

JAPAN

Japan Itinerary

Two weeks across Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima & Sapporo.

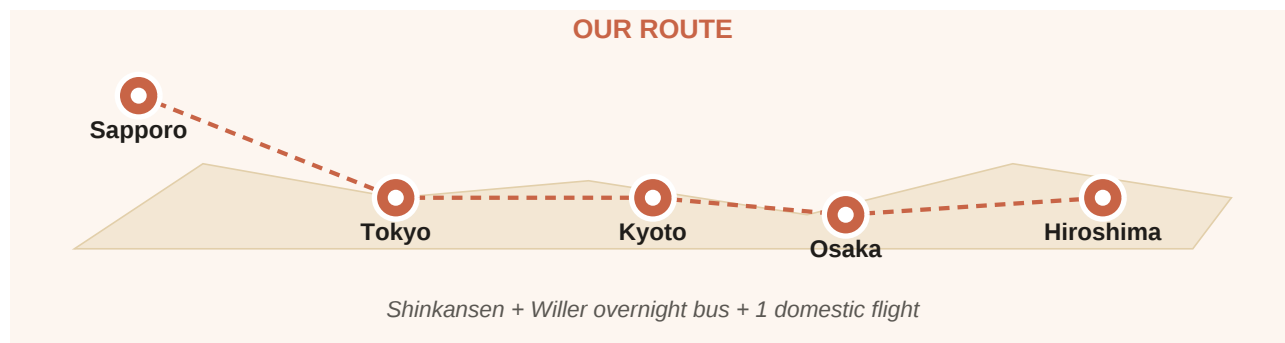
“Tokyo welcomes you with your favourite video game character — a giant Mario waving at us before we’d even cleared customs — and somehow that already feels right.”

By Ayushi & Harshit Jain

desk2destinations.com · Honesty over hype. Slow over rushed. Practical over pretty.

Japan at a glance

We did the classic Golden Route plus Hokkaido in two weeks — Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, a one-day reckoning in Hiroshima, and a quick Sapporo flight up north. Roughly 1,200 km of Shinkansen, one overnight Willer bus, one domestic flight. Here is the practical version of everything we wish someone had handed us before we boarded.



Best time to visit

Cherry blossom season runs late March to early April in Tokyo and Kyoto; Hokkaido blooms two to three weeks later, so late April (when we went) is a sweet spot if you want sakura twice. Autumn (October–November) is gentler and gives you maple foliage. December–February is the ski/snow window in Hokkaido.

Visa & documents (Indians)

Japan now offers an **eVisa for Indian passport holders** — processing is roughly five working days through the official VFS portal. Carry the printout. Carry your passport for tax-free shopping over ¥5,000 (most drugstores and outlets stamp it on the spot).

Currency, plug, language

Currency: Japanese Yen (JPY); rough thumb rule on our trip was **1 yen ≈ ₹0.55**. ATMs at 7-Eleven and Lawson reliably take Indian cards. Plug type A/B (same as US, two flat pins). English signage is excellent in stations and tourist zones; outside those, Google Translate's camera mode is your best friend — we used it daily on snack packaging.

Transit

JR Pass for inter-city Shinkansen hops — the 7-day pass starts paying off the moment you do a Tokyo–Kyoto–Hiroshima loop. **Suica / Pasma IC card** for everything local: metro, buses, vending machines, and convenience stores. In Kyoto specifically, switch to a **Day Bus Pass** — it breaks even at four rides and easily clears five on a temple day. For long hops on a budget, **Willer overnight buses** are cheaper than the Shinkansen and surprisingly comfortable.

Rough daily budget per person (INR)

- **Stays:** Hostel bunk ■3,000–5,000 / night (we used Hostel Wasabi in Asakusa); 3-star hotel ■5,000–8,000 (Almont Inn, Garner Hotel, Kiori Exec sit here); 5-star ■15,000+ (Sapporo Park Hotel).
- **Food:** ■1,500–3,000 / day if you mix convenience stores, ramen counters and one nicer meal. Vegan/veg adds about 10%.
- **Local transit:** ■500–1,500 / day on Suica + day passes.
- **JR Pass 7-day:** roughly ■25,000 per person at the time we travelled.
- **Attractions:** ■500–1,500 / day — most temples and parks are ■300–500.

What we'd do differently

Skipping Miyajima for the overnight Willer bus is the one regret. Give Hiroshima 36 hours next time so the floating torii isn't a rushed afterthought.

