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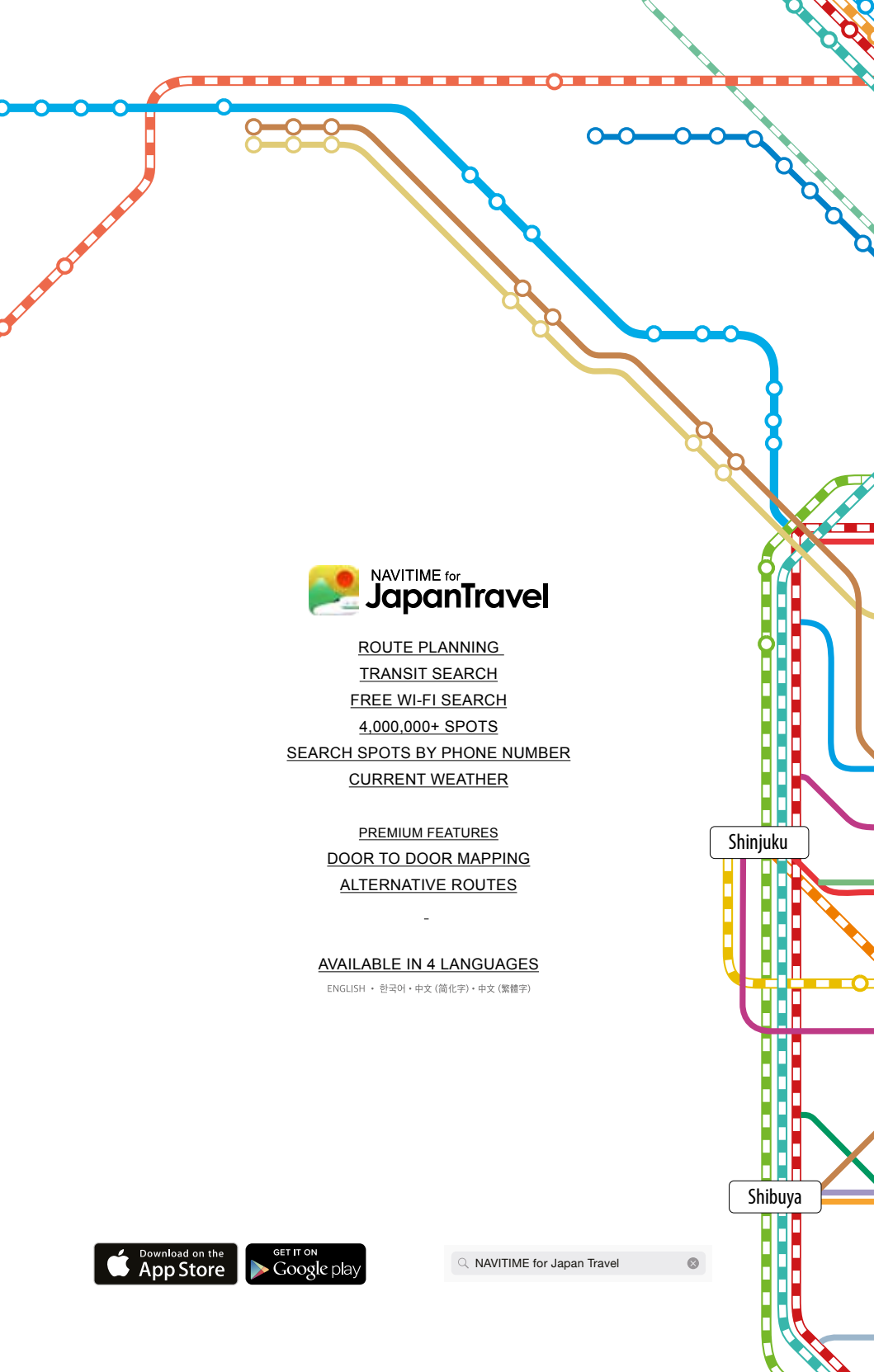
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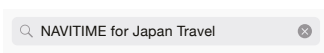
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秋
Autumn



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Miyagawa Shuntei, 1899

AUTUMN NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

NAVITIME FOR JAPAN TRAVEL TEAM

October through December is the season for getting out in nature to enjoy “koyo” - the autumn leaves.

After the heat and humidity of summer breaks, Japan’s most beautiful season sets in. If the spring is all about cherry blossom viewing, autumn is all about the changing colors from north to south.

Whether you’re relaxing in an open air hot spring sipping sake, or riding through the mountains in a steam locomotive, there are so many ways to make the most of the season and the good weather.

When you’re traveling, it’s impossible to know all of your options, which is why in this issue we’ll share our personal favorites. For example, did you know that you can row a boat down a river in Kyoto lined with a breathtaking view of red maple trees?

And while we’re talking about trees, how about picking fresh fruit? We compiled a list of autumn fruits and the prefectures that grow the most delicious ones. Most places offer all-you-can-eat plans, so feel free to indulge!

We’ll also share some of our tips for enjoying Nikko, a town of hot springs, nature, history, and one of the more unique historical them parks in the world.

Just two hours from Tokyo, Nikko is one the most popular day trips for Tokyoites, and we’re recommending a few of the area’s hidden gems.

KEYWORD OF THE SEASON:

紅葉 KOYO

AUTUMN LEAVES

If you can’t make it out to the countryside, we have some suggestions for enjoying the outdoors right in the heart of downtown Tokyo, and even go fishing in the moat of the shogun’s castle (this is actually a thing!).

NAVITIME for Japan Travel is a mobile app that helps you plan how to get around Japan. In this print edition we want to give you some cool ideas to make your trip extra special. Though we’re already the most popular navigation tool for travel in Japan, it’s

our goal to do more, and help our users find more off-beat destinations and experiences, and do Japan like a pro.

The best advice we can give for autumn is to get yourself out of the city and explore Japan’s exquisite natural beauty. That’s generally our advice for any season anyway, but we’re huge fans of Japan’s autumn so this issue is particularly special to us. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did making it for you.



UNIQUE KOYO ROUTES

Japan's beautiful autumn season is a feast for the eyes, and there are plenty of ways to experience the views as you travel.

SAID KARLSSON

The mild weather that autumn brings, combined with the spectacular views it offers, makes this the best time to enjoy the outdoors in Japan, and with some simple planning you can catch the koyo from a number of unique ways of getting around.

By Ropeway | Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route

This ropeway is a part of the "Alpine Route", a scenic path that crosses the northern part of the Japanese Alps, located around the border of Toyama Prefecture and Nagano Prefecture. Besides being

the longest unsupported ropeway in all of Japan, it has some of the best views of autumn leaves in the entire country.

