

EXCURSIONS

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Step outside Tokyo for a breath of fresh air, and you will encounter a whole different world from the nonstop super-bustle of the capital. Located just an hour or two by train are soothing *onsen* (mineral hot springs) in natural settings, refreshing mountain hikes and walks, and a few decent beaches on the Pacific. If you have got the time and a yen for careful planning, you will be able to do all three in one trip. Plus, there are the must-see tourist destinations of Nikkō and Kamakura, as well as the hot springs of Hakone and the Izu-hantō peninsula near breathtaking Mt Fuji. The first two, rich in gorgeous temples and shrines, are particularly worth seeing if you don't have time to jump on a *shinkansen* (bullet train) to see the splendid architecture of Kyoto and Nara near Osaka. Thanks to Japan's unsurpassed public transport infrastructure, sightseeing in the Kantō area around Tokyo is easy, quick and very much worth the time.

Places listed in this chapter can be visited as day trips, although if you're planning on being in Tokyo for a week or more, an overnight stay can make these excursions infinitely more relaxing, especially if it's at a ryokan (traditional Japanese inn).

ONSEN

Hot springs heaven, here we come! Getting naked with total strangers is not, for most of us, the cultural norm, and those not from Japan often feel self-conscious at first. But shy *gaijin* (foreigners) should know that the Japanese perceive bathing as a great social leveller; all revel in the anonymity that nudity allows.

The baths themselves come in as many different shapes and sizes as the customers, varying from the deluxe to the primitive. Essentially, you will either visit solely for an *o-furo* (traditional Japanese bath, which translates literally as the 'honourable bath') or stay at an *onsen ryokan* (traditional hot-spring inn) to enjoy good food, copious amounts of alcohol, karaoke and a soak in the establishment's private baths, which may be located either indoors or outside. Ryokan will often allow you to have a soak even if you aren't staying there (ask for *ofuro-nomi* or *higaeri-onsen*), although late-night privileges are often reserved for guests. This is an excellent and affordable way to experience some beautiful, traditional baths. Unfortunately, bathing is also big business and rampant commercialism has marred many once-lovely *onsen*.

There are two excellent books devoted to *Onsen*: *A Guide to Japanese Hot Springs* by Anne Hotta and Yoko Ishiguro, and *Japan's Hidden Hot Springs* by Robert Neff. Both are worth seeking out for anyone looking to *onsen-hop* their way through Tokyo's outlying *onsen* resorts. Holders of the JR Pass can use JR lines to hop to hot springs far afield from

Tokyo, utilising the *shinkansen* (bullet train) to get out of the city as swiftly as possible.

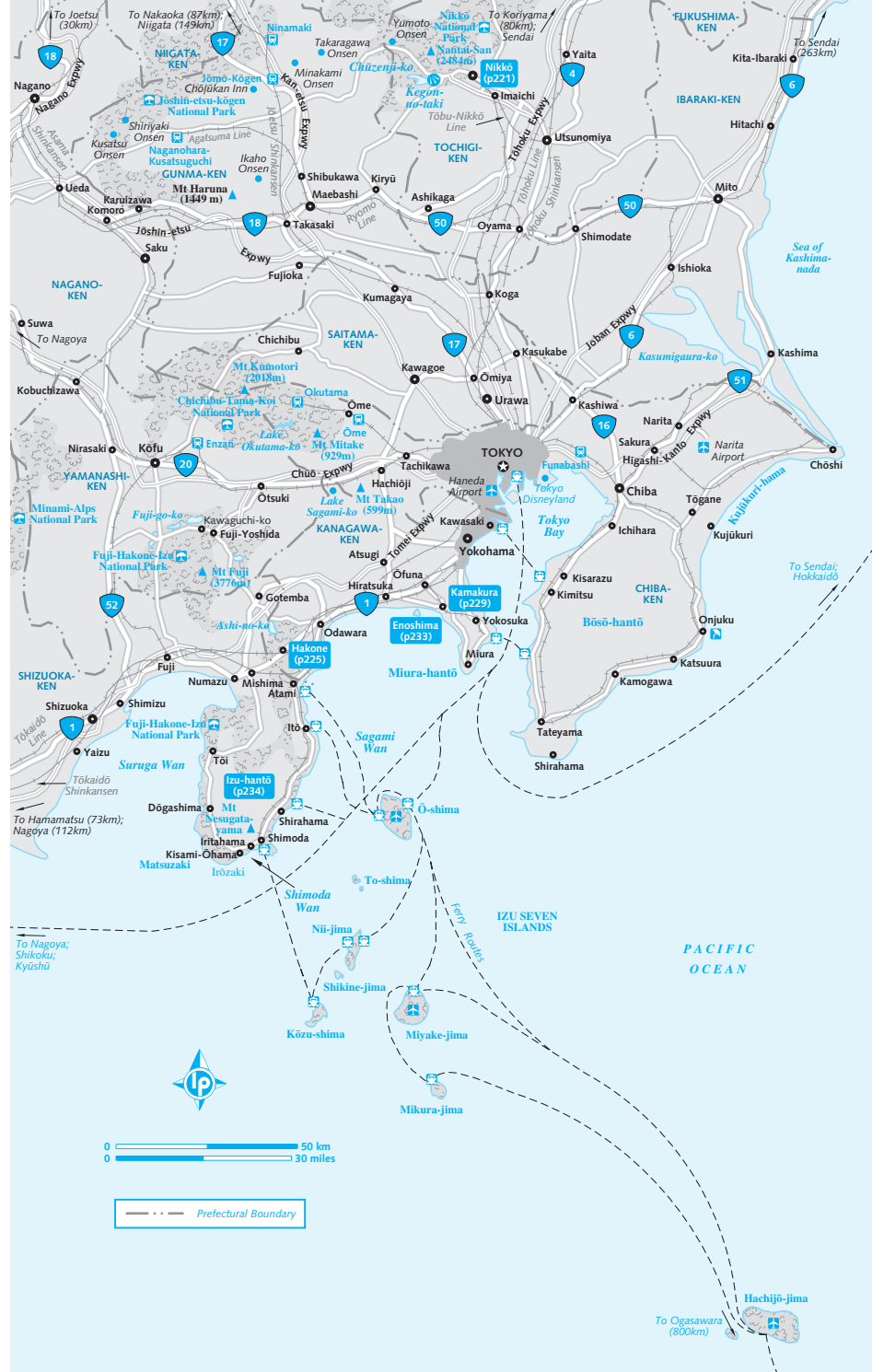
In most of the destinations that follow, there are *onsen* listings, so if you're off to Nikkō (p225) or Hakone (p228) for a day or two, you can certainly get your feet (and more) wet. But the star in the Kantō area hot-spring firmament is Gunma-ken, where water bubbles out of the ground wherever you poke a stick into it.

Get to Gunma from Ueno Station in Tokyo via Takasaki (*shinkansen* ¥4600, one hour; *tokkyū* ¥3700, 80 minutes; *futsū* ¥1890, 110 minutes) and Jōmō-Kōgen Stations (*shinkansen* ¥5550, 75 minutes) on the Jōetsu *shinkansen* line, or via Maebashi (*tokkyū* ¥3190, 100 minutes; *futsū* ¥1890, two hours) on the Ryōmō Line, and Shibukawa (*tokkyū* ¥3510, 105 minutes; *futsū* ¥2210, 2¼ hours) on the Agatsuma Line.

The following Gunma *onsen* are highly recommended and within a day's journey via *shinkansen*.

Higaeri onsen (bathing without accommodation) generally runs from ¥700 to ¥2000.

Chōjūkan Inn (法師温泉長寿館; Map p219; ☎ 0273-85-6634; www.houshi-onsen.jp in Japanese; 650 Nagai, Niiharu-mura) To get to this gorgeous, wood-walled inn at Hōshi Onsen, take the Jōetsu *shinkansen* from Tokyo Station to the Jōmō-Kōgen Station (¥5240, 75 minutes). From there, take the bus for Sarugakyō Onsen (30 minutes). At the last stop, take another bus for Hoshi Onsen (25 minutes). Try to arrive around noon to sample the inn's mountain-vegetable steamed rice. Women can sneak into the (far superior) men's bath here. In fact, it's almost expected.



Ikaho Onsen (伊香保温泉; Map p219; www.hotels-ikaho.or.jp, in Japanese) Great public bath with views of Mt Haruna. To get there, take the Jōetsu Line from Takasaki to Shibukawa Station (*futsū* ¥400, 25 minutes), and then a local bus to the *onsen* (¥550, 20 minutes). There's also a shuttle bus from the east exit of Takasaki Station to Ikaho Onsen Bus Terminal (¥1000, 55 minutes, three daily).

Kusatsu Onsen (草津温泉; Map p219; www.kusatsu-onsen.ne.jp) This is a quintessential old-time *onsen* town. Take the Agatsuma Line from Takasaki to Naganohara-Kusatsuguchi Station (*futsū* ¥1110, 87 minutes), then a local bus to the *onsen* (¥670, 30 minutes). There is an express bus from Shinjuku Station New South Exit Bus Terminal (¥3200, four hours 15 minutes, nine daily).

Minakami Onsen (水上温泉; Map p219; www.mina-kami-onsen.com) This is a thriving *onsen* town that is often frequented by couples. If you're not interested in a romantic rendezvous, you can white-water raft in the summer. To get there, take the Jōetsu Line from Takasaki to Minakami Station (*tokkyū/futsū* ¥2360/950, 54/64 minutes). From the station, the *onsen* is a pleasant 15-minute walk.

