

Join Panda Travel in...



2024 Niigata, Sado Island & Tokyo Fall Explorer

(GP13168)



Oct 25 - Nov 3, 2024
8 Nights/ 10 Days

*Tokyo - Niigata - Sado Island -
Yahiko - Nagaoka - Minakami*

\$100 OFF PER PERSON
when you pay with a personal check/cash

\$4,469*
per person-triple occupancy

\$4,469*
per person-double occupancy

pandaonline.com

(808) 734-1961

1017 Kapahulu Ave, Honolulu, HI 96816

Cancel for any reason up
to 65 days prior to departure
date for a FULL REFUND!

A minimum of 16 participants is
required for the tour to operate

Itinerary

Day 1: (Fri) Oct 25 – Honolulu Depart Honolulu via Hawaiian Airlines

→ Meet the Panda Travel representative 3 hrs prior to departure at the Hawaiian Airlines check-in counters.

Day 2: (Sat) Oct 26 – Haneda-Tokyo

Hotel Groove Shinjuku (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Arrive at Haneda Airport. Meet your English-speaking local guide at the arrival lobby, and then we'll transfer to **Hotel Groove Shinjuku**, where you'll be staying for the night. Our hotel is located with many shopping and dining options available to you.

Day 3: (Sun) Oct 27 – Tokyo-Niigata (B/L)

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Niigata (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. We'll take a charter coach to Tokyo Station and board a bullet train to Niigata. Your luggage(s) (2 pcs per person) will be delivered to your hotel in Niigata the next day. **Please prepare an overnight bag for a 1-day stay.**

→ 10:41am – Upon arriving at Niigata Station, we'll embark on a full day of touring around Niigata.

→ 11:15am – Here we are at the **Northern Culture Museum**, a 130-year-old landmark that was once the residence of the Ito family, one of Edo Period's most prominent farming families. Today, this private museum houses 6,000 antiques from Japan, China, and Korea. In addition to the 65 onsite living quarters, the museum also maintains a beautiful garden displaying vibrant seasonal flora.

→ It's time to **experience** the ancient tradition of **mochi tsuki pounding**. During this activity, you will participate in the pounding process to create mochi, a delightful Japanese rice cake.

→ 12:45am – Now, enjoy a **Japanese-style lunch** at **MISOGURA**, located at the Northern Culture Museum.

→ 2:30pm – Next, we'll make a stop at **Shirone Kite Museum** to learn about the lore and history of the giant kite battles of Shirone. Dating back to the mid-1800s, the annual Shirone Kite Festival sees spirited festival goers fly their kites and then crash them. Find out why at this museum! We'll also have the opportunity for a **hands-on experience: kite painting**.

→ 4:00pm – Get ready for a fun **Japanese pear picking experience** at **Shirone Garden**, known for its organically grown fruits.

→ 5:45pm – Arrive at ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Niigata. Our

hotel is about 10 mins away from Niigata Station by foot. Enjoy the evening of shopping and dining on your own.

Day 4: (Mon) Oct 28 – Niigata (B)

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Niigata (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 9:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a full day tour around Niigata.

→ 9:30am – This morning begins a visit to the iconic museum, factory, and gift shop: **Niigata Senbei Okoku** ("Niigata rice cracker kingdom"). Approximately 4 million senbei are produced at this facility alone! Here, we'll watch artisans make senbei—each producing 2,000-3,000 crackers per day—and **try our hand at making** our very own, from dough to design. Let your creativity run wild as you paint the face of your senbei with soy sauce and concoct your perfect blend of flavoring powder. Be sure to also check out the souvenirs and sample the senbei based ice cream and croquettes!

→ 11:30am – Here we are at the historic **Imayo Tsukasa Sake Brewery**. Dating back over 250 years to the Edo period, this facility stands out in the region because it continues the traditional brewing practice of using cedar and bamboo tanks. The brewery credits Niigata's fertile soil and pure Agano water for its generational success, and its brew has now become synonymous with quality sake.

→ 12:45pm – Next, a visit to the hub of all things Niigata: **Minato no Marche Pier Bandai**. At this marketplace, you'll find the freshest produce, daily catches of local seafood, delectable sushi, quality Koshihikari rice, smooth sake, and more! Tip: snack on the highly sought after charcoal grilled nodoguro (rockfish), a fresh catch only available on weekends. Enjoy lunch on your own at this foodie's paradise!

