deeply with Japan's natural rhythms, spiritual roots, and heartfelt hospitality.



ASEAN Blog -Expo 2025

Notes:

- The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.
- Items 7 and 8 are based on information from JNTO partners.

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