

2024 August Vol.2

New Open

1. The New Novotel Nara is Opening in Japan's Ancient Capital City on September 4



Nara Prefecture is home to numerous ancient buildings and structures that are testaments to the area's crucial role in Japanese history, several of which have been collectively designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under the title "Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara." In September, the new hotel Novotel Nara will open its doors in Nara City, becoming a fresh base from which to explore the city and its many wonders. Only a 10-minute taxi ride from many of Nara's famous sightseeing spots such as Nara Park and Todaiji Temple, the hotel is easily accessible and still offers a quiet escape from the busyness of the city. The design of the hotel's guest rooms is based on Nara's rich culture and nature while the rooftop terrace on the 8th floor offers seasonal activities such as cherry blossom viewing. After a long day of marveling at one of Japan's ancient capitals (located here prior to Kyoto), interacting with deer, and exploring the streets of this charming city, you can head back to Novotel Nara to rest up for your next exciting day in Nara. As it is only around 1 hour away from Kyoto, it is also the perfect place for those who want a quiet stay while still getting to visit Kyoto.

[Novotel Nara](#)

New Open

2. Escape to a Soothing Hot Spring Resort in the Japanese Alps, Opening September 5, Gifu



©Hoshino Resorts

Located in the mountains of Gifu Prefecture, the Okuhida Hot Spring Villages offer splendid retro Japanese views nestled amongst pristine nature. From September 5, the Hirayu hot spring village will become the new home of the Hoshino Resorts KAI Okuhida, a hot spring "ryokan" that blends both traditional and modern elements to create a luxurious space that will refresh both the mind and body. The numerous baths, including communal and private baths, are fed by the water that flows from the Hirayu hot spring, and you will find elegant accents throughout the resort that are made with local materials and craft techniques. For the cherry on top, be sure to indulge in the meals provided by the resort, which often include succulent, tender local Hida beef. It is also near Hida Takayama and Shirakawa-go, which are popular sightseeing destinations due to their traditional Japanese townscapes.

[Hoshino Resorts KAI Okuhida](#)

Festival and Event

3. Taste the Delectable Flavors of Hokkaido at Sapporo Autumn Fest, September 6 – 29



The Sapporo Autumn Fest is a culinary festival in Sapporo City that showcases and celebrates the harvest of autumn and delicious local flavors of Hokkaido. Fresh, seasonal ingredients and food vendors are brought together from across Hokkaido to create a fabulous festival that welcomes more than two millions of visitors annually who gather to sample and chow down on a variety of mouthwatering Hokkaido specialties. Delicious dishes that can be sampled here include Ramen, meat cuisine, drinks, and more, and it goes without saying that they are made with locally sourced ingredients. You are sure to find something new to try even if you visit multiple times and are guaranteed to leave happily with a satisfied palate and full belly. The festival will be held in Odori Park in central Sapporo from 10:00 am to 8:30 pm between September 6 and 29, so you can easily make it a destination on your travel itinerary or pop by for some yummy eats during your sightseeing.

[Sapporo Autumn Fest](#)

Festival and Event

4. Calling All Sake Lovers! Taste the Aroma and Flavors at the Sake Matsuri, October 12 – 13, Hiroshima



©Higashihiroshima City Tourism Association

The Sake Matsuri is one of the largest Japanese Sake festivals in Hiroshima Prefecture, with booths, food stalls, and more popping up around the Saijo area of Higashi-hiroshima City. Saijo is a prime location for this event, as it is known as one of the leading Sake producers in Japan and is only 40 minutes from Hiroshima Station. Of course, all Sake lovers must stop by the Sake Hiroba Plaza, which hosts a collection of approximately 800 different Sakes from across Japan that can be sampled (ticket required, advanced purchase recommended to fully enjoy the Sake Matsuri). Many local breweries will also open to the public, offering Sake tastings for a fee and some even selling limited-edition Sake brews. Though the festival's primary focus is Sake, you can still find many families in attendance enjoying the food, parades, and musical performances at the main venue.

[The Sake Festival](#)

Festival and Event

5. A Procession of Vibrant Boats at the Kamaishi Festival, October 18 – 20, Iwate



©Kamaishi Festival Executive Committee

The Kamaishi Festival, held in the city of Kamaishi in Iwate Prefecture, is arguably most famous for its procession of colorfully decorated boats that carry the deities of Ozaki Shrine as well as energetic festival participants who rouse spectators watching from land. Performers on the boat play musical accompaniment and don festival wear and props that liven the atmosphere, and some boats even carry tiger dancers who shake the beautiful tiger masks at onlookers. The

numerous, vividly colored flags flapping above the boats act as symbols of prayers for large catches and create a unique sight that appears as if straight from a retro movie poster. Events held on the last day of the festival take place on land, and include tiger and Kagura dances, shrine floats, and traditional performing arts.

The festival details are scheduled to be announced at the end of August, so be sure to keep an eye out!

[Kamaishi Festival](#)

Festival and Event

6. Celebrate Some of the World's Best Movies at the Tokyo International Film Festival, October 28 – November 6



©2023 TIFF

The Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) is one of the largest film festivals in Asia, drawing filmmakers, actors, and film enthusiasts alike from all across the world. Filmmakers from various countries submit their works in the hopes of being selected for the festival's official screening when works are played over the course of the festival. In addition to film screenings that cover a wide range of genres, the festival also hosts workshops, discussion panels, and red carpet ceremonies, facilitating the understanding of movies. The festival is happening mainly at the Hibiya, Yurakucho, Marunouchi, and Ginza area, enjoyable for people of all ages, thanks to the variety of events, and can introduce festival-goers to new genres, themes, and subjects. TIFF provides a platform for filmmakers and enthusiasts to showcase their works and passion projects, creating a wonderful opportunity to delve deeper into the complex and fascinating world of cinema.

