

RYOKAN WANDERINGS



A sample 2 week itinerary for those who want to experience
the relaxing nature of Japanese onsen during their travels
whilst traveling through 2 Japanese seasons
of winter - to relax in Yukimi-buro, snow viewing onsen
of spring - chasing the fragile fleeting beauty of sakura
catching a view of majestic Mt Fuji
whilst exploring the hustle, bustle of Tokyo,
historic, beautiful Kyoto and beyond

ULTIMATE 2 WEEKS JAPAN ONSEN ITINERARY

IDEAL TRAVEL DATES & TIPS

EARLY BLOOMING SAKURA

Sakura (remember there are many different types) begins blooming at the earliest at the end of January in Atami into late February at Kawazu (sometimes even the beginning of March depending on the year) in Shizuoka Prefecture which is a perfect stopover point between Tokyo & Kyoto.

SNOW SEASON IN JAPAN

Winter in Japan for you snowboarding/skiing/snow lovers out there, can start as early as December up in Northern Hokkaido (late December for locales closer to Tokyo), finishing as late as end February, beginning March (closer to Tokyo) and as late as end March (in Hokkaido) *depending on how good the snow season is.

WHEN'S BEST TO SEE MT FUJI

The iconic views of snow capped Fuji-san in all her glory is best seen in the winter season, on nice clear days. For the humidity that comes with the other seasons causes Mt Fuji to hide more often than not (*however randomly, my video of Sorano Hotel was actually shot in May! it was much more impressive than my iphone gives it credit for - but it was a random clear morning - so imagine what one could see in winter...*)

POSSIBLE IDEAL TIMELINE

Ideally a great window of travel would be to give yourself a 2 weeks itinerary in the last 2 weeks of February/last 10 days of February - first 4 days of March so you can go from snowy onsen up north (*Tohoku prefectures will be easier time & travel wise rather than Hokkaido*) down to Tokyo through Shizuoka to catch the early blooming Sakura then onto some cultural historic-ness in Kyoto - finishing off with exploring the lesser known Chubu region of Fukui & Ishikawa.

I also recommend the end of February more than end of January (if you're trying to see early sakura) because you will avoid the school holidays of Australian tourists (kids have to be back in school by January 27th-30th) and the Chinese New Year holidays (generally the first two weeks of Feb) where accommodation availability is booked out months in advance and prices increase drastically (especially for snow season).

EXTEND TO THREE WEEKS (OR MORE) IF POSSIBLE

If your budget & holiday leave allows for it, I would extend the 2 week itinerary to 20 - 30+ days for a more leisurely exploration. This is for example if you want to get some good snowboarding/skiing in places like Hokkaido (since this itinerary is more onsen focused), have 3-5+ days exploring Tokyo, 3-5+ days exploring Kyoto's famed sights, taking the time to explore beautiful Kanazawa (2-3days) **after** Kyoto, Awara Onsen & Yamashiro Onsen, giving yourself 1-2 more days at the very end to get your last minute souvenir shopping in Tokyo done before flying out.

REMEMBER

This itinerary is not fixed in stone, it simply exists to give you inspiration for travels in Japan where you can see a beautiful contrast of snow & sakura whilst enjoying onsen. This is actual travels I have done logistically so I know it's physically possible (granted you will have to be organised, know how to use google maps and plan ahead) and granted instead of staying at Sorano Hotel in the winter - I went home to do some laundry & change the wardrobe for the early Spring adventure! haha but I know its feasible time wise

If you do have a certain budget, obviously it might not be financially feasible to do everything with onsen, so my advice is if you're going to a place where you will be walking around a lot, seeing sights & exploring, perhaps you do not have to stay in an onsen accommodation in Tokyo & Kyoto as they will be pricier since they are more well known cities. **Splurge** on a place with private onsen when you want to truly relax & just enjoy the experience of being in an Onsen Ryokan. Of course, if you're a lucky individual where money is no object - go all out!

***Please note: I'm not a travel planner/travel agent/agency - I do not assist in making bookings or bespoke planning, this is me sharing my personal own experiences.** Henceforth, please make a decision if you'd like to stay at a property shared here/on my blog independently; taking into account your own personal needs, comforts, tastes, scheduling and budgets.

