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# SUMMER ESCAPE

MAKE A BREAK FOR KAMAKURA



VOLUME 03

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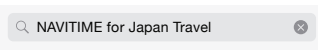
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Shinjuku

Shibuya

Taking a nap, feet planted against a cool wall. - Busby



# 夏

Summer



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## SUMMER NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

NAVITIME FOR JAPAN TRAVEL TEAM

From festivals to fireworks, and surfing to summiting, summer in Japan is hot, sticky, and far too short.

Japan is well-equipped with blasting cold (and dry) indoor air, so you'll always find a refuge somewhere. Even so, as with anywhere in the world, summer without the outdoors is no summer at all.

Tackling summertime recommendations isn't an easy undertaking. There are far too many options to choose from, and the summer season is also quite short. June is already unpredictable due to the rainy

season, and the following beach season lasts a mere six weeks for most, despite perfect weather well into September. The beach huts and young crowds disappear in mid-August as quickly as they appeared in July.

At the same time, the limited Mount Fuji climbing season brings crowds 3,776 meters above sea level to catch a brilliant sunrise before the snow returns and makes the peak too dangerous to attempt.

Summer in Japan is intense, but it's far from endless.

City dwellers of means tend to prefer higher elevations and northern latitudes to escape from the humidity, taking refuge in places like Karuizawa (Nagano) and Hokkaido. The more adventurous find themselves in the mountains, swimming or rafting in cool streams, and hiking through rural villages.

Regardless, your average person stays right where they are. Japanese cities already have plenty going on all summer, with local festivals happening somewhere every weekend, and more than enough to do just a train ride away. Nearly one million people attend the Sumidagawa fireworks every year, and the packed crowds seem to be more of an attraction than a deterrence.

With all of these things going on, choosing the right location to feature in this issue was a challenge, but Kamakura popped right out for us. With just the right combination of tradition, nature, and beach life, Kamakura is a perfect day trip within easy reach of Tokyo. It's no wonder that so much of Tokyo's creative class is willing to make the daily commute in exchange for a completely different lifestyle on their days off. Plus, with a deep and revolutionary history, the city on the sea is full of stories.

NAVITIME for Japan Travel is a mobile app that helps you plan how to get around Japan, and this print edition is still evolving along with our service. Though we're already the most popular navigation tool for travel in Japan, we want to do more and help our users find more off-road destinations and experiences.

The best advice we can give for the summer is to get yourself out of the city and explore the countryside. That's generally our advice for most seasons anyway, but summer in particular is the perfect time to escape the hot concrete and find yourself somewhere new.







## IT'S MATSURI SEASON

Summer in Japan is synonymous with traditional festivals celebrated across the country. Here are three of the best.

As the temperatures and humidity rise in Japan, the energy, spectacle, and entertainment come together in a long lineup of matsuri that attract from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of participants every year. While festivals of all sizes happen year-round across Japan, especially with harvest-centric festivals in the autumn, the most local and celebratory events take place in the summertime when it's more about having fun for the sake of it, dancing, drinking, and playing carnival games.

Each matsuri has its own theme and charm, and since there's never an entry fee they attract quite a crowd. Just remember to come with a big appetite! Rows of street food stalls with local and traditional fare make it possible to sample a bit of everything without breaking the bank, and locals are always happy to have visitors join in the festivities.

### **Tenjin Matsuri (Osaka)**

Dedicated to Sugawara no Michizane, the deified patron of learning and art, the Tenjin Matsuri in Osaka is one of the top three festivals in Japan, and takes place on both land and water. The main celebrations kick off on the second day with drummers and dancers leading a procession of portable shrines from Tenmangu shrine through the streets of Osaka, where they are then loaded onto a hundred illuminated boats that parade up and down the Okawa river. Onlookers have plenty of food and drink to choose from, and crowd the riverbanks for a two-hour fireworks display. Having hopefully entertained the deity, the parade returns him to his home at Tenmangu to wait another year.

### **Aomori Nebuta Matsuri (Aomori City)**

Get your cameras ready for this spectacular lantern festival in northern Japan, centering on over twenty massive lantern floats based on kabuki or mythical stories. Constructed throughout the year by local craftsmen, the colorful floats of painted washi and hundreds of lights are up to five meters tall and nine meters wide. Haneto dancers dressed in vibrant costumes push the floats along while jumping, dancing, and shouting "Rassera! Rassera!" around the city. Anyone can join in the procession, but you'll need to rent haneto costumes for about ¥4,000. On the final night, the floats are loaded into boats and ferried around Aomori Bay as a fireworks display caps off this fiery festival.

### **Awa-Odori (Tokushima City)**

The Awa-Odori is celebrated to mark the Obon period and welcome ancestral spirits back to this world. Participants of all ages put on yukata and straw hats to dance to the traditional Tokushima song, "Awa Yoshikono", accompanied by traditional instruments. This dance dates back to 1587 when the Tokushima castle was newly built and the

feudal lord Hachisuka Iemasa offered sake to the townspeople, who ended up getting drunk and dancing in the streets. As the song itself goes, "It's a fool who dances and a fool who watches! If both are fools, you might as well have fun dancing!", so don't hesitate to join the massive street dance party from 6pm onwards.

### TENJIN MATSURI

2-1-8 TENJINBASHI, KITA-KU, OSAKA  
JULY 24-25

### AOMORI NEBUTA MATSURI

YASUKATA, AOMORI-SHI, AOMORI  
AUGUST 2-7

### AWA-ODORI

TOKUSHIMA-SHI, TOKUSHIMA  
AUGUST 12-15



# WELCOME TO KAMAKURA

For a tranquil city on the beach, Kamakura was once the center of Japan's political sea change, and the origin of over 600 years of feudal society and turmoil. Now, centuries past, the history, geography, and cultural artifacts still remain, right on the edge of the world's largest metropolis.

Originally founded as the very first samurai capital in 1185, Kamakura was the world's fourth largest city in 1250, before suffering a rapid decline when overthrown in 1333. Despite so much turmoil nearly 700 years ago the area is still full of remnants of its past, including still-standing temples and monuments, and historical sites that have escaped the development that transformed most cities in the region.



Now, when visiting this coastal town, an abundance of nature, history and new experiences awaits travelers. Though just an hour from the center of Tokyo, the atmosphere of small town living will instantly transport you to a time when Japanese cities had a more relaxed pace, without tall buildings and flashy neon lights.

The beauty of Kamakura is that there is something for everyone and in every season – hiking, surfing, temple-hopping, quality local food, and shopping are all within reach in a setting that's not quite rural and not quite a city. Set between



the once impassable mountains which protected it from invasion for centuries, Kamakura's idyllic geography combined with impressive historical landmarks makes it an ideal travel destination for those seeking respite from the noise and tourist traps of the urban areas of the Kanto region.



It's still possible to take ancient backcountry trails between temples and wander down to the beach to enjoy the water, or catch a magnificent view of the silhouette of Mount Fuji as the sun sets behind it. Although the entire city isn't exactly walkable, the Enoden electric railway founded in 1900 can take you around the area easily and maintains its classic retro charm.



For history buffs, a visit to the centuries-old Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu Shrine can give a crash course on the first shogunate government of Japan, which was responsible for the city's initial growth (and eventual downfall). A popular and bustling street, Komachi-dori shouldn't be skipped if you're interested in local crafts like the famous carved Kamakura lacquerware, or to catch a meal. Kamakura isn't known for its food culture, but you're never too far from a quick curry, soba, or snack that you can eat on the go.

