# The Japan Heritage Journey Travel Experiences

The narratives of Japan's unique culture and traditions, shaped by the country's landscapes, climate, and people over countless centuries, are collectively known as Japan Heritage. Embark on a personalized journey through these iconic cultural sites, where you can engage in authentic encounters and experiences guided by master artisans and storytellers and discover the true legacies of Japan.



#### Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan

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# About Japan Heritages

E ach region of Japan has its historic charm, unique culture, and traditions shaped by its landscapes, climate, and people across centuries. This cultural legacy of Japan, whether in tangible artifacts or intangible practices, has been carefully preserved and passed down, ensuring that its narratives endure and are shared for generations to come. These stories, recognized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, are collectively celebrated as Japan Heritage.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs is committed to preserving and leveraging these cultural assets and the broader Japanese culture, both within Japan and abroad. In its efforts, the agency aims to revitalize local communities and unveil the lesser-known aspects of Japan, thus weaving together these narratives to capture the broader essence of its vibrant culture.

Exploring the theme of "Journeying Further into Japan," embark on a voyage to these remarkable sites, from globally renowned cultural treasures to hidden gems off the beaten path, and discover the historical and cultural narratives unique to each region, allowing you to embrace the true spirit of Japan.

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#### **Featured Areas**



#### Japanese Copperware Craftsmanship in Toyama

From Tokyo: 3h30min (by shinkansen) | From Osaka: 4h (by train)



#### Explore an Ancient Port Town in Fukui

From Tokyo : 5h20min (by shinkansen and train) | From Osaka : 3h30min (by train)



#### The Rich Heritage of Green Tea in Kyoto

From Tokyo : 3h (by shinkansen and train) | From Osaka : 50min (by train)



#### A Sacred Journey into the Shikoku Pilgrimage

From Tokyo: 1h20min (by plane) | From Osaka: 2h (by plane)



#### Experience the Samurai Way of Life in Satsuma

From Tokyo: 3h30min (by plane) From Osaka : 3h (by plane)





#### Spirituality and Gastronomy in Yamagata

From Tokyo: 1h15min (by shinkansen) From Osaka: 1h15min (by plane)



#### Trace the Footsteps of a Refined Samurai in Sendai

From Tokyo: 2h (by shinkansen) From Osaka: 4h45min (by shinkansen)



#### Explore an Ancient Path in Hakone Hachiri

From Tokyo: 35min (by shinkansen) From Osaka: 2h45min (by shinkansen)



#### **Discover Wood Artisans** in Hida Takayama

From Tokyo: 3h40min (by shinkansen and train) From Osaka: 3h10min (by shinkansen and train)



#### Dive into the Six Ancient Kilns' Heritage in Tamba-Sasayama

From Tokyo: 4h (by shinkansen and train) | From Osaka: 1h30min (by train)





Hakone Hachiri, Kanagawa and Shizuoka

## Explore an Ancient Path in Hakone Hachiri

The Old Tokaido Road, connecting Kyoto and Tokyo for centuries, offers a true sense of history steeped in nature. Walk through the exceptionally preserved section of Hakone Hachiri, a cedar-lined stone path that unveils breathtaking views of lakes and mountains. Pause at a 400-year-old traditional tea house where you can savor their time-honored amazake (non-alcoholic sweet rice wine). Discover the art of local Yosegi woodcraft, spend the night at a serene inn, and indulge in the region's delectable soba and eel specialties on this replenishing guided journey.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #062
"A Perilous Mountain Pass on the Kyoto-To-kyo Highway"







Wazuka, Kyoto

# The Rich Heritage of Green Tea in Kyoto

#JapanHeritage | #JapaneseTea

Wazuka town in southern Kyoto is best known for its legacy of producing the finest quality Uji green tea, a tradition spanning over 800 years. Taking advantage of favorable climatic and soil conditions, the tea plantations in the town form a beautiful landscape. Harvest tea leaves in the fields, grind them into powder, and enjoy a tea-tasting session or a tea-infused lunch amid the breathtaking scenery. This immersive experience will lead you through the rich tea culture deeply rooted in this area of Kyoto, from the art of cultivation to the processing and creation of various tea-infused products.