Shiriyaki Onsen (尻焼温泉; Map p219) Very odd and primitive, literally, the 'arse-burning' hot spring, favourite of haemorrhoid sufferers of the Heike clan. At this *onsen*, you simply strip and climb into the river – though not during spring, when the river is high and the water quite cold. Bring a *beniō* (boxed lunch) as there are no food options in the area, and start out early. To get there, take the Agatsuma Line from Takasaki to Naganohara-Kusatsuguchi Station (*futsū* ¥1110, 87 minutes) where you can catch a local bus to Hanashiki Onsen (¥800, 30 minutes). From the bus stop, it's a 10-minute walk.

Takaragawa Onsen (宝川温泉; Map p219; www.takaragawa.com) Complete with river bathing, Takaragawa has off been voted the nation's best. To get there, take the Jōetsu Line from Takasaki to Minakami Station (*tokkyū/futsū* ¥2360/950, 54/64 minutes), where you will be able to catch a local bus to the *onsen* (¥1100, 35 minutes).

HIKING

The mountains surrounding Tokyo offer exquisite hiking and walking trails through quiet forests of lofty Japanese cedars, around waterfalls and lakes. Such activities can often be planned with a soak in the local *onsen* with

a cool *nama-biiru* (draught beer) afterwards. The region includes some of Japan's most famous peaks like majestic **Mt Fuji** (see p228), but far easier and flatter walking paths abound. Trails can be reached by a train journey of one to two hours from hubs like Shinjuku, Ueno and Tokyo. One of the best English guidebooks is Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Japan*; Tokyo's foreigner-friendly **International Adventure Club** (www.iac-tokyo.org) organises regular hikes for hikers of all abilities as well as more challenging outings like ice climbing and snow camping.

Be sure to bring enough water if you go, and stock up on snacks at a convenience store or supermarket as some rural train stations may have very little in terms of local shops and restaurants. Other items you should consider bringing include maps, sturdy footwear, a torch, a first aid kit and rain gear. It's a good idea to drop by the tourist information office near the trailhead – if there is one – to get the latest information on routes, times, and weather and trail conditions.

Ōme (青梅) is a quiet town along the Tama River in western Tokyo just outside Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park. There's a lovely, relaxing and quite flat trail through the hills behind Ōme Station (*futsū* from Shinjuku on the Chūō and Ōme lines ¥780, one hour) that runs parallel to the JR Ōme Line. To reach it, turn left once you exit the station and continue for a few blocks until you come to a road that crosses the railway over a small bridge to your left. Take another left here, follow the road around some tennis courts up to a park, where you'll find a trailhead leading up on your right. This leads to the main westward trail, which you can continue on until signs for Futamata Station (二俣尾駅, about two hours), a few stops down the Ōme Line.

Okutama (奥多摩) is at the terminus of the JR Ōme Line and a gateway to the trails in the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park. Regular trains from Shinjuku run here daily with changes at Tachikawa and Ōme (¥1050, 110 minutes) but on weekends and holidays there are faster Okutama Holiday Express services in the morning (¥1050, 90 minutes). A great hike with an inspiring Shinto shrine at the end is from Okutama to Mitake-san (御岳山, 929m). From Okutama Station, take a left past the **tourist information centre** (奥多摩観光案内所; ☎ 0428-83-2152; 210 Hikawa, Okutamamachi; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), a good source for English maps and local information, and cross a bridge

over the Tama River just before the trailhead going to Nokogiri-yama (鋸山, 1109m). This moderate climb continues to Ōdake-san (大岳山, 1267m), which has superb vistas, and then down to Mitake-san (929m), whose charming mountaintop village is home to the impressive Mitake-jinja Shrine and quaint *minshuku* (B&Bs). The hike takes three to five hours and there is a funicular (¥570, five minutes) leading down from Mitake to Takimoto, where buses run to Mitake Station on the Ōme Line. Otherwise it's a pleasant 30-minute walk.

Takao-san (高尾山), at only 599m, is a family-friendly sacred mountain south of Ōme that is an easy climb (or otherwise funicular ride, ¥470, six minutes) with a picturesque temple and shrine as well as a monkey park atop it. It is easily reached from Shinjuku on the Keiō Line to Takaosanguchi (*jun-tokkyū* ¥370, 53 minutes), but JR Rail Pass Holders can ride the JR Chūō Line for free to Takao Station (47 minutes) and then get on the Keiō Line to Takaosanguchi (¥120, two minutes). From Takaosanguchi Station, turn right and continue straight through the village to the funicular station (where English maps are available), passing it on the left and climbing to the top via the forested **Inari-yama trail** (稲荷山コース, 90 minutes). From the summit, you can try to spy Mt Fuji to the southwest and then pause for a snack at the noodle shops. If you have the time and energy, keep hiking westward following the signs to Shiro-yama (城山, 670m), a 45-minute trek away. There are refreshment facilities here, and then the trail dips down to Lake Sagami-ko (相模湖, 60 to 90 minutes). Nearby JR Sagami-ko Station on the Chūō Line will bring you back to Shinjuku (¥950, one hour).

BEACHES

If you're seeking sun but shunning crowds, don't head for the beach on weekends and holidays when there's a predictable inflow of city-dwellers (and their sometimes appalling penchant for littering). When school's out for summer (mid-July through August), students will also be flocking to the shoreline. Surfers can find respectable waves along the Pacific coast of the Bōsō peninsula, in Chiba prefecture, and sunbathers will find decent beaches on both Bōsō-hantō and Izu-hantō. Be warned that many beaches have very strong rip currents.

South of Tokyo

Kamakura has its own beach at **Zaimokuza** and **Enoshima Island** (p233) and is best visited on a weekday when it's less crowded.

There are some lovely beaches near **Shimoda** (p234) on the Izu peninsula. Ten minutes north of town by bus, **Shirahama** (白浜) can see good surf, but if the tides are uncooperative the expansive, beautiful beach awaits your towel. Buses from Shimoda leave hourly (¥320). Ten minutes south of Shimoda are a string of lovely beaches, of which **Iritahama** (入田浜) and **Kitsami-Ōhama** (吉佐美大浜) are favourites with surfers and sunbathers. Further around to the western side of the peninsula, **Dōgashima** (堂ヶ島; p235) is another charming town.

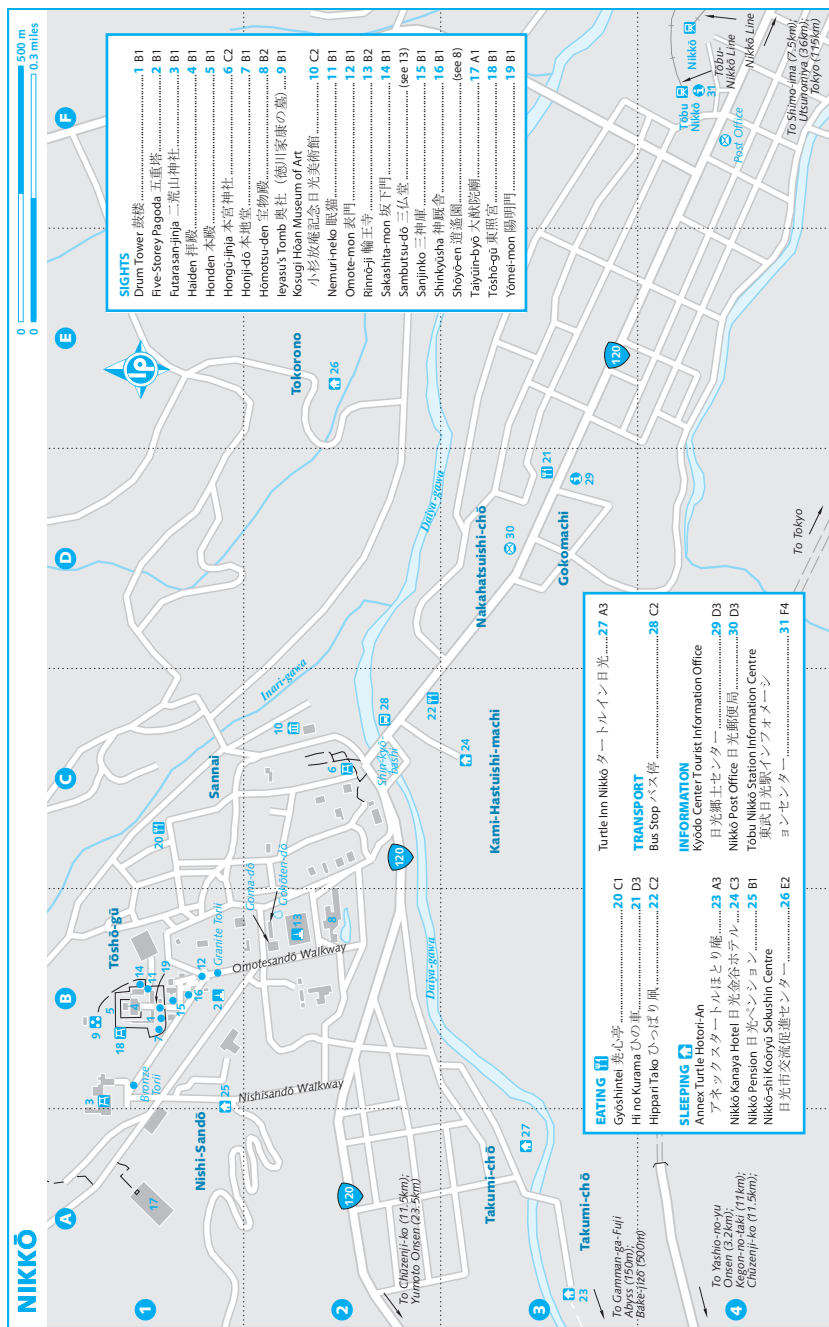
East of Tokyo

Underrated and untainted by overdevelopment, the Bōsō peninsula boasts some of the best, mellow beaches near Tokyo. **Onjuku** (御宿) is the nicest of those most easily accessed from Tokyo, with beachfront cafés, a laid-back coastal vibe and lots of white sand and decent waves. South of Onjuku, **Katsuura** (勝浦) and **Kamogawa** (鴨川) also get good swells. Wakashio trains (*tokkyū*, ¥3700, 80 minutes) to Onjuku Station depart from the southeast end of Tokyo Station on the JR Keiyō Line. About half the cost, but much slower, are the regular trains on the JR Sotobō Line.