This seaside city, teeming with a multitude of scenic and historic attractions, is easy to navigate in a day or two with a combination of trains, hikes, leisurely walks, and perhaps even a bike rental if you want to cover more ground.



# LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

To get the best insights into the city, for this issue we worked with Kamakura-based Huber, a service that matches local guides with visitors to Kamakura and other areas.



**ATSUSHI**

*I love introducing my local area to visitors, and also having my friends do the same for me when I visit their hometowns. This is the way I travel, so each friend I have means one more unique trip with someone!*



**SAKI**

*I'm a university student studying sociology. I love food, so I always take visitors to interesting and delicious local restaurants they wouldn't know about otherwise.*



**HOTARU**

*I'm a Chinese girl and have been living in Japan for five years. I can speak three languages and like to take visitors to trendy areas in Tokyo, as well as harder to find places too!*



## TEN-EN HIKING COURSE

01

8 YAMANOUCHI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 0981

This hiking route from Kencho-ji in to Zuisen-ji takes about 30-45 minutes across mountain ridges, a peaceful route known only to locals. There are many hiking trails like this one in Kamakura, and having a guide helps you get away from the crowds and up to stunning ocean views.



## ZENIARAI BENTEN

02

2-25-16 SASUKE, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 25 1081

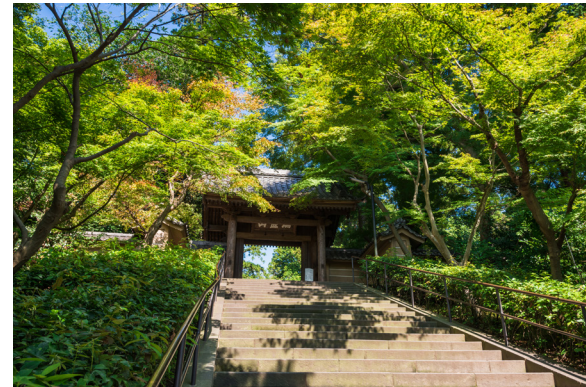
Up a valley path and through the mouth of a cave is Zeniarai Benten. It's said that if you wash money in the water that springs from these rocks, more will come to you after you spend it. Most local shops happily accept your wet cash as payment, knowing its blessed origin.



## ENOSHIMA

03

1-9 ENOSHIMA, FUJISAWA-SHI, KANAGAWA  
This small island is 25 minutes away from Kamakura. At one time people could cross on foot during low tide, and the island's shrine has been a place of worship for over 800 years. With a panoramic view of the sea, it's the perfect spot to relax after a long day wandering around Kamakura.



## ENGAKU-JI

04

409 YAMANOUCHI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 0478

This imposing temple captures the essence of Kamakura. Built over 700 years ago, it embodies the samurai aesthetic with the strength and natural beauty of unlacquered wood. You may even witness a temple choir in prayer in the midst of this peaceful atmosphere.



## HOKOKU-JI

05

2-7-4 JOMYO-JI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 0762

Sipping tea amongst quintessential Japanese gardens is a tradition of spiritual healing, relaxation, and introspection. Set on a secluded hillside, at Hokoku-ji you can enjoy traditional tea surrounded by an impressively curated bamboo forest.

In collaboration with

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HUBER OFFERS LOCAL "TOMODACHI GUIDES", PROVIDING FREE TRAVEL CONSULTATIONS FOR PEOPLE PLANNING THEIR TRIPS TO JAPAN, AS WELL AS GUIDED TOURS TO MAKE YOUR TRIP MORE LOCAL AND MEMORABLE.



# 8 HOURS IN KAMAKURA



JENIE GABRIEL

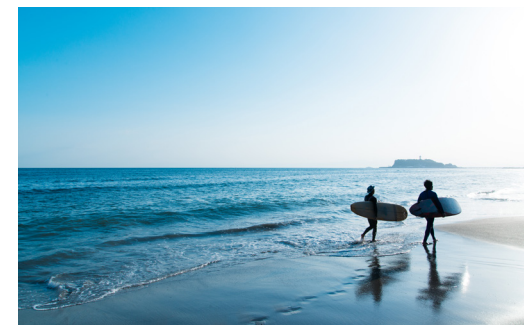
Once the first samurai capital of Japan, Kamakura is now an idyllic destination mixing history, nature, and a feel of the small town life, just a short distance from the lights of Tokyo.

Only travel can make me get up at 7:30AM on my day-off to join the madness of the Tokyo rush hour. An hour away in Kamakura, I trailed behind eager tourists and students on their way to Komachi-dori, breezing past cafés, food stalls, and craft shops. Wandering aimlessly took me to Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu Shrine, a symbol of the old capital, before taking the Daibutsu hiking trail from Jochi-ji, a rustic Zen temple amidst a lush forest. Following the signs, I reached the Kotoku-in temple with the imposing Great Buddha (Daibutsu).

After a hearty curry lunch, the next stop was Hasedera, with temple grounds built on a hillside and the most impressively landscaped garden I've seen. It was an unexpected surprise when I entered a dark, small cave where I found hundreds of Benten statues carved in the walls and lined up neatly on the floor. After stepping out of the solemn Kannon-do Hall with its 9-meter high gilded statue of Juichi-men Kannon, I was amazed by the view of the coastline - the highlight of my day trip.

Luckily, on the way back to Hase Station, I happened across a mobile café in a converted van where the owner prepared rich hand-dripped coffee, giving me the perfect boost for my sunset return trip to the lights, energy, and hustle of Japan's newest capital.

- 01 **KOMACHI-DORI**  
1-5-6 KOMACHI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA
- 02 **TSURUGAOKA HACHIMAN-GU SHRINE**  
2-1-31 YUKINOSHITA, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 0315
- 03 **JOCHI-JI**  
1402 YAMANOUCHI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 3943
- 04 **KOTOKU-IN (GREAT BUDDHA OF KAMAKURA)**  
4-2-28 HASE, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 0703
- 05 **CARAWAY (CURRY RESTAURANT) キャラウェイ**  
2-12-20 KOMACHI, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 25 0927
- 06 **HASE-DERA**  
3-11-2 HASE, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA  
T/ 0467 22 6300
- 07 **IDOBATA COFFEE**  
2-14-13 HASE, KAMAKURA, KANAGAWA







## KAMAKURA: THE RISE OF THE EAST

MARKY STAR

The eastern city on the sea was once ground zero for Japan's cultural divide.

You may have heard of a rivalry between Ōsaka and Tōkyō. Usually, this manifests itself in baseball in the case of the Tōkyō Giants<sup>1</sup> and the Hanshin Tigers<sup>2</sup>. But it comes up in a lot of other situations too.

Kansai people<sup>3</sup> complain about the heavy flavoring of food in east, and Kantō people<sup>4</sup> complain about the blandness of food in the west. Kantō people claim that Kansai people talk loudly, talk too much, act waaay too familiar too quickly, and speak a boorish, unsophisticated dialect<sup>5</sup>. Conversely, Kansai people say Tōkyōites are cold, distant, and speak effeminately.

