

Japan: History and Nature

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自然 NATURE

高尾山 Mt. Takao Tokyo



- Mt. Takao is one of the most favorite places for people living in Tokyo, which is ranked at ☆☆☆ by the Michelin guide.
- It is located within one hour ride by train or automobile from the center of Tokyo.
- The best season is November, when you can admire beautiful autumn colors.

吉野山 Mt. Yoshino



- The mountain is in the Nara prefecture, and is famous for the beautiful cherry blossom in April.
- Many emperors and Toyotomi Hideyoshi visited here and admired its beauty.
- The Kinpusanji Temple is the starting point for the Shugendo pilgrimage road, which is selected one of the World Heritages of Japan.

鳳凰山 Mt. Houou



- The mountain is located in the Yamanashi prefecture and is 2800m high.
- Since the medieval age, people have brought baby-like buddhist statues (ojizo-sama), believing that they could have babies by praying to Buddha.
- You need to walk more than 7 hours to reach the top of Jizoga-take peak, which is famous for the Phenix-like rock tower (Obelisk).

栗駒山 Mt. Kurikoma-yama



- The mountain is in the Miyagi prefecture.
- It is famous for its autumn leaves, covering the whole mountain and turning it red.
- The mountain is often praised as the best place to admire the autumn leaves.

東尋坊 Tojinbo Rock Fukui



- Tojinbo is located in the northern coast of the Fukui prefecture.
- In the past, the rock was notorious for the best spot to commit suicide, and is now often used for movie shooting of crime drama.

華嚴の滝 Kegon Fall, Nikko



- One of the three great waterfalls (Kegon, Nachi, and Fukuroda) in Japan.
- Another notorious spot to commit suicide in the past.
- Today it is prohibited to approach the edge of the water fall, but is still attracting many visitors.

草津温泉 Kusatsu Onsen Gomma



- One of the most popular onsen hot springs, which is approachable from Tokyo.
- The Kusatsu onsen is considered to represent the Japanese Onsen culture, developed since the beginning of the Edo era.

城郭

CASTLES AND PALACES

姫路城 The Himeji Castle



- The castle was built by Lord Ikeda at the end of the Sengoku era.
- This is a rare castle in the sense that the original tower remains today.

兼六園 Kenroku-en Garden



- The garden was made at the Kanazawa city by the lord Maeda in the early Edo era, and is considered to be the best Japanese garden made by the daimyos.
- The Maeda family was the ruler of the Kaga domain (Ishikawa prefecture today) and is the largest daimyo under the Tokugawa bakufu.

寺院と神社

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

永平寺 Eiheiiji Temple Fukui



- The temple was founded by a famous Zen Priest Dogen in the early Kamakura era.
- The Sodo Zen brought by Priest Dogen from China to Japan is the largest Zen Buddhism sect in Japan today.

伊勢神宮 Great Shrine of Ise



- The shrine is located in the Mie prefecture, and is the most holy shrine in the Japanese Shintoism.
- In the shrine, believers worship the goddess Amaterasu, the ruler of the Heaven.
- PM Abe held a G7 summit 2016 meeting in the Ise city and invited the western leaders to the shrine.
- The main hall is the sacred place where nobody is allowed to take photographs.

出雲大社 Great Shrine of Izumo



- In the ancient time, there was a country ruled by King Ohkuninushi in the San-in region, the northern coast of the western Japan.
- The kingdom was conquered by the Yamato dynasty.
- The king Ohkuninush is now worshiped as the god of marriage and good harvest.

厳島神社 Itukushima Shrine



- The shrine in the Hiroshima prefecture was built by the warlord Taira-no Kiyomori in the 12th century.
- The shrine is famous for its red gate, simmered in the water of the full tides.
- One of the most popular place for tourists and listed in the World Heritage of the UNESCO.

熊野那智大社

Kumano Nachi Taisha Shrine



- The shrine is located at the southern coast of the Wakayama prefecture.
- The shrine is one of the three shrines (Nachi Taisha, Hongu Taisha, and Hayatama Taisha) located at the goal of the Kumano Pilgrimage Road.

日光東照宮 Nikko Toshogu Shrine



- The shrine was built in the Tochigi prefecture by the third Shogun Iemitsu, a grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu, in order to worship Ieyasu as a god.
- The shrine is decorated by colorful sculpture works, created by the genius master, Hidari Jingoro.
- The Three Monkeys illustrate the three Confucius warnings: *Do not see, say, or listen to any bad things.*

京都 KYOTO

清水寺 Kiyomizudera Temple



- The most popular temple in Kyoto.
- You can admire the beauty of the autumn colors, if you visit the temple at the end of November.

嵐山 Arashiyama



- Arashiyama is the northern gate to enter Kyoto city.
- The Togetsu Bridge is the good point to start your tour in Kyoto.
- You can enjoy the walking tour around the Saga zone by starting from here.

醍醐寺三宝院

Sanpo-in Garden, Daigoji Temple



- The Buddhist temple was supported by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu at the late Sengoku era.
- The beautiful garden was made in the early Edo era, and is now listed as a National Treasure of Japan.

醍醐寺弁天堂

Benten Tower, Daigoji Temple



The pond near the Beneten Tower is one of the most beautiful places in Kyoto in the autumn season, attracting tourists.

瑠璃光院 Ruriko-in Temple



- This is a hidden treasure in Kyoto.
- The small temple was not known by people in the past.
- Now it is the most popular place in Kyoto in autumn.
- You need to follow the line of people to wait for being admitted to enter the temple for longer than 2 hours!

東福寺 Toufukuji Temple



- Toufukuji temple near the Kyoto Station, is one of the authoritative Zen temples built in the Muromachi era.
- Today it is the most popular place in Kyoto to admire autumn leaves, where you will see more foreign travelers than in any other places in Japan.

永観堂 Eikando Temple



This is the most popular place to admire autumn leaves in Kyoto, comparable to Tofukuji.