

JOURNEY  
TO THE EAST  
SMALL GROUP TOUR



**TOUR DOSSIER**



## TOUR DOSSIER

# Journey to the East



*“Welcome to the start of your Unique Japan Journey!”*



*Our team are really looking forward to planning your trip to Japan. If you have any questions, at any time, feel free to get in touch”.*

**Please quote the following reference when contacting us:**

## **JOURNEY TO THE EAST**

**We can be reached on any of these numbers:**



**IRL:** +353 (0)1 6787008 (9am – 5.30pm)

**UK:** +44 (0)20-3239-2519 (9am – 5.30pm)

**USA:** +1 347-688-3952 (8am – 3pm)

**Email:** [info@uniquejapantours.com](mailto:info@uniquejapantours.com)

As a result of the **Covid-19 Pandemic**, changes in accordance with WHO guidelines and advice will be implemented on all of our tours. Full updates will be sent to you in advance and can be viewed online: [uniquejapantours.com](http://uniquejapantours.com)

### Unique Japan Tours

IRELAND: +353 (0)1 6787008 | UK: +44 (0)20-3239-2519 | USA: +1 (347) 688-3952  
Skype: uniquejapantours / Website: [www.uniquejapantours.com](http://www.uniquejapantours.com) / Email: [info@uniquejapantours.com](mailto:info@uniquejapantours.com)



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## Journey to the East



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## 1. Why Choose Unique Japan Tours?

### 1. FULLY BONDED – FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Unique Japan Tours is a member of Total Payment Protection who fully guarantee and protect financial transactions between you and Unique Japan Tours. Your tour is fully protected no matter what country you are paying from. Full details of this will be clearly explained in our terms and conditions.



### 2. Small Groups with NO MINIMUM NUMBER POLICY

Our groups have always been intimate in size. We prefer quality over quantity. For that reason, our average group size averages at 8-12 people (maximum 16 guaranteed). Since our tours started in 2007, and unlike many other operators out there, we have never cancelled a tour because of insufficient numbers. If we get less than the minimum number to run a tour (currently set at 6 people), don't worry. We have years of experience designing a semi-escorted version of the same tour. The only difference to you will be instead of having a full-time tour leader throughout, you will be met on arrival at each destination by local guides and assistants - almost like your own private tour!! [See Inclusions on Page 14]

### 3. Local Team with 24/7 Emergency Helpline

Our local company UJT Services G.K. [also owned by Unique Japan Tours], will oversee all operations of your trip from start to finish. Our team in Tokyo are busy working behind the scenes ensuring each tour runs smoothly, in real time! So, rest assured, no matter what your problem may be, we will be with you all the way. While on our small group tours, your tour leader &/or local guides will be your key contacts for any emergencies.



### 4. 22 Years Experience in Japan

Our founder, Darina Slattery, first visited Japan in 1998, where she studied at Tokyo's Meiji Gakuin University. Today, she leads a team of Japan travel experts, working with hundreds of local suppliers in Japan directly, and selling tours to Japan globally. This **invaluable knowledge and vast network of connections** has resulted us being able to create the most amazing itineraries for people. All our tours are tried and tested ensuring our clients gain time, memories, & savings while on your trip.



### 5. OUR CREW – JAPAN TRAVEL EXPERTS

Our work ethic is **family & customer focused**. We are a team of 15 Japan travel experts located in Tokyo, London & Dublin. Our clients come from all over the world so you can expect diversity in the group which always adds a bit of colour!

Let's *Zoom/Skype/Chat* our way to finding you the best tour that suits you and your travel partners. We find speaking to you in person will save everyone time while ensuring you get the best tour suitable for you.







# Journey to the East

## 2. Tour Route & Departure Dates

**Duration: 7 Nights / 8 Days**

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

Journey to the East is an 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.

