

Kyushu's Hot Springs and Volcanoes

7 Days/6 Nights
Departure Dates:

2012
Nov 11 - Nov 17

2013
March 31 - April 6
Nov 10 - Nov 16

If these dates don't suit your travel schedule, please **contact us** to talk about operating a private tour or customizing a tour for you or your group.

Prices

US\$2600 Tour

US\$130 Bike Hire

Single Supplement

A single room may be available locally on payment of a supplement but, as some of the Japanese-style hostels are quite small, this cannot be guaranteed.

Route Map

Click on map to enlarge



Located in the southern part of Japan, Kyushu is the third largest island and is known for being a hot spot of steaming springs. Our cycle through this mountainous and geothermic island will take us past volcanic calderas, steaming vents, feudal castles, green tea plantations, old growth forests and waterfalls.

We will partake in the Japanese tradition of bathing in hot springs. Onsens provide great opportunities to meet friendly locals and soothe muscles after some challenging rides.

In the quaint town of Kurokawa, arguably the most beautiful onsen town in Japan, we don yukata and stroll down the streets hopping from hot spring to hot spring.

We next head to the land of water and stone bridges, with stunning views of Mt Kuju (1791m) and stopping to admire the feudal architecture of Taketa.

Turquoise water rushes down the Manainotaki waterfalls as we cycle into

Takachiho Gorge with its stunning blue waters contrasting with the red and yellows of the trees in the autumn. We cycle back to the rim of Mount Aso caldera, which has a circumference of around 120 km, before descending down to Kumamoto, offering a chance to glimpse into modern city life and feudal Japan at its landmark Kumamoto Castle.

This 7-day tour rides from the lushness of onsens to the steaming caldera of Mt. Aso to modern Kumamoto and offers up numerous myths and legends of Kyushu along the way.



You can extend your visit to Kyushu with our 8-day Cycling Colourful Kyushu Island tour.

Trip Profile

The cycling around Mt Aso is moderately challenging with a few climbs. We ride 265 km in five cycling days on quiet roads with amazing views. The first few days riding are shorter, giving you ample time to warm up for the longer days towards the end of the trip, but averagely fit cyclists will have no problems.

Suitability: This trip is suitable for anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. This trip is not too arduous, and so riders with less experience are more than welcome, although the fitter you are the more you will enjoy it.

Biking Conditions: This trip is for 99% along tarmac roads in good condition and there is no technical riding. The trip is fully supported; an air-conditioned bus follows us for the entire journey, so exhausted riders can skip the tougher sections if they wish.

Biking Difficulty



(out of five)

Good quality tarmac roads with some long days and hills. No technical experience required.

Day to Day

B= Breakfast L= Lunch D=Dinner

Day 1 - Arrive in Kumamoto/Aso

Arrive Kumamoto/Aso airport from Tokyo, Osaka, or Seoul, or Kumamoto station from Tokyo and Osaka and transfer to Jigoku Onsen. Time to get the bikes fitted and test ridden. There will be a group meeting at 6 pm followed by our first true Japanese meal.

Jigoku Onsen. D

Day 2 - Aso – Kurokawa

Our riding begins straight away from the ryokan on the impressive plain of the Aso caldera. Legend is that the outer crater was once a lake, but one day the god of the mountain kicked open the only break (through which today the railroad passes) emptying the water and leaving the plain fit for cultivation. After climbing the caldera rim and some minor up and downs on scenic Yamanami Highway, it is downhill to Kurokawa Onsen. Kurokawa is a charming little town with two streets and a bunch of hot springs dotted around. We visit Yama Mizuki Onsen, with its outdoor bath sitting on the edge of a fast moving creek, giving you the option to freeze yourself then jump back in the hot water.

Kurokawa Onsen. Ride 48 km. B L D

Day 3 - Kurokawa - Taketa

Scenic Hokutaki Roman Road crossing the Kuju Highlands leads us southeast to the old Bungo State, land of water and stone bridges. Underway, the views on Kyushu's highest mountain, Mt Kuju (1791m) are truly stunning. The Kuju Flower Park and Midori Highlands Guernsey Farm offer distraction from the hard work in the saddle. Then it is a downhill freewheel all the way to Taketa. Arriving in Taketa, we visit the ruin of Oka Castle, which was constructed by a local warrior to house Yoshitsune Minamoto, a hero in Kamakura Period. If it's the season, cherry blossoms bloom plentiful. Taketa has a fair amount of feudal architecture, *buke yashiki*, most notably Taketa Manse built in 1818.

