



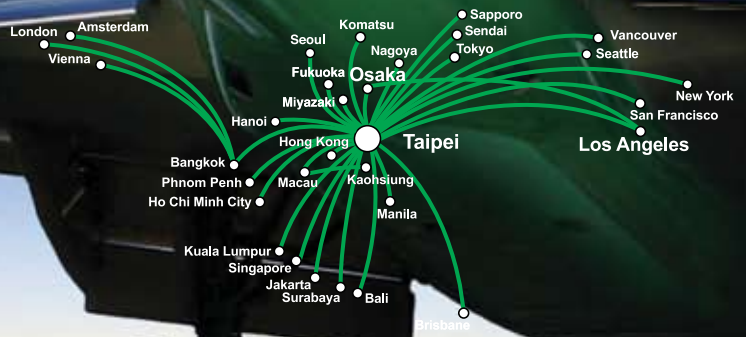
Yokoso!
JAPAN



Japan

Winter Guide '08-'09

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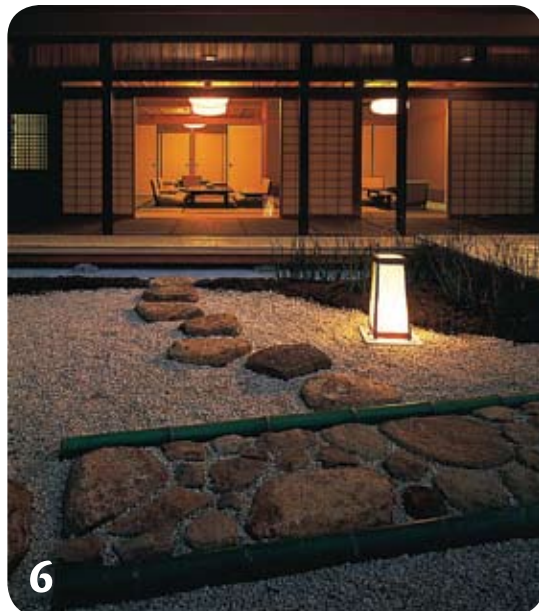
Find out why this is the season to visit Japan.



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Written by: Marissa Tinloy | Design by: Deborah Dimond
Cover image: Golden Pavilion Temple, Kyoto, Japan.
Photography by: Akisuke Shibata

TRAVELAGE
CUSTOM PUBLISHING **WEST**



Snow and ice festivals make the winter months unique for clients.

Japan... Warm & Inviting in Winter

Winter in Japan is a largely untouched market — and a great selling opportunity. While the charm of frost-tipped cherry trees, snowy mountains and cozy ryokan inns are often forgotten amidst Japan's more popular travel seasons, there's nothing that can quite describe the sight of heavy fog rolling across high-peaked mountains and lush gardens with lanterns illuminated in the sparkling snow. Now is the perfect time to bring together romance and irresistible offers for clients interested in experiencing an exotic destination like Japan.

This winter, Japan has a range of offerings designed to immerse your clients in the mystical beauty of Japanese winter. It's the ideal season to invite them to share in the magic of Japan's unique roster of events, including the countrywide Yokoso! Japan Weeks, celebrating the best of shopping and holiday events, and Kyoto Winter Special, during which candles are lit throughout many sites. Winter activities, such as hitting the slopes of Nagano and Hokkaido on Olympic-quality powder and enjoying the hot springs and traditional inns, are not to be missed. For every traveler's interest, Japan has something special to share.

The romance of winter in Japan brings together the best of the country's stunning landscape and exciting, big-city activities. The weather is phenomenal. The opening of sacred temples and shrines is rare. This truly is a special season. Japan warmly welcomes visitors from around the world to share in the natural and cultural splendor of this gentle season.

Q+A

Naoko Marutani,
Director of the Japan
National Tourist
Office, Los Angeles



WHAT MAKES VISITING JAPAN IN THE WINTER A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE?

