



## Japan National Tourist Organization

(Japan Travel Updates <http://www.jnto.go.jp>)

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Tel. (075) 371-5649

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Tel. (0724) 56-6025

# ON THE TRAIL OF THE SAMURAI

**A**n in-depth look at samurai culture in Japan.

## Chronology of Japan's Samurai History

1192 – 1333 Kamakura Shogunate

1336 – 1573 Ashikaga Shogunate

1567 – 1600 Period of Unification

1603 – 1867 Tokugawa Shogunate

1868 – Age of Modern Japan Begins (Meiji Imperial Restoration)

***“The samurai's life was like the cherry blossom's, beautiful and brief. For him, as for the flower, death followed naturally, gloriously.”\****

Samurai literally means “one who serves.” They are also known as *bushi* or “military gentry.” The military class or *buke* began to gain influence in the 10th and 11th centuries, as the power of the emperor and the court nobility, based in Kyoto, declined due to continual internecine fighting among the clans of the aristocracy.

Feudalism became institutionalized in Japan at the end of the 12th century, when Yoritomo, of the great military clan Minamoto, stepped into the power vacuum and established a military government based in Kamakura, about 290 miles east of Kyoto.

For the next 700 years, the shogun ruled Japan through his network of vassals and their samurai. The emperor remained on the throne, a ruler in name only. The military were now the only class that mattered, and a strong code of feudal loyalties developed.

The warriors' code of honor became the dominant ethical force in Japanese society. When the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier visited Japan in 1549, he observed: “...they are men of honor to a marvel, and prize honor above all else in the world.”

As the centuries passed, Japan's samurai gained a reputation beyond the country's borders. Today, a new generation is learning about samurai through video games and animated cartoons.

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Although Japan's feudal system was abolished over a century ago, the samurai virtues of honor, loyalty, courage, and self-discipline continue to play an important role in Japanese society.

The legacy of the samurai lives on, not only in Japan's magnificent castles and warriors' armor, but in the people themselves -- in their work ethic, their honesty, and in the respectful way they treat both friends and strangers.

*\*(From The Learning Channel program, "Ancient Warriors: The Samurai")*

## Day 1 – Arrival into KYOTO



**Tokyo**, a dynamic city of 12 million people, has been Japan's political capital for four centuries. Originally known as **Edo**, it was the largest city in the world by the 1720's. Tokyo dazzles visitors today, just as Edo dazzled visitors in the 18th century.

If taking the train into Tokyo, you can activate your Japan Rail Pass at the Narita Airport train station. If taking the airport bus into Tokyo, activate your Rail Pass the following day at any major Japan Railways (JR) station.

## Day 2 – TOKYO



Edo Castle

Begin your journey at Tokyo's **Imperial Palace**, formerly **Edo Castle**. This was the home of the Tokugawa shoguns from 1603 until 1867, and the military capital of Japan. Kyoto was the imperial capital, but the emperors had no power. The shoguns controlled every aspect of daily life, down to what people were allowed to wear. Society was divided into four classes: court nobles, samurai, farmers, and townspeople. With the court nobles living in Kyoto, the class with the clout in Edo were the samurai.

Since the country was now at peace, the martial pursuits of the samurai were limited to honing their skills in practice sessions. Techniques were standardized into styles or schools, and these traditions continue today. At the **Hall of Martial Arts** also known as the **Budokan**, built for the 1964 Olympics in a park that used to be part of the palace grounds, you can watch judo and kendo practice on certain days. JNTO can provide practice schedules.

Today's palace grounds are only a fraction of their size during the Tokugawas' rule. The distance around the present compound is just over 3 miles, and it has become a favorite jogging path for latter-day road-warriors and others. The only part of the palace grounds open regularly to the public is the **Imperial Palace East Garden** or **Higashi Gyoen** and the **Sannomaru Shozokan Museum**, which exhibits items from the vast Imperial collection.



Kendo

If you are a practitioner of one of the martial arts, you will want to visit whatever *dojo* in Tokyo is affiliated with the particular martial art you study. Bring a letter of introduction from the master of your dojo. If you're planning to participate in a session, you might also want to bring your uniform, to save having to rent one.

Serious students of the martial arts may want to visit dojos in other fields besides the one they study. Tokyo has numerous *dojos* for *aikido*, *judo*, *karate*, *kendo*, *naginata* (popular with women), *iajutsu*, and more. JNTO can provide details.