Farm stay. Ride 34 km. B L D

Day 4 - Taketa – Takachiho

We spend today in the hilly Sobo Katamuki Quasi-National Park, taking a break at the Harajiri Waterfalls before climbing to Ohiragoe Tunnel at 950 m. After the tunnel it's a spectacular descent into Takachiho, ancient land of Japanese myths. In autumn, the slopes colour magnificently red with maple leaves. It is said that the gods first set foot on earth at this spot after creating Japan by stirring the primeval ocean muck. On our way down we visit Amano-iwado Cave, said to be where sun goddess Amaterasu hid from her joker-brother Susanou, to be coaxed out by goddess Amano-uzume dancing hoochi-kooch parody of her own sacred dance which 'made assembled gods laugh till the high plain of heaven shook'. In the evening we can watch these ancient kagura folk dances performed at the



Cycling Distance
265 kilometres

Cycling Days

5

Takachiho Shrine. We stay at Hosuehiro Ryokan.
Hosuehiro Ryokan. Ride 58 km. B L D

Day 5 - Takachiho - Aso

Once more we climb up the rim of Mt Aso's caldera. Passing by Takamori, filling our bottles with fresh water from a well at Shirakawa Springs. Climbing the last metres, we earn a well deserved soak at Jigoku Onsen. Our onsen pass gets stamped as we go into the 3 different onsen areas of the complex. The rocky outdoor baths (separate gender), "Roteniwaburo", are quite nice. The water temperature is great, they're rarely crowded, and the view is spectacular. The Sparrow Bath, "Suzumenoyu" is mixed gender, and has very acidic water, so take off any jewelry before entering.

Jigoku Onsen. Ride 74 km. B L D

Day 6 - Aso - Kumamoto

We follow the Shirakawa river and the city of Kumamoto is nearing quickly. We stop to visit Kumamoto castle, which dates back to 1467, and is considered one of Japan's top 3 castles (三名城 *Sanmeijō*), together with Osaka and Nagoya. If we have time we'll ride on to Suizenji garden and visit the replica of Mount Fuji. Tonight we overnight at a traditional Japanese inn where the owner is a dye artist and you can make your own souvenir tenugui towel.

Nakashimaya Hostel. Ride 51 km. B L D

Day 7 – Kumamoto Departure

Departure to airport or train station.

B

How to Book

Fill out our online **booking form** to reserve your adventure. Places are limited so it is essential that you secure your place as early as possible.

Uniquely SpiceRoads

We live in Asia and have thoroughly researched the routes to assure that you see the best scenery and ride the best terrain, be it on road or dirt.

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We have carefully chosen accommodation that is the best available for the location and offer a good mix, from home stays to luxurious lodges, on our tours.

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We love Asian cuisine, well-known for its use of fresh ingredients, and will make sure you get to sample lots of it.

Nuts & Bolts

Bikes: Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you are able to hire bikes locally for the price listed on the front page of this document. The bikes are well-known makes of hybrid and mountain bikes (depending on the tour) with lightweight alloy frames, light gears, v-brakes and Shimano components. You're free to bring own pedals, (rail type) seat and handlebar extensions. If you bring your own bike, please make sure it is in good mechanical order.

Bike Repairs: Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended. These are provided.

Safety: Wearing a helmet is compulsory on this biking adventures and if you choose not to wear one you will be asked to sign a liability waiver. Your guide is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

Support: We will be supported by air-conditioned vehicle that have been specially modified for cycle tours. The vehicle follow us the whole time and are always available for tired cyclists. It is very easy to get bikes on and off, so you can rest when you are tired and cycle whenever you feel like it.

Guides: You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 8 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

The Nitty Gritty

Arriving and Departing: This tour begins in Kumamoto and ends in Kumamoto. International and domestic flights to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times.

Passports and Visas: All nationalities require a valid passport and up to 62 countries have reciprocal visa exemption arrangements allowing nationals from those countries to enter Japan without a visa. Depending on the country, you are allowed to stay in Japan for a certain period of time, which can range from 90 days to six months.

Health: No vaccinations are needed.

Weather: Japan has a diverse climate. There are four seasons: from April to June is spring. The rainy season is from middle of June to the middle of July. July through end of September can be hot and humid temperatures in the big cities can go as high as 35 degrees Celsius.

Food: Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Most meals will be Japanese seafood; a typical breakfast would include rice, a piece of grilled fish, miso soup. We always carry some granola and Muesli with us for those in need. Dinners will include lots of different seafood - some cooked, some raw. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

Subject to Change

In remote destinations abnormal conditions can prevail at any time, and all adventurous holidays can therefore be subject to unexpected change.

Although our guides will do their best to adhere to the original itinerary and cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes; in order to enjoy our tour you should be prepared to be flexible when necessary.

Drink: Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit and soft drinks are included in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer is freely available everywhere in Japan, but is NOT included in the price.

Extra Expenses: We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US\$30 a day for incidentals. Tipping is not customary in Japan. Guides have received and accepted tips on a voluntary basis.

Money: The currency in Japan is the yen (¥) and is pronounced as 'en', with no 'y' sound. Though ATMs are everywhere in Japan, it is not always easy to use them as most only work with Japan-issued bank cards and credit cards. The exception is Japan's post office ATMs which accept cards that belong to the following international networks: Visa, Plus, MasterCard, Maestro, Cirrus American Express and Diners Club cards. In addition to postal ATMs, you will find a few international ATMs in big cities and at the major airports. International cards also work in Citibank Japan ATMs.

The information in this document is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between this and previous information, this document is the correct version.