→ 2:30pm – Later today, we'll make a stop at the popular **Ponshukan Kan** in Niigata Station, best described as a "theme park" for sake. Not only does this site offer nearly 100 varieties of sake to sample and a sake cellar with over 90 labels from most of Niigata's breweries, it also displays the finest Niigata food, traditional seasonings, regional ingredients, and snacks like homemade bakudan onigiri ("bomb onigiri") assembled with Japan's top-quality Koshihikari rice.

→ 4:00pm – Return to hotel. Take the remainder of the day at leisure.

Day 5: (Tue) Oct 29 – Niigata-Sado (B/L/D)

Sado Resort Hotel Azuma (Free Wi-Fi) - [Enjoy onsen](#)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:30am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby as we'll transfer to Sado Kisen Niigata Terminal for a ferry ride from Niigata Port to Ryotsu Port.

→ 9:25-11:55am – Ferry ride to Sado Island by Sado Kisen.

→ 11:55am – Welcome to Sado Island! Monikered “Butterfly Island” for its shape, Sado Island is famous for its beautiful natural scenery and preservation of traditional Japanese culture. Upon arrival, we'll proceed to transfer to our next destination.

→ 12:15pm – Here we are at the Toki Forest Park, where you'll have the opportunity to see 70 of the rare Japanese crested ibis (“Toki”). Once a widespread breed in Japan, these birds are no longer a common sight. In addition to the exhibition hall detailing the history and life of the Toki, the park features a semi-natural enclosure with a toki family on display at Toki Fureai Plaza. Visitors can also enjoy the popular soft ice cream made with Sado-grown green edamame beans here.

→ 1:45pm – Enjoy Japanese style lunch at a local restaurant.

→ 2:45pm – After lunch, we'll walk to Sado Gold Mine. In the eyes of the Western World and European explorers like Marco Polo, Japan was the “land of gold.” By the 17th century, mineral and metal rich Sado Island not only held the biggest gold and silver mine in Japan, but it also became the world's largest gold producer. As we explore the 400 year old mines on this “Island of Gold,” we'll learn how Sado gold funded the Tokugawa Shogunate and discover other vital roles it has played in shaping the history of Japan.

→ 4:00pm – Arrive at Sado Resort Hotel Azuma for the next 2 nights, followed by a Japanese-style dinner at 6pm. Nestled in the westernmost point in the northern Sado mountains, this hotel is known as the “closest to the setting sun” and makes for the ideal sunset viewing spot. Enjoy a stroll down to the beach, meditate in the vast Japanese garden overlooking the Sea of Japan, or relax in one of the hotel's onsens.

Day 6: (Wed) Oct 30 – Sado (B/L/D)

Sado Resort Hotel Azuma (Free Wi-Fi) - [Enjoy onsen](#)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:30am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a full day tour in Sado.

→ 9:45am – This morning, our first stop will be a unique and exciting experience: a barrel boat ride (Hangiri Tarai-bune) steered by a local fisherwoman in traditional dress. In the

past, women from Ogi, a port town on Sado Island's south coast, paddled these wooden and bamboo constructed tub-shaped boats to navigate around the cliffs to collect seaweed, shellfish, octopus, and more. We'll experience something similar as these skilled women expertly maneuver our oval boats, gracefully gliding through the water with a figure eight paddle motion as we make our way around Ogi port. During our ride, fans of the famous 2001 Japanese animated coming-of-age fantasy film, Spirited Away, will recognize our surroundings in several of its movie scenes.

→ 10:45am – Next, we'll explore the fishing village of Syukunegi, an area that once prospered as the center of the shipbuilding industry during the Edo era. Hidden behind a large wall of windbreakers near the rough Sea of Japan, this quiet village of 200 old houses seems untouched by time, preserved from centuries past. On our village stroll, you can visit one of the ship owner's homes, “Seikuro,” to marvel at the house building skills of the local village carpenters.

→ 11:30am – Enjoy a western-style lunch at a local restaurant in Shukunegi, Sado City.

