

August 21, 2025

Festival and Event

1. Nagasaki Kunchi festival celebrating the city's multicultural heritage Oct 7-9



© NPOTA

Immerse in a vibrant three-day celebration at Nagasaki Kunchi, held from October 7 to 9 as the autumnal rite of Suwa Shrine, which honors the city's guardian deity. The festival dates back to 1634, evolving over the years into a colorful mix of Japanese, Chinese, and European traditions — a definitive proof of the port city's history of multicultural ties. Performers, led by kasaboko (elaborately decorated spinning umbrellas) — jaodori (dragon dance), shishi (lion dance), Chinese and Dutch ships, and so on, go around the city. (The performances vary depending on which town groups take part each year.) The event, whose performances are designated as nationally important intangible folk cultural properties, is said to have been highly reputed for its splendor since the Edo Period. The performances can be watched at various locations in the city, including paid venues. Some of the seats for spectators need to be reserved in advance.

[Nagasaki Kunchi](#)

Festival and Event

2. Savor sacred sake at the Doburoku Festival in Shirakawa-go, Gifu Oct 14-19



©Shirakawa Village Office

The Doburoku Festival in Shirakawa-go, the UNESCO World Heritage-listed village known for its Gassho-style wooden houses, is a series of rites held at the area's shrines from October 14 to 19, where the villagers express gratitude for rich harvest and pray for peace and safety in the community. "Doburoku" is a cloudy (unfiltered) sake, brewed specifically for these rites and then served for the residents and visitors. Under Japan's strict brewing laws, the local shrines are licensed to brew doburoku solely for religious purposes, and the sake served at the rites can only be tasted at the event venues. Each shrine begins preparing the sake — based on the local recipe handed down for generations — in late January, when the village is still blanketed in snow. When the doburoku is served to participants following the ritual of dedication at the shrines, each venue is covered in the rich aroma of the sacred sake. This rare and authentic celebration of Japan's cultural heritage, set in a historic mountain valley village, allows tourists to join locals in intimate shrine ceremonies, sipping doburoku and connecting deeply with Japan's spiritual and agricultural traditions, creating an unforgettable experience.

[Doburoku Festival](#)

Festival and Event

3. See the Tokugawa Shogunate history reenacted at the Nikko Toshogu Autumn Festival in Tochigi Oct 16-17



kazukiatuko / PIXTA



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Nikko Toshogu Shrine is a popular historical destination accessible on a day trip from Tokyo. Its Autumn Grand Festival vividly recreates the 1617 procession that marked the transfer of the spirit of Tokugawa

Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, to Nikko, Tochigi Prefecture. The first day of the October 16-17 festival will feature a Yabusame performance by skilled archers shooting arrows from galloping horses. On the second day, over 1,000 people in authentic samurai and other attire participate in the procession, offering a glimpse into Edo Period heritage. After his death and initial burial in Kunosan in present-days Shizuoka Prefecture in 1616, Tokugawa Ieyasu's spirit was transferred the following year to Nikko to be enshrined here according to his will. Set amid Nikko's autumn foliage and located at a UNESCO World Heritage site, this festival faithfully honors the Tokugawa Ieyasu, and its rarity lies in its exclusive connection to this historic shrine. It is a massive production that offers a time-slip into the Edo Period.

[Nikko Toshogu Shrine Autumn Festival](#)

Festival and Event

4. Enjoy the roaring celebration at Niihama Taiko Festival in Ehime Oct 16-18



Every mid-October, the streets of Niihama, Ehime Prefecture roar with thunderous chants as citizens bring the vibes at the Niihama Taiko Festival. This event is believed to date back over 1,000 years, originating as a rite to implore the deities for a rich harvest. The centerpiece of the celebration is the massive, towering taiko drum floats — each about 5.5 meters high, 12 meters long, and 3 tons heavy. The biggest highlight of the event is “Kakikurabe,” in which the participating groups compete with the power and beauty of their finely-decorated floats. Around 150 men lift each of these gold-embroidered taiko-dai floats as they let out intense “Sorya! Sorya!” and other chants along with rhythmic drumbeats and whistles. Nicknamed the “men’s festival,” this display of intensity, power, and tradition — as more than 50 gorgeously decorated floats parade throughout the city — is a must-visit autumn spectacle.