North of Onjuku, **Kujukuri-hama** (九十九里浜) has over 60km of smooth, sandy, sparsely populated beaches. To access them, take the JR Sotobō Line to Oami Station, transfer to the Tōgane Line, and disembark at Kujukuri town. Frequent buses ply Kujukuri-hama's coastal towns, and you can hop off when you see a spot that appeals to you.

NIKKŌ 日光

An excellent day trip from Tokyo, Nikkō is one of Japan's major tourist attractions due to the splendour of its shrines and temples, and the surrounding natural beauty. Nikkō can become extremely crowded, especially during spring and autumn foliage seasons. If it's at all possible, it's best to visit early on a weekday to avoid the crowds. Before you head to the shrine area either by bus or on foot, you may want to stop by the Tōbu Nikkō Station Information Centre (p225) or the Kyōdo Center Tourist Information office (p224) to give yourself the lay of the land.



NIKKŌ COMBINATION TICKET

Although you can buy separate tickets to each of Nikkō's attractions, it makes sense to buy a combination ticket (¥1000), which is valid for two days. The ticket covers entry to Rinnō-ji and to Tōshō-gū and Futarasan-jinja. Most sights are open 8am to 5pm (until 4pm November to March).

Nikkō's history as a sacred site stretches back to the middle of the 8th century when the Buddhist priest Shōdō Shōnin established a hermitage here in 782. For many years it was known as a famous training centre for Buddhist monks, although after a time it declined into obscurity. Nikkō remained forgotten until it was chosen as the site for the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu (p224), the warlord who took control of all Japan and established the shōgunate that ruled for 250 years until Commodore Perry (p26) and his American ships arrived in Tokyo Bay, just in time to usher in the Meiji Restoration and the end of the feudal era.

Tokugawa Ieyasu was laid to rest among Nikkō's towering cedars in 1617, but it was his grandson Tokugawa Iemitsu who, in 1634, commenced work on the imposing shrine that can be seen today. The original shrine, Tōshō-gū, was completely rebuilt using an army of 15,000 artisans from all over Japan. The work on the shrine and mausoleum took two years to complete, and the results continue to receive mixed reviews.

Tōshō-gū was constructed as a memorial to a warlord who devoted his life to conquering Japan. Tokugawa Ieyasu was a man of considerable determination and was not above sacrificing a few scruples, or a few people, in order to achieve his aims. He is attributed with having had his wife and eldest son executed because it was politically expedient for him to do so. Interestingly, Tokugawa's final resting place manages to reflect the imperiousness and the austerity of the powerful despot.

RINNŌ-JI 輪王寺

You can approach this ancient temple via *Shin-kyō-bashi* (a sacred bridge) leading to the Toshogu area. Shōdō Shōnin was reputedly carried across the river at this point on the backs of two huge serpents. Tourists not toted by reptiles can cross the bridge on foot. The

next stop is 1200-year-old *Rinnō-ji*, also founded by Shōdō Shōnin of the Buddhist Tendai sect. On its grounds is *Sambutsu-dō* (Three Buddha Hall), which houses a trio of huge, remarkable gold-lacquered images: a *senjū* (1000-armed Kannon); the central image of Amida Norai; and Batō, a horse-headed goddess of mercy. *Hōmotsu-den* (Treasure Hall; Rinnō-ji; admission ¥300; 8am-4pm), also in the temple grounds, has a splendid collection of temple artefacts, sculptures and scrolls. Admission to Hōmotsu-den includes entry to the lovely Edo-period garden *Shōyō-en*.

TŌSHŌ-GŪ 東照宮

A huge stone *torii* (entrance gate to a Shinto shrine) marks the entrance to *Tōshō-gū*, while to the left is a *five-storey pagoda*. The pagoda dates from 1650 but, like so many structures destroyed by natural disasters, was reconstructed in 1818. The pagoda is remarkable for its lack of foundations – the interior contains a long suspended pole that apparently swings like a pendulum in order to maintain equilibrium during an earthquake.

The true entrance to Tōshō-gū is through the *torii* at *Omote-mon*, which is protected on either side by the Deva kings. Through the entrance to the temple to the right is *Sanjinko* (Three Sacred Storehouses). The upper storey of this building is renowned for the imaginative relief carvings of elephants by an artist who had apparently never seen the real thing. To the left of the entrance is the *Shinkyūsha* (Sacred Stable), a suitably plain building housing a carved white horse. The stable's only adornment is an allegorical series of relief carvings depicting the lifecycle of the monkey. They include the famous 'hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil' trio that is now emblematic of Nikkō and a favourite subject for shutterbugs.

Once you're finished taking in the stable, pass through another *torii* and climb another flight of stairs, and on the left and right you will see a *drum tower* and a belfry. To the left of the drum tower is *Honji-dō*, with its huge ceiling painting of a dragon in flight known as the Roaring Dragon. According to legend, the dragon will roar if you clap your hands beneath it.

Next comes *Yōmei-mon*, whose interior is adorned with a multitude of reliefs of Chinese sages, children, dragons and other mythical

NIKKŌ TRANSPORT

Train The best way to visit Nikkō is via the Tōbu-Nikkō Line from Asakusa Station. The station is in the basement of the Tōbu department store (it's well signposted from the subway). All seats are reserved on *tokkyū* trains (¥2740, 110 minutes), but you can usually get tickets and reservations just before setting out. Trains run every 30 minutes or so from 7.30am to 10am; hourly after 10am. *Kaisoku* trains (¥1320, 90 minutes, hourly from 6.20am to 4.30pm) require no reservation. (Note, passengers should ensure they ride in the first two carriages of the train as only these two go all the way to Nikkō.) For trains other than the *tokkyū*, you may have to change at Imaichi.

Travelling by JR is costly and time consuming, and is really of interest only to those who have purchased a JR Pass at home. The quickest way to Nikkō via JR is to take the *shinkansen* from Tokyo to Utsunomiya (¥4800, 50 minutes), where you will then change for a *futsū* train to Nikkō (¥740, 45 minutes).

Nikkō-Kinugawa Free Ticket This economical pass (¥7800) is valid for three days and is available from Tōbu railways in Asakusa, as well as at major JR stations. The pass includes transport to Nikkō, unlimited Tōbu bus usage on certain Nikkō-area routes and some discounts at local shops.

Bus Once you arrive in Nikkō, you can either do the 30-minute uphill (and fairly featureless) walk to the temple and shrine area, or you can hop on bus 1 or 2 (¥190).

creatures. So much effort and skill went into the gate that its creators worried that its perfection might arouse the anger and envy of the gods. To appease their predicted wrath, the final supporting pillar on the left side was placed upside down as a deliberate error intended to express humility.

Through Yōmei-mon and to the right is **Nemuri-neko** (Sleeping Cat; admission ¥520; ☎ 8am-4.30pm). This small feline carving is easy to miss – look to the beam above your head just before you begin the climb to Ieyasu's Tomb. **Sakashita-mon** here opens onto a path that climbs up through towering cedars to **Ieyasu's Tomb**, a relatively simple affair considering the boundless ambition of the person entombed. If you are using the combination ticket (see boxed text, p223), it will cost an extra ¥520 to see the cat and the tomb. To the left of Yōmei-mon is Jinyōsha, a storage depot for Nikkō's *mikoshi* (portable shrines), which come out and bring the temple ground to life during Nikkō's merry May and October festivals. The **Honden** (Main Hall) and **Haiden** (Hall of Worship) can also be seen in the enclosure.

OTHER SIGHTS

Near Tōshō-gū is **Futarasan-jinja**, dedicated to Nantai-san, the tall mountain that rises above Chūzenji-ko, its consort Nyotai and their mountainous progeny Tarō. Also in the vicinity is **Taiyūin-byō**, which enshrines Ieyasu's grandson Iemitsu (1604–51) and is a smaller version of the grander Tōshō-gū. The smaller size gives it a less extravagant air, and some consider it more aesthetically worthy than its larger neighbour.

The **Kosugi Hōan Museum of Art** (日杉放菴記念 日光美術館; ☎ 0288-50-1200; 2388-3 Sannai; admission ¥700; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a collection of landscape paintings by local artist Kosugi (1920–64) and is a good rainy-day option.

To take a break from the colour and the crowds, take a 20-minute walk over to **Gamman-ga-Fuji Abyss**, which houses an interesting collection of statues of *Jizō* (patron of travellers, children and the unborn). One of the statues, *Bake-jizō*, mocks travellers foolish enough to count the number of statues (it's said to be constantly changing to frustrate such attempts).

A bit further afield, and ideal on a quiet day if you've thoroughly explored Nikkō, is the 50-minute bus trip up to **Chūzenji-ko** (¥1100) along a winding road; buses depart from either Nikkō or Tōbu Nikkō train stations. There's some beautiful scenery, including the 97m-high waterfall *Kegon-no-taki*; an elevator (¥530 return) drops down to a platform where you can observe the full force of the waterfall. Also worth a visit is the third of the trio of *Futarasan-jinja*, complementing those near Tōshō-gū and on Nantai-san.

