

## Five Emerging Cities To Explore In Japan

Japan is becoming ever more popular with British travellers and it's not just the more well-known destinations that are piquing our interest. Research from [TripAdvisor®](#), the travel planning and booking site, has revealed that the Japanese cities of [Kanazawa](#), [Ishigaki](#), [Takayama](#), [Nagasaki](#) and

[Fujikawaguchiko-machi](#) have been steadily growing in popularity each year amongst travellers<sup>1</sup>. Here TripAdvisor shows us what's on offer at these destinations, from Edo-period Samurai houses and castles to beautiful beaches and impressive mountain landscapes.

### 1. [Kanazawa](#)

*(65% growth in international traveller interest)*

Kanazawa is home to ancient Samurai history where the highest ranking social caste of military nobility lived and ruled for over 700 years in the 1100s. Also known as Little Kyoto, Kanazawa is the capital city of Japan's Ishikawa Prefecture.

**Fun facts:** Today, it is the only place where the Samurai presence remains. Travellers can get a look at the remaining residences.

[Kanazawa Castle](#), one of the largest relics of the Samurai age, is located right at the heart of the city. The castle is adjacent to the famous [Kenrokuen Garden](#) which is celebrated for its beautiful ponds and streams. Not surprisingly, it is a beautiful place to go during the Sakura season when the cherry-blossoms are in full bloom. Nearby, visitors can stroll through the [Higashichaya Old Town](#) to enjoy a cup of tea, traditional arts and crafts, and the overall nostalgia of this old Geisha district. Not too far away sits the [Myoryuji Ninja Temple](#) which was built to protect the Emperor in dangerous times – its hidden staircases, secret passages, escape routes and pinholes make it an intriguing place to visit.

**How to get there:** To get to Kanazawa, travellers will need to fly to Tokyo. It is then a short 2.5 – 3 hour bullet train ride on the JR Hokuriku Shinkansen to Kanazawa.

**TripAdvisor traveller restaurant recommendations:** Situated on the west coast of Japan, Kanazawa is known for its fresh seafood. [Morimorizushi Kanazawa-ekimaeten](#) is one of the most popular restaurants for high quality sushi but at affordable prices. A great *izakaya* (Japanese gastro pub) option would be [Itaru Honten](#), which is famous for its Japanese sake pairings and use of local ingredients.

**Great accommodation options:** [Toyoko Inn Kanazawa Kenrokuen Korinbo](#) (recommended by travellers for its location, value and cleanliness) [Ryokan Yamamuro](#) (recommended by travellers for its great hosts, warm service and central location) – both bookable on TripAdvisor at an average rate of £47 and £79 per night<sup>2</sup>.

**Reason to book now:**

- Kanazawa Jazz Street 2016 takes place in the middle of September featuring over 200 jazz concerts performed in the city centre for four consecutive days by some of the world's leading jazz artists and university bands.

### 2. [Ishigaki](#)

*(52% growth in international traveller interest)*

Ishigaki is an island hub known for its beaches and great dive sites where you can find rare corals, located in Japan's south western Okinawa Prefecture.

**Fun Facts:** Surprisingly given that it is an island the island's cuisine is centered on meat instead of seafood.

The jewel of the island is [Kabira Bay](#) [Mount Omotodake](#) [Tamatorizaki Observatory](#)

**How to get there:** Domestic flights to Ishigaki are available via Tokyo Haneda to Naha Airport in Okinawa – this takes about 2.5 hours – followed by another hour-long flight to New Ishigaki Airport.

**TripAdvisor traveller restaurant recommendations:** Ishigaki beef is the island's most famous specialty and meat lovers should head to [Sumibiyakiniku Yamamoto](#) for the beef steak special. Yaeyama soba is another popular dish – its taste and texture is different to soba on the mainland. A good place to try this is [Akaishi Shokudo](#). If you are at an *izakaya*, try *Awamori* an alcoholic beverage indigenous to Okinawa which is distilled from long grain indica rice.

**Great accommodation options:** [Hotel Patina Ishigakijima](#) (recommended by travellers for its location and value) and [Club Med Kabira Beach](#) (recommended by travellers for its vicinity to the beach and service) bookable on TripAdvisor for an average rate of £71 and £386 per night<sup>2</sup>.

**Reason to book now:**

- Experience Okinawan culture with the Hounensai harvest festival that takes place between mid-July and early August. This is one of the most important festivals in Ishigaki where locals pray for a rich harvest, ceremoniously bearing the *hatagashira* flag poles in a street parade. Other highlights of the festival include traditional dance, a staged warrior battle performance and a public tug-of-war contest that anyone present is able to participate in.

### 3. [Takayama](#)

*(44% growth in international traveller interest)*

Not far from Kanazawa is Takayama, which is also on Japan's official 'Samurai route' but tucked away in the mountains of Hida in the Gifu Prefecture.

- is a beautiful castle town known for its well-preserved old merchant districts from the Edo-period (1603-1868). Sannomachi Street, which is located in the old town, is lined with ancient wooden houses, museums, coffee houses and shops selling traditional crafts and food specialties. To experience the picturesque Hida countryside, you can consider booking the [Satoyama Experience tour](#), a private tour where you can cycle through local villages, rice fields and lovely Japanese homes.

**Fun facts:** With its cold climate and the crystal clear mountain water nearby, Takayama has the perfect conditions for producing high quality Japanese sake.

