

Japan – Land of the Rising Sun

Tour Code JP

Japan is a land of innovation and ancient tradition, where Shinto shrines compete against the glittering towers of the modern age. On this comprehensive tour we see ancient gardens, sacred shrines and awe inspiring landscapes, and discover the cultural heritage of Japan on this exciting journey between Tokyo and Osaka. We visit the famous Kenroku-en garden and the traditional ochaya (tea) houses of Kanazawa, before exploring the imperial city of Kyoto with its many temples and shrines. We experience the sombre modern history of Hiroshima, then visit the picturesque island of Miyajima and the Torii gate, before ending the tour in the city of Osaka.



Magnificent views of Mt Fuji

ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly from London to Japan

Evening flight with Air France via Paris to Tokyo.

Day 2 Arrive Tokyo

Evening arrival and transfer to the Park hotel for four nights. Welcome dinner in a quality Japanese restaurant (D)

Day 3 In Tokyo

We start the day at Meiji Jingu, Tokyo's most famous shrine, dedicated to the spirit of the late Emperor Meiji. The shrine is a popular site for Japanese Weddings where a bride and groom dress in traditional *Shinto* wedding attire. We continue to new Tokyo as we then take a walk down Omotesando, commonly referred to as Tokyo's Champs-Elysee. This broad, tree lined avenue features a multitude of fashion flagship stores designed by internationally renowned architects within a short distance of each other. Later, we visit the Edo Museum, for a history of the city of Tokyo. Dinner in a quality Japanese restaurant (B,D)

Day 4 In Tokyo

We visit one of the world's largest fish markets, Tsukiji Fish Market handles over 2,000 tons of marine products per day before heading to the nearby Hama-Rikyu Teien, a former private garden of an *Edo* Period lord. We then have a chance to view Tokyo from a different angle as we take a boat cruise along the Sumida River to Asakusa. This afternoon we explore this area of Tokyo's *Shitamachi*, or old town. Asakusa is home to Sensoji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple, and also the city's oldest *Geisha* district. The streets around Sensoji have many traditional shops selling Japanese crafts and souvenirs and are a delight to wander in. Dinner in a quality restaurant (B,D)

Day 5 View Mt Fuji. Visit Hakone

We head by coach to Mt. Fuji and Hakone, this area and the surrounding national park has natural beauty in abundance and is encircled by several forested mountains, dramatically accented by deep glens and ravines. After buffet lunch, we take a cruise on Lake Ashi, formed by a volcanic eruption over 300,000 years ago. We then catch a cable car up Mt Komagatake for views of Mt Fuji. Dinner in a quality restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 6 Visit Matsumoto. Drive to Takayama

Today we will head north and head into the Japanese Alps, to visit Matsumoto Castle, one of the most complete and beautiful among Japan's original castles. It is a good example of a "hirajiro", a castle built on the plain rather than on a hill or mountain. The castle is also called Crow Castle because of its black walls and spreading wings. We make our way up the Roof of Japan to the mountain village of Takayama. Due to its previously inaccessible location nestled high in the mountainous Hida alpine region, the beautifully preserved old town of Takayama has developed its own unique culture. Two nights at the Hida hotel (B,D)

Day 7 In Takayama

We visit Miyagawa morning market, with stalls selling local crafts and produce and a good opportunity to try some of the region's delicious fruit and vegetables. We continue to Hida No Sato Folk Village, an open air museum exhibiting over 30 typical farmhouses plus other traditional buildings from the *Hida* region and a workshop illustrating some of Japan's handicrafts: wood carving, tie-dyeing, weaving, and lacquering. Later we proceed to the Festival Floats museum, displaying floats from the famous Takayama festival, or simply wander through the beautifully preserved old town. Dinner at local restaurant (Japanese style dinner) (B,D)

Day 8 Drive to Kanazawa. Visit Shirakawa-go

After a morning at leisure and lunch in Takayama we drive to Shirakawa-go; declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. Gassho-zukuri

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means "constructed like hands in prayer", as the farmhouses' steep thatched roofs resemble the hands of Buddhist monks pressed together in prayer. The architectural style developed over many generations and is designed to withstand the large amounts of heavy snow that falls in the region during winter. The roofs, made without nails, provided a large attic space used for cultivating silkworms. After this visit, we continue to Kanazawa, the center of Hokuriku Area for economy and culture. Overnight at Excel Tokyu Kanazawa hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 9 Visit Kanazawa. Drive to Kyoto