Top 10 must-do highlights

Curated from what we actually did, in the order we'd tell a friend. No filler.

- 1

■

Mt. Fuji day trip from Tokyo · [Tokyo](#)
Willer highway bus to Kawaguchiko, red Fuji loop to Oishi Park, sprint to Chureito Pagoda for the postcard.
- 2

■

Senso-ji at 7:30 a.m. · [Tokyo](#)
Asakusa's big landmark, almost empty before the crowds. Worth the alarm.
- 3

■

Shibuya Crossing & Hachiko · [Tokyo](#)
Cross it three times. Free upper view from a mall, Falafel Brothers in Parco for lunch.
- 4

■

Meiji Shrine forest · [Tokyo](#)
Wine barrels, Japan's oldest wooden Torii, a hush you don't expect this close to Shibuya.
- 5

■

Fushimi Inari Torii hike · [Kyoto](#)
Walk the vermilion tunnels to the first viewpoint and the city opens up below.
- 6

■

Uji matcha day trip · [Kyoto](#)
An hour from Kyoto. Whisked matcha, parfaits, matcha soba. Most shops shut by 6 p.m.
- 7

■

Kinkaku-ji in the rain · [Kyoto](#)
The Golden Temple goes liquid in soft rain and the pond doubles it perfectly.
- 8

■

Dotonbori + Don Quijote · [Osaka](#)
Glico running man, canal reflections, yellow Ferris wheel. Block 3 hours for Donki alone.
- 9

■

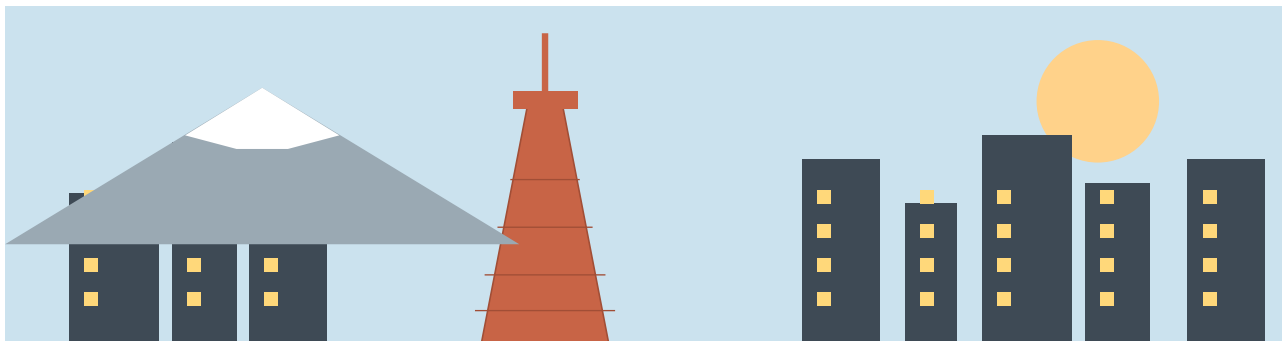
Peace Memorial Park & Dome · [Hiroshima](#)
Stand in front of the Genbaku Dome. Walk the park slowly. The 3D museum is essential.
- 10

■

Hill of the Buddha (Tadao Ando) · [Sapporo](#)
Tunnel approach, lavender ring, Buddha reveal. 1.5 hr from Sapporo, worth every minute.

Tokyo

You don't ease into Tokyo. You land, you blink, and you're already in love. Seven days here, split into two stints — Asakusa for the first five, then a quick pit-stop hotel night before our Sapporo flight, and a final rainy day after.



Tokyo Tower silhouette + Mt. Fuji on the horizon



→ Read the full Tokyo guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/japan-tokyo.html

Top 5 things we did

- 1 Mt. Fuji from Kawaguchiko & Chureito Pagoda** — via the Willer highway bus from Shibuya.
- 2 Senso-ji at sunrise**, then the Asakusa market for daifuku, baby castella cakes and matcha ice cream.
- 3 Shibuya, Meiji Shrine, Harajuku, Shinjuku** in one long, perfect day — ending at Omoide Yokocho and Golden Gai.
- 4 Akihabara at BIC Camera and Yodobashi** — eight to twelve floors of electronics each. Budget your time wisely.
- 5 Jimbocho books district** — the Sanseido publishing-house store, then a quietly perfect dinner at OBICÀ in Ginza.

