

Festival and Event

1. Spring Brings Bright Bursts of Color With "Sagemon" Decorations to Kyushu's "City of Water," February 11 – April 3, Fukuoka



©Yanagawa City

Yanagawa, known as the "Venice of Kyushu," is famous for its canals that wind through the city. Running past weeping willow trees that gracefully hang over the water, gondola rides are a popular sightseeing activity here. Come spring, the city will burst into color with vibrant "Sagemon" hanging decorations, displayed to celebrate Hinamatsuri (Girls' Day) and wish for the happiness and health of young girls. A popular attraction during this time is the Ohinasama Water Parade, during which people dressed in traditional clothing float under dangling ornaments. Sagemon and classic Hina doll arrangements are also set up around the city, creating mesmerizing, vivid displays that can be enjoyed while walking around in a custom called "Sagemon Meguri." Another springtime draw includes the Takahata Park Cherry Blossom Festival, which coincides with the peak blossoming period of the park's 500 cherry trees. During the festival period, Mihashira Shrine hosts its dynamic "yabusame" performances, where visitors can watch in awe as archers shoot arrows at targets while riding on horseback.

[A tour of the Sagemon heralds the arrival of spring](#)

Festival and Event

2. Attend a Festival with a Wealth of Inspiring Animations, March 15 – 20, Niigata



Clarice's Dream (2023)

©Niigata International Animation Festival

The Niigata International Animation Film Festival (NIAFF) will be held for the third time on March 15 - 20, 2025, in multiple locations across Niigata City, including Niigata Shimin Plaza. It is not only the world's first film festival centered around long-form animation, but also one of Asia's largest animation film festivals. Niigata Prefecture has strong ties to the world of animation, being home to the Niigata Manga Animation Museum and the birthplace of numerous animation giants such as Okawa Hiroshi, who produced Japan's first color feature-length animation. The wide range of programs during the event will help visitors appreciate the deep and complex world of animation, including screenings of films by creators from across the world and talks by directors, producers, critics, and more. There will also be a competition to recognize and honor some of the biggest current talents in animation. The dedication to animation and the evolving industry helps educate and deepen the appreciation for this expressive art form that is beloved around the world. For more details about the festival, please check the official website.

[Niigata International Animation Film Festival](#)

Festival and Event

3. Welcome Spring With the 30-Kilometer Journey of a Shrine Deity, March 18 – 23, Ishikawa



©Ketashrine

Once it starts to get warmer in March, Hakui City holds the Heikokusai, one of its most significant festivals. During the festival, a procession of over 50 people led by a sacred horse travels across the Noto Peninsula for six days, carrying the deity of Keta Taisha, one of the most distinguished shrines in the region, in a "mikoshi" (portable shrine) to a sub-shrine about 30 kilometers away. The festival is also called "Oide-Matsuri," which roughly translates to "come out festival," as it is one of the first spring festivals after a long and rough winter that beckons people outside. Spectators gather by the roads to witness the transferring of the deity, also welcoming the long-awaited arrival of spring. The mikoshi makes a couple of stops along the way, including spending the night at Sukunahiko-Kamikataishi Shrine while picking up its deity before returning to the main shrine. This fabulous festival is a beloved reminder of times past and a symbol of spring in Noto.

[Heikoku Festival \(Oide Festival\)](#)

*Please note that the website uses machine translation, so there may be some inaccuracies. The festival's name is Heikoku Festival.

Festival and Event

4. Explore Humans' Connection with Nature Through a Breathtaking Flower Festival, March 20 – April 27, Hyogo



The Awaji Flower Festival 2025 will be held to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Awaji Flower Expo, an international event dedicated to horticulture and landscape gardening. The theme of this year's event is "Living with nature, connecting lives on Awaji Island." It will take place mainly at three venues on the island: Awaji, Sumoto, and Minami Awaji. Zones across the venues will host a variety of events including seminars, talks, interactive activities, botanical displays, and more, emphasizing the importance of humans' coexistence with nature. Though located in the Seto Inland Sea, Awaji is easy to get to: it is about a 40-minute drive from Kobe City or a 70-minute drive from Osaka City, and there are also direct buses that travel to Awaji from Kansai International Airport. The different venues on the island can also be visited by local bus, and 88 tourist facilities across the area act as satellite venues, providing the opportunity to tour different corners all across the island and introducing the many charms of Awaji.

