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Japan Rail Adventure: Sapporo to Tokyo

Day 1: Welcome to Sapporo, Hokkaido

Kon'nichiwa and welcome to Sapporo! One of our friendly team members will meet you at the airport and whisk you directly to your hotel. After check-in, rest-up – or maybe take a stroll down to the Sapporo Beer Museum for a look-see, and a cheeky tasting or two. But don't lose track of time, because by day's end, you'll be bonding over dinner with your guide and fellow MagRailers!

Accommodation: Dormy Inn Premium (or similar), Sapporo

Included: Dinner

Day 2: Sapporo – Not just Famous for Beer!

Pop on your comfy walking shoes this morning, because after breakfast, you'll be exploring Sapporo with your guide on foot. Also on the cards is a ride on the Sapporo Shiden. You'll already be feeling that Sapporo's more like a regional hub than Japan's fifth largest city – and when you take a ride on a tram (they've been around since the early 1900s) it only adds to the city's charm.

After lunch, you'll stop by the Hokkaido-jingu Shrine. This is a deeply spiritual place for the Japanese people because it's believed to be the resting place of four deities. You might like to pick up a lucky charm here and pop it in your pocket for good luck. And don't forget to keep to the side as you pass through the Torii Gate entrance – it's said the centre is reserved for the gods to come and go.

Tonight is for doing as you please! You might feel like tracking down a bowl of steaming miso ramen – being a Sapporo speciality, it's easily found, and your guide can point you in the direction of a restaurant just near your hotel.

Accommodation: Dormy Inn Premium (or similar), Sapporo

Included: Breakfast, Lunch



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Day 3: Train to Hakodate

Wave goodbye to your suitcase this morning – it's on a journey of its own by courier. You'll be reunited in Hirosaki on Day 4. When you step on the train to Hakodate with your lightweight overnight bag, you'll be wondering why nowhere else in the world has caught onto this liberating travel style!

The four hours by train will slip by too quickly. After soaking in Hokkaido's inland green, your comfortable ride will track to the West and sidle on up to the coastline – and Pacific Ocean views wherever you look. Your only distraction will be the neat compartments of deliciousness in your bento box that's served for lunch along the way.

Before day's end, you'll be treated to a different type of view – of Hakodate city stretching out on the narrow peninsula arm below you – thanks to a ride on Mt. Hakodate's Ropeway.

Accommodation: Resol Hakodate (or similar), Hakodate

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 4: Seikan Tunnel and Hirosaki Castle

Rise and shine early this morning because you don't want to miss out on eating like the locals. A donburi breakfast is basically steamed rice and anything you choose to have on top – even Hakodate's famous catch, squid! It may sound all too lunch-like for you, but hey; when in Rome... or in this case, when in Japan... and the options are almost endless!

Afterwards, you'll leave Hokkaido Island behind for Japan's mainland via the Seikan Tunnel. The train ride is so smooth you'll never know that for more than 23 km you're travelling below the seabed. That's just a part of the three-hour journey, but it's a train trip to tick off your must-do list!

Hirosaki Castle is not only a quintessential Japanese castle that's absolutely photo-worthy, it's also a place to step back and take in the bigger picture because looming in the background is an unexpected showstopper. Welcome to Mt Fuji without the crowds! Here is its little-known look-alike, but equally as imposing, Mt Iwaki.

Accommodation: Route Inn Hirosaki Ekmae (or similar), Hirosaki

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner



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Day 5: The Gono Line Joyful Train

You won't know which way to look when you ride the Gono line today. The train departs the station in the shadow of Mt Iwaki and before long, the track plucks a path through the countryside. You'll feel like you're travelling through fairytale towns – a dusting of snow on the roofs of homes and onsens.

Suddenly, about a third of the way into the five-hour journey, serenity is replaced with drama. The Senjojiki coastline is right there, by your side – its bedrock fingers clawing at the coastline, forming natural swimming pools that locals flock to every summer. The line hugs the shoreline now for much of the rest of the ride. Goodbye Onsens, hello fishing villages! Not even today's Bento Box will distract you from the scenic movie playing outside your train window.