### **Wait. What? Isn't This About Kamakura?**

Yes, it is. And we'll get to Kamakura in a minute. Things weren't always this way. Before the 1200's, the west of Japan was the center of sophistication and the east was a brutish and uncultured no man's land. While the west was the arbiter of courtly elegance, eastern Japan was a collection of rustic villages in the boonies controlled by local warlords with the cultural refinement of a sword wielding baboon on horseback.

Until the 12th Century, that is.

### **The Rise of the First Samurai Capital**

Prior to the 12th Century, Japan was a very different place. The de facto capital of Japan had always been in the west where the emperors and their courts resided. Eventually, it was settled that Kyōto would be the permanent imperial capital. It was city based on classical Chinese urban planning and feng shui which made it the most elegant and refined city in all of the Japanese islands. The court was dominated by powerful clans descended from, or closely entangled

with, the imperial family. There was one small problem though.

Traditionally in Japan, family inheritance has always been passed down from father to the first born son. The noble families of Kyōto tried to produce as many sons as possible as infant mortality rates were horrific in those days. However, only the oldest surviving son could carry on the family name and inheritance<sup>6</sup>. So, what did they do with the other surviving inheritance-less sons?

Well, the other sons would be shipped off to the east and north of Japan where they were given swaths of land to call their own. They were granted military governorships and ruled in the name of the imperial court. These local strongmen were called samurai because they served the emperor<sup>7</sup>. They upheld the rule of law in the east by force and used their personal armies to suppress anyone who didn't obey the court. This freed up the emperor and his courtiers to work on poetry, painting, calligraphy, and studying the Chinese Classics. All the while, the rough and tumble samurai did all the messy work of taming the east. Seemed like a good idea at the time. Win-win for everyone, right?

### **Wrong.**

In short, while the nobles in the west concerned themselves with poetry and frivolous games, the samurai clans in the east were becoming military powerhouses. Since they were descendants of noble families<sup>8</sup>, their armies and names made them forces to be reckoned with in Kyōto. This may sound familiar to fans of *Game of Thrones*.

One family in particular, the Minamoto Clan, amassed great power in the Kamakura area. This territory was far from Kyōto so they could operate independently of the court. They were also located on the sea and surrounded by mountains which meant they were extremely well-defended.

### **Minamoto no Yoritomo the Game Changer**

One head of the family, a samurai warlord named Minamoto no Yoritomo subjugated other clans through alliances and sheer brute force. The emperor eventually granted him the hereditary title of shōgun in 1192. This title essentially made him the military dictator of Japan.

Yoritomo considered the imperial court corrupt and decided to remain in Kamakura so he could rule independently and let the courtiers in Kyōto play their games and write their poetry, practice their calligraphy, and enjoy the glamorous life of the day. But in effect, Yoritomo robbed the imperial court of any real power. I don't know if this was his intention or not, but Minamoto no Yoritomo basically launched Japan into a new age in which samurai would rule Japan for nearly 700 years and the emperor and his court were relegated to ritual and artistic endeavors. It also paved the way for eastern Japan to become a cultural center in its own right.

### **The Kamakura Period**

Yoritomo developed Kamakura as his shōgunal capital – the first non-imperial capital in Japanese history. He invested heavily in the tutelary deity of his clan, Hachiman, the god of war, by building Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū shrine (this god would later become the “patron saint” of all samurai in Japan). The new capital was built with all the sophistication of Kyōto. When you visit Kamakura, pay attention to the areas around the station and Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū; this is where Yoritomo's capital was! It's laid out on a grid in compliance with feng shui and feels a lot like central Kyōto. It's a far cry from the clustered and intentionally windy streets of Tōkyō.

### **Kamakura's Legacy**

Japan would be ruled by eastern samurai from 1192-1868. Some of Kyōto's most famous attractions, Ginkaku-ji (the Golden Pavilion) and Kinkaku-ji (the Silver Pavilion) were built by Kantō warlords in the form of the 2nd shōgunate, which chose to rule



from the old western capital so it could keep an eye on the imperial court. This shōgunate was weak, though. They didn't follow Kamakura's example of rejecting western court culture. They tried to show that samurai could play the court game too. They could, but in the end the samurai warlords of the east refused to be complacent. Once again, the country fell into 100 years of civil war where samurai fought samurai and the imperial court kept writing poetry and practicing calligraphy. Eventually, the emperor ended up living in a shack<sup>9</sup>.

Fast forward 100 years to the 1600's. Yet another eastern samurai rose to power and established a new shōgunate near a backwater bay in the Kantō area called Edo. His name was Tokugawa Ieyasu. He fought and won a battle that is often considered a war between the east and west – also considered the last epic battle in samurai history. Ieyasu won a decisive victory that ushered in a new era we now call the Edo Period – an era often considered Japan's Golden Age.

Ieyasu claimed descent from the Minamoto Clan<sup>10</sup>, and he insisted on ruling from Edo<sup>11</sup> in the east. Like Minamoto no Yoritomo he wanted to keep the imperial court in check and wanted to operate as far away from Kyōto as he could, and he ensured that samurai were kept at the top of the social hierarchy by rule of law. He also kept merchants at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and continued a policy that severely limited social mobility.

For almost 250 years, the Tokugawa Shōgunate allowed Kyōto to flourish artistically and ritually, but excluded the vanquished western samurai clans and imperial court from participation in politics.

This all may seem harsh, but in reality Edo flourished as the cultural, martial, and political capital of Japan, while Kyōto flourished as a ritual and artistic imperial capital. But something else happened along the way. Edo, which was later renamed Tōkyō, developed a samurai culture.

Kyōto's neighbor, Ōsaka, developed a merchant culture. Samurai culture was steeped in respect, cultural sophistication, austerity, and shunned the crass ways of the commoners. In contrast, the merchant culture was outgoing, casual, unconcerned with social rank, flashy, and talkative. They couldn't even speak the dialect of the capital. Uncouth barbarians, I tells ya!

Those two cultures are basically alive and well today and are clearly evidenced in the Kantō/Kansai rivalry. People from the 1700's would completely relate to the prejudices of Japanese people living in 2016. The east-west rivalry isn't about baseball, whose food is better, or speaks worse; it's about who lost something and who gained something centuries ago. And yeah, it's true. These cultural differences intensified in the Edo Period, but they can all be traced back to Kamakura. Minamoto no Yoritomo flipped the system. Boorish country warlords from the east (literally the rejects of the Kyōto noble families) fought their way to the top of the social ladder, rivaled and often bested the ancient capital in arts and poetry, and then paved the way for the political and cultural supremacy of eastern Japan. Kamakura is more than a city. It's an idea that sent shockwaves through Japan's culture and society that are still felt today. It's a symbol of the east copying the west to look legit. It's a symbol of the east giving the finger to the west to stay legit, and the east is still the cultural epicenter of Japan today.

#### Notes

- 1 - Who totally rule.
- 2 - Who totally suck. And yes, I'm totally biased.
- 3 - Kansai is the region of western Japan where Kyōto and Ōsaka are located.
- 4 - Kantō is the region of eastern Japan where Tōkyō is located.
- 5 - Kyōto excluded, of course. The polite version of the Kyōto dialect is considered extremely elegant.
- 6 - Which included court rank...
- 7 - The term samurai (侍) literally means "servant".
- 8 - And sometimes of the emperors themselves!
- 9 - I'm not joking, the Portuguese missionaries of the time described Kyōto as a burned out ghetto.
- 10 - Probably a lie!
- 11 - Present day Tōkyō. And yes, it's Tōkyō and not Tokyo – but that's a whole other article in and of itself.