→ 1:00pm – Our first stop this afternoon is the Sado Island Taiko Center, home to two giant drums hand carved from a 600-year-old zelkova log and many smaller drums. During the “taiko experience” session, we'll watch professionals drumming thunderous beats, and later, try our hand at them too as the Kodo members teach us how to use the bachi drumsticks to play.

→ 2:45pm – Now a visit to Sado Rekishi Densetsukan, a museum centered on Sado's history as a place of exile for political dissidents, including former Emperor Juntoku, Buddhist monk Nichiren, and founder of Noh, Zeami. Among the many displays, full-sized robots of historical figures will depict famous scenes and explain the cultural significance of the island.

→ 4:30pm – Here we are in the Kitazawa area, which houses important facilities that contributed to the modernization of mines. These include a power plant and a thickener, both designated as National Historical Sites. Initially used for copper beneficiation, the Kitazawa Flotation Plant successfully applied the flotation method to extract silver and gold, pioneering its global use. During wartime, the Flotation Plant processed over 50,000 tonnes of ore per month, earning its distinction as the largest plant in the East and serving as a testament to Sado Island's mining history.

→ 5:30pm – Enjoy a Japanese-style dinner at a local restaurant.

→ 7:15pm – Return to hotel.

Day 7: (Thu) Oct 31 – Sado-Yahiko-Nagaoka (B)

Hotel New Otani Nagaoka (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby this morning for a drive to Ryotsu Port.

→ 9:15am – We'll return to Niigata by taking a ferry ride.

→ 11:45am – Upon arrival at Niigata Port, we'll proceed to our next destination.

→ 12:30pm – Today, we'll explore **Yahiko Park Momijidani Valley**, a picturesque destination known for its stunning **autumn foliage**, best seen together with its vermilion bridge. The valley features meandering streams, lush greenery, and an abundance of maple trees, creating a magical sight during the fall season.

→ 1:30pm – Now, enjoy lunch on your own at **Omotenashi Hiroba**, a popular rest spot with both tourists and locals.

→ Next, we'll drive to **Tsubame Sanjo**, home to the Shinano River, the longest river in Japan. Sanjo's access to fresh and irrigated water developed its local agriculture, but it also subjected the agrarian city to frequent flooding. Beginning in the early 1600s, frustrated farmers pivoted their trade to blacksmithing as an alternative source of income. Combining their expertise in both agriculture and metalwork, these farmers designed innovative farming tools that gained popularity for trade with other regions. Soon, Sanjo established itself as a major metal ware producer in the nation.

→ 3:00pm – Now stop at **Tsubame-Sanjo Regional Industries Promotion Center**, a haven of metalworks showcasing the incredible craftsmanship from the industrial heart of Japan: Tsubame-Sanjo. In addition to traditionally crafted items like knives, copperware, and kitchenware, the facility also features local sake, Koshihikari rice, Echigo confectionaries, and other regional specialties to fill our shopping bags. Excitingly, during our **hands-on lesson**, local masters will teach us all about the art and precision of knife sharpening.

→ 5:00pm – Arrive at **Hotel New Otani Nagaoka**. Our hotel is a short walk away from Nagaoka station. Enjoy the evening of shopping and dining on your own.

Day 8: (Fri) Nov 1 – Nagaoka-Minakami (B/L/D)

Gensenyu no yado Matsunoi (Free Wi-Fi) - **Enjoy onsen**

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 9:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby this morning for a drive to Minakami.

→ 10:45am – Once here, we'll visit **Kiyotsu Gorge**. Recognized as a National Place of Scenic Beauty and

Natural Monument, this breathtaking valley is known for its seasonal beauty and unique tunnel system. Not only do the tunnels feature various art and history exhibitions, but they also frame the spectacular towering rock formations and serene river that flows through the gorge, making for stunning photos.

→ 12:30pm – Grab lunch on your own at **Echigo Yuzawa Station**, a bustling transportation hub with a diverse range of shops and eateries.

→ 2:30pm – This afternoon, get ready for an exciting **pressed flowers experience** at **Takumi no Sato**, an artisan's village in Minakami, dedicated to local craftsmanship. Enjoy strolling through the village's charming streets lined with traditional-style buildings, gardens, and small shops that are filled with exquisite handmade crafts and local products, making it a perfect place to find unique souvenirs and gifts.

