

2025 **1** 2025
ISLANDS OF
JAPAN
MARATHON

18 September to 16 October 2025



Rally & Globe
VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CAR CLUB

Covering the four main islands of Japan in 28 days, from Hokkaido in the far north, through Honshu and Shikoku to the finish in semi-tropical Kyushu, the *Islands of Japan Marathon* will be a true journey of discovery through this intriguing land.



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This amazing Marathon event will see crews journeying almost 7,000 kilometres from the wide open spaces of Japan's most northerly island, Hokkaido, to remote and rugged Kyushu, in the far southwest. Along the way we will crisscross the length of the country's largest island, Honshu, with a brief but spectacular side trip to the rarely visited, and off the beaten path, island of Shikoku.

With the vast majority of Japan's population living close to the coast there are thousands of kilometres of quiet country roads to explore. Gravel tracks, mountain passes, fine drift and kart tracks, and splendid race circuits are all on the menu.

Brown bears may be seen in Hokkaido and black bears on the other main islands. Deer are commonly seen, and tame varieties may be seen in a number of cities. Snow Monkeys are unique to Japan and our route will pass through their habitats.

With so much to see, non-driving days in Shiretoko, Karuizawa, Kyoto and Hiroshima will be welcome. The schedule will be such that there will be plenty of time to explore other highlights along the route, and to make the most of the high-quality hotels that Japan has to offer.

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28 days (24 driving), 7,000 kilometres, and the four main islands of Japan

Route notes:

After a couple of days settling in to the Japanese way of life in Sapporo*, Hokkaido's capital and a former Winter Olympic City, our first evening as a group will feature a drinks reception and *RtG's* traditional Welcome Dinner.

Hokkaido

Days 1 to 7:

Sapporo to Hakodate

Our adventure begins in downtown Sapporo, but we are quickly out of the city and sampling the first of the island's many gravel roads. Hokkaido has 20% of Japan's land mass but only 5% of its population so there is plenty of space for everyone. This far north there are large stretches of wilderness, forests, dark blue lakes, and hot springs.

By the second day we are in the Daisetsuzan National Park, Japan's largest. The park's name means "Big Snow Mountain" and



*Crews importing their vehicles should plan to arrive in Sapporo by Monday 15 September to provide passports to their shippers to enable customs clearance of the vehicle. The first night of included accommodation is Thursday 18 September.



there are plenty of those along with active volcanoes. After three days we arrive in the Shiretoko National Park. The Shiretoko Pass is regarded as one of Japan's most scenic roads and from the summit there are views of the Russian-controlled Kuril Islands to the east. We will have an early non-driving day on the peninsula. A nature cruise will be an attractive option and we are in peak season to see killer whales, while brown bears may be visible on the shore.

Refreshed, we head southwest towards Obihiro with a passage control in the Kushiro Wetlands, home to numerous species of birds, including the red-crowned white crane, a traditional symbol of Japan. Then an international race circuit is on the agenda before we overnight on the shores of Lake Toya, a perfectly round volcanic lake whose southern shore is dominated by Mount Uzu which last erupted in 2000.

Our final night on Hokkaido is spent in historic Hakodate before we take the morning ferry to Honshu after seven exhilarating days.

Northern Honshu

Days 8 to 13: Hakodate to Karuizawa

After our 3 hour, 40 minute ferry crossing, we land in Aomori. Following a visit to a local

raceway we will tackle a couple of mountainous regularities on the way to our hotel. Our first night on Honshu is spent by Towada-ko, the main island's largest crater lake, and a location renowned for its peaceful atmosphere.

Heading south and west towards the Sea of Japan, the competition will increase as regularity and test opportunities abound. One of the highlights is our run over the Hachimantai Mountains passing some of the country's best rustic hot springs and volcanic landscapes. Day 10 we will follow the west coast of Honshu with frequent loops inland into the hills to tackle scenic regularities and a kart track.

On Day 11 we travel down the central spine of Honshu, destination Nikko. Nikko is one of Japan's major attractions and a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is renowned for its stunning autumn colours and abundant Buddhist and Shinto shrines and temples.