If you are traveling with children, inquire at JNTO about observing, or perhaps participating in, children's kendo or judo classes. Children in Japan are encouraged to study the martial arts not for self-defense, but to instill character and discipline.

## Evening Day 2 or 3 – TOKYO with Side Trip to NIKKO



Kabuki Theatre

Attend a kabuki play or bunraku puppet performance. Often these stories deal with a samurai theme. The best known of this genre is Chushingura, a play about the 47 ronin, or “masterless” samurai, who committed suicide together after avenging their lord's death. JNTO can provide performance schedules upon request.

### Side trip to Nikko

A day trip to **Nikko** is strenuous but worth it. The thickly forested mountains of **Nikko National Park** contain Japan's most famous buildings: the elaborately decorated mausoleums of the first shogun and his grandson, the third shogun.

“Never say magnificent,” goes a Japanese saying, “until you have seen Nikko.” Some 15,000 craftsmen worked on the many buildings here, and money was no object. The aim was to create a complex grander than anything else in Japan, in order to honor the shoguns and keep them forever in people's memory. They succeeded; no one who goes to Nikko will ever forget it.



Unlike traditional Japanese architecture, which is characterized by clean lines and uncluttered spaces, every surface of the structures at Nikko is covered with ornate decoration: painted, gilded, lacquered, carved – no inch is left untouched. This applies not just to the main buildings, but to gates, walls, storehouses, everything.

One of the gates, the **Yomeimon Gate**, is nicknamed the “Twilight Gate,” meaning that a person could stand in front of it until twilight trying to take in all of its exquisite carvings and drawings.

The stable that houses the sacred horse used for ceremonies, is decorated with what became the world's most famous monkeys: “See no Evil, Hear no Evil, Speak no Evil” are carved into one of its panels.



Toshogu

Another attraction in the Nikko area is **Nikko Edo Mura**, a theme park that re-creates life in the Edo period. In addition to authentic replicas of Edo-era buildings, there is live entertainment performed by actors dressed in Edo-period clothes: samurai, geisha, ninja, and more. They are spread throughout the village, and performances take place at several different venues.

A “samurai” guards the entrance gate to Nikko Edo Mura (Mura means village). In order to enter, you must present a pass similar to those that were required of travelers arriving at checkpoint gates during the Edo period.

This sprawling, event-filled village is tremendous fun, for adults as well as children. It has some 18 major attractions, and to see all of them takes at least five hours.

Since Nikko Edo Mura is about one hour beyond Nikko’s **Toshogu shrine-mausoleum complex**, it is not possible to do them both in a day-trip from Tokyo. You’ll have to choose one or the other or spend the night locally.

Nikko Edo Mura is located near **Kinugawa** hot spring, a spa town with some 20 hotels and inns, all featuring soothing mineral baths.

Accommodations are equally as plentiful in the vicinity of the mausoleums. Nikko City has numerous hotels, including the **Kanaya**, one of the first western-style hotels in Japan. Or, if you take a bus up the winding road to scenic **Lake Chuzenji**, there are additional hotels and inns, including a branch of the venerable Kanaya. Hot mineral spring baths are also available at **Chuzenji Spa**.



Nikko Senning Yortsu

To reach Nikko City from Tokyo using a JR Rail Pass takes about 2 hours if you ride the bullet train to Utsunomiya and then transfer to a local JR train from Utsunomiya to Nikko. Add another 30-40 minutes if you ride to Utsunomiya on a JR rapid train instead of a bullet train. If you don’t want to change trains, you can take the private Tobu Railway directly from Tokyo’s Asakusa Station to Tobu-Nikko Station. This takes 2 hours and 10 minutes and costs 1,320 yen.

The one-hour trip from Nikko City to Nikko Edo Mura can only be made on Tobu trains and buses, but the total cost is less than 1,000 yen.

## Day 3 – TOKYO

Tokyo’s other must-see attraction for anyone interested in samurai culture is the **Tokyo National Museum**. The nation’s premier museum, located in Tokyo’s largest park (**Ueno Koen**), showcases national treasures and a wide range of

objects formerly owned by daimyo and their samurai. Exhibits deal with every aspect of samurai life, including nonmilitary pastimes such as the tea ceremony and poetry.

Before entering the museum compound, you can get an idea of the elegant lifestyle of a daimyo by looking to the left of the main entrance at an elaborate roofed gate which once stood outside the residence of Lord Ikeda. Unlike samurai, who lived according to a code of restraint, feudal lords were expected to live in a manner commensurate with their wealth and power.

