Located in the southwestern point of Japan, on the island of Kyushu, Nagasaki Prefecture is an area steeped in historical significance and natural beauty. While many may perhaps remember its capital, Nagasaki, as the second, and last, city in the world to suffer an atomic bomb attack, visitors will be surprised to see how the place is now a flourishing international cruise centre with a booming shipbuilding industry.

Nagasaki, whose name means Long Cape, was a mere fishing village of little significance until the Portuguese arrived in 1543. Famously hailed as the first place in Japan to receive western visitors, Nagasaki became a port of trade for the Portuguese as well as the Dutch, and a centre of Christian propagation. Due to its exposure to western influences, many historical ruins and buildings in Nagasaki bear exotic touches unseen anywhere else in Japan.

Beyond Nagasaki, nature lovers will appreciate the myriad richness the land and sea bring to the people here. Shimabara, with its source of spring water, is not just a place with beautiful scenery but one filled with culinary delights. Bask in the warm hospitality of the locals with a homestay at Minami-Shimabara that will let you experience Japan like never before.

Then, venture higher to hot springs town Unzen, where ryokans abound, waiting for you to immerse your tired body in the mineral rich waters that fill their baths. Be awestruck by local attraction Unzen Hell where rock formations, hot springs and smoke combine to create some 30 types of “hell” with bubbling sounds, heat and mist.

Round up your journey of Nagasaki with a visit to Hasami to soak in the artistic vibes of the local community with its traditional and modern take on the famous Hasami Porcelain and, finally, to Sasebo for a jaw-dropping burger that’s caught the attention of some of the cast members of Harry Potter.

In the pages the follow, you’ll see the mind-boggling array of food, sights, experiences and souvenirs that will shape your impression of Nagasaki. Be warned: it’s going to be quite a ride!
Cultures meet and meld together best in food. In Nagasaki, there is no stronger evidence of this than the Shippoku Ryori.

The Shippoku feast typically takes place on a red round table. This is perhaps the first and most obvious sign of Chinese influence in Nagasaki cuisine. Long before Japan instituted its isolationist policy, Chinese merchants were already doing trade in Nagasaki. With them, they brought their practice of taking their meals at a round table to symbolise completeness. Where there used to be a red table cloth, the Japanese have transformed into a red lacquer table.

The dishes one sees at a Shippoku feast are an amalgamation of Japanese, Chinese and Dutch influences. The baked chicken roll with walnut resembles pate while the stewed pork belly is a deadringer for Chinese dongpo meat. And, the place to go for a Shippoku feast is Fukiro, a 358-year-old establishment.

Ohire opens the feast. It is a bowl of soup with mochi, snapper and seasonal vegetables. The hostess will invite you to drink this soup and you’re not allowed to start on the rest of the food or be served beer until you finish the Ohire.

Once the ohire is done, it’s time to tuck into the rest of the feast. You’ll find a variety of flavours and textures that’ll tease and tantalise your tastebuds. Besides the stewed pork belly and baked chicken roll, there are deep-fried snapper heads, shrimp paste sandwiches, and many more.

Rice, soup and pickles are served after the main dishes, with the end of the meal marked with a bowl of delicately flavoured umewan – a sweet red bean drink with a salted cherry blossom.

Another name for Shippoku is Omoyai cuisine (meaning “share”). This is because the dishes are served up at once and in a communal fashion. The atmosphere at a Shippoku feast is convivial and joyous, which explains why many newlyweds in Nagasaki often opt to celebrate their special day at Fukiro.
Champon
Nagasaki’s most representative dish is a bowl of thick noodles in steaming hot broth, topped with seafood, vegetables and meat. This is a Chinese creation, conjured by Shikairo’s founder in 1899 for poor Chinese students studying in Nagasaki looking for a hearty, yet affordable meal. Today, you can also find a crispy noodle option called Sara Udon. Shikairo still serves up the original champon to scores of tourists and locals daily. A wait for a table may take up to 30 minutes, so be prepared.

