# Japan Beyond Sightseeing

Longer stays and weddings are adding new dimensions to Japanese tourism experiences. BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD



Open-air relaxation at Rusutsu Resort amid Hokkaido's natural beauty.

Two newlyweds leave a picturesque garden venue in Kobe, where they recited their vows among the warm autumn foliage. The next stage of their journey, through the mountains and islands of Japan, awaits, with distinctive accommodation, enchanting nature and incredible food at every turn. Japan's unique charm, hospitality and connected infrastructure offer everyone, from solo travelers to couples and families, moments to enjoy and celebrate.

**New Directions in Japanese Tourism**

The oft-repeated wisdom is that the meaning is found in the journey, and JR Central Hotels Co., Ltd. facilitates that journey with convenient stays. The company places many of its properties within or beside major stations, connecting accommodation with the Tokaido Shinkansen and Japan's regional destinations. President Akihiko Ito sees this accessibility as one of the country's defining advantages. "Because so much is concentrated within a relatively compact area, the density of what a traveler can experience becomes very high," he said. Kanden Amenix brings density of experience into locations like Kyoto, Osaka, Nagano and the Northern Alps. In Kyoto, centuries-old temples and businesses coexist with contemporary dining, shopping and hotels. "Visitors can experience the dramatic contrast between ultra-modern urban centers and the quiet charm of historic towns—almost like 'time travel,'" President and Representative Director Aiko Ikeda said. Through properties including HOTEL ELCIENT KYOTO HACHIJOGUCHI, the company combines restorative facilities, locally influenced dining and modern convenience while encouraging visitors to explore Japan's contrasting regional cultures. Japanese fashion and lifestyle company TOMORROWLAND has translated its approach to design, retail and customer service into Casa CABaN HAYAMA, its first hotel. Overlooking Sagami Bay, the 14-suite retreat combines architecture, seasonal cuisine and coastal nature, allowing guests to inhabit the company's carefully composed aesthetic world.

MIKAZUKI GROUP takes Japan's hospitality culture and exports it overseas. Its Da Nang property combines lodging, bathing, pools, dining and entertainment while sharing Japanese culture with Vietnamese and international guests. "We wanted to create places where grandparents, parents and children could all enjoy themselves together," Chairman Yoshimune Odaka said. In Hokkaido, Kamori Kanko is developing Rusutsu as a year-round destination for skiing, sports, business and technology while protecting the region's long-term interests. The company seeks to attract investment and create permanent jobs while growing together with the local community and keeping tourism revenue in the local economy. "My objective is not simply to build a successful resort," President and Representative Director Hisatake Kamori said. "What I want to create is a sustainable community."

**Emerging as a Wedding Destination**

Japan's hospitality also provides a strong foundation for wedding tourism as couples incorporate weddings as part of a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Founded in 1922, Tokyo Kaikan helped move Japanese celebrations from private homes into purpose-built ceremonial venues. Today, it hosts around 1,100 weddings annually, including a growing number for international couples. "For wedding couples, the most important thing is ensuring their guests are completely comfortable and well taken care of," President Noriaki Watanabe said. Treat Co., Ltd. brings that hospitality into the deeply personal process of choosing a wedding gown. The company curates dresses from international couture houses and uses its skilled atelier team to tailor each garment precisely, combining authentic materials with attentive service. Creative Director Yoko Yamashiro describes choosing a dress as an emotional, once-in-a-lifetime journey. "Treat each bride as if she were your own sister," she tells staff.

At CLEF du RÊVE, international couples can experience two distinct sides of Kobe: the traditional Japanese garden of SORAKUEN and the panoramic city and sea views of SOLA KOBE. Together, they reflect what makes Kobe a unique wedding destination—a city where Japanese tradition, nature and contemporary design meet, with Osaka and Kyoto within easy reach. Executive Director Masanao Matsubara sees the wedding as the heart of a much larger journey. "If couples can enjoy a beautiful wedding, experience Japanese hospitality and discover Kobe and the wider Kansai region, the celebration becomes part of a much richer journey through Japan," he said. It is a vision that captures Japan's wider tourism opportunity: connecting convenient travel, remarkable places, craftsmanship and personal hospitality to create experiences visitors carry home with them.



Kobe is emerging as an international wedding destination, blending sophisticated venues, scenic waterfronts and distinctive Japanese hospitality.

