

niponica

Discovering Japan
2017

no. 20

にほにか



Special Feature

Railway Journey
across Japan

niponica is published in Japanese and six other languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) to introduce to the world the people and culture of Japan today. The title niponica is derived from "Nippon," the Japanese word for Japan.



Cover photo: Moka Railway runs through a tunnel of cherry blossoms and rapeseed flowers in spring.
 (Photo: Nakai Seiya)

Special Feature

Railway Journey across Japan

Over valleys, through mountains, across rivers, through tunnels, and along the sea:
 From Shinkansen traveling at a top speed of 320 km/hr to leisurely local lines, railway journeys in Japan offer unique pleasure and excitement.

Contents

Special Feature Railway Journey across Japan

- 04 Dream Railway Journey
 - 10 Attendants for Train Travel
 - 12 COOL Trains ART Trains
 Pictures of train culture
 - 14 Train Travel Today:
 Greater Comfort and Safety
 - 18 Riding in Warmth
-
- 22 Tasty Japan: Time to Eat!
Onigiri
 - 24 Strolling Japan
Moji
 - 28 Souvenirs of Japan
Kutsushita



Photo: Arto



no. 20 January 11, 2017
 Published by: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
 2-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8919, Japan
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/>

A high-speed train, likely a Shinkansen, is shown in motion, traveling from left to right across a field of vibrant yellow dandelions. The train is white with blue and red accents. The background is a bright blue sky filled with fluffy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, suggesting a pleasant journey.

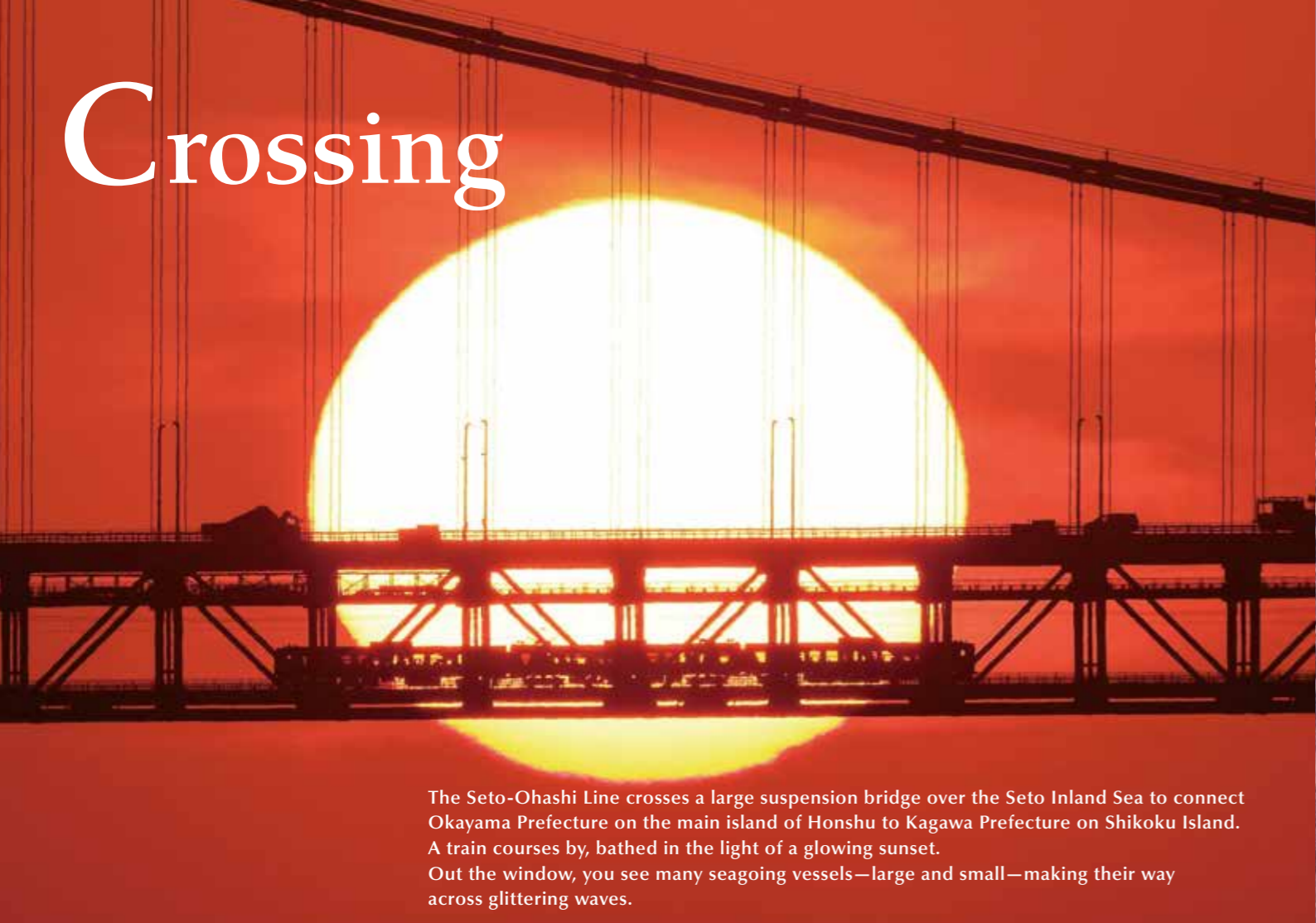
Dream Railway Journey

Photos: Nakai Seiya, Mashima Railway Pictures Co., Ltd.

From mountains and seas to valleys and plains, there are trains offering breathtaking views, trains carrying fresh perspectives on life, and trains bringing you local tastes savored at a banquet or at ease.

