

JOURNEY TO THE EAST SMALL GROUP TOUR



TOUR DOSSIER 2018/2019

Journey to the East

Winter Cranes, Snow Festival, Ainu People, Drift Ice, Hokkaido Aurora & much more.....

Journey to the East is a 8 day discovery to the truly remote, undiscovered, hidden parts of Eastern Hokkaido. These vast national parks and lakes are home to the symbolic and majestic red crowned cranes, wild bears, red foxes and giant eagles. Enjoy coastal explorations searching for dolphins, whales and sea lions. Visit lakes set in ancient volcano calderas. Feed white tailed eagles in their natural habitat. Learn about the indigenous Ainu people and relax in open air hot spring baths. These are just some of the encounters you can expect on this incredible journey through Eastern Hokkaido.

START : TOKYO
FINISH : TOKYO / OSAKA



ROUTE

STARTS & ENDS IN
TOKYO OR OSAKA

Sapporo [2 nights]



Kushiro [1 night]



Lake Akan [2 nights]



Shiretoko [1 night]



Abashiri [1 nights]



Tokyo

GROUP SIZE: MIN 6 / MAX 16 **DURATION:** 7 Nights / 8 Days

SLEEP:

Category

3/4* western style hotels & traditional Japanese style ryokans

ESCORTED:

English speaking

Tour leader throughout with local guides in places

TOUR DATES:

2019

February 04 – 11

2020

February 03 - 10

*Pre & Post Self-guided tours can be arranged separately.
Consult with us for advice and assistance.*

Unique Japan Tours

54 Dawson Street, 3rd Floor, Dublin 2, Ireland

☎ IRELAND: 01 6787008 | UK: 020-3239-2519 | USA: 347-688-3952

URL: www.uniquejapantours.com SKYPE: uniquejapantours Email: info@uniquejapantours.com

Itinerary Summary

Itinerary in Brief

Accommodation & Meals

<p>DAY 1</p> <p>Flight from Tokyo to Sapporo</p> <p>Welcome dinner at local restaurant (please pay locally)</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Free time to enjoy Sapporo Snow Festival (Giant Ice Sculptures) for the evening and the next day Your tour leader will be ready to take you out!!</p>	
<p>DAY 2</p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Sapporo city tour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sapporo Odori Park • Sapporo TV Tower • Sapporo Clock Tower • Nijo Market <p>HIGHLIGHT: Sapporo Snow Festival</p>	<p><i>2 Nights</i></p> <p>Tokyu Hotel Sapporo (or similar 3/4*)</p> <p><i>Breakfast Daily</i></p>
<p>DAY 3</p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Train to Kushiro in eastern side of Hokkaido (4 hours)</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Kushiro Shitsugen</p>	<p><i>1Night</i></p> <p>ANA Crowne Plaza Kushiro (or similar 3/4*)</p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<p>DAY 4</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Sunrise with Tancho Cranes at Setsuri River ***Early departure***</p> <p>Transfer back to hotel for breakfast</p> <p>After break, Lake Kussharo & Mashu area sightseeing</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunayu – Swans • Mt. Iou • Tea Break (pay locally) • Lake Mashu <p>Enjoy dinner & onsen (hot spring) at your hotel</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Fireworks & Ainu Dance Show after dinner</p>	<p><i>2nights</i></p> <p>Lake Akan Tsuruga Wings <i>Japanese Style</i> (or similar)</p> <p><i>Breakfast & Dinner Daily</i></p>
<p>DAY 5</p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Marimo Boat Ride</p> <p>Free time for relax time in onsen</p> <p>Dinner at your hotel</p>	

<p>DAY 6</p>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel (Possibility of box breakfast ***Early departure***)</p> <p>Transfer to Shiretoko Peninsula</p> <p>Transfer to Rausu</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shiretoko Mt Rausu • Drift ice Walking or Snow Shoeing <p>Onsen at hotel</p>	<p><i>1 Night</i></p> <p>Shiretoko Daiichi Hotel <i>(or similar 3/4*)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<p>DAY 7</p>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Transfer to Abashiri</p> <p>HIGHLIGHT: Abashiri area sightseeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch at local restaurant (pay locally) • Lake Tofutsu • Abashiri Prison Museum • Abashiri Drift ice 	<p><i>1 Night</i></p> <p>Hokuten No Oka Lake Abashiri Tsuruga Resort <i>Japanese Style (or similar)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<p>DAY 8</p>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Transfer to Asahikawa or Sapporo Airport</p> <p>Flight from Asahikawa or Sapporo to Tokyo Haneda or any other domestic airport in Japan (consult with us before you plan your post tour journey)</p> <p>Optional add-ons available as a self-guided tour</p>	<p>Tour Ends</p>

Destination Highlights

◆ DAY 1 & 2: Sapporo

Sapporo Snow Festival - Introduction

We will hop on a short flight up to Hokkaido's capital city Sapporo. Experience one of the largest snow festivals in the world where giant snow sculptures, visited by some two millions people every year, line the streets of Sapporo day and night, waiting to wow you with their enormous impact and street festival feeling!