Leaving Nikko we head into the Japanese Alps, destination Karuizawa, an upmarket mountain resort noted for its splendid autumn colours. We will have a rest day here and some may be tempted to take the one-hour journey on the Bullet Train into central Tokyo, while others enjoy the massive, upmarket, outlet centre in town.

Central Honshu & The Japanese Alps

Days 14 to 20:

Karuizawa to Kyoto

Leaving Karuizawa we stay in the Alps and tackle some excellent regularities on the way to Nagano. The city will mark the end of Day 14 and along the way we expect to cross Japan's highest public road near Yokoteyama, at 2,200 metres, visit the Snow Monkey Park and traverse part of the country's fabled Romantic Highway.

Heading south of Nagano we start to see in the distance Japan's most iconic image, Mount Fuji. Fujiyama dominates the area, and we hope to spend the night in a splendid hotel close to its base. Our accommodation is part of the Fuji Speedway complex and a morning's activities on the various circuits available to us is planned.

After Fuji we explore the Izu Peninsula, renowned for its lush greenery, rugged coastline beloved of surfers, and numerous hot springs. We spend the night overlooking the ocean after a spectacular day's driving.

The next morning we head to Hamamatsu near the Pacific coast where our lakeside hotel is built in the style of a ship. Most of the days route will be on traffic-free roads in the hills of Shizuoka Province.



Heading west we are quickly in the heartland of the current World Rally Championship event, Rally Japan, and we make full use of the demanding roads and test venues available to us. We plan to take lunch at the Toyota Museum. Then after bypassing the city of Nagoya, we have a pair of splendid private track tests near Suzuka, before heading west for a couple of regularities that lead us to the city of Nara. A short walk from our hotel is Nara-koen, a large grassy park home to a massive, towering effigy of Buddha and hundreds of very tame deer, very keen to eat biscuits sold by opportunistic vendors! Next morning Kyoto is only a short drive away and we will have that afternoon and a full rest day to explore this amazing historic city.

Western Honshu & Shikoko

Days 21 to 25:

Kyoto to Hiroshima

We leave Kyoto to the northwest heading back to the Sea of Japan and into a very different landscape. Tranquil, wooded valleys lead us to the sleepy coast, rarely troubled by foreigners. Our base is Miyazu, famous for its Amanohashidate (Bridge to Heaven) sandbar considered to be one of Japan's most beautiful sights. From there we head to



Kurashiki and its astonishing old town, with our hotel nestling in its centre. Restored warehouses line the willow-edged canal, and the adjoining lanes are full of old wooden houses hosting interesting shops and galleries. Definitely a place not to be missed.

A stunning bridge system runs south from Kurashiki onto the island of Shikoku, renowned for its natural beauty and 88 sacred temples. The spectacular Iya Valley with its staggeringly steep gorges crossed by vine footbridges is the perfect location for sightseeing and, of course, some challenging regularity sections before our overnight halt in the Kochi area. Day 24 sees us island hopping on another series of spectacular bridges back onto Honshu for the venue of our final rest day, Hiroshima. Our hotel is just south of the city in the Setonaikai National Park and many of the rooms provide a view of the Seto Inland Sea and the Torii Gate shrine that at high tide

appears to float above the water. On the rest day a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum in the city centre is strongly recommended.

Kyushu

Days 26 to 28:

Hiroshima to Fukuoka

On Day 26 we plan to take a ferry (or even two) to our final Japanese Island, Kyushu. It is described as arguably the warmest and most beautiful of them all, with active volcanic peaks, rocky, lush, near tropical coastlines and many hot springs. We will spend a night on the east coast before heading north to the centre of the island. Aso-san is the world's third largest volcanic crater at 128 kilometres in circumference, and there are towns, villages and farms within it. The penultimate night will be spent near the crater's edge.

Finally, our destination arrives. Fukuoka is described as friendly and fun, both excellent ingredients for the arrival of a Marathon event such as ours. After the finish arch, champagne spraying, and prizegiving dinner at our ocean side hotel, tales will be told long into the night of our four-week adventure in this amazing land.

We hope you can join us!

Route details are subject to change.



