KYUSHU / KYUSHU · TOKYO · 16–21 DAYS · BY TRAIN

From tonkotsu to Tokyo: three weeks of hells, volcanoes & hot springs

Updated October 2026 · Best time: late Oct–Nov

Trip planner · tabi-notes.com/kyushu-onsen-ramen-route

Kyushu is Japan's southern island: warmer, more relaxed and far less crowded than the classic Golden Route. It's also arguably the country's best food island. Think tonkotsu ramen, yatai street stalls, mentaiko and Kumamoto horse sashimi for the brave.

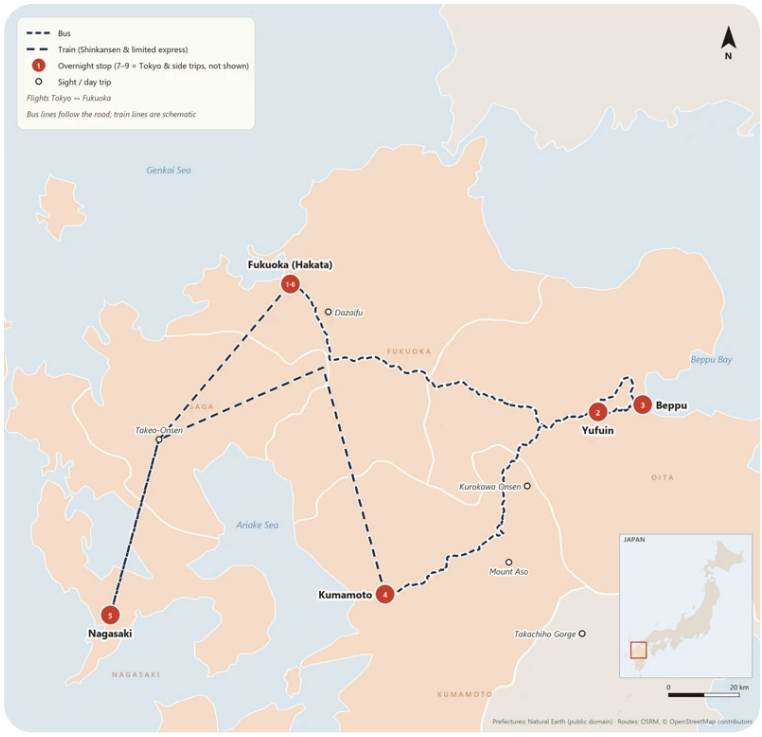
No car needed. Fly into Tokyo and straight on to Fukuoka (or fly directly into Fukuoka), then travel by train and bus in a loop: Fukuoka → Yufuin → Beppu → Kumamoto → Nagasaki → Fukuoka. Fly back to Tokyo for the big-city finale. Doing 21 days instead of 16? Add one of three classic side trips from Tokyo.

16–21 days	**train & bus** no car needed	**6** cities	**late Oct–Nov** best time
~¥205k pp hotels + transport, 16 days*			

*Hotels (sharing a room) and local transport. International flights not included.

The route at a glance

1. **Fukuoka** — Nights 1–3
2. **Yufuin** — Night 4
3. **Beppu** — Nights 5–6
4. **Kumamoto** — Nights 7–9
5. **Nagasaki** — Nights 10–11
6. **Fukuoka** — Night 12
7. **Tokyo** — Nights 13–15
8. **Side trip (pick one)** — Nights 16–18/19
9. **Tokyo** — Final 1–2 nights



The loop by train and bus: Fukuoka → Yufuin → Beppu → Kumamoto → Nagasaki → Fukuoka, with day trips to Dazaifu, Aso, Kurokawa and Takachiho.

Hotels on this route are easy to book on the usual platforms. Pick your own comfort level. The budget below assumes mid-range city hotels plus one ryokan night.