**How to get there:** Getting to Takayama is fairly easy by bullet train on the JR Tokaido Shinkansen from Tokyo to Nagoya which takes approximately 2 hours. This is followed by an hour and a half transfer on the JR Hida limited express train to Takayama. Visitors can also fly to Kanazawa and take the JR limited express train and Shinkansen to Takayama via Toyama station which takes just over 2 hours.

**TripAdvisor traveller restaurant recommendations:** Hida beef is a specialty of the Gifu prefecture. Meat lovers should visit [Ajilkuratengokuto](#) savour this through an authentic Japanese barbeque experience.

**Great accommodation options:** [Ryokan Tanabe](#) (recommended by travellers for its authentic ryokan experience, service and location) bookable on TripAdvisor for an average rate of £194 per night<sup>2</sup>.

**Reason to book now:**

- The Takayama Matsuri Autumn Festival which takes place in October, is held after the crops have been harvested. The festival is known for the large ornate floats, or *yatai*, that roam around the city at night. These date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are intricately decorated with detailed wood carvings, lacquering and ornate metal-work. The festival is also known for the puppet performances, operated by strings and push rods from within these floats.

### 4. [Nagasaki](#)

*(41% growth in international traveller interest)*

Nagasaki is the largest city and capital of Japan's Nagasaki Prefecture. It is surrounded by mountains and the sea providing for amazing scenic views wherever you look. The city has a somber history dating back to the second World War, when it was devastated by an atomic bomb. This is heavily documented and memorialised at the [Nagasaki Bomb Museum](#), where visitors can look at artifacts and learn about atomic weapons. To get a 360 degree view of the city, visitors can ride a cable car to the summit of [Mount Inasa](#), which is beautiful both in the day and at night. Alternatively, visitors can also take a boat

tour to [Hashima Island](#), an abandoned island also known as “Battleship Island”. Known for its undersea coal mines, the island was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2015.

**Fun facts:** Hashima Island is the sinister-looking island that features in the 2012 James Bond movie ‘Skyfall’, as the deserted hideout for its villain Raoul Silva.

**How to get there:** To get to Nagasaki, travellers will need to fly to Tokyo Haneda. They can then take a domestic flight to Nagasaki Airport which takes just over an hour and a half.

**TripAdvisor traveller restaurant recommendations:** Champon (pronounced ‘Chan-pon’) is Nagasaki’s regional noodle dish made with fried pork, seafood, vegetable and chicken in a pork broth. A good place to try this is at [Shirairo](#). Fans of *Chawanmushi* (steamed custard egg) should also make a visit to [Yossou](#), which is highly recommended by the locals.

**Great accommodation options:** [Richmond Hotel Nagasaki Shianbashi](#) (recommended by travellers for its location and cleanliness) and [Fujiwara Ryokan](#) (recommended by travellers for its location, value and warm service) bookable on TripAdvisor for an average rate of £83 and £70 per night<sup>2</sup>.

**Reason to book now:**

- Nagasaki Kunchi which takes place from 7 to 9 October is the city’s main highlight, a festival celebrating the autumn harvest that spills into the streets. It has been celebrated annually for 400 years and incorporates dance and performances by groups that represent Nagasaki’s various districts. These districts take turns to participate once every seven years so the festivities stay fresh.

## 5. [Fujikawaguchiko-machi \(Mount Fuji\)](#)

*(33% growth in international traveller interest)*

Fujikawaguchiko is a Japanese resort town located on the northern part of Mount Fuji. It surrounds [Lake Kawaguchi](#), one of the famous Fuji Five Lakes around Mount Fuji, and is home to many hot springs, bathhouses and scenic golf courses. Many hikers use Fujikawaguchiko as a starting point for climbing the volcano along the Yoshida Trail. For music-lovers, the [Kawaguchiko Music Forest Museum](#) will enchant and beguile with its exquisite music boxes, organs and other instruments.

**Fun facts:** The last time Mount Fuji erupted was in December 1707.

**How to get there:** Travellers can easily get to Fujikawaguchiko from Tokyo by taking the JR Limited Express line Kaiji from Tokyo or Shinjuku station to Otsuki station. The journey takes just 40 minutes. From Otsuki station, they can then take the Fujikyū Railway Line to Kawaguchiko station which is a 55 minute journey.

**TripAdvisor traveller restaurant recommendations:** Pumpkin Hoto is a popular local noodle soup from the Yamanashi Prefecture that is served in a big iron pot. To give this a try, visitors should visit [Kosaku Hoto Kosaku](#), which is highly recommended by travellers on TripAdvisor.

**Great accommodation options:** [Lakeside Kawaguchiko Sunnide Resort](#) (recommended by travellers for its service and good views) and [Konansou](#) (recommended by travellers for its authentic ryokan experience and service) bookable on TripAdvisor for an average rate of £241 and £317 per night<sup>2</sup>.

**Reason to book now:**

- With Mount Fuji and Lake Kawaguchiko as your backdrop, the Fuji Kawaguchiko Autumn Leaves Festival (Oct 31 – Nov 23) is the perfect time to visit and to admire the colours of the season. Fujikawaguchiko literally turns red during this time as the maple leaves change colour.

<sup>1</sup> The TripAdvisor ranking is based on the top five Japanese cities that have seen the biggest year-on-year increase in share of international traffic sessions to their destination pages on the site, comparing 1 March 2014 – 28 February 2015 to 1 March 2015 – 29 February 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Average nightly rates of bookable properties in each Japanese cities are based on TripAdvisor pricing data from June to

November 2016, aggregated from booking partners, including online travel agencies and direct hotel suppliers, and converted to GBP using xe.com on 14 June 2016.

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