# Shinkansen Guide: Prices, times, and destinations



## Hokkaido Shinkansen / Tohoku Shinkansen

Train	From	To	Time	Price
Hayabusa	Tokyo	Sendai	1h35min	¥10,890
Hayate	Tokyo	Sendai	1h45min	¥10,890
Komachi	Tokyo	Sendai	1h40min	¥10,890
Yamabiko	Tokyo	Sendai	1h25min	¥8,200
Nasuno	Tokyo	Sendai	1h25min	¥8,200
Tsubasa	Tokyo	Sendai	1h25min	¥8,200
	Koriyama	Sendai	2h05min	¥10,890
	Yamagata	Sendai	2h15min	¥14,230
	Morioka	Sendai	2h20min	¥14,230
	Shin-Aomori	Sendai	3h20min	¥16,840
	Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto	Sendai	4h15min	¥22,690



## Hokuriku Shinkansen

Train	From	To	Time	Price
Tsurugi	Tokyo	Nagano	1h30min	¥8,200
Kagayaki	Tokyo	Nagano	1h30min	¥8,200
Hakutaka	Tokyo	Nagano	1h50min	¥8,200
Asama	Tokyo	Nagano	1h50min	¥8,200
	Nagano	Toyama	2h15min	¥12,730
	Toyama	Kanazawa	25min	¥3,330
	Toyama	Kanazawa	2h35min	¥14,120
	Toyama	Kanazawa	3h10min	¥14,120

## Joetsu Shinkansen

Train	From	To	Time	Price
Toki	Tokyo	Takasaki	50min	¥4,930
Tanigawa	Tokyo	Takasaki	55min	¥4,930
	Takasaki	Echigo-Yuzawa	1h25min	¥6,670
	Takasaki	Echigo-Yuzawa	1h25min	¥6,670
	Echigo-Yuzawa	Niigata	2h20min	¥10,570
	Echigo-Yuzawa	Niigata	1h20min	¥6,910



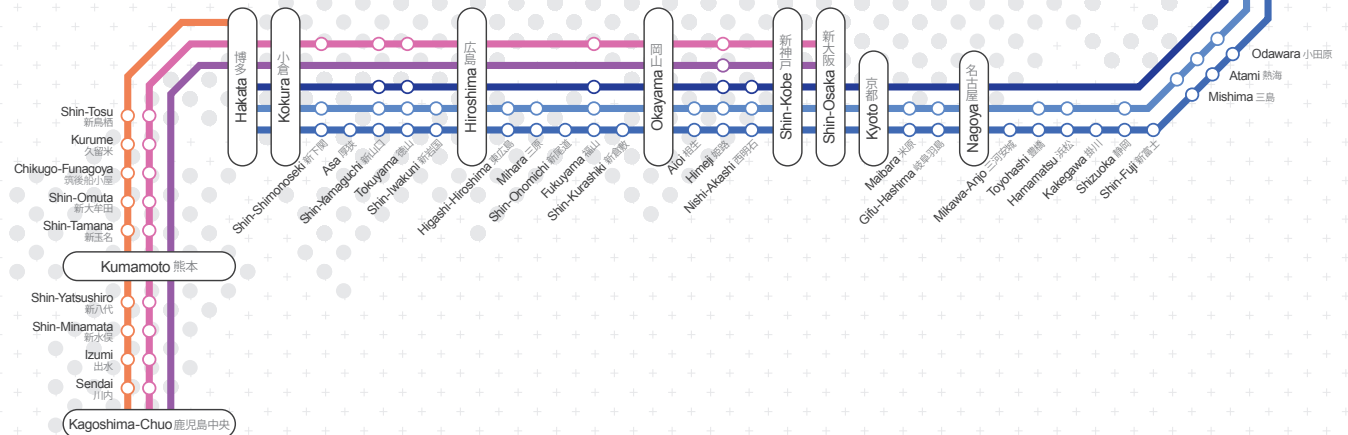
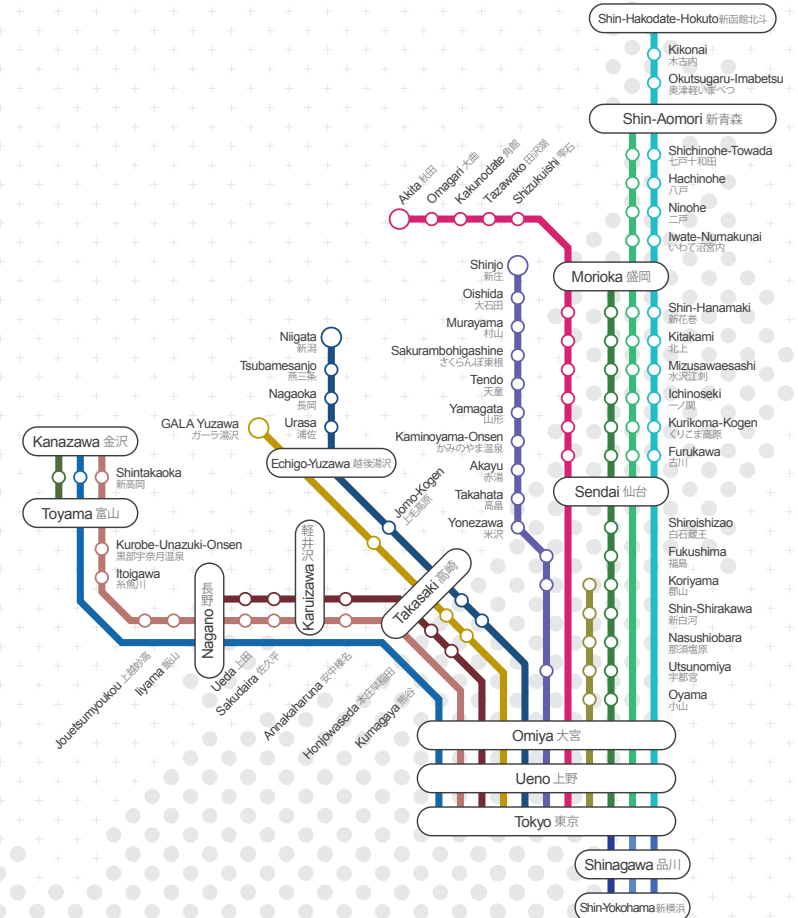
## Tokaido / Sanyo Shinkansen

Train	From	To	Time	Price
Nozomi	Tokyo	Nagoya	1h40min	¥11,090
Hikari	Tokyo	Nagoya	2h00min	¥10,880
Kodama	Tokyo	Nagoya	2h45min	¥10,880
	Nagoya	Kyoto	2h20min	¥13,910
	Nagoya	Kyoto	2h40min	¥13,600
	Nagoya	Kyoto	3h45min	¥13,600
	Kyoto	Shin-Osaka	2h35min	¥14,450
	Kyoto	Shin-Osaka	3h00min	¥14,140
	Kyoto	Shin-Osaka	4h05min	¥14,140
	Shin-Osaka	Hiroshima	4h00min	¥19,080
	Shin-Osaka	Hiroshima	5h20min	¥18,560
	Shin-Osaka	Hiroshima	4h40min	¥18,560
	Hiroshima	Hakata	5h05min	¥22,950
	Hiroshima	Hakata	5h45min	¥22,330
	Hiroshima	Hakata	9h00min	¥22,330



