

# ENTRANTS' MANUAL











# THE JAPANESE ODYSSEY 2018 THE HIDDEN RINDO

A beige Corolla from the mid 80's in mint condition stationed on the lot.

Its driver got out of the car and walked smoothly towards us. He looks about 65 years old, a slender body, his trousers are the same colour as his car and he wears sneakers. He sits on the pavement next to us, crosses his legs, and starts to talk English. He is puzzled to meet non-Japanese in that part of the country.

We explain him that we are on our Odyssey, and have been riding our bikes now for 7 or 8 days.

We are aiming for the south of the country and gave him a rough overview of our planned route. He stood up, walked towards his car and opened the trunk. He then came back to us with two big red shiny apples in his hands and offered them to us. "Personal harvest" he said. He continued: "make sure you don't enter a forest when conditions are misty, people here in villages nearby think that spirits inhabit trees". He bowed and left.

I don't remember how the decision was made, but it is certainly Guillaume that proposed the idea and talked me into leaving the main road and turning right on that small forest road. The road was fenced off. We strode over it quite easily and checked the route on our phones. They were a few challenging switchbacks to the summit of the pass and then we would have to "plunge" down on the other side of the hill. Easy job. After a few hundred meters on the rindo, we saw a dozen eerie stone monks side by side peering at us by the side of the road. It felt like we were being watched. Perhaps we were. With Guillaume we exchanged a quick look, not very at ease, and entered the misty and mossy forest. All was silent. We were alone on the road. Before getting there, we were cruising on a perfect smooth asphalt, now the road was littered with debris, tree branches and stones.

We really had to focus to lead our bikes around the many obstacles on the ground. The sky started to darken. The hills we were heading to were now covered in mist and the summit of the intended pass was somewhere lost in the clouds.

But we never made it to the summit. I slipped and fell once. Then Guillaume had to stop to repair a flat tyre. Hairpin bends became steeper and sharper. And a thick fog had descended with a visibility down to 10 meters. At one point, with Guillaume we decided to turn back. In the descent we didn't exchange a word, we were too focused on manoeuvering our bikes with our hands gripped on the brake levers. The way downhill appeared as though it would never end. But we finally made it to the gate and to the junction with the main road.

We got off the bike to step over the gate again. I turned and looked at the dozen stone monks. They seemed to have a smile on their faces, which I am pretty sure they didn't when we first got on the rindo.

### THANKS

The Japanese Odyssey is about an idea. An idea firmly entrenched in our head. Firmly entrenched in our heart. For the last three years, we have been dedicated to dream up an event exploring the wilderness of Japan. From the early beginning we can count on the support and the positive feedback of many of you. **Thanks for this.** 

Japan is a confusing and puzzling country. We would like to thank our local friends: Ryoji (from CHAMPION SYSTEM JAPAN), Eigo (aka Nubasho) and Ken (from JYKK) whose contributions, advices, country knowledge and little hands during previous events were invaluable.

We would like to take a moment to say a massive thanks to Timo at PELAGO, Ryoji (again) at CHAMPION SYSTEM JAPAN, Sogon at FAR RIDE MAGAZINE, and Lucas at PAPERSKY MAGAZINE for being so enthusiastic about both past editions and this year odyssey.

We also would like to welcome APIDURA as a new partner on the Japanese Odyssey. Since the first edition, they have been excited and shared stories and pictures from the Japanese Odyssey on their social media platforms, all of this helping us a lot to develop the event awareness among the bikepacking community. This year they decided to go a step further by joining us and helping us promoting the event.

We share common ground in our philosophies with our partners. They are essential to us and to the event, and we are really proud to have them on our side for the 2018 Odyssey Tour.

Emmanuel & Guillaume











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# THE 2018 JAPANESE ODYSSEY MANUAL

Welcome to all people planning to enter the 2018 Japanese Odyssey.

This is our manual. If you consider entering this year event, read it with attention. And read it again. Make sure you understand what: "being on your own" is really all about.

If you have any queries, hesitation or doubt, don't hesitate to contact us by e-mail: contact@japanese-odyssey.com

You may also follow us on various social channels.