The Japanese culture centers on a respect of nature and seasonality. You can feel those in our festivals, foods and customs.

The most popular traveling seasons to Japan are Spring (cherry blossom) and Fall (autumn foliage), but during Winter there are a lot of things to enjoy, too, that many tourists don't know about. It's a great time to come to Japan because of festivals, special events, more availability in hotels, and off-season airfares...even though it's definitely an "on-season" to come.

WHAT IS THE ATMOSPHERE IN JAPAN LIKE DURING THIS SEASON?

This is a special time of year for Japanese people, like Thanksgiving or Christmas for Americans — and there is something quite splendid and romantic about it. The cities become very festive with decorations and illuminations for the Christmas holidays and New Year. With the snow and the bright lights, and the special openings of temples and events, winter feels like a very magical time of year. It is a fresh start.

WHAT CAN VISITORS EXPECT IN TERMS OF WINTER WEATHER?

Because of its geographical structure, islands stretching from north to south, Japan has a wide range of climates. Even in winter, visitors can find whatever temperatures they're looking for. Northern parts of Japan, such as Hokkaido or Tohoku, or mountain areas of central Japan can offer visitors abundant snow while one can enjoy the mild winter in the southern regions such as Okinawa. In cities such as Tokyo or Kyoto, it doesn't snow much and average temperatures are about 50F. Travelers to Japan can really have it all.

IF YOU HAD ONE WINTER DAY TO SPEND IN JAPAN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

I would go outside the city, stay in a ryokan and enjoy the hot springs, Japanese cuisine and sake. [she laughs] The best part is, when it's cold outside, you feel even more comfortable being in such a warm, soothing atmosphere, feeling like part of the nature in a quiet surrounding.

JNTO Los Angeles: 213-623-1952
www.japantravelinfo.com; email: info@jnto-lax.org

A Winter Wonderland

SHOPS AND SKI RESORTS COME ALIVE DURING THIS FESTIVE SEASON

Winter in Japan is one of the most wonderful seasons imaginable, with incredible snow, ski resorts and activities as well as countless cultural, culinary and sightseeing experiences. Japan not only receives some of the best powder snow in the world, it features steaming hot springs (*onsen*), snow and ice festivals and unrivaled hospitality to enjoy after a day on the slopes.

On the ski front, Japan features two main ski destinations — Hokkaido and Nagano. From November through April, the mountains of Japan are in prime ski condition, ready to challenge the best international skiers and snowboarders and pamper them after a day on the slopes.

Hokkaido is one of the country's most popular and well-known winter sports destinations. Its capital, Sapporo hosted the 1972 Winter Olympics. Hokkaido is the northernmost main island of Japan, abundant with nature, events and festivals, including the Sapporo Snow Festival. Travelers can easily reach this snow haven with a brief domestic flight from Tokyo. The famous ski regions on the island are Niseko and Furano.

The unbeatable trio of the Grand Hirafu, the Niseko Village (formerly known as Higashiyama) and the Annupuri Ski Resorts make up Niseko United, the large interconnected ski resort, ideal for clients interested in perfect ski conditions and a wealth of activities. In July 2008, the Hilton Hotel Group opened Hilton Niseko Village. This completely restyled 506-room property is at the base of Niseko Village Ski Resort, center of the interconnected resorts and boasts a ski-in/ski-out location with restaurants, bars, hot springs and spa. Other hotels in the area include the lauded Niseko Alpen, with a special ski-in/ski-out location and extensive spa options, and the Northern Resort Annupuri, known for its fusion of Japanese and Western decor and atmosphere.

