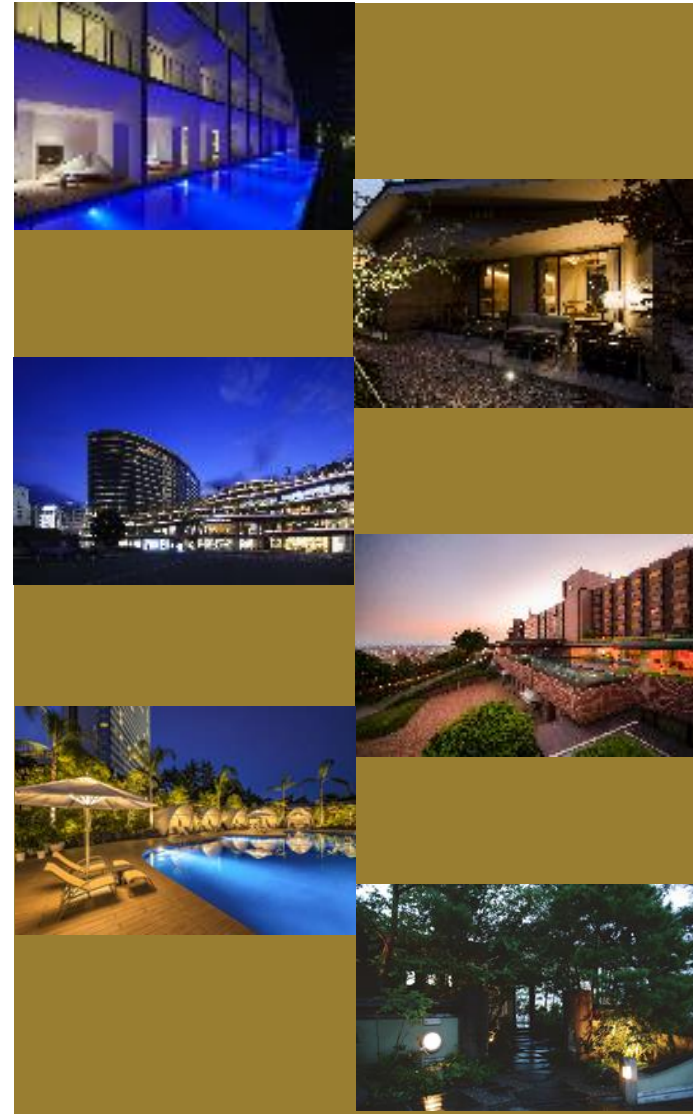


Course #5

Around KYUSYU

**SAGA/NAGASAKI/KUMAMOTO/
KAGOSHIMA/MIYAZAKI/OITA/FUKUOKA**
7 Nights 8 Days mostly by public transport



Around KYUSYU 7 Nights 8 Days

DAY 1



FUKUOKA⇒KARATSU⇒YOBUKO⇒SAGA

DAY 2



SAGA⇒SHIMABARA⇒UNZEN

ROUTE MAP



DAY 3

UNZEN⇒AMAKUSA⇒KUMAMOTO



DAY 4

KUMAMOTO⇒KAGOSHIMA

Around KYUSYU 7 Nights 8 Days



DAY 5

KAGOSHIMA⇒MIYAKONOJOU⇒AYA⇒MIYAZAKI



DAY 6

MIYAZAKI⇒USUKI⇒BEPPU



DAY 7

BEPPU⇒FUKUOKA

DAY 1 FUKUOKA – KARATSU – SAGA



Arrive at Fukuoka Airport via Singapore or other international airport.



From Fukuoka Airport, take the subway and JR train to Karatsu, a journey of 90 minutes. From Karatsu Station travel by private vehicle to Karatsu Castle. The castle is also known as Maizuru, or Dancing Crane, Castle as the pine groves to the left and right of the keep give it the look of a crane with its wings spread. From the observatory on the fifth floor of the castle tower there are superlative views of the Genkai Sea and Matsuura Bay.

Leave the castle and head to the sea, a stretch of water much loved by legendary diver Jacques Mayol, who was immortalised in the movie *The Big Blue*. Mayol's first encounter with a dolphin, which took place at Nanatsugama in Karatsu, inspired his lifelong passion as a diver. It is said that he loved Karatsu so much that he visited the city over 20 times in the eight years leading up to his death in 2001.



For lunch, enjoy the local specialty of squid ikizukuri and squid steamed dumplings.



In the afternoon, catch the train to the city of Saga, some 70 minutes away.



From Saga Station travel by private vehicle to Soejima Glassware, which makes Hizen vidro glassware. Much of Hizen vidro glassware is made using the glassblowing technique that eschews the use of moulds. This results in soft dreamy designs. Some of the glassware on show is made using the traditional "Japan glassblowing" technique and can only be seen at Soejima Glassware. Japan glassblowing is a special method that uses two blowpipes at the same time. Nicknamed nitoryu, or "two-sword fencing," this technique requires a remarkable level of skill, even among experienced glassblowers.