Tonight, it's your turn to sleep in a traditional Inn. Don't worry – your accommodation has come a long way since the Edo Period, and while the low-rise beds may take some getting down to, once you're tucked in, you'll sleep surprisingly well!

Accommodation: Traditional Japanese Inn (or similar), Akita

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Japan's Joyful Trains

Do you fancy riding a train for the pure enjoyment of riding a train? Then you're going to love Japan's 'Joyful Trains'.

Enjoy sedate rides with musical accompaniments on the inside while coastline drama and countryside orchards pass by on the outside, or dive into the world of kitsch by riding a train celebrating all things Pokémon. Dine out with a view from a fancy-shmancy restaurant train, or test your balance with a ride on a saki-tasting train. There's even one for cyclists; destined for a bike-friendly tourist spot and fitted with bike racks and a floor to accommodate riding shoes!

Whether you're enticed by the views on the outside, or the activities on the inside, in Japan there's a train ride dreamed up for everyone!



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Day 6: Samurai Town and Sendai

There've been so many wow moments on this trip already, but still, you'll hardly be able to contain yourself this morning. You'll be boarding the train for a short ride to the town of Kakunodate. As you roam the streets, you may feel like you've travelled back in time. This place was home for centuries to military nobility known as the Samurai. Explore it with your guide, inside and out!

Then it's back on the train to rest your feet. Sendai is around one and a half hours away. At check-in, you'll be reunited with your luggage once again!

Accommodation: Washington Hotel (or similar), Sendai

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 7: Day tripping to Matsushima

Matsushima Bay is on show today, so it's no wonder that you'll spend some time exploring it on a comfortable cruise boat. Any spot that's listed as one of Japan's three most scenic views, deserves your attention! You'll also visit Zuiganji – a temple that's had several reincarnations over the centuries and is now a Zen Temple. Wander towards the entrance and you'll notice the tree-lined path no longer has the ordered rhythm of Zen planting. That's because this area was tragically hit by the tsunami in 2011 and some trees, damaged by the salt water, have been felled.

You'll be back at your hotel around 5pm. That's plenty of time to make your dinner plans – the night is yours to explore as you please!

Accommodation: Washington Hotel (or similar), Sendai

Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 8: Aizu Wakamatsu

Today's train ride is just two-and-a-half hours and when you arrive in Aizu Wakamatsu, you'll be pleased there's a bunch of time up your sleeve for your guide to help you discover exactly what this scenic beauty has to offer.



MAGNIFICENT

Set in a valley ringed by mountains, the town not only has onsen and a must-be-photographed castle surrounded by manicured traditional streetscapes... it's also famous for a drink – anyone up for a tasting or few at our favourite saki brewery?

Accommodation: Aizu Wakamatsu Washington Hotel (or similar), Aizu Wakamatsu

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 9: Old Post Town Ouchi Juku

Your MagRail family will trade the tracks for the road this morning. It's just one hour to your destination – the old post town of Ouchi Juku. Once a stop on the trade route between your overnight stop and Nikko, it developed out of necessity during the Shogun era, to feed, water and bed down weary traders who travelled the route on foot.

Today, Ouchi Juku is restored to its Edo-period, traditional self. You'll wander along the unpaved main street, peering at the shops and inns, feeling amazed by the immaculacy of their trimmed, thatched roofs. By now, you'll have come to realise that each day on this trip is like a leap from one magic-filled storybook to the next.

Back to Aizu Wakamatsu for a free afternoon. Hmm... how will you decide to spend it?

Accommodation: Aizu Wakamatsu Washington Hotel (or similar), Aizu Wakamatsu

Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 10: SL Taiju Feature Train

You'll travel by train to Kinugawa Onsen this morning – however, not for the obvious reasons tourists usually flock to this onsen resort town, known for its amusement parks. Instead, in true adventurous style, you've come in search of a train called Great Tree! It's a short ride, but we guarantee that this time of year, it's a must-do!