For a relaxing soak, check out the area's *onsen* (see opposite).

INFORMATION

Kyōdo Center tourist information office (日光郷土センター; ☎ 0288-53-3795; 591 Gokomachi; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) Providing lots of useful pamphlets and maps, the office also has helpful English-speaking staff. Internet access costs ¥100 per 30 minutes.

Nikkō Post Office (日光郵便局; ☎ 0288-54-0101; 896-1 Nakahatsushi-chō; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Three

blocks northwest of the Kyōdo Center tourist information office, this post office has an international ATM.

Tōbu Nikkō station information centre (日光駅構内 観光案内所; ☎ 0288-53-4511; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) At the Nikkō train station, there's a small information desk where you can pick up a town map and get help in English to find buses, restaurants and hotels.

ONSEN

Yashio-no-yu Onsen (やしおの湯温泉; ☎ 0288-53-6611; 1726-4 Kiyotakiwa-no-shiromachi; adult/child ¥500/free; ☎ 10am-9pm Fri-Wed) This modern hot-spring complex has open-air baths, saunas and a large indoor bath. Take a Chūzenji-bound bus from either train station in Nikkō; it's a 12-minute ride to the Kiyomizu-itohōme stop. Walk back towards Nikkō, under the bypass and across the bridge.

Yumoto Onsen (湯元温泉; admission ¥500) Although Nikkō is not generally thought of as a place to hit the hot springs, it does have its own little pocket of thermal activity. This quiet *onsen* is about 30 minutes from Chūzenji-kō by bus (¥840) and can be a good way to wrap up a day spent trudging between temples and shrines.

EATING

Hi no Kuruma (ひの車; ☎ 0288-54-2062; 597-2 Gokōmachi; mains ¥500-1500; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) A great spot for do-it-yourself *okonomiyaki* (cabbage) pancakes. Top yours with pork, squid, beef, shrimp and corn for ¥1500.

Hippari Dako (ひっぱりだこ; ☎ 0288-53-2933; 1011 Kami-hatsushichō; dishes ¥800; ☎ 11am-7pm) Good, cheap *yakitori* (skewers of grilled chicken) and *yaki-udon* (fried noodles) and friendly staff have made Hippari Dako a favourite travellers' spot for years. The walls are papered with business cards and testimonies to the virtues of hot sake.

Gyōshintei (莢心亭; ☎ 0288-53-3751; 2339-1 Sannai; dishes ¥4000; ☎ noon-8pm) Set in the garden grounds of Meiji-no-Yukata, Gyōshintei serves elegant Buddhist vegetarian cuisine.

SLEEPING

Nikkō-shi Kōryū Sokushin Centre (日光市交流促進センター; ☎ 0288-54-1013; www.city.nikko.lg.jp/kankou/nikko/shukuhaku/koryusokusin.html, in Japanese; 2845 Tokorono; r with/without bathroom ¥5000/4100) Japanese- and Western-style rooms have views at this popular hostel. It's a 10-minute walk from

the Shiyakusho-mae bus stop, on the southern side of the Daiya-gawa.

Turtle Inn Nikkō (タートルイン日光; ☎ 0288-53-3168; www.turtle-nikko.com/turtle/index_en.html; 2-16 Takumi-chō; s with/without bathroom from ¥5600/5100) Far and away the most popular of Nikkō's pensions, this cosy place is located beside the river and beyond the shrine area. To get here from the station, take a bus to the Sōgō-kaikan-mae bus stop, then backtrack around 50m to the fork in the road and follow the river for around five minutes.

Nikkō Pension (日光ペンション; ☎ 0288-54-3636; www.nikko-pension.jp; 10-9 Nishi-Sandō; r per person with/without breakfast & dinner ¥9800/5800) A Tudor-style mansion near the temples with funky old décor. There's a large Japanese cypress bath open 24 hours.

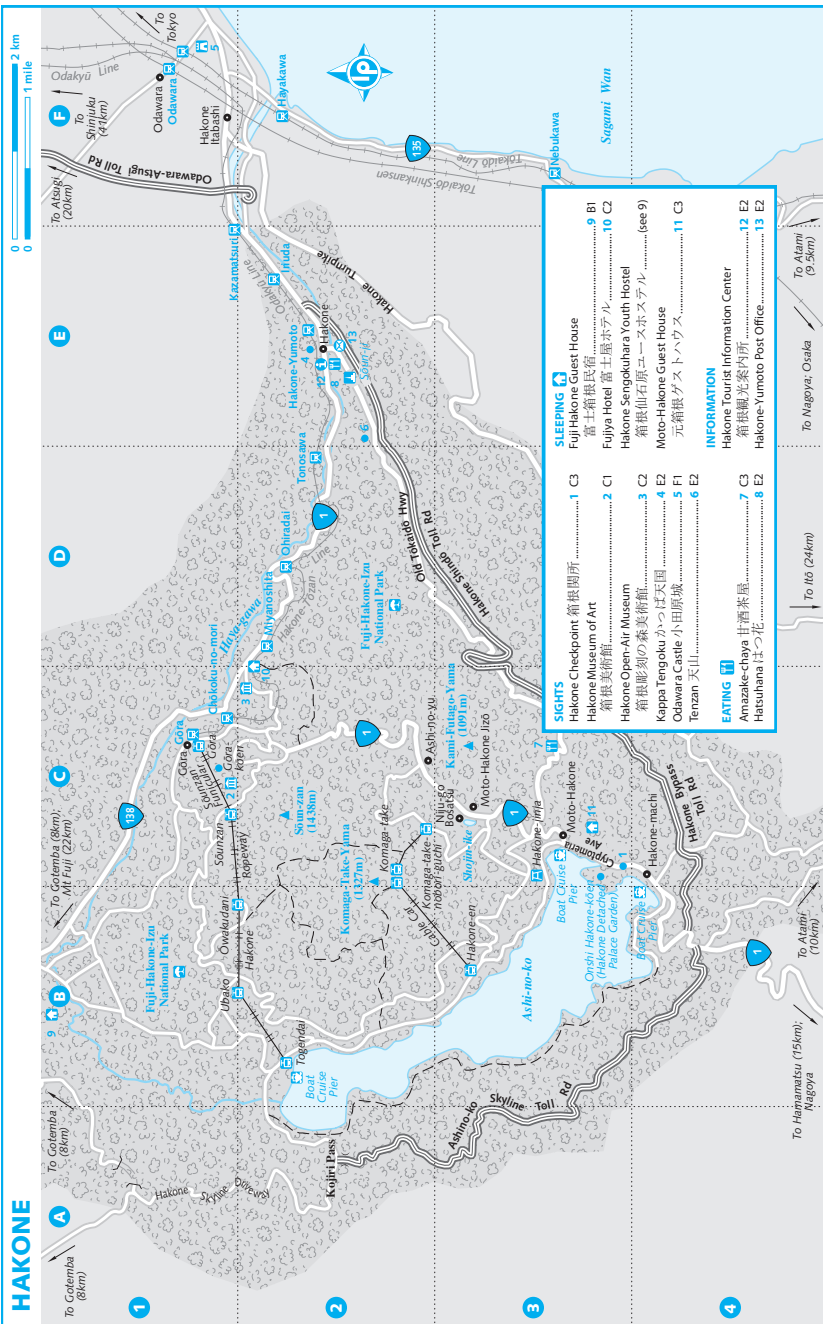
Annex Turtle Hotori-An (アネックスタートル ほとり庵; ☎ 0288-53-3663; www.turtle-nikko.com; 8-28 Takumi-chō; r per person from ¥6800) This place, with mostly tatami rooms, is to the west of Turtle Inn Nikkō (above), over the river but on the same road. The bath house looks out onto the forest surrounding the inn.

Nikkō Kanaya Hotel (日光金谷ホテル; ☎ 0288-54-0001; www.kanayahotel.co.jp/english/nikko/index.html; 1300 Kami-Hatsushi-machi; s/d from ¥9240/11,500) Overlooking Shin-kyō-bashi, Nikkō's classiest hotel is decent value if you feel like a little civilised splendour. During peak holiday periods the rates nearly double.

HAKONE 箱根

If the weather cooperates and Mt Fuji is clearly visible, the Hakone region can make a memorable day trip from Tokyo. You can enjoy cable-car rides, visit an open-air museum, soak in hot-water springs and cruise Ashi-no-ko (Lake Ashi). A paradise for hikers, divers and *onsen* lovers, **Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park** is a grab-bag of tourist sights taking in Mt Fuji (3776m), the surrounding five lakes, the Izu Peninsula and the Izu Islands.

Once you've arrived at Hakone-Yumoto Station, it's possible to board the delightful two-car mountain train that slowly winds through the forest to Gōra. Between Odawara and Gōra on the toy-train Hakone-Tōzan Line is the **Hakone Open-Air Museum** (箱根彫刻の森美術館; ☎ 0460-82-1161; www.hakone-oam.or.jp; 1121 Ni-no-Taira; admission with/without Hakone Freepass ¥1400/1600; ☎ 9am-5pm). You might want to stop in at the Hakone Tourist Information Centre (p228) before you start exploring; it's a five-minute walk west of



the Hakone-Yumoto Station. This art museum is a short walk from Chōkoku-no-mori Station, just before Gōra. As well as paintings, the museum has a 70,000 sq metre outdoor sculpture park that features works by artists such as Auguste Rodin and Henry Moore. The outdoor bronzes are particularly lovely in the winter under a light blanket of snow.