[Niihama Taiko Festival](#)

Festival and Event

5. Fire up your Kyoto autumn experience at Kurama Fire Festival Oct 22

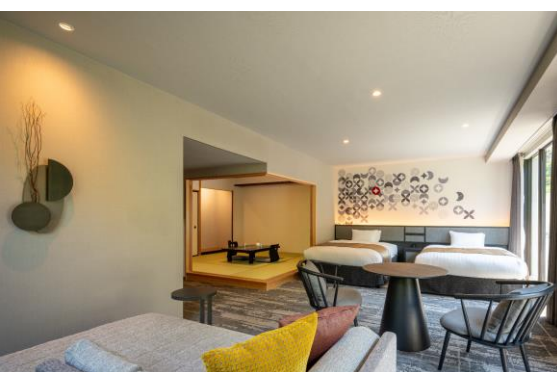
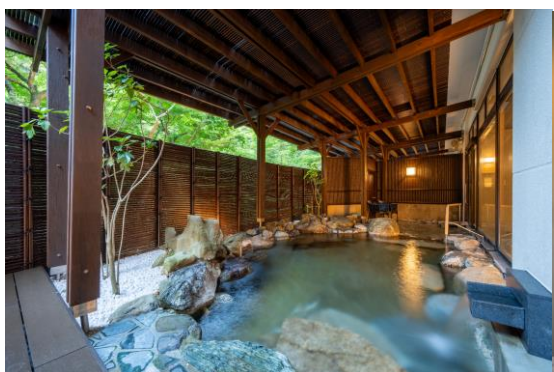


Every October 22, the normally quiet mountain village of Kurama in northern Kyoto comes alive with fiery energy as villagers carrying more than 500 lit torches join the Kurama Fire Festival. This Shinto celebration, whose origin dates back to medieval Japan, is a reenactment of the procession that transferred the Yuki Daimyoin deity to Yuki Shrine at its present location on the slopes of Mt. Kurama in 940. During the festival, local children carrying small torches join adult men carrying taimatsu (giant torches) each weighing up to 100 kg. These men, garbed in traditional “shimekomi” loincloths and warrior’s sandals, carry the big torches around the village as they all chant “Sairei, Sairyo!” Named as one of the most eccentric festivities in Kyoto, the Kurama Fire Festival offers a truly surreal spectacle. The venue is about an hour’s train ride from Kyoto Station. The festival starts around 6 p.m. and runs through midnight.

[Kurama no Hi Matsuri](#)

Renewal Open

6. Enjoy tradition and hospitality at the renovated Yamanaka Onsen Kajikaso in Ishikawa



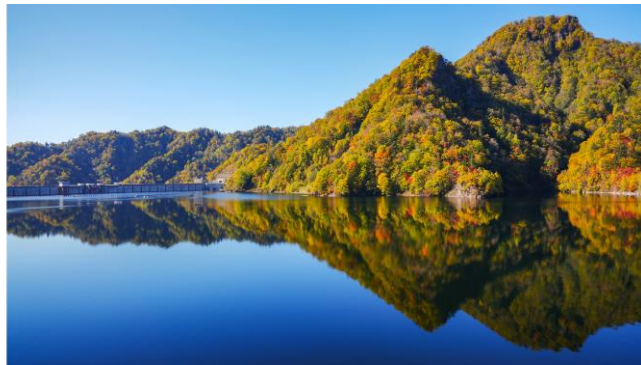
Nature, tradition, and modernity are the elements that make Yamanaka Onsen Kajikaso, which reopened on August 1, an attractive accommodation. The hotel is located in the Yamanaka Onsen hot spring area in Kaga, Ishikawa Prefecture — 30 minutes from Kanazawa Station by limited express train — with a 1,300-year-old history. It has undergone renovation to combine Japanese warmth with modern Western touches. The reopened hotel features 101 rooms, each over 35 sq meters in size, and guests can choose different styles: Japanese, Western, or mixed. Nestled in the quiet Kaga mountains, the hotel’s main attraction is the onsen, including an open-air bath, a perfect place to relax while soaking in the beauty of

the surrounding forest and the Daishoji River. At dinnertime, enjoy a sumptuous serving of Hokuriku cuisine, including Kaga vegetables, Noto wagyu beef, and fresh seasonal seafood from the nearby Sea of Japan — all prepared by top chefs. Before retiring at night, guests can savor the natural beauty of the area or marvel at the Yamanaka lacquerware displayed around the hotel.

