

Join Panda Travel in...



# 2025 Niigata, Sado Island & Tokyo Spring Explorer

(GP13292)



April 13 - 22, 2025

8 Nights/ 10 Days

*Tokyo - Niigata - Sado Island - Yahiko -  
Nagaoka - Kusatsu - Kawagoe*

**\$100 OFF PER PERSON**  
on our complete package when you pay  
with a personal check/cash

**\$4,498\***

per person-triple occupancy

**\$4,498\***

per person-double occupancy

**\$5,198\***

single 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: (Sun) Apr 13 – Honolulu Depart Honolulu

→ Meet the Panda Travel representative 3 hours prior to departure at the airline's check-in counters.

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## Day 2: (Mon) Apr 14 – Haneda-Tokyo

Palace Hotel Omiya (Free Wi-Fi)

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

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## Day 3: (Tue) Apr 15 – Tokyo-Niigata (B/L)

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Niigata (Free Wi-Fi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 9:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. From here, we'll take a short walk to Omiya Station and board a bullet train to Niigata. Your luggages (2 pcs per person) will be delivered directly to your hotel in Niigata on the same day by a chartered truck.

→ 10:41am – Once we arrive at Niigata, we'll spend the day touring around the city.

→ 11:30am – 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.

→ Next, time to experience the ancient tradition of **mochi tsuki pounding** and make your own tasty Japanese rice cakes during this lively, hands-on activity.

→ 1:00pm – Enjoy a **Japanese-style lunch** at **MISOGURA**, located at the Northern Culture Museum.

→ 2:30pm – Afterwards, we'll visit 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!

→ 4:30pm – Stepping into the popular **Ponshukan Kan** at 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.

→ 5:30pm – Arrive at **ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Niigata**. Enjoy the evening of shopping and dining on your own.

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## Day 4: (Wed) Apr 16 – Niigata-Sado Island (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 – Now 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 – We'll head to a local restaurant to enjoy a **Japanese-style lunch**.

→ 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**, where we'll stay 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.

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## Day 5: (Thu) Apr 17 – Sado Island (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** – Our first stop this morning 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.

→ **1:00pm** – This afternoon, a visit to **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** – Our next stop: **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're at the **Kitazawa Flotation Plant**. This facility was initially used for copper beneficiation, but it later pioneered the use of the flotation method to extract silver and gold, enabling the global adoption of this breakthrough technology. During wartime, the Flotation Plant processed over 50,000 tonnes of ore per month, earning its distinction as the largest plant in the East, showcasing Sado Island's rich mining heritage.

→ **5:30pm** – Now, enjoy a **Japanese-style dinner** at a local restaurant.

→ **7:15pm** – **Return to hotel.** Enjoy the evening at leisure.

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## Day 6: (Fri) Apr 18 – Sado Island-Niigata-Yahiko (B/D)

Shiki no Yado Minoya (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 the **Sado Kisen's ferry**.

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

→ **12:00pm** – From here, 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 and more! Enjoy lunch on your own at this foodie's paradise!

→ **2:15pm** – Get ready for a fun **strawberry picking experience** at Sorano Farm.

→ **3:30pm** – Later today, we'll make a stop at the **Sasaiwai Sake Brewery** in Niigata. A relic of the Meiji era, Sasaiwai has earned a sterling reputation as one of the region's most respected sake producers. Here, we'll take a tour of the historic kura and learn about the brewery's time-honored production methods.

→ **5:00pm** – Arrive at **Shiki no Yado Minoya**, followed by a **Japanese-style dinner at 6:30pm**. Unwind in the ryokan's indoor and outdoor onsens after dinner, as well as take an early morning soak before our departure.

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## Day 7: (Sat) Apr 19 – Yahiko-Nagaoka (B)

Hotel New Otani Nagaoka (Free Wi-Fi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **9:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby.** This morning, we'll embark on a walking tour to explore Yahiko's natural and cultural highlights. First, wander through the serene **Yahiko Park** and admire the lush greenery and Mount Yahiko in the distance. Continue to **Yahiko Omotenashi Hiroba**, an open plaza with a hand & foot bath, souvenir shops, and eateries. Now, visit the iconic **Yahiko Shrine**, one of Niigata's most prominent shrines. Established in 657 BC, the shrine honors the Shinto deity Yahiko-no-Okami, guardian of the sacred Mount Yahiko.

→ **11:00am** – Depart Yahiko and drive to Nagaoka.

→ **11:30am** – Enjoy lunch on your own at the bustling **Teradomari Fish Market Street**, more popularly known as Sakana no Ameyoko. Along your stroll, you'll hear

merchants selling their wares and find stalls of fresh seafood and snacks galore. Some of these tasty delicacies include sweet shrimp, squid, horse mackerel, crimson snow crab, and black throat seaperch. Place an order Hamayaki-style - the local cooking method of grilling whole items on bamboo skewers over white charcoal.