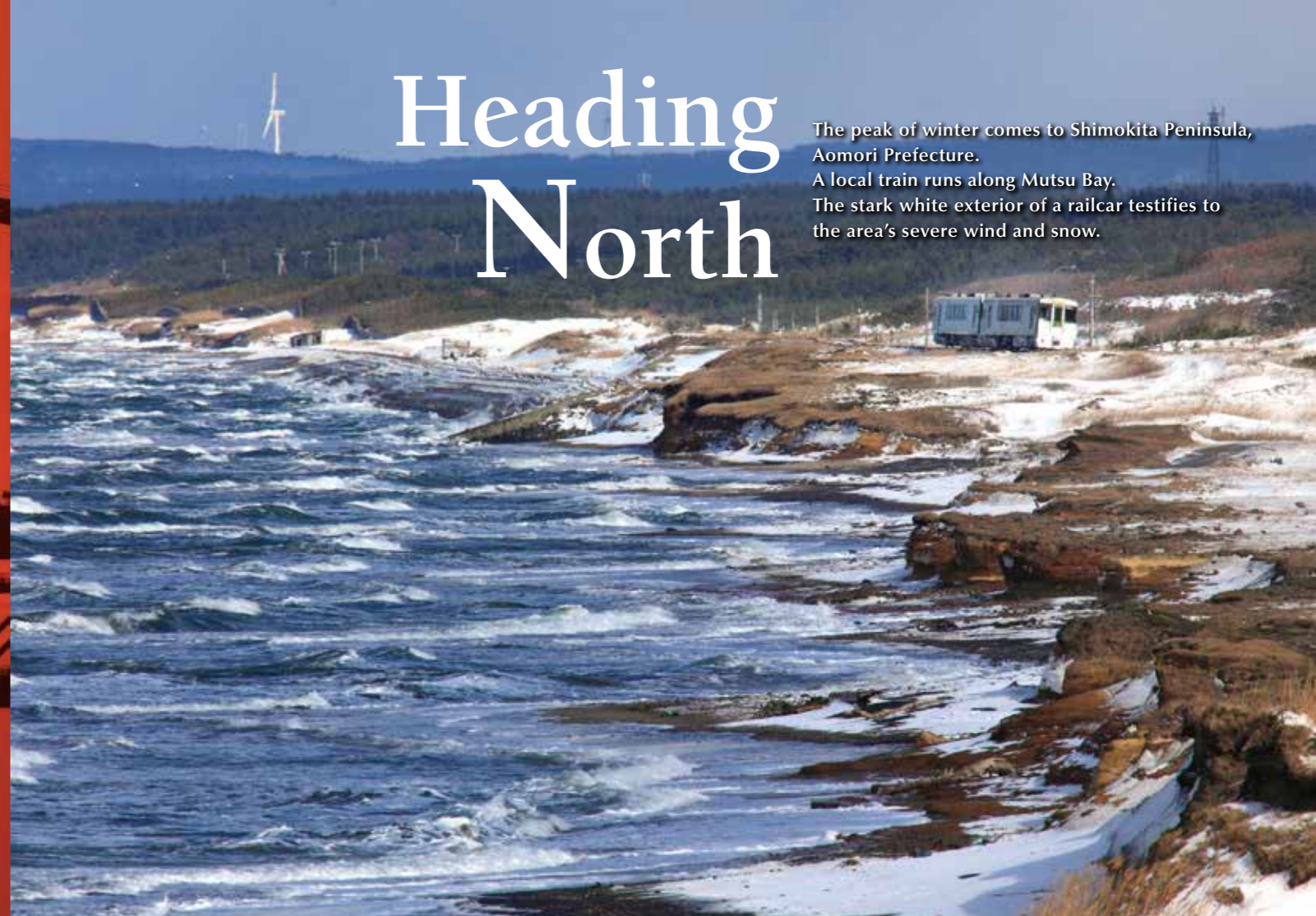
Let's embark on the railway journey of your dreams—one more devoted to discovery than destination.

Crossing



The Seto-Ohashi Line crosses a large suspension bridge over the Seto Inland Sea to connect Okayama Prefecture on the main island of Honshu to Kagawa Prefecture on Shikoku Island. A train courses by, bathed in the light of a glowing sunset. Out the window, you see many seagoing vessels—large and small—making their way across glittering waves.

Heading North



The peak of winter comes to Shimokita Peninsula, Aomori Prefecture. A local train runs along Mutsu Bay. The stark white exterior of a railcar testifies to the area's severe wind and snow.

