

February 24, 2026

New Open

1. Capella to open first Japan property in Kyoto Mar 2026



Capella Kyoto will open in late March in Miyagawa-cho, a traditional “kagai” (flower town), or geisha district, in Japan’s ancient capital. The luxury hotel is located just steps away from Miyagawa-cho Kaburenjo, a theater dedicated to the performing arts of maiko and geiko — Kyoto’s apprentice and fully trained traditional entertainers. Designed in the style of a machiya (townhouse), Capella Kyoto features 89 rooms and suites. The four-story hotel positions itself as a haven of heritage, inspiring deeper cultural understanding through its curated collection of Japanese artworks and artifacts. Together, the rooms form a harmonious square around a serene courtyard and gentle water feature. Each room comes with bespoke amenities and views of Miyagawa-cho, a neighborhood where well-preserved traditional teahouses and machiya line the streets, creating an atmospheric setting ideal for strolling and catching glimpses of geishas gracefully making their way to appointments. Of the hotel’s 29 suites, six are equipped with private hot spring baths. Each accommodation is furnished in soothing hues and intricate textures, with carefully considered details that echo centuries of craftsmanship, reinterpreted for a contemporary setting. Guests are spoiled for choice when it comes to dining. Options include the first international outpost opened by California’s three-Michelin-starred SingleThread, showcasing Japanese cuisine that highlights Kyoto’s heritage. For those seeking a deeper connection with Kyoto’s centuries-old heritage, Capella Curates offers unique experiences beyond the hotel, including a hands-on session to craft a Japanese lacquer bowl and a visit to a 150-year-old atelier specializing in geta (traditional wooden footwear).

[Capella Kyoto](#)

New Open

2. RIHGA Royal Hotels to launch new condominium resort in Okinawa Apr 1



RIHGA Royal Hotels will open its first condominium resort in Okinawa on April 1. Located in Chatan Town on Okinawa’s main island, RIHGA Royal Resort Okinawa Chatan is about a 35-minute drive from Naha Airport. Located next to American Village, a popular entertainment and shopping complex, the hotel is described as “an urban resort with an American West Coast vibe,” where guests can enjoy “a luxury holiday filled with light, color, and elegance.” The hotel comprises 209 guest rooms, all exceeding 40 square meters, with the largest spanning 242 square meters. Furnished with elegant wooden furniture and stylish fabrics, the rooms offer a relaxed seaside atmosphere. Each room has large windows that invite natural light and provide open views of the Okinawan cityscape. Some room types additionally offer ocean and sunset views. Equipped with kitchens, laundry facilities, and balconies, the accommodations feature flexible room configurations, including twin rooms and larger options with up to six beds. On the 18th floor, a rooftop deck includes an infinity pool, a premium lounge, and a communal bath with a sauna, offering panoramic views of the expansive sky and the coastline.

[RIHGA Royal Resort Okinawa Chatan](#)

Renewal Open

3. Time travel to Edo era when Uzumasa Kyoto Village reopens Mar 28



©Toei Uzumasa Eigamura Co., Ltd.

Uzumasa Kyoto Village invites visitors to step back into the Edo era when it reopens on March 28. Formerly known as Toei Kyoto Studio Park, the immersive experience park was created about 50 years ago by Japan’s leading producer of samurai films and TV dramas. In phase one of its reopening, it will be reborn as a place where history, culture, and entertainment seamlessly converge. Located just 30 minutes by train from Kyoto Station, it is the only theme park in Japan where guests can experience authentic “jidaigeki” (period drama) settings. Visitors can enjoy a ninja attraction and the opportunity to dress up in a kimono of their choice, such as those worn by a samurai or geisha. They are free to wander the park’s open sets, enjoy immersive live performances, and try hands-on

cultural experiences such as tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and Noh — a classical form of theater combining music, dance, and drama. Visitors can also savor a wide range of Japanese flavors at on-site food and beverage venues, including cafes, a craft beer brewery, and a Kyoto-style gourmet dining restaurant. As evening falls, the park transforms into an illuminated landscape of softly glowing lanterns, offering a distinctly different and atmospheric way to experience Kyoto until its closing time at 9 p.m. The park’s revamp is being carried out in three stages. Phases two and three of its reopening are slated for 2027 and 2028, when new facilities such as a nightlife district zone and a theater will be added.

