

Japanese Macaques are found all over Japan. They are also known as snow monkeys because they live in some areas where it snows, and they are a popular tourist attraction due to their love of hot baths. In colder regions, macaques can often be seen soaking in natural hot springs called onsen to stay warm during the winter.

Location: Nagano Prefecture in the centre of Honshu.

Habitat: Forest covered mountainous areas with onsen.

Best time to see them: In the winter when there is most snow.

Macaque



Tanuki look like a cross between a raccoon and a dog, but they are actually a wild animal native to Japan. In Japanese folklore, tanuki are famous for being cheeky shapeshifters who love to cause mischief, often pretending to be people, statues, or even teapots!

Their natural habitat is woodland, but they can sometimes be seen in urban areas like Tokyo, where they take advantage of leftover food and safe hiding spots.

Location: Hiroshima Prefecture in the south of Honshu and Tokyo city.

Habitat: Woodland.

Best time to see them: All year round.

Tanuki



Shika deer are common across Japan, especially in woodland and suburban areas. They are accustomed to people and often approach visitors, particularly in places like Nara Park (southern Honshu, east of Shikoku), where they are considered sacred and protected as a national treasure. Historically, these deer were believed to be messengers of the gods. They are frequently fed by hand and are known for their gentle behaviour.

Location: Nara in the south of Honshu, to the east of Shikoku.

Habitat: Woodland and sub-urban areas.

Best time to see them: Autumn.

Shika Deer



The **Japanese Giant Salamander** can grow up to 150 cm, making it one of the largest amphibians in the world! They can even regrow lost limbs! These amphibians breathe mainly through their skin, while their lungs help them control buoyancy in water. They live in cold, fast-flowing rivers and streams in mountainous areas, but their habitat is under threat from pollution and dam construction.

Location: Central Honshu and some smaller islands in southern Japan.

Habitat: Cold, fast flowing rivers and streams in the mountainous regions.

Lifespan: Up to 70 years.

Giant Salamander



Japanese Giant Spider Crabs are fearsome-looking creatures but don't worry. They live deep beneath the sea, so you won't bump into one while snorkelling!

The Japanese giant spider crab can reach an incredible leg span of up to 370 cm, making it the largest arthropod in the world. Despite their size, they're gentle scavengers, feeding mostly on dead fish and sea plants.

Location: Seas off the southern coasts of Japan.

Habitat: Up to 300m under the sea where it's around 10°C.

Lifespan: 100 years on average.

Giant Spider Crab



Serow look like a cross between a goat and an antelope. They are quite small, standing about 75 cm tall at the shoulder.

Once hunted nearly to extinction, they are now protected as a national natural monument, and their population has made a strong recovery.

Location: Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku

Habitat: Dense coniferous and broadleaf forests.

Best time to see them: Winter when they are easier to spot against the snow.

Serow



Sea Turtles in Japan

Japan is home to three endangered species of sea turtles: Loggerhead, Hawksbill, and Green turtles. These turtles migrate to the warm southern waters to lay their eggs on sandy beaches.

Other species also visit Japanese waters and may occasionally nest. Yakushima Island, off the coast of Kyushu, is one of the most important nesting sites in the country.

Location: Yakushima Island and other southern coastal areas

Habitat: Tropical waters and sandy beaches

Best time to see them: April to September, during nesting and hatching season.

Sea Turtles



Inoshishi or Japanese wild boar, is a native animal found in forests across Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku. In traditional Japanese culture, inoshishi were symbols of courage and determination. They are one of the animals in the Japanese zodiac but they are also hunted for meat and their hides.

Nowadays, inoshishi are seen as pests because they damage crops and can be aggressive. They are strong, tough animals that can swim well and even wander into towns. Their striped piglets, called uribō, are especially cute.

Location: Across Kyushu, Honshu and Shikoku.

Habitat: Forest covered mountains

Best time to see them: All year round, but its best not to go looking for them!

Inoshishi



Hokkaido Brown Bears are generally shy and avoid humans, and they are considered less aggressive than the black bears found on Honshu, which can sometimes attack if startled.

Brown bears are omnivores, feeding on a wide variety of foods including berries, roots, salmon, insects, and small animals. Rivers rich with salmon in the spring and autumn are an important food source.

There are around 3,000 brown bears living in the wild on Hokkaido, mostly in remote forested and mountainous areas.

Location: Hokkaido

Habitat: Forest covered mountainous areas near to rivers.

Best time to see them: Spring.

Hokkaido Brown Bear



The **Northern pika** looks like a tailless mouse but is actually more closely related to a rabbit. They are well adapted to cold, mountainous environments and live on rocky slopes where they can quickly hide from predators.

Pika are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk. This, along with their small size and rocky habitat, makes them hard to spot in the wild. Pika spend the warmer months gathering and drying plants, which they carefully store in their burrows to survive the long, snowy winters.

Location: Hokkaido

Habitat: Loose rocky slopes in mountainous regions.

Best time to see them: All year round.

Pika