Travelers interested in Japanese swords should allow time to visit the **Sword Museum** or **Token Hakubutsukan**. Located in Tokyo's Yoyogi district, this small museum has an outstanding collection of Japanese swords. Tokyo has dozens of museums, from the mammoth **Edo-Tokyo Museum** to the tiny **Daimyo Clock Museum**.

#### Note:

For more information on museums in Tokyo (and elsewhere in Japan), see JNTO's website: [www.japantravelinfo.com](http://www.japantravelinfo.com). First click on "Things to See and Do" (in the left-hand column), and then click on either "Museum Information Japan," which links you to the Japan Museum Website, from which you can connect to the sites of over 200 Japanese museums, or "Museum Pdf Files," which takes you to JNTO's own museum pamphlet. JNTO will also mail-out the museum pamphlet free of charge.

A visit to **Sengaku-ji Temple**, where Japan's most famous group of samurai, the 47 **ronin**, are buried, shows that contemporary Japanese still remember and admire the samurai ethic of loyalty. Almost always, you will find that someone has come recently and burned incense on one or more of the graves, even though it has been 300 years since the vendetta occurred. If you come here on Dec. 14, the day of the vendetta, the crowds are so thick that you'll have to wait in line to enter the graveyard, which is on a hill behind the temple. The temple also has a small museum devoted to the 47 **ronin**.

**Note:** As you travel around Tokyo by subway, notice the number of advertisements that feature pictures of samurai to get their message across.

## Day 4 – KAMAKURA (An easy day-trip from Tokyo)



Day trip to Kamakura takes about one hour by train. This seaside city near Tokyo was chosen by the founder of the shogunate system of military government, Yoritomo, to be his headquarters in 1192. For the next seven centuries, although there was usually an emperor on the throne in Kyoto, real power resided with the shogun, located first in Kamakura, later elsewhere, and eventually in Edo (Tokyo).

About the time the shogunate was established, Zen Buddhism was introduced into Japan from China. It quickly caught on among the military in Kamakura, who liked its emphasis on austere discipline, both mental and physical, as a way for each person to work out his own salvation. The “way (path) of the samurai,” also known as *bushido* was heavily influenced by zen principles.

Kamakura became a city of vast temple complexes including what were known as the “Five Great Zen Temples of Kamakura.”

Get off the train at Kita (North) Kamakura Station, walk for 15 min. and you’ll come to *Kenchoji*, one of the Great Five. Although the complex is not as large as it was in the past, it is still sufficiently imposing to give a sense of what it must have felt like to be in this zen-influenced military capital in the middle ages.

With zen came the tea ceremony, and new ways of thinking about gardens, *ikebana* (flower arranging), ceramics, calligraphy, ink painting, landscape painting, and even architecture.

*Buddhism* and *Shintoism* had always co-existed in Japan, and when Kamakura became the seat of the shogunate, Yoritomo moved a certain Shinto shrine to the center of the city. *Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine* is still in the city’s center, and it is on the tourist circuit today, much as it was on the samurai circuit in earlier times. *Hachiman* was worshipped as the god of war, so this was an important place for warriors to pay homage.

Twice a year, Tsurugaoka Hachimangu remembers the warriors of Kamakura by hosting tournaments of samurai archery. Called *yabusame*, this is archery on horseback, and it is thrilling to watch. Men dressed in samurai armor come galloping down the course, shooting at targets as they flash by. *Yabusame* tournaments take place here in mid-September and early April, and have been held annually at this shrine since 1266.

Some of the shrine’s ancient treasures are exhibited in a building called the *Homotsuden*.

Adjacent to the shrine is the *National Treasure Hall* or *Kokuhokan*, a museum housing treasures from many of Kamakura’s Buddhist temples. A visit here will give additional insights into Kamakura culture during the Age of the Samurai. The museum is closed on Monday.

Not far from the shrine is the *grave of Yoritomo*, who founded the Kamakura shogunate over eight centuries ago. Yoritomo continues to be immortalized today in literature and on the stage, much as English kings are immortalized in Shakespeare.

Kamakura is home to Japan’s most famous Buddha statue. The Great Buddha, known commonly as *Daibutsu*, has been sitting serenely at this temple since the 13th century. At one time, the 37-foot-high bronze statue was inside a building, but



Tsurugaoka Hachimangu

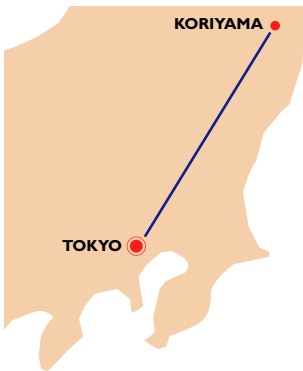


Buddha statue in Kamakura

in 1475 a tidal wave washed it away. Staircases inside allow you to climb to the interior shoulder of this National Treasure.

