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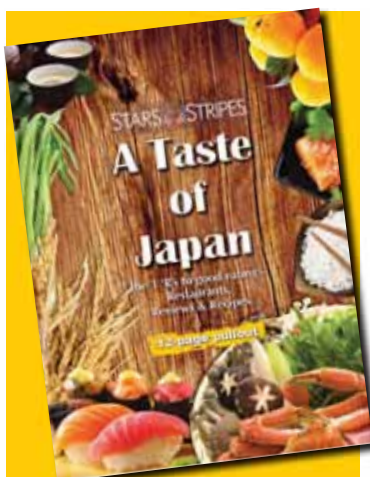


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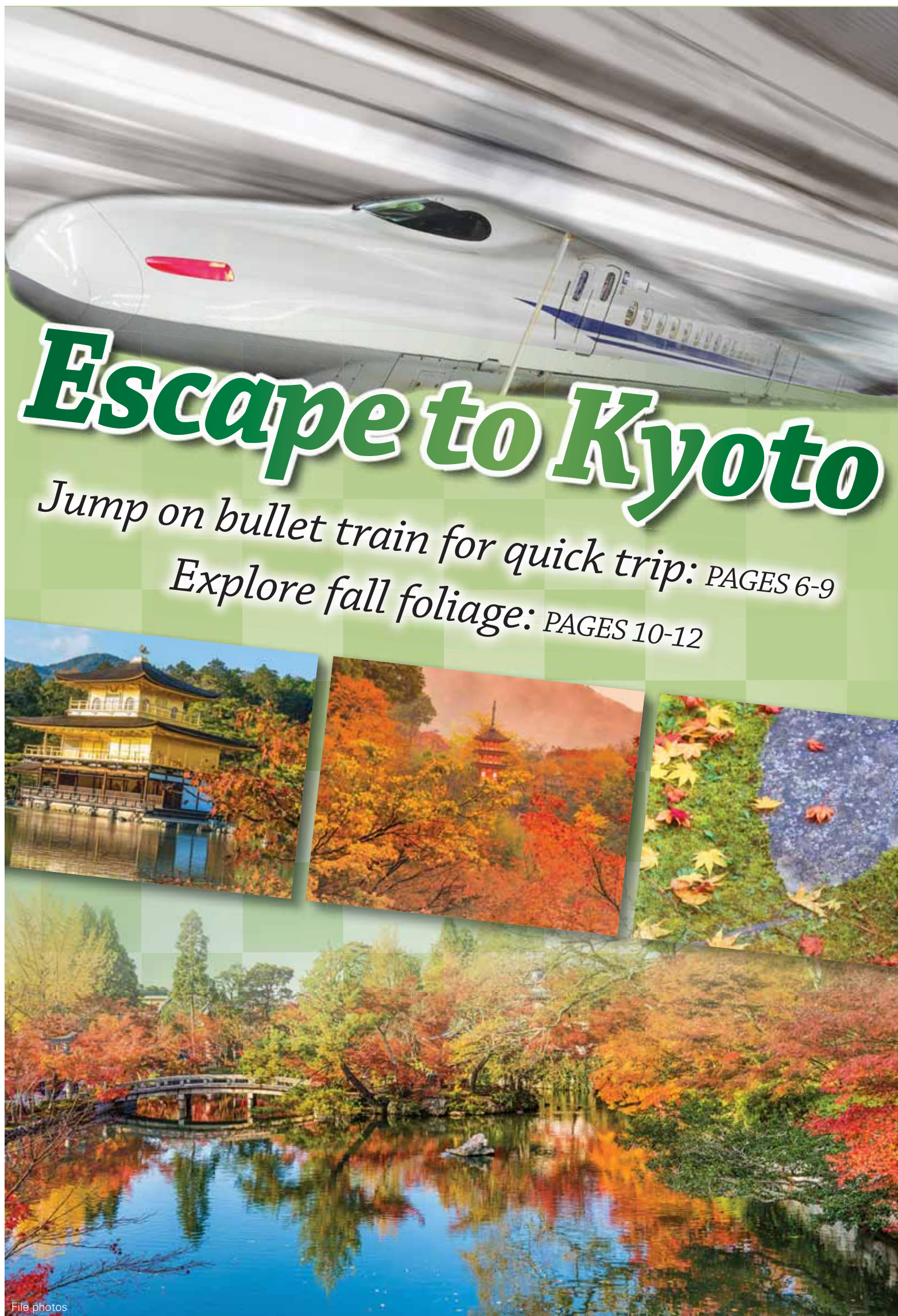


**A BRISK WALK FOR
FALL FOLIAGE NEAR
NAF ATSUGI**

PAGE 4



**Special 12-page
pullout inside!**



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Photos courtesy of USS Ronald Reagan

USS REAGAN FAMILIES GATHER ON FACEBOOK TO WELCOME SAILORS HOME

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: November 13, 2020

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE– Sailors manned the rails 6 feet apart aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan as it returned to its homeport here on Nov. 7.

Homecoming isn't the same during the coronavirus pandemic. There were no loved ones on the pier, no bands and no fanfare to welcome the crew home after a five-month patrol that included rare dual-carrier operations and three visits to the South China Sea.

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
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Families instead watched their sailors pull into port via a live-streamed video posted to the carrier's Facebook page. More than 1,500 were viewing the event at 10:15 a.m., sending virtual hearts and leaving comments like "OMG he's back!" and "BEST DAY EVER! Welcome home!"

The ship disembarked its 5,000-person crew "in a controlled, socially distance manner," carrier spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Dawn Stankus told Stars and Stripes on Nov. 20.

"In order to get Sailors home to see their loved ones, the ship will rely heavily



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Dec 1-19

→ on pre-designated walking routes on base and the use of buses,” she said by email.

Carrier Air Wing 5 flew off the carrier to its home at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni on Nov. 6, according to a post on the base Facebook page.

The Reagan deployed in early June, but many of the crew had not seen their families since going into pre-deployment quarantine as early as April. The month before, the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt diverted to Guam mid-deployment to address an outbreak that infected more than 1,150 crewmembers with the coronavirus.

While the Reagan successfully avoided a widespread coronavirus outbreak this patrol, a “small number” of its sailors tested positive aboard the ship on Aug. 27.

Despite the infections, the Reagan continued its operations by imposing measures that contained the virus’ spread, Vice Adm. Phil Sawyer, deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy, told reporters during a September conference call.

During its patrol, the Reagan twice participated in operations this summer with the carrier USS Nimitz, based in Bremerton, Wash. In June, the carriers trained together in the Philippine Sea, and in July met for exercises in the South China Sea.

Dual-carrier operations are relatively rare. The Navy has

conducted just eight in the Indo-Pacific since 2001, three of them this year.

Although China planned its own carrier operations in the South China Sea, according to the South China Morning Post on May 24, the U.S. Navy in July said the presence of the Reagan and the Nimitz in the same area was “not in response to any specific political or world events.”

The carriers’ exercise also took place about a week before Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on July 13 for the first time laid out the official U.S. stance rejecting China’s claims of sovereignty over most of the 1.4 million square miles of the South China Sea and dozens of militarized islands within it.

The Reagan returned to the contested waters twice more this fall before making its way home. The carrier held air-defense exercises there in August, and maritime security operations including flight operations and maritime strike exercises, the Navy said Oct. 15.

China reportedly held live-fire drills in the South China Sea the day after the Reagan’s August exercises, the Chinese military said at the time.

During its 2020 deployment, the carrier also participated in exercises, including Valiant Shield, transited the Strait of Malacca twice and operated with the navies of regional allies and partners, such as Japan.

doornbos.caitlin@stripes.com
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While the Reagan successfully avoided a widespread coronavirus outbreak this patrol, a “small number” of its sailors tested positive aboard the ship on Aug. 27.



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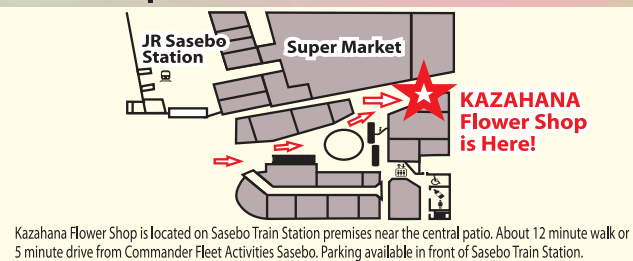
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Watch the video



Explore Miyagase Lakeside Park near Atsugi

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

Nestled within the Tanazawa mountain range, you'll find Miyagase Lakeside Park, a popular spot for autumn leaf viewing near NAF Atsugi.