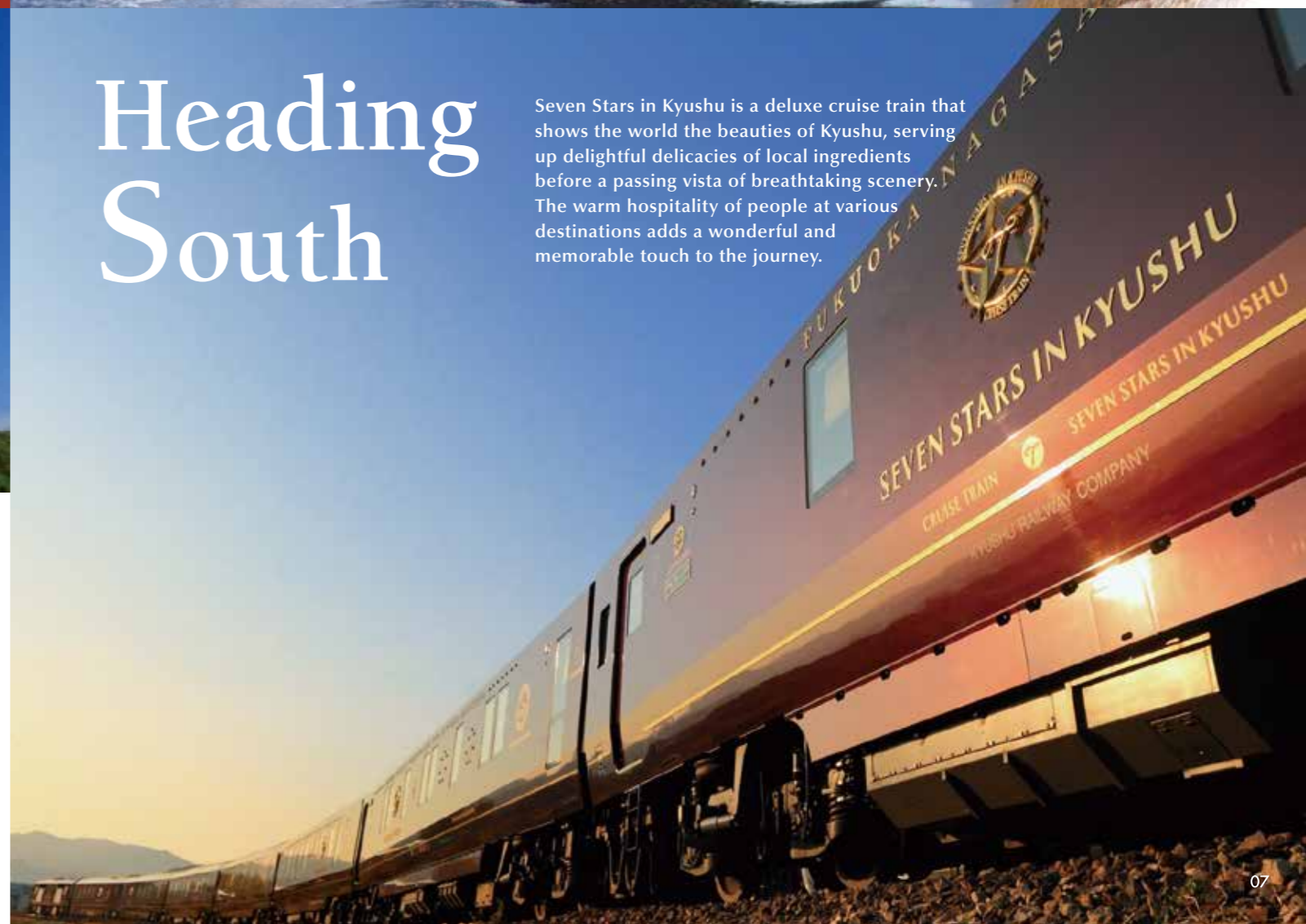
Shining



The morning sun glints off a highland train on a summer's day.

A local train is visible down the lush green tunnel of a northern station.

Heading South



Seven Stars in Kyushu is a deluxe cruise train that shows the world the beauties of Kyushu, serving up delightful delicacies of local ingredients before a passing vista of breathtaking scenery. The warm hospitality of people at various destinations adds a wonderful and memorable touch to the journey.

Reminiscent

Shimonada Station on the Yosai Line, Ehime Prefecture, is a place to alight from at least once in your life. The moment you set foot on the platform, the vast, tranquil Seto Inland Sea greets you. Sunsets are especially mesmerizing, and the station draws many who long to see a view reminiscent of home or the past.



Gateway



Tokyo Station, with a magnificent structure featuring red brick, is Japan's main rail gateway. Some 3,500 trains, including Shinkansen and conventional lines, depart this station carrying more than 500,000 passengers on any given day.

The Joyful Train features *tatami* (traditional rush mat) flooring and a "running banquet," complete with great smiles and grand window-seat views of the passing landscape.

Crew members of Hisatsu Orange Railway, running on the west coast of Kyushu, announce the dining train Orange Restaurant's imminent departure by joyously ringing a handbell.

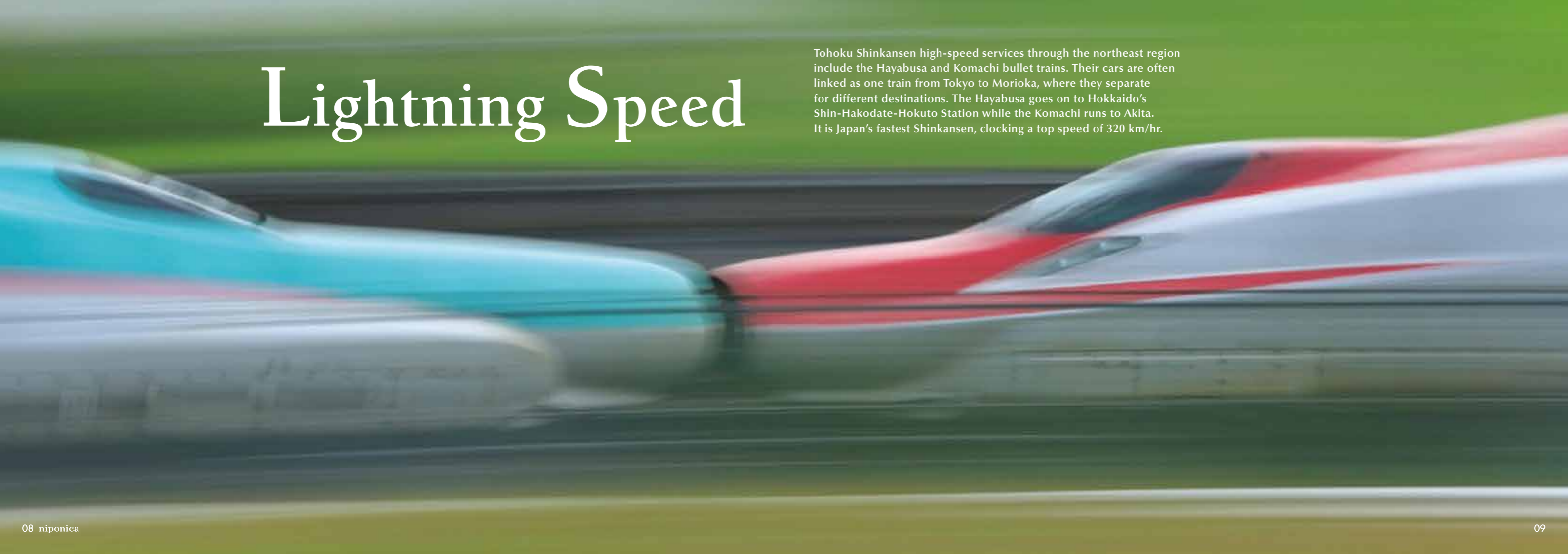


Smile



Lightning Speed

Tohoku Shinkansen high-speed services through the northeast region include the Hayabusa and Komachi bullet trains. Their cars are often linked as one train from Tokyo to Morioka, where they separate for different destinations. The Hayabusa goes on to Hokkaido's Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto Station while the Komachi runs to Akita. It is Japan's fastest Shinkansen, clocking a top speed of 320 km/hr.





Attendants for Train Travel

It's more than just the train itself that appeals to people and makes them want to get on again and again. The warmth and hospitality of the attendants greeting passengers on each train truly enhances the enjoyment of travel many times over.

DESIGNED BY EIJI MITOOKA + DON DESIGN ASSOCIATES



Photos: Echizen Railway Co., LTD, Kurihara Kageri, Takagi Hiroshi, East Japan Railway Company, Mashima Railway Pictures Co., Ltd., Yuri Kogen Railway Company, and Ryobi Holdings Co., Ltd.

