

Performing Arts

Few countries in the world offer the visitor as much a variety of entertainment as Japan. The variety encompasses both native and imported drama, dance, and music. And what makes Japan truly interesting in the eyes of theater and music buffs is the long continuity behind the native forms. It never ceases to surprise visitors that there are dances seen today that have been performed since the seventh century; that there are aristocratic plays which are performed today almost exactly as they were in the late fourteenth century; and that there are dances and plays of the commoners' theater which have been in the repertoire since the early eighteenth century. If the visitor chose his entertainment carefully he could legitimately claim to have seen plays and dances and heard music ranging in time of origin from the seventh to the twentieth centuries—a span of 1,300 years!



A rooftop becomes center stage during a dramatic moment with Onoe Kikugoro, left, and Ichikawa Ebizo. During climactic moments yells and cheers erupt from the rapt audience.

Kabuki

Kabuki is easily the best known of the Japanese performing arts and most visitors try to include this vivid experience in their itinerary.

Though it is far from the oldest, it is probably the most attended form of traditional theater, since unlike *noh*, it began with the masses, and even today is more a popular, rather than a classical, entertainment.

It is interesting to note that, although today all the roles in kabuki are played by men, kabuki was founded by a woman in 1603. The Tokugawa shogunate later decided that its content was becoming too erotic, upsetting public morals, and banned women from performing. Their place was taken by young boys, who didn't help the problem much, and from 1652, only men have

been allowed to continue performing.

The kabuki stage sets and costumes are rich and elaborate and new techniques for special effects are continuously being introduced. It is said that the revolving stage was first utilized by a kabuki troupe. Other plays use wires to make the actors fly through the air and others institute instantaneous costume changes before the eyes of the audience.

Plays are being performed almost year-round and modern kabuki performances have been cut down to a maximum of four hours, with an early show at 11 a.m. and an afternoon show at 4 p.m. A typical program consists of three parts: a lengthy excerpt from a traditional kabuki play; a shorter section of a dance sequence; and an early-modern drama.

There are usually amenities inside the theater such as restaurants, snack bars, bars and gift shops which make the visit even more interesting.

TIPS

- It is difficult for all but the most-interested visitors to attend an entire performance. The dance section is often considered the most intriguing.
- Kabuki theaters are well prepared to receive foreign guests. Most offer English synopses of all the plays, and some offer discounts if you show your passport.

Bando Tamasaburo, one of the most famous of the young generation of kabuki actors, is an *oyama*, or one who stays strictly with the roles of women.



Kabuki Theater Workshop by a Kabuki Actor

A two-hour kabuki theater workshop by famous actor Nakamura Matazo is available for interested groups. A three-to-six-months advance request is necessary and the workshop will be subject to the lecturer's schedule. The workshop will cover such topics as:

- 1) Background and history of kabuki theater
- 2) Demonstration and explanation of kabuki form
- 3) Demonstration and explanation of make-up techniques
- 4) Demonstration of how to wear kabuki kimono
- 5) Short performance



Kabuki-za in the Ginza



The brilliant colors of kabuki sets form an elegant backdrop for Onoe Kikugoro, Onoe Baiko and Ichikawa Ebizo, left to right.

Noh

Noh's ancient origins can be found in native dances and mimes. Because it is a more classical form of entertainment, its popularity doesn't rival that of kabuki or bunraku, although the singing of the noh songs is a popular hobby. For most people, their knowledge of noh ends with the exquisitely carved masks worn by the actors for certain roles.

Long ago, noh (meaning "artistic accomplishment" in Japanese) included two groups—one specializing in comedy and acrobatics and the other concentrating on serious drama—but eventually only the more serious group came to be called noh.

Today, noh consists of both dramatic (mimed action and narrative) and non-dramatic (dancing and music) elements. Thus the actors are required to be skilled in acting, dancing and singing.

What makes noh difficult for the novice to comprehend is the stylized and unrealistic acting which is usually closer

to a demanding choreography. A certain tilt of the body may often insinuate more complex motions and motives.

The actor is always costumed in sumptuous brocades, and if he is playing the part of a warrior, woman or demon, is always masked. The chorus, which chants the thoughts in the main actor's mind and describes the scene, and the orchestra of flute and drums, are dressed in formal attire.

Noh is serious drama, and at the most only three are given in a day's program. Short comic pieces are enacted between the plays.

One kind of noh which may be of interest to visitors is *takigi noh*. The nighttime performances of this, often by local amateurs, are held at outdoor stages lit by flickering torches, giving an unreal air to the elaborate costumes and the haunting music.

TIPS

- A short lecture and demonstration of noh by an actor is available; previous arrangement is requested.

The gorgeous brocades glitter as a Noh actor plays the part of the butterfly spirit.



Bunraku

Like kabuki, *bunraku* dates from the early 1600s, with the combination of three art forms—narration, puppetry, and *shamisen* music. For a while, the theater in Osaka was devoted exclusively to this drama. The puppet dramas even outshone kabuki, and many of the plays in kabuki repertoire originated as bunraku performances.

In the West, the word "puppet" is apt to conjure images of hand-puppets or the marionette kind manipulated by strings. Although these are sometimes found in Japan, the bunraku puppets are completely unique.

They are actually about two-thirds the size of a human being and are operated by three men. The master operator manipulates the head and the pulleys

