

RELAXING OITA: A 2-DAY TRIP FROM TOKYO



When Japanese people want to relax, they go to an onsen (hot spring). Japan boasts an incredible number of hot spring resorts, and one of the very popular location of them is Oita Prefecture in Kyushu. If you want to try the onsen experience while enjoying local cuisine and sightseeing, here is an itinerary that will take you to some of the best places in Oita. Soak in the famous hot springs of Beppu, stroll through a gorgeous samurai town, visit a shrine overlooking the sea and pair some locally made wine with delicious regional dishes.

Getting to Oita

From Tokyo's Haneda Airport it takes about 1.5 hour by plane to the Oita Airport.

DAY 1

Discover a Beautiful Castle Town

Start your journey in the samurai town of Kitsuki. This castle town is made of two samurai districts, connected in the middle by a merchant district. The old buildings and streets are lovingly preserved, making for a beautiful backdrop. Also, wearing a kimono (you can rent one in the area) gets you free entrance and discounts at many establishments. Finally, visit the quaint Kitsuki Castle, one of Japan's smallest castles.

How to get there: From Oita Airport, take the Airport Limosine Bus (about 30 minutes) to the Kitsuki Bus Terminal. Kitsuki Castle is about a 5-minute walk from the bus stop.

Try Oita's Famous Hot Springs

After the historic views, it is time to enjoy what Oita Prefecture is famous for. Head to Kannawa, an old-fashioned onsen (hot spring) town in Beppu city. Here you can bathe in the many thermal facilities and relax. Go to the Hyotan hot springs for outdoor and indoor baths, a waterfall bath, a steam bath and a sand bath. Don't forget to try jigoku mushi (hell steaming), a local cuisine where food is cooked using the steam from the hot springs.

How to get there: From Kitsuki, take a taxi to Kitsuki Station. Take a train to Kamegawa Station and then a bus to the Kannawa bus stop. Total travel time: approx. 1 hour.

DAY 2

A Journey to Hell

Visit Beppu City's famous seven "hells". These hot springs all have a unique look and they are for

viewing only, not for bathing. Make sure you check out Chi no Ike Jigoku, (a blood red pool) and Umi Jigoku (a blue pool). You can also catch a view of Beppu city engulfed in clouds of hot steam.

How to get there: The “Jigoku” hells area of Beppu is just a 15-minute walk from Kannawa Onsen. You may easily walk around as almost all the “Jigoku”s are located in Kannawa area.

Enjoy Wine and Regional Cuisine

Continue your journey with a visit to the Ajimu Winery in Usa city. This facility surrounded by vineyards resembles a park. You can tour the factory and sample the wine and brandy made with locally harvested grapes, including a Japanese grape variety called shokoshi. Next to the winery is Asagiri no Sho. This restaurant pairs the local wine with exquisite regional cuisine. Local specialties include dango jiru (thick noodles and vegetables in a miso-based soup), toriten (chicken tempura) and softshell turtle.

How to get there: Ajimu Winery is about a 30-minute taxi ride from Beppu’s “Jigoku” hells area.

Make Your Wishes at the Lovers' Shrine

Visit Awashimasha, a shrine dedicated to love and match making. The shrine stands on a cliff over the sea. To tell whether you will be fortunate in love, you can try to throw a stone into a heart-shaped hole in one of the rocks in the sea below. End your day with a romantic sunset at the nearby Matama Beach.

How to get there: Awashimasha Shrine is about a 50-minute taxi ride from Ajimu Winery. Matama Beach is an 8-minute taxi ride from the shrine.

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