



東京近郊 TOKYO KINKO

# OUTER TOKYO 30



北 KITA

# NORTH 64



南 MINAMI

# SOUTH 90



東 HIGASHI

# EAST 144



西 NISHI

# WEST 168



週末旅行 SHUMATSU RYOKO

# WEEKEND TRIPPER 216

# NAVIGATING YOUR DAY TRIP

## SYMBOLS

Throughout the book you will notice that each listing includes symbols that highlight different activities. We've developed the below key to help you decide on the best trips for your interests.



## TRIP INFORMATION

Transport information is listed at the beginning of each day trip. The travel time for each trip is listed after the mode of transport. Depending on where you are staying in Tokyo there may be a quicker way to reach your destination.



## REGIONS & PLANNING

The majority of the day trips in this book are centred around the Kanto region and, to a lesser extent, the Chubu region. We also make some Weekend Tripper suggestions (see page 216), which dip into the Hokuriku and Kansai regions and go further into the Chubu region.

Large cities, prefectures and Shinkansen routes can be viewed on this map. To help you plan, it's important to find your bearings before you leave and make sure you know where the main train lines go and how close day trips are to one another. This will also help you plan overnight or weekend adventures if you are keen for more time out of the city.



# GHIBLI PILGRIMAGES: FORESTS, GARDENS & DREAMSCAPES

Scattered through forests, suburbs and former exposition grounds are real places that quietly shaped Studio Ghibli co-founder Hayao Miyazaki's imagination. These day trips reward unhurried travellers – those willing to let the boundary between animation and reality gently blur. Before the soundtracks swell and the credits roll, there is another way into Miyazaki's world. It begins on foot. Follow Mei as she disappears down a narrow forest path, Catbus just ahead, blinking through the trees. Join Totoro and pause the day with a nap beneath camphor leaves, while soot sprites scatter across the floorboards of an old farmhouse. These journeys are not about spectacle, but about immersion: listening to the wind in the grass, to cicadas humming like a held note; strolling through neighbourhood gardens that shaped extraordinary stories. From the mossy folds of Sayama Hills to the unassuming lanes of Asagaya, and onwards to a park where imagination has taken physical form, think of these places as Ghibli scenes without a script: you arrive, you wander and you find that something small and magical.

## DAY TRIP: TOTORO'S FOREST NO. 1

North of Tokyo, the **Sayama Hills** roll softly across the border of Saitama and Tokyo, a rare pocket of Satoyama landscape – traditional countryside where woodlands, fields and village life overlap. This is the place widely known as **Totoro's Forest**, a mosaic of preserved green spaces that inspired *My Neighbor Totoro*.

The walk is gentle and contemplative: dirt paths beneath tall trees, filtered light, birdsong and the occasional glimpse of suburban rooftops beyond the forest edge. At the heart of the forest is **Kurosuke's House**, a restored early Showa-era farmhouse where Totoro himself might just be napping, waiting behind shoji screens. Inside, displays explain local conservation efforts and Miyazaki's connection to the area. This is not a theme park – it's an act of preservation, Totoro's wishes realised, the deeper magic of the forest. Allow half a day to wander slowly, breathe deeply and awaken the spirit of Totoro inside yourself.

10 am–3 pm (Tue, Wed, Sat); apply in advance to visit: [www.totoro.or.jp/kurosuke](http://www.totoro.or.jp/kurosuke)

## DAY TRIP: A-SAN NO NIWA & EDO-TOKYO OPEN AIR ARCHITECTURAL MUSEUM

Begin in **Asagaya**, a low-rise, lived-in Tokyo neighbourhood. A short walk from the station brings you to **A-san no Niwa**, meaning A's Garden, where A means 'anyone' or 'visitors' – so it's anyone's, or everyone's, garden. It's a modest but deeply evocative green space. Miyazaki wrote about this garden in *The House Where Totoro Lives*, describing it as a personal refuge and creative touchstone. So much so that he then designed the space to reflect the profound effect it had

on his creations. Sadly, the original Totoro House burnt down, but instead you'll find a whimsical and delightful garden with a small cottage, pathways, gates and picket fences that allow you to wander and contemplate Miyazaki's tender inner world.

