

JAPAN
DISCOVERED
SMALL GROUP TOUR



TOUR DOSSIER 2017/2018

Japan Discovered

14 Days - SMALL GROUP TOUR

ROUTE

STARTS IN TOKYO /
ENDS IN TOKYO

Tokyo [2 nights]



Nagano
(Jigokudani)
[1 night]



Takayama
(via Matsumoto)
[2 nights]



Kyoto
(via Gokayama &
Kanazawa)
[3 nights]



**Hiroshima/
Miyajima Island**
[1 night]



Kawaguchiko
(Mt. Fuji)
[2 nights]



Tokyo [2 nights]

Group Size:

MIN 6 / MAX 16

Duration:

13 Nights / 14 days

Japan Discovered two week tour will glide you through the glittering cities, mountainous terrains, paddy field plains, spiritual temples, and hot spring sources using the worlds most hi-tech and efficient transport system (bullet trains, private vehicles, ferry rides & local trains). If this is your first time to Japan, all of your expectations will be met, plus more! We try to bring you places that are more challenging to do on your own. You will take part in various cultural activities such as an authentic tea ceremony in a traditional Kyoto tea house, soba noodle & washi paper making in the Unesco untouched Gokayama, farmhouse visits, Sake (rice-wine) distillery, remote ryokan stays, relaxation in therapeutic onsens (hot springs), Karaoke fun in Tokyo with the locals, and much much more!



ESCORTED:

English-Speaking

Tour Leader throughout with local guides meeting you in some places

SLEEP:

Combined

Superior 4* & Standard (3*) Western Hotels (11 Nights) & Superior Ryokans (3 nights) including hot springs & traditional kaiseki meals

PAY (per person):

Double/Triple	EUR4,300	GBP3,650	USD4,800	AUD6,510
Single	EUR5,285	GBP4,480	USD4,800	AUD8,000

TOUR DATES:

2017

Additional Seasonal Highlights:

- March 18 – 31 *'Sakura' Cherry Blossom Season*
- April 10 – 23 *'Sakura' Cherry Blossom Season & Takayama Festival*
- May 11 – 24 *Sumo Tournament Tokyo*
- Sep 07 – 20 *Sumo Tournament Tokyo*
- Oct 05 – 18 *Takayama Harvest Festival*
- Nov 26 – Dec 09 *'Kouyou' – Amazing Autumn Leaf Season*





Itinerary Summary

DAILY SCHEDULE		SLEEP
<p>DAY 1 (Tokyo)</p> <p>Arrive into one of Tokyo's International Airports (Haneda or Narita). Met by driver on arrival and transferred to your Tokyo hotel. You will have free time in Tokyo until tour orientation in the evening where you will meet your tour leader and the rest of the group. Meeting time is usually 6pm. Enjoy a welcome dinner at local izakaya (pay on the spot).</p>		
<p>DAY 2 (Tokyo)</p> <p>After breakfast, meet group in hotel lobby. Full Day Sightseeing in Tokyo with one of our local guide: Visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsukiji Fish Market & Outer Shopping Streets • Hamarikyu Garden • Sushi Lunch at well known Sushi restaurant (pay locally) • Asakusa Sensouji Temple & Shopping Street • Edo Museum <p><i>Sumo Stadium (May & Sep tours will include tickets to see a live Sumo Tournament!! All other tours will visit the stadium exterior on foot and hopefully catch a glimpse of Sumo Wrestlers!</i></p>		<p>Park Hotel (or similar)</p> <p>2 Nights</p>
<p>DAY 3 (Jigokudani)</p> <p>After breakfast, you will move to the nearest train station. Board the ever-efficient 'Shinkansen' (bullet train) to Nagano followed by a local bus to visit the Snow Monkey Park where you can watch the wild monkeys bath in the natural hot spring bath out in the open (Jigokudani). 1km mountain walk is essential here so if you have problems walking, inform us in advance. Tonight will be your first introduction to a traditional and typical Japanese style hotel known as a ryokan. Kaiseki Dinner & Hot Springs (onsen) are a real treat tonight!</p>		<p>Senjukaku Ryokan (or similar)</p> <p>1 Night</p> <p><i>Japanese style</i></p>
<p>DAY 4 (Matsumoto & Takayama)</p> <p>Japanese style breakfast at your ryokan. Move to Matsumoto for a visit to an original samurai castle. Again, climbing steps will be necessary here if you want to feel like the king of the warriors! If you're not up for climbing, you can explore the beautiful gardens that surround it. After lunch, we will continue our journey on to Takayama. The route we take is sure to take your breath away. River valleys and majestic mountains are at either side, giving you the chance to see the real rural Japan, often difficult to find when traveling along any shinkansen tracks!</p>		<p>Takayama Best Western (or similar)</p> <p>2 Nights</p>