<b>Start: Sapporo - Finish Abashiri</b>		
Duration: 7 Nights / 8 Days	Ryokan: 3 nights	
Theme: Photography, Wildlife, Nature, Culture		
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Age: All Ages	
Style: Standard/ Superior	Total Level: ★★★★★	

**ROUTE:** Sapporo (2) ⇄ Kushiro (1) ⇄ Lake Akan (2) ⇄ Shiretoko Peninsula (1) ⇄ Abashiri (1)

### TOUR DATES:

- **February 3 - 10, 2021**
- **February 8 - 15, 2022**

*Alternative dates can be arranged but may not include the snow festival in Sapporo.*





# TOUR DOSSIER

## Journey to the East



### 3. Tour Itinerary

Itinerary in Brief	Accommodation & Meals
<p><b>DAY 1</b></p> <p>Arrival at Sapporo</p> <p>Welcome dinner at local restaurant (please pay locally)</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Free time to enjoy Sapporo Snow Festival (Ice Sculptures) for the evening and the next day Your tour leader will be ready to take you out!!</p>	<p><i>2 Nights</i></p> <p><b>ANA Crowne Plaza Sapporo</b> <i>(or similar 3/4*)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast Daily</i></p>
<p><b>DAY 2</b></p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Sapporo city tour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sapporo Odori Park</li> <li>• Sapporo TV Tower</li> <li>• Sapporo Clock Tower</li> <li>• Nijo Market</li> </ul> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Sapporo Snow Festival</p>	
<p><b>DAY 3</b></p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Express Train to Kushiro in eastern side of Hokkaido (4 hours)</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Kushiro Marsh Observatory</p>	<p><i>1Night</i></p> <p><b>ANA Crowne Plaza Kushiro</b> <i>(or similar 3/4*)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<p><b>DAY 4</b></p> <p>(Possibility of box breakfast ***Early departure***)</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Sunrise with Tancho Cranes at Setsuri River</p> <p>Break for packed breakfast After break, transfer to Lake Akan area</p> <p>Lake Akan area sightseeing</p> <p>Enjoy dinner &amp; onsen (hot spring) at your hotel</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Fireworks &amp; Ainu Dance Show after dinner</p>	<p><i>2nights</i></p> <p><b>Akan-ko Tsuruga Wings</b> <i>Japanese Style</i> <i>(or similar)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast &amp; Dinner Daily</i></p>
<p><b>DAY 5</b></p> <p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Lake Kussharo &amp; Lake Mashu area sightseeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunayu – Swans</li> <li>• Mt. Iou</li> <li>• Tea Break (pay locally) at view point of</li> </ul>	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lake Mashu</li> </ul> <p>Free time for relax time in onsen</p> <p>Enjoy dinner &amp; onsen (hot spring) at your hotel</p>	
<b>DAY 6</b>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel (Possibility of box breakfast ***Early departure***)</p> <p>Transfer to Shiretoko Peninsula</p> <p>Transfer to Rausu</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shiretoko Mt Rausu Shiretoko Winter Boat Cruise, Snow Shoeing or Drift-Ice Walking</li> </ul> <p>Enjoy dinner &amp; onsen (hot spring) at your hotel</p>	<p><i>1 Night</i></p> <p><b>Shiretoko Daiichi Hotel</b> <i>(or similar 3/4*)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<b>DAY 7</b>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Transfer to Abashiri</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT:</b> Abashiri area sightseeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abashiri Prison Museum</li> <li>Abashiri Drift Ice Cruise (Subject to Weather Conditions)</li> <li>Abashiri Drift ice festival</li> </ul>	<p><i>1 Night</i></p> <p><b>Hokuten No Oka Lake Abashiri Tsuruga Resort</b> <i>Japanese Style (or similar)</i></p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p>
<b>DAY 8</b>	<p>Breakfast at your hotel</p> <p>Transfer to Memambetsu Airport</p> <p>Flight from Memambetsu airport to Tokyo Haneda or any other domestic airport in Japan (Direct flights may be limited so 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>