The ride takes about seven minutes, but expect to spend considerably more time – about eight hours – if you want to traverse the entire 90 kilometer route by an assortment of charming buses, cablecars, and trolleys. There are also several lodging options if you want to spend the night in the mountains.

Due to the varying elevations in the area, leaves turn at different times, but expect the color change between mid-September and mid-December. Another highlight of the Alpine Route is Mt. Tateyama, 3,000 meters high and usually covered in snow from late September until April.



If you're traveling from Tokyo, the easiest way to get to the Alpine Route is by taking the shinkansen to Nagano, and then catching a highway bus for 90 minutes to Omachi, the eastern entrance of the Alpine Route.

By Boat | Arashiyama

Japan has a myriad of rivers, and the leisurely pace of a boat is an excellent way to experience the autumn foliage. There is most likely a suitable river nearby, no matter which part of the country you happen to be in. However, one of our favorite rides on the water is along the Hozugawa River which runs from Kameoka to Arashiyama in Kyoto. The 16 kilometer boat ride takes you through breathtaking ravines that are gorgeous all year round.

This river has been used by boats since the 700s, and due to the beautiful surroundings, the river became a popular sightseeing spot from the beginning. Pleasure cruises, running along the Hozugawa since 1895, take about two hours, and the best time to view autumn leaves is from the middle of November to early December.

To get there from Kyoto, take the JR Sagano Line to Kameoka Station, and the cruise starting point is located just an eight minute walk away.

By Car | Metasequoia Namiki

One of Japan's most scenic roads is located near Takashima in Shiga Prefecture, not far from the western shores of Lake Biwa. Here, a 2.4 kilometer stretch of National Road 287, not far from the town of Makino, is surrounded by hundreds of Metasequoia trees planted in the late 1980s as a biology class project by a local school. Thanks to their efforts, car enthusiasts can cruise through one of the top scenic spots in all of the country. If you're headed this way, the highest chance of catching the vivid colors here is in November.

On Foot | Kamikochi

Kamikochi is a popular nature preserve in Nagano, not far from the Alpine Route. The area is a plateau surrounded by some of the most impressive mountain scenery in the country, and part of the Chubu Sangaku National Park. Kamikochi is especially famous for hiking, and its spectacular vistas have made it an extremely popular location in October.

The area has several active volcanoes, and many of the lakes were formed by past eruptions. Most are the result of mudslides that disrupted the Azusa River within the last 100 years, leaving decaying trees that remain standing in the middle of some of the lakes.



If you're an experienced hiker, you'll probably opt for one of the more advanced routes up the mountain peaks, but some of these routes take several days and there's already snowfall in October at the higher altitudes. Inexperienced hikers should go for the shorter routes around the lakes. Private vehicles are restricted from entering Kamikochi, so the only way to get here is by bus or taxi, and both Takayama and Matsumoto are connected to Kamikochi by bus.

By Train | Hakone Tozan Railway

Taking the railway up the mountain from Hakone-Yumoto to the hillside onsen town of Gora is a perfect way to watch the autumn leaves, and if this 40 minute leisurely trip isn't enough you can continue by taking the cable car up to Sounzan.

The train itself is half of the fun, as the Hakone Tozan is the only mountain railway in Japan that climbs up the hillside by changing direction at several switchbacks along the way. Train geek or not, the ride gives you plenty of chances to see endless hills in all imaginable hues of red, yellow, and brown.

If you venture further up in Hakone, you'll also be able to catch the snowy peak of Mt. Fuji as the perfect backdrop.

To get to Hakone-Yumoto from Shinjuku you can take the classic Odakyu Limited Express Romancecar for 90 minutes.

Get out there!

There are plenty of ways and plenty of places to take in the autumn colors all over Japan, and these were just a few of the more famous spots. Getting out into more rural areas can be a bit daunting for planning, but it's worth every effort this time of year, and getting there can be just as interesting as your destination.

BEST EXPERIENCES

- 01 **TATEYAMA ROPEWAY**
NAKANIKAWA-GUN, TATEYAMA-MACHI, TOYAMA
T/ 076 465 5775
- 02 **HOZUGAWA RIVER BOAT RIDE**
2 SHIMO-NAKAJIMA, HOZU-CHO, KAMEOKA, KYOTO
T/ 0771 22 5846
- 03 **METASEQUOIA NAMIKI**
MAKINO-CHO, TAKASHIMA, SHIGA
T/ 0740 33 7101
- 04 **KAMIKOCHI**
MATSUMOTO, NAGANO
T/ 0263 95 2433
- 05 **HAKONE TOZAN RAILWAY**
707-1 YUMOTO, HAKONE-MACHI, ASHIGARASHIMO, KANAGAWA
T/ 0460 85 5033

WELCOME TO NIKKO

For nature lovers, history fans, onsen buffs, foodies, and enthusiasts of art and architecture, Nikko has a lot to offer. It's a designated World Heritage destination that has called to pilgrims and travelers for centuries.

Just two hours from Tokyo in central Tochigi Prefecture, Nikko is a hilly, mountainous area, and home to some of Japan's most impressive nature and important shrines and temples. A popular destination for domestic and international travel, it's arguably the most famous area for autumn leaves in the Kanto region. Depending on elevation and sunlight, Nikko's leaves change at different times in different places from early October to mid-November.

Nikko began life when the priest Shodo came here in the 700s and established the forerunners of three main temples, Rinno-ji, Futara-san, and Chuzen-ji. The first shogun, Ieyasu, asked to be buried in his ancestral lands in Shizuoka and then transferred one year later to Nikko. This put Nikko on the map.

The third shogun, Iemitsu, expanded the temple complex to its current grandeur - albeit a bit over the top - and then built his own mausoleum. The surrounding hills had attracted pilgrims since the 800s, but patronage by the shogunate transformed the area into the tourist attraction it is today.

While Toshogu, the first shogun's grave, is by far the biggest attraction (and the most crowded), Nikko's real jewels lie off the beaten path. Avoiding the throngs of people, you can take a scenic pilgrimage up the mountain using the Takino'o Path (see page 12). The most ancient structures and monuments are scattered in the dense cedar forest. Many statues are covered with lush green moss and the hills are dotted with waterfalls and fresh streams, with hundreds of tiny religious objects on the path between the tomb of Shodo Shonin and Takino'o Shrine.

The Ryuokyo Gorge is a quiet stretch of the Kinugawa River that's well-known by locals, so while hordes of tourists descend upon Lake Chuzenji in fall, Ryuokyo is a peaceful alternative where you can enjoy the autumn leaves in peace. The river is fed by many clear streams and waterfalls and, unlike many of Nikko's best kept secrets, the gorge is accessible by train.

Lastly, Nikko is famous for yuba (tofu skin). It's usually served as thin sheets then dipped in soy sauce and wasabi, like sushi. You should definitely try it in one of its many forms while you're in town.