The man-made lake is only a 45-minute drive from the base and has a trail which makes for good walking or a fresh run. This lake serves as a reservoir which provides drinking water to Tokyo and Yokohama City. Dogs on leashes are allowed to visit this park as well, so don't forget to bring your furry friend.

I visited in early November and the mountain showed early signs of fall. My wife and I enjoyed a brisk walk around the spacious park with a 315-meter long and a 23-meter high suspension bridge with a nice view of the surrounding area.

So, if you're on Atsugi or Camp Zama, make plans to head out and enjoy one of Japan's most colorful season at Myagase Lakeside Park. The peak autumn colors are projected for late November.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Miyagase Lakeside Park
LOCATION: 940-4 Miyagase, Kiyokawa Village, Aiko-gun, Kanagawa Prefecture
URL: www.miyagase.or.jp
TEL: 046-288-3600

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Subarashii akibare desu!

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI
STRIPES JAPAN

As autumn continues, the cold high-pressure system covering the Kanto Plain and other regions facing the Pacific Ocean brings us nice, clear weather. It's a great time for us to hike, take a walk at the park or along the sea-coast for some autumnal colors.

It's a wonderful, clear autumn day!
= Subarashii akibare desu!

- subarashii= wonderful
- akibare = clear autumn weather
- .. desu = it is ..



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File photo

Let's take a bullet train

Editor's Note: The story below is from a trip our writer took last year to Kyoto with his family. Today, we are living in uncertain times, so please plan ahead if, and when, you decide to travel. Follow safety guidelines set by your base and always remember to practice proper hand-washing and social distancing.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

When planning a trip to Kyoto, taking a car might seem like an attractive option. That is, until you realize that traveling there from any of the military installations in the Kanto Plain will have you driving nearly six hours on the Tomei Expressway. This highway is notorious for heavy traffic especially around the Ebina and Nagoya junctions, adding more drive time to what a quick weekend trip should entail. What about flying, you may ask?

Considering that the nearest airport to Kyoto is an hour away via limousine bus, this option might also not be a good one.

For trips to Japan's picturesque old capital, riding the rail on the Shinkansen is the fastest and most popular. But keep in mind that it can also be the most expensive option.

Running at speeds of up to 200 mph, the bullet train, as it's also called, connects Tokyo and Kyoto in around two hours.

Since the first model of the Shinkansen was introduced in 1964, it has connected Tokyo to most major cities around the country with a total rail length of 1,729 miles. It is also considered the symbol of Japan's innovative technology.

We chose the bullet train as our means of travel



when my wife's sister and her family were in town visiting from Guam. Having visitors was a great opportunity to hop on for an trip to Kyoto.

There are three types of Shinkansen between Tokyo and Kyoto you can purchase tickets for: "Nozomi" (wish), "Hikari" (light) and "Kodama" (echo). Nozomi is the fastest, with fewer stops and a quicker route, so in order to have more time in Kyoto, we rode this one.

We boarded at Shin-Yokohama Station and were surprised by how busy the platform was even for our 6:12 a.m. departure time. The rocket-like super express trains look more like white jets on the rail than trains. Bullet trains were arriving and departing in a matter of minutes. According to the time table, there were anywhere between eight to

1 Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion)

Kinkakuji, or the Golden Pavilion, is another one of the city's many UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The third shogun of Muromachi Shogunate, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358-1408), built the hall in his own villa, called Kitayama-den. Just as a handout says, the pavilion and its garden were fashioned to represent the Buddhist's earthly paradise. The gorgeous, golden exterior is striking against the dark green forest and blue water pond in the garden surrounding it.

HOURS: Mon - Sun, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
LOCATION: 1 Kinkokujicho, Kita-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Pref.
ADMISSION: adult: 400 yen, elementary and middle school: 300 yen (Nov 18 -30, adult: 600 yen, elementary and middle school: 300 yen)
URL: www.shokoku-ji.jp/kinkakuji/
TEL: 075-461-0013

SEE MORE KYOTO ON PAGE 8

Kyo

'Capital of one-thou

Kyoto is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites packed into an area of around 828 square kilometers. Over 250 shrines, as many as 1,600 temples and other cultural properties within the city have been impressing foreign visitors for ages. Tokyo may be huge with its sprawling city blocks lined with skyscrapers and bright lights, but its old flavor is now secluded to certain spots or neighborhoods. Kyoto, on the other hand, has an opposite approach with neighborhood keeping their traditional character and feeling. But make no mistake, Kyoto is a modern city. Kyoto is often associated as "the Capital of One-Thousand Years," as it was established in 794 and had been the capital of Japan for more than 10 centuries before Tokyo took over the position in 1868. Kyoto



Check out the video!

Travel on the Shinkansen for less!



Travel on the Shinkansen for less!

According to the JR Tokai website, one-way Shinkansen tickets between Shin-Yokohama and Kyoto are 12,420 yen (non-reserved seat) (about \$115), 13,250 yen (reserved seat) and 18,030 yen (luxurious Green Car seat).

At about \$230 per round-trip, traveling to Kyoto via bullet train is not cheap! But don't forget to check your local ITT office or travel agencies for package tours that can cut the cost and also include a hotel stay.

I booked our tickets through JTB, a well-known travel agency in Japan, and paid 21,000 yen (\$190). The package included round trip Nozomi Shinkansen tickets and a room at a great hotel that was only a 2-minute walk from Kyoto station.

If you have visitors from out of town,

I suggest they purchase a JR Rail Pass. This is a special pass exclusively for those on tourist visas. The pass covers most bullet trains and the nation-wide JR railway service. The tickets range in price from around \$300 to \$400 per week and need to be purchased in advance. Visit <https://global.jr-central.co.jp/en> or call at 050-2016-1600 for more information.

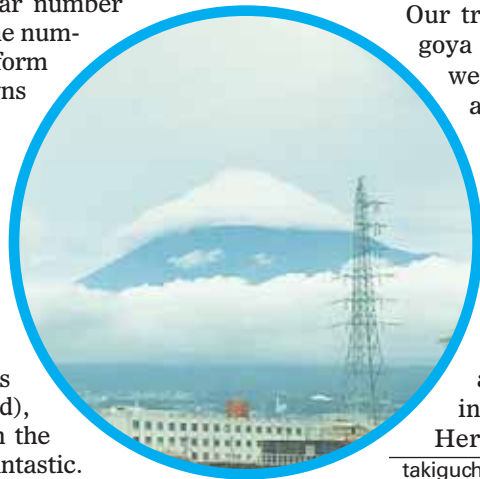


10 bullet trains heading to Kyoto within the hour. Before boarding, stop at one of the various shops selling special train bento boxes and drinks. These make for a great snack or meal as they're packaged so that they're easy to carry and fit on the trains' seatback trays.

When you purchase your shinkansen ticket, pay attention to the car number and line up according to the numbers you'll find on the platform floor and on the digital signs above.

If you didn't have a chance to buy snacks or bentos on the platform or station, don't worry, there are attendants aboard with a cart full of tasty treats available for purchase.

With our sandwiches and drinks (beer, included), we enjoyed the view from the train. It was simply fantastic.



Although it was not a clear day, we were still able to see majestic Mt. Fuji shrouded in clouds and many wooden homes as we passed through villages and factory towns. Despite the extreme high-speed, it's a smooth ride. There is also free wi-fi onboard.

Our train only made one stop at Nagoya before reaching Kyoto and we were there less than two hours after we boarded in Shin-Yokohama. The train ride was so comfortable that we wished our destination were further so we could stay on longer.

We stepped off the train and found ourselves at Kyoto Station, in the center of the old capital. It was 8 a.m. sharp and we had a full day of exploring the areas UNESCO World Heritage sites ahead of us.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

to sand years'

is the eighth largest city in the nation and is home to a population of 1,467,702 (as of June 2019).