→ We'll then transfer to **Sanjo City**, home to the longest river in Japan. Sanjo's access to fresh, irrigated water supported its local agriculture, but also subjected the agrarian city to frequent flooding. 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.

→ **1:45pm** – Now a stop at **Tsubame-Sanjo Regional Industries Promotion Center**, a haven of metalworks showcasing the rich metalworking heritage of the Tsubame-Sanjo region of Japan. In addition to traditionally crafted items like knives, copperware, and kitchenware, the facility also features local sake, Koshihikari rice, Echigo confectionaries, and other regional specialities to fill our shopping bags.

→ **3:30pm** – Next, a visit to the **Nagaoka Fireworks Museum** - a unique cultural rest stop. Explore the museum's exhibits which highlight the history and significance of Nagaoka's renowned fireworks displays. You can also browse local food offerings and try your hand at fireworks-themed games and activities. At **4:15pm**, experience the brilliant colors and thunderous booms of the famous Nagaoka Fireworks at the museum's incredible 360-degree dome theater.

→ **5:15pm** – 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.

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### **Day 8: (Sun) Apr 20 – Nagaoka-Kusatsu (B/L/D)**

Yorokobi no yado Takamatsu (Free Wi-Fi) - [Enjoy onsen](#)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

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

→ **9:45am** – Along the way, we'll visit one of Japan's three largest gorges - **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. The **Kiyotsukyo tunnel**, carved through the rock, is a must-see attraction within the gorge. 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** – We'll now enjoy **lunch** at ENZA Cafe, located at the base of the snow monkey park.

→ **1:45pm** – Welcome to **Jigokudani Monkey Park!** Home to over 160 of the world famous Japanese Macaques or "snow monkeys." Despite the seemingly harsh conditions of snow cover during most of the year and the rough cliffs and hot springs bursting from the ground, this is a snow monkey's paradise. Having grown accustomed to humans, these unbothered monkeys will not mind an audience as they take a dip and relax in the natural hot spring that is their spa.

→ From here, we'll head to **Kusatsu**, one of Japan's most famous hot spring resorts.

→ **4:30pm** – Before going to our onsen for the evening, we end our touring day with a **Netsu-no-Yu dance show**. This 30 min performance is a unique opportunity to observe the centuries old practice of using large wooden paddles to stir the bath with a precision that retains the water's special properties while cooling down its temperature.

→ **5:15pm** – Arrive at **Yorokobi no Yado Takamatsu**, followed by a **Japanese-style dinner at 6:30pm**. This traditional Japanese hotel is well-known for its excellent indoor and outdoor onsens that are fed from Yubatake ("hot water field"), the fresh geothermal hot spring famous in the region.

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### **Day 9: (Mon) Apr 21 – Kusatsu-Kawagoe-Tokyo (B)**

Sunshine City Prince Hotel (Free Wi-Fi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **8:30am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a drive to Kawagoe & Tokyo.**

→ **11:00am** – Congrats, you've been enrolled in Soy Sauce School at **Kinbue Soy Sauce Park!** At this interactive facility operated by a well-known 230 year old soy sauce brewery, "students" (i.e., visitors) will learn all about the soy sauce production process. Be sure to also check out their unique and delectable selection of products.

→ **12:30pm** – Take a stroll in **Kawagoe** or "Little Edo." Enjoy free time to browse, shop, and explore this former castle town, with its preserved Kurazukuri (clay-walled warehouses) and other historic buildings surrounding. A tip: visit the iconic Starbucks on Kanetsuki Dori Street. Located in an old warehouse, this iconic spot has become world famous and the best example of traditional meets modern.

→ **3:30pm** – Arrive at **Sunshine City Prince Hotel**, our accommodations 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

the rest of the day at leisure.

## Day 10: (Tue) Apr 22 – Tokyo-Haneda-Honolulu (B)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

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

→ 9:00am – Our day begins with a visit to **Tsukiji Outer Market**. A renowned bucketlist spot, Tsukiji is the largest fish market in the world. While the inner auction market relocated to Toyosu in 2018, the charm remains in its outer market. Be sure to enjoy all that the outer market has to offer, from seasonal produce and candy tasting to knife-making artisan shops.

→ 11:00am – Now, a visit to the **Nezu Shrine**, a landmark dating back over 1,900 years ago. When spring rolls around, Nezu Shrine bursts with life, teeming with a remarkable crop of 3,000 blooming azaleas decorating a hilly landscape and a torii path. In Japanese culture, azaleas symbolize abundance and success, making them a thoughtful gift to confer good wishes onto someone. The annual Bunkyo Azalea Festival is the highlight of the year, attracting visitors from all over to celebrate springtime in Tokyo. Take some free time to explore and enjoy the astonishing scenery.