**Note on Getting Around:** All of the sights in central, not north (*kita*) Kamakura are easily accessible by bicycle, which can be rented at Kamakura Station.

## Day 5 – TOKYO / AIZU-WAKAMATSU



Travel from Tokyo north to **Aizu-Wakamatsu**, by taking the bullet train to **Koriyama** (about 1 1/2 hrs.) and transferring to a regular train for the ride to Aizu-Wakamatsu (1 hour via express). Samurai culture reached its peak in castle towns, where the feudal lord, or *daimyo*, made his home. So distinctive are castle towns as a cultural phenomenon that the language has a special word for them: *jokamachi*.

Aizu-Wakamatsu is among Japan's most celebrated *jokamachi*, because of events that took place here in 1868, when supporters of the collapsing Tokugawa shogunate fought supporters of the emperor. Besides several excellent museums, including the museum in the restored castle, Aizu is famous for saké, and there's a **Saké History Museum** and several breweries. After exploring the city center, if you have time, take a bus or local train to the surrounding towns and enjoy the traditional and picturesque architecture.

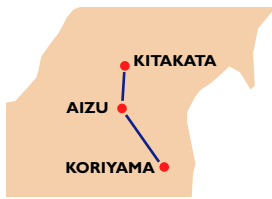
The sight that every tour bus to Aizu visits without fail is **limoriyama**, the burial place of Aizu's celebrated teenage samurai. In 1868, the Aizu clan was one of the last supporters of the shogunate during the Meiji Restoration. A group of 19 teenagers called or "White Tiger Squad" or *Byakkotai*, swore to defend the castle with their lives. When they saw that it was burning, and realized it had been captured, they all committed suicide.

A 20-minute bus ride from Aizu is a hot spring resort, **Higashiyama Onsen** (spa), that attracts many tourists who want to stay overnight in the Aizu vicinity. Among its sights is a well-planned theme village devoted to samurai culture. Called **Aizu Samurai Residences** or **Aizu Buke Yashiki**, it is a group of buildings designed to show what daily life was like in the samurai era. Life-size mannequins in period clothes are posed in rooms featuring different aspects of samurai life. Shops here and 5 minutes away at **Higashiyama Onsen** carry local folk craft, including lacquerware, ceramics, textiles, bamboo-ware, and papier-mâché toys. All castle towns attracted craftsmen, since a daimyo and his many samurai required a wide range of items for daily life, for special occasions and festivals, and for the battlefield.



Aizu Castle

## Day 6 – AIZU WAKAMATSU / KITAKATA / Return to TOKYO



On Day Six, take an express train about 15 min. to the town of **Kitakata**, where you can see more Japanese-style storehouses or *kura* than you'll ever see in one place again. After a big fire, much of the town was rebuilt in thick-walled *kura* architecture, in hopes of surviving another fire. There are *kura* banks, *kura* restaurants, *kura* inns, *kura* museums, *kura* everything.

Originally, *kura* were used not only to store rice, but also to store an upper-class family's prized possessions, the beautifully handcrafted objects and clothes that were used only on special occasions.

Rent a bicycle at the train station. It's a pleasant way to explore this flat town. After a few hours in Kitakata, take an express train back to Aizu-Wakamatsu and transfer there for an express train (1 hour) to Koriyama. At Koriyama, transfer again for a bullet train (1 1/2 hours) to Tokyo. Overnight in Tokyo.

## Day 7 – TOKYO / MATSUMOTO / KANAZAWA



Take an early morning express train from Tokyo to Matsumoto (2 hours and 40 minutes). Matsumoto is a charming castle town in the mountains northwest of Tokyo. Besides its beautiful mountain scenery and splendid castle, which is a national treasure, Matsumoto offers a hot spring that provides a relaxing place to spend the night. **Asama Onsen** (spa) consists of several inns and hotels, many of which are decorated in the rustic folkcraft style for which this city is noted.

**Black Crow Castle**, with its massive beams and distinctive black wood siding, is among the country's few original castles still standing. Built 400 years ago, the craftsmanship is superb. This level of excellence in traditional workmanship can also be seen in a number of cottage industries producing furniture, lamps, and other handsome objects made from wood. If you have time to stroll around the local shops, you can purchase some exceptional objects for yourself.