JR Central Hotels

www.associa.com

# Where Rail, Hospitality and Regional Japan Come Together

JR Central Hotels connects Japan's leading rail corridors with seamless stays, regional discovery and trusted hospitality. BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD

For those discovering Japan, ease of travel can shape the entire journey. JR Central Hotels Co., Ltd. has built its hospitality model around convenience, placing many of its properties around major railway stations and along Japan's travel corridors, including the Tokaido Shinkansen. President Akihiko Ito sees this position as a natural advantage in a country where


Club Lounge

culture, nature and modern life are closely connected. "Because so much is concentrated within a relatively compact area, the density of what a traveler can experience becomes very high," he said. That density is central to Japan's appeal, allowing visitors to move between Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and beyond, while using well-connected hotels as comfortable bases for exploration. JR Central Hotels' station-integrated model is designed to reduce travel friction. Many properties are located within or beside major stations, often connected to commercial facilities that combine transport, accommodation, dining and shopping. "In practical terms, it means being able to complete the essential parts of a trip ... within one integrated environment," Ito said.

Nagoya is playing an increasingly important role as a hub, allowing guests to stay in the city and take day trips across central Japan, rather than changing every night. Ito described this as a shift from a "touring model" to a "stay model," with Nagoya serving as a strategic base for richer, more flexible travel. From there, guests can explore the Golden Route as well as destinations such as Gifu and Takayama. The company is also expanding through partnerships with leading international brands, while preserving the service culture Japan is known for. Ito said JR Central Hotels aims to "combine the world's best standards" from partners such as Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt "with the Japanese quality we have cultivated over many years, including omotenashi and our distinctive approach to service." For Ito, the hotel business is ultimately about connection. "The hotel business exists to provide a place where people can truly



"Japan's appeal comes from the way long history, nature and culture blend together, and because Japan is geographically compact, those elements are concentrated."

**Akihiko Ito**
President, JR Central Hotels Co., Ltd.

rest," he said. "At the same time, it provides a place where guests and local communities can interact." Through that mix of rail access, global quality and regional hospitality, JR Central Hotels offers travelers a seamless way to experience Japan.



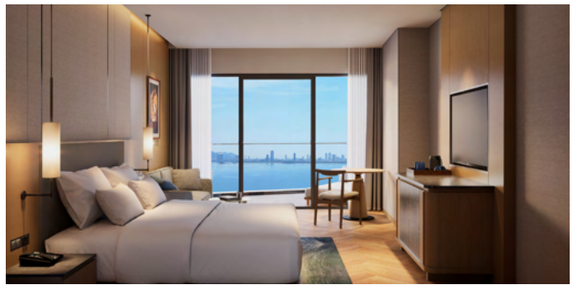



Nagoya Station (Nagoya Marriott Associa Hotel & Nagoya JR Gate Tower Hotel)

# Mikazuki Takes Japanese Hospitality Global







In Vietnam's coastal city of Da Nang, Mikazuki is reimagining family holidays through Japanese hospitality, wellness and all-in-one resort leisure.

BY CIAN O'NEILL AND QUENTIN LANGE

As the sun rises over the sandy beaches of Da Nang, Vietnam, three generations of the same family rise for the first of many unforgettable days. In just four years, Da Nang Mikazuki Japanese Resorts and Spa has grown into a truly international destination, drawing 790,000 visitors a year from 105 countries.

Established in 1961, Hotel Mikazuki Group's hospitality identity has been shaped by spa hotels, hot-spring leisure and family-oriented resort stays. Chairman Yoshimune Odaka said the group's hotels are designed around families, especially multigenerational ones. "We wanted to create places where grandparents, parents and children could all enjoy themselves together." Facilities such as onsen baths are developed with children in mind, with a focus on creating memorable experiences.

This philosophy was honed at Ryugujo Spa Hotel Mikazuki on Tokyo Bay, home to the group's "stay-and-play" model, and its entry into Vietnam is a natural extension: decades of expertise in large leisure complexes where lodging, bathing, pools, dining and entertainment are part of the stay. With cultural activities, entertainment and local family-friendly experiences all on its doorstep, Da Nang is the ideal base for Hotel Mikazuki.

**Bringing the Mikazuki Model to Vietnam**

When the group entered Da Nang, the city already had 17 five-star hotels in operation. That number has since grown to 30, intensifying competition in one of Vietnam's most active coastal tourism markets. Odaka saw that the only path to success was to differentiate the resort from global hotel brands.

Spanning 13 hectares, Da Nang Mikazuki is the largest investment ever made by a Japanese company, whose land-use rights were secured through an unprecedented verbal bidding process, a first for a Japanese company. Its leadership is just as international—the general director is Korean and the general manager is British, together leading a team of around 550 staff. "Our concept was to create a destination that could serve as a base for sharing Japanese culture while still appealing to international travelers and local guests," he said. "We wanted to build facilities that existing hotels did not already have, make them high quality and then offer them at pricing that represented strong value."

