

Join Panda Travel in...



2024 Tohoku Winter Delights & Tokyo Tour

(GPI3230)



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

Dec 14 - 22, 2024
7 Nights/ 9 Days

*Tokyo - Aomori - Hirosaki - Odate -
Oga - Akita - Kakunodate - Morioka -
Yokote - Matsushima - Sendai*

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

\$4,198*

per person-triple occupancy

\$4,198*

per person-double occupancy

\$4,598*

single occupancy

pandaonline.com

(808) 734-1961

1017 Kapahulu Ave, Honolulu, HI 96816

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

Itinerary

Day 1: (Sat) Dec 14 – Honolulu Depart Honolulu via Hawaiian Airlines

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

Day 2: (Sun) Dec 15 – Haneda-Tokyo Sunshine City Prince Hotel (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Upon arriving at Haneda Airport, you'll meet your English-speaking local guide at the arrival lobby. We'll then transfer to Sunshine City Prince Hotel, our accommodation for the night. Our hotel is directly connected to Sunshine City shopping center with many shopping and dining options available to you. Nearby, you'll also find a 24-hr Family Mart convenience store and a Seiyu supermarket for snack, bento, and beverage pickups. Enjoy your evening at leisure.

Day 3: (Mon) Dec 16 – Tokyo-Aomori-Hirosaki (B/L/D) Dormy Inn Hirosaki Natural Hot Spring (Free Wi-Fi) - Enjoy onsen

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 7:45am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. We'll transfer by charter coach to Tokyo Station and board a bullet train to Aomori. Your luggage will be delivered to your hotel in Akita the next day. Please prepare an overnight bag for 1 day.

→ A Japanese bento box will be provided on the train for you to enjoy for lunch.

→ 12:29pm – Upon arriving at Shin Aomori Station, we'll begin our tour in Aomori.

→ 1:15pm – Now a visit to the **Nebuta Museum Wa Rasse**. Dedicated to Aomori's annual August Nebuta Matsuri festival, this museum showcases beautiful exhibits that tell of the 300 year old festival's history, lore, and traditions. A museum favorite: the Nebuta parade floats. Composed of painted washi paper over wire frames, these magnificent lantern floats take one year to construct and are accompanied by teams of taiko drummers, musicians, and dancers during the summer festival.

→ 3:30pm – Next, we'll explore the **Tsugaru Neputa Village**. This cultural center recreates the excitement and thrill of the Neputa Matsuri festival. Sharing similar origins to its cousin—the Nebuta Matsuri festival in the prefectural capital of Aomori—the Neputa Matsuri festival is rooted in the Tanabata tradition of toro nagashi, a celebration of the star festival in which festival goers set lanterns afloat on rivers. Of the two festivals, Neputa is the older one and features parade floats that are semi-circular. At this village, you'll

find musical performances, traditional folk craft workshops, souvenir shops, and a restaurant that celebrates Tsugaru's vibrant culture.

→ 5:15pm – Arrive at **Dormy Inn Hirosaki Natural Hot Spring**. During our stay, unwind in the hotel's onsen to relax and rejuvenate after a day of exploration. At 6:15pm, we'll walk to a **Japanese restaurant for dinner** and will return to the hotel by 8:15pm.

Day 4: (Tue) Dec 17 – Hirosaki-Odate-Oga-Akita (B) Hotel Metropolitan Akita (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:15am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. We'll start our full day tour to Akita.

→ 9:30am – Now a stop in **Odate**, the birthplace of the famous Akita dog, Hachiko, whose statue is outside Shibuya Station in Tokyo. Here we are at the **Akita Dog Visitor Center**, modeled after the 1920's Shibuya Station in Tokyo where loyal Hachiko waited patiently for his owner. Enjoy free time at the gift shop, which offers Akita dog themed gifts and souvenirs.

→ 10:30am – Introducing an exciting **Odate Magewappa making experience** where you'll learn the traditional craft of shaping thin cedar wood into a beautiful plate. This cherished art form from Akita Prefecture is known for its durability, eco-friendliness, and ability to elevate the flavors of your meals. Have fun!