Where we stayed

Hostel Wasabi, Asakusa for the first stretch — spotless, a stone's throw from Senso-ji, free luggage hold till early evening. Then **Almont Inn** near Tokyo Station for the one-night pit-stop before our Sapporo flight; they held our suitcases for the two days we were in Hokkaido.

Getting around

Suica card on the metro, JR lines and at every Lawson. **Willer Express bus** for the Mt. Fuji day trip and the overnight to Kyoto — departs from the 5th floor of a Shibuya mall (yes, really). Tokyo Station is its own underground city; map T's TanTan or any restaurant inside it before you go in.

Veg/vegan food picks

- **2foods, Ginza** — vegan burger, smoothie, a quick first-day lunch.
- **Fujifuku, Asakusa** — tiny owner-chef-run vegan Japanese set course; one meal and one drink per person, and one of the warmest evenings of our trip.
- **Afuri** — our first proper ramen in Japan, late-night near Akihabara.
- **T's TanTan, Tokyo Station** — the famous vegan tantanmen. Worth the 7:30–8:30 p.m. station maze.
- **Falafel Brothers, Parco Shibuya** and **Komeda's Plant-Based Kissa, Ginza** — both excellent backups when ramen feels heavy.
- **OBICÀ, Ginza** — date-night Italian on our last evening, owner sources olive oil straight from Italy.

Day-by-day flow (compressed)

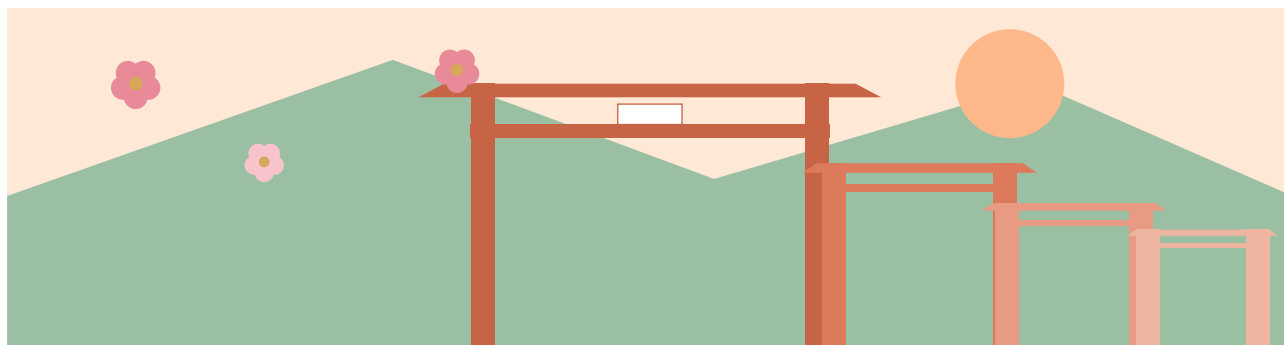
- **Day 1 — Arrival, Ginza, one-drink rule.** Morning: land at Haneda/Narita, Suica + metro to Hostel Wasabi. Afternoon: Ginza shopping (Uniqlo, GU, On Shoes), 2foods for lunch. Evening: GU at Rox Mall in Asakusa, Fujifuku for the set course; book the Willer bus to Mt. Fuji for the day after next.
- **Day 2 — Kappabashi & Akihabara.** Morning: slow start, vegan café pizza. Afternoon: Kappabashi knife/ceramics street, then BIC Camera (3pm–7pm). Evening: Indian thali at Yodobashi, neon walk through Akihabara.
- **Day 3 — The Mt. Fuji Day.** Morning: Senso-ji at 7:30 a.m. (empty), Hachiko, Willer bus from Shibuya. Afternoon: Fuji Bus red & green loops, Oishi Park photo session, ice cream and cookies. Evening: sprint to Chureito Pagoda, Willer back to Akihabara, Afuri ramen.
- **Day 4 — Shibuya, Shinjuku, Harajuku.** Morning: Meiji Shrine forest. Afternoon: Shibuya crossing + upper view, Falafel Brothers, Pokémon Center, ABC Mart, Shibuya 109, Takeshita Street boba. Evening: Shinjuku neon, Omoide Yokochō, Golden Gai, T's TanTan at Tokyo Station.
- **Day 5 — Asakusa market & Jimbocho.** Morning: Asakusa market snack tour and Senso-ji photos with crowds. Afternoon: Jimbocho books district (Kreyszig moment), Ain Soph in Ginza, Daiso, Sanseido bookstore. Evening: hostel pickup, Willer overnight bus to Kyoto from 9:40 p.m.
- **Day 6 — Back in Tokyo (pit-stop).** Afternoon: Almont Inn check-in, more Uniqlo Ginza, Komeda's Plant-Based Kissa. Evening: pizza on Uber Eats in bed; pack a single backpack for Sapporo.
- **Day 7 — Final day & the Lawson incident.** Morning: 4 a.m. Limousine bus from Sapporo to New Chitose, fly back through heavy Tokyo rain. Afternoon: okonomiyaki and plum wine in Asakusa; matcha pilgrimage (The Matcha House, Hatoya Matcha, Maccha House). Evening: omikuji at Senso-ji, OBICÀ dinner in Ginza, the legendary multi-Suica Lawson incident.

