

# JAPAN 2019



# Trip Overview

Tokyo, Hakone, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka & Naoshima

## Total Duration of Trip:

10 Days

## Dates:

May 16th - May 27th

Arrival at Haneda Airport

Return at Narita Airport

## Schedule Overview

<b>Thursday 5/16</b>	<b>Friday 5/17</b>	<b>Saturday 5/18</b>	<b>Sunday 5/19</b>
NYC	Tokyo	Tokyo	Tokyo
<b>Monday 5/20</b>	<b>Tuesday 5/21</b>	<b>Wednesday 5/22</b>	<b>Thursday 5/23</b>
Tokyo	Hakone	Kyoto	Kyoto
<b>Friday 5/24</b>	<b>Saturday 5/25</b>	<b>Sunday 5/26</b>	<b>Monday 5/27</b>
Nara/ Osaka	Naoshima Island	Kyoto/Tokyo	Tokyo/New York

# Pre-Travel Planning

## JR Pass for Train Travel

Pre-order the JR Pass at least one month prior to departure.

JR Passes are sold for 7, 14 or 21 days and offer unlimited rides on the JR line, which includes most of the bullet trains. The Standard pass is sufficient and starts at \$261 for 7 days.

If you plan on traveling to more than one city outside of Tokyo, you will save a lot with the pass.

Purchase one here: <https://www.jrailpass.com/the-japan-rail-pass>

## Portable Wifi

Getting around Japan could not have been possible without the pocket wifi. It is particularly handy for on the spot translation, Google Maps, and looking for last minute food spots.

Most pocket wifi run for \$4-12 a day. We selected an unlimited 10-day pocket wifi from [GetYourGuide.com](http://GetYourGuide.com), which was delivered to our hotel before our arrival and is easily returned through a pre-addressed envelope you can drop off at the post office in the airport on the way back.

Purchase here: <https://www.getyourguide.com/tokyo-l193/unlimited-pocket-wifi-router-rental-in-japan-t110647/>

## Packing

Between the small hotel rooms and the multiple-city excursions, packing light is essential.

I highly recommend sticking to a carry on if you can, to save yourself the trouble of having a large suitcase to bring around everywhere. Many subway stations lack escalators and elevators, and most hotel rooms are too small to open a large suitcase in. Save yourself the trouble, most hotels have laundry rooms available for less than a \$1.

Make sure to pack walking shoes, you'll be running around quite a bit, as well as an umbrella or raincoat, the weather is somewhat unpredictable.

## Where to Stay

We stayed in Roppongi, which is a fun business area with a lot of nighttime activity. I also recommend staying in Harajuku, Shibuya, or Shinjuku.

# Things to Know

## Subway

With your handy pocket wifi, the subway will be your best friend. Grab a PASMO card when you get in, and go for unlimited or preload it.

If using the Apple Maps app, you will be able to determine how much each trip costs, roughly 130-450¥ per trip depending on the distance.

The PASMO card is valid for all subway lines and buses throughout most of Japan (includes Kyoto, Hakone, & Osaka.) If you plan on relying on buses and the subway to get around, it may be worthwhile to invest in an unlimited card for the week.

It takes a couple tries to get the subway right, but usually, looks for the name of the stop and the letter/number combo associated with it to know which direction you should go in.

Subway: Tap your card at the "IC" gates when you go in and when you go out.

Buses: In Tokyo, tap your card when you enter the bus. In Kyoto, tap when you get off the bus.

- **When using the bullet trains**, only the Hikari trains are covered by the JR pass. Nizomi trains are not part of the deal. If your google maps or apple maps app only shows you Nizomi trains, check the website Hyperdia to find the other trains available to avoid getting charged the extra cost.
- **Eating & Walking:** It's considered somewhat rude so step off to the side and enjoy your snack. There is no eating or drinking on the subways, except for water (which explains how clean everything is all the time...)
- **Trashcans:** There are very few trashcans in Japan so be ready to carry your trash around with you. Most train stations will have a trashcan available near the gates or in the bathrooms.
- **ATM:** 7-Eleven is your best friend. No fees for international cards. Beware that many places still do not take credit cards. 100¥ equals roughly \$1.

