



HIROSHIMA CITY GUIDE



Hiroshima City Guide by JJ Walsh

Surrounded by forests, Hiroshima city has become world-famous as the 'city-of-peace'.

A brand that attracts millions of visitors each year to bear witness to what happened on August 6th, 1945, pay respects to those who died, and to consider peace in their own lives.

But, there is much more for visitors to do and enjoy beyond the peace park and every interaction is a chance to appreciate and find inspiration in the stories of Hiroshima people who have rebuilt the city from ashes into the thriving metropolis it is today.

Hiroshima City Guide: Introducing Hiroshima

Surrounded by forests, Hiroshima city has a population of 1 million and the prefecture, which includes the cities of Fukuyama, Higashi-Hiroshima, Kure, [Onomichi](#) and many towns in rural mountainous and island areas, has a total population of 3 million.

Often called the city of water, in [the Jomon period](#), Hiroshima city was a bay, but land was filled in and six rivers created to flow from the mountains to the sea into what we see today.



The floating huge red torii (gate) to Itsukushima shrine in Miyajima is perhaps Hiroshima's most iconic view

The creation of the centre of power

In 1589, Mori Terumoto established Hiroshima castle and gave the area the name Hiroshima which literally means 'wide island' which put it at the centre of power due to its key strategic position protected by mountains, but with easy access to the sea.

The Asano clan built the beautiful Shukkei-en gardens and are connected with many of the shrines and temples along sacred Mt. Futaba, near present day Hiroshima station. They retained power until the feudal system was outlawed in 1871.

Neighbouring port towns

The nearby port towns of Kure, [Onomichi](#) and Ujina have been hubs of trade, entertainment and naval bases for hundreds of years. Today, many visitors enjoy a day trip to Kure to learn about its naval history, and all the ports have ferries to nearby islands for sightseeing, cycling, [hiking](#), stays and leisure activities.



Views over Onomichi from Senkoji Temple, Senkoji Mountain

Post-war Hiroshima has seen the rise of international events in line with its peace brand- such as hosting international conferences like the G7, peace memorial ceremonies, anti-nuclear rallies, and peace-themed festivals.

A variety of successful businesses in Hiroshima date back to the time the castle created a stronghold in the area, and now many local entrepreneurs continue to offer a variety of unique products and services. Hiroshima is well-known for its high-quality sake, gin and [craft beers](#) as well as citrus, olives, and oysters.

Cycling, chocolate, cars, sake and luxury hotels

One-of-a-kind products and services such as the [Shimanami cycle route](#), locally made USHIO chocolate as well as boutique lodges like the floating luxury hotel Guntu, and the innovative LOG hotel in Onomichi.



The Shimanami-kaido is a 70km (45mi) cycling route spanning several islands starts in Onomichi | Photo: JJ Walsh

Hiroshima is considered one of the top-3 sake-making regions in Japan thanks to its soft water-regular sake tastings and events are held as well as the Sake Festival in [the sake town of Saijo](#).

One of Hiroshima's most famous brands is the flagship Mazda facility which also sponsors the city's Carp baseball team's new 'Zoom-Zoom Stadium' transitioned from creating munitions during the war to making cars and machinery post-war.

A new soccer stadium for the J-League Sanfrecce Hiroshima team is set to open near the castle in 2024.

SEE ALSO: [Going To A Thrilling Baseball Game in Japan](#)

Where is Hiroshima?

Hiroshima is a city in Hiroshima Prefecture about halfway down the [central island of Honshu](#). 4 ½ hours from [Tokyo](#) to the east, and 2 hours from [Kyoto](#). If you're heading south to the [island of Kyushu](#), it is only an hour to [Fukuoka](#).

The Climate in Hiroshima

The winters in Hiroshima are mild but the summers are hot and humid.

The area is green thanks to regular intervals of rain throughout the year. The spring and [autumn months](#) are considered the most comfortable, but lively summer festivals and clear blue skies in winter make those seasons popular for visitors as well.

When to Visit Hiroshima City

Hiroshima is beautiful in [spring for cherry blossoms](#) and in [autumn for fall foliage](#), but there are interesting festivals and beautiful views to enjoy throughout the year.

Summer is hot, but also the best time to visit for the city's key peace events and traditional cultural and fireworks festivals. Winter is becoming a popular time to visit for the illumination festival at night and clear skies in the day.