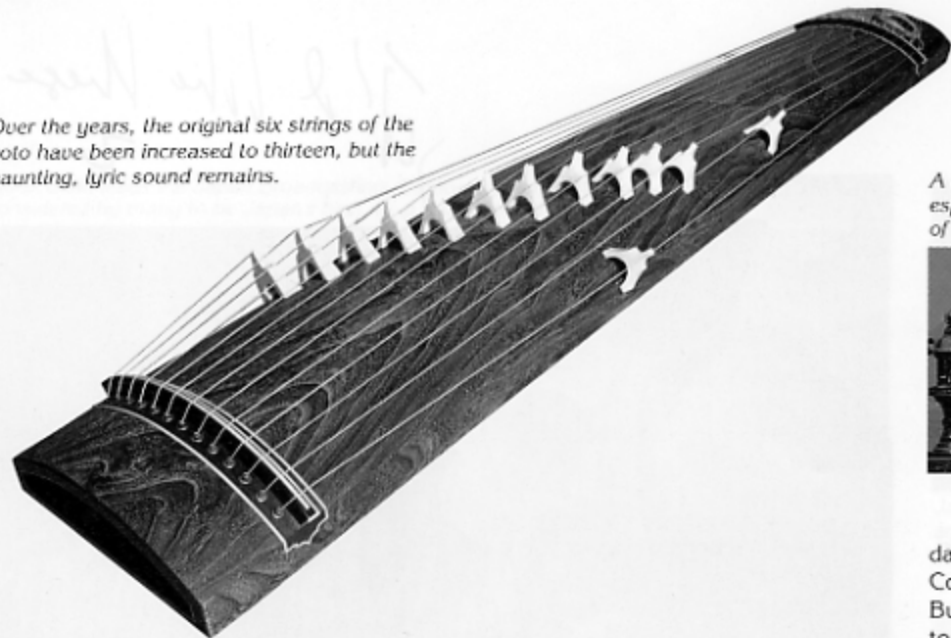


Bunraku puppet masters can be seen manipulating the life-like figures. A close look at the left side reveals one of the helpers, clad in black from head to foot.



This immobile face will spring to life in the hands of the puppet masters.

Over the years, the original six strings of the koto have been increased to thirteen, but the haunting, lyric sound remains.



From the left, koto, shamisen and shakuhachi instruments played by masters at a performance of traditional music.



The biwa, an instrument similar to the lute, is used to accompany the singing/narration of ancient tales of battles and other epic dramas.

that close the eyes and open the mouth, with his left hand, and the right arm of the puppet with his right. His first assistant takes charge of the puppet's left arm, coordinating his movements with his master's. The second assistant moves the puppet's legs (if it is a male puppet) or the skirts of the kimono (if it is female). It takes years to perfect the extraordinary degree of preciseness required for perfect coordination. But this is rewarded when the black-clad manipulators truly become invisible behind the lifelike movements of the amazing puppets.

The bunraku theater, although based in Osaka, takes turns performing in Tokyo and Osaka for about a month at a time. Plays are also held in Kyoto for about two months out of the year.

Traditional Music

At some time during a trip to Japan, you'll hear examples of traditional Japanese music, whether it is a local folk song being broadcast over loud speakers in a shopping arcade, or a koto performance at a *geisha* party. And although it may sound strange to the ears at first, ultimately it comes to be appreciated as a part of the unique atmosphere of the country.

Most of the traditional instruments were introduced from India and China and adapted somewhat to fit the Japanese style. The *biwa*, a string instrument shaped like a mandolin, was one of the earlier ones, used to accompany chanting and singing. *Shakuhachi*, a type of flute and one of the most difficult to play, was another. Its tradition is still being kept very much alive, with some artists stretching the horizons to include jazz and other musical forms as well as traditional compositions.

The koto, a harp-like instrument, and the shamisen with its strings and drum-like body, are probably better known overseas. And the *taiko* (drum)—some small enough to be carried in the hand, others taller than a man—is indispensable to Japanese music.

Since music developed as an accompaniment to dance and drama, the best places to hear a combination of these instruments are at kabuki, noh and traditional dance performances.

A more simple but also enjoyable style, is *kagura*, which is sacred music and dance performed at shrine festivals. Flutes, drums, and gongs are used to entertain the gods and the people who come to the festival.

A bugaku performance is a rare sight, but especially eye-catching at the floating shrine of Miyajima island.



Gagaku, the ancient court music and dance, is now preserved at Imperial Court ceremonies and a few Shinto and Buddhist rituals. Unfortunately, a chance to see a performance is rare, though several times a year special concerts are held at the National Theater and other halls. The sounds of the unusual gagaku instruments may be a shock to those familiar with more melodic tones.

The Wild Drums of the Seaweed Devils

The drum is a very important musical instrument in any Japanese festival. The strong, powerful beat of the drums adds excitement to the festival and reaches into the hearts of the listeners.

The method of beating the drums in festivals varies, but Gojinjo Daiko of Ishikawa prefecture is famous for the striking and peculiar performance of the drummer as well as the energetic and forceful beat. This festival originated in 1576 when an army attacked the unarmed village. To counter the attack, the villagers put on devil's masks, wore seaweed, then beat the drums in order to scare off the attackers. This historic drama is presented along with other drum performances in the *Nafune* Grand Festival on July 31 and August 1 every year.



Other Theater

Unfortunately, recent years have seen the decline of some of the larger revue-type theater groups. The Nichigeki Hall, which for years played host to the Nichigeki Dancers and their long-legged chorus line, has been torn down, and the Shochiku Kokusai Dancers have been left without a home since their theater in Asakusa (famous for its spectacular depictions of earthquakes, fires, and other disasters) disappeared from the scene. The SKD now plays at the Kabuki Theater and other theaters on a temporary basis.

The Takarazuka Revue Company, which features musicals and plays by its all-girl troupe, is still going strong, filling the theater next to the Imperial Hotel with adoring fans. Surprisingly, they are mostly young girls.

Appealing to a different audience, but just upstairs from the Takarazuka Theater, is what's left of the Nichigeki—the small Music Hall. The genre there is similar to the Crazy Horse in Paris and other places around the globe; tastefully-done nude shows performed several times a day.

There are also many small avant-garde theaters around Tokyo and other bigger cities. Some of the groups are fairly famous, others are not; some do plays in English, but the large majority are in Japanese.

It would be interesting to mix a bit of the traditional with the modern by comparing noh or kabuki with other types of theater. It's best to check with one of the tourist papers, like the *Tokyo Tour Companion*, to find out what is playing and where.



Kurosawa Akira received worldwide acclaim for his film, "The Seven Samurai," which became the basis for an American film, "The Magnificent Seven."

Movies

The Japanese cinema burst upon the world first in 1950 when the famous film "Rashomon," directed by Kurosawa Akira, won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. Since then there has hardly been a film festival anywhere in the world at which a Japanese film has not been singled out for merit.

But the Japanese were turning out film masterpieces for nearly thirty years before "Rashomon." Movies had been introduced into Japan in 1895, and only two years later, the Japanese were making their own. Most of the earlier films were remakes of kabuki dramas, and it was these films which later developed into the samurai movies of the present day.

