

2024 December Vol.1

New Open

1. Stay in the Middle of the Metropolis That Never Sleeps at Iyf Shibuya Tokyo, Opening December 19



© Iyf Shibuya Tokyo

The Shibuya neighborhood in downtown Tokyo is one of the city's main entertainment hubs, with the famous Shibuya Crossing, Shibuya109, Miyashita Park, the Hachiko statue, and more. Only a seven-minute walk from Shibuya Station, the prime location of the new Iyf Shibuya allows easy access to the area's iconic draws and even the rest of the city. Although Shibuya is known for its vibrant energy almost around the clock, those who want a break from the hustle and bustle can make the short walk to Yoyogi Park or Meiji Jingu Shrine to chill among the greenery in one of Tokyo's largest parks. With a total of 200 rooms in five types, including connecting rooms and other options for families and groups, this "lifestyle hotel" has a coworking space "CONNECT," social kitchen "BOND," gym "BURN," laundry room "WASH & HANG," meeting space "COLLAB," and more. The hotel is perfect for all types of guests and lengths of stay.

[Iyf Shibuya Tokyo](#)

New Open

2. Stay at a Registered Cultural Property Beloved by Famed Novelists, New Private Annex Opening December 19, Shizuoka



© OCHIAIRO

Ochiairo is a traditional style "ryokan" inn nestled in the mountains of Izu in Shizuoka Prefecture right by a babbling brook. The lush surrounding nature and charming atmosphere provided great inspiration for influential Japanese authors such as the Nobel prize recipient Kawabata Yasunari. Built in 1874, Ochiairo boasts stunning traditional Japanese architecture and has been designated as a Tangible Cultural Property. It is the perfect place to experience first-rate Japanese hospitality, with impeccably furnished guest rooms in both Japanese and Japanese-Western styles, and seasonal cuisine that highlights the natural flavor of the ingredients. The ryokan will be opening a new reservable private villa called "Shakunage" in December. This annex will contain a private dining area surrounded by greenery, saunas with a fireplace motif, and an outdoor bath where guests may listen to the healing sound of a river babbling. All the elements of a fantastic, quintessentially Japanese vacation can be found at Ochiairo!

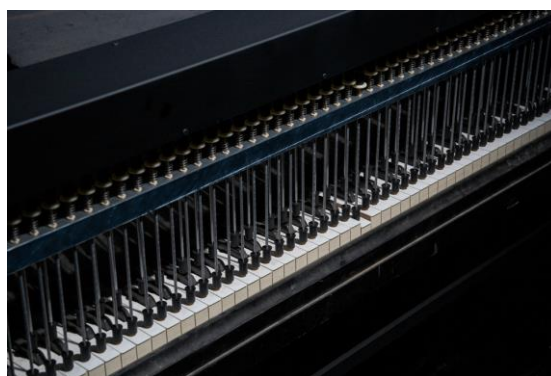
OCHIAIRO

Festival and Event

3. Celebrate the Life and Creative Works of Japan's Musical Maestro, Sakamoto Ryuichi with a Special Exhibition, December 21 – March 30, Tokyo



Photo by Neo Sora ©2017 Kab Inc



Ryuichi Sakamoto with Shiro Takatani,
IS YOUR TIME, 2017/2023,
installation view of "Ryuichi Sakamoto | SOUND AND
TIME" at M WOODS (People's park), Chengdu,
2023 Image courtesy of M WOODS

Sakamoto Ryuichi is one of the most celebrated Japanese composers of his time, having written famous musical pieces across multiple genres including the iconic *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, and winning numerous awards. An artist as well, Sakamoto created 3-dimensional sound installations in collaboration with other artists, pushing boundaries and introducing innovative concepts. The "Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo will be the first comprehensive exhibition held in Japan, showcasing his cutting-edge pieces and focusing on his large-scale works. It will even include a new piece that was being conceptualized before he passed in 2023. They will be installed in areas both inside and outside the museum, allowing visitors to truly experience the dynamism of his artworks.

[Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time](#)

Festival and Event

4. See the Stunning Performances of World-Class Artists at the GMO SONIC Music Festival, January 25 – 26, Saitama



© GMO SONIC

GMO SONIC is one of the largest music festivals in Japan, welcoming world-famous music artists from a range of genres including dance and hip-hop. This year marks the third time this music festival will be taking place, and this time it will be held at Saitama Super Arena, just under an hour from central Tokyo. Under the theme "Wa" (Japanese-style), the festival aims to bring an unprecedented fusion of Japanese culture and entertainment to visitors from around the world. The lineup that includes the major international artists such as Skrillex, Anyma, Martin Garrix, Peggy Gou, Metro Boomin, and R3HAB will be split over two days, filling the weekend with energetic music that will make you want to move to the beats. Don't forget to check out the festival food in between sets of jamming to the music, with hearty dishes from a variety of cuisines. There are three types of tickets available, Platinum Standing, GA, and U19, so be sure to check the official website for more information and see the latest updates.