→ 1:15pm – Enjoy and grab lunch on your own at **Michinoeki Takanosu**, a rest stop in Takanosu, where you can find a variety of souvenirs, snacks, and foods made with local ingredients.

→ Drive to Oga City, the central town on the Oga Peninsula.

→ 3:45pm – Once here, a visit to the **Namahage Museum**. This museum is dedicated to highlighting the Namahage Festival where young men don devil's masks and traditional straw garments on New Year's Eve. The men also hold papier mache knives and go door to door admonishing sluggards to ward off misfortune and bring blessings.

→ 6:00pm – Arrive at **Hotel Metropolitan Akita**, our accommodation for the next 2 nights. Centrally located next to the JR Akita Station, our hotel offers abundant shopping and dining options.

Day 5: (Wed) Dec 18 – Akita-Kakunodate-Akita (B/L) Hotel Metropolitan Akita (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 10:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. Our

morning begins with a drive to Kakunodate, a former castletown and samurai stronghold in today's Akita Prefecture. While Kakunodate Castle no longer exists, the **castletown of Kakunodate** is seemingly frozen in time, remaining remarkably unchanged since its founding in 1620.

→ **10:30am** – Our day kicks off at the **Takashimizu Sake Brewery** for sake tasting. This brewery's sake consists of select Akita rice and water, which results in an excellent taste unique to Akita. Its products have even received the Gold Prize at several annual Japan Sake Awards.

→ **1:45pm** – **After a Japanese-style lunch at a local restaurant**, enjoy a stroll around **Kakunodate**. Admire the well-preserved Edo period traditional houses ("kura") and explore the tranquil samurai district, providing a glimpse into the rich history and cultural heritage of Kakunodate. Particularly noteworthy landmarks are the Aoyagi and the Ishiguro samurai houses—famed for its size and quality—which offers visitors a rare glimpse into the lives of middle class and wealthy samurai families. Today, we'll be visiting the **Ishiguro House**.

→ **5:00pm** – **Return to hotel**. Enjoy the evening at leisure.

Day 6: (Thu) Dec 19 – Akita-Morioka (B/L)

Hotel Metropolitan Morioka New Wing (Free Wi-Fi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel**.

→ **9:00am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a full day tour to Morioka. Your suitcase (2 pcs per person) will be delivered by courier services from Akita to Tokyo. Please prepare an overnight bag for 2 days.**

→ **10:30am** – The morning begins with a drive to Morioka and a photo stop at **Lake Tazawa**. Almost perfectly circular in shape, this crater lake is the deepest lake in Japan and changes from sapphire-blue color to shades of jade green and indigo blue depending on the sunlight and season. Interestingly, the lake also does not freeze in winter. This is a great place to snap a photo of these stunning views.

→ **12:15pm** – Established in 1891, **Koiwai Farm** holds significance as one of the largest and most renowned farms in Japan, showcasing sustainable agricultural practices and preserving the Tohoku region's farming heritage. The farm's dedication to producing high-quality dairy products, such as fresh milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream, has earned it a well-deserved reputation for excellence. And **at 1:15pm, enjoy Yakiniku lunch at the farm**.

→ **2:45pm** – Next is a fun visit to **Morioka Tezukurimura**, an artisan's village of workshops dedicated to local craftsmanship. The motto here is "see, touch, and create." As an introduction to traditional Japanese crafts, we'll enjoy a **hands-on experience: indigo dyeing**.

→ **5:00pm** – **Arrive at Hotel Metropolitan Morioka New**

Wing. Ideally located, the hotel is close to Morioka Station, with a variety of dining and shopping options just steps away. The remainder of the evening is yours to enjoy at leisure.

Day 7: (Fri) Dec 20 – Morioka-Yokote-Matsushima-Sendai (B)

Hotel Monterey Sendai (Free Wi-Fi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel**.

→ **9:00am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby as we begin our morning journey to Matsushima**, a stunning coastal town in Miyagi Prefecture that is often ranked with Amanohashidate and Miyajima as Japan's three most scenic views.

→ **9:45am** – Along the way, we'll stop at **Shiwa Winery**. Shiwa Town is a leading fruit producer in the Iwate Prefecture and is well-known for its high quality grapes. Uniquely, the winery was born out of the local farmers' desire to self-brew their harvest, and the result is outstanding wine.