GŌRA TO ASHI-NO-KO

Gōra is at the end of the Hakone-Tōzan Line and the start of the funicular and cable-car trip to Tōgendai on the shore of Ashi-no-ko. There's nothing to see at Gōra, and you'll probably want to wander on. Further up the hill, 10 minutes from Gōra Station, is the **Hakone Museum of Art** (箱根美術館; ☎ 0460-82-2623; www.moaart.or.jp/english/hakone/index.html; 1300 Gōra; admission ¥900; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Fri-Wed Apr-Nov, 9am-4pm Dec-Mar), which has an interesting moss garden and a collection of ceramics from Japan and across Asia.

Once finished with the museum, take the funicular from Gōra up **Sōunzan** (10 minutes). If you don't have a Hakone Freepass (see below), you'll need to buy a ticket (¥400) at the booth to the right of the platform exit. Sōun-zan is the starting point of a dramatic

4km cable-car ride to **Tōgendai**. On the way, the car passes through **Ōwakudani**, which you'll know you're approaching when you catch the first eggy whiff of sulphur. You can get out at this point and take a look at the volcanic hot springs where the steam continually rises. The water from these hot springs is responsible for the black shells of many a boiled egg. If the weather is clear, there are grand views of Mt Fuji, both from the gondolas and from Ōwakudani. The journey from Gōra to Tōgendai costs ¥1300/2300 one way/return; make sure to hold on to your ticket if you pause at Ōwakudani. From Ōwakudani, the car continues to **Ashi-no-ko** (Lake Ashi), a pretty lake that on clear days serves as a reflecting pool for majestic Mt Fuji, which rises imperiously above the surrounding hills. The best way to take in the views and cross the lake is to board one of the incongruous black **Ashi-no-ko Pirate Ships** (cruise ¥840) at Tōgendai. These kitschy ships cruise the length of Ashi-nō-ko in 30 minutes.

Near where the boats dock in Hakone-machi is the old **Hakone Checkpoint**, run by the Tokugawa regime from 1619 to 1869 as a means of controlling the movement of people and ideas in and out of Edo. The present-day checkpoint is a recent reproduction of the original, and can be interesting for history buffs.

HAKONE TRANSPORT

There are three ways to get to the Hakone region: the Odakyū express bus service, departing from the bus terminal on the west side of Shinjuku Station; JR service, which runs regularly from Tokyo Station; and the private Odakyū train line, which departs from Shinjuku Station.

Train JR trains run on the Tōkaidō Line between Tokyo Station and Odawara Station. *Futsū* trains (¥1450, 80 minutes) run every 15 minutes or so, while *tokkyū* trains (¥2660, one hour) leave less frequently. *Shinkansen* (¥3440, 35 minutes) leave Tokyo Station every 20 minutes, but you'll need to make sure you're on the train that stops at Odawara (the Kodama does, others do not).

Trains also run to Odawara from Shinjuku Station on the Odakyū Line. The quickest and comfiest option is the Romance Car (¥1720, 75 minutes), which leaves every half-hour. There's also a *tokkyū* service (¥850). At Odawara, you can change to the Hakone-Tōzan Line, a two-car toy train that will eventually deposit you at Gōra (¥650). Alternatively, if you are already on the Odakyū Line, you can continue on to Hakone-Yumoto and change to the Hakone-Tōzan Line (¥390 to Gōra) by crossing the platform.

Bus The Odakyū express bus service has the advantage of running directly into the Hakone region, to Ashi-no-ko (Lake Ashi) and to Hakone-machi (¥1950, two hours). The disadvantage is that the bus trip is much less interesting than the combination of Romance Car, toy train (Hakone-Tōzan Line), funicular, cable car (ropeway) and ferry. Buses leave from bus stop 35 in front of Odakyū department store on the west side of Shinjuku Station.

Hakone Freepass The Odakyū Line offers a Hakone Freepass (two/three-day validity ¥5000/5500); this excellent ticket allows you to use seven modes of transport within the Hakone region and provides discounts on some of the major sights. The fare between Shinjuku and Hakone-Yumoto Station is also included in the pass, although if you're seeking the comforts of the Romance Car, you'll have to pay a surcharge (¥870). If you have a JR Pass, you'd be advised to buy a Freepass in Odawara (¥3900/4400). Altogether it's a good deal for the Hakone circuit.

A WISE MAN'S CLIMB *Tony Wheeler*

I started out on a hot August night. At 10pm the temperature had been around 27°C (80°F), but by 4am it was below freezing and the wind was whistling past at what felt like hurricane speed. With a surprising number of other *gaijin* (foreigners) and a huge number of Japanese, I reached the top of Mt Fuji.

Climbing Mt Fuji is definitely not heroic: in the two-month 'season', as many as 180,000 people get up to the top – 3000-odd every night. Nor is it that much fun – it's a bit of a dusty slog, and when you get to the top it's so cold and windy that your main thought is about heading down again. But the climb and the views aren't really what you do it for. To Japanese Fuji-climbers, it's something of a pilgrimage; to *gaijin*, it's another opportunity to grapple with something uniquely Japanese.

Like many other climbers, I made my Fuji climb overnight. At 9.30pm I got off the bus at the Kawaguchi-ko 5th Station, which is where the road ends and you have to start walking. Surprisingly, about half the passengers on my bus were *gaijin*, most of them a group of Americans planning to convert the Japanese to Mormonism! I'd bought a litre of the isotonic drink Pocari Sweat and a packet of biscuits at a 7-Eleven in the town of Kawaguchi-ko, and wearing a shirt and a coat, I was all set. The night was clear but dark, and I was glad I'd bought some new batteries for my torch before I left Tokyo.

My experience of climbing holy mountains is that you always get to the top too early – you work up a real sweat on the climb and then you freeze waiting for dawn. So I hung around for a while before starting out.

Despite the hordes climbing the mountain, I managed to lose the path occasionally. By the time I reached 2390m I'd already stopped to unzip the lining from my coat. By 11pm I was past 2700m and thinking it was time to slow down if I wanted to avoid arriving too early. By midnight it was getting much cooler, and I zipped the jacket-lining back in place and added more clothes to my ensemble. I was approaching 3000m – virtually halfway – and at this rate I was going to be at the top by 2.30am, in line with the four hours and 35 minutes the tourist office leaflet said it was supposed to take! In Japan, even mountain climbing is scheduled to the minute.

Although I'd started on my own, some of the faces I met at rest stops were becoming familiar by this point, and I'd fallen in with two Canadians and a Frenchman.

From here, nearby buses run from Moto-Hakone back to **Odawara** (¥1070, 50 minutes). Odawara is billed as an old castle town, which it is – although it's generally agreed that the castle is an uninspiring reconstruction of the original. If you're still interested, **Odawara castle** (小田原城; ☎ 0465-23-1373; adult/child ¥400/150; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a 10-minute walk from Odawara Station.

INFORMATION

Hakone Tourist Information Center (箱根観光案内所; ☎ 0460-85-6700; 698 Yumoto; ☎ 9am-5pm) Located in front of Hakone-Yumoto train station.

Hakone-Yumoto Post Office (郵便局; ☎ 0460-85-5681; 383 Yumoto; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri)

ONSEN

There are many bathing options in Hakone's numerous *onsen* areas. Along with a multitude of *onsen* there are also many *onsen ryokan* (traditional hot-spring inns), some of which welcome day visitors.

Kappa Tengoku (かっぱ天国; ☎ 0460-85-6121; 777 Yumoto; admission ¥750; ☎ 10am-10pm) Just up the hill from Hakone-Yumoto Station, this *ro-*

temburo (and outdoor bath) is a nice one if it's not too crowded.

Tenzan (天山; ☎ 0460-86-4126; 208 Yumoto-Chaya; admission ¥900; ☎ 9am-11pm) This large, popular bath is 2km southwest of town; weekends and holidays can be busy. A free shuttle bus runs from the bridge near Hakone-Yumoto Station. After soaking in *rotemburo* of varying temperatures and designs (one is constructed to resemble a natural cave), the 20-minute walk back down the hill along the river is invigorating.

EATING

Amazake-chaya (甘酒茶屋; ☎ 0460-83-6418; amazake & snacks from ¥500) Since the Edo era, this tea house has been serving up *amazake* (warm, sweet sake) and light snacks. It's about 550m up the Old Tōkaidō Hwy from Moto-Hakone.

Hatsuhana (はつ花; ☎ 0460-85-8287; 635 Yumoto; mains ¥750-1100; ☎ 10am-7pm) Slurp some *soba* (buckwheat noodles) at this pleasant eatery along the Haya-gawa. Hang a left on the next main street after passing the tourist information centre in Hakone-Yumoto; it's over the bridge on the left.

Huts are scattered up the mountainside; some stations have a number of huts, and others have none. The proprietors are very jealous of their facilities, and prominent signs, in English and Japanese, announce that even if it is pouring with rain, you can stay outside if you aren't willing to fork over the overnight fee. Fortunately, at 1.30am we were virtually swept into one hut, probably in anticipation of the numerous bowls of *rāmen* (noodles in soup) we would order. We hung out in this comfortable 3400m-high hideaway until after 3am, when we calculated that a final hour and a bit of a push would get us to the top just before the 4.30am sunrise.

We made it and, looking back from the top, we saw hordes of climbers heading up towards us. It was no great surprise to find a souvenir shop (there is absolutely no place in Japan where tourists won't find a souvenir shop waiting for them). The sun took an interminable time to rise, but eventually it poked its head through the clouds, after which most climbers headed straight back down. I spent an hour walking around the crater rim, but I wasn't sorry to wave Fuji-san goodbye. The Japanese say you're wise to climb Fuji, but a fool to climb it twice. I've no intention of being a fool.