01 Obako Attendants on the Magokoro Train Service

Attendants in traditional local attire provide support to passengers. (Yuri Kogen Railway, Akita Prefecture)



Obako attendants greet passengers. Obako means "young woman" in local Akita dialect. Announcements mixed with Akita dialect leave an impression that's different from Tokyo, providing a feeling of nostalgia.

Local railways provide warm hospitality to travellers and local residents alike. On the Yuri Kogen Railway in Akita Prefecture, female attendants known as *Obako*, who wear traditional local attire, ride the *Magokoro* ("sincerity") train, which operates a return service once a day. The attendants do more than simply help passengers on and off the train. They also provide information on sights along the line and present passengers with handmade gifts as mementos of the trip. All of this helps to make a more than memorable occasion. The thoughtful and heartfelt service that can be found in local areas guarantees a fun and unforgettable journey.



When the train leaves the terminus, the women at a store inside Yashima Station and employees give everyone a grand send-off.

02 Tama the Second Stationmaster

The super stationmaster cat (Kishi Station, Wakayama Electric Railway Kishigawa Line, Wakayama Prefecture)

The local Wakayama Electric Railway took over a line that was close to shutting down and worked together with local people to bring it back to life. A local family asked for their calico cat named Tama to take up residence in the station, and the cat was soon appointed stationmaster, which became the talk of the town. With the passing away of Tama in 2015, a new cat called Nitama has taken on the role of second stationmaster to greet passengers at Kishi Station. In Japan, cats are thought to bring good luck. Many tourists from both inside and outside Japan come to visit and ride the Tama Train adorned with pictures of Tama, who has become the symbol of the area.

DESIGNED BY EIJI MITOOKA + DON DESIGN ASSOCIATES



The roof of Kishi Station is made using a traditional Japanese cypress bark-thatched style in the shape of a cat's face.



Tama, "Honorable Eternal Stationmaster"



The cat affectionately known as Nitama is protected in Okayama where the parent company of Wakayama Electric Railway is based. After serving as stationmaster at Idakiso Station, Nitama took on the role of "Tama the Second Stationmaster" when the original Tama passed away. You are more than likely to find Nitama sleeping comfortably in the glass-walled stationmaster's office.



03 The Ultimate in Sweets Created by Fruit Meisters

Fruitea Fukushima, "Traveling café" (JR East Ban-etsu-West Line, Fukushima Prefecture)



The sweets served on-board the train are part of a menu that cannot be found anywhere else. Each treat is handmade by skilled artisans. In addition, the on-board interior is so relaxing that you'd never have thought you were on a train.

Fukushima Prefecture is one of Japan's foremost producers of fruit like peaches, strawberries, and cherries. At a long-established fruit company that has been in business for more than 90 years there, heartfelt sweets made by pastry chefs using fruit that has been carefully selected by fruit meisters are served on the train café, Fruitea Fukushima. There are two kinds of original sweets that include seasonal fruit when it is at its tastiest. The menu is full of ideas from the pastry chefs.

04 Dinosaurs Convey the Attractive Features of the Region

Dr. Dinosaur greets passengers on the platform. (Echizen Railway, Fukui Prefecture)

Fukui Prefecture is home to one of the world's most renowned dinosaur fossil excavation sites. At Fukui Station, the gateway to the prefecture, visitors are greeted by dinosaurs at every turn. Dr. Dinosaur dressed in white sits on the "dinosaur bench" on the platform of Echizen Railway's Fukui Station to greet passengers getting on and off the Dinosaur Express.



Dr. Dinosaur is a character from the Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum. He has the bones of a plant-eating dinosaur in his left hand and a book in his right.

POKÉMON with YOU Train

Meet the world-famous characters born in Japan

With the cooperation of the POKÉMON with YOU campaign, which aims to help support recovery following the Great East Japan Earthquake, this train running on the Ofunato Line in the Tohoku region features the famous Pokémon game characters. The train is like a dream for children, with a seated carriage featuring illustrations of Pokémon and a playroom carriage where they can play freely.



©2016 Pokémon. ©1995-2016 Nintendo/Creatures Inc./GAME FREAK inc.

Pokémon is a registered trademark of Nintendo, Creatures Inc., GAME FREAK inc.



Hanayome Noren

Experience the traditional "harmony and beauty" of Japan

This sightseeing train runs along the Noto peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture. The red and black colored exterior was conceived in the image of *Wajima-nuri* lacquerware, a traditional craft of the Hokuriku region. The overlapping pattern is of Japanese-style clothing known as *Kaga-Yuzen*. The interior of the train offers travelers the chance to rediscover the harmony and beauty of Hokuriku thanks to an aisle designed as stepping stones resembling a Japanese garden, walls depicting the gold leaf of Kanazawa, and individual cabin partitions finished in a *yuzen-zome* dye style.



COOL Trains

ART Trains

Pictures of train culture

Photos: Nankai Electric Railway Co., Ltd., West Japan Railway Company, East Japan Railway Company, The Pokémon Company, and Mashima Railway Pictures Co., Ltd.



Rapi:t

A striking form combining strength and speed

This Nankai Electric Railway limited express links the center of Osaka with Kansai International Airport. The outside of the train is done in a futuristic retro style and the strong design evokes the image of a steam locomotive in the streamlined shape of an aircraft. The blue carriages leave a lasting impression on travelers.



*Photographic works inside a perspective drawing by ©mika ninagawa, courtesy of Tomio Koyama Gallery

GENBI SHINKANSEN

Appreciating modern art while on the move

This "moving museum" runs on the Joetsu Shinkansen Line. The exterior resembles a painter's canvas and features images of fireworks in Nagaoka on a jet-black base designed by photographer and film director Ninagawa Mika. The interior of the train displays works that include paintings, sculptures, and photographs by six different artists.

Train Travel Today: Greater Comfort and Safety

Photos: Aflo, Kyushu Railway Company, Central Japan Railway Company, Nakai Seiya, Hitachi, Ltd., and Mashima Railway Pictures Co., Ltd.

People and Technology Drive Japan's Railways

The wonder of Japan's railways goes far beyond the speed of the Shinkansen. Other remarkable key elements include on-time performance, safety, comfort, and energy conservation—all achieved while smoothly operating at mass-transit capacity. The synergy of people and technology is the power that drives this outstanding train system.