◆ DAY 3: Sapporo → Kushiro

Kushiro - Introduction

Bid farewell to Sapporo and travel eastward to Kushiro. Hokkaido's unspoilt natural beauty makes it a haven for outdoor lovers and nature and wildlife enthusiasts. Kushiro, which is well known as "the town of mist," is situated in the south-eastern part of Hokkaido, facing the Pacific Ocean. The marine products industry of Kushiro has flourished since the early 20th century, and the long and narrow city centring on Kushiro Port still retains many features of the streets of the early 20th century port town. Takuboku Ishikawa, a famous poet and novelist, lived in Kushiro during those days, so there is also a literary atmosphere to the city. Kushiro Tancho Nature Park is known as the site of the first successful artificial breeding of tancho cranes (Japanese cranes), which are designated as special natural monuments.



◆ DAY 4 & 5: Kushiro → Lake Akan

The Red-Crowned Crane – Profile

The red-crowned crane, or Tancho in Japanese, is an iconic creature and a symbol of good fortune, long life and loyalty. It is one of the largest east Asian cranes and one of the rarest cranes in the world. These birds - once revered and widespread throughout Japan - have endured tough times their numbers dwindling to such low levels they faced the threat of extinction only sixty years ago. Their protection and repopulation is a great success story of 21st century conservation in Japan. On the western side of the Kushiro Marsh lie Akan Town and Tsurui Village. These are two of the best observation spots for the Tancho cranes. Your tour leader will help introduce you to these beautiful birds here, taking you to the Akan International Crane Centre which was established in 1996 and is dedicated to research on the biology and behaviours of Japanese cranes and to helping preserve these majestic creatures. You will also visit the Tsurui-Ito Tancho Sanctuary established in 1987 by the Wild Bird Society of Japan with the aim of protecting the Red-crowned crane and their habitat.



◆ Lake Akan / Akan National Park – Introduction



The Setsuri-gawa River is where the Red-crowned cranes roost in winter and the nearby pastures are their feeding grounds. Rise early and seize this once in a lifetime opportunity to take in a spectacular northern sunrise in the company of the majestic Tancho Cranes at Setsuri-gawa River. Later, your tour leader will take you to explore the scenic Akan National Park and its many wonders. The beautiful caldera lake of Lake Kussharo has a circumference that runs 57 kilometres long, and dotted around its edges are several outdoor hot spring baths or onsen. Sunayu beach is another highlight, its sandy beach hiding hot spring water beneath. Scoop out some sand and soak your feet in the natural hot spring waters. The sulfur-filled Mt Iou rises 512 meters above sealevel and boasts over 1,500 volcanic craters. The

local specialty of steamed eggs heated over volcanic fumes are a must try. Finally, Lake Mashu is another of Akan National Park's stunning caldera lakes. Mashuko, as it is called, is considered one of the most beautiful lakes in Japan and is appreciated for its clear blue water. It is also famous for the heavy fog which frequently blankets it.

◆ DAY 6: Lake Akan → Shiretoko

Shiretoko Peninsula National Park – Introduction



Today you will explore one of the most remote regions in all of Japan, eastern Hokkaido's Shiretoko Peninsula. Shiretoko National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to huge variety of wildlife, including brown bears, deer, winter red foxes and eagles. Sightseeing boat cruises are a great way to take in the rugged coastline of the Shiretoko Peninsula. They also provide an excellent opportunity to see brown bears who often stalk the rocky beaches of the coast. You might also see sea animals such as dolphins, whales and sea lions.



Shiretoko Fantasia – Aurora Laser Lights

The Shiretoko Aurora Laser Light Show is a special night festival held to commemorate a spectacular and rare display of the Aurora 'Northern Lights' of over fifty years ago. The festival combines smoke and light and to simulate the aurora and is an entertaining way to spend the evening watching illuminated drift ice and crashing waves of the Okhotsk Sea.