→ 4:45pm – Arrive at **Gensenyu no yado Matsunoi**, followed by a **Japanese-style dinner** at 6:30pm. This traditional Japanese hotel is well-known for its excellent indoor and outdoor onsens. Unwind after dinner and in the morning before our departure.

Day 9: (Sat) Nov 2 – Minakami-Tokyo (B)

Hotel Groove Shinjuku (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:30am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a drive to Takasaki.

→ 9:00am – Our morning begins with a ride on the **Tanigawadake Ropeway**, a gondola that will transport us to the majestic Mt. Tanigawa, provides unfettered access to the gorgeous, unobstructed views of the breathtaking natural landscape, especially during the **vibrant autumn season**.

→ 11:30am – Next, a stop at **Aeon Mall Takasaki**, a vibrant shopping destination that offers a diverse range of shops, dining options, and entertainment experiences. Enjoy some free time to explore and grab some lunch on your own.

→ Begin our drive to Tokyo.

→ 3:30pm – Arrive at **Hotel Groove Shinjuku**. The remainder of the afternoon is yours at leisure.

Day 10: (Sun) Nov 3 – Tokyo-Haneda-Honolulu (B)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 11:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for touring around Tokyo.

→ 11:30am – Our day begins with a stroll through **Meiji**

Jingu Shrine, a Shinto shrine built in 1920 to honor Emperor Meiji, the first emperor of modern Japan, and his wife, Empress Shoken. Nestled in a forest with muffled sounds of the bustling city in the near distance, Meiji Jingu Shrine first welcomes visitors with an enormous wooden torii gate.

While exploring the vast grounds, you'll find over 200 sake and wine barrels, gifted by famous breweries from across Japan as sacred offerings to Emperor Meiji. The display also features wine barrels from France, a tribute to the emperor's affection for wine and promotion of Western culture during the Meiji period. Enhanced by the presence of fall foliage, this location offers a perfect setting for admiring the beauty of fall leaves.

→ **1:00pm** – Next, we'll visit **Antenna shops in Yurakucho**. Featuring specialty foods, crafts, and other goodies from regions around Japan, this stop is a great place to do some souvenir shopping.

