



The Artists

Traditional Japanese drumming meets modern entertainment in DRUM TAO 30th Anniversary 「THE TAO 夢幻響」. The innovative Japanese drumming ensemble Drum Tao are known for their fresh take on traditional Japanese taiko drums. The group, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2023, has held acclaimed performances in more than 500 cities across world and has been seen by close to ten million spectators. The ensemble's performances are magnificent spectacles of musicianship and movement, incorporating taiko drumming, Japanese flute and guitar, and extraordinary, acrobatic choreography.

In their thirtieth anniversary tour, Drum Tao revisits some of their greatest performance pieces. This performance mixes the traditional use of taiko drumming with bold choreography to dazzle audiences. While this type of drumming is not often seen in the United States, there are a wide range of taiko drumming troupes across Japan. Those troupes are styled from traditional to more modern, but most focus on classical presentations, making Drum Tao distinctive in the art form.

In 1993, founder and director Ikuo Fujitaka was inspired by the Cirque du Soleil show *Mystère* as the idea for Drum Tao formed. Fujitaka decided to create a taiko performance in the spirit of Cirque du Soleil, which is full of spectacle and full of joy. Ensemble members commit many hours and work to make every show the most audience-grabbing it can be. "We discuss a lot," ensemble member and company manager Taro Harasaki told The State News media organization. "We talk a lot. We meet to make the numbers better and better. We put many years into one number to make the songs rich."

Every day starting at 5:30 a.m., the Drum Tao artists gather to train and practice. They begin by running together for eight miles, followed by beating their drums in place for one hour without break for muscle and mental training. Breakfast is followed by martial arts training and workouts. The rest of the day is spent practicing drum and dance techniques and composition until 10 p.m. The process to be able to perform with Drum Tao is rewarding, particularly because of the close community, but intense. It generally takes one to three years of constant study to be cast as an official drummer of Drum Tao.

Drum Tao have received the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Award, Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner's Award, Outstanding Cultural Achievement Award by Oita Prefecture, and Taketa City Cultural Creation Award.

Performers

Kiyoko Aito
Shoko Sakaguchi
Taro Harasaki
Yoshinori Suito
Keisuke Yamamoto
Masanori Takayama
Tatsunori Yamaguchi
Shinya Kiyota
Soshiro Fukumizu
Taketora Mitsuo
Yutaka Kawasaki

Lighting Technician
Ryo Harada

Sound Technician
Kenichi Horiuchi

Production Manager
Matthew Osier

The Art Form

Taiko (太鼓) are a broad range of Japanese percussion instruments. In Japanese, the term taiko refers to any kind of drum, but outside Japan, it is used specifically to refer to any of the various Japanese drums called wadaiko (和太鼓, literally “Japanese drums”) and to the form of ensemble taiko drumming more specifically called kumi-daiko (組太鼓, literally “set of drums”). The process of constructing taiko varies between manufacturers, and the preparation of both the drum body and skin can take several years depending on the method.

Taiko have a mythological origin in Japanese folklore, but historical records suggest that taiko were introduced to Japan through Chinese and Korean cultural influence as early as the sixth century CE. Pottery from the Hanjiwa period depicting taiko drums has also been found. Some taiko are similar to instruments originating from India. Archaeological evidence also supports the view that taiko were present in Japan during the sixth century in the Kofun period. Their function has varied throughout history, ranging from communication, military action, theatrical accompaniment, religious ceremony and concert performances. In modern times, taiko have also played a central role in social movements for minorities both within and outside Japan.

Kumi-daiko performance, characterized by an ensemble playing on different drums, was developed in 1951 through the work of Daihachi Oguchi and later in 1961 by the Ondekoza. Taiko was made later popular with many other groups copying the format of Ondekoza. Other performance styles, such as hachijō-daiko, have also emerged from specific communities in Japan. Kumi-daiko performance groups are active not only in Japan, but also in the United States, Australia, Canada, Europe, Taiwan, and Brazil.