◆ DAY 7: Shiretoko → Abashiri

Abashiri – Introduction

Nearby Abashiri is a city of 40,000 people, famous for its drift ice, prison museum, and Lake Tofutsu. Abashiri Prison was built in the late nineteenth century to hold especially dangerous criminals. The Abashiri Prison Museum provides a fascinating insight into the hard lives and difficult daily conditions that inmates faced. Lake Tofutsu's brackish waters contain a mixture of sea water and fresh water and its wetlands are home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. It is also home to a variety of wild birds like erne, grey heron, and whooper swans.



Abashiri Okhotsk Drift Ice Festival

During your time in Abashiri Drift Ice festival will be taking place. You will get the chance to do a boat ride on the Abashiri Lake.



◆ DAY 8: *Tour Ends*

Meet your tour leader in hotel lobby and travel together to the airport from where you will fly back to Tokyo. Your eight day small-group tour will end here in Tokyo but your Japan adventure can continue with our optional add-on allowing you to explore the ancient cultural capital of Kyoto and the beautiful coastal city of Kanazawa. If you wish to continue your adventure you can also sign up to “Hidden Treasures of Japan” small group tours which starts on this day.

What's included?

7 Night's Accommodation	Selection of Western 3/4* & Japanese style hotels
English Speaking tour leader throughout	English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout
Internal Flights	Domestic flights from Tokyo (Day 1) and back to Tokyo or any other one leg journey in Japan, e.g. Osaka (Day 8)
Private Guides in places	English speaking local guides
Entrance fees throughout	Into all sights included in itinerary
Meals	Breakfast daily & 2 Evening Meals
Transport	Internal transport by ferry/boat rides, flight, train, chartered vehicles

UJT's Additional **Services:**

Standard on all of our trips to Japan are the following services:

- ✓ Comprehensive tailor-made travel pack
- ✓ Local Emergency Contact
- ✓ All taxes and service charges
- ✓ Baggage Transfers where necessary

Not Included:

- Meals other than those detailed above
- International Flights
- Tour Guide / Driver Gratuity (optional)

"At UJT, our aim is to be open and honest with all of our travellers. We hate hidden costs so will tell you where and when you will need cash while on the go!"

Darina Slattery, UJT Owner/Manger

UJT's Essential **Travel Pack**

At Unique Japan Tours we aim to make your adventures in Japan run as smoothly as possible. To facilitate this we will provide a detailed Travel Pack, tailor-made for your specific trip including:

- ✓ Tips, hints and information covering subjects as diverse as transport, food, language and bathing etiquette!
- ✓ Detailed step-by-step itinerary including hotel names (in both English and Japanese – good to have for taxi drivers) and daily suggested itineraries with clear details on how to make this happen!
- ✓ Destination guides giving you up to date information on each place you visit.
- ✓ Local Area Maps, Vouchers, and Emergency contact details.

Any other information you have specifically requested from us.

Tour Price (per person)

Twin/Double	€3,250	£2,750	US\$3,865	AU\$5,000
Single Occupancy (guaranteed own room)	€3,650	£3,100	US\$4,365	AU\$5,750

*①If you are willing to share a room with same gender, there will be no single supplement. However, if we are unable to find a suitable room-mate, due to the high costs for single rooms in Japanese style hotels, we would ask you to pay 50% of the single supplement. You will be notified 6 weeks prior to the start date. ②Due to the unpredictability of currency exchange rates, we may be required to change the prices closer to tour dates. While this has not happened in the past, we would like to raise the rights to do so, if the currency moves +/- 5 yen from November 2018 rates. You will be notified of this change before paying your final balance (8 weeks prior).

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Top 5 Reasons to join a UJT Small Group Tour

1. 20 Years Experience 10 Years Planning Tours (2007 – 2017)



UJT's Founder, Darina Slattery, began her research 20 years ago while studying Japanese at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo. She has travelled the length and breadth of this fascinating country over these twenty years picking up ideas for creating unique itineraries, meeting local people to work with her team, sussing out the back streets of the larger cities and towns, and making sure her tours offer more than just 'seeing the sights', other tour companies will offer. This **invaluable knowledge**, combined with a team of talented Japan travel consultants, will ensure an incredible journey both at the planning stage, and while you're there!