This experience was inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #009 "Japanese Tea Eight Centuries of Tradition."





### Japanese Tea: Eight Centuries of Tradition

Kyoto Prefecture (Minamiyamashiro Region's Uji, Joyo, Yawata, Kyotanabe, Kizugawa, Ujitawara, Wazuka, Minamiyamashiro)

The introduction of tea to Japan traces back to China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). In the Minamiyamashiro region of Kyoto, tea production techniques took root, giving rise to various types of green tea. Among them are matcha,

used in the traditional tea ceremonies; sencha, commonly enjoyed in daily life; and gyokuro, renowned as one of the world's finest green teas. For over 800 years, people in this region have cultivated premium teas, cementing their position

as pioneers in tea cultivation and processing. Simultaneously, they have made significant cultural contributions to the lasting traditions of the tea ceremony. Visitors to this area can journey through the evolving history of tea production, from the

enchanting tea fields to rows of wholesale shops and tea-themed festivals.







Takaoka, Toyama

# Japanese Copperware Craftsmanship in Toyama

#JapanHeritage

#Craftsmanship

For over four centuries, the city of Takaoka has thrived on its proud tradition of craftsmanship, notably renowned for its copperware artistry. Discover this timeless craft by visiting the esteemed Nousaku casting company to tour their impressive manufacturing facilities, learn traditional techniques, and craft your own exquisite tin sake cup. Nearby in Tonami City, the long-established Wakatsuru Sake Brewery invites you for an exclusive brewery tour and sake-tasting. End the day with a Japanese dinner featuring Toyama's seasonal ingredients, perfectly complemented by the finest local sake.

This experience was inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #003 "Takaoka: Flourishing Folk Culture Under the Maeda Clan."