A POSSIBLE TRAVEL ROUTE

HOW TO GET TO [SANSUIKAKU, OOSAWA ONSEN](#)

- Travel from Tokyo Station - Shin Hanamaki Station (~3hrs mins) direct with the Tohoku Shinkansen (~13,610JPY)
- From Shin Hanamaki Station there is a free shuttle bus for guests staying at Sansuikaku (reserve at time of booking)

Oosawa Onsen is famed for its traditional architecture and many onsen baths especially its mixed (konyoku) outdoor onsen rotenburo Osawa no Yu. If you require a cheaper stay, one can stay in their historical building [Tojiya](#) where you can even bring your own groceries to use the old fashioned kitchens (it's fun!) to make your own meals and truly experience a rustic onsen ryokan stay in traditional rooms. Sansuikaku is the newer annex, where only Sansuikaku guests have use of the large Sansui no Yu bath and 3 private indoor family onsen baths. If you stay in the Tojiya building, you cannot use these particular baths.

SANSUIKAKU TO [TAKIMIKAN, GINZAN ONSEN](#)

- Take the Shuttle Bus back to Shin Hanamaki Station (remember to reserve your spot & check available times)
- Shin Hanamaki Station - Sendai Station (~1hr) direct with the Tohoku Shinkansen (~5810JPY)
this route runs roughly every 60mins, so check your times closer to the date - heavy snow may cause some delays
- Sendai Station - Yamagata Station (~1hr 20mins) direct with JR Senzan Line (~1170JPY)
buses are also available from Sendai - Yamagata station, and are quicker, slightly cheaper & more frequent (~1000JPY) - check routes on Google Maps closer to your travel times unless you have a JR Pass, then maybe JR trains are better
- Yamagata Station - Oishida Station (~30mins) every 2 hrs direct via Yamagata Shinkansen (~1970JPY) or local train every 90mins (~50mins) direct via JR Yamagata Line (~680JPY)
- Oishida Station - Ginzan Onsen (generally your accommodation will have a complimentary shuttle bus at certain times, so make sure to work around that - otherwise local bus (~40mins) for (~1000JPY) or a taxi

There are only 12 onsen ryokans available to stay at, in Ginzan Onsen and they book out fairly quickly especially in snow season! You can read about my time at Ginzan [here](#) and why I chose to stay at [Takimikan](#).

TAKIMIKAN TO [SORANO HOTEL](#)

- Accommodation Shuttle Bus - Oishida Station (check the times and reserve your spot if needed)
- Oishida Station - Tokyo Station (~3hrs 15mins) direct via the Yamagata Shinkansen (~12450JPY)
- Tokyo Station - Tachikawa Station (~40mins) direct via the JR Chuo Line "Chuo Special Rapid Takao" (~660JPY)
~10mins walk from Tachikawa Station to Sorano Hotel.

For those who want to be close enough to Shinjuku to go exploring but still far away enough that you can disengage from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo city, you can find moments of my stay at Sorano Hotel [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

Obviously Tokyo is a good place to extend your stay here, to enjoy exploring this great city and perhaps more financially feasible to have a more budget stay in your trip, as most likely you will be out wandering around.

A POSSIBLE TRAVEL ROUTE

SORANO HOTEL TO KAWAZU & NANADARU HOTEL

- Tachikawa Station - Tokyo Station (~40mins) direct via the JR Chuo Line “Chuo Special Rapid Takao” (~660JPY)
- Tokyo Station - Kawazu Station (~2hrs 27mins) direct via the Limited Express Odoriko (~5930JPY) or (~9810JPY) if you take the fancy Saphiro-Odoriko Limited Express (~2hrs 18mins)

Arriving at Kawazu Station one will instantly see a cloud of fluffy pink sakura blanketed by a carpet of bright yellow nanohana flowers - spend the day meandering through - have the famous pink taiyaki treat! as you walk across the Kawazu river bordered by hundreds of sakura. You can read more about it [here](#). When you're finished, head to Nanadaru Hotel (where a private family onsen bath is available for guests, and in the evening their public baths turn to private use for guests)

- Kawazu Station - Kawazu Nandaru Onsen (河津七滝温泉) via local bus (~26mins, ~ 730JPY)

If you're someone who loves hiking, you can hike from the station (there's a well known route) or jump off along the bus route so you can see all the famed 7 Waterfalls of Kawazu. Remember to pack your swimsuit as well so you can enjoy the multiple public onsen baths right by the big waterfall (daytrippers only ~1000JPY CASH entry). See my time [there](#) (it's also a 5min walk from Nanadaru Hotel). If you have extra time, extend your time - head down to the lesser travelled, lesser crowded [Minami Izu Cherry Blossoms](#) (my favourite).