## Sanyo / Kyushu Shinkansen

Train	From	To	Time	Price
Mizuho	Kyushu	Kumamoto	1h30min	¥10,230
Sakura	Kyushu	Kumamoto	1h30min	¥10,230
Tsubame	Kyushu	Kumamoto	1h30min	¥10,230
	Kumamoto	Kagoshima-Chuo	2h30min	¥15,310
	Kumamoto	Kagoshima-Chuo	3h05min	¥18,850
	Kumamoto	Kagoshima-Chuo	3h15min	¥18,540
	Kagoshima-Chuo	Kyushu	50min	¥5,130
	Kagoshima-Chuo	Kyushu	1h45min	¥10,450





# HOW TO MOUNT FUJI

Thought about climbing Mount Fuji during your trip? It's not as difficult as you may think, and from July through early September the trails are ready for hikers of all ages to take on Japan's highest peak.

Say what you will about Fuji's summertime crowds, souvenir shops, wifi hotspots, and vending machine on the summit, but climbing Fuji isn't something you do to appreciate nature or hiking anyway. You do it because it's Mount Fuji, and tackling the summit is pretty much the main thing to do with it aside from

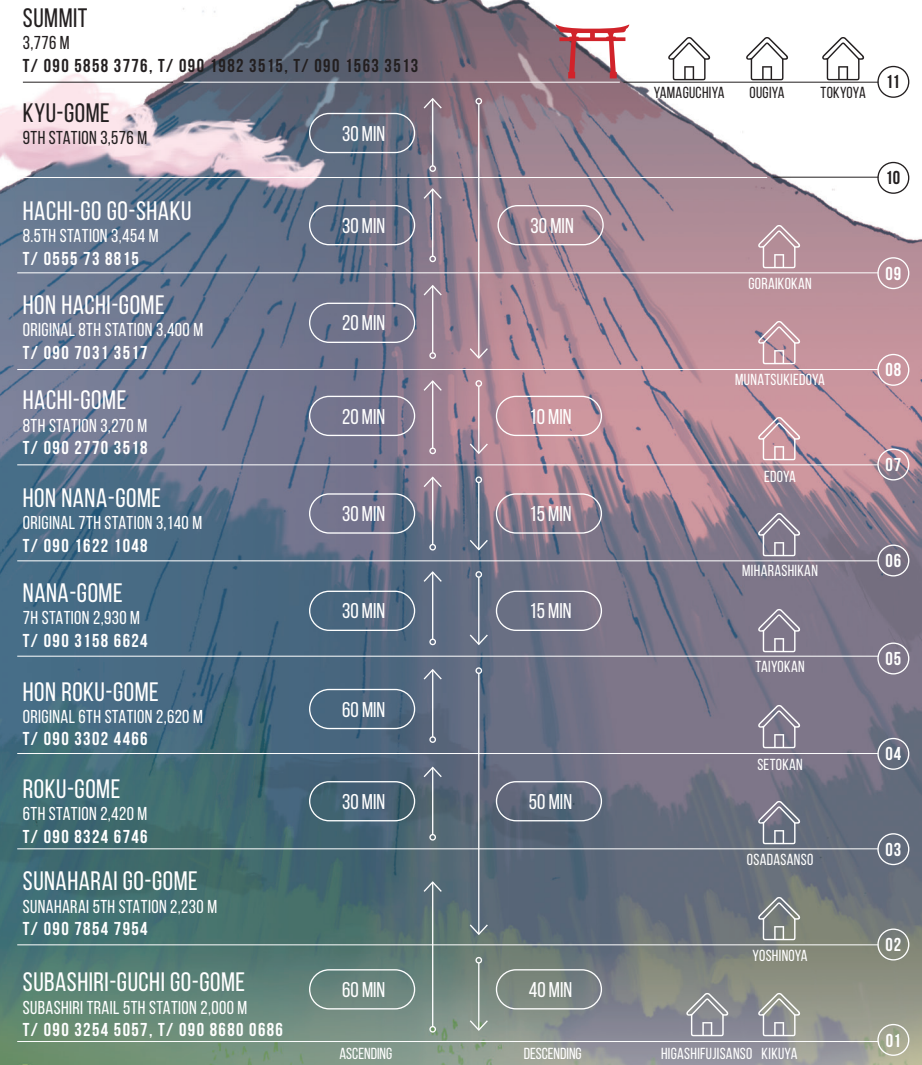
gazing at it from a hot spring bath as you recover the next day.

You don't even need to prepare particularly hard if you have hiking experience. Some tourists even make the trip from Tokyo on a whim wearing only jeans and sneakers with a small bag of supplies, but the average Japanese climber is equipped to tackle the Matterhorn. Somewhere in-between is advisable.

Nearly everyone starts at one of the four 5th Stations on different sides of the mountain. The Yoshida Trail is the most popular, but we like the Subashiri Trail which is less crowded and still has enough stops to rest and re-hydrate during the 5-8 hour climb.

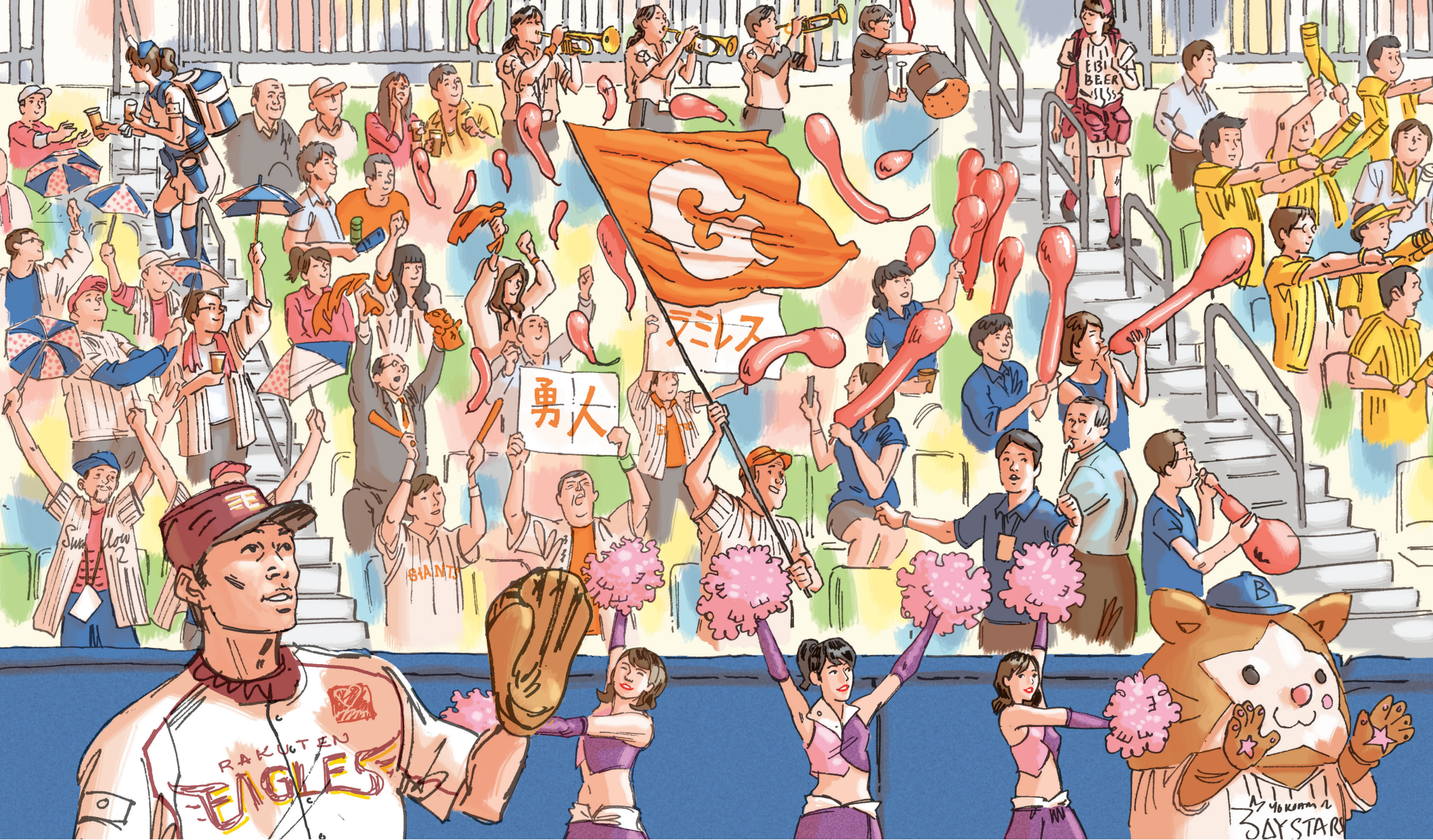
Aside from being in decent enough shape to walk uphill, at minimum we advise sturdy shoes, water, snacks, and some level of waterproofing as the weather can change quickly up there. You can even reserve space in the mountain huts to get a few hours of sleep before trekking to the top for the sunrise.