→ 12:30pm – Spend the afternoon at Asakusa’s iconic **Sensoji Temple** and **Kaminarimon Gate** (aka “Thunder

Gate”) with its massive lantern. This spot is a “must see” in every guidebook and boasts over 30 million annual visitors. Traditionally, once you reach the top of the temple steps, you should clap twice and bow your head as a sign of respect. With the belief that coins trap the dangers of daily life, visitors also customarily make a small offering by tossing coins into a wooden rack, tossing away those dangers as well.

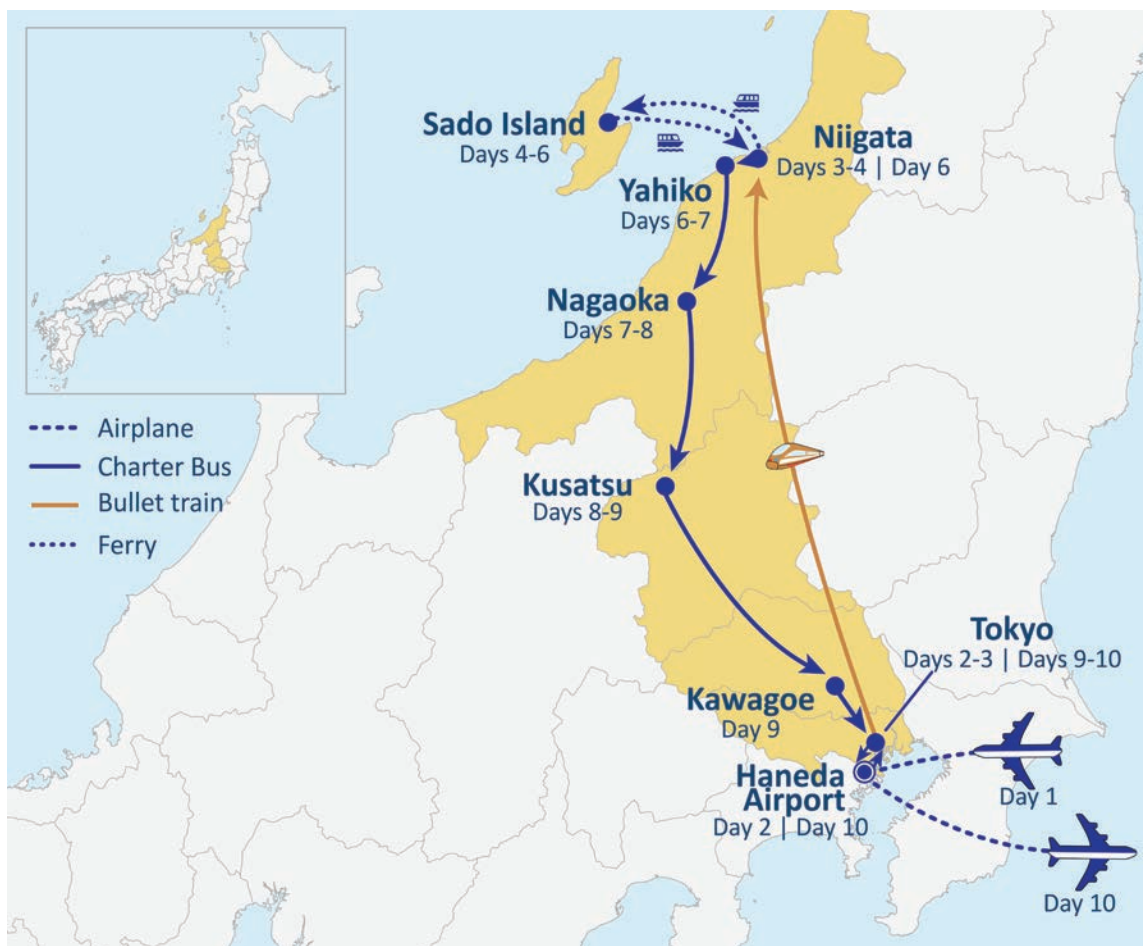
You’ll also find the **Five Storied Pagoda** there. Regarded as one of the “Four Edo Pagodas,” this nearly 174 foot monument stands to represent Tokyo’s few remaining pagodas. As you roam through the temple grounds, you’ll come across the **Nakamise Shopping Arcade**, a lively and extensive shopping street lined with good luck charms, traditional goodies, and Japanese snacks.

→ 2:30pm – Next, a stop at **Tokyo Solamachi!** Located at the base of Japan’s tallest structure—Tokyo Sky Tree—this large shopping, dining, and entertainment complex features over 300 establishments. Enjoy some last-minute shopping!

→ 5:00pm – Arrive **Haneda Airport** to begin our check-in process for the 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, February 7, 2025.**
- » **Final payment due by February 19, 2025. 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.