Furano, located to the east of Niseko in central Hokkaido, also provides excellent snow conditions. Furano offers skiers the opportunity to experience the neighboring mountains of Kamui and Tomamu, as well as backcountry skiing on the live volcanoes of Mt. Ashihidake and Mt. Tokachidake. In terms of accommodations, clients can choose from a wide range of cottages, guesthouses and luxury hotels, including the convenient ski-in/ski-out New Furano Prince. For those with other outdoor interests, the island offers hiking in the backcountry, soaking in natural hot springs and viewing some of the world's most stunning active volcanoes.

Another famous destination is the Nagano Prefecture in central Japan, host of the 1998 Winter Olympics. Like Hokkaido, it also bears a reputa-



tion for spectacular snow, well-equipped facilities and a variety of apre-ski attractions. A quick trip by bullet train from Tokyo, the picturesque region houses world-class winter resorts and magnificent views of Japan's Alps.

Hakuba, a famous ski region in Nagano, features 33 feet of seasonal snowfall and a 3,514-foot vertical playground. This luxury lounge spot offers more than great snow, with accommodations and activities to fit every client's desire, including indoor and outdoor hot springs, shopping and a vibrant nightlife thanks to more than 150 restaurants, shops and bars. For those seeking culture, Nagano boasts the Zenkoji Temple and Matsumoto Castle. Not-to-be-missed are the famous snow monkeys in the rock baths at Jigokudani Monkey Park.

For those who prefer hitting the shops over hitting the slopes, winter in Japan is also a great time to shop. Many department stores throughout the major cities hold winter sales. During the New Year holiday many stores feature *Fukubukuro*, Japanese for "lucky bag" or "mystery bag." Stores assemble bags of undisclosed merchandise and sell them at 50 percent or more off the list price of the items contained within. Additionally, many stores offer special discounts in conjunction with events such as the Yokoso! Japan Weeks and Kyoto Winter Special.



Top: Skiing at Niseko Village
Above: Special winter sales entice shoppers.

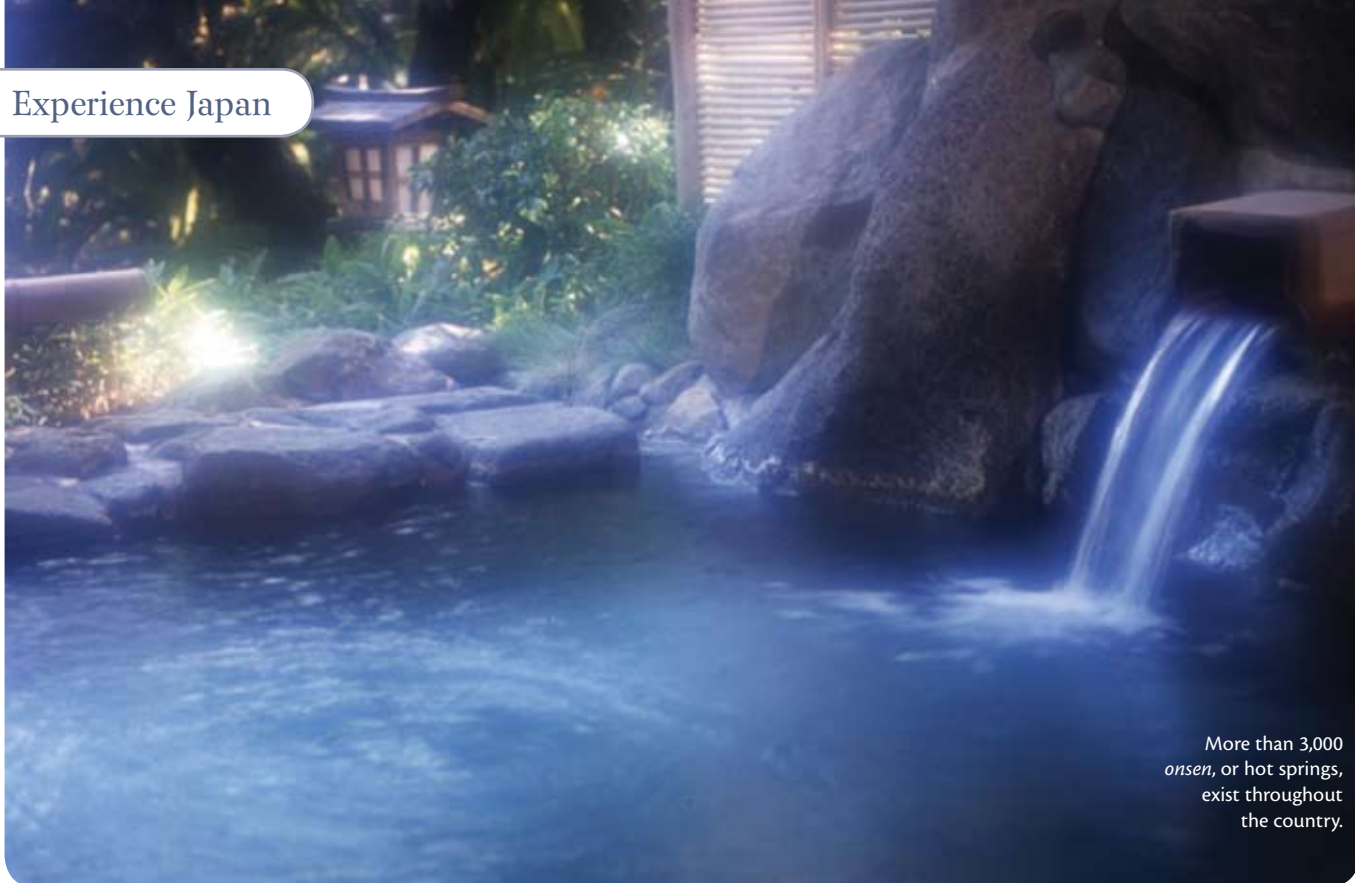
Resources:

Skiing Hokkaido: www.skiing-hokkaido.com

Honshu-Mount 6: www.mt6.jp

Hokkaido: www.visit-hokkaido.jp/en

Nagano: www.nagano-tabi.net/sc/english/toppage.php



More than 3,000
onsen, or hot springs,
exist throughout
the country.

Healing in Japan: Hot Springs and Ryokans

PLUS: REJUVENATING DAYTRIPS FROM TOKYO

A visit to a Japanese hot spring promises to be one of the most beautiful and rejuvenating experiences — something clients are sure to appreciate and will always remember. In Japan, spa-goers don't just dip into a Jacuzzi. Instead, they have the option to step into an indoor or outdoor fresh mineral bath, all while taking in the sights of Japan's magnificent landscapes, such as the snow-capped mountains, tumbling sea or bamboo groves. Such a luxurious and unique experience can only be found in Japan.

Naturally, Japan's volcanic terrain has created more than 3,000 hot springs, known as *onsen*, in regions across the country. At these onsens visitors to Japan are invited to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and experience rural beauty and great hospitality at serene Japanese-style inns, better known as ryokans.

Onsen offer an impressive range of unique purification treatments and state-of-the-art hot spring facilities. Onsen water is believed to have healing powers derived from its mineral content so just soaking in this hot, mineral-rich water brings therapeutic benefits. There are several unique venues featuring onsen. In Kagoshima, the Ibusuki Hakuuikan offers a 300-year-old Sand Bath practice in which guests are buried in warm, beach-like sand to enhance perspiration and increase blood circulation. More traditional, favorite spa treatments include open-air baths (*rotenburo*) with waterfall massages, and enclosed clay baths.

In the evening, healing experiences are customarily accompanied by a comfortable and enlightening stay

at a traditional ryokan. With more than 55,000 inns throughout the country — 1,400 of which are quality-approved members of the Japan Ryokan Association (www.ryokan.or.jp) — the ryokans of Japan offer an enormous range of luxury and affordability, allowing visitors on every itinerary to experience the elements of Japanese culture and customs staying in the *tatami* (straw-matted) rooms, wearing *yukata* (robe) and sleeping on a *futon* (cotton-filled mattress).