Chawanmushi
A familiar dish within and beyond Japan, the Chawanmushi at Yossou is backed by over 140 years of experience. It comes in a big bowl filled with Anago (sea eel), shrimp, chicken, black fungus, ginkgo nut, bamboo shoot and fish cake. The steaming hot bowl of custardy goodness can also be enjoy in a set called Fufumushi (which translates to “husband & wife set”), where an identical bowl containing steamed sushi is served alongside for a more filling meal.

Guzouni and Gamba sushi
After a walk around the samurai town and castle in Shimabara, fill up your belly at Houju a restaurant serving up Guzouni and Gamba Sushi. The former is a soup dish made with a variety of ingredients gathered from the surrounding land and sea, including but not limited to vegetables, mochi, chicken and beancurd. A creation of the Shimabara Rebellion in the 17th century, this dish is as representative of Shimabara as champon is to Nagasaki. Another signature is Gamba Sushi – puffer fish sushi served with sour plum sauce. The sushi has got a firm bite with a delicate flavour, definitely an appetising eat for a summer day!

WONDERLAND
A trip to Nagasaki Prefecture is bound to widen your gourmet horizon. Be sure to give these yummy creations a shot on your visit!

Unagi
For a energising meal after a long ride on the road, make a stop at Fukudaya restaurant in Isahaya. The 150 years old restaurant has a unique way of keeping its Kabayaki (grilled unagi) tender, which is typical in Isahaya area – after grilling these succulent river eels from Kyushu region, the chef places them into a porcelain pot with a compartment for hot water. He then covers it up and let the steam soften the unagi. The result? Caramelised unagi that melts in your mouth. Oishii!

Nagasaki Wagyu
In 2012, wagyu beef from Nagasaki won the highest award in the National Wagyu Capacity Livestock Shows. This presented the prefecture with the perfect opportunity to promote its wagyu beef. At Fukudaya ryokan, the Kaiseki Ryori serves up a slab of this tender, finely marbled meat upon a heated plate made from volcanic rock. Every bite of the wagyu fills your mouth with sweet meat juices. The meat is so flavourful, you’ll find it unnecessary to use any sauce.
Fresh seafood
For some of the freshest, most reasonably priced seafood, you have to check out Dejima Asaichi. A seafood market in the morning, the place transforms into an eatery in the afternoon where your purchase of freshly caught seafood is served up raw or cooked however you want.

MUNCH!
Travelling is such hard work so you’d better be sure to plan in lots of pitstop for snacks like these.

Castella Ice
A day trip to Gunkanjima will not be complete without a slice of Castella Ice. An ice cream sandwich made with two slices of Castella, this treat is a fun way to enjoy the indescribably sweet sponge cake. Soft and fluffy with a creamy centre, you might not be able to stop at just one.

Tori-no Shiraishi
Love fried chicken? You’ll find it right here at this shop at Shimabara! Freshly fried on order, each bite-sized piece is deliciously crispy on the outside and impossibly juicy on the inside. Best consumed with cold beer.

Sasebo Burger
American fast food in a Japanese city? Yes, and Log Kit is where you’ll find the Super Burger – a 16cm wide mammoth containing a 100g beef patty, two eggs, two slices of cheese and a 5mm thick bacon! Log Kit sells 800 of it every day.

IZAKAYA 101
A compound word consisting of “i” (to stay) and “sakaya” (sake shop), izakayas are the quintessential watering holes for those who love good food, good drinks and, good conversations.

Like bars, izakayas are often found concentrated along a specific street. In Nagasaki, that’d be Doza and Shianbashi, and in Sasebo, that’d be Kyomachi and Yomisekoendo-ri. Here’s how to make the most of each izakaya visit:

1. ASK THE CHEF WHAT’S FRESH
The fastest way to decide what food you should order is ask for the chef’s recommendations. He’ll be able to tell you what the inhouse specialities are and what seafood just came in fresh that day.