From Asagaya, return by train towards Musashi-Koganei Station, then continue on foot, by bus or by taxi to the **Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum**. This expansive outdoor museum assembles historic buildings from across Tokyo and across time, reconstructed on extensive parklands. Walking through the re-created old Showa-era streetscape of shops, houses and buildings feels uncannily like stepping into a Ghibli background painting. The museum was a major inspiration for Miyazaki, in particular the picturesque old bathhouse, which became part of the blueprint for the bathhouse in *Spirited Away*. Together, A-san no Niwa and the museum form a dialogue between imagination and ordinary life – the domestic worlds that Miyazaki elevated into wonder.

If you have time, or perhaps on another day, no pilgrimage to this softer side of Ghibli is really complete without a visit to the **Ghibli Museum**, tucked away in the leafy calm of neighbourhood Tokyo's **Inokashira Park**. Here, Miyazaki's world turns inward and playful: staircases curl without explanation, stained glass glows with familiar silhouettes and short films flicker like private dreams. There is no fixed path – much like *Spirited Away*, you wander and piece things together for yourself. Outside, the park is a reminder that imagination doesn't end at the exit; it simply slips back into the trees.

Entry to Ghibli Museum is strictly by advance reservation. Tickets go on sale on the tenth day of each month for the following month and often sell out within hours, especially on weekends and during school holidays. Entry is timed, with arrivals staggered every 30 minutes to control crowds, and most visitors spend 2–3 hours inside.

Apply in advance to visit the Ghibli Museum and A-san no Niwa: <https://experience-suginami.tokyo/2016/01/a-san-no-niwa>; [www.tatemonoen.jp](http://www.tatemonoen.jp); [www.ghibli-museum.jp](http://www.ghibli-museum.jp)

## OVERNIGHT JOURNEY: GHIBLI PARK

**Ghibli Park** is not a single destination but a constellation of five spaces: Ghibli's Grand Warehouse, Hill of Youth, Dondoko Forest, Mononoke Village and Valley of Witches, languishing in the vast grounds of **Expo 2005 Aichi Commemorative Park**. The atmosphere is more country escape than amusement park. It is a place designed to be walked through, lingered in and quietly absorbed – just like the worlds that inspired it.

This is a day trip that demands planning: tickets are released two months in advance and often sell out immediately. Premium passes allow access to the five spaces; standard tickets cover three. The one-way journey takes just under 3 hours. From Tokyo, take the Nozomi Shinkansen to Nagoya, then connect via the Higashiyama and Linimo lines to Aichikyuhaku-kinen-koen, from where the park is an 8-minute walk. Or take the Meitetsu bus near Nagoya Station straight to the park. While technically doable as a long day trip, Ghibli Park is best savoured as an overnight stay. Travel packages – including transport and accommodation are available.

Apply in advance to visit: [www.ghibli-park.jp](http://www.ghibli-park.jp)



# HITACHI SEASIDE PARK



*A living canvas of flowers,  
sky and sea*

|       |                                                                                     |           |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| ————— |  | ~90 min   |
| ..... |  | 15–20 min |

## GETTING THERE

From Ueno Station, take the JR Joban Line Limited Express to Katsuta Station (~90 min). Take the east exit, then catch a local bus to Hitachi Seaside Park (15–20 min).

[hitachikaihin.jp](http://hitachikaihin.jp)

## DISCOVER

Miharashi Hill, flower gardens, cycling paths, open lawns, coastal atmosphere.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Spring: nemophila blue fields (especially late April to early May). Summer: sunflowers, zinnias, seaside picnics. Autumn: red kochia and cosmos blooms (October). Winter: quiet walks, wide skies, coastal stillness.

**Advice** → The bus from Katsuta Station arrives at the west entrance and bikes can be hired from just inside the gate.

Hitachi Seaside Park and Kairaku-en Garden (see page 89) can be combined into one day trip.

We love Ibaraki Prefecture, a places of sea breezes, endless horizons and vast stretches of land adorned with flowers, fields and folklore. **Hitachi Seaside Park** harnesses the region's mystical ability to grow flowers. They don't simply bloom here; they transform the landscape itself. Entire hills are painted with colour, living strokes on a canvas of green.