For those interested in exploring the spirit of Japanese rejuvenation without an overnight stay, daytrips from Tokyo to nearby hot spring areas such as Nikko or Hakone are an ideal alternative. There are several onsen facilities where travelers can just soak in the bath without staying overnight. Moreover, these two areas have more than just onsen to offer. Nikko, located north of Tokyo, offers a host of opportunities for hiking as well as the touch of history and culture found at the Toshogu Shrine. Similarly, the town of Hakone, situated in the southwestern part of Kanagawa, offers stunning views of Mt. Fuji and volcanic traces at Owakudani.

The Ooedo-Onsen-Monogatari (www.ooedo-onsen.jp/english/) in Tokyo is even more convenient for travelers who are looking for onsen inside the city. This onsen theme park pumps in water from natural hot springs some 4,600 feet underground in order to fill its indoor and outdoor bath facilities. It specializes in traditional spa techniques, too, such as a foot bath set in a Japanese-style garden.

DASH TO NIKKO

Nikko, located just two-hours by train from Tokyo, makes a fabulous day excursion. Tobu Railway and Japan Railways Group (JR) both provide quick and affordable transportation. Tobu runs between Tobu Asakusa Station in Tokyo and Tobu Nikko Station. Japan Rail Pass holders can travel by bullet train from JR Tokyo Station to JR Utsunomiya Station and change to the local Nikko Line to JR Nikko Station. Or from JR Shinjuku Station to Tobu Nikko Station. Nikko Tourist Association www.nikko-jp.org/english/index.html

HOP TO HAKONE

Direct trains run between Tokyo's Shinjuku Station and the Hakone-Yumoto Station on Odakyu Railways. On the "Romance Car" express train, the journey takes about one hour and 15 minutes. The ride is approximately two hours on other trains. Japan Rail Pass holders can take the bullet train from JR Tokyo Station to JR Odawara Station and then to Hakone-Yumoto Station by Hakone Tozan Line, the journey is one hour and 30 minutes. Hakone-Zenjan National Park www.hakone.or.jp





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Kyoto Winter Special

In the winter, clients have the opportunity to visit coveted national treasures like the Fushimi-inari Shrine



As the ancient capital of Japan, the city of Kyoto is an ideal setting to celebrate the country's rich, regional and cultural history. With the glistening rooftops of its historic pagodas, the glow of lanterns in the night and the quiet of winter peace, clients in search of a relaxing vacation are sure to love Kyoto.

"Winter is a very tranquil season in Kyoto. You can feel the heart of Japanese style and culture," said Keiji Maki, Deputy Director of Tourism Promotion, City of Kyoto.

The Kyoto Winter Special, running from Dec. 1 to Mar. 31, 2009, encompasses a wide range of promotions. Specials include the opportunity to visit hidden cultural heritage sites, stroll romantic candlelit lanes in the city and enjoy seasonal offers from hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops. Unique visitor experiences include home-cooking visits, zen meditation seminars and craft making.

The Kyoto Winter Special includes permission to visit coveted national treasures, such as sacred temples and shrines that are normally restricted to the public. With eleven temples and one shrine participating in the festivities, visitors have the opportunity to explore such sites as the mystical Kodai-ji, Toji

Temples and Fushimi Inari Shrine whose red torii gate pathway was featured in "Memoirs of a Geisha". These spots will be open from Jan. 10 to Mar. 18, 2009.

The city of Kyoto, which boasts more than 1,000 years of history as the ancient capital of Japan, will also feature enlightening cultural events, such as the mystical Hanatouro lantern lighting. Hanatouro, which literally means "flower and light road" in Japanese, results in thousands of illuminated lanterns and flowers placed along the 3.25-mile path along the streets of Arashiyama (Dec. 12 – 21) and Higashiyama (March 13-22, 2009). Musical performances and art exhibits also highlight the event.