2. SEASONAL MENU VS REGULAR MENU
If you spot two menus at the izakaya, chances are one of them is the seasonal menu. This will feature dishes created using produce that are in season, so if you are up for a culinary surprise, order up something from this menu.

3. PORTION CONTROL
Like Spanish tapas, you are meant to eat only a small amount of each dish at an izakaya. For a party of four, order an amount enough to feed two. This way, you can sample more dishes.
Maki Fukuda of Unzen Fukudaya Ryokan

Known for its nice ambience, Fukudaya Ryokan is especially famed for its personable yet highly professional service standards. We speak with its head hostess (okami) on her brand of omotenashi (service and hospitality).

A ryokan is often fronted by its head hostess. Why is that so?
I guess it’s because, unlike a hotel, a ryokan tries to evoke the feeling of home in its guests. The okami is therefore seen as the lady of the house, someone who invites the guests in and prepares the meals.

What is so unique about Fukudaya’s brand of service?
To be honest, we don’t do anything differently so, when we got wind that customers find our service special, we were surprised. What we try to do is placed ourselves in the shoes of our guests and think how they would like to be served. Every morning, the staff also gather for a sharing session to highlight the feedback they are receiving from the guests. This way, we are constantly adapting to their needs.

What is the one must-see you’d recommend to visitors of Unzen?
This is very difficult! But if I had to choose something, I would say do check out Unzen Hell. Usually, people have to travel near the summit of a volcano to catch sight of a landscape like Unzen Hell. But this is right next to the village so it’s very special!

Chef Masaru Kamikakimoto of Pastisserie Camille

As one of Nagasaki’s five Tourism Meisters, Chef Kamikakimoto’s expert use of the prefecture’s produce is testament of his deep love for the place and its people.

What is it about Nagasaki that you love?
We have a very rich history because Nagasaki was the first place in Japan to receive foreign influences for a long time, from 17th century to 19th century. Our unique geography also means we are able to produce a wide variety of food. The people of Nagasaki are extremely open and warm-hearted. We welcome visitors from within and beyond Japan because we believe everyone should be able to live together in peace.

What or where would you recommend we eat at Nagasaki?
I would like to recommend a meal that includes Nagasaki Wagyu and seafood. Our wagyu beef is No. 1 in Japan! Because of the abundance of fresh produce, it is almost impossible to find bad restaurants in Nagasaki. Most of our restaurants are really good!

What does it mean to be a Tourism Meister of Nagasaki?
Being a Tourism Meister goes beyond attracting foreign visitors to Nagasaki. It’s also about educating the locals about the prefecture and getting them excited about its produce and culture. I want to promote Nagasaki through our food because we are blessed with a wide variety of seafood and farm produce.

Have you always wanted to be a chef?
Being a chef wasn’t something I had considered at all! I just like the idea of donning the chef’s white uniform. In fact, I wanted to be a PE teacher! However, a leg injury put an end to that dream. The idea of becoming a chef entered my head when I saw an enrollment poster for a French culinary school. After failing twice to obtain a scholarship, I decided to fund my own training there and left for France in 1974. I was 24 years old and already considered too old to train as a chef.

Nagasaki Faces of

Chef Masaru Kamikakimoto of Pastisserie Camille

As one of Nagasaki’s five Tourism Meisters, Chef Kamikakimoto’s expert use of the prefecture’s produce is testament of his deep love for the place and its people.
Glover Garden
This garden is a treat for the eyes with its beautifully preserved Western houses, including the one built by Thomas Blake Glover. Shutterbugs will have a whale of a time here so be prepared to spend at least two to three hours here!

Oura Church
Also known as the Church of the 26 Japanese Martyrs, this church is said to be the oldest church in Japan. Honoring the nine European priests and 17 Japanese Christians who were crucified in 1597, the appearance of the church encouraged descendants of early Japanese Christians to come out of hiding and embrace their faith once again.

Nagasaki Peace Park
Built on a low hill to the north of the centre of the atomic bomb blast, the Peace Park is built as a vow that a tragic war such as World War 2 will never be repeated. At the center of the park is a 9.7-metre high statue by sculptor Seibou Kitamura, which signifies the threat of atomic weapons and a wish for peace.