Eventually, however, screen plays dealing with modern life were produced, and today Japanese films are some of the finest, both technically and artistically, in the world.

TIPS

- You have a chance to watch famous Japanese films at the Japan National Film Center, 3 cho-me, Kyobashi, Tokyo; telephone, (03) 561-0823. It is the only place which often shows them with English subtitles.
- In Kyoto, plan a visit to the open sets of Toei's Uzumasa Studio. Spend time wandering around the samurai movie sets, eating at a period restaurant, or taking pictures of the costumed actors. Get your picture taken dressed as one of Japan's heroes, heroines or villains.
- Most foreign films are shown in Japan in the original language with Japanese subtitles. Theaters can be found everywhere, and are listed in foreign-language publications.



The all-girl Takarazuka Theater presents lavish productions of popular musicals at its headquarters near Osaka and another hall in Tokyo.



Visitors are still allowed, but some sections of Toei's Uzumasa Movie Studio are roped off when filming of a samurai drama gets underway.

Horst Stein leads the Japan Broadcasting Corporation's NHK Symphony Orchestra, considered by many to be Japan's best, in a guest performance.



Classical Music

Western music probably made its debut in Japan when the first groups of missionaries brought their various musical instruments into this country along with their bibles. And although it soon disappeared during the closed-door years of the Tokugawa shogunate, it began to be enjoyed after the re-opening of the country, many people studying and playing, some of them going on to become world-famous performers.

Classical music's continuing popularity is proven by the fact that in Tokyo alone there are more than seven professional symphony orchestras, not to mention a number of chamber groups and ensembles. These are also supplemented by concert appearances by major orchestras and artists from all over the world: the Berlin Philharmonic with Herbert von Karajan, the Boston Symphony with Seiji Ozawa, La Scala Opera, to quote but a few. What all this means is that it is safe to say that there are at least three or four concerts a week—a pleasant choice for music lovers.

Tickets for foreign musicians' performances can be very expensive, but for local performers' concerts they are more reasonable.

Popular Music

Ever since the Beatles performed in Tokyo before thousands of screaming fans a number of years ago, Japan has been a major concert stop for musicians from all over the world. Rock, chanson, canzone, latin, jazz, blues, country & western—you name it, Japan has had its share of concerts. Today, not a week goes by without several concerts by famous artists, not only in Tokyo, but in all the large cities from Hokkaido to Kyushu.

There are clubs (called "Live Houses") featuring live music of all kinds performed by excellent Japanese bands, and sometimes foreign artists. The prices are reasonable by any standard—a small music charge and a drink.

Jazz has always been big, and still seems to be growing. Within the space of a few months, outdoor festival and concert-goers are able to see and hear the likes of Carmen McRae, Freddie Hubbard, Sadao Watanabe, Ron Carter, Lee Ritenour, McCoy Tyner, Dave Grusin, Art Blakey and Woody Herman, and that's just the top of the list.

Festival and big-concert schedules are decided far ahead of time, so ask your local JAL office to get the information. Weekly schedules are published in local papers and tourist publications.

Discos are as prevalent in Japan as anywhere else. Some buildings house five or six under one roof, and several areas in Tokyo, such as Akasaka, Shinjuku and Roppongi are especially well known.



Jazz-great Gerry Mulligan performs before an audience of thousands, young and old, at an outdoor music festival in Madarao, central Japan.



More and more outdoor jazz and rock festivals are being held each year, drawing thousands of fans to see their favorite Japanese and foreign musicians.

Everybody Can Be a Star with Karaoke

For a more Japanese experience in popular music, why not try an "empty orchestra" bar or club. "Empty orchestra" is the literal translation of the Japanese word *karaoke*, which means a tape recording of songs with only the accompanying music and no vocals. The karaoke bars have tape systems with hundreds of tapes and thousands of songs, domestic and foreign. And everybody takes turns singing their favorite songs to the tape accompaniment. You'll have a chance to learn old folk songs as well as Top Ten Japanese hits and maybe you can teach some of your local songs, too. You don't have to be a professional singer to join in but you must have enough confidence (or enough alcohol in your bloodstream) to stand in front of an audience and exercise your vocal cords. Everybody can be a star in Japan, even if only for a few minutes.

Architecture & Religion

Shrines, castles, temples, palaces or common houses—the main features of traditional Japanese architecture have always been wooden construction and a basic simplicity of design.

There are exceptions, however, like the gold leaf covering the elaborate Toshogu Shrine in Nikko. But more representative would be Todai-ji, the largest wooden structure in the world, or Horyu-ji, the oldest wooden structure in the world, both in Nara.

Though there are not as many relics of history as a more stone-oriented culture, for those with an eye for beauty Japan is a fascinating museum of eye-catching design and architectural techniques.

Castles

It rises out of the plain all in white, like the bird that gave it its nickname of "White Heron," or "Egret," Castle. The tower of Himeji-jo Castle (left), one of the most spectacular remaining examples of Japanese castle architecture, still proudly overlooks the land of its former domain south of Osaka, and people stand in awe of its massive presence just as they have done for hundreds of years.

At one time, the landscape of Japan was dotted with hundreds of such castles, but time, war, the end of the feudal era, and modern expansion have reduced the number. Most castle towns have tried to retain at least part of their heritage. Many have built ferro-concrete replicas; others have kept the huge stone walls, which now look down on children playing in the parks that were once castle grounds.

The ones that remain still conjure up images of lords and warriors, their razor-sharp swords and the luxurious kimono of their graceful ladies. Himeji-jo is one of the best since it is one of the few left which had the original materials restored rather than rebuilt; a choice which may have been influenced by the fact that the original construction required 50,000,000 man-work days! But even some of the smaller or rebuilt ones have been turned into excellent museums, featuring armor, artwork, and the architecture which made them so formidable.

The legendary fish of pure gold decorating the rebuilt tower is the symbol of Nagoya-jo Castle's former elegance.



Osaka-jo Castle was built in the sixteenth century by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. 63,000,000 man-workdays went into the structure, the largest stone of which weighs 250 tons!