Fabulous hotel deals, irresistible coupons and a tempting contest will give your clients even more reasons to visit this mesmerizing city in central Japan. Western-style hotels and traditional Japanese inns (*ryokan*) will provide visitors with unbeatable opportunities, such as a fourth-night-free, an on-arrival room upgrade or a complimentary welcome drink. Several venues throughout the area feature special visitor discounts or giveaways.

www.kyotowinterspecial.com

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** Kyoto extension is per person rate, double occupancy, must be purchased with Japan Holiday.

Welcome!

Yokoso! Japan Weeks

Yokoso! Japan Weeks, celebrated nationwide every year during the months of January and February, bring together the best of Japanese culture and regional attractions in order to, quite literally, *yokoso* (welcome) international visitors, making it an ideal time to send your clients to Japan.

These exciting five weeks, which take place throughout the country, highlight cultural events that are unique to each region and include special discounts at restaurants, hotels and tourist attractions. Whichever region your clients visit, there will be something special to offer.

Shoppers will appreciate department store discounts, outlet specials and alluring programs that most major retailers participate in throughout the event.

For clients interested in cultural experiences, sacred holiday and seasonal events offer an opportunity to become immersed in the Japanese heritage. This special period invites people from around the world to be a part of traditions unique to the Japanese culture.

With shopping discounts in the cities, traditional ceremonies in the countryside and seasonal experiences in every locale, the Yokoso! Japan Weeks pose the perfect time to book your clients to discover the diverse beauty and warm welcome of wintertime Japan.

www.yjw2009.jp/eng



Yokoso! Japan Weeks invite clients to immerse themselves in Japanese culture.

QSAWAMI/JNTO

When:

Yokoso! Japan Weeks 2009 is scheduled for January 20 through February 28, 2009.

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A Taste of Winter



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Favorite Foods

THE TOP FIVE MUST-TRY WINTER DISHES

Japanese cuisine is as diverse — and delicious — as the landscapes and seasons it reflects. During winter, warm favorites with local and seasonal ingredients top the chart for the dishes that shouldn't be missed. Here is a sampling of the best of the best.



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TOKYO HOLIDAY

This Tokyo adventure uncovers a city full of sheer energy where rhythms of modern culture collide with old traditions. To accentuate your trip, consider our optional tour to the exciting city of Bangkok or Singapore, where skyscrapers decorate the skyline alongside many other unique landmarks.

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1. **NABEMONO**, or nabe, is the perfect cure for the cold winter weather. Varieties of this one-pot soup or stew are endless and can be tailored to please any palate. Favorite ingredients include noodles, chicken, eggs, cabbage and miso or soy. Regional ingredients make it a local specialty and a great dish to be enjoyed with friends and family.

2. **NOODLES**, such as ramen noodles found in hot soups, are another excellent choice for winter diners. Other varieties include thin soba or thick udon noodles. These are best served in a hot broth called *tsuyu*, accompanied by various seasonal ingredients.

3. For a festive treat, try **OSECHI**, finger foods combined and served in a bento box to celebrate Japanese New Year. Each dish making up the osechi has a special meaning, for example *kuro-mame*, or black soybeans, represent a wish for good health, while *kazunoko* (herring roe) symbolizes the desire for many children.

4. **KAISEKI** is a good option to sample local ingredients in a festive presentation. The traditional, multiple-course meal is as rich in culture as it is in culinary appeal. A typical kaiseki begins with an appetizer followed by sashimi, a simmered dish, a grilled dish and steamed dish. All of this is sweetly capped off with a seasonal dessert.

5. Last, but not least, is a true Japanese tradition, **SAKE**. While this rice wine is popular in the U.S., there's nothing like enjoying it with authentic Japanese cuisine. It can be served hot, warm or cold depending on your preference.