What To Do In Hiroshima: Seasonal Events and Festivals

Winter in Hiroshima

January is the time of [New Year shrine visits](#) in the beginning of the month to pray for good fortune and buy new good luck charms. At the end of the month, Tondo bonfires are held around the city to burn the previous year's good luck charms in a sacred bamboo fire.

February is the time of Setsubun festivals to dash out the demons and welcome in the good luck. Gokoku-jinja on the castle grounds has a popular Setsubun festival each year with priests shooting arrows at demon faced targets and lucky-bean throwing.

Spring in Hiroshima

In March and April the city is covered in the white and pink flowers of ume and [cherry blossoms](#) when people enjoy Hanami picnics under the blossoms- the most popular areas are around the castle and along the rivers.

In May, the flower festival takes over the city centre during the golden week holidays with thousands of food stalls, floats, musical performances and an exciting Yosakoi dance parade.

RELATED: [Sakura: Beautiful Cherry Blossom Festivals in Japan](#)

Summer in Hiroshima

In June and July the city is populated by [colorful yukata](#) (summer kimono) wearing festival goers for early summer events.



The annual Toukasan yukata festival takes place Held every year for three days starting on the first Friday of June | Photo: JJ Walsh

Held every year for three days starting on the first Friday of June, the Toukasan yukata festival is an annual event signalling the start of summer and dates back 400 years.

RELATED: [Is It Rude \(For Foreigners\) To Wear Kimono?](#)

The week surrounding August 6th commemorations is when hundreds of thousands of people seek out the city for peace conferences, talks, exhibitions and related events in summer. The evening of the 6th is stunning with colorful lanterns floating on the river in front of the A-bomb dome.

Autumn/Fall in Hiroshima

In October, enjoy Halloween fun at the Yokogawa town's zombie night, or head to the Hiroshima castle grounds to enjoy the food festival stalls set up around the moat.

In November, Shukkeien gardens opens at night for fall leaves viewing in combination with the best time to enjoy moon views. From mid November through January, stroll the lights after sunset at the Dreamination illumination event set-up the long Heiwa-Odori Peace Boulevard each year.

SEE ALSO: [6 Great Spots to See Spectacular Autumn Leaves in Japan](#)

Hiroshima Travel Guide: How to Get Around

Hiroshima is easy to get to by air or bullet train. Once in the city, travelling around is easy with its range of public transport options. Hiroshima city is easily walkable from the station to the city's main sights in and around peace park. You can also rent a bicycle near the station and enjoy all the major sites by riding along the rivers.



Classic trams (streetcars) travel around the city and out to the ports, even to Miyajima

Classic trams (streetcars) travel around the city and out to the ports - even to Miyajima where you can catch a short ferry to the famous island of the UNESCO Itsukushima floating shrine.

There are also many bus lines including the tourist Maple Loop bus which is free to ride with a [Japan Rail Pass](#). Visitors can ride local JR trains to Miyajima and interesting sites just outside the city centre. There is also an ASTRAM monorail to take you in and out of the city to the suburbs.

PRO TIP:

Using JR Pass on Hiroshima sightseeing buses

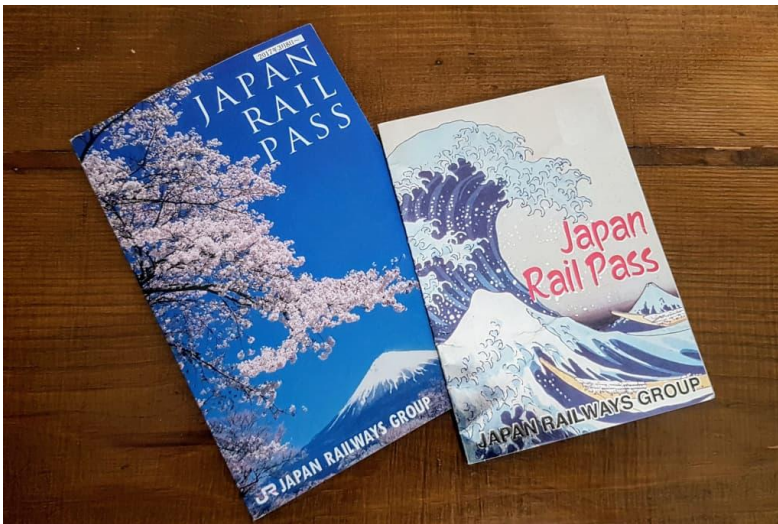
You might be surprised to learn that the [Japan Rail Pass](#) is also valid on Hiroshima's sightseeing buses.