Shamisen, also known as sangan, the Chinese sanxian, made its way via Okinawa to Japan, the shamisen is widely loved. The instrument has three strings and is often referred to as the Japanese guitar or lute. While only used in Japan since modern times, the shamisen appears in kabuki theater, puppet plays and other such theater music, as accompaniment to singing and especially for folk songs from many regions.

There are a variety of standard shamisen which vary according to genre from hosozao (thin neck) to futazao (thick neck) along with a diverse range of bachi and plectrums (similar in function to a guitar pick), and koma, bridges. A characteristic sound from a shamisen is a lingering resonance called sawari, which is made from the string lightly touching the surface of the neck when striking the strings or knocking the plectrum on the body.

Shinobue, also called bamboo flute, is often used in kabuki theater and folkloric performance arts. Shinobue are of simple bamboo construction and are made in a range of lengths, are blown in from the side, and have either six or seven finger holes. There are two types of shinobue: ohayashi and uta. The shinobue was played widely in Heian period (794-1185), but the modern uta type was invented by Hyakunosuke Fukuhara in the early 1900s. The uta type is tuned and easier to play with the shamisen because of its greater pitch accuracy and it is often played in modern taiko performance.



Taiko



Kumi-daiko



Shamisen



Shinobue

senzoku-online.jp
taiko-shop.com

Costumes for Drum Tao have been created since 2012 by the world-renowned fashion designer Junko Koshino. Born to dressmakers in Kishiwada, Osaka, Japan in 1939, Koshino has opened boutiques in Tokyo, Paris, New York, Singapore, and two in China. With her namesake brand, Koshino participated in Paris Fashion Week for twenty-two years starting in 1978. Moreover, Koshino has earned an exceptional reputation by organizing avant-garde shows around the world. Even at the age of 84, she has not slowed down at all as she is continuing to expand the horizon of her creative endeavors.



Junko Koshino

Koshino's work is characterized by sleek color-blocked sports uniforms, distinctive forward-looking corporate and exposition uniforms, costumes of opera fantasy and grandiloquence, and future-aimed clothing. Koshino's notable strength derives from her strong play between the individual and the group. Koshino's best works are her uniforms and collective vestments. Her work fosters an easy and elegant collective character.

In addition to designing for Drum Tao, Koshino's recent projects range from outfits worn by vegetable growers at a grocers' convention to garments for sumo wrestlers and J-League

soccer uniforms for the team Kawasaki Verdy. Koshino holds periodic joint fashion shows in Japan with her two designing sisters, Michiko and Hiroko, especially in their hometown of Kishiwada. Aside from her design work, Junko Koshino has kept busy lecturing, serving on various governmental and municipal committees in Japan, and appearing on television shows and in commercials. She also designs the fireworks for the summer festival Ryukyu-Kaiensai in Okinawa.

