

Transformative Adventures Through the Soul of Japan



Travel has changed. Nowadays, people no longer want to be mere passive sightseers but active participants in foreign cultures who contribute positively to the development of local communities. Adventure Travel (AT) is an increasingly popular answer to the changing demands of international tourism.

The quintessence of AT, which is to seek to foster sustainability and connections with the land and its people through a variety of fun activities, nature and cultural experiences that are bound to transform travelers' very souls, was the topic of the [Adventure Travel World Summit 2023](#), held from September 11th to 14th. The event attracted more than 750 participants from around 64 countries to [Hokkaido](#), the first Asian host of ATWS, and the ancestral land of the Ainu, an indigenous people with their own unique culture and language, making the northern island the perfect setting for discussing the summit's stated theme – "Harmony." ATWS2023 wasn't all talk, though, as it also included Adventure Travel tours showcasing the appeal of Japan's lesser-explored regions.

Deep dive into the realm of the nature and Ainu Culture: Hidaka Ainu Adventure, Hokkaido

This exciting five-day tour, [Hidaka Ainu Adventure](#), is inspired by the journey of 19th-century British explorer [Isabella Bird](#), who visited Hidaka in south-central Hokkaido in 1878 and got to know the ways of the Ainu there.



Follow in Isabella Bird's footsteps with the help of an Ainu guide who'll lead participants in prayer to Kamuy (spirit-deities), a visit to a Kuca cise (an Ainu hunting hut), and a barbeque with the Ainu of the Biratori region of Hidaka. Swap stories, expand your horizons, and make meaningful connections with people who live in harmony with the land. Participants of the tour will also visit the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum dedicated to the preservation of important tangible Folk Cultural Properties of the Ainu. There, you'll learn more about the Ainu culture through hands-on activities like making ohaw (fish/meat and wild plant soups) or carving traditional Ainu patterns into wooden coasters. Hidaka Ainu Adventure also includes a stay at Biratori Onsen Yukara known for its therapeutic hot springs and a multi-course meal featuring local vegetables and beef.



Nature is another important theme of the tour. Participants will get a chance to enjoy the unspoiled landscapes of Hokkaido as they traverse Biratori and Urakawa, enjoying the tranquil sights of grazing horses and cattle, as well as Biratori's Lily-of-the-Valley field, a famous landmark in early summer in Hokkaido. More panoramic views will be available from atop Mt. Apoi during a 5-hour hike up the majestic mountain.

The sights are sure to become lifelong memories for Hidaka adventures who'll see firsthand that a harmonious coexistence with nature is both possible and worth it.

Quest for an intact beauty of Japan: Explore the Best of Shikoku by E-bike and SUP

[Shikoku](#), one of Japan's four main islands (located in the southwest of the country), is a pristine paradise that until recently has not been known that well by international tourists. This AT tour, [Explore the Best of Shikoku by E-bike and SUP](#), aims to remedy that.



Photo by Shikoku Tours

Travel the [Shimanami Kaido](#) expressway that connects mainland Japan with Shikoku on e-bikes and enjoy scenic views of the Seto Inland Sea and its myriad islands. One intriguing stop on the route is the Oyamazumi Shrine, which houses armor and weaponry of the Murakami Kaizoku (corsairs) who once ruled the area as part of a powerful “water army” that maintained order around the Seto shipping routes. The theme of the AT tour is also expressed through a visit to Dogo Onsen, Japan’s oldest and arguably most famous hot-spring area. The overnight stay includes a performance of geisha dancing, intended to put the participants in the spirit of taking a journey deep into the heart of Shikoku.



Photo by Shikoku Tours

Participants will also travel high above sea level with a bike ride nearly halfway up Mt. Ishizuchi, the highest peak in western Japan standing at 1,982 meters tall. The mountain is also the source of the Niyodo River. Frequently voted as the river with the best water quality in Japan, Niyodo’s color is so mesmerizing that locals have nicknamed it “Niyodo Blue.” You’ll have the pleasure of discovering the charms of the river during a standup paddleboarding (SUP) experience and a visit to the Ino-Cho Paper Museum, where you’ll make traditional Japanese paper from vegetation nurtured by Niyodo. The river has also long blessed the area with ingredients for Sake making used by the Kameizumi Sake Brewery, another exciting stop on the tour.