There are four sightseeing bus routes and all start and finish at Hiroshima Station (JR trains). Stops include downtown, Hiroshima Castle, Atomic Dome, Peace Memorial Park, Kamiyacho and Hiroshima Station.

Have your [JR Pass](#) or [Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass](#) ready to show to the driver on boarding the bus. The driver will note down or take a photo of the pass number as proof of eligibility. Ride the bus as normal. There is no requirement to show the pass when exiting the bus.

Read my [Japan Rail Pass Ultimate Guide HERE](#).

Read my [Regional Japan Rail Pass Guide HERE](#).



[>>Buy JR Passes Here<<](#)

Top Attractions in Hiroshima

Hiroshima city centre attractions are focused around the expansive Peace Memorial Park that has the UNESCO 'A-bomb Dome' ruins on one end and the Peace Memorial Museum and the Gates of Peace at the other end about 800 metres away.

Peace Memorial Park: The A-bomb Dome

The Genbaku-dome - or A-bomb dome - is a powerful reminder of the devastation a nuclear attack had on the buildings and people of Hiroshima.



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Inside the park, you will find key monuments and sights along the central 'peace line' where you can view the A-bomb dome, children's monument, eternal flame, cenotaph and memorial museum without a break in the view.

The children's monument and its many strands of 1,000 folded orizuru cranes symbolise good luck, but also wishes for peace thanks to the fellow students of Sadako Sasaki who died of radiation-caused cancers ten years after the blast.



A centrepiece of the Peace Park is the Cenotaph, designed to resemble Japan's ancient burial mounds

The Cenotaph and Reflection Pool

The central Cenotaph is a sombre and sacred place which was designed like an [ancient burial mound](#). Here locals and visitors light incense and lay flowers to pray for [the souls of the dead](#), taking in the reflection pool and eternal flame behind the arch.

Near the A-bomb dome ruins is the 'Orizuru Tower' souvenir shop, cafe and museum structure which offers history and activities inside as well as a stunning viewpoint at the top looking into the A-bomb dome and out across the entire city.

Walk down the central 'Hondori' from the peace park's main bridge through Hiroshima's main shops, business and into the Nagarekawa nightlife area.

Hiroshima Castle and Gokoku-jinja

Walk north from the A-bomb dome along the river and find the Hiroshima Castle (sometimes referred to as Carp Castle) rebuilt in its original design from 1589. The replica now serves as a museum of Hiroshima's history before World War II.

Walk around the moat to take in the beauty of the trees, moat and castle views and take note of the impressive A-bombed surviving 'HibakuJimoku' trees which gave hope to people in Hiroshima when they grew back.



Hiroshima 'Carp' Castle was rebuilt in its original design from 1589

Visit Gokoku-jinja shrine in the castle grounds. There is limited English, but many visitors enjoy the exhibits, old pictures and samurai armour displays in the castle museum as you make your way up to see the stunning views from the top at the lookout.

Shukkei-en Zen Gardens

Shukkei-en gardens is a popular attraction as you can enjoy a shrunken landscape built by [zen tea ceremony](#) master Ueda Shoko.

A short walk from Hiroshima castle, it is a beautiful place to take a walk around the central pond to enjoy [seasonal changes in blossoms and leaf colour](#), tea houses and ornate bridges and stone lanterns. The adjacent prefectural art museum often has interesting international and domestic art on display- buy a combo-ticket to enjoy both art and garden.



Shukkei-en Garden was designed by the zen tea ceremony master Ueda Shoko

Museums of modern art, Deshio warehouses and Mazda cars

On the other side of the city from the peace park, along peace boulevard, is the park and modern art museum of Hijiyama set to reopen in 2023. Travel south from Hijiyama on the other side of the tunnel toward the port of Ujina and you will find the largest A-bombed ruins in Hiroshima - the Army clothing depot warehouses of Deshio.

Car-enthusiasts will want to visit the Mazda factory and museum, and a chance to [watch a Carp baseball game](#) at the Mazda “Zoom Zoom” stadium is also lots of fun. Both require advanced bookings.