## Food

Many restaurants and stores are closed until 11am. For breakfast, your best bet is a café nearby, or 7-Eleven (yes really.) They make fresh rice balls, sandwiches, etc every day and they are cheap and delicious. Also perfect for snacks and drinks.

# Day 1

## Tokyo

### **Program**

Arrival at Haneda Airport, take metro to the hotel.

Unpack and late night dinner nearby and explore the neighborhood.

### **Neighborhood: Roppongi**

To do:

Shopping at Roppongi Hills

Walk around the main street and grab sushi/ramen in any shops.

Night Life/Clubs

\$\$\$ : V2 Tokyo, Le Baron de Paris, Kento's,

\$ : Atom, Bar Quest

Grab a drink in a piano bar or jazz club (test out Japanese whisky!)

Our Hotel:

### **ACT Hotel Roppongi**

Address: 7 Chome-17-15 Roppongi,

Minato City,

Tokyo 106-0032, Japan

Phone: +81 3-6435-0777

# Day 2

## Tokyo

### Program

#### Neighborhood: Shinjuku

Early Morning: Start at the **Toyosu fish market** for the tuna auction (starts around 4:30am, the jet lag will have you up just around then.) If you're not feeling too early, head to the Ginza - **Tsujiki Fish Market** instead starting anytime after 6am for the freshest sushi you've ever had in your life. Walk around the streets and grab yourself a rolled omelet, yakitori, or the largest oyster possible.

Best sushi restaurants in the area:

Sushi Zanmain, Harenohi Shokudo, or Sushi Dai.

Take a coffee break at **Hoshino Coffee** on your way back from the subway.

If you have time before the Museum: **Chiyoda & the Imperial Gardens**

Free admission. Walk around the gardens for an hour. It's beautiful and worth the stroll.

*Alternatively:* Shinjuku Gyoen Gardens & Omoide Yokocho

Next, head to the **Yayoi Kusama Museum** (pre-order tickets online, visit lasts about an hour or less).

Spend the rest of the day exploring **Shinjuku**, the streets all light up at night, it's beautiful. Check out the Hanazono Jinja Shrine, fish for your own dinner at Zauo or be entertained at the Robot Restaurant (both require reservations/pre-order).

Before 11pm, go check out the skyline from the **Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office Building**.

Grab a late night drink in **Golden Gai**, you'll find hundreds of mini bars all around. Grab a beer and enjoy the weird atmosphere.

# Day 3

## Tokyo

### **Program**

#### **Neighborhood: Harajuku**

Head over to Yoyogi Park & Meiji Shrine as early as possible (aka before 9:30am) to enjoy the park with the less tourists crawling everywhere.

Next, walk through Takeshita street and explore all the different stores.

Grab a crepe at any of the shops and decorate your photos in a Purikura Booth.

Stop by the Animal Cafe to pet some adorable animals (one drink included) or go say hi to the Hedgehogs at Hedgehog Café Harry Harajuku

#### **Shop**

Laforet

Ragtag Harajuku

Oedo Kazuko (Kimono)

#### **Food**

Harajuku Gyoza Lou

Kawaii Monster Cafe

Kamakura Matsubara-an Keyaki

Take a rest for the afternoon, you've earned it.

Grab dinner anywhere nearby and stop by a local piano bar or jazz club if you haven't done so yet.

# Day 4

## Tokyo

### **Program**

#### **Morning**

Pre-order your tickets and get to the TeamLab Borderless museum 30min before it opens to avoid lining up for hours once you get inside.

Plan to spend at least 2 hours in there, it is huge and beautiful. Once you are done, hop on the Daikanransha Ferris Wheel for an unbeatable view of the city.

Grab a coffee at the cute coffeeshop inside the Toyota Showcase building, or race around cars if you have time.

#### **Afternoon**

Go say hi to Hachiko the dog in Shibuya and walk through Shibuya Crossing (Enjoy the view of the world's busiest crosswalk from the nearby Starbucks).

Grab all the sushi you can at the Standing Sushi bar nearby (Uogashi Nihonichi Tachigui Sushi). It's fast and delicious. Leave some room to grab kobe beef on a stick while you walk around the area.

