

# Winterscapes of Japan

In the long chain of islands that form the Japanese archipelago, the winter scenery varies from one region to another. One of the most spectacular is the snowscape, in which everything is blanketed in dazzling white.

The natural wonders of winter fascinate us, with its sometimes harsh, sometimes awe-inspiring, and sometimes overwhelming beauty. A snowscape can sometimes be thrilling and at other times bring us peace of mind and tranquility.

Come and discover for yourself the unique snow-laden landscapes of Japan's cities, villages, and mountains, where people's lives are intertwined with nature.



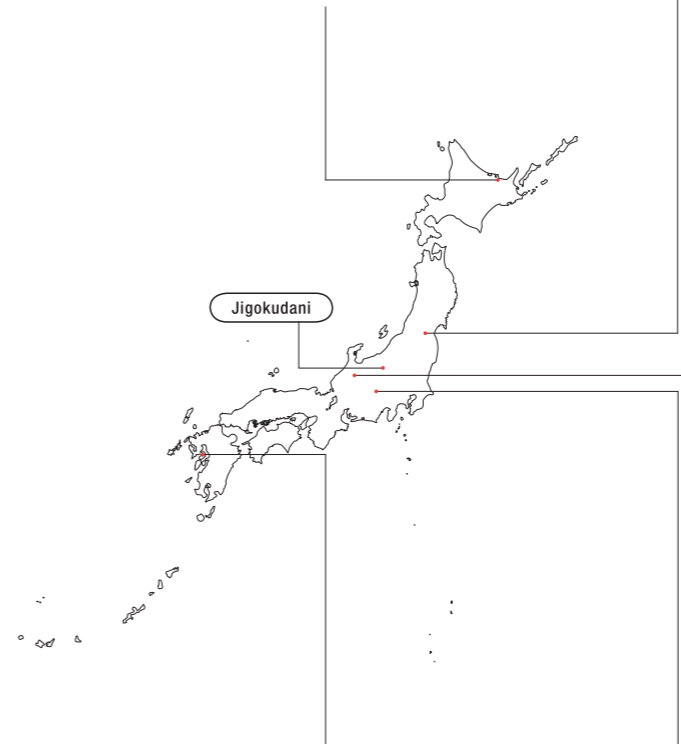
**Snow Monkeys: Jigokudani Yaen-Koen (Snow Monkey Park), Nagano**

Jigokudani Yaen-Koen is the only place where you can see Japanese monkeys bathing in natural hot springs. Popularly known as “snow monkeys,” they look almost human as they relax in the warm water—an adorable sight that is sure to warm your heart.



**Drift Ice: Abashiri, Hokkaido**

In mid-January, drift ice reaches the shore of Okhotsk Coast in Hokkaido. You can take a sightseeing boat to view this harsh and dynamic winterscape up close.



**Hard Rime: Mt. Myokendake, Nagasaki**

Winter comes even to the southern island of Kyushu, forming a beautiful and dazzling winterscape. The trees become covered in hard rime—ice crystals formed from water droplets in the air. It can only be seen under the right conditions, however, which include low temperature, strong wind, and fog.



**Soft Rime: Zao, Yamagata**

The soft rime covering the Zao Plateau is a natural work of art interweaving weather and vegetation. Skiing among the looming giants—also known as “snow monsters”—is a unique and thrilling experience. (©Kyodo News)



**Historic Village: Shirakawa-go, Gifu**

Designated as a World Heritage site, the historic village of Shirakawa-go is dotted with traditional *Gassho* style houses. Their distinctive steeply pitched thatched roofs are designed to withstand heavy snowfall. In the past, the villagers raised silkworms in the attic space. The snow falling gently on the village is a truly serene sight.



**God's Crossing: Lake Suwa, Nagano**

When the entire surface of Lake Suwa freezes over in the winter, a rare and awe-inspiring phenomenon can be seen. The ice cracks and is thrust upward across the middle of the lake, forming a pattern that looks like a path—thus earning it the name *Omiwatari*, meaning “God's Crossing.”