Peace Pagoda & Toshogu Shrine

On the other side of Hiroshima station, hike up to the silver ‘Peace Pagoda’ for city views by walking through hundreds of red torii-gates in the forest behind the colourful Toshogu shrine.

Heading along the main street in front of Toshogu shrine, you can find many shrines and temples dating back hundreds of years featuring many interesting 7-lucky gods statues and beautiful architecture.

Food in Hiroshima: okonomiyaki and oysters

Okonomiyaki, a layered vegetable, meat and noodle dish is a signature food popular across Japan, but invented in post-war Hiroshima as the put together a filling meal from simple ingredients.

If you fancy sampling this signature dish, then head for the heart of downtown Hiroshima and Okonomimura (literally 'Okonomi Village'), where you'll find over 25 okonomiyaki restaurants spread across four floors, each offering its own twist on this humble pancake.

SEE ALSO: [Ajinoya Restaurant Osaka: Japan's Best Okonomiyaki?](#)



Hiroshima okonomiyaki rivals that of its famous Osaka counterpart | Photo: JJ Walsh

Oysters raised off the coast of Hiroshima are also highly rated by seafood lovers- especially when visiting Miyajima island. For sweets, try some Momiji-manju maple leaf shaped cakes filled with sweet beans, chocolate or custard.

As citrus grows well here, you will find many local products made with oranges and lemons including the unique condiment for okonomiyaki, oysters and other savory dishes called LEMOSCO.

RELATED: [15 Must-Try Japanese Foods](#)

Book Hiroshima food experiences

The Real Japan has partnered with [byFood, specialists in Japanese food experiences](#), to offer an expertly curated selection of the finest, most fun and tastiest food experiences Hiroshima has to offer.

The folks at byFood believe one of the best ways to experience Japanese culture is to dive in with your chopsticks. And I agree!

If you want to sample a bit of everything the friendly and vibrant downtown Hiroshima has to offer, then the [Ultimate Hiroshima Food Tour](#) is the perfect experience for you. Explore local shopping streets while tasting Hiroshima-style Okonomiyaki, Tsukemen dipping noodles, and more.



Sample the best that downtown Hiroshima has to offer on the [Ultimate Hiroshima Food Tour](#)

If sake is more to your taste, then check out the [Hiroshima Sake Town Tour in Saijo](#). It includes visiting 4-6 local sake breweries in Saijo - Hiroshima's sake district - and learn about their sake brewing productions and, of course, sample their brews. Finish your tour at a local restaurant where you can eat for Bishu Nabe, a local style of hot pot - made with sake!

You can [see all the Hiroshima food experiences on the byFood website HERE](#).

Day Trips from Hiroshima

Miyajima Island and the floating Itsukushima shrine and red torii

No Hiroshima city guide would be complete with mention of Miyajima island. Its famous UNESCO floating Otorii - giant red Torii gate - and floating Itsukushima shrine are top of the list for most travellers to Hiroshima, but to avoid the crowds aim to arrive before 9am or after 3pm.



Miyajima island is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its giant red torii shrine gate

If possible, plan to stay overnight on the island so you can enjoy the quiet beauty of the island without the overcrowding. It only takes 30 minutes to reach Miyajima station and then take a short ferry to the island, but there are a lot of sights to enjoy at a leisurely pace, so make sure to give yourself a half to a full day to enjoy the island.

If you are using a [Japan Rail Pass](#) you'll get a free ferry crossing to Miyajima as the ferry is also included in the [JR Pass](#).

Miyajima: home to Japan sacred sika deer

Miyajima is also home to Japan's sika deer, thought to be messengers of the Gods in Japan's native Shinto religion, and are treated as sacred. Although the deer population has declined since World War II, the locals took to feeding them, meaning they are now well used to seeing humans.



Miyajima island is also home to Japan's sika deer, considered sacred by the locals

'Rabbit Island' - feeding fluffy wild bunnies on Okunoshima

Okunoshima (aka 'Rabbit Island') and Takehara delight travellers who love the old town charms and feeding fluffy wild bunnies. You can take a train or bus in about an hour to Takehara and then another 20 minutes on to Tadanoumi port to get a short ferry over to rabbit island.

Okunoshima was actually erased from maps during the war as it was used as a poison gas factory. So, as you walk around and enjoy the cute bunnies, you can also learn about the island's military past and see the incredible contrast between its dark past and fluffy tourism appeal.