[GMO SONIC 2025](#)

Seasonal Topic

5. Take the Ultimate Winter Train Ride Through the Snowy Landscape, Hokkaido



Copyright © Hokkaido Railway Company

The SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen Train is a retro-style steam locomotive that runs through the snow-covered Kushiro Wetlands from January to February every year. The train runs through the towns of Kushiro and Shibecha, and guests can stay cozy and warm while taking in the dreamy views of the outside winter wonderland. While the scenery is absolutely mesmerizing and there is even a nature guide on board to point out the best sights, don't forget to also appreciate the charming, vintage-style interior of the locomotive. With richly colored upholstered seats and warm wooden accents, you will feel as though you have been transported back in time several

decades once you board. For extra comfort, cars two through four are equipped with potbelly stoves that will warm you up as you enjoy the snowy landscape. If you're lucky, you may even get to see Ezo-deer or red-crowned cranes dancing in the snow. As this train only runs in the winter, it is certainly a unique and special way to enjoy the cold months! (Reservation required)

[SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen Train](#)

Seasonal Topic

6. Admire the Gorgeous Winter Scenery From One of Japan's Most Iconic Outdoor Hot Springs, Akita



Tsurunoyu Onsen in Akita Prefecture is one of the most famous "onsen" hot springs in Japan, with many hoping to get to soak in the milky water of its outdoor bath while surrounded by snow in the winter. It is one of the oldest hot springs that belongs to the Nyuto Onsenkyo hot spring area that is located at the base of Mt. Nyuto, which is a part of the Towada-Hachimantai National Park that spans the prefectures of Akita, Iwate, and Aomori. Surrounded by an ancient beech forest, this hot spring area consists of four different baths. Each of the baths are filled with water with different properties and offer different benefits. While the onsen can be enjoyed during a day trip, an overnight stay will let you fully experience the charms of the area. There are several accommodation facilities in the area, with traditional guest rooms that exude a nostalgic atmosphere. You should also not miss trying the local fare, including nabe hot pot that will warm you up from the inside.

[TSURUNOYU ONSEN](#)

Special Experience

7. Discover the Charm of a 300-Year-Old Traditional Japanese House, Tokushima



©Chiiori Alliance

Chiiori is an accommodation facility set in a traditional Japanese house, aiming to promote the beauty of the Japanese countryside. Owned by Alex Kerr, a recipient of the 2024 Architectural Institute of Japan Award for Cultural Achievement for his work in preserving traditional Japanese architecture and revitalizing regional areas of Japan, the house has been renovated to provide ultimate comfort, but it still retains the classic elements that made up its architecture when it was built some 300 years ago. This includes a thatched roof and an interior that appears unchanged over the course of hundreds of years. A highlight of the interior is the wooden floors, which were used in the area before tatami floor mats were introduced, that shine with a black hue that showcases the deep history of the structure. The house is located in the Iya area of Tokushima Prefecture, which is known for its thriving vegetation that almost feels untouched by man. It is only a 30-minute drive from one of the area's famous and thrilling vine bridges that is suspended over a rushing stream. It is perfect for a comfortable, luxurious, and private stay in a true off-the-beaten-path part of Japan.

(Only reservable as an entire unit)

[CHIIORI](#)

Special Experience

8. Make Your Own Miso While Admiring a Mountainous View, Nagano



Have you ever tasted Miso soup, which the majority of Japanese have everyday? Miso, a paste made from fermenting soybeans with "koji" mold, is one of the most important staples in Japanese cuisine. In the past, many households made their own miso, and with differences in factors such as what beans are used, how much salt is used, or the length of the fermentation,

the taste of each family's miso varied. With this experience, you will deepen your knowledge of this indispensable condiment through a tour of a miso factory and a hands-on workshop where you will get to make your own miso. After detailed presentations that will give you more appreciation for the miso-making process, you will head to the workshop at the Handmade Miso Experience Center, which offers stunning views of the nearby mountains of the Southern Japanese Alps from its large windows. There is no better way to understand the nuances of miso than making it yourself from scratch, and you will get to taste the fruits of your labor three months later when your fully fermented miso is shipped to you.