If you need a sit down break, go hang out at the Cat Café Mocha for some snuggles and coffee.

# Day 5

## Hakone

### Program

#### Morning

Try to leave early and head over to the Tokyo Train Station and find the JR Main Office to activate your JR Pass.

Then, take the train to Hakone. You will most likely need to take a bus from the train station to your hotel. Take out cash beforehand if you can, finding an ATM there will be more difficult.

We stayed at the Hakone Green Plaza Hotel. It's on the pricier end, but the view of Mt. Fuji (if you're lucky) is unbeatable and dinner and breakfast were included buffet style. The public Onsen is lovely and open to the public for a fee.

#### To do in Hakone:

Beware, most things close after 5pm.

If the weather is favorable, start with the Hakone Tozan Ropeway for beautiful views of the area. Drop by the Open Air Museum.

Finish with the Hakone Sightseeing Cruise on Lake Ashi. This will also be your best option if the ropeway happens to be closed. Roundtrip comes out to about 1,850¥ for the normal cabin.

Regardless of the hotel you stay in, take the rest of the evening as an opportunity to hang out in a traditional Onsen.

#### Hotel

*Hakone Green Plaza Hotel*

**Address:** 1244-2 Sengokuhara, Hakone,  
Ashigarashimo District, Kanagawa 250-0631, Japan

**Phone:** +81 570-092-489

# Day 6

## Kyoto

### Program

#### Morning

Next, head over to **Kyoto** as early as possible, once again using your JR pass.

Grab yourself a Benton box for breakfast from any of the shops in the train station. They are so cute and very cheap.

After dropping off your bags at the hotel (we stayed at the Grand Japaning Hotel Kuromonsanjo), head over to the **Arashiyama Bamboo Forest & Grove** and enjoy the stroll.

Next, check out the **Iwatayama Monkey Park** (1,000¥ per person). Beware of the 20min hike up the mountain, so plan for comfy shoes that day. Pet and feed the monkeys at your leisure and enjoy the beautiful view from high up.

Finish with the **Tenryu-Ji Shrine and Zen Gardens**.

#### Evening

Take a well-deserved rest and shower, then go grab some Ramen at Fire Ramen (you won't have a line before 6:30pm, no guarantees after that).

Then head over to **Gion** to walk around the small side street and see a Geisha or two hurry over to her appointment.

If you're not exhausted, keep going through the **Higashiyama District** and see the **Yasaka Shrine** at night, it's all lit up and beautiful.

**Hotel: Grand Japaning Hotel Kuromonsanjo**

Address: 327 Shimoichimonjicho,  
Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto, 604-8335, Japan

**Phone:** +81 75-746-7663

# Day 7

## Kyoto

### **Program**

#### **Morning**

Head over to the Fushimi Inari Shrine early morning. It's open 24/7. Plan to spend at least 2 hours to really see the entire park. It's beautiful and the higher up you hike, the quieter it is.

Next, head to the Kiyomizu Dera buddhist temple for more beautiful nature views.

#### **Afternoon:**

Break for lunch before heading to the Philosopher's Path and the Ginkaku-ji Silver Temple. The walk is around 1 hour without stopping, but take the time to check out all the temples nearby if you can. This will take all afternoon.

#### **End of afternoon / evening:**

Go check out Nishiki market for fun souvenirs, delicious food and a unique ambiance.

If you need a break from Japanese cuisine, try out Pizza Salvatore and try to get a table outside. It's delicious and the view is lovely.

# Day 8

## Nara & Osaka

### Program

#### Morning

Train to **Nara**

Grab a map at the train station and reach the Deer Park. Check out some of the temples along the way. Grab snacks from any of the street vendors to feed the deers. Beware, they are not patient and will try to nip at your clothes and bag. Walk around **Kawakobucho Street** and Sanjo street for some shopping. If it's raining, check out the **Higashimuki Shotengai** shopping arcade.

Temples to check out:

Kofukuji Temple

Isuien Garden

Todaiji temple

Nara Deer Park

Kasaguga Taisha Shrine

#### Afternoon

Around lunchtime, take a train over to **Osaka** for some street food treats.

Start at the **Osaka Castle** to check out the beautiful park and the castle.