On the walk leading to majestic Kiyomizudera Temple, you'll see the classic wooden homes of yesteryear. A stroll along the small river in Gion District will transport you back in time as you pass young women in their rental kimono and yukata. The center of Kyoto made us feel as if we'd strayed into the glorious age of the old capital.

Divided into five districts, Rakuchu (center), Rakuhoku (north), Rakunan (south), Rakuto (east) and Rakusai (west), Kyoto's public transportation system is easy to use and very convenient. Check out the one-day bus and subway passes ranging from 600 to 1,500 yen. If you have a Suica or Pasma card, you can also use them in Kyoto.

Kyoto Prefecture

Kyoto City

Rakuhoku
Rakusai
Rakuto
Rakunan

2 Fushimi Inari

Easily one of the most recognizable and most popular of Japan's shrines, Fushimi Inari sits at the foot of the 764-foot-high Inariyama Mountain. After I worshipped in front of the beautiful main shrine, my family and I walked through more than 1,000 bright torii gates towards Inariyama summit. Although we gave up midway, if you have time, hike to the top of mountain for stunning views of the city from high above.

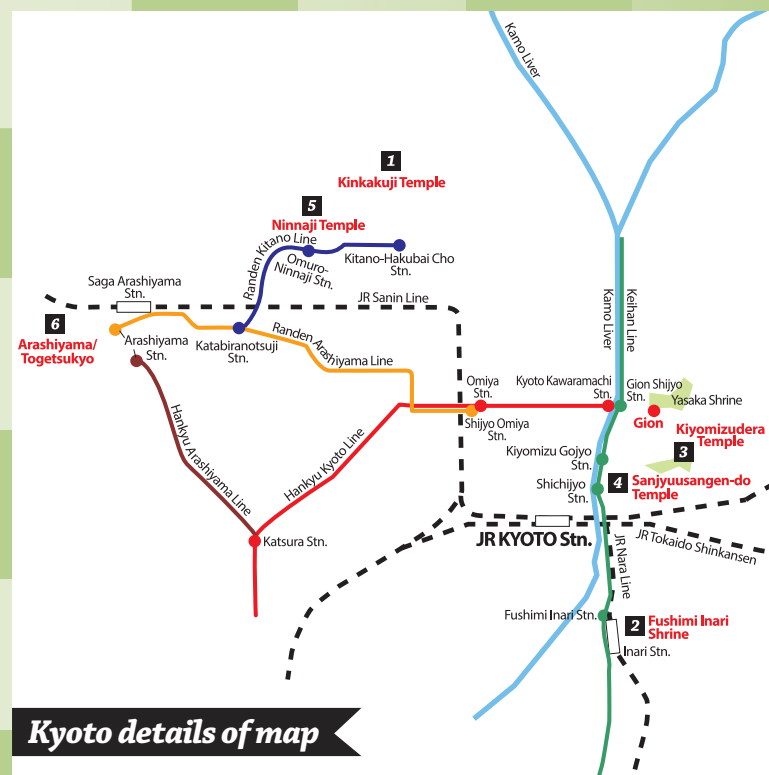


LOCATION: 68 Fukakusa Yabunouchimachi, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Pref.
URL: <http://inari.jp/en>
TEL: 075-641-7331

Fushimi Inari

Kiyomizudera Temple

File photo

**Kyoto details of map**

KYOTO: Can't miss these spots in the old capital

**Gion District**

3 Kiyomizudera Temple and Gion District



Registered as an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994, the 1,200-year-old Kiyomizudera Temple is a majestic temple built on a wooden platform. Although the upper part of the temple is currently covered for repairs, we were able to see the unusual wooden platform structure that sustains the gigantic temple. The stone-paved path from the temple to elegant Gion District was filled with numerous eateries and souvenir shops. Gion, also known as the Geisha District, attracts tourists with its elegant traditional merchant houses. We were there too early in the day, so we did not see any geisha, but you might have better luck catching sight of one in the evening on her way to an event or dinner.

Kiyomizudera Temple

HOURS: 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. (Nov. 18-30, 6 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.)

*The Jojuin Garden in the temple is lit up for Nov. 18-30.

LOCATION: 1-294 Kiyomizu, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Pref.

ADMISSION: adults: 400 yen, elementary and middle school: 200 yen (Nov. 18-30, adult: 600 yen, elementary and middle school: 300 yen)

URL: www.kiyomizudera.or.jp/

TEL: 075-551-1234



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4 Sanjuusangen-do Temple

Officially named Rengeoin Temple, Sanjusangen-do (literally meaning 33-intervals temple) in the east of Kyoto was established in 1164. The 393-foot-long temple hall is home to 1,001 statues of Kannon (Buddha of Mercy), making for an incredible sight. A gigantic statue of Senju Kannon (1,000-armed Buddha of Mercy) sits at the center, surrounded by the thousand statues.

HOURS: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Nov. 16 - Mar., 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.)
LOCATION: 657 Sanjusangendo Mawarimachi, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Pref.
ADMISSION: adults: 600 yen, high school: 400 yen, elementary school: 300 yen
URL: www.sanjusangendo.jp/
TEL: 075-561-0467

5 Ninnaji Temple and Randen Train

Ninnaji Temple is another UNESCO World Heritage site in Kyoto and one of the largest and most prestigious temples in the city. This temple was founded in 888. Its large temple gate, bell tower, main temple hall, Kannondo hall and 5-story pagoda draw less tourists than other sites here, so enjoy it at your leisure.

A 2-minute walk from the main temple gate, head to the wooden building housing the Omuro-Ninnaji Station of the Randen Line – a small one-car train running around the Arashiyama District. Be sure to hop on one when you go back to center of the city.



Sanjuusangendo Temple



Ninnaji Temple

6 Arashiyama bamboo grove and wooden bridge (Togetsukyo)

A popular tourist destination in Kyoto, Arashiyama District is known for its famous bamboo grove. The express train on the JR Sagano Line got us there in a 15-minute ride from Kyoto Station. We stepped down to the riverside of the Oi River and looked up to see the beautiful landscape of the wooden Togetsukyo Bridge over the river against backdrop of green mountains. It looked just as an old Ukiyo-e woodprint.

Togetsukyo
LOCATION: Saga-Nakanoshimamachi, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Pref.
URL: https://ja.kyoto.travel/tourism/single02.php?category_id=8&tourism_id=2682



Togetsukyo Bridge



Arashiyama



Enkou-ji Temple

Plenty of koyo in Kyoto

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANO BETTS,
TRAVELSWITHNANO.COM

With shorter days and crisper air – plus all the seasonal produce like mushrooms, chestnut and sweet potato filling up the shelves – I feel sad to bid goodbye to vibrant summer days but feel equally excited for autumn and that proper feeling of hygge we all crave. Most of all, I look forward to seeing colors turn. There is something truly majestic about autumn in Japan: the eye-catching yellow ginkgo trees lining up the avenues and draping maple trees seem matching so perfectly with time-kissed wooden shrines and landscape gardens. If you happen to find yourself in Kyoto during this time, you'll know what I'm talking about.

I traveled there specifically to admire **koyo (colorful autumn leaves in Japanese)**. I traveled during the fourth week and sadly only caught the tail end of the season, but there still were plenty of nooks where maple trees were at their peak.

Of course, it does vary from year to year and Japan-guide.com does a superb job providing foliage updates each season. While everywhere you look is beautiful, I put together this list to share some of the best places to view autumn leaves in Kyoto in case you plan a trip there. From the most touristy to the off the beaten track places in Kyoto, I'm sure you'll find a perfect place to enjoy the beauty of this amazing time of year.

Arashiyama

While it is most popular for its bamboo grove, Arashiyama is stunning during autumn as well. Take a stroll along the river or, better yet, take a boat ride to enjoy the multi-colored thick gorge. Best of all, take a hike in its lush forest, and reward yourself with a tofu restaurant in the end.

Adashino Nenbutsu-ji Temple

While in Arashiyama, make sure you also visit this truly gem of a place. hundreds of Buddhist statues cover the

ground intended to commemorate those who died without families to remember them and create somewhat eerie atmosphere.

Fushimi Inari Taisha

I've written aplenty about one of the most striking temples in Kyoto. Remember, the further up you go, less crowded it gets. Also, do stop at the udon restaurant on your way down and slurp to your hearts content as you admire the view of the forest from the comfort of your tatami seat (or chair, in my case).