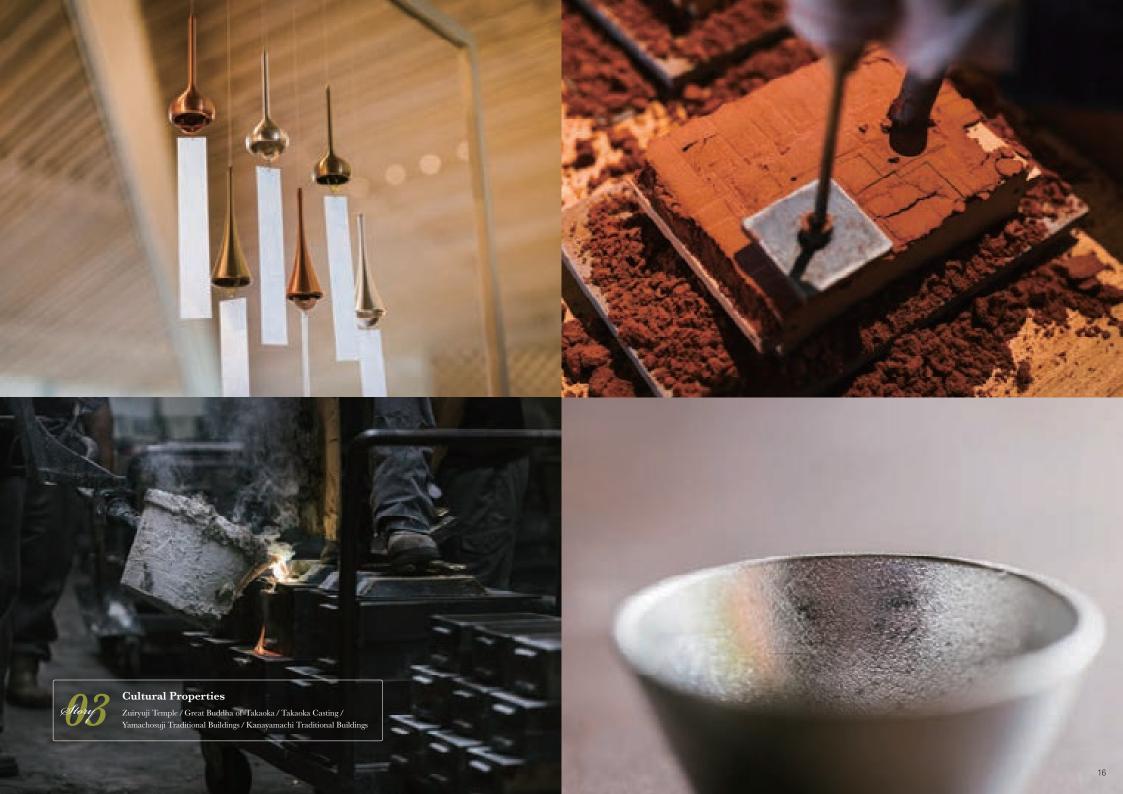




### Takaoka: Flourishing Folk Culture Under the Maeda Clan ~ People, Skills, Heart ~

Toyama Prefecture (Takaoka City)





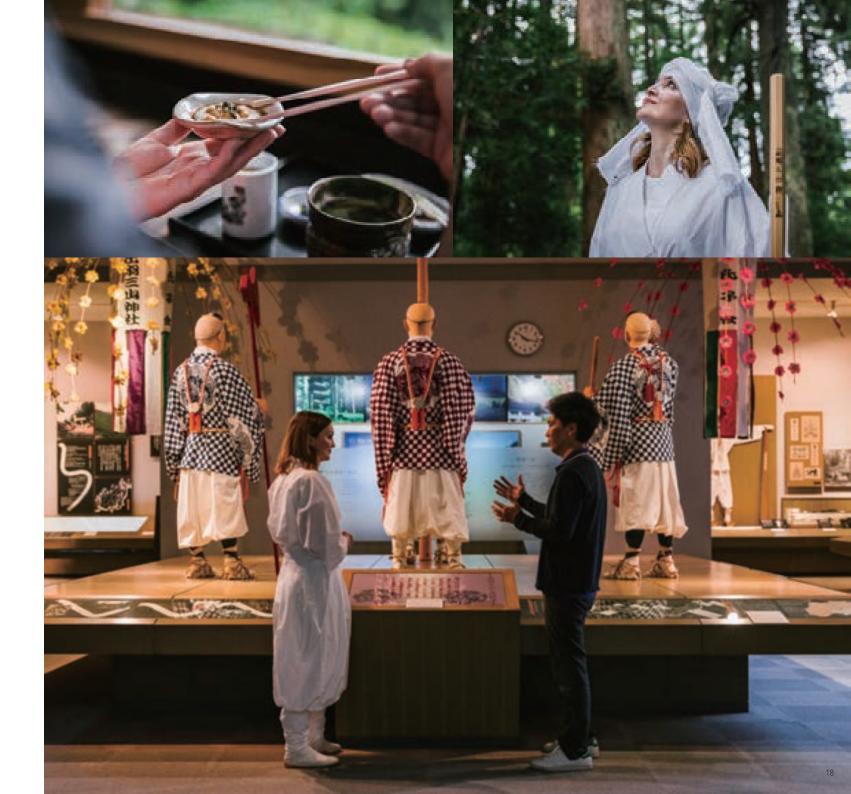


Dewa Sanzan, Yamagata

# Spirituality and Gastronomy in Yamagata

Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono, collectively known as the Dewa Sanzan, hold a sacred mountain faith that mixes nature worship with esoteric Buddhist beliefs. Ascend the stone steps of Mt. Haguro with a yamabushi mountain priest, embarking on a journey of enlightenment. After receiving a special blessing at the mountaintop temple, a local restaurateur will guide you through the secrets of mountain foraging and local cuisine using these naturally grown ingredients. For a deeper understanding of the yamabushi culture and their unique views on nature and spirituality, visit the Ideha Cultural Museum at the foothills of Dewa Sanzan.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #020 "Dewa Sanzan: A Journey to Rebirth."