Finish up today with a Magrail dinner in the fairytale-like onsen town of Nikko.

Accommodation: Nikko Station Hotel (or similar), Nikko

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner



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Day 11: Bullet Train to Kyoto

Today is a travel day, so pack that book, just in case you want to drift off to another world for a time, while your group transfers to Kyoto via Tokyo (oh... did you notice that Kyoto is an anagram of Tokyo?!). The whole trip will take about five-and-a-half hours but the last bit, and your first ride on the Bullet Train, is absolutely thrilling!

Your luggage will be waiting for you in Kyoto, so pop on your party-best (if it goes with your sensible walking shoes)! You will get to know Gion, Kyoto's most famous district, on a walking tour with your guide tonight. With the lanterns lit for the evening, there is an atmospheric glow in town. Keep an eye out for geisha girls flitting about the streets like fireflies, while the restaurants and bars brim with revelling patrons. This is a new side of Japan that's just now unveiling itself to you, so take it all in and enjoy!

Accommodation: Onyado Nono Shichijo Kyoto (or similar), Kyoto

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 12: Kyoto – The Famous

Good morning! You just finished your first sleep of four in your premium Kyoto Hotel. Now is that time in your trip where it's oh-so-nice to change the pace, unpack and make yourself feel truly at home.

Today, your guide will show you Kyoto's premier must-see list. Touristy or not, the Old Town is still going to knock your socks off, and when you walk through the orange colonnade of the Torii Gates, you'll be pinching yourself that you're doing it!

With a few other 'A-lister' experiences to sneak in, including a private tea ceremony, you'll be back at your hotel by the late afternoon. Tonight is yours for the making – go out on the town or stay in – whatever you choose, now is an excellent time to mention your hotel has his and hers hot springs baths onsite!

Accommodation: Onyado Nono Shichijo Kyoto (or similar), Kyoto

Included: Breakfast, Lunch



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Day 13 – Miyama Village

Today is a special one! Once you've been there and it's weaved its magic on you, when you hear the word Miyama, all that will follow is a sigh of content – guaranteed. Welcoming. Unique. Heartfelt – just a few words to express this place when you break up into groups of four for your in-home lunch experience. An experience to fill both your belly and your soul!

Accommodation: Onyado Nono Shichijo Kyoto (or similar), Kyoto

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 14 – The Sagano Romantic Train

We couldn't let you leave Kyoto without visiting the Bamboo Forest, so we've snuck that into your morning before you head out to trump it with an oh-so-special train ride! It's just a leisurely 25-minute trip in all, but how mesmerising those minutes are, no matter the season. Who needs cherry blossom when the Japanese maple surrenders its best in autumn, summer brings the greenest of greens and the winter landscape twinkles with a dusting of snow. The line runs along the Hozugawa River and winds through the mountains at a gentle pace, giving you plenty of time for photo opportunities.

There are no set plans for dinner tonight, but can you hear your MagRail family calling anyway?

Accommodation: Onyado Nono Shichijo Kyoto (or similar), Kyoto

Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 15 – Tokyo Bound

It's time to say goodbye to Kyoto – Tokyo is calling! Let's jump aboard the bullet train one more time. In a little over three hours, you'll be staring up at those never-ending high-rise clusters of central Tokyo. Life is at a different pace in Japan's capital and biggest city. It's high time you experienced it!

After a spell at the hotel, you'll regroup for an evening guided walk around Shinjuku. This neighbourhood is not only one of Tokyo's largest entertainment and shopping areas, it's also



MAGNIFICENT

home to the world's busiest train station! That sounds like a perfect spot for your farewell dinner – together you'll celebrate the adventures you've had and friendships you've made.

Accommodation: Metropolitan Ikebukuro (or similar), Tokyo

Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 16 – Farewell

Has it really been sixteen days? You've experienced so much and it's hard to fathom how the time went by so fast. Grab your nearest MagRailer for a hearty hug. This may be your last breakfast together for now, but surely not forever – the only question left is: where to next?!

Included: Breakfast