Da Nang Mikazuki now has 308 rooms and runs at around 75 percent occupancy, with demand outstripping capacity on close to 100 days a year, forcing the resort to turn guests away. That is why Mikazuki is adding 139 rooms, with a goal of 1 million annual visitors. One pillar of the expansion is wellness tourism: exporting Japanese-style health screenings, using all-Japanese medical equipment, to Vietnam—allowing Japanese residents in Asia and affluent travelers to receive Japan-standard checkups without having to travel to Japan.

In June 2026, Mikazuki's villas were reborn under a new concept, Mikazuki Villas – The Ryokan. Blending contemporary luxury with traditional Japanese aesthetics, it is Da Nang's first true Japanese-style villa retreat. Each spacious villa comes with its own private pool, offering a tranquil setting and the wholehearted hospitality of omotenashi. Underpinning this drive is a culture that hands real decision-making power to people on the ground, even for activity investments exceeding $1 million, encouraging every employee to take on new challenges. The best coach stands at the front when facing questions after a loss, but steps to the back during the championship celebration. Odaka leads the same way: he takes the responsibility, while his team receives the glory.

As the family sets off for the day, Mikazuki's philosophy comes into focus. A holiday should not ask grandparents, parents and children to choose between rest and activity, comfort and culture, value and quality. It should make room for all of it. That is what the group has spent decades refining in Japan and brought to Vietnam with greater ambition. This Phase 2 expansion, linking hotel, villas, wellness and the local economy, is more than new rooms: it is the next test of how far Japanese hospitality can evolve beyond Japan's shores.

CONTENT BY THE WORLDFOLIO





Mikazuki villas - The Ryokan













Hotel Mikazuki
JAPANESE RESORTS & SPA

https://mikazuki.com.vn/en/

# Beyond the Powder Rusutsu's Four-Season Vision









Rusutsu Resort begins a new chapter amongst Hokkaido's renowned powder snow. The resort is building on its world-class winter reputation to become a leading four-season destination under Kamori Kanko's leadership, while pursuing long-term growth that benefits visitors and the community for generations. BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD, CIAN O'NEILL AND BERNARD THOMPSON

Across three mountains at Rusutsu Resort, winter arrives in a rush of powder, covering Hokkaido's slopes in snow so light and deep it gained a reputation internationally. But the resort follows the full rhythm of the year: when the snow recedes, spring greens the landscape, summer opens its fairways and trails, and autumn sets the forests ablaze in vivid colors.

Rusutsu Resort is part of Kamori Kanko Co., Ltd., a Japanese tourism and hospitality group with operations from Hokkaido to Australia, including Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. Rusutsu's reputation is built on winter, and it has been named Japan's Best Ski Resort six times, with 42 kilometers of skiable terrain and international connections through the Epic Pass network. Hokkaido already encourages a different style of travel from Japan's major urban gateways, with international guests there usually staying longer in one place. According to Kamori Kanko Representative Director and President Hisatake Kamori, its cool summers, open landscapes, cuisine and views of Mount Yotei and Lake Toya provide reasons to stay beyond the snow season. When the snow melts, a different Rusutsu emerges, with 72 holes for golf, a growing network of pickleball courts, hot springs, outdoor recreation, wellness experiences and an amusement park, all framed by Hokkaido's picturesque landscape. "People increasingly travel because they have a specific objective," Kamori said. By serving athletes, wellness travelers, creators and business visitors alongside vacationers, Rusutsu can attract guests for more varied reasons throughout the year. Rusutsu's scale gives Kamori Kanko a unique opportunity and responsibility. With around 4,000 hectares under ownership, the company takes a long-term view of how the destination evolves. Kamori said growth must strengthen the community and balance investment with housing, employment and regional participation, while avoiding undermining the place visitors come to experience.

For Kamori, the next chapter is about building upon Rusutsu's winter identity. It will combine world-class skiing with sport, wellness, nature and year-round experiences, balanced with the needs of the community, to work toward a destination that thrives in every season. "I want Rusutsu to enhance the quality of life for everyone connected to it."

https://rusutsu.com/en/

JAPAN'S BEST SKI RESORT

RUSUTSU RESORT
HOKKAIDO JAPAN



# Inside Casa CABaN HAYAMA

## By TOMORROWLAND

**Photography:** Gorta Yuuki



TOMORROWLAND brings its refined design ethos to hospitality with Casa CABaN HAYAMA, a serene seaside retreat blending architecture, nature and understated luxury on Japan's coast. BY CIAN O'NEILL

TOMORROWLAND has always approached its stores without compromise, considering the people who bring them to life, the products selected for them and the spaces that contain them as parts of a single whole. Rather than simply displaying products, the company shapes every element through a consistent set of values, giving each store its own character and meticulous attention to detail. Casa CABaN HAYAMA extends that same sensibility into hospitality. Through its spaces, objects, service and the time spent within them, guests are invited to experience TOMORROWLAND's worldview in an entirely new way.