Make sure to pick up packets of the recommended rabbit food at the port to make sure the bunnies are getting the nutrition they need as you enjoy feeding them.



Rabbit island delights travellers who love old town charms and feeding wild bunnies | Photo: JJ Walsh

Kure's Battleship Yamato Museum and beaches

Kure is a popular daytrip to see the impressive battleship Yamato museum and the submarine you can walk through. There is also an interesting retro-town centre to walk through to eat the navy's favourite curry and rice dish. Kure is less than an hour by train, bus or car from Hiroshima station. Kure also has great sake breweries to explore and beautiful swimming beaches in summer.

Mitarai: small town featured in Drive My Car

From Kure, visitors can also head over to the small town of Mitarai- this town was once a lively entertainment port filled with teahouses and geisha. It is now rebuilding with new entrepreneurs running cafes, a retro-toy museum, historical theatre has been reopened, and has a few nice temples and inns in addition to classic streets of old houses. Mitarai was featured in the 2021 Japanese film [Drive My Car](#).

Onomichi: hidden charms to be found in this port town

[Onomichi](#) is a must-see spot for cyclists who want to ride the Shimanami Kaido route, but it is also one of Hiroshima's nicest port towns.



Take the Senkoji Ropeway for impressive views over Onomichi town and harbour | Photo: JJ Walsh

A very walkable town centre with one of the longest covered shopping streets in Japan, hillside temples offering great views of the harbour, and ferries take you to charming destinations like Setoda with its interesting temples, cafes and museum.

The town has been featured in many Japanese films and is famous for its traditional foods like [ramen](#), and the Betcha demon mask festival, but also for its entrepreneurs running unique shops, galleries, a mix of Japanese and western foods, great coffee shops and the excellent Onomichi [craft beer](#) brewery.

SEE ALSO: [Senkoji Ropeway Cable Car: Charming Onomichi City](#)

How to Get to Hiroshima

By Rail

From Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka the easiest way to get to Hiroshima is via the Shinkansen bullet train, specifically the San'yō Shinkansen service operated by JR West. This line is included in the [Japan Rail Pass coverage](#).

Local trains also operated by JR West include the San'yō Main Line, the Kure Line, the Geibi Line and the Kabe Line.

By Air

Hiroshima is served by [Hiroshima Airport](#), the largest airport in [the Chūgoku region](#).

It's located 50 km (31 mi) east of the city, with regular flights to Tokyo (Haneda and Nartia), [Sapporo](#), [Sendai](#), [Okinawa](#), and also to China, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. The Hiroshima-Haneda route is the fifth-busiest domestic air route in Japan.

Iwakuni Kintai-kyo Airport, 43 km (27 mi) a military airbase south-west of Hiroshima, has a civilian airport terminal with [All Nippon Airways](#) (ANA) operating flights to Tokyo Haneda, and ANA Wings operating flights to Naha (Okinawa) and Tokyo Haneda.

SEE: [Hiroshima Airport website \(English version\)](#)

By Car

If you rent a car in Japan, you will have no problem finding your way to Hiroshima as it is connected to other big cities via toll highways. The drive from Tokyo to Hiroshima is around 800 km (502 mi), taking about 8 hours 30 mins. Hiroshima is 331 km (206 mi) from Osaka, with a drive time of just under 4 hours. Kyoto is a little further than Osaka, taking around 4 hours 15 mins.

By Bus

Willer Express operates an overnight highway bus from Tokyo to Hiroshima departing Shinjuku Station at 20:00, arriving at Hiroshima Bus Station at 09:00 the next day.

You can use a site such as [12GoAsia to check timetables and reserve seats](#) on highways buses.

Where to Stay in Hiroshima

In Hiroshima city: I'd recommend any of the hotels downtown along peace boulevard for great views and convenient location to walk to shops and sightseeing. The [KNOT is a popular hotel](#) in a good location, also the [Mitsui Garden](#) and [Dormy Inn](#) as well as [the new Hilton hotel](#) get good reviews.

[Smaller hotels like the KIRO](#) are also in a good area. Near the castle, a popular hotel is the [Rihga Royal which overlooks the Hiroshima Castle](#) grounds. If you want to stay near the station, the [Sheraton Grand Hiroshima](#) or [Granvia Hiroshima](#) are popular hotels with good views of the mountains.