[Yamanaka Onsen Kajikaso](#)

Special Experience

7. Behold the beauty of autumn colors on a bus tour at Jozankei, Hokkaido this October



The Jozankei area in the suburbs of Sapporo, Hokkaido, is famous for its beautiful views of autumn foliage in the upcoming season. The Jozankei autumn leaves bus tours offer a rewarding way to experience Shikotsu-Toya National Park's rich red, gold, and orange foliage. Convenient shuttle buses from the Jozankei Tourist Information Center, including guided tours to each of the five iconic viewing spots, are available in October: Jozankei Onsen area; Hoheikyo Dam; Sapporo Kokusai Ski Resort (where ski gondolas take visitors to the summit); Kamui-no-Mori fruit theme park; and Mt. Hakkenzan area. Visitors can enjoy crisp autumn air, fruit picking, local onsen hot springs, and cultural stops like the Ainu Cultural Center, blending nature, relaxation, and Hokkaido's unique charm into an unforgettable day trip. The tours range from an hour's bus ride to a full day experience. See the website for each tour's operation period and other details.

[See five great views of autumn leaves in Jozankei by bus](#)

Special Experience

8. Embark on a premium autumn tour over Niigata Fukushima-gata Lagoon



The Fukushima-gata Lagoon, located in the eastern part of the city of Niigata, is a 260-hectare wetland known as a biodiversity haven. A two-day premium tour over the lagoon, organized by tour operator Edge of Niigata, comprehensively blends adventure and cultural immersion, guiding guests through serene lakes and marshes via helicopter, traditional “katafune” boat, and walking trails, from which vibrant autumn foliage spreading across Mt. Gozu areas can be seen in the upcoming season. The wetland is a treasure trove of biodiversity, with over 220 species of wild birds and more than 450 species of plants identified. Participants in the tour engage with local traditions by foraging water chestnuts with expert guides and savoring local Niigata cuisine, in addition to sake tastings at historic breweries. Niigata is renowned for having some of Japan’s most sought-after premium sake. Local onsen arrangements are also part of the tour, offering an intimate, authentic connection to Niigata’s natural beauty and rural heritage. The tour is a high-end customized journey into Japan’s countryside to experience nature, culture, and exclusivity.

[The Legacy of Water/Edge of Niigata](#)

[Discover Niigata's Wildlife and Gastronomic Culture at Fukushima Lagoon | tsunagu Japan](#)

Special Experience

9. Fresh Miyagi seafood paired with local sake at Kesennuma Brewer’s Table



One of the greatest pleasures of travel is savoring the local food — preferably with fine drinks that compliment the fresh local ingredients. The Kesennuma Brewer’s Table (reservations required) is a program that offers a pairing dinner featuring the fresh seafood of this port city in Miyagi Prefecture with sake from the local breweries. Participants in the program first visit one of the stores of local breweries in

Kesennuma, where they can learn about the history and passion for sake brewing. Kakuboshi and Otokoyama Honten, which were rebuilt after being damaged in the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, are both registered as national important cultural treasures. The food and sake served in subsequent dinners at city restaurants (offering either Japanese or Western menus) are all locally sourced, with each dish in the course accompanied by different types of sake to match the ingredients. A premium course, available in seasons when freshly brewed sake goes on sale, includes a brewery tour and sake tasting, and brewers will join the dinner table with the participants to share their passion for brewing and explain the food/sake pairing. It is a program that will enable visitors to learn about the deep connections between the fishing town and its sake culture.

[Kesennuma Brewer's Table](#)

Special Experience

10. Experience violin-making craftsmanship at Suzuki Violin workshop in Aichi



Suzuki Violin Co. is a pioneering violin manufacturer in Japan. The Obu, an Aichi Prefecture-based company offers an English-guided tour of its workshop, where visitors can not only witness the skills and passion of its veteran artisans but experience making a part of the violin themselves. Established in 1887, Suzuki Violin became an internationally acclaimed manufacturer that won awards at the Paris World Exposition and other international competitions. At its peak during the Meiji Period, it produced 100,000 violins annually. Albert Einstein was said to have been among the fans of the instrument made by the company, and participants in the tour can see a handwritten letter from the theoretical physicist at the workshop. Along with learning the company's history, they can try their hand at varnishing a violin part called "bridge" — which holds the strings above the body and transmits their vibrations to the soundboard — and turning it into a strap to take home as a souvenir.

[Suzuki Violin Workshop Tour](#)

[Suzuki Violin Manufacturing](#)

Notes:

- The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.

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