

Japan – Bike Parks and Backcountry Tour

Where and when does this trip start and finish?

The Japan MTB trip starts and finishes at Narita Airport, Tokyo, Japan and runs Sunday to Saturday. It is best that you plan to arrive at Narita Airport on the Saturday as we will depart Narita airport at midday on the Sunday. This will allow you to have a good rest after your flight and won't affect our departure time if your flight is late. We start riding from Monday morning until Saturday afternoon. Arrange your departure flight from Tokyo on the Sunday after the trip at the earliest as we will arrive at Narita airport in the evening of the final Saturday to maximise our riding time.

What's included in the price?

- 6 nights accommodation (from Sunday night to Friday night).
- 6 x breakfast
- 6 x dinners
- 6 days of guided riding (including 2 days in bike parks)
- All lift tickets, park entry fees and land transport
- Van support (your bikes and kit will be moved with you the entire trip)

What's not included in the price?

- Lunches. We will provide transport to and from lunch/dinner and help with ordering meals and explaining how things work!
- Accommodation on the Saturday night before the trip starts or the Saturday night when the trip finishes. We have recommended airport hotel accommodation options.

What is the maximum group size?

Our groups are capped at 8 riders. This is the maximum size we can cater for and accept.

Do I have to book as a group?

We take individual and group bookings. If you book as an individual you will have to share a room with one of your new riding buddies. By the end of a week's riding you will have a whole new bunch of riding buddies to book your next League of Trail adventure with!

Is there an itinerary?

Please refer to our website for an outline of our itinerary. There may be slight variations based on weather and trail conditions. The accommodation will remain the same regardless of weather conditions.

Getting here

What is the best airline to use to get to Japan with a bike?

We have no affiliation with any particular airline, however, we regularly use QANTAS for our flights because of their baggage allowance and great past experiences. Whichever airline you choose, always double check their baggage policies to ensure you can take a bike on the flight and what your baggage weight allowances are.

Can I arrive earlier and/or depart later?

The trip starts and finishes at Narita Airport, Tokyo. We designed it this way to give you flexibility in planning your arrival and departure. Japan is an amazing country and while you'll get to experience a piece of Japan on the mountain bike trip you may like to spend some extra time checking out more of the country. Narita airport has great transport options directly into Tokyo which is a transportation hub for the country.

If I arrive earlier or leave later is there somewhere to store my bike?

There are delivery companies that can take your bike from Narita to the accommodation in Matsumoto and return your bike to Narita from Hakuba (our final destination) if you want to travel without your bike. Contact us for more information.

Can I meet you in Matsumoto and leave directly from Hakuba?

We can definitely accommodate this option, however, we are not able to adjust the cost of your trip if you choose to find your own way to Matsumoto or leave directly from Hakuba.

Administration

What insurance do I need? **IMPORTANT** – read this as travel insurance is mandatory!!!!

It is mandatory to have travel insurance that covers you for rescue while mountain biking in mountainous, remote, backcountry locations in Japan. Your insurance must also cover you for any medical costs in Japan as well as repatriation.

It is a condition of booking that you take out insurance that meets the above criteria. Matt has had personal experience with injuries in Japan requiring hospitalisation. While we have no affiliation with Velosure (velosure.com.au) Matt was insured through Velosure and their service was outstanding and for this reason we recommend and personally use Velosure for all of our adventures.

We highly recommend that everyone has travel insurance cover for extra costs and charges associated with travel delays, cancellations, rescheduling, repatriation or any other factors outside your control

Should I insure my bike and belongings?

We make every effort to ensure that your bike and belongings remain safe and secure throughout the trip, however, we don't accept any responsibility or liability for damage, loss or theft of your bike or belongings while on the trip. It is up to you to ensure that you are happy with the security arrangements in place at the accommodation and whilst transporting your bike, belongings, including your bike on vehicles and uplifts. We accept no liability for damage incurred to your bike during uplifts by any means.

Please ensure that you have adequate insurance during the trip for damage, theft and loss to your bike and belongings.

Can I cancel or transfer my trip to another week?

Due to the high costs we incur to pre-book accommodation, guiding and transportation your final payment becomes non-refundable **at time of booking**. We highly recommend you have adequate travel insurance to cover any cancellation due to unforeseen circumstances in order to financially cover non-attendance. Please refer to our booking Terms and Conditions for further information.

What happens if I injure myself during the trip?

Your insurance should cover you financially. You must be insured for travel to the nearest hospital for treatment. We will help you where we can with logistics in the event of a hospital visit, however, ultimately the trip will continue without you and you may need to rely on your insurance provider for continued care and transportation

How much spending money should I bring?

Japan's currency is the Yen. Paying by credit/debit card is not common in Japan. It is best to carry money with you. If you don't exchange money at the airport or prior to your departure we have found that the ATM's at 7 Eleven stores work for most overseas issued cards when withdrawing cash. We will be stopping at many 7 Eleven's during our week of riding (the food there is amazing!) so there will be ample opportunity to withdraw some cash. Expect to budget up to 1500 Yen for lunch and 600 - 800 Yen for a beer at restaurants.

When should I tell you about a medical condition?

If you have a pre-existing medical condition it is a requirement that you disclose this during the booking process. If you injure yourself on the trail let one of the guides know as soon as possible. All guides carry remote area first aid kits and are trained in remote area first aid.

The Riding

How long are the days and how much ascending/descending is there?