Accommodation for the night is at Garden Terrace Saga Hotels & Maritopia. The decoration in the atrium, which can be seen from the relaxing lobby area, changes with the seasons. Enjoy dinner in the glimmering light of a patio and feast on dishes made with Saga's much-talked-about first-rate ingredients.

Accommodation: Garden Terrace Saga Hotels & Maritopia
<https://www.gt-saga.jp/>



Karatsu Castle



Nijinomatsubara



Nanatsugama



Squid ikizukuri



Squid steamed dumplings



Hizen vidro



DAY 2 SAGA – SHIMABARA – UNZEN



Leave Saga and head to Isahaya by train, a journey of about an hour. At Isahaya, change onto the sightseeing train Shimatetsu Cafe Train and enjoy lunch as the pastoral scenery of Shimabara Peninsula glides by. The journey lasts about two hours.



Shimatetsu Cafe Train



In the afternoon, enjoy pedaling around the castle town of Shimabara on an e-bike. Some 3,000 tons of water per day gushes out of the ground at the spring water garden Shimeiso. The pond here is filled with colourful koi carp and the enchanting garden has been ornamented with numerous plant varieties, including red pine and maple. Two tatami rooms of a traditional building stand directly above the ponds. Looking out over the garden from here, the rooms and the garden appear to be one, a beautiful image that can only be seen here.

Known as “the city of swimming carp,” Shimabara is kept beautiful thanks to the efforts of its residents. One of the highlights of this city of water is the sight of coloured carp, some red and white, others tricoloured or all gold, swimming through the clear streams of the Bukeyashiki Preservation District, which rekindles the long-gone lives of the samurai. Be prepared to be greeted by a military commander in full Sengoku warlord armour when visiting Shimabara Castle.



City of swimming carp



Spring water garden Shimeiso



From Shimabara, travel 30 minutes by private vehicle to Unzen. The air at Jigoku Onsen is filled with the scent of sulfur, while whole districts are covered with steam and hot air that billows from the ground. It is no wonder that the place is named after jigoku, or hell. This is also known as the place of Christian martyrdom, which is commemorated with a martyrdom monument.



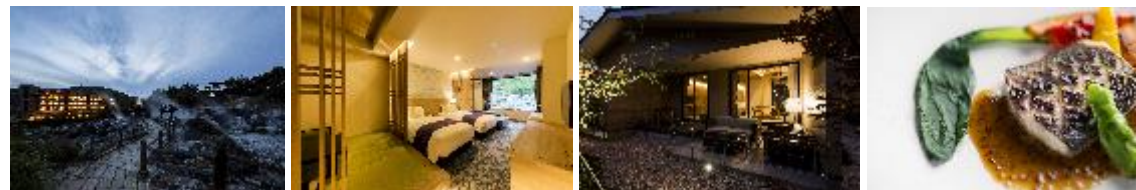
Unzen Jigoku



Samurai residence



Accommodation is at Mt. Resort Unzen Kyushu Hotel, a sophisticated hotel located above Unzen Jigokudani. The entrance, guestrooms and standalone rooms occupy a 9,158-square-meter site. Consisting of four buildings, as well as a cafe bar with terrace and a rooftop lounge for use by guests only, the hotel is ideally suited to anyone wishing to relax in stylish luxury.



Accommodation: Mt. Resort Unzen Kyushu Hotel
<http://kyushuhtl.co.jp/>

DAY 3 UNZEN – AMAKUSA – KUMAMOTO



Travel one hour by private vehicle to Kuchinotsu Port then board a ferry to Amakusa, some 30 minutes away. At Amakusa, board a private boat and set off for a morning of dolphin watching. There is an over 90 percent chance of sighting up to 200 Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins that inhabit these waters throughout the year. The dolphin pods come so close to the boat that you can almost touch individual dolphins with your hand. The best time of the year is spring through to summer. Dolphin watching is highly recommended for families as even small children can enjoy the experience.



Dolphin watching



Back on dry land, travel 50 minutes by private vehicle to Sakitsu Church, which is part of the Hidden Christian Heritage Sites of Nagasaki and the Amakusa Region. Within the solemn Gothic-style church there are tatami mats, a rare sight in a church. Soft light filters through the stained glass windows, creating a calm space. Built next to the tranquil Yokaku Bay, the church is also known as the Church of the Sea.