Your entrance ticket to the castle also admits you to the adjacent museum of local history, **The Japan Folklore Museum** called **Nihon Minzoku Shiryokan**. Also worth visits are the **Folk Art Museum** called **Matsumoto Mingeikan** and the **Nihon Ukiyo-e Hakubutsukan**, one of Japan's best woodblock print museums.

Spend a day in Matsumoto and proceed to **Kanazawa**, your next stop, in the evening or stay over night in Matsumoto and travel to Kanazawa in the morning. Be aware that if you plan on staying at a *ryokan* (Japanese inn), you must arrive by 6 p.m. in order to be served dinner, which is included in the price and is part of the experience.

**Kanazawa** has been called the most magnificent castle town in all of Japan. To reach Kanazawa from Matsumoto, take an express train to **Itoigawa** (2 1/2 hours), and transfer to an express on the Hokuriku Main Line to Kanazawa (1 1/2 hours).

Kanazawa owes its fame to the Maeda lords, who had the distinction of being the wealthiest daimyo in the land. This was a fief of *hyakuman-goku* “one million *koku* of rice,” the daimyo’s annual income. This meant that the lords of the Maeda clan had plenty to spend on the finer things of life, and spend they did.

They lavished money on fine architecture, fine silks, fine ceramics, fine metalwork, fine armor, fine paintings, fine gardens, and more. Craftsmen flocked to Kanazawa, and the city became a smaller version of Kyoto. Like Kyoto, Kanazawa escaped bombing in World War II, and much of the samurai culture that formerly existed here can still be seen. Don’t miss the row of old samurai houses or the temple called **Ninja-dera**, which is full of secret doors and escape hatches.

Buy a paperback guidebook titled *Kanazawa: The Other Side of Japan* by Ruth Stevens, in order to get the most out of your two days in this fascinating city. The book will also give you leads on neat places to stay.

Kanazawa’s fabled castle no longer stands, but this city offers so many other wonderful sights that you won’t mind not having a castle to see.



Kenroku-en

**Kenroku-en**, the private landscape garden built by the Maeda lords over a period of 165 years, is one of the top stroll gardens in Japan. Some consider it to be the country’s finest. Now a public park, it entrances visitors regardless of the season, as there is always something blooming or eye-catching. With its several teahouses and small restaurant, **Miyoshi-an**, one can easily spend half a day or more exploring Kenroku-en.

Not far from the garden is an exquisite villa built by one of the Maeda lords for his mother. **Seisonkaku** villa is a splendid example of refined shoin-style architecture. Do not miss it.

Also in this neighborhood is the **Hanro Honda Zohinkan**, or **Honda Museum**, run by the family that served as chief advisors to the Maeda lords. Treasures owned by several generations of Hondas are on display, including some unusual equestrian military equipment. Many items in the museum were gifts from the Maedas or Tokugawas, made by their personal craftsmen.

Kanazawa has numerous other museums, temples, shrines, and the only public Noh stage in Japan. Local groups perform or practice there almost daily, and visitors are welcome.

JNTO can provide a schedule of Kanazawa’s Noh performances.

## Day 9 – KANAZAWA

Spend your second day in Kanazawa visiting some of the traditional craft workshops that have given this city a reputation second only to Kyoto for extraordinary workmanship.

At **Saihitsuan Yuzen Silk Center**, you can watch artists hand paint colorful and complex designs onto silk cloth.

As befitted the richest fief in Japan, Kanazawa became Japan's leading center for the production of gold leaf. At the **Yasue Kinpaku Kogeikan**, or **Gold-leaf Museum**, you can watch craftsmen decorate items with thin sheets of gold – so thin that one sneeze would blow them all away.

Ceramics were highly refined in Kanazawa. The Ohi family made tea bowls for the Maeda lords, and their descendants still make them. Kanazawa was also known for colorful Kutani porcelains, most of which were, and still are, made on the outskirts of the city.

At the **Tourist Local Products Hall** called **Kanko Bussankan**, craftsmen give demonstrations upstairs, and a wide variety of crafts and souvenirs are sold downstairs.

Another place that offers an overview of the traditional crafts of this area, which was called Kaga in feudal times, is the **Prefectural Museum of Traditional Arts and Crafts** or **Ishikawa-kenritsu Dento Sangyo Kogeikan**. Definitely worth a stop for anyone interested in Japanese crafts.

