

Japan Tourism Topics by JNTO Japan National Tourism Organization

March 9, 2026

New Open

1. OMO7 Yokohama by Hoshino Resorts to open Apr 21



OMO7 Yokohama by Hoshino Resorts will breathe new life into the former Yokohama City Hall when it opens on April 21. The hotel is part of a large mixed-use development in front of JR Kannai Station, the heart of Yokohama's port area. The new development includes a gourmet street featuring 34 restaurants and pubs. Operating under the concept "Groove to Yokohama-ism," OMO7 Yokohama blends the city's rich history and culture with contemporary sensibilities. The hotel offers 276 rooms across nine types, including distinctive "yagura" rooms with loft-like elevated beds and spacious yagura suites. An iconic grand staircase from the former City Hall's public hall has been preserved and reinterpreted, now linking the hotel's first and second floors. Guests can also enjoy OMO Bakery, OMO Dining, and a range of cultural experiences highlighting Yokohama's international influences and local traditions. Guests are invited to explore the surrounding neighborhood on guided OMO Ranger tours that showcase the city's best-kept secrets, and to enjoy local cuisine at one of the 34 bustling eateries.

[OMO7 Yokohama](#)

2. Explore the birthplace of Japan's carp streamer festivals in Kumamoto Mar 28-Apr 23



Children's Day in Japan is hard to miss. Each year on May 5, colorful carp-shaped streamers are displayed outside homes, schools, and public spaces across the country. Known as "koinobori," these decorations express families' hopes for their children, traditionally boys, to grow strong and healthy. Tsuetate Onsen in Kumamoto Prefecture is widely regarded as the birthplace of Japan's koinobori festivals. Ahead of Children's Day this year, the hot spring town will host a seasonal celebration from March 28 to April 23. Thousands of brightly colored carp streamers — once a modest display but now numbering more than 3,000 — will be suspended above the Tsuetate River that runs through the town, creating a vivid spectacle against the valley backdrop. The event has become a compelling reason to visit this tranquil hot spring settlement known for its nostalgic atmosphere. While exploring the area, travelers drawn to quiet streets and old-fashioned charm can still find public hot spring steam vents around town, which are traditionally used to cook eggs or sweet potatoes.

[Tsuetate Carp Streamer](#)

[Tsuetate Onsen at Kumamoto Kyushu](#) (Japanese only)

Festival and Event

3. Witness one of Japan's largest festivals, Dontaku, unfold in Fukuoka May 3-4



© Festival of Fukuoka-shi people Hakata Dontaku harbor festival

The Hakata Dontaku Minato Festival in Fukuoka City is widely regarded as one of Japan's largest festivals. With about 30 stages set up in different locations across the city for traditional and modern performances, the two-day celebration is impressive in scale, consistently drawing more than two

million spectators. Held on May 3 and 4 during Golden Week — a major spring holiday period in Japan — Hakata Dontaku is a citywide festival of music, dance, and community. Said to date back more than 800 years, it begins with the Hakata Matsubayashi, a colorful procession in which the Three Gods of Good Fortune — Fukujin, Ebisu, and Daikoku — walk alongside “chigo,” elaborately dressed children who participate in the parade. The Dontaku-tai (local groups) then kick off a spectacular parade of more than 30,000 participants. The festival concludes on the evening of May 4 with the lively So-Odori mass dance, where spectators are invited to join locals in a joyful finale that embodies the inclusive spirit of Hakata Dontaku.