# Dewa Sanzan: A Journey to Rebirth ~ 300-year-old cedars and 2,446 stone steps ~

Yamagata Prefecture (Tsuruoka City, Nishikawa Town, Shonai Town)

he Three Mountains of Dewa," or Dewa Sanzan, is the collective name for Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono. Together, they form the core of the ascetic religion known as Shugendō, a unique Japanese mountain faith that mixes nature worship with esoteric Buddhist beliefs. Haguro Shugendō lies within the magnificent nature of the Dewa Sanzan, in the center of Yamagata Prefecture. Mt. Haguro (the mountain of the present) is prayed to for happiness in the current life, Mt. Gassan (the mountain of the past) for a peaceful afterlife, and Mt. Yudono (the mountain of the future) for rebirth. The common people of the Edo period (1603-1867) considered a visit to the Dewa Sanzan as a journey to rebirth.

Many visitors still embark on this journey from one of the eight Happo Nanakuchi entrances to the mountains via a land route known as the Rokujurigoe Kaido, or Rokujuri Mountain Pass Road, or by boat along the Mogami River. There are temple lodgings along the road and around the mountain entrances, with over 300 in the Toge area at the foot of Mt. Haguro alone. Temples run by yamabushi mountain priests still welcome worshipers in Toge today. Toge residents grow up participating in events such as the Shoreisai fire festival and watching adults welcome worshipers. This builds a close familiarity with the three sacred mountains and the beliefs of the yamabushi. Many young local men go on to become yamabushi themselves after rigorous training, allowing them to guide worshipers on their "journey to rebirth."









Shikoku Region

# A Journey through the Sacred Shikoku Pilgrimage

#JapanHeritage

#Pilgrimage

The Shikoku Henro, a renowned pilgrimage route on the island of Shikoku, encompasses 88 temples, where Kukai, the founder of Japan's Shingon school of Buddhism, is said to have undergone training in the 9th century. The entire route requires nearly 40 days for an average traveler by foot, but on this condensed journey, visit significant temples and scenic sites, including Zentsuji Temple, considered the birthplace of Kukai. The local community extends respect to those who walk the path, offering drinks and a place to rest, a custom-deeply rooted in this region and known as "osettai."

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #015 "Henro - A Spiritual Journey through Shikoku."



## Henro – A Spiritual Journey through Shikoku

Tokushima Prefecture, Kochi Prefecture, Ehime Prefecture, Kagawa Prefecture & 58 local government offices









Takayama, Gifu

# Discover Wood Artisans in Hida Takayama

Gifu Prefecture's Hida region is celebrated across Japan for its 'Hida no Takumi,' master artisans renowned for their exceptional woodworking skills. A journey to Hida immerses visitors in these age-old artisanal techniques refined over 1,300 years. Discover lacquerware painting, a local specialty since the 17th century, and visit studios where Ichi (yew) woodcarvings, utilizing the prefecture's official tree, are produced. Another highlight is witnessing the grand floats constructed 300 years ago for the Takayama Festival, which are still used today. The restored Kusakabe residence, Taniya, offers overnight stays for a single group each night. Unwind in the evening at the adjacent Kusakabe Folk Museum, which serves as a lounge complete with a traditional sunken hearth.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #029 "The Wood Artisans of Hida Takayama"



#### The Wood Artisans of Hida Takayama

Gifu Prefecture (Takayama City)