We visit Kanazawa; a beautifully preserved castle town that was once Japan's wealthiest, and with a thriving center for culture and arts. In Nagamachi Samurai district, Saihitsu-an Yuzen Silk offers demonstrations of the centuries-old Yuzen silk painting technique. Nomura Samurai House is a traditional Japanese home with tea-ceremony room, an interior courtyard garden and artifacts from the Edo period. The highlight of any visit to Kanazawa is Kenrokuen garden and the imposing Kanazawa Castle nearby. We continue to Kyoto, Japan's cultural capital by train. Kyoto is home to an astonishing 2000 Shrines and Temples, including 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Three nights at the Westin Miyako hotel with dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 10 In Kyoto

We start with a visit to Nijo Castle, built by the founder of the Edo; Shogunate, as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by stunning gardens. The main building was completed in 1603, and is famous for its Momoyama architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors. We continue on to Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion. Originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun, after his death it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples. Our next stop is Arashiyama, where we visit Tenryuji temple and walk through the bamboo forest. We take a rickshaw from Nomiya shrine to Togetsu bridge. Lunch at the temple and dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 11 In Kyoto

We depart for Fushimi Inari shrine by local train where we can walk under thousands of vermilion torii gates. We continue to visit Kiyomizu (Pure Water) Temple. From the 13m high veranda jutting out from the Main Hall we can enjoy amazing views of the whole of Kyoto, whilst pondering the fact that both the Main Hall and Veranda were built without the use of nails or any kind of joiners. We proceed for a typical Japanese Tea ceremony at a temple near Higashiyama and Gion district. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 12 Train to Hiroshima

Today we take the Shinkansen Bullet train to Hiroshima, about a 2 hour journey. Perhaps more than any other city in the world, Hiroshima is famous for one moment in history. On 6 August 1945, it became the first target of an atomic bomb. Hiroshima has rebuilt itself as one of Japan's most laid back, vibrant cities full of wide boulevards and museums, great food and friendly, welcoming people. We visit with the Hiroshima Peace Museum and Memorial Park in central Hiroshima. Two nights at the Sheraton hotel with dinner in the hotel (B,L,D)

Day 13 Visit Miyajima Island

We take the ferry to Miyajima, a small wooded island located in the Inland Sea, here you will find perhaps the most photographed site in Japan; The Floating Torii Gate. Itsukushima shrine that it belongs to, dates back to the 6th century and is designed in a pier-like structure, built partly on the water. We have time to explore the island and its many shrines and temples, walk in the beautiful forest and have the option to hike up or take a cable car to the peak of the island, Mt. Misen, to see spectacular views of the surrounding islands. Local restaurant dinner (B,D)

Day 14 Train to Osaka. City tour

Depart Hiroshima for Osaka by bullet train which will take you about 2hrs journey. Japan's third biggest city, what Osaka lacks in sightseeing draw cards it makes up for with its flamboyance, fun loving people, and amazing food. We depart for half day city tour of Osaka, including Osaka Castle, arguably Osaka's most famous landmark and views from the top floor of the surrounding gardens and city not to be missed. We continue the sightseeing with Sumiyoshi Taisha, one of Japan's oldest shinto-shrines, originally founded in the 3rd century. It offers an unique glimpse on the original shinto architecture. A farewell dinner has been arranged at a top quality restaurant (B,D)

Day 15 Depart Osaka. Fly to London

After a leisurely breakfast we transfer to Osaka International airport for our flight home with Air France via Paris arriving into London Heathrow in the evening (B)

Cost £3995.00 per person in a twin room (excluding international flights) Single supplement charge £675.00

Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Japanese guide for the duration of the tour
- ▶ All transportation by a/c bus, Bullet train, ferry and cable car
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Comfortable four star standard category tourist hotels.
- ▶ Breakfast and Dinner meals in hotel or local restaurants
- ▶ Airport transfers
- ▶ Bottled water daily
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, visa fees, alcoholic drinks, guide and driver gratuities, international flights are not included in the land tour cost (Air France flights from £715.00 through Flight Centre UK), (Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch, D Dinner)



Geisha, Tokyo