DAILY SCHEDULE		SLEEP
<p>DAY 5 (Takayama)</p>	<p>Your local guide will meet you in the hotel lobby after breakfast. Together, you will explore Takayama on foot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takayama Morning Market • Kusakabe Folk Park • Takayama Yatai Kaikan (Festival Float Hall) • Takayama Jinya (preserved Government town hall) <p>You will have free time in the afternoon to walk through the streets by yourself, sampling the street food and local artisan shops. During festival tours (April & October) this itinerary will be subject to our guide's recommendations. The night-lights and entertainment during festival season brings great excitement to the tour. Highly recommended.</p>	<p>Takayama Best Western (or similar)</p> <p>2 Nights</p>
<p>DAY 6 (Gokayama & Kanazawa)</p>	<p>After breakfast, we will head north into Toyama prefecture stopping in Gokayama, recently awarded UNESCO world heritage status. Today will be filled with cultural experiences, unique to both Japan and this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washi paper making (take home your work of art) • Soba noodle making followed by lunch (you better concentrate and do your best as you will be sampling your own creations)!! • Wonder through the 400 year old farm house villages 'Gassho Zukkuri' of Suganuma • Enjoy a traditional dance performed by a local farmer over a hot cup of roasted tea sitting around the original fire burner! <p>After lunch, we will drive further north up to Kanazawa and visit one of Japan's top three gardens – Kenrokuen Garden. After a great fun filled day out, you will be ready to wind down on one of the luxurious express trains. This journey will be just over 2 hours to reach our next point of stay, Kyoto.</p> <p>Check into your accommodation and relax!</p>	<p>New Miyako Hotel, Daiwa Roynet Kyoto</p> <p>(or similar)</p>
<p>DAY 7 (Kyoto)</p>	<p>Our local Kyoto guide will meet you all after breakfast and show you Kyoto's best bits! Depending on the season will depend on where we visit. Especially during the cherry blossom season, many sights get very crowded. These uncomfortable places are usually avoided. Typically, our day in Kyoto includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nijo Castle • Kinkakuji Golden Pavillion • Kiyomizu Temple or Heian Shrine • Gion district for an authentic tea ceremony at local machiya with special guest – a real Kyoto Geisha! 	<p>3 Nights</p>
<p>DAY 8 (Kyoto)</p>	<p>A well deserved Day Off in Kyoto. Your tour leader will be able to assist you if you would like to go wondering however we recommend you take it easy today, so as not to tire yourself out too much!</p>	

DAILY SCHEDULE

SLEEP

DAY 9

(Miyajima Island & Hiroshima)

This morning we start at an usual earlier time of 7.30am in order to catch the best shinkansen train to our next stop, Hiroshima! Just a swift two-hour journey on the speedy shinkansen, once you find your seat, we promise you can sleep again. These trains offer first class comforts, not like any train you have been on in the western world. Just briefly stopping in Hiroshima, we will continue on to Miyajima Island, another UNESCO World Heritage hot spot! Here, we will visit the impressive Itsukushima Shrine that floats so peacefully on the water along with the giant Torii Gates. Free time for shopping is included here.

Return to Hiroshima after lunch. For people who opt out of visiting the Peace Park (not everyone is up for this), you can have free time. Otherwise, follow your guide and listen to the story of how this humble city has rebuilt itself after the devastating A-Bomb blast of WWII. Emotions and perspectives might move slightly here but we guarantee you will listen with pure interest and curiosity.