FACEBOOK: @japaneseodyssey INSTAGRAM: @japanese\_odyssey TWITTER: @japaneseodyssey

## IT IS NOT A RACE.

### We do understand competition. And yet, we don't see the Japanese Odyssey as a race. It is an adventure. It is above all a "voyage".

What makes us ride our bike? It certainly is about going fast and going high. But not only. Your Japanese adventure is also about opening your eyes, enjoying the sceneries, trying to get a grasp of the culture of this country, meeting some of the locals and enjoying the company of fellow entrants.

Our event is not about competing against the others. It is about challenging yourself. The difference is subtle.

This year we are taking you on different forest roads (rindo). The event and the autumnal season will provide opportunities to explore the landscape, and to ride huge distances with just the minimum necessary and required. We would like the entrants to make use of the occasion to take some turns, to leave behind them highways and fast sections, and to explore secondary roads and secluded areas.

There will be no official timing and no rankings. We won't hand out medals. Success in the event is measured by its completion in 10 days. Make it within the time limit and you are a winner. But remember the time component is only one element of your adventure.

So, challenge yourself, open your eyes to watch the amazing and magic surroundings, breathe Japanese air, and ... go fast if you like.

### WARNINGS

To understand the spirit of the Japanese Odyssey take a quick look in the dictionary for the definition of the word "odyssey". It is a long series of wanderings and adventures, filled with notable experiences and hardships. Entrants will go solo and unsupported across Japan, over a distance of about 2,600 kilometres. The Japanese Odyssey is ridden entirely at the entrants' own risks. Don't attempt this event unprepared, as no one will be there to rescue you. And stay always acutely conscious of your own limitations.

### TAKING PART IN THE JAPANESE ODYSSEY IS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. ENTRANTS TAKE PART AT THEIR OWN RISK.

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- There is no organization. There won't be any logistics support for emergency cases. It cannot be stressed enough that entrants will be on their own.
- They will have to be ready for a demanding adventure. They will endure days of consecutive 12 to 15 hours on the saddle.
- They will have to show real capacities in (not exhaustive) taking care of their bike, finding a place to sleep every night, handling the bad weather in mountainous areas, trying to understand road signs in a foreign country, and handling information in a foreign language...
- Entrants' participation in the Japanese Odyssey involves serious risks of accident that may cause (and it is not exhaustive): material damages, head or body injuries and even death from various causes including (but not limited to) over exertion, dehydration, cardiac arrest, slips, falls, accidents with others, or accidents caused by their own. Thus, we want every entrants to understand and to agree that one elects voluntary to take part in The Japanese Odyssey and assume all risks of lost, damage, injury and death that may be sustained.

We should not be liable for any death or personal injury suffered by an entrant arising from its participation in the Japanese Odyssey. They also agree to release us from and against any claims, demands, proceedings of any nature whatsoever which may be made by them or on their behalf in respect of any loss, damage, injury and death caused to them or their property as a result of their participation in the Japanese Odyssey.

### WE WANT EVERYONE TO GET BACK HOME SAFE, BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT SAFETY WILL BE YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSABILITY.

- 1. In Japan, ride on the left side of the road.
- It is a requirement that entrants obey all traffic regulations. On a bicycle you basically follow the same rule as a car. That means stopping at all stop signs and red lights, and yielding the right of way. Remember to use hand signals when turning, slowing down or stopping.
- 3. For your safety, and the safety of others, don't use your radios and mp3 while cycling.
- Cyclists must yield the right of way to pedestrians. Do not ride on sidewalks except on those with 'Pedestrians and Bicycles' signs.

- 5. Traffic in big cities and on major highways can be very heavy and dangerous, and wouldn't be pleasant. Wherever possible, try to avoid large cities and stay on smaller local roads, which are generally quieter.
- 6. It is your responsibility to have your bicycle well maintained.
- 7. It is your responsibility to carry all the necessary repair equipment.
- You will be going over mountain passes, remember that the weather can be very unpredictable. Don't forget to take with you warm clothes and sunscreen.

- 9. It is your responsibility to have enough water and food supplies with you.
- 10. Again. Mountains are a hostile environment where mutual aid and solidarity can be essential. For this reason we ask each entrant, if their place and the circumstance they are in allow, to make it their priority to go to help any other entrant in danger or in difficulty.