[Tokyo International Film Festival 2024](#)

Seasonal Topic

7. Find a Blanket of Cosmos Flowers at the Ikoma Plateau in the Fall, Miyazaki



The blooming cosmos at the Ikoma Plateau is a quintessential autumn sight in Kobayashi City, which can be reached in about 1 hour by car from Miyazaki City in Miyazaki Prefecture. The blossoms reach their peak in late September to mid-October, with approximately 1 million flowers creating a multi-colored carpet of pink, white, and red. The Ikoma Plateau Cosmos Festival coincides with this peak blooming period and is a lively affair, with special events, food stalls, fireworks, and more. The Kirishima Mountain Range spreads out beyond the cosmos flower field, creating the perfect view for some breathtaking pictures, and there is even a photo contest held so people can showcase their beautiful shots of this stunning sight. Try to stay for the "night cosmos," when the flowers will be illuminated by more than 20,000 candles on October 13.

[Ikoma Plateau](#)

National Park

8. Vivid Autumn Foliage and Ethereal Spirituality at Daisen-Oki National Park



©Ministry of the Environment

Daisen-Oki National Park, which straddles Tottori, Shimane, and Okayama prefectures, boasts awe-inspiring views of one of the largest beech forests in Western Japan. From late October to the beginning of November, the mountain bursts into fiery shades of yellow, orange, and red as the leaves change colors with the arrival of the autumn season. The foliage provides a breathtaking contrast with the rocky facades of the northern and southern "walls" of the

mountain, showcasing the marvels of nature. November is also when all the gods from all over Japan convene at Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine, which is also located within the park. In this season, multiple ceremonies are held for the gods during their stay. Autumn in Daisen-Oki National Park is a prime time to enjoy Japan's marvelous nature and culture.

[Daisen-Oki National Park](#)

Special Experience

9. Try Your Hand at Japanese Blacksmithing in Hyogo During a 3-Day, 2-Night Tour



From gorgeous mountains and sea to unique islands, the vast Hyogo Prefecture is blessed with abundant nature. Nurtured by the diverse environment, the prefecture also boasts rich culture and history as well as great culinary traditions. Through this tour, you will be taken to an authentic blacksmith workshop in Miki- Hyogo Prefecture - which is the oldest blacksmith town in Japan. Here, you will get the unique experience of trying your hand at hammering red-hot iron while being mentored by a master forger who creates Japanese knives by hand from the forging process. This 3-day, 2-night tour that will allow you to explore the charms of Hyogo such as meeting local potters in Tachikui (a pottery production area surrounded by mountains that feels like a hideaway) and enjoying a lunch with sake pairings and explanations by a “tanba toji” brewer. Tanba toji is one of leading groups of sake craftsmen. You can also visit the Akashiura Fishery Cooperative where you can watch freshly-caught fish being auctioned off - a rarity even in Japan - and then have lunch at a local sushi restaurant.

[Get off the Beaten Track and Discover Hyogo's Terroir 3 Days 2 Nights](#)

Special Experience

10. Step Into a Fantastic Realm at the Library in the Earth, Chiba



©Koji Fujii / TOREAL

A quick glance at the Library in the Earth in Kisarazu City, Chiba Prefecture will make you think you are looking at a hobbit's hole. Designed by Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP and located within the vast Kurkku Fields complex, the library is covered with a roof of thick grass and lush vegetation, with a soft curved water drop shape when viewed from above. Rows of books appear as you take the approach leading underground and up to the library, emphasizing the feeling of entering a fantastic world. Small details hidden throughout the library add to the magical design, including book slots that reveal kaleidoscopes once the books are pulled out, skylights that let natural light flow in, and wooden structure that lets the facility seamlessly blend in with its natural surroundings. A train journey of approximately 80 minutes from Tokyo Station will bring you to this distinctive location. Not only is the library perfect for book lovers, but also those who have always wanted to jump into a fantasy world.

*Kurkku Fields member registration is required to be able to access the Library in the Earth

[Library in the Earth](#)

[KURKKU FIELDS Guide](#)

Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai

Expo 2025: Experiencing the Thriving Heritage and Traditions that Empower Lives of Today in the Tokai Region



Embark on an unforgettable journey through the Tokai region, where rich cultural traditions thrive and continue to empower lives. Visit the awe-inspiring Ise Jingu Shrine to feel the connection between past and present. Be inspired by the Ama divers, whose stories of resilience and deep bond with the sea are legendary.

Experience Shizuoka's serene tea fields at the "Hajimari no Kocha Terrace Cafe." Don't miss the "National Tea Festival Shizuoka Tournament" on November 2-3 – a vibrant celebration of Japan's rich tea culture held for the first time in Hamamatsu City. Alongside a consumer expansion event at Hamamatsu Castle Park, you can deep dive into traditional tea ceremonies, sample exquisite teas, and join workshops that aim to create new tea experiences by combining tea with diverse industries, nature, and history.

Discover how these destinations balance happiness and prosperity with life's essentials. Explore vibrant intersections of agriculture, spirituality, culture, and history that inspire dreams and ambitions. Get ready for days filled with enriching experiences, enlightening conversations, and breathtaking sights that celebrate life and tradition.

For more details, visit the JNTO Expo 2025 website.

URL : <https://www.japan.travel/en/expo2025/article/tokai-kansai/>

Notes:

- The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.
- Item 9 is based on information from JNTO Partners.

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