Then, head straight to the **Dotonbori district** for the neon-lights and street-food galore area. Must-try: fried hot dogs, takayuki (grilled octopus balls), yakitory, crab legs, udon soups, or if you feel like sitting down: teppanyaki to grill your dinner on a hot plate right at the table.

Alternatively, check out the **Shinsekai district** for the same thing with a more retro vibe.

Walk around Shinsaibashi shopping center for some fun souvenirs and great atmosphere.

#### Evening

Head over to the Umeda Sky Building to enjoy the breathtaking view of Osaka. Start on the last floor for a drink by the windows, then head over to the rooftop.

Take a train back to Kyoto that night.

# Day 9

## Naoshima

Travel to Naoshima as early in the morning as possible. It takes a solid 3 hours to get there.

Getting to Naoshima: This guide here was incredible handy: <https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e5476.html>

Take a JR train from Kyoto to Okayama. Transfer at Okayama to get to Uno Port. From Uno, you will go across the street to grab a ferry to Miyanoura Port (510¥ round trip). Once you get to Miyanoura, there are buses bringing people around the island for a flat fee of 100¥ (paid upon exiting). There are also a few taxis available if that's easier to get to the hotel. We stayed at one on the opposite side of the island, but the host was incredibly kind and drove us back to the port after we came in with our suitcases.

Rent an electric bicycle if you can, the island has many many hills. Even if the signs say sold out, go in and talk to the people just in case, there are plenty of shops renting them out.

There are two buses on the island: the Benesse House bus, running between the Chichu Art Museum and Tsutsuji-So, and the Town Bus, running throughout the island. Handy guide and bus times: [http://www.naoshima.net/en/access/access\\_from/](http://www.naoshima.net/en/access/access_from/)

### Things to note:

- Buses only come every 30-40min, so plan your time wisely and coincide the ferry time and bus times to avoid getting stuck at the port.
- Pre-order tickets for the Chichu Art Museum. Note that this Museum and the Lee Ufan Museum don't allow photography.

### **Program**

Start with your bikes and head to the Chichu Art Museum (30-45min visit). There is a no-bike zone between there and the Benesse House so park your bikes and visit this museum first. Next, take the Benesse House bus to the Lee Ufan Museum (30 min visit). Finish at the Benesse House Museum.

Grab dinner at Ebisukamo for a traditional Japanese dinner.

### **Guest House Seaside Namihei**

**Address:** 39-10 Tsumuura, Naoshima, Kagawa  
District, Kagawa 761-3110, Japan

**Phone:** +81 90-1006-8237

# Day 10

## Kyoto / Tokyo

### Program

#### Morning

Take a bike ride in the morning and go see the Yellow Pumpkin and the rest of Benesse House park.

Around 10am, the Art House projects open up. You can buy a pass for one or 3 houses. Use your bikes to get around, just be mindful and park where designated.

Time your bus schedule right to return the bikes and get your luggage and be in time for the ferry. The trains from Uno to Okayama are only every hour.

Take train back to Tokyo (roughly 4.5 hour trip).

#### Afternoon

Around 6pm, go check out Akiharaba district, especially on Sunday evening, to see some people cosplaying in the anime & electronics district.

Grab dinner at a cosplay or maid cafe for a unique experience, or check out one of the many ramen shops in the area.

#### **APA Hotel Nihombashi Bakurocho Eki-Kita**

**Address:** 1 Chome-14-1 Higashikanda,  
Chiyoda City, Tokyo 101-0031, Japan

**Phone:** +81 3-5835-3411

# Day 11

## Tokyo / New York

### **Program**

Grab breakfast near the hotel and enjoy walking around the area before heading back to the airport.

Note that it can take up to an hour and a half to get to Narita Airport by subway.

**Must Try Food:**

- Tonkatsu (fried pork)
- Yakitori
- Sushi
- Udon
- Ramen
- Okonomiyaki (Japanese savory pancake)
- Tempura
- Sashimi
- Miso soup
- Onigiri (the ultimate Japanese fast-food. Think rice triangles filled with deliciousness)
- Teriyaki (fried Udon/Soba noodles with beef, which is widely available)
- Gyoza