### **GROUND RULES**

Again, the Japanese Odyssey is NOT billed as a race. The intention is for a long distance unsupported adventure. Authenticity, equity, and respect for the other entrants and for the environment are the fundamental principles guiding the organisation of the Japanese Odyssey. Mountains are a hostile environment with weather conditions changing very fast. Mutual aid and solidarity can be essential. Thus, we emphasize the camaraderie spirit and allow entrants to ride together.

There is no organization. All that is provided is inspiration. However, we set some few rules in order to put on an enjoyable and safe adventure, and to ensure equal opportunity within the entrants.

- 1. Entrants must be over 18.
- 2. Follow the Japanese Road Code.
- 3. When riding, it is mandatory to wear a helmet.
- It is mandatory to have a front and a rear light. Check them regularly (as well as your brakes). At night, entrants are asked to wear high visibility (or reflective) gears and clothing: vest, jacket, bands, ....
- 5. Entrants must subscribe an insurance or agree to cover the cost of rescue in the event they need to be evacuated.

- 6. The guiding principle is: "On your own & Unsupported".
- 7. Entrants must carry their own gear. Posting stuff anywhere prior to the start is forbidden.
- 8. Entrants can ride together. They also can rely on each other for mechanical assistance and general support. (But, please no drafting).
- Private assistance is forbidden. That means entrants can eat, resupply, sleep or service their bike only at places also available to other entrants or at commercial shops along the route.
- 10. "Unplanned support" is allowed. Make sure you understand what "unplanned" means. If someone you don't know along the route is giving you something to drink, or helping you to fix something on your bike it is "unplanned" and OK. But pre-arranged outside support is forbidden. The difference is subtle.

The Japanese Odyssey is, by its nature, impractical to oversee and to police. So please, play by the rules. Be respectful to the others. Do not litter. And enjoy.

### LAUNCHING ON WEDNESDAY THE 31ST OF OCTOBER, YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS IN TOKYO.

## NEXT OF KIN

The "next of kin" procedure has first been brought in by Mike Hall on the TransContinental Race, and then has been adopted by many other bikepacking events. We have decided to introduce and to apply this year this procedure to make sure that in the case of a severe accident there would be a proper notification to the next of kin and relatives of the involved entrant.

The idea is to ask every entrant at the time of the registration to give us the name and the contact email address of their next of kin. What follows is the procedure brought in on the TCR.

"We will then contact them by email, and notify them that they have been designated as an entrant's next of kin, and point of contact. They will also be advised of some important details of the rider agreement which riders have signed, the responsibilities of the riders and the limited obligations of the Japanese Odyssey. We advise that riders discuss their entry into the event with their next of kin prior to the registration and that the next of kin understands that the rider knowingly is taking full responsibility for their ride and they won't be getting any assistance. Due to the nature of the event we cannot provide emergency rescue to riders. Our commitment is to notify next of kin as soon as possible once we are aware of an incident and provide them with as much information as we can. "

# TRAVELLING FROM TOKYO AIRPORTS TO DOWNTOWN TOKYO

#### Everyone knows Tokyo. But no one knows Tokyo.

Almost everything has been written about the city. It is the most populous metropolis in the world, with more than 37 millions inhabitants. It is urban and fast paced. And bullet trains are connecting the capital with the rest of the country.

But Tokyo has a lot more to offer. The city may be forever reaching into the future, but you still see traces of the past and of the Shogun's era. Tokyo is a modern city built on old patterns where you can find cobblestone lanes, older neigbourhoods and quiet and dark streets.

Tokyo has two airports: Narita Airport and Haneda Airport. Cycling from there to the city centre makes for one of the more unusual beginnings to a Tokyo trip. But it is an option only if you're up for the challenge after your long flight and the arrival process of getting through custom and immigration services. Indeed, be prepared for an exhausting and hectic ride. Haneda and Narita airports are approximately 25 and 75 kilometres from Tokyo downtown.

Otherwise, Japan Rail East's trains run between both Airports and major metropolitan stations including Tokyo, Shinagawa, Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro.