Honest reality check

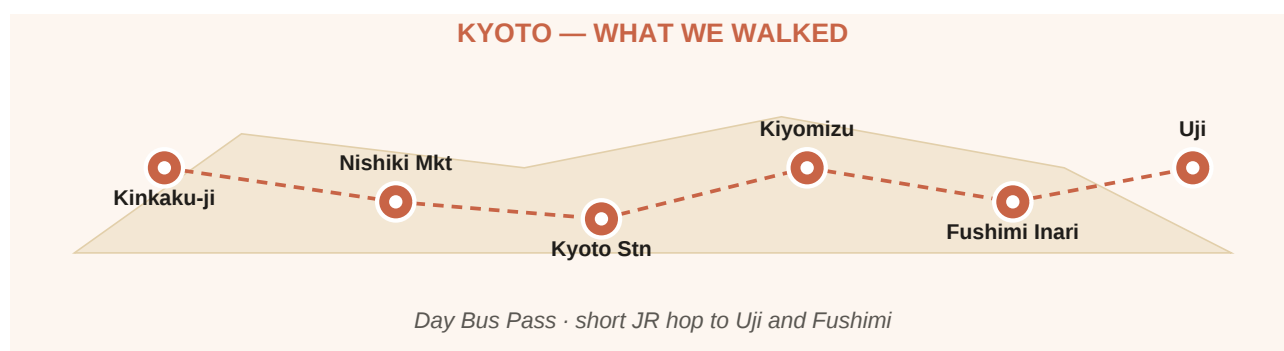
Tokyo Station is a maze — budget an extra 30–45 minutes your first time. Akihabara rewards walking energy, not list energy: four hours in BIC Camera and we still didn't see half the floors.

Kyoto

If Tokyo is acceleration, Kyoto is deceleration. Three slow, rain-soft, matcha-soaked days. We arrived at Kyoto Station at 5:30 a.m. on a Willer overnight bus and watched the city slowly wake up.



Vermilion torii gates fading into the Higashiyama hills



→ Read the full Kyoto guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/japan-kyoto.html

Top 5 things we did

- 1 Uji matcha town** — the parfait, the bitter whisked tea, the matcha soba noodles, and the Murasaki Shikibu bronze statue at Uji-bashi.
- 2 Kiyomizu-dera** in soft rain, then Sannenzaka and Ninenzaka downhill with a warm apple pie.
- 3 Kinkaku-ji (Golden Temple)** — even better in the rain.
- 4 Fushimi Inari Taisha** — the vermilion Torii tunnels at 1:15 p.m., up to a clearing where the city opens out.
- 5 Covered market hopping** through Nishiki, Shinkyogoku and Teramachi when the rain refuses to quit.

Where we stayed

Kiori Exec — small premium over a hostel, but the lobby is comfortable enough to nap in at 6:30 a.m. and the staff actually do bump you into a clean room early. Free umbrellas at the door (which we used hard on our anniversary day).

Getting around

Day Bus Pass over Suica — Suica was costing us ¥320 per ride, the day pass breaks even at four hops and goes into profit at five. Just don't lose it inside Kinkaku-ji like Ayushi did. Trains for Uji (about an hour) and Fushimi Inari.

Veg/vegan food picks

- **Vegan Izakaya** — the gyoza was the best of our entire Japan trip; thin-skinned, crisp-bottomed, herby. Sake list to match.
- **Kyoto Engine** — the best ramen we have ever had, full stop. Vegetarian chilli ramen plus a parfait from a thousand-flavour display board.
- **Ain Soph Kyoto** — the burger holds up against the Ginza branch.
- **MACCHA HOUSE (■■■■)** — matcha parfait and the seasonal sakura-strawberry-matcha latte. Outstanding.
- **Delhi Restaurant, Kyoto** — chole bhature and onion parantha, run by a Dehradun-wala for 20 years. The right answer for a rainy anniversary.