Hotel Century 21 Hiroshima or Hotel New Hiroden

(or similar)

1 Night

DAY 10

(Lake Kawaguchi at Mt Fuji)

After breakfast, we move again by bullet train right back to nearer the starting point, but this time, diverting inwards to a lake side room at the foot of Mt Fuji. Kawaguchiko is one of Fuji's Five lakes. We will base our selves in a ryokan, probably one with a different style to your first ryokan experience in Nagano. We spend two nights here with nothing but free time to allow you unwind and do your own thing. Or, if you prefer to have company, you can follow the footsteps of your tour leader, for a pleasant day out taking in a lake cruise and ropeway ride.

Both nights will include dinner at your hotel and full use of the hot spring baths.

Kukuna Ryokan (or similar)

2 Nights

DAY 11

(Lake Kawaguchi at Mt Fuji)

Kawaguchiko Free Day

Dinner & Hot Springs (onsen) at your ryokan.

Japanese style

DAY 12

(Tokyo)

After breakfast, we head back to the capital Tokyo. You will have free time today with plenty of options on your door step.

DAY 13

(Tokyo)

Our final day in Tokyo can be spent in two ways:

1. With your tour leader seeing a few more of the must see sights:
 - Meiji Jingu Shrine at Yoyogi Park
 - Harajuku & Omotesando Walking & People Watching
 - Shibuya Walking / Shopping
2. Take a day off from the group and explore Tokyo, or Kamakura, or Yokohama on your own. Your tour leader will be more than happy to oblige in helping you make your plan in advance.

No matter which option above you choose, a farewell dinner will be arranged by your tour leader with option to continue the night out at a local Karaoke Bar & local style pub!

Shinagawa Prince Hotel (or similar)

3 Nights

DAY 14

(Tokyo)

Tour ends the next morning after breakfast.

Tour Highlights

TOKYO

One quarter of all Japanese live in Tokyo or the near vicinity and with a population of over 12 million inhabitants, Tokyo is one of the largest cities in the world. With its huge skyscrapers, underpasses, overpasses and crowds of pedestrians, Tokyo may not seem the most attractive city on the surface, but the city has a vibrant charm all of its own. The street level detail is what makes Tokyo such an incredibly interesting place to explore and at every turn you will be met with an array of sights, sounds and smells to enliven the senses. The city has many major sights to visit such as Senso-ji Temple in the old downtown area of Asakusa or the fashion hub of Shibuya from where all new trends are said to emanate. All in all a stay in Tokyo is to experience one of the world's most vibrant and interesting cities; a capital hurtling headlong into the future whilst maintaining its links with the traditions of ancient Japan.



KANBAYASHI, Nagano

After the hustle and bustle of Tokyo, you will move onto a rural village less than one hour by train and bus from Nagano city to a tiny place called Kanbayashi or Yudanaka Onsen in Nagano prefecture. This is home to the well documented 'Snow Monkey's - the wild monkeys that live up in the mountains but come down in the cold to get warm and fed, at a natural open-air hot spring bath out in the open. Here you will stay in a beautiful local ryokan.



MATSUMOTO

Matsumoto is an alpine city surrounded on all sides by the towering peaks of the Japan Alps and has an almost European feel to it. The city is most famous for its original castle which is only a short distance from the station. This is one of the only original castles in Japan and really gives you a sense of ancient Japan and how the samurai used to live and fight. The city also boasts a number of sake breweries, hidden in the backstreets amongst the traditional buildings, a good museum of Ukiyoe woodblock prints, and is the home of soba noodles, the local speciality which is particularly delicious. You can also try some of the city's other local delicacy - raw horse! The city has a really relaxed atmosphere and a cosmopolitan feel befitting of a city renowned for its musicians and authors. The famous violin teacher, Suzuki (of the Suzuki method) originated from Matsumoto and you will find a commemorative statue on the street opposite the station.