In a city whose residents were tea ceremony enthusiasts, having attractive sweets to serve at the tea ceremony was as important as having attractive tea bowls. **Morihachi** has been making sweet wafers and cakes to accompany tea for 300 years, and their shop is a major sight on the tourist circuit.

## Day 10 – KANAZAWA / KYOTO



Train to **Kyoto**, about 2 hr. 45 min. by express from Kanazawa.

Kyoto is not actually a castle town, since it was the home of the emperor, but Japan being as eclectic as it is, Kyoto contains a superb example of **shoin**-style architecture, the style preferred by the warrior class.

The building, **Nijo Castle**, was constructed to serve as the residence of the shogun when he visited Kyoto. In appearance, it is more of a palace or villa than a heavily fortified castle. **Shoin** style is understated, except for the usual imposing gate. The wooden halls, **tatami**-floored rooms and sliding doors do not seem at first, to the Western eye, to be particularly grand. But the sliding doors are painted by the finest artists of the day, the transoms above the sliding doors are exquisitely

carved, and the garden facing the main rooms is designed by Kobori Enshu, who had no rival. The planks in the hallway floor are installed in such a way that they creak or “sing” whenever they’re stepped on, so that no one could sneak up on the shogun.

To see how ordinary daimyo lived when they came to Kyoto, visit the **Nijo Jinya** mansion, located just around the corner from Nijo Castle, so the daimyo could be at their shogun’s beck and call. In the imperial capital of Kyoto, both daimyo and shogun had plenty of enemies. As a precaution, Nijo Jinya is fitted with several hiding places and escape routes.

Like Tokyo, Kyoto, too, is home to numerous dojos, should you want to practice some more martial arts during your stay.

Adults as well as children will enjoy Kyoto’s **Toei Uzumasa** Movie Village. This vast complex, built to provide sets for filming samurai-period movies, transports visitors back in history to the streets of feudal Japan. Have your camera ready in case a “samurai” walks by.

After visiting the movie village, proceed to the **Kyoto National Museum**. Its extensive collections include excellent examples of samurai armor and metal work. Labels are in Japanese and English.

If you have additional time, spend an extra day in Kyoto. Explore its magnificent temples and gardens and partake of the tranquil aspects of Kyoto that a samurai would have experienced centuries ago.

## Day 11 – IGA-UENO



The fastest way to get to **Iga-Ueno** is on the private Kintetsu RR, but if you want to use your Rail Pass, take JR via Nara. JNTO’s Tourist Information Center (TIC) in Kyoto, tel. 075/371-5649, can provide details.

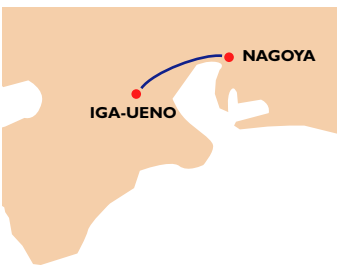
This castle town in nearby Mie Prefecture was one of Japan’s two main areas for **ninjutsu** training. Adjacent to the restored castle, and reachable by an underground tunnel, is a **ninja museum**, where tricks-of-the-trade are exhibited. These include devices for walking on water, tools for climbing steep castle walls, gadgets for breathing under water, and tiny, sharp-pointed objects to throw in an enemy’s path to disable him. All are remarkably inventive.

Nearby is a **ninja yashiki** or “ninja’s house,” featuring even more hidden escape routes than the house in Kyoto or the ninja temple in Kanazawa. Guided tours are available in Japanese, but you can arrange for a “volunteer” guide as a translator by contacting JNTO’s Kyoto TIC (above).

Additional sights in Iga-Ueno include the **Haisei-den Memorial** to the famous 17th century haiku poet Matsuo Basho, located at the entrance to **Hakuho Park**. Basho was born here, and you can visit his house and museum.

Iga-Ueno is noted for its **Iga-yaki** pottery, its high quality locally-brewed sake, and the production of **kumihimo**, or “braided cord.” In the days of the samurai, **kumihimo** was highly prized, and adorned many parts of a warrior’s armor and weapons, as well as enhancing a woman’s obi. It is fascinating to watch these intricate cords being woven. Three different types of looms are used, depending on the style of cord, and you’ll wonder how the braider remembers which string to move next.

## Day 12 – NAGOYA



From JR Iga-Ueno Station, **Nagoya** can be reached in about 1 1/2 hours on the late afternoon through express train. Otherwise, change JR trains at Kameyama Station, and allow about two hours in total to reach Nagoya.