Airline Update

WHO'S FLYING, WHEN AND WHERE

Traveling to Japan from the Western U.S. is as easy as ever, with an increasing number of direct flights from major gateway cities. Here's a review of the more popular routes and airlines.

NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

DFW - NRT: American Airlines

DEN - NRT (via SEA): United Airlines

IAH - NRT: Continental Airlines

LAX - NRT: Japan Airlines International, All Nippon Airways, Northwest Airlines, United Airlines, American Airlines, Korean Air and Singapore Airlines

PDX - NRT: Northwest Airlines

SAT - NRT (via IAH): Continental Airlines

SFO - NRT: Japan Airlines International, All Nippon Airways, Northwest Airlines and United Airlines

SEA - NRT: Northwest Airlines, United Airlines

KANSAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

(gateway to Osaka, Kyoto & Nara)

LAX - KIX: Eva Airways and Thai Airways (starting Oct. 26)

SFO - KIX: United Airlines

GLOSSARY: Denver International Airport (DEN), Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW), George Bush Intercontinental/Houston Airport (IAH), Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Portland International Airport (PDX), San Antonio International Airport (SAT), San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA)



INTO: KANSAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COLTD/INTO

Upcoming Events

NOV | 2 [FESTIVAL]

Karatsu Kunchi Festival, Saga. This annual three-day festival attracts visitors with a display of gigantic floats known as *hikiyama*. The highlight of the event is on the second day when attendees haul gigantic floats over the sand along Nishinohama Beach.

Event runs until Nov. 4.

NOV | 3 [PARADE]

Hakone Daimyo Gyoretsu, Hakone. Held on national Culture Day, this event at the Yumoto Hot Spring Town in Hakone includes a procession of nearly 170 people dressed in traditional samurai warrior and princess costumes. In the style of an ancient feudal lord parade, the group is accompanied by marching bands and dancers.

DEC | 1 [WINTER SPECIAL]

Kyoto Winter Special, Kyoto. Since 2007, the city of Kyoto has held this winter special to share the history and splendor of this romantic city. During this time, hidden cultural heritage sites are open to the public and visitors will enjoy special events and discounts.

Event runs until March 31, 2009.

JAN | 20 [FESTIVAL]

Yokoso! Japan Weeks. Throughout Japan, visitors will have an opportunity to get special offers at hotels, restaurants, shops and attractions, while enjoying unique cultural events and performances. The Yokoso! Japan Weeks are part of a unified, nationwide effort to welcome international visitors.

Event runs until Feb. 28, 2009.

FEB | 3 [FESTIVAL]

Lantern Festival of Kasuga Shrine, Nara. This festival involves the mystical lighting of 3,000 bronze and stone lanterns within the shrine and along pathways to Kasuga Taishi. The shrine was established in the year 768 A.D. and, with Mt. Mikasa as a backdrop, it possesses a magical aura.

FEB | 5 [FESTIVAL]

Sapporo Snow Festival, Sapporo. One of Japan's largest and most well-known winter events, the Sapporo Snow Festival continues to grow, beckoning visitors with seven days of glittering snow statues and ice sculptures. Since 1950, this event has been one of Hokkaido's most prominent winter celebrations.

Event runs until Feb. 11, 2009.

FEB | 7 [FESTIVAL]

Asahikawa Winter Festival, Asahikawa. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, nightly fireworks are launched from the Guinness Record-holding world's largest snow sculpture.

Event runs until Feb. 11.

MAR | 22 [MARATHON]

Tokyo Marathon 2009, Tokyo. The Tokyo Marathon runs an impressive course, passing important landmarks like the Metropolitan Government Building, the Imperial Palace, the Ginza shopping district, Asakusa and other historic sites.