Day-by-day flow (compressed)

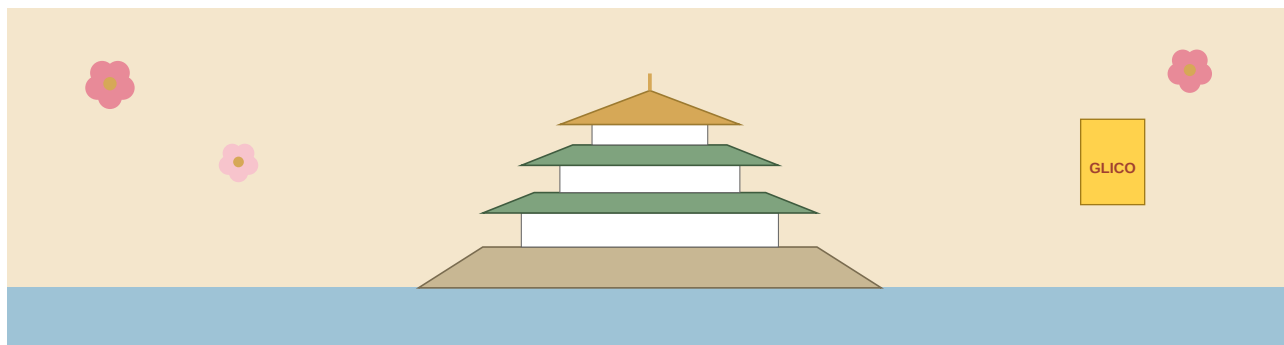
- **Day 1 — Arrival & Uji.** Morning: 5:30 a.m. Kyoto Station, lobby nap at Kiori Exec. Afternoon: late train to Uji (4:30 p.m. start), matcha parfait, Uji Shrine, Tale of Genji statues. Evening: Vegan Izakaya gyoza in Kyoto, switch from Suica to a Day Bus Pass.
- **Day 2 — Anniversary, in the rain.** Morning: Kiyomizu-dera, Sannenzaka, Yasaka Pagoda views, apple pie. Afternoon: Kinkaku-ji (lost bus pass moment), covered arcade and 3 Coins. Evening: Delhi Restaurant for chole bhature.
- **Day 3 — Fushimi Inari.** Morning: lazy noon brunch at Ain Soph, MACCHA HOUSE parfait. Afternoon: Fushimi Inari from 1:15 p.m., walking up through the Torii tunnels. Evening: skincare run at OS Drugstore + Matsumoto Kiyoshi, then Kyoto Engine ramen for the road.

Honest reality check

Kyoto refuses to be rushed — even the rain in Kyoto walks. If your trip is short, give Kyoto three nights, not two.

Osaka

Tokyo is order. Kyoto is calm. Osaka is the friend who pulls you into the night with shopping bags and street food and laughs the loudest. Two days, one castle, six pairs of shoes.



Osaka Castle, gold roof glinting



→ Read the full Osaka guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/japan-osaka.html

Top 5 things we did

- 1 Rinku Premium Outlet** — 250 shops, open-air, near Kansai airport. We walked out with three pairs of Nike at ■4,000–6,000.
- 2 Osaka Castle grounds** on a Sunday — gold trim, green roofs, families spread out for picnic.
- 3 Don Quijote in Dotonbori** — 3.5 hours of skincare, snacks, KitKats, matcha lattes. Bring a strong bag.
- 4 Dotonbori at night** — Glico running man, the canal, the giant yellow Ferris wheel above Donki.
- 5 Rikuro's Cheesecake** at Daimaru Mall — reach before the 8 p.m. shutter; eat it in bed.

Where we stayed

Garner Hotel, central Osaka — loyalty signup got us free early check-in and two complimentary water bottles. **Quick warning:** Garner runs five hotels inside a 3 km radius. Drop the exact address into Maps before you walk back, otherwise you'll lobby-walk into the wrong one.

Getting around

Osaka is barely **1 hour 15 minutes from Kyoto**. The metro and the city buses got us everywhere; we used Suica throughout. For Hiroshima we pre-booked the **extra-space seats on the Shinkansen** — with one large, one medium and one small suitcase plus a fully-packed backpack, it was the right call.