Stop by stop

01 Fukuoka 福岡

Nights 1–3 · Ramen capital & yatai food stalls

PLAN

- Arrival: check in, find ramen near the hotel. Hakata tonkotsu is the local religion
- Nanzoin (one of the largest bronze reclining Buddhas in the world), Canal City, Ohori Park
- teamLab Forest, and a half-day trip to Dazaifu Tenmangu shrine
- Evenings: the yatai stalls along the river in Nakasu. Eat a lot!
- Optional half-day: Yanagawa, about 50 minutes south, for a punt ride on the canals and steamed eel (unagi seiro-mushi) at Ganso Motoyoshiya or Wakamatsuya

> **Good to know** Book the **same hotel** for both Fukuoka stays (and both Tokyo stays). You can leave your big luggage there and travel light around Kyushu.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Fukuoka Tower
city view over Hakata Bay

Nokonoshima Island Park
flower island, short ferry ride

Ishikura Sake Brewery
sake brewery in Hakata

WHERE I EAT

Nagahama Yatai Dogenya
yatai street stall

Hakata Issou
tonkotsu ramen

Hakata Ramen ShinShin
tonkotsu ramen

Maedaya Motsunabe
motsunabe hot pot

博多もつ鍋菊武
motsunabe hot pot

Hakataro Nishinakasu
mizutaki & motsunabe

Yoshizuka Unagi
grilled eel

Daichi no Udon
Hakata udon

Hakata Yakiniku Hachi Hachi
yakiniku

Hakata Sushi Momonoki (博多鮨桃の木)
sushi

A Happy Pancake Tenjin
soufflé pancakes

Rec Coffee · Stereo Coffee · Blue Bottle
coffee

02 Yufuin 由布院

Night 4 · A ryokan night: traditional food & onsen

PLAN

- Main point: a traditional kaiseki dinner and a long soak in the onsen
- Lake Kinrin early in the morning when the mist rises
- Yufuin Floral Village, the Comico Art Museum, small cafés and shops along Yunotsubo street

Good to know This is the night to splurge on a ryokan with a private open-air bath.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Bussan-ji
small temple near the station

03 Beppu 別府

Nights 5–6 · The seven hells & countless hot springs

PLAN

- The Hells of Beppu (jigoku): boiling blue, red and mud ponds you look at, not bathe in
- Beppu Ropeway up Mount Tsurumi
- Takasakiyama, the monkey mountain
- The beach, sand baths and a downtown stroll

Good to know Try food cooked in onsen steam (jigoku-mushi). It's a Beppu speciality.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Hachiman Kamado Shrine
shrine in the Kannawa hot-spring area

Beppu Park
green break in the city

Kitsuki Castle & samurai town
half-day trip, ~40 min north

Futago-ji
mountain temple on the Kunisaki peninsula

WHERE I EAT

Gyoza Kogetsu
Beppu gyoza

焼とり凡 母家
yakitori

焼肉壽壽
yakiniku

Owadazushi
sushi

Somuri Steak
steak

Tonkatsu Yamamoto Loin
tonkatsu

Fukubako Soba
soba

Saryo Morisawa (茶寮森澤)
tea house

04 Kumamoto 熊本

Nights 7–9 · Castle, Kumamon & Mount Aso

PLAN

- Kumamoto Castle and Suizenji garden
- Kumamon Square and the One Piece statues around the prefecture
- Day trip: Mount Aso, one of the world's largest calderas
- Day trip: Kurokawa Onsen, or Takachiho Gorge with its rowing boats under a waterfall

Good to know Takachiho and Kurokawa are both easier as a tour or with a one-day rental car.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Kamishikimi Kumanoimasu Shrine
mossy forest shrine on the way to Takachiho

Yamaga Distillery
whisky distillery north of Kumamoto

WHERE I EAT

Akagumi Ramen
Kumamoto ramen

Mangetsu Okonomiyaki
okonomiyaki

Takiniku Gyu-chan (たき肉牛ちゃん)
grilled beef

Kunsei Garden Takeshita (燻製ガーデン タケシタ)
smoked dishes & drinks

Gluck Coffee Spot · Cafe switch
coffee

05 Nagasaki 長崎

Nights 10–11 · History, harbour & one of the world's great night views

PLAN

- Mount Inasa lookout at night
- Meganebashi stone bridge
- Sanno Shrine and its famous one-legged torii
- Peace Park
- Teramachi-dori temple street and Chinatown