2. A PERSONAL SERVICE & FAMILY FRIENDLY

Our work ethic is **family & customer focused**. Darina grew up in the hotel industry (family-run) where hospitality and service were key to its success. UJT prides itself on offering a **very personal service** from start to finish. So if you join our tour, you join our family - if the chance arises, come meet us face-to-face in Dublin, Ireland. We also offer tours to Ireland ☺

3. FULLY FLEXIBLE & TAILOR-MADE Pre & Post Tour Options

Some people feel like doing just a part of their trip in a small group, which is fine! We will assist you for any pre or post tour arrangements. So just tell us where else you would like to see (if it is not included in the itinerary of your chosen tour), and we'll make sure you get the best value and experience for your time in Japan.

4. JAPAN BASED Office & Tour Leaders



Our own Japan based sister company (**UJT Services G.K.**) based in Tokyo is ready to help/assist you on the ground offering peace of mind through every stage of your journey. We use our own contacts and book most of our services directly with the service provider. This cuts out any middle-man which can help us offer better value for you.

5. INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Our team are a mix of Japanese and International staff, all of whom have lived and worked in Japan for some time. We are passionate about Japan and know the country inside-out. Our local guides and tour leaders will inform, educate, and entertain you for the day, **travelling with a local, like a local!**

How to Book

Contact any of our Japan Travel Consultants to get started.....

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BOOKING DEPOSIT:

We ask for a €250/£200/US\$300/AU\$350 Booking Deposit to secure your place:

[Online Payment](https://www.uniquejapantours.com/online-payment/) (powered by stripe): <https://www.uniquejapantours.com/online-payment/>

NEXT STEP Get in Touch Unique Japan Tours

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JAPAN TRAVEL TIPS



CREDIT CARD / CASH

Only **Seven Bank** (found in 24 hour convenient stores and other locations), **Citibank** (24 hours, found in major cities only), **Shinsei Bank** or **Post Office ATM's** (normal business hours) will accept foreign credit cards for cash withdrawals - **Don't forget your PIN & to inform your card service provider that you are leaving your home country** - they sometimes put a security block on using cards overseas. It is advisable to bring as much cash as might you need or as much as possible - credit cards and Japan are not as advanced as you might think! Laser Cards are not accepted in most places. Never run low on cash when not in a city as you will find it tough to change currency at banks, or find an ATM suitable. We recommend a budget of €50 – €80 per day per person (when accommodation is already pre booked). If you are taking part in a small group escorted tour, this figure may be less, as your activities and places of interest will keep you busy hence less time to spend money.



SHINSEI BANK



ゆうちょ銀行



SEVEN BANK

citibank



LUGGAGE

Bring one suitcase weighing a recommended weight of 15 kg on your way to Japan. You'll add to this during your stay and the maximum weight allowance is 20 kg per person on most economy seats. Business class varies but is around 30 kg per person - however, we do not recommend you to carry 30 kg around with you. Without knowing it, you may need to carry this case upstairs, through stations, and so on. The lighter the case, the less energy wasted! Not only this, Japanese airports are very strict about weight and usually charge ¥3,000 per extra kilo. If you get caught at the airport with a hefty fine, use the Post Office Service to send by SAL. This takes from 1 week up to 6 weeks to be delivered. It's a lot cheaper than Air Freight.

"Takkyubin" is a postal service that delivers parcels, including suitcases, skis, etc. from anywhere, and to anywhere, within Japan. Distances that do not require a flight usually take less than one day. So if you send your bag from Tokyo in the morning it can sometimes be at your Kyoto hotel that evening or the following morning. If you are planning an overnight stay in the countryside (where few coin lockers exist), this service is highly recommended.



"Coin Lockers" - "コインロッカー" are found in most train stations (look for the sign). The bigger the station is the bigger the lockers are; i.e. lockers available for larger suitcases. Smaller rural stations may only have lockers suitable for light luggage. This option is safe and very convenient. It is not recommended to carry baggage when sightseeing, especially in cities. It will tire you out and get in the way. Cost per locker depends on the size and time ranging from ¥200 - ¥600 for up to 6 - 8 hours.

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CLOTHES

Check the climate and temperature before you leave and bring clothes to suit the season. Japanese weather is very predictable so it shouldn't be a problem planning your wardrobe. Japanese people dress very casually day and night - except in Tokyo where you won't know what to expect. Women dress quite modestly but very elegantly. Men are well dressed but if work is not involved, a suit is not worn. Unless you are travelling for a special occasion or on business, there's no need for men to bring a suit. Business travellers should bring smart, clean, neat suits with all the trimmings - if you want to impress.



TRAVEL ADAPTOR

If you plan to carry electronic devices it is advisable to carry a travel adaptor with you. Voltage in Japan is 120V (compared to 220V in Ireland, for example). Make sure your device has a built in transformer or you may burn it out.