Hitachi Seaside Park is sizeable. As well as its flower gardens, it offers several walking trails, restaurants, picnic areas and a small amusement park. A train trundles on tyres through the park, stopping at various locations to allow visitors to get on and off at will. Rental bikes are a great way to explore the park's many cycling paths. Hire one from just inside the west gate and cycle past the narcissus garden, towards the old-style Japanese house **Miharashi no Sato** and the charming **Omoyo Old Village**.

The beauty of the flowers, mass planted in large fields in the park, cannot be fully captured in words or photographs; you have to experience it, so go in your favourite season if you can. Spring dresses the park in blue. The nemophila fields roll across **Miharashi Hill**, millions of delicate blossoms opening in the gentle air. Walking among them feels dreamlike; the earth and sky blend into a single palette of azure, set against the glinting sea. In autumn, red kochias cast off their summer coats of feathery green and cover the hills with orbs of crimson fire. From the top of Miharashi Hill, the red waves spill down to the sea, spectacular against the silver-blue horizon. Cosmos flowers add splashes of pink and white.

Summer brightens the park with greens and yellows. Sunflowers turn their happy faces towards the sun, and zinnias ripple in the fields, while you can rest in shaded groves with a picnic, the shadows and the ocean breeze offering cool relief. In winter, the park sleeps, grasses dry, the sea winds sharpen, the flowers lie silent. Hitachi Seaside Park is a landscape as fleeting as it is eternal – flowers bloom and fade, and each visit is different, each season a renewal.



## MOUNT FUJI VIEW DAY TRIPS



Spectacular and memorable Fuji views can be found on many of the day trips in this book, including Miho Beach (see page 103), Lake Kawaguchi (see page 202) and Nihondaira Yume Terrace (see page 99). There are other iconic spots across Shizuoka where Mount Fuji reveals its many moods – from mist-shrouded mystery to crystalline winter visions. Here are some of our favourites.

### OBUCHI SASABA

Travel from Shizuoka to Obuchi Sasaba tea fields (you'll need to catch a series of buses and trains that can take up to 2 hours, or hire a car if you can – it's faster). If you are there between April and May, it's tea-harvesting season. There is no picking workshop or tea house experience here; however, you'll get one of the most iconic views of Mount Fuji. In April in particular, Fuji wears a bonnet of snow and proudly looks down upon rows and rows of billowy tea terraces bowed before the mountain in gentle respect.

#### Getting there:

- \* From Tokyo Station, take the JR Tokaido Line to Shizuoka Station, then transfer to the Minobu Line for Fujinomiya Station. Take the north exit, then catch a taxi or local bus to the tea fields (~2.5 hr).
- \* [fujinomiya.gr.jp](http://fujinomiya.gr.jp)

**SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS:** → April–May for tea harvesting and snow-topped Fuji.

### MIZUGATSUKA PARK

High on the slopes between forest and cloud, Mizugatsuka Park, at the edge of Fuji's base, seems to bring you close enough to touch Fuji's peak. This is not one of those distant views – the mountain is immense, its symmetry pure against the sky. On clear mornings, the peak stands aloft like a god, the perfect vision with the foreground adorned by wildflowers or, in autumn, by red leaves at the base.

#### Getting there:

- \* From Tokyo Station, take the JR Tokaido Shinkansen to Mishima Station, then take the Tokaido and Gotemba lines to Gotemba Station. From the station's main exit, catch the Fujisan Skyline bus to Mizugatsuka Park (~2.5 hr).
- \* [pref.shizuoka.jp](http://pref.shizuoka.jp)

**SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS:** → May–June for wildflowers. October–November for autumn leaves.

### MOUNT FUJI SHIZUOKA AIRPORT

Few airports have a view such as this. Beyond the runway, Mount Fuji's perfect cone rises, a watchful, protective sentinel. The glass windows of the airport frame the mountain like a painting – each hour shifting colour, the perfect way to pass the time while waiting for a flight. Every landing is a greeting; every take-off carries a quiet blessing, Fuji breathing out the wind that lifts you skyward.