However you decide to do it, remember that while going up in the dark is a fun challenge, the sun-drenched, shin-aching, monotonous return trip through a lifeless moonscape of volcanic sand may be the hardest part of your journey.



SUBASHIRI TRAIL





## THE JAPANESE BASEBALL EXPERIENCE

Whether you're a fan of Japan and America's shared national pastime, a baseball game here is often the backdrop to the more intense experience of being a spectator.

Although most of Japan's visitors don't come from baseball-loving countries, going to a game here is by far one of the most exciting things you can do. Rather than just sit back and enjoy the game, Japanese baseball is all about being a part of the non-stop crowd energy from beginning to end.

With hardcore fans occupying the cheaper outfield seats, leading constant chants, and even playing

instruments, the crowd becomes more of a spectacle than the game itself. Forget "Take me out to the ballgame" as each stadium has its own traditions involving thousands of flying balloons, umbrellas, and even custom chants for major players.

Despite the high-intensity fans, the atmosphere is also much more laid-back. Food and drink prices are already quite reasonable, but most stadiums

also allow carry-in food and drinks, even alcohol! Of course you can always order a freshly-poured draft from the vendors carrying jetpack-like dispensers.

With twelve teams in the Japanese majors you'll likely be in the area of at least one game during your travels. Same-day tickets are possible, but plan in advance in case of sold-out games between rivals. Trust us, it's worth it.



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# GET READY FOR FIREWORKS

In comparison to the boisterous crowds of a local matsuri, fireworks festivals are a much more relaxed affair.

As impressive as the fireworks are, with hundreds of thousands of people in attendance it's worth going just to experience the crowd, atmosphere, and food.

There's nothing wrong with going the traditional route, navigating your way through the humid evening air in a colorful yukata, picking up a free fan to cool yourself, and bringing a plastic sheet or blanket to sit on as you wait for dusk. It's worth showing up early to secure a space, but at most festivals you'll be able to find somewhere to sit even if you arrive in the late afternoon. Even without a seat, viewing the fireworks while walking amongst the crowd is also a great experience.

There are lots of street stalls selling food and drinks, with our favorites being the yakisoba, yakitori and okonomiyaki, plus chocolate-covered bananas and shaved ice for the kids. Any kind of drink is available as well, but beware crowded restroom lines later in the day.

Typically starting after 7pm and lasting around 90 minutes, the displays are spectacular and feature a range of shapes, colors, and even well-known anime characters. Some even have competitions among pyrotechnic companies as they show off their latest designs and technology for festival planners.

If you stick around until the end of the show, we suggest staying a little later, having another drink on the riverbank, and relaxing in the warm summer evening. The closest train stations are likely to be extremely crowded, so it's best to take it easy or even find somewhere local to grab a bite to eat.

## SUMIDAGAWA FIREWORKS FESTIVAL (TOKYO) 01

ALONG SUMIDA RIVER (CASAKUSA STATION)

JULY 30

## NAGAOKA FIREWORKS (NIIGATA) 02

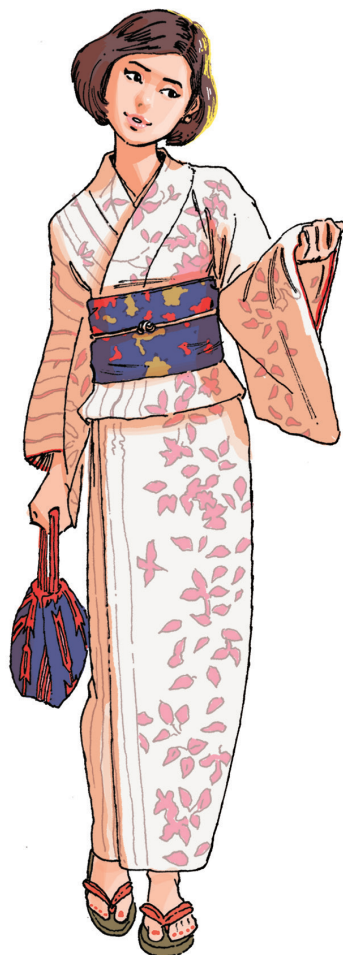
ALONG SHINANO RIVER (NAGAOKA STATION)

AUGUST 2-3

## KUMANO FIREWORKS (MIE) 03

SHICHIRI MIHAMA BEACH (KUMANOSHI STATION)

AUGUST 17







## ACTUAL COOL JAPAN

Forget the classic image of cool summer breezes in an airy garden side tatami room. If you're in a Japanese city, get ready for punishing sunshine and humidity. Luckily we have some creative options.

Whether fanning yourself at a festival or camped out in the air-conditioning, keeping cool in the summer can be a constant battle. Luckily Japan's fast and experimental product cycles have given us a never-ending selection of goods to keep us cool, or

at least trick us into thinking we are. The best part is that all of these are available at most drug and convenience stores when things get sticky.

When Japan started the "Cool Biz" concept back in 2005 to reduce energy consumption, office workers could dress more casually, but the air conditioning was also reduced. Since then, manufacturers have blessed us with a selection of gels, sprays, and other products that give a tingly and cool skin sensation despite the heat. They won't stop you from sweating through that suit, but you'll feel a lot better doing it.

Out of all of the cooling products, the champions for



us are "body sheets". They're compact, lightweight, and serve as both body cooler and impromptu portable shower when you're sweaty and far from your home base. With fragrance and cooling level options, you have a lot to choose from, and best of all you won't look strange using them in public.