For more information including prices and timetables, please visit:

Tokyo Narita: www.jreast.co.jp/e/nex Tokyo Haneda: www.jreast.co.jp/e/haneda

# **RINKO BAGS**

Japan has an excellent rail network that allows travel to almost any place in the country in little time. But the rule is: bicycle must be covered in order to be taken on a train, a bus, or a subway.

The bike must meet standard luggage size requirements and if not in a bike box must be packed in a carry-on-bag, called rinko bags. Take both wheels off to pack your bike.



# SATELLITE TRACKING AND BLUE DOTS

# We will have a SPOT tracker leaderboard up for the event.

It has a main justification as it will offer the entrants safety and peace-of-mind by notifying their family and their friends their GPS position and letting them know that everything is fine. The technology is also intended to help us follow your route, check everyone goes through the mandatory check points, and to give a general overview of everyone's position.

# SPOT tracker use is mandatory for the 2018 edition. We will provide you with a rented tracker device as a part of your registration.

The device weights about 100g. You clip it to a carrier, and attach that carrier to your bike via a cable tie. Make sure the tracker has a clear view of the sky with its SPOT logo pointing upwards.

We will hand out the trackers during the preevent briefing. We will take time to have the use of the tracker demonstrated, and to make sure everyone is at ease with its operation. We will also turn on and test all the trackers.



The device is battery powered with 4 x AAA Lithium batteries. You won't need extra external power supply. We will provide the first set of batteries. They should last about 2 weeks. In case you need to replace your batteries, make sure they are the lithium batteries.

The entry fee covers the rent of the SPOT tracker (+ 4 AAA lithium batteries) and the cost of our supplier for the satellite tracking.

Note that there is a discount for those using their own device. We will set up an information form to collect their SPOT information (ESN number and shared page), in order to transmit them to our supplier.

### **ROUTE PLANNING**

One of the most challenging and fun part of your adventure, is planning your route at home ahead of the event. It will make your trip more efficient, and it will minimize your stress.

However, it is important to take into account two factors:

- Traffic in big cities, or on major highways can be dangerous. Wherever possible, try to avoid large cities, and stay on smaller local roads. It is also important that you plan a safe and good route leaving Tokyo.
- The succession of steep climbs can be very challenging. It is strongly recommended to check elevation profile of your route on websites, so you will be able to know how much elevation you can expect to gain or lose on a particular route.

You will start your adventure by mapping out your route on route-planning sites and/or apps. It will enable you to determine your daily starting and ending locations and to eliminate major highways or toll roads. This step will also help you researching where you can sleep each night. Switch to a street view to scope out the routes you plan to take, and to get important information ahead of the event about traffic and road conditions.

There is an incredible network of roads in Japan. Wherever you go, even once you get out of the cities and towns, there will be some great and soft routes, in perfect condition. They really do build roads everywhere. In the mountains, even if the area is barely inhabited, each small village needs it's road, as do the forestry industries based there. You will often find yourself alone on a small beautiful road. Most routes are numbered, with the number usually displayed on a road sign just after an intersection. You usually don't get lost easily. Blue and green colours will be your friend during your odyssey. Blue background road signs typically point you to national or prefecture roads (hexagon sign). The green background signs point you to the toll expressways and are not allowed by bike. Information on the signs are normally written in Japanese and English.

The stop sign is a red, downward pointing triangle. The warning signs designating situation you have to pay attention to are pattern on a yellow diamond.

One thing you have to take care of on Japanese roads are the speed bumps, road separators, and drainage ditches that can be fairly deep.

## **PRE-START BRIEFING**

We will hold a pre-start briefing in the afternoon of Tuesday, October 30. The exact location and time of meeting will be communicated later on.

It is an informal and friendly meeting. We will have the opportunity to meet and to get to know each other.

We will also hand out the trackers and take time to have their use demonstrated, and to make sure everyone is at ease with their operation.

Each entrant will be photographed by Eigo Shimonjo our photographer. It will also be your final opportunity to ask your burning and thorny questions.



## THE CONTROLS

### The 2018 Japanese Odyssey will start from Tokyo on October 31st. The time for the start is 06:30 AM. Entrants will have to ride back to Tokyo within a 10 days time limit.

If they want to complete the 2018 Japanese Odyssey, they'll have to go in the determined order through the 12 mandatory checkpoints (CP). CP 4 and CP 11 consist in mandatory segments. The roads leading to the CP haven't been fully tested.