→ **1:00pm** – Enjoy lunch on your own at **Matsushima Fish Market**, a bustling gathering place of fishermen and seafood enthusiasts. This vibrant marketplace is renowned for its diverse array of fresh catches, ranging from sashimi-grade tuna to plump oysters, and remains a must-visit destination for culinary adventurers seeking Japan's maritime treasures.

→ **2:30pm** – Prepare to embark on a **sightseeing cruise** this afternoon and set sail through breathtaking **Matsushima Bay**. Dotted with over 200 small islands covered in pine trees, this picturesque bay boasts stunning natural landscapes that change with the seasons—vibrant cherry blossoms in spring and fiery foliage in autumn. Sit back, relax, and enjoy the scenic views.

→ **4:00pm** – Our next stop takes us to **Kanezaki Sasakama Kan** for a unique **Sasakama** (grilled fish cake) **making experience**, a local specialty of the region. Our skilled instructors will guide us through the process of making and then enjoying the finished product hot off the grill.

→ **6:00pm** – **Arrive at Hotel Monterey Sendai**. The remainder of the evening is yours at leisure. Our hotel is located a short walk from Sendai Station. There're many shops and restaurants nearby.

Day 8: (Sat) Dec 21 – Sendai-Tokyo (B)

Hotel Groove Shinjuku (Free Wi-Fi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel**.

→ **8:30am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby** and take a short walk to Sendai Morning Shopping Street, which is located just a few minutes away from Sendai Station.

→ **8:45am** – We'll start our day at the energetic **Sendai Asaichi Morning Market** or "Sendai's kitchen." Here, savor an incredible selection of seafood sourced from Miyagi, one of Japan's top three fishing spots. This renowned fishing region, blessed with bountiful coastal waters, ensures that the seafood available at the market is fresh and of the highest quality. In addition to the seafood, the market also features the region's local produce and confections. Enjoy this fantastic cultural hub, where both locals and visitors come together!

→ **10:22am** – Now, we'll hop on a bullet train from **Sendai Station to Ueno Station**.

→ **11:50am** – Upon arriving at **Ueno**, we'll take a short drive to our next destination.

→ **12:15pm** – Here we are at **Ameyoko Shopping Street**. This is the absolutely perfect place to get your omiyage. "Ameyoko" is short for "Ameya Yokochō" or "candy shop back alley" since candies were traditionally sold there. Alternatively, it is short for "America," a callback to the post-WWII era when American products were sold there illegally. Now, the street is lined with over 400 shops from cooked street food, snacks like dried squid, and fresh seafood to clothes, bags, accessories, cosmetics, and much more!

→ **3:30pm** – Arrive at **Hotel Groove Shinjuku**, where you'll be staying for the night. Our hotel is located with many shopping and dining options available to you. After check-in, the remainder of the afternoon and evening is yours at leisure. A tip: the best spots to catch the winter illumination displays are at the Shinjuku Southern Terrace and more generally around the southside of JR Shinjuku Station.

Day 9: (Sun) Dec 22 – Tokyo-Haneda-Honolulu

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **11:15am** – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby.

→ **11:45am** – Time to indulge in **Harajuku & Omotesando**, the vibrant heart of all things trendy and eccentric. Beyond its colorful street art and youth-driven quirky fashion culture, this area is a delightful haven for sweets, including gigantic cotton candy, crepes, and cream puffs. Enjoy lunch on your own, and don't miss the multi-story Daiso nearby for some shopping fun.

→ **1:30pm** – Next, we're off to **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.

→ **3:00pm** – We'll stop by **Divercity Shopping Center** on our way to Haneda airport. Located on the artificial island of Odaiba, this unique and massive landmark is one of the

best shopping, dining, and entertainment complexes in Tokyo. Don't forget to take a moment to snap a photo in front of the famous Gundam Statue. Towering at nearly 80 feet high, this figure is the only life sized Gundam statue in the world. Enjoy some last minute shopping and sightseeing at this famous site!

→ **Transfer to Haneda Airport via Hawaiian Airlines for our flight home.**

→ **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, October 10, 2024.
- » Final payment due by October 22, 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.