Veg/vegan food picks

- **Mercy Vegan Cafe** — small spot near Dotonbori, run by a lady and her daughter. Cosy, warm, great desserts.
- **Rikuro's Cheesecake (Daimaru)** — the famous jiggly Osaka cheesecake; closes at 8 p.m. sharp.
- **Nepalese roti and sabzi** stand near Don Quijote on a Sunday — the unplanned reset meal.

Day-by-day flow (compressed)

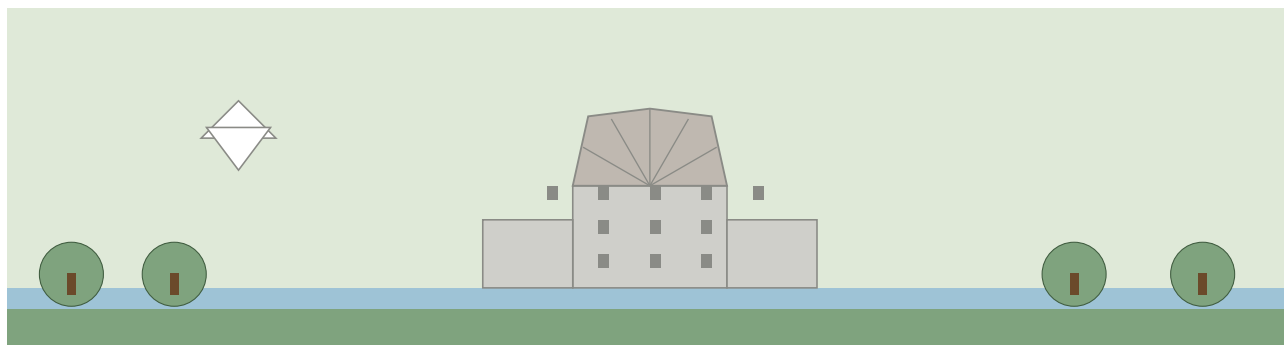
- **Day 1 — Rinku Outlet & Rikuro's.** Morning: Kyoto→Osaka, Garner Hotel check-in, brunch. Afternoon: Rinku Premium Outlet (2:30–6 p.m.) — Nike, Sketchers, ASICS, Onitsuka Tiger; the KitKat 14-flavour pack we still regret not buying. Evening: Rikuro's Cheesecake at Daimaru by 7:45 p.m., ramen we were too tired to finish.
- **Day 2 — Castle, Donki, Dotonbori.** Morning: Osaka Castle and gardens. Afternoon: Indian roti at the Nepalese spot, then 3.5 hours in Don Quijote (skincare, KitKats, matcha lattes). Evening: Mercy Vegan Cafe near Dotonbori, then Glico running man and a five-store KitKat price hunt (¥220–350 for the same packet).

Honest reality check

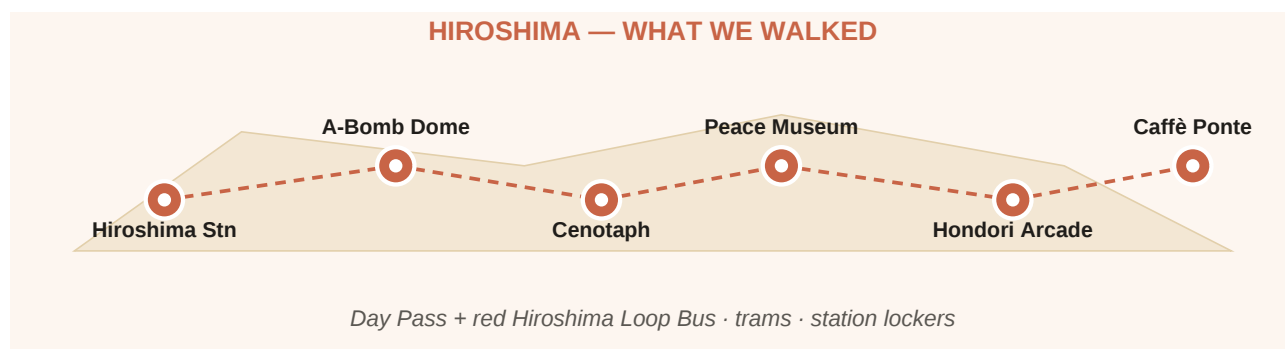
Compare prices across two Matsumoto Kiyoshi stores before bulk buying — same product, sometimes 20–30% apart in the same lane. And if you spot a KitKat 14-flavour gift box, just buy it.