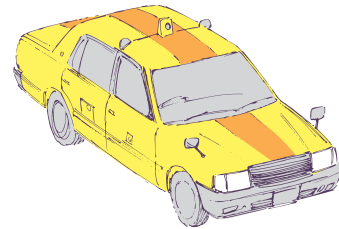
To end the day on a cool note there are also plenty of bath products that give you a cool, refreshing feeling both in and out of the shower room. Everything from bath salts to soaps and shampoos are found in drug stores or lifestyle shops like Tokyuu Hands and Don Quijote. Even mint-maker Frisk has a new line of bath-friendly body coolers.

- 01 **ROHTO Z!**  
COOLING EYE DROPS. REFRESHING IF YOU LIKE MINTY EYES.
- 02 **SHIRT COOL**  
COOLING SPRAY FOR INSIDE AND OUTSIDE YOUR CLOTHES.
- 03 **SOKAI SHOWER - EXTRA COOL**  
COOLING LOTION FOR USE DURING YOUR SHOWER.
- 04 **HEAD FREEZER BY GATSBY**  
SPRAY IT RIGHT INTO YOUR HAIR. COOLER THAN FROSTED TIPS.
- 05 **CRAZY COOL BY GATSBY**  
COOLING SPRAY THAT APPARENTLY NEEDS A CAUTION SIGN.
- 06 **FRISK BATH SALTS**  
BATH SALTS TO COOL YOUR SKIN IN THE TUB.
- 07 **FRISK BATH SOAP**  
NORMAL SOAP THAT LEAVES YOU ALL TINGLY.
- 08 **BODY SHEETS BY GATSBY**  
YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND. FEEL COOL AND WIPE THE SWEAT AWAY ANYTIME.
- 09 **BIORÉ SARASARA POWDER SHEETS**  
YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND IF YOU LIKE FRUITY, FLORAL AROMAS.
- 10 **HIYARON BY LOTTE**  
THE ONLY PRODUCT THAT ACTUALLY GETS COLD. SMASH IT AND ENJOY!

Though a bit different, one of the more popular souvenirs to bring back home are cooling eye drops, meant to refresh and wake you up with a minty burst of menthol in your eyes. Great if you like that sort of thing, but only if you can handle the intensity!

Finally, the classic Hiyaron "one touch" cooling packs instantly drop to freezing temperatures when you crush the pellets inside, lasting for a good forty minutes. This is the one product that actually gets COLD, so you can put it behind your neck, lie down with it on your head, or just hold it against your cheek while you amble around town.





## 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 much easier on the rails.

- 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, we recommend to get a Pasmio, Suica, or other similar 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](http://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 card, 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 Our favorite form of money is e-money cards like Suica and Pasmio, which 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 think about being offline during a holiday, it's hard to go 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 use 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.



# REAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

It can be frustrating not being able to communicate, but it's also part of the charm of travel! How about just getting by smoothly and not feeling completely lost? With just a bit of practice you can break the ice, and your efforts will always be appreciated.

## HELLO & GOODBYE

Whether greeting a stranger or a friend, a simple 'hello' fits any occasion, but Japanese has a bit more nuance than you may be used to.

01 To greet someone just use one of these phrases, smile, and all will be good with the world.

**O-hayo** / Good morning

**Konnichi-wa** / Hello or Good afternoon

**Konban-wa** / Good evening

02 Meeting for the first time? Your new friend might drop a **hajime-mashite** followed by their name. It basically means "Nice to meet you" but it's only used at the very moment when you first meet and exchange names. Any other time and it's odd.

Example: **Hajime-mashite. Roger desu.**

(Nice to meet you. I'm Roger.)

03 Saying goodbye is a bit more tricky, but an all-purpose **mata-ne!** (see you again!) is fine. If you're going to see them again the following day, a **mata-ashita** (see you tomorrow) fits a bit better. The well-known **sayonara** has its time and place, but unless you have the tone down you might sound like you're saying goodbye FOREVER, or about to behead your enemy.

04 Another greeting you may hear, but probably have no need to use, is **otsukaresama**. Often translated as "Thank you for your hard work", it is also a blanket word for co-workers to use in place of not only both hello and goodbye, but also as an acknowledgment in any type of fleeting office interaction with those you may not be so close to.

## PLEASE & THANK YOU

Ahh, the basics of any civilized person should be just that: Basic. Mastering common courtesies goes a long way to feeling comfortable.

01 **Kudasai** is generally translated as "please" but it's more about wanting to receive something. For an all-purpose please, **onegai-shimasu** is far more natural. For example, when taking a taxi to Shibuya say **Shibuya onegai-shimasu**, as **kudasai** would be a bit odd. Just need a beer? **Biiru kudasai** is fine.

02 There are several ways to say thanks, but for your purposes a simple **arigatou** will be enough, and adding **gozaimasu** on the end makes it more polite.

03 Just ate a tasty meal in a more casual joint or at a friend's place? Give your regards to the chef with **gochiso-sama**.

04 Uh oh, need to apologise? If it's a harmless slight like a bump in the train, **sumimasen** gets you back in their good graces. **Gomen-nasai** is for something worse like knocking someone over completely. Anything beyond that, and you'll be mastering the art of the bow in no time (see below).

05 Yeah, everyone else is doing it, but don't feel obligated to bow to people while you're here. Knowing when, how, and to what degree takes some situational awareness. Anyway, most bows are actually just deeper nods, so stick with that unless you've done something terrible, or are meeting the Emperor. Even then, practice first so you don't look awkward (see: Barack Obama).

## AT THE RESTAURANT

Luckily for all of us, picture menus are common in Japan for everyone, not just touristy places. Still, it's good to know a few key phrases to order things.

01 When you first arrive they may ask **Yoyaku arimasuka?** (Do you have a reservation?). If so, say **Hai** (yes) followed by your name. If not, they'll either say they can't accommodate you or ask...

02 ...**Nan-mei sama desuka?** (How many people?). Showing how many with your fingers is perfectly acceptable. If you can't show your group size on one hand, best to make a reservation.

03 Get the staff's attention anytime with **Suimasen!** and don't be afraid to be loud about it in a more casual place.

04 When they ask, **O-kimari desuka?** (Are you ready to order?), just point to the photo on the menu and reply with a simple, **Kore, kudasai** (This one, please). If you want to change amounts of things, add **hitotsu** (1), **futatsu** (2), **mittsu** (3), or **yottsu** (4) after **kore** or the item name. Order more than that and you're on your own.

05 Other useful phrases are **Nama kudasai** (draft beer please) and **Okaike kudasai** (check please), but they won't likely understand your "signing a check in the air" motion made from across the room. If you ask for "the bill" in English there's a good chance you'll end up with a beer, so avoid that word.

06 If you want to pay by credit card you can ask **Caado wa daijoubu?** (Are credit cards ok?), but make sure to ask that when you arrive, or have plenty of cash on-hand as a backup.

## SHOPPING

Whether you're grabbing a snack at the conbini or sneaker shopping, you'll be interacting with shop staff in some way.

01 Generally you'll be greeted by staff with some version of **Irrasshaimase!**, often in unison. It's their way of saying "Welcome!", and helps them keep up their energy during the day. This requires zero response from you besides maybe a smile or a simple greeting.