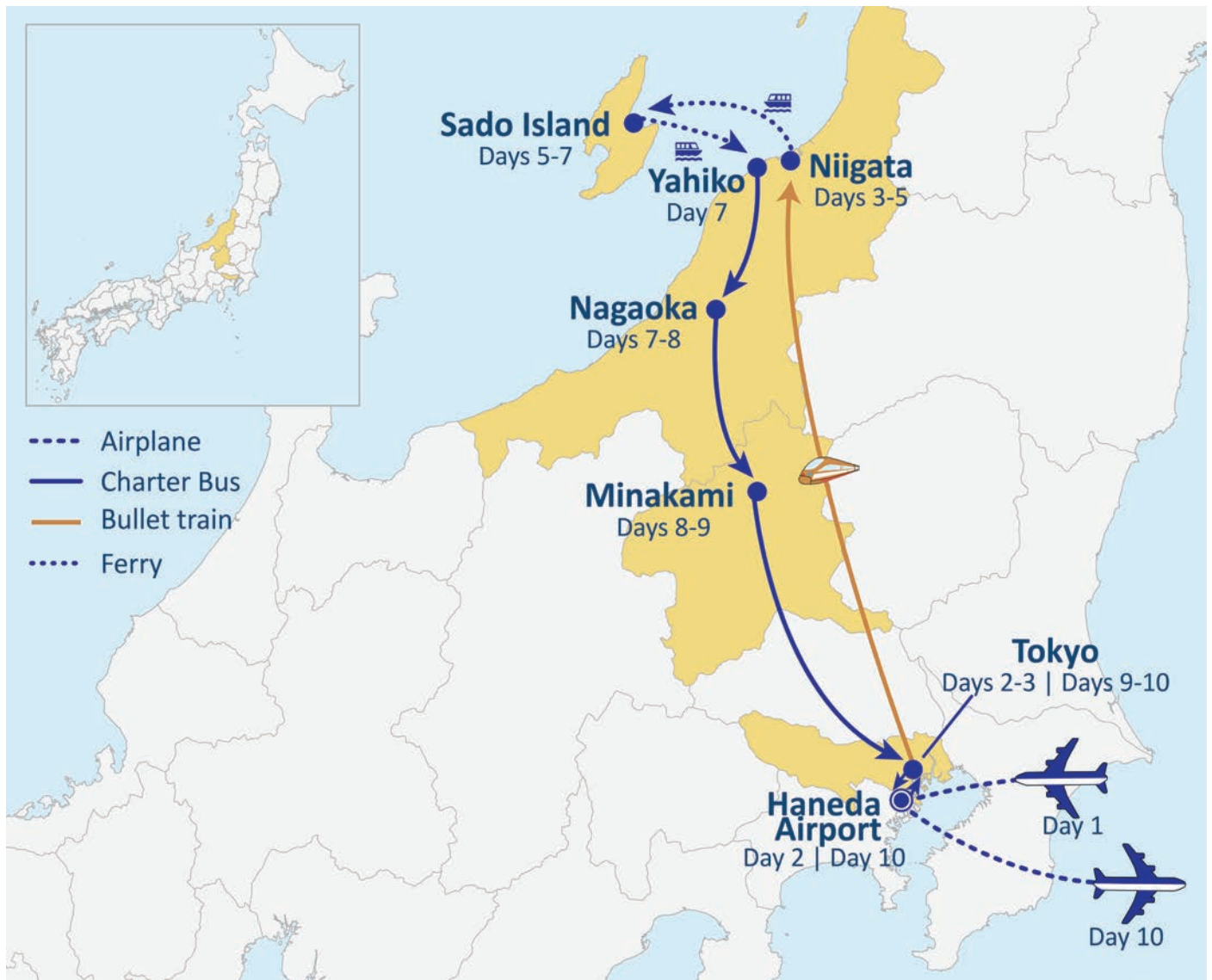
→ **3:00pm** – Here we are at the brand new **Toyosu Senkyaku Banrai**, opened its doors in Feb 2024 and inspired by the historic streets of Tokyo, this Edo themed multi-story shopping and entertainment center treats visitors to a variety of boutiques, as well as eateries featuring specialty foods like Toyosu's signature fresh seafood and produce.

→ **5:00pm** – Arrive at **Haneda Airport** to begin our check-in process for the flight home.

→ **Depart from Haneda via Hawaiian Airlines.**

→ **Arrive in Honolulu (same day).**

Thank you for traveling with us! 🐼



Need to Know...



Payment Policy

- » Reserve with **\$75 per person deposit. Refundable up to 65 days prior to departure date, August 26, 2024.**
- » **Final payment due by September 7, 2024. Package is non-refundable after this date.**

* Fares and Fees (Priced in USD)

- » Are subject to change in light of fuel supplements, taxes, and differences in costs.
- » Air ticket fare is guaranteed, but taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges are subject to change until tickets are issued, approximately 53 days out.
- » We reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary with or without notice.



Special Assistance

- » You must inform us of any disability/impairment that requires special attention at the time of your making the reservation.
- » We reserve the right to cancel the reservation(s) if the disability/impairment is unsuitable for the tour.
- » You are also responsible for any costs and/or accommodations related to your disability/impairment, such as providing your own travel companion.



Travel Insurance

- » We highly recommend the purchase of trip insurance. Please ask our representatives for more information.



Travel Documents

- » A valid passport is required for all U.S. citizens and must be valid and not expire at least 6 months from the return tour date.
- » Non-U.S. passport holders must check with the Japanese Consulate to see if a visa is required.



Land Tour Operator & Costs

- » Land Tour Operator is Nippon Travel Agency.
- » Land Tour costs are based on current currency conversion rates, which are subject to change.



Other remarks

- » Not Included in the tour: Gratuities for local English speaking guide; additional baggage fee charges from the airlines; alcohol and soft drinks with meals.
- » A minimum of 16 participants are required for the tour to operate.
- » You are expected to abide by domestic and international government and accommodation policies related to health, safety, and welfare.