The Sun Yat-sen Umeya Shokichi Museum
Umeya Shokichi was more than just a benefactor of Sun Yat-sen, he was also a dear friend of the latter. 2011 marked the first century of the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, and Shokichi’s great-granddaughter released items such as photos, letters and telegrams to the public to tell the story of their friendship. This exhibit of 260 items will paint a vivid picture of China and Japan during those tumultuous times.

Unzen Hell
Dotted with solfataric clay discoloured by fumarolic gas and belching mist with an ungodly hissing noise, Unzen Hell offers an otherworldly experience to visitors of the hot springs town. The area is also infamously known as the execution ground of Christian martyrs in history, which also explains its association with hell.

Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geopark
Shimabara, Unzen and Minami-Shimabara are the three cities surrounding Mount Unzen, an active volcano that last erupted in 1991. At this park, visitors will learn how the people have come to cope with living around the volcano, making best use of its spring water, hot springs and fertile soil, and about the ingenious ways they have come up with to manage its next eruption.
Atelier Nishinohara
Located in Hasami, this group of buildings was originally an abandoned potters’ enclave. Eight years ago, a group of artists decided to revive the area by setting up their galleries and workshops here. Enjoy a slice of cheesecake at the café, monne legui mooks, while you soak up the artistic vibe of the area.

According to the boss of the café, more and more people are opting to set up their businesses here because they are drawn to the slower pace of life in Hasami.

Shimabara Bukeyashiki
While it’s not surprising for castles to be preserved, what’s rare is the preservation of residences of foot soldiers. At Teppo-machi (Gun Town), you’ll get to see three perfectly preserved samurai houses as well as a waterway of fresh spring water in the middle of the street.

Shime-Sou Spring Garden
Along Carp Road in Shimabara, carps swim freely in the waterways along the street. But it is at the Shime-Sou Spring Garden that you will go weak in the knees at the beauty and tranquility of the place, and sheer size of the carps that swim in its ponds. Functioning as a visitors’ centre of sorts, you can stop by for a cup of green tea and just let your mind go blank for a while.

Hashima Island
Known also as Gunkanjima (meaning Battleship Island), this deserted mining island served as inspiration for the dead city in the James Bond movie, Skyfall.

You wouldn’t be blamed for thinking Hashima Island was a giant battleship afloat in the sea. The entire island is a veritable concrete jungle, surrounded by a grey seawall. When coal was still the predominant source of energy, the island’s population boomed. In addition to a hospital, shops and schools, it also had its own cinema and pachinko hall.

When domestic and global needs for coal decreased, so did the island’s population, and in 1974, it became officially closed. Its buildings laid wasted and exposed to the elements for 35 years before the island was opened again to visitors for day visits, where their access is limited to certain areas for safety reasons.

A campaign is underway to have Gunkanjima listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
Minpaku / Farm stay
There’s no better way to experience a place than a homestay with a local family. Get the firsthand account from Oishii’s contributing writer Deborah Tan.

“Homestays tend to make me nervous because I worry about being the perfect guest and often end up obsessing whether I’m being a nuisance. As I do not speak any Japanese, I was beyond anxious about this visit. Nonetheless, I tried to stay positive - nothing a nod and a smile can’t fix, right?

My first task for the day was to help my host harvest zucchinis for our dinner. Being a bona fide city-girl, I was terrified of ruining the crops! Luckily, I only had to pick five zucchinis before getting reassigned to the kitchen to help my hostess prepare dinner.

Dinner was a sumptuous spread consisting of homemade asparagus tofu, Sara Udon (crispy noodles with seafood sauce) and fresh shitake mushrooms.

Throughout dinner, my host and his family made me feel welcomed, despite the obvious language barrier. The relaxed and friendly atmosphere warmed my heart and I found myself beaming from ear to ear throughout the evening.