NANADARU HOTEL TO SORANIWA SHIJO BETTEI

- Kawazu Nandaru Onsen (河津七滝温泉) - Kawazu Station via local bus (~26mins, ~ 730JPY)
- Kawazu Station - Odawara Station (Tokaido Shinkansen: Hikari) - Kyoto Station (~3hrs 52mins, ~15780JPY)
- Kyoto Station - Soraniwa Shijo Bettei (~15-20mins) via local bus or train (multiple options - use Google Maps)

Being in the heart of Kyoto, in one of my favourite areas, with so many places walkable and I place I just love to get lost, Soraniwa's luxe sister property is a dream, but it is pricey! You can see moments of my stay [here](#). If you're someone who's on a budget, not that fussed about private onsen, but still would like to enjoy their onsen rooftop foot bath & public onsen - stay at the cheaper little sister property [Soraniwa](#). They are actually housed in the same building but Shijo Bettei guests have exclusive rooms cards that give them entry into Shijo Bettei. It was an amazing stay, but if you're going to be mainly walking around exploring, not enjoying your luxurious room perhaps save a private onsen splurge for the final end of your trip! You can see other places I've enjoyed staying in Kyoto [here](#). Kyoto is a place where if you can, extend that stay and discover this iconic, historical city

SORANIWA SHIJO BETTEI TO HAIYA RYOKAN

- Kyoto Station - Awara Onsen Station (~1hr 37mins) direct via Thunderbird Limited Express (~5810JPY) (arrange complimentary shuttle bus pick up with Haiya Ryokan or take a taxi)

After days spent walking, exploring, discovering, seeing all of Kyoto's famed sights, take some time to recharge in this glorious family run onsen ryokan in charming Fukui Prefecture. Book at stay in Haiya's original annex and you will feel like you've left the modern world and stepped right into Studio Ghibli's Spirited Away with its darkened corridors, low ceilings, sliding shoji doors to enter rooms built with stunningly beautiful Japanese sukiya-architecture and dappled vibrant green, mossy private tsuboniwa gardens with their own private onsen. See my stay [here](#) & read more about my time [there](#).

A POSSIBLE TRAVEL ROUTE

HAIYA RYOKAN TO [TACHIBANA SHIKITEI](#)

- Awara Onsen Station - Kaga Onsen Station (~11mins) direct via JR Thunderbird/Shirasagi Express Trains (~1620JPY) (arrange complimentary shuttle bus pick up or take the local bus to Yamashiro Onsen Town)

It's so close (practically 10mins train ride!!), you may as well just pop on down to Kaga Onsen and do a couple nights in the wonderfully picturesque Yamashiro Onsen town with over 1300yrs of history. This is an iconic onsen town with cobblestone paths that was built up around the stunning traditional public bathhouse Kosoyu and it's beautiful stained glass windows in historic Kaga colours. Also see the birthplace of Japan's modern alphabet and take some time to wear gorgeous antique & vintage kimonos. You can read about what I got up to in Yamashiro Onsen town [here](#) & [here](#), and see it [here](#). For those who prefer a more modern luxury onsen ryokan experience with private outdoor onsen, no stay is more perfect than Tachibana Shikitei especially with Yamashiro Onsen's famed beautifying waters for the skin. Read about my time [there](#), and see it [here](#).

HEAD BACK TO TOKYO TO CATCH YOUR FLIGHT

- Kaga Onsen Station - Kanazawa Station (~28mins) direct via JR Thunderbird/Shirasagi (~2060JPY)
- Kanazawa Station - Tokyo Station (~2hrs 58mins) direct via Hokuriku Shinkansen (~143809JPY)

(note from March 16th 2024, the Hokuriku Shinkansen will go direct from Awara Onsen, Kaga Onsen stations back to Tokyo, one doesn't have to do a stopover in Kanazawa - so keep that in mind for future Japan adventures)

Time to leave Japan, head back to Tokyo for some last minute shopping - or perhaps even extend a couple nights more in Tokyo.... or if you want to explore even more, make the time to give a few nights to your stopover in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture one of my utmost favourite places rich with historic districts, tradition, geisha, tea ceremony, kimono, amazing food but without the crowds of Kyoto