Kiyomizu-dera Temple

Touristy as it might be, visit to this temple is a must, especially in fall. I highly recommend coming just before sunset, because that magical golden cast upon the colorful hills make it even more stunning.

Tofuku-ji Temple

Probably one of my favorite temples in Kyoto, Tofuku-ji has a beautiful gateway arch – the oldest in Japan – that leads to an expansive medieval complex consisting of 24 temples. Four contrasting gardens – both dry gravel and landscaped – are arranged around the main hall. In addition, I don't think anything can compare to the sight of the burnished maple trees that cover the entire grounds.

Enkou-ji Temple

This zen temple, first established in 1601 as an educational institution, is tucked away in the north-east of Kyoto. One of the primary features is a stunning garden containing a bamboo forest and numerous maple



Fushimi Inari Taisha



Bishamon-do Temple

trees which is so picturesque as to attract crowds during fall. The garden also has a remarkable underground water basin that allows visitors to appreciate the delicate sound of dripping water.

Nanzen-ji Temple

Nestled in the forested foothills of Kyoto, Nanzen-ji was turned into a temple after the death of its owner – Emperor Kameyama – and became the most powerful Zen temple in Japan for a time. The sprawling grounds feature enormous Sanmon (Triple Gate) symbolizing entrance into the sacred part of the precinct; a peaceful Leaping Tiger Garden and the brick aqueduct which serves as a nice photoshoot backdrop.

Bishamon-do Temple

If you want to see the fiery

red maple tree galore, then Bishamon-do Temple, located in Higashiyama Mountains, is a perfect place for you. This ancient temple dating back to the 8th century AD can be reached easily by hiking from Nanzen-ji Temple. It's an easy stroll with a bit of gentle climbing.

Kodai-ji Temple

Established in 1605 and serving as one of the largest and most important sub-temples of Kennin-ji, Kodai-ji is renowned for its beautiful design and exquisite craftsmanship. There is so much to explore here, and the grounds were absolutely stunning during autumn. I enjoyed wandering around and taking in the scenery of the expansive garden of serene pools swimming with colorful koi,



Arashiyama

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Kanji of the week

金

Kane (Money) / kin (Gold)

Language Lesson

Let's play.

Asobi mashoo.

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

	1	4						9
	2			5		6	3	
		6	9					
				8			7	
	8		5	9	4			
	3			1	6		4	
				9				
			3	8		2		
2		6			3	1		

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:

2	7	6	5	3	1	8	9	4
5	1	9	4	6	8	2	3	7
8	4	3	9	2	7	1	5	6
7	3	4	6	5	2	9	1	8
6	8	5	1	9	4	7	2	3
9	2	1	7	8	3	4	6	5
4	6	7	2	1	5	3	8	9
1	9	8	3	7	6	5	4	2
3	5	2	8	4	9	6	7	1

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The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- Vehicles for hire
- Windows predecessor
- Literary lioness
- Friend in war
- Without delay
- Prom goer
- Romantic setups
- Police, slangily
- Soldier with a spear
- Ordering option
- It may be bitter
- First
- Doomsayer's sign
- Like some gains
- Horse's tidbit
- Comment on, in a way
- Ballroom dance
- Overhead items
- Smallest in size
- Working stiff
- Barn bundles
- Era that began in 1957
- "___ takers?"
- Loftiest
- Salty drop
- Thanksgiving serving
- "Poison Arrow" band
- Flowering vine
- Man of the cloth
- Alert
- Writing desk
- Ship of Greek myth
- Linus' younger brother
- Andy's radio partner
- Gas light
- Knight mare?
- Canvas cover

DOWN

- Knitting stitch
- Detective Pinkerton
- Extremely
- Lip-___
- Baroque tune
- Hot spot
- Numbers to crunch
- Leopardlike cat
- Bagel variety
- Wharton's "___ Frome"
- Salacious look
- Musical chairs goal
- Part of a pot
- Gave out
- Word on a penny
- Lavish affection (on)
- Misplace
- Poke fun at
- In an orderly way
- Full of excitement
- Fine-tune, as muscles
- "Fernando" singers
- Indian bread
- Copies
- Nimble
- Ingredient in Worcestershire sauce
- Bird feeder block
- Cleanser brand
- Proof of pedigree
- Car radio button
- Mortise insert
- Element no. 5
- High point
- Aquatic bird
- Merchandise
- Proof word
- One to grow on?
- Winter wear
- Co-star of Betty and Bea

Answers to Last Week's Crossword:

S	T	A	B	C	R	A	P	S	R	U	S	T
T	I	M	E	H	E	L	E	N	O	N	T	O
O	B	I	T	E	L	I	T	E	S	N	A	G
L	I	S	T	P	R	I	C	E	T	I	A	R
E	A	S	E	L	S	E	R	P	E	N	T	
			R	O	T	H	P	I	S	U	S	A
A	R	R	O	W	S	T	A	T	T	E	R	E
B	E	E	F	H	A	U	N	T	M	A	R	A
E	D	I	F	Y	I	N	G	E	M	B	L	E
T	O	N	E	R	A	I	D	E	A			
A	C	T	U	P	S	A	L	T	P	A	N	
A	R	G	O	T								
A	C	T	U	P	S	A	L	T	P	A	N	
B	R	A	N	M	O	R	A	L	A	S	H	Y
B	U	T	T	C	R	O	W	E	S	T	E	M
A	X	E	S	M	A	N	S	E	S	O	R	E

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KOYO: Beautiful colors everywhere

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

hills of meticulously tended moss, a forest of tall bamboo, tea houses with thatched roofs and the rock garden with raked grey gravel.

Eikando Zanrin-ji

This zen temple dating back to the 9th century is undoubtedly one of the best spots for colorful foliage viewing in Kyoto. You could easily spend a couple of hours here admiring the scenery of maple trees, ponds,



Daigo-ji Temple

and rock gardens. The view of the pagoda nestled in the woods is one of the most iconic fall views of Kyoto and one of the main features of the temple is the statue of Amida Buddha

with a turned head.

Ginkaku-ji Temple & Philosopher's Path

Ginkakuji, the brown sister of the famous Golden Pavilion in the opposite side of the city – has it all: landscape garden, ancient wooden temple and a lush garden to compliment the scene. After you are done touring it, take a walk along the Philosopher's Path. It was beautiful in spring, I bet – it is equally so in autumn.

Daigo-ji Temple

The temple features iconic one-storied pagoda set behind the vermillion bridge a colorful array of maple trees. Even if you don't paint, this place is so perfect, it will make you want to pick up the brush and start creating a landscape painting.

Ennaruyama Reikan-ji Temple

This temple is truly off the beaten path, mostly because you can access it only a few times during the year, and autumn is one of those periods. Their maple tree grove contrasts so nicely with aged stone lanterns and the thick moss that covers the grounds. Quite picturesque, if you ask me. Honen-in Temple next door is also offers a beautiful foliage and a quite respite from the crowds.

Kifune Shrine

Northern mountains of Kyoto City which hide a dormant town Kibune which is home to Kifune Shrine. According to legend, a goddess traveled in a boat from Osaka all the way up the river into the mountains north of Kyoto, and Kifune Shrine was built at the site where her boat journey had come to an end. Kifune Shrine is dedicated to the god of water and rain and believed to be the protector of those at sea. Here



Eikando Zanrin-ji

you can obtain a unique type of fortune written on paper slips (omikuji) that reveal their messages when dipped into water. Actually, many flood to Kibune to escape the summer heat and feast on a kaiseki meal served kawadoko style, when a covered tatami dining patio are extended over the river where visitors can enjoy a meal as the water flows beneath them, while lanterns and fireflies illuminate the surroundings in the evenings.



Enkou-ji Temple

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The background is a rich, textured collage of Japanese culinary elements. In the top left, there are two small dark bowls filled with a light-colored liquid, possibly soy sauce or miso, next to a small brown teapot. To the right, a cluster of bright orange citrus fruits, likely mandarin oranges, is shown. Below the oranges, a black plate holds a piece of salmon topped with a green garnish. In the center-right, a wooden bowl is filled with white rice, with a pair of wooden chopsticks resting on top. The bottom of the image is dominated by a variety of fresh ingredients: several pieces of nigiri sushi (salmon and tuna) are in the bottom left; a basket of fresh green onions and other vegetables is in the bottom center; and a large, vibrant platter of sashimi, including salmon, tuna, and various types of mushrooms, is in the bottom right. The entire scene is set against a dark, vertically-grained wooden background.

