



Linking community-based tourism and conservation of nature - the cases of Japan's rural areas



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Spirit of Japan Travel



... TRAVEL LIKE NO OTHERS



::: TRAVEL LIKE NO OTHERS

- **22°N to 46°N latitude**
- **3,000+ islands**
- **Biodiversity Hotspot**
 - **1/4 vertebrate endemic**
 - **3/4 amphibians endemic**

FACTS ON JAPAN

data from CBD, CI

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- more than 20% are over 65
- In 1989 - 11.6% In 2030 - 25.6%
- Low fertility and high life expectancies

FACTS ON JAPAN

data from Japanese Health Ministry

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Genkai shuraku (限界集落): Marginal community. More than 50% of the population is over 65. The population is aging, and the function of the governing body is becoming limited.

7,878 villages (12.7%) are facing the issue
423 to disappear within 10 years
2,220 to disappear eventually

FACTS ON JAPAN

cited from Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

::: COMMUNITY MOTIVATION

Silent ending is a virtue

Employment opportunity for young people

Good transportation - shopping, hospital

Periodic visit to houses

Mutual internationalization



TOURS

KYOTO/NARA CULTURE – pottery, tea ceremony, Zen meditation, kimono, sweets, traditional cuisine : 8 9

RURAL COMMUNITY – farm house stay, rice planting & harvesting, green tea picking, basket weaving, sushi class, taiko-drum, hot springs, dance, music, seaturtle conservation : 2 7 10 11 12

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS – birds, whales, dolphins, bear, deer, plants, and endemic species : 1 2 4 5 7 11 14 16

SCUBA DIVING – hammerheads, manta rays, cold and warm water : 1 5 11 14 15 16

KAYAKING/CANOEING – island hopping, camping, rapids, icebergs : 1 4 5 7 10 11 14 15

TREKKING/HIKING – multi-day, day hike, pilgrimage, mountains, coasts : 1 2 4 5 6 7

8 9 10 11 13 14 15

CYCLING/MTB – multi-day, one-day, mountains, flood plains, city : 1 8 11

VOLUNTOURISM – help earthquake disaster area in exchange for food and shelter : 3

WORLD HERITAGE SITES & NATIONAL PARKS UPON REQUEST.

From 35,000yen per group per day up to 8 persons. *Includes guiding fee and tax.





Muroto-Anan Quasi-National Park

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Kutcharo Lake, Hokkaido

HOME TO THOUSANDS OF MIGRATORY SWANS - EXPLORE IN A PRIVATE RESERVE

The northern tip of Hokkaido is rarely visited, even by the Japanese nationals, because it appears to be a vast plain of nothingness. In fact, most travelers are not aware of what they are missing - pristine nature.

Lake Kutcharo is a permanent freshwater lake [Bewick's Swans](#) 27km; however, it is a rare water bird sanctuary that supports the [largest Bewick's Swan population in Japan](#) and was designated a Ramsar site in 1989 (wetlands of international importance). What even the local people do not know is that a large portion of the untouched land is owned by private parties. Working with a local NGO for [conservation and ecotourism](#), [Conservation NGO](#) this destination can only be enjoyed by only a few selected individuals who agree to abide by the codes of conduct, respecting nature and the local culture. Its blessings of nature are unspoken to the outer world and should be kept this way to minimize impacts from human interactions.

The highlights of this destination are not limited to the protected natural area. You will have a chance to visit the town as the guests of friends. If you like cooking, you can harvest the local surf and turf ingredients for a dinner hosted by the community. For cultural interaction, staying overnight in a local Zen temple is now possible, (subject to availability), definitely something beyond what normal travelers experience.