If you decide to go

Fuji-san can be reached via **Keiō Kōsoku bus** (☎ 03-5376-2222; ticket ¥1700), which takes 1¾ hours and departs from the long-distance bus station on the west side of Shinjuku Station, or via a more expensive and circuitous train route that takes at least two hours and involves hopping the JR Chūō Line for Ōtsuki (*tokkyū/futsū* ¥2980/1280) where you will then need to cross the platform to catch the local train to Kawaguchi-ko (¥1110, 50 minutes). Whether arriving by bus or train, Kawaguchi-ko is the place to catch the bus for the Kawaguchi-ko 5th Station (one of several departure points that are part-way up the mountain), where most climbers from Tokyo begin their evening hike. If you're a glutton for punishment you can start at the base of Fuji-san and climb all the way up Fuji via the Yoshida route. Keep in mind that the official climbing season starts on 1 July and ends on 31 August (although it is possible – but not advised – to go at other times). And, of course, remember common-sense hiking precautions: take water unless you intend to buy it during your climb, and make sure you pack gear that is appropriate for cold and wet weather – conditions can vary wildly between the bottom and top of the mountain.

SLEEPING

Hakone's popularity with Japanese weekenders in search of the ultimate spa experience is reflected in the high price of most accommodation in the area. With the exception of two youth hostels and a couple of ryokan, there are few budget and midrange options, although those that exist are comfortable and convenient for hiking and hot-spring hopping.

Fuji-Hakone Guest House (富士箱根民宿; ☎ 0460-84-6577; www.fujihakone.com; 912 Sengokuhara; r per person from ¥5250) This guesthouse has clean, airy Japanese-style rooms and access to a hot spring bubbling up directly from the Owakudani Volcano. There's a comfy lounge and internet access too (30 mins/¥100). A natural hot spa is available for private bathing, and night-time soaks are a treat, especially when the weather cools. To get here take a bus from stand 4 of Odawara Station to the Senkyōrō-mae bus stop (¥1020, 50 minutes). There's an English sign nearby.

Moto-Hakone Guest House (元箱根ゲストハウス; ☎ 0460-83-7880; www.fujihakone.com; 103 Moto-Hakone; r per person from ¥5250) This homey, pleasant guest house is located near Ashi-nō-ko. From the bus terminal at Odawara Station,

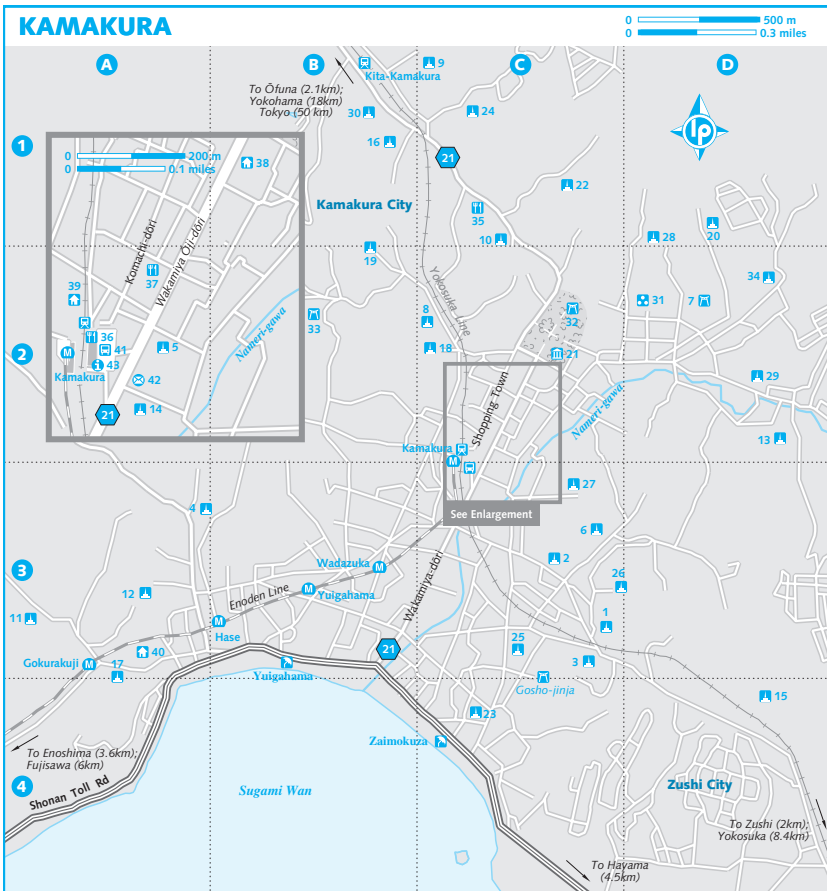
catch a bus from lane 3 to Ashinokoen-mae bus stop. The guest house is well signposted from there.

Hakone Sengokuhara Youth Hostel (箱根仙石原ユースホステル; ☎ 0460-84-8966; www.jyh.or.jp; 912 Sengokuhara; dm ¥3195) This friendly youth hostel is located just behind Fuji-Hakone Guest House. Check-in is from 4pm to 6pm. For directions, see Fuji-Hakone Guest House (left).

Fujiya Hotel (富士屋ホテル; ☎ 0460-82-2211; www.fujiyahotel.co.jp; 359 Miyanoshta; r from ¥23,400) The posh, wood-trimmed Fujiya Hotel, which has the rustic feel of a 19th-century hunting lodge, is famous as one of Japan's earliest Western-style hotels, and is highly rated on all fronts. The hotel is a five-minute walk from Miyanoshta Station on the Hakone-Tōzan Line; if you ring from the station, someone will give you directions in English.

KAMAKURA 鎌倉

Kamakura had a spell of glory as the nation's capital from AD 1192 to 1333 when Japan's seat of power temporarily relocated here from Kyoto. The Minamoto and later the Hōjō clans ruled Japan from Kamakura for more than a century, until finally in 1333,



weakened by the heavy cost of maintaining defences against the threats of attack from Kublai Khan in China, the Hōjō clan fell from power at the hands of the forces of Emperor Go-Daigo. Although the restoration of imperial authority was somewhat illusory, the capital nevertheless shifted back to Kyoto, and Kamakura disappeared temporarily from the history books.

Today Kamakura's wealth of notable temples and elegant shrines makes it one of Tokyo's most rewarding day trips, and one that is most often undertaken by locals. The city is best in spring and autumn when the weather is temperate, but ocean views and old-fashioned shops are a delight year-round. Be sure to stroll up Komachi-dōri from Kamakura Station, where you can stop by the Tourist Information Centre (p233) for a bit of

local information in English. Then jump on the Enoden Line for a rickety ride through Kamakura's backstreets to Hase Station, which is near the awesome *Daibutsu* (Great Buddha) and Hase-dera temple.

TEMPLES & SHRINES

Kamakura has a wealth of ancient temples and shrines, making it a very worthwhile destination if you can't make it to Kyoto. These sanctuaries make for an ideal weekend stroll as many can be comfortably visited on foot.

A pleasant walk from Kamakura Station, **Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū** (鶴岡八幡宮; ☎ 0467-22-0315; 2-1-31 Yukinoshita; general admission free, exhibition hall ¥100; 🕒 9am-4pm, closed last Mon each month) is a carnivalesque Shintō shrine that was estab-

KAMAKURA

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Egara Tenjinja 住柄天神社.....	7	D2
Eishō-ji 英勝寺.....	8	C2
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lished by the Genji family, founders of the Kamakura shōgunate. It is dedicated to a deity who is both the god of war and the guardian of the Minamoto clan. You'll see a steeply arched bridge that was once reserved for the passage of the shōgun alone.

Inside **Hase-dera** (長谷寺; ☎ 0467-22-6300; 3-11-2 Hase; admission ¥300; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mar-Sep, 8am-4.30pm Oct-Feb), a temple overlooking the bay, is a 9m-tall, gold-leaved **Kannon statue**, said to have washed up from the sea in the early 8th century. The statue represents the Buddhist goddess of mercy whose compassion is often invoked as a source of succour to the bereaved and aggrieved. In the gardens here are thousands of small *jizō* statues. Mothers who have miscarried or aborted fetuses, or lost their children, often dress *jizō* in warm clothing or offer toys or food as offerings in supplication for helping those lost children negotiate the underworld.

Kenchō-ji (建長寺; ☎ 0467-22-0981; 8 Yamanouchi; admission ¥300; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm), the first and grandest of Kamakura's Zen temples, is home to gnarled cypress trees that arose from seeds brought from China by founding priest Lahsi Tao-lung 700 years ago. The main hall is from Kyoto and the Buddha Hall (Butsuden) from Tokyo, but the temple bell is the only artefact that was actually made here.

One of the five main Rinzai Zen temples in Kamakura, **Engaku-ji** (円覚寺; ☎ 0467-22-0487; 453 Yamanouchi; admission ¥200; 🕒 8am-5pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Mar) dates from 1282 and has a majestic main gate from the 1780s. The temple's main treasure, one of Buddha's teeth, is enshrined

up the hill but is off-limits to the public (although you can peer into the courtyard).

For 600 years **Tōkei-ji** (東慶寺; ☎ 0467-22-1663; 1367 Yamanouchi; admission ¥100; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-4pm Nov-Mar) was known as the Divorce Temple, the only place in Japan where abused or disgruntled wives could seek refuge from unhappy marriages. The main object of worship here is a statue of Shaka Nyorai (the Enlightened Buddha). The statue is believed to date back to the 14th century and, according to temple records, it escaped a great fire in 1515.