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BYFOOD

Known as the younger, hipper, younger brother to Tokyo, Osaka has a reputation for futuristic architecture, wild nightlife, and of course, amazing street food. It's a port city in the Kansai region of Japan, with an easy-going but fun and colorful vibe, and a distinct Osaka dialect. Osaka is said to be the birthplace of kuidaore, a word in Japanese that loosely translates to "ruin oneself by the extravagance of food," meaning either financially or physically (it's all-you-can-eat madness out there, guys).

It's a lot of fun in Osaka, and easy to get on board with Osaka's unique food culture, but be warned, a lot of it is cheap, fried, and absolutely delicious! With so many places to visit and things to eat along the way, you can easily stuff yourself with all kinds of weird and wonderful Japanese foods. Discover Kansai cuisine in this comprehensive Osaka food guide, and find out what to eat in Osaka right here.

Osaka is sometimes known as the food capital of Japan, supported by its endearing nickname, Tenka no Daidokoro, meaning "the nation's kitchen." With its place as a port city, this originally referenced Osaka's important place as a trade hub in the Edo period of Japan. True for travelers and Japanese people alike, the name now refers to Osaka's amazing food culture. A gourmet's paradise, Osaka is considered one of the best cities in Japan for passionate foodies to come and worship Japanese food.

1. Okonomiyaki

Osaka is the original home to the now-typical Japanese food, okonomiyaki, and remains the best place to eat it. This savory Japanese pancake was invented before World War II and grew to build a legacy, now continuing to have country-wide popularity. You'll find plenty of yatai street food stalls selling Osaka-style okonomiyaki around the city, the absolute best in Japan! Most restaurants in Osaka are teppanyaki

hot plate style, so you can try the full experience of grilling okonomiyaki for yourself. Eating okonomiyaki this way goes hand-in-hand with the casual eating and drinking culture in Osaka, as you can take your time drinking and chatting with friends as it grills away.

Okonomiyaki in Osaka is the counterpart to Hiroshima okonomiyaki, which has the ingredients layered. Osaka-style okonomiyaki is a kind of savory pancake made from a mixed batter of eggs and shredded cabbage, grilled and topped with a thick savory-sweet soy sauce, Japanese mayonnaise, and a sprinkle of seaweed, aonori. But, literally meaning "grilled as you like it," you can grill it as you wish and put on whatever toppings you'd like. Try some okonomiyaki in its birthplace, one of the best foods in Osaka.



Source: CityFoodsters

2. Takoyaki

Another amazing invention from the Kansai region, takoyaki should be right at the top of your list of what to eat in Osaka. These balls of batter-y goodness are quite similar to okonomiyaki, however, the bite-sized balls are made individually, each containing a piece of tako (octopus). Each ball is a bit crunchy on the outside but gooey on the inside, so it's definitely food for the adventurous. Those dancing flakes sprinkled on top of the takoyaki are dried bonito flakes, or katsubushi in Japanese, which are also used to garnish okonomiyaki. They are used to round out the dishes and give takoyaki its signature flavor. Osaka has more than 700 takoyaki stores in the city, a whopping amount of tako-love that shows



Source: Adobe



Source: nakashi

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it's the best place to try this popular Kansai specialty. Enjoy the street food culture of takoyaki, with yatai street stalls throughout the city turning tako balls all day. Pick up some takoyaki en route to your next tourist stop; it's an essential part of what to eat when you visit Osaka.

3. Sushi & sashimi

When you're visiting Osaka, you've just got to try the local sushi and sashimi, simple but oh so delicious. As a port city, it's unsurprising that Osaka has one of the biggest fish markets in Japan, Osaka Central Fish Market. With canals running throughout the city, Osaka has a laid-back kind of seaside vibe with fresh, high-quality seafood to match. From the finest sushi restaurants to local markets like Kuramon Ichiba, you can find freshly sliced sushi throughout the city. Even bento boxes of sushi sold at the supermarket are extra fresh and easy to grab when you're on-the-go sight-seeing. Conveyor belt sushi trains are a fun, easy going way to have sushi in Osaka, but sitting down to an omakase chef's special sashimi menu in Osaka is a must-do, too.



4. Kushikatsu

Kushikatsu are an irresistible snack in Osaka, one of the city’s signature foods you should definitely try on your Osaka trip. The word broadly covers skewered meat or vegetables, kind of like a yakitori chicken stick, only it’s not just chicken, and it’s panko-crumbed and deep-fried. Now one of the city’s biggest and most famous kushikatsu restaurant chains, Daruma is said to have started selling kushikatsu in 1929, skewered meat as a quick fix lunch for laborers. Cheap, easy and of course delicious, kushikatsu continued to gain momentum throughout the war era for working class people. Fast-forward through to today, who doesn’t love bite-sized, deep-fried morsels on skewers? You can grab them either as local street food or order a la carte at specialty restaurants throughout Osaka. Head to the nostalgic Shinsekai if you want Osaka’s best kushikatsu, where many of the restaurants are open round the clock, or the Tsutenkaku area can also sort you out. And remember everyone, it’s a big no-no to double dip. Kushikatsu is an essential snack to accompany a sake or a beer, in Osaka’s friendly drinking culture.

5. Yakiniku

Kind of like Korean barbeque, yakiniku means “grilled meat,” which is an extremely popular thing to eat in Osaka. You can, of course, get a grill’s worth of yakiniku anywhere in Japan, but Osaka gets away with stealing some glory from their neighboring city, Kobe. As in the name, Kobe is home to the world-famous Kobe beef, which is considered one of the highest quality wagyu (Japanese beef) produced in Japan. With such close access to such high-quality meat, not just limited to Kobe beef, Osaka serves some seriously delicious yakiniku. You can grill for yourself with friends at yakiniku restaurants all over Osaka (you can’t go wrong at the Koreatown in Tsuruhashi) or again grab some grilled wagyu meat sticks to-go from a street vendor.



Butaman

File photo

6. Horumon

Following the philosophy of “waste not, want not” horumon or horumonyaki is like yakiniku, except you’re grilling the other random meat bits like organs, offal, giblets, and innards. Also referred to as motsu, it was introduced to Osaka by a yoshoku (Western-style cuisine) chef who swiftly had the term “horumonyaki” trademarked in 1940. Horumon comes from the word hormone, also doubling up as it sounds similar to the word for “discarded goods” in the Kansai-Osaka dialect, which aligns with the Japanese mentality of mot-tainai, to avoid being wasteful. Practical and delicious, horumonyaki has a reputation for being a “stamina-building” food and goes perfectly with a beer. Beef sinew broiled in sweet miso and mirin sugar marinade (doteyaki) is a tasty entry-level horumon. A dish designed for adventurous eaters, grilled livers, kidneys, intestines, hearts, try the works and grill your own horumonyaki in Osaka.

7. Kitsune udon

Udon noodles are popular throughout all of Japan, but the kitsune variety was invented in Osaka. The local style is less intense than what’s eaten in Tokyo; the Osaka style soup comes with noodles in a light dashi fish stock broth, topped with a piece of deep-fried tofu skin (abura-age) that’s been stewed in sweet soy sauce. The name “kitsune” means fox, derived from the myth that abura-age is a fox’s favorite food, also used on the outside of an inarizushi (rice ball wrapped in tofu skin). It’s now eaten widely throughout Japan, although Osaka is the birthplace of this simple yet filling udon dish.



Source: OiMax

Kitsune Udon

8. Butaman

The humble steamed pork bun, of course, originated in China, but is now widely sold throughout Japan and named butaman in Japanese. The delicious pork bun specialists at 551 Horai have brought Osaka some fame in the butaman game, with their headquarters proudly in the heart of Namba. It’s so popular that around a whopping 170,000 buns are sold each day! With juicy pork and spongy buns, the butaman are delicious every time, while their other dumplings, like gyoza, are also extremely tasty. Sold in sets of even numbers for good luck, it’s a must-try snack in Osaka.