02 Staff may also ask **Shichaku shimasuka?** (Would you like to try that on?).

03 When you make your purchase you'll get some other questions as well: **Fukuro irimasuka?** / Do you need a bag? Response: **Onegai-shimasu** (Please) or **Iranai-desu** (I don't need one)

**Issho de ii desuka?**

Is it ok to put everything in one bag? (Usually for hot/cold or heavy/soft food items)

Response: **Onegai-shimasu** (Please) or **Betsu betsu de** (Separately)

**Atatame masuka?**

Do you want me to heat it up? (for food at the conbini)

Response: **Onegai-shimasu** (Please) or **ii-desu** (No thanks)

**Pointo caardo omochi desuka?**

Do you have a point card? (Many shops have a point program of some kind)

Response: Either pull out your point card (unlikely) or say **Nai desu**.

Read more on [www.navitimejapan.com/traveling](http://www.navitimejapan.com/traveling)



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EDITOR | Michael Keferl

PRODUCTION | Yoko Kitakoga

ART DIRECTION | Mimmo Cangiano Belcuore

PHOTO EDITOR | Don Kennedy

COVER ILLUSTRATOR | Chong Fei Giap

ILLUSTRATOR | Adrian Hogan

WRITERS

Jenie Gabriel

Marky Star

Michael Keferl

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3-8-38, Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku

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## 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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[contact@navitimejapan.com](mailto:contact@navitimejapan.com)

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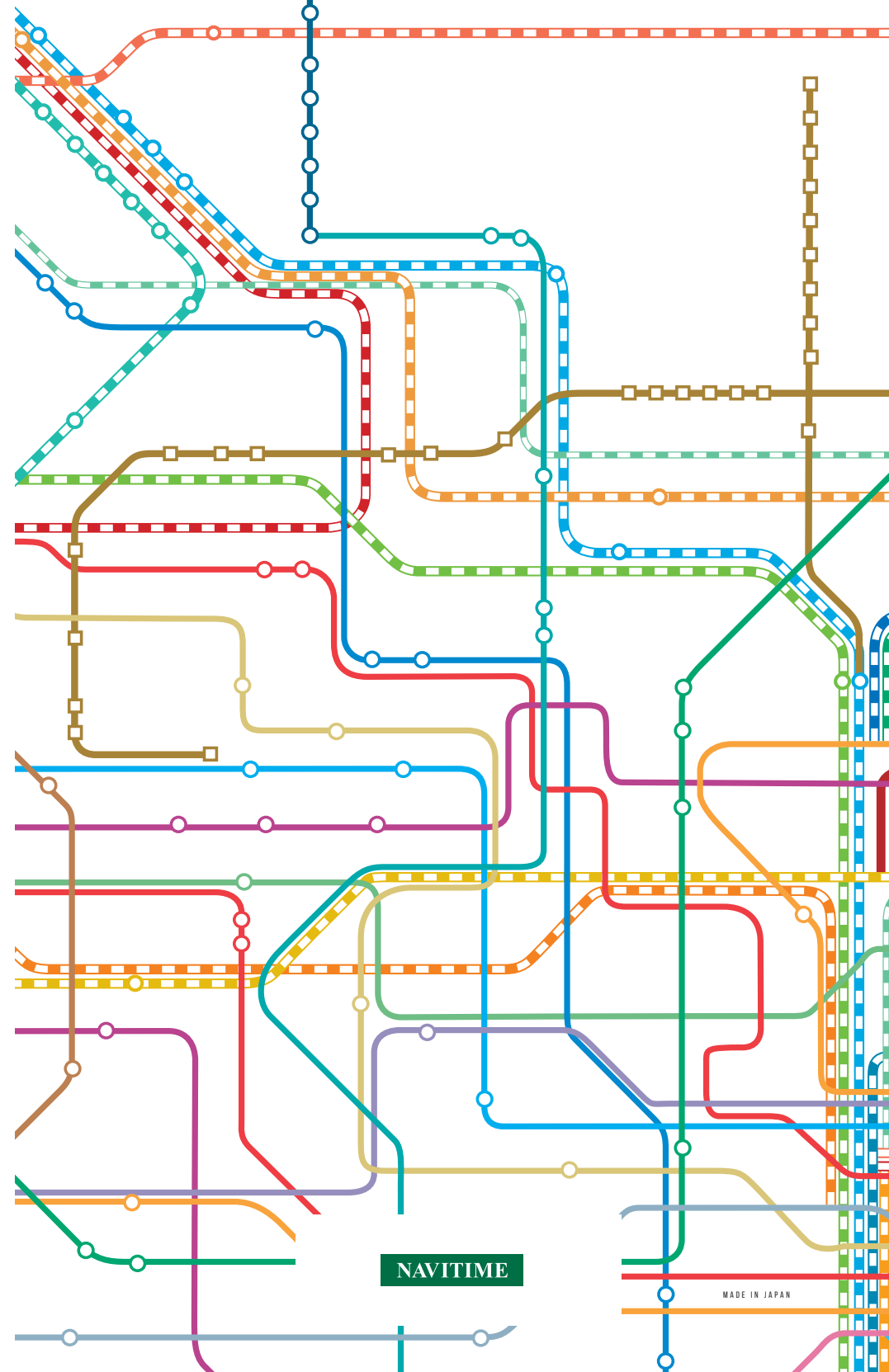
NAVITIME for Japan Travel

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



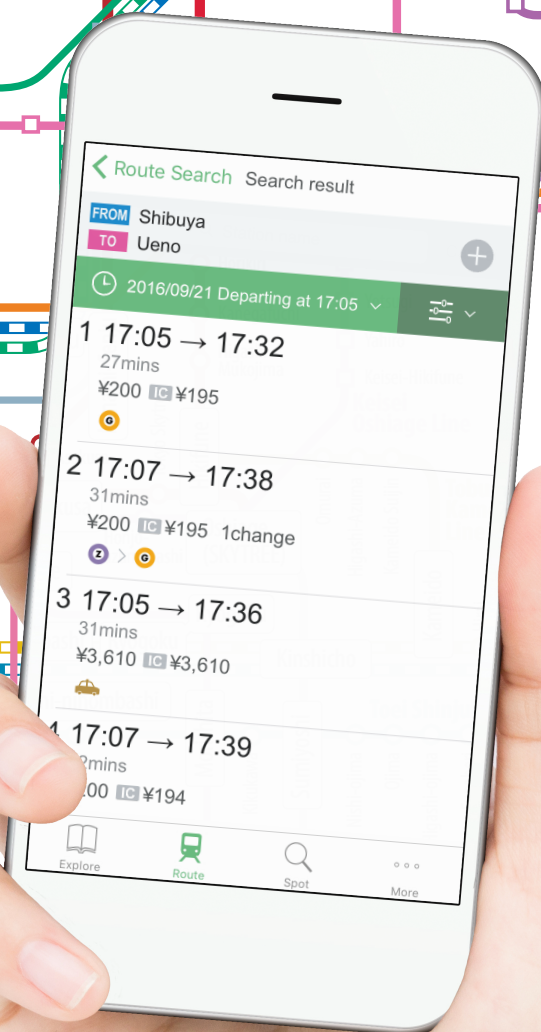
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3 17:05 → 17:36  
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