[Uzumasa Kyoto Village](#)

Festival and Event

4. Enjoy a dramatic replay of history at the Yonezawa Uesugi Festival in Yamagata Apr 29–May 3



©Yonezawa City Tourism Department

Like a giant picture scroll unfolding, the Yonezawa Uesugi Festival brings history to life in a dramatic annual spectacle. The festival is held from April 29 to May 3 in Yonezawa, a city at the southern end of Yamagata Prefecture. The event is centered around Uesugi Shrine, where the legendary warlord Uesugi Kenshin is enshrined, and the downtown area. Warriors clad in traditional armor march alongside portable shrines, creating a vivid historical procession through Yonezawa. The festival’s main highlight is a breathtaking reenactment of the Kawanakajima battle on May 3, said to depict one of the largest struggles of the era. Paid seating offers the best views of the full spectacle. Around 700 participants act as warriors from both sides to stage an all-out battle, vividly recreating the chaos of combat between Uesugi warriors and enemy forces, including a dramatic river crossing. Adventurous visitors can apply in advance to join a procession by the Uesugi forces and take part in the battle reenactment as members of the troop. After watching the battle, visitors can stroll through Uesugi Shrine to enjoy cherry blossoms at their peak, beautifully illuminated at night.

[Yonezawa Uesugi Festival](#)

Seasonal Topic

5. Celebrate spring with a firefly squid feast in Hyogo Apr 5



Held each year in early April, the Hamasaka Minato Firefly Squid Festival celebrates the arrival of spring by offering one of this coastal region’s most iconic seasonal delicacies at its freshest. This year’s festival will be held on April 5 at the Hamasaka Fishing Port Auction Market in northern Hyogo, an area known for Japan’s largest catch of “hotaru ika” (firefly squid). The event’s standout attraction is the dramatic kamaage demonstration, where large batches of firefly squid are hoisted by crane and boiled in a 1.5-meter-wide pot. Visitors can sample a variety of dishes, including freshly prepared kamaage firefly squid. Adding to the lively atmosphere is a unique eating contest, in which participants race to see who can eat the most firefly squid within a set time. Whether you are a seafood lover or simply seeking a memorable spring experience, the festival deserves a spot on your calendar. Beyond the event, local restaurants continue to serve fresh firefly squid dishes, inviting visitors to savor the flavors of the region throughout the season.

[Hamasaka Minato Firefly Squid Festival](#)

*The festival’s date will be updated on the website soon.

Adventure Travel

6. Discover the birthplace of Japan’s oldest hydronic rice cultivation on an e-bike journey through Karatsu’s unspoiled rural landscape, Saga



©Karatsu City

The Chinese characters for “Karatsu” mean “a port leading to the continent.” Rice, the staple of the Japanese diet, is said to have first entered Japan through Karatsu, a coastal city in Saga Prefecture. Visitors can now learn insights like this from a two-day, one-night e-bike cycling tour that explores local food culture and daily life in Karatsu. Accompanied by a cycling guide, a nationally certified interpreter-guide, and an escort vehicle, participants ride through a richly varied landscape of coastal scenery and rural countryside, including the terraced rice paddies of Hamanoura. The itinerary also includes key cultural

and historical sites such as Matsurokan, which exhibits artifacts related to Japan's earliest rice cultivation. For lunch, participants have the opportunity to enjoy dishes made with local ingredients at a restaurant overlooking the islands of Imari Bay. After lunch, the tour moves on to Mishima Shrine, where participants can connect with locals and learn about the deep relationship between fishing and faith. Other stops include the Yobuko Morning Market, famed for its exceptionally fresh seafood such as squid, and Cape Hado, where locally caught turban shells are grilled on site. Accommodation includes a relaxing one-night stay at an inn offering panoramic views of the blue waters of the Genkai Sea and the nearby islands.

[A journey exploring the food and livelihoods brought by the Sea of Genkai, offering an opportunity to appreciate the deep connection between the region's natural environment and its people.](#)

Adventure Travel

7. Explore Shimanto River through one-day adventure by train and bicycle in Kochi



© Kochi Escapes

Kochi is the largest of Shikoku's four prefectures, stretching across much of the island's southern side, where rivers meander through rugged mountains and deep forests that blanket about 80 percent of the land. The Shimanto River is one of them. Known as Japan's last remaining undammed rivers, it is famed for its clear waters and submersible bridges built to withstand flooding. Through a tour offered by Kochi Escapes, visitors can explore it with a one-day journey by train and bicycle. Participants meet their English-speaking guide at JR Kochi Station and take an express train to Kubokawa Station in Shimanto Town. From there, they ride the JR Yodo Line, which runs alongside the Shimanto River and offers views of an unspoiled landscape with mountains on both sides of the river. After the train journey, participants cycle 20–25 kilometers along the river, passing quiet villages where daily life unfolds in harmony with nature. Before traveling back to Kochi City from Kubokawa, there is time to explore the town and visit Iwamoto-ji Temple, a stop on the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Customization of the tour is possible.