SHOES & SOCKS

Bizarre as it may sound, clean socks are vital in Japan. You will be surprised at the number of unexpected times you have to take off your shoes to enter a room, even dressing rooms in clothes stores. Comfortable shoes are a necessity. Lots of walking involved - even if from hotel lobby to room.



MOBILE PHONES

A common mistake many travellers make is assuming your mobile phone will work in Japan. Until recently no carrier operated roaming in Japan but now, some phones *might* work (not all). It is recommended you contact your phone company before going. Note that roaming charges are extortionate. If you cannot be without, you can rent for a reasonable fee. Options will be available to you on arrival at the airport. It may be difficult to arrange this on your own in a city so we recommend you get this task done at the airport where they will also speak English.

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TIME

It is advisable not to go to MacDonald's 10 minutes before your train leaves - they won't wait. A common shock for many travelling to Japan for the first time is the punctuality of services, especially with the trains. If your train is due to leave at 11.11, you should aim to be at the station for 10.50. This gives you time to find which carriage you are supposed to be standing at (written on your ticket). The bullet train will arrive at 11.11 and leave 10 seconds later so there is really no time for wasting or rushing.



INTERNATIONAL CALLS

It is not cheap to call home and even more expensive from a hotel room. Your best option is to buy an International Call Card at a convenience store. You can use this from your hotel room or any pay phone that allows International calling (you will see a sign). ¥1,000 will buy you 15 minutes approximately to an Irish landline, for example. It is a lot more economical to call land lines than mobiles.

SKYPE

If you have a Skype account you can call your family for free (as long as your family have a Skype account on their own PC at home). This is the best way to call home. You can call mobile phones and landlines also for a much cheaper fee than a normal phone or call card. It is worth looking into before going to Japan, especially if you plan on bringing your laptop with you! If you do not have a laptop, you can use Skype from an internet cafe. Just bring your own headset with earphones and microphone. Talk for free! For more information visit: <http://www.skype.com/>




WI-FI

Wi-Fi service is improving throughout Japan. Many cafes now offer free Wi-Fi service, including Starbucks, and in most Tokyo underground/metro stations. There is also an option to hire a portable Wi-Fi router for around ¥1,000 per day at the airport. Some companies allow you to book online and have it delivered to your hotel. There is also a free app you can download which allows you to use Wi-Fi for free. For more information visit: <http://wi2.co.jp/tjw/welcome/english.html>

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LANGUAGE

Surprisingly, you will find little or no English once you leave the main cities (Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto etc.). For this reason it is advisable to carry a pocket phrase book, go on an escorted tour or consult with us before you leave for Japan. Advance planning will make your trip to Japan a lot more worthwhile and comfortable.



TOKYO TRANSPORT

If you do not have use of Japan Rail Pass and plan on being in Tokyo for more than a few days, we recommend you to buy a SUICA card*. This is similar to a pay as you go transport card, like the Leap card in Dublin or the Oyster card in London. You can purchase this at any JR office or alternatively from a ticket machine located beside the entrance to tracks. A small deposit is required to buy the card. Top it up as necessary. It can be used on all trains in Tokyo. Extremely handy and saves you time. Just swipe the card at the ticket gates. The gates will tell you how much each journey costs, and how much you have left on the card. For more information visit:

<http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/index.html>

*In some cases, your itinerary may state that your Private Tour Guide will provide you with your SUICA card.



VISAS, AIRPORT SECURITY & DOCUMENTATION

Passengers carrying an EU passport are exempt from obtaining a visa to enter Japan. You are not permitted to work as this is only a tourist visa. Visas can be validated for up to 6 months or less. For more information on Visas in Japan visit: http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/02.html

Since November 2007, security checks on entering an International Airport in Japan requires passengers to give their finger print and photo, kept on file and processed at the immigration area. You are not required to bring a photo with you. You will receive an immigration card to fill out (usually handed out on the aircraft before landing). This must be filled out and handed in to Immigration on arrival.

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BULLET TRAINS (*Shinkansen*) & JAPAN RAIL PASS

If you are travelling in Japan using the Japan Rail Pass, it is still advised to reserve seats prior to getting on the bullet trains. Advance booking is always recommended in Japan. During busy seasons trains can get quite full, even in reserved areas. If you do not reserve your seat, you could end up standing for most of your journey which is not necessary. Same goes for any long distance or special types of trains in Japan - reservations recommended. On our small group tours, your tour leader will arrange all of this for you so you don't have to worry.



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