Besides spending time on the farms and learning how to prepare local dishes, homestayers at Minami-Shimabara will also get to enjoy experiences like dolphin-watching and visiting nearby attractions.

Language is certainly not a problem because the hosts have each developed their own ways to communicate with their guests. For example, my host has a sheet of basic greetings and questions printed out in English, Mandarin and Japanese, so you can point to what you want to say and he’ll get what you are trying to convey.”

For more information, visit www.city.minnamishimabara.lg.jp.

Once Upon A Time In Nagasaki
Immerse yourself in the Nagasaki way of life with a visit down memory lane and a homestay stint with a local family

Visit Dejima
A man-made island contructed in 1634 to keep the Portuguese away from the local population, today Dejima takes its visitors back in time with authentic replicas of its former structures.

A fan-shape artificial island that serves as a trading outpost for the Portuguese, and later for the Dutch. Dejima’s historical significance is one that must be preserved so visitors and locals can appreciate the economic and cultural impact Nagasaki’s role as the sole contact point with foreigners has on Japan.

A walk amongst the carefully replicated buildings will have you feeling like you have travelled back in time - an experience made even more authentic with the appearance of a samurai roaming the streets.

You can also take your experience at Dejima to the next level by signing up for a package of dress-up at the kimono station. You’ll be dressed by a traditionally trained kimono dresser whose assistant will then do up your hair and accessorise you so you’ll look the part of a Japanese lady 100 percent. The kimonos used are the real deal too, made from silk and embroidered with much care and attention to details. It makes for a great photo opportunity too!
A Piece of Nagasaki

Because souvenirs are truly the best way to share the memories and joy of your trip with friends and family.

Somen
If you love your udon, ramen and soba, you will most definitely love Somen. Commonly described as Japanese “mee sua”, these thin, hand-stretched noodles make for a great summer dish as they are best eaten with chilled soup or dipping sauce. Yamaichi produces some of the country’s best Somen and its hand-stretched range carries flavours such as black sesame, sweet potato and seaweed.

Vidro/Glassware
Another local delight inspired by Nagasaki’s early interaction with foreigners. It used to be that the sand required to create glassware was obtained from the beaches of Nagasaki. These days, however, the sand is imported from Tasmania, Australia. The beauty however is not compromised. At Ruri An, you can find pendants, windchimes and sake sets, and sign up for a glassmaking class too.

Hasami Porcelain
It seems counterintuitive to buy porcelain back but once you see how beautiful the Hasami porcelain are, you’ll be capitulate. Combining the quality of traditional Japanese porcelain and the practicality of modern tableware, Hasami porcelain will fit in with your modern interior. They are priced affordably too!

Sake
Want sake made the traditional way? You’ll find them right here at Yoshidaya, a sake brewery located in Minami-Shimbara, runned by the family’s 13th generation. A wooden structure, headlined by a whole piece of Hanegi trunk, is used to extract the sake from the fermented rice, and then bottled by hand. The result? A sake that tastes almost like fresh spring water. It’s a must-buy!
Champon Noodles
If you can’t get enough of the Champon noodles at Shikairou, then be sure to grab a few packets of instant Champon noodles from the supermarket or souvenir shops. Packed with dried noodles and premixed soup pack, these may cost more than your average instant noodles but the flavour are pretty close to a freshly cooked dish of Nagasaki’s signature dish.

Castella Cider and Unzen Lemonade
If you have a friend who collects bottled beverages, these souvenirs from the hotspring town of Unzen are perfect! The Castella Cider, an invention by the shopkeeper, is packaged to look like a box of Castella cake, while the Unzen Lemonade is made with the bubbly hotspring water, its bottle design inspired by Pearl S Buck – famous American children’s author who lived in Unzen for a year in 1927.

Beauty products
As the setting of one of the world’s most beloved operas, Madama Butterfly, it is almost obligatory that Nagasaki has to do something to commemorate Puccini’s most definitive work. Together with Shiseido – Japan’s most iconic beauty company – a series of beauty products inspired by Madama Butterfly has been created. Consisting of a pack of facial blotters, hand cream and perfume, you’ll love the airy rose scent. Available at most tourist attractions in Nagasaki.