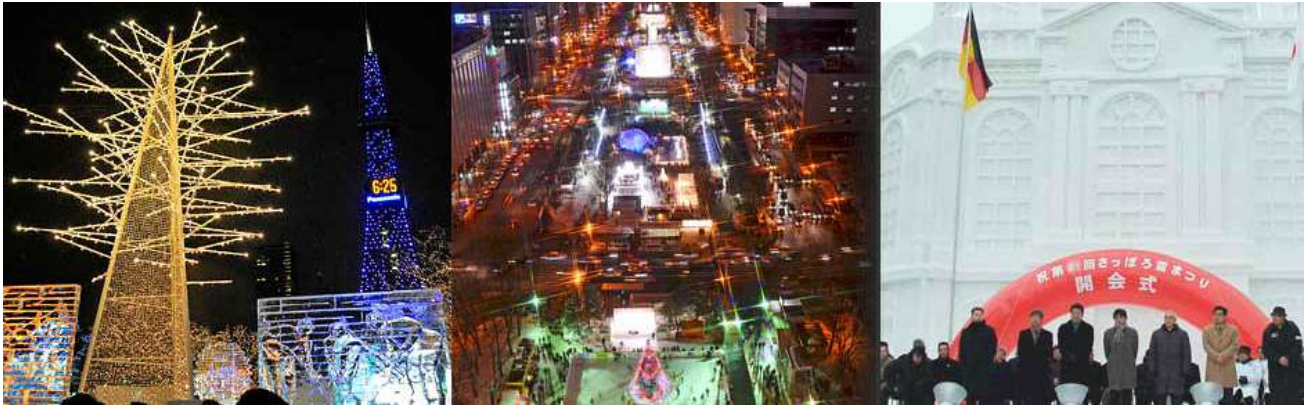


## 4. Destination Highlights

### ◆ DAY 1 & 2: Sapporo

#### Sapporo Snow Festival

In 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

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.







# Journey to the East

## ◆ DAY 4 & 5: Kushiro → Lake Akan

### The Red-Crowned Crane

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 National Park

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.



### ◆ Japan's Indigenous Ainu People

The earliest settlers of Hokkaido were called Ainu, worshippers of the sacred animal, their deity which they believe continues the good fortune of their community. The Ainu have long been of interest to anthropologists because of their cultural, linguistic and physical identity, but most tourists will not have heard of them. The main reason being they were cut off from Japanese society and treated differently by the majority. However, in April 2019, they were legally recognised as an indigenous people of Japan by the Japanese government which has resulted in more positive appreciation of Ainu culture, language and heritage.





◆ DAY 6: Lake Akan → Shiretoko

## Shiretoko Peninsula National Park



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.



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### ◆ DAY 7: Shiretoko → Abashiri

#### Abashiri

Nearby Abashiri is a city of 40,000 people, famous for its drift ice, prison museum. 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. If the weather permits, you will get the chance to do Drift Ice Cruise out to Sea of Okhotsk - A variety of wild animals can be seen with the coming of drift ice season so enjoy your adventure !



#### Abashiri Okhotsk Drift Ice Festival

Spectacular Drift Ice  
experience in Abashiri,  
boat ride on the Abashiri  
Lake.

### ◆ DAY 8: Tour Ends

Today you will travel to the airport from where you will fly back to Tokyo. Your eight day small-group tour will end here in Momambetsu airport 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.





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### 5. Tour Prices & Inclusions

#### Prices:

<b>Twin/Double Sharing:</b>	€2,800		£2,400		US\$3,150		AU\$4,600
<b>Single Room Throughout:</b>	€3,580		£3,100		US\$3,400		AU\$5,900

Prices are per person. All prices are subject to change in line with exchange rate fluctuations. Check website [www.uniquejapantours.com](http://www.uniquejapantours.com) for up-to-date guaranteed prices.

Once deposit is paid, your tour price is fixed. [Book Now.](#)

#### Inclusions:

<b>Hotels &amp; Ryokans (7 nights)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 7 nights in 4* western style hotels &amp; superior Japanese ryokans</li> <li>*You will be sleeping on futon bedding in tatami matted rooms on 3 nights, an authentic Japanese experience. If you require a bed for health reasons, let us know early.</li> </ul>
<b>Fully Escorted (6 – 16):</b>	You will be escorted by our friendly English- speaking tour leader who will travel with you from Day 1 to 8.
<b>Semi Escorted (1 - 5):</b>	You will be met in each area by our local assistants and guides on days you don't have private guides.
<b>Meals:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Welcome Dinner at local izakaya on Day 1</li> <li>✓ Breakfast daily</li> <li>✓ 3 evening meals at your ryokans (taste the seasonal local produce from each region where you stay)</li> </ul>
<b>Private Tour Guides:</b>	Whether you're on a fully escorted or a semi escorted tour, you will be met on 4 days by our local guides in: Sapporo, Kushiro, Lake Akan, Abashiri
<b>Getting Around:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reserved Seats on all long-distance trains</li> <li>✓ 1 Luggage transfer when using express train(one bag per person)</li> <li>✓ Chartered vehicles, local taxis/minivans/coaches on private city tours</li> <li>✓ Arrival &amp; Departure Airport transfers to &amp; from hotel</li> </ul>
<b>Entrance Fees:</b>	Included into all sights listed on itinerary
<b>Cultural Experiences:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sapporo Snow Festival &amp; sightseeing</li> </ul>