TOBU-NIKKO STATION TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER

4-3 MATSUBARA, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 22 1525

01

NIKKO TOSHO-GU

2301 SANNAI, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0560

02

AGE YUBA MANJU NO SAKAE-YA

10-1 MATSUBARA-CHO, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 1528

03

NIKKO HIGHLIGHTS

When in Tokyo, do as the Tokyoites do:
Get out of the city and enjoy the mountains, forests, and hot springs of Nikko.

Whether you're coming for the stunning nature, art and architecture, or the centuries old spiritual tradition, you could easily spend a weekend or more in the area and still not experience all the great things that Nikko has to offer.

The city is famous for its pristine streams and waterfalls. In Japan, wherever there's natural springs, you can be sure there are plenty of onsens. In fact, Kinugawa Onsen is one of the premier hot spring destinations in the Kanto Area with tons of outdoors

activities for nature lovers, as well as plenty of history and culture.

It's nearly impossible to make a perfect list, but here's what you absolutely can't miss when you're in town.

TAMUZAWA IMPERIAL VILLA 01

8-27 HONCHO, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T / 0288 53 6767

Built in 1899 for the future Emperor Taisho, the villa has 106 rooms and is surrounded by gardens and the natural beauty of Nikko's mountains. When the bombing of Tokyo escalated in 1944, the crown prince was evacuated to this site from time to time. The villa's architecture smoothly blends styles from the Edo, Meiji, and Taisho periods.

RYUOKYO CANYON 02

1357 FUJIHARA, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T / 0288 76 4111

Located right next to Ryuokyo Station or a short drive from Kinugawa Station is one of Nikko's lesser known spots. You can relax along the river and enjoy the autumn colors reflected in Nijimi no Taki (literally, the rainbow waterfall). This hike is popular with locals avoiding the crowds during peak seasons.



LAKE CHUZENJI 03

2478 CHUGUSHI, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T / 0288 55 0360

If going off the beaten path isn't your thing, the most popular destination is Lake Chuzenji, which is accessible by bus.

The mountains, lake, and autumn leaves are stunning, but to avoid crowds you should go at the crack of dawn or in late afternoon. Scenic spots are accessible by tour boats or walking paths.



TOSHO-GU 04

2301 SANNAI, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T / 0288 54 0560

This is the mausoleum of the first shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. It features 1,500 wooden sculptures and is the product of the top artists and craftsmen of the 1600s. Though it can get a bit crowded, one of the highlights is the carved relief of three monkeys representing "Hear no evil. See no Evil. Speak no Evil."

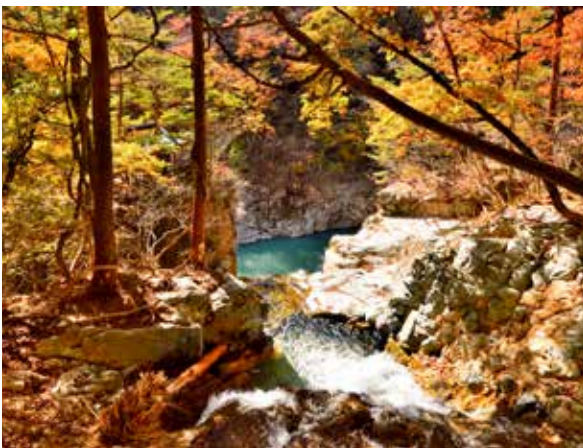


KEGON FALLS 05

CHUGUSHI, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T / 0288 55 0030

Kegon Falls is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Japan. The area is gorgeous year round; green in spring and summer, red and yellow in autumn, and white and completely frozen in winter.

The falls can be viewed from both free and paid observation decks, the latter of which is accessed by a 100 meter elevator.



NIKKO ITINERARY

The area's best-kept secrets are hidden in the mountains.
Hike Nikko like a pro!

The undisputed star of Nikko is Toshogu, the sprawling mausoleum of the first shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Famous for centuries, it's always packed with tourists - particularly in peak seasons. If you want to avoid the crowds and see all the cool stuff that the masses are missing, then this is the hike for you.

First get off the train at JR Nikko or Tobu Nikko stations and make your way by bus or on foot to Shinkyo, the sacred bridge originally reserved for envoys of the imperial court attending Futarasan Shrine. Head to the path "Shrines & Temples of Nikko". Everyone goes left but we're rebels and are taking the lesser known path on the right.

Soon we'll arrive at Hongu Shrine, a three-story pagoda, and a 1,300 year old temple dedicated to Kannon. Continue uphill about 1.5 kilometers until you come to a small red temple called Kaizando built to honor Shodo Shonin, who brought Buddhism to Nikko in 766. His grave is behind the temple. Note the piles of rocks left by past pilgrims.

Continue up the hill as you discover all of the religious objects littering the ancient path. At the top, we'll come to Takino'o Shrine, Shiraito Falls, the grove of sacred trees (one has long since collapsed on the stone fence), and the Sake Spring (unfortunately not actually flowing sake).

On our descent (about a kilometer), stop at Taiyu-in, the grave of the third Shogun, Iemitsu. His grave is more subdued than his grandfather's and became the model for future shogunal graves. At this point, we have to make a decision: Do we go home, or bite the bullet and join the crowds at Futarasan and Toshogu?



MARKY STAR

01

TOBU NIKKO STATION

4-3 MATSUBARA, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0137

02

SHINKYO

SANNAL, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0535 (FUTARA SHRINE)

03

HONGU SHRINE

SANNAL, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0535 (FUTARA SHRINE)

04

KAIZAN-DO

SANNAL, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0531 (RINNO-JI)

05

TAKINO'O SHRINE

SANNAL, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 0535 (FUTARA SHRINE)

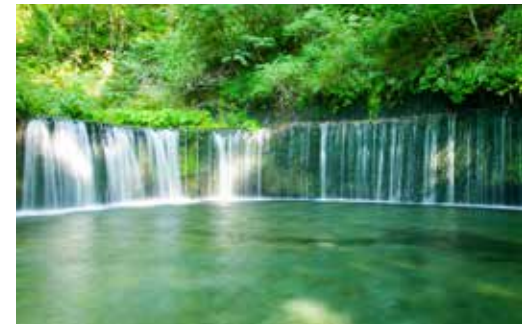
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TAIYU-IN

SANNAL, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
T/ 0288 54 1766

TIP

This is a very simplified itinerary, so be sure to pick up a map of the whole path in the Tourism Office. There's so much more to see!





EDO WONDERLAND

Step back in time to Japan's feudal golden age, the Edo Period. During more than 250 years of peace, samurai ruled the land, geisha entertained the wealthy, and the country was closed to the outside world as a unique culture flourished.