TAKAYAMA

After your brief visit to Matsumoto Castle you will move onto Takayama. Mountains in Japan were once believed to be the sacred dwelling places of divine spirits and the Hida, Kiso and Akaishi ranges of Mountains, known collectively as the Japan Alps, rise majestically in northern Honshu. Takayama, in the heart of the Hida Mountains is a delightful town, established in the 16th century as the castle town of the Kanamori family and now famous throughout Japan for its old town area of narrow streets containing many well-preserved inns, tea houses, shops and merchants houses with the latticed windows and overhanging roofs characteristic of the Edo period. The town was also renowned throughout the Edo era (1603-1868) for the very high quality of its craftsmen. Indeed, many of the temples in Kyoto were built by workers from Takayama. A walk through the morning market on the bank of the Miyagawa River is a nice introduction to meeting locals and seeing stands selling local farm produce, flowers and crafts. There are also some great micro sake breweries affording the chance to sample the wares of Takayama's most famous product! A stay in Takayama is a chance to get a feel for a way of life that really has all but disappeared from modern Japan.



GOKAYAMA

Gokayama is nestled along the deep gorge of Sho River. 33 'gassho-zukuri' (thatched farm houses) have been preserved in the historic villages of Taira and Ainokura. Your day to Gokayama will enable you to experience a variety of deep cultural activities, some of which include:

- ❖ Washi paper making at a local factory
- ❖ Soba Noodle making at a local restaurant (where you will eat your own noodles for lunch)
- ❖ Toyama (prefecture name) dance by a local farmer in one of the old thatched farmhouses (gassho zukkuri)



KANAZAWA

Kanazawa is a lovely small city close to the Japan sea coast. Until the turn of the century it was the 4th biggest city in Japan. However its wealth was built on rice production and traditional crafts such as weaving and gold leaf and with the full scale industrialisation of the country Kanazawa was somewhat left behind. Today the city is flourishing again and still maintains a lot of its old charms. There are several small geisha districts and one where you can go inside an old tea house and see where the clients were entertained and even take tea yourself (sadly no longer served by geisha!). There are also samurai house and the city's most famous sight, the beautiful Kenrokuen garden rated as one of the three best stroll gardens in the whole of Japan.



KYOTO

Oozing with tradition, Kyoto is the ultimate destination for anybody who wants to soak up time-honoured Japanese culture. Home to a number of UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, this ancient city showcases the heart and soul of traditional Japan. Kyoto boasts an array of world-class gardens, majestic festivals and delicate cuisine, all of which make much of the rhythms of nature and the changing of the seasons. On first glance however, visitors will see that like any large Japanese city, grid-like Kyoto has its fair share of neon and concrete. But the discerning eye will soon pick out Kyoto's treasures: sacred shrines tucked in among shopping arcades, time-honoured teahouses nestling among modern businesses and mysterious geisha scuttling down backstreets among the tourists and souvenirs. Kyoto's charm lies in these details and whether you're here for three days or three years, the closer you look, the more you'll discover.

Your day trip in Kyoto will take in some of the most spectacular sights: Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavillion), Kiyomizu Temple, Gion district including an authentic tea ceremony at local machiya. Each individually as interesting as each other but the beauty of this day is that you will hear the full story that comes with Kyoto and its ancient historical past.

KYOTO - Free Day

You will have a full day off from touring giving you the opportunity to either take a break from it all and/or go see the sights in Kyoto that you really want to see. Your tour leader will be available in the morning to help you orientate your day. If you need ideas, he/she will also be there to fill your day with other Kyoto highlights such as the Philosophers Walk or Arashiyama Bamboo Forest.



HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima is a city that needs little introduction. It is of course famous for being the site of one of two atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of the Second World War. Despite its tragic past, Hiroshima is now a bustling and vibrant city which has risen phoenix-like from the ashes. The Peace Park and Museum are a poignant reminder of the reason for Hiroshima's fame and everyone should spend an afternoon in this part of town. Other attractions in Hiroshima include Hiroshima Castle and the baseball stadium.