Keep in mind that some portion may be wild, and that it could be touch and go with road conditions as landslides happen and roads get closed. Reaching those CP and then continuing your route will lead you on small, secluded and wild forest roads. Except for a few tiny portions of gravel, entrants will ride on sealed roads. But that doesn't necessarily mean a dream ride on a smooth tarmac. Indeed, rindo roads are often no longer maintained or repaired. Entrants might find used asphalt, poor surface, stones, branches and flying debris. Also, roads covered with moss are very slippery.

For those who intend to select and ride on larger gravel sections, make sure to use good and wide tyres as the Japanese use large grey flinty stuff for their sharp gravel. Again, our main concern is to have any of you getting back home safe after the event. Therefore we ask you to always consider safety first when making any decisions.

In-between those imposed CP entrants can take the route of their choice. Depending on the route choices, the adventure stretches over about 2,600 km.

#### Don't expect to find anything on top of the

**CP.** No premises, no rest house. Controls will in most cases just be an intersection, or the top of the intended hill, and they won't be staffed. Should you have an accident or a mechanical problem on the more remote CP, you are likely to be out of cell phone reach and few if any vehicles will pass.

## THE MAP

#### Here is the map with the 12 CP.

Most of them are situated in the inland part of Japan, which is pretty hilly and mountainous, and dominated by small agriculture and forest areas.

# Use this address to get the detailled version of the map

http://goo.gl/2gtM9q

#### Videhol profesecture Videhol profesecture

# START, COFFEE STOP, AND FINISH

### EVENT START: TOKYO

# Location: Nihonbashi Bridge 35.684°, 139.774°

The Nihonbashi Bridge was formerly a wooden bridge erected early in the 17th century, and was reconstructed in stone during the Meiji Period. Now the bridge stands obscured and overshadowed by an elevated expressway. But it remains the symbolic heart of the country. Indeed, the bronze plaque on the road in the middle of the bridge marks point zero, from which distances from and to Tokyo are measured.

It will also be the zero milestone of your odyssey. We will set off from the memorial (and replica) bronze plaque a few meters off the bridge on Wednesday, October 31, at 6:30 AM.

# CP: CROSS COFFEE by CHAMPION SYSTEM 35.64082, 139.52031

After only a few kilometres you will stop at CROSS COFFEE, the perfect spot for a quick coffee before a long day on the saddle. This brief stop is a little nod to our partner Champion System.

### FINISH: TOKYO

Your adventure ends where everything started a few days before. At the Nihonbashi Bridge. Congratulations, you made it.

### **CHECKPOINTS AND THEIR COORDINATES**

CP1: WADA PASS 35.65764° , 139.16831°

CP2: SHIRABISO PASS 35.43801°, 138.03003°

CP3: MOUNT AONEGAMINE 34.33478°, 135.82289°

CP4: KUMANO KODO Start: 33.75802°, 135.84036° Finish: 33.64477°, 135.80213°

CP5: KUMOSO 33.93389° , 134.32518°

CP6: OCHIAI PASS 33.91806° , 133.9477°

CP7: KOCHI WIND FARM 33.45536° , 133.12314°

CP8: 0D0RI PASS 35.23016° , 134.43749°

CP9: ONYU PASS 35.38686° , 135.79185°

CP10: TORIGOE PASS 35.53693° , 136.34438°

CP11: ARIMINE RINDO Start: 36.55467°, 137.3615° Finish: 36.41969°, 137.4399°

CP12: OBSERVATORY TSUKISHIGE 36.10635°, 138.64773°

We will send later on an email to the entrants identifying risky roads and gravel sections that they may encounter and may want to bypass.

# **RE-SUPPLY POINTS AND SLEEPING OUTDOORS**

It is impossible to starve in Japan. Konbini is the Japanese word for convenience stores. They are everywhere in Japan, and in medium and big cities are open all day round.

Konbini are a favourite stop for most cyclists. It is the cheapest way to eat in Japan. They are huge chains, so the uniformity means you can be sure of getting the same wide range of relatively healthy food and drink, plus lot of snacky crap.