[Festival of Fukuoka-shi people Hakata Dontaku harbor festival Mobile DONTAKU \(MOBA DON\)](#)

[Hakata Dontaku](#)

Festival and Event

4. Hamamatsu Festival in Shizuoka offers spectacular kite battles and illuminated float parades May 3-5



©Hamamatsu and Lake Hamana Tourism Bureau

A dynamic early-summer celebration held from May 3 to 5 in Hamamatsu City, western Shizuoka, will bring together residents from more than 170 towns to send giant kites soaring into the sky. Held annually, the three-day Hamamatsu Festival celebrates the arrival of firstborn children while praying for the healthy growth of all children. On the festival’s opening day, each town marks the birth of firstborns by flying large “first kites” emblazoned with the children’s names and family crests. The highlight is the intense Kite-Cutting Battle at the Nakatajima Kite Flying Grounds, set on coastal sand dunes. There, teams test their strength and skill as they grapple with tangled strings, while the powerful and stirring sounds of the Rappa-tai (trumpet bands) rally the competitors with bold blasts. Similar contests are also held at the same venue on May 4 and 5. Each evening, the focus shifts downtown to the Goten-yatai Procession, in which more than 80 elaborately decorated floats parade through the streets. Distinct from many traditional festivals in Japan, the Hamamatsu Festival is a fully community-driven event rather than a ritual tied to a shrine or temple.

[Hamamatsu Festival – Japan’s Kite Battle and Night Parade](#)

Festival and Event

5. Sendai Aoba Festival fills streets with vibrant dances and parades in Miyagi May 16-17



For two days each year on the third weekend of May, the streets of Sendai come alive with dynamic dance performances and festival floats, creating scenes that evoke the distinctive aesthetics associated with Lord Date Masamune. This year, the Sendai Aoba Festival will be held on May 16 and 17 in Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, often dubbed the “City of Trees” for its abundant greenery and zelkova tree-lined streets. With about 20,000 participants, the festival is said to attract nearly one million visitors annually. On May 16, nearly 5,000 dancers will gather to perform the energetic Suzume Odori (Sparrow Dance). May 17 marks the festival’s main day, when a 2.4-kilometer parade fills the streets with 12 wheeled floats, mikoshi (portable shrines) from Aoba Shrine, costumed warriors, and cheering spectators. The festival traces its origins to the Sendai Festival of 1655. Today, it blends centuries-old tradition with broad community participation, creating a vibrant celebration of dance, history, and local pride.

[Sendai Aoba Festival](#)

Adventure Travel

6. Trek through spring greenery and wild cherry blossoms on Yakushima Island, Kagoshima



©Yakushima Town

Yakushima Island, with about 20 percent of its land designated as one of Japan’s first UNESCO World Natural Heritage sites, is well known among international travelers. Located about 40 minutes from

Kagoshima Airport by plane, it is also known as the “Alps of the Ocean,” as roughly 90 percent of the island is covered in forest. Yakushima spans a wide range of climates, from subtropical coastlines to cool, misty mountains, all waiting to be explored. Spring is one of the best seasons for trekking on Yakushima. In April, wild cherry blossoms bloom in the highlands, their pale pink petals and red buds standing out against fresh greenery and ancient cedar forests. Before the rainy season begins in mid-May, hikers can enjoy relatively stable conditions and clear mountain views. One of the most rewarding routes leads to Taikoiwa (Drum Rock), a massive granite outcrop at about 1,050 meters above sea level in Shiratani Unsuikyo Ravine. From Taikoiwa, trekkers are treated to sweeping views of Yakushima’s peaks rising beyond 1,800 meters. Shiratani Hiroba serves as the starting point for some trekking courses, including routes that lead to massive cedar trees said to be more than 3,000 years old. Visitors can choose the course they prefer depending on their skills.

[Spring Trekking on Yakushima Island: Experience Wild Cherry Blossoms and Fresh Greenery](#)

[Guided Tours in English | Yakushima guide office Sangakutaro](#)

Seasonal Topic

7. Spring opens a stunning snow corridor on the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route



©Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route

Each spring, the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route linking Nagano and Toyama reopens for one of Japan’s most dramatic seasonal journeys. A renowned springtime sight along the route is the “snow walls,” which are accessible from April 15 to June 25. At the highest section, between Murodo and Midagahara, the snow walls rise up to 18 meters, creating a surreal passage of white beneath clear blue skies. Murodo’s cool temperatures mean the snow melts slowly even in late June, allowing visitors to admire the snow walls set against sweeping views of snowcapped peaks. Visitors can walk across snowy fields around Murodo, where sightings of the alpine ptarmigan — sometimes referred to as “messengers from God” — are possible from late May to June, particularly near the reflective waters of Mikurigaike Pond. The Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route offers a rare opportunity to experience Japan’s mountains at their most awe-inspiring.

[Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route: A Spectacle-Studded Journey Across the North Japan Alps | Stories | The Official Tourism Website of Toyama "Visit Toyama"](#)

[Tateyama-Kurobe Alpine Route: Spring Seasonal Attraction April-June](#)

Seasonal Topic

8. Sear your own bonito over straw flames and savor Kochi's iconic dish



©VISIT KOCHI JAPAN

One of the best ways to get off the beaten track in Japan is through local food, and in Kochi Prefecture, that means katsuo (bonito). There are two seasonal varieties: “hatsu-katsuo,” the first bonito of spring; and “modori-katsuo,” the returning bonito of autumn. The spring catch is prized for its lean, firm meat and light flavor, and there is no better place to enjoy it than in Kochi, which has the highest consumption of katsuo in Japan. The local way to enjoy it is Katsuo no Tataki — Kochi's quintessential food. The fish is prepared using a searing method known as “warayaki,” in which thick fillets are briefly thrust into flames from burning rice straw. The result is a richly aromatic katsuo with a flavor distinct from other styles of sashimi. At Katsuobune Tosa Tataki Dojo, visitors can go beyond simply tasting Katsuo no Tataki by searing it themselves. Using special grills under staff guidance, participants skewer a fresh fillet and thrust it into the flames, locking in a smoky aroma while keeping the center rare. The experience ends with freshly sliced bonito served sashimi-style, ready to be enjoyed moments after grilling.

[Katsuo no Tataki \(Seared Bonito\): Kochi's Soul Food](#)

Sports Tourism

9. Embrace the spirit of Japan through a kendo experience in Nara



The spirit of Japan can be expressed in many forms, from cuisine and craftsmanship to ancient martial arts. Among them, kendo offers a powerful entry point into Japan's deeper cultural essence. More than a sport, kendo embodies principles such as courtesy, focus, and self-discipline. In Ikaruga, a town in Nara Prefecture shaped by 1,400 years of history, a unique experience invites participants to immerse themselves in the spirit of the samurai. Held at Iwaki Dojo, this approximately two-hour

kendo program deepens understanding of Japanese history and spirituality under the careful guidance of experienced instructors, and is suitable even for those with no prior martial arts experience. Participants don a traditional kendo uniform to learn proper posture, movements, and how to handle a bamboo sword. The experience accommodates between 2 and 20 participants. Transportation service is available for groups of fewer than 10 people. As an optional add-on, participants can wind down after training by making their own matcha au lait at a nearby cafe.

[Immerse Yourself in the Samurai Spirit: A Kendo Experience](#)

Luxury Travel

10. Escape the crowds on an exclusive cruise to Miyajima and Hiroshima's islands



Miyajima's Itsukushima Shrine is one of Japan's most recognizable landmarks, long favored by photographers for its seemingly floating torii gate set against the sea. A private charter cruiser offers visitors a new way to experience this UNESCO World Heritage site, along with other islands of Hiroshima Bay. Departing from Hatsukaichi Marina, the intimate cruise is designed for small groups of 2 to 10 and allows complete freedom to choose your route within the operating area, which includes Miyajima and Hiroshima, as well as the islands of Etajima and Kure. The well-appointed cruiser features front and rear decks, an upper deck ideal for panoramic views, and a comfortable interior with a living area and onboard toilet. From the water, guests can admire the distinctive torii gate from rare vantage points, glide beneath large bridges, and pass uninhabited islands scattered across the Seto Inland Sea. Stops at island piers are possible within the chartered time, whether to explore ashore or linger at sea. Available as a three- or six-hour charter, the experience can be tailored as a family outing, a romantic sunset cruise, or a leisurely island-hopping escape.

[Luxury Cruise Around Miyajima](#)

Notes:

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

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