Hiroshima

If you only saw the rest of Hiroshima — the trams, the kids on bikes, the lemon sorbet by the lake — you'd never believe what this city has lived through. One full day, packed.



The A-Bomb Dome, paper cranes, Peace Park trees



→ Read the full Hiroshima guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/japan-hiroshima.html

Top 5 things we did

- 1 The A-Bomb Dome (Genbaku Dome)** — left exactly as it was on 6 August 1945. Stand in front of it. Read the plaque slowly.
- 2 Peace Memorial Museum** — the 3D projection sequence reconstructs the bombing minute by minute; the burnt tricycle and the stopped watch will stay with you.
- 3 Peace Memorial Park** — the Cenotaph arch frames the Dome by design; walk it slowly.
- 4 Hondori Arcade** — covered shopping street near the park; we found a Sketchers outlet here.
- 5 Lakeside lemon sorbet** at a Caffè Ponte by the river — the city's quiet way of telling you to breathe.

Where we stayed

We didn't stay overnight in Hiroshima. We came in by Shinkansen at 7:50 a.m. from Osaka, dumped luggage in a station locker, and left on the overnight Willer bus to Tokyo at 6:05 p.m. Hostels and Booking.com hotels around Hiroshima Station are your best bet if you want a slower visit (which, with hindsight, we recommend).

Getting around

Hiroshima Day Pass + the friendly **red Hiroshima sightseeing loop bus** covers the Dome, Peace Park, museum and the regular city in one ticket. The trams are quietly wonderful if you have time to spare. Station lockers are reliable; ours held two suitcases and a backpack for the day.

Veg/vegan food picks

- **Vegetarian onigiri** from the convenience stores at Osaka Station — carry these on the Shinkansen.
- **Indian restaurant near Peace Park** — not glamorous, but a reliable veg lunch when the okonomiyaki queue is around the block.
- **Hiroshima okonomiyaki** — the layered, noodle-stacked Hiroshima version is the city's signature; queue if you can.

Day flow (compressed)

- **Morning:** 7:50 a.m. Shinkansen out of Osaka, vegetarian onigiri hunt before boarding; arrive Hiroshima just before 10. Lockers, day pass, red loop bus to the Dome.
- **Midday:** A-Bomb Dome, Cenotaph, full Peace Memorial Museum (3D projection at the heart of it).
- **Afternoon:** Indian-restaurant lunch by 2 p.m.; Hondori arcade, Sketchers; lemon sorbet by the river. Skip Miyajima if you must — we did, and regret it.
- **Evening:** 6:05 p.m. Willer overnight bus to Tokyo from a bus terminal on a mall's upper floor. Confirm the floor before you arrive.

Honest reality check

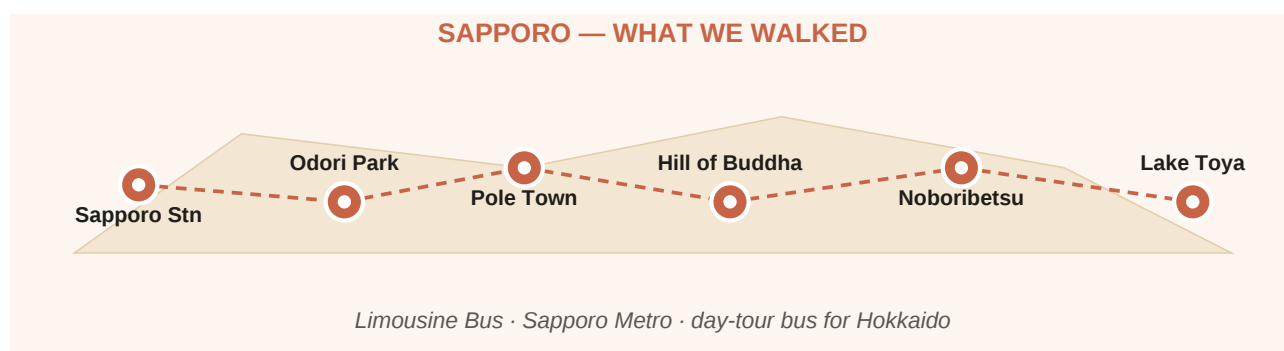
One day is too tight. Stay a night and plan half a day for Miyajima at minimum — the floating torii is the visit we will come back for.