MARKY STAR

One of Nikko's top attractions is Edo Wonderland, a theme park designed to take you back in time to Edo, the former name of Tokyo and capital of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Being a huge Japanese history nerd, I was skeptical yet curious the first time I visited as a consultant for a TV show showcasing the world's most unique theme parks. I was impressed by the efforts they made to keep the experience both realistic and fun, and much of that was due to the enthusiasm and passion of the people working there. Since we're looking at Nikko in this month's issue I headed back to get the full experience.

When you arrive at Edo Wonderland you're greeted by samurai guarding a checkpoint, the sort used to strictly regulate who and what passed through

the borders of the various feudal domains. Then you continue along a kaido, a tree-lined highway connecting Edo with the rest of Japan.

In those days, travelers would arrive at the first post town outside of the city, get a room, a hot bath and a meal, drink with a courtesan, and then get a new pair of shoes to replace their beat-up traveling shoes. At Edo Wonderland, we didn't need new shoes, but our first stop was a change of clothes.

To get into the spirit, guests are encouraged to dress in period fashion based on class. You can be a samurai, merchant, farmer, or even a concubine or high ranking courtesan. The staff are fully in character too, portraying different characteristic Edoites and addressing the guests according to their social rank. Naturally, I chose to dress as a feudal

lord, and my wife a princess, the highest ranking characters available. Of course, not everyone can be a lord, so there were plenty of mid-ranking samurai and commoners.

Because of our status, samurai and townspeople would drop to the ground and bow in deference, which felt a bit strange, but it's good being rich and powerful and you get used to it pretty quickly.

Our next stop was the ninja show, even though anyone who knows me knows I'm not much of a fan because the "modern ninja" is a complete fiction. A little suspension of disbelief on vacation wasn't too much to ask, and the show is basically a non-stop action performance with well-choreographed fight scenes using katanas and ninja stars. Even for a crusty ninja-hater like me, it was actually fun.

After that, I wanted to show my wife my favorite place, Kodenma-cho Prison & Execution Grounds. This building showcases the miserable conditions of a typical Edo Period prison with exhibits depicting common methods of punishment, torture, and execution. Obviously perfect date material.

Suddenly we heard chanting and cheering, as men

with topknots carried a portable shrine down the street for a festival. Definitely better for a date than the execution ground, and Edo Wonderland hosts a festival once a day, every day.

All the revelry made us hungry, so we picked up some yakitori and popped into a teahouse for some traditional Japanese sweets and matcha.

Altogether, the food, architecture, costumes and atmosphere made stepping back into the Edo Period - with all its beauty and blemishes - a blast. With all the sights and sounds of Old Japan surrounding you, it's sort of like taking a vacation within a vacation.

EDO WONDERLAND

470-2 KARAKURA, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
0288 77 1777

01

KINUGAWA ONSEN STATION

1390 KINUGAWA-ONSEN, OHARA, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
0288 54 0560

02

From Kinugawa Onsen Station, take the regular bus (410 yen). Or, a free shuttle runs four times a day from Fujiya Kanko Center (edowonderland.net).

TIP

WHERE TO SEE KOYO

The autumn leaves take a few months to change across the country, and many famous spots have festivals and events to celebrate and enhance the experience.

There's no shortage of seasonal events linked to the changing colors of leaves throughout the country. No matter where in Japan you're bound for, there's something happening if you get the timing right.

In mid-September, the leaves start turning first up north in Hokkaido. In most of Kanto and Kansai, you can expect to get in on the action in mid-November, but be aware that in higher elevations, the leaves will start changing sooner. In Shizuoka, Osaka, central Tokyo, and parts of Kyushu, sometimes it won't start until late November or even early December!

Some temples and shrines decorate their grounds and encourage people to come and enjoy their trees in solemnity. Other places go into full on matsuri mode, featuring traditional music and food stalls. There are even places that illuminate the trees for viewing after dark, and there are some places that even do all of the above.

Luckily the leaves last a bit longer than the cherry blossoms, so perfect timing isn't as big of a deal. We've created a map showing the standard times, so if you head to an area within that timeframe you'll be just fine.

AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVALS

HAKODATE MOMI-G FESTA

KOSETSU-EN, 56 MIHARASHI-CHO, HAKODATE, HOKKAIDO
OCTOBER 22 ~ NOVEMBER 13

DAKIKAEI KOYO-SAI

DAKIKAEI VALLEY, TAZAWAKOSOTSUDA, SENBOKU, AKITA
EARLY OCTOBER ~ EARLY NOVEMBER

LIGHT-UP NIKKO 2016

NIKKO TOSHOGU SHRINE, 230 1 SANNAI, NIKKO, TOCHIGI
OCTOBER 11 ~ NOVEMBER 13

OKU-CHICHIBU OTAKI AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL

MITSUMINE SHRINE, MISTUMINE, CHICHIBU, SAITAMA
MID OCTOBER ~ MID NOVEMBER

JINGU GAIEI GINGKO FESTIVAL

MEJI JINGU GAIEI, 1-1-1 MINAMIENOKI-CHO, SHINJUKU, TOKYO
MID NOVEMBER ~ EARLY DECEMBER

FUJIKAWAGUCHI-KO AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL

KAWAGUCHIKO MOMIJI CORRIDOR, NASHIGAWA, KAWAGUCHI, YAMANASHI
NOVEMBER 1 ~ 23

KITANO TENMANGU ODOI MOMIJI-EN

KITANO TENMANGU, BAKURO-CHO, KYOTO, KAMIGYO-KU, KYOTO
EARLY NOVEMBER ~ EARLY DECEMBER

KOKO-EN KOYO-KAI

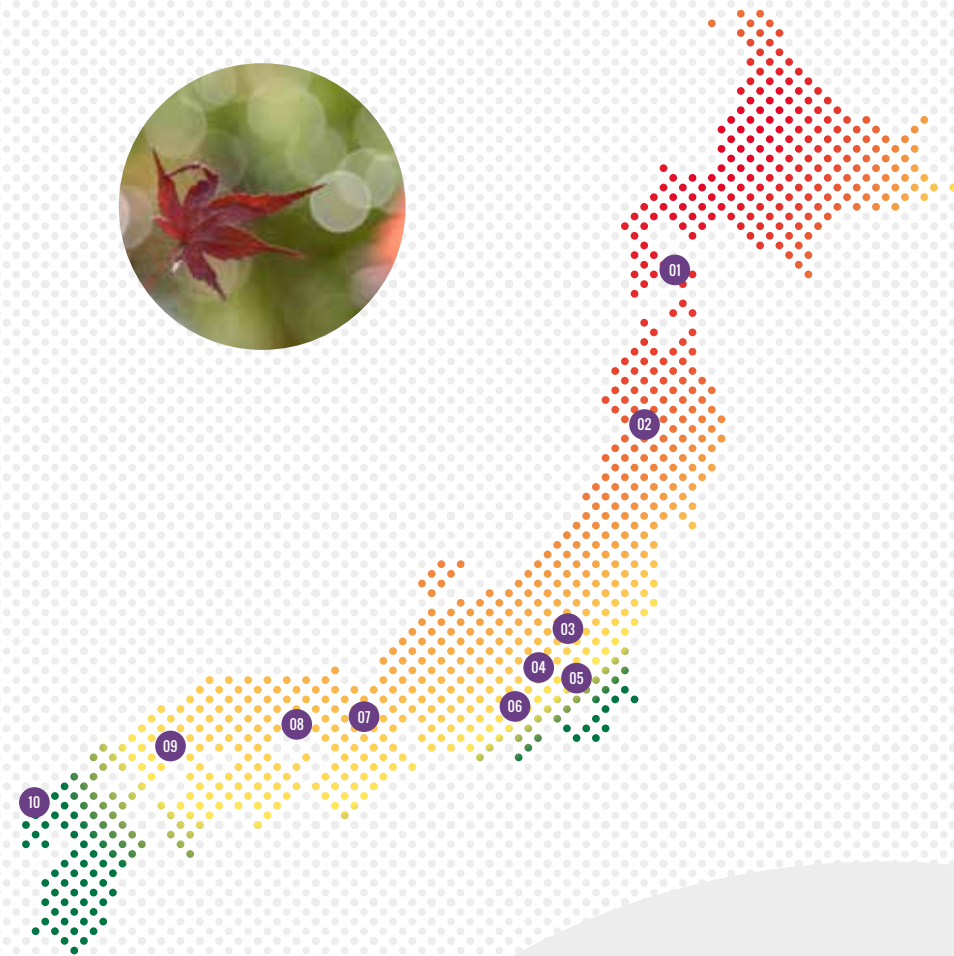
KOKO-EN (HIMEJI CASTLE), 68 HONMACHI, HIMEJI, HYOGO
NOVEMBER 18 ~ DECEMBER 4

DAISHO-IN MOMIJI FESTIVAL

DAISHO-IN, 210 MIYAJIMA-CHO, HATSUKAICHI, HIROSHIMA
NOVEMBER 9 ~ 27

MIFUNEYAMA RAKUEN AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL

MIFUNEYAMA RAKUEN, 4100 TAKEO-CHO, TAKEO, SAGA
EARLY NOVEMBER ~ EARLY DECEMBER





URBAN OUTDOORS

There are many ways to enjoy outdoor activities in the middle of central Tokyo. Here are a few of our favorite urban outdoor spots.

SAID KARLSSON

Tokyo is about as urban as it gets, but you can still pretend you're out in the countryside. One of the most accessible places to experience lush greenery and trails is the **Institute for Nature Study** between Meguro Station and Shirokanedai Station. The 20 hectare nature park has been left untouched since 1949 (though some trees are much older), and is home to over 2,000 varieties of insect, fish, mammal, and bird. Once inside, you'll forget you're actually in the middle of the world's biggest metropolis.

If you prefer something more rural, pay a visit to **Jidayubori Minka-en**, a compound of traditional farmhouses in Setagaya Ward, near Seijo Gakuen-mae Station. The houses date back to the late Edo Period (1860s) and the place is a goldmine for anyone interested in the history and life of old Japan. The staff are enthusiastic; one woman even offered us her homemade sweets.

While you're in this part of the city you can visit the open fields on the banks of the **Tama River**. This is one of the biggest green spaces in the city and is rarely crowded. The stretch between Izumi-Tamagawa Station and Futako-Tamagawa Station is a nice walk, and you can watch local anglers fishing.

But you don't have to leave central Tokyo to go fishing. Near Ichigaya Station sits the decades old

Ichigaya Fishing Point on what used to be an outer moat of Edo Castle. For a small hourly fee you can try your luck at catching rather large koi fish, though it's purely catch and release.

If you want to eat what you catch, you can head indoors to **Zauo**, a chain of seafood restaurants with an indoor fishing pond. You'll get a fishing rod and bait to catch your own dinner, and the restaurant will turn it into sashimi, sushi, or fry it depending on your preference. Expect to pay around 5,000 yen per person depending on the type of fish.

If you're really keen to get out and enjoy the city you can hit up all of these locations by bicycle. There are plenty of places renting out bikes all over town, and it's a great way to see the areas between stations. Head over to rentabike.jp for a comprehensive list of rental locations and prices.

FEATURED LOCATIONS

INSTITUTE FOR NATURE STUDY

5-21-5 SHIROKANEDAI, MINATO-KU, TOKYO
T/ 03 3441 7176

JIDAYUBORI MINKA-EN

5-27-14 KITAMI, SETAGAYA-KU, TOKYO
T/ 03 3417 8492

FUTAKO-TAMAGAWA STATION

2-22-13 TAMAGAWA, SETAGAYA-KU, TOKYO
T/ 03 3700 0405

ICHIGAYA FISHING POINT

1-1 TAMACHI, ICHIGAYA, SHINJUKU-KU, TOKYO
T/ 03 3260 1325

ZAUO

3-2-9 NISHI-SHINJUKU, SHINJUKU-KU, TOKYO
T/ 03 3343 6622

01

02

03

04

05

Japan is famous for really delicious fruit. Rather than eat the expensive stuff from specialty shops and supermarkets, why not pick your own fresh from the tree?

Seasonal foods are a big deal in Japanese culture, and on top of that, Japanese fruit tends to be of really high quality. One interesting twist to put on your trip is to get out of the big city and pick fresh fruit. It's a relaxing activity to add on to your onsen stay as well. You can pick all kinds of fruit all over the country, but we chose five autumn fruits in combination with the five prefectures most famous for them.

Generally speaking, there are two basic systems for fruit picking so the two Japanese words you'll need to know for this are tabehodai (all you can eat) and -gari (picking). Alright, let's look at some farms!

KATSUNUMA GRA-PARK

2972 KATSUNUMA, KATSUNUMA-CHO, KOFU, YAMANASHI
T/ 0553 44 0645

Katsunuma, Yamanashi is the grape capital of Japan. If you're visiting Mt. Fuji, visit Gra-Park (combining the words "grape" and "park"). They grow over 16 varieties and offer two plans. One is tabehodai (1,000 yen for normal species, 2,000 yen for high end) - all you can eat with no time limit. The other is budo-gari - 100 yen per 100 grams of normal grapes and 200 yen per 100 grams for the premium kind. Check out the Budo no Kuni Culture Hall to learn about the history of Katsunuma and grape cultivation.

