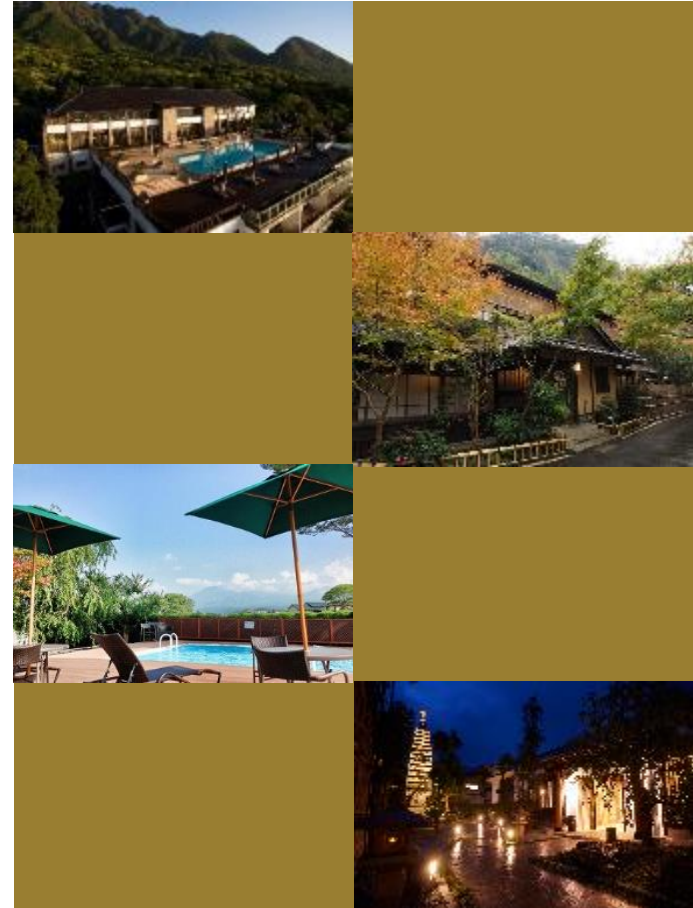


Course #4

KAGOSHIMA/KUMAMOTO/MIYAZAKI

4 Nights 5 Days



ROUTE MAP



DAY 1

FUKUOKA⇒YAKUSHIMA



DAY 2

YAKUSHIMA⇒KIRISHIMA



DAY 3

KIRISHIMA⇒HITTOYOSHI⇒ASO



DAY 4

ASO⇒TAKACHIHO



DAY 5

TAKACHIHO⇒KUMAMOTO Airport

DAY 1 FUKUOKA – YAKUSHIMA



Arrive at Fukuoka Airport via Singapore or other international airport.



Have lunch at an airport restaurant of your choice.



From Fukuoka Airport, take a 70-minute domestic flight to Yakushima, a World Natural Heritage Site. With a circumference of about 130 kilometres, the island of Yakushima off the southern coast of Kyushu was formed millions of years ago when magma seeped through the seabed and turned to granite. The soaring central mountains have led to the island being referred to as the “Alps of the Ocean.” It is said to rain 35 days a month on Yakushima. The abundant rain is the lifeblood of the 1,000-year-old Yakusugi cedar trees and the pictorial evergreen forests.



Yakushima



After arriving at Yakushima, travel 50 minutes by private vehicle to Yakusugi Land. Continue on for another 15 minutes to Kigensugi, the only Yakusugi in Yakushima that can be seen from a car. The tree is 19.5 metres tall, has a maximum circumference of 8.1 metres and is believed to be 3,000 years old. Although the tips of the branches are dead, the soundness of the tree can be seen when viewed from below it. The appearance of such a large old tree growing in this hushed environment has a solemnity that can be overwhelming.



Yakusugi Land



Kigensugi



The night's accommodation is at the luxury Sankara Hotel & Spa Yakushima, some 40 minutes away. Located on high ground with the sea below and mountains forming a natural backdrop, the hotel encapsulates the beauty and charm of the island. For dinner, feast on specially prepared French dishes that use an abundance of fresh local ingredients. Enjoy an evening of quality at this elegant hotel.



Accommodation: Sankara Hotel & Spa Yakushima
<https://www.sankarahotel-spa.com/>

DAY 2 YAKUSHIMA – KIRISHIMA

Head out in the morning to experience some island tours certified by the Adventure Travel Trade Association and see up close the abundance of nature that benefits from Yakushima's mild climate and abundant rainfall. The highlight of the day is the World Heritage area nature walk.

Travel one hour by private vehicle to the Seibu forest path. From here, the four-kilometre walk to the coast and back through the evergreen forest, a World Natural Heritage Site, takes between two and three hours. Along the way, look out for Yakuzaru monkeys and Yakushika deer. Until 50 years ago, people lived in this area. Today, the animals have the rich natural environment to themselves. On clear days, Kuchinoerabujima, a volcanic island that continues to emit smoke, is visible from the coast.



World Heritage area nature walk



Over the course of the rest of the day, travel around the island by private vehicle in an anticlockwise direction. Along the way, there are numerous stops, such as at a beautiful sandy beach that is the number one sea turtle nesting ground in Japan and at a distillery that makes mellow-tasting shochu from the soft, rich water of the island. Until the evening, use this opportunity to better understand the geography, nature and environment of this fascinating place.