▼ Next-Generation Eco-Train "DENCHA"

Next-generation trains running on batteries have arrived with the "DENCHA" battery-powered electric cars developed by JR Kyushu. "DENCHA," which stands for "DUAL ENERGY CHARGE TRAIN," can recharge its batteries while running on electricity from overhead power lines so that it can keep going in areas without power. The mechanism also allows it to regenerate power from the braking system and can save energy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 to 50% compared with diesel trains on lines without electricity. There is also no exhaust gas.



"DENCHA" runs in Kyushu from autumn 2016.



The flow of energy inside the train is displayed on an information board on the train.



▼ Tokaido Shinkansen and Continued Evolution

"There is no end to the evolution of the Shinkansen," says Ueno Masayuki, one of the people responsible for its development. JR Central collects detailed data on the operation of all of its trains and analyzes it constantly while performing other research with the aim of making the Shinkansen more comfortable, more accurate, and safer. The new N700S train slated for release in 2020 is the culmination of ideas conceived of by a group of engineers following such dedicated research. Let's take a look at a few examples of evolution in the new Shinkansen.

1▶ Less wobble for greater comfort

The shape of the tip of the Shinkansen is one of the important factors that affect the riding comfort of the passengers. A method of aircraft design was introduced in development for the first time for the Series N700 that appeared in 2007. The newly developed model N700S features a new "Dual Supreme Wing" shape designed in the image of spread wings after repeated 3D studies and experiments analyzing aerodynamic drag. This has resulted in less wobble from wind resistance and swirling air caused by the high-speed train as well as a reduction in noise generated when passing through tunnels.

2▶ Energy savings through compact, lightweight design

The weight of operation-related electronic equipment of new trains has been reduced by about 20%, leading to further energy savings. Next-generation semiconductors—developed jointly with an electronics company—deliver higher power with less loss and operate at higher temperatures. These achievements, combined with train-draft cooling, have given operation-related equipment a lighter and more compact design.

3▶ Safety enhanced by shortening braking distance

Revisions to the system to automatically keep the train under the speed limit and the braking mechanism helped shorten the automatic braking distance during an earthquake by 5% compared to the N700A. Although this may seem minimal, it leads to a safer Shinkansen, especially in terms of more quickly stopping the train when an earthquake occurs.

This steady and constant evolution is the reason the Shinkansen remains the world's premier train system after all these years.

Evolution of Shinkansen nose

"Aero Double Wing" of the current latest model, the N700A



Newly developed "Dual Supreme Wing" of the N700S



The front shape of the N700S has been evolved to cut noise and wobble for a more comfortable ride.

*The position of the lights is to be determined.



A commitment to research, one of the strong points of the Japanese, has led to improvements in technology for high-speed rail.

▼ Experience in the Shinkansen General Control Center Essential to Smooth Operation

“Capacity for sound judgment is critical to operational management using a computer system,” says Hirayama Tsutomu, director of the Train Operation Controllers for the Tokaido Shinkansen, as he explains the importance of on-site decision-making.

Put succinctly, experience for controllers comes when a typhoon or similar calamity throws the train schedule way off. As an example, the extent of congestion on the platform changes constantly with the seasons, days of the week, time of day, and other factors. It’s not possible to determine how to lessen the confusion simply by moving the trains with computers alone. Train operation controllers take a close-up look at conditions on the platform in addition to the monitor in order to make the most appropriate decisions.



Up to 432 services operate on any one day with the Tokaido Shinkansen (results up to October 2016). When something unexpected happens, control personnel from different fields come together to make decisions.

▼ Japan’s Diverse Rail Technology in Action Overseas

The advanced technology in Japan, a major power in rail, is being introduced in earnest around the world. The Taiwan High Speed Rail, which started operation in 2007, uses 700T carriages based on the Series 700 carriages on Japan’s Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen. A Japanese rail company with proven results also lends a hand with human resource development to ensure safe and punctual service. Japan’s unique and meticulous practice and training helped foster core human resources as instructors. There has not been a single major accident on the line since it opened almost 10 years ago.



The high-speed railway in Taiwan has been highly praised for its comprehensive Japanese technology in such aspects as quietness, comfort, and punctual service.

Japan’s rail technology has been introduced in emerging countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar. The used trains, with their role completed following the introduction of new models in Japan, are exported along with maintenance-related technology as a set. Rather than merely handing over used trains, many countries around the world are also given the know-how to continue using the high quality products for a long time to come.



Japanese trains are exported to Jakarta in Indonesia. These trains once operated on the JR Joban Line and Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line.



Japan-made trains operate on the new high-speed line connecting London to the Channel Tunnel. The trains can run freely on both conventional lines and dedicated high-speed lines.

The new edition High Speed 1 train connecting London in the United Kingdom to the Channel Tunnel runs using the Class 395 high-speed cars developed by Hitachi, Ltd. in 2009. The train incorporates Shinkansen technology that enables maximum speed of 225 km/hr. The exceptional reliability and on-time service are on par with Japan’s Shinkansen. It won’t be long before the start of operation of the AT-300, a high-speed hybrid train equipped with a diesel-powered generator under the floor.

Trains Inspire a Taste for Travel

Japan is teeming with sightseeing trains, each with its own local color. These trains offer panoramic views of the country’s nature in each season and are built using local natural materials to ensure a comfortable space to relax. More than just a means of transport, it’s a joy simply to ride on one of these trains.



● Cruise train “Seven Stars in Kyushu”



On this cruise train, which travels around Kyushu, passengers stay in luxurious cabins. The interior includes porcelain that is individually hand-made by local traditional artisans as well as *kumiko*-styled wooden transoms, providing a glamorous feel to the classical interior. (Photo provided by Kyushu Railway Company)

● “Yufuin no Mori”

This limited express resort train heads to the popular hot spring area of Yufuin. The train has big windows so that passengers can take in the best view along the trip. A lounge space boasting a contemporary wooden design provides the perfect chance to chat, which adds to the enjoyment of the journey.



● Eizan Electric Railway’s “Kirara”

The seats face windows that extend to the ceiling for passengers to fully appreciate the northern area of Kyoto’s beautiful nature in comfort. When the autumn leaves cast their crimson color inside of the train, it is truly a sight to behold.



● “Echigo TOKImeki Resort SETSUGEKKA”

On this sightseeing train operating along a local line in Niigata Prefecture, passengers can enjoy the beautiful scenery while tasting local flavors. The train offers spectacular views of the Sea of Japan and Mt. Myoko. Passengers can get a true feel for the natural richness Niigata has to offer.