Founded in 1283 by Hojo Morotoki, **Jōchi-ji** (淨智寺; ☎ 0467-22-3943; 1402 Yamanouchi; admission ¥150; 🕒 9am-4.30pm) is the fourth of Kamakura's five great Zen temples. The main gate's bell on the 2nd floor of the belltower was cast in 1340. Nearby is Kanro-no-ni, one of Kamakura's 10 revered wells. The interest in this muddy little pond, whose name translates to 'sweet water', is mostly historical, but photographers still swarm its edges looking for the perfect shot.

Ennō-ji (円応寺; ☎ 0467-25-1095; 1543 Yamanouchi; admission ¥200; 🕒 9am-4pm Apr-Oct, 9am-3.30pm Nov-Mar) is distinguished by its statues depicting the judges of hell. According to the Juo concept of Taoism, which was introduced to Japan from China during the Heian period (794-1185), these 10 judges decide the fate of souls, who, being neither truly good nor truly evil, must be assigned to spend eternity in either heaven or hell. Presiding over them is Emma (Yama), a Hindu deity known as the gruesome king of the infernal regions.

Kakuon-ji (覚園寺; ☎ 0467-22-1195; 421 Nikaidō; admission with tour ¥300; 🕒 10am-4pm, closed in Aug) features a charming thatched Buddha Hall and hourly tours; the last one starts at 3pm.

Zuisen-ji (瑞泉寺; ☎ 0467-22-1191; 710 Nikaidō; admission ¥100; 🕒 9am-5pm) is best known for its perennial flowers and relaxing strolls through gardens laid out by founder Musō Kokushi during the Kamakura era (1185–1333).

If you feel like exploring some of Kamakura's more remote temples and shrines, the following are good options.

Students come to **Egaraten-jinja** (荏柄天神社; ☎ 0467-25-1772; 74 Nikaidō; admission free; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm) to pray for academic success. Like other Tenjin shrines, Egara is dedicated to the memory of Michizane Sugawara, a Kyoto scholar of noble birth who was born in the middle of the 9th century. Students write their aspirations on *ema* (small wooden plaques), which are then hung to the right of the shrine. Buses taken from stop 6 in front of Kamakura Station run out to Egara Tenjinja; get off at Tenjin-mae.

Sugimoto-dera (杉本寺; ☎ 0467-22-3463; 903 Nikaidō; admission ¥200; 🕒 8am-4.30pm), Kamakura's oldest temple, is said to have been established by Empress Komei sometime in the mid-8th century. The famous ancient steps lead

to ferocious guardian figures (*niō*) poised at the entrance. The main hall houses three Kannon statues that are said to have miraculously escaped a 12th-century fire by hiding behind a tree. Take a bus from bus stop 5 in front of Kamakura Station and get off at Sugimoto-dera.

Situated down the road from Sugimoto-dera, **Hōkoku-ji** (報国寺; ☎ 0467-22-0762; 2-7-4 Jōmyōji; admission to garden ¥200; 🕒 9am-4pm) has quiet landscaped gardens where you can relax under a parasol with a cup of green tea. This Rinzaï Zen temple is known for its forest of vibrant, perennial bamboo. It regularly holds *zazen* (meditation) classes for beginners.

GREAT BUDDHA & MUSEUM

Kamakura's most famous sight, **Daibutsu** (鎌倉大仏; Great Buddha; Kotoku-in, 4-2-28 Hase; admission ¥200; 🕒 7am-6pm Mar-Nov, 7am-5pm Dec-Feb) was completed in 1252. Once housed in a huge hall, the statue of Buddha today sits in the open, as a result of its home having been washed away by a tsunami in 1495. Cast in bronze and weighing close to 850 tonnes, the statue is 11.4m tall. Its construction was inspired by the even bigger *Daibutsu* in Nara, although it is generally agreed that

KAMAKURA TRANSPORT

Train From Tokyo Station, the JR Yokosuka Line runs to Kamakura (¥890, 56 minutes) and Kita-Kamakura (¥780) Stations. On clear days, you may be able to catch intermittent glimpses of elusive Mt Fuji. Once here, you can continue on to Enoshima via the scenic Enoden (Enoshima Dentetsu) Line from Kamakura Station or by bus from stop No 9 in front of the station. The train (¥250, 24 minutes) is the simpler and cheaper option.

Bus The transportation hub here is the Kamakura train station, from which most of the local buses depart. A lack of English-language signposting makes the bus network hard to use, but the station's Travel Information Centre (TIC; [below](#)) has the latest details on which boarding spots serve which destinations.

the Kamakura bronze is artistically superior. If you're not claustrophobic, you can enter the Buddha's belly through a small door that opens from his side. The privilege will cost you a measly ¥20.

The **Kamakura National Treasure Museum** (鎌倉国宝館; Kamakura Kokuhōkan; ☎ 0467-22-0753; 2-1-1 Yukinoshita; admission ¥300; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) displays an excellent collection of Kamakura art. Some are the typically peaceful *Jizō*, although the collection also houses a number of compelling sculptures that are energetic and carnal, and sometimes gruesome.

INFORMATION

Post Office (郵便局; ☎ 0467-22-1200; 1-10-3 Komachi; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Has ATMs inside.

Tourist Information Centre (鎌倉観光案内所; ☎ 0467-22-3350; 1-1-1 Komachi; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 5pm Oct-Mar) Located just outside the east exit of Kamakura Station.

EATING

Chaya-kado (茶屋かど; ☎ 0467-23-1673; 1518 Yamanouchi; mains from ¥900; 🕒 10am-5pm, may close without notice) Serving up hot, hearty soup, this humble *soba* (buckwheat noodles) spot is conveniently located on the route from Kita-Kamakura to Kamakura, just before you reach Kenchō-ji. During the low season, the restaurant may open only for lunch.

Komachi-ichiba (こまち市場; ☎ 0467-24-7921; 1-1-1 Komachi, Kamakura Station, 2nd fl; lunch/dinner from ¥980/1700; 🕒 11.30am-2pm & 4-10.30pm) This restaurant, located above the Tourist Information Centre, dishes up tasty meal sets at terrific prices. The sister tempura shop next door has the same hours of operation.

T-Side (ティーサイド; ☎ 0467-24-9572; 2-11-11 Komachi; meal sets from ¥2100; 🕒 11am-9.30pm) T-Side's varied and delicious Indian menu is a find in

Kamakura. Unlike most local eateries in town, which close just after 8pm or so, this little spot stays open later.

SLEEPING

Kamakura Hase Youth Hostel (鎌倉はせユースホテル; ☎ 0467-24-3990; www.1.kamakuranet.ne.jp/hase_yh; 5-11 Sakanoshita; dm member/nonmember ¥3360/3990) Three minutes from Hase-dera and Yuigahama beach, this hostel has bunk beds with a tatami room and a capacity of 12. Breakfast and dinner are available.

Hotel New Kamakura (ホテルニューカマクラ; ☎ 0467-22-2230; www.newkamakura.com, in Japanese; 13-2 Onarimachi; s/d from ¥7500/11,000) Reservations are recommended at this friendly, wood-floored hotel near the station. Both Western- and Japanese-style rooms are available.

Classical Hotel Ajsai (クラシカルホテルアジさい; ☎ 0467-22-3492; www.beniya-ajisai.co.jp/hotel.htm, in Japanese; 1-12-4 Yukinoshita; s from ¥6830) This is an affordable option with simple Western-style rooms and views of Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū shrine.

ENOSHIMA 江ノ島

Unless you're a surfer and plan on being in the water for most of the day, it's best to avoid this popular beach at weekends, when its sand is completely packed with day-tripping escapees from Tokyo. At the end of the beach is a bridge to **Enoshima Island**, where **Enoshima-jinja** (江ノ島神社; ☎ 0466-22-4020; 🕒 9am-4pm) is reached by an outdoor escalator, although it is possible, and pleasant, to walk the whole way. The shrine houses a *hadaka-benzaiten* – a nude statue of the Indian goddess of beauty. Other sights around the island include the **Enoshima Samuel Cocking Garden** (江の島サムエル・コッキング苑; ☎ 0466-23-0623; adult/child ¥200/100; 🕒 9am-4.30pm) and some sea caves on the far side of the island.

BUDDHISM IN KAMAKURA

Although Buddhism came to Japan in the 6th century, it was 500 years later, during the Kamakura period (AD 1185–1333), that Buddhism finally spread throughout the country. Initially the Kamakura period was marked by secular disillusionment with Buddhist institutions and the monastic orders, and a widespread belief that the world had entered Mappō (the Later Age), a period of Buddhist decline when individuals would no longer be able to achieve enlightenment through their own efforts alone. This led to the flourishing of alternatives to established Buddhist doctrine – notably Zen and the Pure Land school of Buddhism.

The Pure Land Jōdo school preached that in the Later Age, salvation could be achieved only through devotion to the transcendent Amida Buddha – all who called on him sincerely would achieve salvation in the Pure Land after death. This populist stroke opened Buddhism in Japan to the masses, who had previously been largely excluded from the more esoteric branches of Buddhism. This also contrasted with Zen, which sought Buddhahood through meditative practice aimed at the empty centre of the self.

With its rigorous training and self-discipline, Zen found support among an ascendant warrior class and made a considerable contribution to the samurai ethic. Differences on the question of whether *satori* (enlightenment) could be attained suddenly or whether it was a gradual process accounted for Zen breaking into the Rinzaï and Sōtō sects.

The contending schools of Pure Land and Zen, along with the views of charismatic leaders, such as the influential 13th-century priest Nichiren, led to the revitalisation of Buddhism within Japan during the Kamakura period. The major Japanese Buddhist sects can trace their antecedents to that era.