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- ✓ Endangered Red-Crowned Crane Sanctuary and viewing spot
- ✓ Overnight stays in traditional ryokans with hot spring baths
- ✓ Shiretoko Snow Shoe Experience
- ✓ Sightseeing at Lake Akan / Lake Kussharo / Lake Mashu
- ✓ Indigenous Ainu Culture Show
- ✓ Abashiri Drift-Ice Cruise (subject to drift-ice conditions)
- ✓ Abashiri Drifrt Ice Festival
- ✓ Abashiri prison museum
- ✓ Amazing scenic drives, and more.

### 6. What about our luggage?

If you are continuing your travels on the mainland (Tokyo/Kyoto etc), we recommend you carry a smaller bag up to Hokkaido and send your large bag to your hotel in your post tour location. The service in Japan to send bags is excelled. Consult with us before you make this plan. Eitherway, don't forget Hokkaido in February will be cold, especially in Eastern Hokkaido. Hats, gloves, warm jackets/down with extra fleeces underneath, thermal layers are recommended. Each passenger will be required to carry your own bags at all times. Tour leaders will not be responsible for bags. Some hotels will have porter service but not all.



# Journey to the East

## 7. Complimentary Services

### UJT's Additional **Services:**

- ✓ Unique Japan Tours Travel Consultant
- ✓ Comprehensive tailor-made travel pack
- ✓ Local Emergency Contact
- ✓ All taxes and service charges
- ✓ Financial Protection

### Not **Included:**

- Meals & Beverages (not listed on itinerary)
- International Flights (request quote)
- 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!
- ✓ Customised access maps with bi-lingual train times and full instructions for every journey you will be making in Japan.
- ✓ 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.

## 8. Ready to BOOK!

To secure your place on **JOURNEY TO THE EAST** Tour we require a (non-refundable) booking deposit of

€250 / USD300 / GBP200 / AUD350 per person

Pay Deposit Online: <https://www.uniquejapantours.com/book-a-tour/>

**Tour Reference:** Booking Deposit

**Tour Name:** Journey to the East



## 9. Small Group Tours Checklist

When?	What to do:	Tick when complete:
Before paying deposit:	Read and agree our full <a href="#">Terms &amp; Conditions</a>	<input type="radio"/>
When ready to book:	Pay <b>Booking Deposit</b> ( <a href="#">Payment Link</a> )	<input type="radio"/>
After paying deposit up to 7 days:	Receive pro-forma invoice outlining schedule of payments. Check it. Complete <b>Booking Form</b> and send (with copy of passport) to your travel consultant	<input type="radio"/>
After paying deposit :	Take out personal/medical <b>Travel Insurance</b> . Send your policy name and details to your travel consultant	<input type="radio"/>
After paying deposit (up to 8 weeks prior):	Book your flights as soon as you have your tour secured with us (or before if you find a good deal)  <b>Send E-Ticket</b> to your UJT Travel Consultant	<input type="radio"/>
8 weeks prior	<b>Tour Balance</b> is due 8 weeks prior to the tour starting date. Pay online or by bank transfer. Details will be on your Pro-forma invoice.	<input type="radio"/>
2-3 weeks prior	Wait for your <b>Travel Pack</b> including full pre-departure details.  We will send to the postal address you provide us with. Your travel consultant will be in touch before this time to confirm address.	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Departure	Final check you've sent all <b>Essential Documents</b> to your travel consultant:  Flight E-Tickets, Dietary Requirements (if any), Insurance Policy Name/Number, Passport Copy, Emergency Contact Name/Number	<input type="radio"/>