● “Toreiyu Tsubasa”

This resort train has been introduced on the Yamagata Shinkansen line. One of the key features is a footbath carriage where passengers can bathe their feet in hot spring water. With a carriage featuring Japanese-style *tatami* flooring and a lounge car selling local food and sake, people on board can experience the atmosphere of walking in a hot spring resort town.

Riding in Warmth

Text & Photos by Nakai Seiya



Sanriku Railway along Iwate Prefecture's Sanriku Coast (top)

People of a fishing town joyously welcome incoming train, waving colorful "good catch" banners and handheld signs to celebrate restoration of the line to full operation (left and above).

In April 2014, townspeople along the Sanriku Railway Line in Iwate Prefecture finally had a reason to celebrate. After waiting three long years for repairs of immense damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake, they gathered on platforms to greet the trains, shouting a hearty "Welcome Back." Their joyous reception reveals the role of trains in the life of a town or village.

The passenger train is at the heart of Japanese railways. Rail lines are meticulously laid to be integral to

daily life, and trains carry a high volume of passengers every day. The close connection between people and trains in Japan adds something warm and inviting to a place.

Also, Japan is blessed with beautiful seasons. Each one colors the land with a different kind of beauty. Spring is the time to look at cherry blossoms; summer sights are white cloud banks; autumn comes into view ablaze with glowing leaves; and winter is seen turning the world

silvery white.

Japan's railways are richly varied: from the high-speed Shinkansen and local lines to steam locomotives, trams, and gourmet restaurant trains. Trains are enveloped by the warmth of the people riding them, and the lines are designed to harmonize with nature. Whether a frequent visitor or first-timer, be sure to experience the wonder and the joy of Japan's railways.

Nakai Seiya
Railway Photographer



Born in Tokyo in 1967, he takes photos of railways from a unique perspective. His art extends beyond trains to anything related to railways, creating new genres in railway photography. His blog, which has been running since spring 2004, introduces a railway photo every day without fail. In addition to taking photos for advertisements and magazines, he is also active in many other areas that include lectures and television appearances.
<http://railman.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/>
(Japanese)



Shimane Prefecture

Ichibata Electric Railway, Izumo

The sight of the train coursing behind red torii gates (gate to a sacred place) is something magical, like the setting of a mythological tale. Elsewhere, along the Ichibata Electric Railway line is Izumo Taisha (Izumo Grand Shrine), known for the deity of marriage and matchmaking.



Toyama Prefecture

Kurobe Gorge Train, Kurobe

The sightseeing line features open-air carriages that give you an intimate feeling of nature as they carry you through precipitous cliffs of Kurobe Gorge. The best time to ride is autumn, taking in the season's fresh crisp air and vibrantly colored foliage.



Local line from Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture, to the Chugoku Mountains brings you past peaks, rivers, rice paddies, and other rural delights. A midsummer sunflower field in Sayo Town is an absolutely amazing sight to behold.

Kishin Line, Sayo Town

Hyogo Prefecture



Hokkaido

Senmo Line, Shibechea Town

The highlight of the Senmo Line through eastern Hokkaido is the passage across Kushiro Shitsugen, Japan's largest wetland, where magnificent nature spreads out before your eyes. Look out your window and you just might see Japanese cranes out on the marshes.



Journey to Railway Scenes of Japan

The railway is an integral part of Japan's landscapes in many ways, blending in with each of the four seasons. Take a look at railway photographer Nakai Seiya's selection of picturesque railway lines across the country.



Tottori Prefecture

Wakasa Railway, Yazu Town

This local railway serves the eastern part of Tottori Prefecture. Looking up from the base of a waterfall at the 128-meter-long bridge, one of the Registered Tangible Cultural Properties, it seems as though the train runs atop the water.

Shizuoka Prefecture

Oigawa Railway, Kawanehoncho Town

Passengers on this line, operating the most steam locomotives in the country, travel in rare style and pleasure through beautiful tea plantations. Riding in a steam locomotive through a vast landscape makes you feel as though you've slipped back in time.



Akita Prefecture

Gono Line, Happo Town

Most of the line runs along the Sea of Japan coast, revealing beautiful, dynamic scenes of ocean sunsets and choppy winter waves. Also pleasurable is a trip through the apple orchards of Tsugaru Plain.



Kagoshima Prefecture

Ibusuki-Makurazaki Line, Ibusuki

Kyushu's southernmost railway provides majestic views of two volcanoes, Kaimondake—also known as Satsuma-Fuji for its beautiful silhouette and resemblance to Japan's top peak—and Sakurajima, with its rising vapors.



Ehime Prefecture

Yosan Line, Seiyo

Coursing along the Seto Inland Sea and Uwa Sea, this line offers views near Iyo-Iwaki of waraguro, traditional conical stacks of rice straw left to dry after fields have been harvested.

Chiba Prefecture

Kominato Railway, Ichihara

It's hard to believe this retro rural line is only about an hour from Tokyo, where the huge ginkgo tree at Kazusa-Kubo Station turns a breathtaking gold in autumn.



Onigiri

Photos by Aflo, amanaimages Inc., and Seven-Eleven Japan Co., Ltd.

Onigiri, or a rice ball, is a Japanese food made with freshly cooked rice and filled with tasty ingredients that is formed into shape by hand. Japanese people have loved *onigiri* since long ago and this food remains popular today.

Onigiri is simple to prepare and can be made ahead of time. Since the rice balls are easy to carry around and can be eaten by hand, they can be consumed anytime, anywhere. This makes them the perfect companion for trips and especially convenient for packed lunches since long ago. *Onigiri* is typically formed into a triangular shape and the rice is filled with such ingredients as *umeboshi* (pickled Japanese plum), grilled salmon, *kombu* (kelp), or *katsuo-bushi* (dried bonito) and wrapped in *nori* (seaweed). Nowadays, there are many variations to traditional *onigiri*. Different types of meat can be used as filling, and besides white rice, fried rice, rice with red beans, or rice seasoned and cooked with different ingredients can be used. The surface can also be coated with *miso* or soy sauce and then grilled. Food sections in department stores, convenience stores, supermarkets, and other food outlets sell a wide range of *onigiri*. As a fast food that can be eaten anywhere one chooses, *onigiri* has become Japanese soul food. The next time you take a train trip, be sure to take a few *onigiri* to enjoy.