Buke-gashiki samurai houses are found all over the country. Most of the remaining ones were built at the end of the Edo era, just before the Samurai class fell from its powerful status.

TOUR IDEAS

HIMEJI-JO CASTLE TO HIROSHIMA—THREE DAYS, FROM KYOTO

Day 1: KYOTO—HIMEJI—TAKEHARA

Transfer to Himeji for a visit to Himeji-jo, one of the best in the country. Several hours can be spent just admiring the grounds or climbing the tower. Afternoon transfer to Takehara.

Day 2: TAKEHARA—HIROSHIMA

Morning sightseeing of this old station-town of the Sanyo-do Road through western Japan, including a visit to a local sake distillery. Afternoon free for wandering and shopping in the town. The production of salt, sake and soy source products made this area rich in feudal times and many streets retain the old atmosphere. Evening transfer to Hiroshima.

Day 3: HIROSHIMA

Morning excursion to Miyajima, site of the famous "floating" shrine. Afternoon sightseeing of Hiroshima, including Peace Park and the Atomic Bomb Museum. Late afternoon departure for next destination.

"CROW" CASTLE AND THE NAKASEN-DO ROAD—FOUR DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: TOKYO—OIWAKE

Transfer from Tokyo to Oiwake for a stay at a typical Japanese inn, featuring specialty dishes of the area. Oiwake is a quiet resort in the Shinshu highlands with a fine view of volcanic Mt. Asama. It was an important station of the old Nakasen-do Road in the days of the shogun.

Day 2: OIWAKE—MATSUMOTO

Transfer to Matsumoto via Nakasen-do, passing through towns such as Mochizuki, Ashida and Unno, where old merchant dwellings and farm houses, and inns are still preserved in the quiet streets. Evening transfer to Matsumoto.

Day 3: MATSUMOTO

Sightseeing of this picturesque gateway to the Japan Alps, including a visit to six-story Matsumoto-jo, called "Crow" Castle because of its all-black structure. The original castle was built in 1504, and the compound now houses a Japan Folklore Library. The city is also known for its fine paper and wood craftwork.

Day 4: MATSUMOTO DEPARTURE

Depart Matsumoto for either Tokyo or Nagoya/Kyoto.

Common Houses

Amazingly enough, what with the wooden construction, there are quite a few towns and villages which, thanks to dedicated people, have kept old dwellings from the feudal-era intact. Although many visitors complain of the lack of remnants of old Japan after a visit to Tokyo or one of the larger cities, a short trip can offer a close look at how the common people were living during the years of isolation from the rest of the world.

Oftentimes, streets of old samurai houses can be found just behind a shopping center, and several communities have made an effort to collect and restore old farm houses and merchant dwellings. Many of them still house merchants doing business in traditional ways. It's a long way away from robot-controlled car factories!

Shrines & Temples

To the Japanese, nature and natural phenomenon are perceived as the work of the gods, and this thinking and attitude was the genesis of the ancient religion of Shinto. Contrary to Western religions, there are many gods in Shinto. Shrines (*jinja* or *jingu* in Japanese) are dedicated to these gods—places for the gods to dwell. People gather to worship, dance and give instrumental performances to the gods to bring good fortune.

At one time, shrines were rebuilt every twenty years for purification reasons, with a considerable amount of labor, capital and technology involved. Today, Ise Jingu Shrine in Mie prefecture retains this ancient tradition.

While Shinto is the native religion, Buddhism was brought to this country from India, through China and Korea, back in the sixth century. Sponsored by the reigning clans, this new religion spread around the land in a very short period, with temples being constructed one after the other.

In order to distinguish between shrines and temples one needs to look for a *torii* (tall gateway) and a *sanmon* with *nio* statue (gate with guards). The *torii* indicates a shrine and the *nio* statue a temple. Another difference is that shrines usually have thatched roofs while temples are roofed in tile with a notable curvature.



Miyajima's Itsukushima Shrine is popularly called "the floating shrine," since high tide brings the waters of Hiroshima Bay up under the building.



Farm houses in the *gassho-zukuri* (praying hands) style at Hida Folklore Village in Takayama. The steep roofs of the three-story structures were designed especially for mountain areas to keep snow from piling up.

A countless number of shrines and temples exist in Japan. But this doesn't necessarily mean the Japanese are religious as a people. Most Japanese celebrate births with Shinto trappings, marry in either a Christian or Shinto fashion (sometimes both), and hold funerals observing Buddhist customs.

When touring shrines and temples, one should note the very small as well as the large structures. Some shrines and temples have been appointed as national treasures and possess very fascinating histories.



Goju-no-to, a five-story pagoda in Nara, is one of the finest examples of Heian-period architecture.



The Chinese influence in architecture can be easily seen in the red-lacquered exterior of Kasuga Taisha in Nara, a big difference from the traditional simplicity of more ancient shrines.

Zen

To reach a basic understanding of Japan and its culture, an acquaintance with Zen philosophy is strongly recommended. Zen's influence is felt no matter where you go or what you do. Art, architecture, gardens, noh theater, the tea ceremony, martial arts and much of daily life all reflect the Zen mentality. Rather than evaluating things from an egocentric viewpoint, Zen tries to see a thing from the standpoint of the thing itself—as existence, which is universal to all.

Zen teaches that a state of the spirit free of any distractions is attained through *zazen* (Zen sitting), or meditation. This practice came to Japan from India and China about 700 years ago, and was quickly adopted by the warrior class who felt that the principle of "no thoughtness" was fitting for those who were fighting so much of the time. It is interesting that the philosophy was chosen by warriors for its tranquility. At the same time, it was making inroads into society as a whole—affecting thought and resulting in artistic expression which is dynamic and powerful yet deceptively simple.

Today much of this art can be seen in temples and museums, some of which have extensive collections. Many temples in Japan will accept visitors who are familiar with meditation and are genuinely interested. There are also some with special programs for novices and beginners.



A tap on the shoulder with a stick is meant to keep the Zen meditator's mind from wandering.

Christianity in Ancient Japan

Christianity was introduced into Japan in 1549 when Francis Xavier first landed on the southern island of Kyushu. Missionaries were active for ninety years until they were finally expelled. But during that time around 200,000 people were said to have converted to the new religion.