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Glover Garden
Western houses above the harbour

Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum
next to the Peace Park

Gunkanjima (Battleship Island)
boat tour to the abandoned island

Kofuku-ji & Sofuku-ji
Chinese temples near Teramachi-dori

Confucius Shrine
colourful shrine & museum

Nagasaki Ropeway
the easy way up Mount Inasa

WHERE I EAT

Hakata Motsunabe Oyama
motsunabe hot pot

Shirokiya, Nagasaki Station
izakaya

Hayama Coffee (Oranda-dori)
coffee on the Dutch Slope

Tosaka Coffee (トサカコーヒー)
coffee

06 Fukuoka 福岡

Night 12 · Back for one easy night

PLAN

- Arrive around midday, relaxed shopping
- One more big ramen dinner in the evening

Good to know Same hotel as the first stay, so your luggage is already waiting.

WHERE I EAT

Hakata Ramen ShinShin (Deitos, at Hakata Station)
one last tonkotsu ramen

Maedaya Motsunabe Nakasu
motsunabe hot pot

NOOICE Hakata
breakfast café

07 Tokyo 東京

Nights 13–15 · Fly back to the capital

PLAN

- Roppongi, Tokyo Tower, Shibuya, Yoyogi Park & Meiji Shrine, Shinjuku & Gyoen
- Asakusa, Akihabara, Ginza, the fish market, Tokyo Station
- teamLab Planets, Odaiba, wagyu and a night of bar hopping

Good to know My full list of Tokyo restaurants and bars is in the Tokyo city guide.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Suga Shrine stairs
the staircase from the film "Your Name"

Shimokitazawa
vintage shops & small cafés

Cat Street (Harajuku)
shopping street between Shibuya & Harajuku

Kappabashi kitchen street
knives & kitchenware, e.g. JIKKO

Kabukicho batting centers
late-night batting cages in Shinjuku

Capcom Store & Square Enix Garden (Shibuya)
for gamers

BrewDog & Bauhaus (Roppongi)
craft beer, then live rock covers

WHERE I EAT

Teppanyaki Keyakizaka · Kisentei Midtown
teppanyaki & wagyu

Sushi Banya Ginza · Sushi Satake · Fukube Sushi
sushi in Ginza

Sushi Yajima
omakase sushi

Tonkatsu Aoki (Daimon)
tonkatsu

Matsuo Jingisukan Ginza
lamb barbecue

Gyoza Hohei Ginza
gyoza

Monja Moheji Ueno
monjayaki

Otoko no Omurice Egg Bomb
omurice

Perfect Beer Kitchen · stand Bar Joker
Shimbashi after-work drinks

Michi Naki Michi · BW Cave
izakaya in Shibuya

08 Side trip (pick one) 寄り道

Nights 16–18/19 · For the 21-day version

PLAN

- **Kyoto**: 3–4 days, with day trips to Osaka and Kobe
- **Hiroshima**: Peace Memorial, Miyajima island
- **Kanazawa**: Kenroku-en garden, geisha district, seafood market
- Or stay closer to Tokyo: Hakone or Lake Kawaguchiko for Mount Fuji, Ito on the Izu peninsula, or Yokohama

Good to know Buy point-to-point Shinkansen tickets, or price a regional pass for the side trip only.

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Higashi Chaya District (Kanazawa)
geisha teahouse district

Geisha House Shima (Kanazawa)
Edo-era teahouse you can visit

Nagamachi (Kanazawa)
samurai district

Omicho Market (Kanazawa)
seafood market

Myoryu-ji, the Ninja Temple (Kanazawa)
temple full of trap doors (guided tours)