Nagoya is home to the fabled **Tokugawa Bijutsukan Art Museum**, which contains an enormous collection of objects that belonged to the Owari branch of the Tokugawa family. The holdings of the Nagoya-based Tokugawas were second only to the shogun in Edo, and the family collection in Nagoya encompasses a broad array of art objects and furnishings, including superb examples of armor and weaponry. A dedicated aficionado of Japanese art could stay all day.



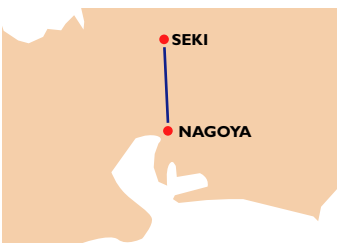
Nagoya Castle

Others will want to move on to Nagoya Castle, once one of the biggest in Japan. Destroyed in World War II, it has been rebuilt and contains some of the original objects. Its size is larger than any other castle visited on this itinerary.

**Atsuta Jingu Shrine** in Nagoya is the second most important imperial shrine in Japan, after the Grand Shrine at Ise. This shrine keeps the sacred sword that is used whenever a new emperor is enthroned.

For those who would like to see the modern side of Nagoya, the city has redeveloped its waterfront and created an attractive area for recreation, including a new state-of-the-art aquarium.

## Day 13 – SEKI



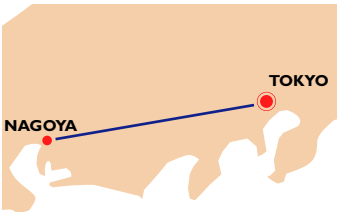
**Seki City**, in adjacent Gifu Prefecture, has long been a center for sword production. Today, more cutlery is made in Seki than swords, but a number of swordsmiths still work here. Several times a year, they offer public demonstrations of sword forging at the **Nipponto Tanrenjo**, a pavilion designed especially for forging demonstrations. These are held on the first Sunday of March, April, June, July, September, and November, as well as January 2nd, and during the city’s annual

sword festival in October. Visitors who come to Seki at other times can learn about swords from exhibits and videos at the small sword museum in the city.

During warm-weather months, the ancient sport of *ukai* – catching sweet-water *ayu* fish using cormorant birds – can be observed from small lantern-lit boats on the local river. This is a grand party with plenty of merry-making that is only cancelled during a full moon because the moon's glow blinds the birds.

To reach Seki from Nagoya via JR, take a local train on the Old Tokaido Line to Gifu, about 20 minutes, and then catch a Meitetsu train from Shin Gifu Station for Seki. The 50-minute ride costs about \$6 one way.

## Day 14 – (or evening of day 13) Train to TOKYO



Take the bullet train from Gifu-Hashima Station to Tokyo, a 2-hour ride.

If you have time in Tokyo for one final sight before heading for **Narita Airport**, you might want to end your journey into Japan's samurai past at a quiet Shinto shrine near Tokyo's trendy **Roppongi** nightlife district. The shrine is dedicated to Maresuke Nogi, the general who won the war against Russia in 1905, showing the world for the first time that an Asian nation could defeat a European power. Japan was ecstatic, and General Nogi became a national hero.

Technically, Nogi was not a samurai, as Japan was now a constitutional monarchy under Emperor Meiji. But in 1912, on the day of Emperor Meiji's funeral, General Nogi and his wife committed ritual suicide.

Many have speculated on General Nogi's reasons for choosing this course of action, which took 20th century Japan by surprise. Some believe that he was motivated not just by a desire to escort his leader to the next world, the traditional reason for a warrior's *junshi* suicide, but also because he wanted his last act on earth to make a powerful statement: that in Japan's heady rush toward things modern and Western, people should not lose sight of traditional values.

The question of how to preserve the samurai values of loyalty, diligence and austerity in the face of new social and economic conditions is still being discussed as Japan enters the 21st century.



Fuju+bullet train

## Samurai Festivals



Soma Noma

Many festivals and events held around Japan today hark back to the country's samurai past. Some of the major ones are:

**Hakone Daimyo Parade** (Hakone-Yumoto, Kanagawa Pref.) – Nov. 3  
Reenacts the procession to Edo of a daimyo and his entourage. The shogun required all daimyo to spend every other year in Edo, partly to keep an eye on them, and partly to force them to spend large sums of money that might otherwise have been spent on making their fief stronger and thus more of a potential threat to the shogun.