[Awaji Flower Expo 25th Anniversary Flower Festival 2025](#)

Special Experience

5. Spend the Night Like a Feudal Lord, Kagawa



The 400-year-old Marugame Castle is famous for its stone wall, which ranks as the highest in Japan. The castle now lets guests experience what it is like to spend the night in a magnificent Japanese castle. The traditional architecture that showcases the prosperity of the region back when the Kyogoku clan ruled over it for more than 200 years and historic atmosphere are offset with modern comforts for a relaxing stay. After the rickshaw pick-up at the station to the castle, in a welcome truly fit for a lord or lady, you will be greeted with a "taiko" drum performance before you move to your luxurious bedroom. The castle has one of only twelve surviving wooden keeps in Japan, which is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property that can be rented out and enjoyed as a night lounge with traditional Japanese music, drinks, and snacks. For dinner, you will be provided with an authentic historical meal made with local ingredients and served on stunning lacquerware, making you feel like royalty. The experience also lets guests craft their own traditional Marugame Uchiwa fan and join a sencha tea ceremony.

[MARUGAME Castle Experience](#)

Special Experience

6. A Luxurious Modern Japanese Ryokan Right By the Sea, Hiroshima



Ryokan Onomichi Nishiyama is located right by the water in the retro merchant town of Onomichi. A tea garden that welcomed wealthy merchants and their guests back when the town prospered as a port of call along the Kitamae shipping route, it has now been turned into a traditional-style Japanese inn that preserves Onomichi culture. There are eight rooms in six detached buildings that feature Japanese architectural elements and warm wooden accents. Each building holds a bathroom that is reminiscent of an indoor hot spring with a shower area and deep tub, allowing guests to enjoy the luxurious sensation of bathing in their own private "onsen" hot spring. Every corner holds a bit of its history in some form - original, restored, or

repurposed - from the furniture to the tableware. The ryokan's restaurant is also not to be missed, its scrumptious dishes made with locally produced ingredients are made in an open kitchen that offers dynamic entertainment during the dining experience. The Western-style dishes pair wonderfully with the restaurant's collection of wine and Japanese sake, which you can also enjoy outside of the restaurant at the self-service lounge. The ryokan is less than a 10-minute drive from Onomichi Station, making it the perfect place to unwind after exploring the area's iconic retro townscape and experiencing activities in the Seto Inland Sea area.

[Ryokan Onomichi Nishiyama](#)

Sports Tourism

7. Train Your Body and Soul with Martial Arts on an Ancient Pilgrimage Route, Wakayama



The Kumano Kodo is one of Japan's most famous ancient pilgrimage routes, and it actually has a surprising connection to aikido, a traditional Japanese martial art. Although it is a martial art, aikido is centered around a peace-based philosophy. Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of aikido, was born in Tanabe City, which acts as the gateway to the Kumano Kodo. With this three-day, two-night experience, you will be able to dive deep into Japanese spirituality by learning aikido with an experienced instructor and exploring the historical, nature-rich area. On the first day, you will don a traditional uniform to train directly with an aikido master who will teach you basic movements, techniques, and the aikido ideology. The second day offers the option of either experiencing the local agriculture for yourself through activities such as fruit picking or walking along the Kumano Kodo in the morning, with local fare available for lunch to provide energy for the afternoon of walking. The day finishes with a stay at a hot spring inn that will rejuvenate you for the following day of visiting sacred shrines along the pilgrimage route.

[Aikido, Kumano Kodo Experience](#)

Adventure Travel

8. See a Different Side of Kyoto Near the Coast



©Kyoto by the Sea

When one thinks of Kyoto, images of maiko walking through cobblestone streets and ancient wooden temples may be the first thing to come to mind. However, Kyoto is much more than just the Kyoto City area. “Kyoto by the Sea” stands for the area of seven towns and cities to the north of the prefecture. They are located by the Sea of Japan and are filled with awe-inspiring natural sceneries, delectable local cuisines, unique historical heritages, and more. You can head to Amanohashidate, said to be one of the three most scenic spots in Japan, for unparalleled panoramic views and some fun in the water such as sea kayaking or standup paddleboarding. For adventure enthusiasts, head to the Oeyama Mountains to hike part of the 100 km Oni Trail, where you’ll encounter hundreds of “oni” demon statues, masks, and signs as you traverse through quiet mountainous hamlets, coastal fishing towns and ancient temples. Though much less explored than Kyoto City, which is just one to three hours away by train depending on your destination, the Kyoto by the Sea area holds countless discoveries that will enrich your Japan trip.