NISHIJIMA NO-EN

541 SHIMOTAGA, ATAMI, SHIZUOKA
T/ 0557 68 1737

Shizuoka's moderate climate in autumn and winter is perfect for growing mikan (Mandarin oranges) along the coast. If you're staying to enjoy an onsen here, make a little time to pick some of these juicy little guys. Nishijima No-en in Atami offers two plans.

For 300 yen you have an unlimited tabehodai, or you can pick as much as you want to take home at 250 yen per kilogram.

AOMORI SIGHTSEEING APPLE GARDEN

35 AZA-OSAWA, TAMOGINO, AOMORI, AOMORI
T/ 017 738 3047

Aomori is synonymous with apples. In fact, 70% of all apples in Japan are produced here. At Aomori Sightseeing Apple Garden they grow 26 varieties on roughly 250 trees, and have two plans. You can pick three apples for 300 yen, or if you're feeling like a glutton you can do a one hour tabehodai for 1,000 yen. They also grow pears, chestnuts, peaches, prunes, and cherries, but the cost varies if you want to pick other fruit.

TAKADAI-EN

532 TAKATSUKA SHINDEN, MATSUDO, CHIBA
T/ 047 392 9134

You might be familiar with Funassyi, the hilarious and unofficial mascot of Funabashi, Chiba. That's because there are a lot of nashi (pear) growers in Funabashi. Unfortunately, only one of them allows nashi-gari but that's OK, because all of Chiba Prefecture is famous for nashi. Takadai-en grows four types of pears and offers a simple system: 650 yen per kilogram. If your group plans on buying more than 1000 yen per person, you'll need to make a reservation. But c'mon, nobody needs that many pears on vacation.

YAMASHIRO TAGA FRUITS LINE

16 ANGAI TO TAGA, IDE-CHO, TSUZUKI, KYOTO
T/ 0774 82 4110

Nara is Japan's persimmon capital. There are two types, astringent and non-astringent - both of which are eaten in different ways. If you want to take a break from sightseeing, Yamashiro Taga Fruits Line is a popular spot for persimmons (they also have mikan and grapes). There's an 800 yen tabehodai plan with no time limit. Of course, you can also buy some to take home at market price (which varies year to year). The farm is located 15 minutes from Nara by train.





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Ringo



@100SHOWZAKKI



Budo



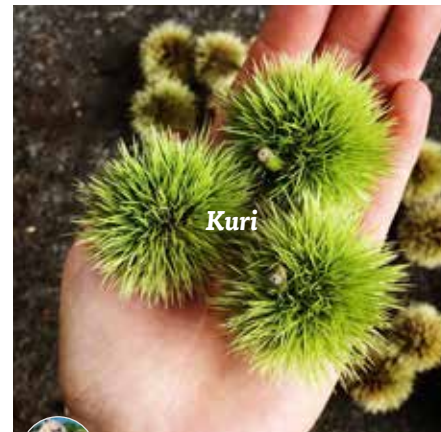
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Mikan



@AZONISHI



Kuri



@ERINOSUKE1129



Nashi



@TSUTSUMITAKAE



AUTUMN MATSURI

An important part of regional social life and culture are local festivals that occur in different seasons. These matsuri provide a connection with Japanese history and traditional spirituality.

Matsuri are traditional Japanese festivals, ranging from hydrangea matsuri in the rainy season to the samurai military drills of the Soma Numaoi. The word "matsuri" comes from the verb matsuru which means to enshrine, pray, or worship, and has its origins in Japan's native religion, Shinto. But these days, it's more of a catch-all phrase for any public festival. Everybody loves a good party, right?

There are quite a few matsuri throughout the country related to the autumn leaves (see page 17), but many have their roots in Shinto and Buddhism. Others provide business opportunities to areas that need an economic stimulus, and some, like the Azabu-Juban Matsuri, are massive money making operations that draw hundreds of food stalls from all over the country.

One of the best autumn festivals is the Kawagoe Matsuri which takes place every October in Saitama (pictured above). Huge decorated floats "battle" each other with a musical performance and cheering, in a town that has preserved much of its Edo Period charm. The event has a history stretching back more than 360 years and attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year.



In collaboration with: ohmatsuri.com

Nyu Matsuri

In October, all the Japanese gods go to Izumo Shrine in Shimane to meet. It's said that Niutsuhime no Okami, the goddess enshrined at Nyu Shrine, overslept and was late so she became depressed. In this festival the people are ordered to "laugh, laugh a lot, wahaha!" to cheer up the goddess. They carry her portable shrine, smiling and laughing the whole way. The leader of the group can lead them wherever he wants, preferably in a funny direction, such as into a river, or off the correct path.

Sawara Taisai Autumn Matsuri

This three day event takes place during the first or second weekend of October and is affiliated with Suwa Shrine. It has remained relatively unchanged

since the 1700s, featuring 14 huge floats with large dolls of historical and mythological characters, and the music and dance borrowed closely from the dominant styles of the shogun's capital. The town still retains its Edo Period post town feel, so it's easy to slip back in time. Many people like to enjoy the matsuri with a boat ride down the canal.

Kagoshima Ohara Matsuri

This autumn festival began as part of the post war recovery effort. While its history only dates back to 1949, it draws on previous local traditions, many of which date back to the Edo Period, and combines them with the Western concept of parades. A branch parade is also held in Tokyo's Shibuya neighborhood in spring.

FEATURED MATSURI

NYU MATSURI (WARAI MATSURI) 01
 HIDAKAGAWA-CHO, HIDAKA, WAKAYAMA
 THE DAY BEFORE SPORTS DAY (2ND MONDAY OF OCTOBER)

SAWARA TAISAI AKI MATSURI 02
 SAWARA-CHO, SHINJUKU-KU, KATORI, CHIBA
 2ND SATURDAY OF OCTOBER

KAGOSHIMA OHARA MATSURI 03
 YAMASHITA-CHO, KAGOSHIMA, KAGOSHIMA
 NOVEMBER 2-3



THE GREAT JAPANESE ROAD TRIP



Japan's public transportation is world-renowned, but renting a car and exploring the countryside is a liberating and underrated way to create a completely unique experience.

One of the biggest reliefs of traveling in Japan is knowing that there's almost always a train or bus to get you where you want to go. So why would you need a car to travel?

If you're planning to stay in mostly urban areas, it's true that a car is probably more hassle than it's worth, but once you're outside of the cities you'll find that nearly everyone drives everywhere, and the train lines are primarily for students and fellow tourists. Truly getting off the beaten path can take an incredible amount of time and effort, and a car is hands down the best way to do it.

The benefits of car rental go beyond the driving experience of winding mountain roads and magnificent vistas. It means going where you want, when you want; avoiding downtime waiting for sporadic buses and trains, and not having to lug around your baggage.