Top left: A host of different *onigiri* in a convenience store

Top right: *Onigiri* fillings include *umeboshi*.

Center: *Onigiri* are typically shaped by hand into triangles before the filling is added and they are wrapped in *nori*.

Bottom: At home, rice just cooked is lovingly shaped by hands that have been dipped in salt water.

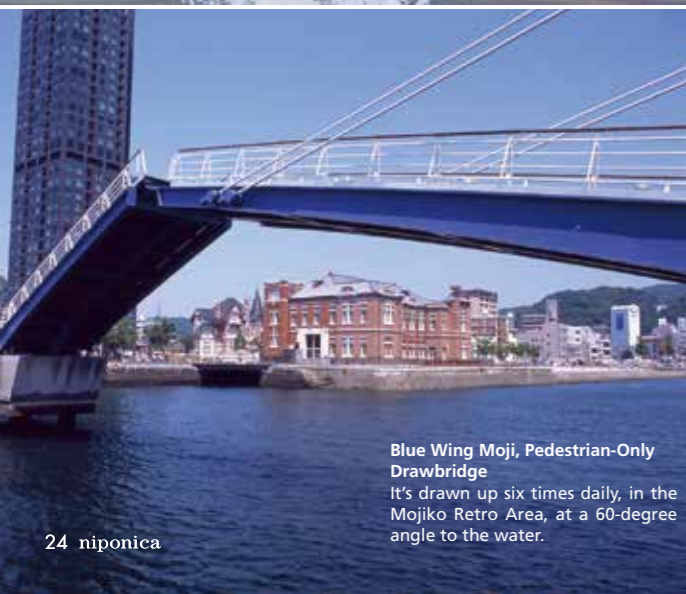
Experience the Romance of Modern Japan

Moji

Within the city of Kitakyushu, at the northern tip of Kyushu, is the ward of Moji. Here you'll happily encounter a number of historic buildings of modern Japan and an old train station that is a symbol of the exotic town.



Moji Station Building
The former gateway to Kyushu is a beautiful wooden structure. Under repair for preservation until 2018 (Photo by PIXTA)



Blue Wing Moji, Pedestrian-Only Drawbridge
It's drawn up six times daily, in the Mojiko Retro Area, at a 60-degree angle to the water.



Moji Retro Sightseeing Train
The train connects Mojiko and Mekari areas in 10 minutes. (Photo by Aflo)



Moji Retro Observation Room
Enjoy a panorama of the Mojiko Retro Area and Kanmon Straits from the 31st floor of Moji Retro High Mart, the highest building in the Mojiko area.



Left above: Old Moji Customs House
The brick building, completed in 1912, now houses restaurants and galleries.



Right above: Kyushu Railway History Museum
Nine cars of rolling stock are on display, which many train fans come to see. Photo shows C59 #1.



Left below: Mojiko Retro Cruise
Popular sightseeing boat commands a view of Moji Port townscape from the sea. (Photo by PIXTA)



Right below: Sightseeing Rickshaw Ride
A retro rickshaw is just right for touring the old townscape. (Photo by PIXTA)

Facing Kanmon Straits separating Honshu and Kyushu, Moji has been strategic for transit and trade throughout the ages. The port, for example, was one of Japan's three major international trading ports, including Kobe and Yokohama, since opening in 1889. It served as a hub for trade with the Asian continent, which also helped the town flourish, and was the rail gateway to Kyushu until the undersea railway tunnel between Kyushu and Honshu opened in 1942.

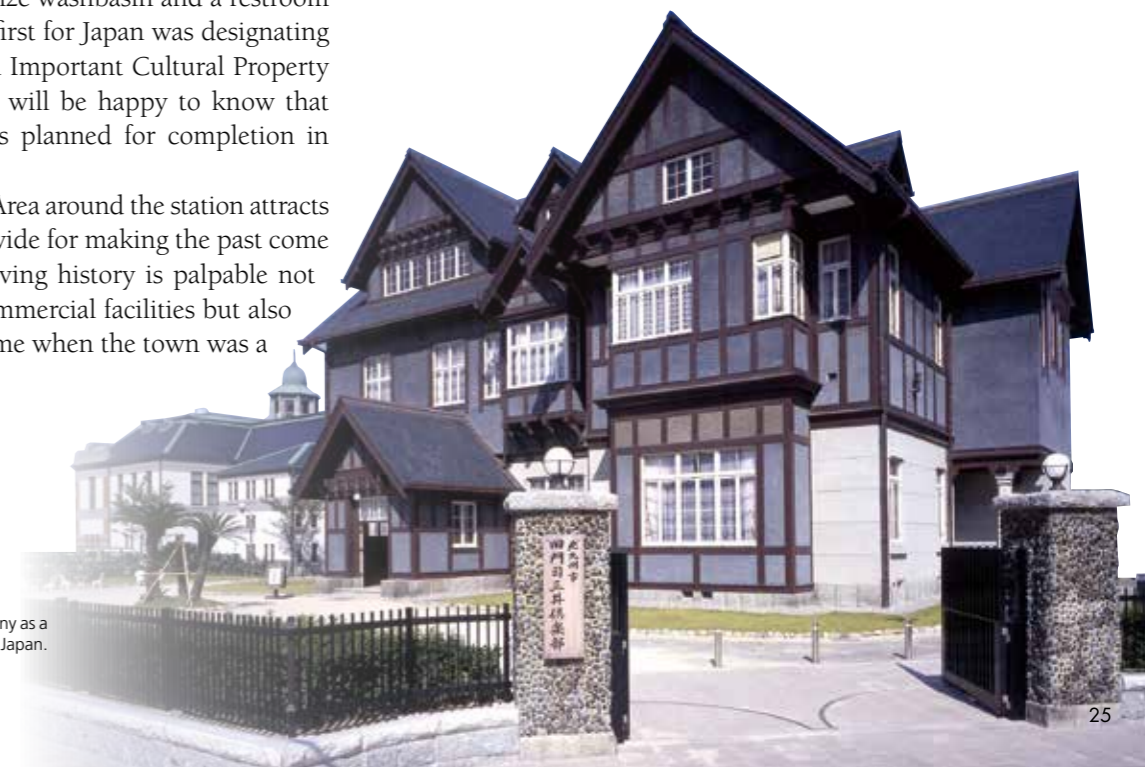
Formerly known as Moji Train Station, today's Mojiko Station building has a symmetric appearance configured in Neo-Renaissance style, as befits its construction in 1914. The interior has notable historic design elements considered modern at the time, including a bronze washbasin and a restroom of marble and tile. A first for Japan was designating the train station as an Important Cultural Property in 1988, and visitors will be happy to know that ongoing restoration is planned for completion in March 2018.