9. Negiyaki

Negiyaki is yet another dish that is grilled on a tepanyaki hot plate, and is loved by people from Osaka. Another pancake-style food, it is made of negi (green onions) between thin layers of grilled batter, without meat and more crunch. It’s a popular form of konamono, a flour-based food, much like takoyaki and okonomiyaki. Konamono is well-loved and consumed regularly by people in Osaka, either in restaurants or at home.

10. Ehomaki

An ehomaki is a long tube of sushi, traditionally eaten during Setsubun (the bean-throwing festival) for good luck. Each year on February 3, you are meant to

eat these “fortune rolls” all in one go while pointing in a particular direction (which changes each year) to ward off evil. Setsubun is celebrated throughout Japan, however, ehomaki originated in Osaka, made by street vendors in the mid-1800s. Bigger than your standard sushi roll, an ehomaki averages 6cm thick and 20cm long. These are filled with egg, fish, vegetables, or even pork cutlet.

11. Fugu (Pufferfish)

The giant fugu pufferfish decorations flying overhead throughout Osaka are impossible to miss. They’re calling for those who are feeling game (and rich) to try pufferfish in Osaka. Zuboraya is the biggest restaurant for fugu in Osaka, and among one of the many Michelin-starred restaurants throughout the city. You can have fugu in many different styles and dishes and don’t worry, they’re prepared carefully so you can dine death-free when tasting fugu in Osaka.



Source: tsuda

12. Kappo cuisine

Kappo is the answer to fine dining in Osaka, the specialty meal that rivals elegant kaiseki in Kyoto. A kaiseki meal in Kyoto is typically a multi-course meal, combining craft with food. Kappo in Osaka is similar in that it’s high-end food, but with an emphasis on cutting, cooking, and preparing, without covering up what goes on behind the scenes. It’s a little more rustic, but the result is always fresh and creative dishes that are presented beautifully every time. Kappo dining also is different as you are seated in bar-counter style, with an open kitchen and chefs working right in front of you. You watch the chefs cook and they watch you as you eat; it’s an immersive, interactive experience, only to be had in Osaka. Kigawa is the big name in kappo dining in Osaka, alongside other high-class establishments. When visiting Osaka you have to have a kappo experience, the Osaka version of kaiseki.

13. Jiggly cheesecake

It was Rikuro Nishimura who founded the company in charge of making the fluffiest baked cheesecake in Japan: Rikuro-Ojisan (or, Uncle Rikuro). As the story goes, Rikuro was once a humble pastry chef, and now widely known for developing the ever-popular Japanese cheesecake. Jiggly, wobbly, sweet and delicious, this cheesecake is incredibly popular for a reason and is a must-try dessert in Osaka. Their flagship store is located in Namba but also have 11 stores in the Kansai area. However, with the intention to keep it as an Osaka delicacy, Uncle Rikuro doesn’t plan to expand, so you’ll have to head to Osaka if you want to taste it! It’s definitely one of the best cheesecakes in Japan (and somehow always makes it onto your Instagram feed).

Explore the different areas of Osaka, knowing exactly what to eat in Osaka with our helpful guide. Whether it’s casual street food or a fancy kappo meal, you can have it all with Osaka’s fun food culture quickly putting you cozily in a food-coma in no time. Discover your new favorite Osaka food and make sure you try okonomiyaki, takoyaki, sushi, and kushikatsu on your Osaka trip. As Osaka is sometimes regarded as the kitchen of Japan, you can always expect a guaranteed high standard of food quality in this food capital.

File photos

The essence of green tea in Japan culture

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

managing director of Japan Tea Central Public Interest Incorporated Association.

UMAMI

As much as sushi and ramen may dominate the chatter about Japanese food, green tea cannot be ignored.

Teas from Asia, especially matcha green tea, are experiencing their moment abroad, so it wouldn't be surprising if you've tried a few varieties already.

A common misconception is that green tea, also cha or ocha, is only meant to be paired with sushi or Japanese sweets, known as wagashi. However, drop by any local Japanese restaurant, and you will find, more often than not, besides handing you the standard oshibori (wet towel), the server will also bring green tea for the table.

Inside Japanese homes, green tea also serves as an important tool to welcome guests and create a cozy atmosphere. Japan's tea ceremony is a recognized cultural symbol which revolves around the formal act of welcoming guests with green tea. But today, even casual visits with Japanese friends will often include refreshing hot or cold green tea, depending on the season.

While there has been a slight decline in green tea consumption (due to the bubble tea trend and introduction of new soft drinks), it still holds strong. In 2016, Japan produced 77,100 tons of tea, 97 percent of that being green tea.

What makes green tea stand out among countless beverages available in Japan? Green tea has three special characteristics, according to Hitomi Nakajima,

"First, green tea has 'umami' or savory and rich flavor in itself, not like other teas and beverages," Nakajima said. "The unique flavor is made from amid acid, and it gives a complicated, profound taste without applying sugar, salt or any other seasonings."

So, while British black tea is often enjoyed sweetened and with cream, green tea is usually enjoyed as is.

In addition, brewing the same tea leaves two or three times enables you to enjoy the changing umami flavor.

On a trip to Kamakura once, I stopped in at a traditional tea house for some green tea and sweets. The employee recommended brewing the tea leaves again after enjoying the initial brew. "The first service of tea and the second have a completely different flavor and aroma," I remember her saying.

When I tried as she suggested, the second pour was smoother with a milder aroma compared to the sweet and sour richness of the first brew. Without realizing, she had introduced me to green tea's evolving umami.

HEALTH BENEFITS

The second characteristic of green tea, according to Nakajima, is its many health benefits. "Since green tea has not been fermented and contains the original nutrition of the unchanged tea leaves, it works on your health in various ways," Nakajima said.

During the 9th century, green tea was first introduced from China for medicinal use in Japan. Green tea contains caffeine, catechin and other vitamins and antioxidants which helped Buddhist monks stay alert during Zen meditation and sutra study, Nakajima said.

A drink for monks and aristocrats became a staple in Japanese homes when Nagatani Souen, a tea farmer in Kyoto, created sencha, green tea processed and dried which allowed for it to be inexpensive and accessible to all. Today, more than 60 percent of whole tea product of Japan is sencha.

ART FORM

The third characteristic of green tea is the consumption of it in powdered form. Today, matcha is used in drinks, lattes and desserts, including ice cream. It is also at the center of a prized custom in Japan – the tea ceremony. This ritual involves matcha tea, Japanese sweets and participants often wear kimonos. More on this ceremony later.

"Matcha enabled us to develop an art of traditional tea ceremony, while it offers a particular wonderful flavor to various drinks and sweets these days," Nakajima added.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Green tea is a superfood

Aside from being a refreshing drink to have while relaxing with friends or enjoying some quiet time, green tea is considered a superfood by many health experts.

According to the Japan Tea Central Public Interest Incorporated Association, one cup of tea (about 4 ounces) contains about 30 – 50 milligrams of caffeine, 70-120 milligram of catechin and 10-milligram vitamin C, along with other nutrients, such as theanine, calcium, magnesium, iron, beta carotene, vitamin E, chlorophyll, protein and dietary fiber.

Just like coffee and black tea, caffeine in green tea has an awakening effect that helps us stay alert

and awake while it relieves fatigue. It is also said to help burn fat and promote blood circulation.

Catechin restricts the absorption of glucose, keeping blood pressure low and is thought to prevent obesity. Catechin also has a sterilizing effect, which is why you might see people in Japan using it as a mouth rinse after meals to kill bacteria and prevent cavities.

Theanine is a substance unique to green tea. It affects the brain cells and gives a relaxing and healing effect. Another added benefit is the amount of Vitamin C in green tea, which gives it the antioxidant effect

we want to help prevent colds and improve immunity.

Fair enough. You now know why green tea is called a superfood, don't you? Let's drink it daily and improve our health!



Where to get your hands on it

Today, green tea is available throughout the nation. You can buy green tea leaves at virtually any supermarket, department and convenience stores for around 1,000 – 1,500 yen (\$9-13.50) per 100 gram or 3.5 ounces.

Although you can buy green tea anywhere, Nakajima recommends seeking out a specialty tea shop as these usually have employees well-versed in tea facts and can help you find your perfect cup.