Fortunately, Japan's roads and highways are some of the safest and best-maintained in the world, and combined with great navigation you'll be able to create an experience that the guidebooks just don't feature.

01 RENTING A CAR is actually quite easy, and much more visitor-friendly in recent years. Companies like Nippon Rent-A-Car offer full English language support, multilingual car navigations, and driving information to make your roadtrip go smoothly.

02 PHONE NUMBERS in Japan correspond to specific locations, so you can input the number of your next destination into the car navigation and get there easily; much easier than figuring out addresses, and you don't need to read Japanese.

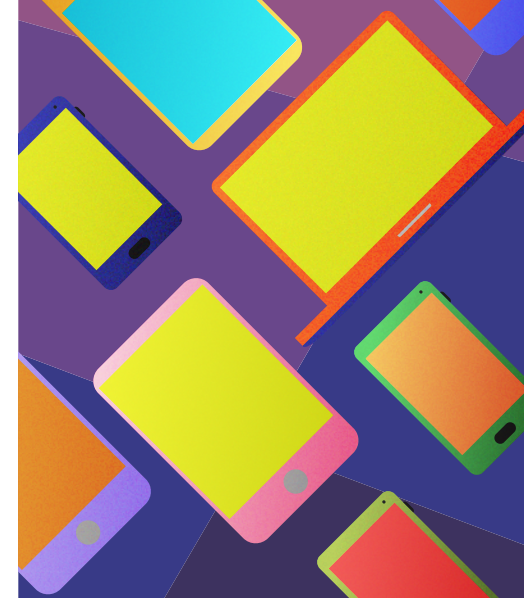
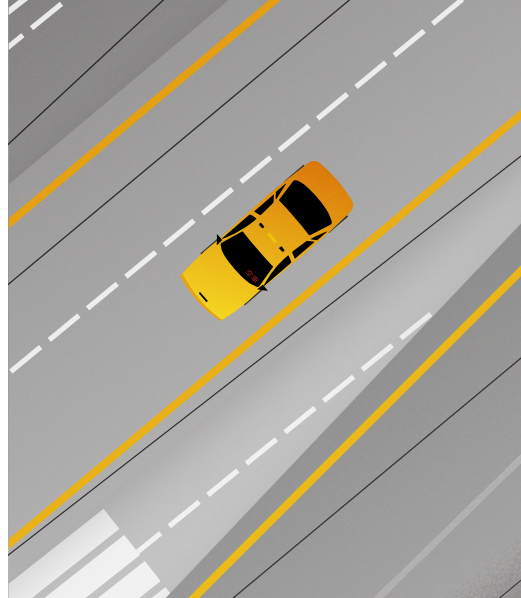
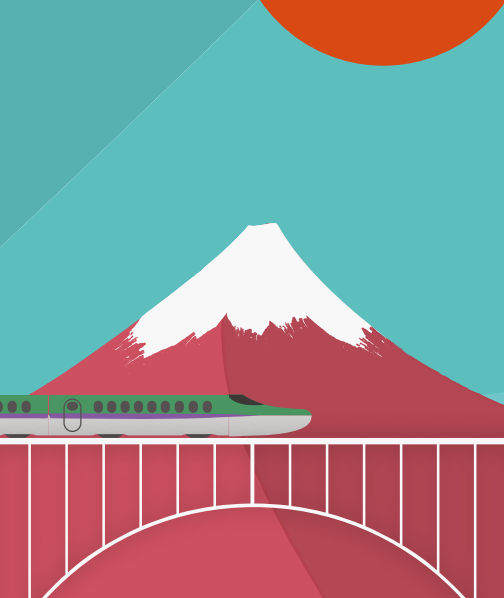
03 PARKING - With very little free street parking in Japan, your biggest issue is finding a spot for the car, especially in the cities. Be sure to check with your urban accommodation ahead of time if they have parking or you may find yourself in a paid parking lot. Luckily most paid lots have daily maximum fee caps so you don't need to stress about hourly charges.

04 SERVICE AREAS - Need a highway break or just some gas? Japanese highway rest stops are the cleanest in the world, and the larger ones feel like suburban malls, complete with shops, restaurants, playgrounds, and even ferris wheels. Look for the big "P" on highway signs to know where to get off.

05 TOLLS & ETC -If you're planning to take a lot of highways, be sure to rent an ETC card along with your rental car for cashless toll payments. You avoid the hassle of lining up to pay in cash, and can also save a ton of money. Nighttime, weekend, and holiday rates are 30% off, and special regional ETC passes from your rental shop can cover all of your holiday driving for a low flat rate.

06 CITY DRIVING - While there are certainly congested times, driving in Tokyo is actually quite easygoing compared to most big cities. It's the suburbs that can really get congested at peak times as more people drive there. If you have the chance, get on the downtown highway and live out your video game driving fantasies.

07 GAS - Most of the time you won't need to pump your own gas as filling stations tend to be full-service, which means also getting your windshield cleaned and a wet towel to wipe down your dashboard. Self-service stations are a bit cheaper, but the full-service experience is worth it.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

With the most efficient, yet easily most complex public transport in the world, it takes a lifetime to master Japan's train system. Still, there are a few things to make your time here on the rails much easier.

- 01 Japan's railways are a mix of private and public companies all working together, but that also means all-day passes for one rail system won't work on another one, so be sure of your plans in advance.
- 02 Rather than buy passes or individual tickets per trip, get a Pasma, Suica, or the regional equivalent e-money card. Your unused cash is refundable, and makes moving around frictionless.
- 03 Getting on and off trains can be quite simple, as most people politely line up and wait their turn. Be aware of areas for elderly and pregnant passengers, and if you aren't sure just follow the crowd.
- 04 Knowing which trains to take and when is the hardest part of getting around. Of course we suggest our smartphone app, with the most up-to-date schedules making for a stress-free experience.

TAKING TAXIS

Depending on how far you're going, taking a taxi may be one of the more expensive things you do during your trip, but there are a few ways to make the most of them.

- 01 Have the address for your destination ready, and in Japanese if possible. Cities here are dense and drivers most likely won't know your location unless it's a common point of interest.
- 02 Not every taxi takes credit cards, though it's more common these days. Look for a sticker on the window with the card you want to use, and if you aren't sure just ask the driver in advance.
- 03 No need to ever touch the door! Your driver will always open and close it himself, mostly to prevent you from opening it onto an unfortunate cyclist or nearby car.
- 04 Taxis can be quite expensive if you're taking a long trip. Our app provides a simple taxi fare search to give you the best estimate for your journey.

Read more on www.navitimejapan.com/traveling

MONEY TIPS

It's hard to get by on just one form of money during your time in Japan. In fact, you will most likely be dealing with three of them rather often.