You will find numerous temples around Kamakura, including: Ankokuron-ji, Chōshō-ji, Daigyō-ji, Daihō-ji, Eishō-ji, Gokuraku-ji, Hongaku-ji, Hosshō-ji, Jufuku-ji, Kaizō-ji, Kyūhin-ji, Myōchō-ji, Myōhon-ji, Myōhō-ji and Raigō-ji. Anyō-in is a temple known for its azalea blooms in spring; Joju-in is another temple known for its blooms in May; Meigetsu-in is a 13th-century temple; and Zeniarai-benten is a Shintō shrine famed for its ability to double money washed in its spring.

ENOSHIMA TRANSPORT

Train The rustic Enoden railway runs between Kamakura and Enoshima (¥250, 25 minutes). Alternatively, Enoshima can be reached from Shinjuku Station in Tokyo with the use of Odakyū Line's Enoshima Kamakura Free Pass (¥1430, 90 minutes). JR also offers a Kamakura Enoshima Free Ticket (¥1970, 55 minutes), which is valid for two days.

Enoshima's beaches are good for some meditative wandering, particularly around the rocky headlands on the southern side of the island. On fair days, Mt Fuji is clearly visible from the south and west sides of the island. In the late afternoon, you can stop for a drink at one of the cliff-side restaurants where couples often come to watch the sun set over the mountain.

IZU-HANTŌ 伊豆半島

Eighty kilometres southwest of Tokyo, Izu-hantō, with its abundant *onsen* and rugged coastline, is one of Japan's most popular resort destinations and cottage areas. It can get very crowded at weekends and holidays, particularly in summer. Luckily, once you get past the touristy resort of Atami, the crowds usually thin out. And over on the west coast, where transport is by bus only, things are always a lot quieter.

ATAMI 熱海

Atami is known as a hot-spring naughty-weekend destination for Japanese couples, although one well-known *gaijin* (foreigner), John Wayne, got off his horse and drank his sake here for the filming of *The Barbarian and the Geisha*. Other than its numerous hot springs, its prime attraction is the **MOA Art Museum** (MOA; 美術館 ☎ 0557-84-2511; www.moaart.or.jp; 26-2 Momoyama-chō, Atami; admission ¥1600; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Fri-Wed, closed 6-10 Jan & 25-31 Dec), which houses a collection of Japanese and Chinese art. Take a bus from bus stop 4 outside the station to the MOA Bijutsukan. **Itō** is another hot-springs resort and is famous as the place where Anjin-san (William Adams), the hero of James Clavell's book *Shōgun*, built a ship for the Tokugawa shōgunate. Atami is especially popular with amorous twosomes, and is best avoided if you're wanting peace and quiet.

SHIMODA 下田

Shimoda is the most pleasant of the surrounding *onsen* towns. It is famous as the residence of the American Townsend Harris, the first Western diplomat to set up house in Japan. The Treaty of Kanagawa, which resulted from Commodore Matthew Perry's visit (p26), ended Japan's centuries of self-imposed isolation by forcing the nation to open the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to US ships. An American consulate was established in Shimoda in 1856.

About 700m south of Shimoda Station is **Ryōsen-ji** (了仙寺; ☎ 0558-22-0657; www.izu.co.jp/~ryosenji; 3-12-12 Shichiken-chō, Shimoda; museum admission ¥500; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), which is now famous as the site where Commodore Perry and representatives of the Tokugawa shōgunate signed a treaty whose conditions (favourable to the USA, of course) supplemented those outlined in the Treaty of Kanagawa, which was signed earlier, in 1854. Located next to the temple is the **Ryōsen-ji Treasure Museum** displaying exhibits relating to the arrival of Westerners in Japan. These include pictures depicting Okichi-san, a courtesan who was forced to give up the man she loved in order to attend to the needs of the brutal barbarian, Harris. When Harris left Japan five years later, Okichi-san was stigmatised for having had a relationship with a foreigner and she was eventually driven to drink and suicide. Next door to Ryōsen-ji is **Chōraku-ji** (長楽寺; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), a pleasant little temple that is worth a quick look. Nearby **Hōfuku-ji** (宝福寺; ☎ 0558-22-0960; 1-18-26 Shimoda; museum admission ¥300; ☎ 8am-5pm) has a museum that commemorates the tragic life of Okichi-san. Her grave is also here.

Other ways to take in Shimoda include taking the **Shimoda Ropeway** (☎ 0558-22-1211; return fare incl mountaintop park admission ¥1200) up 200m-tall Nesugata-yama, walking along one of the many beaches, or taking one of the **Black Ship cruises** (☎ 0558-22-1151; cruise ¥920) around the bay. These cruises take about 20 minutes and depart from Shimoda Harbour every 30 minutes. There are three boats per day (9.40am, 11am and 2pm) that leave on a course for Iro-zaki. You can leave the boat at Iro-zaki (one way ¥1530, 40 minutes) and travel by bus northwards up the peninsula, or stay on the boat to return to Shimoda. Note: three boats per day leave on Monday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; during holiday seasons the schedule is daily.

WESTERN IZU-HANTŌ

伊豆半島西部

From Shimoda's bus stop 5 in front of the station, it's a very scenic bus journey to **Dōgashima**, a small, charming fishing town on the western side of the peninsula. Along the way is **Matsuzaki**, a cape recommended for its traditional-style houses and quiet sandy beach. The bus to Dōgashima takes about 30 minutes (¥1360).

The main attractions at Dōgashima are the dramatic **rock formations** that line the seashore. The park situated just across the street from the bus stop has some of the best views. It's also possible to take a boat trip (50/20 minutes ¥1880/900) from the nearby jetty to visit the town's famous **shoreline cave**, which has a natural window in its roof that allows light to pour in. You can look down into the cave from paths in the aforementioned park.

South of the bus stop in Dōgashima, you will find the stunning **Sawada-kōen Rotemburo onsen** (沢田公園露天風呂温泉; 2817-1 Nishina, Nishi-Izuchō, Kamo-gun; admission ¥500; ☎ 7am-7pm Wed-Mon Sep-Jul, 6am-8pm Wed-Mon Aug), which is perched high on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. You should go early in the day if possible; around sunset, it's standing room only.

INFORMATION

Main Post Office (下田郵便局; ☎ 0558-22-0603; 1-4-27 Shimoda; ☎ 10am-5pm) Has an international ATM.

Shimoda Tourist Information (下田市観光案内所; ☎ 0558-22-1531; 1-4-28 Shimoda; ☎ 10am-5pm) Has

maps and brochures in English. Located next to Shimoda Station.

Volunteer English Guide Association (☎ 0558-23-5151; maimai-h@i-younet.ne.jp; Shimoda; ☎ 8.30am-5.15pm Tue-Sun) Offers free guided tours of the area.

EATING

Musashi (むさし; ☎ 0558-22-0934; 1-13-1 Shimoda; mains from ¥630; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Musashi serves most Japanese favourites, including tempura *soba*.

Matsu Sushi (松寿司; ☎ 0558-22-1309; 1-2-21 Shimoda; meal sets from ¥1000; ☎ 11am-8pm Thu-Tue) Stop by this place for well-priced, fresh sushi and sashimi.

Gorosaya (ごろさや; ☎ 0558-23-5638; 1-5-25 Shimoda; lunch/dinner ¥1575/3150; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-9pm Wed-Mon) This slightly upscale restaurant serves very good seafood; look for the wooden fish at the entrance.

SLEEPING

Ōizu Ryokan (大伊豆旅館; ☎ 0558-22-0123; 3-3-25 Shimoda; r per person ¥3500) With a tiny hot-spring bath and small, simple Japanese-style rooms, this popular ryokan is situated on the south side of Shimoda. It is located two blocks north of Perry Rd and four from the waterfront.

Kokumin-shukusha New Shimoda (国民宿舎 新 下田; ☎ 0558-23-0222; 1-4-13 Nishi-Hongo, Shimoda; r per person with/without meals ¥7480/4855) This non-descript economy inn does have its pros: tatami floors and a spacious *onsen*. Take a right out of Shimoda Station, another right at the first

IZU-HANTŌ TRANSPORT

Atami

Train JR trains run from Tokyo Station to Atami on the Tōkaidō Line: Acty *kaisoku* (¥1890, 90 minutes), Kodama *shinkansen* (¥3570, 52 minutes), Odoriko *tokkyū* (¥4070, 80 minutes). It's also possible to approach Atami via Shinjuku Station via the Odakyū Line to Odawara (¥850, 73 minutes) and then connecting with the JR Tōkaidō Line to Atami (¥400, 30 minutes).

Itō

Train Itō is connected to Atami by the JR Itō Line (¥320, 25 minutes). The JR Odoriko *tokkyū* service also runs from Tokyo Station to Itō (¥3820) and takes about two hours.

Shimoda

Train Shimoda is as far as you can go by train on the Izu-hantō peninsula. You can take the Izu Kyūko Line from Itō (¥1670, 90 minutes) or the Odoriko *tokkyū* from Tokyo Station (¥6090, three hours).

traffic light, continue for 2½ blocks and find it on your right.

Station Hotel Shimoda (下田ステーションホテル; ☎ 0558-22-8885; www.takinogawa.net/station.html, in Japanese; 1-1-3 Nishi-Hongo, Shimoda; s/d ¥5800/9800) Right next to Shimoda Station, this is a reasonably priced, no-frills business hotel that will do for a short stay.

Shimoda Tōkyū Hotel (下田東急ホテル; ☎ 0558-22-2411; www.shimodatokyu.com, in Japanese; 5-12-1 Shimoda; s/d from ¥14,000/16,000; 🚗) Two kilometres south of Shimoda, this posh hotel has an *onsen* and a swimming pool and boasts a cliffside location with ocean views. Rates include a free shuttle to and from the station, as well as two free meals.