This AT journey is a non-stop showcase of the best Shikoku has to offer, combining the island’s scenic landscapes, unique history, and centuries-long traditions to expose travelers to a whole new side of Japan, possibly changing their lives forever.

Adventure Away

Following ATWS 2023, Japan's Adventure Travel is sure to attract even more attention, especially given the wealth of potential AT destinations that the country has to offer. The Japanese archipelago is incredibly diverse, stretching north to south from the subarctic forests of Hokkaido to the subtropical beaches of Okinawa. Thanks to such a varied landscape, Japan is gaining international attention as an exciting AT destination, where fresh perspectives are forged and travel itself is redefined.

Japan Tourism Topics

1. A Taste of Tradition and Futurism at Mercure Tokyo Haneda Airport, November



With a blend of Japanese and European aesthetics, Mercure Tokyo Haneda Airport offers a memorable stay in a convenient location near Haneda Airport, a gateway for business and travel in Asia. Opening on 26th November 2023, the concept of the hotel's TOKYO ECLECTIC initiative is to showcase the city's unique balance of tradition and futurism, inspired by Japan's rich culture such as traditional crafts from the past and present. Direct access to many of Tokyo's greatest attractions makes Mercure Tokyo Haneda Airport the ideal hub for travelers coming to Japan for both business and/or pleasure. Whether at the beginning or end of an exciting journey around the country, guests can enjoy a modern take on a traditional Ochaya teahouse and indulge in local flavors in the upscale dining area any time of day. Mercure Tokyo Haneda Airport is a 10-minute drive from the airport.

[Mercure Tokyo Haneda Airport](#)

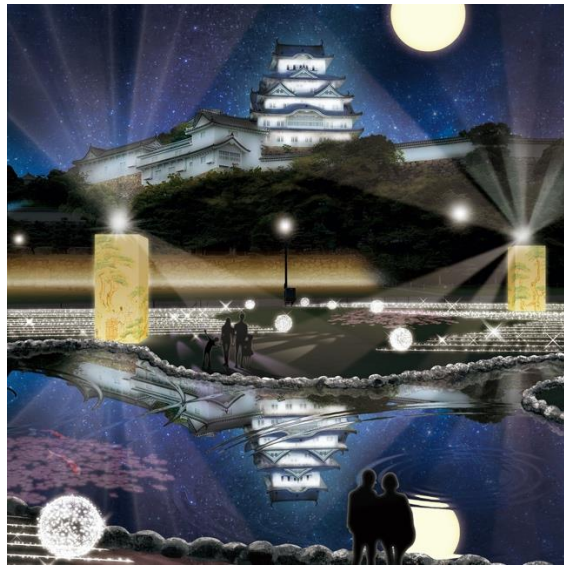
2. Learn from the Shogun lifestyle with a premium experience at the historic Nikko Toshogu Shrine in Tochigi



About 2 hours away from Tokyo by train, Nikko Toshogu Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built about 400 years ago in dedication to legendary Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Edo shogunate (1603-1867), is renowned for its intricate woodwork and serene natural surroundings. A new tour offering goes beyond the typical sightseeing trek through Nikko. The My Shogun Story tour package explores the shrine plus the philosophies of Shoguns and their successors. Experience the samurai etiquette and martial arts, including archery, horsemanship, and swordsmanship, within Butokuden (Hall of Butoku), a Registered Tangible Cultural Property of Japan. In addition to those activities, a traditional Kaiseki meal with an Ogasawara-Ryu lecture, and an exclusive Shogun Seating Room prayer service, the overnight Deluxe My Shogun Story itinerary offers a stay at prestigious Nikko Kanaya Hotel, opened way back in 1873. An exclusive cocktail party plan is also available at the British Embassy Villa Memorial Park on the shores of Lake Chuzenji.

