



Sapporo, Hokkaido

**2019 IEEE International Symposium
on Circuits and Systems,**
Sapporo Convention Center
<http://www.iscas2019.org/>

Like northern New England in the U.S. or the Grenoble region of France (which are on about the same latitude), the island of Hokkaido offers cool forests in summer, snow sports in winter, and blazing fall foliage.

"Visitors of all nations have always selected Sapporo—with its distinctive northern culture, delicious food, and warm hospitality—as the most attractive city in Japan," says Professor Yoshikazu Miyanaga, dean of the Hokkaido University Graduate School of Information Science and Technology, and chair of the organizing committee for the upcoming 2019 IEEE International Symposium on Circuits and Systems (ISCAS 2019). The flagship IEEE Circuits and Systems Society (CASS) conference should attract around 1,500 attendees. "Many IEEE members and others who do not belong to CASS attend to keep up with cutting-edge research."

The Sapporo Convention Center, says Professor Miyanaga, is particularly well suited to international technical symposia.

Getting there is easy, with more than 50 scheduled flights from Tokyo's Haneda Airport to Sapporo's Shin-Chitose International. The center of Sapporo is only 30 to 60 minutes away by rail, bus, or car, and "newcomers can find their way around easily, even without their smartphone GPS apps."



Meetings in Japan:

It's easy to forget how vast Japan is. The archipelago sweeps 2,850 km (a 1,770-mile sweep) from Wakkanai in northern Hokkaido, through Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, and Okinawa to the islands of Taketomi and Ishigaki far to the south. Along that arc lies a tremendous variety of landscapes, climates, local cultures, and attractive meeting venues.

In 2016 alone, IEEE societies sponsored 50 international and regional meetings in Japan. Most convened in the capital region, from Tokyo to Kyoto, but tech meeting organizers are increasingly looking to other venues, from the semi-Alpine north, where Hokkaido has hosted 7 major IEEE meetings since 2013, to semitropical Okinawa Prefecture, which has welcomed 10 IEEE conferences in four years. (For a list of IEEE meetings in Japan 2016–2019, see <http://bit.ly/2hKoawk>.)

"We would like to let organizers know the charms of not only the metropolis but also regional cities in Japan," says Etsuko Kawasaki,

Executive Director of the Japan Convention Bureau, part of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).



Competitive Costs

Once considered an expensive destination, Japan is increasingly competitive, says Ms. Kawasaki. The December 2016 exchange rate was 115 yen per U.S. dollar, compared to 78 yen five years ago. On average, a trip to Tokyo can be significantly less expensive than a visit to Paris, London, or (most expensive) New York City.

And there is, moreover, "a wide range of venues...and you can select a suitable one that meets your budget," particularly outside of the big cities—one more reason to consider Japan's smaller cities and outlying islands.

Getting Around Is Easy

Foreigners are often daunted by the thought of getting around in Japan. They don't need to be.

"Traveling to regional cities is easier than meeting planners and





Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture

2014 IEEE Asia Pacific Conference on Circuits and Systems,
ANA InterContinental Ishigaki Resort,
17–20 November 2014

Ishigaki is one of the southernmost islands of Okinawa Prefecture. It's a tropical island of 48,000 people just 200 km [125 mi.] east of Taiwan. To put that in perspective, it is on the same latitude as Key West, Florida, or Morocco's West Sahara province.

"Okinawa in general, and Ishigaki in particular, is one of the best sight-seeing spots in Japan."



It is subtropical, with beautiful coral beaches, and has the facilities and quality services to support a first-class meeting," says Professor Hiroshi Ochi of the Kyushu Institute of

Technology, who served as General Chair of the 2014 IEEE Asia Pacific Conference on Circuits and Systems [APCCAS 2014, <http://www.apccas2014.org/>], held there.

The conference theme was, appropriately, "Smart and Green Circuits and Systems." It drew 310 attendees, who were treated not only to rigorous technical sessions but also a banquet that featured a local traditional dance performance and a welcoming talk by the mayor. "We formed a strong connection with the Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau that we expect to be useful in planning future conferences."

There were no complaints about travel or expense, either, says Professor Ochi. "There are many direct flights from most major mainland airports, and low-cost carriers were available."

Ski Slopes to Tropical Beaches

attendees imagine, thanks to highly developed transportation networks throughout the nation," says Ms. Kawasaki. "Attendees can arrive in Hokkaido or Kyushu within 2 hours from the major international airports in Tokyo or Osaka."

Japan's public transportation system has adopted a common prepaid integrated-circuit fare card system that can be used to travel on trains, subways, buses, and taxis throughout the country.

The multilingual environment in public places has been improving as Japan prepares for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Stations and city streets carry multilingual signs, and more tourist information centers open each month.

How JNTO Helps

The Japan Meetings web site (japanmeetings.org) includes tools for searching destinations by facility size, region, and amenities. There are also tools for finding local convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs), professional congress orga-

nizers (PCOs), destination marketing companies (DMCs), and other sources of planning assistance.

JNTO maintains local offices in the U.S., South Korea, the U.K., and Singapore to help planners bridge languages and time zones. "JNTO provides information for organizers, and each local CVB responds to the organizer's specific requests," Ms. Kawasaki says. Convention cities often offer additional incentives, including subsidies of up to 20 million yen (about US \$174,000).