fashionencyclopedia.com/Ki-Le/Koshino-Junko
junkokoshino.com



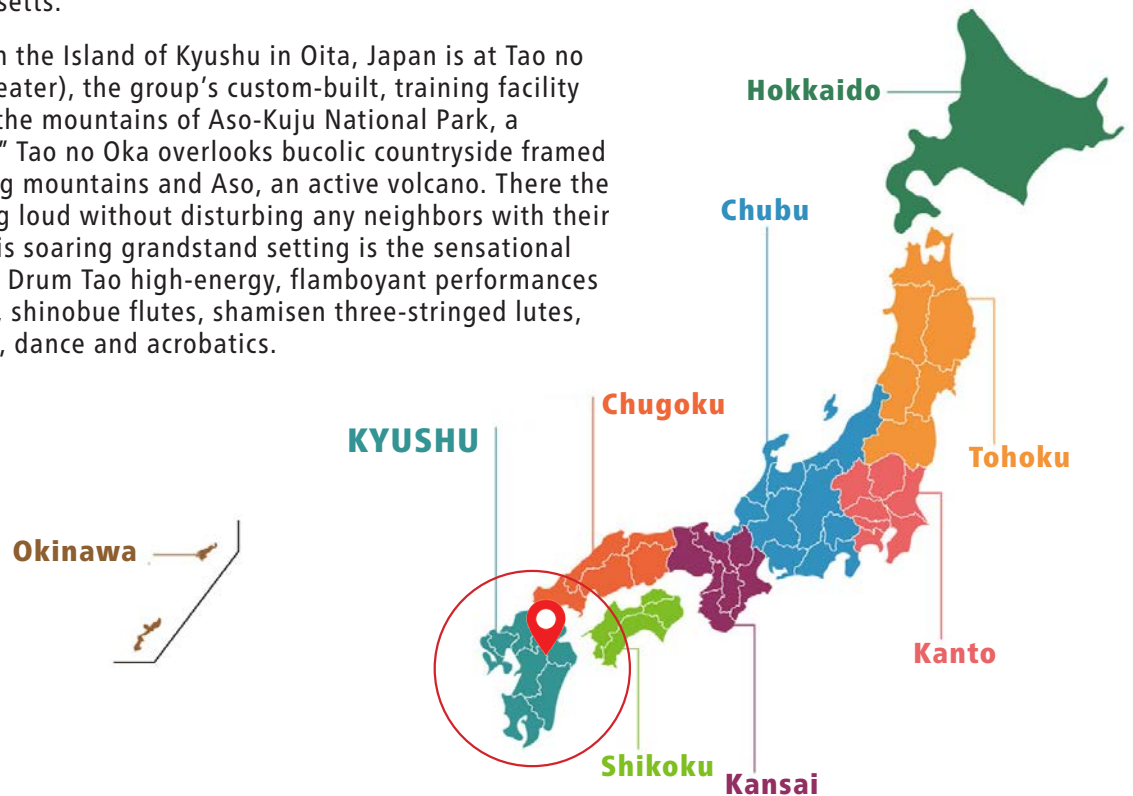


Matsumoto Castle, Japan

Geography

Located in East Asia, Japan is a curved-shaped archipelago with the Sea of Japan along the west coast and the Pacific Ocean along the east coast. Its closest neighbors are South Korea, Russia, and Taiwan near the southernmost Okinawan islands known as Yonaguni. Japan's size is often compared to that of Germany and it is slightly smaller than the state of California and four times larger than Massachusetts. Kyushu is the third largest island of Japan's five main islands and the southernmost of the largest islands. The island of Kyushu is 1.35 times as big as Massachusetts.

Drum Tao's home on the Island of Kyushu in Oita, Japan is at Tao no Oka (Tao Nature Theater), the group's custom-built, training facility and venue, high in the mountains of Aso-Kuju National Park, a "Theater in the Sky." Tao no Oka overlooks bucolic countryside framed by the Kuju towering mountains and Aso, an active volcano. There the taiko drums can ring loud without disturbing any neighbors with their immense sound. This soaring grandstand setting is the sensational natural backdrop to Drum Tao high-energy, flamboyant performances with wadaiko drum, shinobue flutes, shamisen three-stringed lutes, koto zithers, chants, dance and acrobatics.





Tao Nature Theater

Tao no Oka, which opened in 2020, includes an exhibition of the group's stage costumes created by celebrated fashion designer Junko Koshino, cafe, bar, video theater, shop and Club Tao, an intimate indoor live performance space. Performances are held regularly throughout the season from early spring through autumn.

Nearly 70% of Japan's terrain is blanketed by forest, making it one of the world's greenest destinations and a haven for outdoor activities. Nature lovers are spoiled for choice, with rich bio-diverse woodlands, snow-capped mountains, rushing rivers and 32,800 kilometers of coastline to explore. In this deep wilderness, traditional Satoyama communities who have lived harmoniously with nature for generations are also being rediscovered through sustainable outdoor activities. From guided treks through unspoiled forests to canyoning in wild rapids, kayaking in serene nature, hiking along sacred pilgrimage routes, snorkeling in otherworldly surroundings, cycling through national parks and more, Japan's great outdoors abounds in recreational opportunities.