Since tea leaves are a fresh product, it's best to purchase small batches and refrigerate them at home. Green tea should be consumed within a month after purchase.



Difference between teas

Green, black and oolong teas all taste very different, but did you know they come from the same tea bush? The only difference is the way the harvested leaves are processed, whether they are fermented and for how long. Green tea is not fermented but steamed instead. Black tea is deeply fermented, while oolong is lightly fermented during production.

Further adding to the complexity, green tea is available in many different varieties:

- **Sencha (steamed tea)** – This is the most popular and most common form of green tea. After the steaming and cooling process, the tea leaves are crumpled and dried before packing.
- **Bancha (low-quality steamed tea)** – Although it has the same steaming and drying process as sencha, bancha is a coarser tea because it consists of leaves harvested after the sencha harvest. Despite bancha being considered a lower quality tea, many regional variations and different manufacturing methods make the tea popular among tea lovers.
- **Gyokuro** – This variety is made of leaves from plants grown under sunshades for three weeks prior to harvest. Gyokuro has a sweet, profound taste and considered a high-end tea.
- **Hojicha (roasted tea)** – For this cup, green tea leaves are roasted in high heat and traditionally in a special pan called a houroku. Thanks to this roasting, the color of the tea changes to a beautiful golden brown and has a crisp aroma and flavor.
- **Tencha** – Like gyokuro, tencha tea is made from leaves off plants grown in shade of reed screens for four weeks before harvest. Unlike gyokuro, however, tencha is steamed without crumpling the leaves.
- **Matcha (powdered tea)** – A famous and popular form of green tea, matcha is made of tencha leaves which are steamed, dried, and then, ground with a stone mill to a fine powder. This tea is used during traditional tea ceremony and also offers unique flavor to various sweets and drinks.
- **Genmaicha** – This tea is made by mixing roasted rice with sencha or bancha green tea. Because of its pleasant roasted aroma and buttery taste, the tea is popular worldwide.

- Source: Nihoncha Instructors Association



Why tea is bitter



Green tea might seem too bitter to appreciate. It is the tea's catechin and caffeine which might give you that impression. However, both of these are known for their health benefits, including disease prevention.

So, how do we soften the bitterness?

Adding cool, non-boiled water helps brew sweet, tasty tea. Both caffeine and catechin dissolve easier in hot water, so hotter tea is bitter since it contains more of these substances. If you want to soften the bitterness, be sure to steep tea in lower temperature, so that you can reduce the extraction of them while keeping the umami flavor and aroma.



Mixing in matcha



As Nakajima mentioned, matcha is loved by a lot of people throughout the world and has been applied to various food and sweets.

Sweets and drinks made with matcha

- Matcha rollcake
- Matcha cookies
- Matcha popcorn
- Macha Pokkie
- Matcha cheesecake
- Matcha chocolate
- Matcha nuts
- Matcha pudding
- Matcha latte
- Matcha milk



Photos by Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

Elegant tea ceremony “Chanoyu”

While being a popular flavor, matcha is the centerpiece of the traditional tea ceremony.

The tea ceremony known as chanoyu, originated in China, but was developed and refined in 16th century Japan. The ceremony incorporates Zen philosophy and unique aesthetics of “wabi,” where art is harmony, simplicity and tranquility.

According to Nakajima, “Wa-kei-sei-jaku” are four words that represent the art of the tea ceremony. (“Wa” stands for peace of mind, “kei” means respectfulness for guest, “sei” is purity and clean and “jaku” stands for calmness).

“In brief, the ritual art of the tea ceremony shows the mind how you welcome guests through brewing and serving a cup of matcha tea,” he said.

There are many opportunities at museums and events to participate in a traditional tea ceremony, so keep an eye out to try it for yourself!



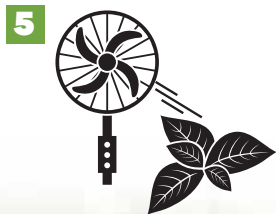
How to produce green tea



- 1 Picking tea leaves in the field
- 2 Steaming the leaves

- 3 Drying the tea leaves and crumpling them
- 4 Arrange the size of leaves

- 5 Dry leaves completely



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

TEA: Try it at home



How to brew tasty tea

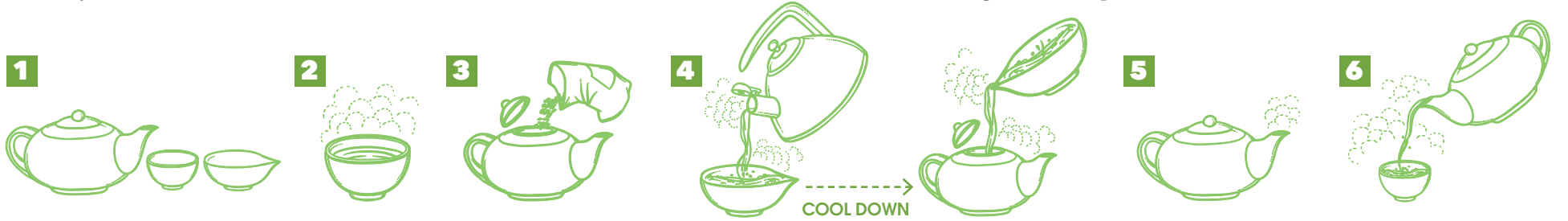
Brewing your own cup may seem intimidating, especially if you think you need to be an expert after reading Nakajima’s description. Don’t worry, it’s easy!

Keep in mind while brewing that the richness and sweetness can be adjusted depending on the ration of tea to water and how long you steep.

- For sweeter and richer tea, use more tea leaves and brewing in warm water that did not reach a boil.
- For a milder, more balanced cup, uses less tea and brew in warm water.
- If you don’t mind bitterness but you want to make it mild, then apply boiled water and steep the tea leaves for just a few seconds.
- Remember: Longer steep time makes the tea stronger.

The following is a brewing way recommended by Nihoncha Instructors Association. Try it first, then you can adjust the water temperature and steeping time to make it your favorite taste.

- 1 Prepare teacups and teapot.
- 2 Pour boiled water into all the teacups. (4 ounces per cup)
- 3 Put the tea leaves in the teapot. (For three people: about 9-10 grams)
- 4 When the boiled water has cooled down to around 70 to 80 degrees Celsius in the teacups, pour the water into the pot over the tea leaves.
- 5 Wait for one or two minutes to steep the tea leaves. While the first brew takes one or two minutes, the second brew takes only around 30 seconds.
- 6 Pour the tea into the teacups. Avoid filling the cups with tea in a single pour. Instead, pour a small amount in each cup and then continue to add more until all cups are filled because this will ensure to distribute the richness and sweetness amongst all the cups.



Tea tools



- A (Yunomi) Chawan – teacup
- B Kyuusu – tea pot
- C Chazutsu – tea canister
- D Yusamashi – bowl for cooling boiled water
- E Chasaji – tea spoon
- F Chataku – teacup saucer



Traditional sweets and green tea

Try these traditional wagashi (traditional Japanese sweets) and Ryukyukashi (traditional Okinawan sweets), which pair well with green tea.

Wagashi (mainland of Japan)

- Dango - A sweet dumpling that comes in an assortment of colors and is made from cereal and rice. Soy sauce and sweet bean paste are often used to flavor it. Applying sugar to a well-pounded dango can preserve it for long time.
- Monaka - A wafer filled with adzuki bean paste. The paste can be made from sesame seed, chestnuts or rice. Most wafers are square-shaped.
- Senbei - A Japanese rice cracker in various shapes, sizes and flavors that are usually baked or grilled over charcoal. A typical senbei is flavored with soy sauce, mirin, and wrapped with a layer of seaweed. There also are salt- and sugar-flavored senbei.



