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Fukuoka, a Center of History and Culture

Region Serves as Bridge Between Japan and Asia

Situated in the northern part of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, Fukuoka Prefecture has a unique local culture and cuisine that has developed over its long history. Its proximity to China and the Korean Peninsula has made it a gateway between Japan and the rest of Asia, not to mention a vital transportation hub. Among its historic attractions are the ruins of Dazaifu, an ancient government office, while the many small islands lying off the coast further captivate visitors. Fukuoka is also renowned for its fresh seafood and many street-side food stalls.



The Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival.
(C)Fukuoka City



Outdoor food stalls in Fukuoka. (C)Fukuoka City



Hakata ramen. (C)Fukuoka City



Cherry blossoms at the ruins of the
Dazaifu government office.
(C)Iwasaki Takashi

Hiroshima, Home to Two World Heritage Sites **Web** **Japan**

Local Specialties Include Oysters and Hiroshima-Style *Okonomiyaki*

Hiroshima Prefecture faces the scenic Seto Inland Sea to the south and embraces the picturesque peaks and valleys of the Chugoku Mountain Range to the north. Boasting a long history and rich culture, the region is home to two World Heritage sites: the Atomic Bomb Dome, which stands as a symbol of the first city to suffer the dropping of an atomic bomb, and the historic Itsukushima Shrine. In addition to following the path of history from ancient to modern times, the opportunity to taste popular local specialties like oysters and Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki* (savory pancakes with fried noodles and cabbage) should not be missed!



Itsukushima Shrine. (C)Getty images



The Atomic Bomb Dome. (C)Hiroshima Prefecture



Hiroshima is famous for its tasty oysters.(C)Hiroshima Prefecture



Momiji manju. (C)Hiroshima Prefecture

The Timeless Elegance of Kanazawa

City of Culture Offers a Journey Back in Time



Kanazawa Kenroku Garden.
(C)Ishikawa Prefecture

Located on the Sea of Japan in the middle of Japan's main island of Honshu, the city of Kanazawa flourished as a castle town from the late sixteenth to the late nineteenth century. The arts and culture that developed over these three centuries, as well as many of the old buildings and districts built during this period, continue to color the life of the city today. Kanazawa is also known for its savory local dishes made from an array of ingredients - the bounty of the sea and mountains. Vestiges of the Edo period (1603-1868) culture of samurai and commoners can be found all around town even today.



Jibuni stew. (C)Ishikawa Prefecture



The Nagamachi district of former samurai residences.(C)Kanazawa City



Kanazawa gold leaf.
(C)Ishikawa Prefecture



Delicious-looking Japanese sweets.
(C)Kanazawa City

The Ogasawara Islands

Rare Plants and Animals Abound in Tropical Paradise



Chichijima

Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, the 30-plus islands that make up the isolated Ogasawara Islands group boast pristine natural environments and are known by some as the "Galapagos of the Orient." Located approximately 1,000 kilometers south of Tokyo, the islands are home to indigenous plant species found in few if any other places in the world, and numerous marine activities including swimming with dolphins and whale watching can be enjoyed in the cobalt blue waters.



A rare Bonin white-eye.



Shima-zushi.



Humpback whales are a spectacular sight close-up.