Sakitsu Church



Enjoy rice topped with fresh seafood for lunch before heading to Suizenji Jojuen by private vehicle, a journey of 1.5 hours. The garden, which is fed by subterranean water from Mt. Aso, has a Noh stage and the Kokindenju no Ma, a striking building that was relocated from the Kyoto Imperial Palace in 1912. Spend time strolling through the garden and enjoying the view of pine trees and the artificial miniature mountain in the centre of the picturesque pond. A cup of matcha along with some traditional sweets can only enhance the sense of elegance.



Rice topped with fresh seafood



Suizenji Jojuen



From Suizenji Jojuen, make a beeline for Kumamoto Castle for a lesson in iai, the art of drawing a sword. Learn not only the way of the samurai but also the spirituality of the warrior. At the end, collect your “samurai training completion certificate” and a tenugui hand towel as a souvenir.

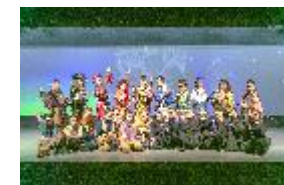


Samurai experience




Accommodation for the night is at Koko Hotel Premier Kumamoto. From the lobby all the way through to the guestrooms, the unusual and resplendent interior décor has been inspired by Kumamoto Castle. For dinner, enjoy a choice of meals at the adjacent SAKURAMACHI Kumamoto, a new landmark shopping and entertainment centre. For nightlife, head over to the 096k Kumamoto Kagekidan.

Accommodation: Koko Hotel Premier Kumamoto
hotels.com/kumamot



096k KUMAMOTO
Opera company

DAY 4 KUMAMOTO – KAGOSHIMA

 Catch the Shinkansen bullet train to Kagoshima, a journey of one hour, and then board a ferry for the 15-minute journey to Sakurajima. Upon arrival, rent a bicycle and explore the sights.

Arimura Lava Observatory stands on a small hill along a one-kilometre path that cuts across a lava field created by the great eruption of 1946. From here you can clearly see Kinko Bay and the power of Sakurajima, a world-famous active volcano. Minamidake, one of Sakurajima's three peaks, is a triangular cone-shaped volcano that is still active. From the crater can sometimes be heard rumbling sounds or explosions that occur with eruptions. Yogan Nagisa Park has a natural hot spring with a source some 1,000 metres below Sakurajima. Soak your feet in the reddish-brown hot water that gushes to the surface while admiring the majesty of Sakurajima.



Arimura Lava Observatory



Sakurajima



Cycling around Sakurajima



Return to Kagoshima by ferry and take part in a hands-on sushi-making class. Beginning by observing how to slice the fish, learn from a sushi master how to make your very own sushi and then enjoy your creations for lunch there and then.



Sushi-making class



After lunch travel 30 minutes by private vehicle to Sengan-en, designated a Place of Scenic Beauty, and the Shoko Shuseikan Museum, both of which form part of this World Cultural Heritage Site. As well as the superb garden with stunning views of Sakurajima, there is a palace where feudal lords once lived. Adjacent to the site is a Satsuma kiriko studio that offers tours of the cut glass production site.



Sengan-en



Shoko Shuseikan



The evening's accommodation is at Shiroyama Hotel Kagoshima, which stands on a 108-metre-high hill surrounded by woodland in the Kagoshima city centre. The views of Kinko Bay and the seemingly floating Sakurajima are spectacular. For dinner, enjoy a buffet that makes abundant use of locally grown seasonal produce.



Accommodation: Shiroyama Hotel Kagoshima
<https://www.shiroyama-g.co.jp/>

DAY 5 KAGOSHIMA – MIYAKONOJOU – AYA – MIYAZAKI



Take the train to Miyakonojo, a journey of about 80 minutes, and then travel 10 minutes by private vehicle to Kirishima Factory Garden. At the shochu distillery here do as professional blenders do by slowly inhaling the shochu aromas and tasting the sweet potatoes, the main shochu ingredient. See, hear, smell, taste and touch the shochu to learn how it is produced.



Kirishima Factory Garden



For lunch, head to Kichisuke in the Kirishima memorial hall, which is within Kirishima Factory Garden. The special menu pairs locally produced meat and other regional produce with various shochu types. Taste various craft beers and styles of shochu and enjoy discovering which food goes best with which shochu.



Pairing food with shochu



After lunch, travel 70 minutes by private vehicle to Aya Teruha Suspension Bridge, which spans the evergreen forests of the Kyushu Chuo Sanchi Quasi-National Park. With a height of 142 metres and a length of 250 metres, it is one of the largest pedestrian suspension bridges in the world. Finish your day out by trying your hand at the art of indigo dyeing at Aya International Craft Castle.