Sapporo

Hokkaido is the version of Japan no one warns you about — quieter, colder, bigger, and somehow more generous. Two days. Late-season sakura, sulphur volcanoes, and an indecent amount of ice cream.



Hokkaido snow, Mt. Usu in the distance, Hill of the Buddha



→ Read the full Sapporo guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/japan-sapporo.html

Top 5 things we did

- Hill of the Buddha (Tadao Ando)** — tunnel approach, lavender field, Buddha reveal. About 1.5 hours from central Sapporo; absolutely worth it.
- Late-season sakura walk** — get off one bus stop before yours and just walk. Hokkaido blooms two to three weeks after Honshu.
- Pole Town arcade** — a kilometre of underground shops, warm even in cold weather, gloriously easy to get lost in.
- Noboribetsu Hell Valley** — sulphur, steam, red-orange rock; a film-set landscape.
- Lake Toya + two surprise dairy farms** — calm mountain-ringed water, then yogurt and ice cream tastings.

Where we stayed

Sapporo Park Hotel — our first proper 5-star of the trip, but Japan's 5-star is service and finish, not amenity overload. Beautiful lobby, comfortable bed, no AC (it's Hokkaido in April), thin white curtains let the 4:30 a.m. sunrise wake us up the second morning. Recalibrate your expectations and you'll love it.

Getting around

Airport Limousine Bus from central Tokyo to Haneda at 5 a.m. — quietly genius. **New Chitose Airport bus** on the other end (~1 hr 15 min into Sapporo). Inside the city, the metro and Pole Town walking will get you most places. For Day 2 we booked a **tour bus** for Noboribetsu, Bear Ranch, Mount Usu and Lake Toya — Hokkaido's modest public transport can't link those in a day; the guide carries the cognitive load.

Veg/vegan food picks

- **Holistic Bio Café Veggy Way** — gentle, plant-forward; the right reset after a 5 a.m. start.
- **Kintoya Bake** — warm baked cheese tarts, almost custardy inside.
- **Donguri** — the legendary tray-and-tongs bakery; we raided it twice.
- **Hokkaido soft-serve ice cream** — Pole Town, Mount Usu stop, two surprise farms by Lake Toya. Each region's milk tastes a little different, so each cone is research.

Day-by-day flow (compressed)

- **Day 1 — Hill of the Buddha + Pole Town.** Morning: 5 a.m. Limousine Bus, 7:20 a.m. flight Haneda→New Chitose. Afternoon: Hill of the Buddha, late-season sakura walk back. Evening: Holistic Bio Café, Pole Town wandering, Kintoya Bake + Donguri haul.
- **Day 2 — Tour bus through Hokkaido.** Morning: 8 a.m. departure from Sapporo Station, Noboribetsu Hell Valley. Afternoon: Bear Ranch / Mount Usu base (we shopped instead), vegan ramen, Lake Toya, two surprise dairy farms. Evening: back to Sapporo by 4 p.m., Odori Park, Sapporo TV Tower, second Donguri raid, pack for the 4 a.m. flight to Tokyo.

Honest reality check

Two days is not enough — Hokkaido feels like its own country. Skipping Bear Ranch + Mt. Usu ropeway to shop instead is the one call we don't regret.

Costs & closing

Per-person estimates in Indian Rupees, based on what we paid in April–May 2026 plus rounded-up ranges for things you might do differently. Treat **Mid** as the most realistic plan.

Item	Low	Mid	High
Flights ex-India (return)	55,000	75,000	1,10,000
JR Pass 7-day	25,000	25,000	32,000
Hostel bunk / night	3,000	4,000	5,000
3-star hotel / night	5,000	6,500	8,500
Food / day per person	1,500	2,200	3,000
Attractions / day	500	1,000	1,500
Local transit / day	500	900	1,500
Tokyo→Kyoto Willer bus	2,500	3,200	4,500
Hiroshima→Tokyo Willer bus	5,000	6,500	8,500
Sapporo flight (one-way)	4,000	5,500	8,000

Numbers are estimates — exchange rate, season and your own pace will move them.

Total for a 14-day Japan trip per person (mid-range)

Roughly **■2,80,000–3,20,000 per person**, all-in — flights + JR Pass + accommodation + food + attractions + intercity buses + the Sapporo flight. Skew higher if you stay in 4–5-star hotels or shop at Rinku Outlet the way we did. **This is an estimate, not a quote.**

If this was useful

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