Karatsu Kunchi Festival

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*denotes 1 day after departure

**denotes 2 days after departure

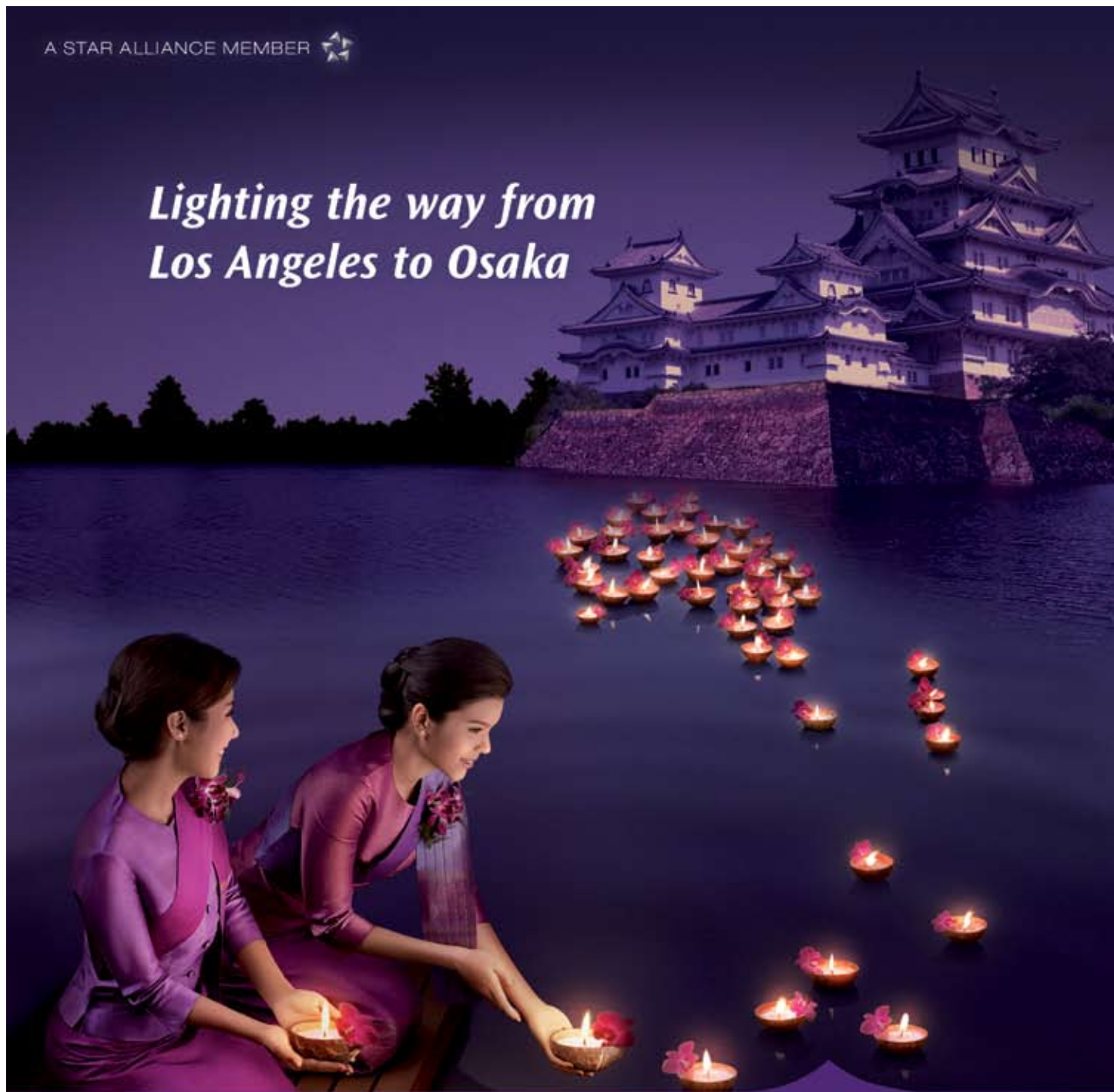


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