[Explore the Shimanto River by Local Train and Bicycle—1 day tour from Kochi city](#)

Special Experience

8. Master authentic Yamagata ramen in a half-day hands-on experience



© YAMAGATA EXPERIENCE

Ramen consistently ranks among the Japanese dishes foreign visitors most want to try — and no other prefecture takes it more seriously than Yamagata. With the highest number of shops and per-capita consumption in the country, it is known as Japan’s “Ramen Prefecture.” For time-strapped travelers with a genuine passion for Japanese food culture, a half-day gourmet adventure is available for them to master Japan’s beloved soul food. The hands-on ramen creation experience takes place in a real ramen restaurant alongside a professional chef. Participants learn the fundamentals of building ramen’s foundational flavor, starting with preparing tender chashu (braised pork). The class also covers customizing karamiso (spicy miso paste) to suit individual tastes, and the precise timing needed to cook fresh noodles to their ideal texture. Compact yet immersive, the experience offers an authentic look into Yamagata’s ramen obsession while equipping participants with practical skills and insider knowledge. All ingredients are provided, along with an English-speaking guide and round-trip transfers from participants’ accommodations or stations.

[Yamagata Ramen Creation Experience: Master the Flavors, Perfect for Shorter Itineraries!](#)

Special Experience

9. Sip local Japanese sake with custom-made lacquered glasses in Fukui



© Tsutomu Ogino (TOMART:PhotoWorks)

As Japanese sake pairing becomes increasingly popular, a distinctive way to elevate the experience with specially lacquered sake glasses can be found at Kubota Liquor Store in Fukui Prefecture. Established in 1914, the store is located in Sabae City, an area renowned for its Echizen lacquerware. A unique program created by local tourism organization SOE invites visitors to sample a range of sake at the shop. Using sake glasses lacquered exclusively for the store by a master artisan of Echizen lacquerware, guests can try different types of local sake selected by the owner, who explains how glass shape influences aroma and flavor. The transparent glass reveals the subtle

brown hue of natural lacquer, which gradually deepens over time, offering a visual pleasure unique to natural materials. Applying lacquer not only alters the appearance of the glass but may also subtly influence how the sake's flavor is perceived. Lacquer also offers a practical advantage due to its natural antibacterial properties, as confirmed by scientific studies.

[Japanese Local Sake Tasting with Lacquered Glasses](#)

Special Experience

10. Visit Asuka Village and learn about Japan's first imperial capital in Nara



While Kyoto is well known as Japan's ancient capital, many visitors may not realize that the country was founded in Asuka between the late 6th and 7th centuries. Asuka Village, as it is known today, is located in Nara Prefecture, about an hour by train from Kyoto, Osaka, and Kansai International Airport. Known for its tranquil rural scenery, Asuka is often described as "Japan's nostalgic landscape," which remains beautifully preserved to this day. Visitors can choose from three types of tours organized by the Asuka Tourist Association to explore village life, accompanied by a dedicated interpreter-guide. On the two-day "Asuka, The First Capital of Japan" tour, participants explore archaeological sites from the Asuka period, a pivotal era when the foundations of Japan's economy, politics, and culture were formed. The sites include numerous tumuli, or ancient burial mounds, which offer a glimpse into Japan's megalithic civilization. History, however, is not the village's only appeal. Two additional tours offer glimpses into local life and food culture, with hands-on experiences such as pressing soy sauce at a brewery known for its traditional wooden barrels and sutra-copying at Kawahara-dera temple in a state of quiet clarity and inner stillness. There is also a visit to a local farm to mingle with locals and learn about everyday life in a satoyama (rural countryside). For accommodation, visitors can choose between a restored 150-year-old farmhouse registered as a National Tangible Cultural Property, or a fully renovated 250-year-old traditional Japanese house.

[ASUKA The First Capital of Japan](#)

Notes:

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

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