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**FROM ALL OF US AT THE JNTO OFFICE WE WISH YOU THE VERY BEST FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND FOR A HEALTHY, HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS 2020!**

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## Winter in Japan

Have you ever considered a trip to Japan in winter? Winter is a wonderful time to explore the country with many fun options for travellers - from skiing in Hokkaido to visiting Nagano - home of the 1998 Winter Olympics. With daily flights to Tokyo from Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, a visit to Japan has never been easier!

### Skiing Hokkaido

Looking for something out of this world this ski season? How about cat assisted ski and snowboard adventures on your own private mountain! The best powder skiing in the world is in Hokkaido where wind blows tracks as soon as they're made so that each successive run is as pristine as the first. The newest ski resort to grace the slopes is the luxurious Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono resort and spa, opening on January 20, 2020.



In addition to the fluffy powder skiing including back country, side country and tree skiing, the Japanese ski experience is made complete after a full day of activity by soaking in a steaming hot spring under the stars, and dining on Hokkaido brand wagyu and sake with the freshest local seafood on the island.



### Winter Cherry Blossom Viewing in Okinawa

Spring cherry blossom viewing is peak tourist season in Japan. But, did you know that in Japan's southern islands of Okinawa the cherry blossoms are actually in full bloom in January? Visiting this warm tropical island chain in winter offers the best cherry blossoms while avoiding the masses of tourists. Renowned as the island of healthy longevity where centenarians enjoy traditional lifestyles, ripe tropical fruits burst with juiciness,

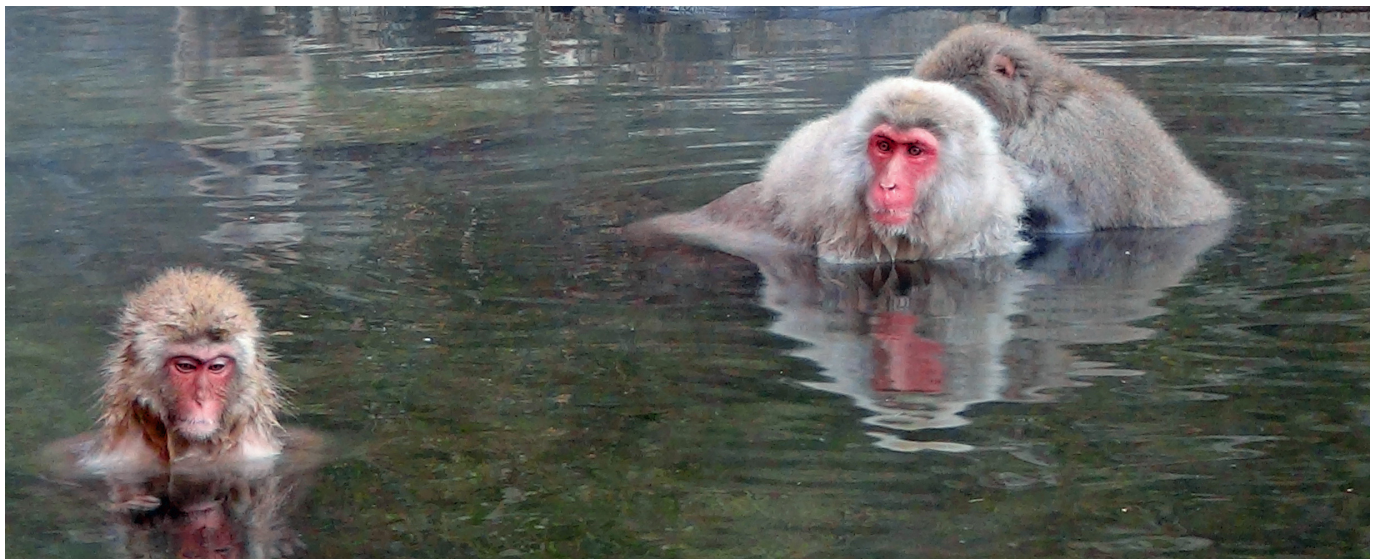
deep sea diving is second to none, seafood is always fresh, and white sandy beaches without the crowds and without the summer heat, are perfectly calming and make for a relaxing getaway.

## Winter Wonderland in Toyama

Pristine white snow blankets Toyama prefecture on the Japan Sea side. Visiting the quiet and remote gasshō-zukuri villages in Gokayama, where fluffy snow is packed four metres high, is like a walk in a magical snow globe. Within the three hundred-year old, thatched-roofed-houses, shaped liked the cupped hands of one in prayer, locals cultivate silkworms and make rice paper. Each village is softly illuminated from January to March to heighten their enchantment. Nearby in the Shogawa Valley, the Omaki Onsen is rated one of the top hot springs in Japan, and one of the most secluded. Here you can enjoy an open-air hot bath with magnificent views, followed by local cuisine around a charcoal fire. Within the Snow Canyon of Mt. Tateyama, the highway plow creates snow banks on either side that reach up to sixty-six feet! This iconic stretch of Route 6 attracts visitors from across Japan. Renowned for sweet, thick seafood from Toyama Bay, a signature dish in winter is Toyama Black Ramen. Rich in a unique soy broth, it has been recognized as champion of the Tokyo Ramen Show. Winter months are also warmed by LED-lit trees and sculptures across parks and streets during the Snowpiad Tateyama Sanroku festival that provides for the most romantic winter setting in Japan.



## Nagano's Monkey Planet



## Nagano's Monkey Planet continued

Winter sports abound in Nagano, home of the 1998 Winter Olympics, and strolls along the Nakasendo Trail through ancient postal towns reveal a glimpse into the past, but the volcanic activity enables relaxing hot springs in the most unspoiled nature imaginable. Even the monkeys have got it good in the crisp mountain air of the Japan Alps. Once upon a time, monkeys descended from the trees high up in the mountains and into the hot springs below to stake their claim. Now, the hot baths of Jigokudani belong to them. When the temperature drops, they plunge into the hot water to pamper and groom each other. A short hike along a wooded path leads to the famed Snow Monkeys, happily obliging visitors by lazing their day away in their own natural spa.



## Warming up in Akita

Akita is a rural agricultural hub where tradition remains unspoiled. In winter, igloos pop up, both large and small during the Yokote Kamakura Festival, creating glowing orbs across the cityscape. Miniature “kamakura” are candle-lit and evoke a mystical ambience, while the larger huts invite visitors to enter for warm drinks. Cuisine is rooted in comfort food from Bear Stew; Kiritampo, rice that is mashed, kneaded and stewed with meat and vegetables or glazed with a miso paste; and Hinai chicken, free-range and slow raised to tender, juicy perfection and paired with creamy Hinai chicken eggs and sweet sauce on rice. Outdoor onsen, called rotenburo, provide havens in which to soak and unwind. Nyuto onsen, "nipple hot spring", is a cluster of mixed-gender baths found at ryokans in the mountains. Their piping hot milky white waters have healing powers. They are hundreds of years old and named after the shape of the mountain for which they are named. Don't miss the Akita Dog museum, the only museum in the world dedicated to Japanese dogs.