**Soma Noma** (Soma, Fukushima Prefecture) – usually July 23-25  
The lords of Soma were noted horsemen, and this is a large-scale and very exciting festival, featuring hundreds of horsemen in samurai attire celebrating their heritage for three days. The lead rider is the current head of the Soma family. (In many samurai festivals around Japan, the lead rider is a descendant of the former daimyo.)

**Grand Festival of Toshogu Shrine** (Nikko, Tochigi Prefecture) – May 17–18  
This ornate shrine is the burial place of the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, so events here are always on a grand scale.

17th – **Yabusame**, archery tournament on horseback

18th – Reenactment of the procession of 1,000 samurai who escorted Ieyasu's remains to this shrine.

**Hyakuman-goku Festival** (Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture.) – mid-June  
This fief was the wealthiest in feudal Japan; the festival and an elaborate procession show the glory of the Maeda daimyo.

**Uesugi Festival** (Yonezawa City, Yamagata Pref.) – May 3rd, during Golden Week holidays and **Shingen –Kou Festival** (Kofu City, Yamagata Pref.) – Sat. & Sun. between April 6th and April 12th. Kenshin Uesugi and Takeda Shingen are two other historical Japanese warriors, who fought each other up and down central Honshu. Their battles with one another are commemorated in their respective home cities.

**Chagu-Chagu Umakko** (Morioka, Iwate Prefecture) – mid-June  
Elaborately decorated horses are paraded through the streets.

**Yabusame** is held at many places around Japan, especially spring and autumn. In **Tokyo**, it's held along the bank of the Sumida River in the spring, and also at certain shrines. In **Kyoto**, it's held at **Shimogamo Shrine** on May 3rd.

**Boys' Day** – Traditionally the 5th day of the 5th month on the lunar calendar, now held on May 5, and called **Children's Day**.



Koinobori

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In the feudal era, the purpose of this holiday was to inspire young boys to be brave. In households of samurai and the nobility, miniature figures of brave warriors from the past, elaborately attired in armor, were placed in the *tokonoma*. Outside, huge vertical banners, similar to those carried in battle, were flown on tall bamboo poles. Both of these practices are still observed today by many Japanese families.

**Aizu Festival** (Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima Pref.) – Sept. 22-24

On Sept. 23, a national holiday, a samurai procession honors the memory of Aizu's brave samurai, including the 19 teenagers who chose to die rather than surrender.

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## Samurai Movies

Japan's equivalent of Western movies is the samurai film. Anyone who is a fan of samurai culture should rent Akira Kurosawa's films, such as **The Seven Samurai** or **Kagemusha** (*Shadow Warrior*).

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## More Information

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### Websites:

• <http://www.northnet.org/americanakangdukwon/samurai.html>

Detailed timeline of samurai history with a good bibliography and glossary.

• <http://www.judoinfo.com/samurai.htm>

This award-winning site from the "Judo Information page", discusses the background that led to the origins of the samurai. There is also a good bibliography.

• <http://www.delphi.com/samuraihistory/start/>

A forum for the study and exchange of Japanese Samurai History

• <http://www.techjapanese.com/~samurai/>

**Samurai Archives:** History of the samurai warriors and battles, maps, glossary, famous figures (men & women), and cultural information – wisdom, death, clothing, tea, poetry

• <http://www.digimad.com/obershaw/castle/index.html>

Japanese Castles: History, Structure, Defenses, Maps

• <http://www.jidaimura.co.jp/en/edo/edo.htm>

Website for Nikko Edo Mura: Everything to know, plus a discount admission coupon.

• <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/FEUJAPAN/BIBLIO.HTM>

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• **Secrets of the Samurai: A Survey of the Martial Arts of Feudal Japan**, by Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook (Charles E. Tuttle Co., paperback), July 1991

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- ***Samurai Warfare***, by Dr. Stephen Turnbull (Arms & Armour Press, London), Oct. 1997
  - ***Code of the Samurai: A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinsu*** Translation and Introduction by Thomas Cleary (Charles E. Tuttle Co.), September 1999
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  - ***Kendo: The Definitive Guide***, by Hiroshi Ozawa (Kodansha Intl.), 1997
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  - ***Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai***, by Yamamoto Tsunetomo, William Scott Wilson as translator, (Kodansha Intl., paperback), March 1997
  - ***The Unfettered Mind: Writings of the Zen Master to the Sword Master***, by Takuan Soho, William Scott Wilson as translator (Kodansha Intl. Paperback), March 1988
  - ***The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century***, by Jeffrey P. Mass, (Stanford University Press), Dec. 1997
  - ***Legends of the Samurai***, by Hiroaki Sato (Overlook Press), October 1995