EXTEND FOR A FEW MORE NIGHTS IN KANAZAWA

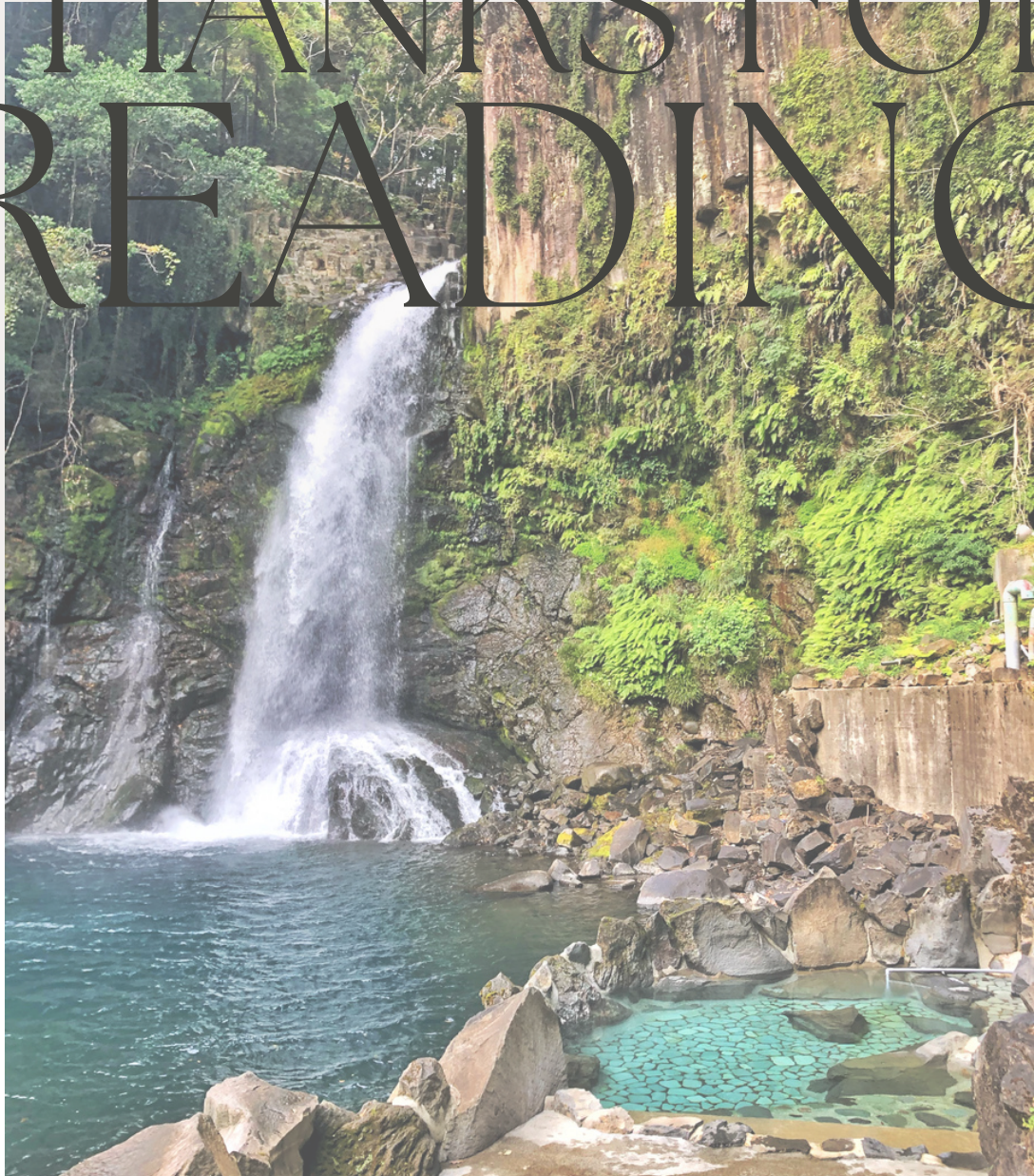
- Kaga Onsen Station - Kanazawa Station (~28mins) direct via JR Thunderbird/Shirasagi (~2060JPY) (or take the local Hokuriku line to save some yennies (~46mins, ~ 770JPY))

I love Kanazawa and its surroundings, delicious cheap seafood, iconic historic geisha and samurai districts, gold leaf production, tea ceremony, stunning machiyas to spend the night, one of Japan's Three Great Gardens - Kenroku-en is here. A paradise for those who love contemporary art, with all the museums, outdoor artwork scattered around the town. I could waffle on endlessly about my love for Kanazawa - you have a little read about my adventures there, [here](#) (though I have a lot more to update!)

REMINDER

Public transport schedules and times can change, so take the routes given as a starting base to help you understand the logistics needed, the fact that this trip is entirely possible if well prepared and confirm the travel logistics closer to your travel dates, especially if you choose to extend and add more in or take some out.

THANKS FOR READING



I HOPE YOU FOUND IT HELPFUL

If you enjoyed this little mini travel guide, and found it helpful along with the IG reel
please do share the word about the [RYOKANWANDERINGS BLOG WEBSITE](#) & [INSTAGRAM](#)
so others may experience the wonders of Japan's love of onsen bathing, and if you can,
please consider donating to the [RYOKANWANDERING KO-FI](#)

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