Although it was banned somewhat earlier, the policy was lax enough to allow one lord to send his retainers all the way around the world to Rome to find out more about the faith. Little by little, however, the prohibition was tightened and the last big stand Christianity made in those days was at Shimabara-jo in Kyushu, where 30,000 defenders were overwhelmed by the authorities in 1637. The castle has been reproduced and serves as a museum today, with exhibits such as *fumie*, Christian images which people were forced to step on in order to prove they were not Christians.

Although the shogun and the authorities were convinced that Christianity had been eradicated, it was not totally true. In 1865, after a church had been erected in Nagasaki, thousands of people who had secretly kept their faith passed down through generations, came forth to confess their religion—220 years later!

The island of Kyushu has many places of interest regarding the history of Christianity in ancient Japan, places relating to an era when exile and banishment were daily occurrences.



This is how western traders looked to Japanese artists when they first appeared on Japan's shores in the sixteenth century. The era also marked the introduction of Christianity to Japan.



Nagasaki's Oura Catholic Church, the oldest Gothic structure in Japan.

TOUR IDEAS

ZEN AT SOJI-JI TEMPLE— TWO DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: TOKYO—SOJI-JI

Noon transfer to Soji-ji in Tsurumi. Afternoon discipline of lectures, meditation and a simple vegetarian supper with the monks. Accommodation at the temple (9:00 p.m. bedtime).

Day 2: SOJI-JI—KAMAKURA

Morning discipline of meditation, sutra chanting and temple breakfast beginning at 3:30 a.m. After lunch transfer to Kamakura for sightseeing, including Zen temples of the city. From Kamakura, transfer back to Tokyo or on to Hakone, or Kyoto.

NOTE: A shorter Zen program is possible at Soji-ji, easily fitting into a half-day itinerary.

ZEN IN WESTERN JAPAN— THREE DAYS, FROM KYOTO

Day 1: KYOTO—

EIHEI-JI ZEN TEMPLE

Transfer to Eihei-ji for Zen program and accommodations. The Zen discipline from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. includes meditation and a vegetarian Zen supper. A film forum follows.

Day 2: EIHEI-JI—KANAZAWA

Morning discipline from 3:30 a.m., including sutra chanting and meditation. Afternoon transfer to Kanazawa, an attractive old castle-town. Accommodations at a Japanese inn.

Day 3: KANAZAWA—KYOTO

Morning sightseeing of the city, including Kenroku-en Garden, one of Japan's finest. Afternoon return to Kyoto.



Sarjusangendo Temple, where 1,000 golden Buddhas surround a 1,000-armed central Buddha.

Food & Drink

Raw fish, seaweed, soybean curd, and boiled octopus. *Sukiyaki*, *shabu-shabu*, *sushi*, and Kobe beef. Some sound more mouth-watering than others, but Japanese food as a whole is appealing to more and more connoisseurs around the globe who are attracted by the delicate taste and health qualities.

Raw fish may give the image of someone tearing at a freshly caught tuna with their bare hands and teeth, but as anyone who has seen and dined on the carefully sliced and arranged pieces of *sashimi* can attest, it is a delightful feast for the eyes and the taste buds. So it is with many of the other Japanese foods that seem strange. The freshness and subtle flavoring combined with the artistic method of serving each dish more than make up for the first reaction of surprise. For anyone adventurous enough to put his or her *hashi* (chopsticks) into previously unknown dishes, a new world awaits.

There are too many kinds of foods to try to explain here, but there are plenty of publications offering explanations and lists of recommended restaurants. Some are small shops on sidestreets featuring dishes made from ancient recipes; some are interesting enough to be a destination in themselves.

With the spread of Japanese restaurants overseas, the world is realizing that Japan is a land of culinary delights.

Drink is popular, too. More than a thousand years ago, a Chinese visitor reported that the Japanese liked alcohol. The specialty is *sake*, of course, and it is still made from rice in small local distilleries around the country as well as at more modern ones. You can have your sake in bars, restaurants or even sitting in an outdoor hot spring gazing at the stars.

There are other local drinks as well. Like *shochu*, a stronger one made from sugar cane or sweet potatoes, similar to a vodka. Japan's oldest man, who lives in the southern islands which are famous for *shochu* production, claims a daily intake was responsible for his good health.

Japan is also high on the list of beer-consuming nations. The result is a number of beer halls, beer gardens, and excellent beers. Sapporo's Beer Garden is the best known, but in the summer they are found on rooftops all over the country.

Whatever your preferences in food and drink, Japan can meet and even exceed your expectations.



The vegetarian layout of *shojin ryori*, first introduced by Zen priests, is pleasing to the eye. And delicious.

Shojin Ryori

The word *shojin* means to restrain one's mind and devote oneself to the teaching of Buddha. Therefore, if a person abstains from eating meat and practices vegetarianism he is performing *shojin*. This then becomes *shojin ryori*, or vegetarian cooking. It was introduced in the Heian and Kamakura periods by Zen priests in China who learned to cook with only vegetables. It is a simple diet, but offers balanced nutrition. For instance, *tofu* (a form of soy beans) and *yuba* (dried bean curds) supply lots of protein. Seaweed and mushrooms have many valuable minerals. And by mixing sesame and nuts with vegetables, an adequate source of oil is achieved. This *shojin ryori* is the perfect diet for people who love natural food because the excellent cooking technique preserves the flavor of each vegetable.

In the Edo period, the people who prohibited themselves from taking animal meat for religious reasons named some of the vegetarian dishes after animals, thus helping to compensate for the lack of meat. For example, fried carrots were called *kani* (crab) and baked eggplant was called *shigiyaki* (snipe).

The ancient discipline of *shojin ryori* is still practiced in some modern Japanese households and restaurants.

Kaiseki Ryori

Kaiseki ryori is formally called "cha kaiseki," a type of cooking served at the time of the tea ceremony. The word "kaiseki" stems from a Zen passage which means "warm stone (*seki*) on bosom (*kai*)." It was believed that to hold a warm stone against the bosom would relieve hunger for a while. Therefore *kaiseki* is a light meal preparing, but not overwhelming, the taste buds and stomach for the special taste of the tea when it is served later at the tea ceremony.