We have maximised the riding on this trip, however, there will still be time at the end of the day to play tourist. Expect to be out for 5-6 hours a day. Our trip is uplift assisted when possible and we use chairlifts in the bike parks. Be prepared to ascend 1000 – 1500m on backcountry days. When it comes to descending expect upwards of 3000m+ of descending in a day in the bike parks if you ride hard!

How difficult is the riding?

The trails in Japan are a mix of fast, wide open downhill runs and some techy gnar in the bike parks to natural, flowy back country trails with plenty of tight corners. There are some steep sections of trail, tight switchbacks and sections with exposure as you would expect in high alpine environments. A strong intermediate to advanced rider comfortable riding dark blue to black diamond (International standard) will have no worries riding the trails in Japan. You don't need to be comfortable on 'bike park' type features like gap jumps, drop offs, wall rides. These man made features are not generally found on our trips

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be comfortable riding your bike for 4-6 hours a day in high alpine environments. A solid level of endurance and the confidence to ride back country trails with limited escape routes is essential. The fitter you are, the more you will enjoy your trip.

Do you use shuttles or uplifts?

Our trips are gravity oriented and we will use private shuttles and gondola uplifts when available. Understandably not all locations are able or allowed to be accessed by motor vehicle or gondola and as such there are large elements of trail riding with climbing of ~1000m+ on back country days

What will the weather be like?

May is generally still a little cooler as the peaks will still be capped in a lot of snow from the winter. The days are generally clear and crisp, perfect weather for riding.

September/October sees the change of season and the leaves start changing colours to brilliant yellows and reds. You can expect a late hit of summer heat but generally the temperature is still warm.

Riding in alpine environments it is always important to carry clothing for sudden changes in weather. Refer to the section on equipment for minimum clothing packing list.

Is there a day off for sightseeing/rest?

While there is no dedicated day off there is plenty of time for sightseeing after the days riding. When we are based in Matsumoto you will have plenty of opportunity to take in the sights and soak up the Japanese culture. As we will be based in Matsumoto and Hakuba on the trip you do have the option of taking a day off riding if you would like.

Do you use qualified guides?

Our guides are experienced and qualified, first aid trained and insured. We also use local guides that really know the area and the language.

How do you ensure the safety of the riders?

Although we may seem friendly and laid back we have developed a robust set of operating procedures and safety protocols to minimise risk to our riders. Our guides are remote area first aid trained in case of emergencies. While we understand that mountain biking is an inherently dangerous activity we have numerous pre-planned bail out options, bad weather alternatives and carry 2 way satellite communication equipment in case of emergency.

Kit

What bike will I need?

You need a specific type of bike to enjoy and ride the trails in Japan. At a minimum a trail/enduro style dual suspension mountain bike with ~ 140mm suspension is required. Your bike should also be in excellent running condition. Having it serviced prior to your trip is a great idea as bike shops in Japan are few and far between.

What spare parts do I need to bring?

Japan has a very limited number of bike shops and even less available in terms of spare parts. At a minimum the following kit is essential for every rider:

- Spare tubes (minimum of 2)
- Spare derailleur hanger
- At least 1 replacement set of brake pads
- Spare tyre (especially if you are riding 29", or plus size tyres)
- Derailleur cable

What riding kit should I take?

Here is a basic packing list of the essentials items:

- Riding Jersey/tops
- Riding shorts
- Riding knicks/chamois
 - We have access to washing machines every night so you will have the opportunity to wash riding gear – pack accordingly
- Good waterproof jacket
- Windstopper/warm layer
- Waterproof shorts (not a bad idea if you have them as it can rain hard in Japan!)
- Helmet (half lid is fine, lightweight full face or half lid with removable chin guard)
- Knee guards (highly recommended)
- Elbow guards (optional)
- Riding glasses
- Full finger riding gloves
- 15-20 litre riding pack with water bladder or water bottles
- Trail spares as listed above
- Basic trail tool
- Mobile phone

What off bike kit should I bring?

As we have a limited carrying capacity in our vehicles please limit baggage to 1 kit bag each (between 50-100litres). You'll need to pack clothes for the evenings and toiletries along with your spare parts.

Accommodation and food

What is the accommodation like?

We will be staying in a traditional Japanese guest house (Ryokan) in Matsumoto. We have the entire Ryokan to ourselves, you will get to sleep on tatami mats and experience traditional Japanese living. Expect to share a room with up to 2 other riders.

Our accommodation in Hakuba is amazing and you will get to sleep in a western bed again! You'll have access to wifi, washing machines, TV (Japanese TV is pretty funny!) and full kitchens in both Matsumoto and Hakuba.

Will we go to public baths/onsens?

Onsens (public hot baths) are an important part of Japanese culture and part of our trips. Our accommodation in Matsumoto is a traditional Ryokan and as such has limited showering facilities for 8 people. As such we will use Onsens and public baths regularly. The hot mineral waters are great on the body after a big day of riding.

What do we do for lunch?

The Japanese convenience store (or Kon-bi-ni) is a wonder to behold. You will eat better at a Japanese 7-11 than you would in a lot of restaurants anywhere else in the world. Be prepared to try out a range of different foods from these places at lunch. Bike parks offer amazing, well priced meals at their onsite cafes.

What about dinner?

We'll get a chance to try out local Japanese cuisine every night. From little local Izakayas to Gyoza restaurants to making your own Okonomiyaki (Japanese pancakes) you'll get the chance to experience it all.

I have a special dietary requirement, how will that work?

In our experiences Japan doesn't cater that well to specific dietary requirements. We can certainly try and work in with your dietary requirements and if you have a medical allergy let us know and we'll work around it for you!