Situated on Morito Beach in Hayama, Kanagawa, overlooking Sagami Bay, the hotel has 14 guest rooms, each with its own terrace and views of the sea and, on clear days, Mount Fuji. The idea formed spontaneously in 2017 when Patricia Urquiola visited longtime friend and founder of TOMORROWLAND, Hiroyuki Sasaki, at Morito Beach. The Milan-based architect and designer proposed creating a home-like hotel embodying the company's worldview.

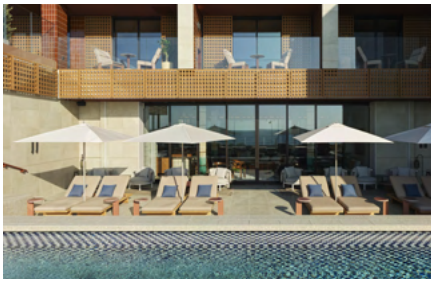
Urquiola approached Casa CABaN HAYAMA as a total composition, bringing a consistent vision to its architecture, interiors and furniture. At the heart of the design is the concept of "weaving," inspired by TOMORROWLAND's origins in knitwear. Materials and spaces are interlaced with the surrounding landscape and the passage of time, gently softening the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, architecture and nature. This concept is holistic, visible in the design, the changing light, movement of air and time spent in the hotel. Guest rooms flow seamlessly from the interior to the terrace to the sea, drawing the eye to the horizon. The sound of waves changes alongside the weather and tide, while shifting daylight casts patterns from morning to dusk. Nature is something experienced through the sound, light and air.

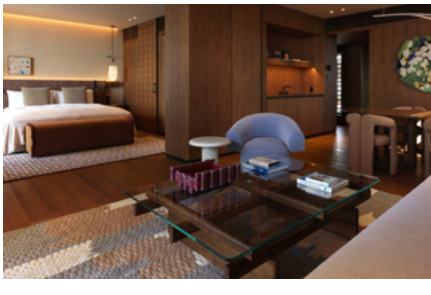
Guests are invited to slow down and notice the subtle changes that often pass unseen in everyday life. No two moments in Hayama are quite the same: the light, waves and wind are always changing. It leaves a lingering desire to return in another season, at another hour and discover a different side of the same place.

The world of Casa CABaN HAYAMA also comes to life through its dining. At the Main Dining, the bounty of both sea and land from Hayama and the Miura Peninsula is transformed into refined, seasonal dishes, served in the same relaxed and unpretentious atmosphere that flows throughout the hotel.

"Of course, I hope something about this hotel resonates with our guests during their stay. But more than anything, I want them to leave already thinking, 'I want to come back,'" says Hiroyuki Sasaki, founder and chairman of TOMORROWLAND.







**Casa CABaN HAYAMA**
955-2 Horiuchi, Hayama, Miura-gun,
Kanagawa 240-0112, Japan

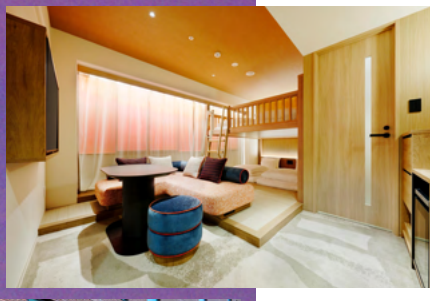
**Tel:** +81 46 895 0228
https://casacaban-hayama.com/en/

# HOTEL ELCIENT Relaunches in Central Kyoto

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD AND CIAN O'NEILL

Old meets new in Kyoto, where centuries-old shrines and family-run businesses stand alongside modern dining and shopping. It's a quality shared across the country, something Kanden Amenix President Aiko Ikeda likens to time travel. "This proximity of contrasting cultural experiences is, I believe, one of Japan's greatest attractions," she said. October 1 marks the HOTEL ELCIENT KYOTO HACHIJOGUCHI Renewal Grand Opening, Kanden Amenix's hotel in central Kyoto. Minutes from Kyoto Station, the hotel features a large spa, a rarity in central Kyoto. The refurbished rooms are warm and stylish, with options for four guests, plus a cloakroom with over 200 self-serve storage units for guests on the move. The new restaurant ORANGE TERRACE KYOTO offers bistro dining, with a diverse, 8-stage breakfast buffet, as well as lunch and dinner prepared with seasonal Kyoto ingredients.