[Kyoto by the Sea](#)

Japan Heritage

9. A Spiritual Journey to Rebirth Through the Mountains, Yamagata



The Dewa Sanzan, or the "Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa," play an imperative role in the Japanese mountain ascetic religion Shugendo. Consisting of Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono, which represent the present, past, and future respectively, trekking through them is symbolic of going through the cycle of rebirth. The mountains still see many worshipers who come to experience this journey to rebirth, and there are many accommodations that cater to

visitors, including temple lodgings run by priests. Some of these temple lodges even serve vegetarian "shojin ryori" Buddhist cuisine, offering culinary insight into the religion's ideologies. There are also numerous shrines and temples in the area that stand as physical representations of the mountains' spirituality. They can be reached via hiking trails, with difficulties that range from beginner to advanced, and also offer breathtaking views of the surrounding nature. Exploring the Dewa Sanzan will also reveal historical wonders such as the five-story pagoda at Mt. Haguro, a National Treasure and said to date back to the 14th century, and centuries-old cedar trees. A journey through the Dewa Sanzan provides the opportunity for an enlightening experience.

[The Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa: A Journey to the True Spirit of Japan](#)

Notice

10. Promoting Sustainable Tourism - Travel Etiquette for the Future Guide Now Available



Japan has seen a striking spike in foreign tourists in recent years. This has also come an influx of unexpected incidents involving certain actions, behaviors, and interactions with locals. The Japan Tourism Agency has created a Travel Etiquette poster/leaflet and sightseeing pictograms that illustrate manners that should be minded and violations that should be avoided while touring around Japan. Both will be available in five languages and include easy-to-understand images and text. The content introduced in these initiatives is meant to not only protect the wellbeing of the locals, but also enhance the travel experience. It is highly recommended to take a look at them to make your time in Japan more enjoyable for everyone and also be sure to heed local signs and instructions when visiting areas as well. The Japan Tourism Agency will also continue to update the information based on current news and feedback to help make Japan tourism a positive experience for everyone.

[Travel Etiquette Guide](#)

Expo Pavilion and Event Reservation System



©Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition

Applications for the lottery have begun; its first round will be accepted up to two months in advance. In addition to the Signature Pavilion, it includes the Yushan Digital Tech from Taiwan, the Republic of China, the Japan Pavilion, Cartier's Women's Pavilion, etc.

International pavilions also participate in the system: the UAE, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Serbia, Thailand, Hungary, Brazil, Poland, Portugal, the International Red Cross, and the UN pavilion.

Additionally, you can make reservations for various events. For example, you can apply for the events in April such as Ado's Special Expo Opening Live Performance, the Jr. EXILE concert featuring THE RAMPAGE, FANTASTICS, BALLISTIK BOYZ, and PSYCHIC FEVER, and the opening program Physical Twin Symphony.

There are several pavilions and events at the Expo that can be enjoyed without a reservation. There is also a system of same-day registration slots for pavilions and events, but visitors are encouraged to make use of advance bookings for pavilions and events to be applied from three to two months before your date of visit to ensure a smoother visit with shorter waiting times.

There are three opportunities to book pavilions and events in advance as follows. After booking a visit date and time, you can apply for each of these opportunities. If you are successful in all three applications, you can visit the Expo with up to three slots reserved in advance.

- ▷2-Month Advance Lottery: 3 to 2 months before your visit.
- ▷7-Day Advance Lottery: 1 month to 8 days before your visit.
- ▷Available Slot Reservation: 3 days to 9:00 am on the day before your visit.

For further details including "Same-Day Registration", please refer to the press release of the EXPO association.

<https://www.expo2025.or.jp/en/news/news-20250110-04/>

Notes:

- The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.
- Items 5, 6 are based on information from JNTO Partners.

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

For media inquiries, including requests to use photographs, please contact the JNTO Press at media_inquiry@jnto.go.jp



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