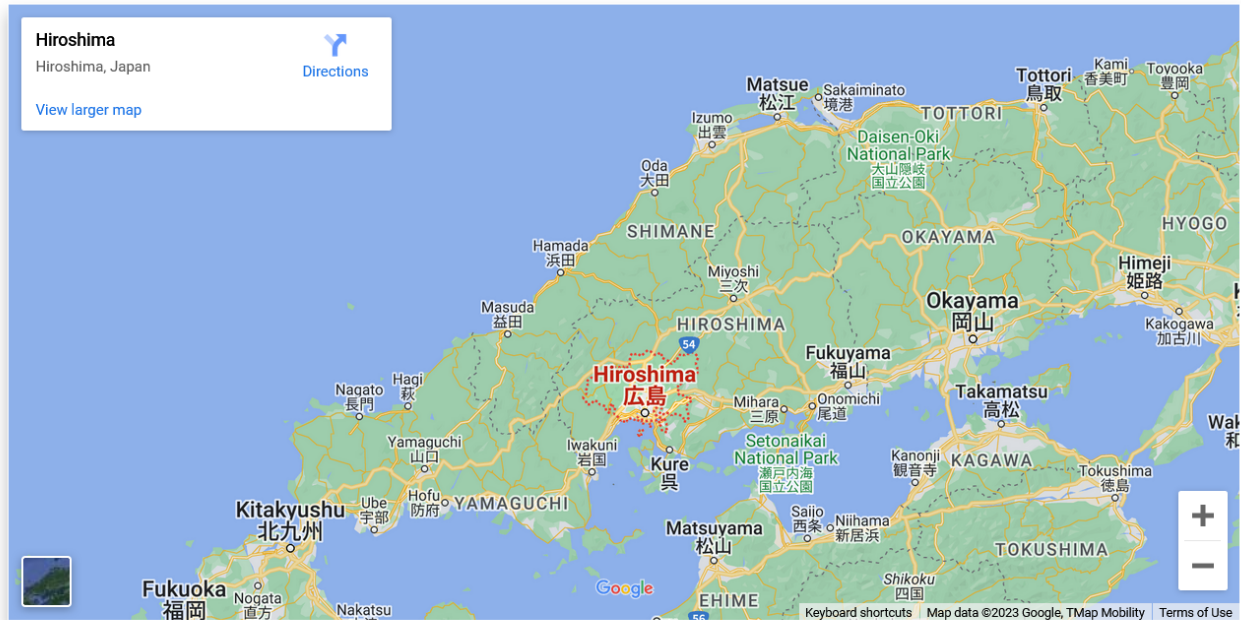
I hope this introductory Hiroshima city guide inspires you to add it to your next itinerary.

About the Author



JJ Walsh from Hawaii, now calls Hiroshima home after 25+ years. She runs [Inbound Ambassador](#), a sustainable travel-tourism consulting, content & training business. JJ also co-founded Get Hiroshima in 1999, and arranges bespoke tours in Hiroshima that promote sustainability. Her weekly talk show-podcast Seek Sustainable Japan has over 400 live interviews.

Location Map: Hiroshima City



Resources

Get Hiroshima

[Get Hiroshima - Be more than a tourist](#)

Dive Hiroshima - The Official Guide To Hiroshima Website

[Dive Hiroshima - Travel & Tour Information](#)

JNTO Hiroshima City Guide

[Hiroshima's Vibrant Capital](#)

Things To Do In Hiroshima

[GetYourGuide: Hiroshima Activities & Experiences](#)

Recommended Hotels In Hiroshima

[Dormy Inn Hiroshima](#)

[Granvia Hiroshima](#)

[Hilton Hiroshima](#)

[KIRO Hiroshima by THE SHARE HOTELS](#)

[The KNOT Hiroshima](#)

[Mitsui Garden Hotel Hiroshima](#)

[Rihga Royal Hotel Hiroshima](#)

[Sheraton Grand Hiroshima](#)

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- [Discover Honshu: Island Guide](#)
- [Discover Shikoku: Island Guide](#)
- [5 Insider Tips for Sustainable Travel in Japan](#)

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My [Travel Planning Calls](#) are ideal if you have a few unanswered questions about a trip you are planning, or would like feedback and suggestions on an itinerary you are building. Learn More [HERE](#).

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