The Mojiko Retro Area around the station attracts visitors from far and wide for making the past come alive. This sense of living history is palpable not only in hotels and commercial facilities but also in buildings from a time when the town was a

bustling center of international trade.

One such building in the Mojiko area is the Kyushu Railway History Museum, with a red brick main building built in 1891. Here you'll see old and new rolling stock, which make for a fun way to learn about the railway history of Japan.

Overseas and native visitors alike will delight in knowing that buildings formerly used as shipping companies, trading companies, banks, or warehouses may very well be the museums, galleries, and restaurants they presently occupy. Such knowledge enhances any walk for pleasure through this amiable port town. You can also ride a rickshaw and soak up the ward's nostalgic ambiance or a sightseeing boat cruising past majestic sights, both enjoyed while



Old Moji Mitsui Club Built by a trading company as a social club, it is an Important Cultural Property of Japan.



Kanmon Straits Fireworks Display The brilliant fireworks display over the straits is a summer treat every August.



Kokura Castle A good stretch of the legs from Moji to Kokura brings you to Kokura Castle Tower, rebuilt in 1959.



Sunset in the Moji Retro Area

listening to a tour guide describe the town.

Beside the Mojiko area is Mekari, reached by tram from Kyushu Railway History Museum Station on the Mojiko Retro Sightseeing Line*, which makes use of the former port cargo railway line. From Mekari Park - the Second Observation Deck, you can experience a breathtaking view of the Kanmon Straits.

Another choice is to take a local train from Mojiko Station for about 10 minutes to Kokura Station in the center of Kitakyushu City. Katsuyama Park, on the grounds of Kokura Castle built in 1602, has a Japanese garden that is beautiful in all four seasons and replete with literature and history facilities for full appreciation of this place and its people.

A bit farther away is Mt. Sarakura, offering enjoyment of commanding views. Find delight in panoramic views of Kitakyushu City from the observatory, at an elevation of 622 meters, by day as well as in fabulous night views. From the station at the mountain foot to the summit is a 10-minute trip by

cable car connecting to monorail.

Moji and its surrounding area are also extremely popular for its gourmet restaurants. You won't want to miss out on restaurants offering freshly caught fish and shellfish from nearby waters.

In addition to the appeal of savory seafood, there are a number of well-established eateries serving up Western and Chinese cuisines. Finally, be sure to try Moji's notable delicacy, known as *yaki* curry (baked curry rice).

Railways have played an important role in the development of industry and culture across modern Japan in its big cities and villages. By riding the railways and walking the streets of Moji, you also are taking a journey that brings to life the memory of times gone by.

*The train runs regularly on Saturdays, Sundays, and National Holidays from the middle of March to late November. During spring and summer vacation it is operated daily.

Mojiko Retro Area



- 1 Blue Wing Moji
- 2 Mojiko Retro Observation Room
- 3 Old Moji Customs House
- 4 Kyushu Railway History Museum
- 5 Mojiko Retro Pier
- 6 Old Moji Mitsui Club
- 7 Mekari Park - the Second Observation Deck



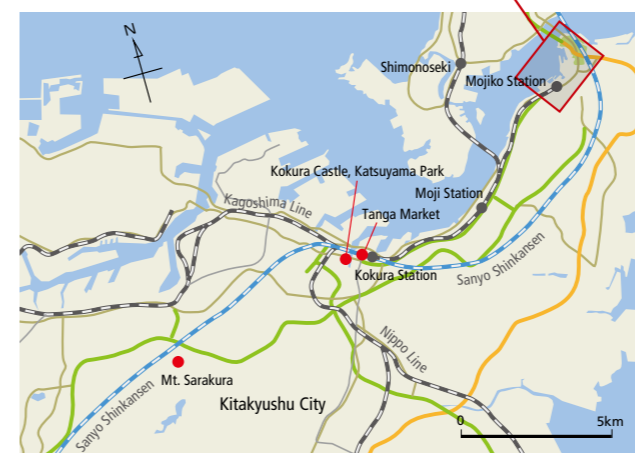
Left: Mt. Sarakura Cable Car
Transit from cable car to monorail brings you to a splendid view atop Mt. Sarakura.

Right: Tanga Market
Pedestrian traffic never ceases in Tanga Market, which satiates the stomachs of Kitakyushu.



Left: Blowfish sashimi and hot pot
Enjoy fresh seafood from the Kanmon Straits.

Right: Yaki curry
The local gourmet treat is a baked curry rice dish topped with cheese and egg.



Getting There

Fly an hour and 40 minutes from Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) to Kitakyushu Airport. A bus from Kitakyushu Airport takes about 35 minutes to reach JR Kokura Station, and JR Kagoshima Line train is a 15-minute ride to Mojiko Station.

For More Info

- **Kitakyushu City Tourist Information Corner**
TEL: (+81) 093-541-4189
<http://www.gururich-kitaq.com/en/>
- **Kyushu Railway History Museum**
TEL: (+81) 093-322-1006
<http://www.k-rhm.jp/> (Japanese)





Kutsushita:

The **Epitome** of **Manufacturing**

Photos by Kusu Seiko



Made in Japan *kutsushita* (socks) boast high quality embodying the spirit of manufacturing and production technology. There are many different kinds that infuse Japan's unique material technology, ranging from warm, wool-like socks made from a blend of ordinary and organic cotton to ones with excellent deodorizing ability.

In Japan, where the custom is to take one's shoes off indoors, particular attention is given to ensuring both functionality and

an inimitable fashion sense. This has led to a variety of styles, including socks designed with motifs that have been widely popular in Japan through the ages, comfy socks with glove-like pockets for each toe that also provide health benefits, and socks with a split between the big toe and other toes like traditional Japanese *tabi* socks. Both practical and trendy, Japanese socks of exceptional quality are sure to make the perfect gift.