Castella
The Portuguese introduced this simple but delectable cake to Nagasaki in the 16th century. Castella is made of eggs, sugar and flour, and at Fukusaya, they are made by hand to ensure the full-bodied flavour of the cakes are preserved. You will find these cakes in a myriad of flavours, such as strawberry and chocolate, and packaging but don’t go home without one in the original flavour.
Shopping
Somen - Ichi-ko Honpo
(Shop & Restaurant)
4615-2 Tei, Fukaecho,
Minamishimabara-city,
Nagasaki 859-1504
Tel: 0957-72-7119

Vidro/Glassware - Rurian
5-11 Matsugaemachi,
Nagasaki-city, Nagasaki 850-0921
Tel: 095-827-0737

Hasami Porcelain - Kurawankan
2255-2 Iseki-go, Hasami-cho,
Higashisonogi-gun, Nagasaki
859-3711
Tel: 0956-26-7162

Sake - Yoshidaya
785 Yamagawa, Ariecho,
Minamishimabara-city,
Nagasaki 859-2202
Tel: 0957-82-2032

*available Fukuoka & Nagasaki
International Airport as well

Dining / Food & Drink
Shippoku Ryori - Byotei FUKIRO
5-4 Kaminishiyamamachi,
Nagasaki-city, Nagasaki 850-0006
Tel: 095-822-0253

Champon - Shikairo
4-5 Matsugaemachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 850-0921
Tel: 095-822-1296

Chawan mushi - Yossou
8-9 Hamamachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 850-0052
Tel: 095-821-0001

Unagi - Fukudaya
1-13 Sakaemachi, Isahaya-city,
Nagasaki 854-0013
Tel: 0957-22-0101

Guzouni and Gamba sushi - Houju
2-243 Shinmachi, Shimabara-city,
Nagasaki 855-0803
Tel: 0957-64-2795

Nagasaki Wagyu - Unzen Fukudaya
380-2 Unzen, Obamacho,
Unzen-city, Nagasaki 854-0621
Tel: 0957-79-2151

Seafood - Dejima Asaichi
102 Nagasaki Dejima WHARF, 1-1
Dejimamachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 850-0865
Tel: 095-825-8558

Fried Chicken - Tori no Shiraishi
2-279 Takajima, Shimabara-city,
Nagasaki 855-0801
Tel: 0957-65-5007

Sasebo Burger - LOG KIT
1-1 Yatakecho, Sasebo-city,
Nagasaki 857-0047
Tel: 0956-24-5034

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Various farm houses in
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www.city.minamishimabara.lg.jp

Kimono experience at Dejima -
Nagasaki Hakarasen
9-48 Abugamachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 852-8035
Tel: 090-9473-9182

Hashima island tour / Castella Ice
- Gunkanjima Concierge
102 Tokiwa Terminal, 1-60
Tokiwamachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 850-0843
Tel: 095-895-9300

Café - monne legui mooks
at Atelier Nishinohara
2187-4 Iseki-go, Hasamicho,
Higashisonogi-gun,
Nagasaki 859-3711
Tel: 0956-85-8033

Patisserie Camille
1F Mirai Nagasaki COCO-WALK, 1-55 Morimachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 852-8104
Tel: 095-801-5327

Oura Church
5-3 Minamimiyamatemachi,
Nagasaki-city, Nagasaki 850-0931
Tel: 095-823-2628

The Sun Yat-sen
Umeya Shokichi Museum
4-27 Matsugaemachi, Nagasaki-city,
Nagasaki 850-0921
Tel: 095-827-8746

Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geopark
Memorial Park of Houses
Destroyed by Debris Flow
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6077 Tei, Fukae-cho
Minamishimabara-city,
Nagasaki 859-1504
Tel: 0957-72-7222

Shime-so spring garden
2-125 Shinmachi, Shimabara-city,
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Take photo of four seasons image as above with “Pictu AR”.

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