Just as hearty hospitality is the spirit of the tea ceremony, so should be the serving of *kaiseki ryori*, an equal element in the tradition. In the formal ceremony, the host usually prepares and cooks the dishes himself. The menu calls for vegetables in season, and all is neatly and artistically arranged to please the eye. Rice and other dishes are served in turn along with sake. The food should be eaten at the temperature it is served. Guests should feel free to help themselves to food during the meal, and not ask the host to serve them.

Kaiseki ryori is an indispensable part of the Japan experience—even apart from the tea ceremony. Guests and host alike may enjoy this very original style of cooking, which makes

use of seasonal vegetables and concentrates on the beauty of the meal itself.

Why not enjoy a meal at one of the many restaurants which still serve this fascinating cuisine.

Sapporo Bier Garten

Somebody wisely insisted on not tearing down Sapporo Beer's original brewery. It's been fixed up like a German beer hall inside with a roaring fire for those cold winter nights, and an outdoor garden for summer guzzling. Sapporo Beer, one of Japan's best and the city's most famous product, never tasted better. On draft, of course. You can order a variety of snacks such as the island's own potatoes or corn. But the specialty is Genghis Khan barbecue. You grill New Zealand lamb, plus a variety of vegetables on a gas-fired grill at your table. Ask for the King Viking special: all the beer you can drink and Genghis Khan you can eat during a two-hour period, for 2,970 yen (1982 price). If you prefer seafood, always excellent on Hokkaido, ask for Dosanko yaki: salmon, crabs and scallops also grilled at the table (1,200 yen). It's wise to make reservations to avoid a possible long wait. Phone: (011) 742-1531. It's a short ride by taxi from Sapporo station, just tell the driver, "Biiru-en." It's open from 12:00 noon to 9:00 p.m.



The many tastes included in *kaiseki ryori* are meant to be enjoyed before the tea ceremony. The light flavors are chosen to improve the taste of the tea.



Mouth-watering, bite-sized pieces of sushi: abalone, salmon eggs, shrimp, sea urchin, and tuna among others.

Sounds good

Country-Style Food at Your Fireplace

Ukai-Toriyama, located about one hour from Tokyo, is more than the average Japanese restaurant. It could almost be mistaken for a small village, since the numerous structures cover several acres of a narrow valley in the mountains. The largest and most impressive of them is a centuries-old restored farmhouse.

The restaurant is laid out around a magnificent natural garden which has its own mountain stream winding throughout the grounds, full of carp, trout, and an occasional duck or goose.

But of course, the main attraction is the food, and the speciality at Ukai-Toriyama involves doing the cooking by yourself. Each room has an *irori*, or Japanese-style fireplace, and the already skewered food is brought in on a platter. The menu includes everything from pheasant to chicken and venison and from pork to trout, with an amazing variety of vegetables as well. Soup, rice, and side dishes of *sashimi*, salad, etc., are also in the sets. It's up to the guests to place the skewers over the red-hot charcoal after seasoning it to their taste. When it's done, Bon appétit!



More local seafood delicacies. These dishes from the Pacific Ocean side of Shikoku.



A countryside sake shop advertising its distinctive local brands. The brand name is written on the side of the barrels.



The *nomiya*, literally "drinking places," should not be ignored. These roadside "holes in the wall" serve sake and snacks at a micro-fraction of the price at bars or clubs.



Tempura's origins are obscure. Though possibly Portuguese. The fish and vegetable morsels dipped in batter and deep-fried, is now a uniquely Japanese dish.



Yakitori consists of tender bits of chicken, vegetables and other delicacies, skewered and barbecued. At stands or restaurants, it's inexpensive and a favorite snack or meal.



Outdoor Experiences

Japan has its share of spectacular scenery. Rocky coastlines, snowy peaks, caldera lakes, terraced rice fields, and bamboo-laced hills changing color with the wind are all beautiful to see and excellent surroundings for relaxation.

If you're the active type, you can hike the many trails through Japan's mountains. If you're passive, sit in a hot-spring bath drinking sake and washing your troubles away. Whatever you're looking for, there's a wide range of choices available to help you get close to nature and discover for yourself a Japan far away from neon lights, commuters and city life.



Kyoto's Arashiyama area is a year-round canvas for nature's colors. Cherry trees blossom in the spring, and maple leaves turn brilliant shades in the autumn to the delight of many visitors.

Getting a little bit wet is part of the fun of riding the rapids of the Nihon Rhine.



Setonai-kai, Japan's Inland Sea, was infested with pirates in ancient times. Pleasure boats cruise those same waters today.

River Riding

Since most of Japan's rivers are narrow and fast moving, there are a number of places where boatmen cater to people wanting an exciting riverboat ride. Many of these boat courses have been in operation for years, back to a time when they were a necessary mode of transportation. None of the rapids are really dangerous, but some parts are thrilling and other parts are ideal for calmly watching the countryside go-by. Most of the trips take about an hour to an hour and a half of actual river riding.

Boat Cruises

What better way to experience the spectacular and scenic coastline of the island country of Japan than from the deck of a boat. There are ample opportunities for enjoying boat cruises in quite a few districts, though most of the vessels are by no means luxury ones. There are some deluxe yachts and cruisers that are available for charter, but they are not cheap.

The easiest way is to take advantage of the scheduled cruises which are run on a frequent basis.

Evening Delight— Riverboat Dining

It's early evening, and the *yakatabune* river boats, *chochin* lanterns glowing, pull up to the wharf to take on passengers. They climb aboard and take their places around the low table, and by the time the boat pulls away, are already sipping on their first cups of sake and beer. Plates of food come next, as a soft wind caresses the *shoji* screens, and the boats make their leisurely way down Tokyo's Sumida-gawa river.

Yakatabune originated in the Edo period when an artisan came up with the traditional design. They were an immediate hit with the samurai and wealthy merchants who saw a chance to enjoy a new atmosphere. Of course, to make sure of a good time, they would invite their favorite *geisha* to sing, dance and keep the mood lively.

It's more difficult to find a *geisha* today, but the boats have continued to offer that same special atmosphere. Both individuals and groups can reserve places or whole boats, and prices vary according to the meal served.