Located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Japan has more than a hundred active volcanos, although most of them are not a threat to human activity. In addition, Japan is located on the fault lines of four tectonic plates, making earthquakes a common occurrence. There have been several devastating earthquakes in the last hundred years, including the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. Small earthquakes happen on a daily basis somewhere in Japan, and many of them are barely noticeable.



Drum Tao Costumes



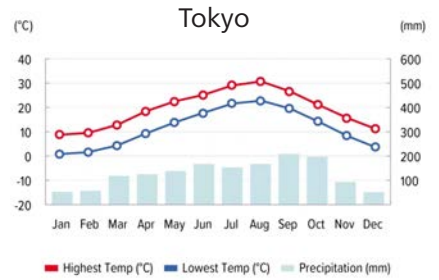
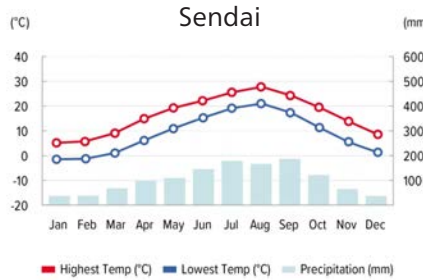
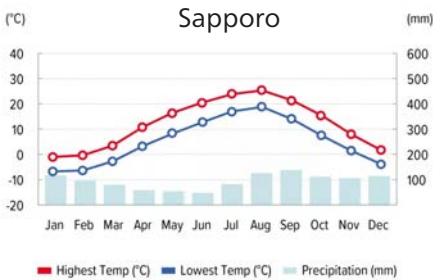
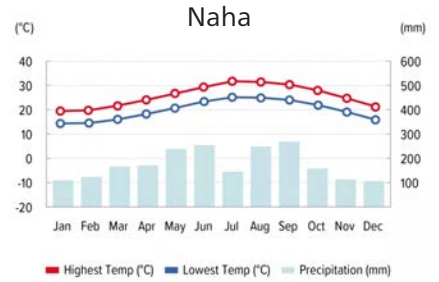
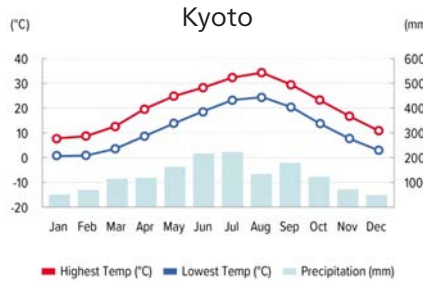
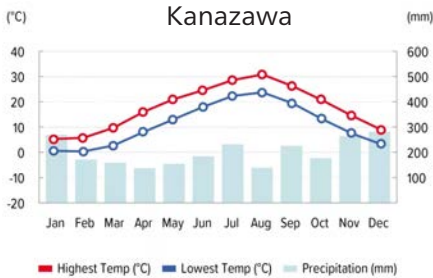
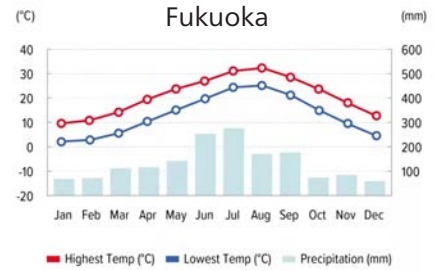
Kyushu japan



Sakurajima volcano

Activity

Average temperatures and precipitation vary across the country, but fall within a temperate range similar to New England, with the exception of the Okinawa region, which is made up of the southernmost islands and is subtropical. Looking at the maps in this guide, which of these temperature charts is for a city closest to Oita?



To learn more about the other regions of Japan, visit Japan.travel/en/us for many more photos and descriptions of life around this beautiful country.