Sendai, Miyagi

# Trace the Footsteps of a Refined Samurai in Sendai

The modern city of Sendai, founded around 1600 by Date Masamune, a prominent and highly cultured lord of feudal Japan, has a rich history tied to Masamune and his family. Discover the beauties of Sendai with visits to Zuiganji Temple, the ornately designed mausoleum of Date Masamune known as Zuihouden, and a boat tour around the Matsushima islands, renowned as one of the "Three Most Scenic Spots of Japan." Tour the former Date residence before indulging in "Tansu Ryori," a unique meal served in a small dresser or tansu. To immerse in the culture, meet a samurai descendant and craftsman behind Matsukawa Daruma—a Japanese doll symbolizing perseverance and luck. Learn about the techniques preserved for over 200 years, and acquire one to bring the essence of tradition home.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #019 "Sendai — Home of the Sophisticated Samurai"





### Sendai - Home of the Sophisticated Samurai

Miyagi Prefecture (Sendai City, Tagajyo City, Matsushima Town)

ate Masamune (1567-1636), the feudal lord of the Sendai domain, is renowned both as a skillful warlord in the peritical and military spheres, and as a highly cultured individual. He contributed greatly to the development of today's Sendai City, where his power base was located, and to the culture of Miyagi Prefecture as a whole. In Masamune's days, the Tohoku Region was called Mutsu, or "further beyond," because of the region's remoteness from the centers of politics and culture. Undeterred, Masamune, who ruled nearly half of Mutsu, decided to make his fiefdom as culturally rich as the capital. After building his castle in Sendai, he had the country's top carpenters and craftsmen construct magnificent temples and shrines in the castle town and the beautiful coastal town of Matsushima. He restored and modernized Matsushima's historic buildings and built lodging facilities to make visiting scenic spots around Sendai easier for people outside of Mutsu. His successors inherited Masamune's enthusiasm for a cultured life and also influenced popular culture at the time. Visitors can influence today in Sendai's unique traditional





Tamba-Sasayama, Hyogo

# Dive into the Six Ancient Kilns' Heritage in Tamba-Sasayama

"The Six Ancient Kilns" refers to six villages renowned for their deeply ingrained pottery-making traditions: Echizen, Seto, Tokoname, Shigaraki, Tamba, and Bizen. These kilns boast a legacy of producing pottery from medieval times. Visit one of these regions, such as Tamba-Sasayama in Hyogo Prefecture. Nestled amid mountains and not too far from Kyoto and Osaka, this quiet town has thrived in pottery-making since the late Heian period (794-1185). Begin your exploration at the Tamba Antique Pottery Museum, and visit the nextdoor Cafe Oito, where drinks and delicacies are served on Tamba pottery. Explore various kilns and try your hand at pottery-making or acquire a unique piece to take home.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #050 "Six Ancient Kilns ~ Ceramics Born and Raised in Japan ~"





#### Six Ancient Kilns

#### ~ Ceramics Born and Raised in Japan ~

Okayama Prefecture (Bizen City), Fukui Prefecture (Echizen Town), Aichi Prefecture (Seto City, Tokoname City), Shiga Prefecture (Koka City), Hyogo Prefecture (Tanba Sasayama City)



The "Six Ancient Kilns" of Japan are historic ceramic production sites known for crafting glazed Seto ware and unglazed Echizen, Tokoname, Shigaraki, Tanba, and Bizen ware. All six styles were conceived and developed in Japan and are the foundation of the domestic ceramics industry. Production from these kilns has continued uninterrupted for nearly 1,000 years, and the kilns and their pottery techniques, some dating back as far as the prehistoric Jomon period (c. 14,000-300 BCE), have been

preserved to the present day. These kilns hold not only great significance in Japan but also play a crucial role in the global history of ceramics. Towards the end of the 12th century, Japan's political system of rule by the imperial court was replaced by a military regime controlled by samurai. Around this time, many kilns were built to produce unglazed yamajawan (mountain tea bowls). The largest production site was Tokoname in present-day Aichi Prefecture. Inspired by this early style, Echizen ware emerged in Fukui

