

UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER EXPERIENCES

AWAIT YOU IN JAPAN

Its landscapes changing in fascinating ways, Japan offers a rich variety of enjoyable activities during the summer, from subtropical resorts to cool 3,000 meter-class mountains. Many enduring folk dances and performances can also be seen in this season.

SUBTROPICAL ISLANDS

Surrounded by emerald green seas in southernmost Japan, Okinawa Prefecture is one of Asia's preeminent resort areas. Taketomijima, a small Okinawan island with a population of about 300 people, is a popular destination that retains the prefecture's original scenery of houses with red-tiled roofs, stone walls made of coral, and white sand roads. A rocking ride in a water buffalo-drawn cart through hamlets blazing with bougainvillea is absolutely unforgettable. AFLO



SPECTACULAR MOUNTAINS

Mountains cover around 70% of the Japanese land area, with 23 summits above 3,000 m. Of these, Mount Tateyama in Toyama Prefecture has been revered as a holy mountain since ancient times, and is a site of spiritual practices. Today, with public transportation reaching an altitude of 2,450 m, many tourists visit after the snow has melted, drawn by beautiful ponds, rare alpine plants, and breathtaking scenery.

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RITUAL DANCES

In the summer, folk dances are held throughout Japan praying for the repose of the deceased. Also intended to pray for a good harvest, the end of plagues, and safety from disasters, as well as to strengthen local spiritual forces, dances and other folk arts have been handed down over the centuries in every region. In November 2022, 41 such events were inscribed on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as "Furyu-odori, ritual dances imbued with people's hopes and prayers." The photograph shows the Ayakomai dance in Kashiwazaki City, Niigata Prefecture, passed down for about five centuries, with some features having a tantalizing resemblance to early *Kabuki*.