They are offering a wide range of products and services. They will provide you with fresh and healthy items: salads, fruits(expensive), sandwiches, bento boxes (rice-vegetables-fish/ meat). With Guillaume we use to pay around 900-1000 yens each for a meal: drinks, sandwiches, sliced omelette, onigiri (rice ball made from white rice formed into triangular or cylinder shapes and often wrapped in seaweed), chocolate and some sweets,.... You also may use the konbini to do your banking, as your international card is mostly accepted on their ATMs. (We had the most success with 7-Eleven's. Lawson or Family Mart, not so much).

### SLEEPING OUTDOORS

You won't have any difficulties finding quiet places to put your sleeping bag or hammock.

You will find all long your route quiet cosy bus shelters. Public parks can be a good option as well. Make sure they are not too near from a residential area though.

### MICHI NO EKI

Michi no Eki are roadside stations. They are a government-designated rest area found along roads and highways in Japan. There are currently over 1,000 locations throughout Japan.

#### www.michi-no-eki.jp/stations/english

### **CAMPSITES AND YOUTH HOSTELS**

Camp sites are run by government or individuals, and they charge for some money (usually ¥200 to ¥500), but some of them are free. Here's a map of all free campsites:

#### mapmates.net/camp-zero/sumafo.html

### **OTHERS OPTIONS**

Minshuku (a room in a private house) and youth hostel are almost available in any medium size villages. But there is the bug of the reservation. In November with the peak autumn tourism season, it is strongly recommended to make a reservation on the morning. Allow ¥3,000 - ¥4,000 per night in a youth hostel.



Bus stops are plentiful, and make great shelters.

# THE END OF YOUR ODYSSEY

Congratulations. You made it back to Tokyo.

Any entrants making it to the Nihonbashi Bridge in Tokyo before Saturday 10th, November at noon will be considered as having completed the 2018 Japanese Odyssey.

We propose to meet and to gather with those of you who are still around on Saturday night. Nothing will be planned and arranged in advance, consider this rather as a casual opportunity to sit back, relax and to share your adventure or misadventures with your fellow entrants.

Note that the entrants reaching Tokyo during that improvised and sketched party, have first to get to the finish line on the Nihonbashi Bridge, and then only can join us.



## **ENTRY AND REGISTRATION**

Before you commit to enter, take a good look at this manual. Make sure to read with extreme care and attention the WARNINGS and GROUND RULES sections. And remember, the Japanese Odyssey is very challenging.

There is no requirement to have completed any other particular bike event to take part in the event. However, having previous participation in bike endurance events will give you helpful experience.

#### **REGISTRATION PROCESS**

Send us an email if you are on our side for this adventure, with the following information:

- 1. Family Name
- 2. First Name
- 3. Gender
- 4. Date of birth
- 5. E-mail address
- 6. Postal Address
- 7. Nationality
- 8. Will you rent a tracker or use your own device?
- Next of kin. Please specify first and last name and contact email address of your next of kin.

We will then email you back both an entry disclaimer attestation and the PayPal account number for the entry fee.

Sign and send back the entry disclaimer. Pay the registration fees. Your registration is confirmed.

Train. Hard. And... Be prepared.

You are required to be at least 18 years old to take part in the Japanese Odyssey.

You also need to be an experienced cyclist and you must be sufficiently trained to undertake this tough and demanding adventure.

You need to be resourceful, to be able to cope with the unknowns of the adventure, mechanicals problems and weather changes even if in a state of deep physical and mental fatigue. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit enough to complete the adventure, that you are in good health, and do not have any illness that will hinder your ability to complete the Japanese Odyssey.

It is also your responsibility to check and monitor your condition during the adventure and to withdraw if you are no longer fit to continue.

#### **ENTRY FEES**

The entry fee of 255 € for the 2018 Japanese Odyssey includes the rent of the tracker, the set up of the tracking leader board and the satellite tracking, the participation at the pre-event briefing and at the dinner in Tokyo on Tuesday Oct. 30, and the 2018 event's goodies.

For the entrants bringing their own tracker device, an entry fee of 190€ applies.

#### **CANCELLATION POLICY**

You are entitled to total refund if you cancel your registration before the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

There will be no refund for cancellations from the that date onwards.



# YOUR CONTACT

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