

UNRAVEL A DREAMY VACATION DURING WINTERS IN JAPAN

National, 19th December 2019: December is a month, which brings with itself happiness and festivities all across the globe. The chilled air is filled with love and warmth which adds extra glory to a destination. Japan in December comes with an undefined magic with lit up streets and weather ranging from snowfall in some regions to extremely pleasant in others. Southern locations like Okinawa are warmer throughout the year, whereas mountainous areas like Nagano and Niigata begin to get snow in late autumn. Sunny days in Tokyo can feel warm, but sometimes gets surprisingly cold.

As the winter season kick-starts, the destination starts twinkling with some of the stunning illuminations which brightens up the essence of Japan. Most of the business and shopping centres showcase beautifully decorated trees, along with other Christmas-themed displays that turn a casual trip to the mall into a magical winter wonderland experience! Christmas time becomes a feast to the eyes as large scale projection mapping illuminations takes over the cities. You'll find major displays all over Tokyo and if possible take the Yamanote Line around the city to witness few others.

Just a short walk from the Shimbashi Station, CarettaShiodome Winter Illumination showcases the setup from mid of November up till February. Tokyo Midtown Christmas event near Roppongi Station goes on from mid November to end of December. Ginza and the Marunouchi area around Tokyo Station are prime spots for fancy dinners and festive lights. Other big events around Japan include: the Sagamiko Illumillion in Kanagawa, the Sendai Pageant of Starlight (December); The Ashikaga Flower Fantasy in Tochigi ; the Nabana no Sato Winter Illumination in Mie and Festival of the light in Osaka. Special mention also goes to the Kobe Luminaire in December, whose impressive display, commemorates the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995.

Although Christmas is considered as a western festival, yet some of their customs are found slightly in a different way in Japan. On the Christmas Eve, couples plan a romantic date at a special restaurant or stroll down the town to view the Christmas illuminations. Churches in major cities have midnight Christmas mass which is bustling with people in their best attire. The clubs and pubs in Japan are buzzing with great music and themed parties.

New Year's Eve across Japan is celebrated with great pomp and show. Japanese New Year celebration is known as Shogatsu, and particularly New Year's Day is called Gantan. To experience the festival as a local and witness how Japanese bring in the New Year, one should visit a shrine or a temple. Some shrines hold events and prepare "Amazake"(traditional sweet, low-alcohol Japanese drink made from fermented rice) and "Zoni" (soup containing rice cake) for visitors, preparation may vary from region to region. One of the more unusual and distinctive festivals is the NamahageSedo Festival which is held on New Year's Eve in Oga City, Akita Prefecture . Performers dressed as namahage (demonic boogeymen of Japanese folklore) dance to delight the crowd.

The ones looking for a dreamy snow covered vacation can head to the northern island of Hokkaido region. Known to be as the sanctuary for winter sports, Hokkaido's powder snow is praised by skiers from around the world as being the best quality snow! If you are a skiing, snowboarding, and other snow activities lover, then this region is the best place to visit. From a beginner to professional there is a skiing arena for all. The ones looking for a relaxed trip worry not, many of Japan's ski resorts have hot spring facility or at least a selection of onsen bathing spots nearby. You can take a soothing dip in the natural hot water and rejuvenate your body & mind.

For all the food aficionados the best way one can beat the winter chills is by planning a trip to Ramen Expo in Osaka which takes place on four weekends through December. Entry to the park is free however; main event area (inside park) may apply entry fees, with over a varied 40 noodle vendor options to choose. You can also visit the Nankinmachi Lantern Festival in Chinatown, Kobe which runs from first week of December to late December with plentiful colours and flavours drawing crowds.

These unique and ample of options during the holiday season make Japan as one of best destination to visit. From fun filled activities to gastronomical food to pleasant weather, Japan has got it all. Therefore, all these events and favorable climatic conditions make Japan an all year around destination. Japan in fact witnessed 14,900 Indian tourist arrivals in November, posting 12.3% SPLY hike. Moreover, 164,200 Indians visited Japan from Jan-Nov' 19, posting a phenomenal 14.2% year-on-year hike.

About Japan National Tourism Organization:

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) was founded in 1964 with the mission of enticing foreign travelers to Japan. Affiliated with the Japan Tourism Agency of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, JNTO has effectively functioned as the Japanese government bureau of tourism. It has a total of 21 tourism-promotion-oriented offices across the world, and a large network of suppliers for tourism and event services in Japan. The Japan Convention Bureau (JCB), within JNTO, gathers professionals dedicated to attracting international conferences and incentive tours to Japan, located in 6 strategic offices.

For more information: <https://www.japan.travel/en/guide/autumn-guide/>
JNTO Website: <https://www.japan.travel/en/in/>

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