Prefecture during the 13th century, soon followed by Tanba ware (Hyogo Prefecture) and Shigaraki ware (Shiga Prefecture). Meanwhile, Seto ware (Aichi Prefecture) and Bizen ware (Okayama prefecture) had begun commercial production by the late 12th century. The Seto style was based on the medieval Aichi-based Sanage ware tradition, which included more than 1,000 kilns before the development of the new style. Bizen ware, on the other hand, traces its roots back to Sue ware, a type of unglazed pottery first made in Western

Japan in the 5th century. All six of the ancient kilns benefited from the availability of high-quality clay near their production sites, and the production of this pottery is still a flourishing traditional craft industry in each region. Each of these six ancient pottery regions boasts unique, well-preserved landscapes, and the cities associated with each kiln host ceramics festivals, with the Setomono Fair in Seto being particularly noteworthy. These festivities draw attendees from both Japan and around the globe.







Obama, Fukui

## Discover an Ancient Port Town in Fukui

#JapanHeritage

#Culture

The coastal town of Obama once served as a seaport, supplying the old capital Kyoto with goods from mainland Asia and seafood, such as its primary catch, saba (mackerel), leading to the moniker "the Mackerel Road." Experience Obama, where cultural traditions thrive, through its celebrated Wakasanuri lacquerware, the Myōtsū-ji temple founded in 806, and renowned pressed mackerel sushi in Kumagawa-juku, a post town along the famed Mackerel Road. For the night, enjoy the comfort of a thoughtfully restored townhouse that preserves its traditional architectural charm.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #005 "Wakasa Heritage – Connecting the Sea and Kyoto ~ Imperial food purveyors and the Mackerel Road ~."



# Wakasa Heritage – Connecting the Sea and Kyoto ~ Imperial food purveyors and the Mackerel Road ~

Fukui Prefecture (Obama City, Wakasa Town)

he province of Wakasa was situated along the Sea of Japan's coastline in what is now Fukui Prefecture and held the esteemed title of 'miketsukuni' - a region responsible for producing food offerings for the Imperial Court. It played a pivotal role in supplying essential foodstuffs like sea salt, mackerel, and various marine products to Nara and Kyoto's ancient, landlocked capitals. This role as a vital food source birthed a unique culinary culture in Wakasa. The coastal hub of Wakasa also connected the sea trade from China and Korea to the inland trade routes. Along this route, local ports and castle towns emerged, thriving as vibrant centers of trade. Traveling merchants brought their festival customs, forms of entertainment, and Buddhist traditions that soon spread far and wide into rural farming areas and fishing villages. This rich exchange ultimately resulted in distinct cultures and customs evolving in villages and hamlets.

Today, this historic route is known as the 'saba-kaido' or 'Mackerel Road,' offering visitors an opportunity to experience nature, savor delicious traditional foods, partake in festive celebrations, and admire traditional houses and roads that harken back to the earlier days of great prosperity.









Satsuma, Kagoshima/

## Experience the Samurai Way of Life in Satsuma

Izumi-Fumoto, nestled in Kagoshima Prefecture, is one of the notable fumoto villages once home to distinguished samurai of the Satsuma Domain. A key attraction is staying at RITA Izumifumoto, a transformed samurai residence offering a modern, minimalist hotel experience. Each suite is exquisitely designed to ensure a restful sleep. At the Izumi-Fumoto History Museum, immerse yourself in culture by trying on a kimono and partake in a tea ceremony at one of the historic residences. While the area is easily walkable, opting for the Izumi Cow Carriage tour presents a unique way to sightsee. Witness the historic Samurai homes and reflect on the life of a Satsuma samurai.

This experience was curated in collaboration with the Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and inspired by the Japan Heritage Story #082 "The Martial Towns of the Satsuma Samurai"



#### The Martial Towns of the Satsuma Samurai

Kagoshima Prefecture (Kagoshima City, Izumi City, Tarumizu City, Satsumasendai City, Ichiki-Kushikino City, Minami-Satsuma City, Shibushi City, Minami-Kyushu City, Aira City)







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