#### Getting there:

- \* From Tokyo Station, take the JR Tokaido Line to Shizuoka Station. Take the north exit, then catch a local bus to Mount Fuji Shizuoka Airport (45–60 mins).
- \* [mtfj-shizuokaairport.jp](http://mtfj-shizuokaairport.jp)

**SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS:** → winter for the clearest Fuji views.







## THE NAKASENDO: MAGOME TO TSUMAGO



*Cedar, stone and memory  
on the old postal road*

|  |  |           |
|--|--|-----------|
|  |  | ~90 min   |
|  |  | 50–60 min |
|  |  | 25 min    |

### GETTING THERE

From Tokyo Station, take the Tokaido Shinkansen to Nagoya Station (~90 min), then transfer to the Shinano Limited Express to Nakatsugawa Station (50–60 min). From the main exit, a local bus winds through the hills to Magome (25 min), where the trail begins.

[kiso-nagano.or.jp](http://kiso-nagano.or.jp)

### DISCOVER

Magome waterwheels; Kumanojinja Shrine; Ichikokutochi Tateba Chaya; Odaki and Medaki waterfalls; Waki-Honjin Okuya; Tsumago's preserved streets.

### SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Spring: cherry blossoms, soft mist. Summer: bright greens, warm streams. Autumn: peak colours, crisp air – the best walking season. Winter: quiet, snow-powdered, magical but icy on slopes.

Between the mountains of Gifu and Nagano, you'll step into an older Japan – the **Nakasendo**, the slow-beating heart of the Kiso Valley. Here, the 8-kilometre (5-mile) walk from **Magome** to **Tsumago** feels less like a hike and more like travelling through time to find the rhythm of Edo travellers who walked this way long before you.

Morning begins in Magome (43rd post town), perched on its mountainside like a dream. Climb the cobbled slope, past inns built from the darkest, time-polished wood. Waterwheels turn in their own unhurried language; chestnuts roast somewhere out of sight; miso perfumes the air. Buy gohei-mochi lacquered with sweet walnut sauce and eat it still warm, watching clouds stretch and yawn over the mountains. From the **Magome Jinbakami Observatory**, the roofs spread below you in a puzzle of triangles, every one holding its own story. Koi drift in the river, persimmons dry from eaves like plump orange lanterns – autumn announcing itself in fruit.

Late morning will carry you into the forest, the stones softening into earth, the light shifting into long, green breaths. This part of the Nakasendo is gentle – 2.5 to 3 hours at an easy pace, mostly downhill. Woodsmoke curls between farmhouses; bamboo leans in close; the air tastes of pine. Bear bells hang on posts like tiny guardians. **Kumanojinja Shrine** is vibrant, especially in autumn. Mist floats between the cedars. At **Ichikokutochi Tateba Chaya** you'll find a small thatched teahouse and visitor centre where volunteers may welcome you with cups of green tea and warm smiles. There's no charge, though donations are accepted – the Edo tradition of roadside hospitality very much alive. Sit for a moment, admiring the double-flowered weeping cherry before you and letting the warmth of the tea move through your hands and into your body, reviving tired limbs. Further along you'll encounter the **Odaki** and **Medaki waterfalls**, scenic cascades of water that are considered male and female and were once used in purification rituals.



# WEEKEND TRIPPER

週末旅行 SHUMATSU RYOKO



Most of the listings in this book can be done as a day trip, but for places further afield we recommend packing your pyjamas and a toothbrush and turning your trip into a mini-break. The destinations in this chapter's sections are best enjoyed spread over a couple of days to make the most them. Evening streets quieten, lanterns glow, and the rhythm of a city shifts in ways that day trippers rarely witness. Staying overnight allows time for slow dinners, early morning walks and those serendipitous discoveries that happen when you are not watching the clock for the last train back to Tokyo.

The elegant castle town of Kanazawa rewards those who linger with its beautifully preserved districts, traditional crafts and gardens that reveal different moods across the day. Further north, Niigata offers coastal air, renowned sake breweries and a food culture shaped by some of Japan's finest rice. To the west, the great urban duo of Osaka and Kyoto invites a deeper immersion. Osaka's neon-lit food streets and exuberant nightlife come alive after dark, while Kyoto reveals its quieter magic in its early morning temples and twilight alleyways.

These destinations can be done as day trips, and we have, on occasion, zipped over to Kyoto or Kanazawa for the day and had many a wonderful experience. However, a night or two away transforms these cities from quick sightseeing stops into places that can be truly absorbed.



MARUFUKURO HOTEL, KYOTO