Photos: gerardbrown.co.uk & shutterstock.com



Rally the Globe
VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CAR CLUB

Rally the Globe is a not-for-profit club that exists to support a broad family of motorsport enthusiasts who want to explore the world in vintage and classic vehicles.

We go out of our way to find memorable accommodation.

You will be with a great bunch of like-minded people creating memories that will last forever.

Entering *The Islands of Japan Marathon* is open to crews of all abilities, although you may wish to consider entering a shorter event to gain some experience first. Husbands and wives, parents and children, and just good friends all compete on our events. The evening social gatherings ensure life-long friendships are forged - united in an adventure.

Eligible cars

Just about any car of a type built before the end of 1976. If your car was built in the late 1970s, but it is similar to an earlier car, then it is almost certainly eligible. If you are uncertain, please check with us before submitting your entry form.

We love to see people using older cars so there is an entirely separate classification for cars of a specification produced before the end of 1945.

Please note that there are complexities with importing cars registered in Switzerland, Germany, Austria or Luxembourg into Japan. If this might affect you, please contact us before submitting an entry.

Event description

The Islands of Japan Marathon will use both gravel and asphalt roads. We use minor roads to explore areas that few tourists will ever see, some of which will present driving challenges. We go out of our way to avoid really rough roads where possible.

On this event you will encounter some "regularity" sections, where you will try to arrive at secret checks at a precise time. We have also planned tests on private land, tracks and circuits.

Underlying the competitive elements will be the basic challenge of driving the length

of Japan in a fifty-year-old car. Your preparation, ingenuity and resilience will all be tested.

Hospitality

29 nights' accommodation is included in a shared room (double or twin). Single rooms are available for a supplementary fee but may be limited at some hotels.

One of the joys of Japan is that the hospitality standards are world class so we will be staying in good hotels throughout - although some may be chosen for unique character rather than star ratings. This may be a Marathon in length, but the accommodation will provide none of the hardship experienced on similar events.

Dinner and other refreshments will be provided on most competition days. A light lunch will be included where this is possible. As a Marathon event, you will need to carry all of your own luggage in your car.

What to take

A fire extinguisher, full first aid kit, warning triangle, high visibility jackets and a towrope are all mandatory. On occasion we will park in historic areas where we insist an oil-resistant groundsheet is placed under each car.

Your car will need to be fitted with a tripmeter that can be calibrated to that of the organisers (eg Monit G-100) and you will need a simple stopwatch

for the regularity sections.

A list of other mandatory equipment will be issued in the lead up to the event and may include items of car preparation, essential spares, navigational equipment, etc.

On event support

Our expert team of sweep mechanics follow the last car on the route and are prepared to help anyone they come across. Should your car be off-route, you must contact the sweeps as soon as possible. Should you need to be transported by truck we will help as much as we can, but all responsibility, including payment, rests with the competitor.

We always have at least one doctor or paramedic on our events.

Getting there and back

The vast majority of international flights into Japan will land at either Tokyo Narita, Tokyo Haneda, or Osaka Kansai. Direct connections to Sapporo New Chitose Airport, and from Fukuoka Airport, are available with Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways (ANA) as well as some other local airlines. Asian airlines such as Cathay Pacific also offer transits in places such as Hong Kong and other travel hubs, with direct flights on to Sapporo.

We work closely with CARS Europe who will be offering a range of car shipping options to

the start and back again from the finish, but competitors are reminded it is their responsibility to ensure their vehicles are delivered on time. Crews importing their vehicles should plan to arrive in Sapporo by Monday 15 September to provide sufficient time to clear customs.

Insurance and other documents

Vehicle insurance is not included, and we strongly recommend you have adequate travel, medical and cancellation insurance. Please contact *Rally the Globe* HQ for suggested providers.

Details of any visas, driving licences or other documents that you will require throughout the event will be provided in due course. The responsibility for obtaining these lies with the individual although *Rally the Globe* HQ will be there to guide you through the processes.

More information

Our regular newsletters will keep you updated, including any relevant travel and medical information you may need. If you require any information on shipping cars to the event, preparing yourself and your car for a visit to Japan, or anything else, please feel free to contact *Rally the Globe* HQ.

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For more information and latest news see: www.rallytheglobe.com



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