- 01 While credit cards are becoming more readily accepted, Japan is still very much a cash-based country, so you'll need to have a decent amount on you for walking around. The easiest place to get cash is at 7-Eleven convenience stores, providing international ATM services with zero fees. We also have an ATM search feature in our smartphone app.
- 02 Even when using credit cards, there's no guarantee that smaller shops will accept your particular brand. Best to make sure it's accepted when you first arrive, or you'll soon be making a quick run to the ATM.
- 03 E-money cards like Suica and Pasma are our favorite form of money. They also double as payment systems for riding public transportation. Not only that, but you can make purchases directly from vending machines and convenience stores without getting a lot of loose change in return.

GETTING CONNECTED

Even though Japan is a highly connected country, getting online as a visitor can be frustrating. Even just for basic mapping and information searches, having a reliable connection can be a challenge.

- 01 While it's nice to imagine being offline during a holiday, it's hard to get by without features like mapping and transit search. We recommend renting a portable Pocket Wifi during your trip, especially if you want to share the connection with someone else. They're fast, lightweight, and allow you to connect any kind of device that supports wifi.
- 02 If you're set on using a SIM card for your phone or tablet, you can now find data SIMs in electronics stores, convenience stores, and even vending machines. While they don't provide you a phone number, you'll be online in a snap.
- 03 It can be good to find wifi spots when you want to save on mobile data costs. Some companies like Docomo provide countrywide wifi on public networks, but more locations are offering it as well. It's best not to bank on having wifi or you'll get frustrated when you can't find it when you need it.

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EDITOR | Michael Keferl
PRODUCTION | Yoko Kitakoga, Jenie Gabriel

ART DIRECTION | Mimmo Cangiano Belcuore

PHOTO EDITOR | Don Kennedy
COVER ILLUSTRATOR | Manico Tanaka
ASSISTANT DESIGNER | Kosuke Inoue

WRITERS
Marky Star 2-3, 8-16, 22-27
Said Karlsson 4-7, 20-21
Michael Keferl 28-31
Emiko Izawa
Makoto Terauchi

PRINTER
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NAVITIME JAPAN Co., Ltd.
Minami Aoyama Tokyo Bldg.
3-8-38, Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan, 107-0062

ABOUT

NAVITIME for Japan Travel is the most downloaded smartphone app for travellers visiting Japan, available in English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Korean languages.

Featuring Japan's most popular train route search functionality, the app also includes multimodal route search, navigation, real-time train timetables, and offline search for free wifi spots.

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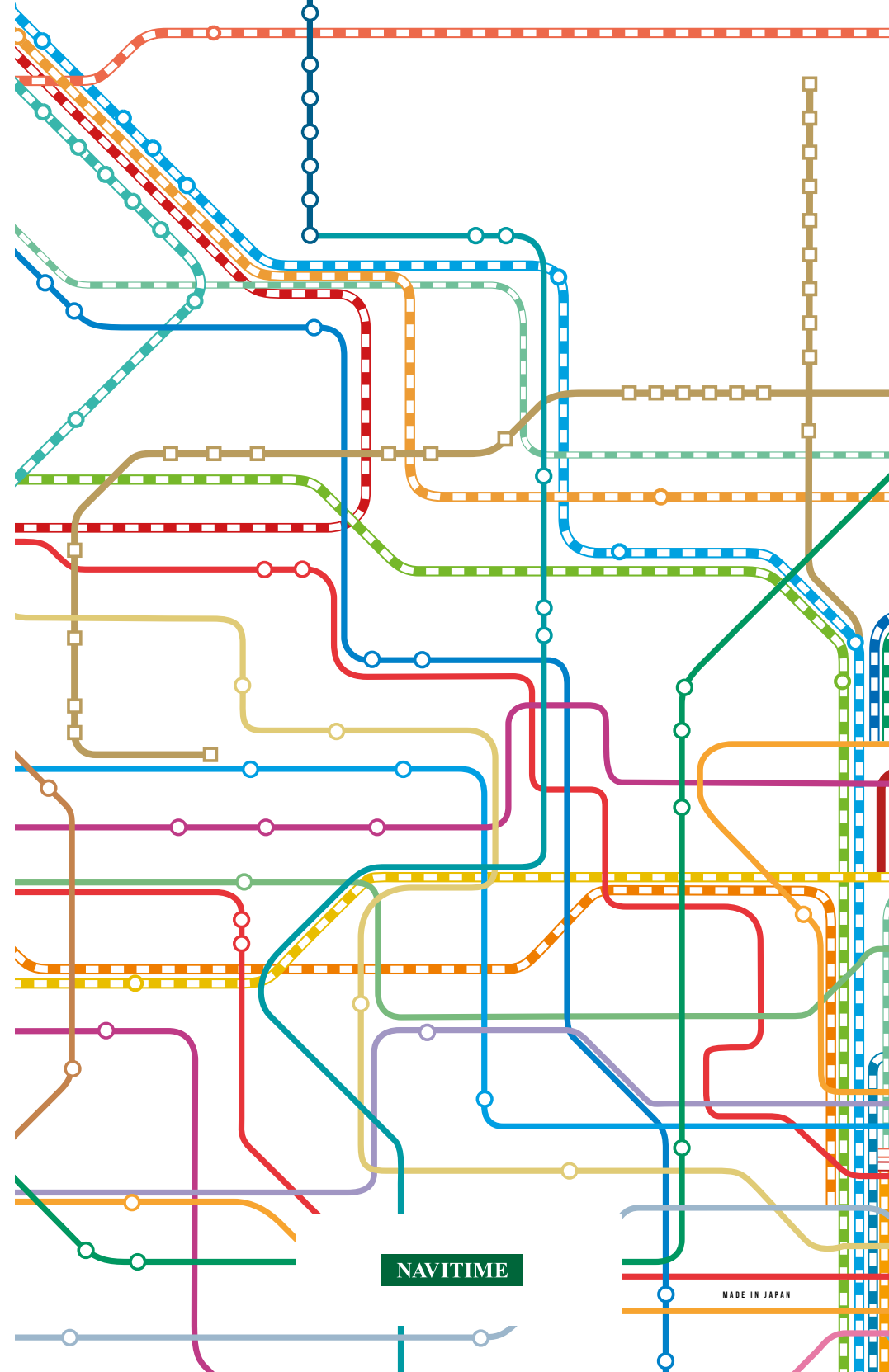
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We're always excited to collaborate with both visitors and locals for written, photographic, and video content. If you are interested in documenting your trip or sharing your experiences of Japan, you can find more information at the link below:
navitimejapan.com/creators

発行人

NAVITIME for Japan Travel
株式会社ナビタイムジャパン
〒107-0062
東京都港区南青山三丁目8-38
南青山東急ビル

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