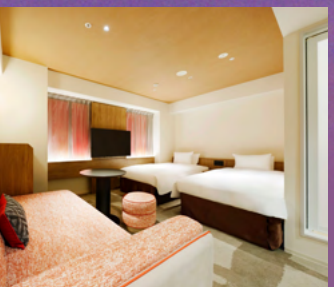


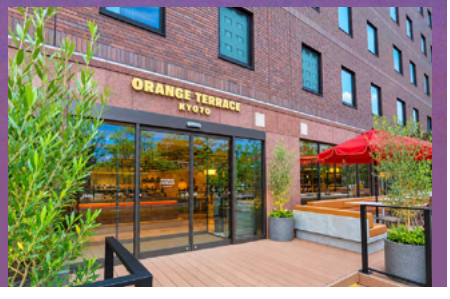




**"No matter how many times you visit, Japan always feels fresh."**

**Aiko Ikeda**
President,
Kanden Amenix Co., Ltd.






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# Treat's Couture Quality for Destination Weddings

Treat brings couture craftsmanship and heartfelt hospitality to every stage of the bridal journey.

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD AND KYANN EDOUARD

With Japan's natural beauty, distinctive culture and celebrated hospitality attracting travelers worldwide, Treat Co., Ltd. is helping couples transform a visit into an unforgettable wedding experience. Treat curates exceptional gowns from leading couture and fashion houses around the world and makes them available to brides through its rental service. Each gown is meticulously tailored by highly skilled atelier artisans to achieve a beautiful, precise fit, while expert care preserves the beauty and quality of delicate silk fabrics. Together with deeply personal service tailored to each bride, Treat brings this refined experience to distinctive Japanese destinations, including Tokyo, Kyoto and Okinawa. As inbound tourism grows, Treat can offer visitors a refined way to celebrate their marriage through the scenery, aesthetics and spirit of Japan at every stage of the celebration.

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# CLEF du RÊVE: Kobe as a Wedding Destination







Between mountains and sea, Kobe offers international couples elegant venues, regional cuisine and easy access to Kansai, positioning CLEF du RÊVE at the center of Japan's growing destination wedding market.

BY
DANIEL DE BOMFORD, BERNARD THOMPSON AND CIAN O'NEILL

In early autumn, the ancient camphor trees and Japanese maples of SORAKUEN frame a wedding scene found only in Japan. As the music begins, the bride makes her way down the aisle, surrounded by the rich greens and warm autumn colors of the traditional Japanese garden. For couples seeking a celebration that feels both deeply personal and distinctly Japanese, it is a setting that captures the unique appeal of a wedding in Japan.

As Japan's domestic wedding market evolves alongside demographic and lifestyle changes, CLEF du RÊVE sees a new opportunity: welcoming more international couples to celebrate in Japan. Masanao Matsubara, executive director, believes that Japan has all the elements of an outstanding wedding destination. "We have extraordinary culture, world-class cuisine, beautiful natural scenery, distinctive architecture, exceptional levels of quality, and a hospitality culture that is respected around the world," he said. Matsubara positions Kobe as one of Japan's most compelling wedding destinations. Framed by pristine mountains on one side and the ocean on the other, Kobe offers all the sophistication and amenities of a big city, with fewer crowds for a more intimate experience. Its location connects it to Osaka, Kyoto and the greater Setouchi region, allowing couples to create memories over an entire trip with friends and family. "If they can enjoy a beautiful wedding, experience Japanese hospitality, explore Kobe, discover the surrounding region and continue their journey throughout Kansai, then the wedding becomes only one part of a much richer experience," he said. At CLEF du RÊVE's SORAKUEN venue, couples gather amid a traditional Japanese garden, while Ocean Place overlooks Kobe's waterfront from the Maritime Museum, offering an open terrace. Across its portfolio, elegant surroundings are paired with locally inspired cuisine and attentive service. Everything is tailored to the couple; planners work closely to shape the atmosphere, food and details around their individual stories and aspirations.

SSOLA KOBE, nestled in the foothills of the Rokko mountains, offers panoramic views over the city and a striking setting where nature and contemporary architecture come together. Rather than simply providing venues, CLEF du RÊVE combines Japanese hospitality, local culture and personalized production to create celebrations shaped around each couple's story. By bringing together Kobe's venues, cuisine, culture and hospitality, the company hopes to help establish the city as one of Japan's distinctive wedding destinations and give couples from around the world a new reason to discover the region.

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