[Handmade Miso Experience Center](#)

Adventure Travel

9. Delve Into the Indigenous Ainu Culture, Hokkaido



© Courtesy of The Foundation for Ainu Culture

The Ainu are an ethnic group that is indigenous to the northern region of the Japanese archipelago, particularly Hokkaido. They have their own fascinating, unique culture, which can be learned about at the National Ainu Museum and Park (Upopoy), which aims to preserve and pass down Ainu traditions. This facility hosts workshops and interactive exhibits that explore the Ainu's long history and culture that has been fostered among nature. The six main themes of the exhibits at the National Ainu Museum are Language, Universe (spirituality and customs), Lives, History, Work, and Exchange (Ainu interactions with other ethnic groups), each featuring a wealth of displays that introduce visitors to the beautiful and complex Ainu world. You can also witness traditional Ainu music and dance at the Cultural Exchange Hall, which also holds performances of an ancient rite dance that was designated as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and there are other spots around the grounds with traditional Ainu craft and cooking workshops. The vast precinct is even home to a replica of an Ainu village that offers an unparalleled glimpse into the historical life of the Ainu. Upopoy and the Ainu culture present a special experience unlike any other in Japan.

[Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park](#)

Special Experience

10. A Specially Designed EXPO2025 Jet Is Taking to the Skies in December

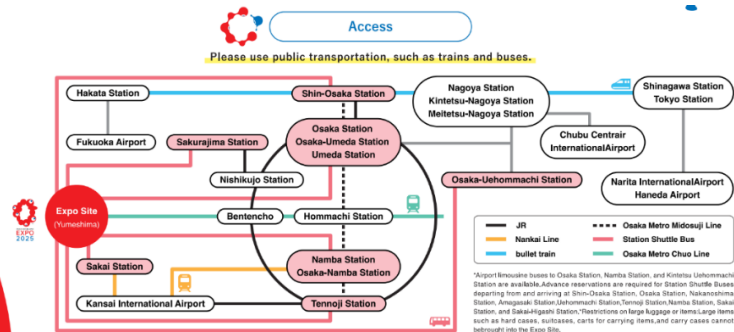


Only four more months until the EXPO2025! To help build enthusiasm, the ANA (All Nippon Airways) Group, one of the PR Suppliers of the EXPO2025, will be launching a specially designed plane ahead of the Expo. Along with ANA's trademark logo, the aircraft will feature the EXPO2025 logo and a design that incorporates both the Expo colors and ANA corporate colors. It will fly domestic routes, and as there is only one plane planned to be adorned with a special design, getting to ride it offers a sense of exclusivity. More details about the launch date, concept, and design of the in-flight items are to be announced at a later date, so be sure to check the official site for updates and to get more excited for the EXPO2025!

[Specially Designed "EXPO2025 ANA JET" to Launch!](#)

Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai

Easily Check Out the EXPO2025 by Train!



Yumeshima Station on the Osaka Metro Chuo Line is set to open on January 19, 2025. Located in front of the East Gate of the EXPO2025 Osaka, Kansai site and it will be the only rail access route to the artificial island of Yumeshima. The entrance to the Expo and the Grand Roof (Ring) will appear right in front of you when you go up from the basement floor of the station to ground level, and as the Expo buildings emerge, we're sure your excitement will rise.

EXPO2025 Osaka, Kansai is expected to attract 28 million visitors during the 184 days of the event, and roads around the venue are expected to be congested. There are only two ways to get there by car: from the north via the Yumemai Bridge, and from the south via the Sakishima Tunnel, both of which only have 2-3 lanes in each direction. Private vehicles are not allowed on the Expo site. Shuttle buses will be in operation, but they are also expected to be crowded depending on the time of day.

The Osaka Metro Chuo Line runs east to west through the center of Osaka, and along the line is Osaka Port Station, home to the KAIYUKAN Aquarium and the Giant Ferris Wheel. The line runs directly to Ikoma in Nara Prefecture via Bentenchō Station, a transfer station with the Osaka Loop Line, and Hommachi Station, a transfer station with the Midosuji Line, the most popular train line in Osaka.

It is scheduled to operate at a maximum frequency of one train every 2 minutes and 30 seconds during the EXPO2025 period. New 400 series trains have been introduced to the line. In addition to new exterior designs, fixed cross-seats have been installed inside some of the trains. They have a very different appearance from conventional subway cars, making them an attraction in their own right. Take the Osaka Metro Chuo Line to the Expo site, not just to avoid congestion, experience new trains, but support the environment, meeting the global environmental protection theme of EXPO2025.

[Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Admission Tickets Information | Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Official Website](#)

Notes:

- The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.

If you'd like to download photos and videos of Japan's tourist attractions, please visit the [Japan Online Media Center \(JOMC\)](#)

For media inquiries, including requests to use photographs, please contact the JNTO Press at media_inquiry@jnto.go.jp



Copyright ©2024 Japan Tourism Organization. All Rights Reserved.

※If you no longer wish to receive our email newsletter, please [click](#) here to unsubscribe.