Flowers blossom on the river banks in spring, cool breezes chase away the heat in summer, and the silver reflection of the autumn moon dances on the water. What a great way to enjoy history and tradition!



Cruising on the *yakatabune* river boats is a pure Japan experience. Tatami mats, *shoji* screens, sake, and a tasty meal on board.



The islets of Matsushima form a scenic backdrop for the many cruise boats plying the bay waters. Craggy rock formations and wind-blown trees have earned the area a name as one of Japan's three most beautiful places.

TOUR IDEAS

RAPID RIDING ON THE KUMA-GAWA—TWO DAYS, FROM FUKUOKA

Day 1: FUKUOKA—HIToyoshi
Morning transfer from Fukuoka to Hitoyoshi by JNR train. Afternoon sightseeing around the popular resort area, famous for its hot springs. Accommodations at Japanese inn or minshuku.

**Day 2: HIToyoshi—
KUMA-GAWA—FUKUOKA**
Enjoy a boat trip down the Kuma-gawa rapids. The service was started in 1910, and has five very rapid and thrilling points during the 2-hour-30-minute course. Return to Fukuoka in the late afternoon.

NOTE: The trip is run on a scheduled basis from March through November (four daily). Charter basis only is accepted from December through February.

RAPID RIDING ON THE NIHON RHINE—ONE DAY, FROM NAGOYA

AM—Transfer from Nagoya to Mino-Ota by JNR train. Enjoy the boat trip down the Kiso-gawa, otherwise known as the Nihon Rhine. The first half of the trip is on white water, with the lower half of the 1-hour-10-minute ride calm and placid. Lunch on board the boat.

PM—Return to Nagoya.
NOTE: We recommend combining this with a trip to Takayama, excellent for a stay at a minshuku, as it is a classic old city. The above boat trip operates from mid-March to mid-December.

MATSUSHIMA BAY CRUISE— THREE DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: TOKYO—SENDAI

Transfer from Tokyo to Sendai by bullet train. Remainder of the day for sightseeing in Sendai, including Aoba-jo Castle and its environs. Accommodations at a hotel.

Day 2: SENDAI—MATSUSHIMA

Transfer to Matsushima by bus. Remainder of the day sightseeing of Matsushima Bay, with its hundreds of tiny pine-covered islets, by small boat. Accommodations at an inn or minshuku.

Day 3: MATSUSHIMA—TOKYO

Return to Tokyo.

INLAND SEA CRUISE— TWO DAYS, FROM KYOTO

Day 1: KYOTO—HIROSHIMA

Transfer from Kyoto by bullet train to Hiroshima. Afternoon sightseeing of Hiroshima, including Peace Park, and Miyajima, famous for its floating shrine. Accommodations at a Hiroshima hotel.

Day 2: HIROSHIMA— OMISHIMA—IKUCHI-JIMA— KYOTO

Morning hydrofoil ride through the Inland Sea to Omishima Island and its ancient-armor museum, the best in Japan. Lunch on the island. Cruise to Ikuchi-jima Island to visit Kosan-ji Temple with its replicas of many famous temples. Return by boat and bullet train to Kyoto.

KYUSHU NINETY-NINE ISLAND CRUISE—TWO DAYS, FROM FUKUOKA

Day 1: FUKUOKA—HIRADO

Transfer by motorcoach from Fukuoka to Hirado via the famous shore line of Karatsu. Lunch en route. Accommodations in Hirado at minshuku, ryokan or western-style hotel.

Day 2: HIRADO—SASEBO— NAGASAKI

Sightseeing in the morning of Hirado and remnants of its former standing as a trading port in the early seventeenth century. Afternoon cruise through the Ninety-Nine Island Sea with its oyster cultivation and beautiful scenery to Sasebo. Transfer from Sasebo to Nagasaki by motorcoach.



Japan Air Lines' Okuma Beach Resort is perfect for relaxing in the sun. Or swim, dive, windsurf and play tennis to your heart's content.

Beaches

The coastline of Japan stretches for over 26,000 kilometers, and although the volcanic makeup of the islands results in a lot of cliffs and rocky crags, the country is also blessed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

Close to Tokyo, both the Boso and the Izu peninsulas have miles of white-sand beaches gracing their shores, and the southern island chain, including Okinawa, is a true tropical paradise. Although most beaches aren't overdeveloped as resort areas, there are always minshuku and ryokan facing the waves, and some places such as Shimoda have western-style hotels which can meet any standard. There are also pensions and cottages available for rent in many areas.

Camping & Hiking

As guide books like to point out, Japan's geography is 80 percent mountains, so there is no problem finding beautiful hiking spots. Routes range from simple walking trails and the strenuous but easy climb of Mt. Fuji to the more challenging inclines of the Japan Alps.

Hiking possibilities are so abundant that even within an hour of downtown Tokyo you can find hiking trails that lead through lovely gorges decorated with delicate waterfalls and lush greenery.

The sacred nature of Mt. Fuji, or Fuji-san as it is called in Japanese, made it a special destination for pilgrimages years ago. Documents from the fifteenth century mention an endless chain of pilgrims climbing the mountain, and even today, many climbers wear the white robes and carry the wooden staff of the pilgrim.

Some things have changed though. Women are now allowed to climb the mountain, a privilege that was not granted them until 1872.

The most popular pattern is to arrive at the summit in time for the sunrise. This involves either an early-morning climb or a stop overnight at one of the few huts along the trail. The descent is easier; some people slide much of the way down on the volcanic sand. The best season weather-wise is July and August.

The Japan Alps were given their



Not far from the castle city of Matsumoto, the Kamikochi Valley is the most spectacular gateway to hiking paths in Japan's Northern Alps.



The country's symbol to many tourists as well as Japanese, Mt. Fuji offers a special challenge to anyone willing to climb the rocky slopes all the way to the summit.

name by a nineteenth-century western missionary, Walter Weston, who introduced climbing as a leisure activity to Japan. He claimed that although they were smaller in scale, their natural beauty surpassed that of their European counterparts.

Camping sites in Japan are not quite as numerous as in some other countries, but they are being rapidly developed and are now plentiful in certain areas. There are sites with every facility from electricity to cottages; there are also lesser-developed ones.