The Shukkei-en garden is well worth an afternoon stroll with a number of tea houses dotted about the grounds. The Hiroshima Prefectural Museum of Art contains some wonderful paintings by both Japanese and Western artists. There is also the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art which has many pieces inspired by the 1945 bombing. There are also some great views of the city from here. The local food is okonomiyaki, a kind of Japanese savoury pancake. You choose the ingredients and then cook the pancake yourself at your table.

MIYAJIMA ISLAND

Miyajima Island, located just off the coast of Hiroshima, is one of Japan's most loved places with a charming rural atmosphere to match the beautiful surroundings. The island is perhaps best known for the red torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine which appears to be floating in the sea. In the evening this gate and the shrine behind it (as well as other traditional buildings in the area) are floodlit and the atmosphere is magical. A cable car takes you to fantastic views across the Inland Sea from Mount Misen, the highest point of the island.



There are many pleasant walks on Miyajima among the temples and along the bustling shopping street in the island's small village. You may also see some of the island's native fauna; the sacred deer are easy to spot as they roam freely, but you'll have to work a little harder to spot any of the resident monkey population; keep your eyes peeled! Miyajima is a wonderful place to slow down, unwind and relax, so take your time and let the magic of this island enchant you!

KAWAGUCHIKO



Lake Kawaguchi is the most easily accessible of the Fuji Five Lakes. It is located in Kawaguchiko Town, a hot spring resort named after the lake. The main draw to this area are the amazing views of Mount Fuji. From Kawaguchiko you can sit back and relax in one of the many hot spring baths gazing up at its near symmetrical form or if you want to get even closer then there are regular buses up to the fifth station. In the summer months this is the ideal base for climbing Mount Fuji and the start of the traditional pilgrimage route.



Tour Ends

Japan Discovered ends after breakfast. You will be provided with airport limousine bus tickets to get you to Narita Airport which depart from Shinjuku (area you are staying) frequently.



What's included?

Date	Service
Accommodation	9 Nights Western (3 & 4 star), 3 Nights Superior Ryokan with hot springs & Kaiseki dinner (total 13 nights)
English Speaking tour leader	English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout your journey
Airport Transfers	Arrival & departure airport transfers included to & from Tokyo hotel
Private Tour Guides	Local English speaking tour guides in Tokyo, Kyoto, Takayama, and Hiroshima & Miyajima Island
Entrance Fees	Included Into all sights listed on itinerary
Cultural Experiences	Tokyo Fish Market, Karaoke Bar, Izakaya Dining Out, Tea Ceremony in traditional tea house featuring Kyoto geisha, World Heritage Temples and Shrines in Kyoto, Bullet train journeys, Japanese Garden, Washi Paper Making, Soba Noodle Making, Local Toyama Dance, Takayama Festival (April & October tours only), Snow Monkey Park, Samurai Castle in Matsumoto, Tokyo Sights by Day & Night!! Sumo Tournament Tickets (May & September tours only).
Meals	Breakfast daily, 1 lunch, 3 evening meals

Other Inclusions:

- Comprehensive Travel Pack
- Local Emergency Contact
- All Taxes & Accommodation Surcharges
- Fixed Price Policy
- Minimum 6 / maximum 16 people
- No hidden Costs!!

This package does not include:

- International Flights [*Arrange own flights into and out of Tokyo's Haneda or Narita Airports – Always check the arrival date on your flight e.g. if flying from Europe/US, you will arrive into Tokyo the following day (depending on airline you use)*]
- Meals other than those specified in itinerary
- Beverages consumed at any meal (*Water served freely*)
- Baggage Handling (*You are requested to carry your own bags so be careful when packing! Your tour leader will help you arrange luggage forwarding on some journeys by the reliable 'Takkyubin Service'*)
- Tour Leader Or Driver Gratuity – *can be arranged among your group (Optional)*



How to Book

Contact one of our Japan Small Group Tour Experts
[Ref. **JPD Small Group Tour**]
to get set up with your own online travel portal:

[ONLINE – Booking form](#)

Email: tours@uniquejapantours.com

Call IRL: +353 1 6787008 / **Call UK:** +44 20 3239 2519