Aya Teruha Suspension Bridge



Aya International Craft Castle



The night's accommodation is Sheraton Grande Ocean Resort. The hotel is located 154 metres above ground and all guestrooms have east-facing ocean views. Enjoy a remarkable location unique to this Seagaia resort. Watch the sun rise over the magnificent Pacific Ocean and marvel at the glittering Miyazaki sunlight reflecting off the colorful sea, the blue of the sky and the vivid green of the pine forests and lawns. Play golf at night among the illuminations and, on full moon nights, wonder at the magical "moon road" that appears across the surface of the sea. For dinner, feast on various styles of Miyazaki beef, said to be the best in Japan. Enjoy Teppanyaki at Beef Atelier Ushinomiya, a snug restaurant with only six seats.

Accommodation: Sheraton Grande Ocean Resort
<https://seagaia.co.jp/>



DAY 6 MIYAZAKI – USUKI – BEPPU



Travel 2.5 hours by train to Usuki. From the station, head to the Usuki Stone Buddhas, 20 minutes away. All but one of the Buddhas have been designated as national treasures.

Carved to represent Dainichi Nyorai, the cosmic Buddha, the Usuki Stone Buddhas are believed to have been created from around 1180 onward. They are unparalleled in Japan in terms of scale, quantity and quality of carving.



Usuki Stone Buddhas



For lunch, feast on pufferfish at the original Ryotei Yamadaya, one of Usuki's top restaurants. Yamadaya's Tokyo location has earned three stars in the Michelin Guide Tokyo for nine consecutive years.



Ryotei Yamadaya



Tiger pufferfish



Nioza Historical Road



In the afternoon, travel 20 minutes by private vehicle to Nioza Historical Road. Located at the base of Usuki Castle, Nioza sits on a hill made of tuff, a porous rock formed by hardened volcanic ash, in this case from Mount Aso. The rock has been cut to form a road. The many narrow alleyways retain the atmosphere of a castle town, while high stone walls, stately tiled roofs, white-walled buildings and numerous temples line the road's slopes. Be sure to change into kimono to fully enjoy strolling around the charming lanes of Usuki.



Usuki Castle ruins



From Usuki, travel 50 minutes by private vehicle to Beppu.

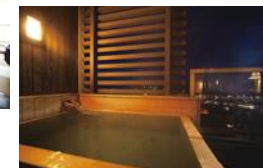


Ryugenji



The evening's accommodation is Ryotei Matsubaya, which sits on a tranquil hilltop among natural beauty that is gradually transformed as the seasons change. For dinner, enjoy innovative kaiseki cuisine made with Oita's abundant ocean and mountain ingredients. Delicious Yakushi hot spring water is used in the drinks and cooking. Each guestroom overlooks Beppu Bay and has a bath fed with hot spring water.

Accommodation: Ryotei Matsubaya
<https://matsubaya.cc/>



DAY 7 BEPPU – FUKUOKA



Return to Fukuoka by train, a journey of about two hours, and then head to Hakatamachiya Furusatokan, which is 20 minutes away. Here, discover the world of Hakata traditional crafts and the craftsmen who doggedly preserve traditional techniques while incorporating new ideas and concepts into their work. Items on show include Hakata dolls, Hakata papier-mâché, Hakata spinning tops and Hakata magemono circular boxes.



Hakatamachiya Furusatokan

From Furusatokan, head to Kushida Shrine on foot. Since long ago, the shrine has been the nexus for worship of Kushida, the deity for success in business and for long life and eternal youth. The shrine is also the starting point for Oiyama, the climax of Hakata Gion Yamakasa, Fukuoka's leading festival. From the shrine, continue on foot to the Hakata Traditional Performing Arts Centre to spend time with trainee geisha in a traditional setting.



Kushida Shrine



Spending time with geiko



For lunch, try your hand at making the Fukuoka specialty of ramen noodles. Immerse yourself in the whole process, from kneading the flour dough and cutting it into noodles with a pasta-making machine to boiling the noodles using an authentic tebo draining basket and, last but not least, tucking in to your freshly made ramen. Whatever's left can be taken away as a souvenir.



Making ramen (Images are for illustration purposes.)

In the evening, spend an hour enjoying the city streets of Fukuoka from an open top bus.



Your hotel for the night is the Grand Hyatt Fukuoka, which, even for the luxury Grand Hyatt brand, is superbly located. The hotel stands in Canal City Hakata and is surrounded by specialty stores, theaters and restaurants. With traditional dignity and grace, Grand Hyatt Fukuoka is a city oasis of hospitality where guests can enjoy a stay of the highest quality. For dinner, enjoy top-quality Western cuisine made with ingredients carefully selected by the hotel's chefs.



Open top bus

After dinner, enjoy wandering among Hakata's famous yatai food stalls.

The next morning, leave Fukuoka Airport and return to Australia via Singapore or by other international route.

Accommodation: Grand Hyatt Fukuoka
<https://www.hyatt.com/jaJP/hotel/japan/grand-hyatt-fukuoka/fukgh>



Fukuoka yatai food stall