D.T. Suzuki Museum (Kanazawa)
calm architecture & water garden

Kanazawa Castle
next to Kenroku-en

WHERE I EAT

Sushi Kaiseki Kozuki (Kyoto)
sushi kaiseki

Yakisoba Baby / Okonomiyaki Baby, Dotonbori (Osaka)
okonomiyaki & yakisoba

Zeniya Nishinakajima (Osaka)
kushikatsu

Unagi Yondaime Kikukawa (Kanazawa)
grilled eel

Osushi to Genshiyaki Nakamura (Kanazawa)
sushi & open-fire grill

京祇園ねぎ焼 粉 (Kanazawa)
negiyaki

Higashide Coffee · Curio Espresso (Kanazawa)
coffee

09 Tokyo 東京

Final 1–2 nights · Last shopping & the Ghibli Museum

PLAN

- Ghibli Museum in Mitaka (book tickets well in advance)
- Kanda, and a last round of shopping in Ginza

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Ginza shopping
MUJI, Onitsuka Tiger, Daiso, drugstores

Tokyo Video Gamers Cafe & Bar (Akihabara)
retro games with a drink

WHERE I EAT

A Happy Pancake Ginza
soufflé pancakes

Gyūan Ginza
beef

Sushiro Kagurazaka
conveyor-belt sushi

Budget

Estimates for October at ¥150 ≈ US$1 · ¥165 ≈ €1. Ranges, not promises.

	16 days	21 days
Hotels (per person, sharing)	≈ ¥180k	≈ ¥250k–280k
Local transport (trains, buses)	≈ ¥25k	≈ ¥33k
Total per person	**≈ ¥205k**	**≈ ¥280k–315k**

MY RECOMMENDATION

Hotel prices are based on real mid-range options. You can easily go cheaper or more luxurious. The 21-day price depends on which side trip you pick.

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Domestic flights Tokyo ⇄ Fukuoka
- Food, ryokan upgrades and entrance fees

Booking & practical tips

LUGGAGE

Same hotel twice in Fukuoka and twice in Tokyo means you can leave luggage behind. Takkyubin (luggage forwarding) solves the rest.

BOOKING TIMING

Book hotels about six months ahead for autumn. Ryokans in Yufuin and Kurokawa go first.

ALTERNATIVE LOOP

Swap Yufuin and Oita for a western extension: Fukuoka → Nagasaki → Kumamoto → Beppu → ferry to Matsuyama (Shikoku) → Hiroshima → Fukuoka.

EAT

Hakata ramen, yatai, mentaiko, Kumamoto horse sashimi, champon in Nagasaki, jigoku-mushi in Beppu.

Two more ways to do Kyushu

OPTION 1 · THE ONSEN-HEAVY VERSION

1. 3 days Fukuoka
2. 2 days Yufuin
3. 2 days Oita
4. 3 days Kumamoto
5. 2 days Nagasaki
6. 1 day Fukuoka
7. fly to Tokyo: 3 days Tokyo, 2 days Ito (Izu), rest in Yokohama or Tokyo

OPTION 2 · KYUSHU + SHIKOKU + HIROSHIMA

1. 3 days Fukuoka
2. 2 days Nagasaki
3. 3 days Kumamoto
4. 2 days Beppu
5. 2 days Matsuyama
6. 2 days Hiroshima
7. 1–2 days Fukuoka
8. rest in Tokyo

Frequently asked questions

Is a JR Pass worth it for this route?

Usually not. The Kyushu loop is cheap with single tickets, and the Tokyo ⇄ Fukuoka leg is faster and often cheaper by plane. Price the JR Kyushu Rail Pass only if you add many long train days.

Why fly between Tokyo and Fukuoka?

The Shinkansen takes about 5 hours; a flight takes under 2 hours, and Fukuoka Airport is only two subway stops from Hakata Station. Booked early, domestic flights often cost less than the train.

Can I see Mount Aso and Takachiho without a car?

Aso, yes: the Kyushu Odan bus and JR trains stop there. Takachiho and Kurokawa are much easier as a day tour from Kumamoto or with a one-day rental car.

Is the horse sashimi in Kumamoto a must?

It's the local speciality (basashi), usually served with sweet soy and ginger. If it's not for you, Kumamoto ramen with fried garlic is the safer classic.

Which side trip should I pick for the 21-day version? –

Kyoto for temples, Hiroshima and Miyajima for history and the floating torii, Kanazawa for gardens and seafood. If you have never been to Kyoto, pick Kyoto.