Dango



Monaka



Senbei

Ryukyukashi (Okinawa)

- Chinsuko - An Okinawan cookie that originated during the Ryukyu Dynasty. It is made from wheat flour, sugar and lard. Chinsuko is one of the most important traditional sweets on Okinawa.
- Chilrunko - Often called “Okinawan kasutera,” Chilrunko is a brightly colored steamed cake topped with a smattering of peanuts that have been dyed red with citrus peels boiled in sugar syrup. The recipe includes plenty of eggs, which were scarce and thus highly-prized during the Ryukyu Dynasty era. It is said that this cake was eaten only by nobility.
- Senjuko - A pretty lotus-shaped cake with pastry on the outside filled with a mixture of sesame and peanut butter and refreshingly fragrant
- Kippan - A traditional Okinawan sweet made by boiling mixed local citrus fruits and sugar syrup down until it has become a chewy, mochi-like texture. Usually, white sugar powder is sprinkled over this sweet.
- Hanabo-ru - A cookie made from wheat flour and egg yolk then shaped like a wisteria flower. This Ryukyukashi requires the skilled techniques of an experienced patisserie chef. The Portuguese introduced this sweet to mainland Japan in the 1600s, and it was later introduced to Okinawa.



Chinsuko



Senjuko



Hanabo-ru

– Souce: Masae Arakaki of Arakaki Kashiten





Museums to check out

If you want to learn more about tea or would like to check out a tea ceremony, explore the museums below.

■ Fujinokuni Chanomiyako Museum

This museum has a plethora of tea information, hosts a tea ceremony, brewing and grinding tea leaf demonstrations.

LOCATION: 3053-2 Kanayafujimicho, Shimada City, Shizuoka Pref. (1-hour-and-40-minute drive from Camp Fuji)

HOURS: Wed – Mon, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

ADMISSION: 300 yen; College students or younger and age 70 and older: free

URL: <https://tea-museum.jp/>

TEL: 0547-46-5588

■ Iruma City Museum ALIT (Tea Museum)

Iruma City is famous for its local Sayama Tea. The museum displays several tea houses, tea cultivating gears, hundreds of panels explaining green tea.

LOCATION: 100 Nihongi, Iruma City, Saitama Pref. (20-minute drive from Yokota AB)

HOURS: Tue – Sun, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

ADMISSION: adult: 200 yen; high school and college students: 100 yen; middle and elementary school students: 50 yen

URL: <http://www.alit.city.irma.saitama.jp/>

TEL: 04-2934-7711

For further information on Japanese tea and its culture:

■ Japan Tea Central Public Interest Incorporated Association

LOCATION: 2-8-5 (5F) Higashi Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo

URL: www.nihon-cha.or.jp/

FACEBOOK: @nihoncha.public

TEL: 03-3434-2001



Okinawans keep it cool with Sanpin cha

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPE JAPAN

While brewing your own green tea at home or indulging in a nice cup at a tea house in Japan, convenience stores and supermarkets do offer a much more convenient option in a bottled form.

A quick browse through the offerings at your local shop will show you just how many varieties of brands and flavors are readily available for consumers. On Okinawa, another variety is also dominating the beverage section – sanpin cha, or jasmine tea.

Sanpin Cha's history dates back to the Ryukyu Kingdom (1429 – 1879).

According to Tsutomu Suga, a columnist who authors several articles about the history of tea, the name "Sanpin" has its roots in the Chinese word "香片(xiāngpiàn)" for jasmine tea. Suga believes jasmine tea used to be recognized as a signature product of Fuzhou, China. Given the fact that the Ryukyu Kingdom had an outpost in this harbor city on China's east coast, Jasmine tea was most likely brought to Ryukyu from there, according to Suga. It had to wait until after the end of the kingdom to reach all the people of Ryukyu, not just nobility.

Today, you'll find it served in restaurants and alongside other tea varieties in stores. According to Suga, sanpin cha can either be fully fermented as it

was in Fuzhou, half-fermented like in Taiwan, or even as green tea scented with jasmine imported from China.

I enjoy the jasmine tea as a refreshing and re-energizing beverage. It tastes a bit milder than oolong tea with a delicate bitterness and distinct scent that both relaxes and reawakens your senses.

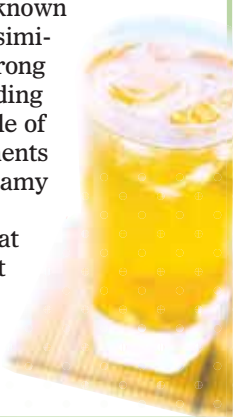
And this tea reminds me of the visits to my grandparents' homes as a child. Having it with Sata Andagee (Okinawan doughnut) or Kurozatou (black sugar) still brings back memories of the old days.

Enjoying the tea with local sweets is still quite popular but you'll also find new pairings like the sanpin-cha-wari cocktail, which mixes sanpin cha with Okinawan liquor, Awamori.

According to the book, "Cha to Ryukyu-jin (tea and people of Ryukyu)" by Koichi Takei, another popular tea during the Ryukyu Kingdom was Kuma cha, a green tea harvested in Kumamoto Prefecture (then known as Higo). The author draws similarities between Kuma cha's strong flavor and that of sanpin cha, including how the strong scent drew the people of Ryukyu to drink both as refreshments during the subtropical island's steamy summer.

Sanpin cha remains a part of that strategy for keeping cool in the hot Okinawan summer. As for me, the scent and flavor both refresh me and remind me of the past.

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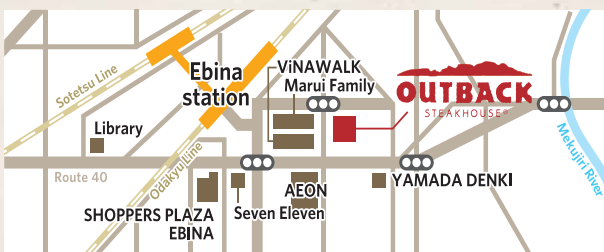
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RESTAURANT INFO

Guide to Japan's popular munchies



Nikomi: Pork or beef offal stew with vegetables such as carrots and radish in a miso-based soup. We usually sample it with shichimi spice powder (mixed with Japanese chili pepper, ground sansho and hemp seed), which gives it a little kick.

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Eat like a local, and try one of hundreds of options of tsumami dishes you'll find at many restaurants around Japan.



Tofu: There are several variations. Hi-yayakko, chilled tofu with grated ginger, green onion and bonito flakes, is known as a great tsumami to cool you down on the hot summer night. Yudofu, warmed tofu with mustard, green onion and sour soy sauce, is great to sample with warm sake on a cold night.



Yakitori: Despite literally meaning "grilled chicken," yakitori is used as the general term for all skewered and grilled items. They include negima (a skewer of small pieces of chicken thigh), sasami (a skewer of minced chicken) and butabara (a skewer of pork rib). When you order one, you usually can choose to have them grilled with salt or soy-sauce based broth (tare).



Sashimi: This is one of the most popular tsumami dishes consisting of sliced fish, usually tuna, yellowtail, squid, horse mackerel or salmon. We usually sample them by dipping in soy sauce with wasabi.



Shiokara: Salted and fermented squid guts. It has a chewy texture and a fishy and salty taste. The squid is thinly sliced so you can eat just a little bit at a time.



Edamame: Boiled or steamed green soybean pods usually served with salt. We push the beans out of pods when we sample one. This tsumami dish can go along with virtually any type of liquor and is considered as a standard starter for any party.



Oden: Japanese hotpot with assorted ingredients like daikon, tofu or fish cakes. Especially good during wintertime.



Potato salad: Most izakaya offer this, but how it's prepared varies by izakaya. The biggest difference between Japanese and American potato salads is the mayonnaise. Japanese mayonnaise is tangier and saltier than the standard U.S. mayo used in American potato salad.

Unique tsumami dishes (or maybe weird-looking)

You may consider them weird, but they pair well with traditional Japanese liquors (sake and shochu). Don't hesitate to try one when they are available!

Karasumi: Dried mullet roe.

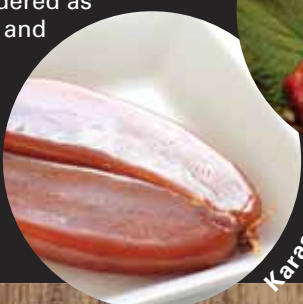
Uni: Sea urchin.

Konowata: Salted sea-cucumber guts. It is traditionally considered as one of the three "unusual" delicacies, along with karasumi and uni, with its strange and exotic flavors.

Basashi: Thin slices of raw horse meat.

Namero: Made by placing miso, Japanese sake, green onions, a perilla leaf, and ginger on top of raw fish and mincing them together with a knife until it becomes sticky.

Shuto: Salted and fermented bonito intestine.



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and drive



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