Leave Yakushima by plane and fly the 35 minutes to Kagoshima Airport.




Accommodation for the night is at Orihashi Ryokan, a mountain village inn in Myoken Onsen. It takes about 30 minutes to reach by private vehicle. Nestled in the mountains, this 140-year-old ryokan offers a peaceful place to relax and recharge. There are 13 standalone guestrooms on the 33,000-square-metre site, each with its own open-air hot spring bath, making this the ideal escape from the outside world. Dinner is kaiseki cuisine brimming with locally grown ingredients and meticulously selected seasonal vegetables.



Accommodation: Orihashi Ryokan
<https://orihashi.co.jp/>

DAY 3 KIRISHIMA – HITOYOSHI – ASO


 Leave Kirishima by private vehicle for Hitoyoshi, a journey of some 70 minutes.


Board a wooden boat and head down Kuma River, one of Japan's top three rivers for rapids. As well as the “middle course” that leads to Onsenmachi and the “short course” that ends at Sagaramachi, there is also a “long course” and a thrills-and-spills “torrent course.” Enjoy the great outdoors while the boatman regales you with local colour. Also popular is hitting the Kuma River rapids aboard an inflatable dinghy.



Rafting on Kuma River



 From Hitoyoshi, travel two hours by private vehicle to Aso.


 For lunch, enjoy the Aso specialty of akagyudon—slices of soft lean beef served over rice with a poached egg on top.



Akagyudon



Shirakawa Spring


 In the afternoon set off for Shirakawa Spring, a celebrated water source that is so highly regarded, it was chosen as one of Japan's 100 best water sources by the country's Environment Agency. Some 60 tons of water at a constant temperature of 14°C gushes from the spring each minute.

Continue on to Daikanbo, which offers a commanding 360-degree view of Aso's cityscape, Aso's five peaks and the Kuju mountain range. If you visit in autumn through winter, you may be lucky enough to see the magical sea of clouds.



Daikanbo



 The night's stay is at Aso Plaza Hotel in Uchinomaki Onsen. The hotel is long established, with over half a century behind it. Relax in your room while taking in the view of Mt. Aso's five majestic peaks. In the evening enjoy a multi-course kaiseki dinner made with plenty of fresh local ingredients.

Accommodation: Aso Plaza Hotel
<https://www.asoplaza.co.jp/>



DAY 4 ASO – TAKACHIHO

Today's challenge is yet another certified by the Adventure Travel Trade Association. Spend the day in the shadow of Mt. Aso, an active volcano that continues to smoulder threateningly. Begin the day with a breakfast of champions on a nearby mountaintop. Review the day's itinerary while enjoying this special summit feast. The starting point is Aso Station, which, at an altitude of 523 metres, is seen as the gateway to Mt. Aso.

Jump on an e-bike and head in the direction of the Nakadake crater at an altitude of 1,258 metres. This special route across open meadows is normally off-limits. The sight of volcanic smoke rising from the active crater is awe-inspiring.

The cycling continues after lunch. Close to the small active volcano Komezuka, explore tunnels created long ago by lava flows while taking in the far-off scenery of lush grasslands. After reaching the finish line at the hotel, you have covered 32 kilometres, adventure-cycled for seven hours and climbed to an elevation of 780 metres.

From the hotel, travel one hour by private vehicle to Takachiho, said to be where the grandson of the sun goddess descended to earth. It also happens to be the location of your night's accommodation. Ryokan Shinsen is both a Japanese restaurant and a traditional inn situated close to Takachiho Shrine. Wind down after a day of exertion under the watchful eye of the gods and enjoy dinner and a bath in this secluded space.

After dinner, attend a performance of Takachiho Yokagura, which has been designated as an "important intangible folk cultural asset." The fourth of 33 kagura, a style of sacred music and dance, is performed each evening at 8 pm on the kaguraden, a sacred stage erected in the grounds of Takachiho Shrine. Performed in turn by dancers from different villages, these authentic kagura are very popular.



Takachiho Yokagura



Mt. Aso e-bike adventure



Accommodation: Ryokan Shinsen
<https://www.takachiho-shinsen.co.jp/>

DAY 5 TAKACHIHO – KUMAMOTO Airport

The last day of this tour is also spent on an activity certified by the Adventure Travel Trade Association. Visit a deep gorge in Takachiho and experience the lives of the people who live there. Accompanied by a local guide, hike for about eight kilometres



The day begins between the volcanic basalt columns that make up the strikingly beautiful walls of Takachiho Gorge. Here, enjoy a light breakfast while admiring the majestic scenery. After breakfast, follow the path as it leads deeper into the gorge until you arrive at the perfect spot for some outdoor cooking. Here, try your hand at the Takachiho specialty of Kappo chicken. Kappo means bamboo in the local dialect. Chicken meat and vegetables are stuffed into a bamboo tube and cooked over a flame. The bamboo enhances the flavour of the ingredients. Be sure to also try sake heated in bamboo over the fire. After lunch, visit a shrine that is at the heart of the local community and see how rice terraces and tea fields make full use of what little arable land there is in this narrow valley.



Takachiho Gorge



Adventure Travel in Takachiho



There will be time for a shower before leaving for Kumamoto Airport by private vehicle, a journey of some 80 minutes. Return to Australia via Haneda Airport.