Photo Album : Kutcharo Lake, Hokkaido



Behind the scenes



Behind the scene



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Hiwasa, Tokushima

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ENJOY PRIME ADVENTURE

[Loggerhead seaturtle Nesting Ground](#)

Hiwasa is the sleepy fishing village with a well-protected beach where turtle often come to nest during spring and summer. Stroll through the town past traditional minka houses, making stops at places of interest, i.e. sweets shop, seafood store, artisan's gallery, etc. When you are tired of walking, there is a natural hot spring footbath next to a market where locals gather to chat and catch up with stories. For energetic individuals, join a weekly Awa-odori folk dance practice at the municipal hall. Within a stone's throw, there is a Hilltop Yakuoji (deity of medicine) temple, home to worshipers and day visitors making their 28th stop on the 88-temple pilgrimage circuit henro; that pilgrims have followed since the early 800s in the hope to expel evil spirits and misfortune.

[Seaturtle museum collaboration](#)

Due to its proximity to the ocean and mountains, numerous adventurous opportunities are available to sate the visitors' curiosity in exploring the area. Sea kayaking along the rocky shore with 'paddle-thru' natural arches, mountain biking in town or in the woods, trekking along a photogenic coastal trail... these are just among a few of the adventures that Hiwasa offers.

This area is also a food lovers' paradise. Sample today's catch and locally grown organic vegetables prepared with a touch of local seasonings in more-than-a-century-old private dining establishment. Our traditional style inns boast straw-mat tatami rooms that are cleverly positioned to allow you to luxuriate within view of a Japanese garden. Weather and season permitting, local farmers assist you in planting and harvesting rice and seasonal vegetables in a lush-green valley.

Photo Album : Hiwasa, Tokushima



Behind the scene



Behind the scenes



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Masuda, Shimane

PROUD OF RURAL JAPAN - NATURE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY HAS IT ALL!

We have been developing eco-rural tourism product for years with the local community of Sumi in Masuda, Shimane. This small rice-farming community lies next to one of the clearest rivers, Takatsu River, and the community faces a number of social issues: 1) the younger generation drifts out to the cities 2) limited income as less and less rice and rice products are eaten in Japan 3) high-aging society and depopulation

Culture and environment conservation

These issues are leading to serious degradation in the surrounding environment, Satoyama, and to traditional rituals such as Kagura, (Shinto music and dance). The community does not desire a silent ending of the village; rather it endeavors to host travelers as if they were their family members, not just the guests.

This area is the least visited in all of Japan by overseas travelers; thus, the cultural authenticity is intact and vivid. The community members will perform the sacred dance in a lush ancient shrine just for you, and a tea ceremony will be held at an old private house with a historically valued dry stone garden that is closed to the public. The majority of what you pay will stay in the local area for your food and drinks, employment, and conservation of the river that their life is dependent.



Photo Album : Masuda, Shimane



Behind the scenes



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Spirit of Japan Travel

**World Natural Heritage
Ogasawara National Park**

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Ogasawara Islands

THE GALAPAGOS OF THE ORIENT - NATIVE SPECIES PARADISE

The Ogasawara Islands were added to UNESCO list of World Natural Heritage sites in July 2011. Flora and fauna there have undergone unique evolutionary processes, because these islands have never been connected with a continent, and thus are often dubbed the GALAPAGOS OF THE ORIENT.

These islands are only accessible by a 25-hour boat ride, with additional hours during rough weather. Visitors must be committed to staying a minimum of 5 days including the 2-day boat ride. We will kindly ask you to follow the codes of conduct set by the local government to help conserve the nature on the islands.

The activities are season- and weather-dependent, however, whale watching, dolphin swims, seakayaking, and scuba diving are known to be one among the best in Japan. Land activities include

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Photo Album : Ogasawara Islands



It all comes down to...

- Kindly approach to talk about the past
- Invest overtime, late nights
- Build bonds and trust



Trusting and be trusted by the community



Challenges

- Split community by our presence
- Understand their life cycle (on/off season)
- No or no adequate accommodation in the village
- Equal opportunity (seniority, male-dominated society)
- Talk turkey (from a guest to a reliable business partner/friend)
- Meeting timing, frequency, and duration

Our rural tourism strategies

- Small volume, High quality tours
- Small volume, High paying clients
- Low carbon, Slow travel
- Low calorie, Nutritious food
- Reserved for eco-elites
- Unique priceless opportunity

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See you back here in JAPAN!

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