For people with an adventurous spirit, what better way is there than hiking and camping to get as close as possible to the natural beauty of Japan.

Hot Springs

Most people know of the Japanese love affair with the bath. Even long ago baths were an intrinsic part of Japanese life; and today, both public baths and hot springs have retained their cult status despite the convenience of household tubs. Japanese travel magazines are full of reports on various onsen, or hot spring resorts, which are said to be useful in curing all kinds of ailments as well as just for relaxing. Because the country is made up of volcanic isles, there are hot springs to be found everywhere, from ski grounds to beach resorts.

Contrary to many people's belief, there are few places where mixed bathing is observed. If it is, it is usually the older generations which have no qualms about bathing in the presence of the opposite sex.

The competition between the onsen resorts results in some unique and sometimes unbelievable results. There are even baths in seaside caves, baths in ropeway cars, outdoor baths on mountain tops, sulfur baths, citrus baths, milk baths, et cetera.

TOUR IDEAS

THE WHITE SANDS OF SHIMODA—THREE DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: TOKYO—HAKONE—SHIMODA

Morning departure of Tokyo to Hakone. After half day of sightseeing in Hakone, transfer to Shimoda. Accommodations at resort hotel, Japanese ryokan, or minshuku.

Day 2: SHIMODA

Free to enjoy the white sands and sun at the beach or pool.

Day 3: SHIMODA—ATAMI

Half day of sightseeing in Shimoda, including visits to temples with erotic statuary and artifacts from Japan's first modern contacts with the west and Commodore Perry. Afternoon transfer to Atami for bullet train connections.

TROPICAL SKIES OF OKINAWA—FOUR DAYS IN OKINAWA

Day 1: OKINAWA ARRIVAL—OKUMA BEACH

After arrival at Naha Airport, spend a half-day sightseeing around the island. Afternoon continue to Okuma Beach, JAL's own private resort. Accommodations are cottage style.

Days 2 & 3: OKUMA BEACH

Full day free to enjoy all the facilities such as windsurfing, tennis, scuba diving, or just sunning on the beach.

Day 4: OKUMA—

OKINAWA DEPARTURE

Morning free. Afternoon transfer to Naha Airport for departure.

CAMPING & HIKING IN THE JAPAN ALPS—FOUR DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: TOKYO—MATSUMOTO

Transfer from Tokyo to Matsumoto, the gateway to the Japan Alps. Sightseeing including the well-preserved Matsumoto-jo Castle, the Folk-crafts Museum and other points of interest. Accommodations at a hotel.

Day 2: MATSUMOTO—

KAMIKOCHI

Early morning transfer to Kamikochi Valley, one of the most spectacular in Japan, sur-

rounded with snowy peaks. Rest of the day free for hiking, climbing or relaxing before camping for the night.

Day 3: KAMIKOCHI—TOKUSAWA

Hiking to the Tokusawa Camp Site, deeper into the Alps. Rest of the day free.

Day 4: TOKUSAWA—MATSUMOTO

Hike out of the Alps to Kamikochi and transfer to Matsumoto for next destination.

HOKKAIDO HIKING & CAMPING—FOUR DAYS, FROM SAPPORO

Day 1: SAPPORO—

SOUNKYO GORGE—SOUNKYO ONSEN

Transfer from Sapporo to Sounkyo Onsen through the Sounkyo Gorge, a 24km-long canyon with many waterfalls and 200m-high cliffs. The ascent of Mt. Kurodake can be made part of the way by ropeway, the rest by foot. This area of the Daisetsu-zan National Park is excellent for hiking, with trails criss-crossing the wide-open spaces. Accommodations at a ryokan.

Day 2: SOUNKYO ONSEN—FURANO—

TORINUMA CAMP SITE

Morning free. Afternoon transfer to the Torinuma Camp Site at Furano, best known as World Cup Ski site, but also for its magnificent views of both mountains and plains.

Day 3: TORINUMA

Full day free for leisure enjoyment of the scenic area.

Day 4: TORINUMA—SAPPORO

Transfer to Sapporo.

CLIMBING MT. FUJI—TWO DAYS, FROM TOKYO

Day 1: Transfer from Tokyo to Kawaguchi-ko Lake and the 5th Station on the slopes of Mt. Fuji. From there it is a 5-hour climb to the summit. Accommodations at a rustic lodge with only the bare necessities.

Day 2: After viewing the sunrise from the peak, a 3-hour descent to the 5th Station again, for bus transportation to your next destination.



UNIQUE BATH TOUR—FOUR DAYS, FROM NAGOYA

Day 1: NAGOYA—NAGASHIMA

Transfer from Nagoya to Nagashima Hot Spring Resort and the elaborate Grand Spa Nagashima for accommodations.

Day 2: NAGASHIMA—KII-KATSUURA

Transfer to Kii-Katsuura by train and boat to the Hotel Urashima. The hotel's special feature is a bath located in a neighboring cave overlooking the sea.

Day 3: KII-KATSUURA—ARITA

What do you do to top taking a bath in a cave? Take a bath while riding in a ropeway car at the Arita Kanko Hotel. The hotel also has milk baths, sake baths, tangerine baths and jungle baths.

Day 4: ARITA—KYOTO

Depart Arita for Kyoto.

SAND BATHS AND HOT SPRINGS IN SOUTHERN KYUSHU—THREE DAYS, FROM KAGOSHIMA

Day 1: KAGOSHIMA ARRIVAL—IBUSUKI

On arrival at Kagoshima, sightseeing of the city, including a cruise on Kagoshima Bay and a visit to the foot of Mt. Sakurajima, one of the few active volcanoes. En route to Ibusuki visit samurai houses and tea fields at Chiran. Accommodations at the Ibusuki Kanko Hotel with its jungle bath and sand baths.

Day 2: IBUSUKI—MT. KAIMON-DAKE—KIRISHIMA

Excursion to Mt. Kaimon-dake and Ikeda-ko Lake, supposedly the home of the Loch Ness monster's cousin, Iessie. On to Kirishima Spa, and its caldera lakes, craters and other sites of volcanic activity.

Day 3: KIRISHIMA—KAGOSHIMA
Morning free. Afternoon transfer to Kagoshima.