[My Shogun Story](#)

3. Astonishing illuminations World Heritage Site Himeji Castle, November 22-December 11, Hyogo



Himeji Castle, also known as “White Heron Castle” for its striking white exterior, will be celebrating its 30th anniversary of its World Heritage Site registration with a dazzling light-up event (500JPY general entrance fee) from November 22nd to December 11th after sunset. The title of the event “kyoukasuigetsu,” which consists of four characters and directly translates to “Mirror, Flower, Water and the Moon,” refers to an old idiom with a deeper meaning, implying the ephemeral beauty of the castle reflected on the large water mirror at San-no Maru Square that sprawls out in front of the castle. An array of lasers and spotlights emanating from the towers will illuminate the night sky creating a spectacular effect. Projection mapping will transform the castle throughout the evening,

emphasizing Himeji Castle's power and beauty. Illuminations are planned to extend down Otemae Street from the station to the castle.

[30th of Himeji Castle History "kyoukasuigetsu"](#)

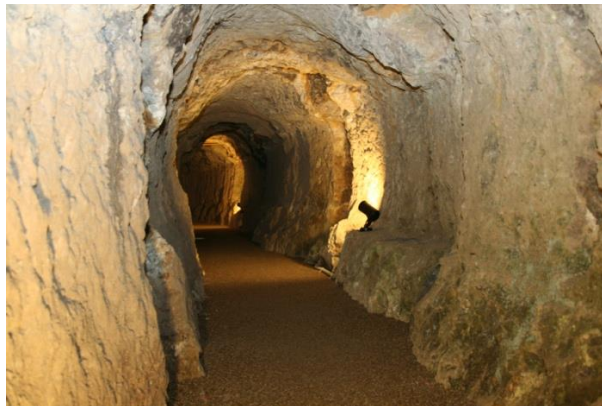
4. Taste of Japan's Unique Food Stall Culture at Kuramoto Street, Hiroshima



Under the gentle glow of festive lanterns and golden ginkgo trees in the cool autumn atmosphere, visitors to Kure City, a scenic seaside city 30 minutes from Hiroshima, can stroll down Kuramoto Street while savoring the area's tastiest treats, available at a variety of popular Yatai (Japanese food stalls). With a long history as a traditional Yatai street, the area continues to attract visitors with quick, delicious food and an open, cheerful atmosphere. Folks will feel warm and cozy in the crisp autumn evening with a hearty bowl of Ramen noodles or Oden, a kind of Japanese fish cake stew with a variety of ingredients. Of course, other staples of Japanese soul food like Teppanyaki, Yakitori and more are available, ensuring constant foot traffic from hungry visitors.

[Kuramoto Street](#)

5. The Alluring Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine surrounded by nature, Shimane



Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine, one of the world's largest silver producers in the 16th to 17th centuries, now appears on the World Heritage List resting within the lush landscape of Oda City, Shimane Prefecture in a rural area undisturbed by massive crowds encountered in one of the Japan's major tourist hotspots. Cutting through the dense mountain forest, the prosperous town preserves the remains of winding transportation routes, historic loading ports and old mines renowned for easily extractable Fukuishi silver ore, derived from rocks formed by the region's volcanic activity. Even after such an industrial past, nature has reclaimed the area, surprising visitors with stunning scenery, especially in autumn as the old silver mine is surrounded by walls of gold and crimson hues. A major attraction still open to the public is Rygen-ji-mabu, an impressive 600-meter-long tunnel. Visitors can participate a silver ring making experience on a walking tour of the town.

[Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine](#)

Notes:

- *Items 4 and 5 are based on information from JNTO Partners.*
- *The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.*

If you'd like to download photos and videos of Japan's tourist attractions, please visit the Japan [Online Media Center \(JOMC\)](#)

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